

Hidden Division

—Revealing the Impact of Migration Policies Through
Vietnamese Narratives in Germany—

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(Ogushi Seminar 4 year)

Introduction	
I	The History of Asian Migrants
II	Vietnamese in Germany
1	History of Vietnamese Migrants
2	Experiences in FRG
3	Experiences in GDR
4	After the Reunification
III	Multidimensional Division
IV	Conclusion
V	References
VI	Appendix A: Interview Summary

Introduction

When migration policy is discussed, the origin of migrants, the purpose of migration and expectations towards the migrant community differ every time. Sometimes there is an expectation and effort for migrants to fully integrate into the host country and culture, anticipating their migration to be permanent or long-term. Others do not intend for migrants to stay long in the country and treat them as temporary members of the workforce. However, when these expectations are not reciprocated, migrants suffer policy and social friction owing from the clash between their own wishes and those of the host nation's. It is critical to see how different at-

titudes towards migrant groups influence the lived experiences of migrants in the host nation and how it causes a deep division; even within people who share the same name of origin, because they were treated differently.

Not a lot of culturally similar nations experience having divergent policies towards migrants at the same time of period. However, Germany is an exception. As it was divided to West and East Germany after the Second World War before its reunification in 1990, it is the consummate state to look at how migrants became the victims of the history and were bounced between different policies of former two states and its new reunified state. Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and German Democratic Republic (GDR) had different attitudes when welcoming migrants, though these migrants ended up within one unified nation in the end. After the reunification of the country, the difference they initially experienced in former divided nations became a greater difference because of how reunified Germany handled them.

A glance into Asian migrant group, which has long been outside of German migrant study's focus, will provide an insight to a new and remarkable impact Germany's history has made on migrants.¹⁾ Turkish minorities have historically been the center of the attention when it comes to migrant discourses in Germany, along with sizeable minority groups from Eastern Europe and Southern Europe.²⁾ Nevertheless, they have mostly been summoned to FRG as '*Gastarbeiter*' (Guest-workers)³⁾ and this will restrict the possibility of the study to compare the impact that was caused by the difference between GDR and FRG. On the other hand, a great rise in the number of Asian migrants from 1961 to 1990 in FRG can be seen⁴⁾ together with extensive number of '*Vertragsarbeiter*' (Contract-workers) who located in GDR. This shows that looking at the migrants from Asian countries allows this paper to explore the comparison between FRG and GDR and migrants in reunified Germany from these former nations, which is a perspective severely lacking in the field of migrant's study.⁵⁾

Out of the various Asian migrant groups, Vietnamese has one of the longest histories in Germany, which allows this work to look at a greater scope of historical integration. The case study of Germany also lays out the clear influence of different German governments and policies as the Vietnamese migrant community can be

split in two comparable groups: migrants from South Vietnam to FRG and from North Vietnam to GDR. Nevertheless, the data of Vietnamese people is simplified in reunified Germany and is not provided in two categorizations of Vietnamese people, those from former FRG and the others from former GDR. These Vietnamese people are stated to be in one group on the data, but Germany has been categorizing them into two groups when it comes to the policies and the treatment towards them. This absence of data has been making this categorization and differentiation invisible. To overcome the ignorance of the Germany on this matter, the observation on the detailed experiences and historical policies towards these two groups of migrants should be made.

This paper will reveal the multidimensional aspects of division within contemporary Vietnamese migrant groups; and how Germany's history and policies have contributed to create this division. The first section of this thesis will illustrate the general history of Asian migrants in Germany. Then, I will examine the specific context of Vietnamese migration to Germany, looking specifically at the idiosyncrasies in their experiences both the FRD and GDR. After looking at the different attitudes and policies in the FRG and GDR, the changes in lived experiences of migrants in reunified Germany will be further examined, which will be an explanation of how the multidimensional division within Vietnamese was created. Furthermore, by looking closely at the personal experiences of interviewees, structure of the division will be furthermore analyzed.

Multidimensional Division should rise a question to many migration policies that ignores three significant matters: the original relation within the migrant group, the fragility migrant's status, and the impact of historical change in policies within host nation.

I The History of Asian Migrants

The definition of 'migrants' is important to understand when looking at German data. The Federal Statistical Office of Germany has collected data of foreign citizens since 1939,⁶⁾ while the data of '*Personen mit Migrationshintergrund*' (people with migrant backgrounds) has been collected since 2005.⁷⁾ This alteration was made

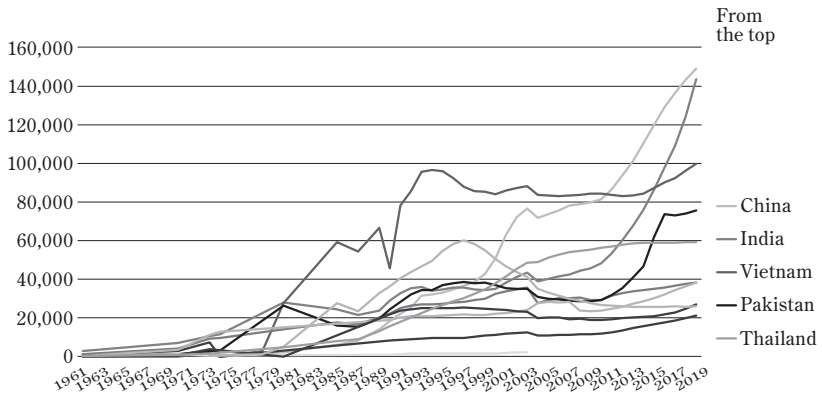
through the reformation that happened simultaneously with enforcement of new immigration law.⁸⁾ The data of *Personen mit Migrationshintergrund* defines people who did not, or have parents that did not, obtain German nationality from birth.⁹⁾ This was then expanded to include: foreign nationals, naturalized, emigrant, people who were adopted by German citizens and children of said above of people.¹⁰⁾ In the proceeding section I will use both data of *Personen mit Migrationshintergrund* and that of foreign citizens to gain extensive overview on migration history.

