Vietnam is one of Russia’s key partners in the Asia-Pacific region. The Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) and Russia continue to develop cooperation, which has traditionally been friendly, based on years of close cooperation in a wide range of areas (diplomatic relations were established on 30 January 1950). The bilateral legal framework consists of over eighty documents, including such fundamental instruments as the Treaty of Friendship (1994) and the Declaration on Strategic Partnership for the 21st Century (2001).

The strategic partnership between Russia and the SRV became comprehensive in July 2012. This cooperation clearly reflects Russia’s “pivot to the East”, which has become particularly relevant in the current international climate of increasing Russophobia in the West. The said development of cooperation is not an alternative to relations with China, but an opportunity to diversify trade, economic and military-strategic relations in the East.

In the face of growing tensions in Eurasia and a policy of harsh sanctions by the US and the EU, Russia is naturally interested in strengthening cooperation with its longstanding partner in East Asia, Vietnam. Its political elites are well aware that Russia, as a great global and Asian power with considerable military potential and as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, has been and remains an essential factor in maintaining peace and stability in the region. It can and should play an important role in shaping the future security system in the Asia-Pacific region in general and in Southeast Asia in particular, both as an active participant and as a reliable guarantor of agreements yet to be reached.
The importance of developing relations with the SRV is determined by shared interests and fears about attempts by
the US and its Western allies to complicate the international environment and security in the Asia-Pacific region. It is
also linked to the need to ensure a peaceful environment for economic development in the Asia-Pacific region, as
well as for Vietnam and Russia with effective integration into the economies of both countries, the benefits of trade
and economic cooperation with ASEAN countries.

Today, Vietnam is a rapidly growing regional power of 100 million people, which has escaped centuries of poverty
and backwardness, successfully integrated into the regional economy, and become a reputable and reliable partner
for many countries around the world and a respected member of the global community. Vietnam’s highly critical
attitude towards the use of armed force in conflict resolution is due to the fact that the Vietnamese people have fought
successfully not only with the Americans, but also with the French, the Japanese, etc. Therefore, today it is
aiming at solving all political problems peacefully, through diplomacy, knowing full well what a real war, not in
exercises and firing ranges, is like. That is why the Vietnamese prefer to talk more about the future than about the
past.

An extensive system of active political contacts and dialogue has been set up between the SRV and Russia, both at
the highest and at all other levels, which has created a solid basis for political cooperation. Vietnam is the only state
in Southeast Asia that has been visited by Russian Presidents five times; President Vladimir Putin has already visited
the SRV three times, which has significantly strengthened the traditionally friendly relations between the two
countries and peoples. Both countries have long agreed on concerted approaches to improving the security and
cooperation architecture in Southeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific region, which they believe should be based on the
principles of collectivity, multilateralism and equality, on generally accepted norms of international law, including
the provisions of the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, which are very important for Vietnam. This, in
particular, allows for effective coordination in leading international platforms, especially within the UN and its
structural units, as well as in multilateral forums in the Asia-Pacific region.

Although the pandemic has had a major negative impact on global foreign trade in general, as well as on trade
between Vietnam and Russia, trade cooperation between the two countries is developing positively, with bilateral
trade expected to rise to nearly $6.5 billion by the end of 2021, up from $5.7 billion a year earlier.

The deepening security and military-technical cooperation between Russia and Vietnam is a clear confirmation of the
trusting nature of Russian-Vietnamese relations. In January 2020, Russia and Vietnam signed a contract for the
purchase of 12 Russian Yak-130 combat trainer aircraft worth over $350 million. At a press conference following
talks between Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Vietnamese Foreign Minister Bui Thanh Son at the end of
September, the intention to step up bilateral military cooperation was confirmed.

The official visit to Russia by Vietnamese President Nguyen Xuan Phuc and his meeting on November 30 with
Russian President Vladimir Putin was a logical continuation of the increasingly strong relations between the two
countries in recent years.

Nguyen Xuan Phuc was in Moscow as prime minister in 2019 and met Russian President Vladimir Putin. Even back
then it was clear that the Moscow-Hanoi line was reaching a new level. Nguyen Xuan Phuc belongs to the old school
of Vietnamese politicians, which is linked to both the Soviet era and new times, when Vietnam began to build up its
own weight. Nguyen Xuan Phuc has spoken Russian practically since childhood, as the subject was part of the
compulsory school curriculum. It is noteworthy that in recent years, after a break caused by the processes of the
1990s, the Russian language has been actively studied again in Vietnam, contributing, among other things, to further
rapprochement between the peoples of the two countries.

The talks between the Russian and Vietnamese presidents resulted in a joint statement on the vision for developing a
comprehensive strategic partnership between the two countries until 2030. Cooperation between the two countries
on political, economic, military, military-technical and security issues is developing, contributing to stability in the
region, according to a statement posted on the Kremlin’s website. “A special place in the structure of Russian-
Vietnamese relations is occupied by military, military-technical and security cooperation, which is progressively
developing in the interests of Russia and Vietnam and their peoples, contributing to maintaining peace and ensuring
stability in the region and the world as a whole,” the statement said. “Russia and Vietnam will ensure maritime
security, freedom of navigation and air navigation, unimpeded trade, advocate restraint in relations, non-use of force
or threat of force, resolution of disputes by peaceful means in accordance with universally recognized principles and
norms of international law,” the text of the statement reads. The joint declaration also stresses that “Russia and
Vietnam stand for a fairer democratic system of international relations based on the rule of international law and the
principles of the UN Charter, including the sovereign equality of States, territorial integrity, equal rights and self-determination of peoples, non-interference in the internal affairs of States, non-use or threat of force, and settlement of disputes by peaceful means”. The sides consider it necessary to enhance region-wide efforts to establish a comprehensive, open and transparent architecture of equal and indivisible security and cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region on a collective and non-aligned basis, based on international law.

Vladimir Putin and Nguyen Xuan Phuc discussed strategic partnership in various fields. In particular, Vietnam is interested in joint production of coronavirus vaccines with Russia. The SRV was one of the first to license the Russian vaccine, Sputnik V, and was the first to launch its own production of the drug.

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