

Ensuring and maintaining an independent and self-reliant economy in the new era of national development

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- **Abstract:** Building an independent, self-reliant economy associated with comprehensive and intensive international integration is one of the ten major relationships that the Communist Party of Vietnam has identified as needing to be resolved in the process of building socialism. This article clarifies achievements and challenges, thereby proposing solutions to build an independent and self-reliant Vietnamese economy in the new era of national development.
- **Keywords:** independent and self-reliant economy; new era of development.

1. Introduction

Economic independence and self-reliance are the material foundation for ensuring political independence and self-reliance and are the core conditions for maintaining national sovereignty in the context of globalization and deep international integration. In the new era of development, the need to enhance economic self-reliance is becoming more urgent in order to protect national interests, maintain socialist orientation, and proactively respond to external fluctuations. Ensuring and maintaining economic independence and self-reliance is not only a development goal but also a strategic requirement for the cause of building and defending the Fatherland in the new era of development.

2. Content

2.1. Achievements and challenges in building an independent and self-reliant economy in Vietnam

Under the leadership of the Party, after nearly 40 years of implementing the renovation process, Vietnam has achieved great and historic achievements, thanks to which the country's potential and position have been raised to new heights, ensuring the foundation for the country to enter a new era, making Vietnam a prosperous, civilized, and happy socialist country.

From a starting point as a backward agricultural economy, heavily devastated by wars, by the end of 2024, Vietnam's GDP reached USD 476.3 billion, an increase of more than

100 times since 1986, placing it among the 32 countries with the largest economies in the world, with an average income per capita of USD 4,700 (compared to about USD 80 in 1975). Coming out of the siege and embargo, Vietnam has established trade relations with more than 230 economies in the world, with total import and export turnover in 2024 reaching more than USD 786 billion, of which exports surpassed the 400 billion mark for the first time (a trade surplus of more than USD 24 billion), becoming the 22nd largest trading partner globally. From a country that had to import 2 million tons of food each year, Vietnam has become one of the three largest rice exporters worldwide.

Vietnam has participated in 19 multilateral and bilateral free trade agreements (FTAs) (of which 16 FTAs are in effect and being implemented, 4 FTAs are under negotiation). Vietnam is considered one of the countries with the largest economic openness in the world, with comprehensive and deep international integration. In attracting foreign direct investment, by the end of 2024, Vietnam had attracted nearly USD 502.8 billion in registered capital. Currently, there are more than 42,000 projects in operation, with realized capital estimated at USD 332.5 billion.

In particular, Vietnam is shifting its focus on attracting FDI, from quantity to quality, prioritizing high-tech and sustainable industries; in 2024, the cooperation agreement between the Vietnamese Government and NVIDIA Corporation opens a new era for high-quality FDI⁽¹⁾.

Infrastructure is constantly being improved to serve socio-economic development. Specifically, Vietnam has nearly 26,000km of national highways, including about 2,000 km of expressways; there are 7 railway lines, with 2,703 km of main lines. In 2025, the National Assembly and the Government approved and are vigorously implementing the North-South high-speed railway project. The country has 22 civil airports in operation, including 11 international airports. Regarding maritime transport, there are 34 seaports of all types with 02 special-class ports, over 100 km of wharves. Vietnam's internet network is developing very rapidly; the fiber optic network has connected to 100% of communes, mobile broadband infrastructure has covered most villages and hamlets, and internet speed ranks 32nd globally. By mid-2024, there will be 78.44 million internet users, reaching 79.1% of the population; the number of mobile internet subscribers reached an average of 91.9 subscribers per 100 people. Vietnam's telecommunications infrastructure has transformed into the digital infrastructure of the economy, opening up access opportunities and becoming a tool for socio-economic development⁽²⁾.

The achievements of economic development have contributed to enhancing social welfare, improving people's lives, ensuring social security, and human security. The rate of poor households according to the single-dimensional poverty standard in 1993 has decreased to 1.93% according to the multidimensional poverty standard in 2024. Universal primary education was completed in 2000, lower secondary education in 2014, moving toward high school education universalization; nearly 99% of adults can read and write. The number of university and college students in the past 40 years has increased nearly 20 times, with an average of 215 people/10,000 people. The cultural life of people across the



Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh attended the policy dialogue session "Vietnam's New Era: From Vision to Action", within the framework of the 16th Annual Meeting of World Economic Forum Pioneers (WEF 16 Tianjin) _ Photo: tienphong.vn

country has been improved, developed richly and diversely; many traditional cultural values of the nation have been preserved and promoted in human education and developing the tourism economy.