When looking at immigration data, the definition of “Asia” must be clarified. The definition of Asia given by the Federal Statistical Office of Germany is in a broad sense and it includes many countries from the Middle East, such as Afghanistan, Iran, and Iraq.¹¹⁾ As these middle eastern countries were not included in the system of *Gastarbeiter* nor *Vertragsarbeiter*, there’s an impetus to focusing more on the migrants who are mainly from South Asia, South East Asia, and East Asia to gain a better picture of the number change before and after the reunification. Therefore, in this paper when “Asian Migrants” are mentioned, it does not include those migrants from middle east.

Asian nationals in Germany have a storied history. In 1939, there were 900 foreign nationals from Asian countries.¹²⁾ This number remained low with only marginally increases on both sides of the newly divided German republics. Although West-Germany summoned “*Gastarbeiter*” (guest Workers) mainly from Italy, Greece, Yugoslavia, and Turkey after the 1960s, the number of Asian migrants steadily increased.¹³⁾ In 1990, the number of Asian Migrants in the FRG was 4 times larger than it was in 1961, despite them not being included in the government policy of *Gastarbeiter*.¹⁴⁾

With greater emphasis on the narrowed defined Asian countries, it can be observed that Vietnamese migrants have made up a significant proportion of Asian Nationals in Germany. First data on the numbers of Vietnamese is provided by the Federal Statistical Office in 1970, where only 500 Vietnamese were living in FRG.¹⁵⁾ Specific data in GDR is lacking on this matter due to the limited documentation given by GDR. After 1990, when the reunification of Germany took place, the number skyrockets to 96,659 people, and the number remained between 97,000 and 83,000 for the last 30 years (Graph 1). Today, the Vietnamese nationals are 3rd largest

Graph 1 Number of Asian nationals in Germany



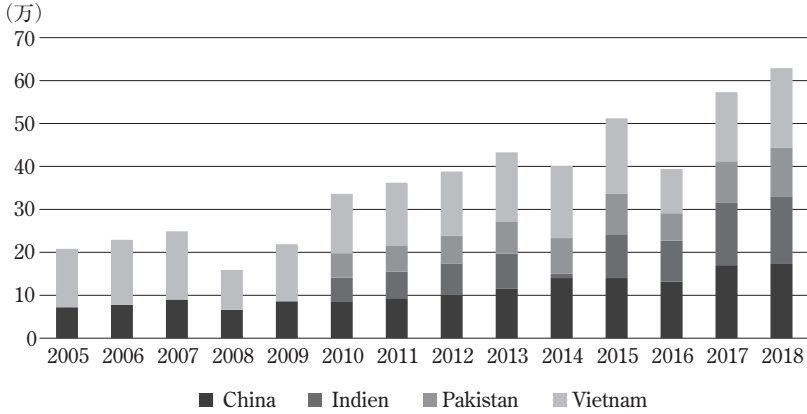
Source: Federal Statistical Office of Germany 1961-2019

group among Asian Nationals.

Nevertheless, the data on the number of the *Personen mit Migrationshintergrund* indicates the history and the current situation of the migrant group better than the data on the number of foreign nationals does. Number of Vietnamese nationals in 2018 takes third place among other groups of Asian migrants, though the number of people with migration background with the origin of Vietnam is the largest compared to other people with Asian migration background (Graph 2). This illustrates there is a large number of Vietnamese communities including the Vietnamese nationals as well as second or third generation of them, who assumingly are German citizens through birth.

Following these statistics, it becomes clear that the Vietnamese migrants have been a large migrant group in Germany, and they have built communities where people live crossing several generations together. This characteristic of Vietnamese migrants allows this paper to explore more of the long-term impact of the policies and history, which differed in each two former nations as well as in reunified Germany. Additionally, unlike other migrant groups, Vietnamese migrant groups can be separately observed, as Vietnam was also divided into two countries after decolonization. Vietnamese people from north and south were separately summoned or migrated to Germany in west and east and this deepens the observation that could

Graph 2 Background of Asian Migrants to Germany



Source: Federal Statistical Office of Germany 2005-2018

be done on the differences in impacts which state's treatment and history made on life of migrants.

II Vietnamese in Germany

1 History of Vietnamese Migrants

In most studies on Vietnamese migrants in Germany, the difference between those who came to FRG and GDR are often underestimated.¹⁶⁾ However, there are notable differences between the two, when focused on the rational for migration as well as their origin that inform divisions that exist within migrant communities today.

As such, proceeding we will have a presentation of the individual historical circumstances that bought Vietnamese migrants to the FRG and GDR respectively. As previous studies lack the perspective of the division between the Vietnamese from former FRG and former GDR, 3 additional Interviews have been done for this paper to support the argument. A, from North Vietnam in GDR, B from South Vietnam in GDR, and C from South Vietnam in FRG. All Interviewees are currently living in Berlin. The detailed profile information can be found in the appendix in the end of



Source: Federal Statistical Office of Germany 1970–2019

this paper.

2 Experience in FRG

The number of Vietnamese nationals went through a dramatic growth after 1973 until 1991. The graph shown below does not include that of GDR, which means that the number of Vietnamese in both Germany until 1991 could have even been bigger (Graph 3).

The Vietnamese nationals who came to FRG can be divided into mainly two groups. The larger group is comprised of “former students”.¹⁷⁾ Many young unmarried students came from Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam) to FRG as a part of collaborations at university education level.¹⁸⁾ These “former students” stayed in Germany, opting not to return to Vietnam in consideration of the political situation.

