
A critical analysis of the operational performance of General Vo Nguyen Giap 1940–1954

Major Stuart Pascoe, Australian Army

*The struggle must build, however slowly. The way to win is by small defeats, one after another until the coup de grace.*¹

Vo Nguyen Giap

Introduction

1. General Vo Nguyen Giap has been described as one of the most successful Generals of the 20th century,² and his ultimate success certainly supports this. His campaign began with no more than academic support for a communist ideal, and ended in the forced expulsion of a colonial power.³ His command responsibilities were broad and his challenge great, spanning the Vietnamese revolution and French occupation. Giap possessed a difficult nature. He was an idealist, a politician, and importantly did not always succeed in battle.⁴ An overall assessment of Giap's leadership is a complex proposition.

2. The aim of this paper is to critically examine the operational performance of General Vo Nguyen Giap during the years 1940 to 1954.

3. The paper focuses on Giap's campaign against the French and utilises the Hersey-Blanchard Situation Leadership Model (SLM) as the medium to examine his leadership effectiveness. The paper commences with an outline of his background, before detailing the command requirements made of him during the campaign. The Hersey-Blanchard model is explained, and then compared against Giap's leadership method.

From teenage activist to general

4. Vo Nguyen Giap was born to a peasant family in 1911. At that time Vietnam was almost entirely a rural nation. Aside from the cities of Hanoi and Saigon, population concentrations were based on small villages serviced by provincial capitals. Villages were most often small clusters of homesteads, and were particularly concentrated in the vicinity of the two major rivers in the nation, the Mekong in the south and the Red in the north. Vo Nguyen's village, An-Xa was located in Quang-Binh province.⁵ This was one of the poorest regions in Vietnam, and interestingly located adjacent to the 17th parallel, which was later to become the focus of national division.⁶

5. Vo Nguyen was raised in a strongly nationalistic family that placed a high priority on education. His father was highly respected within the region both for his participation in the resistance to French rule in the 1880s, and his application to studies. He ensured that his son received a balanced education that incorporated traditional Confucian Vietnamese content and values.⁷ Giap became well versed in the rising nationalism of the time, and was noted as a fervent and enthusiastic student of the subject.⁸ He demonstrated a particular interest in modes of political thought, and was especially attracted to the works of Lenin, Marx, Engels, and Mao Tse-Tung. He would later become an influential leader in the Vietnamese Communist Party.⁹

6. Throughout his youth Vo Nguyen's capacity as a student was demonstrated with his selection for continued studies at local and French academies. This was highly unusual at the time, the majority of the Vietnamese population being illiterate, and only the smallest percentage going past primary school. He was eventually awarded degrees in Law and political economics, and was noted as a student of particular intelligence. He had a considerable ability to dominate others using an adept thought process, and could quickly interpret the intent of others. He had a developed capacity to listen and debate, but also an innate ability to pull back so that points of contention would not become significant obstacles.¹⁰ Whilst a post-graduate student, Vo Nguyen was also a university lecturer. He was highly respected for his ability to instruct in history, particularly military history. This mainly self-instructed historical knowledge was the largest portion of Giap's military experience prior to assuming his first command responsibilities.¹¹

7. Giap's distinctive nature represented a synthesis of many pressures. The system of community independence, local dependency, and loyalty within which he was raised was 'naturally' at odds with imposed French authority. The many individual nationalistic influences he had in his early life reinforced these 'natural' values, recognisable later as the pillars of his idealism. He saw communism as the solution to the complexity which industrialisation had apparently presented to Vietnam and the world, and deeply desired change in Vietnam. Additionally his education, capacity as a student, and his experience within academic circles had left him a capable and influential individual at many levels. This facility, his passionate belief in communism, and his ability to influence those around him were enduring capabilities. Experiences of his youth had prepared him well to adapt to a military environment and for survival within the communist party.

Giap and command—revolution in Vietnam

8. The communists' plan to expel the French was intended to follow a pattern of a three-stage revolution; contention, equilibrium, and counteroffensive. Each stage demanded particular philosophical conditions to be met before the next; however, the measure of each was indistinct. It required the communist leadership to gauge the readiness of the population for additional challenge and hardship, a difficult subjective determination.¹² This complexity was intrinsic to the environment within which Giap was to lead.

