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Cold War Coethnics: Nationhood and Belonging
among Vietnamese Immigrants and Refugees in Germany

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requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Sociology

by

Phi Hong Su

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Professor Rubén Hernández-León, Chair

How do international migrants who have experienced civil war in their homeland interact with one another and negotiate national division in their host land? My dissertation addresses this question through examining a singular case of parallel international migration and regime change. After the 1975 reunification of Vietnam, people unwilling to live in the newly-formed socialist country began to flee. Many resettled in West Berlin, a capitalist enclave entirely encircled by socialist East Germany. In 1980, Vietnamese from a second migration stream began to arrive in East Berlin on labor contracts. Germany reunified a decade later, bringing these two groups of Vietnamese together within a reunified city. This is the only instance in which coethnics who represent opposing sides of the Cold War divide have resettled en masse in the same destination.

My comparative and historically-grounded qualitative inquiry draws on 81 interviews and 14 months of participant-observation in Vietnamese religious and social organizations across Berlin. I first trace the movements of refugees to West Germany and contract workers to East

Germany, revealing how Cold War logics differently marked individuals as essentially economic or political migrants despite shared experiences of violence and postwar poverty (Chapter 2). Next, I consider how respondents draw on cultural repertoires to explain why they prefer to socialize with coethnics from the same region of origin (north or south) (Chapter 3). Thereafter, I show how people become exclusively sorted into one of two cultural organizations, representing refugee or contract worker migration streams, through social pressures to adhere to the regional identities and accompanying sociopolitical norms of each organization (Chapter 4). Finally, I examine interactions at the only social institution that contract workers and refugees regularly attend together: a Buddhist pagoda (Chapter 5).

In examining how Vietnamese refugees and contract workers encounter one another in reunified Berlin, I argue that Cold War logics have unsettled categories of shared identity such as ethnicity, nationhood, and religion. While this research draws on a unique case of international migration, its findings reveal processes at play more broadly among migrants from countries with politicized internal divisions, whether along religious, ethnic, or national lines.

The dissertation of Phi Hong Su is approved.

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2018

To Mary Yu Danico

Và cho ba mẹ

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For both coauthored pieces, I lent my ethnographic and interview data, while coauthors lent their media, archival, and secondary statistical data.

Vita

Phi Hong Su received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology from California State Polytechnic University, Pomona in 2010. The most rewarding professional experiences in her undergraduate studies were the different capacities in which she worked with Mary Yu Danico, through the Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program, Michi and Walter Weglyn Endowed Chair for Multicultural Studies, and Psychology and Sociology Department Peer Mentoring Program. She earned her Master of Arts degree in Sociology from the University of California, Los Angeles in 2012, focusing on the transmission of homeland politics among the children of refugees. Phi's interests in how people rebuild their lives after war and international migration led her to conduct dissertation fieldwork in Berlin, an important site of post-socialist reconstruction.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The second time Tàì lost his home was more devastating than the first. Tàì first left the land of his birth in 1954 when, as an infant, he was carried across the seventeenth parallel into southern Vietnam.¹ The roughly one million “northern migrants”² who made this trek exited the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV or North Vietnam) to live in the Republic of Vietnam (RVN or South Vietnam) (Hansen 2009). Tàì spent nearly his entire upbringing in the South, and identifies as a southerner despite his discernable northern accent. The war raging between the two Vietnams³ again reached Tàì in the 1970s, when he and his family separated and fled from their home as Northern troops advanced into the South. Tàì experienced the loss of a homeland more powerfully this time, with the victory of Northern communist forces over South Vietnam and the reunification of the country under a one-party socialist system in 1975. Following the “fall” or “liberation” of the South, one of Tàì’s brothers escaped the reunified Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV or Vietnam) by sea as part of the “boat people” refugee crisis that began in the late 1970s. This brother was rescued by the West German ship, *Cap Anamur*, and resettled in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG or West Germany). Some years later, more of Tàì’s brothers tried their fates on

¹ I refer to “South,” “Northern,” and so forth in upper case when discussing the regimes that existed between 1954/5-1975. When referring to people, places, and things before the division and after the reunification of Vietnam, I use lower case. This also applies to East and West Germany between 1945-1990.

² *Bắc di cư*

³ Known in the west as the Vietnam War, the protracted conflict in Vietnam from 1955-1975 has also been referred to as the Second Indochina War and the Resistance War against America. These designations call attention to the involvement of and impact on neighboring states such as Cambodia and Laos (Turley 2008), as well as official and unofficial narratives of the war in Vietnam today (Schwenkel 2009).

the seas. They survived despite pirates repeatedly raiding their boat and raping all of the women and girls onboard. Tàì attempted his own escape in the mid-1980s, drifting on the sea for one month before docking in Thailand. He remained in a makeshift Thai camp for some years before resettling in West Germany in late 1989. Upon arriving in West Berlin, Tàì took language classes for several months before finding a job in a German company. At the time of our interview in 2016, Tàì had been happily employed by the same company for nearly three decades.

Tàì's time in West Germany was comfortable and fulfilling, leading him to "see [Germany] as a second homeland."⁴ Yet, his adopted homeland also experienced tremendous social, economic, and political upheaval that paralleled developments in his homeland: the Berlin Wall fell in November 1989 shortly after Tàì arrived, and the divided Germanys reunified the following year through the accession of the German Democratic Republic (GDR or East Germany) and its absorption into reunified Germany.⁵ The victory of West over East Germany barely affected Tàì, as a refugee with a pathway to permanent residency and naturalization. By contrast, German reunification profoundly disrupted the lives of those in the former East, including Tàì's coethnics—people who share his Vietnamese ethnicity. As I will discuss in the following vignette, Vietnamese labor migrants to East Germany faced much socioeconomic and legal uncertainty after 1989.

To aid people he saw as his "countrymen,"⁶ Tàì housed over half a dozen contract workers, all from northern Vietnam. He recalled that while he went to work, the men stayed in his home watching television and eating his food. They used his name to rent videos but never returned them. Tàì then came home after work one day to find his place nearly set on fire because one of the contract workers had thrown a lit cigarette butt into the trashcan. Despite the fact that he

⁴ *Chú coi đây là quê hương thứ hai rồi.*

⁵ The official names and abbreviations for West and reunified Germany are identical. To avoid confusion, I only use FRG to reference West Germany, and Germany to refer to the reunified country.

⁶ *Đồng hương*

traced his roots to the north, this near-miss convinced Tài that he could not live harmoniously with northerners, whom he saw as too deeply influenced by communism. He thus asserted that “wherever communists go, wherever communists dominate, there is deceit.”⁷

Tài’s view of the injurious effects of communism also influenced how he related to his homeland. He visited southern Vietnam once in the late 1990s, but felt a deep sense of disappointment as soon as he arrived:

What does disappointment mean? I wanted to keep all of the beautiful images of my homeland, of my childhood there. But honestly going back now, there’s nothing left... Three days I didn’t step foot out of the [hotel] room... Because now if I look back, if I look back on everything about my former homeland then I’d be very disappointed, and that becomes despairing. But despair is the greatest misery for a person. People can be disappointed, but don’t bring them to the point of despair.⁸

Tài willingly engaged with both northerners and the state of Vietnam, the latter of which was crafted in the image of the North. These engagements confirmed for him a fundamental incompatibility between himself and the people, places, and things related to the North and its inescapable association with communism, as he saw it. Over forty years after the reunification of Vietnam, Tài’s social network still reflects the pre-1975 division of North and South, comprising largely southern refugees.

* * *

Trinh, like Tài, experienced multiple instances of regime change and international migration. Born in the late 1960s in northern Vietnam, she came of age in a post-war environment marked by hunger and deprivation. Trinh reached adulthood in the late 1980s and jumped at the opportunity to go abroad on a labor contract. Having a family member working overseas, Trinh explained,

⁷ *Hễ mà nơi nào cộng sản tới, hễ mà nơi nào mà cộng sản thống trị, thì nơi đó có sự gian dối.*

⁸ *Thất vọng là thế nào? Chú muốn giữ lại tất cả những cái hình đẹp quê hương của chú, của cái ngày thơ ấu của chú ở đó. Nhưng mà bây giờ về thật sự không còn là cái gì hết... Ba ngày chú không hề bước chân ra khỏi phòng... Bởi vì bây giờ nếu mà nhìn lại, nếu mà nhìn lại tất cả những cái bây giờ của quê hương cũ của chú thì chú rất thất vọng, thành tuyệt vọng. Mà cái sự tuyệt vọng là cái khổ nhất của con người. Người ta có thể thất vọng, nhưng đừng đưa người ta đến cái chỗ tuyệt vọng.*

bolstered the economic situation of the entire family immensely. Unlike Tài, Trinh did not anticipate making a life for herself overseas; she only wanted an opportunity to go abroad temporarily to earn money. In 1989, Trinh began factory work in the Eastern Bloc.⁹ She recalled comfortable eight-hour workdays, which afforded her time in the evenings to work side jobs in order to send more money back home.

Some months after Trinh's arrival in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union collapsed. Like many coworkers she knew, Trinh would later hire a guide to help her cross the border into reunified Germany. There, she registered in an asylum camp. As an asylum-seeker, Trinh automatically received language and integration classes at the camp. She sought a job at a German company the following year. Trinh recalled being "comfortable in west Germany,"¹⁰ with Germans speaking slowly to her because they knew she could not yet speak their language fluently. Yet, Trinh also encountered much uncertainty in the following years. In the early 1990s, she met and married Nghĩa, a fellow contract worker-turned-asylum-seeker from northern Vietnam. After having their first child, Trinh and Nghĩa lived in constant fear that their family would be deported. They squirreled away much of their earnings and lived frugally, so as to have some savings in the event that they had to return to Vietnam. By the late 1990s, the German government passed a law that provided permanent residency to foreigners with steady employment who had had children on German soil before 1993. Trinh and her family regularized through this legislation and, as of 2016, ran a successful business in eastern Berlin.

As with Tài, Trinh's social circle largely reflects the Cold War divisions of North and South. She recalled that, during her time in the asylum camp, southern boat refugees had come to provide support. Nghĩa hovered nearby as I interviewed Trinh and also allowed me to interview him later that afternoon. He interrupted to challenge his wife's reading of refugee visits as helpful.

⁹ For confidentiality reasons, I have omitted the names of Soviet allied countries as well details such as the type of service or manufacturing work people do.

¹⁰ *Thoải mái ở tây Đức*

Trinh then replied that, given how much southern refugees hate northerners, it was generous of them to show up to speak at all. Trinh can sense that southerners resent northerners like her, she explained, when they comment on her accent, draw attention to her northern background, or reference *Chợ Đông Xuân*, a marketplace in eastern Berlin named after one in Hanoi, the capital of Vietnam. Trinh nevertheless expressed sympathy toward southerners, whom she saw as aggrieved because they lost their homeland. Today, her friendship networks mostly include northerners and former contract workers. Trinh's understanding toward the suffering of refugees does not translate into relationships that cross the Cold War divide. Trinh and Tài, from the opening vignette, thus enact what journalist Sebastian Schubert has termed "Berlin's Vietnamese Wall."¹¹

Unlike Tài, Trinh and Nghĩa remain Vietnamese citizens. Like boat refugees, Trinh extols the virtues of German society and its "respect for human rights."¹² In fact, one strategy Trinh adopted to try to stay in Germany involved dissenting against the Vietnamese government. In the early 1990s, she began to write pieces critical of Vietnam and to participate in protests as a ruse to bolster her asylum claims. The German government deemed her case unconvincing, and she and her husband received a deportation order in 1998 before finally legalizing their statuses the following year through the aforementioned legislation for those with children born in Germany. As soon as they received permanent residency, Trinh and Nghĩa returned to Vietnam for several weeks. Both emphasized that they have never had difficulties with the Vietnamese Embassy, which ostensibly understands that they only protested to find a way to stay in Germany. Yet, wife and husband also acknowledged several social problems in Vietnam, recalling that "if [they] don't give money to customs [at the airport], someone will give trouble."¹³ Moreover, Nghĩa mused that

¹¹ Sebastian Schubert, "Berlin's Vietnamese Wall," Deutsche Welle, November 24, 2004, <http://www.dw.de/dw/article/0,1564,1408694,00.html>.

¹² [*Nước người ta*] rất tôn trọng quyền con người.

¹³ *Nếu mà mình không cho tiền hải quan sẽ bị người ta give trouble.*

“nowadays, the people who oppose Vietnam are the intelligentsia,”¹⁴ who know that something is deeply wrong with the government and society. Despite their ongoing relationships to Vietnam, northern former contract workers like Trinh and Nghĩa nonetheless often express critical views of the state.

* * *

Born in central Vietnam over two decades after the reunification of the country, Kim came to learn about the Cold War divide after coming to Germany as an international student. Kim and I first met at a Buddhist pagoda in western Berlin in 2015, just three months after she had arrived in Germany. Nineteen years old and with no relatives in the country, Kim found the pagoda through Hồng, a woman whose flat she shared. Kim hailed from a city in central Vietnam known for having a dialect that is difficult even for native speakers to understand. Knowing this, Kim trained her accent to sound like a southerner.

Kim spent her first year in Germany studying for a language exam to gain entrance to university and working at a café to supplement the money sent by her family in Vietnam. Despite missing home, she considered life in Germany to be illuminating for her personal development. For example, she asserted that Vietnamese expect (heterosexual) women to show deference to their husbands even if their husbands mistreat them. Before leaving Vietnam, Kim foresaw a similar fate for herself. But since “she has seen differently,”¹⁵ she explained, she will not put up with mistreatment in her intimate relationships.

As new migrant arrivals have done for centuries, Kim relied on coethnic networks to find housing, employment, and information for navigating her studies. Her social life revolved around coethnics as well: she participated in a youth group at the pagoda where we met, and regularly attended the festivities of a social organization in eastern Berlin (also attended by Trinh). These

¹⁴ *Bây giờ mấy người chống Việt Nam là mấy người trí thức.*

¹⁵ *Em đã thấy khác rồi.*

sites differed in their composition: while southerners and former refugees founded the pagoda, northerners and former contract workers ran and attended events of the social organization. When she lived in Vietnam, Kim also used the words “northerner” and “southerner,” but meant them descriptively rather than politically. After spending several months with her housemate Hồng, Kim learned more about the war and lasting divisions than she ever had back home. For example, while growing up Kim had never heard words like “re-education” camp,¹⁶ prisons that held those deemed by the reunified Vietnamese government to be anti-revolutionary.¹⁷ The descriptors of north and south became, for her, politicized.

By late 2016, Kim had not yet passed her language exams to secure a study visa, and so could not return to visit her family in Vietnam. But during her time away, she came to question things she had previously taken for granted. For instance, Kim knew that her grandparents had left for the United States decades earlier through a program called “H.O.,”¹⁸ but did not know that it applied to former soldiers of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) who had been imprisoned in “re-education” camps. No one in her family had talked to her about life before “liberation,”¹⁹ as the Northern victory is referred to in Vietnam. Kim also knew that there was only so much she could achieve educationally and occupationally back home because her family did not have good standing with the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP). However, Kim’s parents taught her that she simply “must accept”²⁰ this because opportunities in their country function on

¹⁶ *Trại học cải tạo*

¹⁷ Kim was not unique in this process of coming to learn about Vietnam through living abroad: one of her closest friends in Germany, Duyên, similarly spoke of not knowing that the North Vietnamese communist leader, Hồ Chí Minh, had children. Duyên explained her astonishment at learning this fact, counter to what she had been taught while attending school in Vietnam: ‘How could he be a father, when he’s the father of our nation?’

¹⁸ Humanitarian Operation

¹⁹ *Giải phóng*

²⁰ *Phải chấp nhận*

a “hereditary”²¹ basis. After coming to Germany, however, Kim came to see this as a telltale mark of inequality rather than simply the way things are. When I left Berlin in late 2016, Kim still intended to return to Vietnam after her studies but had come to increasingly disapprove of the state and society.

In this dissertation, I draw on the singular case of parallel international migration and regime change that Tàì and Trinh represent, the resulting divisions of which Kim would become socialized into decades later. After the reunification of Vietnam, people unwilling to live in the newly-formed socialist country began to flee. Many resettled in West Berlin, which was then encircled by East Germany. Beginning in 1980, Vietnamese from a second migration stream began to arrive in East Germany and the Eastern Bloc, more broadly, on temporary labor contracts in the name of socialist solidarity. Germany reunified a decade later, bringing these two groups of Vietnamese together in the same country and, for many, in the reunified city of Berlin. This is the only instance in which coethnics who, representing opposing sides of the Cold War divide, have resettled *en masse* in the same destination. This dissertation centers on the lives and social relationships of Vietnamese refugees to West Germany (like Tàì) and contract workers to the Eastern Bloc (like Trinh), who arrived on their respective German soils roughly simultaneously. I further consider how later arrivals (like Kim) learn about and become sorted into these Cold War divisions of North and South, contract worker and refugee.

Despite coming of age decades apart and arriving in Germany through distinctive migratory pathways (refugee, labor migration, and international study), Tàì’s, Trinh’s, and Kim’s narratives nevertheless reveal the durability of the Cold War divide of North and South Vietnam. Having lived through Vietnamese reunification, Tàì’s and Trinh’s motives to emigrate had to do with the conditions they faced in post-war Vietnam, while their relationships to the Vietnamese

²¹ *Cha truyền con nối*

state circumscribed the options they had for leaving. A generation after they departed from Vietnam, Kim traced their paths to Berlin to improve her life opportunities.

All three went about their lives with an eye toward the host society in which they resettled, the coethnic community spaces where they spent the bulk of their free time, and the home society they had left behind. None had emigrated with a mastery of the German language, though to varying degrees they had all received some language training in order to start their new lives: Tàì and Trinh while in refugee camps, and Kim as a prerequisite for coming to Germany as a student. As with Tàì and Trinh decades before, Kim began to improve her German through interacting with coworkers and customers at her workplace. All three spoke positively of the German state and society, which—being far wealthier and more developed than Vietnam—they saw as undisputedly a better place to live. As a new arrival, Kim relied nearly exclusively on coethnic networks to navigate German society. By contrast, Tàì and Trinh had long since integrated but still preferred to socialize with coethnics. Both had been back to Vietnam, while Kim intended to do so as soon as she passed her language exam. The returnees' trips back reinforced for them the stark contrast between what they saw as Germany's rule of law and respect for human rights versus Vietnam's arbitrary rule in which the communist regime does not respect individual rights.

The case of Vietnamese in Germany is fundamentally marked by the fact that migrants have crossed borders from and to states that have also dramatically redrawn their own. The collapse of South Vietnam and East Germany mean that these Cold War migrants have at least twice encountered the crossing of borders and people: once of their own accord through international migration, and again because of regime change. This project is therefore motivated by a central concern with how people rebuild their lives and coethnic communities after numerous displacements caused by regime change (the crossing of borders over people) and international migration (the crossing of people over borders). Specifically, I unpack the following research questions:

1. How does regime change shape the boundaries of membership and belonging among people residing within a territory?
2. What happens to the social identities and relationships of people affected by regime change after they migrate internationally?
3. How enduring are the effects of these crossings of borders and people?

Colloquially, regime change refers to a change in administration or government, or to a transition between types of regimes (democratic, authoritarian) (Bermeo 1990; Gasiorowski 1995). I am interested in the type of regime change that creates new states. Modern states operate on the principle of nationalism, “which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent” (Gellner 2006 [1983]: 1). Though canonical scholars differ on whether they see nationalisms as creating nations (Gellner 2006 [1983]) or vice versa (Smith 1986), they treat nationhood and ethnicity as one and the same. Nationalism, then, is the principle that each ethnicity should have its own state. As I will show with the case of Vietnam, however, regime change can engender competing nationalisms even among people who feel unquestioningly that they belong to a shared ethnicity/nation. Thus, I focus on regime change that results in the formation of new states to consider how macro geopolitical developments affect understandings of shared identity such as ethnicity, religion, and nationhood.

International migration similarly reconfigures people’s experiences of membership and belonging. By migrating, people undergo a transformation in how they relate to the states in which they reside. For example, migrants may become racialized minorities in a host society, while back home they were the majority group. Migrants also carry with them the practices and norms they learned in the countries they left. Following Roger Waldinger, I therefore treat international migration as a process of “migrants pull[ing] one society onto the territory of another state, creating a *zone of intersocietal convergence*, linking ‘here’ and ‘there’” (2015: 6). Yet, migrants come from societies that are internally fractured, whether along the lines of ethnicity, race, religion, or some combination of these. Such social cleavages may at times be less apparent than in the case of

Vietnam if they have not been institutionalized through regime change. By drawing on a case of institutionalized national division and reunification, this study illuminates social processes that are perhaps less obvious in instances where regime change has not occurred.

Finally, as we see with Kim, regime change has lingering effects that do not become apparent until after international migration. This happens because the process of international migration as intersocietal convergence pulls the social relations of the home society onto the territory of a host state. I will argue that, for the Vietnamese in my study, what is being pulled onto German territory is tension. As part of the post-war generation, Kim did not experience regime change in Vietnam firsthand. Instead, she grew up in a society that had already inscribed in books and policies the moral uprightness of the socialist North and reunified Vietnam, and that delegitimized the South—if it spoke of it at all—as puppets to foreign imperial powers. Though Kim did not learn about competing narratives of the South while in Vietnam, she did so after going abroad. Memories of war live on in overseas Vietnamese communities, which display the flag of South Vietnam; mourn April 30, the day the Saigon government fell; and instill in the younger generations a sense of nostalgia, displacement, and loss (Aguilar San-Juan 2009; Brettell and Reed-Danahay 2011; Chan 2006; Dang 2005; Nguyen 2017). International migration, then, pulls regime change-driven conflict from the host society onto a new territory, providing it new soil on which to grow.

Scholars similarly investigating relationships among coethnics have offered much insight into the persistence or transformation of ethnic boundaries and homeland politics. Their studies tend to emphasize cleavages along two *temporal* dimensions: distance from the migratory experience, such as conflict and cooperation between first- and second-generation coethnics (Chung 2007); or period of migration and assumed motivations, such as political refuge versus economic migration (Eckstein 2009; Erdmans 1998; Zake 2009). These temporal disparities make it difficult to parse whether any conflict that scholars observe stems largely from pre-migration experiences or from varied experiences of integration into a host society. I largely control for these

aspects by examining migration streams from a shared origin country that converged on divided Germany at the same time.

Refugees and contract workers shared the sociohistorical experiences of Vietnamese and German reunification, albeit from different vantage points. As first-generation migrants, members of both major migration streams can relate to certain general difficulties of initially adapting to a foreign context. In the aftermath of two reunifications, these Vietnamese abroad bore witness to efforts of their sending and receiving states to rewrite their national histories, and the places of individuals within them. This dissertation thus considers how Vietnamese in Germany dismantle, rebuild, and reconfigure coethnic relations. By comparing refugees and contract workers to later arrivals, I further show how international migrants reproduce the identity categories that are unsettled by regime change, long after the events that created these categories have been transformed.

A Negative Case of Community Formation

Whenever I introduced myself as a student who was interested in the lives of Vietnamese in Germany, potential respondents nearly always replied that there existed not one, but two (or more)²² Vietnamese communities in Berlin. For example, Lan, who migrated to West Germany through family reunification for refugees, felt strongly that the Vietnamese in Germany remained divided between north and south. She explained: “I look at Germans and I feel that they’re so lucky. Why were they able to heal like that (after reunification) when we haven’t?”²³ In fact, native Germans still stereotype what they see as differences between German westerners²⁴ and

²² One woman estimated over half a dozen, splitting up the groups into period of migration (before 1975, between 1975-1989, and after 1989) and migratory stream (student, refugee, contract worker, and undocumented migrants).

²³ *Chị nhìn người Đức rồi chị cảm thấy họ may mắn quá. Tại sao họ có thể chữa lành như vậy khi mình chưa làm được?*

²⁴ *Wessi*

easterners²⁵ (Glaeser 2000; Hogwood 2000). For people socialized in pre-reunification Germany, “more than 40 years of dual state structures has indeed contributed to the construction of two different nations” (Borneman 1992: 57), diverging in conceptions of self and economic and political histories. But Lan’s point has some measure of truth, given her experience in paying a tax as part of solidarity efforts to build up the former East after reunification. Former contract workers have also noted that, in sharp contrast to German reunification, Vietnamese reunification entailed the mass detention and persecution of Southern regime loyalists. I therefore consider the lack of community formation across migration streams and regions of origin, firstly, to respect how migrants make meaning of their social lives.

Furthermore, the literature on international migration provides reasons we should expect migrants to resettle near and build community with their coethnics in a host land. Knowledge acquired by migrants and shared through their social networks creates a feedback effect that further facilitates migration (Boyd 1989; Hernández-León 2008; Massey et al. 1987; Massey and Espinosa 1997). For example, Italian migrants to the United States at the turn of the 20th century transplanted their hometowns into shared blocks in New York City (Baily 1999). Even when government policies aim to disperse migrants upon their initial arrival in a host country, ethnic communities still often form through the secondary, internal migration of individuals looking to benefit from coethnic networks (Li 2009; Zhou and Cho 2010). Access to coethnic social networks is important for migrants even in the transit countries they travel through before reaching their destinations (Akcapar 2010; Paul 2011). Post-1965 immigration to the United States has seen migrants bypass the ethnic community to live in middle-class suburbs (Zhou 2009). Still, these “ethnoburbs” (Li 1998) allow minority groups to draw on ethnic resources and retain their cultural identities. Such ethnic concentrations or enclaves also enable exploitation (Sanders and Nee 1987), alongside opportunities (Wilson and Portes 1980). Opposing sides on the debate of the

²⁵ *Ossi*

net benefits versus costs of such networks, however, agree on migrants' propensity for coethnic concentration.

Therefore, while I do not take shared ethnic identification as grounds for a presumed primordial bond, I examine the absence of coethnic community formation as a way to understand individuals' beliefs about and practices of national belonging. My expectation of community formation around shared ethnicity derives from respondents, themselves, and from findings in the social science literature on the role of ethnic communities in immigrant incorporation.

Border and People Crossings

Weaving together scholarship on migration, nationalism, and boundary work, I explore what Jaeun Kim calls "transborder membership politics," which include the

"political claims, institutionalized practices, and discursive representations oriented to or generated by those who have durably resided outside the territory of a state, yet are perceived as belonging to that state or to the nation associated with that state" (2016: 11).

In her historical and ethnographic study of Korean migrants to China and Japan, Kim forcefully shows how North and South Korea sought to claim Koreans abroad as their own. Unlike Kim, however, I foreground how migrants' transborder membership politics shape their relationships to coethnics abroad, rather than to the state that claims them as part of its nation. By focusing on relationships among coethnics, I offer several insights into the citizen-state-territory nexus—the idea that a citizen is a member of a state that maps cleanly onto a territory.

Firstly, I argue that international migration and regime change are mirrored processes that interrupt the trinity of citizen-state-territory. Both processes powerfully restructure the identities and social relationships of people caught in them. Rather than being a clean uprooting from one country to another (Handlin 1951), international migration forges connections between home and host societies. These cross-border connections take place at an everyday level through the efforts of migrants in writing letters (Cancian 2010; Liu 2005), forming hometown associations (HTAs) dedicated to issues in the homeland (Fitzgerald 2008; Orozco and Lapointe 2004; Waldinger et

al. 2008), and building dream homes in countries of origin (Fletcher 1999). Sustained connections also take the form of lobbying the host land regarding the homeland or directly participating in the politics of the homeland (Portes et al. 1999). At a structural level, however, these connections happen because international migrants carry with them their citizenship and belonging to a state after they enter another territory. Leaving therefore disrupts but does not necessarily sever the citizen-state-territory relationship.

Regime change similarly unsettles the citizen-state-territory trinity, albeit in a different fashion. Whereas international migration moves the citizen of a state onto a different territory, regime change redefines the state that governs a territory of citizens. As a consequence, it calls into question who belongs to the nation represented by the state. The rise and fall of states create (national) minorities (Arendt 1966 [1951]; Brubaker 1995; Brubaker 1996) whom, in particularly hostile cases, the state treats as internal “enemies of the people” (Kligman and Verdery 2011). This can have devastating consequences, as with the case of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar.²⁶ As regime change redefines the state and nation of a territory, people living in the territory can develop antagonistic relationships to the homeland (Dufoix 2008). As we saw with Tàì, his longing for his homeland coexists with his immense opposition to the state that now governs that territory.

International migration and regime change disrupt, but do not sever the relationship among citizen, state, and territory; therefore, my second contention is that both processes serve as preconditions for ultimately decoupling this trinity. Namely, international migration and regime change both create refugees, the sole figure that truly dissolves the citizen-state-territory nexus (Arendt 1966 [1951]). Refugees, by fleeing a country where they likely held citizenship, fall outside of the international system of nation-states and national belonging (Haddad 2008). This is why international efforts to resolve the refugee “problem” involve different ways of reincorporating

²⁶ After independence in 1948, the government denied the Rohingya full citizenship despite evidence that they had been residing for several centuries in the territory that is now Myanmar (Topich and Leitich 2013).

them into a nation-state apparatus. The United Nations, for example, adopts a three-pronged approach of resettlement, integration, or repatriation. As I will show, however, international migrants can become refugees long after leaving a homeland for reasons that do not entail violence or persecution. While existing studies affirm that regime change in the homeland creates refugees, I further draw attention to how regime change in a host country can change individuals' relationships to their home states, thereby creating refugees or asylum-seekers.

Thirdly, by examining refugees within capitalist contexts and labor migrants within socialist contexts, I show certain insights to be true regardless of the nature of the regime type from and to which migrants come. This point is both methodological and conceptual. Methodologically, much of the scholarship on overseas Vietnamese focus on the United States, France, and Canada, where a refugee identity is hegemonic. By contrast, the large presence of contract workers and non-refugee immigrants in my study allows me to disentangle processes that are particular to refugee migration from those that are true of international migration more broadly.

Conceptually, my comparative design bridges the literature on refugee studies with that of socialist migrations. In plotting the emerging interdisciplinary field of critical refugee studies, Yén Lê Espiritu calls for “imbu[ing] [the term refugee] with social and political critiques that critically call into question the relationship between war, race, and violence, then and now” (2006: 411; see also Espiritu 2014). Taking up this call, historian Phuong Tran Nguyen develops the concept of refugee nationalism, a politics of nostalgia “[e]nmeshed in this nexus of American guilt [about the war in Vietnam] and refugee gratitude” (2017: 1). Both works center on US military entanglements in Vietnam and, for Espiritu, across the world. But it was not only the United States and allied western countries who became entangled in Vietnam or who welcomed Vietnamese; people also circulated across socialist countries, in what Christina Schwenkel (2014) has termed “socialist mobilities”:²⁷

²⁷ Gertrud Hüwelmeier (2013) has similarly called these “socialist pathways of migration.”

“While socialism is commonly associated with a generalized condition of *immobility*, here I demonstrate that mobility was in fact key to the realization of socialist international ideology and to fostering the belief that global socialism offered the most desirable path to development and prosperity” (2014: 236).

Studies of international migration have focused almost exclusively on people moving within capitalist contexts. Yet, as scholars increasingly note, there existed vibrant networks of exchange among, for example, the Eastern Bloc and Southeast Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean (Alamgir 2017; Apostolova 2017). As aforementioned, labor migrants can become refugees after going abroad. Even in the absence of this transition to refugeehood, however, certain insights of critical refugee studies still hold for those who never become refugees. Namely, that militarization, empire, and displacement create not just refugees, but international migrants more broadly. Specifically, refugee migrations to western democratic countries and labor migrations to socialist countries both formed and intensified in the context of the Vietnam and Cold Wars. Both migrations followed the military and imperial entanglements of the Cold War superpowers and their allies across the globe. Members of both migration streams faced racialized discourses and practices. For refugees, this manifests in how, for western “soldiers[,] travelling to Southeast Asia is figured as a journey back in time to an anachronistic moment of prehistory—from orderliness to chaos, from innocence to violence” (Espiritu 2014: 89), while also treating Vietnamese as victims without agency. Upon reaching western shores, however, these same refugees are upheld as model minorities, “racialized relative to (yet different from) other groups of color” (Espiritu 2014: 182). In a similar vein, Schwenkel observes that:

“[r]epresentations of Vietnamese migrant laborers as victims of a cruel and abusive socialist system likewise abound, reflecting a racialized, cold war imaginary that, in some cases, continues to underpin contemporary thought” (2014: 247).

Yet, East Germans also celebrated Vietnamese as particularly diligent compared to workforces from other regions of the world. By investigating the only site where both Cold War migration streams converged, I show that certain processes related to migration pertain regardless of regime type.

Finally, even while pointing out the slippage between categories like refugee and contract worker, I affirm the continuing importance of these categories in the everyday lives of individuals who reproduce them through boundary work. Though the states of North and South Vietnam no longer exist, the people who belonged to them continue to draw *symbolic* boundaries (Lamont 1992; Lamont and Molnár 2002) around the categories of North and South and, to a lesser extent, East and West (Germany). These feelings of groupness and belonging become enacted as *social* boundaries across various contexts. In particular, I will show that Vietnamese coethnics reproduce tension in their cultural and religious lives. My study presents a case of boundary making that shows how people engage in constructivism, “that ethnicity is the product of a social process rather than a cultural given,” while they still feel unhesitatingly and act upon a sense of primordialism, that their “ethnic membership was acquired through birth and thus represented a ‘given’ characteristic” (Wimmer 2008: 971). While the Vietnamese in my study share cultural traits, founding myths, and a language, they erect symbolic and social boundaries that reveal how their shared ethnicity has been fragmented by Cold War developments. Though people vehemently adopted the identities of Northerner and Southerner, the reunification of their countries did not recast them as simply Vietnamese. One reason geopolitical developments have enduring effects, then, is that those who lived through them recreate categories and divisions through their daily beliefs and interactions.

Methodology

This mixed qualitative study draws on fourteen months of participant observation in Berlin between 2013-2016 and 81 in-depth interviews. I volunteered at three Buddhist temples across the city of Berlin: Chùa Linh Thứu, in the western neighborhood of Spandau,²⁸ and two smaller

²⁸ After two summers of preliminary research in Berlin, I found only one site that both refugees and former contract workers attended together in large numbers: a Buddhist temple in the western part of the city. Through this site, I learned of other temples in the city attended predominantly by contract workers, and through contacts further received an invitation to attend service at an

temples in the eastern neighborhood of Lichtenberg, Chùa Phở Đà and Chùa Từ Ân. Through respondents I met at these temples, I also came to participate in two cultural organizations that I call Refugees for Germany (RfG) and Friendship and Adventure (FaA) (see Chapters 4 and 5 for detailed discussions of my entry into these sites). In addition to observing people's cultural and religious lives, I also followed them across their personal and professional lives through interpreting for them at doctors' offices, joining them during family dinners, and keeping them company during work shifts at their places of employment or self-owned businesses.

