

PREFACE

HO CHI MINH: “A GREAT MAN OF CULTURE”

In November 1987, in anticipation of the centenary of the birth of Ho Chi Minh in 1990, the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) considered that “the international celebration of the anniversaries of eminent intellectual and cultural personalities contributes to the realization of UNESCO’s objectives and to international understanding,” and passed resolutions to recognize Ho Chi Minh as among the “great personalities ... [who] have left an imprint on the development of the humanity.”^{iv} The General Conference acknowledged Ho Chi Minh as “a Vietnamese hero of national liberation and great man of culture” and “an outstanding symbol of national affirmation. [He] devoted his whole life to the national liberation of the Vietnamese people, contributing to the common struggle of peoples for peace, national independence, democracy and social progress.”^v The resolutions also suggested

that the important and many-sided contribution of President Ho Chi Minh in the field of culture, education and the arts crystallizes the cultural tradition of the Vietnamese people which stretches back several thousand years, and that his ideals embody the aspirations of peoples in the affirmation of their cultural identity and the promotion of mutual understanding.^{vi}

The General Conference encouraged the Member States to join in the commemoration “as a tribute to his memory, in order to spread knowledge of the greatness of his ideals and of his work for national liberation.”^{vii} Ho Chi Minh’s work for national liberation was best known through his claiming independence for Vietnam from French colonialism. On September 2, 1945, after being overseas for thirty years (1911–41) searching for a solution to the “colonial question,” and led the country of Vietnam to defeat France and Japan in the August Revolution of 1945, Ho Chi Minh read Vietnam’s Declaration of Independence. For the Vietnamese people, the gesture of Uncle Ho asking, “Do com-

patriots hear me well?” before reading the declaration warmly touched “a million hearts.” Renowned poet Tô Hữu captured this moment in his poem “Theo Chân Bác” (Following Uncle’s Journey) (1970):

He [Uncle] was about to read the Declaration, but asked:
 “Do compatriots hear me well?”^{viii}

The event was also a turning point of world history. In fact, the Declaration of Independence read by Ho Chi Minh is featured in Terry Golway’s 2009 collection, *Words That Ring through Time: From Moses and Pericles to Obama, Fifty-one of the Most Important Speeches in History and How They Changed Our World*.^{ix} Just two years before Vietnam’s independence, between 1943 and 1945, however, the United States and Vietnam were cooperating to fight against Japanese fascism in Asia. Golway refers to a story by William J. Duiker (2000)^x to illustrate how Ho Chi Minh admired the American Revolution and President Roosevelt’s ideals of anti-colonialism and equality of nations: “In late 1943, when a US pilot was downed near the Chinese-Vietnamese border, he was rescued by Ho’s comrades, known as the Viet Minh. The pilot shouted ‘Viet Minh!’ when the guerrillas approached, and they replied, ‘America! Roosevelt!’”^{xi} Susan Dunn tells another story about American officer Archimedes Patti of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the precursor to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), who Ho Chi Minh consulted about the draft the Declaration of Independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, a document that was clearly rooted in the great ideals, wording, and structure of the US Declaration of Independence, written by Thomas Jefferson in 1776.^{xii}

Throughout human history, lost opportunities abound. When we reflect upon the above stories, we are in fact witnessing the opening chapters of one of the greatest lost opportunities of the twentieth century. America was revered in Indochina at the time as a bastion of democracy and anti-colonialism in the struggle against Japanese fascism. Especially in the postwar French efforts to reclaim its former colonies in Southeast Asia, America was seen as a potential protector of great modern ideals such as equality of nations and democracy. However, caught in the postwar chaos of an ideological conflict of what became the Cold

War, America decided to support France rather than recognizing Vietnam's independence, and the United States later replaced France to intervene directly in Vietnam, a geopolitically important country with Saigon (Cochin China) being the principle base of French capitalism and the colony's capital and considered the "Pearl of the Far East" and the "Paris of the Orient."^{xiii}

One of the most hopeful leaders of contemporary Vietnam was a little-known political activist who was determined to regain independence for Vietnam and would become the first president of the newly established Democratic Republic of Vietnam in 1945. Ironically, after the first French defeat in 1945, and especially after the second, dramatic defeat at Điện Biên Phủ in 1954, Ho Chi Minh was increasingly broadly castigated in the West as a communist. This complex thinker and humanist was tarred by a broad brush, and misconceptions tended to settle into the popular consciousness – misconceptions that have endured over the decades, especially during the period known as "the Vietnam War" from 1955 to 1975.

