HO CHI MINH NATIONAL ACADEMY OF POLITICS

LUU THI THU HIEN

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CITIZENS AND THE STATE IN J.J.ROUSSEAU'S THOUGHT - IMPLICATIONS FOR BUILDING THE SOCIALIST RULE OF LAW STATE IN CONTEMPORARY VIETNAM

SUMMARY OF DOCTORAL DISSERTATION
MAJOR: DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM AND HISTORICAL MATERIALISM
Code: 9229002

HA NOI - 2026

The dissertation was completed at
Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics

Supervisors: **1. Assoc Prof.Dr. Dang Quang Dinh**

2. Dr. Pham Anh Hung

Reviewer 1: .....
.....

Reviewer 2: .....
.....

Reviewer 3: .....
.....

The dissertation will be defended before the Academy-level Dissertation Evaluation Council
Held at Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics
Time……hours……date……month……year 2026

The dissertation can be found at: The National Library of Vietnam and The Library of the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics

INTRODUCTION

1. Urgency of the research topic

The relationship between the citizen and the state is a fundamental and foundational relation in almost all schools of political philosophy and philosophical conceptions of the state. Diverse philosophical doctrines, through various forms and theoretical approaches, have centered on explicating this relationship to determine the essence, origin, and boundaries of state power. Philosophers belonging to the natural law doctrine, such as John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, J.J.Rousseau, and Montesquieu, laid the theoretical foundations and shaped the frameworks for the citizen-state relationship. Through their theories on natural rights, the social contract, popular sovereignty, and the separation of powers, they contributed to constructing a state model in which political power originates from the people, is limited by law, and is institutionalized within republican governance, enshrined in constitutions, and codified in statutory legal systems enacted by parliaments.

J.J.Rousseau (1712-1778), born in Geneve, was an eminent thinker of the French Enlightenment and a quintessential representative of the natural law school of philosophy. His doctrine on the citizen-state relationship emerged as a revolutionary response to the pervasive social inequality under eighteenth-century absolutism. Originating from the profound premise that man is born free but everywhere in chains under power, Rousseau formulated the theory of the social contract to construct a new political order. Among his works, The Social Contract stands as a relatively complete philosophical treatise wherein he comprehensively and systematically articulates the core contents and philosophical significance of the relationship between the citizen and the state. Throughout this work, the concept of popular sovereignty serves as an overarching motif, exalting legitimate political power and the active role of citizens in political life. According to Rousseau, state power possesses legitimacy only when derived from the general will of the people and dedicated to serving the common good of the community - a core principle through which he executed a monumental historical shift: transforming human beings from the status of "subjected subjects" into

"sovereign citizens", thereby advancing beyond the ideas of Montesquieu. Alongside the works of contemporary thinkers like John Locke and Montesquieu, The Social Contract generated immense spiritual force, sparking the powerful bourgeois revolutions of the eighteenth century. To this day, many of its core tenets continue to be inherited and enshrined in major political documents as symbols of humanity's revolutionary spirit. Consequently, J.J.Rousseau's progressive thought not only serves as a vital theoretical source for the historical development of the rule of law, but re-examining his perspectives also carries urgent significance, providing a theoretical key to further perfecting the relationship between the state and citizens in the contemporary context.

Particularly for Vietnam, J.J.Rousseau's thought regarding the relationship between the citizen and the state carries profound theoretical and practical value. This inheritance is vividly manifested in the creative reference and application of the doctrine of popular sovereignty and the general will by the Communist Party and State of Vietnam in constructing the model of a Socialist Rule of Law State of the People, by the People, and for the People. Presently, Vietnam continues to accelerate the building and perfection of the Socialist Rule of Law State in line with the spirit of the Party's 14th National Congress. A core component of this process is establishing and developing a harmonious and close relationship between the State and citizens, wherein the State respects, guarantees, and protects human rights and civil rights, while citizens fully discharge their obligations to the State and society. The Documents of the 14th National Congress explicitly emphasize: "Building and perfecting the Socialist Rule of Law State of Vietnam of the People, by the People, and for the People under the leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam is the central task of political system reform; it must always be placed within the overall work of building and rectifying a comprehensive, clean, and strong Party and political system; building a modern, effective, and efficient national governance system; possessing a complete, strictly enforced legal system; and guaranteeing and protecting justice, human rights, and civil rights."

However, the process of state power organization and governance still poses numerous theoretical and practical challenges.

Theoretically: The process of building a socialist rule of law state requires clear institutionalization of the citizen - state relationship to guarantee state legitimacy; establishing a power control mechanism that genuinely centers on building an institutional framework grounded in the relation between the people and the state; constructing a state with sufficient national governance capacity amid advancing knowledge and democratic practices, which demand the guarantee and self-guarantee of citizens' legitimate interests; and establishing the principle of the rule of law in the new development stage based on securing a two - way relationship between citizens and the state.

Practically: In the era of global integration, the influence of pragmatic lifestyles, public apathy, and the moral degradation of a non - negligible segment of Party members within the state apparatus constitute pressing issues, posing severe threats to the survival of the wholesome socialist regime painstakingly built by generations of Vietnamese people. The Party - State - People relationship faces various inadequacies; the implementation of the two - tier local governance system has not operated entirely smoothly, certain pre-existing backlog issues remain unresolved effectively, and the people's exercise of democracy has not been fully realized in practice.

These emerging imperatives regarding mechanisms to promote popular sovereignty, enhance the efficacy of state power control, strengthen accountability, and bolster public trust in the State necessitate that Vietnam selectively absorb progressive international ideas while learning and drawing experiences from rule of law state building processes in other nations for a comprehensive analysis. Returning to a systematic study of J.J.Rousseau's thought on the relationship between the citizen and the state not only helps elucidate the historical - theoretical essence of political power, but also supplies vital scientific arguments to address practical bottlenecks, further refine institutions, and elevate the efficacy of the State - citizen relationship in contemporary Vietnam. Proceeding from these rationales, the author selected the topic: ***"The Relationship between Citizen and the State in J.J.Rousseau's thought - Implications for building the Socialist Rule of Law State in contemporary Vietnam"*** as the subject for this doctoral dissertation in Philosophy.

2. Research Objectives and Tasks

2.1. Research Objectives

On the basis of clarifying the context of formation and the fundamental contents of J.J.Rousseau's thought on the relationship between the citizen and the state, the dissertation evaluates its historical values and limitations, while drawing implications and reference values for building the Socialist Rule of Law State in contemporary Vietnam.

2.2. Research Tasks

First, to conduct a comprehensive literature review of domestic and international studies directly related to the research topic.

Second, to analyze the prerequisites for the formation of J.J.Rousseau's thought on the relationship between the citizen and the state.

Third, to analyze the core contents of J.J.Rousseau's views on the relationship between the citizen and the state.

Fourth, to evaluate the historical values and limitations of J.J.Rousseau's views, thereby deriving theoretical and practical implications, as well as reference values, for the current process of building the Socialist Rule of Law State in Vietnam.

3. Research Subject and Scope

3.1. Research Subject

The dissertation focuses on analyzing J.J.Rousseau's thought on the relationship between the citizen and the state, identifying reference values alongside theoretical and practical implications of this thought for building the Socialist Rule of Law State in contemporary Vietnam.

3.2. Research Scope

In terms of content: The dissertation concentrates on analyzing J.J.Rousseau's perspectives regarding the relationship between the citizen and the state.

In terms of source materials: The dissertation relies primarily on J.J.Rousseau's seminal work, *The Social Contract*. Additionally, reference is made to his treatise *Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality Among Men*, alongside scholarly research works by domestic and international authors.

In terms of application orientation: The dissertation emphasizes analyzing the theoretical significance and reference value of J.J.Rousseau's thought on the citizen - state relationship for building the Socialist Rule of

Law State in contemporary Vietnam, without delving deeply into specific technical legal issues.

4. Theoretical Foundations and Research Methods

4.1. Theoretical Foundations

The dissertation is conducted on the theoretical foundations of Marxism - Leninism, Ho Chi Minh Thought, and the guidelines of the Communist Party of Vietnam concerning human rights and civil rights within the socialist rule-of-law state.

4.2. Research Methods

Methodological Basis: The dissertation is executed on the basis of the methodology of dialectical materialism and historical materialism.

Specific Research Methods: The dissertation utilizes a combination of research methods, including: The historical and logical method; method of analysis and synthesis; gomparative and contrastive method; systemic and structural approach; scientific generalization and abstraction; hermeneutic and interpretive method.

5. Scientific Significance and Novel Contributions of the Dissertation

Upon completion, the dissertation will deliver the following significance and contributions:

Academic and Scientific Significance:

The dissertation contributes to systematizing and generalizing the main contents of J.J.Rousseau's views on the relationship between the citizen and the state.

The dissertation contributes to evaluating the enduring values within J.J.Rousseau's thought while pointing out the limitations and shortcomings in his perspectives, particularly concerning the citizen - state relationship.

The dissertation provides valuable reference material for subsequent studies on the state, citizens, and the relationship between citizens and the state.

Practical Significance:

The dissertation can serve as a valuable reference document for teaching, learning, and research activities at academic and training institutions, particularly

within modules on the history of philosophy, the history of political thought, and the history of early modern Western philosophy.

Novel Contributions of the Dissertation:

The dissertation contributes to systematizing the core contents of J.J.Rousseau's thought on the relationship between the citizen and the state in his seminal work The Social Contract.

The dissertation affirms J.J.Rousseau's prominent contributions to establishing the theoretical foundations for state legitimacy while elucidating his historical limitations. Building upon this, the dissertation evaluates the reference value of J.J.Rousseau's thought for building the Socialist Rule-of-Law State in contemporary Vietnam, emphasizing civil rights, accountability, and the expansion of mechanisms guaranteeing democracy.

6. Structure of the Dissertation

In addition to the Introduction, Conclusion, List of Author's Published Works Related to the Dissertation, and References, the dissertation is structured into 04 chapters and 11 sections:

Chapter 1: Literature Review on the research topic

Chapter 2: Foundations of J.J.Rousseau's Thought on the Relationship Between the Citizen and the State

Chapter 3: Core Contents, Values, and Limitations of J.J.Rousseau's Thought on the Relationship Between the Citizen and the State

Chapter 4: Implications of J.J.Rousseau's Thought on the Relationship Between the Citizen and the State for Building the Socialist Rule-of-Law State in Contemporary Vietnam.

Chapter 1
LITERATURE REVIEW ON THE RESEARCH TOPIC

1.1. MAJOR RESEARCH WORKS RELATED TO J.J.ROUSSEAU'S THOUGHT ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CITIZEN AND THE STATE

The dissertation reviews various domestic and international research groups concerning the formation prerequisites and the core content of J.J.Rousseau's thought on the citizen-state relationship. These research groups - comprising monographs, reference books, doctoral dissertations, and scientific journal articles - make substantial scientific contributions by approaching J.J.Rousseau's thought from multiple dimensions. These range from socio - economic conditions, political - cultural contexts, and ideological prerequisites to specific topics such as human nature, natural rights, freedom, equality, citizenship, the social contract, the general will, popular sovereignty, law, democracy, the state, and the control of political power.

