

National Independence Associated with Socialism - A Consistent and Continuous Goal Aligned with Contemporary Trends and the Aspirations of the Vietnamese People

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Abstract: *National independence associated with socialism, the path chosen by the Party and the Vietnamese people, is an objective necessity fully aligned with the trajectory of the Vietnamese revolution and the currents of the times. Both theoretical analysis and practical experience demonstrate that national independence associated with socialism is a choice in accord with historical development and the aspirations of the Vietnamese people.*

Keywords: *nation; national independence; socialism; relationship between national independence and socialism; Communist Party of Vietnam.*

1. National Independence and Socialism as Goals of the Contemporary Era

National independence and socialism are defining objectives of the current era. The combination of national independence with socialism serves as both the goal and the driving force of the Vietnamese Revolution. This synthesis lies at the core of Ho Chi Minh's thought and provides the foundation that enables the Party to effectively address strategic and tactical issues in leading the Vietnamese revolution.

A *nation* is a historically formed, stable community of people bound by a common language, territory, economic life, and cultural-psychological bonds. Only a community possessing all of these interrelated characteristics can constitute a nation. *National independence* is the highest value and the most noble inviolable right of every nation-state. It is the fundamental national right, encompassing unity, independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. This right entails genuine and complete independence, including complete autonomy over a nation's sovereignty in all dimensions: territorial integrity, politics, economy, culture, military affairs, defense, and security. The right to national independence is inherently linked to the people's rights to freedom and democracy and to their pursuit of happiness within the nation-state; it is also connected to the principle of equality in relations among all other nation-states in the world.

National independence also embodies the principle of self-determination including the right to secede or the right to voluntarily integrate into a larger nation-state. Importantly, national independence acquires its full significance only in the context of socialism. It is inseparable from the proletarian revolution, specifically the people's national democratic revolution led by the Communist Party of Vietnam (the vanguard of the working class), and from scientific socialism. Only under these conditions can national independence realize its deepest meaning.

Socialism is both a doctrine, an ideal, a movement and a development model, a regime. According to Marxism-Leninism, socialism — in terms of its political and economic and social institutions — is the initial stage of communism, comprising the two transitional phases on the road to the highest and final mode of production of human society (the communist mode of production). The economic foundation of socialism and communism is social ownership of the means of production and large-scale production by modern mechanized and automated machinery based on a unified plan without chaotic competition or crises. In such a system, social relations of production are commensurate with the level of productive forces and create conditions for their fullest development. Exploitative classes no longer exist. Racial and ethnic inequality are eliminated. The goals include comprehensive human development and the satisfaction of basic social needs. However, socialism and communism differ in level: socialism is the lower stage and communism the higher one, with differences in the level of productive forces and production relations.

One can distinguish utopian socialism from scientific socialism. Scientific socialism, grounded in Marxism-Leninism, has been implemented in various forms in human history since the Russian October Revolution of 1917 and has been continuously developed and supplemented in theory and practice. Since the late 20th century, in the process of *Đổi mới* (Renovation), the Communist Party of Vietnam has steadfastly adhered to Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh Thought, progressively attaining a more complete and profound understanding of socialism and the path to socialism in Vietnam.

The relationship between national independence and socialism is dialectical and inevitable one, inherent to any nation that chooses the path toward socialism, a system with all its positive attributes, then the linkage between national independence and socialism is necessarily dialectical, as part of the general evolution of human society, manifesting comprehensively in economic, political, ideological, and cultural dimensions. Marxism-Leninism holds that nation - states will inevitably advance towards socialism via various

routes. The prerequisite for building socialism is that the nation- state must be fully independent that generally ensured by the proletarian revolution and the people's democratic revolution in line with socialist ideals — and that fundamental national rights (unity, independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity) must be guaranteed and realized.

Socialism provides the inner strength that allows a nation to survive and develop, thereby ensuring the realization of national independence. Proletarian revolutions or bourgeois democratic revolutions aligned with socialist ideals serves as the initial condition for the fusion of national independence and socialism. It must then be followed by a process of preserving and promoting the nation's intrinsic strengths and traditions, coupled with revolutionary transformations along socialist lines, employing suitable paths and methods so that socialism becomes an accomplished reality and an organic part of the nation.

