

# Vietnam, An “Unofficial Ally” of the U.S. against China?

Will Vietnam Turn the “Quad” Into the “Quint”?

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Region: [Asia](#), [USA](#)

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*A [US aircraft carrier recently docked in Vietnam](#) for the first time since the American military withdrawal in 1975.*

This hitherto unprecedented move in the post-war relations between the US and the ASEAN-member state is clearly intended as a signal towards China, with whom Vietnam is involved in a contentious dispute over the South China Sea and the attendant energy resources underneath its waters. Hanoi no longer regards Washington as an enemy, but an unofficial ally because of the Pentagon’s willingness to help the country boost its naval military capacities in order to offset China’s advantages in this field. While not much of substance has been achieved on this front, the future is indeed very promising, and it’s likely that Vietnam could play some role – however informal – in the so-called “[Quad](#)” between the US, Japan, Australia, and India in “containing China”.

The country boasts a highly strategic location and has both maritime and mainland borders with China, which makes it ideal for the “Quad” to include in its framework to the point of de-facto becoming the “Quint” if Vietnam is fully integrated into this developing military integrational platform. Beijing already feels uneasy about [New Delhi’s creeping role](#) in its backyard, which some Indian commentators claim is “payback” for what China is doing in South Asia, so getting to the point where the US, Japan, and also Australia are regulars in this space as well would definitely put the People’s Republic on the strategic defensive. The risk, however, is that China will more assertively defend its maritime claims in the region in the face of foreign provocations from the “Quint”, which might lead to a tense standoff one of these days.

In fact, a so-called “controlled escalation scenario” might be exactly what the “Quad” is hoping to achieve in generating a low-intensity crisis as a means of “justifying” the incorporation of Vietnam into this multilateral military partnership, though this could of course spiral out of control real fast and lead to a dangerous situation. It’s too early to tell at this point if that’s exactly what’s being planned for the coming future, but nevertheless, the takeaway is that Vietnam’s interest in deepening its naval cooperation with the US serves as a means of doing so with the whole “Quad” as well, and that could have unpredictable consequences for the bloc’s relations with China.

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