RESEARCH ESSAY

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"There's No Solidarity": Nationalism and Belonging among Vietnamese Refugees and Immigrants in Berlin

Sitting cross-legged on the floor of his one-room apartment in Berlin, Long 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?"[1] Bảo, a family friend sitting to Long's left, interjected after an extended pause: "There's no solidarity."

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This article examines the attitudes and behaviors of individuals like Long toward fellow Vietnamese (coethnics).[2] Long, who left his home in northern Vietnam in his twenties, entered Germany through a third country in the Schengen Zone of free movement in Europe.[3] Without documentation or knowledge of the German language, Long relied on coethnics to help him find a service sector job, even though he tries to limit his interaction with other Vietnamese. I am exempted, however, because I am a "southerner" and therefore, he argues, live more freely as a result of the diluted reach of communism into the south. In Long's logic, Vietnamese with southern roots literally embody anticommunism, a logic that conflates an individual's region of birth or ancestry in Vietnam with culture, history, and politics.

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In this essay, I focus on Berlin as a site that, during the Cold War, received refugees fleeing the collapse of the Republic of Vietnam (RVN, or South

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Vietnam) to the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG, or West Germany), as well as contract workers from the reunified Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV, or Vietnam) going to the German Democratic Republic (GDR, or East Germany). The 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall dramatically increased the chances of coethnics from separate migration streams encountering one another.[4] In this context of a reunified Germany, I ask: How do ethnic Vietnamese individuals' perceptions of coethnics complicate or reinforce social divisions?[5]

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.[6] This unique migration scenario enables a critical examination of problematic binaries such as communist/anticommunist, revolutionary/nonrevolutionary, and defender/aggressor during the war.[7] 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."[8] 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/anticommunist) while recognizing that these categories do not map cleanly onto one another.

Based on in-depth interviews and fourteen months of participant-observation between 2013 and 2016, I chart how ethnic Vietnamese in Berlin at times explain coethnic divisions as incidental or based on cultural differences, and at other times politicize and even criminalize perceived differences between northerners and southerners, contract workers and refugees. My findings follow in two parts: firstly, I discuss expressed cultural differences based on participant-observation and semi-structured interviews. In the second part of the findings, I draw on interview data with only those individuals who arrived in Germany before, or 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/anticommunist reveal how overseas

Vietnamese reflect on and espouse their views of histories of the nation and war, and the very tangible and often contentious consequences for coethnic relations.

Overseas Vietnamese Communities and Relationships with Vietnam

This case study 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 in the 2006 inaugural *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* issue to "take seriously the range of Vietnamese perspectives on the before-and-after of the Vietnam War."[9] 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."[10] In an alternative strategy, An Tuan Nguyen deemphasizes refugees altogether by focusing on a comparatively understudied migrant group: Vietnamese professionals in the United States.[11] In highlighting a group at the periphery of Vietnamese and migration studies, An Tuan Nguyen reveals ongoing and changing relationships between Vietnam and countries of mass resettlement of Vietnamese.

Of particular relevance to this article are studies of contract workers to the GDR and the Eastern Bloc in what Gertrud Hüwelmeier and Christina Schwenkel have termed, respectively, "socialist pathways of migration" and "socialist mobilities."[12] 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. In studying contract workers and refugees simultaneously, I therefore build on Hüwelmeier's and Schwenkel's insights, while showing how the refugee narrative of trauma and displacement—"not as legal classification but as an idea"—informs coethnic relations in a context of varied migratory pathways to Berlin.[13]

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

Đổi Mới [Renovation] has, among other consequences, improved opportunities for research that have been seized upon by Vietnamese studies scholars.[14] 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, research by Kieu Linh Caroline Valverde reveals how relationships between Vietnamese in the United States with their former homeland shaped the politics of music production and dissemination. She notes, specifically, that Vietnamese music in the United States appeared "stagnant" by the mid-1990s with a fixation on songs that were popular in Sài Gòn before 1975. This trend started to shift against a backdrop of increasing exchanges between Vietnamese overseas and Vietnam.[15] This is not to suggest that Renovation resolved any lingering antagonism between Vietnam and exiles abroad: for instance, Hiroki Furuya argues that Vietnamese Americans have reconciled return travel to Vietnam with continuing opposition to the Vietnamese regime.[16] Such nuances in relating to the homeland are further elaborated by Ashley Carruthers, who notes 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."[17] In Berlin, the perceived reach of the Vietnamese state in the embodied form of contract workers appears at the 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.

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At the heart of this essay are social relationships between people of Vietnamese origin and coethnics from different migration streams and regions. I address social relationships by examining attitudes and behaviors toward others of the same ethnicity. Firstly, I consider how Vietnamese depict themselves and coethnics. Mandy Small's study of remittances is an important reference for this, as he examines how Vietnamese in Vietnam envision overseas Vietnamese "over there."[18] Small forcefully 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."[19] Responden[illegible] my study similarly engage in a [illegible]nticization of an unrealized path: in the opening vignette, [illegible]'s idealization of the RVN reflects how he imbues "south Vietnamese" persons with political meaning. Unlike the individuals in Small's study, however, [illegible] occupies the same spatial reality as the coethnics he regards, thus raising the question of how these imaginaries are tempered or reproduced 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.[20] Yet, the potential for cooperation abroad, as well as in Vietnam, is often overlooked. An exception is Schwenkel's 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 the former Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV, or North Vietnam).[21] I will return to this point in my discussion of goodwill and ill will among Vietnamese after the fall of the Berlin Wall, but will first provide a discussion of the field site and respondents.