In the development of capitalism, especially in the most advanced capitalist countries, mature capitalism serves as the 'waiting room' and the most complete preparation for socialism. It must be acknowledged because this is precisely the prediction and affirmation of the great authors of Marxism; at the same time, this has methodological significance, because if this is not seen and acknowledged, it would mean denying the common evolutionary path of humanity, isolating socialism from the common path of civilization, and inevitably leading to a total negation, lack of inheritance—forcing socialism to walk a lonely path, as the historical reality of socialist countries has, to some extent, experienced and tested

In countries that move directly to socialism, bypassing the capitalist stage, the interplay between national independence and socialism has a distinctive character because socialism remains a potential goal under those conditions. Therefore, with an orientation toward socialism and by developing the nation's latent strengths and traditions, the primary task is to identify the optimal forms and steps to achieve socialist objectives within the nation. This must be undertaken in recognition that the world is always in flux, presenting both favorable and adverse impacts on the nation's course and on the interplay between national independence and socialism.

Only socialism and scientific communism can completely address the problem of national independence and bring freedom, prosperity, and happiness to all people and all nations.

2. The Communist Party of Vietnam and the Relationship between National Independence and Socialism in Leading the Vietnamese Revolution

During the period 1930 - 1945, from the end of the 19th century, due to the imperialist invasion, Vietnam, from an independent feudal country in the East,

was “erased” from the world map and became a colonial, semi-feudal country. The objective and urgent demand of the Vietnamese people was to liberate themselves from the yoke of oppression and brutal domination of the colonial imperialists and the feudal landlord class, to build a new social regime that ensures national independence, freedom and happiness for the people. The Vietnamese people have constantly struggled to realize the wish that “nothing is more precious than independence and freedom”.

In the early 20th century, Nguyen Ai Quoc (Ho Chi Minh), combining his practical experience with the scientific understanding of Leninism, concluded: “To save the country and liberate the nation, there is no other way than the path of proletarian revolution.”⁽¹⁾ This idea — that the national question and national independence can only be solved through socialism — inaugurated the patriotic movement, the workers’ movement, and the Vietnamese communist movement. Nguyen Ai Quoc’s founding of the Communist Party of Vietnam was the culmination of this ideological struggle and the inevitable fusion of these elements: namely, the ideology of national independence associated with socialism.

In the Party’s first Political Platform (1930), the goal was set as an anti-imperialist agrarian revolution — in other words, a people’s national democratic revolution led by the working class to advance toward socialism, bypassing the capitalist development stage. This goal resonated with the aspirations of the nation and its entire populace. To realize this strategic goal, a series of strategic and tactical issues were correctly resolved under the leadership of Nguyen Ai Quoc and the Party.

However, in the revolutionary practice of early 1930–1935 period, within the Vietnamese and Indochinese communist movements, there were leftist misinterpretations concerning the relationship between the nation and the class struggle, and about linking national independence with socialism. These misinterpretations resulted from overemphasizing class struggle as the sole source of revolutionary strength and failing to recognize that the people as a whole and the nation were themselves revolutionary forces. During 1936–1939, the Party adjusted its revolutionary strategy to focus on pursuing the ideal of national independence (at that time framed in socialist terms), although the slogan of national independence was not sufficiently emphasized. Through the experience of the national liberation movement during the period from 1939 to 1945, the Party unified its strategic view: national independence must be placed foremost, and the struggle for independence would be pursued along the socialist path — opposing imperialism and fascism, defending the socialist

Soviet Union, and supporting global democratic movements during World War II. As a result, the Party mobilized a broad base of the entire nation, firmly grounded on the workers-peasants alliance as the principal driving force, to achieve national independence and to seize power from the hands of the Japanese fascists and the feudal regime during the great August Revolution of 1945.

After the August Revolution, since the goal of national independence had been largely achieved and the goal of socialism was immediately proposed, Vietnam was re-invaded by French imperialists. The Party and the people were compelled to wage another resistance war, continuing the cause of the national democratic revolution through revolutionary armed struggle. The Party adopted a strategy of nationwide, comprehensive, prolonged, and self-reliant resistance (1945–1954), which combined the strength of national unity with international solidarity, and united national independence with socialism and with the forces of democracy, progress, and peace worldwide. The Party continuously educated cadres, party members, and the populace on the synthesis of Vietnamese patriotism with socialism based on Marxism-Leninism and the ideology and revolutionary path of national liberation of Ho Chi Minh,. Thanks to this ideological and organizational leadership, after nine years of resisting French colonial aggression (1945–1954), the Vietnamese people defeated the great power of the French Empire — despite American imperialist support for France — liberating the North and achieving national independence there. In the revolutionary struggle to win and defend independence, the Party, the government, the Viet Minh Front (later the Lien Viet Front), and the people laid the necessary groundwork so that when the people's democratic revolution was victorious, the country could immediately transition to socialist construction.

