

HO CHI MINH NATIONAL ACADEMY OF POLITICS

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**POLITICAL CULTURE OF KEY COMMUNE-LEVEL
CADRES IN THE MEKONG DELTA AT PRESENT**

SUMMARY OF DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

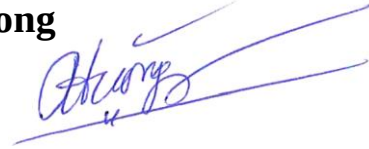
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Academic Supervisors: 1. Dr. Bui Viet Huong



2. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nguyen Viet Thanh



Reviewer 1:
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Reviewer 2:
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Reviewer 3:
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INTRODUCTION

1. Urgency of the Research Topic

The commune level has always maintained a foundational position in the political system and national administrative apparatus. It is the closest tier of government to the people, directly implementing the guidelines of the Party and policies and laws of the State, while reflecting the true aspirations and daily life of the populace. The commune level is also the intersection between formal state management institutions and the traditional autonomy of village communities. This interweaving makes the activities of key commune-level cadres distinctly unique: they must ensure strict, unified legal enforcement while maintaining social flexibility, harmonizing community interests, and preserving local solidarity and stability. Consequently, key commune-level cadres require not only professional expertise and administrative skills but also firm political acumen, public service ethics, and an appropriate political culture.

The Mekong Delta holds an exceptionally strategic position regarding economy, politics, national defense, security, ecological environment, and foreign relations. The riverine culture, community spirit, openness, emotional richness, and high adaptability of Southern residents serve as valuable social resources and directly impact local political-social life and governance. Currently, the Mekong Delta faces critical challenges: climate change, drought, saline intrusion, riverbank and coastal erosion, livelihood transition, labor migration, and the demands of digital transformation and operationalizing the two-tier local government model. These conditions require key commune-level cadres to possess a standardized political culture to enhance local governance capacity and consolidate public trust. In recent

years, fostering the political culture of key commune-level cadres in the Mekong Delta has achieved positive outcomes: political acumen has been enhanced, dedication to serving the people and rule-of-law consciousness have shown clear progress. However, certain limitations persist: a segment of cadres shows ideological deterioration, declining dedication, bureaucratic alienation, pragmatism, evasion of responsibility, undue deference, arbitrary discretion, and "peace-at-all-costs" mindsets. Corruption, wastefulness, and negative phenomena remain complex. These shortcomings undermine grassroots governance effectiveness and erode political trust. Therefore, selecting the topic: ***“Political Culture of Key Commune-Level Cadres in the Mekong Delta at Present”*** is of profound theoretical necessity and practical urgency for a doctoral dissertation in Political Science.

2. Research Objectives and Tasks

2.1. Research Objectives

On the basis of clarifying theoretical issues and evaluating the practical situation of the political culture of key commune-level cadres in the Mekong Delta at present, the dissertation proposes guiding perspectives and major solutions to build and enhance the political culture of this contingent in the coming period.

2.2. Research Tasks

(1) Systematize the research overview related to the topic; (2) Analyze and clarify theoretical foundations regarding political culture and the political culture of key commune-level cadres; (3) Analyze the current situation, identifying achievements, limitations, causes, and issues raised regarding the political culture of key commune-level cadres in the Mekong Delta; (4) Formulate perspectives and propose major solutions to elevate their political culture in the Mekong Delta.

3. Subject and Scope of Research

3.1. Subject of Research

Political culture of key commune-level cadres in the Mekong Delta at present.

3.2. Scope of Research

In terms of content, focuses on constituent elements, evaluation criteria, and influencing factors regarding the political culture of key commune-level cadres; geographically, surveys provinces and centrally-run cities across the Mekong Delta (with fieldwork in Dong Thap, An Giang, Can Tho, Vinh Long, and Ca Mau); temporally, covers the period from 2021 (the 13th National Party Congress) to the present.

4. Theoretical Foundations and Research Methodology

4.1. Theoretical Foundations:

Grounded in dialectical and historical materialism of Marxism-Leninism; Ho Chi Minh Thought; and the guidelines of the Party on cadre development and Vietnamese cultural and human development. The dissertation employs systemic-structural, political science, axiological (value-based), and regional approaches.

4.2. Research Methodology:

Specific methods include: document analysis and synthesis; sociological surveys using structured questionnaires ($N = 640$ valid responses); in-depth expert interviews; field observations; statistical processing; and comparative political analysis.