Methodology

This essay is based on fourteen months of participant observation and semi-structured, in-depth interviews with boat refugees, former contract workers, their families who migrated through family reunification, and those who came undocumented after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Because I am interested in the period following the collapse of global communism for the second part of the findings, I restrict that part of the analysis to interview data with forty-six individuals who came to East, West, or present Germany before or during 1992. This includes Vietnamese contract workers and undocumented immigrants who crossed from the former Soviet Union into reunifying Germany. However, I continue to draw on participant-observation with immigrants and refugees who arrived as early as the 1970s and as recently as 2015. I conducted the interviews in Vietnamese, German, or some combination of the two. Each interview lasted about two hours, though [illegible]e instances the interviews ran nearly five hours. I recruited interviewees through various sites across Berlin, including three Buddhist temples, an Evangelical church, and two community

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organizations attended by former contract workers and/or refugees.[22] For the purposes of this essay, I draw on ethnographic observations largely in the first part of the findings, and in a more limited capacity in the second part when my observations directly contradict or add nuance to respondents' recounting of events during and after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The ethnic Vietnamese in this study included a roughly equal number of contract workers, boat refugees, and the families of both. While nearly all the refugees and their families have German citizenship, only some former contract workers do, despite eligibility for naturalization. This may have resulted from naturalization laws requiring a certain level of knowledge of the German language: the second wave of contract workers 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" about his Vietnamese nationality. By our interview in 2016, Lâm had lived in Germany longer than he had in Vietnam, yet retained strong homeland ties. By contrast, most of the refugees sponsored their families' move to Germany, and often had few close ties remaining in Vietnam. The refugees and those who arrived through family reunification largely work for German corporations, while former contract workers include many people who are self-employed, unemployed, and, less often, employed by another person or entity.

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While studying relationships among coethnics of different migration streams and regions of origin, it became apparent that my own positionality impacted the types of access I gained. My host of demographic characteristics and life experiences—related to my class, gender, age, and linguistic abilities—undoubtedly shaped not only respondents' perceptions of me during research, but also the questions I asked and assumptions I had of them. Of these features, my ethnic (Vietnamese), national (American), and regional (southern Vietnamese) identification seemed to most obviously yield moments of insight and advantage in the field. My American upbringing often served as a point of fascination and even exoticism for those who had traveled to the United States and those who still dreamed of going, and often segued into questions about my thoughts on life in

Germany versus the United States.[23] At times, my national belonging facilitated discussions of coethnic relations of key interest to me: for instance, a former contract worker at a 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]" would be treated walking down the street in the Vietnamese communities in California. Such perceptions of life in overseas Vietnamese communities fit Helen B. Marrow's finding that "migrants are now embedded within a social field that connects flows of people and ideas across several different receiving countries," here, with people of Vietnamese origin in Germany exhibiting familiarity with the politics of Vietnamese in America.[24]

If my American nationality elicited a certain curiosity, the fact that I was a child of an Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) soldier who served time in a "re-education" camp granted me special access to a 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 boat refugee men in their sixties, 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 regions of Vietnam, and 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—even though one of the two men originally came from the North and spoke with a clear northern accent, himself. In defense of the research team, whom I knew personally, I insisted that these questions aimed to glean a portrait of individuals as it relates to certain health outcomes, and their signatures were necessary to justify the small compensation given to respondents for their time. I emphasized that any information they provided would remain confidential. Because the men remained skeptical, I pointed out that I had just interviewed one of them a few hours earlier, asking similar questions concerning politics, religion,

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and his migration history. To my astonishment, the man I interviewed remarked that I am allowed to ask him because I am the child of southerners, specifically an ARVN soldier, and grew up in the United States; had I been a Vietnamese national, he "would have strangled [me]."

While my very apparent southern Vietnamese accent granted me access to former boat 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 or sugarcoated in my presence. In 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 event, to which he explained: "You're invited. Do you know why? Because you're a child of the south." He insisted I had not been marked by communism in the same way he and his contemporaries had, and consequently—to him—I lived more freely and honestly than the northerners in the room who came as contract workers. 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 "uncivilized," "uncultured," and that the younger generation such as myself do not concern themselves with such matters.

However, my identity and research interests proved cumbersome when meeting 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 were aware that 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 and fear lessened as I became more of a regular attendee at various community events and spaces, but ultimately, I was much less successful at recruiting those who would rather not discuss politics, those who identified themselves as more or less apolitical, or those with an uncertain legal status. To explain the complex histories of Vietnamese migration to Germany, and the tenuous situation of some of the ethnic Vietnamese population there today, I offer a historical overview of migration.

Vietnamese Migration to (West and East) Germany

BOAT PEOPLE AND FAMILY REUNIFICATION

Within a few years after the end of the war in Vietnam, roughly from 1978 onwards, those unwilling to live under the new government began to flee by sea. The mass departure of Vietnamese by boat sparked a humanitarian crisis that the United States, France, and allied countries—including West Germany—sought to address through concerted efforts to rescue and resettle boat people. One well-known intervention was carried out by *Cap Anamur*, a West German ship that rescued many stranded at sea in the early 1980s. Boat people from Vietnam resettled in West Germany under the stipulations of the 1951 Geneva Convention. The officially recognized refugees received temporary residence, welfare provisions such as job training and language classes, then permanent residence with the option of becoming naturalized.[25] These extraordinary provisions resulted from West Germany initially accepting Southeast Asians only as part of a "contingent" group of refugees.[26] By 1979, the government had doubled the original quota of ten thousand refugees, and the number rose to thirty-eight thousand by 1984.[27]

CONTRACT WORKERS

The end of combat in 1975 did not mean the end of economic distress in war-torn Vietnam. In 1980, in an effort to ease unemployment, transfer skills, fill labor shortages, and alleviate trade debts with its allies, the government of reunified Vietnam formalized its existing worker-training program with East Germany through a bilateral contract worker agreement.[28] Vietnamese represented a plurality of the contract workers in East Germany, and that number increased tenfold in the 1980s.[29] Unlike refugees, who were intended to integrate into West German society, the contract workers were not meant to intermingle with East Germans. Their goal was, in the first wave of contract worker migration, knowledge transfer, and, later, primarily to fill a labor shortage.

