

## Current Situation And Issues Raised About Political Culture Of Key Cadres At Commune Level In The Mekong Delta In The Era Of The Vietnamese Nation's Rise

Phan Van Tuan<sup>1</sup>, Nguyen Khanh Ly<sup>2</sup>, Pham Thi Thuy Hong<sup>3</sup>, Tran Van Dien<sup>4</sup>, Luong Thi Hoai Thanh<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Faculty of Politics and Journalism, College of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vinh University, Vietnam, ORCID: 0000-0002-7375-7894

<sup>2</sup> Nghe An University, Vietnam, ORCID: 0009-0004-3447-3710

<sup>3</sup> Faculty of Politics and Journalism, College of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vinh University, Vietnam

<sup>4</sup> Dong Thap University

<sup>5</sup> Department of Political Theory, Faculty of Basic Sciences, Can Tho University of Medicine and Pharmacy, 179 Nguyen Van Cu, Can Tho 94000, Vietnam, 0009-0001-0084-0144

**Abstract:** Key cadres at the commune level play an important role in organizing the implementation of socio-economic development tasks and ensuring security and national defense in the locality. Recognizing this, Party committees and authorities at all levels in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam have focused on building a contingent of cadres with strong qualities, capacity and political will. Thanks to that, after nearly 40 years of renovation, the political culture of the majority of key cadres at the commune level has been continuously improved, demonstrated through a sense of responsibility, standards of conduct and capacity to perform tasks. Many typical examples of political culture have become quality human resources, contributing to the sustainable development of the region. However, besides the achieved results, there are still some key cadres at the commune level who have shown limitations such as lack of standards in political behavior, low work efficiency, and even signs of ideological and moral degradation, affecting people's trust in the Party and State. Part of the reason is due to the lack of awareness of the importance of political culture, and the training and fostering work has not really received due attention. In the face of the requirements of innovation and integration, building a team of key cadres at the commune level with political courage, pure ethics, high professional qualifications, and standard working style is an urgent task. This is not only a key factor to consolidate the grassroots political system but also an important contribution to the common development of the Mekong Delta and Vietnam in the era of national development.

**Keywords:** Vietnam, Mekong Delta, Political culture, key officials at commune level

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Key officials at the commune level are those who hold important positions, have great influence on the operation of the apparatus organization, and are the core of organizations in the apparatus system at the grassroots level. The political culture of key officials at the commune level, therefore, has a great influence on the way of organizing and operating political and social activities, the quality of relationships between organizations in the political system with each other and with local people.

The Mekong Delta has a total natural area of 40,557 km<sup>2</sup>. The average population in 2024 of the Mekong Delta is estimated at 17.432 million people. This is a land rich in historical, cultural and revolutionary traditions, heroic and very glorious; it is a place of long-standing

solidarity and solidarity of ethnic communities with very special cultural features and a unique river culture. Looking at the political life in the Mekong Delta today, from the perspective of political culture. Most of the key cadres at the commune level have practical political capacity, ideals, beliefs, political courage, and participate in political activities; they are models of cultural behavior in the political environment. However, in addition to the achieved results, it is also necessary to frankly acknowledge that under the impact of international integration and market economy, when money and material things are considered the highest value to evaluate people, political and cultural values are often pushed to secondary levels. There is a phenomenon that some key cadres at the commune level are indifferent to political issues, have faded ideals, and show signs of degradation in political ideology, lifestyle ethics, and corruption; still negligent, losing vigilance, confused in identifying and fighting against the wrong and fabricated views of hostile forces, especially when they use the media on the internet to sabotage, there are also manifestations of "foreign worship" and "hybrid" culture, which are causing a number of key cadres at the commune level in the Mekong Delta to change their concept of political and cultural values and the implementation of political and cultural values, which is worth pondering, and needs to be identified in order to have solutions to fight and reject.

