

# ENHANCING THE POLITICAL CULTURE OF OFFICIALS AND PUBLIC SERVANTS IN THE MEKONG DELTA REGION, VIETNAM, NOWADAYS.

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***Abstract**-Political culture in Vietnam is the science and art of political activities, an integral part of the national culture, manifested through attitudes, behaviors, and political capabilities of officials and public servants in the Mekong Delta region. In the era of innovation, deepening international integration, the impact of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, enhancing political culture for the leadership and public servants in the Mekong Delta region is crucial. It involves recognizing the importance of culture and political culture in society, aiming for values, standards, and rational political conduct. This task is not only fundamental to building a strong and clean Party, constructing a state by and for the people but also serves the interests of the people, and promotes social progress, which is significantly important for the development of Vietnam.*

*Keywords: Political culture, cadres, civil servants, Vietnam.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Political culture is an essential component of culture, in which knowledge, emotions, beliefs, ideals are crystallized and expressed through attitudes, behaviors, and political capacities of political subjects. In political culture, leadership officials are important subjects. One cannot become an experienced, courageous, insightful, and intelligent leader in the practical politics of the country without an abundant political culture resource. Therefore, enhancing political culture for the cadre and civil servant team in general, and strategic-level officials in particular, is a matter of significant importance for the development of the country.

General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong emphasized the need to deeply imbibe President Ho Chi Minh's teachings, stating that "cadres are the roots of all work" and that "success or failure in every task depends on good or poor cadres." At the same time, as the leader of the Party and the State, he strongly affirmed that "organizational work and cadre affairs must be the focal point" and the "key" of the "key task" related to the Party's survival, the regime's destiny, and the rapid and sustainable development of the country. It is crucial to focus on building and purifying the cadre team, especially constructing a strategic-level cadre team with sufficient qualities, capacities, and credibility, equal to the assigned tasks. It is important to promote the exemplary role of cadres and Party members, with higher positions requiring even greater moral standards. This includes political activity capacity, ideals, beliefs, political courage, thinking and intellectual capacity, decision-making leadership ability, the ability to mobilize and utilize human resources and talent, as well as scientific and operational experience in politics.

Leaders and public servants in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam must establish current standards of political culture: adherence to the Party's guidelines, principles, policies, and state laws; political

qualities, ethics, lifestyle, conduct, and work style; professional competence and expertise; political etiquette; progress and results in carrying out tasks; sense of responsibility and coordination in task implementation; attitude of serving the people; political qualities, ethics, competence, expertise, and task performance results assigned. Foster revolutionary ethics, with primary standards of dedication, frugality, integrity, and righteousness; prioritize local and people's interests, consistently cultivate and fulfill exemplary responsibilities; leadership style, characterized by unity of party loyalty and high principles with dynamism, creativity, and openness to new ideas; honesty, objectivity, and scientific approach; unity of collective work, democracy, decisiveness, and personal accountability; theory linked to practice, consistency between words and deeds; regular close contact with the people; exemplify cultural behavior in a political environment.

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### 1. Results and Discussion

Officials and public servants are individuals who hold key positions within the system of Communist Party of Vietnam agencies, Vietnamese state institutions, and political-social organizations. They are responsible for formulating guidelines, orientations, policies, and organizing their implementation within their leadership scope. At the same time, they are leaders who comprehensively manage the organization they are in charge of, ensuring that the organization fulfills its assigned political functions and tasks effectively.

