

The Impact of Religion on Secular Life and Some Mainstream Religious Security Trends in the Coming Time in Vietnam

Tran Minh Duc¹

Corresponding Email: ductm@tdmu.edu.vn

¹Thu Dau Mot University, Vietnam

Abstract

In the context of many internationally unpredictable fluctuations, hostile forces have been causing religious life in Vietnam to suffer many negative impacts. Many subjects have taken advantage of loopholes in state management of religion to distort Vietnam's policies, causing internal conflicts. In many cases, a very small incident or a normal conflict in religion that can be exaggerated, distorted, and perverted to become serious; a religious incident in an area or locality that can easily be amplified into an international issue; an event that is only a phenomenon, but can be perverted to become a nature; an issue that is partial, but can easily turn into a whole; a story that is very ordinary, but can be turned into a complicated one. In the article, the author analyzes some of the main impacts of religion on secular life in Vietnam today, and some religious security trends in the coming time.

Keywords: Security, Religion, Believers, Vietnam

Received: April 9, 2024

Revised: May 7, 2024

Accepted: June 20, 2024

Introduction

Vietnam has 16 religions with about 26 million believers, 55 thousand dignitaries, 130 thousand sub-dignitaries, and nearly 28 thousand worship facilities (The Steering Committee for summarizing the Resolution No. 25-NQ/TW, 2017). Among them, Buddhism has the largest number of believers with nearly 14 million, over 30 thousand dignitaries, nearly 68 thousand sub-dignitaries, nearly 18 thousand worship facilities and 40 training institutions across the country (Vietnam Government Committee for Religious Affairs, 2019).

In Vietnam, Catholicism currently has more than 7 million believers, more than 4 thousand priests, 44 bishops, 1 cardinal, over 16 thousand monks, more than 5.5 thousand churches and chapels throughout the provinces and cities of the country (Vietnam Government Committee for Religious Affairs, 2019); Protestantism has over 1.12 million believers (General Statistics Office of Vietnam, 2019); Caodaism has about 2.5 million believers, nearly 12.5 thousand dignitaries, nearly 23 thousand sub-dignitaries, about 1.3 thousand worship facilities, distributed in 37 provinces and cities across the country, mainly in the Southern and Central Vietnam regions (Vietnam Government Committee for Religious Affairs, 2019); Hoa Hao Buddhism has 1,450 thousand believers, 100 pagodas (Vietnam Government Committee for Religious Affairs, 2019); Islam has about 80 thousand believers and 89 worship facilities (Vietnam Government Committee for Religious Affairs, 2019); The Bahá'í Faith has about 7 thousand believers, concentrated in the Southern and Central Vietnam regions (Hien, 2020); The Pure Land Buddhist Association has about 600 thousand believers, 900 thousand members, nearly 6 thousand dignitaries and sub-dignitaries, more than 900 physicians and nurses, 210 worship facilities, 210 Phuoc Thien herbal medicine clinics, distributed in 25 provinces and cities, mainly in the Southern region (Hien, 2020); The Buu Son Ky Huong Faith has more

than 10 thousand believers, 90 dignitaries and 18 worship facilities, distributed mainly in some Southern provinces and cities (Hien, 2020); The Tu An Hieu Nghia Faith has about 62 thousand believers, 476 dignitaries and 76 worship facilities, distributed mainly in the Southern region (Hien, 2020); Minh Su religion has about 10 thousand believers, more than 500 dignitaries, more than 1.2 thousand sub-dignitaries, 53 worship facilities, distributed in 19 provinces and cities, mainly in the Southern region (Hien, 2020); Minh Ly religion - Tam Tong Mieu (Temple of Three Sects) has more than 1 thousand believers, distributed in Ho Chi Minh City, Long An province and Ba Ria - Vung Tau (Hien, 2020); Brahmanism has about 54 thousand believers, over 400 dignitaries and sub-dignitaries, 42 worship facilities, mainly distributed in Ninh Thuan and Binh Thuan (Hien, 2020); The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has about 1 thousand believers, concentrated mainly in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City (Hien, 2020); Ta Lon Hieu Nghia Buddhism has about 8 worship facilities, about 65 thousand believers, concentrated in An Giang, Can Tho, Dong Thap, and Kien Giang (Hien, 2020); Seventh-day Adventist Church have more than 16 thousand believers, 7 pastors, church elders and bishops, 102 deacons, 10 branches, more than 100 meeting places, 7 churches and a church head office, operating in 32 provinces and cities (mainly in the Central Vietnam and Southern provinces) (Hien, 2020).

