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Внешнеполитическая концепция Хо Ши Мина – основа устойчивой вьетнамско-российской дипломатии

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Аннотация. Внешнеполитическая концепция Хо Ши Мина, основанная на ключевых принципах национальной независимости и автономии, прагматической гибкости и гармоничного баланса между государственной мощью и требованиями времени, заложила прочный фундамент внешней политики Вьетнама. Отношения Вьетнама и России (ранее – СССР) служат наглядным примером жизнеспособности этого идеологического наследия. В статье утверждается, что внешнеполитическая концепция Хо Ши Мина не ограничивается историческим значением, а является концептуальной основой модели «устойчивой дипломатии», опирающейся на три взаимосвязанных компонента: идейный фундамент – ценности независимости и мира; двусторонние стратегические интересы, включая сотрудничество в области обороны, энергетики и экономики; многовековое историческое и культурное наследие. Исторический анализ и эмпирические исследования показывают, что Вьетнаму удалось сохранить стратегическое партнёрство с Россией, одновременно диверсифицируя внешнеполитические связи, чтобы адаптироваться к конкуренции между США и Китаем и последствиям конфликта на Украине. Статья вносит вклад в теорию внешней политики средних держав и содержит практические рекомендации для Вьетнама, демонстрируя, как гибкое применение внешнеполитических принципов Хо Ши Мина может способствовать защите национальной независимости, реализации политики диверсификации и развитию народной дипломатии.

Ключевые слова: идеи Хо Ши Мина, вьетнамско-российские отношения, внешняя политика Вьетнама, устойчивая дипломатия, многовекторность.

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Ho Chi Minh's foreign policy thought is a foundation for sustainable Vietnam-Russia diplomacy

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Abstract. Ho Chi Minh's foreign policy thought, anchored in the core principles of national independence and autonomy, pragmatic flexibility, and a harmonious balance between national strength and the demands of the age, has become a durable foundation for Vietnam's external policy. The Vietnam-Russia relationship (formerly Vietnam-Soviet) exemplifies the resilience of this intellectual legacy. The article argues that Ho Chi Minh's foreign policy thought is not merely a historical heritage but constitutes the conceptual basis for "sustainable diplomacy" built on three interacting pillars: an ideational foundation, which are the values of independence and peace; bilateral strategic interests, including cooperation in the fields of defence, energy and economics; and a long-standing historical and cultural legacy. The historical analysis and empirical case studies show that Vietnam has been able to preserve a strategic partnership with Russia while simultaneously diversifying its external relations to adapt to the U.S.-China competition and the repercussions of the Ukrainian conflict. The study contributes to the theory of middle power diplomacy and provides practical recommendations for Vietnam, highlighting how a flexible application of Ho Chi Minh's foreign policy thought can help safeguard national independence, pursue diversified foreign relations, and reinforce people-to-people diplomacy.

Keywords: Ho Chi Minh's thought, Vietnam-Russia relations, Vietnam's foreign policy, sustainable diplomacy, diversification.

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Introduction

The comprehensive strategic partnership between Vietnam and the Russian Federation (formerly Vietnam and the USSR) is one of the deepest and most resilient foreign relationships in modern Vietnam, founded on long-standing friendship and shared strategic interests. In a geopolitically volatile environment, the durability of this relationship raises an important scholarly question: what is the root of that resilience? This article argues that Ho Chi Minh's foreign policy thought (with its foundational principles for external policy) constitutes the "red thread" that has shaped and nourished the Vietnam-Russia relations from the Soviet era to the present. His thought consistently emphasized independence and autonomy, while simultaneously promoting friendship and international solidarity as the means to safeguard national independence. That steadfastness has both expressed Vietnam's diplomatic identity and enabled Hanoi to respond flexibly to great powers. The topic is therefore of significant importance, especially as the international environment witnesses intensifying the U.S.-China competition, conflict in Eastern Europe, and increasingly

pronounced multipolarity; under such conditions, consolidating the traditional relationship with Russia assumes heightened strategic significance.

