

**Diaspora Engagement and its Implications for Development in the
Homeland: A Case Study of Vietnam and Vietnamese-American
Diaspora**

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation provides an analysis of a diaspora that channels ideas, skills, and experiences to the homeland to promote socio-economic development based on the case study of Vietnam and Vietnamese-American diaspora. This study shows that despite lingering conflict, progress toward rapprochement in Vietnamese diaspora-homeland relations occurs through transnational media and the engagement of Vietnamese-American social workers in community development projects in Vietnam. The dissertation illustrates the way Vietnamese-American diaspora members/organizations work closely with their Vietnamese counterparts. Members of the Vietnamese-American diaspora with motivation and persistence in their philanthropic giving create positive changes in Vietnamese local communities. The engagement of Vietnamese-American diaspora in homeland development evolved from low-level to high-level transnational practices, of which the scope has correspondingly expanded from the individual or family level with remittances or family business investments to the community level with collective action by diaspora philanthropic organizations.

The dissertation primarily uses qualitative data obtained through semi-structured interviews and participant observations during multi-sited fieldwork. In Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh City and Da Nang City were the main research sites, where donors, social workers, and other interested parties were interviewed. In the United States, California was the main research site where Vietnamese-American philanthropists, representatives of Vietnamese-American diaspora-driven nongovernmental organizations, and heads of initiatives as well as the Vietnamese-American diaspora community were interviewed during workshops and conferences. First-generation and second-generation Vietnamese-American diaspora members were interviewed to clarify the different ways they engaged with the homeland via philanthropic activities. An online semi-structured interview was conducted with a representative of Vietnamese-American Nongovernmental Organization Network on the issue

of ensuring efficient implementation of development projects with their local Vietnamese partners. Short online survey was also conducted to examine the levels of demographic and social engagements between the ethnic Vietnamese population in the United States and Vietnam.

Although overseas Vietnamese are recognized as development actors contributing to the development progress in Vietnam, there is still ambivalence amongst Vietnamese policy makers about the role of Vietnamese-American diaspora members/organizations. Based on the analysis of the transnational engagement of Vietnamese-American diaspora members/organizations in Vietnamese society, this study aims to address the following questions: (1) What is the extent of the relationship between the Vietnamese-American diaspora and Vietnam? (2) Can members of the Vietnamese-American diaspora be considered *transnational development agents* contributing to homeland socio-economic development? (3) How can the resources of the Vietnamese-American diaspora be fully utilized to embrace socio-economic development in Vietnam? Answers to these questions provide insights into the Vietnamese diaspora-homeland relationship and the effort of rapprochement between Vietnam and Vietnamese-American diaspora toward homeland socio-economic development. They also advance the argument that in the Vietnam case, the nexus of diaspora-homeland and development goes beyond income-based and material supports, while emphasizing social development that improves the well-being of every individual in society.

Since the issuance of Resolution 36-NQ/TW on March 26, 2004, regarding overseas Vietnamese affairs, Vietnamese individuals who reside overseas have been encouraged to return to Vietnam to conduct business, invest, and cooperate in science, technology, education, culture, arts, sports, and charity sectors. The Vietnamese government issued Decision No. 1984/QD-TTg to launch a project to broadcast 20 television channels and four radio channels to overseas Vietnamese individuals worldwide between 2015 and 2020. However, the

international broadcast of Vietnamese television channels has faced resistance from overseas Vietnamese communities due to lingering postwar conflicts, ideological differences, and the competitiveness of diverse Vietnamese-American diasporic media, which has played a distinct role in maintaining Vietnamese ethnic identity and culture. Vietnamese-American diaspora members/organizations, who have engaged in various philanthropic activities in Vietnam, have faced difficulties due to the lack of clear regulations for Vietnamese-American diaspora-driven nongovernmental organizations and cautious attitudes of Vietnamese local authorities toward Vietnamese-American social workers.

The dissertation examines how the Vietnamese-American diaspora members/organizations can harmonize the transnational relationship with Vietnamese home state actors and work effectively with them by practicing the “diplomacy by diaspora.” Progressive Vietnamese Americans have facilitated a transnational exchange with Vietnamese people within a flexible and pragmatic approach to build purposeful partnerships with their Vietnamese partners and advance their cause via communication. Building and maintaining long-term relationships with local Vietnamese authorities and counterparts also helps Vietnamese-American social workers update notices for changes in policies regarding grassroots development projects. Moving from personal networks to extended organizational networks, Vietnamese-American diaspora members/organizations are more likely to widen their circles of trust and form alliances to expand their access to shared information and resources. The formation of a unified front, known as Vietnamese-American Nongovernmental Organization Network, accelerates the Vietnamese-American diaspora engagement in the social development of Vietnam by enhancing the diaspora functions of representation, mediation, and advocacy.

The expansion of grassroots activities conducted by Vietnamese-American diaspora members/organizations, including remittance sending or humanitarian and philanthropic

assistances, results in the practices “from above” at a state level that aim to maximize the engagement of overseas Vietnamese communities into homeland socio-economic development. The Vietnamese home state exercises “diplomacy for diaspora” and “diplomacy through diaspora” to promote a two-way communication and encourages the involvement of overseas Vietnamese communities in the progress of science and technology. Policies that cover a broad range of issues relating to overseas Vietnamese have been made accordingly, for example Law No. 24/2008/QH12 dated November 13, 2008 (legalizing dual citizenship), Law No. 56/2014/QH13 dated June 26, 2014 (loosening the requirement for nationality registration), Decree No. 87/2014/ND-CP dated September 22, 2014 (attracting overseas Vietnamese scientists and technologists), and Decree No. 82/2015/ND-CP dated September 24, 2015 (visa exemption for overseas Vietnamese, their foreigner spouses, and children).

“Diaspora diplomacy” is discussed through the lens of transnationalism “from above” and “from below” perspectives, revealing the reciprocities in the nexus of Vietnamese diaspora-homeland-development. While the home state’s policy plays a decisive role in the involvement of Vietnamese-American diaspora members/organizations, the diaspora engagement has implications for intensifying the efforts of the home state to enhance global integration through the transnational cooperation with overseas communities. Although Vietnamese-American diaspora engagement creates substantial potentials for the development process of Vietnam, the success of tapping their intellectual, economic, and social capitals depends on comprehensive efforts to promote long-term cooperation. The Vietnamese diaspora-homeland cooperation would be further strengthened if diaspora engagement was supported by a clear diaspora engagement policy and a continuous process for building trust and mutual commitment between Vietnam and Vietnamese-American diaspora. Beyond remittances and economic contributions, the engagement policy needs to consider the multidimensional benefits of diaspora resources and include the participation of the state and

local government to create a common platform in which people with shared developmental concerns can contribute to both economic growth and social development in Vietnam.

This dissertation is organized into seven chapters excluding Introduction and Conclusion. The Introduction presents the study background, research problems, objectives, questions, and methodology. Chapter 1 presents a brief overview of relevant theories concerning diaspora studies and literature review on Vietnamese diaspora-homeland development within the paradigms of transnationalism. Chapter 2 analyzes the rapprochement process of Vietnam and Vietnamese-American diaspora. Chapter 3 discusses the issue of diaspora giving for development in Vietnam from the transnationalism “from below” perspective. Chapter 4 explains how the Vietnamese-American diaspora members/organizations cooperate with their Vietnamese counterparts by exercising “diplomacy by diaspora.” Chapter 5 clarifies the transnational practice “from above” of Vietnamese home state, which employs “diplomacy for diaspora” and “diplomacy through diaspora” to enable a favorable environment for diaspora engagement. Chapter 6 tracks the formal procedure promoting the engagement of overseas Vietnamese into homeland socio-economic development since the late 1970s. Chapter 7 provides theoretical findings on the expansion of Vietnamese-American diaspora engagement in homeland development, and proposes suggestions as to how Vietnam may maximize diaspora resources. The Conclusion summarizes key findings and provides recommendations for future research.

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INTRODUCTION

Background of the study

With an estimated 258 million people living in a country other than their country of birth, according to the United Nation's International Migration Report (2017), migration is at its zenith in the twenty-first century and has become a critical concern for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.¹ Migration is on the rise in this globalization era characterized by a growing freedom of goods, people, and capital circulation. Various factors, including widespread poverty, conflict, political repression, economic stagnation, and unemployment, drive people away their home countries, while economic opportunities, political freedom, and social stability draw people to new lands. Among those who leave their homelands and resettle in other places, it is necessary to differentiate the definitions of *(im)migrants* and *refugees*. To put it simply, migrants choose to move mainly to improve their lives and the lives of their families, while refugees refer to forcibly displaced people who are in vulnerable situations, such as armed conflict or persecution, in their country of origin (Adler and Gielen 2003, p.84). As scattered populations flee to other countries, the notion of a diaspora requires a complex understanding of the relation among people within their community as well as the relationship between the diaspora and the country of origin.

A sense of belonging shapes the behaviors of exiled communities. There is also a willingness to participate in political, economic, and social development in the countries of origin. As Shain (2007, p.5) notes in his work on diaspora-homeland kinship in international affairs, although remotely separated communities tend to vary in culture, traditions, language,

¹ The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes migration as a “powerful driver of sustainable development,” which brings significant development benefits to migrants and communities in their countries of origin through mechanisms such as skill and financial resource transfer, investment opportunity, labor force advancement, and cultural diversity promotion.

Source: International Organization for Migration, *Migration and the 2030 Agenda: A Guide for Practitioners* (Geneva: International Organization for Migration, 2018), 17–52.

and other factors owing to geographical segregation, they still maintain a coherent identity, including a shared history and memory, and most importantly, the awareness of objective reality about their ancestral homeland. Recent studies on diasporas have shown their critical role in the development process of the country of origin. The role of diaspora members as actors of development owing to their significant contribution to the development process in their countries of origin through annual remittances has been well recognized. Diaspora members are considered agents for development in homeland through the formation of diaspora-driven NGOs and active participation of diaspora members in development organizations (see Riddle and Brinkerhoff 2011; Turner and Kleist 2013; Kleist 2014). They play a unique role in the development strategies, poverty reduction, reconstruction, and growth of their home countries.

Regarding the increasingly important role of diasporas in development, various state-sponsored programs have been established to promote and support diaspora-centered initiatives in countries of origin. For example, the International Diaspora Engagement Alliance (IdEA), which is managed by a public-private partnership between the U.S. Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development, and Calvert Foundation, engages global diaspora communities, which include the private sector, civil society, and public institutions in collaborative efforts to contribute to economic and social development in countries of origin. The African Diaspora Policy Center works to mobilize African diaspora in Europe for the development of the African continent and increase the awareness of the value of African diaspora to job creation, growth, and poverty reduction in their countries of origin. Governments of countries of origins also develop their diaspora engagement frameworks to involve diaspora communities in national development, for example, the adoption of five Legacy Projects: the African Diaspora Skills Database, African Diaspora Volunteer Corps,

African Diaspora Investment Fund, Development Marketplace for the Diaspora, and African Institute for Remittances.

Traditional diasporas, such as African diasporas or the recent South Asian diaspora, are the focus of the majority of diaspora studies. There is a shortage of studies focusing on Vietnamese (-American) diaspora and their transnational practices with direct effects on aid and development, even though the diaspora might play a significant role in the original home country's strategic thinking and foreign relations. Since the seventies of the twentieth-century, the contemporary Vietnam saw the migration of Vietnamese for diverse purposes and reasons. After the Vietnam War, Vietnamese migration was divided between refugees and asylum seekers largely taken in by Western countries, and students and labor migrants going to Vietnam's communist allies - the former Soviet bloc (see Tran 2018). Recently, new groups of Vietnamese migrants have been emerging. There are naturally born Vietnamese attending foreign high schools and colleges as international students; after graduation, they work and reside in those countries as permanent residents (see Nguyen 2019). Another category consists of recent migrant laborers who work in Taiwan, Japan, South Korea, Africa, and the Middle East. There are also marriage migrants, known as Vietnamese brides, who married South Korean or Taiwanese men and followed their husbands to those countries.

Among the different categories of overseas Vietnamese communities, this dissertation focuses on the case of a political diaspora community that has "historical roots in refugee-exile circumstances (Cunningham and Nguyen 1999, p.72)." The dissertation examines the engagement of the Vietnamese-American diaspora and its implications for development in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (Vietnam). Based on observed correlations in the collaboration of Vietnamese-American diaspora associations and the ancestral homeland for socio-economic development, the dissertation reveals the process of rapprochement between Vietnam and Vietnamese-American diaspora, highlighting the cross-border connection among transnational

people beyond, between, and within nations. Additionally, based on an analysis of the engagement of Vietnamese-American diaspora-driven nongovernmental organizations² (VA NGOs) in the development of Vietnam, the dissertation also advances the argument that the nexus of diaspora-homeland-development goes beyond income- and material support-based involvement to emphasize social development.

Problem statement

Owing to the Vietnam War (1955-1975), which was the long, costly, and resulted in divisive conflicts between North Vietnam and South Vietnam,³ over two million Vietnamese refugees were resettled in the United States, Australia, Canada, France, China (Hong Kong), and other nations (U.S. Congress 2009). These refugees were also forcedly displaced after experiencing hardships in postwar Vietnam, for example the re-education camps and campaign against “bourgeois” elements (Do 1999, pp.29-37; Vo 2006, pp.95-96; Settje 2007, p.172). Anti-communist sentiments continues to exist in the Vietnamese-American diasporic media (Carruthers 2001, pp.119-149; Hanh Nguyen 2020, pp.22-25). Many believe that the tension between the communists (now the Vietnamese government) and noncommunists (now the Vietnamese-American diaspora) will never end, and thus the diaspora-homeland relationship might be forever damaged. Despite some pragmatic and flexible policies toward overseas Vietnamese under the influence of the economic renovation in 1986, anti-communist sentiments in diaspora politics worsened the relationship between Vietnam and Vietnamese-American diaspora (Dang 2000, pp.198-201). Furthermore, anti-communist spirit seems not to significantly recede as people may think it does; rather, anti-communism in the second-

² A nongovernmental organization (NGO) is a nonprofit, citizen-based group that operates independently of any government to serve social or political goals such as environmental or humanitarian cause.

³ The Republic of Vietnam (also known as South Vietnam) was a noncommunist country governing the southern half of Vietnam from 1955 to 1975; its capital was Saigon. The Democratic Republic of Vietnam (also known as North Vietnam) was a country governing the northern half of Vietnam from 1945 to 1976; its capital was Hanoi.

generation is more about discontentment and unhappiness about exclusion or the reaction against discrimination than it is about political situation in Vietnam (Truong et al. 2008, p.262).

Nevertheless, Vietnamese-American diaspora members/organizations and the Vietnamese home state have attempted to approach each other over the past several years (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.16). To reach out to the exiled communities, the Vietnamese government passed Decision No.1984/QD-TTg to broadcast via 20 television channels and four radio channels to overseas Vietnamese communities by 2020. Some examples include the VTV4 (the channel of the national television broadcaster of Vietnam), VTC10 (the channel of the state-run Vietnam Multimedia Corporation), and VOV5 (the international service of Radio - the Voice of Vietnam broadcasting globally in 13 foreign languages via analogue and digital shortwave, internet streaming and podcasting, satellite, FM and MW relays). Meanwhile, VA NGOs have undertaken development projects in Vietnam to empower vulnerable communities through humanitarian and philanthropic activities and have contributed to the economy of Vietnam through a large annual remittance, which accounted for 6.3% of the country's gross domestic product in 2020.⁴

In reality, rapprochement process between Vietnam and the Vietnamese-American diaspora community has not occurred smoothly. First, diverse perspectives about politics, morality, and loss relating to the war resulted in lingering conflicts and significant differences in political views between Vietnam and Vietnamese-American diaspora community, which are the main obstacles to mutual-trust building and reconciliation processes in the post-war period (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.31). For example, among the old generation, there is a large difference in the way Vietnamese Americans and Vietnamese people (especially people from northern Vietnam) saw the Vietnam War from both sides. In particular, was the Vietnam War a

⁴ "Personal remittances, received (% of GDP) – Vietnam," The World Bank, accessed March 21, 2022, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS?locations=VN>.

movement of national liberation, foreign intervention in a civil conflict, or struggle against Communist aggression?⁵ Moreover, the issue of whether anti-communism faded away among the young generation of Vietnamese Americans is still being debated. Koh (2015, p.179) and Nguyen-Akbar (2016, p.103) state that first-generation and second-generation Vietnamese Americans view Vietnam differently. Having less war-related experiences or being less emotionally attached to the original home country than first-generation, second-generation Vietnamese Americans have a more impartial view of Vietnam and are more open and likely to return, work, do charity, and communicate with Vietnamese authority (Huynh and Yiu 2016, pp.175-179; Nguyen-Akbar 2016, pp.103-106). Whereas, Truong et al. (2008, p.262) state that, the anti-communist spirit seems not to significantly recede as people may think it does; rather, overseas anti-communism in second-generation Vietnamese Americans is as much of a reaction to discrimination and exclusion in Vietnam. It is difficult for Vietnam and its diaspora members to reconcile such different points of view. In reality, despite the efforts of the Vietnamese government to connect with overseas Vietnamese communities through transnational media, the project has been predicted to fail owing to the resistance of Vietnamese-American viewers and ideological differences (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.22). Resolution 36, which is considered an official call for reconciliation from the government of Vietnam, has been criticized by many Vietnamese-American diaspora members.

Meanwhile, VA NGOs face challenges of interacting with Vietnamese partners as well as harmonizing the relationship among groups within the diaspora community (Pedersen, as cited in Salemink 2006, p.118; Sidel 2007, pp.9-11; Truong et al. 2008, p.262). The confusion

⁵ There is no single interpretation of the Vietnam War, which still remains a matter of discussion and debate among scholars. The book *The Vietnam War: Vietnamese and American Perspective* - edited by Jayne S. Werner and Luu Doan Huynh - highlights multiple perspectives on the Vietnam War from Vietnamese scholars who participated in the war, Vietnamese-American and U.S. specialists. Scholarly works that sees the war from various perspectives (i.e., American-centered approaches; or considering the role of China and the Soviet Union; or focusing on the dimensions of Vietnam) help broaden the understanding about the Vietnam War. Source: Edward Miller, and Tuong Vu, "The Vietnam War as a Vietnamese War: Agency and Society in the Study of the Second Indochina War," *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 4, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.1525/vs.2009.4.3.1>.

in recognizing the role of diaspora organizations makes it difficult for them to engage in the homeland's affairs. Their activities are under strict control by Vietnamese authorities in order to safeguard the social order and political stability of Vietnam, from the viewpoint of the Vietnamese state. Additionally, bottom-up activities of political NGOs, which practices actions of political advocacy, challenge the hegemonic leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam (Thayer 2009, p.1). The authority does not countenance any diaspora intervention in Vietnam's affairs that may threaten the social and political stability of the state (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.30), yet prefers the government-dominant model in the relation with NGOs (Sidel 1997, p.298). The role of the members of the Vietnamese-American diaspora, whether they serve as "development contributors" who contribute to the development process in Vietnam or "conflict entrepreneurs" who exacerbate social and political issues (as described in Brinkerhoff 2011), is still debated (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.34). Local authorities therefore have hesitated either to partner with diaspora organizations in philanthropic activities or to receive humanitarian aid from them.

Apart from material and financial resources, the processes of training human resources and development are complementary to each other. The diaspora members have gained considerable socio-cultural and technical knowledge in their countries of residence, and many would like to contribute to the development of their home country (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.33). However, despite the more-open attitudes toward overseas Vietnamese people, role confusion causes a lack of clear policy from the state for Vietnamese-American social workers to perform activities in Vietnam (Sidel 1997, p.293; Truong et al. 2008, p.271). Owing to the lack of recognition and poor infrastructure, several diaspora members continue to hesitate to return to their original home country or provide information, capital, and access to the developing market. This leads to the third problem, in which Vietnam cannot make full use of the great potential of its overseas community.

Research objectives

Mainly catalyzed by the Vietnam War, the Vietnamese diaspora now extends throughout the world. By far, the largest community of this diaspora may be found in the United States, with a population of 2,182,735 people, including the first and second generations of Vietnamese alone or in any combination (U.S. Census Bureau's 2019 American Community Survey). Using the case study of Vietnamese Americans and their engagement in development in Vietnam, this dissertation aims to achieve the following:

1. Investigate the process of rapprochement between Vietnam and the Vietnamese-American diaspora community to clarify the transnational connection between them.
2. Examine the role of Vietnamese-American diaspora organizations as *agent of development* for socio-economic development in Vietnam.
3. Enhance the understanding that the key contribution of the Vietnamese-American diaspora members/organizations to the development process of the homeland lies in social and human resources.
4. Identify the significance of a clear policy and institutional framework for reducing the various risks and challenges that VA NGOs might face in Vietnam.
5. Make suggestions on how to improve the diaspora-homeland relationship as a potential approach to reconciliation and development in the country of origin.

Research questions

In an effort to tackle the abovementioned problems, these three questions are raised and carefully examined through empirical evidence:

1. What is the extent of the relationship between the Vietnamese-American diaspora and Vietnam?

2. Can members of the Vietnamese-American diaspora be considered *transnational development agents* contributing to homeland socio-economic development?
3. How can the resources of the Vietnamese-American diaspora be fully utilized to embrace socio-economic development in Vietnam?

Research methodology

Research design

Based on the case study of Vietnam and Vietnamese-American diaspora, the dissertation conducted a qualitative analysis of the diaspora-homeland transnational relationship, diaspora engagement, and its implications for the socio-economic development process in the homeland. Primary data were collected during media observation, onsite fieldwork, interviews, and survey. In addition, the knowledge acquired through the study of Vietnamese history, international relations, and development studies was relevant. The dissertation contains compiled data from government publications, books, journals, statistical documents, and textual materials. All data are interpreted within the theoretical frameworks of migration, globalization, transnational diaspora-homeland relationships, and development.

Primary data gathering procedures

Developed through the specific case of the U.S.-based Vietnamese diaspora, the idea for this dissertation was derived from years of diasporic media observation since 2012. Primary data for this case study were obtained from the analysis of Vietnamese-American cultural and media environment within Vietnamese-American diasporic newspapers, entertainment shows, social media, radio, and television programs. Primary data were also collected and organized after onsite fieldworks in Vietnam and the United States were completed in 2018. The objective of these trips and interviews was to ascertain how the transnational philanthropic and development projects prepared and monitored by VA NGOs were successfully conducted in Vietnam.

In Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh City and Da Nang City were the main research sites where donors, social workers, and other interested parties were interviewed. In 2015, the author had an opportunity to follow a group of Vietnamese-American and local volunteers travelling from Ho Chi Minh City to Central Highlands of Vietnam (Dak Lak Province and Gia Lai Province). Free notebooks, textbooks, stationaries, and food for home use were distributed to the needy students in this mountainous area. As the region was in a turbulent situation, outsiders, especially aid workers from foreign NGOs, were not allowed to enter without certificates of entry permit from the local authorities. The underlying atmosphere of suspicion surrounding Vietnamese Americans made it difficult for them to work with their partners in Vietnam.

In September 2018, the author collaborated with a Vietnamese-American associate professor to organize a conference titled, “From Possibilities to Vision and Action: Preparing Vietnam for Its Next Phase of Growth” in Da Nang City, Vietnam. The conference, which was a joint project between the University of California, Davis and the University of Da Nang, aimed to facilitate interactive dialogues among government officials, academics, leading environmental and development experts, cultural producers, and students for sustainable socio-economic development in Vietnam. The academic event was strictly monitored by the local authority to ensure that education about Western values, such as human rights and democracy, were not discussed. The conference offered the opportunity to learn how to establish collaborative relationships in the transnational diaspora-homeland development contexts.

From September 2017 to March 2018, the author did six months of onsite research in California where Vietnamese Americans are mainly concentrated. Vietnamese-American philanthropists, representatives of VA NGOs, and heads of initiatives as well as those within the Vietnamese-American diaspora community were interviewed during workshops and conferences. In November 2017, the author participated in the “Humanitarian Work in Viet Nam: The Future of Civil Society and Transnational Soft Diplomacy Viet Nam” symposium

organized by the New Viet Nam Studies Initiative at the University of California, Davis. The symposium gathered Vietnamese-American NGO workers, Vietnamese journalists, and undergraduate and graduate students to explore challenges and approaches of Vietnamese-American diaspora philanthropy in Vietnam. A semi-structured interview was conducted after the event with a Vietnamese-American social worker whose nonprofit organization was actively practicing community development in Vietnam. A second-generation Vietnamese American who works for a fundraising nonprofit that helps build homes for impoverished households in Vietnam also shared her thoughts and experiences.

In November 2020, a virtual semi-structured interview was conducted with a Vietnamese-American social worker from VA NGO Network on the issue of ensuring efficient implementation of development projects with their local Vietnamese partners. The organization is a consortium of VA NGOs responsible for operational activities on humanitarian and development programs in Vietnam. During the two-hour interview, the interviewee shared her philanthropic experiences in Vietnam and provided information on effective approaches to promote diaspora engagement in homeland socio-economic development.

From April 1 to May 31, 2021, a short online survey was conducted to examine the levels of demographic and social engagements between the ethnic Vietnamese population in the United States and Vietnam. Most respondents were second-generation Vietnamese Americans and social workers from VA NGOs. The survey questions ask about the frequency of their returning trips, their acknowledgment of Vietnam's expatriate-oriented incentives, the habit of charitable giving, and their future plans to work or live in Vietnam. The survey results imply the need for a diaspora engagement policy that strengthens the bridging and negotiating functions of the diaspora toward homeland development.

Significance of the study

This study contributes to understanding the engagement of Vietnamese-American diaspora members/organizations to socio-economic development process in Vietnam. The dissertation raises awareness of the way mutual understanding can lay the groundwork for a win-win solution for the complex diaspora-homeland relationship. In the globalization era, a fragmented⁶ emerging market, such as Vietnam, offers networking and relationship building and creates economic opportunities for its people and foreign investors. Vietnam began to liberalize its economy in the 1980s, when the Vietnamese leaders launched the economic renovation (Doi Moi 1986). The country has shifted from a centrally-planned to a socialist-oriented market economy, which is described as a multi-sectoral market economy where the state sector plays the leading role in directing economic development (Dang 2019, pp.694-695). Small and medium-sized enterprises represent 96% of the total stock of companies, employ 47% of the labor force, and account for 36% of national value added.⁷ Under the Doi Moi 1986, Vietnam commits to expand its economic reforms and integration into the global economy by carrying out various measures to attract foreign direct investment, for example, participating in many bilateral and multilateral free trade agreements with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Economic Community, Japan, Korea, and the United States.

At a time when development issues are becoming more challenging and complex by the search for sustainable development, it is required to promote development cooperation not

⁶ Fragmented market is the market consisting of small to medium-sized enterprises that compete with each other and large enterprises. There is no company that can exert enough influence to move the industry in a certain direction, therefore fragmented markets can present opportunities for smaller companies to enter an industry and reach smaller target markets.

Source: "Fragmented market," Monash Business School, accessed September 29, 2021 <https://www.monash.edu/business/marketing/marketing-dictionary/f/fragmented-market>.

⁷ "SME and Entrepreneurship Policy in Viet Nam – Policy Highlights," Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, accessed September 29, 2021 <https://www.oecd.org/cfe/smes/VN%20SMEE%20Policy%20highlights%20EN.pdf>.

only by states but also by private sectors, including corporations, NGOs, academic institutions, and so on. Vietnam can tap into its diaspora, which is characterized as a critical resource for development based on the sources of innovative knowledge, technical skills, trade, revenue, investment, and so on. In reverse, the diaspora can consider Vietnam as their investment destination. Moreover, the capacity of diaspora-based associations to lobby the state's interests abroad cannot be ignored (see DeWind and Segura 2014; Baser and Halperin 2019). The transnational dynamics of diaspora-homeland strategic collaboration can have a favorable impact on development progress and international cooperation to secure the national interests of Vietnam. To ensure full access to these resources, it is important to ease tensions and recognize the role of the diaspora in the development process in the country of origin. Based upon a relationship of mutual trust, a clear policy, funding, and a communication mechanism for foreign NGOs in general and VA NGOs in particular, an opportunity exists for them to effectively provide support to people in need and create positive changes in Vietnam.

There are many studies providing information that can be considered background knowledge about diaspora-homeland transnational relationships and the contribution of the diaspora to the economic development process of homelands. More research is nonetheless needed to understand the direct social influence of diaspora engagement on the development process in the country of origin, rather than in the economic sphere alone. Through a detailed case study, this dissertation makes an attempt to fill the research gap by providing answers to the questions concerning the social contribution activities of U.S.-based members of the Vietnamese diaspora to their homeland. This empirical analysis, focusing on the recent situation in Vietnam, attempts to add value to the existing studies about diaspora-homeland-development. Given the importance of contributing to the sustained development of Vietnam, the outcomes of VA NGOs' activities should be evaluated in the context of current discussions related to the diaspora's role as a "development contributor" towards the homeland. The

findings can be applied to other diaspora-homeland cases in which the diaspora community becomes a critical stakeholder for tension reduction and development in a post-conflict society.

Structure of the study

The dissertation has seven chapters, excluding the Introduction and Conclusion.

Introduction: This section introduces the notions of migration, diaspora, and development as the background of the study. It also comprises research problems, objectives, questions, and methodology. The idea for the dissertation was derived from many years of Vietnamese diaspora media observation. Several onsite fieldworks have been conducted in Da Nang City (Vietnam), Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam), and California (the U.S.). Vietnamese-American philanthropists, representatives of VA NGOs, and heads of initiatives were interviewed during workshops and conferences.

Chapter 1 (“Diaspora, homeland, and development literature”): This chapter provides general overviews of the migration-development nexus, definitions and typologies of the diaspora, diaspora-homeland relationships, and diaspora-homeland development within the paradigms of transnationalism in various sociopolitical contexts. Studies about Vietnamese diasporas, in particular the Vietnamese-American diaspora, mostly focus on race and ethnicity issues related to host land integration, identity, bicultural conflict, and generation gaps. A few other scholarly studies discuss the transnational connection between Vietnam and its diaspora globally regarding remittance sending, human mobility, and changes in the diaspora-homeland relationship. A transnational virtual community – VNForum, which created lines of cross-border communication, has facilitated transnational exchange and contributed to technology development in the home country. However, there is a lack of data and evidence of how the diaspora transfer other types of nonmaterial resources, such as skills and knowledge, to engage in social development process of the home country.

Chapter 2 (“The rapprochement process of Vietnam and Vietnamese-American diaspora”): This chapter provides insight into the transnational linkage between Vietnam and Vietnamese-American diaspora through transnational media and community development projects. The positive change in diaspora-homeland relationship is demonstrated by the rapprochement via Vietnamese transnational media and civic engagement of VA NGOs in Vietnam (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.31). The Vietnamese government issued Decision No. 1984/QD-TTg to launch a project providing 20 television channels and four radio channels to overseas Vietnamese worldwide between 2015 and 2020; however, these channels were not very popular among Vietnamese-American community (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.22). Meanwhile, the dedication to support vulnerable people in Vietnam has gradually evolved to tackling some of the most important social issues in Vietnam by diaspora-driven NGOs. The watchfulness of local authorities, however, is a major obstacle for VA NGO’s social workers. The lingering tension since the wartime and different social and political views are the main challenges for the rapprochement process between Vietnamese-American diaspora and the Vietnamese home state (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.33).

Chapter 3 (“Diaspora giving for development in Vietnam: A view of transnationalism “from below”): The engagement of Vietnamese-American diaspora members/organizations in the development process in Vietnam is further discussed based on the theory of transnationalism “from below.” Recent years have witnessed the active engagement of Vietnamese-American diaspora members/organizations in homeland socio-economic development (Sidel 1997; Truong et al. 2008; Nguyen 2022). The scope of such transnational practices has correspondingly expanded from the individual or family level, with remittances or family business investments, to the community level, aided with a collective action by diaspora organizations (Nguyen 2022). Apart from positive outcomes generated by economic implications of remittance, there is a growing appreciation of the unique and potent

role of diaspora-driven nonprofit organizations, which bring not only resources but also strategies and ideas to address problems. The California-based VA NGO Network was established on its mission to lead effective collaborations among VA NGOs. The community-based activities delivered by VA NGOs have drawn a positive response and social impacts among Vietnamese local communities.

Chapter 4 (“Diplomacy by the diaspora: Motivations, practices, and outcomes”):

This chapter clarifies how the Vietnamese-American diaspora members/organizations can harmonize the transnational relationship with home state actors and collaborate effectively. A semi-structured interview with a representative of selected VA NGO was conducted to explore the implementation of collaborative development projects with their Vietnamese counterparts. The involvement of VA NGOs into homeland (social) development demonstrates their ability to actively conduct the “diplomacy by diaspora” to facilitate transnational exchange within a flexible and pragmatic approach. Such dynamics have turned the diaspora into the social force fulfilling the diplomacy’s core functions of representation, communication, and mediation beyond and between nations and simultaneously affected their status in the country of origin. However, the strategic posture of VA NGOs in relationship building needs a system of active communication adopted by the home state so that it can further participation and contributions from all stakeholders at all levels. A survey targeting the ethnic Vietnamese population in the United States was conducted to examine the levels of their demographic and social engagements in Vietnam. The survey result implies an informed and collaborative policymaking that could consider the best arrangements for the bridging and negotiating functions of the diaspora.

Chapter 5 (“Enabling an environment for diaspora engagement”): The extensive transnationalism “from below” creates a condition for the practices of transnationalism “from above.” “Diaspora diplomacy” is discussed through the lens of transnationalism “from above”

from the Vietnamese perspective. The home state exercises state-driven diaspora diplomacy to promote a two-way communication and encourages the involvement of overseas Vietnamese communities into the progress of science and technology. The adoption of “diplomacy for diaspora” and “diplomacy through diaspora” reveals the efforts of the Vietnamese government to build cross-border relationships and strengthen transnational cooperation. The State Committee on Overseas Vietnamese Affairs has employed various measures at the state level to mobilize overseas Vietnamese resources for the socio-economic development of Vietnam. Despite its numerous positive outcomes, overseas Vietnamese-oriented diplomacy and policy implementation process continues to present challenges for Vietnamese-American investors at various administrative levels.

Chapter 6 (“Making sense of the *state transnationalism* in Vietnamese perspective: Proactive and reactive roles in the transnational reincorporation process”): Through the lens of “state transnationalism,” this chapter examines motivations and outcomes of the home state’s efforts to promote the transnational reincorporation of overseas Vietnamese into homeland development projects. These approaches were influenced by the economic renovation (Doi Moi 1986) that advocated for global trade liberation and international cooperation. The home state plays reactive and proactive roles in steering and sustaining this particular transnational process. While the outcomes of the diaspora-driven development practices impacted the home state policy adjustment, the motivations and processes of diaspora engagement tend to be influenced by state and local policies in the country of origin (Nguyen 2022). This reciprocity has a direct influence on the functions and actions of the diaspora and home state within the transnational reincorporation (Nguyen 2022). Thus, the diaspora-homeland cooperation for development requires a full acknowledgment of each other’s need and capacity as well as the effective participation of both main actors.

Chapter 7 (“The diaspora as material and nonmaterial resources for development in Vietnam”): Evolving from the old notion of a dispersed population maintaining a collective memory about the original home communities, diasporas are now in a strategic position to act as transnational activity facilitators or development bridge-builders between host and home countries. Governments in developing countries which have large expatriate populations increasingly realize that engaged diasporas can be strategic assets for development. Ministry- and sub-ministry level diaspora institutions have been established to engage the overseas communities abroad on a formal basis. This chapter proposes suggestions on how Vietnam might more effectively turn to pragmatic diaspora engagement policy if sustained attention from key policy makers would be given to the social and economic contributions of the diaspora. In order to improve the transnational reincorporation, Vietnam may consider the diaspora engagement policy that integrates social dimensions of diaspora giving into targeted development purposes while reflecting diaspora diversities with more realistic approaches towards trust building and resource mobilizing for development (Nguyen 2022).

Conclusion: The conclusion summarizes the whole dissertation. It reiterates key findings of the study. The research distances itself from economic involvement while focusing on the contribution of Vietnamese-American diaspora members/organizations to social development of the original home country. Diaspora engagement plays a role in shaping the state policy that encourages international integration and maintains collaborative networks worldwide. Further research on effective plans for Vietnamese diaspora-homeland development is needed to magnify the human capital and financial resources that Vietnamese refugees and their descendants contribute to the socio-economic development in their country of origin.

CHAPTER 1

DIASPORA, HOMELAND, AND DEVELOPMENT LITERATURE

The term diaspora is closely related to migration. Migration is the movement of people from one place to another. Encyclopedia Americana defines migration as a mass-movement of a species from the place of habitual residence to a new place.⁸ In the International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, the term is defined as the relatively permanent movement of persons over a huge distance.⁹ That people migrate for various reasons creates their different statuses and backgrounds, such as coerced versus voluntary migrants, long-term versus short-term migrants, and permanent versus temporary migrants, who maintain diverse ties with their countries of origin and have varied developmental roles there (Van Naerssen et al. 2008, pp.15-16).

The nature of migration has changed over time and so has the term diaspora. It is crucial to define what the term means for this dissertation. In this chapter, different theories about the migration-development nexus proposed by scholars in the field of development will be covered. The literature on the theoretical concepts of the diaspora and its typologies, diaspora-homeland relationships, and diaspora-homeland-development nexus will be reviewed. A deep conceptual understanding of diaspora-homeland transnational connections in an era of globalization will help in the thorough investigation of the case study of Vietnam and Vietnamese-American diaspora.

1.1 Migration-development nexus: Theories and approaches

Migration and development have been treated as two separate areas of study in the political, social, and economic spheres. Recent studies demonstrate that perceptions of migration and development have changed in conjunction with a new understanding of the development approach. The mainstream approach views development as synonymous with

⁸ *Encyclopedia Americana*, Vol. 19 (New York: The Encyclopedia Americana Corporation, 1969), s.v. "Migration."

⁹ *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol. 10 (New York: Macmillan and Free Press, 1968), s.v. "Migration."

economic growth and people's unfulfilled material needs. There are four theories of economic development in post-World War II, which include the linear-stages-of-growth model; theories and patterns of structural change; international-dependence revolution; and neoclassical, free-market counterrevolution (Todaro and Smith 2015, pp.119-141). Rostow (1960, pp.4-10) defines development as a series of different stages of economic growth all countries have experienced over time: traditional society, pre-take-off stage, take-off stage, maturity stage, and high mass consumption stage. Rooted in the experiences of the Marshall Plan,¹⁰ this *stage approach* was then replaced by structural-change theory and international-dependence theory. Associated with the Lewis dual-sector model,¹¹ *structural-change theory* (also referred to as structural transformation) implies that underdevelopment is caused by the underutilization of resources; thus, the state should industrialize and increase its capabilities for productive transformation (Todaro and Smith 2015, pp.129-130). *International dependence theory* places the blame for inequality on developed nations, which cause the underdevelopment and dependence of developing countries (Todaro and Smith 2015, p.131). *Neoliberal theory* (or neoclassical counterrevolution) in economic thought indicates that underdevelopment results from the lack of efficiency in state policy, corruption, and excessive state intervention; it promotes open economies, free markets, and privatization of inefficient public enterprise (Todaro and Smith 2015, pp.135-137).

The theoretical evolution in the nexus between migration and development overlaps with theoretical changes in economic development studies (Weeraratne 2018, p.193). The motivation of migration is believed to be decided by either people or society, termed the *humanist approach* and *determinist approach*, respectively. The former indicates that an

¹⁰ The Marshall Plan, also known as the European Recovery Program, was a U.S. program providing a massive amount of financial aid to help reconstruct Western Europe's economies after the World War II.

¹¹ Dual-sector model divides the economy into the subsistence sector (underdeveloped rural areas with excess labor) and the capitalist sector (advanced urban areas with high technological production). Migration from the traditional, less productive sector to newer manufacturing industries is encouraged.

individual decides whether to migrate, while the latter emphasizes the role of society as the crucial factor in the decision-making process. In addition, there are other approaches that attempt to integrate humanist and determinist approaches based on various aspects of development. In relation to the idea of pull and push factors proposed by the *neoclassical economic approach*, migration is explained as being pushed by underdevelopment factors such as low living standards and the lack of economic opportunities in areas of origin, and being pulled by development factors, including the demand for labor and an open economic environment in the destination place (Ravenstein 1885, pp.167-168; Lewis 1954, p.176; Todaro and Smith 2015, p.77). Borjas (1989) notes the wage differentials that affect the decision of workers to move from low-wage areas to higher-wage areas (as cited in Castles and Miller 1998, pp.21-22). However, this approach is criticized by Munck (2008, p.1230) as being too individualistic and narrow in explaining migration, as it focuses on individuals' experiences in economic aspects alone.

Development has a multitude of meanings, apart from economic growth and better quality of life. Sen (1999, pp.289-292) views development as an effort to expand the freedom of choice so that people have opportunities to fulfill their natures. Conversely, the critical approach to development emphasizes more than just linear development. Equitable development promotes human capacity and the fair distribution of opportunities for achieving the quality of people's lives (Merz et al. 2007, p.4). It aims to remove recurring development barriers such as poverty, lack of basic capacities (clean water, nutrition, health care, education, clothing, shelter, etc.), or lack of civil and political freedom that hinder people's opportunities to engage in behaviors that are in keeping with what they hold to be of value (Merz 2007, p.186).

According to Lewis (1982, p.1), migration is the response to social and economic change and acts as a catalyst for change in the places of origin and settlement. Further theories

of migration were proposed to explain the complex nature of migration and its developmental impact. The *historical structural approach* sees migration as a part of socio-economic change. Mangalam and Cornelia (1968, pp.16-18) argue that migration is not an independent decision made by individuals but rather the consequence of socio-economic changes in which these three factors affect its nature: society of origin, society of destination, and interdependence among migrants. This approach also considers migrants as agents of social change (Mangalam and Cornelia 1968, p.15). The International Organization for Migration (2019) later affirms that migrants are considered important agents of change in a range of sectors owing to their tremendous contributions to the origin and destination countries in reference to three aspects: sociocultural, civic-political, and economic.

The *migration system approach* tends to be more interdisciplinary in explaining migration, as it evaluates both historical and economic effects from previous concepts. Mabogunje (1970, pp.4-10) finds that migration is influenced by three elements: surrounding incentives that urge people to leave, institutions that control the migration flow, and various socio-economic and political forces that play major roles in the migration process. In this approach, migration is viewed as a circular, interdependent, and self-modifying system in which changes in one part affect the whole system (Mabogunje 1970, p.16; Lewis 1982, p.29). This approach also considers the links between sending and receiving countries in terms of colonization, political influence, trade, investment, or cultural ties (Castles and Miller 1998, p.28).

1.2 Diaspora: Definitions and typologies

Arising from the study about the migration and development nexus, the phenomenon of the diaspora and the engagement of its members in the development process in the country of origin have recently received attention. The word *diaspora* comes from the ancient Greek word *dia speiro*, meaning “to sow over.” Since ancient times, the concept has been used to

refer to Greek colonization in Mediterranean lands between the 6th and 4th centuries before the common era. This original concept of diaspora has a fairly positive meaning signifying the expansion, migration, and colonization of the Greek diaspora. Eventually, it has been changed to a quite negative connotation to describe the forced dispersion of people from their country of origin. The word is primarily used to refer to the Jews after the destruction of Jerusalem under the Babylonian empire and the Armenians after the Armenian genocide. Beginning in the 1950s and 1960s, it was used with reference to the African diaspora rooted in slavery, the Vietnamese diaspora rooted in the Vietnam War in the 1970s, and the recent Palestinian and Kurdish diasporas rooted in atrocities. These experiences of involuntary mass dispersion have given rise to a tragic vision of the diaspora. This section reviews the definitions of the diaspora and its various typologies that researchers have developed through many perspectives.

1.2.1 Definitions

The word *diaspora* became associated with the fate of Jews and their famous trauma. As the Oxford Advanced American Dictionary states, diaspora means “*the movement of the Jewish people away from their own country to live and work in other countries*” or “*the movement of people from any nation or group away from their own country.*”¹² A slightly broader definition of diaspora refers to the flight of the early Christians from their land and their scattering across the Roman Empire. The contemporary definitions of diaspora relate to cross-border migration (Choi 2003, p.10; Brubaker 2005, pp.5-6) as a way of understanding that phenomenon, including the political and cultural identities of migrants. Although scientists have tried to tighten the broad definition to a more specific definition that refers “refugees,” “exile,” “ethnicity,” and so on, there is no universal agreement on the definition of diaspora.

¹² *Oxford Advanced American Dictionary*, s.v. “Diaspora (n.),” accessed November 13, 2020, https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/american_english/diaspora.

Cohen (2008) gives a thorough description of diaspora concerning all kinds of cultural and ethnic dispersions relating to the homeland and host land. According to Cohen (2008, p.17), common features of a diaspora are based on the relation to an original homeland, collective memory and myths about the real or imagined homeland, the return movement to the homeland, connection with co-ethnic members, a new life, and a relationship with the host country. This definition by Cohen (2008, p.17) covers an almost essentialist¹³ school of thought, which tends to understand the diaspora as intrinsic to a forced dispersed community. Safran (1991, pp.83-84) proposes six criteria of a diaspora, including the dispersion of people from an area of origin, collective memories and the yearning for a precise location in the homeland, the feeling of alienation in the host country, the hope of return, and the commitment to restore the homeland. Brubaker (2005, pp.5-7) also defines diaspora based on three core elements: space dispersion, homeland orientation, and identity perseverance vis a vis the host country.

Other interpretations of diaspora avoid connecting it to the ideology of a nation-state or the feeling of loss, traumatic dispersion, and return. Contrary to the essentialist approach, constructivist theorists try to find positive features of the diaspora as a desire to promote the emancipation of so-called second-class citizens in the host country (Missbach 2012, p.17). Since identity is constructed through the ongoing process of social interactions/relations (Stone 1962, pp.93-94), the hybrid diaspora identity is perceived as being shaped by technological and communication development, which is a social construction process (Adamson 2012, p.19).

¹³ Classical essentialism assumes that there are underlying true forms or essences and that they are constant over time. Modern essentialism involves the belief that certain phenomena are natural, inevitable, universal, and biologically determined. Essentialism therefore includes stereotypes referring to a certain race, culture, or religion. Constructionism, in contrast, rests on the idea that reality is socially constructed, and thus, it is often seen as liberating. In the constructivist view, identity is considered to be constantly under negotiation and constructed differently over time.

