

THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNIST PARTY'S GUIDELINES AND POLICIES ON THE PROTECTION OF SEA AND ISLANDS SOVEREIGNTY, RESISTANCE TO FIGHT AGAINST DISINFORMATION

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Received:	16/01/2023	The sea and islands are a part of Vietnam's sacred territory, constituting the national sovereignty, serving as a gateway for international exchanges, and holding a particularly important position in the national construction, development and defense. Therefore, in order to carry out plots of "peaceful evolution", hostile forces have used many ways to distort, provoke and oppose to Vietnam's sovereignty over sea and islands. The question is how to protect and maintain the sovereignty of the sea and islands, which is also to protect and maintain the sovereignty of the country? By using historical and logical methods, combined with analytical and synthesis methods, the article aims to present the Vietnamese Communist Party's guidelines and policies on the protection of sovereignty over seas and islands, and resolutely fighting the disinformation. Research results have shown false and misleading claims about sovereignty over sea and islands; at the same time, contributing to clarifying the Party's guidelines and policies in protecting Vietnam's sovereignty over sea and islands. Besides, the article also proposes some solutions to raise people's awareness of this issue. The study reveals that protecting the sovereignty of the sea and islands is an important task and responsibility of all the Party, military forces and citizens, especially the young generation.
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QUAN ĐIỂM, CHỦ TRƯỞNG CỦA ĐẢNG VỀ CÔNG TÁC BẢO VỆ CHỦ QUYỀN BIỂN, ĐẢO, KIÊN QUYẾT ĐẤU TRANH VỚI LUẬN ĐIỀU SAI TRÁI

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THÔNG TIN BÀI BÁO		TÓM TẮT
Ngày nhận bài:	16/01/2023	Biển, đảo là một phần lãnh thổ thiêng liêng của Việt Nam, cấu thành chủ quyền quốc gia, là cửa ngõ giao lưu quốc tế, có vị trí đặc biệt quan trọng trong sự nghiệp xây dựng, phát triển và bảo vệ đất nước. Chính vì vậy, nhằm thực hiện âm mưu “diễn biến hòa bình”, các thế lực thù địch đã bằng nhiều cách xuyên tạc, kích động, chống phá chủ quyền biển, đảo của Việt Nam. Yêu cầu đặt ra là làm thế nào để bảo vệ và giữ vững chủ quyền biển, đảo, cũng chính là bảo vệ và giữ vững chủ quyền của đất nước? Bằng phương pháp lịch sử và logic, kết hợp với phương pháp phân tích, tổng hợp, bài viết nhằm đưa ra các quan điểm, chủ trương của Đảng về công tác bảo vệ chủ quyền biển, đảo, kiên quyết đấu tranh với luận điệu sai trái. Kết quả nghiên cứu đã chỉ ra những luận điệu sai trái, xuyên tạc về chủ quyền biển, đảo; đồng thời góp phần làm rõ về đường lối, chính sách của Đảng trong việc bảo vệ chủ quyền biển, đảo của Việt Nam. Bên cạnh đó, bài viết còn đề xuất một số giải pháp nhằm nâng cao nhận thức của nhân dân về vấn đề này. Nghiên cứu chỉ rõ, bảo vệ chủ quyền biển, đảo là nhiệm vụ trọng yếu và là trách nhiệm của toàn Đảng, toàn dân và toàn quân, đặc biệt là đối với thế hệ trẻ ngày nay.
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1. Introduction

Seas and islands are an inseparably sacred part of a country's territory. Seas and islands are gateways for international exchanges, and have a particularly important position for the national construction and development [1]. Protecting the sea and islands means protecting a significant part of the Fatherland; maintaining the sovereignty of the sea and islands will contribute to maintaining the national independence, sovereignty, territorial unity and integrity, peace and sustainable development [2]. There are many studies that have mentioned this issue from different dimensions such as pointing out the importance of protecting the national borders on sea; emphasizing the role of marine economic protection and development... [3] - [6]. In order to firmly protect the country's sovereignty over sea and islands, it is necessary to promote the synergy of all the Party, people and armed forces [7]. The above works only mentioned a part or an aspect of the research issue. Therefore, this article will focus on analyzing the false and distorted claims of hostile forces about sovereignty over sea and islands; thereby giving the Vietnamese Communist Party's guidelines and policies on the protection of Vietnam's sovereignty over sea and islands. In addition, the study also proposes some solutions to raise people's awareness in protecting Vietnam's sovereignty over sea and islands in the new situation.

