

Indo-Pacific Geo-politics and QUAD

Dr. Babita Maji

Assistant Professor

Raghunath Girls' P.G. College

Meerut

Email: majibabita225@gmail.com

Abstract

The ascent of China has altered the regional dynamics of the Indo-Pacific area and sparked the geopolitical rivalry among the world's leading countries in the twenty-first century. A multinational effort centred on shared security, QUAD was launched in 2007 by Australia, India, Japan, and the United States. China said that it will create an Asian NATO in order to safeguard its strategic and commercial interests since it saw this move as a danger. QUAD, however, has been positioned by Australia, Japan, and India as an economic and civic endeavour to establish an open, integrated, and free Indo-Pacific area. In an effort to preserve regional peace and security, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) has resurfaced as a result of the intricate geostrategic circumstances in the Indo-Pacific region, which are forming an increasingly unstable international order. Due to the Indo-Pacific area's strategic importance and the possibility of Quad grouping, this paper will examine the Indo-Pacific region's geostrategic construct and further examine the role Quad can play in the dynamics of the region. The concepts of security dilemma and neoclassical realism are used in this research to analyse the Indo-Pacific region's dynamics. In order to achieve stability and peace in the region, Quad must play a balancing role in the diplomatic, military, and economic spheres. This paper aims to comprehend the elements that shaped the Indo-Pacific idea and assess the potential role of Quad in the Indo-Pacific region's diplomatic, military, and economic spheres. The research presented in this paper emphasises the historical significance of the Indian subcontinent as well as the roles played by geoeconomics, security, diplomacy, and strategic narratives in forming the Indo-Pacific idea.

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Dr. Babita Maji

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Introduction

The geopolitics and global economy have revolved around the Euro-Atlantic region since the ending of World War II. The global power structure is changing in the twenty-first century. Globalisation since 1991 has caused an economic swing towards Asia, but China's forceful development is ultimately responsible for the great power rivalry's final transfer from the Euro-Atlantic to the Indo-Pacific region. In this geopolitical scenario, India is emerging as a potentially huge beneficiary. It is strategically present amidst the conflict of interests of America, China and Russia. Amid disruptions in global supply chains and US-China disengagement, India is poised to become a major destination for global capital, new technology investment, and increased global and regional partnerships. The traditional conceptions of geopolitics hold that the struggle for dominance over the world's economic and military might is at the center of international politics. The Asia-Pacific security architecture has given way to the Indo-Pacific one in the twenty-first century.

This change has been brought about by the rise of China, the growth of India's geopolitical and economic might, and most importantly, the increasing importance of the Indian Ocean as a vital trading route that carries over two thirds of the world's oil exports and one third of bulk cargo.

As a result of these factors, regional stakeholders have become more vocal in their calls for an open and free Indo-Pacific, which has led to the reestablishment of the Quad. Member states share a common Indo-Pacific vision based on their shared commitment to maintaining an open, free, inclusive, peaceful, and prosperous Indo-Pacific region that is built on an open, rules-based framework.

Since its founding, the Quadrilateral alliance of Australia, India, Japan, and the United States (the Quad) has evolved into an important foundation of the Indo-Pacific regional architecture, with a marked change in emphasis and tone from previous versions. The Quad has evolved into a leader-level discourse since its resuscitation in 2017, started releasing joint statements, and created a new working group structure to promote collaboration. Its agenda has also been considerably expanded and developed to cover infrastructure, cyberspace, critical and emerging technologies, vaccinations, and climate change.

This study examines these issues using information from recent publications, official declarations, and conversations with influential specialists and decision-makers in the four nations. In doing so, it provides five important insights into the Quad as a developing component of the Indo-Pacific architecture and a means of realizing the objectives of its four constituent nations.

First, there is minimal desire among the member nations to further institutionalize the Quad by setting internal goals and institutionalization.

Second, there is less interest in joining the Quad nations as their current objectives revolve upon enhancing the grouping's internal coherence. But in the future, through targeted projects and efforts within working groups, the Quad countries could be open to limited functional collaboration with other nations.

