

CENTRE FOR JOINT WARFARE STUDIES

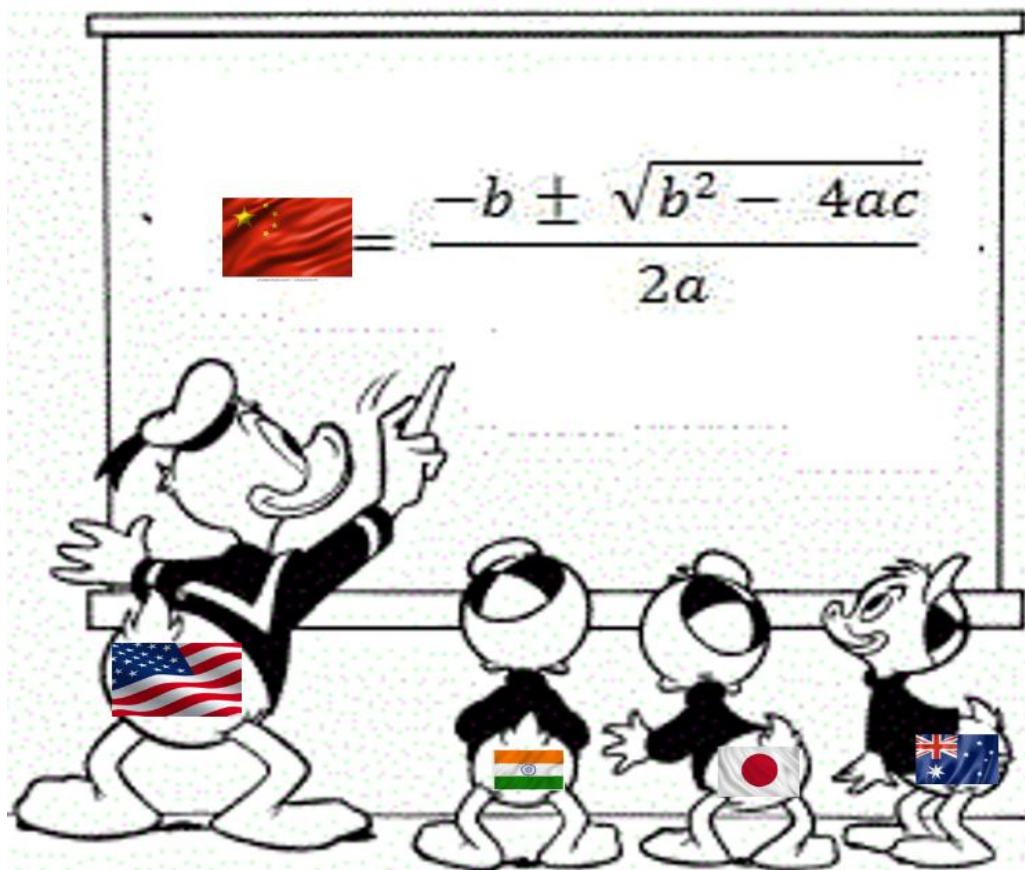


CENJOWS

INDIA'S QUADRATIC EQUATIONS



Lt Gen P R Shankar, PVSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd) is former DG Arty. Now he is a Professor in the Aerospace Department of Indian Institute of Technology, Madras, Chennai.



India has reinforced the LAC with 35000 troops. It is considering banning more Chinese apps. Chinese entities are being excluded from – telecom, railways, non-essentials, infrastructure and more. [Our stance against the Chinese is hardening](#). The question is – should we continue to do it alone or as part of the QUAD? Needs a logical examination.

The External Environment

In the article [QUAD2.0 and Tianxia](#) it was brought out that China is waging an intensifying Multi Domain War. Despite India being in the forefront to contend it, our external environment is fast deteriorating.

The Three-Pronged Chinese Threat. Firstly, China is trying to settle the LAC as per its perception with a Nine Dash Line approach – do what you may, we will do what we want. Reports of [deployment of troops in the Central Sector](#) are surfacing. The direct threat is explicit. Secondly. The threat through Nepal and Pakistan is transparent. The [PLA](#) hand behind the recent attack on our troops in Manipur is suspected. Myanmar is being pressurized to join the BRI. [Bangladesh](#) is veering sharply towards China. Bhutan is under pressure on the Sakteng issue. The [indirect and insidious](#) threat is manifesting in increasing proportions. Thirdly. The recent [Iran – China deal](#) reduces Indian influence in West Asia and constricts our gateway to CARs. With Iran and Pakistan in its lap, Afghanistan falls into the Chinese plate. An alternative CPEC axis via Gilgit Baltistan - Afghanistan – Iran opens up. China gets to control Gwadar and Chabahar. Chinese dreams of a two-ocean superpower seem real. This puts our IOR strategy at greater risk. Overall, the Chinese footprint is expanding exponentially.

Two Toned Pakistan. While dealing with an impoverished Pakistan of 200 plus million radicalized people headed by an ineffectual Government, we must contend with the supra national Pakistani Army (China funded) with regained “Strategic Space” in Afghanistan. The threat from Pakistan hereafter could also be a Chinese one. These two tones will get more complex and jarring.

Internal Dimension

Reality Check. Internally our status is tight. Lack of political consensus or internal strength even when China is at the gates is disturbing. The future

political landscape appears fractured which China to exploit. The Virus is raging unabated. While coping with health issues, the effect on the economy is debilitating. The Industry is working at 30% efficiency. Our economy will not rebound soon. In a couple of years, we might stabilize IF we decouple successfully from China, attract relocation and make Atma Nirbharta a great success. Our strength will grow only thence. Our defense establishment is [off track](#). Lack of budgets, inability to procure, fast track imports during every conflict, lack of long-term focus or priority, bureaucratic ineptitude and many more issues will constrain capacity building. OFB unions going on strike when war is imminent! Still amending DPPs and procurement rules? Oh Bureaucracy! Our 'neighbor's first' policy is in tatters with China being 'first' with all our neighbors. Overall, the mirror on the wall suggests that India cannot tackle China on its own. It might hold it off now. But just that. There is no Cinderella story around.

