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From the Socio-Economic Achievements of the 13th National Party Congress to the Aspirations for Further Progress of the 14th Congress

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Abstract
During the 13th National Party Congress (2021 - 2025), the Vietnamese economy demonstrated strong resilience in its recovery and achieved remarkable development amidst a complex, unpredictable, and unprecedented global situation, with many factors beyond forecast, especially the severe impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.
This article provides a systematic analysis of Vietnam's major socio-economic achievements during the term of the 13th National Party Congress (2021 - 2025), set against a global backdrop marked by complex fluctuations and unprecedented shocks, particularly the profound impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and the growing trends of fragmentation and protectionism in global trade. By clarifying key outcomes in economic growth, macroeconomic stability, economic scale, and endogenous capacity, the article identifies the critical factors underpinning these achievements, while also recognizing existing barriers and challenges affecting the quality and sustainability of growth. On that basis, the article examines the emergence of new growth drivers for the 2026 - 2030 period and elucidates the development vision and prospects outlined in the documents submitted to the 14th National Party Congress. The article affirms the logical continuity and inheritance between the achievements of the 13th Congress and the objectives of rapid, sustainable development and stronger advancement during the term of the 14th National Party Congress (2026 - 2030).

Keywords: 13th National Party Congress, 14th National Party Congress, Vietnam, Socio-Economic Development Achievements, Macroeconomic Stability, Economic Resilience, Growth Model, New Growth Drivers, Development Aspirations

Content

Major Achievements

During the 2021 - 2025 period, Vietnam achieved and surpassed 22 out of 26 [1] key socio-economic targets;

[1] ***Targets achieved:*** ***(1)*** Average GDP growth rate reaches 6.5 - 7.0%/year; ***(2)*** GDP per capita reaches 4,700 - 5,000 USD; ***(3)*** The proportion of processing and manufacturing industry in GDP reaches 25% or more; ***(4)*** The proportion of digital economy in GDP reaches about 20%; ***(5)*** The contribution rate of total factor productivity (TFP) to growth reaches 45%; ***(6)*** Average state budget deficit during the period is 3.7% of GDP; ***(7)*** Public debt does not exceed 60% of GDP; ***(8)*** The proportion of trained labor reaches 65 - 70%; ***(9)*** The overall unemployment rate is below 3%; ***(10)*** The urban unemployment rate is below 4%; ***(11)*** The multidimensional poverty rate decreases by an average of 1.0 - 1.5%/year; ***(12)*** Average life expectancy of the population reaches 74.5 years; ***(13)*** Average number of years of healthy life reaches 67 years; ***(14)*** Number of hospital beds reaches 30 beds per 10,000 people; ***(15)*** Number of doctors reaches 10 doctors per 10,000 people; ***(16)*** The percentage of the population participating in health insurance reaches over 95%; ***(17)*** The percentage of urban population supplied with clean water through the centralized water supply system reaches 95 - 100%; ***(18)*** The percentage of urban solid waste collection and treatment reaches at least 90%; ***(19)*** Forest cover rate is maintained at 42%; ***(20)*** Urbanization rate reaches 45%; ***(21)*** The percentage of communes meeting new rural standards reaches at least 80%; ***(22)*** The percentage of districts meeting new rural standards accounts for at least 50% of the total number of districts nationwide. ***Targets not yet achieved:*** ***(1)*** The rate of increase in social labor productivity reaches 6.5%/year or more; ***(2)*** The percentage

specifically, in 2024 - 2025, it achieved and surpassed all 15[2] socio-economic targets. The average GDP growth rate for the entire period stood
at 6.3% per year; the size of the economy increased from US$346 billion in 2020 to US$510 billion in 2025, a jump of 5 places to rank 32nd in the world; GDP per capita increased from over US$3,500/person/year to US$5,000/person/year, placing Vietnam in the group of upper-middle-income countries. Total export turnover exceeded US$900 billion by 2025, bringing Vietnam's trade volume to the top 20 globally.