Looking at the political life in the Mekong Delta today, from the perspective of political culture. Most of the key cadres at the commune level have practical political capacity, ideals, beliefs, political courage, and participate in political activities; they are models of cultural behavior in the political environment. However, in addition to the achieved results, it is also necessary to frankly acknowledge that under the impact of international integration and the market economy, when money and material things are considered the highest value to evaluate people, political and cultural values are often pushed to secondary levels. There is a phenomenon that some key cadres at the commune level are indifferent to political issues, have faded ideals, lack political courage, and show signs of degradation in political ideology, lifestyle ethics, social values and norms, and corruption. In particular, the good political and cultural values of the nation and the political ideals of the Party have not yet been absorbed into the key cadres at the commune level in the Mekong Delta. They are still negligent, lose vigilance, and are confused in identifying and fighting against the wrong and fabricated views of hostile forces, especially when they use the media on the internet to sabotage.

From the above limitations, we can identify a number of issues facing the key cadres at the commune level in the Mekong Delta: The deviation in the perception of a number of cadres about social values and norms; the localism in the leadership and management activities of a number of individuals; the degradation of political ideology, ethics and lifestyle of a number of key cadres at the commune level. In addition, the influence of foreign culture, the manifestation of "foreign worship" and "hybrid" culture, is causing a number of key leaders at the commune level in the Mekong Delta to change their concept of political cultural values and the implementation of political cultural values. This is worth pondering and needs to be identified in order to have solutions to combat and reject.

In the process of building a socialist rule-of-law state in Vietnam, the communal government plays a particularly important role. This is the level of government closest to the people, directly implementing the Party's policies and the State's laws, and at the same time reflecting the people's thoughts and aspirations to higher levels. For the communal government to be truly strong, clean and friendly, the core and fundamental factor is to build and develop the political culture of key communal-level officials. General Secretary To Lam pointed out: "In the two-level local government model, the communal government is the direct administrative level closest to the people. It is necessary to innovate management thinking towards a constructive government, building a communal

cadre team with comprehensive capacity, capable of applying digital technology, understanding the people, and closely following reality; it is necessary to promote administrative reform and digital transformation in handling procedures and interacting with the people" (Speech by General Secretary To Lam at the Party Congress of Nghia Tru commune (Hung Yen), term 2025-2030, 2025). The article clarifies the political culture status of key cadres at the commune level in the Mekong Delta, thereby proposing some basic solutions to improve the political culture of key cadres at the commune level in the Mekong Delta to meet the requirements and tasks in the current era of national development.

This study contributes to advancing the understanding of political culture as a moral-axiological construct grounded in Vietnamese socialist humanism. It emphasizes that cultural identity, ethical values, and revolutionary ideals play a fundamental role in shaping political capacity and decision-making processes at the local governmental level, particularly among key commune-level cadres in the Mekong Delta.

In addition, the study contributes to the philosophy of culture by elucidating how political culture mediates the relationship between individual ethical conduct and collective political responsibility. The findings demonstrate that the moral orientation and ethical qualities of local cadres-diligence, integrity, fairness, and a commitment to serving the people-not only reflect but also reinforce the distinct socialist cultural identity of Vietnam, thereby strengthening social cohesion and trust in governance.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a combination of philosophical, theoretical, and empirical methods to examine the political culture of key commune-level cadres in the Mekong Delta. By integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches, the research ensures methodological rigor, triangulation, and enhanced validity of findings.

### ***2.1. Philosophical and theoretical foundations***

The study is grounded in dialectical and historical materialism, which provides a scientific worldview and methodological basis for analyzing political culture as a dynamic, historically conditioned phenomenon. These philosophical approaches allow the research to examine the interactions between socio-economic transformations, political ideology, and cadre behavior in the Mekong Delta over nearly four decades of *Đổi Mới*.

To situate the study within broader political culture scholarship, the research also refers to selected Western theoretical frameworks-such as Almond & Verba's civic culture and Inglehart's post-materialist values-for conceptual comparison. This comparative lens enhances conceptual clarity and highlights the distinctiveness of political culture shaped by Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh Thought in the Vietnamese context.

