

# RESEARCHES ON ETHNIC RELATIONSHIP IN VIETNAM (FROM 1980 TO THE PRESENT)

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**Abstract:** This article summarizes researches on ethnic groups and ethnic relations in Vietnam conducted from 1980 to the present. The author shows that ethnic relations in Vietnam since 1986 are basically good in spite of some rare flashpoints and hazards in recent years. In the current context, ethnic relations are gradually becoming complex; cohesion among some ethnic groups reflects close solidarity, the inter-ethnic groups and transnational scale included. The dissociation also appears due to communication and exchange, and emerging ethnic-religious communities in some populations. This article also shows that the previous studies had some limitations as follows: i) inadequate theoretical frameworks; ii) lack of holistic approaches; iii) limited empirical bases; iv) gaps in research content; and v) restrictions in research methodology.

**Key words:** ethnicity, ethnic relationship, renovation, Vietnam.

In research of ethnicity, examination of ethnic relationship has both important theoretical and practical implications. Ethnic relationship is the relation between different ethnic groups in a country and internationally, and the relation between an ethnic group and the community of nation - state in different aspects such as politics, economy, society, culture, etc. Ethnic relationship is a natural relation in a multicultural nation-state, affected by many factors.

The importance of ethnic relationship has been recognized. However, how to deal with this properly in each country is not easy. Over time, ethnic relationship is changing. And over time, political regimes are also changing their policies related to ethnic relationship, thus having effect on ethnic relationship. Besides, ethnic relationship is also influenced by international context, which are external factors, with unpredictable consequences.

In Vietnam, ethnic relationship is the field to which the Party and State has been paying a special attention. As a result, during the war for independence and protection of the country, ethnic minorities groups stood side by side with Kinh people (the majority) and contributed to this task considerably. Stepping into the period of modernization and industrialization to develop the country, the Party's and government policies have been focusing more on issues of solidarity and equity to support each other among different ethnic groups.

Thanks to favorable policies, since the period of *Doi moi* (renovation) until the present, ethnic relation in Vietnam has been evaluated as stable. The main tendency is the close relationship among different ethnic groups. However, there have been issues of conflict among some ethnic

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groups in different localities. Riots in the Highlands by small ethnic groups, protection for land by the Khmer people in the Southwest or, most recently, riots by the H'mong people in Muong Nhe district, Dien Bien province which asked for religious freedom and establishment of the Kingdom of H'mong people have demonstrated that ethnic relation in Vietnam has become more complicated with unstable internal factors.

What accounts for the fact that we have favorable ethnic policies, and at the same time, complicated issues related to ethnic relationship have arisen? Over the past time there have been researches trying to give explanations to the issue. The common point is that those researchers have recognized both subjective and objective causes. However, they seem to blame objective causes, which are explained mainly as opposite forces, more for the instability. Subjective causes have not been identified clearly. Instead, they have been described rather in a general way, avoiding details.

In the above described context, it is important to carry out research of ethnic relationship in Vietnam seriously. In order to do this well, first, it is necessary to reflect on achievements and limitations of researches carried out during the past time. Therefore, this paper mainly focuses on how the issue raised has been examined since 1980 up to the present, providing an overview of the situation in research of ethnic relationship in Vietnam, since the time General Statistics Office published *Index of Ethnic Minority Groups in Vietnam* in 1979.

### 1. Viewpoint and research approach

In our country, related to the concept “ethnic relationship” (“*quan he dan toc*”<sup>(1)</sup>) it is necessary to mention ethnographers. The concept of ethnic relationship has been developed over time. During the period between 1960s-2000, there was not a clear definition of ethnic relationship, and that relationship was often understood as the relationship among different sub-groups of a specific group or among different ethnic groups in an area/region, mainly expressed in the relationship of language and culture; or ethnic relationship was associated to the ethnic process (Nguyen Van Huy, 1983a; Phan Huu Dat, 1998, pp.624-638, 639-644; 2004, pp.704-762). Later, the concept of ethnic relationship was expanded. According to Pham Quang Hoan and Nguyen Hong Duong (2008) and Phan Xuan Bien (2011, p.11), ethnic relationship as understood in Vietnam nowadays is primarily: 1) The relationship among all different ethnic groups with the Nation – Socialist Republic of Vietnam; 2) The relationship between the main ethnic group (Kinh people) and other ethnic groups; 3) The relationship among