From these sites and through snowball sampling, I recruited interviewees (see Table 1 for sample overview and Table 2 for list of recurring respondents). Former refugees, contract workers, and the families of both comprised roughly two-thirds of the interview sample. The remainder included international students, people who arrived on tourist visas but regularized through other channels, those who remained undocumented, as well as second-generation Vietnamese Germans. Each interview lasted an average of two hours, though in rare instances the interviews ran nearly five hours. I transcribed and translated the interviews. When citing respondents, I use quotation marks for recorded interviews as well as for field observations that I could immediately write down. When paraphrasing field observations or the handful of interviewees who declined to be voice-recorded, I use scare quotes.

Former contract workers spanned a larger range of legal, class, and employment statuses than did former refugees. I briefly discuss the example of citizenship here (see Chapter 2 for an in-depth discussion). While nearly all the refugees and their family members held German citizenship, only some former contract workers did, despite eligibility for naturalization. Some explained that they did not naturalize because permanent residency in the EU grants many of the

Evangelical church. One shortcoming of the ethnography, however, is that I did not spend time in Catholic institutions, though Catholics represent a large proportion of those who fled to South Vietnam in 1954 and who later became boat refugees. However, I am assured that by focusing on Buddhists, I am accounting for the dominant Vietnamese religious group in Germany (Baumann 2000).

same rights as citizenship (Soysal 1995). Further, naturalization laws require a certain level of knowledge of the German language. Contract worker arrivals in the late 1980s largely lacked German fluency in comparison to refugees, who received extensive language instruction. However, even some former contract workers who met the prerequisites for naturalization did not want to give up their Vietnamese passports, as one former contract worker explained to me, because he “always feel[s] a sense of pride when [he] says [he is] a Vietnamese national.”²⁹ Lâm would consider naturalizing, he mused, if he could retain both citizenships. By our interview in 2016, Lâm had lived in Germany longer than he had in Vietnam, but he still had strong homeland ties. Most of the refugees, by contrast, had sponsored their families to Germany and likely had few close ties remaining in Vietnam. Contract workers’ statuses thus ranged widely from those with German citizenship or permanent residency to those on short-term visas and still others who were undocumented.

Positionality

While studying relationships among coethnics from different migration streams and regions of origin, it became apparent that my own positionality impacted the types of access I gained. A host of demographic characteristics and life experiences related to my class, gender, age, and linguistic abilities undoubtedly shaped not only respondents’ perceptions of me, but also the questions I asked and assumptions I had of them. Of these features, my ethnic (Vietnamese), regional (southern), and national (American) identification seemed to most obviously yield moments of insight and advantage in the field. At times, my national belonging facilitated discussions of coethnic relations of key interest: for instance, a former contract worker at an eastern temple, after being introduced to me, said ‘they object fiercely to the [Vietnamese] regime over there [in the United States],’ before asking how ‘someone like [her]’—a northerner—would be treated walking down the street in the Vietnamese communities in California. Such perceptions

²⁹ *Mình luôn luôn rất cảm thấy là tự hào khi mình nói mình vẫn là người Việt Nam.*

of life in overseas communities fit Helen B. Marrow's observation that "migrants are now embedded within a social field that connects flows of people and ideas across several different receiving countries," (2013: 645), here, with people of Vietnamese origin in Germany exhibiting familiarity with the politics and goings-on of Vietnamese in America.

If my American nationality elicited a certain curiosity, my background as a child of an ARVN soldier who was imprisoned in a "re-education" camp granted me access to a special segment of Vietnamese in Berlin: veteran boat people. The weight of this access was unforgettable when I realized how Vietnamese non-southern researchers fared in trying to study refugees. In one poignant instance, I visited a respondent at her workplace while her acquaintances, two refugee men in their 60s, skimmed through a survey being conducted by social scientists at a local institution. The principal investigator and research assistant conducting the survey both hailed from the northern region of Vietnam. They had confided in me months earlier about their fears of refugees' instinctive distrust of them. Sure enough, the two men felt the survey to be invasive in its questions about political, religious, social, and psychological attitudes. They concluded that the researchers surely intended to pass along their information to the Vietnamese Embassy and had to be communist, as both came of age in Vietnam in the northern region. In defense of the research team, I insisted these questions aimed to glean a portrait of specific health outcomes, and their signatures were necessary to justify the small compensation given to respondents for their time. I emphasized that their confidentiality would be ensured. I pointed out that I ask similar questions concerning politics, religion, and migration histories in my interviews. To my astonishment, one of the men remarked that I was allowed to ask him anything because I am the child of southerners, specifically an ARVN soldier, and grew up in the United States. Had I been a Vietnamese national asking him, he would have "strangled [me]"³⁰ (see Chapter 4).

³⁰ *Bóp cổ con*

While my obvious southern roots granted me access to former refugees and their families, it did not appear to harm my capacity to reach former contract workers or people from northern Vietnam. Admittedly, this may reflect a level of naïveté on my part, as I will never really know what respondents withheld in my presence. In at least some instances, however, I recognize the friendliness of northerners as signaling political allegiances. For example, I asked a former contract worker if non-members could attend his organization’s upcoming celebration, to which he explained: ‘You’re invited. Do you know why? Because you’re a child of the south.’ He insisted I was not marked by communism in the same way he and his contemporaries had been. This meant that—to him—I lived more freely than the northerners in the room who came as contract workers (see Chapter 4). At the same time, my separation from Vietnam and the war meant that some former contract workers felt comfortable telling me that boat refugees who continue to wave the South Vietnamese flag are “uncultured,”³¹ and that the younger generation like me do not concern themselves with such matters.

However, my subject position and research interests proved cumbersome when I met some individuals for the first time, especially during earlier phases of data collection in the summers of 2013 and 2014. In those days, people who spoke to me and learned I was a researcher replied that they did not ‘know about those things [politics].’ Nor did they want to get in trouble with some unspecified authority, as suggested by one woman who gestured with her hand chopping down on her other wrist. Suspicion of me or fear of consequences of speaking with me dwindled as I became more of a stable fixture at various community events and spaces. But ultimately, I was less successful at recruiting people who would rather not discuss politics, identified as more or less apolitical, or had uncertain legal statuses.

³¹ *Thiếu văn hóa*

Roadmap of the Dissertation

In the subsequent five chapters, I trace the development of coethnic boundary making across various dimensions of social life. Chapter 2, “Making Cold War Migrants,” outlines the history of Vietnamese migration to East, West, and reunified Germany. I begin with Aristide Zolberg and colleagues’ (1989) treatment of refugees as differentiated from other types of migrants through violence. By comparing refugees and contract workers, I show that some who did not anticipate violence still fled and received refugee status, while at times others who directly suffered state violence stayed in Vietnam and only later became economic migrants. Drawing on historical-legal developments and interviews, I trace how political developments channeled Vietnamese into the label of political or economic migrants, despite an overlap in their motivations for leaving Vietnam. This chapter situates the development of the categories of North/South and contract worker/refugee within regional and global geopolitics. It also frames contemporary migration from Vietnam to Germany as following pathways established by earlier waves.

Chapter 3, “Contesting the Cultural Content of Ethnicity,” examines the symbolic boundaries that Vietnamese draw between themselves and coethnics along the Cold War dimensions elaborated in the preceding chapter. While all respondents express an essentialized sense of shared peoplehood with other Vietnamese, they also differentiate among themselves by referring to cultural traits such as food, accent, and social norms. Across regions of origin and migration streams, respondents articulate what they see as defining differences among coethnics to be products of historical socialization. For example, northerners and southerners reference past famines in the North to make moral claims about the diversity of cuisines in the south versus the north or, conversely, the pragmatism of famine-distressed northerners versus southerners. This chapter argues that respondents at once take for granted while constantly making and unmaking shared ethnicity.

The remaining empirical chapters shift from individuals’ expressed perceptions and attitudes to group-level actions. These chapters center on women, who disproportionately bear the

responsibility of practicing and transmitting culture (Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989). In Chapter 4, “Enforcing Cold War Loyalties,” I consider how Vietnamese enact social boundaries through policing friendship networks. This chapter draws on two sociocultural organizations: Refugees for Germany and Friendship and Adventure. Refugees founded and largely attend the former, and contract workers, the latter. I compare social events that the organizations hosted over the course of one year, including celebrations of the Lunar New Year, the most important Vietnamese holiday; and events surrounding the planning of a key respondent’s birthday party. I narrate this chapter through the experiences of three women who straddle both RfG and FaA, while themselves not fitting the organizations’ implicit identities of, respectively, southern refugee and norther contract worker. This chapter reveals how individuals encounter various social pressures to sort into the North/South divide.

Chapter 5, “Politicizing Shared Religion,” centers on the reproduction of coethnic conflict in a religious sphere. This chapter is based primarily on participant-observation at Linh Thửu Pagoda in western Berlin, with limited comparisons to the eastern pagodas of Từ Ân and Phỏ Đả. In the singular site that people across migration streams and regions of origin attend together, I ask how respondents reconcile the temple’s emphasis on harmony with their conflicting nationalisms and relationships to Vietnam. Beginning with the development of Linh Thửu Pagoda in Cold War West Berlin, I trace how the entry of contract workers into the temple after 1989 led to nationalist conflict. I then consider how those who remained in the aftermath of the controversy must negotiate their politics and religiosity. This chapter suggests that respondents play out Cold War antagonisms across various social arenas, transforming the religious sphere into another site of coethnic contestation over understandings of the nation.

Finally, Chapter 6, “Cold War Coethnics,” concludes with the theoretical, empirical, and practical contributions of this dissertation for the study of border and people crossings. Roughly three and four decades after the reunification of their host and home countries, respectively, Tải’s and Trinh’s lives continue to be shaped in no small measure by Cold War developments and

framed by the now obsolete categories of North and South, contract worker and refugee. Their social networks and understandings of their ethnic nation reflect the circumstances under which they left Vietnam, arrived on separate German soils, and experienced the collapse of global socialism. By articulating and enacting the division of Cold War categories, coethnics like Tàì and Trinh demonstrate the durable impact of geopolitical conflict on people's everyday lives.

This introduction began by sketching the varied regional loyalties and migration experiences of Tàì, Trinh, and Kim, who all nevertheless see themselves as part of a shared nation. Despite their divergent relationships to their homeland (upon departure) and host land (upon arrival), all three cherish the German society they live in today and readily point out flaws of the Vietnamese state and society they left behind. With very few exceptions, all respondents expressed varying criticisms of Vietnam's one-party socialist system. Berlin's "Vietnamese wall" thus does not derive from competing allegiances to the Cold War politics, per se, like communism and anti-communism. Rather, Vietnamese coethnics like Tàì and Trinh experienced regime change that reconfigured and stratified their belonging to Vietnam (and Germany). By migrating, they pulled these understandings and tensions with them onto German soil. Kim came to learn of and became sorted into these divisions as well. By examining the lives and social relations of immigrants and refugees as well as those who came after them, this dissertation reveals how the crossing of borders and people creates opportunities anew for the reproduction, disruption, and transformation of intragroup tensions.

Chapter 2: Making Cold War Migrants

Born four years apart and in opposite regions of Vietnam, Tín and Sơn both had strong motives to leave their homeland. Tín was a soldier in the Army of the Republic of (South) Vietnam, but did not try to escape after reunification in 1975 because “the country ceased being at war.”¹ But in the late 1970s, Tín and his wife had their first child. They feared for the child’s future because of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam’s policy of “three-generation life history,”² which meted out social, economic, and political punishments or opportunities based on individuals’ commitments to revolutionary ideals. Because Tín was marked as having a bad (anti-revolutionary) background, his child’s prospects would be curtailed. After months of planning,³ Tín, his wife, and child escaped Vietnam by boat in 1981. They were rescued by the West German ship, *Cap Anamur*, processed in a refugee camp in the Philippines, and eventually resettled in West Germany.

Sơn was a soldier in the People’s Army of (North) Vietnam (PAVN), and had long desired to leave the country. He was the grandson of wealthy landowners who were executed by the Việt Minh after the 1945 land reforms. The implications for Sơn’s parents were profound: “When [his grandparents] were denounced as landowners... then [his] parents from then on were forced to follow the revolutionary path. To atone for their crimes.”⁴ Through his parents’ efforts, Sơn was

¹ *Đất nước thôi chiến tranh.*

² *Lý lịch ba đời*

³ Like Tín, many refugee respondents reported actively planning their escape for several months before attempting it. This contrasts with commonsense understandings of refugee movements as sudden and unplanned.

⁴ *Khi bị đấu tố địa chủ... thì là bố mẹ chú lúc đấy là bắt buộc phải đi theo con đường cách mạng. Để chuộc tội.*

deemed to have a good background. Before any exit would present itself, Sơn dreamed of leaving the country that had forced his family down a narrow political path, and that he saw as rewarding relationships and loyalty rather than merit. In 1981, Sơn found an exit through a coveted labor contract to East Germany, awarded to him because of his parents' dedication.

On the surface, Tín and Sơn represent the diverging paths that individuals took in opposition to or in support of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Tín, having lost his citizenship upon unlawfully departing Vietnam, resettled in West Germany as a refugee. Sơn, whose parents demonstrated revolutionary commitment, received an opportunity to earn money in East Germany as a contract worker at a time when Vietnam was war-torn and marked by scarcity. Yet, their biographies reveal how state policies shaped migration pathways despite overlapping individual motivations. Both men were drafted by their respective armies and assessed through the three-generation life history. When the Democratic Republic of (North) Vietnam first implemented the life history in 1954, however, countries were not taking Vietnamese refugees. By the time the Republic of (South) Vietnam collapsed in 1975, “boat people” refugees—who likely fled as consequence of the three-generation life history—captivated the world's attention.

This chapter offers a strategic case for understanding how (inter-)state policies generate varied migration flows, by comparing two groups of migrants who originated from what became the same country (Vietnam) and arrived in two countries that later became one (Germany). I ask: *Under what migratory channels did Vietnamese arrive in West and East Germany? And how do refugees and immigrants make sense of their decision-making processes and motivations?* I start from Aristide Zolberg and colleagues' treatment of refugees as differentiated from other types of migrants through violence:

“We shall therefore define refugees as persons whose presence abroad is attributable to a well-founded fear of violence, as might be established by impartial experts with adequate information... Violence may also be inflicted indirectly, through imposed conditions that make normal life impossible” (Zolberg et al. 1989: 33).

Zolberg et al.'s observation about indirect violence has particular relevance to the three-generation life history and its consequences for families. However, Tín's and Sơn's narratives reveal that some who did not anticipate violence against them still fled and received recognition as refugees, while others who experienced state violence at times stayed in Vietnam and only later became economic migrants. Drawing on historical-legal developments and interview accounts of individuals' migration experiences, I trace how political circumstances channeled Vietnamese into the label of political or economic migrants, despite an overlap in their motivations for emigrating.

While some authorities have insisted that “refugees are not migrants” (Feller 2005: 27), scholars have increasingly identified empirical, conceptual, and practical problems with distinguishing between the two: namely, that some who flee situations of violence do not receive refugee status (Menjívar and Abrego 2012); that distinctions serve the purpose of “limit[ing] and control[ing] the movement of people in a world in which free movement is not tolerated” (Kukathas 2016: 256); and that the refugee-immigrant dichotomy actually harms the former by failing to meet their long-term economic needs (Long 2013). This chapter builds on these three lines of inquiry. Empirically, I draw on a natural experiment of varied migration from Vietnam to divided Germany to show that homeland violence and persecution do not necessarily predict a person's migratory status. People's statuses also change over time after they have already emigrated, and because of developments in the host land. Conceptually, I argue that international migration is a first step in disrupting the nexus of citizen-state-territory—the idea that a citizen is a member of a state that maps cleanly onto a territory. In arguing thusly, I complicate the work of political theorists like Hannah Arendt (1966 [1951]), who see the refugee as the sole figure that dissolves the citizen-state-territory trinity. Practically, I build on Katy Long's (2013) stance that refugee protection efforts should also consider the economic needs of refugees as a particular class of international migrants.

The chapter follows in four parts that each consider developments in migrants' homelands, host lands, and in the broader international context. First, I outline the state relations between South Vietnam and West Germany; North Vietnam and East Germany; and among both Vietnams, Germanys, and their Cold War allies in the decades before the collapse of South Vietnam. Second, I discuss the conditions under which many Vietnamese, largely from the former South, fled Vietnam as refugees. Third, I examine the contract work program between the SRV and East Germany as well as the Soviet Union and allied countries. Finally, I sketch the diverging conditions facing refugees and contract workers after the fall of the Berlin Wall (see Figure 1). I show how the designations under which they arrived on German soil have shaped their life trajectories.

Before Refugees and Contract Workers: International Study Exchange and Humanitarian Assistance

Two decades before Vietnamese refugees and contract workers began to arrive on German soil, both Vietnams and Germanys had already established ties through international study exchanges and humanitarian assistance. Following the 1954 division of Vietnam at the seventeenth parallel, the North and South Vietnamese governments started to send students to East and West Germany, respectively, as well as to other allied socialist and capitalist countries.⁵ The war in Vietnam drew widespread attention from both Germanys as well, with East German citizens in particular sending supplies to support North Vietnam (Bui 2003: 16). The parallel streams of international study and the social assistance provided to both Vietnams prefigure the later migrations of refugees and contract workers.

⁵ Pioneering students and professionals had been going to colonial France, for example, since the 1910s (Blanc 2005: 1159).

International students played a role in key nation-building efforts. First, educational exchanges reflected and strengthened relationships between the allied countries that engaged in them. Second, such exchanges aimed to equip students with the tools for national reconstruction. North Vietnamese students in East Germany and the USSR therefore largely specialized in technical disciplines, such as architecture and engineering, that were deemed critical for rebuilding after colonialism and war (Schwenkel 2015: 4).

International students from both Vietnams shared a duty to repatriate after completing their studies, but Vietnamese reunification would complicate this outcome for Southerners. One example comes from Kiều, who was born in northern Vietnam shortly before the division of the country. Kiều's family carried her into the South as an infant. Like Tài (Chapter 1), Kiều formed part of a larger movement of one million people who left for South Vietnam after the Geneva Conference,⁶ which sought to settle lingering issues from the wars in Korea and Indochina (Hansen 2009). In the early 1970s, Kiều received a scholarship to train as an engineer in West Germany. Her scholarship stipulated that she would return to South Vietnam after graduation. Before she could complete her studies, however, South Vietnam collapsed. The RVN Embassy in Bonn closed, and Kiều's passport became obsolete.

Students like Kiều had few options for repatriation, as reunified socialist Vietnam had strong motives to deny western-educated individuals the right to return. Such actions of the SRV, whether explicitly inscribed in policy or not, created de facto refugees in the country of destination who had not left their homeland under conditions of fear or violence.⁷ Kiều and most of her fellow international students stayed in West Germany, receiving refugee travel documents from the West

⁶ The majority of these “northern migrants” [*bắc di cư*] were Catholics who were seen as “in effect turning their backs on Hồ Chí Minh’s Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) government” (Hansen 2009: 173). Yet, Hansen notes that some left not out of political fear or religious persecution, but because of food shortages that evoked the specter of the 1945 famine.

⁷ Similarly, following the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989, the United States passed the Chinese Student Protection Act of 1992, which protected western-educated students from being deported to China, and provided them a pathway to legalization (Gao 2006).

German government. She claimed that the SRV granted repatriation to some who sympathized with the outcomes of reunification, as the newly-formed state required political loyalty. According to Kiều, the students who remained in West Germany subsequently adjusted well because of their language skills, training, and familiarity with West German society. This point is corroborated by my interviews and by policy reports (Wolf 2007).

Nam, from North Vietnam, similarly felt obligated to study diligently while war raged on at home. He explained:

We were able to go on the bones and blood of our friends who went to war. So the responsibility is to come here to eventually return to build the country... We have to be responsible to the people who took up arms to fight.⁸

In contrast to Kiều, Nam experienced the events of 1975 as confirmation of the urgency for him to return and pay his dues in Vietnam. After completing his studies in the late 1970s, Nam went back to northern Vietnam and began a government internship for two years. As I will discuss later, students like Nam would receive a second opportunity to go abroad in the early 1980s to lead labor contingents.

While abroad, both sets of international students knew that they needed to toe the political lines of their origin countries; those who failed to do so sought asylum in their host countries. In the United States, for example, several South Vietnamese students sought asylum, citing fears of persecution because of their anti-war politics (Nguyen 2015: 94). In East Germany, North Vietnamese students were torn between competing factions of socialist powers: by the 1960s, the rival socialist visions of China and the Eastern Bloc constrained educational opportunities for North Vietnamese students, whose national government leaned toward China's stance (Grossheim 2006). Some individuals in both situations successfully filed for asylum to remain in

⁸ *Bạn chú được đi là đi vào tiêu chuẩn xương máu của các bạn đi chiến đấu. Thì trách nhiệm của chú là sang đây học để cuối cùng là trở về để xây dựng đất nước... Mình phải có trách nhiệm với những người cầm súng chiến đấu.*

their host countries.⁹ In the East German context, the DRV Embassy did not forget the actions of student asylum-seekers, and successfully urged the GDR to “isolate the GDR citizens from Vietnam” (Grossheim 2006: 468) by harming their employment opportunities and denying them communication with coethnic contract workers. Through state relations and diplomacy, the long arm of the state reached into the lives of even those Vietnamese who had shed their former citizenship.¹⁰

One crucial difference between Southerners like Kiêu and Northerners like Nam had to do with the three-generation life history, an autobiographical, standardized form that inquired “into one’s family, going back three or more generations, on the moral and political antecedents of all members” (Bélanger and Khuât 1996: 89-90). It followed from the “Soviet blueprint,” a “technological package... of which collectivization was a major part” (Kligman and Verdery 2011: 50). Vietnamese collectivization, determined in some measure by the three-generation life history, was first implemented in the North in 1954, and applied throughout reunified Vietnam after 1975. A question on a 1990s version of the form asks, for example:

“BLOOD BROTHERS AND SISTERS (Also specify name, age, alias, birthplace, what did they do for the enemy, for us. For each time period, state rank, position, branch. What are they doing now, where?) You need to specify for each time period from 1945-1954 and from 1955-April 1975. If you have many brothers and sisters, then write everything about one before moving to the next.” (Leshkovich 2014: 159).

⁹ Fifty North Vietnamese students in the Soviet Union and 20 students in East Germany applied for asylum (Grossheim 2006: 464, 468). Those who applied successfully in East Germany received permanent residency and, eventually, citizenship.

¹⁰ The long arm of the Vietnamese state reaches into Germany today as well, albeit through unofficial channels. On July 23, 2017, Vietnamese asylum-seeker Trĩnh Xuân Thanh was abducted in a Berlin public space. The German Ministry of Foreign Affairs concluded that Vietnamese intelligence services kidnapped Trĩnh, and declared the action an “unprecedented and blatant violation of German law and international law” [*präzedenzlosen und eklatanten Verstoß gegen deutsches Recht und gegen das Völkerecht*]: Robert Roßmann, “Vietnamesischer Geheimdienst entführt Geschäftsmann in Berlin,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, August 2, 2017, <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/geheimdienst-skandal-vietnamesischer-geheimdienst-entfuehrt-geschaeftsmann-in-berlin-1.3614117>.

The form further inquires into social relationships outside of the family, and what role one's friends played in struggles against the French and Americans. Individuals determined as having a good background received government employment and related socioeconomic advantages (Bélanger and Khuât 1996: 90). Those with a bad background faced property confiscation and, after 1975, imprisonment in "re-education" camps and removal to largely uninhabited areas called New Economic Zones (NEZ) (Leshkovich 2014: 143). These distinctions among citizens created internal "enemies of the people" (Kligman and Verdery 2011: 106). However, Northern victims of land reforms, including those identified as enemies through the three-generation life history, did not flee as refugees. Some, like Sơn's family, had to instead toil to redeem themselves as committed revolutionaries.

After initial implementation, these good/bad background designations tended to be relaxed. This was important for Nam, who was nearing completion of high school in North Vietnam in the early 1970s. Before Nam's cohort of students came of age, the government had reserved scholarships for those who "had merit with the revolution,"¹¹ as indicated by the three-generation life history. During Nam's last year of high school, however, the Minister of University Education announced that those who scored highest on exams, but did not have strong revolutionary backgrounds, would be awarded with scholarships regardless. Thus, at the time that Nam came of age, the authorities had relaxed the use of the three-generation life history in determining educational opportunities. As I will elaborate in the discussion of contract workers, the earlier implementation of the three-generation life history in the North meant that people could change their backgrounds over time.

In addition to international study exchange, the two sets of Vietnams and Germanys had formed ties through humanitarian and social programs. Assistance from both Germanys sometimes directly related to the war effort, as in East Germany, where unions and workplaces

¹¹ *Có công với cách mạng*

encouraged citizens to donate supplies to North Vietnam (Bui 2003: 16). West Germany, however, tried to avoid further involvement in the war. The Bonn-based government had a keen interest in presenting West Germany as “peaceful” and “rehabilitated” after World War II (Blang 2004: 349). However, they received pressure from the United States to do more for the Cold War cause (Mausbach 2002). West Germany’s dependence on an American alliance made it difficult to opt out of South Vietnam. Moreover, West Germany and South Vietnam shared similar experiences of political turbulence and national divide. Hence, Chancellor Ludwig Erhard expressed solidarity with South Vietnam’s struggle in a “Berlin-Saigon analogy.”¹² West Germany took the middle way toward South Vietnam, providing medical support through the (West) German Red Cross (GRC).¹³ As a non-governmental entity, the GRC sent two ships, *Helgoland* and *Flora*, to provide medical support off the coast of South Vietnam.¹⁴ These ships foreshadow the assistance the GRC would later provide to refugees in their transition and resettlement processes.

In sum, the reunification of Vietnam in 1975 saw South Vietnamese international students transformed into refugees overnight, and ensured that North Vietnamese international students would repatriate, if only temporarily. Who these students were, what they did, and how they left their homelands did not determine their opportunities for resettlement. Rather, their migration channels diverged because of regime change that resulted in the formation of a new state (Zolberg 1983): the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. The three-generation life history that nearly curtailed Nam’s chance to study abroad would come into play throughout all of Vietnam after

¹² The “Berlin-Saigon” analogy recognized that South Vietnam and West Germany had engaged in similar efforts against communism, in a Cold War context of “Free World versus Evil Empire.” (Mausbach 2002: 79).

¹³ Deutsches Rotes Kreuz. 2009. “30 Jahre danach: Boat People in Deutschland Beispiele gelungener Integration,” http://www.wortreich.biz/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Broschuere_Boat_People.pdf.

¹⁴ *Helgoland* was equipped with 150 beds, 54 doctors, and 3 operating units. The GRC continued to help South Vietnamese after 1975, as they made their way to third-country refugee camps and eventually to West Germany (DRK 2009).

reunification. The punishments doled out, based on the information gleaned from this autobiographical statement, would drive mass exodus out of southern Vietnam. Humanitarian organizations that previously provided medical assistance in South Vietnam would aid in the resettlement of refugees. By contrast, students to the Eastern Bloc would go abroad again as group leaders for labor contingents. Later, these students would take circuitous routes to remain in reunified Germany, including filing for asylum, organizing for residency rights, or repatriating to Vietnam and then returning to Germany surreptitiously.

Refugee Flows, 1975-1980s

While Kiều, Nam, and their fellow international students experienced Vietnamese reunification as “unexpected,”¹⁵ the situation in South Vietnam had already become quite desperate by the time President Nguyễn Văn Thiệu fled on April 21, 1975. His successor, Trần Văn Hương, resigned only a week later. Anticipating the victory of the Northern army¹⁶ over that of the Southern,¹⁷ the American military began an airlift campaign, “Operation Frequent Wind,” on April 29, 1975. In the hours preceding the “fall” or “liberation” of Saigon, the capital of South Vietnam, this program evacuated roughly 7,000 Americans and Vietnamese with western connections. General Dương Văn Minh issued unconditional surrender. He had been serving as South Vietnamese Acting President for only 48 hours before North Vietnamese tanks rammed the gates of the Saigon Presidential Palace.

The victory of the Northern PAVN over the Southern ARVN ended the Vietnam War. Soon after, policies of the SRV created refugee flows because they targeted those suspected of loyalty

¹⁵ *Không ngờ*

¹⁶ They were backed by China and the USSR, as well as by guerrilla forces of the People’s Liberation Armed Forces of South Vietnam (PLAF).

¹⁷ They were backed by the United States, Australia, Thailand, and South Korea, among other anti-communist allied countries.

to the old regime. In the three years following reunification, over 110,000 people fled to first-asylum countries.¹⁸ Many, but not all escapees, hailed from southern Vietnam. These have been dubbed “boat people,” as they often escaped in small and non-seaworthy vessels over the South China Sea. In what follows, I discuss domestic and international developments that led Vietnamese to escape and eventually resettle in western liberal democracies.

Immediately following General Dương’s capitulation to North Vietnamese Colonel Bùi Tín on April 30, 1975, the latter reportedly told the former:

“You have nothing to fear. Between Vietnamese there are no victors and no vanquished. Only the Americans have been beaten. If you are patriots, consider this a moment of joy. The war for our country is over.”¹⁹

Despite Bùi’s assurances that there would be “no victors and no vanquished,” by May 1975, one million people with ties to the former Southern regime were “invited” to “re-education” for 3 days to one month (Toai 1980). These prisons, notoriously widespread throughout communist countries, involved forced labor and indoctrination via propaganda, under conditions of food scarcity and minimal medical treatment (Metzner et al. 2001). For the soldiers of the ARVN, government workers, religious leaders, and others with American ties who reported for “re-education,” the days turned into weeks, months, and years. Many did not survive the prison sentence.

Facing retribution, people who had recently been released from prison began to leave Vietnam within a few short years. Hòa, who served in the ARVN, explained: “I was a soldier in South Vietnam, so I couldn’t live with the communists... Even if I could live with them, I would die

¹⁸ “Flight from Indochina,” United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/publications/sowr/3ebf9bad0/state-worlds-refugees-2000-fifty-years-humanitarian-action-chapter-4-flight.html>.

¹⁹ “South Vietnam Surrenders,” April 30, 2009, <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/south-vietnam-surrenders>.

early.”²⁰ Hòa fled Vietnam immediately upon his release from detainment, at the age of 27. Tuấn, also an officer in the ARVN, escaped Vietnam after a 5.5-year prison term. Both men’s imprisonment convinced them it would be impossible to live in the reunified country without further persecution. They risked the journey by sea and eventually resettled in West Germany.

Young Vietnamese men still had reason to fear conscription after 1975: by December 1978, tensions between reunified Vietnam and its Cambodian allies, the Khmer Rouge, boiled over into armed conflict. Fearing Vietnamese intentions of dominating former Indochina, the Khmer Rouge began to purge its own soldiers who had been trained by Vietnamese. Oanh cited this conflict as the reason her family decided to flee in the early 1980s, when she was a child:

My older brother was coming of age and would have had to join the military. At that time, the army was going over to Cambodia, so no one who was going... was alive to come back. So my mother decided to let us [my father, my brother, and me] go.²¹

The conflict with Cambodia had several socioeconomic and political implications. Firstly, the draft removed many men from the labor market (Pike 1981: 87). Secondly, “even though the victim [Pol Pot’s military] was an extraordinarily heinous regime” (Brown 1995: 78), Vietnam’s invasion of Cambodia led to condemnations by the international community, including the United States and the regional Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). China leapt to Cambodia’s defense by invading northern Vietnam in 1979. Vietnam’s move toward the Soviet line of Marxism further exacerbated tensions with China, at a time when the ideological stances of China and the USSR stood at odds.²² The tense diplomatic relations between Vietnam and China spiraled into increasingly antagonistic treatment of Vietnam’s ethnic Chinese, who comprised a large

²⁰ *Chú là lính của miền Nam thì sống với chế độ cộng sản thì chú không sống được... Nếu mà sống thì cũng phải chết sớm.*

²¹ *Anh của cô đến cái tuổi vị thành niên, phải đi lính. Thời điểm đó là đi lính qua bên Campuchia mà người đi ... thì không còn mạng về. Thế thì là mẹ cô mới quyết định là cho đi.*

²² For a history of when Vietnam toed the Chinese line, see Grossheim (2006).

proportion of refugees fleeing at the end of 1978. Some 300,000 Vietnamese nationals (of Chinese descent) resettled in China as a result.²³

People also fled because of dire socioeconomic persecution in the form of collectivization, a standard socialist practice (Kligman and Verdery 2011). To nationalize the economy in early 1978, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam began to take over the businesses and homes of entrepreneurs, including but not limited to ethnic Chinese. The government closed small businesses in the former South, leading hundreds of thousands of people—whose means of earning a living had been eliminated—to subsequently flee. One such person was Tàì (Chapter 1), who explained: “The reason [I left] is very easy to understand: my house was stolen by those communists.”²⁴ Born in northern Vietnam, Tàì was one of the roughly 600,000 Catholics who migrated in 1954 into what would become South Vietnam (Hansen 2009: 178-179). His family later lost their home and spent their savings on the run as communist troops advanced into the South in 1975. In the mid-1980s, Tàì escaped and reunited in West Germany with his brothers, who had been rescued years earlier by the ship, *Cap Anamur*.

Because state practices like the three-generation life history sought to purge and purify society, certain individuals acquired the stigma of “enemies of the people,” which prompted them to leave. Thanh, who fled with her parents, offers one such example. Though she had no nuclear family connections to the ARVN, Thanh had an uncle who had served in the military. As Thanh understood it, she would have been unlikely to advance in Vietnam as a result. Having left Vietnam at the age of 3, however, Thanh was too young to discern the specific policies that drove her parents’ decision-making process. Tín, from the opening example, better understood the policies:

²³ Song Jing, “Vietnamese refugees well settled in China, await citizenship,” United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, May 10, 2007, <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/latest/2007/5/464302994/vietnamese-refugees-well-settled-china-await-citizenship.html>.

