
HO CHI MINH THOUGHT ON HUMAN RIGHTS

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Abstract:

President Ho Chi Minh is one of the few Vietnamese thinkers who approached the issue of human rights earliest and most extensively. His ideology on human rights originates from Vietnamese humanistic traditions while creatively synthesizing progressive human rights thought from the East, the West, and Marxism-Leninism. This study aims to examine the core content of Ho Chi Minh's human rights thought. Using dialectical materialism and historical materialism as the theoretical framework, this research conducted a systematic documentary analysis of primary sources including Ho Chi Minh's complete works, the 1945 Declaration of Independence, and the 1946 Constitution alongside secondary sources such as Party documents, journal articles, and biographies. The findings reveal four pillars of Ho Chi Minh's human rights thought: (1) individual rights are inseparable from national rights; (2) human rights must be protected by law; (3) special attention must be given to vulnerable groups, particularly women; and (4) realizing human rights requires building a rule-of-law state of the people, by the people, and for the people. The study concludes that Ho Chi Minh's human rights ideology remains highly relevant today, guiding Vietnam's policies in respecting and implementing human rights across civil, political, economic, social, and cultural fields. Vietnam's election to the United Nations Human Rights Council (2013, 2023-2025) affirms the enduring global significance of Ho Chi Minh's human rights legacy.

Keywords: *Ho Chi Minh, human rights, national rights, rule-of-law state, Vietnam.*

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INTRODUCTION

Ho Chi Minh's thought on human rights represents a creative and systematic application of Marxist-Leninist doctrine on human rights to the specific historical conditions and revolutionary realities of Vietnam (Ho Chi Minh, 2000, vol. 4). Unlike many contemporary thinkers who merely adopted Western human rights frameworks, Ho Chi Minh developed an indigenous perspective that prioritized national liberation as the prerequisite for individual freedoms. This ideological foundation emerged from his direct experiences with colonial oppression and his extensive travels across both Eastern

and Western societies. Consequently, his human rights thought is not a theoretical abstraction but a practical guide for revolutionary action, deeply rooted in the struggle for national independence and social justice.

The universal value of human rights, as recognized by the international community today, affirms that every individual is entitled to fundamental freedoms without discrimination based on gender, race, language, religion, or social status. These rights are protected by international treaties, customary international law, and the domestic legal systems of sovereign states (Ho Chi Minh, 2000, vol. 1). The framework of international human rights standards has gradually been formed and accepted by nations worldwide, requiring all social institutions and organizations to respect, protect, and fulfill these obligations. However, Ho Chi Minh observed that such universal standards often remained unattainable in colonial contexts where national independence had not yet been achieved.

The values embedded in Ho Chi Minh's human rights thought retain profound validity and practical significance for contemporary Vietnam. They continue to guide the ideology, policies, and practical activities of the Communist Party of Vietnam and the Vietnamese State in addressing modern human rights challenges (Central Party History Research Board, 1984). His insistence on linking human rights with national sovereignty remains particularly relevant in an era of globalization, where economic integration and international cooperation must be balanced with the preservation of national identity and self-determination. Moreover, his emphasis on legal protection for human rights has shaped Vietnam's constitutional development and legislative reforms from the 1946 Constitution to the present day.

Ho Chi Minh's approach to human rights was distinguished by its dialectical integration of diverse intellectual traditions. He selectively absorbed the progressive human rights ideals of the Western Enlightenment, particularly those articulated in the American Declaration of Independence (1776) and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789). Simultaneously, he remained deeply rooted in the noble humanistic traditions of the Vietnamese people, which emphasized community solidarity, mutual assistance, and respect for human dignity (Tran Dan Tien, 1975). Most importantly, he synthesized these influences with the scientific principles of Marxism-Leninism regarding human liberation, class liberation, and national liberation.

The creative dimension of Ho Chi Minh's thought lies in his expansion of the concept of human rights from the individual to the national level. He argued that individual rights—such as the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—could not be meaningfully realized in a nation that remained colonized or subjugated (Ho Chi Minh, 2000, vol. 6). Therefore, national independence became the fundamental human right upon which all other rights depended. This theoretical innovation addressed a critical

gap in Western human rights discourse, which had traditionally focused on individual entitlements within established nation-states without adequately considering the colonial context.

The practical translation of Ho Chi Minh's human rights ideology into legal and institutional frameworks began immediately following the August Revolution of 1945. The Declaration of Independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, proclaimed on September 2, 1945, explicitly invoked the universal principles of the American and French declarations while asserting the Vietnamese people's right to self-determination (Ho Chi Minh, 2000, vol. 4). Subsequently, the 1946 Constitution the first constitutional document of independent Vietnam codified specific civil and political rights, including freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, and equality between men and women. This institutionalization demonstrated Ho Chi Minh's commitment to a rule-of-law state where human rights are not merely rhetorical but legally enforceable.