The current career innovation emphasizes the breakthrough point of "organizational work, officials must be the driving force," which is crucial to the survival of the Communist Party of Vietnam, the fate of the regime, and the rapid and sustainable development of Vietnam. It is essential to focus on building a clean and competent team of officials and public servants, especially in terms of leadership and management, with sufficient qualities, capabilities, credibility, deep professional expertise, mastery of professional knowledge, and a dedication to contribute effectively. Political culture encompasses all these qualities and capabilities of the team of officials and public servants. In the face of the political changes in the world, the challenges to the existence and development of various forms of socialist reality, and the complex socio-economic developments within the country,... The political culture of the officials and civil servants in the Mekong Delta region demonstrates: absolute loyalty to the scientific principles of Marxism-Leninism and the ideology of Ho Chi Minh. They have a spirit of uncompromising struggle against incorrect ideologies and actions that go against the Party's viewpoints and the legitimate interests of the people. "The struggle to prevent and push back the decline in political ideology, moral values, and the manifestations of self-evolution and self-transformation within the organization are vigorously carried out with clear progress" [1, volume 2, page 219].

The team of officials and civil servants in the Mekong Delta "possesses political integrity, expertise, intelligence, leadership abilities, and the fighting spirit of the Party that are increasingly elevated, remaining steadfast in the face of all difficulties and challenges, and implementing appropriate strategies for timely and effective guidance and resolution. The essence, standpoint of the working class remains steadfast; the majority of officials and party members have trust and determination to implement the Party's reform path." [1, volume 2, p. 168]. The professional expertise and theoretical level of the cadre, party members, and civil servants have noticeably improved. The dialectical understanding of real-life situations, the integration of theory and practice, and the analysis and evaluation of local issues have become increasingly specific and deeply comprehensive. In the context of globalization and numerous negative social impacts, officials, party members, and civil servants in the Mekong Delta still maintain a healthy lifestyle and show concern for the common cause of the locality. New aspects of ethical values and a gradually formed new way of life have emerged. The positive political attitude, strengths, capabilities, and personal responsibility awareness of officials, party members, and civil servants are highly valued and encouraged.

The Mekong Delta implements a friendly governance model, the "Smiling Office" model, with the motto "Know how to greet, smile, listen, guide, express gratitude, and apologize." The formation of the province's motto aims to orient, educate, and enhance the awareness and actions of officials

and civil servants regarding their responsibility to serve the people. Through implementation, initial trust has been built among the people towards the policy of building a friendly government that serves the people, improves quality, and provides administrative services through postal services. This approach has gained support and increasingly strengthened the bond with the people.

Alongside the advantages, the leadership and public officials in the Mekong Delta region also have limitations. Since Vietnam has undertaken comprehensive reforms, deepened international integration, and experienced the impact of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and market-oriented socialist economy, where surplus value and material wealth are considered the highest values for assessing individuals, cultural and political values are sometimes relegated to a secondary position. There are phenomena such as corruption, fading ideals, lack of political courage, and signs of ideological, ethical, and social value decay. The good political and cultural values of the nation and the Party's political ideals have not yet been fully absorbed by each individual leader and manager to become a driving force for promoting standardized behaviors. In the Documents of the 13th National Party Congress, the Communist Party of Vietnam also candidly acknowledged: "The cultivation and training of ethics and lifestyles among a number of cadres and party members are not regular, with some deterioration in political ideology, ethics, and lifestyles; there is still a discrepancy between words and actions; non-compliance with Party principles; opportunism, corruption, wastefulness, individualism, pragmatism, factionalism, internal disunity; failure to uphold a sense of responsibility towards organizations, agencies, units, localities, and the people". The implementation of regulations regarding the exemplary role of officials and party members is not yet widespread and effective. Some officials have violated to the extent that disciplinary or criminal actions are necessary. The struggle against ethical and lifestyle deviations is still not strong. Self-criticism and criticism are still merely formalities in many places. The misuse of positions and authority for personal or group interests is not uncommon among officials. Even when caught doing wrong, some officials continue to hold their positions. Resignation has not become a cultural norm, meaning it is not a default and common practice in political life when leaders and managers no longer enjoy the trust of the people.