In contrast to the expressed solidarity between socialist workers during the Cold War, Germany no longer received Vietnamese workers warmly after national reunification. In the transition to a market economy, the

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reunified government of Germany began offering an incentive of three thousand German Marks to contract workers to return to Vietnam.[30] The promise of 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 twenty-one thousand a year later.[31] Moreover, from 1990 to 1995, Vietnam refused to accept voluntary returnees who had unsuccessfully applied for asylum in Germany. For some years, tens of thousands of workers lived in uncertainty, having no residency or means of earning a wage, as former East German companies reduced their workforce or closed their factories, laid off and sought to repatriate nearly forty thousand Vietnamese.[32] Those intending to regularize through the 1993 "right to stay" [*Bleiberecht*] legislation for former contract workers required proof of social security contributions, a place to live, and German language competence. Moreover, the stipulation regarding clean criminal records was complicated by the rise of what newspapers referred to as "cigarette mafias." Having lost their jobs and still being refused work permits to western Berlin after reunification, some Vietnamese turned to smuggling cigarettes across the former Soviet Union border and selling them without a license.[33] News reports of illicit cigarette trading, gang wars, and shootouts in the eastern Berlin neighborhoods of Marzahn and Lichtenberg emerged throughout the 1990s, painting a negative portrait of former workers.[34] I will return to the fall of the Berlin Wall and black market activities in the second half of the findings, after discussing ethnic Vietnamese individuals' views on coethnic relations in Berlin.[35]

Regionalism as a Cultural and Historical "National Pastime"

In examining coethnic relations among individuals of Vietnamese origin in Berlin, it became immediately apparent that the defining category of difference expressed by respondents was that between "North" and "South." For example, as soon as I walked into a temple in northeastern Berlin one morning to help prepare for the upcoming Lunar New Year, one woman sitting on the floor wrapping a rice cake explained to another: "Germany has reunified, but north and south haven't reunified." This regional antagonism has been described by Bernard B. Fall as a favorite "national pastime."[36]

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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 roughly two decades later. While Cochinchina became a direct French colony, Annam, Tonkin, and parts of Cambodia and Laos became Indochinese protectorates. Those living in these five areas experienced different types of administration.[37] The creation of North and South Vietnam in 1954 then cut across former Annam, forcibly aligning those living in the central region with either the North or South.[38] 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

Firstly, individuals of Vietnamese origin 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 one refugee organization, for example, Nga, a recent migrant from southern Vietnam, mentioned how relieved she and her friend were to find an organization where they could hear southern accents. 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.[39] To Nga, accents matter insofar as they signal familiarity, or lack thereof, without necessarily implying deeper social subtexts. Thus, respondents remark on accents as natural, neutral outcomes of socialization.

Respondents 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 sometimes moralization tied to culinary traditions. This is exemplified by a conversation with Anh, one of very few southerners who regularly participated in a cultural organization for predominantly northern former contract workers.

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 makes boring food. Walking alongside us during this conversation was Hạnh, who traces her roots to northern Vietnam. She reasoned that southerners have a wider culinary range, resulting from their upbringing in the fertile Mekong Delta, compared with restricted resources in the north.[40] In contrast to remarks about differences in accent, food talk tended to moralize: 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.

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ACCIDENTS OF HISTORY: SCARCITY AND LOCATION

Famines did ravage North Vietnam, and South Vietnam did experience comparative prosperity in part because of American financial support; however, respondents often interpreted individuals' actions as inevitable byproducts of these group-level characteristics. This became most apparent in conversations about practices at Buddhist temples. For instance, Oanh, a southerner who migrated through family reunification for boat refugees, recalled bristling at seeing northerners, who she disparagingly refers to as *bắc kỳ* [literally, northern region], make a big show of their donations at temples.[41] Similarly, Hồng, who migrated from southern Vietnam in 2000, described northerners' presumably immodest behavior at temples:

> Southerners donate in a way so that no one notices. We slip money [into envelopes] like we're offering from our devotion, not showing it off for everyone to see. But northerners, do you know, have a dish with offerings of pastries, fruits, this and that, and money exposed . . . they kneel next to their offering dishes [in the prayer hall]. They pray and then they take the dish home.

Hồng painted a scene in which northerners allegedly chant loudly, asking 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 also stated that, because poverty was endemic in their region, northerners became accustomed to overcompensating with exaggerated displays of piety, but could not actually afford to part with the food and gifts they brought.[42] On the whole, ostentatiousness tended to be a descriptor of class status ascribed to northerners, rather than southerners. This association reflects a reality in which some former contract workers who achieved enviable success through entrepreneurship are now known for their conspicuous consumption.

In addition to socialization around accents, food, and behavioral norms that have roots in the homeland, 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.[43] Freedom of movement was deeply constrained for contract workers in a way it simply was not for Vietnamese refugees or East Germans after 1989. To invoke residential or locational "preferences" then ignores 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. Yet, 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 persuasive 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 strategic in their

relationships compared with Southerners.[44] 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." 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 wealth and cultural exchange with Americans, southerners are painted as more "relaxed," though perhaps unwisely so, and indulge in food and rest in ways that jeopardize planning for the future.

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Even when well-intended, positive stereotypes such as "generous" and "easy-going" mask the diversity within groups and complexity within individuals. When ill-intentioned, labels can become dehumanizing. In one example of this, a recent migrant 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 "simply too evil," and she should have known better than to live with "a person of the central region." By locating the 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. Interestingly, Xuân herself has acknowledged this historical rift, insisting that people from the central region caught between the two great powers of North and South during the war suffered the most and therefore deserve the most sympathy. Yet, in a moment of discontent, she deployed generalizations that she herself acknowledged to be problematic. I return to negative stereotypes of coethnics in the final part of the findings, and emphasize simply that, based on a pseudo-psychological reading of historical happenchance, 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, a third party to our conversation added that there are good and bad people everywhere.

