

STRENGTHENING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF VIETNAM AND THE PEOPLE UNDER HO CHI MINH'S IDEOLOGY

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Abstract: *President Ho Chi Minh has affirmed that the close attachment to the people is the origin of the strength of the Communist Party of Vietnam. Therefore, promoting and consolidating the relationship between the Party and people is considered an essential task in developing and regulating the Party. In this paper, the author analyzes Ho Chi Minh's thoughts on this relationship and proposes some solutions to strengthen it in the current period to increase the power and capacity of the Party leadership.*

Keywords: *Vietnam history, Vietnamese communist party, policy, Ho Chi Minh.*

МЫСЛЬ ХО ШИ МИНА ОБ УКРЕПЛЕНИИ ОТНОШЕНИЙ МЕЖДУ ПАРТИЕЙ И НАРОДОМ

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Аннотация: *Президент Хо Ши Мин подтвердил, что тесная привязанность к народу является источником силы Коммунистической партии Вьетнама. Поэтому развитие и укрепление отношений между партией и людьми считается важной задачей в развитии и регулировании партии. В этой статье автор анализирует мысли Хо Ши Мина об этих отношениях и предлагает некоторые решения по их укреплению в текущий период с целью увеличения силы и возможностей партийного руководства.*

Ключевые слова: *история Вьетнама, Вьетнамская коммунистическая партия, политика, Хо Ши Мин.*

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With brilliant insight and practical experience, President Ho Chi Minh, the beloved leader of the Vietnamese and the “soul” of the Communist Party of Vietnam, has articulated the truth: “There is nothing as precious as the people. Nothing is more powerful than the unity of people” [7, p. 453]. The above statement has emphasized the importance of the people in history, which has become a significant content in Party building under Ho Chi Minh’s point of view: Strengthening the party-people relationship. After more than 90 years of developing the Party and 35 years of implementing Doi Moi, the document of the 13th National Congress of the Communist Party (in 2021) emphasized the policy of “Tightening the intimate link between the Party and the people and relying on the people to build the Party” [1, p. 191]. Therefore, *consolidating the relationship between the Party and people* is an important direction in developing and regulating the Communist Party of Vietnam currently.

1. Ho Chi Minh’s views on the people and the link between the Party and the people

Based on the view that “the masses make history,” Marxism-Leninism has revolutionized the worldview and human outlook in the history of human thought. Understanding national characteristics and creative spirit helps Ho Chi Minh, a true communist, inherit that humanistic view and extend the concept of the masses. According to V. I. Lenin, the concept of “masses” implies “the majority, and not simply a majority of the workers alone, but the majority of all the exploited,” [12, p. 38] and he focuses on *class spirit*. However, Ho Chi Minh emphasized *ethnicity* in definition: “The four classes that constitute the people are workers, peasants, petty-bourgeoisie, and the national bourgeoisie” [5, p. 264]. His views are entirely consistent with the features of Vietnamese society, where the class struggle is less ferocious than the West, but patriotism is highly developed.

Ho Chi Minh’s populist worldview differs from that of previous generations. In the tremendous might of the entire people, he remained *the core forces*: workers, peasants, and intelligentsia. He considered the masses not only the driving force of the struggle for national liberation or a means of protecting power as in feudal times but also a *goal* of the revolution. He emphasized that the revolution had to rely on strength and for the sake of the people. Thus, “everyone has food, clothes, and studying opportunities.”

Ho Chi Minh highlighted the close link between the Party and the people after appreciating the people's power and realizing the role of the Revolutionary Party in the battle for the people's happiness. He also discussed the origins of such cohesiveness from a variety of perspectives.

According to Ho Chi Minh, the Party's cohesiveness with the people comes from *the aim and ideals of the Party*. The Party was founded to meet the objective needs of history, the people, and the nation, not for its own sake. He said: "The purpose of the Party lies in eight words: Uniting the entire people - *servicing the Fatherland*" [4, p. 49]. Because the Party takes the people's interests as its goal, the common interests between the people and the Party create *the root* of cohesion and the Party's natural attraction to the masses, making "the Party and the people be one." He also pointed up that the people and the Party were conditions for each other's existence and development. The Party has no force and strength without the people. Similarly, the people have no leaders without Party. The combination between the *political entity*, the Party, and the *social entity*, the people, made a great revolutionary cause. Therefore, Ho Chi Minh concluded: "The revolution is the cause of the masses, not any hero. We succeeded because the Party organized and promoted the people's revolutionary force. It led the masses to strive under the flag of Marxism-Leninism" [9, p. 672]. Besides, *the Vietnamese social structure* also regulates that cohesion. Vietnam was a semi-feudal colony, and the working class accounted for a small proportion. Therefore, "the number of party members is less than the number of the people. In hundreds of people, there is only one party member. Therefore, the Party can't do anything and will be alone without the support of the masses. Loneliness will make us fail" [2, p. 278]. After the victory of the August Revolution, the Party became the ruling party. The close relationship between the people and the Party needed to be strengthened further. Otherwise, the Party would be bureaucratic and gradually lost its vitality. According to Ho Chi Minh, the Communist Party is both a leader and a people's servant. "Our system is a democracy, which implies that the people are masters," he wrote. Because our Party is the ruling party, cadres at all levels are devoted servants of the people" [10, pp. 83 – 84]. He also affirmed that leaders were servants of the people and had to implement this duty well. In summary, this relationship is reciprocal in all revolutionary stages. "A powerful party refers to a strong people's force, and vice versa. If the people and the Party are strong, we will definitely win" [8, p. 117].

