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The Russia-Ukraine War: Unpacking Online Pro-Russia Narratives in Vietnam

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Russian President Vladimir Putin speaks with Vietnam's President Nguyen Xuan Phuc during their meeting in Moscow, on 30 November 2021. Picture: Mikhail KLIMENTYEV/SPUTNIK/AFP.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Russia-Ukraine war's ramifications for Vietnam are felt beyond the economic and diplomatic realms. It has in fact become an online hotbed of conflicting and confounding narratives that demonstrate different worldviews and political leanings among Vietnamese netizens.
- An examination of 28 Facebook pages/groups active in trending pro-Russia narratives finds an 'echo chamber' that is on a constant lookout for Russian, Western and even Chinese news sources that peddle and amplify pro-Russia and anti-Western voices.
- The most salient pro-Russia narratives in Vietnam's cyberspace revolve around justifying Russia's invasion of Ukraine, echoing anti-America and anti-imperialist worldviews, and lionising Russia while demonising Ukraine.
- These online groups have likely carved out a niche for the conservative segment of the Vietnamese state to shape a propaganda environment where there is space for pro-Russia and anti-Russia narratives, so that pro-Ukraine sentiments will not become predominant in the public discourse.
- Pro-Russia narratives in Vietnam's cyberspace are the result of cross-pollination between sentimental attachment since the Soviet era, psychological bias towards Russia embedded in Vietnam's education and propaganda system, and the overriding imperative to preserve the Vietnamese state's political and ideological interests.
- Due to the interplay of the above-mentioned factors, the Vietnamese government's response to the war in Ukraine comes in different shades of grey, instead of binary pro- and anti-Russia stances.

INTRODUCTION

The ongoing Russia-Ukraine war following Moscow's invasion on 24 February has sparked intense public debates on Vietnam's social media. For Vietnam, the ramifications of the war are felt beyond the economic and diplomatic realms. It has become an online hotbed of conflicting and confounding narratives that demonstrate different worldviews and political leanings among Vietnamese netizens. Of note, those who support Russia and Putin have been as energised and engaged as those who are against the war and sympathetic towards Ukraine.¹

Using discourse analysis, this article examines Vietnamese netizens' pro-Russia posts and conversations between 24 February and 10 April on Facebook – the dominant social media platform in Vietnam with 68 million users.² It looks into 28 pro-Russia Facebook pages/groups³ with strong followings so as to profile these Russia-sympathisers and the narratives they engage with. The article also seeks to understand why these pro-Russia netizens are so intimately impacted and actively engaged on a supposedly remote international conflict. It argues that their pro-Russia posturing is the result of cross-pollination between sentimental, psychological, ideological and political factors that are quite unique to Vietnam, given the country's historical links to Moscow.

PROFILING OF VIETNAM'S PRO-RUSSIA NETIZENS

This section analyses the content of posts and comments on 28 Facebook pages/groups which have been most active in trending pro-Russia narratives online (See Appendix 1). These are divided into three categories:

- Category I – 8 Russia-nostalgia groups show a strong attachment to Russia and Putin. These groups have been very active in propagating the Russian stance on the invasion. They have built up a solid base of followers, ranging from around 6,600 to some 90,000.
- Category II – 18 self-proclaimed patriotic or conservative pages/groups explicitly adopt a pro-regime stance. Amassing a strong base of followers of between 21,000 and 570,000, they have been very active in defending Vietnam's position on the war in Ukraine.
- Category III – 2 pages provide news about the conflict. With a following of approximately 27,000 and 30,000 respectively, they appear to be set up just recently and seek to keep viewers abreast of the war's developments. These pages also adopt an explicitly pro-Russia stance.

What are their news feeds?

The news feeds of these pro-Russia netizens are typical of the ‘echo chamber’ phenomenon in which people only interact with information from or opinions of like-minded peers that reflect and reinforce their existing beliefs. They actively disseminate positive information about Russia from various Russian sources, including statements by Putin and his cabinet members, the ministry of defence (mil.ru), Russian News Agency (TASS), RIA Novosti, Channel One Russia, RT and Russia-1.⁴ The Russian proficiency of some Vietnamese – mostly the older generation – has been instrumental for their access to and dissemination of Russian language materials, including many images and videos to create an impression of authenticity. This also means that they are more directly exposed to Moscow’s information warfare.⁵

