

obsessions with origins and superpower competition to a richer understanding of the complex dynamics over a half-century of international change. This is precisely the perspective we expect from historians who can cross boundaries and see the period in more holistic terms thirty years after the fact. We can indeed only begin to understand the legacies of the Cold War in Afghanistan, the Koreas, Ukraine, and especially the United States when we question the inherited assumptions that still underpin so many of our current policies. This history matters more than ever. Lüthi's book is an enduring contribution.

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Blood Ties: The United States and Vietnam Beyond War

Amanda Demmer. *After Saigon's Fall: Refugees and US-Vietnamese Relations, 1975-2000*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2021. 288 pp. \$39.99 (paperback).

During the final days of April 1975, U.S. helicopters ascended into the Saigon sky and made their way to ships in the East Sea (known to those outside of Vietnam as the South China Sea). The aircraft, which the Vietnamese called “dragonflies,” tore families asunder but also bound the United States and Vietnam together. The dragonflies lifted wives and children out of Vietnam while some husbands and fathers who had served in South Vietnam's military or worked with Americans got left behind. Hanoi officials consigned many of them to years in reeducation camps. The fates of others are unknown. Historians have bookended the Vietnam War narrative with April 30, 1975, as its conclusion, but Amanda Demmer offers an important corrective to that logic. Although the date marks the end of direct U.S. military and political involvement in Vietnam, it also signals the beginning of a new chapter in U.S.-Vietnamese relations. Blood ties linked the two countries.

Until about a decade ago, the South Vietnamese remained on the margins of the conventional Vietnam War narrative, if scholars included them at all. By placing refugees at the center of her story, Demmer not only amplifies South Vietnamese voices but also changes the conversation about the United States' postwar relationship with Vietnam. Despite the image of a haphazard rush to escape South Vietnam, the U.S. presidential administration of Gerald Ford and Congress enacted policies regarding evacuation and refugee resettlement before

the fall of Saigon. For the following two decades, the United States and Vietnam repeatedly held talks regarding refugees, reeducation camp detainees, and prisoners of war. Washington and Hanoi could not quit each other, even when they were officially not on speaking terms. The trauma of postwar family separation via exile and imprisonment left Americans and Vietnamese reaching across thousands of miles like estranged kin seeking some way to get past an ancestral rupture. Policymakers articulated the familial bonds in humanitarianism and human rights terms, and twenty years of trying to address the very personal consequences of war eventually resulted in normalization. As Demmer convincingly argues, normalization of relations between the United States and Vietnam was a twenty-year process, not a singular moment in 1995. Washington's efforts to heal South Vietnamese war trauma required Hanoi's participation.

To highlight the continuity in the U.S. relationship with Vietnam after the fall of Saigon, Demmer emphasizes the role of Congress in U.S. foreign policy-making, the centrality of human rights in diplomatic ideology, and the consistent attention the U.S. government paid to Indochinese refugees—Vietnamese, but also Cambodians fleeing the Khmer Rouge bloodbath. Bipartisan support in Congress for refugee resettlement ensured that the plight of Indochinese migrants remained in legislative conversations even when presidents turned their attention to other issues. Demmer also shows how non-governmental actors were crucial conduits of information about reeducation and refugee camps to Congress. When diplomatic talks between Washington and Hanoi stalled, activists worked to keep up the momentum towards resolving postwar humanitarian crises.

Leading the efforts on behalf of South Vietnamese refugees and reeducation camp prisoners were Ginetta Sagan and Khuc Minh Tho. Born in Italy in the 1920s, Sagan and her family joined the anti-Fascist resistance during World War II. Sagan's parents were killed, and Sagan nearly met a similar fate before sympathizers rescued her from prison in 1945. She migrated to the United States after the war and settled in California, where she founded the west coast chapter of Amnesty International and the Aurora Foundation, a human rights non-governmental organization. Khuc Minh Tho worked for South Vietnam's embassy in the Philippines. Her first husband, a South Vietnamese Army officer, died in combat when Tho was pregnant with their third child. Tho was in the Philippines when Saigon fell, but her children and second husband were still in Vietnam. She gained entry to the United States and spent the next fifteen years advocating for refugees and detainees while trying to reunite with her family. Tho founded Families of Vietnamese Political Prisoners Association (FVPPA) from her home in Virginia and networked with other South Vietnamese exiles in the United States whose relatives remained in Vietnam. Sagan and Tho testified before Congressional committees on refugees and reeducation camps, and their reports influenced U.S. policymaking towards Vietnam.

