

# THE PRINCIPLES OF VIETNAM'S COMMUNIST PARTY IN ITS RELATION WITH THE UNITED STATES (1975 – 2013)

NGUYEN ANH CUONG \*

**Abstract:** This paper is an effort to recollect in the most complete way the Communist Party of Vietnam's foreign policies in general, and particularly its policies towards the United States in the last 40 years (1975 – 2013). In its relation with the United States, Vietnam has many times revised its policy orientation. From 1976 to 1978, the two countries conducted negotiations on normalizing their diplomatic relations but were unsuccessful due to major differences in their principles. From 1978 to 1986, Vietnam and the United States were in direct confrontation with each other. In late 1986, together with reforming its economic mindset, Vietnam abandoned the confrontational spirit and instead adopted the outlook to co-exist in peace with the United States, gradually normalizing its diplomatic relation with the United States. With the 7<sup>th</sup> National Congress of Vietnam's Communist Party (June 1991), Vietnam decided to become proactive in its relations with the United States. Therefore, on 12<sup>th</sup> July 1995, the two countries officially normalized their bilateral diplomatic relations. From 1995 until now, the Vietnam-US relationship has been highly regarded by the two, gradually moving toward a stable framework that goes in line with the principle to actively open up foreign policies and get engaged in international integration.

**Key words:** Vietnam-US relations, principles, Communist Party of Vietnam, foreign policy.

Studying Vietnam-US relations is not only about analyzing the results achieved but in fact, those accomplishments represent only the external surface of the principles or policies within. Therefore, to learn about the principles of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) in normalizing and developing its relations with the United States means to actually clarify the roots of the special Vietnam-US relations. With that in mind, this paper has tried to recollect in the best way possible all the foreign policies of Vietnam's Communist Party in general and

particularly, policies concerning the United States, so as to create a basis for more thorough research on this unique relationship.

## **1. The principles of CPV and the Vietnam - US relation from 1975 to 1986**

In December 1976, the 4<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPV determined the new foreign policy mission as: "to take advantage of the favourable international context to promptly heal the war wounds, recover and

---

(\*) Ph.D., University of Social Sciences and Humanities - Vietnam National University, Hanoi.

develop the economy, culture, science and technology, strengthen national defence, establish the physical-technological foundation for the country's socialist regime; at the same time, to maintain close ties with the socialist sibling countries as well as with all other nations in the world that are currently fighting for peace, national independence, democracy and socialism"<sup>(1)</sup>. The foreign policy, thus, became: "To establish and expand normalized relations with other countries on the basis of respecting each other's independence, sovereignty, equality and mutual interests.

Together with the sibling countries and advanced nations across the world, continue to fight the invasive and war-provoking policies of imperialist countries, especially the United States"<sup>(2)</sup>.

However, the need to build the country in peace as well as to receive international aids to help heal the war wounds and recover the country became more urgent than ever. In June 1975, the Vietnamese government actively initiated negotiations with the United States, seeking to establish diplomatic relations and also to demand the United States to respect the articles of the Paris Convention (January 1973), including a pledge to provide post-US war assistance to help with Vietnam's restructuring. However, the Ford administration rejected Vietnam's request, saying that it would not normalize relations with Vietnam unless the latter provided an exact count of United States soldiers missing in action (MIA). Between 1975 and 1976, the United States denied for three times Vietnam's application to join the United Nations. To foster the

normalization process, in early 1977, Vietnam and the United States conducted two negotiation rounds in Paris on three main issues: one on the United States fulfilling its duty to contribute to rebuilding Vietnam after war; one on finding Americans missing in the war; and one on normalizing the Vietnam-US relations. For Vietnam, the three issues came together as a package. The United States, on the other hand, suggested that the two countries normalize their relations unconditionally and establish correspondence offices in the two capitals. The United States anticipated that diplomatic relations would be promptly established between the United States and Vietnam, and on this basis, the United States would lift the trade embargo imposed on Vietnam, meanwhile the issue of economic assistance would be left for discussion later on.<sup>(3)</sup> In July 1977, the United States no longer opposed Vietnam's accession to the United Nations.

During the negotiations, the principles of Vietnam were reflected in the speech of Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Phan Hien on 26<sup>th</sup> March 1976: "The responsibility of the United States to contribute to the relief of war wounds and reconstruction of post-war Vietnam is indisputable, both in legal terms as set out in the Paris Convention, in international legal obligations

---

<sup>(1)</sup> Communist Party of Vietnam (1977), *Political Report of the Party Central Committee at the 4<sup>th</sup> National Congress*, Su that Publishing House, Hanoi, p.178.

