

Vietnam's culture after 35 years of Reform

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Abstract: *After 35 years of Reform, overcoming shortcomings in previous periods, especially in restoring faded traditions, correction and/or getting rid of inappropriate norms, exchange and acculturation of foreign values on a selective basis, Vietnam has built its new cultural norms which are better embedded in the human culture and in accordance with the international common standards. However, the dynamic growing society also embraces in itself many contradictions which inevitably contributes to a contradictory entity of culture, a showcase of low value, valueless or even anti-value phenomena on its surface.*

Keywords: 35 Years of Reform, Culture, Values, Cultural Values, Vietnam

1. Vietnamese culture, 35 years after Reform: Positive changes

Compared to the past, contemporary Vietnamese culture, in all forms and activities, is experiencing both negative and positive changes. As for positive changes, many transformations can be considered *revolutionary*. However, as for the negative changes, many transformations can be considered a form of *degradation, crisis, and decay*.

An important landmark for the transformation of Vietnamese culture to achieve new heights in quality and appearance is when Vietnam participated in the *World Decade of Cultural Development* (1987-1996), proposed by United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

1.1. Going beyond the rigid methodological framework of past studies on culture in the period before “Reform”, culture is no longer seen as a passive product of economic life and infrastructure, but become an internal factor, regulating human behavior, even guiding the development, in both the management and administration of macro policies and the scope of daily activities of each individual.

The view that culture is the *spiritual foundation of social life, the goal and the driving force of development* and the *policy orientation* of building an advanced Vietnamese culture imbued with *national identity* is recorded in important documents of the Party and the State of Vietnam since the late 1990s.

Although on the surface, this view is sometimes criticized as cliché and

insubstantial, the reality shows otherwise: the view has changed awareness, creating a foundation for culture to flourish, stimulating the revival of most of the traditional values previously neglected or even stigmatized, making Vietnamese culture return to its normal appearance, connecting with the past, and then, thanks to international integration, Vietnamese culture can catch up increasingly deeply into world culture, contributing to the common cultural treasure of the world community.

1.2. The innovating view of culture gives individuals and social organizations the ability to intervene and solve social problems from cultural causes, which have not been considered before. The *self-regulating* function of culture is also *performed quietly* and sometimes *outside of deliberation*.

Through the unique way of “soft power”, culture has increasingly helped deepen the national consciousness, clarify the national history, and affirm the sacred value of national independence and sovereignty. Based on a “*Healthy Nationalism*” (the term used when evaluating Vietnam by Joseph S. Nye, the founder of the doctrine of “soft power”), culture has been correcting the extreme views of certain subjects, bringing together previously distant notions.

Not only in the superficial phenomena of cultural activities, but also at a deeper level, in the contents of the humanistic qualities of development, with its dimensions concerning the people, the community, and the nation, Vietnamese culture also has achieved a new height that was difficult to achieve before.

1.3. After 35 years, Vietnamese traditional culture is respected and restored in many

fundamental aspects¹. Cultural values and identities, including cultural identities of local, ethnic groups, such as Champa culture, Funan culture, etc., have been studied deeply, thus, creating a renewed sense of humane co-existence of the Vietnamese ethnic communities within an independent and unified country. The achievements of humanity’s civilization that were present in Vietnam, such as the French civilization in Vietnam, the achievements of the Nguyen dynasties, etc., have been evaluated more and more rationally, and are inherited into Vietnamese culture. There is a growing sense of social awareness among the agencies responsible for economic growth coupled with cultural development, that its implementation of social progress and justice is considered more realistic and effective.

The tradition of being studious, thrifty, honest, benevolent, respecting the rules and regulations of the country, etc., has been noticed and promoted and is respected and actively implemented by a large number of people from all walks of life.

The basics of family education are good. Family still plays the central role as a fundamental cell of society. In the system of social institutions, the family is still an institution containing many of the best qualities, strong enough to ensure the stable and secure development of society.

