



Ho Chi Minh's Thought on Human Rights and National Independence

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ABSTRACT

This paper elucidates Ho Chi Minh's thoughts on human rights and national independence, asserting that human rights are inseparable from national sovereignty and self-determination. From the historical reality of Vietnam's struggle for national liberation, Ho Chi Minh recognized that only through achieving independence and freedom can individuals truly exercise their fundamental rights to life, education, creativity, and the pursuit of happiness. His thought represents a synthesis of Eastern humanism, Western democratic ideals of human rights, and, most notably, Marxism-Leninism. The article emphasizes the humanistic, progressive, and highly practical values of Ho Chi Minh's thought in safeguarding and promoting human rights in today's context of globalization. Moreover, his ideology also articulates a clear stance on respecting both the sovereignty and human rights of other nations, thereby contributing to the building of peace, cooperation, and sustainable development among countries

INTRODUCTION

Entering the 21st century, human beings have increasingly become the central focus of social development. Most countries around the world now place human beings at the heart of their socio-economic development strategies, recognizing human rights as universal values. However, the understanding and implementation of human rights vary significantly across nations, influenced by factors such as historical context, cultural traditions, and levels of development. At the same time, human rights have often been misused under the guise of “humanitarianism”, and “democracy” and politicized or internationalized to justify interference in the internal affairs of sovereign nations. Such actions violate national sovereignty and the right to self-determination under the pretense of promoting human rights, reflecting ideological inequality and power politics.

Therefore, affirming and safeguarding the human rights of each nation without threatening or infringing upon the sovereignty and rights of others has become an urgent global imperative. In this context, studying Ho Chi Minh’s thoughts on human rights and national independence holds both theoretical and practical significance. It offers important insights for protecting the human rights and sovereign integrity of the Vietnamese nation, while also promoting mutual respect for the sovereignty and rights of other peoples around the world.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The intellectual foundation for understanding Ho Chi Minh’s conceptualization of human rights and national independence lies in his own writings, speeches, and political treatises. The *Collected Works of Ho Chi Minh* (2000, 2009, 2011) remain the most authoritative reference, providing systematic insight into his synthesis of universal human values, revolutionary praxis, and national self-determination. These texts illustrate his pragmatic and strategic engagement with Enlightenment ideals, particularly the U.S. Declaration of Independence (1776) and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen (1789). Rather than adopting these documents uncritically, Ho Chi Minh strategically reinterpreted them within the context of anti-colonial struggle, positioning the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity as universal norms that colonial powers had failed to uphold in practice.

These foundational writings underscore the distinctive feature of Ho Chi Minh’s thought: the inseparability of human rights from national independence. In his view, the liberation of the Vietnamese people from colonial domination was not only a political necessity but also a moral imperative rooted in the recognition of human dignity. Thus, for Ho Chi Minh, sovereignty itself constituted a human right, and national independence was both a precondition and an expression of fundamental freedoms.

Beyond his collected works, biographical studies have contributed to contextualizing Ho Chi Minh’s political formation and ethical commitments. Lan (1976) provides one of the earliest comprehensive accounts of his life, tracing his intellectual development from early exposure to Western revolutionary thought to his leadership in Vietnam’s anti-colonial struggle. These works emphasize his capacity to integrate diverse ideological influences Marxism-Leninism,

Confucian ethics, and Enlightenment principles into a coherent vision for Vietnam's liberation and development.

Historical analyses further underscore the role of Ho Chi Minh in shaping Vietnam's constitutional and political frameworks. His leadership in drafting the 1945 Declaration of Independence, for instance, exemplified his ability to situate Vietnam's national liberation within a broader discourse of universal rights. This moment is often cited as the crystallization of his synthesis of human rights and sovereignty, blending local aspirations with global legitimacy.

Recent decades have witnessed a growing scholarly interest in Ho Chi Minh's thought on human rights, approached through multiple disciplines including political science, law, philosophy, and education. Nguyen (2023) highlights the application of Ho Chi Minh's ideas in legal education, particularly their role in strengthening a rights-based approach to governance in contemporary Vietnam. This study underscores how Ho Chi Minh's emphasis on the people as the foundation of political authority continues to inform legal reforms and the promotion of human rights awareness within socialist institutions.

