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Controversies over Monuments Commemorating Hồ Chí Minh in Vietnam

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- With the beginning of its reform policies in 1986, Vietnam's development can be characterised by the rise of the market economy and decline of ideology.
- The Communist Party and the State have attempted to anchor the fading ideology, the foundation of their rule, by, among other means, erecting at great cost numerous monuments to Hồ Chí Minh.
- This has become a movement reminiscent of the socialist emulation practiced in the pre-reform period.
- Given that Vietnam faces many economic and political challenges, the seemingly excessive spending on these monuments has been regularly questioned.
- The Party and the State have to reconsider how to balance their economic and political needs.

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INTRODUCTION

After decades of war and disastrous economic policies, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) shifted toward a market economy with a reform policy known as *đổi mới* (renovation), which began taking effect from 1990. At that time, the country was ranked among the poorest in the world.¹

Market reforms attracted foreign investment and saw a loosening of control over ideology. The use of state ideology declined the more that prosperity increased.² In any case, with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the disintegration of the socialist bloc, many Vietnamese were finding it difficult to take socialism seriously. Moreover, the reforms had also exposed them to Western democratic values and economic consumerism. Concerned about the foundations of their power, the Party and the State began to build monuments and memorials at a cost of billions of Vietnamese dong.

Monuments to historical and mythical figures that are considered to embody the Vietnamese spirit, culture, and heroic history were built all across the country, though by far most have been constructed to commemorate Hồ Chí Minh.³ This essay is about this process of enhancing the memory of Hồ Chí Minh among the people through monuments, as well as the monumental controversies, including economic concerns, that have ensued.

HỒ CHÍ MINH AS A SOURCE OF POLITICAL RELIGION

For many decades, the Vietnamese party-state, and Hồ Chí Minh himself, tried to replace the polytheistic landscape of Vietnam with one political religion – love for Hồ Chí Minh – and through that love to foster loyalty to the Party and the State. To a significant extent, the State did succeed in squeezing theistic religions out of the people.

According to the 2019 state census, 83 million out of 96 million (or over 86%) Vietnamese do not follow any religion.⁴ The decades of suppression of theistic religions, followed by the collapse of the foundations for a socialist future and by economic development and consumerism, led to a questioning of the moral foundations of the country. Uneven living conditions for different strata of the population in different localities also caused people to express doubts about the Party and the government. The Vietnamese State and Party responded to this worrying trend through the promotion of a political religion – The Cult of Hồ Chí Minh – with campaigns such as “To Study and Follow Hồ Chí Minh’s Moral Example” and “To Live, Fight, Work, and Study Following the Example of Great Uncle Hồ”.

To be sure, pictures and busts of Hồ Chí Minh had started to appear in 1945, and are still required in all institutions and organisations. The mausoleum where Hồ Chí Minh’s body is kept was completed in 1975, with Soviet assistance. In 1990, on the 100th birthday of Hồ Chí Minh, the Hồ Chí Minh Museum, also constructed with Soviet assistance, opened its doors. That same year, a monument of Hồ Chí Minh holding a girl was erected on the main square of Hồ Chí Minh City, in front of City Hall.

In the first decade of the 21st century, monuments to Hồ Chí Minh began to spread like wild-fire around the country. In 2000, an 18-meter-high monument to Hồ Chí Minh at the 11-hectare complex on the square bearing his name was built in Vinh city.⁵

In 2004, the Ministry of Culture, Sport, and Tourism issued, with the prime minister's approval, a plan to build a series of Hồ Chí Minh monuments by 2010. The proposed monuments were divided into two groups: Group A covered those to be established in administrative centres, and Group B were those to be established in public offices and on the campuses of institutes of higher education. The monuments were to be located in provinces associated with important events in the Vietnamese revolution, bearing the imprint of President Hồ Chí Minh's life and revolutionary career, and associated with historical landmarks of the country. Their role, as the plan prescribed, was to commemorate and honour Hồ Chí Minh's great contributions to the country and the people, and to promulgate Hồ Chí Minh's ideology and the study of his teachings. They were to depict his charisma, spiritual beauty, and noble personality, thus meeting the emotional needs of the Vietnamese people and their international friends.

