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THE ASPIRATION TO BUILD A PROSPEROUS, SUSTAINABLE, AND POWERFUL NATION INSPIRED BY THE PATRIOTIC SPIRIT OF TRẦN HƯNG ĐẠO

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ABSTRACT

The article profoundly portrays the image of Grand Prince Hưng Đạo Trần Quốc Tuấn as an eternal symbol of patriotism, military genius, and the moral principle of “taking the people as the root”, a foundational value in Vietnam's political and cultural thought. From his life, career, and military as well as political ideology, the author demonstrates that patriotism is not merely a sacred emotion but a practical ideal expressed through concrete actions, civic responsibility, and the aspiration for national prosperity. Grand Prince Trần Quốc Tuấn left a monumental legacy through core values such as prioritizing national interests above all else, caring for the people, maintaining independence and self-reliance, and promoting innovation and creativity under all circumstances. These values not only possess historical significance but also serve as profound guidance for the present cause of nation-building and defense. The article emphasizes that, in the era of deep international integration, patriotism with its nucleus being national pride and endogenous strength remains an invaluable spiritual resource and the most powerful internal driving force for Vietnam to realize its aspiration for rapid, sustainable, and prosperous development, striving to become a strong and thriving nation by the mid-21st century. This paper employs an interdisciplinary approach combining historical analysis, political theory, and cultural studies to examine Trần Hưng Đạo as a lasting symbol of Vietnamese patriotism and strategic leadership. Through the analysis of his military-political legacy and ethical philosophy, the study argues that patriotism, when grounded in people-centered governance, national self-reliance, and public responsibility, serves as a vital ideological resource for contemporary nation building. The findings suggest that Trần Hưng Đạo's principles prioritizing national interests, empowering the people, and fostering internal strength remain highly relevant for Vietnam's pursuit of sustainable and sovereign development in the 21st century.

KEYWORDS: Sustainable Nation, Patriotism, Trần Hưng Đạo, Vietnam.

1. INTRODUCTION

The history of the Vietnamese nation, forged through thousands of years of nation-building and defense, **represents a continuous process of crystallizing core values** patriotism, national pride, the spirit of independence, self-reliance, resilience, and the enduring aspiration for sustainable development. Within this historical continuum, Hưng Đạo Đại Vương Trần Quốc Tuấn emerges as a comprehensive symbol of national heroism. He was not only an outstanding military commander and astute political strategist but also a great thinker whose influence deeply permeated Vietnam's cultural, ethical, and religious life. The image of Trần Quốc Tuấn is enshrined not only in official historiography but also ingrained in the popular consciousness through folk beliefs, where he is venerated as Đức Thánh Trần, a sacred embodiment of loyalty, filial piety, and national integrity.

Researching the thought, career, and legacy of Trần Hưng Đạo from an interdisciplinary perspective spanning history, political science, and religious studies offers profound insights into the portrait of a historical figure whose influence transcends his era. In the current context, as Vietnam is undergoing robust transformation with the aspiration to become a developed, high-income country by 2045, it is essential to revive and promote the patriotic spirit, people-centered governance, and the ethos of independence and self-reliance exemplified by the Trần Dynasty. This is not merely an act of historical commemoration but serves as an internal driving force for realizing the national goals of industrialization and modernization.

Furthermore, this paper analyzes the patriotic spirit of Hưng Đạo Đại Vương Trần Quốc Tuấn through a historical lens, elucidating the profound socio-political dimensions of his ideals such as “placing the common good above all” (*dĩ công vi thượng*) and “sacrificing oneself for the nation” (*vi quốc vong thân*). It also examines the enduring influence of this spiritual legacy within popular religious practices, particularly the veneration of Đức Thánh Trần, a unique convergence of history and spirituality in Vietnamese folk belief. **On this basis, the paper raises a central question** How can the patriotic spirit of the Trần Dynasty, rooted in the will of the people, intellect, and ethical principles, catalyze sustainable and robust national development in the new era?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The legacy of Trần Hưng Đạo (Trần Quốc Tuấn), a national hero of Đại Việt and a military strategist of

exceptional vision, has attracted significant scholarly attention across various disciplines. Vietnamese historiography has explored his role from historical, cultural, religious, and military perspectives. In *Việt sử tân biên* (Volume 3), Phạm Văn Sơn (1970) provides an in-depth narrative of the resistance wars against the Mongol invasions, emphasizing Trần Hưng Đạo's pivotal role in military strategy and leadership. Complementing this historical account, Nguyễn Khắc Thuần (2005), in *Danh tướng Việt Nam*, portrays the general's moral character and strategic genius in detail.

