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## **Background Briefing:**

### **Vietnam: The Party Congress and Vietnam's External Relations**

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[client name deleted]

Q1. Could you please spend your precious time to express your expectations from this Congress, especially in the area of diplomacy of Viet Nam for the next few years.

ANSWER: The draft Political Report that was released last year called for improving the efficiency of diplomatic activities and taking the initiative to promote international integration. It is clear that priority will be given to economic integration. The 14th plenum's endorsement of the TPP was a good sign of where Vietnam would like to go in coming years. At the same time, the draft Political Report called for strengthening national defense and security "in the new situation." This indicates the close relationship between economic growth, international integration and strengthening Vietnam's capacity for self-defence.

I do not think Vietnam will abandon its policy of "diversifying and multilateralizing" its external relations and being a reliable partner to all. Vietnam is likely to deepen its relations with Europe, Japan and the United States in other areas besides economics, such as science and technology, education and training and human resource development. Vietnam will try to maintain good relations with China while at the same time lessening its economic dependency on its northern neighbour.

Vietnam will try to steer a course to benefit from its relations with the major powers without falling into the orbit of any one of them.

China's recent redeployment of the HD981 and rush to complete the construction of airfields on its artificial islands indicates that Vietnam, along with other Southeast Asian states, will face a difficult time in dealing with China that prefers to act unilaterally rather than cooperatively.

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