

Combining Socio-economic Development with National Defense, Security, and Foreign Affairs in Vietnam's Current Foreign Policy

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Abstract: Building and developing socio-economic aspects alongside strengthening national defense, security, and external relations have always been a strategic combination of the Communist Party and the State of Vietnam in the process of nation-building and development. Entering the third decade of the 21st century, in the face of unpredictable changes in the global, regional, and domestic situations, the Communist Party of Vietnam has issued development documents with many fundamental and important orientations related to external relations. With the aim of clarifying the viewpoint of the Communist Party of Vietnam on the combination of socio-economic development with national defense, security, and external relations today, the article delves into the theoretical basis and practical aspects contributing to the formation of the Party's viewpoint on this combination, the Party's basic viewpoints at the XIIIth Congress, as well as the implementation of this approach in recent external relations activities.

Keywords: external relations; socio-economic development linked with national defense, security.

Building and developing socio-economic aspects coupled with enhancing national defense, security, and external relations are proactive and voluntary activities of the state and the people under the leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam. The close alignment and mutual promotion of the three factors of socio-economic development, national defense and security, and external relations within a unified framework nationwide are contributing to enhancing the overall strength of the country, successfully fulfilling the two strategic tasks of building socialism and firmly defending the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

1. Theoretical and practical basis for the viewpoint on the combination of the three factors of socio-economic development, national defense and

security, and external relations in the documents of the XIIIth congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam.

From a theoretical perspective, the nation's external relations ultimately ensure the national interest. Theoretically, the national interest is the realization of the three basic goals of the nation: security, development, and influence in international relations. These three goals largely reflect the three factors of socio-economic development, national defense and security, and external relations. Building and consolidating national defense and security is to achieve the goal of security - ensuring a peaceful environment for development, a fortress for external relations activities. Socio-economic development is the goal of national development, an important prerequisite for external relations activities and national defense and security. External relations activities (diplomacy) contribute to the position and prestige of the country. Thus, the three factors constituting interests of Vietnamese nation are combined in Vietnam's external relations activities. In other words, external relations must serve the interest of nation. Therefore, external relations activities need to combine these three factors.

Furthermore, ensuring national defense and security, socio-economic development, and enhancing the country's position through external relations activities will create the comprehensive national strength of Vietnam. To enhance national comprehensive strength, it is necessary to strengthen the combination of socio-economic development with national defense and security and external relations.

Practically, implementing the foreign policy at the XIIth Congress: Vietnam's external relations activities have gained many achievements related to the combination of the three factors mentioned above, specifically: International integration and economic diplomacy have made significant progress in terms of principles, policies, and practical implementation, along with national defense and security which has strengthened the peaceful and stable environment, contributing significantly to the socio-economic development of the country and enhancing Vietnam's position and role in the international arena.

Vietnam persists in defending sovereignty, territory, interests of nation on the sea, in the air, and on land; international cooperations on seas and islands have been enhanced, maintaining a peaceful and stable environment, promoting relations with other countries⁽¹⁾.

We also actively participate in the United Nations' peacekeeping activities, enhancing Vietnam's position and responsibility within the international community. Participation in humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, search and rescue, and international cooperation in post-war recovery efforts has been fruitful. Efforts to participate in the fight against the proliferation of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction⁽²⁾ are also active.

However, our Party also points out some limitations when implementing the viewpoint on the combination of the XIIth Congress. Specifically: The combination between developing socio-economy and ensuring national defense and security in some areas and localities is not yet serious, tight, and effective. Some localities still allow foreigners to invest in strategic areas, affecting the security, and safety of the region. Investment in building defense areas in some localities is not commensurate with the potential and pace of economic development. Information security and cybersecurity are still limited and challenging⁽³⁾.

