



Research Article

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From Changes in Religious Policy to Consequences for Freedom of Religion and Belief in Vietnam

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Abstract

Vietnamese laws and the ideals of the Communist Party of Vietnam have made it possible for everyone to practice their beliefs and religion. Vietnam is now among the nations with the greatest variety and quantity of religious and philosophical beliefs. Due to the increasing development of religion and belief in Vietnam, the law needs to be improved to ensure the Vietnamese people's freedom of religion. The article focuses on analyzing major awareness points about religion and belief that occurred during the foundation and development of Vietnam since this is the root cause of changes in religious freedom in this country. As a result, it helps to answer the following questions: Is Vietnamese law on religion and belief up to par with the international standards of laws? Do Vietnamese citizens have the freedom to practice their religion and beliefs? The article also demonstrates the primary expressions of contemporary religious life in Vietnam.

Keywords: Religious law, religious life, religion in Vietnam, religious policy in Vietnam

1. Introduction

Vietnam is ranked 3rd in terms of the world's most diverse religions and beliefs.¹ The Communist Party of Vietnam's (CPV) guidelines and the Constitution both states the idea that all religions are equal in terms of the law. Vietnam's first constitution (Constitution 1946) recognized the right to freedom of belief and religion in Vietnam; this recognition was preserved in the 1959, 1980, 1992, and 2013 constitutions. The latter tends to be more thorough, focusing especially on "breakthrough" in each period; it has significantly innovated in religion since 1990 and has continued to grow up to this day.

Since its foundation in 1945, Vietnam has paid special attention to religion. However, the Vietnam Law on Religious Beliefs was not formally issued until 2016 and only became effective in 2018. It has reflected a very complicated and ongoing process of Vietnam's cognitive approach toward religion has been divided into two religious periods before Doimoi (Renovation) and Doimoi (in 1990). Along with the innovations in religious awareness reflected in the perception of President Ho Chi Minh from 1945 to 1955, the consciousness of the Party in 1990, the 2013 Constitution, and the Law on Belief and Religion in 2016; thus, policies and laws on religion and beliefs were also developed to further the increasing freedom of those who practice different religions.

In the religious situation in Vietnam, however, there are still many beliefs at odds with reality. For example, the International Religious Freedom Report of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), the Report on the human rights situation of the US Department of State, Report on religious freedom in Vietnam by Human Rights Watch. Or in some outdated works, such as V.M. Mazyrin in the book *Reforms in the transition period in Vietnam (1986-2006): orientations, changes, results*. Kliuch-C Publishing, 2007 (Мазырин В.М. Реформы переходного периода во Вьетнаме (1986-2006 г.г.): направления, динамика, результаты. М.Ключ-С, 2007 - 336 с).

So what is reality? The article will analyze the policy on religion and belief based on data from the text and the data in actual practice, along with historical and logical methods and a comparison with recognized international regulations widely accepted. The article focuses on examining and clarifying how religion has changed, as well as the essential elements of religious life in Vietnam.

2. Changes in Religious Policy

2.1 Religious policy line before Doimoi

The policy of religious rights was proposed by President Ho Chi Minh, at the first meeting of the Government Council of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, on September 3, 1945: "Free belief and religion unite." (Minh, 2011a, p. 8) That policy is explicit in the first constitution of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (November 8, 1946), chapter II, section B (rights and obligations): "All Vietnamese citizens have the right to freedom of belief," "unite the entire people without distinction of race, sex, class or religion," "all power in the country belongs to the entire Vietnamese people, regardless of race, class, religion." (Hung, 2014). Or in the closing words of the premiere on March 3, 1951, the Vietnam Labor Party declared: "[...] Regarding religion, the Vietnam Labor Party fully respects the right to autonomy of belief of everyone." (Minh, 2011b, p. 50). After peace restoration, on June 14, 1955, President Ho Chi Minh signed Decree No. 234-SL stating that the state and religions have a relationship with each other but not an internal relationship: "the state not to interfere in the internal affairs of religions. As for the Catholic issue, the religious relationship between the Catholic

¹In his presentation at the 21st Annual Conference from October 5-7, 2014, Law School - Brigham Young University - USA, on *Law and Religion* by Brian J. Grim - President of the Religious Freedom & Business Foundation USA. Vietnam ranks 3rd in terms of religious diversity after China and Mozambique.

