

# Promoting driving forces to unlock resources in the new era of development

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- **Abstract:** Driving force and development resources have a close relationship; driving force promotes the effective mobilization, allocation, and use of resources. Without generating driving force, there can be no resources for national development. This article clarifies the approach to promoting the driving force to unlock resources for development, highlights some achievements of Vietnam over nearly 40 years of promoting such driving force from the launch of national renovation to unlock resources for national development, and proposes some solutions for enhancing driving forces to unlock resources in the new era of development.
- **Keywords:** driving force; development resources; unlocking resources; rising country; new era.

## 1. Introduction

During the discussion titled “Some issues on the new era, the era of national rise” with students of the training course updating knowledge and skills for planning officers of the 14<sup>th</sup> Party Central Committee (3<sup>rd</sup> class) on October 31, 2024, at the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics, Professor, Dr. To Lam, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam pointed out: “Resources serving economic development have not been effective (human resources remain limited, with declining labor productivity and motivation among state management cadres; material resources are still being wasted; and financial resources remain untapped)”<sup>(1)</sup>. Therefore, the question posed is the need for solutions to enhance driving forces in order to unlock resources for national development in the new era.

## 2. Content

### 2.1. Approach to promoting driving forces to unlock resources for development

Throughout history, every step forward in human civilization has been associated with humanity’s need to self-liberate its internal driving forces and generate new

sources of power. The power that forms the driving force for human development is the power of intelligence and the power of developing thought. Driving force is liberated through the steps of social development:

Primitive communist society - the earliest form of human society - was based on communal ownership, collective labor, and egalitarian distribution. Human behavior in the community was governed by habits and customs; the strength of human beings seemed to rely solely on physical force.

At a certain level in the development of productive forces, particularly when the two industries of animal husbandry and agriculture were born, the quantity of goods produced exceeded daily needs. Surplus wealth emerged and was appropriated by some individuals as personal property. This marked the birth of private ownership and the replacement of primitive communism with a slave-owning society. At this point, both slave owners and slaves began to experience inner torment, reflection, and thought - the birth of human consciousness. The earliest form of thinking was reflection on one's status and place in the community. Slave owners sought to preserve and consolidate their dominant position. Conversely, slaves sought to escape their status as the exploited. In this way, political thinking emerged. At the same time, slave owners aspired to possess more land, livestock, and slaves to increase their wealth and strengthen their dominance. Thus, economic thinking began to appear among the slave-owning class. The process of contemplating how to maintain and strengthen ruling status, how to accumulate wealth, and how to escape the condition of subjugation - this was the initial formation of managerial thinking.

On the other hand, slaves were compelled to work through physical coercion by the slave owner, not out of their own economic interest. A society in which almost the entire direct labor force producing material wealth had no desire to create more - and at times even sought to destroy what they had made (because they perceived that wealth as the source of their suffering) - could not possess the strength or driving force for development.

The emergence of the feudal system liberated slaves into free farmers. This was essentially a revolution in ownership relations, and its revolutionary nature was expressed through the abolition of the barbaric institution of slave-based private property - wherein humans were themselves owned. Unlike slaves, peasants could possess their own bodies and had the potential to rise in social status. Moreover, peasants had the opportunity to own a portion of social wealth. This opened up the creative potential in political thinking, economic thinking, and managerial thinking among the basic productive forces in society, thereby providing feudal society with a new internal developmental momentum that far surpassed that of slave-owning society and marked a significant leap forward.

However, feudal private ownership still had many limitations, hindering social progress. The basic material condition of feudal reproduction was land. Meanwhile, "under the sky, mountains and rivers, the country", everything, including land

resources, was the property of the king. The king's ownership was private ownership. Thus, in feudal society, private ownership was, in essence, the ownership of only one individual. Moreover, the king wielded state power - the king was the state. Thus, feudal private ownership took on the nature of state ownership. The king and feudal lords exercised ownership primarily to preserve the throne and ensure dynastic succession. Any action, even if beneficial to the national economy or people's livelihoods, would be banned - even destroyed - if it posed a threat to the king's rule. Feudal peasants lacked the material conditions necessary to develop economic or managerial thinking and to rise and transform their lives. Consequently, due to the nature of private ownership in feudal society, the ability of peasants to cultivate political, economic, or managerial thinking was severely limited.

