



THE WAR ON NATIONAL DEFENSE IN THE SOUTHWESTERN BORDER AREA (1975-1979) AND SOME ORIENTATION OF UNIVERSITY TEACHING IN VIETNAMⁱ

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Abstract:

The war to protect the Fatherland in the southwest border area (1975-1979) is a historical process of great significance for the cause of the struggle and defense of the Socialist Fatherland. In Vietnam, the teaching on the war to protect the Fatherland in the southwestern border has not been focused on all training levels. From the perspective of history, the article clarifies the cause and nature of the war to protect the Fatherland in the southwestern border, thereby drawing some lessons for the national liberation cause and orient the teaching content of tertiary level in Vietnam.

Keywords: Cambodia, protect the country, university teaching, Southwest border war, Vietnam

1. Introduction

The war to protect the Fatherland in the southwest border area (1975-1979) is a historical process of great significance for the cause of the struggle and defense of the Socialist Fatherland. However, like the war to protect the Fatherland in the northern border region (1978 - 1988), the history of this war, up to now, has not been fully studied and presented in public forums in Vietnam, especially in historical education content at tertiary level. Within nearly four years, the Pol Pot - Ieng Sary group slaughtered nearly 3 million Cambodians, removed most of the infrastructure and society and pushed the Khmer people before the catastrophic destruction. Pol Pot Group - Ieng Sary distorted history, incited national enmity, mobilized dozens of main divisions and many local regiments to wage war on our border. Wherever they go, they destroy villages, plunder and brutally

ⁱ CHIẾN TRANH BẢO VỆ TỔ QUỐC Ở BIÊN GIỚI TÂY NAM (1975 – 1979) VÀ MỘT SỐ ĐỊNH HƯỚNG NỘI DUNG GIẢNG DẠY BẬC ĐẠI HỌC Ở VIỆT NAM

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kill people, including the elderly, women, and children; seriously infringing upon Vietnam's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity...

The fight against the invading Pol Pot army is a completely just and necessary act of self-defense of the Vietnamese people. Responding to the call of the genuine revolutionaries of Cambodia, Vietnam helped the Cambodian people overthrow Pol Pot's genocidal regime, saved the Chua Thap nation from destruction - it was a legally appropriate action, lofty international love. There have been many forces with myopic, non-historical vision and arrogant attitude that have distorted this issue. But the civilized world, the progressive humanity has admitted, has supported Vietnam's noble cause, condemning the brutal genocide regime in Cambodia led by Pol Pot. The process of the trial of the crimes of the leaders of the Democratic Cambodian regime has made it clear.

Evaluating the significance of the Victory at the Southwest border during the 40th anniversary of this event, Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen stated: *"Many countries consider democracy, but there is no one to save the Cambodian people. Pol Pot genocide again, only Vietnam"* (Nguyen Thi Binh, 2019). Historian Ben Kiernan (2002) argued that the above achievements are also the legitimate answer to the question: "Why a decade?". The fear of Pol Pot's return to destruction and the recurrence of civil war is a great threat that makes people feel that the strengthening of relations between the People's Republic of Cambodia and Vietnam is the only hope for an independent and sustainable state.

Over the past years, teaching about the war on national defense of the southwestern border at many levels has been too rudimentary, incompatible with the position, stature and significance of that historical process in Vietnam modern history; does not meet the cognitive needs and even does not meet the requirements of developing the competencies and qualities of Vietnamese students. Moreover, even in a few such short paragraphs, some errors and errors have been revealed in both historical content and form of presentation and expression (Tran Trung Hieu, 2018).

2. War background

The resistance war against the US and national salvation, culminating in the historic Ho Chi Minh Campaign ended successfully, opened a new era of national history, but the whole country had to continue to deal with challenges. In the international context and regions have profound and complicated changes.