### ***2.2. Documentary analysis***

Documentary analysis and synthesis were used to systematize: theoretical foundations of political culture. Party and State documents on cadre responsibilities. Existing studies on political behavior and governance at the commune level.

This method supports the construction of the conceptual framework and provides a basis for identifying current limitations and challenges.

### ***2.3. Comparative and contrastive methods***

Comparative methods were applied to: examine similarities and differences in political culture across Vietnamese regions and in selected international contexts; trace changes in cadre political culture throughout the renew period.

This approach enables a multidimensional understanding of political culture as both culturally specific and historically evolving.

#### ***2.4. Expert interviews (qualitative component)***

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with experts in political science, public administration, and cultural studies, particularly those with experience in the Mekong Delta. These interviews: provided qualitative insights into cadre behavior, political awareness, and institutional influences; served as a qualitative anchor for interpreting survey data.

Interview transcripts were coded using a hybrid coding approach (deductive codes from theory + inductive codes from interview content). The coding process involved: Initial open coding; Categorization into thematic clusters; Synthesis of cross-theme patterns. This procedure ensures transparency, reliability, and replicability.

#### ***2.5. Sociological survey (quantitative component)***

Sampling and data collection. A structured questionnaire was administered to key commune-level cadres and residents in selected Mekong Delta provinces.

800 questionnaires were distributed, 640 valid responses were returned (80% response rate). Sampling employed stratified purposive sampling, ensuring representation across: provinces (Dong Thap, Can Tho, Ca Mau, An Giang, Vinh Long; gender and age groups; administrative positions (Party Committee, People's Council, People's Committee, and mass organizations). This structure ensures good representativeness relative to the cadre population.

Survey instrument, the questionnaire included: closed-ended items; Likert-scale measures of political awareness, attitudes, and behavioral norms; items assessing perceptions of integrity, public service ethics, and political responsibility.

Data processing and analysis, survey data were: coded and cleaned in Microsoft Excel; analyzed using SPSS.

Analytical techniques included: descriptive statistics to identify general patterns; cross-tabulations to explore subgroup differences; correlation analyses to examine relationships among variables (e.g., political awareness and ethical behavior).

Correlations were interpreted with caution: the study distinguishes clearly between statistical association and causal relationships, avoiding overgeneralization and acknowledging potential confounding factors.

#### ***2.6. Interdisciplinary integration***

Given the complexity of political culture as both a normative and empirical construct, the study adopts an interdisciplinary approach, integrating insights from: political science; philosophy and ethics; sociology and anthropology; cultural studies. This integration deepens explanation and improves the explanatory power of the findings.

#### ***2.7. Methodological triangulation***

The combination of philosophical reasoning, documentary analysis, expert interviews, and quantitative surveys ensures triangulation across methods. This strengthens: internal validity (through cross-verification of data sources); external validity (through representative sampling); theoretical validity (through alignment between data and conceptual frameworks).

The research methodology is designed to be comprehensive, coherent, and scientifically rigorous. By combining Marxist-Leninist philosophical foundations with modern empirical techniques and interdisciplinary insights, the study provides a robust framework for analyzing and improving the political culture of key commune-level cadres in the Mekong Delta.

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### 3.1. Results

#### 3.1.1. The political and cultural status of key cadres at the commune level in the Mekong Delta region

**First**, the political and cultural status of key commune-level cadres in the Mekong Delta. The political culture of commune-level key cadres in Vietnam constitutes a specific expression of socialist political culture—one grounded in the values, ideals, and identity of the working class and of the Vietnamese nation. In axiological terms, political culture at this level comprises a constellation of values oriented toward truth, goodness, and beauty in political life. These values are not merely abstract but are embodied in the political consciousness, attitudes, and behaviors of cadres as they participate in governing practices. Thus understood, political culture is simultaneously a normative horizon and a practical mode of conduct: it manifests through action, style of work, ethical comportment toward the people, and the everyday exercise of public authority. It is this lived ethos that determines both the strength of the grassroots political system and the effectiveness of the commune-level government in managing socio-political and economic affairs.