The other group of Vietnamese Migrants are named “Boat people”.¹⁹⁾ “Boat people” are used to refer those who came by boat to FRG as refugees.²⁰⁾ They fled the country after the Vietnam War, which devastated the country and was ended in 1975. Interviewee C describes herself as one of those “Boat people”. Most of “Boat people” were highly educated and had high social statuses such as business executives or intellectuals and this allowed them to organize their migration out of the country.²¹⁾ C stated that her older brother fled to the US before her and many of other family or relatives fled to other countries as well, which shows the connection

or power they had to organize the flee out of the country.²²⁾ She also finished her 10th grade of high school right before the fleeing, which indicates the importance family put on education.²³⁾ In addition to their high educated status, since they came as refugees, they were offered language courses and have received support in the labor market integration especially in the field of metal industry.²⁴⁾ C also attended a language course after arrival, mentioning that she had never learned German before her departure. Though literature suggests that some children did not receive language courses or preparation before attending German schools.²⁵⁾

Still, they were much more welcomed to be integrated into German society and this leads to the future integration difference with the ones who settled in the GDR. For instance, C claimed in her interview that she and her siblings did not require to work to sustain the minimum living for a year when they fled to FRG.²⁶⁾ Her family had received financial aid as refugees, and this allowed them to also live in the *Wohngemeinschaft* (which refers to shared style flat often seen in Germany) specific for refugees.²⁷⁾ She also had received high level education in FRG until 1990 at one of *Fachhochschule*, which stands for Universities for specific skills or fields of study. Taking a part in university level education that C integrated well into German society.

Along with their integration to Germany, many cut their connections with homeland.²⁸⁾ C mentioned that she did not have many contacts with her relatives nor family neither, since they also have left Vietnam to flee.²⁹⁾ This indicates not only the attitude of welcoming refugees on the FRG's end but also the active willingness of "Boat people" to be integrated into German society.

According to a literature, accepting "Boat people" in FRG ended in 1982, for all that, with family reunification policy, which allowed migrants to summon their families to Germany, the number of Vietnamese migrants in FRG increased to 45,779 by 1990.³⁰⁾

From the given conditions, it is apparent that educational level was relatively high for those "Boat people" and they have received fair recompense from the FRG's social welfare system. The attitude they had and the expectation of the government towards them did not differ and they both were keen to both integrate and be integrated.

3 Experience in GDR

Since 1955, groups of children from North Vietnam arrived in the GDR to receive education. They attended primary and secondary school in GDR. Prior to their arrival in GDR, there were many Korean children and Greek children who were brought to GDR like these Vietnamese children and they were expected to follow the similar educational paths.³¹⁾ From the fieldwork interview by a researcher, the aim was to educate the children in order to rebuild the North Vietnam after the war. 13,000 students and experts were educated in GDR between 1966 and 1986 through this program.³²⁾

In 1973, the GDR government started its new policy on inviting workforce from other socialist countries. In this policy, those workers were called “*Vertragsarbeiter*” (Contract workers) and many from North Vietnam migrated to GDR as these workers.³³⁾ These workers were summoned until the reunification of Germany. Even though most literatures only describe “*Vertragsarbeiter*” as they are North Vietnamese, it is possible that some could have been from South Vietnam. One of the interviewees, B, who migrated to Germany in 1988, described her as one of the “*Vertragsarbeiter*” from South Vietnam.³⁴⁾ Putting the year of reunification of Vietnam into consideration, which was in 1975, it is probable that she was considered just as “Vietnamese” from the GDR perspective. She however identifies herself as South Vietnamese and this fact should be considered throughout evaluation. Overall, her experiences illustrate that individuals from the former South Vietnamese were also sent to GDR as “*Vertragsarbeiter*”.

The aim of this GDR policy was ideological rather than economical. They sought to spread the ideology of socialism to the third world countries and to aid socialist countries that were damaged by the war.³⁵⁾ The contract of these workers was hold not between the country and the individuals but between GDR and Socialist Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam).³⁶⁾ Differing from the “former student” or “Boat people” who arrived in FRG, these “*Vertragsarbeiter*” did not stay long in GDR, they were usually sent back to North Vietnam after 4–5 years.³⁷⁾ One interviewee from North Vietnam, A, explained in the interview that her initial contract as “*Vertragsarbeiter*” was also 5 years.³⁸⁾ Due to this short-term workforce use of migrants,

they were not intended to integrate into German society. They were expected to maintain their cultural connection with their country of origin while they stayed in GDR.³⁹⁾

Not only the attitude of GDR, but also Vietnamese migrants themselves were not motivated to integrate. They kept their boundary with the homeland and sought to build the parallel life. Many made a proactive effort in order to improve their earnings by working at the outside of GDR companies.⁴⁰⁾ In one instance, migrants purchased sewing machines to sew clothing for local Germans, and others similarly built businesses relationships between Vietnamese workers and locals.⁴¹⁾ A, from North Vietnam also mentioned her strong connection with her family in Vietnam. She sent money and many packages with all different kinds of goods, which her family could possibly sell well in Vietnam.⁴²⁾ The reason of this strong connection and dampened interest in integration could be seen in the background why they came to Germany. Many of “*Vertragsarbeiter*” often came to Germany to make more money to provide better for their families.⁴³⁾ Unlikely in FRG, it was not allowed in GDR for “*Vertragsarbeiter*” to have their families come to GDR. So, this attempt to try to earn more in GDR was significant for them only in the context of providing more for their families in Vietnam.