Church of Vietnam and the Roman Holy is an internal issue of religion. The state does not interfere" and "Freedom of belief and worship is a right of the people. The democratic-republican state always respects." (Vạn, 2001) President Ho Chi Minh advocated in Article 1: "The state guarantees the people's right to autonomy of belief and autonomy of worship. No one may infringe on that autonomy. Every Vietnamese has the right to follow a religion or not to follow a religion." (Hòa, 1955) It shows the similarity in the views of Ho Chi Minh with the 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR): "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief [...]." (Commissioner). Even early, Ho Chi Minh advocated that the state should not interfere in the internal affairs of religions and ensure the people's right to autonomy of belief before the world had the International Convention on Civil Political Rights 1966 (ICCPR). The views also reflected a popular value of countries in Asia: human rights guaranteed by the government (Onishi, 2021)².

Until 1990, that is, when Vietnam's religious views and policies entered the Doi moi (Innovation) period, the Political Report at the 4th Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam (1976), the 5th (1982), the sixth (1986) did not present new views on religion. These reports all have the same structure according to the following contents:

- Respecting the people's freedom of belief, respecting the right of all citizens to follow a religion or not, and legally treating religions equally.
- Uniting religions to build and develop the country.
- Caring for and helping people who follow religions to build new lives
- Being alert and resolute on time against all plots to take advantage of religion to destroy the Fatherland and socialism. (Đảng, 2006a, p. 33) (Đảng, 2006b, p. 451)

The laws governing religion in Vietnam from 1976 to 1990 were not entirely comprehensive, general, or detailed, and they did not cover all the increasingly diverse and complex religious activities. Nevertheless, they served as the initial framework for the state's legal management of religious affairs (Dương, 2015).

New things of interest in this period were the *Resolution of the Secretariat on the work of religions in the new situation* (October 1, 1981) (Đảng, 1981). That dared to be honest about the shortcomings: "On the other hand, there is a tendency to want to Subjectively rapidly eradicate religion by administrative measures leads to actions that violate religious policies, including gross violations. However, due to its historical context, it is still heavy on reactionary politics in religion. Therefore, leading to the complex activities of religion not being recognized radically and comprehensively, some religious cases are only resolved in a situational way (Dương, 2015). From a political perspective, religions are primarily seen by CPV as tools of opposing forces working against the revolutionary cause. It also describes religion as a means of spiritual oppression for the working masses, viewing religious ideas as "improper sentiments and blind ideals.". From a social perspective, CPV considers religion negative, selling gods and selling saints, equating religion with superstition when calling it "religious superstition." (Minh, 2015).

As can be seen, in the policy on religion from 1945 - 1990, a primary feature in this period was Ho Chi Minh's thought of respecting freedom of belief, religion, and national harmony. Ho Chi Minh was the initiator of religious freedom policies embodied in the Constitution. The following analysis of

²Unlike Europe, in Asian society in general, with a tradition of absolute monarchy, kings - the sons of heaven - represent absolute power, often standing above religion. In Asian history, therefore, the problem of relations between the state and religious organizations is not as acute as in Europe. It was not until the nineteenth century, when many Western countries completed the process of invasion and domination in the East, that the penetration and interaction of views, cultural and legal values in all fields in which religion was made-up. Currently, legal issues on religion have been raised globally and require countries to cooperate in solving them. See more at Hà, N. T. V. (2017). *Pháp luật về tôn giáo của một số quốc gia và kinh nghiệm đối với Việt Nam [Laws on the religion of some countries and experiences with Vietnam]*. Tạp chí Khoa học Nội vụ, 11/2017, 77-84.

Vietnam's ideas and policies on beliefs and faiths will also be based on Ho Chi Minh's ideology. Ho Chi Minh's ideology is creative because, although adopting the philosophy and methodology of Marxism-Leninism, it has a remarkable sense of independence and originality. In Ho Chi Minh's thought, religion is not only a form of social consciousness but also a specific cultural phenomenon, creating values of national cultural identity. Ho Chi Minh urged for religious harmony rather than the fight against religion. In the struggle for national independence, reunification, and the successful construction of socialism in Vietnam, people view religion as a resource. Ho Chi Minh's Ideology on religion is a breakthrough into bureaucratic, rigid, or devout views, upholding the role of religion and mystical power in the East in general and particularly in Vietnam (Chung, 2018).

