

Original Research Article

## The Issue of Religious Unity in Ho Chi Minh's Ideology

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**Abstract:** The ideology of religious solidarity is a crucial aspect of Ho Chi Minh's Ideology of fostering a broad-based national unity. Rooted in Vietnam's practical conditions and an appreciation of religion's humanistic and positive values, President Ho Chi Minh not only advocated and directed the construction of religious solidarity but also exemplified it as a unifying leader. He became a symbolic banner for national unity, including religious leaders and communities. This perspective was demonstrated during the first session of the Government Council of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam on September 3, 1945, when he proposed, "The government should declare: Freedom of belief and solidarity between religious and non-religious people". Building on his innovative ideology, the documents of the XIIIth National Party Congress introduced several updates and enhanced understandings of the Party's stance on religious solidarity, reflecting a more comprehensive and suitable approach to meet the current developmental needs of the nation. By studying and learning about Ho Chi Minh's ideology on religious solidarity, this study recommends ways to continue strengthening the religious solidarity of the Communist Party of Vietnam in the current period.

**Keywords:** Religion, Belief, Ho Chi Minh's Ideology, Religious Solidarity, National Unity.

## INTRODUCTION

President Ho Chi Minh is a genius leader of Vietnam. Throughout his revolutionary career, his ideological legacy is an invaluable asset for the Party and the people. Ho Chi Minh always affirmed the importance of solidarity in the Vietnamese revolutionary cause. He repeatedly emphasized: "Solidarity is our invincible force to overcome difficulties and achieve victory" (Minh, 2011, vol9, p. 177), "Solidarity is strength, the key to success" (Minh, 2011, vol14, p. 186). Therefore, we must always preserve the great solidarity bloc – the universal key that has helped the Communist Party of Vietnam over the past 95 years bring the country through many dangerous rapids to the shore of victory. Among these, his Ideology on religious solidarity and religious harmony stands out as a core and significant component.

Vietnam is a multi-religious country (Giau, 1973&1983; Ngoc, 2002; Hinh 2007; Van, 2019&2020); therefore, the issue of religious solidarity is very important in social life and has a strong impact on the revolutionary process. Solving this issue is not only about solidarity between religious and non-religious people, but also about solidarity within religions, and solidarity between people with different beliefs and religions. In implementing religious solidarity, Ho Chi Minh focused on solidarity between communists and people of different religions. According to him, although the worldviews of communists and people with different beliefs and religions are different, they have common interests in the country and the nation, so they must stand side by side to fight for the common goal of the nation. Furthermore, as revolutionary leaders, communists must be the nucleus to gather, rally, and attract the masses, including religious masses, to participate in the revolution. This ideology plays a vital role in building national unity, fostering revolutionary forces for national liberation, and unification, and advancing toward socialism.

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## PURPOSES AND METHODOLOGIES

### Purposes:

This article systematically and fundamentally presents Ho Chi Minh's ideology on religious solidarity and national unity. It aims to extract theoretical and practical implications for applying his Ideology to the current mission of nation-building and defense.

### Methodologies:

The article approaches the subject from the perspectives of historical philosophy, cultural philosophy, and value philosophy. Specific methods include: the logical and historical unification method, analysis and synthesis, induction and interpretation, abstraction, generalization, and comparison.

### Main Findings:

Firstly, an overview of the significant role and meaning of Ho Chi Minh's ideology on religious solidarity and national unity in nation-building and defense. Secondly, presentation and analysis of the core contents of his ideology on religious solidarity and national unity, including objectives, subjects, content, and methods. Thirdly, identification of the theoretical and practical significance of Ho Chi Minh's ideology on religious solidarity and national unity in Vietnam's revolutionary cause.

## LITERATURE REVIEWS

Ho Chi Minh's Ideology on religious solidarity and national unity reflects profound and consistent ideals of broad national harmony and high aspirations. As such, this subject has drawn considerable attention from scholars both within and outside Vietnam. Research works on Ho Chi Minh's ideology on religious solidarity and national solidarity can be summarized in the following topics:

### Studies on the Historical Context and Theoretical Foundations of Ho Chi Minh's Ideology on Religious Solidarity and National Unity

During their lifetime, Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and V. Lenin discussed many issues about religion to provide scientific arguments to solve the problem of religion in building socialism. Based on the dialectical and historical materialist methodology, the Marxist-Leninist classics approached religion mainly from the perspective of social-ideological forms and political aspects. Accordingly, religion is considered a part of the social-ideological form created by humans, reflecting objective reality in a "mythical" and "illusory" way. Religion is a historical category, existing and developing in a certain period, when humans "reasonably" resolve the relationship between humans and nature, the relationship between humans and humans, religion will "naturally" "disappear". In socialism, the mission of communists in solving the religious problem is to build a "paradise" right in the reality of life to gradually liberate people from the "ghost" of religion.

To study this issue, there have been many research works, the following typical works can be mentioned:: Ho Chi Minh with Vietnamese Buddhism (1945–1969) by Professor Phung Huu Phu (Chief Editor), National Political Publishing House, 1997; Ho Chi Minh's strategy of national solidarity by Professor Phung Huu Phu, Vu Duong Minh, Le Mau Han, and Pham Xanh, National Political Publishing House, 2011; Ho Chi Minh's ideology on religion, Political theory Publishing House, 2020, by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Doan Thi Chin; Religion in the Vietnamese revolution: Theory and Practice, Political theory Publishing House, Hanoi, 2008, by Prof. Dr. Do Quang Hung; Theories on religion and religious policies in Vietnam, Religious Publishing House, Hanoi, 2011, by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nguyen Duc Lu; Vu Hong Van & Nguyen Trong Long with Identify the values of ancestor worship belief in the spiritual life of Vietnamese people (2019), etc.

The above studies have affirmed that religion is a product of human beings, associated with certain historical natural, and social conditions. Therefore, in essence, religion is a social phenomenon reflecting the helplessness and deadlock of human beings before nature and society. To a certain extent, religion plays a positive role in culture and social ethics such as solidarity, goodness, concern for people, etc. Religion is the consolation and spiritual support of the working masses. In terms of worldview, the religious worldview is idealistic, opposite to the ideology and worldview of Marxism-Leninism, science, and revolution. The difference between realistic socialism and the paradise that religions often aim for is that in the religious concept, paradise is not reality but in the other world. Meanwhile, communists advocate and direct people to a civilized society, happiness right in the real world, built by everyone and for everyone.

### Studies on the Core Content of Ho Chi Minh's Ideology on Religious Solidarity and National Unity

Studies on the core content of Ho Chi Minh's ideology on religious solidarity and national unity, with example works like: Ho Chi Minh's Ideology on National Unity by Tran Huy Lieu, National Political Publishing House, 1999; Ho Chi Minh and Religions by Tran Quoc Vuong, National Political Publishing House, 2006; National Unity in Ho Chi Minh's Ideology edited by Phan Dinh Dieu, National Political Publishing House, 2010; Ho Chi Minh: Ideology and Legacy by Le

Huu Lap, National Political Publishing House, 2011; National Unity and Religious Issues in Ho Chi Minh's Ideology by Nguyen The Anh, National Political Publishing House, 2019.

The above studies have confirmed that, according to Ho Chi Minh's ideology: religion is an inseparable part of culture because it is the creation of human beings themselves. This approach has value beyond the times, especially in the context of the relationship between communists and religion being quite heavy due to differences in worldviews. It is also from this approach that Ho Chi Minh has an objective attitude when evaluating the role of religion, especially recognizing the good moral values of religion in the process of building a new society.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Significance and Role of Religious Solidarity in Ho Chi Minh's Ideology**

Vietnam is a multi-religious country, and throughout the struggle for national liberation and development, colonial and imperialist forces often exploited religious issues to undermine the revolution. Their schemes and tactics aimed not only to divide people across regions, between urban and rural areas, and between Kinh and ethnic minorities, but also to sow discord among followers of different religions, between religious and non-religious communities, and even within a single religious community. Therefore, Ho Chi Minh emphasized that religious solidarity is vital for uniting the entire nation and creating collective strength to achieve the goals of national liberation and development. After the country gained independence, in the first meeting of the Provisional Government on September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1945, President Ho Chi Minh declared: "Colonialists and feudalists implemented policies to divide people based on religion to facilitate their rule. I propose that our Government proclaim freedom of belief and unity between religious and non-religious communities".

