

## **Introduction: Nation-building in China and Vietnam**

This special issue explores the changing nature of Chinese and Vietnamese nation-building in the era of globalisation and specifically, transnationalism. The concept of transnationalism encompasses migration, diaspora and much more, from complex trade routes and capital flows to a concomitant growth in alternative social formations, virtual communities, multiple identities and the like. At the same time, however, the transnational “signifies the resilience of nations and the state” ([6], p. 599) because the concept of ‘trans-national’ also presupposes the existence of national borders to be crossed. It informs contemporary nation-building both across and within nation-state borders, since migration and multiculturalism also highlight the “transnationality that is arising inside nation-states” ([5], p. 389). This is what makes transnationalism a particularly useful frame of reference in the context of this special issue, which looks at its implications in two specific cases of nation-building. As two of the few communist regimes to have survived the end of the Cold War, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) and the People’s Republic of China (PRC) are particularly interesting examples of pragmatic “nation building at the intersections of socialism and free market capitalism ([27], p. 19). Colonialism, communism and conflict, prevailing discourses on modernization and development, enduring concerns over national sovereignty and security, and latterly consumption and technology have all shaped these states’ unique approaches to nation-building in a transnational context. In terms of the conceptual framework set out below, East and Southeast Asia have also been remarkably fruitful regions for theorising nation and identity [12], providing the basis for Benedict Anderson’s seminal book *Imagined Communities* [1], as well as more recent, influential works like Aihwa Ong’s *Flexible Citizenship* [19].

Vietnam has experienced lengthy colonisation, division and significant emigration, but the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP) has nonetheless built a national narrative of overriding unity founded on an ancient, Bronze Age civilisation and two millennia of repeated resistance to foreign invasion [22]. Despite China’s long-standing, self-ascribed status as the ‘middle kingdom’ at the centre of a hierarchical cosmology, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) today emphasises and defends the PRC’s sovereignty

in standard Westphalian terms, much like its Vietnamese counterpart ([2], p. 133). The first part of the following discussion sets out a conceptual framework designed to put contemporary Chinese and Vietnamese nation-building in comparative, international perspective. Drawing on the twin facets of transnationalism highlighted above, the second part looks at the borders of nation-building from the perspective of diasporas living outwith the nation-state. In turn, the third part focuses on a series of trends working to reinterpret the nation from within, and ends with an overview of contributions to this special issue. It should become clear that transnationalism affects contemporary nation-building in manifold ways and that the specific cases of China and Vietnam, in all their complexity, offer a stimulating basis for wider comparisons.

### **Nation-building: The International Context**

Transnationalism refers to “sustained linkages and ongoing exchanges among non-state actors based across national borders – businesses, non-government organizations, and individuals sharing the same interests” ([34], p. 3), as distinct from international exchanges between states. It can also be distinguished from globalisation, in that transnationalism focuses on the way in which *specific* culturally and politically embedded identities evolve in their interaction with others ([19], p. 4). Diaspora communities are one such manifestation of transnationalism and are considered further below. The trend towards recognising diasporas as full or quasi citizens of the ‘home’ country, with the more or less overt goal of tapping into their investment potential and business knowhow [4], has been described as ‘deterritorialised citizenship’ [8; 9] and is particularly relevant to nation-building. Deterritorialised citizenship is also something of a misnomer, however, precisely because the homeland territory, in the form of the nation-state, continues to play a crucial role in defining and delimiting belonging. That is, in terms of eligibility for citizenship, the state still decides who is deemed part of the national diaspora, and according to which criteria. A more useful alternative to deterritorialised citizenship is the concept of ‘kinetic nationalism’ developed by Kate Jellema [11] with particular reference to Vietnam. This better captures the flexibility and fluidity of nation-building in the twenty-first century context of transnationalism.

