

Basic Issues Of Power Alienation In Vietnam Today

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Abstract:

Alienation of power is a negative phenomenon that occurs when power is misused and deviates from the purpose of serving the common interest, causing many bad consequences for the development of society. From a philosophical perspective, alienation of power is not only an administrative or legal issue but also an issue of ethics, philosophy of life, and the nature of power in society. Studying alienation of power through a philosophical lens supports us clearly in understanding the underlying causes, manifestations, and proposing appropriate solutions to ensure that power is always used correctly, transparently, and responsibly. The article analyzes and clarifies the basic issues related to the alienation of power in Vietnam today. Accordingly, in the current period, the manifestations of power alienation are diverse, mainly expressed through: alienation of power in the performance of public duties and corruption, bribery, profiteering from policies; lack of transparency, low responsibility in accountability; formation of interest groups to manipulate policies and personnel. The article also presents and analyzes three basic solutions to prevent the alienation of power in Vietnam today. The limitation of the article is that it has not pointed out and explored the factors affecting the alienation of power in Vietnam today.

Keywords: power; alienation of power; state; Vietnam

1. INTRODUCTION

State power is a special form of political power, organized and exercised through the state apparatus to serve the common interests of the people and society. In the organization of modern state power, the problem is not whether there is power or not, but how to control and use that power to be not abused or corrupted. C. Montesquieu warned: “Anyone who has power is led to abuse it; he continues until he finds limits” (Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, 1748). This sentence has become an important theoretical premise for the ideology of decentralization and control of power in a rule-of-law state. In Vietnam, state power is unified, with a division of labor, coordination, and control among agencies in the implementation of legislative, executive, and judicial powers - according to the 2013 Constitution, Article 2, clauses 1 and 2 affirmed that: “*The Socialist Republic of Vietnam is a socialist rule-of-law state of the People, by the People, and for the People. State power is unified, with a division, coordination, and control among state agencies in the exercise of legislative, executive, and judicial powers*”. However, reality shows that the organization and operation of power in Vietnam today still have shortcomings related to the alienation of power. This phenomenon manifests in many forms, such as abuse of power, corruption, group interests, buying and selling power, shirking responsibility, and manipulating policies to serve personal or small group interests. Major cases in recent times (such as the Viet A, AIC, Van Thinh Phat cases...) are concrete evidence of the serious consequences of corrupted power, causing not only economic damage but also eroding people’s trust in the public authority. Alienation of power is one of the most profound manifestations of the degradation of political ideology, morality, and lifestyle - an issue that the Communist Party of Vietnam has repeatedly warned about. In the 4th Plenum of the 12th Central Committee (2016), the Party clearly stated: “A not insignificant number of cadres and Party members, including those holding leadership and managerial positions - even at high levels - have shown signs of degradation in political ideology, ethics, and lifestyle, with manifestations of ‘self-evolution’ and ‘self-transformation’.” To build a truly rule-of-law State of the people, by the people, and for the people - as the strategic goal identified in the Documents of the

13th National Party Congress – it is necessary to fully, comprehensively, and scientifically identify the basic issues of power alienation. This is not only an urgent theoretical requirement but also a pressing demand arising from the realities of national governance. In the new era, the development of the Vietnamese State necessitates a fundamental shift in mindset, institutional reform, enhanced administrative capacity, and improved operational effectiveness - aiming toward the construction of a socialist rule-of-law state that serves the cause of national industrialization, modernization, and international integration. Therefore, studying the basic issues related to the alienation of power in Vietnam today is both timely and essential.

Research question

Question 1: What are the specific manifestations of power alienation?

Question 2: What are the basic solutions to prevent alienation of power in Vietnam today?

Research Objective

The purpose of the article is to analyze and clarify the basic content related to the alienation of power in Vietnam today.

Research Method

Theoretical research methods: This study employs methods of analysis, synthesis, and theoretical systematization to identify key concepts of tools and construct the theoretical framework of the article. In addition, it integrates a combination of specific research approaches such as deduction and induction, logical and historical analysis, comparative methods, and the juxtaposition of theoretical perspectives with practical realities.

