



## Nguyen Trai's Political Thoughts

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**Abstract:** *Nguyen Trai's political thought emerged and developed in specific historical conditions, when he supported Le Loi against the Ming rule in the 15th century. He participated in the Lam Son Uprising against the Ming Dynasty to gain national independence, built the Dai Viet (the Le Dynasty) and was a great minister of the Le Dynasty. Nguyen Trai's political ideology is expressed in his works, during the ten years of Lam Son Uprising and in his time as mandarin. The content in Nguyen Trai's political ideology is the thought of humanity, compassion and concern for the people; thought of building a good state model; thought about diplomacy.*

**Keywords:** *nation, political ideology, people, state, diplomacy.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Nguyen Trai is a great intellectual, a great thinker, a prominent political activist in the Vietnamese feudal society in the 15th century. He was a hero who liberated the Dai Viet from the domination of the Ming Feudal Dynasty in China. Studying on his career, we will realize that he has left a foundation of thought for the Vietnamese people, in that foundation of thought has political thought.

#### 1.1. Biography of Nguyen Trai

Nguyen Trai (about 1380-1442) was born in Chi Ngai commune, Chi Linh district, Hai Duong province. From a young age, Nguyen Trai was taught by Father and Granddad about the love of his homeland, the country, and the love of working people. He understood the national tradition and knew how to live for the right, thought of humanity.

In 1400, he passed his doctorate in the first course of the Ho Dynasty. Nguyen Trai's thought political was formed in the context of the feudal Vietnamese regime in the 15th century, the Dai Viet Dynasty, Dai Ngu Dynasty, and the invasion of the Ming Dynasty. His political thoughts are expressed in his practical activities, he was an adviser to Le Loi during the battle against the invading Ming Dynasty, a great mandarin in the Le Dynasty.

The main works of Nguyen Trai include: *Quân Trung Từ Mệnh Tập* literally means (Middle troops from episodes) are a collection of historical - military - diplomatic documents drafted by Nguyen Trai under the mandate and in the name of Le Loi, the booklet contains letters exchanging between Le Loi and Ming dynasty generals. *Bình Ngô Đại cáo* literally means (Great proclamation upon the pacification of the Wu) to declare the victory of the resistance against the Ming Dynasty, affirming Dai Viet's independence. This is considered the second Declaration of Independence of Vietnam, a literary work with an important administrative function for the history of the Vietnamese nation. *Dư Địa Chí* literally means (Geographical location) a brief record of Vietnam's administrative and natural geography through historical periods. Presentation of geography, shape of mountains and rivers. Some administrative units such as province, district, commune, and village belong to the religion.

Through his works, we have realized that Nguyen Trai's political thought reflected many aspects of our country's life, including: political, military, diplomatic, cultural, social ideals. Nguyen Trai's political ideology has not only the theoretical value but also the practical value of Dai Viet, and those values have profoundly influenced the history of Vietnamese thought today.

## 2. CONTENTS OF POLITICAL THOUGHT OF NGUYEN TRAI

Nguyen Trai's political thought was not a systematic doctrine, expressed scattered through his works, discovered by the research works of modern social scientists. Nguyen Trai's thought was a mixture of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism (Confucianism played a major role), in accordance with the practical situation of Dai Viet at that time. The political view of Nguyen Trai was formed at the end of the Tran Dynasty, the period of Ho Dynasty, the Ming Dynasty invaded Dai Viet, the period of Le Dynasty. Nguyen Trai's political thought has shown "thought of humanity", expressed in the following 3 contents: firstly, humanity means loving people; secondly, humanity is always tied to the ideology for the people and stabilizing the people; thirdly, humanity is also expressed in the "studiousness" and "tolerance".

According to research by writer, historian Tran Huy Lieu: "Nguyen Trai's ideology about humanity is associated with people's thoughts, patriotism, peace thoughts, all a political way, a policy to save the country and build the country. The idea of humanity has been shown the dream of building an ideal society for the everlasting peace: Nghieu Thuan society of Nguyen Trai". (Tran Huy Lieu, 1966, p. 144) [3].

Nguyen Trai's political views have simple but profound content. Nguyen Trai's idea of humanity is also the power to protect the nation, promote the patriotism of everyone. The content of Nguyen Trai's political ideology includes: "respect for the people", "taking people as root"; ideology of nation, nation, state building; "thought about diplomacy".

### 2.1. Nguyen Trai's Political Ideology about People, Taking People as Root

According to research by Tran Huy Lieu: "Nguyen Trai is full of compassion for people, respect for the people. He affirmed that the people are the forces that produce the material of society and the driving force that determines the decline of the dynasty and the country. He is considered to be one of the historical figures who have thought about the people in Vietnamese feudal history." (Tran Huy Lieu, 1966, p.56) [3].

The people that Nguyen Trai was interested in were "all the farmers and miserable workers". They not only created great strength for the resistance, but also the source of victory: "magnificent and magnificent, all due to the hard labor of the people" (Nguyen Trai Full Episode, 1976, p.196) [4]. Therefore, he advised to love and care for the people, to let the villages where there was no resentment of sorrow.

