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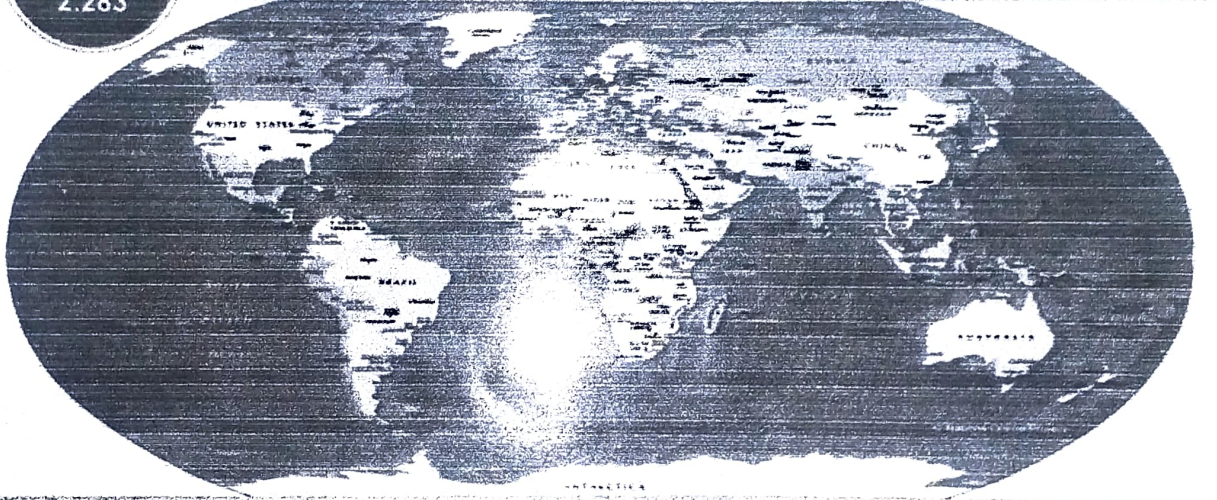
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महाराष्ट्र राज्यशास्त्र व लोकप्रशासन परिषदेची संशोधन पत्रिका

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## India and QUAD : An Overview of Relations in the Indo-Pacific Region

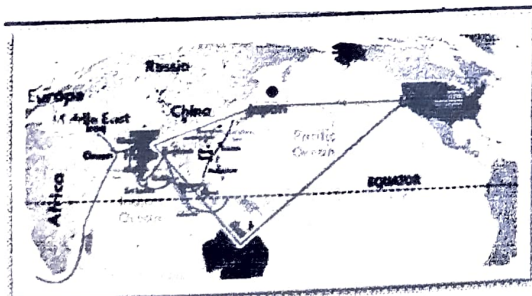
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The QUAD partners came together and the grouping expanded its agenda against the background of the Chinese aggression against Taiwan and in the Indo-Pacific regions. The QUAD agenda now includes diverse economic activity apart from strengthening security. While the dates of the QUAD summit are still to be finalized, US President Joe Biden, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Japan Prime Minister Fumio Kishida will be in Sydney to further strengthen cooperation and push back the Chinese belligerence in the Indo-Pacific regions and aggressive behavior against all four democratic countries. Before that India will also be hosting the QUAD foreign ministers meet in New Delhi soon.

With these events taking place in the last month of 2022, this paper aims to take an overview of QUAD, India's participation in QUAD and discuss various alliances developing in the Indo-Pacific regions.



**Quadrilateral Security Dialogue-** the QUAD is an informal strategic forum comprising four nations, namely — United States of America (USA), India, Australia and Japan. Its origins can be traced back to the evolution of Exercise Malabar and the 2004 Tsunami when India conducted relief and

rescue operations for itself and neighboring countries and was later joined by the US, Japan and Australia. It is considered an alliance of maritime democracies, and the forum is maintained by meetings, semi-regular summits, information exchanges and military drills of all the member countries. Today, the countries—all democracies and vibrant economies—work on a far broader agenda, which includes tackling security, economic, and health issues.