Furthermore, in the context of globalization and international integration, the influence of foreign cultures, manifested as "foreign worship" and "hybrid cultural traits," is causing a change in the perception of political and cultural values among a portion of the leadership and management officials in the Mekong Delta. It is necessary to recognize and find solutions to combat and reject this phenomenon. Analyzing the current situation, understanding the causes of the transformation of political and cultural values, and proposing solutions are essential in the construction of a political and cultural framework while striving to reinforce the noble political values of the Communist Party of Vietnam and the Vietnamese people for the current officials and civil servants in the Mekong Delta.

The limitations mentioned above stem from several reasons: lack of training and discipline in adhering to behavioral rules within the public administration system. However, there are also external factors that influence officials and civil servants, making it difficult for them to maintain mandatory standards of ethics and conduct and to generate new behaviors, even ones that contradict existing standards, leading to moral degradation and the deterioration of political culture through the influx of pragmatic lifestyles in a portion. Many leaders and officials, due to excessive self-interest, lose their integrity and are willing to compromise their dignity. These are manifestations of corruption, power-seeking, and the close connection between political culture and the ethics of officials and civil servants. The selection and promotion of officials, party members, and civil servants for study and development lack depth and high quality. The policy for officials does not effectively serve as a driving force or lever for development.

## **2. SOME SOLUTIONS TO ENHANCE THE POLITICAL CULTURE FOR OFFICIALS AND CIVIL SERVANTS IN THE MEKONG DELTA REGION, VIETNAM AT PRESEN**

To enhance the political culture of the leadership and public officials in the Mekong Delta region, the following coherent solutions should be implemented:

*The first*, it is crucial to deeply internalize the viewpoint that "the work of cadres must truly be the 'key to the key'" [1, volume 1, page 27] in the Party building, which is closely related to the survival of the Communist Party of Vietnam and the regime. Cadres are the root of all work and the decisive factor in the success or failure of the revolution. Therefore, it is essential to attach great importance to building a competent cadre team at all levels, especially at the strategic level and among the leaders who possess virtues, talents, and credibility within the Party and among the people. Special attention must be given to unity, consensus in will and action within the Party [1, volume 2, page 226]. Each officer and public servant should enhance their political acumen, firmly apply and develop the Marxist-Leninist ideology, Ho Chi Minh's thought, and faithfully adhere to the principles of the Communist Party of Vietnam. They should timely summarize practical experiences, develop theories to foster innovation, oppose conservatism and stagnation, and resolutely fight against political opportunism. Actively studying and following the ideology, ethics, and style of Ho Chi Minh is not only about theoretical learning but also about paying attention to learning methods, styles, ethics, and lifestyles of President Ho Chi Minh. It is necessary to delve into studying styles, particularly the style of thinking, working, expressing, behaving, and living of the leader. In addition to improving the understanding of Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh's thought, it is important to grasp the political line and renewal path of the Communist Party of Vietnam, equipping cadres, party members, and the people with scientifically sound arguments to resist and refute erroneous ideas and defeat plots and tactics that undermine the path to socialism in Vietnam and the leadership role of the Communist Party of Vietnam. This is an important foundation for directly enhancing the political culture of leaders and public officials. Any deviation, inclination, action, or statement contrary to the Party's line and path of the Communist Party of Vietnam not only leads to the ideological decline of cadres and party members but also harms the Party. Furthermore, studying and following the ideology, ethics, and style of Ho Chi Minh must be linked to the responsibilities and tasks assigned to each position because this is the core solution to fulfilling the mission, with a focus on building a team of ethical, dedicated, and devoted cadres, party members, and public servants who serve the homeland and the people, and maintain close ties with the people. They must have a sense of respect for the law, where democracy goes hand in hand with discipline and integrity, and individual freedom is connected to social responsibility and civic duty.

