



The process to rapprochement between Vietnam and its diaspora in the United States

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ABSTRACT

Despite the lingering conflict between the government of Vietnam and the Vietnamese diaspora in the United States, issues of remittance and relationship relaxation between the refugees and Vietnamese government happened both in the 1990s. Recent years have seen the attitude-change of the returning diaspora and their shifting strategies of working in Vietnam. This paper describes the first step toward rapprochement between Vietnam and its diaspora in the United States, by analysing the attempts of Vietnam to approach its diaspora in the United States and the reactions of the diasporic community members. On the other hand, it also describes the efforts of Vietnamese Americans to empower Vietnamese people through philanthropic and civic engagement activities. The rapprochement via media and civic engagement reveals a shift from hard, intense ideological conflict to soft tactics in the transnational relation between Vietnam and the Vietnamese diaspora in the United States. This paper concludes that the process to rapprochement is still challenged by the significant differences in political views between the two sides. It suggests that the process of negotiation and conflict resolution be conducted with openness, honesty and acceptance of differences.

KEYWORDS

Vietnam; diaspora; politics; media; non-governmental organization

1. Introduction

1.1. *The origin of Vietnamese diasporas*¹

The contemporary history of Vietnam is full of political conflicts, interconnections, and complex diplomatic entanglements throughout turbulent colonial wars and North–South division (based on the 17th parallel after the Geneva Conference in 1954). Particularly after the communist troops from North Vietnam entered South Vietnam,² the tension in the country reached its peak. The day of 30 April 1975 signalled the end of the Vietnam War (1955–1975) and the fall of Saigon, the capital of the South Vietnam regime. Since 1975, Vietnam has been reunified under the official name Socialist Republic of Vietnam (Vietnam) and ruled by one political party, the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV). Vietnam has achieved territorial unification; however, there are still a number of scattered people who fled as political refugees.³ According to the 111

Cong. Rec. H4855, over two million Vietnamese refugees have settled across the world, in the United States, Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, Hong Kong, and many other nations (US House 2009). They tried to escape the political oppression (*i.e.* re-education camps) and social and economic reforms (*i.e.* the campaign of abolishing 'bourgeois' factors) of the communist government of North Vietnam (Do 1999; Vo 2006; Settje 2007).

1.2. Vietnamese diaspora in the United States

The largest number of Vietnamese refugees may be found in the United States; the number of refugees peaked at 1.6 million individuals including the first and second generations, according to the Migration Policy Institute (2015). A large proportion of the first-generation arrived the United States as political refugees after the collapse of Saigon in 1975, with more than 200,000 in the immediate aftermath of the war from 1975 to 1977. Then, there were approximately 588,000 between 1978 and 2013, after the 'Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act of 1975' was passed under President Gerald Ford and the refugee admissions programme began to be formalized (Migration Policy Institute 2015). Although the refugee admissions programme diminished after 1996, an increasing number of new legal permanent residents entered the United States as family-based immigrants (Migration Policy Institute 2015). Table 1 shows the ten states in the United States in which the most Vietnamese people live.

As shown in Table 1, most Vietnamese-American refugees have settled in southern California, Texas, Washington, Florida, Virginia, Georgia, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, New York, and Louisiana. Among around 1,753,333 people living in the United States (according to U.S. Census Bureau's 2017 American Community Survey), California has the largest number of Vietnamese people, with a population of 642,758. California tops the list with six out of seven cities all over the country having the largest Vietnamese-Americans population; for example, San Jose with 108,110; Los Angeles with 96,003; Garden Grove with 54,505; San Diego with 37,695; Westminster with 37,242; and Santa Ana with 26,099 people.

It is important to note the distinction between a migrant and a refugee. The former is the one who leaves his country voluntarily due to economic motives, while the latter is forced to leave as a victim of oppression, political persecution or violence (Adler and Gielen 2003). The migration of Vietnamese refugees to the United States has occurred in two periods, each with several waves (Do 1999). The first period began in April 1975

Table 1. Top ten states with highest Vietnamese-American populations (2017).

1	California	642,758
2	Texas	253,149
3	Washington	73,209
4	Florida	71,823
5	Virginia	59,838
6	Georgia	54,116
7	Massachusetts	47,472
8	Pennsylvania	42,161
9	Louisiana	33,261
10	New York	30,544

Source: U.S. Census Bureau's 2017 American Community Survey, accessed at https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml.

through 1977, with three waves of Vietnamese refugees. The first wave of this period began a week to ten days before the collapse of Saigon on 30 April 1975, including ten to fifteen thousand people (Do 1999). The second wave occurred at the end of Vietnam War, involving a largest amount of approximately eighty thousand people. They were military personnel and urban professionals who associated with the U.S. military or the South Vietnamese government, leaving in the state of panic in U.S.-sponsor evacuation. A final wave of this period involved about forty to sixty thousand people who left by small boat, ships, and commandeered aircrafts (Do 1999). The second period of Vietnamese refugee migration began in 1978 and continues even today (Do 1999). Figure 1 shows two main migration periods of Vietnamese Americans since 1975 with specific waves.

Though there are many different overseas Vietnamese communities, this study focuses on the case of political diaspora community that has historical roots in refugee-exile circumstances. It can be assumed that wherever there are Vietnamese refugee community, there are anti-communist groups and associations. The tension between the Vietnamese communist authority and the Vietnamese anti-communist refugees seems to never end. While 30 April 1975 became the national holiday of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and stands for the victory of North Vietnam in the Vietnam War, to overseas Vietnamese refugees, the day is remembered as the 'National Day of Resentment' or 'Black April'.

