

Culture of Savings and Anti-Wastefulness: Enduring Values and Significance for Sustainable Development



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ABSTRACT: The culture of savings and anti-wastefulness is one of the precious and cherished traditional values of the Vietnamese people, playing a significant role in the nation-building and development process. Today, Ho Chi Minh's ideology on savings and anti-wastefulness has become a solid foundation for national development policies. Maintaining and promoting a culture of savings associated with anti-wastefulness not only brings economic benefits but also serves as a tremendous and powerful driving force that contributes to the rapid and sustainable development of the nation while improving all aspects of the people's lives. To shed further light on related issues, this article focuses on analyzing and systematizing the content and enduring values of the culture of savings and anti-wastefulness in relation to Vietnam's sustainable development amidst the current context of integration and progress.

1. INTRODUCTION

Throughout Vietnam's long history of development, the culture of savings and anti-wastefulness has always been regarded as a key factor, closely associated with admirable traditions such as diligence, creativity, and resilience in overcoming the harsh challenges of nature, the struggle against foreign invasion, and the building and development of the nation. This is not merely an economic action but a way of life that encompasses humanistic and ethical values, clearly reflecting individual responsibility toward the community, society, and nature. Therefore, the culture of savings and anti-wastefulness is not just an economic matter but holds profound significance for the sustainable development of society.

In the present day, the world faces enormous challenges threatening humanity's survival, including environmental pollution, climate change, depletion of natural resources, and issues surrounding sustainable economic development. In this context, the culture of savings becomes increasingly significant. Each nation and community has its own distinctive values related to savings and anti-wastefulness, and Vietnam is no exception. From early on, savings and anti-wastefulness have been seen as indispensable elements in the effort to build and safeguard the nation.

Recently, the renaming of the Central Steering Committee for Anti-Corruption and Negative Phenomena to the Central Steering Committee for Anti-Corruption, Wastefulness, and Negative Phenomena, coupled with the decisive, forward-thinking directives of General Secretary To Lam, reflects the Communist Party of Vietnam's recognition of and determination to combat this silent and dangerous "disease" from within. This is not only a goal but also a mission that requires the collective effort and political resolve of the entire Party, the political system, and the people, especially the younger generation, under the absolute, direct, and comprehensive leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam.

2. HO CHI MINH'S IDEOLOGY ON SAVINGS AND ANTI-WASTEFULNESS: A FOUNDATIONAL AWARENESS FOR VIETNAM'S NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

President Ho Chi Minh, a national hero, an eminent cultural figure, and the great leader of the Communist Party of Vietnam, was also a steadfast communist revolutionary in the global workers' movement. His life was a shining example of selflessness, dedicated entirely to the revolutionary cause of the nation and to the advancement of global progress, peace, and justice. During his lifetime, Ho Chi Minh provided numerous directives on implementing a culture of savings and combating wastefulness. These principles have not only served as foundational elements in shaping the Party's policies but have also been recognized as universal values for humanity.

Ho Chi Minh's ideology on savings and anti-wastefulness transcends resource management; it embodies profound moral, political, and cultural principles that reflect his vision for sustainable national development. He regarded savings as a critical factor in building and defending the nation, considering it a "national policy" that everyone should practice to achieve prosperity and national self-reliance. He famously stated: "During both resistance and nation-building, our people must save; unnecessary activities should be reduced or eliminated to achieve self-reliance and self-sufficiency" (8). For Ho Chi Minh, savings is not merely about

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managing assets but about respecting all resources, including labor, natural resources, time, and materials. Savings must be applied across all sectors, from production and consumption to the actions of individuals and organizations in society.

Ho Chi Minh's ideology on savings aligns with the goal of building a just, democratic, and civilized society. During the war years and times of economic hardship, he emphasized the role of savings in safeguarding national resources and maintaining the economy under difficult circumstances. He believed that every grain of rice, every pill, and every moment was precious and must be used responsibly. He stressed: "Do not think saving small things like scraps of paper or pen nibs is insignificant" (7). Over time, his principles of savings became an essential cultural value, demonstrating revolutionary ethics while spreading throughout society.