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<sup>(1)</sup> In Vietnamese, the term “dan toc” has two meanings, both means *toc nguoi* (ethnicity), and means *quoc gia/ dan toc* (nation). To avoid misunderstanding, when referring to “dan toc” with the meaning of Ethnicity, we use two terms “dan toc” and “toc nguoi” with the same meaning; while when using the term “dan toc” with the meaning of Nation, we use the term “dan toc - quoc gia” (Nation - State) as it has been used in many scientific works in the world.

In fact, two terms Nation and Nation - State has slightly different meaning. However, in the context of the issue under discussion, we believe that the use of the term Nation – State might be more relevant.

different ethnic groups within and outside of Vietnam; and 4) The relationship within one specific ethnic group, including the relationship among them within Vietnam and with those of the same ethnic group living abroad. Vuong Xuan Tinh and Nguyen Van Minh, in a research of ethnic relationship in the Northern mountainous areas, the North Central Coast, the Central Highlands and Southwestern, tried to get an insight into the relationship between the ethnic group with political system and the relationship between an ethnic group with nation (Vuong Xuan Tinh and Nguyen Van Minh, 2009, pp.5-57; 2010, pp.51-125).

Through the development of the concept, it can be concluded that the concept of ethnic relationship has evolved considerably, and in general, has reflected fully the situation of that relationship in Vietnam at present. Among the above viewpoints, it is important to pay attention to the viewpoints of the concept of ethnic relationship by Pham Quang Hoan and Nguyen Hong Duong. However, the first point (1) can be replaced by the term “the relationship between ethnic group with the community of nation-state”, so that it can be more precise scientifically. The second point (2) partly overlapped with the third point (3); and in the fourth point (4), the international relationship of an ethnic group is not limited to the relationship with people of that specific ethnic group but also with people of other ethnic groups. The case that the Champa people have very close relationship with people of other ethnic groups but the same religion is an example.

Besides, international ethnic relationship in Vietnam at present should be classified separately in order to be examined more thoroughly.

Adopting the above viewpoints, we suggest the following points of ethnic relationship so that it can be the basis for analysis:

1. The relationship within one specific ethnic group.
2. The relationship among different ethnic groups.
3. The relationship between the main ethnic group (Kinh people) and other ethnic groups.
4. The ethnic relationship across countries
5. The relationship between a specific ethnic group with the community of nation-state.

The above mentioned relationships are expressed in many aspects such as origin, language, culture, marriage, family line, economy, politics, etc.

In theory, though ethnic relationship is a field of interest of historians, ethnographers, researchers of cultural studies, researchers of politics studies, etc., very few people address the theory of ethnic relationship, especially, the issue of application of theory in doing research in this field. Among the few researchers who have addressed related theories, we should mention authors such as Nguyen Van Huy (1983c), Be Viet Dang (1988, pp.3-15). Examining ethnic relationship in relation with ethnic processes, Be Viet Dang put forward the concept of getting closer among ethnic groups in our country. In fact, this concept is associated with the theory of ethnic processes by Russian

researchers which was quite common during the period of former Soviet Union. That theory has also influenced some researches by Nguyen Van Huy (1982, 1983a, 1983b), Do Thuy Binh (1986, pp.3-10; 1991, pp.19-27). From the viewpoint of the process of getting closer to each other by ethnic groups during the process of constructing socialism, author Nguyen Van Huy suggested the viewpoint of a community of Vietnamese people or the community of socialist Vietnamese people in Vietnam; at the same time, he suggested the approach of classification based on development level of different ethnic groups into nation, ethnic groups or tribes with the highest level being socialist nation (Nguyen Van Huy, 1983c, 1988).

