

A NEW DIMENSION: ON INDIA-U.S.-AUSTRALIA-JAPAN QUADRILATERAL

Militarisation of the Quad will not alleviate the territorial threat India faces from China

In what will be seen as a significant shift of the government's posture towards the India-U.S.-Australia-Japan Quadrilateral (Quad), Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Bipin Rawat stated on Thursday that India believes the Quad would be a "good mechanism" to "ensure Freedom of Navigation Operations" (FONOPs) in the Indian Ocean and surrounding oceans including the Indo-Pacific. Unless he misspoke, the suggestion is that India is now prepared to join Quad military patrols, which marks a departure from its earlier reticence and public statements by the leadership. The Indian Navy has not taken part in any joint patrols outside of the Indian Ocean, and even within it, held its first one, with France, only recently. In terms of the engagement with the Quad, India has not yet formally announced a decision to include Australia in the annual Malabar exercises with the U.S. and Japan, although it is expected to do so. However, the move from conducting exercises together to joint operations would take time, something that makes the CDS's assertion significant. It is easy to surmise that his contention that the Quad operations are needed to ensure there is no "fear of any other nation singularly trying to dominate the oceans", is a veiled reference to China. It is also clear that the LAC tensions and clashes, as well as the PLA's refusal to implement border agreements, have convinced New Delhi that new strategies will be required to deal with Beijing. While India continues to engage China diplomatically, and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh have spoken of the importance of a resolution through talks, there is no doubt that an outcome of the tensions will be a strengthening of India's ties with global powers such as the U.S., as well as formations like the Quad. An indication of this is the government's plans to host a ministerial-level meeting of the Quad in the next month, possibly when the India-US "2+2" meet of Foreign and Defence Ministers is held.

While India considers its options, it is necessary to remember some of the reasons for its reticence in terms of militarising the Quad in any way. Prime Minister Modi said in 2018 that India sees the Indo-Pacific as a "geographical concept", not a "strategy or a club of limited members", and it would be important to know whether that formulation has changed. India is the only Quad member not already tied in a treaty alliance with the others, and Mr. Jaishankar's statement that India would never be part of any "alliance system" would run counter to what the CDS suggests. Finally, India is the only country in the Quad that shares a land boundary with China, and it is unclear how the militarisation of the Quad in Indo-Pacific waters would alleviate the territorial threat it faces. If, however, New Delhi's view of its Quad engagement has shifted, clarity and an expansion of Gen. Rawat's statement are essential.