2.2 Innovation awareness

The awareness, views, and renovation policies in religious work were in Resolution No. 24-NQ/TW of the Politburo of the Communist Party of Vietnam on strengthening the mission in the new scenario. This decision is a turning point in views and policies on the religions of the Communist Party of Vietnam. The Resolution: "Religions is a long-standing issue. Religious beliefs are the spiritual needs of a part of the people. Religious ethics has many things suitable for the construction of a new society." (Ban, 1990) It is seen as a breakthrough because the Communist Party of Vietnam's multifaceted approach to religion reflects innovative thinking as follows:

First, the Communist Party of Vietnam recognizes that religion has existed for a very long time because prerequisites for its growth are still present. Concerning the spiritual aspect of man, religion is the experience of the Divine. So explain a need not only for earthly life but also as a goal after the "afterlife.". Every religion was born into a particular cultural setting within the nation and society in which it was practiced (Minh, 2015). Thereby, CPV avoids myopic perception and narrow attitudes, prejudice, and discrimination against religious compatriots.

Second, CPV acknowledges that people develop religions to satisfy their spiritual needs and that they must grow crops and raise cattle to meet their basic nutritional needs. Hence, religions were born out of the need for a community. When it has become a religion, it has a national character, and it is a part of the spiritual life of that nation. Previously, while tending toward acknowledging the decline of religion, it disregarded the spiritual needs of a part of the people.

Third, CPV acknowledges the value of religious ethics. Religion has the task of moralizing, contributing to building people's living personalities, and making social life healthy. Before that, religious morality was even considered "it is a heavenly morality." Since then, CPV has had a new perception that "doing religious work well is the responsibility of the whole political system." (Đảng, 2003, p. 45)

The political report at the 7th National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam in 1991 affirmed: "Beliefs and religion are the spiritual needs of a part of the people. Our Party and State respect the people's right to freedom of belief and non-belief and implement equality and unity among religions and between religions. Overcome all narrow-minded, prejudiced, and discriminatory attitudes toward religious compatriots, oppose acts of taking advantage of religion to destroy national independence and national unity, oppose socialism, and prevent believers do their civic duty." (Đảng, 1991, p. 78) The program on building the country in the transitional period to socialism, approved by the VII Congress of CPV, also clearly states: "Beliefs and religion are the spiritual needs of a part of the people. Consistently implementing the policy of respecting and guaranteeing the right to freedom of belief. And fighting against the abuse of beliefs to harm the interests of the Fatherland and the people." (Đảng, 1991, p. 24)

Chapter 5, Article 70, 1992 Constitution further elaborates: "Vietnamese citizens have the right to freedom of belief and religion, to follow or not to follow a religion. All religions are equal in front of the law." (Nhà, 2020, p. 87)

The right to freedom of belief and religion and the protection of this right continue mentioned in many legal documents. In the Civil Code, Article 5 of the principle of equality stipulates: "In civil

relations, the parties are equal. No reason for differences in ethnicity, gender, social class, or economic situation may take as a pretext for differences. "Individuals have the right to freedom of belief and religion, to follow or not to follow a religion." And Article 47 clearly states: "Individuals have the right to freedom of belief and religion any; No one may infringe on freedom of belief or religion or take advantage of belief or religion to infringe upon the interests of the State, the public interest, the lawful rights, and the interests of others." (Nhà, 2005)

The Ordinance on Beliefs and Religions promulgated in 2004 regularized the renewal viewpoint of the Party and the State of Vietnam, in which it was determined: "Religion is a long-standing issue. Beliefs and religions are the needs of a part of the people. Religious ethics has many things suitable for the construction of a new society." (Đảng, 2003, pp. 45-46) The 2004 Beliefs and Religions Ordinance stated:

All religions recognized by the State have the right to conduct religious activities within the framework of the law. And beliefs and spiritual actions of different theology are guaranteed by the State.

Legitimate property belonging to state-recognized religious places of worship is protected by law. Religions shall be built, repaired, and restored per the needs. And under the conditions of the country and the provisions of the law.

Religious organizations are established, merged, split, ordained, appointed, and elected, according to the charter, regulations of the religious organization, and the provisions of the law, without discrimination of what religion is.

