



A decade of Vietnamese cultural diplomacy: From recognition to action (2010-2020)

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Abstract

The year of 2020 marks a 10-year period of reforming strategies in diplomacy in general and in cultural diplomacy in particular of Vietnam. In 10 years, Vietnamese cultural diplomacy (VCD) has made important achievements contributing to the national diplomatic goals including multilateralization and diversification of relations, active and proactive integration, being a trustworthy friend and partner, a responsible member of the international community, and promoting Vietnam's prestige on the world stage. Not only recognizing the need for being more diverse, opener and deeper, VCD has also successfully introduced its own theoretical framework. A variety of action plans have been launched so far and brought back remarkable results. Among these, the project on "Honoring President Ho Chi Minh, a Vietnamese hero of national liberation and a great man of culture overseas" is one the most important contents. This is a clear reflection of Vietnamese policies and methods of doing cultural diplomacy from 2010 to 2020. The project provides valuable lessons to Vietnam in building and implementing the cultural diplomatic policies more efficiently in the future.

Keywords: Vietnam, cultural diplomacy, Ho Chi Minh, foreign affairs, the UNESCO

1. Cultural diplomacy and the concept of cultural diplomacy in Vietnam

'Culture' in cultural diplomacy is not limited to literature, art, and drama, but it includes broader values of "a people's past history, religion, philosophy, law, interest, language, and all other capabilities acquired by man as member of a society" (Anand, 1981; p.16). That is why culture, instead of ideals, politics or economics, is the difference and the uniqueness that distinguishes one person from another. The right awareness of the coverage of culture in cultural diplomacy plays an essential role in determining the importance of culture in international cooperation as well as the content of the activities of cultural diplomacy. The behavior of national governments is shaped not only by the pursuit of power and wealth, but also by priorities, similarities, and differences of culture; therefore, largely important and dangerous potential conflicts are likely to arise between groups of people belonging to different cultural entities. Accordingly, Joseph Nye, when referring to the concept of 'soft power', emphasized that culture is seen "as a source of soft power" (in places where it is attractive to others) (Gienow-Hetch, 2010; p.10).

Thus, what is cultural diplomacy?

Cultural diplomacy is a special field of diplomatic activity concerned with the use of culture as both an object and a means to achieve the fundamental goals of a nation's domestic and foreign policies. Specifically, culture is used to create a good image of the country, and to promote the national culture and language to the world. At the same time it is also a field concerned with establishing, developing and maintaining relationships with other nations through culture, art and education. As a result, the fundamental interests of a nation such as development, security and expansion of international influence are ensured and promoted. Although various forms of cultural diplomacy were rekindled in the nineteenth century when Britain, France, and other European empires exercised their influence in the United States, the concept of cultural diplomacy was officially born in the United States in the cold war period. At this point, "much of the US-centered research is based on the premise that cultural diplomacy became a key instrument of foreign policy in the nation's effort to contain the Soviet Union." American researchers used cultural diplomacy to describe the process by which a nation, as one polar of the world, increased its sphere of influence through non-political and non-military forms. According to the Advisory Committee on Cultural

Diplomacy, the US State Department believes that cultural diplomacy is a two-way street helping foreign people understand the US, and at the same time helping America understand what other peoples are thinking. Therefore, the term of "cultural diplomacy" refers to the association of political influence and manipulation, followed by the elements of interaction in activities and foreign policy of nations.

Since cultural diplomacy has become more and more popular, research and scholarship in this field have also flourished. The concept of cultural literature is observed from many different angles and points of view as well as updated with changes in domestic and foreign situations. These views all share in one common point that cultural diplomacy uses culture as a special and diverse field and tool to establish, develop, and maintain relations between countries. This is achieved through building a good image as well as spreading a country's culture and language around the world. The content of cultural diplomacy is defined by the use of a variety of cultural factors to make impact on foreign communities, influencers, and leaders. These factors contain all the characteristics of a culture such as: education, history, science, art, religion, customs, personality, sports, language, and interests. These factors are skillfully conveyed in many forms, of which the important role is the effective operation of the increasingly brilliant mass media, making the geographical distance become increasingly closer as well as external cultures become closer and more alive.

