

HO CHI MINH'S SYSTEM OF THOUGHT ON INDEPENDENCE AND AUTONOMY: A STRUCTURAL APPROACH

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ABSTRACT: This article examines Ho Chi Minh's thought on independence and autonomy from the perspective of the structure of political thought, aiming to clarify the logical relationships among the concepts of independence, the right of national self-determination, self-reliance, self-strengthening, and autonomy. Based on textual analysis of Ho Chi Minh's works in dialogue with major Vietnamese and international scholarship, the study argues that these concepts do not exist as isolated ideas but constitute an integrated system of political thought. Within this structure, independence represents the fundamental value and overarching objective; the right of national self-determination serves as its political and legal foundation; self-reliance functions as the means through which the nation exercises its agency; self-strengthening refers to the process of enhancing endogenous national capacity; and autonomy reflects the practical capability to safeguard and develop national independence. This structural approach provides a new analytical perspective for Ho Chi Minh studies while offering a theoretical framework for applying his thought to Vietnam's national development in the contemporary context.

Keywords: Ho Chi Minh Thought; independence; autonomy; structure of political thought; right of national self-determination.

1. Introduction

Ho Chi Minh Thought constitutes the ideological foundation and guiding principle of Vietnam's revolutionary cause, while also serving as one of the major subjects of inquiry in political science, intellectual history, and Vietnamese studies. Within this system of thought, independence and autonomy occupy a central position, consistently reflecting Ho Chi Minh's conception of the Vietnamese nation's right to exist, develop, and determine its own destiny. From the aspiration for national independence to the goal of building a nation capable of exercising political, economic, cultural, and diplomatic autonomy, Ho Chi Minh developed a coherent system of thought with profound theoretical and practical significance. This intellectual legacy continues to provide important guidance for Vietnam's nation-building and national defense in the contemporary context.

Over the past several decades, Ho Chi Minh Thought has attracted considerable scholarly attention both within Vietnam and internationally. International studies by Duiker (2000), Brocheux (2007), Quinn-Judge (2002), Marr (1971, 1981), Goscha (2016), among others, have primarily examined the formation and evolution of Ho Chi Minh's thought within the historical context of Vietnam and the global anti-colonial movement. In Vietnam, the works of Vo Nguyen Giap, Tran Van Giau, Le Mau Han, Dang Xuan Ky, Hoang Chi

Bao, Song Thanh, Mach Quang Thang, Bui Dinh Phong, and many other scholars have provided comprehensive analyses of the core dimensions of Ho Chi Minh Thought, including national independence, socialism, Party building, national unity, human development, and the Ho Chi Minh methodology. Collectively, these studies have affirmed both the theoretical and practical significance of Ho Chi Minh Thought and have laid an important foundation for the development of Ho Chi Minh Studies as an academic field.

Nevertheless, most existing studies approach Ho Chi Minh Thought either from a historical perspective or through individual thematic issues. Concepts such as independence, the right of national self-determination, self-reliance, self-strengthening, and autonomy are typically examined as relatively separate subjects or discussed in different historical contexts. Their logical interrelationships within a unified system of thought, however, have not yet been systematically analyzed. In other words, the existing research gap lies not only in content but also in methodology, as most studies emphasize the description or interpretation of Ho Chi Minh Thought rather than identifying its internal conceptual structure.

Against this background, this study addresses the following research question: Do the concepts of independence, the right of national self-determination, self-reliance, self-strengthening, and autonomy constitute a coherent structure within Ho Chi Minh Thought? If so, what are the logical relationships among these concepts? Drawing upon an analysis of Ho Chi Minh's writings in dialogue with representative Vietnamese and international scholarship, this study seeks to identify the structure of Ho Chi Minh's system of thought on independence and autonomy, while clarifying the position, function, and interrelationships of its central concepts.

This study adopts a qualitative research design, combining textual analysis, historical analysis, and conceptual analysis to examine Ho Chi Minh's writings from the perspective of the structure of thought. Within this analytical framework, each concept is not treated as an isolated category but is interpreted in relation to other concepts in order to reveal the internal logic of the overall system of thought.