From a cultural standpoint, Trần Quốc Vượng (2002) in *Tìm về bản sắc văn hóa Việt Nam* highlights the symbolic and spiritual significance of Trần Hưng Đạo in the continuum of Vietnamese cultural identity. Nguyen Van Huy's (2012) work, *Tín ngưỡng thờ Đức Thánh Trần ở Việt Nam*, shifts the focus toward the religious and anthropological dimensions, offering a rich examination of how his veneration has permeated Vietnamese folk beliefs. Military thought under the Trần dynasty is systematically addressed by the Vietnam Institute of Military History (2010) in *Lịch sử tư tưởng quân sự Việt Nam thời Trần*, particularly analyzing Trần Hưng Đạo's strategic principles such as “lấy dân làm gốc” (relying on the people) and “ngụ binh ư nông” (embedding soldiers in peasant life).

More recently, Vũ Quang Hiến's state-funded research (2016–2018) evaluates the applicability of Trần Hưng Đạo's military philosophy to contemporary state governance, indicating a trend of reassessing historical legacies through modern lenses. Furthermore, Phạm Quang Long (2015) and Lê Trung Hoa (2015) provide complementary insights into the nationalist and cultural dimensions of his legacy in broader Vietnamese historical consciousness.

Internationally, while specialized monographs on Trần Hưng Đạo remain limited, some notable works recognize his impact in the broader context of Vietnamese and Southeast Asian history. Keith Weller Taylor (2013), in *A History of the Vietnamese*, situates Trần Hưng Đạo as a nation-builder and enduring figure in the formation of Đại Việt. Victor Lieberman's *Strange Parallels* (2003) contextualizes the Trần dynasty within broader regional developments, implicitly recognizing Trần Hưng Đạo's influence. Modern military theorists such as Edward Luttwak (2001) and Martin van Creveld have laid conceptual foundations, particularly in asymmetric warfare and strategic logic that resonate with Trần Hưng Đạo's principles, such as “dĩ nhu thắng cương” (using softness to overcome strength)

and “lấy ít địch nhiều” (using fewer to defeat more).

Despite the breadth of existing scholarship, a notable gap remains in integrating Trần Hưng Đạo's patriotic ethos, his philosophy of “khoan thư sức dân” (nurturing the people), and the vision for sustainable national development into a coherent theoretical framework applicable to 21st-century nation-building. Prior studies have largely addressed these dimensions in isolation, military, spiritual, or historical, without a unifying lens that connects them to contemporary aspirations of a prosperous and resilient Vietnam.

This article contributes to filling that gap by reinterpreting Trần Hưng Đạo not only as a historical-military figure but as a cultural-symbolic archetype whose vision aligns with modern national goals. Through synthesizing his thought and legacy, the study proposes that his principles offer enduring insights for Vietnam's path toward sustainable development, prosperity, and national strength in the contemporary era.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODS

3.1. Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that combines insights from civic republicanism, people-centered development theory, endogenous development, and soft power theory. These theoretical perspectives help to reinterpret the patriotic thought of Trần Hưng Đạo not only as a historical legacy but also as a dynamic resource for Vietnam's sustainable nation-building in the 21st century.

First, civic republicanism emphasizes civic virtue, public responsibility, and prioritization of the common good (Pettit, 1997; Skinner, 2002). Trần Hưng Đạo's decision to place national interests above personal ambition exemplifies the republican ideal that patriotism is a rational and ethical commitment to the survival and prosperity of the nation.

Second, the people-centered development approach, as proposed by Sen (1999) and Haq (1995), positions human capability, equity, and social inclusion at the heart of sustainable development. Trần Hưng Đạo's philosophy of “taking the people as the root” (lấy dân làm gốc) reflects this orientation, emphasizing the people's role not only in wartime defense but in post-war recovery and long-term national resilience.

Third, endogenous development theory highlights the importance of local cultural values, historical identity, and self-reliant strategies (Amin, 1990; Friedmann, 1992). His emphasis on national

independence, internal unity, and cultural sovereignty during the Mongol-Yuan invasions illustrates how indigenous values can serve as strategic foundations for modern nation-building.

Finally, soft power theory (Nye, 2004) is used to explain how Trần Hưng Đạo's image revered in both history and popular belief has become a source of symbolic capital that strengthens national identity and inspires civic engagement. His legacy operates not only as historical memory but also as a cultural force that reinforces Vietnam's internal strength and international positioning.

This theoretical framework enables a multidimensional understanding of patriotism not as a static tradition but as a living, evolving force that continues to inform Vietnam's aspirations for prosperity, sustainability, and national dignity in a globalized era.

3.2. Methods

This study employs an interdisciplinary research methodology that combines historical analysis, documentary synthesis, political science, religious studies, and practical contextualization to explore the enduring relevance of Trần Hưng Đạo's patriotic ideology in contemporary Vietnam. The historical method is used to reconstruct the socio-political context of the Trần Dynasty and examine primary sources such as Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư, Lịch tượng sử, and Binh thư yếu lược alongside modern scholarship to interpret his intellectual legacy.

Documentary analysis and thematic synthesis enable the identification of core themes such as patriotism and people-centered governance across historical and modern discourses. Drawing from political theory and religious studies, the research also investigates how Trần Hưng Đạo's image functions both as a political archetype and a spiritual-cultural symbol, particularly through his continued veneration in folk religion.