Third, the Quad seems to have a strong basis of support among its four members, indicating that it will remain a vital component of the Indo-Pacific region. Institutional environment even when regimes change in the future. The number of government departments and individuals engaged in the grouping's operations has increased due to its working-group structure and the wider range of topics it covers. The Quad and its initiatives are also widely supported by politicians of all stripes inside the member nations.

Fourth, conventional security cooperation is still crucial even though the Quad agenda has been expanded to cover economic and nontraditional security challenges.

There are a lot of potential benefits for the group. As insular offshore powers with the capacity to maintain the liberal status quo in the maritime commons of the region, Australia, Japan, and the United States have a strategic interest in doing so. Due to its large population, long history of hostilities with China, and geographical isolation from China, India is a rimland nation that makes it the main alternative rimland power and inherently antagonistic to the Belt and Road Initiative. Using insights from geopolitical theory, the Quad might pursue three avenues of action to thwart the rise of Chinese hegemony in order to achieve these possible benefits.

The US and other insular nations, immune from direct threats to their homeland, might assure a favorable balance of power by merely controlling the global marine commons, according to sea power advocate Alfred Thayer Mahan. On the other hand, Sir Halford Mackinder contended that the development of railways would make it possible for central continental powers, like Russia and Germany, to more successfully unite and govern the "heartland" of Eurasia and gain indisputable authority that they could then project out into the oceans. It was accurately noted by Nicholas Spykman that the economically productive "rimland" of coastal states, spanning from Western Europe to South and East Asia, is where the greatest concentrations of demographic and economic power in Eurasia are found, rather than in the region's comparatively barren interior. Therefore, according to Spykman, the biggest threat to U.S. and international security stems from a potential hegemon or coalition—such as Germany, Japan, or Russia—that wants to unite the rimland

under its control in order to gain unrivaled access to the global commons and unrivaled productive potential.

First and foremost, the members of the Quad should reaffirm their collective maritime dominance in the Indo-Pacific region's international waters and airspace. For their own security and development as well as the security and prosperity of the entire region, it is imperative that they maintain the liberal status quo of freedom of navigation, which is supported by international law and standards. Members of the Quad should plan and practice for eventualities including Chinese pressure that affects freedom of navigation, construct a shared and overlapping architecture for surveillance and logistics, and coordinate the development of complementing capabilities through military consultation.

Secondly, it is imperative for the Quad members to reaffirm their dedication to the liberal order. This single strategic vision is already shared by them, but regular political consultations should prevent members from being seduced into agreeing to Chinese strategic intentions. Being the sole resident rimland power in the Quad and the member most leery of strategic alliances, India, this is particularly crucial. China will keep trying to sway New Delhi's stance and seduce Indian leaders by offering a cordial and mutually beneficial partnership. However, China will find it difficult to maintain control over the rimland and the waterways around it if India's regional policy, which is supported by its political and military links to the Quad, continues to be skeptical of Beijing's objectives.

Third, the Quad ought to assist other rimland states in maintaining their security, particularly in Southeast Asia, which is both strategically and economically important.

The Quad should combine economic assistance and security cooperation to lessen these smaller governments' susceptibility to Chinese pressure, since China targets them through influence and coercion. Indonesia is the largest state in the region in terms of both population and economy, and it is situated near some of the most important marine chokepoints. This isn't a case for the Quad to grow; rather, it's a case for it to focus its next efforts on helping important nations like Indonesia become independent and develops while still honoring the region's clumsy ASEAN-centric institutions. Without requiring the formation of any new formal structures or alliance obligations, these lines of work are ideally suited to the preferences of the Quad members for a progressively deeper process of political and military coordination. Situated on or close to the Eurasian littoral, the four states that currently hold the status quo are all militarily strong. The Quad can be an effective platform for coordinating members' strategic policies to thwart Chinese hegemony because of their individual and combined advantages.

