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**DAILY EDITORIAL
ANALYSIS**

TOPIC

**A NEW PHASE IN THE INDIA-VIETNAM
STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP**

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A NEW PHASE IN THE INDIA-VIETNAM STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Context

- The recent state visit of the Vietnamese President to India has elevated ties to an **Enhanced Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (ECSP)** reflecting the growing strategic convergence amid rising geopolitical competition in the Indo-Pacific.

Historical Evolution of India–Vietnam Relations

- India and Vietnam share historically warm ties rooted in anti-colonial solidarity and mutual strategic trust.
- Relations gained momentum under India's **Look East Policy**, later upgraded into the **Act East Policy**.
- **Key Milestones**
 - ◆ **1972:** Establishment of diplomatic relations
 - ◆ **2007:** Strategic Partnership
 - ◆ **2016:** Comprehensive Strategic Partnership
 - ◆ **2026:** Enhanced Comprehensive Strategic Partnership
- Over the years, regular political dialogues, defence exchanges, naval cooperation, and people-to-people ties have strengthened bilateral trust.

Defence Cooperation: Core Pillar

- **Maritime Security Cooperation:** Both countries support freedom of navigation, UNCLOS-based maritime order, peace and stability in the South China Sea.
 - ◆ India has consistently supported Vietnam's maritime capacity-building efforts.
- **Defence Transfers and Training:** Important developments include transfer of **INS Kirpan** to Vietnam in 2023, training support for Vietnamese armed forces, and defence Lines of Credit from India.
- **BrahMos Missile Discussions:** Possible export of **BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles** indicate a shift from capacity-building to deterrence enhancement, India's growing defence export ambitions, and Vietnam's effort to strengthen strategic balancing in the South China Sea.
 - ◆ It aligns with India's push for **Atmanirbhar Bharat in defence manufacturing**.

Economic and Technological Partnership

- **Trade and Investment:** Bilateral trade has crossed **\$16 billion**, and it is aimed at **\$25 billion by 2030**.
 - ◆ **Key sectors** include pharmaceuticals, electronics, agriculture, renewable energy, and digital payments.
- **Supply Chain Resilience:** Vietnam has become a major ASEAN manufacturing hub. For India, Vietnam is important for diversifying supply chains away from China, strengthening resilient Indo-Pacific economic networks, expanding semiconductor and electronics cooperation
- **Critical Minerals and Rare Earths:** The focus on rare earth collaboration, critical minerals, and emerging technologies reflects the changing nature of strategic competition where economic security and technological resilience are becoming central geopolitical concerns.

Regional and Geopolitical Significance

- **Indo-Pacific Strategic Balancing:** India and Vietnam contribute to a broader Indo-Pacific framework involving Japan, Australia, and the United States.
 - ◆ Though not formal military allies, both countries support rules-based order, strategic autonomy, and opposition to unilateral coercion.
 - ◆ Their joint emphasis on 'rule of law, peace, and stability' reflects a shared normative approach.
- **ASEAN Centrality in India's Indo-Pacific Vision:** Vietnam occupies a crucial place in India's engagement with ASEAN, and because of its strong manufacturing base, and strategic location near South China Sea.
 - ◆ For Vietnam, India offers strategic diversification, defence cooperation, and a trusted non-hegemonic partner.
 - ◆ It complements Vietnam's 'multi-alignment' foreign policy approach.

- **Emerging Economic Architecture:** The partnership increasingly focuses on economic security, digital connectivity, trusted supply chains, and critical technologies.
 - ♦ It reflects a wider global trend where geopolitical competition is reshaping trade and technology networks.

Challenges and Structural Constraints

- **Defence Industrial Hurdles:** Financial viability, technology transfer issues, and geopolitical sensitivities around arms exports.
- **Trade Barriers:** Logistics constraints, regulatory differences, and limited private sector participation.
- **Connectivity Deficits:** Physical and maritime connectivity between India and Southeast Asia remains underdeveloped.

Way Forward

- **Strengthening Defence Cooperation:** Faster defence industrial collaboration, joint maritime exercises, and expanded naval interoperability.
- **Enhancing Economic Integration:** Faster implementation of trade agreements, semiconductor and digital economy partnerships, and supply chain resilience initiatives.
- **Expanding Indo-Pacific Cooperation:** Greater coordination in ASEAN-led forums, collaboration on maritime governance, and joint initiatives on blue economy and climate security.

Source: TH

Daily Mains Practice Question

- [Q] Discuss the significance of India–Vietnam relations and examine the key challenges in translating bilateral strategic intent into concrete outcomes.