A notable methodological contribution is the application of a practical contextualization approach, which involves extracting key values from historical texts, interpreting their ethical and political significance, and applying them to current development challenges such as post-pandemic recovery and digital transformation. For instance, the study reinterprets the principle of khoan thư sức dân (“relieving the people's burdens”) as a framework for modern social policy. Together, these methods provide a multidimensional lens through which patriotism is not merely treated as a historical sentiment but as a dynamic, actionable ideology capable of informing Vietnam's pursuit of a

sustainable, self-reliant, and prosperous future.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Hưng Đạo Đại Vương Trần Quốc Tuấn: A Symbol of Vietnamese Patriotism and Wisdom

Trần Hưng Đạo's patriotism was a powerful and sincere sentiment that rose above all personal conflicts, power struggles, and ambitions for fame. He was the son of Prince An Sinh Vương Trần Liễu, who once harbored deep grievances against King Trần Thái Tông. Before his death, **Trần Liễu entrusted his son with a final wish** "If you do not take the throne for your father, my soul will not rest in peace in the underworld." (Liên, Huru, & Tiên, 1993, p. 211). Yet, when Trần Quốc Tuấn held both military power and the people's loyalty in his hands, he resolutely set aside personal vendettas to serve the greater good, dedicating himself wholly to the survival of the nation and the prosperity of the Trần Dynasty. Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư records that, later, when he commanded the entire army and won the trust of his officers, he confided his father's dying wish to his close aides, **Yết Kiêu and Dã Tượng. Both men courageously objected** "Though such a plan may bring temporary wealth and power, it will leave behind a thousand-year stain of infamy. Does Your Highness not already possess enough wealth and honor? We would rather die as humble servants than be officials lacking loyalty and filial piety." (Liên, Huru, & Tiên, 1993, p. 211). Their honest and loyal words moved Trần Quốc Tuấn to tears, further strengthening his resolve to abandon any personal ambition and devote himself fully to the righteous cause.

He also repeatedly tested his sons to gauge their character. When he asked Prince Hưng Vũ Vương, "In the past, some seized the throne to pass on to their descendants. What do you think of this?" **Hưng Vũ Vương promptly replied** "Even if it were a different clan, it should not be done, let alone among our kin." Hearing this, Trần Quốc Tuấn nodded in approval. However, when he posed the same question to his younger son, Prince Hưng Nhượng Vương Quốc Tảng, **he received a different answer** "Emperor Taizu of Song was just an old farmer who rose at the right time and founded a dynasty." Upon hearing this, Trần Quốc Tuấn became enraged, drew his sword, and nearly killed his son, only restraining himself when Hưng Vũ Vương intervened. **He sternly instructed** "After my death, seal my coffin before allowing Quốc Tảng to pay his respects." (Liên, Huru, & Tiên, 1993, p. 211).

This decision exemplifies his extraordinary stature, a man who placed national interests above all

else, never allowing personal ambitions to overshadow the greater cause. His patriotism was a rational and moral choice, embodying the courage and integrity of a true virtuous talent.

Trần Hưng Đạo's patriotic thought is most vividly expressed in his immortal work *Hịch tướng sĩ* (Proclamation to the Officers), a timeless masterpiece of martial literature that profoundly moved generations. In this work, he conveyed his deep concern for the fate of the nation, instilling in each officer a sense of national pride, an unyielding fighting spirit, and responsibility toward the country. His words "Often I forget to eat at mealtime, at midnight I beat my pillow; my guts ache as if cut, my tears flow like rain; I am furious that I have yet to flay the flesh, peel the skin, swallow the liver, and drink the blood of the enemy" (Đạo, 2001) were not mere rallying cries but the heartfelt voice of a commander tormented by the nation's peril. He used moral reasoning to persuade, invoked the examples of predecessors to awaken a sense of duty, and depicted the bitter reality of national loss to arouse vigilance. *Hịch tướng sĩ* is a clarion call imbued with the indomitable spirit of the Hào khí Đông A - the Trần Dynasty's heroic spirit and stands as a patriotic manifesto rich in humanity and intellect.

Trần Hưng Đạo also embodied Vietnamese wisdom in military art and strategic thinking. During the three wars of resistance against the Mongol-Yuan invasions, he played a decisive role, demonstrating exceptional command and leadership. With strategies such as the scorched-earth policy (*vườn không nhà trống*), "mobilizing soldiers while they farm" (*ngụ binh ư nông*), and "using the few to defeat the many, the weak to overcome the strong," he exhausted the enemy's strength and led the mighty army that once conquered both Europe and Asia to repeated humiliating defeats. **The Bạch Đằng victory of 1288 was the pinnacle of his military brilliance** he ordered stakes to be planted beneath the riverbed and timed the attack with the receding tide, launching multi-directional assaults that trapped the Yuan navy in an ambush. The enemy general Ô Mã Nhi was captured, Toa Đô was killed, and the invading army was utterly routed. This victory decisively ended the Yuan's ambition to conquer Đại Việt and is recorded in global military history as one of the greatest ancient naval battles ever fought.