Therefore, from the achieved results, with a fairly harmonious combination of socio-economic development with national defense and security and external relations, national defense and security have been strengthened; resolutely and persistently safeguarding independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. Political security and social order are preserved, maintaining a peaceful, stable environment for nation-building and development. External relations and international integration have been proactively promoted in both depth and substance. Relations with partners continue to be expanded, intensive, extensive and efficient by signing and implementing many free trade agreements. The position and prestige of our country in the international arena have been enhanced⁽⁴⁾. These results are the practical basis for continuing and developing the combination of the three factors in the Party's viewpoint at the XIIIth Congress.

2. The Party's orientation regarding the combination of socio-economic development with national defense and security, and external relations in the Documents of the XIIIth Congress

The integration of these three factors is manifested in the direction of developing external relations, tasks, and solutions in Vietnam's 5-year and 10-year strategies on socio-economic development until 2030, specifically:

Regarding the future direction of external relations development:

In the coming period, the Party advocates continuing to exercise the foreign policy of independence, autonomy, diversification, multilateralization

of external relations; be proactive, active and efficient in comprehensive and in-depth international integration, maintaining a peaceful and stable environment, constantly elevate Vietnam's international status and prestige⁽⁵⁾ with the following viewpoints:

- To implement consistently and creatively external relations activities, to be proactive and active in comprehensive and in-depth international integration.

- + To handle properly relations between national independence and autonomy on the one hand and comprehensive, in-depth, flexible and efficient international integration on the other for the national interest, and ensure national independence, autonomy and sovereignty. To link closely the process of proactive, active, comprehensive and in-depth international integration with enhancement of the entire society's aggregate strength and mobilization of its potentials; and to innovate and complete domestic institutions, and raise the country's autonomous, competitive and adaptive capacity. To boost and heighten the quality and efficiency of international integration in social affairs, environment, science and technology, education and training, culture, tourism and other fields.

- + To actively deliver on regional and international commitments, in integration with socio-economic development strategies, policies, plans and programs. To take a proactive part in, make active contributions to, uphold Vietnam's role in building and defining multilateral institutions and the international politico-economic order, and fully honor international commitments and trade agreements to which the country has been a signatory. To expand relations and boost cooperation with political and social forces and the people of other countries, striving for peace, national independence, democracy, development cooperation, and social progress⁽⁶⁾.

- + To participate proactively and actively in multilateral mechanisms on defense and security along a new thinking about Homeland safeguarding. With determination and persistence, to combat and foil all hostile forces' plots and actions interfering in the internal affairs and encroaching upon the independence, sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity, national security and political stability of our country. To continue pushing for the settlement of issues related to the sea, and security and safety of navigation and overflight, on the basis of

international law, particularly the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. To consolidate borders of peace, security, cooperation and development; and to solve outstanding issues related to land borders with neighboring countries⁽⁷⁾.

- To consistently exercise the foreign policy of independence, autonomy, peace, friendship, cooperation, development, and diversification and multilateralization of external relations. To ensure to the utmost State and national interests on the basis of fundamental principles of the United Nations Charter and international law, equality, cooperation and mutual benefit. To combine the nation's strength with that of the times, and be proactive and active in comprehensive and in-depth international integration; Vietnam is a friend, a reliable partner, and an active and responsible member of the international community.

- To ensure the Party's unified leadership and guidance and the State's centralized governance over external relations activity and international integration. On the basis of cooperation intertwined with struggle, to continue raising the efficiency of external relations activity and international integration in the State and national interests, and safeguard firmly the socialist Vietnamese Homeland. To continue promoting the pioneering role of external relations activity in shaping and preserving solidly an environment of peace and stability, mobilizing external resources for national development, and heightening the country's status and prestige.

- To build a comprehensive and modern diplomacy upon three pillars, namely the Party's external relations activity, the State's diplomatic activity, and people-to-people external relations activity.

- To boost bilateral external relations and uplift the multilateral external relations caliber. To proactively participate and promote Vietnam's role in multilateral mechanisms, particularly ASEAN, the United Nations, APEC, the Mekong Subregion, and other regional and international cooperation frameworks, in issues and mechanisms of strategic importance, in keeping with specific requirements, capacity and conditions. To attach importance to developing traditional relations of cooperation and friendship with neighboring countries; and to work proactively, actively and responsibly with other ASEAN countries for a united and strong Community and for ASEAN's firmly maintained centrality in the regional security architecture. To further strengthen and deepen bilateral cooperative relations with partners, particularly strategic partners, comprehensive partners and other

important partners, creating a state of interwoven interests and enhancing mutual trust⁽⁸⁾.

Regarding tasks and primary solutions:

During the 2021-2025 five-year period, our Party has identified several tasks and solutions:

Firstly, to enhance the effectiveness of foreign affairs activities, to be proactive in international integration, creating a peaceful environment and favorable conditions for national development.

Secondly, to link closely external relations with national defense, security, and socio-economic development, continue consistently the policy of independence, autonomy, multilateralization and diversification; to further strengthen relations with partners, especially important partners, in-depth, effectively, and sustainably, to enhance interwoven interests, flexible, creative, and efficient handling of relations with major countries. To boost and uplift the multilateral external relations, closely combining it with bilateral diplomacy, to implement international responsibilities, especially ASEAN, the United Nations, and Asia-Pacific cooperation frameworks. To tight and efficient coordination between the Party's external relations activity, the State's diplomatic activity, and people-to-people external relations activity. To maintain peace, security, and freedom of navigation and aviation in the East Sea; To continue pushing for the settlement of issues related through peaceful means on the basis of international law, particularly the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea⁽⁹⁾.

Thirdly, To enhance economic diplomacy to serve socio-economic development, with people and businesses at the center of service. To maximize the national position and external resources to serve the country's development. To improve integration capacity, to implement effectively international commitments, free trade agreements; integrate with economic-social development plans and programs⁽¹⁰⁾. To leverage political advantages in external relations to protect the interests of the state, businesses, and people, especially in economic, trade, and foreign investment disputes. Further promote cultural diplomacy, making practical contributions to promoting the national image and enhancing the country's overall strength. Economic diplomacy also needs to ensure research on the impact on national defense and security to achieve a harmonious combination of economic factors with defense-security and external relations.

Fourthly, To handle effectively work of overseas Vietnamese citizen protection and maximize the contribution of overseas Vietnamese resources to serve the country's development. To manage relations with partners well, avoid being passive and surprised. To monitor closely the situation in the East Sea, persistently and resolutely protect Vietnam's legitimate interests in accordance with international law⁽¹¹⁾. Our country has a large number of compatriots overseas as well as citizens studying and working in many countries worldwide, which is an extremely important resource that needs to be leveraged to contribute to the country's socio-economic development. However, among these people, there is also a small portion holding dissenting ideologies, being attracted by hostile forces to sabotage the regime. Therefore, the work pertaining to compatriots overseas also needs to be combined with the work of defense and security to prevent these risks early on. At the same time, we also need to capitalize on patriotic compatriots overseas who have the capacity to participate in defense and security work, fighting against external threats to national security.

Thus, in the 2021-2025 five-year tasks, our Party clearly demonstrates the close combination of socio-economic development with defense-security and external relations in each specific external relations activity as well as in external relations work in general.

In the 10-year Socio-Economic Development Strategy from 2021 to 2030, our Party continues to set forth external relations directions, tasks, and solutions. They are:

Firstly, To enhance the effectiveness of external relations work, international integration, and Vietnam's status, prestige on the international arena. To promote continuously and actively external relations, citizens protection work; maximize opportunities from the international integration process, especially from signed free trade agreements; focus on enhancing integration capacity, particularly at the provincial and local levels, resolve international trade and investment disputes. To consistently exercise the foreign policy of independence, autonomy, diversification and multilateralization of external relations; enhance adaptive and flexible handling of national interests harmoniously with common concerns, depending on the object, issue, time, in line with international law and regional principles, in the spirit of national interest being paramount.