Language was also an obstacle for many “*Vertragsarbeiter*”. The language courses were provided only for two months after their arrival and they were given accommodation under the supervision of the Stasi (GDR state security service). B however attended at language course only for 1 month, and therefore it is likely that many also did not even receive 2 months language course. Hillmann mentions that the most of the “*Vertragsarbeiter*” had lower motivation to learn German than those who fled to FRG.⁴⁴⁾ It is possible that there were multi-dimensional reasons why many “*Vertragsarbeiter*” did not actively learn German. One fact mentioned by B and A was that every time they went out, their care worker who also played the role as interpreter would always come along.⁴⁵⁾ This could have a connection to Stasi mentioned above, though she claimed that the reasoning was always the language barrier.⁴⁶⁾ They also have lived in the same building only with other Vietnamese “*Vertragsarbeiter*”.⁴⁷⁾ A clearly declared that she rarely had any communications or connections with Germans as well.⁴⁸⁾ These conditions give the idea that many “*Ver-*

tragsarbeiter” probably did not need to use German in their daily lives and therefore had difficulties improving their German abilities.

In contrary, some factors suggest that GDR was not the substandard host nation for some. Several articles published in GDR explains that these Vietnamese workers had opportunities to get along with local workers as well as felt strong solidarity with them.⁴⁹⁾ B also describes one of her German colleagues as below, which suggests that there might have been some cases where “*Vertragsarbeiter*” felt the strong connection to local German workers.

“She was like my care mother. We slept together, she taught me German, and she helped me whenever I needed her help.”⁵⁰⁾

In addition, A who said she did not have many connections with German locals, stated that “People from GDR was very nice”.⁵¹⁾ This could also help the belief that GDR local community has been welcoming towards those foreign “*Vertragsarbeiter*”.

The working condition and measure might have been also fair in GDR. B shared her information on weekend working, mentioning that they could have worked also on the weekends if they wanted to earn more.⁵²⁾ This shows that Vietnamese migrants had slight freedom to make their own decision in their work. Some literature initiates that salary of the “*Vertragsarbeiter*” was to be said the same as that of German workers and it can also bring up an assumption that some Vietnamese earned more than GDR locals with additional earning mentioned above.⁵³⁾ Though, B mentioned that out the salary of Vietnamese “*Vertragsarbeiter*”, 600DDR mark got sent to Vietnam automatically.⁵⁴⁾ If the salary after this deduction is said to be same as the one for German, the assumption above can be right, though there’s no specific data to prove this.

Overall, Vietnamese in GDR was not desired to integrate nor motivated to do so. Thinking of the socialistic character of its media in GDR, the non-governmental information on discriminations that often occurred and violence towards Vietnamese migrants provide realistic description of how they lived in GDR as migrants.⁵⁵⁾ B mentioning how special she was, additionally empathizes the fact how rare and special it was for her to be close to a German colleague among other Vietnamese colleagues. However, with the salary and working condition, we cannot ignore the probability that GDR could have been a fair host nation for some migrants.

4 After the Reunification

After the reunification of Germany in 1990, there was a significant difference in the treatment of the former “Boat people” and former “*Vertragsarbeiter*”. Nevertheless, the difference is not clear from the data provided by the government. It identifies Vietnamese as one group, and do not differentiate between former “Boat people” and “*Vertragsarbeiter*”.⁵⁶⁾ It is not clear whether this lack of information on these two marginal groups is intentional or not, though it can be surely claimed that this absence of data hides the existence of these people, how they have suffered and how they have turned into the marginalized group from legitimate migrants with legal status.

Looking into the policies and legal statement as well as personal experiences collected through interviews, will allow us to exclaim the real attitudes of the government, which objected both groups did not share many similarities. From these differences, it will open up the perspective on the actual impact and influences reunified Germany has made on these migrants.

(1) Visa and employment conditions

As mentioned above, “Boat people” had already been treated in FRG as Refugees, and this status has secured their existence also in reunified Germany.⁵⁷⁾ “Boat people” had received social welfare support from the FRG government and they did not have a pressure of needing to apply for residence permit, since they had Asylum status given to them as they fled into Germany. This asylum status of course was never taken away from them and have been their status also in reunified Germany.⁵⁸⁾ C, one of the interviewees who came to Germany as “Boat people”, she also shared her experience, mentioning that her family did not have to have their own resource of income for a year since they had enough financial aid from the state.⁵⁹⁾ Even after the reunification, her husband had worked for a major German firm for more than 10 years and C could also study at *Fachhochschule*, which is relevant to college in Germany. From this example, it is clear, that seeking the stable financial status nor having a secure residence status in FRG for “Boat people” weren’t a notable issue.

In comparison, former “*Vertragsarbeiter*” in GDR lost their status and protections they had and suddenly became a marginalized group without any legal status and social welfare protection from the government.

Unemployment first became a heavy problem. Due to the reconstruction of the economic system demanded by FRG government, many factories in GDR closed and those Vietnamese “*Vertragsarbeiter*” were rarely relocated to different locations.⁶⁰⁾ Already by May 1990, which is five months before the official reunification, about 60% of Vietnamese “*Vertragsarbeiter*” was unemployed.⁶¹⁾ The reason for the termination that has occurred to foreign “*Vertragsarbeiter*”, including Vietnamese was unjust. Transfer or relocation for all the workers had to be organized by the supervision of the firm and this led to difficulties transferring German workers. To avoid terminating German workers, many factories and firms terminated the “*Vertragsarbeiter*” instead.⁶²⁾ There was also a clear discriminatory motto at the time which can be translated into “Before Germans go, foreigners go.”⁶³⁾ These economical, discriminatory, and political conditions led to high rate of unemployment for former GDR “*Vertragsarbeiter*”.

