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THE ECONOMY OF SOUTH VIETNAM IN THE PRISM OF BÁCH KHOA JOURNAL (1957-1975)

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ABSTRACT

The economic issues of South Vietnam have been mentioned in research works both before and after the Vietnam War ended in 1975. However, economic studies based on press sources are still an issue that has not received due attention. The Bách Khoa Journal has opted to be a case study in this writing not only because of its advantage in terms of the time of existence for nearly 20 years (1957-1975), almost coinciding with the existence of the Republic of Vietnam government (1955-1975) but also because of the richness in the content as well as the way of approaching when referring to the economic issues of South Vietnam. This article not only synthesizes and analyzes the main economic issues reflected in the Bách Khoa Journal to better understand the economy of South Vietnam through the perspective of contemporaries, but based on this source of information, we also have an additional basis to verify the studies on the economy of South Vietnam in the period 1957-1975.

KEYWORDS: South Vietnam, Economy, Bách Khoa Journal

1. INTRODUCTION

The relatively open press policies in South Vietnam from 1955 to 1975 created a vibrant environment for South Vietnam's press. The diversity in quantity, genres, and political stance of South Vietnam's press made the press one of the valuable sources for research on South Vietnam in the years 1955-1975. Regarding the research on the press during this period, some prominent works could be mentioned, such as *South Vietnamese Culture and Arts in 1954-1975* (Trần Trọng Đăng Đàn, 2000); *Cultural Chorography of Hồ Chí Minh City*, Vol.2 (General Publishing House, 1998); *Press History of Saigon – Hồ Chí Minh City, 1865-1995* (Nguyễn Công Khanh, 2006), *Press in Saigon, 1954-1963* (Dương Kiều Linh, 2017). The work *South Vietnamese Culture and Arts in 1954-1975*, authored by Trần Trọng Đăng Đàn, focused on literature rather than journalism; however, through this approach, we can see the close connection between the changes in the social context of South Vietnam, the impacts of the cultural and artistic policies of the contemporary government on the development and artistic trends in South Vietnam during the years 1955-1975. The work *Cultural Chorography of Hồ Chí Minh City* elucidated three main aspects: literature, press, and education. Despite the studies on the press, especially Saigon press, which was published over 30 years (1945-1975), occupying a modest space in the entire work, it has mentioned viral activities of the press associated with political

fluctuations in South Vietnam during that period. With *Press History of Saigon – Hồ Chí Minh City, 1865-1995*, the author Nguyễn Công Khanh systematized the development of South Vietnam's press from 1865 to 1995. The book not only presents the development process and the press policies under the Republic of Vietnam government but also highlights the press trends, typical newspapers and magazines, and outstanding journalists. The researcher Dương Kiều Linh released the book *Press in Saigon, 1954-1963*, which provided many research aspects related to the press published in Saigon during the First Republic period (1954-1963), i.e., press policies under the Ngô Đình Diệm government, the issue of press classification, the miens of Saigon press in the years 1954-1963. More importantly, this is one of the few works that research the interactive relationship of the Saigon press with political, socio-economic, cultural, and ideological issues in South Vietnam. Regarding the studies on South Vietnam's economy, many works have been published before and after 1975. In this research area, we can mention some works, such as *South Vietnam's Economy in the period 1955-1975* (Đặng Phong, 2004). This is one of the elaborate research works on the economy of South Vietnam in the period 1955-1975, clearly depicting economic aspects from economic aid, agriculture and land, industry, transportation and posts, commerce to finance and monetary. The work studied the economy in South Vietnam in two regions: the region governed by the Republic of Vietnam government and the liberal region.

Although the issue of the economy and press in South Vietnam during the years 1957-1975 has been explored from many different angles, economic research based on press sources has not received due attention. *Bách Khoa Journal* was chosen as a case study in this article not only because of its advantage in terms of the time of existence, nearly 20 years (1957-1975), almost coinciding with the existence of the Republic of Vietnam government, but also because of the richness in the content and the number of the articles as well as the approaches when referring to the issue of South Vietnam's economic issues. This writing, on the one hand, aims to restore the faces of the economy in South Vietnam during the period 1957-1975 based on the documents of this journal; on the other hand, it provides an opportunity to better understand the economic thoughts of contemporary South Vietnamese intellectuals. In addition, based on this source, we also have an additional basis to re-examine published works on the economy of South Vietnam in the period 1954-1975.

To address the research questions, we apply two main research methods: historical and logical methods. While the historical method helps to research economic issues in the *Bách Khoa Journal* from a historical perspective and in the specific historical context, using the logical method enabled the article to analyze the factors affecting the development of the press in South Vietnam in general and the *Bách Khoa Journal* in particular, in the period 1957-1975. Moreover, the logical method is the basis for analyzing economic issues, which have been reflected in the issues of the journal in different periods, and giving comments on the activities of the press in South Vietnam in the studied period. Other methods, such as comparison, statistics, and expert interviews, were utilized to contribute to thoroughly solving the research issues.

Bách Khoa is a semi-monthly journal published twice a month. During its 18-year existence, from January 15, 1957, to April 30, 1975, Bách Khoa published 426 issues. Bách Khoa also underwent two name changes. The first time in 1965, it was changed from Bách Khoa to Bách Khoa Thời Đại. The second time, in 1970, it was changed from Bách Khoa Thời Đại back to Bách Khoa (Nguyễn Vy Khanh). Nguyễn Hiến Lê had recorded in his memoirs: "The newspaper has a policy of publishing all personal initiatives, whether right or wrong, as long as they are honest and constructive on any issue: from politics, military, to socio-economics, literature, science... without any limitation of political stance or faction." (Nguyễn Hiến Lê, 1993, p.417).

The journal's open spirit attracted a large number of contributors, who frequently submitted writings for Bách Khoa, presenting distinctive political viewpoints, even opposing ones. This unique phenomenon was later mentioned by researcher Nguyễn Vy Khanh in his article. He assumed, compared to other journals, *Bách Khoa* is the hotbed of the "covert" and left-wing members, covered by the name "former resistance fighters," originated from North and Central Vietnam, i.e., Lê Ngô Châu, Vũ Hạnh, Lưu Nghi, Thiên Giang, Nguyễn Hiến Lê, and Võ Phiến (Nguyễn Vy Khanh).

2. CONTENTS

2.1. Historical Circumstances

After the Geneva Agreement, signed in 1954, peace had not yet been restored in Vietnam. The US intervention in South Vietnam led to the birth of a republic institution as a counterweight to the political institution (Democratic Republic of Vietnam) in the North. The consultative conference to unify the two regions did not occur as planned. Instead, the country was divided into two regions governed by distinct regimes. For more than 20 years (1954-1975), the press in South Vietnam developed in a special context of war and division, which determined the unique characteristics of South Vietnam's press.

During the period 1954-1975, the development of the press in South Vietnam was deeply influenced by the press policies of the Republic of Vietnam government. Under the government of the Republic of Vietnam, the slogan of "democracy" was raised to attract the sympathy and support of the people in South Vietnam. The essence of this "democracy" has always been controversial; despite that, the press of South Vietnam benefited to a certain extent from that policy. The spirit of "democracy" created conditions for many press streams to coexist in South Vietnam, not only pro-government press but also opposition, neutral, and revolutionary press. These press groups, whether operating veil or unveil, whether long-term or short-lived, all contributed to the diversity and dynamism of the press life in South Vietnam in the years 1954-1975.

Under the First Republic, several decrees related to the press were promulgated. In 1956, the First Republic government issued Decree No. 23/TTP suspending press censorship, thus facilitating the condition for the press to prompt. Several additional press licenses were issued, and more weekly and daily newspapers were established, making public opinion in the press even richer. This is considered the golden age of the press under the First Republic government. The golden age ended in 1959 when

the government issued Decree No. 13 (February 20, 1956), which prescribed imprisonment and fines for press agencies that “used the forum to incite acts that violated national security or created public panic” (Nguyễn Việt Chúc, 1974, p.64). To reinforce Decree No. 13, Decree 151/BTT/ND (June 26, 1959) was issued, which defined the responsibility of journalists for the country’s security (Nguyễn Việt Chúc, 1974, p.64; Dương Kiều Linh, 1999, p.22). The press was further tightened after the bombing of the Independence Palace and the coup of General Nguyễn Chánh Thi. By 1962, the First Republic government had repressed press agencies just as it had cracked down on opposition politicians (Nguyễn Việt Chúc, 1974, p.66).

When the First Republic government collapsed after the coup on November 1, 1963, South Vietnam existed under the military administration from 1963 to 1967. To gain sympathy from the journalists and public opinion, the new government issued Decree No. 2/64 on February 19, 1964, recognizing freedom of speech and defining the procedure for prosecuting crimes committed by the press. Then, also in 1964, many decrees were issued that were beneficial to the operation of the press, such as Decree No. 10/64, which defined the regulations for press publishing and organization; Decree No. 908, issued on December 19, 1964, the authorities granted all ease to the publication of newspapers published by political parties. In general, the press during this period developed somewhat freely, this situation is clearly shown in a statement: “Freedom of the press during the Nguyễn Khánh regime was considered hardly perfect, journalists could write whatever they wanted, including writing articles against Nguyễn Khánh” (Nguyễn Việt Chúc, 1974, p.66).

Due to the "open policy," the number of newspapers and journals in South Vietnam increased rapidly. At the end of 1936, there were about 25; by 1964, the number had increased to 91. However, many newspapers had to close during this period, along with the birth of a series of new daily newspapers. Some newspapers only published one issue. By 1965, the number of newspapers published under the Republic of Vietnam government was reduced to 47. Commenting on this situation, Nguyễn Việt Chúc assessed that "the press at that time was like a wild forest, trees grew and fell respectively, while the ground had been made good to prepare for many other trees to grow, but the results were not much. Most newspapers did not aim at the purpose of information and discussion as before but only focused on disseminating decadent literature as a consequence of an era of constant chaos" (Nguyễn Việt Chúc, 1974, pp.66-67).

On December 30, 1969, Decree 019/69 was issued, establishing the press regulations. The Decree stated: “Freedom of the press is fundamental in the regime of the Republic of Vietnam. Otherwise, exercising that freedom must not harm personal honor, national security, and public morality. The press cannot be closed without a decision from a judicial agency” (Ministry of Information, *Files on Drafts and Promulgation*). The promulgation of Decree 019/69 created a general, unified regulation with specific provisions on publishing, printing, and distribution activities and specific provisions to handle press violations. After the promulgation of Decree 019/69, the number of newspapers in Saigon increased rapidly, with Vietnamese daily newspapers alone reaching 40.

Although affirming the freedom of the press, Decree 019/69 could not be peripheral to the political purpose of controlling the press of the Republic of Vietnam government. During this period, the press was still strictly inspected before being published. To protest the government's request for "disguised censorship" in the form of prior submission, many newspapers "erased" censored content and did not add new ones but left blank spaces in their newspapers. Noticeably, numerous newspapers "violated the press law," whereas the editors protested by not paying the fines. For example, from December 1969 to August 1972, *Điện Tín* newspaper, edited by Lý Quý Chung, recorded 5,000 cases of "violating the press law" (Nguyễn Hoàng). However, the newspaper's representatives did not pay any fines. The "disguised censorship" policy disadvantaged South Vietnamese press operations. By January 3, 1970, only 25 daily newspapers, all with offices in Saigon, kept published in South Vietnam.

On August 5, 1972, Decree 007/TT/SLU was issued, making the press life in the South even more severe. According to this Decree, each daily newspaper had to deposit 20 million VND (equivalent to 47,000 USD), and periodical newspapers (including weekly newspapers and monthly newspapers) had to deposit 10 million VND. If any editor did not pay the full amount, their newspaper's license would be revoked (Nguyễn Hoàng). After Decree 007 was issued, a series of newspapers had to close due to financial difficulties. Newspapers considered wealthy and long-standing, such as *Saigon Mới* of *Bút Trà* (established in the 1930s), also had to self-suspend because of Decree 007. More than 70% of journalists in Saigon were unemployed; some were imprisoned (Trần Nhật Vy). After a period of ineffective struggle, on September 8, 1974, a joint meeting was held by the press association, electing Mr. Nguyễn Văn Bình to be a chairman of the *Committee for the Struggle for Press Freedom*. The first task of this committee was to oppose the implementation of Decree 007. This meeting also set a date for protesting the Decree 007 in the form of "journalists begging" day on October 10, 1974. On the scheduled date, a demonstration by journalists with the support of many groups took place, attracting public attention and dealing a fatal blow to the government's policy of suppressing the press (Trần Nhật Vy).

