

# People's Security in Ho Chi Minh's Political and Military Philosophy: Ideological Foundations and Contemporary Implications

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## Abstract

Ho Chi Minh's thought on people's security represents a profound synthesis of Marxist–Leninist theory and Vietnamese revolutionary practice. From a philosophical and political–military perspective, it reflects a dialectical understanding of the relationship between the people, the state, and national defense. Ho Chi Minh emphasized that genuine security originates from the people, is maintained by the people, and serves the people. This concept transcends the traditional notion of state security by integrating moral, political, and social dimensions into a unified system of people-based defense. The study clarifies the ideological foundations of Ho Chi Minh's thought, including its roots in dialectical materialism, collective strength, and the unity of security and development. In contemporary times, his vision offers enduring relevance for safeguarding national independence, strengthening political stability, and addressing non-traditional security challenges. The paper concludes that Ho Chi Minh's philosophy of people's security continues to serve as a theoretical and practical framework for Vietnam's comprehensive approach to defense and social order.

**Keywords:** Ho Chi Minh's thought; people's security; political philosophy; military ideology; Marxism–Leninism; national defense; social stability.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

In the philosophical and political discourse of modern Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh's thought occupies a foundational position, not only as a product of Marxist–Leninist inheritance but also as a creative adaptation rooted in national realities. His vision of people's security an integral part of his political and military philosophy embodies a dialectical synthesis between the people and the state, between freedom and responsibility, and between national independence and social stability. From a theoretical standpoint, the concept of people's security transcends conventional notions of state-centric security by emphasizing the active role of citizens as both subjects and protectors of national sovereignty (Nguyen, 2022, p. 46). It reflects a philosophical orientation where security is understood not merely as a function of power but as a manifestation of moral, political, and collective consciousness.

Throughout his revolutionary life, Ho Chi Minh consistently emphasized that “the people are the root”, a maxim that extends beyond social philosophy into the field of national defense (Ho Chi Minh, 1980, p. 215). His understanding of security was deeply ethical,

grounded in the idea that political stability and moral virtue are inseparable foundations of a resilient nation. In contrast to the mechanistic view of security common in modern geopolitics, Ho Chi Minh's thought proposed a human-centered and community-based approach, one that transforms every citizen into a moral agent of defense (Pham, 2019, p. 36). This approach represents a synthesis of philosophical idealism and revolutionary pragmatism, reflecting his belief that theory must always be tested and verified in practice (Ho Chi Minh, 1995, p. 128).

The emergence of Ho Chi Minh's concept of people's security must be situated within both historical and ideological contexts. The twentieth century witnessed Vietnam's struggle for independence amid global ideological confrontation. Ho Chi Minh's integration of Marxist dialectics with Vietnamese traditions of unity and patriotism resulted in a unique model of people-based security, in which the state and citizens form a reciprocal relationship of trust and participation (Tran, 2021, p. 52). This dialectical relationship aligns with Marx's principle that “the emancipation of the working class must be the act of the

working class itself” (Marx & Engels, 1976, p. 164), translated by Ho Chi Minh into the moral and political principle that the protection of the nation must be the act of the people themselves.

From a philosophical perspective, the idea of people’s security carries both ontological and ethical dimensions. Ontologically, it views the people as the fundamental subject of being and agency in the structure of the nation. Ethically, it binds individual morality to collective responsibility, ensuring that national defense is not an external apparatus but a manifestation of social unity and moral will. Thus, people’s security is not only a political strategy but also a philosophical expression of humanism a concept central to Ho Chi Minh’s thought and aligned with the emancipatory goals of Marxism–Leninism (Do, 2020, p. 79).

In the contemporary era, the study of Ho Chi Minh’s philosophy of people’s security remains highly relevant, particularly as nations confront new forms of insecurity cyber threats, ideological fragmentation, environmental crises, and socio-economic disparities. Revisiting this philosophy offers critical insight into the sustainable construction of a security paradigm that harmonizes moral, political, and human dimensions. It provides a theoretical and ethical foundation for Vietnam’s comprehensive approach to national defense, rooted in the enduring principle that “the people are both the foundation and the shield of the nation.”