Understanding Ho Chi Minh's human rights thought is essential for comprehending the contemporary human rights policies and practices of Vietnam. His ideology provides the philosophical foundation for the Vietnamese State's engagement with international human rights mechanisms, including its election to the United Nations Human Rights Council in 2013. Furthermore, his emphasis on the interdependence between individual rights, national rights, and social development continues to inform Vietnam's approach to economic, social, and cultural rights alongside civil and political freedoms. Thus, a systematic examination of Ho Chi Minh's human rights thought contributes not only to historical scholarship but also to contemporary debates about the universality and cultural specificity of human rights.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The intellectual foundation for understanding Ho Chi Minh's conceptualization of human rights and national independence lies in his own writings, speeches, and political treatises. The *Complete Works of Ho Chi Minh* (Ho Chi Minh, 2000, 2009, 2011) remain the most authoritative reference, providing systematic insight into his synthesis of universal human values, revolutionary praxis, and national self-determination. These texts illustrate his pragmatic and strategic engagement with Enlightenment ideals, particularly the U.S. Declaration of Independence (1776) and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen (1789). Rather than adopting these documents uncritically, Ho Chi Minh strategically reinterpreted them within the context of anti-colonial struggle, positioning the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity as universal norms that colonial powers had failed to uphold in practice (Ho Chi Minh, 2000).

The idea of human rights was formed early in human history, especially clearly through two major bourgeois revolutions: the American Revolution (1776) and the French Revolution (1789). Famous declarations such as the American Declaration of

Independence or the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen affirmed basic, inalienable human rights—such as the right to life, the right to liberty, and the right to pursue happiness. This is the foundation of the Western human rights perspective, which values the individual and universality. However, Marxism-Leninism approaches human rights from a social and class perspective. Accordingly, human rights cannot truly exist if people still live in injustice, oppression, and exploitation. Therefore, only revolution and socialism can ensure human rights in a comprehensive and equal manner. Ho Chi Minh absorbed both of these schools of thought but did not follow a stereotype (Van & Ngat, 2025). From the Vietnamese experience, he believed that human rights must be linked to national rights—there can be no individual freedom if the country still lacks independence. This is a unique way of thinking, very suitable for the context of colonial countries at that time (Van & Ngat, 2025).

These foundational writings underscore the distinctive feature of Ho Chi Minh's thought: the inseparability of human rights from national independence. In his view, the liberation of the Vietnamese people from colonial domination was not only a political necessity but also a moral imperative rooted in the recognition of human dignity. Thus, for Ho Chi Minh, sovereignty itself constituted a human right, and national independence was both a precondition and an expression of fundamental freedoms (Van & Ngat, 2025). This understanding aligns with recent scholarship by Nguyen and Nguyen (2024), who argue that Ho Chi Minh's philosophy of human emancipation evolved from a deep understanding and development of national, Eastern, and Western thoughts, especially influenced by Marxist-Leninist ideals, and was tailored to Vietnam's unique context and the global trends emerging post the Russian October Revolution.

Beyond his collected works, biographical studies have contributed to contextualizing Ho Chi Minh's political formation and ethical commitments. Early comprehensive accounts of his life trace his intellectual development from early exposure to Western revolutionary thought to his leadership in Vietnam's anti-colonial struggle (Tran, 1975). These works emphasize his capacity to integrate diverse ideological influences—Marxism-Leninism, Confucian ethics, and Enlightenment principles—into a coherent vision for Vietnam's liberation and development. Historical analyses further underscore the role of Ho Chi Minh in shaping Vietnam's constitutional and political frameworks. His leadership in drafting the 1945 Declaration of Independence, for instance, exemplified his ability to situate Vietnam's national liberation within a broader discourse of universal rights. This moment is often cited as the crystallization of his synthesis of human rights and sovereignty, blending local aspirations with global legitimacy (Central Party History Research Board, 1984).

Not stopping at theory, Ho Chi Minh soon laid the foundation for the institutionalization of human rights by law, typically the 1946 Constitution—the first

document affirming the basic rights of Vietnamese citizens. The 1946 Constitution included a Preamble and 70 articles written in 7 chapters. Chapter I stipulated the form of government; Chapter II stipulated the duties and rights of citizens. Right from the Preamble, the 1946 Constitution affirmed: "The unity of the entire people, without distinction of race, gender, class, or religion. Guaranteeing democratic freedoms and rights. Implementing a strong and wise government of the people" (Nguyen, 2025a). Commenting on the 1946 Constitution, President Ho Chi Minh affirmed: "That Constitution declares to the world that Vietnam has achieved independence. That Constitution declares to the world that the Vietnamese people have all the rights and freedoms. That Constitution declares to the world that Vietnamese women have been granted equal rights with men to enjoy all the freedoms of a citizen" (Nguyen, 2025b). The progressive provisions of the 1946 Constitution contributed to strengthening national unity, creating immense internal strength that helped the fledgling revolutionary government overcome countless difficulties (Nguyen, 2025a).