The monuments of group A were to be subsidised primarily by the State, while the monuments of group B were expected to be financed by raising funds from organisations and personal contributions. It was specifically stipulated that the State would apply forms of reward and recognition to organisations, collectives, and individuals who made positive contributions to this project.⁶ After 2010, a new plan lasting until 2030, was to be implemented.⁷

Not all monuments were connected to places where Hồ Chí Minh had visited or lived. One of the most notable monuments, built at a cost of VND 80 billion (US\$3.5 million), opened in 2012 in Pleiku.⁸ At the opening ceremony in December 2012, Hà Sơn Ninh, a member of the Party Central Committee and the Party Secretary of Gia Lai province, said that even though Hồ Chí Minh never visited the Central Highlands, “all his thoughts and actions have always followed the lives of ethnic minorities here. This was evident when he wrote a letter to the Congress of ethnic minorities in South Vietnam that took place in Pleiku on 19 April 1946.”⁹

By 2015, as many as 134 monuments to Hồ Chí Minh were erected, and many more were and are planned. The opening of each monument is accompanied with great fanfare, with the highest officials of the Party and/or the State present. Many of them are called “Uncle Hồ with the people of (the name of the province)”. They aim to secure connections between the Party and the State, on the one hand, and the people of various localities, on the other.

In 2015, the 115th anniversary of Hồ Chí Minh's birthday, many new Hồ Chí Minh monuments appeared. For example, the one that was built in 1990 at the Hồ Chí Minh City municipal hall was replaced with a monument almost twice its size.¹⁰ In Tuyên Quang province, northwest of Hanoi, a new monument entitled “Uncle Hồ with People of All Ethnic Groups in Tuyên Quang” was erected at a cost of VND 130 billion (US\$5.6 million).¹¹

CONTROVERSIES OVER HỒ CHÍ MINH STATUE IN SON LA PROVINCE

Soon after the initiation of the new monuments, a controversy flared up over their costs, triggered by a plan to build a monument called “Uncle Hồ with Compatriots of the Peoples of the Northwest” in the capital city of Son La province.¹² Son La is a remote mountainous province in northwestern Vietnam on the border of Laos, and is one of the poorest provinces in Vietnam, second only to its neighbouring province, Lai Châu.¹³

Discussions about the monument had started to circulate in 2006, and in 2014 the government approved its construction.¹⁴ On 3 August 2015, it became known through news outlets that the People’s Committee of Son La province had ratified the project, at a total cost of VND 1.4 trillion (US\$64 million).¹⁵ This stirred public opinion, with many blogs and newspapers carrying critical comments about the exorbitant sum.¹⁶

The provincial and central governments reacted swiftly. On 4 August, Cầm Ngọc Minh, Chairman of the Son La province People’s Committee, explained that the statue itself would cost only VND 200 billion (US\$8.6 million), while the rest of the money would pay for a complex that included a public square.¹⁷ He stressed that this square was necessary since the province did not have one to serve its political, economic, cultural, and social activities.¹⁸

On 5 August, Deputy Minister of Culture, Sport, and Tourism Vương Duy Biên came forward with his own explanation that what the government approved in 2014 was only the idea of the project but they had not seen or approved either the model or the investment.¹⁹ The following day, Prime Minister Nguyễn Tấn Dũng announced that he had directed Son La Provincial People's Committee to report to him on the project and to proceed with the construction of the monument only after obtaining approval of the model and after the sources of investment had been identified.²⁰

Meanwhile, a group of 141 intellectuals and leaders of different religious and social organisations, launched an online petition opposing the erection of new monuments of Hồ Chí Minh across the country.²¹ They claimed costly projects “not only stand in total contrast to the conditions of extreme poverty of people but create lucrative chances for greedy officials to embezzle public funds”. The petition accused the government of using the Hồ cult to intensify its rule over the country while ignoring serious challenges such as the growing threat from China in the South China Sea, Vietnam’s political and economic dependence on its northern neighbour, and a public debt that had soared to US\$110 billion by the end of 2014. The group appealed to the government to focus on essential infrastructure, including roads, bridges, clinics, and schools rather than on lavish monuments in remote parts of the country.²² No one responded to them; nor did they think that anyone would respond, as I was told by one of the signatories.

