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Socio Economic Development According to Sustainable Ecological Model: The Case of Vietnam

Dr. Pham Cong Nhat

Associate Professor, University of Social Sciences and Humanities,
Vietnam National University, Hanoi, Vietnam

Abstract:

Nowadays, many countries consider the sustainable ecological model as an inevitable trend in their socio-economic development. During its development process, Vietnam is affected by unfavorable factors due to the global climate change. Therefore, it is requested to select a sustainable socio-economic development strategy as one of the priorities for the development. However, the success of this development model in Vietnam depends on many factors. This article analyses the theories and practices of the pillars for a sustainable ecology model. Then, some basic solutions are recommended to contribute to socio-economic construction and development in the sustainable ecology model in Vietnam today. This article is also part of my research results and my colleagues have done many research projects on ecological philosophy and application in social development in Vietnam in recent years.

Keywords: *Green economy, environmental protection, sustainable development, democratic social institutions,*

1. Introduction

In the history of its development, it seems that this is the first-time humanity has faced to the great threats and challenges in the development caused by the influences of its own uncontrolled actions. The predictions that the development of the humanity is confronted with the disintegration of social and natural ecological structures seem to become a reality for all nations over the world, especially countries that are directly affected by climate change as Vietnam. As a developing country in the context of many impacts from climate change trends in the world, the selection of solutions for sustainable ecological development is considered as a smart choice of Vietnam. According to the Vietnamese Government: Vietnam always determines sustainable development as both a requirement and a goal: "rich, strong, fair and civilized people; contribute to preserving peace, strengthening cooperation, prosperity in the region and the world". At the same time, The Vietnamese Government also affirmed: "Sustainable development is the right choice, if not the only one. This poses many challenges to all countries, especially for developing countries" (Vu Duc Dam, 2018). This article bases on the analysis of the real situation, then recommends some solutions to construct and develop the society as well as the economy in the sustainable ecology model – a development model regarded as one essential trend associated with specific conditions in Vietnam today.

2. Research methodology

- General methods: Analytical method: including quantitative and qualitative analysis; Synthesis, abstraction, generalization, systematization of some theoretical and practical issues related to the content of the article.
- Interdisciplinary approach method: Using the philosophical method to study, evaluate some research results of some sciences related to the topic of the article such as ecology, ecological ethics, ecological economics, etc.
- Some of the content presented in this article is also part of the research results of some of the same research topics of my work with colleagues at National University of Hanoi (VNU), Vietnam in recent years...

3. Research Results

Sustainable ecological model is a new term in ecological sciences that describes an artificial ecological structure that includes natural, social and human factors existing and interacting, assisting each other in order to achieve a stable, long-term (sustainable) development goal. Developing the society and the economy in the sustainable ecology model is also a concept used by many countries in recent years. This concept which refers to the construction and development of a particular country's socio-economy bases on a sustainable ecology model and three basic pillars: green economy, sustainable environmental protection and development and democratic social institutions.

Green economy. According to the economists, green economy is defined as an economy which mitigates environmental risks and ecological scarcity and aims at the sustainable development without impairing the environment. On the one hand, the green economy is closely related to ecological economics. On the other hand, it also has some connections to politics (Lynn R. Kahle, Eda Gurel-Atay, Eds, 2014). Visualizing the green economy is a combination of three elements: economic, social and environmental. Sustainable green economy is an economy that generates a lot of profit or

useful values towards the development of human society's life. Today, the concept of green economy is not only understood in terms of activities in the economic sector alone but also in cultural and social activities, in which environmental friendly factors are considered Core elements in activities to create green economy. The report of the green economy of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) in 2011 also states that "to be green, an economy must not only be efficient, but also fair. Fairness implies recognizing global and country level equity dimensions, particularly in assuring a just transition to an economy that is low-carbon, resource efficient, and socially inclusive" (UNEP, 2011). A green economy is an economy or model of economic development basing on sustainable development and knowledge of ecological economics. The primary goal of green economy is to create jobs, ensure sustainable economic growth and prevent environmental pollution, global warming, resource depletion and environmental degradation. One of the distinguishing features of green economy is the emergence of green labeling and eco-labeling methods that have appeared when the consumers have to face the friendly measurements for the environment and sustainable development. Many industries are beginning to apply these standards as an effective way to promote the green practices in a globalized economy... Green economy development is considered as one of the basic pillars of socio-economic development in the ecological and sustainable model.