Interdisciplinary research has also expanded the scope of analysis by examining Ho Chi Minh's ideas through cultural, ethical, and comparative perspectives. Scholars argue that his human rights framework transcends liberal individualism by situating rights within a broader matrix of social justice, collective welfare, and national identity. This approach aligns with contemporary debates on non-Western models of human rights, highlighting the importance of cultural contextualization in rights discourse.

Furthermore, studies such as Quy and Thanh (2025) in *Asia Europe Journal* explore the continuing relevance of Ho Chi Minh's ethical leadership model in the moral development of Communist Party cadres. Their findings suggest that his legacy not only informs political governance but also shapes the ethical orientation of public officials, emphasizing accountability, service to the people, and moral integrity.

Ho Chi Minh's legacy remains deeply embedded in Vietnam's contemporary approach to human rights on the global stage. Vietnam's membership in the United Nations Human Rights Council (2023–2025) has been framed domestically as an extension of Ho Chi Minh's commitment to human dignity and sovereignty (Nhan Dan, 2023). Vietnam's co-sponsorship of a resolution commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the 30th anniversary of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action reflects a continuity of his vision in promoting rights at the international level.

At the same time, international organizations and human rights watchdogs have raised concerns about Vietnam's domestic human rights practices. Human Rights Watch (2025) documents ongoing restrictions on freedom of expression, association, and religion, as well as the imprisonment of political activists and environmental defenders. These criticisms highlight tensions between Ho Chi Minh's human rights ideals and contemporary political realities, raising questions about the extent to which his vision has been realized in practice.

From an academic perspective, these tensions provide fertile ground for critical inquiry. They underscore the need to distinguish between Ho Chi Minh's normative framework and its implementation by subsequent generations of political leadership. While his theoretical contributions remain significant, the divergences between ideal and practice illustrate the complexities of translating ideological legacies into contemporary governance.

Gaps in the Literature and Research Agenda

Despite these contributions, several gaps persist in the scholarship. First, while Vietnamese sources have extensively documented Ho Chi Minh's human rights thought, international scholarship has yet to fully situate him within the broader genealogy of global human rights theory. Compared to figures like Gandhi, Fanon, or Nkrumah, Ho Chi Minh's contributions remain relatively understudied in international academic discourse.

Second, there is limited comparative analysis between Ho Chi Minh's integrated framework of rights and dominant Western liberal paradigms. His conception that sovereignty itself constitutes a human right offers a distinct alternative that challenges the individualist bias of mainstream human rights theory. Situating Ho Chi Minh within debates on postcolonial and decolonial thought could enrich global understandings of rights and justice.

Finally, there is a need for greater interdisciplinary dialogue that connects Ho Chi Minh's thought with contemporary issues such as climate justice, sustainable development, and global governance. His emphasis on the interdependence of rights, independence, and social responsibility provides valuable insights for addressing transnational challenges that transcend national borders.

Overall, the literature reveals both the richness and the limitations of existing scholarship on Ho Chi Minh's thought on human rights and national independence. While foundational texts and recent studies highlight his unique synthesis of universal principles and anti-colonial struggle, significant gaps remain in situating his ideas within global human rights theory. This article aims to contribute to filling that gap by positioning Ho Chi Minh's framework as a holistic, contextual, and anti-colonial model that is historically grounded yet globally relevant.

METHODOLOGY

Research Methods

This study employs a qualitative research design rooted in the analysis of both primary and secondary sources. Primary materials include Ho Chi Minh's writings, speeches, and the *Collected Works of Ho Chi Minh* (2000, 2009, 2011), which provide the theoretical foundation for his articulation of human rights and national independence. These texts are examined not merely as historical records but as normative frameworks that articulate a distinct vision of human dignity, sovereignty, and social justice.