After failing in the war of invasion of Vietnam, the US quickly adjusted one step of strategy, intensifying the arms race and the cold war, in order to gain the upper hand in the confrontation with the Soviet Union. The United States continues to maintain 49,000 troops (out of a total of more than 2 million permanent US troops) stationed in foreign bases, innovating strategic offensive weapons, strengthening military alliances globally. At the same time, taking advent age of the discord between a number of socialist countries and the conflict between the Soviet Union - China to prevent and repel the influence of the "communist wave" in Southeast Asia; cooperating with international

reactionary forces, implementing hostile policies, economic encirclement, embargo, in order to weaken and reduce Vietnam's position in the international arena.

For Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge force led by Pol Pot - Ieng Sary in the last years of the war against the US (1970 - 1975) was incited by reactionary and hostile foreign forces to carry out a number of attacks, kidnapping and killing Vietnamese cadres and soldiers operating in the Cambodian battlefield. In the first 6 months of 1972, Military Region 203 (the Southeastern Military Region of Cambodia) had 26 killings of Vietnamese soldiers, 17 cases of weapons robbery, 385 kidnappings, 413 confiscations of goods; In the first 6 months of 1973, the Pol Pot army caused 102 cases, killed and wounded 103 Vietnamese soldiers, robbed tens of tons of food and weapons (The Laborers Newspaper, 2019). In April 1975, after taking the leadership of Cambodia, the Pol Pot - Ieng Sary government was instigated by foreign reactionary forces to urgently build up a force to wage war to invade the border area. South-western world of Vietnam.

While Vietnam is facing a series of difficulties in the southwest border caused by the Pol Pot - Ieng Sary forces, on the northern border after 1975 China has organized small attacks and conducted movement of land border markers on the Vietnam-China border line of land encroachment, from 234 cases in 1975, to 812 cases in 1976. Land encroachment continued to increase to 873 cases in 1977 and 2,175 cases in 1978, causing a tense and complicated situation on the northern border of Vietnam (Tran Duc Cuong, 2014: 29).

While the international and regional situation has changed extremely complicatedly, the domestic situation also faces a series of difficulties and challenges. In the North, over 21 years (1954 - 1975), although being a large rear, most cities, towns and towns in the North were destroyed by war, of which 12 towns and 51 towns were completely destroyed; 4,000 out of 5,788 communes were destroyed, of which 20 were completely destroyed. Most of the industrial zones were destroyed by the war, many were beaten back and forth many times with the extent of destruction. All power plants were damaged, 5 million square meters of houses (not including the number of houses in the countryside) were destroyed by enemy bombs. All railroads, roads, 100% bridges, the entire system of harbors, sea routes, rivers and warehouses were bombarded. The US Empire caused 1,600 irrigation works, most of its farms and hundreds of thousands of hectares of fields destroyed, and more than 40,000 cattle and buffaloes killed by bombs. They raided 3,000 schools, 350 hospitals, of which 10 were leveled (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2004: 37, 498).

In the South, the war has had many serious consequences. Under the new American colonial regime, an economic structure dominated and manipulated by foreign capitalism was formed. Some sectors of the economy develop, but are not balanced, not on their own strength, but on foreign aid. Some material facilities and technical means were damaged as a result of the war against the US - Vietnam Republic. In the face of complicated developments in the world and in the country, Pol Pot - Ieng Sary group in Cambodia has launched provocative operations, encroaching on Vietnamese territory.

3. Cause of the southwestern border war

3.1. Ambition for the restoration of the mighty Angkor empire

According to Professor Nayan Chanda (2019), the conflict between Vietnam and Cambodia was extremely complicated in the sense that it involved most of the most important actors on the world political stage at that time. But first, the cause of the war has long hidden in history. The Angkor Empire stretched on the Indochinese peninsula and from the 17th century onwards its territory was gradually narrowed after military conflicts with Vietnam and Thailand. Immediately after the Second Indochina War ended in 1975, the Khmer Rouge assumed that they were ready to restore the mighty Angkor empire.