Nation-building is understood here as state-led nationalism, which seeks to forge and maintain a link between nation and state. As such, the criteria for belonging to the nation-state will necessarily be ideologically laden [31]. The term 'nationality' is often used as a synonym of state citizenship, indicating how closely the legal construct of citizenship is bound up with the presumption of a common national identity. Nationality more properly refers to members of a nation and not a state ([21], p. 38), however, and it is crucial to distinguish between these two concepts. The nation refers to the cognitive, legitimating basis for authority, whereas the state embodies the territorial and institutional dimensions of authority. Citizenship, in turn, is an important marker of belonging to the state and can be defined as the legal expression of national membership, which flows from the nation-state nexus. It thereby "entails the entitlement to belong to a community" ([35] p. 22), as well as legal rights and obligations. This rather diffuse sense of belonging, sometimes described as 'cultural citizenship' ([25], p. 14), is key in connecting national loyalty to state legitimacy, and underpins the nation-state construct as a whole.

The controversial phenomenon of migration is important to nation-building because the relationship between migrants and the national construct must be managed. States set parameters as to how migrants should 'integrate' into the 'host' society, principally through naturalisation procedures, required language competence and citizenship tests. In pursuit of nation-building, they decide how inclusive to make their national construct and erect higher or lower barriers to belonging accordingly. Official attitudes towards migrants are thus a good way of gauging the openness or otherwise of a national construct to new citizens. Turning to diaspora, this denotes a group of migrants who share a common bond to the homeland they or their forebears left behind. Not all migrants belong to a diaspora, however, because they might not identify with their country of (ancestral) origin. Neither can we assume that a diaspora represents a homogenous group. Members of a diaspora will feel and express their sense of belonging to the homeland in different ways, be it through upholding its customs and cultural traditions, some form of political activism, or economic solidarity in providing remittances and other types of financial support. Diaspora and migration are thus key aspects of transnationalism affecting nation-building today.

The extension of nation-state citizenship to diaspora communities is not a new phenomenon. West Germany's recognition of *Aussiedler*, its ethnic German diaspora beyond the erstwhile Iron Curtain, is a case in point. Greece's links with its diaspora during the nineteenth century is another. Italy's recognition of overseas Italian citizens is also long-standing, and India's development of a policy towards overseas Persons of Indian Origin is ongoing [4]. In the present era, contrary to the once popular view that globalisation would lead to the decline of the nation-state [18], we have instead seen a renegotiation of the nation-state construct and its reimagining across frontiers. Importantly, these frontiers have not disintegrated. Borders have always been porous, but they continue to be important in delimiting the 'homeland' and in controlling migrant flows, amongst other functions. However, it is increasingly difficult for official nation-building to present these frontiers as encapsulating a homogenous people and a coherent 'geo-body' [32]. This is not only because states' recognition of their diasporas oversteps state frontiers, but also because *de facto* multiculturalism resulting from centuries of migration cannot be erased through official integration policies and nation-building rhetoric alone. It is also becoming increasingly apparent that top-down attempts to achieve national unity and solidarity are being renegotiated from within, as scholars explore the multivocal nature of nation-building (see Rozsko in this issue).

Reflecting on some of the trends outlined above, Ulrich Beck and Natan Sznaider [5] have argued that the social sciences must move away from so-called "methodological nationalism" - or the focus on bounded 'nation-states' as units of analysis - in favour of a more cosmopolitan outlook. Somewhat counter-intuitively, perhaps, studies of how nation-states are constructed should be no different. Important steps in this direction have been taken in the study of Vietnam, exemplified by recent edited volumes entitled *Borderless Histories* [33] and *On the Borders of State Power* [10]. Complementary work on China includes monographs by Callahan [7], Barabantseva [3] and Liu [15] among others. Transnational flows have always shaped and influenced nation-states, but the growing impact of diaspora and immigration, as well as unofficial national memory and commemoration, should be integrated into any study of contemporary nation-building [31]. As we shall see in section three below, anthropologists are also developing

innovative analyses of specific social trends in Vietnam, which suggest new ways of thinking about nation-building more generally.