Secondary sources include biographical works, scholarly monographs, peer-reviewed journal articles, and recent reports by international organizations (Nguyen, 2023; Quy & Thanh, 2025; Human Rights Watch, 2025). The study adopts a critical textual analysis approach, comparing Ho Chi Minh's discourse

with broader international human rights documents such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (1993). The analysis is conducted in three stages: Contextualization situating Ho Chi Minh's human rights thought within its historical, cultural, and political context; Conceptual Analysis identifying core principles such as sovereignty as a human right, the integration of individual and collective freedoms, and the interdependence of rights and independence. Comparative and Critical Engagement examining how Ho Chi Minh's framework aligns with, diverges from, or enriches dominant Western liberal paradigms of human rights, as well as its relevance to contemporary global debates.

Methodological Framework

The study is grounded in a historical-dialectical methodology, drawing from Marxist and postcolonial traditions of inquiry. This methodological orientation is particularly appropriate for analyzing Ho Chi Minh's thought, as his conceptualization of rights emerges from the dialectic between universal ideals and local historical struggles. Unlike positivist approaches that isolate texts from their context, the historical-dialectical method situates Ho Chi Minh's writings within broader socio-political processes, such as colonial domination, global anti-colonial movements, and the rise of socialist governance

Additionally, the research integrates elements of hermeneutic interpretation, focusing on the meaning-making processes in Ho Chi Minh's appropriation of Enlightenment ideals. His invocation of Western revolutionary documents is read not as passive borrowing but as an act of reinterpretation, strategically deployed to legitimate Vietnam's struggle for independence on both moral and legal grounds. This interpretive lens allows for a deeper understanding of how universal values were localized and transformed within the Vietnamese revolutionary context.

From a broader perspective, the study engages with critical human rights scholarship and postcolonial theory. By foregrounding Ho Chi Minh's synthesis of sovereignty and human rights, the research challenges Eurocentric paradigms that often equate rights exclusively with individual liberties detached from collective struggles. Instead, it positions his thought as part of a decolonial genealogy of human rights, in dialogue with figures such as Mahatma Gandhi, Frantz Fanon, and Kwame Nkrumah.

Methodologically, this approach contributes in three key ways:

1. Normative Clarification - by systematically reconstructing Ho Chi Minh's integrated conception of rights and independence.
2. Comparative Insight - by situating his thought within global debates on rights and justice, highlighting both convergences and divergences with liberal frameworks.
3. Practical Relevance - by connecting his normative vision to contemporary issues, such as Vietnam's role in the UN Human Rights Council, ongoing critiques of rights practices, and broader debates on culturally grounded human rights.

In sum, the methodological framework combines historical-dialectical analysis, hermeneutic interpretation, and critical postcolonial theory. This

triangulation ensures that Ho Chi Minh's human rights thought is studied not only as a historical artifact but also as a living framework that remains relevant for global discussions on rights, sovereignty, and justice.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ho Chi Minh's Thought on Human Rights

In Vietnam, the issue of human rights has been addressed at an early stage. Ho Chi Minh absorbed and elevated the notion of human rights to a higher theoretical and practical level, asserting that human rights must be intrinsically linked to national rights, including national independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. He emphasized that human rights can only be realized through a revolutionary struggle against colonial oppression and exploitation, in pursuit of national liberation and solidarity in building and defending the homeland. For Ho Chi Minh, a dependent and colonized nation cannot guarantee the realization of individual rights. This foundational principle ensures that both individual and collective rights are achieved in a unified and sustainable manner.

Ho Chi Minh's concept of human rights was deeply rooted in the historical experience of the Vietnamese people and selectively inherited from both Eastern and Western progressive traditions. Above all, it was shaped by his creative application of Marxism-Leninism's philosophy of human and societal liberation. His thought incorporates a range of progressive and universal values, enriching the global discourse on human rights theory. Embodying the spirit of Vietnamese patriotism, he proclaimed that the most precious things in life were national independence and people's freedom: "What I desire most in life is for my fellow countrymen to enjoy freedom and for my country to gain independence" (Lan, 1976, p. 15).

