

4 **Military politics in contemporary Vietnam**

Political engagement, corporate interests, and professionalism

Carlyle A. Thayer

The Vietnam People's Army (VPA), as a military operating in a communist state, has always been subject to the special dynamics typically inherent in the relationship between communist parties and their armed forces. On the one hand, the Vietnam Communist Party (VCP) exercises strict political control over the military, as it does over all other agencies of the state. Military officers are part of, but also subordinate to, the official party hierarchy that dominates the various levels of state and society. On the other hand, however, the communist state grants the armed forces a privileged place in its ideological and political mindset: it is viewed as the indispensable tool of the proletarian class to fight imperialist enemies both within and outside the state. Consequently, the armed forces are integrated permanently into the infrastructure of the state, and their political influence is relatively stable. Nevertheless, fluctuations in the political influence of the VPA have occurred over time, and they have often been indicators not only for change within the armed forces, but for shifts in Vietnamese politics as a whole.

One of these fluctuations was visible in the 1990s. For Vietnam, the decade of the 1990s was framed by two crises: the collapse of the socialist system in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, and the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997–8. Both of these events exacerbated cleavages among the Vietnamese leadership, which was divided about the scope and pace of economic reform and the degree to which Vietnam should pursue integration with the global market. Fearful that the collapse of the socialist system could make it vulnerable to external security threats, and concerned that it would not be able to stem the challenge of major economic reform without the help of the military, the VCP decided to increase the role of the armed forces in political affairs. As a result, the VPA became a major participant in Vietnam's 'third wave' of state-building (Vasavakul 1997b). Subsequently, retired military officers were selected for state president and party secretary general, and military representation on the VCP's Central Committee increased at both the seventh (1991) and eighth (1996) national party congresses.

This period of military ascendancy was short-lived, however. In 2001, the ninth party congress declined to reappoint the incumbent secretary general (a retired military officer) to a full five-year term and elected a civilian instead. Military representation on the Politburo was reduced by half, leaving it with only one VPA member. It appeared that after Vietnam had overcome the dual threat of the

breakdown of the communist bloc and the Asian monetary meltdown, the VCP was confident enough of its position to return the strength of the military in the party's key bodies to pre-crisis levels. A major study of this period concluded that these developments represented 'not only a process of defining power sharing but also continued party control of the army' (Vasavakul 2001: 338). Vasavakul (2001: 355–356) also made two predictions regarding the future role of the military in Vietnam. First, the VPA would continue to be run by 'political generals' who were 'not likely to become spokespersons for professional officers' even though the military was given increased autonomy over professional matters. Second, the VPA would continue 'to play an important role in shaping the new political, economic, and social order' because the military had become both 'red and entrepreneur', i.e. they had linked their communist identity with both national economic development in general and military-owned businesses in particular.

This chapter will review the military's role in politics from 2001 to the present. Analyzing civil–military relations in Vietnam since Vasavakul's account was published, the chapter argues that, while the military's role has undergone some significant adjustments, its overall influence on politics and society has remained at a steady state. Three factors explain this stasis. First, there is consensus among the party leadership that the military should continue to play a role in state-building through national conscription and what is broadly termed 'socialist construction.' Second, the leadership of the VCP continues to accept Marxist-Leninist ideological strictures that legitimize the political role of the military in Vietnam's one-party state. Third, economic development and global integration have replaced the more traditional security concerns of the 1990s as the key drivers of Vietnamese politics. Despite the general level of stability in military–party relations at society level, Vietnam's integration into the global economy has generated external pressures on the VPA to relinquish ownership of its commercial enterprises. This is a potentially significant development that will likely result in a slightly reduced yet stable role of the VPA in national-level politics and a greater concentration on military professionalism.

This chapter also highlights other crucial changes in military–party relations as economic development and national security concerns have become intertwined. This has become particularly apparent as Vietnam's plans to develop its maritime territory in the South China Sea have been challenged by China (Thayer 2008b: 37–41). This has generated pressures on the VPA to modernize its forces, raise its professional standards, and step up international defense cooperation with regional states in order to better defend Vietnam's national sovereignty. In the future, the VPA is likely to be less 'red and entrepreneur', i.e. less ideologically and commercially oriented, and more 'khaki and professional' as military expertise and corporate interests dominate. The following discussion reviews these developments in three parts. Part one presents an historical overview of the military involvement in politics from 1946 to 2001. Part two analyzes the contemporary role of the military in politics, national defense, security affairs, the economy, and society from 2001 to the present. Part three discusses the factors that account for altered influence of the military in national politics and its persistence at societal

level. The conclusion provides a brief summary of contemporary civil–military relations in Vietnam and the factors that have shaped them.

The military’s involvement in politics, 1946–2001

The Vietnam People’s Army was founded in 1946. Initially, it comprised a platoon of 34 members led by Vo Nguyen Giap, a political general, communist revolutionary and a senior member of the Indochinese Communist Party. Since 1946, the VPA has been engaged in armed conflict for a total of 36 years, including the wars against the French (1946–54), the United States (1959–75), and the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia (1977–89). During and after the Korean War in the early 1950s, China helped the VPA to transform itself from an anti-French guerrilla force into a conventional army. Subsequently, the VPA continued its transformation into a modern regular force during the Vietnam War, this time with Soviet assistance. By 1987, the VPA had 1.26 million troops and was the world’s fifth largest standing army.

Despite the VPA’s transformation into a formidable military force, it has always remained under firm party control (Thayer 1985: 245–8). The party exercises control over the VPA through the mechanism of ‘dual-role’ elites. In other words, senior party members simultaneously occupy the highest ranks in the military. From its very origins, the VPA was commanded by so-called ‘political generals’, i.e. communist revolutionaries who had no prior military experience (Turley 1977). At the same time, party control was reinforced through a parallel structure of political commissars and political officers within the VPA itself, directed by a party–military committee composed of members of the Politburo and the Central Committee. Since 1985, party control over the armed forces has been exercised by the Central Military Party Committee (*Dang Uy Quan Su Truong Uong*).

With the establishment of a communist one-party state, first known as the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV, 1954–75) and subsequently the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV, 1976–present), the VPA has been assigned multiple roles, not the least of which is responsibility for defense of the homeland. The VPA has also been assigned political, internal security, and economic production roles (Thayer 1985: 250–4 and Thayer 2001). In the view of party leaders, the military cannot play a politically neutral role because it must carry out its historic mandate as an instrument of maintaining the supremacy of the worker–peasant alliance against its class enemies. However, the multiple roles of the military in Vietnamese society may be accounted for not only by Marxist-Leninist ideology but also by its guerrilla heritage and protracted periods of armed conflict and external threats to national security. In other words, the VPA has been continually engaged in state-building, economic production, and internal security. In order to fulfill these roles, the VPA has always been accorded bloc representation on the party’s Central Committee (see Table 4.1). Between 1960 and 1982, for example, military representation on the Central Committee averaged 14.6 percent of full members. With the adoption of economic reforms (*doi moi*) in 1986, however, military representation declined to seven percent of full members. Similarly, the

Table 4.1 Military representation on VCP executive

<i>Year/Position</i>	<i>Politburo*</i>		<i>Central committee*</i>	
<i>Year (Congress)</i>	<i>Military representation</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Military representation</i>	<i>Percent</i>
1986 (6th)	2 of 13	15.4	9 of 124	7.3
1991 (7th)	2 of 13	15.4	13 of 146	8.9
1996 (8th)	2 of 19	10.5	17 of 170	10.0
2001 (9th)	1 of 15	6.7	14 of 150	9.3
2006 (10th)	1 of 14	7.1	17 of 160	10.6
<i>Average</i>		11.0		9.2

Source: The author's personal database on all members of the VCP Central Committee, 1951–present.

