

## **THE SPECIFIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SOCIALIST MODEL IN VIETNAM TODAY**

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### **ABSTRACT**

During the transitional period toward socialism in Vietnam, the country has achieved significant and historically meaningful accomplishments across multiple sectors. By applying the specific characteristics of the Vietnamese socialist model, these achievements have been reflected in various domains, including political stability and expanded economic growth; the safeguarding and promotion of the people's mastery; the balance between economic development and social equity; the harmony between growth and sustainable development; the preservation of the socialist nature of the market economy; and the capacity to seize opportunities and address challenges during the process of global economic integration. These successes have further strengthened the confidence and determination of the entire Party and people in the cause of advancing toward socialism.

**Keywords:** Particularity, Socialism, Vietnam.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

At present, the great revolutionary cause poses extremely important tasks for socialist countries around the world, requiring each nation to be flexible in the process of reform and renewal in order to achieve comprehensive development in all fields. To this end, Communist Parties must continue to vigorously innovate their thinking, creatively apply Marxism–Leninism to national realities, and engage in theoretical exchanges with one another to enrich and advance the understanding of the socialist model. In particular, it is essential to firmly grasp the lesson of recognizing the specific conditions of each country and each nation in conceptualizing and building socialism. This approach enables the full mobilization of the people's strength in combination with the Party's leadership wisdom, thereby ensuring steady progress on the path toward socialism.

For Vietnam, the nation is currently presented with historic opportunities while simultaneously confronting numerous difficulties and challenges. To fulfill the revolutionary tasks of the current period—both in theory and in practice—it is imperative to creatively apply and further develop Marxism–Leninism and Ho Chi Minh Thought in accordance with the country's distinctive conditions, aiming to build a Vietnam that is “prosperous, strong, democratic, equitable, and civilized.”

### **2. CONTENT**

#### **2.1. General Theoretical Perspectives on the Socialist Model**

##### **2.1.1. The Concept of Socialism**

Socialism is a concept that emerged prior to the advent of Marxism. According to A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles (Oxford, 1888), the term “socialism” was first introduced in human history by Pierre Leroux (1797–1871) in 1832 on the Le Globe newspaper. Socialism is a broad concept encompassing various meanings, addressed by numerous scholars and scientific works. However, depending on the analytical approach, different viewpoints on socialism may be formulated.

There are several fundamental approaches: According to the Vietnamese Dictionary edited by Hoàng Phê, socialism is understood as the initial and lower stage of communism, as defined by Marxism. The Scientific Communism Dictionary defines socialism as a social system that will inevitably replace capitalism—a system primarily characterized by public ownership of the means of production, the absence of exploitation of humans by humans, and identified as the first stage of the communist socio-economic formation [4, p. 400]. From these approaches, socialism can be understood as the initial stage of the communist socio-economic formation, a social system replacing capitalism, characterized by predominant public ownership of the means of production, reflecting the ideal of liberating the working masses from oppression, exploitation, and injustice, and constituting a science on the historic global mission of the working class.

According to the Vietnamese Encyclopedia (1995), socialism is understood in two senses: first, as an ideological current and political doctrine [3, p. 517], which has developed through two levels—utopian socialism and scientific socialism; second, as a real social system—an actually existing socialist society established in practice, emerging after the victory of the October Revolution of 1917 in Russia and subsequently developing into a global system.

Thus, from various perspectives on socialism, when referring to the particularities of the socialist model in Vietnam, the concept is mainly employed in two senses: first, socialism as an ideological current, a body of theoretical thought; and second, socialism as a desirable and progressive social system.

