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## The Core Values of Vietnamese Political Culture<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract.** The present paper covers the socio-historical backdrop of the influence of basic political orientations, patriotism, national unity, human politics, and foreign politics on Vietnam's political culture throughout its history, extending right to the present. A historical and analytical view examines theoretical frameworks and real-life examples of these values influencing political behaviour. Evidence has shown that these values produced national unity, led to the making of policies, and structured Vietnam's diplomatic approach, which assisted in Vietnamese independence and social-political stability.

**Keywords:** political culture, Vietnam, patriotism, national solidarity, human politics, foreign policy.

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## Основные ценности вьетнамской политической культуры<sup>2</sup>

**Аннотация.** В данной статье рассматриваются социально-исторические предпосылки влияния базовых политических ориентаций, патриотизма, национального единства, заботы о человеке и внешних установок на политическую культуру Вьетнама на протяжении всей его истории вплоть до настоящего времени. Исторический и аналитический подход позволяет изучить теоретические основы и реальные примеры влияния этих ценностей на политическое поведение. Показано, как данные ценности способствовали укреплению национального единства, формированию государственной политики и структуры внешнеполитического курса Вьетнама, что обеспечило его независимость и её социально-политическую стабильность.

**Ключевые слова:** политическая культура, Вьетнам, патриотизм, национальная солидарность, забота о человеке, внешняя политика.

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## Introduction

The political culture of Vietnam has evolved throughout a rather complex political history, which has shaped and been shaped in the form of actors' behaviors and attitudes. Founded on the socio-political context of Vietnam, historical struggles for independence, and traditional cultural values, the political culture has consistently guided political behavior across authority through generations.

The core values of patriotism, national unity, humanistic policy, and foreign politics have continued to facilitate political strategies and decisions from historical times. Evolving from its birth around Confucianism, Buddhism, and an agrarian lifestyle, the political culture in Vietnam has carried a remarkable capacity to adapt itself to foreign invasions, colonialism, and revolutions. That abnegation is mirrored in the values of nationalism and patriotism, which united the Vietnamese during their persistent resistance against colonial and imperial powers.

These enduring values remain central to Vietnam's modernization and global economic integration. The ideals of patriotism drive policies on sovereignty and independence; national unity acts as good glue during crises or natural calamities; humane politics puts people first. The priority here is directed to social welfare, health, and education to better the rest of life. Conversely, foreign policy is grounded on independence. Their stance of multilateralism and constructive diplomacy defines Vietnam as the character aiming to approach people and civilizations, striking a hair-raising balance between national interests and global cooperation.

However, these political-cultural values have yet to be analyzed in a comprehensive, scholarly format. Hence, this study aims to fill that gap by following the continuities and changes of these values and how they have affected governance. The research seeks to answer the following main questions: What are the core values of the Vietnamese political culture? How have these values kindled changes in political actors' behavior during historical epochs? What are these values' roles in Vietnam's political and socio-economic development? Through these questions, the research aims to provide greater insight into the historical and contemporary relevance of these core values in shaping Vietnamese political culture.

## Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach combining literature review and content analysis to examine the interplay between political culture, core values, and political behaviour in Vietnam. Drawing on relevant academic theories and official documents, the research identifies key conceptual frameworks and findings illuminating how cultural values have shaped political conduct across historical periods.

The selected literature provides theoretical grounding and contextual depth, enabling the study to trace enduring patterns in Vietnam's political culture and assess their implications for contemporary governance and modernization. This approach ensures analytical coherence while situating the research within broader scholarly discourse.

## **Theoretical and conceptual foundations**

### *Values*

In social sciences, values are the general acceptance of principles that individuals and groups hold sacred and which, in some way, guide their actions and judgments. Values represent a crucial part of behavior; they help determine social norms and provide the framework to interpret things as good or bad, desirable or not, worth doing or worth not doing.

Clyde Kluckhohn defines values as “conceptions of the desirable which guide the actions and behavior of individuals and groups” [Kluckhohn 1951]. This definition works better regarding the normative side of the concept of values, which acts as a factor in shaping behavior and social norms. Bolstering this argument, Milton Rokeach also refines values to mean “enduring beliefs that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite mode of conduct or end-state” [Rokeach 1973].

