

THE ROLE OF THE STATE IN ENSURING SOCIAL SECURITY IN VIETNAM IN THE CURRENT CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

In the current context, with the constant changes in politics, the economy, and increasingly complex social issues, ensuring social security is always a major concern of every State in the world. In Vietnam, the Vietnamese State always considers "people as the center and driving force of the innovation process and the country's development" (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2021, p.18), so the Vietnamese State operates based on "for the benefit of the people, taking the happiness of the people as the goal to strive for" (Trong, 2021, p.9). Article 59 of the 2013 Constitution of Vietnam defines the central role of the State in ensuring human rights and social security as follows: "The State creates equal opportunities for citizens to enjoy social welfare and develop the social security system" (National Assembly, 2013a). Thus, the Vietnamese State plays an extremely important role in ensuring human rights, in this case ensuring social security. This study focuses on the role of the State in ensuring social security in Vietnam in the context of current socio-economic fluctuations. The study uses qualitative research methods to analyze published data from 2020 to June 2024 by the General Statistics Office, Vietnam Social Security, and related studies, to assess the role of the Vietnamese State in ensuring social security in two aspects: (1) ensuring the right to approach and enjoy social security for all people and (2) ensuring the quality of social security services. The research results show that the Vietnamese State has achieved significant achievements in ensuring social security, but there are still some limitations that need to be overcome. Therefore, in addition to providing an overview of the role of the Vietnamese State in social security, the study also proposes solutions to improve the effectiveness of the social security system in Vietnam.

Keywords: Social security, Vietnamese State, current context

1. Theoretical basis and research questions

The state is a special political power organization that, according to V.I.Lenin, "The state is an apparatus used to maintain the domination of one class over another" (V.I.Lenin, 1976, p. 110). Through the state, the ruling class will perform its class function and social function (Hanoi Law University, 2009, pp. 46-49). Which, the social function plays the role of ensuring power because if this function is not performed effectively, the state power will be weakened and gradually replaced by a power of a new ruling class, a new state. In other words, if the state only serves the interests of the ruling class without taking into account the interests of other classes and strata in society, that state cannot exist for a long time. F. Engels concluded that "class domination can only exist on the condition that it ensures that the oppressed are not left in extreme poverty" (Marx & colleagues, 1995, p. 779) and "social function is the basis of domination; and political domination lasts only as long as it performs its social function" (Marx & colleagues, 2002, p. 253). Thus, in addition to performing class functions, the State plays an extremely important role in performing social functions, and social security is one of the particularly important social functions. Because social security not only ensures basic human rights; ensures the stability, development, and progress of a society but also demonstrates the State's humanity towards disadvantaged groups in society, thereby maintaining its domination. Therefore, performing well social functions in general and social security in particular is considered one of the important tasks of every state in the world, including Vietnam.

Regarding the concept of social security, there are still different views in the world in general and in Vietnam in particular. However, according to the definition of the International Labor Organization (ILO), social security is the provision of welfare issues for households and individuals through state or collective mechanisms to prevent a decline in living standards or improve low living standards (Mai, 2017). The World Bank (WB) states that social security is the Government's measure to help individuals, households, and communities cope with and control risks affecting income to reduce vulnerability and unstable income (Tra, 2016, p.17). Thus, the concept of social security that ILO or WB put forward emphasizes the particularly important role of the State (or Government) in minimizing risks and dangers, helping individuals and groups cope with some unwanted changes. Later, with the context of the world economy falling into a prolonged crisis with no sign of stopping, the United Nations introduced a "social security floor" in which priority issues such as basic health care; minimum income for people of working age (which discusses issues for workers who are unable to generate permanent income (disabled people), people who lose their jobs temporarily (unemployed people) or the poor); minimum income for people above and below working age (such as the elderly and children) or housing, education issues, etc. (Institute of Labor Science - Social Affairs, 2014, p.10). This concept of the United Nations is also accepted by many countries, especially developing countries, because this concept of the United Nations is considered a guarantee for the minimum standards of life, by international treaties on social security. In Vietnam, according to researcher Hoang Chi Bao, social security is defined as "the safety of human life, from individuals to communities, creating the premise and motivation for human and social development" (Bao, 2008, p.8). Researcher Mai Ngoc Cuong has concretized this concept by listing specific human problems in implementing social security when stating that social security is "the guarantee of

income and some other essential conditions for individuals, families, and communities when they have reduced or lost their ability to work or lose their jobs; for the lonely elderly, orphans, the disabled, the vulnerable, and those affected by natural disasters and enemies" (Cuong, 2009, p. 22). Thus, it can be understood that social security is the work of the State and society, through the use of their tools and measures, to prevent, minimize, and overcome risks (Phuc, 2012) that can be brought to individuals in the community who have been and are being affected by objective and subjective factors and causes.

