

# BATTLE OF DIEN BIEN PHU VICTORY OF VIETNAM CULTURE

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**Abstract:** The historic victory of Dien Bien Phu Battle made French colonialists withdraw the troops, ending their direct involvement in Vietnam. The author highlights the Vietnamese national cultural values that were applied by the Communist Party, the Government, the army, and the people in this significant battle. Owing to skilful directions of President Ho Chi Minh and General Vo Nguyen Giap, we changed from the combatant strategy of “swift attack, swift win” to the combatant strategy of “slow advance, certain success”. The result proved that it was a clever application of cultural quintessence and military art learned from the history of anti-aggression resistance of our nation and people. Following are major factors for the victory in the battle: 1) Sound political and military guidelines of the Communist Party led by President Ho Chi Minh; 2) Skilful and creative application of Vietnam’s military sciences and art in the new epoch; and, 3) Application of patriotism and heroism of our army and people under the leadership of the Communist Party.

**Key words:** Dien Bien Phu, Vietnam, culture, Vo Nguyen Giap, patriotic.

1. In the broad sense, culture is crystallization of the most valuable and the finest things related to creative activities of man; they are kept from generation to generation, becoming the sustainable tradition, the national identity, and the goals as well as dynamics of social development.

Application of the above-mentioned sense in the topic of this paper, we can affirm that Vietnam culture is crystallized from material and non-material values as well as material and spiritual activities created by our ancestors for thousands years of the country building and protection.

As we had to cope with natural calamities and fight enemies very often since the ancient time, Vietnamese people have been

completely imbrued with the sense of responsibility for the homeland and country. The spirit is gradually accumulated in mind, knowledge, ideology, morality, will and faith etc, which are decisive factors for behavior and treatment of national community in different situations. Particularly, when the country is invaded, the spirit is tempered into patriotic and heroic courage that are the top values of Vietnam culture. Drawing experience from a lot of victories in fighting against cruel invasion of the Northern feudal forces, the ancestors built our own special military theory and art.

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The military theory is full of humanity, as stated by Tran Hung Dao: *“The King and the subject are harmonious; everyone is unanimous; the whole country is united; and all clans are soldiers”*; or by Nguyen Trai: *“Use the just cause to win the cruelty”*. It is an original military art, like: *“Take advantage of weakness and constrain strong points of the enemy”* (Tran Hung Dao); *“Use the smaller to win the bigger”* (Nguyen Trai)... The military theory and art are an integral part of Vietnam culture in the Middle Ages.

2. By the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, Vietnam still remained a backward country, while France - the first Western country sending troops to invade Vietnam - already became a powerful imperialist country with advanced industries and professional expeditionary forces equipped with modern weapons. Struggling against the invasion, our people led by patriotic feudal intellectuals bravely rose up in many different areas, but they all were defeated. The national liberation movement reached an impasse, both politically and militarily.

In that context, Nguyen Ai Quoc, who was President Ho Chi Minh later, went abroad to seek for the way to save the country. Starting with patriotism, he came to Marxist – Leninism and found out the right way for national salvation, which is: To carry out the national revolution; to realize democracy, aiming at socialism; to attach the national liberation with social and human liberation; and, to combine the national force with advantages of the epoch, resulting in a greater force to fight for the country independence and freedom.

Immediately after the August Revolution in 1945, followed by the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, however, French colonialists came back to provoke in Southern Vietnam. In the face of such a situation, President Ho Chi Minh and the Central Committee of Communist Party, on the one hand, called upon people in Southern Vietnam together to carry out a war of resistance against the French colonialists. On the other hand, they tried to negotiate with representatives of the French government for the sake of getting a peace treaty. Although we made a lot of concessions related to economic and cultural interests, the French government still kept the intention of invading Vietnam by force. Responding to the interview of the *Paris-Saigon Newspaper* on the 13<sup>th</sup> December 1946, President Ho Chi Minh stated: *“Our compatriots and I sincerely long for peace. We do not want to have a war. I know that French people do not want to have a war, either. We want to avoid this war by all means... Vietnam needs building for development. We do not want Vietnam to be the place where a lot of people will be killed and buried. If they force us to carry out the war, however, we have to carry out it”*<sup>(1)</sup>.