Vietnam is a multi-religious country, in which beliefs and religions always have direct and long-term impacts on Vietnamese sustainable development, so religious security has been of concern to Vietnam since the country's gained independence in 1945. At that time, President Ho Chi Minh and the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam facing challenges from "foreign invasion" and "internal rebellion", advocated attracting the support of the people and religious compatriots. In later stages, religious security is also obtaining more extensive attention from the State, especially regarding religion's more and more participation and impact on social life.

Some impacts of religion on secular life in Vietnam today

The impact of religion on the people's faith and religious needs

The Party and State of Vietnam always affirm that religion is the spiritual need of the people. The people tend to look for "spiritual solutions" when they face their obstacles and misfortunes in life. Thus, religion is considered a "commodity" product on the market, while the consumers of "religious commodity" are believers, the providers of "religious commodity" are monks and religious dignitaries. In the "free competition" market mechanism, religious dignitaries, based on the religious needs of believers, will be constantly creative to provide "new commodity" such as healing, requiem, and praying for the deceased to be reborn in the Western Pure Land, performing Buddhism Wedding Ceremony, seeing house direction, and grave direction, seeing good and bad days, etc. to stimulate the religious "consumption" needs of the congregation, promoting their region's prosperity and competition with other religions. The price of this commodity is not based on the law of value, sometimes super price, super profit but customers still voluntarily pay. The people's belief in religion today is gradually shifting from passively religious access to actively one. Particularly in the group of people whose survival security index is threatened such as loss of job, loss of property, loss of land and house, death of relatives, loss of position, illness, divorce, infertility, loneliness, etc., actively access to religion to share, to be supported, to obtain advice, to improve health, to heal, to relieve frustration, etc. Religious beliefs are owning a strong secular "fulcrum" (politics, economy, society) and religion can become a tool to control spiritual and human security.

The impact of religion on the issues of land and construction of worship facilities

In the past few decades, land-related issues related to religion in Vietnam have been quite complicated, in which a large proportion of religious “hot spots” causing religious insecurity and national security are all related to religious land. Lawsuits, complaints, and disputes related to religious land also account for a large proportion of religious lawsuits. According to statistics from Vietnam Government Committee for Religious Affairs (Vietnam Government Committee for Religious Affairs, 2019), four religions, namely Catholicism, Buddhism, Protestantism, and Caodaism, have the most religious land-related lawsuits as of 2019 with 723 cases (of which, Catholicism is 430, Buddhism is 196, Caodaism is 65, Protestantism is 32). In the first six months of 2020, there are 28 long-term disputes and lawsuits over religious land the whole country (including 12 cases in Ho Chi Minh City; Archbishop Joseph Vu Van Thien in Hanoi has 4 petitions sent to Hanoi City People’s Committee and Vietnam Government Committee for Religious Affairs on religious land; Xuan Loc Bishop House (Dong Nai) borrows nearly 100 hectares of land in the Cui Mountain area to build the Pilgrimage Center of Our Lady of Cui Mountain; Diocese of Vinh had 5 cases; Nghe An with 18 cases, etc.).

According to incomplete statistics of the Department of Social Security (Ministry of Public Security), there have been over 2 thousand religious land-related lawsuits in 54 provinces and centrally-run cities (in the past 2 decades), and the number of large gatherings causing religious and political insecurity and social order and safety (in many areas) accounts for a large proportion of religious “hot spot” cases. Lawsuits are becoming more and more complicated. In the past, the subjects who filed and instigated the lawsuits against the government used to hide their faces and pushed believers to confront the government. Now, the subjects who filed the lawsuits publicly are religious dignitaries, took signatures of the people and believers, mobilized a large number of believers to gather, demonstrate, destroy public property, resist or obstruct a person lawfully engaged in a public duty, arrest officials, and destroy agencies, public headquarters, block roads causing traffic congestion and loss of security and order. In case that the government fails to solve the problem, they take to social networks to call for international and overseas support. Some cases take advantage of religious land lawsuits to gather masses of believers causing trouble and riots to fight for freedom, democracy, and to abolish the Communist Party, from a land issue to a political issue.

In Vietnam, religious land is allocated by the State without collecting land use fees. The State grants land to religious organizations to build worship facilities or use for agricultural and forestry production, monastic economics and construction of religious training institutions, nursing homes, orphanages, etc. After 1975, a series of religious land facilities used for religious activities, economic and social activities (previously granted) are all subject to state ownership, so authorities at all levels have taken over and confiscated them for management and use. Some religious lands are cleared for use for socio-economic development and national security and defense, while some are encroached by surrounding people. According to Vietnamese law, religious land is allocated by the State (no land use fees collected), religious organizations will not be allowed to transfer, donate, mortgage, or buy or sell; If violated, it will be revoked. Land for religious facilities allocated by the State without collection of land use fees will not be compensated when the State conducts its clearance or recovery for security, national defense, socio-economic development and national and public interests (Tran, 2024). However, transfer, sales, and donation of land of religious organizations are maintained in many forms without the State’s recovery. When the State takes back the land of a religious institution to use for socio-economic development and national and public interests, it must still compensate the religious institution through replacement with another piece of land. However, religious organizations often cause difficulties when they are in land recovery, often

request or sue the State to compensate or return. The increase in the number of worship facilities, illegal construction of religious works and auxiliary works are quite common, showing the complexity of religion-related land issues. Many local religious works across the country that have been newly built in the past 1-2 decades have been called by public opinion as “Religion Joint Stock Company” or “Pagoda BOT”, “Spiritual BOT” (VOV, 2018). Pagodas, temples, churches, statues, bells, and wooden fishes built by believers and religious organizations are increasingly larger, the latter more majestic than the former. Meanwhile, residents in remote and mountainous areas still live in poverty, homelessness, cramped housing, with low income, poor transportation infrastructure, roads, bridges, schools, hospitals that are still very limited.

The impact of religion on the people’s lives

Currently, religious activities in Vietnam are shifting from “spiritual salvation” to “realistic relief” with the motto “If society does not fulfill its duties to the community, the church will replace it”, competing with private organizations and state organizations in vocational guidance activities, vocational training, healing, addiction treatment, humanitarian charity, social protection, nurturing orphans and helpless elderly people, taking care of people with HIV, leprosy, etc. to attract believers. Religion contributes to promoting economic activities to increase its prestige. The monastic economic model, production of qigong food, and clean agricultural products are increasingly developing, not only supplying the domestic market but also exporting commercially. “Religious association” means, whereby believers of the same religion will form an association and/or a company to do business together. Thus, believers not only satisfy their spiritual needs but also meet economic purposes, then religion becomes more attractive and attracts more believers.

All religions have their strategies to “renew themselves” in three aspects including mission, rituals, and personnel to strengthen faith, protect legitimacy, and attract and compete with believers. Buddhism has three strategies including changing preaching Buddhism based on the congregation’s needs; focusing on training qualified monks; changing Buddhist rituals to be more suitable. Catholicism also has three strategies including lay theology; re-preaching and cultural integration. Then it is shown that religion is increasingly penetrating deeply into social life to strengthen faith and affirm legitimacy. In the journey of penetrating social life, religion with its ambition restores a “prominent” position in socio-political issues, replaces missing secular values, attracts the masses, asserts its legitimacy, and competes with socio-political organizations. At this time, the government has its own policies and principles to control rights and limit religious freedom, sometimes leading to violations of the people’s religious freedom only to protect other civil rights, human security, political security and above all national security. In some cases, religion, with its “rebellion” against the government in the name of religious freedom, and “instability” can lead to an “instability” in political security and religious security.

Some issues raised by religious security trends in Vietnam in the coming time

Religious policy-related issues

In the process of developing and implementing policies and laws on religion in Vietnam, there still exist a number of issues, which may be one of the factors affecting religious security in Vietnam: (1) Religious organizations in the world, once recognized and protected by law, will have the freedom to create religion and will also be guaranteed the same rights and obligations as other civil legal entities, specifically, the right to participate in all economic, political, social,

cultural, educational, medical, charity, and social security activities in which such religious organizations can demonstrate their competencies or strengths and meet the conditions prescribed by law. In Vietnam, religious organizations are recognized by law, though the right to social presence and the right to participate in social and professional activities (charity, humanitarian, hunger eradication, poverty reduction, legal advice, etc.), the right to provide public services (education, healthcare, financial support, etc.) have not been expanded. (2) Vietnam's religious policies and laws are still more oriented towards "managing" than "instructing and supporting" the people in exercising their right to religious freedom as specified by law. In legal documents, the provisions for religious activities are still largely focused on the obligations of individuals and religious organizations to competent state authorities, in the mechanism of asking - giving. Many purely religious activities often have to be registered with the government, but the procedures have not been streamlined. (3) Although the process of making policies and laws on religion in Vietnam involves participation, exchange, criticism, and publicity in the mass media, it is still formal at times, leading to many policy criticisms from the people (including the scientific community), being rarely consulted and adjusted. The people accept policy institutions, without any need for criticism, but still do not completely agree. If a policy or legal document is adopted without much consent from the people (those governed by the policy), it will not obtain voluntary compliance, leading to law circumvention in the people. (4) Vietnamese people due to a long time in the past, have been more attached to traditional religions and beliefs such as Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, so the local governments in some places have paid more attention to these religions compared to other religious groups such as Catholicism, Protestantism, etc. In some cases, local governments are too worried about security, order and social stability due to large gatherings in religious practice, combined with limited capacity to distinguish between positive and negative motivations related to religious practice, without full consideration of all aspects of the people's religion and belief needs, leading to a rigid management of the governments without paying enough attention to the religious freedom and the freedom to religion practice of believers (particularly in ethnic minority areas); Sometimes, there are places where religious policies are not consistent or equal.

Religious diversification

In the past decade or two, in Vietnam, the number of religious organizations recognized or licensed by the state to operate has increased sevenfold. In 1999, there are only 6 organizations belonging to 6 religions recognized by the State (including Buddhism, Catholicism, Protestantism, Islam, Caodaism, and Hoa Hao Buddhism) with about 14.7 million believers (accounting for about 19.4% of the population). By 2011, there are 34 organizations belonging to 13 officially recognized religions with about 25 million believers (accounting for 28.4% of the population). In 2020, there are 41 organizations and practices belonging to 16 religions that are granted a permit of operation or legal entity recognition by the State (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2020). The most typical example of division and diversity of denominations and organizations is Protestantism. At present, Protestantism in the world has about 300 denominations and thousands of different Protestant organizations. Protestantism is introduced to Vietnam quite late (in 1911). After more than half a century, by 1975, Protestantism had 20 organizations and denominations with about 550 branches. Over the next half century, by 2015, this number has increased four times (over 80 denominations, 606 branches and 4,757 meeting places) (Do, 2021). Facing the diversity of Protestant denominations, a unique way of this religion that helps it survive and develop when "born late birth" is a dispersion to survive, and spread. Despite the diversity of denominations and organizations of Protestantism, instead of

making the Church increasingly stronger, the denominations, sects, and meeting places operate quite independently, with low connectivity and high separation (Dac, 2020). The emergence of many new religious phenomena is an inevitable trend that demonstrates the dynamism of religion, a phenomenon giving rise to many significant problems and challenges. Socio-culturally, they represent unique schools of faith and lifestyle, emphasizing individual freedom or group association, promoting female/gender elements in religion, aiming to subjects such as students, pupils, workers in industrial zones, disadvantaged groups (retired, sick, lonely), excluded people (unemployed, illiterate, frustrated), ethnic minorities.