Religious solidarity is a crucial element of Ho Chi Minh's national solidarity strategy. For Ho Chi Minh, national solidarity, including religious solidarity, was a consistent and fundamental issue of the revolution - not a temporary political tactic. His vision was for long-lasting, voluntary, sincere, and genuine solidarity, based on the principle: "Anyone with talent, virtue, ability, and the will to serve the nation and the people, we unite with them" (Minh, vol. 9, 2011, p. 44). Thus, the goal of solidarity is to gather all patriotic forces and maximize resources to achieve independence for the nation and freedom and happiness for the people. Ho Chi Minh stressed that solidarity is the decisive factor for the success of the revolution.

In a multi-religious country like Vietnam, religious solidarity has significant social implications and strongly influences the revolutionary process. Addressing this issue involves uniting religious and non-religious communities, fostering solidarity among various religious groups, and building unity within individual religious communities. Ho Chi Minh also emphasized solidarity between communists and religious followers. He believed that despite differing worldviews, communists and religious followers shared a common national interest, making it essential to work together for the country's goals. Moreover, as leaders of the revolution, communists must serve as the nucleus for mobilizing and uniting all communities, including religious followers.

### **Key Aspects of Religious Solidarity in Ho Chi Minh's Ideology**

Key aspects of religious solidarity in Ho Chi Minh's Ideology are expressed through the idea of solidarity between religious and non-religious compatriots; the idea of solidarity between compatriots of different religions and the idea of solidarity between compatriots within religions.

Excerpts from documents, reports, letters, etc. sent by Ho Chi Minh to religions, to people in provinces and cities, to people across the country to encourage, visit, and wish them a happy new year all used the example of Buddha to remind people about religious solidarity, national solidarity to defeat the enemy and only by defeating the enemy can we have true freedom of belief and religion.

Solidarity between religious and non-religious communities used by Ho Chi Minh in his calls for national and military resistance: "In the Viet Minh, our people stand firmly together, regardless of gender, age, religion, wealth, or class" and "We must rise up! Whether men or women, old or young, regardless of religion, political affiliation, or ethnicity" (Minh, vol. 4, p. 480).

In the urgent tasks of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, it was stated: "Issue number three: ... All male and female citizens aged eighteen and above have the right to run for office and to vote, regardless of wealth, poverty, religion, or ethnicity" (Minh, Vol. 4, p. 7).

During the celebration of the National Union, Ho Chi Minh spoke at the event about sacrifices for the nation and the people, saying:

"In the days of Buddha, there were four political factions that divided the hearts of the people and harmed the nation. But today, Vietnam has only one faction: the determination of the entire people to gain independence. Buddhist followers believe in Buddhism; Catholics believe in God; and we believe in Confucianism. These are

supreme figures, and we place our trust in them. However, when it comes to the people, we must not act against their will. Whatever the people desire, we must do.” (Institute of Religious Studies, 1998, p. 169).

In another talk with farmers and landowners in Hung Yen, he said: “... Regardless of age, gender, or religious beliefs, our compatriots must unite and work together. The strong help the weak, the young support the elderly, and the wealthy assist the poor. With this spirit of solidarity, we will surely achieve complete independence and enjoy true freedom and happiness” (Institute of Religious Studies, 1998, p. 170).

It is evident that in every piece of writing or speech, Ho Chi Minh consistently emphasized compassion, tolerance, and mutual support, aiming to foster religious unity, especially between those who follow a religion and those who do not. This spirit of national solidarity was essential to unifying the country, a deep desire of Ho Chi Minh and the Vietnamese people throughout the two resistance wars.