Trần Hưng Đạo also demonstrated visionary political thought, particularly in emphasizing the principle of "nurturing the people's strength" (*khoan thư sức dân*) as the foundation for building a people's defense. He understood that military power could

not endure without popular support, especially if the people were impoverished or suffering. In the eighth year of the Hung Long reign (1300), when King Trần Anh Tông asked him for a strategy to safeguard the country, **Hung Đạo Vương calmly replied** "...nurturing the people's strength to deeply root and firmly ground the nation that is the best strategy for national defense." (Liên, Huru, & Tiên, 1993, p. 211). This reflects profound statecraft wisdom and insight into balancing military might with civil governance, strength with compassion, whose relevance endures even in modern society.

Moreover, Trần Quốc Tuấn was a great thinker, leaving behind an exceptional and theoretically rich military legacy. His treatises, such as *Binh thư yếu lược* (Essentials of Military Tactics) and *Vạn Kiếp tông bí truyền thư* (The Secret Transmission of Vạn Kiếp), remain invaluable resources for training the army. They reflect a comprehensive strategic vision for national construction and defense, far ahead of their time.

The *Binh thư yếu lược* (Essentials of Military Tactics), which Trần Hưng Đạo compiled at the request of King Trần Anh Tông, is a crystallization of the essence of ancient Eastern military doctrines drawing from thinkers like Sun Tzu and Wu Qi, yet indigenized and adapted to the realities of Vietnam's wars of resistance against the Mongol Yuan invasions. Although the original manuscript has not survived in full, citations and references found in historical works such as *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư* (The Complete Annals of Đại Việt) and *Khâm định Việt sử thông giám cương mục* (The Imperially Ordered Annotated Text and Mirror of Vietnamese History) show that it was a highly systematic treatise. It covered military principles, organization of forces, tactical operations, and especially the art of employing and managing talent.

Meanwhile, the *Vạn Kiếp tông bí truyền thư* (The Secret Transmission of Vạn Kiếp), though imbued with esoteric elements and passed down as a secret text within his lineage, demonstrates Trần Hưng Đạo's profound integration of scholarship, philosophy, and military ethics. In this work, he discusses the fate of the nation, the favorable conditions of time (*thiên thời*), human concord (*nhân hòa*), and the interaction of yin-yang and the five elements (*âm dương ngũ hành*), a holistic framework for understanding the rise and fall of a country and its era. Despite its mystical aspects, the core idea emphasizes that a commander must understand the right moment, know oneself, know the enemy, and grasp the cycles of heaven and the nation's destiny. For this reason, many modern scholars regard this

work as a form of distinctive Vietnamese "Eastern military philosophy," where dialectical folk wisdom crystallizes into strategic thought.

Notably, in both works, Trần Hưng Đạo clearly articulated that war is merely an unavoidable last resort; the ultimate priority is to pacify the people, relieve their burdens, and safeguard them, thus nurturing the enduring strength of the nation. This vision, born amidst the flames of warfare, foresaw the necessity of long-term, sustainable governance rooted in popular will, intelligence, and moral principle.

Trần Hưng Đạo laid the groundwork for Vietnamese military thought, knowing when to fight, when to retreat, when to reconcile, when to prepare, when to use flexibility to overcome rigidity, and when to defeat cruelty with benevolence. He contributed to forming a political philosophy and people-centered governance deeply imbued with cultural depth. He was not only a brilliant general and military theorist but also a profound thinker who knew how to win victories on the battlefield and sow seeds of enduring national ideology.

The life and legacy of Trần Hưng Đạo stand as a vivid testimony to the synthesis of profound patriotism, the spirit of sacrificing oneself for the nation, and timeless strategic wisdom. In Vietnam's journey toward modernization today, learning from and upholding the patriotic spirit and intellect of Hưng Đạo Đại Vương Trần Quốc Tuấn is essential to nurturing the aspiration for a strong, prosperous, and sustainable nation in the future.

4.2. The Enduring Value of Trần Hưng Đạo's Patriotic Spirit

The patriotic spirit of Trần Hưng Đạo is not merely a value limited to the anti-invasion struggles of the 13th century; it has transcended historical boundaries to become an enduring spiritual heritage deeply embedded in the consciousness of the Vietnamese people for centuries. The lessons drawn from his life, career, and thought remain guiding principles for every era, especially in the nation's current endeavors of construction and defense.

First: Placing National Interests Above All Else

Throughout every period of the nation's history, genuine patriotism has always been inseparable from the act of putting the interests of the nation and the people above all else, beyond personal gain, private emotion, or individual power. Trần Hưng Đạo was the perfect embodiment of this ideal. He was a leader who set aside all personal glory, dedicating his entire life to the destiny of the country and the survival of Đại Việt.

