

# Ho Chi Minh and the goal of national independence and socialism

## of the Vietnamese revolution

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### 1. Introduction

President Ho Chi Minh - the great leader of the Vietnamese Party and nation - dedicated his entire life to the independence, freedom, and happiness of the Vietnamese people and the struggle for peace, national independence, democracy, and progress for humanity. On his journey to achieve true independence, freedom, and happiness for the entire nation, Ho Chi Minh founded the Communist Party of Vietnam and, together with the Party, led the Vietnamese people in regaining national independence and advancing towards socialism, ushering in a new era in the nation's history - the era of national independence and socialism. The unwavering commitment to the goal of national independence and socialism is the guiding principle and compass of the Party's actions. It is an objective choice, proven in practice over more than 95 years of the Party's leadership in achieving national independence and building the country, achieving tremendous successes in the reform process, and continuously enhancing Vietnam's position on the international arena.

### 2. Content

***2.1. Determining that the Vietnamese revolution should follow the path of the proletarian revolution, pursuing the goals of national independence and socialism - a great contribution by Ho Chi Minh.***

The history of Vietnam in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century shows that choosing the path of proletarian revolution, the path of the national liberation revolution and socialist revolution to achieve the goals of national independence and socialism, is one of the great contributions made by leader Ho Chi Minh to the development of the Vietnamese nation in modern times.

With a fervent patriotic tradition and an indomitable spirit of resistance against foreign invaders, forged and shaped by the nation's millennia-long history, from the French colonial invasion (1858) to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and into the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the patriotic struggles of the Vietnamese people took place vigorously in many places. Notable

examples include the Can Vuong movement; the national salvation initiatives and activities of Phan Boi Chau and Phan Chau Trinh; and the national salvation initiatives and activities of the Vietnam National Party, etc. Although the methods and approaches to these struggles differed, the fundamental commonality was the lack of a correct national salvation strategy, leading to their failure. The nation's history tested these paths but did not salvage the country under the banner of feudalism or bourgeois democracy.

The failure of the struggles and national salvation movements under the banner of feudalism and bourgeois democracy made the issue of determining a correct path to national salvation even more urgent for the Vietnamese revolution. It was in such a historical deadlock in the Vietnamese national liberation movement that Ho Chi Minh “emerged at the decisive moment, responding to the demands of history”<sup>(1)</sup>.

Ho Chi Minh always cherished and admired the passionate patriotic example of his predecessors, but with his exceptional political acumen, he decided not to follow their path. Rather, he chose his own unique direction: going to the West. This initial orientation and correct approach formed the basis for the subsequent correct steps on the journey he chose. Armed with genuine patriotism and based on the principles of freedom and happiness for his people and independence for his nation as his *raison d'être* and as a measure of value to examine, analyze, and consider the political and ideological trends of the world, Ho Chi Minh traveled through many European and American countries, even to places considered centers of human civilization and places being “civilized” by European and American colonialism, sifting through and absorbing the cultural essence of humanity, seeking a correct path to national salvation for his people.

In July 1920, Ho Chi Minh read V.I. Lenin's Thesis (First Draft of the Thesis on the National and Colonial Questions) and discovered a completely new path to national salvation - the path of national salvation under the banner of the proletarian revolution. In December 1920, at the 18<sup>th</sup> Congress of the French Socialist Party, Ho Chi Minh voted in favor of joining the Communist International and became one of the founders of the French Communist Party, as well as the first Vietnamese communist.

Since discovering Marxism - Leninism and recognizing its scientific and revolutionary value, Ho Chi Minh understood that: “To salvage the country and liberate the nation, there is no other way than the proletarian revolution”<sup>(2)</sup>, the path to achieving the goal of national independence and socialism.

As General Secretary Le Duan pointed out: “The first great contribution of President Ho Chi Minh was to connect the Vietnamese revolutionary movement with the international workers' movement, leading the Vietnamese people to follow the path that he himself had taken, from patriotism to Marxism - Leninism. That is the only path of liberation that the Russian October Revolution opened for working people and all oppressed nations around the world”<sup>(3)</sup>.

National independence and socialism were both the goals of Ho Chi Minh and the Vietnamese revolution, and the fundamental, overarching content of Ho Chi Minh's thought system. Embodying the nation's aspirations and the truth of the era, he stated the immortal

truth: “Nothing is more precious than independence and freedom”. Simultaneously, with profound dialectical thinking, Ho Chi Minh determined that in the new conditions of the nation and the era, national independence could only achieve its full value and be sustainably guaranteed when linked with socialism. With its core content of “national independence and socialism,” Ho Chi Minh’s thought profoundly demonstrated its scientific, revolutionary, and humanistic nature, aiming for the complete liberation of humanity, maximizing the potential of everyone in the common cause, and building a strong, prosperous, civilized, and happy nation. The pursuit of national independence and socialism has guided and directed all the victories of the Vietnamese revolution in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and continues to lead the Vietnamese revolution to glorious achievements in the new era of development.