Solidarity among followers of different religions, to destroy all plots of enemies to exploit religion to divide religions and exploit sects to sabotage the Vietnamese revolution, Ho Chi Minh always promptly and skillfully encouraged the spirit of religions to unite to fight and unify the country in the Letter to compatriots and soldiers in the South and South Central regions on the occasion of the 2<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the Southern Resistance War, he wrote: “We, regardless of whether we are religious or non-religious, Buddhist or Cao Dai followers, must unite closely and resolutely resist to achieve national liberation and protect the Fatherland” (Minh, vol. 5, p. 214).

Ho Chi Minh treated all religions equally, ensuring fairness in all aspects of life. For example, religious institutions were entitled to a portion of land for their activities during land reform. “Article 25: The following people are divided:...Cathedrals, Pagodas, Ancestral Temples and other religious organizations are left a part of the land for worship purposes..... Religious workers who do not have enough to live on, can cultivate and have the requirements, are divided a part of the land in the place where they work, or in their hometown” (Institute of Religious Studies, 1998, p. 265).

In a meeting with representatives of Catholicism, Buddhism, and Cao Dai in 1945, he remarked: “The nation must first be liberated before religions can be truly free. At this moment, there are no distinctions between religions - every individual is a citizen of Vietnam and has to fight for the complete independence of the nation”. (Institute of Religious Studies, 1998, p. 362).

Everywhere, every time, Ho Chi Minh always put the spirit of national solidarity and religious solidarity first, especially solidarity between religions to destroy the enemy's plot to divide compatriots and religions. Therefore, even at the vegetarian meal in the Buddhist prayer ceremony, there was also a delegation of Catholic representatives attending. He said: “Although the two religions represent different ideals, both originate from compassion and humanity. Therefore, there is no reason why, at this time, as children of Vietnam, we cannot achieve unity between these two religions” (Institute of Religious Studies, 1998, p. 365).

The idea of uniting compatriots within religious communities was also emphasized by Ho Chi Minh in his letter to the Vietnamese Buddhist Association: “On the occasion of the Buddhist holiday of the fifteenth day of the seventh month, I respectfully pray to Buddha to protect our nation and people... Only when the country is independent can Buddhism flourish... Buddha represents great compassion and seeks to alleviate suffering. To save sentient beings from suffering, one must sacrifice, struggle, and eradicate evil spirits. Today, our compatriots are united, sacrificing wealth and blood, fighting to the end in resistance... This means that we are embodying the great compassion of Buddha Shakyamuni, resisting to free our race from the suffering of enslavement” (Institute of Religious Studies, 1998, p. 200).

In his letters to monks, nuns, and Buddhist followers on the occasion of Buddha Shakyamuni’s Enlightenment Day in 1957, and in his letter to the Unified Buddhist Congress of Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh encouraged the spirit of unity among religious leaders and followers: “...I commend the monks, nuns, and followers for their fervent patriotism and dedication to fulfilling their civic duties, living up to the ideals of a Buddhist. The lives of our people are gradually improving, aligning with the principles of Buddhism, which aim to build a life of purity, goodness, equality, peace, and prosperity. On this occasion, I hope the monks, nuns, and followers will further strengthen their unity to contribute to the swift success of peacebuilding efforts... Finally, I wish you all good health, diligence in your practice, devotion to serving humanity, and dedication to the nation and peace” (Institute of Religious Studies, 1998, p. 335-336, 352).

Furthermore, Ho Chi Minh called upon Buddhist followers nationwide to follow Buddha’s teachings: “Serve humanity selflessly and altruistically” (Institute of Religious Studies, 1998, pp. 335–336, 352). Ho Chi Minh’s philosophy of religious unity centered on applying and promoting the positive and humane values of religions, respecting citizens’ freedom of belief, and especially fostering inter-religious solidarity to build a great national unity. This unity was seen as

a source of strength. The Party and State of Vietnam have applied this philosophy of religious solidarity both during the resistance and in building a prosperous, democratic, equitable, and civilized Vietnam.