In terms of religion, founders and leaders often create “magical powers” to attract believers. Teachings are mainly borrowed from existing traditional religions, mixing ideas and ritual practices of many religions, often closely linked to ethnic culture (ethnic minorities), regional culture; seeking to compete with and replace traditional (old) religions, demanding an equal legal status, and sharing fairly in the “religious market”, thus easily leading to conflicts with other religions, weakening the religious harmony that is traditional in Vietnam. Legally, the government is confused in dealing with new religious phenomena. The government can only intervene indirectly through the judicial system when these religions violate the law, or are accused of violating order and security, national security or harm health or money, life and dignity of others. Thus, religious diversity in Vietnam appears in a complex international and regional context, as an inevitable trend to create new, rich “commodity products” that fully satisfy the multilateral and multi-dimensional religious needs of the religious class. Religious diversification that entails religious competition and demands for the presence and legal status of new religious denominational groups will threaten the assurance of religious and national security in Vietnam, a situation happened in the world and the region.

Religious conversion

Protestant and Catholic denominations are increasingly expanding their propaganda to areas rich in indigenous beliefs and religions (ethnic minority areas, mountainous areas, remote areas), leading to the people’s abandonment of traditional customs and beliefs to follow new religions. Religions, customs and beliefs become different, evenly in a opposite condition because customs are often considered bad customs and superstitions. Whether the people access new religion voluntarily or are enticed or seduced, the traditional religious consciousness is still more or less disturbed and replaced by the reverence for a new divine force, as a result, the people no longer believe in traditional gods and do not perform traditional religious rituals. Religious people refuse to participate in community cultural activities and disregard traditional cultural values. For young people, their leisure time is reading the Bible and singing Hymns. Boys and girls no longer participate in folk culture such as trumpet playing, flute playing, shuttlecock throwing, etc. during Tet holidays.

The indigenous culture and knowledge of the people in oral folk tales, proverbs, dance and music that have been preserved and maintained from the previous generations to the next generation are at risk of being lost because the family heads, village heads, village elders, and priests have to cede their positions and dominant roles to a new group of missionaries or leaders of religious meeting places who are mostly young people or middle-aged. The elderly, like the “living museums” of national culture, no longer have the prestige to educate and pass down the nation’s cultural values to the next generation. On the contrary, young people influenced by the new religion also gradually harm and even lose the sense of preserving and promoting traditional customs and traditions that their ancestors pass on. When families and individuals have confusing matters, instead of seeking a support from village elders or village heads for

advice like before, they seek priests or pastors. As a result, the nation's traditional cultural flow begins to be obstructed, interrupted, and gradually faded. For example, Protestant people in the Central Highlands break gongs and Che jars, announce to give up the custom of drinking can wine, Xoang dance, performing gongs, singing folk songs, etc.

The matriarchy of some ethnic groups in the Central Highlands and the traditional practices of matriarchal families are also gradually changing, in which women no longer play an important role, not promoted, children are not necessarily born with their mother's surname, etc. A survey in Bao Lac district (Cao Bang province) shows that there is a discrimination between religious and non-religious groups, and disunity within clans that has occurred for examples, within families and clans with their children following Protestantism but the parents do not follow it, these children will not be divided in the property. Protestants do not support non-Protestant families in case of filial piety, do not accept the marriage of each other's children, do not share water sources, do not eat food that has been offered to ghosts, etc. And when members of the same clan or village do not accept those who abandon their traditional culture and beliefs to follow a foreign religion, conflicts arise. The above cases show that conflicts between new religions and traditional customs and traditions can lead to breakdown and decline of traditional culture.