Secondly, To improve the effectiveness of external relations work, closely linking proactive and active international integration with strengthening

the capacity of synchronized, modern institutions. To tight and efficient coordination between the Party's external relations activity, the State's diplomatic activity, and people-to-people external relations activity. To boost and uplift the multilateral external relations, closely combining it with bilateral diplomacy, to implement international responsibilities, especially ASEAN, the United Nations, and Asia-Pacific cooperation frameworks. To maintain peace, security, and freedom of navigation and aviation in the East Sea; To continue pushing for the settlement of issues related through peaceful means on the basis of international law, particularly the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Thirdly, To enhance the level and quality of international integration to expand markets, seize capital, technology, knowledge, and management skills; improve the competitiveness of the economy and products; promote the development of domestic industries, establish a higher position in the global value chain; actively contribute to the process of innovation in growth models, restructure the economy; promote industrialization, modernization of the country, narrow the development gap with more developed countries in the region and the world.

Fourthly, To construct economic diplomacy to serve development, with people, localities, and businesses at the center of service. To protect the legitimate interests of the state, businesses, and Vietnamese citizens in international economic, trade, and investment disputes. To seriously implement international commitments and signed trade agreements. To seize favorable international environments to enhance integration capacity and benefit from integration, making significant contributions to economic, social development, environmental protection in the region and the world⁽¹²⁾.

3. The practice of combining economic and social development with national defense, security, and diplomacy in some recent foreign activities of Vietnam.

In recent years, following the Resolution of the 13th Party Congress, Vietnam's external relations activities have achieved the following results:

Firstly, active participation in UN mechanisms such as the Human Rights Council, the UN Security Council, and proactive engagement in ASEAN, APEC, etc. This has helped enhance Vietnam's prestige and position globally, instilling confidence in business partners and contributing to socio-economic development.

Secondly, external relations activities have effectively contributed to the country's post-COVID economic and social recovery, specifically:

Health diplomacy, vaccine diplomacy such as participating in the COVAX fund, bilateral vaccine diplomacy with the US, China, Russia, South Korea, Cuba, etc., ensuring human security and creating a safe environment for the implementation of serious commitments in bilateral and multilateral cooperation agreements, thereby accelerating the recovery process after the pandemic.

Thirdly, external relations activities have contributed to protecting the country's independence, sovereignty, and maintaining a peaceful and stable environment:

Bilaterally external relations activities have facilitated economic relations with 230 countries and territories, including FTAs with 60 economies⁽¹⁴⁾, establishing defense relations with the military of over 100 countries, including 5 permanent members of the UN Security Council.

Multilaterally, Vietnam's international integration in economics and defense is deepening, actively participating in various global and regional mechanisms and forums such as the UN, APEC, ASEAN-led mechanisms, ADMM, ADMM+, defense and security cooperation with the EU. The signing of the Framework Agreement between the Vietnamese Ministry of Defense and the EU on crisis management activities in 2019 is a notable achievement. Vietnam has also contributed peacekeeping forces to UN activities in Africa, among others.

Fourthly, external relations activities contribute to ***strengthening solidarity and friendly relations between nations***, fostering a favorable international environment that contributes to socio-economic development and reinforces national defense and security. During visits by Party and State leaders to other countries, there is a combination of economic, political, cultural cooperation, and defense collaboration.

These fundamental results clearly demonstrate the close combination of socio-economic development with national defense, security, and external relations in the external relations activities of our Party and State. Consequently, they also contribute to the sustainable development of the external relations field. It's crucial to continue leveraging these achievements in the future./.

(1), (2), (3), (4), (9), (10), (11) Communist Party of Vietnam (2021), *Documents of the 13th National Party Congress*, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, Vol. 2, pp. 59, 58, 76, 85, 154, 154, 155.

(5), (6), (7), (8), (12) Communist Party of Vietnam (2021), *Documents of the 13th National Party Congress*, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, Vol. 1, pp. 117-118, 161-165, 161-165, 161-165, 282-284.

(13) This mechanism was co-founded by the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI), and the World Health Organization (WHO).

(14) <https://www.tapchicongsan.org.vn/web/guest/quoc-phong-an-ninh-oi-ngoai1/-/2018/821527/doi-ngoai-viet-nam-nam-2020-tu-tin-vung-buoc-tren-con-duong-phat-trien.aspx>.