

ders comprehensive assertions about people's views extremely difficult (p. 187) – a point that cannot be stressed enough, considering that open expression was particularly constrained during the Rajapaksa years. In the volume's final chapter Amarnath Amarasingam calls for a more nuanced view of the influential Tamil diaspora, which is generally portrayed as “overly radical and fundamentally corrosive to the prospects of peace in Sri Lanka” (p. 203).

The volume offers a comprehensive overview of the social and political problems that were caused by the war and remain largely unresolved to this day. With its contributions from sociology, anthropology, history, religious studies, law and politics, the collection is well structured, as the chapters of each section are interrelated in their scope, thus rendering possible a comparative perspective on issues in post-war Sri Lanka. Beyond that, the “new” lines of religious conflict that have resulted directly from the war's end are also analysed in some depth.

The editors Amarnath Amarasingam and Daniel Bass stress that the articles should be read as a “cumulative critique [...] of the policy-oriented ‘lessons learnt’ literature” (p. 6). This is an important contention, as transitions from war to peace are of a procedural nature and, as becomes increasingly clear throughout the book, Sri Lanka has yet to move from a post-war to a post-conflict situation. Hence, the reviewed volume proves to be a valuable point of departure for all those investigating violent intra-state conflicts and war-to-peace transitions in South Asia and beyond.

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ANDREAS MARGARA, *Der Amerikanische Krieg. Erinnerungskultur in Vietnam*. Berlin: regiospectra, 2012. 154 pages, €19.90. ISBN 978-3-9401-3248-2

The book begins with the famous meeting between Robert McNamara and Vo Nguyen Giap in Hanoi in November of 1955, a scene which is also notable in the documentary “The Fog of War” from the American director Errol Morris. While McNamara is hoping for reconciliation through the meeting, Giap still considers the American attack, in the context of that period, as foreign “aggression”. Therefore, he sees no reason for any critical discussion of Vietnam's wartime past.

Andreas Margara chooses this scene as the introduction to his monograph on the culture of remembrance in Vietnam. On the one hand, in the course of his analysis Margara considers the public representation of the so-called “American War”. On the other hand, he analyses the private processing of

wartime experiences from the end of the war until the introduction of the Doi Moi programme of economic reform in 1986. The theoretical framework for this work comes from the French historian Pierre Nora's concept of *lieux de mémoire*. Based on this concept, the author analyses, in the second chapter, the reassessment of the war through places of remembrance such as war memorials, military cemeteries, official memorials and state museums. In addition to spaces of remembrance, Andreas Margara also addresses practices of remembrance in the form of tributes and memorial days. In the third chapter, the author approaches remembrance in a private context. Because Andreas Margara was not able to conduct any personal interviews with war veterans, this work relies on secondary literature. However, through his clever inclusion of quotes from former soldiers, taken from secondary sources, the author successfully establishes a focus on individual perspectives and single destinies. He thoroughly describes the role of women during the war, as well as the difficulties they experienced in post-war society, particularly returning female fighters, who often faced problems starting a family due to the physical and health deprivations they had experienced during the war. The recurring theme of the waiting wife in Vietnamese literature and music also makes its way into this work. Naturally the author also takes the war trauma experienced by the Vietnamese population into account when discussing personal remembrance. While the term "Post Traumatic Stress Disorder" was included in the American handbook for treating mental disorders found in returning veterans from Vietnam, there was no medical or psychological treatment for those similarly affected in Vietnam.

The author provides the reader with a historical and cultural perspective on the topic of death in order to better approach the individual methods of remembrance in a Vietnamese context. At the end of the third chapter he identifies problems of reprocessing experiences of the war in Vietnam, including the "marginalization of South Vietnam" (p. 93). The narrative promoted by the state takes into account only the combatants who fought on the side of the former Democratic Republic of Vietnam, and ignores the fate of the members of the army of the Republic of Vietnam, as well as the officials of the South Vietnamese regime. Andreas Margara also identifies the relationship between the USA and Vietnam as an additional problem. Though there has been both an economic as well as political rapprochement between the two states over the last two decades, the USA has not officially recognised the war crimes committed by American soldiers in Vietnam and has not paid any reparations to date.

In the fourth chapter, the author surveys the way in which the country has coped with the war since 1986. In his brief explanation of the Doi Moi reforms, the author also touches on the generational conflict in Vietnam. Over 50 per cent of the population of the country was born after the end of the war

and is familiar with the war only as it has been portrayed in stories, movies, literature, music and in official state representations. Methodologically, the author draws on analyses of film, literature and art from the post-reform era in this chapter. He briefly addresses the works of authors including Bao Ninh, Duong Thu Huong and Pham Thi Hoai, as well as the directors Dang Nhat Minh and Bui Thac Chuyen, all of whom have dealt with the American war and the post-war period in a critical manner. With regard to art, the author observes that “a meaningful transition” (p. 112) has taken place. While the works of artists such as Bui Xuan Phai, Duong Bich Lien, Nguyen Tu Nghiem and Nguyen Sang were considered counter-revolutionary during the revolution, these artists were honoured, partially posthumously, at the fourth Congress of the Arts Association in 1994. Following these analyses of the art scene in modern Vietnam, the author examines war tourism, differentiating between the several groups of actors and memorials. Margara observes that memorials like the Cu Chi tunnels have been commercialised to cater to the interests of tourist groups, for example by providing a seemingly authentic war experience for US-American tourists. In addition, the author notes that nostalgia for the war has resulted in an increasing commodification of wartime artefacts, such as guerrilla helmets or Zippo lighters used by American GIs.

In order to give a perspective on the process of the evolution of war remembrance, Andreas Margara points out the reworking of the war with the example of the exhibition on daily life in Vietnam during the subsidy period (1975–1986), an exhibit which was featured in 2006 at the Vietnam Museum of Ethnology in Hanoi.

As a conclusion to his analysis, Margara selects the term “fragmentation of remembrance”, which Peter Steinbach used to shape the German discourse of the memory of World War II. By choosing this term, he seeks to describe the inconsistency between the narrative of the state and the public representation of the war, on the one hand, and the actual experience and daily practices of the population, on the other. In the case of Vietnam, Margara finds that the former completely neglects the experience of the population in the southern part of the country.

This work from Andreas Margara serves well as a general introduction to the topic of the culture of remembrance in Vietnam. With this book Margara provides an important contribution to German research on Vietnam.

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