New Alliances & Challenges for India

What is the issue?

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- India is being pulled into multiple alliances to counter China’s connectivity initiatives and growing clout.
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- But India needs to exercise caution due to the costs involved and the uncertainty prevalent.
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What are the recent developments?

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- Officials from India, Australia, Japan and the U.S. held discussions on the sidelines of the East Asia summit in Philippines.
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- The discussions focussed on cooperation based on their converging vision and values for promotion of peace, stability and prosperity.
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- Lately, U.S. has vouched for the inclusion of Australia in the India-Japan-U.S. security cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region.
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- Taking it a step further, Japan has called for the inclusion of France and Germany.
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- In this backdrop, the prospect of a quadrilateral security alliance (Japan, US, India, Australia) is very real.
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Why is BRI being opposed?

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- Recently, U.S. Secretary of State Mr.Tellerson, stressed that an Indo-Pacific alliance would prevent predatory economics.
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- The ‘predatory economics’ remark was referring to China’s investment model being pioneered through BRI.
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- He stressed that the financing mechanism of BRI would saddle the consenting nations with enormous debts.
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- Hence, he called for alternative “financing mechanisms” in a multilateral way.
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How much progress has been made?

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- Discussion on the quadrilateral alliance is still at a nascent phase.
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- It is largely expected to be a counter narrative to China’s Belt and Road Initiative – BRI.
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- Notably, India is already working on connectivity projects on its own in its neighbouring countries and ASEAN.
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- India has also vouched to support any project of countries whose broad goals are aligned to it in the region.
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- U.S. has also begun investing in India’s periphery – notably, a $500 million agreement with Nepal to build infrastructure there.
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- Japan is attempting to align its own development initiatives to improving connectivity in the region through high-profile projects.
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- Hence, the proposed quadrilateral is a broader attempt to institutionalise this into a structured format.
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Why India needs to be cautious?

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- Cooperative mechanisms are crucial to maintain stability in the Indian Ocean Region.
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- But it would be prudent on India’s part to do a cost-benefit analysis of building such grand alliances during uncertain times.
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- Even countries wanting to shape an alliance to counter China are deeply intertwined with China in terms of trade.
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- Hence, caution is needed and excessive dependence on multilateral frameworks to fulfil national objectives may prove a costly mistake.
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Source: The Hindu

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