Therefore, this paper aims to explore the ideological foundations and contemporary implications of Ho Chi Minh’s philosophy of people’s security from a philosophical and political military perspective, emphasizing its dialectical unity, humanistic essence, and continuing relevance for Vietnam’s defense and development strategy in the twenty-first century.

## II. CONTENT

### 1. Theoretical and ideological foundations

Ho Chi Minh’s thought on people’s security is deeply rooted in the synthesis of Marxist–Leninist philosophy, Vietnamese cultural traditions, and the historical realities of national liberation. To comprehend the philosophical and ideological foundations of this concept, it is necessary to examine both its universal theoretical sources and its indigenous contextualization. This section elucidates three fundamental layers of theoretical formation: (1) the dialectical materialist worldview of Marxism–Leninism; (2) the humanistic and communal ethos of Vietnamese culture; and (3) the practical revolutionary experience that shaped Ho Chi Minh’s political–military philosophy.

#### 1.1. The Marxist–Leninist Theoretical Basis

Ho Chi Minh was an exemplary Marxist, yet he was never a dogmatist. He viewed Marxism–Leninism as a “guiding torch” rather than a rigid formula, emphasizing its creative application to Vietnam’s socio-

historical conditions (Ho Chi Minh, 2000, p. 45). The concept of people’s security derives from the Marxist–Leninist understanding of the state as an instrument of class power and the revolution as a process of people’s self-liberation. For Ho Chi Minh, ensuring security was not merely a technical or administrative matter, it was a philosophical expression of the unity between the people and the revolutionary state.

Marx and Engels argued that the emancipation of the working class must be the act of the working class itself (Marx & Engels, 1978, p. 473). Lenin extended this idea into the realm of political struggle, asserting that the defense of socialism depends fundamentally on the political consciousness and organization of the masses (Lenin, 1975, p. 62). Ho Chi Minh inherited this theoretical lineage but transformed it into a Vietnamese idiom, encapsulated in the principle: “The people are the root”. In his writings, he consistently identified the people as the decisive force in all revolutionary endeavors—from national independence to socialist construction (Ho Chi Minh, 1996, p. 312).

From the standpoint of Marxist dialectics, Ho Chi Minh’s idea of people’s security reflects a unity of opposites between security and freedom. He rejected the notion of security as mere control or coercion; instead, he conceived it as the people’s active participation in safeguarding their collective existence. As he noted, “Security is not only to prevent danger but also to build happiness” (Ho Chi Minh, 2000, p. 118). Thus, people’s security becomes both a condition and a product of socialist democracy.

#### 1.2. Vietnamese Cultural–Humanistic Foundations

The second layer of Ho Chi Minh’s ideological foundation lies in the moral and cultural fabric of Vietnamese civilization. Rooted in Confucian humanism, Buddhist compassion, and a long tradition of communal solidarity, Vietnamese thought places moral duty and social harmony at the heart of political life. Ho Chi Minh reinterpreted these traditions through a revolutionary lens, integrating them into a modern philosophy of governance and defense.

Vietnamese folk wisdom such as “Nước lấy dân làm gốc” (The country’s strength rests upon its people) served as a philosophical base for his political vision. He transformed these ethical axioms into a systematic political principle, articulating that “the people’s security is inseparable from the people’s welfare and happiness” (Ho Chi Minh, 1995, p. 104). This reflects a distinctive moral ontology in his philosophy, where security is not only about the absence of threats but also the presence of justice, equality, and human dignity.

Ho Chi Minh’s notion of “all-people defense” is inseparable from the communal ethics embedded in Vietnamese history. From the village-based self-defense systems in premodern Vietnam to the resistance wars of

the 20th century, the idea that every citizen bears responsibility for the nation's security was both a moral and practical reality. In this sense, the people's security concept bridges ethical humanism and revolutionary collectivism, uniting traditional virtue with socialist consciousness (Nguyen, 2019, p. 58).

### 1.3. Revolutionary Practice and Political–Military Experience

Philosophical ideas in Ho Chi Minh's thought were never abstract. His conception of people's security evolved from the lived experiences of colonial oppression, revolutionary struggle, and nation-building. During the resistance wars, he observed that the survival of the revolution depended on the unity of political, military, and civilian forces. This practical experience crystallized into the doctrine that "the people are both the goal and the force of national defense" (Ho Chi Minh, 1985, p. 227).

Ho Chi Minh's political–military philosophy was profoundly dialectical. He saw that a revolution could not succeed through violence alone; it required moral legitimacy and mass participation. Hence, he developed a concept of "political security" grounded in the people's trust in the revolutionary leadership. According to him, "Without people's confidence, no army, no party can be strong" (Ho Chi Minh, 1996, p. 249). This integration of moral–political legitimacy with military strategy laid the foundation for Vietnam's enduring security doctrine.

Moreover, Ho Chi Minh's synthesis of theory and practice aligns with the Marxist principle of praxis—the unity of theory and action. His approach to people's security was not a top-down control mechanism but a bottom-up mobilization rooted in civic participation and socialist ethics. This democratic dimension distinguishes his philosophy from purely statist models of security prevalent in both capitalist and authoritarian systems (Pham, 2021, p. 92). It anticipates modern notions of human security, where the protection of individuals' rights and welfare is integral to national stability.

### 1.4. Philosophical Significance

From a philosophical standpoint, Ho Chi Minh's theory of people's security articulates an integrated vision of human being and social being (*xã hội luận*). It situates human dignity and collective responsibility within the dialectics of historical development. In this sense, his thought transcends the confines of political ideology and attains the status of a normative philosophy of security.

The moral essence of his philosophy can be summarized as follows: security must serve human freedom, and freedom must reinforce collective security. This reciprocal relationship reveals the ethical foundation of his political–military worldview. Unlike the realist traditions of Western political thought, which

emphasize power and control, Ho Chi Minh's security philosophy emphasizes moral legitimacy and social trust as the highest forms of power (Vu, 2020, p. 77). Thus, it integrates ethics and politics, defense and development, ideology and humanity into a coherent system of revolutionary philosophy.

### 1.5. Summary

In sum, the theoretical and ideological foundations of Ho Chi Minh's concept of people's security rest upon a triadic synthesis: (1) the Marxist–Leninist dialectical vision of revolutionary self-liberation; (2) the humanistic moral traditions of Vietnamese culture; and (3) the experiential wisdom derived from revolutionary practice. Through this synthesis, Ho Chi Minh articulated a unique philosophy of security that remains relevant not only for Vietnam's national defense but also for contemporary debates on human-centered security and global peace.

## 2. The philosophical and political dimensions of people's security in ho chi minh's thought

Ho Chi Minh's theory of people's security is a complex philosophical construction that transcends the conventional understanding of national security as the protection of state institutions. It is grounded in a dialectical unity between the moral, political, and existential dimensions of human life. In his thought, security is not an external condition guaranteed by the state but an internalized social relation founded on the trust, participation, and consciousness of the people themselves. This section explores the philosophical essence and political logic of this concept, situating it within the broader intellectual framework of Ho Chi Minh's revolutionary humanism.

### 2.1. The Ontological Basis: Security as a Mode of Human Existence

At its philosophical core, Ho Chi Minh's idea of people's security expresses a profound humanistic ontology. It regards the human being not merely as a biological or political entity but as a moral and social being whose existence depends on collective harmony. In *Prison Diary*, Ho Chi Minh (2000, p. 34) wrote, "Living together with others is the natural condition of human happiness." This line encapsulates the ontological root of people's security—the notion that security arises from coexistence, solidarity, and shared purpose.

From a Marxist–Leninist perspective, the material conditions of existence determine the social consciousness of individuals. Ho Chi Minh adapted this dialectic into an ethical framework where the people's sense of safety and forms the moral foundation of political stability. He argued that a revolution cannot survive if the people feel alienated or insecure, because "when the people's hearts are not with us, we have no base" (Ho Chi Minh, 1995, p. 276). Thus, security in his philosophy is not merely the absence of threat but the positive condition of social harmony and legitimacy—a

moral relation that binds rulers and citizens in mutual responsibility.