In the context of contemporary nation-states, the domestic/international distinction is breaking down to the extent that diaspora communities abroad are increasingly being brought “back into the national fold” ([11], p.70; [4]). However, this tendency towards inclusiveness by no means applies to immigrant populations as well. For example, the introduction of citizenship tests in the likes of Germany, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Denmark institutionalise an ethnocultural slant to naturalisation. They tend to conflate the process of naturalisation with nationality, or ‘cultural citizenship,’ in that some of their questions seek to draw out expressions of community solidarity. This presupposes a commitment to the nation-state as the “imagined community” writ large, which may not reflect the candidates’ actual motivation [19]. Nonetheless, the tests officially supplement the legal construct of citizenship with measures of national loyalty and belonging. On the one hand, then, we are seeing definitions of national belonging extending beyond the nation-state’s territorial boundaries to ‘co-ethnics’. For migrants living inside those boundaries, on the other hand, achieving nationality *qua* citizenship is increasingly premised on markers of ethnic belonging, instead of other possible factors like residence. Although this can be read as widening the borders of belonging, as is suggested by the term ‘deterritorialised citizenship’, it can also be considered regressive, since belonging is more often premised on ethnic markers of descent (diaspora eligibility) or cultural assimilation (citizenship tests) than purely civic markers of residence and/or political participation. Drawing on these wider debates, the following section focuses on some of the implications of transnationalism, specifically diasporas, for nation-building in Vietnam and China.

### **Nation-Building and Diaspora**

Whilst keen to preserve Chinese culture and society from the potentially nefarious effects of globalisation, the CCP also attempts to market aspects of Chinese history – including colonial remnants - as a means of attracting global business, tourism and capital [17]. This strategy targets not only foreign entrepreneurs, visitors and investors, but also members of the extensive Chinese diaspora. Although the PRC officially

embraces its overseas community, Barabantseva points out how this policy is primarily directed towards ethnic Han in a hierarchy of 'true' belonging. Despite the fact that the PRC officially acknowledges the country's ethnic diversity at home, its international appeals are unlikely to resonate with those ethnic minorities abroad who do not regard themselves as Chinese, nor those who consider the communist regime illegitimate. Nevertheless, the PRC's diaspora policy is part of a wider strategy, detailed by Barr in this issue, which is designed to involve overseas Chinese in the country's modernisation and development. As such, it is one example of a 'deterritorialised' form of nation-building, in that it fosters a sense of national belonging and loyalty to transcend borders. Yet the strategy is also very much focused on the fortunes of the Chinese 'homeland', suggesting that the nation-state and its territory continue to be the core concerns. As the following example illustrates, however, some reject the political propaganda linking national loyalty to support for the ideology and actions of the communist regime.

The 2008 Olympic games in Beijing were intended to showcase the PRC's diversity and achievements, and drew many donations from overseas Chinese, but also hit the headlines as the focus for international protests surrounding the status of Tibet. Alongside Taiwan, the PRC's policies towards Tibet are the most internationally controversial aspect of its official nation-building. As the Olympic protests showed, the Tibetan diaspora has been very successful in harnessing some of the potential of globalisation and transnationalism to its cause. The spiritual appeal of the Dalai Lama has also helped to make the Tibetan cause an attractive one for international sponsors. From its base in India, the Tibetan government in exile has forged the "diaspora ideology of Dharamsala" [13], which presents the Tibetan people in stark opposition to the Chinese 'Other', not only ethnically and politically, but also ethically and even environmentally. This provides an opportunity to cast the PRC in a bad light for allegedly destroying Tibetan ecology and landscape [16], thereby combining 'timeless' and semi-mythical aspects of Tibetan spirituality and culture with 'progressive' features such as democracy and environmentalism. Tibetan nationalism is thus at once a domestic and a transnational challenge facing the PRC's leadership, as it seeks to maintain legitimacy through nation-building.