### **Regarding the Method of Implementing Religious Solidarity**

Using national and human interests as a common denominator, Ho Chi Minh emphasized that the resolution of ethnic and religious issues should prioritize the interests of the nation, the people, and fundamental human rights. In the context of the Vietnamese revolution, he pointed out that the people's freedom of belief and religion could only be realized with national independence, stating: "If the country is not independent, religion cannot be free, so we must first achieve independence". He stressed that only based on shared interests - national independence, and the freedom and happiness of all individuals regardless of social class, gender, ethnicity, or religion - can ethnic and religious issues be resolved satisfactorily.

In the relationship between ethnicity and religion, Ho Chi Minh consistently placed national issues as the top priority without neglecting religious concerns. His approach inspired religious organizations to align their principles with national interests. Examples include: Catholicism: "Live the gospel amidst the nation."; Protestantism: "Serve God and the nation."; Buddhism: "Dharma, nation, and socialism."; Caodaism: "Glorify the nation and illuminate the faith."; Hoa Hao Buddhism: "Revitalize the faith in harmony with the nation; align with State policies and laws to contribute to the protection and development of the country."

Respecting the good values in religions; accepting differences, promoting similarities between religions, between religious philosophy and communist ideals: Ho Chi Minh never had a biased or ostracizing attitude, but viewed religion on a cultural and ethical level, with the concept that religion carries values closely linked to people, for people, and therefore carries profound humanistic values. He summarized: "Jesus taught morality as charity."; "Buddha taught morality as compassion."; "Confucius taught morality as humanity and justice" (Minh, Vol. 7, p. 95). He saw similarities between these teachings and the socialist ideals he pursued. With a broad and compassionate perspective, Ho Chi Minh believed the founders' visions of equality, freedom, and humanity aligned with communist ideals. He affirmed that the participation of religious followers in the national resistance was consistent with the spirit of mutual support embodied by both Jesus and Buddha.

In Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh advocated avoiding direct confrontations with religious doctrines to prevent adversaries from exploiting religion to propagate claims like "communists are atheists" or "communists will eradicate religion." He encouraged respect for differences, emphasized commonalities between religious teachings and communist ideals, and recognized the contributions of religious followers to the revolutionary cause. He declared: "The purpose of our Government is to fight for independence and bring happiness to the people. To achieve this happiness, socialism must be built. If Jesus Christ were born in our era and confronted with the suffering of the people, he would be a socialist working to alleviate human suffering" (Minh, Vol. 7, p. 95). This approach reflects a creative application of Marxist-Leninist theory tailored to Vietnam's context, showcasing Ho Chi Minh's open-mindedness and profound humanity.

Ensuring freedom of belief and equality among religions, for Ho Chi Minh, people have the right to choose, to believe or not to believe, to follow or not to follow any religion; religions are equal to each other without distinction of size, and one should not ridicule or despise the religion of others because of promoting one's own religious beliefs.

Under his leadership, the people's freedom of belief has been affirmed in the Party's policies and guidelines and institutionalized in the State's legal documents. The first Constitution of our country in 1946, Chapter II, Section B clearly stated: "All Vietnamese citizens have the right to freedom of belief". Respecting religious organizations and activities, he emphasized: "The government does not interfere in internal religious affairs; specifically, regarding Catholicism, the religious relationship between the Vietnamese Church and the Holy See is an internal matter of Catholicism" (National Center for Social Sciences and Humanities - Institute for Religious Studies, 1998, p.79). In addition, he linked the implementation of the people's freedom of religion and belief with the duties and responsibilities of citizens: "do not separate the duty of Catholics to respect God from the duty of citizens to love their country" (Nhan Dan Newspaper, September 27, 1955), "Religious activities must not hinder people's production, must not be contrary to the policies and laws of the State" (Minh, vol. 13, p. 454). He required monks and religious dignitaries when propagating religion to "have the duty to educate believers about patriotism, the duties of citizens, and the sense of respect for the people's government and the laws of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam" (Decree on religious matters, No. 234, June 14, 1955).