Regarding cultural diplomacy, it is necessary to mention **the relationship of cultural diplomacy, public diplomacy, and soft power**. In the multi-dimensional relationship among these three factors, public diplomacy and cultural diplomacy are considered as keys and tools to implement soft power policy. Although the relationship of cultural diplomacy and public diplomacy is interdependent and not mutually exclusive, each country has a different way of evaluating and formulating strategies for these two forms of diplomacy. Researchers generally share the view that cultural diplomacy and public diplomacy play an important role in the formation, implementation, and development of soft power while the relationship/correlation between diplomacy culture and public diplomacy follow two distinct trends. Some scholars and countries develop and implement cultural diplomacy strategies as an independent form of diplomacy, while others consider cultural diplomacy as an integral part of public diplomacy or people-to-people diplomacy such as Japan or the United States.

Vietnamese cultural diplomacy is formed based on traditional cultural values and identities. The cultural spirit of the Vietnamese people or the cultural identity of the Vietnamese nation include the main features of **patriotism, community, idealism in social behaviour, openness and adaptability and integratability**. Traditional Vietnamese diplomacy is an identity diplomacy characterised by amiable, soft-hearted to remote citizens, and internal emperor-external king policies (Nguyen Dy Nien, 2008; p.49). Cultural identities or national identities have been contributing to the formation of clear cultural diplomacy policies and orientations. It is not only a policy of softness and openness in conduct, responsibility and community in international cooperation, but also reflected in the goal of cultural diplomacy to introduce the image of Vietnam as a country with kindness, tolerance, morality, peace-loving as well as the spirit and diplomatic strategy of 'unchangeable-adaptable' motto (using the unchangeability to adapt to all changes) as one of the identities of Ho Chi Minh's school of diplomacy. It shows the consistency in strategies, goals and ideals with the 'unchangeable' national interests but flexibility in strategies, paths, ways of doing, seeing, handling, steps and the tempo in each period. This diplomatic policy expresses the flexibility and mobility depending on the issue, from time to time and depending on the object or partner in all circumstances, but it is consistent and uncompromising in principle and in issues that influence national independence. This is the foundation of Vietnamese diplomacy in general and Vietnamese cultural diplomacy in particular. Speaking at the 29th Diplomatic Conference on the morning of August 22, 2016, Party General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong emphasized the cultural identity of the Vietnamese nation, which is soft but tough, compassionate but resilient. It is a unique school of diplomacy imbued with the 'Vietnamese bamboo-tree' identity, making a worthy contribution to maintaining the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity.¹

The values of traditional national cultural identity have made an important contribution to the building and shaping of orientations, goals and implementation methods of Vietnamese cultural diplomacy. Firstly, patriotism is the dominant ideology and orientation for cultural diplomacy activities. Adaptability, inquisitiveness, openness and gentleness have also contributed to the formation of diplomatic ideologies and strategies of keeping a tough, uncompromising stance on principles but being flexible to avoid bad consequences. Secondly, the goal of cultural diplomacy is to build the image of the country, culture and people of Vietnam community with compassion, tolerance, morality, and peace in the international. Along with the application of softness, solidarity, and creative spirit, cultural diplomacy has the overall power to promote other relationships such as political diplomacy and economic diplomacy. Thirdly, softness and openness in behavior, a sense of community and solidarity, and the spirit of industriousness and creativity, as the basic characteristics of Vietnamese people, are also three important factors in the implementation of cultural diplomacy activities. Cultural identity plays an important role for the development of diplomacy in general and cultural diplomacy in particular. The noble values forged through thousands of years of history have created a modern Vietnamese diplomacy imbued with national identity.

