

2. India – Vietnam Defence Policy – International Relations

Key Agreements Signed (Recent Visit)

MoA on Submarine Search & Rescue Cooperation – Establishes a formal mechanism for mutual support in submarine emergencies, including rescue operations, technical assistance, and information-sharing. Enhances interoperability between the Indian Navy and Vietnam People's Navy in deep-sea operations. Marks a shift towards higher-end maritime coordination beyond surface-level exercises.

Letter of Intent on Defence Industry Cooperation – Aims to strengthen defence industrial bases through joint production, R&D, and technology transfer. India's focus areas include naval equipment, missile systems, cyber defence, and maintenance, repair & overhaul (MRO). Supports Vietnam's military modernisation as part of its "Four Nos" defence policy (no alliances, no foreign bases, no siding with a country against another, no use of force).

Reinforcing Comprehensive Strategic Partnership – Defence ties reaffirmed as the backbone of the partnership. Both nations highlight stronger strategic alignment in the Indo-Pacific. Reiterate commitment to sovereignty, rule of law, and peaceful settlement of disputes.

Broader Strategic Convergence in the Indo-Pacific

Shared Interest in a Rules-Based Indo-Pacific – Commitment to UNCLOS 1982 for maritime governance. Opposition to unilateral militarisation or alteration of the maritime status quo.

Regional Stability & Maritime Security – Focus on freedom of navigation, secure supply chains, and countering grey-zone tactics in the South China Sea.

Evolution of India–Vietnam Relations

Historical & Civilizational Roots

Civilizational Ties – Inspired by Gandhi and Ho Chi Minh—shared anti-colonial history & moral leadership. Deep cultural links through Buddhism and maritime trade routes.

Diplomatic Progression

1972 – Full diplomatic relations established.

2007 – Strategic Partnership initiated.

2016 – Upgraded to Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP).

2020 – Adoption of "Joint Vision for Peace, Prosperity & People" during Virtual Summit.

2022 – Celebrated 50 years of diplomatic ties.

Political Engagement & Institutional Mechanisms

High-Level Exchanges (Recent) – 2024 Vietnam PM's Visit → Plan of Action (2024–2028) signed; 10 agreements across economy, digital, energy, water, and education. Frequent meetings at ASEAN, BRICS, G7 Plus demonstrate high political trust.

Core Institutional Mechanisms – Joint Commission Meeting (JCM) on Economic, Trade & S&T Cooperation – 18th session (2023). Strategic Dialogue and Foreign Office Consultations – 13th round (2025). Regular Defence, Maritime, Nuclear Energy, and Policy Planning dialogues. Parliamentary cooperation via Vietnam–India Parliamentary Friendship Group.

Defence & Security Cooperation (Core Pillar)

Strategic Defence Vision (Towards 2030)

Joint Vision on Defence Partnership (2030) – Prioritises logistics support, training, defence manufacturing, maritime domain awareness, and capacity building.

Major Milestones – India's gifting of INS Kirpan (2023) – first transfer of an operational warship to any country. Regular port calls, staff talks, and high-level naval visits.

Military Exercises

VINBAX-2024 – Focus on UN peacekeeping, counter-terrorism, HADR.

Vietnam's participation in MILAN-2024 strengthens multilateral naval interoperability.

Security Mechanisms – Structured dialogue on counter-terrorism, extremism, cybercrime, and transnational criminal networks. Cooperation between police, coast guard, and border management agencies.

Trade & Economic Relations

Trade Profile

Trade Volume – Reached USD 15.76 billion (2024–25), aiming toward USD 20 billion target.

India's Key Exports – Pharmaceuticals, engineering goods, textiles, agricultural products, ICT equipment.

India's Key Imports – Electronics, machinery, common metals, coffee, seafood, and textile products.

Investment Landscape

Indian Investments in Vietnam – Approx. USD 2 billion, with 430+ projects in sectors like IT, power, agro-processing, minerals.

Vietnam's Investments in India – About USD 12.69 million, with potential expansion in IT, EVs, and industrial parks.

Notable Project – VinFast's EV assembly plant in Tamil Nadu → strengthens India's e-mobility ecosystem and Vietnam's global EV footprint.

Trade Promotion Platforms

Key Trade Fairs & Forums

VINAMAC – Machinery and industrial equipment networking.

Vietramed – Healthcare and medical equipment exhibition.

Bharat Global Mobility Expo – Future mobility collaborations.

Development Partnership

Education & Capacity Building

Human Resource Support – 200+ Vietnamese trained annually under ITEC & ICCR. Scholarships for engineering, public policy, cyber security, agriculture.

Indian-funded Institutions – Cuu Long Delta Rice Research Institute → supports agriculture innovation.

Hi-Tech Cyber Forensic Lab & Advanced ICT Centre → boosts Vietnam's digital security capacities.

Community-Level Impact

Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) – 46 completed across 39 provinces since 2017. Focus on school infrastructure, healthcare centres, and rural water supply.

Humanitarian Assistance

Operation Sadbhav (2024) – India provided USD 1 million in disaster relief for typhoon-hit communities.

Cultural Heritage Support

My Son Sanctuary – ASI-led restoration deepens civilizational bonds. Recognised by UNESCO.

Cultural, Academic & People-to-People Exchanges

Cultural Diplomacy

Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre (Hanoi) – Promotes yoga, Sanskrit, classical arts. Serves as India's cultural anchor in Southeast Asia.

Vesak 2025 – 15.5 million Vietnamese venerated Buddha's Sacred Relics—India's Buddhist diplomacy at its strongest.

Academic Engagement

Think Tank Partnerships – ICWA–HCMNAP–IIPA collaborations build policy research cooperation in governance, economics, climate, and geopolitics.

Media & Film Linkages

Film Co-Productions – "Love in Vietnam" premiered at Da Nang Asian Film Festival 2025 → deepens cultural narratives.

Indian Diaspora in Vietnam

Community Profile – Around 8,000 Indians—mainly in Hanoi & Ho Chi Minh City.

Key sectors – IT, education, mining, pharmaceuticals, and professional services.

Key Concerns & Challenges

China Factor & Strategic Balancing

Concern – Vietnam shares a 1,300 km land border and intense economic interdependence with China. India faces Chinese assertiveness in the Himalayas. Both share a strategic concern over maritime and

territorial aggression.

Suggestion – Strengthen coordinated maritime domain awareness (MDA) systems. Develop Indian-assisted defence manufacturing in Vietnam to reduce Chinese dependency.

ASEAN's Consensus-Based Approach

Concern – Vietnam, bound by ASEAN centrality, cannot move too rapidly on India-specific initiatives. Slows down bilateral defence, digital, and connectivity projects.

Suggestion – Use ASEAN-led platforms—ADMM+, EAS—to channel India–Vietnam collaboration.

Defence Technology Transfer Delays

Concern – MoUs often face bureaucratic hurdles and limited industrial capacity. Implementation of submarine search/rescue cooperation requires specialised training.

Suggestion – Set up India–Vietnam Defence Industrial Task Force for fast-tracking deliverables. Expand Indian defence lines (BEL, HAL, BDL) into Vietnam industrial zones.

Underperformance in Trade Volume

Concern – USD 15.76 billion is below potential given complementary economies. Tariff barriers, logistics constraints, and limited private-sector awareness stall progress.

Suggestion – Fast-track India–Vietnam Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA). Promote direct shipping routes and digital trade platforms.

Digital & Innovation Gap

Concern – India's technology presence in Vietnam is much smaller than South Korea, Japan, or the US.

Suggestion – Establish India–Vietnam Digital Innovation Corridor. Boost cooperation in 5G, AI, cybersecurity, and semiconductor packaging.

Conclusion

Deepening Comprehensive Strategic Partnership – The partnership stands as one of India's most robust in Southeast Asia—built on trust, cultural affinity, and strategic convergence.

Shared Indo-Pacific Outlook – Both nations remain committed to a free, open, inclusive Indo-Pacific anchored in international law and multilateralism.

Future Path – Enhanced defence cooperation, economic diversification, digital innovation, and socio-cultural connectivity will shape the next decade of India–Vietnam ties.

Source – <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-vietnam-boost-defence-ties-at-15th-defence-policy-dialogue/article70263109.ece>