

## The Current Status and Emerging Issues of Political Culture among Commune-Level Officials in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam Today

Bui Thi Can<sup>1</sup>, Le Thi Thanh Hieu<sup>2</sup>, Phan Huy Chinh<sup>3</sup>, Nguyen Thi Rang<sup>4</sup>, Nguyen Thi Thanh Thao<sup>5</sup>, Tran Tin Nghia<sup>6\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Vinh University, VIETNAM, Email: [canbt@vinhuni.edu.vn](mailto:canbt@vinhuni.edu.vn)

<sup>2</sup> Vinh University, VIETNAM, Email: [ltthien@vinhuni.edu.vn](mailto:ltthien@vinhuni.edu.vn)

<sup>3</sup> Vinh University, VIETNAM, Email: [phanhuychinh@vinhuni.edu.vn](mailto:phanhuychinh@vinhuni.edu.vn)

<sup>4</sup> Vinh Long University of Technology Education, Vinh Long City 85106, VIETNAM, Email: [rangnt@vlute.edu.vn](mailto:rangnt@vlute.edu.vn)

<sup>5</sup> Vinh Long University of Technology Education, Vinh Long City 85106, VIETNAM, Email: [thaontt@vlute.edu.vn](mailto:thaontt@vlute.edu.vn)

<sup>6</sup> Department of Biochemistry, Faculty of Medicine, Can Tho University of Medicine and Pharmacy, (179 Nguyen Van Cu, Can Tho 94000, VIETNAM, Email: [ttngchia@ctump.edu.vn](mailto:ttngchia@ctump.edu.vn)

\*Corresponding Author: [ttngchia@ctump.edu.vn](mailto:ttngchia@ctump.edu.vn)

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### ABSTRACT

Commune-level cadres play a pivotal role in implementing socio-economic development and ensuring local security and defense. In the Mekong Delta region, after nearly 40 years of renovation, efforts to build a cadre team with strong political qualities, competence, and ethics have been emphasized, contributing to the enhancement of political culture and promoting sustainable development. However, a segment of cadres still exhibit limitations in ideology, ethics, and work effectiveness, undermining public trust in the Party and State. The main causes are insufficient awareness of political culture and inadequate attention to training and professional development. Therefore, cultivating a cadre team at the commune level with firm political resolve, ethical integrity, professional expertise, and exemplary working style is an urgent requirement in the new era of Vietnam's national development.

**Keywords:** Vietnam, Mekong Delta, Political Culture, Commune-level Cadres

### INTRODUCTION

Commune-level cadres hold key positions with significant influence on the functioning of organizational apparatuses and serve as the core force within grassroots organizational systems. Therefore, the political culture of commune-level cadres deeply affects the organization and operation of political and social activities, the quality of relationships among organizations within the political system, as well as the relationship between the political system and the local populace.

The Mekong Delta spans a total natural area of 40,557 km<sup>2</sup>, with an estimated population of approximately 17.432 million people in 2024. This region is rich in historical, cultural, and revolutionary traditions; it has historically been a strategic area and a convergence point of longstanding solidarity among ethnic communities, characterized by distinctive cultural traits, notably its unique riverine culture.

Examining the current political life in the Mekong Delta from the perspective of political culture reveals that the majority of commune-level cadres possess practical political competence, ideals, firm political resolve, and actively participate in political activities, serving as exemplary models of cultural behavior in the political environment. However, alongside these achievements, it is necessary to frankly acknowledge that under the

influence of international integration and the market economy—where money and material wealth tend to be viewed as measures of human value—political and cultural values are often relegated to a secondary status.

In reality, there has been a noticeable phenomenon where a portion of commune-level cadres display indifference towards political issues, exhibit fading ideals, lack political resilience, and show signs of deterioration in political ideology, ethics, lifestyle, violations of social norms, and even acts of corruption. Notably, the noble political-cultural values of the nation and the Party's political ideals have not been thoroughly internalized in the awareness and actions of certain commune-level cadres in this region. Some cadres exhibit subjectivity, a lack of vigilance, and confusion in identifying and combating the distorted and hostile viewpoints propagated by antagonistic forces—especially as these forces exploit online media to implement "peaceful evolution" schemes aimed at undermining the Party and State.

