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Practical Issues and Social Philosophy in Vietnam Today

by
Pham Van Duc

The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy

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Table of Contents

Preface	v
<i>John A. Kromkowski</i>	
Part I. A Philosophical Perspective on the Reality of the Social Development in Vietnam	
1. Reflections on Philosophical Research in Vietnam in the Present Globalizing Epoch	3
2. Teaching Philosophy in Vietnam: Achievements and Problems	19
3. Marx's Materialistic Understanding of History and Its Epochal Significance	31
4. The Concept of Good Society: A Perspective from Vietnam	43
5. On the Sustainability of Social Development in Vietnam	63
Part II. Development in Vietnam: Some Socio-Political Issues	
6. Socialist Model: Some Theoretical and Practical Issues	75
7. Socialist Model in Vietnam: Some Concerned Issues	81
8. The Relationship between the Market Economy and Socialism from the Perspective of the Dialectics of the Evolution of History and Some Characteristics of the Socialist-Oriented Market Economy in Vietnam	89
9. The Development of Science and Technology as the Key for Realizing the Fast and Sustainable Development Strategy in Vietnam Today	103

10. Human Development within Vietnam's Strategy of Sustainable Development	115
--	-----

Part III. Development in Vietnam: Some Socio-Economic Issues

11. The Views of Some Economic Theories on the Economic Crisis of Capitalism and Some Lessons for Vietnam	127
---	-----

12. The Policy on Agricultural Land and Its Impact on Agricultural Production and Peasant's Life in Vietnam Today	133
---	-----

13. The Role of Human Resources in the Process of Industrialization and Modernization in Vietnam Today	145
--	-----

14. Corporate Social Responsibility in Vietnam: Some Pressing Theoretical and Practical Issues	155
--	-----

Part IV. Development in Vietnam: Some Socio-Cultural Issues

15. Business Ethics: Some Theoretical and Practical Issues in Vietnam	169
---	-----

16. Social Solidarity as the Foundation for Realization of Democracy in Vietnam	179
---	-----

17. Promotion of Traditional Cultural Values in the Context of Globalization	195
--	-----

About the Author	207
------------------	-----

Index	211
-------	-----

Preface

JOHN A KROMKOWSKI

The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy (RVP) is pleased to add this study, *Practical Issues and Social Philosophy in Vietnam Today* by Pham Van Duc, Vice-President of Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences (VASS), to its publication series of research findings that focuses on cultural traditions, values, and heritage and their role in contemporary change and development.

The theme of practical issues and social philosophy in Vietnam is an important contribution to the studies that comprise the RVP publication series entitled "Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change." The volumes are not merely accounts or discussions of current issues and crises of the moment, but probes of contemporary affairs in order to reach toward what is both essential and particular to cultural change. This publication series addresses the urgently pressing questions of fundamental values embedded in choices and activities that drive cultural development and shape the meaning of and consequences for societies in our time of intensive global development. From such an angle of observation this publication series engages the search for understanding of underlying problems that have caused the crises of our times. This approach is designed to promote the process of articulating new, specifically applicable directions of change, to foster deeper attention to the particularity of fundamental, underlying issues.

In this study Prof. Pham Van Duc focuses on social development in Vietnam, specifically on human development within the Vietnamese strategy of fast but sustainable development. The author explicates the aims and driving force of socio-economic development held by both the Communist Party and the Government of Vietnam.

"We can say that in Vietnam today, sustainable development aims for no other target than human development, improvement of the quality of human life; in its turn, human development serves as the basis and most solid foundation for the implementation of sustain-

able development. This is the dialectics of development in modern society.”

This account of the Vietnamese reality has four interconnected dimensions or aspects that express the meaning and substance of Vietnam today: 1) philosophical perspectives, especially the Vietnamese concept of a good society; 2) explications of models of the market economy and Vietnamese socialism related to human development, science and technology and sustainable strategies of socio-political developments; 3) interpretations of socio-economic theories of crises and development, eg., China’s harmonious society model and the Vietnam’s strategy of sustainability, social responsibility, land and agricultural policy; and 4) elaborations of socio-cultural developments related to business ethics, social solidarity and the promotion of traditional cultural values. The outcome is to provide access to the Vietnamese consciousness and the concrete issues Vietnam faces today.

As a professional philosopher, Pham Van Duc pays particular attention to social philosophy, especially the practical issues raised in the current development of Vietnam. Since ‘The Cause of National Comprehensive Renovation’ initiated in 1986, Vietnam has been gradually perfecting its own socialist model. The overall goal of that model is to build a Vietnam with “wealthy people, strong, democratic, [and a] just and civilized country.” Or as Ho Chi Minh stated briefly and plainly “socialism first of all is to liberate the working people from poverty, bring employment, welfare and happiness to the people.”¹

Pham Van Duc’s research on social development in Vietnam expresses the close relationship between socialism and human development in Vietnam within the ‘Strategy of Fast and Sustainable Development.’ As he points out the standpoint of the Communist Party of Vietnam and the Government of Vietnam is that the rapid and sustainable development should be implemented steadfastly, especially in respect to human development. Human beings have been elevated into the central position, both as the aim and the driving force of the socio-economic development of Vietnam.

¹ Ho Chi Minh, *The Complete Works* (Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 1995), Vol 8, p.411.

This volume, *Practical Issues and Social Philosophy in Vietnam Today*, can be read in conjunction with other three RVP publications on the philosophic tradition of Vietnam: *Reason, Rationality and Reasonableness* by Tran Van Doan (2001), *The History of Buddhism in Vietnam* Chief editor: Nguyen Tai Thu; Authors: Dinh Minh Chi, Ly Kim Hoa, Ha Thuc Minh, Ha Van Tan, Nguyen Tai Thu (2009) and *Rethinking the Role of Philosophy in the Global Age*, edited by William Sweet and Pham Van Duc (2009). Two other volumes are also recommended: *Cultural Traditions and Contemporary Challenges* edited by Warayuth Sriwarakuel, Manuel B. Dy, J. Haryatomoko, Nguyen Trong Chuan and Chhay Yiheang (2005) and *Hermeneutics for a Global Age: Lectures in Shanghai and Hanoi* by George F. McLean (2004).

Part I
**A Philosophical Perspective on the Reality
of the Social Development in Vietnam**

1.

Reflections on Philosophical Research in Vietnam in the Present Globalizing Epoch

Over the last three decades, comprehensive renovation in Vietnam, has brought about various significant and historic achievements. During the period, the number of scholars engaged in research and teaching has increased and both the quantity and quality of philosophy in Vietnam has grown considerably. Many research themes, which have been either ordered or financially supported by the Party and the Government, have been directed towards strategic problems of the development of our country or fundamental problems of philosophy. Looking back to that period, the Vietnamese philosophers ask themselves: What have been their main achievements? and What problems should they focus on in order to strengthen their role in the context of the ongoing globalization?

Major Achievements and Problems for Philosophical Research in Vietnam

The impact of renovation can be seen both in teaching as well as in research in philosophy. Since 1986 the number of published works in all fields of philosophy has increased rapidly. The scope of philosophical research has become more and more diversified: from the history of philosophy to logics, ethics, aesthetics, philosophy of culture, philosophy of science and technology, environmental philosophy, and from ancient philosophy to modern philosophy, from Marxist philosophy to Non-Marxist philosophy, from the major thinkers to the main tendencies in philosophy. There are three causes for such diversity: *Firstly*, since 1986 Vietnam has launched its Renewal Project (Doi Moi), in which the renovation of thinking has been considered a vital factor. During the process of renovation more and more attention from the Government has been given to theoretical activity in general and philosophical research in particular. *Secondly*, people engaging in philosophical activities have become more and more mature, many of them have successfully defended their M.A. and Ph.D. dissertations,

and some have been awarded professorships. *Thirdly*, in the context of the policy of openness and international economic integration, interactions, exchanges and cooperation in the area of teaching and researching philosophy between Vietnamese scholars and institutions and their counterparts abroad have been established and continuously expanded. Many Vietnamese scholars have participated in various international conferences or received different kinds of scholarships to study abroad. A great number of international scholars have attended conferences or delivered lectures on specific subjects or themes limitedly accessible to scholars in Vietnam.

However, what is noteworthy here, are the ways of doing research and the contributions of our philosophy to the cause of our comprehensive renovation. Prior to 1986 philosophical research in Vietnam had focused mainly on commentaries and propaganda of the Party's policy.

After 1986, along with that task, many philosophical research projects have made valuable suggestions for mapping out and planning the policy for the socio-economic development of the country. For example, in the area of social philosophy many scholars have contributed to the defense of arguments on the decisive role of productive forces in relation to production relations, not the other way round: production relations should be developed in advance in order to pave the way for productive forces to be developed; on the role of multi-sector, multi-ownership, and socialist-oriented market economy; on the role of human resources and driving forces in general in the process of promotion of social development, especially the role of interests, especially economic interests; on the need of combination of economic growth with social progress and justice in every step of development; on affirmation that culture is the driving force and spiritual foundation for social development etc.. Those arguments have been included in the Party official documents and their correctness has been verified in practice.

Similarly, the problem of democracy in society and the building of a society truly governed by the people, which has been a very sensitive and important problem and has been often mentioned by Presi-

dent Ho Chi Minh² as well as in many philosophical works, has been recognized by the Party and consequently included in the documents of the Party Congresses.

In the course of a comprehensive renovation of our country, including a renovation of thinking, attention has been paid more to researching and teaching non-Marxist philosophy simultaneously with a reconsideration and renewal of the methods of teaching Marxist philosophy. In the past tendencies of non-Marxist philosophy were introduced rarely or mainly for critical purposes. However, since the beginning of the Renovation, in the spirit expressing in a respectful attitude towards all different cultures including philosophical cultures, research on Western philosophy has been oriented not only to criticizing but also to discovering the positive and strong points as well as the real values of non-Marxist philosophical trends and doctrines, especially those of modern Western philosophy.³

Vietnam has steadily built up its professional philosophers engaging in research and teaching of non-Marxist philosophy and many of them have graduated from Western universities and colleges.

Together with researching and teaching Marxist and non-Marxist philosophy, research and teaching of the history of Vietnamese thought have been carried out. The course aims at introducing students to outstanding thoughts of our forebears mainly in the areas of politics, ethics and philosophy. In recent years with the support of the Government the Institute of Philosophy has focused its researches on the history of Vietnamese thought from the period of formation of the nation to the present time. As a result, two volumes have been published. Since 2002 the Institute of Philosophy has concentrated on history of Vietnamese philosophical thought. The authors of the work have completed their draft of the first volume, which has been submitted to a publisher, and continued to work on the second volume. Upon its completion the history of Vietnamese philosophical thought

² Nguyen Trong Chuan, "Retrospective on 55 Years of Researching and Teaching Philosophy in Our Country," in *A Half Century of Researching and Teaching Philosophy in Vietnam*. Edited by Nguyen Trong Chuan (Hanoi: Institute of Philosophy, 2001), p. 23 (in Vietnamese).

³ Nguyen Hao Hai, "The Situation of the Research on Non-Marxist Philosophy (Modern Western Bourgeois Philosophy) in the Last 55 Years," p. 583.

will become a very valuable and useful document for teaching of history of Vietnamese philosophy.

However, we should admit that our research on philosophy has not yet met the demands raised by the practice of our life; many pressing problems of the country's development and its management require answers from philosophers. There have been only a few valuable works researching philosophical problems originating from our practice. Works reflecting the real rhythm of the life have not been as expected both qualitatively and quantitatively. Many research projects, for lack of data collected from practical surveys, have little practical value and exert only modest impact on social practices as well as on the activity of planning policy and providing guidelines for the Party and Government. In quantitative terms, for almost 20 years people engaging in researching and teaching philosophy in our country have produced great number of publications but among them there hardly has been a remarkable work on our society, not to mention on the region or the world, bearing the clear imprint of Vietnamese philosophy.

The Role and Main Research Orientations of Philosophical Research in Vietnam in the Context of Globalization

Philosophy in Vietnam is defined as a system of the most universal points of view on the world and the place of man in this world.⁴ Philosophy often plays a key role in one's worldview and methodology; it is identical with the nuclear of worldview, but not with worldview on the whole. The role of philosophy is to provide man with an interpretation of the world and his place in it. Therefore, philosophy gives us a generalized view on the world and especially on society. Like other theoretical disciplines, philosophy not only performs the function of interpreting the problems of the world in general and of human society in particular; but on the basis of its interpretations orients humans in their actions. Therefore, a good philosophy will

⁴ "National Council for Directing the Compiling of National Textbooks for the Subjects of Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh's Thoughts," *The Textbooks of Marxism-Leninism* (renewed and revised edition) (Hanoi: The National Political Publishing House, 2004), p. 23 (in Vietnamese).

help people act rightly. The history of the development of science has shown that every scientist is implicitly or explicitly under the influence of a certain philosophical worldview or system of certain philosophical views. Based on their correct philosophical views, many scientists have been able to make ingenious forecasts, which have been verified by latter generations. It is difficult to fully specify the worldview and methodological role of philosophy in human social practices. History has shown that many philosophical systems have played the role of a worldview and methodology for revolutions and laid solid foundations for human actions. From the experience of history and practice we can see that philosophy plays an important role in the context of globalization. With a correct philosophical system, a nation will be able to choose for itself a wise course of action and discover the right orientation in order to make use of opportunities and overcome challenges brought by globalization.

The question is: What problems should philosophy focus in order to successfully carry out its worldview and methodological role in the present context? For example, the theme of the 21st World Congress of Philosophy in August 2003 in Istanbul, Turkey, which was philosophy facing world problems, means that the development of the world has brought about many problems, the solutions to which require the joint effort of nation-states worldwide. Philosophy cannot ignore those problems.

First of all, it should state clearly that we all live in a context of globalization. Philosophy faces globalization as a general and necessary tendency, as well as world problems brought about or deepened by globalization. Therefore, the task of philosophy is to contribute to a full awareness of globalization and the problems it has brought.

There have been different views on globalization. Globalization is often known first of all as economic globalization. In these terms, globalization is understood as a gradual growth with an ever-wider expansion of the scope of productive forces transcending the national borders and interdependence of various nation-states in their economic activities. From the perspective of the most important features of present economic relations, economic globalization is known as an expansion of the capitalistic mode of production determined by the USA and other developed capitalistic nations.

Researchers on globalization have worked out various interpretations of the causes and characteristics of globalization, especially that from 1990s to the present. But generally speaking the main features of the interpretations can be stated as follows: *first*, present globalization is closely linked to a knowledge-based economy, especially information technology; *second*, it has created a new world economy and international relations among a diversified series of subjects; *third*, the present globalization has established close economic relationships among various nations through a system of markets and market economy; *fourth*, capitalistic nations play decisive role in the present process of globalization. This can be seen from the fact that Western capitalistic countries with their powerful competitive ability have created transnational and supranational corporations. At the same time, they have striven to broaden and expand uninterruptedly their capitalistic mode of production to all the countries worldwide.

What should be emphasized more is that the concerns of philosophy are not limited to the causes and characteristics of the present process of globalization, but also include its positive and negative relationships, its advantages and disadvantages. Theoretically speaking, contemporary globalization has brought about certain advantages, which can briefly be stated as follows: *firstly*, it optimizes the ability to allocate resources through global means; *secondly*, it creates the capability of facilitating objective economic rules in a global space; *thirdly*, it accelerates and promotes rapid rational adjustments of the industrial structure through global instrumentality; and *finally*, globalization has made it possible to resolve some common problems, which human beings have encountered during the process of economic globalization and social development. Along with these opportunities globalization has also posed very big and serious challenges to people and nations worldwide, especially to the developing nations.

From the social perspective, the demands of the global economy have brought about enormous changes in labor and in the life-style of peoples of all nation-states worldwide. In the present context of the development of the world economy, every country faces such common and very disturbing problems in the development of its national economy, as ecological and environmental pollution, the depletion of natural resources, issues of population and public health, the gap

between rich and poor, social vices and transnational crimes etc. In short, the very process of globalization accelerates strongly and rapidly the impact of the global problems of our age on all nations worldwide. Nowadays, hardly any nation can ignore the quick and broad spread of such pandemics like SARS, bird influenza, or terrorism, and international crimes. If every country in the world, especially the developed countries, are fully aware of the above-mentioned problems and have positive and effective measures to deal with them in the context of economic globalization, then social and economic development will become more comprehensive, harmonic and stable.

From the political perspective, people often mention the serious challenges globalization poses to *national sovereignty* through the impact of the economy on politics. The rate of economic integration will lead to political integration. Following that logic, people discuss the weakening of the nation-state model. In the context of present globalization, people often talk more about interdependence among nation-states, rather than their full independence.

In the context of globalization there is no entirely independent country completely isolated from the world. The danger is that some countries intend to take advantage of globalization to achieve hegemony. These countries exploit some situations to wage war against other weaker nations. The motivation behind such actions is economic interest. The act of waging aggressive war is an obvious violation of the national sovereignty of a nation and disregards international law. The American war against Iraq can serve as a typical illustration for that point. In recent years, facing serious violations of international laws and national sovereignty many philosophers have raised their voice to ask the United Nations to be more resolute in the protection the Charter of the United Nations and international conventions. Many philosophers want the United Nations to guarantee justice and fairness in the present context of globalization. Although the United Nations has not yet fully executed that role, many people assume that its existence is necessary in the present conditions, but the problem is

that the United Nations needs renovation.⁵ Hence, philosophers do not avoid the pressing problems raised by the contemporary world.

Economic globalization is the most important aspect of the process of globalization. Economic globalization impacts strongly on the political field. In turn, political changes exert influence back upon the economy. Philosophical research should focus on the impact of economic and political changes in culture in the context of globalization.

Many scholars, in the course of globalization, have pointed out a tendency to unify all cultures. All developed countries want to impose their cultural values upon every other country in the world. Through globalization some developed Western countries claim that non-Western cultures are not well adapted to or even contradict Western cultures and civilizations. They want the rest of the world not only to succumb economically, politically and militarily to them but also maximally to limit the specific characteristics of non-Western cultures. Huntington's view on the clash of civilizations shows that there cannot be any peace in the present world due to the existence of the clash among civilizations in the conditions of globalization. The West wants to fight for their interests until victory, or, in other words, to force the non-Western world to yield completely.⁶

Even in the field of philosophy Asian people engaged in teaching and research face a similar situation. Almost every Asian country has undergone Western colonial rule. The latter has not only exploited the natural resources of the colonized countries, but also broken the ties of local people to their cultural, intellectual and spiritual heritages; in other words, the sources from which their identity have been created. Most Asian countries, after being liberated from colonial domination and gaining their political independence, have actively mapped out their own plan to develop their economy under the ideological mask of "modernization," which in fact is "Westernization" and "Capitalization." After the collapse of socialism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, there has been no counterpoise to the capitalistic super-powers, which allowed them to expand their global strategy. Asian

⁵ Peter Singer, *Human Right, the State and International Order* (Vietnamese translation is available in *Review of Philosophy*, 2003, N^o.11).

⁶ Bjaznova, "Globalization and National Values," *Research Materials of the Institute of Social Sciences Information*, 2005, TN.2005-37, p.7.

countries were lured into the process of globalization. The advantages of Western culture in Asia can also be seen in the field of philosophy.⁷

In practical terms no one can deny that globalization is a necessary process, which has created opportunities for countries with a developing economy to integrate into the world economy in order to accelerate their economic growth and technological renovation. However, it should be emphasized that the opportunities brought about by globalization among different countries and nations are not the same. Generally, more opportunities are given to the more economically developed and richer countries than poor countries. Globalization brings more challenges than chances to poor and developing countries. As Kofi Annan, the former United Nations General Secretary, claims "Globalization has brought us closer together in the sense that we are all affected by each other's actions, but not in the sense that we all share the benefits and the burdens. Instead, we have allowed it to drive us further apart, increasing the disparities in wealth and power both between societies and within them."⁸

As a developing country, apart from great advantages and opportunities, Vietnam also faces considerable challenges in the context of globalization and economic integration. Recently many Vietnamese leaders have pointed out very serious economic, as well as social, political and especially cultural, challenges. What should Vietnamese philosophy do in order to take full advantages and overcome the challenges brought about by globalization in the present international and national context?

Firstly, if international philosophers are focusing research on problems caused by globalization, Vietnamese philosophers should orient their research on the practical problems raised by the cause of building and developing our country in the context of globalization and international economic integration. Vietnam is in the process of continuing its renovation in the context of globalization and international economic integration. Therefore, the problems raised by the

⁷ This was the problem raised in an International Conference "Teaching Philosophy in the Asian Context," which was held in Manila, the Philippines, February, 2004.

⁸ Kofi Annan, "Do We still Have Universal Values?" *Research Materials of the Institute of Social Sciences Information*, 2005, TN.2005-36.

development of Vietnam will be closely linked to regional and international problems from which it cannot be detached in the present context. As an independent country, Vietnam will have to deal with its own problems during its development. On the other hand, world or global problems themselves have different manifestations in various countries. The specific manifestations are determined by local historical conditions. Therefore, despite having common features of world problems, these will also have Vietnamese characteristics. Therefore, there exists a dialectical unity between the universal and the particular in the practical problems faced by philosophers in every country. The main task of philosophy is to research that relationship.

This also means that philosophers must contribute to a philosophy of development for their nation and in the context of globalization and international integration, answer such questions as what is a philosophy of development of their nation? and how to choose the optimal way of development in order for a nation to take full advantages of the opportunities and overcome the challenges brought about by globalization?

History has shown that by taking advantage of the opportunities many underdeveloped countries have been able to shorten their development period and catch up with developed countries. The underdeveloped countries can acquire capital, technology and skills from developed countries to accomplish an abridged development, thereby "reducing suffering." This is an advantage for late-developing countries or the "post-development advantage."

For example, the four so-called "Asian Tigers," which have developed later than such countries like the USA and Germany, have made gigantic progress. They have caught up with and even overtaken such capitalistic countries with a long development as England, France and other western capitalistic nations.

We would add that the distinction between a philosophy of development and philosophizing on development remains relative. The former seems to be on a higher level of generalization than the latter. To develop philosophizing on development is the task not only for people engaged in research and teaching of philosophy, but also for every branch and science. In the thousands-year history of existence and development, our forebears have constantly reviewed and

summarized their philosophizing, which has focused on the relations between humans and the nature, between man and man. In the struggles against foreign aggressors our forebears have generalized strategic guidelines into profound philosophical thoughts, such as philosophizing of all-people totality, quick-fight-and-quick-win or steady-fight-and-steady-win philosophizing, etc. At present, big enterprises also want to implement certain business philosophies. Successful business is closely related to its specific philosophizing. Similarly, every branch, in every period of its development, should work out its particular philosophizing of development.

However, philosophy is on a higher-level generalization than philosophizing. Philosophy is a system of theoretical views on social development in general or on a certain sphere of human action. The task of building such a system is assigned first of all to people engaged in the research and teaching of philosophy.

Secondly, apart from the tasks of reflecting upon and researching problems raised by the practice of development in the world and Vietnam, philosophy has its own logic. No system of philosophy or philosophical view has begun from scratch. On the contrary, philosophy has always been inherited from previous philosophical views and systems, which have served as its premises and ideological materials. Therefore, one of the important tasks for Vietnamese philosophers is to research the philosophical thought of Vietnam. A satisfactory answer to the question about the existence of Vietnamese philosophy has not yet been found. There has never been a philosophy in Vietnam if philosophy is understood as a rigor system of views and categories such as is commonly accepted in the West. However, if philosophy is understood as wisdom or the love to wisdom, as deeply philosophical thoughts directing or orienting human actions, there is no reason to deny the existence of philosophy in Vietnam, a nation with thousands of years of existence and development. The task of Vietnamese philosophers is to reveal and investigate the philosophical thoughts of our nation. In doing so they have not only to reconstruct the philosophical thought and explain the foundations for their formation and development; more importantly, they must find their significance for the present life of our nation and clarify their possible contributions to the

Vietnamese people and their country. Only then can we see clearly which thoughts should be preserved and further developed.

In addition, as mentioned above, the greatest threats and challenges for developing countries are the concerns about losing national identity in the present globalization process. Research on the values of national culture, including those of philosophical culture is of the utmost importance in order to preserve and promote national identity.

Thirdly, one of the no less important tasks for people engaging in research and teaching of philosophy in Vietnam is to investigate the trends and ideas of preeminent world philosophers, both in the East as well as in the West. Due to difficulties in material conditions and the limitations those engaged in teaching and research in philosophy, we concentrate our research primarily on the philosophical tendencies, views and thoughts, which have more influence on Vietnam and can theoretically and methodologically contribute to solution of the problems raised by its development.

First of all, we should focus on rethinking, the proper understanding and developing the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism in the present context of globalization. Within the history of the Vietnamese revolution, the philosophy of Marxism-Leninism has been regarded as the ideological foundation and guideline for the socialist-oriented development of Vietnam. At the present time, those engaged in research and teaching of Marxist-Leninist philosophy constitute the largest majority among our philosophers. However, the Marxist-Leninist philosophy was formed as a result of the generalization of the historical practice of last decades of the 19th Century and the beginning of the 20th Century. Therefore, apart from the theoretical points, which have still preserved their value for orienting our present practical actions, there also exist some points, which are not appropriate for new historical conditions.

The practice of 30 years has shown that the persistence of Marxism-Leninism does not mean implementing it wholly and mechanically, but rather scientifically and creatively in new historical conditions. The success of the cause of renovation in Vietnam has demonstrated that point. Therefore, the rethinking and proper understanding and development of the basic principles of Marxist-Leninist

philosophy is of utmost importance in terms of theoretical and pressing practical significance.

In coming years, our task is to research and clarify (all) the theoretical points in the system of the views of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels and Vladimir Lenin, which are still correct and preserve their full value as the theoretical foundation and guideline for practical action, and those, which need to be amended and developed further in order to be suitable for new conditions of the age. Simultaneously we also need to specify clearly the theoretical points, which were appropriate in the past, but have been overcome by our practice and are not applicable in the new conditions.

Beside the rethinking and proper understanding and development of the basic principles of Marxist-Leninist philosophy, we also need to continue to concentrate on researching the tendencies of non-Marxist philosophy. Since the beginning of the renovation there have been more attention and new approaches to research on the tendencies of non-Marxist philosophy. However, what has been achieved in this area is still modest.

The challenge our philosophers face in research on non-Marxist philosophy is that only a few scholars have special training in those areas. Most of the literature and resources on the subject are in foreign languages while not so many people can make fluent use of foreign languages in their research. In recent years some research materials in the area of non-Marxist philosophy have been translated into Vietnamese. However, there have been not so many Vietnamese translations of masterpieces of world-famous philosophers.

In the future we must actively train the army of scholars specializing in non-Marxist philosophy or if possible, in particular thinkers. For the time being, due to the shortage of research materials and the limited proficiency of our scholars and teachers in foreign languages, it is of utmost necessity to continue to invest in translating some typical works of outstanding philosophers of the various philosophical schools.

Upon introduction into other countries many foreign doctrines have undergone some variations and modified expressions caused by the specific economic, political, social and cultural conditions of the natives. Thanks to that kind of variation and modification, foreign and

imported philosophical doctrines have been able to survive in native countries. In spite of the fact that Confucianism has been born in China, Confucian scholars have striven to find out similarities and differences between Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese Confucianism. In addition, there exist different views on the impact of Confucianism on modern society. While many scholars claim the great contributions, Confucianism has made to the growth and modernization of the Asian tigers, some others still insist that for modernization it is necessary to renounce Confucianism. The real role of Confucianism remains a topic for further investigations.

Similarly, in its long history Vietnam has been under the influence of various cultures. During the acculturation of different cultures including philosophical cultures, foreign philosophical views themselves have undergone some variations in order to be adaptable to the conditions of Vietnam. We can say that not only such doctrines as Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, which have exerted much influence in Vietnam, or Existentialism and Pragmatism, which have been influential in southern Vietnam under the former Saigon regime, but even Marxist-Leninist philosophy, all have undergone variations and been differently impacted in different periods in our history. Our main task is to investigate and clarify their manifestations and values.

Vietnamese philosophers engaging in researching and teaching philosophy in Vietnam are fully aware of the truth that “a nation that wants to climb the pinnacles of science cannot possibly manage without theoretical thought.” “But theoretical thinking is an innate quality only as regards natural capacity. This natural capacity must be developed, improved, and for its improvement there is as yet no other means than the study of previous philosophy.”⁹

In the present age of globalization, learning different cultures is necessary to enrich one’s own national culture. At the same time, in order to develop every nation must preserve and promote its national cultural identity, including its philosophical culture.

However, in our opinion, regardless of their specific research area and nature (practical problems or world problems or the history of

⁹ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Complete Works* (Hanoi: The National Political Publishing House, 1994), Vol. 20, pp. 487, 489.

philosophical thoughts in Vietnam or Eastern, Western philosophies etc.), the ultimate point of philosophical research in Vietnam is to develop the country and the people of Vietnam as well as to enhance the thinking abilities of the Vietnamese. For the ultimate goal of all development and progress is human development, progress and happiness in order to help humans achieve the True, the Good and the Beautiful. This is also the goal for which research and teaching in philosophy in Vietnam strives.

2.

Teaching Philosophy in Vietnam: Achievements and Problems

In the history of Vietnam, the August Revolution in 1945 was a milestone signifying the birth of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the first ever state representing the union between workers and peasants in South East Asia. Since then the research and propagation of philosophical thoughts have been constantly among the most important tasks of philosophers in Vietnam.

Within the history of a nation or any science, we could not say that 70 years is a long period. However, that duration was full of important events for the Vietnamese philosophy. As a result of establishment of the Democratic Republic regime in Vietnam, philosophers were officially given a chance to form their own institution to research and propagate systematically thousand-year cultural quintessence of human kind presented in different philosophical systems as well as tested and valued masterpieces of human thoughts worldwide.¹⁰

At present there are about 4000 scholars nationwide engaging in researching and teaching philosophy as their principal occupation. Besides the bodies specialized in researching and training the professional philosophers such as the Institute of Philosophy, the Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences (VASS), Departments of philosophy in Ho Chi Minh's National Political Academy and the National Universities there are also various units undertaking philosophical teaching in all establishments of the national education network ranging from high school to university. In other words, philosophy has been a compulsory course for students in all those educational institutions. Moreover, some thoughts of world famous philosophers have been taught in the subject of civic education in high school in Vietnam. In our country the teaching of philosophy has been given enough attention. It is our policy that philosophy is considered as a science aiming at providing world outlook and methodology for

¹⁰ Nguyen Trong Chuan, "A Retrospection into 55 Years of Researching and Teaching Philosophy in Our Country," p. 23.

scientists as well as people engaging in management of practical activities. The number of people involving in researching and teaching philosophy may not be very large for a country like Vietnam with the population of nearly 90 million. But the formation and development of such an army is really a remarkable achievement.

First of all, we must say that, in Vietnam the spreading and criticizing the typical Oriental doctrines like Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism had been carried out by many Vietnamese intellectuals before the August Revolution in 1945. In some big cities like Hanoi, Saigon, Hue there had been publications introducing some of the western philosophers and philosophical systems like those of Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Rousseau, Montesquieu, Voltaire, Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, and even Marxism. Philosophy had been taught at some high schools and colleges. It means that the propagating and teaching philosophy had been taken place before the August Revolution. Claiming the great significance of that task in the period from 1945 to the present does not mean ignoring or giving improper evaluation to the period prior to the August Revolution.

However, in this paper we would like to focus on a brief statement and preliminary evaluation of the situation of teaching philosophy in North Vietnam prior to 1975 and the whole nation since 1975.

Teaching of Philosophy in North Vietnam prior to 1975

Through the period of 30 years, from 1945 to 1975, there had been no single day of peace in Vietnam. The most important task of our nation during that period was to struggle for national independence and regain national unity. Under those conditions the researching and teaching of philosophy could not be carried out systematically. In addition, the content of teaching philosophy was predominated by the propaganda of the principal theories of Marxism, the non-Marxist thoughts was mentioned slightly just enough for criticism and rejection. At that time non-Marxist thoughts were thought as the outlook of a conservative and counter-revolutionary class.

Modern Western philosophy, in particular, at the very beginning has been considered as an ideological foe for Marxism. Therefore, the task of criticizing and eliminating its remnant and influence in Viet-

nam was among the most important ones in that period. Especially after Geneva's Convention in 1954, when South Vietnam came under the domination of the American Neo-Colonialism, the puppet regime in South Vietnam supported by many western reactionary forces had been constantly on the fierce ideological and cultural offensive to North Vietnam. Under those conditions the struggle to eradicate the remnant and negative influence of western philosophical currents of thought was at the top of the agenda. In 1962 the Institute of Philosophy was established, the department of critique of Western bourgeoisie philosophy was one of the earliest to be institutionalized.¹¹

However, at that time there were not so many publications even on Marxist philosophy. Eminent Professors such as Tran Van Giau, Dang Thai Mai and Tran Duc Thao¹² were among the first scholars who were instrumental in propagating the Marxist philosophy in Vietnam. During the period from the end of the 40s to middle of the 50s they had published a number of works introducing the history of philosophy as well as the Marxist philosophy.¹³ Those very works have played an important role in propagating the basis doctrines of the Marxist philosophy to many generations of cadres of our party and government.

From 1960 to 1964 many popular textbooks and documents on philosophy had been published, particularly the documents and

¹¹ Nguyen Hao Hai, "Situation of Research on non-Marxist Philosophy (Western Modern Bourgeoisie Philosophy) in Vietnam in last 55 Years," in *A Half Century of Researching and Teaching Philosophy in Vietnam*, ed. by Nguyen Trong Chuan (Hanoi: The Institute of philosophy publisher, 2001), pp. 575-576.

¹² All three professors were awardees of Ho Chi Minh Award (the highest award in the field of science in Vietnam). In particular, professor Tran Van Giau has been conferred the honor of the Hero of Labor in the Renovation Period.

¹³ Such as Tran Van Giau's *The World View* (first published in 1948 and reprinted in 1956), *Historical Materialism* (first published in 1949 and reprinted in 1957), *Dialectics* (published in 1955); Dang Thai Mai's *The History of Western Philosophy* (published in 1950); Tran Duc Thao's series of lectures "The History of pre-Marxist Philosophy" and "The History of pre-Marxist Thought." His lectures have been recently collected and published.

textbooks for army colleges.¹⁴ Despite their elementary nature in philosophical content, those publications had contributed actively in propagating the basic principles of the Marxist philosophy to our people. Due to the political instability in USSR the philosophical activities in Vietnam were almost in a restrained development during the years from 1964 to 1970. In the period from 1970 to 1975 the teaching of philosophy had carried out regularly in secondary and tertiary education but there was no department specializing in training of bachelor of philosophy.

In brief, looking back at the period from 1945 to 1975 we should first note that one of the important achievements of propagating and teaching of philosophy is that it has contributed actively to many generations of our cadres and people, both in quantity and in quality of theoretical thinking, scientific outlook and Marxist philosophical methodology. More importantly it has been a solid basis for a revolutionary theory to permeate into our cadres and population and to convert the theory into scientific faith and materialistic strength. In doing so the propagating and teaching of philosophy contributed importantly to our great victories over foreign invaders and their puppet regime.

Besides, the teaching philosophy also contributed to revitalize the values of the traditional patriotism existing in the ideological heritage of our ancestors, especially its revolutionary heroism. The very heroism has encouraged timely our spirit of nationalism in our struggle against foreign invaders in frontline as well as in the rear. At the same time during that period, there were researches on the problems of man claiming the decisive role of man, subjective factor but the power of weapon in the war against foreign aggressors.

Teaching of Philosophy in Vietnam since 1975

After country's unification in 1975, the teaching of philosophy has been carried out more methodologically and systematically. For

¹⁴ For example, *The Categories of Dialectical Materialism* (published in 1960), *The Categories of Historical Materialism* (published in 1962) (for the cadres of army regiment and division ranks [field-officers], *Dialectical Materialism* (for primary army officers), etc.

the first time in 1976 the departments of philosophy specialized in training bachelor of philosophy in two universities were established. The curriculums of previously five-year (and presently four-year) undergraduate course in philosophy have been structured deliberately to meet the needs of social practice in Vietnam. In the course, apart from philosophical subjects, students must take other supplementary subjects like those of natural sciences, social sciences and foreign languages. Philosophical subjects include the history of Oriental, Western and pre-Marxist philosophies, Marxist philosophy and some modern western philosophical currents.

By the end of the 70s there were first graduates of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Vietnam and universities started to enroll students seeking the degree of the Master of Philosophy in the early 90s. Currently in Vietnam there exist four official institutions specializing in training Ph.D. students and seven others undertaking the training students for Master degree. Since the beginning of the 90s the number of graduates from those institutions has rapidly increased. Particularly the Government of Vietnam established in 2000 its own longterm project sponsoring students to study overseas graduate courses. Every year, there are two or three students preparing to do their Master of Ph.D. degree in philosophy among the holders of that kind of government scholarship. In this way the community of our philosophers is increasing annually with a large number of scholars graduating from various universities in the world.

The increase in number as well as the improvement of qualification of scholars working in the field of researching and teaching philosophy has contributed positively to the teaching activities in all universities and colleges. We have more and more researches and publications with high quality addressing different issues in various fields of philosophy.

Marxist Philosophy is dominant in the curriculum of secondary and tertiary schools. The same situation can be seen in the area of philosophical publications. It can be easily explained because for a long time the majority of graduated students have specialized in Marxist Philosophy.

The period from 1975 to the present can be divided into two smaller ones: the pre-renovation period (1975-1986) and renovation period (since 1986 to the present).

In the pre-renovation period, the content of teaching of philosophy in Vietnam is basically the same of that of the previous years, which had focused mainly on the Marxist philosophy. Apart from it there were also small part of the history of pre-Marxist philosophy (including both Oriental and Western philosophy) and the course of critique of modern western bourgeoisie philosophy.

Even within the Marxist philosophy, teaching philosophy was limited to the formula: teacher explained the classic texts, made examples to illustrate and student only listened to teacher, took notes and learnt what he got by heart. "teaching philosophy had just only repeated classic principles, stated in a simple way some fundamental categories, laws, principles and limited to interpretation, explanation the policy-lines of the Party and Government"¹⁵ "...within the limit of pure theoretical issues imbruing with scholasticism."¹⁶

So far in that period the main method of teaching philosophy was explanation and propagation of classic principles (of the Marxist philosophy). Such a method reduced the role and significance of philosophy and made philosophy a boring subject. Moreover, it also negatively influenced the way student thinks in philosophy. First it led to the bad habit of bookishness and hackneyed writing, which was a product of metaphysic thinking and dogmatism paying no attention to the constant changes in reality. Second, it also deprived student of the function of critical thinking, one of the important functions of scientific thinking. Third, while considering the practice as something secondary and make-up for "immutable truths" resided in textbooks, it paid no proper attention to research and summation of practice. Finally, it formed a mechanical and stereotyped thinking as well as passiveness for student in encounter with real problems of life.¹⁷

¹⁵ Duong Phu Hiep, "Philosophy and Practice," *Journal of Philosophy*, N.1. 1989, p. 4.

¹⁶ Nguyen Van Trung, "Some Thoughts on the Relations between Philosophy and Politics," *Journal of philosophy*, N. 1, p. 57.

