

APPLYING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THEORY OF HO CHI MINH TO MANAGE THE ECONOMY OF VIETNAM TODAY

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Abstract

During the time when the industrial revolutions 2.0 and 3.0 were taking place in the world, President Ho Chi Minh led the revolution to fight for national liberation from “poverty”, bringing Vietnam to unification, step by step building the socialism. Up to now, Vietnam is gradually undergoing comprehensive renovation, especially the economy development in the direction of modernity which is a proof of the correct inheritance and application of Ho Chi Minh's economic development theory and economic management experience and achievements of the science and industry in the world. Ho Chi Minh's theory of economic development needs to be continued to be fully aware, thoroughly grasped, comprehensively and systematically researched, creatively applied and developed theoretical and practical values to suit the economic management line of the Party, the policies and laws of the State and the current context of the industrial revolution 4.0.

Keywords: *Development theory, Ho Chi Minh, economy, Vietnam*

1. Introduction

Ho Chi Minh's theory of economic development is a system of viewpoints aimed at orienting and solving basic economic problems of the development process from a semi-feudal colonial society with backward agriculture to gradually progress to a socialist regime with a modern industrial-agricultural structure and advanced science and technology which is capable of continuously improving and enhancing the people's material and spiritual life. His ideology on economic development is evident in the stages of leadership, direction and administration of the revolutionary cause from the New Democracy and the Transition to Socialism, especially the construction of socialism in the North, containing new, modern, very scientific and revolutionary ideas. His views on increasing production, practicing thrift, improving people's living standards, building and developing production, economic characteristics, purposes and structure; efficiency and principles of economic management, integrated economic development, etc. have topical significance and profound directional value in the process of economic construction and development in Vietnam today.

2. Method

The study is based on the methodology of dialectical materialism and historical

materialism. The study uses a combination of specific methods, namely historical method, logical method, analytical method, synthetic method, comparative method, generalization - abstraction method, expert method, survey and statistical methods, etc., to carry out study tasks.

3. Results

3.1. Ho Chi Minh's theory of economic development

Firstly, on economic development goals. In theory and practice, He affirmed that the role of the country's economic development has a close, intimate, harmonious combination and mutual impact of political, cultural and social aspects. When outlining the task of construction and developing of each aspect of social life, according to Him, the construction of each aspect of life cannot be separated, individual, simply, which is closely linked to the construction of other aspects and is a totality of all other aspects. In which, economy is always a fundamental field, playing a decisive role that deeply governs the fields of psychology, morality, society and politics. Stemming from our country's reality, He specifically directed: "Our most important task is to build the material and technical foundation of the Socialism so that the North can gradually progress to socialism with modern industry and agriculture and advanced culture and science. In the process of socialism revolution, we must reform our old economy and build a new one, in which construction is the key and long-term task"²⁰. All of His concerns about the economy is to ensure practical benefits for the people, so that the people can have enough conditions to eat, wear, stay, study, travel, treat, etc. "He requested to act immediately: 1. Ensuring food to the people. 2. Ensuring clothes to the people. 3. Ensuring shelter to the people. 4. Ensuring education to the people"²¹. These are the goals and meaningful measures in each of our economic policies and measures. He said: "The policy of the Party and Government is to take great care of the people's lives. If the people are hungry, it is the Party and Government's fault; if the people are cold, it is the Party and Government's fault; if the people are ignorant, it is the Party and Government's fault; If the people are sick, it is the Party and the Government's fault, etc. If the people are hungry, cold, sick, our policies, no matter how good they are, can't be implemented"²².

According to Ho Chi Minh, the goal of socialist economic development is to improve and enhance people's living standards. He affirmed: "The most important thing in our economic plan today is *to gradually improve people's lives*"²³. In 1961, he asked and answered himself "What is the purpose of socialism? To put it simply and easily is *Constantly improving the material and spiritual life of the people*, first of all, the working

²⁰ Ho Chi Minh (2011), *Complete Volume*, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, vol. 12, p. 412.

²¹ Ho Chi Minh (2011), *Complete Volume*, Ibid, vol. 4, p. 175.

²² Ho Chi Minh (2011), *Complete Volume*, Ibid, vol. 9, p. 518.