The desire for development, the will to be useful to society, and the enthusiasm to build a rich and strong country, etc., are strongly expressed in many classes of people, from

¹ Traditional culture in Vietnam has a history of thousands of years, more than the founding history of many countries, meaning it has a greater durability and influence than many people imagine.

those with high-level responsibilities to ordinary working people.

1.4. The tangible and intangible cultural values are determined and evaluated according to international standards, many tangible and *intangible cultural heritages*, *natural heritages*, and *world memory heritages* are recognized by the international community (UNESCO, 2021)¹. Daily cultural life is now establishing new cultural patterns.

In many forms of cultural activities, Vietnam's cultural value system is no longer out of place. It has narrowed the gap compared to the world; especially with extensive cultural exchange and acculturation; most cultural activities are modernized; public culture, market culture, behavioral culture, integration culture, etc. are all closer to the region and the world. Many cultural activities such as culture in the entertainment world (Showbiz) - event organization; fashion culture; workshop culture; tourism culture - hotel; cuisine; The culture of using information technology - social networks, etc. in Vietnam is no longer much inferior to that of developed cultures. Even with several specific cultural activities and events, Vietnam has proved its role and position and has made a positive impact in the international arena, such as the 2017 APEC Summit in Da Nang, the 2019 US-North Korea Summit in Hanoi, and the Vietnamese military joining the

United Nations peacekeeping force, to name a few.

1.5. Regarding political culture, public culture, foreign policy (diplomacy), police culture, military culture, school culture, etc., the Vietnamese cultural value system also has many bright spots, and the standards are close to the world. However, these areas still produced mixed opinions from both domestic and international actors.

Although science and education still have many limitations and shortcomings, there have been relatively clear developments in the direction of integration. Vietnamese people are still considered active and intelligent. Vietnamese students, in international competitions in several basic sciences and information technology, continuously achieve very high rankings. In addition, Vietnam is also one of the few countries where about two-thirds of the population use the Internet, social networks, and smartphones, which is a very strong technology platform for cultural development².

1.6. Thus, in terms of culture, by shedding many formulaic and rigid conceptions, awakening traditional values and identities, and absorbing reasonable factors from the outside, after more than 35 years of renovation and integration since Reform, Vietnam has escaped from many limitations of the old approach and quickly merged into the common flow of human civilization and global culture. The standards of world

¹ Up to now, Vietnam has five cultural heritages, two natural heritages and one mixed heritage (only in Southeast Asia among 35 mixed heritages of the world), twelve intangible cultural heritages of humanity, six world memory heritages recognized by UNESCO (See: *Department of Heritage, Cultural Heritage Information*, <http://dsvh.gov.vn/thong-tin-disan-van-hoa-121>, accessed on 19 November 2021).

² See: Tam, Duong (2021), *Vietnam achieved 162 Olympic medals in 5 years*, <https://vnexpress.net/viet-nam-gianh-162-huy-chuong-olympic-quoc-te-trong-5-nam-4347403.html>; *General Statistics Office 2021*, <https://vnetwork.vn/vi/news/thong-ke-tinh-hinh-internet-viet-nam-nam-2021>, accessed on 19 February 2022.

cultural activities have been widely applied in Vietnam. Vietnamese culture is becoming increasingly known and positively appreciated by the world community.

The cultural life of the majority of residents has changed for the better, including those in remote and isolated areas. From a poor and underdeveloped country, the income and cultural life of many peoples have improved in both level and quality. Vietnam has become a country with an average GDP, an economy that ranks in the world, and has the highest foreign exchange reserves in 2020 ever. Vietnam is one of the countries with remarkable and continuous progress in the human development index (HDI). The trend that HDI is better than the economic index has been maintained for the past 25 years and is continuing. In 2020, for the first time, Vietnam was ranked among 52 countries that have high HDI (High Human Development Index- HDI: 0,700-0,800 - HDR 2020)¹. The average life expectancy of people is quite high, not inferior to countries with high HDI index, and continues to increase. Over the past three decades, about 50 million people have been eradicated from poverty. Vietnam reached the finish line 10 years earlier than its commitment to the United Nations for the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG),

which was welcomed by the international community².

