

## The Theoretical Issues and Legal Basis of Streamlined National Public Administration– Key to Realizing Vietnam's Vision For “New Era of Rise.”

<sup>1</sup> Le Lan Anh, <sup>2</sup>Vu Thi Ngoc Linh

<sup>1</sup> Doctor of Economic Law, Faculty of Law, Hanoi Open University (HOU), Vietnam.

<sup>2</sup> Applied Economic Law, Hanoi Law University, Vietnam

Received: 20<sup>th</sup> Aug 2025 | Received Revised Version: 30<sup>th</sup> Oct 2025 | Accepted: 05<sup>th</sup> Nov 2025 | Published: 18<sup>th</sup> Dec 2025

Volume 07 Issue 12 2025 | Crossref DOI: 10.37547/tajssei/Volume07Issue12-05

### Abstract

*This article aims to clarify the theoretical issues and legal basis for streamlining Vietnam's national administrative system today. By presenting different perspectives, policies, and legal foundations for reforming the country's administrative structure, the article demonstrates that streamlining the administrative system is a crucial management revolution for Vietnam's "New Era of Rise." The success of this reform should be measured by clear improvements in service quality for businesses and citizens, as indicated by PCI/PAPI scores. The article also emphasizes that only through a combined approach—strengthening organizational efficiency, reforming administrative procedures (including digitalization), and investing in high-quality human resources—can the administrative system become a driving force, rather than an obstacle, for Vietnam's development.*

Keywords: The era of rise; Vietnam's public administrative system; administrative reform.

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**Cite This Article:** Le Lan Anh, & Vu Thi Ngoc Linh. (2025). The Theoretical Issues and Legal Basis of Streamlined National Public Administration– Key to Realizing Vietnam's Vision For “New Era of Rise.”. The American Journal of Social Science and Education Innovations, 7(12), 26–32. <https://doi.org/10.37547/tajssei/Volume07Issue12-05>.

### Introduction

Vietnam is entering a new stage of development with a strong aspiration to become a developed, high-income country by 2045, marking Vietnam's "Era of Growth".

The concept of "Era" here is understood as a historical period marked by important characteristics or events that have a great influence on the development of society, culture, politics, and economy. Era is often used to divide time in history according to major events or fundamental changes in political life or science, technology, environment. For example: Industrial Era, Information

Era, Digital Era, Space Era. Previously, it was the Stone Age, the Ancient Era, Medieval Era.

The new era, from Vietnam's perspective, is the era of development, the era of prosperity under the leadership and rule of the Communist Party, building a prosperous and developed society, contributing more and more to peace, stability, and development of the world. Việt Nam is poised to reach a historic turning point, described by Party General Secretary Tô Lâm as an "era of the nation's rise".

According to the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam Tô Lâm, the era of rise "is the era of

development, the era of prosperity under the leadership and governance of the Party, successfully building a socialist Vietnam. The destination of the era of rise is a rich people, a strong country, a socialist society, standing shoulder to shoulder with the world powers. The top priority in the new era is to successfully implement the strategic goals by 2030, Vietnam becomes a developing country with modern industry and high average income; by 2045, it becomes a developed socialist country with high income". To usher in a new era, Vietnam must focus on streamlining its public administration.

## **Content**

### **1. Origin and strategic vision of Vietnam's administrative reform**

The strategy to streamline the state administrative apparatus is built on a solid legal foundation, the core of which is the Resolutions of the 6th Conference of the 12th Party Central Committee of Vietnam (2017). This strategy is implemented synchronously through two main pillars, including Resolution No. 18-NQ/TW (on the political system) and Resolution No. 19-NQ/TW (on public service units).

#### *Pillar I: Streamlining the Political System Organization (Resolution 18-NQ/TW)*

Resolution 18 focuses on continuing to innovate and reorganize the political system to achieve streamlining, effectiveness, and efficiency. The Resolution has set out a specific roadmap: By 2021, the goal is to perfect the institution to overcome the situation of overlapping and overlapping functions. Specifically, it is necessary to pilot several new models of organizational apparatus and concurrent positions to streamline the focal points. Regarding quantitative targets, it is required to reduce at least 10% of the payroll compared to 2015, along with the reasonable arrangement and reduction of commune-level administrative units.