Fighting against the plot to exploit religion by reactionary forces: respecting the freedom of belief of the people, but Ho Chi Minh always raised the issue of distinguishing the genuine religious needs of the masses from the plot to exploit religion by hostile forces. For the ringleaders, stubborn people and those who exploit and pretend to be religious to divide the great national unity bloc and sabotage the revolution, President Ho Chi Minh clearly stated: must resolutely "punish according to the law" and "The Government will severely punish those who deceive and force people to leave their

homeland, falling into a life of darkness and suffering in both body and soul” (National Center for Social Sciences and Humanities - Institute for Religious Studies, 1998, p.79).

For religious communities, Ho Chi Minh pointed out that freedom of belief is a sensitive issue, easily exploited by counter-revolutionary forces to distort and undermine the solidarity between secular and religious communities, as well as among followers of different religions. Therefore, religious communities must remain vigilant and “not fall for the deceitful propaganda of scheming forces.”

For the Communist Party of Vietnam, the State of Vietnam, Front of Vietnam, and mass organization officials, Ho Chi Minh emphasized the need to serve as exemplary models in implementing religious policies; to actively explain the Party and State's policies to religious communities; and to firmly correct any mistakes or shortcomings in the implementation of such policies. He criticized certain behaviors, such as: “Towards Catholic farmers, some teams explained Marxism-Leninism. Many officials, whenever speaking of priests, indiscriminately referred to them disrespectfully, causing discomfort among Catholic farmers” (Minh, vol. 7, p. 95 & 332). This, he explained, led to misunderstandings among religious followers about the Party's policies and provided opportunities for enemies to incite division, distortion, and sabotage.

Respecting religious dignitaries and caring for believers while guiding them toward activities beneficial to the entire nation: Ho Chi Minh always valued the role and influence of clergy and religious leaders - figures with significant impact on their followers. Therefore, he believed that respecting, persuading, and mobilizing religious dignitaries were critical measures for fostering harmony between religious and secular communities and promoting national unity. With a respectful, sincere, and open attitude, Ho Chi Minh successfully rallied many prominent religious leaders, such as Father Pham Ba Truc and Mr. Cao Trieu Phat, a Cao Dai leader in the Hau Giang region, to actively participate in the struggle to protect national independence and build religious solidarity.

In addition to emphasizing the roles of religious leaders, Ho Chi Minh showed deep concern for the lives of religious followers, particularly those belonging to ethnic minorities. He sent numerous letters and messages to Catholic communities and ethnic groups, praising their contributions and enthusiastic participation in the resistance, as well as extending his greetings on major religious holidays. Notably, toward those who had strayed or turned away from the revolution and the nation, he expressed sympathy for their hardships in foreign lands and advocated a policy of leniency: “Do not seek revenge. For those who have gone astray, our people must use forgiveness and reasonable words to guide them” (Minh, vol. 4, p. 471). He stated, “Except for a very small number of major traitors, all our people have patriotic hearts. While some have been misled, over time, they will gradually awaken and return to the nation” (Minh, vol. 4, p. 471).

Through such policies and measures, President Ho Chi Minh creatively and appropriately addressed religious issues, fostering strong unity between secular and religious communities, and among people of various religions, to collectively contribute to the struggle for liberation and the building of socialism. This forms a theoretical foundation and guiding principle for the Party in addressing religious issues in both past and present revolutionary periods in Vietnam.

