

# Combine national strength with the strength of the times in building socialism in Vietnam today

DR. VU THE TUNG

ASSOC.PROF., DR. DO THI THACH

*Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics*

- **Abstract:** During the renovation period, the Communist Party of Vietnam has creatively applied Marxism - Leninism, Ho Chi Minh Thought, and practical lessons to effectively mobilize domestic and international resources, promote socio-economic development, maintain political stability, national defense, and security, and enhance the national standing. In the new domestic and international context, with many opportunities and challenges, it is necessary to continue to research and clarify the driving role of this combination, thereby proposing solutions to effectively promote resources for the cause of building socialism.
- **Keywords:** National strength; strength of the times; building socialism; new era of development.

## 1. Introduction

In the process of human development, the existence and prosperity of each nation - people are always closely linked to the objective conditions of the times. Based on the theoretical foundation of Marxism - Leninism, especially V.I. Lenin's thought on inheriting the progressive achievements of mankind to build a new society, together with the strategic thinking and revolutionary practice of President Ho Chi Minh, the Communist Party of Vietnam early gained a profound understanding of and effectively promoted the dialectical relationship between national strength and the strength of the times. This has been identified as an objective requirement, a vital law in the cause of building socialism. Hence, the goal of national independence associated with socialism has been maintained and developed, achieving many great achievements.

Entering a new era with intertwined opportunities and challenges, combining national strength (patriotism, cultural traditions, solidarity, and aspirations) with the strength of the times (achievements of the scientific and technological revolution, globalization trends and common progressive values of humanity) is becoming a prerequisite for Vietnam to develop rapidly and sustainably, while firmly affirming its position in the international arena.

## 2. Content

### ***2.1. Combining national strength with the strength of the times is a law-based issue of socialism and of building socialism in Vietnam.***

*Firstly*, in the process of forming and developing the theory of socialism, Marxism - Leninism, especially V.I. Lenin's thought, clearly affirmed the law and objective necessity of combining national strength with international strength in the process of building a new society. Although thoroughly criticizing the exploitative nature of capitalism and at the same time opposing it to socialism in many fundamental aspects, V.I. Lenin still emphasized the requirement to selectively inherit and use the achievements of capitalism, especially the achievements in science and technology, production organization, social management, and progressive culture. He said, "We must absorb the entire culture left by capitalism and use that culture to build socialism. We must absorb all science and technology, all knowledge, all art. Without that, we cannot build a communist society"<sup>(1)</sup>. One of V.I. Lenin's famous theses: "Using both hands to take the good things from abroad: Soviet government + Prussian railway order + American technology and trust organization + American national education... = Socialism"<sup>(2)</sup> not only demonstrates open-mindedness and practicality but also affirms the objective requirements of the process of combining national factors with contemporary factors in the process of building socialism.

Creatively absorbing that spirit, President Ho Chi Minh early gained a profound awareness of the strategic importance of combining national strength with international strength in the Vietnamese revolutionary cause. Very early on, Ho Chi Minh determined that the Vietnamese revolution must be placed in the orbit of the proletarian revolution, an organic and inseparable part of the world revolution<sup>(3)</sup>. He affirmed that the cause of national liberation in Vietnam could not succeed without being associated with the international revolutionary movement, especially the support of progressive, peace-loving, and justice-loving forces in the world. The guideline of combining patriotism with internationalism, between national independence and socialism, between national historical tradition and the spirit of the times in building socialism, is a unique and consistent feature in Ho Chi Minh's thought. This is also the law of the Vietnamese revolution. Therefore, right from the early days of the founding of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, in his letter sent to the United Nations, President Ho Chi Minh clearly expressed the spirit of peace, the policy of integration and cooperation, emphasizing the desire to "implement the open-door policy and cooperation in all fields"<sup>(4)</sup>, demonstrating the spirit of being friends with all countries for peace and development.

According to General Secretary To Lam, the significance of this event "can be considered as the first 'declaration' on the approach of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam to the international community"<sup>(5)</sup> - a clear demonstration of his strategic vision of combining national strength with the strength of the times throughout the Vietnamese revolutionary process.

*Secondly*, in the context of globalization, the existence and development of nations and peoples take place under objective conditions closely linked to the regional and

international environment. Factors such as geographical location, demographic and cultural structure, history - culture, religion - belief, or level of socio-economic development all determine the organic relationship between each nation and the surrounding world. No nation, no matter how powerful, can exist and develop sustainably in isolation from the international community. All movements and changes in the external environment, from the geopolitical, economic, scientific-technological fluctuations to globalization and regionalization trends, have a profound impact on each nation and each nation. Those impacts can bring opportunities but can also pose severe challenges, requiring each country to proactively adapt, seize opportunities, and at the same time enhance internal strength to overcome difficulties, maintain independence, autonomy, and its own development orientation.

