

Contemporary China Research
Global China and the Future of Capitalism Seminar Series -
Vietnam and China's Diverging Industrial Relations Systems:
A Case of Path Dependency

Abstract

The seminar will discuss why Vietnam and China, one-party states that allow only one official trade union, are traversing different paths in terms of their trade unions' institutional structures, the state's and trade union's attitudes toward strikes, willingness to reform their trade unions, and willingness to engage with the international labor union movement. The path dependency of their recent histories have set them on paths vis-à-vis authoritarianism. Thus, when external contingencies force institutional change Vietnam and China to veer in new divergent trajectories—the TPP energizing Vietnam to debate the acceptance of autonomous trade unions, while Xi Jinping in China intensifies Party control over industrial relations and civil society.