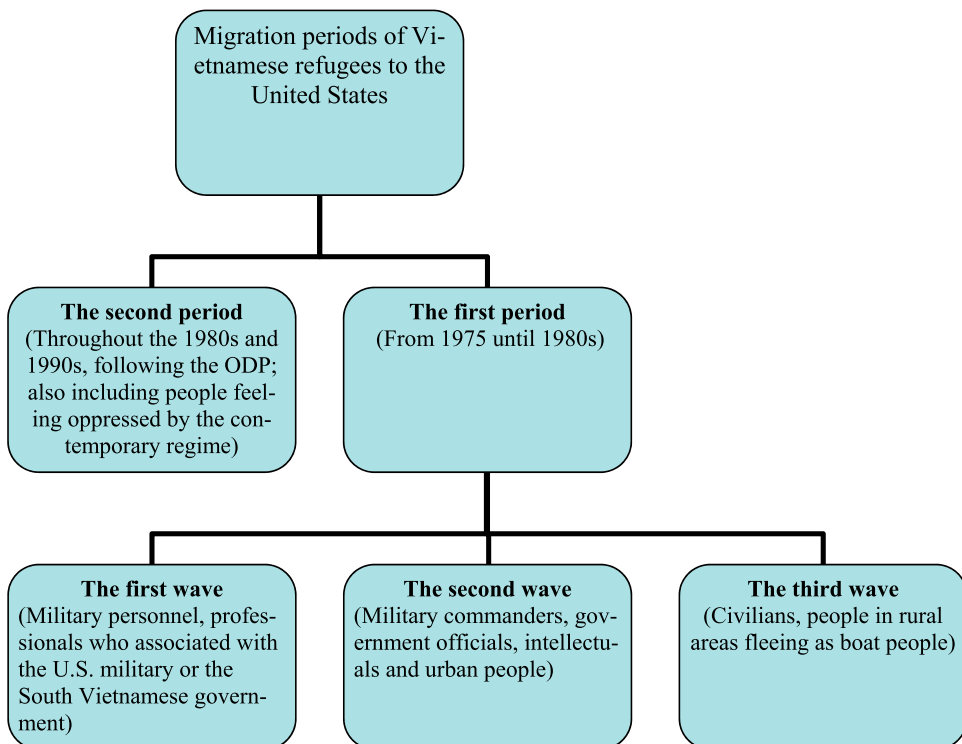


Figure 1. Two main refugee migration periods of Vietnamese-American since 1975 with specific waves. Source: By author, based on information from U.S. Department of States Dispatch (1991), Do (1999), Adler and Gielen (2003), Migration Policy Institute (2015), the Orderly Departure Program (ODP).

Annually, on this day, a series of commemorative events are held in Vietnamese refugee communities in remembrance of the lost nation, dead soldiers, and 'boat people' who were killed by pirates while leaving Vietnam on boats and ships. They also use social media and other networking sites to express criticism of the government of Vietnam's policies.

In fact, despite leaving for new lands over many years, Vietnamese refugees still concern themselves with political, social situations and the development progress of Vietnam. This paper describes the first step toward rapprochement between Vietnam and its diaspora in the United States by analysing the attempts of Vietnam to approach its diaspora in the United States and the reactions of the diasporic community members. It also describes the efforts of Vietnamese Americans to empower Vietnamese people through philanthropic and civic engagement activities. However, the process to rapprochement is still challenged by the significant differences in political views between the two sides. It suggests that the process of negotiation and conflict resolution be conducted with openness, honesty and acceptance of differences.

1.3. Literature review

Many researches approve that Vietnamese refugees are still keeping the ties with their motherland in various forms while adapting to the host society, for example, their very large contribution to the economic development of Vietnam by sending large volumes of remittances and investment capital annually (Hernandez-Coss 2005; Pfau and Giang 2009). According to Furuya (2002), the relationship between the Vietnamese government and the Vietnamese-Americans has been told in the composition of confrontation and mutual distrust; however, issues of remittance and relationship relaxation happened both in the 1990s. Furthermore, the growth of the internet allows those people from remote areas to connect with Vietnamese citizens who share the same social, political concerns. Valverde (2012) describes the relationship among transnational men beyond and between the nations, shows how their acts form virtual communities via the internet, organize social movements, and even enhance political representation together.

This paper focuses on the attempt to approach the Vietnamese diaspora in the United States through Vietnamese media, and the reactions of the diasporic community. Given that there is an increasing tendency to return to the country of origin (Chan and Tran 2011; Chan 2013), the study also analyses the activities of Vietnamese-Americans seeking to empower people in Vietnam through philanthropic and civic engagement. However, there are challenges to the negotiation and reconciliation process, in spite of attempts to normalize the tension and improve mutual understanding through transnational relations.

The study describes how Vietnamese-American non-governmental organizations and influential return migrants use less ideological-based sentiments to approach Vietnamese partners in order to enhance collaborations. It also clarifies the efforts of Vietnam to promote reconciliation with the Vietnamese diaspora in the United States and the practical outcomes. This is a qualitative research based on primary data obtained from social media observation and interviews with keys informants during on-site fieldworks in Vietnam and the United States. Secondary data are collected from academic studies, statistical documents, and textual materials.

2. The need for conflict resolution and attempts of Vietnam to approach its diaspora in the United States

2.1. The need for conflict resolution

Vietnam currently is one of the fastest growing economies in Southeast Asia. Its development is of major interest to its people, global powers, and those with economic interests domestically and internationally. The implementation of the economic reforms (Đổi Mới) launched in 1986 have transformed Vietnam from one of the poorest country in the world, with per capita income around 100 U.S. dollars, to lower-middle-income status with per capita income of over 2000 U.S. dollars by the end of 2014; the country has also made remarkable progress in reducing poverty, there is only 3 % people living in extreme poverty, comparing to over 50% in the early 1990s (World Bank 2016). The first four principles of Đổi Mới, however, are identical with the Four Cardinal Principles⁴ put forward by Deng Xiaoping in 1979: the first principle: ‘advance to socialism is the necessary path’ and ‘renovation is not to change the socialist objective’, the second principle: ‘Marxism-Leninism is always the ideological foundation of our Party’ and ‘renovation of thinking is not to deviate from Marxist-Leninist principles’, the third mentioned that the proletarian dictatorship has to be strengthened and the fourth principle emphasized the leadership of the communist party as the decisive condition for victory (Communist Review 1989; as cited in Dosch and Vuving 2008).

Since the collapse of communism, the People’s Republic of China (China) and Vietnam have worked to improve their diplomatic and economic ties in order to maintain the communist regimes. Despite praising each other as nice neighbours and good comrades, the relation between China and Vietnam in deed contains many problems. Recently, China-Vietnam relation has been overshadowed by maritime disputes in the South China Sea where both Vietnam and China claim sovereignty over Spratly Islands and Paracel Islands. Vietnam has been falling into a new crisis, in which it is able to choose only one option, whether to keep the ideological comradeship with China or to uphold nationalism. Aside from the huge resources of overseas Vietnamese community, it is believed that the reconciliation with Vietnamese diaspora will help Vietnam work easily with the United States and international organizations, by taking advantage of their opportunities to lobby for international assistance.

In fact, one year after Đổi Mới 1986, Vietnam issued the Law on Foreign Investment, which expressed the desire of the government to integrate into the global and regional economy. One aspect of economic growth historically and currently has been the contributions of the Vietnamese people living overseas. This has taken place through remittances and economic and social contributions from those living abroad to their country of origin. Overseas Vietnamese tend to send money three or four times annually for special events of their family, including Lunar New Year holidays, weddings or funerals (Hernandez-Coss 2005). Amounts of remittance have become greater and greater. These funds have made a great contribution to the economic development progress of Vietnam. According to the State Bank of Vietnam, remittances to Vietnam from abroad were approximately 12 billion U.S. dollars in 2014,⁵ and 13.4 billion U.S. dollars in 2016, which accounts for 6.7% of the country’s gross domestic product (World Bank 2017, 21). The government of Vietnam has gradually acknowledged, albeit indirectly,

that the prosperity of the country is to some extent dependent on annual remittances and capital investment from Vietnamese refugees.