The system of medical examination and treatment facilities has developed widely, including units invested in modern and synchronized construction; many facilities implement specialized treatment techniques of international scale; 94.2% of the population has health insurance. Poor people, children under 6 years old, and the elderly are provided with free health insurance, and the orientation for the 2025-2030 period is to provide health check-ups for people once a year and free hospital fees for all people. In 2023, Vietnam's human development index (HDI) was ranked 107/193, reaching a high level in the group of middle-income developing countries in the world⁽³⁾.

In the context of a rapidly changing, complex, and unpredictable world, Vietnam still maintains its independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity, ensuring the highest national interests. Political and social stability creates important conditions to attract foreign investors, expand cooperation, deeply and comprehensively integrate into the world's production processes and chains, and actively participate in maintaining peace and stability in the region and the world. From a country under siege and embargo, as of June 2025, Vietnam has established diplomatic relations with 194 countries, of which 13 are comprehensive strategic partners. In particular, our country has established

comprehensive strategic partnerships with 4 out of 5 Permanent Members of the United Nations Security Council (the remaining country is a strategic partner) and has economic and trade relations with 230 economies in the world⁽⁴⁾.

Thus, after nearly 40 years of implementing the renovation process, the country's potential has been strongly enhanced, its prestige and position in the international arena have been raised to new heights; at the same time, our country has a strong political foundation in terms of organization, human resources and capacity to manage national development, a humane, modern political foundation, of the people, by the people and for the people.

The achievements are a testament to the suitability and correctness of the policy of combining the building of a self-reliant economy with proactive international integration. This policy meets the practical requirements and legitimate aspirations of the people, while contributing significantly to encouraging the will and nurturing the aspiration to build a prosperous and happy nation in the new era of national development.

However, in addition to the achievements, there are still some limitations that need to be overcome. The negative impacts of the market economy have created many significant challenges. For profit, many businesses have disregarded the law and ethics, producing and trading in counterfeit and poor-quality goods. The gap between the rich and the poor and social inequality tends to increase. The 13th Congress pointed out: "The socialist-oriented market economic institution still has many problems and shortcomings. Institutional building capacity is still limited; the quality of laws and policies in some areas is still low. The investment and business environment is not really open and transparent. There has not been a breakthrough in mobilizing, allocating, and effectively using development resources. Institutions for regional economic development and coordination have not received due attention and have been slow to be concretized by law, so regional linkages remain loose"⁽⁵⁾.

2.2. Solutions to ensure and maintain an independent and self-reliant economy in the new era of development

Firstly, maintain independence and self-reliance in determining policies, guidelines, and strategies for the country's economic development.

This is a matter of principle in determining the direction and strategy of economic development and international economic integration. In it, independence and self-reliance are the capacity of a country to protect its sovereignty and national interests and exercise the right to self-determination in choosing its political regime, development model, path, and domestic and foreign policies, without being imposed upon, dependent, or manipulated from outside. Independence and self-reliance are demonstrated in all aspects of politics, economics, defense, security, culture, society, foreign affairs, etc., of the country.

However, the connotation of independence and self-reliance is not an immutable value. In the current era of deep globalization and international cooperation, these two concepts are relative and always exist in a multi-dimensional interdependence relationship among countries. This means that it is impossible to avoid negative impacts from global fluctuations, external pressures, or even certain interventions. However, participating in

integration does not mean losing or being unable to maintain independence and self-reliance; just as protecting sovereignty does not require closing off or separating from the world. The level of impact and dependence of each country depends fundamentally on its self-reliance capacity, resilience, along with strategic decisions on the roadmap, scope, and cooperation partners in the integration process.

To consolidate and maintain independence and self-reliance, it is essential to avoid dependence on any partner or market in any field. It is necessary to pursue a policy of diversifying international relations and partnerships. Firmly adhere to the principle of combining national strength with the strength of the times; with the focus being on relying on national internal strength, unleashing and maximizing domestic potential, and effectively utilizing external resources.

Secondly, promote internal strength, take advantage of external strength, improve national governance and creation capacity, create new growth momentum, and sustain development.

Building a new growth model does not mean completely breaking away from old growth drivers, but rather “renewing” those old drivers on the basis of promulgating and implementing policy and legal frameworks to encourage behavioral changes in consumption, production, and investment.

Make the most of new growth drivers, including the digital economy, renovation, improving labor efficiency and total productivity, promoting and enhancing the role of the private sector, and perfecting institutions for safe and sustainable digital transformation, energy transition, and effective response to climate change.

Solving the difficulties, obstacles, and bottlenecks of the economy requires persistently implementing long-term goals; promoting endogenous capacity and effectively utilizing external factors. Focus on improving the competitiveness of domestic enterprises and the economy. Developing the agricultural, industrial, and service sectors equally; accelerating the disbursement of public investment, stimulating consumption, expanding the domestic market, and improving labor productivity.