Recent decades have witnessed a growing scholarly interest in Ho Chi Minh's thought on human rights, approached through multiple disciplines including political science, law, philosophy, and education. Studies highlight the application of Ho Chi Minh's ideas in legal education, particularly their role in strengthening a rights-based approach to governance in contemporary Vietnam (Van & Ngat, 2025). This research underscores how Ho Chi Minh's emphasis on the people as the foundation of political authority continues to inform legal reforms and the promotion of human rights awareness within socialist institutions. Interdisciplinary research has also expanded the scope of analysis by examining Ho Chi Minh's ideas through cultural, ethical, and comparative perspectives. Scholars argue that his human rights framework transcends liberal individualism by situating rights within a broader matrix of social justice, collective welfare, and national identity (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2024). This approach aligns with contemporary debates on non-Western models of human rights, highlighting the importance of cultural contextualization in rights discourse.

A distinctive feature of Ho Chi Minh's thought is that he did not view national independence merely as a political-territorial category, but rather as a condition for Vietnamese people to live in freedom, to be masters of their own destiny, and to enjoy happiness through practical rights in their daily lives (Nguyen, 2026). The goal of building a society where the people are masters and their happiness is guaranteed was realized by Ho Chi Minh through the creation of state and legal institutions immediately after seizing power. The 1945 Declaration of Independence not only inherited the universal values of humanity regarding the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, but also elevated the natural rights of human beings to the sacred rights of nations. This is a major contribution of Ho Chi Minh, placing national rights in a unified relationship with

human rights; linking national independence with the freedom and happiness of the people (Nguyen, 2026). In a letter to the People's Committees of provinces, districts, and villages after the August Revolution, President Ho Chi Minh affirmed: "An independent country where the people do not enjoy happiness and freedom is meaningless" (Nguyen, 2026).

In addition to emphasizing gender equality, Ho Chi Minh paid special attention to vulnerable groups in society, particularly women and ethnic minorities, who had long been disadvantaged under previous social regimes (Van & Ngat, 2025). For the first time in Vietnamese constitutional history, women were officially and fully affirmed in terms of their social and legal status. The 1946 Constitution not only recognized equality between men and women but also guaranteed women's participation in the government apparatus, a voice in national development, and full enjoyment of fundamental freedoms such as freedom of speech, freedom of association and assembly, freedom of religion, and freedom of residence (Nguyen, 2025a). This attention to vulnerable groups demonstrates Ho Chi Minh's comprehensive and humane approach to human rights that extends beyond formal legal equality to substantive social inclusion.

Furthermore, studies exploring the continuing relevance of Ho Chi Minh's ethical leadership model in the moral development of Communist Party cadres suggest that his legacy not only informs political governance but also shapes the ethical orientation of public officials, emphasizing accountability, service to the people, and moral integrity (Pham, 2024). From a philosophical perspective, Pham (2024) interprets Ho Chi Minh as "a theorist of humanization, namely, as a critic of dehumanization and an architect of rehumanization." As a critic of dehumanization, Pham (2024) explains that Ho Chi Minh identified the racial dehumanization faced by the Vietnamese as a consequence of capitalism and colonialism. As an architect of rehumanization, Ho Chi Minh envisioned "paternalistic democracy"—where Party cadres must cultivate their revolutionary moral virtue, making them trustworthy in the eyes of "the people" whom they are to serve, enabling them to effectively guide "the people" toward the goals of independence and communist revolution (Pham, 2024).

The philosophy of human emancipation in Ho Chi Minh's ideas encompasses several interconnected dimensions. According to Nguyen and Nguyen (2024), key aspects of Ho Chi Minh's philosophy include exploring themes of liberation on national, class, and human levels, and addressing liberation from oppression, exploitation, and enslavement towards the goal of fostering human development. This multi-layered approach distinguishes Ho Chi Minh's human rights thought from Western liberal frameworks that tend to focus primarily on individual rights (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2024). Ho Chi Minh's framework is holistic and contextual, recognizing that individual rights cannot be fully

realized without national liberation, and national liberation cannot be sustained without social justice and human development.