The bourgeois revolutions brought a new advance in the institution of private property - abolishing its association with the state and restoring it to individual citizens. For the first time in history, individuals were recognized and protected by the law in their civil rights and property rights. The French Civil Code of 1804 stated: "Every French citizen enjoys civil rights"<sup>(2)</sup>; "No one may be compelled to transfer his ownership, except for the public interest and upon satisfactory prior compensation"<sup>(3)</sup>; "Property ownership is established and transferred by inheritance, gift or donation, and by the validity of obligations"<sup>(4)</sup>. The American Declaration of Independence in 1776 also stated: "They are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; among these are the right to life, the right to liberty and the pursuit of happiness"<sup>(5)</sup>.

In Vietnam's Declaration of Independence in 1945, President Ho Chi Minh quoted these famous lines from both historic declarations: "All men are created equal. They are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among these are the right to life, the right to liberty and the pursuit of happiness"<sup>(6)</sup>.

Thus, looking back at history, it can be seen that changes in ownership relations play a decisive role, a revolutionary turning point in the process of social development. As Karl Marx pointed out: "All so-called political revolutions, from the first to the last, are carried out to protect ownership of a certain type"<sup>(7)</sup>. Social revolutions are essentially aimed at liberating the driving forces of social development, thereby opening up resources for social advancement.

### **2.2. Results of promoting driving forces to unlock resources for Vietnam's national development**

Vietnam's renovation process began at the end of 1986, when the Party declared its policy of developing a multi-sector economy,

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eliminating the monopoly of only one form of ownership (state ownership), and building an economy based on various forms of ownership. This also means eliminating the monopoly of the state management apparatus on business activities, giving all components, forces, and each person the right to do business. Every citizen was given the right to harness their intelligence, talent, labor power, material assets, and financial capital, to exercise economic and managerial thinking, and to create greater material wealth - enriching both themselves and society. This constitutes one of the most important aspects of freedom and the human right to pursue happiness.

The renovation in ownership relations opened a new phase of development for the Vietnamese economy. The emergence of multiple sectors, actors, and forces participating in economic activity, and the resulting interrelations among them, gradually shifted Vietnam's economy from a centrally planned, subsidized model to a socialist-oriented market economy. The private economic sector and the foreign-invested economy, both growing in proportion, along with the transformation within the state economic sector, have led to positive changes in social production: shifting from the old industrial-agricultural structure to the industrial-agricultural-commercial and service structure. These changes liberated, awakened, and nurtured the people's strength. Combined with Vietnam's ability to harness the power of the times, this brought the economy a new status and momentum for development; a vast reservoir of material, spiritual, and intellectual resources. The movement of Vietnam's economy has become increasingly "synchronized" with the trajectory of the global economy. This is a critical precondition for integration into regional and global markets and opens up new opportunities to access abundant resources such as capital, technology, human resources, and international markets.

As a result, after 40 years of renovation, Vietnam have achieved remarkable accomplishments; "Our country has never had such a foundation, potential, position, and international prestige as today"<sup>(8)</sup>. General Secretary To Lam affirmed: "The great achievements after 40 years of renovation under the leadership of the Party, helped Vietnam accumulate position and strength for breakthrough development in the coming period: from a poor, backward, low-level country, besieged and embargoed, Vietnam has become a developing country, with average income, intensively and extensively integrated into world politics, the global economy, human civilization, taking on many important international responsibilities, playing an active and responsible role in many important multilateral organizations and forums. Independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity are maintained; national and ethnic interests are guaranteed"<sup>(9)</sup>.

Vietnam has risen to become a middle-income country with per-capita income reaching about USD 4,300 in 2023, nearly 60 times higher than that in 1986<sup>(10)</sup>.

The economic structure is increasingly changing in a positive direction: the proportion of agriculture, forestry, and fishery is decreasing, the proportion of industry - construction, and the proportion of the service sector have shown upward



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trends<sup>(12)</sup>. The decrease in the proportion of the agricultural sector in GDP leads to a shift of labor from the agricultural sector to the industrial and service sectors with higher labor productivity.

The proportion of state-owned enterprises within the total enterprise sector has decreased over the years (accounting for 22.84% in 2015 and decreasing to 21.18% in 2021)<sup>(13)</sup>. This is the result of the renovation process, shifting to a market economy aimed at mobilizing resources from various economic forms for development.

Vietnam maintains trade relations with 220 countries and territories and has good relations with international institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization, and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum. Vietnam has signed 20 free trade agreements (FTAs), of which 16 FTAs have come into effect and are being implemented. In 2024 alone, Vietnam will complete the signing of the FTA with the United Arab Emirates (CEPA), complete the process of implementing the Protocol on the United Kingdom's accession to the CPTPP Agreement, and put the FTA with Israel into effect<sup>(14)</sup>. These developments formed a crucial foundation for Vietnam's total import-export turnover by November 2024, which was estimated to reach USD 715.55 billion, an increase of 15.4% over the same period last year, of which exports will increase by 14.4% and imports will increase by 16.4% and the trade surplus reached USD 24.31 billion<sup>(15)</sup>.

The quality of economic growth has shifted towards depth, grounded in the application of science, technology, and renovation, with an average labor productivity growth rate of about 4.6% per year for the 2021-2023 period, and the contribution of

total factor productivity (TFP) to economic growth is increasing steadily. In the 2016-2020 period, the contribution of TFP to economic growth reached 45.57%, and in the 2021-2023 period, it is estimated to reach about 42%<sup>(16)</sup>.

In addition to economic achievements, the socialist orientation of the Vietnamese economy is constantly being consolidated. The poverty rate according to the multi-dimensional poverty standard in 2024 is below 1.9%, down more than 1%; the happiness index increased by 11 levels, ranking 54/143<sup>(17)</sup>; the Human Development Index (HDI) has continuously shown improvement, reaching 0.73 points in 2023, which is much higher than countries with the same income level<sup>(18)</sup>. The health sector has made great progress as living standards improve. The quality of medical examination and treatment has improved gradually; epidemics have been properly controlled; advanced medical techniques, especially organ transplantation, have been increasingly mastered. Digital transformation and remote medical examination and treatment have been promoted; the private healthcare sector continues to develop. Positive developments have also been recorded in labor and employment. The quality of human resources has been improved; the labor force and the rate of employed workers have increased; unemployment and underemployment rates have decreased, etc. Vietnam is also aiming for green and inclusive development. At COP27, Vietnam pledged to reduce methane emissions by 30% and end deforestation by 2030, while achieving “zero” carbon emissions by 2050<sup>(19)</sup>.

The Party and political system are being built to become increasingly clean and strong. National defense and security potential is being enhanced; and “the people’s heart position” is prioritized; national defense position and the people’s security posture, especially in strategic and key areas, are being firmly consolidated<sup>(20)</sup>.

### ***2.3. Some solutions to promote driving forces to unlock resources in the new era***

Currently, after nearly 40 years of renovation, Vietnam’s development context has undergone many fundamental changes: The world is in the midst of Industrial Revolution 4.0, which has the power to “overturn the logic of development” in ways that humanity has never seen in the three previous industrial revolutions; at the same time, the population is aging, global trade is declining, while environmental degradation and climate change issues are increasing. These factors have created a new era of development, different in both structure and developmental logic, posing major challenges to Vietnam’s development: How to recover and develop the socio-economic status in the new context, and at the same time, find opportunities within difficulties and crises to create new momentum for growth, to anticipate and take advantage of major trends of the era for breakthrough development.

Vietnam’s economy is presently at a pivotal moment. For the country to enter a new era, Vietnam needs a new system of development driving forces - not just the old “renewed” versions of the old one - to open up and effectively use resources for development. Vietnam cannot solve the problem of “development lag” by continuing to maintain the old system of driving forces. The country’s growth and development

driving forces in the new period must be defined as development in depth, ensuring rapid and sustainable development; determined at the national level, which means that the level of impact must be at the macro level, encompassing the whole country; determined synchronously in terms of institutions, subjects and some fundamental, key factors - both material and spiritual - that influence various sectors to form a comprehensive national development driving force; defined by position and role of impact on the country's overall development in each specific period. In the time ahead, it is necessary to promote the following groups of driving forces:

*Firstly, the group of institutional driving forces - this is an important growth driver, playing an increasingly important role in the development of each country.*

For Vietnam, among the three biggest bottlenecks today: institutions, infrastructure, and human resources, institutions are the “bottleneck of bottlenecks”<sup>(21)</sup>. To unlock resources for national development, the State must employ its primary tools: creating mechanisms and policies as the basis for forming and promoting the driving forces. Institutional reform entails the establishment, supplementation, and changing the system of rules and regulations, first and foremost the formal legal rules and regulations, to implement economic reforms, promoting the process of transforming the country's economy into a full and modern market economy. Institutional breakthroughs are changes that are large enough, fast enough, strong enough in the institutional realm to remove institutional bottlenecks and generate a leap forward in the process of transitioning to a full, modern market economy. Thus, institutional reform and institutional breakthroughs represent a transformation in content, not merely in form, order, or procedures.

Therefore, State policies related to the interests and honor of the people must undergo social critique before being issued and be summarized and evaluated for effectiveness. This ensures that policies enter into practical life, generate broad consensus within society, and fulfill the objectives set out for them in an effective and efficient manner.