However, the poor in remote areas, and the poor who migrated because of job loss in the past four waves of the Covid-19 pandemic are also indicators reflecting the inadequacy of management culture and cultural life chemistry in general. But this fact must be faced up to because it has only made the overall picture of the cultural situation appear clearer, without changing the general improving trend.

Culture has permeated into the country's approach to development method - *moving from a rigid, bookish, subjective, dogmatic method to a new, more flexible, more realistic, more dynamic method* - liberating the endogenous resources, using external resources, absorbing the strength and quintessence of external cultures and civilizations, closer to the trends and standards of the world community. Evaluating Vietnamese culture after 35 years of renovation, the document of the 13th National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam affirms: "The awareness of culture, society, and people is becoming more and more comprehensive and profound. The cultural fields, activities, and products are increasingly diversified, meeting new and multifaceted needs of social life. Many traditional cultural values and cultural heritages are inherited, preserved, and promoted. Culture in politics and the economy was initially valued and promoted with positive effects. Cultural exchange, cooperation, and international integration have flourished.

¹ See: *The economic status of Vietnam*, Ministry of Finance Digital Portal dated 12 January 2021, https://mof.gov.vn/webcenter/portal/vclvstc/pages_r/l/chitiet-tin?dDocName=MOFUCM188702, accessed 19 February 2022; UNDP (2020), *Human Development Report 2020*, <https://hdr.undp.org/en/2020-report#:~:text=The%202020%20Human%20Development%20Report,planet%20in%20a%20fairer%20world,accessed on 19 November 2021>.

² See: ADB (2021), *Poverty Data: Vietnam*, <https://www.adb.org/countries/viet-nam/poverty>, accessed on 19 November 2021.

Comprehensive human development Vietnam is gradually becoming the center of the socio-economic development strategy. Criticism, struggle, repelling evil, evil, backwardness, opposing views and wrong acts harmful to culture and people's way of life are focused" (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2021: 64).

2. Vietnamese culture after 35 years of Reform: limitations and inadequacies hindering the development

Vietnam today is a society that contains many contradictions. The country is deeply integrated and developed relatively quickly, even during the previous financial crisis and the current Covid-19 pandemic. The socio-economic development has many bright spots which are highly appreciated by many international organizations and the world community. With undeniable progress, Vietnam's international reputation is increasingly expanding. But on the other hand, the value picture of Vietnamese society has many disturbing dark phenomena that are not only undervalued or unvalued, but also even countervalued. *HDI index is high, but people are still corrupt, and morals are still degraded. The economy has grown, and the middle class has increased, but the gap between the rich and the poor has become more severe, the poverty rate in remote areas is still high, and the risk of falling back into poverty is lurking. Education and health indicators have improved, but the quality of education is still poor; people-to-people relationships in healthcare still have too many problems, and patients are sometimes more exploited rather than served. Tradition is restored, world cultural quintessence is absorbed, but many deviant and false values are almost considered normal. The happiness*

index improved, but the number of people satisfied with their lives did not increase. Tourism, festivals, and show businesses are developing, but behaviors that are not cultured are still quite common. The country develops dynamically, but the institutions and incentive structure still have the potential to damage people and degrade culture. Social trust is still in serious decline.

Assessing the limitations of current culture, the document of the 13th Party Congress clearly states: "Culture has not been given adequate attention to economy and politics, has not become an endogenous resource and motivation of the country's sustainable development. The role of culture in building people has not been properly defined, and there is a tendency to attach importance to the mere entertainment function. There is a lack of major cultural, literary, and artistic works that vividly reflect the stature of the renovation process and have positive effects on people. The cultural and social environment continues to be polluted by social evils, corruption, and negativity. The gap in cultural enjoyment between regions is still large, and cultural life in ethnic minority, remote, and isolated areas deal with many difficulties. The work of leadership, direction, and management of culture still has many shortcomings, confusion, and delays in institutionalizing the Party's views and policies on culture. Investment in culture is not adequate and not very effective. There is no effective solution to prevent and reverse serious degradation in some aspects of culture, morality, and lifestyle, causing frustration in society. The mass information system still has many limitations; some press

agencies have shown signs of moving away from the principle and starting to be taken over by commercial interests; Social network management is still inadequate. The quality and quantity of cultural staff have not met the needs of cultural development in the new period. The introduction and promotion of Vietnamese culture abroad are not strong; There are many limitations to receiving the quintessence of human culture present” (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2021: 84-85).