*The second*, enhance theoretical awareness and political acumen for the entire political system, media, and people, thereby generating "resistance" and "immunity" to protect the ideological foundation of the Party, refute erroneous and hostile views, and combat the obstruction of the socialist path in Vietnam, implementing the principle of "taking the good and discarding the bad." Educate and elevate the level of awareness among officials and public servants in the Mekong Delta about the importance, role, significance, and value of political culture in society, especially during the period of renovation, international integration, and digital transformation. This includes self-cultivation, training, and development of a patriotic spirit, ethics, lifestyle, and the promotion of positive political qualities, political ideals, beliefs, and political acumen, as well as intellectual capacity. It also involves revolutionary ethics, lifelong dedication to serving the Fatherland and the people, and upholding integrity, frugality, probity, benevolence, wisdom, courage, and trustworthiness. Prioritize the revolutionary cause of the Communist Party of Vietnam, the interests of the nation and the people above all else, primarily combating individualism and the various diseases caused by individualism. Regularly engage in self-cultivation and fulfill the responsibility of setting an example, in accordance with the spirit of the Document of the 13th National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam: "Awaken the spirit and will, determine to develop a prosperous and happy country; a strong, enduring nation; and promote the value of Vietnamese culture and the strength of the Vietnamese people in the cause of building and defending the Fatherland" [1, volume 1, p. 46].

*The third*, we aim to establish a healthy cultural environment and create a cultural space in line with Ho Chi Minh's ideals to provide favorable conditions, prerequisites, and motivation for enhancing the political culture of officials and public servants in the Mekong Delta region, while

promoting the spirit of dedication to the nation. We are determined and persistent in the fight against corruption and negative practices. We focus on building and developing democratic consciousness within the organization. We effectively implement the principle of democratic centralism in all organizations within the political system, starting with the Party, each cell, and party organization, in order for officials, party members, and public servants to exercise democracy and emphasize their social responsibilities. However, democracy must adhere to principles. We fully and strictly implement the principle of democratic centralism, with collective leadership going hand in hand with individual responsibility.

We need to be cautious and overcome both tendencies: formalistic democracy and bureaucratic centralism. By combining 'building' and 'combating,' with 'building' as the fundamental, strategic, long-term task, we aim to imbue progressive and positive thinking deeply into all aspects of social life, effectively rectifying deviations, transforming backward ideas, and pushing back against wrongdoing.

*The fourth*, enhance the political culture of officials and public servants from provincial to commune levels in the Mekong Delta, it is necessary to integrate basic knowledge of political science and leadership science, with a systematic understanding of politics, rather than being satisfied with or limited to the level of experience. It should be closely linked to the mastery of Party principles and political guidelines. Emphasize the responsibility to comply with legal regulations, be diligent, economical, honest, selfless, maintain a simple, clean lifestyle, and serve the people with respect and devotion. These should be considered as criteria for evaluating officials, party members, and public servants in the performance of their duties. In addition, each official, party member, and public servant must enhance their self-awareness through education, adjust their behavior, and promote self-discipline, self-learning, and the development of work style, ethics, and lifestyle. Having a proactive attitude and self-consciousness in carrying out political tasks is crucial. To achieve high results in self-study and self-improvement, a scientifically designed and demanding plan must be continuously and consistently implemented.

*The fifth*, the Party Committee and government need to strengthen the inspection work in all activities of officials, party members, and state civil servants, taking strict measures against any violations of the law, especially those that breach the ethical standards of officials and civil servants. The implementation of regulations regarding the responsibility of setting an example by officials and party members, particularly those in higher positions, must be done effectively. Setting an example should truly become an important aspect of the Party's leadership. Emphasizing inspection and supervision within the Party, while leveraging the monitoring role of the press and the people in holding officials and party members accountable for their exemplary responsibilities. Combining the maintenance of Party discipline and principles with upholding the state law, fostering the education and cultivation of character and revolutionary ethics for officials and party members. Effectively implementing the supervision by elected bodies, the Fatherland Front, political-social organizations, and the people in nurturing and cultivating the ethics and lifestyles of officials and party members, especially those in leadership positions and key roles [1, Volume 2, pages 237-238].