### 2.1.2. Creative Theoretical Contributions of Ho Chi Minh Thought and the Communist Party of Vietnam Regarding the Socialist Model in Vietnam

By applying the fundamental principles of Marxism–Leninism on the dialectical unity of theory and practice, President Ho Chi Minh developed sound and innovative viewpoints on socialism, appropriately adapted to Vietnam’s concrete conditions. The classical authors of Marxism–Leninism set forth the core characteristics of socialism’s ultimate objectives. President Ho Chi Minh also articulated his own views on the defining features of socialism, but his approach was expressed in a clear and accessible manner while remaining firmly grounded in the fundamental principles of Marxism–Leninism. This is evident in several key aspects:

- **Socialism as a system ensuring prosperity for all, national strength, and equal employment opportunities**—where all people enjoy a secure and happy life, with continuous improvement in both material and spiritual well-being. Ho Chi Minh wrote: “Building socialism is transforming the entire society and nature itself, creating a society in which there is no exploitation of humans by humans, no hunger or cold, and where all people enjoy warmth, abundance, and happiness” [5, pp. 221].
- **Socialism as inseparable from advanced science, technology, and culture**, built by the people themselves under the leadership of the Party. Ho Chi Minh stated that socialism is “a society that progresses day by day, with ever-increasing material wealth and spiritual well-being” [6, pp. 438]. Building socialism is a “titanic struggle” against all outdated and degenerate elements, aimed at creating the new and the beautiful [7, pp. 617]. Only upon

the complete success of socialism and communism can the cause of human liberation be considered fully accomplished.

- **Socialism as a political system in which power belongs to the people**, where the people play the most decisive role, and officials serve the community. In socialism, all authority and all strength rest with the people.

From these characteristics, it can be seen that Ho Chi Minh's thinking on socialism was creative not only in defining the general objectives but also in formulating concrete goals and tasks for the immediate future, reflecting the needs and aspirations of the people. A key part of this creativity lay in his clear distinction between socialism and individualism, positioning socialist ideology in direct opposition to individualist ideology. Ho Chi Minh stressed that, to succeed in building socialism, individualism must be eradicated. He regarded individualism as a "malicious" and "dangerous" adversary of socialism, whose elimination was a long-term and arduous task. Some scholars have argued that this point in Ho Chi Minh's thought "constitutes a novel and creative addition to the political-ethical approach to socialism" [2, pp. 213].

Applying the Marxist–Leninist viewpoint on the necessity of establishing a Communist Party to lead the socialist revolution, Ho Chi Minh founded the Communist Party in Vietnam. In the context of the Vietnamese revolution, he developed new and creative understandings of the Party, situating its formation within the country's specific historical conditions. Ho Chi Minh held that, given Vietnam's socio-economic and political circumstances—different from those of Western countries—the Vietnamese revolutionary path must proceed from a national democratic revolution to a socialist revolution. In Vietnam, the patriotic movement for national liberation was broad and vigorous, while the working class had only just emerged. Therefore, the formation of the Communist Party could not rely solely on the workers' movement but had to be based on both the workers' movement and the patriotic movement.

Summarizing the particular law governing the Party's formation, in his work *Thirty Years of Activity of the Party*, Ho Chi Minh wrote: "The combination of Marxism–Leninism with the workers' movement and the patriotic movement led to the establishment of the Indochinese Communist Party in early 1930." This was indeed a distinctive innovation of Ho Chi Minh, who recognized and applied the specific law to establish a Communist Party in Vietnam that met the practical demands of the Vietnamese revolution.

Regarding the essence of the Communist Party, the Marxist–Leninist classics affirm that it is the party of the proletariat, fighting for the interests of the proletariat and serving as its vanguard. Applying this principle to Vietnam's specific conditions, Ho Chi Minh asserted that the Communist Party of Vietnam is not only the party of the working class but also the party of the entire nation.

## **2.2. The Significance of Studying the Specific Characteristics of the Socialist Model in Vietnam Today**

Over more than 38 years of national renewal, by flexibly applying the specific characteristics of the socialist model, Vietnam has achieved significant accomplishments.

### **Achievements in the Political Sphere**

In recent years, the process of building and consolidating the core values of Vietnam's political system has yielded many important achievements of strategic significance for the stability and sustainable development of the country. These successes can be clearly identified in two fundamental aspects: (1) strengthening the leadership role of the Communist Party of Vietnam, and

(2) building a clean, strong, and comprehensive political system, especially in the areas of anti-corruption and perfecting the socialist rule-of-law state.

