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# **GROWING RELEVANCE OF QUAD: IMPACT ON INDIA-CHINA RELATIONS**

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## ***Abstract:***

*The United States of America (USA), India, Australia, and Japan are the four countries that make up the Quad, commonly known as the "Quadrilateral Security Dialogue" (QSD). Working for a free, open, prosperous, and inclusive Indo-Pacific area is one of the Quad's main goals. In 2007, the group convened for the first time outside of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). An alliance of marine democracies is thought to exist. All of the member nations participate in meetings, semi-regular summits, intelligence exchanges, and military exercises to preserve the forum.*

The QUAD, which consists of the US, Japan, Australia, and India, had been dormant until 2017, when it was reorganised for a number of reasons, including China's increasing influence and aggressive behaviour in the Indo-Pacific, the need to maintain rules-based order in the area, the need to strengthen the existing institutions, the need to protect geostrategic and geoeconomic interests through freedom of navigation, and the promotion of connectivity and regional development.

However, it is important to note here that the Indian Ocean Tsunami of 2004, one of the greatest natural disasters in history, led to the creation of the Quad framework. The shocking death toll prompted several nations to band together to offer immediate humanitarian aid. In order to help the tsunami-affected nations, India, Japan, the US, and Australia created a "core group" and sent nearly 40,000 troops, humanitarian aid workers, helicopters, cargo ships, and planes. Former foreign secretary Shyam Saran stated: 'India's entire capabilities came as a surprise to the world, demonstrating India's power, leadership ability, and commitment to the Indo-Pacific'.

Midway through January 2005, the humanitarian relief mission came to an end, but the leaders' understanding of the Quad framework began to grow again. Shinzo Abe, Japan's former prime

minister, advocated for freedom, human rights, democracy, and the rule of law in 2006 when he proposed a "arc of freedom and prosperity." Manmohan Singh, the former prime minister of India, travelled to Tokyo in the same year. In a joint statement, the two nations indicated their readiness to start discussions with other "like-minded" nations in the Indo-Pacific area. US Vice President Dick Cheney expressed US interest in the Quad dialogue in 2007. The Quad was given an ideological foundation by Abe's remarks on the "confluence of the two seas" during his visit to India in the same year. On the fringes of the ASEAN Regional Forum in Manila a month later, the 'initial Quad's' first meeting was held.

## **Chinese Muscle-flexing**

Two Malabar naval exercises were conducted in 2007. The US-India drill included Japan for the first time in April, and when Singapore and four other navy joined in September, the exercise became multilateral. The coalition, however, disintegrated when China began to oppose the exercises. Indian communist groups also started to demonstrate against the maritime drills, severely harming India's standing in the Quad. India hesitated as well out of concern that its competition with China might prevent it from joining the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). Shinzo Abe, the main proponent, also resigned as prime minister, and India also lacked Australian support, mostly because of China.

However, increasing Chinese aggression forced India to quicken the Quad's pace. The leaders of the Quad countries convened in the Philippines in 2017 on the fringes of the ASEAN summit, bringing the organisation back as Quad 2.0. India, formerly a reluctant participant, started acting proactive. For instance, Australia started asking India to rejoin the Malabar exercises in 2017; India finally agreed in 2020. Furthermore, border disputes—the Galwan Valley confrontation in 2020 and the Doklam incident in 2017—pushed India towards active engagement by emphasising India's proficiency in pharmaceuticals, supply chains, technology, and manufacturing capacity at the Quad virtual and in-person summit in 2021.

The events that occurred in the years between 2012 and 2020 are responsible for the Quad's resurgence. When Prime Minister Abe retook office in 2012, he demanded a "democratic security diamond." Each member of the Quad experienced Chinese aggression between 2013 and 2020 when Xi Jinping was in power. China put security at risk by refusing to abide by globally recognised maritime regulations, contesting orders based on those regulations, claiming lands and

islands, creating artificial islands, and endangering Indo-Pacific peace. In 2012, China used coercion against Japan in the vicinity of the Senkaku Islands. The trade imbalance between Beijing and Washington has caused tensions to rise. As was previously noted, India and China had border disputes in 2017 and 2020 at Doklam and Galwan Valley.

## **Relevance of QUAD for India**

The core of QUAD is an Indo-Pacific region that is open, inclusive, and free. China has recently become India's largest threat, and US backing for the latter has reached a boiling point. The geopolitical context has become the impetus behind India's QUAD membership. The summit highlights how deeply strategic India's interest in the Quad is, especially in light of the current border impasse in Ladakh. The containment of China's expanding military engagement in the Indo-Pacific area will always be the main agenda item of QUAD, despite the fact that it covers a wide range of topics, including the economy, pandemics, and development.

The fact that many countries in the aforementioned region, including India, the Philippines, Japan, Taiwan, Brunei, Malaysia, and Vietnam, have maritime or territorial disputes with China makes this issue much more important. Beijing has been particularly active in the South China Sea, even going so far as to contradict international maritime treaties and rules. The main world powers have been extremely concerned about China's ongoing military show-off.

China's viewpoint has not altered since it initially rejected the creation of the Quad. The Quad was described to as a "headline-grabbing idea" by the Chinese Foreign Minister in 2018 and the group was charged of overtly promoting conflict among Asian regional countries. Beijing has urged nations like Bangladesh to refrain from participating with the Quad because it sees it as a part of a bigger plan to encircle China. Here, it is important to quote the statement made by the spokesperson for the Chinese Foreign Ministry following the summit on March 12, 2021: "We hope that relevant countries will keep in mind common interests of the regional countries and uphold the principle and do things for regional peace, stability, and prosperity rather than the opposite." The statement makes it abundantly clear that Chinese see QUAD as a danger to their quest to dominate the area. Being the main rival for China in South Asia, Beijing is particularly displeased with India's membership in Quad. India, on the other hand, views it as a chance to make up for past wrongs and counterbalance China's expanding expansionism in the region.