However, the comparison of Ho Chi Minh's human rights ideology with other human rights ideologies in the world remains relatively understudied. Despite these contributions, several gaps persist in the scholarship. First, while Vietnamese sources have extensively documented Ho Chi Minh's human rights thought, international scholarship has yet to fully situate him within the broader genealogy of global human rights theory. Compared to figures like Gandhi, Fanon, or Nkrumah, Ho Chi Minh's contributions remain relatively understudied in international academic discourse (Pham, 2024). Second, there is limited comparative analysis between Ho Chi Minh's integrated framework of rights and dominant Western liberal paradigms. His conception that sovereignty itself constitutes a human right offers a distinct alternative that challenges the individualist bias of mainstream human rights theory. Situating Ho Chi Minh within debates on postcolonial and decolonial thought could enrich global understandings of rights and justice (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2024). Finally, there is a need for greater interdisciplinary dialogue that connects Ho Chi Minh's thought with contemporary issues such as climate justice, sustainable development, and global governance.

Ho Chi Minh's legacy remains deeply embedded in Vietnam's contemporary approach to human rights on the global stage. Vietnam's membership in the United Nations Human Rights Council (2023-2025) has been framed domestically as an extension of Ho Chi Minh's commitment to human dignity and sovereignty (Nguyen, 2026). Vietnam's co-sponsorship of a resolution commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the 30th anniversary of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action reflects a continuity of his vision in promoting rights at the international level. In the current period, the Communist Party and State of Vietnam continue to promote his ideology, gradually respecting, ensuring, and implementing human rights in the civil, political, economic, social, and cultural fields, which are recognized by the international community (Van & Ngat, 2025). Proactively participating in human rights forums around the world, including being elected with a high number of votes to the Human Rights Council in 2013, Vietnam has once again affirmed its role and position in working with the international community to respect and ensure human rights.

METHOD

This study employs dialectical materialism and historical materialism as its foundational theoretical framework, following the Marxist-Leninist tradition of social analysis (Ho Chi Minh, 2000). These philosophical approaches enable the examination of Ho Chi Minh's human rights thought within its specific historical, economic, and social contexts, rather than as abstract or timeless ideals. By applying dialectical materialism, the study analyzes the internal contradictions within colonial society that shaped Ho Chi

Minh's revolutionary consciousness and his critique of oppression. Simultaneously, historical materialism provides the lens to understand how material conditions particularly French colonial exploitation and the suffering of the Vietnamese peasantry influenced the formation and prioritization of national rights over individual rights in Ho Chi Minh's ideology (Van & Ngat, 2025). This dual theoretical basis ensures that the research captures both the dynamic evolution of Ho Chi Minh's thought and its rootedness in concrete historical realities.

To operationalize this theoretical framework, the study conducts a systematic documentary analysis of primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include original writings, speeches, and declarations by Ho Chi Minh, particularly the *Complete Works* (Ho Chi Minh, 2000, 2009, 2011), the 1945 Declaration of Independence, the 1946 Constitution, and historical documents such as the "Demand of the Annamese People" (1919). Secondary sources consist of official Party documents, including resolutions and directives of the Communist Party of Vietnam (Central Party History Research Board, 1984), scholarly books, scientific topics, peer-reviewed journal articles, and biographies that discuss Ho Chi Minh's human rights thought (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2024; Pham, 2024; Tran, 1975). The collected materials are analyzed qualitatively to extract information regarding the formation, content, and contemporary relevance of Ho Chi Minh's human rights ideology. The analytical process focuses on identifying key themes—such as the relationship between individual rights and national rights, the role of law in protecting human rights, attention to vulnerable groups, and the vision of a rule-of-law state—while comparing Ho Chi Minh's perspective with Western and Marxist-Leninist human rights traditions (Van & Ngat, 2025).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Ho Chi Minh's Thoughts on Human Rights as an Inheritance of Progressive Global Human Rights Thought

During his 30 years of working abroad, Ho Chi Minh devoted himself to studying bourgeois revolutions. At the same time, he found the "inalienable human rights" in the American Declaration of Independence (1776) and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789). The human rights ideas of these two documents were raised to a new level by him in the Declaration of Independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in 1945, affirming a truth: the Vietnamese people must also enjoy those "inalienable rights" (Ho Chi Minh, 2000).

