



Ho Chi Minh's Political Courage and its Application by the Vietnamese Communist Party Today

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Article Info

E-ISSN: 3107-7129

Volume: 01

Issue: 06

November - December 2025

Received: 26-09-2025

Accepted: 28-10-2025

Published: 24-11-2025

Page No: 20-24

Abstract

Studying Ho Chi Minh's political courage is to study the steadfastness of a great leader throughout his political life. Today, Vietnam is promoting industrialization, modernization, and international integration, striving to achieve great national aspirations and milestones. This requires the Party's cadre and members to continuously cultivate genuine political courage, steadfastness, and resilience. Therefore, researching and applying Ho Chi Minh's political courage has profound significance, directly contributing to improving the quality of Party members, the leadership capacity, and the combat strength of the Party.

Keywords: Political Courage, Ho Chi Minh, Communist Party

Introduction

Ho Chi Minh's political courage is the courage of an outstanding statesman, formed on the basis of profound knowledge, reflecting the fusion of national and universal values, and inheriting the quintessence of both Eastern and Western traditions. The core content of Ho Chi Minh's political courage is manifested in the following aspects: maintaining firm belief in the leadership of the Party and the strength of the people, placing national interests above all; independent and creative thinking, sharp political insight, steadfast commitment to national independence and socialism; frankness, and the willingness to acknowledge mistakes and shortcomings.

Firstly, trust in the Party's leadership, in the strength of the people, and placing national interests above all. Throughout his revolutionary life, despite facing countless difficulties, Ho Chi Minh always trusted in the strength, courage, and intelligence of the Party. This trust was not only a source of motivation for him to remain steadfast in his ideals, but also a guiding light for the entire Vietnamese nation to unite, overcome challenges, achieve independence, and build the country. As early as 1927, in his work *Revolutionary Path*, when raising the question of what a revolution must first have, Ho Chi Minh pointed out: "First of all, there must be a Revolutionary Party, to organize and mobilize the people internally, and connect externally with oppressed peoples and the proletariat everywhere. Only if the Party is strong will the revolution succeed, just as a boat sails steadily only if the helmsman is skilled."

Ho Chi Minh constantly reminded that the Party must continually renew and rectify itself, combat bureaucracy and corruption, and remain close to the people to deserve their trust. In his Will, he instructed: "Our Party is a ruling party; each Party member and cadre must truly imbue revolutionary ethics, be industrious, honest, and impartial. We must maintain the Party's purity, worthy of being leaders and loyal servants of the people." These are fundamental ethical requirements for cadres and Party members, arising from the revolutionary nature of the Party and the intimate relationship between the Party and the people in the revolutionary cause.

Ho Chi Minh placed absolute trust in the people. For him, the people were not only the root of the revolution but also the inexhaustible source of strength behind all national victories. He affirmed: “There is nothing more precious than the people in the sky. There is nothing stronger than the unity of the people in the world.”

His faith in the people stemmed from both scientific understanding and practical experience throughout the journey of national salvation. From the early years of seeking a revolutionary path, he realized that only when the people rose up to claim their right to life and freedom could the nation escape slavery. In every period, Ho Chi Minh regarded the people as the subjects of the revolution and the creators of history. This belief enabled him to adhere to the principle of “taking the people as the foundation,” fully mobilizing the strength of national unity to achieve independence and national reunification.

Throughout his revolutionary life, President Ho Chi Minh always placed national interests above all, regarding them as the guiding principle for every decision and action. For him, the highest goal of the revolution was to liberate the nation, bringing independence, freedom, and happiness to the people. He once expressed his ultimate desire: to achieve complete national independence, total freedom for the people, ensure everyone has food and clothing, and that everyone has access to education.

This ideology was not merely a slogan but was demonstrated through concrete actions. In building the government after the August Revolution, Ho Chi Minh proposed tax reduction, combating famine, and establishing literacy classes. He emphasized: “Whatever benefits the people, must be done to the utmost; whatever harms the people, must be avoided to the utmost.” These teachings vividly illustrate placing national and people’s interests as the highest standard for evaluating policies and revolutionary actions.

Thus, Ho Chi Minh’s political courage is profoundly expressed in his absolute faith in the Party and the people. For him, the Party and the people are inseparable. He devoted his entire life to serving the people, considering it the sacred duty of a revolutionary. In his Will—a summary of his revolutionary spirit and moral life—Ho Chi Minh left an unwavering faith in the Party and the people, regarding it as decisive for the success of the revolution.

Secondly, independent and creative thinking, sharp political insight, and steadfast commitment to national independence and socialism. At the beginning of the 20th century, Vietnam faced a deadlock in the path to national salvation. With independent and creative thinking, Ho Chi Minh decided to travel to France under the principle: “To fight France, one must understand France,” studying the enemy directly at its stronghold. This decision was historically significant, reflecting Ho Chi Minh’s unique and creative thinking.

