

## **Sustainable Development in Vietnam Under International Integration: Policy Challenges and Strategic Directions**



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### **ABSTRACT**

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Sustainable development has become a central policy concern for countries facing increasing pressures from globalization, environmental degradation, and social transformation. For developing and transition economies, international integration simultaneously creates opportunities for economic growth and risks to long-term development sustainability. This study aims to analyze sustainable development in Vietnam under conditions of deepening international integration from a policy and governance perspective. Adopting a qualitative policy analysis approach, the study systematically reviews key Party resolutions, national socio-economic development strategies, sustainability-related policy documents, and relevant secondary data to identify major development achievements, structural constraints, and strategic priorities. The findings indicate that Vietnam has made notable progress in economic growth, poverty reduction, and the incorporation of sustainability objectives into national development planning. However, persistent challenges related to environmental degradation, regional inequality, and fragmented governance continue to constrain long-term development resilience. The analysis further reveals that sustainable development outcomes in Vietnam are strongly mediated by policy coherence, institutional capacity, and coordination across economic, social, and environmental domains. This study contributes to the literature by conceptualizing sustainable development as an integrated governance framework rather than a collection of sectoral objectives and offers policy-relevant insights for strengthening sustainable development planning in Vietnam and other developing economies undergoing international integration.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Sustainable development has become a central paradigm in contemporary development discourse, particularly as countries confront the opportunities and constraints created by deepening international integration. Intensifying globalization, rapid technological transformation, climate change, and non-traditional security risks have increased pressure on national development models to reconcile economic competitiveness with social inclusion and environmental integrity through coherent, long-term strategies. In this context, the feasibility of sustainable development increasingly depends on whether governance systems can reduce policy fragmentation, align cross-sector priorities, and manage trade-offs across time horizons—an issue emphasized in recent assessments of policy coherence mechanisms for achieving the sustainable development goals (SDGs) [1].

Vietnam represents a particularly instructive case for examining sustainable development under intensified international integration. Since the initiation of the Đổi Mới

reforms, Vietnam has achieved strong growth and deeper participation in regional and global production networks; however, accelerated industrialization, urbanization, and export-oriented restructuring have also generated sustainability pressures, including environmental pollution, uneven regional development, and widening social disparities. Recent empirical evidence for Vietnam indicates that urbanization and industrialization dynamics can deteriorate environmental quality, reinforcing the policy imperative to internalize environmental constraints within growth strategy rather than treating them as secondary externalities [2].

From a policy perspective, sustainable development in Vietnam is not merely an economic or environmental objective, but a strategic orientation encompassing economic efficiency, social progress, environmental protection, and institutional stability. Yet translating strategic commitments into implementable policy packages remains challenging, particularly in contexts where administrative capacity, regulatory enforcement, and inter-sector coordination are uneven. Scholarship on Vietnam's climate governance further suggests that policy framing and institutional logics (including

security-oriented narratives) shape how sustainability priorities are defined, mobilized, and implemented [3], while emerging evidence also highlights the complementary role of social and faith-based actors in promoting environmental stewardship and climate-responsive behavior at the community level [4].

Existing international literature on sustainable development has extensively examined conceptual frameworks, governance instruments, and SDG-oriented measurement systems. However, empirical and policy-oriented studies in developing and transition economies often remain fragmented, with limited integration of (i) international integration drivers (trade, foreign direct investment (FDI), and global value chains), (ii) domestic governance capacity, and (iii) environmental and distributional outcomes into a single analytic framework. Comparative evidence indicates that trade and FDI can support sustainable development outcomes, but their effects are conditional and may create conflicting pressures across economic, social, and environmental pillars without compensating policies and institutions [5].

For Vietnam, these conditionalities are particularly salient. International integration has contributed to structural transformation and upgrading, but it also raises governance demands related to competitiveness, regulatory quality, and inclusive distribution. At the macro-social level, recent evidence suggests that FDI may have complex and heterogeneous effects on income inequality across groups and locations, underscoring the importance of complementary redistribution and inclusion policies to ensure that integration benefits are broadly shared [6]. Relatedly, evidence on urbanization and poverty dynamics in Vietnam highlights that spatial transformation can be associated with poverty reduction, while also implying the need for place-sensitive policies to prevent uneven development and new vulnerability pockets [7].