Occasionally, these pro-Russia netizens would interact with mainstream Vietnamese news outlets when there are commentaries that are seen as favourable to Russia and negative to Ukraine and the West.⁶ They also rely on Chinese sources, which are generally friendlier towards Moscow and critical of the West, including quoting comments of Chinese analysts and the spokesperson of China’s foreign ministry. There are other dubious references or unidentified sources that cannot be verified.⁷ Additionally, perhaps unique to Vietnam, there is a large number of Vietnamese in Russia – ranging from 26,000 to 100,000 according to various sources, some of whom actively propagate favourable narratives about Russia on these groups.⁸

They also look out for pro-Russia or anti-Western voices from the West as long as the narratives serve their confirmation bias. Notable figures in this respect include Chris Hedges – a former New York Times reporter and currently host of RT’s On Contact programme, and retired US Marine Corps officer Scott Ritter, both of whom were opponents of America’s war in Iraq. Hedges believes that the war in Ukraine serves American strategic and ideological interests by ‘making Russia bleed through Ukrainian blood’ whereas Ritter questions the authenticity of the evidence regarding Russian soldiers’ Bucha massacre. Notably, Vietnamese netizens’ access to these Western voices is also channelled through Russian outlets, especially the RT.

The zeal of defending and glorifying Moscow also drive these netizens to a range of Western media of different genres and political directions – including The Economist, The Hill, Die Zeit to the tabloid Daily Mail and Junglewelt (a left-wing and Marxist German daily), to pick and choose opinions and information that they consider positive for Russia and negative for Ukraine and the West. Such information mainly focuses on the energy crunch in Europe and Europeans’ grievances over spikes in energy and food prices. They also actively seek to debunk what they see as ‘fake news’ and ‘fake images’ from Ukrainian and Western sources about Russia’s atrocities and military losses in Ukraine or about the dire economic situation and anti-war sentiments in Russia.

What are their pro-Russia narratives?

Based on the analysis of these Facebook pages/groups, the following most salient pro-Russia narratives are distilled:

- *Russia's invasion of Ukraine is justified.*

These netizens rationalise Russia's incursion in Ukraine as a necessary step to respond to Western (mainly American) political, ideological and military antagonism against Moscow. According to this narrative, the US and its Western allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) have cornered Russia into this war because they have never abandoned their containment strategy against Russia since the end of the Cold War. By expanding NATO further eastward, they have disregarded Russia's legitimate security interests in its own neighborhood while at the same time sowing widespread hatred and hostility towards Moscow. Additionally, buying into Putin's 'manufactured' history that Ukraine is a historical part of Russia, this narrative justifies the invasion as Moscow's timely intervention to stop Kyiv's genocide, fascism and racism against Russian-speaking communities in Ukraine. In sum, they view the Russian act as a legitimate response to a 'neo-Nazi' Ukrainian government kowtowing to the US and the West.

- *Pro-Russia posturing is a veil for underlying anti-America and anti-imperialist worldviews.*

Pro-Russia sentiments, chiefly by pro-regime Facebook pages/groups, are tinged with anti-American imperialism among Vietnamese whose hatred of American involvement in the Vietnam War remains strong. They castigate America and the West for lulling Ukraine into this conflict by the promise of NATO admission, and ridicule Western countries for not rendering Kyiv the scale of military support that President Volodymyr Zelensky asked for. This anti-imperialist narrative points the finger at America's ulterior motives in pushing Ukraine to go to war with Russia: a weakened Russia and a Europe more dependent on American security guarantees and energy supply. A Vietnamese military-linked commentator encapsulated the tenor of this narrative: "Russia and Ukraine must go to war and Ukraine must fight the Russians until the last Ukrainian soldier, for the sake of America."⁹ They also criticise Western sanctions and media coverage against Russia, which they view as emblematic of the West's hegemony over the global financial system and information sphere. Notably, 'whataboutism', or the highlighting of double-standards on the part of the US and the West, has also been used to lay bare what is perceived to be American and Western hypocrisy in criticising the Russian invasion but waging catastrophic wars in Iraq, Afghanistan or elsewhere.