CONTENT

1.1. *Alienation of power and its specific manifestations*

Power is considered the ability of an individual or organization to force other individuals or organizations to obey their will. It arises from the need to organize common activities, to divide social labor, and to manage society. Power is an objectively necessary condition and means to ensure the normal operation of any social community. Power exists in every organized, purposeful community of people in a class society as well as a classless society, for society in general as well as for its different parts. Power has some outstanding characteristics: Social interaction; Purpose; Coercion; Legitimacy. When power is left unchecked, its negative side becomes the most significant factor contributing to the ethics and political degradation of the cadres - corrupting not only the individuals entrusted with authority but also the entire apparatus itself. As a result, the state apparatus risks losing its nature as a state “of the people, by the people, and for the people” and gradually transforms into a state that acts contrary to the interests of the people. Power inherently carries the risk of corruption; in fact, abuse may be considered a congenital defect of power itself. Wherever power exists, so too does the potential for its abuse. With that concept, it can be understood that: Alienation of power is the incorrect, incomplete, or excessive implementation of the power given in the process of performing one’s duties, responsibilities, and powers, such as abuse of power, taking advantage of power, not implementing or not fully implementing the power given. In society, there are still many conflicts of interest, even conflicts of an antagonistic nature, and the presence of corruption can be seen in many areas and at many times. According to a unified understanding, alienation of power is the act of some cadres and civil servants abusing political power and state power to do wrong things to benefit themselves or a group of people, causing harm to the common interests of the collective, and the interests of the nation and people. In modern society, the alienation of power becomes more sophisticated and takes many complex forms. The nature of power alienation is the process of power being distorted, deviating from the goal of serving the common good, and

being dominated by personal interests or interest groups. In Vietnam, alienation of power is taking place in many different forms and levels, in the political, administrative, and judicial systems. The main manifestations include:

Firstly, abuse of power in the performance of public duties and corruption, bribery, and profiteering from policies.

Abuse of power in the performance of public duties is a common manifestation of power alienation, when individuals or groups of people in the public apparatus take advantage of their positions to exceed their assigned authority, and make illegal decisions or decisions that do not serve the public interest. Typical cases include improper appointments of cadres, administrative interference in judicial activities, arbitrary issuance of investment licenses, and misaligned planning decisions. For example, in several major cases - such as the Viet A Company scandal (2021 - 2022) - leaders at various ministries, sectors, and localities abused their power in licensing and procuring medical equipment, causing serious losses to the state budget.

In addition, corruption, bribery, and profiteering from policies are the most obvious and dangerous forms of power alienation, manifested in turning power into a tool for personal gain. Actions such as accepting bribes, “protecting” businesses for personal gain, manipulating legislation, and profiteering from public investment programs, bidding processes, and public procurement are common manifestations. The nature of corruption is the transformation of public power into a tool for personal gain, contrary to the goal of serving the people and society. Corrupt behavior can take many forms: accepting bribes, giving bribes, taking advantage of positions to appropriate assets, issuing policies that benefit interest groups, etc. Common forms in Vietnam currently are: Receiving bribes in operations, licensing, and recruitment. A typical example in this case is the Viet A scandal (2021–2022): many cadres of the Ministry of Health, provincial CDCs, and senior leaders received bribes in the purchase of COVID-19 test kits, causing a loss of thousands of billions of VND; Profiteering from public policies and planning. A typical example is the Van Thinh Phat Group case (2022): manipulating the bond market, withdrawing money from banks causing particularly serious damage to the national finance; Petty corruption in the public administration sector. This is reflected in practices such as paying unofficial “grease payments” to expedite paperwork, obtain permits, or receive preferential treatment. Such petty corruption occurs in various administrative agencies - such as tax authorities, business registration offices, and land management departments. Although it may not cause substantial economic losses, petty corruption severely erodes public trust and fosters a distorted “give-and-take” culture within the bureaucracy.

Secondly, the formation of interest groups to manipulate policies and “buy positions and power” and manipulate personnel.