Born into a colonized nation deprived of sovereignty, Ho Chi Minh witnessed the suffering of his people under the domination and exploitation of feudal and colonial regimes where the right to life and the right to independence were utterly absent. For him, the quest for human rights necessitated the reclamation of national sovereignty and racial equality. This conviction drove the young Nguyen Tat Thanh to embark on a journey to seek a path to national salvation in 1911. He devoted himself to studying the real meaning of "liberty, equality, fraternity" in the imperial metropolises, thoroughly researching the bourgeois revolutions and progressive ideologies of the time. He discovered in the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789) and the U.S. Declaration of Independence (1776) the notion of "inalienable rights". These texts provided a crucial foundation for Ho Chi Minh to assert that the Vietnamese people, too, must be entitled to such inalienable rights.

Drawing on the principle of national self-determination recognized by the Allied powers after World War I, Ho Chi Minh, on behalf of the Group of Vietnamese Patriots in France, submitted an eight-point petition to the Versailles Conference on June 18, 1919. It demanded the French government recognize Vietnam's democratic and civil rights. However, the petition was rejected an experience that led Ho Chi Minh to a crucial realization: "To achieve true independence and freedom, oppressed nations must rely primarily on their strength; the Vietnamese must liberate themselves" (Minh, 1975, p. 21). He

concluded that independence could not depend solely on the support of the metropolitan revolution; rather, colonial nations must proactively pursue self-reliance, mobilize their people, and follow the path of Marxism–Leninism. For colonized and dependent peoples, national independence and sovereignty are prerequisites for the realization of human rights.

While Western conceptions of human rights primarily emphasize individual liberties, Ho Chi Minh advanced this idea to a higher level of integration. He argued that in the era of imperialism where capitalism had evolved beyond free competition individual rights alone were insufficient. In colonized countries, the rights of individuals are inextricably linked to national rights, including the right to self-determination and racial equality. Based on the idea of the right to live and the right of nations to self-rule, Ho Chi Minh demanded that the Vietnamese be granted the same freedoms as the French. He stated: “Both nations share common interests, mutual sentiments, a similar culture and ethics, and a collective desire for freedom... Vietnam’s fight for independence is aligned with the democratic ideals pioneered by the French nation” (Minh, 2000, Vol. 4, p. 271).

In a letter to the French diaspora in Indochina, he wrote: “You love France and want her independence. You love your compatriots and want them to be free. Such patriotism and humanism honor you, for they reflect the noblest of ideals. But we too must be allowed to love our homeland and seek its independence. We too must be allowed to love our people and wish for their freedom. What you cherish as an ideal must also be ours” (Minh, 2000, Vol. 4, p. 73).

He went further to appeal: “French citizens in Indochina! Do you not believe that enough human blood has been shed, that peace true peace based on justice and democratic ideals must replace war, and that liberty, equality, and fraternity must prevail across the land, regardless of race or skin color?” (Minh, 2000, Vol. 4, p. 75).

For the Vietnamese people, the determination to defend national independence became a sacred cause for which they were willing to sacrifice everything. Ho Chi Minh affirmed: “We are unafraid of death because we long to live. We, like you, want to live freely, without oppression”; “The Vietnamese people will never accept a return to slavery. We would rather die than lose our independence and freedom” (Minh, 2000, Vol. 4, p. 483).

Ho Chi Minh did not merely inherit human rights ideals from the past he transformed them. He extended the notion of human rights beyond the right to subsistence to include the right to personal and intellectual development. These included the rights to education, creativity, the pursuit of happiness, and full civil, political, economic, cultural, and social participation. His human rights thought encompassed special attention to marginalized groups: ethnic minorities, women, children, and disadvantaged communities ensuring their rights and enabling social inclusion.

Thus, Ho Chi Minh’s human rights theory is rich in both breadth and depth, forming a revolutionary and scientific framework of human rights. For him, human rights were not just theoretical constructs but guiding principles for

action. The liberation of the people and national independence were the ultimate aims of his revolutionary mission: "I have only one desire, the most pressing one my country to be free, and my people to have food, clothing, and education" (Minh, 2009, Vol. 4, p. 161). "My entire life has been devoted to the interests of the nation and the happiness of the people. Whether hiding in the mountains or languishing in prison, I have endured hardship for that purpose" (Minh, 2009, Vol. 4, p. 240).

