

Vietnam Appoints Army General Luong Cuong as New President

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Key Takeaways

- On October 21, General Luong Cuong was unanimously elected as Vietnam's new president, making him the fourth person to hold the office since 2021.
- As president, Luong Cuong will likely continue Vietnam's active engagement with foreign partners, prioritizing economic development and investment, particularly in strategic sectors such as energy, real estate and high-tech, while balancing these with national security concerns.
- Luong Cuong's military background is significant, as it is expected to restore the balance of power in Vietnam's top leadership, which had been dominated by officials with a police background.
- Following recent leadership reshuffles, Vietnam's top "four pillars" are now firmly in place, fostering expectations of political stability that could boost confidence among the business community and foreign investors ahead of the 2026 Party Congress.

Overview

On October 21, Vietnam's National Assembly unanimously **elected** General Luong Cuong as the country's new president. General Secretary To Lam, who had been serving concurrently as president, will now focus on his primary role as head of the Communist Party. Luong Cuong's promotion signifies Vietnam's return to the tradition of collective leadership, with power shared among the four highest ranking positions (the "four pillars") – general secretary, president, prime minister, and chairman of the national assembly. With a decades-long career in the military, Luong Cuong adds a military presence to Vietnam's leadership group, which was dominated by those with a police background.

Outlook for Political Stability

With the appointment of Luong Cuong, Vietnam's top four political positions are now firmly in place. This should provide reassurance to the private sector about the country's political stability—a crucial factor in its appeal as a top destination for



foreign investment. Additionally, Cuong's history as a former military general brings a certain amount of balance to Vietnam's political leadership, as both police and military figures are now in key roles.

To Lam's decision to relinquish the presidency can be understood as a strategic move to solidify his position as Vietnam's paramount leader. While he could have theoretically retained both roles, as Xi Jinping has done in China, such a move would have risked creating friction within the CPV, as it could have been viewed as an effort to consolidate personal power at the expense of Vietnam's long-standing principle of collective leadership. With Luong Cuong's promotion, To Lam will now focus on his Party responsibilities, particularly as preparations for the 14th Party Congress become increasingly critical.

Implications for Business and Foreign Investment

During his three months as president, To Lam actively engaged with foreign leaders and potential investors, notably during his recent trip to New York, where he filled his schedule with U.S. private sector meetings. His public statements and private discussions indicate a stronger focus on economic development and foreign investment compared to his predecessor Nguyen Phu Trong, who prioritized party ideology and anti-corruption efforts. This approach is unlikely to change even as To Lam shifts his focus to his role as Party Chief, leaving foreign engagement to President Luong Cuong and Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh.

Although Luong Cuong, with his military background, may be perceived as conservative, he is unlikely to make significant changes to Vietnam's foreign or economic policies. In his inauguration speech, he stressed the importance of "enhancing national defense and security" while pursuing a "multilateral foreign policy," signaling Vietnam's ongoing commitment to a "multi-alignment" strategy. As an army general, Luong Cuong will look to balance Vietnam's economic and national security interests, particularly in the South China Sea, and prioritize investments that enhance economic security and reduce reliance on Chinese capital, especially in high-tech, energy, and real estate sectors.