Build a streamlined, effective, efficient, and high-performing socialist rule-of-law state apparatus; promote decentralization and delegation of power to ensure unified management, promote initiative, creativity, and responsibility across all levels and sectors. The mindset of “state control” must be replaced with “state regulation when necessary” (i.e., market regulation should be primary). Eliminate the notion that “the state will open up areas to the people and businesses only insofar as it is capable of managing them,” and replace it with the mindset that “state management must not restrict development, but rather serve development, promote development, and exist for development,” with no legal limits or barriers placed on the innovation and creativity of the people and businesses.

*Secondly, the group of growth driving forces according to the role of the economic sector, in which the private economic sector should be considered an important driving force*

In a market economy, the fundamental principle governing the movement and development is that economic forces and entities must be equal in the market. However, in the socialist-oriented market economy in Vietnam, the state economy plays a leading role - guiding the long-term development of the economy, for all economic forces and components. The concept of “leading role” is first and foremost associated with setting the rules of the game and supervising the game, requiring all economic factors and entities to strictly adhere to them. In a market economy, the leading function includes the task of creating an effective (stable and encouraging) macro environment.

In Vietnam’s socialist-oriented market economy, the leading role must be tied to the economic function of the State and not synonymous with any separate economic force. This sector will continue to play an important role in the process of industrialization and modernization of the country due to its strong potential, its control over key economic sectors and irreplaceable functions (supplying public goods).

However, this economic sector must operate properly according to the core functions assigned to it under the conditions determined by the market. In principle, this sector is not allowed to have any special privileges outside the institutional framework or in contradiction with the market principle. Any possible “privileges” must only arise from its objective functions, such as the legal requirements for the production and provision of public goods and services.

The foreign-invested economic sector (FDI) has advantages in finance, technology, business experience and market access compared to domestic economic sectors. However, it is necessary to carefully assess the risk of dependency posed by this sector if its development goes beyond the state’s capacity for control. The crux of the problem does not lie in the rapid growth of this economic force but in the State’s capacity for macro-management and control of the industrialization and modernization process.

Building and developing the capacity for flexible policy responses and a strong institutional structure are prerequisites for carrying out this task. This is a core function of the Government in creating enabling environments, organizing and leading integration and promoting the industrialization and modernization process. The Government needs to create conditions and support domestic enterprises to link with FDI enterprises so that domestic enterprises can improve their capacity to participate in the global value chain.

*Thirdly, the group of growth driving forces based on the role of growth-generating factors, such as resources, capital, labor, science and technology, culture, democracy, social justice, etc.*

It is necessary to comprehensively evaluate and re-inventory the country’s resources from a modern perspective (structural trends, technological prospects, future resource values). Special attention should be paid to marine resources, intangible and non-traditional resources (e.g. flight corridors, environmental

resources, tourism resources, geo-strategic advantages, etc.). A strategic plan should be devised for developing processing industries based on domestic raw materials and high technology. There must be active efforts to develop new industries and seek new partners in order to exploit available resources effectively, based on advanced technologies.

A roadmap should be developed to limit the export of raw resources and efforts should be made to identify and target strategic resource import markets. Combine effective exploitation with raising awareness of protecting and saving natural resources. Efficient exploitation must be combined with raising awareness about conservation and the economical use of natural resources. Attention should be paid to harnessing cultural values to serve the cause of national industrialization and modernization. Vietnam's geopolitical advantages should be leveraged in the context of globalization, diversifying relations with other countries across all fields - political, economic, cultural, scientific, and technical - and across all levels of interaction: from Party to State to people's organizations and non-governmental organizations, through a variety of flexible forms.

Mobilize and use financial resources effectively. Focus on promoting domestic financial resources. For human resources, it is necessary to properly workers' basic needs and ensure equity in access to social benefits. Develop and improve policies that value and reward trained human resources appropriately. Prioritize the allocation of State investment capital and the mobilization of social capital to create employment, improve the quality and efficiency of labor resource utilization. Formulate a national human resource development strategy as the "axis" strategy of the entire national development strategy. In particular, it is necessary to focus on building a number of key universities with high-quality human resource training programs, aiming to make a significant supplier for high-quality labor markets in the region and the world. To achieve this goal, the training program must be undergo strong renovation to meet modern international standards, in terms of content, teaching methods, and technical facilities.