¹ Cited from the speech of General Secretary of Vietnam Communist Party at the 29th Diplomatic Conference, available at <http://vov.vn/chinh-tri/toan-van-phat-bieu-cua-tong-bi-thu-tai-hoi-nghi-ngoai-giao-lan-thu-29-542895.vov>

Although the role of culture in Vietnamese diplomacy was early mentioned, cultural diplomacy officially became one of the three pillars of Vietnam's foreign policy and first identified at the 23rd Diplomatic Conference (2001) and then at the 10th National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam (2006) and the 25th Diplomatic Conference (2006). The combination of awareness of the role of culture and awareness of the need to promote international integration is one of the main factors that makes the Vietnamese government pay more attention to cultural diplomacy. Such changes create the basis for cultural diplomacy activities that have been strongly implemented since 2009, actively contributed to changing as well as improving the national image. Culture is no longer a side event accompanying diplomatic activities but has been an event that is invested, purposeful, and is a means to promote the country and people of Vietnam. Therefore, the role of cultural diplomacy is increasingly being strengthened by not only actively participating in coordination with other fields but also being considered as the spiritual pillar of economic and political diplomacy in the implementation of national foreign policy goals.

Although mentioned in many documents, studies, and even official policy documents of the government, there is still no unified or official concept of cultural diplomacy in Vietnam. In the diplomatic perspective, cultural diplomacy is considered as "a form of diplomacy through culture to establish, maintain and develop foreign relations". Specifically, according to former Politburo member, former Deputy Prime Minister, and former Minister of Foreign Affairs Nguyen Manh Cam, by linking with political diplomacy and economic diplomacy, cultural diplomacy creates a common front for the overall outcome of diplomacy. Former Deputy Prime Minister Nguyen Khanh also said that cultural diplomacy is one of the pillars of diplomacy, not a part of foreign culture. It is the implementation of foreign policy to achieve political goals by cultural tools and cultural measures. In which, cultural values will be a sustainable spiritual support for diplomatic activities, and create pressure on partners to effectively implement national political, economic and cultural policies. The Department of Cultural Affairs and UNESCO of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam defined cultural diplomacy as an external activity that is organized, supported or sponsored by the state. This activity is implemented in a certain period of time in order to achieve certain political and foreign policy objectives under cultural forms such as: art, history, ideology, tradition, cuisine, films, publications, and literature. The target audience of cultural diplomacy is the government and people of other countries to promote the image and enhance the position of the country and nation instead of specific profit. The objective of cultural diplomacy is to contribute to ensuring national security, serving economic development, enhancing the country's position and image in the international arena, and serving the overseas Vietnamese community. Along with political diplomacy and economic diplomacy, cultural diplomacy is one of the three pillars of Vietnamese diplomacy. In the cultural perspective, cultural diplomacy is perceived as a specific activity using cultural tools to achieve the goals of diplomacy and using diplomacy to honor the beauty of culture. On the government side, the official definition of cultural diplomacy set forth in the *Strategy on cultural diplomacy through 2020* is "the implementation of state-led cultural activities to achieve the objectives of politics, economics and culture that are in line with the general requirements of foreign affairs. The content of cultural diplomacy includes five main activities: paving the way, opening relations with countries and regions that have not had much relations with Vietnam; promoting, strengthening and deepening the understanding with other countries; promoting the image of the country and people of Vietnam in the international arena; doing campaign for Vietnam to have more heritages recognized by the UNESCO; and absorbing the cultural quintessence of humanity to enrich the national cultural identity."²

In sum, Vietnamese cultural diplomacy is the use of culture as both a tool and an objective, as well as use culture to implement diplomacy and use diplomacy to develop national culture. For Vietnam, the current concept and activities of cultural diplomacy are similar to public diplomacy. The strategy of cultural diplomacy, the promotion of people-to-people exchanges, the use of cultural tools and external information in international relations, etc. are also considered as public diplomacy activities to exercise "soft power".