As soon as the French troops rudely sent the ultimatum, asking Vietnam Government to surrender, President Ho Chi Minh made an appeal to the whole people for the nationwide resistance war. He wrote:

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<sup>(1)</sup> Ho Chi Minh (1995), *Complete Works*, Vol.4, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, p.473.

*“Dear compatriots from all over the country!*

*As we want peace, we had to make concessions. Yet, the more we make concessions, the more French colonists encroach on us, because they want to invade our country again!*

*No! We would rather sacrifice all than lose our country and become slaves....We have to rise up!”<sup>(2)</sup>*

3. The appeal for the nationwide resistance war made by President Ho Chi Minh reflects concisely the political and military guidelines of Vietnam’s Communist Party and government in the resistance war. It was to carry out the whole people, total and protracted war, in which the self-reliance played an important role. The guidelines showed clearly that it was necessary to build the people’s army consisting of three types of forces: regular troops, local troops, and guerrillas. According to the guidelines, we should start with the guerrilla warfare first and then carry out the regular warfare; it was essential to combine effectively and flexibly guerrilla attacks with vigorous offensives.

The above-mentioned strategic guidelines were proved in the first 7 – 8 years of the resistance war. Tempered in fire and sword, Vietnam’s army became more matured and powerful; it gradually switched over from the defensive to the offensive; in turn, it achieved significant victories in Viet Bac Campaign (1947), Vietnam - China Border Campaign (1950). Hoa Binh Campaign (1951-1952), and Northwestern Vietnam – Upper Laos Campaign (1952-1953).

In the meanwhile, aggressive plans of

the French colonialists one by one failed completely. French government was also changed 17 times, due to which 5 high commissioners and 6 commanders-in-chief of the French troops in Indochina were in turn recalled back to France.

Due to such a critical situation, in May 1953 the French premier appointed Henri Navarre, a four-star general, as the 7<sup>th</sup> Commander-in-chief of the French Union Forces in Indochina, corresponding to the negotiation with the United States.

Considered as a talented general with strategic views and knowledge, Navarre outlined an ambitious plan, which aimed at gaining initiative, enabling the French troops to get out of Indochina with high reputations.

The key measures outlined by Navarre include: (1) to strengthen the French Union Forces with more troops from Metropolitan France, legionnaires and puppet soldiers; (2) to ask for more funding and weapons from the United States; and, (3) to establish strategic mobile groups. The plan would be tentatively carried out within 18 months with 2 periods, including: a) From the winter of 1953 through the spring of 1954: The defensive position would be maintained in the North; whereas strategic attacks would be made in the South; and, b) In the autumn and winter of 1954: Most of the French Union Forces would be moved to the North in order to carry out the “total attack” as a decisive battle, forcing Vietnam Government to agree with all requests raised by the French government in negotiations.

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<sup>(2)</sup> Ho Chi Minh, *op. cit.*, p.480.

*“The plan of Navarre is highly appreciated by not only the French government, but also our American friends. It allows us to hope for many things”*<sup>(3)</sup>, said Lanien, the French Premiere, when evaluating this plan.

In the second half of 1953, Navarre made a reckless decision. He sent paratroopers to Lang Son, destroying some of our warehouses, launched a large scale raid in Binh Tri Thien, carried out a number of operations in the Red River Delta, and reinforced raiding activities in Lao Cai and Lai Chau.

In the early October 1953, a meeting of the Politburo was held in Tin Keo (Dinh Hoa District, Thai Nguyen province) and chaired by President Ho Chi Minh, in order to discuss strategic directions for the period of the winter 1953 and the spring 1954. At the meeting, General Vo Nguyen Giap presented a report on Navarre’s scheme, analyzing details of the fighting situation and outlining a Winter-Spring plan of the Army Central Committee. It was a big plan with a lot of important guidelines, aiming at breaking every intention of the enemy. President Ho Chi Minh emphasized an outstanding and original idea, as retold by General Vo Nguyen Giap afterwards:

*“He was at the meeting with an unruffled attitude and a cigarette between his fingers. His eyes suddenly showed concentration. He raised the hand, which had been put on the table, and clenched a fist. He said:*

*- The enemy has concentrated the mobile troops to create a power... Don’t scare! We will make the enemy scatter the forces and the power will no longer exist.*

*He opened his fist; and, each finger*

*points to one direction”*<sup>(4)</sup>.

