

THE PROPOSED QUADRILATERAL: A CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Some concepts are too easy to give up and the offer for quadrilateral cooperation among India, Japan, Australia and the United States of America is one of them. It is becomes evident when USA is shifting its attention from south east Asia to west Asia and south Asia now India has a chance to fill the power vacuum in the indo pacific region thereby she could the generally curb the problem of human trafficking, drugs trafficking illegal small arms smuggling and other national security threats like international terrorism etc. and specifically can help countries in the region by providing defence equipments, technological and financial assistance in navigation and maritime security areas where they are lagging behind. The concept is inseparably related to the rise of china as a great economic power in general, and second only to the United States of America in particular. The threat of China's growing one sided instinct forced the Asian nations to lower the regional disparity by shaking their hands together. But the attractions of economic terms with China and the risks of inciting it limit the instinct for unite action against China.

Keywords - Quad, Economic Development, Strategy, Terrorism, Connectivity.

BACKGROUND

The term "Quad" was coined by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in his book titled My Beautiful Country where he proposed the idea for Asian and Global Security in the East Asean Summit held at Manila the formal talk was initiated between Japan India and Australia it got the full support of US. The result is Quad or Quadrilateral is a track two diplomacy and military arrangement. The arrangement was a reaction to increased Chinese economic and military capability, and the reaction from was severe. Earliar the Quad could not be possible because of the Australian PM Kewin Rudd's withdrawal in 2008. Now Quad is gaining much momentum in the last few years when the secretary of state Rex Tillerson emphasised the importance of India and of US-India ties. He spoke of stability, security and prosperity across the Indo-Pacific region in the coming decades. The

India government which was dubious about the role of Quadrilateral dialogue until very recently, but now softens its stands for discussion of the terms and conditions for its participation.

THE AMBIT OF COOPERATION

As Prime Minister Shinzo Abe won the elections of 2017, Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono told the Nikkei Asian Review that he planned to present to US President Donald Trump a formal proposal for a high-level dialogue among the four nations. Japan would be interrelated in substantive cooperation among them on defence cooperation, maritime security, and infrastructure development. Senior officials of the four countries could meet next month on the table of the East Asia Summit in the Philippines. Kono added that Tokyo also wants London and Paris to eventually join this effort.¹

Manila's meeting took place at the "working level" with senior officials from all sides participating. It will still be some time before the 'Quad' meets at the ministerial or leaders level, but the Manila meeting offers insight into its presumptive direction.²

The theme was "free and open Indo-Pacific." The first quadrilateral meeting addressed seven core themes these were rules-based order in Asia, freedom of navigation and over flight in the maritime commons, respect for international law, enhancing connectivity, maritime security, the North Korean threat and nonproliferation, and terrorism. Following the meeting, the government statement made by the U.S. Department of State, the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. All four statements emphasized that the convergence of visions and shared interests underpinned the quadrilateral.

Table 1: Comparison of U.S., Indian, Japanese, and Australian statements following the 2017 working-level quadrilateral meeting

	US	India	Japan	Australia
Free and open Indo-Pacific	"shared vision for increased prosperity and security in a free and open Indo-Pacific region"	"a free, open, prosperous and inclusive Indo-Pacific region serves the long-term interests of all countries in the region and of the world at large"	"measures to ensure a free and open international order based on the rule of law in the Indo-Pacific"	"a shared vision for increased prosperity and security in the Indo-Pacific region and to work together to ensure it remains free and open"
Rules-based order	"upholding the rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific"	"cooperation based on their converging vision and values for promotion of peace"	"direction for cooperation, including with countries in the region, in upholding the rules-based order and respect for international law in the Indo-Pacific"	"upholding the rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific"
Freedom of navigation & overflight	"freedom of navigation and overflight"	N/A	"ensuring freedom of navigation ... in the Indo-Pacific"	"freedom of navigation and overflight"
Respect for international law	"respect for international law, and the peaceful resolution of disputes"	N/A	"respect for international law in the Indo-Pacific"	"respect for international law"
Connectivity	"increasing connectivity consistent with international law and standards, based on prudent financing"	"stability and prosperity in an increasingly inter-connected region that they share with each other and with other partners"; "enhancing connectivity"	N/A	"increase connectivity"
Maritime security	"coordinating on ... maritime security efforts in the Indo-Pacific"	N/A	"maritime security in the Indo-Pacific"	"upholding maritime security in the Indo-Pacific"
North Korea/proliferation	"further cooperating to curtail the DPRK's nuclear and missile programs and unlawful acts"	"proliferation linkages"	"lacking proliferation threats, including North Korea's nuclear and missile issues, against which maximized pressure needs to be applied"	"threats to international peace and security posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, including the DPRK's nuclear and missile programs"
Terrorism	"coordinating on counterterrorism"	"addressing common challenges of terrorism"	"countering terrorism"	"coordinate on efforts to address the challenges of countering terrorism"
Next Steps & Misc.	"The quadrilateral partners committed to deepening cooperation, which rests on a foundation of shared democratic values and principles, and to continue discussions to further strengthen the rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific region."	"The Indian side highlighted India's Act East Policy as the cornerstone of its engagement in the Indo-Pacific region."	"The participants affirmed their commitment to continuing discussions and deepening cooperation based on shared values and principles."	"The participants committed to continuing quadrilateral discussions and deepening cooperation on the basis of shared values and principles."

