

INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC INTEGRATION FROM HO CHI MINH'S PERSPECTIVE: EXPERIENCES AND LESSONS FROM HO CHI MINH CITY

Nguyen Van Dao
Van Lang University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Summary: The article analyzes Ho Chi Minh's views on international economic integration and summarizes experiences and lessons from Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) in the integration process. Ho Chi Minh affirmed that international economic integration is an important step in the country's development, helping to enhance Vietnam's position in the international arena. From the achievements and limitations in HCMC's integration process, the article draws valuable lessons and proposes specific solutions to enhance the effectiveness of integration in the future. Researching and applying Ho Chi Minh's views will contribute to helping HCMC develop sustainably and integrate more deeply into the global economy.

Keywords: Ho Chi Minh's perspective, economic integration, Ho Chi Minh City.

Introduction: International economic integration plays a key role in Vietnam's economic development strategy, especially in the context of increasingly deep globalization. Ho Chi Minh, with his strategic vision, has put forward profound views on the importance of international economic integration for the cause of revolution and national development. Ho Chi Minh City, as the economic locomotive of the entire country, has taken strong steps in international economic integration and achieved many outstanding accomplishments. However, this process also faces many challenges and requires important lessons to be drawn.

1. Ho Chi Minh's View on International Economic Integration

First, International Economic Integration is Necessary

Ho Chi Minh always emphasized the importance of linking the Vietnamese revolution with the world revolution, considering “the Annamese revolution is also a part of the world revolution” (Minh, 2011a). He believed that “without strong external support, the liberation movement would hardly succeed” (Minh, 2011b). Therefore, solidarity and international integration are inevitable trends in Ho Chi Minh's thinking, helping Vietnam develop its socio-economy and improve people's lives.

From the early days of independence, Ho Chi Minh implemented the idea of international integration. In 1946, he sent a letter to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, affirming: “Vietnam is ready to implement the policy of opening up and cooperation in all fields” (Minh, 2011f). This view was concretized through diplomatic notes sent to the governments of China, the United States, the Soviet Union, and the United Kingdom, emphasizing the construction of an open economy: “All the measures of harassment imposed by

the colonial planned economy have been abolished... Vietnamese cadres and workers, under the direction of Vietnamese directors, are working diligently and effectively” (Minh, 2011c). Ho Chi Minh also proposed establishing cultural relations with the United States, sending students to study and research. Regarding France, he stated in Paris in 1946: “Complete independence by no means means severance...An independent Vietnam not only does not harm the interests of France, but also strengthens its position and consolidates its prestige in Asia” (Minh, 2011d).

Ho Chi Minh applied the economic integration perspective into practice through many economic diplomacy activities, building a solid foundation for economic diplomacy with socialist countries and the non-aligned movement. He created opportunities for economic cooperation for Vietnam through visits and learning from the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries. Visits such as the 1955 visit to the Soviet Union helped Vietnam access industrial and agricultural projects, laying the foundation for important industrial development. Ho Chi Minh emphasized learning from other countries, studying the economic development strategies of China and India to apply to Vietnam's practice.

Second, Integration Must Be Independent and Self-Reliant

Ho Chi Minh affirmed that international economic integration must ensure independence and not be “dissolved” He advocated learning but not copying, preserving, and promoting national cultural identity, and building a self-reliant economy, not dependent on foreign aid and investment.

Ho Chi Minh paid special attention to three core issues: military, diplomacy, and economy. He said: “Independence without a separate army, separate diplomacy, separate economy. The Vietnamese people absolutely do not crave that kind of fake unity and independence” (Minh, 2011g). Economic autonomy is the foundation for political independence.

Ho Chi Minh emphasized the importance of diversifying economic relations to avoid dependence on a single partner. He reminded: “The help of friendly countries is important, but we must not rely on it, we must not sit and wait for others” (Minh, 2011h). In addition, he emphasized the role of science, technology, and education in improving competitiveness, and the need to invest in education and training of high-quality human resources: “The socialist revolution is closely linked to the development of science and technology, and the cultural development of the people” (Minh, 2011k).

