The publication of this memoir is a story in itself. Quitoriano delayed sharing his account because of trauma, concern for the safety of family and comrades, and criticism from friends who believed that his story threatened revolutionary myths. Following his brief imprisonment in 1994, Quitoriano quietly rebuilt his life outside the underground. His narrative now helps us understand the rise and fall of the CPP-led insurgent movement, whose decline reflects the ebb of what had been called the peasant wars of the twentieth century. *Deeper Ground, Darker Shadows* offers invaluable insights into the internal debates, moral ambiguities and real-life consequences confronted by those involved in underground movements.

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Small Revolutionaries: Participation of Children and Youth in the Vietnam War. By Mai Anh Nguyen. Cornell University Press, 2025. viii+206pp.

Small Revolutionaries explores the role of young people in the war in Vietnam from the 1950s to the war's end and beyond. Rather than simply examining the impacts of the war on children—death, disease, dislocation, hunger—the author looks at children who chose to participate in the conflict either as combatants or as support personnel. She is interested in determining their motivations for joining the resistance forces, either in the North or the South, and understanding the factors that shaped their decision. The book makes

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an important contribution to our understanding of how the war shaped the lives of an understudied segment of Vietnamese society.

The book is based primarily on interviews with forty people who had participated in the war as children. Nguyen's informants share memories refracted through the passage of time nearly half a century after the war's end. They offer compelling narratives of their experiences and motivations: to avoid censure, to help family and to right injustices. The book is not, however, merely a recounting of their memories of choosing to fight or support the war effort; Nguyen also tries to situate their experiences theoretically. She relies on Bourdieu's notion of "habitus" to describe both their decision and their experiences. She argues, unsurprisingly, that the decision to join was shaped by multiple factors: "Influenced by Bourdieu's thinking, the relational approach that I take in this book allows me to demonstrate that actions, while partially shaped by rationality and autonomous choice, are also constructed by social environment and historical dispositions" (p. 12). This statement is certainly unobjectionable but seems a bit self-evident.

One of the book's strengths lies in the author's use of multiple voices: both northern and southern participants, and a good balance of men and women. This allows readers to see how choices about participating in the war were shaped by particular circumstances of place and time. It also shows how participation was often gendered, whether because of cultural or practical considerations. Nguyen nicely balances information from her interviewees with historical context, weaving the two together in a compelling overall narrative.

The book does have a few weaknesses in addition to its considerable strengths. Perhaps the biggest is how a long set-up chapter, "Vietnam in Historical and Social Context, 1955–1975", presents the children's choices as largely guided by "Confucianism", depicted here as a kind of primordial cultural determinant. This philosophical system has a long history in Vietnam, but it feels reductionist to present it as the overarching determinant of people's choices and actions. More importantly, however, having made the case for Confucianism as a key determinant, the author then goes

on to offer much more practical, convincing and likely rationales for people's decisions to join the war as children. While one cannot dismiss the importance of social and cultural factors in shaping people's lives and choices (here "Confucianism" stands in for a panoply of Vietnamese cultural practices), decisions are frequently made by much more immediate concerns about physical well-being or family or personal circumstances.

The book's other weakness is a sense that the stories Nguyen is telling are not unique to children. I often found myself forgetting that she was describing young people, because the experiences of war often felt like universal, shared traumas spanning ages and life stages. While her interlocutors were eighteen and under when they joined the fight, frequently their motivations, actions and experiences were hardly unique to their youth or to the Vietnamese wartime circumstances, something the author does not fully acknowledge. While the author does wrestle with the question of how to define "childhood" and offers a fairly robust discussion of the concept, it still feels like she contrasts the Vietnamese childhood experiences she describes with those of an indeterminate "Western" idea of the child, and a comfortably middle class one at that. This seems to sidestep fundamental questions of class and socio-economic status, which profoundly affect childhood experiences and agency. I would argue that children from low-income families, regardless of where they live, are often forced to accept early employment, sacrifice and hardships, challenges not dissimilar to those faced by the children discussed in this book.

In sum, Nguyen's *Small Revolutionaries* is a solid contribution to the scholarship on the war in Vietnam. It focuses on an important and often overlooked segment of the Vietnamese population and its response to the exigencies of war. More importantly, rather than a discussion of childhood traumas that war can inflict on children, Nguyen here presents children as agentive actors capable of making choices about and for themselves. This is a significant observation and one of considerable value to our understanding of the war. While there are some shortcomings, as outlined above, the book provides

valuable insights through its stories of children whose engagement with war was on their own terms and not simply as victims.

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The Everyday Politics of Resources: Lives and Landscapes in Northwest Vietnam. By Nga Dao. Cornell University Press, 2026. xviii+313 pp.

The Everyday Politics of Resources offers a nuanced look at everyday life before and after resettlement projects in the Northwest highlands of Vietnam, with a particular emphasis on what is lost in the resettlement process and the importance of materialities—dams, rubber and mines. Dao examines these development projects and their materialities across several decades, arguing that the result is "'resource territorial subjects'—peasants without land and fishermen without access to rivers—who are in a constant mode of becoming rather than being" (p. 2). Each of the three parts of the book, titled "Dams", "Rubber" and "Mines", illustrates this mode of becoming as predominantly ethnic minority highlanders engage in everyday attempts to make a living while becoming territorial subjects. For those less familiar with Vietnamese development history, Dao provides an overview of pertinent displacement moments, including the upland and lowland divide, early dam and economic development history, and the cultural values of ethnic minorities in the region. Many of the lowland stereotypes and state discourses about the uplands may sound familiar to those who conduct research in highland Southeast Asia, but Dao examines how ongoing processes of territorialization and differentiation are entangled with everyday politics (p. 5), demonstrating that the lowland/upland distinction is not always a lived reality.