State-recognized religious organizations are equal in establishing schools and opening training courses for people specializing in religious activities; equality in publishing, printing, and using scriptures and spiritual utensils to serve the needs of religious activities.

Religious organizations, followers, monks, and dignitaries of other religions have equal rights to conduct external interactions under the charter and regulation canon law of the religious organization with Vietnamese law. In particular, the principle of priority for applying international law is recognized. Article 38 of the 2004 Beliefs and Religions Ordinance stipulates: "In case an international treaty to which the Socialist Republic of Vietnam has signed or acceded contains provisions different from those of this Ordinance, the provisions of the international treaty shall apply." It presents the opportunity for the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to further internalize and apply rules relating to the freedom of religion and belief (ICCPR). Additionally, there are numerous other international human rights agreements relevant to Vietnam.

These issues were then concretized in Decrees No. 22/2005/ND-CP dated March 1, 2005, and Decree No. 92/2012/ND-CP dated November 8, 2012 (replacing Decree No. 22/2005/ND-CP) of the Government detailing and implementing measures to implement the 2004 Beliefs and Religions Ordinance.

Thus, the breakthrough in thinking about religion in Resolution 24 is a qualitative change in theoretical awareness and attitude towards religious practice. It creates effects on numerous facets of social life. That innovative novel viewpoint is the basis for the provisions on belief and religion in the 2013 Constitution and the 2016 Law on Belief and Religion (Chung, 2018).

2.3 *The development step in the perception of the CPV and the law of the State*

At the Eleventh National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam (2011), the Platform for National Construction in the Transitional Period to Socialism (supplemented and developed in 2011) summarized: "Respect and ensure the people's right to freedom of belief and religion and non-belief or religion under the law. To fight and strictly handle all acts of violating freedom of belief and religion and taking advantage of religious beliefs to harm the interests of the Fatherland and the people." (Đảng, 2011, p. 81) The Political Report at the 11th National Congress of CPV stated: "Continue to perfect policies and laws on belief and religion in line with the CPV viewpoints in the new period of the country; respect the ethical values, good culture of religious organizations;

encourage dignitaries, followers, and religious organizations to live a good life, to be religious, and actively contribute to the national construction and defense." (Đảng, 2011, p. 51)

Chapter 2, Article 24 of the 2013 Vietnamese Constitution stipulates 1. Everyone has the right to freedom of belief and religion, to follow or not to follow a religion. All religions are equal in front of the law. 2. The State respects and protects the right to freedom of belief and religion. 3. No one may infringe on freedom of belief or religion or take advantage of religion to violate the law.

At the 12th Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam (January 1, 2016), CPV continued to affirm that "Complete policies and laws on beliefs and religions, promote the good cultural and moral values of the religion. Paying attention to and creating conditions for religious organizations to live following their charters and regulations, which have been recognized by the State, and under the law, making active contributions to the building and preserving defend the country." (Đảng, 2016)

The law on Belief and Religion was born in 2016. That is on the renewed perceptions of the CPV and the State of Vietnam. It is the concretization of the third breakthrough view on thinking about religion, which expresses as follows:

Firstly, the 2016 Law on Belief, Religion has the unification of three pillars "rule of law - nation - international." The rule of law is clear, transparent, and simple in the ruling, clearly distinguishing the objects and the scope of regulation. ³ It harmonizes with Civil Law, Land Law, Construction Law, Criminal Law, Residence Law, etc. It bears Vietnamese identity in specific laws. It is international in what expands the audience from "citizens" to "everyone," ⁴ including foreigners living in Vietnam and acknowledging religious legal status, etc. It is the concretization of the principle of non-discrimination in religion. That is in international law. And is compared with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR.) Vietnam has been a member since 1982: Art. 18 (1): "Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice [...]." Or 1981 Declaration of the General Assembly: Art. 1 (1): "Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. This right shall include freedom to have a religion or whatever belief of his choice [...]." (Commissioner, 2021)

Secondly, the 2016 Law on Beliefs and Religions recognizes religion as a tool for fostering social progress. in addition to encouraging religion to take part in socialization activities, the law regards religion as a right and duty of religious groups in the economic fields. ⁵