Not only being unemployed, “*Vertragsarbeiter*” soon lost their status and privilege as migrants who were invited through the state program. Parallel to many Vietnamese getting terminated, they all were forced into the situation of making decisions whether to stay in Germany or to return to Vietnam. “*Vertragsarbeiter*” was offered 3000 German mark with the payment support for 70% of the rent for 3 months upon returning. The firm was also suggested to support the returning flight cost. Attracted by the amount of financial support stated above, as well as caused by the unstable and unpredictable future in Germany with unemployment status, many decided to go back to Vietnam.⁶⁴⁾ However, Germany was not the only one who refused to have them integrated or welcomed to the nation. Vietnam refused to welcome the former “*Vertragsarbeiter*”, especially those who did not want to return to Vietnam initially.⁶⁵⁾ As literature suggests, it is predictable that the returning procedure was not simple nor easy even if they were approved to return.⁶⁶⁾ Other literature indicates that many regretted going back due to the unwelcoming community attitude towards them in Vietnam.⁶⁷⁾ This could be caused by the governmental refusal attitude towards their homecoming. First in 1995, the agreement was made

between reunified FRG and Vietnam, which finally stated that Vietnam will officially welcome former “*Vertragsarbeiter*”.⁶⁸⁾ This agreement was not made with Vietnam’s strong will to open its door, was made only because FRG threatened with massive economic measures they could take on the Vietnamese government.⁶⁹⁾ Even after this Agreement, out of 38,077 application of returning, only 21,573 was taken accepted by the Vietnamese government.⁷⁰⁾

Reunified Germany attempting to send former “*Vertragsarbeiter*” and Vietnam refusing them to return shows how they turned into a truly unwanted and lost group of people from needed workforce in former socialistic nation.

This unfair treatment of host and home nations led most Vietnamese “*Vertragsarbeiter*” to stay in Germany. The number of “*Vertragsarbeiter*” who remained in Germany is thought to be 160,000.⁷¹⁾ Nevertheless, the refusal and ignorance of reunified Germany continued to trouble those who remained in the country.

“*Vertragsarbeiter*” has received a legal status which was different than the ones for “Boat people”. Unlike “Boat people” who were guaranteed to stay in Germany legally with the Asylum status, many of “*Vertragsarbeiter*” first received the residence permit as Contract worker.⁷²⁾ This divergent categorization put former “*Vertragsarbeiter*” to diminished and poor social status and they were differentiated from those who arrived in former FRG, even though state only identifies both groups as one group of Vietnamese migrants on data. This status led people to experience poor treatment or judgment from the society, as their permit was very limited. A also recalls the time after reunification as not easy for some of people she knew.⁷³⁾

While some have received these residence permit as contract workers, some sought to get the asylum status. Since these asylum applications were submitted after the reunification, these intended Asylum only as Vietnamese, not as Asylum from GDR. If the “*Vertragsarbeiter*” has fled GDR to FRG before reunification, their status as person from GDR will be stronger than the one as possible refugee from Vietnam. For instance, B also has applied for an Asylum status though as a person from GDR even though she was from south Vietnam, which could have helped her to claim that she needed to flee the country before coming to Germany.⁷⁴⁾ Those who sought to gain the asylum status as refugees from Vietnam, which was most of the asylum seekers after the reunification, they were judged as legal migrants or

work force since they all had working contracts to come to GDR.⁷⁵⁾ This resulted in 99% of rejection rate for those asylum applications.⁷⁶⁾

This rejection of asylum applications and short-term contract work permit pushed some people into cigar smuggling.⁷⁷⁾ Cigar smuggling was the only choice left for some people, even with the realization that it is an act of crime. Working as illegal smuggler put them into the riskiest position, more likely to be caught by the police, since they tend to be more visible in comparison to those who organize the international smuggling system itself.⁷⁸⁾ This is nowadays still attached as a stereotype to former “*Vertragsarbeiter*” Vietnamese, who locates in East Berlin.⁷⁹⁾ This negative image attached is special to “*Vertragsarbeiter*”, since former “Boat people” did not need to commit a crime to sustain the minimum level of living.

In 1993, it became available for former “*Vertragsarbeiter*” to gain non- contract worker residence permit for 2 years.⁸⁰⁾ Though this was only available only to those who could sustain their living without social welfare support.⁸¹⁾ This meant the need for former “*Vertragsarbeiter*” to be employed and financially stable, which was back then also not easy for German citizens given the economic situation with high unemployment rate.⁸²⁾ B recalls her experience in West Berlin after reunification. Even though she has fled to west Berlin before the reunification, since she did not hold the long-term residence permit, she could not find a job which led her to be unable to rent her own accommodation. She described her time until she has obtained the permanent residence permit as;

“It was like walking in a circle. I don’t have a job, so I cannot get the residence permit, and without residence permit, you cannot find the accommodation, and without your own accommodation, you will not be hired. It was like a loop”.⁸³⁾

Seeing herself being an asylum seeker from GDR to FRG still having had a difficulty to obtain the legal residency, it is not hard to imagine the difficulty which those former “*Vertragsarbeiter*” who stayed in GDR till the end faced.

With the condition, self-employment became one of the most accessible ways to be financially and legally stable. Small snack bars, restaurants, and flower shops and furthermore kinds of shops had opened, and it became the major job resource for those former “*Vertragsarbeiter*”.⁸⁴⁾ A’s experiences are likely to what have been mentioned above.⁸⁵⁾ Her husband and she both had difficulties getting employed,

and that led them to start the small selling business at the market.⁸⁶⁾ As she described, that was how many other Vietnamese former “*Vertragsarbeiter*” sustained their living. Even after long years of selling textiles in market, their businesses followed were not successful.⁸⁷⁾ As she remembers, all the business her husband started had run fine only for first several years and they had to re-open new restaurant for another attempt.⁸⁸⁾ This shows that the self-employment might have been the way for them to maintain the living cost but was not stable at any cost. It is not hard to imagine that many other former “*Vertragsarbeiter*” who started their own business also go through the unstable financial conditions.

