

India Consolidates Anti-China Front Despite Unequal Power Relationship in QUAD

By [Paul Antonopoulos](#)

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*A few days ago, the Indian Naval Command submitted to **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** a request to build six nuclear submarines. From the Indian military’s position, the country needs six new submarines to counter the growing strength of the Chinese fleet that has long housed warships across the Indian Ocean. Currently, India has two nuclear submarines – one leased from Russia and the other domestically built. China has seven nuclear submarines and will soon add 12 more. It is obvious that New Delhi wants to narrow the ever-increasing gap in military power between the two countries.*

Also noted is the Indian military base on North Agaléga Island, part of Mauritius, an island nation in the Indian Ocean to the east of Madagascar. This military base is taking on a so-called defensive role against China’s growing power, particularly in Eastern Africa and the Indian Ocean. The base was established in 2015 to track Chinese ships passing through the Indian Ocean to the African coast.

Using the base for this purpose against China demonstrates that India is increasingly aligning its international policy with QUAD (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue), an anti-China U.S.-led organization that also consists of Japan and Australia. New Delhi has traditionally kept its distance from military alliances, and yet, although today QUAD is not an officially institutionalized organization, many believe it will soon become a kind of “Asian NATO.” This is an immense shift from India’s traditional position as a leading voice of the Non-Aligned Movement.

India also has another foreign policy direction that it can pursue despite being in stark contrast to QUAD – the BRICS group. India, along with Brazil, Russia, China and South Africa, were attempting to establish a more equitable multipolar world order. These countries showed willingness to work together to help less developed countries whilst simultaneously improving their own global status and image.

Some experts point to this potential, with [one saying](#):

“There is also the chance, however remote it may seem at the moment, that India and China enter into a grand rapprochement with one another, which results in them synergizing their economic activities in East Africa. This would naturally be the best-case scenario that could lead to multilaterally beneficial outcomes for all regional stakeholders. India and China could jointly assist Africa’s ascent across the 21st century, ideally through trilateral projects instead of competition.”

The Indian government can still choose between its traditional pacifist foreign policy or an alliance with a dubious militarism that only benefits the Anglo World. However, all signs are now pointing towards Indian militarism in the face of China’s growing power.

The U.S., Japan, Australia and India are expected to collectively aid each other and work together to defeat China in a hypothetical war. From the Indian perspective, they believe that a part of Kashmir is currently occupied by China and Pakistan, which New Delhi fears in the future will launch wars against India to claim even more Kashmiri territory, and in this way, QUAD is meant to serve as a deterrent.

However, the main folly with this idea is that it places a high amount of trust in Australia, Japan and the U.S. to support the Indian war effort against China. From the American, Japanese and Australian perspective, any hypothetical war with China will be at sea between the navies. It is expected that India would send its warships thousands of kilometers away to fight in the South China Sea. But the reality is that any hypothetical war between India and China will be land based on the Himalayan mountains. It is almost inconceivable to imagine that American, Japanese and Australian infantry will be landing in India to fight against the Chinese on mountain ranges thousands of kilometers away.

Therefore, QUAD does not have an equal power relationship among the four members as there is an expectation that Indian servicepeople will travel thousands of kilometers to fight against China without any clear prospect of the other three members sending soldiers to India. India and China have fought several wars and skirmishes, and all of them have been on land and over border disputes.

This must bring to question the function of the North Agaléga Island base. Although it is part of India’s own growing power projection across the Indian Ocean, including East Africa and its offshore islands like Mauritius, it is also part of efforts to counter China’s growing power and influence. The bulk of the issue between China and India is border demarcations on the Himalayas. By expanding naval military ties with the U.S., Japan and Australia, India is not resolving its issues with China, but is rather expanding problems for the sake of countries who are unlikely to support India in a land war against China.

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Paul Antonopoulos is an independent geopolitical analyst.

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