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Quad needs both economic & military plan for Indo-Pacific

BY ET CONTRIBUTORS | FEB 23, 2018, 11.37 PM IST

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By Yusuf T Unjhwala

The chiefs of navy of [Japan](#), [US](#), [Australia](#) and [India](#) sharing the stage at the recent Raisina Dialogue in Delhi comes just a couple of months after the officials from these countries met in Manila to revive the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue giving a clear indication of the military aspect of the grouping which is being called the [Quad](#). The move indicates India's readiness to shed its past inhibitions about the militarisation of the grouping and willingness to take greater responsibility in the security of the Indo-Pacific region.

The sudden revival of the Quad and the overt display of its militarisation shows how serious the members of the Quad consider the Chinese threat to be. China's unilateralism, disregard for rule based order, use of infrastructure development and investments in the region for geopolitical gains have hastened the process.

[China](#) sees the Quad as a stepping stone for an Asian NATO that is designed to contain it.

The members of the Quad deny that the grouping is to contain China or any other. The Quad cannot become an Asian NATO for the following reasons:-One, the driving force behind the grouping are Japan, India and Australia who are most threatened by China's rise and are uncertain of America's role in the region although it is part of the Quad. Japan and Australia which are treaty allies of the US, don't trust its security guarantee.

Japan has shed its pacifist constitution giving more power to its military and increased its defence budget. In fact, US President Donald Trump has indicated his support for Japan developing its own nuclear weapons than rely on the US.

Similarly, Australia doesn't think the US will remain the most powerful country in the world. Australian PM Malcolm Turnbull in his introduction to the new foreign policy white paper wrote that "Australia must be sovereign not reliant". India has historically been averse to any military alliance directed against any other country.

Two, A NATO style article 5, is unlikely. The US is increasingly seen as an unreliable ally. Furthermore, none of the countries of the Quad are likely to fight on behalf of the other. Japan is not going to help India if a war breaks out with China and vice versa. However, there can be greater cooperation in terms of weapons supply, intelligence sharing, diplomatic pressure and posturing.

Three, the Quad's goal is to keep the sea lanes of the Indo-Pacific free and open for inclusive and prosperous region. This does not require a NATO style military alliance. However, the US will play a major role in the Quad as the most powerful country in the world and its support is required for effective rule-based order. None of the other members of the Quad are capable of individually or collectively shaping the events around the Indo-Pacific.

Exercise Malabar provides the template for maritime cooperation between the Quad with focus on anti-submarine warfare, antipiracy operations, sea interdiction, humanitarian and disaster relief and joint patrolling, which India has been non-committal about so far. Assigning areas of responsibility will allow better allocation of naval assets.

India will be responsible for the security of the Indian Ocean which it considers as its primary area of interest. The new US national security



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strategy states that it supports India's leadership role in the security of the Indian Ocean and throughout the broader region. This will allow the US which has major presence in the IOR to allocate more naval assets in the Pacific Ocean and the South China Sea.

This will help India as it will force the Chinese Navy to allocate more resources in that region than expand its footprint in the Indian Ocean. The Quad will not be successful in achieving its objectives if it does not have a sound economic agenda and focuses only on the military aspect. China's geopolitical play is backed by its economic might which it is using to make infrastructure and other investments under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The Quad will have to provide an alternative.

The Indo-Japanese Africa Asia Growth Corridor (AAGC) can be adopted by the Quad. The AAGC envisages to enhance capacity and skills, quality infrastructure and institutional connectivity, development and cooperation projects and people to people partnership. The connectivity is going to be sea-based rather than land in contrast to China's BRI.

India should look to derive economic gains from the Quad. It needs over a trillion dollars in investments in its infrastructure and the manufacturing sector to create the millions of jobs that are required for its rising working age population. At the same time, India has to use the Quad to strengthen its military capabilities.

India has is a major defence partner of the US that allows the US to share advance weapons and technology to India. India is exercising its strategic autonomy by being part of the Quad and not compromising it as some analysts suggest. India joined its first security grouping last year when it was inducted into Shanghai Cooperation Organization. It is part of India's policy of engaging with every power in what is being termed as multialignment. Being part of the Quad will strengthen India's economic and military capability and establish itself as a security provider in the Indo-Pacific region.

(The writer is Editor, Defence Forum India)

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