Notably, the economy returned to a high growth trajectory, while inflation remained consistently under control below 4%, and major economic balances were ensured. This is also the period when Vietnam reduced public debt from 44.3% of GDP in 2020 to 35 - 36% of GDP; reduced the budget deficit while state budget revenue increased 1.36 times compared to the previous term (estimated at 9.6 trillion VND); the foreign exchange market was relatively stable, and lending interest rates had decreased, positively impacting the recovery and development of businesses.

The socio-economic development achievements of the 2021 - 2025 period could be summarized by the concepts of "resilience" and "breakthrough." In the first year of the term, despite the severe impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the decline in global trade, Vietnam's economy still grew by 2.58%, while many countries fell into recession and experienced negative growth. From 2022 onwards, Vietnam accelerated urgent measures to support production and business, reformed administrative procedures, and promoted economic recovery, resulting in a significant acceleration of GDP growth to 8.02%. Importantly, in 2025, based on a thorough assessment of the practical situation and in response to the country's development requirements, Vietnam adjusted its GDP growth target to 8% or higher instead of the initial target of 6.5%, reflecting the country’s aspiration, political determination to overcome challenges, and commitment to entering a new stage of development.

The resilience of the Vietnamese economy is demonstrated in two important aspects. Firstly, the internal capacity of the economy has been enhanced through data on GDP growth rate, the increase in GDP size, and total import and export turnover; many other macroeconomic indicators are also positive. Secondly, Vietnam continues to be a reliable destination for foreign investors as global investment flows fluctuate and restructure after the Covid-19 pandemic; total import and export turnover continues to set new records, despite the negative impacts of the retaliatory tariff policies of the US President Donald Trump's administration.

Factors that contribute to success

Vietnam's outstanding socio-economic development achievements during the 2021 - 2025 period stem from six main groups of causes: Firstly, the decisive, unified, and flexible leadership and guidance of the Party and State in the context of unprecedented and complex global changes have helped the economy quickly shift from a crisis response state to recovery and breakthrough, promptly adjusting targets and priorities to meet practical requirements. Secondly, macroeconomic management has been carried out proactively, cautiously, and effectively, consistently stabilizing the macroeconomy, controlling inflation, ensuring major balances, and rapidly reducing public debt and budget deficits, thereby creating important policy space for growth. Thirdly, traditional growth drivers have been effectively utilized in conjunction with the recovery of production, expansion of investment, stimulation of consumption, and promotion of exports, while the economic structure continues to shift towards increasing added value. Fourth, deep international economic integration and the effective utilization of new-generation free trade agreements have helped Vietnam expand its markets, diversify its partners, and enhance its resilience to external shocks, even in the context of fragmented global trade and increasing protectionism. Fifth, the resilience and internal capacity of the economy have been significantly strengthened, demonstrated by its ability to maintain growth during the most difficult periods and its rapid recovery and significant breakthroughs in the final years of the term. Sixth, the confidence of the international community and investors continues to be strengthened, recognized by prestigious organizations such as the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) when assessing Vietnam as one of the world's high-growth economies, capable of withstanding and recovering positively from global shocks, thereby creating a positive ripple effect on attracting investment and the medium-term development prospects of the economy.

Barriers and challenges

Despite positive results and notable achievements, the Vietnamese economy during the 13th National Party Congress term still faces several internal obstacles and challenges that could affect the quality and sustainability of

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of trained workers with degrees and certificates reaches 25 - 30%; ***(3)*** The percentage of rural population using clean water meeting standards reaches 60% or more; ***(4)*** The percentage of operating industrial parks and export processing zones with centralized wastewater treatment systems meeting environmental standards reaches 92% or more.