The QUAD was born from the vision of the Indo-Pacific as a single strategic space, where activities in one area would inevitably affect activities in the other. There were two underlying motivations behind this grouping and vision. The first was that the United States, Australia, India, and Japan have a vested interest in upholding the rules and norms of the current order; augmenting existing institutions; ensuring freedom of navigation and trade; and promoting connectivity, economic development, and security within existing rules and standards. The second was that all four QUAD members believed that China's rise and the reach of its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) posed a threat to them and the region. Yet, the QUAD was essentially dormant until 2017. It was resurrected (QUAD 2.0) for a number of reasons, not the least of which was that the Donald Trump administration saw the Indo-Pacific as a crucial theater of competition with China and thought India could play an important role in countering China in the region.

The Quad has provided an opportunity to participate in different configurations with 'like-minded' nations. For example, Australia, India, and Japan have announced their





intention to launch a supply chain resilience initiative. Furthermore, India has participated in COVID-19 related cooperation with the UK, Brazil, Israel, South Korea, and the US. India, the US, Japan, and Australia met virtually at the March 12 Summit in 2021 to discuss development, cooperation on the Indo-Pacific, vaccines, technology, climate change, and supply chain management. The Quad leaders also released a Joint Statement that has come to be known as 'The Spirit of the Quad'. Without mentioning China, the document points towards quadrilateral cooperation against the activities of China in the Indo-Pacific region. The document by no means signaled that the Quad is a military coalition—instead, it emphasized its core agenda to make the Indo-Pacific an inclusive, free, and open region, in which the rule of law is upheld.

### India and QUAD

India has to weigh a number of long-standing and conflicting security, diplomatic, and economic calculations. India's vision of the Indo-Pacific rests more on the Indian Ocean and less on the Pacific Ocean, where Chinese assertiveness arouses the most concern from the United States, Australia, and Japan. For India, the Indo-Pacific framework stretches from the east coast of Africa to the western and southern Pacific and includes portions of the Middle East. In contrast, the United States includes neither Africa nor the Middle East in its conception of the Indo-Pacific.

India is uncomfortable with any conception of the Quad as an anti-China "alliance of democracies" (as U.S. President Joe Biden has put it). India supposedly abandoned nonalignment after the end of the Cold War, but it is still not willing to enter into an alliance with any country or group. India is certainly worried about a rising China but also faces the reality that, as of this year, China overtook the United States to become its number-one trading partner.

The Quad also poses some challenges for India-

1. There is the possibility of reactivating tensions with China on different fronts, making it imperative for New Delhi to ensure that the Quad is not reduced to an anti-China grouping. Since India and China are members of international organizations such as BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) and SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation), managing China through the Quad would undermine India's involvement in other organizations.

2. India's involvement in the Quad could risk alienating two important Indian allies, Iran and Myanmar. Iran is a crucial partner for India to secure energy and conduct trade with Central Asian countries, but China's 2021 USD 400-billion economic deal with Iran may become a problem for India. Simultaneously, China is also active in Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

3. India is the only country among the Quad members that shares its borders with China. If India engages militarily in the Quad, there emerges a risk of Chinese aggression at the India borders.

5. The U.S.-India partnership has progressed rapidly over the past few years, in some quarters, India still remains a little skeptical of the United States as a long-term reliable and trustworthy partner.

However, It is believed that the forum strategically counters China's economic and military rise. Interestingly, if Chinese hostilities rise on the borders, India can take the support of the other Quad nations to counter the communist nation. In addition, India can even take the help of its naval front and conduct strategic explorations in the Indo-Pacific region. There has been a significant reorientation of India's foreign policy due to violent clashes at the India-China disputed border. In 2015 and 2018, India launched the Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) concept and Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) for maritime security. In 2018, India tried to align





the objectives of the Quad with SAGAR and IPOL. These initiatives seek to contain Chinese bellicosity in the oceans.