When attachment to the people was the source of the Party's strength, Ho Chi Minh always found ways to launch that power.

According to him, the Party had to consider "*the masses the root*." The people are the core factor of the country. If the Party wants to succeed, it must act under that objective law. Considering "the masses the root" means that the Party must know how to rely on the people, *uphold their mastery*, and listen to their opinions. Therefore, even though the Party is in power, *the people are still the master*. They entrust the leadership role for the Party, so cadres must not turn these rights into personal power. Building a state, which belongs to the people, is owned by themselves, and for their benefit with institutions guaranteeing their right to mastery is the Party's task. Considering "the people the root" also means that the Party wholeheartedly serves the people with the spirit of "doing beneficial things and avoiding things that are harmful to them" to improve their material and spiritual life continuously. He said that showing the practical benefits for the people was an incredible thing (private interests and common interests, partial benefits and global interests), because mere theory and politics could not convince them. He concluded that if they were happy, the policies of the Party and the Government would be implemented easily. On the contrary, if we did not meet their living standards, our policies would not come true no matter how good they were. Therefore, all policies and mottos of the Party are aimed at improving people's lives. Because he considered the interests of the people as the goal and ideal of the Party, he stated: "If there is one Vietnamese exploited and poor, the Party will grieve and consider it a consequence of the Party's failure to fulfill its duties. Therefore, the Party takes care of both the great work such as transforming the backward economy and culture into advanced ones, and the small things such as the people's daily necessities" [9, p. 402]. To affirm the morality of the Party, he indicated: "The Vietnamese Labor Party is not afraid of any enemy no matter how fierce they are, and any task even though it is difficult and dangerous. The Party is ready to be a faithful servant of the people" [4, p.50]. In his *Will*, Ho Chi Minh also repeated: "It's significant for the Party to have a good plan for economic and cultural development to improve people's quality of life continuously."

Cadres *shall be close to the people, listen, and understand them* to make reasonable guidelines and policies, enhancing the relationship between the Party and the people. Ho Chi Minh repeatedly warned of the danger of alienating the masses when the Party became the ruling party. He severely criticized cadres who relied on authority and disregarded the people. The bureaucratic, emotional, and impractical leadership had also been criticized. He wrote: "If we keep doing according to our desires, thoughts, and views, and force the masses to follow, which means that we are doing the opposite of our motto. We shall listen to the views of the people, not imposing our opinions on them" [2, p.288]. Therefore, he asked cadres and party members to regularly survey reality, pay attention to people's lives, listen to their opinions, and comprehend their hearts. According to Ho Chi Minh, the people are the ones who

are under the leadership of the Party, so “any resolution that they believe it’s inappropriate, let them propose corrections” [2, 337 - 338]. From there, he proposed the Party’s mode of operation: “The leadership of the Party shall come from the masses and return to them” [2, p. 330].

He also asked cadres and party members to *learn from the people humbly*. If party members “do not learn from the people, they cannot lead them. Learning from them helps party members develop themselves” [3, p. 432]. However, humbly learning and closely sticking to them does not mean “following all views of the masses.” The Party shall have a strong spirit to positively change the perception of a part of the “underdeveloped” masses and perform well its *leading role*.

Ho Chi Minh encouraged the Party to treat them with *responsibility and honesty*. Before doing anything, the Party should consult with the people, explain things to them, and protect their interests, demonstrating the Party’s accountability. Working in a bureaucratic way and issuing orders, on the other hand, implies that the Party is not responsible. He said that in the process of leading, cadres could make mistakes. However, if “you make mistakes, you shall honestly self-criticize in front of the people and accept their criticism” [4, p.177]. Because of upholding democracy, he stated that if there were a few constructive things in the ten things the people commented, they were valuable and useful. The honesty of cadres not only makes the masses sympathize and trust but also creates a basis for cadres to overcome limitations and become more mature to fulfill the role of leaders and loyal servants.

To increase the relationship between the Party and the people, the Party must *implement the propaganda with the population* well. According to Ho Chi Minh, this task is fundamental and is a decisive factor in the success of the Party’s policies. Therefore, he severely criticized the phenomenon of “disregarding the propaganda with the population, appointing a group or a few people, who have low capacity, and not caring about the results. Other officials do not support and consider themselves not responsible for this work” [3, p. 234]. He gave a series of profound instructions on the propaganda with the population, such as explaining to the people that it was their interest and their duty, and they had to try to fulfill it. Officials “must discuss with the people, ask their opinions and experiences, work with them to make plans suitable with the local situation, and then encourage them to fulfill that plans” [3, p. 233]. The propaganda with the population must be carried out widely, and “no one is left behind.” This work should be considered the duty of all officers, not just the agency carrying out the propaganda. “Those in charge of this work shall think, witness, walk the talk” and be a great example of morality.