Sources:

John D. DeLamater, and Janet Shibley Hyde, "Essentialism vs. social constructionism in the study of human sexuality," *The Journal of Sex Research* 35, no. 1 (1998): 10–16.

Anders Berg-Sorensen, Nils Holtug, and Kasper Lippert-Rasmussen, "Essentialism vs. Constructivism: Introduction," *Distinkson: Journal of Social Theory* 11, no. 1 (2010): 39–41.

Baser (2015, p.20) underlines that the diaspora is constructed by both its ethnic identity and mobilization efforts towards the host land. The definition of diaspora identity concerning an issue of mobilization leads to the questions of why and how people are mobilized for identity and how they accept it (Sokefeld 2006, p.268). Based on social movement theory, Sokefeld (2006, p.280) also argues that the formation of the diaspora identity is not a natural consequence of migration but a specific process through which a diaspora emerges.

Essentialist theorists emphasize the sense of solidarity in the diaspora and expect people with the same backgrounds to maintain their traditions and heritage and act as a monolithic community, while constructivist theorists stress individual experiences, disintegration, and freedom of choice (Missbach 2012, pp.15-21). Vertovec (1997) presents a general explanation with three meanings of diaspora, seeing it as a social form (pp.278-281), a type of consciousness (pp.281-289), and a mode of cultural production (pp.289-292). In the *first* meaning, the connotation of diaspora is rather negative, as it is associated with forced displacement, victimization, trauma, and loss (i.e., the experiences of the Jews). Three traits attributable to this social category of diaspora include social relationships (forced migration, collective identity, ties to the homeland, networks and communal organizations in the host land, solidarity with other diaspora members, unwillingness to assimilate), political orientations towards the homeland and host land, and economic strategies as a new source and force in international business. The *second* meaning emphasizes the experience of the diaspora, a state of mind, and a sense of identity. Diaspora awareness is constituted either negatively by experiences of discrimination and exclusion or positively by historical identification and contemporary cultural and political forces. Diaspora awareness of multi-locality creates a space and opportunity to connect people here and there. It is further considered to be the source of resistance as a process of self-questioning and self-awareness. The *third* meaning is closely related to the discussion of current notions of globalization, which is often seen as a worldwide

flow of cultural objects. The production and reproduction of transnational social and cultural phenomena result in the transformation of diaspora identity into a culturally hybrid identity.

To summarize the three characteristics of diaspora, Faist (2010, pp.12-13) outlines the old and new usages of the term regarding the cause of displacement, the relationship with the homeland, and the integration process into host land. For the first feature, the old notion focuses on forced dispersal, while the new notion simply mentions any kind of dispersal, either voluntary or involuntary. For the second feature, the old notion suggests a physical return to the homeland, while the new notion just implies a linkage between the homeland and host land. For the third feature, the old notion insists that the diaspora community remains a bounded community that is separated from the majority group, while the new notion argues for the existence of cultural hybridity.

1.2.2 Typologies

Depending on the main motives generating the original migration of people, Cohen (2008, pp.39-99, pp.123-138) classifies diasporas into five categories: victim or refugee diasporas, trade diasporas, labor diasporas, imperial diasporas, and cultural diasporas. Victim diasporas are the result of the traumatic experience of war, conflict, and forced dispersion; the best-known cases are of the Jews, the Africans, and the Armenians, and the most recent case of the Ukrainian diaspora. Trade diasporas are diasporas of merchants who live in dispersed communities and travel back and forth to conduct commercial practices and exchange goods (i.e., the Turks in sixteen-century Venice, the Chinese in Southeast Asia). Labor diasporas refer to migration in search of work and economic opportunities (i.e., Indian workers in plantations in the colonial period of the British Empire, Chinese railroad workers in the United States).

Colonists of powerful nation-states, such as those of the Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, German, French, and British, established their own imperial diasporas to expand their imperial plans. However, the term is rarely used in reference to the descendants of, for example, British

people in Australia, New Zealand, or the United States since their ties with their homelands have been loosened over generations. Cultural diasporas (or deterritorialized diasporas) refer to the movement of people through a process of chain migration, such as the Caribbean diaspora. With this expression of diaspora, Cohen (2008, pp.123-138) loosens the concept based on the assumption that ethnic groups become mobile and multi-located and are able to construct new identities. Moreover, other categorizations in the functionalist view emphasize historical or political factors of diaspora classification, such as traditional/historical (i.e., Jews, Greeks), dormant (i.e., America), incipient (i.e., post-Soviet Russian), stateless (i.e., Palestinian), and state-linked (i.e., China, Mexico) diasporas (Sheffer 2003, pp.73-172). Such classifications assume that a particular diaspora can be categorized into more than one type concerning people's different motivations to leave their country of origin at various times (Choi 2003, p.14; Meyer 2011, p.651).

1.3 Diaspora-homeland relation

Rather than the mere scattering of a population caused by dispersal or uprooting, diaspora holds a complex identity constructed through the continuous and intense interactions among people in a diaspora's communal institutions in original and destination countries (Tölölyan 1996, pp.28-30). Elements of common origin, sense of distinctiveness, and historical experiences, which sustain ethnic group consciousness (Vertovec 1997, pp.281-289), also create a feeling of connection to the homeland (Pattie 1999, pp.82-86; Brown 2011, p.233). Collectively shared memory of a real or imagined country of origin is one of the key characteristics of a diaspora (Safran 1991, p.83; Cohen 2008, p.17). Cohen (2008, p.17) and Gamlen (2011, pp.269-270) define a diaspora based on an orientation towards a homeland as a constitutive element. Wilcock (2018, pp.3-5) goes further, concluding that the diaspora identity forms when mobilization towards a homeland initiates the collective processes of remembering, forgetting, and future-making. The imaginative process unites people in the

diaspora community and orients them to their homeland (Wilcock 2018, p.15). Common culture, shared values, family, religion, language, and even food create strong emotional ties to the homeland (Brown 2011, pp.233-235).

Coined by Anderson (1983), the term “imagined community” is used to define a *nation*, since its members probably will never know or see each other face-to-face but still hold in their minds a mental image of their affinity and identity. The nation is imagined by people who identify themselves as members of that socially construct community (Seton-Watson 1977, as cited in Anderson 1983, p.6). This comprehension involves identifying similarities among people of a community. The identity of any “imagined community” is determined by its cultural roots, traditional heritages, and the efforts of every member to maintain its continuity (Anderson 1983, pp.9-11). Following that thread, the term “imagined community” may also be used to understand the concept of “imagined homeland,” which does not necessarily refer to a real geographic locale. The *homeland*, or the country of origin, is the concept of a place from which a person comes. It does not necessarily refer only to the physical territory of a real, personal property but also includes a more abstract sort of *home* (Cohen 2008, p.10), which refers to the ideas of social (collective memories of family, intimates, associations, other social, cultural, or religious groupings) and psychic (thoughts, philosophies, myths, dreams, history, sufferings, and achievements) territories that people in the same *land* have shared with one another. Diaspora communities maintain collective memory and myths about the homeland (Safran 1991, p.83) and the transmission of a common heritage (Cohen 2008, p.17). Members of a diaspora idealize a real or imagined ancestral home and have a commitment to its destiny (Cohen 2008, p.17). A second-generation Vietnamese American noted, “*My parents came here in the 1990s as refugees. I haven’t had a chance to go to Vietnam, but I always think about our root. I may go there someday.*”

In reality, the relation between the country of origin and the diaspora, however, is complex (Sheffer 2013, p.13; Cohen and Yefet 2021, p.2; Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.33), especially for members of a political diaspora, who have experienced traumatic war events and postwar social stressors. One of the factors that is responsible for this complex nature and that constitutes a major obstacle to the improvement of the relationship between the diaspora and the homeland is the viewpoint on *identity*. Neither the homeland nor the diaspora community dominates the process of constituting *national identity* (Shain 2002, p.118), which regards nationality based on common ancestry or ethnicity (a strict definition) or based on a self-determination process (a loose definition) (Dahbour 2002, p.17). In the constructivist approach, a diaspora community has the ability to declare its own identification, but identity can be negotiated between the homeland and the diaspora community (Shain 2002, pp.117-119). Cohen and Yefet (2021, p.6) argue that the Iranian diaspora community imagines its identity in a way that is contrary to how it is constructed in the Iranian homeland. The experience of the diaspora and its complex relation to the supposed homeland thus should be treated with caution.

1.4 Diaspora and transnationalism: Differences and similarities

Diaspora literature often focuses on issues of ethnic identity and the socio-cultural relationship with the home and host countries (Safran 1991, pp.83-84; Cohen 2008, p.17; Shain 2002, pp.117-119). *Transnationalism* refers to the processes by which immigrants sustain regular involvement in economic, political, and social activities that link their societies of origin and settlements (Schiller et al. 1992a, p.ix; Basch et al. 1994, p.8). The terms diaspora and transnationalism sometimes overlap although they originally refer to quite different social phenomena (Faist 2010, p.11). Diaspora studies and transnationalism concern intense cross-border connections of migrants to national or local territories, including the original home country, destination country, and other residing regions (Faist 2010, p.20). The distinguishing

point is that they “emphasize different aspects of movement and identity formation (Olwig 2004, p.55).” In theory, diasporic approaches emphasize the cultural sphere or identity category, for example the distinctive cultural traits of minorities in terms of integration, while transnationalism focuses on issues of migrant integration in destination countries and their transnational practices that matter (Faist 2010, p.20).

Distinctive characteristics of diaspora and transnationalism are also demonstrated in three facets which are largely matters of emphasis rather than theoretical concept. The first difference concerns the scope of groups: diaspora relates to religious, ethnic, and national groups while transnationalism is a boarder term encompassing various social formations, transnational phenomena, and movements (Faist 2010, p.21). The second difference concerns identity and mobility: diaspora emphasizes aspects of collective identity, while transnationalism indicates the concepts of cross-border mobility and networks (Faist 2010, pp.21-22). The third difference concerns the time dimension in the usage of these terms: diaspora addresses aspects of historical continuity, such as the multi-generational pattern, while transnationalism refers to recent migration flows (Faist 2010, p.22).

The conceptual differences between diaspora and transnationalism can be further clarified in the scope-based groupings, which concern diaspora and transnationalism as (1) as descriptive analytical notions, (2) socially constituted formations, and (3) socio-cultural conditions. In the first group, while diaspora studies mainly discuss cultural distinctiveness, nationhood, and social practices, such as entrepreneurship, transnational studies bring the issues of mobility and networks into focus (Faist 2010, p.17). In the second group, the two concepts are not in contrast with each other but built on distinctive values of identities and practices vis-a-vis countries: Diasporic transnationalism refers to the ties of those who maintain cross-border connections to their countries of origin while residing in countries of destination, thus forming the transnational social space or field, while transnationalism through mobility is

defined by circulation and movement across border (Faist 2010, pp.18-19). In the third group, factors such as political constitution, solidarity, and social class characterize the concept of diaspora, which also requires the integrated consideration of factors bearing on its traditional elements of communal autonomy or collective identity and recent studies on transnational ties within the intensive cross-border flows of persons, ideas, and goods (Faist 2010, p.20).

The scope of diaspora studies is being broadened beyond the traditional concerns of migration, identity, and settlement. There is an emerging field of research on migration and development that examines the nexus between transnationalism and diaspora-homeland development owing to the effects of globalization and rise of refugee diasporas in today's interconnected world. Diaspora members maintain relationships with globally dispersed groups who collectively identify their ethnicity with residential communities in host states and with the home state (Sheffer 1986 and Safran 1991, as cited in Vertovec 1999, p.449). Homeland links and host-society integration construct the collective identity of a diaspora (Baser 2015, p.20; Sokefeld 2006, pp.268-280), while simultaneously maintaining development implications (Faist 2010, p.19), as migrants can engage in transnational activities that contribute to socio-economic development in home and host countries.

1.5 Diaspora-homeland development within the paradigm of transnationalism

The growing global connections create a transnational social space that helps transfer economic, social, cultural, and human resources across borders (Faist 1998, pp.214-215). Transnationalism is an effective means of promoting knowledge, skills, and wealth transfer between nations (Patterson 2006, p.1892). Diasporas maintain active linkages with original home countries that create necessary conditions to contribute to homeland development through transnational networks (Faist 2010, p.19). Diasporas even emerge as social forces having their role in the development of policy-making owing to their ethnic origins and their readiness and capability to contribute to homeland development (Weinar 2010, pp.74-86). In

reality, states have witnessed the influence of diasporas (A-Ali et al. 2001, pp.590-593), and this form of transnationalism is significant in nation-building and the development process of developing countries (Kong 1999, as cited in A-Ali et al. 2001, p.579; Patterson 2006, p.1892).

Regarding the different forms of diverse cross-border practices, there are two modes of transnationalism classified as *transnationalism “from below”* and *transnationalism “from above.”* The former explains the bottom-up approach in which migrants maintain ties with their countries of origin through transnational economic, social, cultural, and political grassroots activities, while the latter highlights the top-down approach with the rise of “high-level” transnational practices by powerful institutional actors (such as states, global media, multinational corporations, and supra-national political institutions) to channel the flow of capital, good, and people across borders (Guarnizo and Smith 1998, pp.3-9; Portes et al. 1999, pp.220-222). Furthermore, several new theoretical concepts have been established to explain the intense interactions between states and diasporas in the transnational paradigm. *Diasporic transnationalism* refers to the sustained cross-border ties, which thereby forms transnational fields or spaces for a real interaction and engagement among migrants and their collectives (Faist 2010, p.18). The *state transnationalism* theory explains the way in which state and sub-national governments, either proactively or reactively, participate into these transnational dynamics (Chin and Smith 2014, pp.83-84).

The binary approach toward transnationalism leads to the discourse of a powerless nation-state, as to the debates that nation-state is weakened by transnational practices “from above” and decentralized by grassroots activities “from below (Guarnizo and Smith 1998, p.3; Appadurai 1996 and Strange 1996, as cited in Chin and Smith 2014, p.84).” Different from binary transnationalism, the state transnationalism perspective emphasizes the crucial role of the state actor in initiating, promoting, and sustaining these transnational movements and connections for the sake of its own priorities and relevant actors (Chin and Smith 2014, pp.83-

85). State transnationalism may represent a possible outcome of the transnational governance via diaspora-homeland partnerships for mutual benefits of all parties concerned (Chin and Smith 2014, p.84).

Empirical research on diaspora engagement in homeland development values the contribution of the diaspora to the economic development process in the homeland regarding annual remittances, investment opportunities, development finance, and business practices (Hernandez-Coss 2005; Patterson 2006; Pfau and Giang 2009, 2010; Debass and Ardovino 2009; Terrazas 2010; Newland and Plaza 2013; Carment and Calleja 2017). In developing countries that have unimproved investment climates and weak bargaining positions and thus face difficulty attracting inflows of foreign direct investment (FDI), the diaspora community plays a critical role as a source of FDI to the homeland (Carment and Calleja 2017, p.243). Diaspora members may generate useful networks to enhance the homeland's reputation and steer foreign investments to their home countries (Newland and Plaza 2013, p.5). In a comparative study between FDI versus diaspora direct investment (DDI), Debass and Ardovino (2009, p.9) conclude that DDI investors are less susceptible to political risks and sudden economic shocks than FDI investors since they are more informed and less likely to withdraw investments owing to their feeling of pride and duty towards the homeland. In addition, DDI can help foster brain gain by substantial intellectual capital assets from the return of diaspora members, enhance knowledge and technology spillovers, promote further investment from non-resident investors through joint ventures, and encourage the reform of local market structures for future global business engagement (Debass and Ardovino 2009, pp.7-10).

Apart from economic activities, the diaspora-homeland development nexus expands to political, social, and cultural activities, for example lobbying, human rights promotion, media production, and the development of subcultures (Carment and Calleja 2017, pp.226-227). Forms of diaspora engagement include diaspora advocacy and activism, volunteerism,

entrepreneurship, philanthropy, social innovation, and diplomacy (Yong and Rahman 2013, p.7). The engagement process can occur not only at an individual level but also at an organizational level through grassroots organizations, international institutions, business associations, or political groups (Carment and Calleja 2017, pp.223-260), in which the diaspora may advocate for international aids (see Gertheiss 2016). For instance, the roles of Non-resident Indians and People of Indian Origin, which is a grassroots-oriented diaspora that establishes engagement between Germany and India to contribute to the economic and social development of India through remittances, foreign-direct investments, business facilitation, entrepreneurship, charity work, political support, and lobbying, are thoroughly examined by Gottschlich (2013, pp.20-40). Among those who do not physically return to the homeland, members of the Pakistani diaspora serving in international financial institutions and think tanks in the West continue to engage and discuss policies in Pakistan through many pathways, including research institutions, universities, forums, and the media (Zaidi 2013, pp.46-52). The intellectual capital from the Pakistani diaspora helps to solve the issue of brain drain in Pakistan and plays a critical role in forming and advocating home-country government development policies (Zaidi 2013, p.54).

The nexus between the diaspora-homeland and development is explained in Patterson (2006) based on a threefold classification scheme: development in the diaspora, development through the diaspora, and development by the diaspora (Mohann 2000, as cited in Patterson 2006, pp.1897-1899). *Development in the diaspora* relates to the case when the homeland assists its diaspora members to improve their political and financial foundations in the host country, so that they can engage in homeland development. *Development through the diaspora* is the case when globally dispersed ethnic groups provide material and nonmaterial supports to the homeland owing to extensive international networking among members in the diaspora communities. *Development by the diaspora* is explained as an effort of the diaspora community

who plays the key role in homeland socio-economic development. This transnational cooperation not only benefits the homeland but also improves the status of the diaspora community in the host land (Patterson 2006, p.1897).

In this era of information and communication technology, physical dispersion and return might no longer be a significant condition for diaspora-homeland development (Yong and Rahman 2013, p.13). The term *virtual diaspora* is employed to describe the usage of cyberspace by migrants to engage in online transactions (Laguerre 2002), which goes beyond conventional diaspora studies. The internet expands opportunities for diasporic connections as well as diaspora-homeland communications. Those virtual communities connect diaspora members living in the same host country or in other countries with individuals in the homeland (Laguerre 2002). Mirchandani (2013, pp.231-245) shows that the virtual diaspora can influence economic and traditional social norms in India by increasing female labor force participation. Using nine case studies, Brinkerhoff (2009) finds that the digital diaspora creates a community with hybrid identity among the diaspora members, as well as contributes to socio-economic development in the homeland. Digital diaspora platforms (i.e., Somalinet and AfghanistanOnline) also help to prevent potential conflicts in the homeland by allowing the expression of feelings of marginalization, the development of social capital, the negotiation of a hybrid identity with liberal values and shared norms of behavior, and the addressing of issues to avert conflict escalation (see Brinkerhoff 2009).

In addition, there is also the involvement of the diaspora in various different layers of political engagement in the host country, intra-diaspora, trans-state, and in the homeland (see Baser and Halperin 2009; Missbach 2012). Homeland may take advantage of the intellectual capital from its diaspora to manage the reputation of the country; for example, many Pakistani think tanks hire young and senior Pakistani living in the West to explain Pakistan to their host organizations and government, consequently influencing the policymaking process towards

Pakistan (Zaidi 2013, pp.41-55). Lobby/advocacy networks have also impelled home and host country governments at the local, national, and international level, consequently affecting home-country politics or becoming critical development agents in their home countries, that is, second-generation Hungarian Americans from the Hungarian Human Rights Foundation used lobbying tactics to combat human and minority rights violations of the Ceausescu system, Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora interest groups in the United Kingdom and Canada influenced host countries' foreign policies in 2009 towards the civil war in Sri Lanka (see Kovács 2018; Godwin 2018; Baser and Halperin 2019).

The involvement of diaspora interest groups in homeland politics ignites heated debates on the role of members of the diaspora as conflict entrepreneurs promoting conflict for profit or development contributors for the development of the homeland (see Brinkerhoff 2011; Gertheiss 2016). Brinkerhoff (2011, p.127) argues that the impact of diaspora remittances depends not only on senders' intention but also on receivers' usage. For instance, diaspora remitters may be manipulated by insurgents in the country of origin even if they do not intend to support conflict. In another case, attempts by the Somalian diaspora community to support violence ultimately supported peace (Horst 2008 as described in Brinkerhoff 2011, p.127). The confusion about the role of diaspora engagement causes a lack of sound and investment-friendly policies, and thereupon poses obstacles to diaspora involvement; in extreme cases, they can provoke opposition to the homeland government from diaspora populations (Carment and Calleja 2017, p.237). Thus, motivations for engagement should be carefully analyzed case by case to adopt the appropriate decision of when to tolerate, when to support, or when to partner with such engagement (Brinkerhoff 2011, p.137).

1.6 Diaspora-homeland connection: The case of Vietnam

Studies on Vietnamese diasporas, in particular the Vietnamese Americans, fall mainly under the category of Asian-American studies which examine the history, experiences, culture,

and policies relevant to Asian Americans (Furuya 2002, p.74). Closely related to other ethnic studies disciplines, they discuss race and ethnicity issues relating to identity, bicultural conflict, the integration process of refugees into the host country, and generation gaps. There are a few scholarly studies on the transnational connection between Vietnam and its diaspora worldwide. Furuya (2002, 2006, 2016), Chan and Tran (2011), and Chan (2013) have discussed the ties between Vietnam and its diaspora with regard to remittance sending and human mobility as well as changes in the diaspora-homeland relationship. The Vietnamese government decides and implements favorable policies toward overseas Vietnamese communities owing to their economic contribution to Vietnam through large remittances (Furuya 2002, pp.78-83; Chan and Tran 2011, p.1102; Furuya 2016, pp.47-49). There are even organizations promoting trade exchange with Vietnam in Orange County. Diaspora-driven nonprofit organizations providing humanitarian assistance in Vietnam have also emerged (Furuya 2002, p.86). Various philanthropic organizations run by Vietnamese Americans have worked to empower the impoverished in Vietnam as well as protect and support those in vulnerable situations (Truong et al. 2008, pp.259-267; Hanh Nguyen 2020, pp.25-28).

The changing relationship between Vietnam and its overseas communities was clearly exhibited in the Vietnamese foreign policy from the post-war period until the economic renovation in 1986. Policies towards overseas Vietnamese were becoming more pragmatic and flexible under the influence of the economic renovation owing to their potential resources for economic development (Dang 2000, pp.198-201). The Vietnamese government has changed how it refers to overseas Vietnamese, using terms such as “đồng bào” (in Japanese: 同胞; in English: compatriot) or “kiều bào” (in Japanese: 僑胞; in English: overseas compatriot) to indicate their shared origin (Furuya 2002, p.80; Chan and Tran 2011, p.1105). The transnational practices of the state, including overseas Vietnamese-oriented policy reforms and the use of methods to promote patriotism or to encourage thinking of the home nation, show

the efforts of the Vietnamese government to attract economic contributors from overseas communities and maximize their developmental impact in the home country (Furuya 2002, p.80; Furuya 2006, pp.198-204; Chan and Tran 2011, pp.1104-1107).

The 1994 survey described in Furuya (2002, p.87) reveals an interesting diaspora-homeland relationship regarding changes in U.S.-Vietnam bilateral relations and homeland sociopolitical affairs. Among Vietnamese Americans residing in California (survey areas: Los Angeles, Orange, San Diego, Riverside, San Bernardino, and Ventura Counties), 59% of the respondents stated that they did not like the Vietnamese communist government. In the same survey, 54% supported the decision to end the U.S. trade embargo on Vietnam, 49% hoped that economic progress would accelerate the democratization process in Vietnam, and 31% thought that democratization would be achieved by exerting appropriate pressure on the economy in Vietnam. Many Vietnamese Americans see no contradiction in supporting the economy of Vietnam while contesting its politics (Furuya and Collet 2009, p.70). Nearly 40% of first-generation Vietnamese Americans (more than 50 years old at that time) expressed their intention to return to live permanently in a democratized Vietnam (Furuya 2002, p.87).

Interestingly, recent years have seen an increasing tendency of migrants and refugees to return to the country of origin, including Vietnamese refugees (see Chan and Tran 2011; Chan 2013). The diaspora-homeland relationship results in either a physical return to the homeland or a continuous cross-border linkage. Apart from large volumes of remittances and investment capital annually (Hernandez-Coss 2005, pp.4-5; Pfau and Giang 2009, pp.435-436; Pfau and Giang 2010, pp.4-5), members of the Vietnamese diaspora have shared their knowledge and technological skills with people in the homeland (Valverde 2012, pp.65-89). The process is conducted through international development exchange programs or human resource mobilization projects. Furthermore, information technology and cyberspace have emerged and spread worldwide, consequently creating interactive communications between

the country of origin and digital diaspora (see Brinkerhoff 2009; Valverde 2012). Through the experiences of Vietnamese-American diaspora members in their initial attempts to connect with Vietnamese fellows via the Internet, Valverde (2012, pp.65-89) examines how information communication technology aids transnational connections and community-building activities, consequently creating virtual communities that allow dialogues to be created where none had previously existed owing to the lingering tension between people in Vietnam and Vietnamese expats.

The return of Chinese Vietnamese, who fled for different political and economic reasons during the war and postwar periods, is an interesting case of the shifting of identities creating a hybrid diaspora (Chan 2013, p.526). Owing to the diplomatic fallout between Vietnam and China immediately after the Vietnam War, these people left Vietnam as overseas Chinese and returned to Vietnam in the 1990s as overseas Vietnamese to enjoy the favorable government policies for overseas Vietnamese (Chan 2013, pp.529-530). The return of refugees to perform charity work (see Sidel 2007), work, invest, or even retire in Vietnam (see Chan 2013) reveals a major change in the diaspora-homeland relationship. However, when refugees return to their country of origin or habitual residences after long periods, they face a challenge in participating again in the social, political, and cultural life of the country of origin (Chan and Tran 2011, pp.1108-1111). The positive aspect is that during the migration process, overseas Vietnamese learn and adopt new skills, knowledge, and experiences that make them an important force for development in the home country (Chan and Tran 2011, p.1108). The dynamic interactions between Vietnam and the returning diaspora members have created a transnational social field that offers opportunities to initiate the reconstruction of Vietnamese nationhood and construct unity among Vietnamese people worldwide (Chan and Tran 2011, pp.1102-1103, pp.1112-1114).

Valverde (2012, pp.65-89) takes a further step from diasporic Vietnamese narratives that center on stories, memories, and experiences of Vietnamese refugees to portray a refreshing image of the transnational virtual community – VNForum – that has created lines of communication between Vietnam and its diaspora in the era of information technology. VNForum has facilitated transnational exchange by providing training activities in the United States for pioneering Vietnamese computer scientists and engineers who subsequently set up information technology companies in Vietnam and connected the early Vietnamese information technology community with the rest of the world. Valverde (2012) explains how members of VNForum became involved in homeland affairs by promoting real-world social change in Vietnam through collaboration with the Vietnamese government and overseas Vietnamese in, for example, the No-Nike labor rights campaign. The movement was one of the first acts of international cooperation between Vietnam and overseas Vietnamese regarding sociopolitical issues in the home country. Valverde (2012) also describes the evolution of VNForum into Vietnam Business, which provided a meeting ground for people of diverse social and political views and the use of different social media platforms by VNForum’s founder to reach Vietnamese people during the years of restriction on dissident bloggers in Vietnam.

Studies about second-generation overseas Vietnamese mostly describe their adaptation efforts in the host country after being uprooted or their struggles between “new” versus “old,” traditional versus modern values, Asian versus Western values, and language barriers that inevitably strain relationships in two-generation families (see Zhou and Bankston 1999; Do 2002). The first-generation and second-generation overseas Vietnamese maintain the transnational relationship with the original home country but in different ways. For example, while the first generation often donate to trustable individual charities, hometown associations, or religious organizations, the second generation engages themselves in volunteer activities in

Vietnam and are more open to communicate with Vietnamese authorities (Huynh and Yiu 2016, pp.171-178). Although the second generation may have some memories of Vietnam through their parents' old experiences, they see themselves as Americans and have a more impartial view of Vietnam (Koh 2015, p.179; Nguyen-Akbar 2016, p.103). During international economic integration, second-generation overseas Vietnamese return to Vietnam to engage themselves in career development activities in non-profit, finance, information technology, and health care sectors (Koh 2015, p.180; Huynh and Yiu 2016, p.178; Nguyen-Akbar 2016, pp.103-106). Most Vietnamese media have created an idealistic image of overseas Vietnamese, especially the young, who inspire Vietnamese youths as role models (Chan and Tran 2011, pp.1106-1108). However, the returning overseas Vietnamese has faced difficulties in securing the recognition of their rights granted by the home state regarding home ownership and the restoration of Vietnamese nationality (Koh 2015, p.188), or they have faced difficulties owing to poor infrastructures in the home country (Nguyen-Akbar 2016, pp.113-114).

Engaging diaspora members as agents of development for the home country is a challenging issue for policy-makers owing to the diaspora-homeland relationship and the unique socio-economic context in the home country. Patterson (2006, p.1903) assumes that one could envision the outcome of transnational cooperation between a diaspora and its homeland based on the "nature of collaboration," which might also reflect the characteristics of a warm, supportive connection, or an aggressive relationship of both sides. On the one hand, there is a strategic collaboration between the diaspora and homeland based on a sense of solidarity and cooperative attitudes; on the other hand, if diaspora-homeland relations are still mired in tension, there is no coordination between them (Patterson 2006, p.1903). In the case of Vietnam and Vietnamese-American diaspora, however, the nature of the relationship is not distinct in such a way that one can describe it clearly as either solidarity or hostility. Thus, the outcome of the cooperation between Vietnam and the diaspora community is limited and

sometimes leads to controversial results. For example, although VA NGOs can return and conduct philanthropic activities in Vietnam, they sometimes face obstacles owing to the traditionally suspicious attitude from Vietnamese local authorities. Chapter 2 gives insight into the transnational connectedness between Vietnam and the Vietnamese-American diaspora based on the analysis of their rapprochement efforts towards each other. Despite some attempts to ease tension through media and humanitarian activities, the rapprochement process is still challenged by lingering conflicts originating from the war, as well as significant differences in political views between the two sides (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.22).

CHAPTER 2¹⁴

THE RAPPROCHEMENT PROCESS OF VIETNAM AND VIETNAMESE-AMERICAN DIASPORA

Taking Vietnam and Vietnamese-American diaspora as a case study, this chapter provides insights into the diaspora-homeland relationship and effort of rapprochement between the homeland and diaspora for homeland development. Although persistent conflicts have remained to date, issues of remittance and rapprochement between the Vietnamese-American diaspora and the Vietnamese home state started in the 1990s (Furuya 2002, pp.78-83; Chan and Tran 2011, p.1102; Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.16). The last few years have witnessed a shift in attitudes among members of the Vietnamese-American diaspora and their engagement in collaborative projects with Vietnamese partners (Furuya 2002, p.86; Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.16). Under the influence of the economic renovation (Doi Moi 1986), which is known as the “open door” policy in Vietnam, several legal documents regarding overseas remittances have been issued by the Vietnamese government since the late 1980s, resulting in more convenient remittances and good sending from overseas Vietnamese individuals to their families in Vietnam, for example, Decision No.126-CT dated April 10, 1987, Circular No.128-CT dated April 10, 1987, and Decision No. 170/1999/QD-TTg dated August 19, 1999.

Since the issuance of Resolution 36-NQ/TW, dated March 26, 2004, regarding overseas Vietnamese affairs, Vietnamese individuals who reside overseas have been encouraged to return to Vietnam to conduct business, invest, and cooperate in science, technology, education, culture, arts, sports, and charity sectors. Policies which cover a broad range of issues relating to overseas Vietnamese have been made accordingly, for example, Law No. 24/2008/QH12

¹⁴ This is the modified version of the preprint of an article published by Taylor & Francis in DIASPORA STUDIES in 2020, available online: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09739572.2020.1689694>. It has been reproduced here with the permission of the copyright holder.

dated November 13, 2008 (legalizing dual citizenship), Law No. 56/2014/QH13 dated June 26, 2014 (loosening the requirement for nationality registration), Decree No. 87/2014/ND-CP dated September 22, 2014 (attracting overseas Vietnamese scientists and technologists), Law No. 65/2014/QH13 dated November 25, 2014 (giving overseas Vietnamese more opportunities to access property), Decree No. 82/2015/ND-CP dated September 24, 2015 (visa exemption for overseas Vietnamese, their foreigner spouses and children), and so on. This chapter describes the rapprochement via transnational media and civic participation through which the transnational relationship between Vietnam and Vietnamese-American diaspora changes from intense ideological conflict to ingratiating tactics (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.31). However, the process of relationship relaxation remains challenged by the remaining tensions originating from the war and differences in perspectives on social and political issues between the two sides (Hanh Nguyen 2020, pp.30-33).

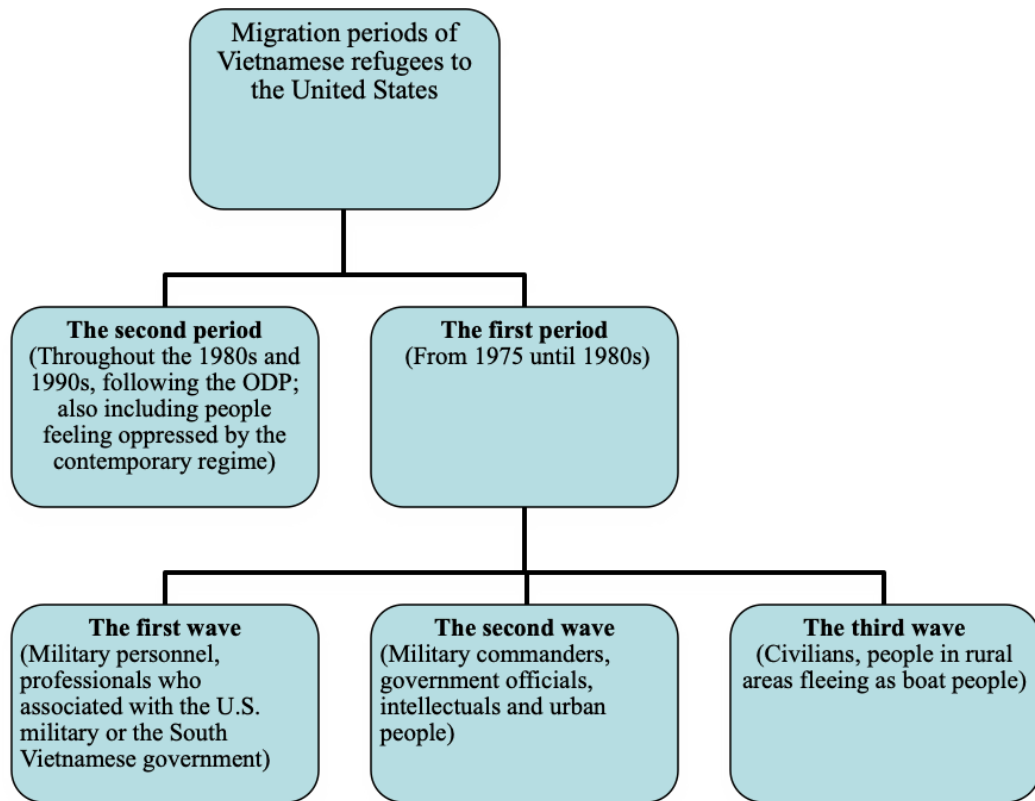
2.1 Vietnamese diaspora in the United States

Before 1975, most Vietnamese living in the United States were diplomats, military trainees, students, academics, or wives and children of American servicemen (Collins 1975, p.15; Dang et al. 2015, p.15). There were wealthy tourists travelling there during the interwar era and a few poor laborers working there to make a living (Keith 2019, p.48). The mass migration of people from Vietnam to the United States as refugees and asylum seekers began from the end of the Vietnam War. Vietnamese migration to the United States is generally divided into two distinct periods (Do 1999, pp.26-27). The first departure period began from April 1975 until the early 1980s, with three waves of Vietnamese asylum seekers (Hanh Nguyen 2020, pp.17-18). About ten to fifteen thousand people fled Vietnam in the first wave, a week to ten days before the Fall of Saigon (also known as the Liberation of Saigon by North Vietnamese) on April 30, 1975 (Do 1999, p.26; Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.18). In the second wave of exodus that happened at the end of the Vietnam War, approximately eighty thousand people

who were service members and urban professionals in the U.S. military or the South Vietnamese government, were evacuated by U.S.-sponsored flights (Do 1999, p.26; Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.18). About forty to sixty thousand people boarded small boat, ships, and commandeered aircrafts in search of refuge in the final wave (Do 1999, p.27; Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.18). A high proportion of the first-generation Vietnamese Americans arrived the United States as political refugees with an estimated 125,000 individuals in the immediate aftermath of the war from 1975 to 1977 (Alperin and Batalova 2018).

The second period of Vietnamese refugee influx began in the 1980s and continued throughout the 1990s until this day (Do 1999, p.27; Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.18). The early part of this period experienced the continuing exile of the “Vietnamese boat people” who left the country in homemade, poorly constructed boats and small vessels (Do 1999, pp.28-29). Approximately 588,000 Vietnamese were permitted to enter the United States as refugees between 1978 and 2013, after the “Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act of 1975” was passed under President Gerald Ford, the refugee admissions program became formalized, and the Orderly Departure Program-ODP (1979-1994) was created by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (Migration Policy Institute 2015; Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.17). An increasing number of lawful permanent residents have entered the United States with family-based immigrant visa, since the dismissal of the refugee admission program in 1996 (Migration Policy Institute 2015; Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.17). Figure 1 illustrates two major migration periods of Vietnamese since 1975 along with specific waves.

Figure 1 Two main refugee migration periods of Vietnamese-American since 1975 with specific waves



Source: Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.18.

In 2021, the largest number of Vietnamese outside Vietnam have settled in the United States. The number of Vietnamese Americans reached 1,852,906 individuals, including the first and second generations of Vietnamese.¹⁵ Table 1 shows ten U.S. states with the largest number of Vietnamese immigrants (one race).

¹⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, “American Community Survey Demographic and Housing Estimates,” *2020: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (DP05)*, accessed April 8, 2022, <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=all%20populations&tid=ACSDP5Y2020.DP05>.

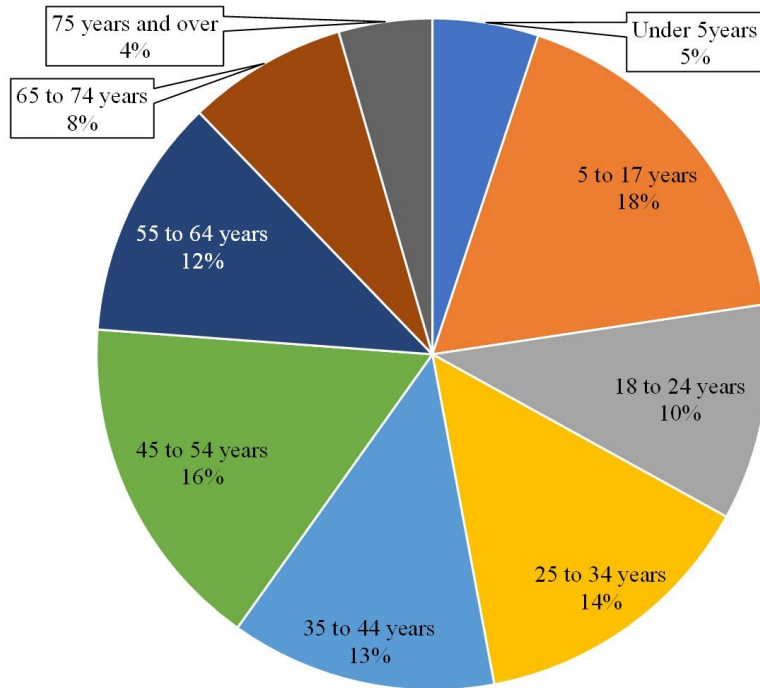
Table 1 Top ten states with highest Vietnamese-American populations (one race) (2019)

1	California	679,781
2	Texas	273,257
3	Florida	91,040
4	Washington	80,453
5	Georgia	71,583
6	Virginia	68,474
7	Massachusetts	48,205
8	Pennsylvania	35,459
9	Louisiana	33,698
10	New York	29,460

Source: Nguyen 2022.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2019 American Community Survey, California has the largest concentration of Vietnamese by state with a population of 679,781, followed by Texas, Florida, Washington, and Georgia. Large metropolitan areas in the West for Vietnamese settlement include San Jose (114,284), Los Angeles (96,740), Garden Grove (54,390), San Diego (36,717), Westminster (35,279), and Santa Ana (23,449) (U.S. Census Bureau 2019). The Vietnamese-American labor force participation rate was 64.4% in 2019 (U.S. Census Bureau 2019). Figure 2 depicts the age distribution of Vietnamese Americans in 2019.

Figure 2 Age demographics of Vietnamese Americans (2019)



Source: Nguyen 2022.

Vietnamese Americans are well-educated. In 2019, the majority (76.1%) of all adults aged 25 years and above were at least high school graduates (Nguyen 2022). Approximately 33% of the population had graduated with a bachelor’s degree or had earned an even more advanced degree. The educational attainment of Vietnamese-American adults aged 25 years and above is illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2 Educational attainment of Vietnamese Americans 25 years and over (2019)

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	Vietnamese Americans	US Average
Population 25 years and over	1,459,782	224,898,568
Less than high school diploma	23.9%	11.4%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	20.7%	26.9%
Some college or associate's degree	22.5%	28.6%
Bachelor's degree	22.7%	20.3%
Graduate or professional degree	10.2%	12.8%
High school graduate or higher	76.1%	88.6%
Male, high school graduate or higher	79.4%	88.0%
Female, high school graduate or higher	73.3%	89.2%
Bachelor's degree or higher	32.9%	33.1%
Male, bachelor's degree or higher	34.1%	32.3%
Female, bachelor's degree or higher	31.9%	33.9%

Source: Nguyen 2022.

A high percentage of the working-age Vietnamese-American community has advanced education. Statistics on levels of academic achievement provide information on the labor situation of Vietnamese-American individuals and labor force skill levels. Higher levels of education attainment increase their employment opportunities in the labor market. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2019), 67.2% of 1,749,082 Vietnamese-American population aged 16 years and above are in the civilian labor force, in which the employment rate accounts for 64.7% versus 2.5% of the unemployment rate (Nguyen 2022). Many of them are highly-skilled professionals employed across a broad spectrum of industries (Nguyen 2022). Table 3 reflects the percentages of employed Vietnamese Americans aged 16 years and above in various occupations and industry.

Table 3 Occupations of employed Vietnamese Americans 16 years and over (2019)

OCCUPATIONS	
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	1,132,200
Management, business, science, and arts	37.0%
Service	30.0%
Sales and office	14.2%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance	4.3%
Production, transportation, and material moving	14.4%

INDUSTRY	
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	0.8%
Construction	2.5%
Manufacturing	16.4%
Wholesale trade	1.8%
Retail trade	8.7%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	3.2%
Information	1.7%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	4.5%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	10.3%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	17.4%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	10.1%
Other services (except public administration)	19.2%
Public administration	3.4%

Source: Nguyen 2022.

During the post-war period to the early 2000s, the Vietnamese government was either unconcerned about creating a connection with its diasporas (especially those residing in the United States) in order to tap into their resources other than remittances or anticipating a promising vision of diaspora-homeland cooperation for the country's development process. Before the issuance of Resolution 36-NQ/TW dated March 26, 2004, policies relating to overseas Vietnamese individuals only involved remitting transfers and sending/receiving goods overseas to their families in Vietnam. For example, realizing the economic potential of remittance, in the 1980s and 1990s, the Vietnamese government was making various policies to increase and control the remittance inflow, such as Decision No. 151-HDBT (dated August 31, 1982), Decision No.126-CT (dated April 10, 1987), Decision No. 170/1999/QD-TTg (dated August 19, 1999), and Decision No. 78/2002/QD-TTg (dated June 17, 2002). Since there was no appropriate support mechanism to promote the contributions of diaspora other than remittances until the early of 2000s, institutionalized practices of philanthropy, investment, and business cooperation have never been easy within the complex diaspora-homeland relationship (Sidel 2007, pp.6-7).

However, potential contributions of the diaspora to development in the original home country could be greater than considered. In particular, the Vietnamese-American community is enriched by not only growing capital but also developing human resources of knowledge and expertise. Moreover, diaspora organizations may act as a bridge between the home and host countries and facilitate transnational cooperation (Ionescu 2006, pp.24-25). In fact, since the end of the U.S. trade embargo on Vietnam in 1994, the amount of remittance and remittance transfer business operators gradually increased (Furuya 2002, p.85); when being asked, 54% of 861 Vietnamese-American survey respondents supported the decision to lift the U.S. trade embargo on Vietnam (Furuya 2002, p.87). Furthermore, since the adoption of economic reform in 1986, Vietnam has endeavored to promote its global trade liberalization, socio-economic

development, and international cooperation. With the aim of attracting adequate financial and human resources conducive to high rates of growth, foreign investment, and technology advancements, the Vietnamese government is seeking to resolve conflict with overseas Vietnamese communities, especially those in the United States, through empowering institutions whose national expatriate-oriented strategies are presented on the policy agenda. After the issuance of Resolution 36-NQ/TW dated March 26, 2004, various policies were made to encourage overseas Vietnamese individuals' contributions to the socio-economic development process in Vietnam. Policy change and implementation are further elaborated in Chapter 5.

2.2 The need for socio-economic development and efforts of Vietnam to approach Vietnamese-American diaspora

The economic renovation (Doi Moi 1986) enabled Vietnamese economy to upgrade to lower-middle-income status with gross domestic product per capita of over \$2,700 USD in 2019.¹⁶ One year after the implementation of the economic renovation, the Vietnamese government issued Law No. 4-HDNN8 dated December 29, 1987 on Foreign Investment, which aimed to promote economic cooperation with foreign countries, increase exports, and encourage investments from foreign organizations and individuals. There is evidence that remittances have a positive impact on poverty reduction and economic growth resulting from the contributions to Vietnam from Vietnamese people living overseas (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.20). According to World Bank statistics,¹⁷ in 2019, officially recorded remittance flows to Vietnam reached \$17 billion USD. This is more than 100 times the amounts received in the mid to late 1980s, which is approximately \$100–200 million USD annually (Dang 2005, p.114). In 2020, despite the unprecedented challenge of COVID-19, remittances to Vietnam

¹⁶ “Vietnam: Overview,” The World Bank, accessed October 6, 2021, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/vietnam/overview#1>.

¹⁷ “Personal remittances, received (current US\$) – Vietnam,” The World Bank, accessed October 6, 2021, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.CD.DT?locations=VN>.

