

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS AND FACTORS INFLUENCING THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLITICAL STEADFASTNESS AMONG VIETNAMESE STUDENTS TODAY

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ABSTRACT: Vietnamese students represent a young, dynamic, and creative intellectual force that society highly values and expects to play a key role in building the nation in a new era, the era of national advancement. The Ministry of Education and Training has attached particular importance to the task of educating and developing political steadfastness among students. Most Vietnamese students possess strong political will and have been making significant contributions to the cause of national construction and defense. However, a portion of students still lack political knowledge, have vague revolutionary ideals, weakened faith in the leadership of the Party, and show signs of deviant and non-standard lifestyles.

Keywords: Theoretical foundations; Political steadfastness; Students; Vietnam

I. INTRODUCTION

Political steadfastness is an essential quality that every student must possess, helping them not only to realize their professional dreams and aspirations but also to fulfill their responsibilities toward the Fatherland. Vietnamese students are an elite component of society. Under the leadership of the Communist Party, this force has made and continues to make important contributions to the cause of national construction and defense. However, a segment of students has not fully exercised their sense of responsibility; some even show moral degradation, a departure from national traditions and ethics, distorted perceptions of the country's political situation, and declining faith in the Party's leadership. To overcome these limitations, educating and developing political steadfastness for Vietnamese students has become an urgent requirement. This paper studies and analyzes the theoretical foundations and key factors affecting the development of political steadfastness among young generations in general, and students in particular, enabling them to enter future life equipped with knowledge, intellect, morality, willpower, scientific belief, and revolutionary ideals.

II. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR DEVELOPING POLITICAL STEADFASTNESS AMONG VIETNAMESE STUDENTS TODAY

2.1. Concept of political steadfastness

Political steadfastness is a distinctive political quality manifested through a strong ideological and political standpoint without confusion or hesitation in specific political situations and circumstances, showing maturity, independence, and creativity in addressing practical issues while ensuring compliance with the objective laws of development of things and phenomena, without retreating in the face of obstacles contrary to those objective laws. The political steadfastness of Vietnamese students is defined as their steadfast commitment to the ideals of communism, unwavering faith in the revolutionary cause of the Communist Party and the nation, continuous self-cultivation and self-improvement, and their strong sense of responsibility in study and labor. They are unafraid of hardship or challenges and are determined to devote their youth, talents, and strength to the cause of national construction and defense.

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The political steadfastness of students is manifested through the following key traits:

- Living with clear goals and political ideals; maintaining faith and steadfastness in the Party's guidelines and the State's policies and laws.
- Having the courage to think, to speak, and to act according to what they believe is right; remaining undaunted by any pressure and ready to take responsibility for their actions.
- Possessing a high degree of independence, without relying on or depending on others.
 - Avoiding complacency, not fearing hardship, and not retreating in the face of obstacles.
 - Having great ambition and the willingness to take risks in order to achieve chosen goals.
 - Maintaining an open and broad-minded attitude toward new ideas, avoiding dogmatism, rigidity, or narrow-mindedness.

2.2. Theoretical foundations for developing political steadfastness among Vietnamese Students

The political steadfastness of students is reflected in their strong belief in the Party's goals and ideals, as well as in the revolutionary cause of the people. It represents their awareness and sense of responsibility in studying and working to cultivate intellect, knowledge, talent, and willpower, thereby contributing to the building of a prosperous, free, and happy nation [1, p.55]. The political steadfastness of Vietnamese students is the steadfastness in striving for their ideals, living with passionate commitment to action, and maintaining self-control based on their understanding of both natural and social sciences and the humanities so as not to be tempted by materialistic desires, but to clearly know what they must do to contribute to the nation and society. The political steadfastness of today's students also lies in their tireless effort to perfect their character, whose essence is morality, the pursuit of truth, goodness, and beauty, embodying the principle of being "both virtuous and competent" [5, p.103].

The 13th National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam emphasized: "Strengthen the education of revolutionary ideals, ethics, and cultural lifestyles among the young generation; enhance patriotism and national pride; nurture dreams, aspirations, and ambitions for advancement; and promote a strong sense of responsibility toward the country and society" [3, p.168]. Cultivating political steadfastness is therefore a vital requirement and task for youth and students in the current context, in which the Party, the State, and society as a whole are intensifying education on political steadfastness among the young generation. This is closely aligned with the implementation of Resolution No. 35-NQ/TW dated October 22, 2018, of the 12th Politburo, "*On strengthening the protection of the Party's ideological foundation and combating wrongful and hostile viewpoints in the new situation*".