Within the specific context of the Mekong Delta, the political culture of commune-level key cadres is shaped by the dynamics of a class-based society and by the enduring commitments of the Vietnamese revolutionary tradition. It is expressed in loyalty to the Party's goals and ideals, perseverance in the face of hardship, and a sense of accountability to the Party, the State, and the People. From a cultural-philosophical perspective, these commitments represent a moral-political identity, in which cadres are understood as mediators of the Party's vision, responsible for translating political doctrines and legal policies into lived social practices while maintaining the vital connection between the Party and the citizenry.

Political culture at this level can therefore be interpreted as a value system encompassing standards, beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral norms that guide cadres' leadership and service to the people. It is formed through processes of social interaction comprising organizational structures, community expectations, and the reciprocal relationship between state officials and citizens. This interactive process shapes the leadership style and ethical orientation of commune-level cadres and defines the degree of trust and cohesion within local political institutions.

**Second**, institutional framework and the new configuration of commune-level leadership. Recent institutional reforms-outlined in Resolution No. 60-NQ/TW (April 12, 2025), Conclusion No. 150-KL/TW (April 14, 2025), and Official Dispatch No. 03/CV-BCĐ (April 15, 2025)-restructured administrative units and clarified key leadership positions at the commune level across the Mekong Delta. The newly defined cadre structure includes the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of the Commune Party Committee; chairs and vice-chairs of communal People's Councils and People's Committees; and leaders of core mass organizations such as the Fatherland Front, Youth Union, Women's Union, Farmers' Association, and Veterans' Association. Provincial and municipal Party Committees have implemented these reforms decisively, assigning cadres in accordance with their competencies and ensuring adherence to Party principles.

Across the five provinces and municipalities of the region-with 495 commune-level administrative units-key cadres now occupy positions that require both technical competence and cultural-political maturity. Improving their political culture can thus be conceptualized as a transformative process: the translation of theoretical knowledge into value-oriented public action, marked by ethical behavior, administrative responsiveness, and integrity in serving both citizens and enterprises.

**Third**, cultural-philosophical foundations of political culture in the Mekong Delta.

The 13th National Party Congress emphasized the centrality of culture as “the spiritual foundation, endogenous resource, and breakthrough driving force” of development. In

this frame, enhancing political culture becomes not merely an administrative requirement but a philosophical task—one that demands a harmonization between national cultural traditions, the particular cultural identity of the Mekong Delta, and the ethical expectations placed upon cadres.

The Delta's riverine civilization, multiethnic composition, and hospitable social ethos form an intricate cultural backdrop against which cadres must cultivate themselves. This self-cultivation mirrors the classical Vietnamese philosophical tradition-embodied in Hồ Chí Minh's teachings on revolutionary ethics—where cadres are envisioned as “servants of the people” and moral exemplars. Political culture, therefore, entails the disciplined practice of virtues such as diligence, thrift, integrity, impartiality, and resistance to individualism or ideological degradation.

From an axiological perspective, commune-level cadres are both producers and mediators of political-cultural values. They guide community cultural development, strengthen cultural institutions, promote patriotism, and protect local heritage. At the same time, they must remain open to the humanistic values of global culture, fostering political literacy, ethical awareness, and a civilized lifestyle among the population.

**Fourth**, empirical reflections and philosophical interpretation.

Survey data from April 2025 reveal high levels of political knowledge, ideological steadfastness, and administrative competence among cadres—92.7% demonstrate firm political understanding, 82.5% report proficiency in information technology, and 98.1% show strong political will. These empirical findings support a philosophical interpretation: political culture is not only a set of norms but a cultivated disposition and ethical-political habitus.

The commitment to integrity provides an illuminating example. Integrity, in this context, functions as a foundational moral value that anchors cadres' political identity and sustains public trust. Drawing upon classical Marxist-Leninist ethics and the moral grammar of Hồ Chí Minh's thought, integrity appears as both a personal virtue and a systemic safeguard. Cadres are expected to embody transparency, avoid corruption, and maintain honor as a core ethical principle. This “culture of integrity” becomes a symbolic moral capital that reinforces collective confidence in governance.