1.2. MAJOR RESEARCH WORKS RELATED TO THE IMPLICATIONS OF J.J.ROUSSEAU'S THOUGHT ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CITIZEN AND THE STATE FOR BUILDING THE SOCIALIST RULE-OF-LAW STATE IN CONTEMPORARY VIETNAM

The author of the dissertation has conducted a comprehensive review of domestic and international scientific works addressing the historical value, contemporary significance, and reference potential of the rational kernels within J.J.Rousseau's thought. These works focus on issues such as democracy, human rights, popular sovereignty, the organization and control of state power, and the construction of the rule of law state in general, as well as the Socialist Rule of Law State in Vietnam in particular. These research studies - presented in the form of monographs, reference books, scientific research projects, doctoral dissertations, and journal articles - hold substantial theoretical and practical value.

1.3. VALUE OF REVIEWED LITERATURE AND ISSUES REQUIRING FURTHER ELUCIDATION

1.3.1. Value of Reviewed Literature

First, existing works have clarified the eighteenth-century French economic, political, cultural, and ideological context, while summarizing the life and career of J.J.Rousseau. This serves as an essential foundation for

identifying the practical and theoretical prerequisites that shaped his thought on the relationship between the citizen and the state.

Second, prior studies have conducted in depth analyses of J.J.Rousseau's works, particularly The Social Contract, thereby elucidating his perspectives on the social contract, freedom, equality, popular sovereignty, and political philosophy. These findings provide important source materials and theoretical foundations for the dissertation topic.

Third, numerous research works have articulated the value and influence of J.J.Rousseau's thought on the theory of the rule of law, democracy, and civil rights, while pointing out both his contributions and historical limitations. This helps highlight the contemporary significance of J.J.Rousseau's thought for modern political issues and the process of building a rule of law state in Vietnam based on promoting democracy and guaranteeing civil rights.

The literature review demonstrates that while J.J.Rousseau's thought has drawn widespread attention, significant theoretical gaps remain. Most authors approach his thought only in fragmented dimensions, such as human rights or direct democracy, without systematically analyzing the relationship between the citizen and the state as a unified whole. Studies on the formation prerequisites have not yet fully clarified the combined impact of socio - economic, political, cultural factors, and personal experiences; furthermore, the evaluation of the utopian nature of his direct democracy model remains incomplete. Crucially, research applying J.J.Rousseau’s thought to building the Socialist Rule of Law State in Vietnam remains sparse, lacking theoretical depth and systematic rigor. This represents the key scientific gap that this dissertation aims to address.

1.3.2. Issues Requiring Further Research in the Dissertation

The examination of relevant literature indicates that studies on Enlightenment philosophy remain relatively modest, particularly specialized research. Furthermore, no comprehensive study has fully investigated the relationship between the citizen and the state in J.J.Rousseau's views, delineated its contemporary values and historical limitations, or especially evaluated its reference significance for the practice of building the Socialist Rule of Law State in contemporary Vietnam. The specific tasks set forth in this dissertation are:

First, to analyze the foundational prerequisites forming J.J.Rousseau's thought on the relationship between the citizen and the state.

Second, to conduct a deep analysis of J.J.Rousseau's perspectives regarding the relationship between the citizen and the state, thereby clarifying the decisive principles governing state power and civic participation.

Third, to identify the values and limitations of J.J.Rousseau's thought and derive its implications for building the Socialist Rule of Law State in contemporary Vietnam.

Chapter 2
FOUNDATIONS OF J.J.ROUSSEAU'S THOUGHT ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CITIZEN AND THE STATE

2.1. SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY EUROPEAN SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

2.1.1. Crisis of Feudalism and the Development of Eighteenth-Century Capitalism

J.J.Rousseau’s thought was shaped against the backdrop of eighteenth-century Europe, a period marked by profound economic, political, and social transformations. The robust development of capitalist production and the rise of the bourgeoisie, alongside the decay of feudalism, generated acute contradictions between new productive forces and obsolete political institutions. Meanwhile, absolute monarchy continued to uphold privileges for the nobility and clergy, creating severe social inequality. These upheavals necessitated the construction of a new political organization model grounded in freedom, equality, and human sovereignty.

2.1.2. Social Class Structure

The social class structure of eighteenth century France, combined with the Enlightenment movement, constituted the practical prerequisite and ideological environment that decisively shaped J.J.Rousseau's views on the citizen and the state. On the one hand, deep class polarization impelled him to construct a theory for the liberation of the people, resulting in an absolute rejection of the autocratic sovereignty of kings, nobles, and the clergy. J.J.Rousseau demanded that the state safeguard the political and moral equality of citizens rather than economic privilege, while proposing a bourgeois republican model governed by the rule of law as the manifestation of the general will. Inheriting the rationalist spirit of the Enlightenment while simultaneously critiquing the limitations of contemporary civilization,

J.J.Rousseau forged a distinct intellectual voice that perfected his unique doctrine on the social contract, popular sovereignty, and the relationship between citizens and public authority.

2.1.3. Formation and Development of Enlightenment Political Thought

The seventeenth and eighteenth century European Enlightenment, characterized by an explosion of rational thought, the scientific spirit, and progressive doctrines such as John Locke's natural rights and Montesquieu's separation of powers, established a crucial philosophical prerequisite for J.J.Rousseau's thought. This vibrant intellectual atmosphere profoundly impacted him across three core dimensions: distilling the values of liberty and popular sovereignty; fiercely critiquing inequality and social alienation; and constructing a new institutional theory. Through this framework, J.J.Rousseau affirmed that state legitimacy must originate from the social contract and operate on the foundation of the general will, thereby harmoniously reconciling individual freedom with communal order.