In the face of opposition from Cambodian leaders who had ties to Vietnam, Pol Pot and their troops conducted an internal purge and launched a series of assassination attacks on civilians on villages Vietnamese desert along the border since 1975. Professor Nayan Chanda added: *"As we walked to the village, a strong stench told us what to see. It was still a terrifying sight. Fifteen men, women and children, beaten to death by the Khmer Rouge, were scattered around their three thatched huts"*. The explanation for the massacre lay on the dirt walls of a hut, where someone scribbled with Khmer charcoal: *"This is our land! In other words, the Vietnam-Cambodia conflict stems from ancient territorial conflicts in history, fueled by the arrogant ambitions of the Pol Pot regime"* (Truong Minh, 2019).

Pol Pot Group - Ieng Sary distorted history, incited national hatred, launched a war to invade the southwestern border, causing bloody crimes against innocent people; seriously infringing upon Vietnam's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity; trample on the good values of the friendly relationship between the two countries, the two peoples of Vietnam and Cambodia. Pol Pot - Ieng Sary Group proposed "New way of fighting", which determined: *"The war between us and Vietnam is long-term, rodent nature, if we do not hit it first, we will not win. .. Just kill a few tens of days, kill a few thousand each month, kill a few thousand each year, you can fight 10, 15 to 20 years, do 1 kill 30, and sacrifice 2 million Cambodians to destroy 60 million Vietnamese"*. Arrogant and very reactionary, according to Le Monde Newspaper (France) on January 8, 1978, Pol Pot announced on Phnom Penh Radio: *"In my life, I hope to liberate Saigon"* (Le Kha Phieu, 2019).

3.2. The southwestern border war stems from foreign hostile forces inciting and assisting

In order to wage war against Vietnam, the Pol Pot - Ieng Sary administration, backed by foreign reactionary forces, actively prepared early. While creating public opinion provoking hatred between the two peoples that *"Vietnam is a traditional enemy, the number 1 enemy"*, Pol Pot - Ieng Sary has organized the construction of a government system in the style of militarization and development rapid military force. From 7 divisions (1975) to 14 divisions (April 30, 1977), then 23 divisions with hundreds of long-range cannons and tanks at the end of the war (December 1978). Thus, this is a war carefully prepared by Cambodian reactionary forces and hostile forces with many dark ambitions.

According to Professor Nayan Chanda in his book *Brothers Enemy: The war after the war* was published in 1986, it is necessary to clearly see the fact that China, now even being one of Vietnam's closest allies in the Vietnam War, also for their own sake. They wanted to keep their southern border safe and North Vietnam to China acting as a "safe zone". Therefore, they aid Vietnam in the war against the US but never want Vietnam to become stronger. China once advised Vietnam to persevere with the guerrilla war line, to prolong the war instead of trying to quickly end the war.

Vietnam's reunification in April 1975 overturned Chinese attempts. After the liberation of the South, Vietnam had overwhelming strength, ready to take a pioneering role in this area. China has always been afraid of the imbalance in the balance of power in Southeast Asia and the possibility of the Soviet Union replacing the void left by the US power, reflected in the rise of Vietnam, a close ally of the Soviet Union. So, in order to weaken Vietnam, Cambodia's Khmer Rouge became an ideal partner of Beijing. Since 1975, China began to give unlimited, mass aid to Pol Pot government in Cambodia, including money and weapons. Meanwhile, they completely cut off aid to Vietnam, at the right time when Hanoi is in the middle of the second 5-year planning period (Truong Minh, 2019).

Nguyen Thi Binh (2019) in an interview on *Two Frontier Wars: 40 years look back*, cited some foreign documents revealed that China's actions were deliberate, planned in many ways, prepared in advance and the Chinese leader – Dang Tieu Binh, when visiting the US at the end of January 1979 said he would "*teach Vietnam a lesson*". Former State President Nguyen Thi Binh affirmed: "*What lesson? After we liberated the South, reunited the country, defeated Pol Pot? Or is it that China's calculations at that time turned to implementing strategic plans to reverse international relations, especially in relations between major countries?*" (World and Vietnam, 2019).

Talking about China's supporting role in the southwestern border war, author Vo Van Sen in his speech to lead the seminar *Some issues of the war to protect the Fatherland in the southwest border* (April 5/2018) named China to support the Khmer Rouge forces attacking Vietnam. China considered the reunified Vietnam in 1975 to compete for great influence with them, so it sought ways to divide and entice Laos, using the Khmer Rouge as a tool, causing 'bleeding' to degrade Vietnam. China aids the Khmer Rouge to build a democratic Cambodian state and equips the Khmer Rouge army to build a war force against Vietnam (National University Ho Chi Minh City, 2018).

