

The 1968 General Offensive and Uprising with the Vietnam War

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Summary: - *The 1968 General Offensive and Uprising in South Vietnam is one of the outstanding events of the Vietnam War that attracted the attention of many domestic and international researchers. However, up to now, there are still different assessments of the gain - loss, victory - defeat, advantages - mistakes of each warring party. These are historical issues that need further clarification. This study focuses on explaining the reasons why the Vietnamese side decided to open the General Offensive and Uprising; salient points of the general offensive; from which to draw the most general and basic assessment of the event.*

Keywords: - *Vietnam War, Tet 1968, Johnson and Vietnam, the Mau Than 1968.*

Introduce:

The purpose and reason Vietnam opened the Mau Than Offensive and Uprising (1968) not only researchers, but also generals and insiders of both Vietnam and the US have different assessments and perceptions. General Westmoreland¹ thinks that Vietnam has proved “the Americans could only win at a greatly increased cost, and inflict the Americans with a disastrous Dien Bien Phu in the American election year and gain some leverage to get to the bargaining table before an opponent the player whose resolve is probably weakened a lot”² (Westmoreland 1988, p.101) and “... they are determined to win an important military-political victory in the US Presidential election year”³. US Ambassador Bunker in Saigon, in the report dated February 4, 1968, asserted: The Viet Cong's offensive was aimed at psychological impact rather than military; they intended to make the people lose confidence in the Americans and the Saigon government failed to protect them. Front line with

¹ The commander of the US Military Aid Command, Vietnam (MACV) in Saigon, after the Tet Offensive in 1968, was recalled by President Johnson to the Pentagon to hold the position of Army Chief of Staff.

² Westmoreland, *Report of a soldier*, translation published by Young Publishing House, Ho Chi Minh City, 1988, p.101

³ Tran Trong Trung, *White House with the war of aggression in Vietnam*, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, 2005, p.559

America, Nguyen Van Thieu - President of the Republic of Vietnam commented: The Viet Cong were tired of sitting down to negotiate; they want to gain advantages at home and abroad, want to put themselves in a strong position to bargain on the conference⁴ (Tran Trong Trung 2005, p.559). While, Vietnam started from the goal of turning the revolutionary war in the South into a new period - period of a decisive victory by the method of general offensive and uprising, hitting the enemy's headquarters in cities and towns throughout the South, focusing on Saigon - Hue - Da Nang, smashing American imperialism's will to invade⁵ (Ministry of Defense, Vietnam Military History Institute 2001, p.320).

Besides, the special features of the Tet offensive in 1968 such as: element of secrecy, surprise; background; attack scale; Vietnam's efforts and determination; or the unpredictable impact of an attack on both sides... is also a topic of interest to researchers. While, the surprise element of the

⁴ Tran Trong Trung, *White House with the war of aggression in Vietnam*, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, 2005, p.559

⁵ Ministry of Defense, Institute of Military History of Vietnam, *History of the resistance war against the US for national salvation (1954-1975)*, volume V: General offensive and uprising in 1968, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, 2013, p.320

attack has many evaluations from different approaches. General Vo Nguyen Giap, Commander-in-Chief of the Vietnam People's Army, said that: "...the first time, we organized and launched a simultaneous attack across the vast battlefield into the enemy's strongholds and still kept the surprise until the time of the shooting"⁶. American General Maxwell Taylor is also mentioned that the US side was completely surprised at the scale of the whole region of the Spring 1968 General Offensive and Uprising of the South Vietnamese army and people and the real surprise was that the enemy was able to open many fierce attacks at the same time⁷ (General Van Tien Dung 2007, p.378). Those are also the issues that the author of this study will raise and have his own explanations.