When permanent residence permits finally became available for Vietnamese migrants, they were required to have lived in Germany for more than 8years.⁸⁹⁾ The significant rule here was these 8years would not count the years in GDR. This is a clear differentiation and judgment the state’s policy made, stating that those who migrated to GDR were less worth the residency than the ones who lived in former FRG from the perspective of reunified Germany. This differentiation between people who migrated to FRG and GDR finally got lifted in 1997.⁹⁰⁾

With focus on legal status and employment situation of Vietnamese migrants in reunified Germany, it occurs that former “*Vertragsarbeiter*” became invisible new category to be marginalized, forced to lose legal and social status and protection from the government, even though they still were part of legal system of former “German” Democratic republic.

(2) Language and Culture

Language sufficiency and cultural lifestyle of those who were in FRG and GDR remained divergent after the reunification.

As already mentioned above, people in FRG, generally “*Boat people*” often took a part in education system in Germany or were better integrated and this implies that they had better proficiency in the Germany language. Still nowadays, majority of high education in Germany is provided in German, and therefore if attending at any courses at high education institutions, Germany sufficiency will be required. C, who once attended *Fachhochschule* in Germany spoke fairly high level of German during Interview as well. As a community, many former “Boat people” cut off their

connections to Vietnam.⁹¹⁾ C had a lot of friends who were Germans and did not necessarily hang out only with Vietnamese people.⁹²⁾ Even so, an issue of second generation seems to be interestingly greater among those former “Boat people”. Because boat people often tried more proactively to integrate into the German society and demanded their children to speak more fluent German, the gap between children and the parents often becomes a problem, according to Hillmann.⁹³⁾ This specific gap that exists in former “*Boat people*” shows the state’s low involvement in the long-term integration support in the educational system or social welfare system but also the absence of the perspective on two different groups of Vietnamese migrants.

In comparison, those who spent their time in former GDR often struggles with the language. From A and B interviews, it is clear that they usually did not need any German as they always had interpreters with them when going out.⁹⁴⁾ They might have not needed German in former GDR though, it is troublesome to sustain a living in Germany without speaking a good amount of German.⁹⁵⁾ It is said that not more than 10 or 15% of former “*Vertragsarbeiter*” speak sufficient German.⁹⁶⁾ This of course will be connected to the unemployment or the result of high rate of self-employment among these people since it is arduous to get a position that does not require German proficiency.⁹⁷⁾ Also, as a community, it is often said that former “*Vertragsarbeiter*” stay in their own community and often are closed to the others who do not belong to the community.⁹⁸⁾

The low language sufficiency and high unemployment of those people illustrates the ignorance of the state to specifically look at the former “*Vertragsarbeiter*” to take care of the issue and to be involved in solving this integration problem as host nation.

III Multidimensional Division

This chapter will explore the division that lies within Vietnamese migrants by looking at how Vietnamese migrants view each other. As Vietnam was divided into south and north, this division naturally exists in their relations to each other. However, by taking a deeper look into the Germany’s west and east division and how

they've influenced their impressions on each other, it becomes evident that the division is now multi-dimensional.

A describes her feelings and views towards other Vietnamese from South Vietnam or West Germany as rather indifferent. They both looked even confused when the questions "What kind of feelings/thoughts do you have towards south Vietnamese?" and "Do you think there's still a division between West Berlin Vietnamese and East Berlin Vietnamese?" came up. It is interesting that the daughter mentioned how they did not notice that there's a clear division or tendency of more West German Vietnamese being Southern Vietnamese and East German Vietnamese being Northern Vietnamese. Therefore, A's daughter claimed that she never thinks of Vietnamese people's origin in Vietnam connected to the German historical division of West and East.

Still, two facts provided by them brings us to a deeper observation of this matter. A and her daughter furthermore explained how they know no one from west Germany. Nonetheless, the daughter claimed that she still asks her Vietnamese friends whether their family originally comes from South or North Vietnam. The latter fact indicates their attention to north and south difference. However, the former fact illustrates how socially and historically divided they were in the context of west and east. This could imply that the unfamiliarity of A and her daughter to West/South and East/North structure of Vietnamese migrants in Germany is caused by how German state makes it invisible, that the long-term treatments of former "Boat people" and "*Vertragsarbeiter*" were divergent and how it caused a great social and historical difference in their lives. A claimed "It was just how it turned out, that we didn't know anyone from West Germany.". It was not something that naturally happened so, but because the Germany's attitude made Vietnamese in West and East so distant. Now they are unfamiliar with it that they think it's only the north and south matter.

B from South Vietnam, who used to be in GDR but now lives in West Berlin, tells how she felt the difference in the treatment from Vietnamese in West Germany. As she arrived in West Berlin fleeing from GDR after the fall of Berlin wall, she attended classes along with other Vietnamese. She recalls one of her experience there saying, that one person from South Vietnam told her that people from GDR

do worse at school and therefore they lead the image of whole Vietnamese migrants down. This was a comment towards those Vietnamese from GDR where South or North Vietnamese origin did not play a role. B also felt that some of other Vietnamese, who comes from North Vietnam but married so called Boat people from South Vietnam looked down on those who used to live in GDR. Nevertheless, B mentioned throughout the interview that she does not look down on North Vietnamese people, which shows her stronger sympathetic feeling towards those who are from GDR, despite of where they are from in Vietnam. B also strongly stated that she found the life in GDR better than in reunified Germany.

B's stronger sympathetic feelings as former East German, "Vertragsarbeiter", shows the fact that the Germany's different attitude towards migrants in west and east caused a division within the people from the same nation. Because she is a cross sectional existence having experiences of being an irregular "Vertragsarbeiter" from South, as well as having lived in both East and west Germany, it well displays that the west-east division exists in correlation to the south-north division.