²⁴ *Cái lý do [rời khỏi Việt Nam] dễ hiểu lắm: nhà cửa của chú bị tụi cộng sản nó cướp hết rồi.*

Instead of migrating in 1975... I thought our country ceased being at war. It was only me and my wife, we hadn't yet had children. Then in 1978 we had a [child]. But the communist regime had a three-generation life history... I thought about my [child's] future and so I fled. I escaped by boat for that reason, for the future of my child, *not because I couldn't live with the communists.*²⁵

Tín's decision to emigrate for his child's future reflects how state policies compel people to leave by making the social group to which they belong—those with a bad background—vulnerable to state persecution. Yet, Tín and his wife found a way to live under the reunified regime; it was for them not an impossible situation, but they wanted better opportunities for their child. Thus, the persecution Tín anticipated could have curtailed opportunities for his offspring, but did not present clear and immediate threats of violence or conditions that would have made life *impossible*, as in Zolberg et al.'s (1989) definition.

Broader societal and economic changes following reunification further drove Vietnamese to emigrate, largely from the south. Tài, who was forced out of his home by invading troops, resented that the conflict leading up to reunification had halted his studies. This is a common dislocation produced by civil war. Similarly, Vũ explained: "When liberation²⁶ came then my education was interrupted, and my dreams of continuing my studies could no longer be realized."²⁷ Tài and Vũ came of age during a steady decline in the quality of health and educational institutions in Vietnam which paralleled other developments in the economy. The government reduced food rations markedly (Pike 1980: 86). Vietnam's inability to re-establish diplomatic relations with other

²⁵ *Thay vì năm 75 bác đi di dân luôn... rồi nghĩ đất nước thôi chiến tranh... Có hai vợ chồng thôi, chưa có con. Rồi tới năm 78 thì có [con]. Nhưng mà chế độ cộng sản thì nó kêu là... lý lịch ba đời... bác đi vượt biên là lý do là vì tương lai của đứa con, chứ không phải là ở với cộng sản không được.*

²⁶ Vũ tried to remain nonpartisan in all of our conversations and requested that I not ask him questions about politics. In this light, his use of the term "liberation" should not be read as political loyalty to the SRV. Similarly, former contract workers from northern Vietnam refer to the city of Saigon, rather than Ho Chi Minh City, even if they may remained (more or less) loyal Vietnamese citizens.

²⁷ *Khi giải phóng vào đó thì công việc học hành của chú nó bị gián đoạn rồi cái ước mong của mình để mà tiếp tục học... thì không còn được nữa.*

countries, as well as its problematic Second Five Year Plan, further aggravated the impact of natural disasters such as drought and famine. Hiếu was one such person who fled after being relocated to a NEZ as part of collectivist restructuring. He explained:

After 1975, life in Vietnam was very difficult. Difficult in two ways: in terms of politics and in terms of society. Politically, people weren't completely free... The second difficulty was economic difficulty... The government took my family to an area that was rural so that we could farm. So I don't understand completely if that was a good thing but it perhaps wasn't so good because people didn't have experience with rural living ... and did not receive help from the government... in general everyone was poor and suffering and the government couldn't achieve [their production goals].²⁸

Governments often applied new economic and population policies to individuals and families based on political dogma. Yet, Hiếu did not treat his family's movement to a NEZ as a form of persecution, but, rather, as an agricultural policy that worsened an already fragile economy. This points to the gap between individuals' interpretations of persecution versus state policies targeting those deemed anti-revolutionary. Hiếu's position that life was difficult for *everyone* further shows that, in a sense, all migrations are politically motivated because people living in effective economic and political regimes would be able to survive adequately.

By the late 1970s, state policies in the form of political persecution and collectivization produced mass exodus. The flight of boat people sparked a crisis that the United States, France, and allied countries sought to address through concerted efforts to rescue and resettle boat people. One well-known intervention on the part of West Germany was *Cap Anamur*, which rescued many overcrowded refugee boats at sea. Government officials were reluctant to commit to resettling refugees. However, private citizens chartered the ship and sailed under the West

²⁸ *Sau năm 75 thì cuộc sống Việt Nam khó khăn lắm. Khó khăn với hai mặt: chính trị và xã hội. Về mặt chính trị thì người ta cũng không có được tự do hoàn toàn... Rồi cái khó khăn thứ hai là khó khăn về kinh tế... chính phủ hỏi cư gia đình mình đến cái khu không phải thành thị, nông thôn để mình khai thác làm farm, nông trại. Thì chú chưa hiểu rõ được cái này nó có tốt không nhưng mà có lẽ là một số cái không tốt khi mà những người ta không có kinh nghiệm về đời sống nông thôn... mà người ta không có canh tác làm ruộng làm rẫy được thì cũng thiếu, không có được phụ giúp của chính phủ... nói chung là đại khái ai điều nghèo khổ thì chính phủ không làm được những điều đấy.*

German flag, which meant the FRG was “formally obligated to take the shipwrecked refugees” (Bösch 2017: 30).²⁹ The earliest refugees rescued by *Cap Anamur* began to arrive in West Germany in the late 1970s. At the time, the country experienced economic prosperity in part because of vast sums of foreign money being infused into the last frontier between Western Europe and socialism. In contrast to the situation of the contract workers discussed next, West Germany desired the integration of boat people and their families, who numbered between 33,000 (Hillmann 2005: 86) and 38,000 (Wolf 2007: 4) on the eve of German reunification.

Boat people from Vietnam resettled in West Germany under the stipulations of the 1951 Refugee Convention. The country firstly provided them with temporary residence, then permanent residence and naturalization. These Vietnamese received welfare provisions such as job training and language classes, leading some scholars to consider them privileged compared to other refugees coming to West Germany (Blume and Kantowsky 1988).³⁰ This is in part because West Germany initially accepted Southeast Asians as part of a group of 10,000 “contingent refugees,”³¹ not anticipating that their numbers would eventually increase threefold.

Vietnamese (and, more broadly, Southeast Asian) boat people received refugee status in no small measure because of their geopolitical significance. In the United States, for example, the figure of the Vietnamese refugee provided the “(re)cuperation of American identities” after the devastating military loss in South Vietnam (Espiritu 2014: 2). Such “calculated kindness” reveals how foreign policy concerns underlie humanitarian operations (Loescher and Scanlan 1986). In West Germany, the special status afforded Vietnamese refugees derived both from the globally

²⁹ “Da die »Cap Anamur« unter Bundesdeutscher Flagge fuhr, war die Bundesrepublik formal verpflichtet, die schiffbrüchigen Flüchtlinge aufzunehmen” (Bösch 2017: 30).

³⁰ Tou T. Yang’s (2003) preliminary report on Hmong in Germany provides a sense of how exceptional the Vietnamese case is. A total of 10 Hmong families en route to Argentina were unexpectedly turned away at the airport and, as a last-minute compromise, resettled in the German town of Gämmertingen. Yang notes a lack of sponsorship programs to aid these refugees and considers the government unprepared to host them.

³¹ *Kontingentflüchtlinge*

publicized crisis they faced at sea and from the legacy of 20th century German history. To make partial amends for its Nazi past, West Germany went above and beyond the UN Convention's call for *granting* asylum to guaranteeing the *right* to asylum in Article 16 of its Basic Law³² (Green 2001: 89). This right to asylum, and the substantial welfare benefits provided during the application process, remained enshrined in the German Basic Law until 1993 (Hailbronner 1994), by which point reunified Germany had accepted more refugees into its borders than all other Western European countries combined (Klusmeyer 1993: 101).

Yet, unlike the United States and France, West Germany neither exercised imperial designs on nor had colonial ties with South Vietnam. While West Germany's acceptance of Vietnamese fit with the "Berlin-Saigon analogy," the government only reluctantly took refugees after it was pressured to do so by civil society, including student groups such as the Association of Christian Democratic Students³³ and the Young Union,³⁴ the youth organization of two conservative German parties, CDU and CSU (Bösch 2017: 13, 20).

In sum, refugees' exodus from Vietnam resulted from state actions that identified and punished internal enemies; yet, state persecution took on different forms, not all of which involved violence or led to impossible living conditions. Some respondents experienced physical and economic persecution, as in the cases of former ARVN soldiers who were imprisoned. Still more dreaded the effects of the three-generation life history or cited the near abject economic and social conditions they endured in post-1975 Vietnam as compelling their emigration. Others feared more deaths on the horizon because of the looming conflicts with China and Cambodia, but this involved a national military draft, rather than policies targeting southerners and anti-revolutionaries. At least some of those granted refugee status were

³² *Grundgesetz*

³³ *Der Ring Christlich-Demokratischer Studenten*

³⁴ *Junge Union*

“victims of what might be considered nefarious political routine, a vast category that includes most of the citizens of illiberal states... [but this is different from] those who are singled out as targets for the willful exercise of extraordinary violence on the part of some agent” (Zolberg 1983: 26).³⁵

While SRV policies aimed to make life difficult for suspected Southern regime loyalists, individuals who hailed from the South and perhaps experienced “nefarious political routine”—rather than targeted violence—also received refugee status. Next, I turn to contract workers, some of whom experienced political persecution, but who did not subsequently flee or become refugees after 1975.

Contract Worker Flows, 1980-1989

Describing conflict between refugees and contract workers in Berlin, journalist Sebastian Schubert noted that Vietnamese nationals to East Germany “were not boat people, but rather, North Vietnamese true to their regime.”³⁶ This seems supported by the fact that the same three-generation life history that convinced Tín to flee Vietnam also enabled Sơn to work in East Germany beginning in 1981. However, not all contract workers hailed from the northern region. Moreover, as earlier noted, one difference between these men is that the life history document had been in use in North Vietnam since 1954 and only reached southern Vietnam after reunification. Its longer tenure in the north means that families like Sơn’s had time to improve their standing through demonstrated allegiance to the communist party. While many took up labor

³⁵ This distinction between general oppression and targeted persecution has been blurry and inconsistent in practice. In the United States, for example, the Carter administration treated Southeast Asian refugee claims as group-based, in contrast to the individual-based definition of the 1951 UN Convention (Hamlin 2012b: 618). On the other hand, Australia routinely denies Chinese asylum-seekers because their claims of forced sterilization under the one-child policy result from “a general law... [that] lack[s] the critical nexus between fear and UN Convention grounds that would make them eligible for refugee protection” (Hamlin 2012a: 961).

³⁶ “Berlin’s Vietnamese Wall,” *Deutsche Welle*, November 27, 2004, <http://www.dw.com/en/berlins-vietnamese-wall/a-1408694>.

contracts to escape abject poverty in Vietnam, some also left in the hope of going to a country that was more developed politically than their own.

Sơn, from the opening discussion, claimed he had a choice in where to go as a laborer because his parents had toiled for decades to prove themselves to the communist party. His parents worked to overcome the bad background they acquired after 1945:

Other families were different, so for example people just had to work at a normal level... My social background was as a child of a landowning household, so now you had to toil, so that [leaders] could see your effort. That was the thing [to do] to re-educate... [He compares it to ARVN soldiers in “re-education” camps after 1975:] We are made to lose something so that we feel hopeless... We feel sorrow. But then in that time like with my family, there was nowhere to go. Every path was labor, labor, to labor, so that people could see your labor.³⁷

While growing up, Sơn knew that he had to fit in with the political system, even if fitting in involved nepotism and deceit. At the point of his departure from Vietnam, Sơn saw no future for himself left in the country, though no opportunity to permanently stay in East Germany presented itself either. Later, demonstrated allegiance to the SRV would matter less for contract workers, as the GDR increasingly requested more foreign workers to fill their labor shortage.³⁸

Others expressed long-standing discontent, despite not having been punished by the SRV as Sơn's family had been. Hùng, for example, went abroad to earn money in the hopes that he would one day return to Vietnam and marry. Born in South Vietnam, Hùng witnessed Vietnamese reunification as a child and grew up dissatisfied with the direction of the country. Having known

³⁷ *Những gia đình khác thì thí dụ như là người ta chỉ làm với mức độ bình thường... Thành phần của mình là con nhà địa chủ, thì bây giờ mà đi làm là mà phải làm cật lực, làm sau để tao thấy được cái công sức của mà. Cái đấy là cái để mà cải tạo...Mình bị mất đi một cái gì đấy thì mình thấy hẳn... Hẳng là mình có một cái buồn tủi...Thế nhưng mà cái thời như nhà chú thì không có đường nào để đi... Chỉ mỗi một con đường là lao động, lao động, là lao động, làm sau để cho người ta thấy được là cái lao động của mình.*

³⁸ In the first wave in the early 1980s, the SRV reserved contracts for high-achievers in the military, academy, industry, and politics. The ranks of contract workers included “doctors, engineers, teachers, economists, or skilled workers [who were] expected to perform low-level activities” (Wolf 2007: 6). Selectivity decreased after 1987 because of soaring demands for labor in East Germany and unemployment in Vietnam.

contract workers from the north, Hùng stated that many were unhappy with the government from the start:

Arriving in [East] Germany, I think most of the brothers [men] were more or less dissatisfied with our government, even though their relatives were holding power in Vietnam. And they were also people who were educated, knowledgeable, informed. They were still dissatisfied, still unhappy with our government to varying degrees. There are people who had a vindictive hatred, who were upset, who yelled, who cursed, and others who criticized but criticized to a small degree. They just wanted the government to change, while a number of others wanted it overthrown.³⁹

The discontent Hùng witnessed among fellow contract workers reflected actions by the SRV both within its borders and beyond. Failed collectivization policies in post-war Vietnam drove those who were well-situated try to find exits. By the same token, the fact that they were well-situated better allowed them to secure contracts. Hiền, for example, appears to fit the description of Vietnamese contract workers as “true to their regime.” Born in northern Vietnam in the late 1940s, Hiền received a scholarship to study in East Germany during the early 1970s and then a labor contract in the late 1980s. In between his two stints in East Germany, he worked as a teacher in Saigon⁴⁰ and described the economic situation in those years as “miserable and painful.”⁴¹ Once he heard that the government needed interpreters for laborers in East Germany, Hiền “hunger[ed] so”⁴² for the chance.

By creating bilateral contract work programs, the Vietnamese state established a legal channel for temporary migration, creating a legitimate and politically tolerable escape valve for people who were dissatisfied economically (and perhaps politically as well). As with refugees,

³⁹ *Đến Đức thì anh nghĩ là đa phần những anh họ đều có ít nhiều bất mãn với nhà nước mình, mặc dù là thân nhân họ đang nắm quyền Việt Nam. Nhưng mà họ cũng là người có học, là người có hiểu biết, có tiếp cận thông tin. Họ vẫn bất mãn, vẫn không hài lòng với nhà nước mình ở nhiều mức độ khác nhau. Có người họ cũng căm thù, cũng bực mình, cũng la hét lên, cũng chửi mắng, cũng có người họ phê phán mà phê phán một cái mức độ nhẹ. Họ chỉ muốn nhà nước đổi mới, thay đổi, còn một số khác thì muốn lật đổ.*

⁴⁰ The city was renamed Ho Chi Minh City [*Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh*] after reunification, but many, including Hiền, still refer to the city by its old name.

⁴¹ *Khốn khổ, vất vả*

⁴² *Đói lắm*

contract workers' explanations for why they left Vietnam often wove economic reasons with the hopes for living in a more developed civil society. We can glean this from Cúc, from northern Vietnam. She came to East Germany as a contract worker in the late 1980s at the age of 27:

People always said the European countries are very civilized, modern, with a good environment. The relationship between people is very good, the rights of people were higher [than in Vietnam].⁴³

Cúc's comment echoes those of Hiếu, who explained the difficulties in post-1975 Vietnam as political and economic. Yet, Hiếu made his way to West Germany under a refugee designation. He surely detailed persecution as part of his refugee status determination, as a form of claims-making for access to a territory (see Kim 2016). By contrast, Cúc hints at wanting to live in a more developed civil society but ultimately expresses her migration motives as economic.

As with refugees, temporary contract workers exist through the negotiations of states (Surak 2017). The two migrant groups diverge in terms of their migratory channels, which were created by distinct geopolitical and economic priorities. Because both East Germany and Vietnam stood to benefit from an ongoing contract labor exchange, the former made provisions to facilitate workers' transition abroad, including transporting new arrivals from Berlin-Schönefeld Airport directly to their ethnic- and gender-segregated hostels and confiscating their passports. This arrangement prevented comingling with native East Germans, just as both home and host states desired. Indeed, receiving states generally worked to prevent the intermingling of temporary workers with its native population (Surak 2013: 90).

Overall, contract workers considered East Germany a "paradise" due to their higher earning capacity there versus in Vietnam (Kolinsky 2004: 85), even if paradise had few mechanisms of mobility in place. As with temporary labor programs throughout the world,⁴⁴

⁴³ *Người ta cứ nói về ở các nước Châu Âu rất là văn minh với hiện đại với không khí cũng rất tốt. Cái mối quan hệ giữa con người và con người rất tốt, cái quyền con người cao hơn.*

⁴⁴ This includes West Germany, which received Turkish guestworkers from 1961-1973 (Rist 1978).

Vietnamese who were contracted for a job expected that they would return home after a definite period (4-5 years), with few opportunities to renew their stays. To further bar integration, labor contracts specified that workers could not arrive with spouses or live as families. The contracts included numerous restrictions against, for example, political participation. Contract workers' violations of these restrictions would serve as grounds for their termination from the program. Neither Vietnam nor East Germany shared the contents of the bilateral agreement with workers, however.

Exposure and acculturation mattered greatly once contract workers left Vietnam, as some became disillusioned with the SRV after spending time in East Germany. One example comes from Ngọc Lan, who arrived in the GDR as a teenager. She was born in North Vietnam and raised to think that “everything socialist is good.”⁴⁵ At the point that she received a labor contract to go abroad, Ngọc Lan felt immense “gratitude to the government.”⁴⁶ Upon arriving in East Germany, Ngọc Lan and her fellow contract workers surrendered their passports, as the East German authorities feared that people would escape to the West as native Germans had done, and further delegitimize the GDR by doing so. For the first few years, Ngọc Lan and other contract workers forfeited 15% of their paychecks to help rebuild Vietnam; this decreased to 12% within a few years. Before her contract expired, Ngọc Lan fell in love with a German man. She demanded her passport back in order to marry him, but the SRV Embassy would not return her documents without a letter from her parents giving their consent to the marriage—though she was an adult. Her parents did not approve of an intercultural partnership. Facing opposition from all sides, Ngọc Lan became increasingly unhappy with the SRV.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ *Alles, was sozialistisch ist, ist gut.*

⁴⁶ *Cảm ơn chính quyền.*

⁴⁷ Drawing on archival documents about the Czech-Vietnamese labor agreement, Alena Alamgir (2017) has argued that the SRV in fact worked to protect its workers' rights abroad. Ngọc Lan, however, experienced the SRV as an impediment to her interests.

Contract workers experienced other familial and reproductive issues because of a contract stipulation against missing work for extended periods of time. In practice, this led to a ban on female contract workers becoming pregnant.⁴⁸ In her interviews, Pipo Bui (2003) spoke with Vietnamese contract workers in East Germany whose fears of deportation drove them to attempt dangerous home remedies to terminate their pregnancies. These included digesting tiger balm (a heat rub made from menthol, camphor, and other oils) and hurling themselves from elevated platforms. Though this de facto ban against pregnancies eroded with the collapse of the GDR, its imprint is still evident in the age structure of the Vietnamese second generation, who were largely born after 2000.⁴⁹

Meanwhile, the economic situation in Vietnam continued to deteriorate throughout the 1980s, as the country struggled to maintain or re-establish diplomatic relations around the world. Though not strictly economic, the U.S. embargo (1975-1994) prohibited most exports and imports to and from Vietnam, economic transactions involving Vietnam, and the transportation of goods destined for Vietnam (Lang 1995: 272-273). Tensions remained unresolved due to economic (trade, frozen assets) and humanitarian concerns (MIAs, refugees, and human rights).

In 1986, the 6th National Congress of the government of Vietnam instituted market reforms, termed “Renovation,”⁵⁰ that created a market economy under a socialist government. Within four years of market reforms, Vietnam began to earn a reputation as “the next great [economic] Asian tiger.”⁵¹ Though relationships between Vietnam and other countries remained fractious in the early 1990s, the fall of the Berlin Wall and of the Soviet bloc “permitted [other countries] to look at its

⁴⁸ Following a similar logic, other countries barred women from participating in labor exchange programs altogether.

⁴⁹ Statistischer Bericht / Amt für Statistik Berlin-Brandenburg / A I 6 – hj 2/09. Melderechtlich Registrierte Ausländer im Land Berlin am 31. Dezember 2009: Alter, Geschlecht, Staatsangehörigkeit.

⁵⁰ *Đổi Mới*

⁵¹ “Vietnam: A New Asian Tiger?” *BBC News*, November 16, 2000, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/1026259.stm>.

relations with Vietnam in a post-Cold War perspective” (Lang 1995: 275). The end of Vietnamese warfare with Cambodia and improvements in its human rights record also led to further relaxation of tensions. Specifically, the SRV released former South Vietnamese soldiers and officials from “re-education” camps and made efforts to cooperate with the United States regarding unresolved POW/MIA issues.

Fall of the Berlin Wall and German Reunification

To the surprise of many on both sides of the Cold War divide, the Berlin Wall fell on November 9, 1989. News of impending German reunification soon followed. For Vietnamese boat people in West Germany, the fall of the Berlin Wall and Soviet Union affirmed their belief that the “Evil Empire” could not persist—though Vietnam remained socialist. Many refugees in West Berlin encountered contract worker coethnics for the first time after the Wall came down, and organized aid efforts on the behalf of “[their] Vietnamese brothers and sisters.”⁵² As the epicenter of reunification, the city of Berlin experienced much structural flux. Within a three-year span, the Berlin Wall was leveled, and the GDR reabsorbed into reunified Germany. The newly reunified country experienced relative economic decline because of the reintegration of the East. For the most part, however, refugees living in Berlin found their lives relatively unchanged compared to those of their contract worker coethnics. Many businesses in the former East closed their doors or laid off employees, forcing the migrants to choose yet again between life abroad or in Vietnam (Bui 2003). Some lucky few could expect to complete their contracts at their companies; others received unemployment benefits, started their own businesses, or sold cigarettes and other goods illicitly to survive (Kil and Silver 2006; Kolinsky 2004). Still others repatriated to Vietnam, and then returned to Germany as undocumented migrants or asylum-seekers. For the latter, their time in

⁵² *Anh chị em người việt mình*

East Germany convinced them that Vietnam's version of socialism was inferior in terms of human development and rights.

Compared to the impact of reunification on former contract workers, few studies mention the implications for boat refugees. German citizens, including former refugees who had naturalized, began to pay a solidarity tax to help rebuild the east. However, we know far less about their lives during this period and how reunification impacted their labor market or social experiences. My interviews reflect the general worsening economic situation after German reunification: Tín, who fled Vietnam out of fear of the three-generation life history's impact on his child, lost his job after reunification:

I stopped working because the wall came down then. The quality of life changed, meaning the economy sank immediately. They were at a high point [in terms of quality of life] and then it dropped and because of that, the company [I was working for] shut down, so I stopped working.⁵³

Because he had refugee status, however, Tín received financial assistance that continues to support him to this day. Though the initial post-reunification economic decline affected refugees and their families, they could count on the social welfare net because of their refugee or naturalized status.

Former contract workers, however, felt the consequences of reunification with real force. In contrast to the expressed solidarity between socialist workers of the world throughout the Cold War, reunifying Germany no longer received Vietnamese workers warmly. Some Vietnamese observed that even Germans who had previously seemed friendly began to behave with hostility toward them, while others began to avoid public transportation out of fear of xenophobic attacks (Hillmann 2005). One illustration of this change comes from Huệ, a contract worker and self-

⁵³ *Bác nghĩ tại vì bác thấy bắt đầu cái bức tường nó mở đó. Thì cái vật giá nó thay đổi, tức là nó làm cái kinh tế của nó bị sụp liền. Nó đang ở trên mức cao rồi nó xuống thấp thành ra vấn đề đó thành ra cái hàng nó đóng cửa, rồi bác mới nghĩ việc.*

identified cadre from northern Vietnam. She worked in janitorial services and decided to try to stay in reunifying Germany. She recalled encountering people on the street who would shout:

You “go back to Vietnam. Fijis.” They called Vietnamese Fijis... They demanded money and cigarettes... and if you didn’t [give it to them], they messed with you... They pinned you down, took your money, took all sorts of things. They just left your papers alone... [I] only had [with me] 5, 10 Marks [at a time].⁵⁴

Huệ lost her job shortly after the Wall fell. She needed proof of housing to be able to stay, but people would not rent to Vietnamese. Half of the interviewees in one study similarly claimed they had been discriminated against in their searches for housing and employment (Hillmann 2005: 92).

While Huệ decided to stay in reunifying Germany, many of her coworkers repatriated to Vietnam. Anticipating the transition to a market economy on the eve of reunification, the GDR began offering an incentive of 3,000 German Marks⁵⁵ to contract workers to return to Vietnam. The promise of (at times unfulfilled) severance pay, together with the threatening reality of deportations, meant that the number of Vietnamese contract workers dropped steeply from 60,067 in 1989 to only 21,000 a year later (Kolinsky 2004: 84). In total, roughly 34,000 accepted the 3,000 GM and repatriated. From 1990-1995, however, Vietnam refused to accept involuntary returnees who had applied for asylum, and would only issue entry visas to voluntary returnees (Wolf 2007: 8).

For some years, tens of thousands of workers lived in uncertainty, having no residency rights and few means of earning a lawful wage, as former GDR companies fired and sought to repatriate them. Some 15,000 won the right to complete the duration of their original contracts (Kil and Silver 2006: 104). However, the residency stipulation regarding clean criminal records would

⁵⁴ *Mày về “ab [nach] Vietnam” đi. “Fidschi.” Việt Nam nó gọi là “Fidschi”... nó bảo có tiền có thuốc cho nó... không thì nó quậy... Nó đê hết người, nó lấy tiền, lấy các thứ. Chỉ có giấy tờ nó không lấy thôi... để trong ví chỉ có 5 đồng, 10 đồng với bao thuốc...*

⁵⁵ Roughly equivalent to \$1735 on December 31, 1999 (http://coinmill.com/DEM_calculator.html#DEM=3000). For perspective, Vietnam’s capita GDP that year was \$375 (<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD>).

be complicated by the rise of “cigarette mafias,”⁵⁶ which operated all over Europe and often involved Chinese gangs. In the German context, illicit cigarette sales were linked to Vietnamese, who lost their jobs and—in contrast to native Germans or ethnic German new arrivals from the USSR—were still refused work permits to western Berlin after reunification. News reports of illicit cigarette trading, gang wars, and shoot-outs in the eastern Berlin neighborhood of Marzahn emerged throughout the 1990s, painting a stigmatizing portrait of workers.⁵⁷ Law enforcement did not communicate the consequences of illicitly selling cigarettes to Vietnamese. Officers simply demanded a fine when catching cigarette sellers and then returned the merchandise to them without explaining how this citation would affect their criminal records and, ultimately, right to remain. Germany eventually deported some 7,000 Vietnamese for illicit cigarette trading (Kolinsky 2004: 97). For the many would-be deportees whom Vietnam refused to accept, Germany provided a de facto stay of deportation.

People who repatriated did not always remain in Vietnam, either. They soon found that the 3,000 GM did not last, or, more importantly, realized that they had become unaccustomed to and increasingly dissatisfied with the Vietnamese government during their time abroad. An example comes from Minh, who first came to a Soviet satellite country as a contract worker. The country he went to, though not as developed as East Germany, “had a sense of culture.”⁵⁸ Though

⁵⁶ *Zigarettenmafia*

⁵⁷ Michael Dörschel, “Vietnamese bei der Schießerei schwer verletzt: Möglicherweise Streit in der Zigarettenmafia,” *Berliner Zeitung*, April 4, 2000, <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/moeglicherweise-streit-in-der-zigarettenmafia-vietnamese-bei-schiesserei-schwer-verletzt,10810590,9787626.html>; Vera Gaserow, “Der aussichtslose Kampf der Berliner Polizei gegen die Zigarettenmafia,” *Die Zeit*, May 24, 1996, <http://www.zeit.de/1996/22/vietnam.txt.19960524.xml>; Olaf Kanter, “Vietnamesen in Angst vor den Schergen der Mafia,” *Die Zeit*, May 22, 1995, <http://www.welt.de/print-welt/article658901/Vietnamesen-in-Angst-vor-den-Schergen-der-Mafia.html>. Noa Ha (2014) has observed that discussions of the German political parties about illicit cigarette trading always referred to Vietnamese. As of 2016, signs in eastern Berlin still associated unauthorized cigarette sales with terrorism and organized crime.

⁵⁸ *Có nền văn hóa*

it was socialist like Vietnam, he explained, the Soviet Bloc country did not restrict news to the extent that Vietnam did. When he repatriated in the late 1980s, Minh realized that even his relatively high salary as an engineer could not support his family. He saw this as a failure of the Vietnamese state, and began to write articles critical of the regime. In the early 1990s, Minh again left Vietnam to go to Russia, and from there made his way into Germany. He registered in a refugee camp in Germany and remains in Berlin today on a refugee passport. Minh was an exception, however, as few Vietnamese successfully filed for asylum. Germany only granted one percent of an estimated 8,000-12,000 asylum applications (Hillmann 2005: 92).

Some contract workers saw asylum-seeking as a way to stall for time to earn more money abroad. This was the case for Trinh, from northern Vietnam, who arrived in a Soviet allied country as a young adult in 1989 (Chapter 1). She marveled at having to work only eight hours a day, and pursued side jobs as well to be able to send money back to Vietnam. After the Wall fell, she hired a guide to take her across the German border, where she registered in a refugee camp. After spending some months in Germany, Trinh saw it as vastly superior to Vietnam: “Their country was like that: people really respected human rights.”⁵⁹ After marrying a fellow northern contract worker and having children, Trinh decided to stay for good. To do so, she and her husband began to attend anti-communist protests: “My intention at that time was to gain time—meaning I’d have proof that I was opposed to the government of Vietnam.”⁶⁰ She admitted, however, that she only protested and criticized the government to claim asylum. Trinh and her family would not establish a secure legal status until a decade after the fall of the Berlin Wall. They remained through new legislation that came out in the late 1990s, but first cycled through several types of policy changes for status regularization. She retains Vietnamese citizenship today, although she speaks German fluently and runs a successful business in eastern Berlin. Trinh and her husband both claim to

⁵⁹ *Nước người ta như thế: người ta rất tôn trọng quyền con người.*

⁶⁰ *Ý của cô lúc đó để làm sao cái thời gian mình có—tức là mình có bằng chứng là mình có chống lại nhà nước Việt Nam.*

have no issues today with the Vietnamese Embassy, which presumably understands that their anti-communism was a ruse.

The reunifying German government allowed contract workers who had arrived before 1982 to apply for long-term visas on the condition that they withdraw their asylum applications. People intending to stay required proof of social security contributions, a place to live, and German language competence. Those who applied unsuccessfully for asylum received toleration status, *Duldung*, a form of liminal legality (Menjívar 2006) that was “merely a suspension of deportation and that translates into a highly uncertain legal status” (Korntheuer 2017: 39). Dũng, a contract worker from southern Vietnam, received *Duldung* status after crossing from a Soviet allied country into Germany. He explained:

I was *Duldung*, that means only here temporarily, and could be kicked out at any time. That means, in the middle of the night they knock: “Are you so and so?” Then, “I’ll give you 15 minutes to prepare your things. Then please go to the vehicle.” Then they take you to the airport to go directly back.⁶¹

Dũng remains in Germany today because he had extenuating health circumstances. The vast majority of his fellow contract workers, however, were deported one-by-one.

Though the primary integration concern for reunified Germany was Turkish former guestworkers, policies addressing Turks benefitted Vietnamese and other groups; by the same measure, Vietnamese drew on the experiences of Turks to push for their own rights to stay. Vietnamese were active in negotiating their status transition from contract worker to asylum-seeker, and drew on NGOs, ethnic strategies, the migration industry, and German state policies, many of which the government had developed in response to Turkish guest workers to West Germany (Joppke 1999). The 1990s saw a rise in organizations dedicated to fighting for Vietnamese rights to stay and in ethnic entrepreneurship as a strategy for remaining (for the

⁶¹ *Chú là Duldung, tức là ở tạm thời, bị đuổi lúc nào cũng được. Tức là nửa đêm nó gõ cửa, “Ông có phải là tên đó hay không?” Rồi, “Xin mời ông 15 phút để ông chuẩn bị đồ đạc. Rồi xin mời ông ra xe.” Rồi chờ sân bay về luôn.*

Turkish case, see Yurdakul 2009). By 1992, Vietnamese together with German advocates began to form organizations to aid those facing deportation (Weiss 2005). Strategies included compiling documentation or encouraging migrants to sue for better visas. Today, these organizations largely comprise former contract workers, though their missions have shifted to providing integration assistance. Secondly, Vietnamese adopted the strategy of opening ethnic restaurants satisfy the residency requirements of steady income (Sutherland 2007). “*Asiasnacks*,” “*Asiambiss*,” or “*Chinapfanne*” kiosks and restaurants began to spring up in the eastern part of Berlin and now dot the entire city.

Offering amnesty for the undocumented, the 1993 “right-to-stay”⁶² legislation required relatively strict documentation. Roughly 10% of Vietnamese workers acquired permanent residency through this legislation, and only these privileged few could access rights and benefits like family reunification (Mehrländer et al. 1996). In a concurrent effort to expel their contract worker population after reunification, Germany committed 100,000,000 GM to Vietnam in 1994 in return for the latter’s acceptance of 40,000 repatriated workers. Though the two countries reached the Readmission Agreement in 1995, actual repatriation numbers fell woefully short of stated targets: 3,000 out of 13,500 in 1995 (Wolf 2007: 9). Liz Fekete (1997: 2) attributes these shortcomings largely to the rise of a black market of irregular migration statuses deployed by migrants as a way to stay in Germany.

By the 1990s, Vietnam was moving toward an era of redefinition that was not in contrast and contradistinction to the United States. It still had unresolved disputes with the United States, including missing soldiers and health issues resulting from wartime defoliants. By 1995, however, the two countries had normalized relations. They made headway on a Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) by 1999, and in 2000, William Cohen traveled to Vietnam in the first visit by a U.S. Secretary of Defense since 1975.

⁶² *Bleiberecht*

Germany has also changed dramatically in the new millennium: its famed ethnocultural tradition of citizenship (Brubaker 1992) began to give way with a move toward conditional birthright citizenship based on *jus soli*.⁶³ The German Nationality Act of 2000 reduced the residency requirement for naturalization from 15 to 8 years and introduced conditional birthright citizenship and the option to choose a nationality upon turning 23. Children now automatically receive German nationality if they are born in Germany to at least one parent who has been a resident for eight years. The country today is moving toward mandatory integration seminars for the first time, although this is accompanied by continuing structures limiting overall immigration (Schmidt 2003).

