

***Đổi mới* in the Classroom? The Portrayal of National and World History in Vietnamese Textbooks**

Martin Großheim

Examination of the treatment in Vietnamese history textbooks of national and world history against the backdrop of the collapse of socialism in the Soviet Union and Soviet Bloc countries suggests that the authors of these textbooks fear that what happened in the Soviet Union could also happen in Vietnam. The purpose of the textbooks' depiction of the past is to allay these fears. The textbooks reflect Vietnam's turn back towards China after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and of socialist countries in Eastern Europe. For the leadership in Hanoi, the emphasis on fraternal ties with China has, however, recently lost its allure. Beijing's actions in the South China Sea have, in turn, prompted many Vietnamese to demand a more comprehensive coverage of Sino–Vietnamese relations in history textbooks.

Keywords: Vietnam, *Đổi Mới* policy, textbooks, history education, collapse of the Soviet Union, Sino–Vietnamese relations.

In this article, I examine history textbooks produced mainly by the Ministry of Education and Training for students at the secondary and university levels in Vietnam. I am interested specifically in the textbooks' depiction of Vietnamese national history and of world history, against the backdrop of the collapse of socialism in the Soviet Union and in Soviet Bloc countries. The authors of these textbooks, I argue, fear that what happened in the Soviet Union could also happen in Vietnam. To allay these fears, they depict the past in peculiar ways.

The first part of the article analyses the treatment in textbooks of the collapse of socialism and the construction in them of recent Vietnamese history, in particular the beginnings of *Đổi mới* policy, within the context of that collapse.¹ The second addresses the ways in which history textbooks reflect Vietnam's turn back towards China after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of socialism in Eastern Europe between 1989 and 1991. Finally, the chapter argues that for the leadership in Hanoi, emphasis on fraternal ties with China has recently lost its allure because of Beijing's actions in the South China Sea. These actions have prompted many Vietnamese to demand more comprehensive coverage of Sino–Vietnamese relations in history textbooks.

Historical Narratives of the Collapse of Socialism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe

World History

The collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe, starting with the creation of a non-communist government in Poland in September 1989 and the fall of the Berlin Wall in November of the same year and culminating in the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, forced the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP) into a precarious position. The authors of textbooks whose content was under the strict control of Vietnam's Ministry of Education and Training had to find a way to present the collapse of socialism as a process that stemmed from anti-communist plots and a campaign of “peaceful evolution” orchestrated by “foreign powers and reactionary domestic elements”.² They also had to assure student-readers that, in the end, socialism would prevail despite temporary crises. At the same time, they had to insist that — especially in contrast to Mikhail Gorbachev, the last general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1985–91) — only the Vietnamese leadership and their comrades in Beijing had implemented reforms correctly; they had, that is, prevented the rise of a multiparty system.

The most recent Vietnamese twelfth-grade history textbook provides a short account of the collapse of socialism and the

disintegration of the Soviet Union. Despite its brevity, the message is clear: the Soviet Union was plunged into a crisis because the new Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) leader, Gorbachev, made many serious mistakes while carrying out his reform agenda. First, he tried to effect the transition from a planned to a market economy too hastily, with a chaotic economic situation as the result. Secondly, the introduction of a multiparty system weakened the leading role of the party and led to demonstrations and strikes (Phan Ngọc Liên 2014c, pp. 14–15).

The following section of the textbook analyses the crisis of socialism in Eastern Europe. It treats the erroneous reform policy initiated by Gorbachev and the destructive activities of “hostile forces” that made the crisis in the socialist countries in Eastern Europe more and more serious. When communist parties accepted a multiparty system and held national elections, communism soon collapsed across Eastern Europe, too. As for the German Democratic Republic (GDR, Deutsche Demokratische Republik), or East Germany, the textbook only mentions that there was a crisis in 1989, that many people fled the country, that the Berlin Wall came down in November of that same year, and that Germany was reunified a year later.

After this short factual account, the textbook analyses the reasons for the collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe. First, it notes that although the leaders of the socialist countries had achieved some positive results, they had become increasingly “voluntaristic” (*duy ý chí*), and, with the planned economy hampering production, people’s lives could not be improved any more. The lack of democracy and justice had also increased popular dissatisfaction. Second, the countries did not pay adequate attention to technological change, with the result that the socio-economic crisis was even worse than it would otherwise have been. Third, the various communist leaderships made many mistakes when carrying out reforms. The textbook identifies “destructive domestic and foreign forces” as being a further reason for the collapse of socialism (*ibid.*, pp. 16–17). An earlier twelfth-grade textbook provides a similar account (Nguyễn Anh Thái 2006, p. 19).

The ninth-grade history textbook emphasizes the influence of “anti-socialist elements” (*thế lực chống chủ nghĩa xã hội*) on the disintegration of the socialist regimes in Eastern Europe even more (Phan Ngọc Liên 2014a, pp. 11–12; see also Nguyễn Anh Thái 2014, pp. 37–38, 44–45). It also mentions the serious economic and social problems that the Soviet Union and other socialist states faced, but it identifies two factors as the primary reasons for the collapse of socialism. First, “anti-socialist forces” used the crisis to manipulate the masses and propel them to engage in destructive activities. Second, and as a result, the communist parties in Eastern European countries had to give up their leadership roles and accept free elections, which anti-socialist elements went on to win.

The accounts of the collapse of socialism in both the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe acknowledge the existence of serious crises. They state that the communist parties themselves were responsible for the collapse of socialist rule because they relinquished their leading political role unnecessarily, and unidentified “hostile forces” must also share the blame. In this understanding of what transpired, the “masses” (*quần chúng*) are utterly passive.

The two textbooks on modern world history used at teacher training colleges in Vietnam expound on this narrative in much more detail. After describing the end of the Soviet Union in 1991 in almost melodramatic terms, the first world-history textbook in Vietnam, which has been published in numerous editions, gives four specific reasons for the collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe (Nguyễn Anh Thái 2014, pp. 458–59).

1. The socialist countries in Eastern Europe had experienced the capitalist system for a long time. Therefore, the mechanical adoption of the socialist system used by the Soviet Union did not fit their own specific conditions and led to dissatisfaction among the people. Furthermore, domestic anti-socialist forces comprising civil servants, officers who had served the old regime, landlords, capitalists, and the Catholic Church were still quite strong and colluded with elements abroad to bring about the peaceful downfall of socialism.

2. The leadership in these countries either proclaimed up to the very end that reforms were unnecessary, or they launched reforms when it was already too late.
3. Part of the leadership had degenerated and lost its revolutionary morals. It came to favour capitalism or democratic socialism or simply misused power, as in the case of Nicolae and Elena Ceausescu in Romania.
4. The non-interventionist policy of the Soviet Union under Gorbachev created additional favourable conditions for anti-revolutionary forces to continue destroying socialism.

This analysis appears to be inconsistent. On the one hand, it acknowledges the dissatisfaction of parts of the population with the policy of the governing socialist parties. On the other, when it comes to the concrete role of the people in the period of crisis from 1989 to 1991, it disparages those groups who participated in demonstrations as anti-revolutionary remnants of the old capitalist regimes co-operating with anti-socialist forces from abroad. In other words, the account adheres to the old binary worldview of revolutionary progressive forces fighting against reactionary anti-socialist elements.

In comparison, the concrete account of the developments in the socialist countries is rather more factual and less biased (Nguyễn Anh Thái 2014, pp. 462–63). It explicitly mentions, for example, that demonstrations took place against the GDR's ruling Socialist Unity Party (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands), then led by Erich Honecker, and that many East Germans tried to flee their country by whatever means they could. The narrative fails, however, to explain why so many East Germans left and why they took to the streets in protest. The fact that the demonstrations also targeted one-party rule and the dreaded GDR Ministry of State Security (Ministerium für Staatssicherheit, "Stasi"), with which the Vietnamese Ministry of Public Security (*Bộ Công an*) had maintained close relations since the mid-1960s (Großheim 2014) is also omitted. The account thus remains rather vague and leaves out facts that are crucial to a proper understanding of the "*Wende*",

or transformation of East German policy in 1989–90, which led to Germany’s reunification.

As for the collapse of the Soviet Union, the world-history textbook follows the account that appears in the school textbooks. Here, the main culprit is Mikhail Gorbachev with his overhasty reform policy and his diminution of the CPSU’s leading role. More than anyone else, he opened the doors to foreign anti-revolutionary forces (*ibid.*, pp. 451–57, 466).