2. Methodology

To accomplish the research objective, logical and historical methods, analysis and synthesis were used to identify disinformation and clearly analyze the Party's opinions in protecting Vietnam's sovereignty over sea and islands. On that basis, the study also proposes a number of solutions to raise people's awareness about the issue of protecting Vietnam's sovereignty over sea and islands in the new situation.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Identifying false and misleading claims about sovereignty over seas and islands

"Vietnam's national borders include national borders on land, sea, in the air, in the ground which are determined by the system of national landmarks on the field, marked by coordinates on the map and shown by the vertical plane according to the territory of Vietnam. National border areas are territories which are contiguous to the national borders with special regulations promulgated by the Government to protect border safety" [3, p.172]. In recent years, the situation in the East Sea has seen some positive changes, but there have been still many unstable factors. "The East Sea is now one of the "hot spots" in the world" [4, p.58], the center of the competition for power and influence of countries inside and outside the region, especially the big countries. For more than two decades, this sea has always been a "pan of fire" on the political chessboard of the region. Therefore, the issue of protecting the sovereignty of the sea and islands as well as protecting the national interests of Vietnam is being raised urgently.

Enemies and reactionary forces have taken advantage of this issue to release disinformation to distort and oppose to Vietnam's sovereignty over sea and islands. With the purpose of spreading disinformation about the complicated situation and development in the East Sea, they have set up reactionary foreign newspapers and radio stations such as BBC, Radio Free Asia (RFA)... Besides, they also use social networking sites such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, etc. to release untrue documents, images and videos. They often take advantage of "hot spots" in the East Sea to distort the guidelines and policies of the Vietnamese Communist Party and State in the struggle to protect sovereignty over sea and islands. Some typical events include the cables of Vietnam's ships, namely Viking 02 and Binh Minh 02, being cut in 2011, 2012; the event that China's oil rig Haiyang Shiyu 981 (HD 981) violated the East Sea in 2014; the incident of China's survey ship, Haiyang Dizhi 8 illegally surveying in the exclusive economic zone and continental shelf of the East Sea (in 2019)... Reactionary forces tried to take advantage of these

events to mislead the Vietnamese Communist Party and State's guidelines, policies and activities to protect the sovereignty of sea and islands with distorted articles such as "The Vietnamese government is weak and cowardly", "The Vietnamese government sells the East Sea", "The Vietnamese Party and State are silent because they have compromised with the foreign countries", "The Vietnamese State has agreed to hand over Vanguard Bank to China"... They also built up fake YouTube channels to list Politburo members "giving half of Vanguard Bank to China"; release many fake news such as "The Vanguard Bank case is the first step to legalize the Mat uoc Thanh Do"... to incite the people, instigate protests to boycott China... in order to cause division and instability in the country, from which they want to call for the overthrow of the regime. Most recently, on the pretext of the United States Department of State's rejection of most of China's sovereignty claims in the East Sea, reactionary organizations have increased and repeated many tricks and misrepresentations about the Vietnamese Communist Party and State's policies and directions; advocating for "anti-China, pro-American" behaviors in order to cause instability and disunity inside the country and abroad, harming national interests [8, p.23].

In particular, through the issue of sea and islands, hostile forces want to destroy the regime, cause division between the Party, State and people, and carry out "peaceful evolution". At the same time, they also want to break up Vietnam's foreign relations with relevant countries, making Vietnam fall into confrontation and isolation. To achieve their goals, they spread many documents and articles that distort Vietnam's foreign affairs, defense policies and combat capabilities. They want the people to see that the leaders of the Party and State should let the sovereignty of the sea and islands be encroached on for the interests of other partners. They also make the argument that the single-party country cannot protect its territorial sovereignty, thereby directing the ideology to demand political pluralism and opposing multi-party regimes. Their purpose is to deny the leadership of the Party and break the links among the Party, State, Army and people in the matter of protecting Vietnam's sovereignty over sea and islands. Obviously, the terrorist and reactionary forces want to cause the anxiety and skepticism of a part of the population due to their lack of information or misunderstanding. These things negatively affect people's perception and ideology, cause panic, and reduce people's belief in the leadership of the Party. Facing that reality, the Party, State and people need to expose, refute and persistently fight against the reactionary forces' tricks of inference and distortion in order to protect the sovereignty of the sea, islands and the territorial integrity of the Fatherland.

3.2. Obvious awareness of the Party's guidelines and policies to protect sea and island sovereignty

In his life, President Ho Chi Minh said: "In the past, we had only nights and forests, today we have days, sky, and sea. Our coast is long and beautiful, we must know how to preserve it". His advice was the driving force for the whole nation to defeat the empire and its minions and liberate the nation. Today, his statement also affirms the responsibility of generations of Vietnamese people, especially the young generation, who need to promote their advantages and firmly protect the sacred airspace, sea and islands of Vietnam. The Vietnamese Constitution emphasized: "The Socialist Republic of Vietnam is an independent and sovereign country enjoying unity and integrity of territory, including the mainland, islands, seas and airspace" [9, p.8]. "All acts against independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity, or against the construction and defense, of the Fatherland shall be severely punished" [9, p.13]. Therefore, during the process of leading the Vietnamese revolution in general, and leading the current industrialization and modernization of the country in particular, the Party has always been interested in promoting the strength of the great national unity in protecting Vietnam's sovereignty over seas and islands, considers it one of the fundamental driving forces for the country's sustainable development.

In the context that the situation in the East Sea has been complicated, the struggle to protect Vietnam's sovereignty and legitimate interests according to international laws in the East Sea has

become increasingly difficult and drastic. "Accepting and developing Ho Chi Minh's diplomatic thoughts, Vietnam strives to handle it flexibly, skillfully to avoid conflicts and confrontations in the struggle to protect sovereignty over seas and islands" [5, p.54]. Therefore, on the one hand, the Vietnamese Communist Party and State agree on a consistent viewpoint to firmly protect national sovereignty, territorial integrity and legitimate interests in the East Sea; on the other hand, Vietnam resolutely maintains peace and stability to build and develop the country, consolidate friendship and cooperation with neighboring countries. The Resolution of the 11th Party Congress clearly states: "The goal and task of national defense and security is to firmly safeguard national independence, sovereignty, unification, and territorial integrity; to maintain sovereignty over seas, islands, borders and airspace; to protect the Party, the State, the people and the socialist regime..." [10, p.125].

In order to fulfill the task of protecting sovereignty and territorial integrity, the prerequisite is to constantly improve the national strength, build a national defense posture on sea. In particular, the strategic, urgent and key issue is to build a posture of people's hearts and minds, firmly protect the country's sacred sovereignty over sea and islands. This was emphasized by the Party at the 12th National Congress as follows: "Resolutely, persistently fighting to defend the Homeland's independence, sovereignty, and legitimate interests on sea, and at the same time proactively and actively resolving disputes and disagreements in the East Sea by peaceful measures according to international law, especially the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea; preserving the environment of peace, stability and cooperation for development" [8, pp.104-105]. The Congress also pointed out to gradually exploiting completely the great potentials of the marine economy, developing the economy on islands, mastering the territorial sea and continental shelf, and implementing the sovereignty over the exclusive economic zone. The Party's viewpoints in this period showed their fierce determination to persistently fight against false arguments, and to protect Vietnam's East Sea.

On the basis of properly assessing the domestic, regional and international situation and the trend of the era, the 13th Party Congress continued to affirm, supplement and develop basic views on the task of protecting sovereignty of sea and islands in a new situation. During the 13th National Congress, the Party affirmed their consistent viewpoints and proposed measures to settle the current sea and island disputes as follows: "Resolutely and persistently protecting the national sovereignty, territory and interests at sea, in the air and on land; enhancing international cooperation on sea and islands; maintaining a peaceful and stable environment, promoting relations with other countries" [11, p.109]. The Party affirms that building "a posture of the people's hearts and minds" in protecting the sovereignty of the sea and islands is a new and important point that needs to be promoted. The process of building people's political-spiritual factors, spirit and belief in the seas and islands of the Fatherland is aroused, gathered and promoted to create a solid political-spiritual foundation. On that basis, the Party mobilizes the synergy of all forces in the task of upholding the country's sovereignty over the sea and islands, firmly defending national independence and territorial integrity.

It can be seen that, through the congresses, the Party's awareness of the position and role of the sea and islands has been constantly supplemented, gradually completed and developed [6, p.71]. As a result, Vietnam's national synergy, position and force in the sea and islands has increased remarkably. The all-people national defense, people's security, and "people's hearts and minds" posture on the sea and islands have been continuously consolidated and strengthened. The forces to manage and protect the sea and islands, the core of which is Vietnam People's Navy, have been gradually built and developed stronger and stronger. In the political and foreign affairs, the Party has successfully applied the policies of maintaining independence and self-reliance in foreign affairs and international cooperation. Faced with complicated developments in the East Sea over the past time, the Party and State of Vietnam have basically implemented the strategy of ensuring sovereignty and security; promptly handled situations at sea, ensuring sovereignty,

relations and a peaceful environment at sea. Thus, over the years, the Party and Vietnam's work to protect and maintain the sovereignty of the sea and islands has achieved certain results. To obtain these results, the Party has performed well on a number of issues, specifically as follows:

Firstly, ideology and awareness are unified throughout the Party, the people and the army, especially the young generation about the position, role and special importance of the sea for the national construction and protection

Vietnam is a coastal country; its sea area is 3 times as large as that of the mainland, accounting for nearly 30% of the East Sea area. It can be said that "the sea is a constituent part of the sacred sovereignty of the Fatherland, a living space, a gateway for international exchanges, closely associated with the national construction and defense" [1]... Thanks to the location on the important maritime and aviation route between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean; between Europe, the Middle East and China, Japan and other countries in the region, Vietnam sea and coasts play a particularly significant position in terms of economy, politics and military. Besides, the East Sea of Vietnam is also known as a "rich" sea, not only in natural resources and important minerals such as oil, gas, coal, iron, titanium, salt, etc. but also in the number of aquatic species. With a long and beautiful coastline, rich and diverse marine lives, Vietnam's sea area is very favorable for the development of marine tourism. For security and defense activities, Vietnam's sea and islands serve as the national gateways, strengthening the defense line to protect the Fatherland.

Secondly, the Party and State unify the foreign policies of independence and self-reliance, peace, friendship, cooperation and development, and implement multi-lateralization and diversification of foreign relations.

This is a correct view in order to ensure the highest interests of the nation according to the basic principles of the United Nations Charter and international laws, namely equality and cooperation for mutual benefits. The Party and State advocate the implementation of the foreign policies of independence, self-reliance, multi-lateralization and diversification in order to maintain a peaceful and stable environment for the development of the country. At the same time, Vietnam also implements the policy of "not joining forces with one country in opposition of another", not being passively influenced or manipulated by any big countries, especially avoiding becoming a chess piece of big countries. In addition, the implementation of foreign affairs and international cooperation on the sea also contributes to maintaining a peaceful and stable environment for the development of the country.

Third, the Party advocates settling disputes by peaceful means in order to maintain peace, security, safety, freedom of maritime and aviation in the East Sea.

Resolving disputes by peaceful means is Vietnam's consistent and thorough stance on the East Sea issue. All activities at sea should be conducted on the basis of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, respecting the sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction of the coastal countries in the sea areas established in accordance with the Convention. Based on a full legal basis, sovereign rights and other legal rights over Vietnam's seas are established.

Fourth, the Party and State advocate resolutely and persistently fighting to firmly protect independence, sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity on sea, islands and airspace; to maintain a peaceful and stable environment for the development of the country.

This viewpoint and policy shows the strategic direction for the entire Party, people and army to focus on effectively implementing national defense tasks, firmly protecting the sea and islands of the Fatherland. The whole Party, the people and the army must resolutely fight to protect the national sovereignty and interests as well as uphold the principal issues with the highest consensus and determination. At the same time, the Party has determined that settling disputes in the East Sea is a long-term problem; thus, the whole Party and people need to persevere in cooperation in finding peaceful means to settle disputes and protect Vietnam's legitimate interests based on complying with international law and respecting legal interests of the other countries.

Fifth, the Party advocates that the economic, cultural and social development should closely connect to the consolidation and improvement of the national defense and security, especially in strategic areas, extremely difficult areas, border areas, and islands.

The Party has determined that Vietnam will become a developing country with modern industry and high average income by 2030. Therefore, marine economic development is considered as one of the important tasks and solutions for Vietnam to achieve that goal. Over the years, Vietnam has focused on sustainable development of the marine economy associated with ensuring national defense and security, maintaining independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. The results achieved in recent years have shown the correct application of the Party's viewpoints and guidelines in sustainable development of the marine economy and protection of the country's sovereignty over seas and islands.

3.3. Proposing solutions to raise people's awareness about the issue of protecting Vietnam's sovereignty over sea and islands in the new situation

Firstly, the Party needs to strengthen their leadership to fight against hostile forces' wrong arguments of sovereignty over sea and islands.

The Party continues to thoroughly grasp and raise political awareness and revolutionary actions among cadres, party members and the people on strengthening protection of the Party's ideological foundation, resolutely fighting against hostile forces' wrong arguments in the new situation, persistent and determined to firmly defend the sacred sovereignty of the sea and islands of the Fatherland. At the same time, the Party also needs to be more careful to promptly detect and handle disinformation, and quickly give information orientation, prevent wrong arguments of hostile forces.

Second, the Party advocates promoting propaganda and education for cadres, party members and people in general, especially the young generation in particular, about sovereignty over the sea and islands.

"Propaganda on sea and islands is an important ideological work to widely disseminate the Party's guidelines and policies in society" [7, p.81]. In order to contribute to raising people's awareness and sense of law observance on the protection of sea and island sovereignty, promoting propaganda and education for cadres, party members and people is considered a necessary and appropriate measure. At the same time, the Party and State need to make more efforts to prevent fishing vessels from violating foreign waters, provide favorable conditions and support for fishermen to reach out to sea safely.

Third, the State needs to strengthen the management of social networking sites and ensure network security in Vietnam.

Enemy forces often take advantage of cyberspace to make distorting statements and incite public opinion against the Vietnamese Communist Party and State. Faced with that situation, the Party needs to pay attention to grasp the situation of public opinion, especially information related to the sovereignty of Vietnam's sea and islands, in order to promptly counter, prevent, and take countermeasures to fight against "peaceful evolution" of hostile forces on social networking sites. The Party should continue to focus on effectively implementing the application and development of information technology in parallel with ensuring network security.

Fourth, the Party needs to prioritize investment in the development of the sea and island economy and effectively implementing the socio-economic development strategies in coastal and island areas.

Developing the marine economy in association with firmly protecting the sovereignty of the sea and islands is always concerned by the Party. Therefore, the Party advocates building service centers, establishing strong economic groups which are capable of reaching out and combining economic development with mastering the sea and islands in order to effectively exploit potential resources of the sea. Developing the marine economy should be associated with solving social problems and improving people's living standards.

Protecting the national sovereignty over sea and islands is a total of organized activities of both the political system and the whole citizens, led by a specialized core force, under the leadership of the Party, the centralized management and administration of the State. Protecting national sovereignty over sea and islands aims to exercise and maintain the national sovereignty and sovereign rights, and to fight against all acts of violating the national sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction recognized by international laws, prescribed in Vietnamese laws.

4. Conclusion

As a part of the sacred territory of the Fatherland, Vietnam's seas and islands have always held a particularly important position in the national construction, development and defense. Protecting the sovereignty of the sea and islands is an important task and responsibility of the whole Party, the people and the army, especially for the present young generation. The Party needs to exploit and promote the synergy of the whole country and the whole political system to protect and maintain independence, sovereignty, sovereign rights, jurisdiction, maritime integrity in particular and the territorial integrity of the Fatherland in general, to drive Vietnam to a country of "rich people, strong country, democracy, justice and civilization".

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