The year 1919 marked an important change in Ho Chi Minh's ideology. At the Versailles Conference, on behalf of Vietnamese patriots, he sent the "Demand of the Annamese People" with 8 points, in which he requested the French Government to return some basic freedoms and democracy to the Vietnamese people as well as the Indochinese countries, specifically the right to freedom of the press, freedom of speech, freedom of association and assembly, freedom of residence abroad and freedom to travel abroad, freedom of study and opening technical and professional schools for natives in all

provinces (Ho Chi Minh, 2000). However, that demand was not of interest to the French Government as well as the countries attending the Conference. That failure helped him understand clearly: "to be liberated, nations can only rely on themselves, rely on their own strength" (Tran, 1975, p. ...). This petition once again affirms the idea of a regime that respects the minimum freedoms and democracy of the people that was formed in the early years when Nguyen Ai Quoc left to find a way to save the country.

The influences of Marxism-Leninism and the Russian October Revolution had a profound meaning in the formation of Ho Chi Minh's thoughts on human rights. After reading Lenin's Theses, he realized that only the path of proletarian revolution could liberate the nation, liberate the people, and gain independence, freedom and democracy for the people (Ho Chi Minh, 2000). The nature of socialism is humanity, respect and protection of human rights. Ho Chi Minh creatively applied the views of Marxism-Leninism to form unique, contemporary thoughts on human rights (Van & Ngat, 2025).

From the above analysis, it can be seen that President Ho Chi Minh's human rights ideology not only selectively absorbed the quintessence of humanity, but also elevated it to suit the historical context and requirements of the Vietnamese revolution. The above content shows that Ho Chi Minh's human rights ideology was formed from the smooth combination of Western universal values and the spirit of national liberation struggle. The absorption of the ideology of human rights in the American and French Declarations was not a copy, but was elevated and concretized by Ho Chi Minh in the actual conditions of colonial Vietnam (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2024). From the failure at the Versailles Conference, he drew a fundamental lesson: only the path of revolution and self-reliance can ensure freedom and democracy for the nation. This shows that human rights in Ho Chi Minh's thought are not only a goal, but also a means to achieve national independence thereby laying the foundation for a revolutionary, national and deeply humanistic human rights ideology.

Core Elements of Ho Chi Minh's Thought on Human Rights

Individual Rights Are Closely Linked and Inseparable from National Rights

The Declaration of Independence of Vietnam, directly drafted and announced by President Ho Chi Minh on September 2, 1945, affirmed a truth: "All peoples in the world are born equal, every people has the right to live, the right to happiness and the right to freedom" (Ho Chi Minh, 2000, vol. 4). That truth was developed by him from quoting the content of the two Declarations of Independence of the United States (1776) and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen of France (1789). In the two declarations, the right to life, equality in rights, freedom and the pursuit of happiness are sacred and inviolable. That is also the content of the Preamble of the Declaration of Independence on September 2, 1945. He declared to all the people and international friends: "All men are born equal. Their Creator has endowed them with certain inviolable

rights; among these are the right to life, the right to liberty and the right to the pursuit of happiness" (Ho Chi Minh, 2000, vol. 4).

It can be seen that the creative development of President Ho Chi Minh's human rights ideology lies in this core value. He "extended" from individual rights to national rights, in which human rights and national rights are inseparable. Human rights can only be realized when the nation is independent. He pointed out that human rights can only be achieved through the revolutionary struggle against colonial oppression and exploitation, gaining national independence, and uniting the entire people to build and defend the Fatherland (Van & Ngat, 2025). That is the prerequisite for individual rights and national rights to be guaranteed in a sustainable manner.

With dialectical thinking and sharp reasoning from "obvious facts that no one can deny" (Ho Chi Minh, 2000, vol. 4), he proved that human rights are natural, so the rights of nations are also natural. That must have been a clear proof that the acts of oppression and exploitation of the Vietnamese people by imperialist forces were against the natural order, a violation of the declarations of the American bourgeois revolution and the French revolution. That also once again affirmed that the right to equality between all people and all nations is natural, an undeniable truth (Nguyen, 2026). And that the birth of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was also completely in accordance with natural order, no one can deny it. The nations of the world must respect the independence and freedom of the Vietnamese nation. That has great significance not only for a young nation in the early days of its establishment, but also for colonial and dependent nations around the world (Nguyen, 2026). Thus, President Ho Chi Minh expanded human rights into national rights, abstract human rights into concrete rights to live in independence and freedom. Moreover, he also developed from the right to national independence into the rights of nations in the world. This is his important contribution to the history of the development of Vietnamese human rights ideology.