The second, new edition of *Lịch sử thế giới hiện đại* (Modern World History) (Đỗ Thanh Bình 2012, pp. 130–43) presents a similar narrative of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the other socialist states in Eastern Europe, albeit with a somewhat different emphasis. In the case of the Soviet Union, it explicitly criticizes Gorbachev for having focused on political rather than economic reforms, and specifically notes his having amended the Soviet constitution in a way that diminished the role of the CPSU.

The book identifies this same fundamental mistake as a reason for the collapse of socialism across Eastern Europe generally. In accepting pluralism, the parties in power degenerated into mere debating societies. It stresses the negative impact of the new political thinking in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, which denied the necessity of class struggle, embraced the theory of globalization while renouncing proletarian internationalism, and thus created favourable conditions for imperialist forces to carry out their conspiracy of peaceful evolution (*diễn biến hòa bình*) (*ibid.*, p. 142). Imperialist countries had been carrying out this anti-revolutionary scheme since the end of the Second World War through economic, cultural and social means. They finally realized it when the socialist countries faced a serious crisis at the end of the 1980s. The imperialist powers took advantage of this situation to collude with “sensitive” (*nhạy cảm*) elements in those countries, such as youths, students and intellectuals, and undermined their faith in socialism by invoking abstract concepts such as “democracy” (*dân chủ*), “human rights” (*nhân quyền*) and “liberty” (*tự do*). As a result of this cunning propaganda, the masses were “duped” (*lừa*)

and their hitherto close relations with the ruling socialist party loosened (*ibid.*, p. 142).

In a separate chapter, *Lịch sử thế giới hiện đại* identifies the United States — the “main culprit of the Cold War” — as the major string-puller working behind the scenes in the era of the collapse of socialism (*ibid.*, p. 263). According to the account, Washington partly managed to implement its plan to weaken and undermine the socialist system in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and to push global socialism into decline during this period.³

The book depicts the masses in a way similar to the distorted analysis in the twelfth-grade history textbook discussed above, albeit in much more detail. It characterizes them, that is, as having been passive and foolish at a critical juncture in the history of socialism, and thus falling prey to an anti-socialist conspiracy concocted and initiated by hostile outside forces. In other words, the narrative only recognizes the agency of those who supported communist parties in Eastern Europe. It ignores the fact that hundreds of thousands of Germans took to the streets to denounce the East German regime.

To portray the end of socialism in the former Soviet Union and other states in the socialist bloc as the result of a Western plot fully accords with the official narrative advanced by the Communist Party of Vietnam (*Đảng Cộng sản Việt Nam*, CPV) (Hội đồng 2014, pp. 400–2; *Đảng Cộng Sản Việt Nam*, 19 May 2010; Nguyễn Tiến Bình 2011). This narrative basically reproduces the Cold War language of two antagonistic worlds — precisely the image that Nguyễn Văn Linh, general secretary of the CPV from 1986 to 1991, and his cohorts used to explain the collapse of socialist states from 1989 to 1991 (see Elliott 2012, chap. 3). The textbooks’ narratives of developments in the international and domestic arenas — of, that is, the collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe and the reform period in Vietnam since the 1980s — are closely intertwined.

National History

History textbooks emphasize that the CPV implemented the reform policy of *Đổi mới* correctly and explicitly bolster the legitimacy of

the one-party rule in Vietnam. The twelfth-grade history textbook published in 2014 depicts that policy as the latest chapter in the triumphal history of the party. In a similar way to the older twelfth-grade textbook, released in 1987 (*Lịch sử II* 1988, pp. 159–69), it represents this master narrative as a series of closely connected successes that were only possible thanks to correct leadership on the part of the CPV (Tai 2001a; Pelley 2002; Tuong Vu 2014). According to this narrative, after its founding in 1930 the party dominated the anti-colonial struggle and led the Vietnamese people to independence from colonial rule. The year 1945, which saw the August Revolution and the proclamation of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam by Hồ Chí Minh on 2 September, appears as the second turning point. The year 1954 marks the successful end of the anti-French resistance war with the Battle of Điện Biên Phủ, followed by the “major victory in spring 1975” (*đại thắng mùa Xuân 1975*) — that is, Vietnam’s victory over the American superpower and the liberation of the South of the country on 30 April. The implementation of *Đổi mới* policy in 1986 represents the culmination, at least so far, of this narrative of the triumphant continuity of socialism in Vietnam (Phan Ngọc Liên 2014c, pp. 216–20).

In this consistent teleology, the 2014 twelfth-grade history textbook presents the Vietnamese revolution as the inevitable result of historical forces and hails the CPV as the source and the guarantor of the nation’s successful development. In other words, the narrative attributes all the achievements realized since 1930 to the wise and hyper-competent leadership of the party. Thus, the lesson that readers of the history textbook must learn is that the success of the Vietnamese revolution stems entirely and exclusively from the leadership of the CPV (*ibid.*, p. 220). The older twelfth-grade textbook offers the same overarching lesson (Đình Xuân Lâm 1999, pp. 199–200).

Likewise, the newest world-history textbook states that its aim is to equip students with knowledge that bolsters their confidence in the achievements of socialism and in the path that the CPV has taken (Đỗ Thanh Bình 2012, pp. 10–11). In accordance with this

proclaimed aim, it omits or distorts details that undermine this triumphalist version of the past — most notably the disaster of the land reform campaign of 1953–56, which represents one of the darkest moments in the history of Vietnamese communism. It resulted in terrible excesses — in public trials that saw thousands of villagers sentenced to death — and caused utter chaos in the countryside of northern Vietnam.⁴ However, the authors of history textbooks basically present the land reform as a success story. They admit the serious mistakes made during the campaign, such as the denunciations of “resistance landlords” (*địa chủ kháng chiến*) at public trials or the incorrect classification of certain peasants, cadres, and party members as landlords. But they also emphasize that the party amended any errors that may have been committed (*Lịch sử 12* 1987, p. 86; Đinh Xuân Lâm 1999, p. 122; Phan Ngọc Liên 2014c, pp. 158–59; Hội đồng 2014, pp. 202–6; Lê Mậu Hãn et al., 2006, pp. 106–7; Lê Mậu Hãn 2013, pp. 180–84).⁵

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries in Eastern Europe, the authors of history textbooks in Vietnam faced the challenge of how to address the negative domestic developments after 1975 — especially the failed attempt of the leadership in Hanoi to build socialism in the South and the subsequent reversal of its policy in the 1980s — without damaging the legitimacy of the CPV. In other words, they had to undermine the logical possible conclusion that the adoption of the *Đổi mới* policy of 1986 constituted an open admission of the party’s earlier mistakes.

Textbooks uniformly hail the victory of 30 April 1975 as the beginning of a new era in the history of the Vietnamese people and the dawn of a reunified Vietnam moving towards socialism (Phan Ngọc Liên 2014c, p. 197; Đinh Xuân Lâm 1999, p. 178; Lê Mậu Hãn et al. 2006, p. 132). They even praise the defeat of the United States and the “puppet administration” (*ngụy quyền*) of the southern Republic of Vietnam as a victory of the socialist world against “American neo-imperialism”, and stress its significance in world history (Đinh Xuân Lâm 1999, pp. 178–79; Hội đồng 2014,

pp. 327–28; Phan Ngọc Liên 2014c, p. 197; Lê Mậu Hãn 2013, p. 422).

In accordance with a Marxist timeline, the heading of the last part of one of the textbooks on the history of the CPV is “Leading the whole country in the transition to socialism” (*Đưa cả nước qua độ lên chủ nghĩa xã hội*).

Textbooks claim that the reunification of the country and the building of socialism were closely interrelated and interdependent. According to the account in the newest twelfth-grade history textbook, for example, reunification created favourable conditions to build socialism and was welcomed by the entire Vietnamese people (Phan Ngọc Liên 2014c, pp. 201–3). The section that follows this assertion focuses on the various steps involved in the implementation of the five-year plan for 1976–80: the collectivization of agriculture in the South, the socialization of its industry and commerce and the struggle against the remnants of “neo-imperialist culture” in that part of the country. It states that most peasants switched to collective farming and that trade and handicrafts were reorganized, but that the state-owned and collectivized economy suffered losses and hampered the development of the private sector. The result was a negative impact on citizens’ living standards. This criticism of the policy in the aftermath of the Second Indochina War seems quite far-reaching, as it admits that the private sector could not develop in this period. But the analysis in the textbook does not draw the conclusion that the CPV leadership in Hanoi caused a serious economic crisis by imposing the socialist development model of the North on the southern part of the country, a blow worsened by the U.S. embargo. Nor does it acknowledge that unfavourable weather conditions resulted in a considerable slump in rice production in the Mekong Delta. At this juncture, the narrative also fails to mention the passive resistance on the part of many peasants to the agricultural collectivization campaign in the South.⁶ It similarly ignores the flight of hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese — including former inmates in re-education camps in the South — from their country because of the dire economic situation and in protest against the

harsh socialist policy of the CPV in the territory of the former Republic of Vietnam.

