



## The Role of Human Development in Vietnam's Socialist-Oriented Development: A Party Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

Grounded in the theoretical premises of Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh Thought on the centrality of human beings in social transformation, the Communist Party of Vietnam has consistently affirmed that the Vietnamese people constitute the nation's most decisive and valuable resource. Within this framework, the human factor is understood not merely as a component of development but as its intrinsic driving force and ultimate purpose. For Vietnam a country that has deliberately chosen and steadfastly pursued a socialist-oriented path economic growth is not regarded as an end in itself. Rather, development is conceived as a comprehensive process aimed at enhancing human well-being, expanding human capacities, and creating conditions for the all-round development of individuals. Throughout the Renovation period, this human-centered orientation has been coherently reflected in Party documents and strategic policies. These texts consistently position human beings at the core of socio-economic planning, emphasizing that sustainable national progress depends fundamentally on the cultivation of intellectual potential, moral values, and social responsibility. In this sense, development is legitimized by its contribution to human flourishing, while the Vietnamese people remain both the subjects and the beneficiaries of the country's modernization and socialist construction

## **INTRODUCTION**

Ho Chi Minh conveyed a long-term developmental philosophy through his well-known assertion: “For the benefit of ten years, plant trees; for the benefit of a hundred years, cultivate people.” Embedded in this idea is a strategic understanding that the decisive foundation of national advancement lies in nurturing human capacities over time. Drawing upon and further elaborating this intellectual orientation, the Communist Party of Vietnam has consistently positioned cultural development and the comprehensive cultivation of the Vietnamese people at the heart of the country’s contemporary development agenda. Within this framework, human development is not conceived as a derivative by-product of economic expansion; rather, it functions simultaneously as an inherent objective and as an internal driving force of the nation-building process.

## **LITERATURE RIVIEW**

Throughout the Renovation period, Party Congress documents have systematically reaffirmed the centrality of the human factor. Human beings are defined as the country’s most critical and valuable resource, serving both as the endpoint toward which development is directed and as the active agency that makes development possible. Accordingly, the enhancement of living standards and the protection of human dignity and well-being are articulated as the supreme commitments of the socialist-oriented system. The Thirteenth National Congress further reinforced this principle by emphasizing that the quality and level of human development decisively shape the course of social transformation. This reflects a consistent strategic logic: all progress is generated by human initiative and creativity, and its ultimate justification rests on advancing human fulfillment. In this sense, human beings represent both the origin and the purpose of development.

In the context of intensified globalization and expanding international integration, the ability to adapt to structural change, capitalize on emerging opportunities, and confront multifaceted challenges is fundamentally contingent upon the robustness of the human factor. Consequently, promoting the holistic development of the Vietnamese people transcends the status of a conventional policy objective; it constitutes a strategic determinant of the long-term success of the Renovation cause. From the Sixth to the Thirteenth Party Congress, this human-centered orientation has been consistently institutionalized in major resolutions and policy frameworks, evidencing a sustained and coherent commitment to a development paradigm anchored in the advancement of people.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The inquiry into human beings and human development is situated within a broader epistemological and ontological framework grounded in dialectical materialism and historical materialism. From this standpoint, human beings are not approached as abstract or isolated entities but as concrete historical subjects constituted within specific socio-economic formations and evolving through praxis. Human development, therefore, is understood as a historically

conditioned and socially mediated process, shaped by the interaction between material production, institutional structures, cultural values, and human agency.

Methodologically, the study adopts the dialectical principle of totality, examining human development within the interrelated system of economic, political, cultural, and social relations. It applies the concrete-historical approach to situate the Party's perspective within the specific conditions of Vietnam's Renovation period, thereby avoiding ahistorical generalizations. At the same time, the logical-historical method is employed to trace the internal coherence and developmental trajectory of theoretical positions across successive Party Congresses, revealing both continuity and transformation in the conceptualization of the human factor.

Consistent with historical materialism, the analysis treats human beings simultaneously as products of objective socio-economic conditions and as active subjects capable of transforming those conditions through conscious practice. This dual perspective allows the research to interpret Party documents not merely as normative statements but as reflections of historically determined social relations and developmental requirements.

In addition, the study incorporates interdisciplinary analytical tools such as synthesis, comparison, and statistical examination not as isolated techniques but as methodological moments integrated within a dialectical framework. Through this approach, the research seeks to illuminate the structural, historical, and normative dimensions of the Party's human-centered development strategy, thereby contributing to a theoretically grounded evaluation of contemporary human development in Vietnam.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Communist Party of Vietnam's Perspective on Human Development in the First Decade of Renovation (1986-1996)**

Building upon the orientation set forth at the Sixth National Congress, the Seventh National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam (1991) further elevated education and training, together with science and technology, to the status of the foremost national priority, identifying them as essential instruments for strengthening the human factor the immediate source of developmental dynamism. In the Platform for National Construction during the Transitional Period toward Socialism adopted at this Congress, a comprehensive vision of socialist society was articulated. Such a society was characterized by the emancipation of human beings, the realization of popular sovereignty, a developed economy, and an advanced culture deeply rooted in national identity. It envisaged a social order in which individuals enjoy material security, freedom, and happiness, are provided with conditions for personal growth, and benefit from the guarantees of democracy and social justice.