To substantiate this claim, the article proceeds to: (i) systematize the principal pillars of Ho Chi Minh's foreign policy thought; (ii) analyze how that thought operated in successive phases of Vietnam-Russia relations; and (iii) evaluate the role of Ho Chi Minh's thinking as a durable foundation for the comprehensive strategic partnership between Vietnam and Russia in the new context. The study employs secondary source document analysis combined with historical and interpretive approaches. Source materials include Ho Chi Minh's works, documents of the Communist Party of Vietnam, Soviet-era diplomatic records, and scholarly literature both domestic and international on Ho Chi Minh's foreign policy thought and Vietnam's external policies. Through this approach, the article not only elucidates Ho Chi Minh's intellectual legacy in international relations but also helps explain the mechanisms by which middle power states sustain stable diplomacy with great powers.

Preliminary findings indicate that Ho Chi Minh's foreign policy thought not only influenced the formation of Vietnam's early external strategy but also shaped a long-term diplomatic outlook grounded in the principles of peace, cooperation, mutual respect, and common development. Viewed over a span of seventy-five years, the Vietnam-Russia relationship constitutes the most vivid and enduring demonstration of the lasting value of that thought. Ho Chi Minh is portrayed not merely as the leader of the Vietnamese nation but also as a great friend of the Russian people (a historical bridge linking two cultures, two revolutionary traditions, and two peoples). The study also identifies current challenges and the attendant adjustments in Vietnam's diplomatic practice. On that basis, it offers theoretical contributions and policy implications for Vietnam-Russia diplomacy going forward. These findings also provide useful guidance for other middle powers in conducting foreign policy that adapts to the contemporary international environment.

Literature review

Numerous studies both internationally and within Vietnam have examined various aspects of Ho Chi Minh's foreign policy thought and the Vietnam-Soviet (later Vietnam-Russia) relations. The domestic scholarship has largely focused on interpreting the intellectual content of Ho Chi Minh's foreign policy and assessing how this legacy has been applied to Vietnam's diplomacy after *Đổi Mới* (the Renovation reforms). For example, Nguyen Dy Nien has systematized the core principles of Ho Chi Minh's foreign policy, which were independence and autonomy, peace, international solidarity, and the method of "flexibility and creativity" [Nguyen 2008]. Many Vietnamese articles also analyze the connection between Ho Chi Minh's principles and the "diversification and multilateralization" strategy that Vietnam has pursued since the late twentieth century, while emphasizing the humanistic dimension of diplomacy and the role of people-to-people exchanges. However, most existing studies concentrate on overviews of the thought itself or on particular economic or political aspects; none, to date, has taken Ho Chi Minh's foreign policy thought as the primary theoretical framework to analyze the sustainability of the Vietnam-Russia relations.

At the international level, a number of Russian and Western scholars have investigated the Vietnam-Soviet/Russian relations. Notably, Sophie Quinn-Judge and Ilya Gaiduk highlight Ho Chi Minh's pivotal role during the Cold War and, in particular, his influence on the orientation of relations with the Soviet Union [Quinn-Judge 2002; Gaiduk 2003]. Earlier studies by Pike (1987)

provided a foundational analysis of Vietnam–Soviet relations, later supplemented by archival-based research [Pike 1987]. The articles in the *Russian Journal of Vietnamese Studies* have explored Vietnam’s diversification strategy and Hanoi’s use of historical legacy to balance great powers [Chapman 2021: 6–26; Toropchin 2023]. Several studies by Russian scholars have evaluated Vietnam-Russia economic strategy and defence cooperation, while also noting obstacles to collaboration such as delays in energy projects [Sigauri-Gorsky 2025; Nikulina 2021; Novikova et al. 2023; Ryazantsev et al. 2022].

Despite a substantial body of literature, important research gaps remain. Firstly, no study has made Ho Chi Minh’s foreign policy thought the central theoretical frame for examining the continuity of the Vietnam-Russia relations. Secondly, there is a lack of deep analysis of the sustainability of this relationship in the new geopolitical context, marked by the U.S.-China competition, sanctions on Russia, and the war in Ukraine. Thirdly, comparative studies that assess how Vietnam’s invocation of Ho Chi Minh’s legacy in policy toward Russia differs from its application toward other great powers are scarce. This study seeks to address these gaps by treating Ho Chi Minh’s foreign policy thought as a distinctive ideational foundation that has enabled Vietnam to sustain stable relations with Russia across decades.