¹⁷ Nguyen The Nghia, "A Retrospection into 25 Years of Researching and Teaching Philosophy in Southern Provinces," in *A Half Century of Researching*

There are many factors causing that situation, but the main reasons are the following:

Firstly, an identification philosophy with politics. "Due to the very identification many researchers and teachers of philosophy had considered themselves as political cadres and propagandists. As a result, they treated their lecture as political discourse or dissemination of policy-line."¹⁸

Secondly, the quality of textbooks was low: their structure was inappropriate; lecturers had to follow literally the textbooks teaching even many outdated propositions and issues. The majority of our textbooks at that time were heavily based on the textbooks of the former USSR.

Thirdly, there were many irrationalities in selection of students and organization of courses. Classes were often overcrowded and students had the exam papers and questions and even the answers at hand. Therefore, some students without attending lectures could prepare the exam papers at home, learnt them by heart and reproduced them in exam room.¹⁹

In the renovation period, the researching and teaching philosophy gradually affirmed its role in our educational network and achieved great successes. The teaching content has been more and more extended, including Oriental, Western, Marxist philosophies as well as modern bourgeoisie philosophy. Teaching methods have been constantly updated to meet the new contents and the student's needs.

Since the Renovation in 1986 and especially after the collapse of the former USSR, the problems of reconsideration of the Marxist philosophy has been raised. Recently a national scientific-technological program for preparation of textbooks for Marxist-Leninist sciences has been organized under the support of our Government. There is a

and Teaching Philosophy in Vietnam, ed. by Nguyen Trong Chuan (Hanoi: The Institute of Philosophy Publisher, 2001), pp. 41-42.

¹⁸ Duong Phu Hiep, *op. cit.*

¹⁹ Vu Van Gau, "Teaching the Marxist Philosophy in Ho Chi Minh City's University of Social Sciences and Humanities," in *A Half Century of Researching and Teaching Philosophy in Vietnam*, ed. by Nguyen Trong Chuan (Hanoi: The Institute of Philosophy Publisher, 2001), p. 23.

national theme on philosophy among the themes of the program. As a result, a textbook on philosophy at national level has been published. Some of errors and shortcomings that existed in previous textbooks have been overcome in this book because it has been written with the participation of a large number of our leading experts in philosophy.

There have also been many changes in methods of teaching the Marxist philosophy. In the past students could only learn philosophy through their notes taken from lecturers and textbooks, nowadays apart from the notes they can have access to original classics of Marxism translated into Vietnamese. The very direct access to the classics of Marxism gives the students a chance to have deeper understanding of the thoughts of the classics of Marxism and see the evolution and changes of their points of view. In doing so students themselves can value which thoughts are appropriate, which are outdated, which are in need of supplementation and updating to meet the needs of the current historical conditions.

In the field of philosophical research there have been renovations as well. Since 1975, especially the last 15-20 years, apart from textbooks written for various student levels, the number of publications on research works on all specialized fields of philosophy have rapidly increased. The scope of research problems presented in those publications has been more and more diversified: from history of philosophy to logic, ethics, aesthetics, philosophy of culture, philosophy in natural sciences, techniques and philosophical problems of environments; from ancient philosophy to modern philosophy; from Marxist philosophy to non-Marxist philosophy; from philosophical doctrines of some philosophers to philosophy of great schools and systems. The diversity can be explained by the following factors: *first*, since 1986 Vietnam has started its cause of comprehensive renovation. Within that process the renovation of the way of thinking was considered as a fundamental step: our Government has paid more and more attention to theoretical activities in general and philosophical researches in particular. *Second*, there has been a significant development of the community of philosophers: the fruits of many years of training courses supported by the Government. Many of them have completed

their M.A. or Ph.D. degrees, among those many have been awarded a professorship.

More importantly, we must proudly mention that such changes in the methods of conducting philosophical research and teaching as well as contributions of our philosophers to the comprehensive renovation our country. Prior to 1986 a majority of philosophical researches had been conducted with the aim of interpretation and propagation of party's policy-lines. However, after the start of our Renovation course in 1986, there have been many positive suggestions in many philosophical works and researches as well as opinions which contributed to the Party in preparation of the policy in socio-economic development of our country.

For example, in the field of social philosophy, our philosophers have insisted on the decisive role of production forces in relation to production relations denying the point that production relations should be advanced to pave the way for production forces. The attention also given to the roles of multi-sector economy, the diversity of ownership as well as the market economy with socialist orientation; to the role of human resource, particularly to the driving force of various interests, especially and first of all economic interest in social development. The correctness of those arguments and opinions has been well verified in the real practice of our life.

Similarly, our philosophers have addressed one of the very sensitive and important problem of democracy in society and building of a really democratic society as stated repeatedly by the President Ho Chi Minh.²⁰ This problem has been regularly treated in the works of our philosophers. As a result, our Party has approved it and has officially included them in the documents of many Party Congresses.

Within the process of a comprehensive renovation our country, together with the renovation of the way of thinking and methods of teaching the Marxist philosophy, the research and teaching of non-Marxist philosophy have been paid more attention. Many modern western schools and currents of philosophy, which either have not been introduced or criticized negatively in the past, have been intro-

²⁰ Nguyen Trong Chuan, "A Retrospection into 55 Years of Researching and Teaching Philosophy in Our Country," p. 23.

duced and attentively given proper attention. Their positive aspects are now recognized in the spirit that all different cultures including those of philosophy should be given a proper respect. Philosophers focus not only on the negative aspects but also on positive aspects of non-Marxist philosophies, especially modern western philosophy.

As a result of the Renovation there have been changes in teaching of western philosophy. At present, within the program of teaching philosophy at tertiary level, the course of critique of western bourgeoisie philosophy has been replaced by the course of non-Marxist philosophy, the main content of which consists of modern western bourgeoisie philosophy. In many training institutions, for example in the Institute of Philosophy, the content of the course of non-Marxist philosophy has renovated profoundly: students have a chance to study various modern western bourgeoisie philosophical schools and currents, they can see the diversity of thoughts, both the negative as well as positive aspects and points of these systems and schools. The teaching now is not limited only to negative critique of western bourgeoisie philosophy as it used to be in the past.

At present, we can say that Vietnam has formed gradually a community of scholars specializing in research and teaching non-Marxist philosophy. Their number may be comparatively limited but among them there exist philosophers with a profound expertise.

The difficulty of teaching non-Marxist philosophy consists in the shortage of its literature. Many students cannot access to the primary sources due to their lack of fluency in foreign languages while many famous classics have not been translated into Vietnamese. Therefore, the majority of students still rely on their notes from lectures and available textbooks in Vietnamese.

The problem is that in the coming years we must train intensively a class of students specializing in non-Marxist philosophy, and if possible, in individual authors of western philosophy. At the moment, with the prevalence of shortage of literature and lack of fluency of foreign languages, a priority has been given to the translation into Vietnamese some of typical works of famous philosophers.

Besides teaching the Marxist and non-Marxist philosophy we have also carried out the research and teaching the history of Vietnamese thoughts with the aim of introducing students to typical

thoughts of our famous thinkers in the history, especially the thoughts in the areas of politics, ethics and philosophy. In recent years, under the support of the Government, the Institute of Philosophy – Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences of Vietnam, has focused on the study of the history of Vietnamese thoughts, starting from the very beginning of the formation of our country. At present the Institute has published three volumes of the work. Since 2002 the Institute has also started the study on the history of philosophical thoughts in Vietnam. The completion of the study will be a very valuable contribution to teaching the history of Vietnamese philosophy.

Philosophers working in researching and teaching philosophy in Vietnam are well aware that “a nation cannot be steady on the top of development of sciences without its own theoretical thinking.” “But theoretical thinking is only one of the potential endowed capabilities of human beings. This capability must be nourished and perfected and until now there is no other way to perfect it than to study the whole philosophical heritage of the past.”²¹ On the other hand, in the context of the present globalization, the acceptance of various cultures worldwide is necessary to enrich the culture of every nation. At the same time, every nation should preserve and promote its cultural identity including the culture of philosophy.

Looking back into the history of teaching philosophy in Vietnam, we can see that, Vietnam has gradually formed a strong community of professional philosophers working in researching and teaching philosophy. The teaching philosophy in Vietnam has contributed more and more actively to the propagation of great thoughts of our nation and human kind to our people to promote the development of their theoretical thinking. After all, the ultimate aim of any development and progress is for the development and progress of human beings, to help them to reach the True, the Good and the Beautiful. Research and teaching of philosophy in Vietnam desire to achieve nothing more than this end.

²¹ Marx and Engels. *The Complete Works*, Vol. 20, pp. 489 and 487

3.

Marx's Materialistic Understanding of History and Its Epochal Significance

While evaluating the great contribution of Marx for the development of humanity at Marx's funeral, Engels wrote "Just as Darwin discovered the laws of evolution in organic nature so Marx discovered the law of evolution in human history; he discovered the simple fact, hitherto concealed by an overgrowth of ideology, that mankind must first of all eat and drink, have shelter and clothing, before it can pursue politics, science, religion, art, etc.; and that therefore the means of life, and consequently the degree of economic development attained by a given people or during a given epoch, form the foundation on which the forms of government, the legal conceptions, the art and even the religious ideas of the people concerned have been evolved, and in the light of which these things must therefore be explained, instead of vice versa as has hitherto been the case."

That is not all. Marx also discovered the special law of motion governing the present-day capitalist mode of production and the bourgeois society that this mode of production has created. The discovery of surplus value suddenly threw light on the problem, in trying to solve which all previous investigations, of both bourgeois economists and social critics, had been groping in the dark."²²

Engels claims that the materialistic understanding of history and the theory of surplus are Marx's two great discoveries.²³ Here the issue is what are the contents of the materialistic understanding of history and what is the significance of this discovery for the development of Marx's philosophy in particular and Marxism in general?

Marx's philosophy, as we know, consists of two organic components, namely dialectical materialism and historical materialism (or also known as the materialistic understanding of history). Dialectical materialism is understood as a science of the most general laws of movement and development of nature, society and human thinking.

²² Marx and Engels, *Complete Works*, Vol. 19, pp. 499-500.

²³ *Ibid.*, Vol. 19, pp. 164-170.

Historical materialism is a science of the laws of movement and development of society as an organic whole. Therefore, while social sciences like economics, law, history, sociology and other disciplines investigate different aspects of social life, historical materialism investigate society as an organic whole. The subjects of historical materialism are laws enacting in all or in many socio-economic formations.

The basic principles of historical materialism have been explained by Marx in different works, especially in the preface of his *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*. These principles can be summarized as follows:

First, it is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness.

Second, the mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life.

Third, in the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness.

Fourth, at a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production or – this merely expresses the same thing in legal terms – with the property relations within the framework of which they have operated hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an era of social revolution.

Fifth, the changes in the economic foundation lead sooner or later to the transformation of the whole immense superstructure. In studying such transformations, it is always necessary to distinguish between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, artistic or philosophic – in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out.

Sixth, no social order is ever destroyed before all the productive forces for which it is sufficient have been developed, and new superior relations of production never replace older ones before the material conditions for their existence have matured within the framework of the old society.

Seventh, in broad outline, the Asiatic, ancient, feudal and modern bourgeois modes of production may be designated as epochs marking progress in the economic development of society.

Eighth, the bourgeois mode of production is the last antagonistic form of the social process of production – antagonistic not in the sense of individual antagonism but of an antagonism that emanates from the individuals' social conditions of existence – but the productive forces developing within bourgeois society create also the material conditions for a solution of this antagonism. The prehistory of human society accordingly closes with this social formation.²⁴

The birth of historical materialism has brought about a new conception on the history to philosophy, which is both materialistic and dialectic as well as an organic combination between materialism and dialectics. This is one of epochal significances that Marx has contributed to humankind because:

First, according to Lenin's explanation, historical materialism is a thoroughgoing application of the principles of materialism into the research on social phenomena.

The thoroughgoing application can be seen in the fact that historical materialism implements the view of dialectical materialism on the relation between matter and consciousness into the research and explanation of social development. Matter and consciousness in the social realm are understood correspondently as social being and social consciousness.

Social being includes many elements, among which the mode of production is the most important. The latter is the most decisive factor, though geographical condition and population density are also very important. In fact, in the history of philosophy, many thinkers have paid too much attention to geographical factor or the factor of population density for the development of society. In contrast to those

²⁴ Marx and Engels, *Complete Works*, Vol. 13, pp. 13-17.

theories, historical materialism affirms the decisive role of the mode of production.

Every mode of production in the history of mankind expresses the dialectical unity between production relations and productive forces, in which the latter are the manifestation of the relation between man and nature, the unity between means of production and laborers. The latter use the former to interact with nature to produce material wealth guaranteeing the existence and development of society. The production relations are expressed in three aspects: ownership, organizational management and product distribution. Within the relation between production relations and productive forces, the latter plays decisive role. Therefore, the mode of production is the most important element among the components of social being, the other components play the role of premises and conditions for the development of the mode of production.

Social consciousness is the reflection of social being in two levels: socio-psychological and ideological. At the same time, it also manifests in other basic forms like political, legal, ethical, religious, artistic, scientific and philosophical consciousness.

While dialectical materialism confirms that matter precedes and determines consciousness and consciousness, being the product of the highly organized form of matter – the human brain, can insert positive impacts back into the existence and development of the material world, historical materialism also affirms that social being precedes and determines social consciousness; social consciousness actively reflects social being and has a relative independence and more importantly can impact on social being through the activities of human beings. In this sense, social consciousness can either promote or delay the development of social being.

However, historical materialism is more than an explanation of general principles of the relation between social being and social consciousness: it penetrates deeply into the analysis of the structure of society and investigates dialectical relations between elements of the structure. With the birth of the notion of socio-economic formation, Marx has provided social sciences with a new approach to society.

The replacement of the general notion of society by that of socio-economic formation allows us to have a clear picture of the compo-

nents and stages of the development of society as well as the causes of movement and development of society in general. The notion of socio-economic formation is used to refer to the development of society in a certain historical period with its typical kind of production relations and a superstructure founded on these production relations. Certain production relations are always in accordance and determined by a certain development of productive forces. The development of socio-economic formations is a natural-historical development.

Within a socio-economic formation, according to the view of historical materialism, the infrastructure (including the totality of production relations) plays a decisive role and determines the superstructure (including ideology, institutions and relations established on the infrastructure). However, the superstructure retains its own relative independence and can exert impact on the infrastructure. It is what Marx means when he states that the change in economic basis leads to the change in superstructure.

Second, with the establishment of historical materialism, the principles of dialectics are also thoroughly applied in the examination and analysis of the development of society.

Every social phenomenon or process, according to historical materialism, is related to thousands of other phenomena and processes of nature, society and human thinking. It is the application of the dialectical principle of universal relations into the examination of society.

Together with the principle of universal relation, the principle of development is also applied by historical materialism in order to investigate social development. While dialectics states that nature is a process and all phenomena and things are always in the process of movement and development, historical materialism affirms that society in general, as well as every social phenomenon, are in the process of constant movement and development. The whole history of humankind is the process of consequent replacement of various socio-economic formations, in which the following formation has been always more developed than the previous. In general, as Marx stated, the Asiatic, ancient, feudal and modern bourgeois modes of production may be designated as epochs marking progress in the economic development of society.

At the same time, historical materialism also discovers that the struggle of opposing sides within a society is the profound cause of its development. It is the struggle between new productive forces and obsolete production relations and then the struggle between the class representing new productive forces and the class representing old production relations in a class-divided society. The struggle between opposing classes will lead to a social revolution, i.e. the leap in the development of society.

Social revolution has its task of reconstructing profoundly all spheres of social life, first of all the sphere of economy and politics. Within the sphere of economy, social revolution must resolve the conflict between new productive forces and old production relations by the means of replacement the latter by new production relations, which are in accordance with the new productive forces. Within the sphere of politics, social revolution must resolve the conflict between infrastructure and superstructure and replace the old government by a new government. The replacement of the old government by a new one is realized through a violent revolution because a state is a product of irreconcilable class contradictions as well as an instrument for class suppressing.

The result of social revolution is the replacement of one socio-economic formation by other, which is more developed. Thus, the consequent replacement of socio-economic formations has contributed to the progressive development of human society. However, different socio-economic formations have been temporal stages within the development of human society from lower to higher stages as Engels confirmed.²⁵

In his evaluation of the pre-Marxist socialism, Engels points out that "But the Socialism of earlier days was as incompatible with this materialist conception as the conception of Nature of the French materialists was with dialectics and modern natural science. The Socialism of earlier days certainly criticized the existing capitalistic mode of production and its consequences. It could not explain them, and,

²⁵ In this paper the author uses some materials from Professor Le Huu Tang's lectures "The Fundamental Contents of Marxism-Leninism and Its Methodological Function in the Cognition and Transformation of Practice."

therefore, could not get the mastery over them. It could simply reject them as bad. The more strongly this earlier Socialism denounced the exploitations of the working-class, inevitable under capitalism, the less able was it clearly to show in what this exploitation consisted and how it arose."²⁶

Therefore, according to Engels, the problem is, *on the one hand*, we need to explain the capitalist mode of production in its historical relations, in the necessity of its formation, development and decay. On the other hand, we also need to reveal the inner and hidden nature of this mode of production. Both aspects can only be accomplished with the help of Marx's materialistic understanding of history and theory of surplus. However, within the limit of the paper we could only concentrate on the significance of the materialistic understanding of history to the formation of scientific socialism.

According to the materialistic understanding of history, production and exchange are the basis of all societies. In all societies product distribution and class division are conditioned by what have been produced and the mode of production and exchange of products and goods. Therefore, it is necessary to "discover the ultimate cause of all social changes and political upsets are not taken place with human brain...but are located in the changes of the mode of production and exchange; the cause should not be to look for in philosophy but in the economy of the corresponding epoch."²⁷

Within historical materialism the theory of socio-economic formation is one of most important theoretical bases of Marx's and Engels's theory of socialism, according to which the movement of the fundamental contradictions of society is originated from the law stating the accordance between production relations and the certain level of productive forces, superstructure and infrastructure. Productive forces are the most dynamic and revolutionary. The development of society is expressed in the development of productive forces, which will sooner or later bring about changes in production relations. It means that any change within production relations is the necessary consequence of the fact that the old production relations are no more

²⁶ Marx and Engels, *Complete Works*, Vol. 19, p.304.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. 20, p. 371.

in accordance with the development of new productive forces. This is the foundation and objective law confirming that capitalism will be necessarily replaced by a new, more developed and better society.

Within a class-divided society, the contradiction between productive forces and production relations is expressed in the contradiction between exploiting class and exploited class. The struggle between those classes is the driving force for social development in all class-divided societies. In capitalistic societies the contradiction between productive forces and production relations is expressed in the contradiction between proletariats and bourgeoisies. Therefore, the birth of socialism is a result of the struggle between proletarian class and bourgeois class. This is also a historical necessity.

Thus, the materialistic understanding of history points out objective tendencies and driving forces of the human society, within which capitalism, as a socio-economic formation, is only a stage in the historical development of humankind and will be necessarily replaced by a new and more developed socio-economic formation; moreover, the theory of surplus reveals the mystery of the capitalistic production and points out clearly the historical mission of the proletarian class as the grave-diggers of capitalism. From those two discoveries Marx and Engels have come to the conclusion that: the collapse of the bourgeois class and the victory of the proletarian class are inevitable; by the same logic, capitalism will be replaced by communism.

The conclusion is a scientific one, which constitutes the kernel of the Marxist theory of socialism. It is not accidental that Engels, in his *Anti-During* and *The Development of Socialism from Utopia to Science*, claimed that "These two great discoveries – the materialist conception of history and the revelation of the secret of capitalist production by means of surplus value, we owe to Marx. With these discoveries, socialism became a science, which had in the first place to be developed in all its details and relations."

Thus, while mentioning about the scientific of the Marxist theory of socialism, Engels wanted first of all to talk about its scientific foundation and the key conclusion it comes to – the conclusion about the inevitable replacement of capitalism by communism. The questions of how the communism will be like as well as all its details and relations ...are the subjects of further investigations. The problem is what is the

foundation Marx and Engels's social research on a new society with its details and relations based on?

Since 1843, Marx himself was clearly aware of the fact that "we do not attempt dogmatically to prefigure the future, but want to find the new world only. through criticism of the old...Up to now the philosophers had the solution of all riddles lying in their lectern, and the stupid uninitiated world had only to open its jaws to let the roast partridges of absolute science fly into its mouth...I am speaking of a ruthless criticism of everything existing, ruthless in two senses: The criticism must not be afraid of its own conclusions, nor of conflict with the powers that be."²⁸

In 1917, or after 74 years, Lenin also talked about the foundation for predicting the characteristics of a new society "on which foundation can we pose the question about the future development of communism?...Basing on the fact that communism is forming from capitalism, developing from the history, from capitalism and is the result of the impact of social forces generated by capitalism. In Marx's writings one cannot find any intention to fabricate illusion and predict vaguely the things one cannot foresee. Marx posed the issue of communism in the same way the scholars of natural sciences pose, for example, the issue of evolution of new species with the knowledge of its origin and clear clues of its development and change."²⁹

It is easy to understand because by the time when Marx and Engels passed away, socialism had not yet existed in reality. What they discussed about socialism was a result they got from their research of capitalism – an existing society but not a result they had from their analysis of the events of future society. Therefore, Marx and Engels only affirmed about the features of the future society as possibilities.³⁰

As their predictions were only possibilities, Marx and Engels often corrected their predictions. For example, in their *Communist Manifesto* Marx and Engels mentioned about 10 measures to build

²⁸ Marx and Engels, *The Complete Works*, Vol. 19, p.305.

²⁹ Vladimir I. Lenin, *The Complete Works* (Moscow: The Progress Publishing House, 1976), Vol. 33, p.104.

³⁰ Le Huu Tang (Editor), *Socialism from Theory to Practice: Key Experience Lessons* (Hanoi: The National Political Publishing House, 2003), pp.30-31.

socialism in the most advanced countries (but not in all countries). However, they also warned that these measures are only optional but not be necessarily applied in all places and all times.

What is the guarantee for scientific and reliability of Marxism's conclusions and predictions about the future society? From the analysis of historical materialism and its significance we can affirm that the guarantee for scientific and reliability of Marx's and Engels's predictions about the future society can be found in their analysis of the development of human society in general and capitalistic society in particular, in their discovery of the laws regulating the movement and development of the contemporary capitalistic society.

However, as the predictions about the future are based on the tendencies of development of things, of what will be in the future, their concrete contents will depend on the circumstances and their changes in the future. Therefore, the truthfulness of these predictions should be verified in practice. Because, after all, practice, according to Marxist philosophy, is the only criterion of truth.

After the collapse of the socialism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in the 90s, many people, who believed in Marx and Marxism, started to doubt about the truthfulness of historical materialism, namely the theory of socio-economic formation.

The practice of the end of the 20th century and beginning of the 21th century has not denied the scientific foundation of historical materialism, but on the contrary, has affirmed its scientific foundation and truthfulness. According to basic principles of historical materialism we have mentioned above, the collapse of the socialism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe was of necessity. It was the collapse of a concrete model of socialism. Instead of establishing a new and more advanced mode of production than that of capitalism, that model contained many defects, which had not been discovered timely to be overcome. The development of capitalism and the ongoing process of globalization are evidences proving the truthfulness of Marx's point about the development of society as a natural-historical process, in which the following stage of development is always more progressive than the previous ones. The principles of historical materialism still remain their significance and capitalism will be necessarily replaced by a more developed and progressive society.

More than that, the success of the cause of renovation and openness in Vietnam and China has supplemented new elements to the ways and measures of building socialism for the countries taking the 'abridged' transition course to socialism. The success also affirms that the consistency of Marxism does not mean to apply it dogmatically and mechanically. Marxism should be applied scientifically and creatively in new historical conditions. The creativity in the application, supplementation and perfection of Marxism to make it appropriate to new historical circumstances is the correct way to defend and follow consistently Marxism. This is also an urgent task for scholars engaging in theoretical research in our country today.

Relating to this task, by the end of 90s of the previous century, in the context of the collapse of the socialism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe many people mentioned the theory of cultures and civilizations. Some of them suggest that the theory of cultures and civilizations is scientific by nature and can replace Marx's theory of socio-economic formation. To be fair, the theory of cultures and civilizations suggests some interesting points. However, if we investigate more carefully the theory of socio-economic formation, we can see that while paying particular attention to economic factor, Marx did not ignore cultural factor in the development of society. According to Marx's view, the cultural factor is always determined and dependent on material factor. Together with the confirmation that the consequent replacement of socio-economic formations is a nature-historical process, in which the following formation is always more progressive than the previous ones, the theory of socio-economic formation also recognizes the inheritance and development of the civilization of humankind and regards the replacement of socio-economic formations as the replacement of civilizations.

While affirming the truthfulness and significance of the basic principles of historical materialism, the task of scholars engaging in philosophical research is to concretize and investigate more deeply those principles. The most important thing is, in our view, to clarify a series of issues relating to the relationship between the decisive (determining) factors (social being, productive forces, infrastructures ...) and the determined factors (social consciousness, production relations, superstructure.). In his lifetime, Lenin had affirmed that "Natu-

rally, the opposition between matter and consciousness only has an absolute meaning in very limited cases: in this case only within the scope of basic epistemological issues we should recognize what precedes and what follows. Besides those cases, there is no doubt that the opposition is relative."³¹ Applying the above-mentioned Lenin's idea on the relationship between matter and consciousness, we can pose the question whether the determining factors mentioned above will always be decisive in all circumstances and historical conditions or only decisive in final stages? If the latter is the case then which determined factors could become decisive? Those questions are important in the practical activities in which the role of subjective factors can be put into full play without falling prey to voluntarism and dogmatism. For example, historical materialism affirms that infrastructure determines superstructure and the latter is the reflection of the former and can impact back the former. How the back impact can be understood? Are there any cases, in which superstructure changes the infrastructure or the former is always only the determined factor? The role of culture in the development of society should be analyzed thoroughly. Culture, according to the view of historical materialism, is determined by material conditions of human beings. Therefore, the question is how to analyze the role of culture as the driving force of social development.

All the above-mentioned points affirm the great contributions of Marx for his epoch as well as the epoch we are living in. It is our responsibility to implement and develop creatively Marx's philosophy in order to resolve the problems posed by our era. The success or failure in the practice depends on our generation and we can decide it for ourselves.

³¹ Lenin, *Complete Works*, Vol. 18, p.173.

4.

The Concept of Good Society: A Perspective from Vietnam³²

Introduction

A good society has been seen as the ultimate goal of the Vietnamese since ancient times. Through their thousands-year history different generations of the Vietnamese have been looking for the ways to achieve this noble aim. The question is what is a good society from the perspective of the Vietnamese? In order to answer the question, we would like to concentrate on the following points in this paper: 1. the concept of good society in Confucianism; 2. the concept of good society in Vietnamese traditional thought; 3. Ho Chi Minh's view on the acquirement of the thoughts of different cultures for the construction of a good society in Vietnam.

The Concept of Good Society in Confucianism

As a representative of East Asian philosophy, Confucianism pays particular attention to two ways: the way of Heaven and the way of Man as the "Inner Sage and outer King."³³ While the Inner Sage is an inward way to cultivate the self and establish the virtue of the sage the Outer King is an outward way to use the virtue to rule the country and practice the way of the King in the society. This view was clearly expressed in the *Great Learning* – one of the 'Four Books' of Confucianism. The First chapter of the *Great Learning* points out three great guidelines including inner Sage and outer King: 1: manifesting virtues, 2: loving the people³⁴ and 3: resting in the highest good or excellence. These three purposes have been concretized from inward to

³² Co-authored with Nguyen Tai Dong, *The Acting Director of the Institute of Philosophy* (Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences).

³³ "Inner Sage and Outer King" appeared for the first time in *Changtzu* and then has been popularly used in Confucian literatures.

³⁴ Or renovating the people, as translated in some other versions.

outward in eight main points or contents including: investigating the things, extending to the utmost one's knowledge, being sincere in one's thought, rectifying one's heart, cultivating one's self, regulating one's family, ordering well the state and pacifying the world. In other words, in order to achieve the state of inner Sage man have to cultivate his personal morality in accordance with the ethical criteria and standards set up by Confucius and his disciples in the form of Five Constants (Wu-ch'ang or Five virtues of human behavior: benevolence, righteousness, proprieties, wisdom and fidelity) and other virtues of courage, truthfulness, humbleness...etc. the practice of King's way consists in ruling the country in accordance with fundamental principles and methods in order to achieve a good society. Then what is a good society and how to achieve it?

A good society, according to Confucianism, is a harmonious society in three dimensions: man to nature, man to man and man to himself. In the relation with nature, Confucianism claims that man originates from nature and therefore, man and all social relationships are part of nature and ought to follow the laws of nature. The conception of 'trinity' (Heaven-Earth-Man) pays attention to the reciprocity between man and outer objects as well as affirms the importance and proactiveness of man in his relation to nature. Within the social relations (man to man), apart from addressing the solutions to economic issues and basic needs of people's livelihood such as 'making people wealthy first and then educating them', 'allowing people to have property first and cultivate their minds later', Confucianism focuses on the moral relations between man and man, or more concretely the relations within the state and families. Those relationships manifest in three main bonds: between ruler and minister, father and son, husband and wife, in which the authority of ruler over the minister, the authority of the father over the son and the authority of the husband over the wife are affirmed, or the Five Constant Virtues (righteousness on the part of the father, love on the part of the wife, brotherhood on the part of elder brother, respect on the part of younger brother, and filial piety on the part of son).

In the relation between man and his self, Confucianism focuses on the cultivation of the inner self and perfection of the self. Everyone must learn, not only theoretically but also practically, to cultivate the

basic virtues of benevolence, righteousness, proprieties, wisdom and fidelity, among which benevolence (jen) is both as a virtue and the foundation for all other virtues. According to Confucianism, through the cultivation of moral seeds endowed by Heaven, especially the cultivation of benevolence, man can overcome himself and become perfect.

According to Confucianism Li (propriety) and Zhengming (rectification of names) are needed in order to build an ideal society as mentioned above or to practice the King's way.

As one of the cardinal virtues in Confucianism, Li (propriety) is usually understood as the principle of social order and hierarchy. Confucius, the founder of Confucianism, paid particular attention to Li and considered it as both the criterion and measure to construct a harmonious and good society. As Confucius claimed, Li has the following contents: *first*, Li is to use to regulate human relations in society. You Ruo, a Confucian disciple, said that "Among the functions of propriety (Li) the most valuable is that it establishes harmony. The excellence of the ways of ancient kings consists of this. It is the guiding principle of all things great and small. If things go amiss, and you, understanding harmony, try to achieve it without regulating it by the rules of propriety, they will still go amiss."³⁵ *Second*, Li is the expression of ethical norms and the scale of values in society. Confucius used to make Jen and Li identical when he said "If a man is not humane (Jen), what has he to do with ceremonies? If he is not humane, what has he to do with music?"³⁶ *Third*, Li are the norms, rules and rituals to urge man to follow the right way. Confucius said "The superior man extensively studies literature (wen) and restrains himself with the rules of propriety. Thus, he will not violate the Way."³⁷

Confucianism insists that the practice of Zhengming (rectification of names) is necessary in order to bring order, morality and harmony to society. Confucius stressed on the social roles and asked that names (position, role, privilege) must go together with performance (competence, duty and responsibility) and everyone should strive to play

³⁵ Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius*, translated by Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 1: 12, p.17.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 3:3, p.26.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 6:25, p.45.

his proper role in the social hierarchy "Let the ruler be ruler, the minister be the minister, the father be the father, and the son be the son."³⁸ Therefore, the rectification of names is the foundation for social management. Tzu-lu said, "The ruler of Wei is waiting for you to serve in his administration. What will be your first measure?" Confucius said, "It will certainly concern the rectification of names." Tzu-lu said, "Is that so? You are wide of the mark. Why should there be such a rectification?" Confucius said, "Yu! How uncultivated you are! With regard to what he does not know, the superior man should maintain an attitude of reserve. If names are not rectified, then language will not be in accordance with truth. If language is not in accordance with truth, then things cannot be accomplished. If things cannot be accomplished, then ceremonies and music will not flourish. If ceremonies and music do not flourish, then punishment will not be just. If punishments are not just, then the people will not know how to move hand or foot.

Therefore, the superior man will give only names that can be described in speech and say only what can be carried out in practice. With regard to his speech, the superior man does not take it lightly."³⁹ To sum up: a good society, according to Confucianism, is the one in which man is highly virtuous and maintains harmonious relationships with other men and nature and Li (propriety) and Zhengming (rectification of names) are needed in order to build an ideal society.

The Concept of Good Society in Vietnamese Traditional Thought

After more than a thousand years Vietnam regained its independence in the beginning of the 10th Century. This important event shows that Vietnam has not only a vehement will to freedom and the spirit of undauntedness but also a solid system of thoughts serving as the foundation for its enduring and heroic struggle against foreign invaders. The Vietnamese have struggled from generations to generations for their national independence and reconstruction of their traditional culture handed by their ancestors from the time of Hung's

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 12:11, p. 82.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 13:3, p.88.

Kings. As Vietnamese Confucians in the 12th Century remarked on the rebel of Trung's Sisters in "*Thien Nam ngu luc*" "the first thing is to take the national revenge and the second is to restore the Cause of Hung's Kings."⁴⁰ The Cause of Hung's Kings is the cultural foundation of the Vietnamese and the inner vitality of the nation.

The system of thoughts of the Vietnamese at that time manifested, first of all, in the reflections of the Vietnamese on themselves and their responsibility towards the nation and country. The sense of community, the awareness of a common origin of the Viet and their national sovereignty are expressed clearly in the tale of "One Hundred Eggs" associated with the King Lac Long Quan, a descendant of dragons, who marries the fairy Au Co. Apart from the affirmation of the national spirit, the tale also expresses the humane nature of the Viet society, which is not a kind of simple aggregate of separate individuals but an organic community bound by blood ties and holy relationships. Here in this tale 'compatriot' means the descendants from the same original womb.

After regaining the independence, especially after the 'upheaval of twelve' the need for a unified society became more pressing for the Vietnamese. The influence of Chinese culture was not quite symmetrical with the period of more than 1,000 years of the Chinese domination. However, when the Viet regained their sovereignty, they actively acquired some outstanding achievements of Han's culture in order to safeguard their national independence and construct their social life. The Viet not only actively acquired Chinese political institutions, social structures and education system but also approached, transformed and developed some fundamental concepts of Chinese philosophy to make them appropriate to the conditions of Vietnam. The Chinese philosophy was known by the Viet mainly through the teachings of Chinese Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. Basing on the foundation of the traditional thoughts and culture of Vietnam some outstanding Vietnamese Confucian scholars like Chu Van An, Nguyen Trai, Le Thanh Tong, Nguyen Binh Khiem, Nguyen Du, Phung Khac Khoan, Le Quy Don, Le Huu Trac, Ngo Thi Nham...

⁴⁰ *The History of Vietnam* (Hanoi: The Tertiary Education Publishing House, 1993).

acculturated Chinese Confucianism in order to address and find solutions to the problems raised by the reality of Vietnam. The Viet were able to form their own form of Buddhism by the end of the 13th Century through their acculturation of Indian and Chinese Buddhism. In following the teaching of the Buddha, this Vietnamese sect of Buddhism, known as Truc Lam's Zen Buddhism, has actively engaged with the problems and issues of the real life-world of the Viet.

The intellectuals of Vietnam in the past, regardless of their ideological stances and differences in interpretation of the world and human values, were united at the point on the importance and necessity of national independence, which serves as the most important premise for construction of a good and happy society. The nation as a whole recognizes clearly that only by being an independent, sovereign, free, and united, Vietnam could gain stability, development and felicity. The yearning for freedom, peace and self-reliance has been constantly manifested in the traditional thoughts of Vietnam. In his reply to the question raised by the King about the national affairs, Phap Tthuan, a Vietnamese Zen Master, said:

Like woven canes the nation's destiny stands
Peace now adorns the Southern sky
If mindful wisdom tends the Palace
All warring stops, all strife withers.⁴¹

Or in a famous poem "Nam Quoc Son Ha," which is considered as the first Declaration of Independence of Vietnam, Ly Thuong Kiet affirmed the truth that:

Over Mountains and Rivers of the South, reigns the Emperor of
the South
As it stands written forever in the Book of Heaven
How dare those barbarians invade our land?
Your armies, without pity, will be annihilated.⁴²

⁴¹ *Thien Uyen Tap Anh* (A Collection of Outstanding Figures of the Zen Community).

⁴² *Ly-Tran Literature and Poetry* (Hanoi: The Social Sciences Publishing House, 1977), Vol. 1, p.321.

Many other basic concepts relating to the theme of national independence, freedom and peace were also addressed in the works of famous Vietnamese Buddhist monks and Confucian scholars during that period of national construction.

Apart from the thought on national independence, the thoughts of benevolence and righteousness are among the most important ideas of the Vietnamese traditional thought relating to the concept of good society. An ideal society is the one, which is not only independent, unified, socially in order but also righteous and benevolent. The thought of benevolence and righteousness has been a guiding threat for Vietnamese Confucianism in the history. As Nguyen Trai affirmed "The benevolent uses weakness to control the powerful, and the just uses the few to fight against the many"⁴³ and "Uphold great justice to overcome barbarity, and uphold perfect humanity to challenge brute force."⁴⁴ The thought of benevolence and righteousness acts not only as a policy guideline like 'rule of virtue' or 'rule of Li' in Chinese Confucianism, but also as the goal for the cause of national independence, and more than that, as the foundation for ethics and criteria in human life. Thanks to the thought of benevolence and righteousness, Nguyen Trai in particular and other Confucians and leaders of Vietnam in general, were able to eradicate hatred and intolerance and practice the Way of Heaven. In Nguyen Trai the thought of benevolence and righteousness was also demonstrated in the amnesty given to surrendering troops to eradicate the source of future wars, and to leave an eternally kind image in their mind.

The thought of benevolence and righteousness was concretized in social relationships as the authentic way of being human. According to Nguyen Trai, to be human means first of all to have the virtues of benevolence, wisdom and courage. However, unlike traditional Confucians, Nguyen Trai insisted that those virtues are not theoretical but should be implemented in human life and embodied in human actions to help man to renounce all kind of evil. Nguyen Trai's thought of benevolence and righteousness became the life orientation, and basic code of conduct for Vietnamese Confucians in later periods.

⁴³ Nguyen Trai, *Letter in Reply to General Phuong Chinh*.

⁴⁴ Nguyen Trai, *Binh Ngo Dai Cao* (Great Declaration).

King Le Thanh Tong, who was fond of Confucianism, said “eradication of brutality is King’s benevolence.” Ngo Sy Lien, a famous historian, claimed that benevolence is the most revered virtue “to renounce the life in order to follow righteousness is better than to live. To live in indignity is not what a great man wants.”⁴⁵ Though Mencius affirmed that human life is worth living but if he has to choose between life and righteousness he could sacrifice his life to choose righteousness.⁴⁶ So, did Ngo Sy Lien, who regarded righteousness is more important than life. Life without righteousness is only mere physiological existence. It is righteousness that makes human life meaningful and authentic.

Ho Chi Minh’s View on the Acquirement of the Thought of Different Cultures for the Construction of a Good Society in Vietnam

President Ho Chi Minh, a great leader of the Vietnamese Revolution, has been recognized by UNESCO as a hero of national liberation and great man of culture. Throughout his life Ho Chi Minh devoted himself to the cause of national liberation and the struggle for people’s happiness. He knew how to absorb the quintessence of different cultures both in the East and the West. As a Vietnamese, he grew and educated within the Vietnam’s tradition of ardent patriotism, admiration for heroes of national liberation, and earnest aspiration for freedom of the nation.