Within this framework, the Platform outlined fundamental orientations for social policy, underscoring the imperative to foster the human factor through the safeguarding of equity and equality in both rights and responsibilities of citizens. It called for a balanced integration of economic expansion with social

advancement; the harmonious development of material and spiritual life; the alignment of immediate interests with long-term objectives; and a proper resolution of the interconnections between individuals, collectives, and the broader social community (Communist Party of Vietnam, 1991, pp. 12–13).

This perspective did not emerge arbitrarily but was grounded in the theoretical principles of Marxism–Leninism and shaped by the concrete historical conditions of Vietnam. On that basis, the Party affirmed that sustainable development requires the inseparable linkage between economic growth and the effective implementation of social policies, ensuring balanced social progress with human beings positioned as the central subject and ultimate purpose of development.

### **The Communist Party of Vietnam’s Perspective on Human Development in the Period of Accelerating National Industrialization and Modernization (1996–Present)**

As Renovation progressed and the complexity of national tasks intensified, the Party stressed the imperative of galvanizing patriotic spirit and resilience among the populace, unlocking the creativity and intellectual capacities of the Vietnamese people, and decisively overcoming poverty and backwardness through the application of science and technology (Communist Party of Vietnam, 1996, p. 107). Concurrently, it reaffirmed that economic expansion cannot be pursued in isolation but must proceed in tandem with social advancement and the realization of equity at every stage of development. Social justice, in this conception, must be manifested not only in the fair allocation of productive assets and the equitable distribution of outcomes but also in ensuring that all individuals are afforded genuine opportunities to cultivate and effectively deploy their abilities (Communist Party of Vietnam, 1996, p. 113).

Adhering to the human-centered orientation that characterized the Renovation era, the Ninth National Congress (2001) reiterated that Vietnamese society is fundamentally organized for human beings, with people occupying the pivotal position in socio-economic advancement. In this conception, human beings are understood not merely as a labor force but as bearers of intellectual capacity, moral integrity, and spiritual strength. They represent the decisive element and the most precious resource in the process of socialist construction. This perspective was institutionalized in the Party’s assertion that education and training constitute a major driving force of industrialization and modernization, serving as both a prerequisite for enhancing human resources and a foundational condition for social progress and sustained economic growth (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2001, p. 108–109).

The Tenth National Congress (2006) further deepened this orientation by positioning the human development strategy at the core of the broader socio-economic development agenda during the accelerated phase of industrialization and modernization. All policies designed to cultivate the human factor were grounded in the principle that the people are the makers of history, the authentic holders of social power, and the central actors in economic, cultural, and social life. The ultimate purpose of the revolutionary cause, therefore, is to serve the people themselves. Party documents emphasized the cultivation and refinement of the Vietnamese human personality, calling for the consolidation of value

systems and character traits appropriate to the new stage of industrial transformation (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2006, p. 33).

Simultaneously, ensuring social justice is addressed through a call to establish and perfect a comprehensive policy framework capable of guaranteeing access to essential public services. Equality needs to be ensured in key areas such as education, employment, healthcare, culture, information, and physical development, thereby creating the necessary conditions for each individual to fully develop their potential (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2006, p. 101).

Taken together, the Tenth Congress reaffirmed a consistent commitment to nurturing and enhancing the values of the Vietnamese people, safeguarding social equity and social security, and advancing the objective of holistic human development under new historical circumstances. This orientation reflects both the intrinsic laws governing social evolution and the legitimate aspirations of the population, while expressing the humanistic character and progressive aims of the social system Vietnam seeks to construct.

In the Report reviewing selected theoretical and practical questions after two decades of Renovation (1986–2006), the Communist Party of Vietnam reiterated a fundamental principle: human beings constitute the nation's most valuable asset. Human development was defined simultaneously as the motive force and the ultimate aim of the revolutionary process and of the renewal cause. The Report underscored the necessity of integrating the promotion of the human factor with a deeply humanistic orientation, thereby establishing conditions for individuals to achieve comprehensive development within a society characterized by justice, compassion, and healthy social relations. Within this framework, human beings were explicitly positioned at the core of the socio-economic development strategy, with an emphasis on broadening opportunities and enhancing the institutional and material conditions necessary for their advancement (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2005, p. 78–79).