In terms of influence, impact, gain and loss of the 1968 Mau Than Offensive and Uprising with each side participating in the war, it is also quite diverse. Henri Kissinger said that: "The Viet Cong's 1968 Mau Than Offensive was defeated, but damaged American public support for the war in Vietnam"⁸ (Henri Kissinger, p.68). Besides, Jeff Stein and Marc Leepson asserted: "Although the Communists suffered militarily and suffered great losses, it was the proclamation of history that they had won a decisive strategic victory. The Americans lost faith in the good predictions of the Johnson administration and came to the conclusion that the war would have to drag on for many more years"⁹ (Jeff Stein - Marc Leepson 1993, p.81). General Van Tien Dung identified: the US not only "cannot win" but is actually "losing"¹⁰ (General Van Tien Dung 2007, p.377). First Secretary of the

⁶General Vo Nguyen Giap: "*Tet Mau Than, the decisive battle of historical strategic war*", Saigon - Mau Than 1968, Ho Chi Minh City General Publishing House, 2013, p.359

⁷ General Van Tien Dung, *Anthology*, People's Army Publishing House, Hanoi, 2007, p.378

⁸ Henri Kissinger, *End of the Vietnam War* (Special Reference), volume 1, Vietnam News Agency Publishing House, p.68

⁹ Jeff Stein - Marc Leepson: *Handbook of events of the Vietnam War*, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, 1993, pp.80-81

¹⁰ General Van Tien Dung, *Anthology*, People's Army Publishing House, Hanoi, 2007, p. 377

Communist Party of Vietnam Le Duan affirmed: "During the General Offensive and Uprising on the occasion of the Mau Than Offensive, we won a great victory, the enemy lost a lot. Obviously, this battle opened a strategic turning point marking the period when the US had to deescalate the war due to its failure in the local war strategy"¹¹ (Le Duan 1985, p.214). In addition, the attack and uprising of The Mau Than Spring shook the United States, making it clear to the American rulers in the White House and Pentagon that the American army would be defeated¹² (Ministry of Defense, Vietnam Military History Institute 2001, p.320).

For such a large and complex event as the Mau Than Offensive, it is not easy to have an accurate, objective and comprehensive assessments and comments. The meeting of the Politburo of the Communist Party of Vietnam on April 23, 1994 concluded: besides, the great victories, the Tet Offensive also had mistakes in strategic direction, so it faced many difficulties and losses¹³. Besides, William Colby, former director of the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) reviewed: in just a few days, the South Vietnamese and American armies really contained the attack, the communists could not win ... on the communist side, their intelligence agencies also underestimated the strength of the South Vietnamese and American armies, which led to disaster for them. The Communists suffered many losses ... However, that Tet offensive became the turning point of the war and the advantage was in their favor¹⁴ (William Colby 2007, p.138-139). In the spirit of scientific research that inherits, selects and closely follows historical events that have taken place, putting it in overall relationship with what is

¹¹Le Duan, *Letter to the South*, Truth Publishing House, Hanoi, 1985, p.214

¹² Ministry of Defense, Institute of Military History of Vietnam, *History of the resistance war against the US and national salvation (1954-1975)*, volume V, General offensive and uprising in 1968, National Political Publishing House, H. 2001, p. .320

¹³ Conclusion of the Politburo meeting on April 23, 1994 on giving opinions on the Draft summary of the Resistance war against the US and national salvation, Archives No. 215-BBK/BCT.

¹⁴ William Colby, *The Vietnam War, A Missed Victory*, People's Public Security Publishing House, Hanoi, 2007, p.138, 139

relevant, the article's author gives assessments, summaries, and reviews.

Research Questions

The article focuses on clarifying research questions, which is also the orientation in which the report conducts research:

1. Why did Vietnam decide to launch the 1968 General Offensive and Uprising?
2. What are the special features of the General Offensive and Uprising?
3. General assessment of the general offensive and uprising against the war?

Regarding the reason, the goal of Vietnam to launch the 1968 Mau Than Offensive and Uprising

Vietnam's decision to launch the 1968 Mau Than Offensive and Uprising came from the following basic reasons:

Firstly, the position and forces of the Southern revolution had developed.