Note

*full members

VPA's representation on the Politburo has fallen from an average of 20.7 percent in the 1970s and early 1980s to only one member (or 7 percent) in 2006. Since 2001, this single member has been the VPA's most senior general, who simultaneously holds the position of Minister of National Defense.

In addition to the VPA's representation on the party's Central Committee and Politburo, uniformed military officers stand for election to and serve as deputies in the National Assembly and on its various committees. The Minister of National Defense is an ex officio member of the Cabinet and the National Defense and Security Council. The VPA also plays a political role through the socialization of conscripts into the values of Vietnam's socialist regime. In other words, the VPA acts as one of the main transmission belts for recruitment into the party. Finally, the VPA also played an important role historically in 'socialist construction' through involvement in building infrastructure, economic production and natural disaster relief.

While VPA engagement in the communist regime has been a constant in Vietnamese politics since the 1940s, its intensity has seen significant fluctuations. For instance, the collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s set the stage for a period of military ascendancy in the 1990s. Vietnamese party conservatives and military leaders argued that Vietnam was threatened by a Western 'plot of peaceful evolution'. In 1992, in the shadow of the collapse of the Soviet Union, Vietnam promulgated a new state constitution. For the first time, the armed forces were charged with 'defense of the socialist regime' in addition to defense of the fatherland. General Le Duc Anh, the former Minister of National Defense and senior member of the Politburo, was selected president and ex officio commander-in-chief of the armed forces. In 1996, at the eighth national party congress, military representation on the Central Committee temporarily rose to ten per cent, the highest figure since the fourth national party congress in 1976. The following year, Vietnam was struck by 'three typhoons': the Asian Financial Crisis, a major natural disaster caused by a real typhoon, and massive peasant protests in Thai

Binh province. It was in this context that, in December 1997, Lt. General Le Kha Phieu, former head of the army's General Political Department (GPD), replaced Do Muoi as VCP secretary-general. This marked the first occasion that a retired career military officer was appointed party leader. Significantly, this leadership change took place at a plenary session of the Central Committee and not at a national party congress.

But by the early 2000s Vietnam had largely recovered from the multiple crises of the late 1990s. Vietnam's economy grew at an unprecedented rate, averaging 7.63 percent growth between 2000 and 2007. Further, Vietnam stepped up the pace of economic integration by signing a major bilateral trade agreement with the United States that came into effect in late 2001. As a result, economic development and global integration replaced traditional security concerns as the key drivers of domestic politics. These developments coincided with growing disenchantment within the VCP over the lackluster leadership of Secretary General Phieu and the increasing role of the military in domestic politics. Phieu's position was severely undermined when Central Committee members learned that he had directed the military intelligence service to conduct wire taps on Politburo colleagues (Thayer 2003a). Thus, in April 2001, the Central Committee issued an unprecedented rebuke to the Minister of National Defense, General Pham Van Tra, and the Chief of the General Staff, Le Van Dung. Secretary-General Phieu fell victim to this backlash. Although he was endorsed by the Politburo for another term as party leader, this recommendation was overturned by the Central Committee. Phieu was replaced as VCP secretary-general at the ninth congress in 2001. As Vietnam weathered the aftershocks of the collapse of socialism and the Asian Financial Crisis, the military's political role gradually receded. It was now the party's managerial elite that took center stage to manage Vietnam's integration with the global economy.

Military engagement in politics, security affairs, the economy and society: 2001–2010

While Phieu's replacement signaled a lessening of military influence at the highest echelons of the party, the continuing interference of General Department II (military intelligence) in party affairs provided evidence of the VPA's autonomy within Vietnam's political system. This was also highlighted by the fact that the military as an institution suffered only a minor blowback from Phieu's misuse of the VPA's intelligence service. For example, VPA representation on the Central Committee was reduced only marginally at the ninth national party congress in 2001 from the previous 10 percent to 9.3 percent. Similarly, General Pham Van Tra emerged relatively unscathed. While he was dropped two places in the protocol rankings, he retained his portfolio as Minister of National Defense and his seat on the Politburo. If there was a main victim in the military, it was General Pham Thanh Ngan, head of the General Political Department. He was dropped from the Politburo. General Le Van Dung, Chief of the General Staff (CGS), retained his seat on the Central Committee and was elected to the party's Secretariat. Five months after the tenth congress, Dung replaced Thanh as head of the GPD.

Despite Phieu's fall, complaints about the military's interference in politics continued after 2001. In 2004, two of Vietnam's most respected retired military generals wrote private letters to the party's senior leadership charging that the military intelligence service was abusing its power by interfering in internal party affairs (Thayer 2008a). No less a figure than General Vo Nguyen Giap demanded an investigation into the 'extra-legal' activities of General Directorate II because of the failure of the VCP's key bodies to take appropriate action. General Giap specifically charged that General Directorate II had attempted to manipulate factionalism in the party by smearing the political reputations of leading figures including himself (Thayer 2008a). In his accusations, General Giap was supported by retired Major General Nguyen Nam Khanh. A pillar of the establishment, Khanh was the former head of the Central Committee's Propaganda and Training Department, former Political Officer for Military Region 5, and former deputy head of the VPA's General Political Department. He accused General Directorate II of 'slandering, intimidation, torture, political assassination', as well as manipulation of internal party factionalism for its own partisan purposes. Khanh documented his allegations by quoting from the classified *News Bulletin* produced by General Directorate II (Thayer 2008a).

