



SOLIDARITY OF RELIGIONS - AN IMPORTANT FACTOR CONTRIBUTING TO PROMOTE THE STRENGTH OF THE GREAT NATIONAL UNITY BLOC

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Abstract

The article "Solidarity of religion - an important factor contributing to promoting the strength of the great national unity" focused on analyzing some contents: The role of religious unity in promoting the strength of the congregation ethnicity; The current situation of religion and religious solidarity in Vietnam, thereby giving some basic solutions to the realization of religious unity in Vietnam today. The article will contribute to explaining some theoretical and practical issues about the role of religious solidarity, in order to build religious unity and promote the strength of the current great national unity of Vietnam.

Keywords: Religion, religious unity, important factors, solidarity, great unity, nationality.



Introduction

Vietnam is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country. Since the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, President Ho Chi Minh paid great attention to building religious solidarity, considering it as one of the important factors leading to the success of the revolution in Vietnam. In their leadership and administration to the country, the Party and State have always affirmed: One of the main motivations for national development is the policy of great unity among people, in which special importance is given to the ethnic and religious solidarity, for the sake of the nation and nationalities, the prosperous and happy life of the people.

According to Vietnamese Dictionary, solidarity is unanimous, combined into a concrete block. Religious solidarity means religions unite and work together for a common purpose. In Vietnam, religion and ethnicity are always in a close and intertwined relationship. Religious people are also national citizens.

Many ethnic people have been following a religion; Therefore, religious solidarity is an important component of the great national unity bloc. Under the leadership of the great Party and President Ho Chi Minh, in recent years, people from all strata, regardless of their background, class, ethnicity, and religion, have always shown the spirit of solidarity and harmony, creating great strength in the cause of building and defending the country Vietnam. The article will contribute to the interpretation of some theoretical and practical issues on the role of religious solidarity, in order to build religious solidarity and promote the strength of the recent great national unity bloc in Vietnam.

1. The role of religious solidarity in promoting the power of the great national unity bloc

During his lifetime, President Ho Chi Minh always paid attention to ethnicity and religion, in which he paid special attention to respecting the right to freedom of belief and religion, creating solidarity among religions in our country. This is also a guideline for the success of our country's revolution. This was affirmed throughout the thousand-year-history of our ancestors building and defending the country. Since the establishment of the Vietnam Communist Party and through its leadership to the country, the role of social solidarity has continued to be affirmed in the two wars against the France and the United States. In the current period, when the country is building socialism, implementing industrialization and modernization, the role of religious solidarity in promoting the power of great national unity bloc has always been emphasized.

The existence and development of religion has an important role and influence on human life. The active role of religion is not only directed to the ethical education of people but also to create social cohesion, preserve and promote traditional cultural values of the nation. The view of our Party and State is to promote all resources for the country's development. In order to develop the country sustainably, the resources for development must be always abundant. We can not rely solely on natural resources but also on other resources, such as human resources, intellectual resources, moral resources, cultural resources, etc. Each religion itself is a great social resource



(including material, spiritual, intellectual resources, etc.), if religions unite together and with society, it will create a huge resource to promote the strength of the great national unity bloc.

Religious solidarity also means eliminating the risk of religious conflict. Each religion is not merely a collection of people who have spiritual beliefs in supernatural beings, but also an association of faithful and coherent force for their own beliefs and religious organizations. Practicing religious solidarity is caring, maintaining and developing solidarity between religious and non-religious people, among religions and followers within a religion that aims to create a unified bloc to build and defend the nation, thereby preventing enemies from taking advantage of religious conflicts to incite and destroy the national development.

The world has witnessed terrible consequences due to conflicts between religions. It was the separatist movement in the (former) Yugoslavia that led to a tragic war between Catholics, Orthodox and Islam. The Middle East is considered a hot spot for wars and conflicts related to ethnic, religious, economic, political, social issues which have not yet ended. In particular, international terrorist organizations have taken advantage of religious conflict to conduct bloody terrorist attacks, claiming the lives of thousands of innocent people to serve their political conspiracy. The culmination was terrorist attacks in September 11, 2001 in the US, killing nearly 3,000 people. It can be said that conflicts between religions have become one of the causes of social, economic and political conflicts between countries and regions.