Theoretical foundations and concepts

In international relations, the ideas of national leaders can be viewed as a cultural and ideological variable influencing a country’s foreign policy. At the same time, scholars employ the framework of “middle power diplomacy” to analyze how middle powers maintain relations with great powers. Accordingly, countries like Vietnam must be flexible and shrewd in protecting their core interests when engaging in dialogue with superpowers. In this context, Ho Chi Minh’s foreign policy ideology can be regarded as a “normative framework” guiding Vietnam’s strategy. Ho Chi Minh’s principles (such as independence and self-reliance; peace and humanity; international solidarity; and the maxim “dĩ bất biến ứng vạn biến” (“Adapt to changing circumstances with unwavering principles”)) [Ho Chi Minh 2011, 1: XXI] are seen as theoretical pillars explaining how Vietnam builds stable relations with major powers, including Russia. The application of this ideology reflects the characteristics of middle power diplomacy, which is protecting national interests while flexibly adapting to a volatile international environment.

The article proposes the concept of “sustainable diplomacy” to analyze long-term stable foreign relations. Accordingly, sustainable diplomacy is built on three pillars: the ideational and ideological foundation; common strategic interests; and the long-standing historical and cultural heritage between the two sides. This framework helps to explain the role of Ho Chi Minh’s ideology (the ideational pillar), bilateral interests (the strategic interest pillar), and historical factors (the cultural pillar) in maintaining the Vietnam-Russia relationship under international pressure. The concept not only reflects how Vietnam draws on its leader’s legacy to maintain stable foreign policy, but it can also be extended as an argument for countries of middle power scale or ideological orientation in the world when balancing principles and interests.

Ho Chi Minh’s foreign policy ideology

Ho Chi Minh’s foreign policy thought encompasses the leader’s views and principles on international relations, aiming to protect the nation’s independence and sovereignty and to

contribute to the global national liberation movement. This ideological system was formed through the selective adoption of Marxism-Leninism, the quintessence of world culture, and Vietnam's historical experience. That thought has guided all of Vietnam's foreign policy and serves as the foundation for building strategic relationships, exemplified by the Vietnam-Russia relationship. Three main theoretical pillars can be summarized as follows:

1. *Independence and self-reliance in international relations.* Ho Chi Minh held that national independence is supreme: "Nothing is more precious than independence and freedom" [Ho Chi Minh 2011, 5: 130]. This viewpoint became the guiding principle that all international relations must not violate Vietnam's sovereignty and independence. Here independence does not imply isolation; rather, Vietnam should integrate internationally in ways that "align with the national interest" while preserving its autonomy. He wrote: "In principle, common progress depends on the development of internationalism; and civilization is only beneficial when international relations are expanded and strengthened" [Ho Chi Minh 2011, 1: XVII]. In relations with major powers, Ho Chi Minh advocated "befriending all democratic countries", rejecting dependence on any external force. This idea was implemented through a policy of diversification of relations, not tilting entirely toward any single bloc, as affirmed in the 1945 Declaration of Independence: "The Vietnamese people have the right to enjoy freedom and independence, and in reality have become a free and independent nation. The entire Vietnamese people pledge to devote all their spirit and strength, life and property, to maintaining that freedom and independence" [Ho Chi Minh 2011, 4: 3], and "a nation which does not fend for itself and simply sits waiting for other nations to help is not worthy of independence" [Ho Chi Minh 2011, 7: 445].

2. *Friendship and international solidarity.* A prominent aspect of Ho Chi Minh's thought is the combination of patriotic nationalism and proletarian internationalism. He believed that Vietnam's national struggle is closely linked to the global movements of national liberation and class struggle. He declared: "The Kuomintang must help us liberate [our country], help all oppressed peoples to liberate. Regardless of any country or nation, let all stand up against our common enemy" [Ho Chi Minh 2011, 2: 232]. Through Ho Chi Minh's ideology and diplomatic efforts, Vietnam was able to mobilize substantial support from the bloc of socialist countries (especially the Soviet Union) and from the worldwide peace movement. This was not merely a matter of temporary strategy but a lasting moral value of Ho Chi Minh's diplomacy, summed up in his maxim: "Be friends with all democratic countries and do not make enemies of anyone" [Ho Chi Minh 2011, 5: 256].