Turning to Vietnam, an important segment of its diaspora consists of 'boat people' who fled the country in the 1970s following communist victory in the Vietnam-American War (but see also [29]). Their anti-communism clearly represents a potential ideological challenge to the SRV's official discourse, although the vigour of this challenge varies in practice. For example, Louis-Jacques Dorais [9] considers the Vietnamese community in Quebec to be much less politicised today than the so-called *Viet Kieu* (overseas Vietnamese) in Southern California, particularly Orange County, for whom anti-communism can still be an important component of their self-identification. One factor influencing politicisation there is the continued control of community associations by first-generation Vietnamese exiles, who were often high-ranking officials in the defunct Republic of Vietnam [a.k.a. South Vietnam] (but see [11], p. 79). Ong and Meyer's chronicle of the number and nature of protests within this community highlights the preponderance of those organized against the SRV government, rather than issues surrounding migrant communities or U.S. politics more generally ([20], p. 98). As such, "homeward-looking politics has served as a temporary deterrence to the Vietnamese state's effort to reincorporate the diasporic communities and, at the same time, may serve as a tool to preserve the history of South Vietnam" ([20], p. 99). Here we see a strong counter-narrative to the VCP's discourse of national unity, which has largely erased the country's division from official commemoration [26].

Anti-communist protests help to cultivate a distinct Vietnamese identity amongst specific diaspora communities, rather than a sense of solidarity with the Vietnamese nation-state. Nevertheless, this does not amount to the *deterritorialisation* of citizenship or even national identity, but rather the construction of *two rival territories* as cultural centres for understanding what it means to be Vietnamese. This creates "the heartaches of a life split between two homelands" ([11], p. 79), but does not necessarily undermine a belief in a single Vietnamese nation independent of its government(s). Even when the Republic of Vietnam existed under the leadership of Ngo Dinh Diem, it rivaled its northern neighbour in expressions of patriotism and claims to be the one, true representative of the Vietnamese nation ([30], p. 48). Ideological opposition to the communist regime has often stood in the way of inward investment or return visits by refugees "cautious of the triple threats of pressure from the dominant anti-Hanoi groups

in the Vietnamese American community, the U.S. government embargo, and continuing hardline policies in Hanoi” ([28] p. 4). This started to change after 1986 due to the SRV’s process of economic liberalisation known as *doi moi* (renovation), and is now tempered by ever-increasing trade, travel and cultural exchange, as well as evidence of lesser political polarisation amongst the younger generation of *Viet Kieu* ([20], p. 99).

Similarly to the PRC, Vietnam seeks to strengthen the status of the national ‘homeland’ politically and economically by tapping into family ties and ancestral links, since these represent continuing connections to Vietnam. A further, significant element of “transnational Vietnam” is thus interpersonal (Valverde, cited in [9], p. 109). Repatriation to the place of birth for reburial remains an ideal for many *Viet Kieu* ([9], p. 113), for example, although the widespread belief that ancestors’ spirits can be called to visit the family shrine - wherever this may be located in the world - very much facilitates the transnational conduct of ancestor worship. At the same time, this practice reaffirms a sense of belonging to Vietnam, one which official Vietnamese nation-building is now seeking to exploit by suggesting that ancestor worship serves to unite all Vietnamese across religions and ethnic groups. Indeed, Kate Jellema ([11], p. 72) points out that “with a little encouragement [from the state], filial piety in a family context might be translated into loyalty to the modern nation.” Further, the link between the related practice of spirit worship and patriotism has also been noted. For example, popular Vietnamese deities like Lieu Hanh and Tran Hung Dao take on both a spiritual and patriotic function in contemporary Vietnam ([23], p. 67).