[2] ***(1)*** GDP growth rate reaches 7.0 - 7.5%, exceeding the target by 10 - 20%; ***(2)*** GDP per capita reaches 4,900 - 5,000 USD, exceeding by 4 - 6%; ***(3)*** Average consumer price index (CPI) is controlled at 3.5 - 4.0%, lower than the target by 10 - 20%; ***(4)*** Social labor productivity growth rate reaches 6.0 - 6.5%, exceeding the target by 5 - 10%; ***(5)*** The proportion of processing and manufacturing industry in GDP reaches 25.5 - 26.0%, exceeding by 2 - 4%; ***(6)*** The proportion of digital economy in GDP reaches 18 - 19%, exceeding the annual target by 5 - 10%; ***(7)*** State budget deficit maintained at 3.0 - 3.2% of GDP, lower than the target of 15 - 25%; ***(8)*** Public debt at 36 - 38% of GDP, lower than the allowed ceiling of 35 - 40%; ***(9)*** Total social investment reached about 34 - 35% of GDP, exceeding the target by 3 - 5%; ***(10)*** General unemployment rate decreased to about 2.2 - 2.4%, lower than the target of 20 - 25%; ***(11)*** Urban unemployment rate at about 2.8 - 3.0%, lower than the target of 25 - 30%; ***(12)*** The rate of trained labor reached about 68 - 69%, exceeding the target by 2 - 4%; ***(13)*** The multidimensional poverty rate decreased by an average of about 1.6 - 1.8%/year, exceeding the target of 10 - 20%; ***(14)*** The rate of collection and treatment of urban solid waste reached 92 - 93%, exceeding the target of 2 - 3%; ***(15)*** The forest cover rate remained stable at about 42%, achieving the set target.

growth in the coming period. First, the quality of growth and labor productivity remain major challenges, with the average labor productivity growth rate for the 2021 - 2025 period reaching only about 5.24%, lower than the set target. This reflects persistent limitations in technology, vocational skills, and the quality of human resources, posing a risk that, without breakthrough solutions, Vietnam will struggle to improve its competitiveness and overcome the middle-income trap.

Furthermore, bottlenecks in the disbursement of public investment continue to be a prominent issue. Institutional and legal procedural obstacles, along with difficulties in land clearance, have prevented a large amount of public investment capital from being injected into the economy in a timely manner, slowing down the progress of infrastructure development and limiting the spillover effects of state capital on growth and development.

Another noteworthy challenge is the health of the private sector, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). While the number of newly established businesses continues to increase, the rate of business exits from the market is also rising sharply, estimated at around 60% by 2025. This indicates the limited resilience of the domestic business sector to market shocks, rising input costs, and increasing competitive pressure in the context of volatile global trade.

Finally, risks from the international economic environment continue to exist and tend to increase. The relatively high level of dependence on exports, especially on a few key markets such as the US (accounting for approximately 30% of export turnover), makes the economy vulnerable to retaliatory tariffs, technical barriers, and increasing protectionist trends. This is a significant challenge, requiring Vietnam to continue diversifying its markets and enhancing the adaptability and resilience of its economy in the next stage of development.

Emerging growth drivers for the 2026 - 2030 period

Besides effectively leveraging traditional growth drivers, the period 2021 - 2025 also marks the strong development of economic activities based on new growth models, including innovation, digital economy, green economy, and renewable energy, especially in the final year of the term.

Resolution No. 57/NQ-TW of the Politburo on breakthroughs in science, technology, innovation, and national digital transformation, together with Resolution No. 68/NQ-TW on private sector development, has promoted technological restructuring. As a result, Vietnam's innovation ecosystem has entered a phase of extensive development with over 4,000 startups, 2 unicorns, and positioning itself as an attractive destination for technology capital in the region. Along with this, it has attracted the participation of over 1,000 partners into Vietnam's innovation ecosystem, including leading technology corporations such as NVIDIA, Google, Meta, Samsung, Qualcomm… through the connection of the National Innovation Center (NIC). The private sector has seen a significant breakthrough with over 300,000 newly registered and reactivated businesses, bringing the total number of active businesses in the economy to over 1 million by 2025 alone. This creates new momentum for private-sector investment, bringing new vitality to the economy.