Ho Chi Minh also directed the improvement of agriculture and industrialization, emphasizing that development must be based on a modern scientific and technological foundation. In addition, Ho Chi Minh also attached great importance to commerce, considering it an intermediary link closely connected to agriculture. He pointed out: “In the national economy, there are three important aspects: agriculture, industry, and commerce. The three aspects of work are closely related to each other” (Minh, 2011j).

Third, Equal and Mutually Beneficial Cooperation

Ho Chi Minh advocated for international economic integration on the basis of equality and mutual benefit, for the common good. He affirmed: Vietnam “is ready to establish all friendly and cooperative relations with any country on the principles of: respecting the completeness of each other's sovereignty and territory, not infringing on each other, not interfering in each other's internal affairs, and ensuring equality and mutual benefit” (Minh, 2011i). This viewpoint emphasizes the right to autonomy and independence in international relations, avoiding domination by major countries.

Ho Chi Minh believed that international economic cooperation must aim at common interests, respect, and equality. He proposed eliminating obstacles such as colonialism and extreme nationalism to promote cooperation. Ho Chi Minh affirmed that international agreements must be based on consensus and mutual respect, negotiated in a peaceful atmosphere.

Ho Chi Minh always promoted the spirit of cooperation and mutual support among socialist countries but also protected national interests, avoiding excessive dependence on any single country. The principle of equality and mutual respect was maintained by Ho Chi Minh even in the early period of the resistance war against France, with the desire for friendly and mutually beneficial cooperation between the Vietnamese and French peoples: “The Vietnamese and the French can and must join hands in a cause of equal and honest cooperation” (Minh, 2011e).

2. Experience and Lessons from Ho Chi Minh City

First, Actively Opening Up to Attract Foreign Investment

Ho Chi Minh City has built an attractive and transparent investment environment, drawing many foreign projects in the fields of industry, services, and tourism. The city has issued many preferential policies and created favorable conditions for investors, leading to an increase in FDI capital. In 2023, Ho Chi Minh City led the country with 12,398 projects and a total registered capital of 57.632 billion USD (Diu, 2024). Industrial parks, such as Tan Thuan Export Processing Zone and Linh Trung Export Processing Zone, have attracted many international enterprises, creating millions of jobs. Ho Chi Minh City has also promoted administrative reform and digitized records to create a favorable and transparent investment environment.

Ho Chi Minh City has been actively promoting its image and investment potential abroad, regularly organizing investment promotion conferences with strategic partners such as Japan, South Korea, the United States, and Europe. The presence of large enterprises such as Intel and Samsung is a testament to the city's attractiveness. Incentive policies such as tax exemptions, infrastructure support, and labor training have increased investor confidence.

The city has also been constantly improving its infrastructure, upgrading Tan Son Nhat International Airport, Cat Lai Port, and Hiep Phuoc Port, and implementing the Ben Thanh - Suoi Tien Metro Line 1 project, expected to be completed by the end of 2024, to improve connectivity and reduce traffic congestion. These efforts have helped Ho Chi Minh City become a bright spot in

attracting investment and economic development in Vietnam, providing valuable lessons for other localities. Creating a favorable and transparent investment environment is a key factor in helping Ho Chi Minh City maintain its attractiveness to foreign investors, contributing to promoting sustainable economic development.

Second, Strongly Developing the Private Economic Sector

Ho Chi Minh City has encouraged the development of the private economic sector as an important driving force for sustainable growth. The city aims to have over 500,000 enterprises by 2025, with the private sector contributing about 65% of GDP (Hien & Bac, 2023). Ho Chi Minh City supports startups through startup support centers, assisting nearly 1,840 projects from 2016-2021, helping many businesses grow strongly.

Fairs and exhibitions such as VIMEXPO help promote products and expand markets for private enterprises. The program supports SMEs in accessing international markets, providing training and legal advice, enhancing brand value, and international competitiveness.

Ho Chi Minh City focuses on improving the quality of human resources through vocational training programs and encouraging innovation. Startup competitions and technology seminars create a dynamic startup ecosystem. The city connects private enterprises with international resources through the Investment and Trade Promotion Center (ITPC), expanding business networks and improving competitiveness.