2.2. The attempts of current government of Vietnam to approach Vietnamese diaspora

Vietnam has carried out many methods to attract foreign investment and overseas development assistance, including deliberate effort to reconcile with the overseas Vietnamese population in order to benefit from their financial resources, advanced knowledge and technological skills. Overseas Vietnamese meeting the requirements can now apply for a five-year multiple entry visa to Vietnam. Those who were born in Vietnam and currently have foreign passports and those who are spouses or children of a Vietnamese individual are eligible for the entry visa exemption certificate.

Furthermore, recognizing the potential resource available in the overseas Vietnamese community, the government of Vietnam promotes the ‘Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals’ (TOKTEN) programme launched by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in order to counter brain drain problem in the state. TOKTEN Vietnam encourages well-educated, highly-trained and experienced overseas experts to return Vietnam on short-term assignments. Although the programme mentions ‘expatriates’ in general, it is understood implicitly that the call has been aiming at the well-educated human resource from the diaspora.⁶ TOKTEN Vietnam was first initiated in 1989, in ten years since, two projects have been completed. The high-skill workforce would serve governments, public and private enterprises, universities and other institutions in fields of civil engineering, marine sciences, information technology, management and agriculture. The first TOKTEN project gathered 194 expatriate consultants and established partnerships between Vietnamese organizations and international consulting organizations.⁷

On 26 March 2014, the Vietnamese Communist Party Politburo enacted Resolution 36/NQ-TW (also known as the Politburo Executive Order 36) to address the relation between Vietnam and overseas Vietnamese communities worldwide. It is considered as the formal calling for national reconciliation after years of enmity between communists and anti/non-communist Vietnamese refugees. Resolution 36 appears well intended to help draw all overseas Vietnamese closer together and encourage them to invest and contribute more to the economic development of the nation. Since the advent of Resolution 36 in 2004, the government of Vietnam has made continuous efforts to appeal to overseas Vietnamese through various social and cultural channels, encouraging them to return, invest and contribute to the development of Vietnam.

2.2.1. The use of media to approach Vietnamese Americans

This part of the paper examines the use of transnational media and cultural aesthetic for conflict mitigation between Vietnam and its diaspora in the United States. It explains how the government of Vietnam uses the media to interact with Vietnamese Americans, who have shared history, language, traditions, and most importantly a territorial homeland. In the effort to communicate with the Vietnamese diaspora in the United States, the government of Vietnam has launched satellite television as a channel to reach the community; however, the result is still in question.

Media (or mass media) are the means of mass communication, which broadcast, publish, and narrowcast media and include newspapers, magazines, television, radio, mail, telephone, fax, and internet. They are the main sources of information for people around the globe. Media organizations are generally assumed to play an important role in politics, as they have a powerful influence on political reality, carry messages of persuasion and shape public opinion (Street 2011). The media are also referred to as the fourth branch of government in democratic countries alongside the three branches of the legislative, executive and judicial authorities.

In the effort to leverage its cultural aesthetics, Vietnam strongly invests in various types of entertainment and transmit them through media channels. In 2014, the former Prime Minister of Vietnam, Nguyễn Tấn Dũng, approved a project to launch twenty television channels and four radio channels to cater to expats by 2020, with a budget of 20 million U.S. dollars. Vietnam was to introduce ten channels between 2015 and 2017 and ten more channels from 2018 to 2020 as part of a scheme for providing television and radio services on the internet for overseas Vietnamese around the world. The channels will be transmitted based on internet television technology online and on television and mobile devices.⁸

Especially, the state-run Vietnam Television (VTV) has already broadcast the bilingual (Vietnamese and English) VTV4 channel in Vietnamese-American communities for approximately ten years. Launched in 1998, VTV4 channel offers a package of programming from the three domestic channels (VTV1, 2 and 3) to the Vietnamese diaspora worldwide. In order to recall old memories of the *homeland*, plays and songs are often reminiscent of rustic villages, farmers, cows, paddy fields and elements of folklore culture of Vietnam. Moreover, VTV4 has made documentaries and organized talkshows with Vietnamese Americans who fled away as refugees but then would like to return and repay the motherland for nurturing them. For example, a Vietnamese American was featured in the national broadcast of ‘Ngày trở về: Tiếng gọi quê hương’ (in English: Coming home day: The call of Motherland) launched in 2015, as the overseas Vietnamese who always keeps a strong bond with her motherland. In the documentary ‘Hai nửa thế giới’ (in English: The two-half worlds) launched in 2018, Vietnamese refugees tell their own stories, behind-the-scene life in the diaspora, and their desires to contribute to the development of Vietnam.

However, the view ratings of VTV4 in the United States are not high due to the lack of marketing strategy and the resistance of Vietnamese-American viewers. This 20 million U.S. dollars project is predicted to be a failure of the CPV due to the ideological differences between the two sides. The major difference between the CPV and Vietnamese refugees is divergent opinions concerning political, social and economic issues, not just historical issues. The Vietnamese diaspora in the United States resists the one-way information exchange via transnational media from Vietnam.

2.3. The reaction of Vietnamese-American viewers – characteristics of Vietnamese diaspora’s broadcasting networks

2.3.1. Entertainment shows

Although the Vietnamese refugees were exiled from Vietnam, they have still kept social ties with their country of origin. Nostalgia remains strong, especially, among the first-

generation Vietnamese refugees. They have organized their own cultural activities within the community to preserve their Vietnamese culture and heritage and have educated the following generation about Vietnamese traditions. Children are sent to Vietnamese-language classes during the weekends to learn the language and culture, as well as to participate in community exchanges. The media is used to make connections between overseas refugee communities and their families in Vietnam and among the diaspora communities themselves. Of them, the show 'Paris by Night' is one of the most popular Vietnamese-language musical variety series.

'Paris by Night' is produced by the entertainment company Thuý Nga Productions, whose founder is Mr Tô Văn Lai, a Vietnamese refugee who left for France in 1976. The show was originally filmed in Paris; by the late 1980s, because of high demand from the populous Vietnamese-American community and the fact that most Vietnamese language performers from South Vietnam lived in the United States, the operations of Paris by Night were moved to Westminster in Orange County, California (Cunningham and Nguyen 1999). It features musical performances by modern pop stars, traditional folk songs, and sketch comedies, sometimes relating to historical events. To meet the entertainment desires of alienated Vietnamese refugees, Vietnamese-language music live shows and variety series have been designed to help alleviate their homesickness since their settlement in new land. Compared to the vivid live shows of Paris by Night, VTV4 seems not satisfy Vietnamese-American viewers' culturally specific experiences, memories, and desires.