### **The Application of the Communist Party of Vietnam in the Process of Leading the Vietnam Revolution**

Under the policy of “respecting freedom of belief and religion” established by the Communist Party and the State of Vietnam, the overall religious situation has remained stable in recent years. Most religious organizations and clergy have adhered to legal regulations and contributed positively to the nation's efforts in building and defending the country. However, due to the adverse effects of globalization and the market economy, along with the hostile forces' schemes to “politicize religion”, religious life in Vietnam has faced negative impacts and latent risks. Notable issues include exploiting religion to oppose the Party and State, violating laws, fostering division among ethnic groups, undermining national solidarity, disrupting political security and social order, forming groups under the guise of religion or new faiths, and engaging in superstitious, profit-driven religious activities that distort cultural and social ethical standards.

A pivotal milestone in the Party's evolving perspective on religion was the 9<sup>th</sup> Central Committee's Resolution 24-NQ/TW, which recognized the concept of “religious ethics” as containing many elements compatible with the construction of a new society. By 2003, with Resolution 25-NQ/TW, the Central Committee issued a dedicated resolution on religious affairs for the first time. This resolution affirmed that belief and religion are the spiritual needs of a segment of the population and will continue to exist alongside the nation during its process of building socialism. The Party and State consistently implement a policy of great national unity, with religious work fundamentally rooted in mass mobilization efforts. Politburo's Directive 18-CT/TW (2018) introduced the term “resources”, emphasizing the contributions of religions.

Currently, the State has recognized and granted registration certificates for the operation of 43 religious organizations belonging to 16 religions, with more than 27 million followers (approximately 28% of the population), over 55,000 clergy, nearly 150,000 religious officers, and nearly 30,000 places of worship (Government Committee for Religious Affairs: Religious Work, 2021, pp. 44–66). These 16 religions include Buddhism, Catholicism, Protestantism, Cao Dai, Hoa Hao Buddhism, Islam, the Baha’I Faith, the Pure Land Buddhist Association, Seventh-day Adventism, Four Debts of Gratitude Buddhism, the Minh Su Dao, Minh Ly Do–Tam Tong Mieu, Brahmanism, Mormonism, Hieu Nghia Ta Lon Buddhism, and Buu Son Ky Huong (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2020). The Party’s viewpoint on “religious resources” identifies these recognized religious organizations and their diverse contributions, including human resources, material assets, financial mobilization capabilities, and the positive cultural and ethical values of religions. Religious resources have played a role in societal development, with significant contributions in education, social welfare, and humanitarian work.

Recognizing the critical role of religion in Vietnam, the 13<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Party proposed new viewpoints and policies on religious affairs based on the practical situation and Ho Chi Minh’s ideology regarding religion and religious solidarity.

The issue of religious solidarity is embedded within the broader context of religious work and the construction and consolidation of great national unity as emphasized by the Party. The Party’s XIII<sup>th</sup> Congress documents identify one of the key tasks for ushering the country into a new phase of development: “Mobilizing, uniting, and gathering religious organizations, clergy, and followers to ‘live a good life and a beautiful faith’, contributing positively to the building and defense of the nation. Ensuring that religious organizations operate in accordance with the law and their recognized charters and regulations. Promoting the cultural and ethical values and resources of religions for national development. Resolutely combating and strictly handling individuals who exploit religion to oppose the Party, State, and socialist regime, or to create division, disrupt religious solidarity, and undermine great national unity” (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2021, vol. 1, p. 171).

Upholding Ho Chi Minh’s ideology on religious solidarity in the current national context, the Party continues to emphasize the shared values between the revolution and religion, as well as between socialist and religious ideals, considering these as essential foundations for achieving great national unity. The Party recognizes that under the socialist-oriented market economy, Vietnam is home to various economic sectors, population groups, and classes with different needs, aspirations, lifestyles, and religious beliefs. Furthermore, in the context of deep international integration, many religions have expanded into Vietnam, and religious activities have become more globally interconnected. Therefore, to achieve great national unity, the Party must focus on identifying commonalities, respecting differences that do not conflict with national interests, and resolving conflicts of interest appropriately to foster consensus, trust, and the optimal strength of the national unity bloc. During the period when Ho Chi Minh led the country, the basis for implementing religious solidarity was the goal of overthrowing imperialism and colonialism to gain national independence and move forward to build socialism - a fair and good social regime for all people. Inheriting that viewpoint, today the Party defines more clearly the goal of “Rich people, strong country, democracy, fairness, civilization”, “strongly arousing the spirit of patriotism, the will of national self-reliance and the aspiration to develop a prosperous and happy country”.

