

India - Vietnam Relations: Notes for UPSC GS2

The topic regarding India- Vietnam relations is an important feature of the GS-2 Paper in the UPSC Mains Examination. This article will analyse how far the relations between the two nations have fostered over the years.

Background of India-Vietnam Relations

India-Vietnam relations have been exceptionally friendly and cordial since their foundations were laid by Prime Minister Nehru and President Ho Chi Minh more than 50 years ago. The traditionally close and cordial relations have their historical roots in the common struggle for liberation from foreign rule and the national struggle for independence. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was one of the first visitors to Vietnam after its victory against the French at the battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954.

President Ho Chi Minh went to India in February 1958. President Rajendra Prasad visited Vietnam in 1959. In recent times, political contacts have strengthened as reflected in several high-level visits by leaders from both sides. Trade and economic linkages continue to grow. India's thrust under the 'Look East' policy combined with Vietnam's growing engagement within the region and with India has paid rich dividends. Vietnam is an important regional partner in South East Asia. India and Vietnam closely cooperate in various regional forums such as ASEAN, East Asia Summit, Mekong Ganga Cooperation, Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM) besides UN and World Trade Organisation (WTO).

Developments Regarding India-Vietnam Relations

Since 1992, the bi-lateral ties between India and Vietnam have developed extensively in many fields such as economic ties, agriculture and manufacturing. Not being limited to economic reasons alone, there has been extensive fostering of bilateral military cooperation that includes sale of military equipment, sharing of intelligence, joint naval exercises and training in counterinsurgency and jungle warfare.

Some of the more recent developments are highlighted below:

Commercial and economic ties

During President Pranab Mukherjee's visit to Vietnam in 2014, India and Vietnam signed seven agreements, including one for enhanced cooperation in the oil sector. The details of the agreements are given in the table below:

S.No	Name of Agreement/MoU	Description of the Agreement/MoU
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1	Agreement on Cooperation and Mutual Assistance in Customs Matters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Agreement aims to strengthen, promote and develop cooperation and mutual assistance on matters pertaining to customs between India and Vietnam. ● The two countries shall assist each other for the prevention, investigation and combating customs offences for the proper application of customs laws and for facilitating legitimate trade. The two countries shall also cooperate and exchange information in their enforcement against the illicit trafficking of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances, precursor chemicals and other prohibited goods.
2	MoU on \$ 100 million Line of Credit for Defence Procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The MoU provides a concessional line of credit for procurement of defence equipment from India. Details of equipment to be procured by Vietnam are under finalization.
3	MoU in the field of Animal Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The MoU establishes cooperation between India and Vietnam in the field of Animal Health including protecting territory of each other from introduction of animal diseases and infection caused by the trade of animals, products of animal origin and materials of animal reproduction. ● India and Vietnam shall also share special information on meat processing, meat products and slaughterhouses/abattoirs. They shall cooperate in the training and upgrading of human resources in the field of animal health through

		exchange of delegations, workshops, expert visits, training and share information on veterinary research.
4	MoU in the Field of Setting up of Pangasius Breeding and Farming in India.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This MoU between India and Vietnam is aimed at cooperation in transfer of technology and setting up of Pangasius (catfish) breeding and farming in India and allied activities between the two countries through joint activities, programmes, exchange of scientific material, information and personnel. <p>The joint activities shall be environmentally sound and sustainable. Annual Work Plan will be drawn and a Joint Technical Committee shall be formed to provide guidance, review progress and facilitate cooperation.</p>
5	MoU in Youth Affairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The MoU provides the framework for programmes of cooperation between India and Vietnam in the field of youth development and excellence by encouraging and promoting an exchange of programmes, experience, skills, techniques, information and knowledge. ● The youth programmes shall include participation of young politicians, young entrepreneurs, young doctors, young journalists etc. It shall also involve participation of young people from both countries in youth festivals, seminars and conferences on

		youth related issues.
6	Letter of Intent between ONGC Videsh Limited, India and Vietnam Oil and Gas Group (PetroVietnam).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ONGC Videsh Limited (OVL) and PetroVietnam signed an MoU on 20 November, 2013 with an objective to enhance mutual cooperation in the hydrocarbon sector. • PetroVietnam offered new blocks to OVL for oil and gas exploration and production. OVL is keen to expand its presence in Vietnam and is evaluating the blocks on offer. This Letter of Intent will further consolidate cooperation between India and Vietnam in the energy sector and pave the way for future collaboration between the two countries in this area.
7	MoU between Jet Airways (India) and Vietnam Airlines Company Limited.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jet Airways and Vietnam Airlines have entered into this MoU for enhancing their presence in each other's markets. The scope of the MoU involves code sharing on services of each other. • From 5 November 2014, Jet Airways intends to extend its Mumbai-Bangkok flight to Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. This service will also enable passengers travelling from Delhi to Bangkok, to connect on the extension flight beyond Bangkok to Ho Chi Minh City.

During President Trần Đại Quang state visit to India in March 2018, a total of three agreements - two MoU's and one Work Plan - were signed between India and Vietnam. The details of the agreements are highlighted below:

List of MoUs/Agreements signed during the State visit of President of Vietnam to India (March 03, 2018)		
S.NO	Name of MoU/Agreement	Purpose of the MoU/Agreement
1	MoU on Economic and Trade Cooperation.	The MoU provides for an establishment of a framework for enhancing economic and trade promotion.
2	Work Plan for the years 2018-2022 between the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Vietnam.	The Work Plan's main objective is to promote cooperation in transfer of technology and exchange of visits of technical experts in the fields of agriculture and allied
3	MoU on Cooperation between the Global Centre for Nuclear Energy Partnership, India (GCNEP) and the Vietnam Atomic Energy Institute (VINATOM).	The MoU aims to strengthen the technical cooperation in the field of atomic energy for peaceful purposes.

Strategic cooperation

India and Vietnam are both members of the Mekong–Ganga Cooperation, which is created with the aim to develop and enhance close ties between India and nations of Southeast Asia.

Vietnam has been a close supporter of India's bid for a permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and also supported India's membership to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC).

In a 2003 joint declaration, India and Vietnam collaborated on creating an "Arc of Advantage and Prosperity" in Southeast Asia. For this purpose Vietnam has done much to support the increasing significance of the relationship between India and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and its negotiation of an Indo-ASEAN free trade agreement. India and Vietnam have also built strategic partnerships, including extensive cooperation on developing nuclear power, enhancing regional security and fighting terrorism, transnational crime and drug trafficking.

With a view to enhance Indian and Vietnamese military relations, the Indian Navy has been welcomed many times. Vietnam has also accepted Indian support for a peaceful resolution of the territorial disputes in the South China Sea. Indian Foreign Minister Salman Khurshid refers to Vietnam as one of the pillars of India's "Look East" policy. In 2018, India and Vietnam conducted their first bilateral naval exercise together, in Vietnamese waters.

For more articles related to India's foreign affairs, click on the links given in the table below: