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# India, Australia, US, Japan hold first meet on 'quadrilateral' coalition

BY [DIPANJAN ROY CHAUDHURY](#), ET BUREAU | UPDATED: NOV 13, 2017, 12.31 PM IST

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NEW DELHI: India, overcoming its hesitation to create a format comprising itself, USA, [Japan](#) and [Australia](#), on Sunday participated in a Quadrilateral meet of the four countries in Manila on the eve of Modi-Trump meet eyeing to hedge China's expansionism in the Indo-Pacific region.

“Senior officials of diplomatic authorities in Japan, Australia, India and the United States, met in Manila, the Philippines on November 12, and discussed measures to ensure a free and open international order based on the rule of law in the Indo-Pacific,” the Japanese Foreign Ministry said in a statement at the end of the Quadrilateral meet. Senior MEA officials participated in meet on India’s behalf. Over the next two days PM [Narendra Modi](#) will also meet PMs of Australia and Japan separately besides Trump.

ET was the first op report in October about possibility of Quadrilateral in Manila. The Japanese Foreign Ministry statement itself made it clear that the agenda of Quadrilateral was aimed at measures to ensure stability of Indo-Pacific region amid China’s aggressive foreign policy that could sharper in the second term of Xi Jinping Presidency. Interestingly the Quadrilateral meet coincided with Trump’s Asia tour that sought more responsibility from China.

“...the participants discussed the direction for cooperation, including with countries in the region, in upholding the rules-based order and respect for international law in the Indo-Pacific, tackling proliferation threats, including North Korea’s nuclear and missile issues, against which maximized pressure needs to be applied, ensuring freedom of navigation and maritime security in the Indo-Pacific and countering terrorism and other issues,” the Japanese Foreign Ministry statement emphasised.

All members of Quadrilateral have been worried over China’s reclamation activities and belligerence in the [South China Sea](#) region that might impact Freedom of Navigation through the area. “The participants affirmed their commitment to continuing discussions and deepening cooperation based on shared values and principles,” according to the Japanese Foreign Ministry.

In a similar statement MEA noted, “Officials from India’s Ministry of External Affairs, Australia’s Department of Foreign Affairs, Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and United State’s Department of State met in Manila on November 12, 2017 for consultations on issues of common interest in the Indo-Pacific region. The discussions focused on cooperation 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.

They agreed that 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. The officials also exchanged views on addressing common challenges of terrorism and proliferation linkages impacting the region as well as on enhancing connectivity.

The Indian side highlighted India’s Act East Policy as the cornerstone of its engagement in the Indo-Pacific region.”

It is no secret that members of Quadrilateral have been forming partnerships to bring strategic balance in the Indo-Pacific region India

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and Japan with an eye on marrying India's Act East Policy with Japan's Free and Open Asia Pacific strategy has created an Act East Forum in the backdrop of China's OBOR. Japan is keen to expand its infra projects in SE Asia amid China's OBOR and along with India are exploring to develop projects in ASEAN. This is part of Indo-Japan corridor or partnership conceived last year for the Indo-Pacific region that also extends to Eastern Africa under Asia Africa Growth Corridor – an initiative that would provide an alternative to OBOR being implemented in a non-transparent fashion dictated by China's interests and whose end goal remain unclear. USA had spoken of alternate financing model for infrastructure projects as opposed to OBOR.

The idea of Quadrilateral was conceived by Japanese PM [Shinzo Abe](#) during 2006-07 period followed by the first meeting during that time. In his meeting with Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj last month US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson pushed the idea of Quadrilateral that was echoed near simultaneously by Japanese Foreign Minister in an interview to a local media. Besides officials of four countries were in touch over last few months to organise Quadrilateral.

India last participated in a similar Quadrilateral in 2007 but the format fell through after Australia pulled out ostensibly under Chinese pressure. Delhi has been hesitant ever since to join the Quadrilateral format and would still like to make steady moves rather than making ambitious goals as the group strengthens as a unit, pointed out persons familiar with the issue. Less than a month later on Dec 10-11 India in a balancing act will host Russia-India-China trilateral at the Ministerial level.

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