The collusion between some cadres with positions and power and businesses to manipulate and control policies, planning, and public investment is a very sophisticated manifestation of alienation. Power here is used not to serve the people, but to protect the interests of a specific group of people. Interest groups are informal groups of individuals or organizations with close ties in power, economics, or social status, aiming to pursue their interests by influencing, dominating, or controlling the process of formulating and implementing public policies. When interest groups operate away from the control of the law and the public, they can become negative interest groups - a clear manifestation of alienation of state power. A typical example is the Van Thinh Phat Group case (2022), in which many individuals with great influence in the banking, securities, and real estate systems were prosecuted for manipulating financial policies, causing great damage to the economy. In addition, one of the serious manifestations of power alienation is the formation of a mechanism of “buying and selling power” through the buying and selling of positions and power. This distorts the principle of “virtue-talent” in personnel work and distorts the political-administrative system. The 4th

Plenum of the 12th Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam candidly acknowledged and warned of this situation, stating: “*The buying of positions, power, transfers, and even impunity has become a deeply troubling phenomenon, seriously eroding the trust of cadres, Party members, and the people*”

Thirdly, lack of transparency and low accountability

Another manifestation of power alienation is the lack of transparency and avoidance of accountability to the people. Power, when not bound by an accountability mechanism, can easily be used arbitrarily and without publicity, leading to loss of control. There are still many administrative decisions or local policies that are issued without consulting the people, are not properly published on information portals, or do not have an effective complaint mechanism. Some specific manifestations are:

Field	Manifestation of irresponsibility in explanation
Public administration	
Policy - law	Issues unreasonable policies without a clear explanation mechanism, no one takes responsibility.
Public investment – finance	The project ran over budget, fell behind schedule and involved multiple violations, yet no specific responsibility was assigned to the person in charge.

Thus, the above manifestations show that alienation of power is no longer a single phenomenon, but has appeared at many levels and fields and has seriously impacted the country’s development. Fully and accurately identifying these manifestations is a prerequisite for proposing solutions to effectively control power and build a transparent and honest public administration. Alienation of power stems from the combination of uncontrolled power, declining public ethics, lack of transparency in personnel work, and ineffective monitoring systems. If not identified and remedied promptly, alienation of power will undermine people’s trust, and hinder the process of building a rule-of-law state and sustainable development.

1.2. Basic solutions to prevent alienation of power in Vietnam today

Firstly, raise awareness for the whole society about power control.

Focus on innovating the public disclosure and widespread propaganda about the harmful nature of power alienation to raise awareness in the whole society about power control, prevention and fight against corruption and negativity. It is necessary to propagate and raise awareness about the dangers and consequences of power alienation, corruption, and negativity in the whole political system and the whole society so that cadres, party members, and people understand that alienation of power “distorts” power, loses confidence in the Party and the regime, causes discontent in society, and damages the country’s economy. Just counting the action of abusing power for corruption, the state budget has lost hundreds, thousands of billions of dong. If there were no corruption, the salaries of cadres, workers, and employees would certainly be better, the welfare and social security projects would be more and better, and people’s lives would be less difficult. To raise awareness for the entire political system and society about the harmful effects of power alienation, corruption, and “group interests”, it is necessary to first make public the cases of power alienation, especially abuse of power, corruption, “group interests”, major negatives, including the tricks of power abuse, corruption, negativity, the people involved, the assets that interest groups have appropriated so that people can see the dangerous nature of power alienation, and corruption is only the result of an action of power alienation whose consequences have been particularly serious. Strengthening propaganda and dissemination in many appropriate and practical forms for cadres, party members, and people to understand the Party’s regulations, policies, and laws of the State. Controlling power, preventing and combating corruption and negativity must comply with the principles and regulations of the Party and the laws of the State, following

the traditions and cultural identity of the nation, socio-economic conditions, and the purposes and requirements of Party building and rectification today. In particular, the orientation is to build a team of cadres and party members who are both red and professional, good at expertise and profession, with pure political qualities and ethics, with sufficient qualities, qualifications, capacity, courage, and prestige, well meeting the requirements, tasks, and powers assigned, equal to the tasks.

