
VIETNAM IS LOSING ITS BEST FRIENDS TO CHINA

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Close observers of Vietnams foreign relations will note that Hanoi maintains three distinct levels of partnership. In descending order of importance, they are: comprehensive strategic partnerships, strategic partnerships and comprehensive partnerships. At the highest level, comprehensive strategic partnerships cover the full gamut of cooperative activities, and only Russia, India, and China have achieved this elite status in Vietnams worldview □ with China receiving the added designation of being a comprehensive strategic cooperative partner.

Strategic partnerships, which exist with nations like Australia and Japan, are more numerous and indicate that Vietnam and the partner share long-term strategic interests. Comprehensive partnerships are even more common and include countries that do not necessarily (but may) share a mutual long-term strategic interest. The U.S. is a prominent comprehensive partner that actually operates at the strategic level as the two nations cooperate to push back against China □ a friend of Vietnam but also an adversary in some areas, especially the South China Sea.

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