

Critical assessments on the ideology of protecting Vietnam's sovereignty over sea and islands in the 13th National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam

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ABSTRACT : As a maritime country, maritime security is of special importance to Vietnam, having a great impact on marine economic development, ensuring national defense and security, and protecting the peaceful environment of the country. However, at present, the situation of territorial sovereignty disputes and non-traditional security issues such as terrorism, piracy, smuggling, disputes over fishing grounds and exploitation of marine resources is increasingly complex and difficult to predict. These challenges require the Vietnamese Communist Party to have a comprehensive strategy to protect Vietnam's sovereignty over the sea and islands. The article points out the important role of protecting sea and island sovereignty for the sustainable development of Vietnam and analyses ideologies related to protecting Vietnam's sovereignty over sea and islands in the 13th National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam.

KEYWORDS: *Sovereignty; the 13th Communist Party; the East Sea; Vietnam*

I. INTRODUCTION

Vietnam's seas and islands are part of the sacred territory of the Fatherland. The sea not only contains great economic potential and is a gateway to expanding trade relations with the world, but also plays an important role in ensuring security and defense, as well as being a key strategic area in the construction of building and defending the fatherland. Therefore, protecting the homeland's sovereignty over sea and islands not only reflects the Vietnamese Communist Party's thoughts through all the congresses but also becomes one of the key regular and long-term tasks for the whole country and the whole political system. In the new context of territorial sovereignty disputes and non-traditional security issues such as terrorism, piracy, smuggling, disputes over fishing grounds, exploitation of marine resources (causing environmental pollution) becoming increasingly complex, the mission of protection of sovereignty over the sea and islands has become more important than ever.

II. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The role of protecting sovereignty over the sea and islands in Vietnam's sustainable development

Sovereignty over seas and islands is essential to Vietnam's sustainable development. Firmly protecting the sovereignty over the sea and islands is the responsibility of each country and is an important factor for the country's sustainable development[1].

Vietnam's seas and islands are part of the sacred territory of the Fatherland, constituting national sovereignty and a gateway for international exchanges. This is also a strategic area for national defense and security, creating an important space to control access to the territory on the mainland. Vietnam's sea has an area of over 1 million km², accounting for about 29% of the area of the East Sea (3.5 million km²) and is 3 times larger than the land area (332 thousand km²). Vietnam shares maritime borders with seven countries: China, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, Cambodia, and Thailand. This country currently has 28 provinces and cities bordering the sea, with a coastline of about 3,260 km, from Mong Cai to Ha Tien, nearly 3,000 large and small islands, many important seaports, and popular tourist areas. Most of the key economic sectors of this country are associated with the sea, such as tourism, oil and gas, fisheries, transportation, shipping industry, etc. As a marine country, marine security issues have a great impact on marine economic development, ensure national defense and security, and protect the peaceful environment of Vietnam [4].

During the past years, the Communist Party and the State of Vietnam's guiding policy has been an economic development strategy associated with ensuring national defense and security, as well as maintaining the fatherland's independence and sovereignty. The Platform for National Construction in the Transition to Socialism (supplemented and developed in 2011) affirms that stability and sustainable development in all

aspects of socio-economic life is a solid foundation of defense and security. Socio-economic development goes hand in hand with strengthening defense and security strength. In each socioeconomic development strategy, master plan, and policy, as well as in each locality, closely integrate the economy with national defense—security with the economy. This is a fundamental principle in the association between economic development and national defense and security. In light of emerging challenges in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly strategic competition among major powers and disputes over maritime and island sovereignty, the combination of economic development with national defense in general, and marine economic development associated with ensuring national defense and security in particular, is critical. With an independent, self-reliant, non-aligned foreign policy and a "Three Nos" [5] defense policy—that is, no military alliances, no aligning with one country against another, and no foreign military bases on Vietnamese resources in resolving related disputes over the sovereignty of the sea and islands.

Ideologies for protecting Vietnam's sovereignty over sea and islands in the 13th National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam

After nearly 35 years of the Doi Moi process, Vietnam has recorded monumental and historic achievements in the building and defending of the Socialist Fatherland. The size and development level of the Vietnamese economy have been significantly upscaled. The Vietnamese people's well-being has improved significantly, both materially and spiritually. Vietnam's foreign relations and international integration have become stronger and more extensive.

The global and regional landscapes are witnessing complex developments. Immense and sudden adversities are emerging [4]. As such, challenges and opportunities for Vietnam's development are intertwined. Against that backdrop, the Communist Party of Vietnam identifies that its key objectives are to continue leading the country forward, advance the Doi Moi process across the board, and actively increase Vietnam's international integration in service of building and defending the nation.