Nguyen Trai analyzed the cause of failure of the Tran dynasty and the Ho dynasty, he pointed out that they were not trusted by people and supported by people: "The Tran relies on existing wealth and power, neglecting miserable people,... do not care about everyone's interests, people wanted to turn over the dynasty they didn't know" (Nguyen Trai Full Episode, 1976, p.196-197) [4]. He pointed out the weakness of the Ho dynasty: "...the Ho dynasty overturned the Tran dynasty, so the whole nation considered the enemy, the people did not support the Ho dynasty..." (Nguyen Trai Full Episode, 1976, p.139) [4]. As a result, Dai Ngu was invaded by the Ming dynasty to merge into one of their provinces, he wrote that: "many layers of barriers preventing sea waves, So is the chain of iron chains, Flip the boat to understand people like water" (Nguyen Trai Full Episode, 1976, p.281) [4].

Although, the Ho dynasty conducted a war of national defense, they did not gather the entire people's resistance forces, did not promote the material and spiritual strength of the people. As a result, the resistance led by the Ho dynasty quickly failed.

Nguyen Trai said that a revolt to win is based on the people, must be supported by the people, must receive the support of the people. He advocates based on people to build forces and carry out a comprehensive revolt: "building sticks as flags, the people of the four directions gathered" (Nguyen Trai Full Episode, 1976, p.79) [4], he advised the soldiers: "people suffer because of the enemy for a long time, liberation troops do not encroach upon the people, in the area of the army" (Nguyen Trai Full Episode, 1976, p.58) [4]. Therefore, the liberation army received the consensus of the people, when they went anywhere, they were supported by people "volunteering to work together and die to kill the enemy". The sympathy and support of the people is one of the prerequisites for Lam Son insurgents to win.

Nguyen Trai advised the government not to collect heavy taxes, besides, to take care of the material and spiritual life for the people. He always dreamed of having a miracle to bring rich life to the people. Inheriting his idea, Le Thanh Tong advocates that the government must implement a “humanitarian” approach to the people whose basic contents are to reduce tax reduction for the people, make people more prosperous, destroy bad people to protect the people.

For Nguyen Trai, people have a very important position and role to decide the demise of a dynasty, deciding on the development of history. He said, “raising the boat to the people and turning the boat down is also the people”. He asserts that people are the fundamental force and the main force to carry out the resistance, in addition, the people are rears providing material resources for the revolt. Therefore, when the nation is independent, the state must worry so that the people can live full and not hear the resentment of sorrow.

## 2.2. Nguyen Trai's thought about State Construction

Nguyen Trai is very proud of his beautiful country with majestic mountains, rich products, long-standing civilization with his own lifestyle, the history of brilliant heroes fighting against foreign invaders. He affirmed that Dai Viet was an independent nation and had a tradition of patriotism, peace, and territorial sovereignty: “Our country is Dai Viet so far. Declared independence long ago. Countries have territorial sovereignty. North and South customs are different. From the Dinh, Ly and Tran dynasties, independence was created. Along with the Han, Tang, Tong and Yuan dynasties in each country in one place”.

He said that “humanitarian” is to save people from violence, to save the country from invasion, to protect the country, to protect the people. The Ming dynasty was unjust, because their army invaded the Dai Ngu Dynasty, slaughtering innocent people, plundering people's properties. As a result, the people have united to resolve to liberate themselves. That liberation is called “righteous war”. He advised that “To take the righteous to win the violence, To take humanitarian to replace violence”. In Nguyen Trai's career, the thought of building a state and operating the state apparatus was formed when the nation regained its independence and began the process of building the country. He dreamed of building a state “The king has a kind heart, Mandarins have talent and virtue, People live happily and happily”. In order to fulfill his dream, he asked the king to have a close life with the people, love the people, and always care about the interests of the people, living the happiness of the people is my goal.

He thought that the foundation of the state, “taking people as root”. The king must take “humanitarian” as the background. Nguyen Trai advocates educating people, taking care of people's life is better than using punishment with them. when the country ended the war, peace was repeated, Nguyen Trai and his king Le Loi started to build a good society for people to have a happy and prosperous life. He said, “Nghieu Thuan King, Nghieu Thuan people. I am so satisfied (Nghieu Thuan was a king that had kindness, generosity and talent and was praised by the people, in the ancient Chinese dynasty).

According to Nguyen Trai, a peaceful country will be a country with a prosperous and beautiful life, at the same time, having a good and friendly relationship with other countries. Nguyen Trai's socio-political ideology is in line with the aspirations and dreams of the nation, it is the most humane thought at that time.

In addition, Nguyen Trai is also interested in building a legal corridor to combat bureaucracy and corruption, bribing officials. He asked mandarins to pay great attention to people's life, “Today, from high-ranking mandarins to small mandarins in the imperial court, institutions in institutes and other units. Those who have positions must work responsibly, ensure fairness, hard work, be loyal to the absolute king, treat people harmoniously, abandon greed, and lazy”.