## ***2.2. Achieving the goals of national independence and socialism - an objective choice proven and affirmed by the historical practice of the Vietnamese nation***

From Ho Chi Minh’s choice, the goal of national independence and socialism became the choice of the Vietnamese Party and nation. Overcoming the failures of patriotic movements under feudal or bourgeois democratic banners, the Vietnamese nation, under the leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam, chose a new path to national salvation - the path of proletarian revolution - to achieve the goal of national independence and socialism.

Founded, led, and trained by leader Ho Chi Minh, right from its birth in the Spring of 1930, in the first Political Platform adopted at the founding conference, the Communist Party of Vietnam clearly stated its task: “To carry out the bourgeois democratic revolution and the agrarian revolution to go towards a communist society”<sup>(4)</sup>, that is, to carry out the national liberation revolution, to achieve the goal of regaining national independence, to give land to the peasants, and then to build socialism.

Throughout its leadership of the Vietnamese revolution, the Party has always been clearly aware of the goals of national independence and socialism. Party documents from each Congress have consistently affirmed these goals. At the 2<sup>nd</sup> Congress (1951), in the context of the rapidly developing strength of the resistance forces, the Party began operating openly and determined that the Vietnamese national democratic revolution would progress into a socialist revolution, and Vietnam would become a socialist country.

At the 3<sup>rd</sup> National Party Congress (1960) - a congress held at a time when the country was still divided into two regions - to fulfill the central task of liberating the South and unifying the country, the Party defined the revolutionary tasks in each region as: advancing the North towards socialism, while simultaneously promoting the national democratic revolution in the South, achieving national reunification, and building a peaceful, unified, independent, democratic, and prosperous Vietnam. Leading the revolution to simultaneously carry out two different strategic tasks in the two regions of the country was a great innovation of the Communist Party of Vietnam, an important addition to the theoretical treasury of Marxism - Leninism on revolutionary strategic guidelines.

The resistance war against the United States ended in victory, leading to the reunification of the North and the South and enabling the entire country to embark on the path toward socialism. Leading the revolution in the new context, the Party always raised the banner of

national independence and socialism and clearly determined that building socialism in Vietnam must go through a long and difficult transitional period: “Our country is transitioning to socialism, bypassing the capitalist system, from a society that was originally a colony, semi-feudal, with low productive forces”<sup>(5)</sup>. The Party also reviewed and drew out the great lessons of the Vietnamese revolution, including the lesson: “Firmly grasping the banner of national independence and socialism. That is a lesson that runs throughout the process of our country’s revolution. National independence is a prerequisite for realizing socialism and socialism is a solid basis for ensuring national independence. Building socialism and protecting the Vietnamese Fatherland are still two strategic tasks that are organically related to each other”<sup>(6)</sup>.

During the period of renewal, the 7<sup>th</sup> National Party Congress (1991), based on the summation of practical experience and the development of theory, added Ho Chi Minh Thought with Marxism - Leninism to form the ideological foundation of the Party. Faced with the difficulties of the domestic and international situation, especially the crisis and subsequent collapse of the model of real socialism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the Congress adopted the Platform for Building the Country during the Transitional Period to Socialism (the 1991 Platform), which, in particular, outlined the characteristics of the socialist society that the Vietnamese people were building and the directions and solutions for its implementation. The Platform served as an ideological and theoretical banner, helping cadres, Party members, and all strata of the Vietnamese people to steadfastly overcome difficulties and challenges, and advance the renewal process.

At the 9<sup>th</sup> Party Congress (2001), from the new practical experience of the world and domestic situation, the Party continued to affirm: “Our Party and people are determined to build Vietnam along the socialist path on the foundation of Marxism - Leninism and Ho Chi Minh Thought”<sup>(7)</sup> and “our country’s path forward is the transitional development to socialism bypassing the capitalist system”<sup>(8)</sup>. This is not about bypassing everything related to capitalism, but only bypassing the dominance of capitalist production relations and capitalist superstructure.

The 11<sup>th</sup> National Party Congress (2011) adopted the Platform for Building the Country during the Transitional Period to Socialism (supplemented and developed in 2011), outlining the fundamental features of Vietnam’s path of transition to socialism; supplementing and developing the characteristics of the socialist society that the Vietnamese people are building with 8 basic characteristics, 8 basic directions, and 8 major relationships that need to be grasped and resolved well in the process of building socialism in Vietnam. This also affirms that national independence is a prerequisite for socialism and, conversely, only socialism can firmly guarantee national independence. These are two inseparable components in the goal of national development.

