

45 Years of Vietnam - India Diplomatic Relations: State and Prospects

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Abstract

On the occasion of the 45th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations and the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the strategic partnership relations between Vietnam and India, we study the state of the two countries to reproduce the panorama over the past 45 years. Then, we can see the good development prospects in the coming time thanks to the following reasons: The two countries have very the high political credibility, the parallelism of strategic interests, the willingness to share, mutual trust on almost all bilateral and multilateral issues, including the East Sea issues, the cultural similarity, the geographical proximity, the economic potentials of the two countries as well as other factors. The traditional friendship and the comprehensive cooperation between the two countries are sure to be raised to new height in the coming time.

Key Words: Vietnam - India Relations; Strategic partnership relations; Diplomatic relations.

1. The state of the relations between Vietnam and India in the last 45 years

1.1. Political - diplomatic relations

Since the establishment of the diplomatic relations in 1972, and especially since the establishment of the strategic partnership relations in 2007, we are proud that the traditional friendship and comprehensive cooperation between the two countries have constantly developed, for the benefits of the peoples of the two countries, for the peace, the stability, the cooperation and the development in the region and the world. The relationship between the two countries is not only “*clear as the sky without cloud*”¹ which was said by Prime Minister Pham Van Dong as well as Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee said “*History and geography linked us as strategic partnership in the new century, striving for peace, security stability and sustainable cooperation among nations in Asia*”.²

¹ Huy Binh, Dang Chinh, the relationship between Vietnam and An Do is at the stage of best development, dated 5/1/2017 (<http://www.baomoi.com/quan-he-viet-nam-an-do-dang-o-giai-doan-phat-trien-tot-dep-nhat/c/21253363.epi>)

² downloaded on 19/3/2017.

² Vietnam News Agency, *India and Vietnam need to promote the comprehensive cooperation*, according to website of Indian Defense Research and Analysis Institute, 11/2008.

During the past time, India has always considered Vietnam as an important partner in Southeast Asia and a pillar in the eastern policy of India. On a State visit to Vietnam from 14-17 September 2014, the Indian President, Mr. Pranab Mukherjee said, *“To protect the national interests and the common interests such as peace and prosperity, India and Vietnam must stand side by side”* and *“India shall always be the trusted and loyal friend of Vietnam”*. Especially, the Indian President, Mr. Pranab Mukherjee repeatedly asserted *“in India, every political party agrees to improve the relationship with Vietnam”*.³ On the contrary, Vietnam identifies that the strategic partnership with India is a priority in its foreign policy. Vietnam always respects and desires to continuously improve and strengthen the traditional friendship and comprehensive cooperation with India and is always ready to be a bridge for India to strengthen the cooperation with ASEAN as well as other cooperation forums in Asia-Pacific.⁴

It can be said that Vietnam and India now have a very good political relations with very high political reliability because the two countries do not have any obstacle but have the same strategic interests, willingness to share, mutual trust on almost all bilateral and multilateral issues, including the East Sea issues. This trust is increasingly reinforced by the fact that the two countries regularly exchange high-level delegations of the Party, State, National Assembly and Government.

The visit of Vietnam delegations to India including Prime Minister Pham Van Dong (1978 and 1980), General Secretary Le Duan (1984), General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh (1989), General Secretary Do Muoi (1992), the visit of Chairman of National Assembly of Vietnam to India (1994), Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet (1997), President Tran Duc Luong (1999), General Secretary Nong Duc Manh (2003) and Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung (2007; 2014)...

The visit of Indian delegations to Vietnam: President Rajendra Prasad (1959), Prime Minister R.Gandhi (1985 and 1988), President R. Venkatraman (1991), Vice President K.R. Narayanan (1993), Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao (1994), Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee (1/2001), Chairman of National Assembly Somnath Chatterjee (3/2007), President Pratibha Patil (2008), Indian President Pranab Mukherjee (2014); Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi (9/2016,)...

1.2. Security - defense cooperation

Defense and security cooperation is also the concern of the two countries and it is an important pillar of the strategic partnership between the two countries. Through the frequent contacts of officers of Ministry of Defense as well as the Ministry of Public Security of Vietnam with the Ministry of Internal Affairs of India, the two parties agree to continue strengthening the defense and security cooperation on the basis of existing mechanisms and cooperation arrangements; strengthening the exchange of delegations, dialogue on defense and security policies, enhancing cooperation, sharing information and experiences in defense and security, experience in protection as well as construction of defense forces to more effectively protect the sovereignty of the country, coordinate at relevant multilateral forums, such as ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting (ADMM+), ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) ... Recently, the two parties have made great progress in

³ Nguyen Hung, *the relationship of Vietnam and India has never been so best as present, 25/10/2014* <http://vov.vn/chinh-tri/quan-he-viet-nam-an-do-chua-bao-gio-tot-hon-hien-nay-360293.vov>, downloaded on 15/1/2017

⁴ *The relationship of Vietnam and India constantly develops* (<http://www.vietnamembassy-hungary.org>), downloaded on 15/1/2017.

defense cooperation, such as delegations exchange, annual defense policy dialogue, cooperation between armed forces, exchange of visiting vessels, training and improvement of capacity and cooperation at regional forums, including the Mine Action Program for humanitarian purposes.

1.3. Economic relations

a. Trade relations:

Economic relations is one of the five pillars of the Vietnam-India strategic partnership and a strategic objective of Vietnam-India bilateral relations the two dynamic economies strongly developing in Asia. Currently, India is one of the 10 largest trade partners of Vietnam. The two-way trade turnover has been steadily increasing over the years since the two countries established the strategic partnership relations. The two countries have become important trading partners, the bilateral trade turnover in 2014 reached US\$ 5.551 billion, doubling compared to that of 2010. Both Parties now have the desire to actively strengthen, further promote the bilateral trade to gradually reach the bilateral trade turnover target of US\$ 15 billion by 2020.⁵

The export and import data of Vietnam and India from 2010 to 2014

Unit: million USD

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Export	992	1,523	1,778	2,355	2,460
Import	1,762	2,342	2,160	2,833	3,091
Total	2,754	3,866	3,938	5,188	5,551
Balance	-770	-819	-382	-478	-631

Source: General Department of Vietnam Customs

b. Investment relations

By the end of January 2013, India has 68 valid projects with the registered capital of over US\$ 251.35 million, ranking the 30th in 98 countries and territories investing in Vietnam.

About the sector structure: in the field of manufacturing and processing industry, India has 33 projects with the total investment capital of US\$ 134.9 million (accounting for 49% of total projects and 53.7% of total investment capital). Then, the mining field of 3 projects with total investment capital of US\$ 86 million (accounting for 4% of total projects and 34.2% of total investment capital).

About the investment area: if excluding 3 oil and gas exploration and production projects, India is investing in 19 localities, but the total investment capital is concentrated in Tuyen Quang province in the Alliance mineral exploitation project with the total investment capital of US\$ 15 million and Ninh Thuan province in Dhampur sugarcane production project with the total investment capital of US\$ 22 million.

⁵ Market Department of Africa, West Asia, South Asia, *the trade exchange between Vietnam and India strongly grew from 2010 to 2014, dated 19/6/2015* (<http://www.moit.gov.vn/vn/tin-tuc/5355/trao-doi-thuong-mai-viet-nam---an-do-tang-truong-manh-me-tu-2010-2014.aspx>), downloaded on 15/1/2017.

About the form of investment: Most of the investment capital of India is in the form of 100% foreign capital to 49 projects with 142 total investment capital (accounting for 72% of total projects and 56.5% of total investment capital). The remaining capital is in the form of business cooperation contracts and joint ventures.⁶ It can be said that there are several limitations to the investment relations between the two countries, which does not correspond to the potentials of each country in the current stage.

1.4. Culture and education relations

The culture and education cooperation between the two countries has been carried out very soon and in the early years of the 21st century, it is favorable for strong development with the cultural cooperation program in specific period well implemented by both countries that is the establishment of research institutes to improve capacity in Vietnam about information technology, English training, business development, hi-tech computing and other fields. The establishment projects of Center for software development talent and training in Ho Chi Minh City and the Center for satellite signal detection and image data reception in Ho Chi Minh City, English and Informatics training center at Nha Trang University of Communication... In addition, the regular coordination for organizing programs of culture, art, music, film exchange... is to strengthen the understanding between the two countries, including the effective organization of Vietnam-India People's Friendship Festival every two years which has made the relations between the two countries closer. At the same time, India offers a variety of short-term and long-term training programs with over 100 scholarships of various kinds annually, both in the bilateral and multilateral form (Hang Mekong River Cooperation, Colombo Plan) in many fields, especially in agriculture, informatics and English training, and remote sensing. More and more Vietnamese students go to India for studying thanks to its quality and reasonable costs ...

2017 is the 45th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations and the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the strategic partnership relations between the two countries. Accordingly, the two countries shall hold "Vietnam Film Week in India" and "India Film Week in Vietnam", organizing a series of events including Painting and Artwork Exhibition ... This shall surely be a very exciting opening for the bilateral relations of the two countries in the coming time.

2. Prospects of bilateral relations between Vietnam and India in the coming time

Firstly, the international and regional contexts continue to develop in favor of the two countries' relations.

From now to 2020, the situation of the world and the Asia-Pacific region shall be unstable and unpredictable. However, the trend of peace, stabilization, cooperation for mutual development is still the decisive trend of the world and Asia shall remain the world economy center. Every rich or poor, developed or developing country has to strengthen the cooperation and link with each other under the motto "I beside you, and you beside me" for mutual development, Vietnam and India is not an exception. The relationship between Vietnam and India shall continue to develop in the future.

⁶ Trade Promotion Department, *India Market Documents*, dated 26/5/2009 (<http://www.vietrade.gov.vn/chau-a-thai-binh-duong/289-an-do.html>) downloaded on 15/1/2017.

Secondly, the policy “Action in the East” of India shall be a prospect for the relations of both countries

The policy “Action in the East”, upgraded from the “Eastern Policy” on the basis of accessing Southeast Asia region, is one of the important adjustments in India's diplomatic policy. This policy has a strong impact on Vietnam-India relations. In Southeast Asia region, Vietnam is considered as a pillar in “Eastern Policy” of India as Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi affirmed on 03 September 2016 that “Vietnam is an important pillar in Eastern Policy of India”. So the relations of the two countries not only brings prosperity to the people of the two countries, but also serve the strategic interests of each party in contributing to enhance the role and expand opportunities for mutual cooperation and development in the region.

Thirdly, Vietnam continues its multilateralism, diversification, being active in international integration in 2011-2020.

At the 12th National Congress of the Party, we continue to implement our foreign policy under the guideline of “independence, self-control, peace, cooperation and development; diversification, multilateralism; being active in international integration; a reliable friend, partner and a responsible member of the international community”.⁷ With the system of viewpoints, policies, objectives and tasks of foreign affairs actively integrating into the world. Certainly, India continues to be a very important position in Vietnam's foreign policy in the coming time.

Fourthly, the potential for economic cooperation between the two countries is still great

For Vietnam and India, after the reform and opening period, the economy continues to develop stably, the demand on trade, market, investment is increasingly high. Both countries are big markets in terms of trade and investment, with abundant human resources and abundant natural resources, the geographic distance is not very far and both countries have the strategic partnership. However, the relationship between the two countries now is not corresponding to the potential of each country. So we can believe that the economic relations of the two countries in the coming time shall have more prospects than the current period.

Fifthly, the two countries have the parallel strategic interests, willingness to share and mutual trust on almost all bilateral and multilateral issues.

Vietnam and India agree on the international and regional issues concerned by both Parties, including the East Sea issues. The two countries always emphasize the importance of ensuring peace, stability, security, safety and freedom of navigation in the East Sea, settle the disputes by peaceful means, not threaten or use force, comply with the international law, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 1982, and the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the East Sea (DOC) and support the soon adoption of the Code of Conduct in the East Sea (COC) ... Therefore, to protect the interests of the country and the common interests such as peace and prosperity, India and Vietnam shall have to stand side by side and cooperate more closely.

⁷ Pham Binh Minh, *new points and core contents of the foreign policy in the documents of the 12th National Congress of the Party, dated 26/4/2016* (<http://www.nhandan.com.vn/chinhtri/item/29421802-nhung-diem-moi-va-nhung-noi-dung-cot-loi-cua-duong-loi-doi-ngoai-trong-van-kien-dai-hoi-xii-cua-dang.html>) downloaded on 15/1/2017.

3. Conclusion

Apart from the achievements, the relationship between Vietnam and India is facing some challenges, especially the situation in the region is fluctuating, complicated, mixed with many different trends, both influence competition and increase in interdependence among the powerful countries, putting many interest problems at the same time for each country. Especially, the security situation of the region has become increasingly tense due to the military modernization, increase in claims to sovereignty and aggressive actions to change the status quo in the East Sea, not recognize the judgement of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) on rejecting the “Cow tongue shape” of China.

So, in the coming time, the two countries should be more active in promoting mutual understanding, promoting, disseminating and sharing information, especially updated information on each country's situation, opportunities for cooperation exchange, business investment, tourism, culture, spirituality ..; *Secondly*, it is necessary to continue the exchange of high-level visits to reinforce the special political credibility and create more motive for cooperation in all fields; *Thirdly*, it is necessary to try to further strengthen the economic relations between the two countries to correspond to the great potential of the two countries; *Fourthly*, Vietnam needs to active to cooperate with India on science and technology to take advantage of the great achievements that India has achieved in several fields such as IT, aerospace, nuclear, medicine, biotechnology ... At the same time, strengthen the culture and education cooperation to contribute to the mutual understanding between the two peoples. In addition, Vietnam should promote its role as a coordinator for India-ASEAN relations for period from 2015 to 2018 to have more initiatives and assert its role in promoting the cooperation between India with the region, actively support for India to soon join APEC as well as actively participate in economic, scientific and cultural connectivity initiatives.

Finally, I believe that the traditional friendship and strategic partnership between Vietnam and India have many opportunities and prospects. We believe that, with the strong determination of the leaders and people of the two countries, the cooperation between Vietnam and India will surely continue to rise to new height in the future, for the benefits of the peoples of the two countries, for peace, stability, cooperation and prosperity cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region and in the world.

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