New religious extremism

Currently in Vietnam, in addition to 16 religions with 41 organizations and sects that have been recognized or granted a permit for religious activities by the State, there are also many new religions imported from abroad into Vietnam such as Falun Gong (Falun Gong - China), Unification Church (Unification Church - USA), Om Shri Sai Baba (India), I-Kuan Tao (Yiguandao - China), Supreme Master Ching Hai (France), Aum Shinrikyo (Japan), etc. Many new (endogenous) religious phenomena also began to form, develop and attract believers, attracting the attention of public opinion such as the Gratitude and Humanity Act; Thanh Minh For National Love; The Tao of Heaven of Vietnam (The Tao of Heaven and Spirituality of Vietnam, The Special Tao of God of Vietnam for Life); Ho Chi Minh's Religion (Uncle Ho's Spiritual Religion, Ho Chi Minh Jade Buddha, Thien Co Van Hoi of Ho Chi Minh Jade Buddha, One Mind for Repaying Association of Ho Chi Minh Jade Buddha); Special Spirituality (Spiritual Group No. 1; Dai Phap Doan Trang Tu Gia); Thuong Nguyen Cong Ly Association; Long Hua Association (Long Hua Samadhi, Long Hua Zhengmei, Long Hua Maitreya, San Hua Maitreya, Long Hua San Hui); Long Wen Hui; Phu Tho Group 18 (Phu Tho Faith Council, Hung King Tu Sinh Group, Fairy Dragon Association); Luu Van Ty Sect; Ha Mon, Sieu Hoa; To Duong Extrasensory School; Mau Hoi (Mau Hoi Thai Binh), Cung Tien religion, Charismatic Renewal, Duong Van Minh religion, Pha Toc Sect, Occult Science Spontaneity Doctrine, etc. The common characteristics of these new religions are: (1) Beliefs and ways of religious practice are different from traditional (old) religions. Beliefs are even "rebellious" in terms of morality and ethics. (2) Exploiting hot issues of political and social life such as pluralism, multi-party, civil society, democracy, human rights, and corruption to lower the reputation of the Communist Party (the Gratitude and Humanity Act, Supreme Master Ching Hai, Falun Gong, Ha Mon), inciting hatred, dividing the great national unity bloc, demanding the establishment of an autonomous separatist country (Vang Chu religion, Protestantism Degar, Ba Co Do religion, Gie Sua religion). Propagating false information about the nation's history and leaders (Ho Chi Minh Jade Buddha), criticizing leaders for not caring about the people's lives (the Gratitude and Humanity Act, Thien Co religion, Phu Tho Group 18), demanding the abolition of Marxism - Leninism and Ho Chi Minh's ideology, using religious

principles to build the Constitution. (3) Using religious practice as a means to affirm national identity and find solutions to cultural crises and social conflicts. In claiming to join these religions, the people can find different ways to reestablish the connection between tradition and the present. Social problems and deadlocks in human lives such as divorce, adultery, drug addiction, sex addiction, instabilities that threaten human survival such as natural disasters, epidemics, illnesses, unemployment, infertility, etc. are promised to be resolved. (4) “Commercialization of gods”, doing business based on the supernatural knowledge, using magical methods to achieve economic goals. Leaders (sect leaders) often “take advantage” of the people’s misfortunes such as illness, disease, natural disasters, loss of home, loss of job, death of relatives, loss of position, etc. to make offerings to ward off bad luck, gain illegal profits (Ho Chi Minh Jade Buddha, Vang Chu, Duong Van Minh); or charging from participants, selling scriptures and offerings (Long Hua Maitreya, Ho Chi Minh Spirituality), forcing believers to beg for food to bring money to pay to sect leaders (Luu Van Ty Sect), threatening and performing miracles to cause madness (Long Hua Maitreya). (5) Explaining unusual phenomena in the direction of superstition, healing without using drugs, using recitation and incantations (Long Hua Maitreya, Ho Chi Minh Spirituality, Falun Gong). (6) Emphasizing individual freedom or group association, looking for any methods to compete with, replace traditional religions, disrupt religious harmony, insult faith in traditional religions, seeking an equal position, demanding a fair share of the “religious market”, using the masses of believers to pressure the government to recognize or ignore their existence, demanding the same legal rights as traditional religions.

Religious secularization and superstition

Previously, religious space is a closed and private space. Currently, religious organizations tend to “push” monks “into life”, engage in economic activities to support themselves and attract believers. Religions promote their economic activities in many forms (monastic economy, farm economy of agricultural products, qigong food), with clear business purposes, producing offerings and utensils for religious practice, divine services (making offerings to ward off disasters, misfortunes, seeing dates and times, etc.). The presence of religions has gone beyond the religious space (worship facilities such as pagodas, churches, temples, etc.), penetrating secular space. Thus, we find an increase in secularity in religions. Sometimes, religions (especially Buddhism) provide spiritual services not only to save souls (giving believers a spiritual fulcrum) but also to earn personal profits (dignitaries, religious monks make offerings to clear the enemy’s revenge, three calamities, removing multiple funerals, offering to the deceased, worshiping to ghost catching, performing Buddhism Wedding Ceremony, praying for having children, praying for career success, seeing fortunes, seeing house and grave directions, seeing good and bad days, fortune-telling), etc. at a high cost compared to the people’s income (especially vulnerable people with illness, disease, unemployment, divorce, etc.).