Unfortunately, since 1990s until the present, there has been little effort of proposing new theories or applying theories in researching about ethnic relationship in Vietnam. In the work *“Several theoretical and practical urgent issues related to the existing ethnic relationship”*, Prof. Phan Huu Dat et al. addressed some issues related to the term “nation”, “ethnicity”, nation-state, the theoretical school in ethnic relationship of Soviet ethnographers. However, all the issues addressed by him are not much different from those addressed by Be Viet Dang and Nguyen Van Huy. Besides, Prof. Phan Huu Dat et al. gave overview of some theories common in the West such as the theory of conflict, diffusion theory, the theory of center and periphery from the criticism perspective [Phan Huu Dat (chief author), 2001, pp.11-101]. Recently, there have been researches mentioning theories of

foreign theorists without applying them in those researches (Vuong Xuan Tinh and Nguyen Van Minh, 2009; 2010; Phan Xuan Bien, 2011). As such, in this overview, we focus only on works examining ethnic relationship following the above described analytical framework.

## **2. Research of ethnic relationship in Vietnam**

### ***2.1. The relationship within one specific ethnic group***

So far, there have been different works in this field. Though every work has looked at the issue from a different perspective, generally, authors mainly analysed coherence or separation of an ethnic group.

During the 1960s-1980s, there was a tendency that ethnographers focused on exploring the identity of an ethnic group. In that difficult journey, they tried to prove consistency and coherence of ethnic groups. That tendency was also expressed in identifying components of different ethnic groups in Vietnam. From hundreds local groups of different ethnic groups, ethnographers classified them into 54 ethnic groups based on their similarity in language, culture and the awareness of ethnicity. However, in certain cases, the classification of local groups into the same ethnic group has demonstrated limitations. An example is the grouping of two groups - Cao Lan and San Chi into an ethnic group called San Chay [Khong Dien (chief author), 2003].

As described above, paying attention to the coherence of an ethnic group, many authors also have taken into consideration cultural consistency. Besides, there have

been researches focusing on strong coherence of certain ethnic groups and H'mong people can be an example. There have been a number of papers addressing the coherence of this ethnic group through the family line relationship and cultural similarities [Pham Quang Hoan, 1995; Phan Huu Dat (chief author), 2001, pp.223-241; Vuong Duy Quang, 2005; Nguyen Van Thang (chief author), 2009]. During the past time, there is a new type of coherence in the community of ethnic group which is coherence of a community based on ethnicity and religion. However, this type of coherence has not been studied thoroughly. So far, the issue has been addressed only in the case related to the Champa people (Phu Van Han, 2009). Cases related to other ethnic groups such as Hmong, Ede, Giarai have not been studied yet.

While before 1990s, the main tendency in examining ethnic relationship was the coherence, since 1990s until the present, there have been works addressing the separation. By the end of 1990s, in Vietnam there were 40 local groups who wanted to be separated into a distinct ethnic group [Phan Huu Dat (chief author), 2001, p.346]. On this basis, Institute of Ethnic Minorities Studies was assigned the task of reidentifying the component of certain ethnic groups in Vietnam (Khong Dien, 2002). However, the results of this research have not been published yet. Still, there are researches of this issue [Khong Dien (chief author), 2003; Dinh Thanh Du, 2008]. There are works about the situation of changing from traditional religion into Protestants among

H'mong people which has caused separation and conflicts among these ethnic people (between those following traditional religion and those having changed into Protestants) [Vuong Duy Quang, 2005; Nguyen Van Thang (chief author), 2009]. The religious factors has also caused separation among groups following Islamism, Brahmanism and Banism (Phan Xuan Bien, 2010, pp.17-18).

About the reason leading to the coherence, authors have often referred to the internal needs in development – which is the need to share and support each other within people of the same ethnicity, especially when they belong to the same family line or the village community (Pham Quang Hoan, 1995; Vuong Duy Quang, 2005, pp.106-132). Common reasons leading to separation can include external factors such as the market economy, globalization, illegal missionary [Vuong Duy Quang, 2005, pp.254-258; Nguyen Van Thang (chief author), 2009, pp.147-163].

## ***2.2. The ethnic relationship among different ethnic groups***

This relationship has been addressed by many authors, especially the social and cultural relationship. In terms of social relationship, Cam Trong (1978, pp.240-266) pointed out the domination in the old society with an example of Khang, La Ha, and Xinh-mun ethnic groups in the Northwest had to work for so called noble Thai people. Cultural relationship has been emphasized more, namely, the influence of the Thai culture on ethnic groups living in the Northwest (Phan Huu Dat, 2004, pp.404-405). Under this influence, there

have been cases when certain ethnic groups (e.g. Khang, Kho-mu) have lost many of their cultural elements. Prof. Be Viet Dang (1988) believed that this is the case of the assimilation or the ethnic transformation.