- *Russia is lionised and Ukraine demonised.*

This narrative holds that Russia is surely winning on the battlefield given its military might and strategic mastery. Unverified video clips of 'Ukrainians' welcoming Russian soldiers are widely circulated among these pages/groups, which heap fulsome praise on Russian soldiers as 'liberators'. This narrative also lauds Putin's high approval ratings and Russia's

economic resilience despite Western sanctions. On the other side of the spectrum, Ukraine is belittled as a ‘small state’ that should know its place. President Zelensky is written off as a ‘clown’ who dabbles in politics and who has become a ‘puppet’ of the West. A content analysis of 10 Facebook pages representative of the two categories finds that of thousands of posts between 24 February and 10 April, the most engaged one is a video on Zelensky’s profession as a comedian prior to his entry into politics.¹⁰ It ridicules Zelensky’s handling of the conflict as well as Ukraine’s relations with Russia and the West, dovetailing with the dominant pro-Russia narratives. The video is widely circulated across various Facebook pages/groups, with 1.1 million views, 2,400 shares, 28,000 reactions and 4,600 comments, a vast majority of which are supportive of the video’s messages. Netizens also dig into what is perceived to be a shameful record of Ukraine in its relations with Vietnam, for example: Ukrainians once toppled the statue of Lenin; Ukraine sold the aircraft carrier Liaoning to China, which has a longstanding South China Sea dispute with Vietnam; and Ukrainian media¹¹ defamed Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam’s most iconic liberation hero.

To what extent are they linked to the government’s position on the conflict?

Vietnam’s state-controlled news outlets generally adopt a neutral tone and refrain from editorialising the Ukraine crisis. Their main messages revolved around reiterating Vietnam’s desire to stay strategically neutral.¹² But there have been some outliers. One notable example is a YouTube video by TV24h owned by VTC, a cable firm that is labelled as being ‘funded in whole or in part by the Vietnamese government.’ The video was broadcast on 3 April with the title ‘The Russia-Ukraine war lays bare the West’s true colors’.¹³ It quoted Chris Hedges as saying that it is hypocritical for US President Biden, an ardent supporter of the Iraq war, to brand Vladimir Putin as a war criminal. According to Hedges, such double standards have permeated American politics. As of this writing, the video has been viewed nearly 890,000 times and attracted over 6,800 likes. Of around 2,600 comments in response to the video, an overwhelming majority threw strong support behind Hedges’ position, saying it helped enlighten the broader public on the true nature of the US and the West.

In a country where the authorities have strictly controlled all news outlets and obliged them to censor readers’ comments even on social media platforms,¹⁴ any coverage of such a major issue like the war in Ukraine is unlikely to escape censors’ gaze if they have strayed away from the party line. Meanwhile, whether these pro-regime Facebook pages/groups have the backing of the Vietnamese state is perhaps an evergreen question. But even if some of these pages/groups were state sponsored, not explicitly admitting it seems to be the strategy of choice; that ambivalence gives the authorities both the deniability and the flexibility to shape public opinion and play the nationalist card when deemed necessary.¹⁵ Arguably, pro-Russia narratives on these pro-regime Facebook pages/groups do not clash with the party’s classical orthodox discourse about anti-imperialism, anti-Western hegemony, and its view that Russia as a traditional friend and benevolent power. Therefore, these platforms are likely to shape a propaganda environment for the Vietnamese state – especially the more conservative segment in it – within which there is adequate space for pro-Russia sentiments and narratives, so that anti-Russia, pro-Ukraine sentiments will not become predominant in the public discourse.

EMOTIONAL AND POLITICAL UNDERCURRENTS OF PRO-RUSSIA NARRATIVES

The salience of pro-Russia narratives in Vietnam is the result of many factors that are simultaneously sentimental, psychological, historical, ideological and political.

Sentimental attachment

The fervent support for Russia's war against Ukraine among a significant number of Vietnamese brings to the fore latent pro-Russia sentiments in the country. Such sentiments are strongly felt among older generations, many of whom used to study, work and live in Russia and have kept fond memories and sentimental attachments since the Soviet era. Vietnam is perhaps the only outlier in Southeast Asia where Russia's soft power still holds some appeal, with many Vietnamese professionals and intellectuals growing up immersed in Russian/Soviet ideology, literature, music and culture during the Cold War.¹⁶ Their feelings towards Russia are a mix of admiration, nostalgia and gratitude, given the Soviet's invaluable assistance to Vietnam's national liberation and reunification during the wars against France and America. Therefore, they tend to frame other Vietnamese fellows who denounce Russia's invasion of Ukraine as 'disloyal' and 'ungrateful' to Russia, a longstanding and trusted friend of Vietnam.