After the August Revolution of 1945, in the first meeting of the National Reconstruction Committee, Ho Chi Minh outlined four urgent tasks: ensuring the people had food, clothing, shelter, and education. He famously declared: "If independence does not bring freedom and well-being to the people, then that independence is meaningless" (Minh, 1995, Vol. 4, p. 56). "Only when people are well-fed and well-clothed will they truly understand the value of freedom and independence" (Minh, 1995, Vol. 4, p. 152).

Therefore, he consistently reminded Party and State officials that national independence must ultimately translate into real popular sovereignty, in which all power belongs to the people. Government institutions are entrusted by the people to serve the people. Hence, on September 3, 1945, at the first meeting of the Provisional Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh identified six urgent tasks, including drafting a constitution to guarantee democratic freedoms and organizing a general election with universal suffrage for all citizens aged 18 and over, regardless of wealth, ethnicity, or religion.

From the abstract notion of basic human rights, Ho Chi Minh expanded the concept into national rights and the right of citizens to live in freedom and independence. He transformed natural law foundations into revolutionary principles of struggle against oppression. His human rights ideology demonstrates a far-reaching vision that addresses fundamental questions of human dignity, with enduring contributions of global relevance. Among his most significant contributions is the idea that protecting one's own national independence and human rights must go hand-in-hand with respecting the sovereignty and human rights of other nations. This remains one of the most urgent and pressing challenges in global political life today.

Ho Chi Minh's Thoughts on the Right to National Independence and Respect for Sovereignty and Human Rights of All Nations

Ho Chi Minh's conception of human rights is deeply rooted in the right to national independence and sovereignty, while simultaneously emphasizing the respect for those same rights in other nations. This is clearly articulated in the *Declaration of Independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam* on September 2, 1945. Drawing inspiration from the United States Declaration of Independence (1776) and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen (1789), Ho Chi Minh declared: "All men are created equal. They are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights; among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness" and "All nations on the earth are equal from birth; every nation has the right to live, to be happy, and to be free" (Minh, 1995, Vol. 3, p. 577). In doing so, he established a human rights discourse that intertwined personal liberties with the collective right of nations to self-determination.

Ho Chi Minh consistently asserted Vietnam's sovereignty and the sacred

rights of its people: "We solemnly declare that our people sincerely desire peace. But we are also determined to fight to the end to defend our most sacred rights: the territorial integrity of the Fatherland and independence for our country" (Ho Chi Minh, 2000, Vol. 4, p. 469). At the same time, he expressed unwavering respect for the sovereignty and human rights of other nations, emphasizing peaceful and equal international relations even with colonial powers such as France and the United States. In the *Policy Statement of the Provisional Coalition Government*, he noted: "In foreign policy: friendly to foreign nationals, especially the Chinese. As for the French, we fight only the colonialists. Those French nationals who do not harm our independence will have their lives and property protected" (Minh, 1981, Vol. 1, p. 372).

Reinforcing this policy of peaceful coexistence, he stated: "The Vietnamese are ready to welcome and cooperate with French intellectuals, peasants, workers, and businesspeople who come here to work. Reasonable monetary and cultural interests of the French in Vietnam will be protected. Those who do not want their sovereignty violated should respect the sovereignty of Vietnam" (Minh, 2000, Vol. 4, p. 458). Similarly, his stance towards Chinese immigrants in Vietnam was one of equality and inclusion. Recognizing their long-standing contributions to Indochina's economy, Ho Chi Minh upheld their legitimate rights to livelihood, protection, and equal treatment as Vietnamese citizens (Minh, 2000, Vol. 4, p. 14).

Ho Chi Minh's thoughts on human rights and sovereignty were not limited to Vietnam's independence but extended to the rights of all nations. Though he placed Vietnam's revolution within the broader context of international solidarity – particularly between colonial and metropolitan proletariat forces he consistently stressed the importance of mutual respect and non-interference. In affirming the strategic alliance between Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, he declared: "The Vietnamese people are closely united with the brotherly peoples of Cambodia and Laos, and that strength is enough to defeat French colonialists and American interventionists" (Minh, 1995, Vol. 6, p. 74). Yet, in that same context, he emphasized that such cooperation must be based on the absolute equality of sovereign nations: "Vietnam always respects the independence of Laos and Cambodia and expresses its willingness to cooperate based on absolute equality between sovereign states" (Minh, 2000, Vol. 4, p. 470).

