

INDIA-VIETNAM CONTEXT: REFLECTING AND CONTEMPLATING

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ABSTRACT

India and Vietnam share a strong relationship with a great deal of scope for deepening relations in the future. These relations have a history stretching back to 50 years of diplomatic ties since the 70s but to nearly 2000 years of interactions. During colonial times, people from both countries showed their sympathy and support to each other, and prominent leaders from both countries, like Jawaharlal Nehru and Ho Chi Minh, had personal contacts even before independence. India has also supported Vietnam in several wars in the past. India and Vietnam's timeless friendship is a common feeling among international friends about India and Vietnam's relationship. A study on the relationship between India and Vietnam in their past as well as in the present will help the two countries to understand more about each other, the values of their predecessors, as well as the efforts of the leaders of both countries. Since then, it has been a solid foundation for sustainable development in the future. Based on the studies of prehistoric documents as well as recent state relations of the leaders of the two countries. The article sheds more light on the good relations between the two peoples, the source of good relations at present and prospects for future development.

Keywords: Vietnam, Strategic Partnership, Cultural Exchange, Exploration, Peace pact.

1.0 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The Japanese invasion during the Second World War elevated Southeast Asia's prominence in world politics. The several Southeast Asian republics, namely the nations of Vietnam, Kampuchea, and Laos, were previously known as the French Indochina states. This remained true until the outbreak of the Second World War. After the Geneva Conference of 1954, the countries of Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam were renamed as the Free States of Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam (V, 2019). Vietnam was temporarily split into North Vietnam and South Vietnam at the 17th parallel. India's diplomatic ties with each of these countries have deep historical roots, dating back to the era when her commerce expeditions first reached the shores of Southeast Asia. Their expeditions during those nascent epochs heralded the beginning of a splendid epoch of interactions that enhanced civilisation and culture and withstood the trials of time. India's influence on these populations was characterised by introducing a refined culture centred around the practice of writing literature and mythology derived from the epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Additionally, India introduced the Hindu concept of

monarchy, legal systems, administrative procedures, and notably, unique artistic styles and techniques (Radhakrishnan, 1959).

Their journeys during that ancient age marked the beginning of a magnificent era of interactions that enriched civilization and culture and endured the test of time. India imparted a refined culture to these individuals, centred on the art of literature and mythology inherited from the epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. This culture also included the Hindu notion of monarchy, legal systems, administrative processes, and notably, unique creative styles and methods. Following the surrender of Japan in 1945, the proclamation of an autonomous Democratic Republic of Vietnam was made, with Ho Chi Minh assuming the role of its president. The enlistment of Indian soldiers by Mountbatten's Southeast Asia command to suppress the Vietnamese liberation movement provoked the Indian National Congress and other nationalist factions in India, who welcomed this occurrence. By the conclusion of 1946, the Indian government had assumed a prominent position in its efforts to diminish the presence of French aircraft traversing the airspace of India. Nevertheless, the limitation imposed on Dutch aircrafts flying to Indonesia during its struggle for independence led by Sukarno was somewhat less stringent (Thien, 1963). The disparities arose as a result of the communist leadership during Vietnam's struggle for independence..

In addition, the government imposed a prohibition on the volunteer army, led by Sarat Chandra Bose, who was recruited to fight the French in Vietnam, preventing them from leaving India. The reference "(Somkiat, 1983)" is provided. Nehru believed that India's ability to exert influence in Asia, especially Southeast Asia, was contingent upon its involvement in the decolonization process and its resistance to the Cold War. The Nehru government did not recognize the Democratic Republic of Vietnam either, as stated by the Organisation in 1948. As a result of the chaotic state of the country's civil war, he failed to acknowledge either the Government of Ho Chi Minh or the Bao Dai Government (a pro-French government established in South Vietnam). The topic of discussion in the year 1952 was a debate. India would withhold recognition of either Ho Chi Hinh's or Bao Dai's government until there is clarity on the governing authority and the situation in the country, as stated by the individual. Nehru advocated for a policy of complete non-intervention, saying that Vietnam's nationalism cannot accept any meddling, regardless of the intentions behind it (Debates, 1950). He maintained an essentially neutral position between the pro-Western Bao Dai administration and the communist Ho Chi Minh government. In 1950, when the Western countries acknowledged the latter and the communist nations acknowledged the former, Nehru said, "It is not my place to pass judgement on other governments; they must determine what they believe to be right." However, upon thorough examination of the facts in Indochina, we have concluded that it would be unwise for us to engage in the battle. The year is 1968. Nehru's adoption of this approach likely aimed at using an avoidance technique to prevent India from being involved in the Cold War fight. In October 1954, Nehru made a detour in Hanoi while his route to China. During his return journey, he made a stop in Saigon. Ho Chi Minh gave Nehru the assurance during his brief visit to Hanoi that his government would not meddle in the internal affairs of Laos or Cambodia and would work closely with him to carry out the Geneva Accord. The visit to Saigon had no effect, and tensions between the two regimes persisted.