With India's partaking, the Quad has been upgraded to a cooperation platform on global issues and has held regular ministerial meetings. For instance, in November 2019, India hosted a Quad 'CT-TTX' (counter-terrorism tabletop exercise) in Delhi. Senior military leaders also appeared on Quad-plus panels at India's flagship geopolitical conference the Raisina Dialogue of 2018, 2019, and 2020.

India has also gone beyond the Quad and has deepened its bilateral ties with the Quad members. With Australia, India has signed an information-sharing agreement and a mutual logistics support agreement. Both countries have also participated in bilateral military exercises such as AUSINDEX (Australia India Exercise) and AUSTRA HIND and have conducted dialogues on defense policy and maritime security. India and Japan have participated in bilateral military exercises such as JIMEX (Japan-India Maritime Exercise), and Dharma Guardian. Both nations have signed agreements such as the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) and reciprocal provision of supplies and services. With the United States, India has deepened its defense ties with agreements such as the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA), the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA), and the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA). Both countries have undertaken joint training of peacekeepers and bilateral military exercises such as VAJRA PRAHAR, YUSH ABHYAS, COPE INDIA, and Tiger TRIUMPH.

Through the Quad, India can counterbalance China's growing presence in the Indo-Pacific region, including its BRI (Belt and Road Initiative) which has led to it building port facilities in countries neighboring India, giving rise to a sense of encirclement in New Delhi. With the Quad, India can rise above its

middle-power status and project its influence beyond the Indo-Pacific. Also, India's Act East Policy and Extended Neighbor policy boost India's engagement in the Indo-Pacific.

As a Quad member, India is even better positioned to help the US, Japan, and the rest of the free world get over its dependency on China for manufacturing, which in turn helps fund the PRC's military build-up. Indian companies also can play a key role in countering the Chinese commercial presence in most of the Indo-Pacific—especially the still developing parts—that serves as the front end of its political influence and eventual military inroads. This bolsters a weak point for the other Quad countries. The US government frets that American companies need to get into the remote parts of the Pacific region. The Australians aren't really a scalable option. The Japanese are good on infrastructure projects and don't mind going where the living is rough, but normally don't do the at scale ground-level business development. With a combination of US funding, Japanese skills, resources and networks, and a little imagination the Quad can get to work on the "economic" front.

The Quad decided to take on China's vaccine diplomacy by pledging to distribute one billion doses of COVID-19 vaccine across the Indo-Pacific. India's production capacity, Japanese finance, Australian logistics, and American technology will be utilized to distribute vaccines. Moreover, the Quad is also focusing on new technology, particularly 5G, to challenge China's 'digital Sinosphere'. Australia, Japan, and the US have already banned Chinese information and communications provider, Huawei, and India has banned more than 200 Chinese apps. These are all examples of Quad members collectively challenging Chinese influence.

### Conclusion

China claims it cannot be contained and it is right. Its rise and fall will be determined by its own actions. China's recent actions have generated a backlash in the region and





beyond, which the Communist Party of China will find rather difficult to navigate. What other powers are trying to do now is to set the terms of engagement so that a rising China does not remain inimical to their interests. All states, major and minor, will continue to remain engaged with China, but the battle is over who sets the terms of this engagement.

And it is here that India's role has been central in galvanizing this response. Even before the ongoing border crisis ushered in a paradigm shift in India's China policy, New Delhi was not shy of walking alone, if need be, in challenging China on the predatory aspects of its BRI and other policies. It walked a lonely path, with even its friends advising that shunning BRI could have negative consequences. But New Delhi was eventually successful in making its critique of China's infrastructure plans widely accepted and mainstream. The concept of the Indo-Pacific and its viability was also sold to the world by India's insistence that only when the two oceans are viewed as part of a single unified maritime space, can a coherent regional balance of power be envisioned. Most significant, perhaps, was India standing up to China on border issues underscoring to the wider region,

which has been suffering under the onslaught of Chinese aggression, that giving in to a bullying power is not the only option available.

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