

Ho Chi Minh – A brilliant thinker

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Abstract

Ho Chi Minh is an outstanding thinker of the Vietnamese nation and makes significant contributions to the treasury of human thought and theory. His thought represents a crystallization of the nation's traditional cultural values and the quintessence of human culture, particularly through the creative application of Marxism-Leninism to the country's specific conditions. Ho Chi Minh Thought holds not only tremendous historical value but also serves as the ideological foundation and guiding principle for the cause of renewal in Vietnam. The paper focuses on analyzing Ho Chi Minh within the stream of 20th century human thought, clarifying his prominent and innovative arguments, and thereby highlighting the theoretical and practical value of Ho Chi Minh's thought to the revolutionary cause in Vietnam and the world.

Keywords: Ho Chi Minh, a thinker, innovative arguments, and theoretical and practical value

Introduction

In the 20th century, Ho Chi Minh was recognized not only as a national liberation hero and a man of culture but also as a brilliant thinker. Many scholars worldwide consider Ho Chi Minh Thought to be a comprehensive philosophical - political - ethical system that serves as a guiding principle for the Vietnamese revolution, while simultaneously enriching the theoretical treasury of Marxism-Leninism through the practical experience of Vietnamese revolution (CPV Central Committee's Publicity and Education Commission, 2010, p. 215) ^[1, 3].

In the current context of global volatility, Vietnam is accelerating comprehensive renewal and extensive international integration to enter an era of national rise. Studying Ho Chi Minh as a great thinker not only helps to provide a deeper interpretation of the scientific and revolutionary nature of his outstanding intellectual contributions—thereby affirming His stature in the history of both the nation and humanity—but also contributes to establishing a scientific basis for formulating guidelines and policies, as well as for defending and consolidating the Party's ideological foundation.

Research contents

1. Ho Chi Minh in the Stream of 20th Century Human Thought

Any theory or doctrine exists within the stream of human thought. Depending on the historical context, operational environment, and personal qualities, each individual makes unique contributions to the common treasury of theory and leaves a distinct mark on the evolution and development of their class, nation, and era.

The 20th century was an era of massive upheaval in world history. Capitalism transitioned from the stage of free competition to imperialism. The conflict between oppressed peoples and imperialism is becoming increasingly bitter. The victory of the Russian October Revolution ushered in a new era - an era of transition from capitalism to socialism on a global scale. In that backdrop, many great thinkers emerged, representing various schools of thought: From V.I. Lenin's theory of proletarian revolution, M. Gandhi's

philosophy of non-violence, Sun Yat-sen's Three Principles of the People, and Mao Zedong's theory of rural revolution, Ho Chi Minh absorbed and inherited the nation's fine traditional values and the quintessence of human culture. He creatively applied Marxism-Leninism to the country's specific realities to forge an ideological system that was deeply imbued with Vietnamese identity but still possess universal significance, thereby making a vital contribution to the stream of human thought.

Vietnam is a nation with a long-standing culture. Since the French colonial invasion, patriotic movements against foreign aggressors among all strata of the population took place continuously and vigorously, yet all ended in failure. Born and raised in a semi-feudal colony in the stream of the 20th century thought, Ho Chi Minh embraced Marxism-Leninism not through a purely theoretical path, but rather through the practical need to save the country and liberate the nation. On the one hand, He affirmed the scientific, revolutionary, and unwavering nature of Marxism-Leninism in principle, considering it "the most certain, genuine, and revolutionary doctrine" (Ho Chi Minh: Complete Works, 2011, Vol. 2, p. 289) ^[4]. On the other hand, while studying and applying Marxism-Leninism, he discovered that the East possessed characteristics differing from those of Western nations - characteristics that Karl Marx had not had the opportunity to study during his time. He did not embrace Marxism-Leninism dogmatically and emphasized: "Marxism-Leninism was not a bible, but a guide to revolutionary action" (Ho Chi Minh: Complete Works, 2011, Vol. 9, p. 314) ^[4]. Therefore, He flexibly applied the method of "Vietnamizing Marxism-Leninism" based on the foundation of national culture and the quintessence of human culture. On that basis, he supplemented and developed Marxism-Leninism with creative arguments.