Environmental protection and sustainable development. Environment in a narrow sense does not take into account natural resources, but only includes natural and social factors directly related to the quality of human life. The environment in a broad sense is all the natural and social factors necessary for human living and production, such as natural resources, air, land, water, light, landscape and relations society. The concept of environment, in terms of sustainable development, is understood in a broad sense including all factors of infertility and biology, nature and society, which have direct or indirect effects on health, human life. Human life whether in the early period or even in the modern development period depends very much on the surrounding environment. Humans are facing many challenges when the environment is decline or degraded environment. Environmental degradation is a change in the quality and quantity of environmental components, adversely affecting the lives of people and nature, destroying ecosystems and extinction of wildlife. In particular, environmental components are understood as elements that create the environment: air, water, land, sound, light, underground, mountains, forests, rivers, lakes, sea creatures, ecosystems (Johnson, D.L., S.H. Ambrose, T.J. Bassett, M.L. Bowen, D.E. Crumme, J.S. Isaacson, D.N. Johnson, P. Lamb, M. Saul, and A.E. Winter-Nelson, 1997). Sustainable environmental protection and development must first be to protect the natural environment so that it is always clean and to ensure that every organism can survive there. In the ecological sciences, the concept of sustainability (originated from sustainable and ability) is the property of biological system to maintain the limitless diversity and productivity. Principle of organization for sustainability is the sustainable development including four interconnected sectors: ecology, economics, politics and culture (James, Paul; Magee, Liam; Scerri, Andy; Steger, Manfred B, 2015; and Andy Scerri; Paul James; Jaes A. Thom; Lin Padgham; Sarah Hickmott; Hepu Deng; Felicity Cahill, 2013). By approaching it continually and dynamically, the result of this process can form a sustainable system (Wandenberg, JC, 2016). However, sustainability is first manifested in the natural environment. Therefore, environmental protection and sustainability must first contribute to constructing and preserving the nature sustainably. The natural environment itself is a perfect ecosystem, but since the appearance of human beings and their excessive intervention, the natural environment has become unbalanced, polluted, which threatens the survival of every living organism. Protecting the environment (first of all is natural environment) sustainably is a very important premise of constructing and developing the society and the economy in a sustainable ecological model.

Democratic social institutions. Today, "democracy" has become a fundamental term of popular and dominant political theories in the world. This is reflected not only in a large number of democratic countries in reality, but also in how most countries in the world, regardless of its political system, call themselves a system. Democratic system, or rule on behalf of the people and for the benefit of the people, including Vietnam. A political regime or a government takes the element of "democracy" into the fundamental, fundamental principles for maintaining, managing and developing society thereby creating a specific institution called democratic society institutions. Democratic social institutions are the system of institutions, values, norms of freedom and democracy that incorporate the principles of organization and operation of democracy that guarantees human rights and the ability to self-protect human rights of each individual. The democratic society is a social framework founded on democracy - a state regime built on positive political ideology whose official goal is to create a system of adequate mechanisms and legal environment through reformed and progressive measures. In a democratic society, all activities of the state and citizens are governed by a democratic system, in which the ownership of the people is respected and ensured by the legal system through the tool that is mainly the rule of law. As the present democratic social institutions apply universal suffrage for their voting system (Rex Martin, 2003), it is necessary to mobilize people's participation, social criticism, and fight for social progress. In fact, now a democracy is based on three main pillars: first, the market economy is the economy operated by the influence of market rules with many economic components which exists competitively and equally. A perfect market economy is often regarded as the backbone of the democratic society. Second, the rule of law, is the form of the State building the law to manage society and putting itself under the law. In the state, the rule of law is always placed on the top with the principle "People have the right to do all that the law does not prohibit and use the law to protect their legal rights and benefits. State agencies and cadres, civil servants can only do what the law allows. All management decisions of the State must be transparent" (Nguyen Tan Dung (2014). Third, democratic social institutions, it is the society run by democratic social institutions within the framework of a complete rule of law. In democratic social institutions, all thoughts, aspirations and voices of the people are respected. The state was born not to protect the interests of the faction but to be a tool for the people to implement their mastery. The core of democracy lies in the recognition of the difference. The nature of the difference is each one's own. Human