In the 13th century, when the country faced the threat of invasion by the Mongol Yuan Empire, the most formidable power of its time, Trần Hưng Đạo spared no effort to serve the royal court wholeheartedly, leading the army and people through three major wars of resistance. Despite holding supreme military power and commanding the loyalty of his generals and soldiers, he never sought the highest political authority nor exploited his reputation to build his faction. For him, the greatest glory did not lie in the throne or titles, but in the peace of the nation, the stability of the realm, and the trust of the people.

What is remarkable about Trần Hưng Đạo is that in every circumstance, he consistently acted with a spirit of “the nation above all,” placing the fate of the country above even his own life. In *Hịch tướng sĩ* (Proclamation to the Officers), he did not address himself as “general” but simply as “I”, implying solidarity and a shared destiny with his soldiers and the nation. He stirred in each person a sense of loyalty, duty, and honor not to serve him, but to serve the country. **He wrote** “Why is that? The Mongol Yuan are our mortal enemies, yet you remain indifferent, unwilling to cleanse this humiliation or eliminate this threat, neglecting to train the troops, no different than turning your spears around to surrender, raising empty hands to accept defeat. If this happens, once the traitors are subdued, how will you face the heavens and earth that shelter us?” (Đạo, 2001). These stirring words did not rely on hollow rhetoric but awakened the profound national consciousness within each individual. Trần Hưng Đạo did not merely condemn negligence and indifference toward the nation’s fate; he also warned of the consequences for national honor and the responsibility owed to the country and ancestors. In the context of the time, when the mighty Mongol Yuan army was advancing toward the border and internal unity was not yet complete, this appeal was aimed at all strata of society, **calling forth a noble way of life** living not only for oneself but for the homeland, the nation, and the enduring survival of the fatherland.

The greatest aspect of Trần Hưng Đạo’s leadership lies in how every choice and strategic decision he made was guided by the common interest of the nation and people. When assessing the situation, an overwhelmingly powerful enemy with large forces, he did not rush to seek victory at any cost but instead advocated for a prolonged war of attrition, carefully preserving his forces and refusing to engage unless certain of success. His perspective of “preserving the whole army” and his belief that

“fighting the enemy is a reluctant necessity” reveal a strategic mindset focused on the bigger picture, on the lives of the people, and not on personal merit or belligerence. He never allowed personal pride to dictate rash counterattacks at inopportune moments but was willing to retreat, bide his time, and wait for the right opportunity, something few generals could do without a firm vision and a self completely devoted to the nation.

Second: People as the Foundation-Patriotism Rooted in Devotion to the People A defining pillar of Trần Hưng Đạo’s patriotic thought is the principle of “taking the people as the root” (lấy dân làm gốc) a remarkably humanistic and forward-looking vision. For him, patriotism was inseparable from protecting the lives, dignity, and welfare of the people. It was not merely about defeating invaders, but about building lasting social stability and public trust.

This ethos shaped the way he waged war. Despite facing the brutal Mongol-Yuan invasions, he prioritized minimizing civilian suffering. His strategies, including population relocation, leveraging local knowledge, and mass mobilization, reflected a model of people’s war rooted in both protection and participation. From soldiers to villagers, each citizen became a vital link in the nation’s defense, forming the backbone of legendary victories such as Đông Bộ Đầu (1258), Chương Dương – Hàm Tử (1285), and Bạch Đằng (1288).

Beyond military triumphs, Trần Hưng Đạo’s post-war counsel embodied this same philosophy. Rather than rebuilding palaces, he urged the king to first “rebuild the people’s trust,” advocating tax relief, material aid, and social healing. **His view was clear** the true strength of a nation lies not in its structures, but in the well-being and loyalty of its people.

This lesson remains deeply relevant today. In times of crisis, be it post-pandemic recovery, environmental disaster, or the social cost of rapid economic transformation, his philosophy calls for policies that prioritize the most vulnerable and restore collective resilience. In modern development discourse, “people as the root” is not only a historical ethos but a timeless compass for sustainable, inclusive governance.

Third: Patriotism Tied to Responsibility and Concrete Action Under the ideological light of Trần Hưng Đạo, patriotism is not an abstract notion or an empty slogan but is always intrinsically linked to concrete responsibility and practical action. Patriotism, in his view, is not merely an instinctive emotion but an actionable ideal attached to each individual’s duty toward the nation, whether a common soldier on the battlefield, a general in the

military camp, an ordinary citizen, or even the sovereign himself. Trần Hưng Đạo stands as an exemplary embodiment of this value.

A striking illustration of how patriotism must translate into action is his immortal “Appeal to the Generals” (Hịch tướng sĩ), one of Vietnam’s most remarkable military and political treatises of the medieval era. In this document, Trần Hưng Đạo not only upheld the righteous cause of defending the nation but also awakened each person’s moral responsibility and personal honor: “Now you sit and watch your lord humiliated without concern, bear the nation’s disgrace without shame. You serve the imperial court yet stand by as the barbarians advance, you listen to court music at banquets thrown for the enemy envoys without anger... Not only shall my body in this life bear shame that will never wash away for a hundred years to come, but your family names will be tarnished forever as generals who lost their battles. When that time comes, even if you wish to enjoy pleasure and leisure, would you still have that luxury?” (Đạo, 2001).