The petition did not have any effect, and construction proceeded. Not even when floods and landslides devastated Son La province in August 2017 was the project stopped. While help to restore the province was slow in coming, the construction of the monument proceeded as planned. On 7 May 2019, the completed statue was unveiled in the presence of two Politburo members, Trần Quốc Vương and Trương Thị Mai, many other members of the Central Party Committee and the government, and representatives of different organisations from many provinces.²³ It is hard to say whether or not the absence at this event of Nguyễn Phú Trọng, the Secretary General and concurrently President of Vietnam, or Prime Minister Nguyễn

Xuân Phúc, was a result of the controversy. Reporting on the inauguration of the monument in 2019, the Hồ Chí Minh Museum stressed two points: the initiative came from the province itself to commemorate Hồ Chí Minh's visit there, and other provinces of the northwest contributed to the project, thus demonstrating that not everything came from State coffers.²⁴ The plan to build the next series of Hồ Chí Minh monuments by 2030 has not yet been approved, and there have been signs of controversy around it.

Nevertheless, new monuments continue to appear. The opening of the monument in Sơn La province is definitely not the last. On 11 December 2019, the People's Committee of Quảng Bình Province approved the construction of a Hồ Chí Minh monument.²⁵ Like Sơn La province, Quảng Bình is one of the poorest provinces in the country, and its capital, Đồng Hới, does not have a central square suitable for activities or a memorial to revolutionary martyrs. The monument is expected to be completed in the first half of 2020, at an estimated cost of VND 78.8 billion (US\$3.4 million).²⁶ This is a more modest expense than Sơn La's, perhaps indicating a desire to avoid the impression of an exorbitant undertaking.

An "Uncle Hồ with Peasants" monument was also set to be unveiled in Thái Bình province by 21 March 2020.²⁷ As of today, I have been unable to ascertain the cost of this project. It is possible that publicising the cost is going out of vogue, to avoid provoking public discontent.

CONCLUSION

Hồ Chí Minh's monuments are conceived as the expression of the people's love for their leader, as a pledge of their loyalty to the State, and as the perpetuation of the cult status of Hồ Chí Minh. The proliferation of such objects in Vietnam also demonstrates the State's fear of losing control of the people and its attempt to keep them in or to bring them into the fold through Hồ Chí Minh. The state certainly does not want the monuments to be seen to be of its own initiative. The plans, the directives, and the speeches at the inauguration of the monuments all stress that the initiative comes from the localities, and is not imposed from the centre. While this might be nominally true, the issue is much more complex. To be in the good graces of the Party-State, it has become essential for a province to have a monument to Hồ Chí Minh. With so many localities getting a Hồ Chí Minh monument, it is unseemly to remain without one. Given that since 1945 Hồ Chí Minh has become the signifier of the State and the Party, his monuments thus also express the connection between the people, the State, and the Party. Would the absence of a monument be seen as a lack of loyalty to the Party and the State? Would the absence of a monument signify that Hồ Chí Minh did not have any connection to their province, even if only through sending a letter as in the Pleiku case, or that the people of the province do not love Hồ Chí Minh enough?

To a certain extent, it is reminiscent of the socialist emulation movement – one must participate in the emulation and not stay on the side-lines or walk away from it, for fear of being left without a Hồ Chí Minh monument and becoming an outcast. Moreover, for many localities, it is the best, if not the only way to get money for the improvement of their infrastructure, and to create a public space. While they take suggestions from the provinces, the State and the Party are however the ones who decide whether or not a monument is suitable and is to be subsidized for all or part of the expense.

For the State and the Party, monuments are a means for making their ideology visible. This has become especially important with the progress of the market economy. Prior to the 1990s, ideology was instilled through books, films, and theatre, which were all saturated with socialist realism, glorifying Hồ Chí Minh, the Party, the State, and the revolution. But the market economy has changed all of that.²⁸ Monuments have become one of the very few means for the State and Party to demonstrate their legacy. The bigger the monument, the more people see it. Unlike books, theatre, or movies, they are not easy to avoid, especially in smaller and poorer localities where people do not have many public places at which to congregate.

Whether or not these monuments create or reinforce the connection of localities to the Party and to the State is a different matter. The economic development of Vietnam since 1990 is undeniable, but as the country's GDP moves up to 47th place in the world, its per capita GDP is still among the 55 lowest in the world.²⁹ While the cities are developing fast, the countryside, especially the remote provinces, remains in a very difficult economic situation. While there are still a lot of people, especially the older generation, who are genuinely attached to Hồ Chí Minh, many, particularly in the poor remote provinces, have very different feelings about him and the state he represents. For them, Hồ Chí Minh is a culprit for the poor conditions that they are in, and the fact that the authorities pay for his monuments aggravate these feelings. For them and for many other Vietnamese, the exuberant costs of the monuments compounded by the cost of their maintenance are an astounding waste of resources that could be channelled to the people's good.

