Challenges to the Quadrilateral Alliance

What is the issue?

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While an anti-Chinese alliance is taking shape in the Indo-Pacific, it is not easy to sustain it in the prevailing circumstances.

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What is the international context?

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- U.S. President Trump believes in a world governed by self-interest, with little room for shared responsibility.
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- In contrast, Chinese President Xi is taking the high road, is projecting himself as a firm believer in globalisation and free trade.
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- Notably, the former confronts major opposition to his policies within the U.S, while the latter's grip on China is almost total.
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- Against this backdrop, a coalition of all those willing to align with the U.S. against China's expanding ambitions is shaping up.
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What are the recent developments?

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- Official level talks were held recently, between the U.S., Japan, Australia & India for establishing the "Quadrilateral Alliance".
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- This marks a major shift in India's foreign policy, as it is an active alignment to an emergent power block.
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- As China's expansionist attitudes intensify, more countries are expected to align with the Quadrilateral group.

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- Notably, this is the first time that India has indicated a resolve to align openly with the U.S. to tackle issues specific to Indo-Pacific.
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- This enhances the Indo-US cooperation as major defence partners.
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What is China’s Position?

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- **Political -** China too seems eager to fight the challenges of a counter-alliance.
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- The Communist Party Congress emphasised on a strong military, signalling little willingness for compromise.
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- It also reinforced Mr. Xi’s paramount leadership and clearly elaborated on China’s ambitions for global leadership.
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- Notably, Mr.Xi adopted a hard line on many contentious issues in the region and beyond, reiterating an aggressive foreign policy.
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- **Economic Might -** China is positioned most advantageously as far as economic aspects are concerned.
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- It is the most important trading partner for over 90 countries and a massive economic power house.
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- Although the economic benefits of its Belt & Road Initiative (BRI) are disputed, it has definitely got a favoured reception by most countries.
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What are the challenges for the alliance?

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- Most Asian nations don’t actually have an unfavourable opinion on China despite its reckless foreign policy.

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- China has embarked on a charm offensive to win the support of Asian nations through lavish aid offers.
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- Even Mr.Trump, seemed to have softened his criticism of China, after China produced some attractive mega deals.
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- Only India, Japan & Vietnam have shown some willing to build an opposition to China's designs.
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- Also, nations in the quadrilateral alliance haven't stated a clear vision and gave separate press releases that were vastly divergent.
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- The opinions varied form 'joint security patrol' to 'funding mechanism to counter BRI'.
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How does the future look?

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- The Quadrilateral idea is likely to further irk China.
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- As developments become clearer with the formal setting up of the Quadrilateral, China is certain to counter it proactively.
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- This will pave the way for a new round of turmoil and China would use both force and inducements to win more countries to its side.
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- The consequences of this could be quite significant for peace and stability in the Asian region.
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Source: The Hindu

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