This governance challenge extends to the institutional foundations of sustainable development implementation. Vietnam's capacity to translate SDG commitments into practice depends not only on high-level strategies but also on organizational motivation, administrative capability, and coordination mechanisms across sectors and levels of government. Empirical research on Vietnamese institutions' SDG-related engagement indicates that capacity constraints can materially affect sustainability implementation performance [8]. In parallel, integration pathways—particularly through FDI—are increasingly linked to human capital development and skills formation, yet these gains are not automatic and require strategic alignment between investment policy and education/skills systems [9].

Moreover, as international integration deepens through high-standard trade arrangements and sustainability-linked market requirements, environmental governance becomes increasingly embedded in external cooperation and compliance regimes. In Vietnam's case, recent legal and policy analysis of EU–Vietnam economic cooperation highlights how trade and related mechanisms may influence environmental sustainability pathways while simultaneously raising governance and implementation demands [10]. These external pressures interact with domestic planning and coordination constraints, reinforcing the relevance of “governance for sustainability” rather than narrow sectoral interventions.

In addition, sustainable development planning increasingly intersects with digital transformation and “smart” governance

approaches, particularly in urban systems where infrastructure, services, and environmental management must be coordinated under rapid growth. Recent frameworks on smart governance of sustainable cities emphasize multidimensional coordination across institutional capacity, data governance, stakeholder participation, and technology deployment—elements directly aligned with the institutional coherence themes raised in Vietnam's policy context [11].

Against this background, this study analyzes sustainable development in Vietnam within the context of international integration from a policy and strategic perspective, building on the manuscript's framing of sustainability as an integrated governance framework rather than a set of isolated sectoral objectives.

Specifically, the study aims to: (i) clarify the conceptual and policy foundations of sustainable development under conditions of international integration; (ii) assess key achievements and persistent constraints in Vietnam's sustainability-oriented development practices; and (iii) propose strategic directions to enhance policy coherence, institutional effectiveness, and long-term sustainability.

The contribution of this paper is threefold. First, it provides an integrated policy-oriented analysis that situates Vietnam's sustainability strategy within contemporary debates on SDG implementation and policy coherence. Second, it highlights how international integration (notably through trade and FDI) interacts with domestic governance capacity to shape environmental and distributional outcomes. Third, it offers policy-relevant strategic recommendations to strengthen planning coherence, implementation capability, and resilience under global uncertainty—an imperative that recent food-security resilience research has also underlined in the context of geopolitical shocks [12].

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Sustainable development under international integration: a governance perspective

Sustainable development is widely conceptualized as a multidimensional paradigm balancing economic growth, social equity, and environmental protection across generations. While early formulations emphasized normative goals, recent scholarship increasingly frames sustainable development as a governance challenge shaped by globalization-driven interdependence. Under conditions of international integration, development outcomes are no longer determined solely by domestic policy choices, but emerge from interactions among trade openness, FDI, technological diffusion, and transnational regulatory regimes [5]. This shift has redirected analytical attention toward governance architectures capable of coordinating integration pressures with sustainability objectives, particularly in developing and transition economies.

International integration fundamentally alters the policy environment in which sustainable development strategies are formulated and implemented. Empirical studies highlight that access to global markets, capital, and technology can support economic modernization and structural transformation, particularly in late-industrializing economies such as Vietnam [13]. At the same time, integration exposes domestic systems to external shocks, volatility, and asymmetric adjustment pressures, as evidenced by disruptions to global food systems

and development resilience following the Russia–Ukraine war [12]. These dynamics reinforce the need for governance mechanisms that can translate openness into resilience rather than vulnerability.

Beyond economic channels, international integration increasingly embeds sustainability concerns within legal and regulatory frameworks, shaping how environmental and biosecurity risks are governed. Although much of this literature draws on European experience, evidence on the effectiveness of environmental and biosecurity governance demonstrates the broader relevance of institutional design, enforcement capacity, and regulatory coherence under cross-border integration pressures [14]. This reinforces the insight that sustainable development trajectories under integration are context-dependent, conditioned by political institutions, historical legacies, and cross-sector policy coherence rather than openness *per se* [15].