This study chose Vietnam as the research location because post-war Vietnam is a developing country and is in the process of innovation and international integration. Vietnam, like many other countries, has just faced common difficulties due to complicated developments in the world's political and economic situation, climate change, natural disasters, epidemics, etc. Typically, the Russia-Ukraine conflict has led to the explosion of problems related to goods and energy and is becoming increasingly complicated (Yen, 2023) or the COVID-19 pandemic has caused many countries in the world to fall into crisis. But Vietnam still has significant development steps that the World Bank in Vietnam has assessed that development as "a remarkable development success story" with impressive indicators given: real GDP per capita from under 700 USD in 1986 has increased to nearly 4,500 USD in 2023 (at 2023 constant USD prices) and continues to increase more than six times and the proportion of the population living in poverty has also decreased sharply (The World Bank in Viet Nam, 2024). However, in the process of development, Vietnam also faces many difficulties such as the problem of rapid population aging, which also causes a human resource crisis for the labor market, the rate of workers of working age participating in the labor market tends to decrease, rapidly increasing the rate of dependent population. The aging population is also a challenge for health issues when the number of healthy years of Vietnamese people is only 63 years while the average life expectancy is over 73 years. Thus, the elderly in Vietnam have to live with many diseases and are not healthy (Tien, 2023). In addition, although the State issued the Law on Gender Equality in 2006 to regulate gender inequality issues, however, due to the culture of East Asian countries, the issue of gender equality in Vietnam today still has many problems regarding access to education for girls, job opportunities, etc. (Thin, 2023). The issues of urbanization, climate change, etc. also change people's psychology and lifestyle, which also leads to a shift in economic structure, labor structure, changes in population distribution, and the gap between rich and poor (General Statistics Office, 2021; Tuan, 2013). From there, it causes significant impacts on Vietnam's social security policies. Therefore, the questions raised for this study are:

- What achievements has the Vietnamese State made in social security work today?
- What aspects does the Vietnamese State' role play in social security?
- What issues are being raised in social security work in Vietnam today?
- What solutions are needed to strengthen the State's role in ensuring social security for the people?

Therefore, the study will explore and evaluate the role of the Vietnamese state in social security in two main aspects:

1. Ensuring the rights of all citizens to approach and enjoy social security services;
2. Ensuring the quality of social security services, thereby ensuring the sustainability of the social security system.

2. Method

To have a comprehensive and in-depth view of the social security situation in Vietnam, the research method used in this article is mainly qualitative, a method of analyzing and synthesizing data from official data sources that have been published by the Vietnamese State on the websites of the General Statistics Office, of the Vietnam Social Security... and of the previous researchers. The qualitative method based on accessing data sources will review and evaluate the social security achievements of the Vietnamese State. When combining this method with methods of analyzing and synthesizing data, the study will have an overview from the theoretical basis to the practical operation of the State in social security, the difficulties and problems that are arising in ensuring the role of the State in social security. From there, the study also offers solutions to improve social security in Vietnam today.

3. Discussion Content

The viewpoints and policies of the Communist Party of Vietnam on social security through each Congress have been continuously supplemented, developed, and improved to suit the context of the world and the country. This is reflected in the documents of each Congress as well as the Constitutions and, the regulations of the Party and the laws of the State of Vietnam. Recently, in the context of the prolonged COVID-19 pandemic causing serious impacts on the global socio-economy, the Communist Party of Vietnam has reaffirmed its previous viewpoints of "caring for all people, ensuring labor, employment, and income policies, and implementing well social welfare and social security" (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2021, p. 49). Under the leadership of the Party, the State of Vietnam has achieved several achievements demonstrating its role in ensuring social security in the following aspects:

Firstly, ensuring people's rights to approach and enjoy social security

Article 34 of the 2013 Constitution of Vietnam affirms that "Citizens have the right to social security" (National Assembly, 2013a). On that basis, to create a legal basis and better conditions for all people to exercise their right to approach and enjoy quality social security services, the Vietnamese State has issued many specialized legal documents to further ensure social security for all people, such as The 2019 Labor Code replaces the previous 2012 Labor Code to regulate issues on rights and responsibilities of subjects participating in the labor market. Strengthening State support for vulnerable groups of workers through policies to support job creation. (National Assembly, 2019); The 2013 Employment Law, in Article 1, clearly states that the Law regulates issues on employment and the labor market. Article 43 stipulates that all employees working for 3 months or more in enterprises are required to participate in unemployment insurance. The Law with many provisions contributes to creating conditions to support

disadvantaged workers to ensure a minimum standard of living (National Assembly, 2013b); the 2014 amended Law on Social Insurance aims to further expand the scope of subjects required to participate in social insurance and promulgate regulations to implement the social insurance regime by the conditions of employment and income of all workers as well as promulgate several sanctions against evasion of social insurance payments (National Assembly, 2014); 2013 amended Law on Health Insurance and the 2023 Law on Medical Examination and Treatment were enacted to strengthen the protection, care, and improvement of the health of all people in the new situation, overcoming previous limitations. In addition, the State also issued many laws such as the Law on Education (2019), Law on Children (2019), Law on the Elderly (2009), Law on Food Safety (2010), Law on Labor Safety and Hygiene (2015), Law on Housing (2014).

In addition to these Laws, the State also issued many sub-Law documents to ensure the best social security for all people in the new context, such as recently Resolution No. 42/NQ-CP dated April 9, 2020 on measures to support people facing difficulties due to the Covid-19 pandemic; Resolution No. 68/NQ-CP dated July 1, 2021 on a number of policies to support workers and labor service users facing difficulties due to the Covid-19 pandemic (VND 26,000 billion package); Decision No. 33/2019/QĐ-TTg dated November 14, 2019 on amending and supplementing a number of articles of Decision No. 33/2015/QĐ-TTg dated August 10, 2015 of the Prime Minister on housing support policies for poor households according to the poverty line for the period 2011-2015; Decision No. 1978/QĐ-TTg dated November 24, 2021 on approving the National Strategy for Clean Water Supply and Rural Sanitation to 2030, with a vision to 2045;... or Decision No. 22/2013/QĐ-TTg dated April 26, 2013 on supporting people with meritorious services to the housing network; Decree No. 136/2013/ND-CP dated October 21, 2013 on Regulations on social assistance policies for social protection beneficiaries (System of guiding documents, e.d). Thus, through the promulgation of the Laws and documents under this Law, the State has created the first legal basis to ensure the right to approach and enjoy social security for all people. From there, these rights are implemented in practice.

Secondly, ensuring the quality of social security services

It is necessary to affirm that if the quality of social security services is guaranteed, it will be one of the important factors in building a sustainable, fair, and civilized society. Social security not only brings benefits to the people but also contributes to the overall development of the country. The State has achieved several achievements in the quality of social security services through the following aspects:

(1) Creating job opportunities, increasing income, and reducing poverty

Based on the Law, the Vietnamese State, through the National Employment Program and the National Employment Fund, has created conditions for individuals and organizations to not only borrow capital and enjoy preferential credit to develop production and create jobs but also for disadvantaged individuals to be trained, introduced and find jobs. Thanks to the correct policies and guidelines in social security, Vietnam, even during the COVID-19 pandemic, is still one of the few countries that can maintain jobs and a minimum standard of living for its people. Regarding the structure of the labor force, according to Table 1, it can be seen that the number of laborers in rural areas is still higher than in urban areas, however, in recent years there has been a shift between these two areas. This is clearly shown through the following statistical tables:

Table 1: Number of employed workers in the economy by gender and by urban and rural areas from 2020 to the second quarter of 2024

Year	Total (thousand people)	Gender		Region	
		Male	Female	Urban	Rural
2020	53,609.6	28,324.1	25,285.5	17,519.1	36,090.5
2021	49,072.0	26,238.9	22,833.1	17,766.7	31,305.3
2022	50,604.7	26,918.7	23,686.0	18,706.4	31,898.3
2023	51,287.0	27,269.0	24,018.0	19,070.7	32,216.3
Quarter II/2024	51,400.0			19,700.0	31,700.0

(General Statistics Office, 2024b; 2024d)

Therefore, the average income of Vietnamese workers has increased over the years. In 2022, it reached 6.7 million VND/month, an increase of 927 thousand VND/month compared to 2021. In 2023, it was 7.1 million VND/month (an increase of 459 thousand VND compared to 2022) (General Statistics Office, 2023c) and in the second quarter of 2024, it was 7.5 million VND/month (an increase of 490 thousand VND compared to the same period in 2023) (General Statistics Office, 2024d). The multidimensional poverty rate has also continuously decreased. In 2020, the multidimensional poverty rate in Vietnam was 4.8%, and in 2023 it was 3.4% (a decrease of 0.8% compared to the previous year). This is an impressive number, because during the Covid-19 pandemic when most countries were severely affected economically, the number of unemployed workers increased, the poverty rate increased, Vietnam still had significant growth, and people's lives were guaranteed, this result is recorded through the following statistical table:

Table 2: Poverty rate according to multidimensional approach from 2020 to 2023 (%)

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023
Nationwide	4.8	4.4	4.2	3.4
<i>Decrease (compared to previous year)</i>	0.9	0.4	0.2	0.8

(General Statistics Office, 2024e)

(2) Building a social insurance policy with three main pillars: Social Insurance, Unemployment Insurance and Health Insurance

In Vietnam, the social insurance policy with three main pillars of social insurance, unemployment insurance, and health insurance is considered a safety net, helping to protect people from risks in life, contributing to social stability, and promoting economic development. Therefore, with the State's continuous efforts to improve the quality of social security services, Vietnam's social insurance policy has recorded many results when the number of people participating in these three types of insurance has continuously increased in the years from 2020 to the second quarter of 2024.

Table 3: Number of people and the rate of people participating in Social Insurance, Health Insurance and Unemployment Insurance from 2020 to the second quarter of 2024

Content \ Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	Quarter II/2024
Number of people participating in social insurance (Thousand people)	16,163.9	16,546.8	17,500.2	18,260.0	17,414.0
Proportion of people participating in social insurance (%)	29.5	32.7	33.8	39.25	-
Number of people participating in health insurance (Thousand people)	87,978.0	88,837.2	91,074.2	93,300.0	90,614.0
Proportion of people participating in health insurance (%)	90.2	90.2	91.6	93.35%	-
Number of people participating in unemployment insurance (Thousand people)	13,323.9	13,394.9	14,330.0	14,700.0	14,253.0
Unemployment insurance participation rate (%)	24.3	26.5	27.7	31.6	-

(General Statistics Office, 2024c; Vietnam Social Security, 2024; Cuc, 2024)

(3) Social relief and incentives

This is an indispensable part of the social security policies of most countries to support vulnerable groups in society to help them overcome difficulties and stabilize their lives. If social relief is a form of urgent, short-term support for people facing sudden difficulties such as natural disasters, fires, and unemployment to help them overcome difficulties, social assistance is a form of long-term support to help improve the lives of vulnerable groups. Social incentives are priority policies for specific beneficiaries such as people with revolutionary contributions, poor households, orphans, etc. Through policy groups for each specific group, the state will support cash, provide services (healthcare, education, housing, etc. free or discounted), support production, and support employment for these groups so that they can improve their quality of life with the criterion of "no one is left behind". Along with the issuance of Resolutions to support employees and employers during the COVID- 19 pandemic, as of December 31, 2022, the State has also reduced the contribution level from social insurance and unemployment insurance funds to employees and employers, thanks to which those affected by Covid-19 have received State support of over VND 47,200 billion (accounting for 54.3% of the total support packages) (Cuc, 2023). Regarding those in need of social assistance, according to the Department of Social Protection, the State is implementing "monthly social assistance for more than 3 million subjects; including more than 1.8 million elderly people; 1.1 million people with disabilities; 49,000 orphans and abandoned children... Nearly 3.3 million people are receiving monthly pensions and social insurance; 1.4 million elderly people receive preferential allowances for people with meritorious services to the revolution, about 10,000 elderly people are being cared for at social assistance facilities, 95% of elderly people are issued health insurance cards and have their health records established to monitor and manage their health" (Nu, 2023). Currently, there are 1.2 million people with meritorious services to the revolution receiving monthly allowances and more than 280,000 relatives of people with meritorious services receiving monthly pensions. The level of these allowances and subsidies is also of interest to the State, adjusted to increase along with the roadmap for adjusting the increase in the basic salary level (Phong, 2023). From that, it can be said that the Vietnamese State always cares about each group of subjects based on ensuring social security and building a fair society to improve the quality of life of the people.

From the above research results, it can be affirmed that the Vietnamese State has been performing well in its central role in ensuring the right to approach and enjoy social security for everyone; ensuring the quality of social security services. This is a factor that will contribute to building a sustainable social security system, making the country increasingly rich, civilized, and happy. However, it is also necessary to recognize that the research is still limited in terms of research methods, data, and research scope when the article only uses published data from the Vietnamese State, there is no actual survey research data from subjects who are enjoying the social security system, so the research has not been compared with other published data. This is also the task to continue to build and improve research publications on social security after this study.