Since 1965, the Beijing rulers "*led the Pol Pot, urging them and their comrades to wage an armed struggle against the Syrian government that is allied with the resistance forces of Vietnam and Laos*" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1979: 50).

In 1970, although supporting Sihanouk and the Cambodian resistance government, but Beijing "*still secretly maintained secret relations with the Lon Nol Sirik Matak, on the other hand, actively used the Pol Pot - Ieng Sary, gradually turned the Khmer Party into a party dependent on the Chinese Communist Party*" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1979:62-63). Since 1973, "*at Beijing's order, the Pol Pot - Ieng Sary faction has implemented a two-sided policy towards Vietnam: both relying on Vietnam and against Vietnam*" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

1979: 69). With the support of China, Pol Pot Group - Ieng Sary tried to fight against Vietnam. They accuse Vietnam of signing the Paris Agreement as betraying Campu to once again incite national hatred, provoke anti-Vietnamese sentiment, and make excuses to purge Cambodians who disapprove of their line. Many times, they organized into raids, looting depots, weapons, attacks on hospitals and military shelters of the South Vietnamese Liberation Army in Cambodia (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *ibid*, p. 70). China "poured money, weapons and war tools of all kinds and sent tens of thousands of Chinese advisors into Cambodia to form dozens of new divisions including infantry, armored, artillery, building more or expanding many naval bases, air force, logistics warehouse system" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1979: 78).

3.3. Border conflicts and Vietnam's diplomatic efforts

After 30 years (1945 - 1975) continuously fought for the independence and freedom of the Fatherland, the aspiration of the Vietnamese people was peace to heal the wounds of war and rebuild the country. Therefore, since the late 1970s, there has been tension on the border issue for Cambodia, especially when Pol Pot sent troops to invade the southwest border. Vietnam still persists in the policy of building a border of peace of friendship, after expelling the encroachers, recovering the islands illegally occupied by the Pol Pot army, we have returned more than 600 Pol Pot soldiers were captured in the attacks of illegally invading Vietnamese territory in 1975.

The Party and State of Vietnam sent Comrade Nguyen Van Linh, representatives of the Communist Party of Vietnam, to meet with representatives of the Communist Party of Cambodia to resolve the border conflict issue caused by Pol Pot - Ieng Sary side. In the face of that goodwill of Vietnam, the Cambodian side agreed to have a meeting between high-ranking leaders of the two parties to discuss and resolve the border issue, creating a premise for the border treaty between the two states in June, 1976.

Despite the agreement, the Cambodian side continued to let troops cause many illegal encroachment on the border, relocating landmarks deep in Vietnam from Can Duong, Dau Bau mound, Kon Tum, hacking and robbing our arsenal at Doi Tho (Tay Ninh). In October 1975, the Po Po army invaded the area of Pa Cham (Lo Co), invaded the areas of Moc Bai, Khuoc, Vap Sa, Ta Not, and Ta Bat. At the end of 1975 and early 1976, the Pol Pot army suddenly carried out a number of intrusions into Vietnam more than 10 km deep in the Sa Thay river area (Gia Lai - Kon Tum), causing crimes against the Vietnamese people.

In January 1976, the Fourth Congress of the Communist Party of Cambodia (by Pol Pot as Secretary) determined: "*The most disaster to pay attention to is Vietnam...*" (Library of Military History of Vietnam Male, file number KC 559). At the same time, in the name of helping Cambodia rebuild the country, many foreign military advisors and modern military weapons and vehicles were brought into Cambodia. Relying on outside help, Pol Pot intensified military activities to sabotage us in the southwest border area. At the end of February, early March 1976, the Pol Pot army provoked two border posts No. 7 and No. 8 in Bu Prang (Dak Lak). Next, they continuously let invaders set mines, grenades,

ambush border guards in areas Phum Tua, East Bo Lo Sam, Cay Me, Khuoc, Vap Sa (Tay Ninh), Ha Tien (Kien Giang), Chau Phu (An Giang), Moc Hoa, and Duc Hue (Long An).