2.1. Social crime is a typical sign of human corruption and moral degradation. Before 2020, almost every day, crime continuously occurs and it is worth mentioning that the level of criminal crime is getting more and more worrying. During the four waves of the Covid-19 pandemic, criminal crimes have decreased, but some other types of crimes have shocked society. This situation is evidenced in the reports of the Ministry of Public Security, the Steering Committee for Anti-Corruption, the Judiciary Committee of the National Assembly, or in the press reports on security and social order. Besides, coupled with the rising crime is the problem of drug addiction and illegal drug trafficking. Although Vietnamese laws are among the strictest for this type of crime, such crimes are still increasing. Since 2019, the National Assembly has had to speak out about the risk of Vietnam becoming an international drug transit point. Drug crimes directly destroy society’s efforts in human development. The seriousness of the problem is that according to the Minister of Public Security at the National Assembly question-and-answer session on June 4, 2019, when drug crimes increase, other types of crimes also increase; For every

kilogram of heroin that enters Vietnam, 10 families go to jail¹.

The indicator most clearly shows the degree of human alienation and moral degradation, which are cases where high-ranking Party and State officials violate the law. Since the last few years, when major cases were prosecuted, most people could not help but be surprised to know that, among the felonies, there were also people who had been public security generals, army generals, etc., and very high-ranking cadres of the Party and State such as members of the Party Central Committee, members of the Politburo, etc. Typically, the conclusion of the Secretariat on October 1, 2021, for reviewing and disciplining 9 individuals; the Standing Board of the Party Committee of the Vietnam Coast Guard for the 2015-2020 term, and the Central Inspection Committee on November 2 and 4, 2021 proposed to discipline some leaders of the Ministry of Health and the Party Personnel Committee of the Ministry of Health term 2016-2021. Previously, it was difficult for anyone to think that people with such status

¹ See: *Prevention and fight against crime and law violation*, Ministry of Public Security Portal dated 29 March 2022, <http://www.mps.gov.vn/thong-tin-thong-ke/phong-chong-toi-pham-va-vppl-101.html>, accessed on 29 March 2022; “Conclusion of General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong at the 21st Session of the Central Steering Committee on corruption fighting and prevention”, *Government News* dated 20 January 2022, <https://baochinhphu.vn/ket-luan-cua-tong-bi-thu-nguyen-phu-trong-tai-phien-hop-thu-21-cua-ban-chi-dao-trung-uong-ve-phong-chong-tham-nhung-tieu-cuc-10222012020244664.htm>, accessed on 19 March 2022; “The National Assembly questioned Minister of Public Security To Lam”, *Government News* dated 04 June 2019, <http://baochinhphu.vn/Tin-noi-bat/Quoc-hoi-chat-van-Bo-truong-Bo-Cong-an-To-Lam/367474.vgp>, accessed on 19 November 2021;...

and social responsibility are criminals who manipulate social order and are ready to cause harm to the country¹.

2.2. Education and health were previously envisioned as fields that could not have alienated people, but now the situation has reached the point of being called a “crisis”. In educational activities, many difficult problems appear both in management, administration, and also in school activities. From the textbook program, the autonomy of educational institutions, the scandals at some universities, exam cheating, degree trading, school violence, moral degradation of teachers, pedophilia, sexual harassment in schools, etc. have continuously occurred. The Ministry of Education and Training has not had time to solve this case, another case has appeared. For many years, education has always been a hot spot on the agenda of the National Assembly. The situation of buying and selling degrees, cheating in international (scientific) publications, and irresponsibility in compiling grade 1 textbooks are pressing phenomena of education in 2020. The 2021 problems posed for Education are “Real learning, real talent” and quality online learning. The education crisis still seems to have no way out (Ha Van - Dinh Nam, 2021).