Secondly, perfect the mechanism for controlling power in the political system and enhance the effectiveness of supervision by elected bodies and society.

The 2013 Constitution (Article 2, Clause 3) clearly stated: “State power is unified, with a division, coordination, and control among state agencies.” Based on this constitutional provision, the implementation process in practice must specify individual accountability for each position of power, to avoid the vague notion of “collective responsibility” that blurs the lines of accountability. Establish a mutual control mechanism between agencies in the Party, the State, and socio-political organizations. Focus on implementing power control from the planning, selection, and use to monitoring, evaluation, and handling of cadres. With these current conditions, Vietnam needs to pay more attention and focus on perfecting the law on power control by: building laws or legal documents stipulating the mechanism for controlling state power, especially in sensitive areas such as land, public investment, budget, and appointment of cadres; establishing the principle of power control in cadre work, associated with the mechanism of personal responsibility. In strengthening internal and cross-agency oversight, it is essential to clearly define the responsibilities of inspection, audit, and supervision bodies in monitoring cadres who hold power. There must be a clear separation of functions between decision-making agencies and supervisory bodies to prevent conflicts of interest. The application of digital technologies should be promoted to build an integrated and transparent system for monitoring and controlling public administrative decisions. Strict measures must be taken against actions of power abuse for personal gain, covering up violations, and manipulating policy.

In Vietnam, the 2015 Law on Supervisory Activities of the National Assembly and People’s Councils, the Law on the Vietnam Fatherland Front, the Press Law, the Law on Access to Information, etc. have created a legal basis for people and society to supervise the activities of authorities and public cadres. However, the gap between legal regulations and actual supervision effectiveness is still large, requiring reforms in both mechanisms and political behavior. Since the 2015 Law on Supervisory Activities of the National Assembly and People’s Councils came into effect, People’s Councils at all levels have had tools to exercise and promote supervisory rights. In particular, thematic supervision is one of the key contents directed by the People’s Council of Bac Ninh province to ensure publicity, objectivity, proper authority, and procedures according to the provisions of law. The supervision process has many innovations and focused and key contents. Through supervision activities, responsibilities have been clarified, and many important solutions have been pointed out for all levels, sectors, and localities to remove difficulties and obstacles, effectively implement the goals and tasks of socio-economic development, ensure the rule of law, and enhance the strictness in law enforcement. However, the organization and implementation of supervision activities still face certain difficulties and obstacles due to the lack of detailed implementation guidance documents, leading to confusion in the order and procedures for supervision, the establishment of supervision delegations of the People’s Council delegations and delegates; supervision activities of the delegations, explanation and questioning activities in the meetings of the People’s Council Standing Committee are still limited in practice; the implementation of resolutions, conclusions and recommendations after supervision by agencies is not very effective, and the responsibilities of agencies, organizations and individuals subject to supervision have not been clearly defined... In the process of developing and implementing the thematic supervision program

of the People's Council, the Standing Committee of the People's Council, and the Committees, the People's Council delegates need to: (1) Correctly implement the provisions of the Law on Organization of Local Government, the Law on Supervision Activities of the National Assembly and People's Councils in 2015. The thematic supervision topics must be important issues that have a great impact on the socio-economic development, national defense, security of the locality, etc. In particular, it is necessary to focus on prominent issues that the majority of voters are interested in, such as programs, projects, and policies that affect the rights and interests of the majority of people. The number of supervisions also needs to be carefully considered and decided following the organization's ability to implement and the quality and effectiveness of supervision, avoiding spreading out, and organizing many supervisions in a period but with low efficiency. There needs to be a survey and coordination between elected bodies and inspection and examination agencies to avoid overlap in content, time, area, or supervised units; it is best to have unified leadership from the Party Committee at the same level for agencies on this issue. (2), There is a specific assignment of tasks to each member to review and study legal documents on the functions, tasks, and powers of the supervised agency and accompanying reports; collect information through various channels and verify the accuracy of that information; before working and exchanging directly with the supervised agency, members of the monitoring team need to prepare questions in advance about the issues that the monitoring team is interested in to request the agencies to clearly explain. (3), The thematic supervision topics must be important issues that have a great impact on the socio-economic development, national defense, security of the locality, etc. In particular, it is necessary to focus on prominent issues that the majority of voters are interested in, such as programs, projects, and policies that affect the rights and interests of the majority of people. The number of supervisions also needs to be carefully considered and decided following the organization's ability to implement and the quality and effectiveness of supervision, avoiding spreading out, and organizing many supervisions in a period but with low efficiency. There needs to be a survey and coordination between elected bodies and inspection and examination agencies to avoid overlap in content, time, area, or supervised units; it is best to have unified leadership from the Party Committee at the same level for agencies on this issue.