Population estimates of Vietnamese in Germany as of 2005 include 42,000 naturalized citizens and 83,446 registered foreign nationals, for a total reported population of 125,000 (omitting second-generation Vietnamese Germans and the undocumented) (Wolf 2007: 3). Because refugees received vocational training and worked for German companies before reunification, they remain, on average, better integrated economically than former contract workers. Boat refugees are better integrated linguistically, residentially, and economically as well, because of the benefits and support provided to them (Hillmann 2005; Wolf 2007). Some contract workers, especially those who arrived in the early 1980s, have pursued highly lucrative careers in entrepreneurship, while others remain unemployed or underemployed.

Excepting asylum applicants and EU labor migrants, those coming to Germany today include human capital migrants, relatives coming through family reunification, and international students. The third avenue of migration, international students, has particular relevance to those coming from Vietnam. Germany is the 10th most popular destination for international studies

⁶³ Thomas Janoski (2010) attributes the liberalizing of citizenship laws in no small measure to efforts by the Socialist and Green Parties of Germany.

among Vietnamese, with an estimated 4,600 studying in Germany in 2013.⁶⁴ German universities not only offer minimal to no tuition costs for all attendees regardless of nationality, but also provide foreign nationals with a German university degree a grace period of one year after their studies to find employment (Borkert and Bosswick 2011).

In this discussion of the period following the fall of the Berlin Wall, I have emphasized the experiences of contract workers, whose lives changed dramatically when their host state of East Germany collapsed. The events of 1989-1990 mirror the situation confronting refugees after 1975, when regime change transformed Southerners into “political misfits” (Zolberg 1983). Despite experiencing the formation of a new state, however, contract workers were largely unsuccessful in seeking asylum. Instead, they navigated insecure and at times outright dangerous paths to staying in Germany. Even those who evaded deportation lived in liminal conditions for years. While refugee status largely shielded those in West Berlin and West Germany from reunification pains, contract workers’ liminal legality (Menjívar 2006) left them with few viable options to remain and earn a living. Some would eventually regularize through German policy changes, but others remain in uncertain legal statuses today.

Discussion and Conclusion

The empirical cases of Vietnamese movement to West and East Germany in the 1970s and 1980s upend dominant understandings of the differences between refugees and migrants. That model would assume Vietnamese refugees fled because of their hatred of and persecution by the SRV, and that contract workers participated in economic movement through loyalty to that government. This chapter has shown instead that the life circumstances that should predict refugee or migrant status do not map cleanly onto the experiences of individuals. Rather, I show that political events

⁶⁴ “Number of Vietnamese Students Abroad up 15% in 2013,” *International Consultants for Education and Fairs Monitor*, November 4, 2014, <http://monitor.icef.com/2014/11/number-vietnamese-students-abroad-15-2013/>.

and (inter-)state relations create conditions that made it more likely for some Vietnamese to become refugees, and others contract workers/economic migrants.

Specifically, I have argued that state policies, aimed at different groups of people, created different exit channels. Southern Vietnamese largely received refugee status because their flight to western capitalist countries delegitimized socialism. Thus, applicants from the former South acquired political asylum in western countries despite reasons for leaving that did not always involve persecution or anti-communism. On the other hand, Northerners experienced the socialist government much earlier than their southern counterparts, but did not flee in the same way. Many who eventually became contract workers grew up keenly aware of the famine of the 1940s and of general deprivation, but did not see a secure path out of Vietnam until the government signed labor agreements with East Germany and other countries of the Eastern Bloc in 1980. Thus, the accident of birth in a particular region of Vietnam had enduring implications for individuals' lives.

I have also shown how people can become refugees and asylum-seekers *after* leaving a homeland. For South Vietnamese international students, the RVN fell after they had already left, transforming them into refugees while abroad. For contract workers from throughout reunified Vietnam, the collapse of East Germany saw some transition from economic migrants to asylum-seekers. The migration of contract workers was organized by states and did not originally dissolve the citizen-state-territory hierarchy. Yet, contract workers' claims for asylum after 1989 resulted from the disappearance of the host country of East Germany, which impacted how they related to the home country of Vietnam. In short, geopolitical transformations not confined to the homeland gave the same migrants different legal statuses throughout their lifetimes.

While focusing on the impact of state policies, I have also considered refugees' and migrants' expressed motivations for emigrating and have shown such reasons to often be indistinguishable. In a similar vein, scholars increasingly argue against making distinctions between refugees and economic migrants. Political theorist Chandran Kukathas, for example, contends:

Any attempt to show empirically that refugees, or displaced people more generally, suffer in ways that economic migrants do not, will founder on the rocks of this particular dilemma [that some would-be economic migrants face greater threats than refugees]... The aspiration to find the explanation that distinguishes the refugee from the human being who moves merely (*merely!*) to improve his lot is in many cases motivated by a noble concern to address the needs of those who are most vulnerable or suffer most (2016: 258).

In answer to his own provocative title, “Are Refugees Special?” Kukathas decisively concludes: no. As others have also noted, evaluations of humanitarian deservingness are frequently tinged with geopolitics (Espiritu 2014; Loescher and Scanlan 1986). Yet, Cold War refugees *are* special in that they have attained a coveted designation in a context where western states treated those leaving communist regimes as members of a persecuted social group. While blurring the differences between why refugees and contract workers migrate, this chapter has nevertheless shown that the categories under which they migrate matter greatly for their life opportunities.

By comparing Vietnamese resettlement in Germany, this chapter has offered two broad insights into the relationship between states and citizens, and where refugees fit in this equation. First, following Emma Haddad (2008), I locate the origin of refugees in the international states system. The sending country clearly plays a role in the creation of refugee flows by implementing repressive policies or failing to provide adequate living conditions for its populace. However, the creation of the refugee category is only possible in an international system of sovereign nation-states because no state has an obligation to accept all refugees. Refugees thus rupture the citizen-state-territory hierarchy in a way that national minorities and other types of international migrants do not (Arendt 1966 [1951]). In a world of nation-states, stateless persons pose security risks because they lack the only type of membership that matters for the protection of rights—that of a nation-state with legal territorial sovereignty and means of violence. The creation of Vietnamese and others as refugees—in the Cold War period or otherwise—is hence contingent on states accepting them as such.

Second, this chapter addresses the resolution of the refugee or asylum-seeker “problem” through the nation-state apparatus. Entities like the UNHCR have reterritorialized refugees

through repatriation, resettlement, and integration. Germany and Vietnam similarly dealt with contract workers-turned-asylum-seekers through readmission agreements and legalization pathways. Yet, as Katy Long (2013) notes, a focus on their need for safe haven as refugees often comes at the cost of their economic needs as migrants. Debates rage today in Germany and Europe, more broadly, about whether those who continue to cross international borders to reach wealthier countries are true or “bogus” refugees. Seeing refugees as a particular class of migrants, as Long argues, would justify their search for both sanctuary and an economically sustainable future.

In closing, rather than challenging the importance of the nation-state, refugees and asylum-seekers represent both an inherent failure and a permanent feature of the international states system (Haddad 2008). Their existence in turn reveals the centrality of the state and state relations, as the exceptions that prove the rule. In the next chapter, I turn to how reterritorialization qua regime change in Vietnam has complicated understandings of shared ethnicity and history. I trace how ethnic Vietnamese at once dispel and reproduce stereotypes about coethnics from different regions of origin.

Chapter 3: Contesting the Cultural Content of Ethnicity

Sitting cross-legged on the floor of his one-room apartment in Berlin, Tùng posed a question: Why is it that, in a competition of skill and smarts, one Vietnamese will outperform one Japanese, but three Vietnamese will never defeat three Japanese? Long, a family friend sitting to Tùng's left, interjected after an extended pause: "There's no solidarity."¹ Tùng left his home in northern Vietnam in his twenties and entered Germany through a third country in the Schengen Zone of free movement in Europe. Without documentation or knowledge of the German language, he relied on coethnics to help him find a service sector job. Today, however, he tries to limit his interaction with other Vietnamese. According to Tùng, I am exempted because I am a southerner and therefore live more freely as a result of the diluted reach of communism into the south. In Tùng's logic, Vietnamese with southern roots literally embody anti-communism, a logic that conflates an individual's region of birth or ancestry in Vietnam with culture, history, and politics.

This chapter examines the attitudes and behaviors of individuals like Tùng toward Vietnamese coethnics. I focus on Berlin as a site that, during the Cold War, received refugees fleeing the collapse of South Vietnam, as well as contract workers from reunified Vietnam. The 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall dramatically increased the chances of coethnics from separate migration streams encountering one another.² In this context of reunified Germany, I ask: *How do*

¹ *Không có đoàn kết.*

² Before the fall of the Berlin Wall, those with West German citizenship or refugee status could travel into East Germany, but not vice versa. Some of the refugees in this study and those who came through family reunification had not only traveled to the East before 1989 but had recounted meeting or befriending contract workers.

Vietnamese construct understandings of ethnicity and nationhood vis-à-vis coethnic others? How do their perceptions of coethnics complicate or reinforce social divisions?

To the best of my knowledge, Berlin has the distinction of being the only site in which both those who were ostensibly loyal and those who were antagonistic to the SRV arrived roughly simultaneously and continue to reside in large numbers.³ This unique migration scenario enables a critical examination of problematic binaries such as communist/anti-communist, revolutionary/nonrevolutionary, and defender/aggressor during the war (Cannon 2012; Schwenkel 2008). I undertake this, first, by emphasizing how individuals treat these binary categories as rigid social facts. It is not my intention to reproduce these binaries; rather, I recognize that challenging certain narratives often requires that researchers “engage with the very concept they critique” (Harms 2011: 4). To fairly portray moments in which individuals in my study reify as well as contradict such binaries, I retain the original uses of terms and their accompanying analogies (i.e., northerner/southerner as contract worker/refugee and communist/anti-communist) while recognizing that these categories do not map cleanly onto one another.

This chapter builds on and aims to contribute to scholarship that complicates established narratives of the history of Vietnamese wars and migratory pathways. Increasingly, scholars have taken up YẾN Lê Espiritu’s call to “take seriously the range of Vietnamese perspectives on the before-and-after of the Vietnam War” (2006: 424).⁴ In this vein, Quan Tue Tran’s study of commemorative practices treats boat people as subjects engaged in contestation over symbols of their exodus, rather than as “[either] international humanitarian and geopolitical ‘problems,’ or as traumatized and displaced victims of war and migration” (2012: 109). In an alternative strategy, An Tuan Nguyen (2015) deemphasizes refugees altogether by focusing on a comparatively

³ Gisele Bousquet (1991) has documented conflict among pro-communist versus anti-communist Vietnamese in France. As with studies of Cold War coethnics to the United States, however, the migrants in Bousquet’s study arrived across different waves and time periods.

⁴ Also see Espiritu (2014).

understudied migrant group: Vietnamese professionals. In highlighting a group at the periphery of Vietnamese and migration studies, Nguyen reveals ongoing and changing relationships between Vietnam and countries of Vietnamese mass resettlement.

Of particular relevance to this chapter are studies of contract workers to the GDR and the Eastern Bloc in what Christina Schwenkel (2014) and Gertrud Hüwelmeier (2013) have termed, respectively, “socialist mobilities” and “socialist pathways of migration.” The circulation of people, ideas, and materials across socialist countries, revealed by such scholarship, fundamentally disrupts the association of capitalism with mobility and socialism with immobility. By studying contract workers and refugees simultaneously, I build on Schwenkel’s and Hüwelmeier’s insights, while heeding how the refugee narrative of trauma and displacement—“not as legal classification but as an idea” (Espiritu 2014: 410-411)—informs coethnic relations in a context of varied migratory pathways to Berlin.

The aforementioned studies offer a second important corrective by considering the role of changing developments in the homeland. In 1986, Vietnam introduced reforms that resulted in a market economy. This policy of “Renovation” has, among other consequences, improved opportunities for research that have been seized upon by Vietnam studies scholars (Miller and Vu 2009: 5) The production of culture (art, music, film) provides one critical line of investigation in light of the introduction of market socialism in Vietnam. For example, Kieu Linh Caroline Valverde’s research reveals how relationships between Vietnamese in the United States with their former homeland shaped the politics of music production and dissemination. Specifically, she notes that Vietnamese music in the United States appeared “stagnant” by the mid-1990s, with a gaze affixed toward pre-1975 South Vietnam. This trend has started to shift against a backdrop of increasing exchanges between Vietnamese overseas and Vietnam (Valverde 2003: 36). This is not to suggest that Renovation resolved any lingering antagonism between Vietnam and exiles abroad: for instance, Hiroki Furuya (2006) argues that Vietnamese Americans have reconciled return travel to Vietnam with continuing opposition to the Vietnamese regime. Ashley Carruthers

further elaborates such nuances in relating to the homeland, noting with some irony that among Vietnamese in Sydney,

“it is one thing for people to be able to buy pirated Vietnamese-produced variety shows and telemovies . . . and quite another to have an all-singing, all-dancing live show from Vietnam on the diasporic doorstep” (2008: 72).

In Berlin, the perceived reach of the Vietnamese state in the embodied form of contract workers appears at refugees’ figurative and, sometimes, literal doorsteps. This complicates, in Carruthers’ terms, how “Little Saigons” abroad—and specifically, in Berlin—relate to the “Big Saigon” in Vietnam when its constituents have not established hegemony over what it means to be Vietnamese in the shared space of this post-socialist city.

At the heart of this chapter are social relationships between people of Vietnamese origin and coethnics from different migration streams and regions. I address social relationships by examining respondents’ attitudes and behaviors toward others of the same ethnicity. Firstly, I consider how Vietnamese depict themselves and coethnics. Ivan Small’s (2012) study of remittances is an important reference for this, as he examines how Vietnamese in Vietnam envision overseas Vietnamese “over there.” Small argues that remittance relationships represent to the receiver in Vietnam the “specter of an other—transformed by money from elsewhere—that one might have been and might still become” (2012: 176). Respondents in my study similarly engage in a romanticization of an unrealized path: in the opening vignette, Tùng’s idealization of the RVN reflects how he imbues south Vietnamese persons with political meaning. Unlike the individuals in Small’s study, however, Tùng occupies the same spatial reality as the coethnics he regards, thus raising the question of how people temper or reproduce these imaginaries through interactions.

Secondly, the respondents in this study demonstrate ongoing potential for conflict over ideas of nation, history, and (anti-)communism. This is similarly true of Vietnamese overseas communities in Canada, France, and the United States (Bousquet 1991; Carruthers 2008; Collet 2007; Dorais 2010). Yet, observers often overlook the potential for cooperation abroad as well as

in Vietnam. An important exception is Schwenkel's (2008) study of a 2000 photo exhibit in Vietnam, which gestures toward reconciliation, as the names of fallen photojournalists from the RVN were moved to a memorial slab for their "countrymen" from former North Vietnam.

My findings follow in two parts. Drawing on participant-observation and interviews, I first discuss how respondents speak of cultural similarities as well as differences. In the second part of the findings, I draw on interview data with only those individuals who arrived in Germany before or very shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall—a moment that presented tremendous opportunities for conflict and cooperation among coethnics. Ultimately, moments that affirm or challenge dualities such as communist/anti-communist reveal how overseas Vietnamese reflect on and espouse their views of histories of the nation and war, and the very tangible and at times contentious consequences for coethnic relations.

Regionalism as Cultural and Historical "National Pastime"

The defining category of difference respondents expressed was that between North and South. For example, as soon as I walked into a temple in eastern Berlin one morning to help prepare for the upcoming Lunar New Year, a woman sitting on the floor wrapping a rice cake explained to another: 'Germany has reunified, but north and south haven't reunified.' Bernard B. Fall has described this regional antagonism as a favorite "national pastime" (1967: 41). Regional categories that persist today partially trace their roots to differentiated rule under French occupation. The French conquered what is today southern Vietnam (Cochinchina) in the 1860s but did not gain control of northern (Tonkin) or central Vietnam (Annam) until two decades later. While Cochinchina became a direct French colony, Annam, Tonkin, and parts of Cambodia and Laos became Indochinese protectorates. People living in these five areas experienced different

types of administration.⁵ The creation of North and South Vietnam in 1954/5 then cut across former Annam, forcibly realigning those living in the central region with either the North or South (Marr 1984). These administrative divisions, in tandem with the fact that Vietnam's terrain changes dramatically from north to south, facilitated the development of local cultures. Consequently, respondents in this study justified regionalism through culture, history, and politics. I consider each of these in turn.

Cultural Expressions: Accent and Cuisine

The Vietnamese in my study often rationalized any perceived coethnic divisions as stemming from idiosyncrasies in cultural traits such as accents, food, and social behavior. At a Lunar New Year celebration of the refugee organization, Refugees for Germany, for example, a recent migrant from southern Vietnam mentioned how relieved she and her friend were to find an organization where they could hear southern accents (See Chapter 4 for more on RfG). Particular terminology and accents in Vietnamese mark individuals—sometimes mistakenly—as hailing from certain regions, but for the most part do not actually impede communication.⁶ Accents matter insofar as they signal familiarity, or lack thereof, without necessarily implying deeper social subtexts. Respondents therefore remarked on accents as natural, neutral outcomes of socialization.

Vietnamese also explained differences as simply a matter of taste and preference, as when northern respondents repeatedly mentioned that southerners prepare savory foods as though they were sweet desserts, with large amounts of sugar. These comments may seem innocuous enough, but further examples of food talk demonstrate the historicization and

⁵ For example, publishing laws and media suppression tended to be more stringent in Annam and Tonkin than in Cochinchina (Marr 2004).

⁶ A rare exception to this is provided by Anh, who accompanied her nephew from southern Vietnam and filed for asylum in a refugee camp in reunified Germany. As the only southerners in the camp, Anh recalled having to “translate” [*dịch*] what others said to her teenage nephew, and vice versa because of their different vocabularies.

sometimes moralization tied to culinary traditions. This is exemplified by a conversation with Anh, one of very few southerners who regularly participated in the former contract organization, Friendship and Adventure (See Chapter 4 for more on FaA). Anh suggested at a planning meeting that they should offer a variety of new dishes at each event, instead of preparing ‘the same six meals... over and over.’ Recalling later how another member rudely dismissed her recommendation, Anh complained that the organization consistently made boring food. Hạnh, who traces her roots to northern Vietnam, walked alongside us during this conversation. She reasoned that southerners have a wider culinary range because of their upbringing in the fertile Mekong Delta, compared with restricted resources in the north.⁷ In contrast to remarks about differences in accent, people’s food talk tended toward moralizing: While Anh found virtue in the range and diversity of southern cuisines, Hạnh diagnosed the lackluster offerings of northern dishes as stemming from scarcity. She therefore defended and elevated northerners who had to make do with limited resources, compared with southerners who have taken for granted plentiful land.

Accidents of History: Scarcity and Location

Famines did ravage North Vietnam, and (at a different point in time) South Vietnam did experience comparative prosperity in part because of American financial support; however, respondents often committed the misstep of interpreting individuals’ actions as inevitable byproducts of these group-level trends. This became most apparent in conversations about practices at Buddhist pagodas. One example comes from Hồng, a southerner who migrated through family reunification for refugees. She recalled bristling at seeing northerners, whom she disparagingly refers to as *bắc kỳ* [literally, northern region], make a big show of their donations at

⁷ In his interviews with northern Catholics who migrated in 1954, Peter Hansen finds similar mention of the “good things for us in the South, land and buffaloes” (2009: 188). In addition to fear of reprisal by the Việt Minh, then, these refugees also drew on experiences of famine in the North as reasons for their southward movement.

temples.⁸ Hồng painted a scene in which northerners allegedly chant loudly and ask for all manner of luck in their financial and social lives, only to then make off with the bulk of their offerings. Tempering her rhetoric, Hồng offered that northerners became accustomed to overcompensating with exaggerated displays of piety, but could not actually afford to part with the food and gifts they brought because of the poverty endemic in their region (see Chapter 5).

To be clear, not everyone pathologized poverty and its effects in this direction. As one northern student argued, Buddhists in the North during the war, because of the crackdown of the communist movement on religion, had to build small, discreet temples that were often one story and in which monks truly lived a life of asceticism. In contrast, she described the big temple in western Berlin, as those in southern Vietnam today, as richly adorned and unnecessarily extravagant, not as they were originally intended. On the whole, however, ostentatiousness tended to be a descriptor of class status ascribed to northerners rather than to southerners. This association reflects a reality in which some former contract workers who achieved enviable success through entrepreneurship now exercise conspicuous consumption.

Respondents also drew on the physical separation of refugees and contract workers in West and East Germany before the fall of the Berlin Wall to explain the difficulty in bridging community. Bích, a child of boat refugees, argued that the people “over there” planted their roots and have their own lives in the eastern part of the city, where they originally settled. Such explanations treat as natural the historical trajectory of many contract workers being relegated to the east as a result of discrimination in work and housing during and after German reunification.⁹ Contract workers experienced deep constraints to freedom of movement in ways that simply were

⁸ Respondents at times paired *bắc kỳ* with the preceding word, *chó* [dog], to denote “northern dogs.”

⁹ “Enterprises terminated contracts inappropriately early or raised the rent for a bed in the workers’ dorms retrospectively, deducting back payments from workers’ paychecks” (Bui 2003: 130). Bui further cites an article in *Der Spiegel* that highlights “the discrimination the Vietnamese workers suffered...in the locked dorm to which they were assigned, where the building manager regularly cut off electricity to certain rooms...” (Bui 2003: 46).

not true for Vietnamese refugees or East Germans after 1989. By invoking residential or locational preferences, Bích ignores the structural barriers that remained in place after the physical disappearance of the Berlin Wall.

Politics as Socialization: Foreign Intervention and (Anti-)Communism

I have argued thus far that respondents from different regional and migratory backgrounds cite cultural upbringing and the perceived accident of location in the city of Berlin as points of differentiation among coethnics. These explanations expose a mental schema in which respondents map environmental, historical, and spatial logics onto character traits and individual behaviors. For instance, multiple respondents offered stereotypes of northerners and southerners as manipulative versus naïve, calculating versus permissive or hedonistic, respectively. As with food, the logic that follows is that poverty in the North versus the financial support of the South by foreign powers caused Northerners to become shrewder and more instrumental in their relationships compared with Southerners.¹⁰ Epitomizing this point, a recent marriage migrant from northern Vietnam expressed that she preferred to have friends from the south because “they live more honestly.”¹¹ In another instance, an older man from southern Vietnam contrasted hospitality in both regions: whereas northerners invite others to eat out of formality, he claimed, southerners really mean it, and will physically pull you into their homes and forcefully put food on your plate. Conversely, as a result of allegedly being spoiled by the sun, wealth, and cultural exchange with Americans, southerners are (painted as) more relaxed, though perhaps unwisely so. They supposedly indulge in food and leisure in ways that jeopardize planning for the future.

Even when well-intended, positive stereotypes such as generous and easy-going mask the diversity within groups and complexity among individuals. When ill-intentioned, labels can

¹⁰ North Vietnam also received foreign support, namely from the Soviet Union and China. However, my respondents never noted this point, and tended instead to reproduce the binary of the poor, famine-struck North and prosperous, fertile South.

¹¹ *Họ sống thật thà hơn.*

become dehumanizing. In one example of this, an international student from northern Vietnam suddenly found herself without lodgings after a falling out with her landlord. Detailing to me their conflict and why she left, Xuân exclaimed that her landlord was “too evil,”¹² and she should have known better than to live with a person from the central region. By locating her landlord’s origins in central Vietnam as a shortcoming, Xuân typecasts certain people as fundamentally untrustworthy. Xuân’s comment further reveals the complicated cultural and historical—rather than strictly political—roots of Vietnamese regionalism. Xuân has acknowledged this historical rift, insisting that people from the central region were caught between the two great powers of North and South during the war, suffered the most, and therefore deserved the most sympathy. Yet, in a moment of discontent, she deployed generalizations that she herself acknowledged to be problematic. I will return to negative stereotypes of coethnics in the final part of the findings. Here, I emphasize simply that, based on a pseudo-psychological reading of historical happenstance, Xuân concluded that people from the central region must commit all manner of profiteering to eke out a living. Her comment did not go unchallenged, however, as a third party to our conversation offered that there are good and bad people everywhere.

In sum, respondents across regions of origin, migratory experiences, and ages expressed the same dialectics of north and south as uptight/relaxed, wily/forthright.¹³ This is not a testament to the veracity of such descriptions, but rather to the converging logics that respondents from different backgrounds deploy to understand for themselves the fall of South Vietnam and the state of the communist party in Vietnam today. One fitting example in this regard is Liên, the wife of Tùng from the opening vignette. Like her husband, Liên is a northerner disillusioned with the lack

¹² *Ác quá*

¹³ I recognize that respondents might be appealing to my subject position as a southerner. However, even in contexts where I had yet to open my mouth and identify myself as the sole or one of few southern Vietnamese in the room, I have heard former contract workers joke that they wish southerners attended their events. More importantly, the depiction of those socialized under communism as greedy, manipulative, and reliant on handouts reflects a broader discourse that spans countries and national-origin groups (Erdmans 1998; Hogwood 2000).

of opportunity she perceived for herself in Vietnam and what she described as cronyism rampant under communism. She fiercely insisted that she ‘would rather see the [South Vietnamese] yellow flag with the three stripes than the [current] red flag with the yellow star.’ Tùng further speculated that, had South Vietnam won the war, ‘Vietnam today would be even greater [economically] than Singapore.’ Tùng and Liên’s musings demonstrate that, for them, the nation of South Vietnam and inhabitants of the south represent an idealized counter to the corrupt politics that they see personified by the Vietnamese government with its capital in the north—and from which they want to distance themselves. This conflation of communism and censorship with the north continues today, even as mass protests rage throughout all of Vietnam, and not just the south.¹⁴ So, too, persists the conflation of south and anti-communism, even communists and sympathizers lived and mobilized in South Vietnam.¹⁵

On one hand, this equation of northerners with communism should seem unfounded considering, as both northerners and southerners explained, that ‘most of the people who write against Vietnam today are northerners.’ In fact, nearly all the contract workers and some refugees in this study problematized this mapping of northerner with communist. Yet, individuals of northern background often themselves reproduced these analogies, even while lodging fierce criticism of

¹⁴ In early April 2016, the Vietnamese central coast witnessed an unprecedented biological and environmental disaster when an estimated 100 tons of fish carcasses washed up on shore. Local residents soon suspected toxic waste from the Taiwan-based steel plant, Formosa, to be responsible for poisoning the fish. Before the official government report confirmed this in early July 2016, citizens had already begun protesting against both Formosa and Vietnamese authorities for their perceived lack of appropriate response. See James Hookway, “Vietnam’s Dead Fish Breathe Life into Protest Movement,” *The Wall Street Journal*, May 19, 2016, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/vietnams-dead-fish-breathe-life-into-protest-movement-1463692409>; “Vietnam’s environmental disaster has killed at least 100 tons of fish: official,” *Thanh Nien News*, May 6, 2016, <http://www.thanhniennews.com/society/vietnams-environmental-disaster-has-killed-at-least-100-tons-of-fish-official-61897.html>. Protests have continued six months after the event: Mike Ives, “Outrage Over Fish in Vietnam Simmers 6 Months Later,” *The New York Times*, October 3, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/04/world/asia/formosa-vietnam-fish.html>.

¹⁵ For an even more complicated alignment of southern, noncommunist, anti-Southern regime politics, see Tang 1985.

communism and the one-party Vietnamese government. For example, Phước, the child of a northern contract worker who fought in the war, recalled how the experience of seizing Saigon on April 30, 1975 changed his father. Influenced by propaganda, he explained, his father fought to liberate the suffering South. But once he arrived in the city and took in its architectural and cultural splendor, he realized he had been duped—an “oh shit” moment, Phước half-joked. One consequence of this experience was that Phước’s father stopped believing in the revolution and in his religion. Yet, when defining what he meant by communist, Phước listed: Vietnamese, northerner, person from Hanoi—descriptors that perfectly fit him. Ngọc, also a child of a northern contract worker, relatedly expressed feeling “guilty”¹⁶ when she encountered southerners, even though she was born after the end of the war and does not support the government of Vietnam. In the process of elaborating, Ngọc rephrased her description to “unpleasant”¹⁷ when she thought about how, in her mind, the communist government has harmed the country.

Even while condemning the Vietnamese government, Phước and Ngọc still bound themselves to it and its supposed shortcomings as “its” people. This does not signal a political allegiance, but rather, speaks to the prevalence and strength of the processes of meaning-making that paint northerners as communist, and to which many northerners in my study subscribed even when this was for them a personally inaccurate reading. This interactive process of constructing the self and coethnic others has led some such as Nam, a northern former contract worker, to declare: “It’s not that I’m *afraid* [southerners] will think I’m communist—I *know* they think that!”¹⁸ Importantly, then, contract workers’ or northerners’ expressed sympathy for refugees’ assumed anti-communism does not bridge them socially.

¹⁶ *Schuldig*

¹⁷ *Unangenehm*

¹⁸ *Không phải là chú sợ họ sẽ nghĩ chú là cộng sản—chú biết họ nghĩ như vậy!*

Some individuals pointed out the irony of ongoing coethnic division despite shared political perspectives. One such person was Dũng, a former contract worker from southern Vietnam (Chapter 2). He said, exasperatedly: “[Southerners] here just wave the [yellow-striped] flag...But here I’m like him [northerner] and he’s like me, who are we protesting?”¹⁹ Yet, most contract workers with whom I spoke, including those critical of Vietnamese communism, insist that (anti-)communism is the reason southerners and refugees refuse to mix with (northern) former contract workers, whom they allegedly see as having “communist roots.”²⁰ Subsequently, I consider the role of perceived pre-migration politics as it has historically affected coethnic relations.

Conflict and Cooperation after the Fall of the Berlin Wall

The fall of the Berlin Wall represents an important moment in the history of communities of Vietnamese origin in Germany, and Berlin in particular. This marked both the first mass encounters and signs of cooperation and, later, conflict, among refugees and contract workers (see Chapter 5). During German reunification, many contract workers in former East Germany as well as the Soviet Union tried to claim asylum to remain in Germany. One such “wall person”²¹ was Nghĩa, who left northern Vietnam through a labor contract (Chapter 1). He recounted applying for asylum in 1991 in the west of Germany, where he attended a Vietnamese karaoke event with boat refugees. He was dismayed to hear them say: ‘We came here to live in Germany as refugees and now we have to hear these communist songs.’²² “They themselves are creating this distance,”²³ Nghĩa complained. He was one of several contract workers who, in recalling the events after the fall of the Berlin Wall, contradicted the claim that refugees had come out *en masse*

¹⁹ *Ở đây cầm cờ Việt Nam ... chứ đây tôi giống ông, ông giống tôi, thì chống ai giờ?*

²⁰ *Gốc cộng sản*

²¹ *Tường nhân*

²² *‘Mình sang đây sống tị nạn ở Đức mà mình phải đi nghe nhạc cộng sản.’*

²³ *Người ta tự người ta gây cái khoảng cách.*

to help contract workers. Nghĩa asserted that refugees had only helped family friends whom they already knew from the south. Refugees were willing to engage with contract workers, he explained, only when their regional affiliations matched. Nghĩa's wife, Trinh, also crossed into Germany from a Soviet allied country, and similarly assessed refugees as being very prejudicial toward northern contract workers. Unlike her husband, however, Trinh recalled that refugees did help those filing for asylum. Nghĩa then responded that visiting the refugee camps and talking did nothing to help anyone, but Trinh countered that, considering how much southerners hated northerners, it showed a tremendous amount of generosity that they came out to talk at all.

Many contract workers likewise expressed understanding toward refugees' persisting resentment, voicing sympathy for the plight of boat people who lost their country. This included northerners like Sơn (Chapter 2), who does not approve of refugees bringing out the South Vietnamese flag, old army uniforms, and other reminders of the war. However, even he acknowledged that refugees who return to Vietnam are to this day derided as "reactionaries."²⁴ Similar to Sơn was Hiền, a contract worker who first attended university in East Germany and then returned as a group leader for a contract work contingent. Hiền disagreed with how the Vietnamese government treated the defeated officers of the ARVN, locking them up in political prisons for years. Having lived half his life in Germany, Hiền contrasted the two reunifications of his homeland and host land by telling the story of a German acquaintance of his who was imprisoned by the East German police:

[T]he *Stasi*...wrote down everything about people who had the idea of opposing the regime...When that was done they would alert the union or others to follow these people, and these people could lose their jobs, be followed, arrested, etc. So this man [my acquaintance]...was arrested and held by the police for six months. Until [after] unification...he looked at the files people had written about him, when they followed him, etc ... The important thing is when I asked him, 'Do you still resent them?' 'No, they're just people, they're victims, too.' From that I learned that, if there's reconciliation then we'll

²⁴ *Phản động*

return to ourselves, we'll let go of the resentment a lot more. That's extremely important. But we [Vietnamese] just let the time pass and pass, just like that, just like that.²⁵

For Hiền, as well as other contract workers with northern roots, refugees resent and blame them for the loss of South Vietnam and consider them all communists. Yet, as some recalled, refugees were still willing to lend support and comfort after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

For their part, the refugees with whom I spoke nearly universally claimed that they went out to “receive our Vietnamese people”²⁶ after the fall of the Berlin Wall. They described former contract workers seeking asylum as in need of intervention. Refugees therefore explained their motives as simply helping their “countrymen.” Other refugees cast doubt on this claim, however, by saying they saw contract workers as fleeing communism as they had, but at a different point in time. This alternative perspective sees asylum-seeking as a rejection of the government of the failing socialist East rather than, in contract workers’ own articulations, as a way to stay in a land that was simply more stable and economically viable than Vietnam at the time.