Simultaneously, manifestations of "foreign worship" and a tendency toward "cultural hybridity" have emerged, altering the political-cultural perceptions and practices among some cadres. This is a concerning issue that requires clear identification and timely countermeasures.

From these limitations, several challenges facing the commune-level cadre team in the Mekong Delta can be identified: distorted perceptions of social values and norms among some cadres; localism in leadership and management practices of certain individuals; deterioration in political ideology, ethics, and lifestyle among a segment of key commune-level cadres. Moreover, the influence of foreign cultures, reflected in "foreign worship" and "cultural hybridity," is leading to shifts in the understanding and practice of political-cultural values by some commune-level cadres in the Mekong Delta. This issue demands serious reflection, clear recognition, and prompt measures to combat and eliminate it effectively.

In the process of building a socialist rule-of-law state in Vietnam, the commune-level government holds a particularly important role. As the closest administrative authority to the people, it is directly responsible for implementing the Party's guidelines, as well as the State's policies and laws, while also conveying the aspirations and concerns of the people to higher levels. To ensure that the commune-level government is truly strong, clean, and close to the people, the core and foundational factor lies in cultivating and developing the political culture within the commune cadre team. General Secretary To Lam has emphasized: "In the two-tier local government model, the commune-level government is the administrative level closest to the people. It is necessary to innovate management thinking toward a proactive government model by building a comprehensive, capable cadre team at the commune level, proficient in applying digital technology, understanding the people, and grounded in practical realities; simultaneously, administrative reform and digital transformation in handling procedures and interacting with citizens must be accelerated" (Statement by General Secretary To Lam at the Congress of Nghia Tru Commune Party Committee, Hung Yen Province, term 2025–2030, 2025).

This article focuses on clarifying the current status of political culture among commune-level cadres in the Mekong Delta region and proposes several fundamental solutions to enhance their political culture, meeting the demands and tasks of the country's development in the current era.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs the dialectical materialism and historical materialism methodologies, supplemented by other research methods to comprehensively clarify the research issues.

The document analysis and synthesis method is used to systematize theoretical and practical issues, as well as to assess the current status and challenges related to the political culture of commune-level cadres in the Mekong Delta region, Vietnam. Based on this, the study identifies orientations and proposes fundamental solutions to enhance the effectiveness of building political culture among these cadres in the current context.

The comparative method provides a multidimensional perspective for analyzing and evaluating the political culture of commune-level cadres in different countries, regions, and other domestic areas. This approach also helps identify transformations in the political culture of commune cadres in the Mekong Delta.

Expert interviews are conducted to obtain in-depth analysis from specialists and researchers on the political culture of commune-level cadres, particularly through case studies in the Mekong Delta.

The sociological survey method is applied through distributing questionnaires to collect empirical data on the political culture status of commune cadres in the Mekong Delta. The study conducts direct surveys with commune officials in this region.

The survey method also involves sending questionnaires to cadres across the entire political system, as well as to residents living in communes within the Mekong Delta.

Data processing involves coding and data entry using Excel software; data analysis, statistical parameter calculation, and result interpretation are conducted using SPSS statistical software.

An interdisciplinary research approach is employed due to the nature of the study on the political culture of commune-level cadres in the Mekong Delta, requiring the integration of knowledge from various fields such as cultural studies, cultural anthropology, philosophy, combined with political science.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Firstly, the Current Status of the Political Culture of Commune-Level Cadres in the Mekong Delta Region

The political culture of commune-level cadres in Vietnam forms an integral part of the socialist social culture, closely linked with the working class and laboring people. It represents a specific cultural dimension within the political domain and the grassroots political system. The political culture of commune cadres reflects their cultural competence in the political field; it embodies a synthesis of the values of truth, goodness, and beauty that express the nature of the working class and the cultural identity of the Vietnamese nation. This is manifested through their political awareness, attitudes, and behaviors during political participation. Political culture at this level is not only reflected in cognition but also in actions, working styles, and interactions with the local populace. It is a crucial determinant of the strength of the grassroots political system and the operational effectiveness of commune authorities in fulfilling socio-political and economic tasks.