²³ Ho Chi Minh (2011), *Complete Volume*, Ibid, vol. 10, p. 314.

people”²⁴. The purpose of improving the people's living standards governs the relations of ownership, independence and freedom and is the basis for formulating guidelines, plans and ways of organizing production and developing the socialist economy.

Secondly, making use of all resources to develop production and practice thrift - Methods of sustainable economic development. The basic problem of socialist economic development is how to increase labor productivity, which Marxist-Leninist theory considers a measure of the victory of socialism over capitalism. According to Ho Chi Minh, only the goal of industrialization can be achieved to sustainably develop a socialist society. Industrialization is an inevitable trend for sustainable economic development, contributing to promoting the development of social production, liberating labor force, mobilizing large capital sources and modern technology, creating high productivity. Right after the founding of the country, He advocated extensive integration for economic development: “Vietnam gives a favorable reception to investment from foreign capitalists and technicians in all industries, etc. Vietnam accepts to join all international economic cooperation organizations under the leadership of the United Nations”²⁵. Opening up for cooperation creates great opportunities for nation-building and improving people's lives. He said: “People's lives can only be very abundant when we use machines for production widely: using machines both in industry and in agriculture. The machine will support the human, increase human strength hundreds, thousands of times and help people do extraordinary things. If want to have many machines, it is necessary to expand the industries of making machines, producing iron, steel, coal, oil, etc. That is the way we must go: *The way to industrialization in our country*”²⁶. Industrialization puts new requirements on economic organization and management. Associated with human resources, in economic leadership and management, units need to focus on the key stage “promoting enterprise management, and that staff and workers must be technically proficient; leading agencies must follow closely and serve production”²⁷.

Ho Chi Minh affirmed the strategic point of view: Increasing production goes hand in hand with thrift practice. Thrift is the rational and efficient use of resources to increase the comprehensive strength of the country. If not saving, wealth produced as the situation that “A fool and his money are soon parted”, so we must “save, be not luxury, not wasteful, not indiscriminate”²⁸. Thrift in production is a mandatory requirement in planning and implementing economic development strategies. He advised people to actively produce, work diligently in association with thrift practice; Not only saving in wealth, money, time, energy (people's energy), but also saving in the consumption of wealth. “Thrift means: spending 1 hour doing the 2-3-hour work. 1 person works equal to 2, 3 people. 1 dong used

²⁴ Ho Chi Minh (2011), *Complete Volume*, Ibid, vol. 13, p. 30.

²⁵ Ho Chi Minh (2011), *Complete Volume*, Ibid, vol.4, p. 523.

²⁶ Ho Chi Minh (2011), *Complete Volume*, Ibid, vol.12, p. 445.

²⁷ Ho Chi Minh (2011), *Complete Volume*, Ibid, vol.13, p. 376.

²⁸ Ho Chi Minh (2011), *Complete Volume*, Ibid, vol.6, p. 122.

is equal to 2, 3 dongs”²⁹. He did not consider thrifty to be stingy, miserly, and that money is everything; He said: “Thrift is not being stingy. When it should not be spent, shouldn't. When there is a job worth doing, a benefit for the compatriots and the Country, no matter how much effort, no matter how much it costs, we will be happy”³⁰. He pointed out the purpose of thrift: “We must be more strict in the use of our savings, in order to quickly progress to a full and prosperous life for everyone”³¹. He even proposed the motto “sparing of words” for economic development as “Talk the talk walk the walk”, “Actions speak louder than words”³². With mass organizations, He advised not to have many meetings, to do their best to avoid “meeting without discussion, discussion without decision, decision without action”³³. If we consider actions an expression of morality, we can consider the sparing of words (saying only the most practical things) as an expression of human prudence and faithfulness.

He asked everyone to save their own time, energy and money. The need to save comes not only from personal ethical requirements, but also from the requirements of the apparatus and production lines. In economic activities, as long as a loophole exists, money will follow it out and forcefully break into the entire system, making the loophole bigger and bigger. Therefore, in order to “seal the loopholes, and not let our savings be lost or dispersed”³⁴, everyone must work together, practice thrift, and fight waste. He asserted: “Waste, though not taking public money, its results are also harmful to the people, to the Government. Sometimes it is more harmful than embezzlement”³⁵. It is more harmful because only powerful officials can embezzle, but regardless of person, in any position, it is easy to waste money, time, energy of the themselves, the agency and the society.