society is always diverse and complex, because it has both a common and a separate one. If it is impossible to find the common, the collective, the community, it is difficult to form society. But if we only acknowledge the existence of the common and deny the existence of the particular, then society cannot develop well. During the period of feudalism, a social regime lasting thousands of years, people only impose common things on everyone. Only in modern times, when the sense of individualism is formed, do people respect the privacy and privacy of each person. In the process of operation and management, only when the State creates the necessary mechanisms and legal systems to respect and protect differences, only then can a real democratic society be created. Democratic social institutions are also one of the important objectives in socio-economic development in the sustainable ecology model at the present.

Developing a sustainable society and economy in the sustainable ecological model is one of the essential trends of many countries in the world, including the ones that are suffering many impacts of global climate change trends such as Vietnam.

In Vietnam, from The 8th Congress (1996), The Communist Party of Vietnam has started to set goals for the strategy of constructing and developing the social-economy in the direction of "rapid economic growth, high efficiency and sustainability growth solutions for social problems, security and national defence ensured, consolidation of national security and defense, improvement of public life..." (Vietnamese Communist Party, 1996; p.82). The viewpoint of Vietnam's socio-economic development has been affirmed in the documents of the 9th, 10th, and 11th Congresses, especially in the 2011-2020 socio-economic development strategy. That is "rapid development associated with sustainable development, sustainable development is required throughout the Strategy" (Vietnamese Communist Party, 2006; p.98). At The 12th Congress, the viewpoint of constructing and developing the social-economy in a sustainable ecological model was concretized once again by The Communist Party of Vietnam with the strategy "renew the growth model". Therefore, "Model of growth in the coming time will prefer the combination of intensive and extensive development with more concentrations on intensive development, whose goal is to raise the productivity and competitiveness by effectively exploiting scientific-technological advances, increasing labour productivity, improving the quality of human resources, being active in international integration, developing rapidly but sustainably, harmonizing short-term and long-term goals as well as economic growth and cultural development, exercising social progress and equality, being co-friendly, and ameliorating the material and spiritual life of the people..." (Vietnamese Communist Party, 2016; p.87). Particularly, The Politburo, The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam has recently issued Resolution no 23-NQ/TW on 23rd March 2018 on Orientation for constructing the national industrial development policy until 2030 with the vision to 2045. One of the primary guiding viewpoints emphasized by the Resolution was: "Make use of as much as possible the country's advantage in the period of golden population; exploit thoroughly the achievements of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4.0), the advantages of the trade in order to develop effectively some key industries with the strategies, competitive edge; develop decisively the information technology industry, electronic industry; develop centrally the processing and manufacturing industry; develop considerably the intelligent manufacturing industry; focus on developing the green industry" (Vietnamese Communist Party, 2018). According to the analysis above, sustainable ecology model is urgent and essential for Vietnam's current society and economy.

Being a developing country carrying out industrialization and modernization, in recent years, Vietnam has been recognized as one of the countries with fast socio-economic development pace in the region and over the world. After more than 30 years since the reform of Vietnam, the country's socio-economic development has generally been improved, the people's material life has been gradually improved, and the spiritual and social life has been developed progressively. The development of Vietnamese society and economy has had development achievements which are worth encouraging. However, due to many objective and subjective reasons, Vietnam's socio-economic development in the past few years also has created many challenges to the demands of socio-economic development in a sustainable ecological model. In terms of economy, due to the limitations of science, technology and the quality of the labor force; the current level of production in Vietnam is still backward and unstable. It can be seen clearly in the field of agricultural production.