3. *Principles of cooperation with socialist countries.* In Ho Chi Minh's foreign policy thought, socialist countries were conceived as comrades and a steadfast rear for the Vietnamese revolution, under the principle of "both comrade and brother". "Comrade" implies unity in ideology and goals (building socialism, fighting imperialism) on the basis of equality and mutual respect; "brother" reflects emotional bonds and selfless support. From this principle, the Vietnam-Soviet relationship was built not only on strategic interests but also on humanitarian values and mutual loyalty between the two peoples. The Soviet Union's comprehensive support for Vietnam during the struggle was considered "a great international duty", and the Vietnamese people's gratitude became a national moral tradition. This principle is the foundation of the political trust between Vietnam and Russia today, despite changes in the international context. In the joint declaration of 2025, the leaders of the two countries affirmed: "The Vietnam-Russia relationship ... has created a

solid foundation for the traditional relationship and comprehensive strategic partnership between Russia and Vietnam”¹.

Thus, Ho Chi Minh’s foreign policy thought combines the principle of independence and self-reliance with commitments to peace and global solidarity, creating a set of values that is at once national in character and timeless. That thought forms the foundation of Vietnam’s diplomatic approach: flexible yet steadfast, always protecting the nation’s supreme interests while sharing humanity’s goals of peace and progress.

Applying Ho Chi Minh’s thought in Vietnam-Russia relations

The period from 1945 to 1954: Establishing the foundations of independence and self-reliance and international solidarity. To secure the gains of the August 1945 Revolution, Vietnam sought international support while avoiding subordination to any single power. From the late 1940s Hanoi therefore mobilized assistance from the socialist bloc and the worldwide peace movement, combining pragmatic solicitation of aid with a firm insistence on national autonomy. The Soviet Union’s recognition of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam on 30 January 1950 was widely hailed as “a very great political victory”, symbolizing robust international solidarity with Vietnam’s revolutionary objectives. This initial period constituted a critical test: the independent foreign policy line of “more friends, fewer enemies” together with Ho Chi Minh’s philosophy of broad international solidarity secured the diplomatic support necessary for the young state.

The period from 1954 to 1969: special relations during the anti-American resistance and the reconstruction of North Vietnam. After the 1954 Geneva Accords, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam simultaneously built socialism in the North and sustained the struggle to liberate the South, operating on the principle that “independence and self-reliance go hand in hand with international solidarity”. Facing discord between the Soviet Union and China, Hanoi consistently applied Ho Chi Minh’s maxim (“If you want others to help you, first you must help yourself” [Ho Chi Minh 2011, 2: 320]) by pursuing a balanced policy: accepting military and economic assistance from the USSR to strengthen the anti-American resistance while emphasizing domestic self-help. Soviet comprehensive support materially contributed to the North’s eventual success and illustrated the effectiveness of Ho Chi Minh’s synthesis of international solidarity with the concrete national interest.

The period from 1969 to 1991: continuation of Ho Chi Minh’s foreign policy thought during the Cold War. After Ho Chi Minh’s death in 1969, Vietnam’s foreign policy line largely preserved his guiding spirit. From the mid-1970s the Vietnam-Soviet relationship evolved into a strategic alliance, and in 1978 the two countries concluded the Treaty of Friendship and Comprehensive Cooperation. Vietnam’s heavy dependence on the Soviet Union, however, created severe difficulties when the USSR and the Eastern Bloc collapsed. This episode confirmed Ho Chi Minh’s warning that international solidarity was necessary but must never come at the expense of national independence and autonomy. Applying Ho Chi Minh’s maxim to “preserve the immutable while

¹ Tuyên bố chung về định hướng lớn của quan hệ Đối tác chiến lược toàn diện Việt Nam – Nga [The Joint Statement on major orientations for Vietnam-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership]. *The Government of Vietnam*, May 11, 2025. URL: <https://baohinhphu.vn/tuyen-bo-chung-ve-nhung-dinh-huong-lon-cua-quan-he-doi-tac-chien-luoc-toan-dien-viet-nam-nga-trong-giai-doan-hop-tac-moi-102250511175645569.htm> (accessed: May 11, 2025). (In Vietnamese).

adapting to change” [Ho Chi Minh 2011, 1: XXI], Hanoi adjusted its strategy in time. It engaged with the new Russian state while maintaining the core principles that underpin bilateral cooperation.