The winter-spring plan of the Army Central Committee plan was completely approved; many important comments were made, showing particularly the motto: *Activeness, Initiative, Mobility, and Flexibility.*

At the end of the meeting, President Ho Chi Minh said: *“Regarding to the area for operations, we will focus our forces mainly on the Northwest; forces in other areas will carry out combined operations. Although the main focus of our operations is now determined as the Northwest, it may change in future. The art of army use should be flexibly multiform”*<sup>(5)</sup>.

Realizing that our regular troops mainly moved towards the Northwest, in the middle of November 1953, Navarre sent 6 paratroop battalions to Dien Bien Phu, in order to provide support for the withdrawal of the French troops. In early December, our troops carried out an attack and wiped out a majority of the French troops that were withdrawing from Lai Chau. Dien Bien Phu was, consequently, besieged by our forces. During the next several months, Vietnam’s regular troops coordinated with the liberation troops of Pathet Lao (a communist political movement and organization in Laos) to carry out attacks in central Laos and lower Laos and subsequently in the Northeast of Cambodia. The regular troops

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<sup>(3)</sup> Cited from *Dien Bien Phu Thunder*, The People’s Army Publishing House, Hanoi, 1984, p.61.

<sup>(4)</sup> Vo Nguyen Giap (2004), *Looking back Dien Bien Phu after 50 Years*, The People’s Army Publishing House, Hanoi, p.285.

<sup>(5)</sup> Vo Nguyen Giap (2004), *Op cit.*, p.288.

of the Interregional No.5 launched attacks in the North of Central Highlands and took control over Kontum province and a large area that connects directly with liberation area in Lower Laos. While postponing temporarily attacks on Dien Bien Phu, in late January 1954, we sent a part of our regular army to upper Laos and took control over the area of Nam Hu river, creating a threat of attacks to Luang Prabang.

With the 5 strategic strokes of attacks, we forced Navarre to scatter passively 70 of all 84 mobile battalions of the French Union Forces in battlefields all over Indochina<sup>(6)</sup>. Eventually, the strategic mobile forces were initially smashed.

In spite of falling in the defensive due to the contradiction between concentrating and scattering the forces, Navarre still kept on sending more troops to Dien Bien Phu, aiming at establishing a major force in Dien Bien Phu that would attract and defeat our regular army. In late December 1953, the Politburo made a decision about annihilation of all the enemy forces in Dien Bien Phu. As a result, a battle of forces, brainpower, strategies and tactics between Vietnam's army and the French Union Forces would take place in the area of mutual choice.

4. By late January 1954, the French Union Forces converged in Dien Bien Phu consisted of 10 battalions. At the high time afterwards, there were sometimes 21 battalions, including 17 infantry battalions, 3 artillery battalions and 1 battalion of sappers; there was also 1 company of tanks, 1 company of trucks, and 1 squadron of 14 airplanes. During the battle of Dien Bien

Phu, moreover, two third of all warplanes and two third of all transport aircrafts in Indochina were also mobilized by the enemy. The total number of combatant soldiers was 16,200 soldiers<sup>(7)</sup>.

Henri Navarre by himself arrived in Dien Bien Phu many times to give direct guidance to reinforce the group of fortresses. A delegation of the French government also visited the place and all of them believed that it was an "unconquerable bastion". John O'Daniel, the general commander of the US Army Forces in Pacific also expressed the same comment.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1954, the Politburo established a commanding board for Dien Bien Phu campaign. General Vo Nguyen Giap was appointed as the campaign's Communist Party Secretary cum the Commander-in-chief.

A few days later, General Giap came to Khuoi Tat to say good-bye to Ho Chi Minh, before leaving to the battlefield. Ho Chi Minh gave him some instructions: "*You are now a Commander-in-chief in battlefield. You are given full power to make decisions. This battlefield is significant, so you must win! Only when you are sure about success, make an attack. When you do not feel sure that you will win, don't attack*"<sup>(8)</sup>.

