

# IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY CHALLENGES FOR ETHNIC MINORITY STUDENTS AT THAI NGUYEN UNIVERSITY IN THE CURRENT CONTEXT

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## ABSTRACT

*Thai Nguyen University is currently a key multidisciplinary education and training center, serving as the nucleus in Vietnam's human resource development strategy for the Northern Midlands and Mountains. With a training scale of over 115,000 students, of whom approximately 40% are from ethnic minority groups, students at Thai Nguyen University have become a sensitive "buffer zone" vulnerable to the impacts of non-traditional security. This paper focuses on identifying and analyzing the multidimensional impacts of non-traditional security on students at Thai Nguyen University, particularly the challenges related to cybersecurity, economic security, and cultural security, as well as the risks associated with cultural identity erosion during the digital integration process, and the risks posed by diseases and climate change. By employing theoretical synthesis combined with situational analysis based on socio-economic and educational data specific to the Northern mountainous region of Vietnam, the research highlights vulnerabilities in students' "self-resistance" against non-traditional security threats. The research results propose a systematic solution framework integrated with National Defense and Security Education for students. The focus is on digital transformation in education and training, coupled with skill-building to ensure timely, effective, flexible, and sustainable responses to non-traditional security impacts. This study not only contributes to improving the quality of life and safety for students at Thai Nguyen University but also provides a scientific basis for regional higher education governance policies, aligned with national strategic goals for the development of ethnic minority and mountainous areas towards 2030.*

**Keyword:** *Non-traditional security, Thai Nguyen University, Students, Ethnic minorities, Cybersecurity.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the flow of contemporary history, the world is witnessing a landmark shift from a unipolar security order focused on hard military power to a multidimensional and complex security system. Non-traditional security has emerged as a new frame of reference for assessing the stability of every nation in the era of globalization. While traditional security focuses on protecting territorial sovereignty against armed attacks, non-traditional security expands the scope of protection to all aspects of human life, from the environment, economy, and disease to cyberspace. Following and expanding upon the perspectives of Dr. Tran Hoang Tinh, non-traditional security in the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Industry 4.0) is no longer a series of isolated phenomena but has become an ecosystem of intertwined risks. The profound integration of Artificial Intelligence, the Internet of Things (IoT),

and Big Data has created an environment where security challenges can self-transform, spread across borders at the speed of light, and cause unpredictable consequences for human perception and behavior.

The emergence of non-traditional security is an objective necessity in the developmental process of society. As Vietnam undergoes deep integration, the youth in the Northern mountainous region of Vietnam, in general, and students at Thai Nguyen University in particular, have become a sensitive "buffer zone" before these fluctuations. Thai Nguyen University is not merely an educational and training institution but also an important socio-political center, home to over 115,000 students. These students represent the intelligence and future of the Northern Midlands and Mountains, a region predominantly inhabited by ethnic minority communities. In reality, students from ethnic minority backgrounds are

facing intense internal and external contradictions. On one hand, they are the fastest generation to grasp technology and the vanguard force in the digital transformation of the highlands. On the other hand, due to their origins in economically disadvantaged areas with uneven educational levels and limited local technological infrastructure, this group is prone to "digital disillusionment" or becoming victims of new forms of crime.

The importance of Thai Nguyen University students within the regional security structure is undeniable. They are expected to be the key human resources who will directly implement ethnic policies and sustainable economic development for the Northern mountainous region. However, this group exhibits a certain "lag" in their capacity to identify non-traditional security risks. Economically, pressure from living costs and a lack of professional skills make students vulnerable to being lured into illegal labor or "black credit" (usury) schemes. Culturally and ideologically, the explosion of cross-border social networks places them at risk of "cultural assimilation" or exploitation by provocative rhetoric aimed at dividing national unity under the guise of "human rights" and "religious freedom". If these challenges are not identified in time and addressed through scientific solutions, they will not only affect the future of individual students but also create strategic security loopholes in vital locations.

This study aims to deeply analyze the structure of existing non-traditional security threats at Thai Nguyen University, thereby building a theoretical and practical framework for effective response. Approaching the issue from a human security perspective will help clarify the dialectical relationship between higher education and political stability in ethnic minority areas. The paper argues that to cope with non-traditional security, one cannot rely solely on rigid administrative control measures; instead, a "proactive security" strategy is needed, based on enhancing internal capacity, fostering political mettle, and equipping students with digital skills. This is the key to protecting high-quality human resources, ensuring that Thai Nguyen University students are not only experts in their fields but also solid "fortresses" against the storms of non-traditional security in the new era.