Theories about how values determine behavior have evolved over the years. Shalom Schwartz's Theory of Basic Human Values identifies ten universally recognizable values: power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity, and security — each representing distinct motivational goals [Schwartz 1992]. Schwartz's model shows how values can be coherently organized and interactively nested with others of their kind.

Values are beyond individual beliefs and have socio-culturally grounded meanings. Emile Durkheim emphatically stresses their societal origin in that values derive from a collective conscience that furthers social cohesion and regulates behavior within the community [Durkheim 1893]. Similarly, Talcott Parsons refers to values as central to social integration, as they shape the operations of social systems and guide the phenomenon of socialization through families, schools, and institutions [Parsons 1951]. In this transmission process, values bring continuity to customs and practices handed down across generations. Values influence political behavior and attitudes. As societies achieve economic security, Ronald Inglehart's theory of post-materialism asserts that citizens shift their focus from materialist values (economic and physical security) to post-materialist values (self-expression and quality of life). This transition has powerful political behavioral consequences in that it tends to engender greater political participation, environmental awareness, and support for democratic institutions [Inglehart 1977].

### *Cultural value*

As a subset of social values, cultural values fundamentally shape individual and collective behavior by providing interpretive frameworks for societal engagement and

behavioral regulation. Edward Tylor defines cultural values as a “complex whole” encompassing knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and habits acquired as members of society [Tylor 1871]. This complexity underscores their pervasive influence on social order and cohesion. Clyde Kluckhohn and Fred Strodtbeck emphasize that cultural values enable coordinated societal interactions and coherence [Kluckhohn, Strodtbeck 1961].

Vietnam’s cultural values, shaped by its agricultural civilization, Confucian traditions, and historical experiences, reflect a deep connection to collective historical memory. Citing the scholarship of Song Thanh, cultural values in Vietnam are derived from shared historical experiences, which include patriotism, national solidarity, respect for learning, and communal orientation [Song Thành 2010: 86]. These values underpin not only societal behaviors but also national policies. For instance, rural healthcare reforms and poverty reduction programs highlight the cultural tradition of collective responsibility. Lam Quoc Tuan underscores the role of collectivism and community solidarity in sustaining Vietnam’s social stability and resistance to foreign invasions [Lâm Quốc Tuấn 2006].

Geert Hofstede’s cultural dimensions theory offers a comparative framework for analyzing cultural values across societies. Dimensions such as Power Distance, Collectivism versus Individualism, and Long-term Orientation provide insights into how cultural values influence societal and organizational practices [Hofstede 1980]. These frameworks help contextualize Vietnam’s governance structures and decision-making processes, where respect for authority and collective consensus remain integral.

Cultural values also inspire social integration and collective action. The value of national solidarity, forged during Vietnam’s struggles for independence, fosters unity and resilience against external challenges. Moreover, these values guide institutional practices and governance, ensuring policies resonate with public expectations and cultural legitimacy. Despite the significant emphasis on Vietnam’s historical struggles and cultural foundations, there remains a gap in exploring how enduring values — such as patriotism, national unity, humanistic politics, and foreign relations — adapt to contemporary governance challenges and global dynamics. This study builds upon existing literature to assess these adaptations and their implications for effective governance.

Likewise, modern scholarship by Russian scholars marks the importance of traditional elements and historical influences relating to contemporary Vietnamese political culture. Ivan Kalmykov observed that Vietnam has a significant base of traditional values. In a traditional context, elements of family, community, familial obligations, and respect for authority can be seen in a position of central importance [Kalmykov 2024]. This corresponds with the values of patriotism and national solidarity mentioned previously in this paper.

### *Political culture*

As a subset of social values, cultural values shape individual and collective behavior by providing frameworks for societal engagement and regulation. Tylor defines cultural values as a “complex whole” that includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, customs, and habits acquired within society [Tylor 1871]. These values are foundational for social

cohesion and coordinated societal interactions, as emphasized by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck [Kluckhohn, Strodtbeck 1961].

In Vietnam, cultural values are deeply rooted in its agricultural civilization, Confucian traditions, and historical experiences. Song Thanh describes these values as deriving from shared historical memory, encompassing patriotism, national solidarity, respect for learning, and community orientation [Song Thành 2010: 86]. Such values influence both societal behaviors and national policies, evident in healthcare reforms and rural poverty reduction programs that reflect the tradition of collective responsibility. Lam Quoc Tuan further underscores that collectivism and community solidarity have been critical to Vietnam's stability and resistance against foreign invasions [Lâm Quốc Tuấn 2006].