Vietnam is one of the countries with advantages in agricultural production, yet it does not know how to make use of this strength. Although the labor force in the agricultural sector is relatively crowded (accounting for 41.9% of the country's labor force in 2016), (General Statistics Office of Vietnam, 2016), labor productivity is low due to the limited qualifications of labor and backward technology. Therefore, agricultural contributions to the overall growth of the economy are insufficient and unsustainable. (In 2016, the growth rate of the agricultural sector was only 1.36%, much lower than 2011; the contribution ratio of agriculture accounted for only 16.32% in the general structure of the economy), (Communist Review, 2017). Industrial production and service have made major contributions to the Vietnamese economy. However, in reality, the growth of the Vietnamese economy over the past time mainly relies on exploitation, and export of raw materials. Highly sustainable industrial sectors such as financial services, transportation, tourism, information technology, etc. have developed but not firmly.

In Vietnam, the environmental protection in a sustainable way is facing lots of challenges. Due to limited public awareness of environmental issues and inadequate legal system, especially the law on environmental protection, over the past few years, we have accidentally prioritized the mode of production and the life style which is unfriendly to the nature. This is one of the main causes leading to current difficulties in protecting the ecosystem in Vietnam. Some key environmental indicators even fall below average compared to other countries in the area and in the world. According to the latest study published in early 2016, the overall ranking of Vietnam after measuring five indicators, was at 131st in the world, lower than China at 109th place, Syria at 101st, and the United-States at 26th. Finland, a country in Northern Europe, ranked top in the chart. Specifically, in terms of wastewater treatment, Vietnam scored 19.8/100 points, ranking in 124th place among 139 countries. Regarding forest cover, with a score of 23.97/100 points, Vietnam was at 100th in

the total of 116 countries. Whereas, this Southern Asian country was near bottom in Climate and Energy rankings, placed at 105th out of 113 countries (Tien phong Newspaper. Online version, 2016). Continuous environmental degradation along with natural disasters increasingly linked to climate change have been causing significant human and material damage as well as putting huge pressure on the nation's sustainable development.

During the past years, "the socialist rule of law has been progressively improved and perfected; its effectiveness and efficiency have been increased". However, in order to have a real democracy accelerating the sustainable socio-economic development, many shortcomings and challenges need to be overcome. Viewpoints and perceptions towards social democracy are, in general, still controversial. Moreover, there are great difficulties in implementing people's mastery in economic, political and social fields due to an adequate system of mechanisms, policies and laws. "The mastery of people in many areas and fields is still violated. At times, the exercise of the democracy is limited or just a formality in some places; it is also reported that some people distort the democracy and use it as a pretext to disrupt the national unity or disturb national security, social order and safety" (Vietnamese Communist Party, 2016; p.168). In addition, many pressing social problems are going on, such as fall back into poverty, youth unemployment, increasing social evils and criminal offences. These issues along with corruption and red tape, which are escalating and become more sophisticated, are leading to the erosion of social trust, hindering the renovation and the sustainable socio-economic development.

All these drawbacks and challenges prove that to attain the core objectives of the national strategy for sustainable socio-economic development as analyzed above, Vietnam should take the following measures comprehensively:

Firstly, it is necessary to agree on and understand thoroughly the views of the Party and the State of Vietnam on linking socio-economic development objectives with sustainable ecological models. In the context of market economy and the impact of many factors, there are still many localities, industries and production and business units (including all state, collective, private or foreign investment sectors - FDI) continue to pursue economic growth, increase profits at all costs, including implicitly violating or taking advantage of the State's legal loopholes, especially the law on environmental protection. The phenomenon of some enterprises, among them private enterprises, enterprises with foreign direct investment for many reasons, attach much importance to the profit growth of enterprises did not seriously implement the requirements on waste treatment to protect the environment - conditions must be committed to implementation right from the time of licensing; Besides, in some localities in the country, for a long time, due to the reason of focusing on the growth achievement only or to attract more enterprises to invest in production development in the locality, the security work has been overlooked environmental protection, etc....are bottlenecks that are very worrisome in the strategy of environmental protection and sustainable development. Therefore, it is necessary to continue to deeply understand and grasp the views of The Party and State of Vietnam on sustainable development, resolutely eliminate the idea of economic development at all costs. Because if economic development is overlooked or neglected the goal of social development and environmental protection, the price to pay will not be fully measured; even the result will be "anti-development". Sustainable development cannot be just a common way, but more importantly, it needs to be socialized, becoming a concrete awareness and practical action of every subject, of the whole society (Hoang Dinh Cuc, 2009; p.34).

Secondly, stimulating Vietnam's "Green Growth Strategy" in every sectors of the economy will be a good way to go. One of the goals of this strategy is to accelerate the economic restructuring, make the best use of natural resources, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by researching, applying green technology and developing infrastructure. As a result, Vietnam can improve economic efficiency, respond to climate change, contribute to the poverty alleviation, and create driving force for the sustainable development of the economy. The standpoint is that green growth is by the people and for the people, society will develop in harmony with natural environment in order to reduce the poverty, enhance citizen's material and spiritual life. To do so, it is necessary to restructure the economy and improve the institutions in a way that encourages economic sectors to employ effectively natural resources to make high value added. Besides, the country should restrict and then eliminate the industries exhausting natural resources and polluting the environment. In the short time, the exploitation and production of raw materials (petroleum, coal, rare ores, etc.) need to be slow down if technique and technology cannot meet the requirement of a green economy. Vietnam should also study, apply and update widely modern technology in the country as well as in the world to be more effective in the use of resources and friendly to the environment. Additionally, it is essential to strengthen the propaganda on the active role of the economic sectors and every single individual in establishing a green economy nationwide. In company with the improvement of the laws and policies, the country needs to build an appropriate machinery of government in charge of managing and running the green economy in every field.

Thirdly, promoting the strategy for durable management and protection of the environment should be integrated into Vietnam's actions. To be precise, departments, branches, administrative agencies and enterprises have to implement fully and properly viewpoints, guidelines, policies of the Party and the State on environmental management and protection, which is basis for sustainable development. The perception about the relationship between economic growth and ecological protection must be changed. Economic growth is not always the priority over the measures against potential polluting sources and polluted areas. Importance should, in addition, be attached to the investments in research and application of environmental protection technologies. Regarding international relations, it is a must to intensify global cooperation in training and developing Vietnam's human resources, applying world's advanced technologies, which are adaptable to enterprise's situation, in ecological protection. Entrepreneurs, moreover, should be ready to renovate their production technologies to be more modern, eco-friendly, and resource-saving. Meanwhile, the government has to revise, amend, supplement and finalize policies on management of investment in science and technology for the good of the environment. As a result, the policies supporting investments at any price must be removed because they can turn Vietnam into a landing field for outdated technologies. In the short term, Vietnam had better concentrate on curbing and

minimizing new sources of pollution, especially, on controlling the projects that discharge a great volume of sewage into environment, polluting manufacturing sectors such as steelmaking, mining, thermal power, paper production, and textile dyeing, controlling the discharge of seriously polluting factories as well as those with outdated technologies. For the contaminated areas, there must have methods for amelioration and rehabilitation. Simultaneously, Government should increasingly invest in environmental infrastructure and technology. For the time being, more attention needs to be paid on enhancing capacity to respond to climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions; encouraging scientific research, development and application of ecological technology; intensifying and diversifying investments in environmental protection; strengthening the propaganda in order to raise public's awareness of the importance of environmental protection. In the long term, it is crucial to finalize the legal system for environmental protection. By which, Vietnamese society and economy will have a legal basis for its sustainable socio-economic development.