Guided by Marxism - Leninism and Ho Chi Minh Thought, under the leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam, the Vietnamese revolution has gradually achieved the goals of national independence and socialism, overthrowing the domination of old and new colonialism, unifying the country, and achieving many successes in the construction of

socialism. The August Revolution of 1945 was successful, followed by glorious victories in the resistance wars against French colonialism and the US. These victories have gone down in Vietnamese history not only as a shining example of Vietnamese revolutionary heroism, but also as milestones affirming the Vietnamese people's choice and support for the proletarian revolutionary path and the pursuit of national independence and socialism. These are important bases and foundations for the revival and development of the nation "after the long night of slavery" and the fierce devastation of war, so that today "We have made great achievements of historical significance, developing more strongly and comprehensively than in the years before the reform. With all humility, we can still say that: Our country has never had such a foundation, potential, position and international prestige as it does today"<sup>(9)</sup>.

***2.3. Firmly adhering to the goals of national independence and socialism chosen by Ho Chi Minh, the Party, and the nation - the overarching guiding ideology of the Vietnamese Party and revolution***

Currently, the international and domestic situations are significantly different from those during his lifetime. The Vietnamese revolution and the Vietnamese nation are now facing a complex mix of opportunities, difficulties, and challenges; among them, the most prominent are challenges from globalization, deep international integration, the development of digital technology, non-traditional security challenges; the rise of extremist nationalism and great-power dominance; sabotage by reactionary and hostile forces; and the decline in political ideology, morality, and lifestyle, as well as manifestations of "self-evolution" and "self-transformation" in a segment of cadres and Party members. These factors impact the achievement of national independence and socialism in Vietnam, and affect the thoughts and feelings of cadres, Party members, and the people regarding the Party's goals and ideals.

Meanwhile, as the renewal process deepens, the realization of aspirations for a strong, prosperous, civilized, and happy nation requires the Party to continuously elevate its status, worthy of being the leader of the revolution, "the embodiment of morality and civilization."

In this situation, the 13<sup>th</sup> National Party Congress (2021) affirmed: "The guiding ideology of the entire Party, the entire people and the entire army is to steadfastly apply and creatively develop Marxism - Leninism and Ho Chi Minh Thought; steadfastly pursue the goal of national independence and socialism; steadfastly pursue the Party's renewal policy; steadfastly pursue the principles of Party building, etc. This is a matter of principle, of vital importance to our regime, the solid foundation of our Party, and no one is allowed to waver or be swayed"<sup>(10)</sup>.

The 14<sup>th</sup> National Party Congress (January 2026) reaffirmed the goals of national independence and socialism of the Vietnamese revolution and, drawing from the practical review of the renovation process, supplemented the Party's ideological foundation with the theory of the renovation line. The Congress documents clearly stated the guiding viewpoint first of all: "Firmly apply and creatively develop Marxism-Leninism, Ho Chi Minh Thought, and the theory of the renewal guidelines; firmly adhere to the goals of national independence and socialism; firmly promote comprehensive and synchronous renovation; firmly adhere to the principles of organization and operation of the Party; use development to achieve, and

stability to promote rapid and sustainable development, to improve people's lives and firmly protect the socialist Vietnamese Fatherland"<sup>(11)</sup>.

### 3. Conclusion

Thus, national independence and socialism are strategic goals, a consistent and overarching theme in Ho Chi Minh Thought, which our Party has thoroughly understood, applied, and creatively developed in the practice of the Vietnamese revolution. Thanks to this, the Vietnamese revolution has moved from one victory to another in the struggle for national independence and the building of socialism, most recently the great and historically significant achievements of the 40 years of implementing the Doi Moi (Renewal) policy. This is a valuable lesson for generations of cadres, Party members, and people today to continue to steadfastly uphold the choice of President Ho Chi Minh, the Party, and the Vietnamese nation.

Historical practice has confirmed: "Going towards socialism is the aspiration of our people, the correct choice of the Communist Party of Vietnam and President Ho Chi Minh in accordance with the development trend of history"<sup>(12)</sup>. Historical distance also further affirms and clarifies the role, stature, and value of Ho Chi Minh's thought, including the thought on national independence and socialism, for the Vietnamese revolution, for the path of prosperous, civilized, and happy development of the Vietnamese nation ■

*Received: January 14, 2026; Revised: January 19, 2026; Approved for publication: January 27, 2026.*

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