2. Overview of cultural diplomacy activities of Vietnam in the past 10 years

On February 14, 2011, the Prime Minister ratified Decision No. 208/QĐ-TTg approving the *Strategy on Cultural Diplomacy through 2020*, which stated: "Cultural diplomacy along with economic diplomacy and political diplomacy are the three pillars of Vietnam's modern and comprehensive diplomacy". This document not only recognizes the change in views and perceptions of the Vietnamese government on cultural diplomacy, but also recognizes the efforts and achievements that cultural diplomacy have brought back so far. Accordingly, cultural diplomacy has received the attention and participation of the whole society. It can be said that this document is a push for Vietnamese cultural diplomacy to change both qualitatively and quantitatively, shortening the gap between awareness and action. Based on the *Strategy*, cultural diplomacy is thoroughly understood and implemented in all ministries, departments, and localities throughout the country in a more diversified and richer form, and a proactive attitude. As a result, in the past 10 years, cultural diplomacy has been proving its indispensable role in the implementation of Vietnamese foreign strategy.

² Pham Sanh Chau, Head of Department of External Culture and UNESCO, interviewed with author in April 2016

In term of politics, cultural diplomacy is an important tool to enhance mutual understanding, a glue that binds and promotes political relations between countries. The political role of Vietnamese cultural diplomacy has been consistently and thoroughly demonstrated in its historical role. It was early used during the Vietnam War to increase international support for the legitimacy of the war in Vietnam. After that, cultural diplomacy continued to "break the ice" and "pave the way" to bring Vietnam out of the period of isolation, normalize relations with other countries and integrate into the world. Finally, cultural diplomacy today is strongly promoted to strengthen and develop relations with countries into strategic partners. *In term of economics*, cultural diplomacy plays a crucial role in promoting economic growth. Moreover, culture itself is also an important industry. Cultural diplomacy is an important promotion and support tool for attracting foreign investment, developing the tourism industry, and introducing Vietnam's tangible and intangible cultural values to the world community. Since then, it has played a major role in improving the economic and social life in the localities, especially in remote and isolated areas, and in ethnic minority areas. Along with expanding activities associated with localities, cultural diplomacy has supported localities in sustainable development as well as international integration. In particular, cultural diplomacy is even more meaningful in the context that Vietnam is integrating deeply into international life. The phenomenon of cultural interference is increasingly strong and widespread. Besides, the need to enjoy cultural values is growing and changing rapidly, requiring creative methods of cultural transmission as well as rich and qualified cultural products. In turn, all levels, sectors and people also need to have a deep understanding of the cultures of the country. Entering a new phase, Vietnam's policy of extensive international integration will be further promoted. Vietnam will make efforts to deepen its external relations and develop relations with key partners and traditional friends. *In multilateral diplomacy*, Vietnam continues to be an active and responsible member of ASEAN, and at the same time participates more actively in other multilateral mechanisms, especially the United Nations. In addition, in the context of the constantly complicated world and regional situation, the effective implementation of the foreign policy with the above orientation has posed new challenges to Vietnam's diplomacy. Regarding the role of enriching national cultural identity, cultural diplomacy significantly help absorbing world cultural values and adding them to the national culture, creating a new, rich and varied culture. Thus, recognizing the importance of cultural diplomacy reflects the recognition of the interdependencies between political, economic and cultural backgrounds.

In recent years, Vietnam's cultural diplomacy activities have been widely conducted in various forms both at home and abroad with impressive results.

First of all, cultural diplomacy has witnessed remarkable **developments in the ideology and awareness** of cultural diplomacy from the central to local levels. Through training and retraining programs for staffs, as well as actively implementing the *Strategy on Cultural Diplomacy* by linking the cultural diplomatic work with the major goals, tasks and external activities of each agency, unit, and locality, cultural diplomacy is now no longer a strange concept. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs established a Steering Committee of Cultural Diplomacy³ meeting twice a year in order to direct the cultural diplomatic activities in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Vietnamese representative agencies abroad, and promote cooperation with other related agencies and organizations. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also focuses on promoting propaganda and raising awareness of cadres, civil servants and public employees about the position and role of the *Strategy on Cultural Diplomacy*. In addition, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs established the Department of Communication and External Culture at the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam to train human resources to serve the cultural diplomatic activities of ministries, departments, agencies and localities.