With piercing words, he reproached but also roused the entire army: failure to act in defense of the homeland would be the ultimate betrayal of one’s people, a disgrace that would stain the land for eternity. Here, patriotism is not vague rhetoric but a conscious choice to act decisively when the nation is tested. These lines show that, in his philosophy, true patriotism cannot be separated from competence, discipline, and clear responsibility for one’s assigned role. A patriot must know precisely what actions to take to contribute to the nation’s cause, within their ability and context.

Trần Hưng Đạo himself fully embodied this sense of duty. Throughout three grueling campaigns against the Mongol-Yuan invasions, he consistently held himself to the highest standard of integrity and unwavering dedication to national affairs. When faced with a vastly superior foe, he was neither reckless nor rashly aggressive; instead, he evaluated strength carefully, acted prudently, and waited patiently for the right moment to strike, always prioritizing the preservation of forces and the lives of the people. This was the highest form of responsibility: winning not at any cost, but with the fewest sacrifices.

He was also a leader who shared hardship with his soldiers, living simply and leading by example. According to the Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư, when supplies were scarce, he divided his rations among his troops. When illness broke out in the camp, he tended to the sick and saw to their treatment. For him, to lead was not merely to command, but to

shoulder burdens, to sacrifice, and to live for others; this was the ultimate expression of patriotism.

From Trần Hưng Đạo’s thought and actions, it is clear that patriotism becomes real power only when it is paired with concrete responsibility and deeds. In the present day, as Vietnam undergoes rapid transformation, patriotism is not only about volunteering at the frontlines, but also about responsible, proper conduct in every job and every position held. These are the daily acts, both great and small, that turn love for the country into a driving force for development and a resilient internal resource that propels the nation towards the shared aspiration for prosperity, sustainability, and enduring strength.

Fourth: Patriotism Associated with National Pride and the Spirit of Independence and Self-Reliance Vietnam’s long history of nation-building is deeply rooted in a form of patriotism inseparable from national pride and an unyielding spirit of independence. Among its most vivid embodiments stands Trần Hưng Đạo, whose leadership during the Mongol-Yuan invasions revealed a profound belief: defending the homeland means preserving its dignity, identity, and cultural sovereignty.

Facing the most powerful empire of the 13th century, the Trần royal court, under his military command, refused submission and led Đại Việt to three historic victories entirely on its own. Trần Hưng Đạo’s famous declaration, “If Your Majesty wishes to surrender, please behead me first,” reflected not only loyalty to the monarch but a deeper, unwavering commitment to national honor. **His strategy was grounded in self-reliance** leveraging terrain, uniting the people, and using intelligence over brute strength. The 1288 Bạch Đằng victory remains a testament to how a small but resolute nation can triumph through unity, innovation, and moral strength.

Importantly, his vision of patriotism extended beyond military success. In Binh thư yếu lược and Vạn Kiếp tông bí truyền thư, he emphasized that true national strength rests on cultural identity, moral integrity, and the people’s will. This integrated view of sovereignty remains especially relevant today. In an era of globalization, patriotism must not imply isolation but the confidence to engage globally while preserving national values.

From Trần Hưng Đạo’s legacy, **modern Vietnam draws a powerful lesson** national pride is not arrogance, but the refusal to feel inferior; self-reliance is not retreat, but the continuous cultivation of internal strength in education, science, ethics, and governance. This is the path to a resilient,

independent, and prosperous Vietnam in the 21st century.

Fifth: Patriotism-A Cultural Legacy and a Source of National Development Across centuries of upheaval and renewal, patriotism has served as Vietnam's deepest moral foundation, a living cultural force forged through generations of sacrifice and resilience. It is not merely an instinct in times of war, but a way of life, a moral code shaping the bond between individuals and the nation. Among Vietnam's many historical figures, Trần Hưng Đạo stands out as a timeless symbol who transformed patriotism into a coherent ideological system expressed not only in military strategy but also in civic ethics and national identity.

In contemporary terms, patriotism functions as a vital form of soft power, capable of uniting communities, inspiring trust, and guiding development. The enduring reverence for Trần Hưng Đạo enshrined in temples, legends, and spiritual life demonstrates how patriotic values have become part of Vietnam's cultural DNA. As Vietnam faces the challenges of global integration, this legacy offers more than pride; it provides an ethical compass for policymaking and a source of resilience rooted in unity and identity.

When patriotism evolves from sentiment to civic responsibility, from commemoration to daily action, it becomes a powerful engine for sustainable development. Learning from Trần Hưng Đạo today means cultivating a national spirit where every citizen, regardless of role, places the country's future above personal interest. In an era defined by fierce global competition in science, technology, and culture, it is this spirit of self-reliance and shared commitment that will shape Vietnam's journey toward a prosperous, resilient, and sovereign future.