In reality, however, Ho Chi Minh was in no way a rigid, hard-core communist; rather, he was a scholar, a flexible political thinker, and a humanist who was devoted to the well-being of his people. He often referred to thinkers such as Confucius, Jesus, Marx, and Sun Yat-Sen and their common cause of bringing happiness to the people. As we will see in the chapters to come, Ho Chi Minh was never a man to trust ideological rigidity. He believed, as his extensive writings and public statements show, that the principal goal of leaders in all political systems must be centred on the development of self-reliant, compassionate communities and societies that promote the betterment of all humankind. His dedication to this goal was precisely the "imprint on the development of humanity," to which UNESCO referred.

Golway remarks that, as Ho Chi Minh sought to win independence for Vietnam, he also helped found the French Communist Party after World War I and worked with the Chinese communists in the 1930s.^{xiv} The debate on whether Ho Chi Minh was a nationalist or a communist has dominated much of Western writing about him, and this book does not attempt to revisit this debate. However, Golway's point about the influence of both the American and French revolutions, as well as the influence of Karl Marx, on Ho Chi Minh's political development will be analyzed.

Ho Chi Minh's complex thought is as relevant today in terms of development theory as it was during his lifetime. This volume examines Ho Chi Minh's positive, timeless messages for his own people and those generations yet to come. For now, let's look at Ho Chi Minh in his early years in Vietnam.

The young Ho Chi Minh, born Nguyễn Sinh Cung on May 19, 1890 to an intellectual but poor family, grew up during a politically tumultuous time in Vietnam. The imperial Nguyễn dynasty and feudal regime were in a declining state,^x weakened and unable to fend off French invading forces. Present in Vietnam since the seventeenth century, the French first spread Christianity and replaced the local language (*Nôm*), which was character-based but distinct from Chinese language (*Hán*), with the alphabet writing. The French gradually took control of the country, imposed harsh rules, such as high personal and land taxes and forced labour, and suppressed any attempt by local people to protest or engage in an armed struggle. The French treatment of Vietnamese people as second-class citizens especially concerned the young Nguyễn, who was troubled by the contradiction between the French ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity and the reality of their brutal treatment of the people in Vietnam.

His father, Nguyễn Sinh Sắc, an accomplished scholar who refused to cooperate with the French, enrolled him in the prestigious French school National Academy (Quốc Học) in the imperial Huế City when he was eighteen, with the view that if the Vietnamese wanted to defeat their colonial master, they would need to know the French language.

By the time Ho Chi Minh was twenty-one, he had been deeply impacted by the oppressive and exploitative nature of the French colonial policy in Indochina. He had lived through and observed the poverty and misery of his people enslaved and inhumanly treated by the French whose hunger for the rich resources of Southeast Asia seemed endless. The Vietnamese youth were starved for education and information to develop their minds. Any semblance of nationalist activity was brutally extinguished by the colonial masters. Naturally, young scholars such as Ho Chi Minh were curious to know how such a power could claim to be motivated by the ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity. Perhaps the mother country was different, he calculated. Therefore, he set out to examine the reality of Western political systems



National Academy (Quốc Học) in the imperial Huế City, established by the French colonial government in 1886, where Nguyễn Tất Thành (Ho Chi Minh) studied 1907–08.

and countries in search for a solution to the “colonial question.” “After examining what they do, I will return to help our people,” he said.^{xvi}

Unlike other revolutionaries in the early twentieth century such as Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela, Ho Chi Minh started out with neither financial resources nor educational and professional credentials. In fact, Ho Chi Minh only had a grade five education at the time. However, under the French obscurantist policy, which aimed to make the population ignorant, having this education was already considered advanced, and it enabled him to work as a primary school teacher. When asked how he would finance his overseas trip, he showed his bare hands and said, “Here. The money is right here.”^{xvii}

Thus, in 1911, with a formidable commitment to the liberation of his people, Ho Chi Minh travelled the world, learning and mastering new languages (French, English, Russian, Chi-



Nhà Rồng Port (Saigon), from where Ho Chi Minh left Vietnam in 1911 in search of a way to save the country from French colonialism.

nese, and others),^{xviii} and studying the political systems and ideologies from which he extracted the seeds of freedom – seeds he would transplant into his home country. His careful studies led him to the conclusion he must distill the best ideas from East and West in what would become an ideological hybrid that reflected his thought of humanism.