2.2. South Vietnam's Economy (1957-1975) through the Prism of *Bách Khoa* Journal

As mentioned, *Bách Khoa* Journal published writing on a wide range of topics. In terms of economics during the years 1957-1975, some concrete aspects were represented and discussed in *Bách Khoa* Journal as follows:

2.2.1. Economic Policies

The first group of articles related to the economy of South Vietnam in the period 1957-1975 is about the economic policies issued by the Republic of Vietnam government. In this group, there are articles updating the legal documents related to the economic development policy of the Republic of Vietnam government, for example, the article "A New Stage in Economic Policy" authored by Bùi Văn Thịnh updated several press law. Decree No. 418-BKT/PC/ND dated June 29, 1956, of the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Vietnam, concerning the matter of adjusting the deposit condition of 10% of the foreign currency requested for import, setting more stringent conditions for import issues. To

regain the right of Vietnamese people to operate in some economic sectors that foreigners dominated, the government issued Decree No. 53, dated September 6, 1956, specifying occupations in which foreigners or foreign associations and companies were not allowed to operate in Vietnam. The article also mentioned a number of other important documents, such as Decree No. 48, dated August 21, 1956, amending the Vietnamese Nationality Law to allow Chinese people born in Vietnam to acquire Vietnamese citizenship; Decree No. 55, dated October 2, 1956, regulating the price throughout Vietnam for all goods, products, and imported food, all necessary domestic products and essential utilities (Bách Khoa Journal, Issue 1).

Huỳnh Văn Lang contributed the most to this group. The articles expressed his concerns about an economic development policy suitable to the conditions and situation of South Vietnam in the years 1957-1975. Although the article "*An Economic Plan*" in issue 2 was short, the fundamental issues of building an economic plan in South Vietnam were raised. Huỳnh Văn Lang briefly defined the comprehension of an economic plan, which is a clear program in quantity and time based on reality. Also, according to Huỳnh Văn Lang, the Republic of Vietnam could not have a large-scale economic plan yet, it was necessary to build a comprehensive and general economic plan which was both concrete and feasible.

He also affirmed that the foremost premise to build an economic plan is complete and accurate statistics, or if there is an error, it should not exceed 5% to 10%. Subsequently, it is essential to train statistical and economic experts, who play the role of "generals" in drafting economic plans (Bách Khoa Journal, Issue 2, p.2). This matter was one of the limitations of the economy of South Vietnam in the period 1954-1975. As researcher Đặng Phong mentioned in his work *South Vietnam's Economy in the Period 1955-1975*, he stated that reconstructing a complete picture of the economic community and portraying South Vietnam's economy is not easy because, during those 20 years, the economy of South Vietnam was always distorted by political factors, by the war situation, and further distorted by the excessive influence of the Americans and their aid. When economic science has no "place to show its power," the presence of economists also fades away" (Đặng Phong, 2004, p.136).

On issue 12, Huỳnh Văn Lang has another writing, *back to the Five-Year Plan: Offering a Pilot Solution*. Devired from the stagnation in implementing the Five-Year Plan by the Republic of Vietnam government and learning from the British economic model, the author proposed economic solutions so South Vietnam could overcome the complex and stagnant situation. Huỳnh Văn Lang believed that it was necessary to share responsibility between the public and private sectors in terms of both capital and technology in the production sectors. Instead of state-owned enterprises dominating all production sectors, other types of enterprises should also be encouraged to develop.

In Bách Khoa Journal, a novel face of economic issues was approached. For example, in the writing of Phạm Ngọc Thảo, "*Self-sufficiency Economy in Military*", the author specified: "The army attended to product activities does not lose their professionalism but also contributes to improve the living standards of soldiers and their families" (Bách Khoa Journal, Issue 5, p.11).

Another solution proposed to strengthen the economy of the Republic of Vietnam is thrift. This idea is presented in the article "*A New Orientation: Thrift*," authored by Nghiêm Phú Lư. The thrift issue is mentioned and analyzed in two areas: Thrift in the state sector and thrift in the private sector. In the state sector, funds are divided into operating and investment funds. A progressive national budget is a budget that pays much attention to investment proposals and saves on operating costs, the largest of which is the budget for paying salaries and allowances for employees (Bách Khoa Journal, Issue 74, pp.4-9).