Thirdly, renovate the management system and restrict state meddling in the internal affairs of religious institutions, so emphasizing the notion of a secular state that many nations, such as the US (which separates the Church from the states) and Japan, promote (promoting the self-governance of religious organizations). In Vietnam, the principle of the adjusted secular is that the State has the responsibility to respect and protect everyone's right to freedom of belief and religion and ensure that all religions are equal before the law (Vũ, 2017). Comparing innovation with Vietnam's 2004 Ordinance on Beliefs and Religions, the state management mechanisms for many activities of religious organizations only need to notify the planning management levels without requiring permission. ⁶

Fourthly, for the first time in the Law on Belief, Religion affirms that a religious organization is an organization with a non-commercial legal person status, acknowledging property ownership and non-commercial economic activities, etc. Considering religion to be a form of social society, it represents a shift, a key new idea, and the single most essential aspect of contemporary, progressive

³The 2016 Law on Beliefs, Religions stipulates the difference between belief and religion, considering them to be two entities operating independently within the scope of regulation and subject of the application.

⁴It is clearly shown in Article 6, Clauses 1,2, and 3 of the 2016 Law on Beliefs, Religions.

⁵As shown in Section 3, Article 54, of the 2016 Law on Beliefs, Religions.

⁶Found in the Law on Belief, Religion 2016. Article 13 – Clause 1, Article 33 – Clause 1,2, Article 36 – Clause 2,3, Article 39 – Clause 1,2.

thinking regarding religious doctrine and practice in Vietnam (Tuấn, 2017).

The document of the 13th National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam (2021) keeps pointing out that bringing the nation into a new stage of growth is one of the most important jobs. This means emphasizing the improvement and effective implementation of ethnicity and religious policy, as well as strong national unity and religious cohesion. The Political Report of the 13th Congress clearly states that "Mobilizing, uniting, and gathering religious organizations, dignitaries, and believers to "live a good life," make active contributions to the construction and protection country. To ensure that religious organizations operate under the law and their charters and regulations recognized by the State. Promoting cultural values, good ethics, and resources of religions for national development. Resolutely fight and strictly handle those who take advantage of religion to oppose the CPV, State, and the socialist regime; divide and destroy religious unity and great national unity." (Đặng, 2021, p. 171)

At the XIII National Congress, the Communist Party of Vietnam included in the Document of the Congress the content of religion as a social resource and emphasized the need to promote the good cultural and moral values of spirituality for national development; improve the capacity, effectiveness, and efficiency of the state management of religious affairs (Tuấn, 2021). It is the affirmation of breakthrough points in the 2016 Law on Belief and Religion.

A particular feature of the third breakthrough shown in this 2016 Law on Belief, Religion is that it has summarized and introduced progressive regulations, reflecting the new perceptions of Vietnam that shares many characteristics with the rest of the globe. Therefore, the reality of religious life in Vietnam is as: "the religious situation is stable: the majority of dignitaries, officials, and religious compatriots feel secure and trust in the leadership of the Party and State, sticking with and accompanying the nation, contributing to the struggle and rejection of slanderous and claims against the government in violation of human rights and religious freedom." (Đặng, 2021, p. 45)

3. Consequences of the Policy of Freedom of Religion and Belief

The drastic changes in the perception of CPV in the Doimoi period, along with specific legal provisions in Vietnam have had a significant impact on the decision and helped to establish stability. The religious picture has more and more bright spots, with specific manifestations, such as:

The diversity, tolerance, and tolerance in religious belief activities in Vietnam show through statistics, i.e., 26.4% of the population classify as religious believers, 14.91% are believers of Buddha, 7.35% are Roman Catholics, 1.09% are Protestants, 1.16% are Cao Dai followers, and 1.47% are Hoa Hao Buddhists. Among the Buddhist community, Tonkin Buddhism is the main religion of the majority, the Kinh (Vietnamese). While about 1.2% of the population, most of the Khmer ethnic group, practice Southern Buddhism. The smaller religious groups make up less than 0.16%, and about 70,000 Cham ethnic people practice separate Hinduism on the South Central Coast. And about 80,000 Muslims live scattered across the country (of which about 40% follow Sunni lineage; the rest 60% follow Bani Islam); about 3,000 followers of the Baha'i religion; and approximately 1,000 are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (of the Church of Jesus Christ). The indigenous religious groups (Buu Son Ky Huong, Tu An Hieu Nghia, Minh Su Dao, Minh Ly Dao, Pure Land Buddhist Association, Hieu Nghia Ta Lon Buddhism) accounted for a total of 0.34%. A small group, mostly foreigners, are Jewish people residing in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. Other citizens identified themselves with no religion. Or beliefs of mascot worship, ancestor worship, village princes, patron saints, and national heroes. Many individuals combine traditional forms of worship and religious teachings, especially Buddhism and Christianity.⁷ Vietnam has 42 organizations belonging to 16 religions, 29,977 worshipping facilities, and 55,839 total dignitaries. (Cường, 2013)