If there is any substance to the allegations raised by generals Giap and Khanh, they demonstrate that key military leaders were actively involved in internal factional politics within the VCP itself. Significantly, it was only in the late 1990s that first attempts were undertaken to bring national security and intelligence agencies under legislative control. For example, the first Ordinance on Intelligence was issued by the chairman of the National Assembly Standing Committee in December 1996. In September the following year, the Prime Minister issued Decree 96/CP on defense intelligence. These documents placed control over the military intelligence service in the hands of the state president and 'unified direction of the government'. However, both documents were drafted by the VPA and left it with such extensive powers that it was still able to operate outside of effective party and government control. Even the Law on National Security, passed in November 2004 in an effort to restore party and state oversight of the military, did not severely erode the VPA's power of political intervention. One indication that General Directorate II had come through this review process unscathed and was seen as a valuable contributor to national security came in March 2008 when the VCP secretary-general, Nong Duc Manh, awarded it the designation the 'People's Armed Forces Hero' for 'its remarkable contributions over the past decades'.¹

The military's ability to maintain its political influence was also reflected in its representation on the VCP's main bodies after the tenth congress in 2006. For instance, VPA representation on the Central Committee rose slightly from 14 members or 9.3 percent (ninth congress) to 17 members or 10.6 percent. Moreover, the composition of the VPA bloc on the Central Committee highlighted the importance that both the party and the military assigned to the VCP-VPA relationship. The VPA's 17 members included: chief of the general staff, head and deputy head of the General Political Department, head of the Technical General Department,

three deputy ministers, the commander of the navy, the political commissar of the Air-Defense Air Force, political commissars for Military Regions 1, 3, 4, 7, and 9, the commander of Military Region 5, the deputy commander/chief of staff for Military Region 2, and the head of the National Defense Academy. In the same vein, the VPA has retained its single seat on the Politburo, with Defense Minister General Pham Van Tra replaced at the tenth congress by General Phung Quang Thanh, Chief of the General Staff. Shortly afterwards, General Thanh also became Defense Minister. Both Generals Tra and Thanh are career regular army officers and represent a break from the 'political generals' who were traditionally appointed in the past.

The analysis of the VPA's involvement in political institutions has pointed to fluctuating, but overall significant, levels of military participation in Vietnamese elite politics. However, assessing military involvement in the political infrastructure is only one way of measuring the quality of civil-military relations in nation-states. Accordingly, comparative analysts have often broadened their perspective on civil-military interactions by discussing the interference of the armed forces in other main areas of state affairs: national defense, security affairs, the economy, and society. Accordingly, the following sub-sections review the VPA's engagement in these key arenas of socio-political and security relationships.

The VPA's role in national defense

In terms of its national defense role, the VPA underwent a massive strategic readjustment throughout the 1990s. In 1987, the VPA's main force stood at a massive 1.26 million troops. Within a year of its withdrawal from Cambodia in 1989, however, 600,000 soldiers were discharged. By the end of the 1990s, further manpower reductions left the VPA with 484,000 main force troops (Thayer 1995 and Thayer 2000). First and foremost, this drastic drop in troop numbers reflected Vietnam's changed strategic priorities after the end of the Cold War. Revising its prior focus on possible aggression by imperialism, Vietnam began to take note of other, more regional threats. In 1998, Vietnam's first Defense White Paper identified 'hot spots' in the South China Sea as the main external threat to Vietnam (Socialist Republic of Vietnam 1998: 18). However, two major strategic missions assigned to the VPA—national defense and economic production—remained the same. Vietnam's second Defense White Paper, issued in 2004, declared, for example, that the main tasks of the armed forces were 'to maintain combat readiness for safeguarding the socialist homeland and making a contribution to the cause of national construction' (Socialist Republic of Vietnam 2004: 37).

By 2004, the different strategic environment had dramatically changed Vietnam's place in the world. Vietnam had not only normalized diplomatic relations with all its former enemies, but had avidly sought regional and global integration through membership in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the ASEAN Regional Forum, the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, and membership in the World Trade Organization. Consequently, the Vietnam People's Army was charged with meeting not only traditional security threats such as

territorial conflict in the South China Sea and ‘peaceful evolution’, but non-traditional threats as well. In this regard, the 2004 White Paper mentioned ‘illegal drug trafficking and transportation of weapons, piracy, transnational organized crimes, terrorism, illegal immigration and migration, and degeneration of ecological environment’ (Socialist Republic of Vietnam 2004: 12).

If Vietnam was still concerned with external ideological enemies, these fears were largely directed at the network of anti-communist overseas Vietnamese living in America, France, Australia, and other Western countries. The 2004 Defense White Paper stated that ‘Vietnam is facing the threat of schemes and ploys by external hostile elements in collusion with internal reactionaries to interfere in Vietnam’s internal affairs and to cause socio-political unstability [sic] in Vietnam’ (Socialist Republic of Vietnam 2004: 11–12). While Vietnam regularly expressed concerns about these diaspora groups, in 2009 the government announced that the domestic security situation had ‘stabilized’ even though ‘hostile forces ... [continued] to incite violence and separatism in some areas of the country’ (Socialist Republic of Vietnam 2009: 16 and 18). The improved internal security situation enabled further troop reductions throughout the 2000s. Between 2001 and 2005, for instance, 29,000 soldiers were discharged, bringing manpower strength down to 455,000, a force level that was also maintained in subsequent years. At the same time, official Vietnamese figures showed that the defense budget as a proportion of GDP fluctuated between 1.8 and 2.5 percent between 2004 and 2008 (Socialist Republic of Vietnam 2004: 35; Socialist Republic of Vietnam 2009: 38). These figures have been discounted as too low by outside analysts, however (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 Vietnam defense budget as percent of GDP, 1999–2009 (in billion US dollars)

<i>Year</i>	<i>VPA size*</i>	<i>Defense budget (DB)**</i>	<i>GDP**</i>	<i>DB as % of GDP**</i>
1999	484,000	2.1	34.5	6.0
2000	484,000	2.6	36.8	7.2
2001	484,000	3.1	39.4	7.9
2002	484,000	2.6	42.2	6.2
2003	484,000	2.6	45.3	5.8
2004	484,000	3.0	48.8	6.1
2005	455,000	3.2	52.9	6.0
2006	455,000	3.2	57.3	5.6
2007	455,000	3.7	62.1	5.2
2008	455,000	2.1	66.0	3.2
2009	455,000	2.1	69.0	3.0

Sources: *International Institute of Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance* (1999–2000 to 2010); **Defence Intelligence Organisation, *Defence Economic Trends in the Asia-Pacific* (2009: 27).

Despite the downsizing of the military and the decline in the overall proportion of the defense budget, expenditure on the armed forces nevertheless increased in absolute terms between 2002 and 2007. This was due to the VPA's efforts to meet its defense responsibilities by embarking on a selective program of upgrading existing stocks of serviceable weapons, force modernization, increasing military professionalism, and stepping up international defense cooperation. As a result, Vietnam's spending on defense rose from US\$ 2.6 billion in 2000 to US\$ 3.7 billion in 2007, with significant funds allocated to the VPA's modernization program. However, the defense budget was reduced precipitously in 2008 and 2009 when the global financial crisis impacted on Vietnam (see Figure 4.1).

The onset of Vietnam's current force modernization program can be traced to the mid-1990s (Thayer 1997). Since that time, Vietnam has been seeking to develop a deterrent capability in the South China Sea through the acquisition of modern Svetlyak-class fast attack craft and Gephard-class frigates armed with surface-to-surface missiles, six Kilo-class conventional submarines and the Bastion land-based anti-ship cruise missile. Vietnam has also modestly modernized its air force through upgrade programs for its MiG-21s and Su-22s, and the acquisition of a handful of Su-27 and twenty Su-30 jet fighters armed with advanced air-to-air and air-to-surface missiles. The air-defense force has acquired a new generation of surface-to-air missiles. Vietnam's force modernization program has also stressed the development of self-reliant capabilities in its national defense industry through co-production and technology transfers at the lower end of the technology scale (Thayer 2009b).