5. New Scientific Contributions of the Dissertation

First, defines and specifies the scientific connotation and structure of the political culture of key commune-level cadres from a Political Science

perspective. The dissertation positions the political culture of grassroots leadership not merely as individual awareness or morality, but as concentrated manifestations in behavioral norms, leadership styles, power exercise modes, accountability, and public service.

Second, constructs and tests an integrated four-axis analytical framework: Cadre subject - Institutional environment - Regional cultural characteristics (Mekong Delta riverine culture) - New governance context (digital transformation, climate change, market economy), providing a scientific tool to examine political culture as a dynamic reality.

Third, clarifies the institutionalization and internalization mechanisms of political culture values and standards into cadre work, proposing a code of political cultural conduct tied to responsibility, integrity, rule of law, and accountability for grassroots cadres.

Fourth, proposes a comprehensive, context-specific system of solutions, harmonizing the promotion of progressive regional cultural values with the mitigation of negative traits (deference, arbitrary discretion), advancing adaptive governance capacity, and enforcing power control mechanisms.

6. heoretical and Practical Significance of the Topic

Theoretical Significance: Enriches Political Science theory regarding the political culture of grassroots leadership and clarifies the bidirectional interaction between regional culture and political culture in local governance modernization.

Practical Significance: Provides empirical evidence and scientific arguments for Party committees and local authorities across the Mekong Delta in cadre planning, training, assessment, and placement. Serves as a reference for research and teaching in Political Science and Party Building.

Chapter 1

OVERVIEW OF LITERATURE RELATED TO THE TOPIC

1.1. Studies on Political Culture

A literature review of domestic and international studies on political culture reveals three primary research orientations:

Foundational Theoretical Studies on Political Culture: Originating from Western behavioralism, pioneering works include classic studies by G. Almond and J. Coleman, as well as G. Almond and S. Verba on the "civic culture" model. This orientation was further advanced by L. Pye (political development and modernization), S. Huntington (political institutionalization), F. Fukuyama (social trust and social capital), E. Ordukhanyan, and S. White (methodology and comparative political systems). This group laid the theoretical groundwork by shifting the research focus from formal institutions to psychological factors, values, and the political orientations of political actors.

Studies on the Transformation of Political Culture in Modern Society: The research focus shifted toward analyzing value transitions driven by modernization, globalization, and the digital technology revolution. Notable contributions include R. Inglehart's theory of "post-materialist values" and global cultural evolution; studies on social capital and institutional trust by R. Putnam, B. Rothstein, and D. Stolle; as well as analyses of the representation crisis, the populist wave, and political polarization by J.W. Müller and F. de Nardis. Contemporary research highlights the dynamic, multidimensional nature of political culture within digital governance and network societies.

Studies on Political Culture in Vietnam: Grounded in Marxism-Leninism, Ho Chi Minh Thought, and the Communist Party of Vietnam's perspectives, prominent scholars - such as Ho Thi Ngoc Sao, Nguyen Minh Tri, Tran Quoc Hoan, Nguyen Quoc Huy, Pham Hong Tung, Pham Ngoc Quang, Nguyen Van Ky, Lam Quoc Tuan, and Nguyen Thi Hong Minh - have elucidated the nature, structure, and role of political culture in Party building, the development of a socialist rule-of-law state, public service ethics, leadership culture, and democratic practices.

1.2. Studies on Commune-Level Political Systems and Key Cadres

Grassroots political systems and local governance: Foreign scholars such as B. Jones et al. and N. Swift & G. Kervella analyze local autonomy and decentralization. In Vietnam, studies by Tran Thai Duong, Tran Thi Dieu Oanh, Nguyen Hong Chinh, and Nguyen Van Quang examine organizational structures, administrative reforms, and the operationalization of the two-tier local governance model.

Key commune-level cadres, public service ethics, and administrative culture: Works by To Lam, Nguyen Trong Chuan, Nguyen Viet Thanh & Luong Thi Hoai Thanh, Le Chi Phuong, and Nguyen Huu Toan elucidate revolutionary ethics, public integrity, exemplary conduct, and the prevention of moral degradation among grassroots cadres.

1.3. Studies on Political Culture of Cadres Associated with the Mekong Delta

Studies by Tran Ngoc Them, Ngo Duc Thinh, and Nguyen Viet Thanh & Vo Thi Kim Xuan outline regional cultural values: openness, syncretism, righteousness, riverine traditions, and adaptive capacity. Doctoral dissertations by Ho Thi Ngoc Sao, Nguyen Huu Lap, and Le Van Tach

address the role of political culture in administrative renewal and specialized environments.