Human Rights Must Be Recognized and Protected by Law

Practices in the world and in Vietnam show that human rights, in order to be effectively implemented, must be recognized and protected by law. Ho Chi Minh was soon aware of a progressive rule-of-law state with a complete legal system to enforce and protect human rights. In "Vietnam Requests Song", he generalized the idea of the necessity of promulgating legal documents into easy-to-remember verses: "Seven requests for the promulgation of the constitution / Everything must have divine law" (Ho Chi Minh, 2000, vol. 1). It is easy to see that these two verses are the expansion and generalization of Article 7 in the "Demand of the Annamese People (1919)" that he sent to the Versailles Conference with the content: "Replace the regime of issuing decrees with the regime of issuing laws" (Ho Chi Minh, 2000, vol. 1). In addition, in those 8 articles, there are 5 articles related to the law with the recognition of human rights, such as

freedom of the press, freedom of speech, freedom of residence abroad or freedom of study. In Article 2, there is a request for "reforming the legal system in Indochina by giving the natives the same legal guarantees as the Europeans; completely abolishing the special courts used as tools to terrorize and oppress the most honest part of the Annamese people" (Ho Chi Minh, 2000, vol. 1). These are specific requests for a rule-of-law state with the important role of law in managing and operating society. He was aware of those ideas very early in the first years of his journey to find a way to save the country.

In August 1945, the revolutionary situation in the country was developing rapidly, Ho Chi Minh convened the Tan Trao National Congress to prepare for the General Uprising. At the Congress, 10 major policies of the Viet Minh Front, which can also be considered as those of the Provisional Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, were approved. These are 10 policies of historical significance, including policies that recognized specific human rights, including: "Human rights; Property rights (ownership); Civil rights: universal suffrage, democratic freedoms (freedom of belief, freedom of thought, speech, assembly, movement), national equality, gender equality; Building a national education, fighting illiteracy, universalizing and compulsory education to primary level, and building a new culture" (Central Party History Research Board, 1984).

Also because of the deep awareness of a State that manages society and ensures human rights by law, immediately after gaining independence, President Ho Chi Minh directed the drafting of the 1946 Constitution with basic constitutional principles. The first Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam recognized 13 articles on human rights and civil rights, established the legal status of citizens associated with an independent nation, and affirmed the rights and obligations of citizens in protecting and building the Fatherland (Nguyen, 2025a). Right in the Preamble of the 1946 Constitution, it was determined: Ensuring the people's freedom and democratic rights is a constitutional principle (Nguyen, 2025a). These contents were inherited and developed by the amended Constitutions of 1959, 1980, 1992 and 2013. He also signed and issued many laws and decrees to protect human rights and civil rights. He promoted the strictness of the law, but that law must be closely combined with ethics, tolerance, and humanity. Generalizing Ho Chi Minh's thoughts on a rule-of-law state that ensures human rights, it can be clearly seen that the goals are all aimed at respecting and protecting the interests of the people, bringing true mastery to the people, and giving back all power to the people.

The Rights of Vulnerable Groups Need to Be Taken into Account, as Do Women's Equality

During his lifetime, Ho Chi Minh paid special attention to ensuring women had equal rights with men in order to liberate women. He repeatedly affirmed the important role and position of women in the history of the Vietnamese nation. He wrote: "The beautiful

mountains and rivers of Vietnam are woven and embroidered by our women, young and old, to make them more beautiful and brilliant" (Ho Chi Minh, 2000, vol. 6). In the work "The Revolutionary Path", he mentioned the role of women when quoting Karl Marx: "Anyone who knows history knows that if you want to reform society without the help of women, it is certainly impossible" (Ho Chi Minh, 2000, vol. 2). He quoted Lenin when he emphasized the importance of women in the success of the revolution: "The revolutionary party must teach women to cook and do national work, only then can the revolution be called successful" (Ho Chi Minh, 2000, vol. 2).

Despite its important position in society, due to the influence of Confucian ideas in society, with the idea of male superiority and female inferiority still existing as a habit, deeply rooted in all classes, all individuals and all families, the struggle for women's equality is still a problem with many obstacles. However, He also pointed out the erroneous and simple notions about this equality in the article "Male and female equality": "Many people mistakenly think that it is easy, just: today you cook, wash dishes, sweep the house, tomorrow I sweep the house, cook, wash dishes, that is equality, equal rights, big mistake" (Ho Chi Minh, 2000, vol. 6). He analyzed that it is just a simple division of household chores, wanting true equality between men and women requires a change in the way of thinking that has been deeply ingrained by the feudal mindset of an entire nation.

Besides emphasizing gender equality, Ho Chi Minh required ensuring women's rights and respecting women. He criticized acts of violence against women, considering it a manifestation of serious gender inequality. Domestic violence makes women feel physically and morally violated, causing them physical and mental pain. He emphasized: "The most barbaric thing about women is the habit of beating their wives. Among the people and among some cadres and party members, this bad habit still exists. From now on, the Party Committee, the government and mass organizations (especially women's and youth organizations) need to make more efforts to propagate the Law on Marriage and Family more widely and must strictly comply with it. The barbaric habits of beating wives and forcing children must end. Women's rights must be truly guaranteed" (Ho Chi Minh, 2000, vol. 12).