## 2. IDENTIFYING NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY THREATS

Identifying non-traditional security challenges for Thai Nguyen University students requires a multidimensional perspective, placing learners at the center of complex social, economic, and technological relationships. Based on the theoretical framework of Dr. Tran Hoang Tinh, this research focuses on four core risk groups directly impacting the lives and development orientation of Thai Nguyen University students in the current period.

Firstly, challenges to human security and campus economic security. For Thai Nguyen University students, especially ethnic minority groups from provinces such as Ha Giang, Cao Bang, and Bac Kan, economic security is the foundation of all academic activities. Market economy fluctuations and post-pandemic inflation have increased living cost pressures, leaving many students in a state of financial instability. This challenge extends beyond the shortage of tuition funds to consequences for human security, as students easily become targets for "black credit" (usury) rings, part-time job scams, or are enticed into illegal labor activities. Additionally, "employment security" after graduation remains a major barrier. The gap in soft skills and access to high-quality labor markets between students from remote areas and those from urban centers creates self-doubt, destabilizing career orientations and affecting the goal of supplying human resources for ethnic minority regions.

Secondly, risks from cybersecurity and the digital transformation process. In the digital era, cyberspace is both a learning environment and a frontline for non-traditional security challenges. Although Thai Nguyen University students access technology rapidly, a significant portion lacks digital literacy and critical thinking skills when facing toxic information streams. This creates loopholes for fake news, distorted political and religious rhetoric, and high-tech crimes to infiltrate. Online scams through recruitment apps, impersonation of authorities, or personal data theft are evolving complexly within the academic environment. Furthermore, excessive dependence on virtual space leads to mental health issues, diminishes real-world social interaction, and creates personal information security vulnerabilities that students lack the capacity to defend against.

Thirdly, the erosion of socio-cultural security and identity crisis. The migration from highland villages to the urban environment of Thai Nguyen for education creates a cultural space rupture for ethnic minority students. The pressures of urban lifestyle and the invasion of unfiltered foreign cultural values through online entertainment platforms are pushing a segment of students toward "identity erosion." The absence of ethnic cultural institutions within the university environment makes students prone to rejecting traditions in favor of inappropriate modern trends. Concurrently, social evils such as drugs, online gambling, and illegal religious proselytization are silently infiltrating residential areas and dormitories, directly threatening the safety and healthy lifestyle of the student community.

Fourthly, the impact of environmental security and health security. As a group closely linked to the Northern mountainous region, Thai Nguyen University students suffer a double impact from environmental and health security. Natural disasters such as landslides and flash floods in their homelands not only cause property damage to families but also cause psychological shock and disrupt students' academic progress. In another aspect, emerging diseases (similar to the COVID-19 pandemic) have revealed the vulnerabilities of the school health system. Students living in concentrated environments face high infection risks, while the lack of preventive medical knowledge and comprehensive healthcare conditions in off-campus boarding houses remains a major challenge in ensuring sustainable health security.

### 3. SOLUTIONS

To effectively respond to the non-traditional security challenges surrounding the lives of Thai Nguyen University students, it is essential to build a synchronized system of solutions with close coordination between the university, technological entities, and community organizations. These solutions aim not only to address surface-level symptoms but also to focus on strengthening students' internal resources and self-adaptation capabilities.

Firstly, structural solutions within the University: Redefining comprehensive education and support. Thai Nguyen University needs to play a leading role in building "technical and ideological

barriers" for learners. The focus should be on fundamentally innovating the content and teaching methods of National Defense and Security Education. The curriculum must be fully updated with modules on cybersecurity, information warfare, and identifying "peaceful evolution" plots in the digital era, rather than focusing solely on traditional military skills. Concurrently, the university should establish and operate professional school psychological counseling centers. These will serve as places to support students in relieving pressure from cultural shocks, identity crises, and traumas caused by natural disasters and epidemics. Notably, startup support strategies should be personalized for ethnic minority students, focusing on exploiting local resources through modern technology, thereby thoroughly solving the economic security puzzle and creating sustainable career paths for highland human resources.