Recent researches continue addressing acculturation among ethnic minority groups under the influence of modernization and industrialization [Tran Binh, 2002; Pham Quang Hoan (chief author), 2003]. A research has pointed out that from perspective of regional culture, the influence of some ethnic minority groups with bigger population such as Tay and Nung in the Northeast has decreased and has been replaced by the influence of the culture of the Kinh (Viet) people [Vuong Xuan Tinh and Tran Hong Hanh (co-chief author), 2012, pp.254-263]. Tran Van Ha (chief author, 2011), Pham Quang Hoan (chief author, 2012) also paid attention to the issue of resettlement which has been taking place in many localities with ethnic minority groups, increasing mixed settlement among different ethnic minority groups, promoting acculturation. However, this also has raised the issue of safeguarding cultural identity of these ethnic minority groups.

The reason leading to strengthened relationship among ethnic minority groups as analysed by authors is the influence of the ethnic intermingling residence (Vuong Xuan Tinh, 1995), mixed marriage (Do Thuy Binh, 1991) and ethnic minority policies (Pham Quang Hoan and Nguyen Hong Duong, 2009; Phan Xuan Bien, 2011).

### ***2.3. Relationship between ethnic minorities groups with the Kinh people (Viet)***

This relationship has been addressed in many researches. Before, it was often believed that in history, the relationship between ethnic minorities groups with the Kinh (Viet) people was quite good without cases of domination. Even the migration towards the South to explore the Mekong River Delta also took place peacefully between the Kinh (Viet) people with local people living there (Nguyen Cong Binh et. al, 1990, pp.222-224). Other authors pointed out that there were cases when the Kinh (Viet) people came to live in the mountainous areas and could well integrate into the life of ethnic minorities communities (Phan Huu Dat and Lam Ba Nam, 2001). However, the issue of cultural exchange and cultural influence of one ethnic group on the other has been the interest of many authors and this interest has been increased. During the 1980s, there was a tendency to examine the getting closer between the Kinh (Viet) people and ethnic minorities groups (Nguyen Van Huy, 1982, pp.7-12; 1983a, pp.32-36; Be Viet Dang, 1988, pp.3-15).

Being the biggest ethnic groups with advantages in adopting new elements and disseminating its culture outside of Vietnam, the Kinh (Viet) had considerable influence on the cultures of many other ethnic minorities groups, especially in the context of industrialization, modernization and integration. Many researchers have warned about erosion, even the loss of culture of ethnic minorities due to the influence of the majority's culture. The research on sustainable development of ethnic cultures in the Northeast by Vuong

Xuan Tinh and Tran Hong Hanh (co-chief author, 2012, pp.167-233) has pointed out that due to the influence of the Kinh (Viet) people culture, most young people of a San Diu village under the research could not speak their mother tongue. This village has also lost several traditional cultural elements such as traditional houses, clothes, etc.

Since 1986, in the context of market economy, there have been cases when the Kinh (Viet) people take advantage of ethnic minorities when trading with them. It might be the case of usury which leads to the fact that ethnic minority people have to sell young rice (Vuong Xuan Tinh et al., 2007); or use other ways to appropriate their land (Vu Dinh Loi, Bui Minh Dao, Vu Thi Hong, 2000, pp.103-113). In the context of market economy, the differentiation between the rich and the poor has been increased more and more, among which there have been the differentiation between the majority and ethnic minorities, between the delta and mountainous areas. The reasons have been different, both subjective and objective. However, there has been a viewpoint that in implementing policies for poverty elimination, the Kinh (Viet) people could benefit more (Neil J et al., 2000; WB, 2006; AF, IDS, 2008).

