

Ho Chi Minh's ideological values on independence and autonomy associated with international cooperation and solidarity in the new era

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● **Abstract:** Throughout his revolutionary career, Ho Chi Minh always clearly affirmed the spirit of independence and self-reliance of the country: “If you want others to help you, you must first help yourself”⁽¹⁾ and placed the Vietnamese revolution in the general flow of the world revolutionary movement. He determined that independence and self-reliance are immutable principles, a consistent policy, while at the same time, combining the strength of internal resources with that of external resources to form overall strength in order to achieve the goal of independence for the Fatherland, freedom and happiness for the people, and best protect national interests in all circumstances and at all times.

● **Keywords:** independence, autonomy; solidarity, international cooperation; Ho Chi Minh Thought.

1. Introduction

In Ho Chi Minh Thought, independence means not being dependent, not imitating, not being dogmatic; while autonomy means thinking for yourself and being in control of your thoughts and actions in all circumstances and at all times, relying mainly on your own strength. However, independence and autonomy in his thought also include being open-minded, learning, and adapting, so it does not fall into isolation and narrow-mindedness, but instead embody equality and mutual benefit in international solidarity and cooperation while maintaining one's own identity. That is independence and autonomy associated with international cooperation and solidarity following to the motto “responding to all changes with the unchanged”, while avoiding falling into the tendency of “Not paying attention to the characteristics of one's own nation while learning from the experiences of fraternal countries is a serious mistake, a dogmatic error. But if we overemphasize national characteristics to

deny the universal value of the great, fundamental experiences of fraternal countries, we will fall into the serious error of revisionism”⁽²⁾. That is the root, the key point to solve all problems, and at the same time, it is also a unique feature in foreign relations according to Ho Chi Minh Thought. Ho Chi Minh Thought on independence, autonomy associated with international cooperation and solidarity has rich, profound, comprehensive content, providing long-term orientation value for the Vietnamese revolutionary cause, especially as our country enters a new era of development.

2. Content

2.1. Independence and autonomy associated with international cooperation and solidarity to successfully achieve the goals of the revolutionary cause

More than a century ago, when the country was sinking into the dark night of slavery, the patriotic young man Nguyen Tat Thanh with his own independent thinking, autonomy and determination left the Fatherland, went to the West to find a way to salvage the country. That path and choice led him to the right decision, which was to come to Marxism - Leninism, to the Third International, to bring the Vietnamese revolution on the right path of proletarian revolution, the path to realize the goal of national independence and socialism.

On the revolutionary journey in the following years, with an independent and autonomous mindset, he deeply realized that it was necessary to place the Vietnamese revolution in relation to the world revolution, bringing the national liberation revolution into the general flow of the proletarian revolution. With that connection, the internal strength of the nation was multiplied and brought into full play when there was an additional source of external strength to prepare for the day when the Vietnamese people rose up to “liberate themselves”. With a political perspective that transcended the times, Ho Chi Minh assessed: “Capitalism is a leech with one tentacle attached to the proletariat in the mother country and another tentacle attached to the proletariat in the colonies”⁽³⁾ and determined that “the Annamese revolution is also a part of the world revolution. Whoever makes revolution in the world is a comrade of the Annamese people”⁽⁴⁾. His viewpoint clearly shows the policy of expanding international cooperation and solidarity to gain foreign assistance for the struggle for national independence, combining national strength with the strength of the times to fight against the enemies of the class and the nation.

The August Revolution of 1945 was successful and the spirit of independence and self-reliance of the Vietnamese people was clearly affirmed by President Ho Chi Minh in the Declaration of Independence: “Vietnam has the right to enjoy freedom and independence, and in fact has

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become a free and independent country. The entire Vietnamese people are determined to devote all their spirit and strength, their lives and property to maintain that freedom and independence”⁽⁵⁾. Independence and self-reliance became the motto of action: “Our unchangeable goal is still peace, unity, independence, and democracy. Our principles must be firm, but our strategies must be flexible. The tasks must be coordinated and connected with each other, each part must be coordinated with the whole, etc. Each task must be coordinated with each place, each time, each situation”⁽⁶⁾. That is the foreign policy of independence and self-reliance that is not isolation but open; of integration but not dissolution in solidarity, international cooperation in the spirit of “revolutionary goals and tasks must always “follow the motto “nation above all” everywhere and at all times”⁽⁷⁾ to win victory in the revolutionary cause under the leadership of the Party.