⁷According to the Government Committee for Religious Affairs and the US Embassy in Vietnam, available at: <https://vn.usembassy.gov/vi/irfreport2018/>. Ngày 24/5/2020

Vietnam has a wide range of religious activities, with annual festivals representing numerous religions as their main form of expressions, such as Catholic Christmas, Buddhist Buddha's birthday, and a series of festivals of different. Other religions are practiced sincerely with the participation of hundreds of thousands of followers. In Vietnam, 95% of the population practices religion. There are nearly 8000 festivals, including 7,039 folk festivals, 332 revolutionary history festivals, 544 religious festivals, ten imported festivals, and more than 40 other festivals every year. These activities are not only the spiritual needs of religious people protected by law. Several major religious festivals have become common festivals among people, demonstrating the harmony of religion and life and tightening the extreme solidarity of the entire Vietnamese nation.

Religious organizations also engage in international exchanges, with numerous foreign religious delegations visiting Vietnam and numerous domestic religious organizations traveling overseas. Numerous significant international religious events are planned. Attracting hundreds of thousands of attendees, such as Vesak Celebrations 2008, 2014, and 2019; the 11th World Conference of Buddhist Women 2009; celebrating 100 years of Protestantism in Vietnam in 2011; the Catholic Holy Year 2010, the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Vietnamese clergy and the 350th anniversary of the establishment of the two dioceses of Tonkin and Outer, the Asian Bishops Conference, etc, religious organizations have grown their involvement in global affairs as well. Many temples belonging to the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha have been in many parts of the world as Russia, the Czech Republic, Poland, and Ukraine. The Vietnamese Buddhist Sangha has admitted to 07 Vietnamese Buddhist Associations in France, Russia, Germany, the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Ukraine, and a Representative Board of monks studying abroad in India; many international cooperation activities of the Catholic Church, Cao Dai Churches, Protestant, and Muslim were promoted. Over the past ten years, more than 1,200 times dignitaries, monks, and followers of religions have traveled abroad for religious training courses, conferences, and seminars with international religious organizations; nearly 200 foreign delegations with dozens to hundreds of participants entered Vietnam for religious activities.

Currently, there are 04 academies, 08 colleges, and 32 intermediate schools of Buddhism. The Catholic Church established the Second Campus of St. Joseph's Hanoi Seminary at the Bishop's House of Bui Chu and the Grand Seminary of Saint Joseph of Xuan Loc in the Diocese of Xuan Loc, bringing the total number to 07 major seminaries and one brand. The General Association of Evangelical Churches of Vietnam (Northern region) established the Institute of Biblical Theology in Hanoi. Some other religious organizations are also promoting schools to train people specializing in religious activities under the law. There have been 40 intermediate schools and colleges affiliated with religious organizations, as well as 13 religious bachelor's training schools for churches. Approximately 13,000 people are enrolled in religious training schools, and more than a thousand members of religious organizations are pursuing master and doctoral degrees abroad (Cường, 2017).

For Catholics and Buddhists alone, in 2004, the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha had 37,775 monks and nuns. By 2012, it had increased to 46,699 monks and nuns; The Catholic Church grew from 2,920 priests to 4,044 priests. There are 10,816 seals issued to religious organizations to use (especially Khmer Theravada Buddhism 452/452 temples have seals). There are about 20,000 worshipping establishments repaired and newly built. Competent governmental agencies have donated hundreds of hectares of land for the construction of worship facilities, in certain notable cases, such as: allocating land to the Archbishop's House of Ho Chi Minh City to set up a center; being allotted 7,500m² of land to the General Confederation of Evangelical Churches of Vietnam (South) to build the Institute of Biblical Theology; assigned 20 hectares to build the Vietnam Buddhist Academy in Ho Chi Minh City, 10 hectares to build the Vietnam Buddhist Academy in Hanoi; allocated more than 11,000m² of land to the Bishopric of Buon Ma Thuot, more than 9,000m² of land to the Bishop's House of Da Nang, 15 hectares of land to La Vang Parish, Quang Tri to expand religious facilities.