Source: U.S. Department of State, the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Compiled by Ankit Panda.³

Meanwhile, India’s statement on Manila’s meeting omitted any explicit reference to freedom of navigation and over flight, respect for international law, and maritime security. The Indian government through its various bilateral statements and declarations with each of the other Quadrilateral participants, voiced active support for these principles.

Both the Indian and Japanese omissions aren’t a statement of disinterest, but rather intended to assuage concerns in China that the reconstituted Quadrilateral will make an attempt to contain China. Just as “connectivity” references speak to an alternative vision to the Belt and Road Initiative, so does freedom of navigation underline a

divergent set of interests for the quadrilateral in the South China Sea, for example, where Chinese territorial irredentism is a cause of concern.⁴

The varying points of emphasis in the four statements out of the first meeting are also telling. For India, the reconvening of the quadrilateral is an opportunity for four like-minded states to foster an “a free, open, prosperous and inclusive Indo-Pacific region.”⁵ The Indian government statement particularly emphasized a vision for regional connectivity for the quadrilateral “based on their converging vision and values for promotion of peace, stability and prosperity in an increasingly inter-connected region that they share with each other and with other partners.”⁶

INDIA’S SITUATION AND DILEMMA

India’s position in the proposed Quadrilateral cooperation among the four is unique as it is a kind of gateway to Indo Pacific and Indian Ocean region. The region’s strategic location has been regularly used as pivot among all the developed and developing nations in the region. Now India’s position is strengthened when USA is shifting its attention from South East Asia to West Asia and South Asia. It appears that India has a chance to fill the power vacuum in the Indo Pacific region thereby she could solve its problem by curbing the human trafficking, drugs trafficking illegal small arms smuggling and other national security threats like international terrorism etc. It can also help countries in the region with defence equipments, technological and financial assistance in navigation and maritime security areas where they are much behind. But it draws an attention to the *criteria that* gives rise to the situation of bipolarity in the region. He also held that China would try to break this encirclement by force or inducement to win more and more South Asian and South East Asian countries to its gambit. This situation would foster cooperation and coordination among the countries and the consequences of this could be quite significant for peace and stability in the Asian region.

WHY IT BECOMES SO RELEVANT NOW?

According to the world outlook report released by the IMF in October 2016 the combined GDP share in the world economy of the Australia Japan India and US is 35.65. whereas Chinese GDP share accounts for 14.9 percent. China stands first in all over the world in terms of PPP {Purchasing Power Parity}.⁷

China in order to strengthen its economical position has launched various projects such as maritime silk road, silk road, OBOR, and now the big one BRI (Belt and Road Initiative). To maintain the balance in this region the states are aligning together just because of their national interest. There are two aspects of this quadrilateral

cooperation first is Defence cooperation which is limited to training and joint exercises among the members and the second is economic cooperation. The Terms and conditions of the Chinese investment process is so obligatory that once any country enter into her economical grasp China will make them totally dependent. In this contrast it is easy to decipher by analyzing the Chinese ‘string of pearls’.