Promoting activities and enhancing roles at UNESCO and international organizations: The UNESCO is one of the key and essential partners of Vietnamese cultural heritages. Because the various titles and recognitions of the UNESCO help the image of Vietnam more deeply depicted on the world cultural and heritage map, as well as enrich the treasure of cultural heritage of mankind. Accordingly, Vietnam manages to promote its landscape, country, culture, traditions and people to international friends. These titles have been becoming a direct resource for economic development and sustainable development in many localities of Vietnam based on the protection of cultural values, environmental protection, and human and nature cohesion. As of November 2020, Vietnam has 40 titles recognized by the UNESCO, including: 8 world cultural and natural heritages, 13 intangible cultural heritages, 7 documentary heritages, 9 biosphere reserves, and 3 global geoparks. Besides, as both a member of the General Assembly, the Executive Council of UNESCO for the 2009-2013 term and the 2015-2019 term, and a member of the World Heritage Committee for the 2013-2017 term, Vietnam has actively participated in this organization not only in the field of culture but also made good use of the UNESCO's ideas and programs in education and science such as the UNESCO's support for Vietnam to build a set of indicators to assess the quality of national education and training, a basis to propose policies to deal with inadequacies and improve the quality of education. In addition, Vietnam and the UNESCO successfully established and put 2 UNESCO Type 2 Centers on Mathematics and Physics into effect and launched several research programs on the sea in natural sciences.

³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Decision no.2773/QĐ-BNG ratified by the Prime Minister in October 2013

The Vietnam Week/Days program overseas is a prominent activity of Vietnamese cultural diplomatic activities organized annually. The Vietnam Days Overseas program includes the *Vietnam Year* (one-year program), *Vietnam Month* (one-month program); *Vietnam Week* (one-week program) and *Vietnam Days* (one-to-three-day program) abroad. These activities are implemented with three main contents including political diplomatic activities of Vietnam such as meetings and talks, introduction of cooperation opportunities in investment, trade, tourism and services with Vietnam, and people-to-people exchange activities. In the past 10 years, *Vietnam Days* activities have been host by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and coordinated with relevant agencies in the following countries: Japan (2013), Italy (2013), Netherlands (2014), Qatar (2014), UAE (2014), United States (2015), Switzerland (2016), Denmark (2016), Spain (2017), India (2018), Canada (2018), Russia (2019), and China (2019).⁴ The programs were organized on the occasion of the visits of Party and State leaders to countries that are strategic partners and comprehensive partners of Vietnam. Many diverse cultural activities aimed at the public and Vietnamese community in the host countries such as: painting/photo exhibition, quintessence of Vietnamese cuisine, Vietnamese space, art performance, film week Vietnam, etc. have contributed to introducing the country, people and culture imbued with national identity, conveying messages about Vietnam's development orientations and international integration, promoting the relationship between Vietnam and other countries deeper, meeting the cultural needs of the Vietnamese community in the host country, contributing to arousing the feelings of attachment to the homeland, towards the Fatherland, and strengthening the preservation of Vietnamese cultural identity in the overseas Vietnamese community.

Cultural diplomacy for the work of Vietnamese people overseas is increasingly concerned. For example, maintaining and promoting the Vietnamese language by promoting Vietnamese language learning and teaching projects at educational institutions and research institutes including the Faculty of Oriental Languages, Far East University, Ho Chi Minh Institute, etc. and in the areas of Vietnamese community living in Russia. In the Czech Republic, the Vietnamese-Czech community maintains the teaching of Vietnamese, and is successfully recognized as one of the 14 ethnic minorities of the Czech Republic, having the right to have its own language, writing and culture in accordance with the laws of the Czech Republic. In addition, the representative agencies of Vietnam's Ministry of Foreign Affairs also encourage and directly organize the Vietnamese people overseas community to participate in cultural and sports activities (i.e. community singing contests, food festivals, Vietnamese fashion, sports tournaments, football, etc.) to promote the beauty of national culture, contemporary art and Vietnamese folklore, as well as introduce culinary culture, traditional costumes, and sports to local friends. In short, the activities of Vietnamese cultural diplomacy in recent years have proved the undeniable importance and increasingly powerful role in Vietnam's foreign policy. From diverse programs and tireless efforts of cultural diplomacy, Vietnam's image has come close to international friends while tightening friendship with many countries around the world. Along with economic diplomacy and political diplomacy, cultural diplomacy also plays an important role in promoting socio-economic development in the country. More than that, cultural diplomacy increases solidarity by pulling peoples closer together. Therefore, there have been many opinions that cultural diplomacy is the basis for forming and promoting Vietnam's soft power in the 21st century.