At the core of Ho Chi Minh's great achievement is not only the question of how a country can go from colonial oppression and poverty to independence, freedom, prosperity, and happiness but also directions for thinking about solutions to this question. Ho Chi Minh's view of collective and individual well-being starts with moral leadership, namely humanism, benevolence, intelligence, courage, and honesty (*nhân, nghĩa, trí, dũng, liêm*). How to maintaining moral leadership to achieve independence is an extremely difficult question because it is critical to the very structure of an international power system that has been set up and dominated by the hegemony of most powerful nations and forces. The post-Cold War conflicts and the rise of China in the early twenty-first century have proved the intensity of a global power struggle in which smaller but geopolitically important countries such as Vietnam must have a role to play.

While the times were very different, I shared the same concerns about poverty in Vietnam when I left the country in

1990, at about the same age as Ho Chi Minh was when he left Vietnam in 1990 was at the early stage of implementing an open-door policy to switch from a centrally planned economy to a market economy system. I was heartbroken to witness the poverty and underdevelopment, and I aimed to understand how to solve the “development question.” I have studied and worked in various development fields in the last two decades. My personal journey in seeking development solutions for what has been loosely called the Third World brought me back to Ho Chi Minh, a strategic leader who brought about an independent and united Vietnam against all odds. Indeed, it was in an intensive study of the Ho Chi Minh Thought that led me to begin to construct a framework that I believe is instructive to those who are committed to building a better world. That framework unleashed the power of the people and enabled an extraordinary degree of courage among the masses of Vietnamese men and women, most of whom were hungry, poorly clothed, and facing soul searing poverty.

The path that led me to the Ho Chi Minh Thought has been my most significant discovery both in academic and practical terms, as I search for development solutions in the developing world. It is, however, a real challenge to find an adequately agreed upon description of Ho Chi Minh’s intellectual, moral, and broadly philosophical legacy to the people of Vietnam and oppressed peoples around the world. I use the term “Thought” here to refer to his ideals, his vision, his goals, as well as his expectations and actions – in essence, the contribution he wished to make – which Charles Fenn, captain of the Office of Strategic Services in 1944 and author of a respected biography of Ho Chi Minh, called “Hochiminity.”^{xi}

It is critical to note that Ho Chi Minh saw himself as a practitioner more than a theorist. For instance, in his 1927 work, *Đường Kách mệnh* (The Road to Revolution), Ho Chi Minh admitted that, because of the urgency to save the people, his writing was simple so that everyone could understand it. He discussed theories when they were necessary for effective practice. In 1945, after gaining independence, he remarked, “Our policies can be right today, but tomorrow they might be obsolete. Therefore, if we are not alert ... we will not keep up with changes in the new world and stay behind.”^{xx} He often humbly referred to

himself as a student of great thinkers from both East and West. Ho Chi Minh never claimed or clearly defined any *-isms* of his own. This is important to recall when we look at the tendency of many critics to dismiss him as a communist and define him purely in terms of ideology.

To understand the American tragedy of the Vietnam War requires an understanding of Ho Chi Minh's principle of "firm in objectives, flexible in strategies and tactics" (*đĩ bất biến, ứng vạn biến*). The fact that the United States would become an enemy rather than a friend, fixated on inaccurate theories and hubris that led to millions of deaths and casualties in a drawn-out tragic war, was not a course Ho Chi Minh had set.

As a humanist, Ho Chi Minh firmly believed in modern ideals of France's liberty, equality, and fraternity and America's anti-imperialism and equality of nations, as well as individual rights to pursue happiness. In both cases, he was bitterly disappointed when he realized that these ideals were not what they appeared to be. One of the more graphic illustrations of the illusions Ho Chi Minh harboured was revealed when he conceived and created one of the finest speeches in the history of humankind, the Declaration of Independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in 1945.

As would become clear, Ho Chi Minh's belief in the credibility of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's (1882–1945) anti-imperialist policies was dashed on the shoals of great power geopolitical realities.^{xxi} While he was without a doubt chastened and gravely saddened by America's capitulation power politics, Ho Chi Minh understood that this were just another example of changing strategies and tactics employed by colonialists and imperialists to exploit and oppress weaker nations. What was unchanged, as he learned twice, once in 1945 and again in 1954, was the powerful forces' inhuman intention to invade and exploit others. On the other hand, Ho Chi Minh, as a patriot, knew all along that the determination of the Vietnamese people to defend their country was always firm, but strategies could be adaptable as they had to be appropriate in each circumstance.