The VPA's modernization program, coupled with regional integration with Vietnam's Southeast Asian neighbors, has produced pressures to step up the pace of military professionalism to ensure that the officer corps is capable of engaging

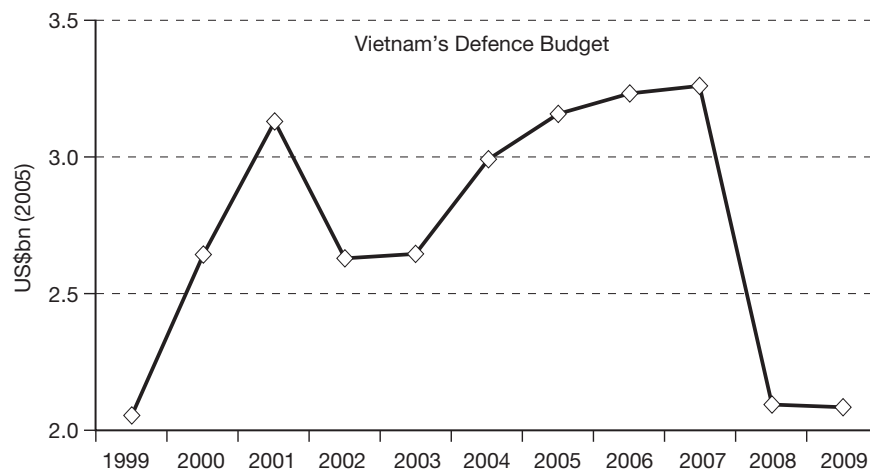


Figure 4.1 Vietnam's defense budget, 1999–2009 (in billion US dollars)
 Source: Defence Intelligence Organisation, *Defence Economic Trends in the Asia-Pacific*, (2009: 27).

with ASEAN partners, absorbing new technologies and meeting the wide range of responsibilities it has been assigned. In order to ensure that VPA officers keep abreast of and are assimilated to international standards of military professionalism and education, Vietnam has begun introducing wide-ranging educational reforms since the late 1990s. Similarly, Vietnam's program of professional military education (PME) and training has been enhanced in order to improve the skills and qualifications of the officer corps. In addition, VPA officers are being sent abroad in increasing numbers to attend professional development courses in countries such as Australia, India, Malaysia, and the United States. In 2008, Vietnam hosted its first PME course for foreign military officers. Finally, Vietnam has markedly intensified international defense cooperation through the exchange of high-level delegations, negotiation of defense cooperation and arms and technology procurement agreements, sending observers to foreign military exercises, and, most recently, joint patrols and joint exercises with regional navies (Thayer 2008b).

The military and domestic security

As noted above, the 2004 Defense White Paper assigned the VPA a domestic role in security affairs, primarily through countering the 'threat of peaceful evolution'. The VPA has been very circumspect, however, about involving itself in direct confrontation with the public, preferring to see the Ministry of Public Security's armed police take the lead role in dealing with public protests, riots and violent demonstrations. Nevertheless, in February and March 2001 the VPA was deployed to the Central Highlands to deal with an outbreak of unrest by several thousand members of mostly Christian ethnic minorities (known as the Degar peoples or the Montagnards) in three provinces. These disturbances received much attention because they took place on the eve of the ninth national party congress. National security authorities were quick to blame 'outside hostile forces'. In particular, they pointed to the FULRO (*Front Unifie Liberation Des Races Opprimes*, United Front for the Liberation of the Oppressed Races). The FULRO was an ethno-nationalist separatist movement of highland ethnic minorities that dated to the 1960s but had persisted in its struggle after unification well into the 1990s.

When unrest broke out in 2001, at least thirteen VPA regiments were posted to the Central Highlands to provide security by manning checkpoints and securing the border with Cambodia.² Soldiers were billeted with local families, while political cadres directed a campaign of political education designed to calm the situation and prevent illegal departures to Cambodia. But renewed unrest erupted in 2004, which Vietnamese security authorities blamed on the alleged instigation of the Montagnard Foundation in the United States. The Montagnard Foundation is an organization comprised of highland ethnic minorities who worked with U.S. Special Forces during the Vietnam War. Evidently, this linkage between domestic ethnic minorities and the Montagnard Foundation is an example of what the Vietnamese government considers to be the 'threat of peaceful evolution'.

Although the security situation has been brought largely under control, ethnic minority unrest continues to concern central authorities. In February 2007, for example, the National Defense and Security Council discussed plans ‘to boost national defense and security in strategic areas’ including the Central Highlands, border regions and the Northwest.³ In this context, the VPA Border Guard has been given responsibility for combating illegal drug trafficking and transportation of weapons, illegal immigration and migration, as well as other transnational criminal activities, which are particularly prevalent in the border areas inhabited by ethnic minorities. According to the 2010 Freedom House report on Vietnam (Gainsborough 2010: 10), the situation in the Central Highlands has remained volatile, and ‘unrest has recently increased over land disputes resulting from confiscations to develop large state-owned coffee plantations’. The Central Highlands, it appears, will continue to figure prominently on the VPA’s domestic security agenda for the foreseeable future.

But security operations are not the only VPA instrument to address the unrest in the Central Highlands. The armed forces have also long been involved in developing infrastructure and providing social welfare services in the Central Highlands. An estimated 20,000 households belonging to the families of soldiers and militia have been settled in so-called economic-defense zones in Dak Lak and Binh Phuoc provinces (Thayer and Hervouet 2004: 373–4; Thayer forthcoming: 466–7). Army Corporation 15, the 15th Army Corps and the Dak To Army Corps have been involved in land reclamation, infrastructure and housing construction, irrigation and water supply, forestry, education, and public health. According to Freedom House, however, ‘such programs are often implemented within government-controlled parameters and perceived by minority populations as aimed at weakening their unique cultural and linguistic identity’ (Gainsborough 2010: 10). Moreover, the VPA has assisted lowland Vietnamese to resettle in the Central Highlands where cleared land has been turned over for the cultivation of cash crops such as coffee, rubber, cashew nuts, cotton, pepper, maize, and green beans. Not surprisingly, these resettlement programs have been controversial; like the military-sponsored transmigration programs in Indonesia, they have brought not only development to remote areas, but also a host of social problems. As the economy grows and intra-Vietnamese migration intensifies, it will remain the responsibility of the VPA to help the Ministry of Public Security in keeping these tensions under control.

The VPA’s economic activities

In addition to its national defense and internal security roles, the VPA is also charged with making ‘a contribution to the cause of national construction’. There are many facets to this role, including assisting with socio-economic development, poverty reduction, and natural disaster response and mitigation. However, the most prominent role of the VPA in national construction takes the form of direct ownership of national defense industries and commercial enterprises.