Today, Vietnam’s nation-building discourse embraces those deemed to be Vietnamese living outside Vietnam with the ultimate goal of increasing the SRV’s prosperity and legitimacy as a unified nation-state. This makes the idea of ‘deterritorialised citizenship’ as a basis for contemporary nation-building rather misleading. On the contrary, today’s nation-builders seek to reaffirm state borders by encouraging their respective diasporas to invest themselves both financially and spiritually in improving the fortunes of the ‘home’ nation-state. These appeals can resonate across the generations, exemplified by one young Vietnamese-American quoted as saying “I cannot take away my father’s pain [...] and he knows not to try to take away my quest to do something for the country that



holds my birthright” (cited in [28], p. 7). This section has looked at diasporas to illustrate some of the political and interpersonal aspects of transnationalism that shape contemporary nation-building in the communist context. The following section draws on stimulating anthropological literature on Vietnam to explore the concept of ‘kinetic nationalism’ as a possible alternative to notions of deterritorialised citizenship.

### **Nation-building: Domestic Dynamics**

Kate Jellema has argued that the Vietnamese case provides evidence of an increasingly “flexible ‘coming and going’ engagement with the nation” ([11], p. 58). The Vietnamese phrase *ve que*, meaning return to the homeland, can be understood on several levels, but has much to do with rites of filial devotion. For instance, it is used to refer to urban migrants within Vietnam, who typically return to their home village for lunar new year celebrations. As in China, this is the main, annual family gathering. But at the same time, the “disciplining *ve* (to come back home) contains within it the liberating *di* (to go out), and therein the possibility of a Vietnamese nationalism compatible with individual ambition and a global outlook.” ([11], p. 58). This analysis is symptomatic of recent anthropological studies of collective memory and religious revival in contemporary Vietnam, which have sought to move beyond bounded understandings of the nation-state to examine transnational and unofficial forms of commemoration that question, complement and sometimes subvert official nation-building.

Complementing Rozsko’s analysis in this issue, Christina Schwenkel uses the term ‘recombinant history’ to show how Vietnamese commemoration of the Vietnam-American war is “a kind of co-production that is bound up in uneven relations of power and competing claims to historical authority and truth” ([27], p. 13). Her approach explicitly highlights the transnational aspects of this process, tracing how everything from museum exhibits to war memorials are influenced by international sensibilities, and interpreted differently by foreign and Vietnamese tourists, defeated combatants, and younger generations of Vietnamese in the SRV or its diaspora. These are just some of the actors who together make up a “historically shifting and patchy transnational landscape shaped by the legacies of war, colonialism, nationalism, socialist internationalism, and global capitalism” ([27], p. 204). Clearly, the form of nation-building

Schwenkel describes is eminently flexible and adaptable to the twenty-first century, transnational context. According to Kate Jellema, the SRV's current focus on ancestor worship in its nation-building discourse is also closely linked to this context; "to counteract the fragmentation of the increasingly global and globalized Vietnamese populace by pulling wayward Vietnamese back home [...] ancestor worship has to seem both appropriately old and appropriately new: at once a time-honoured, naturalized tradition and at the same time a flexible concept relevant to contemporary realities" ([11], p. 72). Both Schwenkel and Jellema show how the SRV's official nation-building is responding to the dynamism and transnationalism of contemporary Vietnamese citizens and society. Its emphasis on ancestor worship suggests an ancient, 'rooted' pedigree well suited to nation-building, but also acknowledges that people are often 'on the move' and may be unable to visit their ancestors' tombs more than once a year or even once in a lifetime. Others may only be able to summon the spirits across continents, but this practice continues to revolve around a longing to return to one's Vietnamese *que* or home, and by extension to the national homeland. To this extent, it is definitely not a 'deterritorialised' form of belonging. Rather, Jellema's use of the term 'kinetic nationalism' is more apt in describing a form of nation-building which accepts departure from the homeland but also expects return (as well as financial returns).