Contention

9. In 1940 Giap was commissioned by Ho Chi Minh to develop political consciousness amongst the peasants in the north of Vietnam. This focus was then extended to raising and training the first element of a formalised 'contention' to the French occupation: a guerilla force.¹³ Giap did not however experience immediate operational success with his guerillas. His cells were poorly armed, and lacked the quality needed to extend a real operational effect. It was 1942 before Giap could make some impact with his new forces, but even then it was only through minor activity.¹⁴ Over the next three years, however, he improved the size and capability of this force, extending guerilla operations across the entire northern region of Vietnam, and significantly disrupting the French occupation.¹⁵ He also led guerilla operations against the Japanese, an action that gained the Vietnamese communists direct support from the USA and UK, together with additional aid from the Chinese communists.¹⁶ This was a significant and important achievement in the absence of other leaders, and particularly of Ho Chi Minh.¹⁷

Equilibrium

10. As guerilla activity increasingly impacted upon the French, Giap recognised there was a need for larger-scale activity to ensure the achievement of the 'equilibrium' stage of revolution. He

believed a succession of small victories, achieved by periodically concentrating his guerillas, would have a damning effect on his enemy.¹⁸ In 1944 Giap raised the first regular platoon of the ‘Vietminh’ and Ho Chi Minh, wanting to increase popular support for the revolution, instructed Giap to attack static French targets. Successful, Giap was overwhelmed with new recruits for his developing main force,¹⁹ the Vietminh quickly building in size during the remainder of the Japanese occupation. By the middle of 1945 Giap was commanding a regular force numbering 10 000.²⁰

11. With the end of WWII and the return of Vietnam to French control, Giap’s total force of Vietminh and guerillas numbered altogether around 30 000,²¹ but despite considerable achievements, including the capture of Hanoi from the Japanese, they were still very inexperienced in conventional warfare.²² By 1947 Giap had organised his main force into divisions, and in 1948 was commanding small, relatively successful campaigns involving up to nine battalions. Having gained in experience, he began his concerted effort to push French forces from the Tonkin region of north Vietnam. On 16 September 1950 he conducted a successful attack on the Don Khe outpost using wave assaults and massed indirect fire. He followed up on 9 October with an attack on a second post, Cao Bang, as relief in place was being conducted. This was later regarded as the worst defeat the French had suffered in their history of colonialism.²³

Counteroffensive

12. By 1951 Giap’s considerable command extended over five divisions, 12 Artillery Regiments, eight Engineer Regiments, an additional 37 ‘Regional’ Battalions, guerilla forces across all the northern reaches of Vietnam, and enormous numbers of porters logistically supporting his main force.²⁴ With this now significant capability, Giap attempted to follow up his 1950 successes. In what was considered the first move of a ‘counteroffensive’ he attacked Vinh Yen, north-west of Hanoi, with two divisions. This attack failed, however, and he sustained very heavy casualties.²⁵ Giap later failed in set battles on two other occasions in 1951 whilst attempting to clear the Red River Delta. He attacked Mao Khe in March, and along the Day River in June. On both occasions he was repelled. The first ‘counteroffensive’ had failed.²⁶

13. In 1953 Vietnamese strategic advisers identified a unique opportunity. International negotiations surrounding the future of Vietnam presented the opportunity to exploit the declining support of the French population for the war in Indo-China. Giap recognised that the French disposition was centring on Dien Bien Phu and he chose this location to next confront the French. This was a significant challenge, especially given recent losses and Giap’s own concerns regarding the experience of his troops.²⁷ The final solution involved a whole-of-force activity. Giap encircled the position, and steadily concentrated his assault and supporting forces. He projected diversionary moves into other regions creating the impression of confused objectives, succeeded in diluting French concentration, and weakened their support lines. He also continued guerilla and local harassing activity throughout.²⁸ When the attack was finally launched his forces had created comprehensive conditions for success. This battle, fought on many fronts, was the event that finally led to the expulsion of the French from Vietnam. Vo Nguyen Giap could no longer be considered just a guerilla leader.