The VPA’s involvement in commercial activities began in the 1980s with the adoption of *doi moi* (Thayer 2003a). In March 1989, nine major army economic

construction units were converted into legal entities (corporations or general corporations) under Decree 46 issued by the Council of Ministers. These new corporations were permitted to operate on the same legal basis as state-owned enterprises, including obtaining credit from state banks and forming joint ventures with foreign partners. In a short period of time, there was a marked rise in the number of military-owned corporations and a rapid expansion of their economic and commercial activities. These corporations became important generators of revenue and, by the early 1990s, they had 'massively broadened their production' of consumer goods.⁴ In 1993, the army set up its first joint stock commercial bank. In the following year, there were over 330 army-run commercial businesses, including 60 military-owned enterprises operated by regular units. The number of joint ventures with foreign partners jumped from 49 in 1995 to 67 in 2003. The scope of the army's commercial activities embraced consumer goods, garments and textiles, automobile manufacturing, construction work, ship and plane repair, hotels and real estate, mechanical engineering, as well as telephone, fax and internet services.

In line with national policy to reform the state-owned enterprise sector, however, military-owned enterprises were also required to restructure from the mid-1990s onwards. There were two major waves of enterprise reforms (Thayer forthcoming: 463–8). The first lasted from 1995 to 1997 and resulted in the reduction of the number of military-run corporations from 335 to 193, mainly through mergers. Nonetheless, a number of these mergers took place only on paper and the reforms of the first wave did little to generate the capital necessary to update old equipment and outmoded technology. A second wave of reforms was initiated in May 1998 in a directive issued by the Central Military Party Committee. The main aim of these reforms was to improve the efficiency of military corporations and increase their capacity to undertake major projects. At that time, the number of military enterprises was reduced to 164, following the CMPC directive that called for unprofitable firms to be dissolved. The directive further decreed that army divisions, provincial units and specialized departments within the defense ministry were barred from operating commercial enterprises. In late 1999, Prime Minister Phan Van Khai directed that military corporations rationalize their commercial activities (Thayer forthcoming: 465). In order to oversee this process, the Economics Division of the General Department of National Defense Industry and Economics was upgraded to the status of an independent Economics Department within the defense ministry.

It would appear that the second wave of reform of army enterprises did not have a major impact. The VPA defended its corporate interests and business continued more or less as usual. In fact, it was estimated in 2001 that the number of companies operated by the VPA had risen again to 200, at least 40 of which were joint ventures, with an annual turnover estimated at US\$ 320 million.⁵ In 2001, the military's telecommunications company, Viettel, entered the lucrative internet and mobile phone markets to directly compete with state enterprises. By 2003, the revenues generated by military-owned enterprises had shot up to US\$ 653.6 million.⁶ Moreover, the Military Commercial Joint Stock Bank raised its chartered capital in 2003 to enable it to provide credit to large projects.

But the military's growing economic and commercial interests directly clashed with the imperatives of global economic integration when Vietnam became a member of the World Trade Organization. In 2007, it was estimated that the army still owned about 140 companies and held shares in more than 20 additional firms in almost every sector of the economy. These enterprises reportedly generated US\$ 2 billion in revenue in 2006.⁷ Trying to address both internal and international pressures in this field, the Central Committee passed a resolution in January 2007 requiring that all business enterprises operated by the army, public service, party, and mass organizations be placed under state management. The decision specified, however, that the VPA would retain ownership and control over companies that were directly related to national defense and security. While the process of handing over ownership of all other companies was due to begin before the end of 2007, it soon became evident that this deadline was unrealistic. In December 2007, Defense Minister General Phung Quang Thanh stated that his ministry would hand over around 140 military-owned commercial enterprises to the state by 2012 and 'focus on training and building up a regular modern army'⁸

In 2008, the National Assembly adopted the Ordinance on Defense Industry that provided the legal basis for the transfer of military-run businesses and set out the principles and legal framework for national defense industries to be retained by the Ministry of National Defense. Plans to divest the Defense Ministry of its business enterprises appeared to gather steam in April 2008 when the Prime Minister issued instructions for the divestiture of 113 military-owned enterprises.⁹ While the initiative led to the divestment, restructuring, or disbanding of small military businesses, it allowed the VPA and the Defense Ministry to hold on to their most precious asset, Viettel, and nine other major general corporations (Socialist Republic of Vietnam 2009: 119). In January 2010, Viettel was officially acknowledged as one of Vietnam's eight largest economic groups, and the first to be run by the Defense Ministry. In addition to its core telecommunication business, Viettel was allowed to branch out into the field of military information technology—meeting the criteria set out in the 2007 decree that made it possible for the VPA to maintain control over enterprises directly related to national security interests. Accordingly, Viettel remains an important source of income for the military, despite the government's overall strategy to reduce VPA involvement in commercial activities. Viettel has increased its revenues 1,500 times within 10 years, from US\$ 2.1 million in 1999 to US\$ 3.2 billion in 2009.¹⁰ Indeed, investing heavily in Cambodia, Laos, and even Haiti, Viettel has emerged as one of Southeast Asia's most profitable military businesses.

The armed forces and society

The fourth area of military politics relates to the way the VPA engages with society, both directly and indirectly. The VPA's direct influence on society is exercised not only through its 455,000 soldiers and their families, but also through nearly five million reserves, militia, and other paramilitary forces. In addition, there are over one and a half million members of the Vietnam Veterans' Association, not

including their dependent households. In addition, the VPA interacts with society through two major mechanisms: national conscription and compulsory defense education.

Vietnam has maintained a system of national conscription since the late 1950s. Currently, all males aged between 17 and 45 and women aged between 18 and 40 who hold professional skills are required to register with the offices of the military command at the commune, ward, or district where they reside. New recruits are given six months basic training and then assigned to units that engage in road building, planting trees, or other infrastructure projects. At present, nearly one million men reach military age each year. Legally all medically qualified males are eligible for service, but there is a long list of exemptions, including deferments for students. Military service is generally sought after by youths from rural areas, while there is a palpable aversion to military service by their urban counterparts, especially those from well-off families who either pay bribes or enroll their sons in part-time classes and university preparatory courses to avoid the draft. Nevertheless, as a result of the massive reduction in the size of the regular army, Vietnam has had little difficulty in meeting its manpower requirements.¹¹ Due to the competing demands of the country's market economy, however, the VPA has found it difficult to attract educationally qualified individuals.

The VPA has also long provided vocational training for soldiers slated for demobilization. Prior to the adoption of *doi moi*, demobilized soldiers were returned to their former employers who were required to provide them with a job. During the difficult transition from a centrally planned to a market economy, however, the VPA became involved in vocational training in order to reduce the burden on businesses. During the five-year period from 1996 to 2001, the Ministry of National Defense set up three technical colleges and 18 job promotion centers capable of handling 35,000 trainees a year for both long- and short-term courses. In the five-year period ending in 2001, 80,000 demobilized soldiers were given vocational training and 45,000 demobilized soldiers were assisted by job promotion centers in finding employment.¹²

The second mechanism through which the VPA exercises influence in society is through an extensive program of defense education for high school and university students, government officials, community leaders and religious dignitaries. In May 2001, Prime Minister Phan Van Khai signed Directive No. 15/2001 On Defense Education in all colleges, universities, and schools belonging to administrative agencies and political and social organizations. Both the Ministry of National Defense and the Ministry of Education and Training were given responsibility for carrying out the directive. In August of that year, the Prime Minister established the Central Council for Military Education, which included many senior government officials. The Council oversaw, among other things, the redrafting of the curriculum for national defense education. This education and its curriculum were made compulsory for all students in senior high school and above. During the 2006 school year, for example, over three million students from 2,866 schools and universities attended national defense education courses. Textbooks and study documents were jointly prepared by the Ministry of National

Defense, the VCP Organization and Personnel Commission, and the Ministry of Education and Training. In addition, the VPA General Political Department and the VCP Ideology and Culture Commission organized training courses on national defense for more than 100 leaders, editors, and journalists from central press agencies.