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought the globe to a complete standstill, yet it was precisely during this crisis that the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue—also known as the Quad—began to gain momentum. Although it is high on the Quad's agenda, it appears that the main focus is now on fighting China given the state of the security situation. It is arguable that China is the undisputed elephant in the room, even though the Quad hasn't said it explicitly. The reasoning underlying the Quad's formation is undermined by Beijing's exclusion from the group's four members. In this case, the Quad may be considered a new type of 21st-century security alliance.

The grouping is becoming more difficult because to the growing polarisation brought forth by the US-China.

Asia-Pacific India's strategic and geographical importance in the Indo-Pacific region acts as a counterbalance to China's expanding influence in the Indian Ocean. The primary reason for the necessity for such a counterweight is China's encirclement strategy through port facilities in India's neighbour, especially Gwadar and Hambantota. Concerns over China's chokepoint in the South China Sea and its maritime presence in the Indian Ocean under the guise of antipiracy operations are another cause for the want to preserve and defend free and open sea channels of communication.

India's strategic importance in the Indo-Pacific region may be seen via four lenses. Firstly, in contrast to Asia-Pacific architecture, the Indo-Pacific build offers New Delhi a chance to surpass its long-standing designation as a middle-power. This is strengthened by India's entry into the League of Great Powers, which includes the US and Japan in particular, as well as the development of strong strategic ties with the US and its regional allies. This significantly promotes India's ambitions to become a great power and its capacity to project power throughout the Indo-Pacific region and beyond.

Second, India's Act East Policy and Extended Neighbourhood Policy are automatically strengthened by New Delhi's active participation in the Indo-Pacific. This rise is further supported by New Delhi's tighter connections with ASEAN members, like as Vietnam, Singapore, Thailand, and Myanmar. Third, the defense-related links that have strengthened the India-US strategic relationship serve as a powerful counterbalance to India's adversaries. This is demonstrated by the four foundational agreements that the two countries signed: the General Security of Military Information Agreement, 2002; the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement, 2016; the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement, 2018; and, lastly, the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement, 2020.

Most importantly, the improved ties significantly increase India's military power, particularly when it comes to hitting precise targets. This is vital since India must closely monitor the Quad Factor in the Indo-Pacific, as well as China's movements along the Himalayan border and China's expanding influence in the Indian Ocean. Furthermore, US arms shipments to India have increased from nil to fifteen billion USD in terms of arms transfer. Furthermore, increased military drills between the US and India, such as Tiger Triumph, the first-ever bilateral disservice amphibious military exercise, have improved communication and camaraderie between the two countries. In addition, New Delhi has a compelling counterargument to China's Belt and Road Initiative by joining the Blue Dot Network.

The Quad is undoubtedly becoming one of the major multilateral fora dedicated to an expanded security partnership in the post-COVID-19 world order, given the increased volume and tempo of the group's activities. Furthermore, an active Quad challenges the notion that the Indo-Pacific area is essentially inactive. Now that the stakes are higher than ever, each of the Quad's four members must assume more important responsibilities in addressing the difficulties and power conflicts in the Indo-Pacific area.

China will undoubtedly get unsettled by the Quad's emergence as a united front advocating for an open and free Indo-Pacific.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended the Quad leaders' first-ever in-person summit on September 24, 2021. Modi placed a strong emphasis on "building peace in the Indo-Pacific region" with "like-minded countries" that uphold democratic principles during the summit.

There are benefits and drawbacks for India in joining the Quad. As previously indicated, China's expanding influence in the Indo-Pacific area, particularly the BRI (Belt and Road Initiative), has caused it to construct port facilities in nations that border India, creating a feeling of encirclement in New Delhi. India can offset this influence through the Quad. India can transcend its status as a middle-power and extend its influence beyond the Indo-Pacific region by utilising the Quad. India's participation in the Indo-Pacific region is further enhanced via its Act East and Extended Neighbour policies.