The political culture of commune cadres in the Mekong Delta represents a segment of class-based social culture, characterized by steadfast commitment to the revolutionary goals and ideals of the Communist Party, absolute loyalty to the Party, the nation, and the people. These cadres demonstrate resilience, perseverance in the face of hardship, and a readiness to undertake and successfully complete all assigned tasks. This also clearly reflects their awareness of their roles and responsibilities as representatives of the Party and State in conveying Party policies and State laws to the people and implementing them effectively, thereby consolidating and maintaining the close relationship between the Party and the populace.

Political culture among commune cadres comprises a system of values, norms, beliefs, attitudes, and political behaviors that they adhere to and express throughout leadership, management, and public service. It is formed and developed through interactions between organizations within the political system, between cadres and the community. This political culture is a vital factor contributing to the leadership style, management effectiveness, and the degree of cohesion between commune authorities and local people.

Based on Resolution No. 60-NQ/TW dated April 12, 2025, of the 11th Plenary Session of the 13th Central Committee of the Communist Party, and Conclusion No. 150-KL/TW dated April 14, 2025, of the Politburo and Secretariat, the Government Steering Committee issued Official Dispatch No. 03/CV-BCĐ on April 15, 2025, providing orientations for certain tasks regarding the reorganization of administrative units and the two-level local government system; specifically concerning organizational structure, cadre, civil servant, and public employee management during the implementation process.

According to the current regulations of the Party and State, the leadership positions at the new commune level — in general and specifically in the Mekong Delta region — include: Secretary and Deputy Secretary of the Commune Party Committee; Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Commune People's Council; Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Commune People's Committee; and heads of mass organizations such as the Chairman of the Commune Vietnam Fatherland Front Committee, Secretary of the Commune Youth Union, Chairman of the Commune Women's Union, Chairman of the Commune Farmers' Association, and Chairman of the Commune Veterans' Association.

Strictly implementing the Party's viewpoints and policies, as well as State laws and directives from central authorities, immediately following the administrative unit mergers and the operation of the two-level local government model, the Provincial and Municipal Party Committees in the Mekong Delta region led and directed commune-level administrative units to promptly and decisively arrange and assign leadership positions in accordance with individuals' expertise and professional qualifications. This process ensures compliance with the principles and regulations set by the Politburo and the Secretariat. Currently, the commune-level administrative units in the Mekong Delta include five provinces and cities: Can Tho City, Vinh Long Province, Dong Thap Province, An Giang Province, and Ca Mau Province, totaling 495 commune-level units.

From this, it is evident that the commune-level cadres in the Mekong Delta serve as heads of Party committees and local governments, holding comprehensive leadership and directive responsibilities across all local affairs. They are accountable to the Party, State, and people for the outcomes of political tasks at the grassroots level. According to the author's perspective, enhancing the political culture of commune cadres in the Mekong Delta involves transforming theoretical knowledge into concrete practical actions. This transformation is reflected in the efficient and timely handling of tasks for citizens and businesses, accompanied by culturally appropriate behavior, thereby

contributing to building politically, ideologically, organizationally, and ethically strong agencies, units, and localities with a robust cadre team.

The 13th National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam emphasized: “Comprehensive and synchronous development of cultural sectors, building a cultural environment and a rich, diverse, healthy, and civilized cultural life; both promoting the nation’s fine values and absorbing the quintessence of global cultures, so that culture truly becomes the spiritual foundation, endogenous resource, and breakthrough motivation for socio-economic development and international integration” (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2021).

Therefore, enhancing the political culture of commune-level cadres in the Mekong Delta region plays a crucial role in helping them clearly understand their awareness and responsibilities before the Party, State, and People. From this foundation, they wholeheartedly dedicate themselves to the cause of nation-building and development, placing the interests of the Party and the People above all else. This process deeply imbues the philosophical ideology of President Ho Chi Minh, who stated: “Cadres are servants of the people,” “faithful servants of the people,” and “all cadres from the Central to local levels—whether provincial, district, or commune, regardless of branch or sector—must be loyal servants of the people. All cadres must wholeheartedly serve the people” (Ho Chi Minh, 2011).

With the distinctive culture of the Mekong Delta—rich in riverine cultural identity, ethnic diversity, beliefs, cuisine, and the gentle, generous, and hospitable character of its people—enhancing the political culture of commune-level cadres becomes increasingly necessary and urgent. All thoughts, actions, and behaviors of these cadres need to be closely aligned with the traditional cultural values of the nation and the unique culture of the Mekong Delta. Each cadre must consciously cultivate and practice revolutionary ethics characterized by thriftiness, integrity, impartiality, and selflessness; actively oppose individualism; and prevent any signs of political and ideological degradation, moral decline, lifestyle deterioration, “self-evolution,” and “self-transformation.”