This attachment has been nurtured by decades of government indoctrination lauding Soviet revolutionary heroism through multiple wars in the 20th century. The adulation and admiration of Russia/the Soviet Union is embedded in Vietnam's education and propaganda system, especially in literature and history textbooks. For many Vietnamese sympathisers, Russia commands respect and admiration because of its contributions and sacrifices in the First and Second World War. Meanwhile, there is little talk about the darker sides of the relationship – for example the Soviet Union's inaction during Vietnam's 1988 naval clash with China in the Spratlys or anti-Vietnamese violence and racism in Russia. This has resulted in a romanticised idea of Russia among a number of Vietnamese, which shutters their ability to perceive the country with a dose of objectivity and realism. They are therefore most susceptible to the narrative that the Russian offensive in the Ukraine is a 'salvation mission' for its Russian-speaking population; it fits their worldview that Russia is a magnanimous and benevolent power.

Ideological and political concerns

Beneath the waves of pro-Russia sentiments on Vietnam's social media are deep-rooted ideological and political undercurrents. Strong pro-Russia sentiments are prevalent on conservative, pro-regime and orthodox-nationalist Facebook pages, and although it is difficult to prove that these pages are state-sponsored or whether they are peppered with pro-government trolls to influence and direct the conversation, this possibility is not entirely ruled out. Of note, robust defence of Russia and fervent criticism of Ukraine/NATO/the US/the West are also found among public figures whose profiles indicate former affiliations with the military and public security sector. Many posts and comments on these pages

associate anti-Russia and pro-Ukraine sentiments with anti-regime and pro-democracy conspiracies. While it is true that a pro-Ukraine stance is more prevalent among liberal-leaning segments of society, not all of them advocate for regime change. However, conservative pages tend to see any criticism levelled at the government's position on the war in Ukraine or any negative parallels – i.e. between Russia under Putin's authoritarianism and Vietnam under the ruling communist party – as hostility towards the government.

There is also an almost instinctive refutation of negative information about Russia on these pages/groups, especially concerning Russia's reported military setbacks in Ukraine. The reason for this uncritical defence – as well as efforts to amplify and glorify Russian military advance in Ukraine – can be both psychological and political. Given the length, breadth and depth of Vietnam's reliance on Russian military equipment and technical assistance, the image of a beaten and battered Russia in Ukraine would not reflect well on the strategic choice of the Vietnam People's Army (VPA) to rely on Moscow as its major arms supplier and its all-weather trusted partner.

At this, pro-Russia netizens in Vietnam widely share sanguine assessments about Russia's military strategy in Ukraine by some Vietnamese retired military/public security figures, most notably Colonel Le The Mau, Colonel Le Ngoc Thong and Major General Le Van Cuong who was former director of the Strategic Studies Institute of the Ministry of Public Security. While the Western media said that Russia had not secured a swift and decisive victory as originally planned, Mau counter-argued that Russia was actually engaged in a 'steady and phased advance' strategy to simultaneously achieve three objectives of protecting civilians; destroying Ukraine's military power; and annihilating neo-Nazis in Ukraine.¹⁷ In the same vein, Cuong believed that Russia will not be bogged down in a protracted war in Ukraine and that "Putin is appropriate in and faithful to his statement that Russia does not invade Ukraine and does not attack Ukrainian civilians since Ukrainians and Russians share the same race, ancestors and blood".¹⁸ Similarly, some Russia-sympathisers did not see Russia's withdrawal from the Kyiv region as a setback but a masterful diversion tactic to seize control of Mariupol.

Russia's footprint in Vietnam is arguably both military and political. Although Russia's position in Vietnam's foreign policy post-Cold War has been relegated to it being only one among other peer powers, Moscow enjoys a deep reservoir of strategic trust within the Vietnamese defence-security establishment. The confluence of military-political interests between Russia and Vietnam was demonstrated in the agreement to enhance cooperation in political and ideological education, and promote collaboration in military history at a meeting in May 2021 between the General Department of Politics of the Vietnam People's Army and the Main Directorate for Political-Military Affairs of the Russian Armed Forces.¹⁹ This is an intriguing development because today's Russia – unlike the Soviet Union – no longer subscribes to the same socialist and communist ideology that Vietnam still does.