The fact that the authorities chose not to recognise the value of the 2015 anti-monument criticism of the Son La monument, and still refuses to acknowledge it today, does not necessarily demonstrate their lack of awareness of the problem. The fact that these objections could appear and that the Party-State reacted, even if in a rather perfunctory way trying to justify the process, shows how far they have moved away from the state over which Hồ Chí Minh presided. But it also shows how far they have yet to go to admit that Hồ Chí Minh's monuments are not the anchor that will keep their ideological construct intact. The absence since 2010 of a continuing plan for constructing Hồ Chí Minh monuments through to the year 2030, along with the continued erection of new monuments, is a sign of the monumental controversy that is yet to be resolved.

¹ In 1990, Vietnam's GDP was US\$6.28 billion with a per capital income of US\$98, <https://countryeconomy.com/gdp/vietnam?year=1990>

² In 2018, GDP was over US\$260 billion, and Vietnam was ranked 47th in the world, with a per capita income of US\$2,698, <https://countryeconomy.com/gdp/vietnam>

³ In May 2019, a new monument to Hồ Chí Minh called "Uncle Hồ with compatriots of the peoples of the Northwest" was inaugurated in Son La province to commemorate his visit to the province on 9 May 1959. This is but one of many similar monuments, memorials, and museums that have mushroomed everywhere in Vietnam over the past two decades.

⁴ Out of 13,162,879 religious people (slightly less than 14% of the population), 6,842,838, around 7% of the population or almost 52% of the religious people, follow Christianity (including Catholicism, Protestantism, Seventh-Day Adventism, and Mormonism), 5,625,980 (around 6% of the total population and close to 43% of the religious people) follow some school of Buddhism (including Hòa Hảo with 983,079 followers). The rest follow various other religious denominations (around 0.7% of the population or 5% of the religious people). *Dân số theo tôn giáo, thành thị, nông thôn và giới tính*, 1 April 2019, <http://tongdieutradanso.vn/ket-qua-tong-dieu-tra-dan-so-va-nha-o-thoi-diem-0-gio-ngay-01-thang-4-nam-2019.html>

⁵ It was officially inaugurated on 19 May 2003, Hồ Chí Minh's 113th birthday.

⁶ All monuments must be part of the long-term governmental plan approved by the Politburo and the Secretariat of the Party Central Committee or approved by the same offices on a case-by-case basis, if they had not been included in the plan. See “Quyết định 185/2004/QĐ-TTg của Thủ tướng Chính phủ về việc phê duyệt quy hoạch tượng đài Chủ tịch Hồ Chí Minh đến năm 2010,”

<https://vanbanphapluat.co/quyet-dinh-185-2004-qd-ttg-quy-hoach-tuong-dai-chu-tich-ho-chi-minh-den-2010#van-ban-goc>

Nguyễn Hưng Quốc, “Phong trào xây tượng đài Hồ Chí Minh ở Việt Nam,” 18 August 2015,

<https://www.voatiengviet.com/a/phong-trao-xay-tuong-dai-ho-chi-minh-o-vietnam/2916910.html>

⁷ However, in 2016, the Prime Minister directed the Ministry of Culture to expand the scope of the plan. Thông báo 101/TB-VPCP của Văn phòng Chính phủ về kết luận của Thủ tướng Chính phủ Nguyễn Xuân Phúc tại cuộc họp thường trực Chính phủ về Quy hoạch Tượng đài Chủ tịch Hồ Chí Minh đến năm 2030, 26 May 2016, <https://bvhttdl.gov.vn/quy-hoach-tuong-dai-chu-tich-ho-chi-minh-den-nam-2030-7718.htm>

⁸ Pleiku is the capital city of Gia Lai province, the second-largest province in Vietnam by size. It is located in the Central Highlands and largely populated by ethnic minorities. The monument is located in the Great Unity Square and is called “Uncle Hồ with the peoples of the Central Highlands”. It is 10.8 metres high with a pedestal 5.4 metres high, featuring reliefs made of natural stone about 60 metres long and 12 metres high. Hồ Chí Minh had never been to Gia Lai or even to the Central Highlands.

