

NEW DELHI WEIGHS SHIFT IN GEOPOLITICAL STRATEGY

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NEW DELHI : The rising geopolitical tensions with China could see New Delhi move closer to groupings such as the so-called "Quad" with the US, Australia and Japan, said analysts. India may also join the US, among others, in the Freedom of Navigation exercise in the disputed territories of the [South China Sea](#).

The biggest casualty of the "violent face-off" between Indian and Chinese troops along the [Line of Actual Control](#) (LAC), which resulted in the death of at least 20 Indian soldiers, will however be bilateral ties, said Srikanth Kondapalli, professor of Chinese Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University.

While India and China will continue to interact at multilateral fora, including at the Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa, or [Brics](#), forum, "ties will be more circumspect at the bilateral level," said Kondapalli.

Besides the "Quad" grouping, it may also embrace the concept of Indo-Pacific—from the east coast of Africa to the west coast of the US—with more ease, despite China's objections.

Other measures India could contemplate are taking positions to the detriment of China at international fora like the recent World Health Assembly meet, for example, where India joined 120 countries that called for an evaluation of how covid-19 that surfaced in China in December became the global pandemic that it did.

"In the past, India has abstained from taking a position on Xinjiang," Kondapalli said. The reference was to the region where the mainly Muslim Uighur population live where Beijing is accused of human rights violations.

To raise the diplomatic costs for China, "India could take a position on Taiwan" besides Xinjiang, said former foreign secretary Kanwal Sibal.

China regards Taiwan as a renegade province and a part of China. India does not recognize Taiwan and does not have diplomatic ties with Taipei but has opened a trade office there with a counterpart office in New Delhi.

Upgrading ties with Taiwan or supporting Taipei at international fora would be one way of signalling to China, Sibal said.

At the military level, while India has to deal with China at the LAC, New Delhi could flex its naval muscle in the [Indian Ocean](#)—a key waterway through which Chinese commercial ships pass. Any choking or blockading of Chinese commercial vessels could cost Beijing dearly, said Kondapalli, pointing to the possible impact such a situation could have on Chinese stock markets. "The Indian Navy is in a strong position in the Indian Ocean region," he said.

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