The evolution of relations

14. That Giap was well respected by Ho Chi Minh is clear. His rapid rise within the Party, and direct application to difficult tasks throughout the revolution, clearly demonstrated this. Similarly, he had great respect for Ho Chi Minh and his revolutionary vision, but it was with his subordinates that Giap had the most successful interaction.²⁹ In his early days he had galvanised small villages to

the cause of revolution. His approach succeeded in generating very great momentum; by the time of Dien Bien Phu he had the support of millions of volunteers supporting his Vietminh forces despite the extreme measures which the French employed. Giap was ruthless in throwing his soldiers against enemy forces in order to achieve his military aims, but he was cognisant of the human toll his battles took. He learnt from his costly mistakes.³⁰ He developed the capacity to recognise when his soldiers had reached breaking point and was able to adjust his plans accordingly.³¹ This combination of subordinate support, mission orientation, and personal understanding was a critical element to Giap's effectiveness.

Effective leadership

15. The essential elements that comprise effective leadership are both subjective and controversial. The body of research surrounding the subject is so extensive that it is necessary to provide a relational focus if it is to be successfully utilised within this examination of operational success. Leadership is defined as that combination of task and relationship behaviours employed by an individual to achieve a prescribed outcome.³² Combinations are unlikely to be static; rather, they are contingent in nature, depending on the task and the personal requirements of individuals involved in achieving the outcome. The effectiveness of leadership within this paradigm can be gauged by the extent to which the leader's chosen combination of behaviours assists or detracts from operational outcomes.³³ This is a situational approach to leadership.³⁴

16. Paul Hersey and Kenneth Blanchard attempted to pattern the situational approach to leadership with their Situational Leadership Model (SLM). Their model is summarised in Figure 1. They divide the spectrum of leadership methods according to measures of relationship and task behaviours, and explain the associated diversity with four basic leadership activities. These are delegating, participating, selling, and telling. In the diagram this is represented within a leader behaviour matrix, the (S4) to (S1) quadrants defined along relationship and task behaviour axes. The appropriate leadership style to be adopted within each situation is then determined by identifying the capability, or readiness, of subordinates to complete the designated task. The relationship between the basic leadership activities and subordinate readiness is inversely proportional. In the diagram the measure of subordinate readiness, high (R4) to low (R1), is depicted below the matrix. The curved line contained within the matrix defines the relationship between leader input and subordinate readiness. This line indicates the appropriate style to be adopted for varying levels of subordinate readiness.³⁵

17. The SLM was chosen to assist in the critical assessment of Giap's leadership effectiveness because of the shifting environment he faced in supporting the revolution. Initially he was tasked to generate popular support. He then had to transform this interest to willingness and capability, in order to conduct regional disruptive operations. As the revolution evolved, he then had to raise a conventional army to engage the French in pitched battle, and he finally had to lead the army to expel the French from Vietnam. At each uncertain stage of the revolution he was dealing with an evolving level of capability and understanding, or maturity in position, within his support base. Similarly, he faced an evolving balance of prioritisation between task and the development of this support base. To lead effectively within these conditions Giap had to determine the relationship between task and subordinate requirements to achieve his goals. The SLM provides a guide for predictive leader behaviour in such situational environments and is therefore a suitable tool to assist the assessment of Giap's operational effectiveness.