2.2. THEORETICAL PREREQUISITES FOR THE FORMATION OF J.J.ROUSSEAU'S THOUGHT

2.2.1. The Influence of Ancient Greek Philosophy

Ancient Greek political philosophy, epitomized by Aristotle's views on the polis and the concept of man as a "political animal", laid an essential foundation for J.J.Rousseau in shaping his theory on the citizen-state relationship. Absorbing the spirit of antiquity, J.J.Rousseau restored the authentic essence of the concept of the "Citizen" and affirmed the model wherein individuals fulfill their moral personhood through engagement with the community. He elevated these values by exalting the direct nature of politics, asserting that sovereignty resides in the People and is strictly inalienable and unrepresentable. Through the social contract, human beings transition from natural liberty to civil liberty and moral liberty. This inheritance enabled J.J.Rousseau to establish a revolutionary proposition: fulfilling political duties is a voluntary moral act, while state power must originate from the general will and operate on the principle of the rule of law.

2.2.2. Thomas Hobbes's Social Contract Theory

Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) was an eminent English philosopher, scientist, and historian. His masterpiece, Leviathan (1651), presents a comprehensive exposition of his philosophical views.

According to Hobbes, the state of nature is an environment of absolute freedom and equality yet perpetually engulfed in chaos, where "man is a wolf to man" driven by survival instincts and the absence of law. To escape fear and ensure security, reason leads individuals to enter into a social contract, voluntarily transferring their unlimited natural rights to a supreme sovereign (a monarch or an assembly). This sovereign possesses absolute power to enact laws, maintain order, and transition society into a stable civil state. Hobbes's theories on the state of nature and the transfer of power via contract served as vital prerequisites for Rousseau's intellectual absorption. However, Rousseau rejected the proposition that "man is a wolf to man" through his belief in humanity's innate natural compassion, thereby constructing a profoundly more humanistic and radically democratic social contract theory.

2.2.3. John Locke's Thought on the Social Contract

John Locke (1632-1704) was a representative of the rising bourgeoisie and gentry in England following the Revolution of 1648. Championing the British bourgeoisie, Locke exalted liberty, human rights, and property rights.

In contrast to Hobbes's brutal portrait, Locke depicted the state of nature as a condition of peace, freedom, and equality, where human beings inherently possess inviolable natural rights, including life, liberty, and estate. To overcome the deficiency of lacking an objective judge to settle disputes, individuals voluntarily execute a social contract to establish a government. Accordingly, the state receives only a limited delegation of power to execute laws as an impartial referee, strictly barred from depriving citizens of their natural rights. Thus, state power is derivative and limited by popular consent; should the government abuse its power, the people retain the full right to overthrow it and establish a new government. Locke's methodology of the "state of nature" and his conception of legitimacy derived from consent provided the prerequisites for J.J.Rousseau to inherit and elevate into his doctrine of the general will and popular sovereignty. Overall, these social contract philosophers converged on the shared premise that political society is neither a product of natural instinct nor divine right, but an institution constructed by human beings themselves to protect and attain individual rights.

2.2.4. Montesquieu's Thought

Baron de Montesquieu, through his seminal work The Spirit of the Laws (De l'esprit des lois, 1748), established crucial groundwork for J.J.Rousseau to

develop his doctrine of popular sovereignty. J.J.Rousseau distilled three core values from Montesquieu: the spirit of the rule of law, a socio - historical methodology, and the exalting of civic virtue. However, J.J.Rousseau demonstrated a major leap forward by critiquing the doctrine of the Separation of Powers and representative government. He affirmed that popular sovereignty is unified and indivisible, demanding that the people directly exercise state power. In doing so, J.J.Rousseau transformed Montesquieu's bourgeois liberal thought into a profoundly revolutionary republican democratic doctrine.

2.3. THE FORMATION PROCESS OF J.J.ROUSSEAU'S THOUGHT ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CITIZEN AND THE STATE

2.3.1. J.J.Rousseau's Life and Intellectual Trajectory

J.J.Rousseau's life exerted a profound influence on the development of his political thought. Born into a commoner family and enduring numerous hardships, he came into direct contact with the injustices and social stratification of feudal society. This personal background enabled Rousseau to clearly perceive the conditions of oppression, inequality, and the alienation of political power, thereby fostering his vigorous critique of contemporary feudal institutions. Beyond being a philosopher, J.J.Rousseau was an influential man of letters, educator, and ideological activist. He sought to defend human dignity, affirm the right to freedom, and exalt the role of the people in political life. It was this rich synthesis of practical experience and scholarly endeavors that contributed to shaping his systematic thought on citizenship, the state, and democracy.

2.3.2. Major Works of J.J.Rousseau

Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality Among Men clearly demonstrates J.J.Rousseau's social critique. He asserted that inequality is not a product of nature but emerged alongside private property and historical development. J.J.Rousseau critiqued the misuse of power and religion to perpetuate the privileges of a minority, affirming that a state is legitimate only when serving the common interest of all citizens.

Julie; or, The New Heloise (1761) reflects the humanistic perspectives and romantic inclinations in J.J.Rousseau's thought. Through a love story that transcends class barriers, he exalted individual liberty, the right to choose

one's marriage, and human dignity, while critiquing the rigid conventions of feudal society.

Émile; or, On Education (1762) articulates J.J.Rousseau's view that education must respect natural human development by integrating knowledge with practical experience. The ultimate objective is to cultivate free, independent, and socially responsible individuals, thereby laying the groundwork for forming citizens suited for a democratic society.

The Social Contract (1762) stands as J.J.Rousseau's most important political treatise. In this work, he affirmed that sovereignty resides in the people and that a state is legitimate only when constructed upon the consent of its citizens. The doctrine of the general will (volonté générale) is presented as the foundation of law and political power, serving as a cornerstone of modern democratic thought.

Rousseau - Judge of Jean Jacques (1776) and **Reveries of the Solitary Walker** (1782) are late works reflecting J.J.Rousseau's inner depth and philosophical introspection. Through them, he revealed his yearning for a life of freedom in harmony with nature while continuing to affirm the enduring humanistic values throughout his intellectual legacy.