The enduring influence of Vietnam's cultural values, particularly national solidarity, fosters unity and resilience in addressing external challenges. Despite this emphasis, a need remains to explore how these traditional values—patriotism, national unity, humanistic politics, and foreign relations—adapt to contemporary governance challenges and global dynamics. This study builds on existing literature to assess these adaptations and their implications for effective governance.

However, contemporary governance challenges, most notably systemic corruption pose significant tensions within the normative structure of Vietnam's political culture. As Russian experts Evgeny Kobelev and Vladimir Mazyrin (2021) argue, corruption undermines the legitimacy of the socialist system and weakens public trust in the Communist Party of Vietnam. Despite substantial institutional reforms, including the prosecution of high-ranking officials and the strengthening of legal frameworks, corruption remains a persistent challenge [Kobelev, Mazyrin 2021]. This paradox highlights a deeper theoretical tension between culturally rooted ideals of moral leadership and the empirical realities of institutional dysfunction.

Therefore, this study adopts the perspective of political culture as both an analytical lens and a normative benchmark to assess how Vietnam's traditional values, such as patriotism, collective solidarity, and moral governance are being reinterpreted and recontextualized in response to global integration and internal political pressures.

#### *Political actors' behavior*

The behavior of political actors is profoundly shaped by a society's values and cultural norms, which are reflected in five interconnected elements: political knowledge, ideals, values, beliefs, and capacities. These elements collectively guide political decision-making and action, ensuring alignment with societal expectations and norms.

Political knowledge is understanding political life gained through education and active participation. It enables political actors to navigate complex systems and make informed decisions. Vladimir Lenin underscored this importance, stating that "The illiterate is the person standing outside politics" [Lenin 2005: 218], highlighting the critical role of education in fostering effective political participation.

Political ideals represent the noble objectives that political actors strive to achieve. Rooted in sound knowledge, these ideals act as a moral and strategic compass, fostering pragmatic and aspirational goals that guide political behavior and decision-making.

Political values are enduring principles widely accepted within a community. These values, whether inherited from tradition or shaped by political practice, provide a stable framework for ethical decision-making, influencing political actors to prioritize actions within defined moral boundaries.

Political beliefs underpin a cohesive political culture. In Vietnam, these beliefs foster mutual respect and adherence to shared standards, enabling political actors to bridge differences and achieve unity. This foundation strengthens political stability and collective action within the community.

Political capacity, encompassing theoretical and practical dimensions, is essential for effective political behavior. Theoretical capacity offers a scientific basis for understanding systems, while practical capacity facilitates the application of knowledge to real-world contexts. Together, these dimensions empower political actors to adapt and address evolving challenges.

These elements interact to shape the behavior of political actors. Knowledge informs ideals, while values and beliefs provide stability and unity. Political capacity ensures that these principles are effectively implemented. By integrating these dimensions, political actors contribute to a resilient and adaptive political system that aligns with societal values and norms.

As Kalmykov [2024] clarifies, the political elites in Vietnam typically find their behaviour shaped not just by institutional restraints, but informal mechanisms formed through traditional socio-political culture, prioritizing seniority, collective harmony and avoiding confrontation. Patterns of inclusion which derive from village autonomy/self-governance and from Confucian ethical orientations embody an embedded cultural logic that draws on and connects to formal institutions, and assists in imbedding legitimacy and adjusting to problem-solving adaptive behaviour.

## **Core values shaping Vietnamese political culture**

The study underscores the pivotal role of Vietnam's core values — patriotism, national solidarity, human politics, and foreign politics — in shaping political actors' behavior and the broader political culture. These values form the foundation of Vietnam's governance, guiding decision-making across historical and contemporary contexts. Building on Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba's seminal work on political culture [Almond, Verba 1963], the research highlights the enduring relevance of these values in navigating post-colonial and transitional challenges. This analysis enriches the understanding of political culture in developing societies, emphasizing the adaptability and continuity of foundational principles in governance.