The contribution of this study is twofold. First, it proposes a structural approach as a complementary perspective for the study of Ho Chi Minh Thought, moving beyond approaches based solely on historical development or individual themes. Second, by examining the relationships among the concepts of independence, the right of national self-determination, self-reliance, self-strengthening, and autonomy, the study clarifies the internal coherence and logical organization of Ho Chi Minh's system of thought on independence and autonomy, thereby offering a new analytical perspective for the study of Vietnamese political thought.

2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Research on Ho Chi Minh Thought has evolved into a well-established academic field encompassing diverse approaches, including history, political science, Vietnamese studies, and intellectual history. Despite their different disciplinary perspectives, scholars generally agree that Ho Chi Minh was one of the most influential political thinkers in modern Vietnamese history, developing a comprehensive system of thought on national independence, socialism, Party building, state building, national unity, and human development. Differences among existing studies lie primarily in their analytical approaches and research emphases.

Within the international scholarly community, the works of William J. Duiker (*Ho Chi Minh: A Life*, 2000), Pierre Brocheux (*Ho Chi Minh: A Biography*, 2007), Sophie Quinn-Judge (*Ho Chi Minh: The Missing Years, 1919–1941*, 2002), David G. Marr (*Vietnamese Anticolonialism, 1885–1925*, 1971; *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial, 1920–1945*, 1981), and Christopher E. Goscha (*Vietnam: A New History*, 2016) have primarily examined Ho Chi Minh Thought from the perspectives of political history and intellectual history. Although these studies differ in methodology and source materials, they consistently identify Vietnamese patriotism, the aspiration for national independence, and the creative appropriation of Marxism–Leninism as the decisive factors in the formation of Ho Chi Minh Thought (Brocheux, 2007, pp. 1–80, 87–120; Duiker, 2000, pp. 1–45, 87–120; Goscha, 2016, p. 123; Marr, 1971, pp. 3–21; Quinn-Judge, 2002, pp. 11–55). A common feature of these studies is their emphasis on explaining the historical evolution of Ho Chi Minh's thought, thereby highlighting his role in both the Vietnamese revolutionary movement and the broader global struggle for national liberation.

In Vietnam, research on Ho Chi Minh Thought has primarily focused on systematizing and interpreting its core theoretical components. Representative works include Vo Nguyen Giap's *Ho Chi Minh Thought and the Path of the Vietnamese Revolution*; Tran Van Giau's *The Development of Thought in Vietnam from the Nineteenth Century to the August Revolution*; Le Mau Han's *The National Strength of the Vietnamese Revolution in the Light of Ho Chi Minh Thought*; Dang Xuan Ky's (Ed.) *Ho Chi Minh's Method and Style* (2023); Hoang Chi Bao's *Understanding Ho Chi Minh's Method* (2011); as well as numerous studies by Song Thanh, Mach Quang Thang, Bui Dinh Phong, and scholars affiliated with the Ho Chi Minh Institute and the Party Leaders Institute. Collectively, these studies have clarified the origins, core contents, theoretical significance, and contemporary value of Ho Chi Minh Thought, while consistently affirming that the close relationship between national independence and socialism constitutes its central guiding principle. Moreover, studies on Ho Chi Minh's methodology, leadership style, and contemporary significance have expanded the field beyond ideological content to include his modes of thinking and political practice.

Alongside these comprehensive studies, numerous scholars have focused on specific concepts such as national independence, the right of national self-determination, self-reliance, self-strengthening, and autonomy. Existing scholarship generally agrees that these concepts constitute fundamental values within Ho Chi Minh Thought and have played a decisive role in Vietnam's revolutionary development. However, most studies examine these concepts separately or within particular domains such as politics, economics, national defense, or foreign affairs. Consequently, the logical relationships among these concepts within the overall structure of Ho Chi Minh Thought have yet to receive systematic analysis.

Against this background, the present study adopts a structure of political thought approach to examine Ho Chi Minh's thought on independence and autonomy. From this perspective, a system of thought is understood not merely as a collection of individual viewpoints or propositions but as an internally coherent conceptual structure defined by the logical relationships among its core concepts. Accordingly, independence, the right of national self-determination, self-reliance, self-strengthening, and autonomy are analyzed as organically interconnected concepts that represent different dimensions of the same system of thought rather than isolated theoretical themes.