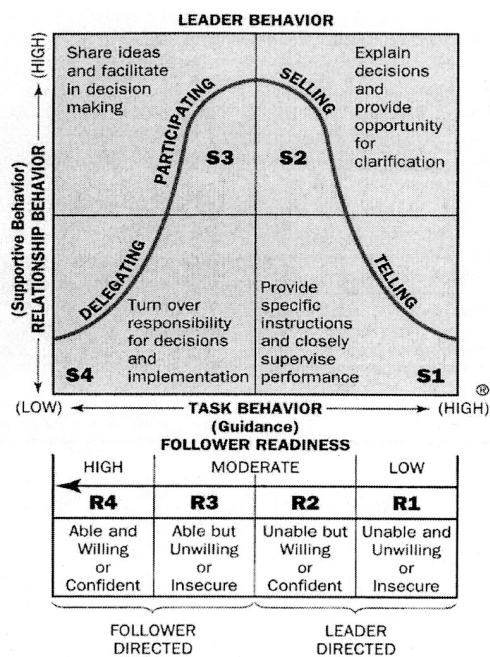


Figure 1: Hersey & Blanchard Situational Leadership Model³⁶

VO NGUYEN GIAP—A SITUATIONAL LEADER

18. There are clear parallels between Giap’s operational success and SLM predictions. During the ‘contention’ stage of the revolution he directly oversaw the raising and training of guerilla units, and then commanded them. His aim was to build independent guerilla ‘cells’ that would in turn motivate the development of new cells of their own accord. His style during this period was carefully tailored to his audience, and the requirements of the task. To achieve this he lived amongst the guerillas, suffered their hardships, and led them during dangerous operations. He introduced tactical procedures that enhanced their survivability and their effectiveness, earning their trust, and demonstrating the potential impact their cells could have on the French occupiers.³⁷ This ‘telling’ and ‘selling’ behaviour increased support for resistance against the French dramatically. As their capability developed, regional operations were raised utilising the local knowledge of the new guerillas. This ‘participation’ behaviour evolved into ‘delegation’ as individual cells and regions graduated to operations without direct input from Giap.³⁸ His operations were successful in achieving very large-scale support quickly, and in achieving the ‘equilibrium’ stage of revolution.³⁹

19. In 1954, during the final ‘counteroffensive’ stage, Giap enjoyed probably his most famous operational success. His defeat of the French at Dien Bien Phu was the final factor in the withdrawal of French occupation⁴⁰ and demonstrated a number of situational leadership behaviours. Firstly he conducted complicated diversionary operations that involved his whole force. Elements of his conventional force conducted manoeuvre, supported by ‘telling’ behaviour, his guerilla forces conducted harassing operations, supported by ‘participation’ and ‘delegation’ behaviour and his regional forces conducted general disruption operations, supported by ‘delegation’ behaviour.⁴¹ Giap’s decision to stall his attack on Dien Bien Phu to conduct additional preparation of his soldiers and officers is further evidence of Giap’s effective situational leadership.⁴² He recognised that their

‘maturity’ in the conduct of deliberate attacks was low, and so he engaged in ‘selling’ behaviour. He also demonstrated this behaviour during the assault, taking opportunity to reinforce, and ‘sell’ before continuing. Situational leadership supported the ‘counteroffensive’ stage of the revolution.⁴³

The SLM complicated

20. Interestingly Giap had applied similar leadership methods in 1951 during the first attempt at a ‘counteroffensive’, but had failed. In his attack on Vinh Yen he did not dislodge the French forces⁴⁴ and sustained very heavy casualties.⁴⁵ He again failed to defeat the French in his next two set battles when attempting to clear the Red River Delta at Mao Khe in March, and along the Day River in June.⁴⁶ He has been strongly criticised for his decision-making during those battles. Whilst in isolation this could indicate a poor match with situational leadership, Giap’s own tactical skills at that early stage were still evolving.⁴⁷ He had experienced smaller battles and succeeded—but these clashes were his first real pitched battles. Giap’s operational success had not been determined by his leadership method and he had made grave errors in judgement.⁴⁸

21. There are two additional influences relating to Giap’s command that had an impact on Giap’s leadership effectiveness. Significantly, the war against the French was part of a wider revolution. From the outset Ho Chi Minh understood that the only way to unite the diverse and independent natures amongst peasant populations was through ideology. The Vietminh was created by the Communist Party, and ultimately led by it.⁴⁹ The structure of the army supported the Party’s ambitions as well, demonstrating an evolution as each stage of the revolution was achieved, and facilitated participation of the whole population at each stage.⁵⁰ Lower leadership within the Vietminh was largely democratic and imbued with communist ideals, similar to village cooperation,⁵¹ and the line between the political and military leadership was blurred for both the leaders themselves as well as the population as a whole.⁵² Within such an environment it could be difficult to separate Giap’s personal influence and that of the surrounding idealism.