## **2.2 Governance, institutions, and policy coherence in sustainable development planning**

A consistent finding across the sustainable development literature is the central role of governance and institutions in shaping development outcomes. Effective governance determines how competing objectives are prioritized, how trade-offs are negotiated, and how policies are coordinated across economic, social, and environmental domains. Under international integration, these functions become more demanding, as governments must reconcile domestic development priorities with external standards, market pressures, and regulatory expectations.

Recent policy-oriented research emphasizes policy coherence as a core requirement for effective SDG implementation. Comparative assessments show that fragmented governance structures, weak regulatory enforcement, and short-term policy horizons undermine sustainability-oriented development, whereas integrated planning frameworks and coordination mechanisms enhance the capacity to manage complex trade-offs [1]. Vietnam-focused governance research further demonstrates that lean, decentralized, and digitally enabled institutional arrangements can improve coordination capacity and responsiveness in sustainability planning, particularly in urban contexts facing rapid integration pressures [16].

The governance dimension is further complicated by digitalization and the rise of “smart governance,” particularly in urban and infrastructural contexts. Reviews of smart governance frameworks stress that technological tools contribute to sustainability only when embedded within institutional arrangements that ensure accountability, inter-agency coordination, and stakeholder participation [11]. Related studies link smart-city governance directly to SDG implementation, reinforcing the argument that sustainability transitions are fundamentally institutional and planning challenges rather than purely technological ones [17]. Recent empirical work in Vietnam confirms that digitally enabled urban governance can serve as a strategic mechanism for aligning international sustainability standards with local implementation capacity [16].

Institutional capacity also operates through human capital formation and organizational systems. Evidence from Vietnam indicates that higher-education institutions play a significant role in shaping SDG implementation capacity, highlighting that sustainability governance extends beyond

formal regulatory agencies to include knowledge and training systems [8]. Similarly, comparative research on FDI and human capital development demonstrates that integration-induced benefits depend critically on domestic institutional quality rather than occurring automatically [9].

Finally, financial and technological policy instruments illustrate how governance mechanisms link growth with environmental objectives. Vietnam-focused studies on green credit show that finance-based tools can influence both pollution outcomes and economic development, contingent on regulatory design and enforcement capacity [18]. Post-crisis restructuring and sustainability transitions in manufacturing and agriculture further highlight the need for governance systems capable of integrating productivity, resilience, and environmental goals through coordinated planning and data-enabled tools [19, 20]. At the sub-national level, strategic planning tools such as SWOT–TOWS analysis have been shown to support environmental governance and agricultural transformation under integration pressures, illustrating how localized governance responses can operationalize national sustainability objectives [21].

## **2.3 Sustainable development in Vietnam: governance mediation and integration effects**

The literature on sustainable development in Vietnam has expanded substantially, reflecting the country’s rapid growth and deepening international integration. Existing studies document significant achievements in poverty reduction, social development, and structural transformation, providing important context for sustainability analysis [22]. At the same time, research on urbanization shows that spatial transformation has contributed to poverty reduction while generating new governance challenges related to uneven development and urban inequality [7].

Distributional effects of international integration remain a contested issue. Provincial-level evidence indicates that FDI can either exacerbate or alleviate income inequality depending on local governance conditions, underscoring the importance of complementary redistribution and institutional coordination [6]. These findings align with broader evidence from emerging Asian economies, which shows that income growth does not automatically translate into equitable outcomes [23], a conclusion reinforced by robustness tests using nighttime lights data for Vietnam [24].

Environmental sustainability represents another critical strand of the literature. Empirical analyses demonstrate that industrialization and urbanization continue to exert pressure on environmental quality, highlighting the limits of growth-led development in the absence of effective environmental governance [2]. Governance-oriented studies further show how climate change has been framed as a security issue in Vietnam, shaping policy priorities and implementation pathways [3]. Recent research also emphasizes the complementary role of non-state actors, including religious organizations, in reinforcing environmental awareness and climate-responsive behavior, particularly at the local level where administrative reach may be limited [4]. In addition, sub-national case studies on agricultural transformation demonstrate how environmental impacts and strategic responses are mediated by local governance capacity under national and international sustainability pressures [21]. International economic cooperation, especially with the European Union, has likewise influenced Vietnam’s

environmental governance through legal and institutional mechanisms while increasing compliance and coordination demands [10].