Regarding the use of external resources, it is necessary to optimize the benefits from foreign investment and promote exports in a sustainable manner. Prioritize the consolidation of key and traditional export markets, while expanding market share to new areas and niche markets, flexibly responding to requests from partners. Make the most of the new generation FTAs that have been signed, improve the effectiveness of trade promotion, connect supply and demand, and diversify products, investments, and export destinations.

Focus on 5 main driving forces to promote regional connectivity, recovery, and growth of economic locomotives; develop the private economic sector and domestic enterprises; promote the digital economy and green economy; improve and enhance the quality of economic institutions; enhance Vietnam’s position in the global value chain and enhance the economy’s independence and self-reliance. Encourage innovative thinking and creativity in creating new growth drivers, explore approaches as well as create an environment for new ideas to be tested and encourage creativity in all aspects of life.

Thirdly, improving the institutions for building an independent, self-reliant, and internationally integrated economy.

Building appropriate institutions and policies is one of the premises and prerequisites for effective and sustainable development. Appropriate and progressive institutions will promote innovation and development; conversely, they will hinder the creativity and operational efficiency of social actors. Institutions themselves are dynamic, requiring constant innovation and updating to keep up with the development level of society. Improving the quality of institutions is an important breakthrough in development strategies.

It is necessary to shift to a mindset that really focuses on serving society and national development. All efforts to improve institutions must have as their core objective the comprehensive promotion of social life and the sustainability of the political regime. Eliminating stagnation and conservatism is the autonomous way to effectively exercise national governance.

Shift from passive thinking to proactive thinking, get ahead, and build leading institutions instead of chasing institutions like before. It is necessary to change the traditional single-line, fragmented approach by sector, which lacks comprehensiveness, to an interdisciplinary, integrated approach, harmonizing long-term interests. This helps limit overlap in the process of formulating legal documents. Institution building is the responsibility of the entire national governance system, from central to local, in which both levels need to work together to shape an open mindset, pave the way, and unblock development resources. Removing institutional bottlenecks needs to be done synchronously instead of depending on specific mechanisms for each individual locality.

Consistent thinking in institutional design and institutional ecosystems needs to put economic development at the center, consider Party building and the political system as key factors, and take cultural development as the spiritual foundation for the whole society.

For the development and integration institutions, the requirement is to establish a close connection between the goal of deep integration and the consolidation of Vietnam's independence and self-reliance in the context of the constantly changing global institutional system.

Building a self-reliant economy in the context of integration requires the improvement of relevant legal mechanisms. This includes consolidating a strong national economic foundation, perfecting a stable political system, and developing an advanced culture imbued with national identity in the process of continuous integration. To optimize efficiency and protect national interests, self-determination needs to be further emphasized; at the same time, to adapt to the volatile international environment, the level of self-reliance needs to be further enhanced. Therefore, the urgent task is to perfect the institutional ecosystem to maximize the opportunities from international treaties and agreements that Vietnam has participated in.

At the same time, the group of institutions that lead and have the function of orienting development strategies needs to be evaluated and prepared for the coming decades. For example, the standards for selecting key industries and the development goals of the sector

must be consistent with the policy of building a self-reliant economy, contributing to making Vietnam a socialist-oriented developed country, while determining the position and level of development of the country in the region and in the world as well. The institutions that are principled in selecting industries, economic zones, and guiding investment under long-term master plans need to be adjusted and supplemented.

Fourthly, improve the quality of training for high-quality human resources.

People play a central role and are the core driving force of the development process. Therefore, to build a prosperous and independent economy, training high-quality human resources is the key factor.

Universities need to further strengthen their role in training human resources, discovering and nurturing talents. Focus on selecting, training, and developing excellent students, especially in talent programs in the field of basic sciences, to create a solid foundation for in-depth research.

Attracting and developing a team of young scientists with potential and leading experts with a passion for research needs special attention.

In addition, it is necessary to mobilize the overall strength of organizations, social forces, and the entire political system in improving the quality of human resources. Expand the lifelong learning movement to all people and the business community.

3. Conclusion

In the journey towards a strong and prosperous Vietnam, economic independence and self-reliance are not only a principled goal but also a vital requirement for long-term development. Ensuring economic independence and self-reliance in the current era of globalization must be based on internal strength, the self-reliance of the economy, flexible adaptability, and the capacity to effectively utilize external resources. More importantly, it is a harmonious combination between the nation's aspiration to rise and steadfast political will, between the strategic vision of the Party and the State, and the creative efforts and unceasing dedication of the whole society ■

Received: July 26, 2025; Revised: September 16, 2025; Approved for publication: September 24, 2025.

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● Endnotes:

(1) The data are compiled by the author based on data published on the website of the General Statistics Office, nso.gov.vn.

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