In order to promptly prevent military actions caused by Pol Pot's side in the southwest border area and prepare for the high-level meeting of leaders of the two countries, in April 1976, representatives of Vietnam and Cambodia were having a meeting in Phnom Penh. The meeting discussed and agreed on three specific measures to prevent actions that cause military conflicts in the Vietnam - Cambodia border area: (1) The two sides strive to educate their own cadres, soldiers and people in border areas to strengthen solidarity and avoid collisions.; (2) All conflicts must be resolved in the spirit of solidarity, friendship and mutual respect; (3) Liaison Committee of the two sides conducted investigation of the collision and met to resolve.

In compliance with the policy of building a peaceful and friendly border with Cambodia, armed police units (now the border guard), tasked with protecting the southwestern border, strictly comply with Party regulations. The State of Vietnam to settle disputes, avoid provocations, do not open fire first, in places where Pol Pot troops invaded, invaded and relocated border markers.

3.4. Pol Pot - Ieng Sary strengthened the building of forces to wage war to invade the southwest border

While Vietnam strictly implemented the agreements, the democratic Cambodian government received military aid from foreign powers and sent experts and advisers to help, continue to develop the army, prepare for war against Vietnam. By the end of 1976, Pol Pot developed the main force from 7 divisions when it was liberated to 12 divisions. Local troops in each province and district established 2 to 3 more regiments. The relatively modern equipped tanks, armored, artillery, air force and navy (equivalent to regiments, divisions) were also established one after another.

In the localities, the Pol Pot - Ieng Sary government implements a policy of compulsory military training. In particular, on the border line adjacent to Vietnam, Pol Pot built many trenches, field fortifications, formed battle clusters, served as a starting base for increasingly large-scale invasions into Vietnamese territory. Administrative units of districts, provinces, zones and regions were re-classified according to militarization.

Along with the preparations for the war, the Pol Pot government made every effort to propagate and incite anti-Vietnam sentiment, considering Vietnam as "the traditional enemy", "the number 1 enemy". Using the excuse of internal cleaning, they classified the population, carried out many bloody purges, in which, and focused on the former cadres trained in Vietnam, the former resistance. supposed to have dissenting thoughts at the main 3rd Division, officers from company level to division were called for questioning, of which 60% of key officers in the division were sent to re-education, or annihilated. In Military Region 24, up to 90% of communal cadres were purged. Division 4 in 1 round of interrogation had 10 officers of the battalion, the regiment and the division were arrested.

Citing the words of Hun Xen, Deputy Regiment of Region 1 Military Region 203 (Library of Military History of Vietnam, file number KC/604).

In 1976, the Pol Pot government increased provocative and encroachment activities in the southwestern border of Vietnam. In the area of Military Region 7, the Pol Pot army caused 280 provocations, encroached upon 20 points on the border (up 2.7 times compared to the 1975 cases). In the areas of Military Zones 5 and 9, all encroachments have increased with an increasingly serious nature. Persistently advocating building a peaceful and friendly border with Cambodia, the Central Military Commission and the Communist Party of Vietnam instructed the military zones and provinces that border Cambodia to strengthen solidarity and avoid any provocation encourage. In December 1976, the 4th Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam continued to affirm the stance of the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam: "Strive to protect and develop the special relationship between Vietnamese with the people of Laos and Cambodia, to strengthen solidarity, trust, long-term cooperation and mutual assistance in all aspects between our country and the two countries on the principle of total equality, respect for each other's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, respect for each other's legitimate interests, making the three countries already attached to each other in the struggle for national liberation forever to stick together in the cause of building and defending the country, for the independence and prosperity of each country" (Communist Party of Vietnam, 1977: 81).