Still others helped, but noted they did so despite believing the contract workers to be all communists. One example comes from Kiều (also see Chapter 2). A self-identified southerner who was born in North Vietnam and migrated southward in 1954, she explained:

Southerners are very humane. They hate communists. But seeing the children of communists come ... they rescued them ... [People] complained, ‘Why are you bringing communists into your homes, into our temple?’²⁷

²⁵ ...Cái Stasi... là ghi lại tất cả những người nào mà có ý tưởng chống đối chế độ, ghi lại hết, rồi xét. Xong rồi chỉ thị cho nhà máy công đoàn hoặc chỉ thị cho những nơi khác theo giới người này người này, có thể đuổi việc, có thể theo giới, có thể bị bắt, vân vân. Thì anh này... bị công an cũng bắt và giam sáu tháng. Đến khi mà thống nhất.... anh xem người ta ghi cái gì về mình, theo giới mình bao giờ.... Cái quan trọng là chú đã hỏi anh, ‘Thế giờ anh còn thù hận gì không?’ ‘Thôi, bây giờ người ta cũng là người, người ta cũng là nạn nhân thôi.’ Thì từ đó rút ra cái luận là nếu được giải tỏa thì con người sẽ trở về mình, người ta cái thù hận nó bớt đi nhiều. Điều đó là vô cùng quan trọng... Còn ở ta cứ để cho thời gian trôi, vẫn cứ thế, vẫn cứ thế, trôi, như vậy....

²⁶ Đón người Việt mình

²⁷ Người miền nam một cái họ có lòng nhân đạo lắm, con ... Họ thù ghét việt cộng. Nhưng mà khi con cháu của việt cộng sang ... họ cứu thôi... [Người ta] bảo, ‘Tại sao dẫn việt cộng về nhà, về chùa?’

Like Kiều, some refugees and southerners assisted contract workers even when faced with criticism for doing so. Moreover, Kiều's positionality makes clear that regionalisms collapse complex histories and identities. The mapping of north/south into communist/anti-communist erases southern communists or sympathizers (such as the National Liberation Front) and northern anti-communists (undoubtedly, many of those who migrated into South Vietnam in 1954). Kiều is one such "northern migrant" who nevertheless paints the war in oppositions that ignore her own complicated biography.

Next, I spend some time focusing on individuals like Kiều, whose personal backgrounds crosscut categories: southern contract workers and northern boat refugees. One example is Dũng, the southern contract worker who felt waving the yellow flag to be pointless. Speaking about the early years of consolidation of the communist movement in Vietnam, he described:

The northerners here are very dissatisfied [with the Vietnamese government]. They curse a lot. I know this.... Because here they're discreet and don't want to confide. But if we're familiar then of course they'll say it. Before '45, this and that happened to their families [in the north]. Then after [1945] what happened, they'll tell everything. They're more dissatisfied than us [southerners]...In the south, the worst case is they'll arrest us [when we flee by boat after 1975]...they'll just capture that person, but there [in the north] they'll make your parents sit in front of the police station...they'll arrest your old mom and dad and keep them there forever.²⁸

Yet, Dũng fell back on calling northerners "those *việt cộng*" when he became animated speaking about people who maligned him during his time as an asylum-seeker in refugee camps:

Those men [who walked over] registered for two, three [refugee] camps. That means they took fake names all over the place and brought papers from somewhere, I don't know... In general, each man had many names... He would receive two, three portions...Then after that Germans found out and were very dissatisfied with this...[Germans] provided social security, insurance, shelter, everything, and this is what these old men do... Those northerners. We southerners don't do that... Then, after that, my TV disappeared. They said they took it by accident.²⁹

²⁸ *[Người bắc ở đây] cũng bắt mẫn nhiều. Họ chười nhiều. Cái đó là chú biết.... Tại họ ở đây họ kín đáo họ không muốn tâm sự thôi. Mình thân tính thì đưa nhiên người ta sẽ nói ra. Trước 45, gia đình bị sao, sao. Rồi sau này bị sao, sao, người ta nói hết. Bắt mẫn nhiều hơn mình.... Ở trong nam, cùng lắm là người ta bắt mình, người ta nhốt ông đó thôi còn ở đây bắt cha mẹ mình ngồi trước công công an... bắt ông bà già con ngồi trước công an hoài.*

²⁹ *Mấy ông [bộ nhân] nhập hai, ba trại. Tức là lấy cái tên giả tùm lum là mua giấy tờ ở đâu, cái chuyện đó mình không biết.... Đại khái là một ông có bao nhiêu tên.... Ông ăn hai, ba đầu. Đó.*

When I asked Dũng to clarify whether he meant that these northerners were communists, he fell back to his earlier statements: “No, [he] already said they’re not communist.”³⁰ What is clear is that communism becomes a label that Dũng maps onto all manner of negative activities, such as petty theft in the refugee camps. Though Dũng insists that northerners hate communism as well—and often more than “we southerners” do—he uses communism as a framework for expressing the worst of Vietnamese individuals’ behavior after the fall of the Berlin Wall. His description of northerners suggests they cannot help but take advantage of the German welfare state and of coethnics alike—here, by stealing his TV—because northerners have been socialized to do such things. Dũng’s logic implies that, despite any expressed opposition to communism or the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP), northerners remain products of communist socialization.³¹

I also spoke with refugees whose families originally came from north Vietnam. Tài, whose family fled to the south in 1954, reiterated to me no fewer than three times during our interview some variant of ‘wheresoever communists go, wheresoever communists dominate, people become enveloped in lies’ (see Chapter 1). Despite his outspoken animosity toward communist ideology and persons, Tài housed nearly a dozen contract workers he met on the streets after the fall of the Berlin Wall. He claimed that, because of northerners’ penchant for lying and committing crimes, he could not get along with them. Quite a few refugees in this study drew on similar criminalization of former contract workers, reflecting a parallel of West German attitudes toward East Germans.³² However, this vicious circle does not stop there, as some former contract

Rồi sau đây thằng đức nó biết rồi nó bắt măn cái chuyện này... nó lo an sinh xã hội, lo bảo hiểm, rồi lo nhà ở, tùm lum hết, rồi mấy ông làm bậy cái chuyện đó... [Mấy ông việt cộng], mấy ông người bác đó. Chứ người miền nam mình không có.... Rồi lâu lâu về mình thấy TV mình mất tiêu. Họ nói cầm nhảm.

³⁰ *Không, chú đã nói rồi, họ không phải là cộng sản.*

³¹ Mary Patrice Erdmans (1998) has reported similar dynamics among Polish refugee and immigrant groups in the United States.

³² After the fall of global socialism, East Germans have had to contend with former West Germany becoming the “reference culture.” The defeated East Germans have subsequently been

workers pointed to more recent migrants from the central region as the actual perpetrators of criminal activity. This pathologization of the coethnic other does not simply reflect German attitudes of West toward East. Rather, it maps onto a hierarchy in which the more integrated Vietnamese feel their achievements and reputations to be marred by later arrivals, whom they see as not knowing how to conduct themselves in German society.

Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter examined how individuals of Vietnamese origin in Berlin articulate differences between themselves and coethnics from different migration streams and regions of origin, and when these differences form the basis for intragroup conflict. While popular media and respondents themselves often attribute coethnic divisions to the Cold War mapping of North and South onto communist and anti-communist, East and West, I suggest that individuals have a far more nuanced reading of politics.

Specifically, I have argued that culture and history matter above and beyond 20th century Cold War politics. Cultural expressions such as accents and food preferences are rooted in physical distance and environmental variation—ultimately the foundations of differentiated local cultures in all societies. These regionalisms predate the introduction of communism in Vietnam. Respondents' explanations of coethnic differences rely on the dichotomies of agricultural abundance versus scarcity and the perceived presence versus absence of substantial foreign assistance. They at times deployed such cultural or historical arguments to moralize about the present behavior and virtues of certain coethnic subgroups. However, animosities typically coincided with politics, the third dimension of difference between them.

stereotyped as “lazy, passive, lacking in initiative and drive, sly, secretive, distrustful, discontented and having a scrounging ‘welfare mentality’” as a result of socialization under communism. Stereotypes of westerners are similarly rooted in the political-economic system of capitalism: “humorless, selfish, materialistic and greedy” (Hogwood 2000: 59). These criticisms paint westerners unflatteringly in their outlook, but not in their actions.

The respondents in my study at times reproduced and reinscribed symbolic boundaries between themselves and coethnics along the lines of politics and standing in both Vietnam and Germany. Refugees, in particular, not only distanced themselves from contract workers out of spite for perceived aggressions during the war, but also out of fear of threats to the refugees' narrative as deserving, integrated citizens. In the 1970s and 1980s, refugee flight legitimized West Germany's and America's Cold War "Berlin-Saigon analogy." Yet, respondents also demonstrated that the mapping of north and south onto communist/anti-communist and contract worker/refugee categories has porous boundaries. By virtue of their birth in southern Vietnam, contract workers such as Dũng could leverage entry into refugee organizations. So, too, could northern-born, anti-communist individuals such as Tài (see Chapter 4).

Today, the desire to validate Germany's welcome of Vietnamese refugees means that respondents draw boundaries between themselves and the coethnics they accuse of lowering their status. They then refract these divisions through the lens of (anti-)communist politics, even when they believe that coethnics across migration streams presently share similar views toward Vietnamese socialism and the ideologies of communism, capitalism, and democracy. In the chapters that follow, I move from the symbolic boundaries elaborated in this chapter to the social boundaries that Vietnamese enact toward their coethnics.

Chapter 4: Enforcing Cold War Loyalties

I first met Anh at a winter holiday mixer that I attended at the invitation of her sister, Hồng. A short, heavysset woman from the Mekong Delta, Anh arrived in Germany on a tourist visa in the early 1990s. Citing severe health issues that she found difficult to treat in Vietnam, Anh filed for asylum in newly reunified Germany. Anh anticipated after some years that her asylum claim would be unsuccessful, and paid a man with German citizenship to marry her. By the time we met, Anh had regularized her legal status and recently joined Friendship and Adventure (FaA), the cultural organization that planned today's mixer. Having befriended nearly all northerners during her time in an asylum camp, Anh was one of only two regular FaA attendees who hailed from the south. The number of southerners at the holiday mixer swelled with the addition of Hồng, Anh's sister; Kim, the international student who rents a room with Hồng (Chapter 1); and me. Hearing our southern accents, one of Anh's closest friends in FaA, Nghĩa, remarked: 'Saigon girls speak so sweetly,'¹ that southerners are kind, too, and should come to FaA events more often.

Amid the cacophony of music and overlapping conversations across the long, narrow foyer where the event took place, Hồng—herself a first-time attendee of FaA events—commandeered the microphone, introduced me as a student from the United States, and implored the “older brothers and sisters”² to assist me in my research. Following her announcement, a string of FaA members approached me to give advice and contacts. An elderly man sat down next to me and offered the names of Vietnamese journalists whose articles I should read. He suggested I look up

¹ *Con gái Sài Gòn nói chuyện ngọt ngào.*

² *Anh chị*

articles he has written as well, saying excitedly that he very much wants young people to grapple with pressing social problems in Vietnam. Shortly thereafter, the FaA members announced the main entertainment event of the night: karaoke. After several songs I did not recognize, the members began to clap along to “Spring over Ho Chi Minh City”³—though many still refer to the city by its old name, Saigon.

Though the evening was only ramping up at 5:30pm, Hồng declared that she and Kim were heading home. I decided to accompany them, so we grabbed our coats, bid the attendees farewell, and headed out. I trailed behind Hồng as she hurriedly descended the stairs of the building. She sighed and said that she wanted to take me here to help me with my research, but cannot “play”⁴ with northerners because all they want to do is sing this “red music.”⁵ Though a non-refugee migrant like her sister, Hồng continued that for ‘those of us who came here as refugees,’ these northerners dig up hurtful memories that are inappropriate for present company. Moreover, southerners would not come out here to the east to socialize, Hồng claimed, because northerners are “country bumpkins.”⁶ Her depiction of northerners is telling, as Hồng insisted both before and after this event that she did not differentiate between north and south, and was instead happy to befriend anyone.

The following weekend, Anh arranged to meet me at a bimonthly gathering of Refugees for Germany (RfG), a social and volunteer organization founded, run, and attended nearly entirely by southerners, former refugees, and their family members. In addition to their social activities, RfG provides regular translation and social services for Vietnamese migrants. Today’s social event, however, was reserved for the membership, and took place in a rented two-story building in western Berlin that was furnished like a private residence. In contrast to the FaA mixer, the RfG

³ *Mùa Xuân trên Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh*

⁴ *Chơi*

⁵ *Bản đồ*

⁶ *Quê*

event did not involve karaoke, dressing up, or taking photos to post on Facebook. This gathering, as in most I would attend over the next several months, involved women preparing food in the kitchen, their children taking classes held in a room upstairs or in the adjoining building, and the men sitting around the living room table conversing.⁷ Over the next few weeks, several of the men and women allowed me to interview them. I later learned that some did so despite—rather than because of—my being introduced by Anh, whom RfG core members criticized as being too undifferentiating in her friendships. By the summer, Anh would stop socializing with RfG, citing their intolerance and unwillingness to attend her events in eastern Berlin with FaA.

In investigating the social activities of the two organizations straddled by Anh, I ask: *How do individuals construct and enforce cultural identities through social interactions? How do they access and maintain social membership in cultural organizations?* I will show that while RfG and FaA approach prospective members differently, both to varying degrees reinforce their regional identities through social cues as well as reprimands. In the preceding chapter, I focused on how Vietnamese draw on cultural logics to justify their affinity for coethnics from the same region of origin. But by invoking accent, food, and history, respondents reproduced the categorical mappings of northerner/contract worker/communist and southerner/refugee/anti-communist. In this chapter, I show how FaA and RfG at once replicate and complicate these mappings. While attended overwhelmingly by northerners and former contract workers, FaA also includes two southerners as well as northerners who openly criticize Vietnamese communism. RfG, though founded and attended largely by southern former refugees, includes some northern refugees as

⁷ In one of my first visits, for example, four men in their 50s-70s sat around a table sipping coffee and discussing how they saw life in Germany differing from the United States. They noted that the German health care system is far superior and no one must suffer because of undocumented status. They then transitioned to the topic of religion, which riled Tàì, who was one of an estimated 600,000 Catholics who moved southward during the division of Vietnam in 1954 (Chapter 1). He remarked that he ‘used to respect religious leaders, but they are all being trained now by the communists.’

well as southern former contract workers. These exceptions raise questions about the porousness of the boundaries of social membership, and under what circumstances people may leverage entry into one or the other organization. I will argue that exceptions come at a cost: those who do not fit the regional origins and implicit expectations of membership—particularly in RfG—receive varying levels of social pressures to conform. This incongruence between RfG and FaA gatekeeping, I will reason, has to do with the loss of South Vietnam, which transformed southerners into national minorities or internal enemies. The Northern victory in Vietnam means that northerners, for the most part, do not need to concern themselves with Southern nationalist politics because they see their northern nationalism as a foregone conclusion.

This chapter moves beyond individual preferences to examine group-level dynamics that regulate social membership, especially as it relates to the maintenance of the north/south contract worker/refugee divide in cultural spaces. As feminist scholars have argued, women perform both the biological and social tasks of reproducing the nation (Yuval-Davis 1993; Yuval-Davis and Anthias 1989). They do so by literally birthing new national members as well as by transmitting culture and socializing later generations. Therefore, central to this chapter is the boundary work engaged in and encountered by three women who participated in both organizations to varying degrees: Anh, the southern failed asylum-seeker-turned-marriage migrant in her late 50s; Hạnh, a northern international student in her early 30s; and Mỹ Linh, a southern former contract worker in her mid-40s. Each falls outside of the binaries of southerner/refugee and northerner/contract worker. Each has differing motivations for dual participation in RfG and FaA. Anh, an extrovert, welcomed all opportunities to socialize and meet new people. Hạnh, quite reserved, needed survey respondents because she was assisting part-time in a research study on Vietnamese. Mỹ Linh, more standoffish than Anh, came to FaA events at the invitation of the latter. Despite their different migratory routes, regions of origin in Vietnam, and motivations for joining both organizations, all experienced social gatekeeping largely by RfG, while FaA seemed largely undisturbed by newcomers so long as they wanted to be merry and make friends.

In what follows, I contrast RfG's and FaA's preparations for and celebrations of the Lunar New Year, and how Anh, Hạnh, and Mỹ Linh navigated these events. I show RfG's event to be highly politicized and aimed toward displaying and reinforcing exile identity among the first-generation members of the organization and their second-generation children, which caused discomfort for Hạnh as a regional outsider.⁸ By contrast, the FaA event focused on cultural practices for the enjoyment of the first generation, with no explicit symbols of politics. This results not from members being apolitical, but, rather, from the fact that Vietnamese reunification by accession of the South normalized the northern renaming of people, places, and things. Yet, Anh and Mỹ Linh regarded these same people, places, and things as partisan because of the loss the South experienced. I then trace the three women's relationships to RfG and FaA throughout the preparations for and hosting of Anh's birthday party. By the end of Summer 2016, Anh would cut her ties with RfG and focus her energy on FaA; Hạnh would still await permission to conduct research with RfG, having already secured it from FaA; and Mỹ Linh would continue to occasionally attend both, albeit with some disparagement from RfG and much contempt for FaA. I will conclude that individuals become aligned with and sorted into one of the two organizations, representing distinct migration streams and regions of origin, through social pressures to adhere to the regional identities and accompanying norms of both. Through narrating the experiences of Anh, Hạnh, and Mỹ Linh, I show how individuals contribute to and experience the "stickiness" of the contract worker (immigrant) and refugee, north and south labels through the enforcement of social boundaries.

⁸ Hạnh did not fit the implicit profile of RfG in other ways as well: having come to Germany as a student, she is part of the new first generation whose migratory path falls outside of the refugee/contract worker binary. Yet, RfG also welcomed native German researchers, a recently arrived international student from the south, a northern political dissident, and me, a 1.5-generation southern Vietnamese American. Thus, while Hạnh differed from RfG members in some respects, her regional background was the primary identification that impacted how she related to RfG.

RfG Lunar New Year Celebrations of Southern Nationalism

By early 2016, I began to attend RfG and FaA with Hạnh, who was completing her undergraduate degree at a Berlin college. Born and raised in northern Vietnam, Hạnh had arrived in Germany three years earlier to begin her studies. For part-time employment, she distributed surveys for a mental health study being conducted at a local university. In the hopes of recruiting southern respondents, Hạnh would accompany me to various events in the months to follow.⁹ I discuss two such events in this section, both of which were Lunar New Year celebrations hosted by refugee organizations. In these spaces, Hạnh encountered signals of her regional non-belonging. At the same time, RfG members like Loan (introduced below) would feel pressure to hide her return travel to Vietnam. Meanwhile, other core members would criticize southerners like Anh and Mỹ Linh for their wide social circles that included northerners. I will show that symbols of refugee nationalism (Nguyen 2017) pervade both organizations, and will explore how individuals adopt and negotiate the organizations' expectations about their social behavior, especially around friendships and return travel.

Nostalgia and Southern Nationalism

Hạnh's introduction to a Vietnamese exile identity and community came shortly before the Lunar New Year celebrations of RfG. After leaving the last RfG planning meeting for their upcoming Lunar New Year celebration, I headed to a nearby church, Lankwitzkirche, to attend a "Cultural Night and Lunar New Year Celebration"¹⁰ of the "Vietnamese Refugee Community of Berlin."¹¹ I arrived shortly after 6pm and located Hạnh, who had been waiting in the large auditorium where performances were to take place. We first purchased some snacks being sold

⁹ She and the principle investigator had little trouble recruiting northern respondents.

¹⁰ *Đêm Văn Nghệ Vui Xuân Bính Thân 2016*

¹¹ *Cộng Đồng Người Việt Tỵ Nạn Berlin*

by the Vietnamese Family of Buddhists¹² before performances began. When we sat down to eat, Hạnh whispered that the rice noodles she purchased were too sweet—a recurring observation of southern food by northerners (see Chapter 3). Once Hạnh finished eating, we returned to the auditorium and stood against the wall at the back to watch as karaoke singers and martial arts troops took to the stage. Young children also performed “yellow songs”¹³ that reflected life in pre-1975 South Vietnam. Midway through one of the skits, Hạnh pointed to the sign above the stage that read “Freedom Spring.”¹⁴ It was etched onto the pattern of the yellow-striped flag of former South Vietnam. I was unfazed by these symbols that dominate Vietnamese overseas communities, as I grew up in the United States. Hạnh, however, shifted uncomfortably and noted that she was not accustomed to seeing this flag displayed.

When we left some hours later and walked over to the light rail station, Hạnh noted that the event was different from that of northerners. She elaborated that northerners are louder and dress up more. She then paused before divulging that she felt “disconnected”¹⁵ in the southern setting. Hạnh had a sense, she explained, that people kept their distance and perhaps did not want to get to know her. She recalled that before I arrived at the event, she had been speaking to an older southern woman and asking her to fill out the survey. The woman declined, adding: ‘I hear communists are all rude and disobedient. But you’re not.’ I laughed at the woman’s

¹² *Gia Đình Phật Tử*, a lay Buddhist organization that aims to imbue young people with Buddhist values.

¹³ *Nhạc vàng*

¹⁴ *Xuân Tự Do*

¹⁵ *Abgetrennt*. All respondents at times wove German or English words into our conversations, even if they only knew a few words. As an international student who had passed the German language exam, Hạnh could comfortably navigate conversational German. Most of our conversations, however, happened in Vietnamese. When we did shift to English or German, we did so because it suited the particular conversation topics and our ability to discuss them efficiently. Even with 1.5 or second-generation Vietnamese who knew more German or English than Vietnamese, I often spoke with them in Vietnamese because the gendered, familial, and hierarchical designations by which we referred to one another and ourselves brought us closer together (i.e. older sister Hạnh [*chị Hạnh*] versus younger sister Phi [*em Phi*]).

assumption that Hạnh was communist simply because she is a northerner. But then I recalled that southern respondents in RfG had stated that they do not trust northerners and could only exchange superficial pleasantries. In particular, I thought back to a conversation with Chính, one of RfG's leaders, who explained just two weeks earlier:

For me, there's a feeling of insecurity [when I encounter northerners]... Insecure in that when we associate, there's a sense of distance, we can't be completely honest with one another. So that's how I feel toward friends who are northerners, and I tell them as much. They also understand. They understand. They say they understand, [say] 'I get you,'... because northerners are used to living with the communist regime, so they rarely speak the truth... But southerners are like Germans: frank.¹⁶

Chính's words reinforce the Cold War Berlin-Saigon analogy, squarely aligning South Vietnam to West and reunified Germany. Rather than simply stereotyping southern or northern characteristics, he is further making a political commentary about how trustworthy people can be after living under socialism. This stance toward socialism, in turn, derives from his experience of losing South Vietnam to socialism. Hearing Chính's words in my head, I could not think of a way to assuage Hạnh's fears. Before we arrived at our stop, I told her I would hope our elders would not apply these regional divides to the younger generation who did not live through the war. She responded, despondently, that she felt like they did. She steeled herself for the possibility that she would be socially excluded at the Lunar New Year celebration of RfG taking place in a week's time.

The preparations for RfG's 2016 Lunar New Year celebration began ramping up in January. In the weekends leading up to the event, the members' young children practiced dances with paper parasols and most of the women prepared walks to model the traditional *áo dài*, a fitted, silk tunic worn over flowing trousers. One of RfG's core organizers, Vũ, explained that the

¹⁶ *Đối với chú thì có cái cảm giác là không có an toàn.... Không an toàn là khi chơi mình có một cái khoảng cách, mình không có thật tình với nhau được. Thì cái đó là cái mà chú cảm giác đối với bạn bè người bắc chú cũng nói vậy. Họ cũng hiểu. Họ cũng hiểu. Họ nói hiểu, [nói] 'Tôi hiểu ông' ... tại vì người bắc họ sống quen với chế độ cộng sản, ít khi nào họ nói thật... Thì cái người nam thì giống như người Đức: thẳng.*

celebration would take place at the city hall in a western borough of Berlin. The borough-mayor would provide an introduction in German. The festivities provide an important opportunity, Vũ emphasized, ‘to communicate to Germans what Vietnamese tradition is.’ Women, especially, ‘need to wear the *aó dài* to show the beauty of our culture’ (see Lieu 2000 on pageantry, femininity, and the nation). The men, however, had the option of wearing the male *aó dài* or western-style suits.

On the second-to-last weekend of February, RfG core members arrived at the local City Hall at noon to begin preparations. After unloading decorations and other supplies, the women and girls immediately went to change into our *aó dài*s. One of the organizers tasked me with overseeing the registration table and reminded me that the event was not advertised widely, so only those who RSVPed may enter. The event began at 5pm with “Call to the Citizens,”¹⁷ the national anthem of the Republic of Vietnam, blaring over the speakers. Vũ’s wife, Vy, relieved me of my registration duties so that I could go inside and enjoy the event. The festivities were held in a great, rectangular hall seating 200 Vietnamese and some ethnic Germans, ranging from the elderly to teenagers and very young children. Two flags hung down from the ceiling, bordering the left and right sides of the stage: the red, black, and gold flag of Germany and the red-striped bear flag of Berlin. Two smaller flags also decorated the stage at eye-level: a second German flag and the yellow-striped flag of former South Vietnam. As I entered the hall, the borough mayor was wrapping up her greeting by drawing a parallel between the successful integration of Vietnamese refugees decades ago and her hopes for the welcome and resettlement of Syrian refugees now. Following her speech, roughly a dozen RfG core members stood at the front to sing “A New Year Toast” (1952).¹⁸ The chorus proceeded:

A a a a
Let us fill our glasses

¹⁷ *Tiếng Gọi Công Dân*

¹⁸ *Ly Rượu Mừng*. The song was written by composer Phạm Đình Chương, who was born in Hanoi but moved to Saigon in 1953. He fled Vietnam after 1975, eventually resettling in California.

*Wish everyone well
A a a a
That hearts be full of charm for life*

*Let us fill up our glasses for more toasts
Wishing the soldiers luck to rise up
Battling (for) the city
Come morning, life will be good
Cheers for the people who, for their country, sacrifice themselves*

*Somewhere far away there is an old mother
Longing for her son's return, her sight blurred by the wait
Wishing her a homeland soon
(With) the footsteps of her son returning in loving reunion¹⁹*

I mouthed along the words, having grown up with both the South Vietnamese national anthem and New Year's toast. Hạnh, by contrast, signaled with a shake of the head that she did not recognize the songs.

Hạnh experienced the aforementioned encounters with refugee social organizing as jarring. Southern nationalism and symbols contrasted sharply with her youth in northern Vietnam as well as her early adulthood socializing with her northern relatives and their social circles in eastern Berlin. The aunts and uncles in RfG, as we addressed them, would make earnest efforts to include her in conversations, even if to patronizingly lecture her about the blunders of communism. But to Hạnh, they retained an emotional distance that she felt to be palpable and

¹⁹ *Á a a à
Nhấp chén đầy vui
Chúc người người vui
Á a a à
Muôn lòng xao xuyến duyên đời*

*Rót thêm tràn đầy chén quan san
Chúc người binh sĩ lên đàng
Chiến đấu công thành
Sáng cuộc đời lành
Mừng người vì nước quên thân mình*

*Kìa nơi xa xa có bà mẹ già
Từ lâu mong con mắt vương lệ nhòa
Chúc bà một sớm quê hương
Bước con về hòa nổi yêu thương*

unsettling. Feeling pessimistic about her prospects of soliciting survey respondents when she felt so out of place, Hạnh headed home from the Lunar New Year festivities shortly after arriving.²⁰

Enforcing Refugee Nationalism: Return Travel and Social Networks

The evening continued with a paper parasol dance by the members' daughters, followed by performances by young pianists, a violinist, and a guitarist with vocal accompaniment. The emcees made announcements in both Vietnamese and German. Non-Vietnamese performed as well, including a tai chi group appearing to be all German. We broke for dinner shortly after the performances and relocated to another hall where volunteers had laid out different Vietnamese dishes buffet-line style. As I looked around for a seat, Loan, an elderly member of RfG, beckoned me to her. Originally from the north, Loan married a South Vietnamese soldier and arrived in Germany in the early 1990s through family reunification for refugees. She insisted on talking to me today because she would be leaving soon but wanted to first help me with my research. Amidst the commotion in the dining hall, Loan explained in hushed tones that she would be visiting Vietnam through early summer and did not want other RfG members to find out and criticize her for doing so.

In the interview, Loan painted a climate of political intolerance toward return travel that is corroborated by my interviews with several RfG members. At least two of the core members, Chau and Hòa, have not been back to Vietnam since they first departed in the 1980s. Chau sees return travel as a direct form of support for the Vietnamese government, and stated on multiple

²⁰ In contrast to his treatment of Hạnh, Chính gladly made introductions for Christina, a German media studies scholar. Christina and I would go on to become good colleague and friends, and have had many discussions about the different insights we received from studying the same organization. I became more familiar with RfG members through ethnography and referred to them in Vietnamese by familial titles (Uncle Chính), while Christina conducted interviews, and referred to them by formal titles (Ms. Nguyễn, for example). Hạnh, like me, referred to them as uncles and aunts, but did not gain access and introductions for research in the way that Christina and I did. I do not attribute this difference in access to my Americanness, but, rather, to my southern Vietnamese background, which the RfG members all referred to when they noted that I was 'one of them.' FaA members similarly foregrounded my southern, not American, background.

occasions that she would never return unless the red flag were toppled and the yellow flag reinstated (see Chapter 5 for how Chau's resistance to return migration shapes her relationships with coreligionists). Unlike Chau, who left Vietnam through family reunification, Toàn fled by boat after being released from a "re-education" camp. His one-bedroom apartment is decorated wall-to-wall with war memorabilia, including old badges and pictures of fallen officers who committed suicide on April 30, 1975 rather than surrender to the North. Even when RfG members travel to Vietnam, some chalk the trip up to errands they must reluctantly run. For example, Chính and his wife, Mỹ Linh (henceforth, Mỹ), noted two weeks after the Lunar New Year that they would be visiting their daughter, who was studying in the South Pacific. On their way back, they will stop by Vietnam to order custom-made *aó dâis*—but only, as they qualified, because people in Vietnam make better and cheaper *aó dâis*.

As I prepared to head home after the interview, I ran into a second woman also named Mỹ Linh. She is a petite southerner who came to East Germany on a labor contract in the late 1980s. I would learn more about this Mỹ Linh over the next several months, watching her interact with members of RfG and, more reluctantly, with those of FaA. RfG members would often secretly disparage Mỹ Linh for her assumed willingness to engage with northerners. RfG members questioned Anh and Mỹ Linh's judgment in friends. The two women would both also encounter moments of discomfort at FaA events, albeit for reasons of a more political nature discussed next.

In sum, both southern Lunar New Year celebrations involved symbols of Southern nationalism, suffering, and nostalgia that regional outsiders and insiders alike could readily detect. In addition to these symbols, language such as "communist" and songs that refer to the war and fallen South Vietnam demarcate these events as southern and refugee. Those who are neither southerners nor refugees, or just one but not the other, can and do attend. They come, however, despite any potential discomfort caused by overtly political icons and themes. For example, some northern former contract workers who regularly attend pagodas in the eastern part of the city also came to the aforementioned events. If they had qualms about the yellow flag as Hạnh did,

however, they knew to be discreet about it because of the visible southern nature of the space. Regional insiders who are not refugees as well as refugees who are not southerners also expected to have to adhere to certain norms around return travel and friendship networks. To avoid real or imagined reprimand for visiting Vietnam, for example, Loan did not reveal her plans to RfG. Others, like Mỹ Linh, carried on with their activities but were subject to frequent criticisms by peers. As I will discuss below, though Anh and Mỹ Linh do not fit perfectly within FaA either, FaA did not scrutinize their friendship networks and political beliefs in the same way.

FaA Lunar New Year Celebrations of the Reunified Nation

Where RfG orchestrated a Lunar New Year celebration of the nation-in-exile, FaA focused on celebrating the reunified nation and its mainstream culture as social fact. I will show that FaA's preparations for and celebration of the Lunar New Year do not include overtly political symbols like the flag of Vietnam. I will argue that this is because the communist victory in 1975 institutionalized and normalized the North's version of history and culture. In the space of FaA, this means that references to Hồ Chí Minh, for example, go uncontested. In the absence of a politicized display like that of RfG's, the FaA celebration would be strictly for the social enjoyment of the first generation. Though the members' young children also attended once in a while, they did not prepare performances to showcase Vietnamese tradition or nostalgia in the same way that the children of RfG members did. Conflict would arise following the FaA New Year event, though for logistical reasons. Where Hạnh felt disconnected from RfG members because of, as she saw it, the latter's reluctance to engage with her, she did not experience such detachment from FaA. Anh, who would end her contact with RfG by the coming summer, visibly enjoyed herself at the FaA event more than at RfG's until reminders of Vietnamese reunification under communism crept into the night's festivities. Mỹ Linh, on the other end of the spectrum, would openly mock northerners and contract workers during each FaA event we attended, but continued to come to support Anh. In what follows, I trace the planning, celebration, and debrief of FaA's

Lunar New Year event, noting how Anh, Hạnh, and Mỹ Linh experienced the space and conflicts that arose. How they each relate to FaA and its members, as contrasted with RfG, reveals the ongoing negotiations of people who straddle organizations when they do not neatly fit the organizations' implicit backgrounds.

Hạnh first met FaA members at their meeting space on February 14, 2016. On this day, Sáu, the sole southerner apart from Anh who regularly participated in FaA, arrived fashionably late to the long foyer where we typically met. She began to good-humoredly tease the men for not presenting the organization's women with flowers on Valentine's Day. Hạnh and I both remarked that we did not realize people celebrated Valentine's in Germany, but Sáu explained that this day is about love, and friendship is a type of love. A skinny, bald man jokingly replied, 'There are different kinds of love and we need to be clear [about what we mean.] There's romantic love or love for Uncle Ho.'²¹ Some members smirked, though most remained stone-faced—evidently desensitized to this reference that has sparked mass protests among Vietnamese refugee communities (Aguilar San-Juan 2009; Brettell and Reed-Danahay 2011; Chan 2006; Dang 2005; Nguyen 2017). We continued to discuss logistics for the Lunar New Year celebration in two weeks. In contrast to the discussions in RfG, no one mentioned displaying Vietnamese culture for Germans, who do not attend FaA events.²² Instead, we focused on logistics such as what time to arrive for set-up and when to practice dances.