Ho Chi Minh wrote that “the doctrine of Confucius has its strong point in personal moral cultivation. The religion of Jesus has its strong point in noble humanity. Marxism has its strong point in dialectical method. The doctrine of Sun Yat-sen has its strong point in the fact that its policy is suitable to Vietnamese conditions. Undoubtedly, Confucius, Jesus, Marx and Sun Yat-sen share the common good point. They all pursue to bring about happiness for mankind and society. I believe that if they had remained alive in the world, they

⁴⁵ *Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu* (Complete History Record of Great Viet), Vol. 1, p.123.

⁴⁶ Mencius Gaozi, “I like life, and I also like righteousness. If I cannot keep the two together, I will let life go, and choose righteousness.”

would have lived in complete concord as the closest friends. I strive to be their humble pupil."⁴⁷

In fact, Ho Chi Minh has absorbed selectively valuable thoughts and quintessence of different doctrines to pursue the "felicity for humanity." He acquired not only Confucian, Christian and Marxist thoughts but also those of Buddhism and Bourgeois ideology. He praised French and American Revolutions, he approached to A. Lincoln's ideas and appreciated the patriotism in Caodaism and Hoa-haoism. For example, he remarked on Buddhism that "The Lord Buddha is the most merciful and most pitiful, who want to liberate people from suffering. He sacrificed himself in the struggle against evil forces... We follow Sakyamuni Buddha's great mercifulness and great pity."⁴⁸

Ho Chi Minh did not stop at absorbing valuable thoughts from various doctrines but he developed it further and applied them creatively to the historical conditions of Vietnam. Therefore, we can affirm that, Ho Chi Minh acquired the values from both the cultural tradition of Vietnam and the cultures of progress of humanity and further developed them to a new level with distinctive features. It can be seen in the way he creatively absorbed the thoughts of Confucius, Jesus, Marx, Sun Yat-sen, etc.

Ho Chi Minh realized between Christianity, Confucianism and Buddhism that there existed a commonality in pressing on ethics, compassion and love. Such elements should be inherited and acquired. As he said, the doctrine of Confucius has its strong point in personal moral cultivation. Christianity has its strong point in noble humanity etc. Jesus asked his followers to "Love your enemies, bless them who curse you, do good to them who hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you." He also taught them not to be greedy, but to lead a pure life and be ready to give when be asked. Ho Chi Minh stressed that "we all inspired by a spirit. Confucian philosophy and Western philosophy both praise the same ethical principle that 'What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others.'⁴⁹ "Jesus

⁴⁷ *Stories about the Ho Chi Minh's Revolution Life* (Tam Lien Publishing House, 1949).

⁴⁸ Ho Chi Minh, *The Complete Works*, p.197.

⁴⁹ Ho Chi Minh, *The Complete Works*, Vol. 4, p.267.

said that morality is philanthropy. Buddha taught that morality is mercifulness and pity. Confucius said and taught that morality is benevolence and righteousness."⁵⁰

Ho Chi Minh not only acquired the rational elements of Confucianism, Christianity and Buddhism but also pointed out the drawbacks of these teachings. As early as in 1927 he wrote "Confucianism relies on three kinds of obedience: ruler and minister, father and son, husband and wife and five cardinal virtues of benevolence, righteousness, proprieties, wisdom and fidelity. Confucius wrote The Book of Spring-Autumn in order to criticize 'rebellious subjects' and 'bad children' but he did not write any work to condemn the evil deeds and crimes of 'wicked fathers' and 'mean princes... Thus, he spoke for the exploiters and against the oppressed,...if Confucius had been alive now he would have been a counter-revolutionary element."⁵¹

He used many Confucian concepts but added quite new contents to them to make them familiar and applicable to the conditions of Vietnam. In this way he renovated and transformed many Confucian concepts by bringing them revolutionary and modern contents.

The fundamental difference between Ho Chi Minh's thought and some religious teachings consists in the fact that Ho Chi Minh not only acquires the humane elements of all religious teachings but also concerns more about what to do and how to act in order to liberate people from their real sufferings. He always takes care about how to liberate the nation, society and the people. His biggest concern and greatest yearning is to make the nation completely independent, the people completely free and bring well-being and education to all people. Ho Chi Minh came to Marxism-Leninism and highly valued Sun Yat-sen's three principles of people because he found in them the way to liberate the nation and the people of Vietnam.

Ho Chi Minh found in Marxism its dialectical method. He affirmed that Marxist dialectical method is a scientific worldview and revolutionary weapon that could bring felicity for humanity. The method helped him to apply universal principles in concrete conditions and circumstances. All kinds of dogma and mechanism are alien to

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol. 6, p.225.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, pp.453-454.

the dialectical method. He pointed out that “Marx built his teachings on the foundation of a certain philosophy of history, but which history? The European history. What is Europe? It is not the whole humanity.”⁵²

Thanks to the dialectical method of Marxism, Ho Chi Minh was able to deal skillfully the relationship between the particular and the universal, nation and humanity, tradition and modernity, individuals and society, theory and practice in the process of development. He realized the unity between theory and practice as the basic principle of Marxist dialectical method. Ho Chi Minh wrote “while emphasizing the importance of theory, comrade Lenin repeatedly mentioned that revolutionary theory is not a dogma but the lodestar guiding revolutionary actions; theory is not something fixed and rigid but fully creative; theory must be constantly added by the new conclusions drawn from the living practice... we should concretize Marxism-Leninism to make it appropriate to every concrete circumstance and condition.”⁵³ He pointed out that “to learn about Marxism-Leninism is to learn about its spirit to deal with all works, all peoples and one’s own self...learning is needed for acting. Theory should go together with practice. Learning should not be for the sake of rote learning or decoration.”⁵⁴

We must affirm that Ho Chi Minh’s thought on socialism is a direct result from his appropriation of the view of Marxism-Leninism on socialism. However, during the process of appropriation of Marxism-Leninism, Ho Chi Minh was able to implement it creatively into the concrete conditions of Vietnam, a country having a time-honored Eastern culture. We can see it concretely in many of his arguments, where he talked about the application of Marxism-Leninism and foreign experiences into the concrete circumstances of Vietnam.

Ho Chi Minh criticized two erroneous tendencies in the mechanical application of Marxism-Leninism: dogmatic tendency that ignores practice and the tendency that overvalues experience and consequently defies theory. Ho Chi Minh wrote “Some comrades are not willing to investigate the practice of Vietnam revolution. They do not

⁵² *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, pp.464-465.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, Vol. 6, p.496.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. 9, p.292.

understand that Marxism-Leninism is the lodestar for action but not the Bible. Therefore, what they do is to learn by heart some sayings of Marx and Lenin to bluff people. There are also some comrades, who insist only in individual experiences. They do not understand that theory is very important for the cause of revolution...Both tendencies are erroneous. The most erroneous is the dogmatic tendency because it deceives people by using the sayings of Marx and Lenin."⁵⁵

Ho Chi Minh always reminded new generations to supplement and develop creatively Marxism in order to make it appropriate to the characteristic features and historical conditions of every nation, especially those in the East. He wrote "Anyway, it is not possible to prohibit supplementing historical bases by adding to them the materials, which Marx could not be able to obtain in his time" and it is necessary "to rethink Marxism in terms of its historical bases and consolidate them by Eastern ethnography."⁵⁶ Ho Chi Minh claimed that if we want to lead the revolution to victory, we need to avoid errors and grope our way, we need to learn the experiences from brother countries and apply them creatively.⁵⁷ At the same time, we need to promote the cultivation and education on Marxism-Leninism in order to apply the standpoints, views and methods of Marxism-Leninism to summarize the specific features of our country. In doing so we can gradually grasp the laws of development of Vietnamese revolution and map out concrete guidelines and steps for the socialistic revolution, which is appropriate to the situation in our country. Thus, it is necessary to learn theory and promote the common theoretical level of the Party, first of all that of Party's key cadres.⁵⁸

Ho Chi Minh always paid attention to the universality of Marxism-Leninism, but he also asked for the creative application of Marxism-Leninism. This very creativity will lead the cause of construction of socialism to victory and avoid the failure caused by dogmatism and mechanism. Ho Chi Minh wrote "at the moment we have abundant experiences of construction of socialism from brother countries but we cannot apply them mechanically because our country has its own

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. 6, p.247.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p.465.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, p.494.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol. 8, p.494-495.

specific features."⁵⁹ The experience of the Soviet Union in construction of socialism was valuable but Ho Chi Minh reminded that we may have other way to socialism than that of the Soviet Union. He wrote "we cannot do the same as the Soviet Union does because the Soviet Union has its distinctive practice, custom, history and geography... we may have other path to socialism."⁶⁰

Together with Marxism-Leninism, Sun Yat-sen's thoughts were also highly valued by Ho Chi Minh and were creatively applied to the conditions of Vietnam. As we mentioned above, Ho Chi Minh found that Sun Yat sen's policy was appropriate to Vietnam.

Sun Yat-sen was a well-known revolutionary in Asia. He is especially popular in Japan, China and Vietnam with his famous three principles of the people (People's Nationalism, People's Sovereignty, People's Livelihood).

Etymologically speaking, Sun Yat-sen suggests that People's Livelihood includes the livelihood of the people, the existence of society, the welfare of the nation and the life of the masses. Therefore, People's Livelihood is considered as the core of Sun Yat-sen's three principles of the people. The purpose and the meaning of People's Nationalism, People's Sovereignty are to find solutions to the problems raised by People's livelihood. We can say that People's Nationalism, People's Sovereignty serve as the means for finding solutions raised by people's livelihood, the existence of society, national welfare and the life of the masses. Moreover, Sun also affirms that the problems of people's livelihood are the law of the development of society and the driving force of social progress. Sun Yat-sen wrote that "human endeavors for survival constitute the law of social evolution and the center of history. What is "human endeavors for survival"? it is problems of the livelihood of the people. Therefore, the principle of the livelihood of the people is the very driving force of social evolution."⁶¹ Sun Yat-sen claimed that the principle of people's livelihood is socialism and communism. According to him, the problems of people's livelihood are "social problems, therefore principle of people's lively-

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 8, p.449.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol. 8, p.227.

⁶¹ Sun Yat-sen, *The Three Principles of the People* (Hanoi: Institute of Social Sciences Information, 1995), p. 336.

hood is socialism, also known as communism, and that is the doctrine of Tai-tung (great harmony)."⁶² After all, the goal of socialism and communism is to deal with the problems of people's livelihood. It is the point where Sun Yat-sen shared with Marxism: they all claimed socialism and communism, as the necessary development states of the history of humanity, are higher than capitalism. The goal of socialism and communism is human beings and their livelihood. Sun Yat-sen believed that communism is the ideal of the principle of people's livelihood and the latter is the practice of the former. Therefore, the difference between Sun Yat-sen and Marx is only the difference in method.

While Marx, believed that class struggle was the driving force of social development, Sun Yat sen claimed that the problems of the livelihood of the people are the original driving forces of history. He intended to promote the problems of the livelihood of the people into the center of political, economic and social considerations and made people's livelihood the center of social history.⁶³

Sun Yat-sen did not share the view that the dictatorship of proletariat can be used to deal with economic issues. He believed that revolutionary methods can be applied to solve political but not economic problems.

For the Chinese case, Sun Yat-sen thought that the principle of people's livelihood cannot be implemented without investigating the conditions and historical circumstances of China. Methods can be mapped not theoretically but only through the research of concrete conditions and materials. Sun Yat-sen proposed two guidelines for the implementation of the principle of people's livelihood: equalization of land ownership and regulation of capital. While with the equalization of land ownership peasants have access to land and more than that people feel secure and concentrate on agricultural production, with regulation of capital state capitalism can be developed.

To sum up: if communism is the future of the three principles of the people, the immediate task is to answer adequately people's four basic needs: food, shelter, cloth and transportation. Sun Yat-sen wrote

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 313.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 344.

that “the ideal of the three principles of the people is that “the people have (property), the people rule and people benefit.”⁶⁴

Ho Chi Minh valued highly Sun Yat-sen’s three principles of the people, especially the principle of people’s livelihood. Moreover, Ho Chi Minh also applied creatively Sun’s thoughts to the conditions of Vietnam, first and foremost, in his conception of socialism.

It should be noted that Ho Chi Minh’s thought of socialism is the direct result of the acceptance of Marxism-Leninism. However, during the process of acquiring Marxism-Leninism, Ho Chi Minh applied it creatively to meet the concrete conditions of Vietnam, a country with its time-honored Eastern culture. All that can be seen clearly in his arguments on the implementation of Marxism-Leninism and foreign experiences in the concrete conditions of Vietnam.

Ho Chi Minh repeatedly criticized two erroneous tendencies in mechanical application of Marxism Leninism: the tendency of dogmatism, which disregards practice and the tendency of paying too much attention to experience that leads to neglecting of theory. He wrote “some comrades refuse to investigate the practical experience of Vietnam’s revolution. They do not understand that Marxism – Leninism is the lodestar for action but not the Bible. Therefore, they learn by heart some sayings of Marx, Lenin in order to deceive people. Some other comrades are stick-in-the-mud followers of scattered experiences. They do not understand that theory is very important for practicing revolution. Both those tendencies are erroneous, especially that of dogmatism, because it deceives the people in the name of Marxism-Leninism.”⁶⁵

Ho Chi Minh always reminded the following generations to supplement constantly and develop creatively Marxism to make it suitable for the historical conditions of their nation, especially Eastern nations “it is not prohibited, anyway, to supplement Marxism with new data, which were not available in Marx’s time, it is necessary to re-investigate the historical base of Marxism and reinforce it with the knowledge of Eastern ethnology.”⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Sun Yat-sen, *The Three Principles of the People*, p. 369.

⁶⁵ Ho Chi Minh, *The Complete Work*, Vol. 6, p. 247.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 465.

Therefore, Ho Chi Minh claims that we need to learn from the experiences of brother countries and implement them creatively in order to lead revolution to victory without wasting time and committing errors.⁶⁷ At the same time, we should promote the cultivation of Marxism-Leninism in order to use the standpoint, view and method of Marxism-Leninism to generalize the characteristics of our country. Only in doing so we can gradually comprehend the laws of development of Vietnam's revolution and then map out concrete policies, guide-lines and steps for the socialist revolution that is suitable for the conditions of our country. Therefore, we need to acquire theory and promote the general theoretical level of the Party, first of all, the core cadres of the Party.⁶⁸

Ho Chi Minh always emphasized the universality of Marxism-Leninism but he also asked our cadres to be creative in the implementation of the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism. The very creativity in implementing Marxism-Leninism will contribute to the success of the cause of building socialism and avoid the failures caused by dogmatism and mechanical application of Marxism-Leninism. Ho Chi Minh wrote "Regarding the cause of building of socialism, we have plentiful of experiences from brother-countries, but we cannot implement those experiences mechanically because our country has its own characteristics."⁶⁹ The experiences of the Soviet Union are valuable, but Ho Chi Minh reminded that "We cannot be like the Soviet Union, because the Soviet Union has different customs, different historical and geographical conditions... we can have other way to process to socialism."⁷⁰

Thus, we can see that Ho Chi Minh had his own way of articulation of the essence of socialism, which is imbued with the specific feature of Eastern nations emphasizing mainly on the problem of people's livelihood, or as in Sun Yat-sen's term: that of livelihood of the people, the existence of society, the welfare of the nation and the life of the masses. While Sun Yat-sen claimed that the principle of people's livelihood is socialism and communism, Ho Chi Minh thought that

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, p. 494.

⁶⁸ Ho Chi Minh, *The Complete Works*, Vol. 8, pp. 494-495.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.499.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.227.

the goal of socialism is to resolve the problems of people's livelihood, bring welfare, freedom and happiness to the people.

Ho Chi Minh said that people are the root of revolution. He often reminded the cadres "to remember that people are the masters. People are water, we [cadres] are the fish. All our power and strength are relied on people."⁷¹ "The government is people's servant. What government does is to achieve the only goal of bringing freedom and happiness to the people. Therefore, people's government must always give the highest priority to people's interests. We should do what is beneficial for the people and avoid what is harmful for the people."⁷² The rights the Vietnamese gained are the right to live, the right to be happy and free. His only desire is "how to bring full freedom and independence to the people. And such kind of freedom and independence should be enjoyed by all the people like the way all creatures enjoy the light of the Sun."⁷³

He affirmed, "I have only one desire, a most earnest desire – to achieve complete independence for our country, complete freedom for our people, and opportunities for all our countrymen to have adequate food and clothing and education. On my part, I need only a humble shelter, where there is green mountains and a river to fish and grow flowers so I can all day long befriend with old woodsmen and children and be far away from fame and wealth."⁷⁴

However, among the rights the people can enjoy, Ho Chi Minh paid particular attention to the right to live and the way to improve people's living standards. To the question "what is socialism?" Ho Chi Minh wrote "the goal of socialism is to improve constantly people's living standards."⁷⁵ The policy of the Party and Government is to take utmost care of people's life "If the people suffer from hunger, the Party and Government are guilty; if the people do not have enough clothes, the Party and Government are guilty, if the people cannot have access to education the Party and Government are guilty, if the people are

⁷¹ Ho Chi Minh, *The Complete Works*, Vol. 4, p.101.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p.22.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 4, p.45.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. 4, pp.161-162.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. 10, p.31.

sick, the Party and Government are guilty”⁷⁶ “What the Party struggles for? For people to have adequate food, shelter and be free. What every Party’s member struggles for? For people to have food, shelter and be free too. What is socialism? People can have food, shelter, be happy and free.”⁷⁷

Thus, socialism for Ho Chi Minh is first of all to deal with the problems of people’s livelihood, or how to deal with the necessary needs of the people. Without proper solutions to those needs the construction of socialism is meaningless and the people will not care about socialism. As Ho Chi Minh said to the cadres “with an empty stomach people pay no attention to what you say, regardless of how attractively you may speak.”⁷⁸ The goal of socialism is to bring welfare, education and happiness to the people “Briefly and plainly speaking, socialism first of all is to liberate the working people from poverty, bring employment, welfare and happiness to the people.”⁷⁹

While talking of socialism, Ho Chi Minh always stressed, first of all, the need to improve people’s living standards and provide all people with adequate foods, shelter and education “To sum up, particular attention should be paid to the works that can promote material and spiritual life of the people.”⁸⁰ Ho Chi Minh affirmed that “we have gained independence and freedom but independence and freedom have no significance at all if our people still suffer from hunger and shortage. The people understand clearly the value of freedom and independence only when they are provided with adequate food and shelter.”⁸¹

Those thoughts of Ho Chi Minh have been inherited and further developed by the Communist Party of Vietnam, especially during the cause of country’s renovation oriented towards the goal of “wealthy people, strong country and a just, democratic and civilized society.”

From the above analysis we can affirm that Ho Chi Minh’s thought is the selective acquirement and new development of many

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. 7, p.572.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. 8, p.396.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol. 8, p.411.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 10, p.17.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol. 8, p.396.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

heritages of thought in the culture of humanity. It was a specific process of acculturation contributing to form the originality in Ho Chi Minh's thought. We can track back in it the traditional values of our nation, which are patriotism, the spirit of tolerance, the sense of self-reliance and the spirit of solidarity. In comparison with many other thinkers in the national history, Ho Chi Minh also overcame narrow nationalism, acquired rational elements in the ethical teaching of Confucianism, Christ's altruism, the dialectical method of Marxism and Sun Yat-sen's Three Principles of the People.

Thanks to the acculturation different trends of thought in the spiritual heritage of humanity, Ho Chi Minh's thought has been the lodestar guiding Vietnam to gain national independence, unify the whole country and bring the life of freedom, well-being and happiness to the people. It also contributes to stabilize the world, develop friendship among nations and bring about social progress and common development for humanity.

Conclusion

The concept of good society in Vietnam today expresses the inheritance and development of the thoughts on good society in the history. It is a long process of acculturation done by different historical figures. The thought on good society from a Vietnamese perspective is expressed concisely in the goal of building a Vietnam with "wealthy people, strong country and a democratic, just, and civilized society" that the Vietnamese are striving for now. In order to achieve the goal, we need a strategy for sustainable development, which bases on the harmonious relations between different spheres, areas and elements of the social life.

On the Sustainability of Social Development in Vietnam

Today sustainable development has become one of theoretical and practical issues well-known to scholars and experts, and, at the same time, the much-discussed topic in various national and international conferences. Sustainable development also attracts much attention among different social strata. Sustainable development has become a prioritized aim and primary development strategy for most countries in the world.

Originally, the term 'sustainable development' came into existence in seventies of the last century and attracted the attention of international researchers working on the issues of environment and international development resulted in the work titled *World Conservation Strategy* (1980).⁸² Afterwards, the idea of sustainable development was addressed in the series of works including *World Commission on Environment and Development. Our Common Future* and *Caring for the Earth: A Strategy for Sustainable Living*.⁸³ While mentioning about sustainable development people often use two definitions articulated in the above-mentioned books. In the book *Our Common Future*, sustainable development is defined as a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In the book *Caring for the earth* sustainable development is understood as improving the quality of human life while living within the carrying capacity of supporting eco-systems. Generally speaking, both these definitions place sustainable development within the rational utility of natural resources and protection of the environment in a way that guarantee the development of today's generation without the impact to the future of following generations.

⁸² IUCN, *World Conservation Strategy: Living Resource Conservation for Sustainable Development* (Gland, Switzerland: 1980).

⁸³ *World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); IUCN/UNEP/WWF, *Caring for the Earth: A Strategy for Sustainable Living* (Gland, Switzerland: 1991).

Thus, etymologically speaking, sustainable development is the development that guarantees economic growth on the basis of rational utilization of natural resources and environment protection in order to meet the need of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their need. The essence of sustainable development is to give solution to the relation between economic growth and protection of natural environment as well as to guarantee justice between generations in utilization of natural resources and environmental protection. Therefore, the very notion of sustainable development implies harmony, the harmony between economic growth and environmental protection, the harmony between generations in utilization of natural resources and protection of the living environment. The contents of sustainable development are to reflect the relationships between man and nature, between man and man. This point can be seen as follows:

First, in order to develop its economy man has to exploit nature and utilize natural materials to satisfy his needs and those of the society. In the history of philosophy, there have existed two famous doctrines: The *Doctrine of Man Dominating, Mastering over Nature* (the main doctrine of Western philosophy) and the *Doctrine of Man Living in Dependence and Harmony with Nature* (the key doctrine of Eastern philosophy). Both doctrines contain positive values, and, at the same time, are not without some negative elements.

In fact, man can never dominate nature completely, and, at the same time, man cannot exist, not to mention develop, without exploiting and mastering the nature. In the first case, as Marx pointed out in his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* that "Nature is man's inorganic body – nature, that is, insofar as it is not itself human body. Man lives on nature – means that nature is his body, with which he must remain in continuous interchange if he is not to die. That man's physical and spiritual life is linked to nature means simply that nature is linked to itself, for man is a part of nature."⁸⁴ While recognizing and affirming the great power of man over nature, but with his dialectical materialist point of view and beyond-age vision Engels admitted that we cannot dominate nature like the way aggressors dominate a nation

⁸⁴ Marx and Engels, *The Complete works*, Vol. 42, p.135.

or a man who lives apart from nature. At the same time, he warned us that man should not be too proud over his victory over nature because every man's conquest of nature would in some near future bring about completely reverse results and unpredictable consequences.⁸⁵ The development of history of humankind since the beginning of the industrial era has proved the correctness and scientific foundations of the founders of Marxism on that issue.

In the second case, unless man exploits and transforms nature, he can neither exist nor be able to escape from animal's world to become human in true sense. As we know, in front of the threat of depletion of natural resources and the crisis of the living environment, instead of looking for wiser resolutions to secure development, protect natural resources and improve the living environment, in recent years in some country around the world some groups of men wanted to restore the concepts of historical naturalism in extreme forms of primitive and wild forms of life. In essence, those were negative reactions of those who wanted to drive the history back to the dark era of humankind. The reactions reflect the impasse in conceptions and ways of life of some people encountering the situation of environmental degradation and devastation.

A correct and scientific view on development should be an integration of values, rational resolutions of drawbacks and contradictions of those two above-mentioned doctrines. The conception of sustainable development meets those pressing demands. In accordance with the conception of sustainable development, in order to exist and develop, man, from an economic point of view, has to exploit nature, but he/she should not do so arbitrarily and irresponsibly, instead he/she should exploit nature rationally and responsibly in order to preserve nature from being destroyed. Nature should exist and develop together with the development of man and human society. In other words, sustainable development expresses a qualitatively new type of development present both in man's understanding and action. This is the exact type of development that is formed consciously on the basis of the grasp of objective and necessary laws of nature, in which man and human society are inseparable parts.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. 42, p.654.

Second, sustainable development resolves harmonically relationships between man and man (the relationship between the present and future generations). According to the view of the sustainable development, the present generation could exploit nature in order to satisfy its needs. However, the present generation should exploit nature in such a way that natural resources should not be exhausted and could be re-generated so that future generations could continue to exploit nature to meet their own needs. The point expresses, on the one hand, the fairness between generations and responsibility of the present generation to future generations, and, on the other hand, the cultural and ethical attitude of the present generation towards future generations.

The above-mentioned contents express different relationships, the relationship between man and nature, and the relationship between man and man. However, they share the common point of expressing man's responsibility towards the environment – the common house and responsibility of every man towards humankind. This is the cultural content of sustainable development.

Thanks to its timely awareness of the significance and importance of sustainable development, Vietnam has talked about sustainable development since the eighties of the last century and sustainable development has become the strategic objective in Vietnam. The contents of the concept of sustainable development have been changed, supplemented and renovated.

Vietnam has intended to build and implement the strategy of fast and sustainable development, which should be suitable for the concrete conditions of Vietnam. The strategy of fast and sustainable development has been affirmed officially in the Documents of the Party's 9th Congress and supplemented and further developed in the Documents of the Party's 10th and 11th Congress.

While addressing the view of development, the Party 9th Congress pointed out clearly that the goal of the development is to reach "a fast, effective and sustainable development, economic growth should go hand in hand with progress, social justice and environmental protection" economic growth should be accompanied with the development of culture, the comprehensive development of man, gradual improvement of the spiritual and material life of the people, the

implementation of social progress and social justice, protection and improvement of the environment; socio-economic development should be combined with the enhancement of national defense and security.”⁸⁶

We can see that in the Documents of the Party’s 9th Congress, apart from the idea that economic growth and environment protection should go hand in hand, the concept of sustainable development was supplemented with a new content: the combination between economic growth and the development of culture, the gradual improvement of the spiritual and material life of the people, the implementation of social progress and social justice, protection and improvement of the environment; the combination between socio-economic development and the enhancement of national defense and security. If in its original, “classic” meaning, the concept of sustainable development addresses mainly about the relationship between man and nature, and the relationship between man and man, in the Documents of the 9th National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam, apart from the relationship between man and nature, and the relationship between man and man, other social relationships like the relationship between economic and social sector, the relationship between culture and national defense and security.

Based on the summarization of the practice of national socio-economic development, the point has been further developed in the Party 10th Congress. The Communist Party of Vietnam pointed out five valuable lessons, among which the most important one was the lesson of sustainable development. The main contents of the lesson include the following key points:

Firstly, fast development should be accompanied with sustainability both in microcosmic and macrocosmic levels, short-term and long-term levels.

Secondly, quantitative growth should go hand in hand with qualitative improvement, the effectiveness and competitiveness of the economy.

⁸⁶ The Communist Party of Vietnam, *The Documents of the 9th Party’s Congress* (Hanoi: The National Political Publishing House, 2001), pp.162,89.

Thirdly, the development should be wide in scope and deep in content; knowledge-based economy should be developed.

Fourthly, economic growth should be accompanied with the development of culture, the comprehensive development of man, realization of democracy, social progress and justice, creation of employment opportunities, improvement of the quality of life, encouragement of legally getting rich with reduction of poverty.

Fifthly, attention should be paid to the protection and improvement of the living environment in every step of development.

Sixthly, economic growth should be parallel to the guarantee of socio-political stability, which is the premise, condition for fast and sustainable development.⁸⁷

Together with the promotion of the national cause of industrialization and modernization, fast and sustainable development is a thorough view in the socio-economic development strategy of Vietnam at the present. The Party's 11th Congress, which was held in January 2011, stated clearly the point of view on national development for a new period, in which the Party affirmed that fast development in combination with sustainable development is the content of primary importance "sustainable development is the foundation for fast development, fast development is to create resources necessary for sustainable development. Fast development and sustainable development should be closely connected to the plans and policies of socio-economic development. Attention should be paid particularly to socio-political stability, national defense and security, steadfast protection of national independence, sovereignty, national unity and territorial integrity in order to secure the fast and sustainable development of the country."⁸⁸

In the socio-economic development strategy for 2011-2020 adopted by the Party's 11th Congress the view on sustainable development continued to be concretized. The Party affirmed that the focus should be on the realization of the following tasks:

⁸⁷ The Communist Party of Vietnam, *The Documents of the 10th Party's Congress*. (Hanoi: The National Political Publishing House, 2006), pp.178-179.

⁸⁸ The Communist Party of Vietnam, *The Documents of the 11th Party's Congress* (Hanoi: The National Political Publishing House, 2011), p.99.

First, it is steadfast to safeguard national independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity as well as guarantee political security and social order and safety, be active and proactive in international integration, and create peaceful and favorable conditions for the national development. This is the *most prerequisite condition* for the fast and sustainable development.

Second, it is necessary to secure the stability of the macro economy and the big balances of the economy, firmly ensure food security, energy and the secure and effective activity of financial institutions.

Third, all resources should be mobilized and utilized effectively in order to secure high growth rate as well as improve the quality of the growth.

Fourth, it is necessary to develop harmonically the cultural, social and economic sectors, constantly improve the spiritual and material life of the people, realize social progress and social justice in every step and every development policy. Social security and social welfare should be guaranteed gradually, equal opportunity in enjoyment of the achievements of the development, especially basic services and social welfare, should be created for all the people.

Fifth, the people's right of collective mastership should be constantly brought into play, democracy, especially direct democracy should be implemented, a consensus, open and solidary society should be built.

Sixth, economic growth should go hand in hand with the protection and improvement of the environment.

It could be said that the above-mentioned are basic contents in the fast and sustainable development strategy of Vietnam. This strategy expresses clearly the combination of the traditional and classic view with the new and specific view of Vietnam on development. Within the fast and sustainable development strategy of Vietnam we can see the following points:

First, the elements of socio-political stability, steadfast safeguard of national independence and territorial integrity, guarantee of political security, social order and safety, active and proactive international integration, the creation of peaceful and favorable conditions for the national development are most prerequisite condition for the fast and sustainable development. The political changes in some countries in

the world today show that we cannot talk about development, not to mention sustainable development, without socio-political stability, steadfast safeguard of national independence and maintenance of territorial integrity.

Second, the strategy of fast and sustainable development focuses on the enhancement of the quality of development, the combination between economic growth and the comprehensive development of man, realization of democracy, social progress and justice, creation of employment opportunities, improvement of the quality of life, encouragement of legally getting rich with reduction of poverty, the attention to the protection and improvement of environment in every step of development. In other words, the strategy of fast and sustainable development is oriented simultaneously to three aims of economic development, social development and protection of natural resources and the environment.

Third, the strategy of sustainable development of Vietnam addresses pretty comprehensively different aspects of development, including the noticeably harmonious solutions to relationship between fast and sustainable development, quantitative growth and qualitative improvement, development in scope and development in content; the harmony between economic development and dealing with social issues, economic growth and environmental protection. Harmony is, therefore, one of important contents of the strategy of sustainable development.

Fourth, the central issue, the key goal of the strategy of sustainable development is the issue of people's livelihood, which is expressed in the strategy we just mentioned above. The strategy of fast and sustainable development pays attention on the quality of economic development, orients to the comprehensive development of man, the realization of democracy, social progress and social justice, the creation of employment opportunities, improvement of the quality of life, encouragement of legally getting rich with reduction of poverty, the attention to the protection and improvement of environment in every step of development. Clearly, that goal, after all, is to solve better and better the issue of people's livelihood, guarantee a comfortable and happy life for the whole population. In the practice of Vietnam, the strategy of fast and sustainable development is the effective way to

guarantee country's socialistic-oriented development aiming at the goal of "wealthy people, strong country, just, democratic and civilized society."

In the Party's socio-economic development strategy for 2011-2020 the key aims on sustainability-oriented economic, cultural, social development as well as environmental protection were clearly mapped out. Thus, *in the sphere of economy*: the goal is to achieve the average GDP growth rate of 7-8% per year. The GDP of the year of 2020 will be 2.2 times to that of 2010. The average GDP per capita will be around 3,000 USD. The value of products of high technologies and the products of the implementation of high technologies will be around 45% in the total GDP. The reduction in energy consumption in GDP will be 2.5 to 3% per year. The economical utility of all resources, especially natural resources should be practiced. *In the sphere of culture and society*: a democratic, ordered, consensus, just and civilized society should be built. By the year of 2020 the human development index (HDI) of Vietnam will be that of the above-average group in the world, the population growth rate will be about 1% per year, life expectancy will be 75 on average; health insurance will be implemented for all people; the rate of trained laborers will be above 70%; the number of skilled workers will be 55% of the total labor force; the rate of poor households will be reduced by 1.5 to 2% per year; social welfare, social security and public health are guaranteed. Education and training, science and technology will be developed to meet the demands of the national cause of industrialization and modernization. An advanced culture imbued with national character will be built; happy, healthy and progressive family life is to be built; man will be given the chance to develop fully his intellectual, moral and physical potentials as well as his sense of citizenship and law compliance. In the sphere of environmental protection: the quality of the environment is to be improved. By the year of 2020 most of the population will have access to clean and sanitary water; newly established enterprises and production businesses must use clean technology or have environment friendly devices; over 80% of production and business enterprises will meet the required environmental standards. Heavy populated areas should be improved and renovated. Natural disasters are to be reduced. We should be proactive in dealing with the consequences of

climate change, especially the rising of sea water.⁸⁹ Those are concrete tasks to be accomplished in order to gradual implementation of the strategy of sustainable development in the beginning decades of the 21st century.

In a new context, in order to implement effectively the strategy of fast and sustainable development, we need to continue to create strong and sustainable changes in awareness, renovate strongly development thinking, grasp thoroughly all policies, plans, projects and action programs. It is necessary to implement in wide scope and at every level with the participation of all branches and levels, the consensus participation of the whole political system, communities of economic actors and all citizen.

⁸⁹ The Communist Party of Vietnam, *The Documents of the 11th Party's Congress*, pp.103-106.

Part II
Development in Vietnam:
Some Socio-Political Issues

6.

Socialist Model: Some Theoretical and Practical Issues

Implementing a Memorandum of Understanding signed on May 2008 in Hanoi between the Institute of Philosophy, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences and the Marxism Academy, China Academy of Social Sciences and with the permission of the President of Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, two of our Institutions organized the first Scientific Forum on Marxism “New Theoretical Contributions from Two Parties and Two Countries” in Beijing, China in 2009. In that conference, the scholars from Vietnam and China contributed to clarifying theoretical achievements of the cause of Reformation and Openness in China and the cause of Renovation in Vietnam. Scholars affirmed that the historically significant achievements of the cause of Reformation and Openness in China and the cause of Renovation in Vietnam are the results of the creative implementation of Marxism in concrete historical circumstances of each country by the two Parties and two countries. In order to achieve more success in the cause of reformation, openness and renovation, it is necessary to continue to supplement and develop further the principles of Marxism – Leninism. All kinds of mechanistic imitation and dogmatism are alien to the scientific and revolutionary essence of Marxism–Leninism.

While inheriting that spirit, as in accordance with the agreement reached by our two institutes, today in the beautiful beach of Doson, Haiphong Province, we will together continue to discuss and exchange our views on the issues raised and discussed two years ago. Today’s Conference on the Models of Socialism: some theoretical and practical issues could be called the second Vietnam-China Scientific Forum on Marxism.

First of all, I would like to affirm that the topic of socialistic models had not been alien to the scholars of our two countries in the pre-reformation or pre-renovation period. In the past many scholars of our two countries had discussed much on different models of socialism. When the old model of socialism collapsed in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, many scholars claimed that this was the

collapse of a concrete model of socialism but not the collapse of a scientific theoretical model of socialism nor even the collapse of the scientific theory of socialism.

The process of reformation, openness and renovation is the process of seeking a new model of socialism. Within that process, in the past only few people talked about socialistic models. However, in recent years, together with the great achievements of the cause of reformation, openness and renovation in the two countries, many scholars raise the issue of researching on a socialist model in each country. Some scholars mentioned about the development pattern of China (Is it the model and method of development?) in the previous conference and claimed that every country has its own pattern of development and Vietnam cannot learn anything from the development pattern of China.

It shows that the topic of today's conference – Socialist models: some theoretical and practical issues – is really a pressing and attractive topic, which contains many complicated theoretical issues, new aspects. Thus, this conference is really the continuation of the discussion of issues raised in the first forum in China. Within the scope of a scientific conference, we surely cannot resolve all the raised issues. Therefore, this conference should be seen as a starting point for a long-term research and collaboration program between our two institutes as well as with other partners in the future. In this spirit, in our view, we should concentrate on the following issues in this conference:

First, theoretical and methodological issues of the research on socialist model. Within this part we will discuss together the questions relating to the development model of socialism, different types of socialist models, the differences and similarities between theoretical and practical models of socialism, the types of socialist models in the past.

Second, the main contents of the general model of socialism that Vietnam and China have been building.

In recent years, while talking about Vietnam's socialist model, some scholars affirm that the socialist model was described in the platform for national construction in the transition period towards socialism and was adopted in the 7th National Congress in 1991. This model was supplemented and developed further in the 8th, 9th, 10th and

11th National Congresses of the Communist Party of Vietnam. In the platform for national construction in the transition period towards socialism (supplemented and developed in 2011) the socialist model was generalized with either most basic and core features. According to that model, a socialist society that the Vietnamese are building is a society:

1. Of wealthy people, a strong country, democratic, just and civilized society.
2. In which the people are masters.
3. With a highly developed economy based on modern productive forces and adequate and progressive production relations.
4. With an advanced culture imbued deeply with national identity.
5. In which man has a happy, free and well-off life and can have chance to develop comprehensively.
6. In which nationalities of Vietnamese community are equal, unified, respectful and helpful to one another to co-develop.
7. With a socialist rule-of-law state of the people, by the people and for the people under the leadership of the Communist Party.
8. To have relationship and cooperation with other countries in the world.⁹⁰

The question is: Is it a general model of socialism that the Vietnamese will build? If we reduce the model of socialism to above-mentioned features, will there be other characteristics (beside the above-mentioned)? As the features of the socialism in Vietnam have been changed and supplemented many times, what are the issues that should be further discussed?

In the China case, after 30 of reformation and openness, the Communist Party of China affirms that China is realizing China's policy of Sinicization of Marxism. Within that policy, China will build a socialism with Chinese characteristics. Thus, is the socialism with Chinese characteristics the socialist model of China? What are its main

⁹⁰ The Communist Party of Vietnam, *The Documents of the Party 11th National Congress*, p.70.

features? What are the creative innovations of the Communist Party of China in comparison with Marxism in its designing the socialism with Chinese characteristics? We would like Chinese scholars to focus on and clarify those important theoretical issues.