Until the end of 1967, that is, nearly 3 years after American combat troops poured into the South with superior means, firepower, and an overwhelming force of nearly half a million troops, not to mention more than 50,000 troops American allies and more than half a million Saigon troops but the US still could not turn the situation of strategic passivity, could not force the Liberation Army of Vietnam to fight the American way. In contrast, Vietnam "learned and more than made the Americans fight in their own way. They are leading the army and marines away"¹⁵ (Neil Sheehan 1990, p.378). In addition, an interesting statistic from American research confirms that up to 88 percent of the cases of clashes between the end of 1965 and the beginning of 1966 were initiated by the Vietnamese side first¹⁶ (Neil Sheehan 1990, p. 379). Further proving the actual ability of Vietnam and the US in the war, in May 1967, Robert McNamara, US

¹⁵Neil Sheehan, *A bright shining lie- John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam*, volume 2, Ho Chi Minh City Publishing House, Ho Chi Minh City, 1990, p.378

¹⁶Neil Sheehan, *A bright shining lie- John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam*, volume 2, Ho Chi Minh City Publishing House, Ho Chi Minh City, 1990, p.379

Secretary of Defense sent President Lyndon Johnson a letter in which he affirmed that: "The President could not win the war in Vietnam and was forced to negotiate an unfavorable peace"¹⁷ (Neil Sheehan 1990, p.379). That shows that the right to take the initiative in the battlefield belongs to the revolutionary forces even though the US aggressively implemented counterattack strategies in the dry season and the strategy of *Research and Destroy* the main force of the Liberation Army.

In fact, the US had to change its war strategy, from a special war strategy to *a local war strategy*, American troops played the main combat role on the battlefield, and the Saigon army only had the task of supporting and pacifying. The US Government also decided to expand the war space, escalate bombing and raiding the North by air and navy in order to destroy the economic and military potential of the great rear, and prevent and proceed to cut off the support of the North to the South. However, the US failed to achieve the set target, failed to destroy the main force of the Liberation Army, failed to destroy the infrastructure of the North, failed to prevent the reinforcement of human and material resources from the North into the South. On the contrary, the US also suffered great material losses, soldiers' lives and shot down many planes. US forces, weapons and firepower are now dispersed in both regions, unable to concentrate entirely on the main battlefield in the South. By the end of 1967, the armed forces for the liberation of the South were still standing and developing, with little loss. That allows to concentrate the majority of forces to launch the largest, most unexpected and largest-scale strategic offensive in space.

Second, Vietnam has been relatively aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the US, the Saigon Government and the advantages and disadvantages of the international context.

After the US sent troops into Vietnam, in December 1965, the Vietnamese leader made a remark: "Although the US imperialists sent in tens of

¹⁷Neil Sheehan, *A bright shining lie- John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam*, volume 2, Ho Chi Minh City Publishing House, Ho Chi Minh City, 1990, p.380

thousands of troops, they were strategically forced to disperse their forces across the battlefields and fell more and more into a passive position, getting bogged down and failing”¹⁸(Communist Party of Vietnam 2003, p.630). At the same time, the use of a large number of troops directly involved in the war, overwhelming firepower and weapons to destroy the revolutionary armed forces of the South in a short time, will make the people's fight Vietnam is more difficult, more fierce. However, The US strengthens its forces in the context of a special war strategy that is in danger of being completely bankrupt and save the Saigon government and army, the new colonialism scheme that the US has worked so hard to build over the past 10 years is in danger of collapsing. This shows that the US is in a losing position, a passive position, so there is no major change in the comparison of forces on the battlefield. Therefore, “The US is unlikely to launch a third dry season counterattack. The trend of the situation throughout 1968 was that the US would become more and more passive defensively than before”¹. Along with that, the difficulties in the heart of the United States are not as small as the huge financial costs of the Vietnam War; The American people increasingly protested, demanding that the Government end the war in Vietnam; the US war administration disagreed and disagreed on the solution to the Vietnam War...the US is in a "dilemma" situation.