In this situation, especially since conflicts in the Southwest and Central Highlands, many authors have been paying more attention to the relationship between the Kinh (Viet) people with ethnic minority people in these areas. They addressed economic relationship, the use of land and culture. However, these researches tend to

evaluate the negative effects from the side of ethnic minorities without paying proper attention to the examination of their roles in development in the areas of ethnic minority people (Truong Minh Duc, 2005; Khong Dien, 2005; Bui Minh Dao, 2009; Vuong Xuan Tinh and Nguyen Van Minh, 2010). Recently, Bui Xuan Dinh (2010) addressed the role of the Kinh (Viet) people in the relationship with ethnic minority people. However, the research was carried out in the Northeast, where the relationship among different ethnic minorities has been considered quite stable and smooth for many past decades.

Similar to the relationship among ethnic minorities, factors such as mixed settlement, mixed marriage and ethnic minorities policies have had considerable influence on the relationship between ethnic minority people with the Kinh (Viet) people (Nguyen Van Huy, 1982; Be Viet Dang, 1988; Phan Huu Dat, 2004, pp. 713-733). Since *Doi moi* to the present, many authors believe that the market economy, globalization, etc. have also been factors having effect on this relationship (Pham Quang Hoan and Nguyen Hong Duong, 2008; Bui Xuan Dinh, 2010; Vuong Xuan Tinh and Nguyen Van Minh, 2009; 2010).

As such, in investigating the relationship between the Kinh (Viet) people with ethnic minorities, while before 1986 the tendency was to examine the harmony and coherence, after 1986, especially since 2000 until the present, there has been also the tendency to examine conflicts among different ethnic minorities. Besides, there have been many

untruthful arguments by the opposite forces in the media trying to blacken this relationship. However, so far there has not been any comprehensive research of the relationship between the Kinh (Viet) people with ethnic minority people and the role of ethnic minorities in establishing national solidarity in our country.

#### ***2.4. The ethnic relationship across countries***

Due to different reasons, in Vietnam there are about 40 ethnic groups which have cross-country relationship at different levels. However, so far, the research in this field has been quite limited. Most of the works mentioned in this overview only partially address the issue under consideration rather than devote the entire content to it. Moreover, they mainly address the ethnic cross-border relationship, i.e. the relationship with the same ethnic group or other ethnic groups in three neighbouring countries sharing the border with Vietnam - China, Laos and Cambodia.

Among researches, the issue which has been addressed most often is the cross-border relationship between Vietnam and China. Some researchers have pointed out that many ethnic groups currently living in Vietnam have their origin from China, coming to settle in Vietnam during different periods in history. Nguyen Chi Huyen (chief author, 2000, pp.62-234) believed that over 20 ethnic groups belonging to the language groups of Tay - Thai, H'mong - Dao, Tang - Mien and currently live in the Northern provinces bordering with China have historical relationship with their people living on the other side of the border. This has also been confirmed by other

authors in their researches specializing on some ethnic groups such as Cam Trong (1978), Pham Quang Hoan and Hung Dinh Quy (chief author, 1999), etc.

Examining the relationship among ethnic groups living along the two sides of the border from the perspective of border security of the Northern mountainous provinces, Chu Thai Son (1987, pp.285-298) believed that it is important to strengthen the element of national culture in the bordering areas through enhancing position of the national language; expanding social, economic and cultural exchange between the lowlands and mountainous areas; respecting and safeguarding cultural identities of the local ethnic groups. After 23 years since the publication of the above mentioned research by Chu Thai Son, research of the Lo Lo people in the bordering area between Vietnam and China in Ha Giang province by Pham Dang Hien (2010, pp.5-13) showed that the use of the general language (Kinh) in this area has been increased besides the bilingual and multilingual use. In addition, the cross-border marriage relationship has also become more common. Bui Xuan Dinh (2010) also carried out a similar research of the ethnic cross-border relationship and received quite similar results in Lang Son province. The authors addressed the increasing number of migration cases by season to Guangxi province, China to find jobs to increase income among the Tay and Nung people in this province. Vuong Xuan Tinh (2011) examined quite in an comprehensive way the relationship of the Ha Nhi people in a village in Bat Xat district, Lao Cai province with the Ha Nhi



people living on the other side of the border. His research looked at the relationship from the perspectives of origin, family line, marriage, culture and business. Vuong Xuan Tinh also carried out a research examining the cross-border relationship of the Tay and Nung people in Lang Son primarily from the business perspective (Vuong Xuan Tinh, 2012, pp.66-76).

