GEOPOLITICS

THE QUAD SUMMIT IN MANILA: PATROL PLANES, SEA CABLES AND A FORUM FOR INDIA

By **Kamlesh Bhagatkar**, *Politician, Author & Geopolitical Analyst · 18 November 2026*

The Quad summit in Manila did take place. On Tuesday, 17 November, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, US President Donald Trump, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi met for the 7th Quad Leaders' Summit, on the sidelines of the ASEAN meetings. When I wrote about Modi's trip to Manila last week, New Delhi had not yet confirmed it.

In their joint statement the four leaders said they "strongly oppose any destabilising or unilateral actions that seek to change the status quo" by force or coercion, Reuters reported. They also expressed "grave concerns about economic coercion, including through arbitrary export restrictions". The statement condemned terrorism and violent extremism in all its forms, including cross-border terrorism, according to ANI.

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri called it a "very substantive and forward-looking meeting" and "a very practical and pragmatic meeting". At all three summits he attended in Manila, Misri said, the Prime Minister made one point: "what the world really needs today is peace, stability, and predictability".

What the four leaders agreed

The first is the Indo-Pacific Maritime Surveillance Collaboration, meant to improve information sharing and maritime domain awareness. Misri said its first exercise will be held on the sidelines of Exercise Sea Dragon in March 2027, in Guam. "It will address shared challenges such as illegal fishing and trafficking, etc," he said. According to the joint statement as reported by ANI, P-8 and P-3C maritime patrol aircraft from the four countries will take part in an exercise in 2027, the first time in a Quad context.

The second is the Quad Partnership for Cable Connectivity and Resilience. Until now it covered the safety of telecommunication cables. Misri said it will now include undersea energy cables. The leaders also welcomed an expansion of Australia's contribution to include electricity cables, and upcoming undersea cable projects in the Indian Ocean.

The third is economic. The leaders agreed to start a Quad Business Forum, bringing together businesses, academics and industry from the four countries. Misri said Modi announced India's interest in hosting it in the first quarter of 2027. The joint statement, as reported by ANI, calls it the inaugural Quad Business Leaders' Forum, to be held in early 2027.

There was also a promise of enhanced cyber cooperation, and the leaders reaffirmed the AI Accelerator that Quad foreign ministers announced in Atlanta. "They address issues related to resilience, to diversification, to connectivity, and capacity building," Misri said of the outcomes.

Why this matters for Bharat

I read the surveillance plan as the most useful outcome for India. Our Navy watches a very large ocean. Shared awareness of what moves on and under the sea is where the Quad helps us most, and it is the kind of help that does not tie India to anyone's military plans.

The cable plan comes next. Undersea cables carry our internet traffic and payments, and the leaders now want energy cables in the same safety net. With cable projects planned in the Indian Ocean, India has a direct stake in how they are built and protected.

The words on "arbitrary export restrictions" also matter to us. The statement, as reported, names no country. I would only note that Indian firms have felt export curbs on inputs we depend on. Earlier this week I wrote about China's curbs on tunnel boring machine exports and what they mean for our projects. Only our own factories can fix that dependence.

India has pressed for the cross-border terrorism language in many forums. Having the American, Japanese and Australian leaders sign it in Manila helps our case.

A summit in someone else's city

There is a less comfortable side. The Quad did not meet at leaders' level in 2025. In February this year, at the Munich Security Conference, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said the summit was "not cancelled" but had not been formally scheduled. "The fact that the QUAD did not take place at the summit level itself, I wouldn't overread it. So do stay tuned," he said, according to The Week, which also reported that India was supposed to host the summit this year.

The summit finally came in Manila, on ASEAN's margins, after a gap of more than two years since the last one in September 2024. Misri presented this as respect for ASEAN centrality, and he pointed out that Quad officials first met in Manila in 2007 and leaders met there again in 2017. "It is very fitting that almost a decade later, in 2026, the 7th Quad Summit is being held here in this city," he said.

I accept that reasoning, and I think a meeting held now is worth more than a perfect meeting held later. Hosting the business forum gives India some of the convening role back. Misri also noted five Quad foreign ministers' meetings in the past 20 months, three of them this year in New Delhi, Manila and

Atlanta.

The same day, Modi told ASEAN leaders that India and ASEAN, "nearly a quarter of the world's population", must ensure "our future is determined by cooperation, not competition," Business Standard reported. Southeast Asian governments watch the Quad closely. Holding its summit inside the ASEAN week, with ASEAN centrality restated in its statement, sends the message India wants: the Quad exists to deliver practical help to the region, and it is not a bloc aimed at anyone.

What to watch

Three dates matter. The first is March 2027 in Guam, where the surveillance exercise will show whether the patrol plane plan is real cooperation or a single event. The second is the business forum in early 2027. If India hosts it, I would judge it by whether it brings investment in supply chains such as critical minerals and electronics. The third is the next leaders' summit. No date or host was announced in the reports I read. India, as I see it, should push for one on Indian soil in 2027.

Sources

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- The Week: QUAD summit 'not cancelled', says EAM S. Jaishankar: Why it matters for India
- ThePrint: Modi to visit Philippines next week to attend ASEAN-India summit, Quad leaders' meet also likely



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