Both textbooks on the history of the CPV provide a more detailed account of the problems that the implementation of the socialist economic policy faced in the South after 1975, but neither one systematically analyses the disastrous economic situation of the post-war period. They merely call the decision to launch an agricultural collectivization campaign in the South “inappropriate” (*không phù hợp*) and attribute the deterioration of the economy to “mistakes in economic management” (Lê Mậu Hãn et al. 2006, p. 135; Hội đồng 2014, pp. 344–45; see also Phan Ngọc Liên 2014c, p. 206).

These textbooks describe moderate reforms launched at the end of the 1970s, such as the introduction of “production contracts” in 1981 (Hội đồng 2014, pp. 352–57; Lê Mậu Hãn et al. 2006, pp. 136–38), but they state that these efforts could not prevent Vietnam from plunging into a serious economic crisis in the mid-1980s. They praise the CPV’s adoption of the *Đổi mới* policy at its sixth national congress in December 1986 as yet another triumph in the party’s long history of victories dating back to its founding in 1930.

The newest twelfth-grade history textbook offers a sober analysis of the move to a multisectoral, market-oriented economy by characterizing it as a necessary reaction to the crisis of the mid-1980s and to the crisis of socialism in the Soviet Union and other Eastern Bloc states. The analysis stresses, too, that the introduction of reforms did not signal a departure from socialism as Vietnam’s ultimate aim (Phan Ngọc Liên 2014c, pp. 208–9).

The two special textbooks on the history of the CPV also clearly convey the message that the adoption of the *Đổi mới* policy was a major party achievement, that the reforms represented nothing more than a step in the transition to socialism and that the ultimate triumph of the Vietnamese revolution depends on the correct leadership of the CPV. In a mantra-like manner, they repeat the fact that the leadership of the CPV is absolutely necessary and that its monopolization of political power is essential. Continual reiteration

of this point is, in fact, the textbooks' principal aim (Lê Mậu Hãn et al. 2006, pp. 155, 179–80, 181–91; Hội đồng 2014, pp. 425, 453, 493, 507–11).

In the textbooks' accounts, the party remains the dominant actor in Vietnam's recent history, credited for its clear-sightedness, its courageous self-criticism, its sense of responsibility for the people and its resolute development of *Đổi mới* policy starting at its Sixth National Congress in 1986 (Hội đồng 2014, p. 383). The school and university textbooks try to buttress the orthodox master narrative centred on the role of the CPV as the dominant and victorious political force in Vietnam's recent past and the guarantor of further success for the country. They also offer the master narrative of a basically successful socialism in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe — until the parties committed the cardinal error of relinquishing their monopoly on power.

In this context, both Vietnamese modern world-history books offer a negative view of the disintegration of socialist regimes in Eastern Europe and depict it as an “unprecedented loss in the communist movement” (*một tổn thất chưa từng có trong phong trào cộng sản*). They also emphasize that the events in question did not signal the end of socialism in general, but rather the demise of a specific unscientific and imperfect form of socialism. They amount merely to a temporary setback, in other words (Đỗ Thanh Bình 2012, p. 143; Nguyễn Anh Thái 2014, p. 537). At the same time, the books stress that Vietnam needed to learn from the experience of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe if it was to avoid the same fate as its socialist brothers there. They present the People's Republic of China as a model for Vietnam to follow. Unlike the Soviet Union under Gorbachev's leadership, China chose the right path, and its leadership decided to build a Chinese-style form of socialism by sticking closely to the several main principles: the leadership of the Communist Party, Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong's ideas, the implementation of reform, the adoption of an open-door policy and the construction of a modern, rich, democratic and civilized socialist China (Đỗ Thanh Bình 2012, p. 163).

The books treat the achievements of China's reform policy both in detail (ibid., pp. 163–70) and in general terms (Nguyễn Anh Thái 2014, pp. 325–28). One textbook praises those achievements as “lights of hope on the path toward the restoration of socialism” (*ánh sáng hi vọng vào con đường phục hưng của CNXH*) (Đỗ Thanh Bình 2012, p. 394). At the end of one paragraph, that book enumerates as many as eleven precious lessons that Vietnam should learn from the Chinese example. These essentially boil down to focusing on economic reforms while developing the leading role of the Communist Party (ibid., pp. 170–71) and adopting and implementing an open-door policy while remaining sufficiently vigilant to foil the plot of “westernisation” and notions of “peaceful evolution” emanating from capitalist Western countries (ibid., p. 173).

The textbooks contrast the divergent approaches to the crisis of the 1980s in the socialist world. Instead of launching reforms in an overhasty way and relinquishing their Communist parties' monopoly of political power, socialist countries such as the People's Republic of China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Cuba, and Vietnam reacted at the right moment and successfully implemented reforms. At the same time, they maintained their essentially socialist systems and effectively prevented any further imitation of European multiparty systems (Đỗ Thanh Bình 2012, pp. 126, 143, 400; Nguyễn Anh Thái 2014, p. 512). In this context the textbooks not only praise the Chinese model but also implicitly endorse the correctness of the decision of the Communist Party of Vietnam to adhere to its own vision by implementing economic reform while maintaining one-party rule.

The textbooks depict the People's Republic of China as an especially fine example of a socialist country that has implemented a successful reform policy. One of the modern-history textbooks explicitly mentions that Chinese and Vietnamese leaders regularly met to share their experience of pursuing reform policies while developing the leadership role of their respective Communist parties (ibid., pp. 170–71).

To present the reform policy of the Chinese Communist Party as a model for the CPV to follow required the authors of history textbooks to portray Sino–Vietnamese relations of the era in which they were at a low ebb in less negative terms. Indeed, the normalization of Sino–Vietnamese relations in 1991 necessitated a complete overhaul of the relevant sections of Vietnamese history textbooks.

Narratives of Sino–Vietnamese Relations in History Textbooks

The Position of China in Vietnamese Politics and the Representation of Sino–Vietnamese Relations in Textbooks before the Collapse of Socialism

Chinese aid to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) had been instrumental during the First Indochina War and continued to be so during the Second Indochina War. However, the hitherto close relations between Hanoi and Beijing became strained when, after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, Chinese communists increasingly perceived the Soviet Union as the main threat to China's main national security and, at the same time, "feared that any move on Hanoi's part towards the Soviet Union represented a dire threat to its national security by encirclement" (Goscha 2016, p. 432). When China re-opened diplomatic contacts with the United States, the DRV's main enemy, the cracks in the Sino–Vietnamese friendship became more and more obvious. Mutual relations quickly deteriorated after 1975, when Cambodia and Laos — and not only Vietnam — also became communist. Tensions peaked in 1977 when the paranoid Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia, which China supported, attacked Vietnamese territory. In response, Hanoi leaned more and more towards Moscow. Its posture reinforced Chinese fears of an Indochina dominated initially by Vietnam and ultimately by the Soviet Union. Furthermore, in 1978 members of the Chinese minority living in Vietnam became the main target of socialist transformation in the South and started to flee the country in great numbers. In this situation, Beijing decided to stop providing military and economic aid to Vietnam. In November 1978, as it

prepared a military response to the attacks of the Khmer Rouge regime, Vietnam signed a mutual defence treaty with the Soviet Union. This step left the Chinese leadership convinced that Hanoi sided with Moscow.⁷

On 25 December 1978, battle-hardened Vietnamese troops invaded Cambodia, quickly overthrew the Pol Pot regime, and installed a new government in Phnom Penh. In reaction, on 17 February 1979 forces of the People's Republic of China staged a limited attack on the Vietnamese provinces along the countries' shared border. China sought above all to teach Vietnam a lesson, as Deng Xiaoping told U.S. president Jimmy Carter during a trip to Washington a few days before (Westad 2006, p. 11).

After three weeks of intense fighting along the Sino–Vietnamese border, the Chinese troops retreated on 16 March 1979, but skirmishes continued throughout the 1980s. Throughout the Third Indochina War (1978–89) and until the early 1990s, Sino–Vietnamese relations were at a low ebb.

If during Vietnam's war with the United States relations between the DRV and China were as close as lips and teeth, Vietnamese media and history textbooks now painted a grim picture. According to this new narrative, from the First Indochina War to the present, the People's Republic of China had basically betrayed Vietnamese interests and acted as a “chauvinist” and “expansionist” power.

A booklet published by the Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the title “The Truth about Vietnam–China Relations over the Last 30 Years” (*Sự thật về quan hệ Việt Nam — Trung Quốc trong 30 năm qua 1979*) presented the new version of the story of Vietnam's interaction with its big neighbour to the north.