In his speech before coming to India Rex Tillerson said that under the China’s ambitious project OBOR the interests of emerging democracies and less developed countries shall not be compromised. Therefore it becomes pertinent to find out alternative and sustainable financial mechanisms for these states in the region. Economic interest of each state is depended upon the China while strategic interest of every nation in this region is quite unstable with the China. So in this equation the proposed Quadrilateral dialogue could be a milestone if maintained in such a way that a kind of balance could be established between the latter and the earlier one. Hence, The proposed Quadrilateral dialogue will provide alternatives not only in economic field but would also enhance the cooperation and coordination among the defense domain.

CHINA’S VIEW ON THE PROPOSED QUADRILATERAL DIALOGUE

China hopes that the cooperation of India, US, Japan and Australia will not be directed at a third party and would not disturb the regional peace and stability. China is the most important player in the region, and as now more confident than ever of projecting regional and global power. In this, China has had the good fortune Chinese President Xi Jinping firmly stated at the 19th Communist Party Congress that U.S. lacks seriousness of purpose and is unable to communicate effectively its priorities for the region. This makes this period of transition very significant for countries like India that have a stake in the long-term stability of the region. “The relevant proposals should be open and inclusive and should be conducive to win-win cooperation and avoid politicizing or excluding the relevant parties,”⁶ this statement made by Chinese foreign Ministry Spokesman Geng Shuang after a media briefing. He was asked what he meant by “exclusion of the relevant parties”⁸ which was referred to omission of China, Geng answered in affirmative tone that China welcomes the development of friendly cooperation between relevant countries. “We hope this kind of relations will not be directed at a third party and conducive to the regional peace and stability. This is the general concept and I think this kind of position applies to any proposal,”⁹

Giving shape and substance to the Indo-Pacific concept by virtually replacing the previous Asia-Pacific, the US, India, Japan and Australia recently held their first official-level talks in Manila ahead of the Asean summit with a focus on keeping the region “free and open”, amid China’s growing military presence in the strategic area. The

action is seen as reversal to China's assertive attitude in the area. They agreed that a sovereign, unobstructed, blooming, and embracive Indo-Pacific area could lead to the lasting interests of all the members in the region in particular and of the world in general. They also exchanged views on addressing common challenges of terrorism and proliferation linkages impacting the region as well which is enhancing connectivity. American officials earlier said the new term "Indo-Pacific" replacing Asia Pacific increases the importance of the rise of India with which the US has strong and growing ties.

A senior White House official had said that "we have strong and growing ties with India. We talk about 'Indo-Pacific' in part because that phrase captures the importance of India's rise". And the strategy is "certainly not" to contain China, he said.¹⁰

QUADS MEET, CHINA CONCERNED?

The meeting of the Quads took place on November 2017 on the sidelines of the East Asean summit where US, Australia, Japan and India discussed an alliance strategy, keeping China's movement in the region. The four nations have agreed that Indo-Pacific region "serves the long-term interests of all countries in the region and of the world at large". Such issues of nuclear tests and activities of Pakistan and North Korea were also discussed. On the question of South China sea the meet was targeted at the issue of freedom of navigation there. M. K. Narayan opined that, 'China has consistently opposed the idea viewing it as an example of anti-China consolidation. For the present, China has been circumspect in its opposition to the move and the rationale was that whether it is directed at a third party with the potential to disturb regional peace and stability. This may not, however, last for much longer'.

CONCLUSION

China has already emerged as a beacon of open and free global business order. This has put these powers in uncomfortable position as the rivalry will be sharp and the arm free stiff challenges to shape the regional economic and strategic initiatives such as Quadrilateral Dialogue. On the one hand, the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) is now relevant without the U.S., and on the other hand, the idea of an Indo-Pacific quadrilateral involving Japan, Australia, India and the U.S. will serve their national security goals. Unlike in the past, india is eager to engage with other regional players if it helps to flower Indian economic and strategic interests in maintaining a stable balance of power in the region. It is being said that the Quad is all about to contain Chinese economic supremacy in the region but it seems unreasonable to accept this assertion when the economic interest of each state is depending upon the China while there is a disparity of strategic interest of every state in this region is

unstable with the China. So far their relations with China are concerned. Hence, a common and cohesive Quadrilateral dialogue will provide the various options to balance the rising tide of Chinese expansion and at the same time it would also promote healthy competition among the members.

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