### *Patriotism and its impact on political behavior*

Perhaps patriotism is the most entrenched and eternal feature of Vietnamese political culture. Patriotism is intertwined with the identity and fervour of Vietnam's citizenry and has ongoing implications for the behaviour and decision-making of political actors. The long history of Vietnam's defence of sovereignty from foreign bodies has fueled Vietnamese nationalism and arguably instilled in all Vietnamese national solid pride, contributing to a formative identity. The famous phrase of Ho Chi

Minh, “Nothing is more precious than independence and freedom” [Hồ Chí Minh 2011: 131], captures the spirit of patriotism that has mobilized and unified Vietnamese for centuries.

Interestingly, the deep roots of Vietnamese patriotism can be traced not only through historical conflicts but also within the cultural foundation of the family unit. When mentioning the roots of Vietnamese patriotism — the main driving force behind all liberation movements and the essence of Vietnamese history, Russian scholar Evgenia Marchenko suggests that it can be traced back to the family unit [Marchenko 2011]. This familial foundation created a sense of inherited responsibility and devotion to national well-being, which has, over generations, shaped political behaviour at both elite and grassroots levels.

It comes as little surprise that during some of the most significant events in the nation's history, such as the Indochina Wars, patriotism was one of the most significant mobilizing forces that prompted Vietnam's resistance against French and American colonialist forces. Political actors like Ho Chi Minh and military leaders like General Vo Nguyen Giap came to characterize the spirit of patriotic sentiment — calling the army and civilian population to sacrifice in the name of the national liberation struggle. Ho Chi Minh affirmed, “Our people have a deep patriotism. It's one of our precious traditions. Every time the Vietnamese country was invaded from the past, the spirit was excited” [Hồ Chí Minh 2011: 38].

Perhaps the most conspicuous example of the effect of patriotism on political behaviour can be found throughout the resistance movement against foreign invasions in Vietnam. These events prominently illustrate the patriotic zeal not only mobilized the military but also civilians during the Battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954 and the unification of Vietnam in 1975 under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh and General Vo Nguyen Giap. Outstandingly, within the contexts, the leaders tapped into national pride, urging against fighting for national independence and encouraging people to unify and sacrifice their lives for independence. It ends up being a belaboured presentation on how the basic value of patriotism has played in history to frame political actions and decisions toward preserving national independence. This example demonstrates how the core value of patriotism has historically shaped political actions and decisions to safeguard national sovereignty.

In addition to shaping immediate and consequential political decisions, patriotism has been a normative guide in shaping long-term national developmental policy. The government's recent emphasis on self-reliance and sustainability as a motto for national development grew from the ideal of national independence, shaped by a legacy of every Vietnamese citizen once pioneering the economic reforms undertaken in the Doi Moi (Renovation) program in 1986. Doi Moi legislation was the national construct of moving the economy from a centrally planned approach (also referred to as the “state-controlled economy”) to a “Socialist Orientation”. The Doi Moi legislation highlights the sentiment of creating a self-sufficient nation-state that departed from very dependency, which contributes to a great extent to economic growth, poverty reduction, and improving the quality of life for millions of Vietnamese people [Đinh Xuân Dũng 2014].



Furthermore, contemporary expressions of Vietnamese patriotism are closely linked to the nation's long-term aspirations for development and modernisation. Patriotism is not only an emotional attachment to the homeland but also a commitment to realising the country's strategic vision. Specifically, the Resolution sets forth the ambitious goal for Vietnam to become a high-income developed nation by 2045 [Đảng Cộng sản Việt Nam 2021: 327]. In this context, patriotism is no longer confined to symbolic or historical narratives but is redefined as an active civic responsibility, mobilising all societal sectors toward building a strong, prosperous, and globally integrated Vietnam.

The legacy of patriotism in the Vietnamese education and training system shapes our national education system to insist on a curriculum that seeks to document the nation's history through the experiences and sacrifices reflecting past generations' efforts to build an independent nation. Every nation needs republican values in a political system that reflects its educational purposes to instil a learned practice. The education legacy of patriotism was designed to entrench patriotism in our social cognition for generations while simultaneously ensuring the guiding expectation of duty and civic responsibility was instilled in the government's expectation of the curriculum--desiring to shape political attitudes and behaviours in future leaders. Creating a combination of patriotic style education and civic responsibility can contribute to a moral construct inscribed in obligations for the students who fill leadership positions (or aspirations to fill leadership positions of society in the future and most likely provide elected representatives to serve national interests).