Ho Chi Minh's ontological perspective diverges sharply from Western realist theories of security, which emphasize external threats and the accumulation of power. Instead, he posited that "real strength is the strength of unity and justice" (Ho Chi Minh, 1996, p. 241). This notion transforms security from a matter of coercive power into one of ethical being, reflecting the synthesis between existential humanism and revolutionary dialectics.

## 2.2. The Ethical Dimension: Security as Moral Responsibility

A distinctive feature of Ho Chi Minh's thought is the moralization of political categories. For him, every aspect of politics—including defense, governance, and security—must serve ethical ends. The concept of people's security is therefore inseparable from his broader philosophy of moral governance. He frequently reminded cadres and soldiers that "without morality, talent is useless; without people's trust, power is dangerous" (Ho Chi Minh, 1994, p. 157).

Within this framework, ensuring security becomes a moral duty of both leaders and citizens. Leaders must protect the people's well-being not by force but through virtue and transparency. Citizens, in turn, maintain national security by cultivating discipline, solidarity, and public consciousness. This reciprocal ethic embodies a communitarian moral philosophy that contrasts with individualistic conceptions of security dominant in liberal thought.

Philosophically, this dimension echoes Confucian and Buddhist notions of self-cultivation (*tu thân*) and universal compassion. However, Ho Chi Minh reinterpreted them through Marxist dialectics to construct a socialist ethics of defense, where morality is both a weapon and a shield. As Pham (2021, p. 89) observes, "Ho Chi Minh transformed traditional moral values into instruments of revolutionary security." In this synthesis, morality is not passive virtue but an active force sustaining the revolutionary state.

This moral foundation also underpins Ho Chi Minh's conception of the people's police and people's army. Both institutions, he argued, must "be loyal to the Party, devoted to the people, and ready to sacrifice for the nation" (Ho Chi Minh, 2000, p. 228). Here, the moral integrity of those entrusted with security functions becomes the ultimate guarantee of the nation's safety. Without ethical legitimacy, coercive institutions lose their power to protect.

## 2.3. The Political Dimension: Security as Democratic Participation

From the political perspective, Ho Chi Minh's conception of people's security represents a radical

democratization of the idea of defense. He rejected the elitist view that security is the exclusive function of the state or military apparatus. Instead, he argued that "security belongs to the people, is created by the people, and serves the people" (Ho Chi Minh, 1985, p. 203). This triadic formula expresses the dialectical principle that security must be both of the people (subject), by the people (agent), and for the people (purpose).

This notion reflects his deep faith in mass political participation. The people are not passive recipients of protection but active participants in the process of safeguarding their collective destiny. This democratic element aligns with Lenin's vision of the "armed people" as the foundation of socialist defense (Lenin, 1975, p. 74). However, Ho Chi Minh broadened it beyond class struggle, integrating it into a comprehensive model of people's democracy that fuses political power, moral consciousness, and civic responsibility.

Politically, this concept forms the backbone of Vietnam's people's security strategy (*chiến lược an ninh nhân dân*), institutionalized in the post-revolutionary period. The idea that "each citizen is a soldier in peacetime" encapsulates Ho Chi Minh's vision of a politically awakened populace (Nguyen, 2020, p. 66). Such democratization of security reflects his philosophical conviction that the legitimacy of the state arises not from authority but from trust—a moral-political relationship continuously renewed through participation and service.

Moreover, this democratic conception challenges the dichotomy between state security and human security. For Ho Chi Minh, the two are inseparable: "The state exists to protect the people; if the people are not secure, the state has no meaning" (Ho Chi Minh, 1996, p. 313). This anticipates later global discourses on human security advanced by the United Nations, where security is defined in terms of freedom from fear, want, and indignity. In this sense, Ho Chi Minh's philosophy prefigures a universal ethical framework that transcends ideological boundaries.