Defense education courses were also run by military regional commands. In March 2007, for example, Military Region 5 reported that it had conducted courses for over half a million persons in the previous year. At the same time, Military Region 4 High Command conducted its 21st course on defense education for directors and vice-directors of colleges, universities, high schools, and state-owned enterprises. The following month, the High Command of Military Region 9 concluded its 23rd defense education course for 86 provincial officials from the Mekong Delta. This defense education program is significant because it brings Vietnam's educated youth and other members of society into contact with the armed forces and its officers. Most importantly, they are introduced to—if not indoctrinated with—the military's conservative views on national security. Furthermore, the series of defense education courses provides important legitimation for the political role of the armed forces in Vietnam's one-party state and for the military's roles in domestic affairs.

Like many other militaries in Southeast Asia, the VPA also tries to influence society through the mass media. One way of achieving this aim is through the publication of its mass daily, *Quan Doi Nhan Dan* (*People's Army of Vietnam*), with a weekday circulation of several hundred thousand copies. The VPA also publishes *Van Nghe Quan Doi* (the Army Literature and Arts Magazine), a popular literature magazine. In addition, the military has its own publishing house, Nha Xuat Ban Quan Doi Nhan Dan (People's Army Publishing House), that produces books on military history and biographies of military heroes. Although the military does not own radio or television stations, it does produce a variety of popular programs for the state-run network. Through efforts like these, which complement its deep involvement in defense education, the VPA remains a fixture in the daily lives of ordinary Vietnamese.

Explaining the level of military involvement in politics

Samuel Huntington (1991) coined the term 'third wave' to describe the global process of democratization that took place in the 15-year period following the military coup in Portugal in April 1974. Huntington estimated that, during this period, 30 countries underwent a transition from authoritarian to democratic rule. Since Huntington's study was published, a further eight countries arguably made a similar transition in the Asia-Pacific region. The list includes Cambodia, Indonesia, Thailand, Mongolia, Taiwan, South Korea, East Timor, and Pakistan. Several of these countries have suffered reversals, such as Pakistan and Thailand, but have since experienced fresh democratic transitions (with the situation in Thailand remaining highly volatile). Processes of democratic transition have almost invariably resulted in attempts by political elites to place the military

under civilian control; but civilian control has not necessarily ended the military's engagement in domestic politics.

In his study of civil–military relations in the Asia-Pacific, Muthiah Alagappa (2001) noted that, since the mid-1980s, there has been a clear trend in reduction in the political power of militaries across the region. In the same vein, Vasavakul (2001: 356) concluded her study of the military in Vietnam by arguing that the VPA in 2001 was 'likely [to continue] to play an important role in shaping the new political, economic, and social order' in the future, because it had successfully altered its role from 'revolutionary heroes to red entrepreneurs' and political generals would continue to defend the army's commercial interests. In other words, Vietnam appeared unlikely to be influenced by regional trends identified by Alagappa.

The case study presented in this chapter suggests that, while some of Vasavakul's predictions made in 2001 have been proven to be accurate, others have been overtaken by events. First, her use of the term 'political generals' (taken from Turley 1977) no longer accurately describes the individuals who have taken command of the VPA after 2001. General Phung Quang Thanh, for example, is a product of professional military education in Vietnam and the Soviet Union. Second, Vasavakul's use of the term 'red' is somewhat misleading because it resonates with the term 'red and expert' used to describe tensions in Chinese civil–military relations in the 1960s. While Vietnam justifies party dominance over the military on ideological grounds, it has never gone to such extremes as China during the Cultural Revolution. Third, Vietnam's military entrepreneurs have lost influence within the VPA's institutional hierarchy, with much of the military's economic power now almost exclusively concentrated in Viettel – a company run not only by generals, but by professional managers as well – and nine other general corporations controlled by regional military commands.

In other words, it appears that since 2001 the VPA has aspired to achieve the levels of military professionalism and force modernization necessary for its mission of defending Vietnam's territorial sovereignty in the South China Sea. In this context, the VPA has relinquished some of its influence over the party, state, and the economy, while it increased its authority over its internal military affairs. Nevertheless, the VPA has remained politically influential since 2001, confirming Vasavakul's overall prediction of stable civil–military relations in Vietnam. To begin with, the interests of Vietnam's military establishment continue to be represented by its members on the VCP Central Committee and by the VPA's most senior general on the Politburo. Similarly, the VPA continue to play an influential role in society through oversight of militia, self-defense and reserve forces, a large veterans network, conscription, and defense education courses. Hence, the notion of declining military influence that some observers have postulated for other Southeast Asian states does not accurately capture the dynamics underway in Vietnam. The following section analyses the reasons for this phenomenon.

VPA involvement in politics: key factors

In the scholarly literature on civil–military relations, many authors have pointed to four main variables that can explain the trajectory of military engagement in the politics of particular nation-states: historical legacies, quality of civilian governance, international influence, and internal military culture. This section discusses the relevance of these four factors for the case of Vietnam, beginning with *historical legacies*. Today's VPA still carries many features that date back to its foundation amidst Vietnam's struggle against French colonial rule. Significantly, the political role of the VPA was determined at the outset by Marxist-Leninist ideology, according to which the VPA was an instrument of the worker-peasant alliance to seize power from the capitalist class. The subsequent prolonged wars against the French and the United States seemed to confirm this Marxist-Leninist premise of historical determinism, providing the foundation for the VPA's national defense, internal security, and political roles.

The independence struggle and the war against the United States also account for the VPA's wide-ranging engagement with society. The VPA's war ethos, enshrined in current doctrine, stresses the importance of maintaining large reserve, militia, and self-defense forces, and calls for the active involvement of the main forces in economic production, socialist construction, and other state-building activities. But, while the wars had a formative and lasting influence on the VPA and Vietnamese society, the grounds for the military's institutional involvement in politics were laid in periods of relative peace. Most importantly, the VPA's current role as one of the main components of the communist system has its roots in Vietnam's periods of political consolidation, such as the establishment of the DRV in 1954 and the SRV in 1976. Consequently, the VPA became one of the four main pillars of the regime, alongside the party, the state, and the Vietnam Fatherland Front (an umbrella group for mass organizations). The VPA's bloc representation on the party's Central Committee and in the National Assembly is a product of these periods. As a result, political and military roles became fused, and they remain so today.

