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Abstract : After communist North Vietnam's victory over U.S.-backed South Vietnam in 1975, U.S.- Vietnam had minimal relations until the mid-1990s. Normal diplomatic relations were established on July 11, 1995. Since then, bilateral ties have expanded to the point where

leaders on both sides describe each other as partners on a number of issues. The maturation of relations has been particularly marked since the mid-2000s, when Vietnam made a decision to upgrade the relationship; since then, overlapping strategic and economic interests have compelled the United States and Vietnam to expand relations across a wide spectrum of issues. In the summer of 2010, the Obama Administration indicated its intent to take relations to the next level, and cooperated with Vietnam to coordinate a multi-country diplomatic push back against perceived Chinese encroachment in the South China Sea. In the United States, voices favoring improved relations have included those reflecting U.S. business interests in Vietnam's reforming economy and U.S. strategic interests in expanding cooperation with a populous country?Vietnam has 88 million people?that has an ambivalent relationship with China. Others argue that improvements in bilateral relations should be conditioned upon Vietnam's authoritarian government improving its record on human rights. Vietnam is asserting itself on the regional stage; for instance, in 2010 it is the chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The population of more than 1 million Vietnamese-Americans, as well as legacies of the Vietnam War, also drive continued U.S. interest.

Descriptors : *POLICIES , *UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT , *GOVERNMENT(FOREIGN) , *VIETNAM , *INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS , ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT , DIPLOMACY , ECONOMICS , INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

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