In short, according to Ho Chi Minh, strengthening the relationship between the Party and the people will consolidate the ruling position of the Party so that it deserves to be the leader and loyal servant of the people. If the Party’s goal is for the people, and the Party possesses the right policies suitable with the people’s thoughts, a dedicated team, and the ability to mobilize the masses, it will be trusted and loved. Thus, the relationship between the Party and the people will be improved. The people will voluntarily implement its guidelines and policies, increasing its position. The Party’s leadership is becoming solidified, and its strength is growing.

2. Applying Ho Chi Minh thought to enhance the relationship between the people and the Party currently

The people are the most solid force to protect the Party, so building the Party is developing people’s trust in the Party. Reinforcing the Party is consolidating the relationship between the Party and the people. In fact, *the Party and the people* are two subjects in a relationship, so they shall actively build this link to be more powerful. However, the Party must fulfill this mission because it is the leader. The Party’s responsibility is to cultivate this relationship and help the people understand their importance, obligations, and interests. It’s challenging for us to complete this task since public belief in the Party has eroded. Therefore, the Party must undertake the following things to apply Ho Chi Minh’s philosophy to the connection between the people and the Party:

- *Firstly, the Party must actively improve the people’s quality of life and use people’s efforts properly*. Ho Chi Minh said: “If we care about the people’s life, they will love us. If we get their belief, we will not scare anything” [11, p. 142]. It is the main task of the ruling party. Correctly solving the problem of growth, improving the people’s strength, and promoting hunger eradication and poverty reduction are the principal duties of the Party at this time. The Party must actively regulate the social divide and prevent the gap between rich and poor, which causes inequality and social conflicts. Cadres and party members shall know how to save because “the food we eat, the clothes we wear, and the materials we use are exchanged for the people’s efforts” [6, p. 145]. Their contributions must be effectively used for the common issues. The Party must make them feel that the Party is a loyal representative of interests of the working class and the whole nation via daily tasks.

- *Secondly, the Party must try to build a government, which belongs to the people, is owned by themselves, and for their benefit*. Therefore, every member of the government apparatus should be their servant. *Increasing the implementation of democracy* is an urgent task of the Party. Ho Chi Minh showed a simple definition of democracy: “*Democracy is to make the people speak their point of view.*” They do not express their opinions because they are afraid or think that they will not be appreciated or listened to. Only when they know how to apply democratic rights and are willing to talk, act, and criticize the Party and Government, will our society be democratic and civilized.

Therefore, the current problem is *to promote grassroots democracy*. It is needful to ensure the people's right to supervise and criticize the Party's and State's guidelines and policies. The motto, "the people know, discuss, implement, check, monitor, and benefit," must become a regulation, not a slogan.

- Thirdly, the relationship between the Party and the people is shown through the Party and other organizations, so the Party shall *determine and adequately perform its role and position in the political system*. It is indispensable to renovate contents and modes of operation as well as enhance the quality and efficiency of activities of the Vietnamese Fatherland Front and socio-political organizations.

- Fourthly, the Party shall focus on *propaganda with the population* and implement Resolution No. 25 - NQ/TW dated June 3, 2013, of the Central Committee "on strengthening and renewing the Party's leadership about propaganda with the population in the new situation." In addition, it is principal to pay more attention to the team in charge of this service.

- Lastly, we should promote Party building and regulation according to the motto of "*basing on the people to build the Party*" [5, p. 281]. The sentence of Ho Chi Minh, "Our people are kind," is incredibly correct. They not only protected the Party during *the revolutionary period*, but also tolerated, stood by, and cooperated with the Party to correct mistakes when the Party took power and made mistakes. To carry out his advice, that is, "letting the people criticize cadres and appointing cadres based on their opinions" [2, p. 336], Party committees at all levels must seriously collect public comments on Party members and consider their evaluation a key criterion. In particular, the Party shall make a "breakthrough" in fighting *corruption and waste*. If this "issue" and "a large part" of officials who are degraded in morality cannot be eliminated, we will lose the people's trust, meaning that we will lose everything. Therefore, we shall rely on the information and support of the people to fight waste and corruption. In short, building the Party *for the benefit of the people and relying on them* is Ho Chi Minh's ideology, which every Party member needs to remember.

The nation and the masses are eternal, so if the Party wants to accompany the country, it must bring people the most practical benefits. Ho Chi Minh's truthful teachings, such as "the people's idea is God's," "we must follow the people's wishes," and "we will achieve victory based on the people's strength," are things that the Party shall maintain and constantly promote.

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