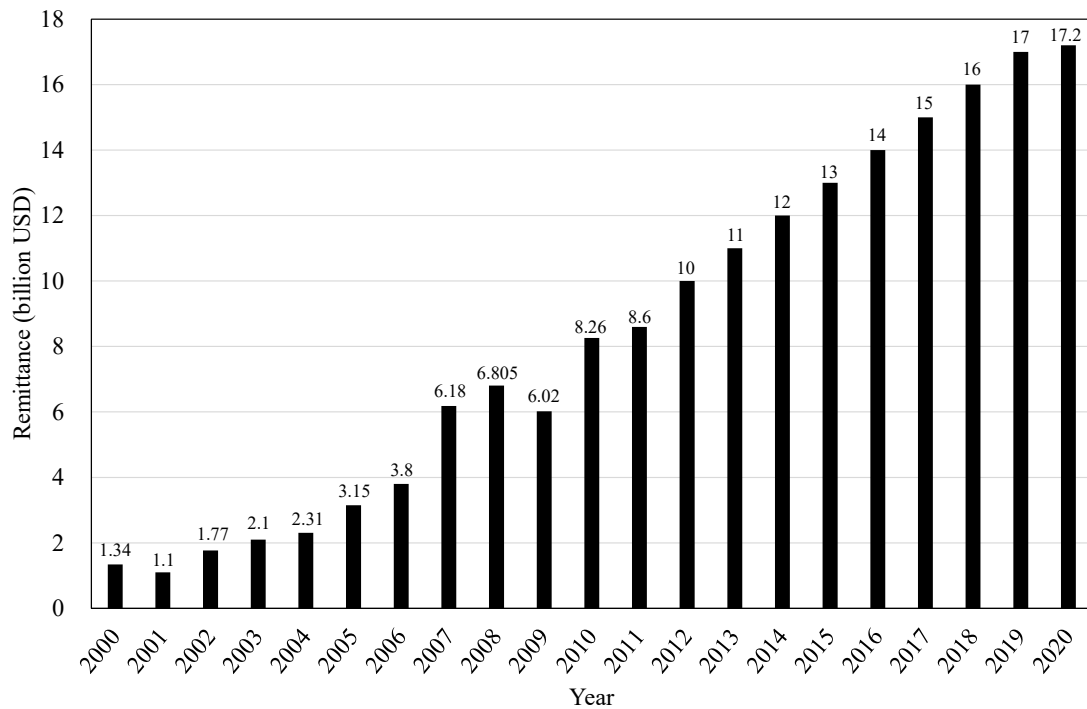
from abroad were \$17.2 billion USD, which accounts for approximately 6.3% of the country's gross domestic product.¹⁸

2.2.1 Remittances

Overseas Vietnamese send large amount of money three or four times annually for special occasions of their families in the origin country (Hernandez-Coss 2005, as cited in Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.20). Owing to specific postwar conditions, it is difficult to measure the exact amount of Vietnamese-American remittances to Vietnam over the years. Pressures from the dominant anti-Hanoi forces within the diaspora community, the U.S. trade embargo imposed on Hanoi in 1975, and the suspicious attitude and hardline policies of Vietnamese authorities towards Vietnamese Americans posed concerns for any remitter (Sidel 2007, p.4). Diaspora members preferred to give goods and money directly to their family members and relatives or send them indirectly through private networks to avoid the 5% tax on remittances sent through banking channels. Many remittance transfers thus remained off the books. In 2005, the Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development of Vietnam signed a contract with Western Union, a U.S. financial services company, to open an online money transfer service. Under the contract, Vietnamese people overseas can transfer money to organizations or individuals in Vietnam from any Western Union transaction office. Figure 3 illustrates remittance inflows to Vietnam through licensed remittance service providers from 2000 to 2020, with a substantial increase over the last 20 years.

¹⁸ "Personal remittances, received (% of GDP) – Vietnam," The World Bank, accessed October 6, 2021, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS?locations=VN>.

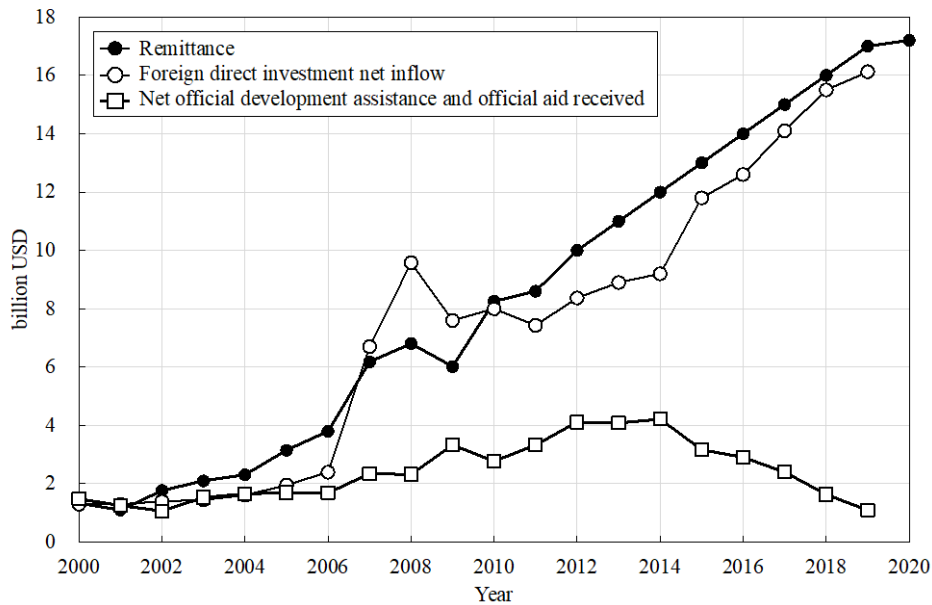
Figure 3 Remittance inflow in Vietnam through licensed remittance services (2000-2020)



Source: Nguyen 2022.

The abolishment of the 5% tax on remittances by the Vietnamese government in 1997 led to annual increases in remittances in later years (World Bank 2006, p.93). The World Bank estimated that remittances from Vietnamese people overseas totaled \$1.34 billion USD in 2000. The official figure for remittances sent through formal systems steadily rose to approximately \$3.15 billion USD in 2005, \$8.26 billion USD in 2010, \$13 billion USD in 2015, and \$17.2 billion USD in 2020. If remittances through unofficial channels and direct spending by returning Vietnamese overseas residents were also included, the estimated total would be higher. These capital flows are at approximately the same level as that of foreign direct investment. For purposes of comparison, remittances, foreign direct investment, and net official development assistance and official aid received in Vietnam from 2000-2019 are displayed in Figure 4.

Figure 4 Remittance, foreign direct investment, and net official development assistance and official aid received in Vietnam (2000-2020)



Source: By author, based on annual data set of the World Bank from 2000 to 2020.¹⁹

Comparing remittances to other financial inflows shows the extent to which the former contribute to the country’s foreign inflows. As shown in Figure 4, the amount of remittances in 2018 is approximately equal to that of FDI in the same year. In the last ten years, the total amount of remittances has been approximately three times larger than that of official development assistance. During 1990s, remittances from the United States were the largest source of remittance inflows (Pfau and Giang 2010, p.4). The Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs estimated that by 2005, remittances from the United States made up approximately 65% to 70% of the total foreign exchange remittances from Vietnamese overseas residents.²⁰

¹⁹ Sources:

“Personal remittances, received (current US\$) – Vietnam,” The World Bank, accessed October 6, 2021, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.CD.DT?locations=VN>.

“Foreign direct investment, net inflows (BoP, current US\$) – Vietnam,” The World Bank, accessed October 6, 2021, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.KLT.DINV.CD.WD?locations=VN>.

“Net official development assistance and official aid received (current US\$) – Vietnam,” The World Bank, accessed October 6, 2021, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/DT.ODA.ALLD.CD?locations=VN>.

²⁰ Statistics of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam, accessed on November 16, 2020, at <http://www.mofa.gov.vn/en/nr040807104143/nr040807105001/ns050630101018/view>.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, overseas remittances sent to Ho Chi Minh City reached \$4 billion USD in the first nine months of 2020.²¹ Remittances are primarily used to buy consumption goods, and are mainly received from family members or relatives living abroad to those remaining in Vietnam who have difficulty making a living, such as poor widows, the elderly, women-headed households, and households where the head does not have a stable job (Pfau and Giang 2010, p.8).

Remittance flows constitute a large source of foreign currency supply in Vietnam. This capital has contributed to the growth of the Vietnamese economy during the postwar period (Hernandez- Coss 2005, pp.18-19; Pfau and Giang 2009, pp.435-436). Until the lifting of the trade embargo between the United States and Vietnam, remittance income played a crucial role in the socio-economic life of Vietnamese people (Dang 2005, p.115; Pfau and Giang 2010, p.10). These capital inflows were essential for sustaining the Vietnamese economy in the most critical phases of the crises of the 1970s and 1980s until the new stage of economic growth in the late 1990s (Dang 2005, p.115; Small 2021, p.31). From the late 1990s until 2004, approximately \$1 billion USD in remittances were used for small-scale investment purposes, for example, within family businesses, not only for individual consumption (Dang 2005, p.115), consequently creating more jobs and generating income (Taylor 1999, as cited in Dang 2005, p.115). Remittances sent to rural areas supported the well-being of recipient households, reduced their likelihood of falling below the poverty line, improved their living conditions, and increased the consumption expenditures on education and health care (Dang 2005, p.115; Small 2021, p.31).

²¹ “Overseas Vietnamese businesses key to national socio-economic development,” *Viet Nam News*, October 28, 2020, <https://vietnamnews.vn/economy/803963/overseas-vietnamese-businesses-key-to-national-socio-economic-development.html>.

2.2.2 Overseas human resources

Recognizing the potential resources other than remittances available in the overseas Vietnamese community, the Vietnamese government promoted the “Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals” (TOKTEN) program, which had been launched by the United Nations Development Programme in 1977, in order to counter the brain drain problem in the state. The State Committee for Overseas Vietnamese Affairs under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs supported the implementation of the TOKTEN program to encourage highly-skilled overseas Vietnamese professionals to return to Vietnam on fixed-term employment in governments, industries, academic institutions, and other organizations. TOKTEN Vietnam was first initiated in 1989. During the following ten years, two projects have been completed. Although the program was disbanded, 194 expatriate consultants participated in the first TOKTEN project and contributed to the partnership establishment between Vietnamese and international organizations in the fields of science and technology. Between 1990 and 1992, 20 TOKTEN consultants were placed with monthly stipends and additional amounts for up to two dependents (Institute of Medicine 2005, p.39).

On March 26, 2014, Resolution 36/NQ-TW regarding overseas Vietnamese affairs was enacted with the intention to unite Vietnamese and overseas Vietnamese to contribute to the economic development of Vietnam (Clause 2 of Article 2). Overseas Vietnamese individuals are considered the “integrated part and invaluable resource for the Vietnamese national community” and “important factor promoting bilateral relations between Vietnam and their host countries (Clause 2 of Article 1 and Clause 2 of Article 2 in Resolution 36/NQ-TW on overseas Vietnamese affairs).” Resolution 36/NQ-TW on overseas Vietnamese affairs is considered the formal calling for national unity and reconciliation (Clause 1 of Article 2) between the Vietnamese communist state and anti/non-communist Vietnamese diaspora communities (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.21). Since the advent of Resolution 36/NQ-TW on

overseas Vietnamese affairs, policies and measures have been reviewed and adjusted to create better working conditions for overseas Vietnamese individuals, particularly intellectuals, businesspeople, and investors, to return and cooperate with domestic partners (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.21). For example, pursuant to Decision No. 135/2007/QĐ-TTg promulgating the regulation on visa exemption for overseas Vietnamese individuals, foreign spouses, and children of Vietnamese citizens, overseas Vietnamese individuals who satisfy the requirements may apply for entry visa exemption (Article 1), and stay in Vietnam for up to 90 days following each entry (Article 6). Overseas Vietnamese individuals have opportunities to access property (Law No. 65/2014/QH13 on housing), develop business in real estate sector (Law No. 66/2014/QH13 on real estate trading), receive income tax relief, and enjoy land rent exemption/reduction for a certain period or during their project execution process (Law No. 67/2014/QH13 on investment).

The issuance of overseas Vietnamese-oriented policies is considered an official call for cooperation with the aim to promote national socio-economic development. Sharing the same purpose, diaspora members who are compassionate about Vietnamese poor people and disadvantaged children get involved in charity and community development projects operated by nonprofit organizations. Vietnam has consequently made a deliberate attempt to engage the overseas Vietnamese population in the process of national development (Hanh Nguyen 2020, pp.21-22). The next sections of this chapter provide an overview on the rapprochement process between Vietnam and Vietnamese-American diaspora, and its practical outcomes. Section 2.3 analyzes the attempt to approach the U.S.-based diaspora through Vietnamese transnational media and the reactions of the diasporic community. Section 2.4 describes how Vietnamese-American diaspora members/organizations maintain transnational relationships and improve collaboration with their Vietnamese partners. Despite the efforts of both sides to ease tension

and improve mutual understanding, there are still challenges in the negotiation and reconciliation processes.

2.3 Media and the attempts to approach the Vietnamese diaspora in the United States

This section analyzes the use of Vietnamese state-led transnational media as strategic communication to approach overseas Vietnamese communities who share a common culture. Media (or mass media) refers to all means of communication channels through which news, music, movies, education, and other issues are being disseminated. This includes broadcasting and narrowcasting medium such as newspapers, magazines, television, radio, direct mail, telephone, fax, and internet. Media represents a crucial element in politics, as they play a central role in delivering persuasive messages and shaping public agenda (Street 2011, p.56). The characterization of media as a “fourth branch of government,” alongside the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, stems from the belief that media plays a key agenda-setting role and is a powerful actor in political realm (Braeman 1985, pp.354-357; Luberdá 2014, p.508).

2.3.1 The attempts to approach overseas Vietnamese viewers

In an effort to diffuse the country’s good image abroad and access overseas Vietnamese audiences, Vietnam strongly implements its communication strategies by investing in various transnational media channels (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.22). On October 31, 2014, the Vietnamese government issued Decision No. 1984/QĐ-TTg to launch a project providing 20 television channels and four radio channels to overseas Vietnamese individuals around the world between 2015 and 2020, with a budget of approximately \$20 million USD at that time. The channels would be transmitted via satellite television broadcast and mobile devices. The project aimed to introduce a minimum of ten television channels (including VTV4 of the state-run Vietnam Television, VTC10 of the state-run Vietnam Multimedia Corporation, and VNEWS of the state-run Vietnam News Agency), four radio channels of the Vietnamese national radio

broadcaster Voice of Vietnam (Article 1, Part I, Clause 2c of Decision No. 1984/QĐ-TTg) between 2015 and 2017, and ten more television channels from 2018 to 2020 (Article 1, Part II, Clause 1b of Decision No. 1984/QĐ-TTg). These television and radio channels shall disseminate information about achievements of the economic renovation (Doi Moi 1986); guidelines, policies, and laws of the Communist Party of Vietnam and Vietnamese state regarding international economic relations, trade liberalization, foreign direct investment promotion, foreign policy, global integration, and tourism; potentials for development cooperation of Vietnam; and Vietnamese people, history, culture, and traditions (Article 1, Part II, Clause 2 of Decision No. 1984/QĐ-TTg). These channels were supposed to meet the information and emotional needs of Vietnamese individuals residing overseas for a long period of time.

In particular, for more than 20 years since April 27, 2000, the state-run Vietnam Television (VTV) has been broadcasting the bilingual (Vietnamese and English) VTV4 channel for overseas Vietnamese through satellite.²² The VTV4 channel broadcasts TV packages of the three domestic channels (VTV1, VTV2, and VTV3) to Vietnamese worldwide. Plays and songs, which are reminiscent of Vietnamese heritage and folklore culture, have many resonances for first-generation diaspora members (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.22). Furthermore, VTV4 has made documentaries and filmed talk shows featuring Vietnamese Americans who fled Vietnam but then wanted to return and contribute to the development of their original home country, for example the gala “Ngày trở về: Tiếng gọi quê hương” (in English: Coming home day: The call of Motherland) launched in 2015, and the documentary “Hai nửa thế giới” (in English: The two-half worlds) launched in 2018 (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.22). Vietnamese television ceased the VTV4 broadcast through satellite around the world from March 31, 2018;

²² VTV4 was broadcast through the satellites Thaicom5 (covering Asian and North African region), Eutelsat Hot Bird 13B (Europe), Hispasat 30W-5 (South America region), and Galaxy 19 (North America).

however, by installing the VTV Go application (the official online television system of Vietnam Television) overseas viewers can still watch VTV channels including VTV1, VTV2, VTV3, VTV4, VTV5, VTV6, VTV7, VTV8, VTV9 through normal or smart televisions, smartphones, tablets, personal computers, and desktop computers.

However, owing to lingering conflicts after war, ideological differences, and divergent opinions concerning political, social, and economic issues of Vietnam, the international broadcast of Vietnamese television and radio channels have faced resistance from overseas Vietnamese diaspora communities. For example, in December 2003, members of the Vietnamese Community of Australia gathered for a rally in Sydney to protest against Special Broadcasting Service's (SBS) broadcast of VTV4 as part of its WorldWatch program and current affairs package.²³ VTV4 was removed from SBS's bulletin after the backlash. The project of beaming Vietnamese satellite broadcasts into the United States in an effort to connect with overseas Vietnamese populations angered Vietnamese-American diaspora members, and many of them saw it as an act of provocation. They are also suspicious of information about the socio-economic development of Vietnam disseminated through these channels.²⁴

In the United States, the view ratings of VTV4 are also low owing to the lack of marketing strategy, particularly, a few channels of Vietnamese state-owned media agencies cannot compete with the large quantity of Vietnamese-American broadcast television channels, newspapers, and entertainment shows, not to mention mass media in the United States (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.22). Moreover, before airing in Vietnam, foreign program channels on paid television must obtain a license granted by the Ministry of Information and Communications to ensure that the contents of program channels are not contrary to provisions of Vietnamese laws on press and advertisement (Article 13 of Decision 20/2011 promulgating regulations on

²³ "Thousands protest at SBS," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, December 3, 2003, <https://www.smh.com.au/national/thousands-protest-at-sbs-20031203-gdhwku.html>.

²⁴ Scott Martelle, and Mai Tran, "Vietnam TV Broadcasts Anger Emigres," *Los Angeles Times*, April 27, 2000, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2000-apr-27-mn-23922-story.html>.

the management of paid television; Article 9 of Law No. 103/2016/QH13 on Press - Prohibit acts). Owing to the anti-communist sentiments in media of Vietnamese diaspora, their broadcasting channels or media products are not supposed to be allowed in Vietnam. Thus, the Vietnamese-American diaspora members oppose the one-way flow of news and other information in Vietnamese transnational media (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.22). The next section describes characteristics of Vietnamese-Americans broadcasting networks to clarify the reaction of diaspora members toward the implementation of Decision No. 1984/QD-TTg on providing television and radio channels to overseas Vietnamese.

2.3.2 Vietnamese-American viewers' reaction – Characteristics of Vietnamese-American diasporic media

2.3.2.1. Entertainment shows

Vietnamese-language musical shows have been organized in the Vietnamese-American diaspora community to ease the feeling of homesickness and fill the cultural void of alienated diaspora members (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.23). Major Vietnamese-oriented entertainment companies in the United States include Thuy Nga Productions, Asia Entertainment, and Van Son Entertainment. Productions houses apart from those mentioned such as Khanh Ha Productions and May Productions, which were successful during its times, have been disrupted recently. Thuy Nga Productions is well-known for “Paris by Night,” which is one of the earliest Vietnamese-language video production shows. Conceived in 1983 by the French-Vietnamese founder, Mr. Tô Văn Lai, the series was originally filmed in Paris, then moved to Westminster in Orange County, California by the late 1980s owing to the high demand for entertainment from the populous Vietnamese-American community and the fact that most Vietnamese-language artists from pre-1975 South Vietnam settled in the United States (Cunningham and Nguyen 1999, as cited in Hanh Nguyen, p.23). A variety of performances on Vietnamese traditional folk songs, modern Vietnamese pop music, dance, plays, and comedy skits in “Paris

by Night” not only cater to Vietnamese diasporic members but also appeal to broad audiences in Vietnam. About 132 episodes of Paris by Night have been produced and circulated worldwide as of 2022, particularly in countries with large Vietnamese populations, to promote the “global Vietnamese diasporic music invasion (Valverde 2003, as cited in Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.23).”

Another big entertainment company, the Asia Entertainment Incorporation, was founded by a Vietnamese-American musician in 1982 who had migrated to the United States as a refugee in 1975. The headquarters is located in the city of Garden Grove in California. Asia Entertainment Incorporation specializes in recording and producing concerts all around the United States. The company is famous for its signature series of Asia Episode 1 to the latest Asia Episode 82 (the concerts with a large number of artists), Asia Golden Series (the programs featuring historical theme), Asia Specials (entertaining musical performances for Christmas and New Year, comedy, talent shows), Singer Shows (live shows of well-known singers), and documentary films. Live concerts were recorded and their CDs/DVDs/ Blu-ray discs are on sale on the company homepage.

Both Thuy Nga Productions and Asia Entertainment are renowned productions with a strong concentration of older Vietnamese-American audiences featuring performances reminiscent of the Vietnam War. For example, the show Paris by Night No.77 named “30 Năm Viễn Xứ” (in English: Thirty Years Away from the Motherland) was released in 2005 to mark 30 years since the Fall of Saigon. It contains emotional songs, musicals, and documentary footage relating to the collapse of Saigon and the exile of Vietnamese diaspora members. Paris by Night No. 91 reconstructed the memories of strikes on major cities of Hue in the Tet Offensive in 1968 and the consequential suffering of people. Asia Entertainment has organized annual fundraising concerts known as “Đại Nhạc Hội Cảm Ơn Anh Người Thương Phế Binh Việt Nam Cộng Hoà” (in English: Thank You, Disabled Veterans of the Republic of Vietnam

Concert) from 2006 to raise awareness and support for disabled veterans of the Republic of Vietnam who are living in Vietnam. The concerts uphold the South Vietnamese nationalism and commemorate the wartime alliance between South Vietnam and the United States, military and government personnel who died defending South Vietnam, and “boat people” who died at sea (Tran 2016, p.42).

Van Son Entertainment was established in 1994 by a Vietnamese-American comedian known as Vân Sơn. The headquarter is in Westminster, California. It started out as a comedy show with stand-up comedians appearing on stage to create relief time for audiences, also including song and dance performances. Entertaining documentaries and travel videos were recorded and produced later, for example the series of “Những Nẻo Đường Miền Tây” (in English: Mekong Delta’s Roads), and have recently become viral on social media in Vietnam. Van Son Entertainment got a business license to operate in Vietnam since 2014. On December 21, 2013, the music concert with comedy sketches “Vân Sơn 50: Chuyện Tình Quê Hương Tôi” (in English: Van Son 50: Love Story in My Homeland) was organized in Ho Chi Minh City in connection with the 20th anniversary of establishment of Van Son Entertainment. On November 8, 2014, the music concert with comedy sketches “Vân Sơn 51: Mùa Thu Tình Yêu” (in English: Van Son 51: Fall in Love) was organized at the Vietnam National Convention Center in Hanoi.

2.3.2.2 Television/radio broadcasters and media agencies

Vietnamese-language television stations, radio stations, and news agencies were prolific in Vietnamese-American diaspora community. Most of them concentrates at Little Saigon – the Vietnamese ethnic enclave in Westminster – and neighboring areas (Hanh Nguyen 2020, pp.23-24). Established in Garden Grove in 1978, the Người Việt Daily News is the oldest and most influential newspaper among other popular news agencies such as the Little Saigon News and Viễn Đông Daily News. The Little Saigon News was founded in 1985. This weekly

Vietnamese-language publication was based out of Orange County in California, gradually had the distribution networks expanded to the rest of California, then nationwide, and even to the cities of Toronto and Montreal in Canada. The Little Saigon News filed for bankruptcy in April 2015.²⁵ *Viễn Đông Daily News* was founded in 1993, with the headquarter situated in the Little Saigon of Westminster, California. In 2022, the *Người Việt Daily News* and *Viễn Đông Daily News* are still active.

Vietnamese-American diasporic media with an abundance of broadcasting agencies outnumbered several transnational VTV channels for overseas Vietnamese communities (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.25). Since 2000, television has replaced newspapers and radios to become the leading mainstream Vietnamese-American media outlet (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.24). There has been an overall increase in Vietnamese diasporic television and radio stations, with the appearance of the Saigon Broadcasting Television Network, Viet-Face TV, Saigon Entertainment TV, Vietnam America Television 57.3, Saigon Radio (106.3 FM in Los Angeles, California; 1430 AM in San Jose, California; 900 AM in Houston, Texas), Viet Radio (1560 AM in Houston; 1480 AM in Dallas), and Radio Saigon Houston (KREH), among others.

2.3.2.3 Social media

In recent years, the emergence of internet and social media has provided opportunities to increase the geographical reach and expand audiences who can access homepages of these media agencies anywhere. Several television programs have been recorded and released on social media platforms to expose Vietnam's sociopolitical issues, such as the talk show "Nói Chuyện Với Ngô Nhân Dụng" (in English: Talk with Ngô Nhân Dụng) and "Giờ Giải Ảo" (in English: De-deification Hour) of *Người Việt TV* (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.24). With the idea of

²⁵ Mediha DiMartino, "Little Saigon News In BK," *Orange County Business Journal*, April 14, 2015, <http://dev.ocbj.www.clients.ellingtoncms.com/news/2015/apr/14/little-saigon-news-seeks-bk-protection/>.

improving human and social conditions for the betterment of Vietnamese society, they discuss economic, social, and political issues of Vietnam from a different perspective than Vietnamese state-owned media channels, and sometimes introduce the works of Vietnamese dissident and refugee writers.²⁶ Moreover, Vietnamese-American diaspora individuals use social media platforms to raise public awareness about social or political issues in Vietnam such as freedom of media and democratic values (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.25).

These practices do not conform with Vietnamese regulations and the principles stated in legal documents. Pursuant to Article 4.2 of Law No. 103/2016/QH13 on Press, the press shall provide information on foreign and domestic issues conforming to the interests of the Vietnamese state and people, disseminate information about achievements of Vietnam, strengthen national unity, promote the political stability, and contribute to socio-economic development of Vietnam. Furthermore, the main purposes to strengthen connections with the overseas Vietnamese communities via transnational media channels are to provide information about the development of Vietnam, call for national unity, and encourage the contribution of overseas Vietnamese individuals toward homeland development. In accordance with the Law No. 103/2016/QH13 on Press, Decision No. 1984/QĐ-TTg related to providing television and radio channels to overseas Vietnamese individuals regulates the dissemination of information on issues of Vietnam's development achievements, international economic relations, trade liberalization, foreign direct investment promotion, and potential for development cooperation (Article 1, Part II, Clause 2 of Decision No. 1984/QĐ-TTg). Based on the opinion of the Vietnamese government, their contents are contrary to Vietnamese laws and efforts to reconcile with overseas communities. Vietnamese-American television programs are not granted broadcast licenses in Vietnam pursuant to Article 13 of Decision 20/2011 promulgating

²⁶ Some of the well-known works include “Đền Cù” (written by Trần Đình, published by Người Việt Books), “Chân Dung H.O” (in English: H.O Portraits, written by Huy Phương and Võ Hương An, published by Createspace Independent Pub), “Bên Thắng Cuộc I, II” (in English: The Winning Side, written by Huy Đức, published by Osinbook), and so on.

regulation on the management of paid television and Article 9 of Law No. 103/2016/QH13 on the press.

2.4 The efforts of Vietnamese-American social workers to engage in homeland development

An increasing number of overseas Vietnamese individuals sojourning in Vietnam to visit their relatives, conduct business, or do philanthropy. Each year, over 500,000 overseas Vietnamese individuals return to Vietnam to visit their families, work, and invest (Chan and Tran 2011, p.1102). By 2020, overseas Vietnamese businessmen have been investing over \$4 billion USD in 3,000 projects in Vietnam.²⁷ While staying in the host country, Vietnamese-American diaspora individuals continue to maintain cultural, economic, and social connections with the homeland. They send remittances, consumption goods, and other daily necessity goods to their family members and relatives residing in Vietnam (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.25). Diaspora members also donate to charity projects or get involved in philanthropic activities to benefit the needy in Vietnam (Hanh Nguyen 2020, pp.25-27). These efforts contribute to the growth of the nongovernmental humanitarian/philanthropic organizations established and driven by Vietnamese-American diaspora members to address social problems in Vietnam.

2.4.1 Philanthropic organizations

In September 2021, there were 436 licensed foreign NGOs from North America, Western Europe, and the Asia-Pacific region being granted operational permit in Vietnam (Nguyen 2022).²⁸ Truong et al. (2008, p.260) categorize three general organizing structures of Vietnamese-American philanthropy activities such as: (1) Vietnamese diaspora groups that are primarily supported by the overseas Vietnamese community (VA NGOs with strong

²⁷ “Overseas Vietnamese businesses key to national socio-economic development,” *Viet Nam News*, October 28, 2020, <https://vietnamnews.vn/economy/803963/overseas-vietnamese-businesses-key-to-national-socio-economic-development.html>.

²⁸ “List of licensed FNGOs,” The Committee for Foreign Non-governmental Organization Affairs, accessed September 19, 2021, <http://comingo.gov.vn/en/danh-sach-cac-to-chuc-duoc-cap-giay-dang-ky/>.

community bases), (2) Vietnamese diaspora groups that are catalysts and facilitators of philanthropic interest and support beyond the immediate Vietnamese community (VA NGOs as facilitators and catalysts of philanthropy), and (3) individual donors and philanthropists. Several representatives of VA NGOs that have been granted licenses to do charity and operate development projects in Vietnam include Design Capital Asia, Friends of Hue Foundation, Pacific Links Foundation, Social Assistance Program to Vietnam, The Compassion Flower, The Institute for Vietnamese Culture & Education, and so on. In 2021, these organizations still existed and ran charitable/development projects in Vietnam.

While *VA NGOs with strong community bases* receive large number of donations from Vietnamese-American diaspora members for their philanthropic activities in Vietnam, *VA NGOs as facilitators and catalysts of philanthropy* are funded by donations from both Vietnam-based and non-Vietnamese benevolent individuals who are sympathetic to the NGOs' causes (Truong et al. 2008, as cited in Hanh Nguyen 2020, pp.25-26). For example, most of the Social Assistance Program's budget comes from generous donors in Vietnamese-American diaspora community through annual fundraising activities that raise about \$50,000–60,000 USD. Vietnamese-American radio and television media have offered free public service announcements to spread the message regarding the organization's philanthropy programs and fundraising needs. Approximately 100 volunteers, mostly young professional Vietnamese Americans, also assist with the annual fundraising events (Truong et al. 2008, p.262). Moreover, VA NGOs can apply for grants provided by Vietnamese-American driven funds to start their projects in Vietnam. The Center for the Encouragement of Self-Reliance – the nonprofit organization founded by the family of Dr. Doan Phung – puts up \$100,000 USD as a challenge grant to assist and encourage VA NGOs to fight trafficking of Vietnamese nationals into slavery for labor or sex exploitation.

Those VA NGOs focus on community development in local areas to ensure the livelihood and dignity of vulnerable people by protecting them from various threats and empowering them to realize their full potentials (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.26). For example, the Pacific Links Foundation works as supportive networks for at-risk youth in order to prevent illegal trafficking of women and young children. The Design Capital Asia empowers Vietnamese people to attain poverty eradication by training Vietnamese youth to become self-reliant through knowledge/skill development, as well as engaging Vietnamese impoverished communities to enhance their environmental and developmental sustainability. The Compassion Flower develops medical and education aids to support Vietnamese students in remoted areas, and provides farming tools, sewing machines, wheelchairs, and bicycles to people with disabilities to improve their livelihoods. Moreover, young Vietnamese Americans have increasingly engaged in philanthropic behaviors, including volunteering and initiating community projects. For example, the Viet House Foundation is a fundraising nonprofit established by a second-generation Vietnamese American to provide homes for impoverished families in Vietnam (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.26). Table 4 lists major community-based VA NGOs that are licensed to operate charitable/development projects in Vietnam.

Table 4 Representatives of licensed VA NGOs working in Vietnam

Organization Name	Year of Establishment	Headquarters	Mission Statements
The Compassion Flower	1990	Danville, California	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fight against human-trafficking and support trafficked victims - Develop education aids for needy students in remote villages - Provide medical aids to tribal people in highlands and people in coastal villages - Natural-disaster relief

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide self-empowerment training courses for trafficking survivors, people at great risk of being trafficked, and disabled women
Social Assistance Program for Vietnam	1992	Garden Grove, California	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide direct relief and medical assistance to Vietnamese orphans and handicapped children, mainly in healthcare, education, and social welfare sectors
Friends of Hue Foundation	2000	San Jose, California	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Help to reduce poverty by equipping impoverished communities in Thua Thien Hue Province with business and skills development - Provide scholarships to poor students - Provide educational and social outreach programs to underserved and marginalized communities - Strengthen the community resilience and well-being by improving access to healthcare and social services
Pacific Links Foundation	2001	Milpitas, California	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Combat human trafficking by empowering women and youth to improve life skills and knowledge - Support the sustainable development of Vietnamese communities in impoverished areas

Source: By author, based on the VA NGOs' homepage websites, accessed on May 12, 2022 at <http://tcf-ngo.org/>, <https://sap-vn.org/>, <https://friendsofhue.org/>, and <https://pacificlinks.org/>.

Licensed VA NGOs working in Vietnam are dedicated to tackling social issues of Vietnam with a mission to promote mutual understanding and cooperation. Focusing in the fields of poverty reduction, environmental sustainability, healthcare, youth empowerment, and disability assistance, licensed VA NGOs work as community-based organizations, similar to most of the (foreign) NGOs operating projects in Vietnam (Thayer 2009, as cited in Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.27). All NGOs operating their projects in Vietnam are required to register with the governmental body of PACCOM, which works closely with foreign NGOs at both the central and provincial levels to mobilize, coordinate, and administer their activities in Vietnam.²⁹ Furthermore, NGO projects must meet these legal requirements to be granted license permitting operation: nonprofit and no religious or political affiliations (pursuant to Article 4 of Decree No.12/2012/ND-CP on the registration and administration of foreign non-governmental organizations in Vietnam).

2.4.2 Political NGOs

Apart from licensed VA NGOs working in Vietnam, some overseas Vietnamese-based NGOs cooperate with Vietnamese civil rights activists to open training courses for human rights activists or use media to make people realize their human rights as the actions for political advocacy (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.28). Human rights are defined as the equal rights to life, liberty, and security of a person without any distinction. Human rights include the freedoms of thought, expression, religion, peaceful association, and the right for equality in public places.³⁰ These NGOs and their partners particularly require the right to freedom of opinion and speech, freedom of the press, access to information, and freedom to form associations and hold demonstrations as prescribed in Article 25 of Vietnam's 2013

²⁹ "The People's Aid Co-ordinating Committee (PACCOM)," Viet Nam Union of Friendship Organizations, accessed April 20, 2022, <http://vufo.org.vn/The-Peoples-Aid-Co-ordinating-Committee-PACCOM-03-442.html?lang=en>.

³⁰ "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," The United Nations, accessed April 2, 2022, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>.

Constitution. This recurring trend encourages collaboration between Vietnamese civil right activist and overseas Vietnamese individuals to benefit from their resources and knowledges (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.28). For example, a Vietnam-based NGO partners with the Vietnamese Overseas Initiative for Conscience Empowerment (VOICE) to provide Vietnamese religious refugees with protection and promote positive policy changes in Vietnam (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.28).³¹ VOICE works with the overseas Vietnamese Viet Tan Party, which is a pro-democracy group advocating for a multiparty system in Vietnam (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.28). After completing the training, participants return to Vietnam and work for human rights empowerment through grassroots activities (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.28).

From Vietnam's perspective, such practice of public empowerment at the grassroots challenges policies in Vietnam and the hegemonic role of the Communist Party of Vietnam (Thayer 2009, as cited in Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.29). The rapprochement effort of the Vietnamese government aims at calling for the engagement of overseas Vietnamese individuals in homeland economic development, while they maintain sociopolitical stability. Vietnamese authorities do not tolerate domestic or foreign NGOs practicing the "bottom-up" approach to either involve political affairs or empower the public through political and social activism (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.29). Pursuant to Article 4 of Decree No.12/2012/ND-CP on the registration and administration of foreign non-governmental organizations in Vietnam, organizations carrying out "political, religious, and other activities against national interests, security, defense, and the great national unity of Vietnam" are not permitted to conduct activities in Vietnam. Organizations working with human rights are unable to operate in Vietnam owing to political sensitivities (Truong et al. 2008, p.259). Therefore, VOICE and Viet Tan Party are prohibited according to Vietnamese law. In 2015, a group of humanitarian

³¹ In 2001 and 2004, there were uprisings of the Montagnard peoples in Central Highlands, with mass jailing and killings; people were not allowed to enter this region for a period.
Source: U.S. Congress, House, *Vietnam Human Rights Act of 2015*, 114th Cong., H.R. 2140, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-bill/2140?r=41&s=1>.

volunteers was not allowed to enter Dak Lak Province and Gia Lai Province in the northern part of the Central Highlands unless they showed a special certificate of permission from the local authorities (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.29). Although all licensed foreign NGOs (including VA NGOs) working in Vietnam are community-based nonprofit organizations that do not engage in political activity, they face challenges in implementing projects in Vietnam while surrounded by suspicion (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.29).

2.5 Promoting the potential for cooperation between the Vietnamese-American diaspora and Vietnam

Despite progresses in tension relaxation and relationship building between Vietnam and Vietnamese-American diaspora through transnational media and civic engagement, various challenges remain for both sides. For Vietnam, Vietnamese transnational media channels are unpopular among the communities abroad owing to the one-way information exchange and competitiveness of diverse Vietnamese-American diasporic media, which plays a distinct role in maintaining Vietnamese ethnic identity and culture (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.30). For Vietnamese-American diaspora members/organizations who have been engaging themselves in various philanthropic activities in Vietnam, the cautious attitudes of Vietnamese local authorities are obstacles (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.30). Some overseas Vietnamese-based organizations are involved in political advocacy, which are strictly restricted by Vietnamese laws and regulations, thereby leading to concern for social and political stability among Vietnamese authorities.

2.5.1 Challenges for Vietnam

Anti-communism has been a dominant ideology in Vietnamese-American diasporic groups/ associations (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.18). The lingering tension between the Vietnamese communist authority and the anti-communist Vietnamese diaspora members remains as those who lost their families and assets after April 1975 continue to hold a grudge against the

Vietnamese government. April 30, 1975, is referred to as the “National Day of Resentment” or “Black April” among Vietnamese diaspora communities, contrary to the so-called “National Liberation Day” by North Vietnam (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.18). Each year on April 30, the anniversary of the Fall of Saigon is held in Vietnamese diaspora communities worldwide to pay tribute to dead soldiers and “boat people” who had fled with the hope for a new life but only to be disappointed. For example, the “Black April Commemoration – Vietnamese Remembrance Day” event was organized at the Australian-Vietnamese War Memorial in Adelaide (Australia) on Friday, April 30, 2021. The “46th Anniversary of the Fall of Saigon – Virtual Black April Commemoration” was held virtually by the Vietnamese American Roundtable on April 30, 2021.

Apart from anti-communist sentiments in diasporic media (Carruthers 2001, p.125), critics also use social media to express their opinions about sociopolitical issues of Vietnam viewed from different perspectives. These practices, however, fall into the category of prohibited acts as stated in Article 9 of the Vietnamese Law No. 103/2016/QH13 on Press and Article 5 of the Decree No. 72/2013/ND-CP on the management, provision, and use of internet services and online information. In Vietnam, all the mass media including newspapers, magazines, and radio and television broadcasters shall follow Law No. 103/2016/QH13 on Press. The Central Propaganda and Training Commission directs all official media, newspapers, and publishing houses in Vietnam.³² The broadcast contents shall be checked before airing to ensure that they disseminate information in line with policies of the Communist Party of Vietnam and laws of Vietnamese state, contribute to the political stability, national

³² The Central Propaganda and Training Commission is the advisory and assisting body of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam, the Politburo, and the Secretariat of the Communist Party of Vietnam in terms of building political thought and morality, the Party’s undertakings, views, and policies in the fields of propaganda, political theory, Party’s history, journalism, publishing, culture, arts, external information, science, technology, and education.

Source: “2013: Central Propaganda and Training Commission focus on seven basic tasks,” *Communist Party of Vietnam Online Newspaper*, January 5, 2013, <https://en.dangcongsan.vn/news-and-events/2013-central-propaganda-and-training-commission-focus-on-seven-basic-tasks-165490.html>.

unity, and socio-economic development, and do not violate the prohibit acts (Article 4 and Article 9 of Law No. 103/2016/QH13 on Press). Furthermore, foreign program channels on paid television shall be edited to ensure contents of program channels are not contrary to provisions of Vietnamese laws on press and advertisements. Paid television programs include story film channels, news channels, education, science channels, entertainment channels, sports, and music channels (Article 13 of Decision 20/2011 promulgating regulation on management of paid television). Pursuant to Decision 20/2011, Vietnamese-American news channels or entertainment shows, such as the Thuý Nga Paris show, are not granted broadcast licenses in Vietnam. While state television channels operated by the Vietnamese government are being broadcast overseas, almost no Vietnamese-language diasporic media product is allowed to release in Vietnam (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.31).

Following Resolution 36-NQ/TW on overseas Vietnamese affairs that emphasizes the unity of all Vietnamese people for national development, a Vietnamese officer discussed the possibility of an open-door policy encouraging the return and contribution of all overseas Vietnamese people (Hanh Nguyen 2020, pp.30-31). However, some returnees were denied entry owing to their criticisms about Vietnamese government and sociopolitical affairs in Vietnam (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.31). These events were reported by foreign media agency, leading to doubt among Vietnamese-American diaspora about the sincerity of the formal call for reconciliation in Resolution 36-NQ/TW on overseas Vietnamese affairs.³³ They have expressed strong disagreement with Resolution 36-NQ/TW on overseas Vietnamese affairs by lobbying for the issuance of several legal documents in California against the visits of Vietnamese representatives and officials travelling in or through the city of Garden Grove,

³³ Mac Lam, “Không ngăn cản bất cứ ai về Việt Nam?,” *Radio Free Asia*, February 13, 2015, https://www.rfa.org/vietnamese/in_depth/no-banning-any-expatriates-wishing-to-return-home---02132015074413.html (in Vietnamese).

such as Resolution No. 8565-04 and Resolution No. 9156-12, which were issued by Garden Grove City Council on May 11, 2004, and November 27, 2012, respectively.

In recent years, talented Vietnamese Americans have been returned and performed in gameshows, comedy TV shows, and other art and entertainment shows organized in Vietnam. These cultural activities are widely broadcasted at the golden time of the national television broadcaster Vietnam Television's channels and those of other local television stations such as Ho Chi Minh City Television and Vinh Long Radio - Television Station. The Vietnamese government also encourages their return or participation in the development of Vietnam by creating favorable conditions for overseas Vietnamese talents, investors, professionals, and their families. Several incentives may include visa exemption (Decree No. 82/2015/ND-CP), dual citizenship (Law No. 24/2008/QH12), opportunities to access property (Law No. 65/2014/QH13), and well-treatment for individuals in scientific and technological activities (Decree No. 40/2014/ND-CP). However, a huge gap remains between the perspectives of Vietnam and Vietnamese-American diaspora community regarding sociopolitical issues, which challenges the efforts to connect with the diaspora. In Vietnam, information disseminated via the mass media shall be in line with policies of the Communist Party of Vietnam and laws of Vietnamese state and contribute to the political stability, national unity, and socio-economic development (Article 4.2 of Law No. 103/2016/QH13 on Press) while diasporic media take different views on various matters, not to mention the anti-communist sentiments. Therefore, there is some truth to the claim that Vietnam has made an attempt to connect with its diaspora via transnational media, but this has limited the impact on outcomes owing to the resistance of Vietnamese-American diaspora members.

2.5.2 Challenges for Vietnamese-American philanthropists

VA NGOs has appeared as a united platform for Vietnamese-American diaspora members, allowing them to obtain information regarding civic engagement in Vietnam and

develop a relationship of trust between participants (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.32). Beyond donor-recipient relationships, the engagement of VA NGOs has formed transnational ties between helpers and receivers who share a common ancestry, have similar culture traits, and speak the same language (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.32). The common concern of homeland development draws Vietnamese-American philanthropists and their Vietnamese counterparts together through development projects aiming to improve the livelihoods of impoverished communities in Vietnam. However, they sometime face problems, which may create hindrances to project implementation. Apart from the suspicious attitude of Vietnamese local authorities toward Vietnamese-American social workers, the lack of specific and clear regulations for VA NGOs may cause difficulties in transferring and distributing diaspora donations (Truong et al. 2008, as cited in Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.32).

Some of them mostly rely on their private connections with Vietnamese local officials and counterparts to implement their projects in Vietnam, rather than officially register with PACCOM (Pedersen 2001, as cited in Salemink 2006, p.118; Truong et al. 2008, as cited in Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.32). This action is deemed to violate the Vietnamese regulations and caused undesired outcomes. For example, in early 2018, Vinh Long Province Radio and Television Station (of Vietnam) and Viet-Face TV (operated by Thuý Nga Productions) received much criticism for the lack of transparency in their joint charity project (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.32). Such difficulties caused by the over-dependence on informal relation-based networks and lack of legal framework could be prevented with successful trust-building efforts between Vietnam and the Vietnamese-American diaspora and favorable policies to effectively engage VA NGOs in homeland development (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.32).

2.6 Conclusion

Economic and political reforms under Doi Moi 1986 have spurred rapid development, transforming Vietnam into a lower middle-income country. As a part of the Regional

Comprehensive Economic Partnership, Vietnam stands to benefit preferential tariffs, the simplification of customs procedures, and common rules of product origin that make it easier to trade and become more attractive as an investment hub, particularly from within the region.³⁴ The country is striving to meet the core sets of development goals, including poverty reduction and sustainable socio-economic development. Such determination is reflected in the Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy³⁵ with long-term objectives and procedures for the intensive collaboration of Vietnamese national/local government and social partners, including donor communities, international organizations, and NGOs. From the initial purpose of attracting overseas remittances and investment for national economic development, Vietnam has gradually fostered a welcoming attitude to comfort overseas Vietnamese people and approached them through the practice of cultural diplomacy³⁶ via transnational media (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.30).