The period from 1991 to 2000: restoring and adjusting relations with the Russian Federation. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia temporarily withdrew from the international stage. The Vietnam-Russia relations entered a recovery phase. Thanks to a tradition of friendship and the consistent policy of independence and self-reliance, Vietnam took the initiative to re-establish partnership with Russia. In 1994 the two countries signed a treaty on the basic principles of their friendly relations, ushering in a new era of normalized cooperation. The continuation of Ho Chi Minh’s thought was reflected in Vietnam’s ability to “adapt to a new context, without abandoning the principles of independence and peace”, something that the 1994 treaty in part reaffirmed.

The period from 2001 to present: comprehensive strategic partnership, realizing Ho Chi Minh’s thought in a new context. The formal elevation of Vietnam-Russia ties to a strategic partnership in 2001 and to a comprehensive strategic partnership in 2012 exemplifies the combination of principled orientation and pragmatic adaptability that characterizes Ho Chi Minh’s diplomatic vision. Bilateral relations have deepened across multiple domains with defense cooperation, energy, and high-technology sectors serving as strategic pillars. The spirit of Ho Chi Minh’s diplomacy is also reflected in Vietnam’s policy of multilateralization: cultivating friendship with all countries while continuing to prioritize its traditional partnership with Russia.

Over 75 years, despite major shocks (the dissolution of the Soviet Union, international sanctions on Russia and intensified the U.S.-China rivalry, the Vietnam-Russia relations have remained resilient. This durability indicates that Ho Chi Minh’s foreign-policy thought continues to act as a guiding thread, enabling both sides to sustain trust and cooperation “on a long-term and principled basis”. During his visit to Vietnam from June 19 to June 20, 2024, President Vladimir Putin once again emphasized: “Hồ Chí Minh, the great son of the Vietnamese people and a good friend of our country, stood at the origins of our bilateral cooperation”².

Current challenges and policy adjustments in the new context

Despite the strong ideological foundation of Vietnam-Russia relations as analyzed above, there remain significant challenges to address.

Firstly, the US-China competition, the Ukrainian conflict and sanctions on Russia. The global strategies of the United States and China create great pressure on middle power countries like Vietnam, forcing Hanoi to carefully consider its partners and its positions at international forums. The Russia-Ukraine conflict and international sanctions on Russia have complicated bilateral cooperation, especially in the fields of finance, energy and defense. Nevertheless, Vietnam has continued cooperation in nuclear energy with Russia’s Rosatom³ and numerous cultural-diplomatic activities. This indicates that Vietnam consistently maintains its links with Russia, deftly managing the challenges arising from international policies.

Secondly, pressure of multilateral integration. Alongside maintaining relations with Russia, Vietnam needs to advance broader international integration, abide by international law, and develop

² Russia and Vietnam: friendship tested by time. Article by President Vladimir Putin. *The President of Russia*, Jun 19, 2024. URL: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/74336> (accessed: Jun 19, 2024).

³ Thanh Hà. Nga sẵn sàng tham gia xây dựng ngành điện hạt nhân Việt Nam [Russia is ready to participate in building Vietnam’s nuclear power industry]. *Laodong.vn*, Jan 14, 2025. URL: <https://laodong.vn/thoi-su/nga-san-sang-tham-gia-xay-dung-nganh-dien-hat-nhan-viet-nam-1450100.lido> (accessed: Jan 14, 2025). (In Vietnamese).

relations with many partners. Relations with Russia, if not handled carefully, can affect Vietnam’s international image (as exemplified by Vietnam’s “abstain” votes at the UN General Assembly regarding calls for Russia to end its military campaign in Ukraine)⁴. Meanwhile, Vietnam is strengthening ties with the United States, the EU, Japan, Australia, India and others, and participating in multilateral forums to diversify relations and reduce risk. This pressure is clear, for example, when Vietnam seeks to attract investment and high technology from major world economies.