1.4. Research Gaps and Focus of the Dissertation

Existing literature reveals key research gaps: (1) Absence of a specialized Political Science inquiry into the political culture of subjects holding and exercising grassroots political power; (2) Incomplete explanation of the linkage between political culture, public ethics, and local governance capacity within a unified framework; (3) Lack of clarity regarding the bidirectional impact of Mekong Delta regional culture on political behavior (when it aids mass mobilization vs. when it leads to arbitrary compromise); (4) Inadequate integration of contemporary governance factors (two-tier local government, market economy, digital transformation) into grassroots political culture research.

Chapter 2

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE POLITICAL CULTURE OF KEY COMMUNE-LEVEL CADRES IN VIETNAM

2.1. Political Culture and Political Culture of Key Commune-Level Cadres

Concept of Political Culture: Political culture is the totality of knowledge, values, ideals, beliefs, norms, and methods of practicing political power by political subjects, shaped through historical processes, institutionalized via political-legal mechanisms, and manifested in political behavior, leadership styles, state-citizen relations, and political-social stability.

Concept of Key Commune-Level Cadres: The collection of officials holding primary leadership and managerial positions in the grassroots

political system (Secretary, Deputy Secretary of the Party Committee; Chairperson, Vice Chairperson of the People's Council and People's Committee; President of the Fatherland Front Committee; heads of socio-political organizations; standing committee members/party committee members serving as Chief of Police and Commander of the Commune Military Command).

Concept of Political Culture of Key Commune-Level Cadres: A specialized component of political culture formed and manifested in the political activities of key commune-level leaders, comprising systems of political knowledge, values, beliefs, and norms internalized, shared, and transformed into capacity, behavior, and modes of exercising power during grassroots governance.

Characteristics: (1) Profound historical-social nature; (2) Normative axiological nature; (3) Behavioral orienting and regulating function; (4) Dialectical unity of cognition, belief, and action; (5) Organizational and empirical nature; (6) Relative stability coupled with dynamic adaptability.

Role: Serves as a decisive factor in implementing guidelines and laws, maintaining discipline, advancing grassroots democracy, enhancing local governance efficiency, and reinforcing public trust in the Party and regime.

2.2. Structural Framework of Political Culture among Key Commune-Level Cadres

The dissertation identifies six interconnected constituent elements:

Political Cognition: Theoretical knowledge, institutional understanding, systemic political thinking, and capacity to concretize policies into local practice.

Political Values: Patriotism, national loyalty, dedication to serving

the people, fidelity to the Party, and harmonizing community ("village") and national ("state") interests.

Political Ideology and Beliefs: Grounded in Marxism-Leninism, Ho Chi Minh Thought, socialist ideals, steadfast political faith, and transparent political sentiment.

Political Norms: Public service ethics (Industriousness, Thrift, Integrity, Uprightness, Public-Spiritedness), power exercise standards, behavioral norms, exemplary responsibility, and accountability.

Political Behavior and Modes of Exercising Power: Practicing authority within legitimate jurisdictions; democratic, transparent, public engagement; standardized conduct; and autonomous power self-control.

Political Practical Capacity: Leadership, administration, policy execution, mass mobilization, and adaptive innovation in contemporary governance.

2.3. System of Criteria for Evaluating the Political Culture of Key Commune-Level Cadres

The dissertation establishes six integrated criteria groups: (1) Political cognition criteria; (2) Political value criteria; (3) Political ideology and belief criteria; (4) Political norm criteria; (5) Power exercise behavior criteria; (6) Political practical capacity criteria.

2.4. Factors Influencing the Political Culture of Key Commune-Level Cadres

Influencing factors comprise objective elements: ideological foundations and political lines of the Party; national historical-cultural traditions; socio-economic conditions and regional riverine contexts; cadre management quality; public intellectual standards; and the impacts of

market economy, digital transformation, and international integration. Subjective elements: personal dedication, morality, capability, and self-cultivation ("self-reflection, self-correction") hold direct decisive significance.

Chapter 3

CURRENT SITUATION AND ISSUES RAISED REGARDING THE POLITICAL CULTURE OF KEY COMMUNE-LEVEL CADRES IN THE MEKONG DELTA AT PRESENT

3.1. General Overview and Regional Political Cultural Characteristics

The Mekong Delta currently comprises 402 commune-level administrative units with 16,984 cadres and civil servants. In terms of political theory qualifications: Bachelor's accounts for 1.02%, Advanced accounts for 3.11%, Intermediate accounts for 48.90%, while Elementary and untrained account for 28.07%, and other equivalent/standardizing training accounts for 18.90%.