During the course of seeking a revolutionary path, Ho Chi Minh seized every opportunity to accumulate both theoretical and practical knowledge. He wrote articles, attended meetings, participated in organizational activities, and read works by famous authors such as Shakespeare, Dickens, Lu Xun, Hugo, and others. From this, he gained proper awareness, analysis, and judgment of the times, choosing and opening a bright path for the nation.

With sharp political insight, when reading Lenin’s *Draft Theses on the National and Colonial Question* published in *L’Humanité* in 1920, Ho Chi Minh identified the path to national salvation, suitable to the era and his aspiration to bring genuine independence, freedom, and happiness to the Vietnamese people. This was the proletarian revolutionary path. Through his political acumen, Ho Chi Minh inherited, applied, and creatively developed Marxist-Leninist theory into Vietnam’s revolutionary practice. From this point, the Vietnamese revolution ended its crisis regarding the path of national salvation.

Ho Chi Minh’s independent intellect is shown in his approach: while affirming the proletarian revolutionary path, he adapted it to Vietnamese reality. Based on national conditions, he insisted on conducting a national revolution to expel colonial invaders and gain independence. Prioritizing national liberation was his creative hallmark, understanding that resolving the national contradiction was the foremost task, which also partially encompassed class liberation. At the 8th Central Committee meeting (May 1941), he affirmed: “If at this time we cannot resolve national liberation, cannot demand independence and freedom for the whole nation, not only will the entire nation remain in bondage, but the interests of social classes will also never be regained.” In his *Appeal to the People* (June 6, 1941), he wrote: “At this moment, national liberation is paramount. We must unite to overthrow the imperialists and traitors to save the nation from danger.”

A core principle reflecting Ho Chi Minh’s political courage is that national independence must be linked with socialism. This is not only the application of Marxism-Leninism to Vietnamese reality but also a guiding principle for comprehensive and sustainable national development. He did not consider independence as mere political freedom or territorial sovereignty, but also as the right to live and pursue happiness for all people. He stated: “An independent country without the people enjoying happiness and freedom is meaningless.” Only through the socialist revolutionary path could people be fully liberated from oppression and injustice. A socialist and later communist society, he asserted, would truly be a better world for humanity.

Ho Chi Minh emphasized that Vietnam’s socialism is not a mechanical copy of foreign models but must creatively adapt Marxism-Leninism to national conditions, combining scientific theory with patriotism, solidarity, compassion, and aspiration for progress. This principle was both scientific and culturally distinctive.

The success of the August Revolution and the steadfast pursuit of national independence and socialism illustrate Ho Chi Minh’s political courage, manifested in independent and creative thinking and sharp political insight. Independence and creativity are principles that help the Communist Party of Vietnam lead the country correctly and achieve victories in all circumstances.

Thirdly, frankness and willingness to acknowledge mistakes and shortcomings. According to Ho Chi Minh, a revolutionary must always put the Party’s and nation’s interests above all. When mistakes occur, acknowledging and correcting them is a manifestation of responsibility and true political courage. He stated: “We are not afraid of mistakes, only afraid of failing to correct them.”

During the course of leading the revolution, Ho Chi Minh himself repeatedly demonstrated the spirit of frank self-criticism and took personal responsibility for shortcomings. After the August Revolution, faced with the existing problems and shortcomings among cadres and Party members in state agencies—such as moral decay, corruption, wastefulness of public resources, bureaucratism, and the arrogance of certain “revolutionary mandarins”—in his capacity as President of the nation, he wrote a letter of *Self-Criticism* published in the *Cuu Quoc* (National Salvation) newspaper on January 28, 1946. In it, he stated:

“Because the people love and trust me, they have entrusted me with the destiny of the nation. Yet, as my talent and virtue are limited, I have not been able to fully meet the expectations of my fellow citizens. The Government under my leadership has done nothing truly significant for the people. Although many in the administration work well and honestly, corruption and embezzlement have not been completely eradicated. The above shortcomings are my fault.”

During land reform and organizational rectification, President Ho Chi Minh openly admitted mistakes before the Party and the people, emphasizing democratic consultation and rapid correction. On August 25, 1956, in his opening speech at the 10th (expanded) meeting of the Central Committee of the Vietnam Workers’ Party (2nd term) regarding land reform and organizational rectification, he conducted serious self-criticism: due to a lack of democracy, he listened and saw too little; now he emphasized the need for democracy and accepted responsibility in turbulent times. He urged that the Central Committee act collectively, correct mistakes promptly, protect the Party through strict discipline, and prioritize education and unity in rectification.