On the day of the celebration, FaA members arrived for set-up at 1:30 in the afternoon. Nghĩa, Anh's friend who said that Saigon girls speak so sweetly, was fidgeting with the sound system as I arrived. Some other men worked together to hoist the FaA banner onto the wall. A

²¹ *Yêu Bác Hồ*

²² As with RfG, FaA's day-to-day activities revolved around the Vietnamese language, culture, and people. With RfG's biweekly gatherings, for example, we only spoke German when non-Vietnamese guests (such as researchers) occasionally attended. In one such instance, however, the RfG organizers eventually asked me to entertain the German guests while they convened to discuss RfG matters (in Vietnamese) in a separate room.

woman then set me to work cutting rice cakes into smaller serving sizes. Mỹ Linh, the southern former contract worker, soon arrived. Having been invited by Anh, she waved me over to sit down next to her. As we had not had opportunities to speak one-on-one up to that point, I asked how she came to this country. She explained that she came to East Germany as a contract worker, much like the others in the room. She nodded to the men busily chatting in the row in front of us and continued that ‘when the [Berlin] Wall came down, they were all mafia. They broke the law and killed people to get to where they are today.’ She insisted that these men ‘are all rich, and everyone runs legitimate businesses now,’ but she knows how they achieved their success. Moreover, she asserted that ‘they will never tell [me] the truth, because no one wants to talk about that time,’ but she ‘is telling me so that [I] know they don’t like us [southerners] and will never accept the yellow flag [of South Vietnam].’

Another FaA member then called me away, bidding me and Kim, the international student who lives with Anh’s sister, to fold napkins into festive shapes. One of the elderly men who provided references during my first visit to FaA sat down next to me to ask how the research was faring. I told him well, and he replied that he planned to set aside time to speak.²³ He continued that there are many pressing social issues both among Vietnamese communities abroad and in Vietnam. His concern for social matters reflects an attentiveness to the nation to which he sees himself belonging. He did not pose these as political issues about whether the government legitimately represented the nation. Where RfG members frequently remarked on the social problems plaguing Vietnam because of what they see as an illegitimate state, FaA members like this man followed news in the spirit of doing good for the nation.

²³ The man whispered in my ear that I would be better off talking to the men, as he claimed women did not follow the news or pay attention to society. Note that while only FaA men explicitly stated this, RfG men implicitly acted upon it, as when they sat around the table discussing politics while their wives prepared meals in the kitchen.

As the only young adults present,²⁴ Kim and I served desserts and took numerous group photos for FaA members. By 6pm, however, Kim was itching to leave. I had told her earlier that I would accompany her, so we gathered our belongings, bowed our heads to the elders one-by-one to bid them farewell. Songs continued to play in the background as we said goodbye to each person. Midway through one song, Anh ran up to Kim, Mỹ Linh, and me, and whispered indignantly: “It’s red music!”²⁵ Mỹ Linh nodded in acknowledgement and disdain before the three of us exited the building. Mirroring my first time at FaA with Hồng, Mỹ Linh similarly discussed the north/south divide as we approached the bus stop. She explained that she came to East Germany at a very young age and did not know much about politics then. She only came here to earn money, but learned about the politics of north and south on (East) German soil. Mỹ Linh insisted that she did not differentiate between north and south in her youth, but became socialized into the southern and refugee stance of mistrusting northerners after emigrating. Despite her own contract worker background and her willingness to share a social space with northerners, these feelings of mistrust led her to sharply rebuke northerners in their presence.

It was not only Anh and Mỹ Linh who had complaints about the Lunar New Year event: FaA members would later bicker over how the event turned out as well. As Hạng and I arrived to the following FaA meeting at 3pm, we walked into a tense room. The dozen or so members present argued about miscommunication at the celebration, such as who should emcee, as well as the announcement of birthdays. They celebrate birthdays as a friendship organization but had forgotten one member’s birthday last month. She felt slighted as a result. The members began talking heatedly over one another and bickering, to the point that Hạng turned to me and said (in English): “I have a headache.” Anh tried to change the conversation by suggesting that FaA

²⁴ While RfG events included the second generation, FaA events largely did not. I read this as resulting from the fact that northerners and former contract workers do not need an informal space to affirm their institutionalized version of history.

²⁵ *Là bản đỏ đó!*

provide a variety of food at events. In response, an elderly woman sharply told Anh that she should take it upon herself to make something different if she has complaints (see Chapter 3 on moralizing around food).

The meeting ended on a strained note, with multiple members visibly irritated with one another. Hạnh and I decided to solicit survey respondents for her research next time and instead prepared to head home. On our way out the door, Phong, an elderly man in FaA, stopped me to say that he wanted to talk about his experiences before he left for Vietnam. Phong first came to East Germany in the 1970s as a university student and returned in the late 1980s as a group leader for a labor contingent. When the Berlin Wall fell, he sold cigarettes illicitly. Phong suggested that hardly anyone would admit to this, mirroring what Mỹ Linh had told me earlier. Phong and I would speak again two weeks later at a meeting of FaA dedicated to practicing dances for an upcoming celebration. Only half a dozen members attended, as many had left for the Netherlands on a group trip to see tulips in bloom. The people remaining practiced swivel dance moves as well as a dance that involved stepping over 10-foot long bamboo sticks. One uncle in his late 50s, Toàn, explained that the event is an anniversary celebration of the founding of the friendship organization, and only members were invited. But he added that I was invited, and clarified: ‘Do you know why? Because you’re a child of the South.’ Speaking at a regular volume, he continued that the people in the room are northerners who have been influenced by communism, so that they are not honest, ‘comfortable,’²⁶ and direct. But southerners, he argued, speak like Germans—directly. This echoes comments from Chính, the RfG organizer, that northerners have been socialized to be dishonest. Toàn similarly characterizes north/south in ways that affirm the global Cold War victory of the democracy over socialism. None of the others present seemed to have heard Toàn, however, as they continued to dance and insisted I join them.

²⁶ *Thoải mái*

Phong then concluded his dancing practice and pulled me to the hallway outside, where he expanded on what he saw as the most pressing matters facing Vietnamese of his generation: medical care, health practices, and access to public health information. Phong concerned himself primarily with the quality of life of his coethnics. In interviews, southerners and RfG members also spoke about the difficulties faced by contract workers after the fall of the Berlin Wall as well as by everyday people in Vietnam today. But their locus of concerns differed: Phong sought to address the well-being of Vietnamese people both in Vietnam and abroad, while refugees' concerns and aid efforts, while also aimed at their coethnics, ultimately provided them with fodder to further criticize the Vietnamese state.²⁷

Regarding politics, Anh occupied a rather unique position in FaA as an anti-communist, southern non-refugee who primarily associated with northerners. While she got along better with FaA than RfG members, her politics better fit that of the latter organization. For example, during a break in my interview with one of the FaA organizers, Lâm, Anh arrived, sat down next to me, and reported on a crime that happened in her southern hometown. A man caught two people trying to rob his home, but somehow subdued and tied them up. He beat them for information while waiting for the police to arrive to arrest them. When the authorities finally did come, they charged the man with kidnapping the thieves. Anh relayed indignantly that the man hung himself to death because of the injustice with which he had been treated. I noted that I had not read this news, to which she replied that she learned about it from blogs on her friends' Facebook pages, rather than mainstream news. Anh regularly shares posts about social ills on her Facebook, and tags FaA members to alert them as well. For instance, she insisted that incestuous rape was on the rise in Vietnam, and that meat producers were selling horse meat disguised as beef. 'This is

²⁷ For example, one RfG member provided free translation as part of the organization's social service commitment. She stated that she would help regardless of whether the persons seeking aid were northerners or communists. This, she said, proved that democracy is far superior to socialism. She conjectured that, had the tables been turned, socialists would never help.

all because of those communists,' she declared, just as Lâm returned to resume our interview. More reluctant than Anh to speak about politics, Lâm nevertheless made clear during our conversation that he was proud to be Vietnamese and sees 1975 as unquestionable proof that national reunification was meant to prevail. Lâm and other FaA members are no strangers to Anh's strong anti-communist sentiments, but her politics do not seem to impact their friendships. This is in part because, with the exception of Lâm, FaA members openly criticized Vietnam's human rights record as well. But even if they did not agree with Anh's criticisms, northerners do not see themselves as needing to respond to Southern nationalism, which they see as drawing its last fading breath through the refugees and southerners who lived through the war.

Anh's and Mỹ Linh's reactions to FaA activities and members, as well as the everyday concerns of northerners like Phong, evidence the asymmetry with which northerners and southerners experienced reunification. As the North's vision of a reunified Vietnam actualized, its accompanying changes became taken-for-granted, including the renaming of Saigon to Ho Chi Minh City. Yet, the name of Hồ Chí Minh reminded southerners like Anh of what she saw as the theft of the South. Anh and Mỹ Linh were upset by a city name and a song that the northerners in the room took as a foregone conclusion. Vietnamese reunification under the direction of the North means that these symbols become objects of contestation to those who disagree with the outcome of reunification. Yet, northerners like Phong and Toàn do not support the actions of the reunified Vietnamese government toward its citizens; rather, they see Vietnam as an imperfect state but a legitimate representation of the nation nonetheless. Phong is an avid newspaper reader who has many connections to journalists writing about social ills both in Vietnam and among Vietnamese communities in Germany. His singing and clapping along to the song, "Spring over Ho Chi Minh City," during an earlier FaA event do not signal support for Vietnamese reunification under communism, as Anh and Mỹ Linh might read it. Toàn goes even further by declaring the purity of southerners, whom he sees as being untainted by communism in the way that he suggests he is. But like Phong, Toàn can happily sing along to songs about Ho Chi Minh

City as a depoliticized, matter-of-fact reference to a place in southern Vietnam. Even while they harbor criticisms of life under communism, both men concern themselves more with what this political fact has meant for everyday people, while southerners like Anh fixate on what this means for the legitimacy of the state.

Drawing Lines and Taking Sides

In what follows, I discuss how the storylines of Anh, Hạnh, and Mỹ Linh converged as I prepared to conclude my fieldwork in Berlin. This section unfolds across four interrelated events. The day before Anh's birthday, I interviewed Hòa, a long-time RfG member, at his home before we both visited Anh at her workplace. The resulting hullabaloo over the survey Hạnh was administering reveals how RfG members like Hòa demarcate and police social membership. Moving onto the preparations for Anh's birthday party, I relate how Anh and the other FaA southerner, Sáu, draw symbolic boundaries between themselves and their northern friends. Yet, their symbolic boundary making largely does not prevent them from enjoying the company of northerners. Southern regionalism would become more apparent at the third event, an RfG barbecue the evening after preparations for Anh's party. I then return to FaA, recalling moments of tension at Anh's birthday party that demonstrate how southern and northern attendees enact social boundaries even as they willingly share a physical space.

Policing Membership: Hòa and the "Communist" Survey

On an afternoon in April, I met Hòa, an RfG member, at the subway station near his apartment. A former officer in the Army of the Republic of Vietnam, Hòa was imprisoned in a "re-education" camp after 1975. He fled by boat in the early 1980s, resettled in West Germany, and, by 2016, had not returned to Vietnam in over 35 years. We talked about the weather and neighborhood as we walked up to his two-bedroom flat that he occasionally shared with renters. He furnished the room he rented out, which doubled as a living room, with two sets of bunk beds along one wall of the room and a mantle in between. Guerilla prints hung all over the walls, along

with the South Vietnamese flag and posters of protests against Vietnam. Hòa proudly pointed me to a tribute he had made for five South Vietnamese generals who committed suicide on April 30, 1975, instead of cooperating with North Vietnamese forces. Another set of photos around the room honored Hoàng Cơ Minh, who led a resistance force to try to retake Vietnam after 1975. Hòa pulled out photos of himself from when he escaped Vietnam, at the same age I was presently, as well as pictures of the groups of people he stayed with in a refugee camp in the Philippines. When I remarked on how young Hòa looked in photos with his military uniform, he produced the outfit to show he still had it, and had also retained badges from the division in which he fought.

After our interview, Hòa asked about my plans for the rest of the day, to which I replied that I planned to visit Anh at her workplace. Hòa decided he would accompany me because he is friends with Anh's boss, but did not hesitate to tell me that I was a bad judge of character and that Anh was not someone I should befriend. He continued that 'you can't trust people with buckteeth who are short'—clarifying that this is an old Vietnamese saying about people who stir trouble. Hòa continued on the topic as we left the apartment, claiming that Anh has a habit of "exaggerating"²⁸ and that he did not trust her propensity to start new business ventures and then run them into the ground. He associated these entrepreneurial inclinations with what he saw as the materialism and greed of former contract workers post-socialism. When we arrived at the small restaurant where Anh worked, she greeted us with a wide smile. Hòa claimed that he and I ran into each other at the subway station, and Anh—not realizing that I had just interviewed him—pleaded with him to please invite me over to help me with my research. He replied that he would invite me over one day, but only welcomed into his home those who are willing to protest. While he and I had talked about attending a protest together,²⁹ he did not invite Anh or assume she would even be interested. His comment aimed to chastise Anh for her seeming lack of allegiance

²⁸ *Nổ*

²⁹ I sought out all types of social and political events to attend.

to Southern nationalism—a nationalism he assumed I held because my father had been imprisoned like him.

As we talked, another man appearing to be in his 60s entered. Lộc was the husband of the owner of the restaurant. We briefly introduced ourselves before Anh suggested that, while they were both here, Lộc and Hòa could fill out a brief survey. Lộc first flipped through the survey and started to say that it was sent by communists. He and Hòa cited, as their evidence, the fact that the survey asked for their names, dates of birth, addresses, and a host of questions about their religion and other details that they felt to be invasive. Anh and I exchanged distraught looks, knowing it was the survey Hạnh had been tasked with distributing. I interjected to say that the researchers were offering an honorarium and therefore needed personal information to prove to funding sources that real people had participated. Lộc aggressively responded that only communists would ask these questions. Anh tried to deescalate, saying that this survey was being passed out by a student, and Anh was simply helping her. I added, addressing Hòa, that I have asked him similar questions about religion and politics. Both men then responded that I do not ask people to write down their answers. The two men egged each other on, with Hòa saying he would take a copy and scribble, 'Pay me 30,000 [euros] and I'll fill this out,' but Anh intervened and said that he could only take a survey if he intended to fill it out.

This continued for over an hour, as customers intermittently came through to order items for take-out. Lộc and Hòa had had three beers each when Anh joked to Hòa that when he invites me over for an interview, he should invite her as well. Hòa flatly responded that she was not invited. Anh replied good-naturedly that he and Lộc were both invited to her 60th birthday party, but Hòa grumbled that he was not interested. Lộc abruptly complained about the survey again, spitting out chunks of roasted peanut that both he and Hòa had been snacking on with their beers. I tried to calmly explain that I knew the student passing out the survey, and that she was just a student assisting in research to earn some extra income. Hòa had met her as well and did not

hesitate to talk to her about his political beliefs and personal life face-to-face.³⁰ I emphasized that I ask many of the same questions in my voice-recorded interviews. Hòa spit back that I could ask him anything because I was from the United States and, more importantly, the child of a Southern officer who was in political prison. Had I been from (northern) Vietnam and asking him these questions, he would have “strangled”³¹ me. Anh scoffed at his comment but Hòa insisted he was not joking, his tone and composure indicating complete seriousness. Stunned, I stopped engaging and left the men to their own devices, hovering closer to Anh’s work station instead.

Around 6pm, I said goodbye to Anh and prepared to head out with Hòa. Anh commented that she found me someone to interview, and that we would meet with that person next week. I thanked her on my way out. As soon as we exited the door, Hòa berated me for being so naïve. He claimed that Anh was only helping me, as she was helping Hạnh, for instrumental reasons. I defended Anh, saying she just wanted to support students who did not have family here. Hòa dismissed me and contemplated making a copy of the survey and forwarding it to the leadership of RfG. Exasperated, I told him that the principle investigator had already been in touch with RfG, but Hòa insisted it did not matter. He would confront the leadership and if, for example, Vũ did not want to distribute the survey among RfG but Chính did, Hòa would know that Chính is a communist. I stopped engaging at this point out of frustration and weariness. Seemingly unperturbed by my non-response, Hòa moved onto other topics before he exited the subway at his stop, saying that he would be in touch about protests on the 30th of April.

³⁰ Hạnh had been attending RfG events with me for nearly three months at this point, and in a meeting just one month before this conversation at Anh’s workplace, Hòa approached Hạnh and me to say that he has a room for a student to rent, and that his home is very quiet. Once a year, he adds, he allows people coming to protest to stay at his home. I ask him what they were protesting and he replied, the “communist regime” [*chế độ cộng sản*]. He said he had to make this clear, ‘since [Hạnh] is a northerner,’ that he is opposed to the *regime*, rather than to individual communists. The three of us later headed out to the subway together. Before we parted ways for our stops, he told us about his children, former partners, employment, and political and social efforts oriented toward Vietnam—all items that he found invasive in survey form.

³¹ *Bóp cổ*

Drawing Symbolic Boundaries: Southern Preparations for Anh's Party

The day before Anh's birthday party during the last weekend of May, I arrived at her house in the early afternoon to help with preparations. As I entered the apartment and peered into the living room, I spotted Kim (the international student from central Vietnam) wrapped in a blanket, laying on the couch, and staring at her phone. She greeted me before saying that she had just arrived and would be staying overnight to help with cooking. I then relayed to Anh that Chính from RfG invited her to an event later tonight. Anh glared disbelievingly, explaining that Chính's wife, Mỹ, claimed that they could not attend her birthday party because of a scheduling conflict with Buddhist events to take place in Berlin and Hanover. Anh deduced that the couple lied, as the two pagodas coordinated to avoid conflicts. When Anh rescheduled her birthday party and informed Mỹ about it, Mỹ simply texted that they were busy, without calling to wish Anh a happy birthday. Because of this, Anh exclaimed, she was done with RfG and warned me not to bring them up again.

After delegating tasks to me and Kim, Anh left to go grocery shopping for tomorrow. Kim and I folded napkins for the party and once we finished, Kim laid back down and I resumed reading *A Viet Cong Memoir*. Kim asked me what book I was reading, and when I showed her the cover, she took the Vietnamese words without diacritical marks to mean "hunched Vietnamese"³² instead of National Liberation Front.³³ I roared with laughter that she somehow managed to mangle the word used by southern Vietnamese and westerners to denote communists. Once I clarified the phrase, however, Kim recalled hearing it used by Anh and her sister, Hồng. Kim had been learning their view of history through osmosis over the last few months in Germany. Having been present for both Hồng and (contract worker) Mỹ Linh's negative reactions to FaA events, Kim confirmed

³² *Việt cong*

³³ *Việt cộng*

that she sees the north/south divide clearly now, where such regional divisions did not matter so much when she lived in Vietnam.³⁴

Anh returned sometime after Kim had started napping and was soon joined by her nephew, Giang, who was currently in graduate school in eastern Europe. After greeting us, he asked about the Vietnamese beef stew that Anh promised she would cook. As we peeled vegetables and prepared other ingredients for the stew, Giang talked about travel, paper marriages, and how the northerners tomorrow would not recognize the dishes we have prepared. Because we, as southerners, attended northern events, we knew their dishes quite well. After we finished eating, Giang borrowed Anh's phone to take a call in the hallway. He returned soon after to ask how to open the door to the building, as someone was vigorously ringing Anh's doorbell.³⁵ Anh went to see who had arrived, and Sáu, the other southerner in FaA, came marching up and yelling genially that Anh had a phone but would not pick it up. Sáu complained that she had been calling and calling, and lightheartedly berated Anh for inviting her to "converse."³⁶ Sáu found this prospect boring and decided to go dancing instead. But then another FaA member mused that Anh probably wanted help for the party, so Sáu launched into action. She chuckled as she told Anh: 'Don't be so ceremonious—we're southerners!'³⁷

Sáu recounted all the effort she had to expend to find us: calling several members of FaA to get the address, wandering around the streets looking for the right building, then ringing the doorbells of all the Vietnamese residents in the building until someone finally answered and pointed her to the correct doorbell. 'Someone else would have given up trying—especially when [Anh] did not pick up [her] phone,' Sáu chortled. But Sáu added that Anh was lucky she made the

³⁴ This reflects Mỹ Linh's account of learning about the north/south divide—and taking sides—after living in Germany.

³⁵ Apartments in Germany list the name of the lease holder by the doorbell.

³⁶ *Tâm sự*

³⁷ *Đừng khách sáo làm gì—mình là người nam mà!*

effort, as no one else in FaA would have been capable of preparing the food: 'They don't know southern dishes and would have harmed more than helped. Those northerners don't understand how to prepare our food.' I asked playfully if they spoke like this at FaA events, and Anh replied in jest that they would be whopped if they did, as the northerners grossly outnumbered them. We continued with preparations until 6:30pm, when Sáu and I headed out and Giang accompanied us downstairs on his way to a convenience store around the corner. As we descended the stairs, Sáu noted that we have prepared all of these delicious dishes, but they will go underappreciated. Contradicting herself in the same breath, she added: 'Whenever there is our food [at events], their food is unpopular.'³⁸ She clarified that she simply had a preference for 'our' food but did not mean this as a judgment of northerners' characters (Chapter 3). Put differently, people sometimes articulate symbolic boundaries without necessarily translating them into social boundaries or divisions. I then parted ways with Sáu at the light rail station, saying we would see each other again tomorrow.

Enacting Social Boundaries: Exclusion and Inclusion in RfG

An hour later, I arrived at an RfG event in the farthest eastern fringes of what used to be West Berlin. Since April, RfG had been meeting at this location to barbecue and enjoy the sunshine. Vũ, one of the leaders, greeted me and then amiably remarked that I have arrived so late in the day. I explained that I was with Anh, but he did not respond to this. His wife, Vy, then asked how Anh's party was, but I clarified that it was not until tomorrow. She also did not comment further. I then went inside to greet each person before coming back outside to sit on some wooden benches to enjoy the spring air. Mỹ Linh, the former contract worker, sat next to me, and started to talk to Kiều, another RfG core member, about how northerners always added some type of herb to their food that we did not. They said other things about northerners that I could not hear so well before Mỹ Linh remarked, seemingly embarrassed, that a northerner was sitting right next

³⁸ *Khi nào có đồ của mình thì họ ế.*

to them. The woman, appearing to be in her 60s and sporting a pixie haircut, was speaking on the phone and not paying us any attention. Mỹ Linh explained in a low voice that the woman was a dissident in Vietnam who had recently received political asylum in Germany. While the implicit regional membership of RfG was southern, the organization welcomed northerners who had demonstrably rejected communism by fleeing or protesting.

Mỹ Linh then introduced me to Kiều's husband, who promptly asked where I was from. I responded the United States and he noted, apparently satisfied with my answer (and perhaps with my accent): 'So [you're one of] our people, not one of their spawn.'³⁹ He then remarked that President Obama visited Vietnam recently and gave a speech telling the locals, 'This is your country.' He lamented that it took a complete foreigner to acknowledge that. He then started to sing along to a melody someone was playing on a flute at the table behind us. His toddler son tried to stop him, saying, 'Papa, the ears! Papa, no!'⁴⁰ After this lighthearted interlude, I went inside to catch up with Tài, a staunchly anti-communist refugee originally from northern Vietnam (see Chapter 2). He coyly asked if I spent a lot of time "over there"⁴¹ for my research as well. He repeated this without actually specifying that he meant the east. Notably, the building we were in today was located quite far east, though it belonged to West Berlin before German reunification. Tài was clearly referring to a political, rather than simply geographic, point. I confirmed that I do go "over there" as well. Chau, another core RfG member, then interjected to greet and chat with me before we began to clean up and head out together.

On our way to the subway, Chau asked about Hạnh. I replied that she had a separate engagement today but would most likely attend next time. I relayed to her how, when Hạnh accompanied me to a refugee Lunar New Year celebration, a stranger said she thought all

³⁹ *Người mình, chứ không phải con ông cháu cha.*

⁴⁰ *Papa, die Ohren! Papa, nein!*

⁴¹ *Bên kia*

communists were rude but that Hạnh did not seem rude. I laughed at the audacity of the comment as I recounted the story, but Chau responded matter-of-factly: 'It depends on what the education in the family was like.'⁴² She did not consider even for a moment that Hạnh might not be communist. Another woman from RfG now caught up to us, and we did not speak much more until we parted at the subway stop.

Negotiating Shared Space: Boundary Making at Anh's Birthday Party

The next day, Mỹ Linh, another long-time pal of Anh's, and I were the few southern friends to attend her birthday party in the east. The party took place in the garden in front of where FaA normally met. A crowd of 50 stirred about as Hạnh and I arrived. Several of the men from FaA sat on a bench smoking and drinking beer, while some of the women set up the food and took photographs in their *áo dài*s. In the background, some attendees fiddled with the sound system for emceeing and karaoke. Two women from the organization co-hosted, giving special thanks to Kim for staying up late into the night with Anh to prepare food for the event. They then opened the stage to people to give tribute to Anh on her 60th birthday. We soon began to line up for food, choosing from an assortment of dishes spread across several tables. Vietnamese-language labels accompanied each dish. But even so, an older woman with a northern accent pointed to round rice cakes⁴³ and asked me what they were, corroborating the claims of Sáu, Giang, and Anh just yesterday that northerners would not be familiar with southern dishes.

As Hạnh and I sat down on some benches to eat, my partner, Will, arrived to join us. Two older men also seated themselves at our table. Someone we did not know came by distributing beers, two for the men and one for Will. The man sitting to our left then took Will's beer to open his and his friend's, but then left Will's unopened. I asked if he could open Will's bottle as well,

⁴² *Cũng tùy theo giáo dục trong gia đình như thế nào.*

⁴³ *Bánh bèo*

but he presumably did not hear me, while the man sitting next to him stared blankly at me. Will, Hạnh, and I laughed in disbelief and confusion, but did not say much else about the exchange.

Mỹ Linh and another southerner then beckoned us to their table. In the background, individuals or couples continued to take turns singing karaoke, with each performer beginning with well wishes for Anh on her birthday. Many of them pronounced Anh's name with a low tone (Ành instead of Anh). I noted to Mỹ Linh that I thought Anh's name had no tone, to which she immediately replied that 'these people are very uneducated' and they simply insisted on mispronouncing Anh's name. Mỹ Linh sat with her arms crossed, leering at the northerners in her line of vision. She encouraged us to stay at her table, saying that those at the first table were 'Hanoi people' who would not want to talk to us. She had no qualms about saying this in front of Hạnh. I did not have a chance to respond as Hùng, a southern former contract worker, began to ask if we had seen a performance that he recommended weeks earlier. He and Mỹ Linh dominated the conversation for the next hour with a volley of jokes and wordplay.

While southerners like Mỹ Linh openly badmouthed northerners, northerners for the most part did not draw attention to the regional origins of the people in attendance. Excepting the strange exchange with the men over beers, I did not experience any northerners treating me differently or unkindly. This could certainly be related to my subject position as a person of southern origin: while southerners like Mỹ Linh felt they could disparage northerners without insulting me, the inverse scenario would have been less plausible. However, northerners did at times criticize refugees, as Nghĩa did when he blamed them for instigating drama between coethnics. I therefore read the fact that southerners did most of the social boundary work and policing to be a function of their loss in the competing national struggle in Vietnam. Northerners did not need to resent southerners, as one northern respondent explained, because 'we won.'

Discussion and Conclusion

RfG, FaA, and related events leading up to Anh's birthday reveal how people construct cultural differences between themselves and coethnics from a different region of origin through interaction. As I explored in the previous chapter, respondents articulate symbolic boundaries through references to food, accent, and cultural practices. Further examples of this include when Anh and Sáu discussed the southern food they would offer for Anh's birthday, as well as when another FaA member responded inhospitably to Anh's request for having a variety of food at events, rather than the same five or six northern staples that Anh found boring. This symbolic boundary work does not necessarily hinder social exchange, however, as Anh and Sáu knew to largely withhold their remarks in the presence of the majority northerners in their friendship organization. At other times, people did translate their understandings of membership into social boundaries. This is clearest in the example of RfG members who repeatedly disapproved of Anh's and Mỹ Linh's interactions with northerners in the eastern part of the city, reading their willingness to engage as a lack of allegiance to Southern nationalism. RfG members' policing efforts directly contribute to the persistence of the north/south and contract worker/refugee mapping. Although less obviously, FaA members also contribute to these divides by referring to people and places that have been stripped of their pre-1975 identities. While FaA members do not intend these to be insulting, southerners like Hồng experience them as such. After introducing me to FaA, for example, Hồng did not return.

I have also shown how nationalisms among Vietnamese present themselves in different ways. After the erasure of their nation-state, Southern nationalists organized cultural events around their memories of war, nostalgia, and suffering. Unlike FaA, RfG members directly involved their children in their events and activities. For the second generation, RfG serves as the only place where they can learn the Southern version of the war and nation. The RfG organizers remind the second generation of their parents' loss through cultural performances, such as nostalgic music that young children belt out at Lunar New Year events. For northerners and former

contract workers, FaA hosts events for the sake of their enjoyment, and engage in songs and practices that they do not see as strictly northern but as Vietnamese. This is made possible through the Northern victory of Vietnam, which has institutionalized and made normal the northern version of history and culture. Because southerners and northerners experienced the outcome of their nationalist struggle in different ways, northerners can sing along to “Spring over Ho Chi Minh City” without feeling that they committed a political act. For southerners who lost their capital of Saigon, however, the northern naming of people, places, and things remind them of defeat, loss, and longing.

These findings situate the experiences of refugees in the context of war and empire (Espiritu 2006, 2014). I also demonstrate that war and conquest inform how contract workers, as non-refugee immigrants, relate to coethnics. A northern former contract worker summed it up when he relayed to me an old adage: ‘We have to give the losers something to live with.’ By this, he meant that northerners simply have to accept the hatred of southerners. Hence, while northerners at times acknowledge the contested nature of history, the triumph of the North means that they also have the privilege of going about their everyday lives without much thought to the grievances of those who lost the war.

Finally, people who do not fit the regional and migratory combination of southerner/refugee and northerner/contract worker still learn about and become socialized into these partitions. The boundary work that these individuals experience and engage in also takes on different forms. While the northerners and southerners in this study both discussed northern versus southern traits as essentialized (see Chapter 3), it was largely the southerners in RfG who then delineated membership and belonging based on characteristics they assumed to be true of the south: frank, anti-communist, and refugee. By contrast, FaA welcomed even anti-communist southerners like Anh, though the event space itself remained largely depoliticized because of its established, albeit implicit, northern nationalist identity. The labels of north and south endure at a group level as people at an individual level map them onto migratory pathways and their accompanying assumed

political allegiances. They then further reinforce these labels through implicitly or explicitly demanding adherence to the underlying identities of a social space. In the final empirical chapter to follow, I consider how such boundary work plays out in a social space with a mixed identity: Linh Thúu Buddhist Pagoda in western Berlin.

Chapter 5: Politicizing Shared Religion

Linh Thửu Pagoda, a Vietnamese nunnery, is nestled between two quiet side streets in Spandau, the westernmost borough of Berlin. The borough is known to be calm and peaceful, compared to the hipper neighborhoods in middle and, increasingly, in eastern Berlin. As I walk in silence to the pagoda on this freezing January Sunday, there are few pedestrians about. Those making their way over from the light rail station can hear chanting from the second floor of the elaborate two-story pagoda, and see the blue, yellow, red, white, and orange Buddhist flag flying, with one displayed every foot along the stretch of the temple gates. The pedestrian entrance to the temple on Pichelswerder Street is marked by a wooden sign with calligraphy that notes the name of the temple in Vietnamese. Visitors have scattered throughout the garden on the temple grounds, taking photos of themselves outside as well as inside the pagoda.

As I arrive inside, hundreds of attendees have already filled into the prayer hall. Today is the Penultimate New Year's Eve, a holiday that revolves around family. Vietnamese customarily prepare feasts so that the spirits of deceased ancestors may descend to share a meal with their loved ones. Offerings today include plates of fruits and candies that people have laid out on the prayer hall floor. The nuns take turns reading off a list of names of deceased family members, relayed to them by lay disciples who make an accompanying monetary donation to the temple.

Downstairs, against the wall separating the foyer from the dining hall, hangs a poster advertising an event, "Vietnamese Refugee Community of Berlin Cultural Night and Lunar New Year 2016." Volunteers have rearranged the dining hall into tight rows of circular tables set with vegetables, pastries, and a hot pot for cooking broth. To the right of the stage at the front of the hall, yellow apricot blossoms, commonly found in southern Vietnam, branch out from an ornate

vase. A succession of karaoke singers takes turns on the stage. In between live performances, pre-recorded music plays in the background, including repeats of “Cry a River” by Đức Huy, who resettled in the United States after 1975. The song begins:

*I often think of home in the evenings
Especially on rainy evenings
Luckily, Cali rains seldom
Unlike Saigon
Otherwise, I'd have cried a river¹*

The lyrics recall the loss of the Republic of (South) Vietnam with its capital in Saigon. Reinforcing this exile status is the reference to California, the state with the largest concentration of Vietnamese outside of Vietnam. Turning to me mid-way through the chorus, Hồng, from southern Vietnam, points out that all the songs are from the south—implying to which group of Vietnamese the temple belongs.

As the only enduring social institution that brings Vietnamese from different migration streams and regions of origin together, Linh Thửu Pagoda provides a singular opportunity to see how religious spaces and disciples attempt to reconcile deep-rooted coethnic divisions. In the preceding chapter, I argued that group-level divisions between northerners and southerners/contract workers and refugees persist, sometimes despite shared individual-level politics. This happens in part because individuals self-select into social organizations that are located in their respective corners of Berlin and attended by others from their same regions of origin. It also happens because of group-level policing mechanisms, imposed largely by southerners against northerners rather than vice versa. Attendees of Linh Thửu Pagoda can and do self-segregate within the shared space. However, the fact that northerners and southerners both attend *en masse* means that they must negotiate the presence of coethnic others in a shared house of worship. Hồng, the southerner from the opening vignette, claims the pagoda as a space

¹ *Tôi hay nhớ về quê nhà vào buổi chiều
Nhất là những buổi chiều mưa rơi
Cũng may Cali trời mưa ít không như Saigon
Nếu không tôi đã khóc một dòng sông.*

made in the image of southerners. The reality, however, is that more former contract workers and northerners now attend than refugees and southerners. Other pagodas, particularly in the eastern part of the city, are populated almost entirely by northerners and former contract workers. When appropriate, I contrast observations at Linh Thửu Pagoda with those of the eastern pagodas to stress the cleavages that occur around shared ethnicity, nationhood, and religion at Linh Thửu.

In this chapter, I address how Vietnamese confront, reconcile, and reproduce coethnic animosities in a religious space that places a high premium on harmony. The distinction between religion as a category versus as a site is key: while religion-as-category is “*a term that provides definitive analytical distinctions between what is religious and what is not,*” religion-as-site refers to “*a [not necessarily physical] location at which we can observe social life*” (Guhin 2014: 580). I am interested neither in the content of lay disciples’ beliefs, nor in whether their practices are true to Buddhism as a faith system (religion-as-category). Rather, I focus on how actors in this space confront fractures in their sense of shared ethnicity and nationhood, and how these in turn complicate shared religiosity (religion-as-site).