Heonik Kwon's fascinating analysis of memory and spirituality in the aftermath of the Vietnam-American war focuses on the "social vitality" ([14], p. 3) of ghosts in Vietnam. He contrasts popular practices of commemoration, which do not distinguish ideologically between those who fell, and the state's need to institute "a hierarchy of value in war death for its legitimacy" ([14], p. 25). Remembering those who died in wartime and the 'heroic mothers' who bore them in terms of martyrdom or 'sacrifice for their country' is an important element of Vietnamese nation-building. For instance, Christina Schwenkel ([27], p. 130) shows how the design and layout of Vietnamese war memorials display both transnational and 'Vietnamised' features, and are received more or less warmly by different sectors of the population. Significantly, these memorials honour those who died for the winning side in the Vietnam-American war, neglecting the tombs of soldiers who fought for the also defunct Republic of Vietnam. Therefore, this "rendering of national unity as a spiritual unity" ([14], p. 27) between past and present, North and South

Vietnam is necessarily incomplete. Kwon also shows that outside the political realm, popular spiritual practices surrounding ghosts of the fallen do not discriminate on the basis of the dead soldier's origins and affiliation, be they American or communist or not. In this apolitical sphere, the ideological divisions of the Cold War are not decisive. Thus, individual encounters with ghosts and their impact on families and local villages offer a rich complement, if not a corrective, to nation-building discourse surrounding only those officially recognised as 'heroes' and 'martyrs'. Kwon's rich analysis chimes with Jellema's view of kinetic nationalism by pointing out the flexibility of spirit worship, which can incorporate ghosts as "another man's ancestor" ([14], p. 99), thereby offering hope of reconciliation extending across both kinship and ideological boundaries to include not only the SRV's diaspora but also its defeated enemies; "In this context, the ritual act of hospitality and its openness to displaced foreign spirits can coexist with the demonstration of unity with familiar ancestral spirits" [[14], p. 165). The adoption of ancestor worship into official Vietnamese nation-building thus holds intriguing potential to undermine the political binaries that are inherent in nationalism - such as insider and outsider, winner and loser - and to offer new ways of thinking about official national belonging and commemoration in the future.

To the extent that nation-states increasingly seek to foster the same sense of national unity, solidarity and loyalty among their diaspora as they do at home, it is quite possible to argue that "transnationalism...may rather reinforce traditional nationalism through a deterritorialized expansion of the nation-state" ([8], p. 172) However, it can also have the opposite effect. Enduring loyalty to a putative 'free Vietnam' rather than the SRV among some Vietnamese-Americans is a case in point. This ideological division still hinders an overriding sense of solidarity with the Vietnamese *people* in some parts of the diaspora. SRV nation-building is now trying to transcend this by emphasising a shared belief in ancestor worship uniting all compatriots across the world. Vietnamese identity is well adapted to displacement and diaspora, since it can be acted out transnationally, but it is not a deterritorialised form of belonging, since it continues to have the nation-state 'homeland' at its symbolic centre. Accordingly, 'kinetic nationalism' is a more helpful analytical term to suit contemporary circumstances. It presupposes that individuals' pursuit of prosperity and legitimacy will benefit the 'home' nation-state,

even if the means used to achieve this are increasingly transnational. All of the contributions to this special issue explore aspects of Chinese and Vietnamese nation-building that are relevant to this twenty-first century context.