Five distinctive characteristics: (1) Proximity to citizens and high social interaction; (2) Practicality and high adaptability; (3) Open community spirit and cultural syncretism; (4) Cultural diversity and consensus-building capacity; (5) Flexibility in political mobilization and social resource aggregation.

3.2. Practical Assessment of Political Culture (Empirical Survey Findings)

3.2.1. Political Cognition

Most cadres maintain solid political cognition: 86.6% rated Good,

3.4% Fair (positive total: 90.0%). Cadres grasp renewal lines and adapt to digital governance and two-tier local administration. However, 10.0% remain Limited and Very Limited; a segment neglects political theory study or engages superficially.

3.2.2. Core Political Values

Core values are maintained: Patriotism and national loyalty achieved 93.0% Good and 2.2% Fair (total 95.2%); Loyalty to the Party achieved 86.4% Good and 7.7% Fair (total 94.1%); Love for and service to the people achieved 86.3% Good and 5.3% Fair (total 91.6%); Harmonizing "village" and "state" interests achieved 86.4% Good and 5.1% Fair (total 91.5%). Nevertheless, 8.4% and 8.5% rated poorly in citizen dedication and interest reconciliation, respectively.

3.2.3. Political Ideology, Beliefs, and Sentiments

Political ideology achieved 88.2% Good and 4.8% Fair (total 93.0%); Political belief achieved 84.7% Good and 7.7% Fair (total 92.4%); Political ideals and sentiments achieved 86.9% Good and 4.4% Fair (total 91.3%); Political acumen achieved 88.3% Good. Nonetheless, political faith among a minority remains vulnerable to toxic narratives on social media (7.6% limited).

3.2.4. Political Norms

Practicing Industriousness, Thrift, Integrity, Uprightness, and Public-Spiritedness achieved 86.4% Good and 9.5% Fair (total 95.9%); Power exercise standards reached 88.3% Good and 6.5% Fair (total 94.8%); Political behavioral norms reached 87.5% Good and 4.4% Fair (total 91.9%); Exemplary dedication reached 85.6% Good and 8.4% Fair (total 94.0%). However, 4% to 8% evaluated these norms at Average and Weak,

showing occasional bureaucratic harassment in land administration and civil registration.

3.2.5. Political Behavior and Modes of Exercising Power

Overall evaluation of power exercise behavior showed 84.6% Good and 1.6% Fair (positive total: 86.2%), while Limited and Very Limited accounted for 13.8%. Specific indicators: Power use and control reached 87.5% Good and 4.4% Fair (total 91.9%); Grassroots democratic institution operation reached 83.8% Good and 7.7% Fair (total 91.5%); Accountability reached 86.9% Good and 4.4% Fair (total 91.3%). Weaknesses remain in evasion of responsibility and formalistic accountability (8% - 13%).

3.2.6. Political Practical Capacity

Overall political capacity reached 85.5% Good and 2.0% Fair (total 87.5%), with 12.5% rated Limited and Very Limited. Specific indicators for execution, development capacity, and rule of law reached 85.6% Good and 4.1% Fair (total 89.7%), with 10.3% rated Average and Weak. Limitations are concentrated in digital governance skills, strategic forecasting, and cross-sectoral problem-solving under climate change conditions.

3.3. Causes of Limitations

Objective Causes: Negative externalities of the market economy and social networks; budget and infrastructure deficits at the commune level; fragmented policies; and village cultural traits (kinship bias, excessive personal accommodation) weakening public discipline.

Subjective Causes (Decisive): Superficial awareness of political culture in certain Party committees; theoretical training disconnected from practice; cadre evaluations not strictly grounded in tangible work output; lax inspection; and insufficient self-cultivation by individual cadres.

3.4. Five Issues Raised Regarding the Political Culture of Key Commune-Level Cadres in the Mekong Delta

Cadre political culture and practice have not fully adapted to the demands of the two-tier local governance model.

Moral and lifestyle deterioration in a segment of cadres contradicts the requirements of the socialist rule-of-law State.

Inadequacies in cadre management, assessment, and cultivation mechanisms hinder the institutionalization of political culture norms.

Conflicts between elevated political culture requirements and limited practical competencies (digital capacity, adaptive thinking) of grassroots cadres.

Demands for early, proactive defense of ideological foundations versus reactive, passive grassroots counter-arguments on cyberspace.