The authors of the Bách Khoa Journal also criticized frankly the dependence of the Republic of Vietnam's economy on American aid. Mai Lư wrote "*Economic Independence*," published in issue 10, pointed out: "Despite some achievements, the country's economy is increasingly unstable because it depends too much on a factor that we cannot control - foreign aid. Because of stubbornly refusing to pay attention to professional opinions, wanting to consolidate power with superficial victories, because of personal interests, etc., the old government (Ngô Đình Diệm's Government) forgot or hesitated in the work of building economic independence to put the lives of all people on sustainable foundations, i.e., the country's resources and the labor power" (Bách Khoa Journal, Issue 169, p.45).

The post-war economic policy was one of the important and concerned economic contents under the Republic of Vietnam government. Author Duy also discussed this issue in the Bách Khoa Journal in the article "*Post-war Economic Plan*." In the article, he affirmed that, in order to move towards a prosperous economy, economic plans must bring tangible benefits to the people, and the people themselves must participate in planning as well as in implementation through the intermediary of their direct representatives at the commune and provincial levels and through local organizations such as Farmers' Associations and cooperatives (Bách Khoa Journal, Issue 265-266, p.21).

2.2.2. Tax

In this group of articles, author Huỳnh Văn Lang remains one of the leading writers. He shows a deep interest in tax issues. In the article "*Tax Policy - An Old Concept, a New Concept*," he aimed to provide readers with an understanding of the government's tax policy so that people will no longer consider tax as a burden but will consider paying taxes as a direct collaboration in the country's economic policy (Bách Khoa Journal, Issue 6, p.7). In the article "*Some Basic Comments on Establishing a Tax Policy*" published in issue 73, he presented a fact that: an important condition, even the most important, determining the development of production and national income is the government's ability to strengthen economic infrastructure such as roads, schools and hospitals. If tax revenues are not sufficient to meet these needs, the tax system must be reviewed. He emphasized that the economic development of a country depends on the tax system, and the structure of that system must be in line with the needs of the government while the domestic economy is developing (Bách Khoa Journal, Issue 73, pp.9-10).

The perspective on taxation is not limited to the issue in South Vietnam. Bách Khoa Journal provided readers with a comparative view when delivering information on governments' tax policies in both South and North Vietnam. In the article "*Tax Policies in North Vietnam*" by Sông Hồng in issue 211,

the three tax areas of the North were described, including the state-owned sector, the collective sector, and the individual sector. Tax rates were calculated according to the progressive method, and distinct rates, heavy and light, were applied upon time (Bách Khoa Journal, Issue 211, pp.35-36).

Meanwhile, author Duy, in the article "*A Tax Policy*," published in issue 224 of the Bách Khoa Journal, studied the tax situation in South Vietnam in the early 1960s of the 20th century. The author mentioned the situation in late 1961 and early 1962, when the Ngô Đình Diệm government issued 10 decrees and tax reforms that faced opposition from the people. Specifically, there was a movement against the new land tax, the 40% tax on house rent, the new equalization tax, and the tax on beer, soft drinks, and cigarettes. To appease public opposition, the Ministry of Economy explained: "The tax reform has reduced surplus income, prevented speculation, black markets, and the trading of import licenses" (Bách Khoa Journal, Issue 224, p.15).

2.2.3. *Trade and Aids*

Trade is also one of the economic issues covered in a significant number of articles in the Journal. In issue 1, Huỳnh Văn Lang has an article titled "*Trying to Find a Solution for Exporting*." The author analyzes the promotion of exports in South Vietnam, considering exports as a measure to narrow the gap in the trade balance and push up the value of the Republic of Vietnam's currency.

Vũ Tam Tư, in the article "*Some Comments on the Quantity of Imported and Exported Goods in Free Vietnam from 1934 to 1954*," summarized the main features of the change in the import and export situation in South Vietnam in 20 years (1934-1954).

Hoàng Minh Tuynh's article "*Aiding Issues to Underdeveloped Countries*," published in Bách Khoa Journal issues 61 and 62, analyzed aid-related issues. According to the author, there are some types of aid: liberal capitalism, Marxism-Leninism, colonialism, and international aid. From studying the types of aid, the author concluded: "It is impossible to rely on capitalist methods to help underdeveloped countries. In these places, the requirement is that having a clear internal orientation, a practical plan which grasps the main needs of the people and knows how to use the suitable means to respond promptly to the circumstances" (Bách Khoa Journal, Issue 107, p.18).

