

Thayer Consultancy
ABN # 65 648 097 123



Background Brief:

Vietnam-U.S.-ASEAN Relations After the Special Summit May 15, 2022

We request your analysis of the 2nd U.S.-ASEAN Special Summit with respect to the following issues:

Q1- How do you evaluate the outcome of the Special Summit with respect to Vietnam-U.S. relations and U.S.-ASEAN relations?

ANSWER: U.S.-Vietnam relations became strained at the end of President Donald Trump's last year in office over trade and related issues. The COVID-19 pandemic made diplomacy more difficult by curtailing in-person meetings.

Now that these impediments have been removed, Vietnamese and U.S. officials are able to hold face-to-face meetings and get to know and understand each other better. This facilitates improved bilateral relations. U.S. and Vietnamese officials will overlap in office over the next two years and seven months. The Biden Administration's first term in office will end in January 2025, while Prime Minister Chinh's term will end in the first half of 2026.

Vietnam-U.S. relations have been enhanced by Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh's face-to-face meetings with President Joe Biden, Secretary of State Anthony Blinken and USAID Administrator Samantha Power. In addition, other meetings with high-ranking U.S. officials, such as Vice President Kamala Harris, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, Cabinet members, and Special Envoy for Climate John Kerry, were invaluable to both sides in getting to know each other's priorities and concerns. This will form the basis for future cooperation.

During Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh's visit to Washington, the Biden Administration demonstrated by word and deed that Vietnam occupies a prominent role in U.S. relations with Southeast Asia. Prime Minister Chinh was the only ASEAN leader personally received by President Joe Biden at The White House. At this meeting President Biden made important commitments to cooperate constructively with Vietnam.

The U.S.-ASEAN Special Summit was the first time in forty-five years that ASEAN heads of government were received at The White House. The first Special Summit was held in Sunnylands, California; while President Trump planned to hold the second Special Summit in Las Vegas, Nevada but had to postpone it. The Washington venue established a precedent for future high-level U.S.-ASEAN meetings.

The leaders at the second Special Summit agreed to raise ASEAN-U.S. relations to a comprehensive strategic partnership in November on a par with China and Australia. President Biden took this opportunity to fill a five-year gap by nominating a U.S. Ambassador to ASEAN. This is a significant recognition of ASEAN's importance and its role in the Indo-Pacific.

Q2 - What are the prospects for the bilateral and multilateral co-operation in the future with respect to Vietnam-United States and U.S.-ASEAN, respectively?

ANSWER: it is important to note that Vietnam and the United States established a comprehensive partnership in 2013. The strategic partnership serves as the basic framework for bilateral relations. As a result of Prime Minister Chinh's visit, both sides laid out their future commitments and expectations.

President Biden reaffirmed the commitment of his Administration to cooperate with Vietnam across a range of sectors including economy and trade, development, pandemic prevention and control, and climate change.

Prime Minister Chinh described the bilateral relationship as a "special relationship." He welcomed continued U.S. cooperation in disease prevention, digital transformation, climate change mitigation, and human resource training. PM Chinh also called on the United States to strengthen cooperation and support for Vietnam in developing a green economy, diversified supply chains, and transition to sustainable energy.

In the coming years we will see much closer interaction in these priority sectors.

The U.S. and ASEAN have been strategic partners since 2015 and current relations are framed by a Plan of Action, 2021-25 and areas of future cooperation included in the Chairman's Statement of the 9th ASEAN-United States Summit (October 26, 2021).

Future relations will be shaped by the Joint Vision Statement adopted by the Special Summit and agreement by both sides to raise relations to a comprehensive strategic partnership in November.

The Joint Vision Statement spelled out eight detailed areas of cooperation: fighting the COVID-19 pandemic and better health security, strengthening economic ties and connectivity, promoting maritime cooperation, enhancing people-to-people connectivity, supporting sub-regional development, leveraging technologies and promoting innovation, addressing climate change, and preserving peace and building trust.

President Biden committed the United States to provide \$150 million in new initiatives, including \$60 million in maritime security and \$40 million in clean energy infrastructure.

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