Third, Improving Competitiveness

Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) focuses on improving the competitiveness of enterprises through administrative procedure reform, human resource training, and technology application. The “one-stop” and electronic systems help simplify legal procedures, reducing time and costs for enterprises.

HCMC encourages enterprises to apply modern technology, supporting innovation and R&D through financial support, technical consultancy, and scientific resources. The HCMC High-Tech Park (SHTP) has attracted more than 160 projects with an investment capital of 10.1 billion USD, contributing more than 50% of the City's export value (Quan, 2022). In addition, HCMC also builds and develops modern industrial parks and export processing zones to attract investment and improve production capacity while supporting the application of new technology for enterprises. Thanks to these policies, the competitiveness of enterprises in Ho Chi Minh City has been significantly improved.

Ho Chi Minh City also actively organizes technology seminars and exhibitions such as the National Innovation and Startup Festival and iTech Expo to create opportunities for cooperation and development for enterprises. These events promote the innovation ecosystem in Ho Chi Minh City.

Thanks to these efforts, Ho Chi Minh City has built a favorable business environment, helping enterprises to develop strongly. The competitiveness of enterprises is increasingly strengthened, demonstrated through the increase in

the quantity and quality of products and services. Ho Chi Minh City's GRDP in the first half of 2024 grew by 6.5%, accounting for 15.75% of the country's GDP (Ngoc, 2020), showing the great contribution of the private economic sector to the development of the City.

Fourth, Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development

Ho Chi Minh City focuses on environmental protection and sustainable development in the process of international economic integration. The city has issued many policies to encourage the use of renewable energy and waste treatment, ensuring that economic development must go hand in hand with environmental protection.

Ho Chi Minh City has been implementing communication campaigns on plastic waste, classifying solid waste at the source, and limiting the use of disposable plastic. Ho Chi Minh City has also promoted the tree planting program, with the goal of planting 10 million trees in the 2021-2025 period, reaching more than 5.7 million trees. The plan to develop parks and public green areas is also being implemented with a plan to develop at least 68 hectares of public parks and at least 4 hectares of public green areas. In addition, Ho Chi Minh City has invested in building modern waste treatment plants, with 5 projects converting solid waste treatment technology to burning for electricity generation, in which the Ho Chi Minh City People's Committee has decided to invest in 2 technology conversion projects of Vietstar Joint Stock Company (2,000 tons/day) and Tam Sinh Nghia Development Investment Joint Stock Company (2,000 tons/day). In addition, the City currently has 2,618/2,653 private waste collection teams and lines participating in cooperatives or enterprises. This waste collection force has 4,191/7,543 qualified vehicles (55%) (Bao, 2023).

Ho Chi Minh City has promoted environmental protection propaganda and education, with campaigns such as "Green Sunday" and "Limit the Use of Plastic Bags," attracting community participation. Schools, agencies, and businesses hold seminars to raise awareness of environmental protection. The city also strongly implements policies to encourage the use of renewable energy, planning to spend VND 650 billion to install rooftop solar power for 440 public offices to reduce pressure on the power system and greenhouse gas emissions.

Industrial parks and export processing zones in Ho Chi Minh City are also required to comply with strict environmental standards. Enterprises must conduct environmental impact assessments and apply measures to reduce pollution. Ho Chi Minh City's efforts to protect the environment and develop sustainably have helped the city maintain economic growth while creating a good living environment for people.

Conclusion

International economic integration is an important factor in the development of Ho Chi Minh City, helping the city accumulate experience and improve competitiveness. To go further, Ho Chi Minh City needs to continue to innovate, create, improve the investment environment, develop high-quality

human resources, apply technology to production, expand export markets, and protect the environment. The city must effectively implement the policies and solutions set out to ensure sustainable and harmonious development. With determination and creativity, Ho Chi Minh City will rise strongly, becoming a modern and livable city. Cooperation between the government, businesses, and people will be the driving force to help Ho Chi Minh City achieve its development goals, contributing to building a bright future for the city and the whole country.

The author would like to thank Van Lang University, Vietnam for funding this work

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