In the world, Soviet Union and China had serious conflict, but they agree on the point of needing a lot of help and aid for Vietnam to fight the US to protect the outpost of socialism in Southeast Asia. Besides, the Vietnamese people's resistance war has also received the sympathy and support of peace, democracy and justice-loving forces in the world, the movement to support the Vietnamese people in the resistance war against the US, and save country is getting stronger. However, there are also some countries that advise Vietnam not to confront the US army because this is the strongest army in the world, never losing a battle; Vietnam should

¹⁸ Communist Party of Vietnam, *Complete Party Document*, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, 2003, vol. 26, p.630

negotiate to get the most favorable terms possible, the Party and State of Vietnam listen to such advice but show independence in perception, thought, policy and action. Vietnam believes that first of all, they must directly clash with American combat troops to know and understand the real strength of the US, and if they are determined to fight the US, they will find a suitable and effective way to fight. Therefore, Vietnam is still determined to fight the US and win the US. From the victory of the first American battles that Vietnam waged after American troops landed in Da Nang (March 8, 1965) such as Nui Thanh, Quang Nam (May 26, 1965), Van Tuong, Quang Ngai (August 18, 1965), and Play me (from the end of October to the end of November 1965) ... help Vietnam affirm that it can defeat the US and is completely capable of defeating the US. Vietnam initially understood the strengths and weaknesses of the US in order to determine an appropriate and effective way to fight, to decide on a strategic military strike that would decide to turn the tide of the war and maintain the right to take the initiative in the battlefield.

From the above analysis and perception, the Vietnamese leadership decided to launch the Offensive & Uprising in the most unexpected way, hitting the enemy's strongest and most solid targets, which are cities and towns, military bases, warehouses, airports, harbors, etc. This largest scale Offensive & Uprising was to prove to the US that the South Vietnamese Liberation Army was not only not destroyed but also had enough strength to simultaneously attack the strongest places of the US and the Saigon Government and army; the Leader of Vietnam said that this is also the time to strike a decisive blow to turn the war in favor of Vietnam and made the US Government admit the fact that Vietnam could not be won by military force, shook the will of the US to continue the war with high intensity and the US Government needed to find other solutions to end the war.

Third, Vietnam has had experience in urban warfare since the time of the resistance war against the French colonialist.

In the resistance war against the French colonialist (1945-1954), army and people of Vietnam has

accumulated a lot of combat experience in the city, starting with the battle in Saigon itself (from September 23, 1945); in Nha Trang (from October 19, 1945); in Haiphong, Lang Son Town (from November 20, 1946); to the mass shooting in Hanoi and other cities north of the 16th parallel opened the national resistance war (from December 19, 1946)...When the gunfire of the general offensive broke out, the areas controlled by the US and the Saigon Government became areas actively conducted by the Vietnam. That is the result of the people's wars alternating with a dovetailing saw tooth pattern that Vietnam has acquired from the tradition of fighting against foreign invaders, from the inheritance and development of experiences of the resistance war against the French colonialists. Therefore, the Offensive & Uprising in 1968 is the continuation of the battle experience in the city in a new context, with a new combat object. The army and people of the South had grown in strength, how to attack from the outside, and were completely proactive in the timing and goals of the attack.

The idea of launching a general offensive with the main goal of targeting the city to win has been proposed by the Labor Party of Vietnam since 1961 after the victory of the Dong Khoi movement in 1960. In the end of 1964 and the beginning of 1965, when America's special war strategy was in danger of bankruptcy because the three pillars could not be implemented, that: 1- the instability and decay of the Saigon government due to constant conflicts and coups; 2- inefficiencies in combat and organization and force building of the Saigon army; 3- the failure and bankruptcy of the strategic hamlet national policy to pacify the southern countryside. However, because American combat troops were rushed to the South in large numbers, the opportunity to launch a general offensive was no longer favorable and the conditions for complete victory were also affected.

Fourth, in 1968 took place the Presidential election and US Congress, Viet Nam's war is the major concern of American voters, if Vietnam hits hard and wins big, it will have a huge impact on American politics.