Recent years, Paris by Night also feature performances relating to historical events. For example, the show 'Paris By Night No.77', released in 2005 with the theme 'Thirty Years Away from the Motherland', was devoted to the thirty-year anniversary of the Fall of Saigon. It contains songs, musicals and documentary footage for remembering the collapse of Saigon. It also describes how distressed anti-communist Vietnamese refugees had changed since fleeing from Vietnam. In 'Paris By Night No. 91', for the 40th anniversary of the Tet Offensive in 1968, there was a scene mimicking one of the fierce attacks of the communists in the battle for Huế City during the time when many families had begun their observances of the lunar new year. Since the early 1980s, Thuý Nga Productions has produced 117 episodes of Paris by Night, along with CDs and karaoke discs. In the hope of Thuý Nga Productions for a 'global Vietnamese diasporic music invasion' (Valverde 2003, 31), the shows are performed live and then taped to circulate internationally in countries including Australia, Canada, and France.

2.3.2. Broadcast television networks and media agencies

Outside Vietnam, there are several Vietnamese-language media agencies that receive investment by host countries, for example, Radio France Internationale by France and Radio Free Asia and Voice of America by the United States. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Vietnam, which had been under the financial administration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam, was returned to the independent public system of the U.K.-based BBC. As it has become financially independent and focuses on content, BBC Vietnam has had increasing influence on viewers. Other media corporations are owned entirely by individuals in the Vietnamese refugee community. Westminster is considered the main cultural centre of the Vietnamese-American community. The majority of Vietnamese-language television stations, radio stations, and newspapers originated from the

Table 2. Main Vietnamese-American broadcasting agencies.

Broadcasting agency	Year launch	Homepage	Headquarter
Vietnamese American Broadcasting Corporation	1996	http://vnhn.us/index.html	Washington, DC
Saigon broadcasting television network	2001	http://www.sbtn.tv/	Westminster, California
SaigonTV	2007	http://www.saigontv.us/	Westminster, California
Vietnamese broadcasting service	2008	http://www.vbstelevision.com/	Westminster, California
NguoiViet TV	2009	http://www.nguoi-viet.com/	Westminster, California
VietfaceTV	2011	http://social.vietfaceTV.com/	Westminster, California

Source: By author.

West Coast, mainly in Little Saigon and adjacent areas. Table 2 shows the main Vietnamese-American broadcasting agencies.

Popular newspapers include *Người Việt*, *Little Saigon News* and *Viễn Đông Daily News*. In 1978, *Người Việt Daily News*, a well-known Vietnamese-American broadcasting agency, began publishing in Garden Grove. There are also broadcasts by *Little Saigon TV*, *Saigon Broadcasting Television Network*, *Viet-Face TV*, *Saigon TV*, *Little Saigon Radio* (Southern California: KVNR AM 1480), and *Radio Bolsa* (Southern California: KALI-FM 106.3 FM), *Nationwide Viet Radio* (Falls Church, Virginia). The most well-known newspaper is *Người Việt Daily News*, belonging to *Người Việt* media agency.

There are various publishing houses that have published books written by Vietnamese dissidents and Vietnamese-American refugees, including ‘Đền Cù’ (written by Trần Đình, published by *Người Việt Books*), ‘*Những Sự Thật Cần Phải Biết*’ (in English: *Must-know Truths*, written by Đặng Chí Hùng, published by *Tiếng Quê Hương*), ‘*Việt Nam Cộng Hoà 1963–1967: Những Năm Xáo Trộn*’ (in English: *Republic of Vietnam 1963–1967: Years of Turbulence*, written by Lâm Vĩnh Thế, published by *Hoài Việt*), and many others. All of these books are in Vietnamese and can be bought online by accessing the link to the *Người Việt* shop: <http://www.nguoivietshop.com>.

If the time of the 1980s and 1990s was considered to be the heyday of newspapers and radios, since 2000, television has been the leading mainstream media, including public television, pay television or television network (video on demand or livestream). Television programmes have experienced strong growth with increasing numbers of television stations. The common points of Vietnamese-language television programmes in the United States are their content that reflects social criticism and anti-communist spirit. When the internet became widely used, recorded programmes were posted on YouTube, including breaking news and headlines concerning Vietnam, social commentaries, and special programmes of the de-deification of communist leadership. For example, the talk show called ‘*Nói Chuyện Với Ngô Nhân Dụng*’ (in English: *Talk with Ngô Nhân Dụng*) hosted by the journalist Đinh Quang Anh Thái, is a popular television programme of *Người Việt TV*. Another example is the talk show called ‘*Giờ Giải Áo*’ (in English: *De-deification Hour*) of *Người Việt TV*, hosted by Dr Nguyễn Xuân Nghĩa and journalist Đinh Quang Anh Thái. The talk shows analyse political and social issues of contemporary Vietnam, criticize the violation of human rights, give prominence to honesty and integrity in society, and introduces the works of Vietnamese dissident and refugee writers.

2.3.3. Social media

The state-run press cannot compete with the very large number of newspapers published daily, weekly, and monthly or with the online newspapers and various entertainment shows of the Vietnamese diaspora. In recent years, Vietnamese-American diasporic media is not only within the community boundary itself, but the growth of the internet as a new media developed to share, spread and promote information, give it even greater reach. There are many websites that internet users can access anywhere, such as BBC.com (in Vietnamese), *nguoi-viet.com*, *voatiengviet.com*, *danchimviet.info*, *hon-viet-co.uk*, *motgoctroi.com*, *danluan.org*, *danlambao.com*, and blogspot – a free weblog publishing tool from Google.

People in the Vietnamese-American diaspora community can now use Facebook and other social networking sites to share democratic values and freedom of media. Vietnamese-language media agencies in the United States have broadcast television programmes criticizing media control and human rights violation in Vietnam and then disseminated them via YouTube, Facebook and other social networking sites. Vietnamese dissidents and activists even take advantage of the popularity of Vietnamese-American media to promote the freedom of media and human rights in Vietnam.

3. Civic engagement and the effort to re-approach the country of origin

Beyond remittances, recent years have seen increasing numbers of overseas Vietnamese coming back to Vietnam annually to visit their families and relatives. A desire to maintain relations among overseas communities and to preserve connections with the country of origin remain strong within the diaspora. Soon after the Vietnam War, members of the diaspora sought ways to send medical supplies and other necessities back to their family members still living in the devastated nation. Assistance is also sent to the poor Vietnamese population through financial support and humanitarian activities. These efforts have gradually evolved into humanitarian organizations or non-governmental organizations⁹ (NGOs) founded and run by overseas Vietnamese to address some of the most important social problems in Vietnam.