President Ho Chi Minh not only emphasized the importance of practicing savings but also paid close attention to combating wastefulness and extravagance. He noted: "With savings and without extravagance, one can maintain integrity and purity. If extravagance exists, one will find ways to embezzle money, leading to corruption, dishonesty, and deceit" (8). For him, wastefulness was a dangerous phenomenon, manifesting in reckless and unreasonable consumption that harms national resources. He identified three main forms of wastefulness: waste of labor, waste of time, and waste of public and national assets.

Ho Chi Minh warned of the grave consequences of wastefulness, asserting: "To waste is like letting the wind blow through an empty house. Embezzlement is a crime, and wastefulness is also a crime. The people entrust their money to us; wasting it is a crime against the people" (11). Wastefulness not only depletes material resources but also leads to negative consequences in governance, fostering moral degradation and weakening state institutions. He emphasized that embezzlement, wastefulness, and bureaucracy are "internal enemies," enemies of revolutionary ethics and socialism. These issues, he noted, stem from a lack of integrity and responsibility, causing financial damage and eroding the people's trust in the Party and the State. Ho Chi Minh declared: "We must resolutely combat wastefulness in our agencies and daily lives. We must stop reckless spending of the people's money and government funds," and he considered such wastefulness unacceptable (10).

Ho Chi Minh's ideology on savings comprises three main aspects: savings in financial use, labor, and time. According to him, savings is essential for maintaining integrity and purity in both work and daily life. Financial savings involve safeguarding national resources and demonstrating responsibility toward the people, avoiding wastefulness of state assets. Labor savings mean using human effort effectively, avoiding waste of time and energy. Time savings emphasize maximizing every moment for the collective benefit, avoiding unnecessary delays. Ho Chi Minh stated: "Savings is not about being stingy. When something should not be spent, even a penny should not be wasted. But when there is a worthwhile cause, something beneficial for the people and the nation, one should gladly commit any amount of effort and resources. That is true savings" (9). He distinguished savings from miserliness, emphasizing the rational and effective use of resources for long-term national, societal, and public benefits.

To combat wastefulness, President Ho Chi Minh called on agencies and individuals to eliminate ostentation and extravagance, such as lavish festivals, banquets, and unnecessary meetings. He pointed out: "If you preach diligence to others but indulge in long lunches and late mornings, or if you advocate savings but live extravagantly, your preaching will be ineffective, even if you continue for a hundred years" (8). Ho Chi Minh further highlighted that wastefulness not only depletes material resources but can also lead to embezzlement, corruption, and moral decay, ultimately eroding public trust in the Party and the State. He warned: "Wastefulness arises from bureaucracy and a lack of responsibility. Any bureaucratic sector is prone to wastefulness and, subsequently, corruption" (11). Therefore, combating wastefulness requires both individual awareness and strong leadership from the Party and State in developing and implementing policies to promote savings and prevent wastefulness. According to Ho Chi Minh, these solutions are essential for building a clean, just, and sustainable society.

The culture of savings and anti-wastefulness in Vietnam is not a recent phenomenon but a long-standing tradition deeply ingrained in the lifestyle and habits of its people. From the Ly and Tran dynasties to the Le and Nguyen eras, feudal regimes enacted regulations on resource conservation and national financial management. Throughout history, the Vietnamese people have endured wars, social reforms, and economic hardships but have preserved the values of savings, from daily living habits to national development strategies. These values have played a crucial role in helping the nation overcome challenges and build the country from difficult conditions.

3. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF A CULTURE OF SAVINGS AND ANTI-WASTEFULNESS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

3.1. "Culture of Savings and Anti-Wastefulness" in the International Arena

Globally, many nations have recognized the importance of practicing savings to conserve resources and ensure sustainable development. Japan is a leading example in implementing savings and anti-wastefulness policies, not only in energy use but also across all aspects of social and economic life. One prominent cultural principle in Japan is *Mottainai*, which translates to "do not waste" (12). This principle applies not only to waste reduction but also to the efficient and frugal use of resources. Thanks to this culture of savings, Japan has emerged as a strong nation in many fields, particularly industry and technology, while maintaining environmental sustainability.

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Although the United States is a country with a robust economy and high consumption levels, it has recently enhanced measures to protect the environment and conserve resources. A clear manifestation of this shift is the establishment of the Department of Government Efficiency by newly elected President Donald Trump, with Elon Musk and American entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy at the helm (13). In a statement, President Trump affirmed that these two remarkable Americans will lead his administration in dismantling bureaucratic government structures, cutting excessive regulations, eliminating wasteful spending, and restructuring federal agencies—essential measures for the "Save America" movement (1).