In the article entitled "*Aid for Underdeveloped Countries*," Nguyễn Phúc Sa emphasized that aid for underdeveloped countries is considered a key task to maintain world peace, the ultimate goal of the United Nations and people with goodwill. The author also explained that the term aid does not only mean giving for free. When a government and an international bank lend money to a developing country with favorable conditions to carry out economic and social expansion projects, this lending is also within the framework of aid because the purpose of this aid is not to make a profit like other creditors. The countries that receive aid must contribute more or less to the operation of the aid program, for example, paying annual fees to the aid agency's budget and covering local expenses. Therefore, in many cases, people replace the term aid with the term cooperation (Bách Khoa Journal, Issue 95, p.4). In this article, the author also provides a somewhat detailed analysis of the role of aid for the Republic of Vietnam. US aid played an important role in the economy of the Republic of

Vietnam. US aid helped balance the budget, imports and exports, finance education and health care, expand roads, develop agriculture and industry, and train officials. Meanwhile, the United Nations aid provided expert services and some scholarships.

Nguyễn Phúc Sa has another article, “*Bilateral Aid and Multilateral Aid,*” in issue 107. He pointed out a prominent trend in aid in the early 1960s. For example, multilateral aid were more preferential in international conferences. For example, aid will not help a single country gain power or influence in the recipient country; aid from the United Nations cannot be used for military purposes, thus avoiding the risk of war; in addition, when aid is concentrated in a single agency, duplication and waste in aid allocation will be avoided. Bilateral aid originates for a variety of reasons, often as a precursor to broader cooperation, in which the donor country gains an advantage in gaining markets for its industry or capital (Bách Khoa Journal, Issue 107, p.18).

In issue 281, Thế Nhân wrote an article, “*Comments on the Issue of Trade Representation in Vietnam.*” The author expressed the view of giving back the right to trade representation to Vietnamese people. “It is reasonable because, in Vietnam, the government must give Vietnamese people legitimate and fundamental benefits. It is fair since foreigners have enjoyed easier exchange, taxation, and travel and transactions than Vietnamese people, so they cannot enjoy the same conditions for practicing trade representation” (Bách Khoa Journal, Issue 281, p.26).

2.2.4. South Vietnam's Economy in relations to Other Economies

The study of South Vietnam's economy was put in the context of its interaction with other economies. In issue 28 of the Bách Khoa Journal, author Vương Hòa Đức wrote an article entitled “*The European Common Market*”. The article describes in detail the organizational structure, forms of operation, and the participation of overseas territories (colonies of European countries) in this organization's activities. It evaluates the exchanges, interactions, and relations between the Republic of Vietnam and the European Economic Community. The author also analyzes the impacts of the European Common Market on the economy of the Republic of Vietnam. During the first 6 months of 1957, South Vietnam exported to countries in the European Common Market with a total value of up to 794,005,000 VND, equivalent to 63% of the total exports of the Republic of Vietnam. The Republic of Vietnam also imported from these countries with a total value of 1,575,256,000 VND, equivalent to 35% of Vietnam's total imports (Bách Khoa Journal, Issue 28, p.8).

In issue 32, the article “*Learning from the Economic Revival of West Germany to Find a Lesson for Vietnam*” by Huỳnh Văn Lang drew lessons for recovering the economy after the war based on German economic experience. Among all factors, the author strongly emphasized the factor related to spiritual motivations.

In issues 40 and 41 of Bách Khoa Journal, Phạm Duy Tân wrote an article about the organization of the European Common Market. From the experience of this organization's operations, the author proposed a general economic policy for the Republic of Vietnam as follows,

1) Not industrializing the economy at any cost

- 2) Applying Agricultural mechanization
- 3) Development of the principle of free competition
- 4) Social security regime
- 5) Labor utilization policy (Bách Khoa Journal, Issue 41, pp.10-11).