Pre-reform history textbooks closely followed this account, which served as a negative master narrative of Sino–Vietnamese relations from ancient to modern times. They portrayed the Geneva conference of 1954 as “the first time the Chinese leaders betrayed the revolutionary struggle of the peoples of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia” (*Sự thật về quan hệ Việt Nam 1979*, p. 16) by colluding with the French and forcing the DRV delegation to accept the temporary

partition of Vietnam (*Lịch sử Lớp Phổ Thông 12* 1985, p. 65; *Lịch sử 12* 1987, pp. 74–76, *Lịch sử 8* 1987, p. 155). According to pre-reform history textbooks, after 1954 the Chinese leadership continued to “betray again the interests of the revolution in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos” (*phản bội lại quyền lợi của cách mạng Việt Nam, Campuchia và Lào*) (*Lịch sử 8* 1987, p. 155) towards Vietnam and the other countries of Indochina. For example, they present the historic visit of U.S. President Richard Nixon to Beijing in 1972 as part of a further attempt on the part of the Chinese leadership to betray the Vietnamese revolution (*Lịch sử 8* 1987, p. 185; *Lịch sử 12* 1987, p. 125). In the same vein, the eleventh-grade history textbook published in 1988 describes the 1979 war as an “invasion” (*xâm lược*) (*Lịch sử 11* 1988, p. 167). In addition, the textbook refers to a persistent, aggressive policy pursued by the People’s Republic of China at the Vietnamese border in the 1980s and denounces Vietnam’s northern neighbour as a dangerous enemy of many Asian countries in general and of Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam in particular (*Lịch sử 11* 1988, pp. 166–68).

This portrayal of an “expansionist” (*bành trướng*) Chinese neighbour in Vietnamese history textbooks of the pre-reform period is consistent with the tendency of a special exhibition in the Museum for U.S. War Crimes in Hồ Chí Minh City that I visited in 1988.⁸ In a special room the exhibition showed war crimes that the “Chinese expansionists” had committed during the short border war of 1979 in grim detail. When I returned to the museum in 1992, the exhibition room was still there, but it was empty. The pictures of Chinese war crimes had been removed, and I was told that there had never been any exhibition on Chinese war crimes there. What had happened?

China as the New Ally: The Representation of Sino–Vietnamese Relations in Textbooks after the Demise of the Soviet Union and Soviet Bloc Countries

At the beginning of the 1990s — after the collapse of the Soviet Union and its socialist allies in Eastern Europe — Vietnam began the process of normalizing relations with China in order to compensate

for the loss of its main strategic partners. But the Vietnamese attempt to establish a new partnership with China on the grounds of common ideological beliefs failed (Elliott 2012, pp. 112–16). Vietnam normalized its relations with China, but decided that it was unwise to rely solely on its northern neighbour, and Hanoi therefore opted for the diversification and multilateralization of its foreign relations (*ibid.*, pp. 121–23).

There is evidence to suggest that, after the meeting of Vietnamese and Chinese leaders in Chengdu (Thành Đô) in September 1990, the Chinese side agreed on a normalization of relations with Hanoi only on the condition that the Vietnamese side assured it that it would play down the border war of 1979 in Vietnamese media and history textbooks and prescribe the use of euphemistic expressions to describe that war (Đào Đức Thông 2016; Xuan Loc Doan 2017).⁹

The normalization of Vietnam's relations with China had a profound impact on the way that Vietnamese museums and textbooks presented chapters in the two countries' shared past, especially the Chinese invasion of the northern provinces of Vietnam in 1979 and other military skirmishes between the two countries in 1974 and 1988. Against the backdrop of increasing numbers of tourists from China visiting museums in Vietnam, military disputes between the two countries have been played down there (see also Chan Yuk Wah 2009, p. 247). History textbooks have reflected the same development.

In contrast to pre-reform teaching materials, one new twelfth-grade history textbook emphasizes that the aid provided by socialist allies such as the People's Republic of China was of major importance in the victory of the Việt Minh against the French in 1954 (Lê Mậu Hãn 1996, p. 113). Likewise, the textbook praises the Geneva agreements of the same year as a great achievement for the DRV without accusing the Chinese of having colluded with the French in order to divide Vietnam (*ibid.*, pp. 140–42). A second post-1990 history textbook does not even mention China's role in the paragraph on the Geneva agreements (Đình Xuân Lâm 1999, pp. 112–13). Similarly, in their sections on the diplomatic struggles of the Second

Indochina War, neither textbook brings up Nixon's visit to Beijing in 1972. As earlier books took this event to exemplify China's "treacherous policy" towards the DRV, this change is noteworthy. A third twelfth-grade history textbook only states in general terms that after the joint Shanghai Communiqué issued by the United States and China in 1972, the latter country's foreign policy had a highly negative impact on the revolution in the three Indochinese countries, but it does not repeat the pre-reform polemics about "Sino-American collusion" (Nguyễn Anh Thai 2006, p. 28).

The major test case for this sanitized version of the history of Sino-Vietnamese relations, however, is post-reform textbooks' depiction of the Chinese invasion of Vietnam in 1979. The ninth-grade history textbook contains a much shorter and more moderate account of the war than did older textbooks. Referring to the long-lasting friendship between the two countries, its narrative notes that relations worsened after 1975 (Hò Song, Nguyễn Kiên 1999, pp. 127–28). In 1979, a war "happened" (*xảy ra*) at the Vietnamese-Chinese border and Vietnamese troops had to protect the country's territory. This episode, it notes, badly damaged mutual relations between the two countries.

In the same vein, the twelfth-grade history textbook from 2014 includes just one paragraph of ten lines on the border war of 1979 (Phan Ngọc Liên 2014c, p. 207; see also Đinh Xuân Lâm 1999, pp. 183–84). Most noteworthy is the fact that the 1979 war is no longer a war. Instead, the paragraph simply refers to "protecting the borders in the North" (*bảo vệ biên giới phía Bắc*). The narrative mentions Chinese leaders who supported the "Pol Pot clique" and harmed the friendly relations between the two countries by fabricating the case of *Hoa Kiều* of overseas Chinese in Vietnam, cutting aid, and withdrawing experts from Vietnam. More seriously, it notes that, on 9 February 1979, thirty-two Chinese divisions attacked the Vietnamese border provinces, from Quảng Ninh to Lai Châu. In order to protect the national territory, the Vietnamese army fought back, and the Chinese troops consequently withdrew on 18 March. This account includes no details of the atrocities

committed and destruction caused by the Chinese army in Vietnam's border province. It also fails to mention that skirmishes with Chinese forces continued until the end of the 1980s, with proper battles, such as one at Vị Xuyên in Hà Giang province in July 1984, causing heavy losses on both sides. The naval battle of March 1988 over the Johnson South Reef near the Spratley Islands is also missing from the account, despite the deaths in that incident of some sixty-four Vietnamese soldiers who tried to defend the reef as Chinese forces attacked it (Phan Ngọc Liên 2014c, p. 207). What is most striking, however, is the sober tone of the narrative, which abstains from any sharp criticism of the Chinese military and even seems to regret the deterioration of Vietnam's relations with China — due to the bad decisions of some Chinese leaders. This narrative accords with Vietnamese foreign policy, which tends to refer to the traditional long-term friendship between the two nations and play down the significance of armed disputes (Chan Yuk Wah 2009, p. 248). The accounts of the history of the CPV in the 2006 and 2012 textbooks on the history of the party dwell on the close relations that Vietnam and China developed during the years of the former's revolutionary struggle and depicts the war in 1979 in the same restrained manner found in the textbooks discussed just above. In some places, the accounts even use the same cautious phrasing. Mutual relations worsened from 1978 onwards, when military conflicts started to occur near the Vietnamese–Chinese border and Chinese troops invaded Vietnamese territory in 1979. The Vietnamese army had to repulse the Chinese army. Vietnam was supported by peace-loving people all over the world. After the withdrawal of the Chinese troops, the two sides began negotiations to restore peace and to resolve overlapping territorial claims in the border region (Lê Mậu Hãn et al. 2006, pp. 140–41). Once again, the 2006 textbook does not provide any details about the context of the conflict or about the devastating impact that the Chinese invasion had on the northernmost Vietnamese provinces, let alone about casualties among civilians or the skirmishes that continued after the official end of the war.

The relevant paragraph in the 2014 textbook on the history of the CPV uses almost the same wording as the other work. It simply elaborates a little more on the “historical significance” (*ý nghĩa lịch sử*) of the struggle of the Vietnamese people to protect the territorial sovereignty of the country (Hội đồng 2014, pp. 349–50). It thus joins all other post-reform-period textbooks treated here in providing a very cursory and cautious account of the Chinese invasion of 1979 and subsequent military conflicts between Vietnam and China.