Thirdly, managing the economy according to the principles and ensuring economic efficiency. The socialist revolutionary process is a long, difficult and arduous historical process with the ultimate aim of ensuring the success of the cause of socialist construction. In that process, it is inevitable that economic, political, socio-cultural issues need to be solved in a scientific, comprehensive and effective manner. Ho Chi Minh was clearly aware of the value of economic development in order to achieve revolutionary goals, and He sought every way to carry out economic development activities. He has set out general and specific goals of economic development in each different revolutionary period, but they all demonstrate the principles of economic management: appropriateness - fairness - benefit - thrift - efficiency.

²⁹ Ho Chi Minh (2011), *Complete Volume*, Ibid, vol.. 6, p. 124.

³⁰ Ho Chi Minh (2011), *Complete Volume*, Ibid, vol.6, p. 123.

³¹ Ho Chi Minh (2011), *Complete Volume*, Ibid, vol.12, p. 467.

³² Ho Chi Minh (2011), *Complete Volume*, Ibid, vol. 3, p. 457.

³³ Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics (1996), *Ho Chi Minh - Biography Chronicle*, vol.10, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi. p.139.

³⁴ Ho Chi Minh (2011), *Complete Volume*, Ibid, vol. 12, p. 467.

³⁵ Ho Chi Minh (2011), *Complete Volume*, Ibid, vol. 7, p. 357.

In economic management, He emphasized the role of the government as a regulator of the entire economy and as a subject of an economic sector. The Government develops mechanisms and policies, establishes and maintains a system of economic management principles and creates levers to stimulate economic development in the main fields; ensures the centralized management of the state and at the same time ensures the autonomy of the governing agencies and economic units. He advocated: “Management of a country is like managing an enterprise: it must be profitable. What is output, what is input, what to do immediately, what to wait, postpone, or discard, what is worth spending, who is worth using, everything must be carefully calculated”³⁶. In the principle of economic accounting, economic efficiency must be taken as a measure, so economic managers must know how to use economic levers to achieve high efficiency. He raised the issues of price, salary, money, tax, contract, bonus and penalty as levers in different economic sectors that will stimulate labor, abundant, fast, good and cheap production, creating products that benefit the family and state.

He emphasized not to be equalized in the economy, in the distribution according to the quantity and quality of labor, so as not to destroy the momentum of development. “In the work of circulation and distribution, there are two important points that must always be reminded: Not afraid of lack, just afraid of unfairness and not afraid of poverty, just afraid of people's restless hearts”³⁷. He asserted: “The distribution must be according to the level of labor. The more labor, the more it is distributed, the less labor, the less it is distributed, etc. The good people and bad people with difficult things and easy things should not be given the same points. That is egalitarianism. *Egalitarianism must be avoided*”³⁸. In management, it is necessary to pay attention to the implementation: “Helping the poor have enough food, those who have enough food will be quite rich, those who are quite rich will get richer, etc. Making use of the people's wealth, the people's power, the people's property to benefit the people”³⁹. Regarding the principle of distribution according to labor, He also mentioned the way and efficiency of lump work in production. “The lump work system is a condition of socialism, it encourages workers to always make progress so that the factory can progress. The lump work brings mutual and private benefits; Good lump work is appropriate and fair under our current regime. The lump work must increase the quantity, but always maintain the quality”⁴⁰.

For organizations and managers of economic development, it is required “to find a way to organize and arrange reasonable arrangements, so that one person can work like two

³⁶ Ho Chi Minh (1990), *On Economy and Economic management*, Theoretical Information Publishing House, H, p. 82-83.

³⁷ Ho Chi Minh (2011), *Complete Volume*, Ibid, vol. 15, p. 224.

³⁸ Ho Chi Minh (2011), *Complete Volume*, Ibid, vol. 13, p. 216.

³⁹ Ho Chi Minh (2011), *Complete Volume*, Ibid, vol. 5, p. 81.