Trần Lương Ngọc has an analysis article on “*The Impact of the Vietnam War on the United States and Vietnamese Economies*” in issue 318. The article presents Professor Benjamin J. Cohen’s comparisons of the impact of the Vietnam War on the United States and Vietnamese economies in three aspects, i.e., Vietnam War funding, the beneficiaries of the Vietnam War, and the adverse consequences of the war. Regarding the cost of the Vietnam War, the author pointed out, “Although the United States spent the larger part, due to its ability to endure, Vietnam bore the burden many times more. The Vietnam War’s expenses accounted for 15% of the national budget and 3% of the US national output. While Vietnam had to contribute more than 60% of the national budget and up to 18% of the national output to the war” (Bách Khoa Journal, Issue 318, p.5).

Concerning the beneficiaries of the Vietnam War, according to Benjamin J. Cohen's research, in the United States, almost all industries more or less benefited due to the wages of the Vietnam War. In terms of proportion, the wooden crate industry for shipping goods was the most profitable, with defense spending in this industry increasing by 1,100% from 1965 to 1967, followed by the industries making boxes and paper utensils such as bowls, plates, cups, etc. The costs for these industries increased by 500% between 1955 and 1967. However, the aircraft and ammunition industries had the highest profits (Bách Khoa Journal, Issue 318, p.6).

Besides the beneficial effects, the Vietnam War negatively affected the two countries. Professor Cohen pointed out that inflation continued to increase in the United States, with prices in 1969 being 6% higher than in 1964. Inflation was even more worrying in South Vietnam, where from 1964 to 1969, the inflation rate was 500%. To finance the war, the US government increased taxes, and from 1966, the American people had to pay an additional US\$ 2.5 billion each year. By 1968, an additional 10% tax was added to the income tax of individuals and companies, raising an additional US\$ 10.5 billion each year. However, compared to the tax burden on the people of South Vietnam, it was still insignificant. From 1964 to 1968, the national budget revenue through tax measures increased more than four times, from 13 billion in 1964 to 56 billion in 1968 (Bách Khoa Journal, Issue 318, p.7). Due to the burden of the Vietnam War, the United States had to reduce spending on activities such as foreign aid, space exploration, and natural resource exploration. Although President Johnson still allocated funds for implementing education, labor, health, and social programs, Professor Cohen believes that these social programs could have developed even more if the Vietnam War had not occurred. In South Vietnam, the government also focused its investment budget on military expenses. The budget for the Ministries of Health, Social Affairs, Education, and Labor accounted for only about 8%, while the budget for national defense increased from 50% of the total budget in 1964 to 60% in 1967 and continued to increase in 1968 and 1969 (Bách Khoa Journal, Issue 318, p.8).

3. CONCLUSIONS

Although the Republic of Vietnam's government promoted "democracy" and introduced specific favorable policies for the birth and operation of the press in South Vietnam from 1954 to 1975, the government's ultimate goal was to control the press to serve their political goals. Therefore, the long-term and continuous existence of the *Bách Khoa Journal* through different governments of the Republic of South Vietnam was an "exception," especially when this journal was considered the land of "pro-communists" and "former resistance fighters."

Contemporary intellectuals in South Vietnam paid considerable attention to the economic issue. Articles published in the *Bách Khoa Journal* exploited it from many different angles, from economic policies to specific economic sectors. More importantly, the economy of South Vietnam was not only analyzed individually but was also viewed in its interactive relationship with other economies. Most of the articles on economics were done by experts or people with expertise in this field. For example, the author Huỳnh Văn Lang was an economics professor at Saigon University. Therefore, the comments made in the articles not only reflect the perspective of contemporary South Vietnamese intellectuals but also ensure knowledge of the economic field as well as the scientific quality.

Born and operated in the context of the Vietnam War, this defined characteristics in the content and approach of *Bách Khoa Journal*. For example, the authors tend to access economic information from countries allied with the Republic of Vietnam to make comparisons, comment, or draw lessons to build economic development policies. Some articles have biased comments on the economy of North Vietnam because the two regions are in a state of political "confrontation."

The "lifespan" of *Bách Khoa Journal* almost coincides with the existence of the Republic of Vietnam government, and articles on economics were also published regularly and continuously throughout the journal's publication period. Therefore, articles on economic issues in *Bách Khoa* will provide a rich source of documents for studying the economy of South Vietnam from 1954 to 1975. This document can also be used as a reference for other research works related to the economy of South Vietnam.

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