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<sup>(6)</sup> Hoang Minh Thao (2013), "Dien Bien Phu Victory - The Moral Strength and Military Art Power", in *General Vo Nguyen Giap Lives Forever in the Heart of All Vietnamese People and International Friends*, Information and Culture Publishing House, Hanoi, p.180.

<sup>(7)</sup> Vo Nguyen Giap (2004), *Op. cit.*, pp.72-73.

<sup>(8)</sup> Vo Nguyen Giap (2004), *Op. cit.*, p.291.

Like all other times, each instruction of Ho Chi Minh was very condensed, but it showed high values of knowledge and culture. Firstly, it demonstrated that the supreme leader of the Communist Party and Vietnam government had high confidence in General Vo Nguyen Giap, “the eldest brother” of Vietnam People’s Army, who had been experienced and clever in the battlefield and had already defeated in turn 6 commanders-in-chief of the French Union Forces in Indochina. Secondly, it reminded General Giap apply flexibly the principle “*Slow advance, certain success*” that had been approved at the 4<sup>th</sup> Central Communist Party Congress (in January 1953)<sup>(9)</sup>. The principle required that “the Commander in battlefield” should investigate and analyze thoroughly the situation in the front; he should realize precisely and comprehensively advantages and weaknesses of the enemy and our army as well, based on which the most effective combatant plans would be built. It was absolutely necessary not to underestimate the enemy, which might lead to impatient and adventurous actions.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> January 1954, General Vo Nguyen Giap, accompanied by Wei Guoqing, the head of the Chinese military advisory group, went towards the front.

As soon as he came to the commanding post, he got a report on the situations of both sides in Dien Bien Phu from the board of staff officers. They suggested the plan of “*swift attack, swift win*”, as the enemy hadn’t been in a steady position yet. According to the board, we would annihilate all of the enemy troops and get a complete success, if

we attacked them immediately with all our forces for 2 days and 3 nights.

In the consultancy meeting of the Battlefield Communist Committee later on, General Giap described big challenges that our army would be unable to deal with, if we followed the plan suggested. Most of members at the meeting, however, assumed that if we did not attack the enemy early, the French troops would reinforce fortifications and the group of fortresses would be very powerful. They were also afraid that it would be difficult to supply provisions, if the campaign lasted long, because it was too far from the rear to the front and the enemy would launch more violent raids. The head of Chinese advisors also shared the same opinion.<sup>(9)</sup>

Although General Giap did not believe the plan “*swift attack, swift win*” would be successful, he found no evidence to reject it. On the 14<sup>th</sup> January 1954, therefore, he agreed to hold a meeting of officers to disseminate the plan of campaign. When launching the determination to carry out the battle, in order to make ideological preparation for them, he said: “At the moment, there is no sign that the enemy will make big changes. We should have a thorough grasp of the enemy situation, in order to prepare proper solutions, when they make a change”<sup>(10)</sup>.

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<sup>(9)</sup> Communist Party of Vietnam (2001), *Complete Party Documents*, Vol.14, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, p.59.

<sup>(10)</sup> Vo Nguyen Giap (2000), *Dien Bien Phu: A Historic Rendezvous*, The People’s Army Publishing House, Hanoi, p.98.

In the next days, he asked the staff officers to keep track of the enemy situation carefully every hour to be reported. In the meanwhile, he personally went to check combatant preparation of our troops. He sometimes climbed up the hill behind the commanding post in Muong Phang and spent hours observing all the enemy entrenched fortifications in Muong Thanh field (*Beatrice*). He realized the enemy was continually strengthening forces and consolidating military positions; whereas, we didn't find out measures to overcome difficulties yet. He racked his brain for several nights, in the hope of finding out an appropriate measure. After he stayed overnight, analyzing the situation, he came to a conclusion that we would be defeated, if we kept following the previous plan. He urgently summoned the meeting of the Battlefield Communist Committee in the next morning (26 January 1954).