Third, the model of development in concrete areas. Society, in a generalized sense, consists of different areas, such as economic, political, cultural, social. The question is: apart from a general model of socialism, are there development models in every concrete area? We would raise that question because in recent years in Vietnam many scholars raise the question of researching political model, economic model, social model and cultural model for Vietnam. If that way of approaching makes sense, what are the concrete contents of development models in every area?

Fourth, in recent years, within the course of renovation, under the leadership of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party, Lao People's Democratic Republic has achieved great successes. The Lao People's Revolutionary Party affirms that the development path of Laos is to build a people's democratic regime and prepare necessary premises to advance towards socialism. Thus, what are the contents of the model of a people's democratic regime? and what is the relationship between a people's democratic regime and socialism? Those are theoretical and practical issues of concern in this Conference.

In the case of Vietnam, the cause of comprehensive renovation and socialist-oriented national development has been continuously and extensively being carried out. While looking back into the cause of renovation in the recent past, the 11th National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam confirms "The achievements of the last 20 years are of great and historical significance. We have realized successfully the first period of the cause of renovation, pulled the country out of its state of underdevelopment, brought many positive changes in the life of the people, strengthened comprehensively national power, reinforced our national independence, sovereignty and socialist regime, improved significantly the status and authority of Vietnam in the world arena and created premises for the country to continue to develop stronger and more sustainable in a new period. However, our country still faces many serious and complicated challenges, which

cannot be ignored.”⁹¹ Therefore, it is of great importance and necessity to research to clarify theoretical and practical issues of socialism and the way to socialism, the improvement of the socialist model that we have been building. As the researchers engaging in theoretical research, we should contribute actively and concretely to the common cause of the all-Party and the all-people in order to construct successfully a Vietnam with “wealthy people, strong, democratic, just and civilized country.”

⁹¹ The Communist Party of Vietnam, *The Documents of the Party 11th National Congress*, p.9.

Socialist Model in Vietnam: Some Concerned Issues

In the years of the pre-renovation period people in Vietnam and other socialist countries often mentioned about the concept of socialist model. At that time the socialist model of the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries became an ideal model for developing nations to admire and strive for. However, at the beginning of the 1990s, after the collapse of the Soviet Unions and socialist countries in Eastern Europe, Marxist theorists in Vietnam analysed the objective and subjective causes of the collapse and came to conclusion that that was the collapse of a concrete model of socialism but not the collapse of the scientific theory of socialism. For a period of about 20 years, people talked less about socialist model. However, in recent years with the successes of the Cause of Renovation, Marxist scholars in Vietnam have been reposing the question of socialist model. So what are the characteristics of the Vietnamese socialist model?

First of all, in order to understand about socialist model, we need to clarify the concept of social development model.

Social development model is a concept to indicate the subjects of social activities, that use methods and resources in order to achieve development goals in the practice of social development. It is a most general concept on the goal and the way or method to realize the process of transformation and change a society from a low level of development to a high level of development.

Generally speaking, social development model includes the following main aspects: First, from the aspect of essence, social development model is the unity between development goal and the way of its realization; Second, from the aspect of content, social development model is an organic whole of development models in concrete spheres of the social life, such as economic development model, political development model, social development model and cultural development model; Third, from the formal aspect, social development model varies in its manifestation depending on political, economic, social and cultural conditions of specific nations states.

In reality, the world has evidenced two most typical social development models, which had realized and come into being parallelly: the capitalist model and the socialist model. However, within each model there exist different concrete types. For example, within the capitalist model, apart from the most general characteristics distinguishing it from the socialist model, we can list some concrete types of that model as follows:

First, the capitalist model of the traditional Europe. It is the model of some developed nations in Western Europe with the goal of attaching social development to the development of productive forces. The basic feature of that model consists in: The development of social market economy, the attention to the importance on the vision and the regulation of the state towards economic development, the healthy and stable operation of the economy, emphasis on just market, priority on construction of social welfare.

Second, the American model of free market economy. The foundation of that model is the priority given to the regularization of market but with the acceptance of macro regulation, including the interference of the state and regulation of the government. The characteristic feature of that model is to emphasise on the proactiveness and interest in protection of private business, and therefore the subjects of that model are under the control and influence of private sectors, sometimes is manipulated by the private, at the same time the state has the duty to serve the development of private economy.

Third, the government-led model in Japan. The specific feature of that model is to take market regulation as a premise, on the basis of which emphasis is put on the role of the government on leadership and guideline of the economy. The distinction of that model in comparison with that of other developed countries can be seen in the two following points: First, the government plays an important role in the operation of the economy; Second, the democratic character of decision-makings can be seen in that all decisions are made publicly with the consideration of public opinions and guarantee of the interests of all concerned parties. Basically all decisions are made with the consideration of the interests of the nation, state and democracy.

Fourth, the East Asian model. In economic terms, this model is to give priority to the view on economic development in order to build

the country to the path of economic prioritization, utilize export-oriented strategy; at the same time to maintain market economy under the leadership of the state. In political terms, this model uses the political regime based on authoritarianism and at the same time uses the method of governance through the talented people and laws, promotes the gradual process of democratization. The executive branch plays a leading role in the relation between executive and judicial branches of those countries following that model. In fact, the executive branch even plays decisive role in legislation and judicial processes.

Socialist model; Socialist mode; Socialist pattern is the concept to indicate the various types and forms of socialism practised in different countries in the world. It means that those countries, in their course of constructing socialism, have their own forms, methods and ways. Due to economic, political, social and cultural differences as well as differences in population, natural conditions, there exist different socialist models in different countries and even within a country there have been different forms with various characteristics of socialism in different period of its development. Based on its concrete practical conditions each socialist country proposes its specific goals and methods of development in different concrete periods of its development.

Socialist model can be understood both in a broad and narrow sense. In a broad sense, socialist model includes a whole of thoughts, concepts on goals, methods and ways towards socialism in general. In a narrow sense, socialist model includes a whole of theories, views on goals, methods and ways towards socialism within a period, a concrete historical circumstance of a country.

In recent years there have existed various socialist models which could be generalized into two typical forms as follows:

First, the socialist model of the Soviet Union (the representative of the countries of Eastern Europe). In this socialist model we can see two distinctive periods: Lenin's period and Stalin's period. The Lenin's socialist model contains following features: First, the state, in the name of the society, directly owns and utilizes means of production; Second, the state decides development plans, controls the process of production and distribution of products of the whole society, all working people work together, share and enjoy common labor's criteria and conditions; Third, the cause of national construction is

converted into a top-down management mechanism. Before the emergence of the Soviet Union all socialist models proposed by the utopists of the 16 century or the scientific socialism of Marx and Engels had not yet been realized. The Soviet socialist model was the socialist model, which had been realized for the first time.

The Stalin's highly centralized socialist model (or highly centralized model) includes following typical features: First, the implementation of unitary common ownership and elimination of all other sectors; Second, the construction of a barter economy but not market economy, the highly centralized model was used in order to manage the economy; Third, the dictatorship of the proletariat was implemented in the political life with the view that the driving force of the socialist society was the struggle between the proletariat and bourgeoisie class. This socialist model contained the characteristics of war's time, which was based on the theoretical principle and ideal of revolution.

Second, the Chinese socialist model. The Chinese socialist model can also be divided into two periods: the Mao Tse Tung period and the period of reformation and openness. First, the Mao Tse Tung socialist model is the socialist model of highly centralized planning and administrative regime. That model was able to create some specific features of socialism with Chinese color but it was under some influence of the old Soviet Union socialist model and could not overcome the framework of the old Soviet Union socialist model, especially in terms of economic development. Second, the current socialist model with Chinese characteristics is the model of social development closely attached to Deng Xiao Ping theory of three represents the view on scientific development. The focus of that model is the strong renovation in thought, concentration of resources for economic growth, or as Chinese scholars call, the development of productive forces. One of the most important theoretical breakthroughs of Deng Xiao Ping was the establishment of the theory of socialist market economy. That establishment was a breakthrough not only in the theory of traditional planning economy, the very theory that denies good-exchange relation, money and the role of market economy, but also a breakthrough in the theory of traditional market economy that regards market regulation is the matter within private ownership. After Deng Xiao

Ping theory and Jang Zemin thought of three represents, the Hu Jin Tao thought on harmonious society is considered as a new development in the awareness of socialism and the way toward socialism in China.

The basic contents of the view on a harmonious society can be seen in four following features: First, "the harmonious society is the essential attribute of the Socialism with Chinese characteristics, the most important guarantee of the country's prosperity, national rejuvenation and the people's happiness; Second, the harmonious society is the continuous aim of the Communist Party of China and all its people; Third, the construction of the harmonious society is the uninterrupted process of harmonization of social contradictions; Fourth, a socialist harmonious society is a harmonious society constructed by all the people together and be enjoyed by all the people together. The current socialist model with Chinese characteristics has achieved great successes and is recognized by the world.

Apart from the two above-mentioned models, there exists a model of the "third way" in the context of economic globalization, which attracts much attention. The model of the "third way" contains the following key contents: First, the balance between the influence of market and the regulation of the state is the principle for constructing a new economy; Second, the balance between rights and duties is the principle for building a new welfare system; Third, the balance between economic efficiency and social justice is the principle to propose new policies; Fourth, the balance between nationalism and internationalism is the principle for implementing foreign policies.

At the moment, there has yet not been a rigorous theoretical system on the model of the "third way." The "third way" emerges due to the practical conditions of capitalism during the process of globalization, left parties in the West have to propose solutions to deal with actual problems of capitalism. It reflects the phenomenon and left-oriented tendencies of the form of political consciousness of the countries in the West. In its essence, it is a political compromise between liberal capitalism and democratic socialism, an ideological movement of capitalism going beyond both the right and the left in the context of globalization in order to overcome its inner problems. Though that model contains some new features and contents, but in its essence, it

bases on the premise of protection of capitalism, focuses on the adjustment of the method of management and governance of the country.

As far as Vietnam is concerned, in the past we often talked about the socialist model we would like to build, which was similar to the socialist model of the Soviet Union and the countries of Eastern Europe. This was the socialist model based on characteristics proposed by Marx and Engels and implemented by Stalin. However, after the collapse of the real socialism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, Vietnam has proactively carried out the cause of national comprehensive renovation and has been gradually perfecting a new socialist model with certain goals and means to achieve these goals. Based on the Documents of the Communist Party of Vietnam, especially the Documents of the 11th National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam, we can outline the Vietnamese socialist model with following main contents:

First, the overall goal, which expresses the essence of the socialist society the Vietnamese are building, is to build a Vietnam with “wealthy people, strong, democratic, just and civilized country.”

Second, this goal is concretized through a series of basic features in all spheres of the social life. This is a society:

1. In which the people are masters.
2. With a highly developed economy based on modern productive forces and adequate and progressive production relations.
3. With an advanced culture imbued deeply with national identity.
4. In which man has a happy, free and well-off life and can have chance to develop comprehensively.
5. In which nationalities of Vietnam community are equal, unified, respectful and helpful to one another to co-develop.
6. With a socialist rule-of-law state of the people, by the people and for the people under the leadership of the Communist Party.
7. To have relationship and cooperation with countries in the world.

Those specific features express comprehensively the basic characteristics of various spheres of a society: From political to economic,

cultural, social and sphere of international affairs. Those features are the inheritance and continuation of the view of the Party stated in the 10th Party's Congress and at the same time with supplementations and new developments to make them appropriate to a new practice.

However, in our view, there are two points which are expressed more concrete and better in the Documents of the 10th Congress than in that of the 11th Congress:

First, while talking about economic characteristic, the 11th Congress affirms "a highly developed economy based on modern productive forces and progressive and appropriate production relations" in comparison with the 10th Congress the adjective progressive was added.⁹² It is necessary to explain further what progressive production relations are.

Second, on the characteristics man, the 11th Congress clearly indicates that the society we are building is the one in which man has a happy, free and well-off life and can have chance to develop comprehensively. In comparison with the 10th Congress the clause (man) "is liberated from unjust oppression" was left out. This way of expression may be shortened but seems not to be logical with the indication about the shortcomings of capitalism mentioned in the Platform for national construction in the transition period towards socialism (supplemented and developed in 2011). When evaluating on capitalism, the Platform writes: The capitalism has potentials for further development, but in its essence, it remains a regime based on exploitation, oppression and injustice.⁹³ Capitalism will certainly be replaced and humanity will certainly advance to Socialism. Thus, a new society replacing capitalism will necessarily be better than capitalism, i.e. in which there will be no more exploitation, oppression and injustice. Therefore, the clause (man) "is liberated from unjust oppression" is necessary and appropriate to the evaluation mentioned in the Platform.

⁹² The 10th Congress stated, "A highly developed economy based on modern productive forces and production relations appropriate to the level of development of productive forces. In our view, that is clear and precise."

⁹³ The Communist Party of Vietnam, *The Documents of the 11th National Congress*, p. 68.

The question is: Is it a general model of socialism the Vietnamese will build? If we reduce the model of socialism to the above-mentioned features, will there be other characteristics (beside the above-mentioned)? As the features of the socialism in Vietnam have been changed and supplemented many times, what are issues that should be further discussed?

Third, Society, in a generalized sense, consists of different areas, such as economic, political, cultural, social. The question is: Apart from a general model of socialism, are there development models in every concrete area? We would raise that question because in recent years in Vietnam many scholars raise the question of researching political model, economic model, social model and cultural model for Vietnam. For example, many economists confirm that a general economic model in the transitional period in Vietnam is a socialist-oriented market economy. If that way of approach makes sense, what are concrete contents of development models in every area? Can we talk that the Vietnamese socialist model is the model that combines growth with gradual solution to the problems relating to social progress and social justice, the issues of social welfare.

In our view, those issues and problems should be theoretically and practically explored and clarified further. This is a quite normal thing because cognition is a process. The very finding of new issues and problems and adequate solutions to deal with them will contribute importantly to shape more precisely the socialist model in Vietnam and then to orient successfully the cause of building of socialism in Vietnam.

The Relationship between the Market Economy and Socialism from the Perspective of the Dialectics of the Evolution of History and Some Characteristics of the Socialist-Oriented Market Economy in Vietnam

1. According to Marx, the evolution of history is a natural historical process, in conformation to objective and natural laws. The development of human society has undergone five socio-economic formations in which a high socio-economic formation is the inheritance and development of a lower socio-economic formation. Thus, the development of human society progresses from low to high, from lesser to higher perfection. So far, humanity has witnessed the birth and reciprocal replacement of four socio-economic formations: Primitive communism, slavery, feudalism, capitalism, and the birth of a new socio-economic formation, communism whose early stage is socialism as a formation that inherits the essence of capitalism and has higher development than capitalist society.

The historical development of human society has witnessed socio-economic formations which produce no commodities and have no market economy. The development of commodity economy and market economy is also a process following rules of development from low to high, from lesser to higher perfection, associated with the development of socio-economic formations. In such logic of history, market economy is an achievement of the mankind, which has reached high and perfect level in capitalism. The market economy has fostered the replacement of feudal socio-economic formation with capitalist socio-economic formation. Considering capitalist socio-economic formation, the market economy has also experienced the development process from low to high, from lesser to higher perfection. Market economy forms are also diversified, with such forms as free market economy, social market economy, etc.

Considering the dialectical aspect of historical development, market economy and socio-economic formations are parallel, of the same direction and meet each other in capitalism. Both capitalism and market economy are the objective products of history, and the achievements of human civilization. Marx once said that, humanity was suffering because of capitalism, but rather humanity would suffer more if there were no capitalism. Market economy promotes capitalism, but also makes it reveal contradictions to resolve, in order to continue growing. In fact, capitalism has constantly self-adjusted to adapt to, and fit the new historical conditions.

Theoretically, according to Marx's view, socialism is a continuance of capitalism, which is of higher level than capitalism. Capitalism has made full facilities preparation for socialism. Socialism and capitalism have no difference in terms of material facilities and economic base. The difference between socialism and capitalism is expressed only in the *superstructure*. The market economy has a positive contribution to constructing and developing material facilities for capitalism and thus, also contributing to preparing facilities for socialism. With such a logic, it can be asserted that, without market economy, there would be no capitalism and accordingly, no socialism, a society born later and having higher development than capitalism. The question is whether market economy exists in socialism?

Theoretically, two different perspectives revolve around this issue. In Engel's view, as there is no private ownership of means of production in socialism, there would be no production of commodity and thus, no market economy. Contrary to Engel's views, production of goods still exists in socialism. So far, no socialism has been born from a highly developed capitalist country, so it is difficult to assert with certainty and persuasion whether socialism contains production of commodity or not.

In fact, in developed capitalist countries, the working class represented by its vanguard Party has not won the government. The working class has taken power and held social leadership in pre-capitalist countries, or a bit higher than that, in average capitalist countries. After seizing power, these countries do not use, but ignore market economy, which results from human civilization, and serves as one of effective measures to develop productive forces. As a consequence,

good ideas about a future society just remain ideals which cannot be realized in practice due to too weak economic base. Such desirable social policies of the humanity cannot come to real life. In addition, the fierce ideological struggle between two factions, the socialist camp and the capitalist camp, plus the misconception that regards socialism a society totally different from capitalism, that sees everything belonging to capitalism or used by capitalism cannot be used in socialism, have resulted in the fact that the idea of using market economy cannot exist in the countries following socialism for decades.

Even Lenin, who soon realized the defects of the central planning bureaucracy mechanism, as well as the important role of market economy, was somewhat subjective, impatient when predicting that Russia could be developed after several years without the use of a market economy. It is noteworthy that, decades after Lenin's mistakes in Communism-in-war policy, his changes in New Economic Policies (NEP) were not recognized by socialist countries. Only after the collapse of socialism in the USSR and Eastern Europe, could market economy have its position and confirm its role in a number of countries following socialism, such as Vietnam and China.

The development practices and classic theories of Marx all confirm the necessity and popularity of market economy in the development of every nation and country. Therefore, for countries that have not experienced market economy, to solve development problems, they must first develop a market economy in the true sense; create favorable conditions to promote the potentials of the market for the development, so as to achieve maximum economic efficiency. Only on this basis, considering strategic objectives, can they escape backwardness, and have physical, spiritual conditions to meet social and humane objectives.

From the logical reasoning and historical practices in the past years, it can be asserted that, the market economy has been identified as an essential step, so it has popularity. The development of market economy is an inevitable mode to build socialism, especially for countries on the path to socialism but not undergoing capitalist development stage, such as Vietnam and China. The question in Vietnam today is not whether to develop market economy, but what features this market economy should have.

2. When referring to a market economy, people often mention its basic elements, including: 1/ The existence of independent owners; 2/ Markets existing in sync with the corresponding institutions; 3/ A pricing system decided by the supply-demand relationship of the market; 4/ Free competition that works as the basic principle of market economy; 5/ The State having an important role.

However, the ways of development of market economy are much diversified, not following a uniform pattern. The reality has shown that plans and patterns of economic development are particular, depending on the historical conditions and specific circumstances of each country and nation. A country going after others should not rigidly and dogmatically apply theoretical principles of market economy; nor apply a stereotyped economic model available somewhere in the market, though that model may be effective in a particular country, to solve peculiar development problems of that country.

The existence and development history of world's market economy models has confirmed that, market economy models are always adjusted in this direction: 1/ Social-human objectives receive increasing emphasis; 2/ The State's role in directing, organizing and regulating development is acknowledged.

Until the late 70s of the twentieth century, the market economy only existed in capitalism with two main forms: Free market economy model and social-market economy model. Currently, in addition to these two major forms, there are socialist-oriented market economy (in Vietnam) and socialist market economy (in China).

Although socialist-oriented market economy was born just nearly a quarter of a century ago, the appearance of this model has proven its vitality as an objective necessity of the time; simultaneously, it also affirms the necessity and popularity of market economy as a compulsory stage in the historical development of all economies.

However, socialist-oriented market economy, which was established not long ago, is still in the process of testing, shaping the structure and nature. As a result, no solid factual basis is available for a theoretical system of socialist-oriented market economy with complete and rigorous logical content.

The concept of "socialist-oriented market economy" was confirmed in the Congress IX of the Communist Party of Vietnam in 2001.

This is the result of 15 years of innovative thinking and practices in our country, summed up on the basis of review, evaluation and lessons drawing at Party Congresses, and continually developed through Congress X and Congress XI of the Party. At Party Congress XI, the Party declared: "Continuing to improve the institution of socialist-oriented market economy is an important prerequisite for accelerating the process of restructuring the economy, renovating growth model, stabilizing macro-economy; is one of three strategic breakthroughs in the next 10 years."⁹⁴

In the documents of the Party, the basic characteristics of socialist-oriented market economy in Vietnam are presented relatively specifically. Speaking broadly, a socialist-oriented market economy is characterized, "that is a multi-sector economy, operating according to the market mechanism involved the management of the State, under the leadership of the Communist Party; it both follows the rules of a market economy, and is led, governed by the principles and essence of socialism."⁹⁵ It is expressed specifically in the following points:

First, market economy is the economic basis for the society to proceed on the path to socialism in Vietnam. Practices of the world and Vietnam in recent years have demonstrated that no economy other than market economy can take the role as the economic basis for social development generally and socialism building particularly. That also confirms, by real practices in Vietnam, the classic tenet of Marx on the role of market economy in human evolution as presented above.

Second, the socialist orientation in socio-economic development requires that the development of market economy in our country is for building a society with "rich people, strong country, democratic, just and civilized society; owned by the people; highly developed economy based on modern productive forces and progressive, appropriate production relations."⁹⁶ The goal of "rich people, a strong country" can only be achieved when the productive forces are developed. The development of market economy is the basis and prerequisite for productive forces development, and economic growth. However, the

⁹⁴ The Communist Party of Vietnam, *Documents of National Party Congress XI* (Hanoi: The National Political Publishing House, 2011), p.34.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.70.

socialist orientation is shown not only in the goal of developing productive forces in response to the need of economic growth, but also in the goal of tackling social problems, first and foremost in promoting social progress and justice. Economic growth and assurance of social progress and justice are two contents of rapid, efficient, stable growth of our country. Socialist orientation requires the assurance of economic growth, of social progress and justice; as well as the unity and organic combination of economic growth with social progress and justice at all development stages of market economy in our country. Economic growth and social, cultural, educational development, for the objective of cultivating humans, are the constituent contents of the rapid, efficient, modern, stable development during the transition into socialist-oriented market economy in Vietnam.

Third, one of the basic elements of a market economy, as discussed above, is the existence of independent owners in various economic sectors and forms of ownership. Similarly, the socialist-oriented market economy in Vietnam is a mixed economy, which includes various economic sectors and forms of ownership coexisting in a unified whole. Forms of ownership in the socialist-oriented market economy are based on two major forms: Public ownership (public property) and private ownership (private property). Mixed ownership, which is formed based on the mixture of different types of ownership, results from the cooperation, joint venture between different owners, namely the State, collectives (groups) and private owners. The fact that public ownership has increasingly become solid foundation, while other types of ownership have been in a strong, unrestricted, interwoven development, abiding by the laws, should be considered as the basic type of economy during the socialist-oriented development stage of our country.

Previously, as per traditional views, the forms of ownership were unique: State-owned, collective or private. After over 25 years' innovation, a mixed economy has gradually been formed and is thriving; equitization is gradually becoming a major organizational form of public ownership economy. Therefore, public property includes not only unique state ownership and collective ownership, but also the part of state ownership and collective ownership in the mixed economy. Likewise, private ownership includes not only unique private

ownership, but also private ownership in the mixed economy. In the process of developing socialist-oriented market economy in our country, the unique form of public ownership tends to decrease but the fundamental meaning of public ownership is increasingly being fortified and strengthened in key areas, as indicated in:

- The capital of the publicly owned economy (including state economy, collective economy and the part of public ownership in the mixed economy) still plays an important role in the total social investment.
- State economy holds key positions in the economy.

An objective requirement of the market and the market economy is to confirm and define ownership as monetary forms over assets, capital, intellect contributed to business, in order to quantify the ownership of each owner. There is no general, derelict ownership, nor equal ownership for everyone in the socialist-oriented market economy.

Fourth, regarding the equality between economic sectors. It can be said that, the clarification of the nature and economic model of the country during the transitional period to socialism, and no formal affirmation of the leading role of state economy are regarded innovative points of the Draft amendments to the 1992 Constitution compared with the 1992 Constitution. Based on the Platform for national construction in the transitional period to socialism (supplemented and developed in 2011), Article 54 in the Draft amendments to the 1992 Constitution states: "1/ Vietnam's economy is a socialist-oriented market economy with various types of ownership and many economic sectors. 2/ Economic sectors are all important components of the national economy, with longterm development, equal and competitive cooperation under the laws."

Meanwhile, Article 19 in the 1992 Constitution highlights, the state economy, which has been strengthened and developed especially in key sectors, plays a main role, and along with collective economy, becomes the solid foundation of the national economy. While in the 1992 Constitution, the state economy was determined to keep the leading role, the Draft Amendments of the 1992 Constitution does

not mention the key role of the state economy. Specifically, Section 2, Article 54 of the Draft Amendments of the 1992 Constitution states: Economic sectors are all important components of the national economy, with longterm development, equal and competitive cooperation under the laws. Compared with the 1992 Constitution, this is a new point, confirming different economic sectors all have equal roles, and are important components of the national economy; no economic sector is presumed to play the key, fundamental role in the national economy.

The reality of many past years shows that a series of state corporations, despite enjoying more favorable conditions than those in other economic sectors, have suffered deterioration, stagnation, even on the verge of bankruptcy due to corruption, wastefulness, poor management. Some ideas consider the state economy as a giant who can only rely on the state budget, but without effectiveness. On the contrary, despite facing great difficulties, many enterprises from other economic sectors have been struggling to survive the regional and global economic and financial crises.

Therefore, it can be said that, the confirmation that our national economy consists of various forms of ownership, without voluntarily identifying which one is the mainstream, fundamental component economy in the national economy, in our opinion, is correct. That is because this first shows the equality between economic sectors. All economic sectors are under the control of the socialist Government, and all aim at developing the national economy; therefore, they should be treated equally. The private sector in a socialist-oriented market economy is different from the private sector in a capitalist market economy in its goals and direction of development. If any economic sector in a multi-sector economy is defined to play a key role, or mainstay role, then there can be no equality among economic sectors. In other words, the stipulation on equality is then merely formalism. In fact, in the past years, despite receiving numerous incentives, the state economy has proved less efficient. Meanwhile, the private sector and other economic sectors, which have been growing strongly, and making great contributions to the economy, have not yet received adequate attention. Therefore, the stipulation on equality among economic sectors within the same legal framework will create

better changes in the country's economy, producing more material wealth, employment, contribution to the budget. Our goal now, economically, is to liberate productive forces, promote economic growth, as well as rapid and sustainable development. Therefore, it is necessary to create a levelled playing field for all economic sectors to reveal their intrinsic capacities, and thereby contributing more to the society.

When questioned whether the state economy holds a major role or not, Le Dang Doanh says, only Vietnam views that the state economy plays a major role.⁹⁷ He says that state-owned enterprises should have fair competition, as indulged children are more likely to become spoiled, that trees living in glass houses cannot withstand hurricanes. Only when they are left to live in a normal environment, subject to the winds of competition, and striving for the better, can state-owned businesses operate more effectively. Nevertheless, the process of support reduction should be scheduled carefully, as they cannot stand immediate cut-off. The weaning to a child cannot occur overnight; likewise, the reduction should be done gradually to have a more competitive environment.

There are also ideas that, if the state economy is not confirmed to hold the key role, our country's development towards socialism cannot be ensured. In our opinion, the assurance for the country's development towards socialism does not rely on the stipulation that the state economy plays a key role, but on its effectiveness. Just like before, right in the period of central planning bureaucratic economy, when there existed only two forms of ownership, state ownership and collective ownership, we had no socialism and stayed at an even farther distance from the socialist goals than we are now today. Consequently, despite being labeled "to have a key role" but always remaining in weakness, sluggishness, unsteady development, or operating inefficiently, the state economy is unlikely to ensure the country's socialist-oriented development. Moreover, if we do not change our mindset, the view that "state economy keeping the leading role" will be no different from the misleading viewpoint some time

⁹⁷ In fact, in the Documents of the Communist Party of China, the state economy is still holding the leading role; but many Chinese economists supporting this view argue that they are not certain how long this view will be maintained in the Documents of the Communist Party of China.

ago that "relations of production can go ahead, paving the way for the development of productive forces," and it is very likely that subjective, voluntarist mistakes are repeated.

The question now is how to promote the controlling and managing role of the State through a regulatory system of policies and legislation. *Fifth*, promoting economic growth as well as ensuring justice. Social justice is a historical economic, political, ethical, legal category that reflects the relations between individuals, between individuals and communities, between a community with other communities to ensure the living conditions, development opportunities; in the implementation of obligations and enjoyment of benefits at a level corresponding to certain social development.

Among the factors affecting social justice, economic development has a special role. As the basis of society, the economy regulates social justice in the sense that, after all, a certain economic development level defines a certain level of social justice. Naturally, in reality, an affluent society will not be able to eliminate injustice, exploitation absolutely; but in a poor, less developed society, injustice and exploitation will surely occur sooner or later. As a consequence, economic development and high total social product are conditions for the implementation of social justice. In turn, social justice can act as a condition for economic growth. As the implementation of social justice attaches the laborer's interests with the social production system, their activeness will, thereby, be aroused during their labor and production activities.

The transformation into market economy acknowledges the existence of various forms of ownership and different economic sectors. However, the coexistence of private ownership and other types of ownership surely results in conflicts. If private ownership receives the same treatment as to public ownership and collective ownership, there are healthy economic relations, and uncomplicated administrative procedures so as to avoid monopoly and privileges, economic sectors are all equal, then the mutual interaction and support between economic sectors will motivate economic development.

The question put forward is economic growth must aim at social justice. Otherwise, not only socialist orientation for the country's development cannot be realized, economic growth will also not be steady. At the same time, social justice must also facilitate economic

development. The dialectical relationship between economic growth and social justice, as the Party Congress X points out, requires "the implementation of social progress and justice must be done right in each step and in each development policy; economic growth must go hand in hand with the development of culture, health care, education; all social problems must be solved for the goal of human development. The distribution is done primarily according to labor, economic efficiency, capital contribution and other resources through social welfare."

Sixth, income distribution is done primarily according to business efficiency and labor productivity; distribution can also be based on capital, property, intellect contribution, and social welfare.

Labor is the main source of material and spiritual wealth for the society, thus creating the country's wealth. To implement justice, on the one hand, distribution based on production and business efficiency must be defined as the primary type of distribution. Laborers with high productivity, quality and efficiency must have higher incomes. On the other hand, a favorable environment should be created for everyone to get rich with their own labor. Therefore, expanding everyone's opportunities for self-development and increasing their capacity of choosing opportunities so as for them gradually to live well both materially and spiritually, are a goal, a natural feature of the socialist-oriented market economy development in our country today.

Incomes gained from capital, property and intellect contribution to production and business are the distribution forms acknowledged by law. Only on this, it can encourage people to get rich justifiably. Increasing the number of rich people, reducing the number of poor people, eliminating famine, decreasing the rich-poor gap, are the key objectives in both the income distribution and redistribution policies of the Government in the development of socialist-oriented market economy in Vietnam.

Seventh, the State's role in the socialist-oriented market economy. Two factors determining the operating mechanism of the market economy are the State and the market. For this reason, in the discussion of the effectiveness of the market economy, it is essential to clearly define the status of this relationship. As soon as capitalism began, economists mentioned the need to combine the invisible hand of the

market and the visible hand of civil society. In fact, whether following a free market economy model or a social market model, the state has always played a very important role. The main question is how the state can intervene effectively. A loosely controlled management by the state will let the dark side of the market negatively impact on the social life; in contrast, the state's deep intervention will cause economic stagnation and poor development. To determine the reasonable intervention in the market by the state is a scientific issue, which reflects the art of management.

For a socialist-oriented market economy, the State has an extremely significant role. If we cannot clarify the operation mechanism of the economy, what the State does, what and how the market does, we cannot have an effectively operating market economy.

Unlike the State of many other market economies in the world, our country has a socialist rule-of-law State of the people, by the people, and for the people under the leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam, who has enough bravery and self-renewal ability to sustain the socialist orientation in developing a modern market economy. That difference is the conditions and prerequisites for the difference in quality of the market economy model intended by our country, compared with other market economy models. To fulfill the mission entrusted by the history and people of Vietnam, the Party and State have to renovate their way of leadership and management of the country and society in the context of market economy, industrialization, modernization, proactive integration into world economy under the impact of globalization.

In fact, Vietnam is still a developing country. It is necessary to implement strategic objectives at the same time, such as ensuring economic growth, implementing social progress and justice, as well as protecting the ecological environment, which do not always go in the same direction. However, these goals must be attained and thus, the State has a particularly important role. Obviously, there must be the State's intervention and regulation in the economy to ensure economic growth on a large scale, the natural and social environment protected and developed. Particularly, the State should intervene in distribution relations to ensure resources distribution, first distribution and re-

distribution in such a way that attaches economic growth with social progress and justice.

Above mentioned are some basic characteristics of the socialist-oriented market economy in Vietnam. These characteristics reflect both the popularity and the peculiarities in the development model adopted by Vietnam.

The Development of Science and Technology as the Key for Realizing the Fast and Sustainable Development Strategy in Vietnam Today⁹⁸

In the process of leading the cause of building and safeguarding a Vietnamese Socialist Homeland, especially since the start of a comprehensive reform of the country, the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) has grasped steadfastly and deeply the position and role of science and technology for the socio-economic development, concurrently always attaches much importance to and creates the favourable conditions for developing the country's science and technology. When being still alive, President Ho Chi Minh ever emphasized that we must advance socialism, build and develop a national economy with modern industry and agriculture based on a state of the art science and technology.

The viewpoint to consider science and technology as the foremost national policy, the key role in the cause of building and safeguarding Homeland, and the foundation and motivation for industrialization, modernization, fast and sustainable development was expressed, asserted, and grasped thoroughly in many documents of the Central Committee's, and in the Party's ones of renovation period as well. The reality has shown that before the Resolution on "The strategical Orientation of developing science and technology by the year 2020 and the task by the year 2000" to be promulgated, CPV had issued some resolutions about science and technology such as Resolution 37 of Politburo (4th term), Resolution 26 of Politburo (6th term), Resolution 01 of Politburo and Central Resolution (7th term).

In the 7th National Party Congress, CPV set forth an important line about implementing industrialization, modernization for devel-

⁹⁸ Co-authored with Nguyen Dinh Hoa, the Vice Chief Editor in charge of the Journal *Philosophy*, the Institute of Philosophy, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences

oping the country's socio-economy. The core of industrialization and modernization, according to the Party's viewpoint, is the process of changing radically and comprehensively the production, business, service, socio-economic management from using mainly manual labor into using widely skilled labor, state of the art technology, and the modern methods to create a highly social labor productivity. The development experiences of countries on the world as well as Vietnam proved that science and technology is one of the indispensable resources of the socio-economic development process, especially for the developing countries like Vietnam. The very important role of science and technology, from aspect of economic development, exposes on some essential following aspects: rapidly to develop production forces for economic growth fast and sustainably; to intensify the process of changing economic structure towards the modern industrialization and social labor restructure; to enhance the knowledge content and the competitive capacity of products in the context of a developing market economy and international economic integration.

Basing on summarizing the reality, examining situation of scientific-technological development, pointing out the strengths as well as the weaknesses in sciences and technology after 10 years implementing the Party's renovation policy, the 2nd Conference of Party's Central Committee (8th term) in 1996 issued the Resolution on: "The strategical Orientation of developing science and technology by the year 2020 and the task by the year 2000." This was the first time Central Committee of CPV issued a resolution for developing sciences and technologies only, which created a new motivation and momentum encouraging all Party and people to move on science and technology.

The 2nd Resolution of Party's Central Committee (8th term) clarified three essential directions, that is: *First*, creatively applying and developing Marxism-Leninism, Ho Chi Minh's thought, inheriting the nation's traditional cultural values, acquiring the intellectual quintessence of humankind, building, developing, and improving system of theories about the road to socialism of Vietnam; providing the scientific grounds for supplementing, perfecting guidelines and policies of the Party and Government to build successfully and to defend firmly a socialist Vietnam. *Second*, it must speed up researching and applying the scientific-technological achievements in all indus-

tries, such as production, business, service, management, and security-defense, to improve technological levels of nation. Rapidly. Treasuring theoretical researches, mastering and improving the imported technologies, going up creating more new technologies in the decisive phase of the development of the country in the 21st century. *Third*, enhancing the endogenous ability; building and developing potential of the country's science and technology: Training, cultivating, using the class of scientific research workers, for the gradual promotion of a modern science and technology of Vietnam which has ability enough to solve most of the key issues emerging in the process of industrialization and modernization. Concurrently, the 2nd Resolution of Party's Central Committee (8th term) also defined duties of science and technology including social sciences and humanities, natural sciences, technical sciences and technologies; especially, having defined the goals and the duties of scientific-technological development by the 2000. It can be asserted that the 2nd Resolution of the Party's Central Committee (8th term) oriented and made out an important foundation for the movement and development of Vietnam's science and technology, gradually raising the motive role of science and technology for the socio-economic development in the period of speeding up industrialization and modernization.

After realizing the 2nd resolution of the Party in 16 years, science and technology of Vietnam have attained some important achievements, contributing practically to the socio-economic development, ensuring the national defense and security, improving social security and quality of life of the people, taking Vietnam from a less developed nation into the average-income ones.

The socio-economic structure of Vietnam, in general, has contributed significantly in promotion of socio-economic development through transferring, developing and applying scientific technology in earlier stage of development. The proportion of industry and service sector has increased while the proportion of agriculture had decreased gradually in ratio in the total economy. Further, some high and advanced level technological industries have been established step by step. This is the change suitable to the goals of the industrialization and modernization process, as well as the development tendency of the modern economy. The acquirement and application of

the state of the art technologies to the important economic field such as the oil and gas exploration, information and communication technology, construction, shipbuilding and other sectors have contributed remarkably in the improvement of the country's economy; from there having made a strong foundation to the process of industrialization and modernization, concurrently enhancing the quality of socio-economic development, improving the people's living standard. Another important achievement is the transferring and applying of the science and the state of the art technology of the world helped us to exploit and use natural resources more effectively and economically, while improving the working environment, the level and skills of labor forces in many industries, as well as the management level of executives, to promote the scientific-technological research activities in domestic arena.

In last 25 years Vietnam attained miraculous achievements in almost every sphere and the credit for which goes to the policy of renovation in general, and science and technology in particular. Due to mastering the advanced technology and science, it not only achieved around development but also went up to the level of various leading countries. We may cite the ship building industry as an example. Further, thanks to making new varieties through bio-technology, the cultivating process also improved and as a result Vietnam became one of the largest exporters of rice, cashew nuts, coffee etc.

However, while reviewing the defined goals and objects as compared with international level, we find that the development of science and technology as the first national policy is not adequate enough and is yet to become a driving force in promoting the process of industrialization and modernization. Though there a large number of researchers the quality of their work is not up to the mark. Comparing with the development level of many countries in the world and in the same region, Vietnam's scientific-technological level is still low and backward. The number of Vietnam's scientific technological research works published in the international scientific reviews, is still very few. The number of the inventions and solutions which are certificated protection, is very few; the number of works, which have great significance for the socio-economic development, is very few as well. The rate of advanced technologies and equipment is

very low; the mechanizing and automating level of the economy is still limited; the level of consuming natural resources such as energy, raw materials etc. is rather high. According to the appreciation of many scientists, the devices and technologies of Vietnam is outdated from 2 to 5 generations in comparison with the international level.