⁴⁰ Ho Chi Minh (2011), *Complete Volume*, Ibid, vol. 10, p. 537-538.

people, working for one day equals for two days”⁴¹. He asked economic managers to uphold the gradual, from small to large, from low to high, voluntary, mutually beneficial principle, avoiding subjectivity, coercion and ostentatiousness. He advised “*don't be greedy to do things quickly and massively*”⁴², need to closely follow the characteristics, situation as well as experience in economic management. “Production plan *is not determined in a bureaucratic way*, it must be closely related to the economic situation, to the source of wealth and a clear calculation of our support. The plan should not *fall behind*, but also should not *run ahead of* the development of technology, should not be separated from agriculture, should not forget about our thrift”⁴³. The biggest feature of economic managers is related to a lot of materials and money, who are easy to be tempted, corrupted and perverted, if they are not clever, they will cause losses and bad consequences for the economic establishments. Therefore, He demanded that in the economy, “management must be democratic, fair and transparent”⁴⁴, the economic managers must have professional qualities, qualifications and standards to meet the requirements set forth.

Fourthly, expanding models and ways of economic development. During the transition to socialism, He advocated an economy with many forms of ownership and many economic sectors. He affirmed: In the transitional period, our country's economy still exists four main forms of ownership: “Ownership by the State means that of the whole people. The ownership of the cooperative means the collective ownership of the working people and the ownership of the individual workers. A few means of production are owned by the capitalist”⁴⁵. Regarding economic components, according to Ho Chi Minh, in the new democracy, there are five different types of economy: “A- State-owned economy (belonging to socialism because it belongs to the people). B- Cooperatives (it is semi-socialism, and will move towards socialism). C- Economy of individuals, farmers and artisans (possibly gradually moving into cooperatives, i.e. semi-socialism). D- Private capital. E- Capital of the State (such as the State joining forces with private capital to do business)”⁴⁶.

The normal economic structure is considered from three angles, namely the sectoral structure, the component structure, and the territorial structure, in which the sectoral structure is the most important. According to Him, because our country is an agricultural country, in the structure of the economic sector, we must attach importance to agriculture, but first of all, food production. He pointed out that three economic sectors have an organic relationship with each other: agriculture, industry, and commerce (Historically: without agriculture, there would be no stability, without industry, there would be no wealth, without

⁴¹ Hồ Chí Minh (1990), *On Economy and Economic management*, Ibid, p. 82.

⁴² Ho Chi Minh (2011), *Complete Volume*, Ibid, vol. 9, p. 466.

⁴³ Ho Chi Minh (2011), *Complete Volume*, Ibid, vol. 7, p. 365-366.

⁴⁴ Ho Chi Minh (2011), *Complete Volume*, Ibid, vol. 13, p. 200.

⁴⁵ Ho Chi Minh (2011), *Complete Volume*, Ibid, vol. 12, p. 372.

⁴⁶ Ho Chi Minh (2011), *Complete Volume*, Ibid, vol. 8, p. 293-294.

commerce, there would be no activeness, without wisdom, there would be not flourish). In particular, commerce is the link between agriculture and industry. If the commerce link is broken, it will not be possible to link agriculture with industry, and the union of workers and farmers will not be consolidated. Talking about the role of agriculture, He pointed out that agriculture not only solves food problems but also provides raw materials to restore small industry and industry, and at the same time provides forest products to expand trade with foreign countries. It is necessary to develop comprehensive agriculture, while attaching importance to forestry, fishery, and salt production.

President Ho Chi Minh raised the issue that economic managers need to orient to build an independent and self-reliant economy in combination with expanding international economic cooperation in order to promote internal resources, potentials and strengths of the country and take advantage of international opportunities and favorable conditions for economic development. Economic development must be associated with the implementation of political tasks, with social progress and human morality, thereby strengthening the socialist political system. Therefore, He is particularly interested in promoting the spirit of socialism and collectivism, fighting individualism, and creating the necessary motivation for development.

When Ho Chi Minh lived in an era when socio-economic development did not set urgent requirements on environmental protection, but with a strategic vision, He had profound valuable thoughts on this issue. In His expression, although He does not directly refer to the term “sustainable development” as at present, the contents, goals, principles, and relationships among factors in sustainable development have all been mentioned by Him from very soon, there were even very accurate, comprehensive and systematic forecasts on the contents related to sustainable development, in which: social welfare must pay attention to the families of war invalids and martyrs who have contributed to the revolution; ethnic minority, etc.