While waiting for others coming to the meeting, General Giap discussed with the head of the Chinese military advisory group about the decision. Later on, the meeting took place with effervescent discussion. Almost all members of the meeting argued that it was necessary to launch swift attacks. Because everything had been prepared; our troops were ready with a high determination; moreover, we had howitzers and anti-aircraft guns, we could make sudden attacks and win. Otherwise, it would be more difficult and we would miss the opportunity. When General Giap asked: "Are you sure one hundred percent that we

will win as recommended by Uncle Ho, if we launch swift attacks?", however, no one made affirmation. Eventually, the Battlefield Communist Committee unanimously agreed to change into the strategy of "*slow advance, certain success*".

Late evening on the 26<sup>th</sup> January, therefore, the Battlefield Communist Committee and the Commanding Board, headed by General Vo Nguyen Giap resolutely decided to stop the tentative attack, withdraw our troops, and pull artilleries out for a new disposition, although thousands soldiers had been already disposed in battle formation and everything were ready for attacks. At the same time, General Giap ordered the 308<sup>th</sup> Brigade to move towards Luang Prabang, in order to attract attention of the enemy forces, while we pulled artilleries out.

This change was afterwards proved as a lucid decision by the reality of the battle in Dien Bien Phu. General Vo Nguyen Giap, the commander-in-chief as well as the secretary of the battlefield communist committee, was firstly credited with making properly "*the most difficult decision in the commanding time*"<sup>(11)</sup>. Owing to his brainpower and firm stuff, he patiently waited for the right chance, carefully considered and cleverly handled situations in order to get a common consensus from both the head of the Chinese advisory group and our military officers. Especially, the fact that he made the change in the battle strategy just about 6 hours before the previously anticipated start

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<sup>(11)</sup> Vo Nguyen Giap (2000), *Op. cit.*, p.112.

of attacks showed the ability to apply creatively the military art of our ancestors.

It is similar to what Tran Hung Dao recommended his generals and soldiers: “*it is necessary to consider changes of the situation. Like a chess player, we have to sail with the wind*”<sup>(12)</sup>. Nguyen Trai also wrote: “*Military decisions must be prompt, like deities or a running wheel or a flying cloud. It may vary unexpectedly, suddenly cold and suddenly hot*”<sup>(13)</sup>. The military art is the very non-material cultural heritage that constituted Dai Viet culture and civilization at the medieval age. It was inherited and developed further for the strategic battle in the resistance war against invasion of the French colonialists as well as intervention of the US Army.

5. It is necessary to emphasize one point, herein. Although President Ho Chi Minh gave General Giap full power to make decisions like a commander in the battlefield, on the one hand, General Giap took the initiative in making the proper decision about changing the battle strategy; on the other hand, he wrote an express report to the Politburo, asking for the consensus of the leadership committee. A few days later, he received a letter from Truong Chinh, the Secretary General of the Communist Party, telling that President Ho Chi Minh and the Politburo unanimously realized that it was completely lucid to make the change. At the same time, the Politburo gave an instruction as below: “*All the Communist members, all the people should gather all strengths to assist the frontline*”<sup>(14)</sup>.

With the motto that “*All for the frontline; all for victory!*”, along different routes 400 – 500 km long, there were thousands of conscripted laborers and volunteers using bicycles, houses, buffalo carts, and rafts etc... to carry food and military equipment to the frontline under the rain of lethal weapons launched by the enemy, in the hope of providing constantly our troops with necessary ordnance during the entire campaign. This was a big surprise for the commanding board of the French Union Forces, because they did think that we could not deal with the logistical difficulties in Dien Bien Phu. After the Navarre’s group of fortresses fell, however, some French and Western politicians gave an allegation that Vietnam won in the battle, owing to the weapons and food supported by China (!?). In reality, for Dien Bien Phu campaign, China supported us with: (1) Twenty four 105mm howitzers and 3,600 corresponding bullets, making up 18% of all our 105mm howitzers and bullets; and (2) 1,700 tons of food, making up 10.8% of all the food used in the campaign<sup>(15)</sup>. Regarding to this, Jules Roy, a French reporter, wrote: “*Navarre was not defeated by supports from outside Vietnam, but by the very Peugeot bicycles that carried 200 to 300 kg and were pushed humanly by those, who did not have enough food to eat and*

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<sup>(12)</sup> Cited from *Summary of the General History of Vietnam, Literature – History – Geography Publishing House, Hanoi, 1958, p.100.*

<sup>(13)</sup> Nguyen Trai (1978), *Complete Works, Social Sciences Publishing House, Hanoi, p.118.*

<sup>(14)</sup> Vo Nguyen Giap (2000), *Op. cit., p.183.*

<sup>(15)</sup> Hoang Minh Thao, *Op. cit., p.183.*

*slept in a nylon sheet on the ground. Navarre was not defeated by means, but by cleverness and will of the opponent*<sup>(16)</sup>.