1.1 Political Relations

The Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of North Vietnam travelled to New Delhi in April 1955. Both New Delhi and Hanoi were visited for a brief time in India reaffirmed their commitment to the cause and pledged full support the Geneva Agreements' implementation and emphasized the Free elections are crucial for achieving harmony amongst Vietnam's two regions. In a subsequent joint statement, the two nations reaffirmed their unwavering support for the Panchasheel (Chakraborti, 1985).

In the meanwhile, beginning in late 1958, India and China's ties began to deteriorate due to disagreements over the Sino-Indian border and the question of Tibetan autonomy. It also had an effect on Indo-Vietnamese ties. India's relations with North Vietnam started to deteriorate, and in 1959, she and the Canadian ICC members for the first time accused North Vietnam of engaging in subversive activities south of the 17th Parallel, or in South Vietnam. With India's support, the ICC expanded its condemnation of North Vietnam over the course of the next three years. In June 1962, its special report focused on North Vietnam's role in escalating the conflict in the South. Armed and unarmed individuals, weapons, ammunition, and other supplies were described as being "sent from the zone in the North to the zone in the South with the object of supporting, organizing, and carrying out hostile activities, including armed attacks, directed against the Armed Forces and Administration of the zone in the South (Heimsath & Mansingh, 1971)." The PRC strongly disagreed with this ICC report.

The Sino-Indian border issue in late 1962 naturally shifted Hanoi's orientation away from Peking. On October 24, 1962, the mouthpiece for Hanoi, Nhari Dan, the official publication of the Communist Party of North Vietnam criticized India for the Sino-Indian conflict and wrote: The Vietnamese people back the justifiable actions done by the government and compatriots of China to protect their territorial integrity. The Native Government made up evidence that China had invaded its land (Noorani A. R., 1970). "An Indian expansionist group clamouring for war trying to incite the masses to blame China, and sowing chauvinism," the Nhari Dan wrote six days later. Further, it stated on November 9 that "the policies of the Indian authorities to seize Chinese territories by force and their attitude' of obstinately rejecting China's reasonable proposition are in opposition to China's policy for peace. (Noorani A. G., 1970)"The Hanoi newspaper also emphasized that Peking's position remained correct and denounced New Delhi's stance in the Sino-Indian boundary dispute. "In the Sino-Indian border dispute, it is blatantly obvious that justice is on China's side, and no one can question China's goodwill," it said India, meanwhile, persisted in defaming China. The Indian Government is working against the interests of the Indian people while advancing imperialists who are escalating their hostility toward China and undermining Asian unity and peace. As a result, New Delhi's relations with Hanoi suffered a significant blow along with the deterioration of India's relations with China.

In 1966, India's Prime Minister Indira Gandhi strained Sino-Indian relations, agreeing with the USA that China's policies threatened peace, especially in Asia during her visit (Archives, 1966). India's hostility towards China brought it closer to the US, but it remained non-aligned. The Indo-US friendship ended soon, and tensions increased after US bombings near Hanoi and Haiphong in 1966, leading to India's deep dissatisfaction with the Washington government. In 1966, Indira Gandhi proposed a Seven Point peace proposal for ending the Vietnam war, stating that India was committed to a peaceful solution and would support any alternative with hope of success (The Times of India, 1966)

Indira Gandhi's Seven Point peace proposal outlined the following:

- i. Geneva type of Conference to be convened by the Co-Chairman, Britain and the Soviet Union;
- ii. Immediate end of bombing in North Vietnam's
- iii. While a peaceful settlement is being hammered out in what might be weeks of tortuous negotiations, the ICC in Vietnam should safeguard "standstill arrangements," with India accepting added responsibility in their task if necessary;
- iv. India, as a member and Chairman of the Commission would accept whatever additional responsibility this might entail;
- v. Withdrawal of all foreign forces from Vietnam and insulation of the country from foreign interference so that the Vietnamese people can have determined their own future;
- vi. The Geneva Conference to guarantee the integrity and independence of a neutral Vietnam and of Laos and Cambodia as envisaged by the 1954 Geneva Agreements;
- vii. The Geneva Power"; to under-write a rehabilitation and development plan for the three Indochina states to repair the ravages of war.