Faced with these challenges, Vietnam must creatively apply and further develop Ho Chi Minh’s foreign policy thought to both preserve its foundational ties with Russia and expand partnerships elsewhere. Hanoi reiterates its commitment to a comprehensive strategic partnership with Russia while simultaneously intensifying multilateral engagement with the United States and other countries. Thus, even as Vietnam signs nuclear energy agreements with Russia’s Rosatom, it continues to promote green energy cooperation and trade with Western partners.

In its Russian policy, Hanoi consistently invokes the historical legacy that underpins bilateral trust, yet it proceeds cautiously so as not to be drawn into bloc politics. Reuters observes that Vietnam “abstained in votes condemning Russia, a position the West considered ‘too close’ to the Kremlin”⁵. Such calibrations are not at odds with Ho Chi Minh’s foreign-policy foundations; rather, they represent a flexible application of core principles to respond to changing circumstances. As Deputy Prime Minister Bùi Thanh Sơn has emphasised, Vietnam’s diplomacy must “always serve the national interest”⁶.

The policy of “multilateralisation and diversification” enables Vietnam to avoid dependence on any single partner, preserve the principle of independence and self-reliance, and maintain a balanced posture among great powers amid confrontation. At the same time, the commitment to peace, humanism, and international solidarity helps safeguard Vietnam’s international image and credibility.

Theoretical contributions and policy implications

Theoretical contributions

Firstly, middle power diplomacy. The Vietnamese case enriches the literature on middle power foreign policy by demonstrating that a national leader’s political thought can serve as a durable theoretical and practical resource for a middle power country. Rather than relying solely on power-balancing frameworks, a middle power can mobilize endogenous cultural, historical and ideological legacies as a guiding “compass” for its external policy. The Communist Party documents emphasize that Ho Chi Minh “laid the foundation and sustained development” of close

⁴ Minh Hạnh. Đại hội đồng LHQ thông qua nghị quyết kêu gọi Nga dừng chiến dịch quân sự ở Ukraine [The UN General Assembly adopts resolution calling on Russia to stop the military operation in Ukraine]. *Tiền Phong*, Mar 3, 2022. URL: <https://tienphong.vn/dai-hoi-dong-lhq-thong-qua-nghi-quyet-keu-goi-nga-dung-chien-dich-quan-su-o-ukraine-post1420345.tpo> (accessed: Sep 21, 2025). (In Vietnamese).

⁵ Francesco Guarascio, Phương Nguyễn. Russia’s Putin praises Vietnam for its stance on Ukraine. *Reuters*, Jun 19, 2024. URL: <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/russias-putin-praises-vietnam-its-stance-ukraine-2024-06-19/> (accessed: Jun 19, 2024).

⁶ Phó Thủ tướng Bùi Thanh Sơn: Ngoại giao Việt Nam đã có những đóng góp quan trọng [Deputy PM Bùi Thanh Sơn: Vietnam’s diplomacy has made important contributions]. *The Government of Vietnam*, Aug 21, 2025. URL: <https://baohinhphu.vn/pho-thu-tuong-bui-thanh-son-ngoai-giao-viet-nam-da-co-nhung-dong-gop-quan-trong-in-dam-dau-an-trong-tung-chang-duong-lich-su-cua-dan-toc-102250821173455422.htm> (accessed: Sep 21, 2025). (In Vietnamese).

ties with Russia, creating a “solid basis” for today’s relationship⁷. Vietnam’s so-called “bamboo diplomacy” (flexible in strategy yet resilient in core purpose) exemplifies the durability and stability of this approach in a volatile international environment.

Secondly, the study also proposes the concept of “*sustainable diplomacy*” built on three pillars: ideational foundation; strategic interests; historical and cultural foundations. These correspond to Ho Chi Minh’s ideological base, practical areas of cooperation, and the historical and cultural legacy of the Vietnam-Russia relations. This model shows that sustainable foreign relations depend not only on immediate interests but also on the synergy of ideological values and long-term historical foundations. Vietnam needs to maintain a “delicate balance” and leverage its long-standing historical relationship with major partners to achieve stability, reflecting all three pillars. Thus, “sustainable diplomacy” is concerned not only with short-term stability but also with maintaining a long-term equilibrium among principles, needs, and historical legacy in its foreign policy.