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In sum, respondents across regional origin, migratory experience, and age described these same dialectics of north and south as uptight/relaxed, wily/

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forthright.[45] This is not a testament to the veracity of such descriptions, but rather to the converging logic 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 Long from the opening vignette. Like her husband, Liên is a northerner disillusioned with the lack 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." Long further speculated that, had South Vietnam won the war, "Vietnam today would be even greater [economically] than Singapore."

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Long and Liên's musings demonstrate that South Vietnam, reimagined through inhabitants of the south, represents an idealized counterpart to the corrupt politics that they see playing out in contemporary Vietnam—and from which they want to distance themselves. The conflation of communism and censorship with the north continues today, even as mass protests rage throughout Vietnam.[46] So, too, persists the conflation of south and anticommunist, even though there were communists and sympathizers in South Vietnam.[47]

On the one hand, this equation of northerners with communism should seem unfounded considering, as one southerner 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 themselves often reproduced these analogies, even while lodging fierce criticism of communism and the one-party Vietnamese government. Phước, the child of a northern contract worker who fought in the war, for example, recalled how the experience of seizing Sài Gòn 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. Yet, when defining what he meant by communism, Phước listed: Vietnamese, northerner, person from Hà Nội—descriptors that fit him.

Ngọc, also a child of a contract worker, expressed feeling "guilty" 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" when she thought about how, in her mind, the communist government has harmed the country.

Phước and Ngọc, even while condemning the Vietnamese government, still tied themselves to it and its supposed shortcomings as "its" people. This does not signal a political allegiance, but rather, speaks to the strength of processes of making meaning that paint northerners as communist. Many northerners in my study subscribed to this even when it was for them a personally inacurrate reading. This interactive process of constructing the self and coethnic others has led some such as Nam, a former contract worker, to declare: "It's not that I'm *afraid* southerners will think I'm communist—I *know* they think that!" Importantly, then, the sympathy that contract workers or northerners express for the assumed anticommunism of refugees does not enable them to bridge this social gap.

Some individuals have pointed out the irony of ongoing coethnic division despite similar political perspectives. One such person is Dũng, a former contract worker from southern Vietnam, who said exasperatedly: "But we [southerners] here just wave the [yellow-striped] flag . . . But here I'm like him [northerner] and he's like me, then who are we protesting?" 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, who they allegedly see as having "communist roots." In the next section, I consider the role of perceived premigration politics as it has historically affected coethnic relations.

Critical Junctures: Conflict and Cooperation after the Fall of the Berlin Wall

The fall of the Berlin Wall represents an important moment in the history of Vietnamese communities in Germany. This marked both the first mass encounters and signs of cooperation and, later, conflict, among refugees and contract workers. During German reunification, many contract workers

either in former East Germany or the Soviet Union tried to claim asylum to remain in Germany. One such "wall person" [*tường nhân*] was Nghĩa, who left Vietnam through a labor contract. He recounts 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." "They themselves are creating this distance," Nghĩa said. 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 to help contract workers. Nghĩa claimed that refugees had only helped family friends they already knew from the south; refugees were willing to engage with contract workers, he explained, but only when their regional affiliations matched. Nghĩa's wife, Trinh, also crossed into Germany from a Soviet satellite, and similarly assessed refugees as being very prejudicial toward northern contract workers.[48] She reasoned that refugees displayed this when "they comment on [her] northern accent, about communism, and the way they refuse to go to [a Vietnamese market in the former East]." Unlike her husband, however, Trinh recalled that refugees showed up to 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 like Trinh expressed understanding toward refugees' persisting resentment, voicing sympathy for the plight of boat people who lost their country. Even Sơn, who does not approve of refugees bringing out the South Vietnamese flag, old army uniforms, and other reminders of the war, acknowledged that refugees who return to Vietnam are to this day derided as "reactionaries." 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 country by telling the story of a German acquaintance 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 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.

For Hiền, as well as other contract workers with northern roots, refugees resent and blame them for the loss of their country, and consider them as communists. Yet, as some recall, 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" after the fall of the Berlin Wall, "not caring whether they were communist or not." Respondents described former contract workers seeking asylum as in need of intervention. Refugees therefore explained their motives as simply helping "our 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 country that was simply more stable and economically viable than Vietnam at the time.

Others helped, but noted they did so despite believing the contract workers to be "all communists." Kiều, a self-identified southerner who was born in North Vietnam and migrated in 1954, explained:

> Southerners have a good heart. They hate communists. But seeing the children of communists, they helped immediately. People complained, "Why are you bringing communists into your homes, into our temple?" They said "[the northerners] were born there but . . . it's not their fault."

Kiều's positionality makes clear that regionalisms simplify complex histories and identities: the mapping of north/south into communist/anticommunist

erases southern communists or sympathizers (such as the National Liberation Front) and northern anticommunists (undoubtedly, many of those who migrated into South Vietnam in 1954). Kiều is one such "northern migrant" [*Bắc di cư*] 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. He said the following about the early years of consolidation of the communist movement in North Vietnam leading up to 1975:

> 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.

Yet, when he spoke about people who maligned him during his time as an asylum-seeker in refugee camps following the fall of the Berlin Wall, Dũng fell back on calling northerners "those *Việt Cộng*":

> 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.

When I asked Dũng to clarify whether he meant that these northerners were communists, he fell back to his earlier statements: "No, [he] already explained, they are not communist." What is clear is that communism becomes a label that Dũng maps onto all manner of negative activities, such as petty theft in

65-66
2 notes:

the refugee camps. Although 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 types of 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 as such. Dũng's logic implies that, despite any expressed opposition to communism or the Vietnamese Communist Party, northerners remain products of communist socialization.[49]

67-68
2 notes:

I also spoke with boat refugees whose families originally came from North Vietnam. Tài, whose family moved to the South in 1954, reiterated during the interview that "wheresoever communists go, wheresoever communists dominate, people become enveloped in lies." Despite his 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 says "with [his] luck, he got all northerners"—though he himself speaks with a clear northern accent. Tài complained that the people he took in nearly set his house on fire by throwing lit cigarettes in the trash, and took advantage of his friendship with a video store owner to rent items that they then never returned. Quite a few boat refugees in this study drew on similar criminal stereotypes of former contract workers, reflecting a parallel of West German attitudes toward East Germans.[50] However, this vicious circle does not stop there, as some former contract workers pointed to more recent migrants from the central region as the actual perpetrators of criminal activity.