2.2. Independence and autonomy combined with international cooperation and solidarity must ensure the highest national and ethnic interests

The greatest and highest goal of foreign affairs is to protect the national interests to the maximum extent in the spirit of combining national strength with the strength of the times, ensuring equality and fairness; in which, internal strength is the decisive factor: “We must rely on real strength. With real strength, diplomacy will be victorious. Real strength is the gong and diplomacy is the sound. The bigger the gong is, the louder the sound”⁽⁸⁾, because “If we are weak, we are just a tool in the hands of others, even if they are our ally”⁽⁹⁾.

From a profound understanding: “Our country is a part of the world. The situation of our country affects the world, and the world situation also has a relationship with our country”⁽¹⁰⁾, President Ho Chi Minh focused on linking the work of both domestic and foreign affairs to properly implement the guidelines and goals and bring the Vietnamese revolution in line with the characteristics and trends of the times. Therefore, he emphasized that: “Independence means we control all our work, without outside interference”⁽¹¹⁾, that “based on common interests, the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam is ready to establish diplomatic relations with the government of any country that respects equality, the territorial sovereignty and the national sovereignty of Vietnam, to jointly protect peace and build world democracy”⁽¹²⁾.

According to him, “patriotism is to resolutely preserve the independence, freedom, and territorial integrity of one’s country. Internationalism is to unite with friendly countries and peoples of other countries to maintain world peace, oppose the imperialist policies of invasion and war, etc. Patriotism and internationalism are closely related to each other”⁽¹³⁾. Accordingly, independence and autonomy always play a decisive role, a solid foundation for international cooperation and solidarity to gain the support of the people of the world to protect national interests; and international cooperation and solidarity are important and indispensable factors of the Vietnamese revolution to both multiply the source of comprehensive strength to maintain independence and autonomy, and create a favourable international environment for the cause of national construction and development. That is the dialectical relationship between internal strength and external strength, the necessity of linking internal with external affairs to protect national interests.

2.3. Independence and autonomy linked with international cooperation and solidarity to gain support from the international community while simultaneously fulfilling international obligations

Maintaining independence and autonomy in international relations and implementing international cooperation and solidarity “on the principle of equality and mutual benefit, we are ready to establish diplomatic and trade relations with all countries”⁽¹⁴⁾, President Ho Chi Minh not only declared that Vietnam wants to “be friends with all democratic countries and not to have enmity with anyone”⁽¹⁵⁾, but he also affirmed that “The Democratic Republic of Vietnam is ready to establish all friendly and cooperative relations with any country on the principles of: respecting the completeness of each other’s sovereignty and territory, not violating each other, not interfering in each other’s internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence”⁽¹⁶⁾. That is the viewpoint of independence and autonomy associated with international cooperation and solidarity to both gain support and assistance from the international community and demonstrate Vietnam’s role and responsibility in fulfilling its international obligations when participating in solving common regional and international issues. That is also Ho Chi Minh’s viewpoint of “making more friends, reducing enemies”, “helping friends is helping yourself” to both resolutely fight against aggressive wars and support the movement for world peace as well as oppose all acts of intervention and infringement on the legitimate interests of nations and peoples.

In particular, President Ho Chi Minh pointed out that building a genuine peace in the world must be based on the principle of respecting the independence, autonomy, and self-determination of each nation, ensuring that each nation can decide its own path, destiny, and development in accordance with its geopolitical position and the specific conditions of each country. He also said: “Parties, whether large or small, are independent and equal, and at the same time united and help each other”⁽¹⁷⁾ to resolve the affairs of the country and the international community without being subject to pressure from outside or from any interest group; so as not to become lackeys of others or other countries.

In fact, “the Vietnamese revolution has gone from victory to victory, which proves that in the era of imperialism, in a small colonial country, under the leadership of the proletariat and its party, relying on the broad masses, particularly peasants, and uniting all patriotic classes in a united front, with the sympathy and support of the world revolutionary movement, especially the powerful socialist camp, the people of that country will certainly win”⁽¹⁸⁾. This experience confirms the Party’s correct guideline and policy in general, on independence, autonomy associated with international cooperation and solidarity, clearly demonstrating the characteristics and political mettle of Vietnamese diplomacy inspired by Ho Chi Minh Thought in particular, both suitable to the specific historical conditions of Vietnam and suitable to the development trend of the new era.

2.4. The value of Ho Chi Minh Thought on independence, autonomy, associated with international cooperation and solidarity

Ho Chi Minh Thought on independence and autonomy associated with international cooperation and solidarity, and his revolutionary life, exemplifies relying on one’s own

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strength to be both steadfast in principles while being flexible in tactics to successfully implement both short-term and long-term goals. That is independence and autonomy associated with expanding international cooperation and solidarity, promoting internal strength with external strength, national strength with the strength of the times to firmly adhere to the goal of national independence and socialism; so that the guidelines, policies as well as all foreign affairs activities originate from the interests of the nation and people, putting national interests above all, first and foremost; that all are aimed at protecting the country's independence and sovereignty and the people's freedom and happiness.

In fact, the implementation and creative application of Ho Chi Minh Thought on independence and autonomy associated with international cooperation and solidarity by Vietnam in different historical periods were carried out in accordance with actual conditions, not only gradually enhancing the country's position and strength in each historical period, but also contributing to the victory of the Vietnamese revolutionary cause in the years of struggle for power; in the two resistance wars against French colonialism and American imperialism (1945-1975); in the wars to protect the southwestern border and the northern border of the Fatherland; and especially in the 40 years of carrying out the renovation and deep international integration.

In particular, in the context of increasingly greater challenges due to unpredictable fluctuations in the international, regional and domestic situations, especially a new world order gradually taking shape with unpredictable changes and impacts of climate change, epidemics, natural disasters, increasing conflicts in many regions as well as potential risks from plots and tricks of hostile forces in implementing the strategy of "peaceful evolution," "color revolution"... more than ever, the value of Ho Chi Minh Thought on independence, autonomy associated with international cooperation and solidarity becomes reaffirmed through vivid evidence in practice.

Firstly, the application of Ho Chi Minh Thought on independence and autonomy associated with international cooperation and solidarity has been concretized, increasingly supplemented and perfected on the basis of the consistent goal of national independence and socialism, ensuring the highest national interests; on the basis of clearly defining partners and adversaries, both cooperating and struggling, along with raising vigilance, promoting the spirit of self-reliance and self-strengthening to protect the political regime, independence, sovereignty, national security, national cultural identity... clearly demonstrated in the Party's first political platform (February 1930), the platform for national construction in the transitional period to socialism (1991), the platform for national construction in the transitional period to socialism (supplemented and developed in 2011), in the documents of Party

Congresses... on the basis of correct understanding of the trends of the times, as well as the global and regional situations. Specifically, the 13th National Party Congress affirmed: “Consistently implement the foreign policy of independence, self-reliance, peace, friendship, cooperation and development, while diversifying and multilateralizing foreign relations. Ensure the highest national interests on the basis of the fundamental principles of the United Nations Charter and international law, equality, cooperation, and mutual benefit. Combine national strength with the strength of the times, proactively and actively engage in comprehensive and extensive international community; Vietnam is a friend, a reliable partner, and an active, responsible member of the international community”⁽¹⁹⁾.

Accordingly, independence and autonomy in order to generate intrinsic strength and proactively and actively integrate and improve the effectiveness of international cooperation have been implemented, contributing to the overall victory of the revolution. Along with that, national interests have been, are and continue to be the highest goal in foreign affairs activities to not only build and protect the socialist Fatherland of Vietnam in the context of globalization, but also clearly demonstrate Vietnam’s vision and consistency in promoting and protecting national interests on the basis of the fundamental principles of the United Nations Charter and international law, equality, cooperation, mutual benefit, without falling into selfish, narrow-minded, isolated nationalism.

Secondly, implementing Ho Chi Minh Thought on independence and autonomy associated with international cooperation and solidarity in all circumstances and at all times means combining the development, enhancement and consolidation of the country’s strength (economy, culture, social security, national defense, security, etc.) with focusing on relations with neighbouring countries and major countries in the spirit of maintaining stability, maintaining momentum of relations and enhancing political trust to promote cooperation in all fields; at the same time, handling arising issues and differences in the spirit of cooperation and friendship based on the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law. That strength and internal force is one of the steadfastness in the goal of national independence and socialism under the light of Marxism - Leninism and Ho Chi Minh Thought, clearly demonstrated in the Party’s correct guidelines and policies; the Party’s close leadership and direction and the State’s effective management; consensus and support of the great national unity bloc in implementing strategic tasks on economic, cultural and social development, protecting independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and legitimate interests of the nation in accordance with the United Nations Charter and international law.