In Ho Chi Minh's thought, the association of national independence with socialism constitutes a core and consistent content and represents the inevitable path of development for colonized nations, including Vietnam. He held the view that in colonial countries, the national issue - combating imperialist aggression to achieve national liberation - must be prioritized; this distinguished his

perspective from many contemporary ideologies that tended to absolutize the class factor. That ideology became a source of inspiration and a driving force for national liberation movements in Asia, Africa, and Latin America during the second half of the 20th century. Furthermore, Ho Chi Minh's thought regarding morality, culture, the human being, and the construction of a state of the people, by the people, and for the people reflects a visionary outlook that transcends its time, aligns with progressive, humanistic global ideals, and remains significant up to now. He emphasized revolutionary morality as a decisive factor in development, regarded culture as the spiritual foundation of society, and affirmed the role of the people in every revolutionary process.

Within the stream of 20th century human thought, Ho Chi Minh not only creatively applied Marxism-Leninism but also developed universal human values in a manner that was accessible, practical, and deeply humane. His contributions extend beyond the borders of Vietnam, becoming a significant part of the history of human thought regarding national liberation, human rights, and development models suited to local conditions. General Vo Nguyen Giap once remarked: "Ho Chi Minh created a comprehensive system of thought that closely integrated theory and practice, as well as national and socialist objectives; this represents a significant development of Marxism-Leninism within the context of the new era." (Vo Nguyen Giap, 2000, p.45) ^[5]. Ho Chi Minh is regarded by many international scholars as one of the most influential revolutionary thinkers of the 20th century; he took the ideology of Marx and Lenin beyond the borders of Europe, allowing it to take root and flourish in the East.

2. Notable creative contributions in Ho Chi Minh's thought

Based on the correct, scientific approach of Marxism-Leninism and a close grasp of realities both within the country and in the world, Ho Chi Minh formulated a comprehensive and profound system of viewpoints regarding the fundamental issues of the Vietnamese revolution, introducing creative insights across various fields.

▪ First, regarding the path of development of the Vietnamese revolution

During the journey of seeking a path to save the country, Ho Chi Minh determined that: "To save the country and liberate the nation, there was no other path than that of the proletarian revolution." (Vo Nguyen Giap, 2000, p.93) ^[5]. this path was the choice of Ho Chi Minh as well as the Vietnamese nation, and it aligned with the developmental trends of the era.

According to Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, the primary task of the proletarian revolution was a class task. This aligned with the social reality of Europe during the time of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. According to Ho Chi Minh, in Vietnam and colonial countries, all social strata shared a common interest and aspiration: national independence. Therefore, it was necessary to temporarily set aside the class task in order to focus on the national task. The path of the Vietnamese revolution is one of national liberation linked to class liberation, in which national liberation is the ultimate and foremost priority. After gaining independence, the revolution had to proceed directly

to the socialist revolution (Ministry of Education and Training, 2021, p. 82) ^[2]. National independence was the foundation and prerequisite for advancing toward socialism, while socialism is the condition for ensuring firm national independence and building a prosperous, happy life for the people. This was the line of uninterrupted revolution, reflecting Ho Chi Minh's strategic vision and creative development of the theory of world revolution. Ho Chi Minh successfully resolved the relationship between national and class issues, as well as between the national and the international, thereby aligning the Vietnamese revolution with the trajectory of the world revolution.

▪ Secondly, regarding the relationship between the national liberation revolution and the proletarian revolution in the metropole.

According to Marxism-Leninism, the national liberation revolution in the colonies must depend on the proletarian revolution in the metropole; the proletarian revolution in the metropole serves as the prerequisite for the colonial liberation movement, and "the complete liberation of colonial countries can only be achieved when the proletariat wins victory in advanced capitalist nations" (Ministry of Education and Training, 2021, p. 87) ^[2]. This viewpoint diminishes the initiative and creativity of the revolution in colonial countries.