Ideological considerations could have also influenced pro-Putin sentiments among these conservative segments. Putin's strongman leadership appeal may be strong among some

Southeast Asian peoples,²⁰ but his popularity in Vietnam is not attributed to his macho personality cult only. According to Vietnam's mainstream discourse, post-Cold War Russia under Boris Yeltsin's leadership was a diminished great power which was ideologically adrift, economically weakened, and strategically disoriented and misled by the West. Therefore, the election of Putin as Russian president was viewed as a judicious choice of strategic significance.²¹ Of note, Putin's re-validation of the Soviet heroic past and his restoration of Soviet symbols rendered some political comfort among Vietnamese conservatives who were apprehensive of the US 'unipolar moment', 'liberal excess' and 'imperial overreach' in the wars in Yugoslavia, Iraq and Afghanistan. They found gratification in Putin's statement that the collapse of the Soviet Union was "the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century".²²

Last but not least, Vietnamese conservatives cheer on Putin not only because they see him as a strongman who can restore Russia to its greatness but also because his leadership oversaw the renaissance of Vietnam-Russia relations after more than a decade of estrangement under Yeltsin. As noted by Anton Tsetov, after Putin came to power, high-level visit exchanges between Russia and Vietnam became frequent, high-value arms deals were sealed, bilateral trade increased, and the official rhetoric in bilateral documents embraced references to 'traditional partners', 'historical roots' and 'friendship' between the two peoples.²³ In fact, some Vietnam netizens – in their zeal to defend Putin's war in Ukraine – referred to his decision to write off 85 per cent of Vietnam's debt to Russia as a demonstration of his magnanimity.

CONCLUSION

Pro-Russia narratives in Vietnam's cyberspace bear major resemblance to their counterparts in Southeast Asia and elsewhere, particularly because they are interwoven with anti-America, anti-Western hegemony discourse as well as adulation of Putin's 'strongman' leadership.²⁴ But the underlying factors driving such narratives are what makes Vietnam unique. Sentimental attachment and nostalgia aside, behind the façade of those pro-Russia narratives are in fact historical, ideological and political factors that underpin the core interests of the Vietnamese state. Given the interplay of deep and powerful drivers behind pro-Russia sentiments in Vietnam, it is perhaps understandable that the Vietnamese government has responded to Russia's invasion of Ukraine with different shades of grey, as opposed to stark pro- or anti-Russia stances.

APPENDIX

SELECTED PRO-RUSSIA FACEBOOK PAGES/GROUPS IN VIETNAM

	Name	In Vietnamese	Type	Followings/ Members
	Russia nostalgia groups			
1	Tribute to the Soviet Union	Tri ân Liên bang Xô Viết	Group	6,600
	https://m.facebook.com/groups/347959942657614			
2	Club – The Heart of Soviet Russia	Club – Trái tim Nước Nga Xô Viết - Hội hữu nghị Việt - Nga (Thành phố HN)	Public Page	12,200
	https://www.facebook.com/groups/Cafexuanloc122buihixuan/			
3	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics	Liên Bang Cộng Hòa Xã Hội Chủ Nghĩa Xô Viết	Public Page	12,421
	https://www.facebook.com/LienBangCongHoaXaHoiChuNghiaXoVietCCCP/			
4	CCCP: A Time to Remember	CCCP Một thời để nhớ	Group	14,000
	https://www.facebook.com/groups/468443520024700/			
5	Nostalgia for the Soviet Union	Hoài niệm Liên Xô	Group	23,400
	https://www.facebook.com/groups/hoainiemliensexo/			
6	Russia in My Youth	Nước Nga Một thời Tuổi trẻ	Group	27,800
	https://www.facebook.com/groups/912496358829066/?ref=share			
7	Soviet Union - a Time to Remember	Liên Xô – Một thời để nhớ	Group	81,200
	https://www.facebook.com/groups/1065931503431270/			
8	It's all within Vladimir Putin's calculus	Tất cả đã nằm trong sự tính toán của Vladimir Putin	Public Page	89,387
	https://www.facebook.com/tsarputinvn/			
	Patriotic, conservative and pro-regime			
9	Fighting against Disinformation in Cyberspace	Đấu tranh chống lại luận điệu xuyên tạc trên không gian mạng	Group	21,300
	https://www.facebook.com/groups/235106643790089/			
10	Love the Vietnamese people	Yêu dân tộc Việt Nam	Public Page	32,444
	https://www.facebook.com/Anhduc210376/			
11	Vietnam Times	Việt Nam Thời Báo	Public Page	53,434
	https://www.facebook.com/vntbnew/			
12	The most stupid anti-Communist statements of	Những câu nói ngu đần cấp lịch sử của liên minh chống	Public Page	58,917