Developing, fostering, and educating the character of young people and students constitute one of the fundamental elements in shaping the moral value foundation of the young generation. The viewpoints of the Communist Party of Vietnam emphasize that youth and students - the younger generation must be developed comprehensively to achieve the goal of "fostering comprehensively developed Vietnamese people" and "placing human beings at the center of development" [4, p.81]. Therefore, it is essential to cultivate cultural values among young people, pupils, and students, particularly their life ideals, lifestyles, intellectual capacities, morality, and cultural identity of the Vietnamese people. At the same time, conditions should be created for students and young people to study, work, enjoy recreation, and develop both physically and intellectually, thereby contributing to national construction and defense.

Accordingly, the political steadfastness of Vietnamese students is their steadfastness in the ideals of communism, faith in the revolutionary cause of the Party and the nation, continuous self-improvement and self-discipline, and their strong sense of responsibility in study and labor. They are unafraid of hardship and sacrifice, devoting their talent and youth to the cause of building and defending the Fatherland. Marxism-Leninism, Ho Chi Minh's Thought, the Party's guidelines, and the policies and laws of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam serve as the theoretical foundations for developing and strengthening students' political steadfastness. This is a long-term, persistent, and steady endeavor that requires the attention and proper awareness of the entire society. Furthermore, this process is influenced by various objective and subjective factors.

III. FACTORS AFFECTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLITICAL STEADFASTNESS AMONG VIETNAMESE STUDENTS TODAY

3.1. Objective factors

Economic, cultural, and social environment.

The socialist-oriented market economy serves as a practical foundation exerting a profound influence on students, fostering an environment that cultivates dynamism, creativity, and self-confidence among Vietnamese youth. This environment offers favorable conditions for students to train themselves in political steadfastness, moral

character, and lifestyle. However, alongside its positive aspects, the market economy also deepens socio-economic disparities, contributing to wealth gaps and social contradictions that may foster corruption, crime, and violence. It also stimulates materialism, individualism, and the pursuit of wealth at the expense of ethics. Such phenomena exert negative impacts on students' political steadfastness. While many Vietnamese students mature and strengthen their will through these challenges, a portion of students who lack political steadfastness have succumbed to temptations, leading to moral degradation, violations of law, and breaches of social norms

Cultural-social environment: Beyond the family, the educational environment in universities plays a crucial role in shaping students' personalities and educating them to become individuals with ideals and ambitions, good citizens endowed with both talent and virtue. Universities are, in essence, places for moral cultivation and intellectual training, where students are equipped with the necessary knowledge and values for life. Cultural and social influences such as fashion styles, dietary habits, lifestyles, perceptions of love, and a hurried, pleasure-seeking approach to life that prioritizes materialism while neglecting traditional morality have significant effects on students. Moreover, the lack of discernment among some students in receiving new cultural trends, coupled with the fascination for novelty and superficial appeal, greatly impacts the process of shaping and strengthening political steadfastness among them.

Furthermore, some students are influenced by socio-cultural factors, trends of "cultural globalization," and the infiltration of "foreign cultures." These influences significantly affect the ideals and lifestyles of students. In the ideological and cultural domain, factors impacting students' political steadfastness also include the phenomenon of "peaceful evolution." This refers to the activities of hostile forces promoting "self-evolution," "self-transformation," and "cultural invasion," with the aim of eroding the socialist regime and the distinctive cultural identity of Vietnam. These forces regard "peaceful evolution" in the ideological and cultural fields as a strategic breakthrough, attempting to undermine faith, cause theoretical and ideological confusion, and create "ideological vacuums." Such conditions allow bourgeois ideology to gradually infiltrate students who, as young individuals, are often open to new ideas, leading to the risk of ideological transformation and the gradual rejection of socialist ideology.