Meanings of Difficult Words:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ dimension (noun) – aspect, feature, side, element. ❖ Quad/Quadrilateral (noun) – The 'Quadrilateral' is described as four democracies (the United States, Japan, Australia and India) with a shared objective to ensure and support a "free, open and prosperous" Indo-Pacific region. ❖ militarisation (noun) – the act of making something similar to armed forces. the process of equipping something (an organisation/etc) with military forces/resources. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ alleviate (verb) – reduce, control, mitigate/moderate. ❖ territorial (adjective) – geographical. ❖ shift (noun) – change. ❖ Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) (noun) – Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) is the professional service chief, head of the Indian Armed Forces and the senior-most uniformed military adviser to the Government of India. General Bipin Rawat was appointed as the first Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) on 31 December 2019. |
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- ❖ **posture** (noun) – position, approach, attitude, standpoint, view.
- ❖ **mechanism** (noun) – system, medium, agency, channel.
- ❖ **freedom of navigation** (FON) (noun) – a principle of customary (established) international law that ships flying the flag of any sovereign state shall not suffer interference from other states, apart from the exceptions provided for in international law.
- ❖ **Freedom of Navigation Operations** (FONOPs) (noun) – operations that reinforce internationally-recognized rights and freedoms by challenging excessive maritime claims.
- ❖ **misspeak** (verb) – misinterpret, misstate, misrepresent, misdescribe, mistranslate.
- ❖ **patrol** (noun) – vigil, guard, watch, monitoring.
- ❖ **mark** (verb) – indicate, represent, signify.
- ❖ **reticence** (noun) – uncommunicativeness, unresponsiveness, quietness, silence.
- ❖ **engagement** (noun) – participation, taking part, involvement.
- ❖ **exercises** (noun) – military drill, military (training) activities/operations.
- ❖ **assertion** (noun) – statement, claim/opinion, declaration, affirmation, contention.
- ❖ **surmise** (verb) – assume, conjecture, suppose.
- ❖ **singularly** (adjective) – remarkably, noticeably, particularly, exceptionally, extremely.
- ❖ **veiled** (adjective) – covert, concealed, hidden, camouflaged.
- ❖ **contention** (noun) – opinion, view, assertion/statement, declaration, affirmation.
- ❖ **Line of Actual Control (LAC)** (noun) – the de-facto (effective) border between India and China. The LAC is a 4,057-km border running through three areas-Western (Ladakh, Ladakh (Kashmir)), middle (Uttarakhand, Himachal) and eastern (Sikkim, Arunachal).
- ❖ **ties** (noun) – bond, association, relationship.
- ❖ **People's Liberation Army (PLA)** (noun) – People's Liberation Army (PLA) is the armed forces of the country of China and Communist Party of China (CPC). It is one of the largest military forces in the world.
- ❖ **diplomatically** (adverb) – in a way that involves ambassadors/diplomats between countries.
- ❖ **speak of** (phrase) – mention, talk about, discuss, refer to, comment/remark on.
- ❖ **strengthening** (noun) – reinforcing, underpinning, buttressing.
- ❖ **as well as** (phrase) – and in addition; and also.
- ❖ **formulation** (noun) – creation, origination, arrangement.
- ❖ **possibly** (adverb) – perhaps, may be, very likely.
- ❖ **in terms of** (phrase) – with regard to, regarding/concerning, in respect of, with reference to.
- ❖ **militarise** (verb) – to equip with military troops/forces; to deploy military troops/forces in an area.
- ❖ **in any way** (phrase) – under any circumstances.
- ❖ **geographical concept** (noun) – it allow for the exploration of relationships and connections between people and both natural and cultural environments.
- ❖ **geographical strategy** (noun) – it is concerned with the control of, or access to, spatial areas that affect the security and prosperity of nations. Spatial areas that concern strategic geography change with human needs and development.
- ❖ **tie in** (phrasal verb) – incorporate, involve something.
- ❖ **(treaty) alliance** (noun) – agreement pact, deal to form a bloc, federation; association/union.
- ❖ **alliance system** (noun) – The alliance system is formed when countries join forces or worked together to achieve a certain goal.
- ❖ **run counter to** (phrase) – to be opposed to, to be in conflict with.

APPROPRIATE STRATEGY:

ON INDIA BANNING MORE CHINA APPS

Whatever the threat from Chinese apps, India needs a better approach to tech regulation

The blocking of a hundred more Chinese mobile applications suggests that the Indian government, not for the first time in recent months, wants to make it amply clear that it will not shy away from leveraging its position as a massive market for technology in dealing with potentially dangerous geopolitical issues. Since June, when border tensions between India and China turned ugly, the government has till now stepped in thrice to block many Chinese applications in one go. In the latest such decision, on Wednesday, it blocked 118 apps, including the widely popular gaming app, PUBG, as well as WeChat Work and Baidu, owing to these being “prejudicial to sovereignty and integrity of India, defence of India, security of State and public order”. Over 200 Chinese apps, which were accessed by millions of Indian users, have been blocked in all till date. The decision has been taken based on several complaints, a press release said, of these apps “stealing and surreptitiously transmitting users’ data in an unauthorized manner to servers which have locations outside India”. It could be argued that loss of access to the Indian market will sharply affect the ambitions of the Internet giants emerging from China, but it remains to be seen if this tech-side intervention is effective as a counter in a geopolitical fight. Also, how far can India go to keep the Chinese players, who are well entrenched in the global tech supply chain, off the Indian market without prejudicing its own growth?