<sup>(2)</sup> Communist Party of Vietnam (1977), *op.cit.*, p.180.

<sup>(3)</sup> National Archives Center III, *Report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the Global Situation and Foreign Affairs of the State in 1977*.

as well as in terms of common sense and moral standards."<sup>(4)</sup>

While the negotiations were carried out, a revised act on foreign assistance proposed by Republican senators was rapidly ratified by the United States Congress with an overwhelming number of votes in favour (266/131). The new act prohibited the United States government from "negotiating war compensation, assistance, or any form of payments to Vietnam". In June 1977, the United States House of Representatives passed with large supporting votes another revised act on foreign assistance, officially dismissing Nixon's promise to provide USD3.25 billion in assistance to Vietnam.<sup>(5)</sup>

Despite the US' lack of goodwill, Vietnam still made efforts to improve Vietnam-US relations, creating favourable conditions to foster the normalization process. From 1978, Vietnam stopped demanding the United States to contribute to the relief of war wounds and to post-war reconstruction. In July 1978, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Phan Hien said: "Vietnam is willing to discuss unconditional normalization first". Simultaneously, when meeting a United States delegation, Prime Minister Pham Van Dong also expressed the goodwill of Vietnam: "Vietnam would like to establish a normalized" and "truly friendly relationship with the US". But at that time, the Carter administration had just passed the decision to normalize the US-China relations first and stopped normalizing its ties with Vietnam from mid - October 1978. Carter also went back on his promise to provide humanitarian assistance to Vietnam. From that point until 1990s, the United States together with other

Western countries, China and ASEAN, continued to besiege, impose embargoes and isolate Vietnam from the rest of the world.<sup>(6)</sup>

From 1979 to 1986, the Vietnam-US bilateral ties were mostly carried out in the foreign policy set out by the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> National Congresses of the CPV (March 1982 and December 1986 respectively) with the following contents:

1. To unite with and cooperate comprehensively with the USSR.

2. To foster and strengthen solidarity with socialist countries; to do anything in power to restore and foster the solidarity between socialist countries and international communist movements on the basis of Marxism-Leninism and international proletarianism.

3. To protect and foster the special relationships, the long-term solidarity and cooperation ties between the peoples of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia on the principle of utmost equality, respect for each other's independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and legitimate interests...

4. To support completely the legitimate struggle of South East Asian people for true

---

<sup>(4)</sup> Le Linh Lan (2006), "The Process of Normalizing Vietnam-US Relation: Experience and Lessons Learnt", *Journal of International Research*, Issue 1.

<sup>(5)</sup> Vu Duong Huan (2002), *The US Political System – Structure and Impact on the Making of Foreign Policies*, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, pp. 166-167. In the letter dated 1<sup>st</sup> February 1973 addressed to Prime Minister Pham Van Dong, Nixon wrote "the US government will contribute to the post-war reconstruction in Northern Vietnam without any political precondition" and the US contribution would be "around USD3.25 billion in official development assistance for the course of five years".

<sup>(6)</sup> Le Khuong Thuy (2003), *The Policies of the United States towards ASEAN before and after the Cold War*, Social Sciences Publishing House, Hanoi.

national independence, democracy, peace and neutrality, and for not having on their territories military and army bases of imperialist countries; to be willing to establish and develop friendly and cooperative relationships with other countries in South East Asia on the principle of peaceful co-existence. With ASEAN countries, Vietnam wanted to establish good neighbouring relationships, always ready to cooperate with them in building a peaceful and stable South East Asia.

5. To fully support the fight of Asian, African, Latin American people against imperialism, old and new colonialism; to contribute to promoting and developing the Non-Aligned Movement.

6. To set up and expand normalized relations at the state level and in areas of economy, culture, science and technology with all countries irrespective of their political and social regimes, on the basis of respecting each other's independence, sovereignty, equality and mutual interests.<sup>(7)</sup>

Abiding by the CPV's foreign policy guidelines, during this time, Vietnam made significant efforts in its relations with the United States, however, "particularly with the United States, the relationship was not improved, mainly due to the hostility of the Washington administration"<sup>(8)</sup>.