*The finally*, it is necessary to promptly criticize any uncivilized behaviors in relation to assigned tasks, work, or among members within the organization. "Innovation and synchronized implementation of learning and following the ideology, ethics, and style of Ho Chi Minh, linked with the struggle to prevent and push back the decline in political ideology, ethics, and lifestyles, and the manifestations of self-transformation within the organization. Resolutely fight against individualism, bureaucracy, corruption, waste, opportunistic lifestyles, factionalism, and the inconsistency between words and actions among officials and party members" [1, volume 2, p. 233].

Continuously innovate strong content and methods of ideological work, ensuring the party's integrity, scientific nature, combativeness, practicality, timeliness, and effectiveness; enhance the quality of propaganda, education, and study of Marxism-Leninism, Ho Chi Minh's ideology. As role models in language and behavior, officials and public servants always focus on building their own image, refreshing their manners, eating habits, clothing style, demeanor, and self-consciously

practicing standards of behavior and cultural etiquette, engaging in self-reflection and improvement, knowledge, intellectual capacity, especially in expressive arts through spoken and body language. Ho Chi Minh once advised: "The more the gem is polished, the brighter it shines. The more gold is refined, the purer it becomes, just like the rice grain that endures the painful pounding to become white as a flower. Similarly, in life, one must undergo hardships and training in order to succeed." Strengthen the education of the glorious revolutionary traditions, culture, history, and the shining achievements of the Party and the nation; constantly improve the level of political theory for officials and party members; regularly struggle against the plots and destructive activities of hostile and reactionary forces, refute erroneous and hostile viewpoints, and protect the ideological foundation of the Party.

Chairman Ho Chi Minh and the Communist Party of Vietnam have made great efforts to build and train successive generations of cadres to undertake and excellently fulfill the tasks of each revolutionary period. During the renovation period, compared to the requirements and political tasks, our strategic leadership team still faces many limitations in terms of qualities and capabilities. There are several reasons for this situation, including the passive and insensitive work of cadres, the lack of a comprehensive cadre strategy and talent strategy, the lack of a coherent cadre policy system, and the incomplete and profound implementation of the Party's fundamental principles and viewpoints on cadre work. Enhancing political culture for the leadership team and public servants is the embodiment of President Ho Chi Minh's aspirations for a harmonious combination of moral and intellectual qualities in practical political activities within the dynamic personality structure of revolutionary cadres. This is the foundation for establishing credibility as the most important intangible asset and the comprehensive standard for qualities and capabilities deeply rooted in the hearts and minds of the leadership team. It is also a prerequisite for leaders and public servants to strive to embody the Party's political culture reflecting the level, qualities, and powers of the Communist Party of Vietnam. "The Party is the intelligence, honor, and conscience of the era," "it is morality, it is civilization." Actively fighting against bureaucracy, corruption, waste, and negativity; effectively preventing and pushing back the deteriorating trends in political ideology, morality, and lifestyle, the manifestations of "self-evolution" and "self-transformation" within the internal ranks, while promoting learning and following the ideology, morality, and style of Ho Chi Minh; effectively showcasing the responsibilities of leaders and public servants according to the principle that the higher the position, the more exemplary they should be.

### CONCLUSION

The enhancement of political culture among officials and civil servants from provincial to commune levels in the Mekong Delta is the thorough realization of President Ho Chi Minh's ideology, far-sighted vision, and expectations for the seamless integration of ethics and talent in practical political activities. It is the most valuable intangible asset, a comprehensive standard of qualities and capabilities deeply ingrained in the hearts and minds of officials and civil servants. The political culture of officials and civil servants in the Mekong Delta reflects the level, qualities, and governing abilities of the Party. Our Party is determined to constantly innovate in order to faithfully implement the teachings of V.I. Lenin and Ho Chi Minh: "The Party is the intelligence, honor, and conscience of the era", "it is morality, it is civilization". We will continue to strengthen the construction and rectification of the Party, build a socialist rule-of-law state and a clean and strong political system. All officials and civil servants in the Mekong Delta must strive tirelessly to enhance their political culture, truly deserving to be servants of the people in their entirety. /.

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