69-70
2 notes:

This stereotyping of the coethnic other does not simply reflect German attitudes of West toward East, but rather maps onto a hierarchy in which the more integrated Vietnamese feel their achievements and reputations to be marred by later arrivals, who are seen as not knowing how to conduct themselves in German society.

Conclusion

This study has examined how individuals of Vietnamese origin in Berlin articulate differences between themselves and coethnics from different migration streams or regions of origin, and has considered when dissimilarities form the basis for conflict. While popular media and respondents

themselves often attribute this coethnic division to Cold War politics, I suggest that individuals reveal a far more nuanced reading of politics—even while they contradict themselves and seemingly reaffirm the Cold War mapping of North and South onto communist and anticommunist, East and West.[51]

71-72
2 notes:

e argued that culture and history matter beyond 20th century Cold War politics. For one, 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. Importantly, these regionalisms predate the introduction of communism in Vietnam. Historical explanations of coethnic differentiation rely on the dichotomies of agricultural abundance versus dearth and the perceived presence versus absence of substantial foreign assistance. Respondents at times deployed the cultural or historical arguments above to moralize the present behavior and virtues of certain coethnic subgroups. However, animosities typically coincided with politics.

73-74
2 notes:

The respondents in my study at times reproduced and reinscribed social boundaries between themselves and coethnics along the lines of politics and standing in both Vietnam and Germany. gees in particular did not simply distance themselves from contract workers out of spite, but out of fear of threats to their image as deserving, integrated German citizens. In the 1970s and 1980s, refugee flight legitimized West Germany's and America's Cold War "Berlin-Saigon analogy."[52] Yet, respondents also demonstrated that the ping of north and south onto communist/anticommunist 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, anticommunist individuals such as Tài.

75-76
2 notes:

Today, the desire to validate Germany's welcome of Vietnamese refugees means that respondents boundaries between themselves and the coethnics they see as marring their status. These divisions are then refracted through the lens of (anti)communist politics, even when individuals believe that coethnics across migration streams presently share similar views toward Vietnamese socialism and the ideologies of communism, capitalism, and democracy. In closing, coethnic conflict and political rhetoric continue to

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serve the function of denigrating those less integrated in Germany, while drawing on age-old rhetoric and understandings of differences rooted in Vietnam.

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ABSTRACT

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 reunited factions of not just one, but two formerly divided countries: Germany and Vietnam. Utilizing this theoretically unique case of Vietnamese refugee and immigrant resettlement in Germany, I ask: How do ethnic Vietnamese individuals' perceptions of coethnics complicate or reinforce social divisions? This essay is based on participant-observation in various sites across Berlin and semi-structured, in-depth interviews. In noting how respondents at times naturalize or reject differences among Vietnamese from varying regions of origin and migration streams, I consider how they reproduce coethnic divisions, at times to protect their societal standing in Germany.

KEYWORDS: *coethnic relations, Cold War, international migration, politics*

Notes

1. I have replaced all names of individuals with pseudonyms. Additionally, I have intentionally withheld certain demographic details about respondents to avoid deductive closure.
2. The individuals in my study interchangeably referred to "our Vietnamese people" [*người Việt mình*] and "countrymen" [*đồng hương*]. However, the vast

majority of boat refugees and their families have been naturalized, whereas many former contract workers have either not wanted or have not been able to gain German citizenship. Therefore, I prefer the term coethnics to conationals.

3. Throughout the essay, I refer to individuals' regions of origin, denoting northern and southern Vietnam (small case) as opposed to the official regimes of North and South Vietnam from 1954–1975. However, respondents imbue these regions of origin with political characteristics and accompanying expectations about behaviors and attitudes. Therefore, even while I try to complicate this mapping, I must honor the fact that respondents often talk about "northern," "southern," and "central" persons and traits as real categories.
4. 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.
5. As with my choice of the term "coethnic," I do not refer to these individuals as Vietnamese Germans because not all have naturalized or—even if they have—do not necessarily identify themselves as German rather than Vietnamese or some third category, such as European.
6. Ashley Carruthers, "Saigon from the Diaspora," *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 29 (2008): 68–86, 69–70. Gisele Bousquet has similarly documented political divisions among Vietnamese in France. However, it was extremely difficult to account for the number of presumed pro-Hà Nội individuals, and they were soon overtaken by Vietnamese refugees arriving after 1975. *Behind the Bamboo Hedge: The Impact of Homeland Politics in the Parisian Vietnamese Community* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991).
7. Alexander M. Cannon, "Introduction: Epic Directions for the Study of the Vietnamese Diaspora," *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 7, no. 3 (2012): 1–6; Christina Schwenkel, "Exhibiting War, Reconciling Pasts: Photographic Representation and Transnational Commemoration in Contemporary Vietnam," *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 3, no. 1 (2008): 36–77.
8. Erik Harms, "The Critical Difference: Making Peripheral Vision Central in Vietnamese Studies," *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 6, no. 2 (2011): 1–15, 4.
9. Yến Lê Espiritu, "Toward a Critical Refugee Study: The Vietnamese Refugee Subject in US Scholarship," *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 1, no. 1/2 (2006): 410–433, 424. Also see *Body Counts: The Vietnam War and Militarized Refuge (es)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014). For her work leading up to *Body Counts*, focusing on a critical rereading of Vietnamese and refugee studies, see: "The 'We-Win-Even-When-We-Lose' Syndrome: U.S. Press Coverage of the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the 'Fall of Saigon,'" *American Quarterly* 58, no. 2

(2006): 329–352; "Militarized Refuge: A Transpacific Perspective on Vietnamese Refugee Flight to the United States," *Pacific and American Studies* 12 (2012): 20–32.