The cross-border relationship between Vietnam and Laos has also been the focus of several researches. Among the related works, there have been researches of the relationship in history of a specific ethnic group, marriage, family line, and migration of ethnic groups such as the Thai, Lao, Kho-mu, H'mong, Co-tu, Ta-oi, Bru - Van Kieu living along the border line between Vietnam and Laos (Ly Hanh Son, 2008; Pham Quang Hoan, 2011; Vuong Xuan Tinh, 2012). Besides, it is important to mention the research by Nguyen Duy Thieu of the Vietnamese people living in Laos and their relationship with Vietnamese people living in Vietnam (Nguyen Duy Thieu et. al, 2008).

The cross-border relationship between Vietnam and Cambodia has been the focus of several researches as this relationship has been quite complicated. Because there are issues which have been left from the history, and issues which have arisen recently, the ethnic relation with nation-state has also become the hot issue in the ethnic relationship. Among researches of cross-border relationship in this area, the relationship between the Khmer people with their people living across the border has been addressed in many works. Several

works emphasize the ethnic relationship in history between a group of Khmer people in the South with the Khmer people in Cambodia (Phan Huy Le, 2011). On the contrary, Tran Van Binh (2004) and Vuong Xuan Tinh (2012) believe that the relationship between the Khmer people in the South and Khmer people in Cambodia has been smooth until the present, especially in terms of Theravada Buddhism and other groups of Khmer people living in Vietnam and abroad.

Evaluating the situation the Khmer people in the Southwest, some researches emphasize the shortage of land, low income and high rate of poverty and illiterate people as factors causing the ethnic minority people to be targets for the opposites forces to disseminate untruthful information of the history, policies by the Party, thus making ethnic relationship between the Kinh people and Khmer people become more complicated, especially the relationship related to the groups of Khmer people returning from Cambodia to request for the land which they believed in history belonged to their ancestors (Le Ngoc Thang, 2010; Vuong Xuan Tinh, 2012).

As addressed above, researches of the international ethnic relationship in our country have addressed the cross-border ethnic relationship with three neighbour countries which are China, Laos and Cambodia. However, there have also been some other researches adding the relationship with countries which do not share the border line with Vietnam, such as the cases of Chinese - Vietnamese and Champa people.

For the Chinese - Vietnamese people, besides analysis of the origin of the ethnic group in relation to the relationship with their homeland, the authors tried to investigate the business relationship of the Chinese - Vietnamese people with other Chinese - Vietnamese living in China and some other countries (Phan An, 2005, pp.19-38; Nguyen Thi Nhung, 2014, pp.73-82). There have also been works which have addressed policies towards the community of Chinese - Vietnamese living in other countries in the region (Phan Xuan Bien, 2010, pp.440-450) or the position of the Chinese - Vietnamese in Vietnam and Southeast Asia in the current context (Chau Thi Hai, 2006, pp.322-385). Besides the main attention focusing on the relationship between the community of Chinese - Vietnamese people in Vietnam with Chinese - Vietnamese people in other countries, Nguyen Van Chinh (2013) also addressed the migration of these people to Vietnam and some other countries under the development policies of China, globalization and regionalization.

With the Champa people, the first research which should be mentioned is the investigation of the Champa culture. This research by Ngo Thi Chinh and Ta Long (2007) emphasized the influence of Islam. Some other authors addressed the issue of ethnic history and the relationship between Champa people living in Vietnam with Champa people living in the region such as Cambodia, Thailand, and Malaysia; religious relationship is emphasized to be the focus in considering international ethnic relationship in this ethnic group (Phu Van Han, 2009; Ly Hanh Son, 2011; Vuong Xuan Tinh, 2012).