Following this suggestion, Indira Gandhi traveled to Moscow in July 1966, and the two nations called for a "immediate cessation of the bombings without much ado" in a joint declaration released on July 16 (Noorani A. G., 1970, p. 189). New Delhi and Moscow's ties improved after this visit. In July 1970, Madame Nguyen Thi Binh, the Foreign Minister of the People's Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam, paid a visit to New Delhi as part of India's support for the National Liberation Front (NLF), a communist group in South Vietnam. In 1970, India criticized the US stance in Vietnam vehemently once more and urged the evacuation of American forces from that nation. Indira Gandhi stated that India will "support the alienable rights of all people, especially those of the Vietnamese, to national independence and freedom" during her visit to the Soviet Union in late September 1971 (Record, 1971).

When the Treaty of Peace, Friendship, and Cooperation was signed on August 9, 1971, it marked the conclusion of the Bangladesh Crisis and the beginning of highly warm Indo-Soviet ties. As long as Indira Gandhi was India's prime minister, the country's following ties with the Soviet Union were quite cordial. In the meanwhile, North Vietnam abandoned its policy of goodwill with the PRC and forged friendly ties with the Soviet Union. This established the fundamental framework for the restoration of cordial ties between New Delhi and Hanoi. When President Nixon's 1971 trip to Peking was announced, Moscow, New Delhi, and Hanoi became enraged as well. The Indo-Soviet Treaty of August 1971 was well received in Hanoi, and on September 9, 1971, it talked of brotherhood between India and North Vietnam. Hanoi has truly never voiced its wish to develop good relations with India in such definite terms since the Sino-Indian boundary disputes of 1962. It also expressed gratitude to the Indian Parliament for denouncing the US for intensifying and extending the conflict in Vietnam and for calling for the swift departure of US forces from the nation (Express, 1971).

1.2 Strategic Partnership

On April 30, 1975, the US officially withdrew its military from Vietnam. India spoke out against the US during these years (1973–1975) for its bombing of Vietnam and its breach of

the Paris Peace Agreement. Because of their shared affinity with the Soviet Union, New Delhi and Hanoi became closer as a result of India's support for Vietnam. Other wards saw closer ties between New Delhi and Hanoi as a result of Hanoi's anti-US and partially anti-China stance and concurrent New Delhi anti-China, anti-US, and pro-Soviet contacts. These two pro-Soviet nations, one in South Asia and the other in Southeast Asia, eventually became close to one another and worked together. India's interactions with the major countries heavily influenced its foreign policy toward this nation.

The goal of this dissertation is to analyse India's policies toward Vietnam since 1975 based on such historical context. Many nations, especially those in Southeast Asia, expressed grave anxiety about Vietnam's future foreign policy after its fight for independence was put to an end in 1975 under communist rule. By founding the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1967, the five non-communist Southeast Asian nations of Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, and the Philippines had already developed strong ties and mutual understanding. If Communist Vietnam would pursue a policy of collaboration with them, they were unsure. Vietnam was militarily considerably more powerful than any of these. Countries, and each of these nations had already experienced Communist uprising. They were concerned that under these conditions If Vietnam decides to pursue a strategy of hostility toward them, It would create a significant security issue for them.

1.3 Cultural Exchange

India and Vietnam, both countries with profound historical backgrounds and dynamic cultural customs, have established strong connections that go beyond diplomatic relations. The cultural interchange between these two nations has intricately intertwined a fabric of common inheritance, establishing connections that beyond physical borders. This scholarly study examines the many aspects of cultural interaction between India and Vietnam, including their historical links, creative relationships, and current partnerships that have influenced the cultural environment of both countries.

India-Vietnam ties have historical origins in the ancient maritime routes that linked the Indian subcontinent with Southeast Asia. Indian traders and merchants sailed across the oceans, making a lasting impact on Vietnam's cultural landscape. The emergence of Indian culture, characterised by its intellectual and theological impacts, had a profound effect on the Cham civilization in central Vietnam. The persistent existence of Hinduism and Buddhism in the area underscores the historical interdependence of these traditions.