4.3. From the Patriotism of Trần Hưng Đạo to the Aspiration of Building a Prosperous, Sustainable, and Strong Nation

More than seven centuries have passed, yet the patriotism, people-centered thought, and spirit of independence and self-reliance embodied by Hưng Đạo Đại vương Trần Quốc Tuấn have not faded. Instead, they have been inherited, disseminated, and transformed into an ideological foundation for the nation's aspiration toward development in the modern era. If, in the 13th century, patriotism was the rallying banner uniting the entire population to defeat foreign invaders, then in the 21st century, it serves as an invaluable spiritual resource, a powerful source of inspiration for building a strong Vietnam with an elevated standing in the international arena.

The Aspiration for National Strength Begins with Indigenous Power In the historical trajectory of every nation, no sustainable progress can be achieved without indigenous strength, the power that emanates from the people, their culture, intellect, spirit, identity, and collective will. The history of Đại Việt under the Trần Dynasty, exemplified by the figure of Hưng Đạo Đại vương Trần Quốc Tuấn, attests to the enduring truth that the nation's internal strength is the solid bedrock for overcoming any challenge and the starting point for all aspirations for growth.

During the three Mongol invasions, Đại Việt had no advantage in troop numbers, weaponry, or resources; its opponent was an army that had swept across Asia and Europe, toppling mighty empires. Yet, amid this daunting context, the nation's internal strength was awakened and fully unleashed through the unity of monarch and people, through the "people-centered" strategy, through Trần Hưng Đạo's exceptional military genius, and through the unwavering determination of an entire populace willing to die rather than surrender. **The historic victory on the Bạch Đằng River in 1288 stands as the most powerful testament to this truth** a nation may be small in territory, but its spirit need never be small.

From his military strategy of "securing the people's wellbeing" to his counsel to King Trần Nhân Tông after the final victory, "What the Court must urgently do without delay is to comfort and care for the people" (Phụng, 1975, p. 295), Trần Hưng Đạo demonstrated profound insight into the principle that no country can become strong if its people are fragmented or neglected. For him, the nation's internal strength rests foremost in the people's trust, cohesion, and commitment, both of the people and for the people.

This lesson retains its full relevance today, as Vietnam faces the imperative of rapid yet sustainable development to become a high-income, developed nation by 2045. Realizing this aspiration for national strength cannot rely on external factors alone, nor can it be achieved through passive borrowing of knowledge, technology, or models. To become prosperous and powerful, the nation must awaken and maximize its internal strengths from reforming governance mindsets and modernizing education and science, to cultivating a new generation of Vietnamese citizens who are ethical, knowledgeable, skilled, and resilient in global integration.

In today's context, the nation's internal strength lies not merely in natural resources or favorable geopolitics, but more importantly in its cultural

assets, its people, and its national spirit. It is the will to rise above poverty and backwardness; the unity and solidarity that reject internal division; the capacity for self-reliance and confidence in the nation's unique capabilities. The patriotism of Trần Hưng Đạo imbued with a profound sense of self-reliance, self-strengthening, and responsibility for the nation's destiny remains a guiding compass for nurturing Vietnam's indigenous strength in this new era.

Sustainable Development Cannot Be Separated from the Principle of "Putting the People at the Center" Throughout all eras, a nation's quest for greatness must first be built on sustainability, **and sustainable development cannot overlook its most decisive factor** the people. The nation's history has demonstrated that the enduring strength of the country derives not only from its military potential, natural resources, or institutional systems but, above all, from the trust and consensus of its people toward their government and the chosen national path.

Hưng Đạo Đại vương Trần Quốc Tuấn deeply and comprehensively understood this principle. During the three resistance wars against the Mongol-Yuan invasions, he mobilized and unified the people's will into an indomitable force for victory. To him, the people were not merely "logistics" for war but the backbone of the nation and the foundation for all state policies from national defense to domestic governance and peacebuilding. Modern development paradigms affirm that no progress is meaningful unless it improves people's lives. Development cannot be measured solely by growth figures or superficial material achievements; true sustainable development must ensure social equity, human advancement, and environmental protection. This is precisely why, since the Fifth Plenum of the 13th Party Central Committee, Vietnam has emphasized the goals of "comprehensive human development" and "harmonious development among the economy, culture, society, and environment" **Therefore, the "people-centered" spirit of the Trần Dynasty holds not only historical significance but also profound guiding value for the present** leaving no one behind in the journey of development; ensuring equitable access to essential public services such as healthcare, education, and social welfare; and fostering aspirations for advancement, creativity, and contribution especially among the younger generation.

In particular, during the ongoing digital transformation, the shift to a green economy, and the development of clean energy, the people must be placed at the heart of the process, both as

beneficiaries and as co-creators. In this way, development ceases to be the sole responsibility of the State and becomes the cause of the entire population, nurtured by shared trust, common interests, and the close bond between government and citizens.