Ho Chi Minh's human rights ideology evolved into a sophisticated cultural vision for international relations. He and the Vietnamese revolution did not fight only for their liberation but also stood in solidarity with oppressed peoples worldwide. As early as 1941, he asserted: "We must fight for the freedom and independence of other nations as we do for our own" (Minh, 2000, Vol. 9, p. 173). He strongly supported the anti-colonial struggles of Laos and Cambodia and called for a united revolutionary front across Indochina, while remaining steadfast in the principle of each nation's right to self-determination. In 1941, the Communist Party emphasized: "After defeating the French and Japanese, the peoples of Indochina will decide for themselves whether to form a democratic federation or establish separate sovereign nations. Their freedom and independence will be recognized and respected" (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2000, Vol. 7, p. 113). The guiding principle was that "helping friends is helping

ourselves" and that national victories should contribute to the global revolutionary cause (Minh, 2000, Vol. 5, p. 169).

Even in opposition to the French colonialists, Ho Chi Minh remained committed to peace. He continuously sought diplomatic solutions to avoid bloodshed, viewing war as a last resort. From the outbreak of hostilities in December 1946 until the Geneva Accords of 1954, Ho Chi Minh never ceased pursuing negotiations with France to end the war peacefully. When war became inevitable, he grieved for all casualties, regardless of nationality: "I bow before the souls of Vietnamese soldiers and compatriots who have sacrificed their lives for the Fatherland. I also grieve for the French who have died. Alas, before the heart of humanity, French blood or Vietnamese blood both are human blood; the French and the Vietnamese both are human beings" (Minh, 2000, Vol. 4, p. 547).

As President of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam even before Vietnam's admission to the United Nations Ho Chi Minh demonstrated his commitment to international humanitarian law by signing the 1957 Geneva Conventions. These include the protection of civilians during war, the treatment of prisoners of war, and the care for the wounded and shipwrecked. This act reflected his profound humanism, moral compassion, and peace-loving spirit, hallmarks of his enduring legacy as a humanitarian leader.

The Values of Ho Chi Minh's Thought on Human Rights and National Independence, While Respecting the Sovereignty and Human Rights of Other Nations

President Ho Chi Minh was among the earliest anti-colonial leaders in the twentieth century to frame the struggle for independence not only as a political demand but also as a question of human rights. His recognition of the intrinsic values of humanity humanitarianism, human dignity, freedom, and equality was consistently articulated across his writings and revolutionary activities. Unlike abstract philosophical speculation, Ho Chi Minh's approach was historically grounded, responding directly to the realities of imperialism, colonial subjugation, and the urgent need for national liberation. His era-defining contribution lies in demonstrating that human rights could not be fully realized in societies denied sovereignty, and that the liberation of oppressed nations was inseparable from the universal struggle for human dignity. At the theoretical level, Ho Chi Minh advanced a distinctive framework that redefined the relationship between human rights and independence. While Western liberal traditions often emphasized the primacy of individual liberties, Ho Chi Minh articulated a dialectical vision in which the right to national independence was itself a fundamental human right. For colonized peoples, he argued, freedom from foreign domination constituted the necessary condition for the realization of all other rights. His assertion "Only by liberating the nation can the proletariat be liberated; both these liberations are the undertaking of communism and the world revolution" (Minh, 2000, Vol. 4, p. 4) captures this synthesis. National liberation was not a separate struggle from social emancipation; rather, it was the foundational step toward realizing socialism and universal human rights.