He has a strategic vision and science in finding many talented people to join the state to serve the country and help people. Nguyen Trai believes that the factor that determines the career of building a peaceful and prosperous country from people's resources. “In the power of the people, what is the most powerful motivation?”, Nguyen Trai said that it is a factor of talent. In the notice of talent selection, he said, “the country has many talented people, so the state must recruit talented people with many different methods, such as: study and pass the exam; mandarins have a high office, and people with great merits to the dynasty, they will recommend a person to work for the state, some

talented people can self-nominate for the state". Nguyen Trai has focused on training, fostering, developing and using talents in government jobs.

### 2.3. Nguyen Trai's thought about Diplomacy

In the context of Nguyen Trai's country being invaded, the Ming Dynasty caused many crimes against the people of Dai Viet. When the enemy is weak, will lose the battle, he had a "humanitarian" thought, convinced the Ming army to surrender, he wanted to spare his enemy. Nguyen Trai is a peace lover, shown in the act of forgiving the enemy when they lost the battle, he said "To make the country long-term, we do not kill 100 thousand enemy troops surrender. Creating peace for the two countries, quenching the war for eternity".

He wanted his country to be peaceful and stable. He did not want to have more long-term violence and war, causing more conflicts with other countries in the region. Nguyen Trai's desire is the principle of "adding less hostile friends", demonstrating the friendship between the nations together, living together in peace.

In the letter to General Wang Thong, when they were surrounded in Dong Kinh, he wrote "the road and bridge were repaired, the boat was ready enough, the general be able to choose the waterway and the road, to bring the troops back to the country, they would be safe".

He said revenge against is the commonness of people, not killing is the background of good people, he wanted everyone to be happy and the country was peaceful. Nguyen Trai's humanitarian thought in that context was not so popular among many people, so they tried to assault, misrepresent, and even gave him guilt. However, he is willing to overcome all difficulties because he believes in being right, believing in the ascent of innovation, the power of righteousness, and the truth of humanity.

Peace love is a special point in Nguyen Trai's humanitarian thought. He condemned the war of invading peoples, it was an unjust war, disgusting. He said war was dangerous because it killed many people, many families were separated. In fact, he supported building the army, persevering the war. Because in order for the country to be independent, the people are free, there is no other way to take the righteous war against the unjust war.

Therefore, Nguyen Trai always dreamed of peace, for the people of both countries. In a letter to the Ming general, he said, If the General had compassion and listened to me withdrawing his troops back to the country, it would not only be lucky for Giao Chi but also for the people. With his humanitarian thought, he ended the war with peace to create a sustainable peace, not because of the victory but revenge for the agreement, not causing more grudge to cause later.

### 3. DISCUSSION

Nguyen Trai's political ideology has contributed, building Vietnam's political system of political ideology and morality. It contributed to the development of Vietnam's political theory system. The value of reasoning in the political thinking of Nguyễn Trãi is expressed in the content.

Nguyen Trai's political ideology has contributed new theoretical content to the history of Vietnamese ideology that is humanitarian political thought. The concept of humanitarian content is specific, easy to understand and easy to do and has escaped the cover of class, humanitarian is applied to everyone, applied to his enemies. It expresses great humanity, which is the crystallization of the patriotic tradition, kindness, affection and tolerance of the Vietnamese nation, a true reflection of the practical requirements of Dai Viet social history, during the 14th and 15th centuries.

Nguyen Trai's humanitarian thought is a valuable contribution to the history of the Vietnamese nation's ideology and history, which has become a symbol of the nation's beauty and goodness. Humanitarianism in the political thinking of Nguyen Trai upholds human being as a center, human factor to live in peace and happiness is the foundation. It is the work of the state, the politics.

Nguyen Trai's political ideology about people, taking people as root. He understood the importance of the people and citizens as a determinant of the existence and development of the state, or collapse, and he set out the requirements to build a nation that benefits the people. This shows the newness, progress in his thinking, which has enriched and deepened the connotation of the people's concept, it is the key to help us interpret and find the true motivation of history, contributing to enriching the history of Vietnamese political thought.

Political ideology on national construction, state construction is the inheritance of ideology about national independence, about the sovereignty of the ancestors. Nguyen Trai has a high level of thinking, and has a strong political style. Summarizing the historical experience and national culture, we find that he has contributed to raising national consciousness and patriotism to a new level, marking an important step in national development, Vietnamese political thought culture and history.

His political ideology of building a strong, prosperous state. He proposed the moral and energy requirements for kings and mandarins. He encouraged recruiting talented people, and everyone had to work in their own right. That thought brings great value to the theory of building the rule of law of people, by people and for people. He said a strong state must ensure the factor: taking people to root, taking humanitarian as the basis for ideology for political direction, and special attention to people's destiny.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Nguyen Trai's political ideology is considered as the pinnacle of Vietnam's political thought in the 15th century. It reflects the maturity of Vietnamese theoretical thinking in the face of pressing issues of the nation and the era. The content and common value of the history of Vietnamese political thought from the period of national construction to the Nguyen Trai period was summed up by him but at a new and deeper level of awareness. These are issues, including: thought about people (humanitarian), peace, friendship between nations, against oppressive war; about national independence and national unity; taking people to root (the power of the people), rely on the power of the people to build and keep the country; about building a state and operating the state apparatus.

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