In today's era - the era of Industrial Revolution 4.0, digital transformation, knowledge economy, and extensive globalization, the connection among countries has become closer than ever. Not only in the economic field, inter-state relationships today also spread strongly across areas such as security, politics, environment, science and technology, and socio-cultural affairs. Interdependence among economies and among global power structures requires that developing internal strength must go hand in hand with the ability to adapt and effectively cooperate internationally.

For Vietnam, a developing country with an open economy, proactive integration, taking advantage of modern scientific and technological achievements, expanding multilateral foreign relations, and diversifying international relations are vital requirements in the process of national development. The harmonious combination of national and contemporary factors is not only a strategic orientation but also a prerequisite for Vietnam to enhance its position and assert its role in the international arena, while maintaining its national identity, independence, and socialist orientation in the context of unpredictable changes in the world situation.

### ***2.2. Combining national strength with the strength of the times is the driving force and strength of socialism and building socialism in Vietnam.***

Deeply imbued with Ho Chi Minh Thought and deeply analyzing the changes in the domestic and international context since the birth of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in 1945, the Communist Party of Vietnam has always clearly recognized the strategic importance of combining internal resources with favourable conditions and factors from the outside to increase the overall strength for the revolutionary cause. During the national democratic revolution, building socialism in the North under particularly difficult conditions, our Party steadfastly applied the ideology of combining national independence and socialism, patriotism and internationalism, national cultural traditions and the spirit of the times, to create the strength to overcome all challenges. The flag of national independence associated with socialism under the leadership of the Party and President Ho Chi Minh strongly aroused the great national unity bloc, bringing together all classes of people, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, or religion, in which the worker-farmer-intellectual alliance played a core role.

Besides the endogenous strength, Vietnam's just revolution towards the common values of humanity, such as peace, independence, progress, and justice, has received wide support from international friends, especially socialist countries and national liberation movements around the world. Thanks to the harmonious combination of national strength with the strength of the times, Vietnam's resistance war against foreign invaders achieved a resounding victory, ending with the Great Spring Victory of 1975, bringing the country into an era of independence, unification, and socialist-oriented development.

During the renovation period, facing major changes in the world, especially the collapse of the model of real socialism in the Soviet Union and the Eastern European socialist countries, the world has changed from bipolar to unipolar and is now moving towards multipolarity and multi-center, with both cooperation and struggle. In this context, economic cooperation and development have emerged as the mainstream, bringing great opportunities for the country to renovate. Firmly and creatively applying Marxist-Leninist theory and Ho Chi Minh Thought, the Party has oriented the use of domestic resources in combination with favourable conditions from outside to serve the cause of national construction and defense. Implementing the foreign policy of independence, self-reliance, multilateralization, and diversification of international relations, with the spirit of "Vietnam wants to be a friend and a reliable partner" of countries around the world, our Party has actively and proactively promoted international economic integration.

The 7<sup>th</sup> National Party Congress (1991) for the first time clearly affirmed: "In the new conditions, it is necessary to attach more importance to applying the lesson of combining national strength with the strength of the times, domestic strength with international strength, traditional elements with modern elements to serve the construction and protection of the Fatherland"<sup>(6)</sup>. This viewpoint continued to be concretized and developed through the following Congresses, becoming a guideline for foreign policy, development strategy, and orientation for building socialism in Vietnam. Summarizing 10 years of implementing renovation, the 8<sup>th</sup> Congress (1996) clearly stated: "Expand international cooperation, seek the sympathy, support, and assistance of the people all over the world, combine national strength with the strength of the times"<sup>(7)</sup>. Since the 9<sup>th</sup> Congress (2001), the Party has identified the maximal promotion of internal strength, while striving to take advantage of external strength, combining national strength with the strength of the times in new conditions as one of the five great lessons of the Vietnamese revolution, namely: "... combining national strength with the strength of the times, domestic strength with international strength [...] maximally promoting internal strength, while striving to take advantage of external strength, combining traditional elements with modern elements"<sup>(8)</sup> to bring the country into a new period.