The consequence of patriotism extends universally into Vietnam's organization of its inter-nation dealings through diplomacy politics and a sense of prudence on international purposes within defence policies that protect state integrity and sovereignty. For example, Vietnam's participation in regional organizations such as ASEAN and strategic partnerships with major powers reflects an orientation between protecting national interests and enhancing regional stability and development. Evidence of the duality of assertiveness and diplomacy in Vietnam's relations with other states shows that patriotic values will continue to shape the behaviours of political agents and states, reinforcing the connection between past, present, and future patterns of preference and action.

Patriotism remains a core value that strengthens cohesive preferences and shared identity with long-term development objectives and helps direct Vietnam's foreign policy. Ultimately, the influence of patriotism on Vietnamese political culture endures as the most significant influence on a nation's past, present, and future political trajectory. Political actions and policies unite political actors under the guiding principle of developing national independence and prosperity. In turn, patriotism functions as an enduring value and mobilizes collective self-interest.

*National solidarity: Unity as a political value*

National solidarity has long been a cornerstone of Vietnamese political culture, shaping political behavior across eras. Rooted in unity and collective action, it has been fundamental to maintaining social order and resilience in times of uncertainty. From historical epochs to the present, national solidarity has guided political actors in decision-making and action.



Historical events such as the Binh Than and Dien Hong conferences during the Tran Dynasty exemplify the unifying power of national solidarity. In 1282, facing the Mongol threat, Emperor Tran Thanh Tong convened the Binh Than Conference with high-ranking officials and generals to strategize defence. Similarly, the Diên Hong Conference in 1284 united elders and common citizens in support of the royal court's decision to resist invaders. After the eventual victory over the Yuan army, Tran Quoc Tuan, known as Hung Dao dai Vuong, famously declared, “Due to the consensus of king and servant, the harmony between siblings, the contributions of the whole country, the enemy must be arrested” [Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư 2023: 414]. These events underscore how national solidarity has historically fostered unity and resilience, enabling Vietnam to overcome external threats and maintain national cohesion.

Political culture has profoundly shaped Vietnam's political behavior throughout its military and post-war history. During the Vietnam War, national unity was pivotal in mobilizing soldiers and civilians to defend the nation. This cultural value transcended the battlefield, guiding logistics, intelligence gathering, and paramilitary operations and fostering collaboration among diverse ethnic groups under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh and Viet Minh. Beyond wartime, national solidarity became a cornerstone of post-war reconstruction, emphasizing the collective good over individual interests and continuing to influence Vietnam's political identity and behavior.

Today, national solidarity remains a critical strength in governance, particularly during crises such as natural disasters, epidemics, or sovereignty violations. In these moments, Vietnamese people, including public officials and civil servants, set aside differences to unite and overcome challenges. This solidarity ensures practical responses and fosters social trust and cohesion, mitigating the impact of crises and accelerating recovery within communities. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated how national solidarity was put into practice in contemporary governance. The Vietnamese state mobilized almost the entire political system (central and local) and all mass organizations, all civil servants, and all ordinary citizens to take immediate public health action and for public social welfare. One example is the “vaccine diplomacy” approach that relied on Vietnam's international relationships to obtain access to vaccine supplies in the ever-increasing global shortage of vaccines. These orchestrated acts reflected a governance model that was essentially one of collectivist values and moral obligation that exemplifies how traditional political-cultural principles and systems are implemented in policy responses to the crisis situation.

National solidarity is equally vital to Vietnam's socio-economic development. Government programs like the National Target Program for Building New Rural Areas exemplify this value by promoting local involvement in decision-making. By tailoring projects to community needs, these initiatives enhance development outcomes and cultivate a sense of ownership and accountability among participants, strengthening kinship and unity.

On the international stage, national solidarity underpins Vietnam's foreign policy. The country's commitment to regional cooperation, as demonstrated through ASEAN engagement and partnerships with nations like Japan, Russia, and the United States, reflects the principle of solidarity. Through mutual respect and shared interests, Vietnam

fosters regional stability and development while reinforcing its sovereignty and status as a responsible global actor.