It is difficult to argue against decisions that are taken on the plank of national security, especially one arrived at by invoking the government’s power under Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, a section upheld by the courts previously. But it would be well argued that the Indian approach should have followed due process, where the focus was on ensuring compliance with the law. Instead, the Indian response to complaints has been to straight away block these apps en masse. Meanwhile, millions of Indians who were engaging with these platforms, some gainfully, have to scramble for alternatives. To add to this, the data protection law, a dire need in this age, is not yet there. All this does not bode well for a country with aspirations of global leadership of tech, an industry which thrives on global networks and rules. Ironically, China, which for years has unleashed widespread censorship of information and kept apps from outside off its Internet, has found a rare chance to take the moral high ground. It has criticised India’s move, accusing it of “abusing the concept of national security”. The last thing India needs is to be compared with China as far as its Internet regulation goes. It certainly needs a more considered approach to tech regulation.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ make clear (phrase) – explain, clarify, elucidate. ❖ amply (adverb) – sufficiently, satisfactorily, (more than) enough. ❖ shy away from (phrasal verb) – avoid, recoil, withdraw nervously (due to fear/surprise/pain/dislike). ❖ leverage (verb) – use, make use of, utilize (to maximum gain). ❖ potentially (adverb) – likely, may be, possibly, probably. ❖ geopolitical (adjective) – territorial. ❖ step in (phrasal verb) – become involved in, get involved in. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ in one go (phrase) – in one attempt, in one single action; at the same time. ❖ owing to (phrase) – because of, as a result of, on account of. ❖ prejudicial (adjective) – detrimental, damaging, harmful, disadvantageous, counterproductive. ❖ sovereignty (noun) – authority, supreme power, domination. ❖ integrity (noun) – unity, solidarity, togetherness. ❖ defence (noun) – protection, shielding, safeguarding; security. |
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- ❖ **public order** (noun) – it is essentially the absence of disorder – the quiet and orderly behaviour of people in public space. It involves people behaving sensibly and rationally, and respecting others.
- ❖ **in all** (phrase) – altogether.
- ❖ **surreptitiously** (adverb) – secretly, secretly, stealthily, furtively, covertly, clandestinely.
- ❖ **unauthorized** (adjective) – unofficial, unwarranted, unapproved.
- ❖ **intervention** (noun) – the process of intervening in something; involvement, interference.
- ❖ **counter** (noun) – answer, remedy, solution (to an argument/criticism).
- ❖ **keep off** (verb) – prevent, stop, block someone (from doing something).
- ❖ **entrenched** (adjective) – ingrained, established, embedded.
- ❖ **supply chain** (noun) – a network between a company and its suppliers to produce and distribute a specific product to the final buyer.
- ❖ **prejudice** (verb) – damage, spoil, impair, undermine, compromise.
- ❖ **plank** (noun) – a fundamental point.
- ❖ **arrive at** (verb) – attain, reach, accomplish (a conclusion or decision).
- ❖ **invoke** (verb) – cite, refer to, adduce.
- ❖ **Information Technology Act** (noun) – it is an Act of the Indian Parliament notified on 17 October 2000. It is the primary law in India dealing with cybercrime and electronic commerce.
- ❖ **Section 69A of IT Act, 2000** (noun) – Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, 2000, was introduced by an amendment to the Act in 2008. It gives the Central government the power to block public access to any information online – whether on websites or mobile apps.
- ❖ **uphold** (verb) – confirm, ratify, vindicate, validate.
- ❖ **due process** (noun) – fair treatment (per established principles & procedures).
- ❖ **compliance** (noun) – conformity, observation, adherence.
- ❖ **straight away** (phrase) – immediately, instantly, at once, directly.
- ❖ **en masse** (adverb) – in a mass, all together, as a group.
- ❖ **gainfully** (adverb) – profitably.
- ❖ **scramble** (verb) – struggle, hurry/hasten, rush (to do something to achieve a goal/result).
- ❖ **add to** (phrasal verb) – make something stronger/greater.
- ❖ **dire** (adjective) – urgent, desperate, pressing, crying, serious.
- ❖ **bode well/ill** (verb) – augur, indicate, portend (a good/bad outcome).
- ❖ **aspiration** (noun) – ambition, goal, desire, hope, wish.
- ❖ **thrive on** (phrasal verb) – to enjoy something, particularly one that other people find unpleasant; to be successful at something particularly one that other people find difficult.
- ❖ **ironically** (adverb) – paradoxically, unexpectedly, strangely.
- ❖ **unleash** (verb) – let loose, release, set free.
- ❖ **moral high ground** (noun) – ethical or political parlance/expression/phrase, refers to the status of being respected for remaining moral, and adhering to and upholding a universally recognized standard of justice or goodness.
- ❖ **move** (noun) – action, measure, deed.
- ❖ **as far as** (phrase) – to the degree/extent that.
- ❖ **certainly** (adverb) – surely, definitely, unquestionably.
- ❖ **considered** (adjective) – carefully thought about, calculated, contemplated, well-chosen.