	the 21st century	cộng thế kỉ XXI		
	https://www.facebook.com/qdzgiaidocthongtin/			
13	Information Processing Center	Trung Tâm Xử Lý Thông Tin	Public Page	60,162
	https://www.facebook.com/ttxlvt/			
14	Northwest love song	Tình ca Tây Bắc	Public Page	72,401
	https://www.facebook.com/TinhCaTayBac1979/			
15	Firestorm	Bao Lua	Group	75,000
	https://www.facebook.com/8.baolua			
16	Battlecry - The Narrator of History	Battlecry - Người kể Sử	Public Page	88,021
	https://www.facebook.com/battlecry.nguoiikesu/			
17	La Nga Victory	Chiến thắng La Nga	Public Page	108,204
	https://www.facebook.com/Chi%E1%BA%BFn-Th%E1%BA%AFng-La-Ng%C3%A0-459302828184277/			
18	The path we take	Đường chúng ta đi	Public Page	116,414
	https://www.facebook.com/transanglap.vn			
19	Anti-Reactionary Youth Front	Mặt trận thanh niên chống phản động	Public Page	126,819
	https://www.facebook.com/Mattranthanhnienchongphandong/			
20	Anti-reactionary Information	Thông tin phòng chống phản động	Public Page	182,000
	https://www.facebook.com/thongtinchongphandong			
21	Saigon People	Người Sài Gòn	Public Page	189,475
	https://www.facebook.com/nguoisaigon15102017lxt/			
22	Comrade Commissar	Đơn vị Tác Chiến Điện Tử	Public Page	216,168
	https://www.facebook.com/WarCommissar/			
23	Tifosi	Tifosi	Public Page	220,000
	https://www.facebook.com/tifosi.hpo			
24	Anti-Reactionary Academy	Học viện phòng chống phản động	Public Page	271,000
	https://www.facebook.com/aravietnam2017			
25	The Fatherland Is Calling Us	Tổ quốc gọi tên mình	Public Page	293,000
	https://www.facebook.com/toquocgoitenminh12345			
26	God's eyes	Mắt thần	Public Page	570,000
	https://www.facebook.com/MatThan.Official			
	Chronicle of the Russia-Ukraine war			
28	Newsletter Russia - Ukraine	Bản Tin Nga - Ukraine	Public Page	26,675
	https://www.facebook.com/B%E1%BA%A3n-Tin-Nga-Ukraine-106716261960645/			
29	Overview of the Russian – Ukraine War	Toàn Cảnh Chiến Sự Nga - Ukrai	Public Page	30,479
	https://www.facebook.com/To%C3%A0n-C%E1%BA%A3nh-Chi%E1%BA%BFn-S%E1%BB%B1-Nga-Ukrai-110869884869506/			

ENDNOTES

¹ It should be noted that there is also a large number of Vietnamese netizens who demonstrate strong anti-Russia and pro-Ukraine sentiments, and they subscribe to different worldviews and different news feeds. This Perspective, however, focuses only on pro-Russia sentiments and narratives.

² Social Media in Vietnam Report 2020 - 2021: Viet Nam, *IRIS report*, 30 October 2021, <https://iris.marketing/social-media-report-vietnam-2020>.

³ Facebook pages are predominantly public, and are visible to everyone on the platform. A Facebook group, however, can be both public and private. The group's privacy settings can be customised depending on who its administrator allows to join and see the group.

⁴ According to Wikipedia, RIA Novosti is a [Russian state-owned](#) domestic [news agency](#), RT (Russia Today) is a Russian [state-controlled international](#) television network, Channel One Russia is a television channel whose ultimate owner is believed to be Roman Abramovich who is allegedly closely linked to the Russian state, and Russia-1 is a state-owned Russian television channel.

⁵ For example, the authors suspect that the Facebook page "It's all within Vladimir Putin's calculus" (<https://www.facebook.com/tsarputinvn/>) is supported by Russia's information warfare because it constantly shares the most updated and authentic pro-Russia images and videos.