In sum, national solidarity is a defining value of Vietnam's political culture, shaping political actors' behavior and governance. It enhances collaboration, social trust, and unity, ensuring political behavior aligns with the collective good. This enduring value, rooted in historical struggles, continues to inform socio-economic policies, diplomatic strategies, and Vietnam's resilience in the face of contemporary challenges. As highlighted by this research, national solidarity is not merely a reactive virtue but a proactive feature of governance and development, influencing domestic and foreign policy directions.

*Human politics: Prioritizing welfare and equity*

Human politics is a foundational value of Vietnamese political culture, emphasizing welfare, social equity, and human rights. Rooted in Vietnam's agrarian past and shaped by Confucian and Buddhist principles, human politics promotes compassion, moral leadership, and governance for the people's benefit. Throughout history, this value has guided political actors in decision-making, shaping domestic and foreign policies.

In Vietnam's dynastic history, rulers like Ly Nhan Tong (1066–1128) and Tran Nhan Tong (1258–1308), prioritized policies that improved the well-being of the people, such as tax reductions during crises and land redistribution to support the peasant class. Ngo Thi Nham, a prominent Nguyen Dynasty advisor, argued that governance should align with socio-economic needs, stating, "The adjustment of the land policy so that the people can be content is the work that has not been stopped since this time" [Ngô Thị Nhâm 2003: 192]. These policies established a tradition of human-centred governance, reflecting the enduring importance of social responsibility and humane politics.

This principle extended even to the treatment of enemies. For example, after defeating the Ming army in the 15th century, Lê Lợi ensured that captured soldiers were provided with food, transport, and safe passage home, exemplifying the Vietnamese commitment to humane values even in conflict. Similarly, Ho Chi Minh's leadership emphasized human politics through reforms such as literacy campaigns, land redistribution, and public health initiatives. Ho Chi Minh famously proclaimed, "The populace is highly astute, enthusiastic, and heroic. Therefore, we must learn from the populace, consult the populace, and understand the populace" [Hồ Chí Minh 2011: 333]. This philosophy underpinned his governance, as evidenced by his humane policies toward prisoners of war. Notably, during the war, French prisoners received allowances of 200 VND per month, surpassing the 150 VND allocated to Vietnamese soldiers; as Ho Chi Minh reasoned, "We can endure hardship, but we need to be more generous towards them" [Lê Văn Hiến 1995: 6–7].

In the modern era, human politics continues to shape Vietnam's governance. The Đổi Mới reforms in 1986 reflected this principle by transitioning from a centrally planned economy to a market-oriented system while focusing on welfare and equity. Programs like the National Target Program on Sustainable Poverty Reduction and healthcare initiatives, including the 2002 national health insurance scheme, exemplify the government's ongoing commitment to improving the lives of vulnerable populations.

Campaigns against infectious diseases, such as malaria and tuberculosis, further highlight the centrality of health security in governance.

Education also reflects the principles of human politics. Investments in schools, teacher training, and scholarships for rural and remote communities ensure equitable access to quality education. These efforts align with Vietnam's vision of human development, reducing regional disparities and fostering socio-economic progress.

Transparency and public participation are now integral to human politics. The 2016 Law on Access to Information ensures citizens' rights to government transparency, while public feedback mechanisms strengthen trust and accountability. These practices underscore Vietnam's commitment to governance that prioritizes the needs and aspirations of its people.

On the global stage, Vietnam's human politics is evident in its peacekeeping missions, humanitarian efforts, and active participation in organizations like the United Nations and ASEAN. These contributions reflect Vietnam's dedication to global peace and cooperation, extending its humanistic values beyond domestic borders.

From pre-dynastic governance to Ho Chi Minh's revolutionary leadership and modern welfare policies, human politics has consistently prioritized the well-being of the people. It reinforces trust between the government and citizens, fostering stability and resilience. In essence, human politics is both a moral guide and a practical framework for governance, ensuring equity and justice while advancing Vietnam's development trajectory.

#### *Foreign politics: Independence, multilateralism, and sincere diplomacy*

Foreign politics in Vietnam are characterized by independence, multilateralism, and sincere diplomacy, guiding political actors in international engagements. Independence is central to maintaining state sovereignty, while sincere engagement fosters trust and collaboration with other nations. These principles have historically underpinned Vietnam's foreign policy, ensuring autonomy and stable international relationships.