2.3.3. The Formation Process of J.J.Rousseau's Thought on the Citizen-State Relationship

The formation of J.J.Rousseau's thought on the relationship between the citizen and the state represents a logical progression through four core epistemological stages. Beginning with the eighteenth - century French socio-economic context that shaped his spirit of liberty and republican consciousness, J.J.Rousseau advanced to a critical epistemological turning point: affirming the people as the true agents creating history and power. By distilling and incisively critiquing the theoretical premises of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, he perfected a dialectical methodology to explain the interaction between citizens and the public authority. This trajectory formed a coherent system of arguments that laid a solid foundation for the principles of the rule of law and popular sovereignty.

Chapter 3
CORE CONTENTS, VALUES, AND LIMITATIONS OF J.J.ROUSSEAU'S THOUGHT ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CITIZEN AND THE STATE

3.1. CORE CONTENTS OF J.J.ROUSSEAU'S THOUGHT ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CITIZEN AND THE STATE

3.1.1. J.J.Rousseau's Conception of the Citizen

For J.J.Rousseau, citizens are understood as individuals inextricably linked to the ideal republican state model. They play a pivotal role within the state, participating in legislation, exercising national sovereignty, upholding civic responsibility, and observing the obligation to obey duly enacted laws.

3.1.1.1. The Citizen as the Sovereign Subject

First, the citizen is simultaneously a member of the sovereign authority and a subject of the state. Second, citizens act in accordance with the general will, striving toward the common good.

3.1.1.2. The Citizen Enjoys Equal Rights

According to J.J.Rousseau, equality plays a decisive role in the formation of the social contract and serves as a foundational principle of civic life. In civil society, equality does not imply absolute material wealth equality, but rather equality in legal status and political participation.

3.1.1.3. The Citizen Possesses Natural Rights to Liberty

J.J.Rousseau made a brilliant philosophical discovery regarding the naturally free human being, regarding liberty as the foundational value of political life. He affirmed that guaranteeing liberty during the transition into citizenship is a paramount imperative. A political regime reaches its apex when citizens possess true freedom: voluntarily adhering to rules and laws they themselves enacted without being dominated by any individual.

3.1.1.4. J.J.Rousseau's Conception of Civic Duties

A distinctive feature of J.J.Rousseau's thought is viewing civic duties as an inevitable structural consequence of the social contract, arising when individuals surrender their private rights to the community. Duty is not an external imposition, but a process of self - cultivation by citizens themselves. J.J.Rousseau thus established an intrinsic philosophical link between rights, duties, and liberty, regarding civic responsibility as a constitutive component of socio - political essence.

3.1.2. J.J.Rousseau's Conception of the State

3.1.2.1. The State Originates from the Social Contract

According to J.J.Rousseau, the state arises from the social contract - a voluntary agreement among individuals rather than divine mandate or force. Upon forming a "body politic," human beings exchange natural liberty for civil liberty and moral equality. The state represents the general will and an indivisible, unified popular sovereignty, operating to guarantee community interests alongside spiritual and legal equality.

3.1.2.2. The State Serves the Common Good

J.J.Rousseau affirmed that the state is established through citizens' voluntary delegation of rights to serve the general will. The state retains legitimacy only when guaranteeing liberty and equality through general laws. If governed by privilege or factional interests, the social contract is severed, empowering citizens to revoke and replace the government.

3.1.2.3. The State Does Not Stand Above the People

J.J.Rousseau asserted that the state is a "moral and collective body" voluntarily formed by citizens, not a ruling entity elevated above the people. Popular sovereignty is absolute, indivisible, and inalienable; government is merely an executive body. In this institution, every individual is both a legislative "citizen" and a law - abiding "subject".

3.1.2.4. Government is Merely an Executive Body

J.J.Rousseau held that government possesses no sovereignty and signs no contract; it is merely an executive agent commissioned by the people - the sole holder of supreme power. Warning against the inherent tendency of executive power toward usurpation, he affirmed that the people retain the right to alter or dismiss the government through periodic assemblies. This thought laid a classic theoretical foundation for mechanisms of power control and recall in modern republics.

3.1.3. Popular Sovereignty and the General Will

3.1.3.1. Concept of the General Will

For J.J.Rousseau, the general will is the core concept representing the public interest, emanating from all and applying to all to safeguard freedom, justice, and equality. Through the general will, individuals obey laws while preserving their freedom. The general will holds supreme authority as the highest moral standard guiding the State - an intermediary body politic that exists legitimately only when serving community interests.

3.1.3.2. Sovereignty Resides in the People

Popular sovereignty represents the supreme achievement of the social contract, affirming that state power belongs absolutely to the entire populace rather than divine figures or privileged groups. Popular sovereignty is the practical expression of the general will, born when individuals surrender private rights to form a unified "body politic". J.J.Rousseau emphasized that sovereignty is inalienable and indivisible.

3.1.3.3. Supreme Sovereignty is Inalienable and Indivisible

Supreme sovereignty is the execution of the general will to reconcile individual interests and ensure social cohesion. Hence, sovereignty cannot be alienated or divided. The social contract establishes the people as the sole supreme subject of state power, expressed through legislation and exercised directly through popular assemblies.

3.1.3.4. Popular Sovereignty Cannot Be Fully Represented

Popular sovereignty is intrinsically tied to the general will: human beings can transfer power, but never will. Rousseau severely critiqued parliamentary representation for its susceptibility to corruption and alienation. Any law not ratified directly by the people in person is entirely null and void.

