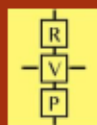




VIETNAM ACADEMY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
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COUNCIL FOR RESEARCH IN
VALUES AND PHILOSOPHY

NATIONAL VALUES IN THE NEW CONTEXT

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

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NATIONAL VALUES IN THE NEW CONTEXT

**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
PROCEEDINGS**

INTERNAL CIRCULATION

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NATIONAL VALUES IN THE PROCESS OF PROMOTING THE VIETNAMESE CULTURAL SOFT POWER TODAY

Do Thi Van Ha*

Abstract: Since the theory of soft power was born up to now, it has received the attention not only of academia but also of politicians because it is not only a theoretical issue but also a practical issues of all countries. For Viet Nam today, the promotion of cultural soft power, contributing to enhance the national strength, promoting the development of the country is very necessary because this is one of the ways suitable to the characteristics as well as the cultural resources of the country. The article affirms the necessity of promoting Vietnamese cultural soft power and the participation of some cultural values in the process of promoting Vietnamese cultural soft power.

Keywords: *values; national values; cultural soft power.*

1. Introduction

Since the early 90s of the twentieth century, the issue of cultural soft power has been mentioned and quickly been widely disseminated, received great attention from not only academic researchers but also policy makers, politicians. In fact, many countries have researched and applied this theory well in their national development and achieved success. Each country, even those have a weaker starting point in global competition, can also be used it as an effective solution to increase national synergy. However, the application and promotion of cultural soft power does not have a common formula for all, but depends on many specific conditions in each country. Therefore, each country needs to research to find out methods and ways to arouse and promote effectively the cultural soft power of their country.

Having a diverse and rich in identity culture, which has been formed through thousands of years, Viet Nam impresses international friends with many cultural heritages, many cultural values such as patriotism, solidarity, willpower, spirit of peace, kindness, tolerance, etc. Those have created cultural soft power - one of the important factors that helped Viet Nam not only defeat invaders who are stronger than us in terms of military strength

* Dr., Hanoi University of Mining and Geology.

and economic potential, but also helped us overcome all difficult times, crises and achieve the proud development today.

2. Related works

2.1. Cultural soft power and the promotion of Vietnamese cultural soft power

Cultural soft power can be understood as the attractiveness and influence of cultural values conveyed through cultural activities and cultural products of this country with other countries in international relations. This attraction is not only formed naturally from cultural values, but also formed in the initiative of the host country.

The Vietnamese historical reality of thousand years fighting against stronger foreign invaders and thousands of years against assimilation of the North have shown that the Vietnamese have really aroused and promoted cultural soft power potential of the nation, although at that time, this had never been named or generalized into theory. The national cultural values such as patriotism, solidarity, humanism, etc. have been exploited and manipulated by generations of ancestors to increase the national synergy, find a reasonable way to protect and develop our country, help us overcome severe challenges. Today, to face and solve challenges in competition and national development, the summarization of cultural values, behaviors and lessons learned has been formed in thousands of years will help us find suggestions for current problems. It can be said that it is the unique national cultural values that have existed in Vietnamese culture for thousands of years that will become an important resource that creates attractiveness for people from other countries in international relations. That is the soft power of Vietnamese culture. Viet Nam's cultural soft power is a potential form that needs to be aroused and promoted to become a resource and a part of the national synergy. Only then can culture “really become a solid spiritual foundation of society, an important endogenous force to ensure sustainable development and firmly defend the Fatherland for the goal of rich people, a strong country, democracy, justice and civilization”¹ as emphasized by Resolution of the 9th Party Central Committee (11th tenure). General

¹ Viet Nam Communist Party (2014): The Resolution of the 9th Party Central Committee (11th tenure) on “Building and developing Vietnamese culture and people to meet the requirements of sustainable development of the country”, at <https://tulieuvankien.dangcongsan.vn/van-kien-tu-lieu-ve-dang/hoi-nghi-bch-trung-uong/khoa-xi/nghi-quyet-so-33-nqtw-ngay-962014-hoi-nghi-lan-thu-9-ban-chap-hanh-trung-uong-dang-khoa-xi-ve-xay-dung-va-phat-trien-590>, [truy cập ngày 2/11/2021].

Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong also affirmed: "Viet Nam's soft power is first expressed in its attractiveness, emanating from cultural values including tangible and intangible values, spiritual values and Vietnamese human values. We must promote those values to create a "brand" for our country, attractive to the outside world, contributing to raising the spirit of national pride, confidence in communication and promotion. spreading Viet Nam's cultural values to the world"¹.