### **First, strengthening the leadership role of the Party – a pivotal foundation.**

Affirming and consolidating the leadership role of the Communist Party of Vietnam has been one of the key tasks, serving as the cornerstone to ensure political orientation, maintain social stability, promote socio-economic development, and firmly safeguard national sovereignty. Throughout the process of renovation and international integration, the Party has consistently served as the “locomotive,” providing strategic direction and organizing the implementation of the country’s major political tasks.

The documents of the 11th, 12th, and 13th National Congresses have consistently affirmed that the leadership role of the Party is the decisive factor in the success of the renovation cause. This is not only a political principle but also the outcome of more than 90 years of revolutionary leadership. In the context of globalization, international economic integration, and unpredictable global changes, strengthening the Party’s leadership role has become even more essential to orient sustainable national development, while preserving the identity and values of socialism.

### **Second, building a clean, strong, and comprehensive political system.**

Alongside enhancing the Party’s leadership role, building a clean and strong political system is a key mission. This includes improving organizational structure, increasing the efficiency of state governance, and ensuring the integrity of the cadre contingent. In recent years, the Party and State have resolutely directed the anti-corruption campaign, considering it an “unyielding battle” aimed at purifying the apparatus and consolidating public trust in the Party and the regime.

The perfection of the socialist rule-of-law state has also been placed at the center of the renovation process. This is a state model that governs society by law, ensuring that state power belongs to the people, is exercised by the people, and serves the people. This process not only requires legal reform but also demands improvements in the competence, ethics, and responsibility of state officials and civil servants.

### **Achievements in the Economic Sphere**

Vietnam has maintained a high rate of economic growth throughout the reform process (*Đổi mới*), resulting in significant changes to the nation’s appearance, an expansion of economic potential and scale, and continuous improvements in people’s living standards. At the outset of *Đổi mới* (1986–1990), Vietnam’s GDP grew at an average annual rate of 4.4%. Nearly two decades later, the country had achieved remarkable growth: during 1996–2000, despite the impacts of the Asian financial crisis and successive severe natural disasters, Vietnam maintained an average GDP growth rate of 7% per year; in 2001–2005, GDP grew on average 7.34% per year; in 2006–2010, amidst the global economic downturn, the country still recorded an average annual GDP growth of 6.32%; and in 2011–2015, GDP grew at an estimated annual average of 5.9% [9].

From 2016–2020, average GDP growth remained around 6% per year (in 2020 alone, GDP growth reached 2.91%, among the highest rates in the world). Both the scale of the economy and per capita income increased (in 2020, GDP reached USD 271.2 billion, with per capita income at USD 2,779). Growth quality improved, with labor productivity rising from 4.3% per year in 2011–2015 to around 6% per year in 2016–2020. The increase in per capita GDP enabled Vietnam to move from the category of least developed countries to that of middle-income countries [9].

According to the General Statistics Office (GSO) on January 6, 2025, Vietnam's GDP at current prices in 2024 was estimated at VND 11,511.9 trillion (USD 476.3 billion). GDP per capita at current prices was approximately VND 114 million (USD 4,700), an increase of USD 377 compared to 2023. National labor productivity in 2024 at current prices was estimated at VND 221.9 million per worker (USD 9,182 per worker), up USD 726 from 2023; in constant prices, productivity increased by 5.88% due to improvements in workforce qualifications (with the proportion of trained workers holding certificates or diplomas reaching 28.3%, up 1.1 percentage points from 2023) [9].

### **Achievements in the Socio-Cultural Sphere**

Over 38 years of Doi Moi, Vietnam has consistently pursued a balanced and coherent approach to economic development and socio-cultural advancement, ensuring progress and social equity in every policy and stage, and harmonizing the material and spiritual lives of the people. The country's achievements in cultural and social development have been significant and widely recognized both domestically and internationally.

In education and training, Vietnam has made notable progress over three decades of reform, with improvements in scale, quantity, and quality. As of the end of 2024, the national labor force aged 15 and above in Q4/2024 was estimated at 53.2 million, an increase of 390,100 people from the previous quarter and 625,300 from the same period last year. The labor force participation rate in Q4/2024 was 69.0%, up 0.4 percentage points from Q3 and 0.1 percentage points year-on-year. For 2024 as a whole, the labor force reached 53.0 million, up 575,400 from 2023, with a participation rate of 68.9%. The proportion of trained workers holding certificates or diplomas in 2024 was 28.3%, up 1.1 percentage points [9].