Another factor in explaining the levels of military participation in politics is the *quality of civilian governance*. Militaries find it difficult to interfere in or assume dominance over political affairs if civilian groups run effective and stable governments. This link between the effectiveness of civilian governance and military participation in politics has also been obvious in Vietnam. Military engagement in politics increased in the late 1990s, when the Asian Financial Crisis threatened Vietnam's economic growth, but it decreased soon after the economic problems had been resolved. Since 2006, civilian Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung and his cabinet have taken the lead in managing the economy, delivering high levels of economic growth, improved public services, and political stability. While there have been some divisions in the ruling elite, particularly in response to the global financial crisis of 2008, these did not undermine the effectiveness of the government as a whole. In 2006, for example, Vietnam witnessed the emergence of a network of pro-democracy dissidents known as Bloc 8406 (from the date of their

founding) and other political activists who challenged one-party rule. However, this group has so far not posed a serious challenge to the legitimacy, power, and durability of Vietnam's one-party regime (Thayer 2009a; Thayer 2010).

One vital element in the increasing strength of civilian rule has been the enhanced prominence of the legislature and cabinet in governance. Significantly, Prime Minister Dung has used legislation and executive decisions to regulate and control military affairs. For example, Vietnam's 2004 Defense White Paper noted that the National Assembly 'has promulgated the Military Service Law, the Service Regulations, Law for Vietnamese People's Army Officers, and the National Frontier Law', while the state president has ratified, among others, 'the State Laws on Ready Reserve Force, Militia and Self-Defense Forces' (Socialist Republic of Vietnam 2004: 33–4). Since the White Paper was published, the state president has promulgated further defense legislation, such as the Law on National Defense (2007), Ordinance on Vietnamese Marine Police (2008), and Ordinance on the Defense Industry (2008). Vietnam's legislative effort has updated and amended outmoded ordinances and filled in legal gaps to keep up with Vietnam's transition to a market economy. In 2009, for example, the National Assembly passed the Law on Militia and Self-Defense Forces, *inter alia*, to require privatized state-owned enterprises to raise and train self-defense forces. The importance of Vietnam's growing package of defense legislation is that it provides a regulatory framework for state control over the armed forces and a legal basis for the many domestic roles of the armed forces. But despite this increasing empowerment of civilian government, the experience of the late 1990s has also shown that VCP leaders continue to rely on the VPA whenever they feel that domestic stability could be undermined by economic crisis or external security threats.

The third factor highlighted by scholars as paying a crucial role in determining the level of military participation in politics is related to *international influences*. Since the mid-1980s, however, Vietnam's regime has largely insulated itself from external influences that could undermine one-party rule or alter existing civil–military relations. For instance, Vietnam successfully weathered the collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe and the disintegration of the Soviet Union by implementing economic reforms that made it independent from Moscow's financial support (Thayer and Hervouet 2004: 363–6). Similarly, Vietnam's membership in ASEAN and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) since the mid-1990s has not impacted significantly on the internal dynamics of Vietnam's regime. Neither ASEAN nor the ARF require members to meet certain benchmarks in terms of their democratic quality or civil–military relations. Nonetheless, Vietnam's increasing integration into the Southeast Asian region has led VPA generals to intensify their defense cooperation activities with external states. This has taken the form of reciprocal high-level visits, naval port calls, and defense education exchanges. The net result of this process has been to socialize Vietnam's military leaders into new values and norms governing the domestic and external roles of the armed forces. These external influences have combined with domestic pressures (such as the divestment of most military-run commercial enterprises) to refocus the military's role in national politics to the promotion of greater military

professionalism. However, none of this has reduced the military's long-standing role in state-building with society at large.

Fourth and finally, scholars of civil–military relations tend to emphasize the importance of *internal military factors*. In recent years, the most important development in this field has been the push for increased military professionalism in the VPA. Since the 1980s, there is some evidence that a debate has taken place within the VPA over the relative influence of political commissars on professional matters. Over time, and after some experimentation, the role of political officers has been supplanted by the ‘one commander system’ (FitzGerald 1989). Today, the balance has shifted in favor of career professionals who must prepare the VPA for modern wars. In this regard, Vietnam has drawn lessons from both Iraq wars as well as from the modernization of China's People's Liberation Army. The increased stress on professionalism notwithstanding, the military's current bloc representation on the party Central Committee is likely to remain stable, reflecting the VPA's corporate interests. In the same vein, the planned divestment of the majority of military businesses by 2012 has supported the trend towards the military's professionalization to some extent, but the VPA continues to hold on to Viettel and nine other general corporations as cash cows and sources of employment for military personnel.

Conclusion

The role of the military in a communist political system represents a distinct sub-set of civil–military relations. Classical civil–military relations theory argues that the military should eschew a political role in order to enhance its professional military competence in external defense. But in Leninist political systems the military almost invariably plays a domestic political role in order to ensure the survival of the socialist regime. Vietnam, for example, amended its state constitution after the collapse of the Soviet Union to explicitly identify ‘defense of the socialist regime’ as one of the military's core missions. Accordingly, the VPA continues to be heavily involved in Vietnam's political institutions. Most senior officers are members of the VCP, and the military selects its own delegates to attend national party congresses. The VPA is given bloc representation on the party Central Committee and representation in the Politburo. Similarly, active duty military officers stand for election to and serve as deputies in the National Assembly, and the most senior military officer serves as Minister of National Defense and has a seat in Cabinet.

While the involvement of the VPA in politics and society has experienced fluctuations over time, the overall trend of civil–military relations in Vietnam since the early 2000s has been marked by stasis. Regional and global advances towards democratization and depoliticization of the military have not impacted on Vietnam in similar fashion as elsewhere in the Asia-Pacific. Vietnam reduced the role of military officers in the upper echelons of the VCP to some extent (the post of VCP secretary-general was returned to civilian hands in 2001 after being held by a retired general for four years), but VPA representation in state and party bodies

has remained relatively stable. In the same vein, the VCP's Central Committee has ordered the military (and other state bodies as well) to relinquish ownership of their commercial enterprises by 2012, but the VPA's continued control over Viettel and nine major general corporations will allow the military to retain a sound economic power base. In addition, the VPA is certain to continue to play a major role in society at large through national conscription; the maintenance of large reserves, militia, and self-defense forces; defense education, and socio-economic development in economic-defense zones.

Despite the VPA's continued entrenchment in political, social, and economic affairs, however, there have been signs of increasing professionalism within the military as a defense force. This has taken the form of enhanced military education and training, both at home and abroad, in order to better manage the process of force modernization now underway. At the same time, Vietnam is widening its military engagement with the region and the world. Thus, while Vietnam's communist regime and its armed forces have so far successfully withstood domestic and international pressures for democratization and less politicized civil–military relations, the generals seem to have developed a greater interest in traditional areas of defense affairs.