Despite this growing body of research, two gaps remain salient. First, much of the literature treats international integration, governance, and sustainability as parallel themes rather than examining their interaction systematically. Second, relatively few studies conceptualize sustainable development explicitly as a strategic governance framework that places policy coherence, institutional capacity, and long-term planning at the center of analysis. Addressing these gaps motivates the present study's policy-oriented approach to examining sustainable development in Vietnam under conditions of deepening international integration.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative policy analysis approach to examine sustainable development in Vietnam under conditions of international integration. The methodological design is guided by the objective of understanding how sustainability principles are articulated, coordinated, and operationalized within national development planning and governance frameworks, rather than measuring causal impacts or testing econometric relationships.

#### 3.1 Document selection and data sources

The primary data for this study consist of official policy and planning documents issued by the Vietnamese government and the Communist Party of Vietnam. These include Party resolutions, national socio-economic development strategies, sustainable development and green growth strategies, and policy documents related to international economic integration and the Sustainable Development Goals. The document selection focused on materials that explicitly address development strategy, sustainability objectives, governance mechanisms, and integration-related policy orientations.

To ensure analytical relevance and temporal consistency, the review prioritizes documents issued during the post-Đổi Mới period, with particular emphasis on the most recent policy frameworks reflecting Vietnam's current development trajectory. In addition, secondary data and reports from national statistical agencies and international organizations were used to contextualize policy analysis and illustrate major development trends and sustainability challenges. These secondary sources were employed for descriptive and interpretive purposes rather than for statistical inference.

#### 3.2 Analytical framework

The analysis is structured around a governance-oriented conceptual framework, which treats sustainable development as an integrated policy and planning paradigm encompassing economic, social, and environmental dimensions. Within this framework, three analytical lenses are applied:

- (i) policy coherence, referring to the alignment of sustainability objectives across sectors and governance levels;
- (ii) institutional capacity, focusing on coordination mechanisms, regulatory enforcement, and administrative effectiveness; and
- (iii) strategic orientation under international integration, examining how external economic and institutional pressures

shape national sustainability priorities.

This framework enables a systematic examination of how international integration interacts with domestic governance arrangements to influence sustainable development outcomes. Rather than evaluating individual policy instruments in isolation, the analysis emphasizes cross-sectoral linkages, coordination patterns, and long-term planning logics.

#### 3.3 Data analysis procedures

The selected policy documents were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. Key themes related to sustainable development objectives, governance mechanisms, integration impacts, and strategic priorities were identified through iterative reading and thematic coding. Particular attention was paid to areas of convergence and tension between economic growth objectives, social inclusion goals, and environmental protection commitments.

The analysis involved comparative interpretation across policy domains, allowing the study to identify recurring patterns, institutional gaps, and structural constraints affecting sustainability-oriented development. Triangulation between policy documents and secondary data sources was used to enhance analytical robustness and reduce interpretive bias.

#### 3.4 Methodological scope and limitations

This qualitative approach is appropriate for addressing the research objectives, which emphasize policy design, governance processes, and strategic planning rather than quantitative impact assessment. However, the study does not seek to establish causal relationships between specific policy interventions and development outcomes. The findings should therefore be understood as analytically grounded interpretations of policy orientations and governance dynamics.

While this methodological design limits statistical generalization, it provides in-depth insight into the institutional and strategic dimensions of sustainable development under international integration. The approach is particularly suitable for informing policy-oriented discussions and identifying directions for future empirical research.