Tensions with China and the Call for an Overhaul of Textbooks

Against the backdrop of assertive Chinese actions in the South China Sea in the last few years, Vietnamese politicians and historians loyal to the CPV have increasingly had trouble following the paradigm valid since the beginning of the 1990s: to emphasize friendly ties with the northern neighbour and maintain silence about the war in 1979 and other dark chapters in the Sino–Vietnamese past.

Especially since 2014, when China sent an oil rig into disputed waters and provoked a bilateral crisis with Vietnam and the outbreak of anti-Chinese demonstrations in that country, several Vietnamese newspapers — such as *Vietnam.Net* and *Thanh Niên* — have considerably stepped up their coverage of the Sino–Vietnamese war of 1979 (Lan Hương 2014; Nga Pham 2014; Nguyễn Phong 2013; *Thanh Niên*, 23 February 2013). At the same time, Vietnamese historians have increasingly called for history schoolbooks to dedicate more space to the war of 1979 than just the few lines that the post-reform books have included. In 2013, for example, a historian from the teachers’ college in Hanoi complained that the account in one textbook was much too short and did not depict the degree of damage that the Chinese invasion had caused or explain why China had invaded Vietnam in the first place (Hồng Hạnh 2013).

In 2014, when the People’s Republic of China began to push its territorial claims in the South China Sea more aggressively than before, discussion about coverage of the Sino–Vietnamese war of 1979 in textbooks gained new momentum. Lê Mậu Hãn, a leading

historian from the Faculty of History at the Hanoi University of Social Sciences and Humanities, proposed that textbooks also include the war with China, just like the wars against the French and the United States (*Thanh Niên*, 17 February 2014). The Vietnamese Association of Historians contributed to the debate as well. In an interview, Vũ Dương Ninh, a colleague of Lê Mậu Hãn, reported that the association had organized a debate about the way in which the war of 1979 should be commemorated and that it had unanimously called for school textbooks to provide more coverage on the conflict (Thanh Huyền 2014). He further mentioned a meeting in which Prime Minister Nguyễn Tấn Dũng had supported that idea. And, as one of the editors and contributors to the twelfth-grade history textbook (Phan Ngọc Liên 2014c), he offered a rare glimpse of the way in which authors, editors and party and government bodies in charge negotiate the contents of history textbooks in Vietnam. He revealed that the original account of the war of 1979 was about three pages long but that, after a heated discussion, it was necessary to cut it to a short paragraph of just eleven lines.

In a second interview, given in February 2016, Vũ Dương Ninh added some details on the reasoning behind the decision to prune the text. According to him, there were directives that historical events relating to the territorial conflicts between Vietnam and China not be included in the textbooks because the two countries had only recently normalized relations (Quỳnh Trang 2016). However, at a time when the 1974 naval battle between the Republic of Vietnam and the People's Republic of China over the Paracel Islands had not been made public, historians insisted that the textbooks address the war with China and the Khmer Rouge regime in 1978–79. Some of Vũ Dương Ninh's colleagues then produced a four-page account — subsequently trimmed to eleven lines because of “delicate relations” (*quan hệ tế nhị*) with China.

According to Vũ Dương Ninh, the series of textbooks currently in preparation must provide detailed accounts of all the conflicts in question: the naval battle of the Paracel Islands in 1974, the war against Cambodia in 1978, the war against China in 1979, the battle

of Vĩ Xuyên in 1984, and the Johnson South Reef skirmish in the Spratley Islands in 1988. They must depict all these military conflicts as “struggles against invaders” (*đấu tranh chống xâm lược*). Before the new textbooks are published, history teachers should prepare additional teaching material on the military conflicts with China themselves and submit it to the Ministry of Education and Training for approval, he said (Quỳnh Trang 2016).

Phan Huy Lê, the internationally renowned scholar and chairman of the Vietnamese Association of Historians, seconded Vũ Dương Ninh and suggested that history textbooks disseminate more information concerning the history of the Paracel and Spratley Islands and the struggle for territorial sovereignty (Hải Quân 2015). In an interview, Nguyễn Quang Ngọc, the vice-chairman of the same association, also supported the idea of including the border war in new history textbooks (Phạm Thịnh 2016).

The Vietnamese public has also begun to demand that the coverage of the Sino–Vietnamese war in history textbooks be increased. For example, when the online newspaper *Vnexpress* published several articles to mark the approach of the fortieth anniversary of the war in February 2017, the reaction was overwhelming. One article entitled “The Border in February 1979”, which presented several impressive photographs of the war, received more than five hundred comments in a brief time (Hoàng Phương 2017). Many readers admitted that at school they had not learned about the topic at all or that they had studied it only in a very cursory manner. They suggested history textbooks treat the war in much more detail (Xuân Trang 2017; Nguyen Minh Quang 2017).

In summary, the deterioration of Vietnamese relations with the People’s Republic of China has led more and more voices in Vietnam to call for stepped up coverage of recent military conflicts between the two countries and of the history of the disputed territories.¹⁰ There is evidence to suggest that the pressure exerted by stakeholders such as the Vietnamese Association of Historians will have an impact. Responding to suggestions made both by historians and general readers (*đur luận*), Nguyễn Vinh Hiển, the deputy minister of education

and training, emphasized that the ministry would consider revising the contents of history textbooks and cover more adequately the war against Cambodia in 1978, the war with China in 1979, and other military conflicts with the PRC in textbooks to be published in a few years' time (Quyên Quyên 2016).

Professor Nghiêm Đình Vỳ, editor of the new series of textbooks due to be published in 2018, also stated that in his personal opinion the new books should pay more attention to the Vietnamese–Chinese war of 1979 (*Sức Khỏe & Đời Sống*, 25 February 2016). However, he also emphasized that the editorial committee and various sub-committees responsible for the content of the new textbooks would have to discuss these issues first and then resolve them. Whether or not to include in the textbooks specific numbers of casualties resulting from the war of 1979 is a sensitive topic, for example, because the new textbooks should promote both historical truth and patriotism. For the new series of textbooks also to cover the 1974 naval battle between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Vietnam over the Paracel Islands would be a major shift in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam's representation of the former Saigon regime. It would reflect a considerable upgrading of the status of the fifty-three casualties from the Republic of Vietnam's navy resulting from that clash.

On the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of that naval battle, in 2014, Vietnamese newspapers published several articles on the clash. This coverage even included a list of the Republic of Vietnam soldiers who died during the battle (*Thanh Niên*, 9 January 2014; Trần Nhật Vy and Quốc Việt 2014). This departure from precedent implies an attempt to shore up “legitimacy by undercutting the overseas Vietnamese supporters of the Saigon regime who, of course, memorialise the battle”, as Carlyle Thayer suggests (Nga Pham 2014). In addition, however, the increased coverage of the event also responds to pressure exerted by domestic forces, including Vietnamese historians and veterans. In fact, in 2014, even former officers of the People's Army of Vietnam started to speak out and suggest that soldiers of the former Army of the Republic of Vietnam

killed in the naval battle with the Chinese be honoured for their patriotic sacrifice (Mai Hà 2014).

The commemoration of military clashes between Vietnam and China remains a highly sensitive political issue in Vietnam. Whether Vietnamese textbooks reflect the distancing of Vietnam from its powerful neighbour to the north in the near future is a political decision. It would, however, be a decision in line with the CPV's new permissiveness in recalling and commemorating past military clashes with China (Großheim 2016, pp. 28–34).

Conclusion

In Vietnam, textbooks still tend to offer a celebratory, sanitized interpretation of the past. They depict the collapse of socialism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe as a tragic event in the history of the movement. They ascribe that collapse mainly to the failure of socialist parties in the GDR, Romania and other countries to launch necessary reforms in time or to avoid a headlong rush into a multiparty system, as witnessed in Russia. They also attribute it to the disastrous influence of anti-socialist forces both outside the countries involved and inside them. The textbooks draw two definitive lessons for the CPV in this context. First, if the party were to relinquish its monopoly on power, that would be tantamount to digging its own grave. Second, the party should avoid making hasty reforms in the political sector and focus on economic reforms instead. In connection with this thinking, the books hail the Chinese Communist Party as an inspiring example for the CPV because it embarked on a timely reform programme and is still marching resolutely towards its socialist goals.

Textbooks also tell the history of the Vietnamese revolution from a teleological perspective. In this narrative, the CPV marched from one triumph to another right from the time of its origins in 1930 and has been the leading force in Vietnam's recent history and the guarantor of the success of the Vietnamese revolution.