Words go hand in hand with actions, right after the country gained independence, he advocated training male and female cadres. By issuing a series of legal documents to manage society, he did not forget to pay attention to the content of women's liberation, creating conditions for women to be equal in all fields. In the "Appeal against illiteracy" (October 1945), he stated: "Every Vietnamese person must understand their rights, their duties, must have new knowledge to be able to participate in the construction of the country... Women need to study even more, they have been held back for a long time. This is the time for women to try to catch up with men, to be worthy of being a part of the

country, to have the right to vote and run for election" (Ho Chi Minh, 2000, vol. 4). Decree No. 14 dated September 18, 1945 recognized the equal rights of women: "All Vietnamese citizens, both male and female, from 18 years of age and older, have the right to vote and run for election" (Van & Ngat, 2025).

Before leaving for eternity, he did not forget to advise in his Will: "In the cause of fighting against the US to save the country, our industrious women have made worthy contributions in combat and production. The Party and the Government need to have a practical plan to train, promote and help so that more and more women can take charge of all tasks, including leadership. Women themselves must strive to rise up. That is the revolution that brings true equality to women" (Ho Chi Minh, 2000, vol. 12). His heartfelt words before passing away were a brief summary of his lifelong concerns about national liberation, human liberation and women's liberation—realizing equal rights for every nation, every person and true equality for women.

To Realize Human Rights, It Is Necessary to Build a Rule-of-Law State of the People, by the People and for the People

International law on human rights identifies the main subject in ensuring and implementing human rights as the State. President Ho Chi Minh did not deny that role, but he paid attention to building socio-political organizations, including the role of the Party. The Party's guidelines and policies are important in serving the legitimate rights and interests of the people. In addition, social organizations and socio-political unions also demonstrate their role in protecting human rights. He directed the establishment of those organizations right after the first years of the country's independence, such as the National Union (established in May 1946), the Vietnam General Confederation of Labor (May 1946), the Vietnam Socialist Party (July 1946), among others (Central Party History Research Board, 1984).

President Ho Chi Minh pointed out that only socialism and communism are the ways to liberate humanity from oppression and exploitation and bring basic human rights to the majority of working people. He said: "Our country is a democratic country, the highest position belongs to the people, because the people are the masters" and "Our regime is a democratic regime, meaning the people are the masters" (Ho Chi Minh, 2000, vol. 4). Therefore, he pointed out: "If the people are the masters, the Government must be the servants. Working today is not for promotion and wealth. If the Government harms the people, the people have the right to oust the Government" (Ho Chi Minh, 2000, vol. 4). This is the thought that vividly and deeply demonstrates the tradition of promoting the role of the people and the autonomy of the Vietnamese people in Ho Chi Minh's thought.

In his work "The Revolutionary Path", he pointed out: The new-style democratic state of Vietnam is a state of the people, by the people and for the people. The social

foundation of that state is the entire Vietnamese nation, based on the alliance between the working class, the peasantry and the intelligentsia under the leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam (Ho Chi Minh, 2000, vol. 2). Immediately after our country gained independence, President Ho Chi Minh affirmed:

"All benefits are for the people.

All power belongs to the people.

Innovation and construction work is the people's responsibility.

The cause of resistance and nation building is the people's work.

The government from the commune to the central government is elected by the people.

Organizations from the central to the communal level are organized by the people.

In short, power and strength are in the people" (Ho Chi Minh, 2000, vol. 4).

In Ho Chi Minh's thought, in order to ensure human rights, it is necessary to build a rule-of-law state of the people, by the people, for the people that state is expressed by President Ho Chi Minh in a concise, succinct, simple, and easy-to-understand way:

- **People's State:** A state in which the people are the masters, have the highest position, the highest power and have the right to decide all issues related to the destiny of the nation and the country. This is clearly stated in the 1946 Constitution: "Vietnam is a Democratic Republic. All power in the country belongs to the entire Vietnamese people, regardless of race, gender, rich or poor, class, or religion" (Nguyen, 2025a).

- **State by the People:** According to President Ho Chi Minh, the policy of building a state by the people means that the state is chosen by the people, electing their representatives, the people are the masters, the people support, help, pay taxes for the State to operate and the people participate in the work of the State (Ho Chi Minh, 2000, vol. 4).

- **State for the People:** That state always serves the interests and aspirations of the people, has no privileges or special benefits, is truly clean, frugal, honest, impartial and selfless. In that state, officials are "servants" of the people. Therefore, any work that benefits the people, no matter how small, must be done with all our might, and any work that harms the people, no matter how small, must be avoided with all our might (Ho Chi Minh, 2000, vol. 4). State officials must be those who know how to use the people's talents, strength and property to benefit the people, protect the people and must not violate human rights and civil rights in the process of performing their duties.