The stable macroeconomic environment, increasingly favorable investment conditions, and strengthened market confidence during the 2021 - 2025 period have created a crucial foundation for Vietnam to attract high-quality foreign investment amidst the significant shifts in global supply chains. These factors serve as necessary conditions for the formation of breakthrough growth drivers from 2026 onwards, enabling Vietnam to maintain stable and sustainable double-digit growth in the subsequent period. Furthermore, the accelerated disbursement of public investment, especially key infrastructure projects, and the process of institutional reform and streamlining of the government apparatus during the 2021 - 2025 period have contributed to unlocking resources, unleashing production capacity, opening new development opportunities, and creating a foundation and expectation for rapid and sustainable development in the 2026 - 2030 period.

Vision and prospects of the 14th National Party Congress

Building upon the significant achievements of the 13th National Party Congress, the 14th Congress is expected to usher in a new phase of development with a long-term vision and higher demands for growth quality. The draft documents submitted to the 14th Congress define the goal for 2030: Vietnam will become a developing country with a modern industrial base and a high middle income, with an average GDP growth rate of 7.5 - 8.0% per year during the 2026 - 2030 period; GDP per capita reaching US$7,500 - 8,000; the digital economy contributing 30% of GDP; urbanization exceeding 50%; average labor productivity growth exceeding 6.5% per year; and continued steady improvement in social and environmental indicators.

Against the backdrop of global economic uncertainty, Vietnam's development prospects for the 2026 - 2030 period are assessed positively thanks to a stable macroeconomic foundation, strengthened policy space, and increasing market confidence. The 14th National Party Congress emphasized the need for a strong reform of the growth model, shifting the focus from capital and labor-based to science and technology-based, innovative, and high-quality human resources; striving to achieve, by 2030, a manufacturing sector share of over 30% of GDP, with the private sector contributing 55 - 60% of GDP, and the proportion of trained workers with degrees and certificates exceeding 35%, while maintaining macroeconomic stability, controlling average inflation below 4%, and keeping public debt within safe limits.

With a vision to transform Vietnam into a developed, high-income country by 2045, the 14th National Party Congress is expected to create a strategic shift in rapid and sustainable development, linking economic growth with social progress, environmental protection, and improving the quality of life for the people. These quantitative orientations and goals, along with the solid foundation built during the 13th National Party Congress, show that Vietnam is facing a great opportunity to make a significant breakthrough and enhance its position in the region and internationally.

Conclusion

Practical socio-economic development during the term of the 13th National Party Congress demonstrates that Vietnam's economy has clearly exhibited strong resilience and the capacity for recovery and breakthrough under the most challenging conditions, while at the same time establishing a solid foundation for the subsequent stage of development. The achievements attained not only reflect the effectiveness of the Party's and State's sound, flexible leadership, guidance, and macroeconomic management, but also highlight the maturation of the economy in terms of scale, quality, and competitiveness.

Nevertheless, persistent constraints related to growth quality, labor productivity, the efficiency of public investment, the health of the private sector, and risks stemming from the international economic environment underscore the need for a more profound transformation of the growth model in the period ahead. In this context, fostering new growth drivers based on science and technology, innovation, the digital economy, the green economy, and improvements in the quality of human resources has become an inevitable requirement.

Building upon the results achieved and the lessons learned during the term of the 13th National Party Congress, the 14th Congress is expected to usher in a strategic transition, translating the aspiration for rapid and sustainable development into concrete outcomes, while enhancing growth quality and Vietnam's position in the region and on the international stage. The close linkage between "achievements" and "aspirations" not only reflects continuity and advancement in the Party's strategic thinking, but also provides an important foundation for Vietnam to confidently enter a new development phase, moving toward the goal of becoming a developed, high-income country by 2045./.

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