Notes

- 1 *Quan Doi Nhan Dan*, 25 March 2008.
- 2 *Agence France-Presse*, 27 April 2001.
- 3 *Vietnam News Service*, 27 February 2007.
- 4 *Vietnam News Agency*, 21 February 1993.
- 5 *Jane's World Armies* electronic edition.
- 6 *Quan Doi Nhan Dan*, 7 January 2003.
- 7 *Thanh Nien*, 31 January 2007.
- 8 *Quan Doi Nhan Dan*, 19 December 2007.
- 9 *Viet Nam News*, 4 April 2008.
- 10 *Viet Nam News*, 13 January 2010.
- 11 In order to address potential over-supply of conscripts, in July 2005 Vietnam reduced the length of compulsory service from two years to eighteen months, and lowered the age of eligibility for military service from the 18–27 year range to 18–25 years. Individuals aged 26 and 27 were shunted into the reserves. The term of service for persons holding technical qualifications or serving in the navy was reduced from three to two years.
- 12 *Vietnam News Agency*, 30 May 2001.

Bibliography

- Alagappa, M. 2001. 'Asian Civil–Military Relations: Key Developments, Explanations, and Trajectories'. In M. Alagappa (ed.) *Military Professionalism in Asia: Conceptual and Empirical Perspectives*, Honolulu: East-West Center; 433–98.
- Defence Economic Trends in the Asia-Pacific*. 2009. Canberra: Defence Intelligence Organisation.
- FitzGerald, D.M. 1989. *The Vietnam People's Army Regularization of Command, 1975–1988*. Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence No. 48. Canberra: Strategic and

- Defence Studies Centre, Research School of Pacific Studies, The Australian National University.
- Gainsborough, Martin. 2010. *Countries at the Crossroads: Vietnam*, Washington DC: Freedom House.
- Huntington, S.P. 1991. *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Schiff, R. 1995. 'Civil–Military Relations Reconsidered: A Theory of Concordance', *Armed Forces and Society*, 22(1): 7–24.
- Socialist Republic of Vietnam. 1998. *Vietnam Consolidating National Defense Safeguarding the Homeland*. Hanoi: Ministry of [National] Defense.
- Socialist Republic of Vietnam. 2004. *Vietnam's National Defense in the Early Years of the 21st Century*, Hanoi: Ministry of [National] Defense.
- Socialist Republic of Vietnam. 2009. *Vietnam National Defense*, Hanoi: Ministry of National Defence.
- Thayer, C.A. 1985. 'Vietnam'. In Z.H. Ahmad and Harold Crouch (eds) *Military-Civilian Relations in South-East Asia*, Singapore: Oxford University Press; 234–66.
- Thayer, C.A. 1988. 'The Regularization of Politics: Continuity and Change in the Party's Central Committee, 1951–1986'. In D.G. Marr and Christine P. White (eds) *Postwar Vietnam: Dilemmas in Socialist Development*, Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University; 177–93.
- Thayer, C.A. 1994. 'The Vietnam People's Army Under *Doi Moi*', Pacific Strategic Paper no. 7, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Thayer, C.A. 1995. 'Vietnam's Strategic Readjustment'. In S. Harris and Gary Klintworth (eds) *China as a Great Power: Myths, Realities and Challenges in the Asia-Pacific Region*, New York: St. Martin's Press; 185–201.
- Thayer, C.A. 1997. 'Force Modernization: The Case of the Vietnam People's Army', *Contemporary South East Asia*, 19(1): 1–28.
- Thayer, C.A. 2000. 'Demobilization but not Disarmament—Personnel Reduction and Force Modernization in Vietnam'. In N. Pauwels (ed.) *War Force to Work Force: Global Perspectives on Demobilization and Reintegration*, Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft; 199–219.
- Thayer, C.A. 2001. 'Vietnam: The Many Roles of the VPA'. In M. Alagappa (ed.) *Military Professionalism in Asia: Conceptual and Empirical Perspectives*, Honolulu: East-West Center; 137–49.
- Thayer, C.A. 2003a. 'The Economic and Commercial Roles of the Vietnam People's Army'. In J. Brömmelhörster and Wolf-Christian Paes (eds) *The Military as an Economic Actor: Soldiers in Business*, International Political Economy Series. London: Palgrave Macmillan; 74–93.
- Thayer, C.A. 2003b. 'Political Developments in Vietnam: The Rise and Demise of Le Kha Phieu, 1997–2001'. In L.B.W. Drummond and Mandy Thomas (eds) *Consuming Urban Culture in Contemporary Vietnam*, London: RoutledgeCurzon Press; 21–34.
- Thayer, C.A. 2008a. 'Vietnam'. In S. Farson, Peter Gill, Mark Phythian and Shlomo Shapiro (eds) *PSI Handbook of Global Security and Intelligence: National Approaches, Vol. 1, The Americas and Asia*. Westport: Praeger Security International; 300–17.
- Thayer, C.A. 2008b. 'Vietnam's Defence Policy and its Impact on Foreign Relations'. Paper delivered to the EuroViet 6 Conference, Hamburg: Asien-Afrika Institut, Universität Hamburg.
- Thayer, C.A. 2009a. 'Vietnam and the Challenge of Political Civil Society', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 31(1): 1–27.

- Thayer, C.A. 2009b. 'Vietnam People's Army: Development and Modernization'. Armed Forces Lecture Paper Series, Paper No. 4, Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei: Sultan Haji Bolkiah Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies.
- Thayer, C.A. 2010. 'Political Legitimacy in Vietnam: Challenge and Response', *Politics & Policy*, 38(3): 423–44.
- Thayer, C.A. forthcoming. 'The Expanding Roles of the Vietnam People's Army, 1975–2002'. In G. de Gantès and Tobias Rettig (eds) *Armées et sociétés en Asie de Sud-Est XIXe–Xxe*, Paris: Les Indes Savantes; 455–70.
- Thayer, C.A., and Gérard Hervouet. 2004. 'The Army as a Political and Economic Actor in Vietnam'. In C. Goscha and Benoît de Tréglodé (eds), *Naissance d'un Etat-Parti: Le Viet Nam depuis 1945*, Paris: Les Indes Savantes; 355–81.
- The Military Balance*. 2000–10. London: International Institute of Strategic Studies.
- Turley, W.S. 1977. 'Origins and Development of Communist Military Leadership in Vietnam', *Armed Forces and Society*, 3(2): 219–47.
- Vasavakul, T. 1997a. 'Sectoral Politics and Strategies for State and Party Building from the VII to the VIII Congress of the Vietnamese Communist Party'. In A. Fforde (ed.) 'Doi Moi: Ten Years After the 1986 Party Congress', Political and Social Change Monograph No. 24, Canberra: Department of Political and Social Change, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, The Australian National University; 81–135.
- Vasavakul, T. 1997b. 'The Third Wave: State Building in Post-Central Planning Vietnam.' *Southeast Asian Affairs*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies; 337–63.
- Vasavakul, T. 2001. 'Vietnam: From Revolutionary Heroes to Red Entrepreneurs'. In M. Alagappa (ed.) *Coercion and Governance: The Declining Political Role of the Military in Asia*, Stanford: Stanford University Press; 336–56.