The foregoing review indicates that, although previous studies have established a substantial scholarly foundation for the study of Ho Chi Minh Thought, an important methodological gap remains. Existing scholarship has largely addressed what Ho Chi Minh Thought consists of and how it developed historically, while paying comparatively little attention to the internal logic through which its constituent concepts are connected to form a coherent system of thought. To address this gap, the present study proposes a structural approach to Ho Chi Minh's thought on independence and autonomy, aiming to clarify the position, function, and logical relationships among its central concepts within the overall framework of his political thought.

3. Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design to examine Ho Chi Minh's system of thought on independence and autonomy from the perspective of the structure of political thought. The primary sources consist of Ho Chi Minh's speeches, writings, letters, telegrams, and official documents published in *Ho Chi Minh Complete Works* (15 vols., National Political Publishing House, 2011), supplemented by representative studies by Vietnamese and international scholars on Ho Chi Minh Thought and the history of Vietnamese political thought.

To ensure the objectivity and reliability of the findings, the study employs three complementary research methods. First, textual analysis is used to examine the conceptual meanings of key categories, including independence, the right of national self-determination, self-reliance, self-strengthening, and autonomy, through close readings of Ho Chi Minh's original writings. Second, historical analysis situates Ho Chi Minh's ideas

within their specific historical contexts in order to clarify the formation, development, and practical application of these concepts. Third, conceptual analysis is employed to compare and distinguish concepts that are closely related yet analytically distinct, thereby clarifying both their individual meanings and their interrelationships.

Building upon these methods, the study adopts a structural approach to political thought as its analytical framework. From this perspective, a system of thought is understood not merely as a collection of individual viewpoints but as an internally coherent conceptual structure constituted by the logical relationships among its core concepts. Accordingly, rather than treating independence, the right of national self-determination, self-reliance, self-strengthening, and autonomy as separate themes, the study analyzes these concepts in terms of their functional and logical relationships in order to reveal the internal structure of Ho Chi Minh's system of thought.

The research was conducted in three stages. First, primary writings by Ho Chi Minh and relevant scholarly works were collected and systematically reviewed. Second, the central concepts were identified, classified, and analyzed according to their meanings, historical contexts, and relationships with other concepts within the system of thought. Finally, based on the analytical findings, the study develops a structural model of Ho Chi Minh's system of thought on independence and autonomy, thereby clarifying the role and position of each concept within the overall framework of his political thought.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. The Conceptual Content of Ho Chi Minh's Thought on Independence and Autonomy

Within Ho Chi Minh's system of thought, national independence constitutes one of its core and enduring principles, running throughout the development of his revolutionary thinking. However, in Ho Chi Minh's conception, independence extends beyond the conventional understanding of a nation's liberation from colonial domination, the recovery of territorial control, and the establishment of national sovereignty. His writings and speeches reveal a broader conceptualization in which independence encompasses a nation's right to exist, its right of self-determination, and its capacity to determine its own path of development.

From the early stages of his revolutionary activities, Ho Chi Minh consistently linked national independence with the principle of equality among nations. In *The Claims of the Annamite People* (1919), he demanded fundamental democratic rights and civil liberties for the Vietnamese people, thereby laying the intellectual foundation for the idea that every nation possesses the right to participate in determining its own destiny. Throughout his subsequent revolutionary activities, he further developed this conception, arguing that national liberation should not merely restore political sovereignty but also create the

conditions under which the people could genuinely become the masters of their own country.

One of Ho Chi Minh's clearest formulations of the meaning of independence appears in his statement: "Independence means that we ourselves conduct all our own affairs without any external interference" (Ho Chi Minh, 2011d, p. 162). This definition is significant because it treats independence not merely as the legal status of a sovereign state but as the practical capacity of a nation to make decisions concerning its own affairs. Accordingly, independence in Ho Chi Minh's thought is inseparable from the principles of self-determination and self-governance, requiring that a nation be able to choose its own development path without external imposition.