Ho Chi Minh clearly articulated the close, reciprocal relationship between the national liberation revolution in the colonies and the proletarian revolution in the metropole; that was a relationship characterized by equality and mutual independence. According to him, capitalism was a leech with one sucker attached to the proletariat in the mother country and another attached to the proletariat in the colonies. To kill that creature, one must sever both suckers simultaneously. Furthermore, colonies held a position of special importance for imperialism, serving as the basis for its survival and growth, as well as a "lucrative" prize for imperialism. Therefore, revolutions in the colonies, together with the proletarian revolution in the metropole, played a crucial role in destroying imperialism; national liberation revolutions in the colonies did not depend on the proletarian revolution in the metropole but must be proactive and creative, and were capable of achieving victory prior to the proletarian revolution in the metropole (Ministry of Education and Training, 2021, pp. 87–89). The above thesis is unique and innovative, holds immense theoretical and practical value, has a scientific basis; it is based on an analysis of the position and role of colonies within the global capitalist system, and the revolutionary potential in those colonies. Moreover, it has been proven correct by the reality of the Vietnamese revolution as well as the national liberation movement worldwide.

▪ Third, regarding the solidarity and rallying of revolutionary forces

Ho Chi Minh determined that: "Unity, unity, great unity; Success, success, great success". He emphasized the strength of the entire people, regardless of class, religion, party, or ethnicity; anyone possessing patriotism could become a force for the revolution. He founded the Viet Minh Front and various forms of broad national united fronts, seamlessly combining national interests with class interests. Furthermore, He expanded international solidarity, garnering support from the international communist and

workers' movement, the national liberation movement, and progressive forces worldwide.

Ho Chi Minh's ideology of solidarity and the rallying of forces guided the formation of a four-tiered front structure: The Great National Unity Front; the Vietnam-Laos-Cambodia Solidarity Front; the Asian-African People's Solidarity Front with Vietnam; the World People's Front of Solidarity with Vietnam against imperialist aggression. Through solidarity, combining national strength with the strength of the times created a combined force for the revolution.

General Vo Nguyen Giap once assessed: Ho Chi Minh's ideology of solidarity "was not merely an application but a creative development of Marxist-Leninist theory regarding class alliances, expanding it into a great national unity bloc founded on national interests and independence and freedom" (Vo Nguyen Giap, 2000, p. 138) [5]. Ho Chi Minh's ideology regarding solidarity and the rallying of revolutionary forces represents a creative crystallization of both the theory and practice of the Vietnamese revolution, as well as a significant contribution to the global revolutionary treasury.

▪ **Fourth, regarding the Communist Party**

In the work of *Đường Kách mệnh* (1927), Ho Chi Minh asserted: "A revolution must, first of all, have a revolutionary party, that mobilizes and organizes the masses internally, while externally establishes ties with oppressed nations and the proletariat worldwide" (Ho Chi Minh: Complete Works, 2011, Vol. 2, p. 289). This represents not only an application of Lenin's thought regarding the role of the vanguard party but also a creative approach, as Ho Chi Minh forged an alliance between the colonial revolution and the international proletarian revolution.

Ho Chi Minh affirmed that the founding of the Communist Party stemmed from the requirements of the Vietnamese revolution, combining Marxism-Leninism with the workers' movement and the patriotic movement. This highlights the role of patriotism in a colonial context and constitutes a significant contribution to the treasury of world revolutionary theory.