No country in QUAD has a boundary that China disputes, with the exception of India. This fact also restricts India's ability to adopt a combative military posture in the Indo-Pacific area. If India takes this action, Chinese assault on its border region may become a concern. Even though India has greatly improved its military capabilities, it still trails behind other QUAD members in a number of areas. For instance, India lacks the industrial infrastructure necessary to produce advanced warfare platforms.

Due to shortcomings in significant force transformations, a lack of integration between its services, and the absence of a national security doctrine and architecture, India's increasing acquisition of military hardware has also failed to turn it into a military power. Additionally, India, a developing country, is under enormous pressure to spend more on defence in order to resist Chinese repositioning due to its limited natural resources. In order to displace or lessen India's power, China is most importantly using its BRI to influence and try to shift domestic politics in nations like Pakistan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.

India has both benefits and drawbacks from joining the Quad. As was already indicated, India can counteract China's expanding influence in the Indo-Pacific through the Quad, including the BRI (Belt and Road Initiative), which has seen China build ports in nations bordering India, creating a feeling of encirclement in New Delhi. With the help of the Quad, India may transcend its position as a middle-power and extend its influence beyond the Indo-Pacific. Additionally, India's engagement in the Indo-Pacific is strengthened by its Act East Policy and Extended Neighbour Policy.

In addition, with the Quad as a backdrop, India's bilateral connections with 'like-minded' nations can be strengthened even further through agreements on intelligence sharing, arms exchange, military ties, and other things. Economically, the Quad will help elevate India as a top investment location, particularly in light of the COVID-19 epidemic. Due to its "Vaccine Maitri," the Indian government's efforts to distribute COVID-19 vaccinations to other countries, India is considered as a prominent actor in the post-pandemic world order. The Quad is important for India because, via economic cooperation, shared democratic principles, and strong defence connections, it has the opportunity to increase its pharmaceutical prowess and assert its leadership in the post-pandemic world.

QUAD is a forum that gives India a special opportunity to hold diplomatic consultations for better regional policy coordination with the member nations to talk about a number of important topics that affect the Indo-Pacific region, such as maritime security, multilateralism, and connectivity. Discussing particular policy actions with like-minded states based on shared regional security perspectives might lay the stage for "preventive diplomacy." The QUAD's institutional framework and ambitions are formally unstated, and because it is a small group, its member nations can work quickly to forge an alliance without being constrained by the conventional principles of non-intervention and consensus-based decision-making that are the fundamental principles of ASEAN and render it ineffective while ruthlessly addressing threats to the political and economic interests of the nations belong.

From a regional standpoint, the majority of South East Asian countries and Pacific Island Countries (PIC) have traditionally seen India as a trustworthy partner, whether for humanitarian aid or for development goals. The Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, James Marape, recently praised India as the leader of the global south and said that PIC will support India's leadership in international forums during a meeting at the third Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC) conference. In response, India vehemently defended its support for multilateralism and a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific.

It is important to note that most nations in South East Asia and the Pacific Islands lack the resources and technology necessary for having an adequate understanding of the marine environment. Quad will undoubtedly gain their trust if it positions itself as a regional provider of public goods to help these nations. The Quad nations will also strive to provide an alternative to Chinese infrastructure while reducing their reliance on Chinese supply chains and technologies. The Quad will also coordinate its positions on disputes involving the East and South China Seas, the situation in the Taiwan Straits, and other divisive topics in the Indo-Pacific and beyond. Additionally, it will strengthen cooperation on climate change, public health, space exploration, and cybersecurity. In addition, Quad will focus on China's main diplomatic, economic, and security initiatives as well as its foreign policy priorities and will react in a coordinated manner.

China asserts that it cannot be contained and that it is correct. Its own actions will determine whether it rises or falls. Recent Chinese moves have sparked an outcry in the region and beyond that the Communist Party of China will find challenging to handle. In order to prevent a growing China from continuing to be hostile to their interests, other states are currently attempting to

establish the conditions of engagement. All nations, big and small, will still be at odds about who determines the parameters of their interaction with China. And it is in this area that India has played a crucial role in inspiring this response. In order to challenge China on the predatory features of the Belt and Road Initiative and other policies, New Delhi was not afraid to go alone, if necessary, even before the recent border crisis brought about a paradigm shift in India's China policy. Even its friends cautioned it against rejecting BRI because of potential bad effects, so it travelled a lonely path. However, New Delhi eventually succeeded in making its criticism of China's infrastructure initiatives well-known and mainstream.

In conclusion, Quad is vital for India since it is seen as a strategic counterweight to China's expanding economic and military might. India may enlist the assistance of other Quad members to combat any escalation in Chinese hostilities along its borders as a Quad member. With the aid of its naval force, India may potentially execute strategic expedition in the Indo-Pacific region. Overall, Quad offers India the option to engage in multilateral cooperation on a range of initiatives that can support the growth of an open, free, and rule-based Indo-Pacific region. It will also be fascinating to see how India balances its ties to China in the context of QUAD. India will have to subscribe to the realpolitik logic to prove that QUAD is not a Democratic confrontation against the Communist Bloc.

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