Building a new type of state of the people, by the people, for the people according to Ho Chi Minh's thought is building a socialist state of law. That state has the task of eliminating all poverty, injustice, inequality and bringing freedom to the working people (Van & Ngat, 2025).

The above-mentioned contents clearly reflect the pillars of Ho Chi Minh's thought on human rights. To understand more deeply the theoretical and practical significance of these views, it is necessary to approach them from an analytical and discussion perspective as follows: Ho Chi Minh's thought has expanded the scope of the concept of human rights from the individual perspective to the national and global dimensions. The close connection between individual rights and national rights not only reflects the reality of the Vietnamese revolution but is also a valuable theoretical contribution to countries that have experienced colonialism (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2024). In addition, his profound awareness of the role of law in protecting human rights shows progressive legal thinking, laying the foundation for building a democratic and modern state. These thoughts are still relevant, serving as a guideline in the work of building and perfecting a legal institution for the people in Vietnam today.

Discussion

Research shows that President Ho Chi Minh's human rights ideology is creative, harmoniously combining traditional Vietnamese humanistic values and Western progressive ideology. A highlight is the close relationship between human rights and national rights: human rights can only be realized when the nation is independent and free (Van & Ngat, 2025). Ho Chi Minh also deeply recognized the role of law in ensuring human rights. The promulgation of the 1946 Constitution and the system of legal documents demonstrated the thinking of building a rule-of-law state for the people (Nguyen, 2025a). In addition, he paid special attention to disadvantaged groups, especially women, with the policy of eliminating inequality and promoting the role of women in society (Ho Chi Minh, 2000, vol. 12). The ideology of "a state of the people, by the people, for the people" is the foundation for the comprehensive realization of human rights, contributing to the orientation of Vietnam's current human rights policy.

From a broader theoretical perspective, Ho Chi Minh's human rights framework challenges the Western liberal assumption that individual rights can be fully realized without national sovereignty. In colonial contexts, where entire populations were systematically dehumanized and dispossessed, the right to self-determination becomes the master right without which all other rights remain illusory (Pham, 2024). This insight positions Ho Chi Minh alongside other anti-colonial thinkers such as Frantz Fanon and Aimé Césaire, who recognized that the struggle for human dignity must begin with the political liberation of the colonized territory. Furthermore, Ho Chi Minh's emphasis on the legal protection of human rights through constitutional and legislative mechanisms demonstrates his commitment to institutionalizing rights rather than leaving them as abstract moral claims. His vision of a state "of the people, by the people, for the people" presages contemporary debates on democratic governance, accountability, and the rule of law in developing nations (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2024).

Nevertheless, several tensions within Ho Chi Minh's human rights thought merit further scholarly attention. First, while he advocated for democratic freedoms such as freedom of speech, assembly, and press, the practical implementation of these freedoms in revolutionary and wartime conditions often required trade-offs between individual liberties and national security. Second, his paternalistic model of democracy—where Party cadres must cultivate revolutionary moral virtue to guide the people—raises questions about the mechanisms for ensuring accountability and preventing abuse of power (Pham, 2024). Third, the relationship between Ho Chi Minh's human rights ideology and contemporary international human rights law remains undertheorized, particularly regarding how Vietnam navigates between universal human rights standards and its specific historical and cultural context.

The findings of this study have several implications for contemporary policy and practice. For Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh's human rights thought provides a valuable resource for articulating a distinctly Vietnamese approach to human rights that is both internationally engaged and rooted in national experience. For the international community, engaging with Ho Chi Minh's framework can enrich global human rights discourse by incorporating non-Western perspectives that emphasize the interdependence of national sovereignty, social justice, and individual freedoms. Future research should explore comparative studies between Ho Chi Minh's human rights thought and that of other anti-colonial leaders, as well as empirical investigations into how his ideas are operationalized in contemporary Vietnamese legal and political institutions.

CONCLUSION

The issue of human rights has always been of great concern to President Ho Chi Minh with its broad, comprehensive and profound content. His human rights ideology is reflected in many areas of social life. In the current period, our Party and State continue to promote his ideology, gradually respecting, ensuring and implementing human rights in the civil, political, economic, social and cultural fields, which are recognized by the international community. In addition to signing many important international documents on human rights, our State has internalized those regulations into the national legal system. Proactively participating in human rights forums around the world, in which being elected with a high number of votes to the Human Rights Council in 2013, Vietnam has once again affirmed its role and position in working with the international community to respect and ensure human rights.

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