Ho Chi Minh, in fact, did not hold rigid application of any specific ideology. His mind was focused on the betterment of humanity, and ideologies only made sense to him as blueprints for strategic purposes. But those blueprints tended to be adaptive

rather than overly disciplined, and they were flexible in changing times and circumstances rather than crudely and strictly applied.

Indeed, for Vietnam in general and Ho Chi Minh in particular, ideologies were adaptable to national contexts, but determination for national independence was firm. Unfortunately, as history has amply illustrated, the successive US administrations misunderstood both: the United States perceived Vietnam as a communist threat *and* underestimated the will of the people to defend their country. In the failure to act upon the lessons the French learned at Điện Biên Phủ in 1954 and also to respond to the overtures of the new president of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the United States dug itself into the quagmire of a lengthy war of horrifying proportions from 1955 to 1975.^{xxii}

Understanding the Ho Chi Minh Thought has enabled me to understand more accurately world events and to answer the development question more satisfactorily. Yet, as a Canadian with Vietnamese origin who had very little experience with the wars, my journey to writing two books on Ho Chi Minh has been both intellectually interesting and emotionally difficult. While my immediate family was politically neutral during the wars, my extended family by marriages includes men who were in the Saigon Army, which was backed by the United States. I do not know if my parents – who were a professor and a teacher – are aware of my work, for we have never mentioned it.

Some of my immediate family members held minor positions with the Women's Union and the Youth Association after the reunification. As a teenager, I quietly refused to be part of these local organizations in Vietnam simply because I was old enough to make the decision not to join any group or adopt any belief until I understood what they represented. I am the only one in my family, and one of only a few in the first generation of the overseas Vietnamese community, to pursue political science and related studies after arriving in a new country.

As Vietnamese, we all face economic and emotional hardships both back home and in our new country. According to the Maslow's hierarchy of human needs, we seek survival through satisfying our basic physical and emotional needs, such as food, clothes, safety, and a sense of belonging in our community.^{xxiii} Only when these needs are met do we seek to satisfy higher needs such as education and self-actualization. The first

generation of the overseas Vietnam community experienced the wars, lived through the difficult time in Vietnam after the Fall of Saigon, and/or experienced the refugee camps and settlement period in a new country. Survival, both physical and emotional, often meant “going with the flow.”

Survival is challenging enough for many overseas Vietnamese and thus has been their only priority. In the process, many have confused common economic hardship and social and gender oppression in a developing country context with political oppression. With the impact of Cold War politics, taking up anti-communism has become a convenient way to vent frustrations or just a way to be part of a majority.^{xxiv}

Not “going with the flow” and striving to learn about the world have been enduring parts of my experience. If patriarchy could not indoctrinate me, I doubt that anything could. One cannot just escape from patriarchy. It is already there when a person is born, and there are grave consequences for not going along, including immense social and family pressure and the risk of becoming an outcast. I admire Western feminism and women and men in the West for achieving a level of gender equity that is still unimaginable to many in developing countries. Interestingly, my experience also includes avoiding being labeled “feminist” when the term is associated with negative connotations such as hating men and militancy. This experience, however, has helped me understand the politics of labeling and devise ways to cope with other serious labels.

In my previous book *Ho Chi Minh: The Heart and Mind of a Patriot*,^{xxv} I emphasized Ho Chi Minh’s motivation and desire to bring about national independence, freedom, and happiness for his people and others around the world. This emphasis was based on a conviction that stems from a Vietnamese belief that “the heart is worth three times more than the mind,” as the seventeenth-century poet Nguyễn Du wrote in *The Tale of Kiều*, the symbol of Vietnamese literature. In the current context, where both capitalism and socialism are perceived to have their own strengths and challenges, a discussion of the ethics of those who run the system (rather than which system is better) is becoming ever more relevant. As Göran Persson, former prime minister of Sweden put it, “The desire to do right must be greater than the ambition to cling to power.”^{xxvi} He referred to a “personal respon-

sibility” on the part of a true leader in bringing about public good. Ho Chi Minh would have very solidly supported this truism.