The Vietnamese leadership commented that if President Johnson wants to be re-elected for a

second term, you need to prove to American voters a clear victory in the Vietnam War. So, Vietnam decided to open the Offensive & Uprising to make the American people aware of the reality of the war in Vietnam, forcing the US Government to consider a solution other than the use of military force, which has proven ineffective.

The special features of the 1968 General Offensive and Uprising

Firstly, this is the turning point of the war

The attack was Vietnam's biggest military and political effort since 1954. Although Vietnam also suffered great losses and did not achieve the set target due to its subjective assessment of the situation and comparison of forces, the victory achieved had a great impact. The General Offensive "immediately caused a great shock throughout the United States"¹⁹ (George C. Herring 1998, p. 245). This is a fatal blow that makes the US realize that its military power is limited, the United States could not win militarily in this war, especially having "made the decisive turning point of the war"²⁰ (Ministry of Defense, Vietnam Military History Institute 2001, p.323). During the general offensive, "we destroyed an important part of the enemy's forces and means of war... America's will to invade was shaken, the enemy had to concessions, sit down and negotiate with us in Paris"²¹ (Communist Party of Vietnam 2006, p.342, 343). The US entered a new period of crisis - a time when the US's global strategy was turned upside down, the period "the United States received a blow to Vietnam not only on the battlefield, but also on the territory of the United States of America"²² (General Van Tien Dung 2007, p.379). US "forced to initiate

¹⁹George C. Herring, *America's longest war*, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, 1998, p.245

²⁰ Ministry of Defense, Institute of Military History of Vietnam, *History of the resistance war against the US and national salvation (1954-1975)*, Volume V: *General Offensive and Uprising in 1968*, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, 2001, p. 323

²¹ Communist Party of Vietnam, *Complete Party Document*, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, 2006, vol. 37, pp.342-343

²² General Van Tien Dung *Anthology*, People's Army Publishing House, Hanoi, 2007, p.379

withdrawal measures"²³(Neil Sheehan 1990, p.429). The Mau Than Offensive created an important turning point, became one of the direct reasons, the decision to force President Johnson to propose substantive negotiations with the Democratic Republic of Vietnam to find a solution to end the war. At the same time, The US also forced to change war strategy, undertaking "de-Americanization of the war", and transfer responsibility of combat directly to the government and army of the Republic of Vietnam.

Second, this is the greatest military effort, demonstrating Vietnam's highest determination to win a decisive victory since the beginning of the war.

From 1965 to 1968, US mobilized 70% the army; 60% the marine; 40% the navy and 60% the air force for the battlefield in South Vietnam²⁴ (The War review steering Committee under The Politburo 1995, p.312). The density of American, Allied and Saigon troops in an area of 1km² during the Vietnam War was the highest density ever achieved in any previous war²⁵ (Ministry of Defense, Vietnam Military History Institute 2001, p.14). Therefore, based on strength, perceive the opponent's strengths and weaknesses, The Vietnamese leadership decided to concentrate all forces²⁶ carry out the Offensive & Uprising in the strongest place of the enemy, combine military offensive with mass uprising throughout the South. This is the offensive with the largest scale, with the largest participating force, hitting the most targets and on the widest scale that the Vietnamese army

and people conduct in order to win decisive victory to turn the situation around face the war. History professor of the Kentucky University George C. Herring commented: "In the 24 hours after Tet began, on January 30, 1968, the Viet Cong launched a series of attacks from the demilitarized zone to Ca Mau. They beat 36 out of 44 provincial capitals, 5 out of 6 major cities, 64 district capitals and 50 hamlets. In addition to the daring battle against the embassy, Viet Cong units hit Tan Son Nhat airport, the Presidential Palace and the headquarters of the General Staff. In Hue, 7,500 liberators fought like a storm and finally captured the ancient citadel and the inner city"²⁷ (George C. Herring 1998, p. 243)

Third, this is an event marking the culmination of Vietnam's art of directing war during the resistance war