Policy implications

First, flexible application of Ho Chi Minh’s thought. Vietnam should uphold the principles of independence and international solidarity to preserve its traditional partnership with Russia while continuing to diversify external ties. Practically, this means protecting long-term strategic interests with Russia (a key partner for security and energy grounded in historical legacy), while actively expanding cooperation with the United States, the EU, Japan and others under a policy of “multilateralization and diversification”.

Second, balancing national interests and international commitments. Foreign policy must place the national interest first, yet Vietnam also bears responsibilities as a member of the international community. Navigating this dual requirement demands skillful diplomacy: leveraging long-standing trust with Russia while articulating clear positions on global issues in order to preserve the standing of a middle power, principled state with a credible voice.

Third, strengthening people-to-people diplomacy. In addition to official diplomacy, people-to-people diplomacy in culture and education is a crucial “soft foundation” for long-term relations. The Vietnam-Russia relations have already had a strong tradition of cultural and civilian exchange, evident in cultural cooperation, student exchanges, and friendship associations that have fostered understanding and trust across generations. Vietnam can intensify activities such as “Russian Culture Week in Vietnam” and its reciprocal events, strengthen training and exchange programs, and promote cooperation between universities and research institutes in both countries. Promoting Vietnam’s image in Russia and vice versa will facilitate political and economic cooperation. People-to-people exchange is a vital pillar that consolidates public trust and support, complementing both countries’ strategic political and economic goals⁸.

⁷ Phạm Hải. Thúc đẩy quan hệ đối tác chiến lược toàn diện Việt Nam – Nga trong bối cảnh mới [Promoting the Vietnam-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership in the new context]. *Tapchiconsan.org.vn*, Sep 29, 2024. URL: <https://tapchiconsan.org.vn/web/guest/quoc-phong-an-ninh-oi-ngoai1/-/2018/976402/thuc-day-quan-he-doi-tac-chien-luoc-toan-dien-viet-nam---nga-trong-boi-can-h-moi.aspx> (accessed: Sep 21, 2025). (In Vietnamese).

⁸ Vietnam, Russia agree to quickly sign nuclear power plant deal. *Reuters*, May 12, 2025. URL: <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/vietnam-russia-agree-quickly-sign-nuclear-power-plant-deal-2025-05-12/> (accessed: May 12, 2025).

Conclusion

Ho Chi Minh's foreign policy thought is not only an important historical legacy but also a mechanism for maintaining long-term stability in the Vietnam-Russia relations. That ideology provides a theoretical framework for Vietnam to uphold its core interests while harmonizing strategy and tactics. Over nearly eight decades, the Vietnam-Russia relations have experienced many ups and downs, but the "red thread" of Ho Chi Minh's thought has run through them, helping the two sides overcome challenges and continue to develop cooperation sustainably. Achievements in the fields of defense, energy, science and technology, and people-to-people exchanges testify to the vitality of this foundation. Meanwhile, Vietnam's current policy of "multilateralization" shows that Ho Chi Minh's thought remains relevant, as Hanoi both maintains a special link with Russia and expands relations with the US, the EU and other partners to protect its national interests. Certainly, alongside the foundational role of Ho Chi Minh's diplomatic thought, the achievements of Vietnam's diplomacy in general (and of the Vietnam-Russia relations in particular) also depend on a constellation of additional factors. These include strategic vision, consistent policy formulation, and, most critically, the proactive engagement of political actors who have shaped foreign relations in each historical period, thereby exerting a decisive influence on Vietnam's diplomatic outcomes. Based on these considerations, it can be asserted that the success of the Vietnam-Russia diplomatic relations rests on a foundation of strategic trust, multisectoral cooperation, effective institutional mechanisms for dialogue, and mutually beneficial socio-economic interests. These elements have not only sustained the stability of the bilateral relationship in the past but also continue to steer it toward sustainable development in the future.

The study suggests directions for future research: Vietnam's model of sustainable diplomacy can be compared with that of other ideologically aligned countries (such as Cuba or Laos) to test the universality or specificity of this mechanism. At the same time, examining the role of leadership legacy and historical heritage in maintaining the external stability of middle power states could further illuminate theories of multilateral diplomacy and balance of power strategy in the 21st century.

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