With that guideline and policy, Vietnam has increasingly integrated into international life, actively, positively, and responsibly participating in solving common problems of the international community, contributing to creating a new position and image of the Vietnamese nation, country, and people, and creating conditions for the country to have new momentum for development. At the 13<sup>th</sup> National Party Congress, the idea of

“combining the strength of great national unity with the strength of the times” was expressed throughout the Congress theme, in the guiding viewpoints and general goals in the Congress documents<sup>(9)</sup>. At the same time, the Party added: “Arousing the aspiration to develop the country, promoting the will” and “combining with the strength of the times” to the concept of “promoting the strength of great national unity” to become “arousing the aspiration to develop the country, promoting the will, the strength of great national unity combined with the strength of the times”<sup>(10)</sup>. The Party emphasized the idea of combining national strength with the strength of the times: “promoting the will of independence, self-reliance, proactiveness, active integration and improving the effectiveness of international cooperation, maximizing internal resources, taking advantage of external resources, in which endogenous resources, especially human resources, are the most important”<sup>(11)</sup>.

Recently, General Secretary To Lam emphasized the key role of the human factor in promoting the power of the times: “In the entire revolutionary process, people are always the center and the creative subject of history. In integration, we cannot rely only on technology or investment capital, but must rely on the mettle, intelligence, morality, and adaptability of the Vietnamese people”<sup>(12)</sup>. This idea is an extension of Ho Chi Minh’s view on combining national traditions with achievements of human civilization, placing people at the center of sustainable development.

The skillful application of this ideology in practice over nearly 40 years of renovation has brought about comprehensive and historically significant achievements. From a poor country, Vietnam has risen to become a dynamic economy in the region. GDP scale has continuously grown, per capita income has increased rapidly, human development indices, education, health, and poverty reduction have improved remarkably.

The year 2024 marks an important milestone for the Vietnamese economy when nominal GDP reaching about USD476.3 billion, with a growth rate of 7%, bringing Vietnam to the 4<sup>th</sup> position in Southeast Asia and 33<sup>rd</sup> in the world in terms of GDP size<sup>(13)</sup>. Per capita income reached about USD4,700, an increase of nearly 17 times compared to that in 1986. Vietnam left the group of low-income countries in 2008 and is currently one of the world’s leading exporters of rice and many agricultural products. The economic structure continues to shift towards industrialization and modernization. In 2024, the industrial and construction sector accounted for 37.64% of GDP, the service sector accounted for 42.36%, bringing the total proportion of these two sectors to about 80% of GDP. The multidimensional poverty rate decreased to below 1%, with an average annual decrease of about 1.05% in the 2021-2024 period. By the end of 2024, about 79-79.5% of communes nationwide met new rural standards, approaching the target of 80%<sup>(14)</sup>. The average life expectancy of Vietnamese people in 2024 reached about 74.7 years, an increase of 1.1 years compared to 2019’s<sup>(15)</sup>. Vietnam’s Human Development Index (HDI) in 2022 reached 0.726, ranking 107/193 countries and territories, among the group of countries with high HDI in the world. The United Nations continues to recognize Vietnam as one of the leading countries in implementing the Millennium Development Goals<sup>(16)</sup>. In particular, the country’s capacity for international economic

integration is getting increasingly deeper. To date, Vietnam has been an active member of many international organizations and new-generation free trade agreements. General Secretary To Lam affirmed: “International integration has become an objective trend, a condition for Vietnam to access and apply progressive values and modern technology, while spreading cultural values and national identity to the world”<sup>(17)</sup>.

Not only in the economic sphere, Vietnam’s political and cultural strength, international position, and prestige have also been greatly enhanced. The stability of the political system, the leadership role of the Party, and the people’s belief in the socialist path are the core factors that create sustainable endogenous strength. Actively participating in regional forums, playing a proactive role in organizations such as ASEAN, APEC, and the United Nations (twice as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, Chairman of ASEAN, etc.). Vietnam has established diplomatic relations with 189/193 countries, of which 13 are Comprehensive Strategic Partners. The system of national values, cultural values, and human values of Vietnam is increasingly promoted... showing that Vietnam is not only a developing country, but also a responsible subject, actively contributing to peace, stability, and development in the world.

With its evolving standing and strength of a new stature, together with the potential, prestige, power, confidence and aspiration, Vietnam will enter a new era of development with a solid foundation for rapid and sustainable development in the coming time.