Despite some unfriendly actions of the United States towards Vietnam, including many obstructing actions that attached the humanitarian problem of "missing in action" soldiers with the anti - Vietnam political issue, Vietnam always considered the problems of Prisoner of War (POW)

and MIA to be humanitarian ones and made serious efforts in addressing them, using that as a foundation to urge the United States to make positive contributions to the relations between the two countries.

In 1983, in the state's report on foreign affairs, Vietnam acknowledged that "so far, the United States still holds a hostile attitude towards Vietnam. As long as the United States still plays the China-against-USSR game, it will maintain the hostile policy towards us"<sup>(9)</sup>.

The reason why the United States did not want to normalize its relations with Vietnam was because it had succeeded in creating a relatively strong United States – ASEAN relationship, making ASEAN a companion in "besieging" Vietnam. The United States put the issue of normalizing Vietnam-US relations on the same table with the demand that Vietnam would have to withdraw its troops from Cambodia and solve the problem of POW/MIA, considering these as prerequisites for normalizing the two countries' relations.

In the face of the regional tension during this period, the 5<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPV pointed out that the only way forward to ensure peace, stability and cooperation in

---

<sup>(7)</sup> Nguyen Dinh Bin (2002), *Vietnam Diplomacy 1945-2000*, National Political Publishing House, pp.295-296.

<sup>(8)</sup> Communist Party of Vietnam (1982), *Documents of the 5<sup>th</sup> National Congress*, Vol. 1, Su that Publishing House, Hanoi, p.155.

<sup>(9)</sup> National Archives Center III (1983), *Dossier of the 6<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting of the 7<sup>th</sup> National Assembly from 19<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> December 1983*, Vol. 6: *Meeting Session of 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1983 on Foreign Affairs*.

the region was to encourage and promote dialogues and cooperation between ASEAN and Indochina countries without external interference, as well as to combat obstructing movements in South East Asia.

With regards to the United States, Vietnam continued to resist the hostile policy of the United States, at the same time, it remained vigilant on the peace development plot, took advantage of the public opinion in the United States and tried to split up the US-China ties. Vietnam showed the American public its humanitarian policy and goodwill; simultaneously, it coordinated closely with the USSR and other socialist countries and friends in the common battle against the reactionary policy of the Reagan administration.<sup>(10)</sup>

Understanding the tendency of the R. Reagan administration, in 1985, Vietnam announced that it was ready to negotiate with the United States government on the issue of missing-in-action Americans in the following two years, a movement that was supported by the public, and the United States rapidly agreed on it. Vietnam also allowed the United States to participate in the excavation of a site where a United States aircraft had crashed. In early 1984, Vietnam welcomed two delegations of United States Congress members and a delegation of high-level officials from the Department of Defence and the National Security Council on missing-in-action Americans. In 1985, the US-Vietnam negotiations on missing Americans and the first official visit of the United States government, including the Assistant Secretary

of Defense, Assistant Secretary of State and Member of the National Security Council, to Vietnam to discuss these issues in January 1986 produced a substantial impact on the region. On the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of national liberalization day 30<sup>th</sup> April 1985, Vietnam allowed American reporters and television to broadcast the event live from Vietnam to the United States to help introduce Vietnam to the United States general public en masse for the first time since 1975. Also for the first time since 1975, Vietnam agreed for a large delegation of 80 American business people to visit Vietnam and study the country's situation, a move that shocked the United States government and urged the advanced public opinion in the United States to put pressure on the government to normalize US-Vietnam relations, and which also frightened the US-friendly Vietnamese reactionaries. Such developments also had a strong influence on the attitude of ASEAN and Western countries, as well as China.<sup>(11)</sup>

## **2. The principles of CPV leading to the normalization of Vietnam-US relations (1986-1995)**

On 12<sup>th</sup> June 1986, the Politburo issued Resolution No. 32 on the international situation and the Party's foreign policy. The Resolution acknowledged the efforts of Vietnam in foreign affairs from 1975 which helped fostering a comprehensive cooperation

---

<sup>(10)</sup> National Archives Center III (1984), *Report on Foreign Affairs in the First Six Months of 1984 (Read at the June 1984 Meeting of National Assembly)*.

<sup>(11)</sup> Communist Party of Vietnam (1982), *Documents of the 5<sup>th</sup> National Congress*, Vol. 1, Su that Publishing House, Hanoi, p.155.

with other countries in the socialist community, contributing to the struggle for the preservation of peace, national independence, democracy and socialism.

The Resolution emphasized the need to: proactively create a stable stance and focus on building the economy, proactively transit to a new phase of struggle where there would be a peaceful coexistence between the three Indochina countries and China, ASEAN, the United States, making South East Asia a peaceful, stable and cooperative region, creating favourable conditions for fostering socialism and protecting the nation.<sup>(12)</sup>

However, the Politburo failed to assess the new and complex developments in Eastern Europe and USSR.

The 11<sup>th</sup> session of the 5<sup>th</sup> Central Committee of CPV in late November 1986 ratified the draft political report which had been submitted to the 6<sup>th</sup> National Congress and which had been complemented and perfected with new principles in the Politburo conference in August 1986. The foreign policy mission now included the need to have more flexible policies, but which should not be delusional and neglecting opposing forces.

The 6<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPV, taking place from 5 to 18 December 1986 in Hanoi, determined that the foreign policy mission of Vietnam was to take maximum advantage of favourable international conditions in order to carry out the overall mission and comprehensive goal of Vietnam's revolution in the first phase. At the same time, the National Congress also pointed

out the solutions and routes to take with each individual partner in accordance with the world's latest developments and trends.

Vietnam regarded the USSR as an important partner. "Fostering solidarity and comprehensive cooperation with the USSR has always been the anchor in the Party and the State's foreign policy".<sup>(13)</sup>

With the United States, the Party and the state's guidelines were "to continue discussions with the United States on tackling humanitarian issues caused by the war and to improve the relations with the United States for the benefit of peace and stability in South East Asia"<sup>(14)</sup>.

Vietnam "supports the policy of peaceful co-existence between countries of different political and social regimes, of eliminating invasive wars and any form of terrorism, especially state terrorism that the United States has considered its national strategy... We ask the United States to have a serious attitude towards the USSR and to sit down with the USSR to discuss specific and practical measures to prevent arms races, first of all to stop nuclear weapons testing. We expose the US' headstrong attitude in giving up arms races across the globe and in space, which contributed to the escalation of tension in international relations"<sup>(15)</sup>.

---

<sup>(12)</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2008), *A Chronicle of Vietnam Diplomacy during 20 Years of Renovation (1986-2006)*, Political-Administration Publishing House, Hanoi, p.12.

<sup>(13)</sup> Communist Party of Vietnam (1987), *Documents of the 6<sup>th</sup> National Congress*, Su that Publishing House, Hanoi, pp.99-100.

<sup>(14)</sup> Communist Party of Vietnam (1987), *op.cit.*, p.108.

<sup>(15)</sup> Communist Party of Vietnam (1987), *op.cit.*, p.105.

After the 6<sup>th</sup> National Congress, the global and local situations evolved fast, with great complexity, negatively impacted Vietnam, especially the restructuring and reforms taking place in the USSR, Eastern Europe and the counter-attacks of imperialism and anti-socialist forces.

The United States government continued to impose strict embargoes on Vietnam and put pressure on other countries to do the same. They built up a large amount of mass media communications means to propagandize against the Vietnamese revolution. In 1987, there were 15 broadcasting agencies operating in Vietnamese, nearly 200 anti-Vietnam newspapers and magazines owned by Western countries and the Vietnamese in exile abroad. They also organized anti-Vietnam activities in international fora such as the United Nations. They nurtured and encouraged anti-state organizations belonging to the Vietnamese in exile abroad to go back to Vietnam and create riots. The issue of Cambodia could not be addressed yet due to the Pol Pot group, ASEAN and other large countries creating obstacles. The Cambodia issue remained the ace for international opposing forces to fight Vietnam.

In May 1988, the Politburo agreed for the 6<sup>th</sup> Party Central Committee to pass Resolution No.13 on foreign policy and mission under the new context. This was an important milestone in reorientating the foreign policy mindset. The Politburo considered that Vietnam had a big chance at preserving peace and developing the economy, thus, "The biggest interest of the Party and the people is to strengthen and

preserve national security and independence; we need to have a comprehensive strategy and be determined in carrying it out"<sup>(16)</sup>. It concluded that "We need a new mindset on security and development in the new era in order to be able to confirm that our priority and focus lie in preserving peace and economic development... With a solid economy, a strong defense base, together with opening up international relations, we will have a higher chance to preserve our independence and establish socialism with success"<sup>(17)</sup>.