⁹ According to the Party, the people of Pleiku want to pay him back for his love. Nguyễn Phú Trọng, the Party’s Secretary General, who attended the ceremony, expressed confidence that Gia Lai province and the Central Highlands provinces in general will continue to move forward, “making greater contributions to the revolutionary cause of the whole Party and the entire nation”. See “Khánh thành Tượng đài Bác Hồ với các dân tộc Tây nguyên”, 10 December 2012,

<https://dantri.com.vn/chinh-tri/khanh-thanh-tuong-dai-bac-ho-voi-cac-dan-toc-tay-nguyen-1355507878.htm>

¹⁰ The new statue is 7.2 metres by 4.5 metres, and stands on a pedestal 2.7 metres high.

¹¹ “Quy hoạch chỉ để khẳng định Sơn La sẽ có tượng đài Bác Hồ”, 5 August 2015,

<http://cafef.vn/thoi-su/quy-hoach-chi-de-khang-dinh-son-la-se-co-tuong-dai-bac-ho-20150805173305368.chn>

¹² The monument was meant to commemorate his visit to the province on 9 May 1959.

¹³ Comparing GDP of affected provinces to Hanoi. General Statistics Office (GSO) from Le Trieu Duong,

“In Vietnam poverty and poor development, not just floods, kill the most marginalized,”

Theconversation.com

29 August 2017, <http://theconversation.com/in-vietnam-poverty-and-poor-development-not-just-floods-kill-the-most-marginalised-82785>

¹⁴ “Công văn số 2124/TTg-KGVX của Thủ tướng Chính phủ : V/v bổ sung Tượng đài Bác Hồ với đồng bào các dân tộc Tây Bắc tại Tp.Sơn La, tỉnh Sơn La vào Quy hoạch Tượng đài Chủ tịch Hồ Chí Minh sau năm 2010”, 30 October 2010,

http://www.chinhphu.vn/portal/page/portal/chinhphu/hethongvanban?mode=detail&document_id=177152

¹⁵ The monument would feature Uncle Hồ with the compatriot peoples of the northwest, in conjunction with the construction of a plaza.

¹⁶ For an array of opinions see for example Kính Hòa, “Trăm năm bia đá cũng mòn, ngàn năm bia miệng vẫn còn trơ trơ”, 10 August 2015,

<https://www.rfa.org/vietnamese/news/programs/ReadingBlogs/stone-stael-still-eroded-comma-08102015051437.html>

¹⁷ The complex includes a monument to martyrs, a general museum, an administrative and reception area, a green campus having a square with a capacity of 20,000 people. The entire complex would cover 20 hectares.

¹⁸ Q. Đô, “Chủ tịch tỉnh Sơn La lý giải nguồn tiền xây dựng tượng đài ‘nghìn tỷ’”, 4 August 2019, <https://dantri.com.vn/xa-hoi/chu-tich-tinh-son-la-ly-giai-nguon-tien-xay-dung-tuong-dai-nghin-ty-20150805085649566.htm>

¹⁹ “Quy hoạch chỉ để khăng định Sơn La sẽ có tượng đài Bác Hồ”, 8 August 2015, <http://cafef.vn/thoi-su/quy-hoach-chi-de-khang-dinh-son-la-se-co-tuong-dai-bac-ho-20150805173305368.chn>

²⁰ “Thủ tướng yêu cầu Sơn La báo cáo việc xây tượng đài Bác Hồ”, appeared in the electronic Governmental Newspaper on 6 August 2015, <http://baochinhphu.vn/Tin-noi-bat/Thu-tuong-yeu-cau-Son-La-bao-cao-viec-xay-tuong-dai-Bac-Ho/233305.vgp>; “Thủ tướng chỉ đạo UBND tỉnh Sơn La về việc xây dựng tượng đài Bác Hồ”, appeared on the governmental website on 7 August 2015, <http://vpcp.chinhphu.vn/Home/Thu-tuong-chi-dao-UBND-tinh-Son-La-ve-viec-xay-dung-tuong-dai-Bac-Ho/20158/16662.vgp>

²¹ Among them were Dr Nguyễn Quang A from the Civil Society Forum, Phạm Chí Dũng from the Independent Journalists’ Association of Vietnam, Dr Chu Hảo, who at the time served as Director of the Trí Thức Publishing House, and the Catholic Bishop Paul Nguyen Thai Hop, Head of the Episcopal Commission for Justice and Peace of the Vietnamese bishops.