¹ See: “The Secretariat disciplined the Standing Board of the Party Committee of the Vietnam Coast Guard for the 2015-2020 term and some individuals”, *Government News* dated 01 October 2021, <http://baochinhphu.vn/Thoi-su/Ban-Bi-thu-ky-luat-Ban-Thuong-vu-Dang-uy-Canh-sat-bien-Viet-Nam-nhiem-ky-20152020-va-mot-so-ca-nhan/448376.vgp>, accessed on 19 November 2021; “Warning as a disciplinary measure against the Party Personnel Committee of the Ministry of Health for the 2016-2021 term”, *Government News* dated 19 November 2021, <http://baochinhphu.vn/Nhan-su/Ky-luat-can-hao-Ban-can-su-Dang-Bo-Y-te-nhiem-ky-20162021/453465.vgp>, accessed on 19 February 2022.

In the health sector, although in recent years this industry has been assessed as having many advances in both professional level and organization, it has not yet overcome the deterioration in the relationship between the doctor and the patient. Health policy has many problems that are difficult to resolve. The patient is still an object “to manage” rather than an object “to be served”. Self-interest in medical activities still occurs in many places, for example, taking advantage of policy loopholes during the Covid-19 pandemic, some health workers still do not hesitate to find ways to find new products. unjustly huge profits. The “innate” humanity of healthcare is still violated².

2.3. In the community value system, the phenomenon of value deviation has been warned about many years ago (Quy, 2015; Reporters group, 2018). But in recent years, this phenomenon has become more and more worrying. At present, the distinction between appearance and reality, labor and wealth, status and talent, money and humanity, ostentatiousness and humility, indifference and altruism, etc. are becoming confusing and people appear to possess a dysfunctional moral compass.

In the public consciousness, the position of some values has been (inadvertently) misaligned, both in daily life and in the mass media. Many honorable titles

² See: Bao An (2021), “Prosecuting the Director of Bach Mai Hospital Nguyen Quang Tuan”, *Ho Chi Minh City People's Public Security Newspaper*, https://congan.com.vn/an-ninh-kinh-te/giam-doc-benh-vien-bach-mai-nguyen-quang-tuan-bi-khoi-to_121941.html; HM (2021), “The Viet A case needs to be dealt with seriously”, *Government News* dated 21 December 2021, <https://baochinhphu.vn/Phap-luat/Vu-Viet-A-la-rat-nghiem-trong-can-phai-duoc-xu-ly-nghiem-minh/456704.vgp>,... accessed on 19 February 2022.

are underserved. Wealth is revered, but labor, even the labor that creates wealth, is overlooked, and not adequately appreciated. Social status is respected, even unworthy status, but talent associated with the status is not honored by many people, even talent is discriminated against. Vietnam is considered a nation of gratitude, but the indifference of many people is very common. Altruism and tolerance are becoming increasingly rare, especially in public offices. There have been too many cases where money has damaged humanity, because of money, relatives are willing to harm each other. Human love is mainly seen only in times of trouble. Humility seems rarely to be honored, and the habit of showing off is everywhere.

In other words, in the current system of values, vanity is nurtured, because fame is often perceived by the social incentives unwittingly as more important than substance. Unethical greed continues to exist. In other words, crony capitalism in Vietnam is a worrying phenomenon, many businesses are more interested in “dealing under the table” than achieving business success by their actual ability. The greed for titles, honors, and social status still can exist because there are still many talented people who are not worthy of their social status. In Vietnam, social status is almost always respected, while the promotion and use of talent are often faced with many difficulties. The situation where a high-status person makes inappropriate and irresponsible statements happens every year. The power of money is almost everywhere to be found, and money is found to be superior to humanity - many values still have no “incentive structure” to be implemented, if not guaranteed by money.

Showiness often overwhelms modesty and is sometimes aided by the mass media. Real knowledge is still considered less than a degree, a qualification. Indifference is still very common both on the street and in the workplace. And, fakery is still present everywhere, still ignored, and still considered normal, if it is not prosecuted before the law.