Secondly, technological solutions: Creating a safe and reliable digital ecosystem. In the context where digital transformation is inevitable, protecting students in cyberspace has become an urgent task. Thai Nguyen University needs to invest in building an internal digital ecosystem integrated with advanced security technologies to protect learners' personal data. Developing dedicated mobile applications for students that integrate official information channels and early warning systems for fake news and online scams is vital. Artificial Intelligence can be applied to analyze toxic information trends targeting ethnic minority communities in the Northern mountainous region—including students at Thai Nguyen University—to provide timely response scenarios. Furthermore, popularizing courses on digital literacy and information security should be considered a mandatory requirement, helping students transition from a state of "passive reception" to "proactive defense" in the digital space.

Thirdly, community solutions: Promoting the vanguard role of socio-political organizations. Socio-political organizations, such as the Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union and the Student Association of Thai Nguyen University, serve as crucial bridges in realizing security policies in daily life. It is necessary to promote the "Self-managed Student Security Network" model in dormitories and off-campus boarding houses to

promptly detect and prevent social evils and the infiltration of illegal religious proselytization organizations. These organizations should diversify ethnic cultural exchange activities and establish identity preservation clubs to ensure that ethnic minority students are not "assimilated" into the flow of urbanization. The "core" role of outstanding students and influential figures within the student community must be leveraged to spread positive values and build sustainable national unity. This is a key solution to consolidating socio-cultural security from the roots, turning each student into a bridge connecting the policies of the Communist Party of Vietnam and the laws of the State of Vietnam with people in remote and isolated areas.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In summary, identifying and developing response solutions to the impacts of non-traditional security on Thai Nguyen University students is an urgent and strategic requirement for educational governance and national security assurance in the Northern mountainous region of Vietnam. Research results indicate that non-traditional security in this environment no longer exists as latent risks but has manifested through complex, multidimensional forms with the capacity to transform and directly impact the ideology, lifestyle, and safety of learners. Regarding the identification of challenges, the study confirms that Thai Nguyen University students are facing a convergence of threats. In the digital space, challenges lie not only in cybercrime or online fraud but also in the digital skill deficit of ethnic minority students facing "cultural invasion" campaigns and political fake news from hostile forces aimed at undermining the Communist Party of Vietnam and the State of Vietnam. Economically, the wealth gap and post-pandemic labor market instability have created heavy psychological barriers, diminishing academic motivation and easily pushing students into social evils or cross-border labor traps. Notably, the identity crisis has emerged as an inevitable consequence of integration, alongside sabotage by hostile forces, causing students to easily "sever" ties with their ethnic cultural roots to pursue virtual modern values, destabilizing socio-cultural order within the academic environment.

Regarding the core solution system, the paper emphasizes the need for a shift in mindset from passive response to proactive prevention.

Firstly, enhancing "digital resistance" must be considered a core component of the formal training curriculum. The Center for National Defense and Security Education at Thai Nguyen University must play the role of an ideological "shield," moving beyond traditional military training to pioneer the teaching of information security skills, directing civilized behavior in cyberspace, and identifying "peaceful evolution strategy" scenarios by hostile forces. This is a key measure to ensure students possess sufficient mettle to contribute to protecting the Fatherland "early and from afar," in accordance with the perspectives of the Communist Party of Vietnam.

Secondly, economic security solutions must be based on substantive connections between the university and the business community, creating specialized school welfare funds for ethnic minority students and directing startups toward local potential, helping them confidently return to contribute to their villages and localities.

Thirdly, building a diverse school cultural environment and leveraging the roles of reputable experts and lecturers will create a humanistic educational ecosystem where ethnic identity is respected and becomes an endogenous strength to thwart all divisive plots.

Finally, equipping students with skills to respond to natural disasters and health security will help them not only protect themselves but also become core communicators, contributing to improving local community capacity upon graduation.

In conclusion, the struggle against non-traditional security challenges for ethnic minority students at Thai Nguyen University is a holistic task requiring the decisive involvement of the entire political system, socio-political organizations, the university, and the students themselves. Implementing these solutions synchronously and drastically will not only ensure political stability and socio-economic development for ethnic minority and mountainous areas in Northern Vietnam but also improve the quality of human resources, affirming the position and prestige of Thai Nguyen University in national and international higher education systems. This serves as a solid foundation for building a generation of young intellectuals who are not only professionally competent but also possess the firm mettle to overcome increasingly complex, large-

scale, and high-impact non-traditional security challenges in the future.

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