The Resolution stated the new method of resistance to be: "To proactively change the current head-to-head confrontation into resistance and cooperation, peaceful co-existence" with all major partners. The Resolution reassessed friend-enemy relationships, and ceased to consider any country as "anchor", "opposition" or "enemy" to Vietnam, hence, creating a turning-point in implementing the renewed foreign policy.<sup>(18)</sup>

The Resolution also emphasized that the foreign policy mission served political stability, that the foremost priority was economic development together with protection of the country. It also clarified some principles that could help address the Cambodia issue, normalize the relations with China, improve the situation with ASEAN, open up the relations with

---

<sup>(16)</sup> Vu Quang Vinh (2000), *The Communist Party of Vietnam's Leadership on Foreign Affairs 1986-1996*, history doctorate thesis, Hanoi.

<sup>(17)</sup> Vu Quang Vinh (2000), *op.cit.*

<sup>(18)</sup> Ho Chi Minh National Political Academy – Institute of CPV history (2002), *Communist Party of Vietnam: the Glorious History Pages (1930-2002)*, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, p.59.

Western, Northern European countries and Japan, and gradually normalize the relations with the United States...<sup>(19)</sup>

In late 1989 and early 1990, while the renewal process in Vietnam was going through positive transformations, the socialist countries in Eastern Europe and USSR were faced with mounting crises and gradually collapsed.

The 8<sup>th</sup> meeting of the 6<sup>th</sup> Party Central Committee held in Hanoi (in March 1990) discussed the urgent issues and addressed the pressing demands of the international and domestic situations. The session put forward the pressing mission of foreign policy under the new context: "To continue opening up diplomatic relations with the principle of "less enemies, more friends", preserve national peace to build and protect the country; step by step remove blockades and embargoes placed on the country; patiently work towards a political solution on Cambodia that is in line with the basic interests of the Cambodian revolution, and towards regional peace and stability"<sup>(20)</sup>.

The 7<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPV was held between 17 and 22 June 1991 amidst many turbulences in the national and global arena. The 7<sup>th</sup> National Congress ratified the Political Platform to build the nation in the transitional period towards socialism. This Platform set out the goal of the foreign policy to be: "To create favourable international conditions for building and protecting the country advance towards socialism, contributing to the common struggle for peace, national independence, democracy and social

advancement of all peoples in the world"<sup>(21)</sup>. The principle of diversity and multilateralism continued to be sustained under the new context: "To cooperate on equal standing and with mutual benefits with all countries regardless of the different socio-political regimes on the principle of peaceful co-existence".

At that point, the international situation had significant impacts on the principles of Vietnam's new foreign policy. With the Eastern Europe block collapsing, the USSR facing serious crisis, the world order shifting, Vietnam lost its traditional hand of support, any country that wanted to exist had to readjust its foreign allegiances (towards diversity and multilateralism).

The National Congress emphasized that: "We need to be aware of and predict the complex evolution and profound changes in international relations, the robust development of productive forces and the internationalization trend of the global economy in order to adopt the appropriate foreign policy".

With regards to the United States, the guideline was "*to foster the process of normalizing relations with the United States*".

The revised and enhanced foreign policy roadmap was confirmed by the 8<sup>th</sup> National Assembly in the 1992 Constitution which was announced and enforced on 18<sup>th</sup> April

---

<sup>(19)</sup> Vu Quang Vinh (2000), *op.cit.*

<sup>(20)</sup> Communist Party of Vietnam (1990), *The 8<sup>th</sup> Resolution of the 6<sup>th</sup> Party Central Committee*, Su that Publishing House, Hanoi, pp.3-4.

<sup>(21)</sup> Communist Party of Vietnam (1991), *Political Platform to Build the Nation in the Transitional Period towards Socialism*, Su that Publishing House, Hanoi, p.18.



1992. The Constitution institutionalized the foreign policy of the CPV and of the State. Article 4 in the Constitution stated that "The Socialist Republic of Vietnam follows the policy of peace and friendship, is open to exchange and cooperation with all countries in the world regardless of differences in political and social regimes, on the basis of respecting each other's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, not interfering into each other's internal affairs, cooperate on equal standing and for mutual benefits; foster solidarity, friendship and cooperation with socialist countries and neighbouring countries; actively support and contribute to the common struggle for peace, independence, democracy and social advancement of all peoples in the world."

The mid-term session took place from 20<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> January 1994 amidst complex international developments: the USSR collapsed, the sovereignty of many countries was challenged due to hostile policies. In Vietnam, opposing forces took every chance to obstruct the process of building and protecting the country that was already facing big challenges and opportunities.