To further promote the role of religion in the cause of building and defending the socialist homeland, the documents of the XIII<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam clearly state: “Promote the positive cultural and moral values and the resources of religions for national development” (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2021, Vol. I, p. 171).

In addition to emphasizing the moral and cultural values of religion, particular focus is placed on the role of religion in “preserving and enhancing traditional social ethics, building cultural life in residential areas, and contributing to the prevention of social vices” (Communist Party of Vietnam, Vol. I, p. 171). The Party has proposed solutions to address religious issues and leverage the strengths of religion to build the great national unity bloc while advancing the construction and perfection of a socialist rule-of-law state. This is closely linked to the requirement to strengthen socialist legality and refine the legal system. Compared to the 12<sup>th</sup> National Congress, the 13<sup>th</sup> Congress not only emphasized “resolutely combating acts that exploit beliefs and religion to divide and undermine national solidarity” but also focused on “mobilizing, uniting, and bringing together religious organizations, clergy, and followers to “live a good life and a beautiful faith”, actively contributing to the nation’s building and defense” (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2021, Vol. I, p. 141). Simultaneously, the Congress stressed the need to “harmoniously address issues related to ethnicity, religion, and social grievances to prevent the emergence of ‘hot spots’” (Communist Party of Vietnam, Vol. I, p. 141). This reflects the creative application of Ho Chi Minh’s ideology in the context of hostile forces intensifying their exploitation of religion to threaten national security, disrupt the national unity bloc, and cause social disorder.

The Party consistently upholds the policy of respecting, prioritizing, institutionalizing in law, and ensuring in practice the right to freedom of belief and religion for everyone. This guarantee has been broadened to include domestic organizations and people, as well as foreign individuals and organizations with religious affiliations living, studying, and working in Vietnam, and overseas Vietnamese returning to their homeland.

The documents of the XIIIth National Congress highlight a key solution in religious mobilization efforts: enhancing state management's capacity, effectiveness, and efficiency in religious affairs. Relevant agencies are tasked with assisting and addressing the people's religious, belief, and spiritual needs, actively listening to and promptly resolving the legitimate aspirations of religious adherents, and ensuring that religious organizations operate according to the law and their recognized charters and statutes. At the same time, the Party emphasizes the need to criticize, combat, and address negative manifestations related to religion, particularly by “resolutely combating and strictly handling those who exploit religion to oppose the Party, State, and socialist regime; create division, disrupt religious solidarity, and undermine the great national unity bloc” (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2021, Vol. I, p. 171).

## CONCLUSION

Thus, in terms of institutions and policies, Vietnam currently does not have specific, complete, and unified mechanisms and policies to realize the Party's viewpoints on promoting cultural and ethical values and religious resources for development. Therefore, the values and resources of religion have not been fully promoted, commensurate with the potential and needs of the religions themselves. On the other hand, the religious activities of dignitaries, followers, and people have raised many issues that need attention, such as the situation of taking advantage of religious freedom to oppose the Party and the State by individuals at home and abroad is still quite common and increasingly complicated; the situation of commercializing religious activities, taking advantage of religious beliefs for personal gain or propagating superstition is still common in some types of religions and beliefs; The activities of some types of beliefs, including ancestor worship, are still limited and unhealthy, causing chaos and disorder at many religious festivals, etc. It can be affirmed that, based on the creative application of Ho Chi Minh's ideology and a more comprehensive and clearer understanding of religion in Vietnam's reality, the Party has, throughout the revolutionary leadership process, formulated appropriate policies and solutions regarding religious work. These efforts have significantly contributed to consolidating the great national unity bloc, harnessing religious resources, and achieving the goals of “a wealthy people, a strong nation, and a democratic, equitable, and civilized society”.

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