Thirdly, improve the ethics, responsibility, and capacity of cadres and civil servants.

It can be said that improving the capacity and responsibility of cadres, civil servants and public employees is of great significance to the development of Vietnam at the present stage. This is an urgent, regular, and long-term task, contributing significantly to the prevention of power alienation in Vietnam today. Alienation of power is a common and dangerous phenomenon when people with power use it for personal gain, interest groups, or violate legal and ethical principles in the performance of public duties. In Vietnam, the rapid process of innovation, integration, and development also poses an increasingly obvious risk of power alienation, especially in the state administrative apparatus. To effectively control and prevent this situation, improving the ethics, responsibility and professional capacity of cadres and civil servants plays a key and decisive role. Civil service ethics is a system of values, principles, and standards governing the behavior of cadres and civil servants while performing their duties. It is integrity, fairness, respect for the law, and putting the interests of the people first. Ethics degradation is the premise of power alienation. When cadres and civil servants put personal interests above public service and abuse their positions for personal gain, public power no longer serves the people but becomes a private tool. In the current context of Vietnam, building a strong political stance, pure revolutionary ethics, and steadfastness in the ideal of serving the people is the core factor that helps cadres avoid the temptations of power, material interests, and internal degeneration. In practice, many cadres and civil servants lack professional knowledge and have limited legal thinking and administrative skills. This is a loophole causing alienation of power, especially when they are led and controlled by personal

or group interests. When capacity is weak, power cannot be controlled, or is exploited as a shield for wrongdoings. Therefore, it is necessary to pay attention and focus first on: improving the quality of recruitment and training of staff; Innovating training programs towards enhancing critical thinking, legal knowledge - and public service ethics; Applying technology and digital data to make work processes transparent and monitor efficiency. Thus, improving the ethics, responsibility, and capacity of cadres and civil servants is a key solution in preventing alienation of power today. This is a long-term process, requiring determination from leaders at all levels, innovation in training and management, as well as creating a transparent, fair working environment with close supervision from society.

CONCLUSION

Alienation of power is a dangerous political and social phenomenon that undermines people's trust in the State and distorts the nature of state power. In Vietnam, the issue of power alienation is not only manifested in the abuse of positions and powers for personal gain, but also in violations of legal principles, lack of transparency, lack of accountability, and ethics degradation in the public apparatus. These manifestations can be identified at various levels, from isolated negative behaviors to more systemic issues such as "group interests", "backyard networks", or "term-based thinking", all of which are severely affecting the quality of governance, effectiveness, and efficiency of state management. The root causes of power alienation in Vietnam are the result of a combination of factors: the incomplete legal institutional framework and mechanisms for power control; the formalistic and ineffective practices in personnel organization and management; the degradation in political ideology, ethics, and lifestyle among a portion of cadres and Party members; along with weak oversight by the people and society. To prevent and gradually push back the alienation of power, it is necessary to focus on key solutions: perfecting the mechanism for effective power control, ensuring publicity and transparency in the organization and operation of the state apparatus; improving public ethics and accountability of cadres and civil servants; promoting the supervisory role of elected bodies, the Fatherland Front and the people; at the same time tightening discipline and order, strictly handling violations. Alienation of power is not only a legal or administrative issue, but also a political, ethical, and cultural one. Preventing alienation of power is a prerequisite for building a truly socialist rule-of-law state of the people, by the people, and for the people. The limitation of the article is that it has not yet pointed out and analyzed the factors affecting the alienation of power in Vietnam today.

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