At the practical level, Ho Chi Minh consistently linked national independence with the lived experiences of the people. He did not conceive independence merely as sovereignty in the abstract but as a tangible condition

for the happiness and freedom of citizens. His famous declaration “If a country is independent but its people do not enjoy happiness and freedom, then that independence has no meaning” (Minh, 2000, Vol. 4, p. 56) reflects his dialectical approach: independence without human rights is hollow, while human rights without independence are unattainable. This perspective highlights an organic unity between collective rights (national sovereignty, territorial integrity, self-determination) and individual rights (freedom, dignity, equality). In Ho Chi Minh’s thought, the two are mutually reinforcing rather than contradictory. Furthermore, Ho Chi Minh located the agency of liberation in the working people themselves. He argued that the revolution must serve the people, affirming their role as the true masters of the nation. This emphasis resonates with contemporary debates on participatory democracy and the accountability of governance. By rooting independence in the empowerment of the masses, Ho Chi Minh’s human rights framework transcended elite nationalism and became a people-centered vision of rights and sovereignty.

The distinctiveness of Ho Chi Minh’s contribution lies in its global resonance. In the age of decolonization, his framework offered a model for other colonized nations struggling against imperialism. He demonstrated that the pursuit of human rights could not be detached from struggles for collective liberation. In this sense, his thought aligns with broader postcolonial critiques of Eurocentric human rights paradigms, which often universalized individual freedoms while neglecting structural inequalities produced by colonial domination.

In contemporary relevance, Ho Chi Minh’s synthesis of human rights and national independence provides a powerful lens for examining the challenges of globalization, sovereignty, and cultural identity. His insistence that independence is meaningful only when it ensures the well-being of the people remains a critical standard by which both domestic governance and international human rights commitments can be assessed. This dialectical unity between independence and rights between sovereignty and human dignity offers a culturally situated yet globally resonant contribution to human rights discourse.

Ho Chi Minh’s thought demonstrates that human rights, civil rights, and the right to national independence can only be realized through a concrete path of revolutionary struggle. This is the path of achieving threefold liberation: national liberation, social liberation, and human liberation. In everyday life, he regarded the creation of necessary material and spiritual conditions for the comprehensive development of both society and the individual as the goal of socialism. This ideology serves as a guiding light in the ongoing struggle to safeguard the hard-won achievements in human rights secured through blood and sacrifice. At the same time, it provides the theoretical foundation for the practical implementation of human and civil rights in Vietnam today amid deepening international integration, aiming toward a society of freedom, justice, and civilization.

Reflecting on the historical development of human rights and situating Ho Chi Minh’s thought within the contemporary context, one can affirm that his human rights philosophy not only absorbed the quintessential values of global

progressive thought but also embodied a visionary mindset that reflected the spirit of the times. His thought approached the fundamental values aspired to by all of humanity. Ho Chi Minh's conception of human rights was a seamless, scientific, and creative synthesis of Marxism-Leninism, Vietnam's millennia-old cultural and ethical traditions, theory and practice, international conditions, and national realities. He bequeathed to the Vietnamese people not only national independence but also equality, freedom, and the right to self-determination on par with other peoples of the world.

Ho Chi Minh's vision of human rights and national independence, coupled with his respect for the sovereignty and rights of other nations, represents a profound humanistic value in the intellectual history of humanity. It is a dialectical inheritance of Vietnam's longstanding moral and ethical traditions. His thought harmoniously integrated the universal values of humanity with the particular values of the Vietnamese nation.

In the current era, the world continues to experience complex and conflicting international relations. War, regional conflicts, terrorism, and heinous acts continue to trample on the most fundamental human right the right to life. Notably, hegemonic behavior, extreme nationalism, and power politics have led to violations of sovereignty and territorial integrity of land, sea, and air of other nations, in disregard of international law and global opinion. While globalization presents opportunities for all countries, it also poses challenges: resource conflicts, territorial disputes, and competition over living and cultural space. Such aspirations are legitimate for every nation, but they must comply with international law and conventions. Otherwise, such ambitions, when accompanied by violations of others' rights to life and sovereignty, contradict the very ideals of human rights. Such conduct starkly opposes the humane, humanitarian principles and Ho Chi Minh's unwavering advocacy for human rights and national independence both for Vietnam and for all nations.