On May 23, 1977, the Central Military Commission issued an order to the armed forces in the South: "*Resolutely defend our territorial sovereignty, do not tolerate any encroachment by Cambodia's reactionary provocative forces into our territory; at the same time respect the territorial sovereignty of Cambodia. Find ways to dampen the spirit of the provocators. Propagate and mobilize your people and take advantage of the consent of public opinion, create conditions to stabilize one step of the border with Cambodia. Crushing the conspiracy to divide the brother states on the Indochinese peninsula*" (Vietnam Military History Institute, 2014: 104).

At the request of the post-war country building, Vietnam continued to implement the policy of reducing permanent troops, including military zones in the south. In 1976, Military Region 9 sent out 30,000 cadres and soldiers. The 4th and 8th Divisions moved on to economic construction duty. Military Region 7 moved 26,303 people to build state-owned agriculture and forestry farms. Military Region 5 sent out 28,000 officers and soldiers, and converted a large number of units to do business. In 1977, the whole army planned to transfer 10 divisions and 89 regiments (about 20-30 thousand people) to the construction and development industries to serve the national economy. A number of standing units of the Ministry and Military Regions 5, 1, 9 are located far from the border to perform the task of training and building in the direction of regular and modern. On the southwest border line bordering Cambodia, only the border guards are tasked with patrolling the country's border areas. The militia and guerrilla force in each border commune have 1 to 2 platoons equipped with rifles to protect production and keep local security and order.

While Vietnam reduced its standing troops and focused on building and developing the country's economy, in two years 1975 and 1976 with the aim of causing war against Vietnam, the Pol Pot - Ieng Sary urgently prepared for war. They redistributed the administrative units, organized the government apparatus of the village, commune, district and province in a military manner, purged the protesters, and provoked anti-Vietnam sentiment, especially building a force. The large military force consists of 12 regular divisions with full service elements, tens of thousands of local troops, of which 41% of troops and equipment are mobilized close to the Vietnamese border. They continuously opened many maneuvers along the border.

Thus, until the end of 1976, the Pol Pot - Ieng Sary group refused all peaceful diplomatic efforts of Vietnam, actively building up military forces to prepare for war, from actively causing conflicts, encroaching on and dispatching a large force of army with weapons, technical equipment, close to the southwest border area of Vietnam, causing the situation to become more and more tense leading to the outbreak of war. This is a large-scale invasion of the entire southwestern border region of Vietnam, prepared with ambitions of Pol Pot - Ieng Sary corporation supported by reactionary foreign forces cause.

4. Some lessons learned

4.1. Promote the strength of the people's war posture to win the war to protect the Fatherland in the southwest border

In the early years when the country has both unified and carried out the task of restoring and developing the economy, overcoming the heavy consequences after the war, our army and our people have to wage war to defend the homeland on the southwest border. Determined to defend the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Fatherland, bring into play the strength of the people's war posture, our army and people have fought heroically, successfully completed the war to protect the Fatherland in the border South West world.

With the bloody experience of the years of fighting the US, in the early days of the war to defend the Fatherland in the southwestern border, our troops and people have grown up, accumulated experiences on new tactical objects' conspiracies and tricks, applied the motto and combat methods, built the third armed forces, prepared the battlefield, built the battle posture, leading, directed and commanded the operations, ensured logistics, technology, economy with defense in the war to protect the Fatherland. This is the foundation for our army and people to overcome all difficulties and challenges in new circumstances and conditions, firmly defend the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Fatherland and fulfilled the lofty international mandate of Laos and Cambodia.

4.2. Off guard, slow to identify enemies

For Vietnam, this is a war to protect the righteous Fatherland for peace, for the long-standing friendship with the Cambodian people. After 30 years of resistance, our army and people have no greater aspirations than peace, in order to rebuild the country, build a prosperous and happy life, contribute to the stability of the region and consolidate the solidarity of the three countries on the Indochinese peninsula. But with the help and support of international reactionary forces, the Pôn Pot - Ing Xari faction launched a war on the southwest border. We must stand up to defend the country, there is no other way. However, *"our huge strategic defect in the border war in the southwest is that we lose our guard and cannot identify our enemies promptly. Not seeing K (Cambodia) soon turned into enemies... The slow definitive enemy identification puts us from the beginning in a situation of unpreparedness, surprise in dealing with the war of border encroachment"* (Office of the Central Military Commission, 1978: 1-2), so in the early stages of the war border protection was not actively and effectively carried out. According to a unified and coherent plan, the combined strength of the armed forces and of the local people has not been strongly promoted *"can not respond promptly and effectively"* (Office of the Central Military Commission, 1978: 1-2).