3.2. Solution orientation to apply Ho Chi Minh's economic development theory to manage Vietnam's economy today

On the basis of the orientation to apply Ho Chi Minh's economic development theory and actively seize the opportunities of the industrial revolution 4.0 to develop our country's economy, it is necessary to synchronously implement the following important solutions:

Firstly, building a long-term strategy and vision, developing a smart nation.

Ho Chi Minh's theory of economic development and technological revolution are an important theoretical and practical basis to apply creatively to establish a strategy for Vietnam's economic development in a practical and effective way in the reform period. The Government and state management agencies need to renovate the thinking, apparatus and

methods of management, administration, planning mechanisms and policies in accordance with revolutionary changes in technology.

Implementing well Directive No. 16/CT-TTg, dated May 4, 2017 of the Prime Minister on strengthening capacity to approach the fourth industrial revolution. Deploying the development of e-Government for administrative management and effective use in the direction and administration of the Government and in dealing with the affairs of people and enterprises; promoting the development of online public services and having solutions to encourage people and enterprises to use them; timely adjusting economic policies to suit the economic situation in the country, the region and the world. Enhancing the leading effective position and role of the state economic management. Effectively promoting the Project on Supporting the National Innovative Start-up Ecosystem to 2025 approved by the Prime Minister in Decision No. 844/QĐ-TTg dated May 18, 2016; Project “Digital Vietnamese Knowledge System”. Continuing to promote the implementation of Resolutions No. 19-2017/NQ-CP dated February 6, 2017, No. 35/NQ-CP dated May 16, 2016 and No. 36a/NQ-CP dated October 14, 2015 by the Government to improve the business competitive environment to promote the development of enterprises, create conditions for enterprises to quickly absorb and develop new production technologies.

Raising awareness of leaders at all levels, sectors, localities, enterprises and the whole society about the Industrial Revolution 4.0. Strengthening international integration and information and communication to improve correct understanding and awareness of the nature, characteristics, opportunities and challenges of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 to have appropriate and effective approaches and solutions.

Secondly, delving into improving the quality of human resources to meet the requirements of economic development. Ho Chi Minh once said: “To build socialism, first of all, there must be socialist people”; “Must consider the human factor as the number one issue”⁴⁷. In economic construction and development, in order to increase productivity, quality and efficiency, must create and regularly adjust mechanisms, policies, methods of organization and management, etc., to actively improve human resources for intelligent, qualified, healthy, creative and dynamic human resources for high production and economic development.

Well implementing the Party's policy on education is “Innovating educational programs and contents in the direction of streamlining, modernity, practicality, suitable for ages, qualifications and professions. Diversifying the learning content and materials to meet the requirements of all levels of education, education and training programs and the lifelong learning needs of everyone”. Innovating education and training, building smart schools, increasing the application of science and technology in training, renovating curricula and

⁴⁷ *People's newspaper*, issued on April 7, 1965.

restructuring training professions to suit the requirements of the 4.0 revolution. Encouraging teachers to teach interactively (Interactive teaching) with smart devices, manage the learning (Class management) combined with team-based learning method (Team-based learning). Focusing on training students adaptability and creative working spirit. It is necessary to have a policy to attract high-quality human resources from the outside in order to create innovation motivation and opportunities to learn and develop on the basis of buying skills and knowledge from outside, building a learning society with the transfer and sharing of common knowledge of mankind.

Thirdly, clearly defining the content, nature and sequential steps in the development of economic sectors and fields. Focusing on developing industries to serve the development of agriculture and light industry. Our country's starting point is an agricultural country, and the potential for agricultural and rural economic development is high. Our Party affirms that “Promoting the development of a number of key economic sectors and fields, which have potentials and advantages to serve as a driving force for growth in the spirit of catching up, advancing with and surpassing in some areas compared to the region and the world”⁴⁸ is the creative application of economic development theory of Ho Chi Minh.