The change in the battle strategy provided a period of time (about a month and a half) for our troops, enabling them to develop their creativity in besiegement re-disposition and combatant preparation so that we would defeat the enemy with a minimum loss.

At that time, our soldiers used manual tools to dig hundreds kilometers of combat trenches, thousands of fortifications for men and fire-weapons, and a lot of sleeping and ambulance shelters as well as ammunition pits, making it favorable to move our forces continually under fierce raids of the enemy artilleries and warplanes. Step-by-step, the system of combat trenches reached closer and closer the center of Muong Thanh; it cut across the airport, preventing and then cutting off completely the air-supply of the enemy. In the infantry battlefield, our soldiers built a system of solid trenches with hide-outs for artilleries in the hillsides, which was combined with a lot of fake battlefields to trick the opponent. At the same time, the Campaign Commanding Headquarter and headquarters of brigades and regiments were also built underground, making the commanding activities not to be interrupted.

In the days, when artilleries were pulled to the new positions in the battlefield, and 56 fighting days afterwards as well, there were a lot of examples sacrificing life for the fatherland; they are forever typical for the patriotic and heroic tradition of our nation. It was, for instance, To Vinh Dien,

who sacrificed himself without any hesitation by using his body to prevent the artillery from falling down the hill. It was Phan Dinh Giot, who used his body to occlude a loophole so that his comrades could climb up to wipe out the blockhouse. It was also Be Van Dan, who used his body as a gun-carriage so that his comrade could continue shooting the enemy. There were sappers struggling with the bombs, which were about to explode. There were medical soldiers and logistic soldiers, who strenuously went through fire and water in order to carry injured soldiers and bullets etc... There were a countless number of unknown heroes, who silently struggled with difficulties in order to contribute a part towards the victory of the battle.

Let's come back to the main developments of the battle in wits, tactic and strategy between our forces and the enemy.

As we carried out diversions effectively, Navarre thought that "*Vietminh's enthusiasm for attack already settled down*"<sup>(17)</sup>, after he saw that our forces did nothing. On the 12<sup>th</sup> March 1954, he sent a mobile group to the liberation area of the Interregional No.5. Right at 5.00pm next day, we started an assault on Him Lam outpost. Our artillery opened a fierce bombardment on the fortification, starting the strategic battle in Dien Bien Phu. The enemy was surprisingly shocked.

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<sup>(16)</sup> Jules Roy (2002), *Battle of Dien Bien Phu in the Eyes of the French*, Ho Chi Minh City Publishing House, p.449.

<sup>(17)</sup> Vo Nguyen Giap (2004), *Op. cit.*, p.203.

Especially, “we gave the opponent the biggest surprise that we did not accept a total swift battle with all the warlike expeditionary forces of the opponent in the solid group of fortresses. We decided to annihilate one-by-one every outpost with our forte, overwhelming position and at our selected time. In addition, we step by step closed our combatant trenches and cut off all their supplies, until the group of fortresses became suffocated”<sup>(18)</sup>.

In the evening of the 7<sup>th</sup> May 1954, more than ten thousands soldiers of the enemy in Muong Thanh came out to surrender, due to our massive assault from all directions. The entire group of fortresses in Dien Bien Phu was then wiped out. Our army and people gained a complete victory.

6. Based on what I have described above, we all realize that many factors stemming from Vietnam’s culture made contribution into the victory in Dien Bien Phu Battle, which was considered “*famous in all 5 continents and the world-shaking*”.

I would like to enumerate some main factors, as below:

- *The most basic and decisive factor for the victory in Dien Bien Phu is the sound political and military guidelines of our Communist Party headed by Ho Chi Minh*<sup>(19)</sup>.