As an emerging force that can help further the development progress, Vietnamese-American diaspora members/organizations are willing to share their experiences and knowledge/skills, as well as engage in various development activities in Vietnam beyond remittances and economic contributions. However, there remains challenges for the rapprochement process between Vietnam and Vietnamese-American diaspora, resulting from not only the lingering postwar tension but also the different perspectives on social and political

³⁴ Heads of State/Government of ASEAN and ASEAN's FTA Partners, *2012 Guiding Principles and Objectives for Negotiating the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership*, Phnom Penh: Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), 2012, <https://rcepsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/RCEP-Guiding-Principles-public-copy.pdf> (accessed April 23, 2022).

³⁵ The Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy (CPGRS) is the action program approved by the Prime Minister at Document No. 2685/VPCP-QHQT dated May 21, 2002 and Document No. 1649/CP-QHQT dated 26th November 2003, and was published in November 2003. The CPGRS translates the Government of Vietnam's Ten-Year Socio-Economic Development Strategy (2001-2010), Five-Year Socio-economic Development Plan (2001-2005), Annual Socio-Economic Development Plan, and other sectoral development plans into concrete policies and measures for implementation.

³⁶ Cultural diplomacy is traditionally understood as governmental practice based on the exchange of ideas, values, and other aspects of culture and identity to strengthen relationships, promote socio-cultural cooperation, advance national interests, and beyond.

Source: "What is Cultural Diplomacy? What is Soft Power?," Institute for Cultural Diplomacy, accessed April 20, 2022, https://www.culturaldiplomacy.org/index.php?en_culturaldiplomacy.

issues (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.33). This is also because of the confusion about the role of Vietnamese-American diaspora members/organizations on whether they should be considered as *conflict entrepreneurs* inducing social instability or as genuine *development actors* (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.34). Apart from several suggestions regarding mutual-trust building and diversity respect, clarifying the role of Vietnamese-American diaspora members/organizations in homeland socio-economic development is important to harness the full potentials of diasporic resources. Chapter 3 provides insights into the contribution of Vietnamese-American diaspora members/organizations in homeland social development through various humanitarian and development projects. The expansion of such transnational practices in level and scope demonstrates the positive role of Vietnamese-American diaspora members/organizations, which must be viewed from a development angle for the sake of the country of origin.

CHAPTER 3

DIASPORA GIVING FOR DEVELOPMENT IN VIETNAM: A VIEW OF TRANSNATIONALISM “FROM BELOW”

The effectiveness of diasporic socio-economic and political involvement in homeland development depends on a range of different short- and long-term policy outcomes relating to substantive and regional problems. As shown in Chapter 2 regarding the complex and challenging relationship between the homeland and the diaspora, mutual trust-building is the essential first step in efforts to put in place formal procedures through which some sort of influence can be exerted (Merz 2007, p.204; Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.33). In addition, the proper recognition of financial aid and development work would encourage Vietnamese Americans and their Vietnamese counterparts to overcome psychological and political barriers to enhance donor-recipient relationships and forge a successful partnership between the diaspora and the Vietnamese government. To better clarify how the diaspora may advance development in Vietnam, the engagement of the Vietnamese-American diaspora with its country of origin is discussed further in this chapter within the theoretical framework of transnationalism “from below.” It is concluded that diaspora engagement, with the emergence of Vietnamese-American diaspora-driven NGOs as new development actors, fosters both economic and social ties between the diaspora and the homeland.

3.1 Vietnamese-American diaspora engagement in development in Vietnam: Related theoretical frameworks

The Vietnamese diaspora maintains strong sentimental and material links with Vietnam. The transfer of financial remittances from the overseas community is at the heart of the diaspora-homeland nexus and development. While remittances have a statistically significant effect on economic growth in Vietnam, diaspora members also participate in facilitating business investment or directing more funding to local social entrepreneurs in the

emerging market. There is a dedication among members of the diaspora to improving the lives of disadvantaged Vietnamese individuals and fostering philanthropic contributions for development in Vietnam through VA NGOs that structure collaborative efforts among stakeholders and governments. Sharing common roots (but not necessarily being totally synonymous) with charity, which means “loving care for mankind,” philanthropy—voluntary private donations for public purposes—is perceived to be more systematic and continuous with transformative potential (Merz et al. 2007, pp.3-4; Newland et al. 2010, p.4). A growing body of evidence shows the critical role of philanthropy in supporting homeland development by transferring material and nonmaterial (knowledge, skills, and ideas) resources back to the country of origin. Diaspora engagement thus represents a form of transnationalism with far-reaching significance for development in the country of origin.

Transnationalism, as reviewed in Chapter 1, describes links between people or institutions across nation-state borders (Vertovec 1999, p.447). Transnationalism refers to the processes by which immigrants maintain ties with their countries of origin through economic, political, and social activities such as remittance-sending, family correspondence, immigrant property ownership in countries of origin, political activity, and various forms of emotional networking (Basch et al. 1994, pp.8-9). Through those transnational activities, migrants can maintain multiple ties between their countries of origin and settlement (Schiller et al. 1992a, b). Portes et al. (1999, pp.224-227) introduce the concept of contemporary transnationalism in which, to be considered transnational, an activity/relation must satisfy specific criteria: a cross-border linkage maintained through new communication technologies; a “massness” of the activity (through the involvement of a significant proportion of persons in the relevant field); and frequency, stability, and resilience, which create elements of regularity and routine involvement in the cross-border activity. Portes et al. (1999, p.228) argue that advances in transportation and communication technologies and the establishment of networks that are

organized across borders are two crucial conditions for transnationalism to emerge. Kastoryano (2000, as cited in Dunn 2005, p.18) adds other important conditions, including multiculturalism, the expansion of cross-border trade or exchange of goods ignited by political/economic liberalism, and the activities of international NGOs that facilitate transnational processes.

Vertovec (1999, pp.449-457) introduces six clusters or themes for transnationalism studies, including transnationalism as a social morphology (i.e., diaspora networks), a type of consciousness (i.e., identity, memory, awareness, and other modes of diaspora consciousness), a mode of cultural reproduction (i.e., hybrid cultural phenomena in fashion, music, film, and visual arts), a channel for the movement of capital (i.e., economic interactions through remittances or transnational entrepreneurs), a site of political engagement (i.e., international NGOs, diaspora politics), and a reconstruction of “place” or locality (i.e., the emergence of transnational social fields created by a high degree of human mobility and advances in telecommunications). In this globalized era with new forms of mass communication and mobility, Vertovec (1999, p.456) argues that transnationalism has broader utility as a concept characterizing the economic, political, and sociocultural spheres than as a narrow description of certain activities.

Portes et al. (1999, pp.221-223) identify three main forms of transnationalism – economic, political, and sociocultural – each characterized by the nature of the related activities and level of institutionalization. Economic transnationalism includes both the actions of multinational corporations/agencies and the informal cross-border economic activity of traders, small businesses, and remitters. Political transnationalism can display both “low” and “high” levels of institutionalization, taking forms that range from individual engagement in homeland politics through civic committees or alliances with home countries’ political associations to the organized activities of entities seeking to shape state legislation and of increasingly influential

international NGOs (Portes et al. 1999, p.222; Dunn 2005, p.18). Sociocultural transnationalism includes both amateur arts/sports performances of individuals abroad and national art expositions or well-organized cultural events. These activities, respectively known as transnationalism “from below” (i.e., uncoordinated activities of individuals) and transnationalism “from above” (i.e., organized and strategic actions of powerful institutional actors such as multinational corporations and states), differ in nature, level, and scope (Guarnizo and Smith 1998; Portes et al. 1999, p.222).

Drawing on empirical evidence, this chapter contends that the engagement of the Vietnamese-American diaspora in homeland development has evolved from low-level to high-level transnational practices (Nguyen 2022). The scope of such practices has correspondingly expanded from the individual or family level, with remittances or family business investments, to the community level, with collective action by diaspora organizations (Nguyen 2022). Diaspora organizations including hometown associations, cultural associations, and migrant youth associations, can do more than simply contribute to development, relief, and reconstruction (Kleist 2007, Orozco and Rouse 2007, Hammond 2013, Sinatti and Horst 2014, Orozco and Rouse 2007, as cited in Kleist 2014, pp.55-56). Their range of contributions include social service provision, humanitarian assistance, advocacy work, political lobbying, and civil society involvement in the country of origin as well as integration-related activities in the country of settlement (Kleist 2014, p.56). Training workshops on topics ranging from program management to team building, accounting, and so on, may improve the general capacity of diaspora organizations as well as increase the development impact of diaspora involvement in developing countries (Kleist 2014, pp.60-61). The emergence of VA NGOs in development discourse and practice is of ever-growing importance as a transnational development channel in Vietnam.

The definition of *development* used in this dissertation is based on work by Sen (1999), who advocates for human capacity-building as a means to expand freedom of choice in favor of individual heterogeneity and a multidimensional conception of welfare in various social and cultural settings (Sen 1999 and Alkire 2002, as cited in Merz 2007, pp.186-187). Human capacity development is defined as the process through which individuals, organizations, institutions, and societies obtain, strengthen and maintain their capabilities, both individual and collective, to set and achieve their own development objectives, perform functions, solve problems, and develop the means and conditions required to enable this process (UNDP 1997, p.5). This approach to development is close to the concept of Social Sustainability and Inclusion (formerly known as Social Development) put forward by the World Bank,³⁷ which promotes the need to “put people first” in development processes by empowering people, building cohesive and resilient societies, and making institutions accessible and accountable to citizens. It is argued that people are their own assets and drive community empowerment themselves, with external agents such as VA NGOs playing an active accompanying role to catalyze or help communities in creating positive changes.

An agent, as discussed by Sewell (1992, p.20), has the capacity to exercise some degree of control over the social relations in which she is enmeshed. A community, which can be local, national, or international, is defined as a group of people who may or may not be spatially connected and who share common interests, concerns, or identities.³⁸ Empowerment refers to the process by which people are able to gain control over the factors and decisions that shape their lives, increase their resources and qualities, and build capacities to gain access, partners, and networks (United Nations 2012). VA NGOs, as transnational development agents, foster

³⁷ “Social Sustainability and Inclusion: Overview,” The World Bank, last modified March 19, 2021, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/socialsustainability/overview#1>.

³⁸ “Track 1: Community Empowerment,” World Health Organization, accessed November 15, 2020, <https://www.who.int/teams/health-promotion/enhanced-wellbeing/seventh-global-conference/community-empowerment>.

potent forms of community empowerment by funding human capacity and leadership development through their philanthropic activities in Vietnam. The next section discusses organized diaspora philanthropy with the emergence of VA NGOs aiming to reduce poverty or to meet other social development goals in Vietnam.

3.2 Vietnamese-American diaspora philanthropy

Apart from the cross-border financial/material links that have channeled the impact of diaspora transfers on poverty and development in the country of origin, there is a growing appreciation of the unique and potent role of diaspora nonprofit organizations, which bring not only resources but also strategies and ideas to address problems. A portion of remittance transfers has been used for philanthropic purposes, including construction and maintenance of schools, church, and other facilities, or donation to local charities (Sidel 2007, pp.8-9). Beyond their actual monetary giving potential, VA NGOs are involved in knowledge-transfer activities in sectors such as public health and education. The level of diaspora giving facilitated by such organizations, especially since the emergence of the VA NGO Network, has much promise for the development of the country of origin.

3.2.1 The evolution of Vietnamese-American diaspora philanthropy

The three-stage evolution of Vietnamese-American diaspora philanthropy is systematically discussed in Sidel (2007, pp.6-17), including “the early years of cautious engagement (1986-1995),” “the beginnings of collective action (1995-2000)” after the normalization of Vietnam-U.S. relations in 1995, and “the acceleration and organization of Vietnamese-American diaspora philanthropy (1999-2006).” In the first phase, a very small number of Vietnamese-American individuals quietly began to return to Vietnam to avoid a hostile reception from both the Vietnamese government and other diaspora members. Apart from family relief, there was relatively little support for charities and philanthropy in Vietnam at that time, and only a few charitable organizations existed to channel such funds to

disadvantaged regions. In the early and mid-1990s, although there was a growing number of returning Vietnamese Americans who continued to carry funds and goods for family relief and investment in family businesses, the broader social use of remittances was still limited.

Vietnamese government policies also began to change after the 1986 economic reforms to promote diaspora engagement through remittances, investment funds, and charitable giving to make the country's economy move forward. Diaspora giving through funds and services also began to have an expanded community-level focus. The second phase of Vietnamese-American diaspora philanthropy, marked by a tentative expansion, occurred in the years after the formal normalization of diplomatic relations between the United States of America and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, with many more cases of visits by Vietnamese overseas residents to their home country, including some who returned to live and work. Vietnamese Americans began to work directly with local charitable institutions and donate money to churches and temples for social services, though these efforts were mostly individual and family-based. When Typhoon Linda hit southern Vietnam in 1997, with thousands killed or made homeless, Vietnamese-American diaspora philanthropy shifted to collective action with the aim of attracting donations from the diaspora community and delivering aid directly to beneficiaries in Vietnam (Sidel 2007, p.9). The normalization of Vietnam-U.S. diplomatic ties and the bilateral trade agreement signed in 2000 paved the way for community relief activities by Vietnamese-Americans, who clustered in faith-based groups (temples and churches) or set up their own philanthropic channels to prevent fraud and leakage of funds by corrupt anticommunist groups in the United States or corrupt officials in Vietnam (Mai Tran 2000, as cited in Sidel 2007, p.10). To alleviate the reticence among Vietnamese-American donors, the Vietnamese government eliminated the tax on remittances and relief funds (which had been 5% in the early 1990s) and tried to connect with Vietnamese-American philanthropist leaders (Kinh Luan 2001, as cited in Sidel 2007, p.11).

The third phase involved newer diaspora giving that was more organized, more ambitious, and more institutionally linked among VA NGOs, domestic NGOs, and international NGOs. Diaspora-friendly changes in Vietnamese policies³⁹ and the extensive efforts of Vietnamese officials to reach out to the Vietnamese-American diaspora encouraged broader contributions from the diaspora to the development of the homeland in areas such as education, health care, agriculture, and society. Despite the remaining tensions between Vietnam and the diaspora, even within the diaspora community itself, diaspora assistance expanded beyond family relief, education, and investment to target an array of public services and charitable/philanthropic activities (Sidel 2007, pp.14-16). VA NGOs' philanthropic activities focused on community empowerment as a means of human capacity development, enabling disadvantaged Vietnamese people to initiate and control their own personal and communal development. Xuan Nguyen, one of the cofounders of the Refugee Women's Network, emphasized that instead of charity projects, their VA NGO focused on philanthropic and human development projects that helped vulnerable Vietnamese individuals earn money and learn how to do so in a sustainable way. For example, the Refugee Women's Network offered to help vulnerable women with their coffee shop business plans by providing them with roasting ovens, pans, and even roasted peanuts. To avoid conflict with the Vietnamese government, Xuan Nguyen suggested that VA NGOs should have trustworthy local counterparts evaluate how the plans were being executed. She also encouraged VA NGO members to return to Vietnam and see the conditions there themselves so that they could decide what should be done to empower Vietnamese people. The philanthropic work carried out by individuals, small local groups, and larger groups gradually became a national force gathered

³⁹ Changes in Vietnamese policies (i.e., the reduction in bureaucratic procedures and limitations on Vietnamese-American investment, Resolution 36 on Overseas Vietnamese Affairs and the related Action Program, etc.), will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

under the banner of the Vietnamese-American Non-Governmental Organization Network to expand its reach in the United States and Vietnam (Sidel 2007, p.16).

Since the acceleration of Vietnamese-American philanthropic organizations in the early 2000s, a number of VA NGOs have registered as foreign NGOs conducting development assistance and non-profit humanitarian aid activities in Vietnam. According to the Committee for Foreign Non-governmental Organization Affairs, there are 284 U.S.-based NGOs out of 436 licensed foreign NGOs working in Vietnam as of September 2021.⁴⁰ Among the U.S.-based NGOs, there are the organizations established and run by Vietnamese Americans (e.g., the Catalyst Foundation, Design Capital Asia, Pacific Link Foundation, Friends of Hue Foundation, Social Assistance Program For Vietnam, and Vietnam Humanitarian Foundation) and organizations with Vietnamese-American experts on the board of directors or advisory boards (e.g., the Children of Vietnam, the Streets International, and the Compassion Flower). The active participation of foreign NGOs results from efforts of the Vietnamese government to intensify the cooperation of foreign NGOs and boost the relationships between Vietnamese people and people in other countries. To promote the participation of foreign NGOs into the sustainable socio-economic development in Vietnam, the Vietnamese government issued the “National Program on the Promotion of Cooperation and Foreign Non-governmental Organization’s Assistance 2019-2025” pursuant to Decision No.1225/ QD-TTg on September 17, 2019. Priority areas of cooperation include education and training; health care; vocational training; agriculture, forestry, fishery, and rural development; addressing social and environmental issues; remedies for war consequences; culture, sports, and tourism.

According to the “National Program on the Promotion of Cooperation and Foreign Non-governmental Organization’s Assistance 2019-2025,” priority should be given to poor

⁴⁰ “FNGOs List by Nationality,” The Committee for Foreign Non-governmental Organization Affairs, accessed September 19, 2021, <http://comingo.gov.vn/en/danh-sach-cac-to-chuc-ppnn-theo-quoc-tich/>.

provinces and mountainous regions where ethnic minorities live to support socio-economic development. Criteria for identifying poor areas and disadvantaged communities are set in Decision No. 275/QĐ-TTg dated March 7, 2018, which regards approving the list of poor districts and districts for ending poverty between 2018-2020. Decision No. 59/2015/QĐ-TTg dated November 19, 2015 regards promulgating multidimensional poverty levels applicable between 2016-2020. As such, in rural areas, foreign NGOs are encouraged to improve the performance of microfinance programs, provide vocational education, support medical training at schools and provincial health centers/ hospitals, assist people in difficult circumstances (e.g., orphans, helpless children, people with disabilities, the elderly, etc.), remediate war consequences, protect the environment, preserve wildlife, and develop methodologies of community-based approach in disaster management. In urban areas, such support includes providing vocational education with job creation, promoting the development of small-and medium-sized enterprises, providing health care and medical support for specialized health establishments, helping people in difficult circumstances, victims of abuse, trafficking or domestic violence, preventing HIV/AIDS, drugs and prostitution, protecting and improving the urban environment, and transportation. Specific priorities would be identified based on practical conditions of each locality. The National Program is said to create favorable conditions for activities of humanitarian and development assistances by foreign NGOs and other donors. Taking VA NGO Network as a case example, the next section analyzes the outcomes of their development projects in Vietnam since 2010 under the partnership with Vietnamese counterparts, international fellows, and donors.

3.2.2 Vietnamese-American Non-Governmental Organization Network (VA NGO Network)

From late 2004 until December 2005, a number of Vietnamese-American organizations shared concerns about the development of Vietnam and met to exchange information and

strategize towards working in Vietnam, eventually forming the VA NGO Network (Sidel 2007, p.16). In 2004, with pooled funding from a few NGOs and a three-year funding commitment from the Ford Foundation, 24 organizations came together to create a single organization united by its mission, vision, and goals. This is the first step in their efforts to find common ground and combine forces to overcome obstacles challenging their development in Vietnam. As this idea gained traction, other philanthropists, academic experts, and civic leaders from around the United States joined, and this resulted in more funding from larger foundations such as the Asia Foundation and the Alexander Wallace Gerbode Foundation. Moreover, online platforms are also used to harness small donations. VA NGO Network incorporated in August 2008 and received its 501(c)(3) status in January 2009 to be eligible to receive tax-deductible charitable contributions in the United States.

The organization is currently led by a board of Vietnamese-American professionals including Dr. Quynh Kieu (healthcare and pediatric expert, founder and president of Project Vietnam Foundation, and committee member of the American Academy of Pediatrics), Ms. Anh-Kim Tran (civic leadership and childhood development expert and co-founder and board treasurer of Pacific Links Foundation), Ms. Phuong-Lien Ngo-Nguyen (nursing lecturer at Cal State University of San Marcos), Ms. Thien-Nhien Luong (epidemiologist, co-founder and president of Design Capital Asia, co-founder of Friends of Hue Foundation, and co-founder of Vietnamese Reach for Health Coalition), Ms. Vi Tuong Nguyen (technology expert and Senior IT Manager at Western Digital Corporation), Ms. Cathy Lam (environmentalism expert and co-founder and president of Our1World), and Ms. Thu-Le Doan (co-founder of Center for the Encouragement of Self Reliance and Vietnamese American Scholarship Fund).

On a mission to lead effective collaborations among VA NGOs, the California-based VA NGO Network has declared four interconnected primary goals—namely, capacity-building, inter-organizational communications and community awareness, advocacy, and

partnerships—to improve their collective ability to assist Vietnamese people by engaging various stakeholders. The organization delivers capacity-building programs to underserved communities in five main areas: health education, education/child development, social work, self-improvement/professional development, and anti-human trafficking. In parallel to the five main areas, member organizations cover various topics ranging from public health, child education, leadership/management skills, and victim protection. Each member organization has its own area of expertise, for example, the Project Vietnam Foundation mainly focuses on public health activities. Moreover, member organizations commit to sponsorships, contribute funding, organize workshops, and host and/or recruit public speakers. Public speakers/member lecturers bring in their own expertise to deliver the curriculum across the five focused programs. Invited guest speakers include directors or specialists from other institutions or international NGOs, such as UNICEF, Global Center for Social Entrepreneurship, KIRO-TV (a CBS-affiliated television station), and Plug In America.

VA NGO Network seeks to strengthen its own capacity and simultaneously build strong ties among member organizations to share information, collaborate in community-building projects, and raise awareness within the Vietnamese-American community through effective charitable efforts. For example, they organized the Capacity Building Workshops three times a year in Vietnam (at the end of March or April, July, and November) and at least twice a year in the United States (in January and September or October). The Capacity Building Workshop team had regularly updated their activities on the organization's website from 2007 to 2014. Table 5 shows the topics of the VA NGO Network's Capacity Building Workshops and the member organization(s) in charge.

Table 5 VA NGO Network’s Capacity Building Workshops (2007-2014) and organization(s)
in charge

Topic	Member organization(s) in charge
Nutrition	Our 1 World, Project Vietnam Foundation
Hygiene and sanitation	Our 1 World
Physical health	Project Vietnam Foundation
Preventive health concepts	Project Vietnam Foundation
Health problems	Project Vietnam Foundation
Aging	Project Vietnam Foundation
Women’s health	The Compassion Flower, Friends of Hue Foundation
Parenting education	Project Vietnam Foundation, Pacific Links Foundation
Early childhood education	Project Vietnam Foundation, Pacific Links Foundation
School age development	Project Vietnam Foundation
(Youth) life skills	Social Development Resource Center, Friends of Hue Foundation, Children of Peace International
Civic Education	Institute for Civic Education VN
Social works workshop	Social Development Resource Center
Conflict management	Institute for Civic Education VN
Behavioral	Project Vietnam Foundation, Pacific Links Foundation
Effective leadership	Institute for Civic Education VN
Program management	Friends of Hue Foundation, Children of Peace International, Kids Without Borders, VA NGO Network
Team building	Pacific Links Foundation, Children of Peace International

Management skills/professional enhancements	Children of Peace International, Institute for Civic Education VN, CHEER, Children of Peace International, VA NGO Network
Victim support	Social Development Resource Center
Awareness & prevention	VA NGO Network

Source: By author, based on data from the VA NGO Network, accessed on May 12, 2022 at <http://va-ngo.org/programs/cbw/>.

The VA NGO Network engages in organized representation so that its member organizations can effectively work together as a sector with the governments of the United States and Vietnam as well as funders and international partners at the policy level. For instance, the public health education program Health Education Initiative (HEI), which is a collaboration between the VA NGO Network, the Project Vietnam Foundation, and the American Academy of Pediatrics, works to provide a safer environment for children in schools and child care centers in Vietnam (Nguyen 2022). The program is the response to the alarming rate⁴¹ of child injuries and preventable child deaths owing to insufficient knowledge of pediatric first aid skills among teachers and caregivers in regions where access to emergency care is limited. The HEI provides local caregivers and teachers with health education and access to updated cardiopulmonary resuscitation and first aid techniques for children, especially in less advantaged areas such as local elementary schools in Vinh Long, An Giang, and Bac Kan Provinces (Nguyen 2022). One of their joint projects is Pediatric First Aid for Caregivers (PedFACTs) Vietnam, based on a program initiated by the American Academy of Pediatrics and introduced in the United States in 2005, which became a vital requirement for teachers and

⁴¹ Vietnam has 334,471 cases of child injuries every year, of which 7,187 result in death. Injury-related child mortality accounts for 19.63% the total mortality rate of the whole country.

Source: Thi-Ngoc-Lan Tran, Mai-Anh Luong, and Thi-Quynh-Trang Khieu, "Situations of Child Injuries in Vietnam and Interventions," *Injury Prevention* 18, no. 1 (2012): A17, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/injuryprev-2012-040580b.7>.

care providers in child care centers and schools (Nguyen 2022). To promote the health and safety of young children, the American Academy of Pediatrics granted the Vietnamese copyrights for the PedFACTs program to the Project Vietnam Foundation through the HEI so that the VA NGO could introduce standardized pediatric first aid trainings to Vietnamese teachers and child care providers (Nguyen 2022). From 2012 to 2014, Hanoi, Hue City, Ho Chi Minh City, and Vinh Long Province were the HEI’s main training areas. Table 6 shows the HEI’s training locations and accomplishments from its establishment year of 2010 to 2014.

Table 6 Health Education Initiative (HEI)’s training locations and accomplishments

Year	Training locations	Number of trained instructors	Number of trained care providers
2010	Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City	43	78
2011	Hanoi, Hue, Bac Kan, Vinh Long	60	672
2012	Hanoi, Hue, Ho Chi Minh City, Vinh Long	-	294
2013	Hanoi, Hue, Ho Chi Minh City, Vinh Long	-	157
2014	Hanoi, Hue, Ho Chi Minh City, Vinh Long	-	174

Source: By author, based on data from the VA NGO Network, accessed on May 12, 2022 at <http://va-ngo.org/programs/hei/>.

PedFACTs Vietnam provides two types of pediatric first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation trainings: PedFACTs training for teachers and parents and PedFACTs training for instructors. The training team consists of PedFACTs-certified medical professionals and childhood education specialists with experience in providing health and safety training courses in the United States and other countries. As shown in Table 6, in the year of its establishment, PedFACTs Vietnam started providing HEI training courses for 121 care providers and

instructors in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City (Nguyen 2022). These courses involve a series of four-day trainings divided into two-day sessions. The number of participants increased enormously in 2011, with approximately 600 care providers and instructors receiving the trainings. The program has expanded its areas of training to 11 cities/provinces throughout Vietnam from 2014 to 2019. Table 7 shows the number of trained instructors, teachers, and students in each training cities/ provinces.

Table 7 PedFACTs Vietnam’s training locations and accomplishments (2010 - 2019)

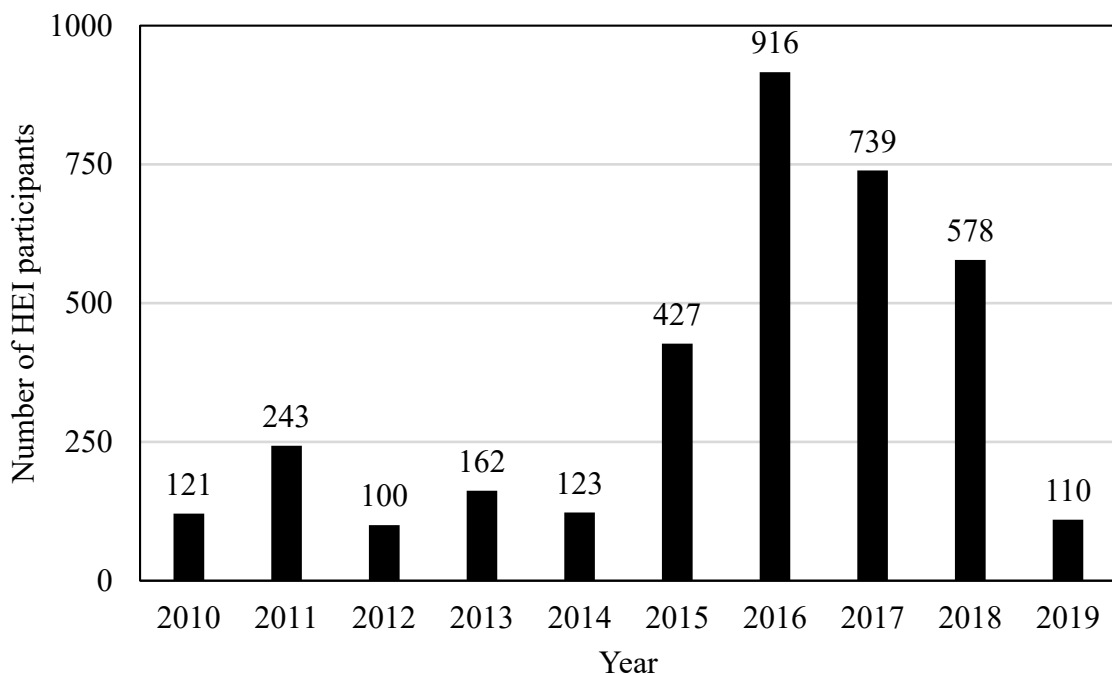
Training location	Trained instructors	Trained school teachers	Trained students	Total of participants
Hue	20	725	234	979
An Giang	-	43	692	735
Vinh Long	30	487	-	517
Ho Chi Minh City	60	406	-	466
Hanoi	69	166	-	235
Dong Thap	-	-	150	150
Da Nang	-	-	120	120
Nghe An	-	113	-	113
Tra Vinh	-	75	-	75
Can Tho	-	73	-	73
Quang Tri	-	56	-	56
	179*	2,144	1,196	3,519

(*) 129 physicians/ nurses; 50 educators

Source: Nguyen 2022.

After taking the training course, each instructor/caregiver must provide at least 40 children with appropriate caregiving (Nguyen 2022). According to PedFACTs Vietnam’s observations, through the HEI, 35 training series has been provided to over 1,300 Vietnamese teachers and caregivers from 2010 to 2014 and 3,519 instructors and child caregivers from 2010 to 2019 (Nguyen 2022). Successful participants were certified by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the VA NGO Network at the end of the course. Figure 5 illustrates the number of HEI’s participants from 2010 to 2019.

Figure 5 Total of the HEI’s participants (2010-2019)



Source: By author, based on data from VA NGO Network.

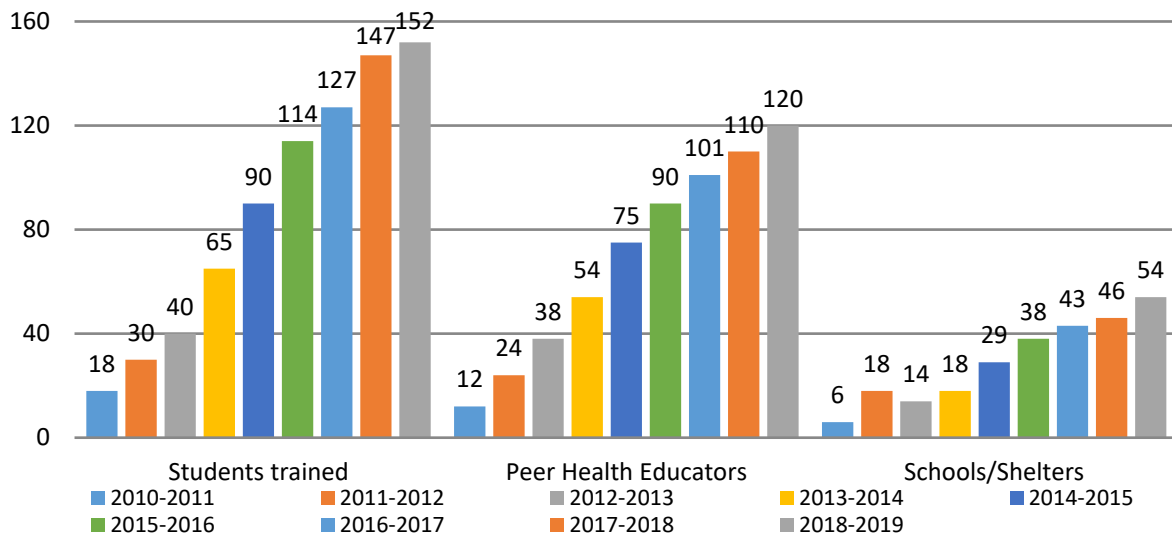
There is another program that aims to provide sustainable solutions to address health, economic and social issues in the most disadvantaged communities through youth empowerment, community engagement, and youth entrepreneurship development. As an integrated program combining health, education, and social and economic development strategies, the Healthy Initiatives through Peer Education (HIPE) initiative encourages students’ professional and career development in the social and economic innovation,

community development, and public health fields. HIPE is grounded on the principles and practical applications of public health, youth engagement, and 40 assets developed by the Search Institute.⁴² To reduce the burden of preventable diseases and poor health outcomes, the program is centered on a peer-to-peer education model designed for school-aged youths and based on creative teaching and leadership training in health education, disease prevention, disaster preparedness and response, and community mobilization in Vietnam's poorest communities. Leveraging the widespread effects of mass media and social networks even in rural areas of Vietnam, which lack healthcare professionals, HIPE engages in video design and production of public service announcements. It also engages American and Vietnamese youths in cultural and social exchanges for young leaders, including language immersion programs in English or Vietnamese. Figure 6 illustrates the number of peer health educators and schools from 2010 to 2019.

⁴² Search Institute is a nonprofit organization founded in 1958 by Merton Strommen, an American expert researcher in the fields of Christian education and youth ministry. The Developmental Asset Framework promoted by the Institute has offered a set of 40 supports and strengths for positive child and adolescent development. The first 20 developmental assets, known as external assets, focus on providing support, relationships, and opportunities for young people in their families, neighborhood, schools, and communities. The remaining 20 assets, known as internal assets, focus on personal skills, values, and commitments they need to have sustainable livelihoods.

Source: "The Developmental Assets Framework," Search Institute, accessed April 28, 2022, <https://www.search-institute.org/our-research/development-assets/developmental-assets-framework/>.

Figure 6 Number of peer health educators and schools (2010-2019)



Source: By VA NGO Network.

The community-based project elicited positive responses from their Vietnamese fellows, broadening the scope of their involvement and expanding their influence in Vietnamese local communities (Nguyen 2022). According to data from the VA NGO Network, the number of Vietnamese youths and students participating in health sessions and activities of the HIPE program in 2019 was 24,288, which was more than nearly ten times higher than that in 2010; the number of HIPE partners from schools and communities increased from 6 (in 2010) to 54 (in 2019) and that of HIPE volunteers increased from 3 (in 2010) to 180 (in 2016) (Nguyen 2022). The Annual Community Health Fair by HIPE, which provides opportunities to promote health-related knowledge/skills for Vietnamese youths and families who do not attend HIPE-participatory schools, witnessed an increase in number of participants from 250 (in 2014) to 920 (in 2018) (Nguyen 2022). In 2019, 21,262 Vietnamese students participated in adolescent reproduction health programs that were conducted in their communities and schools (Nguyen 2022). The emphasis on school-based health prevention and promotion programs resulted in behavioral and attitude changes toward reproduction, sexually transmitted diseases, abortion, and health risks in adolescence. These efforts contribute toward achieving

improved health and wellbeing for Vietnamese school-aged youth by empowering them with knowledge and skills to ensure healthy and sustainable lives.

Furthermore, with the aim of encouraging fundraising projects and enlisting volunteers in the fight against trafficking of young Vietnamese women and children into slavery for labor or sexual exploitation, the Vietnamese-American family of Dr. Doan Phung founded the Center for the Encouragement of Self-Reliance, which has offered 100,000 USD as a challenge grant to provide financial support for fellow VA NGO members. The Center has also created an annual Effectiveness Prize to promote social innovation and capacity-building among individuals or organizations that have effectively contributed to fighting the trafficking of Vietnamese nationals. The 100,000-USD prize is used to fund payments for VA NGO member organizations. The funds can be accessed by initiatives seeking to raise awareness on all forms of human trafficking, to lobby for the establishment and implementation of anti-trafficking policy, to promote cooperation with international governments and institutions, and to deliver direct assistance to vulnerable victims of human trafficking in Vietnam.⁴³

In addition to humanitarian and community empowerment work, the VA NGO Network leverages Vietnamese traditional music as a common heritage to bolster ties among Vietnamese people worldwide and build livelihoods in communities. The organization offers grants and opportunities for young artists to preserve and promote traditional Vietnamese culture. The Music Bridge program established by the VA NGO Network offers music workshops to allow Vietnamese-American youth and young audiences from other communities in the United States to engage with their roots. Disadvantaged children in Vietnam and underserved communities in the California Bay Area can receive free music lessons and are encouraged to take part in community activities to introduce Vietnamese culture and customs through traditional music.

⁴³ “Trafficking Challenge Grant,” Vietnamese-American Non-governmental Organization Network, accessed April 4, 2022, <http://va-ngo.org/trafficking-challenge-grant/>.

The program also connects Vietnamese traditional music experts with students and music lovers to promote a greater understanding of traditional Vietnamese arts.

3.2.3 Pacific Links Foundation

While participating in joint projects of VA NGO Network, member organizations have also been pursuing various development projects in their areas of expertise. For example, in continuous efforts to promote sustainable development of Vietnam, the Pacific Links Foundation has more than 20 years of experience in empowering disadvantaged women and at-risked youth, preventing them from trafficking, supporting them to access education, and expanding their economic opportunities.⁴⁴ There are two on-going programs focusing on different fields, including Education and Modern Slavery Prevention. In the Education portfolio, nine projects have been organized to improve educational opportunities for women and youth in disadvantaged communities – namely, Girls Empowerment Mekong Scholarships (GEMS), Scholarships to Elevate Education and Develop Skills (SEEDS), Career Exploration and English Proficiency Program (CEEP), Camp Connect, Skills Clubs, Vocational Training Scholarships, Online Learning Platform, Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), and Social Work Summer Institute (SWSI). In the Modern Slavery Prevention portfolio, seven projects aim to provide the most vulnerable populations at the frontiers of Vietnam with access to education, shelter, and reintegration services as well as enhance their economic opportunities. These projects include Factory Awareness to Counter Trafficking (FACT), Empower Migrants (EMMI), PAXU – Workers’ Well-being and Growth App, Returnee Initial Support Essentials (RISE), Compassion House and Reintegration Services, Capacity Building for Responders (CaRes), and Community and School Outreach Activities and Campaigns. Table 8 lists the missions, functions, and the appropriate level of capabilities of each project.

⁴⁴ “About Us: Mission and Vision,” Pacific Links Foundation, accessed April 8, 2022, <https://pacificlinks.org/about/>.

Table 8 Pacific Links Foundation’s development projects and scopes of activities

Project name	Acronym (if any)	Scope of activities
Girls Empowerment Mekong Scholarships	GEMS	Enhance the access to education and improve the livelihoods of girls living in human trafficking hotspots (i.e., by providing scholarships, conducting home visits, organizing events to raise awareness on human trafficking).
GEMS University		Provide talented female students from low-income families in the Mekong Delta with mentorship, English learning support, life skills training, volunteer opportunities, and financial assistance.
Scholarships to Elevate Education and Develop Skills	SEEDS	Expand educational opportunities for talented students from low-income families in Central Vietnam by providing them with financial aids, school supplies, health insurance, essential life skills courses, career orientation, and internship opportunities.

Career Exploration and English Proficiency Program	CEEP	Improve student's English language skills over two months of learning during the summer months.
Camp Connect		A three-day career guidance camp for students to increase their commitment to stay in school, and avoid dropouts and trafficking risks.
Skills Club		A youth development program for middle and high school students to develop leadership skills, increase self-confidence/awareness, and engage in human trafficking prevention.
Vocational Training Scholarships		Enable vulnerable youth to study at top vocational schools and strengthen their job readiness.
Growing Learning Opportunities Worldwide	GLOW	An online learning platform that provides at-risk populations with courses on human trafficking awareness and English tutoring.

Early Childhood Care and Education	ECCE	Organize a series of semi-annual workshops for Vietnamese teachers and administrators from care centers and schools in remote areas.
Social Work Summer Institute	SWSI	The joint project of Pacific Links Foundation, West Virginia University, and An Giang University to bring the latest practical knowledge/ skills for Vietnamese social workers through free community health workshops to support trauma victims.
Factory Awareness to Counter Trafficking	FACT	Provide intensive learning workshops on human trafficking prevention to factory workers and managers in industrial zones.
Empower Migrants	EMMI	Empower women migrant workers with knowledge, education, and life skills for professional advancement.
PAXU – Workers’ Well-being and Growth App	PAXU	The mobile application provides reliable information on safe migration, human trafficking prevention, and COVID-19, as well as helps users calculate debt repayments

		and manage their savings and expenses.
Returnee Initial Support Essentials	RISE	Provide first aids (including transportation fees, daily necessities, and referrals to local support services) to human trafficking survivors at the border upon their return to Vietnam. Conduct trainings for local government agencies and border guards to assist survivors.
Reintegration Services		Offer reintegration assistance to human trafficking survivors, including housing, vocational schooling, career guidance, life skills training, health insurance, and medical care.
Capacity Building for Responders	CaRes	Conduct trainings on victim-centered approach for border guards and law enforcement officers in Vietnam and Europe to reduce the risk of human trafficking.

Community and School Outreach Activities and Campaigns		Awareness-raising and outreach events strengthen relevant information/ knowledge/skills and build capacity among vulnerable communities about human trafficking prevention.
Humanitarian		Provide direct support for community development initiatives (i.e., Compassion Home Projects for impoverish families, Flood Relief in Central Vietnam, building schools, providing lunch support).
Media Campaign		The joint project of Pacific Links Foundation, La Liga, and Yeah1 Group to inform media about human trafficking prevention.

Source: By author, based on the 2020 Annual Report of Pacific Links Foundation.⁴⁵

Along with an increase in specific projects, working locations of the Pacific Links Foundation have been expanded significantly from three provinces in 2001 to 17 provinces in 2020. These projects have been operated throughout Vietnam, including the northern region (Lao Cai Province, Quang Ninh Province, and Hai Phong City), the central region (Thanh Hoa Province, Nghe An Province, Quang Binh Province, Quang Tri Province, Hue City, Da Nang City, Quang Nam Province, Quang Ngai Province, and Binh Dinh Province), and southern

⁴⁵ Pacific Link Foundation, *Building a Brighter Future: Annual Report 2020* (California: Pacific Link Foundation, 2020), 7–29, accessed April 8, 2022, <https://pacificlinks.org/publications/>.

region (Ho Chi Minh City, Tien Giang Province, Vinh Long Province, Dong Thap Province, and An Giang Province). Table 9 lists specific projects of Pacific Links Foundation and their operating locations.

Table 9 Pacific Links Foundation’s projects and operating locations (2001-2020)

Region	City/Province	Projects
Northern Vietnam	Lao Cai, Quang Ninh, Hai Phong	CaRes, Community and School Outreach, EMMI, FACT, GLOW (Online Learning), PAXU, Reintegration Services, RISE, Vocational Training
Central Vietnam	Thanh Hoa, Nghe An, Quang Binh, Quang Tri, Hue, Da Nang, Quang Nam, Quang Ngai, Binh Dinh	Camp Connect, CaRes, CEEP, Community and School Outreach, ECCE, EMMI, FACT, GLOW (Online Learning), Humanitarian, Media Campaign, PAXU, Reintegration Services, Research, RISE, SEEDS, Skill Clubs, Vocational Training
Southern Vietnam	Ho Chi Minh, Tien Giang, Vinh Long, Dong Thap, An Giang	Camp Connect, CaRes, Community and School Outreach, ECCE, EMMI, FACT, GLOW (Online Learning), GEMS, GEMS University, Media Campaign, PAXU, Reintegration Services, RISE, Skills Clubs, Vocational Training

Source: By author, based on the 2020 Annual Report of Pacific Links Foundation.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Pacific Link Foundation, *Building a Brighter Future: Annual Report 2020* (California: Pacific Link Foundation, 2020), 3–4, accessed April 8, 2022, <https://pacificlinks.org/publications/>.

Pacific Links Foundation relies on funding sources and support from private donors and institutional entities. The organization builds cooperation and partnership at local and international levels to improve the capacity of human trafficking prevention, ranging from grassroots networks, families, teachers, and local communities, to Vietnamese and international corporations, Vietnamese local and national governments, and Vietnamese and international NGOs. Key institutional partners include the Vietnam Education Society, British Business Group Vietnam, Intel Corporation, AhaSlides, Biti's (Vietnamese footwear manufacturer), Abercrombie & Fitch Co., LaLiga, Beowulf Blockchain, and United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Pacific Links Foundation also partners with the Anti-Slavery International (ASI) and Every Child Protected Against Trafficking (ECPAT UK) to develop a comprehensive project to prevent human trafficking and protect victims in Vietnam. The CaRes project in Europe adopts a culturally sensitive and empathetic approach to encourage migrants to use consultation services and discontinue their precarious journey, as well as builds the knowledge and capacity of European responders to support Vietnamese irregular migrants.

3.3 Social enterprise investment

Diaspora has the potential to contribute to social investment, resulting in a positive social impact as well as a financial return on the original investment (Nguyen 2022). In recent years, Vietnamese-American philanthropists have become increasingly interested and engaged in social investments by improving people's knowledges and skills, supporting them to participate fully in education, employment, and social life (Nguyen 2022). Social investors donate repayable finance to entrepreneurial projects related to poverty, public health, basic education, the environment, human security, and so on. In 2013, Vietnamese-American James Dien Bui established Lotus Impact, the first social investment fund in Vietnam. With charter capital of \$25 million USD and support from its partners, Lotus Impact actively invests in private enterprises, such as Koto Catering (food company in Vietnam), Urmatt (food company

in Thailand), Song Khoe+ (application software company in Vietnam), to help solve key social and environmental challenges and at the same time create jobs and stable incomes for laborers in Southeast Asian countries, particularly Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and Myanmar. The fund focuses on offering impact capital and venture-building services to enterprises throughout Vietnam. Based on the support and counseling of the Vietnamese VinaCapital Group, Lotus Impact made a formal investment decision into Know One Teach One (KOTO) to establish KOTO Catering (Nguyen 2022). KOTO is a social enterprise established by the Vietnamese-Australian Jimmy Pham to raise economic well-being and break the poverty cycle among disadvantaged Vietnamese individuals (Nguyen 2022). KOTO Catering is a joint venture specializing in providing food services in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. The project provides at-risk youth with the opportunity to attend a 24-month training program at a culinary school to enable them to develop sustainable livelihoods for a better quality of life (Nguyen 2022).