3.1. Philanthropic organizations

As of 2012, there are approximately 900 foreign NGOs maintaining partnership with Vietnam; most come from Western Europe, North America, and the Asia-Pacific region.¹⁰ Among them, several representatives of *Vietnamese-American NGOs with strong community bases* are, for example, Lửa Việt Youth Association, Social Assistance Program to Vietnam, Vietnamese American Medical Institute, and Friends of the Lepers; representatives of *Vietnamese American NGOs as facilitators and catalysts of philanthropy* include Development of Vietnam Endeavours (DOVE Fund), Kids Without Borders, Project Vietnam, Vietnam Health, Education and Literature Project (VNHELP), and the Pacific Links Foundation; and there are many *individual philanthropists and donors* (Truong, Small, and Vuong 2008).

While *Vietnamese-American NGOs with strong community bases* receive large amounts in donation from the diaspora community to conduct philanthropic activities in Vietnam, *Vietnamese-American NGOs as facilitators and catalysts of philanthropy* have their

activities supported by both Vietnam-based and non-Vietnamese sources (Truong, Small, and Vuong 2008). Those NGOs work to protect, support and engage people in community work in local areas. For example, the Pacific Links Foundation provides nutrition and education for some of the most impoverished ethnic communities and combats the illegal trafficking of women and young children in rural areas and cities. Many minority women in the more rural parts of Vietnam (in particular, Black Hmongs) are subject to human trafficking, often finding themselves drugged and carried off to China to be sold as either prostitutes or wives. The organization also runs a shelter for young girls who are survivors of human trafficking in Vietnam. Besides, Blue Dragon Children's Foundation is other group of philanthropists who actually go into China and smuggle some of these trafficked women back.

In addition, there are NGOs with non-Vietnamese founders conducting humanitarian activities in Vietnam. An example is Madison Quakers Inc. Vietnam founded in 1992 by Mike Boehm, a veteran of the American war in Vietnam. It is a broad humanitarian aid organization that works for the betterment of Vietnamese communities by establishing water wells, distributing micro-loans to entrepreneurs, and investing in public education. Table 3 provides information about major Vietnamese-American NGOs that have strong community-based infrastructure, as well as many individual philanthropists and donors.

Apart from those, there are other NGOs focusing on development projects which aim to empower the poor in Vietnam and help them to fight against the poverty by themselves. According to Xuan Nguyen, Vietnamese-American co-founder of the Refugee Women's Network, her organization dedicates to help by giving children and families in Vietnam the opportunities to build their own future. The organization has given small business loans to the poor after teaching them necessary skills and knowledge. Moreover, there are individual philanthropists and donors, for example, the KNL Foundation started by Kieu-Nhi Le, a refugee who after achieving success sought to give back to Viet Nam. Kieu-Nhi Le has personally donated time and money as a project director for ADAPT, which seeks long-term solutions regarding sex trafficking. The Vietnamese American Scholarship Fund (VASF) and Fund for the Encouragement of Self-Reliance (FESR) both established by Dr Doan Phung, provide education scholarships for at-risk youth in Vietnam.

In spite of a weaker connection to the homeland, there is a desire to care and work for vulnerable people in Vietnam among the 1.5 and second generation of Vietnamese Americans too. Viet House Foundation is a fundraising nonprofit founded by Huan-Vy Phan, a second-generation Vietnamese American, that uses donations to build homes for families in Vietnam. Recent programme of Pacific Links Foundation sends five college-aged volunteers to work in the An Giang province to teach English and cultural communication, and works with An Giang/Dong Thap Alliance for the Prevention of Trafficking (ADAPT).

The philanthropic NGOs are dedicated to properly conveying and addressing the challenges and issues of Vietnam. They also provide overseas Vietnamese with resources and information to return for civic engagement and integration in Vietnam. For example, OneVietnam, a non-profit organization based in San Francisco, California, is a connecting hub for people passionate about Vietnamese culture to connect, get updates and find opportunities to get involved online and offline. The organization has become the largest online network of Vietnamese people outside of Vietnam, which attempts to

Table 3. Representatives of Vietnamese-American NGOs working in Vietnam.

Organization Name	Year of Establishment	Headquarters	Mission Statements
Lua Viet Youth Association	1983	Marlboro, New Jersey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintain cultural and ethnic identity within the diaspora - Provide humanitarian assistance in Vietnam - Lobby against human rights violations in Vietnam
VNHELP	1989	Milpitas, California	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide humanitarian and development assistance to the poor in Vietnam - Tackle the health issues and education needs of children and the disadvantaged
Social Assistance Program for Vietnam	1992	Garden Grove, California	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide direct relief to poor and needy people, especially orphans and handicapped children - Provide medical supplies and other social services such as healthcare, education and social welfare
Friends of Lepers	1995	Tustin, California	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide financial support to lepers for their medical needs - Provide food and medical assistance for disabled lepers - Provide housing and financial assistance to cured family members to help them re-join society - Provide training, education, housing, and food to the children of lepers - Build schools and wells and provide finances for farming to the lepers who are still able to work
DOVE Fund	2000	Toledo, Ohio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide humanitarian and development assistance to areas in Vietnam - Promote communication, education and cultural exchanges that reflect the best qualities of the Vietnamese and the American cultures. - Create an environment brightened by hope and sustained by peace
Pacific Links Foundation	2001	Milpitas, California	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prevent trafficking by empowering the most vulnerable populations

Source: by author.

connect Vietnamese diasporas to NGOs worldwide. It is also one of the most generous funding foundations that has donated U.S. \$100,000–26 NGOs.

The majority of Vietnamese-American NGOs working in Vietnam is apolitical and focus on poverty reduction, environmental sustainability, health, youth scholarship, and disability. They are thus better understood as community-based organizations, like most of the NGOs in Vietnam working with their counterparts for development projects (Thayer 2009). It should be noted that all NGOs in Vietnam have to be registered first with the People's Aid Coordinating Committee (PACCOM Vietnam). The committee is mandated by the government of Vietnam to mobilize, coordinate and administer the humanitarian and development activities of NGOs. NGO projects must satisfy the following three

requirements to be approved: no religion, no profit, and no politics (Truong, Small, and Vuong 2008)

3.2. Political NGOs

Meanwhile, some overseas Vietnamese-based NGOs also work with their Vietnamese counterparts to advocate for positive changes in state policy (as Thayer (2009) views the role of Vietnamese NGOs). Their activities include conducting training courses for human rights activists and using media to develop human rights awareness. As the United Nations General Assembly (1948) defines, human rights are the basic rights of individuals to receive equal treatment and include the freedoms of speech, press, association and religion, the right to vote, and the right to equality in public places. Many anti/non-communist refugees have begun to advocate for the civil rights struggle and have partnered with Vietnamese civil rights activists.

