

tomorrow's power," in Hagman's words. Innovation and provision of technological products, which are primarily private goods—activity trackers, smartphones—can no longer be restricted to the traditional buyer-seller relationship. This is because the unit of interaction is "data," which is subsequently collected and organised, used, purchased and sold. Moreover, while the digital space is a commons, it is firmly entrenched in the ambit of private entities, e.g., tech companies. This necessarily calls for public-private engagement for the effective use of data. For instance, urban mobility data that is collected by private transportation companies, in the hands of policymakers, could lead to better city planning. Tarek Elabbady, in his intervention, explained how multinationals can become involved with governments—the only ones with the power to aggregate data across

sectors and borders—to ensure effective use of data. Building infrastructure, providing processing services such as edge computing, and ensuring inclusivity are ways in which private entities can get involved.

—Ritika Passi



"India unfortunately has a huge unfinished agenda when it comes to public goods".

—Sandhya Venkateswaran



Alignment, Arrangement Or Alliance? Debating the Future of the Indo-Pacific



In November 2017, on the sidelines of the ASEAN meeting in Manila, officials from the United States, Japan, Australia and India met to revive the four-way quadrilateral dialogue (colloquially, the quad) after a hiatus of ten years. Two months later, in an apparently unconnected development, general and flag officers from all four countries, along with a former senior Indonesian diplomat, assembled in Delhi for a panel discussion at the third edition of the Raisina Dialogue. The meeting came at a time when the strategic construct of an 'Indo-Pacific' order is gaining currency at official levels, and the deliberations focussed on what it could look like and the challenges to its evolution.

In particular, the panellists contemplated whether such an order would be shaped by formal alliances, or by multiple alignments and foreign policy orientations of regional powers. They also articulated their views on the role of flexible regional arrangements, such as the Quad, in shaping that order. However, the problem with flexible arrangements is precisely its flexibility, which could impose an ad hoc character on the groupings, in the absence of the

charter mandates of formal alliances. At the same time, formal alliances can diminish sovereignty and be constraining, reducing the foreign policy choices of states that are party to them. Tensions between the demands of treaty alliances and the flexibility of ad hoc arrangements, could lead to diminished utility especially when viewed against the wider choices that come from multi-aligned foreign policies. These conflicting scenarios will likely determine the structure of any future Indo-Pacific security architecture.

Indian Navy chief Admiral Sunil Lanba delicately brought up the challenge faced by multi-aligned states such as India in multilateral institutions. He noted: "The core philosophy of these institutions must show respect for strategic autonomy for each participating nation." Admiral Lanba's remark was, in many ways, an echo of the on- and off-record equation of the quad with other plurilaterals (the Russia-India-China dialogue by Indian officials) and was an unspoken expression of India's strategic autonomy. This, in turn, signals to the other three in the quad that India's foreign policy strategy precludes the quad from becoming

MODERATOR

Indrani Bagchi, DIPLOMATIC EDITOR, THE TIMES OF INDIA

PANELLISTS

Admiral Sunil Lanba, CHIEF OF NAVAL STAFF, INDIA

Admiral Harry Harris, Jr., COMMANDER, U.S. PACIFIC COMMAND

Admiral Katsutoshi Kawano, CHIEF OF STAFF, JOINT STAFF, JAPAN

Vice Admiral Tim Barrett, CHIEF OF NAVY, AUSTRALIA

Dino Patti Djalal, FOUNDER, FOREIGN POLICY COMMUNITY OF INDONESIA

General Chris Deverell, JOINT FORCES COMMANDER, U.K.

an exclusive partnership directed against China.

The danger with this position, of course, is that by establishing a notional parity between the quad and other arrangements (with or without China), the agenda of the former stands to be diluted or, at worst, become vacuous. In particular, India's strategic autonomy posture is the best bet China has that the quad will never acquire a serious political-military character. This is precisely what is needed for it to have teeth in face of Chinese revisionism. This implication also stands to negate Admiral Lanba's fellow panellist and US Pacific Command chief, Admiral Harry Harris's exhortation about the need to exhibit "courage" and take "tough decisions" to maintain the free and open character of the Indo-Pacific. It is worth noting that in the past, Harris had quite forcefully advocated that India and the US jointly patrol the

South China Sea. It is unlikely that an informal arrangement such as the quad will collectively undertake such action any time soon.

Former Indonesian ambassador to the US Dino Patti Djalal also highlighted the difference between alliances and alignments, arguing that "[new] strategic spaces that will be created will not be by alliances but by alignments." The Indonesian position was unsurprising given that Indonesia – like India – has a multi-aligned foreign policy, deftly juggling its interests with both the US and China as well as its role in ASEAN. However, another problem with flexible alignments are that their strengths – by definition – vary over time, leading to a diffusion of purpose. If China is indeed the leading disruptor in the Indo-Pacific, as Harris in his remark claimed, an inter alia diffused focus of like-minded countries vis-à-vis Beijing is unlikely to



"It is the shared vision of almost all stakeholders in the Indo-Pacific to establish an environment of peace and security. In India's context, this is enshrined in the vision of SAGAR as articulated by our honourable Prime Minister".

—Admiral Sunil Lanba



"China cannot be checked. Yes, in the same way India cannot be checked. India is going to keep growing militarily and strategically just like the United States cannot be checked and Russia cannot be checked".

—Dino Patti Djalal

make it modify its behaviour. The Dragon can only be tamed, some would argue, through sustained and single-minded pressure.

In the absence of a straitjacketed multilateral alliance such as NATO, there is a distinct possibility that a plethora of security arrangements could crop up within a region, leading to duplications, unevenness of coordination between the various members, and other problems that hinder concrete outcomes. This was precisely the point made by the chief of the Australian navy, Admiral Tim Barrett. He acerbically noted that "[one such problem] may be as simple as asking the same nations to send the same ships to so many exercises that they run out of fuel." But similar problems may exist within a given grouping – take the quad, for example. Australia, India, Japan and the US carry out naval exercises in bilateral, trilateral and multilateral formats, with

outcomes of uneven quality. One way by which the quality of the exercises could be standardised is to include Australia in the annual high-end MALABAR exercises. But then, with such exercises the quad could start assuming the contours of an alliance, which would, in turn, impinge on India's strategic-autonomy posture.

—Abhijnan Rej