Different from international remittance, which is sent to family members and may be used in productive activities other than self-consumption, diaspora direct investment comprises companies' direct investment that has higher potential for investment efficiency, beyond the limit of family business (Rodriguez-Montemayor 2012, p.5). The fund aimed to raise approximately \$40–50 million USD in total commitments and anticipated holding a final closing in 2014, according to the managing director of Lotus Impact. The idea that investments could create a positive social, economic, and environmental impact has attracted philanthropists and institutions from the United States, Germany, and the United Kingdom. The partnership between Lotus Impact and VinaCapital to provide venture capital to small and medium-sized enterprises, which provide economic and social values, illustrates a high degree of cooperation between Vietnamese Americans and Vietnamese domestic partners (Nguyen 2022). As a newly established investment foundation, Lotus Impact has evolved its early investment proposition to become part incubator and accelerator. With a passion for rural

community development, Lotus Impact has elaborated a vision for Vietnam's three investment verticals of agriculture, education, and hospitality, particularly stressing the potential of the agriculture sector. Despite being reasonably optimistic about the future, the managing director of Lotus Impact has expressed concerns over whether he can always work effectively with his Vietnamese counterparts to build capacity in rural and underprivileged urban areas.

3.4 Conclusion

The engagement of VA NGOs creates a transnational social space between the Vietnamese-American diaspora and Vietnam in which people with common interests can come together to stimulate both economic and social development. VA NGO members building such a space can be considered the emerging transmigrants, who develop and maintain multiple relations with their country of origin through various familial, economic, social, organizational, and political initiatives (Schiller et al. 1992b, p.1). In addition to financial remittances, the circulation of ideas, practices, skills, and knowledge—known as social remittances—between sending and receiving countries (Levitt 1998, p.926) makes the Vietnamese-American diaspora a “development agent” delivering outcomes that contribute to development goals in the country of origin.

As Newland et al. (2010, p.2) observe in regards to the shifting trend from philanthropy to social investment, some members of the diaspora have become increasingly engaged with this kind of responsible investment to realize both the transformative potential and the intention of their giving. Projects designed by VA NGOs and their Vietnamese counterparts in key areas including education, quality child care, public health care, and youth training target rural communities and individuals in disadvantaged areas with the aim of strengthening their skills and knowledge to enable them to participate fully in social life. In addition, within the cultural sector, there has been a shift in these practices from the low to the high level with the aim of easing tension between Vietnam and Vietnamese-American diaspora (Hanh Nguyen 2020,

p.31). Table 10 shows low- to high-level transnational practices between Vietnam and its U.S.-based diaspora across the economic, political, and sociocultural spheres.

Table 10 Level and scope of transnational practices between Vietnam and Vietnamese-American diaspora members/organizations

		Scope		
		Economic	Social⁴⁷	Cultural
Level	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Remittance sent to family members or relatives - Investment to small family businesses - Individual donors/philanthropists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Religious groups, hometown associations created by diaspora members to maintain connections and provide mutual aids to Vietnamese immigrant communities (i.e., The Association of Vietnamese Americans, An Lac Temple of the Vietnamese Americans, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vietnamese-American individual artists perform in teahouses in Vietnam
	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Multinational investment fund run by the diaspora members and Vietnamese partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Licensed Vietnamese-American diaspora driven NGOs with community empowerment projects (i.e., VA NGO Network and member organizations, VIET/AID, Viethope Incorporation, Vietnam Health Clinic, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vietnamese major artists perform in Vietnamese-American diaspora's big events - Cultural events organized at Vietnamese embassies in the United States (i.e., annual Lunar New Year celebration)

Source: By author.

⁴⁷ Vietnamese Americans maintain cross-border connections with the original home country in different ways. The first-generation Vietnamese Americans tend to work with hometown associations or religious groups to channel charitable fund to Vietnam “quietly” and informally (Sidel 2007, p.7; Huynh and Yiu 2016, p.171). The second-generation Vietnamese Americans are likely to interact and create more formal ties with the Vietnam government. Their organizations focus on local community development (Huynh and Yiu 2016, pp.178-179) and have larger developmental impact and social reach than the first generation’s.

The International Organization for Migration (2018) argues that the extent to which migrants can contribute to development depends on their ability to access services, integrate into their new societies, and stay connected with their communities of origin. Organized in numerous nonprofit organizations, the diaspora members have increased their network capacity and enhanced the transmission of material and nonmaterial resources to local arenas. Therefore, Vietnamese-American diaspora members have become recognized actors who have considerable capacity and potential to positively develop the home country. The next chapter explores how diaspora members are able to navigate the engagement and act as a bridge between home and host countries. By combining efforts while simultaneously conducting various diplomatic tactics to perform the bridging function among multiple stakeholders and audiences, the Vietnamese-American diaspora continues improving its status and position within the development field of the home country.

CHAPTER 4

DIPLOMACY BY THE DIASPORA: MOTIVATIONS, PRACTICES, AND OUTCOMES

The previous chapter emphasizes the growing role of Vietnamese-American diaspora in homeland development by focusing on their social contributions ranging from charity work, community improvement, and capacity building in education and public health sectors. Transnational practices have broadened in scope and level to identify, formulate, and implement development projects that meet the needs of vulnerable communities in the country of origin (Nguyen 2022). These activities have a visible impact on the beneficiary populations, and thus, VA NGOs are perceived as development actors in the country of origin. After observing the increasingly proactive engagement with the homeland, a question may arise about how Vietnamese-American diaspora members/organizations collaborate effectively with home state actors during their joint projects (Nguyen 2022). Chapter 4 draws on the concept of “diplomacy by diaspora” to perform an investigation of the dynamic that turned the diaspora into a social force, thus fulfilling the diplomacy’s core functions of representation, communication, and mediation beyond and between nations (Ho and McConnell 2017, p.3).

Surveys and interviews were conducted to clarify how and to what extent diaspora agents are generating their engagement while normative forms of diplomatic and development activity may be compromised in adverse conditions. An online semi-structured interview was conducted with a representative of VA NGO Network, operating under the joint supervision of PACCOM Vietnam and Department of Foreign Affairs of Thua Thien Hue Province, to clarify how cooperative efforts are performed at the provincial and local levels. Attempting to engage with the homeland, the Vietnamese-American diaspora members/organizations follow the home state’s policies but proactively conduct effective communication and negotiation within their capacities by practicing “diplomacy by diaspora” (Nguyen 2022). The diaspora may also

push for policy adjustment and advocate for improved institutional conditions in the home state to allow further engagement in homeland socio-economic development (Nguyen 2022).

4.1 VA NGOs and their Vietnamese local counterparts

Licensed VA NGOs working in Vietnam establish their liaison offices through which the functions are carried out by a broadly representative advisory board, as stipulated in Decree No.12/2012/ND-CP, on the operation registration and management of foreign non-governmental organizations in Vietnam and Decision No.1225/ QD-TTg on the issuance of the “National Program on the Promotion of Cooperation and Foreign Non-governmental Organization’s Assistance 2019-2025.” They seek to widen the range of supports by creating long-term partnerships with Vietnamese local counterparts. For example, VA NGO Network had professionals from Tinh Hoa Primary School (in Quang Ngai Province) and Preschool Education College (in Ho Chi Minh City) join the Capacity Building Workshops as key lecturers. For the last ten years, the Centre for Humanity Education Hue City-Vietnam has partnered with the Pacific Links Foundation (one of VA NGO Networks’ member organizations) to assemble preschool lesson plans for Vietnamese children.

By building connections with Vietnamese local counterparts, VA NGOs begin to accept their “mutual responsibility” to ensure that the procedures of their development work have positive impacts on local communities. Regular meetings are held between local government members and representatives of foreign NGOs (including VA NGOs) as part of the efforts to strengthen partnerships and cooperate with each other for the development of Vietnam. For example, at the meeting with licensed foreign NGOs operating work in Thua Thien Hue Province on November 28, 2019,⁴⁸ representatives of the Department of Foreign Affairs in Thua Thien Hue Province recognized the effective assistance of those NGOs tailored to the

⁴⁸ “Gặp mặt các tổ chức phi chính phủ nước ngoài tỉnh Thừa Thiên Huế,” The Portal of Thua Thien Hue Province, last modified November 28, 2019, <https://thuathienhue.gov.vn/vi-vn/Chinh-sach-moi/tid/Gap-mat-cac-to-chuc-Phi-chinh-phu-nuoc-ngoai-tinh-Thua-Thien-Hue/newsid/B93F171D-FC95-4689-88A7-AB1300B121DE/cid/2BEA0540-FCA4-4F81-99F2-6E8848DC5F2F> (in Vietnamese).

needs of local communities and their speedy responses in providing emergency humanitarian aids for local residents. The local government also promoted concerns about public participation to efficiently foster and utilize the resources of foreign NGOs in development-related fields. Therefore, a partnership also offers the advantage of benefitting from other important aspects of local counterparts' support, such as opportunities to expand the network with other development actors, close and regular contact with local authorities, and long-term commitments. The methods of tact and diplomacy help VA NGOs and their Vietnamese local counterparts overcome differences and build cooperative partnerships, which allows for a common pursuit of the socio-economic development of Vietnam.

4.2 “Diplomacy by diaspora” as the proactive effort to connect with countries of origin:

Concepts and relevant literatures

Globalization and developments in (information) technology influence the cross-border activities between (im)migrants, home states, and host states. Better access to technological innovations that condense spatial and temporal distances provides a favorable condition for the expansion of grass-root transnationalism (or transnationalism “from below”) in both frequency and scope (Portes et al. 1999, p.224). Grassroot transnational activities carried out by immigrants and refugees in economic, political, and cultural areas are increasing owing to various beneficial motives such as easy border entrance, common language, cultural similarities, and the dense network of communication (Portes et al. 1999, p.224; Ho and McConnell 2017, pp.1-3). Given the changing relationships and higher engagement with home states, the proactive role of diasporas in “diplomacy by diaspora” demonstrates their ability of connecting multiple stakeholders and audiences “here” and “there” based on the functions of advocacy, representation, and mediation (Ho and McConnell 2017, pp.11-14).

Diasporas have their function as diplomatic actors mobilized by states but simultaneously exercised by themselves at different times for different reasons (Ho and

McConnell 2017, p.11). “Diplomacy by diaspora” is conducted independently by diasporas in a variety of forms, such as when circulating the flow of resources within the diaspora assemblages or participating in multilevel powers (Ho and McConnell 2017, pp.11-14). This conceptual framework explains how diasporas deploy diplomatic tactics to perform the bridging function among multiple stakeholders and audiences at local, national, supranational, and global levels. Ho and McConnell (2017, pp.11-14) draw on existing research on the interface between diaspora, politics, and diplomacy and particularly focus on the role of representation, mediation, and advocacy. While there is growing concern about the negative role of diasporas in situations of political crisis by fueling conflicts from afar, diasporas demonstrate characteristics of peace mediators and negotiators of conflict resolution (Brinkerhoff 2011, p.127; Carment and Calleja 2017, p.237; Ho and McConnell 2017, p.12). They can act as third-party mediators by facilitating constructive dialogues between the parties in conflict from a perspective that will help them bridge divides and move toward a mutually acceptable outcome; they can also constitute effective advocacy to influence key decision makers in home states and host states (Baser and Swain 2008, pp.13-17; Ho and McConnell 2017, pp.11-14). These practices become possible owing to the strategic position of diasporas who are living outside the conflict zone but also have an intimate connection to it (Cohen 2008, p.17; Brown 2011, pp.233-235; Ho and McConnell 2017, p.13).

In this regard, diasporas can also be agents for change within the development field and at policy level. Diaspora development practitioners make contributions in the establishment and implement community development projects through the transfer of social and financial resources to these communities in their countries of origin (Furuya 2002, p.86; Yong and Rahman 2013, pp.223-260; Gottschlich 2013, pp.20-40; African Diaspora Policy Centre 2016, pp.5-6; Hanh Nguyen 2020, pp.25-27). The diaspora members are organized in diaspora-driven NGOs involved in development circles and can be the *change advocates* who actively

campaign to raise public awareness on development issues, as well as strengthen their negotiation and advocacy voices within the context of local conditions (Lisowski 2005, p.373; African Diaspora Policy Centre 2016, p.5). This is because NGOs are privileged to enable negotiation based on strategic bridging and mediating abilities, thus they can facilitate greater engagements among complementary resources than traditional development agencies or a country (Brown and Timmer 2006, pp.9-10). In this way, diaspora-driven NGOs are able to adopt various methods to improve effective advocacy and negotiation strategies for developmental interventions in countries of origin (African Diaspora Policy Centre 2016, p.8).

Several instruments and methods that are relevant to diaspora advocacy may include an “inside-outside” strategy, becoming an authoritative voice, creating flexible alliances, and utilizing diaspora skills (African Diaspora Policy Centre 2016, pp.8-9). These methodologies appear to have mainly been applied by diaspora organizations in the context of conducting “diplomacy by diaspora” towards development projects in countries of origin. They demonstrate a high level of effectiveness in the establishment and evolution of a network that harnesses the combined strengths among different organizations, complements each other’s assets, and thus stands a higher chance of being more cohesive and successful. Moreover, the formation of flexible alliances that work together on shared issues also allows the diaspora the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to reach a greater audience in the home country. The next section provides some insights into the implementation of “diplomacy by diaspora” by Vietnamese Americans to gain recognition, make progress in their social work, and become agents of development in the original home country.

4.3 “Diplomacy by diaspora”: The Vietnamese-American perspective

The notion of homeland can vary between the diaspora and general population in the country of origin, between the first generation and second generation, and between

conservative and progressive diasporic members. The attempt to foster open communication and the intensity of engagement with the homeland government are seen higher in the second generation, although both the first and second generations of Vietnamese-Americans maintain cross-border ties with the homeland in various ways (Huynh and Yiu 2016, pp.176-179; Nguyen-Akbar 2016, pp.103-106). Different from senior diaspora members of the first-generation who maintain their imaginations or emotions to the homeland mainly through hometown associations or religious organizations, the 1.5 and second generation of Vietnamese Americans are willing to engage in open dialogue with Vietnamese governmental agencies and sustain relationships with their Vietnamese counterparts (Huynh and Yiu 2016, p.178). The return to the home country, which has recently turned into a new land of opportunities, is made for the pursuit of cross-border entrepreneurial venture (i.e., Lotus Impact), personal career development in international enterprises, or volunteer activities through non-governmental organizations (i.e., VA NGO Network). This section draws attention to the potential of diaspora members who act progressively in situations of homeland development and function as the bridge among grass-root communities, state institutions, and external agencies.

Along with the current attempt of socio-economic development of the home state, the diaspora contributes to this national effort through remittance, business investment, philanthropic activities, and development projects by VA NGOs. Licensed VA NGOs working on developmental/humanitarian projects in Vietnam comprise non-profit public benefit organizations organized and operated pursuant to section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of the United States of America.⁴⁹ Free from any political or religious ideology, the

⁴⁹ Licensed VA NGOs working in Vietnam clearly state themselves as non-profit public benefit organization operating under section 501(c)(3). According to U.S. law, organizations operating under section 501(c)(3) are free from profit and politics. The statement can be found on their websites.

Moreover, according to Article 4 (Prohibit acts) of Decree No.12/2012/ND-CP dated March 01, 2012, on registration and management of activities of foreign NGOs in Vietnam, foreign non-governmental organizations are prohibited from: (1) Organizing or carrying out political, religious, and other activities against national interests, security, defense, and the great national unity of Vietnam; (2) Organizing, carrying out, or participating

majority of them have been providing support to less fortunate people and fulfilling their objectives of nurturing inclusion for a socially cohesive society, particularly in the realm of education and community healthcare services in remote areas of Vietnam. The buffer of distance allows diaspora-driven NGOs to have a broad vision and tackle more controversial issues than local philanthropic organizations (Johnson 2007, as cited in Brinkerhoff 2014, p.971). The diaspora actively found a way to interact with home state actors, beginning from small remittance to philanthropic activities to serve the public. They perceive the Vietnamese state as the partner in their local development programs or the promised land for personal career development and actively conduct outreach projects to diverse communities in Vietnam (Huynh and Yiu 2016, p.179).

Maintaining an effective connection with people from different backgrounds is a time-consuming process that requires particular attention to their various experiences. Progressive Vietnamese Americans have facilitated a transnational exchange with Vietnamese people within a flexible and pragmatic approach to build purposeful partnerships with their Vietnamese partners and advance their cause via communication (Nguyen 2022). A Vietnamese-American social worker recalled that she first met her Vietnamese colleagues during their business trip to the United States:

“They came to the United States to do training in HIV and AIDS, and then I partnered with them to do research in Vietnam. I got into Vietnam by doing HIV and AIDS at the national level and then at the city level in Ho Chi Minh City. I established my relationship in Vietnam that way. I returned to the United States to build my career but parallel to my career, I also do consulting on projects for Vietnam. We helped them to

in activities for profit, not for humanitarian or development purposes; (3) Organizing, carrying out, or participating in activities related to money laundering or terrorism; (4) Organizing, carrying out, or participating in activities harming social ethics or national fine customs and practices or national traditions or identity; and (5) Organizing, carrying out, or participating in other activities contrary to Vietnamese law.

*improve their public health systems [...] They did not pay me; I volunteered because I knew what to do.”*⁵⁰ (Nguyen 2022)

In addition to development projects, Vietnamese-Americans often return to Vietnam to perform charitable work with the support of the Vietnamese government. An interviewee shared her experience of embarking an orphanage building project after devastating floods struck Vietnam in 1999:

*“I was asked to form an organization with the blessing of the government. They wanted us to be there, they wanted our help. They wanted us to build an orphanage because of that flood, and so we agreed to go in to do it. And it was easy for some reasons because our board were Vietnamese [...] They even gave us land to build our orphanage on. Everything was from the bottom up, so I had no problem.”*⁵¹

This diaspora-homeland cooperation encourages them to contribute more to the development process of the homeland. The importance of partnership building is affirmed in VA NGOs’ action agendas, emphasizing the effort to develop a one-to-one relationship with every coalition member. At the local level, the staff of VA NGOs live with the affected communities and perform assessments (such as talking to each family member) to (1) keep their local development strategies in line with changes in local conditions and (2) be in constant touch with the field conditions. Building effective and stable connections with local people also helps them figure out what is going on and they encounter fewer problems with local authorities. The use of diplomatic tactics and strategies for engaging with local Vietnamese communities creates an opportunity to develop a more inclusive, integrated partnership with

⁵⁰ The online interview was conducted on November 2, 2020.

⁵¹ The online interview was conducted on November 2, 2020.

Vietnamese stakeholders. A Vietnamese-American social worker clarified the importance of communication and relationship building with Vietnamese counterparts:

“Before doing the non-profit, I was in Vietnam doing my research about HIV. That experience at the beginning was not very positive. They followed me even though I partnered with the Save the Children Fund. That was the first time in 1997. We hoped the results would receive funding to bring knowledge about HIV in Vietnam to the international community. They did not approve my paperwork to do that at first [...] At the top level, people know each other. They checked and said, “Oh, we know her,” and so I did not have a problem going in and doing the work. There were times when PACCOM would say something and then the city would say something; they interpreted the policy differently [...] The difference between my work and [that of] many non-profits is that we have an office and staff members. There is always investment in the staff because they need to understand the direction of what we want and how to get there. Many organizations raise the issue that they have so many problems working with the government. Why? Because they do not have either staff or office, they do not have relationships with the government. We make it a point to have meaningful relationships and regular meetings with people from the bottom all the way up.”⁵²

Many diaspora-driven nonprofit organizations are run on a volunteer basis and often lack the capacity to effectively communicate their message. It would have been difficult for VA NGOs to conduct their development projects in Vietnamese localities without the prior acknowledgement of national regulations and local contexts, such as preparing legal licenses/permits and professional liability insurance (Nguyen 2022). At the “Humanitarian Work in Viet Nam: The Future of Civil Society and Transnational Soft Diplomacy Viet Nam”

⁵² The online interview was conducted on November 2, 2020.

symposium at the end of 2017 in California, members of participating VA NGOs emphasized the importance of building and maintaining long-term relationships with local Vietnamese authorities and counterparts to update notices for changes in policies regarding grassroots development projects (Nguyen 2022). Moreover, to advocate effectively, diaspora-driven organizations actively employed the engagement of grassroots stakeholders and local authorities to maintain accurate information about the development topics they are interested in. Having knowledge at a grass-roots level within home communities is a key advantage for VA NGOs to become acquainted with developmental issues in the home country. An interviewee emphasizes the requisite knowledge, in particular the liability issues, that social workers need to have before implementing development projects in Vietnam:

“The organization asked us to help them to bring in anywhere from 50 to 100 nurses, doctors, or students to come to Vietnam to do medical (support). They have the attitude that “you know we are coming to Vietnam doing good” [...] I know enough about U.S. medical institutions to say that in the U.S., they will not allow you to do what you do in Vietnam because the policy is a lot more stringent. Doctors from Vietnam cannot even look at the patient without the consent letter. Therefore, I said, “This is not about being nice and kind of making things easy to do. It’s about liability. We are treating patients. Once you leave, if there is something wrong happened to the patient, who would be going to be liable?” The Vietnamese government has a process to make sure that the doctor under (your) teams are really doctors and practice out all of those stuffs. That is a fair requirement.”⁵³

Based on the acknowledgement of Vietnamese local context, VA NGOs sustained and expanded their development projects through inter-organizational partnerships with

⁵³ The online interview was conducted on November 2, 2020.

government bodies at the national, provincial, and local levels (Nguyen 2022). VA NGOs situate at a unique position in which they have information access in both home-host states and a wide network with funding agencies, donor organisations, international NGOs, local and global development experts and partners, government representatives, and community stakeholders. Moving from personal networks to extended organizational networks, VA NGOs are more likely to widen their circles of trust and form alliances to expand their access to shared information and resources (Nguyen 2022). Those diaspora-driven development organizations serve the bridging function by actively establishing intra-organizational partnerships among other civic organizations that want to do social work in Vietnam but do not have either the capacity, voice, or information needed (Nguyen 2022). Therefore, the knowledge can be used further as a tool within the organization's advocacy plan to an extent that: If known as a source of accurate knowledge and information, an organization would become the recognized partner that has a strong representation in the home country and gain greater access to key decision makers. An interviewee affirmed this matter by sharing her experiences with colleagues from the USAID⁵⁴ and other U.S.-based organizations:

“We have colleagues who work for the USAID or U.S.-based organizations. We share theories and sometimes they volunteer for us. When the Vietnamese government and PACCOM deal with, for example, the U.S. embassy, they always bring our name up. Now they recognize us as the big umbrella for all of the VA NGOs [...] Our coalition is not just about people in the community. The coalition also has the representation of the governments. We want them to know what we want to do, how we want to do it, and how we want them to come to help us and work with the U.S. side. It's called partnership building. Whether it is a community, people, the parents, the teachers, the

⁵⁴ United States Agency for International Development.

*youth or even the officials, you have to build the partnership [with them], and sustain it.”*⁵⁵ (Nguyen 2022)

The extension of intra-organizational partnerships has allowed for the formation of a network that plays a decisive role in the outcome of many social and economic interactions. Organizations with different objectives can step up efforts to form a flexible alliance working on the particular issue of shared interest. That helps to reduce the amount of time for accounting or reporting so that they can keep concentrating on direct programs. For example, current partners of the VA NGO Network include nonprofit organizations such as the Design Capital Asia, Our1World, Music Bridge, CHEER for Viet Nam, Project Vietnam Foundation, the Compassion Flower, ConnectMed, Design Capital for Hue, and Pacific Links Foundation. These organizations may wish to stand by and work with the people of impoverished communities to support the sustainable development of Vietnam and the enrichment of their cultural heritage. Therefore, the VA NGO Network declares the mission statement to “*lead effective collaborations and strengthen the humanitarian, cultural, and development work by delivering capacity building workshop to underserved communities.*”⁵⁶ Partner organizations have mobilized available resources to empower Vietnamese disadvantaged youth to access education, improve the health, and increase their economic opportunities. An interviewee talked about the history of VA NGO Network as a common ground for US-based Vietnamese diaspora driven nonprofit organizations:

“We have been there and have real conversations: “We are all in the central region, can we truly come together and find common ground, either in the humanitarian or development fields?” There was the Compassion Flower, then the Pacific Links Foundation and my organization: Design Capital Asia. That is a long story of [the

⁵⁵ The online interview was conducted on November 2, 2020.

⁵⁶ “About Us: Mission Statement,” Vietnamese-American Non-governmental Organization Network, accessed April 5, 2022, <http://va-ngo.org/about/>.

establishment of the] VA NGO Network; [it was formed] in the way organizations can talk to each other, coordinate more of the work, and make sure that the Vietnamese government recognizes Vietnamese-Americans' contributions to Vietnam.”⁵⁷ (Nguyen 2022)

VA NGOs play the role of organizing and coordinating bodies for other U.S.-based nonprofit organizations, which support sustained large-scale donations/contributions in Vietnam. The formation of a united front gained traction: other philanthropists, academic experts, and civic leaders from around the U.S. joined, and the VA NGO Network got more funding from large foundations such as the Ford Foundation, Asia Foundation, and Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation. The approach to communicating and connecting with stakeholders at local, national, and international levels enhances the bridging presence of VA NGOs that play the role of mediators and negotiators within the development field. The practice of combining philanthropy with community capacity building also transforms Vietnamese-American diaspora members into donors, impact investors, or stakeholders who play the role of intermediaries providing technical assistance, offering advice and guidance, and strengthening the support networks for homeland socio-economic development (Nguyen 2022). Community awareness campaigns and training programs have also been organized to promote the empowerment of disadvantaged people and sensitize the public and policymakers to the need for a safe, healthy living environment (see Chapter 3). The diversity and density of their efforts form core skills of *diaspora advocacy* (Ho and McConnell 2017, p.11). By raising awareness among policymakers, the diaspora can impact policies regarding humanitarian relief and development issues that simultaneously affect their status in the country of origin.

⁵⁷ The online interview was conducted on November 2, 2020.

4.4 Efforts and challenges to improve performances of “diplomacy by diaspora” in the Vietnamese-American perspective

Since the founding of VA NGOs, they have faced various difficulties challenging their development work in Vietnam, such as resource scarcities, demands of bribery, and lack of recognition. To meet these challenges, members of VA NGOs see an opportunity to share their philanthropic experiences with stakeholders and counterparts in Vietnam⁵⁸ by developing a two-part strategy of their own. First, they deliver capacity building programs through peer-to-peer interactive processes. At a time when resources are stretched and demands upon staff are increasing, the peer-to-peer model offers participants opportunities to learn from their peers by interacting with each other. For example, the HIPE program of the VA NGO Network aims to increase student knowledge and skills about puberty, adolescent sexual and reproductive health, hygiene, environmental protection, tobacco, and social issues such as gender and anti-human trafficking, which they then take into their families, schools, and communities to improve their health and living conditions. Second, they try to promote effective dialogue and collaboration with like-minded groups and build relationships with their Vietnamese counterparts and local authorities. Evidences from the constructive participation of VA NGOs into homeland social development illustrate how VA NGOs employ their interpersonal and process-management skills to pursue the practice of “diplomacy by diaspora” for balanced situations and win-win outcomes in the diaspora - homeland - development nexus. Such “diplomacy by diaspora” will promote more effective communication and understanding among local and overseas project staff in a spirit of mutual respect and partnership. Moreover,

⁵⁸ For example, since 2001, Pacific Links Foundation (a member organization of VA NGO Network) has conducted the semi-annual Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) program for early childhood educators and administrators from care centers and schools in remote areas of Hanoi, Hue City, Da Nang City, Quang Nam Province, An Giang Province, and Vinh Long Province. These training programs are organized in collaboration with provincial education offices and pedagogical colleges (the Center for School Cooperation and Humanity Education, Elite Bilingual School, and GreenLeaf Learning Center) in Vietnam and the International Children Assistance Network in California, U.S.

formal and long-time relationships with Vietnamese national and local governments with supporting administrative policies and procedures will ensure the successful operations of licensed VA NGOs' community development projects in Vietnam. Their non-profit and non-political activities in Vietnam are encouraged and supported by Vietnamese law (i.e., the National Program on the Promotion of Cooperation and Foreign Non-governmental Organization's Assistance 2019-2025). Furthermore, the transnational character of VA NGOs enables them to engage with a broad range of participants and stakeholders at national and international levels by sharing information with governments, NGOs, and other private and public entities.

The reason for initiating these philanthropic activities is based on the goodwill of providing needed support to worthy causes and the expectation that their experiences and knowledge will contribute to the development of the home country. Influencing outcomes resulting from the quality of their proactive efforts creates their attractiveness and also defines how these projections are received among the nonprofit target audience and local authorities. In the diplomatic context, the promotion of philanthropy has a number of benefits for image branding because it is the topic that creates positive emotional appeals. Effective communication and engagement are occurring, and Vietnam is witnessing a growth of U.S.-based NGOs (including VA NGOs, see more Chapter 3) which serve as instruments for empowering disadvantaged communities through their capacity building projects, after being granted the state's permission. For example, the Scholarship Program to Elevate Education & Develop Life Skills (SEEDS) program of Pacific Links Foundation provides academic scholarships for talented students from impoverished families throughout the Central Provinces of Vietnam in rural areas, improves their skill sets for job readiness and self-awareness, guides them towards a career choice, and expands job opportunities. With about a \$400 USD scholarship value for a middle or high school student and about a \$1,500 USD scholarship

value for a national university student for one academic year, more than 2,000 middle school, high school, and university students received scholarships in the 2019-2020 school year.⁵⁹ Another example is the Girl Empowerment Mekong Scholarship (GEMS) program of the Pacific Links Foundation, which aims to prevent the trafficking of girls and young women by helping them attain education and improving their career prospects. The program provides scholarships to Vietnamese girls residing along the Vietnam-Cambodia border and works with their families and local communities to raise awareness about human trafficking and financial literacy. Since 2005, more than 10,000 long-term scholarships have been awarded; 535 home visits were conducted during the 2019-2020 school year; approximately 500 students from 30 schools received scholarships in 2020; and more than 700 scholarship recipients have graduated from high schools since 2007.⁶⁰ These changes and contributions seem to signal a direction that focuses on diaspora-homeland collaborative development through carefully managing mutual communication and relationship building.

The strategic posture of VA NGOs in relationship building stems from their negotiating and mediating abilities; however, it needs a system of active communication adopted by the home state so that it can enhance participation and contributions from all stakeholders at all levels. In this regard, there is a significant need for communication channels to be created between the home state and diaspora, which can translate into a favorable context for this emerging transnational interaction. This demand mainly refers to the possibility of adopting policy agendas, either at the time they are formulated or when they are implemented, to mainstream diaspora engagement in harmony with the sociopolitical realities and development strategies of the home nation-state. In regards to the efforts of the Vietnamese government to

⁵⁹ Pacific Link Foundation, *Building a Brighter Future: Annual Report 2020* (California: Pacific Link Foundation, 2020), 7, accessed October 26, 2021, <https://pacificlinks.org/publications/>.

⁶⁰ Pacific Link Foundation, *Building a Bright Future: Annual Report 2020* (California: Pacific Link Foundation, 2020), 10, accessed October 26, 2021, <https://pacificlinks.org/publications/>.

engage overseas Vietnamese communities for its development progress, a survey targeting the ethnic Vietnamese population in the United States was conducted to examine the levels of their demographic and social engagements in Vietnam. Table 11 demonstrates the ratios of interaction with the original home country among Vietnamese Americans ranging from ages 18 years and older.

Table 11 Level of engagement with the original home country among Vietnamese Americans

Question 1: How often do you fly to Vietnam?

	Total	18-29 years	30-49 years	50 years and above
1 - 2 times per year	4.4%	7.6%	-	5.5%
More than 2 times per year	4.4%	-	13%	-
Once every several years	19.4%	26.9%	8.7%	22.2%
I have not been to Vietnam yet	71.6%	65.3%	78.2%	72.2%

Question 2: Have you heard about Vietnam’s expatriate-oriented incentives such as visa exemption, dual citizenship, the encouragement of foreign investment, and the utilization of highly-skilled workers from overseas Vietnamese community?

	Total	18-29 years	30-49 years	50 years and above
Yes	26.8%	30.7%	21.7%	27.7%
No	73.1%	69.2%	78.2%	72.2%

Question 3: Would Vietnam be considered as one of the potential places for your personal career development?

	Total	18-29 years	30-49 years	50 years and above
Yes	29.8%	38.4%	30.4%	16.6%
No	40.3%	30.7%	47.8%	44.4%
Don't know	29.8%	30.7%	21.7%	38.8%

Question 4: Have you made charitable donation(s) to help disadvantaged people in Vietnam?

	Total	18-29 years	30-49 years	50 years and above
Yes	43.2%	53.8%	34.7%	38.9%
No	56.7%	46.1%	65.2%	61.1%

Question 5: Which organization(s) do you donate to?

Vietnamese state-run social service organization	7.5%
Individual charity	16.25%
Vietnamese-American NGO	7.5%
Other international NGO	7.5%
Hometown association	3.75%
Faith-based organization	8.75%
I do NOT donate	48.75%

Question 6: Do you plan to live permanently in Vietnam?

	Total	18-29 years	30-49 years	50 years and above
Yes	10.4%	11.5%	8.7%	11.1%
No	73.1%	65.3%	91.3%	61.1%
Don't know	16.4%	23%	-	27.7%

Source: By author.

An online survey was conducted from April 1, 2021, to May 31, 2021. It got 67 responses of Vietnamese Americans ages 18 years and older. The majority of participants were second generation who have not been to Vietnam yet; however, “(*diaspora-homeland relations are warming every day, especially with the younger generations,*” said a respondent. Expatriate-oriented incentives of the Vietnamese government are not very popular in the overseas community. Only 26% know about the policy changes that encourage *overseas Vietnamese individuals* to return, invest, and work in Vietnam. About 73% of Vietnamese-American respondents say they have not heard about the expatriate-oriented incentives of the Vietnamese government, such as visa exemption, dual citizenship, the encouragement of foreign investment, and the utilization of highly-skilled workers from overseas Vietnamese communities.⁶¹ Among 43% of respondents who make charitable contributions, their donations are mainly sent to individual charities to help disadvantaged people in Vietnam. About 30% of respondents consider Vietnam as one of the potential places for their personal career development. However, 73% of them do not intend to live permanently in Vietnam.

⁶¹ Related Vietnamese legal documents include Law No. 24/2008/QH12 dated November 13, 2008 on Vietnamese Nationality; Law No. 67/2014/QH13 dated November 26, 2014 on Investment; Decree No. 87/2014/ND-CP dated September 22, 2014 on attraction of scientists and technologists who are overseas Vietnamese and foreign experts to participate in scientific and technological activities in Vietnam; Decree No. 82/2015/ND-CP dated September 24, 2015 on visa exemption for Vietnamese people residing overseas and foreigners who are spouses, children of Vietnamese people residing overseas or of Vietnamese citizens.

The survey result indicates that there should certainly be a scope to improve this situation and facilitate Vietnamese diaspora engagement for socio-economic development in the home country. The diaspora, as such an important development actor who navigates both environments and acts as a bridge between host and home countries, needs more space to be involved in the “diplomacy by diaspora” and have their voices adequately heard within the development field and at policy level. The abovementioned interview findings highlight the unity among VA NGOs through the establishment of a VA NGO Network and the even-handed approach to a cordial diaspora-homeland relationship for effective transnational cooperation. This approach may be utilized towards the end of informed and collaborative policymaking that will consider the best arrangements for the bridging and negotiating functions of the diaspora. By enabling the active outreach of diaspora advocacy, the policymaking process will also simultaneously improve the level of diaspora engagement into homeland development to support constructive and mutually beneficial outcomes.

4.5 Conclusion

Through the years, the VA NGO Network has attempted to be a mediator to help Vietnamese-American groups interact with Vietnamese officials through face-to-face dialogue (Sidel 2007, p.16). This chapter employs the concept of “diplomacy by diaspora” to clarify issues pertaining to the nature of VA NGOs and their integrative negotiation attempts toward the original home country. It highlights some strategic methods and instruments that these Vietnamese-American social workers have implemented to improve their advocacy techniques, prepare for all eventualities, and increase the reach and influence of their development organizations. The practice of “diplomacy by diaspora” enhances the facilitative mode of engagement to encourage the open dialogue and build trust among diverse stakeholders in the diaspora and original home country. The formation of a unified front

accelerates the Vietnamese-American diaspora engagement in the social development of Vietnam by enhancing the diaspora functions of representation, mediation, and advocacy.

The VA NGO Network has several different projects in place that engage different target audiences with differing developmental domains, whilst maintaining the overarching goals of enhancing the capacity of individuals/groups, empowering impoverished communities, and improving the recognition of the Vietnamese diaspora regarding the role of development actors they can and should play. Regarding the important role that the diaspora plays in development, the practical survey findings imply that issues of diaspora involvement and relevant policies need to be raised more generally within the Vietnamese government and diaspora communities. Policymaking shall be viewed as an opportunity to influence the promotion of transnational engagement through formal partnerships with like-minded individuals and groups by forming long-term relationships and contributing to constructive dialogues. Chapter 5 will examine the state capacity and response of Vietnam to diaspora engagement in an effort to answer the question: “What determines a successful diaspora-homeland cooperation?” The broader view of the government’s role in promoting diaspora-homeland cooperation offers insight into how Vietnam can engage its U.S.-based diaspora in the development process and enable the provision of essential services and support to home communities.

CHAPTER 5

ENABLING AN ENVIRONMENT FOR DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT

5.1 Overview

Chapters 3 and 4 trace the evolution of VA NGOs and clarify how diaspora members engage themselves into development processes of the Vietnamese home state. Chapter 5 examines how this process has been fueled and supported by legal and political programs in the home country. As described in the previous chapters, Vietnamese-American diaspora giving practices have led to the assumption that such practices are due only to a feeling of belonging and dedicated to contributing to the development process of the country of origin. On the contrary, the homeland government should also take an active role if they want to call for diaspora cooperation. During the 1986 reform, the Vietnamese government began to understand the potential of Vietnamese living overseas for the economic development of the country. Vietnamese people who live overseas are considered the important factor to strengthen the relationship and cooperation between Vietnam and other countries; their contributions to the national construction and development of Vietnam is also recognized (Resolution 36 - NQ/TW dated March 26, 2004).

Supportive policies fostering this transnational practice include the articulation of dual citizenship, the externalization of national strategy to attract foreign talent, and the establishment of an investor-friendly legal framework. Cultural diplomacy is used to approach overseas Vietnamese communities via media to reduce tensions and call for unity between Vietnam and Vietnamese-American diaspora (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.30). VA NGOs are encouraged to engage with Vietnam to promote the development of a thriving society through community development projects with their Vietnamese counterparts. Such policies aim at raising more capital funds in the form of foreign investments, attracting and retaining talent with managerial experience and technical skills, and enhancing the links between local

enterprises and their international partners. However, there are many challenges facing the diaspora that influence its engagement efforts. For example, although the joint projects of VA NGOs and their Vietnamese counterparts can accomplish numerous positive changes, this cooperation is not always smooth owing to the climate of mistrust between the local government and the Vietnamese-American diaspora. The reasons why some VA NGOs' leaders still hesitate to officially register with PACCOM Vietnam are the reluctance to alienate their donors who are preoccupied with the fear of corruption and inefficiency when working with the Vietnamese government, bureaucratic hurdles to registration, annual renewal process, and lack of incentives, such as tax exemption and charitable and corporate giving (Truong et al. 2008, p.259, p.271). Moreover, the confusion about the community of overseas Vietnamese refugees results in domestic discrimination and exclusion in Vietnam that may provoke anti-communist activities as a reaction among the next generation of Vietnamese Americans (Truong et al. 2008, p.262) and simultaneously influence the relationship of diaspora philanthropists with their homeland.

Given the important contributions to the development of the country of origin, the outcomes of diaspora-homeland cooperation are evaluated in the context of current discussions on the role of the diaspora as a *development contributor* to the homeland. This chapter aims to respond to challenges faced in the newly emerging diaspora-homeland cooperation by addressing the question: "What determine(s) a successful diaspora-homeland cooperation?" Such cooperation hinges upon whether diaspora members believe that law enforcement institutions in the country of origin are legitimate and trustworthy. "Diaspora diplomacy," which is deployed to help the diaspora understand opportunities in the home country, is discussed through the lens of transnationalism "from above" from the Vietnamese perspective.

5.2 “Diaspora diplomacy” as transnational practices “from above”: Concepts and relevant literatures

As a social force, transnationalism now creates a transitional social space in which not only can those who define themselves as transmigrants trace their ethnic origins but also an increasing number of people participating in this space can engage in the nation-building processes of two or more nations and simultaneously construct their identities (Basch et al. 1994, p.29; Faist 1998, p.234; Jackson et al. 2004, pp.1-3). Within the definition of “transnationalism” given in previous chapters, the distinction must be highlighted between transnational activities conducted by grassroots initiatives (i.e., diaspora-driven NGOs and their home-country counterparts) and those conducted by powerful institutional actors (i.e., the state and its overseas branches of government). The rapid international movement of large numbers of individuals as well as globalization and its impacts on the growth of information and communication technologies require resolute action and cooperation from relevant actors (Birka and Klavins 2020, p.12). Realizing the important role of overseas communities, homeland government generates state-level activities as a formal response to mobilize their material and nonmaterial resources for homeland development (Smith 1996, as cited in Portes et al. 1999, p.220; Nguyen 2022).

Governments of many countries that have large number of diasporas employ economic and political diaspora strategies to tap into those tremendous capital and human resources (Brinkerhoff 2006, p.20). The strategies are developed to promote two-way communication and encourage the involvement of diaspora communities into the progress of science and technology; such long-term strategies aim to enable both collaboration and strategic alliances among those working with diaspora communities (Birka and Klavins 2020, p.12). Home-state governments also consider how to connect with the populations abroad by actively formulating, implementing, and financing diaspora engagement policies to a certain extent (Birka and

Klavins 2020, pp.4-11). Furthermore, the nation-states seeking to be more integrated into the global economy are entitled to exercise “diaspora diplomacy” with respect to the crucial ally that helps advance economic relationship and external relations (Newland and Tanaka 2010, pp.1-2; Brinkerhoff 2012, p.80; Newland and Plaza 2013, p.3; Rana 2011, as cited in Birka and Klavins 2020, p.3).

The processes of bridging the diaspora-homeland divide and forging diaspora-homeland cooperative development can occur through insider connections by practicing transnational grassroot activities or through institutional channels by conducting state-driven diaspora diplomacy. In this context, diplomacy may be defined as the state’s foreign policy instrument, which influences the decisions and behavior of foreign governments and peoples through negotiations, mediation, dialogue encounters, and other nonviolent means. State-driven diaspora diplomacy is known as the use of the Foreign Service or other branches of government with the mission to encourage relationships and cooperation among the homeland government, its diaspora in the host nation, and other interest associations in both countries for mutual benefits (Birka and Klavins 2020, p.2). The recent study of diaspora diplomacy, which has focused on either “diplomacy by diaspora” or “diplomacy through diaspora” or “diplomacy for diaspora,” emphasizes its diverse characteristics and outlooks, which vary owing to countries’ histories as well as their cultural, economic, social, and political situations (Ho and McConnell 2017, pp.3-4; Rana 2011, as cited in Birka and Klavins 2020, p.3).

Home states devote more attention to the policy of diaspora diplomacy to mobilize the diasporas function as diplomatic actors (Ho and McConnell 2017, p.7). Different from the “diplomacy by diaspora” conducted by non-state actors through transnational grassroot activities, “diplomacy for diaspora” and “diplomacy through diaspora” are exercised by home states to lobby for national interests and bilateral relations with host states or foster a mutual

understanding that extends beyond formal, state-driven initiatives (Ho and McConnell 2017, pp.7-11). Such practices are considered an alternative descriptor for a mode of soft power or a strategy to promote the states' external interests (Rana 2009 and Gonzalez 2012, as cited in Ho and McConnell 2017, p.7). The further development of diaspora diplomacy is conducted on a governmental level to address the concerns of diasporas, improve the two-way communication or the systematic two-way relationship between the diasporas and the home state, and involve diasporas in various sectors of interest for development in the home country (Birka and Klavins 2020, pp.4-11). In this case, diaspora performs the bridging function between sending and receiving states or among multiple stakeholders and audiences for diplomatic purposes (Ho and McConnell 2017, p.11).

5.3 Diaspora diplomacy “from above”: The Vietnamese perspective

This section investigates the efforts of the home state to monitor the engagement of overseas Vietnamese individuals toward its developmental progress via practical policies and procedures. For the sake of national interests, tremendous efforts have been made by the Vietnamese government to overcome barriers to the diaspora-homeland relationship. The Vietnamese government has become active in building positive relationships with overseas Vietnamese communities worldwide and has developed a more welcoming attitude towards them. The Vietnamese government has declared overseas Vietnamese communities worldwide as integral parts of the nation (Clause 2 of Article 1, Resolution 36-NQ/TW dated March 26, 2004 on overseas Vietnamese affairs) and issued numerous policies to foster homeland engagement among such communities, especially in the economic development and foreign investment spheres. Vietnamese individuals living abroad have been praised for their contributions to the socio-economic development and philanthropic activities in Vietnam.⁶²

⁶² For example, on February 3, 2018, the former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chairman of the State Committee for Overseas Vietnamese Affairs, Vũ Hồng Nam, presented 700 overseas Vietnamese residing in Thailand with certificates of recognition; on May 15, 2010, on behalf of the State Committee for Overseas Vietnamese Affairs, the former Ambassador to Italy, Đặng Khánh Thoại, presented certificates of recognition to

Diaspora diplomacy, as the institutionalization of diaspora-oriented policy, lies at the core of Vietnam's collective efforts to unite Vietnamese individuals living abroad worldwide as a resource for the state. The adoption of "diplomacy for diaspora" and "diplomacy through diaspora" reveals the efforts of the Vietnamese government to connect with overseas Vietnamese communities, build cross-border relationships, and strengthen diaspora-homeland cooperation. The Vietnamese government has taken numerous measures and diplomatic actions to raise capital from external investors, attract more investors from overseas Vietnamese communities, encourage expatriate experts and intellectuals to take part in scientific and technological activities in Vietnam, build business relationships between local and international companies, and promote bilateral relations based on their roles as political and cultural bridges between the home state and host states.