The universal aspiration of every individual and community is to live in an environment of peace and national independence. Fundamental values such as the right to self-determination, human rights, national independence, sovereignty, freedom, democracy, equality, and happiness are not only legitimate but also must be universally recognized and respected. In this regard, Ho Chi Minh emphasized that national independence and human rights are inseparable, and that the independence and sovereignty of each nation must go hand in hand with respect for the sovereignty and rights of other peoples. This perspective laid the philosophical and political foundation for Vietnam's struggle for liberation in the 20th century and continues to serve as the guiding principle for the Party, the State, and the people in the current era. In today's context, Vietnam faces the dual task of promoting rapid industrialization and modernization while integrating deeply into the global economy. At the same time, the country must deal with complex challenges posed by hostile forces that seek to undermine the socialist regime. These forces pursue strategies of "peaceful evolution," sowing political and social unrest, exploiting sensitive issues such as democracy, human rights, ethnicity, and religion, and using them as pretexts for intervention. Their ultimate goal is to instigate "self-evolution"

and “self-transformation” from within, thereby weakening and overthrowing socialism in Vietnam.

Moreover, tensions in the South China Sea (Bien Dong) have escalated in recent years, directly threatening peace, stability, and security not only for Vietnam but also for neighboring countries in the region. This reality underscores the urgency of safeguarding national independence, building socialism, and defending the Fatherland. The ideological orientation of Ho Chi Minh remains especially relevant here: the defense of independence must be inseparable from the promotion of peace and development. In thoroughly inheriting this ideology, the 12th National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam emphasized the principle of proactive, resolute, and persistent struggle, combining appropriate measures to protect national sovereignty over seas, islands, and airspace, while simultaneously maintaining peace and stability to ensure sustainable development (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2016, p. 146).

In-depth research on human rights, the development of humanitarian thought, and the liberation of human beings in Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh Thought serves as the foundation for shaping the Party’s system of viewpoints on human rights, and for improving the legal and policy framework of the State in this domain. This is essential to enhance Vietnam’s political proactiveness in the international arena concerning human rights. The 2013 Constitution introduced independent institutions and mechanisms for realizing human rights and civil rights. For the first time in the history of constitutional law in Vietnam, the term “human rights” was explicitly used as a chapter heading rather than the previous phrasing “fundamental rights and duties of citizens” seen in the 1992 and earlier constitutions. This change reflects the will and determination of the Party, the State, and the people to protect and uphold human rights, affirming a clearer, more precise understanding of the legal and political importance of human rights, in line with international legal norms. Numerous major policies and decisions regarding socioeconomic development, poverty reduction, and social welfare continue to pursue the goal of serving the people.

Since the late twentieth century, globalization and international integration have emerged as dominant trends, with nations around the world increasingly cooperating for peace and development. Vietnam has actively engaged in this process as a responsible member of the international community. In doing so, the Party and the State have consistently applied Ho Chi Minh’s thought on human rights – particularly the inseparable relationship between national independence and respect for the sovereignty and rights of other nations – while formulating policies that balance national interests with international law. This approach has been evident in Vietnam’s handling of complex issues such as the South China Sea, where timely and appropriate policies have achieved broad domestic consensus and attracted international support. Reflecting this stance, the 13th National Congress of the Communist Party reaffirmed the principle of safeguarding “the supreme interests of the nation based on the fundamental principles of international law, equality, and mutual benefit” (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2021, p. 153).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Ho Chi Minh's thoughts on human rights including the rights to food, clothing, shelter, mobility, education, creativity, the pursuit of happiness, freedom, civil rights, and political, economic, cultural, and social rights as well as the right of each nation to independence, freedom, equality, self-determination, and development, bears profound significance. He applied these ideas in leading the Vietnamese people through the national liberation revolution, achieving great victories: securing national independence and ensuring freedom and democracy for the people.

In the current stage of building socialism, the Vietnamese people consistently aspire to peace and are eager to contribute to strengthening peace, enhancing friendship, and promoting cooperative development both regionally and globally. These are legitimate aspirations and represent the “natural” and “inalienable” rights bestowed by “the Creator” upon every human being and every nation. However, to guarantee human rights and national independence, and to achieve true and sustainable peace, it is essential that the sovereignty and human rights of all nations large or small be respected, and that differences in interests and cultures be acknowledged. Therefore, the study, dissemination, and promotion of Ho Chi Minh's thoughts on human rights and the independence of all nations is of great theoretical and practical significance.

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