In order to promote cultural soft power, Viet Nam needs to use specific transmission channels to spread our unique cultural values (spiritual cultural values, cultural activities, heritage and cultural products), making them penetrate, permeate into other social communities and attract them, thereby contribute to the increase of Viet Nam's power. For Viet Nam, promoting cultural soft power is an appropriate way to increase national synergy because it is suitable for the economic potential of a developing country with low cost and long-term effectiveness. Compared with the use of hard power such as military maneuvers or economic campaigns that require enormous costs to achieve results, the process of promoting cultural soft power is more economical. Not only does it cost less, but cultural soft power even helps countries that own and use it to gain more economic benefits when it promotes the development of many fields of cultural production and services.

2.2. Typical national values in the process of promoting Vietnamese cultural soft power.

Many researchers have affirmed that one of the deep roots leading to victory in the construction and defense of our fatherland is the spiritual and the cultural strength, in which the cultural and spiritual values have been formed and passed down through generations of Vietnamese people, becoming the cultural identity of Viet Nam. Among these, many values are not only meaningful in the past but up to the now are still relevant to the modern context and convincing to the world. That is also the potential of Vietnamese cultural soft power, as it creates a fascinating historical story for many foreigners to answer their questions about the battles and victories. Viet Nam's fierce foreign invaders.

¹ Nguyen Phu Trong, Speaking at the 29th Diplomatic Conference on August 22th, 2016, at <https://vov.vn/chinh-tri/toan-van-phat-bieu-cua-tong-bi-thu-tai-hoi-nghi-ngoai-giao-lan-thu-29-542895.vov>

Up to now, there have been many views on the core values of Viet Nam that have been put forward based on different ways, from descriptive to generalization, to systematization. Although there are certain differences, there are some values that are agreed by the majority of researchers as belonging to the national cultural identity of Viet Nam. That is patriotism; spirit of independence and self-reliance; solidarity; spirit of tolerance, kindness; creativity and flexibility. These cultural values were formed in the natural (struggling with nature) and social (fighting with foreign invaders) circumstances of Viet Nam. Today, in the context of extensive globalization, when the whole world has become a “global village”, countries are aware of and strive for international integration, the above values still show its meaning and relevance to the development of Viet Nam in particular and of humanity in general. Many foreigners are impressed with Vietnamese people by these characteristics. If we know how to promote these values, the story about Viet Nam and its people will create sympathy, gain a lot of love and consensus from international friends.

Firstly, the patriotism and the spirit of independence and self-reliance.

The Vietnamese people's views about the country and territory were born very early and were often molded during the struggle against foreign aggression. It is the process of regularly and continuously facing foreign invaders with many times more strength, it is the time of thousands of years living under the yoke of feudalism in the North that has formed in Vietnamese people the patriotic spirit at all levels, and also because of that, patriotism has become a life ethic, a leading factor in the value table of the Vietnamese people. This has been proven through a series of documents and historical documents of the nation such as: the poem “Nam Quoc Son Ha” by Ly Thuong Kiet, “Hich tuong si” by Tran Quoc Tuan and especially “Binh Ngo Dai Cao” by Nguyen Trai in 1427. Vietnamese people are aware that their status can only be guaranteed in an independent country, therefore, they are determined to fight against foreign invaders to affirm the right to national independence, the right to live independently of them. The Vietnamese people's mind is imbued with one principle: there is no freedom, equality and individual happiness in a nation of slaves. President Ho Chi Minh affirmed: “Our people have a passionate patriotism. It's one of our precious traditions. From the past to the present, every time the Fatherland was invaded, that spirit became vibrant, it formed an extremely powerful

and huge wave, it swept through all dangers and difficulties, it plunged all traitors and invaders”¹. Thanks to this patriotic spirit, independent will and self-reliance, the Vietnamese have maintained, protected and built their homeland for thousands of years. This value conveys many heroic historical stories of the Vietnamese people from traditional to modern, creating extremely attractive stories about our country.

Secondly, the spirit of solidarity.