Finally, renovating Vietnamese social institutions in the pursuit of democracy and progress which meet the demand for ecologically sustainable socio-economic development certainly plays an important role. This should be even considered a key solution to ensure the success in the strategy of sustainable socio-economic development. To realize this, Vietnam's first mission is to reform its leadership style towards political system. On the one hand, the country consolidates Party's leadership; on the other hand, it builds a mechanism for democracy, an insurance for the effectiveness of the political system. Then, Vietnam's socialist model, which is based on democracy, rule of law, and modernity, is continued and perfected as emphasized in the Resolution of 12th National Party Congress: "In its organization and operation, the Government has to promote democracy, conform to the requirements of the rule of law, produce positive changes, and obtain better results. Building the rule of law socialist state must be carried out synchronously in legislative, executive, judicial aspects, and be carried out synchronously with the renovation for a streamlined, effective and efficient political system along with economic, cultural, and social renovation". Continuing to complete the mechanism for legal and constitutional protection" (Vietnamese Communist Party, 2016; p.175). Additionally, it is necessary to keep renewing the operation of institutions of the state, namely Vietnamese Fatherland Front, Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union, associations and unions. Pursuing the democracy and reality, these organizations create a real democratic society to encourage the active participation of Vietnamese from all classes in the establishing and pushing the socio-economy based on the sustainable socio-economic development model

Sixth, continue to enhance the implementation of Vietnam Sustainable Development Strategy until 2020 with the vision to 2030.

In order to complete these missions, Vietnam's viewpoints and solutions are:

Viewpoints: Human beings are the center of sustainable development. The government should consider the role of people as the key subject, resources and targets of sustainable development, aim to fully meet the material and spiritual demand of people of all strata, make the country wealthy and strong, the society democratic, equal and civilized; develop an independent and self-reliant economy with active international integration for sustainable development (Vietnam Government Portal, 2012). Sustainable development is the requirement lasting throughout the process of national development; Sustainable development is the common work of the whole Party, people, authorities at all levels, ministries, agencies, localities, enterprises, social organizations, communities and individuals; Sparingly and effectively exploit natural resources, particularly non-renewable resources, preserve and improve living environment; build a learning society, environmentally-friendly lifestyle, sustainable production and consumption. Besides, science and technology are the foundation and driving force of national sustainable development. Modern, clean and environmentally-friendly technologies need to be widely applied in production fields.

Solutions: Continue to improve institutional system and national administration quality for sustainable development; enhance investments and effectively use State-funded capital to implement the Strategy for Sustainable Development in Vietnam by 2020 with the vision to 2030; Accelerate dissemination and education to raise the whole society's awareness of sustainable development; Intensify the role, responsibility and participation of businesses, socio-political organizations, social-professional organizations, non-governmental organizations, and residential communities in deploying, consulting, criticizing and proposing sustainable development policies; Amplify the role and effects of science and technology, push up technological renovation to implement sustainable development; Expand international cooperation in the fields of information exchange, science and technology for sustainable development, develop environmental economics (waste treatment, energy-saving technology, low-carbon, and waste renewal technology, etc....), (Pham Cong Nhat, 2018; p.731-741).

4. Conclusion

Constructing and promoting sustainable socio-economic development are not only an objective tendency, but also an urgent requirement of Vietnamese economic development. Based on the features of socio-economic development in the country as well as the negative impacts of climate change on a global scale, in the past years, Vietnam has actively prepared and deployed the strategy for sustainable socio-economic development, which has gained enormous encouraging results. However, in order to achieve successfully this socio-economic development strategy and the resolutions of the Party and the State of Vietnam, it is essential to implement synchronously the key solutions analyzed in the article above. The most important factor is still the right attitude and determination of every levels, branches and individuals in transforming Vietnam's strategy for sustainable socio-economic development from vision into reality in the upcoming years.

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