Art functions as a potent means of cultural interchange, and in the context of India and Vietnam, it has acted as a conduit linking the two countries throughout history. India's elaborate dance styles, such as Bharatanatyam and Kathak, are closely related to traditional Vietnamese dances, promoting intercultural understanding. Moreover, the impact of Indian classical music on the evolution of Vietnamese traditional music is evident, resulting in a harmonic fusion of melodic customs.

Moreover, the practice of conveying narratives via grand tales and legends serves as a shared element that unites the cultural storytelling traditions of India and Vietnam. The Ramayana, an esteemed Indian epic, has resonated in Vietnamese folklore, showcasing the common ideals and universal narratives that transcend cultural boundaries. India and Vietnam have actively

participated in joint projects to enhance cultural relations in the modern period. Cultural festivals, exchange programs, and joint research initiatives are crucial in promoting mutual understanding and appreciation. The creation of cultural centres, such as the Indian Cultural Centre in Hanoi and the Vietnam-India Friendship Village, has facilitated opportunities for the interchange of art, literature, and ideas.

Language, a vital component of cultural interchange, has increasingly fascinated both nations. Implementing educational programs and language courses enhances mutual comprehension of linguistic subtleties, promoting effective communication and creating camaraderie.

Economic Relations:

The economic ties between India and Vietnam have shown substantial expansion and diversification in recent decades. Both nations, located in vibrant areas of Asia, have acknowledged the reciprocal advantages of cultivating robust economic relations. This scholarly study seeks to thoroughly examine the economic interactions between India and Vietnam, delving into the historical backdrop, patterns of trade, trends in investment, and hopes for the future.

India and Vietnam have a long-standing relationship rooted in shared culture and history, forming the basis for their economic cooperation. Official diplomatic ties were established in 1972; subsequently, the two countries have endeavoured to enhance their commercial connections. The conclusion of the Cold War and the start of economic liberalization in the 1990s allowed a more profound involvement, culminating in the ratification of the "Strategic Partnership" accord in 2007.

Trade Dynamics refers to the patterns and movements of trade activities across countries or regions. It encompasses the many factors that influence the flow of goods, services, and capital across borders, including tariffs and regulations. Trade between India and Vietnam has shown significant and strong expansion in recent years. The volume of bilateral commerce has seen a substantial surge, reaching an unprecedented peak in the last ten years. Both countries have implemented measures to improve the ease of doing commerce, decrease obstacles, and broaden their economic involvement. The commerce basket comprises various commodities: agriculture, textiles, manufacturing, and electronics.

Vietnam and India have established a significant trade partnership in Southeast Asia, mutually benefiting each other. India exports medicines, machinery, chemicals, and textiles to Vietnam, whereas Vietnam sells electrical goods, textiles, and agricultural products to India. The economic connection encompasses bilateral trade and global venues, such as the ASEAN-India Free Trade Area.

• Current trends in investments

The investment flows between India and Vietnam have seen a surge in recent years, indicating the mutual trust and belief in the economic capabilities of both nations. Indian enterprises have been aggressively allocating capital in Vietnam, namely in industries such as information technology, energy, and Argo. Concurrently, Vietnamese enterprises have shown interest in the Indian market by strategically investing in industries such as medicines and real estate.

In order to enhance investment, both nations have entered into bilateral agreements to promote and safeguard investments. Furthermore, implementing programs like the "Make in India" campaign and Vietnam's endeavors to attract foreign direct investment has generated fresh prospects for partnership.

• **Obstacles and Prospects**

Notwithstanding the favorable trend, there remain obstacles that both countries must confront to maintain and strengthen their economic ties. Attention must be given to trade imbalances, non-tariff impediments, and infrastructure restrictions. Furthermore, changes in the political and geographical aspects of the area may affect the economic environment, requiring flexible methods.

Nevertheless, the difficulties are surpassed by the vast possibilities that await. The economic complementarity between India and Vietnam, their mutual commitment to regional stability, and the growing demand for products and services in both nations provide a favourable atmosphere for further cooperation.