Commune-level cadres in the Mekong Delta are both the creative agents generating cultural values in political activities and the organizers and implementers of developing community cultural life to meet the people’s cultural needs. Simultaneously, they play a critical role in consolidating and improving existing cultural institutions; investing in and upgrading new cultural infrastructures; enhancing the quality of living environments and architectural landscapes; educating revolutionary traditions; fostering patriotism and national pride among the public; and promoting the region’s noble traditions in love for the country and homeland, diligence, creativity, and resilience. These efforts collectively contribute to building the political culture of key commune-level cadres as a “cultural barrier” to prevent and push back against negative, deviant, and harmful cultural manifestations.

In addition, commune-level cadres also play a vital role in disseminating valuable cultural products within the community; protecting local cultural heritage; selectively assimilating new cultural values from the global community; enhancing the general populace’s educational level, political awareness, legal knowledge, and ethics; and actively participating in the development of civilized lifestyle movements, cultural families, cultural villages, and cultural communes at the local level.

In recent years, under the leadership of Party committees, Party organizations, and leadership teams at all levels, the construction and implementation of political culture among commune-level cadres in the Mekong Delta region have achieved significant results. These efforts have contributed to consolidating and maintaining cadres’ trust in the Party’s socio-economic development policies while streamlining the organizational apparatus within the Party’s political system. Specifically:

Regarding the structure of political culture among commune-level cadres in the Mekong Delta, the foremost aspect lies in their political knowledge. The majority of cadres thoroughly understand fundamental principles, possess dialectical thinking, maintain clear political stances, and are capable of applying these principles effectively in carrying out political tasks at the local level. Most commune-level cadres have a firm grasp of the Party’s ideological foundation, platform, and renewal policies; their capacity to absorb political theory has improved markedly, mastering not only specialized knowledge but also interdisciplinary insights to handle tasks swiftly, appropriately, and efficiently.

The survey results from 745 questionnaires collected in June 2025 among commune-level cadres in the Mekong Delta provinces/cities (Dong Thap, Can Tho, An Giang, Vinh Long) show that 95.7% of respondents believe that the majority of commune cadres have a solid grasp of political knowledge. The proficiency and capacity to apply information technology and digital transformation among commune cadres have also shown significant improvements. As a result, these cadres have better access to multidimensional information and stay updated on new trends in management, administration, and politics, thereby contributing to the modernization of grassroots governance methods. Specifically, 88.5% of cadres are proficient in using information technology, and 91.6% hold certificates in management and administration.

Regarding political trust, cadres and Party members in the Mekong Delta consistently maintain absolute confidence in the Party’s and State’s policies, directives, and strategies; they take pride in the values of independence

and freedom, trust the path toward socialism, and support the Party's and State's decisions in organizing and restructuring the current two-tier local government model.

In terms of political attitude, the vast majority of commune cadres strictly comply with the Party's resolutions, directives, and the laws of the State; they uphold the rule of law; and are deeply attached to, respectful of, dedicated to, and wholeheartedly serve the Fatherland and the people, protecting the legitimate rights and interests of the citizens.

Regarding political standards, the commune-level cadres in the Mekong Delta demonstrate a strong sense of responsibility toward their assigned tasks, deeply internalizing the spirit of "serving the people" as the servants of the populace. They consistently exhibit a high level of accountability in their work, innovate their working methods, and proactively and creatively execute their duties. They firmly maintain their political stance, remaining steadfast in Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh Thought, while regularly renewing their mindset and approaches to effectively address emerging issues at the local level.

## **Second, Manifestations of Political Culture in the Commune-Level Cadres in the Mekong Delta Region**

Regarding political ideology, the commune-level cadres in the Mekong Delta region demonstrate a firm and steadfast ideological stance; they are always loyal to the goals and ideals of the struggle for national independence and socialism.