Like celebratory accounts of global communism in the past, the textbooks also ignore or play down inconsistencies and failures

in Vietnam's march along the path to socialism. Whenever the CPV made a serious mistake, as in the case of the land reform campaign of the 1950s, it managed to recognize and correct it soon afterward. The textbooks thus retroactively interpret the darkest days in the history of the Vietnamese revolution as a time of victories that show how determined the party was to criticize itself for the sake of the Vietnamese people. Inconvenient historical events such as the flight of millions of Vietnamese abroad after 1975 are ignored altogether. But the books depict the adoption of the *Đổi mới* policy in the 1980s as another example of the CPV's clear-sightedness. The emphasis is on continuity here, not on the possibility that the policy represented a break with Vietnam's socialist past. In addition, textbooks mainly ascribe the successful reform policy to the competent leadership of the party and regard it as a top-down transformation project. They do not characterize it as a necessary response to pressure from the grass-roots level, where experiments undermining the rigid collective economy had already been mushrooming for a long time.

Describing the historiographical treatment of the Vietnam wars, Mark Bradley and Marilyn Young have observed, "The state's master narrative in the historical realm has largely remained intact" (Bradley and Young 2008, p. 12). This principle applies in particular to textbook narratives of modern Vietnamese history and of Vietnamese and global communism as well. History textbooks are still one of the most important means by which the socialist party-state maintains communist legitimacy. Therefore, they present *Đổi mới* not as a failure of communism but as part of a success story with the CPV as its main actor. There has, in other words, been very little change in history textbooks, and a real *Đổi mới* in the classroom is still due.

In contrast, the representation of Sino-Vietnamese relations in history textbooks has undergone profound changes in the last forty years and thus stands out as an exception. After the Chinese invasion of Vietnam's northern border provinces in 1979, textbooks in Vietnam and state media in general depicted Beijing as Hanoi's arch-enemy from ancient times to the revolutionary struggle against the French

and the United States in the twentieth century. However, after the demise of the socialist states in Eastern Europe and especially its closest ally the Soviet Union, Vietnam chose China as its main strategic partner. Loyal party historians therefore had to rewrite textbooks once more, to present relations with China in a completely different way. This historiographical turn resulted in heavily edited paragraphs on the Sino–Vietnamese war of 1979 in history textbooks.

Since the deterioration of bilateral relations in 2014, Vietnamese historians and the Vietnamese public, using social media, have increasingly challenged this sanitized version of Vietnam’s clashes with China in the past. In a few years, a new historiographical turn might find expression in a different account of Sino–Vietnamese relations in textbooks.

In the long run, it remains to be seen whether the conflicting interpretations of the past that have increasingly emerged because of the *Đổi mới* policy introduced by the party, the collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union and wider access to information about the past via the Internet (Tai 2001*b*, p. 3) will have a more lasting effect on history textbooks in Vietnam. A revamping of history textbooks that keeps pace with Vietnam’s transformation policy over the last thirty years and its opening to the world is overdue. That revamping would also take into account broader changes in Vietnamese historiography in Vietnam since the beginning of *Đổi mới* and the increasing interaction of mostly younger Vietnamese historians with other Vietnam scholars in the world.

Acknowledgements

This article is part of a research project on “The Politics of History and Memory in Vietnam” funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG). I would like to thank the foundation for its support. Thanks also to two anonymous readers for *SOJOURN*.

Martin Großheim is Adjunct Professor in the Department of Southeast Asian Studies, University of Passau, Innstrasse 41, D 94032 Passau, Germany; email: Martin.Grossheim@uni-passau.de.

NOTES

1. On Vietnamese textbooks, see Saito et al. (2013), Salomon and Vu Doan Ket (2007), and Tai (2001a). On textbooks in China and Japan, see Bukh (2007), Shin and Sneider (2011), Müller (2011), and Richter (2009).
2. For an analysis of the “two-camp thesis” and the theory of “peaceful evolution”, see Thayer (1990, pp. 1–2, 14).
3. See also Phan Ngọc Liên 2014c, p. 44.
4. For new accounts of the land reform campaign, see Tessier (2008) and Vo (2015).
5. The same is true for the first exhibition on land reform in the National Museum of Vietnamese History in Hanoi in 2014; the exhibition was closed after a few days. See Brown (2014), Nguyễn Xuân Diễn (2014), and Trịnh Nguyễn (2014).
6. See the analysis in Kerkvliet (2005, pp. 143–233).
7. This discussion follows Goscha (2016, pp. 432–33).
8. The museum was later renamed the War Remnants Museum (*Bảo tàng chứng tích chiến tranh*).
9. Personal communication with a Vietnamese colleague, 2 March 2016; see also *Bangkok Post* (17 February 2015) and Hoàng An Vĩnh (2014).
10. Interestingly, Chinese state-owned media remain almost completely silent on the anniversary of the Sino–Vietnamese war; see Lu (2014).

REFERENCES

- Bangkok Post*. “Vietnam in Rare Note of ’79 China War”. 17 February 2015 <<http://www.bangkokpost.com/lite/news/477632/vietnam-in-rare-note-of-79-china-war>> (accessed on 26 November 2015).
- Bradley, Mark Philip, and Marilyn B. Young. “Introduction — Making Sense of the Vietnam Wars”. In *Making Sense of the Vietnam Wars: Local, National, and Transnational Perspectives*, edited by Mark Philip Bradley and Marilyn B. Young. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Brown, David. “Vietnam Quickly Shuttters ‘Land Reform’ Exhibit”. *Asia Sentinel*, 13 September 2014 <<http://www.asiasentinel.com/politics/vietnam-quickly-shuttters-land-reform-exhibit/>> (accessed 13 September 2014).
- Bukh, Alexander. “Japan’s History Textbooks Debate: National Identity in Narratives of Victimhood and Victimization”. *Asian Survey* 47, no. 5 (October 2007): 683–704.
- Chan Yuk Wah. “Language Power: Relational Rhetoric and Historical Taciturnity”. In *Connecting and Distancing: Southeast Asia and China in*

- Perspectives*, edited by Ho Khai Leong, pp. 230–51. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2009.
- Đảng Cộng sản Việt Nam. “Vì sao Liên Xô sụp đổ” [Why the Soviet Union collapsed]. *Báo điện tử Đảng Cộng sản Việt Nam*, 19 May 2010 <http://dangcongsan.vn/cpv/Modules/News/NewsDetail.aspx?co_id=30684&cn_id=404124> (accessed 19 June 2015).
- Đào Đức Thông. “Xóa lịch sử chiến tranh biên giới 1979: Sự mang ơn ngu muội” [Erase the history of the border war of 1979: Blind gratitude]. *Việt Nam Thời Báo*, 22 February 2016 <<http://www.ijavn.org/2016/02/vntb-xoa-lich-su-chien-tranh-bien-gioi.html>> (accessed 8 May 2016).
- Đình Xuân Lâm, ed. *Lịch sử 12, Tập Hai* [History 12, vol. 2], 14th ed. Hanoi: NXB Giáo Dục, 1999.
- Đỗ Thanh Bình, ed. *Lịch sử thế giới hiện đại* [Modern world history], 3rd ed. Hanoi: NXB Đại Học Sư Phạm, 2012.
- Elliott, David W.P. *Changing Worlds: Vietnam's Transition from Cold War to Globalization*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Giebel, Christoph. “Revolution, War, and Memory in Contemporary Viet Nam: An Assessment and Agenda”. In *Ruptured Histories: War, Memory, and the Post-Cold War in Asia*, edited by Sheila Miyoshi Jager and Rana Mitter. Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2007.
- Goscha, Christopher. *The Penguin History of Modern Vietnam*. London: Penguin Books, 2016.
- Großheim, Martin. “The Lao Động Party, Culture and the Campaign against ‘Modern Revisionism’: The Democratic Republic of Vietnam before the Second Indochina War”. *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 8, no. 1 (February 2013): 80–129.
- . “Fraternal Support: The East German ‘Stasi’ and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam during the Vietnam War”. Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center, CWIHP Working Paper no. 71, 2014 <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/CWIHP_Working_Paper_71_East_German_Stasi_Vietnam_War.pdf> (accessed 6 February 2018).
- . “Kriegsgedenken und gesellschaftliche Initiativen: Vietnam seit den 1970er Jahren” [War commemoration and social initiatives: Vietnam since the 1970s]. *Formenwandel der Bürgergesellschaft/Transformations of Civic Society*, no. 23. Halle an der Saale: Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg, 2016.
- Hải Quân. “Khẩn trương đưa lịch sử Hoàng Sa, Trường Sa vào học” [We urgently need to include the history of Hoang Sa and Truong Sa in the syllabus]. *Zing*, 17 December 2015 <<http://news.zing.vn/Khan-truong-dua-lich-su-Hoang-Sa-Truong-Sa-vao-hoc-post611391.html>> (accessed 6 March 2016).