22. The second additional influence on Giap’s leadership effectiveness was his own nature. Whilst throughout the considerable period in which Giap led the Vietnamese forces against the French he demonstrated substantial agility in his dealings with others, he was a communist first and commander second. It is highly likely that his passion for his cause was a considerable influence in many of his decisions to commit his forces, particularly when on the brink of failure. He was also an extremely ambitious individual who saw all of his peers as possible threats, and recognised that achieving successful results was a means of his own survival. To an ambitious man such incentive must have been a considerable factor throughout his command.⁵³

23. It is clear that the Hersey-Blanchard SLM cannot take into account all factors that influenced Giap’s leadership effectiveness over the period of concern. It is, however, useful in explaining Giap’s approaches to leadership during much of his operational experience.

Conclusion

24. The aim of this paper was to examine the operational performance of General Vo Nguyen Giap in terms of his leadership performance. Giap experienced his greatest successes during his guerilla struggle and the battle for Dien Bien Phu. However, his leadership effectiveness should also be measured against his failures. His losses at Vin Yehn, Red River, and Day River were dramatic, and typified a piecemeal approach to command. He made grave personal errors. It is possible that these errors could be attributed to his lack of experience as a commander, or his idealistic and political

nature, but it is unlikely to have been the misapplication of situational leadership. Indeed it is possible that because of heavy and continual indoctrination, Giap's actual influence over the Vietminh was more political than martial. Each of these factors complicate the examination of Giap's leadership effectiveness using the SLM.

25. When considering Giap's successes, however, Hersey-Blanchard's SLM can be utilised quite successfully. During his guerilla years Giap transited through S1 to S4 behaviours, ultimately relying on independent action within respective regions. Similarly, his mix of behaviours in relation to the diverse forces he utilised at Dien Bien Phu allowed the strengths of each element to add to his overall operational performance. In these instances the SLM indicates that Giap led his forces effectively. His operational successes, and ultimate campaign success indicate that he was, on balance, an effective commander and leader.