Traditional Vietnamese people were born and raised in the context of an agricultural culture. The process of agricultural production requires irrigation and natural disaster prevention, so a single family cannot do it on their own. Therefore, people must organize and stick together in a common community, which is the village, to create strength to meet the development requirements of production and to harmonize interests. In such a context, community cohesion was formed very early and is highly appreciated in the traditional culture of the Vietnamese people. The Ly, Tran, and Le dynasties of Viet Nam had to confront foreign invaders from the north with much stronger strength, but they all maintained the independence of the nation. The reason for that result was because all these dynasties recognized and used the power of unity in the court as well as in the entire people. Facing the much stronger enemy, these courts mobilized the support and strength of the entire people in fighting the enemy, thereby maintaining national independence. This historical story is a heroic testament to the solidarity of the Vietnamese people, and if we know how to exploit it, it will be an impressive point to create the attraction of Viet Nam.

Third, the spirit of tolerance and kindness.

The geographical position at the crossroads of Southeast Asia makes Viet Nam a place of exchange of many cultural flows, especially under the simultaneous influence of two great cultures from ancient times - the Chinese and Indian culture. Therefore, the Vietnamese neither reject foreign cultural values nor monopolize the indigenous culture, but are willing to accept it as long as it does not go against the national interests. Not only that, the Vietnamese people also absorb and modify these cultural values to suit Vietnamese conditions. The spirit of cultural tolerance has contributed to the formation of a unified Vietnamese culture in diversity. Because of that, in

¹ Ho Chi Minh (2011): Complete Collection, National Political Publishing House, Ha Noi, Vol. 7, p. 38

the history of Viet Nam, we can see a peaceful existence instead of the conflicts of many religions, beliefs or special actions such as "opening the way for life" - dropping the remains of the invader after lost battle, even providing them with food, etc. Today, the spirit of tolerance and kindness of the Vietnamese people and Vietnamese culture is reflected in the way we face conflicts over borders and territories in the East Sea. Viet Nam has persistently sought to resolve disputes through peaceful negotiations, respecting the legitimate interests of relevant countries and respecting the cultural values of humanity, and always seriously negotiating and resolving issues on the basis of international law. In the context of a world with many conflicts, where one of the causes of conflict is the difference of cultures, more than ever, people appreciate and uphold the spirit of tolerance, trust and mutual understanding in order to build harmonious cooperation in international relations. The spirit of tolerance in Vietnamese culture manifests itself through ideas and actions that close the past, look to the future, and solve problems by peaceful solutions, thus becoming a potential for Viet Nam to gain friendly attitude, which makes it attractive to international friends.

Fourth, creativity and flexibility.

Creativity and flexibility are quite typical characteristics of Vietnamese people. Despite going through a long history of being ruled and culturally assimilated, the Vietnamese still built and maintained their own culture. Vietnamese people with a creative, flexible spirit along with a spirit of inquisitiveness have absorbed and localized foreign cultural elements to create an outstanding culture with many achievements, from spiritual values such as folklore, the introduction of writing (Nom script) to material culture, such as costumes (four-body dress, ao dai), dishes, etc. The flexibility and creativity of the Vietnamese people are also reflected in the military art with the model of guerrilla warfare, people's war, depending on the terrain conditions, depending on the time to conduct, thereby winning in the wars in which the Vietnamese are always in a weaker position. In the field of transportation, the cart, which was improved by Vietnamese people from bicycles to carry hundreds of kilograms of goods, is a unique creation that surprised the French and Westerners. This characteristic can probably be explained by the cultural characteristics of the Vietnamese. The consciousness of farmers is associated with water, considering water as a

vital element of life, so water is a special element in Vietnamese culture. Some researchers have even affirmed that Vietnamese culture is a culture of water. Vietnamese people have a soft and flexible behavior like water, easily adapting to the changes of the times. Nowadays, this feature is one of the important characteristics for a country to quickly participate in the international integration process.

These traditional spiritual values have created Vietnamese bravery throughout the nation's history. That spirit and behavior has touched even those who have invaded our country, creating the image of a small but resilient country, ready to fight to defend the justice and the country. That is the soft power of Vietnamese culture. These values, these historical stories, if they become the material for cultural stories and are told in the right way, will surely create an attraction for international friends.

3. Conclusion

With a traditional culture that includes many unique values that are suitable for the current context, Viet Nam can confidently plan a specific strategy to promote cultural soft power, to not only enhance the image and position of the country in the world, but also can cope with the encroachment and influence of foreign cultures. In the specific condition of Viet Nam today, it is possible to consider a number of basic methods to promote cultural soft power such as through cultural diplomacy, developing cultural industry, using mass media and developing tourism. Thereby, we can build an overall strategy, and then specific strategies for each industry and each field to turn these national cultural values into strength to protect and develop our country.

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