By focusing on Sagan and Tho, Demmer reveals the role of emotions in policymaking and how the intersection of gender and emotion opens up space for and even expects women to be at the center of policymaking in times of conflict and its aftermath. At the same time that Sagan and Tho fought for South Vietnamese family reunification, the League of Wives, founded by Sybil Stockdale, advocated on behalf of POW/MIA families. The women did not buck gender conventions, and their adherence to traditional womanhood worked to their advantage. Their efforts garnered support from both sides of the Congressional aisle. Presenting refugee, reeducation camp, and POW/MIA issues as family problems foreshadowed the emphasis Americans have placed on the experiences and struggles of military families during the twenty-first century wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Focus on the family, and somehow military issues seem apolitical or worthy of bipartisan support.

Human rights factored into U.S. policymaking after 1975, but Demmer also points out its limits as a diplomatic ideology. As Vietnam's *Doi Moi* reforms opened the country to the global marketplace, U.S. business interests lobbied for normalization without guarantees from Hanoi on human rights protections. When the Cold War ended, the U.S. security outlook changed, and isolating Vietnam packed a smaller geopolitical punch, so the United States had less incentive to insist that Hanoi improve its human rights record. Yet even when human rights lost its diplomatic cache, the South Vietnamese remained a concern for Americans. Demmer comes to the provocative conclusion that although the United States normalized relations with Vietnam, it continued to hold the South Vietnamese in an exceptional relationship.

With this well-researched and clearly-written monograph, Demmer has accomplished two feats. First, she persuasively illustrates that April 30, 1975, is an artificial, if not incorrect, end point for the Vietnam War. The United States did not wash its hands of Vietnam when the last American departed the country. From Ford-era planning for Vietnamese refugee resettlement to Reaganite insistence on a full accounting of U.S. POW/MIAs, the U.S. engagement with Vietnam that began as far back as the 1940s continued into the 1990s. Although the United States isolated Vietnam diplomatically and economically during the two decades after the fall of Saigon, Washington and Hanoi worked together to devise and implement resettlement and repatriation programs. The U.S. military intervention in Vietnam was always intertwined with political nation-building, and the mission was never cut and dry, so suggesting that there are discrete beginning and end points does not accurately represent what U.S. involvement in Vietnam was.

Second, Demmer adds muscle to the historiographical effort to pry the Vietnam War narrative from the vise grip of an earlier cohort of historians and journalists whose personal investment in a particular viewpoint has resulted in an incomplete narrative of the war and its consequences. It should not have taken more than forty years for historians to investigate South Vietnamese experiences, reeducation camps, and Hanoi's human rights violations. Doing so

requires acknowledging multiple Vietnamese perspectives and challenging the relativism that has deemed acceptable a decade of life wasted in a reeducation camp for having fought on the losing side. In taking South Vietnam and the South Vietnamese seriously, Demmer reveals that Hanoi, oddly enough, did too, insofar as doing so helped push normalization with the United States. Demmer deftly and dispassionately navigates among the various historical actors and outlooks, staking no claim to a particular school of Vietnam War historiography. Her work is nothing short of a model for how to write a new history of the Vietnam War.

It could not be more timely. As the United States withdraws from Afghanistan, Americans will need to decide what to do about their Afghan allies who flee for their lives, as well as those left behind. If the resettlement of Afghan refugees does not translate into geopolitical bargaining chips, Americans will have to determine the degree to which they consider human rights a worthwhile diplomatic objective for its own sake. U.S. policymakers will also have to prepare for the possibility that the Taliban will not be as open to cooperation as Hanoi was. For all the differences between Afghanistan and South Vietnam, the lessons Demmer offers about the blood ties that formed between Americans and Vietnamese are relevant to the relationship the United States now has with Afghans and the Taliban.

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FREDERICK ROWE DAVIS

Turtles the Whole Way Down

Sharika D. Crawford. *The Last Turtlemen of the Caribbean: Waterscapes of Labor, Conservation, and Boundary Making*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2020. 204 pp. \$95.00 (hardcover).

Turtle soup was a delicacy in London, Paris, and New York well into the twentieth century. Though largely restricted to highbrow menus, the market for green turtles (*Chelonia mydas*) fueled an extensive hunting campaign, which ultimately brought the species to the brink of extinction throughout much of the circum-Caribbean. In *The Last Turtlemen of the Caribbean: Waterscapes of Labor, Conservation, and Boundary Making*, Sharika D. Crawford reveals how the hunt for sea turtles shaped certain sectors of the Caribbean much like sugar or