Safeguarding Independence-A Strategic Vision for the Century of Integration Across all historical epochs, national independence has remained the bedrock of Vietnam's sovereignty and survival. While in the past it meant repelling foreign invasions and defending borders, in the 21st century, it requires a broader strategic vision encompassing autonomy in policymaking, economic resilience, cultural identity, and technological self-reliance.

This spirit was powerfully shaped during the Trần Dynasty, particularly through the leadership of Trần Hưng Đạo. He consistently championed self-reliance and uncompromising national dignity. His warning to complacent generals, "If we survive without honor, how can we face heaven and earth?" (Đạo, 2001) remains a timeless call to uphold principles over expediency. He sought not just military victory, but the preservation of Đại Việt's independent spirit in the face of overwhelming power.

Today, as Vietnam engages in global trade, diplomacy, and technological exchange, safeguarding independence must extend beyond military sovereignty. It entails strategic autonomy in economic development, technological capacity in key sectors like AI and cybersecurity, and protection of cultural integrity against homogenizing forces. Without independent thinking, even prosperous nations risk external dependency and internal fragmentation. Vietnam's foreign policy must therefore remain one of principled multilateralism, integrating deeply with the world while preserving its identity and core values. **As President Hồ Chí Minh once advised** "Use the unchanging to respond to the ever-changing." This means leading with clarity of purpose, adapting without yielding, and advancing national interests through sovereign decision-making.

The legacy of Trần Hưng Đạo reminds us that national strength is built not on submission or imitation, but on unity, strategy, and the courage to chart one's course. In an increasingly complex global landscape, it is this spirit of proactive independence that will enable Vietnam to expand its development space, protect its sovereignty, and assert its rightful place in the world.

Patriotism as a Driving Force for Innovation, Creativity, and Commitment In the Trần Dynasty,

patriotism was expressed through sacrifice, strategic brilliance, and defiant resistance. **Today, in the era of globalization and the Fourth Industrial Revolution, it manifests in new forms** innovation, resilience, and the will to contribute meaningfully to national development. For Vietnam to achieve its aspiration of becoming a high-income, developed nation by 2045, patriotism must fuel a mindset of self-reliance, breakthrough thinking, and creative action.

Modern patriotism means rejecting complacency and striving to elevate Vietnam's position in global value chains. It is seen in the determination of scientists advancing domestic research, farmers embracing smart agriculture, workers upgrading skills, and educators transforming learning. These are not isolated acts of progress, but collective expressions of national pride. This spirit was demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic, when Vietnamese engineers, researchers, and frontline workers responded with extraordinary commitment. Their efforts were not only technical achievements but vivid reflections of patriotism in action, proving that love for the country is most powerful when tied to responsibility and innovation.

Trần Hưng Đạo embodied this principle centuries ago he led by example, challenged power when necessary, and placed the people above privilege. His spirit of courage, accountability, and visionary leadership offers a timeless model for today's officials, entrepreneurs, and youth alike.

As emphasized in the 13th National Party Congress Resolution, national progress depends on igniting a shared aspiration for prosperity and self-reliance. Patriotism, in this context, is not an abstract sentiment but a personal and collective drive to create value for the nation.

When every citizen asks, "What can I do for my country?" from students studying with purpose to civil servants working with integrity patriotism becomes the backbone of a dynamic, innovative society. It becomes not only a unifying force but also a sustainable engine for Vietnam's future.

5. CONCLUSION

The legacy of Hưng Đạo Đại Vương Trần Quốc Tuấn transcends military triumphs and patriotic

symbolism; it offers a timeless model of leadership, civic responsibility, and national vision. His ideological commitment to independence, people-centered governance, and national pride embodied in both thought and action continues to hold critical relevance in shaping Vietnam's development trajectory in the 21st century. Notably, these values align closely with the foundations of scientific culture and national innovation. In the contemporary era, where economic resilience, technological advancement, and human capital development are key pillars of national strength, patriotism must evolve beyond emotion into a transformative force that drives education, innovation, and ethical governance. Trần Hưng Đạo's principle of "taking the people as the root" emphasizes inclusivity and trust, which resonate with today's needs for participatory education, equitable access to knowledge, and community-driven innovation. His spirit of strategic independence is equally crucial for fostering Vietnam's technological sovereignty, ensuring that the country not only adopts new technologies but also develops its own through investment in research, talent, and institutional capacity.

Moreover, his example inspires a scientific ethos rooted in dedication, critical thinking, and social responsibility. Like Trần Hưng Đạo's insistence on discipline, preparation, and national purpose, a vibrant scientific culture requires resilience, intellectual independence, and a long-term vision guided by public interest. This cultural linkage reinforces the idea that national development must be built on both material resources and intangible assets such as values, identity, and civic virtue. Thus, the study of Trần Hưng Đạo is not merely an act of historical retrospection, but a call to reintegrate patriotic values into Vietnam's contemporary agenda for innovation, education, and technological progress. His legacy challenges every generation to renew their commitment to the nation, not only on the battlefield, but also in classrooms, laboratories, and policy forums so that Vietnam may rise as a powerful, sustainable, and dignified country on the global stage.

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