Political factors influencing the development of political steadfastness among Vietnamese students

The Party's guidelines, and the State's policies and laws, play a crucial role in the formation and education of students' political steadfastness. They not only provide political orientation and the legal foundation for universities to implement education and training in the right direction, particularly in educating political will among students, who are the future owners of the nation, but also serve as a basis for universities to strengthen political and ideological education for the young generation. In this regard, special emphasis should be placed on enhancing students' understanding of Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh's Thought, thereby encouraging them to demonstrate their sense of responsibility toward political, social, and national issues. Hence, the Party's guidelines, and the State's policies and laws, must be aligned with the country's objective developmental trends while simultaneously exerting proactive influence on the formation and growth of political steadfastness among individuals including students. The Party's directions on national construction goals, and its strategies for economic, political, cultural, and social development, help equip students with a scientific worldview and the dialectical methodology of Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh's Thought. This, in turn, enables them to develop correct awareness in developing political steadfastness in accordance with social progress.

The Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union and the Vietnam Student Association also play an important role in fostering and strengthening political steadfastness among Vietnamese students. Through diverse and practical social activities, these organizations exert a significant influence on political education and the formation of political character. When such activities are linked to the implementation of Directive No. 05-CT/TW dated May 15, 2016, of the Politburo on promoting the study and following of Ho Chi Minh's Thought, morality, and style and oriented toward the "Five-Good Student" model, they have a profound impact on strengthening students' political steadfastness. Programs such as "Vietnamese Youth Studying and Following Uncle Ho's Teachings" initiated by the Central Committee of the Youth Union have become a recurring and unifying theme in the Union's educational work, creating positive transformations in both awareness and action among the majority of students.

** Impact of science and technology on the development of Vietnamese students' political steadfastness*

In the 21st century, science and technology have assumed an increasingly vital role in human life, providing essential knowledge and experience that enable individuals to adapt, explore, and discover the world around them. Science and technology also enhance the capacity for transmitting, spreading, and diffusing culture throughout the development process.

The rapid development of science and technology has created numerous opportunities and provided substantial support for students in their learning, daily activities, and in cultivating moral character and personal ethics within the educational environment. In addition to the knowledge received from teachers, students today can

access and consult various other sources — through newspapers, television, and the Internet which help them inherit and absorb new information, knowledge, and engage with socio-cultural activities of both the nation and the world via modern means such as smartphones and tablets. However, many students receive information without critical filtering, especially from social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Zalo, and various fanpages. Online content often carries sensationalized headlines and originates from unverified or tabloid sources. The majority of students tend to prefer reading “clickbait” articles, sharing posts, commenting, and chasing likes rather than paying attention to political, social, or economic news. A concerning reality is that many students are addicted to social networks. Some spend nearly the entire day on their smartphones, posting photos and seeking virtual approval, a phenomenon commonly known as “virtual living.” Worse still, a number of students publish negative or emotionally driven posts, use vulgar language, or criticize their teachers and peers, expressing personal dissatisfaction on social media. The development of technology has, therefore, exerted a profound impact on students’ political steadfastness in general and on their behavior, awareness, and interpersonal conduct in particular.

It can be observed that science and technology are fundamentally transforming the economic, political, and cultural life of today’s young generation compared with the nation’s traditional culture. These changes have made students’ spiritual world more diverse and culturally rich. Yet, science and technology exert multidimensional effects on the formation of political, ideological, cultural, and social orientations. Therefore, strengthening students’ political steadfastness is essential to harness the positive impacts of technological progress while mitigating its negative influences.

** Impact of globalization and international Integration*

In the 21st century, globalization has become an increasingly dominant trend. Vietnam is actively integrating into the global community, participating in this global process to build and develop the country. Thanks to the Party’s correct policies, Vietnam has maintained stability, and its growing international stature has created great opportunities for students to study, access human civilization, and enhance their knowledge, particularly in science and technology.

International integration and cultural exchange are increasingly expanding, providing favorable conditions for students to broaden their horizons and gain access to a wider range of diverse cultural products and achievements. However, without sufficient political steadfastness and the ability to critically select appropriate cultural elements, students may easily be “submerged” in value systems “incompatible” with Vietnamese society and identity. This can lead to a mentality of foreign admiration, “imitation”, and the “uncritical adoption” of new trends and lifestyles that are inconsistent with the nation’s traditional morals and cultural values.

On the other hand, during the process of international integration, hostile forces have been intensifying their acts of sabotage in the fields of politics, economy, ideology, and culture, accelerating the implementation of the “peaceful evolution” strategy. Their purpose is to make the Vietnamese people in general and students in particular, lose confidence in the Communist Party, the socialist regime, and the path of national renewal. The target of these hostile forces is always directed at students, whom they regard as an easily approachable group. They continuously attempt to entice and provoke students into participating in activities that cause instability to the country’s political security and social order.