### 4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 1 conceptualizes sustainable development in Vietnam as a governance-mediated process operating under conditions of international integration. International integration pressures—such as trade liberalization, FDI, global value chain participation, and evolving sustainability standards—are treated as largely exogenous drivers that generate both opportunities and constraints for national development. These external pressures do not translate mechanically into development outcomes; rather, their effects are mediated through a set of governance mechanisms, including policy coherence and strategic planning, institutional capacity and coordination, regulatory enforcement, multi-level governance, and the participation of non-state actors. Sustainable development outcomes—economic transformation, social inclusion, and environmental protection—thus emerge as the result of this mediation process rather than as automatic consequences of integration. Importantly, the feedback loop from development outcomes to

governance mechanisms highlights policy learning and institutional adaptation, indicating that sustainable development functions as a dynamic governance framework rather than a static policy target. The framework provides the

analytical basis for interpreting policy-identified achievements, persistent challenges, and strategic trade-offs in Vietnam’s sustainable development trajectory under international integration.

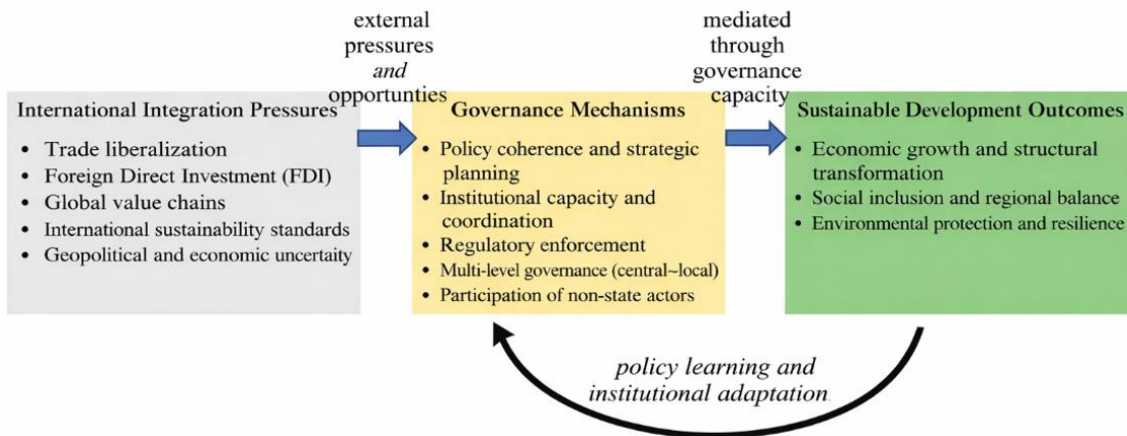


Figure 1. Sustainable development as a governance framework under international integration

#### 4.1 Policy-identified achievements in Vietnam’s sustainable development trajectory

The qualitative analysis of national development strategies and sustainability-related policy documents indicates that Vietnam’s sustainable development trajectory under deepening international integration is characterized by state-guided openness combined with coordinated planning mechanisms. Policy documents consistently emphasize the use of international trade, FDI, and global economic integration as instruments for structural transformation and economic diversification. Sustained economic growth is framed in these documents as an outcome of integration that is actively embedded within long-term national development plans rather than left to market-driven adjustment alone [5, 13].

In the social domain, the policy review reveals a sustained emphasis on inclusive development objectives, particularly poverty reduction, human development, and expanded access to education, healthcare, and social protection. National strategies repeatedly articulate social equity as a core pillar of development rather than a secondary outcome of economic growth. At the same time, policy documents acknowledge differentiated impacts of integration across regions and population groups, indicating official recognition that social achievements depend on continued state intervention and coordinated redistribution mechanisms [6, 7].

With respect to environmental sustainability, the analysis shows a progressive incorporation of environmental considerations into national development strategies. Policy frameworks increasingly reference green growth, renewable energy development, and sustainability-oriented production models. These orientations reflect growing agenda-setting attention to environmental constraints in the context of international integration, particularly where trade relations and external cooperation increasingly incorporate environmental standards [10]. However, the policy review also notes that environmental objectives are frequently articulated at a strategic level, with implementation mechanisms remaining less detailed or unevenly specified. Empirical evidence cited in policy assessments indicates continued environmental

pressures associated with industrialization and urbanization, suggesting that implementation capacity and enforcement remain critical challenges [2].