In a multi-religious society, the unharmony among religions is unavoidable because of their distinction. In order to stabilize and develop a multi-religious country like Vietnam today, religious solidarity is one of the issues that has always been of concern. Great national unity (including religious solidarity) in a country like ours is decisive to protect and build the country; it's a valuable lesson that our forefathers indicated throughout the history of building and defending the nation.

2. The situation of religions and religious solidarity in Vietnam today

Vietnam is a country located between two continents with two great civilizations, China and India; Therefore, the country is profoundly influenced by religions and social ideologies of those two civilizations. Besides polytheism, monotheism, there are also pantheism. Along with the existence of foreign religions (Buddhism, Catholicism, Protestantism, Islam, etc.), there exist endogenous religions such as Cao Dai and Hoa Hao. The picture of religions in Vietnam is quite plentiful, diverse and colorful. Currently, as of June 2017, the State has recognized 14 religions and 44 religious organizations with about 25.3 million followers, of which the number of Buddhism followers is more than 10 million, the number of Catholic followers is 6.1 million, Cao Dai has 2.4 million followers, Hoa Hao has 1.2 million followers, Protestantism has 1.5 million and Islam has about 100,000 followers. If we count the act of worshiping ancestors, tutelary gods, King Hung, etc., most of Vietnamese people have religious spirituality.

On the positive side: All over the world, Vietnam stands out and achieves more accomplishments regarding religion. Religions send greetings to each other's major festivals. All



major religious holidays receive the participation of other religious believers, such as Buddha's birthday and Christmas are no longer for Buddhists and Catholics followers only. Currently, all religions are integrated and participate more in social activities, especially charity and moral education. Most religions abide the Party's guidelines and the State's policies, and some even propagate the Party's guidelines and State's policies and policies to their followers.

On the negative side: Disunity sometimes takes place in a small number of followers and religions. It is internal disunity of a religion manifested through the competition for status, power, operating area and followers among the sects, which leads to a state of dissolution and disorder. It also possibly arises from conflict, criticism among religions. Conflicts may occur between religious and non-religious followers, too. This disunity among religions has created opportunities for enemies to take advantage to incite the division of followers, causing instability in society.

Example of typical cases such as: some Catholic dignitaries and followers protested to reclaim the facilities that they thought belong to their religious organization (the land area in no. 42 Nha Chung, Hanoi); The Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer in Thai Ha, Hanoi incited followers to act aggressively to reclaim the facilities belong to Chien Thang Garment Company, which caused public frustration; General Union of Vietnam Protestant Churches (South) asked for 265 old worshiping places; The Cao Dai in Tay Ninh asked for some establishments in the inner holy building to use for religious activities, etc. In addition, many religious followers have been used by enemies to protest that disrupt social order and security.

Vietnam's history of national construction and defense has proved that unity is the source of strength as President Ho Chi Minh said "Unity, unity, great unity - Success, success, great success". In particular, religious solidarity plays an extremely important role in promoting the strength of the great national unity bloc. Because our country is a multi-religious country, most of people are religious followers. Religious conflicts have been used to cause social disorder, serving the strategy "Peaceful movement, riots and coup" of some enemies.