In the period of 2021 to 2030, the long-term goal is to complete the overall organizational model of the political system in accordance with new requirements, continuing to reduce staff. The key factor is to clearly define the

functions, tasks, and powers of each agency and organization, thoroughly overcoming the situation of overlapping or missing tasks. In terms of vision, the Resolution also sets the goal of clearly defining and organizing the implementation of the model of rural, urban, island, and special administrative-economic unit governments, along with basically completing the arrangement and reduction of administrative units at the district, commune, village, and residential group levels.

#### *Pillar II: Innovation of Public Service Units (Resolution 19-NQ/TW)*

Resolution 19 focuses on fundamental and comprehensive reform of the system of public service units. The goal is to ensure that these units are streamlined, autonomous, operate effectively and efficiently, play a leading role in the public service market, and drastically reduce the number of focal points, overcoming the fragmentation and dispersion.

Regarding the roadmap, by 2021, the requirement is to reduce at least 10% of public service units nationwide on average and reduce at least 10% of public service staff receiving salaries from the state budget compared to 2015. At the same time, strive to achieve 10% of financially autonomous units and reduce the average of 10% of direct expenditure from the state budget. By 2025, these targets will continue to be promoted: reduce another 10% of focal points and 10% of staff compared to 2021. Strive to have at least 20% of financially autonomous units, and continue to reduce 10% of direct expenditure from the state budget. By 2030, the goal is to maintain only units serving political tasks, state management, and providing basic and essential public services, along with a further 10% reduction in staff compared to 2025.

The simultaneous issuance of Resolution 18 and Resolution 19 shows that the streamlining strategy of Vietnam is a parallel process: reducing management burden (Resolution 18) and reducing financial burden, improving the quality of public service delivery (Resolution 19). The success of reducing administrative units of Vietnam under Resolution 18 is only meaningful if Resolution 19 succeeds in transforming the financial

mechanism. If public service delivery units remain ineffective and dependent on the budget, the administrative apparatus will still have to shoulder heavy management and supervision responsibilities, making the overall streamlining goal unachievable.

Reducing direct expenditure from the state budget for public service units (according to the roadmap of

Resolution 19) has strategic fiscal significance. This goal does not stop at saving but rather restructuring the budget, shifting resources from regular expenditure to development expenditure (such as public investment, research and development), which is the financial foundation for the goal of "Era of national rise"

**Table 1.1: Quantitative Objectives of the Lean Strategy (Resolution 18 and Resolution 19)**

Lean Field	Unit of Measurement	Target by 2021	Target by 2025	Notes/Sources
Administrative Staff (Resolution 18)	Staff Reduction	At least 10% compared to 2015	Continue to decrease	Resolution 18-NQ/TW
Public Service Unit	Reduce Leads	Minimum 10% (National average)	Continued 10% decrease compared to 2021	Resolution 19-NQ/TW
Financial Autonomy of Public Service Providers	Unit Rate	Strive to reach 10%	Minimum 20%	Resolution 19-NQ/TW
Reduce Direct Budget Expenditures for Public Service Providers	Expense Ratio	10% decrease compared to 2011-2015	10% reduction compared to 2016-2020	Resolution 19-NQ/TW

## 2. Quantitative Assessment of the Implementation of Resolutions 18 and 19

The implementation of Resolutions 18 and 19 has achieved significant quantitative results. Many ministries, branches, and localities have completed or exceeded the target of reducing staff by 10% and merging and reducing the number of public service units according to the roadmap to 2021. The process of rearranging commune-level administrative units and merging fragmented and overlapping public service units has been accelerated, especially in the fields of education and health. However, the biggest challenge still lies in streamlining, which must be associated with restructuring the staff, civil servants, and public employees, and improving the quality of operations, instead of just mechanically reducing the number.

### 2.1. Effectiveness of public service performance of state agencies

The Provincial Competitiveness Index (PCI) and the Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index (PAPI) are considered important bases for assessing the effectiveness of public service performance of state agencies, thereby promoting localities to change and improve mechanisms and development policies. Analysis of PCI and PAPI data in 2023 shows an alarming situation regarding the quality of administrative reform in economic locomotives, typically the case of Hanoi. Although Hanoi's total PCI score in 2023 increased by 0.41 points compared to 2022, its overall ranking dropped sharply, from 20th to 28th.

The most serious bottleneck lies in administrative procedures related to business and land. Specifically, in 2023, Hanoi ranked 28th in the PCI rankings, dropping eight places from 2022. Notably, five out of the ten sub-indices for the city in the 2023 PCI declined compared to 2022: “Land Access”, “Transparency”, “Fair Competition”, “Labor Training”, and “Legal Institutions and Order”.

### 3. Breakthrough solution: leanness combined with quality and talent

#### 3.1. Utilizing Talents – The Foundation of an Effective Streamlined Administrative System

A streamlined administrative apparatus can succeed only if it is operated by a team of highly competent, professional, and honest officials and civil servants. Streamlining without improving the quality of officials will be “mechanical” streamlining, leading to overload and reduced service quality as seen through the PAPI index.

To overcome this limitation, Vietnam has approved the National Strategy on attracting and utilizing talents until 2030, with a vision to 2050, through

Decision No. 899/QD-TTg dated July 31, 2023. This strategy is a timely supplement to Resolution 18 and Resolution 19, aiming to solve the problem of human resources after the apparatus is streamlined.

The need for Decision 899/QD-TTg is seen as overcoming the “big challenge” of overcoming the limitations of current human resource policies. The fact that this Decision was issued after Resolution 18/19 shows that the initial streamlining process prioritized structure over personnel. However, realizing that streamlining is ineffective without talent is an important step forward.

For the public sector to compete with the private sector in attracting talent, breakthrough mechanisms are needed: first, reforming the civil service system based on job positions and work performance (KPI), instead of rigid staffing. Second, ensuring salary and benefits are commensurate with capacity and workload, especially in large cities where work pressure is high. If the apparatus is overloaded and lacks quality human resources (as in the case of Hanoi), all efforts to reform administrative procedures will fail. Decision 899 must be considered a prerequisite for the success of Resolution 18.

Table 3.1: Strategic Pillars of Human Resources (Decision 899/QD-TTg)

Strategic Areas	Goal/Vision	Relation to Administrative Streamlining
Attracting Talent	By 2030, vision 2050	Ensuring the quality of staff for a streamlined and efficient apparatus (overcoming PAPI's weaknesses)
Salary/Benefits	Reform of the civil service system	Increase competitiveness, retain good staff, overcome overload/negative situation <sup>4</sup>
Innovation	Encourage innovation	Enhance management capacity, enabling staff to address complex challenges of the new era.

#### 3.2. Strategic policy on streamlining the administrative apparatus to operate effectively and efficiently

On the occasion of the 79th anniversary of the National Day of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (September 2, 1945 - September 2, 2024), Comrade Tô

Lâm, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam, outlined the strategic vision, clearly stating the goals and objectives of the era of Vietnam's rise to become a rich, strong, socialist country, on par with the world powers. The top priority in the new era is to successfully implement the strategic goals. By 2030,

Vietnam will become a developing country with a modern industry and a high average income; by 2045, it will become a developed socialist country with a high income. Party General Secretary Tô Lâm also pointed out 7 strategic orientations to bring the country into a new era, an era of national growth, including the strategic orientation of streamlining the organizational apparatus to operate effectively and efficiently.