3.1.4. The Relationship Between the Citizen and the State

3.1.4.1. The State is Established by Citizens

J.J.Rousseau achieved a revolutionary breakthrough by utterly rejecting the Divine Right Theory and Force Theory, affirming that the state is neither granted by divinity nor imposed by conquest, but is an artificial institution voluntarily established by citizens via the social contract. When natural obstacles threaten survival, individuals surrender natural rights to form a common body politic - the State.

3.1.4.2. Citizens Obey the Legal System

As legislative subjects, citizens bear the responsibility to participate in framing impartial laws, for laws are the recorded general will. As subjects, citizens have the duty to obey laws, which means adhering to self - imposed rules, thereby safeguarding "civil liberty" and curbing selfish individual wills from eroding public order.

3.1.4.3. The State Protects Civil Liberty

A legitimate state protects and realizes civil liberty. Laws and the executive apparatus act as the ultimate "shield" protecting civil liberty on the basis of absolute equality. State legal coercion against offenders is not a

deprivation of freedom, but an act of safeguarding collective liberty, compelling individuals to align their private interests with the community.

3.1.4.4. Citizens Exercise Supervision over State Power

To keep state power on its proper trajectory, citizens possess the right and duty to directly supervise power through voting, referendums, and periodic popular assemblies that temporarily suspend executive authority to prevent corruption. The ultimate instrument for this supervision is the legal system - the most refined articulation of the general will.

3.1.4.5. Law as the Expression of the General Will

In J.J.Rousseau's political philosophy, law is not a top - down instrument of imposition, but the direct institutionalization of the general will directed toward the public good.

3.2. VALUES AND HISTORICAL LIMITATIONS OF J.J.ROUSSEAU'S THOUGHT ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CITIZEN AND THE STATE

3.2.1. Values of J.J.Rousseau's Thought on the Relationship Between the Citizen and the State

3.2.1.1. Establishing Solid Theoretical Foundations for Modern Democratic Thought

J.J.Rousseau laid a solid theoretical foundation for modern democratic thought through core pillars: popular sovereignty, moral liberty and discipline, and institutional models along with practical values exalting direct democracy, which views law as the institutionalization of the general will. Consequently, his doctrine became the theoretical banner guiding the French Revolution (1789) and establishing legitimacy standards for modern rule of law states.

3.2.1.2. Emphasizing the Paramount Role of Law

J.J.Rousseau emphasized that law holds an absolute foundational role in a democratic rule of law state through key propositions concerning the sources of legitimacy and the unity of freedom and discipline. He also articulated early warnings regarding power corruption and political culture.

3.2.1.3. Championing Civil Rights and Social Equality Principles

For any legitimate political institution, civil rights and social equality principles occupy the position of supreme objectives. This is realized through the transformation of liberty on the basis of equality, converting natural liberty into legally protected civil rights, establishing comprehensive political

agency, and guaranteeing substantive socio - economic fairness intertwined with moral liberty.

3.2.1.4. Proposing the Concept of Controlling State Power:

J.J.Rousseau regarded the control of power as a core principle against tyranny and despotism. He made a strict distinction between legislative and executive powers, viewing the government as merely a temporary commissioned agent. The people retain the right of supervision, honoring the supremacy of law, and recalling an abusive executive apparatus, thereby laying the groundwork for the modern rule of law state.

3.2.2. Historical Limitations in J.J.Rousseau's Thought on the Relationship Between the Citizen and the State

3.2.2.1. Limitations Originating from Petite Bourgeois Class Stance

J.J.Rousseau's intrinsic limitation stemmed from his petite bourgeois stance, which absolutized private property rights and sought idealistic property reconciliation solutions. Assuming consensus among antagonistic social classes was illusory, causing his theory to remain within formal legal - political boundaries without achieving radical socio - economic emancipation.

3.2.2.2. Limits of the Direct Democracy Model and Infeasibility in Large Scale Nations

J.J.Rousseau's direct democracy model revealed clear utopian and unfeasible qualities when applied to large scale nations due to geographical and demographic obstacles, the peril of tyranny of the majority, and reliance on metaphysical assumptions that idealized civic virtue and required law-appraisal capacities beyond the reach of the populace.

3.2.2.3. Limitations Concerning the Conception of the General Will

In J.J.Rousseau's thought, the concept of the general will remains abstract and metaphysical, detached from practical reality and prone to voluntaristic coercion. He exhibited a tendency to absolutize the general will, suppressing critical debate and imposing the majority upon the minority, which risks the alienation and manipulation of the general will.

3.2.2.4. Incomplete Mechanisms for Power Control

Utopian elements in J.J.Rousseau's state model demonstrated emancipatory force but revealed an over-idealization of an order based on moral consensus. This order lacked concrete mechanisms for power control, interest conflict resolution, and practical feasibility. Expecting a governing

apparatus to remain selflessly non-interested without institutional checks represented a philosophical illusion.

3.2.2.5. Failure to Account for the Plurality of Interests in Modern Society

J.J.Rousseau exalted the absolute unity of the community, thereby ignoring or rejecting the necessity of interest pluralism and the existence of social groups in modern politics. This highlighted a detachment from practical reality: J.J.Rousseau denied interest differentiation, failed to establish mechanisms to resolve interest conflicts, and risked suppressing critical debate while generating forced consensus.

Chapter 4
IMPLICATIONS OF J.J.ROUSSEAU'S THOUGHT ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CITIZEN AND THE STATE FOR BUILDING THE SOCIALIST RULE OF LAW STATE IN CONTEMPORARY VIETNAM

4.1. REQUIREMENTS SET FORTH IN BUILDING THE SOCIALIST RULE OF LAW STATE IN CONTEMPORARY VIETNAM

4.1.1. Guaranteeing That State Power Belongs to the People

Ensuring that all state power belongs to the People is the core principle of the Socialist Rule of Law State of Vietnam, reaffirmed in the 2013 Constitution and the Documents of the 14th National Party Congress, establishing "the People as the root" and the people's happiness as the ultimate measure. Delegated state power must function openly, transparently, and with accountability through democratic practices, legislative institutionalization, social oversight, and service to the People's interests.