Many concrete guidelines, viewpoints of the Party about science and technology mentioned in the Central Conferences and Party's documents are too slowly institutionalized by Government, and not realized seriously and effectively yet. Some economic policies viz. the policies of taxation, finance, export and import, managing finance mechanism in scientific research activities are not really adequate and do not encourage or provide favorable conditions for the investments of the corporations and organizations towards development of science and technology. There still lacks a healthy environment for the scientific-technological investment and competition. Education and training needs qualitative change drastically, especially in building and cultivating the high quality human resource. There still remain many shortcomings in the governmental management for techno-scientific activities. The policies that support and favor people engaged in science and technology are unsatisfactory and their creativity lies unutilized properly. All the above-mentioned reasons have been the barriers for the development of science and technology in Vietnam.

The first scientific-technological achievements after 16 years of implementing the 2nd Resolution of Party's Central Committee (8th term) should be raised to a new level. The shortcomings in perceiving, steering, guiding, and realizing and managing earlier scientific activities should be solved urgently through drastic and feasible solutions.

History of industrialization in second half of 20th century proved that "by and on science and technology," only after some decades, a less-developed country with the average income of 200-300USD per capita rapidly became a developed one with the average income 20.000-30.000USD per capita. It can be said that, the scientific and technological revolution in the context of globalization and international integration has made extremely favorable conditions especially for the developing countries to step up the process of industrialization and modernization, rapidly to minimize the gap from the developed ones.

According to the scientists' forecast, in the coming years, the strong development prospective will belong to the nations that are applying well the science and technology potentials.

Earlier, owing to valuing successes and exploring effectively the achievements of techno-scientific revolution, the advantages of technology transfer have enabled many developing areas to considerably lessened the time involved for industrialization and modernization. The historical reality related to this showed that, in terms of the duration, England/ United Kingdom – the first country of the world, took 120 years to finish industrialization; USA/America and the Western Europe had taken 60 years. Meanwhile, by taking the advantage of the following the countries' industrialization, and using thoroughly the achievements of the modern techno-scientific revolution, the Asian dragons (South Korea, Singapore, Thailand, etc.) have become industrialized modern nations only a shorter time of around 30 years. With current fast pace and the widely influencing scale, hopefully the techno-scientific revolution can help many countries to cut down the time for industrialization and modernization. This is really an extremely important opportunity, which if any nation grabs it may have a great development.

The development reality of Vietnam during the earlier days has exposed that the growth model based-on capital growth, cheap labor, and unrenewable natural resources is no longer appropriate and firm enough to lead the economy in the new context. During the last over 25 years' renovation, Vietnam has attained the great achievements, especially in economic development. The economic growth rate of Vietnam is higher than any of the previous times and to be sorted into the group of economies which have the highest annual growth rate during the past 25 years of renovation. According to per capita GDP, Vietnam passed the poverty rate in order to get into the group of lower middle-income countries. Vietnam's poverty-alleviation achievements are considered rather impressively. These achievements are partly because of Vietnam's selected growth model suitable to the context and the real conditions. However, after effectuating renovation policy, in a span of twenty-five years, with the changes in internal and external conditions, some weak points of this growth model have been revealed hindering the growth. Reviewing the economic development

of the country during past years, it can be seen clearly that Vietnam's economic growth currently still depends heavily on the investment capital. In this case, if it wants to retain a high growth rate, it must continually increase the capital which comes from the accumulated capital or borrowed from other countries. However, Vietnam still is a poor country with a low accumulative reserve for the expanded reproduction and a low saving, so it is difficult to increase capital from the domestic resources. If it wants to increase capital resource, Vietnam must rely on the foreign capital resources more. But in the context of the international economic crisis currently, especially the financial and public-debt crisis, both the FDI capital and others are limited and sustainable (because of being borrowed), at the same time implicating the unsafe factors and risks, besides Vietnam's economic growth does not rely much on knowledge, techno-sciences. The knowledge-economy index is still very low, does not reach the world's middle level. According to the World Bank's estimating method, Vietnam's knowledge economy Index is 3.02 in 2008, ranked 102nd among 133 nations. The index of Vietnam is higher than one of the low-income group of countries but is much lower than one of the lower-middle-income group of countries. In comparison to the countries in the region, the Vietnam's knowledge-economy index is not equal to one-half of the index of NIC's group (South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong), and much lower than that of Malaysia, Thailand, China, and Philippines.

Moreover, the situation of high inflation, high interest rate, and high surplus of imports over exports, causes the stable level of macro-economy to be less firm, the trust of investors in business environment, and the trust of society in value of currency also declines. Although Vietnam's labour productivity has increased considerably, on an average it is 4.8% per one year. But while comparing to some countries in the region, with level of the current labour productivity, Vietnam still lags behind. (the current China's labour productivity is higher 2.6 times, and Thailand is 4.3 times). In recent sessions of the Party Congresses, while appreciating and evaluating the economic development quality, CPV clarified that Vietnam's economy has reached a good growth level but in totality, *it is not really sustainable and its competitive power is still low*. The economic growth is only in width, but

does not develop the comparative-edge. The effective use of invested capital, especially the state capital is very low. The renewing technological speed of industries is much slower than the countries in the region and in the world; the scientific content in each product unit is quite low.

Thus, in order to avoid the risk of backward and to escape “middle-income trap,” at the same time to reach the level of developed countries, Vietnam should not purchase the growth models which are old, less developed, less effective, and unsustainable. In other words, it is the time when Vietnam has to regulate its growth model fitting to the new context, namely the fast and sustainable economic development. The present growth model of many developed countries is closely connected to sustainable growth to the renovation of economic structure, especially the renovation in depth. Factually, many nations are turning towards developing the industries, fields which produce the high technological content products, save energy and natural resource, friendly to environment, develop services and a high qualitative human resource.

In order possibly to renovate the growth model, to restructure economy towards the quality, effectivity, and to enhance the competitive capacity for the fast and sustainable development, there is no way but by and on science and technology, high qualitative human resource, and developing knowledge economy. Reviewing 25 years of renovation, 20 years of realizing the 1991 Platform, and 10 years of implementing the socio-economic development strategy (2001-2010), it can be seen that growth and development during recent years firstly and mainly based-on the “untiedness,” breaking down the barriers, releasing productive forces, reforming mechanism. In other words, we concentrated solving all the difficulties needed to be solved, and the growth as the result of these endeavours also reached its threshold. It means that it is the time we have to make the breakthrough in scientific and technological development. If this can not be realized, it is very difficult to carry out an economic development “fast and sustainably,” even it can be lagged and declined considerably. Thus, only basing on science and advanced technology we can get an in depth economic growth to ensure the fast and sustainable development of the country.

It is essential to have suitable measures to effectively promote activities in research, implementation and application of science and technology, specially the top national policy of science and technology. In other words, for science and technology to develop properly, to act as a driving force for the industrialization and modernization of the country by shortening the way, to contribute to the construction and protection of socialist Viet Nam, we need to develop science and technology as one of the important internal forces. Besides, we also need a sound direction for the development of science and technology in accordance with the modern science and technological revolution, globalization, and international integration in order to narrow the gap step by step not only in the region but also in the field between our country and others in the world.

The Congress XI of Communist Party set the objective of "turning our country into a modern, industrialized one by 2020." There is not much time left to meet the deadline for this objective, as well as for the requirement of adopting a new growth model, and reconstructing the economy. In the Documents of the National Party Congress XI, the important position and role of science and technology in the construction and development of the country was once again emphasized. The Party clearly indicated: "Strongly developing the productive forces to match the increasingly advanced science and technology level"⁹⁹ is one of 5 *development points* in Socio-economic development Strategy 2011-2020; to consider "...a tight combination between human resource development and science-technology development and application"¹⁰⁰ is a vital part in the content of 3 strategic break through. Regarding the major directional points of development, from the aspect of science and technology, the Communist Party of Viet Nam asserted: "Science and technology holds a key role in expanding modern productive forces, protecting natural resources and environment, increasing productivity, quality, effectiveness, and developing speed and competitiveness of the economy. Science and technological development is aimed at boosting the industrialization and modernization of a country, promoting knowledge-based economy, to catch

⁹⁹ The Communist Party of Vietnam, *The Documents of the 11th Party's Congress*, p.30.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p.32.

up with the world's advanced level. Comprehensive development of science and technology must be attached with the development of culture and rise of people's intellectual standards. There should be more and effective use of science and technological potentials of the country, effective study and application of scientific achievements and modern technologies in the world. Simultaneously we also need to focus on establishing approaches and policies that encourage creativity, employ talents, and enhance the application of science and technology."¹⁰¹

In the intermediate future, to make science and technology a key driving force for the rapid and firm development, Congress XI affirmed: "Focusing Science and technological activities on contributing to the industrialization and modernization, and in-depth development. Quick increase of science and technological capacity with focus on the encouragement of strong innovations, comprehensive development of the organization and management schemes for science and technology. Promote the role and effectiveness of major science and technological organizations in the implementation of key science and technological tasks... Expand science and technological companies, technology innovating funds, and venture capital funds. Establish training policies, attract and well treat science-technology talents. Apply democratic rules, respect and encourage intellectual's freedom of thinking in researching. Boost up the research, implementation and application of technology; properly and comprehensively develop social sciences, natural sciences, technical and technological sciences..."¹⁰² These are the Party's strategic guidelines, which provide orientations for science and technological development in the upcoming period.

Development "based on science and technology" in our country is completely new a development mode, with little practical experience. However, in the present context, only science and technology can force Vietnam to have a leap forward. To overcome this challenge, a brainpower mobilization of the Central Committee of the Communist Party is needed to establish and issue a *new thematic resolution* on

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p.78

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, pp.132-135.

science and technological development in the context of market economy and international integration, as well as the contribution of the whole political system, the committed support and participation of officers, Party members, people of all class throughout the country, especially of the science and technological class.

Our goal, as pointed out by the Communist Party of Vietnam, is to lead the country to socialism despite a long time under great challenges, to build Vietnam with "rich people, strong nation, democratic, fair, civilized society." Once the goal is determined, the task is to decide the method and its arrangement to realize it. Science and technological development is the way, method, measure to boost the rapid, firm development directed towards the above overall goal asserted by the Communist Party of Vietnam. The release of a new Central Resolution on science and technological development will be the starting step, which forms the basis and direction for the development of science and technology – the key to performing the quick, firm development strategy of our country currently.

Human Development within Vietnam's Strategy of Sustainable Development

In order to overcome paradoxes, shortcomings and negative outcomes of development based on an outdated concept, which identified development with pure economic growth, today most of the countries in the world choose sustainable development as their way of growth. They use planning and implementations strategies that are attentive to sustainable development based on their concrete historical conditions. Within that general trend, Vietnam has affirmed and gradually implemented its own strategy of sustainable development. We can say that the sustainable development in Vietnam is ultimately human development – the very development of man, for man and by man.

The concept of *sustainable development* came into existence in early years of 1980s and became popular in 1987. Thus, sustainable development is generally defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.¹⁰³ This is the development that guarantees the close and harmonious combination between three aspects of development: economic development, social development and environmental protection.

For the last two decades, throughout the world the issue of sustainable development has received special attention and became a global development demand. Sustainable development has become one of the much-discussed topics in different national and international conferences at all levels.

In Vietnam the view on sustainable development was perceived and expressed very early in the official documents and resolutions of the Communist Party of Vietnam, especially since the beginning of the cause of Renovation in Vietnam. As early as in 1991 the Communist Party of Vietnam emphasized in the *Socio-Economic Development Stra-*

¹⁰³ Brundtland Report by World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED).

tegy for 1991-2000 adopted at the 7th Party's Congress that economic growth should be accompanied with social justice, social progress, cultural development and environmental protection. The 8th Party's Congress (1996) highlighted the lesson that "economic growth closely links with social justice, social progress, the preservation and development of national culture and the protection of the environment. In the Socio-Economic Development Strategy for 1991-2000 adopted at the 9th Party's Congress in 2001 the Communist Party of Vietnam affirmed "to develop rapidly, effectively and sustainably, economic growth associates with social justice, social progress and the protection of the environment." The 10th Party's Congress in 2006 continued to emphasize the lesson of rapid and sustainable development. In addition to contents on socio-economic development and environment, it also added the requirements for comprehensive human development and practicing democracy. Besides, the Congress defined the general objective of the 2006-2010 five-year plan as "Further promoting both rapid, quality and sustainable economic development and human development."

We can see that during its 11th Party's Congress the Communist Party of Vietnam stated clearly in the *Socio-Economic Development Strategy for 2011-2020* that "rapid development must be closely attached to sustainable development, which is the throughout demand of the Strategy." This demand encompasses such key factors as "developing sustainably the economy... Economic growth must harmoniously associate with social justice and progress, constantly improving the quality of people's life. Socio-economic development goes hand in hand with environment protection and improvement." Among those contents of sustainable development outlined by the Party, there are two important points related directly to human development:

First, the economic development must harmoniously associate with cultural and social development, the constant improvement of the quality of people's life, the realization of social progress and social justice in every step and every guideline of development. Culture is considered as the spiritual foundation of the society, the constituting factor of stable and long-lasting value and particular national character of a nation. Culture operates as a mighty social driving force and penetrates into development process. The development of each era in

each nation is imbued with cultural character. Based on cultural foundation, human not only handles the relations with fellow-creatures and natural environment in the present life, but also solves the relations with future generations in the course of development. In this sense, culture is both the result of rapid and sustainable development and the solid foundation for rapid and sustainable development. Cultural development should be put into equal-footing to and harmonious relationship with economic development. Efforts should be spared for developing healthy life, lifestyle and cultural environment. Promoting all cultural aspects so as to enhance good values of the nation and absorb cultural quintessence of mankind and make it both the spiritual foundation of society and driving force of development.

Practicing social justice and social progress is an important content of sustainable development. It is also the norm reflecting the nature of our regime. Serious inequity and polarization create social conflicts in a number of countries in the world and erode the growth. The Vietnam intends to realize social justice and social progress in each policy and stage of development. Vietnam has been focusing on poverty reduction, diversifying resources and mode of implementation so as to sustainably reduce poverty. People are encouraged to get rich legally, and at the same time the polarization is limited through income distribution policies and the development of open and effective social security and social welfare systems. Vietnam continues to streamline the mechanism of distribution at business entities and salary and wage policy in order to ensure equity of interests which, in turn, acts as the driving force for socio-economic development.

Additionally, Vietnam pays particular attention to the cause of development of education and training, especially tertiary and vocational training, in order to turn out an appropriate structure of quality labor force in response to the need of the restructuring of the economy and transformation of growth model, strongly enhancing medical services and promoting health care activities directing resolutely and comprehensively, and mobilizing the strength of entire political system to attain solid and apparent changes in the fight against corruption, social evils and traffic accidents.

Second, the mastership of the people is to be brought into full play, democracy, especially direct democracy, is to be practiced widely, an open and consensus society is to be fostered.

Practicing democracy is a constituent of sustainable development, and was stated clearly by the Party at the 10th Party Congress. Practicing democracy is to multiply the contents of sustainable development. It is stemming from a very important stance which considers human is both aim and subject of the development. Human resources are a longterm competitive advantage and decisive factor to the development of a nation. Widely practicing democracy will promote the creativity of individuals which contributes to the rapid and sustainable development of our country. Thus, this higher type of democracy with the deeper social consensus and the great national unity is further fortified.

In order to bring democracy into full play and make it become resources for development, two conditions should be satisfied: first, creating equal opportunity for everybody to learn and build a learning society in order to raise people's knowledge; second, practicing mastership of the people through institutional settings necessary for insuring democracy in all facets of social life and expanding direct democracy. Democracy is closely linked with discipline and laws.

Thus, the standpoint on sustainable development with concrete contents has been perceived and reflected very early by the Party and Government. Sustainable development has become a consistent policy in the leadership and governance of the process of national development in recent decades. Both within international and national level, the Government of Vietnam has strongly committed to implement sustainable development as well as to link sustainable development with all-round development of man and consider human development is both the aim and driving force of the socio-economic development.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ Government's decision number 153 in 2004 on The Orientation of the Strategy of Sustainable Development in Vietnam, the Establishment of the National Council for Sustainable Development, The Project on Implementation of the 21 Agenda, The Goals of Minennium, and other official documents.

The issue is why does Vietnam pay special attention to the role of man and the policy of human development in the Strategy of sustainable development?

In the history of economics, some pre-Marxist bourgeois economists, for example Adam Smith, regarded labor as the source of all wealth. In his *Dialectics of Nature*, Engels affirmed that labor could be the source of wealth but labor alone cannot be sufficient for the generation of all wealth. Labor in combination with the nature, which supplies materials for labor, could generate all wealth.¹⁰⁵ Therefore, the statement that man has a decisive role in creation of wealth does not mean to isolate man from natural and other resources. On the contrary, man should be put into relationships with all available resources. Thus, man plays his role both as the subject as well as the object of socio-economic processes.

In his relations to natural and other resources man acts as the subject of exploitation and utilization. Natural and other resources themselves cannot take part in socio-economic processes; therefore, cannot be the driving forces for socio-economic development. The role of driving force always belongs to man. Man itself with his strength and intellect is the decisive factor for the effectiveness of exploitation and utilization of natural and other resources. This is the very dialects between man and resources.

The reality shows that thanks to advantages of geographical conditions, richness of natural resources as well as the right way to explore those advantages, some countries in the region and in the world have become rich nations with high-growth rate economies. On the contrary, as examples we can list many cases, in which man faces serious and unpredictable environmental and ecological disasters due to his irrational and unaware exploitation of natural resources for the sake of pure economic benefits.

Man, not only plays a decisive role in the effective exploitation and utilization of natural and other resources but also contributes to regenerate new resources. This relates to the inheritance between different generations in the course of development of human societies.

¹⁰⁵ Marx and Engels, *The Complete Works*, Vol. 20, p.641.

Each generation inherits resources left by previous generations and at the same time creates new resources for future generations.

Today, almost all countries in the world are well aware and declare war against the negative results brought about by the development based on the old view on growth. However, fine intentions are not the real mechanism to prevent futureless growth. The complexities of the current globalization process, the interference and manipulation of the rich nations, the lack of many kinds of resources prevalent in slow-developed economies, the prevalent situation of corruption in some countries always cause serious threats for economies oriented towards sustainable development. Being well aware of that point, the Communist Party of Vietnam affirms that “the building and development of the economy must have a cultural aim and orient toward a just and civilized society and man’s comprehensive development. Culture is the result of economic development and, at the same time, a driving force of economic development. All components should be closely linked to the life and activity of the society in all spheres of politics, economy, laws, disciplines in order to become the most important inner resources of development.”

As a subject, man not only decides the efficiency of the exploitation and utilization of presently, available natural and other resources but also contributes importantly to sustainable development in the future.

As an object, man becomes the object of exploitation, utilization, investment and development. While talking about the role of human resources as the object of exploitation and utilization, people often mention the inexhaustible character of human resources. In recent decades scientists and policy-makers in all countries worldwide have come to realize that natural resources, regardless of how rich they may be, will be exhausted under the exploitation of human beings and only human resources are unlimited and non-exhaustible.

While discussing about human resources, scholars often talk about their qualitative and quantitative aspects. The quantity of human resources is labor force and labor force availability for socio-economic development. Indexes of the quantity of human resources of a nation are its population, population growth rate, average life expectancy, population structure such as the proportion of working-

age population and number of non-working population etc. The quantity of human resources plays an important role in socio-economic development. The non-correlation between the quantity of human resources and development will impact negatively on socio-economic development. Some countries, especially the developing ones, suffer from the excess of labor forces and therefore in those countries employment becomes a pressing issue. Unemployment brings many negative effects and becomes one of the causes of crimes in some societies. By contrast, in some countries with high growth rate of development, there is high demand for labor force, especially seasonal labor force, low-skilled labor force or labor force in those industries that local workers decline to take. Those countries have to import labor forces from other nations, especially from developing ones. The import of labor force helps the imported countries to deal with the demand for labor force but on the other hand, it creates some changes in their social life.

However, the most important element in human resources is not quantity but quality of human resources. The latter is a decisive factor for socio-economic development as well as the cause of industrialization and modernization. Quality of human resources means the intellectual component of human resources or "laborers with high intelligence, high skills, good moral qualities, who have been educated and promoted by an advanced education linked closely to modern science and technology." The limitless and exhaustible character of human resources means the intellectual component of human resources. Alvin Toffler, an American futurist, claims that while all-natural resources may be exploited to exhaustion, human intelligence will never be exhausted and "knowledge can be endlessly taken."

Because of the importance of intelligence and knowledge, most countries in the world today strive to enhance the intellectual content of their labor forces. Education and training play very important role in enhancing the knowledge component within labor forces. Historical experiences have shown that no country or nation in the world can become rich and have a high economic growth rate without universalizing general school education. Newly-industrialized countries like Singapore and South Korea, who reached a high economic growth

rate in 1970s and 1980s, had universalized general school education before their economic take-off.

On the other hand, empirical researches in recent years have shown that capital investment plays only small role in economic growth. The quality of labor force plays a decisive role in the value of surplus products. Moreover, in the era of scientific and technological revolutions, information and knowledge become the core components of the whole modern system.

Vietnam at the moment is classified into the group of developing countries. If we take the time when countries have started the period of industrialization as starting point for comparison, there is a fact that natural resources of developing countries are poorer than that of the developed countries. Vietnam is just within that common case. While being not really rich in natural resources and also affected heavily by wars as well as mistakes of the old mechanism, in order to carry out the strategy of rapid and sustainable development, Vietnam has no other choice than to uphold and utilize properly the role of human resources. This is the very way to bring into full play the country's inner resources in order to accomplish successfully the national strategy of fast and sustainable development.

Over the last 10 years of implementing the strategy of fast and sustainable development, Vietnam has achieved very important and impressive outcomes in human development.

The average economic growth was about 7.3%/year¹⁰⁶ which was one of those highest growth rates of countries in the region. Average GDP per capita in 2010 is about USD 1,200 which surpasses threshold of low income developing countries. Material and spiritual life of people has considerably improved. Real average income per capita has increased about 2.3-fold over the last 10 years. Poverty reduction has attained outstanding outcomes which is highly appreciated by the international community. The income gap between urban and rural areas decreased from 2.3 times in 1999 to 2 times in 2008. Children have been given due care and protection. The percentage of malnourished children under 5 years old decreased from 33.8% to less than 18%. Average life-span of the people increased from 67 to 72-year-old. Lower secondary education has been universalized across

¹⁰⁶ In 2010 GDP was 6.5% while the average GDP for 2001-2010 was 7.2%.

the country. Our human development index (HDI) has unceasingly increased. Its 2008 index was 0.733 which fell into the upper average nations in the world. The level of cultural appreciation and access to information by the people has apparently increased. Social security and social welfare have been given prior importance and gradually expanded. Besides great results in socializing the development of social sectors, state budget financing for these sectors has constantly increased. Medical insurance coverage has been expanded from 13.4% in 2000 up to 62% in 2010. Gender equity posted various progress, the ratio of women holding position of parliament members and important responsibility in the political system has increased. In 2008, Vietnam accomplished most of millennium goals set forth for the year of 2015.

Democracy in the society has continuously expanded, the society becomes more open and consensus; the defense and security are stably maintained; our political and social life remain stable. There have been more positive changes in the face of the country; the position and status of Vietnam in the international arena have improved and heightened; many positive premises for fast and sustainable development have been created for improving the quality of the people.

Besides the aforesaid results, however, there exists a number of weaknesses and mismatch. Achievement attained do not match with potentiality. In the area of culture and society, there are a number of pending matters and pressing issues that prolong in some aspects. Social evils tend to increase. Traffic jam and accidents are at a serious level. Corruption is yet pushed back. Quality of education and training, especially at tertiary education and vocational training are poor and need to be improved. Hospitals are too crowded with low quality medical services. The above-mentioned limitation and weaknesses partly stem from objective reasons while subjective factors act as the main cause, such sustainable development has not been fully perceived and accordingly specified consistently in policies, programming, planning and regulatory tools. In management and operation, it is biased on growth rate without giving due consideration to quality and sustainability of the development. Drastic changes are not seen in resolution of pressing social problems. The process of programming

and planning, the formulation of socio-economic development projects and construction thereof, the implementation of environment protection policy have not been closely incorporated and coordinated. There has been no apparent and effective mechanism of management and supervision of sustainable development. The mastership of the people, especially the direct democracy, has not been brought into full play.

The national cause of socialistic-oriented renovation, building and development in Vietnam under the leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam has undergone the path of more than a quarter of a century. Since then Vietnam has made many great and historically significant achievements in all areas of the social life. The standpoint of rapid and sustainable development has been implemented steadfastly, especially in respect to human development. Man has been posited into the central position, both as the aim and the driving force of the socio-economic development. We can say that in Vietnam today, sustainable development aims for no other target than human development, improvement of the quality of human life; in its turn, human development serves as the basis and most solid foundation for the implementation of sustainable development. This is the dialectics of development in the modern society.

Part III
Development in Vietnam:
Some Socio-Economic Issues

The Views of Some Economic Theories on the Economic Crisis of Capitalism and Some Lessons for Vietnam¹⁰⁷

The recent world economic crisis, which is widely recognized as the worst economic downturn since the 1930s and one of the greatest assaults on global economic stability, makes people rethink about the mechanism of capitalistic market economy in particular and the nature of capitalism and its legitimacy in general. Neo-liberalism as an ideology based on economic liberalism has been seriously challenged. People are questioning the real nature of capitalism, whether the project of global capitalism is realistic and whether capitalism is the only system (model) of sustainable development. In order to address those questions in this article we would like to focus on the brief analysis of the views presented in the economic theories of Neo-liberalism, Keynes and Marx on the economic crisis of capitalism as well as the solutions suggested by those theories. We also would like to point out some methodological recommendations for the development of socialistic-oriented market economy in Vietnam.

Neo-liberalism, Keynes and Marx on the Economic Crisis of Capitalism

We know that Neo-liberalism is a school of thought closely related to the ideas of economic liberalism. Using neo-classical theories of economics, Neo-liberalists advocate economic policies that intend to minimize the role of state and maximize the private business sector. And consequently, government activity will be replaced by market forces in order to give more freedom to individuals to pursue their self-interests and all income distribution mediated through free market should be regarded as natural and just. Neo-liberal economic philosophy can be tracked back to the theories of Hayek and Von

¹⁰⁷ Co-authored with Tran Tuan Phong, Vice Director of the Institute of Philosophy, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences.

Mises, who believed that society should be characterized by the "spontaneous order" which emerges when individuals pursue their own ends within a framework set by law and tradition.

According to the logic of the unrestrained free market advocated by Neo-liberalism, economic crisis and failures – including high rate of inflation and low economic growth and stagnation – are exclusively the result of excessive government intervention in the market. As the market manages to rationalize self-adjustment, all deviations from market efficiency must be attributable to external causes only: economic and financial bubbles and other disruptions are caused by governments and other "imperfections," not by markets themselves. Thus, in the 1980s, the governments in the USA and Britain showed strong support for neo-liberal movement of anti-tax, de-regulation and other conservative measures to reduce government interference in the market. All those kinds of policies and measures are implemented in order to give maximal freedom and maximal space to private market in economy. In the form of a minimal state or night watchman state, government's duty is only to enforce contracts and protect the allocation of property rights. All other economic functions should be left to what R. Reagan call 'the magic of market'. Hayek referred to the market as 'a game', 'a contest played according to the rules and decided by superior skill, strength or good fortune'.¹⁰⁸ In Hayek's order, 'the game' is the only proper determinant of the allocation of resources.

While Neo-liberalism tries to prove that the causes of economic crisis and failure of market economy are external or due to the interference of governments and other non-market forces, Keynes sees the causes of crisis within the mechanism of capitalistic free market. Keynes argues that though capitalist economies contain forces that are capable to restore full employment but these forces (sometimes) are too weak or do not always react timely to the changes in the market. Private sector decisions sometimes lead to inefficient macroeconomic outcomes. As a result, market-based economies can suffer from a persistent lack of demand, consigning millions to unnecessary unemployment and misery.

¹⁰⁸ F. Hayek, *Law, Legislation and Liberty: The Mirage of Social Justice* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976), Vol. 2, p. 115.

Thus, to some extent, Keynesian policy is a reversal of the prevalent orthodoxy of Neo-liberalism in last few decades, which held that efforts to use fiscal policy to manage the economy and mitigate downturns were doomed to failure. With the emphasis on the government's role in economy, Keynes argues for the mixed economy, in which government could play a positive role through the use of monetary and fiscal policy to control level of aggregate demand, which is the as the sum of consumption, investment and government spending, and hence the level of employment during the time of economic and final crisis. It is Keynes who points out that the government plays an important role in providing direct stimulus to the economies suffered from the collapse in private demand, in rescuing the private financial system from collapse as well as in designing a regulatory regime for the whole capitalistic system.¹⁰⁹

Despite his critique of neo-liberalism, Keynes remains a faithful advocate of free market system of capitalism: "There is no objection to be raised against the classical analysis of the manner in which private self-interest will determine what in particular is produced, in what proportions the factors of production will be combined to produce it, and how the value of the final product will be distributed between them."¹¹⁰ Keynes believed that once full employment had been achieved by fiscal policy measures, the market mechanism could then operate freely. "Thus," continued Keynes, "apart from the necessity of central controls to bring about an adjustment between the propensity

¹⁰⁹ Many world leaders use Keynesian economics to justify government stimulus packages for their economies. The new Keynesian consensus was set out in the communique issued by the Group of 20 leading industrialized and emerging economies in November 2008, in which they vowed to "use fiscal measures to stimulate domestic demand to rapid effect" within a policy framework "conducive to fiscal sustainability." However, the move towards using fiscal policy as a means of boosting advanced economies still has limits and can only be a kind of temporary relief and unsustainable fiscal positions may destroy confidence.

¹¹⁰ John M. Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*, in *Collected Writings* (Reprinted in 1936), Vol. 7. pp. 378–397.

to consume and the inducement to invest, there is no more reason to socialize economic life than there was before."¹¹¹

While Neo-liberalism and Keynes think that economic crisis is related to business cycle and not to longterm factors and, therefore, is temporary and to be followed by a period of economic recovery and growth, Marx believes firmly that cyclical crises are characteristic of capitalism. One of the central concerns of Marx, in his study of the capitalist mode of production, was to identify and understand its inherent contradictions, the source of the historic crisis which would eventually create conditions for its overthrow and replacement by a more humane and rational system of production.

Capitalism is a regime in permanent crisis, because capitalism engages in a process of constant transformation of the labor process and revolution of the relations of production, driven by the irresolvable contradiction between capital and labor. Or, to put it another way, capitalism is unsustainable development by its very nature. The only concern of capitalists is the profit and the capitalist system could be characterized by E. M. Wood as 'the sacrifice of people and nature to profit'. Capital in its essence is self-expanding value, driven incessantly to ever larger levels of accumulation, more profit without any bound. As Marx writes: "Capital is the endless and limitless drive to go beyond its limiting barrier. Every boundary is and has to be a barrier for it. Else it would cease to be capital-money as self-reproductive. If capital ever perceived a certain boundary not as a barrier, but became comfortable within it as a boundary, it would have declined from exchange value to use value... Capital is the constant movement to create more of the same."¹¹²

For this reason, any effort to control capital without uprooting the basis of value production is ultimately self-defeating. So long as value and surplus value persist, capital will strive to self-expand; any external boundaries established for it, whether by state intervention or regulation, can and will eventually be overcome. Consequently, capitalism can be seen as the self-destructive system: the run for profit through the excessive exploitation of both the nature and workers

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 379.

¹¹² Karl Marx, *Grundryism* (London: Penguin, 1973), p. 334.

(laborers), the very resources and people it depends on for its profits, can bring about fatal outcomes.

Thus, we can see that Marx's and Keynes's approach and apply the concept of crisis in distinct and opposite ways. While Keynes attempts to stay strictly within the economic sphere and remove itself from the same once the order which it is its intent to preserve no longer requires it. Marx, on the other hand, sees economic crisis as part of the larger crisis of the social order he wishes to supplant. The fundamental contradiction of capitalism, as Marx sees it, is the contradiction between ever-growing social character of the production process and the form of capitalistic private ownership. Without the elimination of the fetter of the private ownership of the means of production human society is unable to achieve further development.

Thus, both Marx and Keynes addressed certain aspects of the capitalistic market economy but both could not suggest some kind of comprehensive solution to overcome crises and guarantee the sustainable development for humanity. Moreover, in the context of today's globalization and scientific and technological revolution, many recently-raised issues of market economy have not yet been addressed in the above-mentioned theories.

The Economic Crisis and Some Lessons for Vietnam

The global economic crisis brings some serious impact in the economic development of Vietnam. Under the timely intervention of the government Vietnam was able to reduce the negative effects of the crisis and was able to recover its economy. Through dealing with the crisis, we try to find the best way to combine market economy with socialism to achieve a crisis-free and sustainable development.

While developing a socialist-oriented market economy we, the Vietnamese, are well aware of the great strengths of open, competitive markets, but we also try to avoid the extreme capitalism and unrestrained greed that have perverted so much of the global financial system in recent times. It is the aim of development of socialist-oriented market economy to create a kind of balance and harmony between the private and the public, profit and wages, the market and the state.

We realize fully that the economic theory of Marx is still theoretically and methodologically valuable. Marx's theory plays a fundamental and guiding role in economic thinking in the present context of globalization. What we must do is to rethink and develop further Marx's ideas as well as to acquire critically the quintessence of other traditions and schools of thoughts in order to work out a viable theory of development for Vietnam.

We understand that economic cycle is an inherent feature of market economy. Thus, the socialist-oriented market economy we are developing in Vietnam is also within the impact of that law. Therefore, in the context of globalization and expanding international integration, Vietnam should improve its reserve capacity, be ready to react effectively to all kinds of crisis-situations as well as minimize the negative impacts of economic cycles. All that could be done with the support of the whole political system, all our people. The experience of dealing with the crisis shows the importance of the upholding the advantages of the socialist regime: the leadership of the Communist Party manifested appropriate policy-guidelines, the role of the government in its consistent implementation of its policies, the role of state's economic sector in sustaining the stability of the whole economy as well as in economic recovery, the contribution and support the common people for the common cause of development of Vietnam.

The Policy on Agricultural Land and Its Impact on Agricultural Production and Peasant's Life in Vietnam Today

Introduction

Agricultural land is the most valuable natural resource, one of the most decisive resources for the life and development of the peasants in the context of socialist-oriented market economy in Vietnam today. Since the beginning of the Renovation, the State has issued policies to help the peasants to get access to land use rights. Those policies exerted positive impacts on agricultural land and agriculture in general in Vietnam. However, in order to make Vietnam agriculture develop stronger and more sustainable there arise many issues relating to the policy on land in Vietnam.

Policies on Agricultural Land in Vietnam Today

The current policies on agricultural land in Vietnam were the results of the Renovation Process initiated by the Politburo Decision No.10 issued in 1988 on the handle of self-mastership rights to peasant's households, the Decision of the Sixth Plenum of Sixth Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam (November, 1988) on the handle of land to peasant's households. Those policies were concretized in Law on Land issued in 1993 (which has been continuously revised in following years, especially the 2003 and 2013 Law on Land), the *Law on Land Use Transfer Tax* (1999), the *Law on Agricultural Land Use Tax* (in 2000, replacing agricultural land Tax). The key contents of the policies on agricultural land of the State of Vietnam today are expressed in the tenure of agricultural land ownership, the State's guidelines on land price, the policy on concentration and accumulation of agricultural land, the policy on agricultural land tax and policy on compensation for agricultural land recovery.

Agricultural Land Ownership Tenure

The tenure of agricultural land ownership in Vietnam is expressed concentratedly in two rights: Ownership right and use right. The State, the subject of ownership right (land belongs to the entire people with the State as the representative owner), the masses, mainly peasants are subject of the land use right. That kind of ownership tenure is specific in comparison with many countries in the world.

As the owner and the organ of public management of land, the State has the right: To recover peasant's land use right, to decide conversion of agricultural land use purpose and transfer of agricultural land, the use of which has been converted, to organizations and individuals who are not peasants and to determine prices of the recovery of agricultural land.

Peasants can use agricultural land for agricultural production purposes. Apart from their use right, peasants also have the right to transfer, inherit and mortgage their use right. According to the current laws the term for leasing agricultural land to peasants is 50 years for land using for planting perennial crops and 20 years for other lands.

The 2013 Land Law devotes the entire Chapter XI on the rights and obligations of land users. Under the law, land users have their right to transfer their land use rights and the duty to implement all rights and obligations written in the law. Their land use rights are protected by the law. Under the 2013 Land Law, land use rights also included the rights to transfer, exchange, lease, inherit and mortgage.

The Policy on Agricultural Land Price

The Government's Decree No 188/2004/NĐ-CP issued on 16-11-2004, determines land price in accordance with market prices and incomes generated by the land. The right to determine agricultural land price is authorized to authorities of province's level. The tenure for price regulation is more flexible and following closely with market price.¹¹³

¹¹³ According to the Government's Decree No. 188/2004/NĐ-CP issued on November 16, 2004, when the gap between state's and market prices is more

According to 2013 Land Law, the land price is based on the land use specified on the land use certificate, land tenure and to remain close to the market price or the income generated from the land. The land price table is changed every five years and is adjusted when there is a large change in the market.

While officially recognizing market prices on land and regulate State's prices to meet market price, the State recognizes indirectly the existence of land use prices and land use market. This is one of the bases for the State to determine the prices of land exchange between the State and the citizens.

Policies on Encouraging Land Accumulation and Collection

The handle of the land to peasant' households was initiated in the beginning of 1990s in accordance with an egalitarian mechanism on both the quantity and quality of land. As a result, agricultural land handed to peasants became too divided. To promote the farmers to conduct large scale agricultural production, the State has provided a policy to encourage farmers – “exchange farming fields,” thereby, farmers can transfer or exchange land with one another to own larger and more collective agricultural fields.

Policies on Agricultural Land Withdrawal and Compensation

The 2003 Law on Land determines that the State has the right to recover agricultural land use rights, as well as housing land of farmers for objectives of public interest, or socio-economic development. While recovering peasants' agricultural land and housing land, the State must compensate peasants by way of allocation of new land for the same purpose as the type of land which was recovered or shall be paid compensation equal to the value of land use rights as at the time when the decision on recovery is made where no land is available for compensation.

than 30% for the period over 60 days, the Ministry of Finance should propose to the Government measures to change prices.

Since 1990s the State has recovered many agricultural lands in order to develop new industrial zones and urban squares.¹¹⁴ In the new Land Law (2013) the State will only acquire land from individuals or organizations for national defense or security objectives and for the socio-economic developmental interests of the nation or people. Land acquisitions must be done in a manner of transparency and accountability and compensation be paid in accordance with the laws. A key purpose of having such tight regulations on land acquisition for socio-economic projects (in the interest of the nation and the people) is to restrain abuses of power and corruption.