The problem is that widespread self-interests and cynicism as the side effects of the market economy have led many people to mistakenly believe that “money” and “social status” are the peak values in life. That fame, justice, and prestige are purchasable. Falsehood has prevailed in many areas of social life, in many cases falsehood has even openly overwhelmed kindness and honesty. Once the hierarchy of community values is distorted, naturally, some values will be removed from their true place in the value system; things that are not valuable, not worth valuing, or even anti-value will replace things that are worth building and supporting. If the values of “Labour”, “Honesty” and “Truthfulness” are accidentally replaced by “Money” and “Status”, the social value orientation will inevitably be ineffective, and society will “lose the way.”

2.4. It is hard to deny that, for a long time, in daily life, people have encountered many lies and falsehoods. Falsehood has become so pervasive that it has become commonplace, discouraging honesty and kindness. Fake diplomas, fake titles, fake knowledge, fake international (scientific) publication, fake product quality, fake medicine, author’s age, fake statistics, payment with a fake voucher, chart hypocrisy, hypocrisy, etc. are everywhere and people are not ashamed of these things.

Unfortunately, society has accepted this fact by looking the other way¹.

In many works and projects, the purpose stated in the document is fake, because it is just a means and a tool for extraction and corruption. For anything to be done, one has to always think about circumventing the law. People become unincentivized to finish the actual work with integrity if there is no talk about how (undeserved) benefits are shared. Every project of national livelihood is in danger of collapse if there is corruption or rent-seeking behaviors that are not prevented. From 2016 to now, this situation has been somewhat reduced due to the fierce anti-corruption work, even in the context of the current Covid-19 epidemic. People have grounds to believe that dealing with corruption will no longer be a forbidden matter as before, and criminals will have to pay the price sooner or later. However, it is still hard to deny that corrupted dealings with the public property are an “implicit motive” of many powerful officials. It is difficult to imagine, what would be the real motives of those undertaking socio-economic projects, if there were no corruption².

¹ See: *Essay about scary silence of good people*, Website of Nguyen Hue School for the Gifted, http://chuyennghue.edu.vn/hoc-sinh/653_bai-van-ve-su-im-lang-dang-so-cua-nguoi-tot.html; Phuong Lien (2021), “Ignore or bravely eliminate evils?”, *Government News* dated 18 July 2013, <https://baochinhphu.vn/print/lam-ngo-hay-dung-cam-bai-tru-cai-xau-102146049.htm>; Le Pham (2020), “Living with the gangster”, *Vnexpress* dated 13 May 2020, <https://vnexpress.net/song-chung-xa-ho-i-den-4098843.html>;... accessed on 12 November 2021.

² See: Ngoc Ha (2020), *Anti-corruption: There is no forbidden zone and everyone's work!*, Website of the Central Department of Internal Affairs dated 15 December 2020, <https://noichinh.vn/tin-tuc-su-kien/>

Human corruption is only one cause of this situation. The corrupt incentive structures and institutions that don't have a place for people to dedicate themselves to normal labor are the more fundamental causes.

The problem is, of course, due to the deterioration of human quality. However, looking further, the problem is that economic institutions and social mechanisms have long given rise to the situation that most jobs and labor are not paid commensurately, especially in the state sector. Almost everywhere, in all forms of labor, if a person does real work, and takes real responsibility, he or she will suffer losses or does not receive worthy benefits for his/her efforts. For decades, society has found its way in the worst way - by lying. In turn, falsehood seeks to defend itself in flawed institutions, loopholes in the law, rigid regulations or self-interest in policies, etc., thereby defending the wrongs, and evil in society.