In terms of political awareness, the commune-level cadres consistently exhibit determination and resolve in carrying out political tasks, being ready to overcome difficulties and challenges to achieve set objectives. Results from a survey of 745 cadres in Dong Thap, Can Tho, An Giang, and Vinh Long provinces in June 2025 show that 98.1% of commune-level cadres display strong political will, remain steadfast in the face of difficulties and challenges, and possess the ability to make decisions for the common good.

Regarding political behavior, commune-level cadres show decisiveness in leadership while maintaining close relations with the people; they have a high sense of responsibility, always ready to accept and complete assigned tasks, unafraid of hardships and difficulties. These cadres are proactive, do not evade responsibility, and are willing to stand up to protect the rights of the people, combat wrongdoings and negative manifestations. A leadership style that is close to the people, flexible, and characterized by listening and dialogue with the people is a prominent feature.

In terms of political competence, the majority of commune-level cadres have a comprehensive awareness and high sense of responsibility regarding their assigned duties, with no signs of indifference or perfunctory work. Generally, this cadre group serves as exemplary models in implementing the Party's Platform, guidelines, and resolutions; the policies and laws of the State; and the specific directives of local party committees and authorities.

Commune-level cadres consistently emphasize responsibility, actively struggle to refute incorrect and hostile viewpoints; combat corruption and negative phenomena; prevent violations of the principles of democratic centralism, people's mastery, and democracy; and strictly adhere to what party members must not do. According to survey results in the Mekong Delta region, 98% of cadres actively refute incorrect and hostile viewpoints; specifically, regarding the prevention and combat of bureaucracy and corruption, 66.6% of respondents believe that "there has been progress," with 22.8% evaluating that there has been "positive progress" (Hoang Anh, 2009).

Building a culture of integrity among officials at all levels holds a particularly important position and role. Grassroots officials in the Mekong Delta region consistently strive to cultivate a culture of integrity, fairness, and transparency as core values, deeply understanding that integrity, fairness, and transparency are fundamental ethical values for officials. These values are decisive factors in the effectiveness of Party building, rectification work, and the political system.

Integrity culture is a cherished traditional value of our Party, nurtured and developed by generations of dedicated officials, becoming the faith, way of life, and guiding principle in the thinking and actions of every grassroots official in the Mekong Delta. Integrity culture is the "soul" of a genuine official — always preserving honor, dignity, purity, and uprightness; never compromising or yielding, steadfastly maintaining the courage and character of a revolutionary cadre.

The grassroots officials in the Mekong Delta continuously train and cultivate their integrity throughout their careers, building a culture free from corruption and negativity. Regardless of the various positions they hold, they maintain moral qualities and a clean lifestyle, honed through practical work, becoming role models for the people to follow and helping form and build the political culture of the grassroots official team.

At the summary conference of Party Congresses for the 2020–2025 term in November 2020, General Secretary and President Nguyễn Phú Trọng cited the famous saying of Soviet writer Nikolai A. Ostrovsky: "Steel is forged in the red fire and cold water; only then does it become strong and fearless" (Nguyễn Phú Trọng, 2020). This message was sent to Party officials at all levels: they must always uphold the courage and spirit of a revolutionary cadre; they must "persistently practice integrity, build a culture of thrift, fight against corruption within cadres,

Party members, civil servants, and public employees... value honor, integrity, and shame when they or their relatives engage in corruption or wastefulness" (Nguyễn Phú Trọng, 2023).

Building a culture of integrity and combating negative phenomena such as degradation, "self-evolution," and "self-transformation" within the grassroots cadre team in the Mekong Delta is one of the important solutions to help officials "not want to" engage in corruption and negativity — serving as a "medicine that cures and saves." Through this, it contributes to building our Party and State to become increasingly clean and strong, meeting the demands of the revolutionary cause and worthy of the trust and expectations of the people.

Survey results from several provinces and cities in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam, show that regarding the building of an integrity culture, 94% of respondents believe there have been significant and profound changes, reflecting a lifelong commitment to self-discipline and cultivating a culture of integrity, honesty, fairness, and transparency among officials; 6% acknowledge there have been changes but not yet profound. Regarding the practice of thrift and combating wastefulness, 82.1% assessed positive changes, with 51.6% noting clear improvements. In the fight against bureaucracy and corruption, 66.6% acknowledged changes, of which 22.8% rated the improvements as good (Hoàng Anh, 2009).