Policies on Agricultural Land Tax

While using the land, peasants must pay to the State the tax on: land lease, land use and other administrative fees. In general, the total of agricultural land tax is not big. From 2003 to 2010, the Government decided to exempt tax for agricultural land under the land limits for all peasants and completely exempt land use tax for poor peasant households and reduce 50% tax for using the land in excess of the land limits. The land tax is applicable only for using the land in excess of the land limits or auctioned land. All fees are small often paid for the certificate of land use right, mapping, land registration.

In general, policies on agricultural land tax have been streamlined remarkably, including tax exemption with transactions of farming land transfers with a view to encouraging land accumulation and collection by farmers, and exemption with land.

The Impact of Agricultural Land Policies to Vietnam's Agriculture in the Renovation Period

Vietnam is an agricultural country. Thanks to the new government's policy on agricultural land, Vietnam's agriculture has enjoyed positive changes in population and labor forces. In 1990 80% of the population of Vietnam (66 millions) lived in rural areas. In 2008 the

¹¹⁴ For example, for the period from 2000 to 2005, the State has recovered about 366.000 hectares of agricultural land, an average of 73.000 hectares per year.

rural population only consisted of 72% of the whole population. Together with the increase of rural population from 58.9 million in 2000 to 62 million in 2008, there was a strong process of re-structure of labors in agricultural, forestry and aqua-cultural areas. The movement of labor forces from rural areas contributed to the enlargement of average land area per agricultural laborer from 0.9 hectares in 2000 to more than 1.1 hectares in 2008.

The above-mentioned changes confirm the rightness of the economic renovations and the process of international integration of Vietnam in general and policies on agricultural land in particular. However, the most significant achievement of Vietnam agriculture during the last two decades is attached to foods. During 1970s and 1980s Vietnam often suffered from food shortage and hunger, in 1976 Vietnam had to import 148 thousand tons of rice and in 1986 that number was 483 thousand tons. After implementing the Renovation policy, the agricultural production has increased remarkably. The rice import was reduced to 55 tons in 1989 and there was no rice import in 1990. In 1995 the total food production reached 26 million tons (among which 25 million tons of rice). In 2008 the total food production was 43 million tons (39 million tons of rice). The average food production per person increased from 363 kg per person in 1995 to 502 kg per person in 2008 and in 2012 the food production was about 43.4 million tons, more than one million in comparison with the production of 2011.¹¹⁵

Since 1990 Vietnam had produced enough foods for the population, and exported at least more than 5 million tons of rice each year together with other agricultural products like coffee, pepper, nuts, seafood products in 2012 Vietnam exported 7.7 million tons of rice.¹¹⁶ In 2007 the total value of agricultural export consisted of 19% among 48.4 billion US Dollars of exports. At the same time, Vietnam also imported some foods, which consisted about 6% in total of 60.8 billion US Dollars of exports. The supply of foods has increased gradually and led to the improvement of the situation of key areas in social welfare and economy. The criteria reflecting that fact can be seen in the increase of life expectancy (effected by the rate of infant death) and

¹¹⁵ Danviet newspapers (March 14, 2013).

¹¹⁶ Youth newspaper (March 14, 2013).

rate of death of children less than 5-year-old (decided by nutrition and health care). The average life expectancy increased from 60 years in 1980 to 65 years in 1990, 69 in 2001, 70 years in 2004 and 74 years in 2007. The current average life expectancy of the Vietnamese is 75 years, which is more than 33 years in comparison with the rate of 1960, while the average increase of life expectancy in the world for that period is only 21 years.¹¹⁷

The rate of death of children less than 5 years old reduced from 70/1000 in 1980 to 56/1000 in 1995, 38/1000 in 2004 and 15/1000 in 2005. The rate of death of children less than five years old and one year old reduced from 35% and 45% in 2001 to 16% and 26% in 2005. The above-mentioned achievements are very significant and they are closely related to the positive changes of agricultural land fund in Vietnam.

The Impact of Agricultural Land Policies on Agricultural Land Fund in Vietnam Today

The land in Vietnam is officially divided into agricultural land, non-agricultural land and unused land. Agricultural land category, comprises the following types of land: Land for agricultural cultivation, forest land, land for aquaculture, land for salt production. Agricultural land is divided further into Land for planting perennial crops and land for planting annual crops, which is further divided into land for rice and short-term crops. Forest land is divided into protective forest land and specialized use forest land. The classification of the land serves the basis for land management and planning.

The total area of the land in Vietnam is 33.2 million hectares. Thanks to new policies on land issued in the Renovation period, the agricultural land has increased from 18.2 million in 1995 to 21.5 million in 2000 and 24.7 million by the end of 2006 (75% of the total area of the land of Vietnam), the increase was more than 3.2 million and most of them was forest land (2,9 millions). The total increase of Non-agricultural land was 328 thousand hectares, 347 thousand hectares for aquaculture land and 277 thousand hectares for perennial crops land.

¹¹⁷ Infor.net (July 10, 2012).

Especially, for the period from 1995 to 2006, the largest change of land fund can be seen in the fact that unused land was reduced from 11.7 million in 1995 into 5.1 million in 2006 and the forest land increased from 10.8 million hectares in 1995 to 14.5 million hectares in 2006. Within the agriculture, land fund for rice reduced from 4.3 million in 1995 to 4.1 million in 2006, at the same time there was an increase of lands for other perennial and annual crops. The area of deforested hills in mountain regions had been reduced by about 580 thousand hectares thanks to the efforts of the central and local governments. The total reduction of rice cultivation area is about 337 thousand hectares due to two main reasons: First, partly because of urbanization and industrialization process; second, because rice cultivation brings low incomes and is less attractive than aquacultural cultivation or cultivation of other crops or animal husbandry.

The data collected in 2008 shows that there is little change in land use purposes. The total agricultural land increases up to 25 million hectares. Rich soil land and land for perennial crops remain stable. The forest land increases to 14.8 million hectares and the unused land is reduced to 4.5 million hectares. The non-agricultural land increases in 3.4 million hectares, in which housing land in urban areas significantly increases to 113 thousand hectares.

While evaluating the plan for land use for the period from 2001 to 2010, the Economic Committee of the National Ensemble confirmed that for that period the planning of land use played an important role in the enhancement of the efficiency and effect of State's management on land and contributed to bringing into full play land potentials to serve socio-economic objectives, create new jobs, increase incomes and improve people's life. Land use planning has zoned land fund for agricultural production, protected land fund for rice cultivation, ensured the goal of providing sufficient foods for the country, sufficient resources for strategic reservation and export. The work on protection and development of forests brings about positive changes preventing serious degeneration of forest areas. Land use planning also has met the demands for promotion of the cause of national industrialization, modernization and urban development; created important resources for national socio-economic development through the activities of auction, collecting fees in land handling, land lease, change of purposes

of land use; the areas of unused land are gradually exploited and brought into use rationally to meet the demands for land use for socio-economic development and ensure the ecological balance and environmental protection.

The practice shows that the quality of prediction of demands for land funds for development of branches and sectors, investment projects in order to include into land use plans in local authorities is still lacking of scientific calculation and is away from development strategies and demands. There have not yet been clearly defined responsibilities of every level in management, organization, planning and implementation of adopted plans for land use.

Although the land for wet-rice cultivation reached 103.55% (more than the planned target), during the last 10 years 270 thousand hectares had converted into the land used for other purposes. The conversion of the land specialized in wet-rice cultivation into the land for industrial and urban development instead of using other lands (for that purpose) took place in many localities. The land for industrial zones and parks were met sufficiently (100%) but investment was still fragmented, some industrial zones were developed too slow.

Meeting the Demands for Infrastructure Development and Ensuring Food Security

With the land use plan extended into 2020 and the five-year land use plan (2011-2015), the Government proposes three key objectives: to meet the demand of infrastructure development (in areas of: transport, water-resources, culture, health care, sports, etc.); to promote industrial and urban development in order to carry out the national cause of industrialization and modernization to ensure national security and defense and social welfare; to ensure the national food security; to protect the environment and promote sustainable development to meet with climate change.

Accordingly, the Government proposes the concrete project of land use planning. By the year of 2020 the agricultural land will be 26.732 thousand hectares, which is more than 506 thousand hectares in comparison with that of 2010. By the year 2020 the non-agricultural land will be 4.880 thousand hectares, which is more than 1.175 thou-

sand hectares in comparison with that of 2010. The unused land at the 2010 was 3.164 thousand hectares and as the result of conversion into agricultural and non-agricultural purposes by the year of 2020 the unused land will only be 1. 483 thousand hectares.

The Government also proposes to retain 3.81 million hectares for rice cultivation by 2020. But according to local proposals the area for rice cultivation will only be 3,6 million hectares. The Economic Committee of the National Ensemble agreed with the Government's proposal to retain 3.81 million hectares for rice cultivation in 2020. The Government's proposal should point out concrete measures to retain that area for rice cultivation, and at the same time, have special policies for rice cultivators and the localities that retain the area for rice cultivation.

Relating to Government's proposal that the area for industrial zone will be 200 thousand by 2020, after consideration the Economic Committee of the National Ensemble agreed with the Government's proposal but requires the Government should only recover lands in accordance with real demands and pay attention to local authorities and regions (middle land, mountain and coast-line regions), which can transform their economic structure.

Positive Impacts and Unexpected Impacts of Land Policies on the Peasant Life Today

Positive Impacts

Agricultural land policies in Vietnam have impacted positively on agricultural production and the life of peasants today in following ways:

- Facilitating peasants to be proactive in their labor, production and transactions in order to maximize the efficiency of agricultural production and income generation from land. Vietnamese peasants get three benefits from agricultural land policies: agricultural land is handed to them free of charge; have the right to organize and plan their cultivation and sell agricultural products in accordance with market principles in order to improve their life; have the right to

transfer land use right as a property. As a result, peasant's life is significantly improved.

- Land policies have also allowed farmers to shift their economic structure, and to enhance land use effectiveness. As peasant's households are regarded as autonomous economic unit, peasants are free to choose to engage in the appropriate agricultural production activities that could bring them benefits and good incomes. As a result, in Vietnam there exist variety of agricultural production, many households specialize in agricultural product goods, the number of households specializing in rice are reduced.

- Land policies also allow credit access for farmers. The issue of certificate on agricultural land use right for peasants helps them not only make the practice of land use right transaction safe, especially transactions relating to lease, production capital but also mortgage their land use right for credits and loans.

- Land policies have encouraged farmers to accumulate collective agricultural land for better agricultural cultivation and production. According to the Law on Land, peasants can exchange, transfer, lease their land in order to have large amount of agricultural land appropriate for mechanization and better agricultural cultivation as well as applying scientific methods for their cultivation. Those peasants, who are not able to engage in effective agricultural activities, can transfer their agricultural land use right to other peasants in order to have money to start non-agricultural industries.

- Land policies have activated agricultural land market in rural areas, resulting in more efficient farming land allocation, and emergence of new industries in rural areas. The market for agricultural land use right in rural areas has been established to facilitate transactions on land use right and reduce exchange fees. The fact that the transfer of agricultural land use right becomes easier creates favorable conditions for rational use of land in accordance with market regulations. As a result, this promotes the process of land re-allocation: between cultivation, aquacultivation and animal husbandry, and at the same time, contribute to restore and develop many traditional handicraft villages in rural areas in Vietnam.

Unexpected Impacts

In addition to positive effects, there are still several adverse impacts from farming land policies.

- Peasants enjoy limited benefits and profit from their land use rights. According to the Law on Land, peasants cannot freely change their land into other types of land, and due to the low benefit generation of agricultural land, the price of use right is much lower than that of other lands. The term for agricultural land use is too short and in addition, the compensation rate for agricultural land is too low if agricultural land is recovered by the State to use for other purposes. As a result, the peasants are not strongly attached to agriculture and the chance to getting rich from agriculture is difficult.

- The situation in which peasants do not have land for cultivation is increasing. The peasants have rights on land use. In difficult circumstances many families, who do not have enough capital or appropriate ways to cultivate and produce, have no other choice but to sell their agricultural land use right and then fall into poverty. The State does not have enough resources to help them to retain agricultural land as the means of their living. As a result, the gap between the rich and the poor generates within the class of peasants. Social evils and crimes have chances to penetrate into the life of Vietnam villages.

- Agricultural land policies fail to encourage farmers to protect cultivated land and to make longterm investment in land. The fact that term for land use right is too short cannot encourage peasants to make longterm investment in order to protect agricultural land. At the same time, in order to have better crops many peasants abuse chemical fertilizers and ignore investment on longterm improvement. As a result, agricultural land becomes degenerated and even polluted.

- Effects of the policies on supporting farmers to accumulate and to collect farming land remains unsatisfied. The egalitarian policy to handle land of 1990s had contributed to agricultural land to become fragmented. In addition, the conversion of use of large amount of agricultural land into other purposes has led to the continuous reduction of scope of agricultural land per person. There exist only few agricultural production units with the total amount of land of 3 to 5 hectares, the majority of households now possess less than one hectare.

- Policies on land withdrawal and compensation make peasants suffer from certain losses. If their land is recovered, peasants will suffer from certain losses because the State has not enough agricultural land fund to compensate peasants. The land reserved for compensation is often not good as the recovered land. As the result, the peasant's life may become more difficult. Peasants in some cases cannot negotiate about compensation. Policies on vocational training for peasants, whose lands have been recovered, as well as policies on encouraging individuals and organizations, who get land use right from recovered agricultural land of peasants, to share and help peasants, the policies on re-settlement often bring low effect.

- Policies fail to encourage farmers to practice modern agricultural production. As the land is too fragmented, almost all agricultural households use their family's labors to cultivate and do not intend to buy agricultural machines and modern devices. They do not intend to cooperate with one another in agricultural production activities, in exchange of means of production and selling agricultural products as well as in application of science and technology in their production. The effect and performance of agricultural production is still low.

Conclusion

The Cause of Comprehensive Renovation in Vietnam has brought about a new face for Vietnam's agriculture and rural life as well as facilitated a change of historical significance. As a country, which used to suffer from food shortage and imported food grains, Vietnam became one of the two largest rice exporters in the world. The outstanding achievement has been the result of renovated management policies: policies on the agricultural land. However, the process of continuous renovation has posed new issues and problems relating to policies on land in order to help Vietnam develop its modern and sustainable agriculture. A very important objective of 2013 Land Law is to strengthen the oversight role of the National Assembly, the People's Councils at different levels, the Viet Nam Fatherland Front, social organizations and people on the land management and land use schemes.

The Role of Human Resources in the Process of Industrialization and Modernization in Vietnam Today

Introduction

Analyzing the real situation of the country before and after the *Domoi* (Renovation) and understanding the trends of investment and development of many countries in the world, over the period from the Sixth Party Congress indicates that the Communist Party of Vietnam has implemented fully its focus on the role of human factor within the process of socio-economic development of the country. Man has always been regarded as the goal and driving force of socio-economic development. Man, as clearly stated in the Political Program for building nation during the transitional period to socialism (supplement, development in 2011), “is both the center of the strategy of development and the subject of development.”¹¹⁸ At the same time, in the socio-economic development strategy for the 2011-2020 period adopted in the 10th Party Congress, the Party affirmed that “The development and enhancement of the quality of human resources, primarily high-quality human resources, is a strategic breakthrough, a decisive factor promoting the development and implementation of science and technology, economic restructure, change of growth model as well as the most competitive advantage guaranteeing fast, effective and sustainable development.”¹¹⁹ Human resources are known as the most important and “most valuable resources holding a decisive role, especially in our country with its limited financial and material resources.”¹²⁰ Human resources are a decisive factor for the success of country’s cause of industrialization and modernization.

¹¹⁸ The Communist Party of Vietnam, *The Documents of the 11th National Party Congress*, p. 76.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

The question is how to understand the view that human resources are the most decisive factor for the success of the cause of industrialization and modernization?

Human Resources Are a Decisive Factor for the Success of Country's Cause of Industrialization and Modernization

In the history of economics, some pre-Marxian bourgeois economists, for example Adam Smith, regarded labor as the source of all material wealth. In his *Dialectics of Nature*, Engels affirmed that not labor alone but labor in its combination with nature, which provides materials for labor, is able to generate all material wealth.¹²¹ Therefore, the claim that human resources hold a decisive role does not mean to separate or isolate human resources from natural and other resources. By contrast, human resources should be put in relation to other available resources. Accordingly, the role of human resources is manifested both as the subject and the object of socio-economic processes.

In their relation to natural and other resources, human resources play the role of the subject of exploitation and utilization. Natural resources and other resources themselves cannot participate socio-economic processes, therefore, cannot become driving force of socio-economic development. The role of the driving force of socio-economic development always belongs to human beings. Human beings themselves with their power and intellect are factors affecting the efficiency of the exploitation and utilization of natural and other resources. At the same time, effective exploitation and utilization of those resources will promote and enhance the strength of human resources. This is a dialectics of the relationships among resources.

The practice shows that thanks to geographical advantages, and rich natural resources as well as right ways to exploit them, many countries in the region and around the world have become rich nations with high-growth rate of economy. On the other hand, we can see many cases in which human beings encounter unpredictable ecological disasters and natural catastrophes due to arbitrary and irresponsible exploitation of natural resources solely for economic purposes.

¹²¹ Marx and Engels, *The Complete Works*, Vol. 20, p. 644.

However, man not only decides the efficiency of the exploitation and utilization of presently-available natural and other resources but also contributes to creating new resources. The latter is related to the inheritance among different generations within the process of development of human societies. Each generation inherits the resources left by previous generations and at the same time, continues to generate new resources for future generations.

Today, while talking about negative effects of economic growth, many scholars mention a negative kind of growth: futureless growth. Since 1970s scholars from MIT and the Club of Rome have predicted on *limitations of growth* due to gradual exhaustion of natural resources. That prediction is not the whole idea of those who raised their voice to warn about futureless growth. Only in 1990s when the world economy reached a high level of development, human beings came to understand more deeply about the reverse impacts on culture caused by economic growth.

Due to the call of short-term interests or strategically short-term planning, some economies in the world intentionally or unintentionally ignore their future. In those economies, people exploit natural resources for maximal profit while putting aside all calculations on environmental consequences and ignoring legitimate interests of future generations. An overemphasis on short-term profits causes imbalanced development or bubble development.

Today most countries in the world are well aware of negative effects of that kind of growth and declare war against it. However, good intentions are not enough for preventing futureless growth. The complications of globalization, interferences and influences of rich countries, different kinds of shortage in slowly developing countries, prevalent corruption in some countries always cause serious threats for those economies intending to pursue sustainable development. Being well aware of those points, the Communist Party of Vietnam affirms "the building and development of the economy must have a cultural aim and orient towards a just and civilized society and man's comprehensive development. Culture is the result of economic development and, at the same time, a driving force of economic development. All components should be closely linked to the life and activity of the society in all spheres of politics, economy, laws, disciplines... in

order to become the most important inner resources of development."¹²²

As a subject, man not only decides the efficiency of the exploitation and utilization of presently-available natural and other resources but also contributes importantly to sustainable development in the future. As an object, man becomes the object of exploitation, utilization, investment and development. While talking about the role of human resources as the object of exploitation and utilization, people often mention about the non-exhaustion of human resources. In recent decades scientists and policy-makers in all countries worldwide come to realize that natural resources, regardless of how rich they may be, will be exhausted under the exploitation of human beings and only human resources are unlimited and non-exhaustible.

While discussing about human resources, scholars often talk about their qualitative and quantitative aspects. The quantity of human resources is labor force and labor force availability for socio-economic development. Indexes of the quantity of human resources of a nation are its population, population growth rate, average life expectancy, population structure: the proportion of working-age population and number of non-working population. The quantity of human resources plays an important role in socio-economic development. The non-correlation between the quantity of human resources and development will impact negatively on socio-economic development. Some countries, especially the developing ones, suffer from the excess of labor force and therefore in those countries employment becomes a pressing issue. Unemployment brings about many negative effects and becomes one of the causes of crimes in some societies. By contrast, in some countries with high growth rate of development, there is high demand for labor force, especially seasonal labor force, low-skilled labor force or labor force in those industries that national workers decline to take. Those countries have to import labor forces from other nations, especially from developing ones. The import of labor force helps the importing countries to deal with the demand for

¹²² The Communist Party of Vietnam, *The Documents of the 5th meeting of the 8th Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam* (Hanoi: The National Political Publishing House, 1998), p.55.

labor force but on the other hand, it creates some changes in their social life.

However, the most important element in human resources is not quantity but quality of human resources. The latter is a decisive factor for socio-economic development as well as the cause of industrialization and modernization. Quality of human resources means the intellectual component of human resources or "laborers with high intelligence, high skills, good moral qualities, who have been educated and promoted by an advanced education linked closely to modern science and technology."¹²³ The talking about unlimitedness and non-exhaustion of human resources means the mention about intellectual component of human resources. Alvin Toffler, an American futurist, claims that while all natural resources may be exploited to exhaustion, human intelligence will never be exhausted and "knowledge can be endlessly taken."¹²⁴

Because of the importance of intelligence and knowledge, most countries in the world today strive to enhance the intellectual content of their labour forces. Education and training play very important role in enhancing the knowledge component within labor forces. Historical experiences have shown that no country or nation in the world can become rich and have a high economic growth rate without universalizing general school education. Newly-industrialized countries like Singapore and South Korea, who reached a high economic growth rate in 1970s and 1980s, had universalized general school education before their economic take-off.

On the other hand, empirical researches in recent years have shown that capital investment plays only small role in economic growth. The quality of labor force plays a decisive role in the value of surplus products. Moreover, in the era of scientific and technological revolutions, information and knowledge become the core components of the whole modern system. Data collected in 1990 has shown that the percentage contributed by information and knowledge to GDP of

¹²³ The Communist Party of Vietnam, *The Documents of the 2nd meeting of the 8th Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam* (Hanoi: The National Political Publishing House, 1997), p.9.

¹²⁴ Alvin Toffler, *Powershift* (Hanoi: The Information and Theory Publishing House, 1992), p. 41 (in Vietnamese).

the USA, England and Germany is 47.4%, 45.8% and 40% consecutively.¹²⁵ It is not accidental that Gary Baker, 1992 Nobel laureate in economics, claims that “there is no investment that could bring greater profit than investment on human resources, especially on education.”¹²⁶

Vietnam started its cause of industrialization later than developed countries. Lessons and experiences learnt from the countries in the region will be very useful for Vietnam if we could acquire and implement them creatively. Vietnam at the moment is classified into the group of developing countries. If we take the time when countries have started the period of industrialization as starting point for comparison, there is a fact that natural resources of developing countries are poorer than that of the developed countries. Vietnam is just within that common case. While being not really rich in natural resources and also affected heavily by wars as well as faults of the old mechanism, in order to carry out the cause of industrialization and modernization to transform the country into an industrialized nation, Vietnam has no other choice than to uphold and utilise properly the role of human resources. This is the very way to bring into full play the country’s inner resources in order to accomplish successfully the national cause of industrialization and modernization.

Some Solutions to Exploit Human Resources within the Cause of Industrialization and Modernization in Vietnam.

First of all, we should affirm that, in order to carry out the cause of industrialization and modernization, Vietnam has no other choice than to exploit rationally and utilise effectively human resources. Doing so is not only in accordance with the general trend in the world but also appropriate for the country with rich human resources. Only in this way can Vietnam overcome the serious shortage of natural resources and capital.

¹²⁵ Tran Van Tung and Le Ai Lam, *The Development of Human Resources: International Experience and Our Practice* (Hanoi: The National Political Publishing House, 1996), p. 24 (in Vietnamese).

¹²⁶ 1992 Nobel Laureate in *Economist* (October 17, 1992).

Vietnam is a country with rich human resources. The recent population census shows that there are more than 40 million people of working age in Vietnam today. The structure of labour force is relatively young (above 60% of those aged 16-34). This is an important factor in terms of quantity in the structure of labour force. We can say that rich and relatively young human resources are a requisite condition for the cause of industrialization and modernization in Vietnam. However, here the problem is how to utilise effectively those human resources? It depends, first of all, on the economic structure and ability to mobilize labour force of an economy.

According to that population census, at the present Vietnam remains an agricultural nation with 70% of population living in rural areas and only 30% in cities. In such an agricultural country, employment becomes a pressing issue. The practice shows that when entering the course of industrialization, any country in the world has to deal with the problem of employment for its population. In order to utilise and exploit natural, human and other resources a country, first of all, has to attract and mobilize maximally labor force into the process of production activities. On the other hand, while other resources can be exhausted and may not be renewed, the more human resources are utilised, in some certain aspects, the more they are renewable and qualitatively enhanced. It means that when humans participate in the process of production, their knowledge, experience become accumulated and improved.

Without positive measures to exploit and utilise effectively human resources, human resources, especially the high-quality human resources, cannot bring into full play their role and even be wasted. Today in Vietnam the situation of unemployment, labour excess, ineffective utilization of labour force are among most pressing issues.

The problem is how to create more employment opportunities for labourers in the conditions in which the growth rate of our economy, despite its initial positive results, still remains slow. In our opinion, employment and socio-economic development are closely linked and dialectically interactive at both national and local levels. The level of socio-economic development determines the pace, scope and efficiency of the solutions to employment problems. By contrast, the fact that people have jobs means production capabilities are liberated and

productivity of the society is enhanced. However, a poorly developed economy lacks both pressing demands on labour force and ability to create employment opportunities. In that case, labour force is not an advantage but a burden due to great pressure caused by employment. Only a healthy developed economy, which develops towards diversity, can be able to create more and more employment opportunities. It means that socio-economic development is a fundamental solution to the problem of providing employment for the people and consequently contributes to the effective exploiting and utilizing of human resources for development purposes. The 11th Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam affirms that it is necessary to “create an environment and conditions for labourers to have jobs and better incomes.”¹²⁷

Apart from policies for socio-economic development to create more employment opportunities for laborers, in order to exploit and utilise effectively human resources it is necessary to use employment opportunities as management instruments and important driving force to uphold the proactiveness of laborers. We should affirm that employment, being put within a certain recruitment mechanism, can become an important driving force for promoting man’s proactiveness. We can say that, capitalism has created a mechanism of employment utilization as an effective tool to manage workers and force them to be constantly proactive and to learn in order to improve their skills.

As we know, labour power becomes a commodity under capitalism. As a commodity labour power is under the impact of the law of competition. within the context of capitalistic production the relationship between supply and demand of labour power is always imbalanced and it is often that the supply exceeds the demand. Under capitalism there exists an army of “reserved” labourers, who are always ready to replace those workers who are currently working in factories and enterprises. In other words, once a worker cannot meet the employer’s demand he will be sacked and replaced by other worker. This service policy forces workers to mobilize their most capability and talent to perform well their assigned work.

¹²⁷ The Communist Party of Vietnam, *The Documents of the 11th National Party Congress*, p. 79.

However, in Vietnam due to some inappropriateness in recruitment mechanism and policy, employment opportunity has not yet become a strong driving force for encouraging labourers to work productively. Apart from the measures for creating employment opportunity it is necessary to have some measures for exploiting and promoting laborer's proactiveness. In recent years, many research themes and projects have focused on driving forces of social development, i.e. the very forces that could bring into full play man's proactiveness to create strong changes and progresses in the socio-economic life. Interest, need, democracy, science, socio-psychological environment, etc. are among the driving forces that researchers and scholars pay particular attention to.¹²⁸

Here we would like to discuss some points relating to the role of interest as an overall and most important driving force in the system of driving forces. If interest is understood as what that meets and satisfies man's needs, interest is a concept with a wide intension; it covers a wide range of elements stimulating man's proactiveness and activity. For example if democracy as a need of a man, or of human collective or of a whole society, the satisfaction of that need is the very interest of a concrete subject. Similarly, as stated above, we can regard employment as an important and necessary interest because it satisfies the need of having jobs and need of working of labourers. With such a kind of understanding interest is diverse in range. People can classify interests according to different methods and criteria.

However, in our opinion, as interest is what that satisfies needs, it would be reasonable to classify interests in accordance with the needs of human beings. In this way we can classify interests into: material and spiritual interests, individual, collective and social interests, short-term and longterm interests. Interest plays very important role in promoting and encouraging man to act. However, every kind of interest has its own driving force role. From the point of the theory of needs, we suppose that, in principle, it is difficult to say what kind of interest is more important. We can only affirm that some interests can become requisite and pressing depending on concrete historical

¹²⁸ Le Huu Tang (Editor), *On the Driving Forces of Socio-economic Development* (Hanoi: The Social Sciences Publishing House, 1997).

circumstances and concrete subjects. Pressing interests are those interests that answer pressing needs of a subject in a certain situation and circumstance.

The practice of the resistance wars against foreign aggressors in the past and the recent period of renovation has shown that not in all times, at all places and for all strata of population material interests play a decisive role and become more pressing than any other interests; and individual interests have not always played more important role than other interests. In many cases and for many peoples, spiritual interests could play a prominent role. Similarly, in certain times community interests and social interests could be given priority over individual interests. While impacting interests as most important driving force for exploiting and utilizing human resources we need to take into account concrete people, concrete historical conditions and circumstances. Only in that way could we work out appropriate policies and meet the needs and aspirations of every social stratum and consequently mobilize their proactiveness and creativity.

Conclusion

To sum up, human resources play a very important role in the process of industrialization and modernization in Vietnam. The 11th Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam affirms that “the development and promotion of the quality of human resources, especially high-quality human resources, are among decisive factors for the fast and sustainable development of the country.”¹²⁹ Man is both the subject and object of the cause of industrialization and modernization in Vietnam. Its success or failure, fast or slow pace depend on the way to exploit human resources. Vietnam needs to take full advantage of its labour force by means of creating more employment on the basis of its socio-economic development. We need to impact appropriately and rationally interests of the labourers in order to exploit effectively human resources for the goal of socio-economic development.

¹²⁹ The Communist Party of Vietnam, *The Documents of the 11th National Party Congress* (Hanoi: The National Political Publishing House, 2011), p.41.

Corporate Social Responsibility in Vietnam: Some Pressing Theoretical and Practical Issues

Together with the national cause of comprehensive renovation, there have been many environmental and social issues posed for our country by the success of rapid promotion of economic growth. The very issues require economic actors, including corporations, to be responsible for finding solution to them, otherwise the economic growth will not be sustainable and we will have to pay high price for environmental and social problems.

It is not until now that the issue of corporate social responsibility has been raised. On the contrary, even during the subsidized economy people were talking about the social responsibility of state's enterprises towards workers and the community. However, in recent years the notion of corporate social responsibility has been expanded to include not only ethical but also legal aspects. The recent environmental harms caused by some enterprises are not only condemned morally but also are brought to justice. Therefore, it is not without reason that in recent years the term of corporate social responsibility has become more and more popular in the mass media and various public forums in Vietnam. At present the concept of corporate social responsibility still remains new and is understood differently in Vietnam. Here we would like to concentrate on the clarification of the content of the concept of corporate social responsibility, the role of the implementation of corporate social responsibility and some practical issues raised in Vietnam today.

Corporate Social Responsibility: Some Theoretical Issues

The term corporate social responsibility officially appeared about 50 years ago in H.R. Bowen book "Social Responsibilities of the Businessman." The term was used to propagate and appeal to business managers for not causing harm to the rights and interests of other

people as well as to appeal to charity of businesses to compensate the damages they caused to society. Since that time the term corporate social responsibility has been interpreted differently. Some define that "corporate social responsibility implies the appropriateness of business's behaviour towards the prevalent standards, values and expectations of the society" (Sethi Prakash, 1975: 58-64). Others understand that "corporate social responsibility includes economic, legal and ethical expectations of the society towards corporations at a certain time" (Archie. B Carroll, 1979), etc.

There exist presently two opposite concepts of corporate social responsibility. The supporters of the first concept think that a business has no responsibility towards the society apart from the responsibility towards its shareholders and workers; it is the state to bear social responsibility as the business fulfils its responsibility when it pays taxes to the state. The supporters of the second concept claim that, businesses, as the actors of the market economy, cause harm and damage to natural environment and society through their using social resources and exploiting natural resources. Therefore, apart from paying taxes they have to bear responsibility towards the environment, community and other stakeholders.

In Vietnam in recent years, the definition of corporate social responsibility by the World Bank's Group of private sector development is widely used, according to which "Corporate Social Responsibility is the commitment by business to contribute to sustainable economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the local community and society at large."¹³⁰

In other words, in order to develop sustainably a business must comply with the standards on: environmental protection, gender equality, work safety, labour rights, fair salary payment, training and development of staff and community development. Business's Corporate social responsibility manifests concretely in following aspects and elements: 1. environmental protection; 2. contribution to communities and the society; 3. fulfillment of the responsibility towards the

¹³⁰ Cited from M.A. Nguyen Thi Thu Trang, "Corporate Social Responsibility." <http://www.Doanhnhhan360.com/PortletBlank.aspx/44D1988963164E>.

providers; 4. Guarantees of customers' interests and safety; 5. Good relationships with the workers; 6. Guarantees of shareholders and labourers within the business. The first four elements express business' external responsibilities and the last two elements are the internal responsibilities of the business. The division of responsibility into external and internal is only relative and it is impossible to state clearly which responsibilities are more important. With those concrete contents the implementation of corporate social responsibility will contribute not only to the sustainable development of a business but also to the sustainable development of the whole society. In Vietnam, sustainable development has become a strategic goal, which was mapped out in eighties of the last century. The concept of corporate social responsibility has changed with times and has been enriched with more and more new contents.

Originally, the term of sustainable development came into existence in seventies of the last century and attracted the attention of international researchers working on the issues of environment and international development resulted in the work titled *World Conservation Strategy* (1980).¹³¹ Afterwards, the idea of sustainable development was addressed in the series of works including *World Commission on Environment and Development. Our Common Future* and *Caring for the Earth: A Strategy for Sustainable Living*.¹³² While mentioning about sustainable development people often use two definitions articulated in the above-mentioned books. In the book *Our Common Future*, sustainable development is defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In the book *Caring for the Earth* sustainable development is understood as improving the quality of human life while living within the carrying capacity of supporting eco-systems. Generally speaking, both these definitions place sustainable development within the rational utility of natural resources and protection of the environment in a way that guarantee the development of today's generation without the impact to the future of following generations.

¹³¹ IUCN, *World Conservation Strategy: Living Resource Conservation for Sustainable Development*.

¹³² *World Commission on Environment and Development: Our common future*; IUCN/UNEP/WWF, *Caring for the Earth: A Strategy for Sustainable Living*.

Thus, etymologically speaking, sustainable development is the development that guarantees economic growth on the basis of rational utilization of natural resources and environment protection in order to meet the need of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their need. The essence of sustainable development is to give solution to the relation between economic growth and protection of natural environment as well as to guarantee justice between generations in utilization of natural resources and environmental protection. The very notion of sustainable development implies harmony, the harmony between economic growth and environmental protection, the harmony between generations in utilization of natural resources and protection of the living environment.

In Vietnam, apart from above-mentioned contents, the concept of sustainable development has added many new contents. Vietnam intends to build a strategy of sustainable development suitable to its own concrete conditions. The main contents of the strategy include the following key points:

Firstly, fast development should be accompanied with sustainability both in microcosmic and macrocosmic levels, short-term and long-term levels.

Secondly, quantitative growth should go hand in hand with qualitative improvement, the effectiveness and competitiveness of the economy.

Thirdly, the development should be wide in scope and deep in content; knowledge-based economy should be developed.

Fourthly, economic growth should be accompanied with the development of culture, the comprehensive development of man, realization of democracy, social progress and justice, creation of employment opportunities, improvement of the quality of life, encouragement of legally getting rich with reduction of poverty.

Fifthly, attention should be paid to the protection and improvement of the living environment in every step of development.

Sixthly, economic growth should be in parallel to the guarantee of socio-political stability, which is the premise, condition for fast and sustainable development.¹³³

¹³³ The Communist Party of Vietnam, *The Documents of the 10th Party's Congress* (Hanoi: The National Political Publishing House, 2006), pp. 178-179.

It could be said that the above-mentioned points are the key contents in the strategy of sustainable development of Vietnam, which expresses clearly the combination between the traditional (classic) viewpoint and the new and distinctive viewpoint of the Communist Party of Vietnam. Within Vietnam's strategy of fast and sustainable development, we can see that:

First, socio-political stability is the premise, condition for fast and sustainable development.

Second, the strategy of fast and sustainable development focuses on the enhancement of the quality of development, the combination between economic growth and the comprehensive development of man, realization of democracy, social progress and justice, creation of employment opportunities, improvement of the quality of life, encouragement of legally getting rich with reduction of poverty, the attention to the protection and improvement of environment in every step of development.

Third, the strategy of sustainable development of Vietnam addresses pretty comprehensively different aspects of development, including the noticeably harmonious solutions to relationship between fast and sustainable development, quantitative growth and qualitative improvement, development in scope and development in content; the harmony between economic development and dealing with social issues, economic growth and environmental protection. Harmony is one of the important contents of the strategy of sustainable development.

Fourth, the central issue, the key goal of the strategy of sustainable development is the issue of people's livelihood, which is expressed in the strategy we just mentioned above. The strategy of fast and sustainable development pays attention on the quality of economic development, orients to the comprehensive development of man, the realization of democracy, social progress and social justice, the creation of employment opportunities, improvement of the quality of life, encouragement of legally getting rich with reduction of poverty, the attention to the protection and improvement of environment in every step of development. Clearly, that goal, after all, is to solve better and better the issue of people's livelihood, guarantee a comfortable and happy life for the whole population. In the practice of Vietnam, the

strategy of fast and sustainable development is the effective way to guarantee country's socialistic-oriented development aiming at the goal of "wealthy people, strong country, just, democratic and civilized society."

Within the context of those goals of sustainable development, the implementation of corporate social responsibility contributes importantly to the strategy of sustainable development of Vietnam. While approaching the concept of corporate social responsibility we should approach both from *ethical* and *legal perspectives*. We should not understand the concept only from an ethical dimension of the managers of the business, or its charity activities, but also from a legal point of view, i.e. the implementation of corporate social responsibility is legally compulsory for a business. The combination of the ethical and legal perspectives constitute an important basis for suggesting solutions to improve business's corporate social responsibility.

Corporate Social Responsibility and Some Practical Issues in Vietnam

For the developed market economies in the world, corporate social responsibility is not a new phenomenon. Businesses, that implement well the corporate social responsibility, will be awarded with an international certificate or a code of conduct. In the context of today's globalization, consumers, investors, policy makers and NGOs focus more and more on the impact of globalization on labour rights, environment and community goods. Those businesses, that do not implement well their corporate social responsibility, will not have opportunity to have access to the international market.

The practice has shown that a business, that fulfils well its corporate social responsibility, will increase its profits. The benefits that a business get from implementation of corporate social responsibility include the reduction of expenditure, increase of turnover, promotion of the value of the brand name, reduction of the rate of unemployment, increase of productivity and more access to new markets. We can illustrate some cases of getting benefits from the implementation of corporate social responsibility.

First, the implementation of social responsibility contributes to the reduction of expenditure and increase of productivity. A business could economize its production expenditure, thanks to the investment and installation of new equipments. For example, a Polish wrapping business has saved up to USD 12 Million within five months, thanks to the installation of new equipments, as a result, it reduced water usage up to 7%, waste water up to 70% and exhaust fumes 87%.¹³⁴

Production expenditure and productivity depend closely on the system of personnel management. An effective system of personnel management also helps the business reduce its expenditure and increase its productivity significantly. A reasonable system of salary and reward, a clean and safe working environment, opportunities for training and a system of medical care and education can contribute to the reduction of the rate of employee leaves and resignations and therefore, the reduction of expenditure on employee recruitment and training of new staff. All those factors contribute to the reduction of production expenditure and the increase of productivity.