When mistakes occurred in land reform (1956), the Central Committee and President Ho Chi Minh publicly engaged in self-criticism before the people and resolved to correct errors. Self-criticism is a requirement for a genuine revolutionary Party. He emphasized: “A Party that hides its mistakes is a ruined Party. A Party that dares to admit its mistakes, analyze their causes, and seek ways to correct them is progressive, bold, and genuine.” For Ho Chi Minh, criticism and self-criticism were not signs of weakness but inner strength that kept the Party clean and strong. He always stressed: “Criticism is the medicine to cure shortcomings.”

This attitude reflects steadfast political courage; only those who truly have faith in the Party, the people, and revolutionary ideals dare to confront their own mistakes. In the great revolutionary cause of the nation, President Ho Chi Minh was not only the pioneer who illuminated the path of national independence linked with socialism but also a shining example of revolutionary morality. One of his outstanding qualities was the courage to frankly acknowledge mistakes and shortcomings, regarding this as a manifestation of honesty, bravery, and a sense of responsibility toward the Party and the people. He once taught: “One must have the courage to admit mistakes and correct them, for only then can one make progress.” This idea still holds its value today and has become an important principle and method in the work of Party building and rectification.

Ho Chi Minh’s political courage encompasses rich content, built on the foundation of scientific knowledge with theoretical and practical significance, serving as a basis for the Party to inherit and effectively apply in leading Vietnam’s revolution.

Firstly, Ho Chi Minh’s perspective of maintaining firm faith in the Party and the people and placing national interests above all is deeply applied by the Communist Party of Vietnam in the leadership of the revolution and national construction today. The Party consistently regards the people as the source of strength while continuously building and rectifying itself to be worthy of its pioneering and exemplary role. The Party and the State have no goal other than wholeheartedly serving the people. The people will only trust the Party if the Party is truly deserving. Currently, the Party is actively promoting comprehensive building and rectification, considering it the “key of the key,” aiming to enhance leadership capacity, combat effectiveness, consolidate public trust, and ensure sustainable national development. Each cadre and Party member must truly become a vanguard, exemplary in ideology, politics, ethics, and lifestyle, wholeheartedly serving the people. Ho Chi Minh’s political courage serves as a guiding principle for every cadre and Party member to remain loyal to the Party’s goals and ideals, steadfast in Marxism-Leninism, reinforcing faith in the path to socialism, and maintaining strong political courage in the face of all temptations.

Recognizing the central role of the people, the Party affirms: the people are the root, and all policies must originate from their aspirations and interests. The Party must rely on the people and exist and develop for the people; under the Party’s correct leadership, the people can fully mobilize their immense strength. The 13th Party Congress emphasized: “Rely on the people to build the Party; take the happiness and prosperity of the people as the goal; consolidate and enhance the people’s trust in the Party, the State, and the socialist regime.” This is reflected in promoting grassroots democracy, encouraging the people’s ownership in social management, lawmaking, monitoring cadres, and combating corruption. The Party’s faith in the strength of the masses is also evident in crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and natural disasters, where the people play a central role in stabilizing society and developing the economy. The 13th Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam drew five lessons from experience, including the second: “In all work of the Party and State, always deeply grasp and strictly implement the principle ‘the people are the root.’”

The Party always places national interests as the supreme principle in dealing with major countries and international organizations. Vietnam pursues a policy of multilateralization and diversification in foreign relations, being a reliable friend, partner, and responsible member of the international community. In all relations, Vietnam adheres to the principle of respecting independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity while ensuring a peaceful and stable environment for development. This steadfastness has helped Vietnam maintain its position and prestige internationally, affirming the image of an

independent, self-reliant, peace-loving nation that always acts in the national interest and for the common progress of humanity.

Secondly, the perspective of independence, creativity, and steadfast pursuit of national independence linked with socialism is not only Ho Chi Minh's timeless political courage but also inherited by the Party, becoming an essential operational principle helping the Party maintain leadership and steer the country correctly in all circumstances. In over 90 years of leading Vietnam's revolution, the Communist Party of Vietnam has consistently demonstrated independence and creativity. The Party does not mechanically copy any foreign model but continuously renovates thinking and leadership methods, flexibly applying policies to suit actual conditions. A notable example is the comprehensive renovation policy initiated in 1986, where the Party proactively shifted toward a socialist-oriented market economy, harmonizing economic development with social welfare while maintaining national independence. The socialist-oriented market economy was recognized as a comprehensive economic model and considered a creative breakthrough theoretically, synthesizing Vietnam's practical experience and selectively learning from the world.

The 13th Party Congress documents define a socialist-oriented market economy as: "a modern market economy, internationally integrated, operating fully and synchronously according to market rules, under the management of a socialist rule-of-law state led by the Communist Party of Vietnam, ensuring a socialist orientation for the goal of 'prosperous people, strong nation, democracy, justice, and civilization,' suitable to each development stage of the country." The fundamental essence of Vietnam's socialist-oriented market economy is a modern, internationally integrated market economy, fully and synchronously operating according to market rules, managed by a socialist rule-of-law state under the Party's leadership. The goal is to rapidly develop productive forces, advance the economy to build the material and technical foundation for socialism, and improve people's living standards. The socialist orientation of the market economy is expressed through state management via law, strategy, planning, policies under the Party's leadership; distribution based on labor results, economic efficiency, and contributions to production, combined with social welfare and protection.

Furthermore, in foreign policy—balancing independence, autonomy, and international integration—the Party consistently maintains a multilateral and diversified approach, avoiding dependence while resolutely defending national sovereignty. The 13th Party Congress reaffirmed: "Actively and proactively integrate internationally, properly managing the relationship between independence, autonomy, and integration; promote comprehensive, deep, flexible, and effective international integration for national interests, ensuring independence, autonomy, and national sovereignty."

The Party consistently pursues the goal of linking national independence with socialism. The vision of a new society is increasingly defined: "prosperous people, strong nation, democracy, justice, civilization; people as masters; highly developed economy based on modern productive forces and progressive production relations; advanced culture with rich national identity; people enjoying adequate, free, and happy

lives with conditions for comprehensive development; equality and solidarity among ethnic groups; a socialist rule-of-law state of the people, by the people, and for the people, led by the Communist Party; maintaining friendly and cooperative international relations." Today, as the country enters industrialization, modernization, and deep global integration, the perspective of linking national independence with socialism remains a guiding principle for all actions. It reminds us that independence must go hand in hand with sustainable development, freedom must accompany justice, and national development cannot be separated from the well-being of every citizen. Vietnam has achieved remarkable socio-economic accomplishments: GDP per capita rose from under \$100 (1986) to nearly \$4,700 (2024), lifting the country to middle-income status; poverty reduced from over 70% (1993) to under 5% (2024); life expectancy, school attendance, and vaccination rates are among the highest in the region. The Party and State formulate policies for economic development oriented toward social progress and justice, international integration, and economic growth without sacrificing independence and sovereignty. Upholding this stance not only preserves revolutionary achievements but also realizes the aspiration of building a strong, prosperous, democratic, just, and civilized Vietnam. In all circumstances, Ho Chi Minh's lesson remains a guiding light: only by linking national independence with socialism can development be sustainable, and the people truly become masters of the country.

Inheriting Ho Chi Minh's political courage and the spirit of previous Congresses regarding independence, autonomy, and creativity, the 13th Party Congress documents emphasize continuous innovation and creativity in thinking and leadership methods, avoiding dogmatism and mechanical replication.

Thirdly, deeply internalizing Ho Chi Minh's political courage in admitting and correcting mistakes, the Party continually renews itself, overcomes difficulties, and leads the country to success. In today's context of comprehensive national renovation, maintaining honesty, courage for self-criticism, admitting mistakes, and correcting them is particularly significant. The 13th Party Congress emphasized: "Continue resolutely and persistently implementing Central Resolution 4 on Party building and rectification, linked with promoting study and following Ho Chi Minh's thought, morality, and style; emphasizing leading by example, self-examination, and courage to acknowledge and correct mistakes." This shows that the Party not only speaks of ethics theoretically but also concretizes it in practice, especially in internal criticism and self-criticism. By confronting shortcomings and committing to correction, the Party preserves credibility, consolidates public trust, and continually improves leadership capacity and combat strength.

In recent years, numerous violations by officials, including high-ranking ones, have been strictly handled, with some removed from office, expelled from the Party, or prosecuted. This demonstrates the Party's political determination to enforce accountability without exceptions. Simultaneously, many cadres have proactively acknowledged shortcomings and seriously reviewed themselves before the organization, reflecting positive changes in awareness and behavior. Acknowledging mistakes does not diminish authority; rather, it demonstrates political courage, responsibility, and ethical

integrity of genuine leaders. Only when individuals dare to admit and correct mistakes can the Party genuinely remain clean, strong, and capable of leading the country in new circumstances.

The value of Ho Chi Minh's political courage is reflected in the scope of his thought, ethics, and style. This courage was a tremendous spiritual strength, enabling him and the Vietnamese nation to overcome challenges and achieve independence and freedom. Its value remains intact today, serving as a foundation for the Communist Party of Vietnam to inherit and apply in leading the revolution. Political courage is essential for ensuring that each cadre has correct political orientation, steadfastly pursues national independence and socialism, adheres to Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh's thought, remains loyal to the interests of the Fatherland and people, possesses determination, and overcomes all difficulties and pressures to fulfill their duties.

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