3. Case Study: the project on “Honoring President Ho Chi Minh, a Vietnamese hero of national liberation and a great man of culture overseas”

As one of the three main contents of Vietnamese cultural diplomacy in the past decade (besides the programs of Vietnam Day/Vietnamese Culture Week and the UNESCO-related work), the project on *Honoring President Ho Chi Minh, a Vietnamese hero of national liberation and a great man of culture overseas* has been widely implemented around the world. In the Blue Book of Vietnamese Diplomacy 2018, the role of the project is emphasized as "not only contributing to honoring the moral thought, personality and values of the hero of national liberation and the great cultural scholar, but also contributing to raise national pride and cohesion, as well as strengthen the overseas Vietnamese community towards the Fatherland." Since it was approved by the Secretariat of Vietnam Communist Party in 2009, the Project has been operated on all continents in more than 100 countries and territories around the world through a network of 94 Vietnamese government agencies with various forms and scales. In other words, the 10 years of implementation of Vietnamese cultural diplomacy strategy 2010-2020 are closely associated with the activities of the project on *Honoring President Ho Chi Minh, a Vietnamese hero of national liberation and a great man of culture overseas*. This is one of the most important and throughout cultural diplomatic activities of Vietnam in the past 10 years.

The objective of the Project is to preserve and protect the vestiges of President Ho Chi Minh in all parts of the world, and to promote the image of Vietnam through the image of Ho Chi Minh, thereby to deepen the relationship between Vietnam and other countries. Honoring President Ho Chi Minh aims to uphold and promote the ideological, moral and personality values of President Ho Chi Minh as well as honor the country and people of

⁴ The events of 2020 (in Indonesia, Angola and Germany) were cancelled because of the Covid-19 pandemic

Vietnam in the international arena. The image of President Ho Chi Minh contributes to promoting the image of Vietnam with its patriotic tradition and will for independence, freedom, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity; about a Vietnam with the heroic history of nation building, defending the country and military art of the Vietnamese people; and especially the humanistic tradition, the peaceful nature, the justness of the struggles of the Vietnamese people as well as the open spirit, always wanting and ready to be friends with the people of all countries.

During the 10 years of the Project, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam has implemented various programs and activities honoring President Ho Chi Minh such as:

- Activities to honor President Ho Chi Minh have contributed to the implementation of Directive 05 of the Politburo on studying and following Ho Chi Minh's thought, morality and style for cadres and party members abroad to always shows confidence, culture and sincerity in external communication and at the same time in contact with the Vietnamese community in the host country while expressing the spirit of loving the people, respecting the people, and serving the people.
- Restoring relics, embellishing and building new statues and monuments, affixing steles and naming streets named after President Ho Chi Minh: As a result, there are 11 memorial sites named after President Ho Chi Minh in Asian and European countries; the number of monuments of President Ho Chi Minh is 35 works in 22 countries on 4 continents (Asia, Europe, America, Africa) and currently, the erection of a statue of President Ho Chi Minh in other countries are still being taken very seriously. The form of placing steles and attaching a bronze sign with 10 works were done in countries of Singapore, UK, Slovakia, India, etc. Many African countries have nearly 20 roads, streets, avenues, schools, and classrooms named after President Ho Chi Minh. These works are a symbol of solidarity and friendship between Vietnam and other countries, a place to keep memories of President Ho Chi Minh and a place to organize exchange activities with international people and friends, thereby helping to strengthen the cooperative relationship toward Vietnam.
- Along with that, Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its representative agencies held a variety of meetings, talks, seminars, etc. to celebrate President Ho Chi Minh's birthday, Vietnam's National Day, and other important national events. At the same time, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism also organized many events to honor Uncle Ho such as artistic and creative activities about President Ho Chi Minh (art shows, exhibitions, etc.), international seminars, translating, editing, and publishing several documents, books, and films about President Ho Chi Minh, etc. The most remarkable one is the Seminar on the occasion of the 30th Anniversary of the UNESCO's Resolution honoring President Ho Chi Minh as *a Vietnamese hero of national liberation and a great man of culture (2987-2017)*, and the seminar on *Ho Chi Minh's Heritage with Vietnamese Cultural Diplomacy in a New Era* on October 29, 2019.