Chapter 4

PERSPECTIVES AND SOLUTIONS TO ENHANCE THE POLITICAL CULTURE OF KEY COMMUNE-LEVEL CADRES IN THE MEKONG DELTA AT PRESENT

4.1. Guiding Perspectives

Accurately and comprehensively perceive the position and role of political culture in grassroots cadre development and Party building.

Foster the political culture of key commune-level cadres as a central task tied to sustainable socio-economic development and ecological protection.

Standardize political culture around core benchmarks: political acumen, integrity, democracy, responsibility, rule of law, and citizen service, using public satisfaction as the ultimate yardstick.

Situate commune-level political culture within the broader national political culture, public service culture, and grassroots democracy.

Anchor political culture firmly in the natural, historical, and cultural characteristics of the Mekong Delta.

4.2. Major Systems of Solutions

4.2.1. Elevating Awareness and Responsibility of Party Committees and Leaders

Institutionalize political culture objectives into local resolutions and working programs. Lead through a coherent chain: *Sound direction* → *Priority targeting* → *Coordinated execution* → *Ultimate accountability*. Implement Directive No. 07-CT/TW and Resolution No. 25-NQ/TW; uphold exemplary leadership at the commune level.

4.2.2. Broadly Propagating and Educating on Political Culture

Revitalize political education by linking theory directly with administrative problem-solving (land disputes, public security, social welfare). Diversify digital dissemination platforms and strengthen political acumen to build ideological immunity against distorted narratives.

4.2.3. Reforming Training and Cultivation Based on Competency Frameworks

Shift from passive lecture-based instruction to practical skill development: administrative authority exercise, crisis management, and digital competence (data-driven governance, online public service delivery). Integrate political culture benchmarks into curricula.

4.2.4. Enhancing Autonomy and Self-Cultivation of Cadres

Enforce self-reflection and self-correction, eliminating individualism, mediocrity, and excessive deference. Cultivate a work style of being close

to, understanding, respecting, learning from, and serving the people. Promote innovation and bold responsibility for the common good.

4.2.5. Formulating and Completing Value Systems, Norms, and Codes of Conduct

Operationalize political culture norms into three clear behavioral categories: *Mandatory actions* (rule of law, integrity, accountability), *Encouraged actions* (innovation, digital adoption, community dialogue), and *Prohibited actions* (abuse of power, harassment, fractionalism). Promote regional cultural strengths while eliminating arbitrary, informal compromises.

4.2.6. Improving Cadre Management and Output-Based Evaluation Mechanisms

Democratize cadre planning, selection, and appointments. Implement multi-dimensional assessments combining Party evaluations, measurable work products, integrity standards, and public satisfaction indices. Establish mechanisms protecting dynamic, innovative cadres.

4.2.7. Building a Healthy, Democratic, and Disciplined Political Environment

Modernize administrative environments and uphold grassroots democracy ("People know, people discuss, people do, people inspect, people supervise, people benefit"). Improve remuneration policies and working conditions, particularly in remote and coastal communities.

4.2.8. Strengthening Accountability, Supervision, and Power Control

Institutionalize two-way accountability (to higher authorities and directly to citizens). Digitize administrative processes and land planning to eliminate informational opacity. Synchronize Party inspections, State supervision, and social monitoring by the Fatherland Front, strictly handling violations without exception.

CONCLUSION

The political culture of key commune-level cadres constitutes a foundational pillar governing the operational effectiveness of grassroots political systems and the quality of citizen service. The dissertation systematizes and develops Political Science theory on grassroots leadership political culture, establishing an empirical six-element structure and an evaluation criteria system.

Practical evaluations in the Mekong Delta confirm that core political values (patriotism, loyalty, citizen proximity, adaptability) remain preserved, driving regional socio-economic stability. Nevertheless, gaps between cognition and practice, moral degradation, excessive deference, and digital capacity deficits among a segment of cadres pose significant obstacles.

Cultivating the political culture of key commune-level cadres in the Mekong Delta requires synchronized solutions: elevating Party leadership, reforming competency-based training, setting behavioral codes, instituting output-based evaluations, and enforcing power control mechanisms. Internalizing these values into daily conduct will forge a devoted, competent, and ethical grassroots leadership dedicated to public service.

LIST OF PUBLISHED SCIENTIFIC WORKS BY THE AUTHOR RELATED TO THE DISSERTATION

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5. Tran Van Dien (2026), "Political Culture and Governance Capacity among Commune-Level Cadres in Viet Nam", *Revista de Investigaciones Universidad del Quindío*, Issue 24, pp. 604-612.