Building upon the consistent emphasis on the human factor articulated in earlier congresses, the Eleventh National Congress (2011), through the Socio-Economic Development Strategy for 2011–2015, reaffirmed the objective of achieving rapid yet sustainable growth while significantly improving economic efficiency and competitiveness. Central to this strategy was the reaffirmation that human beings occupy both the focal point and the active agency of development. The Congress called for decisive breakthroughs in education and training, science and technology, and the effective mobilization of human potential. It established the overarching target of transforming Vietnam into a modernity-oriented industrialized nation by 2020. To realize this ambition, three strategic breakthroughs were identified, among which the accelerated development of human resources particularly high-quality human resources was designated as the second critical breakthrough.

This orientation was regarded as particularly appropriate in light of Vietnam's demographic profile and its deepening, proactive integration into the global economy, a context marked by heightened competition and rapid scientific-technological transformation. These global shifts generate both

prospects and pressures, making the enhancement of human resource quality an urgent imperative. In articulating the pathway toward socialism, Party documents further emphasized that human beings are not only the central reference point of development strategies but also their principal agents. Accordingly, respect for and protection of human rights must be ensured, while harmonizing these rights with national interests, state sovereignty, and the people's collective right to mastery (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2011, p. 76).

The Eleventh Congress articulated a multidimensional approach to promoting the human factor, based on expanding democracy, fully unleashing human potential, and regarding human beings as the subjects, the primary resource, and the ultimate objective of development. To ensure the effective promotion of the human factor, the Party emphasized that it is necessary to "guarantee human rights and citizens' rights, and the conditions for all people to develop comprehensively; enhance capacity and create mechanisms for the people to fully exercise their right to mastery, especially direct democracy, to strongly promote all creative potentials and ensure a high level of social consensus, thereby creating momentum for national development" (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2011, p. 100).

This viewpoint essentially represents a continuation of the Party's consistent thought that human beings are the subjects and the most important resource determining social development, and that the Vietnamese revolution is fundamentally a cause carried out by and for the people.

Resolution No. 33-NQ/TW dated June 9, 2014, of the Ninth Plenum of the 11th Central Committee, on building and developing Vietnamese culture and people to meet the requirements of sustainable national development, reaffirmed the objective of building a culture and a Vietnamese people who develop comprehensively, oriented toward truth, goodness, and beauty, and imbued with national, humanistic, democratic, and scientific values. In the section on Tasks, the Resolution clearly emphasized comprehensive Vietnamese human development, focusing on nurturing patriotism, national pride, morality, lifestyle, and personality. It called for strong transformations in awareness and consciousness of respect for the law, ensuring that all Vietnamese people possess a profound understanding, pride, and reverence for national history and culture. The Resolution also underscored the need to enhance intellectual capacity and cultivate knowledge so that Vietnamese people can meet the demands of a socialist-oriented market economy and international integration, as well as those of the knowledge economy and a learning society. It further emphasized the formulation and development of a standardized value system for Vietnamese people in the period of industrialization, modernization, and international integration.

The Twelfth National Congress of the Party emphasized the human factor in close association with cultural development as the spiritual foundation of society, highlighting the dialectical relationship between culture and human beings, in which human beings are both the subjects who create culture and the beneficiaries of cultural values and products. The human factor referred to here is not abstract, but concrete individuals who possess personality, morality, intellect, competence, skills, and social responsibility. Accordingly, human development must be realized through practical and concrete activities of each individual, rather than in a generalized or abstract manner. The Report of the 11th Central Committee on the documents submitted to the Twelfth Congress clearly stated that “Party committees and authorities at all levels must fully and profoundly recognize the special importance of culture and human beings, and must effectively implement the goal of building a comprehensively developed Vietnamese culture and people oriented toward truth, goodness, and beauty...; creating conditions for the development of Vietnamese people with beautiful personalities, morality, and souls; high levels of intellect, competence, and creative skills; good physical health; and enhanced social responsibility” (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2016, p. 28–29).

In the section on orientations for building Vietnamese people in the new period, Party documents affirmed that “building comprehensively developed Vietnamese people must become an objective of the development strategy. It is necessary to summarize and develop a cultural value system and a system of standard values for Vietnamese people in the period of industrialization, modernization, and international integration; to create environments and conditions for the development of personality, morality, intellect, creative capacity, physical strength, spiritual life, social responsibility, civic duties, and awareness of law observance... so that all Vietnamese people possess profound understanding, pride, and reverence for national history and culture” (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2016, p.126–127). These viewpoints demonstrate the Party’s consistent strategic orientation in building and developing the Vietnamese people across successive Party Congresses, in which cultural, moral, and talent-related values of the Vietnamese people have always been highly emphasized.