Overall, the results indicate that Vietnam has achieved measurable progress in embedding sustainability objectives within national planning frameworks, while simultaneously recognizing internal trade-offs among economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection. These achievements are consistently framed in policy documents as contingent on governance effectiveness and coordination capacity.

#### 4.2 Persistent challenges and structural constraints identified in policy analysis

Despite these documented achievements, the policy analysis identifies persistent structural constraints affecting Vietnam’s sustainable development trajectory. Environmental degradation emerges as a recurring concern in national and sectoral policy documents, particularly in relation to air and water pollution, land-use pressure, and waste management in rapidly industrializing and urbanizing areas. Policy assessments attribute these challenges not only to the scale of economic expansion but also to limitations in regulatory enforcement and inter-agency coordination, especially in high-growth regions [2, 3].

Social and spatial inequality constitutes a second major constraint highlighted in policy reviews. While national poverty reduction achievements are emphasized, official documents also acknowledge uneven development outcomes across regions, particularly in rural, mountainous, and ethnic minority areas. The policy analysis indicates that the benefits of international integration are unevenly distributed, with regions more closely connected to global markets experiencing stronger development outcomes. These findings align with policy-oriented research identifying differentiated income and welfare effects associated with trade and FDI [6, 7].

At the institutional level, the analysis reveals governance fragmentation and limited policy coherence as recurring constraints. Policy documents frequently identify overlapping

mandates, sectoral silos, and short-term performance incentives as obstacles to cross-sector coordination. These institutional challenges are further accentuated under international integration, where exposure to external economic shocks, geopolitical uncertainty, and global market volatility places additional demands on adaptive governance capacity. Comparative policy assessments emphasize that insufficient alignment between long-term sustainability objectives and short-term policy instruments constrains effective implementation [1, 25].

Taken together, the results indicate that constraints on sustainable development in Vietnam stem less from a lack of strategic intent than from institutional and governance limitations that affect implementation consistency and coordination across policy domains.

Table 1 synthesizes key policy-identified achievements, persistent challenges, and their governance implications across economic, social, and environmental dimensions under international integration.

**Table 1.** Sustainable development in Vietnam under international integration: achievements, challenges, and governance implications

Dimension	Policy-Identified Achievements	Persistent Challenges	Governance Implications Under International Integration
Economic development	Sustained economic growth and structural transformation supported by trade openness and foreign direct investment; diversification of production and export structures; increased integration into global and regional value chains.	Continued dependence on growth-oriented industrialization; exposure to external shocks and global market volatility; uneven benefits across sectors and regions.	Requires stronger strategic planning to align competitiveness with long-term sustainability objectives; enhanced coordination between industrial, trade, and sustainability policies to manage integration-related risks.
Social development	Significant poverty reduction; expanded access to education, healthcare, and social protection; explicit policy commitment to inclusive development and human development goals.	Persistent regional and social inequalities, particularly in rural, mountainous, and ethnic minority areas; differentiated distributional effects of international integration.	Necessitates place-based and inclusion-oriented policy interventions; strengthened redistribution mechanisms and coordination between central and local governance to mitigate uneven integration impacts.
Environmental sustainability	Increasing incorporation of green growth, renewable energy, and sustainability principles in national strategies; growing recognition of environmental constraints linked to international standards and cooperation.	Ongoing environmental degradation associated with industrialization and urbanization; gaps between policy ambition and implementation capacity; inconsistent regulatory enforcement.	Calls for improved regulatory enforcement, stronger institutional capacity, and better alignment between environmental regulation and development strategy under integration pressures.

### 4.3 Governance patterns and integration effects revealed by the analysis

The results further demonstrate that sustainable development in Vietnam is consistently framed in policy documents as a governance challenge rather than solely a sectoral policy issue. National strategies repeatedly emphasize the need to align economic competitiveness, social inclusion, and environmental protection within a unified planning logic, particularly in response to the pressures generated by international integration. Policy texts explicitly link sustainability objectives to external market exposure, regulatory standards, and geopolitical uncertainty, indicating awareness of integration-related risks alongside development opportunities [1, 26].