From 1954 to 1975, the Party led nation and the people to pursue two revolutionary strategies simultaneously in two regions: first, accelerating the socialist revolution in the North; second, conducting the people's national democratic revolution in the South, with the aim of reunifying the country and completing national independence and democracy throughout Vietnam. American imperialism was identified as the main enemy of the Vietnamese people and of peoples around the world. The objectives of national independence and socialism in our country thus faced grave challenges and threats; preserving them required extraordinary effort and determination from the Party and the entire nation. By pursuing these two strategies in tandem — socialism in the North and national democratic revolution in the South — the Party maintained

the overarching goal of uniting national independence with socialism. In the North, the struggle focused on defending national independence, building socialism, and waging an ideological confrontation between the socialist path and the capitalist path, all while fighting to liberate the South. In the South, the struggle aimed at directly and fully liberating itself and reunifying the country under the socialist path, while defending the socialist regime in the North. Across the entire country, the supreme mission was to fight against American imperialism to save the nation and to achieve complete national independence for the Fatherland. The urgent goal of achieving national independence and reunification was pursued in parallel with the immediate goal of building socialism in the North, so that this socialist bastion could support the cause of liberating the South and realizing complete national independence. The two regional revolutions were tightly linked, mutually reinforcing and advancing together. The goals of Vietnam's revolution were intimately connected with the goals of the era — namely, peace, reunification, national independence, democracy, and socialism. Consequently, the power of the Vietnamese nation in the resistance war against America to save the country was the combined power of the nation and the era, of national independence and socialism. The combination of national independence and socialism during this period had a unique character, embodied in the dual revolution of North and South. The North came to symbolize socialism and national independence, while the South symbolized national independence oriented toward socialism. At that time, class factors, nationalism, and international solidarity were intertwined at an unprecedented scale, creating an invincible force that defeated the invading American army — the most powerful empire in the world.

During the same period, the Party also committed some mistakes and shortcomings in class struggle. In implementing land reform and the socialist transformation of various economic sectors—including the transformation of private capitalist industries and businesses—the Party at times moved too hastily to build the material foundations of socialism, focusing on heavy industry in the North and delaying the initiation of armed struggle in the South. Despite these limitations, overall, the Party matured significantly in theoretical understanding and practical experience in combining national independence with socialism under complex domestic and international conditions.

From 1975 to the present, recognizing the nature of an era defined by national independence linked with socialism that the Vietnamese revolution pursues, and following the developmental logic after the victory of the people's democratic revolution, the Party adopted the course of carrying out the socialist

revolution nationwide. However, due to the war's aftermath and the country's impoverished and backward condition; due to the exultation of victory and a subjective overestimation of Vietnam's position after the defeat of American imperialism; due to impatience in achieving socialist goals quickly; and due to new international complications that pressed the country to strengthen itself rapidly — in the period 1975-1985 the Party made several mistakes in its understanding of socialism and in the principles of building socialism in Vietnam. With subjective and over-determined thinking, eagerness to skip stages, and without thoroughly examining and promptly applying the North's socialist model (which was essentially the wartime socialist model then prevailing in socialist countries) to the South, even though conditions in the South, in the whole country, and internationally had fundamentally changed, Vietnam fell into an economic and social crisis.

Even though the Party always maintained its commitment to the goals of national independence and socialism, failure to find a suitable model and method to realize these goals risked underutilizing the nation's strengths and causing socialism to lose its practical traction. The mistakes and shortcomings of the Party in the period 1975–1986 were not abrupt, but rather the eventual outcome of accumulated errors during the process of pursuing national independence and socialism — errors that had been masked by the country's war situation and by the influence of the bipolar Yalta order, the confrontation between socialist and capitalist blocs, and overly simplistic theoretical understanding and weaknesses in the Party's ideological and organizational work. These accumulated experiences highlighted the need to innovate the Party's thinking and work.