2.5. Another social phenomenon that can be a consequence of all of the above problems is that trust - people's confidence in the Party, the regime, and the country's future - has suffered from a gradual decline. For a long time, this phenomenon has been alarmed by the media and public opinion. The direct danger threatening the survival of the Party and the regime has been warned

tin-trung-uong/202012/phong-chong-tham-nhung-khong-co-vung-cam-bat-ke-la-ai-308929/; Quy, Nguyen, Canh (2021), “Anti-corruption in the spirit of the 13th Party Congress”, *Propaganda Magazine* dated 14 July 2021, <https://tuyengiao.vn/dua-nghi-quyet-cua-dang-vao-cuoc-song/phong-chong-tham-nhung-theo-tinh-than-dai-hoi-xiii-cua-dang-134364>; “51 leaders nationwide were prosecuted for allowing corruption”, *Nghệ An Newspaper* dated 06 September 2021 (vietnamnet.vn), <https://baonghean.vn/ca-nuoc-co-51-nguoi-dung-dau-bi-xu-ly-do-de-xay-ra-tham-nhung-293693.html>;... accessed on 12 November 2021.

by the General Secretary himself and the Resolution of the 4th Plenum of the 12th Party Central Committee¹. Scientists often find the cause of the crisis of trust, first of all, in the operation of the institution, in the public administration, in the officials, and the legal system. That is reasonable. But from a cultural point of view, the basic reason why trust in the spiritual life of Vietnamese society gradually fades and disappears, in our opinion, is that it has been too long in Vietnam that righteousness has been disrespected or even trampled on. Mostly by accident, but the fact is that this situation of how badly treated righteousness has become is aided by the flawed institution, the loopholes in the law, the bureaucracy of the public, and the greedy people in the cadres. Consequently, justice or righteousness has been despised, sometimes trampled on, which leads to social trust falling into the current state. In some cases, righteousness or justice is treated as meaningless. In some cases, the reason is treated as meaningless. Most recently, some cases make society extremely angry, but the person in charge still responds to the public that the “correct procedure” had been followed. Righteousness in such cases was completely disregarded. Social trust in any form is difficult to have a basis to continue to exist in this context.

In terms of values, it is necessary to say that the orientation of value in practice always has two trends that rarely coincide. On

the one hand, ideal values and norms are explicitly promoted and are deliberately honored to guide human thoughts and behaviors, but they often do not achieve much. On the other, the implicit value of social life itself silently manifests its power. The intense instinctive flow of social life, if not reined in by strong enough legal institutions, will create wiggle room for bad actors and undesirable human qualities to manifest. The bad, the evil, and the unreasonable, in such cases, can be out of control. Vietnam’s cultural value system is more or less in such a conundrum.

The good news is that, as with clear results showing a rare resolute attitude after years of anti-corruption, anti-social moral degradation, etc., the social atmosphere has changed positively. Slowly, the people’s trust has been partially restored. The success of anti-corruption work together with other socio-economic achievements allows hope that in a relatively resilient society like Vietnam, pressing and seemingly intractable cultural issues discussed above do not hinder the normal development of society. Even if viewed from another angle, the treatment of ulcers is also an opportunity for Vietnamese society to thoroughly resolve the conflicts in its heart, and then reach higher and better values.

3. Conclusion

Talking about culture is talking about people. Culture is the spiritual foundation of society, that is, in the long-term, historical view, culture makes people, and people are the products of culture. But when it is considered as a goal and a driving force of development, culture is considered in the short-term vision, culture is a creative product of the people. And in the short term, the people is the creator of culture. To

¹ See: “Resolution of the 4th Plenum (term XII) on strengthening Party building and rectification”, *Government News* dated 31 October 2016, <http://baochinhphu.vn/Thoi-su/Nghi-quyet-Hoi-nghi-Trung-uong-4-khoa-XII-ve-tang-cuong-xay-dung-chinh-don-Dang/290392.vgp>, accessed on 19 November 2021.

correct and overcome the limitations and inadequacies of culture, the starting point must always start from people, from human behavior, activities, and plans.

For writers and artists, the creators of literature and art, who are responsible for awakening and suggesting for society to envision a path to the future, they must be the first to reflect. The writers and artists must have an honest reflection of cultural - social life; should not find reasons to turn their backs on the destinies of individual humans - from workers who lost their jobs due to the pandemic to soldiers, doctors, benefactors, etc., who made sacrifices for the community, fighting invisible enemies; from those who intentionally or unfortunately were entangled in corruption to those who dare to die to do good things; from generals who dare to sacrifice personal interests, shake off their rigid and dogmatic thoughts, to soldiers who quietly stay on the border and islands to keep the peace for the Motherland... There are many personal stories needed to be told, yet they are absent in many works of art.