10. Quan Tue Tran, "Remembering the Boat People Exodus: A Tale of Two Memorials," *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 7, no. 3 (2012): 80–121, 109.
11. An Tuan Nguyen, "More than Just Refugees—A Historical Overview of Vietnamese Professional Immigration to the United States," *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 10, no. 3 (2015): 87–125.
12. Gertrud Hüwelmeier, "Bazaar Pagodas—Transnational Religion, Postsocialist Marketplaces and Vietnamese Migrant Women in Berlin," *Religion and Gender* 3, no. 1 (2013): 76–89; Christina Schwenkel, "Rethinking Asian Mobilities: Socialist Migration and Post-Socialist Repatriation of Vietnamese Contract Workers in Germany," *Critical Asian Studies* 46, no. 2 (2014): 235–258.
13. Espiritu, "Critical Refugee Studies," 410–411.
14. Edward Miller and Tuong Vu, "The Vietnam War as a Vietnamese War: Agency and Society in the Study of the Indochina War," *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 4, no. 3 (2009): 1–16, 5.
15. Kieu Linh Caroline Valverde, "Making Vietnamese Music Transnational: Sounds of Home, Resistance and Change," *Amerasia Journal* 29, no. 1 (2003): 29–50, 36.
16. Hiroko Furuya, "Homeland Politics and Vietnamese in the U.S.: Remittances, Home Travel and Anti-Communist Activities," In *The World of Transnational Asian Americans*, ed. Daizaburo Yui (University of Tokyo: Center for Pacific and American Studies, 2006): 193–208.
17. Carruthers, "Saigon from the Diaspora," 72.
18. Ivan V. Small, "'Over There': Imaginative Displacements in Vietnamese Remittance Gift Economies," *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 7, no. 3 (2012): 157–183, 159.
19. Ibid., 176.
20. Bousquet, *The Bamboo Hedge*; Carruthers, "Saigon from the Diaspora"; Christian Collet, "The Significance of Madison Nguyen and the Rise of the Vietnamese American Voter in San Jose, California: Analysis and Commentary," *Doshisa American Studies* 43 (2007): 131–150; Louis-Jacques Dorais, "Politics, Kinship, and Ancestors: Some Diasporic Dimensions of the Vietnamese in North America," *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 5, no. 2 (2010): 91–132.
21. Schwenkel, "Exhibiting War."
22. After two summers of preliminary research in Berlin, I found only one site both refugees and former contract workers attended *en masse*: 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 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 North Vietnam to South Vietnam in 1954, and later became boat refugees. However, I am assured that by focusing predominantly on Buddhists, I am accounting for the majority of those who came as refugees to Germany: Martin Baumann, *Migration—Religion—Integration: Buddhistische Vietnamesen und hinduistische Tamilen in Deutschland* [*Migration—Religion—Integration: Buddhist Vietnamese and Hindu Tamils in Germany*] (Marburg, Germany: Diagonal-Verlag, 2000).

23. In preparation for a Lunar New Year celebration, for example, members of an ethnic/cultural organization requested I sing an English song so that the audience could experience "something strange."
24. Helen B. Marrow, "In Ireland 'Latin Americans are kind of cool': Evaluating a National Context of Reception with a Transnational Lens," *Ethnicities* 13, no. 5 (2013): 645–666, 645.
25. Gertrud Hüwelmeier, "Spirits in the Marketplace—Transnational Networks of Vietnamese Migrants in Berlin," in *Transnational Ties: Cities, Identities, and Migrations*, eds. Michael Peter Smith and John Eade (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2008), 131–144.
26. In contrast to Vietnamese, war refugees fleeing Yugoslavia were often barred from asylum, and even those Hmong accepted as refugees into Germany did not meet with the same welcome. See Tou T. Yang, "Hmong of Germany: Preliminary Report on the Resettlement of Lao Hmong Refugees in Germany," *Hmong Studies Journal* 4 (2013): 1–14; Maren Borkert and Wolfgang Bosswick, "The Case of Germany," in *Migration Policy Making in Europe: The Dynamics of Actors and Contexts in Past and Present*, eds. Giovanna Zincone, Rinus Penninx, and Maren Borkert (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011), 95–128.
27. Olaf Beuchling, *Vom Bootsflüchtling zum Bundesbürger: Migration, Integration, und Schulischer Erfolg in einer Vietnamesischen Exilgemeinschaft* [*From Boat Refugee to German Citizen: Migration, Integration, and School Success in a Vietnamese Exile Community*] (Münster and New York: Waxman, 2003); Gertrud Hüwelmeier, "Female Believers on the Move: Vietnamese Pentecostal Networks in Germany," in *Gender, Religion, and Migration: Pathways of Integration*, eds. Glenda Tibe Bonifacio and Vivienne S. M. Angeles (Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2010), 115–132.
28. In terms of skill/knowledge transfer, socialist countries participated in a complex web of exchanges including but not limited to architecture, medicine, and science: Schwenkel, "Rethinking Asian Mobilities." As for filling labor shortages, Vietnamese workers concentrated primarily in textiles and machine-tooling: Bui, *Envisioning Vietnamese*, 123–124.