- Hansen, Peter. “Bắc Đi Cú: Catholic Refugees from the North of Vietnam, and their Role in the Southern Republic, 1954–1959”. *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 4, no. 3 (Autumn 2009): 173–211.
- Hồ Song and Nguyễn Kiên. *Lịch sử 9, tập Hai* [History 9, vol. 2], 10th ed. Hanoi: NXB Giáo Dục, 1999.
- Hoàng An Vĩnh. “Trung Quốc ép Việt Nam không được tưởng niệm Chiến tranh biên giới 1979?” [Is China forcing Vietnam not to remember the borders’ war?] *Viet Studies*, 4 February 2014 <<http://viet-studies.info/kinhte/EpKhongTuongNiem.htm>> (accessed 26 November 2015).
- Hoàng Phương. “Biên giới tháng 2 năm 1979” [The border in February 1979]. *VN Express*, 17 February 2017 <<http://vnexpress.net/photo/thoi-su/bien-gioi-thang-2-nam-1979-3541696.html>> (accessed 1 March 2017).
- Hoàng Thuỳ. “Hàng nghìn chiến sĩ thương vong ngày cao điểm trận chiến Vị Xuyên” [Thousands of soldiers die during the climax days of the battle of Vị Xuyên]. *VN Express*, 25 July 2014 <<https://vnexpress.net/tin-tuc/thoi-su/hang-nghin-chien-si-thuong-vong-ngay-cao-diem-tran-chien-vi-xuyen-3022565.html>> (accessed 9 February 2018).
- Hội đồng Trung Ương chỉ đạo biên soạn giáo trình Quốc gia các bộ môn khoa học Mác-Lênin, tư tưởng Hồ Chí Minh [Central Commission directing the compilation of the national textbook of Marxist-Leninist subjects and the Hồ Chí Minh ideas]. *Giáo trình Lịch sử Đảng Cộng sản Việt Nam* (amended version) [Textbook of the history of the Vietnamese Communist Party]. Hanoi: National Publishing House, 2014.
- Hồng Chuyên. “Một phần Trường Sa của Việt Nam bị Trung Quốc chiếm như thế nào? (bài 8)” [How China took a part of Vietnam’s Spratly Islands]. *Infonet*, 14 September 2012 <<http://infonet.vn/mot-phan-truong-sa-cua-viet-nam-bi-trung-quoc-chiem-nhu-the-nao-bai-8-post28394.info>> (accessed 9 February 2018).
- Hồng Hạnh. “Cuộc chiến bảo vệ biên giới 1979: Đã đủ độ chín để viết rõ trong SGK” [The war to protect the border in 1979. Time is ripe to write clearly in textbooks]. *Dân Trí*, 21 February 2013 <<http://dantri.com.vn/giao-duc-khuyen-hoc/cuoc-chien-bao-ve-bien-gioi-1979-da-du-do-chin-de-viet-ro-trong-sgk-1361840384.htm>> (accessed 22 February 2013).
- Kerkvliet, Benedict J. Tria. *The Power of Everyday Politics. How Vietnamese Peasants Transformed National Policy*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005.
- Kinh Hòa. “Lịch sử thế giới trong sách giáo khoa Việt Nam” [World history in Vietnamese textbooks], 12 May 2015 <http://www.rfa.org/vietnamese/in_depth/world-his-in-vn-school-books-05112015122029.html> (accessed 12 June 2015).
- Lan Hương. “Chiến tranh Biên giới 1979: Không thể quên lãng” [The border

- war of 1979: It cannot be forgotten]. *VietnamNet*, 17 February 2014 <<http://vietnamnet.vn/vn/tuanvietnam/161648/chien-tranh-bien-gioi-1979-khong-the-quen-lang.html>> (accessed 26 November 2015).
- Lê Mậu Hãn, ed. *Lịch sử 12, tập 2, Ban khoa học Xã hội* [History 12, vol. 2, Department of Social Sciences], 2nd ed. Hanoi: NXB Giáo Dục, 1996.
- , ed. *Lịch sử Việt Nam, Tập IV* [History of Vietnam, vol. 4]. Hanoi: NXB Giáo Dục, 2013.
- Lê Mậu Hãn, Trình Mưu and Mạch Quang Thắng. *Giáo trình lịch sử Đảng cộng sản Việt Nam: Dùng trong các trường đại học, cao đẳng*, second edition. [Teaching material on the history of the Vietnamese Communist Party: For universities and colleges]. Hanoi: National Publishing House, 2006.
- Lịch sử 8, hệ 12 năm* [History 8, 12-year system], 24th ed. Hanoi: NXB Giáo Dục, 1987.
- Lịch sử 11, hệ 12 năm, tập 1* [History 11, 12-year system, vol. 1], 29th ed. Hanoi: NXB Giáo Dục, 1988.
- Lịch sử 12, hệ 12 năm, tập 2* [History 12, 12-year system, vol. 2], 21st ed. Hanoi: NXB Giáo Dục, 1987.
- Lịch sử Lớp Phổ Thông 12, tập II* [History 12, vol. 2], 8th ed. Hanoi: NBX Giáo Dục, 1985.
- Lu, Rachel. “Comment: Beijing Wants People to Forget the Sino-Vietnamese War”. Special Broadcasting Service, 21 February 2014 <<http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2014/02/21/comment-beijing-wants-people-forget-sino-vietnamese-war>> (accessed 1 March 2017).
- Mai Hà. “Trung tướng Nguyễn Quốc Thước: ‘Cần tôn vinh những quân nhân VNCH chống ngoại xâm’” [Lieutenant-general Nguyễn Quốc Thước: The soldiers of the Republic of Vietnam who fought against foreign invaders should be honoured]. *Thanh Niên*, 7 January 2014 <<http://thanhnien.vn/chinh-tri-xa-hoi/hai-chien-hoang-sa/trung-tuong-nguyen-quoc-thuoc-can-ton-vinh-nhung-quan-nhan-vnch-chong-ngoai-xam-6033.html>> (accessed 7 January 2014).
- Marr, David G. “Vietnamese Historiography, Past and Present”. *Nordic Newsletter of Asian Studies*, no. 4 (2002) <<http://nias.ku.dk/nytt/2002-4/vietnamese.htm>> (accessed 8 June 2011).
- Miller, Edward. *Misalliance — Ngo Dinh Diem, the United States, and the Fate of South Vietnam*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013.
- Müller, Gotelind, ed. *Designing History in East Asian Textbooks. Identity, Politics and Transnational Aspirations*. London: Routledge, 2011.
- Nga Pham. “Shift as Vietnam Marks South China Sea Battle”. BBC News,

- 14 January 2014 <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-25709833>> (accessed 14 March 2015).
- Ngân Anh. “Sao lại xem chiến tranh biên giới là nội dung tế nhị?” [Why consider the borders’ war a sensitive topic?] *VietnamNet*, 11 March 2016 <<http://vietnamnet.vn/vn/giao-duc/293543/sao-lai-xem-chien-tranh-bien-gioi-la-noi-dung-te-nhi.html>> (accessed 11 March 2016).
- Nguyễn Anh Thái. *Lịch sử 9, Tập Một* [History 9, vol. 1], 11th ed. Hanoi: NXB Giáo Dục, 2002.
- . *Lịch sử 12, Tập Một* [History 12, vol. 1], 15th ed. Hanoi: NXB Giáo Dục, 2006.
- , ed. *Lịch sử thế giới hiện đại* [Modern World History], 13th ed. Hanoi: NXB Giáo Dục Việt Nam, 2014.
- Nguyen Minh Quang. “The Bitter Legacy of the 1979 China-Vietnam War”. *The Diplomat*, 23 February 2017 <<http://thediplomat.com/2017/02/the-bitter-legacy-of-the-1979-china-vietnam-war/>> (accessed 1 March 2017).
- Nguyễn Phong. “Nhìn lại chiến tranh biên giới 1979” [Looking back to the war of 1979]. *Thanh Niên*, 17 February 2013 <<http://thanhnien.vn/thoi-su/nhin-lai-chien-tranh-bien-gioi-1979-476927.html>> (accessed 22 February 2013).
- Nguyễn Tiến Bình. “Bài học từ sự sụp đổ và tan rã của Liên Xô” [Lessons from the collapse and disintegration of the Soviet Union]. *Quân đội Nhân dân*, 24 August 2011 <<http://www.qdnd.vn/qdndsites/vi-vn/61/43/binh-luan-quoc-te/bai-hoc-tu-su-sup-do-va-tan-ra-cua-lien-xo/158465.html>> (accessed 19 June 2015).
- Nguyễn Xuân Diên. “Tin hot. Đóng cửa triển lãm cải cách ruộng đất” [Breaking news. Land-reform exhibition closed]. 11 September 2014 <<http://xuandienhannom.blogspot.ca/2014/09/tin-hot-ong-cua-trien-lam-cai-cach.html>> (accessed 11 August 2015).
- Pelley, Patricia. *Postcolonial Vietnam: New Histories of the National Past*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2002.
- Phạm Thịnh. “Đề nghị đưa chiến tranh biên giới vào SGK tương xứng tầm vóc cuộc chiến” [Suggestion to include the borders’ war in textbooks in an appropriate manner]. 19 February 2016 <<http://vtc.vn/de-nghi-dua-chien-tranh-bien-gioi-va-ogk-tuong-xung-tam-vo-cuoc-chien.538.595479.htm>> (accessed 22 February 2016).
- Phan Ngọc Liên, ed. *Lịch sử 9* [History 9], 9th ed. Hanoi: NXB Giáo Dục Việt Nam, 2014a.
- , ed. *Lịch sử 11* [History 11], 7th ed. Hanoi: NXB Giáo Dục Việt Nam, 2014b.
- , ed. *Lịch sử 12* [History 12], 6th ed. Hanoi: NXB Giáo Dục Việt Nam, 2014c.