According to a Vietnamese civil right activist, this trend is exactly what is occurring now in Vietnam. His NGO has considered the strategic cooperation with overseas Vietnamese refugees to make use of their resources and knowledges. One of his partners is Vietnamese Overseas Initiative for Conscience Empowerment (VOICE), the NGO providing education and advocacy for the protection of Vietnamese refugees. VOICE is also a part of the OneVietnam network. Due to an escalation of religious repression by local authorities,¹¹ hundreds of Montagnard Christians in Vietnam's Central Highlands have tried to seek protection and asylum from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Cambodia (Human Rights Watch 2003). VOICE partners with the Việt Tân Party, the exiled political party that advocates a multiparty system and democracy for Vietnam. The stated purpose of action of VOICE is to empower Vietnamese civil society and promote positive policy changes in order to reduce the number of refugees caused by religious persecution.

However, organizations working on human rights issues are not permitted to operate in Vietnam. Due to the growing climate of repression in Vietnam, those NGOs are based in neighbouring Southeast Asian countries. Training courses for human rights activists have been mostly conducted in Thailand, Myanmar, Indonesia, and the Philippines. The short-term courses are two weeks long, while the long-term courses last for one to two months. Temporarily, the training programmes are not public; learners and participants are recruited by using networks with other Vietnamese NGOs and former interns. The training programme focuses on law, public policy, human rights, and project management. Speakers and trainers are invited from other NGOs to assist in the training course and help expand the network with other international organizations, such as Amnesty International. After finishing the courses, trainees return to Vietnam and start conducting grassroots activities for community empowerment.

Sharing the same purpose with human rights activists who oppose human rights violation in Vietnam, Vietnamese Americans have also used social media to disseminate multi-dimensional information and call for a democratization process, including the freedom of the media. The spread of the internet allows people from remote areas to connect with Vietnamese dissidents who share the same social and political concerns. In Vietnam, increasing numbers of dissident bloggers are arrested and imprisoned for 'disseminating anti-State propaganda'. Nguyễn Hữu Vinh, who is known by his online name Anh Ba

Sâm, was arrested on 5 May 2014; Nguyễn Văn Hải, better known by his pen name Điều Cày, was put on trial and spent six years in prison; on 29 June 2017, Vietnamese blogger Nguyễn Ngọc Như Quỳnh (also known by her blogging pseudonym, Mẹ Nấm, which translates to ‘Mother Mushroom’), was sentenced to ten years in prison¹²; and there are many other cases. Dissidents come to the attention of the authorities for their outspoken views about the territorial disputes in the South China Sea and against China’s financing of environmentally controversial industrial projects in many regions of Vietnam, which include bauxite mining in Central Highlands, and the 2016 marine life crisis¹³ in the four provinces of Hà Tĩnh, Quảng Bình, Quảng Trị, Thừa Thiên Huế. The dissidents were accused of violating Article 258 of Vietnam’s Penal Code.¹⁴

Due to serious evidence of human rights abuses in Vietnam, Vietnamese Americans constantly attempt to raise public attention to human rights issues in Vietnam. Vietnamese Americans and human rights activists have used social media to spread the call for the unconditional release of imprisoned dissidents. These efforts yield high responsiveness from the U.S. Congress and the issuance of official resolutions calling on the government of Vietnam to release political prisoners and dissident bloggers and to democratize its political system. In 2009, the 111th U.S. Congress passed the House Resolution 672 introduced by Representative Loretta Sanchez and referred to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. The resolution called on the government of Vietnam to release all political prisoners, including bloggers and cyber activists. In 2012, on the Obama Administration’s ‘We the People’ website, which encourages civic participation through petition drives, a petition was launched by Trúc Hồ, the president of Saigon Broadcasting Television Network, requesting former President Obama to leverage Vietnam’s desire for the ‘Trans-Pacific Partnership’ and ‘Generalized System of Preferences’ to force the immediate and unconditional release of all detained or imprisoned human rights activists. The petition drive was officially launched on 8 February 2012 and had to collect 25,000 endorsements within 30 days for the Administration to issue an official statement and response. By the fourth day, the petition had already surpassed that threshold. Vietnamese-American advocates also call on the U.S. administration to attach human rights conditions to trade and security agreements with Vietnam. The Secretary of State is required to maintain networks with NGOs and human rights advocates, including Vietnamese-American and Vietnamese organizations, to maintain up-to-date information on the state of human rights in Vietnam, according to the 114th U.S. Congress House Resolution 2140 – Vietnam Human Rights Act of 2015.

From the viewpoint of Vietnam, the practice of public empowerment challenges policy in Vietnam and the hegemonic leadership of the CPV (Thayer 2009). The watchfulness of local authorities towards foreign NGOs and Vietnamese-American social workers is a major obstacle for Vietnamese-American philanthropists and NGO workers. In 2015, a group of humanitarian volunteers to Đắk Lắk Province and Gia Lai Province in the northern part of the Central Highlands did not allowed to enter the region by themselves. Some villages in the region were strictly off limits to outsiders without a special certificate of permission; the local authorities regarded all foreigners with considerable suspicion. Any entry was carefully examined, and activities in the community were under strict monitoring. Vietnamese authorities do not tolerate Vietnamese or foreign NGOs that take the ‘bottom-up’ approach, which seeks to empower the public through political and social activism.

4. Discussion

Although both the diaspora and the government have tried to ease tension and build mutual understanding, they have not yet achieved significant success. The Vietnamese diaspora in the United States has its own media agencies and broadcasting channels that have been used to preserve the Vietnamese ethnic identity and to connect people in the diaspora. Vietnamese media and have been resisted due to Vietnam's media control and the one-way information exchange. Besides, in the effort to re-approach their country of origin, Vietnamese-American NGOs conduct various philanthropic activities in Vietnam; some also engage in political issues by promoting human rights awareness and policy changes, which are highly restricted by Vietnamese authorities. Vietnamese Americans' pursuits of philanthropy and civic engagement in Vietnam thus occur in a context of increasing suspicion on the part of local authorities in the fear that upholding human rights in Vietnam will threaten social and political stability.