4.3. Confusion passively deal in the early stages of the war

In the early stages of the Vietnam War, the use of force and manipulation of combat tactics to counter the enemy's attacks in the early stages exposed many limitations. The distribution of forces was still dispersed, the command organization in many places was still loose, the situation was not sure, there were no appropriate ways of fighting, the fight was not right, and the quick destruction was not implemented (Central Military Commission, 1979:2).

According to Kosal Path (2018) in the article Vietnam and Cambodia 1975-78: "Misjudging about each other?" said that when the Khmer Rouge initially attacked from 1975 to mid 1977, the Vietnamese army was less active, and even underestimated the will of the Khmer Rouge to launch an invasion against Vietnam. Therefore, the Vietnamese local forces were less alert and prepared; the maneuvering was slow. This is the content of an assessment sent to the Party Central Committee in August 1977 by General Chu Huy Man, Deputy Secretary, Standing of the Central Military Commission. It led to the first wave of troop maneuvers and war preparations, especially along the land border and southwestern islands.

5. Some content orientation in teaching at the university level

According to Professor Pham Hong Tung (2019), the teaching of history at all training levels must highlight the meaning and legitimacy of the war; History education methods in high schools have changed, shifting from content approach to competence, so it is important to avoid falling into the presentation of developments, requiring students to memorize and memorize data mechanically; It should focus on helping students grasp

the methods of understanding facts, analyzing, evaluating events and historical processes. Accordingly, just present a summary of the main developments, guide students to collect, criticize relevant data, analyze and clarify the causes, nature, position and significance (impact) of this war (Vietnamnet, 2019).

With the above orientations, the teaching about the war to protect the Fatherland in the southwestern border at all training levels must: *“We got out of the war in 1975 but there was no peace. I think both events are 40 years old, but history is objective, truth should be respected and made clear. The nature of the event must be clarified and understood properly. Many historical events of Vietnam’s anti-foreign aggression have been clearly stated in history books and textbooks. Also, both of the above mentioned events need to be clear, specific and transparent. This is probably also a responsibility for history. Referring to the sadness of war in the past is to avoid war, to create peace, friendships and better, more substantive and long-term sustainable relations”* (Pham Thi Binh, 2019).

At the high school level, the history of the war to protect the Fatherland in the southwest border is presented in History 12, in chapter II - The struggle to defend the country (1975-1979) of lesson 25 - Building socialism and fighting to protect the Fatherland (1976-1986) with the following contents: Due to a conspiracy before, right after the victory of the war against the US to save the country, reactionary Pol corporation Pot - Ieng Sary in Cambodia led by Pol Pot has launched provocative operations, invading many territories of our country from Ha Tien to Tay Ninh. In early May 1975, they sent amphibious troops to capture Phu Quoc island; then conquered Tho Chu island. On December 22, 1978, they mobilized 19 infantry divisions and many artillery and tank units to attack Tay Ninh, starting the war to encroach on our border.

Realizing the righteous defense, our army and people organized a counterattack to destroy and wipe out the invaders from our country. At the request of the Front for National Solidarity to save Cambodia, the Vietnamese Army together with the Cambodian revolutionary forces attacked and abolished the Pol Pot genocide regime. On January 7, 1979, the capital Phnom Penh was liberated.

With the teaching content in the general education program, the author Tran Trung Hieu has proposed 4 issues that need to be taught about the war to protect the Fatherland in the southwestern border: (i) present the context and the basic cause leading to the invasion of Pol Pot; (ii) the nature of the southwestern border war for both sides (Pol Pot and the Vietnamese People's Army); (iii) how the role of the Vietnamese volunteer army is manifested and effective in the fulfillment of international obligations that led to the victory of the Cambodian revolution and the fall of the Pol Pot regime of January 7, 1979; (iv) history's greatest value is to draw lessons from history from this war for the protection of sovereignty, border security, sovereignty of sea and islands in the context of complex international relations, overlapping between powers has been and is taking place in the region and all over the world (Tran Trung Hieu, 2019).