Survey results indicate significant progress in cultivating integrity (94% reporting noticeable improvement), practicing thrift, and combating wastefulness and bureaucracy. Yet the philosophical meaning of these findings lies beyond the numbers themselves: they point to an ongoing ethical transformation shaped by institutional norms, revolutionary tradition, and cultural expectations.

**Fifth**, limitations and enduring philosophical challenges.

Despite these achievements, limitations persist. A small but significant proportion of cadres exhibit ideological wavering, bureaucratic behavior, or unethical tendencies. Such manifestations are not merely administrative failings but potential threats to the axiological core of political culture: they erode trust, weaken moral authority, and disrupt the normative relationship between state and citizen. Disciplinary statistics from Can Tho, Dong Thap, and Ca Mau illustrate the seriousness of these challenges.

In philosophical terms, these problems highlight the tension between political ideals and lived practices—a tension inherent in any system that relies on the moral quality of its officials. The task of cultivating political culture, therefore, must remain continuous, reflective, and ethically grounded. As Vietnamese tradition teaches through both historical experience and Hồ Chí Minh's moral philosophy, political culture demands a balance between firmness and flexibility, resolve and compassion, principle and practical wisdom.

### ***3.1.2. Issues raised about the political culture of key officials at the commune level in the Mekong Delta region***

The political culture of key commune-level cadres in the Mekong Delta today emerges within a fundamental contradiction: the increasingly high and urgent normative requirements for cultural-political development contrast sharply with the limited awareness, responsibility, and capacity of a portion of the cadres themselves. This contradiction is not merely administrative; philosophically, it reflects the gap between the ideal values that political culture presupposes and the actual dispositions of the subjects expected to embody them. How this contradiction is addressed will decisively influence the success of efforts to elevate political culture in the region as Vietnam enters a new phase of modernization and integration.

**First**, the internal limitations within the subject of political culture.

Although recent reforms have generated significant progress, persistent weaknesses remain within the cadre corps responsible for constructing political culture. As the leading subject, the provincial-level political system in the Mekong Delta-comprising the Party Committees, People's Committees, and the Vietnam Fatherland Front-bears responsibility for cultivating political-cultural maturity. Yet there remain inconsistencies between institutional expectations and the practical performance of these actors. From a cultural-philosophical perspective, this signals a broader issue: the incomplete formation of the subjectivity of political culture, meaning the ethical, cognitive, and value-oriented capacities necessary for cadres to fully internalize and express political-cultural ideals.

**Second**, the need for a comprehensive and philosophically grounded strategy.

Building political culture cannot be understood in isolation. A scientific, comprehensive, and synchronized cultural strategy must integrate political, economic, legal, and ethical culture. Culture—"the spiritual foundation" and endogenous strength of development-cannot lag behind economic progress if the goals of socialist construction are to be realized. This demands the full and harmonious cultivation of the elements of political culture: ideological clarity, ethical integrity, behavioral norms, and democratic political habits. More fundamentally, political culture must be constructed through the coordinated participation of its constitutive subjects: the Party, which provides orientation and value leadership; the State, which institutionalizes and manages;; the People, who are the ultimate creators and bearers of cultural values.

In the Mekong Delta, a major theoretical task is to strengthen the political-cultural subject through which these actors interact and co-create a political-cultural environment conducive to both stability and innovation.

**Third**, challenges of globalization and the threat to cultural integrity.

The contemporary context of globalization introduces further complexities. Commune-level cadres must simultaneously promote endogenous cultural strength and selectively absorb the valuable elements of global culture. Yet they must also resist "cultural invasion" and ideological erosion. Vietnam's recent years of reform reveal troubling symptoms: the fading of traditional values, the rise of pragmatic materialism, disregard for national cultural identity, and moral degradation. These phenomena reflect deeper axiological tensions: a disorientation in value hierarchies, where material gain displaces ethical commitments and civic virtue.