It is the guidelines of the people’s war, in which all people took part comprehensively in the resistance against invasion of the French colonialists, who were also supported by the US army. The guidelines brought into play our ancestors’ tradition in fighting the enemy to protect the country. At the same

time, the guidelines shows how creatively the fundamental principles of Marxist – Leninism about the revolutionary war were applied in the specific situation of the resistance war in Vietnam – where all the people rose as one man to fight for the country unification, independence, for the people’s freedom and happiness as well as for the peace, national independence, democracy and social progress all over the world.

Obviously, the guidelines were based on a ground of high cultural values, as said by Uncle Ho: “*Culture illuminates the way for the people*”<sup>(20)</sup>.

- *The second decisive factor for Dien Bien Phu victory is the skilful and creative application of Vietnam military sciences and art in the new epoch.*

In all time and everywhere, warfare manuals always give prominence to the principle of mustering strength and gaining the initiative in combat. The combatant plan of Navarre was, therefore, based on the principle. As a bourgeois military leader, Navarre forgot that it was unavoidable to scatter the French expeditionary troops in order to keep occupation. Owing to thorough understanding of the war principles, in the meanwhile, the “Supreme Commanding Committee” of Vietnam army arrayed and disposed the troops flexibly, making the French troops follow our scheme and

<sup>(18)</sup> Vo Nguyen Giap (2004), *Op. cit.*, p.318.

<sup>(19)</sup> Vo Nguyen Giap (2004), *Op. cit.*, p.349.

<sup>(20)</sup> Ho Chi Minh (1971), *On the Cultural and Artistic Work*, The Truth Publishing House, Hanoi, p.72.

“stretch the fist of main forces into many directions”<sup>(21)</sup>. As a result, Vietnam government early realized that it was a good opportunity to wipe out the French Union forces, since they passively moved their warlike groups to the Northwestern mountainous area and built a powerful group of fortresses in Dien Bien Phu.

To accomplish the task, the combatant plan of “*swift attack, swift win*” was initially set up. After realizing changes in the situations, however, we made a timely decision about changing the combatant plan from “*swift attack, swift win*” to “*slow advance, certain success*”. The change was proved as completely sound in practice.

Analyzing this, General Vo Nguyen Giap wrote: “*A precise combatant decision – the decision to wipe out the French group of fortresses in Dien Bien Phu – must contain fully scientism and revolutionism, and must be based on correct and comprehensive assessments of both our forces and the opponent forces*”<sup>(22)</sup>. And, “*once we have a sound combatant guideline, the combatant methods plays a decisive role. It is the main content of the commanding art*”<sup>(23)</sup>.

Regarding to the art of war, the victory in Dien Bien Phu is the very success of Vietnam’s military sciences and art – a part of the national culture in the new epoch.

- *The factor that played a direct decisive role for Dien Bien Phu victory is the patriotism and heroism of our army and people under the leadership of the Communist Party.*

This was obviously shown through a lot of stunning examples of our soldiers and people, who always heightened the determination: (1) not to accept to be slaves; (2) to fight by all means for winning the victory; (3) to keep solidarity; (4) to work unselfishly; (5) to fight bravely against the enemy; (6) to make every effort to get over difficulties; (7) to consider the people’s and the revolutionary interests as the highest; and, (8) to be ready to sacrifice life for the national liberation.

Thus, it is possible to affirm that the patriotism and heroism of our army and people, which were shown specifically and abundantly in the entire Dien Bien Phu campaign, were the fundamental and key values of Vietnam culture. In the light of Marxist-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh’s thought at the new epoch, the values were much more heightened, resulting in an extraordinary power to defeat the enemy right at the time, when they made the best effort for the war.

In conclusion, reviewing generally the three above-mentioned factors, we can come to following judgment: In terms of both significance and nature aspects, Dien Bien Phu victory is forever a “*golden resplendent landmark in history*”<sup>(24)</sup> that demonstrates the full vitality of Vietnam culture.

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(21) Vo Nguyen Giap (2004), *Op. cit.*, p.325.

(22) Vo Nguyen Giap (2004), *Op. cit.*, p.253.

(23) Vo Nguyen Giap (2004), *Op. cit.*, p.253.

(24) Ho Chi Minh (1996), *Complete Works*, Vol.11, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, p.261.