The session also assessed the implementation of the Resolutions passed in the 7<sup>th</sup> National Congress and acknowledged that "some progress was made in demanding the United States to remove the embargo and in normalizing the Vietnam-US relations".

The political report at the session listed out 8 immediate missions, the sixth one being: To continue to expand foreign relations.

By implementing the Party's guidelines, Vietnam reaped important results in its relations with the United States. Such accomplishments urged the United States President to officially announce the normalization of Vietnam-US relations on 11<sup>th</sup> July 1995. Right after, on 12<sup>th</sup> July 1995, in Hanoi, Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet issued a statement praising the decision of President Bill Clinton and presented the willingness to carry out negotiations with the United States government on a new framework for the two countries' relationship. This statement showed that Vietnam was proactively seeking for "a new framework" for the Vietnam-US relations. This important event marked a new chapter in Vietnam-US bilateral relations.

The normalization of Vietnam-US relations, on one hand, illustrated the grand effort made by the Party and the State with regards to the relations with the United States, on the other hand, it also indicated that the United States had started to recognize the role, the position of Vietnam in the stability and development of South East Asia and of the world. It reflected the popular wish of the American and Vietnamese people to leave behind the past and move forward to establish a normalized friendly and cooperative relationship. This was a victory of Vietnam's proactive struggle on the diplomatic field, under the leadership of the CPV.

### **3. The principles of CPV in developing Vietnam - US relations (1996-2013)**

The principles of CPV and the State with regards to the relations with the United

States between 1996 and 2006 were mainly reflected in the open foreign policy from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> National Congress.

The 8<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPV determined the need to: “Maintain the foreign policy of independence, self-control, and openness, multilateralize and diversify foreign relations with the spirit that Vietnam wants to be friends with all nations in the world, striving for peace, independence and development. To cooperate in diversity, bilaterally and multilaterally with other countries, international organizations and regions on the principle of respecting each other’s independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, not interfere into each other’s internal affairs, cooperate on equal standing and for mutual benefits, address existing problems and conflicts through negotiations.

To foster relations with neighbouring countries and other countries in ASEAN, consistently strengthen relations with traditional friends, appreciate relations with advanced countries and with economic-political centers of the world...”

As all countries were giving priority to economic development and consider this as critical to strengthening the collective power of the nation, in the socio-economic development strategy 1996-2000, the 8<sup>th</sup> National Congress clearly pointed out the mission and solution of the external economic development programme to be: “To open up export markets, reform the structure and improve the quality of exports. Raise the share of intensive and fine manufacturing products, cut back on

the export of raw products...

Reinforce the position of familiar markets, recover relations with traditional markets, seek for new markets and trading partners, diminish over-reliance on one single market.

Following accession to ASEAN and preparing for joining the ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (AFTA), we need to further aim for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the World Trade Organization (WTO), step by step take part in the General System of Trade Preferences (GSTP), apply international trade standards and selectively join a few international export associations on individual products”.

In the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting of the 8<sup>th</sup> Party Central Committee in December 1997, the issues concerning Vietnam’s foreign economic policy were further clarified. During the process of industrialization and modernization: “We need to expand our foreign economic relations to take advantage of capital inflows, technology and join world markets. This, however, should be conducted on the basis of independence, self-control, promoting all inner forces, relying mainly on domestic resources, including human resources, land and natural resources, brainpower, tradition...”

Regarding major principles and policies until 2000s, the Party Central Committee clearly stated in the Resolution of the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting of the 8<sup>th</sup> Party Central Committee that: “We need to urgently and firmly negotiate a trade agreement with the United States, join APEC and WTO. We need to have a specific plan to proactively implement all commitments within the AFTA framework.

To maintain and expand the markets

already established with countries in the region and in the European Union, recover the markets of Russia and of Eastern European countries, develop official commercial relations with China, intensify trade relations with India, expand the United States market...”

The 8<sup>th</sup> meeting of the 8<sup>th</sup> Party Central Committee (17<sup>th</sup> December 1998) put forward the main principles and solutions of the country's foreign policy. The Resolution emphasized the importance of strengthening and developing relations with neighbouring countries, with South East Asian countries, within the framework of bilateral relations with ASEAN and large countries, especially for Vietnam's security and development.