The Mekong Delta's political culture thus faces a dual philosophical challenge: How to preserve and renew foundational cultural-political values within a rapidly shifting socio-cultural environment; How to cultivate critical receptivity-absorbing global cultural achievements without losing cultural sovereignty or ideological clarity.

**Fourth**, the crisis of individualism and the erosion of ethical-political subjectivity.

One of the gravest challenges identified is the rise of individualism in its negative sense: egoism, opportunism, and a utilitarian mindset that prioritizes personal gain over collective responsibility. Such tendencies-self-serving lifestyles, apathy toward the community, moral insensitivity, and avoidance of responsibility-represent a direct contradiction with the axiological foundations of socialist political culture.

This crisis points toward an erosion of ethical-political subjectivity: the cadre's capacity to be a moral agent aligned with the values of diligence, thrift, integrity, uprightness, and impartiality. As this capacity weakens, the distance between the cadre and the people widens, and the symbolic legitimacy of political authority is undermined. These developments also illuminate why shortcomings in political culture remain interwoven with broader weaknesses in Party building and cadre development.

**Fifth**, inadequacies in self-cultivation and the persistence of formalism.

Although the Mekong Delta has achieved substantial development in nearly four decades of renovation, not all commune-level cadres meet the demands of lifelong political-ethical cultivation. Instances of ideological degradation, lifestyle disorders, bureaucratic behavior, opportunism, insincerity, and irresponsibility still occur. These manifestations are not isolated administrative faults; they represent a weakening in the internalization of political-cultural values, which threatens the moral foundation of Party legitimacy. The philosophical issue here concerns the insufficient depth of ethical habituation: values are acknowledged but not sufficiently embodied in practice.

**Sixth**, lack of proactive resistance against hostile ideological distortions.

A further inadequacy arises in the capacity of key cadres to identify and confront hostile narratives that distort the Party's anti-corruption efforts or undermine confidence in political institutions. Hostile forces manipulate misinformation to depict anti-corruption work as "internal power struggles." Such distortions are dangerous not merely politically but culturally: they erode the symbolic frameworks of meaning that political culture relies upon.

The late General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong referred to this as a struggle against "internal invaders"-threats that attack value systems from within rather than through external force. This situates the task within a philosophical domain: cadres must develop discursive resilience, the ability to evaluate, refute, and withstand toxic arguments, thereby strengthening their own ideological immunity and preserving the community's moral-political coherence.

**Seventh**, the normative imperative: rebuilding ethical foundations.

Ultimately, the construction of political culture for commune-level cadres in the Mekong Delta must be grounded in revitalizing revolutionary ethics and developing a humane and integrity-based lifestyle. These efforts form the ethical root of combating corruption, wastefulness, and ideological degradation. More than policy, this is an axiological project: the reaffirmation of core moral values as the basis of political life.

Building such political culture is therefore not a peripheral task; it is existential for the Party, the State, and the People. It ensures the vitality of socialist democracy and sustains the vision of a strong, prosperous, and happy Vietnam.

The analysis of political culture among key commune-level cadres in the Mekong Delta reveals a complex interplay between normative expectations, institutional reforms, and the lived realities of governance at the grassroots level. Several major themes emerge from the findings, shedding light on both the theoretical significance and the practical challenges of cultivating political culture in the contemporary Vietnamese context.

Political culture as an axiological and ethical challenge. The study highlights a central tension between the lofty axiological requirements imposed on commune-level cadres and the uneven capacity of the cadre corps to embody those ideals. This contradiction reflects

a deeper philosophical problem: political culture is not merely a set of rules or institutional directives but a value-laden domain shaped by ethical dispositions, cognitive frameworks, and cultural identity. The gap between expectations and reality suggests the need to reconceptualize political culture not only as a governance requirement but as a long-term process of ethical formation and value internalization.

### **3.3. Discussion**

The research findings on the political culture of key commune-level cadres in the Mekong Delta reveal a complex interplay between theoretical factors, institutional structures, and grassroots governance practices.