Fourthly, focusing on promoting development, creating a real breakthrough in infrastructure and technical applications. Developing digital connection infrastructure and ensuring network safety and security to create conditions for people and enterprises to easily and equally access digital content development opportunities. Building a digital transformation strategy, smart governance, prioritizing the development of the digital technology industry, smart agriculture, smart tourism, and smart cities. Reviewing and selecting to develop key products, strategic competitive products of the country, closely following new production technologies, integrating new technologies to focus on development investment.

Economic management needs to adhere to the combination of building the new and improving and upgrading modern technology in the process of industrialization and modernization. Ho Chi Minh once affirmed: “If technology is separated from the entire national economy, losing contact with it, technology cannot lead the national economy”⁴⁹. In the economic development of the country, it is necessary to pay attention to the combination of rudimentary to medium technologies, and at the same time to boldly apply modern technology in each item (from single to synchronous) to create products of high quality, according to standards, with high competitiveness. This is considered a breakthrough and “leapfrog” to catch up with the world's development speed of Vietnam.

⁴⁸ Communist Party of Vietnam (2021): *Document of the 13th National Congress of Deputies*, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, vol. 1, p. 235.

⁴⁹ Ho Chi Minh (2011), *Complete Volume*, Ibid, vol. 6, p. 499.

Promoting economic restructuring in association with growth model innovation, improving productivity, efficiency and competitiveness of the economy, in which focusing on 3 focuses: Investment restructuring with the focus on public investment; enterprise restructuring with the focus on economic groups and state-owned corporations; financial market restructuring with the focus on commercial banks and credit institutions.

Stepping up research and effective application of important scientific and technological achievements for socio-economic development, national defense and security assurance. Building socialism and defending the socialist Fatherland is an organic, dialectical relationship, forming a unified whole, “two are like one, one is like two”. Our Party puts “stability and sustainable development in all aspects of socio-economic life as a solid foundation for national defense and security” as the top priority, but determines “to maintain a peaceful environment with political stability, national security, and human security”⁵⁰. This view should be understood that economic development is the root of national defense - security; Socio-economic construction is an effective method to protect the Fatherland. If this root is solid, then national defense - security will be strong. The expression of solidity is stability and development.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Vietnam is in the process of industrialization, modernization of the country and international integration, the industrial revolution 4.0 is opening up many opportunities, advantages and challenges and difficulties for economic development, requiring the participation of all actors in the economy on the basis of applying topical values of Ho Chi Minh's economic development theory and the country's reality in the current situation. The mastery, research, application and creative development in the current economic management, construction and development in Vietnam in the context of the industrial revolution 4.0 for the core goal of national economy development is to serve the cause of rich people, strong country, democracy, justice and civilization.

Ho Chi Minh's theory of economic development is part of a precious heritage containing profound values of Economic development goals; making use of all resources to develop production and practice thrift; managing the economy in accordance with the principles and ensuring economic efficiency; expanding models and ways of economic development. Along with that, researching on the characteristics, impacts and requirements of the 4.0 industrial revolution on Vietnam's economic development has practical significance today. The process of building and developing Vietnam's economy needs to be oriented to apply the following point of view: Recognizing the trend of economic development in the direction of industry and modernity is an inevitable development trend in promoting Vietnam's economic development; equal opportunities for Vietnam and other

⁵⁰ Communist Party of Vietnam (2021), *Document of the 13th National Congress of Deputies*, Ibid, vol.1, p.156.

countries; science and technology must be considered as an important foundation for the country's breakthrough and sustainable development in the future. Proposing synchronous solutions for economic development, including: Building a long-term strategy and vision, developing a smart nation; deepening the improvement of the quality of human resources to meet the requirements of economic development; clearly defining the content, nature and sequential steps in the development of economic sectors and fields; focusing on promoting development, creating a real breakthrough in infrastructure and technical applications.

In order to properly understand and effectively apply Ho Chi Minh's economic development theory and the achievements of the industrial revolution 4.0, it is necessary to avoid stereotypes and dogma, but to be flexible with methodologically oriented viewpoints and principles. In the current economic construction and development, it is necessary to derive from reality, the situation and characteristics of the world economy and Vietnam's economy to apply Ho Chi Minh's ideology practically and appropriately; apply Ho Chi Minh's economic development perspectives in managing and regulating specific, comprehensive and scientific economic issues, ensuring focus, innovation, integration and sustainable development.

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