The practice of the renovation process shows that Vietnam has always renovated and developed with the spirit of proactiveness, flexibility, creativity, multilateralization, diversification of foreign relations and proactive international integration for the benefit of the nation; at the same time, building and affirming Vietnam’s mettle, position and mindset in dealing with bilateral and multilateral relations and participating in solving regional and international issues is the combination of the strength of Vietnamese culture and people, cultivated and promoted on the basis of applying and developing Ho Chi Minh Thought on independence, autonomy associated with international cooperation and solidarity.

Thirdly, in reality, “our people fought and sacrificed not only for their own freedom and independence, but also for the common freedom and independence of all nations and peace in the world”⁽²⁰⁾. And in fact, Vietnam not only expands friendly relations and cooperation with neighbouring countries, regions, traditional friends, and a network of strategic partnerships and comprehensive partnerships with 30 countries, but also actively and proactively participates in regional and international forums and organizations to both protect national interests and enhance the country’s position. The association of independence and autonomy with international cooperation and solidarity shows that Vietnam is brave, flexible, and proactive in handling national issues as well as participating in handling regional and international issues, which has received consensus, recognition, and high appreciation from international public opinion. That is the strength of Vietnam, and “the strength, greatness and endurance of the Vietnamese people fundamentally lie in the unity of the Vietnamese people and the support of the world’s peoples... Thus, we have both our own strength and the strength of international solidarity”⁽²¹⁾.

The combined strength of internal and external forces not only contributes to protecting the independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity of the Fatherland “from early on, from afar”, but also proactively prevents, stops, and resolves risks to national security; not only ensures the highest interests of the country, but also simultaneously promotes increased cooperation for mutual development. In fact, independence and autonomy associated with international cooperation and solidarity according to Ho Chi Minh Thought have contributed to promoting the role of foreign affairs in “creating and maintaining a peaceful and stable environment” and “mobilizing external resources for national development” in order to “enhance the country’s position and prestige” as well as “elevating and expanding Vietnam’s contributions to peace, cooperation, development and progress of humanity, strongly spreading “the version of Vietnam that is independent, autonomous, peaceful, cooperative, friendly, developed, prosperous and happy”⁽²²⁾ in the new era - the era of building a strong, prosperous and developed Vietnam under the leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam, practically ensuring the highest national interests on the basis of the fundamental principles of the United Nations Charter and international law.

From a colonial society, through many hardships and challenges, Vietnam has become an independent, autonomous, united, sincere, loyal, responsible and hard-working nation that actively participates in solving regional and global issues, showing that: The more difficult and challenging the situation, the more we must thoroughly understand Ho Chi Minh Thoughts on independence and autonomy associated with international cooperation and solidarity. In the new context, to build a prosperous and happy Vietnam, General Secretary To Lam requested “to ensure the highest national interests, for a strong Party, for a prosperous socialist Vietnam with an important position and role in world politics, the global economy and human civilization, for the prosperity and happiness of the people”; meet the requirements of connecting our country with the world, the nation with the times, and proactively participating in solving common world problems”⁽²³⁾. That is also a vivid demonstration of the continued application and creative development of Ho Chi Minh Thought on independence and autonomy associated with international cooperation and solidarity.

3. Conclusion

Ho Chi Minh - National Liberation Hero, Outstanding Cultural Figure of Vietnam and the world. His thoughts on independence, autonomy associated with international cooperation and solidarity are the crystallization, distillation, supplementation, and development of cultural values and traditions of the nation, humanity, and the theory of international relations of Marxism - Leninism. His thought has been applied skillfully and creatively by our Party in the practice of the Vietnamese revolution, especially in successfully handling complex international relations. In particular, Ho Chi Minh's thoughts on independence, autonomy associated with international cooperation and solidarity are expressed through his actions and methods of behavior with calmness, cleverness, sincerity, and goodwill, creating a combined strength contributing to the victory of our country's revolution.

In the current situation, as the country enters a new era of development, we need to firmly grasp and creatively apply Ho Chi Minh Thought on independence and autonomy associated with international cooperation and solidarity to set out the correct foreign policy, capable of adapting to the complex developments of the times, and proactively handling all possible complicated situations ■

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