The realization of holistic human development requires that the entire system of education and training be oriented toward cultivating Vietnamese individuals equipped with a scientific worldview, strong intellectual competence, and sound moral character. This process must be inseparably linked to the protection and exercise of human rights and to the fulfillment of citizens’ rights and responsibilities. It further entails strengthening cognitive capacity and essential life skills so that individuals are capable of responding effectively to the demands of accelerated industrialization and modernization, deep international integration, the expansion of the knowledge-based economy, and the formation of a learning society. At the same time, human development is understood as an integral component of the broader mission of consolidating and safeguarding the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

In advancing the human factor, the Party has also stressed the necessity of confronting moral deterioration and ethical decline as obstacles to comprehensive development. It has called for resolute efforts to critique and eliminate regressive, harmful, and unethical practices, as well as to challenge distorted viewpoints and negative behaviors that undermine cultural progress and risk alienating individuals from authentic human values. Accordingly, concrete measures must be implemented to halt and reverse the erosion of social morality, while addressing the shortcomings that may hinder the full development of the Vietnamese people (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2016, p. 127).

To accomplish the socio-economic development strategy in the new period, the Party identified six key tasks in its documents, of which the sixth task focuses on human development: “To promote the human factor in all areas of social life; to concentrate on building human beings in terms of morality, personality, lifestyle, intellect, and working capacity; and to build a healthy cultural environment” (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2016, p. 219).

Inheriting, supplementing, and developing the viewpoints of previous Party Congresses, the Thirteenth National Congress of the Party further articulated the close and inseparable relationship between placing human beings at the center, ensuring human rights, and promoting comprehensive human development, in conjunction with the practice of democracy and the rule of law to uphold social discipline, legal order, and the great national unity bloc.

The documents of the Thirteenth National Congress reaffirmed a foundational principle guiding all Party and State activities: the consistent recognition that the people constitute the bedrock of the political system. This orientation requires genuine confidence in the people, respect for their role, and the effective promotion of their right to mastery. It also entails steadfast adherence to the participatory principle whereby the people are informed, engaged in discussion, directly involved in implementation, empowered to oversee and supervise, and ultimately positioned as the beneficiaries of development outcomes.

Within the Ten-Year Socio-Economic Development Strategy (2021–2030), the section outlining development perspectives further elaborates this human-centered approach. The Strategy calls for inspiring a collective aspiration toward a prosperous and happy nation, strengthening autonomy and resilience, and consolidating the great national unity bloc in the cause of national construction and defense. Central to this vision is the comprehensive promotion of the human factor: human beings are identified simultaneously as the focal point, the active agents, the most vital resource, and the ultimate purpose of development. Vietnamese cultural values and the qualities of the Vietnamese people are regarded as foundational elements and indispensable internal drivers securing sustainable progress (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2021, p. 215–216).

In delineating strategic breakthroughs, the Thirteenth Congress underscored the continued priority of advancing human resources in close conjunction with scientific and technological development. It emphasized the need to vigorously cultivate national development aspirations, patriotism, pride, self-reliance, compassion, solidarity, and social consensus. Concurrently, attention was directed toward building a culturally rich, diverse, civilized, and healthy social environment and lifestyle, alongside strengthening civic consciousness, responsibility, ethical standards, and respect for the rule of law in both personal conduct and professional activity (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2021, p. 221-222).

Thus, by the Thirteenth National Congress, the Party's perspective on human beings had undergone comprehensive development in both breadth and depth, not only affirming human beings as the center of development, but also clearly orienting toward the comprehensive development of the Vietnamese people in the new period.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

The issue of human development is a fundamental concern for the progress of nations and peoples, and Vietnam is no exception. Recognizing this at an early stage, during the process of national renewal, the Communist Party of Vietnam articulated guiding viewpoints on the construction and development of the Vietnamese people in a comprehensive manner, to promote the active role of the human factor. In its documents and resolutions, the Party has consistently affirmed that human beings are both the center and the driving force of national development. This clearly demonstrates that the Party not only recognizes the crucial role of the human factor but also orients policies toward creating a favorable environment for the development and optimal utilization of human resources in the cause of national construction. As a result, Vietnam's socio-economic development and human development have achieved significant accomplishments: the general level of education has steadily improved; the economy has shown increasing vitality and maintained stable growth; people's living standards have been markedly enhanced; conditions have been created for the comprehensive development of individuals; and public confidence in the Party's leadership has continued to grow. The Party has consistently regarded human beings as the most valuable asset and has always been oriented toward the goal of caring for human well-being and happiness. This also represents the inheritance and further development of Marxist-Leninist perspectives and Ho Chi Minh Thought on human beings.

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