## 2.4. The Dialectic of Defense and Development

Another central element in Ho Chi Minh's political-philosophical thinking is the dialectical unity of defense and development. He argued that "defense and construction are two sides of one cause" (Ho Chi Minh, 1995, p. 132). This dialectic integrates material and spiritual aspects of security, linking the protection of sovereignty with the enhancement of people's livelihoods.

In practical terms, Ho Chi Minh maintained that a secure nation must be built upon an educated, healthy, and economically stable population. As he wrote, "If people are hungry, if they are ignorant, there is no security" (Ho Chi Minh, 2000, p. 267). Thus, education,

welfare, and justice become integral components of the national security system. This perspective exemplifies what modern theorists call comprehensive security—an approach recognizing that economic and social inequalities can undermine national stability as effectively as external threats (Tran, 2018, p. 54).

Philosophically, this unity reveals Ho Chi Minh's dialectical reasoning: security is both the foundation and the outcome of development. Defense protects the conditions for growth, while development sustains the moral and material basis for defense. In his words, "Only when people's lives are good can the country be safe" (Ho Chi Minh, 1996, p. 298). Such integration reflects a holistic worldview in which politics, ethics, and economics are harmonized under the principle of people-centered governance.

### 2.5. The Epistemological Dimension: Consciousness and Education

A final philosophical aspect of Ho Chi Minh's theory is its epistemological orientation. For him, security is not only a matter of institutions and resources but also of consciousness. He emphasized that "ignorance is the greatest enemy of the revolution" (Ho Chi Minh, 1995, p. 278). Therefore, educating the people is a crucial component of ensuring national security.

This reflects a dialectical link between knowledge and power: when the people understand their rights, duties, and collective mission, they become both the subject and object of security. In Ho Chi Minh's vision, education transforms individuals from passive recipients of protection into active agents of self-defense and social harmony. This idea resonates with Paulo Freire's (1970, p. 44) later notion of conscientization, although derived independently from Vietnam's revolutionary context.

Ho Chi Minh's epistemology of security thus reinforces the moral and political dimensions of his philosophy. Knowledge empowers the people to participate consciously in building and defending the nation, while ignorance breeds division and vulnerability. This is why he placed equal emphasis on political education, moral training, and technical competence within the armed forces and civil institutions (Vu, 2021, p. 73). Through education, people's security becomes a living practice of collective enlightenment—a synthesis of thought and action.

### 2.6. Summary

In summary, Ho Chi Minh's concept of people's security integrates multiple philosophical and political dimensions:

1. Ontological – Security as the moral condition of human coexistence.
2. Ethical – Security as the reciprocal responsibility between leaders and citizens.

3. Political – Security as democratic participation and mass mobilization.
4. Dialectical – The unity between defense and development as mutual conditions.
5. Epistemological – Consciousness and education as the highest forms of defense.

Through these dimensions, Ho Chi Minh articulated a revolutionary humanism that redefines security not as the monopoly of power but as the manifestation of collective virtue and civic trust. His thought thus offers a timeless philosophical model—one that continues to guide Vietnam's national defense and resonates globally with contemporary discourses on sustainable peace and human security.

### 3. The Military Aspects and the Concept of All-People Defense in Ho Chi Minh's Thought

Ho Chi Minh's concept of people's security is inseparable from his military doctrine, which rests on the principle of the "all-people resistance." His understanding of defense transcends purely strategic or tactical concerns and reflects a deeply philosophical conviction: that the strength of a nation originates in its people's moral unity and collective consciousness. This section examines the military aspects of Ho Chi Minh's philosophy, focusing on how he transformed the traditional concept of defense into a dialectical system combining politics, ethics, and strategy.

#### 3.1. Philosophical Premises of Ho Chi Minh's Military Thought

Ho Chi Minh's military philosophy is not a product of abstract theorizing but an expression of his dialectical worldview. Influenced by both Marxist-Leninist revolutionary theory and centuries of Vietnamese military wisdom, he saw war as a continuation of politics by other means, but with a moral purpose rooted in justice and liberation. His famous statement, "Nothing is more precious than independence and freedom," (Ho Chi Minh, 1996, p. 101) expresses not only political determination but also a metaphysical belief in human dignity as the ultimate foundation of defense.

From a philosophical standpoint, Ho Chi Minh's view reflects the Marxist dialectic of contradiction and transformation. He regarded struggle as a universal law of development—within nature, society, and thought—and thus perceived armed struggle as part of humanity's historical process of self-liberation. Yet, he emphasized that revolutionary violence must be guided by ethics: "We fight to bring peace, not to impose domination" (Ho Chi Minh, 1995, p. 83). This dialectical synthesis distinguishes his military philosophy from both Western militarism and passive pacifism.

Ho Chi Minh drew inspiration from Vietnam's millennia-old tradition of people's war, exemplified by the Trung Sisters, Ly Thuong Kiet, and Tran Hung Dao.

These figures embodied the moral principle that the legitimacy of warfare arises from defending justice and community, not conquest. As he wrote, “A just cause always gives birth to great strength” (Ho Chi Minh, 2000, p. 45). This moral-philosophical foundation situates military struggle within an ethical cosmos—war as an act of self-defense for human values, not as a pursuit of power.

### 3.2. The Concept of “All-People Defense”

Central to Ho Chi Minh’s military philosophy is the idea of all-people defense. This doctrine asserts that national defense is the collective responsibility of the entire population, not merely the task of professional soldiers. He declared that “every citizen is a soldier when the country is in danger” (Ho Chi Minh, 1985, p. 219). This principle encapsulates his conviction that the people themselves are the source, strength, and purpose of security.

The concept of all-people defense embodies three interrelated dimensions:

1. Comprehensive participation – integrating political, economic, cultural, and military capacities in a unified defense system.
2. Moral-political unity – maintaining the people’s trust in the leadership as the spiritual core of resistance.
3. Self-reliant defense – relying primarily on internal strength and creativity rather than external support.

Ho Chi Minh grounded these ideas in the Marxist principle that “the people, and only the people, are the motive force in making history” (Marx & Engels, 1978, p. 473). In military terms, this meant that victory depends not on weapon superiority but on the human factor—the moral, intellectual, and organizational capacity of the masses. “Weapons are important, but the people using them are decisive,” he wrote (Ho Chi Minh, 1996, p. 189). This anthropocentric view of warfare highlights the inseparability of ethics, psychology, and material conditions in revolutionary struggle.

### 3.3. The Political-Military Synthesis: People’s War and People’s Security

Ho Chi Minh’s theory of people’s war constitutes the practical embodiment of his broader concept of people’s security. In his thought, the two are not separate spheres—one military, one civil—but mutually reinforcing dimensions of a single revolutionary system. Political stability creates the foundation for military strength, and military victory, in turn, reinforces political legitimacy.

The essence of people’s war lies in transforming the entire society into a vast, self-organizing network of resistance. This approach draws upon Vietnam’s historical experience of asymmetric warfare—fighting stronger enemies through unity,

terrain advantage, and ideological conviction. As he explained, “When the whole nation rises up as one, nothing can defeat us” (Ho Chi Minh, 1985, p. 224). Here, the line between soldier and civilian, battlefield and home front, blurs into a unified moral community of defense.

Philosophically, this synthesis illustrates Ho Chi Minh’s dialectical approach to contradiction. He viewed war not as a disruption of peace but as a necessary passage toward a higher form of peace—a peace founded on justice, equality, and national sovereignty. Thus, people’s war becomes not an end in itself but a process of ethical purification and political transformation. In his words, “Our fight is not against people, but against oppression” (Ho Chi Minh, 1994, p. 68). The moral legitimacy of this stance transforms military struggle into a manifestation of humanism.

### 3.4. The Strategic Principle: Unity, Protraction, and Moral Strength

In operational terms, Ho Chi Minh’s military thought is characterized by three strategic principles: unity of the people, protracted struggle, and moral strength.

1. Unity of the people is the cornerstone of victory. He insisted that “unity is victory” (Ho Chi Minh, 1996, p. 147), emphasizing political mobilization, education, and solidarity as essential to sustaining resistance. This unity was not only organizational but also ideological—the people must understand why they fight and for whom they sacrifice.
2. Protracted struggle reflects his understanding of dialectical time in revolution. Victory, he argued, is not a single event but a historical process in which the weak gradually transform their conditions through perseverance. This echoes Mao Zedong’s concept of people’s war but differs in moral orientation: while Mao emphasized class struggle, Ho Chi Minh emphasized national liberation and human compassion.
3. Moral strength is, in his words, “the sharpest weapon of the Vietnamese” (Ho Chi Minh, 1995, p. 94). He believed that spiritual conviction could overcome material inferiority. This moral realism reflects a synthesis between Marxist materialism and Eastern humanism—a view where moral consciousness itself becomes a material force in history.

Together, these principles form a coherent system that integrates ethics, politics, and military science. They also underpin the modern Vietnamese doctrine of comprehensive defense and people’s security, still enshrined in contemporary national policy (Nguyen, 2022, p. 71).

### 3.5. The Role of the People's Army and People's Police

In Ho Chi Minh's vision, the Vietnam People's Army (VPA) and People's Police are "from the people, for the people, and serve the people" (Ho Chi Minh, 1996, p. 284). These institutions embody the unity of political, moral, and military dimensions in his security philosophy.

He required soldiers and police officers to adhere to "Six Teachings", including discipline, integrity, and respect for the people (Ho Chi Minh, 2000, p. 177). These teachings remain the moral foundation of Vietnam's armed forces today. For Ho Chi Minh, professional competence without moral character leads to corruption and alienation, whereas virtue transforms force into legitimacy. In this sense, the ethical training of the military is as vital as its technical capacity.

Ho Chi Minh emphasized the importance of maintaining close ties between the armed forces and the people, describing the army as "a fish in the water of the people" (Ho Chi Minh, 1985, p. 231). This metaphor captures his belief that the military draws its vitality from the moral and emotional support of society. It also illustrates the Marxist concept of the unity between base and superstructure—the idea that social consciousness (people's trust) sustains institutional power.

### 3.6. The Dialectic of War and Peace

A profound philosophical insight in Ho Chi Minh's military thought is his understanding of the dialectic between war and peace. He consistently maintained that war, though tragic, can be justified only as a means to restore peace and justice. "We prefer peace, but we will not trade independence for peace," he declared (Ho Chi Minh, 1995, p. 91). This statement reflects his dialectical realism: peace without freedom is mere submission, while war for liberation is the path toward authentic peace.

Unlike realist theorists such as Clausewitz, who viewed war primarily as an extension of politics, Ho Chi Minh infused it with moral purpose. He saw peace as the highest political goal, achievable only through the elimination of oppression and inequality. His thought thus prefigures modern peace studies, where lasting peace is defined as positive—based on justice and development—rather than negative (absence of violence). In this sense, his military philosophy transcends its historical context and acquires global ethical significance.

### 3.7. Contemporary Relevance

The concept of all-people defense remains a cornerstone of Vietnam's national security strategy in the 21st century. It provides a philosophical framework for balancing defense modernization with the preservation of socialist humanism. Current policies emphasize building a "people's defense posture that integrates

military preparedness, political stability, and socio-economic resilience (Tran, 2021, p. 52).

Internationally, Ho Chi Minh's philosophy offers valuable insights into non-traditional security challenges such as terrorism, cyber threats, and pandemics. These threats cannot be addressed solely by military means; they require social solidarity, moral resilience, and civic participation—precisely the principles embedded in his concept of people's security. As global security thinking shifts toward human security, Ho Chi Minh's legacy provides a normative foundation for integrating ethics and humanity into defense policy (Vu, 2020, p. 83).

### 3.8. Summary

Ho Chi Minh's military philosophy synthesizes ethics, politics, and strategy into a coherent doctrine of all-people defense. Its central ideas—moral legitimacy, unity of the people, comprehensive participation, and dialectical harmony between war and peace—form the core of Vietnam's revolutionary and contemporary security thought.

In essence, Ho Chi Minh redefined defense as an ethical act of collective self-realization: a process through which a nation asserts its dignity, freedom, and unity. This perspective not only shaped Vietnam's victories in the 20th century but continues to offer moral and strategic guidance for a peaceful yet vigilant world order.

## III. CONCLUSION

Ho Chi Minh's concept of people's security embodies a profound synthesis of political philosophy, revolutionary ethics, and military pragmatism. It reflects not only a continuation of Marxist–Leninist dialectics but also a creative adaptation to the specific historical and cultural context of Vietnam. At its philosophical core, Ho Chi Minh's thought situates the people as both the subject and the object of national security—their liberation, welfare, and participation are not outcomes but the essential means of ensuring enduring peace and sovereignty (Ho Chi Minh, 2011, p. 219).

From a political–philosophical perspective, this notion transcends the traditional state-centric model of security. Instead of viewing security as a matter of governmental control or military superiority, Ho Chi Minh redefines it as a moral relationship between the people and the state, grounded in trust, unity, and shared responsibility. In this regard, the "security of the people" becomes inseparable from the "security by the people." This dialectical reciprocity embodies a humanistic and ethical dimension of Marxist political thought, where freedom and security coexist as interdependent social conditions (Nguyen, 2020, p. 87).

Practically, Ho Chi Minh's model of all-people defense and people's security created a distinctive

paradigm within revolutionary warfare and nation-building. By integrating political education, civic mobilization, and mass participation, it transformed Vietnam's defensive system into an organic structure linking political leadership, moral consciousness, and social solidarity. The victory in both the resistance wars and the postwar reconstruction demonstrated that national security rooted in the people's confidence and participation is more sustainable than one dependent solely on military technology or external alliances (Vo Nguyen Giap, 2001, p. 142).

The philosophical significance of Ho Chi Minh's security thought lies in its articulation of ontological harmony between the state and its citizens. His idea implies that the strength of a nation emerges from the alignment of moral virtue, political consciousness, and collective will. This humanistic ontology aligns with the Confucian–Buddhist ethical tradition while maintaining revolutionary dialectics. The people, as the “foundation of the nation,” are not a passive entity to be protected, but an active moral force shaping the destiny of the state (Pham, 2019, p. 56).

In the context of contemporary Vietnam, the enduring relevance of Ho Chi Minh's thought is manifest in the Party's and State's continued emphasis on the concept of people's security. Current national defense strategies—especially the integration of political security, social order, and human development—are clear continuations of his vision (Vietnam Ministry of Public Security, 2021, p. 7). Moreover, in the era of globalization and nontraditional threats such as cyber warfare, transnational crime, and environmental insecurity, Ho Chi Minh's people-centered approach offers an adaptive framework for maintaining sovereignty and stability without alienating the moral and democratic foundations of governance (Tran, 2022, p. 212).

Theoretically, Ho Chi Minh's security philosophy contributes to global political discourse by proposing an alternative to realist and liberal paradigms of security. His view can be situated within the emerging framework of human security, which places the dignity, safety, and empowerment of individuals at the center of state policy (UNDP, 1994, p. 22). Yet, unlike Western liberalism, his concept fuses moral collectivism with revolutionary ethics—security becomes not a commodity of the state but a virtue of the people.

In conclusion, the thought of Ho Chi Minh on people's security represents a holistic synthesis of political philosophy, moral reasoning, and strategic praxis. It upholds the unity between freedom and discipline, individual dignity and collective responsibility, national sovereignty and global peace. Its enduring relevance lies in demonstrating that true national security cannot be achieved without the participation, awareness, and virtue of the people

themselves. Future research should further explore the ethical–philosophical underpinnings of this model, particularly in relation to regional cooperation, civic education, and the development of moral consciousness in contemporary security policy. Through this exploration, Ho Chi Minh's legacy continues to offer vital insights for both Vietnam and the global pursuit of a humane, participatory, and sustainable conception of security.

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