4.1. Challenges for Vietnam

Vietnam has 800 news agencies and 300 television and radio broadcasting channels (Vu and Quan 2015), which are all controlled by the CPV. The state creates political and legal barriers to traditional media, which has an influential role in socio-political and cultural settings. The Department of Propaganda and Training controls media and sets press guidelines. Almost all print media are owned by the CPV. VTV is the only national television provider, although cable services carry some foreign entertainment channels. Under the control of the CPV, the contents of other local/regional media agencies are checked and censored before being broadcast. Vietnamese authorities have used many strategies to address the spread of information from Vietnamese refugee communities by enacting penal codes and strict censorship. In 2011, Decision 20/2011 came into effect, requiring all foreign news and television contents to be translated into Vietnamese and censored by the Ministry of Information and Communications before airing. Internet service providers are legally required to block access to websites that are considered to be politically unacceptable. Thuý Nga Paris show is classified as a 'reactionary cultural product' by the government of Vietnam and cannot be legally purchased in Vietnam. In September 2013, the government of Vietnam released Decree 72 to regulate the internet, including copyright infringement. The decree states that social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook should be used to provide and exchange only personal information and not political news. It also prohibits the online publication of material that opposes the government of Vietnam.

Furthermore, in the press conference entitled 'Xuân Quê Hương' (in English: Spring in the homeland) on 30 January 2015 to welcome expatriates, Vietnam's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Vũ Hồng Nam, stated that, in accordance with Resolution 36, national unity is the final goal of the people; the State Committee on Overseas Vietnamese Affairs would conduct meetings and discussions with representatives of the Vietnamese refugee community so that the two sides would be able to understand each other. Cultural diplomacy is used to reach out to the diaspora community, with the purpose of easing the tension and calling for reconciliation between the two conflicting communities. Mr Vũ Hồng Nam also said that there would be an open-door policy to advocate for the

return of Vietnamese refugees. However, border enforcement officers received the directive to ban the entry of refugees suspected to be opponents of the government. In January 2012, computer security expert Hoàng Ngọc Diêu was forbidden from entering Vietnam although he had been invited to attend a conference there; Mr Nguyễn Hùng Quốc, a professor at Victoria University, Australia, was denied entry into Vietnam in 2005 and 2009 (Lam 2015). These two persons had posted information and commentaries on the internet that imply criticism of the government of Vietnam.

For these reasons, overseas Vietnamese doubt the sincerity and trustworthiness of the call for reconciliation and conflict resolution from the government of Vietnam. Due to the discrepancies between the speech and the acts of Vietnamese authorities, Resolution 36 has faced many criticisms and opposition from the Vietnamese diaspora community. On 11 May 2004, Resolution No. 8565-04 was passed and adopted in the refugee community of Garden Grove City, California, as the act of publicly objecting to Vietnam's Resolution 36. Resolution No. 8565-04 encourages county officials and state legislators in other cities in the United States to pass legislation against Vietnam's Resolution 36 and alerts law enforcement offices to be vigilant for negative effects of Resolution 36 on the Vietnamese refugee community in the United States. Later, Resolution No. 9156-12 was adopted by the Garden Grove City Council on 27 November 2012, which stated that visits by Vietnamese communist officials would provoke the city's large Vietnamese-American population and create a financial burden on the police department responsible for monitoring protests, and thus should be cancelled. Resolution No. 9156-12 also emphasized that it would expire at the time when the U.S. Department of States officially declared Vietnam as a democratic nation. The conflict does not end; instead of guns, the weapons now are words.

As Vietnam is a one-party state led by the CPV, it has used many methods to maintain its monopolizing leadership, including media censorship (Human Rights Watch 2017). Meanwhile, Vietnamese-American media agencies and entertainment shows have promoted the 'anti-communist culture' among people in the diaspora since 1970s (Carruthers 2001, 125). Vietnam's media has failed to connect with viewers in the Vietnamese diaspora community because the viewers are aware that it is only a one-way information exchange. Media products from Vietnam are promoted in many ways among the Vietnamese diaspora in the United States, but no Vietnamese-language cultural product from the diaspora is officially released in Vietnam; only a few talented members of the diaspora have been allowed to perform in public under strict monitoring. The attempted rapprochement cannot lead to success while Vietnamese authority still strictly controls the media and prohibit the two-way transmission of information.

4.2. Challenges for Vietnamese-American refugees

The effort of rapprochement through transnational media and civic engagement activities reveals a shift from hard, intense ideological conflict to soft tactics in the transnational relations between Vietnam and the Vietnamese diaspora in the United States. The Vietnamese diaspora, especially the U.S.-based community, has been dedicated to the *homeland's* affairs; however, it has faced many obstacles from people within the diaspora community itself, as well as from Vietnamese authorities.

In Vietnam, mass organizations (such as the Vietnam General Confederation of Labour, the Vietnam Women's Union, and the Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth

Union) are under the administration of the Vietnam Fatherland Front, and their leaders serve on the CPV's committee. The party monitors and exercises supreme control over all their activities, including the activities of PACCOM. Due to the anti-communist sentiment within the diaspora, many Vietnamese-American NGOs prefer not to be registered with PACCOM Vietnam, as they fear the bureaucratic red tape, alienation of Vietnamese-American donors, and political divisiveness that may damage their local connections within the diaspora (Truong, Small, and Vuong 2008). NGO workers, including Vietnamese-American philanthropists, still rely on their private relations with local officials and counterparts to carry out their projects and thus would likely be considered illegitimate by Vietnamese authorities (Pedersen, as cited in Saleminck 2006, 118; Truong, Small, and Vuong 2008). In addition to the suspicion from local authorities, the lack of a transparent, well-structured administration policy for Vietnamese-American NGOs has become a significant intervening obstacle for the transfer and distribution of aid from the diaspora (Sidel 1997; Truong, Small, and Vuong 2008). In early 2018, Vinh Long Province's Radio and Television Station (of Vietnam) and Viet-Face TV (operated by Thuý Nga Productions) were criticized for lack of transparency concerning the charitable donation from the Vietnamese diaspora in the United States.

Vietnamese-American NGOs play a crucial role in uniting the diaspora not only by providing resources for information dissemination and platforms for civic engagement in Vietnam but also by creating transnational links among individuals. Being slightly different from foreign NGOs and international organizations, Vietnamese-American NGOs have created and maintained transnational connections among helpers and receivers who have the same ancestors, speak the same language and have similar customs. These connections stimulate the participation of people in the diaspora in the lives of people in the *homeland* who have a common bond through perceived shared concerns and interests. The motivations of those NGOs are caused by organizers' mercies for difficult situations and resentment to oppressed cases. The activities of NGOs outside Vietnam towards poverty can be seen as the effort to approach and support poor Vietnamese citizens by the organizers. Thus, the humanitarian aids can be seen as a kind of reaction towards the ineffective management of current Vietnamese government.