The analysis also shows that governance capacity is recognized in policy frameworks as a mediating factor between international integration and sustainability outcomes. Documents stress the importance of inter-ministerial coordination, regulatory enforcement, and institutional learning to manage development trade-offs. Where coordination mechanisms are weak or fragmented, policy texts acknowledge increased risks of environmental stress and uneven distributional effects. These findings correspond with governance-focused analyses of Vietnam's development strategy that highlight organizational adaptation as a critical requirement under conditions of technological and geopolitical change [25].

In addition, the policy review identifies non-state actors as

complementary contributors to sustainability implementation, particularly at the local level. Several policy documents and supporting studies reference the role of community organizations, social groups, and faith-based initiatives in promoting environmental awareness and climate-responsive behavior. Evidence on faith-inspired environmental stewardship indicates that such actors can support local engagement, especially in contexts where administrative reach is limited [4]. However, the analysis also notes that these contributions are generally framed as supportive rather than substitutive, requiring alignment with formal policy frameworks.

### 4.4 Policy-oriented strategic directions emerging from the results

Based on the empirical patterns identified in the policy analysis, several strategic directions emerge as recurrent themes across national planning documents. First, policies consistently emphasize the need for stronger integration of economic, social, and environmental objectives through improved inter-ministerial coordination and clarified institutional responsibilities. Policy coherence across sectors and governance levels is repeatedly identified as a prerequisite for effective implementation of sustainability commitments, particularly in the context of SDG alignment [1].

Second, strengthening institutional capacity is highlighted as a critical condition for sustainability-oriented governance. Policy documents stress regulatory enforcement, monitoring

and evaluation systems, and administrative capacity-building at both central and local levels. Strategic management assessments of Vietnam's development trajectory emphasize institutional adaptability and organizational learning as necessary responses to integration-related challenges [25].

Third, policy frameworks prioritize social inclusion and regional balance through targeted investments in disadvantaged regions. National strategies identify unequal development outcomes as a sustainability risk and emphasize place-based interventions in education, healthcare, and infrastructure to enhance social resilience [26].

Finally, environmental sustainability is consistently linked to regulatory reform, market-based incentives, and technological innovation. Policy documents promote green growth, renewable energy, and circular economy approaches as mechanisms for reconciling economic competitiveness with environmental protection. Aligning environmental regulation with broader development strategy is framed as essential to preventing growth-related externalities from undermining long-term sustainability objectives [1].

## 5. DISCUSSION

This study's findings contribute to broader debates on sustainable development by demonstrating that, under conditions of deepening international integration, sustainability outcomes are shaped less by the degree of economic openness itself than by the governance structures through which integration is managed. In Vietnam's case, the results indicate that international integration has acted as a conditional enabler of development: it has supported economic growth and structural transformation where it has been embedded within coordinated national planning, but it has also intensified environmental and social pressures where governance capacity and policy coherence are limited. This pattern aligns with international assessments emphasizing that sustainable development in integrated economies depends critically on institutional coordination and long-term strategic planning rather than market mechanisms alone [1, 26].

A key contribution of the analysis lies in clarifying the mediating role of governance capacity between international integration and sustainability outcomes. The results show that Vietnam's progress in poverty reduction and human development has been supported by deliberate policy choices that retain social inclusion as a central development objective. At the same time, persistent regional disparities and uneven distributional effects highlight limits to inclusive growth under integration. These findings are consistent with international evidence suggesting that FDI and trade integration can generate differentiated social outcomes unless accompanied by targeted redistribution and place-based policy interventions [6, 7]. The Vietnamese case therefore reinforces the argument that integration magnifies both opportunities and inequalities, placing greater demands on governance effectiveness.

In the environmental domain, the discussion highlights a tension frequently observed in rapidly industrializing economies: while environmental sustainability has gained strategic prominence in national policy discourse, implementation capacity and enforcement mechanisms lag behind policy ambition. Vietnam's experience mirrors international observations that green growth strategies and sustainability-oriented planning often advance faster at the agenda-setting level than at the operational level, particularly

where industrialization and urbanization remain dominant growth drivers [2, 3]. This divergence underscores the importance of aligning environmental regulation, institutional incentives, and development strategy to prevent sustainability commitments from remaining largely declarative.