During his lifetime, President Ho Chi Minh affirmed that uniting the entire people, especially the unity of religions, is a vital issue, determining the success of the revolution. Right after the independence declaration of the country, at the first meeting of the interim Government (September 3, 1945), he declared: "The colonialists and feudalists implemented the policy of dividing Catholics and Buddhism followers for easy domination. I propose our Government declares: "Religious freedom and solidarity" and affirms: "We must closely unite regardless of party, class, religion. Solidarity means power; division means weakness" (). This is the basis for carrying out the unity of people of different religions and between the religious followers and non-followers in the cause of national liberation, construction and defense. Ho Chi Minh wrote: "We must closely unite all classes of people, ... to unite well the parties, unions, the dignitaries, ... unite the ethnicities, ... Catholics and Buddhism followers"(); "All religious followers do not divide, let's unite ..." (), "Religions should be united as brothers and sisters, working together against the US to save the country" (); "Our solidarity is not only widening but also lasting. Solidarity is a national



policy, not a political trick. We unite to fight for the unification and independence of the Fatherland, we must also unite to build our country. Those who are talented, virtuous, capable of serving the Fatherland and the people, we are united with them” (). It can be said that in his letters to the people of all religions and religious dignitaries, Ho Chi Minh always emphasized the great unity ideology in order to realize the goal of resistance to the national construction.

Ho Chi Minh was particularly interested in building religious solidarity. According to him, the goal of religious solidarity is to create synergy, successfully realize the cause of national liberation and national construction. Our Party inherits and creatively applies his idea of religious solidarity to the practical situation and identifies: "Unite the people of different religions; unite religious and non-religious people" () and "At the same time, proactively prevent and resolutely fight acts of using beliefs and religions to fascinate, divide and destroy the great national unity bloc.”⁽¹⁾.

Thus, the religious solidarity in Ho Chi Minh's ideology is the solidarity of Catholics and Buddhism followers, the solidarity of non-religious and religious followers, the solidarity between religions. Religious solidarity is a long-term issue, not a task in a certain stage, not a political trick. Religious solidarity is a part of national solidarity, for the sake of national independence and interests.

According to the 11th Congress Resolution of the Party, “Great national unity is a strategic direction of the Vietnamese revolution; It is the main source of strength, motivation and a decisive factor to ensure the success of building and defending the Fatherland ... promoting the national spirit, the traditions of humanity and tolerance ... to unite all people into the common front, strengthen social consensus” (). The Party pointed out that: "The great national unity must be based on the harmonious settlement of the interests among members of society. Solidarity in the Party is the nucleus, a solid basis for building a great national unity bloc” ().

During the process of leading the revolution from its inception to the present, our Party has always focused on preventing the exploitation of religion to undermine the national unity, the XI Congress Resolution emphasized: "proactive prevent, resolutely fight acts of using beliefs and religions to fascinate, divide and destroy the great national unity bloc" (). Promoting the strength of national great unity is considered as one of the key tasks and goals of the XII Congress term.⁽²⁾.

In order to do well the task of building religious solidarity throughout the country, in recent years, all agencies and sectors from the central to local levels, in which the Vietnam Fatherland Front plays a leading role, regularly educate and implement Ho Chi Minh's ideology, the Party's Resolution, the State's laws on religious affairs and religious solidarity. They also closely combine religious work to the active promotion of socio-economic development, the consolidation of

¹ Báo Nhân dân, số ra ngày 19/3/2011.

² Đảng Cộng sản Việt Nam, Văn kiện Đại hội đại biểu toàn quốc lần thứ XII, sđd, tr. 53 và 79.



national defense and security in localities; encourage religious officials and dignitaries to devote their talents and intelligence to the cause of national construction and defense.

3. Some basic solutions to realize religious solidarity in Vietnam today

With current situation of religion, the implementation of religious solidarity to successfully implement the socialist construction in Vietnam is a matter of concern. Inheriting President Ho Chi Minh's ideology of religious solidarity, the author would like to propose some solutions and recommendations to improve the effectiveness of religious solidarity in Vietnam as follows:

Firstly, it is necessary to continue promoting the socio-economic development of localities with religious followers. Agencies, departments and the political system should pay attention, support, invest in building establishments such as schools, roads, irrigation in order to create conditions for economic restructuring, the application of scientific and technical advances in production and business expansion, raising people's intellectual level. We should also combine specialized support policies for people of all religions in difficult circumstances, gradually improving people's lives. That is an important premise to help religious followers to believe in the leadership of the Party and the State, in the success of the renovation cause as well as create favorable conditions for the construction of religious solidarity between religious and non-religious people.