In the long term, the strategy of science and technology development must be framed as a strategy to guide national development. In the medium term, science and technology development must be considered a priority component of the overall development strategy, with the aim of rapidly laying foundational groundwork for long-term science and technology growth, while also supporting a "breakthrough" in high-tech economic development. Most research institutes should be shifted toward experimental research, application, and deployment, while gradually reducing state subsidies for R&D and technology application activities. Strengthen the capacity for training and conducting experimental and applied scientific research at universities. Strongly encourage the development of private research facilities, especially enterprise research facilities; establish experimental research and technology transfer facilities in Vietnam. Strengthen connections with networks of

Vietnamese scientists and administrators abroad. Build an open institutional framework and provide physical and technical conditions to enable domestic research institutions to easily establish and grow cooperative research partnerships with international counterparts.

*Fourthly, growth driving forces based on the role and contributions of geo-economic regions (growth driving-force regions)*

In a market economy, uneven development among regions is almost inevitable. This is due to the principle of development based on advantages, requiring investment to be concentrated in regions with advantages. In particular, for economies that need to accelerate development to catch up with the leading economies, such investment strategies are indispensable. However, prioritizing the development of key regions must be based on laying the groundwork for connection and spillover effects from those regions to others. To serve this objective, infrastructure development planning, especially in transportation, must be aligned with priority development goals and considered a crucial focus from the outset.

Prioritizing the development of key regions must also ensure respect for international commitments, and such prioritization must not result in discriminatory or unfair treatment of economic entities. Therefore, the primary direction for regional development must promote the development of regional infrastructure instead of providing incentives for businesses in those regions.

*Fifthly, the group of driving forces for international integration, especially international economic integration*

Make the most of external opportunities and resources, as well as the strength of the times to serve the development of the country along a socialist orientation. It is necessary to create an open environment, open mechanisms to attract FDI, improve national credit ratings, offer preferential policies for strategic investors in Vietnam, and enhance the effectiveness of foreign investment utilization in Vietnam. In the context of globalization, the freer flow of goods will naturally lead to increased flows of capital and technology. Therefore, efforts must be intensified to attract foreign investment and advanced technology, enhance cooperation in science and technology, and build strong, highly qualified research teams and working groups, etc. However, it is necessary to avoid tendencies towards over-reliance on foreign resources, or the opposite tendency towards isolationism and an absolute emphasis on self-reliance, that promotes one-sided domestic resources, and separates domestic resources and international resources.

*It is necessary to create an open environment, open mechanisms to attract FDI, improve national credit ratings, offer preferential policies for strategic investors in Vietnam, and enhance the effectiveness of foreign investment utilization in Vietnam.*

*Sixthly, the group of driving forces comprising strategic breakthroughs which, if effectively implemented, are the main driving force for the country's rise up in the new era*

A strategic breakthrough is a type of systemic breakthrough that affects key points but creates a chain effect, spreading quickly through the entire system according to objective and inevitable logic. Such breakthroughs stem from the need to resolve the contradiction between the current system of mechanisms and institutions and the objective development conditions and requirements that are being set. The internal purpose of this type of breakthrough is to profoundly and comprehensively change the current state of the economy.

Continue to implement high-quality breakthroughs in development institutions; human resource development, especially of high-quality human resources; and the construction of synchronous and modern infrastructure for transportation, electricity, telecommunications, infrastructure for trade, services, tourism,... as set out by the Party in the 10-year Socio-Economic Development Strategy 2021-2030. In addition, promote the development of science and technology, innovation and national digital transformation, in conjunction with the fight against corruption, wastefulness, and negativity in the civil service apparatus; and select and build a contingent of cadres with sufficient qualities, capacity, and reputation to undertake the tasks of the country's development in the new era.

### **3. Conclusion**

Promoting driving forces to unlock resources for development holds decisive significance to the development of Vietnam in the new era. This mission belongs to the leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam and the management of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam's rule-of-law state with a system of correct mechanisms and policies, suitable to reality and the times.

Based on the experiences and achievements that Vietnam has gained over nearly 40 years of renovation, and in the face of new opportunities and challenges in the context of Industrial Revolution 4.0, it is necessary to focus on promoting the following groups of driving forces: 1) The group of institutional driving forces; 2) The group of driving forces according to the role of economic sectors; 3) The group of growth driving forces according to the role of growth-generating factors; 4) The group of growth driving forces according to the role and contribution of geo-economic regions; 5) The group of driving forces related to international integration; 6) The group of driving forces that are strategic breakthroughs. These will help Vietnam unlock and effectively use resources for economic development, contributing to the implementation of the goals set by the Party in the era of development, the era of prosperity, under the leadership and rule of the Communist Party of Vietnam, successfully building a socialist Vietnam, with a wealthy people, a strong country, a democratic, equitable, civilized society, standing on par with the world powers ■

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● **Endnotes:**

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