

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF PAKISTAN- VIETNAM DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

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*(Views expressed in the brief are those of the author, and do
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Introduction

2022 marks the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Islamabad and Hanoi. The 50 years journey is dotted with mutual respect, understanding, and the vision for peace and security.

Vietnam and Islamabad established formal diplomatic ties in November 1972 and, since then, worked jointly to put in place various modes and modalities for moving their bilateral ties forwards. Ranging from diplomatic, socio-political, economic, and cultural issues, Pakistan and Vietnam have various processes of bilateral consultations.

High-level visits and interactions are one of the most effective ways to accelerate the processes of growth and development between two countries. In the same vein, Islamabad and Hanoi have been visiting each other at various state levels and reciprocating the exchanges. The then President of Pakistan, Pervez Musharraf paid a visit to Vietnam in May 2001¹, which was reciprocated by the President of Vietnam, Tran Duc Luong in March 2004.

The latest highest-level interaction took place between the Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, and Foreign Minister of Vietnam, Bui Thanh Son, on the sidelines of 29 Asian

¹ "Pakistani Chief Executive Conducted Visit to Vietnam", Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, July 5, 2001, <https://vietnambassy-usa.org/news/2001/05/pakistani-chief-executive-concluded-visit-vietnam>

Regional Forum (ARF) Ministerial meeting in Phnom Penh on August 4, 2022.² They reviewed the bilateral relations and expressed their satisfaction with the friendly ties that their countries share with each other. Earlier, in 2010, Former Foreign Minister, Shah Mahmood Qureshi visited Vietnam for attending the 17th ARF Ministerial meeting in Phnom in July 2010.³

Institutional Mechanism for Bilateral Consultations and Trade

In the early 2000s, three broader institutional mechanisms were established:

- The Bilateral Political Consultation (BCP)
- Bilateral Joint Commission (BJC)
- Joint Trade Commission (JTC)

Pakistan-Vietnam relations consolidated with every session of BPC, BJC, and JTC, as they communicated their mutual desire to stay committed to deepening their bilateral ties.

- The first session of BPC was organized in Hanoi, in August 2015, which came after eleven years of signing the MoU on establishing BPC in 2004.⁴ Mr. Amjad B. Sial, Special Secretary Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan, and Mr. Li Haoi Trung, Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs Vietnam, represented their countries. They reiterated their support for moving the relations forward in the fields of politics, economy, diplomacy, culture, education, health, and sports. Mr. Trung agreed on streamlining visa procedures for Pakistani nations, particularly the tradesmen and business community.⁵
- The second session of BPC was held on April 13, 2018. It was led by the Foreign Secretary of Pakistan, Ms. Tehmina Janjua, and the Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs, Vietnam. They discussed a whole range of issues at length. The Third round of BPC was meant to be held in October 2021 but it was delayed due to the prior engagements of Pakistani leadership. However, the preparations to arrange it are underway.

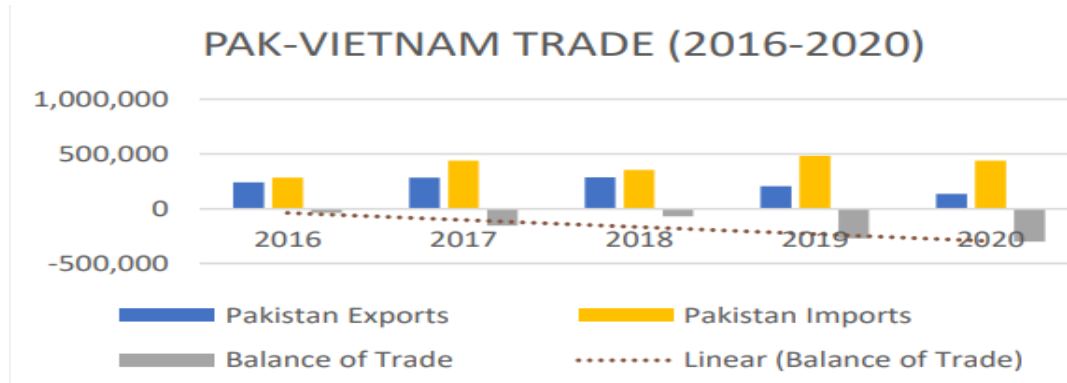
² "Vietnamese FM Vow to Enhance Bilateral Cooperation", *Daily Times*, August 5, 2022, <https://dailytimes.com.pk/977633/vietnamese-fm-vow-to-enhance-bilateral-collaboration/>

³ "43rd AMM/PMC/17th ARF Vietnam 2010 Chairman's Statement 17th ASEAN Regional Forum Ha Naoi, July 23, 2010", Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), <https://asean.org/43rd-amm-pmc-17th-arf-vietnam-2010-chairmans-statement-17th-asean-regional-forum-ha-noi-23-july-2010/>