The findings also contribute to governance-oriented literature by illustrating that sustainable development functions most effectively as an integrated governance framework, rather than as a collection of sectoral objectives. The Vietnamese case demonstrates that cross-sector coordination, policy coherence, and institutional learning are essential for managing trade-offs among economic competitiveness, social equity, and environmental protection under international integration. This interpretation is consistent with governance-focused analyses that emphasize organizational adaptation and strategic coordination as critical capacities in contexts characterized by technological change, geopolitical uncertainty, and external economic shocks [25].

Finally, the results suggest that sustainable development governance extends beyond formal state institutions to include complementary roles played by non-state actors at the local level. While the state remains the primary coordinator of development strategy, evidence of faith-based and community-level engagement in environmental stewardship highlights the potential of multi-actor participation to reinforce sustainability objectives, particularly in areas where administrative reach is constrained [4]. However, the effectiveness of such contributions depends on their integration within coherent policy frameworks that provide strategic direction and accountability.

Taken together, this discussion underscores that Vietnam's sustainable development trajectory under international integration is best understood as an ongoing governance process rather than a linear transition toward predefined outcomes. The Vietnamese experience reinforces international insights that sustaining development gains in an integrated global economy requires continuous investment in institutional capacity, policy coherence, and adaptive planning. These findings have broader relevance for developing and transition economies seeking to balance growth, equity, and environmental integrity under conditions of globalization.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This study has examined sustainable development in Vietnam under conditions of deepening international integration from a policy and governance perspective. In contrast to sector-specific or outcome-driven approaches, the analysis conceptualizes sustainable development as an integrated governance framework through which economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection are coordinated within national development planning. By applying a qualitative policy analysis to key national strategies and sustainability-related documents, the study provides a structured understanding of how international integration interacts with domestic institutional capacity to shape development trajectories.

The results demonstrate that Vietnam has achieved notable progress in embedding sustainability objectives within national planning frameworks. International integration has supported economic growth, structural transformation, and improvements in social welfare where it has been aligned with

state-led coordination and long-term development strategies. At the same time, the findings reveal that these achievements are conditional rather than automatic. Persistent environmental pressures, uneven regional development outcomes, and governance fragmentation continue to constrain the durability of sustainability-oriented development under integration.

A central conclusion of the study is that governance capacity plays a decisive mediating role between international integration and sustainable development outcomes. Where policy coherence, institutional coordination, and regulatory enforcement are relatively strong, integration has functioned as an enabling condition for sustainability objectives. Conversely, where governance capacity is limited, integration has amplified environmental stress and social disparities. These findings underscore that sustainable development cannot be reduced to economic openness or policy intent alone, but depends fundamentally on the effectiveness of planning and governance mechanisms.

The analysis further indicates that sustainable development in Vietnam is best understood as an ongoing and adaptive governance process, rather than a linear transition toward predefined targets. National policy frameworks increasingly recognize the need to balance competitiveness, equity, and environmental integrity, yet implementation gaps persist due to institutional constraints and coordination challenges. The study also highlights the complementary role of non-state actors in supporting sustainability objectives at the local level, while reaffirming the central coordinating role of the state in ensuring policy alignment and accountability.

From a policy perspective, the findings suggest that strengthening sustainable development in Vietnam under international integration requires sustained investment in integrated planning, institutional capacity-building, and policy coherence across sectors and governance levels. Prioritizing inclusive development and regional balance, reinforcing environmental regulation, and enhancing adaptive governance mechanisms are essential to preventing growth-related trade-offs from undermining long-term development resilience.

In broader terms, this study contributes to the literature on sustainable development planning in integrated and transition economies by demonstrating that sustainability outcomes are governance-dependent. The Vietnamese case offers transferable insights for other countries facing similar integration pressures, highlighting the importance of strategic planning and institutional effectiveness in managing the complexities of globalization. By framing sustainable development as a strategic governance framework, the study reinforces the role of planning as a central instrument for achieving resilient and balanced development in an increasingly interconnected world.

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