Another notable example is the Green New Deal, a policy the U.S. is implementing to build a sustainable green economy by investing in renewable energy and minimizing energy waste (5). These policies highlight a significant transformation in the perception of major nations regarding the importance of resource conservation and anti-wastefulness for sustaining development in a world increasingly confronted with challenges such as climate change and resource depletion.

Additionally, European countries like Germany stand out for their policies on resource conservation and environmental protection. Germany has been a pioneer in renewable energy development, waste reduction, and resource preservation, emphasizing that fostering a culture of savings is a critical factor for sustainable development and the creation of a green, clean economy.

3.2. The Role of Savings and Anti-Wastefulness in Vietnam's Sustainable Development Today

Building upon and advancing Ho Chi Minh's ideology on savings, the Communist Party and the Government of Vietnam have introduced numerous directives to promote this value in the process of national construction and development. The Party Congress XIII Resolution, for instance, underscored that savings is one of the necessary factors for sustainable development. It also required authorities, agencies, and organizations to enhance efforts to combat wastefulness and corruption (6). Addressing wastefulness and corruption is not only an urgent task but also a decisive factor for the nation's sustainable growth. In particular, directives from the General Secretary and other Party and State leaders emphasize that savings extends beyond the economic realm; it is a cultural value reflected in every aspect of social activity, from production and consumption to budget and public fund management.

In today's context, fostering a culture of savings and anti-wastefulness has become even more imperative as the country enters a new phase of development, facing challenges in resource conservation, environmental protection, and sustainable growth. The Party and State's policies, such as "Promoting savings and anti-wastefulness throughout society" (Party Congress XIII Resolution) and major campaigns like "Public officials and Party members leading by example in practicing savings in work and daily life," have created a robust movement across society.

Vietnam, as a developing nation experiencing rapid urbanization and industrialization, faces significant challenges related to resources, the environment, and sustainable development. The waste of economic resources, human resources, and natural resources, especially in production and consumption, has placed considerable pressure on the economy and the environment. Without effective savings measures and anti-wastefulness strategies, Vietnam will struggle to maintain sustainable development.

In recent years, the Party and State have increasingly recognized the critical importance of fostering a culture of savings and anti-wastefulness amid rising global environmental demands. The Party Congress XIII Resolution reaffirmed that savings and anti-wastefulness are vital factors for protecting national resources, contributing to sustainable economic development, and driving the nation's industrialization and modernization (6).

"Wastefulness is one of the reasons for the depletion of national resources, slow economic growth, and environmental pollution. Therefore, savings and anti-wastefulness must become fundamental criteria in all of our activities" (3). Vietnam has made significant progress in developing policies and strategies for sustainable development by promoting resource conservation and environmental protection. Resolutions such as Resolution 24-NQ/TW on sustainable development and environmental protection emphasize that combating wastefulness and conserving resources are the responsibilities of the entire society, not just government agencies but also individuals, businesses, and organizations. These policies focus not only on minimizing waste in energy and natural resource use but also on improving production and consumption efficiency.

General Secretary To Lam, in his remarks, emphasized the importance of practicing savings in managing and utilizing national resources. He stated: "We stand at a historic juncture to propel the nation into a new era of growth. This is also the time to shape our future. To seize opportunities, overcome challenges, and significantly enhance resources for the people's well-being and national prosperity during this revolutionary phase, the campaign against wastefulness must be implemented decisively and consistently with effective solutions, creating widespread momentum, and becoming a voluntary and conscious effort of every official, Party member, and citizen. It should become a hallmark of cultural behavior in the new era" (14).

The General Secretary also noted that implementing savings measures is not solely the responsibility of state agencies but must also be embedded in community awareness, encompassing organizations, businesses, and individuals.

He further highlighted: "Savings has a core role and value in consolidating foundations and transforming lofty development goals into actionable programs with high feasibility. Thus, savings must become a progressive cultural foundation for society and a pillar in the national consciousness" (16). This serves as a guiding principle in formulating and executing sustainable development policies in Vietnam, reaffirming the importance of cultivating a culture of savings and anti-wastefulness across individuals, organizations, and society as a whole.