Through examination of researchers of cross-country ethnic relationship in Vietnam, it can be seen that there is relationship among different ethnic minority groups with their people living in other countries which do not share the same border with Vietnam and this relationship might have influence the national security. However, this kind of relationship has not been investigated properly. This is the case of the relationship among H'mong people living in Vietnam with the H'mong people living in Thailand, Australia, France, Canada, England and America; of ethnic groups such as Khmer, Ede, Giarai with people of their ethnic groups living in America and some other Western countries. Meanwhile, for the recent years, the opposite forces of these ethnic groups living abroad cooperate with domestic opposite forces to raise riots against Vietnam, creating ethnic conflicts in the Northwest, the Central Highlands and Southwest.

The Kinh (Viet) people, especially in the South, also have diverse cross-country ethnic relationship, especially after 1975 when the war with America ended in Vietnam. Since that moment, a big number of the Kinh (Viet) people migrated or illegally crossed the border to come and settle in other countries, mainly in the Western Europe, North America and Australia. Thus, there has appeared close relationship between the Kinh (Viet) people living in Vietnam and abroad. At the same time, there has also appeared strategies against Vietnam by the opposite forces living abroad with activities such as communication and establishment of opposite parties and terrorist organizations.

However, until present, the number of researches investigating international ethnic relationship of the Kinh (Viet) people from the perspective of Ethnology/anthropology is still very limited. Some researches tried to look at the issue, however, only in terms of international marriage relationship (Phan An, 2004; Tran Manh Cat, 2007).

Researchers believed that the most important reason promoting cross-country ethnic relationship is the ethnic coherence [Ly Hanh Son, 2008; Nguyen Van Thang (chief author), 2009; Vuong Xuan Tinh, 2011]. Besides, innovations policies focusing on trade, business and investment have also had influence on this relationship. Finally, it is important to mention that cross-country relationship, globalization, ethnic policies of countries sharing the same border line have also had influence on cross-country ethnic relationship in Vietnam (Phu Van Han, 2009; Phan Xuan Bien, 2010; Vuong Xuan Tinh and Nguyen Van Minh, 2009, 2010; Vuong Xuan Tinh, 2012).

### ***2.5. The relationship between a specific ethnic group with the community of nation-state***

This is an important issue. However, during the past time, it has been addressed mainly from the perspective of history. During the 1970s and 1980s, the discussion was raised about the formation of the nation Vietnam with the participation of some ethnographers. However, as mentioned, it was mainly discussed from the perspective of history and the common belief is that the formation moment of Vietnamese nation was closely related with the role of the Kinh (Viet) people. Ethnic minority groups

were mentioned briefly due to the lack of historian facts. Still, it was believed that they had contributed considerably into the formation process of Vietnamese nation (Phan Huy Le, 1981, pp.6-15; 1982, pp.9-20; Dang Nghiem Van, 1978, pp. 9-18; 1984, pp.28-37). Based on arguments of population-structure, Nguyen Van Huy proposed a new viewpoint of the formation of Vietnamese nation which is considered to be the community of Vietnamese people (Nguyen Van Huy, 1983). Unfortunately, this viewpoint has not been addressed anymore until the present.

In order to explain the relationship of a specific ethnic group with state-nation<sup>(2)</sup>, Prof. Dang Nghiem Van tried to analyze the origin and meaning of that concept and indicated that the formation of Vietnamese nation has always been associated with the ethnic process in Vietnam (Dang Nghiem Van, 2003, pp.147-174). Besides, there have been researches in certain specific fields. As described above, Chu Thai Son (1987, pp.285-298) expressed concerns about the weak position of the national (Kinh) language in the area of Vietnam - China border during 1980s, having influence on the socio-economic development and national security in the area. This situation was also confirmed by Tran Van Ha (2005, pp.35-41) in another research. Together with language, several researches tried to examine the awareness of state-nation<sup>(3)</sup> expressed in the interests in political life of the country and obeying the law or the cross-border

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<sup>(2)</sup> This term was coined by Prof Dang Nghiem Van in the cited works.

regulations among the Khmer, Ha Nhi, H'mong and the Champa people (Nguyen Van Thang, 2010; Vuong Xuan Tinh, 2011; 2012). However, the sample of this research is small, thus the research representativeness is not high.