In *Ho Chi Minh: Unexplored Humanism and the Development of Vietnam*, I aim to provide a detailed analysis of Ho Chi Minh’s life and work that may prove novel to many and enlightening to those who are unfamiliar with a great man whose timeless personal light shone far beyond the boundaries of his tragic, beautiful country. I have been very fortunate in having access to many of his writings, which are so far only available in Vietnamese. Having read books on Vietnam and Ho Chi Minh from Vietnamese and Western sources for over twenty years, I am used to having to work with the significant and sometimes uncomfortable gaps between these two sources, which portray Ho Chi Minh as a decent patriot and a “starry-eyed revolutionary or a flaming radical,” respectively.^{xxvii} Vietnamese texts tend to present a humanistic analysis of his life, while Western sources focus almost exclusively on his association with communism and therefore do not reflect Ho Chi Minh and his life and work.

In the research process, I realized that going straight to the source would help me better understand Ho Chi Minh. Therefore, I extensively use Ho Chi Minh’s original writings from 1911 to 1969 from both Western and Vietnamese sources. Most of this material is in Vietnamese, which helps to ensure maximum objectivity in my interpretation of Ho Chi Minh’s life and work. Through Vietnamese colleagues, I had access to the 2009 edition of the *Ho Chi Minh Collection*, which includes twelve volumes, about six hundred pages each, in Vietnamese, published by the Vietnam National Political Publisher. I also had access to the 2011 edition of the *Ho Chi Minh Collection (Hồ Chí Minh: Toàn Tập)*, which includes fifteen volumes of six hundred to seven hundred pages per volume. The amount of information in these volumes is enormous, and in this book I can only begin the task of analyzing his works. There remains much more to consider and learn from this wealth of knowledge, wisdom, and direction for thought and actions. In this book, I include his original writing in Vietnamese in a note whenever I am concerned that the translation might not provide the complete meaning. As for development theories and practices, I combine Western materials and my research on development in Vietnam.

Given that certain topics in this book are politically sensitive, I have tried to be as objective as possible. While my dual position and experience as a Vietnamese Canadian are definitely strengths in this research, they can also be a drawback. For example, my interpretations might not be considered “mainstream” from either a Vietnamese or Western viewpoint.

This study of Ho Chi Minh and his Thought is the result of my desire to learn in the face of extraordinary contradictions and conflicts that have been ever-present in my life and to contribute to the process of development in the developing world, specifically Vietnam. The book is dedicated to the Thought itself and the powerful impact it had on a poor, exploited people who defeated three colonial powers in the course of the twentieth century. The first chapter sets Ho Chi Minh on the international stage, examining his early forays abroad, which were attempts to find the intellectual tools to set his people free. The Western construction of Ho Chi Minh as a communist is at the centre of this discussion. The US support of France from 1945 to 1954, and its own involvement in the Vietnam War after the French defeat in the historic Điện Biên Phủ battle in 1954, resulted in lost opportunities for peace and collaboration. Chapter 2 introduces, interprets, and clarifies the main aspects of the Ho Chi Minh Thought, setting the foundation for the remaining of the book. The Ho Chi Minh ideals of peace, national independence, democracy, and social progress are presented to illuminate his original thoughts on development and on humanity. Chapter 3 examines Ho Chi Minh’s view of national independence and freedom as most precious; this chapter explores resistance against colonialism and imperialism is a just cause in itself, as well as the struggle for equality of nations and the right to self-determination. Because colonialism and imperialism are exploitative and oppressive, a nation must first gain independence and freedom to achieve the goal of development. Chapter 4 addresses Vietnam’s victories, as a small and less developed country, over great military and economic powers, which astounded many people around the world. This chapter attempts to explain the logic behind the idea and belief that a smaller nation can devise strategies, from politics to military to economic development, to leverage its position when dealing with more powerful countries. At the core of these strategies is the battle for the hearts of the

people. Chapter 5 portrays Ho Chi Minh as a dedicated environmentalist with “green” visions and a feminist who fiercely defended women’s rights and brought about many progressive changes for women in Vietnam. He emphasized the importance of investing in the environment and in human capital for long-term, sustainable development. Chapter 6 revisits Ho Chi Minh’s “burning wish” for his people to enjoy independence and freedom, with basic necessities of food, clothes, and education as well as the pursuit of happiness, all of which resonate with the goals of development articulated by international development organizations. Using recent scientific research, I discuss the concept of happiness and link it with human resilience during wartime and human flourishing in post-wartime. Finally, Chapter 7 reflects on Ho Chi Minh’s emphasis on the moral responsibility of national leaders to serve their people and their role in building national unity to protect national interests and in uniting with other nations to build global solidarity. The chapter also examines the implications for Vietnam’s relations with global powers such as the United States and China.