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Vietnam is striving to implement savings strategies across all sectors, from energy management and waste reduction to the efficient use of natural resources. These efforts not only promote economic growth but also foster the development of a green and sustainable economy in the future.

As former General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong remarked during the XIII Party Congress: “With all humility, we can confidently say that our nation has never had the stature, potential, position, and international reputation that it does today” (16). Building and practicing a culture of savings and anti-wastefulness is not only crucial for resource and environmental conservation but also an integral part of Vietnam's strategy for sustainable development.

4. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF VIETNAMESE CITIZENS IN BUILDING AND PROMOTING A CULTURE OF SAVINGS AND ANTI-WASTEFULNESS

The culture of savings and anti-wastefulness transcends economic management principles, representing a fundamental ethical value and a collective responsibility of every citizen in society. This culture is intrinsically linked to a sense of accountability toward the nation's resources, the community, and future generations. Each Vietnamese citizen, from public officials to private individuals, plays a crucial role in practicing and propagating these values, thereby contributing to the creation of a sustainable society.

The individual responsibility to cultivate a culture of savings and anti-wastefulness begins with simple, daily actions. Practices such as conserving water, electricity, fuel, and food, along with judicious use of resources and finances, significantly contribute to reducing the wastage of national resources. Moreover, citizens are encouraged to actively monitor and report instances of wastefulness in public and social contexts, thereby fostering collective responsibility and community welfare.

For instance, efforts to save energy and water or implement waste reduction strategies in production and consumption not only alleviate personal and household expenses but also help conserve national resources. Such practices minimize environmental impacts and establish a solid foundation for sustainable development in the country.

While all citizens share the responsibility for fostering a culture of savings and anti-wastefulness, the younger generation, particularly students, holds a pivotal role in advocating and spreading these values within their communities. As future leaders of the nation, their responsibilities extend beyond daily conservation efforts. They are key drivers of awareness and education about the importance of savings and anti-wastefulness. With their access to information and innovative thinking, students can serve as "ambassadors" for these values, disseminating them widely across society. Educational institutions, such as universities and colleges, can support this effort by organizing workshops, volunteer activities, and innovation competitions to raise awareness of resource conservation, environmental protection, and sustainable development among students and the broader community.

In addition, young people are at the forefront of leveraging technology to develop solutions that promote savings and combat wastefulness. They can design applications, create software for energy efficiency and waste monitoring, or innovate circular economy models, contributing to the development of a sustainable economy that optimizes resource use.

The People's Police Force of Vietnam also holds significant responsibilities in this endeavor. As a key institution tasked with maintaining public security and safeguarding national assets, the police force must exemplify savings in their operations, ensuring resources are used efficiently and waste is minimized. Furthermore, they can collaborate with relevant authorities to prevent, detect, and address wasteful behaviors effectively and stringently. By serving as role models, the police force can pioneer the promotion of savings and lead efforts to combat wastefulness.

The Communist Party and State of Vietnam have consistently prioritized the establishment of a culture of savings and anti-wastefulness as a cornerstone of national development. Resolutions of the Communist Party of Vietnam, particularly the XIII Party Congress Resolution, have underscored the necessity of fostering education and practice of savings across all societal levels. As the nation prepares for the XIV Party Congress, the Party must continue to advance initiatives that deepen the cultural practice of savings in all aspects of society. This includes enhancing public education and communication campaigns to instill a heightened awareness of the role savings and anti-wastefulness play in national development. Such efforts aim to reduce unnecessary expenditures across economic, administrative, and social sectors, ensuring a more sustainable and efficient use of resources.

5. CONCLUSION

The culture of savings and anti-wastefulness is not only a deeply rooted tradition of the Vietnamese people but also a cornerstone of the nation's sustainable development strategy. Ho Chi Minh's ideology on thrift and anti-waste serves as a foundational guideline, influencing policies aimed at fostering economic and social progress while encouraging a responsible and modern way of life. In the context of global integration and pressing challenges such as climate change and resource scarcity, the practice of thrift and anti-waste has become more critical than ever.

To preserve and promote these values, every individual and organization must recognize their responsibility—from everyday practices to impactful national decisions. Only when the culture of thrift is embraced as a collective mindset and ingrained habit can Vietnam achieve its goals of sustainable development, safeguard the welfare of future generations, and enhance its prominence on the global stage.

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