The 9<sup>th</sup> National Congress reviewed the implementation results of the foreign policy guidelines set by the 8<sup>th</sup> National Congress, once again asserted the foreign policy of independence, self-control, of multilaterality and diversity in international relations. The 9<sup>th</sup> Congress analyzed the different aspects of economic processes and confirmed that Vietnam was set to continue to establish new international cooperation relations, to actively integrate with the region and the world “mainly and foremost in economic areas”. Open up relations with other countries without making Vietnam's economy dependent on and controlled by external forces.

A new aspect in Vietnam's foreign policy was seen in the Documents of the 9<sup>th</sup> National Congress, the phrase “Vietnam wants to be friends with other countries in the international community” was changed into “Vietnam is willing to be a reliable friend and partner

with other countries in the international community”, striving for peace, independence and development. This illustrates a deeper understanding of the current global context and of actual international relations and also shows more clearly Vietnam's attitude in international relations.

To concretize the Resolution of the 9<sup>th</sup> National Congress on expanding international cooperation relations and actively integrating into the region and the world “mainly and foremost in economic areas”, on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2001, the Politburo issued Resolution No.07-NQ/TW on international economic integration. Regarding some main missions, the Resolution stipulated: “... - Actively carry out negotiations for WTO accession according to plans and roadmaps that are suitable with the country's conditions – a lower-level developing country currently transiting its economic mechanism. To match the results of the negotiation process with the reform progress in all economic aspects”.

In the Resolution of the 8<sup>th</sup> meeting of the 9<sup>th</sup> Party Central Committee on the *Strategy to protect the nation under new conditions (July 2003)*, the CPV determined its principle on "partner" and "subject" on the basis of "more friends, less enemies". The Resolution presented a few solutions: Maintain the priority of strengthening relations with neighbouring countries; foster relations with major countries and centers on the principle of equality, for mutual benefits, not interfere into each other's internal affairs, create joint interests between Vietnam and other countries; avoid going into confrontation with other countries,

avoid isolation or dependence, the CPV's principle was to strengthen solidarity with other countries; actively promote common features, eliminate conflicting features, establish trustworthy and stable relations, extend cooperation to all levels and areas, even in national defense, security, foreign affairs. With the United States, to proactively open dialogues, promote the wish to maintain and develop relations with Vietnam; take advantage of supportive officials, business people, social classes, restrain extremist groups; establish the framework for a stable relationship with the United States. With advanced industrial countries, especially Japan and the EU, Vietnam aimed to promote economic cooperation, simultaneously protect its sovereignty and interests. Establish strategic partnerships with Russia and India, promote cooperation in all areas, including security and defense... In its relations with large countries, the CPV and the State gave priority to opening foreign economic ties, expand and diversify markets, take advantage of inflows of capital, technology to help with the country's industrialization and modernization, establish joint interests with partners.

In the 10<sup>th</sup> Party National Congress (April 2006), the Party's policy on opening up foreign relations was confirmed: "an open foreign policy with diversified and multilateralized international relations. Proactively engage in global economic integration and extend international cooperation to other areas. Vietnam is a reliable friend and partner for all countries in the international community, proactively

joining the regional and global integration progress". The mission and solutions to opening foreign relations were determined by the 10<sup>th</sup> National Congress to be: Preserve the peaceful environment, create favourable international conditions for reform, foster socio-economic development, industrialization, modernization, build and protect the nation, at the same time, make positive contribution to the common struggle for peace, national independence, democracy and social advancement of all peoples in the world.

The 11<sup>th</sup> Party National Congress (January 2011) put forward the principle: "To consistently carry out the foreign policy of independence, self-control, peace, cooperation and development; to multilateralize and diversify foreign relations, proactively engage in global integration". *International integration became a major foreign policy*, putting economic integration at the center and expanding into other areas: politics, defense, security, socio-cultural and at all levels: bilateral, regional, multilateral and global.

With that in mind, the 11<sup>th</sup> National Congress showed a clear trend in the global integration process. As the world is getting "flatter", the interdependency of elements constituting the society is more intensified. The economic element cannot stand on the outside but has to exist from within and be the driving force for other elements. On the contrary, elements such as political, defense, security, socio-cultural... if they are engaged in productive cooperation can also support economic development.

Following the guidelines of the 11<sup>th</sup>

National Congress, Vietnam concretized them into real actions with the United States through the official visit of Vietnam's President to the United States in July 2013 where the Vietnam-US relation was upgraded from pure partnership to comprehensive partnership. Also, the two countries continued negotiating on another free trade agreement and established the Trans-Pacific Partnership with eight other countries.