3.0 CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The diplomatic relations between the nations of India and Vietnam have undergone a significant transformation over time, characterized by a confluence of historical affinities and an increasingly discerning acknowledgment of shared objectives. As two highly dynamic nations in the Asia-Pacific region, India and Vietnam encounter a multifaceted assortment of challenges and opportunities in their bilateral relations. This scholarly discourse delves into the intricate dynamics that mold the relationship between India and Vietnam, examining the various impediments that hinder closer collaboration and the avenues that offer prospects for heightened cooperation.

• **Challenges**

The foremost obstacle arises from the perpetually shifting geopolitical milieu in the Asian region. Both India and Vietnam are currently grappling with the complexities of manoeuvring through a region marked by a confluence of strategic competition and territorial disputes. The quandary presented by the South China Sea matter, specifically, presents a formidable test as Vietnam endeavors to garner backing for its territorial assertions while India endeavors to uphold a nuanced equilibrium between its strategic imperatives and diplomatic affiliations.

Economic disparities present an additional obstacle in the context of India-Vietnam relations. Although both nations are currently undergoing a period of economic expansion, it is essential to acknowledge that the persistent existence of a development gap between them remains a significant concern. The prevailing asymmetry has the potential to impede synergistic endeavours, particularly in the realms of commerce and capital infusion, as India endeavours to cement its position as a formidable global economic force in tandem with Vietnam.

Cultural and linguistic disparities can engender impediments in effective communication and comprehension. The imperative to proactively address the disparities arising from the diverse

cultural heritages and linguistic variations prevalent in both nations compels us to undertake concerted endeavours to foster a more all-encompassing and productive synergy.

- **The realm of possibilities that present themselves for exploration and advancement.**

In light of the prevailing economic difficulties, it is noteworthy to acknowledge the substantial economic synergy that exists between the nations of India and Vietnam. By capitalising on the distinctive competencies of both nations, namely India's prowess in the realm of information technology and Vietnam's proficiency in manufacturing, the establishment of symbiotic economic alliances becomes a plausible prospect. The pursuit of avenues to enhance trade and investment holds the potential to foster economic development for the participating nations.

Given the shared security concerns confronted by both India and Vietnam, it is evident that a significant prospect exists for the augmentation of strategic partnerships between the two nations. The cultivation of collaborative endeavours within domains such as counterterrorism, maritime security, and defence cooperation has the potential to engender a profound sense of trust and solidarity, thereby fortifying the overarching security framework within the region.

The burgeoning focus on regional connectivity presents a distinctive occasion for India and Vietnam to augment their diplomatic and economic relations. Engaging in regional endeavours, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), facilitates the active involvement of both nations with other regional stakeholders, thereby cultivating a more interconnected and collaborative milieu.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the historical and contemporary relationship between India and Vietnam has evolved through significant phases, marked by periods of both collaboration and tension. The deep-rooted historical ties, dating back nearly 2000 years, have provided a solid foundation for diplomatic engagement. Throughout various geopolitical upheavals, including the Japanese invasion, the Geneva Conference, and the Cold War, both nations have navigated their bilateral relations with strategic foresight and resilience.

The study highlights how India's cultural influence, epitomised by literature, mythology, and artistic practices, has left an indelible mark on Vietnamese civilisation. Furthermore, the shared experiences during colonial times and mutual support during wars have cemented a sense of timeless friendship between the two countries. Politically, despite periods of strained relations, mainly influenced by the Sino-Indian border conflict and the complexities of the Cold War, both nations have consistently sought avenues for cooperation. The strategic partnership, established in recent decades, underscores their commitment to mutual development and regional stability.

Economically, the bilateral trade and investment between India and Vietnam have witnessed significant growth, reflecting their recognition of the benefits of robust economic relations. However, challenges such as trade imbalances, infrastructural limitations, and geopolitical uncertainties require continuous efforts to sustain and enhance their economic ties. Culturally, the rich exchange of traditions, art forms, and linguistic initiatives has fostered a deeper understanding and appreciation between the peoples of India and Vietnam. This cultural

diplomacy has further strengthened the bilateral relationship, paving the way for future collaborations.

Both nations have ample opportunities to build on their historical affinities and shared objectives in facing contemporary challenges, such as geopolitical shifts and economic disparities. By leveraging their unique strengths and addressing mutual concerns, India and Vietnam can continue to forge a dynamic and resilient partnership that contributes to regional peace, stability, and prosperity. The enduring legacy of their historical ties, combined with their strategic and economic initiatives, positions India and Vietnam for a future of sustained and deepened relations.

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