In terms of the scale of preparation time and war space, this is the most secret and unexpected event. Because both the civilian and military intelligence systems and the eye-and-eye network of the US and the Republic of Vietnam were completely surprised when the gunfire broke out at the right time of the New Year's Eve's Mau Than. President Johnson and advisors was really shocked by the surprise and the scale of the attack because he did not think of the situation where the Viet Cong could launch a general attack even though an intelligence officer of Westmoreland said that: "knew exactly what was going to happen but it was so absurd that I couldn't tell anyone"²⁸ (George C. Herring 1998, p. 243, 244). General Taylor²⁹ said that he affirmed that

²³Neil Sheehan, *A bright shining lie, John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam*, volume 2, Ho Chi Minh City Publishing House, Ho Chi Minh City, 1990, p.429

²⁴War Review Steering Committee under the Politburo, *Summary of the resistance war against the US, national salvation - Victory and lessons*, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, 1995, p.312

²⁵ Ministry of Defense, Institute of Military History of Vietnam, *History of the resistance war against the US and national salvation (1954-1975)*, volume V: *General offensive and uprising in 1968*, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi. 2001, p.14

²⁶ In 1967, in South Vietnam, the total number of the Liberation Army of Vietnam was 220,000 main troops and 57,000 local troops (excluding militia, guerrillas and self-defense forces).

²⁷George C. Herring, *America's longest war*, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, 1998, p.243

²⁸ George C. Herring, *America's longest war*, National Political Publishing House, H, 1998, pp.243-244

²⁹ General Maxwell Taylor (1901-1987), was a soldier, a diplomat of the United States in the mid-twentieth century. He served as Director of the United States Military Academy; Army Chief of Staff; Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Was a fighter in World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War. He played an important role in the early days of the Vietnam War, was a participant in the drafting of the plan to pacify South Vietnam (the Staley-Taylor plan), was the US Ambassador to Vietnam (1964-1965), and was a special adviser to the President and Chairman of the President's Committee on Foreign Intelligence (1965-1969). He was

Vietnam was not capable of solving logistical difficulties. The real surprise of the 1968 attack was not only the area-wide scale of the offensive, but also the fact that the South Vietnamese army and people "were able to launch so many fierce attacks at once"³⁰ (General Van Tien Dung 2007, p.378). Before New Year's Eve, General Westmoreland still believed that the main attack of the enemy would be concentrated at Khe Sanh, but all his judgments were proven to be completely wrong³¹ (Clark Dougan – Stephen Weiss 1983, p. 12). American public opinion confirmed "in that war created so many surprises, no surprise surprised people more than the Tet offensive, especially the typical attack on the US Embassy, a officials have stated many times that the worst is over"¹ (Michael Maclear 1981, p.427).

It was the secrecy and surprise of the general offensive that proved the US pacification program was ineffective, because of out of control failed to capture the hearts and minds of the people and a large part of the population silently supported and helped conceal the preparations for the attack of the old revolutionary forces. America admits: "... can't break the spirit and political effectiveness of the opponent. The South Vietnamese government also seems to be more unstable than before, pacification is not progressing but also going backward..."³²

The attack shows that the direction of strategic diversionary activities of the Vietnamese leadership has achieved the highest efficiency. Vietnam decided to attack at the right time "the US and the South Vietnamese government are defenseless...US Command too preoccupied to Khe Sanh to the point where they treat evidence of activity in the city as a diversion to distract them from the main battlefield ... the US underestimated the enemy's capabilities. The Liberation Army seemed to have

also the President of the Academy of Defense Analysts (1966-1969).