These positive changes are demonstrated in specific areas such as a lifelong spirit of self-discipline, building a culture of integrity, honesty, fairness, and transparency; the practice of thrift and combating wastefulness has become increasingly substantive, especially in the context of economic downturn, gaining significant attention from Party committees and authorities at all levels through leadership, direction, inspection, and supervision.

In many localities, the thrift movement has truly become a widespread emulation movement, with the participation of a large number of officials and political organizations. Our Party has clearly stated: "Due to failing to maintain integrity and seriousness in public service, many officials and Party members have violated the Party Charter, the rules that Party members must not do, and even violated laws to the extent that criminal prosecution was necessary" (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2021).

The issue of building a culture of integrity among officials at all levels in the new era — the era of the nation's rise toward a prosperous, happy, and strong Vietnam — is an urgent matter with vital significance for the Communist Party of Vietnam and the Vietnamese socialist regime. As V.I. Lenin once affirmed: "Without a correct political stance, a class cannot maintain its leadership." More than ever, in the current context of a world full of unpredictable conflicts and contradictions, it is essential to rely on the traditional experiences of our ancestors to formulate policies, especially in political activities. This embodies the spirit of being gentle yet skillful, resolute yet flexible; creative yet steadfast; courageous in overcoming all challenges for national independence, freedom, and the happiness of the people. It means knowing how to unite, valuing compassion, but at the same time being firm and persistent in protecting national interests. It is about balancing softness with firmness, seizing opportunities, knowing when to advance or retreat, understanding oneself and others, adapting to changing circumstances, and mastering the art of "binding tightly with a soft rope."

### **Third, Limitations in the Implementation of Political Culture among Grassroots officials in the Mekong Delta Region**

Although significant achievements have been made in building and implementing political culture among grassroots officials in the Mekong Delta region, there remain some limitations that require attention. The Communist Party of Vietnam (2021) affirmed that a portion of officials and party members are not politically steadfast, suffering ideological decline, showing signs of doubt and confusion about the Party's ideals and the country's path toward socialism; some have been anxious, wavering, losing faith; there are even cases denying Marxism-Leninism, Ho Chi Minh's ideology, and the Party's renewal policy.

A survey of 745 officials in the provinces of Dong Thap, Can Tho, An Giang, and Vinh Long in June 2025 showed that 1.9% of officials lack noble ideals, ambition, and national self-reliance; 7.3% of respondents indicated that the cadre team still exhibited signs of bureaucracy, authoritarianism, arrogance, moral degradation, irresponsible service attitudes, causing inconvenience and harassment to the people, and even cases of party members exploiting their positions for personal gain during work. These manifestations pose a risk of eroding the people's trust in the Party and are issues that deserve serious concern, reflection, and attention.

Some localities still face issues of bureaucratization, formalism, and red tape; a portion of grassroots officials continue to exhibit opportunistic, selfish behaviors and lack exemplary conduct both in their work and daily lives. Problems of corruption, bureaucracy, and individualism still persist to some extent. For example, during the period from 2010 to 2023, the Standing Committee of the Can Tho City Party Committee resolutely and seriously disciplined 1,731 party members, including 968 reprimands, 453 warnings, 81 expulsions, and 229 cases of dismissal from the Party (Standing Committee of Can Tho City Party Committee, 2024). In 2023, Dong Thap province disciplined 179 officials and administratively handled 14 cases (Huu Nghia, 2023); in 2024, Ca Mau province also disciplined 223 officials and party members (Inspection, 2024). These figures reflect the determination in

disciplinary work while also highlighting ongoing challenges in building the political culture among key grassroots officials in the Mekong Delta region.

#### **Fourth, Issues Raised Regarding the Political Culture of Grassroots Officials in the Mekong Delta Region**

A fundamental contradiction exists between the urgent and high demands to enhance the political culture of grassroots officials in the Mekong Delta and the limited awareness, responsibility, and capacity of those responsible for building this political culture. This contradiction runs throughout the process of developing and perfecting the political culture of these officials as the country enters a new stage of development. Effectively resolving this contradiction will determine the success of the process to build and improve the political culture of key grassroots officials in the Mekong Delta region.