The implementation of the Project to honor President Ho Chi Minh can be seen as a typical example of efforts and practices, advantages and difficulties as well as lessons learned for cultural diplomatic activities of Vietnam in general. Its success firstly stems from the building of a unified and transparent key message. In the process of honoring President Ho Chi Minh, the two titles of *a Vietnamese hero of national liberation* and *a great man of culture* were used consistently and inseparably. Uncle Ho's cause for national liberation always contains very high cultural, humanistic and moral values that have an impact in the cause of national liberation and affirm the position of the Vietnamese nation. In addition, it is necessary to constantly connect President Ho Chi Minh with the Vietnamese people because he is the embodiment of the nation, the leader of the nation, and crystallizes the cultural values of the nation. The prominent message in these activities can be seen that honoring President Ho Chi Minh also means honoring the nation, and introducing the Vietnamese nation to the world. The implementation of this Project also shows the close, rhythmic and effective cooperation between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, and local agencies, the active participation of non-state actors such as domestic and foreign corporations, enterprises and individuals. It was fully planned, throughout 10 years with action plans and specific goals, that helps eliminate various risks such as over-spread and rambling organization without a focal point, which might cause distraction and waste, significantly affect the overall image of the whole project. With the visible and measured figures, the evaluation of the effectiveness and contribution of the Project also becomes more tangible and easier, creating motivation for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its representative agencies to perform properly.

The budget has been and will still be a major limitation for the Project on honoring President Ho Chi Minh in the coming years as well as for the cultural diplomatic activities of Vietnam in general. Due to the modest funding, the scale of works and activities is limited. It is difficult for Vietnam to conduct intensive programs or reach a wider foreign audience. The coordination and cooperation with departments and local authorities in the host country also face many challenges. This difficulty takes place both in the process of cooperation and discussion on the construction of new monuments as well as the conservation, preservation and repair of completed and ongoing works. Currently, these activities are largely undertaken by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, its representative

agencies and the Vietnamese community living abroad, but in order to preserve the memorial works honoring President Ho Chi Minh for a long time or to enhance interaction with local people, the role of the local government in these countries must be taken under concern.

In order to promote these legacies to improve the effectiveness of Vietnam's cultural diplomatic activities in the new period, Vietnam should focus more on President Ho Chi Minh's human values such as the spirit of peace-loving, justice and friendship with all nations, as well as the spirit of independence and self-reliance, etc. The longer-term programs should be considerate such as the connection between the works commemorating President Ho Chi Minh in different continents to represent President Ho Chi Minh's active life and contributions clearly and comprehensively to humanity.

Conclusion

Cultural diplomacy is emphasized by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Pham Gia Khiem as follows: "Cultural diplomacy plays a very important role both as a spiritual foundation as well as a measure and objective of Vietnam's foreign policy to effectively complement other pillars, construct a foreign policy as a whole, and perform the best national strength that is effectively combined with the strength of the times."⁵ By widely promoting Vietnamese unique cultural values, cultural diplomacy aims to convey to international friends the message of a peaceful, stable, friendly, and open Vietnam, which is implementing successful innovation, developing rapidly and sustainably, and playing an increasingly larger role in the region and in the world. Its richness and flexibility help all the actors more easily access the concept of "cultural diplomacy" that has become popular and close to each people and each level instead of dedicated only for politicians.

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⁵ Deputy PM Pham Gia Khiem's speech at the opening ceremony of the national conference on *Cultural diplomacy for a Vietnamese identity on the interational arena, peace-serving, integration and substainable development* host by Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 15-16 Oct 2008 in Hanoi, and sponsored by the UNESCO