Regarding the nature of the Party, Ho Chi Minh defined it as follows: "Our Party is the Party of the working class and, at the same time, the Party of the Vietnamese nation" (Ho Chi Minh: Complete Works, 2011, Vol. 10, p. 603). Ho Chi Minh inextricably linked the working-class nature with Party's national character, emphasizing the unity between class interests and national interests in the process of leading the revolution. This perspective broadens the Party's social base, aligns with the characteristics of Vietnamese society, and differs from the model of a purely class-based party found in industrialized nations. At the same time, He placed revolutionary morality at a foundational position in Party building. According to Him, "Our Party is morality, is civilization." He regarded morality as the "foundation" of the ruling Party; upheld the spirit of self-awareness and self-cultivation among cadres and Party members; attached importance to self-criticism and criticism; and used practical results as well as the trust and satisfaction of the people as a measure. When the Party becomes the ruling Party, it must always correct itself and innovate itself to be worthy of "being both a leader and a truly loyal servant of the People" (Ho Chi Minh: Complete Works, 2011, Vol. 11, p. 512). Thus, Ho Chi Minh added a new dimension to the treasury

of the world revolution: The Party was not merely an instrument of political leadership but also a moral and cultural organization of the revolution, was the embodiment of the flesh-and-blood bond between the Party and the people.

▪ **Fifth, regarding the building of a state of the people, by the people, and for the people.**

Ho Chi Minh affirmed the democratic nature of the new regime in Vietnam. He emphasized: "Our country is a democratic country; the highest position belongs to the people, because the people are the masters" (Ho Chi Minh Complete Works, 2011, Vol. 5, p. 294) [4]. Accordingly, the new-style state in Vietnam is the state of the people, by the people, and for the people - a model unprecedented in Vietnamese history. The State embodies the nature of the working class, unified with a broad popular character and a profound national character; the people are the holders of power.

Ho Chi Minh combined Marxist theory regarding the proletarian state with the Eastern tradition of "the people as the foundation of the nation", thereby creating a model of a rule-of-law state belonging to the people. This model integrated both "rule by virtue" and "rule by law" in social governance and national leadership, while ensuring the people's oversight and mastery.

▪ **Sixth, regarding socialism and the path of transition to socialism in Vietnam.**

Ho Chi Minh affirmed that socialism was, first and foremost, for the people; he regarded the people's happiness as the ultimate goal, emphasized the principle of taking the people as the foundation, and advocated combining national strength with the strength of the times. In an underdeveloped agricultural country, the path of transition was long, complex, and involved many intermediate stages. He proposed the multi-sector economic model, identifying the development of productive forces as the central task, while simultaneously building a state of the people, by the people, and for the people, and fostering culture and human development.

Regarding the issue of "bypassing" capitalism, Ho Chi Minh affirmed that Vietnam would only bypass the establishment of capitalist relations of production, not the scientific-technical achievements and management experience of capitalism. The aforementioned viewpoint demonstrates creativity and serves as a crucial theoretical foundation for the path of building socialism in Vietnam.

▪ **Seventh, regarding people**

Ho Chi Minh regarded people as the "most precious asset", as the creators of all material and spiritual values; people were both the goal and the driving force of the revolution, and all policies of the Party and the State must aim to bring happiness to the people.

Ho Chi Minh creatively developed the Marxism-Leninism on the human being by emphasizing the roles of education, ethics, and character cultivation, while prioritizing the shaping of the "new socialist person" through a harmonious combination of "virtue" and "talent". He elevated the human being from a socio-economic category to a cultural and ethical one, regarding the human being as the center of all development strategies. Therefore, He affirmed: "For the benefit of ten years, we must plant trees; for the benefit of a

hundred years, we must cultivate people” (Ho Chi Minh: Complete Works, 2011, Vol. 10, p. 612) ^[4]. This is a contribution of profound significance to modern social science, becoming a principle of sustainable development for Vietnam.

▪ **Eighth, regarding morality**

Ho Chi Minh held the view that: Morality serves as the “foundation” for a revolutionary and determines every victory of the revolution. “Just as a river must have a source to have water, and without a source it dries up a tree must have roots to sprout green branches and leaves. “A revolutionary must have morality; without morality, no matter how talented they are, they cannot lead the people” (Ho Chi Minh). Complete Works, 2011, Vol. 5, p. 292) ^[4]. He combined traditional Eastern morality with Marxist revolutionary morality, establishing a new system of moral values - revolutionary morality. Among these, the qualities of “diligence, thrift, integrity, righteousness, and uttermost impartiality” possess both universal significance and a distinctively Vietnamese character.