⁶ These include, among others, the *Doanh nghiệp và Tiếp thị* (Enterprise and Marketing) magazine by the Vietnam Marketing Association, and Vnews – the television channel of the Vietnam News Agency.

⁷ These include, among others, *Nước Nga Infor*, a Facebook page, followed by 8888 and liked by 4812 people.

⁸ For example, these Vietnamese overseas took photos at Russian supermarkets to show the abundance of food and other supplies together with the price tags to prove that the Russian economy was in good shape.

⁹ Le Ngoc Thong, "Russia-France-Germany sideline America in Ukraine: A spectacular exit from the storm!", *soha.vn*, 08 February 2022, <https://soha.vn/nga-phap-duc-loai-my-ra-khoi-ukraine-cu-ne-ha-khoi-tam-bao-ngoa-muc-20220208114034851.htm>.

¹⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=948366282543656>

¹¹ Vietnamese netizens and even the website of the Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union – the largest social-political organisation of Vietnamese youth – reacted strongly to what they view as Ukraine media's disinformation about Vietnam, especially a commentary on Ukraine 24TV titled "Ho Chi Minh – an autocrat with Bolshevik ambitions". See "Offending President Ho Chi Minh is unacceptable", *tiengnoitre.org*, 30 March 2022, <http://www.tiengnoitre.org/2022/03/xuc-pham-chu-tich-ho-chi-minh-la-ieu.html>.

¹² Hoang Thi Ha, "Vietnam's Mediascape Amid the War in Ukraine: Between Method and Mayhem", *Fulcrum*, 30 March 2022, <https://fulcrum.sg/vietnams-mediascape-amid-the-war-in-ukraine-between-method-and-mayhem/>.

¹³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S8FgxJh9B8E>.

¹⁴ "Một số báo VN 'dừng hoạt động fanpage'", *BBC News*, 9 September 2020, https://www.bbc.com/vietnamese/vietnam/2016/09/160909_vn_news_fanpages_vanished

¹⁵ Dien Luong, "Vietnam learns to exploit nationalist rage over Chinese maps", *Nikkei Asia*, 9 July 2021, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Opinion/Vietnam-learns-to-exploit-nationalist-rage-over-Chinese-maps>.

¹⁶ The Soviet Union helped train 52,000 Vietnamese scientists and technicians, including 30,000 graduates, 3,000 PhD and more than 200 D. Sc, as well as thousands of technical workers, who became the core of the country's labour force in all sectors and industries. Many of them became high-level Party and state leaders and reputed scientists and artists. See Tu Thi Loan, "Vietnam-

Russia Cultural Exchanges and Issues to Consider in the Age of Integration”, *Ho Chi Minh City Institute for Development Studies (HIDS)*,

http://www.hids.hochiminhcity.gov.vn/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=4a380122-4f02-42fa-860f-24862569fc92&groupId=13025.

¹⁷ “Interview with Le The Mau: Which side is pursuing power politics?”, *Viettimes*, 12 March 2022, <https://viettimes.vn/khung-hoang-ukraine-ben-nao-dang-theo-duoi-hoc-thuyet-loi-thoi-ve-chinh-tri-cuong-quyen-ly-giai-cua-dai-ta-le-the-mau-post155184.html>.

¹⁸ “General Cuong: Nga will not get ‘bogged down’ in Ukraine”, 28 February 2022, *baonghean.vn*, <https://baonghean.vn/tuong-cuong-nga-se-khong-sa-lay-o-ukraine-303077.html>; “Major general Le Van Cuong assesses scenarios in Russia-Ukraine conflict”, *dantri.com.vn*, 18 March 2022, <https://dantri.com.vn/the-gioi/thieu-tuong-le-van-cuong-nhan-dinh-ve-cac-kich-ban-xung-dot-nga-ukraine-20220316151828630.htm>.

¹⁹ “Vietnam, Russia forge cooperation in political education in military”, *vietnamplus*, 20 May 2021, <https://en.vietnamplus.vn/vietnam-russia-forge-cooperation-in-political-education-in-military/201779.vnp>.

²⁰ Benjamin YH Loh and Munira Mustaffa, “Examining Narratives of the Russo-Ukraine Conflict Among Malaysia's Social Media Users”, *ISEAS Perspective* (date and link to be updated).

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