Options. What are the options available to keep China at bay? First. Go alone. Only feasible when India's comprehensive national strength relative to China improves. Second. Form an alliance or partnership with South East Asian Nations who are also affected by China. A sort of "Chini Peedith Samaj". Even if it is done, the combined heft cannot stop China. India cannot sail into the South China Sea for glory. The others are not strong to come to our rescue. Third. Join the QUAD. That needs examination and understanding.

The QUADratic Equations

USA. India and USA are the largest democracies with increasing interest convergence on bilateral, regional and global issues. The Indian American community is a thriving US ethnic group of increasing consequence. India-U.S. bilateral relations have matured into a "[global strategic partnership](#)". We have a major civil nuclear cooperation agreement. We are major defence partners. The India-U.S. Defence Relations frame work has culminated in the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Association (LEMOA) and Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA). We conduct more bilateral exercises with each other than any other country. Progressively, we are getting more defence equipment from USA. Most importantly we have a common adversary. Only India and USA can take on China in a military confrontation.

Japan. Indo-Japan religious and cultural [relations dateback to 6th century](#) through Buddhism. Prominent Indians associated with Japan include Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore, JRD Tata, and Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. Bilateral ties have been singularly free of any kind of dispute – ideological, cultural or territorial. The ubiquitous Maruti Suzuki transformed India in the 80s. Japan has always stood by India including bailing it out during the balance of payments crisis in the 90s. Indo-Japan relations have grown stronger with time. [India and Japan](#) have a Special Strategic and Global Partnership (2000) and have inked a India-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA in 2011). Put it simply. Japan has been India's trusted friend. The QUAD is Japans initiative. Japan and India are the only countries with territorial disputes with China.

Australia. Indo-Australia ties date back to the Common wealth. Notwithstanding this, the relationship was lukewarm since both countries existed in separate strategic spheres. Ties in cricket were greater. China's rise has driven both towards greater cooperation. We entered into a Strategic Partnership in 2009. Worsening ties have forced Australia to completely reassess its relationship with China. At the same time Australia and India entered into a [Comprehensive Strategic Partnership](#) recently.

The Equation. The QUAD nations are democracies with which India has historical equations. We have common economic and security interests. India has an ongoing 2 plus 2 dialogue with a comprehensive strategic partnership with all the countries. Converting this multilateral arrangement into a formal/semi-formal QUAD arrangement is the next step. Till recently India did not commit fully to the QUAD since it had a border relationship and deep economic ties with China. However the changed geopolitical equations makes India potentially one of the strongest pillars of the QUAD. If the QUAD has to be of substance India needs to play a big role. The talk that USA will use India and will let it down isself-serving sanctimony. If India wants to join the Big League, it should learn to play in it. It should have the confidence to look after its interests in any condition. The QUAD is not a Indo–USA deal. It is four nations supporting each other with each stabilising the others.

The QUADratic Solution

The Effect. QUAD nations have already conveyed unequivocally that Chinese assertiveness has limits. Space for China to scare smaller nations into submission is reducing. India taking on China militarily and enhanced US presence in South China Sea has emboldened Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia and Philippines to declare that Chinese claims in the South China Sea are illegal. Their resolve to get involved with decoupling and relocation from China is apparent. Militarily, the worst case option for China is a two front situation. The current situation allows the QUAD to refine and develop scenarios to tackle China militarily in future also. While land forces need not come to aid for each other, the air and naval forces can. A couple of air and naval exercises (which are on the cards) are good enough for China to get the message. Very importantly the QUAD gives a framework for military cooperation in communication, logistics, intelligence and strategic movement.

Economic Framework. The opportunity value of an economic framework is far greater. Indian economy can only revive if it becomes a base for relocated manufacturing and be part of the global supply chain. QUAD is an ideal platform for that since it is a combination of raw material, manufacturing, consuming and innovating nations. Also, China is not a country which is endowed with resources. Resources and raw materials come from outside. QUAD enables leveraging this capacity collectively. It also gives India the counter leverage in the neighbourhood. There is already talk of QUAD Plus with Vietnam, S Korea and New Zealand joining in. Taiwan will automatically come in to increase the economic weight. So the economic angle is taking shape and will be heavy. It will spill over to the regional nations and EU eventually.

Diplomacy. USA, Japan and Australia have come out openly to support India. [Strong Australian support](#) is clearly the QUAD effect. Something unheard of in the past. The pressure on China on issues pertaining to Taiwan, Hong Kong, Tibet and Xinjiang can only come through a joint diplomatic effort.

The QUADratic Format. The QUAD can operate on three formats. It can carry on as an 'Informal Grouping' as of now. One can see certain coordinated actions and reactions on play. However informal groupings can be divided and dissipate due to trivial factors. They are suboptimal. The QUAD can become an 'Alliance'. A very big ask for all countries in the

Pandemic situation. The middle path is a 'Partnership' with a formal framework and a consultative mechanism for dialogue and action. Yet each country can retain a degree of freedom to pursue its other interests. The middle path of a 'Partnership' suits all including India the best at present.

The Crunch

Whatever has brought India this far will not take it where it wants to go. The point of diminishing returns has arrived. 'Change of Course' will have to be more than rhetoric. Can we do Business as Unusual? In the Global stage, India needs to have the confidence of making hard choices based on its interests. Look at it from any point of view – do we have a better choice? We must get our QUADratic equations right.

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