

India Strengthens Security Cooperation With Vietnam

By Matthew Stein
OE Watch Commentary



Defense Minister Shri Rajnath Singh
Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Defence_Minister_Shri_Rajnath_Singh.jpg, Attribution: Government Open Data License – India (GODL)

India has taken several measures to counter China in the past several years, particularly after violent clashes on the Indian – Chinese border in 2017 and 2020. In addition to strengthening the capabilities of its armed forces along the border, the accompanying excerpted article from the Indian independent think-tank *Observer Research Foundation* reveals how India is trying to improve security cooperation with Vietnam. Following the 2020 border skirmishes, Indian officials believe future conflict with China will not likely be limited to one domain. The article reports on Indian Defense Minister Rajnath Singh’s visit to Vietnam in early June, noting that he signed two security cooperation agreements. One remains unpublished in the public domain, but

the other agreement involved mutual logistics support and allows both to use the other’s military facilities for repairs and replenishment. According to the article “this arrangement will mainly benefit the Indian Navy as it ramps up its profile in the Indo-Pacific.”

Finally, the article addresses the impact of the war in Ukraine on Vietnam’s ability to procure weapons and equipment from Russia, noting that India has the potential to offer Vietnam various weapons and equipment. India operates “similar platforms to Vietnam’s and...has leveraged this by assisting Hanoi in training and capacity building.” Ultimately, India’s agreements with Vietnam mark another step to counter China and offer a potential market for the Indian defense industry.

Source: Sameer Patil, “The importance of India’s defence partnership with Vietnam,” *Observer Research Foundation* (independent think tank in India), 28 June 2022. <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/the-importance-of-indias-defence-partnership-with-vietnam/>

Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh recently paid a three-day visit (8-10 June 2022) to Hanoi to strengthen defence and security ties with Vietnam... India has also activated a satellite imaging and tracking station in Hanoi, enabling it to track Chinese naval activities in the region...

During Minister Singh’s recent visit, India and Vietnam signed two key agreements:

The first agreement, ‘Joint Vision Statement on India-Vietnam Defence Partnership towards 2030’, casts a long-term perspective on the mutual ties. While contents of the agreement are not available in the public domain, according to officials, it aims to “enhance the scope and scale of existing defence cooperation.”

The second agreement, an MoU, focused on mutual logistics support to enable the two countries to use each other’s military bases to repair and replenish supplies. According to the official statement, this agreement is “the first such major agreement which Vietnam has signed with any country.” This arrangement will mainly benefit the Indian Navy as it ramps up its profile in the Indo-Pacific.

Besides, the two countries also agreed to expedite the extension of a US\$500-million Line of Credit (LoC) to Hanoi... As part of the US\$ 500 million LoC, India has offered Vietnam Brahmos cruise missiles, Akash missile air defence system, Varunastra anti-submarine torpedoes, and coastal radars...

Notwithstanding the pro-China orientation of the current political leadership, a key driver of Vietnam’s military

continue on 36

Continued: India Strengthens Security Cooperation With Vietnam

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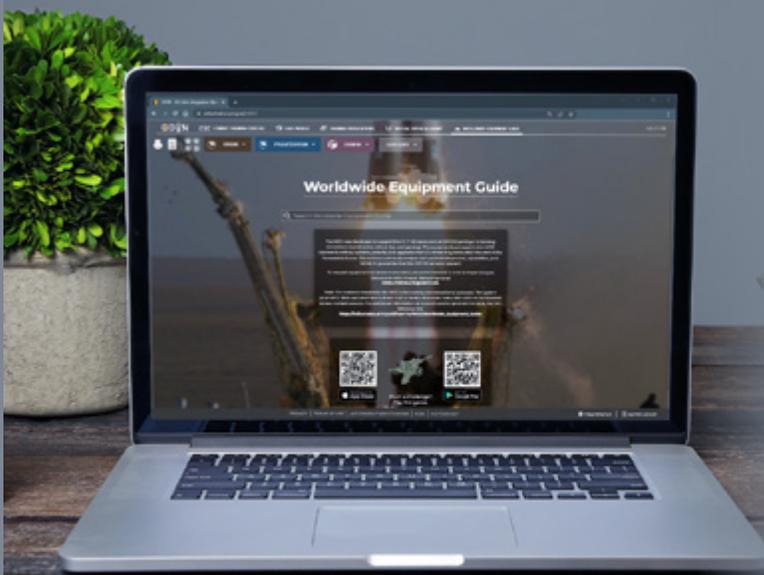
build-up is the security rivalry with China. Beijing’s stepped-up aggression to press its territorial claims in the South China Sea dispute has been a significant irritant for Hanoi...

Vietnam has traditionally relied on Russia for its weapons. However, given its renewed proximity with the US and the US sanctions against the Russian defence industry, Hanoi has sought to diversify its recent arms purchases...

Since the South China Sea clashes, Vietnam has boosted its defence spending, averaging US \$4.8 billion between 2014 and 2018. But, compared to the threat posed by China and its military requirements, this spending is inadequate. Therefore, Hanoi is looking for more affordable defence suppliers with this moderate defence spending.

India can potentially be one such source. The Indian military has the advantage of operating similar platforms to Vietnam’s. It has leveraged this by assisting Hanoi in training and capacity building in Kilo-class submarine operations and Sukhoi-30 fighter jet training.

The unrelenting Chinese hostility in the region will ensure that India and Vietnam will continue on the path of cooperation... However, to optimise the gains of their collaboration and contribute to regional stability, New Delhi and Hanoi will have to show tangible progress...



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