This understanding is further reflected in Ho Chi Minh's conception of the right of nations to freedom and independence. He affirmed that "Freedom and independence are Heaven-bestowed rights of every nation" (Ho Chi Minh, 2011d, p. 9). This statement demonstrates that, in his view, independence is not a privilege granted by external powers but an inherent and legitimate right belonging equally to all nations. It also provides the normative foundation for his conception of the right of national self-determination and for his affirmation of the legitimacy of Vietnam's struggle for independence.

From this perspective, Ho Chi Minh's conception of independence encompasses two closely interconnected dimensions. First, independence represents a fundamental right of a nation, manifested in freedom from foreign domination and in the establishment of equal status within the international community. Second, independence represents a practical capacity, namely the ability of a nation to determine its own political, economic, cultural, and foreign affairs. Without such capacity, formal recognition of sovereignty alone cannot guarantee substantive independence.

Consequently, Ho Chi Minh consistently associated independence with the development of national autonomy. He did not regard independence as isolation from the outside world; rather, he conceived it dialectically in relation to international cooperation and the selective appropriation of humanity's achievements. A genuinely independent nation should rely primarily on its own strength while actively expanding cooperation with progressive forces around the world on the basis of mutual respect for independence, sovereignty, and national interests.

The foregoing analysis demonstrates that independence occupies the central position within Ho Chi Minh's thought on nationhood and national development. It signifies not only the recovery of national sovereignty but also the right of self-determination, the capacity for self-governance, and the ability of a nation to chart its own course of development. This conceptualization provides the theoretical foundation for examining the relationships between independence and the related concepts of self-reliance, self-strengthening, and autonomy within the structure of Ho Chi Minh's political thought.

4.2. The Relationships among Independence, Self-Reliance, Self-Strengthening, and Autonomy within the Structure of Ho Chi Minh's Thought

The foregoing analysis indicates that, in Ho Chi Minh's thought, independence does not exist as an isolated political objective. Rather, it is intrinsically connected with the conditions necessary for establishing, safeguarding, and developing national independence. Accordingly, the concepts of the right of national self-determination, self-reliance, self-strengthening, and autonomy should not be regarded as ideas external to independence but as complementary dimensions that define, sustain, and actualize its substantive meaning.

First, the right of national self-determination constitutes the political foundation and normative principle underlying Ho Chi Minh's conception of independence. Throughout his search for a path to national liberation, Ho Chi Minh approached the national question not only as a struggle against colonialism but also as a struggle to affirm every nation's right to determine its own future. This principle was clearly articulated in the Declaration of Independence (1945), in which he proclaimed: "Vietnam has the right to enjoy freedom and independence, and has in fact become a free and independent country" (Ho Chi Minh, 2011c, p. 3). Consequently, national independence in Ho Chi Minh's thought signifies not merely the end of colonial domination but also the affirmation of a political community's right to determine its own destiny.

However, Ho Chi Minh did not regard the right of self-determination as sufficient in itself to secure genuine independence. A nation may possess legal sovereignty, yet if it lacks the capacity for self-defense, adequate developmental resources, or remains dependent upon external forces, its independence remains vulnerable. For this reason, Ho Chi Minh consistently emphasized self-reliance as an indispensable principle in the struggle to achieve, preserve, and develop national independence. His well-known proposition that "we must rely on our own strength to liberate ourselves" (Ho Chi Minh, 2011b, p. 596) encapsulates a fundamental principle of his revolutionary thought: the decisive force of revolution must originate from the people and from the nation's own internal resources.

In Ho Chi Minh's thought, self-reliance does not imply isolation or the rejection of international assistance. On the contrary, he consistently advocated combining national strength with the strength of the times. The essence of self-reliance lies in maintaining the nation's position as the principal actor in its own development rather than depending upon or allowing external forces to determine its destiny. As Ho Chi Minh emphasized, "if we want others to help us, we must first help ourselves" (Ho Chi Minh, 2011a, p. 320). Self-reliance therefore serves as the means through which formal political independence is transformed into genuine national capability.