³⁰ General Van Tien Dung *Anthology*, People's Army Publishing House, Hanoi, 2007, p.378

³¹ Clark Dougan – Stephen Weiss, *The Vietnam Experience: Nineteen Sixty Eight*, Boston Publishing, 1983, p.12

³² Michael Maclear, *Vietnam: The ten thousand day war*, Thames Mathuen, New York, 1981, p.427

suffered so much damage in the 1967 campaigns that the Americans did not think they could recover and deliver a punch the size of this offensive"³³ (George C. Herring 1998, p. 243). With a series of diversionary activities deployed such as: the fake planning for the entire winter-spring combat operation 1967-1968, disseminated to all levels of battlefield commanders, to large units with the policy of keeping half-closed and half-open so that the enemy could be misjudged; massive preparations but not a major battle for the war with the Americans in the Khe Sanh valley, which in late 1967 attracted the special attention of the US Command in South Vietnam, the United States. White, the Pentagon, even American strategic researchers, the US Department of Defense also think of Khe Sanh as a place Vietnam chose to "repeat the battle of Dien Bien Phu"³⁴ (George C. Herring 1998, p. 242).

Vietnam's proposal to cease fire on the occasion of the Lunar New Year of the nation; Party and military leaders go abroad for medical treatment and convalescence completely misled the judgment and preparedness of the enemy, creating conditions for forces to prepare all factors to ensure a general offensive. This is a great and outstanding success in the art of directing the war of the Vietnamese leadership.

In addition, decisive bravery, reckless and excellent and creative art of war direction of the Vietnam Workers' Party also expressed in policies, plans, and directions to strike at the strongest and most sensitive places of the enemy to create the greatest effect at a time when the US is pushing the war to the highest level in order to win in a quick time. Expected to be 30 months, according to the plan of US Army Commander Westmoreland.

The evaluation of Tet Offensive 1968 in Vietnam War)

In order to evaluate an event, it is necessary to place that event in a specific historical context, have an objective and historical viewpoint, and consider the

³³ George C. Herring, *America's longest war*, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, 1998, p.226

³⁴ George C. Herring, *America's longest war*, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, 1998, p.242

event comprehensively in its overall relation to other events and phenomena. American historian William J. Duiker commented: to properly appreciate a Mau Than, it is necessary to induct around it all difference levels, not simply consider who losses more in battle”³⁵ (William J. Duiker 1981, p.278). The Offensive and Uprising considered a most important even but most complex of the Vietnam’s war, so, need to comment and review this even on comprehensive and objective opinion.

In Vietnam, the politicians, researchers agree that: The Offensive &Uprising is great victory decisive of the resistance war against the United State, save country. Vietnam won brainstorming confrontation, achieved its goal of forcing the US to change its stance on war, assess the potential and strength of the opponent. The Offensive &Uprising divided American society, make raising anti - war in America. However, if consider the "body count" method that the US often takes as a basis to evaluate the victory - loss, the Vietnamese side has not achieved the set goal, suffered great losses in force, and the number of casualties in Vietnam is higher than the United States and the Republic of Vietnam, at the same time, the land is reduced, the position of the revolutionary war was weakened due to an incorrect assessment of the comparison of forces and the response of the US, the army and the government Saigon. Similar to this assessment, George C. Herring commented: The Mau Than Tet Offensive was a failure of the enemy, but it was also an expensive victory for the US and the South Vietnamese Government...North Vietnam launched at Mau Than Tet Offensive to influence the US and the succeeded³⁶(George C. Herring 1998, p.245). Vietnam won an overwhelming psychological and political victory, lead to the fact that “the war in Southeast Asia, is causing a civil war right in the United State³⁷(George C. Herring 1998, p.277), that is the growing anti-war protests by the American

people, disagreement on how to resolve the Vietnam war of the American military generals and the White House; the rift between the Republic of Vietnam and the America, affect the psychology of many soldiers and officials of the Republic of Vietnam about the possibility of American troops withdrawing from Vietnam and so affect to effective “Vietnamization of war” of America after that.

