

INDIA-VIETNAM RELATIONS: NEW DIMENSIONS OF REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP

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Abstract:

India observes Vietnam as an important nation among the ASEAN members, playing a pivotal role in India's Act East Policy. India-Vietnam relations are time tested, traditional and are based on mutual trust and understanding. The countries have elevated their relations in the backdrop of common security interest and bilateral trade. Many developments in the fields of defence, trade, economics and investment as well as energy, education, culture, IT sector and science have enriched the overall bilateral cooperation between the two countries and have reiterated the bond to deepen India-Vietnam relations. India and Vietnam are working jointly in projects like management of Hanoi highway project and in 2019, India and Vietnam has launched Patrol Vessel Project. This paper will look at assessments to see how the relationship has improved from highway to vessel project.

Since Vietnam is an export powerhouse and is said to be a miracle economy and has established itself in the past few decades as the booming manufacturing sector. It is crucial to understand how India benefits from Vietnam's miracle story. In light of the recent change in the dynamics in the Asian region how Vietnam can be a helpful ally to India to counterbalance China.

The paper will analyse the nature of the new dimensions between the relationship of the two countries. It will look into the recent developments that have taken place and how this will affect the future cooperation and association of India and Vietnam. It will also investigate the barriers and the possible road ahead the two countries can walk into to become stronger ally. The methodology used in the paper is analytical and descriptive based on the data collected from white papers, government reports, official speeches etc.

Keywords: Act East Policy, ASEAN, India, Strategic co-operation, Vietnam

I. INTRODUCTION

India and Vietnam share friendly and cordial relations since they gained independence and the foundation of the friendly relations were laid by Prime Minister Nehru of India and Ho Chi Minh of Vietnam more than 70 years back.

The cultural relations between the two countries is believed to be since the 2nd century AD when Buddhism was introduced in Vietnam by an Indian monk. The association between the two countries has its historical roots in a similar struggle for emancipation from the foreign rule and the national struggle for independence. Prime Minister Nehru was among the first foreign guest that visited Vietnam after it gained independence from French rule in 1954 at Dien Bien Phu. Thus establishing the legacy of friendly and amicable relations. In 1958, President Ho Chi Minh paid an official visit to India.

During the cold war era both the countries supported each other at the regional and international realm and were strong allies. India shares a good rapport and goodwill in Vietnam, because India supported its independence from France, opposed the involvement of the United States during the Vietnam war and supported the Unification of the country in the 1960s. Vietnam supported India's policy of the Non-aligned Movement. India held the Chair of the International Commission for Supervision and Control (ICSC), which was formed

according to the Geneva Accord of 1954ⁱ to facilitate the peace process in Vietnam. Although both the countries shared amicable relations, India, initially maintained consulate level relations with the then North and South Vietnams. On 7th January 1972,ⁱⁱ India established full diplomatic relations with Vietnam. During the cold war period, the relations between the two countries developed at a moderate pace.

In 1975, India granted the 'Most Favourable Nation' status to Vietnam. In 1978, a bilateral trade agreement was signed by both countries. Despite the of MFN status given to Vietnam the bilateral trade and relations remained minimum until the end of Cold War. India has supported Vietnam against the US and China at the cost of its own political relations with these two nations.

In 1992, India and Vietnam established extensive economic ties, including oil exploration, agriculture and manufacturing.ⁱⁱⁱ In 1997, India and Vietnam elevated their trade partnership by signing the Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (BIPPA)^{iv}. Bilateral relations and trade have increased since the liberalisation of the economies of both countries. The two states promulgated a Joint Declaration on Comprehensive Cooperation in 2003 in which they envisaged creating an "Arc of Advantage and Prosperity" in Southeast Asia and initiated strategic dialogue since 2009. And since then there has been a continuous elevation in relations between these two nations.

II. From Look East to Act East: A Paradigm Shift in Regional Panorama

Post the cold war era, on 24th July, 1991 India announced its new economic policy known as LPG (liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation) which made economic activity less constraining and reduction in tariffs or removal of non-tariff barriers. This policy made Indian market available for the international flow of goods, investments, capital, human resources and technology. After opening its gate for foreign investments, and in the backdrop of the new economic policy, India also renewed its foreign policy by taking an initiative to connect with the vivid economies of the Southeast and East Asian region. In order to develop and enhance its political, economic and strategic relations with Southeast and East Asian region India launched 'Look East' policy in 1991, during the Prime Ministership of Narasimha Rao. In the Annual report of Ministry of External Affairs in 1996 the term 'Look East' policy was mentioned for the very first time.^v This policy pronounced a tactical shift in India's foreign policy as the Southeast Asian region was preferred over other regions.

The 'Look East' policy has ASEAN at its core.^{vi} India became a sectoral dialogue partner of ASEAN in 1992 which led to the new dynamism and elevation in the relations. The shared interest between these two parties made ASEAN to invite India as the full dialogue partner of ASEAN in the 5th ASEAN Summit held in Bangkok in 1995.

In the first phase of the look east policy, the emphasis was given on elevating the political, diplomatic ties and enhancement of trade and investments with the ASEAN nations and in the second phase, more emphasis was given on substantiating the economic ties, strategic relations and on physical connectivity in the region. The focus was expanded from Southeast Asia to East Asia and South Pacific. The states of northeast India also became the focus as to connect them with the immediate neighbours and for the economic development of the area. Since the launch of this policy, India's relation has got strengthened with the ASEAN nations and has contributed in India's economic development. The ASEAN-INDIA bilateral trade grew at an annual rate of 11.2%, from US\$2.9 billion in 1993 to US\$12.1 billion in 2003.^{vii} Over the two decades India developed

strategic partnership with the ASEAN countries and focused on regional integration and connectivity, trade, economic growth and the development of the Northeast states of India.

Despite so much of attention and deliberation being given to the South Asian region, the Look East Policy had mixed outcomes. Although the phase 1 and phase 2 of Look East Policy were success but they could not achieve their full potential. The Northeast region of India could not traverse the opportunities that were brought in by the policy. One of the major reason for the mixed outcome of the policy is China factor and its dominance in the region.

In 2014, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the 'Look East' policy got upgraded and received a new zest and outlook. The policy was revamped and named as 'Act East' that manifested a more proactive approach towards the region. In the new policy the focus was given on improving the connectivity, regional security and integration not only in Southeast Asian region but also in the Asia-Pacific region. The global world economic order has witnessed a shift from 'west' to 'east' and this change was sensed by the Modi government. The main aim of the upgraded "Act East Policy" is to revive political ties, forge regional security cooperation and develop economic linkages by increasing integration with Southeast Asia.^{viii} The new policy has a greater strategic and political angle to the cooperation. Relationships with Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, Malaysia, Australia have been upgraded to a strategic partnership to counter the dominance of China in the entire region. The focus of the policy is to boost economic co-operation, building infrastructure for greater connectivity and most importantly to enhance strategic & security ties.

III. India-Vietnam relations (under Act East Policy)

India's relations with Vietnam are based on historical and cultural ties that have continued to evolve with the changing power dynamics in the region. Among the ASEAN nations Vietnam shares a unique relation with India. Bilateral relations between the two countries have strengthened over years with a shared focus on regional security issues, stability, and cooperation. Bilateral talks between the two Prime Ministers over the recent visits that have taken place, have been followed by the signing of several bilateral pacts. During the visit of PM Modi to Vietnam, he met Mr. Nguyen Phu Trong, General Secretary of Vietnam Communist Party, Tran Dai Quang, President of Vietnam, and Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan, Chairperson of the National Assembly of Vietnam which ultimately resulted in the upgradation of Strategic Partnership which was signed between New Delhi and Hanoi in 2007 to Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP) in 2016. This gave a major boost to the relations between the two countries. India became one of the four countries with which Vietnam has a CSP.

The political contacts have bolstered as there have been recent visits by leaders from both sides. Nalin Surie, senior diplomat and Director General of Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA), in his address in a workshop said "Vietnam is a core partner of India in ASEAN and a critical partner in our Look & Act East Policy. This should not surprise anybody given our historical relationship and our longstanding support for Vietnam in its efforts towards unification and complete independence. We are now both strategic and developmental partners with growing multi-vector linkages. Given the far reaching geo-political and geo-economic changes taking place in the Indo-Pacific, it is also our belief that our two countries should intensify collaboration not only in ASEAN but also in the broader Indo-Pacific... India and Vietnam, have a convergence of views on various regional and international issues. It is now important that this convergence extends to better understanding each other's perspective and interests in the Indo-Pacific,"^{ix}

It's not just India, but Vietnam also considers India as an important partner in its foreign policy. In 2014, Deputy PM and Foreign Minister of Vietnam Pham Binh Minh stated, "the implementation of strategic and comprehensive partnerships has followed an active and positive roadmap with a particular focus on traditional friends Russia and India..."^x

The new partnership has accelerated trade and economic and linkages continue to grow. Vietnam is an important regional partner and shares crucial bilateral relations with India. The recent upgrade in the relations, delineate that both the nation wants to venture in boosting their bilateral relations in broad range of fields.

There have been many agreements that has been signed between the two countries in the past few years. They range from political, economic, defence, strategic partnerships, science and technology to education and cultural issues. They are

- (i) Framework Agreement on Cooperation in the Exploration and Uses of Outer Space for Peaceful Purposes;
- (ii) Protocol for Amending the Agreement on Avoiding Double Taxation;
- (iii) Program of Cooperation in UN Peacekeeping Matters;
- (iv) Protocol between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam and the Ministry of External Affairs of India on Celebrating 2017 as the "Year of Friendship";
- (v) MOU on Health Cooperation;
- (vi) MOU on Cooperation in Information Technology;
- (vii) MOU on Cooperation between the Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences and the Indian Council of World Affairs;
- (viii) MOU on cooperation in Cyber Security;
- (ix) MOU between the Bureau of Indian Standards and Directorate for Standard, Metrology and Quality for Cooperation in the Fields of Standardization and Conformity Assessment;
- (x) MOU on Establishment of the Centre of Excellence in Software Development and Training;
- (xi) Technical Agreement on Sharing of White Shipping Information;
- (xii) Contract for Offshore High-speed Patrol Boats;^{xi}

IV. Economic Co-operation and New Developments

Since the Look East policy was resuscitate to Act East policy in 2014 by Modi government, Vietnam has been the centre of it. During the visit of Prime Minister of Vietnam to India in October 2014, the economic co-operation was made to be the priority in the strategic co-operation partnership between the two countries. The elevation from comprehensive level to strategic level partnership has led to boost in the economic momentum and cooperation. The bilateral trade between the two countries has witnessed constant growth in the past few years. The result of this, is that India is now among the top 20 trading partner of Vietnam in the world. Among the ASEAN nations Vietnam has become the 4th largest partner of India.

Both the countries are fastest growing economies in the region and engaging with each other would lead to stronger partnership, developments and their strategic goals. According to Indian statistics, the current bilateral trade stands at \$12.34 billion as opposed to the target which was set at \$15 billion for 2020 which could not be achieved due to the worldwide outbreak of covid-19 pandemic. In 2019-20, there were five key items imported into India from Vietnam which included mobile phones and components of mobiles, machinery, computers &

electronic hardware, natural rubber and coffee. Key items exported from India to Vietnam were mainly meat and fishery products, corn, pharmaceuticals, cotton and machinery.

India's Trade with Vietnam



Source: Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India

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SOURCE OF THE PICTURE: Ministry of Commerce and Industry, GOI

The investments in Vietnam by India has also been on the rise. Indian companies have registered almost 23 new projects with a total capital of US \$138.99 million in various areas such as fertilizers, textiles accessories, auto components, food processing etc. At present the investments stand at around \$1.1 billion with 210 projects and is expected to rise in the future as new development projects have been materialising.^{xii}

India has also lifted import prohibition on six commodities which includes coffee beans from Vietnam after sorting out the phytosanitary issues with the latter. Vietnam had also removed suspension on imports of five commodities (namely pods and seeds of peanuts, seeds of cassia, cocoa, bean and fruit of tamarind) from India after it was satisfied with the corrective action to improve pest management. Phytosanitary issues have been addressed and temporary ban on import of six commodities (namely coffee beans, bamboo, black pepper, cinnamon, cassia and dragon fruit) from Vietnam was lifted in 2017.^{xiii}

4.1 Solar Power Contract-In July 2018, the Electric Power Trading company(EPTC) of Vietnam and Shapoorji Pallonji Infrastructure Capital Co Ltd of India signed a power purchase agreement for the solar project Infra 1 Plant In NinhThuan Province. It is a solar project which is the first power purchase project signed between the two countries. According to the existing regulations, solar power projects are entitled to the price of VNĐ2,086 (9.35 US cents) per kWh, subject to the exchange rate fluctuation. The buyer is responsible for purchasing all the electricity generated from the grid-connected projects which operate commercially before June 30, 2019 under the 20-year purchase agreement.^{xiv}The total investment capital of the 50MW solar plant is about US\$ 71 million.

4.2 Hanoi Highway Project-In October 2014, during the Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung visit to India, Vietnam and India signed a \$2 billion pact for the administration and management of the six lane expressway which links the capital city Hanoi, to the port city of Hai Phong, which was completed in 2015.

India's IL&FS will be administering the 105km long expressway for a period of 30years under the term of pact signed with Vietnam's JSC.

Vietnam, as a growing economy which is moving towards urbanisation, has its infrastructure needs on the rise and by signing the pact with Vietnamese company, India has entered the infrastructure sector of Vietnam which has given a boost to India's investment in Vietnam and has also opened doors for the companies and investors from India to invest in Vietnam.

4.3 Connectivity-In existing times, connectivity is one of the most essential instrument to enhance bilateral relations. In Feb 2020, Vietnam's carrier Vietjet airlines marked an important milestone as direct flights connecting Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City and Da Nang to New Delhi and Mumbai were introduced. The vice president of Vietnam Dang Thi Ngoc Thinh said, "Vietjet's direct flight opening records a milestone not only for the development of the airline but also marks the traditional bilateral relations between Vietnam and India. The airline's new route announcement will contribute in promoting the pillars of the Vietnam-India comprehensive strategic partnership, boosting mutual development in term of politics, national defence, security, economy, commerce, tourism and cultural exchange. I am confident that Vietjet will continue to be the leading airline in exploring and commencing direct services to other potential markets in the future."

Poor connectivity has always been one of the biggest obstacle to India's Act Policy. The launch of the direct flights from India to Vietnam and vice versa will eventually boost the tourism as well as the relations but there is still a long way to go. More attention needs to be paid to increase the connectivity between the two countries.

4.4 Space and cyber security-In September 2016, PM Modi's visit to Vietnam witnessed another important pact, i.e. the Inter-Governmental Framework Agreement for the Exploration of Outer Space for Peaceful Purposes. This pact provided with the feature of downloading the real time images of activities in Vietnam's areas of interest from the outer space. India had chosen Vietnam to construct the ISRO satellite tracking centre, however this project is under the umbrella of ASEAN-India initiative. Another MoU was also signed on cyber security between Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology of India and Ministry of Public Security of Vietnam and the transfer of equipment to the Indian funded Indira Gandhi High-Tech Crime Laboratory has also been signed.

4.5 Culture-Culture is one of the 3C's of India's Act East policy. In April 2017, Indian Culture Centre was inaugurated in Hanoi which was renamed as Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre (SVCC) in 2018. It was established to promote the cultural linkages between India and Vietnam and to give Indian culture experience in Vietnam. The centre's library has a huge collection of books, magazines, CDs and DVDs on various aspects of India art, culture, nature, language, etc. Various seminar, exhibitions, film screenings and conferences are held in order to promote the linkages between the two countries.

4.6 Regional cooperation- India and Vietnam are two fastest growing economies in the region. Besides this, another factor that is common for the two nations, is the growing influence and infraction of China in the South China sea. The two nations are not just enhancing their bilateral relations but are working closely together in other regional co-operation to build a strong network of like-minded nations. The two nations co-operate at various regional platforms such as Association of South East Asian Nations(ASEAN), East Asia Summit(EAS), ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM)- Plus, Mekong Ganga Cooperation and Asia Europe Meeting

(ASEM) other than UN and WTO. Vietnam had also backed up India for its bid for a permanent membership in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

V. Defence and Security Cooperation: The foundation of increased bilateral relations

Defence cooperation has been one of the most important pillars of the partnership between the two countries. It was in 2000, that the defence cooperation was signed by India's then defence minister George Fernandes on a visit to Vietnam. This agreement led to the sale of military helicopters, equipment's for the repair of Vietnamese aircraft and training initiatives for Vietnam's military. Since then several MoU's and agreements have been signed by the two nations. The 2007 strategic partnership agreement provided with the framework for further cooperation in the defence field. During PM Nguyen Tan Dung visit to India in 2014, PM Modi observed that "Our defence cooperation with Vietnam is among our most important ones. India remains committed to the modernisation of Vietnam's defence and security forces. This will include expansion of our training programme, which is already very substantial, joint-exercises and cooperation in defence equipment." This has further deepened the defence cooperation of the two nations. In 2015 Indian defence minister Manohar Parrikar was in Vietnam to discuss new initiatives in the military sector, including the possibility of selling the Indo-Russian-produced, short-range, supersonic missile, BrahMos which can be launched from all the three positions, which are submarines, ships, aircraft or land. This is going to be the first such kind of transaction for India. While the deal has still not been able to transpire, the talks are going on. Similarly there has been talks going on for a deal for Vietnam to acquire Akash surface to air missile which has been yet to materialise.

During PM Modi's visit to Vietnam, \$500 million line of credit was granted to Vietnam for facilitating deeper defence cooperation. India had also provided \$100 million line of credit for 12 high speed patrol boats and another \$100 million to build Offshore Patrol vessel for Vietnam's Coast Guard for which India's Larsen and Toubro firm has been contracted. Vietnam is also a part of MILAN, which is India's multinational naval exercise. India offers scholarships to Vietnamese defence personnel under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme every year.

In May 2015, India and Vietnam signed a "Declaration of common vision on defence ties Vietnam - India period 2015-2020" and also signed MoU between Vietnam and the Indian Coast Guard Forces on coordinating crime prevention efforts and the development of transnational cooperation.^{xv} The Joint Vision statement has set forth further momentum to India-Vietnam's expanding defence and strategic ties. India's National security Advisor, Mr. Ajit Doval was in Vietnam in April 2015 where he affirmed that India would do all it can to assist Vietnam in defence and security, specifically defence industry, military technology, intelligence, personnel training, cybercrimes and cyber security.

Maritime cooperation between the two countries is also at the centre, with Vietnam permitting India the right to use its port in Nha Trang, situated close to the strategically significant Cam Ranh Bay. There has been regular visits by Indian Navy to this southern Vietnamese port. Vietnam has also asked India to help them in developing their naval port. The matter of fact is that Vietnam didn't even provide this privilege to the US, even after US being such a close ally in the region to Vietnam confers the fact that Vietnam India cooperation is developing at rapid pace and shares mutual trust.

VI. China's Occupation Of South China Sea and India's Stance and Support To Vietnam

The South China Sea is one the major bone of contention in the Asian region. China claims the sea in its entirety and has used force to assert its territorial claim over the waters whereas other Asian nations like Vietnam claims some of the area under their exclusive economic zones. The floor of the sea is believed to be rich in oil, gas and hydrocarbons and this is the main cause, that the nations are claiming their right over the areas. The smaller nations like Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam have been bolstering their stance against China by building up their defence preparedness and seeking support from other friendly nations for their cause and support.

China's growing assertiveness in South China sea and in Vietnam is one of the crucial basis for enhancing and deepening of the strategic ties between India and Vietnam. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's (SIPRI) think- tank, which tracks the arm trade over five-year periods, there has been an almost 700 per cent surge in Vietnam's defence procurements as of 2015. Thus it makes Vietnam as the market where India can sell its fighter jets, missiles, submarines and other equipment. India has been closely keeping an eye over China's maritime expansion into the Indian Ocean Region. India has been supporting Vietnam and other countries stance on this issue.

South China Sea issue is crucial for India in not just Vietnam's perspective but its also important for India for its economic interest. The SCS is located in a region of great strategic interest for India. Geographically, it connects the Indian Ocean and the East China Sea via the Malacca Straits, which is one of the busiest sea lanes in the world. This important waterway serves as a vital economic artery for the South Asian state. Up to 97% of India's total international trade volume is sea-borne, half of which, passes through the straits. In addition, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) constitutes one of India's largest trade partners, with total trade valued at \$71 billion in 2016-2017.^{xvi}

Vietnam's response to India's outreach on the issue has been very positive. It has invited India to participate in the oil and gas sectors. In November 2013, ONGC Videsh Limited and Petro Vietnam signed a Memorandum of Understanding to promote joint exploration and exploitation of Vietnam's hydrocarbon assets. Indian petroleum company ONGC Videsh Ltd. (OVL), the global arm of Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC), has stakes in hydrocarbon exploration blocks with Vietnam. The company's engagement in Vietnam dates back to around 1988 when it acquired its first overseas asset, Block 06.1. OVL then acquired block 127 and 128 for exploration in 2006.^{xvii} Block 128 falls within Vietnam's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) but is claimed by China in the SCS.

In 2016, Vietnam had invited India to explore natural resources within its 200 nautical mile Exclusive Economic Zone in the South China Sea region. The invitation extended to explore the region at such situations and time to India by Vietnam proves that the two countries appreciate each other's strategic co-operation.

China's overgrowing influence and assertiveness in the South China Sea is not only threat to the security of various nations but of India as well. India has taken a principled stance on the South China Sea and its eastern outreach in the wake of the July 12 declaration of the Permanent Court of Arbitration challenging China's territorial and maritime claims in the South China Sea region needs to be understood in perspective.^{xviii}

VII. India-Vietnam: Dynamic Partnership Post-Covid

As the covid-19 vaccines have been rolled out gradually, the world is trying to get out of the pandemic mode and is trying to go back to the normalcy. The major changes are taking place in the foreign policy of the countries as the pandemic has changed the perception of the world order. The covid-19 and China's aggression against its neighbours has impacted the region and will reshape the future of East Asia.

Even in this pandemic India and Vietnam are two nations which kept the positive momentum of their relations and didn't let the covid-19 deter its cooperation. Vietnam's Ambassador to India Pham Sanh Chau, commemorating the 75th anniversary of the National Day of Vietnam, announced deepening of bilateral relations. Indian company HCL had announced during pandemic to set up one of its biggest IT hubs in Southeast Asia in Vietnam. In the defence sector, the two sides are also discussing to operationalise the pending \$500 million defence line of credit that India had extended to Vietnam in 2016.

In December 2020, India and Vietnam signed key agreements at the virtual summit. Indian Prime Minister Modi said "In today's virtual Summit, we will review various aspects of our cooperation under the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. In addition to this, this is also a good opportunity for us to discuss our cooperation at the regional and multilateral level"^{xix}

India and Vietnam have signed agreements in varied fields such as defence, scientific research, renewable energy, nuclear energy, petro-chemicals, and cancer treatment demonstrating the expanding ties and existing potential for increased cooperation between the two nations.

Taken together, India-Vietnam ties are proceeding on multi-dimensional lines and even during the pandemic the two countries have worked together to enhance their bilateral relations with several online meetings and arrangements. It is evident that the two countries are on rise to have better relations.

VIII. Conclusion

The last 48 years of our established relations with Vietnam and the 10 years of strategic partnership which has now been transformed into Comprehensive partnership has witnessed growth, progress and elevation in the bilateral relations between the two countries. Given the changing dynamics in the region both the countries have similar perception to the issues and threat in the region. Vietnam and India have strengthen their relations as they have collaborated on various sectors like defence, trade and investments and regional security. Due to the current situation prevailing in the region and mutual convergence of the two nations, it is evident that the bilateral relations will grow stronger.

Although there is still much efforts needed to be done in order to enhance our relations. There is scope for India to explore the areas such as the agriculture sector. Vietnam has been seeking buyers for its agriculture exports and by lifting the barriers on the import on agriculture products, India can open its market for Vietnam. There is also potential in investing in agricultural technologies such as irrigation, storage facility, breeding technology where India do good. Tourism is another sector which has been untapped by India. The launch of direct flights in November 2019, from Kolkata to Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City and from Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City to New Delhi has improved the connectivity between the two nations. India attracts Buddhist pilgrims mainly and

thus India should take this opportunity to attract more tourists. Cultural and people to people aspect also need to be strengthened. Language is also a barrier between the people of two nations which hinders the tourism.

One of the major reasons that there is not so much of investment from the private investors from India in Vietnam is due to the lack of awareness among the investors. Only few big companies like TATA and Adani industries are present in Vietnam. The investors should be encouraged. Vietnam is also an upcoming market for India's defence exports which still remains under exploited. Besides all of this Vietnam is one of the most important anchor which can help India in achieving its Act East Policy's aims.

It's not just India but Vietnam is also committed to strengthen its bilateral relationship with India and within the Indo-ASEAN and Mekong-Ganga Cooperation framework as well. Over all, there has been continues efforts taken by both the nations to develop and strengthen their relations and Vietnam can truly become a strategic partner for India in India's Act East Policy in the coming years.

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