Building upon self-reliance, Ho Chi Minh further developed the concept of self-strengthening, referring to the continuous enhancement of a nation's endogenous capacities. Whereas self-reliance emphasizes acting on the basis of one's own resources, self-

strengthening focuses on the sustained development of the capabilities required for a nation to stand firmly and advance. This idea is reflected in Ho Chi Minh's views on economic development, productive capacity, educational advancement, human development, national defense, and the construction of a state belonging to the people. In this sense, independence is not a fixed condition but a continuous process sustained through the comprehensive strengthening of national power.

On the foundations of the right of national self-determination, self-reliance, and self-strengthening, Ho Chi Minh's thought ultimately develops toward the concept of autonomy as the highest expression of national capability. Autonomy refers to a nation's ability to define its own objectives, determine its own development path, and manage both domestic and international affairs independently. Ho Chi Minh expressed this idea succinctly: "Independence means that we ourselves conduct all our own affairs without any external interference" (Ho Chi Minh, 2011d, p. 162). This formulation underscores his conviction that national independence must always be understood within an international context. Accordingly, he advocated expanding international friendship and seeking global support while steadfastly maintaining the principle of independence and refusing to allow any foreign country or external force to determine Vietnam's national decisions.

From the perspective of the structure of political thought, these concepts form an integrated and internally coherent system. Independence constitutes the fundamental objective and value; the right of national self-determination provides its political and legal foundation; self-reliance serves as the means of attaining and preserving independence; self-strengthening represents the process of building endogenous national capacity; and autonomy reflects the substantive realization of independence in national development. This relationship is further illustrated in Ho Chi Minh's declaration that "the entire Vietnamese people are determined to devote all their spirit and strength, their lives and property, to safeguard that freedom and independence" (Ho Chi Minh, 2011d, p. 3), emphasizing that independence can be sustained only through collective self-determination and national strength. These concepts are therefore not linked in a simple linear sequence but constitute a dynamic and mutually reinforcing structure: independence creates the conditions for autonomy, while self-reliance and self-strengthening provide the enduring foundations upon which independence can be preserved.

In summary, Ho Chi Minh's structure of thought on independence and autonomy is built upon the unity of political objectives, the nation's right of self-determination, and its endogenous capacity for development. This perspective demonstrates that the significance of Ho Chi Minh's thought lies not only in defining the objective of national independence but also in identifying the essential conditions through which an independent nation can safeguard, develop, and realize that independence in practice.

4.3. Theoretical Significance of the Structure of Ho Chi Minh's Thought on Independence and Autonomy

Approaching Ho Chi Minh's thought on independence and autonomy from the perspective of the structure of political thought enables a deeper understanding of the systematic, coherent, and evolving nature of his conception of the national question. If independence is viewed merely as a political objective of the Vietnamese revolution, scholarly inquiry is likely to remain confined to the struggle for national liberation and the defense of sovereignty. However, when examined in relation to the right of national self-determination, self-reliance, self-strengthening, and autonomy, independence emerges as an integrated system of thought encompassing objectives, guiding principles, and the capacities required for their realization.

The first theoretical contribution of this perspective lies in clarifying the conceptual depth of independence within Ho Chi Minh's political thought. Conventional interpretations have often emphasized national independence primarily in political and legal terms, namely liberation from colonial domination and the establishment of national sovereignty. Ho Chi Minh's writings, however, demonstrate that independence also encompasses the right of self-determination and the capacity of a nation to determine its own destiny. Consequently, independence is understood not merely as a status recognized within the international system but also as a national capability that must be continuously developed and strengthened.

This perspective also contributes to a clearer understanding of the relationship between national independence and national development in Ho Chi Minh's thought. For Ho Chi Minh, the achievement of independence was not the culmination of the revolutionary process but rather the necessary precondition for building a society in which the people genuinely exercise mastery and the nation is able to pursue comprehensive development. Accordingly, independence is inseparable from the tasks of economic development, cultural advancement, improvement of people's living standards, human resource development, and the strengthening of national capabilities. His conception therefore transcends a narrow understanding of sovereignty by presenting independence as a comprehensive foundation for sustainable national development.

Furthermore, the structural approach helps overcome the fragmented tendency that characterizes much of the existing scholarship on Ho Chi Minh Thought. In previous studies, concepts such as independence, self-reliance, self-strengthening, and autonomy have generally been examined separately or within specific domains, including national liberation, nation-building, foreign relations, or economic development. Viewed as an integrated conceptual structure, however, these categories reveal a unified internal logic: sustainable national development requires not only the right of a nation to determine its own destiny but also the endogenous capacities necessary to exercise that right effectively.

Another important theoretical contribution of this structural perspective is that it clarifies the dialectical relationship between independence and international integration in Ho Chi Minh's thought. For Ho Chi Minh, autonomy does not imply isolation from the outside world; rather, it signifies preserving a nation's decision-making authority while actively engaging with the international community. Shortly after the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, he articulated this principle by declaring that Vietnam sought to "be friends with all democratic countries and bear enmity toward none" (Ho Chi Minh, 2011d, p. 256). This statement demonstrates that international cooperation should always be grounded in national independence and equality rather than dependence or the abandonment of the nation's right of self-determination. Accordingly, Ho Chi Minh consistently advocated combining national strength with the strength of the times while safeguarding the principle of independence through international cooperation. In this sense, autonomy should be understood not as the rejection of external influences but as the capacity to engage with and utilize external resources while preserving national decision-making authority.

From the perspective of political thought, identifying the structure of Ho Chi Minh's thought on independence and autonomy also carries important methodological implications. It suggests that Ho Chi Minh Thought should be examined not only through individual propositions but also through the relationships among its concepts, principles, and conditions of realization. Ho Chi Minh himself consistently affirmed that the ultimate objective of the Vietnamese revolution was to build a Vietnam that was "peaceful, unified, independent, democratic, and prosperous" (Ho Chi Minh, 2011e, p. 614), reflecting the inseparable relationship between national independence and national development. This provides a basis for understanding Ho Chi Minh Thought as an internally coherent system of political thought shaped by the synthesis of Vietnamese patriotism, Marxism–Leninism, and the selective incorporation of progressive values from humanity.

In summary, the theoretical significance of approaching independence and autonomy from the perspective of the structure of political thought lies in revealing the unity among national independence, self-determination, and national developmental capacity within Ho Chi Minh's political thought. This perspective not only provides a more comprehensive understanding of Ho Chi Minh's conception of the national question but also offers a systematic analytical framework for future studies of other dimensions of his intellectual legacy.

4.4. The Practical Significance of Ho Chi Minh's Thought on Independence and Autonomy for National Development

Amid profound transformations in the contemporary international environment, national development increasingly depends upon the ability to reconcile international integration with the cultivation of endogenous capacities. Strategic competition among

major powers, the restructuring of global supply chains, emerging non-traditional security challenges, and the need for new development models have all created new demands for safeguarding national self-determination and strengthening national capabilities. In this context, Ho Chi Minh's thought on independence and autonomy continues to provide an important methodological orientation for national development.

First, Ho Chi Minh's thought highlights the inseparable relationship between political independence and national developmental capacity. Sustainable independence depends not only upon the protection of national sovereignty but also upon the comprehensive strength of a nation in such areas as the economy, culture, education, national defense, and human resources. This perspective reflects Ho Chi Minh's consistent conviction that genuine independence can only be preserved through the development of a nation's own capabilities, since a nation that possesses the formal right to independence but lacks the capacity to defend and develop itself cannot sustain that independence over the long term.

Second, the concepts of self-reliance and self-strengthening within Ho Chi Minh's structure of thought remain highly relevant to strengthening endogenous capacity in the contemporary era. Although international cooperation and access to external resources are indispensable under conditions of deep global integration, they cannot replace the decisive role of domestic capabilities. This requires sustained investment in building a resilient economy, promoting scientific and technological innovation, improving educational quality, developing human resources, and strengthening national culture. Such priorities represent the contemporary application of Ho Chi Minh's principle of relying primarily upon one's own strength.