4.1.2. Building Socialist Democracy

Socialist democracy serves as the institutionalized pathway through which the People exercise their power. It operates through the mechanism of "the Party leads, the State manages, and the People master", alongside the guiding motto "the People know, the People discuss, the People execute, the People inspect, the People supervise, and the People enjoy". Socialist democracy is intrinsically linked with discipline and the rule of law to expand substantive civic ownership in national governance.

4.1.3. Continually Perfecting the Legal System

Perfecting the legal system constitutes a foundational requirement for building the Socialist Rule of Law State of Vietnam, aimed at institutionalizing power and protecting civil rights. In alignment with Resolution No. 66-NQ/TW, legislation and law enforcement are designated as a "breakthrough of breakthroughs", forming a unified whole that guarantees constitutionality, transparency, and public participation to serve national governance.

4.1.4. Strengthening the Control of State Power

Controlling state power is an intrinsic attribute of the Socialist Rule-of-Law State of Vietnam to prevent abuse and corruption of power. This mechanism harmoniously balances granting sufficient authority with imposing strict boundaries. According to the 14th National Party Congress and Resolution No. 27-NQ/TW, power control is implemented through institutional frameworks, the supremacy of law, and integrity in public service ethics.

4.1.5. Guaranteeing and Protecting Human Rights and Civil Rights

Guaranteeing and protecting human rights and civil rights constitute the supreme goal and value measure of the Socialist Rule of Law State of Vietnam, placing the people's happiness at its core. The protection of rights is intrinsically intertwined with the supremacy of law, state accountability, civic duties, and data security in cyberspace.

4.2. REFERENCE VALUES OF J.J.ROUSSEAU'S THOUGHT ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CITIZEN AND THE STATE

4.2.1. Affirming the Role of the People as the Sovereign Subject

4.2.1.1. The People as the Sovereign Subject of State Power

In the Socialist Rule of Law State of Vietnam, the People are the supreme and sole subject of state power. Creatively applying the spirit of J.J.Rousseau's general will, the sovereign role of the People requires a harmonious integration of state authority and civic responsibility: citizens directly engage in social governance, contribute policy inputs, and supervise the state apparatus to ensure openness and transparency.

4.2.1.2. Reference Value for Promoting and Expanding Democracy in Contemporary Vietnam

J.J.Rousseau's radical democratic thought offers profound insights for Vietnam in promoting socialist democracy, placing popular sovereignty at the

center of the motto: "the People know, the People discuss, the People execute, the People inspect, the People supervise, and the People enjoy". This mandates guaranteeing socio - economic fairness, enhancing transparency, and fostering public debate to consolidate trust in the Party and the State.

4.2.2. Reference Value for Enacting Laws in the Common Interest

4.2.2.1. A Legal System Reflecting the Interests of the Vietnamese People

Rousseau's proposition that law is the institutionalization of the "general will" yields crucial reference value for Vietnam. Legislation must originate from practical reality, serve the People, correct market economy deficiencies, combat "group interests" (lợi ích nhóm), and elevate legal culture to uphold the supremacy of law.

4.2.2.2. Enhancing the Quality of Legislative Activities in Vietnam

Elevating legislative quality in contemporary Vietnam is identified as a strategic breakthrough with key imperatives: innovating legislative thinking by using real-world practice and the People's well - being as the ultimate measure; and ensuring predictability, coherence, objectivity, alongside resolutely curbing "group interests".

4.2.3. Exalting Civic Responsibility

4.2.3.1. Raising Legal Awareness Among the People in Vietnam

Applying J.J.Rousseau's spirit of rational self - binding and civic responsibility, raising legal consciousness among the Vietnamese people is realized through fulfilling civic duties, transitioning from passive compliance to voluntary adherence, innovating legal education, and combining democratic practice with the exemplary role - modeling of cadres.

4.2.3.2. Enhancing Civic Social Responsibility in Vietnam

Enhancing civic social responsibility in Vietnam is operationalized through five strategic orientations: recognizing the dialectical relationship between liberty and responsibility; fostering grassroots democracy; synthesizing legal, moral, and patriotic education; ensuring social equity; and exalting the dedication and integrity of public servants to inspire civic responsibility among the populace.

4.2.3.3. Civic Responsibility in Building Political Culture in Contemporary Vietnam

Fostering the role of citizens in constructing political culture in contemporary Vietnam centers on three main pillars: shaping civil cultural standards; practicing substantive democracy; and prioritizing the exemplary

conduct of public officials to cultivate a healthy political culture throughout society.

4.2.4. Reference Value for Controlling State Power

J.J.Rousseau's thought on preventing the corruption and alienation of power offers profound reference value for Vietnam in perfecting institutional mechanisms to control state power in line with the spirit of the 14th National Party Congress. Core requirements include: enforcing openness and transparency; implementing strict leadership accountability; and expanding the People's supervisory role to build an honest, action - oriented, and developmental state apparatus.

4.2.5. Promoting Democracy in National Governance

J.J.Rousseau's perspectives on popular sovereignty and civic responsibility provide rich insights for national governance in Vietnam. This represents a convergence with Marxism - Leninism, as both traditions affirm that the popular masses are the decisive force shaping political destiny, serving as the foundational bedrock for perfecting democratic institutions.

4.3. SELECTIVE APPLICATION OF J.J.ROUSSEAU'S THOUGHT ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CITIZEN AND THE STATE

4.3.1. Application Based on Marxism - Leninism, Ho Chi Minh Thought, and Party Guidelines

Enhancing the quality of the relationship between the citizen and the state in Vietnam represents a creative application of J.J.Rousseau's thought on the theoretical bedrock of Marxism - Leninism, Ho Chi Minh Thought, and the Party's guidelines. This intellectual convergence on political legitimacy is situated within the context of governance reform, the prevention of power corruption, and using the People's satisfaction as the ultimate benchmark of efficacy.