- Quyên Quyên. “Bộ Giáo dục sẽ đưa chiến tranh biên giới, hải đảo vào SGK” [The Ministry of Education is to include the borders’ war and the war for the islands in textbooks]. *Zing*, 22 February 2016 <<http://news.zing.vn/Bo-Giao-duc-se-dua-chien-tranh-bien-gioi-hai-dao-va-vo-SGK-post628550.html>> (accessed 28 February 2016).
- Quỳnh Trang. “GS Vũ Dương Ninh: ‘SGK dứt khoát không được né tránh cuộc chiến tranh biên giới phía Bắc’” [Professor Vu Duong Ninh: ‘Textbooks should by no means avoid the northern borders’ war’]. *VN Express*, 21 February 2016 <<http://vnexpress.net/tin-tuc/giao-duc/gs-vu-duong-ninh-sgk-dut-khoat-khong-duoc-ne-tranh-cuoc-chien-tranh-bien-gioi-phia-bac-3358153.html>> (accessed 21 February 2016).
- Richter, Steffi, ed. *Contested Views of a Common Past: Revisions of History in Contemporary East Asia*. Frankfurt: Campus, 2009.
- Saito Eisuke, Theresa Alviar-Martin, and Khong Thi Diem Hang (2013). “Analysis of Descriptions of the Japanese Occupation and the Atomic Bombs in Vietnamese and Singaporean Textbooks”. In *Controversial History Education: History Textbook Controversies and Teaching Historical Controversy in Asian Contexts*, edited by Mark Baildon, Loh Kah Seng, and Ivy Maria Lim, pp. 75–91. London: Routledge, 2013.
- Salomon, Matthieu, and Vu Doan Ket. “Doi Moi, Education and Identity Formation in Contemporary Vietnam”. In *Compare: A Journal of Comparative Education* 37, no. 3 (2007): 345–63.
- Shin Gi-Wook and Daniel C. Sneider, eds. *History and Textbooks and the Wars in Asia*. London: Routledge, 2011.
- Sự thật về quan hệ Việt Nam-Trung Quốc trong 30 năm qua* [The truth of Sino–Vietnamese relations in the last 30 years]. Hanoi: NXB Sự thật, 1979.
- Sức Khỏe & Đời Sống*. “Dự kiến đưa chiến tranh biên giới phía Bắc vào SGK tiểu học” [Plan to include the northern borders’ war in elementary-school textbooks]. *Sức Khỏe & Đời Sống*, 25 February 2016 <<http://suckhoedoisong.vn/du-kien-dua-chien-tranh-bien-gioi-phia-bac-va-vo-sgk-tieu-hoc-n112606.html>> (accessed 6 March 2016).
- Tai, Hue Tam Ho, ed. *The Country of Memory: Remaking the Past in Late Socialist Vietnam*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001a.
- . “Situating Memory”. In *The Country of Memory — Remaking the Past in Late Socialist Vietnam*, edited by Hue Tam Ho Tai, pp. 1–16. Berkeley: University of California Press 2001b.
- Tessier, Olivier. “Le ‘grand bouleversement’ (long trời lộng đất): Regards croisés sur la réforme agraire en République démocratique du Viet Nam” [The ‘great upheaval’ (long trời lộng đất): perspectives on agrarian reform in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam]. In *Bulletin de l’Ecole française d’Extrême-Orient*, nos. 95–96 (2008): 73–134.

- Thanh Huyền. “Góc nhìn mới về chiến tranh biên giới, hải đảo trong SGK” [New view on the borders’ and the islands’ war]. *Báo Đất Việt*, 14 March 2014 <<http://baodatviet.vn/chinh-tri-xa-hoi/tin-tuc-thoi-su/goc-nhin-moi-ve-chien-tranh-bien-gioi-hai-dao-trong-sgk-3003280/>> (accessed 9 January 2016).
- Thanh Niên*. “Remembering a Forgotten War”. *Thanh Niên*, 23 February 2013 <<http://www.thanhniennews.com/society/remembering-a-forgotten-war-3449.html>> (accessed 1 March 2017).
- . “Danh sách các quân nhân Việt Nam Cộng Hòa hi sinh trong Hải chiến Hoàng Sa 1974” [List of the soldiers of the Republic of Vietnam who died during the naval battle of the Paracel Islands in 1974]. *Thanh Niên*, 9 January 2014 <<http://thanhnien.vn/chinh-tri-xa-hoi/hai-chien-hoang-sa/danh-sach-cac-quan-nhan-viet-nam-cong-hoa-hi-sinh-trong-hai-chien-hoang-sa-1974-5837.html>> (accessed 10 January 2016).
- . “Historian Wants China’s ’79 invasion of Northern Vietnam Included in School”. *Thanh Niên*, 17 February 2014 <<http://www.thanhniennews.com/politics/historian-wants-chinas-79-invasion-of-northern-vietnam-included-in-school-23883.html>> (accessed 18 November 2014).
- Thayer, Carlyle A. “Vietnamese Foreign Policy: Multilateralism and the Threat of Peaceful Evolution”. In *Vietnamese Foreign Policy in Transition*, edited by Carlyle A. Thayer and Ramses Amer, pp. 1–24. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999.
- Trần Nhật Vỹ and Quốc Việt. “40 năm hải chiến Hoàng Sa” [40 years of the naval battle of the Paracel Islands]. *Tuổi Trẻ*, 2 January 2014 <<http://tuoitre.vn/tin/chinh-tri-xa-hoi/phong-su-ky-su/20140102/40-nam-hai-chien-hoang-sa/588163.html>> (accessed 11 May 2015).
- Trịnh Nguyễn. “Lần đầu tiên triển lãm về cải cách ruộng đất” [First exhibition on the land reform]. *Thanh Niên*, 9 September 2014 <<http://thanhnien.vn/van-hoa/lan-dau-trien-lam-ve-cai-cach-ruong-dat-452033.html>> (accessed 16 August 2016).
- Tuong Vu. “Triumphs or Tragedies: a New Perspective on the Vietnamese Revolution”. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 45, no. 2 (June 2014): 236–57.
- Vo, Alex-Thai D. “Nguyen Thi Nam and the Land Reform in North Vietnam, 1953”. *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 10, no. 1 (Winter 2015): 1–62.
- Westad, Odd Arne. “Introduction: From War to Peace to War in Indochina”. In *The Third Indochina War*, edited by Odd Arne Westad and Sophie Quinn-Judge, pp. 1–11. London: Routledge, 2006.
- Xuan Loc Doan. “Breaking a Taboo, Hanoi Recalls War with China”. *Asia Times*, 23 February 2017 <<http://www.atimes.com/article/breaking-taboo-vietnam-recalls-war-china/>> (accessed 1 March 2017).

Xuân Trang. “Nhiều người chưa biết về Chiến tranh biên giới phía Bắc” [Many people don’t know yet about the borders’ war in the North]. *VN Express*, 17 February 2017 <<http://vnexpress.net/tin-tuc/cong-dong/nhieu-nguoi-chua-biet-ve-chien-tranh-bien-gioi-phia-bac-3542704.html>> (accessed 1 March 2017).