

QUAD IS U.S. ANTI-CHINA GAME: RUSSIA

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: QUAD and India

Sergei Lavrov

Russia hit out at the four-nation quadrilateral strategic dialogue or Quad, calling it a “devious policy” by western powers to engage India in “anti-China games”. While Moscow has expressed concerns about the U.S. Indo-Pacific policy and criticised the Quad, comprising the U.S., Australia, Japan and India, as a “divisive” and “exclusivist” concept, this is the first time it has suggested that India-Russia ties could be affected by it.

“India is currently an object of the western countries’ persistent, aggressive and devious policy as they are trying to engage it in anti-China games by promoting Indo-Pacific strategies, the so-called “Quad”, while at the same time the West is attempting to undermine our close partnership and privileged relations with India,” Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said at Moscow-based think tank Russian International Affairs Council. “This is the goal of the U.S.’s very tough pressure on New Delhi in the MTC [military and technical cooperation] area,” Mr. Lavrov stated, which diplomats said indicated growing MTC between India and the U.S.

In the past month, India hosted military exercises with all the members of the Quad, and signed the final pending ‘foundational agreement’ BECA, which facilitates Indian and U.S. militaries in sharing intelligence. The incoming Biden administration is also expected to press harder on India against its purchase of the S-400 anti-missile system from Russia, which could attract U.S. sanctions.

In his comments, Mr. Lavrov said the U.S. and European countries were trying to “restore” the unipolar model with U.S. leadership, but that other powers or poles such as Russia and China would not be “subordinate to it”. The “U.S.-led West” had launched what he called a “game” that seeks to “isolate” Russia, as well as China, he said.

No comment from MEA

The Ministry of External Affairs declined to comment on Mr. Lavrov’s remarks, and whether they represent a strain in India-Russia ties.

In the past few months, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has taken part in multilateral events with Russian President Vladimir Putin, while External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh made separate visits to Moscow where they met their counterparts.

However, former diplomats suggested that the remarks signalled gaps in understanding between Moscow and New Delhi.

“[Mr.] Lavrov’s comment suggests that the two sides, despite a regular dialogue at the highest levels, have not developed enough understanding of India’s point of view and its security concerns about Indo-Pacific and the Quad to avoid a public statement of this nature,” said former Foreign Secretary and former Indian Ambassador to Russia Kanwal Sibal, pointing out that India had not expressed concerns about Russia’s growing strategic ties with China publicly.

“If Russia is concerned about the U.S. pulling India into its orbit, it should express some public concern about China’s unacceptable territorial aggression against India,” Mr. Sibal said, adding that India had maintained its independence in ties with the U.S.

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