The 13th National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam has mentioned the development of related-sea fields, especially solutions to promote marine economic development in association with ensuring national defense, security, and protecting firmly maritime sovereignty.

The 13th National Communist Party Congress of Vietnam determined that we "*resolutely and persistently struggle to firmly defend independence, sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity, airspace, and sea areas; maintain a peaceful and stable environment for development...*" [2].

The 13th Party Congress has determined a consistent position and proposed measures to solve current problems in the East Sea.

The first is to "unify ideology and awareness of the position, role, and special importance of the sea for the cause of national construction and defense throughout the Party, people, and army." The sea is a part of the sacred sovereignty of the fatherland, a living space, a gateway for international exchanges, closely associated with the cause of national construction and defense. Vietnam is a coastal country; its sea area is 3 times larger than its land area, accounting for nearly 30% of the East Sea area. Vietnam's sea and coastal areas are located on the maritime and air traffic routes between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean, between Europe, the Middle East, China, Japan, and other countries in the region. Vietnam's sea is also a "rich" sea with important resources and minerals such as oil and gas, coal, iron, titanium, salt, and millions of tons of aquatic products. Vietnam has a long and beautiful coastline with rich and diverse marine life that is favorable for marine tourism development.

The second is to "resolutely and persistently struggle to firmly protect independence, sovereignty, unification, territorial integrity, sea, islands, and airspace; and maintain a peaceful and stable environment for the development of the country." This is the point of view and policy showing the strategic direction for the entire Communist Party of Vietnam to focus on effectively implementing national defense tasks and firmly protecting the sea and islands of the Fatherland. Vietnam determines that the settlement of disputes in the East Sea is a long-term issue and will persistently cooperate to find peaceful measures to settle disputes and protect Vietnam's legitimate interests on the basis of compliance with international law.

Third, "Vietnam consistently implements the foreign policy of independence, self-reliance, peace and friendship, cooperation and development, multilateralization, and diversification of foreign relations." Assuring the highest interests of the nation on the basis of the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law, equality, and cooperation for mutual benefit. With the goal of maintaining a peaceful and stable environment for the development of the country, Vietnam follows the foreign policy of independence, self-reliance, multilateralization, and diversification. Vietnam does not go with one country against another. In addition, Vietnam carries out international relations and cooperation on the sea, contributing to maintaining a peaceful and stable environment for development.

Fourth, "Maintaining peace, security, safety, freedom of navigation and aviation in the East Sea; settling disputes by peaceful means on the basis of international law and the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea". Vietnam's position on the East Sea issue is clear and consistent. All activities at sea should be

conducted on the basis of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982, respecting the sovereignty, sovereign rights, and jurisdiction of the coastal states in the sea areas established in accordance with the Convention. affirming that Vietnam has a full legal basis and historical evidence of its sovereignty over both the Paracels and the Spratlys, as well as other legal rights over the waters of Vietnam that have been established.

Fifthly, "closely combine economic, cultural, and social development with consolidating and strengthening national defense and security, especially in strategic areas, special difficulty zones, borders, and islands." The 13th Congress of the Party has identified the marine economy as one of the important tasks and solutions to make Vietnam become a developing country with modern industry and a high middle income by 2030. Vietnam focuses on sustainable development of the marine economy associated with ensuring national defense and security and maintaining independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. This ideology is formed based on international experience, forecasts of the situation in the country and in the world, the reality of Vietnam and in line with the trend of the times. The achievements Vietnam has achieved in the past have shown the right application of the Party's viewpoints and guidelines in the sustainable development of the marine economy and the protection of the country's sovereignty over seas and islands.

III. Conclusion

The development of ideology and theory of the Communist Party of Vietnam on the protection of sovereignty over seas and islands during its revolutionary leadership shows that the awareness of sea and island sovereignty has always been a central agenda, especially in the period of comprehensive renovation of Vietnam. The Vietnamese Communist Party always considers the protection of sea and island sovereignty as one of the important contents in the national defense strategy in general and socio-economic development in particular, in order to become a country of sustainable development, prosperity, security, and safety. The 13th National Party Congress of Vietnam has given a strategic perspective on the protection of sea and island sovereignty in accordance with the current context. Those ideas are the basis for solving challenges and integrating, developing sustainably and maintaining the country's sovereignty over the sea and islands.

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