In America, many governments, researchers, and historians agree with the assessment that the US has lost politically and psychologically, has failed in strategy when it has overwhelming force more than the enemy, more than firepower and mobility but can’t take the advantage and initiative in the war. On the contrary, America has to be passive in response to the attack. The most important thing is that the will to continue the war has been broken, the US has begun the process of strategic downwards, must concession the war. “When the Mau Than Tet offensive in 1968 exposed the defeat of the war, the inevitable consequence was a psychological collapse and a domestic political crisis of historical magnitude... and the American people realized America's victory has not been seen "in sight". Vietnam war will be never won... the assurances that the public has heard are lies, bragging”³⁸ (Neil Sheehan 1990, p. 424, 425). Besides, with the explosion of information and the way the American media reported with big headlines about the general offensive that prompted the American people to think "Americans should stop their efforts in Vietnam, where the situation is now hopeless”³⁹(William Colby 2007, p. 139, 140). There are many assessments confirming the impact and influence of the Mau Than Offensive on the US and the direction of the war: General Vo Nguyen Giap confirmed “before Tet Americans think they can win, but after Tet they think it's

³⁵ William J .Duiker, *The Communist Road to Power in Vietnam*, Westview Press, 1981, p.278

³⁶ George C. Herring, *America's longest war*, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, 1998, p.245

³⁷ George C. Herring, *America's longest war*, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, 1998, p.277

³⁸ Neil Sheehan, *A bright shining lie, John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam*, volume 2, Ho Chi Minh City Publishing House, Ho Chi Minh City, 1990, pp.424-425

³⁹ William Colby, *Vietnam War, a missed victory*, People's Public Security Publishing House, Hanoi, 2007 pp.139-140

impossible”⁴⁰(Peter Macdonald 1993, p. 268). The Mau Than Tet “confounded the White House, even disoriented, which led to the downfall of the Johnson administration and marked a turning point in the American war in Vietnam”⁴¹ (Townsend Hooper 1969, p.145). The Mau Than Tet had a great impact on the US situation in all aspects, forcing Johnson to change his policy on the war in Vietnam, to declare a cessation of bombing in North Vietnam, to propose peace negotiations and not to come out apply for a second term. So, the most decisive impact of the Tet offensive shows the fact that the US is facing a potential and serious crisis ... Vietnam became America's first foreign war since 1882, causing a deep internal and social crisis and a political divide⁴² (General Van Tien Dung 2007, p. 375). The Tet Offensive ended the Johnson administration's illusion of "hit fast, win quickly," and put the US military ahead of the prospect of "a war that will never end”

Besides, the majority of politic opinion and the US military, it is better not to have the Mau Than, because the general offensive was an effective test, demonstrating and exposing the limitations, weaknesses, and incompetence of the United States, and “reveal the fatal weaknesses of the Government of South Vietnam which had long been hidden under the guise of military victories”⁴³(Leslie Gelb – Richard Betts 1979, p.171) before a resilient, creative and courageous opponent, the revolutionary armed forces and the Vietnamese people.

Conclude

The US war in Vietnam ended nearly half a century ago with the victory belonging to the Vietnamese people on April 30, 1975. Now, there are thousands of research works, publications published in Vietnam, the US and other countries around the world writing about the Mau Than 1968. That shows the position, role and complexity, influence ...

⁴⁰ Peter Macdonald, *Giap: The Victory in Vietnam*, New York, 1993, p.268

⁴¹Townsend Hooper, *The Limits of Intervention*, MY Mc Key, 1969, p.145

⁴² General Van Tien Dung, *Anthology*, People's Army Publishing House, Hanoi, 2007, p.375

⁴³ Leslie Gelb and Richard Betts: *Irony Vietnam*, Brookings Institution, 1979, p.171

of an event that has a great impact on the warring parties, the direction of the war. However, there are difference opinions about this event, but confirming some unified perceptions: this was a landmark event of the war. For America, from using military power mainly to combining with diplomatic negotiations; America was forced to deescalate the war: limited to stop bombing the North; changed the strategy of waging war, admitted the defeat of a local war strategy, began the process of withdrawing US troops home, forcing an American President to leave the White House. For Vietnam, although it suffered great losses in terms of forces and posture, the South Vietnamese Liberation Army continued to maintain the initiative to attack until the successful end of the resistance war.

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