It is necessary to urgently overcome the limitations and weaknesses in the work of building political culture for grassroots officials in the Mekong Delta. In recent years, the efforts to develop the political culture of grassroots officials in this area have achieved important results; however, some shortcomings and weaknesses remain that need attention. Particularly, as the main actors in building political culture, the political systems of the Mekong Delta provinces need to more effectively promote their roles and responsibilities.

A scientific, comprehensive, synchronous, and harmonious strategy is needed to build the political culture of grassroots officials in the Mekong Delta region, aligned with the development of economic culture, legal culture, ethical culture, and others. This aims to meet the country's requirements as it enters a new development phase and deeper international integration. In social life, if the economy is the material foundation, then culture is the spiritual foundation of society—both a goal and an endogenous resource, an important driving force for national development. Therefore, the orientation of developing culture in a synchronized and harmonious manner alongside economic growth is a fundamental approach in the process of building socialism in Vietnam.

To fulfill this noble mission of culture, it is first necessary to build a comprehensive and synchronous political culture for the grassroots officials. This means that in constructing political culture, focus must be placed on fully and harmoniously developing all constituent elements of political culture. Currently, in the Mekong Delta, attention should be given to building the key actors responsible for shaping political culture among grassroots officials (including the political system of provinces and cities such as the Party Committee, Government, and local Fatherland Front, along with the coordination among these organizations). This is because the core subjects of culture construction and development are the Party's leadership, the State's management, and the people as creative agents. This is a fundamental direction in the process of building socialism in Vietnam.

In the context of globalization and international integration, building a political culture for grassroots officials in the Mekong Delta requires harnessing endogenous cultural strengths while selectively absorbing the quintessence of global cultures; simultaneously, it is essential to prevent "cultural invasion" and to actively combat manifestations of "self-evolution," "self-transformation," as well as social issues such as corruption and negativity.

In recent years, amid the processes of innovation and international integration in Vietnam, traditional cultural values have deteriorated and declined under the influence of "cultural invasion," especially concerning "ethics and lifestyle" throughout society. This phenomenon reflects the dangerous tendency of idolizing foreign cultures, neglecting national cultural values, and pursuing a materialistic, pragmatic, and individualistic lifestyle.

Against this backdrop, a significant challenge arises: how should provinces and cities in the Mekong Delta scientifically, comprehensively, and synchronously develop the political culture of grassroots officials? The approach must both promote intrinsic values and selectively absorb the finest elements of global culture while preventing "cultural invasion." Moreover, it must decisively resist "self-evolution," "self-transformation," and other negative social manifestations. Of particular concern is the resurgence of individualism, selfishness, opportunism, apathy, and ingratitude toward the nation; a lifestyle marked by inferiority, weakness, competition, oppression, and materialism, neglecting spiritual values. This attitude prioritizes personal interests while exhibiting indifference, coldness, and avoidance of responsibilities toward the Party, the country, and the people—an issue that requires serious reflection. The limitations and weaknesses of a portion of Party members, alongside shortcomings in Party-building efforts, are dialectically interconnected and mutually influential.

The discrepancy between the lifelong requirement for grassroots officials to self-discipline and cultivate political culture to prevent and push back manifestations of ideological, ethical, lifestyle deterioration, and individualism, and the existing reality of apathy, avoidance, and formalism in their work represents a significant challenge. After nearly 40 years of renovation, the Mekong Delta region has achieved many positive outcomes. However, it is necessary to frankly acknowledge that a portion of grassroots officials still exhibit ideological, ethical, and lifestyle degradation, individualism; lack exemplary behavior in work and life; live selfishly and opportunistically, pursue material interests while neglecting spiritual values; display opportunistic, apathetic, indifferent, and dishonest behaviors; abuse their positions to tolerate, cover up, and facilitate corruption and negative phenomena; demonstrate superficial and perfunctory attitudes towards work; exhibit bureaucracy,

corruption, and alienation from the masses; lack responsibility toward the Party, the Fatherland, and the people; and show signs of fading ideals. These trends have increased and seriously affected the prestige of the Party, as well as the survival of the Party and our regime. This is a manifestation of a lack of awareness in self-discipline and cultivation among some Party members, leading to moral and lifestyle deterioration. The current issue is the urgent need to strengthen the construction of political culture, revolutionary ethics, and humane lifestyle among grassroots officials – an imperative requirement under present circumstances.