29. Thomas Janoski, *The Ironies of Citizenship: Naturalization and Integration in Industrialized Countries* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
30. Roughly equivalent to $1,735 on December 31, 1999 (http://coinmill.com/DEM_calculator.html#DEM=3000). For perspective, per capita GDP of Vietnam during that year was $375 (http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD).
31. Eva Kolinsky, "Former Contract Workers from Vietnam in Germany between State Socialism and Democracy, 1989–1993," *GFL* (2004): 83–101.
32. Wolfgang Kil and Hilary Silver, "From Kreuzberg to Marzahn: New Migrant Communities in Berlin," *German Politics and Society* 81, no. 4 (2006): 95–121.
33. Pipo Bui's work focuses on where the cigarette sales happened: predominantly in the eastern Berlin neighborhoods of Marzahn and Lichtenberg. *Envisioning Vietnamese Migrants in Germany: Ethnic Stigma, Immigrant Origin Narratives and Partial Masking* (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2003).
34. Bui, *Envisioning Vietnamese*. Michael Dörschel, "Vietnamese bei der Shießerei schwer verletzt: Möglicherweise Streit in der Zigarettenmafia [Vietnamese seriously injured in a shooting: Possible dispute in the cigarette mafia]," *Berliner Zeitung*, April 4, 2000; Vera Gaserow, "Der aussichtslose Kampf der Berliner Polizei gegen die Zigarettenmafia [The hopeless struggle of the Berlin police against the cigarette mafia]," *Die Zeit*, May 24, 1996; Olaf Kanter, "Vietnamesen in Angst vor den Schergen der Mafia [Vietnamese in Fear of the Thugs of the Mafia]," *Die Zeit*, May 22, 1995.
35. Note here that some hundreds of individuals also came as international students to West and East Germany in the 1960s and 1970s, funded by the respective governments of South Vietnam and North Vietnam. While North Vietnam-sponsored students repatriated after attaining their degrees, South Vietnamese students largely filed for asylum to remain in West Germany after Vietnamese reunification. Migration from Vietnam to Germany continues today in part because of networks and pathways established during the Cold War. Ongoing migration takes varied forms, including those who arrive without documentation, those who overstay visas, as well as marriage migration between overseas Vietnamese and those in Vietnam.
36. Bernard B. Fall, *Last Reflections on a War: Last Comments on Vietnam* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1967), 41.
37. For example, publishing laws and media suppression tended to be punished more stringently in Annam and Tonkin than in Cochinchina. David G. Marr, "A Brief History of Local Government in Vietnam," in *Beyond Hanoi: Local Government in Vietnam*, eds. Benedict J. Tria Kerkvliet and David G. Marr (Pasir Panjang, Singapore: NIAS Press, 2004), 28–53.
38. David G. Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial, 1920–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

39. A rare exception to this is provided by Anh, who accompanied her nephew from southern Vietnam and filed for asylum in a refugee camp after German reunification. As the only southerners in the refugee camp, Anh recalled having to "translate" what others said to her teenage nephew, and vice versa because of different vocabulary.
40. In his interviews with northern Catholics who migrated South in 1954, Peter Hansen finds similar mention of the "good things for us in the South, land and buffaloes." 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. "'Bắc Di Cư': Catholic Refugees from the North of Vietnam, and Their Role in the Southern Republic, 1954–1959," *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 4, no. 3 (2009): 173–211, 188.
41. Respondents at times paired *bắc kỳ* with the preceding word, *chó* [dog], to denote "northern dogs."
42. 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.
43. Bui writes: "Enterprises terminated contracts inappropriately early or raised the rent for a bed in the workers' dorms retrospectively, deducting back payments from workers' paychecks." *Envisioning Vietnamese*, 130. Bui further cites an article by *Der Spiegel* highlighting "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 . . . " Ibid., 46.
44. 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.
45. Again, 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 they had southerners attend their events, especially when "southern girls speak so sweetly." 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. See Mary Patrice Erdmans, *Opposite Poles: Immigrants Ethnics in Polish Chicago, 1976–1990* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998); Patricia Hogwood, "After the GDR: Reconstructing

Identity in Post-Communist Germany," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 16, no. 4 (2000), 45–67.

46. 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 both against Formosa and the perceived lack of appropriate response by Vietnamese authorities. 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.
47. For an even more complicated alignment of southern, noncommunist, anti-Southern regime politics, see Truong Nhu Tang, *A Viet Cong Memoir: An Inside Account of the Vietnam War and Its Aftermath* (New York: Vintage Books, 1985).
48. I am purposefully withholding the site of entry to protect respondents' identities.
49. Similar dynamics have been reported among Polish refugee and immigrant groups in the United States. Erdmans, *Opposite Poles.*
50. 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 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, "Wessi," are similarly rooted in the political-economic system of capitalism: "humorless, selfish, materialistic and greedy." These criticisms paint westerners unflatteringly in their outlook, but not in their actions. Hogwood, "After the GDR," 59.
51. Sebastian Schubert, "Berlin's Vietnamese Wall," *Deutsche Welle*, November 24, 2004, http://www.dw.de/dw/article/0,1564,1408694,00.html.
52. 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." Wilfried Mausbach, "European Perspectives on the War in Vietnam," *GHI Bulletin* 30 (2002): 71–86, 79.

“ There ’ s No Solidarity ” : Nationalism and Belonging among Vietnamese Refugees and Immigrants in Berlin

Su, P H I Hong

01 d l Page 1

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examines behaviors of individuals like Long toward fellow Vietnamese (coethnics)

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03 d l Page 1

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In Long’s logic, Vietnamese with southern roots literally embody anticommunism, a logic that conflates an individual’s region of birth or ancestry in Vietnam with culture, history, and politics.

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05 d l Page 2

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The 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall dramatically increased the chances of coethnics from separate migration streams encountering one another.4

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07 d l Page 2

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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.

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09 d l Page 2

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Based on in-depth interviews and fourteen months of participant-observation between 2013 and 2016, I chart how ethnic Vietnamese in Berlin at times explain coethnic divisions as incidental or based on cultural differ- ences, and at other times politicize and even criminalize perceived differ- ences between northerners and southerners, contract workers and refugees.

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11 d l Page 3

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Increasingly, scholars have taken up Yến Lê Espiritu's call in the 2006 inaugural Journal ofVietnamese Studies issue to "take seriously the range of Vietnamese perspectives on the before-and-after of the Vietnam War."9

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13 d l Page 3

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In 1986, Viet- nam introduced reforms that resulted in a market economy. This policy of
ĐổiMới [Renovation] has, among other consequences, improved opportu- nities for research that have been seized upon by Vietnamese studies scho- lars.