Endnotes

1. R. Stetler (ed.), 'Introduction' in General Vo Nguyen, *The Military Art of People's War: Selected Writings of General Vo Nguyen Giap*, UMI, Michigan, 1988, p. 11.
2. Major General R.L. Clutterbuck, 'General Giap: An Assessment', *The Army Quarterly and Defence Journal*, Vol. 124, No. 3, July 1994, p. 333.
3. D. Miller, 'General Giap: The Career of this Outstanding Communist General', *War Monthly*, Vol. 9(6), 1981, pp. 1–2.
4. Lt. Gen. P.B. Davidson (Retd), *Vietnam at War: The History: 1946–1975*, Sidgwick and Jackson, London, 1989, pp. 12–3.
5. An-Xa, like most other villages in the nation, was essentially self-contained. Landowners, tenants, and individuals that supplied other necessary services concentrated around the water sources that fed their rice paddies and animals. Perhaps because of this genesis each village also enjoyed a certain amount of autonomy from national interference. Individuals instead were compelled to act in the interest of communities because of the intrinsic requirements each had of the other, and the community of all individuals. These local requirements were enforced by a system of village elders.
6. B.B. Fall, 'Vo Nguyen Giap: Man and Myth', in General V.N. Giap, *People's War People's Army: The Viet Cong Insurrection Manual for Underdeveloped Countries*, F.A. Praeger, New York, 1962, p. xxix.
7. Giap found parallels between Confucian teachings and communism. He felt that ideals within both teachings saw society and individuals blending seamlessly. S. Karnow, *Vietnam, A History*, Pimlico, London, 1994, p. 155.
8. R. Stetler (ed.), op. cit., p. 13.
9. Giap's journey to command of the communist forces began with his interest in revolution. Whilst still a youth he joined clandestine political groups, and formed close associations with revolutionaries from the previous generation. His own stature increased significantly and in the 1930s began filling functional roles within underground movements. He was eventually arrested and jailed by the French for his political activity. Released, he later joined Ho Chi Minh's newly formed Vietnam Communist Party. Local party officials selected Giap to travel to China to meet with Ho Chi Minh and undergo military training. Ho Chi Minh was impressed with Giap's potential, tasking him, amongst others, to aid in the raising of Guerilla forces to support the revolution. His subsequent successes led to his appointment to command the communist forces throughout the revolution. S. Karnow, op. cit., pp. 156–7.
10. *ibid*, pp. 19–24.
11. Giap was a focused and dedicated instructor. He delivered enthusiastic accounts of past battles to his young students with a particular weight on his own interpretation of the tactical and strategic determinations of his subjects. C.B. Currey, *Victory at any Cost: The Genius of Vietnam's General Vo Nguyen Giap*, Brassey's, London, 1997, pp. 34–5.
12. R. Stetler (ed.), op. cit., p. 104.
13. S. Karnow, op. cit., p. 157.
14. The main focus of these small groups was ambushing, and laying crude traps. Despite the lack of concentrated effect such activity had a significant detrimental effect on French morale as time wore on. Lt. Gen. P.B. Davidson (Retd), op. cit., p. 8.
15. S. Karnow, op. cit., p. 157.
16. *ibid*.
17. Ho Chi Minh had been imprisoned in 1942 by Chiang Kai-shek. B.C. Nalty (ed.), *The Vietnam War: The History of America's Conflict in South East Asia*, Salamander Books Pty Ltd, London, 1996, p. 40.
18. J. Dalloz, *The War in Indo-China 1945–54*, Gill and Macmillian, Dublin, 1990, pp. 98–9.
19. Giap was clearly instructed by Ho Chi Minh that the attacks 'must' be successful. This type of influence must have been felt by Giap throughout the campaign. S. Karnow, op. cit., p. 157.
20. When the Japanese overturned French rule they failed to dominate the northern reaches of Vietnam. This allowed Giap and his cadre to move unfettered to spread the revolutionary word and train new recruits. Lt. Gen. P.B. Davidson (Retd), op. cit., p. 22.

21. D. Miller, op. cit., p. 2.
22. *ibid.*
23. The French lost 60 per cent of their forces stationed in the region who were either casualties or captured. Significantly they lost considerable arms and munitions including 125 mortars and 13 guns, dramatic force multipliers for Giap's own use. B.C. Nalty (ed.), op. cit., p. 44.
24. Giap's Vietminh had become substantially more professional and capable as a result of formal training for junior leaders and officers provided by both Chinese officers and later within the Vietminh's own schools. Capability and effectiveness were also considerably enhanced with the continued provision of Chinese weapon systems as his force grew.
25. It was later estimated that Giap lost between 6000 and 9000 killed and up to 8000 wounded. He also had over 600 of his soldiers taken prisoner. B.C. Nalty (ed.), op. cit., p. 44.
26. B.C. Nalty (ed.), op. cit., p. 45.
27. The French had considerable defences in place. Seventeen battalions of infantry, three regiments of Artillery, and a tank element defended the position. Defences were divided into separate but supporting strong points that had been hardened considerably. The position had its own air support, and maintained substantial reserves. M. Elliot-Bateman, *Defeat in the East: The Mark of Mao Tse Tung on War*, Oxford University Press, London, 1967, p. 194.
28. M. Elliot-Bateman, *ibid.*, pp. 194–5.
29. It is difficult however to entirely distinguish his effect from that of revolutionary momentum. *ibid.*, pp. 164–9.
30. As an historian Giap had studied many military commanders and great battles. His greatest influence however was his experience. He was a constant adaptor who learned every possible lesson from his failures. J. Roy, *The Battle of Dien Bien Phu*, Harper and Row, New York, 1965.
31. The willingness of Giap's soldiers to fight in extremely grim conditions was perhaps best represented at Dien Bien Phu. It was during this battle that Giap had to slow his advance because of his soldiers' concerns about the rate of effort and high levels of casualties. Whether he was concerned for their welfare, however, is considered unlikely given his previous management of 'wave' assaults. He did however understand the requirement to listen to his soldiers to forestall mutinous reactions so he could still achieve his goal. At Dien Bien Phu he changed his plans dramatically to ensure greater survivability, and later slowed his advance to reinforce. B.C. Nalty (ed.), op. cit., p. 51.
32. Task behaviours focus more on specifying the what, who, how and when of an objective. Relationship behaviours focus more on the leader supporting subordinates toward an outcome through effective communication and facilitation. For more see R. Hughes, R. Ginnett, G. Curphy, *Leadership: Enhancing the Lessons of Experience*, 3rd Ed, Irwin McGraw-Hill, Singapore, 1999, p. 58–9.
33. *ibid.*, p. 58.
34. R.L. Daft, *Management*, 5th Ed., The Dryden Press, USA, 2000, p. 515.
35. *ibid.*
36. P. Hersey, K. Blanchard, *Management of Organizational Behaviour – Utilizing Human Resources*, 6th Edition, Prentice-Hall International, New Jersey, 1993, p. 207.
37. S. Karnow, op. cit., p. 157.
38. *ibid.*, pp. 157–8.
39. D. Miller, op. cit., p. 2.
40. Combined successfully with strategic effects. B.C. Nalty (ed.), op. cit., p. 51.
41. Lt. Gen. P.B. Davidson (Retd), op. cit., pp. 178–80.
42. H.R. Simpson, 'A Conversation with Gen. Giap', *Army*, Vol. 41, No. 9, Sept 1991, p. 50.
43. Lt. Gen. P.B. Davidson (Retd), op. cit., pp. 178–80.
44. The French had learned from their recent losses and incorporated their Air Force successfully into the defence. Giap's two divisions were repelled mainly through the use of napalm. B.C. Nalty (ed.), op. cit., p. 44.