In Q4/2024, employed persons numbered 52.1 million, an increase of 414,900 from the previous quarter and 639,100 year-on-year. For the full year 2024, total employment stood at 51.9 million, up 585,100 (1.1%) from 2023. Underemployment among working-age individuals in Q4/2024 was 764,600, down 98,800 from Q3 and 142,000 from Q4/2023, with an underemployment rate of 1.65%. Over the full year, underemployment fell to 1.84%, down 0.18 percentage points; in urban areas it was 1.28% (down 0.32 percentage points) and in rural areas 2.20% (down 0.07 percentage points) [9].

Public health services have also seen notable progress. A nationwide network of healthcare facilities has been established, with increases in the number of doctors and hospital beds per 10,000 inhabitants. The quality of medical services has improved. In 2015, the average life expectancy was 73.3 years (70.7 for men and 76.1 for women). Over the past 30 years, the Party and State have pursued sustainable poverty reduction policies in tandem with encouraging lawful wealth creation. In 2024, average per capita income at current prices was approximately VND 5.4 million per month, up 8.8% from 2023. The preliminary minimum standard of living in 2024 was around VND 1.8 million per person per month (VND 2.3 million in urban areas and VND 1.7 million in rural areas). The multidimensional poverty rate in 2024 (under the 2022–2025 standard) was estimated at 2.4%, down 1 percentage point from 2023 — a success recognized by the United Nations and the international community [9].

With respect to preferential policies for persons with meritorious service, as of December 28, 2024, total support for such individuals and their families amounted to nearly VND 33.9 trillion; support for social protection beneficiaries under Decree No. 20/2021/NĐ-CP totaled VND 27.3 trillion; support for poor and near-poor households and other disadvantaged households outside the scope of Decree 20/2021/NĐ-CP exceeded VND 4.9 trillion; and emergency aid for local



contingencies surpassed VND 3.8 trillion. More than 26.7 million free health insurance cards or equivalent documents were issued to eligible beneficiaries [9].

In education, the 2024–2025 academic year was designated with the theme “Innovation and Creativity, Quality Enhancement, Discipline and Solidarity,” focusing on key priorities such as institutional improvement, ensuring equity in education access (particularly for ethnic minorities, people in mountainous and socio-economically disadvantaged areas, coastal and island regions, orphans, homeless children, persons with disabilities, and those from poor or near-poor households), improving preschool, general, and continuing education, and strengthening teacher and education manager quality and quantity. The sector also sought to mobilize resources for education and expand international integration.

Preliminary data from the Ministry of Education and Training show that in the 2024–2025 academic year, there were 15,204 preschools nationwide (up 48 from the previous year) and 25,783 general education institutions (down 76 due to consolidation). The number of preschool teachers was 373,400 (up 8,200), while general education teachers numbered 819,400 (up 22,700). Preschool enrollment reached nearly 4.8 million children (down 7.9% from 2023–2024), while general education enrollment exceeded 18.5 million students (up 1.3%), including 8.7 million primary students (down 1.2%), 6.7 million lower-secondary students (up 3.0%), and more than 3.1 million upper-secondary students (up 5.0%) [9].

### 3. CONCLUSION

The achievements Vietnam has attained over 38 years of Đổi mới are immense and of historic significance, demonstrating the creative application of the country’s specific conditions to socialist theory and affirming that the reform path pursued has been correct. This has strengthened the Party’s and the people’s confidence in the path toward socialism.

Studying the characteristics of the socialist model in Vietnam not only reinforces our commitment to the goal of national independence linked to socialism, but also upholds the ideological stance of Ho Chi Minh Thought and Marxism–Leninism, in combination with domestic and global revolutionary practice, and steadfastly implements the comprehensive reform strategy. These achievements represent only an important initial step; numerous difficulties and challenges lie ahead. Therefore, building socialism requires learning from practice under the guidance of Marxism–Leninism and Ho Chi Minh Thought while incorporating new experiences. This process not only supplements and develops the Marxist–Leninist theory of society but also breathes new vitality into socialism.

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