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15 d l Page 4

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In Berlin, the perceived reach of the Vietnamese state in the embodied form of contract workers appears at the refugees' figurative and,
sometimes, literal doorsteps. This

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17 d l Page 4

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At the heart of this essay are social relationships between people of Vietnamese origin and coethnics from different migration streams and re- gions. I

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I address social relationships by examining attitudes and behaviors toward others of the same ethnicity.

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Ivan Small's study of remittances is an important reference for this, as he examines how Vietnamese in Vietnam envision overseas Vietnamese "over there."18 Small forcefully 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.

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romanticization of an unrealized path

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Long’s idealization of the RVN reflects how he imbues “south Vietnamese” persons with political meaning.

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Long occupies the same spatial reality as the coethnics he regards, thus raising the question of how these imaginaries are tempered or reproduced through interactions

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I conducted the interviews in Vietnamese, German, or some combination of the two. Each interview lasted about two hours, though in rare instances the interviews ran nearly five hours. I

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I recruited interviewees through

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While studying relationships among coethnics of different migration
streams and regions of origin, it became apparent that my own positionality impacted the types of access I gained. A

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A host of demographic character- istics and life experiences—related to my class, gender, age, and linguistic abilities—undoubtedly shaped not only respondents' perceptions of me during research, but also the questions I asked and assumptions I had of them. Of these features, my ethnic (Vietnamese), national (American), and regional (southern Vietnamese) identification seemed to most obviously yield moments of insight and advantage in the field. My

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Such perceptions of life in overseas Vietnamese communities fit Helen B. Marrow'sfinding that "migrants are now embedded within a social field that connects flows of people and ideas across several different receiving countries," here, with people of Vietnamese origin in Germany exhibiting familiarity with the politics of Vietnamese in America.24

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To my astonishment, the man I interviewed re- marked that I am allowed to ask him because I am the child of southerners, specifically an ARVN soldier, and grew up in the United States; had I been a Vietnamese national, he "would have strangled [me]."

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Unlike refugees, who were intended to integrate into West German society, the contract workers were not meant to intermingle with East Germans. Their goal was, in the first wave of contract worker migration, knowledge transfer, and, later, primarily to fill a labor shortage. In

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“Germany has reunified, but north and south haven’t reunified.” This regional antagonism has been described by Bernard B. Fall as a favorite “national pastime.”36

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In contrast to remarks about differences in accent, food talk tended to moralize: 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 there- fore defended and elevated northerners who had to make do with limited resources, compared with southerners who have taken for granted plentiful land.

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Tempering her rhetoric, Hồng also stated that, because poverty was endemic in their region, northerners became accustomed to overcompensating with exaggerated displays ofpiety, but could not actually afford to part with the food and gifts they brought.42 On the whole, ostenta- tiousness tended to be a descriptor of class status ascribed to northerners, rather than southerners. This association reflects a reality in which some former contract workers who achieved enviable success through entrepre- neurship are now known for their conspicuous consumption. In

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To invoke residential or locational “preferences” then ignores struc- tural barriers that remained in place after the physical disappearance of the Berlin Wall.

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missive or hedonistic, respectively. As with food, the logic that follows is that poverty in the North versus the financial support ofthe South by foreign powers caused Northerners to become shrewder and more strategic in their relationships compared with Southerners.44

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similar to Long's residuals. south being spoiled by americanlization:

Conversely, as a result of allegedly being spoiled by wealth and cultural exchange with Americans, southerners are painted as more “relaxed,” though perhaps unwisely so,and indulge in food andrestinwaysthatjeopardize planning forthe future.

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stereotypes as being dehumanizing.

Even when well-intended, positive stereotypes such as “generous” and
“easy-going” mask the diversity within groups and complexity within indi- viduals. When ill-intentioned, labels can become dehumanizing. In one example of this, a recent migrant 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 “simply too evil,” and she should have known better than to live with “a person of the central region.” By locating the 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 regional- ism. Interestingly,

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I return to negative stereotypes of coethnics in the final part of the findings, and emphasize simply that, based on a pseudo-psychological reading of historical happen- chance, Xuân concluded that people from the central region must commit all manner of profiteering to eke out a living. Her comment did not go unchal- lenged, however, a third party to our conversation added that there are good and bad people everywhere. In

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great re-wording of: i am not proving these descriptions, but...

This is not a testament to the veracity of such descriptions, but rather to the converging logic that respondents from different backgrounds deploy to understand for themselves the fall of South Vietnam and the state ofthe communist party in Vietnam today.

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reimagined: Long and Liên’s musings demonstrate that South Vietnam, reima- gined through inhabitants of the south, represents an idealized counterpart to the corrupt politics that they see playing out in contemporary Vietnam— and from which they want to distance themselves. The

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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 types of behavior after the fall of the Berlin Wall. This

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"northerners remain a product of communist socillaization"

This 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 as such. Dũng’s logic implies that, despite any expressed opposition to communism or the Vietnamese Communist Party, northerners remain products of communist socialization.49 l

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more established/integrated viets see their accomplishments to be stained by later arrivals who don't know how to conduct themselves in german society.

This stereotyping of the coethnic other does not simply reflect German atti- tudes of West toward East, but rather maps onto a hierarchy in which the more integrated Vietnamese feel their achievements and reputations to be marred by later arrivals, who are seen as not knowing how to conduct them- selves in German society.
Conclusion

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I have argued that culture and history matter beyond 20th century Cold
War politics.

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Refugees in particular did not simply distance themselves from contract workers out of spite, but out of fear of threats to their image as deserving, integrated German citizens.

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MAPPING of north/sound onto communist/anticommunist

mapping of north and south onto communist/anticommunist and contract worker/refugee categories has porous boundaries.

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