4. Some issues and solutions to further strengthen the role of the Vietnamese State in ensuring social security for all people

Although, in recent years under the leadership of the Party, the State of Vietnam has achieved certain achievements in implementing and ensuring social security. However, along with the constant fluctuations of the current context, the implementation and assurance of social security are still facing some difficulties and challenges such as the issue of universal coverage of social security, especially in remote areas where the terrain is difficult, transportation is difficult, hindering access to health services, education and social support policies for the people. Comprehensive coverage for vulnerable groups is also difficult because these groups lack information, do not have the conditions to participate in social insurance, or live in difficult areas. Therefore, although the poverty rate in recent years has achieved certain results. But in remote areas, the poverty rate is still high compared to urban areas. In 2023, according to statistics from the General Statistics Office, the poverty rate of 6 regions across the country is as follows: the Red River Delta is 0.7%, the North Central and Central Coast is 3.9%, the Southeast is 0.3%, the Mekong Delta is 3.1%, while the Northern Midlands and Mountains are 10.7%, the Central Highlands is 9.0%, the average income per capita of these two regions is also the lowest in the country (General Statistics Office, 2024e). Regarding education, according to statistics, the situation of children in remote and isolated areas of school age but not going to school still exists at all levels (primary school 3.1%, secondary school 18.4%, high school 53%). The rate of ethnic minorities aged 15 and over who can read and write in a common language is only 80.9% (Hung et al., 2022). Coordination between government levels is still not tight, there are overlaps, administrative procedures are cumbersome, and lack of synchronization, making it difficult for people to access and use social services. Community awareness of social security is still limited, people have not fully used their "rights" to social security, causing a significant impact on people's right to approach and enjoy social security. Some beneficiaries have a mentality of relying on policies, not actively working and producing.

Therefore, in the coming years, to further promote the role of the State in implementing and ensuring social security, the State needs to:

First, in the coming years, the Vietnamese State needs to be more active in expanding the scope of social security coverage, especially for vulnerable groups such as ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, and self-employed workers by strengthening social support programs, simplifying administrative procedures and raising people's awareness of social security policies to ensure the right to approach and enjoy social security policies of all people.

Second, actively build and perfect State institutions through strengthening the review and amendment of policies and laws (there should be stricter requirements on regulations when developing and promulgating policies and laws to ensure the requirements of systematicity and consistency; transparency; flexibility and modernity; fairness and democracy; feasibility).

Third, strengthen the improvement of the quality of social security services. In particular, focusing on synchronous investment in many areas, especially for health and education. Because reality shows that ensuring people's health through improving the quality of health services and creating conditions for children to study in a good environment is one of the most important factors for building the country.

Fourth, it is necessary to build a stable and transparent financial mechanism, combined with diversifying resources to create motivation for implementing social security such as increasing budget revenue sources (through tax reform measures, preventing tax losses, etc.), mobilizing social resources, and building social funds. In addition, it is also necessary to pay attention to managing and allocating the budget effectively to create even development between regions and target groups to ensure fairness and create motivation for national development.

Fifth, improving the capacity of social security officers to build a team of "both red and professional" officers to be able to effectively implement policies, meeting the increasing needs of the people. This is an urgent task that must be carried out regularly and continuously so that the staff can have the skills and knowledge to be constantly updated on policies and laws to solve the problem. In addition, it is also necessary to build a professional working environment, creating conditions for staff to participate in research and creative activities to be able to link theory with practical work.

Sixth, raise people's awareness by actively promoting propaganda on social security policies and building information channels so that people can access information on social security policies of the State. Thereby, people not only understand their "rights" and use them effectively but also build people's trust in the policies of the State.

Seventh, promote the role of the community in ensuring social security. Through the dissemination of the role of the community in implementing and ensuring social security, the State allows people to organize communities to support people in difficult circumstances and creates conditions for people to contribute opinions and build social security policies. Through the community, the State can also consider entrusting some activities to non-governmental organizations and social-professional organizations to partially implement social security.

5. Conclusion

The State always plays a very important role in ensuring social security, because practice shows that implementing and ensuring social security contributes to stabilizing and ensuring the minimum material and spiritual life for all people in a country, promoting socio-economic development, reducing social inequality, improving the quality of life of people, building a civilized and progressive society. Therefore, like most countries, in Vietnam today, along with building and perfecting the legal system to ensure the rights to enjoy and access of the people, the State also pays great attention to ensuring the quality of social security services.

Thereby, ensuring the sustainability of the social security system, and creating a strong driving force to help the State and people have more strength in the face of the constant fluctuations and impacts of the world and domestic situation.

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