In the current domestic and international context, students face not only opportunities, advantages, and favorable conditions but also numerous difficulties and challenges. The essential requirement is that every student must possess sufficient political steadfastness, willpower, and competence to make use of favorable conditions, seize opportunities, overcome difficulties, and rise above challenges.

3.2. Subjective factors

Students constitute the young intellectual force, the principal human resource in the era of the knowledge economy and technological advancement, playing a key role in national development. Most students, aged between 18 and 23, are in the process of shaping their personalities, moral values, and lifestyles. They are energetic, ambitious, and full of dreams, having received systematic and comprehensive education across various disciplines. They are also quick to embrace new ideas and eager to affirm their roles and positions within their families, collectives, careers, and social relationships. However, due to limited life experience, this age group is often vulnerable to fluctuations in political conviction and has yet to develop firm political resilience in the face of complex social transformations.

As the pioneering force in the cause of industrialization and modernization, students are among the decisive factors determining the success or failure of Vietnam’s revolutionary cause. To fulfill this historic mission, they must possess strong political steadfastness, solid professional competence, and revolutionary ideals, being absolutely loyal to the Party’s leadership and steadfastly committed to the socialist path chosen by President Ho Chi Minh, the Communist Party, and the Vietnamese people. They must maintain unwavering faith in the success of the national

renovation process.

The majority of students have a correct understanding of and maintain strong confidence in the leadership of the Communist Party and the country's renovation process. They possess great dreams, ambitions, and ideals, continuously striving to overcome difficulties and make every effort to rise and become useful citizens contributing to society. However, a portion of students still show limitations in political awareness, lack of conviction, live carelessly and indulgently, or are even drawn into activities manipulated by hostile forces. Therefore, strengthening political education and enhancing students' political steadfastness has become increasingly necessary and meaningful. Within universities, some students display political apathy, passive thinking, and a dependent mindset, relying excessively on collectives, fearing responsibility, and avoiding hardship and challenges. They lack the will to cultivate and train their political steadfastness, moral qualities, lifestyle, and professional competence.

The process of cultivating political steadfastness among youth and students is the outcome of both formal education and self-directed learning, self-cultivation, and self-discipline. Self-learning and lifelong education are central tenets of Ho Chi Minh's educational philosophy. He emphasized: "*One must not study only when the teacher is present and play when the teacher is absent. You must know how to study on your own*" [4, p.360]; and "It is necessary to promote and guide self-learning, learning at school, from books, from one another, and from the people" [4, pp.360-361]. Serious engagement in political training not only strengthens young people's "resistance" and "immunity" against negative influences but also fosters perseverance in overcoming difficulties to achieve their goals. Students, as young individuals full of energy and knowledge, are always ready to dedicate themselves; however, their limited life experience makes them susceptible to fluctuations in political conviction, and they have yet to form strong political steadfastness in the face of complex social transformations. This reality requires lecturers in political theory courses to fully recognize their responsibility to nurture students' faith, knowledge, and political awareness, helping them to develop firm political conviction. Nevertheless, current ideological and political education, as well as the teaching and learning of Marxism–Leninism and Ho Chi Minh's Thought, still fall short of practical demands [2, pp.21–22]. At universities, political and ideological education, including instruction on Marxism-Leninism, Ho Chi Minh's Thought, and the Party's Resolutions has received attention and undergone some improvements, yet no real breakthroughs have been achieved. The content and teaching methods remain insufficiently diverse and innovative, resulting in limited effectiveness of political education.

IV. CONCLUSION

In modern society, with the increasing complexity of the world and numerous fluctuations in the domestic situation, every young person, especially students, must be equipped with firm political steadfastness. Only with such conviction can they stand strong and resilient, possess the willpower to overcome all temptations, and have the determination to cultivate and train themselves to become the true masters of the nation's future. To develop such political steadfastness, it is essential not only for Vietnamese students themselves to learn, strive, cultivate, and discipline their character, but also for the whole society to join hands, under the close direction and guidance of the Communist Party, the State, and mass organizations. In particular, universities, as cultural environments, are places where young people and students are educated, trained to develop political steadfastness, and nurtured in talent, knowledge, and moral standards. Universities in Vietnam place strong emphasis on helping students be fully aware of their responsibility for the future development of the country and the fate of the nation.

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