In the current context, globalization, digital transformation, artificial intelligence, and non-traditional security issues are profoundly changing all areas of social life. Combining national strength with the strength of the times is not just a slogan, but must be institutionalized into policies for developing science-technology, education-training, transforming growth models, improving national governance capacity, and participating in global value chains. At the same time, it is necessary to constantly strengthen political capacity, maintain independence, autonomy, and adhere to socialist goals.

Therefore, combining national strength with the strength of the times is not only a lesson learned from revolutionary practice, but also a strategic principle of law in building socialism in Vietnam. General Secretary To Lam emphasized: “The cause of building socialism and defending the Fatherland in the current period cannot be separated from the international environment. To develop quickly and sustainably, we must mobilize and harmoniously and effectively combine national strength with the strength of the times, placing national interests within the overall common interests of progressive humanity”<sup>(18)</sup>. This ideology needs to continue to be thoroughly grasped throughout the entire political and social system, as the foundation for all policies and strategies for national development in the new period. The correct, harmonious, and creative combination of these two sources of strength is the key for the Vietnamese people to realize their aspiration for prosperous and happy development, rising to become a powerful nation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Currently, the power of the times is creating intertwined opportunities and challenges for socialism and Vietnam’s path to socialism. The main trend of the world is still peace, cooperation, and development, creating great opportunities for the country to make a

breakthrough; “Industrial Revolution 4.0, especially the strong development of digital technology, creating breakthroughs in many fields, creating both opportunities and challenges for all countries and peoples”<sup>(19)</sup>. The world situation continues to change in the direction of multipolarity and multicenter; international law and global multilateral institutions are facing great challenges. Major countries still cooperate and compromise, but struggle and restrain each other more fiercely. Extreme nationalism, great power authoritarianism, and pragmatism in international relations are increasing, with the common trend of giving priority to national interests.

### ***2.3. Some solutions to effectively promote the combination of national strength with the strength of the times in the new development era***

To take advantage of the favorable conditions and overcome the difficulties and challenges in the current context, the Party continues to apply the lessons learned from the Vietnamese revolution, striving to find measures to maximize national strength combined with the strength of the times to comprehensively and synchronously promote the renovation process, firmly protect the Fatherland, maintain a peaceful and stable environment, and build a foundation to strive to become an industrialized country with a socialist orientation by the middle of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. First of all, the Party emphasizes: “Strongly arouse the spirit of patriotism, the will of national self-reliance, the strength of great national unity and the aspiration to develop a prosperous and happy country; promote socialist democracy, the combined strength of the entire political system and of Vietnamese culture and people”<sup>(20)</sup>; At the same time, “Combine national strength with the strength of the times; promote the will of independence, self-reliance, proactiveness, actively integrate and improve the effectiveness of international cooperation, maximize internal resources, take advantage of external resources, in which endogenous resources, especially human resources, are the most important”<sup>(21)</sup>.

In the process of implementing the above measures, deeply imbued with Ho Chi Minh Thought, it is necessary to adhere to the following principles: 1) Always put the interests of the nation above all, with the current specific connotation of successfully building and firmly protecting the socialist Fatherland of Vietnam, rich people, a country that is strong, democratic, equitable, with a civilized society, firmly protecting national independence and sovereignty; 2) Inheriting the spirit of “using our own strength to liberate ourselves”, we must know how to “be self-reliant”, and self-sufficient. National strength and endogenous strength, are the decisive factors; the strength of the times, international strength, external strength, is an important factor, but only effective and efficient when the internal strength is prepared promptly and fully. Therefore, it is necessary to resolutely fight against all manifestations of absolutizing national strength or the strength of the times, because those are all one-sided views and disadvantageous for development.

### **3. Conclusion**

Combining national strength with the strength of the times is a great driving force and a combined strength for the cause of building socialism in Vietnam. The experience of renovation over the past four decades has shown that, thanks to the profound

understanding of Ho Chi Minh Thought, the creative application of Marxism - Leninism and the Party's guidelines, Vietnam has gradually mobilized and effectively promoted domestic and international resources, creating great achievements of historical significance. In the context of the world entering the era of digital transformation, knowledge-based economy, and deep integration, the requirement to combine these two sources of strength becomes more urgent and strategic. To realize this, it is necessary to continue innovating theoretical thinking, to strongly promote traditional national values, and proactively approach the achievements of the times, especially science - technology, education, and international cooperation. This is the path for Vietnam to realize its aspiration for rapid and sustainable development, for the goal of a rich people, a strong country, a democratic, equitable, and civilized society ■

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*Author's email: dothithachcnxh@gmail.com*

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#### ● Endnotes:

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