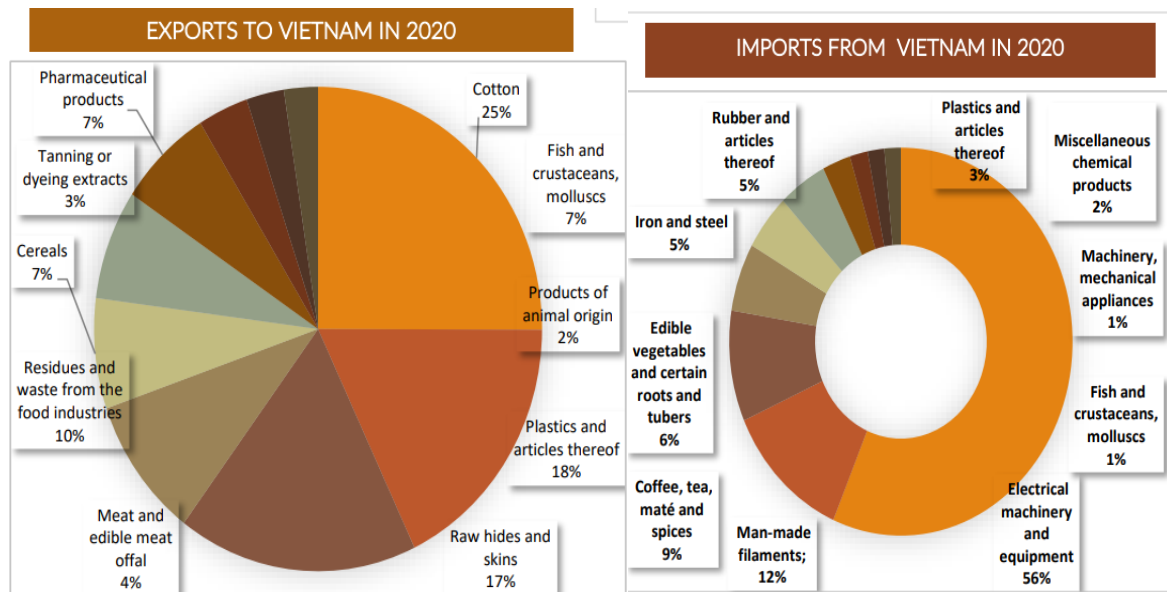
⁴ "Inaugural Session of the Bilateral Political Consultations between Pakistan and Vietnam", Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan, August 19, 2015, <https://mofa.gov.pk/inaugural-session-of-the-bilateral-political-consultations-between-pakistan-and-vietnam/>

⁵ Ibid.

Bilateral trade and investment have improved significantly. After the year 2013, bilateral trade was US\$313 million but, due to the relentless efforts made by the Governments of Pakistan and Vietnam, it doubled in the next five years. However, after the fiscal years 2018-19 and 2019-20, Pakistan’s imports as well as exports to Vietnam declined.⁶



Source: Trade Development Authority Pakistan (TDAP)



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While celebrating the 77th National Day in Islamabad at Vietnamese embassy, Ambassador Nguyen Tien Phong informed the audience that Hanoi and Islamabad are preparing to open a new page in the bilateral friendship by preparing for the third round of BPC, and the fifth JMC, and JTC.

⁶ Suhail Kamran, “Pakistan Vietnam Bilateral Trade Analysis”, Trade Development Authority of Pakistan, <https://tdap.gov.pk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/3.3-Pak-Vietnam-Bilateral-Trade-Analysis.pdf>

Defense Ties and Cooperation at International Foras

Besides well-established diplomatic and economic ties, Islamabad and Hanoi also share a deep understanding of the strategic issues along with extending support to each other on many international forums.

- Their defense relations are mostly based on visits by delegations from military training institutes such as National Defense University (NDU) and Air War College (AWC). So far, Pakistan has sent five delegations from NDU and ACW to Vietnam as part of their foreign study tours in the last six years.
- The last such delegation was sent in August 2009 to Vietnam. It was headed by Former Chairman Joint Chief of Staff Committee General, Tariq Majid and discussed issues of mutual concern at the regional and international level with the Vietnamese military leadership.
- In July 2018, while Receiving Colonel Syed Muhammad Hasnain in Hanoi on July 11, Major General Tien took note of encouraging development of the bilateral defence ties over the past time. He also expressed his hope that, in his new position, the Pakistani military attaché in Vietnam will do his utmost to elevate the relations into a more effective and practical manner.⁷
- On International Forums, Hanoi and Islamabad work in sync with each other. Pakistan supported Vietnam's candidacy to the United Nations' Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) for the term 2015-2017; the International Law Commission for the term 2017-21; Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) for the term 2019-2025. and Security Council (UNSC) for the term 2020-21.
- In the same vein, Vietnam supported Pakistan's candidacy for the Human Rights Council (2019-2025). It is also going to support Pakistan's candidacy for the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Executive Board for the term 2023-2027.

Potential of Islamabad-Hanoi Ties and Policy Recommendations

- In the field of culture, eco-tourism, and the blue economy, both countries have enough to present to each other. However, non-tariff and tariff barriers including no trade agreement

⁷ "Vietnam, Pakistan to Strengthen Defense Cooperation", Vietnam Plus, July 12, 2018, <https://en.vietnamplus.vn/vietnam-pakistan-to-strengthen-defence-cooperation/134473.vnp>

between Pakistan and Vietnam is a major challenge in further boosting the trade and commerce ties.

- After Covid-19, the supply and logistic chains have also faced many problems and caused many issues for Pakistan and Vietnam as well.
- Language and cultural differences between the two states also emerge as one of the challenges in Islamabad-Hanoi ties.
- However, much has been going on from both sides to remove these barriers. The Pakistani diplomatic mission in Hanoi organizes many activities that showcase rich and diverse culture of Pakistan, its famous cuisine, charming folklores, and artefacts. Based on this, cultural, heritage and civilizational diplomacy can help boost the cultural ties.
- Vietnam has a large number of followers of Buddhism and Pakistan has much to offer in this sense as it has a vast historical treasure of Gandhara civilization in its city, Taxila (the center of Buddhism in the 1st millennium BCE.)
- There is a need to boost economic ties and for that, the next session of JTC is highly needed.
- High-level visits are also very much the need of time now. It has been quite a while that a VVIP visit took place between the two countries. Under Pakistan's "Look East East Asia Policy that many new things are happening and, in due course of time, further improvement will be more visible in the upward trajectory of the bilateral relations.