Resolution of the 9th Plenum of the 11th Party Central Committee affirms that culture must be placed on an equal footing with economy, politics, and society¹. That means, for managers, entrepreneurs, or socio-economic development programs and projects, cultural goals must be planned

¹ See: "Resolution of the 9th Plenum of the 11th Party Central Committee on building and developing Vietnamese culture and people to meet the requirements of national sustainable development", *Communist Party of Vietnam Online Newspaper* dated 11 June 2014, <https://dangcongsan.vn/thoi-su/nghi-quyet-hoi-nghi-trung-uong-9-khoa-xi-ve-xay-dung-va-phat-trien-van-hoa-con-nguoi-vietnam-dap-ung-yeu-cau-phat-trien-ben-vung-dat-nuoc-251604.html>, accessed on 12 November 2021.

right from the beginning, next to business objectives. Such works are not only aimed at economic profit or profit-seeking, but they must also protect the culture, not damage people, or most of all, be culturally profitable.

At present, the culture of "a part of cadres and party members", as confirmed by the Resolution of the 4th Plenum of the 13th Party Central Committee, still presents many problems. "Some cadres and party members, including leaders and managers, are not fully aware of the nature and importance of Party building and rectification; showing a lack of responsibility, a lack of example, the fading of ideals, the loss of will, the falling into individualism, violating party discipline, breaking the law"². That is the root cause of damaging the health of social relationships, relationships between people, doctors, and sick children, teachers and students, police and people, people and public authorities, superiors and subordinates...

In cultural development, human culture is always the vital goal of cultural development. If culture makes people dull or extreme, society will be deceitful or insecure. If culture deviates or distorts people, society will be misguided and chaotic. If the culture is healthy and honest, then: righteousness will be respected; society will develop healthily; people do not worry about unjust misfortune; the rich can enjoy the joy of true wealth; successful people can have the

² See: "Full text of the conclusion of the Fourth session of the 13th Party Central Committee", *Communist Party of Vietnam Online Newspaper* dated 29 October 2021, <https://dangcongsan.vn/xay-dung-dang/toan-van-ket-luan-hoi-nghi-lan-thu-tu-ban-chap-hanh-trung-uong-dang-khoa-xiii-595400.html>, accessed on 19 November 2021.

happiness of success; the ordinary workers can have the joy and comfort of being honest, conscientious people.

Looking back at the thousands of years of the development history of Vietnamese society, it can be seen that the regulatory ability of Vietnamese culture from a very early age proved to be the courage and strength to resist negative impacts. polarity from within and without, to strike back and conquer all evils. Among the Bach Viet ethnic groups south of the Yangtze River, only Vietnam was not assimilated by the Han civilization, despite having to undergo more than 1,000 years of Northern domination. Without exception, Vietnam won in all the wars to defend the Motherland, whether the invaders were Qin, Han, Tong, Yuan, Ming, Qing, or French and American. While the whole of Asia has no tradition of sea exploration, very early on the Vietnamese conquered the East Sea, mastering the Hoang Sa - Truong Sa. Keeping the position of the intersection of civilizations, Vietnam has always been a land of stopping, establishing a business, and the convergence of many religions, many ways of life, and many forms of civilization. Dong Son civilization, Sa Huynh culture, Dai Viet civilization from the Dinh and Le dynasties to the 20th century, concerning contemporary external civilizations and cultures, are not inferior in the level of development.

With a culture with such a long tradition, generations of Vietnamese people today certainly do not lack the qualities of intelligence and creativity, courage and bravery, studiousness and industriousness, tolerance and humanity, which are necessary for the cause of national construction and national defense. There

is a basis to believe that, after 35 years of renovation, Vietnamese culture and Vietnamese people have all the conditions, potential, and strength to realize the national development goals determined by the 13th Party Congress □

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