Party General Secretary Tô Lâm pointed out that this task is very urgent: (i) Currently, 70% of the budget is used to support the apparatus, while the work of arranging and perfecting the organization of the State administrative apparatus to be streamlined, operate effectively and efficiently, reduce focal points and intermediate levels is still inadequate, some parts are still cumbersome, overlapping between the legislative and executive branches, not really meeting the requirements of improving the effectiveness and efficiency of management. Some ministries and branches still take on local tasks, leading to the existence of a mechanism of asking and giving, which easily gives rise to negativity and corruption. The work of streamlining the payroll associated with job positions, improving the quality, and restructuring the team of civil servants and public employees is still lacking thoroughly. (ii) This is one of the reasons leading to hindering development, increasing administrative procedures, and wasting the time and effort of enterprises, industry, citizens, and the missed development opportunities of the country.

*Strategic policy:*

(i) Continue to focus on building and streamlining the organizational apparatus of the Party, the National Assembly, the Government, the Fatherland Front, and socio-political organizations to operate effectively and efficiently; streamline the apparatus and organize Party agencies, truly be the intellectual core, the "general staff", the vanguard leading state agencies. (ii) Cut down unnecessary intermediary contacts, and arrange the organization in a multi-sectoral and multi-field direction. Promote decentralization and delegation of power in the direction of "local decisions, local actions, local responsibility" associated with strengthening inspection and supervision, clearly

defining responsibilities between the Central and local levels, between levels, local authorities, between managers and workers. Perfecting the inspection and supervision mechanism, ensuring unity in state management, and promoting initiative, creativity, and enhancing the autonomy and self-reliance of localities. (iii) Summarizing and evaluating the implementation of Resolution No. 18 of the 6th Conference of the 12th Central Executive Committee "some issues on continuing to innovate and reorganize the apparatus of the political system to be streamlined, operate effectively and efficiently" in the entire political system, presented to the 11th Central Conference of the 13th tenure; as a basis for new policies to strongly innovate the work of organizing cadres according to the direction agreed upon by the 10th Central Committee.

### ***3.3. Vision 2030 and Beyond: Post-Lean Organization and Specific Management Model***

The goal by 2030 is to complete the research and implementation of the overall organizational model of the political system. This requires thoroughly resolving the overlapping of functions and tasks between agencies - a core issue that Resolution 18 has raised.

At the same time, it is necessary to clearly define the model of rural, urban, island, and special administrative-economic units. This is a strategic step, because the model of large urban governance (where many complex issues arise, such as land management in Hanoi) needs autonomy and different management mechanisms to promote economic efficiency.

The success of the streamlining process depends on the synchronization of policies. This requires a harmonious combination of organizational streamlining, innovation in leadership methods, streamlining staff, and especially reforming the salary system. This synchronization ensures that talented people are retained and promoted, the streamlined apparatus does not become weak, but, on the contrary, becomes a strong driving force supporting the country's macro goals.

## Conclusion

Streamlining the Vietnamese state administrative apparatus is a vital management revolution for the aspiration of the "Era of National Rise." This revolution cannot stop at cutting the number of units or staff, but must be measured by the effectiveness of serving the people and businesses, demonstrated through the clear improvement of the PCI and PAPI indices.

The current challenge is how to streamline the quantity without leading to overload and a decline in the quality of public services. To completely resolve this bottleneck, there needs to be a breakthrough in two areas: *First*, drastically reforming administrative procedures, especially through digitizing interconnected processes to eliminate overlap and delay. *Second*, investing in high-quality human resources through the Talent Attraction and Use Strategy (Decision 899/QD-TTg), ensuring that the streamlined administrative apparatus is operated by a team of competent and motivated staff.

Only when the Government takes drastic and synchronous actions, linking organizational streamlining with salary system and leadership reform, building a creative and service-oriented administration, can it consolidate the national governance foundation, creating a favorable environment for investment and innovation. This is the key factor to realizing the national aspiration, turning the administrative apparatus into a driving force rather than a barrier to Vietnam's development. The participation of the entire political system with high determination, drastic actions according to a solid roadmap, and at the same time, strengthening public service discipline, is a prerequisite for this success.

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