Second, the implementation of corporate social responsibility contributes to the increase of turnover. Every business operates in a certain location. Its investment to support the development of the local economy could result in the creation of better labour force, cheaper and more reliable source of material supply and consequently the increase of turnover. For example, the Hindustan Lever, a Unilever's branch in India, was able to operate with 50% of its capacity in 1970s due to the shortage of the local supply of milk and therefore was seriously loss-making. In order to deal with that situation, the company established a comprehensive program to help peasants to increase the productivity of the local cow's milk. The program also included training for peasants in the skills of raising cows, improving infrastructures and establishing a committee governing the local suppliers of cow's milk. As a result, the number of milk supply villages increased from six to 400 and that helped the company to operate with its full capacity and then the company became one of the most profitable companies within the Unilever Corporation.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ <http://www.kinhdoanh.com.vn/mtkd/So4/4-baiviet.htm>.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

Third, the implementation of corporate social responsibility contributes to promoting the value of business's brand name and prestige. Corporate social responsibility could help a business increase the value of its brand name and prestige. In its turn the prestige helps the business increase its income and attract more investors and workers. Biggest corporations in the world spend a huge amount of money to become the ideal business model. For example Best Buy Corporation set up a program to modernize its products. A famous coffee company Starbucks has launched its community-related activities, French famous mineral company Evian has started to distribute its environmentally friendly bottles. Multi-national corporations like The Body Shop and IKEA are typical examples. Both corporations are famous not only because of the high quality and reasonable prices of their products but also because they are responsible towards the environment and society.¹³⁶

Fourth, the implementation of corporate social responsibility contributes to attracting high-skilled workers. High-skilled workers are decisive factor for the productivity and quality of products of a business. The practice of developed countries shows that high-skilled resources are not abundant. The problem for businesses is how to attract, keep and make them bring into full play their talents in all business's activities. In the context of market economy, those businesses, who pay fair and adequate salary, provide training opportunity for workers, offer medical insurance and create clear working environment, will be able to attract and keep high-skilled resources.

All the above-mentioned are the foundation to argue for the necessity of implementation of corporate social responsibility in general and at the same time, are useful experiences and valuable references for Vietnam enterprises.

In Vietnam, despite its being recently introduced, the issue of corporate social responsibility is drawing attention of some of the ministries and branches. Evidently, since 2005 Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, Ministry of Commerce and Trade and the Vietnam Leather and Footwear Association have granted award of "corporate social responsibility towards sustainable development" in order to pay honour to

¹³⁶ <http://www.kinhdoanh.com.vn/mtkd/So4/4-baiviet.htm>.

businesses implementing well the corporate social responsibility in the context of international integration. Today many big businesses in Vietnam realize that corporate social responsibility becomes one of the indispensable requirements for them because without compliance with corporate social responsibility businesses cannot get access to the world market in the context of globalization and international integration. While implementing corporate social responsibility many businesses gain positive results in their business activities. The result of a recent survey conducted by Vietnam's Institute for Science of Labour on 24 enterprises of two industries of footwear and textile shows that thanks to their implementation of corporate social responsibility, those businesses achieved a 25% increase in turnover, the labour productivity was raised from 34.2 million VN Dongs per year to 35.8 million VN Dongs per year, the rate of product export was raised from 94% to 97%. Apart from economic efficiency, the businesses also managed to reinforce their reputation with customers, create customer's attachment and satisfaction with their products and services as well as attract more skilled workers.¹³⁷

Thanks to the realization of the importance and benefit of the implementation of corporate social responsibility in the context of globalization and international integration, some big businesses in Vietnam, apart from their duty to pay taxes to the government, have registered to implement corporate social responsibility in the form of commitment to protect the environment and commitment to the local communities and workers. We admit that, in recent years many businesses have not fulfilled properly their social responsibility. Irresponsibility could be seen in frauds in business, financial reports, the lack of labour safety, the production and trade of low quality products, intended harms to the environment. Typical example are the *dumping untreated* wastewater into rivers by Miwon company, Haiduong leather tanning company, Viettri paper processing company, Hyundai Vinashin company that cause serious pollution to rivers and communities living along them, the production of foods containing health-damaging ingredients: soya-sauce with 3-MCPD, rice-noodle containing phormon, powder milk containing melamine. There also are many

¹³⁷ <http://www.kinhdoanh.com.vn/mtkd/So4/4-baiviet.htm>.

cases in which businesses violate the legal regulations on salary, insurance system, labour safety for workers. All those incidents cause frustrations for the society. There is an urgent need to discover the causes of those phenomena as well as necessary measures to overcome them.

There exist different views on the reasons why businesses do not implement their social responsibility. Some people suggest that corporate social responsibility has not been legalized in all businesses in Vietnam. Only big export market enterprises have to implement corporate social responsibility under customer requirements. Due to their financial difficulty and the lack of legal bond many medium and small businesses interpret social responsibility as “contributions to charity.” Other people think that medium and small enterprises do not want to implement corporate social responsibility because the implementation of corporate social responsibility will result in the increase of expenditure and reduce business’s initial competitiveness without gaining immediate benefits. In short, the implementation of corporate social responsibility in Vietnam is still relatively difficult. The reasons are: first and foremost, the incomprehensive understanding of corporate social responsibility by businesses, in many cases corporate social responsibility is interpreted as contributions to charity; second, the implementation of corporate social responsibility also causes some difficulties for businesses, which experience the shortage of capital and technology in their implementation of the criteria of social responsibility. This is true especially in the cases of medium and small enterprises. In fact, most of enterprises in Vietnam are medium and small.

Generally, according to the research conducted in Vietnam by the World Bank in 2002, biggest challenges and obstacles for implementation of corporate social responsibility in Vietnam are:

1. There exist relatively big differences in understanding social responsibility within and among enterprises in Vietnam.
2. Productivity is impacted by the compliance with many Codes of conduct.
3. There is a lack of financial and technical resources to implement the criteria of corporate social responsibility (especially in cases of medium and small enterprises).

4. The difference between the Labour law and customer's code of conduct causes confusions for businesses, for example the issue of overtime work or trade union activities.

5. The lack of transparency in implementing corporate social responsibility in practice is obstructing the benefits brought about to businesses by potential markets.

6. The contradictions among state's regulations make the implementation of the code of conduct bring about unintended results, for example, salary levels, welfares and recruitment conditions.¹³⁸

The above-listed causes can be grouped into three main causes: cognitive cause, economic cause and legal cause. Therefore, in order to promote business's responsibility, it is necessary to focus on those causes to find out appropriate measures. What should be done are:

First, to propagate and educate all businesses, first of all, their managers, on corporate social responsibility, to make them understand that corporate social responsibility is not limited within charity work. Together with propagation, education is very important because all human behaviours are regulated by their consciousness. Therefore, the problem is how to make implementation of corporate social responsibility become the inner motivation of the heads and managers of businesses. The implementation of corporate social responsibility first of all is to be considered as a moral behaviour and is regulated by moral motivation. This is an inner ethical measure.

Second, it is necessary to build up a legal framework compelling enterprises to fulfill seriously and adequately corporate social responsibility. That measure relates to state's responsibility in creating an environment and legal framework for businesses to operate. The legal framework is the most effective measure for the implementation of responsibility; at the same time, it is a supporting measure for ethical measure that makes moral motivations reinforced and become more effective in practice. The difficulty that Vietnam and developing countries in general encounter is the fact that in the context of attracting more foreign investment businesses will find it difficult to attract foreign investors if more weight is put on environmental and social

¹³⁸ www.doanhnhhan360.com/PortletBlank.aspx/44D1988963164E.

goals. Without emphasizing on corporate social responsibility, environmental and social consequences will not be compensated by the outcomes of economic growth. The goal of sustainable development, therefore, will not be achieved.

Conclusion

The issue of corporate social responsibility is relatively new in Vietnam. In recent years, in the face of environmental disasters and negative social outcomes caused by businesses, the issue of corporate social responsibility is urgently raised. In Vietnam, the implementation of corporate social responsibility is completely in accordance with the goal of the strategy of sustainable development. In order to implement corporate social responsibility in Vietnam, it is necessary to promote the propagation and education on social responsibility as well as the improvement of the legal framework for its implementation.

Part IV
Development in Vietnam:
Some Socio-Cultural Issues

Business Ethics: Some Theoretical and Practical Issues in Vietnam

Introduction

In an old Vietnamese viewpoint, businessmen are considered negatively as those who work deceitfully, illegally and immorally. Since the renovation till now, with the policy of building and developing socialist, oriented market economy, the reception of entrepreneurs and enterprises has changed, transferred from deceitful businessmen to the people contributing positively to socio-economic development and are the genius in society. Officially since 2006 the Vietnamese Government has chosen the 13th of October as Vietnam's entrepreneurs' day to honour the best entrepreneurs whose contribution is remarkable for the country's socio-economic development.

It is obviously acknowledged that the primary and main purpose of entrepreneurs and firms is *profit*, which is significantly important force that promotes newly good invention and creation in business to get real sufficiency not only for firms but also for society. Besides positive sides, profit can result in negative effects. To make profit, many businessmen set the law at defiance that is the universal problem of all market economy. Business ethics of businessmen and firms is always urgently pressing issue, especially when the Vietnamese market economy is still young, the system of laws are incomplete and inadequate. Business ethics is a kind of social ethics in the round of professional ethics like ethics of doctors, teachers or police officers, etc. however, the scale and impact of business ethics is large and penetrates almost all spheres of the social life.

Conceptions of Business Ethics

Ethics is derived from Greek word *ethiko* and *ethos* that means customs and habits. As a scientific concept, business ethics has just existed since an early half of seventies in the last century. The first

person giving this notion is Norman Bowie, the famous researcher on business ethics.¹³⁹

Until now, researchers have introduced definitions on business ethics. According to Phillip V. Lewis, Abilene Christian University, America, from about 1961 to 1985, there were 185 definitions on business ethics in source books and reviews. After generalizing the similarity in 185 ones, he considers business ethics as regulations, standards, features to assess behaviour of business subjects. He writes: "Business ethics is all ethical principles, standards or laws to direct an organization's behaviour and fidelity in some specific cases."¹⁴⁰ Ferrels and John Fraedrich focus on behaviour adjustment aspect of business ethics to business subjects: "Business ethics includes fundamental principles and standards adjusting behaviour in business world. However, evaluating specifically right or wrong behaviour fitting with ethics or not is decided by investors, staff, customers, interest – related groups, legal system as well as community."¹⁴¹

At present, in Vietnam, business ethics has still been quite a new issue, has not been written much in research works and textbooks. Apart from some American books translated into Vietnamese,¹⁴² recently, there have been quite lot of articles on business ethics published in some websites such as enterprises forum, Labour, Saigon Times, the Saigon times. Yet, these papers only focus on describing phenomena violating business ethics of firms, theoretical issues have not been mentioned in them.

In the simplest and most general form, it can be seen that business ethics is the principles accepted by society to sort out wrong or right, moral or immoral behaviours of enterprise owners for correcting them. If business ethics is thought that it belongs to a form of the social

¹³⁹ A.M. Marcoux, "The Concept of Business in Business Ethics," *Journal of Private Enterprise* (April 1, 2006).

¹⁴⁰ Phillip V. Lewis, "Defining Business Ethics: Like Nailing Jello to a Wall," *Journal of Business Ethics* 4 (1985), 377-383.

¹⁴¹ O.C. Ferrels and John Fraedrich, *Business Ethics: Ethical Decision Making and Cases* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2005).

¹⁴² Some books written by American authors have been translated into Vietnamese, for example, Verne E. Henderson, *What's Ethical in Business?* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1992).

consciousness, a collection of principles to readjust and value man's behaviour in his interaction with the society, nature in the past or present and future carried out by individual belief, tradition and power of public opinion, it is not only legal compliance but also moral responsibility implementation of firms.

According to the definition, business ethics shares a great deal of similarities with law compliance, corporate social responsibility (CSR). It means that business ethics includes the denotation of law abiding and the concern about right protection for related subjects to enterprises' activities and public benefits. Moreover, it is expected by some people to unify business ethics with CSR, others think the connotation of business ethics is broader than CSR's; others suggest business ethics and CSR are two sides of business philosophy and are separated from each other. Those issues mentioned above are essential for further discussion and research. In reality, the concepts of "business ethics" and "corporate social responsibility" are often used to replace each other in various circumstances, no explicit clarification remains. On theory, both concepts reflect different spheres of business activities of business subjects.

Since then, it is considered that CSR is the obligation that an enterprise or individual needs to conduct to maximize positive effects and minimize negative ones in the society, meanwhile business ethics is the regulations, principles and standards guiding behaviour of business subjects in business activities. In the most common sense, it is found that CSR is the commitment of enterprises to society while business ethics is the specific regulations on moral dignity orienting the process of decision-making of business organizations.

It is affirmed that business ethics concerns about the oriented principles and regulations of business subjects' and agencies' activities, at the same time, CSR implies the consequences to the society of those activities. Business ethics shows motivation, desire, expectation deriving from internal factors of business subjects, the desire of CSR implementation originates from external factors. The definition above has been significantly general to identify whether an enterprise or its owner is moral and its action is ethical. The adjustment can be possible if we can use legal documents although in some specific cases, it is extremely tough.

In order to embody the principles, several organizations have established code of conduct or the global compact, for instance, code of conduct has existed since the early 1990s of the 19th century. The first code was built in 1991 by Levi Straus. Until now, there have been more than 1000 codes of conduct created by multinational corporations around the world, including SA800 by Social Accountability International-SAI.

The contents of the first code of conduct were distinguished, but nowadays most codes mostly focus on the principles of ILO. Almost all of them contain 10 terms representing the principles of basic convention of ILO, for instance, SA8000 consists of CSR regulation, such as: 1/ child u, 2/ forced labor, 3/ labour safety and sanitation, 4/ freedom of association and right to collective bargaining accord, 5/ discrimination, 6/ labour discipline, 7/ working hours, 8/ wage, 9/ management system.¹⁴³

In international scale, in July 2000, the United Nations officially announced the Global Compact to enterprises society. The target of the Global Compact is to support the commitment of enterprises to sustainable development and fair economy. The members of the Compact must claim the agreement of the Compact terms. Now, there are 8000 members in which 5300 firms (both public and private enterprises) participate in the Compact all over the world.

The Global compact makes up 10 general terms which can be divided into 4 articles:

1. Art. on human rights

Term 1: Enterprise must support and respect human rights announced by the United Nations;

Term 2: Enterprise must commit anti-complicity with human rights abuse.

2. Art. On Labour

Term 3: Enterprise must assist freedom of association and acknowledge collection bargaining accord;

Term 4: Enterprise must abandon all forms of forced or abiding labour;

¹⁴³ *Economy and forecast*, No 3, Feb. 2009.

Term 5: Enterprise must truly reject child labour;

Term 6: Enterprise must cleanup discrimination in labour recruitment and job.

3. Art. On environment

Term 7: Enterprise must substantiate curing options towards environmental challenges;

Term 8: Enterprise must implement inventions to improve environmental responsibility;

Term 9: Enterprise needs to encourage and popularize the development of friendly – environment technology.

4. Art. On corruption prevention

Term 10: Enterprise must prevent all forms of corruption including bribery.

The Global Compact is not a code of conduct, actually it is considered as a voluntary agreement which is based on it, enterprises can establish their own code of conduct.

The issue that has been raised is, should we have a general code of conduct for all nations or should each nation build its own code by itself? At national level, should the construction of code of conduct for enterprises be necessary?

Problems of Business Ethics in Vietnamese Enterprises

In State-owned Enterprises

The urgent problem of business ethics in Vietnamese state-owned enterprises today is corruption. According to the report on corruption conducted by the Central Committee for Corruption Prevention in the late 2005, 56.5% of interviewed governmental staff said their direct senior had corrupted at different levels. If governmental seniors get corrupted, their corruption prevention appeals are not effective.

Based on the evaluation of Transparency International, Vietnam is in the list of seriously – corrupted countries. In 2011, in spite of specific improvement, Vietnam's index still got the low point and hit the

bottom of the rank. TI also suggested, in Asian countries, corruption in Vietnam was even more severe than other Asian countries as Singapore, Japan, Korea, Brunei, Malaysia, China, Thailand, Indonesia, but was still less critical than Mongolia, the Philippines, Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar.¹⁴⁴ In 2012, Vietnam, Laos and China lost their positions in the rank by TI. North Korea still remained the gravest corrupt nation in the world. Vietnam's position was 123rd among 176 nations and territories in comparison with the former 112th position. The rank of TI in 2011 had 180 nations and territories. In second chart on perceived level of corruption in public sector, Vietnam got 31 marks. In 2011, Vietnam caught 2.9 points in the 0-10 table.

According to TI's assessment, Vietnamese economy dealt with unstable issues in the context of a series of corruption scandals in corporates and inefficient management of state – owned enterprises that preoccupy investors society. Vietnamese government recently promoted corruption prevention, arrested banking and state – owned enterprise managers.¹⁴⁵

In Foreign Directed Investment Enterprises (FDI Enterprises)

Until 2007, there were 4509 FDI enterprises operating in Vietnam. Most of them implemented relatively well business ethics and corporate social responsibility. Their efficient operation produced high – quality products and contributed remarkably to government budget, fostered economic growth. Unilever was considered as one of the most successful FDI enterprises in its business and public support activities. From 1995 to 2005, Unilever Vietnam contributed to national fund up to 2.400 billions VND. In April 2000, Unilever Vietnam was awarded by the Prime Minister of Vietnam for its achievements to its business and social contribution through projects supporting social health care and education. The company were also rewarded *The Third-class Labor Merit* (2002) and *The Second-class Labour Merit* (2005) due to its contribution to the development of Vietnam.

Aside from most highly – prestige FDI enterprises and corporates always looking up to business ethics and social responsibility in their

¹⁴⁴ www.vnexpress.net dated 19th November, 2012.

¹⁴⁵ www.vnexpress.net dated 6th December, 2012.

operation in Vietnam, several foreign firms still severely violate these issues. For instance, Vedan, a Taiwan company discharging unprocessed water into Thi Vai river causes environmental pollution and influences people's health. Even, a few foreign enterprises in Vietnam are smuggling and tax dodging including Kanaan, Coca Cola, etc.

In Private Enterprises

Apart from a few enterprises operating with its prestige, integrating into international market, performing its awareness and responsibility to community such as Mai Linh Taxi Group, Trung Nguyen coffee Group, Thai Tuan textile and Garment Group, etc., business ethics and social responsibility in Vietnam's private enterprises is the pressing problem. Most of them have not yet supplied high-quality products for consumer, exposed the demand of keeping trust/prestige in their business (with customers, partners and society). They have not also perceived intensively environment protection, treatment to labour, gender equality that are in terms of corporate social responsibility. The instance of unrespecting prestige has been a popular phenomenon. However, in concord with policies and regulations enacted by the Government, those phenomena have been under the control gradually.

It is realized that in comparison with early years of renovation, private enterprises in Vietnam have been robust. The outlook reflects regularization of remaining firms and formation of new ones. The variety of firm sector is accounted as one of the major characters, even the strong point of transfer process in Vietnam's economy. Yet, most Vietnamese enterprises have not attached special importance to business culture, hence, business environment in Vietnam still has lots of inadequate things. In short, it can be affirmed that the most critical challenge of business ethics in Vietnam is the lack of trust:

Vietnamese society is a low trust society. It is hard it to find trust or prestige in Vietnamese society. To believe in each other, family factors or blood relations are likely expected. It is a big challenge in creating an image of favourable business environment in Vietnam. The capacity of trust establishment and consanguinity in business has been recognized as the weakness of Vietnamese enterprises currently.

Violating regulation on food hygiene and safety is an alarming problem in Vietnamese society. In order to get more profits, many companies and individual households use toxic chemicals in food process that impacts badly on community health. For example, they use toxic chemicals such as MDP3 in soy soup production, Formaldehyde in noodle production, Rhodamine B to make pumpkin seeds colourful or industrial colorants for chili powder production, etc.

Food poisoning as the result of lacking of business ethics and social responsibility by businessmen has been a very common phenomenon in Vietnam. In relationship with foreign partners, a few Vietnamese enterprises have not kept their partners' trust. Many batch of goods have been returned by foreign partners since quality in the second times of export was different from the first one. The problem of losing trust of Vietnamese enterprises when signing contracts with foreign partners also leads to negative influences on the prestige.

Some Solutions for Business Ethics Implementation in Vietnam

There are three main reasons for weakness in business ethics and corporate social responsibility including perceptive reason, economic one and legal one. Therefore, in order to enhance business ethics and social responsibility, it is necessary to give solutions based on the reasons. The details can be:

Firstly, it is necessary to establish a legal and mandatory framework to require enterprises to follow business ethics seriously and comprehensively. The solution mentioned is related to the government's responsibility in creating environment and legal phase for enterprises activities. The legal framework which is the most effective method for business ethics implementation, at the same time, the most efficient support solution for moral issues makes moral motive be strengthened and fixed in practice. The challenges for Vietnam and developing countries in general is that in the context of attracting foreign investment, giving priority to social and environmental targets, it is very hard for Vietnamese enterprises to receive foreign investment whereas looking down on business ethics, environmental and social consequences cannot be compensated by economic growth achievements. It cannot reach the goal of sustainable development.

Secondly, it is necessary to propagate and educate business ethics for all enterprises, enterprises owners included. It is essential for them to understand that business ethics not only affects the society generally but also gets long term benefits in the aspect of brand advertisement for enterprises. Training is extremely significant since all human behaviours are through human awareness and oriented by awareness. The issue is how business ethics implementation can be internal motivation of enterprise owners. Implementing business ethics should be a moral action and controlled by morality. It is a moral solution.

Thirdly, it is necessary to construct moral principles in the form of code of conduct or the global compact done by international organizations. In reality, Vietnam has its own code of conduct and the global compact. The Global Conduct Network Vietnam (GCNV) was born in 2007. It has been "a prominent national center of corporate social responsibility." It supports its members in setting up, expanding the enterprises' connection with community, environment, the government so as to gain the aim of sustainable enterprises, prosperous society. GCNV consists of 75 organizations inside and outside of Vietnam which are firms, NGOs, academies, agencies of the United Nations and other governmental agencies in Vietnam. Most members of GCNV are small and medium enterprises.

The code of conduct has not yet readjusted effectively the behaviours of enterprise owners. Accordingly, it is important to continuously establish a code of conduct matching with Vietnamese conditions and to make it practically to correct business subjects' and enterprises' behaviour.

Conclusion

Business ethics is a relatively new problem in Vietnam, however, in recent years, dealing with negatively social consequences caused by enterprises, business ethics has been sparked urgently. In Vietnam, business ethics implementation is totally suitable to the target of sustainable development strategy. It can be concluded that, the perfection of legal framework, the training, propagation and establishment of code of conduct on business ethics is the most relevant solutions in order to gradually improve business ethics in Vietnam today.

Social Solidarity as the Foundation for Realization of Democracy in Vietnam

As a precious tradition of the Vietnamese, social solidarity has been tempered through the thousand-year history of building and safeguarding the country and challenged by the struggles against natural calamities as well as foreign invaders. Thanks to the tradition, in the face of any foreign aggression all the Vietnamese have risen up, united as one man with the firm determination that all the Vietnamese “would rather sacrifice all than lose the country and become enslaved.” Although solidarity has become a Vietnamese value, it does not mean that solidarity has become a tradition only exclusively in Vietnam. On the contrary, solidarity can be a fine tradition in many other nations or in majority of the nations worldwide simply because it is difficult for any nation to exist and flourish without the spirit of national solidarity and especially, in the present context, solidarity has become an indispensable factor for maintaining sustainable development and social harmonization.

However, the solidarity tradition of the Vietnamese is not the same as that of other nations and in order to articulate clearly the distinctive features of Vietnam more specialized research on its traditional values, on its people and the country is needed. Generally speaking, the Vietnamese tradition of solidarity has been established within the specific living conditions of the Vietnamese, who have been constantly engaging in the struggle against natural calamities as well as foreign invaders. *The very arduous conditions* made the Vietnamese to become consolidated and relied on each other to endure and prosper.

The practice of the struggles of the Vietnamese against foreign aggressors has affirmed that thanks to the national great solidarity the nation has gained independence, national unification. Special attention has always been paid to the issue of solidarity and national great solidarity in Vietnam.

The View of Ho Chi Minh and the Communist Party of Vietnam on Social Solidarity

Some basic points in the view of Ho Chi Minh and the Communist Party of Vietnam on the issue of national solidarity should be stated briefly. While inheriting our traditional thought on national great solidarity as well as relying on lessons drawn from his own experience of seeking the way to national liberation, Ho Chi Minh pointed out many important thoughts on solidarity and national great solidarity.

Ho Chi Minh had realized the important role the solidarity had played during the arduous years of the resistance war as well at the beginning period of the national construction. He wrote, "During the resistance war we encountered many difficulties and hardships, enemy significantly outnumbered us but we eventually won the war thanks to solidarity. Thus in the present period of peaceful reconstruction we will certainly be successful if we know how to promote solidarity."¹⁴⁶ Ho Chi Minh generalized his thought on solidarity in a famous slogan, which serves as an acting precept for the nation of Vietnam:

"Solidarity, solidarity, great solidarity
Success, success, great success"¹⁴⁷

As Ho Chi Minh perceived "solidarity is a national policy but not a political intrigue. We must be united to fight for national unification and independence; we also should stand united to construct our country. We reconcile with people who have talent, virtue, strength and willingness to serve the country and people."¹⁴⁸ He also stressed that "Solidarity should be widespread, firm as well as constantly reinforced at the same time: a house will be solid if the foundation is firm, a plan will flourish if the root is well-grounded. We should avoid two erroneous tendencies in the policy on solidarity: narrow isolation

¹⁴⁶ Ho Chi Minh, *The Complete Works*, Vol. 8. p. 392.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. 10, p. 607.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol. 7, p.438

and unprincipled solidarity."¹⁴⁹ Ho Chi Minh claimed that the most important and immutable principle in realizing of great solidarity is the principle of protecting national supreme interests and basic interests of the people of Vietnam.

In his view on solidarity, people solidarity plays a crucial role. While keeping the thought that without the support from the people even simple things cannot be done while more complicated and difficult things can be overcome successfully with the support from the people in mind, Ho Chi Minh pointed out clearly that the greatest strength lay in the people and this strength will enormously increase when the people stay united. He wrote, "there is nothing more precious than people under heaven. There is nothing greater than the strength of united people."¹⁵⁰

It should be noted that Ho Chi Minh's view on solidarity has served as the foundation for gathering people from all social strata, different parties and religions, even people who used to be misguided but eventually became repentant of their mistake. Thus, he wrote "we should unite closely people from various strata, different parties, organizations, personalities, friendly ethnic groups, non-believers as well as religious followers."¹⁵¹

Ho Chi Minh paid particular attention to the solidarity between non-believers and believers, between lowlanders and highlanders. For example, in regard to the solidarity between non-believers and believers he wrote "all people, regardless of their faith, should stand closely united... in order to safeguard our homeland and, at the same time, the right of religious freedom,"¹⁵² "we should unite closely non-believers and believers together to build a harmonious, prosperous life and construct the Homeland. Respectful policies and guidelines towards religious freedom of all religions must be implemented and obeyed properly."¹⁵³ He also emphasized that the saying of "following the Party while being alive, following God after death" generalizes rightly the attitude (mood) of religious followers with the sense of

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 7 p. 438

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol. 8 p. 276

¹⁵¹ Ho Chi Minh, *The Complete Works*, Vol. 10, pp. 605-606.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, Vol. 4, p. 490.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, Vol. 10, p. 606.

patriotism: they follow the Party while keeping their own religious faith and belief in God. We must convert that saying into a motto to educate and mobilize religious compatriots to engage actively into production activities and battle field"¹⁵⁴ and "the yearning of religious followers is to achieve bodily and spiritually welfare. To that aim people should strive for developing production and increasing income. Simultaneously, religious freedom should be protected providing that religious activities do not hinder people's production activities or go against Government's laws and policies."¹⁵⁵

Similarly, Ho Chi Minh also paid due attention to the solidarity among different nationalities and ethnic groups living in Vietnam. He had always advised that the Party and the Government should take care about the solidarity of all nationalities without any discrimination; all nationalities should stand closely united as siblings together to build the common Homeland, to make every nationality prosper and flourishing. All highlanders should stand closely united, ethnic minorities should unite with ethnic majorities, the more advanced and developed nationalities must foster the less developed ones so that all nationalities could flourish together and stand united like siblings from the same family"¹⁵⁶ and affirmed that "The Viet or the Yao, the Muong or Rhade, the Rajlai or Sedang or Bahna... and other ethnic minorities are all the descendants of the Vietnamese, all are brothers and sisters. We should be wholeheartedly faithful to each other in every situation."¹⁵⁷ Especially he stressed that "for those people who are misguided, we should convert them with compassion and generosity. In doing so a great solidarity will be established and once the latter is established our future will surely be glorious."¹⁵⁸ There are, in Ho Chi Minh thought many other important arguments on solidarity and national great solidarity, which are still imbued deeply with humanistic significance. Until his passing away, Ho Chi Minh was concerned about solidarity, first of all the unity within the Party, which should be preserved as the apple of the eye. In his Testament, which

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. 11, p. 575.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. 11, p. 575.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. 10, pp. 282, 418, 460-461

¹⁵⁷ Ho Chi Minh, *The Complete Works*, Vol. 4 p. 217.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol. 4, pp. 246-247.

he left for all the Party and the people, he wrote "Unity is an extremely precious tradition of our Party and people. All comrades, from the Central Committee down to the cell, must preserve the unity and oneness of mind in the Party like the apple of their eye."

While inheriting Ho Chi Minh's thoughts on solidarity and national great solidarity, since its Fourth National Congress the Communist Party of Vietnam has been paying more and more attention to the development of the national great solidarity. Since its Fourth National Congress the Party has initiated the cause of country's comprehensive renovation. The Party realized that there exist many pressing issues relating to legitimate interests of the people. In order to find solutions to these issues the Party must work out appropriate policies and guidelines for different social strata including the working class, peasants, intellectuals, the young, women, people from ethnic minorities, religious followers as well of the Vietnamese residing and working abroad.

Party's thoughts on national great solidarity have been constantly supplemented and improved during the Sixth, Seventh, Eight, Ninth and Tenth National Congresses of the Communist Party of Vietnam. While inheriting Ho Chi Minh's thoughts on solidarity and national great solidarity the Tenth National Congress the Communist Party of Vietnam affirmed that solidarity and national great solidarity is "the strategic policy and the main driving force for constructing and safeguarding the Homeland." This strategic guideline aims at "realizing the unity among all nationalities, religions, classes, social strata, genders, ages, regions, Party's and non-Party's members, working people and pensioners, all members belonging to the great family of Vietnamese nationalities regardless of their place of residency in Vietnam or abroad."¹⁵⁹ The Party points out clearly the principle to build the national great solidarity, which consists of "promoting the strength of the whole national community, patriotic tradition, self-reliance will and national pride; making the goals of firm maintenance of national independence, unification as well as wealthy people, strong country, civilized, just and democratic society the common point; respecting

¹⁵⁹ The Communist Party of Vietnam, *The Documents of the Party's Tenth National Congress*(Hanoi: The National Political Publishing House, 2001), p. 123

the diversity of views and opinions, which do not go against national common interests; eradicating preconceptions and discriminations based on class and background differences; building the spirit of openness, mutual trust and a future-oriented attitude.”¹⁶⁰

The idea of national great solidarity has been clearly articulated and concisely stated in section 10 of the Report of the Tenth Party Central Committee under the title “to bring into full play the strength of national great solidarity, renovate the mode of action of the Vietnamese National Fatherland Front and other people associations.” Fundamental thoughts on the national great solidarity, which have been presented in the documents of the Tenth Party Congress, can be stated briefly as follows:

First, the national great solidarity, which is based on the alliance between the working class, peasant class and intellectuals under the leadership of the Party, is the strategic policy of the cause of revolution in Vietnam.

Second, the national great solidarity is the source of the strength, the driving force and the decisive factor guaranteeing the sustainable victory of the cause of constructing and safeguarding the Homeland.

Third, the goal of national independence and unification is to serve as the common point to adhere and unite compatriots from all nationalities, religions, social strata, all people living within Vietnam as well as residing abroad.

Fourth, all preconceptions, prejudgments, discriminations based on class and background differences are to be eliminated. Different views, given that they do not go against national interests, should be treated with respect. The tradition of benevolence and righteousness as well as the spirit of openness, mutual trust and a future-oriented attitude should be promoted in order to achieve political stability and social consensus.¹⁶¹

In its documents the Party also affirms that the national great solidarity is the national cause, therefore, regarding every class, social strata and community, the Party, the Government and people’s associations and organizations should work out concrete measures to

¹⁶⁰ The Communist Party of Vietnam (2001). *The Documents of the Party’s Tenth National Congress*, p. 124.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 116

build the national solidarity block. For example, regarding the solidarity with religious followers, the Party affirms that “Religious people are an important part of the national great solidarity block. We should realize consistently the policy of respecting and guaranteeing religious freedom, people’s right to pursue or not pursue faith as well as right to conduct legitimate religious activities. We should unite people from different religious backgrounds, religious followers with non-followers and promote fine ethical and cultural values of different religions.”¹⁶²

As stated above, the Party’s view is an inheritance and development of Ho Chi Minh’s view on solidarity and national great solidarity. Based on the practice of the resistance wars against colonialism and imperialism, specially the practice of renovation years, the Communist Party of Vietnam has come to some important conclusions: the national great solidarity is the source of the strength, the main driving force and the decisive factor guaranteeing the sustainable victory of the cause of constructing and safeguarding the Homeland

Social Solidarity and Social Consensus

Social solidarity is the unity, reconciliation and cooperation among social strata and classes in society. To affirm that social solidarity is the main driving force for the cause of constructing and safeguarding the Homeland means that unity and consensus, rather than contradiction, are the driving force. The scope of the category of social solidarity is narrower than that of unity. While the latter, which is understood as unity in diversity, can be used to characterize both natural and social phenomena, the former, which is understood as social unity, is applicable limitedly within the range of social phenomena. Unity implies solidarity. Social solidarity is social unity, or social consensus, or social unity in diversity.

In order to interpret solidarity as the driving force for social development, Vietnam ought to resolve a more generalized problem: the

¹⁶² The Communist Party of Vietnam, *The Documents of the Party’s Tenth National Congress*, p. 122.

problem of contradiction or the unity of opposites playing the role of the driving force of motion and development.

The problem of contradiction or resolution to contradiction as the driving force of development has been posed long time ago among the Vietnamese scholars engaging in teaching and researching Marxist philosophy in Vietnam. There are different views on this problem. Some suggest that contradiction is an objective and self-resolving process, therefore, it is the source and at the same time the driving force of development. On the contrary, others think that contradiction is the source of development and only solution to contradiction is the driving force for development. It is more plausible to support the view that contradiction is the source originating motion and development and only *solution to contradiction* is the driving force of development.

According to Hegel's and Marx's views, contradiction is a process starting from opposites (struggling against each other) – solution to contradiction – unity. Also according to Marx, contradictoriness is objective and universal, which exists in every thing and phenomenon, both in nature, society and human thought.

While in nature contradictions are solved by themselves independently from subjective will of human beings, in society contradictions are solved through conscious activities of human beings. Man's cognition activities play significant role in the process of resolving contradictions. In other words, once contradictions occur in society there will be need to solve them and sooner or later they must be resolved. Here the man's activities play important role resolving that 'sooner or later'. Besides, man's cognition and activity also have revert effects on the process of formation and development of the very contradictions.

If one views that the solution to contradiction is the very driving force of development, early identification and resolving of contradiction play crucial role in creating social solidarity and consensus. In order to establish social consensus, social solidarity or social unity, one should identify contradictions in time and solve them. Timely solution to contradictions is the foundation for social consensus and solidarity. Therefore, social consensus and social solidarity are the outcomes of the resolving of social contradictions.

Social Solidarity and the Realization of Democracy in Vietnam Today

Social Solidarity and the Issues of Harmonization of Diverse Interests

Essentially, the source of social contradictions is the contradiction among interests. Interest is the direct driving force promoting man to act in order to satisfy his own needs and demands. In every man as well in society there exist various kinds of interests. The variety of interests is determined by the diversity of demands. In society interests may be identical but usually they are different and even contradictory. Therefore, people with different interests pursue different activities. As a result, the development of the history, as Ph. Engels rightly affirmed, is something that belongs to the will of individuals, something *objective*. The development tendency of the history is expressed through a diagonal of the parallelogram of forces. The diagonal will be extended longer when man's activities are directed only to one direction, and on the contrary, it will become shorter if man's activities are directed to many different directions.

The question is how to converge man's will and activity of human beings to a unitary direction or, in other words, how to unite man's will and activity. If interest is the driving force promoting man to act, the key point to converge man's activity to a unitary direction can be found in the (proper) handling of the relationship among (different) interests. It is known that there exist various interests. According to different criteria, interests can be classified differently. For example, based on the subjects of interests, interests can be divided into: individual, collective and social, class and national. Even individual interests can also be further divided into: economic, political, cultural.

It is difficult to state that interest is more important than others among these interests. One can only affirm that depending on a concrete historical period this or that interest becomes more pressing or important. For example, during the struggle for national independence, national interests rather than individual or class interests are more pressing and serve as the main driving force to promote people to act. Many have sacrificed not only their individual interests but even their lives for national existence. In such a time individual and

class interests have united with national interests because without the latter even individuals, let alone their interests or class interests, could have been eliminated. In that context national and individual have become identical and served as the foundation for reinforcing social solidarity.

However, in normal conditions, the existence of differences among interests is understandable because every individual pursues his own interests, communities and societies pursue other interests. The very diversity of interests brings about different tendencies to social development. Individual interests and social or community interests may be the same as they also may be different and even contradictory to each other. In planning a policy for social development, we must give priority to social interests than the interests of communities and eventually the promotion of individual interests is to be considered. For social or community interests themselves are common interests answering the demands and needs of the whole society or community. Individual interests of working masses are very diverse and it is difficult to know to whose interests priority should be given.

Individual interests of working masses are strongest driving force for encouraging and stimulating humans to act because the satisfaction of individual interests directly answers the vital needs of individuals. A policy or guideline on social development, which is based on social interests and then community interests, will be successfully realized when social and community interests are similar or simulative to individual interests.

The problem is how to ensue a certain planned social development simultaneously with promoting the proactivity and enthusiasm of certain individuals and communities. Starting from the view regarding social contradictions, which are essentially contradictions among interests, and their resolving as the driving force for social development, a harmonious combination of interests is the very foundation to encourage (promote) rationally individual interests towards guaranteeing social development. When individual interests are harmoniously combined with community and social interests, the former are still able to become driving forces for human activities, which will bring positive results and benefits for the realization of community and social interests. Social interests should become the common

ground for community interests, which, in turn, should become the common denominator for individual interests. Thus, the principle of harmonious combination of various kinds of interest becomes the principle of mutual benefit, which relies on the unity of interests to create common concern. The harmonization of interests implies the respect and tolerance for various interests. This is very important in the context of Vietnam, in which 54 different nationalities and ethnic groups with different cultural traditions and religious beliefs have been living harmoniously together during our history. Social solidarity means respect and tolerance to differences and the awareness of common care the building of common identity.