From 1986 onward, especially after the corruption of the Soviet Union and the socialist countries of Eastern Europe, socialism entered a period of retreat internationally. Our Party faced numerous difficulties and challenges in re-evaluating the nature of socialism and renewing the concepts and methods of building socialism in Vietnam. The Party reaffirmed: "Our Party and people are determined to build the country of Vietnam along the socialist path on the foundation of Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh Thought."⁽²⁾ At the 6th Party Congress (December 1986), the Party adopted a comprehensive renovation line, and the 7th Party Congress (June 1991) approved the Platform on National Construction during the Transition to Socialism. Summarizing the practice of the *Đổi mới* process, the Party drew many lessons; the first lesson was to firmly hold the goal of national independence linked with socialism, based on the foundations of Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh

Thought. The 11th Party Congress adopted an updated Platform for national construction during the transition to socialism (supplemented and expanded in 2011), which affirmed: “Marching toward socialism is the aspiration of our people and the correct choice of the Communist Party of Vietnam and President Ho Chi Minh, in line with the trend of history.”⁽³⁾ The socialist society that our people are building, following the Party’s policies, is envisioned as one of “a rich people, a strong country, democracy, equity, and civilization; in which the people are the masters; with a highly developed economy based on modern productive forces and appropriate advanced production relations; with an advanced culture richly imbued with national identity; where people have a prosperous, free, and happy life with conditions for comprehensive development; where all ethnic groups within the Vietnamese community are equal, united, respectful, and supportive of each other’s development; with a socialist law-governed State of the people, by the people, and for the people, led by the Communist Party; and with friendly and cooperative relations with all countries in the world.”⁽⁴⁾

Under this socialist orientation, many fundamental and urgent theoretical and practical issues have arisen, such as constructing a socialist-oriented market economy linked with a knowledge-based economy, and building the socialist rule-of-law state of the people, by the people, and for the people. At this stage, the issue of national independence linked with socialism is expressed more profoundly in matters such as combining nationalism with class and with international relations. National independence now means protecting the sacred, integral territory of the homeland, safeguarding sovereign territory including its maritime zones, preserving the distinctive Vietnamese cultural identity, and proactively engaging in broad and deep international integration to garner additional conditions for building and defending a socialist Vietnam.

Socialism itself has been defined with a more suitable model, clearer objectives, and comprehensive directions and tasks as outlined in the 2011 Platform. Socialism must be built on the solid foundation of national independence; national independence is the prerequisite for socialism and is only fully achieved when socialism is perfected. The socialism we build carries Vietnamese characteristics and remains linked to national independence throughout the entire transition to socialism.

National independence associated with socialism is the revolutionary goal, consonant with the aspirations of the people and for their benefit. Consistently holding to the goal of national independence associated with socialism is a steadfast and correct policy of the Vietnamese revolution. Under the leadership

of the Party, national independence and socialism have achieved many important and fairly comprehensive accomplishments, leaving numerous outstanding imprints. The country has developed rapidly and sustainably, and the people's trust in the Party, the State, and the socialist regime has been solidly strengthened. The 13th Party Congress (January 2021) affirmed: "With all modesty, we can still say that our country has never had such a great foundation, potential, position and international prestige as it does today."⁽⁵⁾

In the process of realizing the goal of national independence linked with socialism, Vietnam faces significant difficulties and challenges under the strong tide of globalization. In addition to these are instances of corruption and negativity among a portion of officials and party members who have degenerated or become corrupt. Candidly, our Party recognizes that corruption and negativity are among the risks threatening the survival of the Party and the regime. However, corruption is a "common disease" afflicting almost all countries in the world, not an "exclusive product" to the socialist system or a consequence of socialism, as reactionary forces tend to claim. On the other hand, the Party and State have affirmed strong political will and have resolutely handled cases of violations with the motto "no forbidden zones, no exceptions" in recent years.

Therefore, any rhetoric that distorts the relationship between national independence and socialism, or calls for the abolition of socialism, is contrary to the rights and interests of the people and the nation./.

(1) Ho Chi Minh (2011), *Complete Works*, National Political Publishing House – Truth, Vol. 12, p. 30.

(2) Communist Party of Vietnam (2019), *Documents of the Party Congresses in the Renovation Period, Part I (Congress VI, VII, VIII, IX)*, National Political Publishing House – Truth, p. 908.

(3), (4) Communist Party of Vietnam (2019), *Ibid.*, Part II (Congress X, XI, XII), National Political Publishing House – Truth, pp. 501–502.

(5) Communist Party of Vietnam (2021), *Documents of the 13th Congress*, National Political Publishing House, Vol. 1, p. 25.