45. It was later estimated that Giap lost between 6000 and 9000 killed and up to 8000 wounded. He also had over 600 of his soldiers taken prisoner. B.C. Nalty (ed.), op. cit., p. 44.
46. At Mao Khe the French staged an extremely strong defence which Giap's mass attacks could not penetrate. Along the Day River Giap overextended his forces and failed to maintain reserves. B.C. Nalty (ed.), op. cit., p. 45.
47. It has been argued that he failed to capitalise on opportunity, was inflexible in his plan, and critically had not thought of the value air and sea capability added to the French defences. Giap learned many lessons from these failures. Whilst he remained committed to Chinese models of warfare, particularly the characteristics of concentration of force and firepower, he considered the tactics of his enemy more carefully. He realised that large scale attacks within French controlled areas, especially when close to support bases, allowed the French to defeat Giap's numerical superiority. J. Dalloz, op. cit., pp. 138–9.
48. Lt. Gen. P.B. Davidson (Retd), op. cit., pp. 123–6.
49. This was made abundantly clear to soldiers and 'educationally' reinforced on a continual basis. It was often reinforced by French response to Giap's operations. For example in 1950 the French introduced laws involving gaol for Vietnamese proven to have had an adverse affect on military moral, or delayed the movement of military equipment. This led to the jailing of a number of popular Vietnamese individuals, and easy propaganda targets for the communists. J. Dalloz, op. cit., pp. 121–2.
50. The Vietminh was structured from the base level up. In keeping with revolutionary measures everyone in every village had a role to play. The best of the 'self defence' forces within each village became guerillas, the next tier of force. These units were regionally coordinated, but only trained periodically. They were based from their village. They were capable of an element of concerted effort but really existed to assist main force units in diversionary efforts. The best guerillas were recruited to Giap's main force. J. Dalloz, op. cit., pp. 121–2.
51. R. Stetler (ed.), op. cit., pp. 110–2.
52. For example Giap had been a vocal agitator, and an active representative on urban and rural issues well before his appointment on the Vietminh. G. Porter, *Vietnam : The Politics of Bureaucratic Socialism*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1993, p. 83.
53. Giap had to fight off challenges to his position as commander of the Vietminh in the early stages of its development, and these types of conflicts were to continue to plague him for the rest of his long military career, as successful as he was in dealing with them. Lt. Gen. P.B. Davidson (Retd), op. cit., pp. 12–3.

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