In the above context, gods, saints, and Buddhas, which are inherently sacred, are viewed from a much more realistic perspective than before. Religious purity is damaged by the strong temptation of economic interests and competition for prestige and name, causing religion to gradually lose its prestige and role in the people’s spiritual stability, creating a type of faith that is skewed and sometimes pathological. Any unhealthy competition for economic benefits or prestige between religions inevitably leads to jealousy, envy, friction, conflict, and factionalism (if internal issues cannot be resolved on their own, there must be intervention from the governments) causing religious instability, leading to social instability. In the Documents of the 13th National Congress, the Party aware of that situation, clearly states the need to “criticize

and prevent negative manifestations, superstition”, manifestations of “commercialization of belief and religion activities” (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2021), because these are significant challenges to human security, religious security, and more broadly, national security.

Conclusion

Factors like challenges to religious security can come from outside, or can also originate from inside religion, the people’s religion conversion. Vietnam is considered one of the countries with diverse religions, ethnicities, and languages. Religions in Vietnam in the coming time will be closely related to international political issues, economic development, human rights and democracy in Vietnam. The number of believers of mainstream religions (Buddhism, Catholicism, and Protestantism) will increase, though unevenly in different regions. It is required to maintain a cooperation from both sides to be able to successfully solve the “problem” of religious security in Vietnam. On the State side, it is required to limit the promulgation of legal and by-law documents with their vague provisions that lead to the arbitrary abuse during implementing the policies and laws on religion; The State should provide clear and specific criteria and roadmap for religious organizations to be legal status. On the part of the religious community, it is necessary to actively contribute to efforts to ensure social security by participating in open, constructive dialogue; trust in the government and other relevant agencies. Leaders of religious communities should speak out strongly and promptly against hatred for religious reasons, against incitement to hatred or violence for religious reasons.

References

- Communist Party of Vietnam. (2021). *Documents of the 13th National Congress* (Vol. 1, pp. 73, 144). Hanoi: The Truth National Political Publishing House.
- Hien, D. L. (2020). *Handbook on beliefs and religions* (pp. 76, 80, 84, 88, 93, 98, 103, 111, 112, 128). The Truth National Political Publishing House.
- Do, L. H. (2021). Religious security in vietnam today. In *E3S Web of Conferences* (Vol. 258, p. 05007). EDP Sciences.
- General Statistics Office of Vietnam. (2019). *General population and housing census*. Hanoi: Statistical Publishing House.
- Dac, L. T. (2020). Some activities of Vietnamese Buddhism today. *Journal of Scientific Information and Political Theory*, 2(92).
- Ministry of Home Affairs. (2020). *Official Dispatch No. 6955/BNV-TGCP promulgating a list of religious organizations and institutions that have been granted a certificate of religious activity registration in Vietnam recently (as of December 2020)*.
- The Steering Committee for summarizing the Resolution No. 25-NQ/TW on religious work. (2017). *Report for summarizing 15 years of implementing the Resolution 25-NQ/TW dated March 12, 2003 of the 9th Party Central Committee on religious work*.
- Tran, C. L. (2024). The Current Status of Compensation, Support, and Resettlement when the State Acquires Land for Socio-economic Development. *International Journal of Law and Politics Studies*, 6(1), 27-34. <https://doi.org/10.32996/ijlps.2024.6.1.4>
- Vietnam Government Committee for Religious Affairs. (2019). *Documents of the Conference on implementing tasks in 2019 of the state management of beliefs and religions*.

Vietnam Government Committee for Religious Affairs. (2019). *Project to survey the current situation of land and worship facilities of religious organizations in Vietnam: Solutions and recommendations.*

VOV. (2018). *Super Spiritual Project of Huong Pagoda worth 15,000 billion: Please do not build BOT at the pagoda gate.* Visit at: <https://vov.vn/xa-hoi/sieu-du-an-tam-linh-chua-huong-15000-ty-xin-dung-bot-cong-chua-855284.vov>