C, from South Vietnam who fled to FRG and stayed in West Berlin the entire time, clearly mentioned how Vietnamese in East Berlin are different. Importantly, C and her daughter both stated their open and non-biased views and feelings towards East Berlin Vietnamese because they are not very political. However, when they were asked if they were referring to East Berlin Vietnamese or more to North Vietnamese, they answered that they meant to refer more to North Vietnamese. This shows that the differentiation of south Vietnamese and north Vietnamese corresponds with West and East German division in their unconscious understanding. They however, re-claimed that they used the categorization of south and north from the beginning. They might have said so because the German state did not exclaim about difference in the treatment for Vietnamese in West and East, that they did not have a chance to realize that this unconscious differentiation for Vietnamese in West and East is something that has actually emerged because of Germany's attitude.

They further explained how "North Vietnamese" are different after the above point was asked. They mentioned how North Vietnamese lives as if they are in Vietnam, sticking to Vietnamese lifestyle and traditions and how they tend to gather

only within Vietnamese communities. C also believes that some North Vietnamese, who were in East Germany think that boat people are rich. She stated that this bias they could have towards her lead them to act superficially when communicating. Nonetheless, this bias and the reaction of “North Vietnamese” is probably caused by the unfair treatment they went through after the reunification. “North Vietnamese” in east was surely treated differently than the “Boat people” and this could have led them to think of each other in a biased negative way.

IV Conclusion

Through looking at the detailed experiences and thoughts that individuals have towards different groups of Vietnamese people, it has been displayed that division within Vietnamese migrants exists in multi-dimensional way. Even now, the North and South division remains in present day Germany. They claim that they see the lifestyle differences and South Vietnamese think of North Vietnamese as rather closed community claiming that South Vietnamese are more open to German cultures and try to blend in more. However, even this south-north division cannot be simplified because it exists surely in correspondence to the hidden West-East division that has been caused by the long-term influence of Germany’s divergent attitudes towards former “Boat people” and former “*Vertragsarbeiter*”.

Germany diminished the former “*Vertragsarbeiter*” to be a socially and legally marginalized group in German society because reunified Germany did not share the expectations GDR had when they first summoned these people to the country. Because reunified Germany was constructed as GDR being reunified into FRG, the migration policies have stayed tolerant towards those who were in FRG before the reunification but not those from GDR. Those from former GDR suffered to obtain a stable legal status and was bounced between the host nation and their country of origin, being not wanted by both nations. While those in former FRG having social welfare to support them financially, ones from former GDR had to find different ways to become financially stable; Lack of education and language courses made their livelihoods much more arduous. All these differences in treatment and attitude of reunified Germany and how nation’s migration policy did not tolerate the

migrants who used to be welcomed by their old policy which should be now integrated into their new policy, resulted in the distance and division that strongly lies between people who shares the same name of origin.

This differentiation and categorization done by the state is not revealed on data, nor discussed and therefore Vietnamese migrants themselves often think that the division lies within themselves because they come from “North” and “South” Vietnam. However, if there was no difference in the treatment given by the reunified Germany, these people who was originally divided by south and north in the nation of origin could have even come together. Additionally, they could have had a chance to come together in the society beyond the term of being migrants or Vietnamese, just as people who shares the same living framework of a foreign nation-state. Nonetheless, because of the unfair attitude and distance cause by it, now the division is deep and multidimensional.

Finding this new division, that was invisible and unspoken, it raised a question to the migration policies and attitudes that are being discussed in the current world. Migrants are often welcomed at one point but becomes a burden to many nations at the later point. Once they’ve welcomed migrants, the state should take a long-term look on migrants realizing that their actions could eventually influence the migrant’s lives in various ways and for over several generations.

Migration policy and attitude of the nation should be observed and considered with attentions on the three points this study has newly brought on the table. Relation that existed within the migrant group before migration, migrant’s having a possibility of losing both home nation and host nation and lastly the impact of historical changes in the host nation’s policies. There is no “too late” for looking at the influence that has already been made and change and adjust their attitudes to improve the situation. I hope this paper will enable some to see hidden chances for changes to be made.

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VI Appendix A: Interview Summary

The reason why Berlin was chosen as main location focus is because it is the only places where people from East Germany and West Germany are directly facing each other geographically and now functions as one city. This characteristic of the city provides more direct approach to the division between East and West which helps the crucial point of the study. Also, as one city with East and West characteristics and history, Berlin beholds the biggest Vietnamese community in the country.

With the difficulty of finding various Interviewees during the global pandemic, 2 Interviewees are from West Berlin (one who used to be in GDR) and the other from East Berlin. Though, one Interviewee is so called “*Boat people*” from South Vietnam who have migrated to West Berlin and have lived there the entire time. On the contrary, one other interviewee is “*Vertragsarbeiter*” from North Vietnam, migrated and lived in GDR/ East Germany the entire time. To add an additional perspective, the

last Interviewee is also a “*Vertragsarbeiter*” though from South Vietnam and have migrated to GDR and now lives in West Berlin, which makes her have both experiences and similarities of South, North Vietnam but also East and West Germany. Hence, these 3 interviews should provide new information that former studies could not provide.

(1) A

The interview was held in German and Vietnamese. Interviewer is not sufficient in Vietnamese therefore questions were made all in German. The daughter of A interpreted most of the questions and the answers were given mostly in Vietnamese and then translated by the daughter. Few words were given by A in German and therefore when her comments are quoted, they are translated from Vietnamese to German, then translated into English by the writer.

A is from Hanoi, in North Vietnam. In Vietnam, she was studying at the educational organization, which she describes as one like a university. She has studied Finance for a year and in 1987, she flies to Germany as “*Vertragsarbeiter*” (contract worker). She was offered the spot to work in GDR from her own father, who had a power and connection to organize the trip and the plan. As 18 years old, A arrived in Bischofswerda, GDR which locates close to Dresden. After she arrived in Bischofswerda, she has worked at a painting factory for 3 years. The workers were mixture of Germans and Vietnamese “*Vertragsarbeiter*”. She has lived in a *Wohngemeinschaft*, where only “*Vertragsarbeiter*” from Vietnam were living. In 1990, after the reunification of Germany, even with having a choice of flying back to Vietnam, she decided to stay in Germany because she found the life in Germany better than the one in Vietnam. The factory was closed and due to the difficulty to find a job, she started to sell fabrics at the market with her husband, who had been longer in Germany since 1981 and could speak a good amount of German. The market was close to so called Flea market and they would buy goods in Dresden and sell them in different locations near Bischofswerda. The reason why they started this was because of the other Vietnamese doing the same, which gave the idea of the business. After the reunification, their visa was approved but first only for her husband since he had been in Germany for longer. For her, it was her marital status with him that helped her to

obtain the valid visa.

They have lived with a family, who was a friend of A's husband. There, they lived in Kamenz, which is about 25km up north from Bischofswerda. They then had their daughter and have moved to East Berlin in 2001. The motivation to move to Berlin was because A wanted to live in a bigger city, especially with her several Vietnamese friends living in Berlin. In Berlin, they located in east Berlin and have started their first grocery store. They closed the shop after 3-5 years and opened a restaurant. Then after closing the restaurant, A decided to quit running a restaurant with her husband and started to work as Sushi maker in Asian restaurants. Meanwhile, her husband opened 2 restaurants which both he decided to close in the end. The husband now works at a German company in the field of logistics.

(2) B

The interview was held with B and her daughter. Entire Interview was conducted in German and the daughter helped interpreted several times. Interpreting occurred when questions from Interviewer were not clear to her and B explained her feelings and her experiences in her own words in German most of the time. The detailed years and months have been checked again through written messages between Interviewer and the daughter.

B, originally from south Vietnam worked as a seamstress. When she became 24 years old, she had the ambition to get to know new surroundings and environment as she explains. This was her main motivation to fly to GDR. With this reasoning, she has talked to her manager at the factory where she worked to put her on the list to go to GDR as "*Vertragsarbeiter*". It was not official that she has asked for the position, she has paid the manager to put her on the list. She then arrived in Karl Marx Stadt, now called Chemnitz, GDR in 1988 in the beginning of March. After she arrived in GDR, she first took 1-month language course and alongside her caretakers from North Vietnam, who were already in GDR helped her to get the hung of the new German life. She was assigned to work at the factory where they made tights. The work was operated with shift working system, and she worked mostly 8 hours a day with various shifts, such as night and morning shifts. While working, she lived in *Wohngemeinschaft* which refers to a living space with shared

facilities. The whole building was dedicated for Vietnamese “*Vertragsarbeiter*” though each floor was designated for the origin of each Vietnamese “*Vertragsarbeiter*”, one floor being it only for people from South Vietnamese, and the other floors specifically for North Vietnamese. Near her *Wohngemeinschaft*, she met her now husband and they started their relationship as a couple already in GDR. He always wanted to have more freedom, and this led her to the decision of fleeing to West Berlin after the fall of Berlin wall. Her then boyfriend fled to Berlin before her, and she fled GDR a week after, in December 1989. The reason why they chose West Berlin as a destination was because it was the closest FRG city near where they were. It was easier for them to flee into West Berlin because of the geographical reason. Without knowing where her boyfriend was, B found her way to him with the help from local FRG police and local Vietnamese migrants she encountered when she was on the train.

After the arrival in West Berlin, they have applied for Asylum status as Asylum seekers as people from GDR, not as Asylum seeker from Vietnam. This allowed them to gain the Asylum status though it was difficult for her to find the job with the limited length of Visa she has received. While it was not easy to find a job for all the people in Germany, her husband got a job at Vietnamese *Imbiss* (snack stand where most foods are easy to takeaway and price is usually low) and she found a spot for *Ausbildung* (German apprenticeship system). Since then, her husband has been working in different *Imbiss* and she has been working as a caretaker for elderly people.

(3) C

The interview was held with C and her daughter. Entire Interview was conducted in German and the daughter helped interpreted few times. Interviewee had sufficient German level to understand and answer the questions given by the Interviewer and the help from the daughter was rarely needed.

C is originally from South Vietnam, an area close to Saigon. In Vietnam, she has finished her 10th year of high school when she was 16 years old. Before she fled to FRG, her older brother has already fled Vietnam to the US and the rest of her family has always wanted to flee the country as well. This led her siblings to flee the country, and she landed in Hamburg, FRG in September 1986. She defines herself

as “*Boat people*”, which is the term used for those people who came to Germany or Europe as asylum seekers. 4 days after she arrived in Hamburg, she moved to Berlin with her siblings. In Berlin she and her family gained the Asylum status. While they received the financial aid from the government as refugees, her family did not have any source of income for a year after their arrival. They lived together in *Wohngemeinschaft*, specifically prepared for those who sought for obtaining asylum status. Before starting to work or to study, she attended a language course to learn German, as she had never learned German before fleeing Vietnam.

After she took the language course, she started her study at *Fachhochschule* (a German style college with focus on a particular subject) to study about Chemistry. Though, she decided to drop out of the *Fachhochschule* in 1990 and became a tailor. In 1992, she met her husband who happened to be also from South Vietnam, and she was pregnant with her child in 1994. Her husband worked a major company called Siemens for about 10 years until the company took its significant reconstruction and was let go. After 1994, it was difficult to find any kinds of job, according to C. As many Vietnamese people started their own business, her brother has also started his own business. She clearly mentioned that she was not the part of management of the business, though she was employed by her brother as a tailor. Then after working for him several years, she started her own shop as Textile seller/tailor. Her husband meanwhile has worked for different companies though has been financially stable.

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