### **Overview of Contributions**

John Whitmore's memoir of his visit to wartime Hanoi in the aftermath of US bombing in late 1972 offers a unique perspective on Vietnamese nation-building. As a respected scholar of premodern Vietnam, he enjoyed privileged access to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam's (DRV) intellectual elite at the moment when official reaction to the US bombing was first being formulated. Whitmore's account clearly demonstrates how this was woven into a wider "heroic historical narrative" of resistance to foreign invasion. For instance, dubbing the B-52 bombardments "the Dien Bien Phu of the skies" directly linked them to the decisive Vietnamese victory over French colonial forces, which led to the Geneva peace agreement of 1954. While in Hanoi, Whitmore heard of the 1973 Paris peace agreement ending US involvement in the war and witnessed how this was also presented to the assembled international press as an integral part of several thousand years of history. Inspired by the ongoing war and translated for Chinese, Cuban, Japanese, Swedish and US ears, there could be no more vivid evocation of the transnational impact of nation-building. In the official DRV view, this was "the latest battle in their country's long and continuing fight for unity and independence," a fight which would not end until the 30<sup>th</sup> of April 1975. The same nation-building narrative has persisted from wartime to the present day, though Edyta Rozsko illustrates its evolution into a more multivocal discourse.

Rozsko's article begins by examining the VCP's changing attitude towards religious practice as an element of national heritage and a component in its own nation-building discourse. The very title of the VCP's "Resolution No. 5 on Building a Progressive Culture, Imbued with National Identity" clearly indicates its prescriptive approach to marrying 'progressive' modernisation with national loyalty and patriotism. Rozsko's empirical analysis eschews a limited view of 'top-down' or 'bottom-up' drivers in this process, emphasising instead how different sets of people and state representatives can be both influenced by and influential in the staging of "a national drama in which

religion plays its part.” Rozsko concludes that contemporary nation-building is indeed flexible, negotiated, contested and sometimes even responsive to personal narratives, which individuals successfully manage to integrate into official histories. The “institutionalization of religion serves the state’s purpose to legitimize its power and engage people [...] and foster a sense of national unity”, but groups and individuals also pursue their own agendas, which may or may not coincide with those of the state organs they encounter (e.g. at the local level).

Turning to citizens commonly considered to have played little part in Vietnam’s nation-building narrative, Rupert Friederichsen considers the “mixed blessings of national integration” for ethnic minorities in the country’s northern uplands. He sets out to qualify the widely held view of their marginalisation with a much more nuanced approach, which characterises uplanders’ experience as a struggle stemming from their ambiguous attitude towards authority and patchy state policy implementation, amongst other factors. Although the official Vietnamese view is that ethnic minorities should be integrated into the nation-building project, common prejudices towards ethnic minorities as inferior still persist, and influence the state’s development agenda in the northern uplands. Drawing on James C. Scott’s recent work on Zomia, Friederichsen points out that uplanders have been adept at evading but also adapting state strictures on a “case-by-case basis, reflecting local strategising and circumstances”. As Friederichsen shows, policies such as (de)collectivisation and deforestation are clearly linked to prevailing nation-building discourse and uplanders’ perceived place within it. His analysis chimes with that of both Barabantseva and Rozsko in this volume, by illustrating the “civilizational hierarchy of ethnic groups” instituted by the state on the one hand, and uplanders’ ability to avoid or resist some of its policy effects on the other. As Friederichsen’s account of a private partnership between an ethnic Vietnamese trader and an upland village demonstrates, official policy agendas may be helped or hindered in unexpected and patchy ways, further highlighting the need to integrate individual agency into analyses of contemporary nation-building.

Turning to the Chinese case, Elena Barabantseva complements Friederichsen’s analysis of development discourse in Vietnam with a similar focus on the interplay

between Chinese models of modernisation and nation-building. Supported by close readings of an influential government report and National Day parades staged primarily for domestic public consumption, she argues that official PRC claims to be pursuing a unique development path are actually highly misleading. Instead, she documents the PRC's strong tendency to adopt linear models of progress which implicitly measure its stage of development against Western, industrialised societies, and impose a civilisational hierarchy on the PRC's own ethnic minorities. In both the empirical cases discussed, the same use of the Yangtze river as a metaphor is particularly arresting and strongly suggests that the PRC may have adapted its rhetoric to appeal to Chinese sensibilities, but does not challenge well-entrenched imperial and development discourses regarding the one, 'true' path to development. Barabantseva concludes that such "a limited approach to development excludes the possibility of multiple and different modernities within or outside China." She points out the need to question assumptions underlying this view and acknowledge different perspectives and experiences of modernization, in order to promote a more inclusive and less prejudiced form of nation-building.

Michael Barr conducts a related analysis of Chinese nation-building in terms of national branding and the conceptual framework of soft power. Although his focus is on efforts to market the PRC abroad through a Confucius revival, the Shanghai Expo and national publicity films for international audiences, he argues that these are "part and parcel of Beijing's nation building exercises to instil loyalty to the Party brand and strengthen Beijing's own legitimacy". These measures are thus designed to promote national cohesion as well as national competitiveness, thereby increasing the government's standing both at home and abroad. The mutual influence evident here highlights the importance of transnationalism to contemporary nation-building; "China's attention to soft power is co-produced through its domestic and international concerns," a key element of which is creating "loyalty to a communal identity". This, together with the government's painstaking attempts to emphasise its peaceful rise, serves to create a positive image of the national brand through measures as diverse as celebrity endorsements, spotlights on consumer goods, and the reinterpretation of Confucius' legacy. All are packaged as sources of national pride, freed of negative connotations

and unabashed about anachronistic or skewed representations. Importantly, they all testify to a heightened understanding of the increasingly 'relational', or transnational nature of sovereignty and nation-building.

A final perspective on the transnational nature of nation-building comes from Elena Atanassova-Cornelis, who focuses on the role of Chinese foreign policy, specifically towards Japan and the US. Constructing the 'Other' as somehow different or dangerous is a well-entrenched nation-building strategy, and Atanassova-Cornelis' analysis builds on this to show how Japan and the US have been key components in a three-pronged national narrative of victimhood, modernisation and future great power status. Designed to bolster the CCP's attempts to "preserve its legitimacy and ensure domestic stability in the post-Cold War era," this linear, tripartite story illuminates further facets of nation-building in the PRC, and is closely bound up with the trends documented by both Barr and Barabantseva. As Atanassova-Cornelis puts it, "Beijing's nation-building efforts have included a strengthening of the victimisation narrative in Chinese national identity and the promotion of official patriotism" through the portrayal of Japan as the invading, imperialist 'Other'. In this narrative, Taiwan provides an important lynchpin between past events and current affairs, including continuing tensions with the US over its close relations to the island state. The US also looms large in the discourse surrounding the PRC's present and future development, which Barabantseva already established as a crucial component of nation-building. Atanassova-Cornelis complements this from the PRC's security perspective, which is centred on protecting its sovereignty, territorial integrity and interests. The PRC's self-projection is carefully balanced so as not to alarm the international community, whilst satisfying its domestic audience that the country commands respect on the world stage as a major military and economic power. This takes us back to the 'pragmatic nation-building' mentioned at the beginning of this introduction, which Atanassova-Cornelis documents in her account of the CCP's strategic choices to stoke or placate popular xenophobic sentiments.

Together, the articles in this special issue offer fascinating insights into the flexibility and dynamism of contemporary nation-building, which combines ideological elements with strategic pragmatism. Both the SRV and the PRC share a continued concern with

preserving state sovereignty and national legitimacy, but they do so within an increasingly transnational frame of reference. On the one hand, the barriers between residents and diasporic 'Others' are being broken down, while the US, Japanese (or Chinese, in the Vietnamese case) 'Other' is built up as a potential existential threat. What is certain is that nation-building policy and practice are not on the wane in the era of globalisation and transnationalism. On the contrary, rapidly developing nation-states like China and Vietnam seem open to using international technology, finance and expertise to pursue their modernisation projects, while seeking to preserve their one-party political system at the same time. The resulting forms of nation-building are an intriguing blend of commercial branding and religious revival, historical iconography and breackneck expansion, still seasoned with socialist rhetoric. Vietnam and China are adapting contemporary trends for their own, apparently old-fashioned purpose, namely the continued legitimation of their respective nation-states.

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