Ho Chi Minh emphasized the practice of morality. Morality is the result of lifelong self-cultivation and discipline. Consistency between words and deeds; regarding actions and the effectiveness of serving the people as a measure of morality. At the same time, it extends the scope of morality to new social relationships. Morality is not limited to personal relationships but becomes socialist morality. This represents a creative addition to the treasury of human morality, particularly emphasizing the exemplary role of cadres and Party members, and marks a new stage in the development of revolutionary ethical theory, shifting morality from the individual to the societal level - morality of serving to the people and the revolution.

3. The value of Ho Chi Minh’s thought

▪ **From a theoretical perspective**

Ho Chi Minh Thought is the result of the creative application and development of Marxism-Leninism to the conditions of Vietnam, while simultaneously inheriting the nation’s traditional cultural values and absorbing the quintessence of human culture. His innovative arguments advanced the theory of revolution in colonial countries, expanded the scope of the application of Marxism-Leninism to nations struggling for independence, and enriched the treasury of global revolutionary theory. To this day, Ho Chi Minh’s thought remains a source of inspiration for movements struggling for independence, democracy, and social justice in many countries.

Ho Chi Minh Thought is the ideological foundation and guiding principle for the Vietnamese revolution; for the first time in Vietnamese ideological history, the thoughts guiding and directing the nation’s development originated from the Vietnamese people themselves. That ideology illuminated the path for the Party and the people throughout the struggle for national liberation, as well as in the building and defense of the Fatherland.

In the current context, Ho Chi Minh Thought helps the Party and the people of Vietnam gain a correct understanding of issues regarding national independence, socio-economic development, the assurance of human freedom and happiness, and the goal of building socialism. This serves as a solid foundation for the Party to formulate the correct policies and acts as the guiding thread leading the country’s development.

▪ **From a practical perspective**

Ho Chi Minh Thought led the national liberation revolution in Vietnam to victory. By discovering the correct path to national salvation and founding the Communist Party of Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh together with the Party successfully led the August Revolution, the resistance war against French colonialists, the construction of socialism in the North, and the resistance war against American imperialist aggression, ultimately liberating the South, reunifying the country in 1975, and advancing the entire nation toward socialism. Since its inception, Ho Chi Minh Thought has served as the ideological banner guiding the Vietnamese revolution from one victory to another, and the very reality of the Vietnamese revolution has demonstrated and affirmed the correctness and creativity of Ho Chi Minh Thought. Ho Chi Minh Thought is a vibrant, open system that the Communist Party of Vietnam continues to creatively apply, supplement, and develop within the current and future cause of renewal.

Ho Chi Minh Thought makes a significant contribution to the struggle for national independence, democracy, peace, and cooperative development worldwide. He advocated peace, friendship, and cooperation based on equality and mutual benefit; considering international cooperation not only as a means to achieve independence but also as a way to foster development, eradicate poverty, and integrate into the common progress of humanity. He linked the Vietnamese revolution with the national liberation movement and the international communist and workers’ movement, contributing to guiding national liberation movements and the construction of socialism in many countries across Asia, Africa, and Latin America. With the principle of “befriending all democratic nations”, Ho Chi Minh made significant contributions to strengthening peace and promoting international cooperation. In the hearts of friends around the world, He stands as a noble symbol of conscience, dignity, and humanistic ideals.

Conclusion

Ho Chi Minh is a brilliant thinker. His thought represents a crystallization of tradition and modernity, the national and the international, theory and practice, reflecting the intellect, mettle, and character of an outstanding revolutionary. His thought not only holds immense historical value but also serves to guide Vietnam’s current cause of renewal, integration, and development, while contributing to the treasury of human theoretical thought.

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