Expatriates have absorbed critical knowledge and liberal values from host countries that they try to convey to people in their country of origin. However, the over-dependence on informal relation-based networks and the loopholes and flaws within the legal framework caused by social and political constraints challenge efforts for community empowerment and development. Besides, there are the concerns that not enough educated overseas Vietnamese are giving back or that they do not know how to appropriately partner with native Vietnamese. These challenges would be preventable if there were an inclusive, more open door policy that could create flexible opportunities for (Vietnamese-American) NGOs to move forward; if the social relations between the diaspora and Viet Nam were normalized; and if the two-way conversation to solve issues became more effective.

Furthermore, to face significant challenges in Vietnam such as combating poverty, reducing inequality among regions, and promoting civic engagement in public issues, it is not sufficient merely to target the issues and present short-term solutions. A deeper understanding of correlation and causality is required, which leads to the formulation of efficient policies and long-term development programmes to bring about desired outcomes with the intensive involvement of and support from the government and the

commitment from social partners. Remittances are not the only way to transfer resources; the role of the participation of (NGO) stakeholders with institutions is crucial, as it can help to 'shape policy, ensure accountability and hold state institutions to account for their performance and the quality of services delivered' (UNDP 2014, 6).

In addition, when the mutual trust is built and the transnational network is concretely constructed, a *transnational social space* (Faist 1998) between Vietnam and its diasporas in which members of the diaspora can travel freely would encourage the construction of new social relations, the transfer of human capital and the creation of economic opportunities across national borders. Vietnamese-American groups, associations and organizations could act as *transnational development agents* (Faist 1998) carrying cultural, social, and political currents that would benefit Vietnam and its development progress. This optimistic assumption does not try to discount the complicated relationship between the diaspora and the country of origin; nevertheless, transnational organizations and social workers who would like to contribute to the development of Vietnam might also serve as mediators to come to mutually beneficial results. One of the ways to promote these interactions is to create a social space in which people with common interests and shared purposes can come together.

5. Conclusion

The study gives insight into the efforts of rapprochement between the Vietnamese diaspora in the United States and its country of origin. The limitation of this study is that it describes only the transnational connection between the government of Vietnam and first-generation Vietnamese refugees in the United States. The outcome may not be the same when studying other diasporas and even the young, second-generation Vietnamese Americans, as they are different from first-generation immigrants in terms of living styles and ways of thinking and communicating.

The economic reforms launched in 1986 transformed Vietnam from one of the poorest countries in the world into a lower-middle-income country with an emerging market, which makes it a magnet for overseas investment. The purpose of normalizing the tension between Vietnam and its diaspora is to attract more financial resources including remittances and investments from the overseas Vietnamese community for economic development. People of the diaspora have absorbed much knowledge and social values in Western countries, and many would like to contribute back to their country of origin. Vietnamese society, thus, has become more welcoming towards overseas Vietnamese people who would like to contribute to the development of Vietnam.

However, challenges for the rapprochement come not only from the remaining tension that originates from the war but also from the wide differences in political views. The reconciliation process should be conducted with the acceptance of differences and with openness and honesty about the mutual benefits that both sides hope to obtain through negotiation. Clarifying the transnational connection between the two communities helps to bridge the divide, strengthen mutual understanding, and promote social reconciliation for a more developed, unified Vietnam. Furthermore, the need for improved governance that provides efficient public services and ensures the respect for human rights has emerged as a key priority for development. What does Vietnam need to do to become a more responsive state whose political mechanism can keep up with economic

development? Can Vietnamese Americans, through intervention in their *homeland's* affairs, be seen as *conflict entrepreneurs* stimulating social instability or as *development contributors* (as described in Brinkerhoff 2011) serving as a significant resource and critical infrastructure for societal change? The answers to these questions require investigation from many perspectives.

Notes

1. Vietnamese diaspora is where overseas Vietnamese are living. The majority of them are refugees leaving Vietnam in 1970s after the Vietnam War.
2. The Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam) was a non-communist country in the southern half of Vietnam from 1955 to 1975; its capital was Saigon. The Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam) was a country in the northern half of current Vietnam from 1945 to 1976; its capital was Hanoi. The terms 'North Vietnam' and 'South Vietnam' became common usage in 1954, when the Geneva Conference partitioned Vietnam into communist (north) and non-communist (south) parts.
3. United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) – The 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol relating to the status of Refugees defined refugee as the one who 'owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country' (available at <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3be01b964.html>, accessed on September 29, 2015).
4. The 'Four Cardinal Principles': first, 'uphold the socialist path'; second, 'uphold the dictatorship of the proletariat or people's democratic dictatorship'; third, 'uphold the leadership of the Communist Party of China'; and fourth, 'uphold Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought'.
5. Retrieved at <http://www.reuters.com/article/vietnam-economy-remittances-idUSL3N0UR2K520150112>. Accessed on December 15, 2015.
6. The Vietnamese diaspora (especially in the United States) with tremendous material and human resources are what Vietnam has yearned for. However, due to the sensitive narrative of history, the government of Vietnam does not use the word 'refugee' in official documents.
7. Source from <http://www.undp.org.vn/mlist/develop/042001/post76.htm>.
8. Available at http://www.bbc.com/vietnamese/vietnam/2014/11/141104_tvchannels_overseas (accessed 1 December 2017).
9. A non-governmental organization is a non-profit, citizen-based group that operates independently of the government to serve social or political purposes.
10. Retrieved at <http://www.ngocentre.org.vn/content/comingo-vufo-and-paccomm> (accessed on 10 February 2018).
11. The native inhabitants of the Central Highlands are the Montagnard peoples, who face a discriminatory policy by the communist government. In 2001 and 2004, there were uprisings in Central Highlands, with mass jailing and killings; people were banned from this region for a period of time by the communist authority, according to the 114th US Congress's House Resolution 2140, the Vietnam Human Rights Act of 2015.
12. Nguyễn Ngọc Như Quỳnh was released and sent to the United States on 17 October 2018.
13. Formosa Ha Tinh Steel, a steel plant owned by the Taiwan-based corporation Formosa Plastics, discharged toxic industrial waste illegally into the ocean through drainage pipes in 2016. Anti-Formosa protests and demonstrations were banned by the authorities, and protestants were brutally hit by policemen; these are claimed to be human rights violations.
14. Article 258 of Vietnam's Penal Code states that those 'who abuse the rights to freedom of speech, freedom of press, freedom of belief, religion, assembly, association and other democratic freedoms to infringe upon the interests of the State, the legitimate rights and interests

of organizations and/or citizens, shall be subject to warning, non-custodial reform for up to three years or a prison term of between six months and three years; Committing the offense in serious circumstances, the offenders shall be sentenced to between two and seven years of imprisonment’.

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