Social Solidarity, Democracy and Sustainable Development

The Cause of renovation in Vietnam since 1986 has brought about historical significance and great achievements in various spheres including economic, political, social, cultural etc. One of the important achievements is the establishment of social consensus, establishment and reinforcement of the national great solidarity block. The national great solidarity has really become the main driving force for country's development. The harmonious combination of various interests serves as the foundation for social consensus and social solidarity.

Even within the sphere of foreign relations, the Party and the Government have pursued consistently the policy to befriend all nations in the world community on the basis of mutual respect for national sovereignty and mutual benefit. As a result, Vietnam has become a reliable counterpart for many countries around the world and its national status in the international arena has been steadily enhanced.

Within the field of domestic policies, the principle of harmonious combination of various interests has become the foundation for the national strategy for sustainable development. The leaders of Vietnam intend to combine short-term with longterm interests, individual, collective with social interests, economic with political interests, social with cultural interests as well as the interests among various regions in our country, interests of different classes and social strata....All the policies and guidelines of Vietnam are to aim at realizing the policy to combine harmoniously all interests to create social consensus and

social solidarity. Only relying on social consensus and social solidarity can Vietnamese people bring their country towards a modern and sustainable development.

It should be remembered that at the present stage of social development in Vietnam, together with the promotion of the national cause of industrialization and modernization, fast and sustainable development is a thorough view in the socio-economic development strategy of Vietnam at the present. The Party's 11th Congress, which was held in January 2011, stated clearly the point of view on national development for a new period, in which the Party affirmed that fast development in combination with sustainable development is the content of primary importance "sustainable development is the foundation for fast development, fast development is to create resources necessary for sustainable development. Fast development and sustainable development should be closely attached in planning and policies of socio-economic development. Attention should be particularly paid to socio-political stability, national defense and security, steadfast protection of national independence, sovereignty, national unity and territorial integrity in order to secure the fast and sustainable development of the country."¹⁶³

Vietnam's strategy expresses clearly the combination of the traditional and classic view with the new and specific view of Vietnam on development. Within the fast and sustainable development strategy of Vietnam can be seen the following points:

First, the elements of socio-political stability, steadfast safeguard of national independence and territorial integrity, guarantee of political security, social order and safety, active and proactive international integration, the creation of peaceful and favourable conditions for the national development are *most prerequisite condition* for the fast and sustainable development. The political changes in some countries in the world today show that we cannot talk about development, not to mention sustainable development, without socio-political stability, steadfast safeguard of national independence and maintenance of territorial integrity...

¹⁶³ The Communist Party of Vietnam, *The Documents of the Party's Tenth National Congress*, p. 99.

Second, the strategy of fast and sustainable development focuses on the enhancement of the quality of development, the combination between economic growth and the comprehensive development of man, realization of democracy, social progress and justice, creation of employment opportunities, improvement of the quality of life, encouragement of legally getting rich with reduction of poverty, the attention to the protection and improvement of environment in every step of development. In other words, the strategy of fast and sustainable development is oriented simultaneously to three aims of economic development, social development and protection of natural resources and the environment.

Third, the strategy of sustainable development of Vietnam addresses pretty comprehensively different aspects of development, including the noticeably harmonious solutions to relationship between fast and sustainable development, quantitative growth and qualitative improvement, development in scope and development in content; the harmony between economic development and dealing with social issues, economic growth and environmental protection...Harmony is, therefore, one of the important contents of the strategy of sustainable development.

Fourth, the central issue, the key goal of the strategy of sustainable development is the issue of people's livelihood, which is expressed in the strategy we just mentioned above. The strategy of fast and sustainable development pays attention on the quality of economic development, orients to the comprehensive development of man, the realization of democracy, social progress and social justice, the creation of employment opportunities, improvement of the quality of life, encouragement of legally getting rich with reduction of poverty, the attention to the protection and improvement of environment in every step of development. Clearly, that goal, after all, is to solve better and better the issue of people's livelihood, guarantee a comfortable and happy life for the whole population. In the practice of Vietnam, the strategy of fast and sustainable development is the effective way to guarantee country's socialistic-oriented development aiming at the goal of "wealthy people, strong country, just, democratic and civilized society."

Thus, in order to implement effectively the strategy of fast and sustainable development, we need to continue to create strong and sustainable changes in awareness, renovate strongly development thinking, grasp thoroughly all policies, plans, projects and action programs. It is necessary to implement in wide scope and at every level with the participation of all branches and levels, the consensus participation of the whole political system, communities of economic actors and all citizens. Here we can see the close relation between realization of democracy and sustainable development. Because realizing and practicing democracy is a constituent of sustainable development. Practicing democracy is to multiply the contents of sustainable development. It is stemming from a very important stance which considers human as both aim and subject of the development. Human resources are a longterm competitive advantage and decisive factor to the development of a nation. Widely practicing democracy will promote the creativity of individuals which contributes to the rapid and sustainable development of our country. The higher democracy the deeper social consensus is and the great national unity is further fortified.

To bring democracy into full play and make it become resources for development, two conditions should be satisfied: first, creating equal opportunity for everybody to learn and build a learned society in order to raise people's knowledge; second, practicing mastership of the people through institutional settings is necessary for ensuring democracy in all facets of social life and expanding direct democracy. Democracy is closely linked with discipline and laws.

Thus, the standpoint on sustainable development with concrete contents has been perceived and reflected very early by the Party and the Government of Vietnam. Sustainable development has become a consistent policy in the leadership and governance of the process of national development in recent decades. Both within international and national level, the Vietnam Government has strongly committed to implement sustainable development as well as to link sustainable development with all-round development of man and consider human development as both the aim and driving force of the socio-economic development.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁴ Government's Decision number 153 (2004) on The Orientation of the Strategy of Sustainable Development in Vietnam, The Establishment of the

Conclusion

Solidarity is a precious tradition of the Vietnamese, thanks to which the Vietnamese nation has overcome many historical challenges to survive and flourish. Today, solidarity becomes the main driving force for the national development in the context of globalization and international integration. Solidarity becomes the driving force because it creates the joint aspirations and forces of different social strata and communities of the Vietnamese. In the multi-cultural and multi religious context of Vietnam social solidarity is the very foundation for the sustainable development in Vietnam.

The dialectic relation between social solidarity, social consensus and realization and practice of democracy can be seen in the fact that democracy in the society is continuously expanded, the society becomes more open and consensus; the defense and security are stably maintained; our political and social life remain stable. There have been more positive changes in the face of the country; the position and status of Vietnam in the international arena are improved and heightened; many positive premises for fast and sustainable development have been created for improving the quality of the people.

Promotion of Traditional Cultural Values in the Context of Globalization

National Spirit and Cultural Values

In every cultural tradition its national spirit is its national consciousness, which has been established and crystallized during the whole existence and development of a nation. It is the foundation for national will and character manifesting in the values of national cultural tradition. National spirit plays an important role in the orientation of the existence and development of a nation. It is its faith and aspired aim. The national spirit of the Vietnamese is their national consciousness, which has been created during their whole historical process and expressed in the values of their cultural tradition. It is the very spirit that has created the will and strength for the Vietnamese to sustain and develop their country during their thousands-year history. In other words, national spirit is a crystallization and sublimation of the traditional values of a nation.

In recent years, many scholars have focused on and elucidated the traditional values of the Vietnamese in their seminars and published works. Such traditional values as patriotism, fondness for independence and freedom, diligence, striving will, fondness for learning, moderateness, the sense of deference to the elders, the high sense of community, etc., are often considered typical Vietnamese traditional values.¹⁶⁵ Other values, such as frugality, commitment to family, awareness of extreme individualism, etc., are also mentioned.¹⁶⁶

The problem is whether the above values are typically Vietnamese or they are common values existing in all traditional cultures of all

¹⁶⁵ Tran Dai Vinh, "Some Thoughts on the Employing Traditional Values, Striving for New Values as Driving Forces for the Development in Present Vietnam"; Vu Khieu, "Vietnam in Front of the Problems of Asian and European Values," in *Asian Values and Vietnamese Development*, (Hà Nội, 2000), pp. 24, 208-210.

¹⁶⁶ Le Huu Tang, *Research on Asian Values: Problems and Issues*, op. cit., p. 10.

or some of the Asian nations. In our opinion, it is difficult to point out clearly typical Vietnamese values from the values of other traditional cultures. In reality, some of those values belong not only to the Vietnamese but also to other Asian nations. Yet even some values are the common property of humankind as well. Therefore, it is important to demonstrate convincingly the specific manifestations of values in the Vietnamese culture. In other words, traditional values of a nation are the unity between the universal (belonging to humankind) and the particular (belonging to specific nation or group of nations).

For example, one should indicate concretely in researching of patriotism what makes the patriotism of the Vietnamese different from that of the Koreans, the Thai or the Japanese, etc.; what is the distinction of the sense of community of the Vietnamese in comparison with other nations. A comparative research in the same traditional values existing in various national cultures is necessary to find out specific features of the Vietnamese traditional values. It is a complicated work requiring contribution of many generations of scholars and researchers. However, in this paper we would like to emphasize following two points:

First, the above-mentioned have values that have been created and tempered throughout thousands years of the history of establishing and safeguarding our country. During that whole time the Vietnamese have encountered various problems: we had to struggle with very severe natural conditions as well as to fight against foreign invaders at the same time. It means that our traditional values have been formed in the specifically natural, economic, social, political and cultural conditions of Vietnam.

Second, during their existence and development the Vietnamese have struggled against many different foreign aggressors, whose economic and military potentials have been many times stronger than our. Traditional values of the Vietnamese, during the very process of fighting against foreign invasions, have been ceaselessly fortified and tempered to give the Vietnamese a specific identity distinct from other nations.

Traditional values created in those conditions have formed and reinforced the national consciousness and spirit of our nation manifesting in our patriotism, the fondness for national independence, soli-

darity, the sense of community, etc. Now the question is, among the traditional values of our nation, what is a kernel of national spirit, a quintessence that determines the existence and development of the nation?

Some authors (for example, Professor Tran Van Giau, Professor Phan Huy Le, etc.) suggest that patriotism is the basic value to form the essence of our national spirit. They argue that patriotism is an elevated and sacred value, as an origin of a series of other cultural values. It is a natural human feeling with age-old existence. Despite its immutable nature, patriotism has manifested variously in different historical periods. Other authors, like Professor Vu Khieu, claim that the sense of independence and freedom is the highest and most stable value. It is a value for what our nation has constantly struggled for. It is a long-standing aspiration of the whole nation, a prerequisite in the human right of preservation of life, a source of strength and pride of Vietnam.¹⁶⁷

In our opinion, national spirit is a crystallization of a series of traditional values, among which patriotism and the sense of national independence are the two key values. Those two values have a very strong attachment to each other to create the essence of national spirit. Patriotism is a foundation to build the sense of national independence, which, in its turn, fortifies patriotism. Owing to patriotism and the sense of national independence, our nation has been able to fight successfully against all foreign invaders to safeguard and develop our country throughout the whole history from the establishment of the nation until the present.

President Ho Chi Minh used to declare that "our people possess a profound patriotism. It is a highly valuable tradition of our nation. Since the early time whenever our Fatherland has been invaded this spirit has risen to make a very powerful wave gliding through all dangers and difficulties to plunge all traitors and invaders."¹⁶⁸ He also claimed that "nothing is more valuable than independence and freedom," "(we) would rather sacrifice all than lose (our) country, be in slavery." Ho Chi Minh devoted his entire revolutionary cause to only

¹⁶⁷ Vu Khieu, *op. cit.*, p. 24

¹⁶⁸ Ho Chi Minh, *The Complete Works*, Vol. 6, p.171.

one aspiration of how to make our country entirely independent, our compatriots provided with food and clothes and everyone get access to education. This is not only the aspiration of the President himself but also the long-standing ambition and dream of our nation.

It should also be emphasized that independence, according to Ho Chi Minh thoughts, is closely attached to people's freedom and happiness. Independence serves as a premise and necessary condition to bring about freedom and happiness to people. He stressed strongly that independence is meaningless if it fails to bring about freedom and happiness to the people. Ho Chi Minh's above ideas reflect generally our fundamental national values contributing to create national spirit of our Vietnamese nation. He had inferred those ideas not only from our cultural tradition and the practice of the cause of national liberation but also from comparisons with other cultures in his 36 years of itinerant practice to find out the way to save our country.

The national spirit has been brought into full play during our struggles for independence and national liberation. That is why our nation has never yielded to any invader. Every time when our country has been invaded, national spirit has wound up to make a wave to plunge all invaders. It has been verified throughout all our struggles against foreign aggressors. At present, national spirit still plays a vital role in the cause of renovation and modernization in every country. The practice of the cause of renovation and modernization in some countries has shown that owing to the promotion of national spirit, they have achieved wonderful results. On the contrary, the cause of renovation has ended in fatal failure in some countries due to the refusal of traditional standards in order to make a hasty acceptance the values of the West.

Here are some examples to demonstrate this point:

First, in recent years, scholars have claimed that the miraculous success of "Asian Tigers" countries is the result of the promotion of national spirit relying on Asian values. Looking for the reason of Japanese success, for example, some scholars suggest that owing to the combination of Japanese spirit + Western technology, Japan has become an economic power despite the fact that Japan has been severely devastated after the World War Two. A combination "indigenous spirit + Western technology" has been drawn from the successful ex-

perience of Japan as a general formula for development. Here we might not be in agreement with the view regarding spirit and technology as two complete opposite sides, therefore, should be detached completely from each other. After all, any technology always contains crystallized spiritual values. Kawada has stated correctly that "it is a mistake to assume that technology and spirit are two completely separate sides... technology is the understanding of values manifesting in a concrete form relating to man's knowledge on nature and human beings."¹⁶⁹ It should be emphasized here that national spirit is an indispensable component in the Japanese miraculous success.

Second, some authors, in their analysis of the failure of Russian reform in the 90s of the 20th Century, suggest that the Russian socio-economic crisis was not purely economic and political but also cultural, as a spiritual destruction. According to Russian scholar, I.A. Sasilenko, the reason of the crisis was the intention to comprehensive westernization, the denegation of national culture and traditional standards. Therefore, the only way to help Russia to get rid of the crisis is to find out new measures to regenerate its national spirit and determine the homogeneity of Russian civilization.¹⁷⁰ At the same time, the recent recovery of Russia has been interpreted as the result of Putin's afford to raise the national spirit of the Russian and his firm commitment to nationalism to find out appropriate solutions to develop the country.

Third, the rapid and steady development of Vietnam in the last three decades has contributed to affirm further the positions of our nation in Asia and the world. The success of the development can be explained by the political stability, the dynamism and openness of foreign policy, the comparatively low cost of labour forces, etc. But in our opinion, one of the main reasons of the success of Vietnam is the promotion of national spirit to create a collective strength in the cause of comprehensive renovation of our country.

¹⁶⁹ Nguyen Van Phuc, "Cultural Projections in Front of the Challenges of Globalization," in *Traditional Values and Challenges of Globalization*, eds. by Nguyen Trong Chuan and Nguyen Van Huyen (Hanoi: The National Political Publishing House, 2002), p. 254.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 253

Now the problem is how a national spirit can be promoted in the present context of globalization?

Cultural Traditions in the Context of Globalization

As we all know, globalization is not a new phenomenon. Some new features of its manifestation occur in the present time. Due to the strong control of capitalistic nations, particular powerful capitalistic nations over the present globalization, some scholars characterize it as capitalistic. The present globalization impacts strongly on almost all nations, social life of the whole human community as well as the life of every person. People and nations worldwide react differently to the ongoing globalization. While hundreds of thousand of people in developed countries protest against globalization and the impoverishment caused by globalization, people in developing countries welcome it in the hope that globalization may help their nation to renovate technology and modernize their society.

Recently, many scholars focus on analysis of the content and nature of the ongoing globalization. Some scholars claim that globalization is an inevitable process and all nations worldwide, like it or not, will be involved in it. At the same time, globalization is capable to create opportunities for developing countries to integrate into the world economy and consequently, speed up their economic growth and technological renovation. It should be noted that the chances, that globalization can bring to various nations, are not always the same. Generally speaking, the countries with more economic development will get more opportunities than poor countries. Besides, globalization also brings about big challenges including *economic*, *political* and especially *cultural challenges* in all sectors of social life in poor and developing countries.¹⁷¹

In the present international context, almost all underdeveloped and developing countries do their best to take advantage of economic globalization to carry out a kind of abridged development. These nations, on the one hand, focus on international integration, bilateral

¹⁷¹ *Philosophical Challenges and Opportunities of Globalization*, eds. by Oliva Blanchette, Tomonobu Imamichi and George F. McLean (Washington D.C.: The Council for Research in Value and Philosophy, 2001), 2 volumes.

and multilateral development in all fields and various forms and on the other hand, actively fight against Western (both economic and political) interference and imposition. The problem of national independence and sovereignty are critically raised in underdeveloped and developing countries during the course of their economic integration with the world. They are encountering opportunities to develop, reinforce their national strength, gain appropriate place within the system of international labor assignment, become gradually economically independent and fortify political independence, and at the same time, big difficulties and challenges and even a threat of being “recolonized” in term of technology, capital and other things.¹⁷²

From cultural point of view, globalization gives rise to big cultural challenges to developing countries, especially Asian. In reality, almost all Asian nations have experienced the rules of western colonialism. Colonialism has not only exploited natural resources of colonized countries but also broken off all the links between the indigenous and their cultural, intellectual and spiritual heritage, in other words, all the components of their national identity. Therefore, after gaining of political independence, almost all Asian countries, despite suffering from material poverty, have actively mapped out their plan for economic development in the name of the ideology of “modernization,” which is indeed a “westernization” and “capitalization.”

Facing no counterpoises after the collapse of socialistic countries in USSR and Eastern Europe, capitalistic superpowers widen quickly their globalization strategy. Many Asian countries have been attracted to the process of globalization, in which the advantage of western culture has impacted strongly on traditional cultures of Asia, one of the cradles of the culture of humankind. Therefore, the concern about losing national cultural identity is not unfounded. Asian countries, especially the developing nations, face the problem of how to integrate successfully with the world while preserving their own national cultural identity. It is also a big question Vietnam is encountering in its present process of economic integration.

¹⁷² National Scientific Theme No.08.04, *Introductory Report of the Seminar “Political Face of the World in the First Two Decades of the 21th Century”* (Ha Noi, 3-4/04/ 2004), pp. 13-14.

How can the Vietnamese promote their national spirit in the context of the ongoing globalization?

First, the promotion of national spirit manifests primarily in the preservation and promotion of fine cultural values creating cultural identity of the nation. Like other developing nations worldwide, Vietnam has intended to take the advance of the opportunities of international integration to modernize gradually its technology and production. However, the western way of thinking and lifestyle will be inevitably introduced to Vietnam during the process of acquiring the scientific technical and technological achievements of the West. In the context of the present globalization, sooner or later there will be unavoidably a clash between the values of western culture and cultural traditions of the Vietnamese.

However, we should realize that cultural tradition itself is not something immutable; on the contrary, it has constantly changed and developed. Even fundamental national traditional values are to be transformed to meet the demands of new historical conditions. Preservation and promotion of national cultural identity do not mean to refuse and deny completely other foreign cultural values, including western. Vietnamese culture can only develop steadily through the acquirement with the achievements of the culture of humankind. The acquirement of other cultures should be selective: from other cultures we only accept the values, which can be beneficial to the development of our nation, and refuse all the values, which can harmfully influence our culture. After being selective the acquired foreign values should be transformed in order to become integrated into the national culture. For example, in our present cause of renovation, we need to encourage people's creativity, self-assertion. It is important to orient individual spirit of freedom and creativity to serve community's interest and at the same time, not to allow the negative sides of individualism to ruin fundamental traditional values of our nation. National spirit itself is a filter helping our nation select positive values (to our culture) and reject all harmful values.

Vietnam is a country with a long-standing cultural tradition, which has existed alongside with its national history throughout the thousands year of historical process. During the whole process the culture of Vietnam has not only preserved its identity but also

acquired and enriched itself with other foreign cultures from China, France, Russia and even America.

The combination of national cultural tradition with the cultural values of humankind is clearly expressed in the thoughts of Ho Chi Minh, who has been recognized by UNESCO as a hero of national liberation, great cultural thinker. Owing to his practice of itinerant life all over continents to find out the way to save our country, Ho Chi Minh understood very well the values of the West as well as other cultures. He wrote, "The strong point in the teaching of Confucius is the self-improvement of individual ethics. The strong point in the teaching of Christ is its lofty altruism. The strong point of Marxism is its dialectical method. The strong point of Ton Dat Tien's teaching is that its policy is appropriate to our conditions. I strive to be a moderate pupil of those (thinkers)." Reflecting on Vietnamese culture and the way to build it up, Ho Chi Minh claimed that "Vietnamese culture is a result of a mutual influence between Eastern and Western cultures... we learn the best from the East as well as the West to develop our own Vietnamese culture."¹⁷³

While inheriting and developing the above Ho Chi Minh's ideas, Vietnam has intended and indeed, is carrying out the building of an advanced culture with a profound national identity on the basis of promoting national cultural tradition and acquiring the quintessence of the cultures worldwide. We can conclude from the development experiences of many countries and the practice of Vietnam that the idea to build an advanced culture imbued with national identity has proved to be a sound policy to promote national spirit in the context of the present globalization.

Active integration is a good way to preserve and promote national cultural identity. National independence does not mean to close all the doors to grip all one's own heritage, on the contrary, it means to strengthen dialogue and widen cooperation with other nations worldwide in order to acquire their quintessence for the sake of one's own national development. However, a nation can be successful in

¹⁷³ Ho Chi Minh, *On the Cultural and Artistic Activities* (Hanoi: The Truth Publishing House, 1977), p. 89.

doing so if it is capable to safeguard steadily its own national independence.

Second, promotion of national spirit is reflected in the way we find an appropriate model for social development in Vietnam. The selection of an appropriate model for national development requires a sense of independence and creativity. The practice of Vietnamese national history has shown that, thanks to the sense of independence and creativity, the Vietnamese have won all the wars against invaders. The historic victory of Dien Bien Phu's battle would have not been done if we had not possessed the spirit of independence and creativity of our commander-in-chief, top-ranking General Vo Nguyen Giap, and had not promoted our national spirit. The failure caused by the mechanic application of a foreign experience in the pre-renovation period in Vietnam is still a very significant lesson for the cause of country's development in present Vietnam.

It is heartening that in recent years of our renovation process, we have been able to map out appropriate policy-lines and measures to develop our country, and especially we have defined clearly the aim to make "our people wealthy, society equitable, democratic and civilized." As the result, the national spirit of the Vietnamese has been promoted to build our country more and more beautiful and prosperous. The problem of how to find out appropriate methods and adequate steps to take full advance of opportunities and overcome challenges in the context of the ongoing globalization is of great significance in order to build our country to be well-matched with all nations worldwide.

The ways to develop Vietnam will be mapped out on the specific economic, political, social and cultural conditions of Vietnam as well as the consultation of the experiences of other countries in our region and worldwide. It requires a great deal of creativity. The promotion of national spirit in the present context is to serve that aim.

Conclusion

We can draw following conclusions from the above-stated points: national spirit is a crystallization and sublimation of the traditional cultural values of a nation, the most essential part of its cultural tradi-

tion and plays an important role in the orientation of the existence and development of a nation. The national spirit of the Vietnamese has been created from the values of our national cultural tradition, among which the two most important are patriotism and the spirit of national independence. National spirit plays a vital role for the existence and development of a nation. Owing to the promotion of national spirit, the causes of national liberation and renovation in Vietnam as well as the process of modernization in some countries have achieved great achievements.

In the context of the present globalization, a steady preservation and promotion of national spirit and cultural tradition manifest in: *first*, the preservation and promotion of traditional values creating national cultural identity; *second*, the selection of a model appropriate to Vietnamese conditions in order to achieve the aim of building the socialist Vietnam into a strong nation with wealthy people, democratic, just and civilized society.

The active integration into the world and intensive engagement in dialogue with other nations worldwide in order to acquire their quintessence to enrich our own national cultural identity is an effective way to achieve that noble aim.

About the Author

Pham Van Duc received his Doctorate in Philosophy from the Vietnam Institute of Philosophy in 1994. In 1997, the Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences (VASS) awarded Pham Van Duc the distinction of outstanding scholar. In the same year he received a scholarship from the Korean Foundation which marked the starting point of his international career. In 2002 Pham Van Duc was designated Associate Professor and after being awarded this scholarly distinction Pham Van Duc participated the 2012 RVP annual international seminar in Washington D.C. In 2005 Pham Van Duc was appointed as the Acting Director of the Institute of Philosophy of the Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences (VASS). In 2006 Pham Van Duc participated and became one of the founding members of the World Association for Political Economy (WAPE), an international academic organization founded by Marxian economists and related groups around the world. In 2007 he was appointed Director of the Institute of Philosophy of the Vietnam Academy of Sciences (VASS). At the 22nd World Congress of Philosophy held in 2008 in Seoul, South Korea, Pham Van Duc was selected the 2008-2013 Steering Committee of the International Federation of Philosophical Societies (FISP). He was also granted the *Distinguished Achievement Award* of World Political Economy of the 21st Century at the Eighth WAPE Forum in Brazil in 2013. In 2014 at the WAPE Forum Pham Van Duc was selected as Vice-President. In August 2013 at the 23rd World Congress of Philosophy held in Athens, Greece, he was again selected the Steering Committee of FISP for the period of 2013-2018. In 2016 the Vietnam's State Council promoted him to the rank of full professor. He is now Vice-President of Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences (VASS) and President of Graduate Academy of Social Sciences, VASS.

Pham Van Duc is also an active member of the intercultural philosophy network founded by Raúl Fornet-Betancourt. Over decades Pham Van Duc has also served as the RVP regional coordinator of Asia.

Pham Van Duc has published widely. He is co-authored of the following books: *On the Development of Today's Vietnamese Society*, co-

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Pham Van Duc edited the following books: *Globalization in Asia-Pacific Context: Some Philosophical Reflections* (Hanoi: The Social Sciences Publishing House, 2007) (in English); *Social Responsibility of Confucism in History of Vietnam and Korea*. (Hanoi: The Social Sciences Publishing House, 2015); *Some Issues on Social Philosophy in Vietnam Today*. (Hanoi: The Social Sciences Publishing House, 2016) (in English); and *Democracy in the Context of One-Party System and International Integration of Vietnam* (Hanoi: The Social Sciences Publishing House, 2017).

He also co-edited the following books: *On Understanding of Traditional Culture in the Process of Industrialization and Modernization* (Hanoi: The National Political Publishing House, 2001) (in Vietnamese); *Philosophical Perspectives on Globalization* (The Korean National Commission for UNESCO and APPEND, 2006) (in English); *Globalization*

and Identity (Washington, DC: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2006) (in English); *Philosophy in the Global Age* (The Social Sciences Publishing House, 2007) (in English); *Philosophical Perspectives on Globalization* (The Korean National Commission for UNESCO and APPEND, 2006) (in English); *Globalization and Identity* (Washington, DC: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2006) (in English); *Philosophy in the Global Age* (The Social Sciences Publishing House, 2007) (in English); *Philosophical Perspectives on Globalization* (The Korean National Commission for UNESCO and APPEND, 2006) (in English); *Globalization and Identity* (Washington, DC: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2006) (in English); *Philosophy in the Global Age* (The Social Sciences Publishing House, 2007) (in English); *Tenth Vietnam Communist Party Congress Documents: Theoretical and Practical Issues* (Hanoi: The Social Sciences Publishing House, 2008) (in Vietnamese); *Social Justice, Social Responsibility and Social Solidarity* (Hanoi: The Social Sciences Publishing House, 2008) (in English); *Rethinking the Role of Philosophy in the Global Age*, edited with William Sweet (Washington, DC: Council for Research in Values & Philosophy, 2009), Series IIID, Vol. 7 (in English); *Karl Marx's Philosophy and the Era* (Hanoi: The Social Sciences Publishing House, Hanoi 2009) (in Vietnamese); *The Issues of People's Livelihood and Harmonious Society* (Hanoi: The Social Sciences Publishing House, 2010) (in Vietnamese); *Social Responsibility in the Context of the Market Economy* (Hanoi: The Social Sciences Publishing House, 2012) (in English); *The Documents of the 11th Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam: Some Theoretical and Practical Issues* (Hanoi: The Social Sciences Publishing House, 2013) (in Vietnamese); *Vietnam Philosophical Thought: Issues of the Past and Modern Age* (University of Education Publishing House, 2017) (in English)

Pham Van Duc has published more than 100 papers in different scientific journals and reviews.

Index

A

agricultural, 56, 133-144, 151

B

benevolence, 44, 45, 49, 52, 184

Bjaznova, 10

bourgeoisies, 38

Bowen, 155

Bowie, 170

Buddhism, 16, 20, 47, 51, 52

business ethics, 169-177

C

Caodaism, 51

capitalism, 37-40, 56, 85, 87, 89-92,
99, 127-131, 152

capitalist, 7-12, 31, 36-38, 40, 82,
89-91, 96, 127-131, 152, 200, 201

cardinal virtues, 45, 52

Christianity, 51, 52

civil society, 100

civilizations, 10, 41

communism, 38, 39, 56-59, 89

Communist Party of China, 78,
85, 97

Communist Party of Vietnam, 60,
67, 68, 72, 77-79, 86, 87, 92, 93,
100, 103, 111, 113-116, 120, 124,
133, 145, 147-149, 152, 154, 158,
159, 180, 183-185, 190, 209

Confucianism, 16, 20, 43-47, 49-
52, 61

Confucius, 44, 45, 50-52, 203

consciousness, 32-34, 41, 85, 165,
171, 195, 196

consumption, 71, 129

corporations, 8, 107, 155, 156, 162

corruption, 96, 117, 120, 136, 147,
173, 174

cultivation, 44, 50, 51, 54, 58, 139,
140-143

D

democracy, 4, 27, 68-70, 82, 116,

118, 124, 153, 158, 159, 191-193

Deng Xiao Ping, 84

dialectical materialism, 31-34

dogmatism, 24, 42, 54, 57, 75

Duong Phu Hiep, 24, 25

E

economic development, 4, 9, 27,
31, 33, 35, 67-71, 81, 82, 84, 92,
93, 98, 99, 103-108, 110, 111,
115, 116, 119-121, 124, 131, 135,
139, 145-149, 151, 152, 154, 156,
159, 169, 190-192, 200, 201

eco-systems, 63, 157

education, 19, 22, 47, 52, 54, 59,
60, 99, 117, 121-123, 149, 161,
165, 166, 174, 198

effectiveness, 67, 96-99, 111, 112,
119, 142, 158

egalitarian, 135, 143

employment, 60, 70, 97, 121, 128,
129, 148, 151-154, 159, 191

Engels, 15, 16, 29, 31, 33, 36-40, 64,
84, 86, 119, 146, 187

environmental protection, 64, 70,
71, 115, 116, 156, 158, 159, 191

existentialism, 16

exploitation, 37, 87, 98, 119, 120,
130, 146-148

F

Ferrels, 170
 fidelity, 44, 45, 52, 170
 food shortage, 137, 144
 Fraedrich, 170
 freedom, 46-49, 59-61, 112, 127,
 128, 172, 181, 185, 195-198, 202

G

globalization, 3, 7-12, 14, 16, 29,
 40, 85, 100, 107, 111, 120, 131,
 132, 147, 160, 163, 193, 200-205

H

harmony, 45, 56, 64, 70, 131, 158,
 159, 191
 Hayek, 127, 128
 Henderson, 170
 high-skilled workers, 162
 historical materialism, 31-41
 Ho Chi Minh, 5, 6, 19, 21, 25, 27,
 43, 50-61, 103, 104, 180-183,
 185, 197, 198, 203
 human resources, 4, 120-122, 145,
 146, 148-152, 154
 humane, 45, 47, 52, 130
 humanity, 31, 49-53, 56, 61, 87, 89-
 91, 131

I

independence, 9, 10, 20, 34, 35,
 46-49, 59-61, 68, 69, 78, 179-184,
 190, 196-198, 201-205
 industrialization, 71, 103-108, 111,
 112, 122, 139, 140, 145, 150-154
 industrialized countries, 121, 149

J

justice, 4, 9, 49, 64, 66-70, 85, 88,
 94, 98-100, 116, 117, 155, 158,
 159, 191

K

Keynes, 127-131

L

labor force, 71, 117, 120, 122, 148,
 149, 151
 land ownership, 56, 133, 134
 Laos, 78, 174
 Le Ai Lam, 150
 Le Dang Doanh, 97
 Le Huu Tang, 36, 39, 153, 195
 Lenin, 15, 33, 39, 41, 42, 53, 54, 57,
 75, 83, 91
 Leninism, 6, 14, 36, 52-58, 75, 104
 Lewis, 170

M

management, 6, 20, 34, 46, 86, 93,
 100, 104-107, 112, 123, 134, 138-
 140, 144, 152, 161, 172, 174
 Mao Tse Tung, 84
 Marcoux, 170
 market economy, 4, 27, 82-84, 88-
 96, 98-101, 104, 113, 127, 128,
 131-133, 156, 162, 169
 Marx, 15, 16, 26, 29, 31-35, 37-42,
 50, 51, 53-57, 64, 84, 86, 89-93,
 119, 127, 130-132, 146, 186, 209
 Marxism, 6, 14, 20, 26, 31, 36, 40,
 41, 50-58, 61, 65, 75, 77, 104, 203
 Marxist philosophy, 3, 5, 15, 21-
 28, 40, 186
 material wealth, 34, 97, 146
 Mencius, 50
 modernization, 10, 16, 53, 68, 71,
 100-108, 112, 121, 139, 140, 145,
 146, 149-151, 154, 190, 198, 205

N

national spirit, 195-200, 202-205
 Neo-liberalism, 127-130

- Ngo Sy Lien, 50
 Nguyen Dinh Hoa, 103
 Nguyen Hao Hai, 5, 21
 Nguyen Tai Dong, 43
 Nguyen The Nghia, 24
 Nguyen Trai, 47, 49
 Nguyen Trong Chuan, 5, 19, 21, 25, 27, 199
 Nguyen Van Phuc, 199
 Nguyen Van Trung, 24
- O**
 ownership, 4, 27, 34, 56, 84, 90, 94-98, 131, 134
- P**
 patriotism, 22, 50, 51, 61, 182, 195-197, 205
 pollution, 8, 163, 175
 population, 8, 20, 22, 33, 70, 71, 83, 120, 136, 148, 151, 154, 159, 191
 poverty, 60, 68, 70, 108, 117, 143, 158, 159, 191, 201
 pragmatism, 16
 private business, 82, 127
 production relations, 4, 27, 34-38, 41, 77, 86, 87, 93
 productive forces, 4, 7, 32-38, 41, 82, 84, 87, 90, 93, 97, 98, 110, 111
 productivity, 99, 104, 109, 111, 152, 160-163
 proletarian class, 38
 propagation, 19, 24, 27, 29, 165, 166, 177
 proprieties, 44, 45, 52
 public ownership, 94, 95, 98
- R**
 reformation, 75-77, 84
 responsibility, 45, 47, 66, 123, 155, 156, 160-166, 171-177
 revolution, 14, 32, 36, 54, 57-59, 84, 107, 108, 111, 130, 131, 184
 righteousness, 44-45, 49-52, 184
- S**
 security, 67-69, 71, 105, 117, 123, 136, 190, 193
 Sinicization, 77
 Smith, 119, 146
 social progress, 4, 55, 61, 67-70, 88, 94, 99, 100, 116, 117, 158, 159, 191
 socialism, 10, 36-41, 53-60, 75-81, 83-95, 97, 103, 104, 113, 131, 145, 208
 socialist model, 76, 77, 79, 81-88
 socialist regime, 78, 132
 socio-economic formations, 35, 36, 41, 89, 90
 solidarity, 61, 179-186, 188-190, 193
 sovereignty, 9, 47, 68, 78, 189, 190, 201
 Soviet Union, 10, 40, 41, 55, 58, 75, 81, 83, 84, 86
 Straus, 172
 Sun Yat-sen, 50-52, 55-58, 61
 superstructure, 32, 35-37, 41, 90
 sustainable development, 61, 63-70, 72, 97, 103, 110, 115-118, 120, 122-124, 127, 131, 145, 147, 148, 154, 157-162, 166, 172, 176, 189-193
- T**
 Taoism, 16, 20, 47
 Toffler, 121, 149
 Tran Dai Vinh, 195
 Tran Tuan Phong, 127

Tran Van Tung, 150
truthfulness, 40, 41, 44

U

unemployment, 151, 160
urban development, 139, 140

V

Von Mises, 128

Vu Khieu, 195, 197

Vu Van Gau, 25

W

wage policy, 117

Westernization, 10

wisdom, 13, 44, 45, 48, 49, 52

World Bank, 109, 156, 164

The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy

Purpose

Today there is urgent need to attend to the nature and dignity of the person, to the quality of human life, to the purpose and goal of the physical transformation of our environment, and to the relation of all this to the development of social and political life. This, in turn, requires philosophic clarification of the base upon which freedom is exercised, that is, of the values which provide stability and guidance to one's decisions.

Such studies must be able to reach deeply into one's culture and that of other parts of the world as mutually reinforcing and enriching in order to uncover the roots of the dignity of persons and of their societies. They must be able to identify the conceptual forms in terms of which modern industrial and technological developments are structured and how these impact upon human self-understanding. Above all, they must be able to bring these elements together in the creative understanding essential for setting our goals and determining our modes of interaction. In the present complex global circumstances this is a condition for growing together with trust and justice, honest dedication and mutual concern.

The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy (RVP) unites scholars who share these concerns and are interested in the application thereto of existing capabilities in the field of philosophy and other disciplines. Its work is to identify areas in which study is needed, the intellectual resources which can be brought to bear thereupon, and the means for publication and interchange of the work from the various regions of the world. In bringing these together its goal is scientific discovery and publication which contributes to the present promotion of humankind.

In sum, our times present both the need and the opportunity for deeper and ever more progressive understanding of the person and of the foundations of social life. The development of such understanding is the goal of the RVP.

Projects

A set of related research efforts is currently in process:

1. Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change: Philosophical Foundations for Social Life. Focused, mutually coordinated research teams in university centers prepare volumes as part of an integrated philosophic search for self-understanding differentiated by culture and civilization. These evolve more adequate understandings of the person in society and look to the cultural heritage of each for the resources to respond to the challenges of its own specific contemporary transformation.

2. Seminars on Culture and Contemporary Issues. This series of 10 week cross-cultural and interdisciplinary seminars is coordinated by the RVP in Washington.

3. Joint-Colloquia with Institutes of Philosophy of the National Academies of Science, university philosophy departments, and societies. Underway since 1976 in Eastern Europe and, since 1987, in China, these concern the person in contemporary society.

4. Foundations of Moral Education and Character Development. A study in values and education which unites philosophers, psychologists, social scientists and scholars in education in the elaboration of ways of enriching the moral content of education and character development. This work has been underway since 1980.

The personnel for these projects consists of established scholars willing to contribute their time and research as part of their professional commitment to life in contemporary society. For resources to implement this work the Council, as 501 C3 a non-profit organization incorporated in the District of Columbia, looks to various private foundations, public programs and enterprises.

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