²² “Tuyên bố của các tổ chức xã hội dân sự và công dân về những dự án tượng đài trăm tỷ, ngàn tỷ,” 10 August 2015, <http://vanviet.info/van-de-hom-nay/tuyen-bo-cua-cc-to-chuc-x-hoi-dn-su-v-cng-dn-ve-nhung-du-n-tuong-di-tram-ty-ngn-ty/>, <https://nguyentuongthuy2012.wordpress.com/2015/08/10/tuyen-bo-cua-cac-to-chuc-xa-hoi-dan-su-va-cong-dan-ve-nhung-du-an-tuong-dai-tram-ty-ngan-ty/>; It was also discussed in several blogs and English language articles, for example “Opposition to costly Hồ Chí Minh statues”, 22 August 2015, <http://vietnamrightnow.com/2015/08/opposition-to-costly-ho-chi-minh-statues/>; “Vietnam Intellectuals Protest Massive Constructions of Hồ Chí Minh Statues”, 26 August 2015, <https://www.vietnamhumanrightsdefenders.net/2015/08/26/vietnam-intellectuals-protest-massive-constructions-of-ho-chi-minh-statues/>

²³ The statue was 7.9 metres tall with a 4.7-metre-tall pedestal and a 54-metre-long background wall of 18 metres at its highest point.

²⁴ Phương Linh, “Khánh thành tượng đài Bác Hồ với đồng bào các dân tộc Tây Bắc tại Sơn La”, 8 May 2019, <http://baotanghochiminh.vn/khanh-thanh-tuong-dai-bac-ho-voi-dong-bao-cac-dan-toc-tay-bac-tai-son-la.htm>

²⁵ The monument, titled “President Hồ Chí Minh with the people of Quảng Bình”, seeks to commemorate Uncle Hồ’s visit to the province on 16 June 1957. The province is located along the north-central coast of Vietnam, bordering Laos.

²⁶ The statue of Hồ Chí Minh itself will cost VND 41.8 billion (US\$1.8 million). See “Tượng đài ‘Chủ tịch Hồ Chí Minh với nhân dân Quảng Bình’: Công trình văn hóa có giá trị đặc biệt”, 28 July 2019,

<https://www.baoquangbinh.vn/van-hoa/201907/tuong-dai-chu-tich-ho-chi-minh-voi-nhan-dan-quang-binh-cong-trinh-van-hoa-co-gia-tri-dac-biet-2168909/>; Nguyễn Hoàng, “Lễ rót hợp kim đồng vào khuôn đúc Tượng đài Chủ tịch Hồ Chí Minh với nhân dân Quảng Bình”, 24 November 2019, <https://www.baoquangbinh.vn/thoi-su/201911/le-rot-hop-kim-dong-va-khuon-duc-tuong-dai-chu-tich-ho-chi-minh-voi-nhan-dan-quang-binh-2172252/>

²⁷ The monument celebrates the 130th anniversary of the establishment of the province, and commemorates Hồ Chí Minh’s five visits to the province. See “Thái Bình xây Tượng đài Bác Hồ với nông dân”, 28 May 2014,

<https://nhandan.com.vn/xahoi/item/23336202-thai-binh-khoi-cong-xay-dung-tuong-dai-bac-ho-voi-nong-dan.html>; Thu Hà, “Kiểm tra công trình tượng đài Bác Hồ với nông dân”, 19 December 2019, <http://thaibinhvtv.vn/tin-tuc/16/50857/kiem-tra-cong-trinh-tuong-dai-bac-ho-voi-nong-dan>

²⁸ Before 1986, books about Hồ Chí Minh were published in hundreds of thousands of copies. Now, often only a thousand copies are published, as people have a choice of what they want to read and what they want to buy. Movies and theatre productions about Hồ Chí Minh, the

revolution, and the Party also do not sufficiently attract the public to make these productions financially viable.

²⁹ While Vietnam’s GDP is currently ranked 47th, this is largely due to Vietnam being the 15th most populous country in the world. Its per capita GDP is another matter. Out of the 14 countries that are more populous than Vietnam, only 4 countries (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nigeria) have a larger GDP but a lower per capita GDP than Vietnam. Only Ethiopia, being more populous than Vietnam, has a lower GDP and a lower per capita GDP. See:

<http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/countries-by-gdp/>.

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