Third, Ho Chi Minh's thought on independence and autonomy provides an important methodological framework for balancing international cooperation with the preservation of national self-determination. Throughout his revolutionary career, Ho Chi Minh consistently maintained that Vietnam should actively seek international support while ensuring that all policies and actions remained firmly grounded in national interests and the principle of independence. The enduring value of this perspective lies in its capacity to avoid two opposing extremes: isolation from the international community on the one hand and excessive dependence that undermines national decision-making on the other.

Fourth, Ho Chi Minh's thought places human beings at the center of national development and national strength. For Ho Chi Minh, the nation's greatest source of strength originates from its people, and independence can achieve its full meaning only when accompanied by freedom, well-being, and human development. Consequently, cultivating a workforce characterized by knowledge, ethical integrity, creativity, and social responsibility is not merely a requirement for socio-economic development but also a fundamental condition for strengthening national autonomy over the long term.

From this perspective, applying Ho Chi Minh's thought on independence and autonomy today does not mean mechanically repeating ideas formulated under earlier historical circumstances. Rather, it involves inheriting and adapting his fundamental principles to address contemporary challenges. Principles such as safeguarding national self-determination, strengthening endogenous capacity, combining national strength with the strength of the times, actively engaging in international integration, and consistently placing national interests at the center of policymaking continue to retain their enduring relevance for Vietnam's development.

In conclusion, the practical significance of Ho Chi Minh's thought on independence and autonomy lies in its ability to provide a coherent analytical framework for understanding the relationships among national sovereignty, endogenous development, and international integration. Examined from the perspective of the structure of political thought, independence is revealed not as a static condition but as a continuous process of strengthening a nation's capacity for self-determination and sustainable development. This, in turn, constitutes the enduring significance of Ho Chi Minh's political thought in guiding Vietnam's development through successive historical periods.

5. Conclusion

Ho Chi Minh's thought on independence and self-reliance occupies a central position within his broader system of political thought on the Vietnamese revolution and continues to possess enduring theoretical and practical significance for Vietnam's national development. Through an analysis of Ho Chi Minh's writings and speeches, this study demonstrates that independence in his thought extends beyond the establishment of national sovereignty following liberation from colonial rule. It also encompasses the right of national self-determination and the capacity of a nation to determine its own path of development.

The findings indicate that independence, the right of national self-determination, self-reliance, self-strengthening, and self-governance should not be understood as separate concepts but rather as interrelated components within a coherent structure of political thought. Within this structure, independence constitutes the fundamental value and overarching objective; the right of national self-determination provides the political and legal foundation; self-reliance serves as the means through which the nation exercises its agency; self-strengthening represents the continuous process of enhancing endogenous national capacity; and self-governance reflects the practical capability to preserve and further develop national independence. This structural perspective provides a more comprehensive understanding of Ho Chi Minh's political thought than approaches that interpret independence solely in relation to the struggle for national liberation.

A major contribution of this study is to demonstrate that, in Ho Chi Minh's thought, independence is not a condition achieved once and for all at a particular historical moment. Rather, it is an ongoing process that must be safeguarded, consolidated, and continuously

strengthened through the development of national capacities. Genuine independence requires the integration of political self-determination, autonomous policymaking, and the capacity for development across the economic, cultural, scientific, technological, and human dimensions. This perspective also explains why Ho Chi Minh consistently advocated combining national independence with the mobilization of endogenous strength while actively drawing upon the progressive forces of the international community.

From a methodological perspective, approaching Ho Chi Minh's thought on independence and self-governance through the lens of the structure of political thought demonstrates the value of examining political ideas not merely as isolated propositions but as interconnected concepts, principles, and conditions for practical realization. This analytical framework may also be applied to other dimensions of Ho Chi Minh's intellectual legacy, contributing to a more systematic understanding of its internal coherence, theoretical consistency, and contemporary relevance.

In today's context, where nations are required to deepen international integration while preserving their capacity for independent decision-making amid an increasingly complex global environment, Ho Chi Minh's thought on independence and self-governance continues to provide valuable insights into balancing endogenous national strength with proactive international cooperation. Its enduring significance lies not only in its historical guidance during Vietnam's struggle for national liberation and defense but also in its capacity to inform contemporary efforts to build a prosperous, autonomous, and internationally respected nation.

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