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## **Background Brief:**

### **China's Foreign Minister to Visit Vietnam: Scene Setter September 10, 2021**

It has just been announced that China's Foreign Minister wang Yi will visit Vietnam from 10-12 September. What is the significance of this visit and what is on his agenda?

ANSWER: The upcoming visit by China's State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi to South Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia and Singapore comes on the heels of visit to Singapore and Vietnam by U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin and U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris.

Wang Yi's visit to Vietnam is especially significant because for the past two years he has left Vietnam off his itinerary when travelling to Southeast Asia. For example, in October 2020, Wang Yi visited Cambodia, Malaysia and Thailand. In January this year, Wang Yi visited Myanmar, Indonesia, Brunei and the Philippines. However, Wang Yi did meet Vietnam's Foreign Minister Bui Thanh Son face-to-face in Chongqing in June at the Special ASEAN-China Foreign Ministers' Meeting.

Wang Yi's visit demonstrates that Vietnam's policy of being "a reliable partner to all" is working well. No doubt Wang Yi will receive the same message Vietnam's leaders conveyed to Vice President Harris: Vietnam will follow a foreign policy of "independence, self-reliance, and diversification and multilateralization of relations."

The agenda between Wang Yi and his Vietnamese counterpart is likely to include: multifaceted cooperation in combatting the COVID-19 pandemic, including the offer of more vaccines and joint efforts to recover from the pandemic; economic issues, future development cooperation including linking Xi Jin-ping's Belt and Road initiative with Vietnam's Two Corridors and One Circle, the East Sea (South China Sea) dispute and the crisis in Myanmar.

Vietnam's leaders are likely to raise the issue of greater access to China's market and increasing Chinese investment in Vietnam; the East Sea dispute, including China's recent revision of its Maritime Traffic Safety Law and China's likely response to Vietnam's efforts to develop its hydrocarbon reserves.

Wang Yi will warn that the U.S. seeks to undermine Vietnam's socialist regime and appeal to Vietnam on the basis of socialist solidarity to "build a community with a shared future for mankind."

Wang Yi's visit raises the possibility of future high-level visits between party and state leaders.

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