The mismatch between the demands placed on grassroots officials in the Mekong Delta region for early identification, proactive and resolute opposition to all sabotage tactics against political culture education and training, and the actual lack of timely and proactive responses represents a limitation that needs to be overcome. Hostile forces and political opportunists have been and will continue to propagate false, malicious, and dangerous narratives, deliberately distorting and negating the positive significance of the fight against corruption, turning it into an activity with negative motives. They claim that the Party's anti-corruption efforts and disciplinary actions against errant officials constitute "internal strife" or "factionalism," damaging the reputation of those steadfastly fighting corruption. More concerningly, these false narratives have influenced certain segments of the public, causing confusion, wavering, and doubt towards the Party and the State. The late General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong accurately identified this conspiracy and affirmed: "This is a battle against 'internal invaders,' not a struggle between 'factions' or 'internal conflict,' as some misunderstand or deliberately distort with malicious intent; it is 'treating the illness to save the patient,' disciplining a few to save many." The current challenge is to develop sharp arguments to identify and expose the true nature of hostile forces, while simultaneously building strong counter-arguments to refute harmful, distorted, and fabricated information spread by hostile forces and political opportunists, thereby enhancing the resistance and self-immunity capacity of the official cadre, especially young officials.

Above all, the cultivation of political culture and revolutionary ethical qualities—characterized by diligence, thrift, integrity, righteousness, and fairness—among Party members forms the foundation for building a clean and strong Party. It is also the root of efforts to prevent and combat corruption, wastefulness, and moral deterioration. This task is crucial and vital for safeguarding the Party, the State, the People, and the socialist regime, ultimately contributing to a prosperous, strong, and happy Vietnam.

## CONCLUSION

In the context of the country entering a new phase of development and deeper international integration, the construction of political culture for grassroots officials in the Mekong Delta region is influenced and affected by multiple factors, including geographical-natural conditions, historical-political context, socio-economic conditions, cultural-human factors, market economy, globalization, and international integration. Each of these factors holds a specific position, role, and level of impact on the political culture-building efforts for grassroots officials. Notably, the cultural-human factor has a significant and direct influence on the entire process of political culture development.

In recent years, the work of building political culture for grassroots officials in the Mekong Delta has been continuously implemented and has achieved important results; however, various limitations and shortcomings remain. These limitations are reflected in the following aspects:

Firstly, regarding the current situation and the role of key actors in constructing political culture for grassroots officials in the Mekong Delta. Over nearly 40 years of renovation, the Mekong Delta has developed a political system from the provincial to the grassroots level (including the Party Executive Committees, Government authorities, and the Fatherland Front) as the main entities responsible for building political culture for grassroots officials, forming a relatively complete system spanning provinces, cities, districts, wards, communes, and towns. However, the activities of these entities in building political culture for grassroots officials remain limited and have not fully leveraged the overall strength of the political system, resulting in moderate effectiveness and efficiency.

Secondly, regarding the current status of the content in building political culture for grassroots officials in the Mekong Delta, certain achievements have been made (such as fostering patriotism, love for the people; community awareness and national solidarity; the spirit of combat, peace, and humanitarianism, among others). However, these elements have not been thoroughly understood, legally institutionalized, or concretized into political standards and codes of conduct; therefore, they have not been fully and appropriately applied in the context of renovation and international integration. Meanwhile, there still exist cultural anomalies, disorder, and even harmful phenomena within the Mekong Delta region.

Thirdly, the challenges in building political culture for key officials in the Mekong Delta are as follows: First and foremost, it is necessary to overcome the limitations and weaknesses in the political culture construction for grassroots officials in recent years, as without addressing these issues, it will be difficult to build an effective political culture. A scientific, comprehensive, and synchronous strategy for constructing political culture for grassroots

officials in the Mekong Delta must be developed, harmoniously combined with the construction of economic culture, legal culture, and ethical culture, among others, to meet the country's demands as it enters a new phase of development and deeper international integration.

In the context of the market economy, globalization, and international integration, provinces and cities in the Mekong Delta need to determine what actions to take and how to leverage endogenous cultural strengths, selectively absorb the quintessence of world cultures; at the same time, prevent "cultural aggression" and resolutely combat "self-evolution," "self-transformation," corruption, and other negative phenomena.

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