Ever since the first encounter between the American and Vietnamese people, the two nations has gone through many ups and downs. The relationship mainly depends on economic interests and the political awareness of each nation. From 1975, meaning 30 years after revolution, Vietnam was finally united and in peace. The biggest wish of the Vietnamese people was to quickly build, reinforce, reconstruct and develop the country. To meet this legitimate wish, in its relations with the United States, Vietnam pursued a friendly foreign policy, gradually negotiated its way towards a normalized Vietnam-US relations. However, due to personal interests and the inability to overcome the "Vietnam syndrome" within the United States, the United States stopped all negotiations on normalizing the two countries' relations. The Vietnam-US relations suddenly reached an impasse. The United States maintained its embargo on Vietnam. Up until 1986, the United States government and the opposing forces and extreme rights in the United States Congress were reluctant to accept a normalized relationship with Vietnam. The

interests of normalization are genuine and they originated from the two countries' awareness. Therefore, Vietnam had to take gradual steps to tear down the embargo and isolation caps in order to meet its legitimate interests. Vietnam's measures of resistance also took a turn under the reform era.

After the 6<sup>th</sup> Party National Congress (December 1986), the revised guidelines produced significant impact on society. Along with the change in economic mindset, the CPV also adopted a new foreign policy from the Meeting of the 13<sup>th</sup> Party Central Committee (May 1988). Accordingly, with the United States, Vietnam abandoned the confrontational attitude and adopted the principle of peaceful co-existence, gradually normalizing the two countries' relationship. Until the 7<sup>th</sup> National Congress (June 1991), Vietnam became proactive in its relations with the United States, tried to "*foster the normalization of Vietnam-US relations*". Thanks to such efforts, on 12<sup>th</sup> July 1995, the two countries officially normalized their diplomatic relations.

From 1996, the Vietnam-US relations were carried out according to the open foreign policy as with any other country. But with this special relationship, the CPV gives it a higher priority considering that the United States is one of the world's major and most influential countries. The main purpose is to foster mutually beneficial economic cooperation but at the same time, ensure the preservation of security, defense, of national independence, sovereignty, and stay alert on the "peaceful

development" plot of opposing forces. Vietnam is aware that the United States is a developed country, a major economic-political hub of the world and which has significant influence on the global economy and security. That is why in the 8<sup>th</sup> National Congress, the CPV stated that its principle was to "appreciate relations with developed countries and with economic-political centers of the world". Clearly, this principle originated from the nation's interests in prioritizing economic development. Moreover, the United States is full member of and has an influential voice in large organizations such as APEC and WTO, thus, it is understandable the Party's guideline in the Resolution of the 8<sup>th</sup> Party Central Committee "To urgently and firmly negotiate a trade agreement with the United States, join APEC and WTO... expand the United States market...". "While carrying out the foreign policy of independence, self - control, openness, multilaterality, diversity, we also want to establish a long term and multifaceted relationship with the United States". In this multifaceted relationship "the two parties have agreed that, first of all, economic and trade relations need to be fostered in order to reach a completely normalized relationship as agreed when the two countries established bilateral diplomatic relations in 1995". However, Vietnam is also conscious that the United States is the world's leading imperialist and it "has always considered the existence of socialism and socialist countries an immediate threat to capitalism... overthrowing socialist countries,

overturning the leadership of Communist Parties, denying Marxism and Leninism, preserving the unified world with capitalism" has always been its long-term goal. Therefore, on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2001, the Politburo issued Resolution 07-NQ/TW with the message "to put the global economic integration process in line with the need to preserve national security and defense, use integration to improve the nation's collective power in order to strengthen the country's sovereignty and security, stay alert of the intentions of abusing integration to use the "peaceful development" plot on the country". Similar to the relations with large countries, we need to determine the right "partner", "subject" in order to create joint interests between Vietnam and other countries, avoid being in confrontational, isolated or dependent positions. Hence, with the United States, we need to actively pursue dialogues, promote the wish to maintain and develop relations with Vietnam; use the support of officials, business people and social classes, restrain extremists; establish a framework for a stable Vietnam-US relations as set out in the Resolution of the 8<sup>th</sup> Party Central Committee (July 2003). Vietnam's foreign policy can be summarized in the following phrase: "independence, self-control, peace, cooperation and development; multilateral and diverse relations, proactive in global integration; a reliable friend and partner, a responsible member of the international community; for national interests, for a socialist and prosperous Vietnam".