Secondly, we should continue to supplement and complete the system of policies and laws on religion. Policies and laws on religion must always be based on the Party's view of religion which is clearly shown in the 2013 Constitution: "Citizens have right to the freedom of belief and religion following or not following any religion. All religions are equal according to the law. The State respects and protects the right to freedom of religion. No one may infringe on freedom of belief, religion or take advantage of beliefs and religions to violate the law" (Constitution, 2013, Article 24, Chapter II). In particular, freedom of religious, belief does not mean that religious activities are outside the framework of the law, contrary to the interests of the Fatherland, the people and undermine the great national unity bloc.

Agencies and departments need to step up the propaganda and dissemination of legal education in the religious area, especially among dignitaries, religious officials, monks, followers of religions so that they understand and well implement laws on religion such as the Constitution 2013, the Law on Beliefs and Religion, the Criminal law amended in 2015, the Criminal Procedure Law, etc. Agencies and departments need to promote the propaganda and education of the traditional patriotic, the conscious of protecting national independence and territorial integrity, making religions attached to the nation, the homeland, increasing the consensus between religious and non-religious followers, as well as people of different faiths and religions.

Thirdly, we need to pay attention to the training and fostering of officials working with religious and ethnic affairs in general and in the construction of great religious solidarity bloc in particular. We need to care about building up a strong enough organization and personnel apparatus for religious affairs, creating favorable conditions for them to provide better advice to authorities in handling matters related to religion in accordance with guidelines and policies of the Party and State. We need to concern about training and fostering officials working with religious affairs from



the central to local levels, people directly deal with religious issues at the grassroots level. To do well this requires authorities to really care and lead the implementation of the Party and State's guidelines and policies towards religions in a synchronized, comprehensive and highly consistent manner; It is needed to clearly define the leadership role of the Party, the management role of the State and the Government, constantly promote the advocacy role of the Fatherland Front and mass organizations in encouraging religious followers to join patriotic emulation movements, unite, strive to build the homeland.

We need to propagate to make people understand and distinguish religious issues and using religion to violate laws or cause conflicts within families, clans, villages as well as negatively affect to good customs, practices and traditional culture, especially the peaceful life of people, religious followers and dignitaries. This is very urgent in the current situation, when new religions and religious issues develop strongly and some are difficult to control. Besides, we need to expand the exchanges between religions on the basis of mutual respect, together unite to form a common unity bloc, contributing to the development of the country.

Fourthly, we need to well implement the equality and solidarity between religions, religious and non-religious followers.

We need to uphold the equality of religious and non-religious people by the law, the interests of religions must be unified and for the interests of the State. We also need to respect religious activities but criticize and prevent in time acts of using religion to divide and destroy the great national unity bloc and other religious activities in contravention of law.

CONCLUSION

Recognizing the important role of religious solidarity in promoting the strength of the great national unity bloc, the Party and the State have many policies to promote religious solidarity. However, in order to promote the strength of the great national unity bloc in the coming time, we need to continue boosting achieved results, overcome the limitations and shortcomings. Most importantly, it is necessary to better implement the policy of religious equality, especially religious policies and laws.

Great unity is a valuable tradition, a great power that has been verified over the thousand-year-history of building and defending our nation. In particular, religious solidarity is a strategic lesson of great importance that our forefathers summarized throughout the history of building and defending the Fatherland. In the future, we should also pay attention and create more forums for religions to dialogue with each other and with authorities at all levels. This is an important solution for religions to improve mutual understanding, eliminate misunderstandings and create more common values to prompt and promote positive values of each religion in particular and the strength of the great religious unity bloc in general during the period of industrialization and modernization of the country, contributing to our country's strong development in all areas of social life.



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