5.3.1 Diplomacy for diaspora

In 1959, in the pursuance of the Decree 416-TTg signed by the former Prime Minister Phạm Văn Đồng, the Ban Việt Kiều Trung Ương (in English: Central Commission for Overseas Vietnamese) was established with the initial aim of helping Vietnamese individuals returning from overseas reintegrate into Vietnamese society. Most of them had been hired by the French colony to work in Thailand, New Caledonia (New World), the Republic of Vanuatu (New Island), and South America as plantation coolies and miners. The Central Commission for Overseas Vietnamese is regarded as the precursor to the State Committee for Overseas Vietnamese Affairs, which handles overseas Vietnamese affairs and its contribution to the development of Vietnam under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Pursuant to Decree No.74-CP dated July 30, 1994, on the tasks, authority, and organization of the apparatus of the Committee for overseas Vietnamese, the tasks and authority of the Committee is to employ various

Italian Vietnamese residing in Rome; on January 10, 2006, the former Deputy Foreign Minister, Nguyễn Phú Bình, presented outstanding Canadian-Vietnamese businessmen with certificates of recognition for their contributions to the growth of Vietnam and bilateral relations between Vietnam and Canada.

measures at the state level in order to promote their patriotic tradition and encourage the contribution of overseas Vietnamese to homeland development (Article 2). A ceremony to mark the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the State Committee for Overseas Vietnamese Affairs was held on November 19, 2019, in Hanoi. The ceremony saw the participation of the Secretary of the Party Central Committee and Head of the Central Commission for Mass Mobilization, Trương Thị Mai, and the Deputy Prime Minister, Phạm Bình Minh, who praised the Committee for its effective performance in providing consultancy to the state and implementing policies related to overseas Vietnamese. In the effort to attract capital funds from overseas Vietnamese, several measures have been taken by the state to develop policy and regulatory frameworks to shape a positive investment environment in Vietnam. The following laws and decrees are relevant to this purpose.

A. Decision No. 170/1999/QĐ-TTg was released on August 19, 1999, in an effort by the Vietnamese government to further facilitate the flow of remittances. There is no restriction on the amount and usage of remittances. Tax on remittance was eliminated (Clause 3 of Article 6). Furthering Decision No. 170/1999/QĐ-TTg, Decision No. 78/2002/QĐ-TTg was later released, on June 17, 2002, to expand the types of institutions that could receive and deliver foreign currency remitted by overseas Vietnamese to their relatives in Vietnam or for charity purposes.

B. On March 26, 2004, Resolution 36-NQ/TW of the Communist Party of Vietnam Politburo on overseas Vietnamese affairs was proposed to create favorable conditions for overseas Vietnamese to return to Vietnam to visit their homeland and relatives, worship their ancestors, conduct business, invest, and cooperate in every sector, including science, technology, education, culture, arts, sports, and charity. Among numerous measures embarking on an overseas Vietnamese engagement policy for development in Vietnam, the Resolution called for further relaxing travel and immigration issues, streamlining and

reducing investment rules, encouraging the purchase of property and real estate assets, and broadening discussion about new policies on overseas Vietnamese to assist them in the protection of their rights (Clause 1 of Article 3). The Resolution recognized their contributions to national construction (Clause 1 of Article 1), especially their brainpower, and called for better policies and conditions to maximize those contributions (Clauses 2 and 3 of Article 3). This Resolution has had the most significance since it relates to all branches of government, levels, localities, and mass organizations.

C. Decision No. 110/2004/QĐ-TTg was released on June 23, 2004, to promulgate the Vietnamese government's Action Program for the successful implementation of Resolution No. 36-NQ/TW regarding overseas Vietnamese affairs. The Action Program aims to raise awareness about national identity, call for national unity, and create favorable conditions to attract investment by and enhance cooperation with overseas Vietnamese. The Decision requires the thorough involvement of relevant ministries, administrations, branches of government, localities, and mass organizations (i.e., the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Central Committee for Ideology and Culture, the Central Committee for Mass Agitation, the Caucus Commission for Party organizations overseas, the Central Committee for Sciences and Education, the Presidium of Vietnam Fatherland Front's Central Committee) in disseminating the contents of Resolution No. 36-NQ/TW regarding overseas Vietnamese affairs and its Action Program to international organizations and countries in which Vietnamese people reside as well as collecting public opinions of relevant agencies. The Decision states that the Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs takes the principal responsibility for signing bilateral and multilateral international treaties or conducting negotiations and other administrative procedures to create favorable conditions for overseas Vietnamese to integrate themselves successfully into the society of their host countries and protect their legitimate interests. This "diplomacy for diaspora" is

exercised with the aim of helping overseas Vietnamese stabilize their lives in their host countries, attach themselves to the homeland, and be able to contribute to the development of the homeland.

The Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs cooperates with relevant ministries and the State Bank of Vietnam to promote talent acquisition policies and recruitment strategies among overseas Vietnamese experts who are capable of creating scientific and technological innovations or providing consultancy on technology transfer, management, and operation. According to this Decision No.110/2004/QD-TTg, government ministries and agencies, including the Ministry of Science and Technology, Ministry of Education and Training, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Planning and Investment, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Industry, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, State Bank of Vietnam, and General Department of Customs must coordinate with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Public Security in reviewing current regulations and developing new policies to encourage the involvement and contribution of overseas Vietnamese professional in the fields of science and technology (Part II, Article 4b). The State Bank of Vietnam and Ministry of Foreign Affairs must take the responsibility for reviewing or amending relevant policies, attracting foreign currencies, and submitting reports to the Prime Minister in the fourth quarter of 2004 (Part II, Article 5c).

Decision No.110/2004/QD-TTg proposes detailed measures to settle the requests of overseas Vietnamese individuals on nationality, inheritance, marriage, and family in a fast and appropriate manner. These measures include simplifying legal documents regarding the entry, exit, stay, and residence of overseas Vietnamese individuals, thus establishing a one-price policy for returning overseas Vietnamese and their families and amending regulations concerning real estate purchases and foreign investment. These policies aim to attract overseas Vietnamese talents to participate in domestic affairs; create

favorable conditions for scientific research, employment, and business cooperation with overseas Vietnamese intellectuals; and encourage the engagement of overseas Vietnamese who are interested in working for Vietnam's programs and projects on bilateral and multilateral cooperation with foreign countries or international organizations.

Decision No. 110/2004/QĐ-TTg implies the use of cultural diplomacy to enhance the dissemination of Vietnamese culture in overseas Vietnamese communities. The Ministry of Culture and Information takes the principal responsibility for supporting the publication of newspapers, journals, and electronic websites for overseas Vietnamese, distributing cultural products created by overseas Vietnamese in accordance with regulations on publication in Vietnam, and building mechanisms to encourage Vietnamese artists to perform in overseas Vietnamese communities and encourage overseas Vietnamese talents to perform in Vietnam. Furthering the previous Decision No. 281/QĐ-TTg, of March 22, 2004, on the promotion of Vietnamese language teaching and learning for overseas Vietnamese, Decision No. 110/2004/QĐ-TTg stipulated that the Ministry of Education and Training shall establish the Scheme Management Board that includes the involvement of the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Culture and Information, Government Office, Radio Voice of Vietnam, Vietnam Television Station, and other relevant media agencies to promote Vietnamese language teaching for overseas Vietnamese youths at cultural exchange centers, schools, and educational institutions. Furthermore, the Vietnamese government and related agencies are actively engaged in cultural exchange activities between Vietnamese people and overseas Vietnamese, especially the younger generation, as a major part of diaspora diplomatic efforts. The purpose of such efforts is to cooperate with overseas Vietnamese in the development process of Vietnam by extending not only economic-oriented cooperation but

also building a mutual understanding of homeland language, customs, and cultural traditions.

Resolution 36-NQ/TW regarding overseas Vietnamese affairs, dated March 26, 2004, and its Action Program offered a coordinated policy that involves a wide range of organizations at various levels, including the Vietnamese Father Front, ministries, local governments, and domestic and overseas government offices. Some clauses are more advanced and serve to orient subsequent strategy and policy formulation towards overseas Vietnamese individuals. Pursuant to the Resolution, these policies were issued and implemented:

D. Decision No. 135/2007/QD-TTg was released on August 17, 2007, on the promulgation of the regulation of visa exemption for overseas Vietnamese and foreigner spouses and children of overseas Vietnamese or Vietnamese citizens. Decree No. 82/2015/ND-CP was issued on September 24, 2015, as the final text of the regulation. A visa exemption paper is valid for up to five years and must be at least six months shorter than the remaining validity term of the passport or permanent residence paper granted by a foreign country. People entering with visa exemption papers may stay in Vietnam up to 90 days for each entry.

E. Vietnam has amended its nationality law to legalize dual citizenship. Under Article 3 of Law No. 07/1998/QH10, Vietnam recognized that Vietnamese citizens possess a single nationality. The country has permitted dual citizenship under limited circumstances since July 1, 2009. Issues relating to citizenship were revised in Law No. 24/2008/QH12 on Vietnamese Nationality, which has taken effect since July 1, 2009 and continues to uphold the single-nationality principle but allows for numerous exceptions with flexibility. Exceptional cases of dual citizenship are specified in Law No. 24/2008/QH12, including special cases permitted by the President upon acquisition of Vietnamese nationality or application for restoration of Vietnamese citizenship (Clauses 2 and 3 of Article 19; Clause

5 of Article 23), the nationality of adopted children (Article 37) and of those who have acquired foreign citizenship but not yet lost their Vietnamese nationality and still desire to retain their Vietnamese citizenship; registration to retain Vietnamese citizenship is implemented until July 1, 2014 (Clause 2 of Article 13). Law No. 24/2008/QH12 stated that those who regained their Vietnamese nationality would enjoy full civic rights but might have to fulfill citizen obligations as prescribed by law (Article 5). Law No. 56/2014/QH13 of the National Assembly amends and supplements Law No. 24/2008/QH12 by loosening the requirement for nationality registration. Law No. 56/2014/QH13 allows overseas Vietnamese, who have not yet lost their Vietnamese nationality but have no papers proving it, to register at overseas Vietnamese representative offices at any time to establish their Vietnamese nationality and to be granted Vietnamese passports (Clause 2 of Article 1).

F. Overseas Vietnamese have had the right to acquire real estate and start their own business based on the provisions of Law No. 03/1998/QH10 on the Promotion of Domestic Investment since its issuance on May 20, 1998. Law No. 03/1998/QH10 was amended twice to appoint grant-funded incentives to health-care technology investment projects, research and development activities, information technology, and other science/advanced manufacturing technology investment projects, as stated in Law No. 67/2014/QH13, issued on November 26, 2014. Moreover, business owners are granted income tax relief, duty exemptions for imported goods used for investment projects, and exemption/reduction of land rent for a certain period of time or throughout the project execution as governmental incentives and support for the investments of overseas Vietnamese (Clause 1 of Article 15).

G. The state loosened its real estate and housing ownership laws for foreign entities and individuals. The Law on Housing No. 65/2014/QH13, passed on November 25, 2014,

and the Law on Real Estate Business No. 66/2014/QH13, passed on November 25, 2014, provide overseas Vietnamese individuals with opportunities to engage in real estate business or own property in Vietnam. Under Law No. 65/2014/QH13, overseas Vietnamese individuals are entitled to buy, sell, mortgage, or inherit residential houses (Clause 1 of Article 10). Overseas Vietnamese are also entitled to conduct real estate trading, brokerage services, counseling, or management in Vietnam as prescribed in Law No. 66/2014/QH13 (Article 60).

H. The state issued Decree No. 40/2014/ND-CP on utilization and well treatment of individuals in scientific and technological activities and Decree No. 87/2014/ND-CP on attracting scientists and technologists who are overseas Vietnamese and foreign experts to participate in scientific and technological activities in Vietnam. Overseas Vietnamese or foreign experts and their family members (including parents, spouses, and biological or adopted children under the age of 18) will be granted multiple-entry visas or temporary residence cards with the maximum term; those who are awarded medals or honorable titles by the Vietnamese state and temporarily residing in Vietnam will be considered for permanent residency in conformity with the law on the entry, exit, and residence of foreigners in Vietnam (Clauses 1 and 2 of Article 4 of Decree No. 87/2014/ND-CP). They will be provided with favorable working conditions including equipment and supplies, laboratories, experimental facilities, high salary, and funding support and may also be appointed leading posts in science and technology organizations (Articles 5, 7, and 8 of Decree No. 40/2014/ND-CP; Clause 2 of Article 10 of Decree No. 87/2014/ND-CP). Their family members will be assisted in job seeking or in the student enrollment process (Article 5 of Decree No. 87/2014/ND-CP). Overseas Vietnamese and foreign experts may enjoy maximum tax incentives or transfer their legitimate incomes abroad in conformity with the

law on foreign exchange management and relevant regulations (Clause 2 of Article 10 of Decree No. 87/2014/ND-CP).

I. Decree No. 27/2020/ND-CP, dated March 01, 2020, amends and supplements several articles of Decree No. 40/2014/ND-CP on individuals' participation in science and technology and Decree No. 87/2014/ND-CP on attracting the participation of overseas Vietnamese people and foreign experts in science and technology in Vietnam. To this end, the state has authorized a loosening of the standards, for example, abolishing the requirement of scientific doctoral degrees or registered patents for candidates (Clause 2 of Article 2). In addition, overseas Vietnamese and foreign experts who come to Vietnam to work in scientific and technological areas are entitled to negotiated salaries that are equivalent to the salaries for equivalent positions held in foreign organizations or foreign-owned enterprises (Clause 3 of Article 2). Individuals are also entitled to special allowances in consideration of their scientific or technological research achievements in Vietnam, such as academic publishing in prestigious scientific journals and the successful registration of intellectual property rights in plant varieties or inventions, with financial support from the National Foundation for Science and Technology Development and other funding sources (Clause 5 of Article 2).

J. On February 18, 2019, the former Prime Minister Nguyễn Xuân Phúc issued Decision No. 11/2019/QĐ-TTg on redefining the functions, tasks, powers, and organizational structure of the State Committee for Overseas Vietnamese Affairs, affiliated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. From April 5, 2019, the Committee was organized into six affiliated divisions: the General Research Department, the Information and Culture Department, the Economic-Science and Technology Relationship Department, the Legislation and Inspection Department, the Office Division, and Quê Hương Magazine. One of the objectives of the policy is to mobilize and use resources of overseas Vietnamese

for the country's development process. Table 12 illustrates a list of legal documents relevant to overseas Vietnamese engagement for development in Vietnam.

Table 12 Summary of Vietnam's legal documents relevant to overseas Vietnamese

Date	Document	Description
August 31, 1982	Decision No. 151-HDBT	To guide the remittance and goods receiving of families having relatives residing in overseas other than socialist states.
April 10, 1987	Decision No.126-CT	To amend and supplement Decision No. 151-HDBT dated August 31, 1982 on remittance and goods sending from overseas Vietnamese to help their families.
August 19, 1999	Decision No. 170/1999/QD-TTg	To further facilitate the flow of remittances.
June 17, 2002	Decision No. 78/2002/QD-TTg	To expand the types of institutions that can receive and deliver foreign currency remitted by overseas Vietnamese.
March 26, 2004	Resolution 36-NQ/TW on overseas Vietnamese affairs	To create favorable conditions for overseas Vietnamese to return to Vietnam, conduct business, invest, and cooperate in science, technology,

		<p>education, culture, arts, sports, and charity sectors.</p> <p>To call for further relaxing travel and immigration issues, streamlining and reducing investment rules.</p>
June 23, 2004	Decision No. 110/2004/QĐ-TTg	<p>To promulgate the Action Program for the implementation of Resolution No. 36-NQ/TW on overseas Vietnamese affairs.</p> <p>To raise awareness about national identity, call for national unity, and create favorable conditions to attract investment by and enhance cooperation with overseas Vietnamese.</p>
November 13, 2008	Law No. 24/2008/QH12	To legalize dual citizenship.
May 12, 2014	Decree No. 40/2014/ND-CP	To provide utilization and good treatment of individuals engaged in scientific and technological activities.
June 26, 2014	Law No. 56/2014/QH13	To loosen the requirement for nationality registration.
September 22, 2014	Decree No. 87/2014/ND-CP	To attract Vietnamese scientists and technologists who are overseas and foreign experts to participate in

		scientific and technological activities in Vietnam.
November 25, 2014	Law No. 65/2014/QH13	To give overseas Vietnamese more opportunities to access property.
November 25, 2014	Law No. 66/2014/QH13	To give overseas Vietnamese more opportunities to develop businesses in the real estate sector.
November 26, 2014	Law No. 67/2014/QH13	To appoint grant-funded incentives to health-care technology investment projects, research and development activities, information technology, and other science/advanced manufacturing technology investment projects; provide income tax relief, duty exemptions for imported goods used for investment projects, and exemption/reduction of land rent for a certain period of time or throughout the project execution of overseas Vietnamese.
September 24, 2015	Decree No. 82/2015/ND-CP	Visa exemption for overseas Vietnamese and foreigner spouses and children of overseas Vietnamese or Vietnamese citizens.

February 18, 2019	Decision No. 11/2019/QĐ-TTg	To redefine the functions, tasks, powers, and organizational structure of the State Committee for Overseas Vietnamese Affairs, affiliated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
March 01, 2020	Decree No. 27/2020/NĐ-CP	To loosen the standards for policies that attract scientists and technologists.

Source: Nguyen 2022.

Particularly, the activities of foreign NGOs (including VA NGOs) and their administration by the Vietnamese government are managed by Decree No. 12/2012/NĐ-CP on the registration and management of activities of non-governmental organizations in Vietnam dated March 1, 2012. The Committee for Foreign NGO Affairs (COMINGO), Vietnam Union of Friendship Organizations (VUFO), and PACCOM are responsible authorities of the operation of foreign NGOs in Vietnam. The VUFO-NGO Resource Centre, which was established in 1993 through a partnership between foreign NGOs working in Vietnam and the VUFO, exists to serve the community of foreign NGOs and their Vietnamese partner institutions. PACCOM, which is the specialized and functional body of VUFO, was established on June 10, 1989. COMINGO was established later on April 24, 2001, under Decision 59/2001/QĐ-TTg on the establishment of the Working Committee for foreign non-governmental organizations. The activities of VUFO and PACCOM are governed by Decree No. 12/2012/NĐ-CP on the registration and management of activities of non-governmental organizations in Vietnam. Table 13 highlights main tasks of COMINGO, VUFO, and PACCOM regarding the governances of foreign NGOs in Vietnam.

Table 13 Vietnamese administrations of foreign NGOs affairs working in Vietnam

Organization	Main tasks
<p>Committee for Foreign NGO Affairs (COMINGO)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Propose guidelines, policies, and oversight for the implementation of laws and policies relating to the operations of foreign NGOs. - Forward documentation to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the purpose of granting, extension, supplement, amendment, and revocation of the Certificates of Revocation of foreign NGOs in Vietnam. - Periodically report to the Prime Minister on the operations of foreign NGOs in Vietnam.
<p>Vietnam Union of Friendship Organizations (VUFO)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Act as the standing agency of the COMINGO. - Promote cooperative relations between Vietnam and other countries by information exchange; holding meetings, seminars and workshops; and organizing study tours, exhibitions, short-term training courses, and consultations.
<p>People's Aid Coordinating Committee (PACCOM)</p>	<p>Facilitate foreign NGOs' activities in Vietnam:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gather and disseminate information concerning the activities of foreign NGOs in Vietnam. - Monitor and evaluate the activities of foreign NGOs.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Process the issue, extension, and amendment of registration of different types for foreign NGOs working in Vietnam. - Develop training manuals on foreign NGO aid mobilization and issues in the development project cycle. - Participate in guiding and monitoring the implementation of regulations, laws, and policies on foreign NGOs affairs; recommend policies to the government of Vietnam for the operation of foreign NGOs in Vietnam. <p>Assist local partners in their partnership with foreign NGOs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assess the needs of central institutions and localities to seek funding/assistance from foreign NGOs. - Conduct training courses for localities on the mobilization and implementation of humanitarian and development projects. <p>Work as the focal agency between foreign NGOs and Vietnamese partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduce foreign NGOs to ministries, central agencies/ institutions, and local authorities. - Arrange field visits for foreign NGOs and official entry-exit visas for expatriate staff of foreign NGOs.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facilitate procedures for permission from competent authorities for the organization of internal meetings and reviews of foreign NGOs in Vietnam. - Gather and disseminate information with foreign NGOs and Vietnamese partners.
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Source: By author, based on the Vietnam VUFO-NGO Resource Centre’s website, accessed on April 12, 2022 at <https://www.ngocentre.org.vn/content/coming-vufo-and-paccomm>.

5.3.2 Diplomacy through diaspora

Outside Vietnam, “diplomacy through diaspora” is exercised to mobilize the full potential of its overseas population as a foreign policy tool with the potential to improve bilateral relations and cooperation between the homeland and the host land for inclusive economic growth. For example, in 2010, the Business Association of Overseas Vietnamese (BAOOV) set up a branch office in Washington, DC. The launching ceremony attracted a number of overseas Vietnamese businesspeople. The event also saw the involvement of the former Chairman of the Government Office, Nguyễn Xuân Phúc, former Prime Minister Nguyễn Tấn Dũng, and many chief executive officers of top Vietnamese corporations. Offering a promising vision, BAOOV President Phạm Nhật Vượng stated that the association would have great potential for promoting business opportunities in Vietnam to Americans as well as the Vietnamese-American business community. Vice President of BAOOV and President of the U.S. branch, David Huy Ho, emphasized the crucial role of the Vietnamese-American community’s significant contributions to maintaining cooperative cross-border relations, fostering investment, and promoting technological innovation in Vietnam. In the belief that the stable development, low labor costs, and highly trained work forces in Vietnam were favorable conditions for business investment, he hoped that the BAOOV U.S. branch would help

facilitate business transactions between Vietnam and the United States. The former Vietnamese Ambassador to the United States Lê Công Phụng affirmed that the Vietnamese government would fully and strongly support the BAOOV in its mission to strengthen the business ties as well as develop the growing and multifaceted bilateral relations between the two countries.⁶³

Diaspora diplomacy has also been conducted through higher education institutions to tap into highly skilled and well-educated human resources. For example, in 2015, the former Ambassador to the United States, Phạm Quang Vinh, visited the Sacramento region to promote trade, investment and educational exchanges and to further the relationship between Vietnam and the University of California, Davis. Vietnam is a country that thrives agriculturally; there is a demand to circulate practices pertaining to modernizing its agriculture. The University of California, Davis is known as one of the best colleges for agricultural science majors, including in the fields of biotechnology and bioengineering, in which recent advances have the potential to revolutionize agriculture and thereby enhance prosperity in rural regions and improve the quality of Vietnamese lives. The New Vietnam Studies Initiative is believed to serve as a bridge that connects professionals and academic scholars in the United States for the future growth of Vietnam and cooperation between the two nations. Hosted by the New Vietnam Studies Initiative, the former Ambassador Phạm Quang Vinh held an exchange meeting at the University of California, Davis and asked for help from the university's academic scholars to preserve the Mekong Delta's rice crop, which has been suffering from sea-level rise and coastal flooding or drought. This region, with its extreme conditions, declared a state of emergency in August 2020 and is also under the support of the Japan-United States Mekong Power

⁶³ "The Business Association of Overseas Vietnamese (BAOOV) has set up its branch in the USA," Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in the United States of America, accessed April 5, 2022, <https://vietnamembassy-usa.org/news/2010/05/business-association-overseas-vietnamese-baoov-has-set-its-branch-usa>.

Partnership, which offers both immediate measures and long-term plans to respond to any damage.

5.4 Enabling an environment for transnational engagement: Achievements and challenges

The acceleration of Vietnamese-American diaspora engagement in Vietnam regarding remittance flow, intellectual exchange, and investment has benefitted from the effort to change Vietnamese governmental policies. As described in Chapter 3, Vietnam has seen a rise in remittance flow ranging from small monetary contributions to fairly significant investments. In addition to the significant amount of annual remittance, which plays an important role in improving people's lives and boosting economic development (Dang 2005, p.115; Pfau and Giang 2010, pp.8-10; Small 2020, pp.1-2), the cooperation between overseas Vietnamese business associations and domestic enterprises helps to organize trade and investment promotion, for example, in bringing Vietnamese local products to international markets. As a government agency specialized in facilitating investment and trade and providing foreign investors with the necessary information and resources for investment in Vietnam, the Investment and Trade Promotion Centre of Ho Chi Minh City has inked a Memorandum of Understanding with the National Committee for Overseas Vietnamese Affairs in Ho Chi Minh City on October 9, 2019. Though there is no official statistical data about Vietnamese-American business profits in Vietnam, according to the Vice President of BAOOV and President of the U.S. branch, David Huy Ho, in 2008, Vietnamese-American businesses generated over \$20 billion USD in the United States and invested approximately \$200 million USD in various projects in Vietnam.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ "The Business Association of Overseas Vietnamese (BAOOV) has set up its branch in the USA," Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in the United States of America, accessed April 5, 2022, <https://vietnamembassy-usa.org/news/2010/05/business-association-overseas-vietnamese-baoov-has-set-its-branch-usa>.

The maximization of overseas Vietnamese engagement through state policy promotes the development of Vietnamese domestic human resource in multiple ways (Nguyen 2022). The Overseas Vietnamese Club for Science and Technology was established in Ho Chi Minh City on December 28, 2005 to create an integrated community of domestic and overseas intellectuals and promote their contributions to the development of science and technology in Vietnam (Nguyen 2022). Most of the members are experts in economics or information technology specialists and scientists living and working in Germany, the United States, France, Japan, and Australia. As a nonprofit organization, the Club maintains cross-border networks and collaborative relationships among domestic and overseas Vietnamese technology scientists (Nguyen 2022). Furthermore, such transnational collaboration occurs in both individual- and institutional-level (Nguyen 2022). For example, established by a Vietnamese-American professor, the New Vietnam Studies Initiative at the University of California in Davis works in conjunction with the friendship city agreement between Ho Chi Minh City and Sacramento (Nguyen 2022). The Initiative aims to create a space for research, collaboration, and knowledge exchanges among Vietnamese and international academics, experts, government officials, activists, and artists to engage in dialogues and share their relevant knowledge regarding the socio-economic development of Vietnam (Nguyen 2022).⁶⁵

On June 7, 2015, overseas Vietnamese intellectuals and experts gathered at a forum themed “Improving Vietnam’s competitiveness in the global economy,” which was co-organized by the Party Central Committee’s Economic Commission, the State Committee for Overseas Vietnamese Affairs, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Hanoi. At the forum, overseas Vietnamese intellectuals joined their domestic colleagues and policy makers in thorough discussions about the challenges of restructuring the economy, improving the

⁶⁵ “The Initiative,” UC Davis New Vietnam Studies Initiative, accessed April 5, 2022, <https://newvietnam.ucdavis.edu/initiative>.

administration, reforming Vietnam’s domestic financial markets and higher education, training human resources, and promoting scientific and technological development in Vietnam. They also shared knowledge of the process of modernization and the industrial revolution in other countries and proposed suggestions for the promotion of economic growth and the integration of Vietnam into the global economy in the period from 2016 to 2020. From 2015 to 2020, there are continuing meetings and conferences held by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and relevant authorities on overseas Vietnamese affairs and their contributions to the development progress of Vietnam. These activities provided a platform for the community of overseas Vietnamese and governmental organizations to engage in dialogues and mobilize their strengths in developing the nation in a changing international and regional context, with higher requirements for domestic socio-economic development and international integration. For example, on November 11-14, 2016, Ho Chi Minh City authorities held a conference themed “Overseas Vietnamese join hands to build Ho Chi Minh City to develop rapidly, sustainably and with international integration.” The event attracted over 500 participants including overseas Vietnamese professionals, intellectuals, and businessmen from 36 countries and territories worldwide.⁶⁶ On November 26, 2020, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs hosted a meeting in Hanoi to review five years of implementing Directive 45-CT/TW on May 19, 2015, of the Politburo on continuing to promote the implementation of the Resolution 36-NQ/TW of the 9th Politburo on working with overseas Vietnamese individuals in the new situation. About 200 delegates attended the event, including a number of outstanding Vietnamese expats who were residing in Vietnam at that time.⁶⁷ According to the former Minister of Foreign Affairs Phạm Bình Minh, from 2015 to 2020, there were approximately 300–500 returning overseas

⁶⁶ “Ho Chi Minh City Ready for Overseas Vietnamese Conference 2016,” *Communist Party of Vietnam Online Newspaper*, November 11, 2016, <https://en.dangcongsan.vn/overseas-vietnamese/ho-chi-minh-city-ready-for-overseas-vietnamese-conference-2016-415900.html>.

⁶⁷ “Ministry of Foreign Affairs Seeks OVs’ Opinions on National Development,” *Official Gazette - Vietnam Law & Legal Forum*, November 27, 2020, <https://vietnamlawmagazine.vn/ministry-of-foreign-affairs-seeks-ovs-opinions-on-national-development-27488.html>.

Vietnamese who actively share their ideas and perspectives on the contemporary socio-economic development of Vietnam.⁶⁸

Cultural events are organized by the State Committee for Overseas Vietnamese Affairs under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in collaboration with the Ho Chi Minh City People's Committee with the aim of creating a sense of belonging and connection between the overseas communities and Vietnam. The annual "Xuân Quê Hương" (in English: Homeland Spring) arts festival offers welcome support for the relaxation of the diaspora-homeland relationship. Overseas Vietnamese participating in the event have an opportunity to celebrate the traditional Lunar New Year and observe the development progress of Vietnam. In addition, the annual Vietnam Summer Camp accepts young overseas Vietnamese returnees and conducts a cultural exchange with their peers in Vietnam. The State Committee for Overseas Vietnamese Affairs covers the costs of food, accommodation, travel, and activities during the exchange program. During the summer camp, young overseas Vietnamese visit cultural and historical sites in different localities, perform charity work, learn Vietnamese folk songs and dances, and acquire an understanding of Vietnamese culture and traditions.

Despite its many positive outcomes, Vietnam's diaspora-oriented diplomacy and policy implementation process still poses numerous challenges for Vietnamese-American investors. Although the general policy regarding overseas Vietnamese individuals has been updated to be more clear, decisive, and consistent, the process of policy implementation from a theoretical and practical perspective remains complicated and restrictive at various administrative levels. For example, according to Law No. 65/2014/QH13, a foreigner is limited to ownership of 30% of units in an apartment building and up to 250 residential properties in a ward administrative unit. The entire period of home ownership is 50 years from the day on which they are granted

⁶⁸ "Lắng Nghe và Phản Hồi Ý Kiến, Tâm Tư, Nguyên Vọng Của Kiều Bào," *Người Lao Động*, November 27, 2020, <https://nld.com.vn/chinh-tri/lang-nghe-va-phan-hoi-y-kien-tam-tu-nguyen-vong-cua-kiieu-bao-20201127145930427.htm> (in Vietnamese).

the certificate of ownership, with the possibility of extension (Clause 2 of Article 161). Overseas Vietnamese individuals enjoy the same ownership rights as local Vietnamese citizens. As such, overseas Vietnamese individuals will not have to meet local foreign property ownership quotas of percentages for apartments. However, it is worth noting that overseas Vietnamese individuals are still monitored in the sense that the Ministry of Construction has asked provinces and cities to report on homeownership by foreigners and overseas Vietnamese individuals. Furthermore, according to the Decree of Government No. 99/2015/ND-CP on the guidelines for the Law on housing No. 65/2014/QH13, companies with 100% of foreign capital may only purchase or lease-purchase houses from owners of housing construction projects or foreign organizations or individuals eligible to own housing in Vietnam and may only receive houses from housing construction projects as inheritances or gifts from individuals or organizations, provided the quantity does not exceed the limits of 250 such properties (Clause 2 of Article 4).

In the past, according to Article 121 of Law on Land No. 13/2003/QH11 dated November 26, 2003, and Article 126 of Law on Housing No. 56/2005/QH11 dated November 29, 2005, overseas Vietnamese could buy a dwelling house or an apartment in Vietnam in the following cases only: (a) returning to Vietnam for a long-term investment, (b) having great contributions to Vietnam, (c) working as a cultural activist or scientist and wishing to come back to Vietnam to serve the cause of national construction, (d) coming back to Vietnam and staying for six months or more, and (e) other cases as the law allows.

Overseas Vietnamese individuals' home ownership eligibility is still fairly limited, even though Law No. 34/2009/QH12 dated June 18, 2009, on amending and supplementing Article 126 of the Law on Housing No. 56/2005/QH11 and Article 121 of the Law on Land No. 13/2003/QH11 did broaden their qualifications to buy a house in Vietnam. According to Clause 1 of Article 1 of Law No. 34/2009/QH12, overseas Vietnamese individuals in the

following categories and who are permitted by the competent Vietnamese authority to reside in Vietnam for three months or more shall be entitled to own a house in Vietnam for his own use and that of his family members: a) person with Vietnamese nationality, (b) person of Vietnamese origin returning for a direct investment in Vietnam pursuant to the law on investment, (c) a person whose work has contributed to the country's development, (d) a scientist, cultural activist or person with special skills needed by a Vietnamese agency or organization and who is working in Vietnam, or (e) a person whose spouse is a Vietnamese citizen living in Vietnam. In addition, Clause 2 of Article 1 of Law No. 34/2009/QH12 provides that any person of Vietnamese origin not in the categories stipulated in Clause 1(b) of this Article, who has received a valid visa exemption certificate, and is permitted to reside in Vietnam for a duration of three months or more shall be entitled to own separate house or a condominium apartment in Vietnam for such person and his or her family members' residence. Pursuant to Law No. 34/2009/QH12, an overseas Vietnamese owner has a legal right (defined previously in Articles 105 and 107 of Law on Land No. 13/2003/QH11) to lease out and/or authorize others to manage his house and mortgage it with credit institutions licensed to operate in Vietnam. He is also entitled to compensation if the state recovers the land. If an overseas Vietnamese were not in above cases, financing relatives for buying real estates could be the sole way for him/ her to indirectly own real estate in Vietnam.

The law on housing, which was amended in 2014, favors an open real estate market and extended rights on house ownership by overseas Vietnamese individuals. According to Clause 1 of Article 8 of Law on Housing No. 65/2014/QH13, overseas Vietnamese who can enter Vietnam can purchase a house in Vietnam the same way as Vietnamese citizens. However, an overseas Vietnamese individual may still ask his/ her relatives to register as representatives for real estate in Vietnam if, for example, (1) he/she cannot meet conditions of Vietnam's law for owning real estate. Before they can buy property as overseas Vietnamese

individuals in Vietnam, they have to prove their Vietnamese ancestry (pursuant to Clause 2 of Article 5 of Decree No. 99/2015/ND-CP dated October 20, 2015, on guidelines for the Law on Housing No. 65/2014/QH13); or (2) he/she does not want to comply procedures in Vietnam for registering his/her ownership over real estate.

Additionally, real estate buyers/investors must be cognizant of the land rights. A discussion of “land” and “houses” actually raises two different issues. In Vietnam, the land belongs to the people who entrust its management to the state. Individuals or organizations do not have the right to own land in Vietnam. Individuals or organizations only have the right to use land. According to Law No. 45/2013/QH13 dated November 29, 2013, of the National Assembly on Land, land is owned by the all Vietnamese people or, stated another way, land is owned by the State of Vietnam (Article 4). Therefore, private property and the right to land does not really exist, and this is really only a right to use a property belonging to the Vietnamese state. For overseas Vietnamese investors, the right to use land shall exist for a limited period of 50 years from the certificate issue date and is subject to the extension of not more than 50 or 70 years, depending on the case and the purpose of use (Article 126 of Law No. 45/2013/QH13 on Land). “Ownership” of a house means “to own the house” and “to have the right to use the land on which the house is built.” The sale of a house means the transfer of the right to own the house and use the land on which the house is built, from the seller to the purchaser. The purchaser will receive a “pink certificate” or a “red certificate,” which indicates his ownership of the house and his right to occupy and use land on which the house is located or other types of certificates which have similar effect.

According to Law No. 03/1998/QH10 on the Promotion of Domestic Investment, dated May 20, 1998, in addition to offering several incentives for overseas Vietnamese investing in areas with difficult socio-economic conditions, such as tax exemption (Articles 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, and 26) and land rent reduction (Articles 17 and 18), the system was intended to

create a favorable environment in which foreign investments would receive the same domestic investments in accordance with same rules, criteria, and procedures that applied to domestic investors (Article 1). Law No. 03/1998/QH10 on Investment was amended later by Law No. 59/2005/QH11, dated November 29, 2005, on Investment, and Law No. 67/2014/QH13 dated November 26, 2014, on Investment. The legal status of overseas Vietnamese investors becomes ambiguous as Law No. 67/2014/QH13 on investment is applied generally to investors, organizations, and individuals involved in business investments. Before these amendments, in Decision No. 36/2003/QD-TTg dated March 11, 2003, overseas Vietnamese individuals were defined as “persons bearing Vietnamese nationality and those of the Vietnamese origin permanently residing and earning their living in foreign countries (Clause 4 of Article 2).” However, the application of Decision No. 36/2003/QD-TTg is limited in scope and promulgates regulations on the contribution of capital to, and purchase of equities from, Vietnamese enterprises by foreign investors (Articles 22, 23, 24, 25, and 26) only. These difficulties increase feelings of uncertainty for overseas Vietnamese individuals seeking to buy property or handle their investments. Thus, many choose to invest under the names of family members residing in Vietnam to avoid possible disadvantages.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter extended consideration to “diaspora diplomacy” practiced by the nation-state and explored its impact on the cooperation between Vietnam and Vietnamese-American diaspora. The engagement of the diaspora for homeland development conveys several forms of the commitment and resolve of the overseas community and the country of origin to embrace openness and cooperation for their mutual benefit. Diaspora-homeland collaboration, thus, involves not only economic but also political and foreign policy intentions (Ho and McConnell 2017, p.6). The systematic mechanism of formalizing and structuring diaspora-oriented strategies contributes to the practice of soft power (Ho and McConnell 2017, p.6), which shows

the efforts of the home state to attract and persuade through culture, communication, and policies concerning issues of economic reconstruction, development assistance, and civic action (see Nye 1990).

Specific actions of the Vietnamese state to facilitate the engagement of overseas Vietnamese include establishing governmental overseas Vietnamese-focused entities, setting goals to ultimately encourage overseas Vietnamese involvement in homeland development, identifying the technical competency levels of overseas Vietnamese intellectuals required for the technological development and modernization in Vietnam, and implementing and evaluating overseas Vietnamese engagement policies to promote remittance transfer and financial investment. Despite challenges in policy implementation, the home state government can certainly do more to remove obstacles, create opportunities, and enable a favorable environment for the Vietnamese-American diaspora to engage in homeland development. The provision of consistent, transparent legal information and resources by the home state would serve the interests of overseas Vietnamese investors and promote the institutionalization of diaspora engagement.

Now that diasporas are globally connected, allowing information, commodities, and capital to flow more freely across borders, the Vietnamese diaspora-homeland development showcased here has become part of a wider trend. In the globalization context, transnational connections have intensified in terms of range and depth (Goldberg 1992, as cited in Jackson et al., 2004, p.11) as well as density and significance (Jones 1992, as cited in Jackson et al., 2004, p.11), simultaneously creating a favorable space for the operation of transnationalism both “from above” and “from below” that involves multilevel, cross-border practices by multiple stakeholders and audiences. Within this transnationalist paradigm, the diaspora emerges as the independent development agent that generates mutually beneficial diaspora-

homeland relationships and influences the processes of foreign policy implementation in the country of origin. Whereas, the home state, through its dynamics in steering and sustaining the cross-border flows, plays both the reactive and proactive role in this particular transnational process. This demonstrates the reciprocal relationship in Vietnamese diaspora-homeland cooperation for development (Nguyen 2022). Chapter 6 further discusses this relationship to clarify impacting elements within the promotion of transnational reincorporation in the home state.

CHAPTER 6

MAKING SENSE OF THE *STATE TRANSNATIONALISM* IN VIETNAMESE PERSPECTIVE: PROACTIVE AND REACTIVE ROLES IN THE TRANSNATIONAL REINCORPORATION PROCESS

Transnational grassroots activities conducted by Vietnamese-American diaspora-driven organizations have become greater in frequency and scope (Chapters 3 and 4). The evolution and expansion of these practices consequently require the resolute action and cooperation from relevant actors. This is evidenced by policies and regulatory documents released by the Vietnamese government to orient subsequent development strategies toward overseas Vietnamese individuals (Chapter 5). Chapter 6 takes a further step to examine motivations and outcomes of the home state's efforts to promote the transnational reincorporation of overseas Vietnamese individuals into homeland development projects. Beyond the binary of transnationalism "from below" and transnationalism "from above," the notion of *state transnationalism* (proposed by Chin and Smith 2014) is taken into consideration to emphasize the important role of the home nation-state in this transnational dynamic. The active involvement of the diaspora and home state reveals the reciprocal relation in the nexus of diaspora-homeland development, which demonstrates the ability of both actors to define the function and capacity of each other in the process of transnational reincorporation (Nguyen 2022).

6.1 The concept of "state transnationalism"

The binary of transnationalism "from below" and "from above" has been used by researchers to highlight the role of grassroots activities in creating transnational social spaces among home state - host state - migrants and the role of supranational entities in directing global flows of resources (see Basch et al. 1994; Guarnizo and Smith 1998; Faist 1998; Portes et al. 1999). The frequency and intensity of such transnational activities "from below" provide,

to some extent, a possible condition for discourses and practices “from above” to be guided and constructed (Smith 1996, as cited in Portes et al. 1999, p.220). In the context, the home nation-state initially reacts to the transnational interactions triggered by globalization then gradually adopts expatriate-oriented policies in order to proactively control diaspora engagement for development impacts. The process is described as the promotion of “transnational reincorporation” by the nation-state (Guarnizo and Smith 1998, p.8). It happens when the homeland government realizes the importance of their overseas communities then initiates state-sponsored activities to steer the engagement of their overseas communities (Smith 1996, as cited in Portes et al. 1999, p.220).

The view of transnational flows as bottom-up or top-down ones, however, it does not indicate the exact role of the nation-state since both the state and non-state actors (i.e., migrants), whether proactively or reactively, play key roles in this transnational process (though a clear distinction of causality relation may not be made because of the mutuality in their coaction and the influence of external forces shaping the contemporary global environment) (Chin and Smith 2014, pp.81-85). Alternatively, Chin and Smith (2014, pp.83-85) offer the comprehensive theory of “state transnationalism” as a moderate approach providing supporting arguments for the direct relevance of the nation-state in diaspora-homeland development. The active enactment of expatriate-oriented policies to tap into resources from overseas is the effort of the nation-state to produce particular outcomes in pursuit of national interests. As a vital actor in this transnational dynamic, the nation-state proactively initiates/sponsors transnational activities (i.e., expatriate-oriented strategies or diaspora engagement policies) to build cross-border relationships with its overseas communities and strengthen transnational cooperation (Chin and Smith 2014, pp.87-88).

As a strong state regulating all aspects of socio-economic practices, necessary attention should be given to the role of the Vietnamese nation-state in this transnational process. The government has passed acts, resolutions, and bylaw documents that serve to orient subsequent strategy and policy formulation toward overseas Vietnamese individuals. Those collective efforts have been made through “diaspora diplomacy” to unite Vietnamese individuals living abroad globally (see Chapter 5). Despite the inconsistency in the attitude of the Vietnamese government and state policy regarding overseas Vietnamese individuals, from the late 1970s, policies have been drastically changed from tight regulations to increasing openness thanks to the influence of the economic renovation (Doi Moi) since 1986 (Dang 2000, pp.192-201). Motivations and processes of these changes demonstrate the proactive/reactive roles of the Vietnamese home state in the promotion of transnational reincorporation for its national development goals. Through the lens of “state transnationalism,” the next section further discusses these roles of the Vietnamese home country within this transnational dynamic to clarify the present state and social impacts of Vietnamese diaspora-homeland development.

6.2 “State transnationalism” in Vietnamese perspective: The roles of the home state in the promotion of transnational reincorporation

The open attitude and the policy adjustment toward its expatriate communities demonstrate the proactive involvement of Vietnamese home nation-state in this transnational process. These changes have both subjective and objective reasonings, which respectively are the attempt to address national economic crises and influence of the irresistible globalization encouraging bilateral, multilateral, and regional free trade agreements. The transition economy of Vietnam from “centrally planned economy” to “socialist-oriented market economy” since 1986 have profoundly affected how Vietnam had been organizing the process of continuing global/regional integration. From the perspective of economic integration, the country has consistently advocated for global trade liberalization and international cooperation, in such

areas as those of attracting foreign direct investment, and promoting friendly relations with all nations. The approach to overseas communities through policy adjustment is the change-related outcome of the process that unfolds over many years from initial responses to active interventions toward these transnational interactions. This section discusses major events in the policy change and implementation relevant to the development of overseas Vietnamese engagement policies to reveal the reactive and proactive involvement of the home nation-state in the promotion of transnational reincorporation.

6.2.1 Vietnamese diaspora-homeland relationship viewed from the late 1970s to the mid 1980s

The engagement of overseas Vietnamese individuals into homeland affairs is not a new issue but has existed since the Vietnam War. Policies regarding overseas Vietnamese individuals also changed with the shift in the diaspora-homeland relationship, correlation between their role/influence, and priorities of the nation-state during each particular period. Dang (2000) gives a thorough analysis of overseas Vietnamese-oriented policies from the post-war period to national reconstruction with the economic renovation in 1986. Before 1975, they played the role as anti-war patriots, helping Vietnamese business delegation or providing the Vietnamese embassy with information (Dang 2000, p.185). Concerning their political, diplomatic, and economic roles in anti-war protests and the spreading of propaganda calling for the liberation of Vietnam, attitudes toward overseas Vietnamese individuals was rather open and positive (Dang 2000, pp.192-193). After 1975, their number, role, and influence changed after the mass exodus of war-related refugees to Western countries (Dang 2000, p.186). Positive factors in the relationship between Vietnam and its overseas communities gradually faded away owing to the implementation of harsh policies towards overseas Vietnamese individuals (for example, apart from the progressive and liberal Resolution 127-CP dated May 9, 1977, in his article Dang (2000, pp.193-195) points out several strict

regulations towards overseas Vietnamese during the late 1970s extracted from Decision 122-CP dated April 25, 1977) and changes in society and economy (for example, the campaign of abolishing “bourgeois” factors) that affected the lives of urban citizens.

There was a difference in policy documentation regarding overseas Vietnamese individuals versus its actual implementation. For example, Resolution 127-CP dated May 9, 1977, was the open-minded and liberal document that emphasized the importance of expatriate engagement in the post-war construction of Vietnam. Resolution 127-CP stated that Vietnam encouraged any overseas Vietnamese (including intellectuals, skilled workers, and experts) to offer their services to the country by physical return or by sending resources, such as money and means of production (Clause 1 of Article 1). They were welcome to return to visit their homeland. For those who returned to work in national factories and companies, they would be provided with favorable working conditions and privileges in terms of food allocation or bonuses in a certain period of time (Clause A of Article 2). Vietnamese embassies had responsibility in organizing Vietnamese language and history classes for children of overseas Vietnamese individuals (Clause 5 of Article 1).

However, Decision No. 122-CP dated April 25, 1977, followed by Joint Circular No. 178-LBNG/NV dated May 25, 1977, guiding the implementation of Decision No. 122-CP, contained some strict regulations for those who resided in Vietnam without Vietnamese nationality or held the nationality of a country other than Vietnam (excluding foreign experts or students coming to Vietnam under special agreements, and foreign investors or businessmen). Article 7 of Decision No. 122-CP mandated that overseas Vietnamese individual did not have ownership rights in real property. The residence location of overseas Vietnamese individuals in Vietnam was decided by the competent Vietnamese government department (Article 4 of Decision No. 122-CP). They might not reside near the following areas: borderline and coastline areas, security and defensive zones such as around airports and harbors, important

economic zones, scientific and technical research centers, or important traffic hubs (Clause 2 of Article 2, Joint Circular No. 178-LBNG/NV). In addition to regulations on accommodations, Decision No. 122-CP stated that outside their residency overseas Vietnamese individuals could only travel to the areas allowed by relevant government department (Article 4). Furthermore, without specific permissions, overseas Vietnamese individuals residing in Vietnam might not be allowed to practice some professions, including fishing (exploitation of aquatic resources); forestry (exploitation of forest resources); repairing radios and televisions; driving a car, motorized boat, or any other passenger vehicle; printing, engraving, casting and stamping; typewriting, printing, or photocopying (Clause 6 of Decision No.122-CP; Clause 5 of Article 2, Joint Circular No.178-LBNG/NV).

During the early 1980s, the majority of policies towards overseas Vietnamese were subject to set rules for the practices of sending money and goods, and regulating the use of foreign currency in Vietnam (Dang 2000, pp.195-198). Dang (2000, pp.195-197) analyzes several legal documents regulating the sending of money and goods by overseas Vietnamese individuals in the early 1980s, including Decision No. 32-CP dated January 31, 1980, concerning the policy called “Encouraging the transfer of foreign exchange to Vietnam” and Circular No. 5/ NH-TT dated May 5, 1980, promulgating the Decision No. 32-CP. Although the transfer of foreign exchange was encouraged, foreign nationals and overseas Vietnamese individuals were prohibited from bringing foreign currency into Vietnam and using it in local markets (Dang 2000, p.195). In case they brought and wanted to spend foreign currencies in Vietnam, they had to declare to the Customs Department, then change it to Vietnamese currency at the State Bank of Vietnam at a low price (Dang 2000, p.196). Despite unfavorable conditions, such as tight regulations on the sending of goods, high foreign exchange rate, remittance tax, and high possibility of lost package, overseas Vietnamese individuals still kept sending a large amount of remittance and aid back to their family members (Dang 2000,

pp.195-198). It is estimated that from 1976 to 1986, the total value of remittance and goods sent to Vietnam was approximately \$1 billion USD (Dang 2000, p.198). Different from official foreign aids, which went into the state sectors and banks, remittance and goods from overseas Vietnamese individuals were sent directly to receivers. Then, goods could be sold at markets to earn a living (Dang 2000, p.198). This method of exchange created a basic premise for free market and even contributed to the transition to the market economy of Vietnam (Dang 2000, p.198).

6.2.2 The economic renovation (Doi Moi 1986) and its influences on the transnational reincorporation

Vietnam in post-war period faced development challenges regarding economic downturn, poverty, and socio-economic inequalities. By the mid-1980s, Vietnam had become more dependent on the Soviet Union for political support and economic and military assistance (Kelemen 1955, pp.335-345). On the political and diplomatic fronts, tense relations with China (which reached its peak in the Sino-Vietnamese conflict in 1979), the heavy and continuing burden of Vietnamese forces present in Cambodia, and the long-standing U.S. sanction after the Vietnam War placed Vietnam in a bind. The reduction in Soviet economic and military assistance after the mid-1980s and the stagnant 1980s economy of Vietnam drove Vietnamese leaders to adopt a series of political and economic reforms for national post-conflict reconstruction (Nguyen 2022). The economic renovation (Doi Moi 1986) marked a turning point in the sociopolitical condition of Vietnam by switching the economy from “centrally planned economy” to “socialist-oriented market economy” and promoting open-minded political thinking in foreign policy.⁶⁹ Although the Vietnamese trade liberalization and open-door

⁶⁹ The Vietnamese Communist Party stated the important purposes of Doi Moi 1986 at its Sixth National Congress, as follows: (1) transition from the centrally planned economy to the market economy with a socialist orientation under state control; (2) a government of the people, by the people, and for the people; (3) promotion of relations with all countries for the common benefits of development.

policy did not explicitly promote the engagement of overseas Vietnamese into homeland development, they have created a favorable condition for cross-border flows of commodities and people (Nguyen 2022). Remittance and diversified sources of goods continued being sent back to family members in Vietnam from war-related Vietnamese diaspora members or from overseas Vietnamese individuals who worked or studied in other socialist countries (Pfau and Giang 2010, pp.4-10; Small 2020, pp.1-2; Sidel 2007, p.4; Dang 2000, pp.188-189; Beresford and Dang 2000, p.76).

It should be noticed that policies towards overseas Vietnamese individuals regarding their economic roles had been turning to be more pragmatic and flexible under the influence of the economic renovation, though the diaspora and the home country did not have a consistently good relationship (Dang 2000, pp.198-201). Decision No.126-CT dated April 10, 1987, encouraged the sending of money, consumption goods, and means of production from overseas to help families in Vietnam or contribute to the development of the home country (Article 1). Circular No.128-CT dated April 10, 1987, abolished all restrictions on the amount, number of times, and value of remittance; the foreign currency exchange rate would be adjusted flexibly and promptly following the actual market situation (Article 1). All restrictions on the number of times, weight, and value of the goods would be removed. The state would implement a tax reduction or exemption policy and implement convenient procedures for the receipt of production materials; recipients were encouraged to resell goods to state-owned stores at an affordable price (Article 2 of Circular No.128-CT). Furthermore, overseas Vietnamese individuals were treated better with the easing of visa and residency rules by the Vietnamese government (Dang 2000, p.200).

Source: “Resolution of the Sixth National Congress of Vietnam Communist Party,” *Communist Party of Vietnam Online Newspaper*, February 24, 2017, <https://tulieuvankien.dangcongsan.vn/ban-chap-hanh-trung-uong-dang/dai-hoi-dang/lan-thu-vi/nghi-quyet-dai-hoi-dai-bieu-toan-quoc-lan-thu-vi-cua-dang-1493> (in Vietnamese).

Once again, Vietnam relied on Vietnamese people residing abroad to make contact with other nations, especially the West, after the collapse of the Communist bloc in the early 1990s for the purposes of facilitating economic cooperation or cultural and technological exchanges (Dang 2000, p.200). In particular, cadres in Vietnam no longer easily travelled abroad, such as previously when they had been invited and provided with support by the Soviet Union. They had to look for invitations and counterparts to give them money and tickets, and many government officials relied on overseas Vietnamese individuals to make connection with the outside world. These links also facilitated business cooperation, cultural, and technological exchanges Dang (2000, p.200) However, the difference in perspectives about social issues, as well as the concern about anti-communist sentiments in diasporic politics sophisticated and worsened the relationship between the diaspora and home state government (Dang 2000, p.201; Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.33). Specifically, anti-communist activities in overseas Vietnamese communities, especially after the collapse of Soviet Union, eroded the goodwill and progressive attitude of Vietnamese officials toward overseas Vietnamese and influenced the way they were treated in the original home country (Dang 2000, p.201). Moreover, returning overseas Vietnamese individuals who were dedicated to the economic development of the home country faced many challenges owing to the lack of clear regulations on foreign investment (Dang 2000, p.201). It was not until the issuance of Resolution 36-NQ/TW of the Communist Party of Vietnam Politburo on overseas Vietnamese affairs dated March 26, 2004, that overseas Vietnamese individuals were encouraged to return to Vietnam to visit their relatives, conduct business, invest, and cooperate in science, technology, education, sports, culture, and charity sectors. Currently, in recognition of the strength of overseas Vietnamese individuals in material and intellectual terms, laws have been revised by the home state to implement certain changes for effective engagement of their assets. A wide range of regulations on the promotion of foreign investment, visa exemption, dual citizenship, and property

ownership, and so on, has been put into effect⁷⁰ within the Vietnamese states' priorities of national industrialization and modernization.

6.2.3 The Vietnamese transnational reincorporation in the new phase of economic cooperation and regional/global integration after the economic renovation (Doi Moi 1986) until now

For the national goals of industrialization and modernization, Vietnam continues committing itself to the openness of the economy and friendly foreign policy with all nations. The state has been integrating into regional/global economy through the accessions into the ASEAN Free Trade Area in 1995, Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum in 1998, World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2007, and several bilateral/ multilateral trade agreements with Japan, Korea, the United States, and European Union.⁷¹ The irresistible globalization and expansion of information technology enable cross-border inflows and outflows of financial assets, goods, data, and human mobility. Such inflows and outflows matter for growth and development as they circulate ideas, technologies, talent, and business practices around the world. This process broadens the participation of the nation-state in the global economy, as well as expands opportunities for expatriate populations to be involved in the development of the homeland from their overseas locations. Additionally, as the internet may shorten the distance between people, locations, and data in international cooperation, individuals in remote areas can also participate in cross-border activities directly by using digital platform to build a

⁷⁰ For example, Law No. 24/2008/QH12 (November 13, 2008), Decree No. 40/2014/ND-CP (May 12, 2014), Law No. 56/2014/QH13 (June 26, 2014), Decree No. 87/2014/ND-CP (September 22, 2014), Law No. 65/2014/QH13 (November 25, 2014), Law No. 66/2014/QH13 (November 25, 2014), Law No. 67/2014/QH13 (November 26, 2014), Decree No. 82/2015/ND-CP (September 24, 2015), Decision No. 11/2019/QD-TTg (February 18, 2019), Decree No. 27/2020/ND-CP (March 1, 2020).

⁷¹ The U.S.-Vietnam Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) went into effect on December 10, 2001. The Japan-Vietnam Economic Partnership Agreement (JVEPA) was entry into force on October 1, 2009. The Free Trade Agreement between Vietnam and Korea (VKFTA) officially came into effect on December 20, 2015. The European Union and Vietnam signed a Trade Agreement and an Investment Protection Agreement on June 30, 2019.

personal network. Diaspora engagement and its implications for homeland development must be taken into account with regard to a more complex reality of the connected global.

Although Vietnam does not have an institutionalized diaspora engagement policy yet,⁷² the country has increasingly recognized the important contribution of the overseas communities into its economic development and technological advancement. Beyond the encouragement of remittance and good sending, expatriate-oriented policies expand to the promotion of Vietnamese culture through youth summer camps and cultural programs and the provision of incentives to attract hi-tech workers with high qualification and experiences. These policies encourage and create a favorable condition for overseas Vietnamese individuals and their children to maintain a close tie with their homeland, and if possible, contribute to the economic and technological development of Vietnam. Following the state's socio-economic strategy, several practices at the national level have been conducted including the "Vietnam Summer Camp," "Xuân Quê Hương (see more Chapter 5)," and "Trip to Truong Sa (Spratly) Archipelago" – the trip bringing overseas Vietnamese individuals to the Spratly archipelago to attend the commemoration events of martyrs and present gifts to the soldiers and people there. Moreover, in response to the increasing demand for talents of the country, enterprises such as Robert Walters Vietnam – a headhunting and recruitment agency based on Ho Chi Minh City – has organized an outreach program, "Come Home Pho Good: Bring Vietnamese Talent Back Home," that aims to connect overseas Vietnamese professionals to the job market in Vietnam.

The promotion of international travel by the Vietnamese government is another illustrative case. In order to provide a strong boost to regional/global economic integration and foreign investment, in 2018, the Prime Minister approved the plan on the development of direct

⁷² In all official legal documents relating to overseas Vietnamese affairs, an overseas Vietnamese individual is defined generally as the person having Vietnamese nationality and Vietnamese ethnic living and working in countries other than Vietnam (for example, in Law No. 03/1998/QH10 dated May 20, 1998, and Decision No. 36/2003/QĐ-TTg dated March 11, 2003). Those people may or may not have the experience of exile. As of 2021, the diaspora engagement policy, which explicitly promotes the involvement of Vietnamese diaspora populations to the homeland socio-economic development, did not exist.

flight routes between Vietnam and key nations/regions, including the United States, China, South Korea, Japan, Thailand, Malaysia, Russia, Germany, Australia, France, the United Kingdom, India, and other potential markets such as United Arab Emirates and South Africa. The number of passengers from the United States has increased over years: 491,200 in 2015, 552,600 in 2016, 614,100 in 2017, 687,200 in 2018, and 746,171 individuals in 2019.⁷³ The Vietnamese-American passengers took up a large proportion (according to Vietnam National Administration of Tourism) of these flights.⁷⁴ In the absence of a daily direct flight, the shortest journey from Vietnam to the United States often takes approximately 16 hours involving a transit via an Asian hub in Tokyo (Japan), Seoul (Korea) or Taipei (Taiwan, China). Vietnam was planning to launch nonstop flights from Ho Chi Minh City or Hanoi to West Coast hub in the United States, such as San Francisco or Los Angeles. In 2019, Vietnam Airlines – the state-owned flag carrier – received a license from the United States Department of Transportation to deliver commercial passenger, goods, and parcels between Vietnam and the United States. This is one of many necessary requirements for an airline to open (direct) flights to the United States. Whereby, Vietnam Airlines is allowed to operate flights between Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City to some destinations in the United States via transit points in Taipei (Taiwan, China), Osaka, or Nagoya (Japan); the destination cities in the United States will include Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York, Seattle, and Dallas - Fort Worth. In 2020, Bamboo Airlines is another Vietnamese airline that received this license. This license also allows Vietnam Airlines and Bamboo Airlines to operate flights from points outside Vietnam via Vietnam and other transit points to the United States in the form of codeshare or conduct charter flights between the two countries. However, it is required to apply for other licenses from the Federal Aviation

⁷³ “Number of foreign visitors to Vietnam by some nationalities,” General Statistic Office, accessed September 26, 2021, <https://www.gso.gov.vn/en/px-web/?pxid=E0825&theme=Trade%2C%20Price%20and%20Tourist>.

⁷⁴ “Mỹ - Thị trường khách triển vọng của Việt Nam,” Vietnam National Administration of Tourism - Ministry of Cultures, Sports, and Tourism, last modified December 13, 2019, <https://vietnamtourism.gov.vn/index.php/items/30747> (in Vietnamese).

Administration, Transport Security Organization, Customs and U.S. Border Protection, U.S. National Traffic Safety Commission, and other competent United States agencies and organizations before operating direct flights to the United States.⁷⁵ Bamboo Airlines operated the first direct flight from Hanoi to San Francisco on September 23, 2021. Vietnam Airlines operated the first direct commercial flight from Ho Chi Minh City to San Francisco on November 28, 2021.

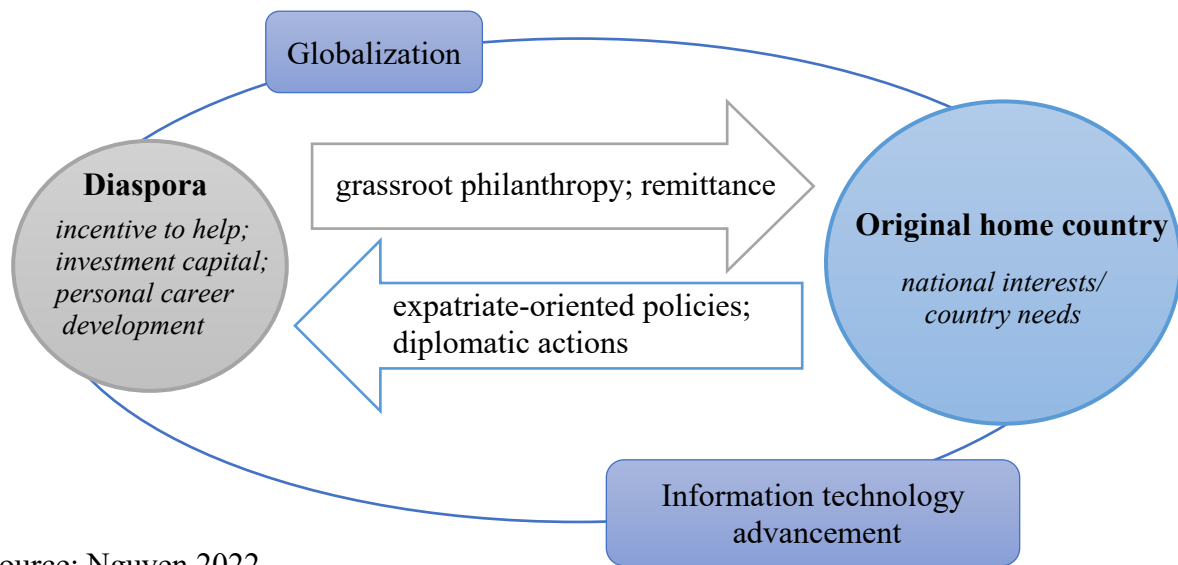
Vietnam has entered a new phase that expands opportunities for international cooperation and development. The proactive promotion of transnational reincorporation is happening as a result between the objective (the reduction in Soviet economic and military assistance after the mid-1980s, information technology advancement, globalization, and free trade) and subjective (national strategies for economic development and global/regional integration) elements. The current state of transnational reincorporation depends heavily on the relationship between the diaspora and the home country regarding the warming attitudes and the openness of the home state policy. Although the relationship between Vietnam and Vietnamese-American diaspora has warmed up and cooled down many times owing to the impact of social, political, economic, and other external influences, the promotion of transnational reincorporation by the Vietnamese home state creates a space for the diaspora to be involved in the socio-economic development of the home country. While external factors (such as global economic integration and the advancement in information and communication technologies) implicated the cross-border cooperation for development, the proactive engagement of both the homeland and the diaspora play the key role in expanding social space for this transnational dynamic (Nguyen 2022).

⁷⁵ Mai Ha, “Vietnam Airlines được cấp phép bay sang Mỹ: Bay thẳng có dễ?,” *Thanh Nien Online*, September 5, 2019, <https://thanhnien.vn/vietnam-airlines-duoc-cap-phep-bay-sang-my-bay-thang-co-de-post881157.html> (in Vietnamese).

6.3 Impacting elements within the transnational reincorporation – Promises and challenges for the Vietnamese diaspora-homeland development

Both the home state and diaspora actively conduct the practice of “diaspora diplomacy” on the purpose of realizing their desired goals in these collaborative development efforts. Beyond economic contributions, the diaspora acts proactively on its capacity to stimulate “diplomacy by diaspora” through grassroots activities. Such activities include the effort of diaspora-driven NGOs to actively build partnerships with Vietnamese counterparts and local authorities (see more Chapters 3 and 4). The expansion of grassroot activities conducted by Vietnamese-American diaspora members/organizations, including sending remittance or humanitarian and philanthropic assistances, results in the practices “from above” at a state level that aim to maximize the engagement of overseas Vietnamese communities in homeland socio-economic development (Nguyen 2022). The home country acts reactively to grassroots transnationalism and proactively on its priority of encouraging and steering the involvement of the diaspora. Vietnam has become adept at engaging “diplomacy for diaspora” and “diplomacy through diaspora” to maximize the potentials of diaspora investment, knowledge transfer, and technological advancement. Such innovative expatriate-oriented policies provide more prospects for diaspora-homeland collaborative efforts, as well as creating more spaces for diaspora engagement. Therefore, while the outcomes of the diaspora-driven development practices play a part on the home state policy adjustment, the motivations and processes of diaspora engagement tends to be influenced by events in the country of origin. Figure 7 illustrates the cycle depicting the reciprocal relationship in diaspora-homeland cooperation for development.

Figure 7 Reciprocal relations in the Vietnamese diaspora-homeland development



Source: Nguyen 2022.

The effective cooperation for development requires a full acknowledgment of each other's need and capacity within the scope of transnational reincorporation. As seen in Figure 7, the reciprocal interactions between the diaspora and the homeland have a direct influence on the functions and actions in transnational development networks. While VA NGO's social workers emerge as independent diplomatic actors actively conducting the "diplomacy by diaspora," strategies of VA NGOs often change in response to the changes in the home state's policy and sociopolitical conditions. The home state's policy plays a decisive role for the involvement of diaspora into homeland social and economic development. On the contrary, Vietnamese-American diaspora engagement has implications for the intensifying efforts of the home state to enhance global integration through transnational cooperation with overseas communities. Figure 7 implies that the efficient utilization of diaspora resources could be gained through the effective participation of both main actors, for example, with the promotion of diaspora policy and timely and appropriate grassroot activities. With the favorable environment created by expatriate-oriented policies and the nature of the diaspora-homeland relationship, the transnational reach promises a vision of effective cooperation for

development, but remains a challenge for Vietnam and Vietnamese-American diaspora members/organizations to work together.

6.3.1 Promises

Overseas Vietnamese individuals are being engaged by the home state in areas of disaster in which they are particularly effective in providing a rapid response to specific needs (Nguyen 2022). In October and early November in 2020, the central region of Vietnam was repeatedly hit by heavy rains triggering flooding and landslides in Thua Thien Hue, Ha Tinh, Quang Ngai, Quang Tri, and Quang Binh Provinces. Natural disasters caused great damages to assets and infrastructures, and increased health risks of water-borne diseases in this region. The State Committee for Overseas Vietnamese, under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, called for practical actions from all overseas Vietnamese individuals to support people in disastrous regions. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, overseas Vietnamese individuals donated approximately \$510,000 USD to help people in affected areas, despite their financial difficulties due to COVID-19.⁷⁶ The donation funds were channeled to the Central Committee of Vietnam Father Front before being distributed to local institutions.

Furthermore, VA NGOs have coordinated immediate relief operations for the destruction caused by these natural disasters. For example, the VA NGO Network raised \$35,000 USD to respond immediately to devastating storms and flooding in Central Vietnam, directly distributed 1,114 relief packages, and assisted in the delivery of relief kits to over 3,000 households in Thua Thien Hue Province.⁷⁷ From October 15, 2020 to October 27, 2020, the Compassion Flower team members distributed gift packages to 1,250 households affected by the flood in Thua Thien Hue Province. They also sent 1,000 books to the students of a middle

⁷⁶ Minh Nga, "Overseas Vietnamese aid motherland \$510,000 to recover from flooding, landslides," *VNExpress International*, November 5, 2020, <https://e.vnexpress.net/news/news/overseas-vietnamese-aid-motherland-510-000-to-recover-from-flooding-landslides-4187420.html>.

⁷⁷ Thien-Nhien Luong, "Lời chào," *OneHeart Newsletter*, no. 05 (Autumn 2020), <https://va-ngo.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/VANGO-2020-newsletter-final.pdf>.

school in Quang Binh Province. On November 16, 2020, and November 17, 2020, they distributed warm jackets, medicated oil, recycled rice bags, household products, and farming tools to the communities destroyed by floodwater and landslides in Quang Tri Province. From November 23, 2020 to December 6, 2020, they granted scholarships to 1,357 students in flood-affected areas and families that were significantly impacted by the pandemic. From February 1, 2021, to February 6, 2021, they distributed 220 red money envelopes to the street food vendors/sellers, bicycle delivery riders, lottery sellers around Thua Thien Hue Province, and suburbs. To ensure that 100% of all donations go to the cause, all members of the Compassion Flower have to pay for their own airfare, food, and accommodation expenses to do the charitable work.⁷⁸

In addition to natural disaster relief, VA NGOs have been supporting Vietnamese communities through their COVID-19 relief programs. In 2020, spread of the uncontained COVID-19 pandemic caused global crisis of unprecedented challenges. Owing to the pandemic, schools, shops, and businesses were completely closed, leaving many families with no source of income. In the first quarter of 2020, the Compassion Flower team members distributed 1,500 masks and 3,000 soap bars to sellers and market-goers in several suburban markets of Thua Thien Hue Province. In the second quarter, they went to many communities in the rural areas to deliver gift packages to 1,030 families and individuals who have been significantly impacted financially by the pandemic.⁷⁹ The VA NGO Network coordinated workshops in Vietnam to help prepare their staff and volunteers for necessary knowledge and practices to keep themselves, their families, and communities safe. With donations from U.S. charitable donors, the HIPE team members of the VA NGO Network distributed COVID-19 relief packages to 119 Vietnamese households experiencing financial hardship. These relief

⁷⁸ “The Year 2020 – Activities,” The Compassion Flower, accessed September 26, 2021, <http://tcf-ngo.us/year-2020/>.

⁷⁹ “The Year 2020 – Activities,” The Compassion Flower, accessed September 26, 2021, <http://tcf-ngo.us/year-2020/>.

packages included basic necessities that they would otherwise purchase from the market so that they could better observe the stay-at-home guidelines. Along with these relief packages, the HIPE also operated COVID-19 prevention online trainings and a series of creative workshops for Vietnamese youth.⁸⁰

6.3.2 Remaining challenges

A complete trust and long-term cooperation between the Vietnamese-American diaspora members/organizations and the home state is not easy to achieve (Nguyen 2022). Although significant efforts have been made to encourage the Vietnamese diaspora engagement, progress has been uneven owing to the complex diaspora-homeland relationship and unique sociopolitical characteristics of the two main actors (Nguyen 2022). First, the decentering component of grassroots activities within the process of transnationalism “from below” (Guarnizo and Smith 1998, p.3) to some extent contradicts the centralized political system of the Vietnamese single-party home state (Nguyen 2022). For instance, pursuant to Decree No. 64/2008/ND-CP dated May 14, 2008, organizations and units permitted to receive and distribute financial aid and relief goods to terminally ill patients or victims of natural disasters, fires, and serious incidents include the Central Committee of the Vietnam Father Front, the Vietnam Red Cross Society, central and local mass media agencies, the local Vietnam Father Front Committees and Red Cross Associations, licensed social and charity funds, central organizations and units with permission from the Central Committee of the Vietnam Father Front, and local organizations and units with permission from provincial/district-level Vietnam Father Front Committees (Article 5). Foreign NGOs implementing development projects in Vietnam are obliged to register first with the PACCOM and apply for prior approval from local authorities (Nguyen 2022). Additionally, a public

⁸⁰ “COVID-19 Relief & ConnectNGive.org,” *OneHeart Newsletter*, no. 05 (Autumn 2020), <https://va-ngo.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/VANGO-2020-newsletter-final.pdf>.

gathering must be approved by the Provincial People's Committee unless it is organized by the government or social and/or political organizations belonging to the government (Article 7 of Decree No. 38/2005/ND-CP). However, many Vietnamese-American diaspora members prefer direct giving, or tend to donate money to nonprofit organizations or individual charities so that it can be quickly distributed among those in need (Nguyen 2022).

The complicated relationship between Vietnam and its U.S.-based diaspora is the second issue that exacerbates the first challenge. The lingering post-war tension and ideological differences between the diaspora and home state cause an underlying suspicion of Vietnamese officials toward Vietnamese-American diaspora members/organizations (Hanh Nguyen 2020, pp.29-34). There is widespread concern that when migration is the consequence of politics, the diaspora, which may suffer a lingering trauma of loss, may have the tendency to exacerbate conflict in the country of origin (Kapur 2007, p.102). That said, changes created by social remittances can eventually affect attitudes towards human rights and gender equality in education and employment (Newland and Patrick 2004, p.18). In addition to its economic and sociocultural initiatives, some Vietnamese-American diaspora members also engage in political activism using social media to advocate policy reforms in Vietnam (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.25). As Guarnizo and Smith (1998, p.3) note in regards to the penetration of transnational phenomena into national cultures and political systems, the nation-state is decentralized by approaches from below. Assuming that emerging multinational and multilevel activities deterritorialize the nation-state, the power of the nation-state to control population movement and goods circulation has been increasingly weakened (Kastoryano 2000, as cited in Dunn 2005, p.17). Fear of social instability in Vietnam remains a barrier to full cooperation between Vietnamese-American diaspora members/organizations and the home state.

Hence, VA NGOs have faced obstacles to enabling the bottom-up empowerment of vulnerable groups through targeted interventions in Vietnam given such current climate of

mistrust (Hanh Nguyen 2020, p.33). VA NGOs must also strive to balance the long-term relationship with their donors in Vietnamese-American diaspora community while appearing politically neutral to the Vietnamese authorities with whom they work (Truong et al. 2008, p.262). Vietnamese-American individuals are sometimes kept under surveillance at public events. In the preparation stage of the conference “From Possibilities to Vision and Action: Preparing Vietnam for Its Next Phase of Growth” organized in Da Nang City in September 2018, the content of each presentation was checked several times by local authority officers before presenters were allowed to speak. At times, even with the approval for an event or an operation of a development project, local police personnel show up to ask questions.

Third, the implementation of overseas Vietnamese-related policies does not quite succeed on its own merits (Nguyen 2022). Despite his optimistic view about the future growth of Vietnam, the managing director of Lotus Impact was concerned about the poor infrastructure and institutional quality in the country, which might affect the possibility of effective collaboration with Vietnamese counterparts. For example, pursuant to Law No. 03/1998/QH10 on the Promotion of Domestic Investment dated May 20, 1998, foreign investments and domestic investments should be treated equally in accordance with the same rules, criteria, and procedures (Article 1). Clause 6 of Article 2 of Law 03/1998/QH10 on the Promotion of Domestic Investment clearly defines “Vietnamese residing overseas” as “Vietnamese citizens and people of Vietnamese stock residing, working, and/or living permanently in foreign countries.” After Law No. 03/1998/QH10 was amended, Law No. 67/2014/QH13 (Clauses 14, 15 of Article 3) and Law No. 61/2020/QH14 (Clauses 19, 20 of Article 3) on investment mention “foreign investor” and “domestic/Vietnamese investor” only. Ambiguity surrounding the legal status affects overseas Vietnamese investors. In one case, overseas Vietnamese

businessmen are considered as “domestic investors”⁸¹ who only need to register their company before starting it, while in another case, they have to apply for foreign investment approval if they are categorized as “foreign investors (Nguyen 2022).”⁸² The registration processing time for domestic business takes approximately a week, while it may last from several months to a year for foreign business (Nguyen 2022). In addition, the general definition of overseas Vietnamese individuals as “Vietnamese citizens and people of Vietnamese origin residing, working, and/or living permanently in foreign countries (Law No. 03/1998/QH10, Clause 6 of Article 2)” has made it difficult for new generations of overseas Vietnamese individuals born outside Vietnam to demonstrate their ethnic origin in case their ancestors lost identification certificates, and they do not speak the Vietnamese language.

VA NGOs make substantial effort to comply with Vietnamese administrative requirements. For example, the applications rules are often changed and the approval process is time-consuming, although licensed VA NGOs completed the permit registration process (Nguyen 2022). A Vietnamese-American social worker explained the application procedure:

“The approval we are using is for five years. They changed the rule at the provincial level for each of the programs. For a provincial level of operation permit, it is three years; then we have to reapply, even in the best situation where we submit. We renew the application three to six months ahead of time. In the United States, for example, you have a non-profit and you just operate. You do not have to get approval whatsoever; you just incorporate like a business does, you do what you need to do, and if you want to have a community coalition, you can, but you do not have to reapply to get a permit. [In Vietnam] sometimes they still make the approval truly late. This takes away time

⁸¹ Domestic investor is defined as “an individual holding Vietnamese nationality or a business entity whose members or shareholders are not foreign investors (Clause 20, Article 3, Law No. 61/2020/QH14).”

⁸² Foreign investor is defined as “an individual holding Vietnamese nationality or a business entity whose members or shareholders are not foreign investors (Clause 19, Article 3, Law No. 61/2020/QH14).”

*and resources that we could [use to] do more things for the community.”*⁸³ (Nguyen 2022)

Some VA NGOs hesitate to register with the PACCOM owing to the time-consuming application process, cumbersome administrative procedures, and the alienation of Vietnamese-American donors who are concerned about the possibility of bureaucratic inefficiency in Vietnamese authorities (Truong et al. 2008, pp.259-271). A representative of a VA NGO concluded, as follows:

*“I would like to validate the general barriers [that VA NGOs have faced when operating in Vietnam] including the following: different interpretations of the regulations governing or supporting NGOs at the different levels of government; a lack of reaching out and organizing workshops for international NGOs when new regulations are passed; cumbersome paperwork processes; too many project-based operational approval permits for such a short period; [and] different levels of government offices do not always have clear or defined responsibilities, so many do not take responsibility for when the approval will be done.”*⁸⁴ (Nguyen 2022)

Fourth, a favorable policy framework is deficient for VA NGOs to rely on while implementing community-based development projects, possibly owing to the lack of recognition by top municipal officials of their capability and significant role in homeland social development process (Nguyen 2022). Overseas Vietnamese-oriented policies issued by the Vietnamese government concentrates on the advantages of their technological knowledge and economic potentials regarding sending remittance, investment, and business networking (Nguyen 2022). Legal documents of the Vietnamese government on foreign NGOs affairs do

⁸³ The online interview was conducted on November 2, 2020.

⁸⁴ The online interview was conducted on November 6, 2020.

not specifically indicate overseas Vietnamese-driven NGOs or give any incentive to encourage their contributions. Table 14 illustrates a list of legal documents on foreign NGO affairs in Vietnam and other relevant policies.

Table 14 Summary of Vietnam’s legal documents on foreign NGOs affairs and other relevant policies

Date	Document	Description
October 22, 2009	Decree No.93/2009/ND-CP	To promulgate the regulation on management and use of foreign non-governmental aid.
March 30, 2010	Circular No. 07/2010/TT-BKH	To guide the implementation of the Government’s Decree No. 93/2009/ND-CP dated October 22, 2009 on promulgating the regulation on management and use of foreign non-governmental aid.
March 01, 2012	Decree No.12/2012/ND-CP	To regulate the registration and administration of foreign non-governmental organizations in Vietnam.
November 12, 2012	Circular 05/2012/TT-BNG	To guide the implementation of Decree No. 12/2012/ND-CP dated March 1, 2012 of the government on the registration and management of activities of foreign non-governmental organizations in Vietnam.

Other relevant policies		
June 18, 2012	Law No.07/2012/QH13	To prevent organizations and individuals from money laundering.
June 12, 2013	Law No. 28/2013/QH13	To stipulate the principles, policies, measures, and forces of anti-terrorism.
October 04, 2013	Decree No. 116/2013/ND-CP	To detail implementation of a number of Articles of Law on prevention and combat of money laundering.
December 31, 2013	Circular No. 35/2013/TT-NHNN	To guild implementation of a number of provisions on prevention of money laundering.
June 16, 2014	Law No. 47/2014/QH13	To provide principles, conditions, order, and procedures for foreigner's entry into, exit from, transit through, and residence in Vietnam.

Source: By author, based on the Vietnam VUFO-NGO Resource Centre's website, accessed on April 12, 2022 at <http://comingo.gov.vn/en/category/legal-documents/van-ban-ve-vien-tro-pcpnn/>.

As there is no specific definition of overseas Vietnamese-driven NGOs in legal documents of the Vietnamese government on foreign NGOs affairs, they are generally categorized as foreign NGOs operating philanthropic projects to improve community conditions in Vietnam. However, the so-called philanthropic organizations should be classified as charitable, humanitarian, and developmental according to their major activities so that government bodies, funding entities, and others can get a clear image of diaspora philanthropy

in Vietnam (Nguyen 2022). These organizations are different in terms of their contributions, commitments, and operational and strategic plans, thus resulting in different short-and long-term effects (Nguyen 2022). Hence, the classification and categorization of VA NGOs regarding permits, operation types, duration, frequency, and direction are necessary to improve administrative effectiveness and accountability in policy formulation and implementation among central or provincial governing bodies concerning the engagement of Vietnamese diaspora in homeland social development (Nguyen 2022).

6.4 Conclusion

Globalization and the advancement of internet technology create a social space providing opportunities for transnational diaspora-homeland cooperation. Going much farther than individual money transfer, the diaspora as independent actor conducts “diplomacy by diaspora” to maintain ties with people within and beyond the nation-state and contribute to the social development of the home country through development projects and philanthropic activities. The willingness to return, communicate with Vietnamese authority, and cooperate with Vietnamese local counterparts reveals a positive change in the diaspora-homeland relationship, which has been stuck in a lingering conflict since the war era. Some young overseas Vietnamese individuals even see Vietnam as a promising land for personal career development. Not a passive human force, diaspora members have been mobilizing their material and nonmaterial resources to bridge the diaspora and the home country. Those non-state actors, through their grass-root activities, can actively engage in homeland affairs as development partners to the extent that impacts upon the development of domestic and foreign policy in the home state, consequently affecting the status of diaspora members in the country of origin (Ho and McConnell 2017, p.11).

Whereas, if the nation-state did not proactively participate in this transnational process, transnationalism would not evolve to such a level. Even though the Vietnamese homeland still

does not have a diaspora engagement policy yet, it initiated its first steps to ease the old tensions and promote the engagement of expatriate communities. The role of diaspora as an agent for economic development has been recognized by the home nation-state, consequently leading to attitude and policy shift. Policies regarding overseas Vietnamese individuals during the post-war period until now have played significant role in encouraging the engagement of diaspora members in homeland economic revival. However, little attention is paid to their contribution to social development of Vietnam through community development programs, consequently creating a fundamental uncertainty for the returning Vietnamese Americans to accelerate philanthropic actions in Vietnam owing to a lack of proper policies. Expatriate-oriented policies by the Vietnamese government are focused on leveraging their technological knowledge and economic potentials; however, there is a lack of a favorable policy supporting the social activities of VA NGOs (Nguyen 2022). Emphasizing the important role of the home state's policy, this chapter implies the necessity of an institutional framework fostering the engagement of the diaspora into Vietnamese homeland's socio-economic development. Chapter 7 provides examples of diaspora engagement approaches, with recommendations for fostering diaspora-homeland relationship, facilitating their transnational linkages, and formulating a diaspora engagement strategy for Vietnam.

CHAPTER 7

THE DIASPORA AS MATERIAL AND NONMATERIAL RESOURCES FOR DEVELOPMENT IN VIETNAM

7.1 The changing notion of diaspora: From dispersed population to development bridge-builders

National and international politics have changed in the interconnected world that links and expands human activity across regions. There are changing contexts pertaining to the nature of the diasporic populations and their relationship to the wider society (Berns-McGown 2008, p.7). These elements challenge the old notion of diaspora (in the studies of Safran (1991, pp.83-84), Cohen (2008, p.17), Brubaker (2005, pp.5-7), etc.) which defines diaspora as a dispersed population maintaining collective memory, vision, or myths about the original home communities and having difficult experiences in adoptive societies. Diaspora has been reconsidered in the wider context of globalization and transnational movements since the early 2000s regarding the flow of people, capital, and information. Such a new notion of diaspora emphasizes the connection feature of diaspora in two dimensions: connection between here (the country of destination) and elsewhere (the country of origin) of all people who share diasporic attributes and connection with wider society (Tambiah 2000, p.163; Patterson 2006, p.1897; Berns-McGown 2008, p.8; Faist 2010, pp.12-13). They are now in a strategic position to act as transnational activity facilitators or development bridge-builders between the host and home countries (Faist 2010, pp.18-19; Mirchandani 2013, pp.231-245; Gottschlich 2013, pp.20-40; Carment and Calleja 2017, pp.226-227). Given their familiarity with the host and home countries, the nature of these connections has implications for global business, trade, cultural exchange, diplomatic relations, social policy, and foreign policy.

Diaspora members can transfer information, ideas, knowledge, new technological skills, and financial assets to the country of origin (International Organization for Migration

2013, p.23). Within the context of cross-border knowledge, skills, and talents transfer, governments in developing countries, which have large expatriate populations, increasingly realize that engaged diasporas can be strategic assets for the development owing to their available sources of trade, investment, philanthropy, education, and culture. There is growing recognition by the home state governments of the important contribution of diasporas to economic development, poverty reduction, reconstruction, and growth of countries of origin. They have established ministry- and sub-ministry level diaspora institutions to engage their (ex-) citizens abroad on a formal basis. Various examples may include the Council of Representatives of Brazilians Abroad which is mandated by the Brazilian State Department to serve as liaisons between the Brazilian government and the Brazilian diaspora all over the world, Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs which seeks to connect the Indian Diaspora community with India by providing information, partnerships and facilitation for all matters related to Overseas Indians, and many others dedicated national institutions for diaspora of China (Overseas Chinese Affairs Office; the United Front Work Department of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party), Mexico (Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores); Instituto de los Mexicanos en el Exterior (IME); Consejo Consultivo del IME), and so on.

Since members of diasporas have different backgrounds, motivations, and connections to the home countries, there is no universal principle or one-size-fits-all model of the diaspora engagement policy. The diverse segment of diasporas requires individualized strategies of engagement with different levels of government, priorities, and degrees of organization. Many developing countries have implemented diaspora engagement projects to enhance connections between the growing diasporas and their countries of origin such as Vietnam (e.g., Come Home Pho Good, Vietnam Summer Camp, Xuân Quê Hương Program, Trip to Truong Sa archipelago), China (e.g., Returned Overseas Students Industry Parks, Developing Motherland and Benefitting-Assisting Overseas Chinese, Talent Plans), Algeria (e.g., Summer Universities

for Algerians Abroad, Support for Diaspora Enterprise), Mexico (e.g., Tres por Uno investment matching program, Red Global MX), and so on. Each diaspora engagement project focus on a particular approach in engaging the right people of the diaspora with the right purpose. Successful projects are researched and tailored to increase the intrinsic motivation of diaspora engagement, reduce barriers to entry, and create opportunities for serendipitous encounters with the aim to assess potential contributions of diaspora to homeland's economic, cultural, and social development.

For the host country, they can bridge the gaps between different cultures, values, beliefs, and political systems to build market linkages and strengthen cooperation within and between societies of host and home countries (International Organization for Migration 2013, pp.23-28). Recognizing the potential of diaspora entrepreneurs as partners in impactful development, the country that hosts large numbers of migrants and refugees, such as the U.S., has engaged diasporas through a number of programs and partnerships. The U.S. Global Development Lab, which serves as a hub within USAID, has diaspora partnerships with, for example, the African Diaspora Marketplace, MicroMentor, the India Investment Initiative, and so on. The International diaspora Engagement Alliance (IdeA) is managed via a public-private partnership between the U.S. Department of States, the USAID, and Calvert Foundation as part of the U.S. government's commitment to engage global diaspora communities, the private sector, civil society, and public institutions in collaborative efforts to support economic and social development. Within the changing global context of international cooperation, home countries may strengthen linkages and create platforms to build greater collaborations with diasporas, host countries, and the wider international development networks.

Considering the new importance of global dialogues on migration and development, there is the availability of handbooks and "road maps" to developing diaspora engagement policies by organizations such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and

Migration Policy Institute (MPI). In the case of Vietnam, while there is evident value to engaging diaspora communities for development, the lack of an effective diaspora engagement policy remains a challenge to informing the initiation or expansion of engagement efforts. Moreover, owing to the absence of baseline data and anecdotal evidences of how diaspora-driven social work led to positive impacts on home communities, the Vietnamese diaspora is not often clearly included in the design and management of the Vietnamese government's expatriate-oriented initiatives, leading to a lack of empowerment and long-term support for diaspora-driven development activities. As a result, the engagement policy which leverages diaspora strengths and aligns them with development priorities in Vietnam is still undetermined. The next section puts forward some modest suggestions for Vietnam to create the proactive framework that deepen the engagement of diaspora business networks, investment, and philanthropy efforts, as well as facilitate skills and knowledge transfers across border.

7.2 Improving the engagement of diaspora into homeland development in Vietnam

Given the cross-border nature of diaspora engagement, the highest representation in government institutions is necessary. The key to improving transnational reincorporation, though, is to take the process seriously by considering diaspora engagement strategy as a necessary component of its national development plan. Vietnam needs to identify goals and the capacity of the government institution focusing on areas in which the diaspora plays positive roles in the homeland development. Moreover, regarding the varied diaspora individuals and diaspora-organized entities owing to historical experiences and the present realities of the home and host countries, diaspora strategy should reflect these diversities with more realistic approaches. Home country programs and incentives need to map diaspora geography and potentials and perceive the importance of trust in a diaspora-homeland relationship in order to

mobilize diaspora resources as agents of social and economic development (Agunias and Newland 2012, p.23).

7.2.1 Identifying focused areas of diaspora engagement for development in Vietnam

Prior to navigating a targeted policy or a specific program to link the diaspora into the homeland development process or engage in activities with overseas Vietnamese and their organizations, it is essential for policymakers to have a clear acknowledgment of homeland development needs, its institutional/industrial capacity for development, and adequate capabilities of diaspora engagement. Given its economic development goals strongly associated with hunger eradication, poverty reduction, and social equality, Vietnam needs the unified diaspora strategy, which focuses on respective areas of diaspora engagement in adaptation to Vietnamese context. In consideration of the strengths of Vietnamese-American diaspora, it can be seen that individual or collective activities of the diasporic community have the potential to contribute to one or more of these development goals through these key areas: remittance, human resource transfer, and community development philanthropy. The objectives of policy should encompass diaspora capabilities including human capital, financial/entrepreneur capital, social capital, affective capital, and local capital as resources for homeland development (Ionescu 2006, pp.40-52).

Remittance

The answer to the question: “Is diaspora an agent of development?” is regularly referred to economic contributions and data of financial remittance. Remittance has overtaken foreign direct investment and official development assistance as the largest inflow of financial capital to Vietnam recently (see more Figure 4). Because of its sheer volume and consistent nature, remittance has been a critical source of foreign exchange and strengthened macroeconomic stability in Vietnam (Dang 2005, p.115; Small 2020, p.2). Within a recipient’s household, remittance has led to an increase in entrepreneur capital for small-scale investment and thus

leading to the reduction of poverty and facilitates human capital formation by improving access to housing, quality education, and health (Dang 2005, p.115; Small 2020, p.1). The Vietnamese government once established a tight control policy over remittance, yet it has sought to encourage remittance sending and channel this financial inflow into development efforts by harmonizing banking regulations and opening up the remittance market (Dang 2000, pp.195-197). The government issued Decision No. 32-CP dated January 31, 1980, concerning the policy called “Encouraging the transfer of foreign exchange to Vietnam,” Circular No. 5/ NH-TT dated May 5, 1980, promulgating the Decision No. 32-CP, and Joint Circular No.4/TTLB-NgT-TCBD dated March 31, 1983, regulating good-sending and good-receiving from overseas. Pursuant to Decision No. 32-CP, overseas Vietnamese were allowed to open bank accounts with tiered interests at the Joint Stock Commercial Bank for Foreign Trade of Vietnam. Principal and interest could be remitted abroad. A foreign currency savings account might enjoy high interest rates (Article 2). These regulations, in reality, were troublesome and intricate owing to uncontrollable factors affecting exchange rates and heavy load of administrative paperwork (Dang 2000, pp.196-197). Moreover, the significant proportion of remittances is used for consumption; this is not necessarily bad, but more active government policies are required to securitize future remittance flows and mobilize remittance for more productive purposes.

Human capital transfer

Diaspora can be a source of human capital for development in the home country on the possibility of reverse brain drain. Broadly defined, human capital includes the levels of education, training, skills, and knowledge that might be drawn on for the diaspora-homeland collaborative development agenda of brain circulation. Diaspora members can help to fill the skills gap that threatens the long-term economic prosperity and social development in Vietnam. VA NGO’s social workers, for example, serve as an essential component of long-term

developmental and social trajectories centered on a commitment to the home country. Even when they choose not to reside in the country of origin, they are acting as middlemen linking among grassroots communities, state institutions, and external agencies. In recent years, the Vietnamese government has moved toward policies promoting brain circulation between the sending and destination countries rather than the permanent return of highly-skilled expatriates. Conferences, meetings, and other exchange events have been organized in Vietnam to facilitate networks and foster the transfer of knowledge and skills of expatriates in science and engineering. For example, the first conference on overseas Vietnamese individuals was held by the State Committee for Overseas Vietnamese Affairs under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Hanoi in November 2009 with the aims of strengthening solidarity among the Vietnamese communities abroad and encouraging them to further contribute to the development of Vietnam. The second conference themed “Vision to 2020 – the Overseas Vietnamese Community’s Integration and Development with the Nation” was also organized by the State Committee for Overseas Vietnamese Affairs under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Ho Chi Minh City in September 2012. At the conference, the former Foreign Minister Phạm Bình Minh affirmed that the Vietnamese state and people recognized the contributions of overseas Vietnamese and considered them as an integral part of the Vietnamese nation, and they felt that the Vietnamese government would continue listening to the ideas of overseas Vietnamese individuals to make new policies that meet their aspirations.⁸⁵ New policy directions are needed to sustain these cross-border linkages and develop sector-based programs that focus on other specific human resource needs in the home country and target the respective professional groups within the diasporas, for example, in health and education sectors.

Diaspora philanthropy and community development projects

⁸⁵ “Second conference for Overseas Vietnamese opens in Ho Chi Minh City,” *Nhan Dan Online*, September 27, 2012, <https://en.nhandan.vn/society/item/717102-.html>.

The growth of cross-border charitable giving and huge amounts of money that flow from Vietnamese-American diaspora to Vietnam have attracted a growing interest in the potential of diaspora philanthropy. Diaspora philanthropy refers to both nonprofit sectors and private donations of diaspora population to their country of origin including a wide range of voluntary, charitable giving practices (Agunias and Newland 2012, p.187). Their approaches may vary based on motivations, objectives, and capacities, yet they have recently been combined into a powerful stream of social investment that not only brings resources but also strategies and ideas to support people to fully participate in employment and social life. While some private donors in the diaspora have necessary information to select their preferred charity and give independently, others who choose to donate via intermediaries include organizations such as hometown societies, community-based associations, faith-based organizations, professional networks, or diaspora-driven NGOs, either for convenience or to achieve greater social impacts (Agunias and Newland 2012, p.187). In the case of Vietnam, VA NGOs are effective channels to transmit diaspora resources to the long-term sustainability of development efforts in the home country, based on their capabilities of building better informed local communities, strengthening people's skills, and enhancing transnational coordination among stakeholders and institutional players. The social capitals,⁸⁶ either bonding (families and friends) or bridging (communities and institutions), can lead to potential benefits of successful cooperation, exchange, and innovation in respect to community development that enhances human health, wellbeing, and opportunity (Ionescu 2006, p.49).

7.2.2 Partnering with relevant diaspora

After articulating clear development goals, the next step for the homeland government is to partner with the diasporas that hope to engage by mapping geographic location of

⁸⁶ Social capital is defined as “networks together with shared norms, values, and understandings that facilitate co-operation within or among groups.”

Source: Tom Healy and Sylvain Côté, *The Well-being of Nations: The Role of Human and Social Capital* (Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2001), 41.

diasporas and identifying what they have to offer, which field they are willing to engage, and what they expect from the home country in return (Agunias and Newland 2012, p.27). Diaspora engagement policy cannot be made based on anecdotal information and wrong assumption. The policy-making process requires a certain amount of effort from policy makers to collect reliable and comprehensive data (through a migrant/diaspora census, survey, questionnaire, for example) regarding the number of populations, current professional and educational status, integration level, and experiences of the diaspora in the host country. This “know-your-diaspora” strategy is conducted by countries of origin to collect information about locations, situations, and potential development roles of their diaspora members. For example, under the instruction of the Indian government, the High-Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora conducted two-year demographic research on the estimated 20 million nonresident Indians and persons of Indian origin. Information resulting from this exercise influenced the evidence-based policy-making process, including the creation of a Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs in 2004 (Agunias and Newland 2012, p.28). The government of Ghana gathered detailed information about diaspora capacities and interests through cooperation with diaspora organizations, such as hometown associations or alumni associations, embassy, and consular offices (Agunias and Newland 2012, p.28).

Conducting large-scale, detailed census surveys in other countries is always expensive. In the case of Vietnam, the country can rely on countries of destination to collect data of their resident diaspora populations. The possibility for diaspora-homeland partnership based on diaspora resources depends on relationships with the diaspora, national development strategies, and foreign policy priorities of Vietnam. The Vietnamese government can determine if the resources are valid enough to use for the process of development in Vietnam. For example, among overseas Vietnamese communities scattering around the globe, the Vietnamese-American diaspora is considered to be well-integrated and have a certain degree of success

through its years of resettlement. Vietnamese Americans have educational attainment and employment levels on par with the general U.S. population and a higher average income. In 2019, members of the Vietnamese-American diaspora ages 25 and older are slightly more likely than the general U.S. population to hold a bachelor's degree (22.7% versus 20.3%); their median house-hold income is higher than the U.S. average (\$72,824 USD compared to \$65,712 USD).⁸⁷ Vietnamese Americans live in greatest concentrations in California (see more Table 1), which is home to many technology companies (in Silicon Valley) and ranks first in the U.S. for agricultural cash receipts in 2020.⁸⁸ In 2020, Vietnam was the seventh largest market for U.S. agricultural exports, at \$3.4 billion USD.⁸⁹ In the first two months of 2021, the United States was the largest importer of Vietnamese agricultural products with a turnover of \$2.04 billion USD.⁹⁰ As the country that thrives on agriculture, Vietnam can tap into its U.S.-based diaspora as a potential source and facilitator of trade, investment, and social remittances regarding innovative knowledge, ideas, and technical skills.

With their material and nonmaterial resources, Vietnamese-American diaspora can contribute to the development of their home country in different ways, depending on national development priorities and the overall policy framework. Along with some soft tactics and diplomatic actions that could be utilized to harmonize the diaspora-homeland relationship, diaspora engagement has to be supported by clear policies and a continuous process for building trust and mutual commitment. Successful government policies would include open, continuous dialogues with the diaspora to reconcile, or at least to take into account, the

⁸⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, "Selected Population Profile in the United States," 2019: *American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates* (S0201), accessed April 8, 2022, <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>.

⁸⁸ U.S. Department of Agriculture - Economic Research Service, *Cash receipts by commodity State ranking in 2020*, Farm Income and Wealth Statistics, April 8, 2022, <https://data.ers.usda.gov/reports.aspx?ID=17844>.

⁸⁹ "Vietnam – Country Commercial Guide: Agriculture," International Trade Administration, last published September 15, 2021, <https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/vietnam-agriculture>.

⁹⁰ "The US was the biggest importer of Vietnamese agricultural products in the past 2 months," Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, accessed April 8, 2022, <https://www.mard.gov.vn/en/Pages/the-us-was-the-biggest-importer-of-vietnamese-agricultural-products-in-the-past-2-months.aspx?item=13>.

possibility of complex situation and diverging perspectives on diaspora-homeland collaborative development. Vietnamese policy makers should think holistically about how to allow diaspora members to plan for the long-term social good in order to explore the extent to which Vietnamese-American diaspora contributions would be “fit for the purpose” in the context of current national development plan.

7.2.3 Considering the social dimension of diaspora contributions to homeland development goals

Diaspora resources relating to the above three main fields might be applicable in the real condition of Vietnamese economy at large in terms of remittance flow, investment, and tourism industry. The diaspora engagement does not only create the economic benefits but also improves social inclusion in the home country. Specifically, contributions might include the monetary remittance sent by overseas Vietnamese to build social facilities (collective remittance),⁹¹ the investment made with the intention to generate positive social impact, or the promotion for tourism with the purpose of exploring the history and heritage of ancestral land. Given these multidimensional benefits, Vietnamese policy makers should consider the social dimension of diaspora contributions beyond the economic realm so that the diaspora engagement strategy could encompass not only the tangible resources but also intangible assets from the diaspora.

Remittances - financial flows and beyond

The policy approach of the Vietnamese nation-state recognizes the importance of remittance sending and knowledge sharing from expatriate communities for its economic growth and technological innovation. These efforts, however, do not go far enough to help the

⁹¹ Social facility is defined as any structure designed, built, or installed to provide space for living or interaction among persons in a community such as primary school, secondary school, college, fire brigade station, dispensary, maternity home, hospital, cemetery, community center, public convenience, stadium, and such other facilities. Source: “Social facility,” General Multilingual Environmental Thesaurus, accessed September 27, 2021, <https://www.eionet.europa.eu/gemet/en/concept/7795>.

diaspora assess the Vietnamese national development goals or tackle the home state's top concerns on poverty reduction, hunger eradication, and social equity. The traditional view on remittance as an essential financial service probably skips its potentials of generating social and cultural benefits. As a result, the majority of remittances go toward household costs and individual consumptions. There is not yet a scheme that explicitly recognize remittance as a source of mobilizing funds to finance the poverty-reduction programs or increase the productivity of this capital flow.

Different from personal remittance spent on private consumption or household expenditures, collective remittance is the type of monetary giving used for the improvement of social and productive infrastructures relating to education, health, and infrastructure development in the home country. For example, a portion of remittance sent back directly to their families and relatives may go for public good such as the construction of schools or the renovation of churches and faith-based facilities (Johnson 2007, p.7; Sidel 2007, p.9). In the late 1990s, collective efforts of overseas Vietnamese to provide direct charitable actions in Vietnam appeared to be individual, family-based, or via faith-based institutions (Sidel 2007, pp.8-9). Overseas Vietnamese individuals showed their willingness to support the community by bringing money back to donate to churches, temples, and local charitable institutions for social services and natural disaster relief activities (Sidel 2007, pp.8-10). Currently, they can also donate to the charity projects of licensed VA NGOs working in Vietnam and see their impacts with frequent updates on websites of those organizations. Given the high population of Vietnamese Americans and the vast number of remittances from the United States, the home state's interventions should support these diaspora members' desire of improving their hometowns by leveraging remittances for the development of social infrastructures and productive community projects.

In addition to collective remittance, monetary donations may be sent back to their kin as the most trustworthy intermediaries for altruistic purposes (not directly benefiting their own families and friends nor for commercial gain) or via hometown associations that evolved into philanthropic actors and organizations (Johnson 2007, pp.7-18). The definitions of “collective remittance” and “diaspora philanthropy” sometimes overlap within a semantic field and are used synonymously despite efforts to distinguish the debatable boundary between these two concepts (Johnson 2007, p.6). Diaspora philanthropy includes private philanthropists or voluntary organizations working for the improvement of local conditions in terms of public good provision. Each type of actor, however, has its own challenge. Even the wealthiest private philanthropists do not have enough resources that bring the community in conditions of sufficiency in food, clothing, and housing. Diaspora-driven organizations, which are able to attract a wide range of donors, face barriers to coordination at the local level in the home state. The coordinating procedure requires a strong public-private collaboration between the diaspora and the home state and an opportunity for other institutional investors to make contributions. Given such circumstances, the development of a mechanism for diaspora engagement in philanthropic field would make the interventions more productive and sustainable in the long term.

Social workers from diaspora-driven NGOs can also raise nonfinancial resource supports to further their cause. This is the capacity of diaspora members to mobilize intangible resources including ideas, values, and networks in the form of *social remittance* to the country of origin. In the process of transmitting these social capitals, they play a part in strengthening and expanding international cooperation with counterparts in their community development projects. For example, if the VA NGO Network is implementing a public health project like the PedFACTs, it can seek help from local medical doctors for a certain number of hours in a day and obtain some advisory supports from colleagues in U.S.-based institutions, such as the

American Academy of Pediatrics or California Medical Association (see more Chapter 3). While less easily quantifiable than financial remittance, social remittance can have a positive impact on development and diaspora turn out to be important agent of development. Therefore, it is necessary to take a closer look at various development dimensions of remittance and the actual impacts of such transfers.

Impact investment

Since the 1986 reform, Vietnam has addressed the importance of international cooperation and foreign investment toward its overall economic development strategy. Diaspora engagement may also have a positive impact on the performance of investment sector in the homeland economy that requires adequate consideration from the home nation-state. Investments from foreign enterprises having connection with diaspora members (i.e., diaspora-driven companies or companies with diaspora members at top leaders) are able to foster the formation and growth of cross-border business cooperation between diaspora entrepreneurs and venture capitalists in the country of origin. Entrepreneurial diaspora can even help to boost light industries in the home country by transmitting understanding and know-how developed in the host countries (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development 2012, p.18). While some investments from diaspora that are considered as philanthropy indeed are made for personal profits rather than public good, they may have a true “philanthropic” meaning (Johnson 2007, pp.7-8). In any case, diaspora investors have more potential advantages compared to general foreign investors in terms of cultural and linguistic knowledge, shared identity, local networks, and risk perceptions in the home country (Rodriguez-Montemayor 2005, p.7).

These advantages could be further useful if diaspora members are willing to offer additional support in the form of social investment, which is made for both achieving financial returns and delivering a positive social impact within local communities. The social enterprise

Lotus Impact (as explained in Chapter 3) is an illustrative case in the current situation of impact investing that seek to achieve financial returns and generate a positive social, economic impact. It offers startups the incubation services that provide full-scale range of services starting with capacity development and grant giving. The regulatory and government policy of Vietnam become more conducive to foreign investment. Other measures for investment opportunity in Vietnam include the high level of entrepreneurship, high growth and medium risk companies, potential for high social impact, and gap to fill between investment in Social Enterprise and Donor Money. However, social enterprise providing incubation service in Vietnam is still scarce and impact capital is difficult to access.⁹² If supported by policies that create an atmosphere conducive to entrepreneurship of diaspora direct investment, the diaspora could channel more resources to foster investment and build a more inclusive society in the country of origin.

Heritage tourism

According to the World Economic Forum's latest 2019 Tourism Competitiveness Index, Vietnam ranks 63rd globally (out of 140 countries) in terms of the volume and attractiveness of its natural and cultural resources.⁹³ Vietnam has eight sites⁹⁴ inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, tied with Indonesia for the most of any country in Southeast Asia. The efforts to open direct flight routes between Vietnam and key nations/regions including the United States, China, South Korea, Japan, Thailand, Malaysia, Russia, Germany, Australia, France, the United Kingdom, India, and other potential markets such as United Arab Emirates and South Africa, have huge potential implications for travel and tourism. Among the

⁹² This is the opinion of the representative of Lotus Impact, during his presentation at the "Humanitarian Work in Viet Nam: The Future of Civil Society and Transnational Soft Diplomacy Viet Nam" symposium conducted at the University of California, Davis in November 2017.

⁹³ World Tourism Organization and World Travel and Tourism Council, *Vietnam - Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index 2019 edition*, 2019, <https://reports.weforum.org/travel-and-tourism-competitiveness-report-2019/country-profiles/#economy=VNM>.

⁹⁴ They are the Central Sector of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long (in Hanoi), Citadel of the Ho Dynasty (in Thanh Hoa Province), Complex of Hue Monuments (in Hue), Ha Long Bay (in Quang Ninh Province), Hoi An Ancient Town (in Quang Nam Province), My Son Sanctuary (in Quang Nam Province), Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park (in Quang Binh Province), and Trang An Landscape Complex (in Ninh Binh Province).

variation on this theme, heritage or “root” tourism could be expected to expand further in the future owing to the strategy to support the competitive tourism industry in Vietnam, in which case the home state has the capacity to engage the diaspora effectively at scale. Moreover, heritage tourism can enable members of the diaspora to trace their lineage in the country of origin (genealogy tourism), build emotional engagement, and attract attention from potential tourists through annual celebrations or cultural festivals. In reverse, the diaspora can play a unique role in promoting international markets for tourism, creating jobs, and boosting foreign exchange liquidity to the tourism industry in the country of origin (Agunias and Newland 2012, pp.215-223).

Pursuant to Resolution 36-NQ/TW dated March 26, 2004, on overseas Vietnamese affairs and Directive 45-CT/TW dated May 19, 2015, on continuing to promote the implementation of the Resolution 36-NQ/TW, several social-cultural events have been organized by the State Committee for Overseas Vietnamese Affairs under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in order to foster feelings of belonging and identity among diaspora communities, consequently encourage tourism by promoting return visits from diaspora members especially the young generation. For example, the annual “Xuân Quê Hương” (in English: Homeland Spring), which is a runner-up to the Lunar New Year festival, is an annual special event exclusively held for overseas Vietnamese people. The event is said to inspire pride of national identity and traditional cultural values among Vietnamese community abroad and strengthen solidarity among the overseas Vietnamese individuals and people in the homeland. Moreover, since 2012, the State Committee for Overseas Vietnamese Affairs under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Vietnam People’s Navy have organized annual trips to Truong Sa (Spratly) Archipelago for overseas Vietnamese. Participants on the trip attended ceremonies to commemorate those who had died in Gac Ma Island and met and talked with

islanders and soldiers. The trip is said to bring overseas Vietnamese closer to the original home country.

In 2002, the Prime Minister granted the State Committee for Overseas Vietnamese Affairs the permission to establish a Community Support Fund. The objective of the Fund is to encourage the young generation of overseas Vietnamese to experience Vietnamese traditions through participation in cultural exchange activities. The State Committee for Overseas Vietnamese Affairs organized the first Vietnam Summer Camp in 2004. Since then, this cultural immersion program has been organized annually to provide young overseas Vietnamese with opportunities to exchange with local residents, visit historical sites, perform volunteer/charity work, and learn Vietnamese cultures and traditions. On August 29, 2021, the State Committee for Overseas Vietnamese Affairs under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs hosted the webinar “Vietnamese Youth and Students Abroad with Vietnam Summer Camp.” In the event, a discussion titled “Joining Hands for the Homeland and the Country” highlighted the meaning of Vietnam Summer Camp in connecting overseas Vietnamese youth with their peers in Vietnam.⁹⁵ Participants of the Vietnam Summer Camp are encouraged to learn more about the origin, culture, and history of Vietnam, thereby making the decision to return and contribute to the development of their original home country.

In reality, several countries, such as Armenia, Israel, India, and the Philippines, have promoted birthright programs to perpetuate their national identity, especially among second and subsequent generations, and strengthen the ties between diaspora communities and their ancestral homelands (Agunias and Newland 2012, pp.219-221). Affective capital nurtured from these processes would increase the commitment and goodwill of diasporas to contribute to the home country even abroad (Ionescu 2006, p.50). These programs are often conducted

⁹⁵ Rosie Nguyen, “Young Overseas Vietnamese Show Their Love for the Homeland,” *Vietnam times*, August 30, 2021, <https://vietnamtimes.org.vn/young-overseas-vietnamese-show-their-love-for-the-homeland-35390.html>.

under the public-private partnership,⁹⁶ and this strategy could be used as a reference for engaging diaspora in tourism sector in Vietnam. For example, the Birthright Israel Foundation raises funds from annual donors to send eligible young Jewish adults on Birthright Israel. Birthright Israel and the Birthright Israel Foundation have offices in cities across the United States and Canada. The program is a partnership between the people of Israel through the Government of Israel, private philanthropists, donors, and Jewish NGOs around the world, including the Jewish Federations of North America, the Jewish Agency for Israel, and Keren Hayesod - United Israel Appeal. The expertise in logistic and standard-setting, as well as sustainable funding allow the Birthright Israel to become a practical educational program that has attracted over 750,000 participants since its inception in 1999 and contributed \$1.5 billion USD to the Israeli economy.⁹⁷

7.2.4 Other strategies

The Vietnamese government might consider establishing a one-stop online portal for diaspora engagement that provides full and up-to-date information about opportunities in investment, start-up business, philanthropy, technology expertise, and skills exchange in Vietnam. The BaLinkBayan, which is the communication platform created by the government of the Philippines in 2013, may become a reference for policy makers. The program has different categories of service for overseas Filipino youth, workers, migrants, and retirees with relevant legal frameworks and guiding materials for investment, donation, and volunteer sectors. The overseas population can access information anywhere and anytime. It is said to promote the strategic partnerships between overseas Filipinos and local communities and assist

⁹⁶ The World Bank defines public-private partnership as “a mechanism for government to procure and implement public infrastructure and/or services using the resources and expertise of the private sector.”
Source: “About Public-Private Partnerships,” The World Bank, last updated April 4, 2022, <https://ppp.worldbank.org/public-private-partnership/about-public-private-partnerships>.

⁹⁷ “Achievements,” Taglit-Birthright Israel, accessed September 29, 2021, <https://www.birthrightisrael.com/about-us>.

overseas Filipinos to invest in the Philippines both at national and local level in order to achieve sustainable development of rural and urban localities.⁹⁸

It is important to acknowledge the diversity of diaspora interests and have well-prepared plans to meet their needs. For example, for the young generation of overseas population interested in exploring their ancestral roots, the above-mentioned Birthright Israel program is one of global best practices in engaging the next generation which was launched in concern of the continuation of Jewish culture and heritage. The program was funded in 2000 by Charles Bronfman and Michael Steinhardt in cooperation with the Israeli government, private philanthropists, the Jewish Agency for Israel, and Jewish communities around the world. Top educators, historians, and tourism professionals were recruited to plan the ten-day educational trips to Israel for young people aged 18–26. Research has shown that participants in the Birthright Israel program are more confident to advocate for Israel's current situation; participants are more likely to feel very connected to Israel and are more likely to marry a Jewish person than their peers who applied for but did not go on the Birthright trip (Saxe et al. 2006, pp.7-8). The program could be used as reference for orienting engagement strategy that provides unique opportunities to explore Vietnamese culture and history for young overseas Vietnamese generation.

While the home state and its expatriate-oriented programs has been the focus of much attention, settlement experiences of diaspora communities as well as policy assessment and strategic priorities of the host state are other factors that influence their motivation of contribution to the home state (Boyle and Kitchin 2013, p.334). Countries can influence the work of diaspora populations they host in five ways: through aid programs for natural or human disasters, trade policies, international diplomatic and foreign policy agendas, security and

⁹⁸ "About us," BaLinkBayan, accessed October 27, 2021, <https://balinkbayan.gov.ph/about-balinkbayan/>.

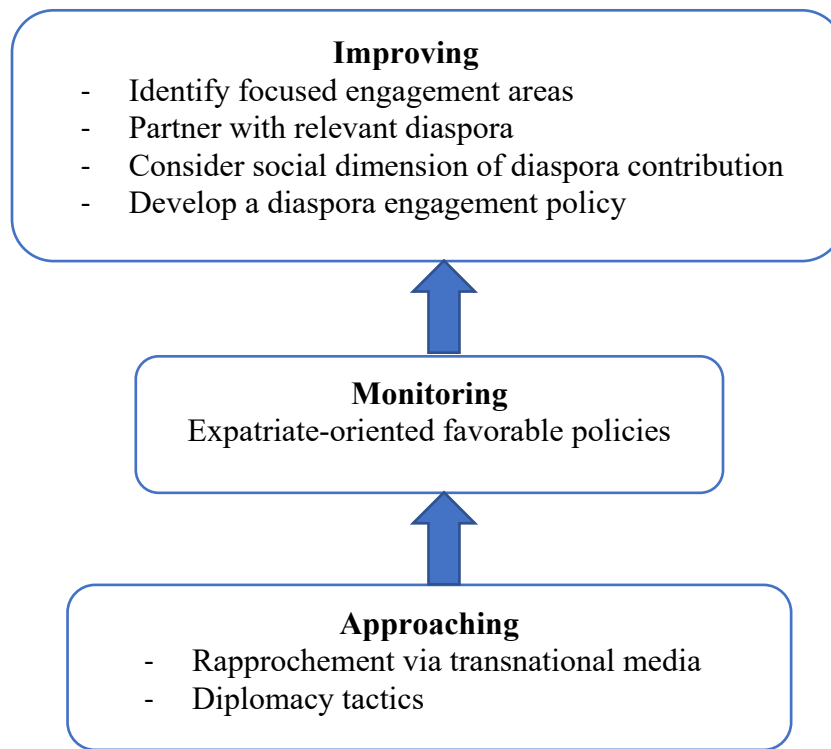
military agendas, and their immigration and refugee policies (Boyle and Kitchin 2013, pp.334-335). Indeed, the normalization of Vietnam-U.S. bilateral relation and emerging trade opportunities between the two nations paved the way for the diaspora involvement in community relief activities in the home country (Mai Tran as cited in Sidel 2007, p.10). This raised several questions that fit in Vietnamese context: How can diaspora populations be used to improve trade and investment linkages between host and home countries? In what ways can diaspora populations be encouraged to deliver development aids to the home country? How might diaspora populations be harnessed to improve foreign policies and bilateral relations between home and host states? Solutions to these matters require the involvement of the diaspora community and home and host states to minimize the obstacles to diaspora contributions to homeland development.

7.3 Stages of engaging Vietnamese diaspora as development partner for home country

While the margins for diaspora engagement to Vietnamese national development strategy are still narrow and the majority of remittances go toward household consumption, diaspora giving can serve many other purposes well-suited to Vietnam's national development goals. Progressive diaspora members have demonstrated high propensity for philanthropic activity, and often engage in fundraising efforts to drive donations to support community projects in Vietnam. By keeping an open line of communication, they do not only donate money but also get involved in the implementation and monitoring processes by providing oversight and advice for community development projects. Common projects include social, educational, recreational, and health development projects such as church renovation, health education programs, and disaster reliefs. Vietnamese schools, faith-based organizations, and public benefit organizations are able to access to those financial and nonfinancial supports from the diaspora.

Furthermore, the interconnection between “here” and “there” creates an opportunity for fostering social networks among those who work for common development purposes. Given the bridging role of Vietnamese-American diaspora and the high potential of diaspora giving, the Vietnamese home state might consider how to enable and revitalize the transnational relationship as part of its efforts toward development and global integration. It can be seen that the effort of Vietnamese nation-state to engage overseas Vietnamese as development partner involves three steps: approaching, monitoring, and improving stage. In the approaching stage, various diplomatic tactics were conducted through formal channels of communication, and there were signs of a growing rapprochement between the diaspora and the home country (Chapters 2, 3, and 4). In the monitoring stage, the establishment of key institutional players with high-level political arrangement steers the interaction with overseas communities and leads their engagement by favorable policies, strategies, and services (Chapters 5 and 6). The next step should be learning from practical experiences to develop a successful tool in improving diaspora engagement. Three steps of the effort to engage Vietnamese diaspora can be summarized in the following Figure 8.

Figure 8 Three-stage efforts toward the engagement of overseas Vietnamese for homeland development



Source: By author.

Different approaches and priorities were created by the Vietnamese government to formalize and monitor the engagement of overseas communities (Chapters 5 and 6). Monitoring and taking steps to improve it, however, are two entirely different undertakings. Based on VA NGOs' practical experiences, it can be stated that the effectiveness of a diaspora-driven organization depends on its ability to coordinate and cooperate with governmental agencies at local and national levels relevant to diaspora engagement. Thus, the existence of a diaspora engagement policy that derived from and is clearly linked to national development strategies is needed to improve diaspora engagement in homeland development processes. The diaspora engagement policy needs to address both the homeland's needs and the diaspora resources so that it would directly support the implementation of strategic priorities defined in national development strategies regarding economic development, finances, tourism, education,

health, and social affairs. The policy may also create a space for interaction in multilateral setting that helps normalize diaspora-homeland relationships, promote mutual understanding, and provide new inspiration and motivation for both sides.

7.4 Conclusion

This chapter is dedicated to the manifold contributions of the Vietnamese-American diaspora regarding different fields of interests that exert major influences on development process of Vietnam. These range from financial/social/collective remittances, human resource transfer, diaspora philanthropy, investment, and business creation that transfer diaspora resources (including human capital, entrepreneurial capital, and social capital) across borders. Furthermore, the unique feature of affective capital, which keeps structural ties between the diaspora and the homeland, allows the possibility of transnational cooperation to be envisioned. The cross-cutting nature of diaspora engagement demonstrates the capability of the simultaneous use of diaspora resources in one specific sector of Vietnamese economy. This statement can be evidenced by the fact that, impact investors from Vietnamese diaspora, whether from a non-profit or for-profit, an enterprise or a fund, can generate social capital alongside a financial return for their projects in Vietnam. In philanthropy sector, the contributions of Vietnamese-American philanthropists have extended beyond their traditional role of monetary support to fall under the broader category of transmitting social capital and human capital for community capacity development.

Vietnam needs an institutional and organizational mechanism, which is formalized by a diaspora engagement policy, for the transfer and distribution of material and non-material diaspora giving. There should be the initiatives that move beyond the economic realm of diaspora giving to integrate its social dimension into the targeted development purposes. Practices of government-led initiatives may include, but are not limited to, the concerted effort toward capacity building for the diaspora and the homeland, the building of mutual trust, and

full responsibility among public-private stakeholders as firm priorities for the foundation of diaspora engagement policy. The engagement policy needs to consider the multidimensional benefits of diaspora resources and includes the participation of the state and local government to canalize supports from overseas communities for homeland social, economic development. In particular, regarding local and social capital of VA NGOs, which defines the ability to negotiate and cooperate with other institutional players (states, organizations, etc.), favorable policies to diaspora-driven NGOs should be granted if the diaspora is going to engage constructively around real issues of homeland (social) development. By leveraging governmental resources with diaspora-led programing, the diaspora engagement policy would ensure that resource and time investments from both parties would play a role in the improvement of lives of Vietnamese citizens.

CONCLUSION

The new landscape of diaspora engagement in Vietnam

The contemporary history of Vietnam, with a massive exodus of people, shows the large Vietnamese diaspora population worldwide. This history has not been without tension and conflict, but it has also shaped the state policy to encourage international integration and maintained ties and networks across the world. In the changing global landscape, Vietnam is striving to become one of the emerging markets that has high rate of economic growth, sociopolitical stability, a good infrastructure, and a rules-based regulatory system supportive of a market economy and international trade. Linking to expatriate communities offers the nation the opportunity to engage itself into international networks, as well as to attract foreign investments and new customers for enterprises (Dang 2005, pp.200-201). Therefore, the rapprochement between Vietnam and Vietnamese-American diaspora has occurred despite the lingering tension between them (Chapter 2). Overseas Vietnamese individuals are provided with more space to become involved in socio-economic development of the home country through the practices of sending annual remittance or sharing information, knowledge, and support based on solidarity other than economic profit. They experience more friendly and open-minded attitude from their Vietnamese peers; some even chose to return and spend their retirement years in Vietnam (see more Chan and Tran 2011; Chan 2013; Furuya 2016).

Given the large amount of annual remittances sent to Vietnam, the economic contribution has been the core topic discussed about the integration of the diaspora into homeland development (Dang 2000; Dang 2005; Furuya 2002; Furuya 2006; Pfau and Giang 2009; Pfau and Giang 2010). Within this context, Valverde (2012) took a rare approach to reveal the support of Vietnamese-American information technology engineers to Vietnamese computer scientists undergoing technical training in the United States. Less attention, however, is devoted to other types of nonmaterial resource transfers, and data are therefore still missing

on social contribution from the diaspora to the homeland. Chapter 3 tries to shed new lights on social impacts of human and community development as another important contributions of the diaspora for homeland development. Other than individual giving with limited social reach, the organizational evolution of Vietnamese-American diaspora philanthropy structures the formation of VA NGOs, which explains the ability to increase engagement with the needs of disadvantaged groups and tackle wider developmental challenges. Chapter 4 explains how first-movers from the home country and the diaspora could enable the transnational cooperation within the context of such unfavorable environment. An institutional precondition for diaspora engagement is not mandatory; it would be improved gradually and incrementally through the participation of diaspora members into homeland development.

The diaspora engagement pushes for policy adjustment and results in favorable institutional conditions in which further and deeper contribution of subsequent diaspora engagement could be expected (Nguyen 2022). For the sake of its own national interests, the Vietnamese government has launched various policies dedicated to activating and mobilizing diaspora resources for its development purposes. The country has loosened the regulation regarding foreign investment, remittance, and goods sending from overseas Vietnamese and encourage the participation of highly-skilled professionals from expatriate communities into the country's technological modernization. Chapter 5 discusses how home country conditions, such as the investment climate and governance initiative, play a part on the engagement of expatriates to homeland development. The expatriate-oriented policies take different targeting approaches (i.e., for economic purposes or cultural exchanges; toward first-generation or second-generation overseas Vietnamese) but face barriers for productive usages of diaspora resources. In reality, building real diaspora-homeland partnership and productive dialogue for transnational cooperation can be a lengthy and complicated process. The complex diaspora-homeland relationship and the lack of diaspora engagement policy prevent the effective

involvement of Vietnamese-American diaspora members/organizations in homeland socio-economic development (Nguyen 2022).

While there is enough evidence to show that diaspora resources can bring benefits to the home country, the home nation-state plays an indispensable role in promoting appropriate policies that complement the benefits of diaspora involvement (Chapter 6). Vietnam has made efforts to ease the tension and call for reconciliation and solidarity with its overseas communities worldwide at policy level. Although the current national development strategies of Vietnam include overseas Vietnamese in general as remitters, trade/investment partners, or skilled professionals aboard supporting economic and technological growths at home, they rarely consider the interests of social and human dimensions involved on a meaningful scale. Moreover, each form of diaspora engagement retains a capacity to enhance the homeland development, and therefore should be approached as a process rather than a one-time action in order to leverage the power of goodwill and resources of the diaspora members and their descendants. Chapter 7 pulls from several of essential guides and examples which remain relevant to the social context, country needs, and national development strategies of Vietnam. It proposes suggestions as to how Vietnam might more effectively turn to pragmatic diaspora engagement policy if sustained attention from key policy makers would be given to the social, economic contributions of the diaspora.

Main findings of the research

The research explores the notion of the diaspora return, even short-term physical return to the ancestral homeland, as the mobility that transmits resources and strengthens ties across national borders. What I encounter in the case of the Vietnamese diaspora in the United States is, despite the lingering conflict, the diaspora has contributed to the developmental process of the home country. The research tries to enrich the current discourse on the role of Vietnamese diaspora in homeland development. Distancing itself from economic involvement, the

dissertation focuses on human needs, practice solidarity, and the contribution of Vietnamese-American diaspora to social development of Vietnam. Beyond the remittances they generate, Vietnamese-American diaspora members fulfill a key development role in Vietnam as philanthropists, impact investors, and first movers in the development of human capital. Through a theoretical review and empirical data of transnational development practices, the dissertation highlights the expansion of cross-border interactions taking place between Vietnam and Vietnamese-American diaspora members/organizations within various social, economic dimensions, as follows:

- Direct and multidimensional effects of material/nonmaterial resources from overseas Vietnamese as a development tool for human and social development in the homeland.
- Factors impacting the attitude and state policy of Vietnam toward overseas Vietnamese in conjunction with its national strategies of global integration and international cooperation.

A substantial number of charity and philanthropic projects in Vietnam are operated by VA NGOs. Those organizations see the process of raising Vietnamese-American contributions for local causes as important in building stronger communities for the long-term sustainability of planned efforts in Vietnam. As the entities link givers and receivers, international donors and local NGOs, and other different parts of the community, VA NGOs are able to reflect local needs and opportunities. Therefore, they are accountable to individuals and organizations to come together to pursue their own and the wider community's development purposes. Unfortunately, current state of relevant knowledge is relatively poor since data on these phenomena are incomplete, if not to say unavailable at all.

The case of Vietnam and Vietnamese-American diaspora spans a cross-section of theories and concepts of diaspora and transnationalism. Literatures on diaspora and transnational studies regarding cross-border development are employed to make sense of the

nature of the Vietnamese diaspora-homeland relationship, and clarify the roles of nation-state versus non-state actors in the transnational practices. In this approach, the Vietnamese-American diaspora is discussed as a non-state actor that helps to construct the socio-economic and sociocultural landscape of development in Vietnam through interconnected experiences. The understanding of advantages and disadvantages of multiple belongings in the transnational era has established the “stateless power” of diasporas which has impacted cross-border cooperation for homeland development (Tölölyan 1996, pp.7-8; Nguyen 2022). The phenomenon connects to the broader social construction of diasporic transnationalism (reviewed in Chapter 1) that creates a transnational social space for the movement of humans, things, and ideas across borders and boundaries. Within the shifting patterns of the Vietnamese-American diaspora, the rise of Vietnamese-American diaspora’s transnational social practices has implications for socio-economic development and the global integration of the Vietnamese home state.

The Vietnamese nation-state is concerned about how to be involved and monitor its diaspora in development activities. It could achieve better results by establishing equitable and productive partnerships with diaspora communities. Diaspora should be treated as an equal development partner. The relationship will be deemed a partnership, and all partners will share responsibilities and be liable for obligations of the partnership. Diaspora-homeland partnerships should be built on foundations of trust, communication, respect, and reciprocity for sustainable outcomes of diaspora engagement toward locally-led development. Furthermore, a comprehensive diaspora engagement policy that links to national and local priorities and coherent with national and local policies may help to maximize diaspora remittance, investment, and philanthropy for socio-economic development in the home country.

Recommendations for further research

The findings provide a spur for more insightful research into sustainable mechanisms for long-term diaspora-homeland partnership. First, research about Vietnamese diasporas in other countries regarding their social, cultural, and economic networks is needed to leverage their community and national development contributions in origin country. Second, there are unexplored potentials concerning the multigenerational engagement, and the collaboration between Vietnamese diaspora and humanitarian and development actor. The second-generation Vietnamese Americans, who return for career advancement or volunteer activities in Vietnam, appear as cosmopolitan individuals bridging the host and origin societies by engaging themselves in the transnational field. Owing to the diversities in the Vietnamese diaspora, there is a need for continued research on the motivations to engage, including the consideration of subsequent generations' needs and ambitions. Third, the traditional ethos of diaspora engagement needs to be changed: it should be seen beyond the traditional economic contribution to embrace other contribution motives in social and humanitarian sectors. Since diaspora is not static, these uncovered areas need additional study to promote evidence-based diaspora engagement policy for successful outcomes.

Last word

As of 2021, Vietnam has further demonstrated its determination to connect with overseas Vietnamese communities and engage them as agents for development process. In particular, the Vietnamese government released Official Dispatch No. 683/TTg-KGVX dated May 25, 2021, on continuing the implementation of Decision No. 1984/QD-TTg on the project broadcasting television and radio services to overseas Vietnamese communities via the Internet between 2015 to 2020. After over five years of implementing Directive No.45-CT/TW dated May 19, 2015, on continuing the implementation of Resolution No.36-NQ/TW dated March 26, 2004, on overseas Vietnamese affairs, on August 12, 2021, Politburo of the Communist

Party of Vietnam issued Conclusion No.12-KL/TW on overseas Vietnamese affairs in the new situation. Pursuant to Conclusion No.12-KL/TW, relevant ministries and agencies are required to serve the missions of promoting the strength of the great national unity, adopting comprehensive measures to assist overseas Vietnamese, and encouraging the contribution of overseas Vietnamese, especially the young generation, to the development of Vietnam and the bilateral relations between Vietnam and their host countries (Sections 1, 2, and 3). As such, the Politburo asked for reforming administrative procedures including issues of citizenship, visa, and resident permit for overseas Vietnamese investors and businessmen, as well as listening to constructive ideas and suggestions offered by Vietnamese experts and intellectuals (Section 3).

Through interviewing and co-working with progressive Vietnamese-American diaspora members, they express a desire to get in touch with their cultural roots, and to use their expertise to contribute to the development of Vietnam. The Vietnamese-American diaspora members have for years been instrumental in helping their families and relatives residing in the original home country, as huge annual remittance flows illustrate. Their contributions beyond remittances could also have an impact on socio-economic development, if tapped into. Through entrepreneurship, investment, trade links, knowledge/skills exchange, and philanthropic organizations, (Vietnamese-American) diaspora groups and individuals are giving back to the homeland in various ways. In recent years, with the growing number of technological tools facilitating diasporas' transnational engagement, such as web portals and online platforms, diaspora members can commit their available material and nonmaterial resources to such endeavors even while continuing to reside abroad owing to their transnational ties and networks in the home and host countries. Donors from diasporic community can check for reporting updates on VA NGOs' homepage website (e.g., The Compassion Flower's website, VA NGO Network's website) to ensure that economic support from the diaspora to those organizations and their charitable/development projects in Vietnam is quite successful.

Financial/nonfinancial resources and the ability of VA NGOs to impose a positive change on community development affect their acceptability and effectiveness in Vietnam. However, one of challenges for VA NGOs attributes to the decentralized nature of transnationalism “from below” through grassroots activities (see Guarnizo and Smith 1998), which contradicts the environment relying on centralized systems, rules, and procedures for efficiency in Vietnam. Many VA NGOs rely on the bottom-up approach, such as through their personal relationship with people and governments at local levels, to be able to carry out activities in Vietnam. Meanwhile, the Vietnamese government prefer a “government-dominant model” in the relation between the state and the nonprofit sector (Sidel 1997, pp.297-298). The state carries out all activities through direct or indirect influence on organizations and agencies based on the top-down approach, in which humanitarian/development projects shall be considered for approved qualification on operation by national/local governments. Moreover, in the Vietnamese sociopolitical context, it must be the partnership that challenges neither the political system of the country nor the “government-dominant model” of state/non-profit relations (Sidel 1997, p.298).

Furthermore, owing to the anti-communist sentiments among many sections of the diasporic community, VA NGOs must balance their efforts to engage with Vietnamese-American community without appearing political to Vietnamese authorities (Truong et al. 2008, pp. 261-262). Licensed VA NGOs working in Vietnam demonstrate their mediating role in negotiating with state officials rather than confronting them as a tactic to build long-term commitments and effective partnerships, therefore, can work on their humanitarian/development projects in support of state policy. This relationship is not always stable owing to lingering conflicts between the home state and the diaspora, but there are efforts to strengthen the transnational connection and uphold the unity between domestic and overseas Vietnamese in promoting Vietnam’s further development. With the aim to promote effective

outcomes of diaspora contribution, one suggestion may be a clear and supportive legal framework for overseas Vietnamese nonprofit organizations in respect of minimizing paperwork burden, offering tax incentives to promote diaspora giving, organizing practical fieldworks, providing them with updated information about local communities in need, and holding regular meeting to improve communication and collaborative networks.

The research is almost based on multisite fieldwork in areas of the original home country (Vietnam) and the destination country (the United States) in order to observe the Vietnamese-American diaspora from abroad and understand it from within. The dissertation recognizes diaspora members contribute to the well-being of communities and societies in the country of origin, and their knowledge, skills, and capacities can be useful in the design and implementation of community development projects. Moreover, the transnational nature of diasporas implies their crucial role in connecting countries and communities through multiple networks.⁹⁹ Despite differences over discourse on sociopolitical issues between the home state and the diaspora, they both have the common goals of sustaining homeland's economic growth and improving living conditions of poor people. For the first generation of Vietnamese Americans, such transnational involvement allows them to reaffirm their identity and strengthen ties with the original home country; while for the young generation, the engagement in homeland projects allows them to learn more about their origin as a process of self-discovery (Huynh and Yiu 2016, p.179). It is therefore essential to create favorable conditions in which both economic and nonprofit activities are supported by policy frameworks and strategic programming to enable, engage, and empower diaspora as agents for homeland's social, economic development.

⁹⁹ "Opening Remarks, Diaspora Ministerial Conference," The International Organization for Migration, accessed October 12, 2021, <https://www.iom.int/speeches-and-talks/opening-remarks-diaspora-ministerial-conference>.

The study hopes to play a part in the ongoing process of reconciliation between Vietnam and Vietnamese-American diaspora, which has been supported through socio-economic development assistances from the diaspora and favorable expatriate-oriented policies from the home nation-state. While there is not yet a Vietnamese diaspora engagement policy, the Vietnamese home state is increasingly strengthening the engagement of overseas Vietnamese in its development process as “non-traditional” but one of key actors. Furthermore, there is a growing recognition that overseas Vietnamese individuals are now in a strategic position to facilitate transnational networks and act as development bridge-builder between Vietnam and their host countries (Section 1 of Conclusion No.12-KL/TW dated August 12, 2021, on overseas Vietnamese affairs in the new situation). A strategy for diaspora engagement accords with Vietnam’s continuing efforts to promote socio-economic development and international integration as stated in Resolution No.1/NQ-CP dated January 1, 2021, on the major tasks and solutions guiding the realization of the socio-economic development plan in 2021. Further and deeper contributions of the Vietnamese-American diaspora could be expected with the attribute of diaspora-homeland partnership for the post-conflict reconstruction and development in Vietnam.

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DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

This dissertation is based in part on the previously published articles listed below. I have permission from my publishers to use the works listed below in my dissertation.

- (1) Hanh Nguyen, Nguyen Le. “The Process to Rapprochement between Vietnam and Its Diaspora in the United States.” *Diaspora Studies* 13, no. 1 (2020): 16–36.
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- (2) Nguyen Le Hanh Nguyen. “Vietnamese-American Diaspora Engagement in Homeland Development: Reciprocities, Potentials, and Challenges.” *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 22, no. 2 (2022). Forthcoming.

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