At the level of university teaching, the war to protect the Fatherland in the southwest border has been studied and discussed a lot in universities and research institutes, notably the University of Social Sciences and Humanities literature (Hanoi

National University), University of Social Sciences and Humanities (National University Ho Chi Minh City), Institute of History (Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences)... Many comments from domestic and foreign scholars say that it is necessary to study and change the teaching content of the war to protect the Fatherland in the southwestern border.

In our opinion, the orientation of the teaching content at the university level must be built according to the true nature of the "*war to protect the Fatherland in the southwestern border against the Pol Pot - Ieng Sary*", according to which the Content teaching should address the following issues:

- 1) Regarding the historical context of the war to protect the Fatherland on the southwest border, the teaching content must clarify the changes in the foreign policy of the US and the West towards China; changes in China's foreign policy toward the Soviet Union; regarding the situation of Vietnam, it is necessary to present difficulties in the consequences of the war of national liberation and aspirations for peace for the Vietnamese people after 1975.
- 2) The causes leading to the war to protect the Fatherland in the southwest border, the teaching contents must be clear: ambition for the restoration of the mighty Angkor empire; the southwestern border war staged from hostile foreign forces inciting and assisting; border conflicts and Vietnam's diplomatic efforts; Pol Pot - Ieng Sary strengthened the building of forces to wage war to invade the southwest border.
- 3) Progress of the war to protect the Fatherland and lessons learned from the war for national defense in the southwestern border, the teaching content should pay attention to the issues: the strength of the people's war won the war of defending the Fatherland in the southwest border; caught off guard, slow to identify the enemy; awkward passive dealing in the early stages of the war.
- 4) How the role of the Vietnamese volunteer army was shown and its effect in the implementation of international service led to the victory of the Cambodian revolution and the fall of the Pol Pot regime on January 7, 1979. The teaching content must focus on the meaningful statements of the State and people of Cambodia as stated by Mr. Samdech Heng Samri (2014) "*Only Vietnam, under the leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam. , has voluntarily brought his descendants and loved ones to help liberate and save the lives of Cambodian people in countless dangers...*"; Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen "*Many countries consider democracy, but there is no one to help the Cambodian people against the Pol Pot genocide, only Vietnam*".
- 5) The role of the leaders of the Communist Party of Vietnam and the State of Vietnam socialism in solving diplomatic crisis issues with countries in the region and around the world; victory of the war to protect the Fatherland in the southwest border.

6. Conclusion

The southwestern border war that saved the Cambodian people from genocide and defended the national sovereignty of Vietnam affirmed: this is a just war, forever is a noble symbol of the pure and faithful international proletariat of the Party, State and people of Vietnam towards the Party, State and people of Cambodia. In the twentieth century, the victory of the war to protect the southwest border and the Cambodian people and the Cambodian army over the genocide regime, reviving the country, Vietnam has made a noble cause, shining upright justice.

The victory of the war to protect the Fatherland and the Cambodian people in the victory over the genocidal Pol Pot regime created a turning point in history; restore the fighting solidarity, the traditional friendship between the people of the two countries Vietnam - Cambodia. To tighten the friendship and solidarity fighting between the two countries in the new revolution period, the delegation of the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, led by Chairman of the Council of Ministers Pham Van Dong, Officially visited the People's Republic of Cambodia from February 16-18, 1979. The result of the visit was that the two countries signed the Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation together on February 18, 1979. According to the content of the treaty, the Vietnamese army continues to be present in Cambodia to help you protect the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and revive Cambodia. By September 1989, according to the agreement, Vietnam had withdrawn all volunteer troops and military experts to the country, completing the lofty international mission.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Authors' contribution

Both authors contributed equally to the conception and writing of the manuscript.

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