The thoughtful reader can relate the content of this book to contemporary issues in power relations, including the economic and financial problems facing the United States and Europe, the rise of China, and intense global waves of protest such as the Occupy movement that is a by-product of the widening gap between the rich and the poor. The Thought has had many applications to many countries over the decades. It is about the power of people and the philosophical, moral, and ethical roads to unleash a vast human capacity for good, compassion, and tolerance.

In this sense, the figure of Ho Chi Minh beckons all of us interested in development economics – studies that are no longer just applicable to developing countries but also now to so-called developed nations of the West. Scholars interested in the enormous greed that precipitated the 2008 financial crisis are now looking to more pragmatic and responsible forms of post-capitalism.^{xxviii} Inherent in these studies are major issues about virtuous conduct, concern for fellow humans, and massive changes in ethical education for business school graduates, among others.

Furthermore, when we study the early twenty-first-century difficulties of the European Union, many of whose member

states are beset with ongoing problems of enormous public debt and double-digit unemployment, we can think back to the critical need for sustainable economic development – a question that Ho Chi Minh addressed in many of his tracts. As one reflects upon his contributions to development, national unity, and freedom – concepts of infinite import that cut across centuries – it becomes increasingly clear that this great communicator has remained misunderstood, not only by overseas Vietnamese, but many others around the world.

Thus, it is time to set the record straight and to have a more balanced view of our contemporary world history, when data and information from the US Government Archive and from European, Chinese, and Vietnamese sources are becoming more accessible to the public. This improved access to information will allow us to appreciate more accurately past events and to enhance international cooperation in the future.

Within Vietnam, because of the prolonged wars, there is still a great need for more systematic education and research on Ho Chi Minh to help catch up internationally in the fields of economic, social, and political studies. Education and research on Ho Chi Minh also helps to address the growing concerns about some local leaders whose lack of leadership qualities such as humanism, benevolence, intelligence, courage, and honesty, which Ho Chi Minh promoted, has seriously affected the people's well-being and overall development of the country.

It is unprecedented for a person from the generation after the Vietnam War, someone who did not experience the war, and has been overseas for over two decades and educated in the West, to write on Ho Chi Minh. My interest in development and in Ho Chi Minh came about in my personal and professional lives. I learned about the revolution in Vietnamese schools and other perspectives of civilian casualties from a collection of anti-war music by artist Trịnh Công Sơn in the South, “Vietnam’s Bob Dylan,” as Joan Baez dubbed him. In Canada, I spoke with Canadian veterans who at first seemed to be concerned for my childhood in postwar Vietnam and then were surprised to hear that I received free education there, which enabled me to continue my university education in Canada. One veteran asked, “Then why the war if we all wanted the same thing [such as free education]?”

The construction of Ho Chi Minh as a communist – the core construction of the two wars in Vietnam – is clearer now. Susan Dunn (1999) notes that “by 1946, all official American references to Ho in Washington were prefixed with the word ‘Communist,’” although the American OSS officers in Hanoi had “liked and trusted” him.^{xxix} The report often known as the Pentagon Papers, completed in 1969 and publicly released in 2011, indicates that “the US missed opportunities to bring peace, stability and independence to Vietnam” by supporting France up until its defeat in 1954.^{xxx} Then in the March 24, 1965 “Plan for Action for Vietnam,” Assistant Secretary of Defense John McNaughton restated US objectives in Vietnam as mostly to “avoid a humiliating US defeat.”^{xxxi} In retrospect, a knowledge of Vietnam’s long history of national defence against foreign invasion – that the French were there for a century before the Americans, and the Chinese were there for a millennium before the French – would be crucial in predicting that the Americans could not win the Vietnam War.

Thus, my reason for writing two books on Ho Chi Minh is ultimately to help right a wrong – a wrong that caused millions of deaths and many other human conflicts and sufferings, delayed the development of a country, and took away the truth about the humanism of a righteous leader whose life and work was much more than just communism.

It is my desire to provide my own interpretation of the Ho Chi Minh legacy in the past cause of national liberation and the current challenge of national development. In doing so, I encourage the concerned youth in Vietnam and around the world to think about building a sustainable future for themselves and generations to come. I hope to create a more active academic exchange between Vietnam and the rest of the world on topics related to Ho Chi Minh that I find very relevant and important for international cooperation in our contemporary world. After all, it was his wish to contribute his part to the betterment of our world – and to encourage others to do the same.