In the printing and publishing of religious publications, since 2006, Religion Publishing House has been authorized to print and publish more than 6,000 religious publications, including more than 4,700 titles with 14,535,464 printed documents; more than 1,000 MP3, VCD, CD, and DVDs;

photos, calendars, and flags; and more than 2,546,000 copies in numerous languages, including English, French, and the ethnic languages of Khmer, Ede, Gia Rai, and Ba Na.

Social activities of religious organizations and individuals focus on kindergarten, vocational training, humanitarian, relief, and health, with various forms and contents of activities such as opening schools, preschool kindergartens, love classes, vocational training centers, social protection centers, supporting flood victims, providing rice, porridge, and boiling water for the poor and sick. Currently, there are more than 300 eastern and western medical examination and treatment facilities, more than 300 kindergartens with over 100 schools, and more than 100 social protection facilities that care for the aged, handicapped, defenseless, Agent Orange victims, and HIV-positive persons. Each year, tens of billions of Vietnamese dong are donated by people and religious organizations to carry out these initiatives (vũ, 2015).

Religious activities gradually become more organized, and the masses of believers, monks, clergy, and religious dignitaries feel secure, excited, and more confident in the Party's lines, policies, and laws. Religion and beliefs have merged into the Vietnamese cultural flow, enriching the distinctive cultural traits of the Vietnamese people. Vietnam, like every other nation in the world, does not let any religion predominate over the rule of law, the national interest, or the public good.

An objective requirement in religious life in Vietnam is whether endogenous or exogenous religions, which religions want to develop must be in harmony with the cultural flow of the nation and subject to the management of the State. One of the fundamental mottos established by the State of Vietnam is to be open and impartial, without prejudice or discrimination toward different religions, when examining and resolving issues relating to belief and religion. The freedom of religion and belief is not unrestricted because going beyond a certain point would once more violate the legal rights of others. True freedom is that the rights of one individual in one community are not violated by the rights of other people or other communities. There is not a single nation where people or religious organizations are permitted to conduct their business in defiance of the local laws of that country.

4. Conclusion

Vietnam is a young nation with a wealth of historical traditions and ideals. As a result, Vietnam has a unique and diversified religious landscape. Since 1945, the State of Vietnam has focused on these spiritual ideals in the modern era. From the point of view of the head of the country - Ho Chi Minh to the CPV and the State's policies, it has been consistent in taking care of the people's freedom of belief and religion. In more than 75 years of establishment and development, the policy and law on religion in Vietnam have undergone three drastic changes and have become progressively perfect. These are the guiding views of Ho Chi Minh in the government decree of 1955, the 1990 Communist Party of Vietnam statement, and the 2016 Law on Belief and Religion. It demonstrates ongoing progress, gradually absorbing and inheriting humanity and the rule of law to create a modern, civilized, rule-of-law state that complies with Vietnamese and international norms.

Religious life in Vietnam is favorable for the development of a religious market. Similar to many other nations in the region, the plurality of religions is evident in many different ways. The new understanding of spirituality in Vietnam is also evidently reflected in the spiritual and social lives of individuals and groups, along with the revision of religious policy. The phenomena of re-creating spiritual life have been significantly shaped by the acknowledgment of faiths as well as the religious organizations that founded the institutions for the church. Because of this occurrence, the Vietnamese government must keep perfecting its laws governing religion and belief. Although the Party and the State of Vietnam have made great efforts in perceiving, formulating, and perfecting policies to create better conditions for the people to exercise freedom of belief and religion, when compared with international law, there are still no similarities. It is considered that the necessity for nations to continue cooperating to close the gap, improve mutual understanding, and lessen judgment and criticism of one another is seen as a common problem.

Additionally, under the effect of legislation and regulations that are not particularly binding, the rich movements and advances in religious life in Vietnam constantly give rise to new perceptions. It also means that in Vietnam, it is necessary to continue to be aware of the concept of "freedom of religion and belief," as well as promote the widespread sharing of one's perceptions with the community in the world. These activities will help the world comprehend Vietnam better, facilitate Vietnam's integration into global advancements, and progress people-centered development.

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