From the feudal era to modern times, Vietnam's leaders have prioritized foreign diplomacy. During the Tran Dynasty, for instance, efforts to repel Mongol invasions highlighted the importance of diplomacy in national security. Such pragmatic foreign policies, rooted in resilience, have continued to guide Vietnam's response to external threats.

Independence remains vital, granting Vietnam autonomy in addressing international challenges and safeguarding sovereignty. Multilateralism complements this by fostering strategic partnerships and reducing reliance on any single power. Vietnam has promoted regional stability and economic growth through organizations like ASEAN and APEC while preserving its independence.

Vietnamese diplomats have also established themselves as respected international actors, engaging in peacekeeping missions and humanitarian initiatives. These efforts have bolstered Vietnam's diplomatic reputation and demonstrated its commitment to global peace and security.

Key foreign relations concepts — independence, multilateralism, and sincere diplomacy — shape Vietnam's political behavior. For example, in the South China Sea

disputes, Vietnam has balanced assertive sovereignty with adherence to international law. Sincere dialogue with China highlights Vietnam's strategic use of diplomacy to uphold sovereignty while seeking peaceful resolutions.

Economic diplomacy further illustrates these values. Vietnam's participation in trade agreements like the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership and Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership has attracted foreign investment, reinforced economic security, and reduced dependency on individual trading blocs. This approach has supported poverty alleviation and driven one of Southeast Asia's fastest-growing economies.

Vietnam's active engagement in international organizations like ASEAN and its strategic trade agreements reflect the integration of sovereignty with global cooperation. These efforts have improved living standards and infrastructure while advancing Vietnam's export-led growth strategy. This balance of assertiveness and collaboration showcases the practical benefits of its foreign policy values.

Through sincere diplomacy, Vietnam has enhanced its international standing, contributing to peacekeeping and humanitarian efforts. These activities reinforce Vietnam's responsibility to the global community and demonstrate its alignment with global stability and development principles.

In conclusion, foreign politics remain a core aspect of Vietnam's political culture, rooted in independence, multilateralism, and sincerity. These principles guide Vietnam's foreign policy, ensuring sovereignty, fostering economic opportunities, and establishing the nation as a stable and respected global actor. As Vietnam adapts to domestic and global challenges, these values continue to underpin its resilience and international stature.

## **Conclusion**

This study has examined the core values of Vietnam's political culture — patriotism, national solidarity, human politics, and foreign politics — and their enduring influence on political actions and governance. These values have consistently shaped Vietnam's political structure, decision-making, and practices, bridging historical legacies with contemporary governance.

Patriotism, deeply rooted in Vietnam's struggles for independence, remains a unifying force guiding decisions on sovereignty and territorial disputes. It fosters resilience, unity, and a shared purpose, underpinning governance in historical and modern contexts. Similarly, national solidarity enhances social cohesion and collective action, vital for addressing crises and sustaining socio-economic development. It integrates diverse efforts to ensure national stability and long-term growth.

Human politics, shaped by Vietnam's agricultural traditions and Confucian-Buddhist influences, centres governance on welfare, social equality, and public trust. Education, healthcare, and social welfare policies reflect this value, promoting well-being and human development. Foreign politics, guided by independence, multilateralism, and sincere diplomacy, balances sovereignty with global cooperation, strengthening Vietnam's international standing and regional stability.

This study contributes to Vietnam studies by analyzing how these core values have shaped political behavior from ancient times to the present while offering insights into their evolving role in addressing modern governance challenges. It underscores the continuity of traditional values in transitional societies like Vietnam, demonstrating their impact on policy decisions and political behavior.

For policymakers, the practical implications are clear. Integrating patriotism into education fosters national identity and civic responsibility. Promoting solidarity in development projects strengthens social cohesion. Policies ensuring fair access to healthcare and education embody the principles of human politics. Balancing independence with multilateralism through sincere diplomacy secures sovereignty while contributing to global peace and stability.

Future research should explore how Vietnam's political culture adapts to globalization and digital transformation, including comparative studies with other nations. These inquiries can further elucidate the unique characteristics of Vietnam's political culture and its implications for governance.

In sum, this study highlights the enduring significance of Vietnam's core values as both continuities in times of change and pathways for future development, ensuring the nation's stability and progress amid globalization.

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