In the complicated situation of ethnic relationship in certain areas in the country, some authors have paid attention to the influence of the opposite forces in agitating ethnic minorities to ask for autonomy and secession. The Khmer from organization in Cambodia and in the other third countries under different roles have been taking advantage the Khmer people in Vietnam through agitating them about narrow-minded nationalism, ethnic hostility, opposition towards the Vietnam government, requesting for autonomy and religious freedom (Tran Van Binh, 2004; Bui Minh Dao, 2009; Le Ngoc Thang, 2010, pp. 407-424). FULRO organization and the so-called De Ga government have also agitated local ethnic groups in the Central Highlands to raise riots against Vietnamese government and asking for autonomy (Truong Minh Duc, 2005; Vuong Xuan Tinh and Nguyen Van Minh, 2009; 2010). However, investigation into this issue from this perspective is still limited and quite general. In a recent research, Vuong Xuan Tinh tried to carry out an experimental research of the awareness of state-nation of six communities- villages of the Tay, Nung, H'mong, Kho-mu, Champa and Khmer in three border areas of Vietnam-China, Vietnam - Laos, and Vietnam - Cambodia. To examine the issue, the author tried to find out capacity of people in using the national language, their use and

understanding of national cultural symbols (national flag, national anthem, the leader, capital city, etc.). Through this, the author believed that awareness of state-nation of many people in the community of the Khmer and Champa people in the border area of Vietnam - Cambodia is not high (Vuong Xuan Tinh, 2012, pp.76-86).

Investigating ethnic relationship with the community of state-nation in Vietnam, some authors believe that the relation has been stable so far thanks to policies of the Party and government (Dang Nghiem Van, 2003, pp.170-174; Phan Huu Dat, 2004, pp.734-762). Besides, research by Pham Quang Hoan and Nguyen Hong Duong (2009), Vuong Xuan Tinh and Nguyen Van Minh (2009, 2010), Phan Xuan Bien (2011), Vuong Xuan Tinh (2012) also indicated the influence of the opposite forces on the relationship.

### **Conclusion**

The above overview shows that in general researches evaluated the ethnic relationship in Vietnam since 1986 until the present as a good relationship. However, there have been certain hot issues and potential dangers. In the context of globalization, modernization and influence of opposite forces, the ethnic relationship has become more complicated due to new factors. The ethnic coherence among certain ethnic groups has increased, even at the national and inter-ethnic group level. The separation has also appeared due to communication and exchange because of the appearance of the community of nation-religion within certain ethnic groups. Conflicts

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<sup>(3)</sup> This term was coined by Vuong Xuan Tinh in the cited works.

among different ethnic groups have appeared in some localities in the Central Highlands and Southwest. Thus, opposite forces have taken advantage of these conflicts to influence the conflicts between the ethnic group and the community of state-nation.

In this situation, many researchers believe that in order to contribute to stabilization and development of the country, it is important to have right policies for effective management of ethnic relationship in our country. However, there has not been any research into this field to clearly indicate specific relationships between ethnic relationship and ethnic policies.

It is possible to draw some conclusions related to the situation in researching ethnic relationship in our country in the past decades as following:

1. *The lack of theoretical foundation.* Most of researches failed in updating the current theories applied in the world and select the most appropriate for application. Thus, researches tend only to describe and present data, leading to the fact that anylisis and recommendations of solution are not in-depth enough.

2. *The lack of comprehensiveness.* There has not been a research which address all the five elements as suggested in the presented framework in an ethnic minority group or population community, and the impact of these elements on the ethnic relationship, especialy ethnic policies.

3. *The lack of experiment.* There has not been reseach carrying out in the whole cycle of developing theory, applying in doing research and suggesting solutions. Many researches have been based on

statistics data, or with data received from field trips but the field trip tasks did not follow the experimental cycle regulations.

4. *There are niches in the research content.* In ethnic relationship, international ethnic relationship, relationship between a specific ethnic group with the community of state-nation, communities of nation-religion have been issues which have not not been investigated properly; the number of researches addressing the relationship between ethnic policies and ethnic relationship and vice verse is limited; the response to arguments by foreign researches with negative effects on ethnic relationship in Vietnam is limited.

5. *Limitations in research methods.* Research results have showed the lack of diversity in research methods. The number of researches using participatory methods is limited. Many researches have followed traditional approach of citing from old research, thus, having negative effects on the quality of researches in general.

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