4.3.2. Non - Equating J.J.Rousseau's Direct Democracy Model with the Socialist Democracy Model in Vietnam

Absorbing J.J.Rousseau's intellectual legacy demands a scientific, objective spirit and a steadfast Marxist stance, strictly avoiding dogmatic copying or conflating democratic models. Based on affirming the superiority of socialist democracy, it is necessary to identify Rousseau's historical limitations, strengthen the control of state power, renovate the state apparatus, and enhance governance capacity to serve the People.

4.3.3. Harmoniously Combining Direct Democracy and Representative Democracy

Drawing from J.J.Rousseau's warning regarding the risk of representative systems becoming alienated from the electorate, the harmonious combination of representative democracy and direct democracy in Vietnam is executed by supplementing representative democracy, institutionalizing the motto "the People as the root", and advancing "digital democracy".

4.3.4. Constructing Mechanisms to Guarantee Civic Ownership Alongside Strengthening Discipline, Law, and the Leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam

Absorbing J.J.Rousseau's spirit concerning political legitimacy and its alignment with Ho Chi Minh Thought, guaranteeing the People's right to mastery in Vietnam is intrinsically linked with legal discipline and the leadership of the Party. Core strategic orientations include: respecting the central role of the People, upholding discipline and responsibility, and innovating cadre affairs.

CONCLUSION

J.J.Rousseau's thought on the relationship between the citizen and the state stands as one of the hallmark achievements of Enlightenment political philosophy, reflecting humanity's aspiration for a political order grounded in liberty, equality, and popular sovereignty. On the basis of his social contract theory, Rousseau affirmed that the state is neither a product of divine right nor force, but the outcome of a voluntary covenant among free individuals to safeguard the common interest. Within this framework, the people hold the supreme position as subjects of political power, while the state retains legitimacy only when reflecting and executing the community's general will.

J.J.Rousseau's prominent contribution lies in establishing a dialectical relationship between the citizen and the state. The citizen becomes the creative subject of political power, directly or indirectly participating in the processes of legislation and social governance. The state is viewed as an institution serving the public good, subject to popular supervision and bound by law.

Through this, J.J.Rousseau laid the foundation for modern democratic principles, such as popular sovereignty, civil rights, the republican spirit, and the supremacy of law.

However, bound by historical conditions, J.J.Rousseau's doctrine retains certain limitations. His conception of the general will remains somewhat abstract, and the ideal state model he proposed lacked concrete institutional guarantees. This demonstrates that Rousseau's theory is profoundly normative and idealized, reflecting a moral-political aspiration rather than a fully operable model across all historical contexts.

Nevertheless, his conceptions of human rights, popular sovereignty, democracy, and law have become an integral part of humanity's intellectual heritage, exerting a profound influence on the formation of modern democratic and rule of law states. These ideas continue to serve as a meaningful reference source for researching issues of political power, the citizen-state relationship, and the process of perfecting contemporary democratic institutions.

For Vietnam today, studying J.J.Rousseau's thought aims at absorbing rational values regarding the People's mastery, the role of law, and the state's responsibility toward society. This contributes to consolidating the principle that "state power belongs to the People", promoting socialist democracy, and realizing the goal of building a state of the People, by the People, and for the People in the current development era.

Overall, J.J.Rousseau's thought on the relationship between the citizen and the state represents the crystallization of humanistic spirit, democratic ideals, and the quest for freedom during the Enlightenment. Despite certain historical limitations, his doctrine maintains enduring theoretical value and practical significance for examining the nature of political power, the role of citizens, and the path toward building a democratic, just, and progressive society.

LIST OF AUTHOR'S PUBLISHED WORKS RELATED TO THE DISSERTATION

1. Luu Thi Thu Hien (2025), "*J.J.Rousseau's Views on the Executive Branch and Its Implications for Streamlining the State Apparatus in Our Country Today"*, Journal of Socialism - Theory and Practice, No. 37 (June 2025), pp. 62-67, ISSN 2615-9473.
2. Luu Thi Thu Hien (2026), "*The Relationship Between Individual Liberty and the General Will of the Social Community in J.J.Rousseau's The Social Contract and Reference Values for Building Digital Citizens Today"*, Political Theory E-Journal, Friday, January 23, 2026, ISSN 2525-2607, https://lyluanchinhtri.vn/moi-quan-he-giua-tu-do-ca-nhan-va-y-chi-chung-cua-cong-dong-xa-hoi-trong-ban-ve-khe-uoc-xa-hoi-cua-j-j-rousseau-va-gia-tri-tham-khao-trong-xay-dung-nguoi-cong-dan-so-hien-nay-11457.html.
3. Luu Thi Thu Hien (2026), "*The Significance of The Social Contract in Building Local Public Servants in a Two-Tier Local Government System Today"*, State Management E-Journal, Tuesday, February 3, 2026, ISSN e-2815-5831, https://www.quanlynhanuoc.vn/2026/02/03/y-nghia-cua-tac-pham-ban-ve-khe-uoc-xa-hoi-trong-xay-dung-doi-ngu-cong-chuc-chinh-quyen-dia-phuong-hai-cap-hien-nay/.
4. Luu Thi Thu Hien (2026), *"Discussing Jean-Jacques Rousseau's Concept of the 'General Will' and Its Implications for Building Institutions for Social Development Management in Contemporary Vietnam"*, Journal of Theoretical Activities (Region III Political Academy), No. 2(215), pp. 50-54, ISSN 0868-3247.