Religion and religious spaces can be great unifiers or dividers in the lives of international migrants. Immigrant religious institutions can help ease newcomers into their environments (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000), build bridges to the host society (Chen 2002), develop civic skills (Mora 2013; Zhou and Bankston 1998), and pass on cultural traditions to the next generation (Herberg 1960). Where host societies perceive migrant faiths to be incompatible with its values—as with the Muslim question in Europe—, religion can be a source of contention between migrants and the broader society. Among immigrants, those sharing a national origin and ethnicity can also be divided by homeland religious-political divisions (Shams 2017: 715). One example of this comes from conflict over meanings of “Indianness” among Muslim and Hindu Indian Americans (Kurien 2001). In this chapter, I consider how migrant religious spaces play “bridging” (Foner and Alba 2008) and dividing roles among coethnics and (former) conationals *who share a religious identity*. In examining how Vietnamese coethnics from different migration streams and regions of

origin interact with one another in a shared religious space, I show how an immigrant religious site operates simultaneously as a unifier and divider. I argue that the historical divisions of these individuals' homelands and host lands have turned each axis of their shared identities into grounds for contestation over ethnic, national, and religious authenticity.

In what follows, I discuss the nexus of religion and politics in Cold War Vietnam. The analysis then follows in three parts. Tracing the foundations of Linh Thúu, I first contend that refugees marked the western pagoda with a Southern nationalist, exile identity long before contract workers filtered across the Berlin Wall. I discuss the conflict that arose at Linh Thúu over the RVN flag once former contract workers started arriving en masse. The nuns intervened in de-escalating the situation, and some individuals from both migration streams deserted the temple as a result. Second, I argue that, for the lay disciples who remained, the arena of contestation shifted from the political to the religious. I show how practices rooted in past and present Vietnam continue to inform dissimilarities among coethnics. These dissimilarities at times boil into hostilities. Third, I focus on present ties and return trips to Vietnam. This chapter concludes that while people in the space of Linh Thúu seek to reconcile coethnic antagonisms, the history and religious practices rooted in the pagoda set the stage for further divisions. The factionalisms that result map onto prior configurations of north and south but have been transformed through a religious—rather than strictly political—logic.

Religion and Politics in Vietnam

Since at least a millennium, institutional Buddhism in what is today Vietnam has at various points been central to culture, politics, and bureaucratic administration (Nguyễn 1993). Religion writ large played a role even in the Democratic Republic of (North) Vietnam, despite doctrinal atheism. After the 1954 division of Vietnam, religious activities and persons in the North came under state jurisdiction. During the first Indochina War (1946-1954), the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) sought to win religious believers, especially Catholics, to its side. While framing foreign

missionaries as “the gang of priests and monks wearing the mask of religion,” the ICP referred to Vietnamese believers as “our Catholic compatriots” (McLeod 1992: 679). Yet, these efforts did not win over religious communities: by 1954, nearly one million Northerners, most of them Catholic, left for the RVN under the Geneva Accords (Hansen 2009).

Religion was similarly politicized in the South. In the 1960s, the RVN faced heated struggles for power between competing religious groups, with Buddhists alleging that Catholic President Ngô Đình Diệm discriminated against their religion in favor of his own. On the eve of celebrations of the Buddha’s birthday in May 1963, Diệm banned the display of religious flags. Only days earlier, however, the Vatican flag had flown at a government-sponsored event in honor of Ngô Đình Thục, leading cleric and brother of Diệm (Joiner 1964). Mass demonstrations by Buddhists broke out. One month later, the monk Thích Quang Đức self-immolated in protest of the war in Vietnam and treatment of Buddhists. His actions delegitimized Diệm and South Vietnam in the eyes of the international community. Mark Moyer thus argues that “the failure of [leaders of the RVN to govern] was largely the result of an outside force, the militant Buddhists,” and suggested that the Buddhist leadership included agents of communism (2004: 749-750). In contrast, D. R. SarDesai notes “the position of Buddhist associations vis-à-vis communism and Communist regimes was one of absolute neutrality... until the government blatantly acted against the Buddhists in 1963” (2005 [1992], 83).

Following the 1963 religious crisis, monastics formed the Unified Buddhist Sangha of Vietnam (UBSV), also referred to as the Unified Buddhist Church (UBC) or Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV) (Chapman 2007). While some such as Moyer see these monastics as communist sympathizers, the government of reunified Vietnam treated the UBSV as a threat. After 1975, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam banned the UBSV in favor of the Vietnamese Buddhist Sangha (VBS). I will return to this discussion, noting the reach of the UBSV and VBS today.

Foundations of the Pagodas and Southern Nationalism

Refugees imbued Linh Thửu Pagoda from the start with their experiences of exile as they resettled in West Berlin, a veritable island of capitalism surrounded by the socialist East German state. In the 1980s, Vietnamese refugees in West Berlin established a study group called Linh Thửu Buddhist Mindfulness Road (LTBMR)² as part of a broader faith network in West Germany. Refugees and their families attended major festivals at Viên Giác, a larger, more established pagoda in Hanover in the West German state of Lower Saxony. To reach Hanover from West Berlin, refugees needed to cross through East Germany to get to West Germany. Disciples at Linh Thửu occasionally referenced these journeys. One such person is Lan, who arrived in West Berlin in the 1980s through family reunification for refugees. She explained:

It wasn't just my feeling, but was the feeling of many people at the time, feeling very uncomfortable. And a sense of insecurity because back then when I came here I was still very afraid of police. And especially of police of East Germany because they're police of a communist country... [T]heir attitude was very cold.³

Refugees' and West Germans' characterizations of the border agents as cold and the border crossing as uncomfortable match how native West Germans experienced crossing through East Germany as well—as the East German police desired. For example, Andreas Glaeser's former GDR police interviewees referred to their own postures, glares, and attitudes before 1989 as a “fuck off position” meant to intimidate civilians (2000: 217). Refugees' descriptions of East German officers were an indictment on what they saw as the socialist state's inhumane treatment of people. Despite encountering such threatening officers, however, refugees continued to make these disagreeable trips into the East until they could establish a larger pagoda in West Berlin.

² *Niệm Phật Đường Linh Thửu*

³ *Không phải là cảm giác riêng của chị, mà lúc đó là cảm giác của rất nhiều người, cảm thấy là rất là khó chịu. Và một cái nỗi bất an vì mình lúc đó mình qua đây là mình vẫn còn rất là sợ cái chuyện công an. Mà nhất là công an của Đông Đức tại cái đó là công an của một nước cộng sản mà cái khuôn mặt họ rất lạnh lùng.*

LTBMR played a role in aiding contract workers fleeing the East after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Followers of the then-fledgling pagoda reported gathering clothes, providing housing, translating paperwork, and generally aiding contract workers who wanted to file for asylum. Catholic refugee interviewees also reported going out to help their coethnics during this time, but the firsthand reports of coordinated efforts came from followers of LTBMR. One such person who recalled helping contract workers was Thắm, who arrived in West Berlin in the 1980s through family reunification for refugees. She noted that “there were few Vietnamese [in West Berlin] at the time, and there [in the east] were our countrymen, so we felt love.”⁴ Yet, some former refugees had by this time acquired German citizenship, and therefore no longer shared a nationality with contract workers. This rhetoric of shared nationality stood in for a sense of shared ethnicity that drove refugees and southerners to extend their hands to contract workers. Thắm claimed that back then, “everyone was bringing [contract workers] home, feeding them... back then there wasn’t yet animosity between north and south.”⁵ Other refugee respondents have contradicted this point, noting that they helped despite believing contract workers to be communists aligned with the SRV.

These acts of coethnic solidarity eventually soured, Thắm recalled, because of the contract workers’ “vices.”⁶ The people Thắm housed made expensive calls to Vietnam, complained that she was cheap for turning off the radiator, and “made a pass at”⁷ her husband. Other refugee interviewees similarly reported negative experiences with helping contract workers. Yet, what is important is that they initially reached out because of shared ethnicity and nationhood, to help those they spoke of as kin.

⁴ Ở đây ít người Việt Nam lắm, ở đó có người đồng hương thì mình thấy thương.

⁵ Ai cũng đem về nhà, cho ăn, cho uống... Lúc đó chưa có kỳ thị giữa nam và bắc.

⁶ Tệ nạn

⁷ Anmachen

Many contract workers became acquainted with the pagoda during this time, though the process was far from seamless. Kiều, a devout Buddhist and anti-communist, noted that some refugees were unhappy with the involvement of LTBMR in aiding contract workers. She recalled people asking: “Why are you bringing communists into your homes, into our temple?”⁸ Contract workers replied that they “were born there [in the north] but they’re not communists.”⁹ These outreach efforts were also tinged with politics, as suggested by Chau, who arrived in West Germany through family reunification for refugees. She considered contract workers “victims of the communist regime.”¹⁰ Others helped, however, even while associating contract workers with the SRV regime.

The sustained convergence of contract workers and refugees at Linh Thửu Pagoda has provided a platform for coethnic tensions that has not been true for the pagodas in eastern Berlin. As of 2016, Linh Thửu Pagoda was the only community institution in Berlin where those from different regions of origin and migration streams regularly came together. As suggested by Thắm above, integration at the pagoda has been far from seamless. It has also resulted in the exodus of earlier southern disciples. Yet, it is difficult to assess the exact numbers of contract workers and refugees at Linh Thửu, especially when large festivals bring in crowds of over 1,000.

Despite a notable shift in its constituency, Linh Thửu Pagoda remains in many ways linked to refugees and their experience of exile.¹¹ This is evidenced by markers such as the flyer posted at the pagoda throughout the winter, advertising an event for the “Vietnamese refugee community of Berlin.” Linh Thửu also maintains exchanges and continues to coordinate events with Viên Giác Pagoda in Hanover, with the latter identifying itself as a refugee community and publishing a

⁸ *Tại sao dẫn Việt Cộng vào nhà, vào chùa?*

⁹ *Họ nói là ‘Họ bị đẽ ra ở xứ đó chứ họ đâu phải là việt cộng đâu.’*

¹⁰ *Nạn nhân của chế độ cộng sản*

¹¹ This is arguably changing, however. For example, Linh Thửu’s current architecture includes a stand-alone pillar beneath the outside entrance to its second-story prayer hall. This is a recreation of the famous One Pillar Pagoda in Hanoi, one of Vietnam’s most iconic temples.

regular magazine that features the RVN flag on the cover. Further, a black sign hanging on the wall of Linh Thửu aligns the pagoda with the UBSV, which remains banned in Vietnam.

The founding of the pagoda by refugees who came primarily from former South Vietnam, and the similar regional origin of many of the nuns, continue to resonate with followers of northern origin or contract worker backgrounds. This is demonstrated by Hanna, a teenaged child of a northern contract worker, whom I met on my first visit to Linh Thửu. Hanna suggested to me early on, after hearing of my interest in studying Vietnamese communities: “I think it’s better if you don’t ask about anti-communism.”¹² She explained: “There was a reporter, and she wanted to write about the dispute between northern and southern Vietnamese, but people did not want to speak with her because they did not want to be named.”¹³ Lowering her voice to a whisper in the guest room at where we were staying, Hanna clarified that these politics were not important to her or her northern relatives, though they were to southerners. While recognizing the tension between northerners and southerners and feeling saddened by it, Hanna continued to attend the pagoda. Similarly, when Đệp began attending the western pagoda, she was dismayed to hear southerners single out northerners, referring to them as “*bắc kỳ*” [literally, northern]. Having arrived in Berlin from northern Vietnam shortly after German reunification, Đệp ‘knew that temple was the southerners’. These “readings of space” (Glaeser 2000) reveal claims-making and contestation over which group’s experiences are privileged—and, hence, who claims belonging at Linh Thửu.

By the 2000s, the founding of the eastern pagodas allowed some former contract workers living in the east to shorten their commutes, participate in interpretations of Buddhism more

¹² “I think it’s better if you don’t ask about *chống cộng sản*.” In rare instances, as with Hanna, we spoke in a combination of three languages to accommodate her primary language (German), the language of the cultural space we were in (Vietnamese), and the language that would help her on her university entrance exams (English). When we met again in Autumn 2015, we spoke only Vietnamese and German.

¹³ *Es gab eine Reporterin, die über den Streit zwischen Nord- und Südvietnamesen schreiben möchte, aber die Leute wollten nicht mit ihr sprechen, weil sie nicht (namentlich) genannt werden wollten.*

suitable to their tastes, as well as avoid nationalisms with which they disagreed. Phở Đà Pagoda was inaugurated in 2007 on the grounds of the Asia Pacific Center (APC), an eastern Berlin business complex. The owner of the APC was a former contract worker who granted use of the land to a group of followers.¹⁴ The abbot and a second monk, who arrived later, both hailed from central Vietnam. In the 2010s, the abbot left to form a new pagoda, Từ Ân, on a purchased plot of land some five kilometers north. Roughly half of the followers came with him. The younger, second monk remaining at Phở Đà then became abbot. Temple attendance at Phở Đà ranged from 50-70 on a typical Sunday, while at Từ Ân it normally involved 15-20 people. To protect the confidentiality of followers and leaders of these temples, I will refer to these together as the eastern pagodas, and will not specify to which abbots or followers at which eastern temple I am referring. Finally, while these pagodas had internal divisions of their own, such conflicts did not relate to competing nationalisms. Therefore, I only draw on these eastern pagodas as they complement an understanding of coethnic relations at Linh Thứu.

While antagonisms between coethnics had been present to some degree since the fall of the Berlin Wall, conflicting nationalisms did not take center stage over shared ethnicity and nationhood until some years later. By the mid-1990s and 2000s, large numbers of former contract workers and northerners had begun attending Linh Thứu regularly. Former contract workers reported that, in response, former refugees began to bring the RVN flag with them to temple. The nuns had to intervene, telling refugees that bringing the flag and its accompanying political allegiances into the pagoda would alienate northern followers.

Former contract workers brought up this flag trial as a gesture that the spiritual leadership arbitrated on their behalf to rectify a wrong. One such respondent was Sơn, the northern contract worker whose landowning grandfather was executed (Chapter 2). Sơn attended one of the

¹⁴ My interviewees did not provide estimates, but Gertrud Hüwelmeier (2013: 82) cites 30 initial followers, primarily female former contract workers.

eastern pagodas regularly. He derided the flag-wavers at the western pagoda as “uncultured,”¹⁵ remarking that educated people would never do such a thing. Sơn did not criticize the RVN flag out of allegiance to the SRV, but because, to him, the national division that resulted in two flags had long been reconciled. He similarly disapproves of reminders of the war, like when people bring out old army uniforms. Refugees brought the flag to the pagoda, Sơn reasoned, to provoke people, create discomfort, and stake claims:

You go to temple and carry the flag of the Southern regime back then... Then northerners come to temple over there so the two sides look at each other uncomfortably... [They bring the flag to say] ‘This temple is ours, not yours.’¹⁶

Sơn clarified that, in recent years, the nuns instructed believers on how they should conduct themselves at temple. Bringing the RVN flag and antagonizing northerners did not meet such expectations. Sơn mused that some of those flag wavers stopped coming to temple. While this has been supported by refugee respondents, it is important to note that some former contract workers left Linh Thứu as well. One such person who was irked by the RVN flag was Huệ, the northern contract worker who self-identified as a cadre and communist (Chapter 2):

[The people at the temple in] Spandau... opposed communism. [I] went once and they hung the yellow stick flag [derogatory term for RVN flag]. Here [we’re] revolutionaries so we don’t go anymore [to Spandau]... Because they hang that flag and oppose our revolution.¹⁷

To Huệ, the red flag of present Vietnam would have been most appropriate and ‘prettiest,’ as it represented Hồ Chí Minh, who Huệ sees as making reunification possible. Indeed, pagodas founded by Vietnamese contract workers in Poland contain “state-legitimizing symbols... such as

¹⁵ *Thiếu văn hóa*

¹⁶ *Ông đi chùa thì ông cầm cờ của chế độ miền nam ngày xưa... họ đem theo đến chùa. Rồi người ở bắc đi sang bên chùa bên đấy thì hai cái phía nhìn nhau có vẻ khó chịu... ‘Cái này là chùa của bọn tao chứ không phải là chùa của chúng mày.’*

¹⁷ *Spandau... chống cộng. Đi một lần họ treo cờ ba que. Đây cách mạng thì các cô không đi nữa. Không đi nữa... Không đi đó về sau. Tại vì nó treo cờ nó chống phá cách mạng mình đó.*

a Hồ Chí Minh statue...” (Szymańska-Matusiewicz 2017: 63). The tension is thus not rooted in mixing religion and politics, but in bringing the *wrong* politics into a religious space.

Southern and refugee respondents remained noticeably silent about the development that resulted in national flags being discouraged from temple. One example comes from Lan, who cited crossing into the East as highly uncomfortable. Lan identified herself from the get-go as quite political, and suspected that many ‘Vietnamese brothers and sisters who went as contract workers’ shared her criticisms of the one-party Vietnamese state. She hated communists in the past because of what they did to her father, throwing him into a prison “re-education” camp, taking the South, and committing various human rights abuses. Through Buddhism, however, Lan learned to forgive and work through her hatred of individuals who may be aligned with the DRV/SRV. Lan’s hopes for reconciliation among Vietnamese did not stem from shared ethnicity alone; rather, she nurtured this through her faith, which taught her to love all living things.

Northerners and former contract workers similarly referred to the role of Buddhist teachings in overcoming conflicts over presumed national allegiances. One example comes from Đẹp, who felt sad about seeing southerners point out northerners at the western pagoda. Noting that tensions at Linh Thửu had diminished in recent years, Đẹp explained:

I think that later the Buddhists [followers] made more... bigger [events], like expanding [the temple]... Then at that time northerners came a lot, too... then after a time the Buddhists who had been coming to temple for a long time [southerners and refugees], I think, also understood the words of the scriptures so people no longer rushed into a temper like in the early days anymore.¹⁸

Like Lan, Đẹp saw the teachings of her faith as helping Vietnamese reconcile antagonisms with coethnics. Unlike Huệ and Sơn at the eastern pagodas, however, Đẹp neither expressed resentment toward the RVN flag nor toward those who brought it to temple.

¹⁸ *Chắc chị nghĩ sau này thì phật tử cái chùa mới làm nhiều... lớn hơn, kiểu như rộng rãi hơn.... Thì khi đó thì những cái người bắc thì người ta cũng đến nhiều... dần một thời gian các phật tử mà đã đi chùa lâu chị nghĩ chắc là cũng hiểu những cái lời nói của kinh thì người ta không còn những cái sân si như cái ngày thời mới đầu nữa.*

While Sơn, Huệ, Lan, and Đệp all sought to negotiate their politics with the teachings of Buddhism not to discriminate against coethnics, only Đệp subsumed politics under her faith in Buddhism. Born and raised in northern Vietnam, Đệp held strong political convictions, opposing the corruption of the SRV and wanting to emigrate because she had a sense that there was “no freedom.”¹⁹ While staying at Linh Thứu during a major holiday years earlier, Đệp had a deep spiritual experience during meditations, shedding tears of joy after finally understanding the scriptures about the love of family. Before her epiphany at temple, Đệp frequently worried about not being able to sustain her business, company employees being courted by competitors, and a host of other material concerns. By the time we met, and over the course of multiple encounters from 2015-2016, Đệp exuded an inner calm, and explained that she no longer worried about losing employees, for example, because those with whom she “has grace”²⁰ will stay with her, and others will move on. Likewise, Đệp’s attitude toward politics is that while she cannot mold the world to her liking, she can model the good that she wants to see in it.

Others retained strong political beliefs in their everyday lives but put them aside in the space of their pagodas for different reasons. For Lan at the western pagoda, Buddhism helped her to stop resenting individual communists, northerners, and former contract workers. Her opposition to the communist regime in Vietnam continued unabated, however, as she still attended protests and has refused to set foot back in Vietnam since her departure over 30 years earlier. At the eastern pagodas, Huệ and Sơn had no need to reconcile their nationalisms with Buddhism, as their pagoda de facto supported their stances. Their national allegiances and religion did not conflict because the eastern pagodas were neither founded nor populated by refugees. In the absence of competing nationalist claims at the eastern pagodas, Huệ and Sơn emphasized coreligiosity and denigrated the refugees for what they saw as creating problems

¹⁹ *Keine Freiheit*

²⁰ *Có duyên*

between coethnics. Yet, Huệ would not have taken offense at her pagoda flying the SRV flag—she only opposed when temples displayed the wrong flag.

The national allegiances of Huệ and Sơn, on the one hand, and Lan, on the other, are not only competing, but also incongruent. Lan frames her anti-communism as a challenge to an illegitimate and corrupt state. By contrast, Huệ and Sơn see Vietnamese reunification as a foregone conclusion; they view refugees and southerners as those who dredge up the past and unnecessarily create friction among a nation otherwise reunited. In calling for a cessation of nationalistic antagonisms by the refugees, Huệ and Sơn both emphasized that “south and north are one house [family],”²¹ and should not differentiate amongst themselves. Northerners insisted that southerners should accept that reunification already happened—and by accession of the South—, mirroring the relationship of West Germans to East Germans in Glaeser’s (2000) study. The former DRV’s image of Vietnam came to encompass the entire territory, and, therefore, to represent the reunified nation. Hence, refugees’ politicized nationalism should not intrude upon temple, because it represents a vision of Vietnam that is already lost.

Politicizing Coreligiosity

After the dust settled from the flag trial, pagoda attendees drew on religious traditions to differentiate among coethnics in ways that did not explicitly rely on or even refer to nationalist politics. In what follows, I will argue that the varied historical experiences of institutional religion in North, South, and reunified Vietnam have influenced coethnic relations within houses of worship in two ways. Firstly, the doctrinal atheism of the DRV meant that those living in the North before 1975 met obstacles from the state in pursuing religion. This complicated the practice and transmission of their faith. While southern respondents had been at least nominally Buddhist before migration, northerners “became active Buddhists only after migration in a (post)socialist

²¹ *Nam bắc (là) một nhà*

context” (Hüwelmeier 2013: 80). Secondly, respondents drew on these structural opportunities for practicing religion to explain real or perceived differences in forms of practice and behavior at Linh Thúu.

Respondents viewed the ability to freely exercise religious practices in the RVN versus DRV as having shaped divergent relationships to “authentic” Buddhism. As there were few studies of religious freedom in Vietnam prior to 1986, I rely in this section on recollections of interview respondents and from secondary literature. The DRV heavily curtailed the rights of religious communities in the North after 1954 (Lewis 2013). Visits to temples in the North were very risky, as Huệ, the cadre, elaborated. As a young adult in the DRV and, later, SRV, Huệ visited temple twice a month on the first and fifteenth of the lunar calendar. She had to “sneak off”²² during lunch breaks to hide her temple visits from others, out of fear of being exposed. Huệ described an atmosphere of tremendous religious intolerance back then, as the government demolished temples. This trend continued after reunification, when the state declared religious gatherings to be illegal. However, some individuals like Huệ clearly found ways to continue observing their faiths.

Northerners also had to contend with religion’s lack of immediate relevance or value to their everyday lives in socialist Vietnam. Cúc, a former contract worker and believer at the eastern pagodas, explained that she did not attend temple back in northern Vietnam partially because of where she was in her life cycle. She was a young adult with a busy work schedule who “did not know about temple.”²³ Moreover, there was no temple near her home: “In the North, there were very few temples in the rural areas, and they didn’t have monks/nuns.”²⁴ Subsequently, visitors who came to be on sacred grounds could not even benefit from teachings by spiritual leaders.

²² *Đi lén*

²³ *Cô cũng không biết đến chùa.*

²⁴ *Ở ngoài miền bắc chùa vùng nhà quê thì ít, không có sư.*

Northerners who began attending pagodas in post-socialist Germany were not converts per se, but, rather, had not practiced Buddhism even though it may have been in their families before 1954 (Hüwelmeier 2013). As I will elaborate shortly, this perceived difference between northern “rememberers” or converts versus southern lifelong practitioners undermined contract workers’ claims to Buddhism in the eyes of some refugees. Yet, Cúc and Huệ (both northern former contract workers) attended the eastern pagodas nearly daily, during which time they cleared weeds, replaced incense in the prayer halls, chanted meditations, and generally carried the burden of maintaining temple grounds. They and other (often unemployed) former contract workers committed themselves to their pagodas with more intensity than many former refugees, few of whom are unemployed (see Chapter 2 for a discussion of their socioeconomic profiles).

The evident devotion of many female former contract workers stands in contrast to southerners’ and refugees’ depictions of them. One example of this comes from Hồng, the southerner from the opening vignette who pointed out that all the songs playing at Linh Thửu were southern. She used to bristle at seeing northern contract workers at the western pagoda, having assumed they were all “godless atheists.”²⁵ “Back then, [even] hearing the language [accents] of northerners was hateful to people,”²⁶ she declared. Though Hồng claimed not to distinguish between northerners and southerners, she initially felt very uncomfortable seeing the former at temple. Speaking excitedly as we drank tea and ate fruit in her living room, Hồng imitated how she perceived northerners’ actions in the prayer hall, loudly chanting for all manner of luck in their professional and personal lives, which she found “ludicrous.”²⁷

Disciples across regions of origin and migration streams have articulated differences in worship practices between coethnics through a pseudopsychological reading of Cold War history.

²⁵ *Vô thần vô thánh*

²⁶ *Trước đây, nghe tiếng người bắc là người ta ghét.*

²⁷ *Buồn cười*

For instance, Hồng's husband, Hoàng, reasoned that northerners have been socialized to ask for material blessings at temple because they were plagued by famine and poverty in the North. He contrasted southerners as having had enough to eat and as prosperous, further offering that northerners could not afford to part with the donations they made to the pagodas. Hoàng implored Hồng not to blame northerners for their "customs."²⁸ Gradually, Hồng learned to tolerate these different behaviors at temple—though she still took the opportunity to mock what she saw as northerners' strange actions in the sacred space. The undertone of husband and wife's rationalization is that poverty and suffering left northerners unable to conduct themselves in a civil manner—quietly, humbly, and graciously in the way that they claim southerners do. Even while seemingly absolving northerners of blame, Hồng and Hoàng treat northerners as inevitable historical byproducts of socialization under communism.²⁹

Grievances against northerners' practices and influence at the pagodas at times shaped lay disciples' evaluations of the spiritual leadership as well. This is exemplified by Chau, who came to West Berlin in the 1980s through family reunification for refugees (see Chapter 4). As a lifelong Buddhist, Chau attended temple while growing up in the RVN. Speaking of behavior at temple, Hồng and Chau both described northerners asking for blessings for their businesses. While conceding that northerners truly believed in Buddhism, Chau felt that they had a limited understanding of the faith:

The northern brothers and sisters over there, their [faith in] Buddhism is real but they don't understand [Buddhism]. They just make offerings. They think there are spirits or something. They go into temple, they say, "Teacher, can you make an offering for me for fortune in my business?" ... Do you know what the nuns say? "OK, let me do it." That means the nuns don't know what Buddhism is. Our Buddha says not to worship spirits. We have to understand the religion... What kind of temple makes offerings for people in their business?... I don't think it's right.³⁰

²⁸ *Phong tục*

²⁹ Others have similarly observed such tropes of brainwashed socialist citizens. These include studies of Cubans (Eckstein 2009), Germans (Glaeser 2000; Hogwood 2000), and Poles (Erdmans 1998), among others.

³⁰ *Mấy anh chị người bắc ở bên kia, đạo phật là đạo thiệt nhưng họ không có hiểu. Họ cứ cúng quãi. Họ tưởng như thần linh vậy đó. Họ vào chùa, họ nói "cô ơi, cô cúng giùm cho con để con*

Chau further implicated the leadership in corrupting the religious space. She candidly described the nuns as ignorant, divorced from the tenets of Buddhism, and led astray by money:

Back then when I went to temple [at LTBM], it still seemed like a temple. You could meet with the abbess, nuns, they would come to talk to disciples. But then the temple expanded... then they expanded some more, then I started to dislike it. I am a Buddhist. Our Buddhism says we shouldn't show off that way. Now we come to make offerings, there's no closeness [of the nuns] to disciples, [the nuns] don't lecture for disciples to understand the religion. Whoever offers a lot [of money], the nuns will come down to greet them. Whoever offers little [money], forget it.³¹

She alleged that the infusion of contract workers to the western pagoda, and their focus on the material, has upended the values of the leadership. Beyond worship practices and who the nuns seemingly favored, Chau had concerns with proper interpretations of Buddhism and behavioral codes. She balked at the pagoda playing karaoke loudly over the speakers, which she considered an abuse of sacred space. Consequently, Chau stopped coming to the western temple, as did some of her friends. She felt it better for her spiritual education to just stay home to read meditations and learn to treat people well.

The above discussion demonstrates that individuals map coethnic divisions onto old configurations of north and south, but couch them largely in terms of the religious instead of the political. Respondents did not frame the nuns' involvement in coethnic reconciliation as political, though the spiritual leadership are surely the subject of intense competing political pressures. Complaints of northerners' (and nuns') supposed behaviors at temple at times reflect a gendered framing of religious practices that Alexander Soucy (2009) has found among Buddhists in

làm ăn được may mắn." ... Biết sư cô nói gì? "Được rồi, để cô làm." Vậy là sư cô đâu có biết đạo phật là gì đâu. Phật mình nói là không cúng vái thần linh. Mình phải hiểu đạo... Chùa gì mà đi cúng cho người ta làm ăn?... Cô thấy không có đúng.

³¹ *Lúc đó cô đến chùa cô thấy nó còn có cái vẽ là chùa [back when it was still LTBHMR]. Gặp được ni cô, sư cô, đến nói chuyện với đệ tử. Còn sau khi mở chùa lớn... lại thêm chùa lớn nữa, thì bắt đầu cô lại không thích. Cô là người đạo phật. Cái đạo phật thuần túy của mình đó là nói mình không có nên phô trương theo cái kiểu đó. Bây giờ vào cúng quãi, gán gửi đệ tử không có nè, giảng cho đệ tử hiểu đạo giáo không có nè. Ai cúng nhiều thì sư cô xuống chào hỏi. Ai cúng ít thì forget it.*

Canada. In his study, women tended to make offerings and carry out rituals, while the few men present studied texts and exuded the air of the educated, in touch with the core beliefs. Hồng's and Chau's comments reproduce this gendered hierarchy, recast with the figure of the feminized, ignorant contract worker versus the educated, devout southern refugee who stayed a course true to the faith. Neither Hồng nor Chau mentioned the flag wavers nor the pressures on nuns to intercede to maintain the peace at temple. They also largely limited their criticisms to the realm of the religious (though I discuss exceptions below). Chau spoke particularly caustically about the nuns, but did not mention the flag ordeal. Yet, in other situations, Chau has made abundantly clear how much the RVN flag means to her. When asked by an acquaintance during a Refugees for Germany social event if she had been back to Vietnam, Chau responded that she would never do such a thing unless the red flag had been removed and the yellow flag reinstated. It is therefore all the more noteworthy that Chau frames her complaints about northerners and nuns at the western pagoda chiefly in religious, rather than nationalistic language.

Despite characterizations of northerners as out of touch with proper Buddhism, former contract workers and northern respondents frequently practiced and invoked understandings of Buddhism that are identical to those of refugees and southerners. Pious northerners expressed that people should come to temple to learn to lead a moral life rather than to pray for blessings. Huệ, the cadre who boycotted the western pagoda, meditated and self-studied at home for years until the founding of the eastern pagodas. Regardless of temple attendance and rituals, she wanted to immerse herself in the words of Buddha. Đẹp, the northerner who felt sad about hearing “*bắc kỳ*” at Linh Thửu, committed to coming to the house of worship to liberate her mind from material concerns and to focus on improving herself as a person. Yet, Đẹp also indirectly affirmed some of Chau's complaints about northerners, noting:

In the north, religion is not like it is in the central region or in Saigon... [In the north] you go to temple and you beseech [Buddha]. You plead for yourself and for your family... [But

I later realized you go to temple] to change your life and your way of thinking, to be blissful.³²

As a young woman in northern Vietnam, Đẹp prayed to Buddha for success in romantic as in professional pursuits. She laughed that young people still do this at temple today. Rather than attributing this to youth and lack of insight into Buddhism, however, Đẹp explained it as a lack of understanding of Buddhism in the north compared to the central and southern regions.

Claims of worship differences between northerners and southerners likely signal differences among individuals at various stages of their relationship to Buddhism as a way of life. All the Berlin temples had a range of visitors, from those committed to the scriptures and working toward embodiment of Buddhist ideals, to those curious but still questioning, to still others who visited because they saw Vietnamese culture and Buddhism as synonymous. There are followers who lie, waste, and commit other offenses in their personal lives and within the space of the temple, as well as those who have seemingly overcome this-worldly concerns to avoid gossip, interpersonal conflict, and offenses against living things. In that light, Chau and Hồng's depictions of northerners serve to chastise the latter in religious rather than explicitly political terms.

Continuing Ties to Vietnam

Present homeland developments also reach into the life-world of the pagodas in ways that go above and beyond historically-framed arguments about (spiritually- and materially-deprived) North versus (prosperous) South. For one, Linh Thửu Pagoda prominently displays a sign outside its second-story prayer hall aligning itself with the UBSV. Respondents at Linh Thửu did not mention the significance of this signpost, though it means that the pagoda is not officially recognized in or supported by the Vietnamese state. By contrast, the abbot of one of the eastern

³² Ở ngoài bắc thì phật giáo nó không có như trong miền trung hoặc trong Sài Gòn... em lên chùa thì em cầu xin... xin cho bản thân mình và cho gia đình thôi... để thay đổi cuộc sống của mình và cái suy nghĩ của mình để nó hạnh phúc.

pagodas is part of the VBS. I met up with the abbot in early 2017, when his travels brought him to California. I inquired about the meaning of the UBSV, to which the abbot explained that the association simply dropped the word “unified” after 1981 and became the VBS. He did not mention politics in explaining the differences between UBSV and VBS—and, in fact, did not differentiate between the organizations. Instead, he noted that some simply did not want to affiliate with the state or become involved with secular institutions, while others saw the benefit of government recognition, including the provision of spaces for religious gatherings.