*Firstly, institutional reforms and the shifting subjectivity of political culture.*

Recent structural reforms in local governance, including the reorganization of administrative units and the clearer definition of leadership roles, have created both opportunities and pressures for political culture development. While reforms help standardize the responsibilities and authority of commune-level leaders, they also require cadres to function as more capable, autonomous, and culturally mature subjects. The findings show that although many cadres possess firm political knowledge and ideological loyalty, there remain limitations in reflexive capacity, leadership style, and ethical behavior. This points to the need for a fuller development of the political-cultural subject, understood as a combination of institutional position and cultivated ethical character.

*Second, globalization and the vulnerability of cultural-political identity.*

The data underline the impact of globalization on local political culture. External cultural influences and materialist values have contributed to a gradual erosion of traditional norms, particularly regarding ethics and lifestyle. This phenomenon introduces an important discussion point: political culture must negotiate between openness and protection. Cadres must selectively integrate global cultural achievements while defending national cultural identity and resisting ideological distortions. This dual task requires a higher level of cultural literacy and ideological resilience than is currently demonstrated by a portion of cadres.

*Third, the rise of individualism and the erosion of collective ethos.*

A recurring theme is the rise of negative individualism-self-interest, opportunism, pragmatism, and indifference—which directly threatens the foundational moral values of Vietnamese political culture. Such behaviors undermine public trust and weaken the symbolic authority of the local political system. The persistence of these tendencies signals that ethical cultivation has not yet been deeply rooted, and that mechanisms for self-discipline and moral accountability remain insufficient. This raises the theoretical question of how to strengthen ethical-political subjectivity so that cadres can embody values instead of merely performing roles.

*Fourth, the challenge of ideological resilience.*

The emergence of hostile narratives and misinformation campaigns has exposed limitations in the ability of cadres to detect, resist, and refute toxic arguments. This deficiency is not only political but cultural: it indicates that cadres have not yet developed a robust discursive capacity or a strong “value immune system.” Strengthening ideological resilience requires integrating political theory education with critical thinking, communication ethics, and media literacy-areas often underemphasized in public service training.

*Fifth, the ethical foundation as the decisive factor.*

The study confirms the philosophical assertion that political culture is ultimately anchored in ethical foundations-diligence, thrift, integrity, uprightness, and impartiality. Where these values are not deeply internalized, political culture becomes formalistic, and governance becomes vulnerable to corruption, bureaucratic stagnation, and moral decay. Conversely, where these values are cultivated as habitual dispositions, political culture becomes a dynamic asset that strengthens governance effectiveness and public trust. This insight

reinforces the idea that the cultivation of political culture must begin with personal ethical transformation, not only structural change.

*Sixth, implications for theory and practice.*

Overall, the findings suggest that political culture at the commune level is a multidimensional construct shaped by institutional frameworks, cultural traditions, and personal moral agency. Improving political culture therefore requires a holistic approach that integrates: institutional reforms (to define responsibilities and create accountability); ethical-political education (to cultivate value consciousness); cultural development (to reinforce identity and community cohesion), and ideological resilience (to counteract distortions and maintain public trust).