Managing the transition of order in the Indo-Pacific area involves not just constructing opposing institutional frameworks or mounting challenges to the balance of power, but also negotiating the nature of the regional order. Members of the Quad have so stated their desire to provide shared security based on shared identity and values, albeit occasionally more in speech than in deed. The argument made in this piece is that India is actively challenging and, in some cases, redefining the

Quad's establishing narratives as an Indo-Pacific "security community." India has taken a selective and ambivalent approach to the socialisation requirement of liberal identity cues under the leadership of Narendra Modi. In general, India has expressed unique ideas on regional security and declined to adopt an overt, coordinated strategy of Chinese containment.

India's current position as a pivotal global power is intricately linked to the Indo-Pacific's geopolitical landscape, which is predominantly shaped by the rivalry between the United States and China. However, the Indo-Pacific concept's appeal also stems from the way that important regional players—including the US, Japan, Australia, and India—have framed it as a "free and open" region with common values. The perception of China as a challenger of the established order both domestically and internationally has sparked renewed attempts to uphold and strengthen the liberal order throughout the Pacific and Indian Ocean regions. Therefore, "freedom and openness" stand as ideals that are essential to the security and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region and act as a counterstrategy to China's growing regional and global influence.

One of the main pillars of the Indo-Pacific regional architecture is the Quadrilateral alliance, which consists of the United States, Australia, Japan, and India. Since great power competition has returned, the Indo-Pacific area has become an important theatre of engagement. In addition to raising serious concerns about the strength and longevity of the U.S.-India Partnership, China's expanding power and influence throughout the Indo-Pacific raises important issues for U.S. policy in the area. The alliance of Australia, India, Japan, and the United States, known as the Quad, has come to be seen as a key component of the Indo-Pacific regional architecture. According to Australia's former foreign minister Marise Payne, it may best be defined as "a diplomatic networking of countries that engages flexibly and practically, with the clear purpose of enhancing stability and prosperity by meeting challenges quickly and nimbly" last year. The Quad has undergone a number of significant modifications since its resuscitation in 2017. Meetings between working-level officials, foreign ministers, and, most recently, leaders of state have all gradually been elevated to a higher position. As conclusion, Quad has the ability to significantly influence Indo-Pacific regional dynamics despite a few obstacles. There are significant security ramifications for the recently proposed Indo-Pacific Partnership on Maritime Domain Awareness. Furthermore, despite the fact that the majority of public attention has been focused on the six leader-level working groups addressing economic and nontraditional security challenges, cooperation on security issues such as maritime security, cybersecurity, counterterrorism, disinformation

management, humanitarian assistance, and disaster response has continued at the ministerial or working level.

India is going to become a more significant player in international affairs as the world economy moves towards Asia. Its high-tech industry and large population make it a valuable equalise to China's rise. The United States recently overtook India as its largest trading partner, but there are still many unresolved issues in this expanding partnership.

New Delhi and Washington policymakers will need to work together more closely than in the past to sustain India's economic development and fortify international partnerships such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad). Greater engagement of Western countries within organizations like BRICS and G20 along with predictability and stability regarding India's political leadership will further strengthen India's position. The Indo-Pacific region essentially envisions new frameworks that highlight the security interests that are convergent and competing, as evidenced by the shift in global power towards the area. The maritime powers—Australia, China, Japan, India, and the United States—are particularly significant. In addition, they aim to control and encourage one another to fulfil their own national objectives. Furthermore, as China's and India's respective wealth, interests, and influence grow over time, the two Countries are interacting with one another in the maritime sphere more frequently; taking into the potential benefits and obstacles, the manner in which China and India will coexist in the shared Cooperation, coexistence, rivalry, or confrontation in Indo-Pacific space could be among theKey strategic challenge in contemporary era. In the Indo-Pacific, quad can contribute to preserving stability and peace in the area. The rise of China's economy and its justification for using economic warfare to further national objectives in the economic sphere led Quad to decide to take the lead in supply chain, technology, and infrastructure sectors, and going forward, Quad is probably going to use the member states' capacities to encourage economic integration with ASEAN nations and offer developing countries with sustainable investment initiatives. Although this study primarily considers the Indo-Pacific region's geostrategic framework and potential role of Quad. The very uniqueness of the Indo-Pacific and Quad concepts in the geographic context requires more investigation to look into many facets of this idea and classification.

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