The spiritual leadership must at times negotiate conflicting allegiances among their followers, or between the beliefs of followers versus those of the monastics. One example of this comes from a second monk present on my visit with the Berlin abbot in California. The abbot stepped out to run an errand, so the young monk showed me around the temple grounds and explained that the UBSV formed after the 1960s Buddhist crisis. Though too young to have experienced this firsthand, the monk explained that the RVN regime brutalized and imprisoned monastics. Walking past the RVN flag as I prepared to leave hours later, I remarked that the temples in Berlin did not fly national flags. The monk replied in a hushed voice that if they did not fly this flag, they would be accused of being communist. Even while subtly expressing skepticism about the propriety of national flags and politics on sacred grounds, the monk saw himself and his fellow monastics as beholden to the political will of an anti-communist southern California audience.

The “long arm of the state” (Sunier et al. 2016) also reached into the Berlin pagodas. For instance, a woman who frequented one of the eastern pagodas was the wife of an officer of the Vietnamese Embassy. After her husband passed, she came regularly with her adult son to the pagoda to grieve. When she decided to repatriate to Vietnam, the abbot and other disciples sent her off at the airport. Though the woman came to the pagoda for deeply personal reasons, her link to the Embassy meant that the Vietnamese state had a presence in the religious space.

A final flashpoint for tensions was the degree of involvement in and return travel to Vietnam. During my first visits to the eastern pagodas, multiple people asked if I planned to join their trip to India, to welcome the Lunar New Year in the Buddha's homeland, and then continue onward to Vietnam. The eastern pagodas also organized money to send to various charities and relief efforts in Vietnam. At Linh Thứu, individual nuns had been away traveling at various points of the year, often to Vietnam. While these travels did not bother all believers, they were a sore point for some such as Chau, the southerner who felt the nuns did not practice appropriate Buddhism. She grudged the nuns their return trips, painting them as vacationing while their disciples in Germany needed spiritual guidance. Chau's criticisms are consistent with her lack of regard for the nuns at the western pagoda, and her view that they are not representatives of a true Buddhist path. Her complaint against nuns traveling to Vietnam, however, concerns both proper Buddhist conduct and the politics of return migration. Chau scorned return travel out of a deep rejection of the SRV state:

So many of my friends go back to Vietnam. So I ask: when you fled by boat, you were afraid they'd catch you, right? So now why do you have to go back to Vietnam? You go back to Vietnam firstly, OK, you say you go to visit family, visit your parents. But when you fled, did you ever think there'd be a day when you'd return to visit your parents? No. But now they've opened their doors... [W]e go back and bring money to the country of Vietnam, but who are we nurturing? We can't nurture our people...³³

Through gritted teeth and on the verge of tears, Chau insisted that bringing money to Vietnam only creates greed among the citizenry, because return migrants could not possibly help everybody in poverty. Instead, returnees rouse in those who live in Vietnam the image of what they could have become had they left. Chau continued that this money from abroad corrupts, leading people to steal, cheat, and degrade themselves to satisfy their greed. By contributing to

³³ *Bao nhiêu người bạn của cô đi về Việt Nam. Cô mới hỏi: lúc mà đi vượt biên, mà sợ nó bắt lại chứ gì? Bây giờ tại sao mà phải về Việt Nam? Mà về Việt Nam thứ nhất OK, mà nói mà về thăm gia đình, về thăm cha mẹ. Nhưng lúc đi vượt biên có bao giờ mình nghĩ có một ngày mình trở về mình thăm cha mẹ không? Không. Nhưng mà bây giờ nó mở cửa ra... Mình về là mình đem tiền về cho xứ Việt Nam mà nuôi ai? Không phải nuôi được người dân của mình...*

this, returnees' actions are "no different from giving money right to those old men [communists]."³⁴ Chau's resolve gave way to sobs at this point, as she maintained that she would love to see "our Vietnam" again, so full of natural beauty. But she would never do so until the regime was toppled and the yellow RVN flag returned to its glory.

Yet, return travel to Vietnam need not indicate support for the SRV regime. Across overseas Vietnamese communities—and those of other refugee groups as well—, individuals must reconcile engagement with the territory of the homeland with the state that oversees it (Furuya 2006). Some have few choices but to confront even the latter. For example, an elderly woman at one of the eastern pagodas recalled arranging to have her deceased husband's body repatriated to Vietnam. He wanted to be buried in his family's cemetery plot in his northern hometown. She detailed her difficulty negotiating the expenses with border agents, whom she expected to be more respectful of the dead. Similarly, Sơn, the contract worker who criticized flag wavers, describes interactions in Vietnam as "[f]rom start to finish about money."³⁵ He returns regularly, however, and does not equate return travel with support for the government.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this chapter, I investigated how individuals' political experiences in the sphere of the profane penetrate that of the sacred. I traced the initial encounter, divergence, and tenuous reconciliation of coethnics from different migration streams and regions of origin. In doing so, I have suggested initial outreach efforts by refugees toward contract workers to be rooted in understandings of shared ethnicity and nationhood. Nationalist underpinnings informed the character of the pagoda since before the end of the Cold War. They became salient once former contract workers began to attend the pagoda in large numbers. The conflict that ultimately arose resulted from perceptions

³⁴ *Chẳng khác nào đưa tiền vào cho các ông nội đó.*

³⁵ *Trước đến cuối cũng là tiền.*

of competing homeland nationalisms. But these homeland divisions do not stay buried in the past. Whether in the form of state-sanctioned religious affiliations or return visits, ongoing homeland connections matter.

The ways history and homeland connections matter extend beyond the political, making the sphere of the religious a battleground for coethnic factionalisms. This is not to say that respondents simply masked political grievances through religious frames; rather, the confluence of contract workers and refugees in a religious space meant that religion—in addition to shared ethnicity and nationhood—became a discursive site of negotiation. While nationalist politics do not disappear, religious difference-making also imposes its own logics and maps onto divisions between north and south, contract worker and refugee. To some degree, the nuns successfully pushed for a reconciliation between the coethnics who remained at the pagoda. However, I do not claim here that religion successfully competes or and replaces nationalism. Rather, factionalism, driven by competing nationalisms, grew to involve the religious in the arena of contestation; this subsequently created multiple, intertwined layers of coethnic boundary making. Hence, while political divisions maps onto religious life, the latter produces its own dynamics that challenge and reshape the political.

Where scholars have noted tension among religious coethnics, they have focused on competing belief systems. This chapter has instead shown how historical developments have politicized group boundaries among coreligionists. In the shared space of Linh Thửu Pagoda, attendees must reconcile their sense of shared identity around “race, ethnicity, religion, and nationality [all of which] are social constructions that have roots in long-standing self-conceptions of community” (Stein and Harel-Shalev 2017: 6). The individuals in my study spoke of and saw themselves as one people with Vietnamese from different migration streams and regions of origin. They acted upon this sense of shared peoplehood, as when refugees reached out to contract workers after the fall of the Berlin Wall even while some of the former resented the latter politically.

While respondents' subjective understanding of shared identities ran deep, this did not correspond to a close-knit community or clear-cut culture (Wimmer 2013: 204). Following in the tradition of Fredrik Barth, Andreas Wimmer notes that "ethnic [and national] distinctions result from marking and maintaining a boundary irrespective of the cultural differences observed from the outside" (Wimmer 2013: 22). That is, coethnics exhibit cultural distinctions, and non-coethnics may also share cultural traits. The specific regional factionalisms among Vietnamese (as discussed in Chapter 3) predate the 20th century. But it was the division of Vietnam and Germany during the Cold War that created structural differences between coethnics in terms of bureaucratic administration, a sense of representation by the government of the homeland, and the right to live in and belong to the host land. It is these particular Cold War logics that have unsettled the shared identities of Vietnamese coethnics, former conationals, and coreligionists.

The empirical chapters up until this point have focused on the micro- and meso-level interactions and boundary making of Vietnamese in Berlin. In the concluding chapter that follows, I link these up to a broader discussion of international migration and regime change as mirrored processes that interrupt the nexus of citizen-state-territory. I elaborate the implications of these disruptions for how people relate to their homelands, host lands, and coethnics abroad.

Chapter 6: Cold War Coethnics

By late summer 2016, Hạng, the northern international student assisting in a mental health research project, still struggled to recruit southern and refugee respondents to fill out her surveys. In the hopes of meeting her goals, we continued to attend events of the organization, Refugees for Germany, including a volunteer day at a psychiatric hospital. On a sunny afternoon in early July, Hạng and I arrived in time to walk with the dragon dance procession through the large complex that housed multiple brick buildings. We then sat on the lawn in front of the central building in the medical complex and nodded along to live jazz while patients and volunteers danced. Some hours in, Hạng approached the RfG organizer, Chính, to follow up with permission to conduct research with his organization. I left them to talk privately, and when Hạng came back, she beckoned me to walk with her to the public restroom, located in a building a short walk away. As we ambled across the medical complex, Hạng started to mention her conversation with Chính. She qualified that she does not want to speak badly of him or others but had grown increasingly frustrated with his evasiveness in responding to her request to distribute surveys. Chính told her that he would talk to the other RfG members but asked her to try to understand his position because RfG members were already “complaining”¹ about the survey. It had been nearly half a year since Hạng accompanied me to the RfG Lunar New Year celebration—where Chính introduced me to a German graduate student who, like me, received nearly instant access to the organization.

¹ *Beschwerden*

Hạnh still had not succeeded in recruiting RfG survey respondents by December 2017. From the time I left Berlin in summer 2016 to early winter 2017/8, Hạnh had intermittently attended RfG events such as biweekly gatherings and birthday parties. Several months earlier, the RfG leadership had agreed to host the principle investigator of the research project to talk about the study. RfG then advertised the event to interested audiences, which resulted in a “special interest day”² of experts rather than a chance to share the goals of the project with RfG and to enlist the participation of its members. When we spoke shortly before Christmas, Hạnh explained that the RfG core organizers asked her to wait while they deliberated their potential involvement further and would respond to her after the holiday break. The survey collection period had, by then, been extended by over a year, and was intended to conclude by January 2018. It bears repeating that RfG granted me, unlike Hạnh, nearly instant permission to conduct research without these protracted discussions among the core organizers. Moreover, neither Hạnh nor I had issues gaining permission to study the predominantly northern organization, Friendship and Adventure; the northern eastern pagodas; or the regionally-mixed western pagoda, Linh Thứu.

Hạnh’s labors make abundantly clear the impact of regime change and international migration on people’s everyday lives in at least three ways that involve “transborder membership politics” (Kim 2016). Hạnh intuitively anticipated and then repeatedly encountered southern refugees’ mistrust of her, which she—and they—attributed to her northern background. These experiences reveal, firstly, that regime change reorganizes people’s understandings of membership and belonging. The 1954 division of Vietnam created the categories of North and South—categories that people take as social fact. While the Vietnamese in my study see themselves as a shared people, they also delineate their regional identities through rhetoric and action—here, by erecting barriers to Hạnh’s access as a northerner. But this boundary work is also disproportionate: while the former

² *Fachtag*

refugees and southerners in RfG set obstacles to Hạng's access, the former contract workers and northerners in FaA did not similarly restrict mine. This reflects how the reunification of Vietnam, which followed the North's vision, left the Southern national "losers" understandably resentful. Northerners and former contract workers did not openly discriminate against southerners in the same way the latter often did to the former. This suggests that regime change unevenly reconfigures how people relate to a homeland. Secondly, these homeland divisions become transplanted onto new soil through international migration. This "intersocietal convergence" (Waldinger 2015) allows Southern nationalism to persist even though the South has fallen and even as people still living in southern Vietnam go about their daily lives in acknowledgment of this geopolitical fact. Being born after the war ended and Vietnam reunified, Hạng did not experience firsthand the North Vietnamese state, nor did she play any part in what refugees see as the aggression of the North against the South. Thus, the third insight revealed by Hạng's experiences is that the effects of the crossing of borders and people endure for generations. What has endured here is tension, born out of regime change in the homeland and kept alive through international migration. This tension reaches even those like Hạng, who grew up long after the war and resulting regime changes.

Though I situate this dissertation between international migration and nationalism studies, I diverge from the dominant literatures in some important ways. Firstly, I deemphasize assimilation and minority relationships with the majority host society. I focus instead on the negotiations and social relationships among immigrant and refugee coethnics, whose lives and social identities do not orient entirely toward the host country. As observed by Nina Glick Schiller and colleagues, "transmigrants are immigrants whose daily lives depend on multiple and constant interconnections across international borders and whose public identities are configured in relation to more than one state" (1995: 48). Yet, even those respondents who have never set foot in Vietnam since they left must negotiate their identities in relation to multiple states and national societies. This orientation toward home and host countries, thus, results fundamentally from

international migration. The fact of crossing an international border pulls the jurisdictions, protections, and social relations of one country onto another. Across the dissertation, I have shown how these border crossings enable individuals to reproduce as well as complicate preexisting social relations. Respondents reify these social identities and divisions of North and South, created by national conflict in Vietnam, and correspondingly map them onto the migration channels of contract worker and refugee.

Secondly, I have examined regime change that bisects nations rather than looking at multiethnic, multinational empires that privilege one ethnicity above others during the process of nationalizing (Brubaker 1996). Studies based on the latter have revealed the triadic relationships among nationalizing states, the (disappeared) national homeland, and national minorities. These studies further evidence the importance of boundary making even when the “cultural stuff” contained within the boundary exists outside of it. By contrast, I have traced the boundary work of those who continually question the content of shared ethnicity, nationhood, and religion, despite cultural similarities observed from the outside. I show that regime change fundamentally reorganizes how people relate to one another and to a nation-state, even when the nation contained by that state sees itself as one and the same.

Theoretical Implications of Border and People Crossings

Corresponding to the theoretical interventions laid out in the introduction to this dissertation, I argue the following. First, as mirrored processes, international migration and regime change disrupt the trinity of citizen-state-territory. Second, both processes are preconditions for ultimately dissolving the trinity because they create refugees. Third, these insights apply across regime types and systems. And fourth, individuals themselves reify social identities and divisions through symbolic and social boundary work.

Addressing political theories of citizenship and belonging, I argue that international and regime change disrupt the nexus of citizen-state-territory—that a citizen is a member of a state

that maps onto a territory. Though the Vietnamese in my study experienced a range of legal and migratory statuses across their lives, they attached themselves fiercely to the contract worker and refugee labels as well as the regional labels of North and South. People displayed allegiance to these Cold War categories by contesting shared ethnicity, nationhood, and religion. I examined the construction of coethnicity in historical perspective, reflecting on the regionalism of Vietnamese as a “national pastime” (Fall 1967) that predates 20th century Cold War developments. Respondents articulated their regionalisms through cultural preferences, as with accents and food. They also relied on readings of history and space, for example, by arguing that northerners and southerners formed particular habits because of the terrain and availability of arable land in their respective regions. Respondents further evidenced the “stickiness” of the North and South labels and the accompanying (and assumed) migratory statuses of contract worker and refugee. Indeed, these Cold War labels endure because Vietnamese map pre-existing regional categories onto migratory statuses in the destination country.

Secondly, I contend that international migration and regime change represent first steps in the undoing of the citizen-state-territory trinity. Scholars following in the tradition of Hannah Arendt have argued that only refugees disrupt the citizen-state-territory nexus. My comparative case builds on this by showing that non-refugee migrants (international students, economic migrants) also disrupt this trinity. They do so by becoming refugees or forced migrants themselves, long after their initial international migration. Drawing on the natural experiment of refugees to West Germany and contract workers to East Germany and the Eastern Bloc, I address the designation of individuals as migrants versus refugees, and the implications of these designations for their life opportunities. Specifically, I trace how inter-state relations channeled some people into the category of refugees, despite them not having experienced violence or persecution. Meanwhile, others who did directly experience violence and persecution ultimately left Vietnam under the economic label of contract worker. Moreover, Southern international students to West Germany and contract workers to the Eastern Bloc became forced migrants of

sorts after having originally left their homelands for reasons unrelated to persecution. Rather, regime change in the homeland (for RVN students) and the host land (for contract workers) transformed them, albeit in different ways, into forced migrants and refugees. These findings contribute to growing evidence of the disparity between refugee versus migrant categorizations and the actual experiences of individuals. With these findings, I also intervene in the debate about whether refugees are migrants by maintaining that refugees represent a particular class of migrants. Because international migration and regime change create refugees, they serve as prerequisites for the dissolution of the citizen-state-territory relationship that is ultimately severed by refugeehood.

My third contention is that the aforementioned findings apply well beyond Vietnamese migration to Germany, to cases involving migration to capitalist as well as to socialist countries. More concretely, my comparative study bridges the academic literatures on critical refugee studies and socialist migrations. As developed by Yên Lê Espiritu (2006, 2014), critical refugee studies calls attention to war, empire, and race in the production of refugees. While aiming to do the same, I complicate this by looking at temporary workers and other migrants moving within socialist contexts in what Christina Schwenkel (2014) has termed “socialist mobilities.” By doing so, I show the construction of both categories, refugee and labor migrant, to be bound up in international webs of alliances and hostilities. West Germany, for example, faced pressure from its American allies to do more for the Cold War cause by aiding Vietnam. Likewise, socialist labor exchange programs stemmed from more than just an economic rationale: Eastern Bloc countries that engaged in labor exchange acted in the spirit of socialist solidarity even when these exchanges did not benefit them financially (Apostolova 2017). Moreover, western and eastern host countries both shielded asylum-seekers who feared persecution from their home states. This demonstrates that international migration and regime change, writ large, complicate the relationship of citizens to a state and territory, regardless of the types of regimes involved.

Fourth, I suggest that geopolitical labels and allegiances persist at a group level through the boundaries that individuals enact. One way I delve into this coethnic boundary work is through narrating the experiences of women who straddled two social organizations, one run and attended by former refugees and the other by contract workers. I explore how these women experienced attempts to police their social networks. All three encountered social boundaries from the refugee organization in the form of rebukes and varying degrees of exclusion. By contrast, the contract worker organization largely welcomed the women. This affirms the importance of Vietnamese reunification by accession of the South. Whereas the refugee organization frequently referenced Southern nationalist politics and required evidence of political loyalty from non-southerners, the contract worker organization focused on a culture and an understanding of nation that became mainstream because the North won the war. They did not see their organization's events as political, because their vision of the nation was taken-for-granted. I also address how those who do not fit the regional and migratory combinations of southern-refugee and northerner-contract worker, like Hạnh, still become socialized into these nationalist partitions.

The second way I address boundary making is through considering coethnics' attempts to overcome divisions, and to what effect. I show that a Buddhist pagoda, the only site where people from both migration streams and regions of origin come together in a sustained fashion, becomes another social observatory in which Cold War contestation over nationhood and nationalism play out. In a religious space that places a high premium on accord, respondents have had to come to terms with the presence of coethnic others from opposite sides of the Cold War divide. Rather than demonstrating the primacy of religion over this-worldly matters, however, lay disciples enacted boundaries between themselves and others. In doing so, they challenged the content of shared religiosity. Vietnamese immigrants and refugees point to differences in the practices and rituals performed at the pagoda (donating, praying) to further distinguish between themselves and coethnics from different migration streams and regions of origin. While articulating their shared

faith at a one level, respondents complicated the content and depth of their relationship to Buddhism.

Taken together, these insights reflect how international migration and regime change, as the crossing of borders and people, powerfully restructure the social identities and relationships of people caught in these processes. Rather than being a clean uprooting from one country to another, international migration forges connections between home and host countries. These connections change not only how migrants relate to people and the state back home, but how they see themselves vis-à-vis and interact with coethnics who have also left. Like international migration, regime change reconfigures membership and belonging. I have focused exclusively on regime change that results in the formation of new states, as with the rise of fifteen states after the fall of the Soviet Union. Because modern states operate on the principle of nationalism, the creation of new states in the image of defined nations means that some segments of the population become marked by governing powers as national minorities or internal enemies. Where international migration and regime change intersect, in these instances, is through the transplanting of regime change-driven conflict onto new soil.

Methodological, Conceptual, and Practical Implications

This study sought to denaturalize the nation-state by considering how local-level developments in the city of Berlin are embedded in and intersect with global changes in Western Europe and Southeast Asia, with the heavy hands of the United States and Soviet Union hovering in the background. The social processes I documented necessarily transcend one nation-state, as refugees cast their lots with the reunified nation-state of Germany. Fitting the more colloquial treatment of transnationalism, contract workers with strong ties to Vietnam literally live their lives across borders. Yet, Germany is a unique host land in that its national divide and reunification inversely mirror those of Vietnam. One fruitful extension of this work, then, would be to compare across national contexts as well as national-origin groups. Such efforts are already underway. For

example, I am participating in a project on forced migration and inequality by the United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER) that has brought together a multidisciplinary team to compare the integration of Afghan and Vietnamese refugees and forced migrants in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and Germany. The insights of this dissertation would only benefit from further attempts to overcome methodological nationalism.

In addition to the nation-state, other units of social analysis taken for granted in the social sciences and humanities include those of ethnicity and nationhood (as in Western Europe) or race (as in the United States). As Jaeun Kim (2016) convincingly argues, nation-building—as with racial formation (Omi and Winant 1994 [1986])—is fundamentally political, contingent, and performative. Attending to the socially constructed nature of these categories does not require that scholars abandon the labels. For instance, it is precisely because Filipinos identify as such ethnically, while distancing themselves from an overarching Asian label, that we can speak of “racial miscategorization” (Ocampo 2016). Similarly, while focusing on people who self-identify as Vietnamese, this study has emphasized how coethnicity is articulated and performed in conflicting ways. To parse out ties resulting from shared ethnicity from those of growing up in a shared country, it would be useful, for example, to consider ethnic Chinese as well as others who do not identify as Kinh (ethnic Vietnamese) but who hail from Vietnam (Lieu 2011).

The findings of this study speak to other cases of international migration and regime change as well. For migrants coming from countries with internal divisions along ethnic, religious, or national lines, my study suggests that migration is a process that pulls the society of the homeland onto the host land, creating opportunities for the reproduction as well as transformation of homeland divisions. Such transplanting of homeland divisions occurs, for example, among Cubans (Pedraza 2007), Poles (Erdmans 1998), and Asian Indians to the United States (Kurien 2001). While the examples of Cuban and Polish migration directly involve regime change-driven migration, however, that of South Asians does not. The Muslim and Hindu Indians in Prema

Kurien's study clash over opposing constructions of the Indian nation, but these nationalist politics did not directly cause migration. The South Asian subcontinent, more broadly, underwent several reconfigurations after India's independence from the United Kingdom in the mid-20th century. In light of this, my case study speaks to the lasting effects of regime change generations after the original events took place. More broadly, I seek to illuminate processes of intragroup conflict that may appear less obvious in countries that have not experienced systematic national division and reunification.

This project also has implications for understanding people who have experienced regime change, whether or not they have migrated internationally. For North and South Koreans residing on the Korean peninsula, for example, my findings suggest that efforts at reconciliation may encounter difficulties because of changes in identity stemming from decades of socialization under different political systems. We can glean this both from my comparative case of Vietnamese to Germany as well as from studies of relationships among former East and West Germans post-reunification (Glaeser 2000; Hogwood 2000). As three prominent examples of Cold War national division, the cases of Vietnam, Germany, and Korea can inform one another in rich ways. For instance, the cases of native Germans as well as Vietnamese in Germany suggest that nations divided by regime change come to develop differences in language, behavior, and so forth. Both Germans and Vietnamese in Germany have made efforts at reconciliation as well. For the Berliners in Andreas Glaeser's study, this involved actively integrating bureaucratic offices such as the police force. For my Vietnamese respondents, this included refugee efforts to aid their contract worker coethnics, as well as social invitations from the latter to the former. For North and South Koreans, this is clear in the solidarity displayed at the 2018 Winter Olympics, when they played on a unified team. What hindsight can offer about the German and Vietnamese cases, however, is that social interactions often serve to further reinforce the divide between coethnics. At no point did Germans or Vietnamese see themselves as one people and act upon their shared peoplehood more than in the fervor and elation that swept Germany after the fall of the Berlin

Wall. It was when people reunited with their coethnics on the other side of the wall, however, that they often confirmed negative stereotypes they had about the “other,” and became, ironically, “divided in unity” (Glaeser 2000). These divisions play out not only among individuals, but affect entire societies.

I offer some practical insights for current debates about refugees and efforts to process them as well. During my fieldwork in Germany, there was increasing public and media outrage against “bogus” refugees (Neumayer 2005) who continued moving on to wealthier countries rather than remaining in the countries where they first arrived. The logic is that their pursuit of economic self-interest invalidates their claims for needing safe haven. But if we take refugees as a particular class of international migrants, as I have argued, then the focus on their long-term needs expands to encompass not just protection, but prospects for economic resettlement (Long 2013).

Regarding current refugee flows from the Middle East to western countries, my study suggests that refugee and immigrant arrivals may in time reproduce the divisions that they left behind. As one specific example, people flee conflict in Syria regardless of whether or not they support Bashar al-Assad’s Ba’ath Party. Rather, people with varying ethnic, religious, and political allegiances may leave for the very understandable reason that their country has become a war zone. By migrating internationally, these refugees and immigrants carry with them homeland loyalties and divides that may yet outlive the physical conflict in Syria. Some countries indirectly address this capacity for tension among coethnic migrants and refugees by encouraging solidarity efforts. For example, the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF)³ provides infrastructure for migrant organizations, run by and for migrants, to serve as a bridge between them and the host society. Funding for such projects at times requires collaboration from several organizations representing an ethnic group, for instance. The Federal Association of Vietnamese

³ *Bundestamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge*

in Germany,⁴ an umbrella organization with offices throughout the country, constitutes one such attempt to build solidarity among coethnics while fostering integration. Yet, my respondents criticized this organization as being too close to the SRV government and therefore only addressing the interests of a segment of the Vietnamese population. Hence, federal umbrella efforts, while potentially fruitful, would benefit from having a range of participants who represent at times competing interest groups from the homeland.

Post-conflict reconciliation, if it can ever be completely achieved, is a difficult and prolonged intergenerational process. As Hiên, the former GDR student and contract worker noted, German reunification did not involve some of same atrocities that Vietnamese reunification did, particularly regarding the imprisonment and persecution of suspected Southern regime loyalists. As he expressed, people can better relinquish their resentment if reconciliatory efforts are made. Such efforts often come too late. The United States government, for example, did not acknowledge or apologize for its internment of Japanese Americans during World War II until over four decades later, after many survivors had already passed. In 2017, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau likewise apologized to indigenous communities for the compulsory boarding school system that had forcefully separated children from their families since the 19th century.⁵ In Vietnam, the government gestured toward reconciliation with a 2000 photo exhibit that listed the names of fallen Southern photojournalists to a memorial slab for their “countrymen” from the North (Schwenkel 2008). Likewise, while the refugees in my study often resent northerners and contract workers, they readily provide assistance when the people they see as their ethnic kin suffer. In recognition of these steps toward unity, however overdue or incomplete, scholars studying post-conflict situations should present moments of solidarity alongside discord.

⁴ *Bundesverband der Vietnamesen in Deutschland e.V. (BVD)*

⁵ Ian Austen, “Trudeau Apologizes for Abuse and ‘Profound Cultural Loss’ at Indigenous Schools,” *New York Times*, November 24, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/24/world/canada/trudeau-indigenous-schools-newfoundland-labrador.html>.

Questions that Remain

Where does this emphasis on border- and people- crossings leave later generations, who do not personally experience regime change or international migration? I have alluded to this across each empirical chapter, showing how people born or raised in Germany to Vietnamese parents—and long after the war in Vietnam ended—become socialized into North/South divisions. As with their parents, the second generation at times engage in bridging efforts, particularly during their university years. The children of refugees and contract workers with whom I spoke largely grew up in a narrowly-defined Vietnamese environment, where they rarely formed friendships with those outside of their regional affiliations. Evidence from the German case further suggests that, even among the second generation, reunification by accession tends to stratify citizens because the nation-state prioritizes one view of history, culture, and progress over others. Yet, the story of the Vietnamese second-generation in Germany remains an open question, as the children of former contract workers are only now entering adulthood.

The second generation, as well as the first, are witnessing a moment of tremendous opportunities for global travel that also redefines how they relate to a real or imagined homeland (Barber 2017; Wu 2005). I have referred to the incongruent ways that Vietnamese view return travel as sources of joy and reconnection, frustration, or moral debasement. How return travel reshapes people's understandings of the homeland, however, varies. Speaking with former contract workers and international students who returned to Vietnam, Schwenkel (2014) attends to how these repatriations shape both migratory channels abroad and stratification within Vietnam today. It is my hope that further research will engage with the ongoing importance of the homeland in similarly productive ways.

In closing, this dissertation has shown how international migration weaves societies together, even as these interwoven societies have already been internally fractured by regime change. These regime change-driven international migrations transplant preexisting divisions onto new

soil, creating concurrent opportunities for reconciliation and further hostilities among people from the same country of origin. By looking at people who are caught in processes of state dissolution and reconstitution, I affirm the continuing importance of the nation-state in the lives of those who cross, and are crossed by, borders.

Appendix 1: Tables

Table 1. Sample Characteristics (<i>n</i> = 81)		
	%	Range
Migration Pathway		
Refugee	16	
Refugee Family Reunification	12	
Contract Worker	22	
Contract Worker Family Reunification	14	
International Student	14	
Visa (Overstayer)	8	
Undocumented	7	
Other	7	
Age		20 - 76
Generational Status		
1st	76	
1.5	18	
2nd	6	
Sex		
Male	43	
Female	57	

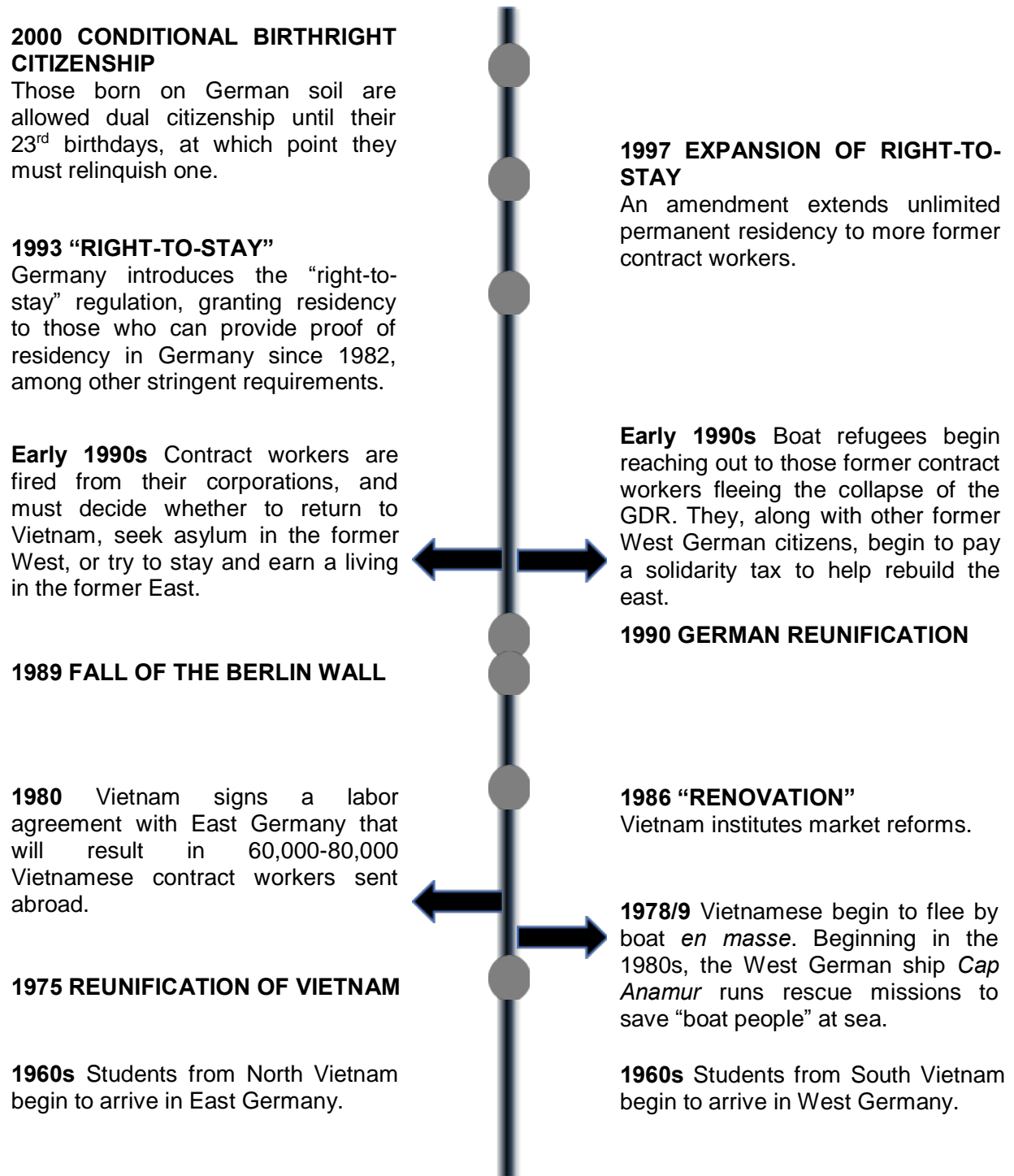
Table 2. Key Respondent Characteristics

	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Birth Decade</u>	<u>Birth Region</u>	<u>Migratory Path</u>	<u>Migration Year</u>	<u>Citizenship</u>
Anh	F	1950	south	asylum	1991	Vietnam
Chau	F	1960	south	family reunification	1982	Germany
Chính	M	1960	south	refugee	1980	Germany
Dũng	M	1960	south	contract worker	1988	Vietnam
Hạnh	F	1980	north	international student	2014	Vietnam
Hiền	M	1950	north	contract worker	1988	Vietnam
Hòa	M	1950	south	refugee	1981	stateless
Hồng	F	1950	south	travel visa	1993	Germany
Huệ	F	1940	north	contract worker	1988	Vietnam
Kiều	F	1950	north*	international student	1973	Germany
Kim	F	1990	central	international student	2015	Vietnam
Nghĩa	M	1960	north	contract worker	1988	Vietnam
Sơn	M	1940	north	contract worker	1981	Vietnam
Tài	M	1950	north*	refugee	1985	Germany
Tín	M	1940	south	refugee	1981	Germany
Trinh	F	1960	north	contract worker	1989	Vietnam

Note: Kiêu and Tài were born in the north and speak with northern accents, but identify as southerners. The remaining respondents identify with their regions of birth.

Appendix 2: Figures

Figure 1. Timeline of Migrations and Political Developments



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