The study contributes to contemporary discussions on political culture by showing that the Vietnamese case-particularly in the Mekong Delta-offers a unique model where socialist ideology, national cultural identity, and local cultural characteristics intersect. The challenges observed here are not merely administrative but reflect deeper philosophical questions about the formation of moral subjectivity in governance.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In the context of the country entering a new era of development and international integration, building political culture for key cadres at the commune level in the Mekong Delta is affected and influenced by many factors (geography - nature, history-politics, economy-society, culture-people, market economy, globalization and international integration). Each of the above factors has a certain position, role and influence on building political culture for key cadres at the commune level. In particular, the cultural- human factor has a great and direct impact on the entire process of building political culture. In recent years, building political culture for key cadres at the commune level in the Mekong Delta has been carried out continuously and achieved important results; however, there are still many limitations and weaknesses. This is reflected in the following points: Firstly, in terms of reality, the role of the subjects in building political culture for key cadres at the commune level in the Mekong Delta. In nearly 40 years of renovation, the Mekong Delta has built a political system from the province to the commune (Party Committee, Government and Fatherland Front) as the subject of building political culture for key cadres at the commune level, relatively complete, with a system from the province, city to district, ward, commune and town. However, the activities of the subjects building political culture for key cadres at the commune level are still limited, not promoting the strength of the entire political system, so it is ineffective and inefficient. Second, regarding the current status of the content of building political culture for key cadres at the commune level in the Mekong Delta, certain results have been achieved (in building patriotism, love for the people; community awareness and national solidarity; martial spirit, peace and humanity...). However, the above factors have not been thoroughly understood, have not been legalized and concretized into political standards and codes of conduct; and therefore, they have not been applied properly in the practice of innovation and international integration. Meanwhile, in the Mekong Delta region, there have been cultural phenomena that are deviant, chaotic, and even toxic. Third, the issues raised in building political culture for key officials at the commune level in the Mekong Delta region: 1. First of all, it is necessary to overcome the limitations and weaknesses in building political culture for key officials at the commune level in the Mekong Delta region in recent years, because if they are not overcome, it will be very difficult to effectively build political culture for key officials; 2. It is necessary to have a strategy to build political culture for key officials at the commune level in the Mekong Delta region in a scientific, comprehensive, synchronous manner and

harmoniously combine with building economic culture, legal culture, ethical culture... to meet the requirements of the country entering a new era, the era of national development and international integration; 3. In the context of market economy, globalization and international integration, what and how should the provinces and cities in the Mekong Delta region do to promote endogenous cultural strength, selectively absorb the quintessence of world culture; at the same time prevent "cultural invasion" and fight against "self-evolution", "self-transformation" and corruption and negativity.

## References

1. To Lam, Speech at the Party Congress of Nghia Tru Commune (Hung Yen), term 2025–2030, Báo Chính Phủ, July 14, 2025, <https://baochinhphu.vn>.
2. Communist Party of Vietnam, Documents of the 13th National Congress of Delegates, Vol. I, National Political Publishing House Truth, Hanoi, 2021, p. 47.
3. Ho Chi Minh, Complete Works, Vol. 13, National Political Publishing House Truth, Hanoi, 2011, pp. 83–84.
4. Hoang Anh (Ed.) (2009), Forever Studying and Following the Moral Example of Ho Chi Minh, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi.
5. Communist Party of Vietnam (2021), Documents of the 13th National Congress of Delegates, Vol. II, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, p. 168.
6. Can Tho City Party Committee (2024), Report 531-BC/TU dated June 4, 2024, Preliminary Summary of 3 Years Implementing Conclusion No. 01-KL/TW of the Politburo on Continuing Directive No. 05-CT/TW "On Promoting the Study and Following of Ho Chi Minh's Ideology, Morality and Style".
7. Huu Nghia (2023), "Dong Thap Disciplinary Action for 179 Party Members," Nhan Dan, <https://nhandan.vn/nam-2023-dong-thap-thi-hanh-ky-luat-179-dang-vien-post791358.html>.
8. Thanh Tra (n.d.), "Ca Mau Disciplinary Action for 223 Party Members," <https://thanhtra.com.vn/doi-noi-52FA82FBF/ca-mau-da-thi-hanh-ky-luat-ba-to-chuc-dang-223-dang-vien-5BBB4882.html>.
9. Nguyen Phu Trong, Speech at the National Conference of Cadres Summarizing the Work of Party Congresses at All Levels, Nhan Dan, November 19, 2020, <https://nhandan.vn/>.
10. Nguyen Phu Trong (2023), Resolutely and Persistently Fighting against Corruption and Negativity to Contribute to Building Our Party and State Increasingly Clean and Strong, National Political Publishing House Truth, Hanoi, p. 80.
11. Almond, G. A., & Verba, S. (1963), The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.
12. Inglehart, R. (1997), Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.
13. Putnam, R. D. (2000), Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community, Simon & Schuster, New York.
14. Huntington, S. P. (1996), The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order, Simon & Schuster, New York.
15. Norris, P., & Inglehart, R. (2019), Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit, and Authoritarian Populism, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK.