

## QUAD 4.0? TO SECURITIZE OR NOT TO SECURITIZE

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*From an ad hoc body that emerged to coordinate a response to a devastating tsunami in 2004, the Quad has grown into a critical and formalized framework with a practical agenda. As the grouping has become an important and (in all likelihood) a permanent fixture in the Indo-Pacific region, debates on its nature and character, and where its priorities must lie have also grown. This paper addresses a key point of contention regarding the Quad's future: Whether the grouping should move toward a rigid security treaty alliance by enhancing its security focus, or whether it should continue on its present trajectory and focus on becoming a public good provider in the region. This paper reflects on the Quad's evolution thus far and aims to make a case as to why the Quad must cautiously stay removed from reverting to its initial security focus and instead focus on achieving its vision of becoming a force for good in the region. Championing public goods can in fact be a major advantage for the Quad, as it can not only help gain greater acceptance in the Indo-Pacific, but also help strategically balance against China's expanding influence and geopolitical footprint in the region.*

The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, an arrangement between four like-minded powers – India, Japan, the US and Australia – has grown from the ad hoc body that emerged post the 2004 tsunami to a critical, and more formalized, fixture in the Indo-Pacific region. Today, it stands as an important aspect of the foreign and Indo-Pacific policies of its constituent states.

The latest Quad Leaders' Summit in Tokyo in May 2022 – the fourth such meeting in the past year and the second in-person one – clearly displayed the strong commitment of all four countries to the grouping. It also highlighted once more the breadth

of issues that the Quad is looking to tackle, as well as the substantial progress it has already made in areas like ramping up vaccine production and delivery. Yet, at the same time, the meeting also left several lingering questions: What is the future trajectory of the Quad? Will it continue to build on its present scope of emerging as a critical provider of public goods in the Indo-Pacific region, or will it revert its focus to traditional security and military collaborations with the aim of containing the threat posed by China's rise in the region? In other words, will the Quad abandon its current flexible (and by extension, rather effective and resilient) structure

and broad agenda in favor of a rigid security treaty alliance that is representative of an Asian version of the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance (NATO)?

This paper aims to understand the future of the Quad and its position in the evolving security architecture of the Indo-Pacific by reflecting on its trajectory thus far and its expanding efforts to achieve the goals of the four member-states.

## Quad's Evolution: From Ad Hoc to Institutional?

### Quad 1.0: A Fragile Existence and Lackluster End

The origins of the 'Quad' can be traced back to the Tsunami Core Group, which emerged rather organically in response to the Indian Ocean Tsunami of December 2004. The tsunami was a natural disaster of massive proportions that caused havoc across South and Southeast Asia – the region we know today as the Indo-Pacific.

For India, the disaster presented an opportunity to rise to the occasion and demonstrate that the Indian Ocean was India's domain, and it possessed the capacity, ability and will to lead in the region. India committed to the disaster relief efforts in an unprecedented manner: Within hours of conversations with the then Sri Lankan President and with the US leadership, in which they raised requests for immediate aid afield, India deployed naval helicopters with essential relief materials to

Colombo; two ships to Galle and Trincomalee (in Sri Lanka); three ships to Male (Maldives); and another two converted hospital ships to Indonesia, the worst-hit country.<sup>1</sup> In total, India's contribution to the international relief effort numbered over 12 ships and almost 6,000 troops.<sup>2</sup> India's response, and its naval capabilities of scale, showed its potential as a major regional power.

Over the following days, India, Japan, Australia and the United States set up an international coalition – the Tsunami Core Group – to coordinate the massive rescue and rehabilitation effort. Together, the four countries amassed numerous planes, helicopters and ships; over 40,000 troops; and well over \$1.2 billion within days.<sup>3</sup> This ad hoc coordinative mechanism became an example of what the four states could achieve by working together, and became the precursor for the Quad.

In 2006, late Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe became an early champion of forging an "arc of prosperity and freedom" as Tokyo sought to promote universal values like freedom and the rule of law across the region.<sup>4</sup> Abe's landmark speech at the Indian parliament, titled 'The Confluence of the Two Seas' made no mention of the Quad, but laid the groundwork for the Indo-Pacific concept that came to define the region. Further, during Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Tokyo, he affirmed that India was interested in initiating a dialogue with other "like-minded countries in the Asia-Pacific region" to address "themes of mutual interest".<sup>5</sup> The four countries held their first – and only – summit along the sidelines of the 2007 ASEAN Regional Forum in Manila. This was followed by a Quad plus Singapore maritime exercise, featuring exchanges of personnel and drills in sea control and multi-carrier operations, which marked a high point (and the final act) for the first iteration of the Quad.

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*First*, the Quad faced fierce opposition by China, which not only registered a formal diplomatic

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complaint with all four states, but also launched a veritable campaign against the very concept of such a consortium. As Australian academic William Tow stated, it “soon became nigh-on impossible to meet a Chinese foreign policy scholar without hearing a variant on why the Quad was bad”.<sup>6</sup>

*Second*, Beijing’s strong objections added to the reticence of the Quad states, which shared varied dynamics with China. For Canberra, appeasing China was important for its economic growth, and it was perceived as a safer bet than throwing in with Tokyo and New Delhi, which ran the risk of being left high and dry as a result of their future policy departures.<sup>7</sup> For India, angering China could damage its ties with a vital neighbor, when their relations had only normalized in 1988.<sup>8</sup>

Washington was similarly concerned that antagonizing China would have repercussions for its larger strategic efforts in the region, including attempts to raise international sanctions against Iran and conduct six-party talks on North Korea.

*Third*, as their differences in China policy indicated, there was a clear and apparent gap between the Quad states, and an overall (but quite glaring) absence of familiarity and regular cooperation between the four states.

*Fourth*, this paucity of familiarity translated into a lack of specificity about the Quad’s purpose and objectives, which only gave critics more room to seize radical speculations that it was a precursor to an Asian NATO aimed at containing China. For instance, while Australia was eager to restrict the Quad to issues of trade and culture, India emphasized that it should have no security implications.

With Abe’s resignation in September 2007, the group was deprived of its main cheerleader and architect. Later that year, newly elected Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd suddenly announced, in a joint press conference with Beijing, that his administration had no intention of continued participation in the Quad – marking the demise of the framework.

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### **Quad 2.0: Forging a Democratic Security Diamond**

Almost a decade later, the second iteration of the Quad – or Quad 2.0 – emerged along the sidelines of the East Asia Summit in 2017. At this time, the strategic environment had changed drastically, creating conditions rich for cooperation. China had become a leading economic and security concern for all four states; its rise was no longer peaceful but characterized by coercion and belligerence. In view of the four states hardening their stances on China, and their calculations of the force and weight of Asia’s coming power, forging the Quad bonds based on shared democratic and liberal institutional values became the need of the hour. Economic and security concerns over China reached new heights, pushing the once hesitant powers like India and Australia to turn towards the integrated Indo-Pacific theatre within their foreign and security policies. This adoption of the Indo-Pacific concept indicated a newfound willingness amongst the Quad states to cooperate, despite drawing China’s ire.

Now, the questions facing the Quad nations were no longer about whether the future will be one of war or peace – but also about the nature of the peace. Who would define the future? Will it be a peace governed by rules and norms or a peace governed by power and coercion? Working together through a Quad format became vital to actively shape the future.

**Table 1: India and its Quad Partners: Institutionalized Security Relations**

	Australia	Japan	United States
Security Dialogues	2+2 Ministerial dialogue Defense Policy Talks, Bilateral Dialogue on East Asia, Consultations on Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Issues, Joint Working Group on Counter-terrorism, Bilateral Dialogue on Global Cyber Issues, Maritime Dialogue, Joint Working Group on Defense Research & Material Cooperation Staff talks between all three services	2+2 Ministerial dialogue Defense Ministerial Dialogue, Defense Industry Forum, Defense Policy Dialogue, National Security Advisors' Dialogue, Space Dialogue, Cyber Dialogue, Technical Discussion for the Future Research Collaboration in Unmanned Ground Vehicles and Robotics Staff talks between all three services	2+2 Ministerial dialogue Defense Policy Group, Defense Joint Working Group, Defense Procurement and Production Group, Senior Technology Security Group, Joint Technical Group, Military Cooperation Group, Service-to-service Steering Group, Defense Technology & Trade Initiative, Policy Planning Dialogue, Homeland Security Dialogue on Counter-terrorism, Joint Working Group on Civil Space Cooperation
Security Agreements	Civilian Nuclear Energy Agreement (2014) Technical Agreement on White Shipping Information Exchange (2015) Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (MLSA; 2020) Defense Science & Technology Implementing Arrangement (DSTIA; 2020)	Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation between Japan and India (2008) Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology Agreement (2015) General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA; 2015) Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement (2017) Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA; 2021)	General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA; 2016) Technical Agreement on information sharing on White (merchant) Shipping (2016) Information Exchange Annexe on Aircraft Carrier Technologies (2016) Helicopter Operations from Ships Other Than Aircraft Carriers (HOSTAC; 2017) Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA; 2018) Industrial Security Agreement (ISA; 2019) Basic Exchange Cooperation Agreement (BECA; 2020) Defense deals like for aircrafts C-17 and C-130J
Military Exercises	Malabar Exercises AUSINDEX, AUSTRALIA HIND, PASSEX Participation in Australia-led PITCH BLACK and KAKADU exercises	Malabar Exercises JIMEX, DHARMA GUARDIAN, SHINYUU MAITRI, SAHYOG-KAIJIN	Malabar Exercises VAJRA PRAHAR, YUDH ABHYAS, COPE INDIA, Tiger TRIUMPH Participation in the US-led RIMPAC exercise

Sources: Prepared by the author based on data from Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Japan-India Relations (Basic Data)," November 18, 2021, <https://www.mofa.go.jp>; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Japan-India Joint Statement: Toward a Free, Open and Prosperous Indo-Pacific," September 14, 2017, <https://www.mofa.go.jp>; Ministry of External Affairs of India, "India-Australia Bilateral Relations," February 6, 2020, <https://mea.gov.in>; Australian High Commission in New Delhi, "Australia India Defence Relationship," <https://india.highcommission.gov.au> (accessed June 29, 2022); Ministry of External Affairs of India, "Brief on India-US Relations," June 2017, <https://www.mea.gov.in>; Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, "US Security Cooperation With India: Fact Sheet," US Department of State, January 20, 2021, <https://www.state.gov>.

Furthermore, alongside the changing regional security dynamics that generated greater convergence, Quad 2.0 was made possible by the strides in the bilateral partnerships of the member-states. India and Japan accelerated cooperation to forge a ‘Special Strategic and Global Partnership’,<sup>9</sup> boosted by the camaraderie between Abe and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The signing of the India-Japan civil nuclear cooperation agreement in 2017, Tokyo’s developmental aid packages to India, and increased security cooperation with Japan joining the India-US Malabar naval exercises as a permanent member were highlights that made their partnership a defining axis in Asia. With the US and Australia too, India saw greater dynamism in bilateral interactions, and increased collaborations and agreements that institutionalized their partnerships (see Table 1). The launch of new trilaterals like Japan-America-India (JAI)<sup>10</sup> in 2015 and Australia-Japan-India (AJI)<sup>11</sup> in 2008 was evidence of the growing strategic convergences between them. Greater military-to-military relations only helped forge greater trust, increase interoperability and set the foundation for stronger political ties.

Nevertheless, the rebirth of the Quad was certainly not a smooth-sailing process. Not only was Australia concerned about the impact on its ties with China, but the US was also cautious about Beijing’s reaction. India too was reticent due to concerns over China’s response; uncertainty about Australia’s – and the other partners’ – commitment considering their

close relationship with China; and doubts about the utility of a quadrilateral when Delhi already shared trilateral frameworks JAI and AJI.

Hence, the evolution of Quad 2.0 was slow in the beginning. The group met regularly at the senior level and later, at the foreign minister’s level. Initial meetings did not culminate in joint statements, but saw all member-nations release individual reports. They echoed a shared interest in promoting a free, open, inclusive and prosperous Indo-Pacific order (see Figure 1), but emphasized their individual priorities. In fact, Indian and Japanese press releases on the consultations refrained from mentioning the word “Quad” until recently.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, there was little in terms of actionable initiatives; much of the language conveyed a rather broad and ambiguous mission and left several questions unanswered about the substance of the Quad.

**Figure 1: Key Imperatives of the Statements by Quad Nations**



Source: Prepared by the author.

One reason for such gaps was the difference in their China calculus (despite an overall shared concern over its belligerent actions). Although Australia was beginning to uncover the full extent of Chinese efforts to influence its domestic politics, including through

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cyber-attacks, it was also incredibly and critically dependent on China for economic prosperity – making for a delicate balance. Similarly, India and Japan – as direct land and maritime neighbours of China with territorial disputes – were very much aware that they faced a formidable adversary right at their border and had to proceed cautiously.

In the context of such dynamics, several experts (both in China and beyond) predicted that Quad 2.0 would follow the first iteration and “dissipate like sea foam”.<sup>13</sup> Despite the changed strategic situation, critics argued there existed too many gaps to allow the Quad to become an effective strategic entity capable of responding to emerging regional security challenges.

### Quad 3.0: A New Synergy

Quad 2.0 received new impetus during the COVID-19 pandemic, in part because of the dramatically worsening geopolitical environment in the region. In other words, China’s own actions proved to be a catalyst for the consolidation of the Quad. China’s disinformation campaign during (and around) the coronavirus pandemic,<sup>14</sup> and actions in the East China Sea (ECS) and South China Sea (SCS) further contributed to strained ties.

When Australia supported an international inquiry into the origins of the pandemic, China retaliated with gross economic sanctions that not only exposed how vulnerable Australia was in its dependence on China, but also brought Sino-Australian relations to perhaps their lowest point in history. China’s national security law in Hong Kong and grey zone warfare against Taiwan prompted further hardening of the Quad states’ China policies. In the SCS, while the world was distracted by the pandemic, a Chinese Coast Guard vessel rammed and sank a Vietnamese fishing boat close to the disputed Paracel islands.<sup>15</sup> Later, a standoff between a Malaysian oil exploration vessel and a Chinese survey vessel, off Malaysia’s Borneo, prompted the US and Australia to deploy warships to the area.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, India’s Galwan Valley clash (June 2020) forced New Delhi to reckon with the Chinese threat. It broke down trust between the two neighbors, and pushed New Delhi to seek

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greater synergy with the Quad as a way to bolster its standing vis-à-vis China. In fact, within a year of the Galwan incident, India had concluded BECA with the US, ACSA with Japan, and upgraded its partnership with Australia.

Soon after US President Joe Biden assumed office, the Quad elevated the grouping to a leaders’ level summit, with the first being held in Washington in March 2021. It went from holding biannual working-level meetings of senior officials to annual ministerial meetings of the foreign ministers at the end of 2019, to meetings of state heads in 2021 (see Table 2 for a timeline). This marked a new phase in the Quad’s forward momentum, and the first concrete step towards the group’s formalization, and thereby, its institutionalization. In total, the Quad leaders have met twice in person and twice virtually over the past two years. These summits have resulted in the formation of additional working groups and the introduction of several new initiatives that encompass a broad spectrum of agendas. The establishment of Quad working groups has also, importantly, been a way to formalize and institutionalize the group through practical initiatives, therefore taking it from a mere dialogue to a substantial mechanism. In other words, Quad 3.0’s objective became to back

its stated vision and aims with tangible, measurable deliverables so as to avoid making the framework into another talk shop in the region.

**Table 2: Quad Meetings and Summits since 2017**

Quad Meetings	
Nov 2017	Working-level meeting, Manila
Jan 2018	Meeting of naval chiefs of the Quad countries in New Delhi, along the sidelines of the Raisina Dialogue
Jun 2018	Working-level meeting, Singapore
Nov 2018	Working-level meeting, Singapore
May 2019	Working-level meeting, Bangkok
Sep 2019	1 <sup>st</sup> Foreign Ministerial meeting in New York, along the sidelines of United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)
Nov 2019	Working-level meeting, Bangkok
Sep 2020	Working-level meeting, virtual
Oct 2020	2 <sup>nd</sup> Foreign Ministerial meeting, Tokyo
Dec 2020	Working-level meeting, virtual
Feb 2021	3 <sup>rd</sup> Foreign Ministerial meeting, virtual
Mar 2021	Inaugural Quad Leaders' Summit, virtual
Aug 2021	Working-level meeting, virtual
Sep 2021	First in-person Quad Leaders' Summit, Washington DC Quadrilateral Strategic Intelligence Forum: Meeting of intelligence chiefs of the Quad countries
Feb 2022	4 <sup>th</sup> Foreign Ministerial meeting, Melbourne
Mar 2022	Quad Leaders' Summit, virtual
May 2022	Quad Leaders' Summit, Tokyo

Sources: Prepared by the author using data from Tanvi Madan, "What you need to know about the "Quad," in charts," Brookings, October 5, 2020, <https://www.brookings.edu>; Geeta Mohan, "Quad senior officials discuss peace, stability in Indo-Pacific," *India Today*, December 19, 2020, <https://www.indiatoday.in>; David Scott, "The Raisina Dialogues: Naval Convergence in the Indo-Pacific," CIMSEC, February 20, 2020, <https://cimsec.org>; Ministry of External Affairs of India, "Quad Senior Officials Meeting," August 12, 2021, <https://www.mea.gov.in>; Garima Mohan and Kristi Govella, "The Future of the Quad and the Emerging Architecture in the Indo-Pacific," GMF, June 21, 2022, <https://www.gmfus.org>.

**“Initiatives like the recently introduced maritime awareness domain to track dark shipping are an example of how the Quad is using its public goods platform to take forward its security agenda and safeguard a rules-based region.”**

Not only did the March 2021 summit lead to the first joint statement (“the Spirit of the Quad”), but it also established three working groups for tangible cooperation and collaboration in the COVID-19 vaccine production and delivery, climate change and critical and emerging technology sectors.<sup>17</sup> By the first in-person leaders’ summit in September 2021, progress was already visible in some areas. For instance, out of the 1.2 billion vaccines pledged, the Quad nations had already delivered over 79 million vaccinations to regional states. Discussions were also underway about expanding manufacturing to build greater capacity and secure supply chains. Further, the Quad’s agenda was broadened from COVID-19 vaccines to building back better public health infrastructure to attain health security; launching a green shipping network and clean hydrogen partnership in the climate domain; and formulating principles of tech design, development and governance, cooperation in 5G, and a semiconductor supply chain initiative in the critical technologies sector. Since then, there have been several new programs and initiatives covering space, cyber, and connectivity infrastructure, and people-to-people exchanges, in addition to COVID-19 and global health, climate change, and emerging technologies. See Table 3 for a detailed breakdown and description of the Quad’s initiatives and working groups.

**Table 3: Key Initiatives and Working Groups of Quad 3.0**

Quad Summit	Outcomes
First virtual Quad Leaders' Summit, March 2021	<p>Vaccine Partnership/Vaccine Experts Group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Expanded manufacturing, financing, logistics, (production, procurement and last-mile delivery) of COVID-19 vaccines</li> <li>▪ Strengthen work of international organizations, and support Indo-Pacific health security</li> </ul> <p>Climate Working Group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Strengthening implementation of the Paris agreement via cooperation between the Quad countries and with other regional countries</li> <li>▪ Supporting the advancement of low-emissions technology solutions</li> <li>▪ Cooperation on climate mitigation, adaptation, resilience, technology, capacity-building and climate finance</li> </ul> <p>Critical and Emerging Technology Working Group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Developing statement of principles on technology design, development and use</li> <li>▪ Coordinating national technology standards with a broad range of partners</li> <li>▪ Cooperating on telecommunications deployment (including diversifying equipment suppliers) with the private sector</li> <li>▪ Monitoring trends and opportunities in the sector and convening dialogues on critical tech supply chains</li> </ul>
First in-person Quad Leaders' Summit, Washington DC, September 2021	<p>Vaccine &amp; Global Health Partnership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Producing and delivering COVID-19 vaccines across the world</li> <li>▪ Targets: 1 billion doses by end of 2022; \$3.3 bn to the COVID-19 Crisis Response Emergency Support Loan program; \$212 mn in grant aid to the Indo-Pacific, \$219 mn for last-mile vaccine rollouts</li> <li>▪ Providing emergency aid (including India-Japan collaboration to invest \$100 mn in healthcare) via the Quad Vaccine Experts Group</li> <li>▪ Building back better health security to prepare for the next pandemic: cooperation on science and technology, clinical trials and research, and a 'global pandemic radar'</li> </ul> <p>Infrastructure Coordination Group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Delivering transparent, high-standards digital connectivity, climate, health and health security infrastructure</li> <li>▪ Providing technical assistance and capacity-building to regional partners</li> <li>▪ Amplifying Quad members' individual contributions to emerge as domain leaders, and draw more private sector investments</li> </ul> <p>Climate Partnership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Green-shipping Network</u>: deploying green port infrastructure; launching a Quad Shipping Taskforce to work with ports across the world to greening and decarbonizing the shipping value chain; establishing low-emission shipping corridors by 2030</li> <li>▪ <u>Clean-Hydrogen Partnership</u>: scaling production of clean hydrogen and developing delivery infrastructure for end-use; accelerating clean hydrogen trade in the Indo-Pacific</li> <li>▪ <u>Climate &amp; Information Services Task Force</u>: enhancing climate adaptation, resilience and preparedness through climate information-sharing and investing in disaster-resilient infrastructure; providing technical assistance to small island developing states through the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure</li> </ul>

<p>First in-person Quad Leaders' Summit, Washington DC, September 2021</p>	<p>Quad Fellowship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sponsoring 100 students in the STEM field in the US to bring together top minds in the Quad states, and promote foundational understanding through people-to-people exchanges</li> </ul> <p>Critical and Emerging Technologies Partnership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Publishing a Quad Statement of Principles for tech design, development and governance to guide responsible, open, high-standards innovation</li> <li>▪ Establishing a Technical Standards Contact Group on Advanced Communication and Artificial Intelligence to develop standards</li> <li>▪ Launching a Semiconductor Supply Chain Initiative to map capacity, identify vulnerabilities and bolster supply chain security</li> <li>▪ Supporting 5G deployment and diversification through Track 1.5 industry dialogue on Open RAN (coordinated by the Open RAN Policy Coalition)</li> <li>▪ Monitoring biotechnology scanning and identifying opportunities for cooperation</li> </ul> <p>Senior Cyber Group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Bringing together Quad leader-level experts regularly with industry pundits to cooperate on cyber standards, secure software, workforce and talent, and secure trustworthy digital infrastructure</li> </ul> <p>Space Partnership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sharing satellite data to protect earth and its waters, and help adapt and respond to climate risks</li> <li>▪ Supporting capacity-building for space-related domains in other Indo-Pacific countries</li> <li>▪ Developing norms and guidelines for long-term sustainability of outer space</li> </ul>
<p>Quad Foreign Ministers' Summit, February 2022</p>	<p>Welcomed the formation of an Indo-Pacific Clean Energy Supply Chain Forum, to be hosted by Australia in mid-2022</p> <p>Announced exploration of a Track 1.5 dialogue between Quad strategic thinkers</p>
<p>Second virtual Quad Leaders' Summit, March 2022</p>	<p>Based on discussions of the Ukraine crisis and its broader implications, Quad agreed to stand up a new humanitarian assistance and disaster relief mechanism to meet future humanitarian challenges in the region and provide a channel for communication</p>
<p>Second in-person Quad Leaders' Summit, Tokyo, May 2022</p>	<p>Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness (IPDMA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Offering near-real-time, integrated, more accurate, and cost-effective maritime domain awareness, to enable Indo-Pacific partners to monitor their waters and uphold FOIP; this will help track dark shipping, respond to climate events and protect fisheries</li> <li>▪ Harnessing commercially-available data using existing technologies</li> <li>▪ Extending support for information-sharing across existing regional fusion centers</li> <li>▪ Consulting with partners to discuss opportunities in this domain and identify future technologies that ensure IPDMA remains cutting-edge</li> </ul> <p>Quad Fellowship</p> <p>Quad Vaccine Partnership and Global Health Security</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Since its formation, achieved provision of 257 million COVID-19 vaccine doses</li> <li>▪ Providing vaccine boosters and pediatric doses</li> <li>▪ Collaboration between Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) and EXIM India to build a US\$100mn vaccine facility</li> </ul>

<p>Second in-person Quad Leaders’ Summit, Tokyo, May 2022</p>	<p><b>Climate Partnership</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Convening Quad Transportation and Energy Ministers to accelerate work of Shipping Task Force and clean hydrogen and clean ammonia fuels; enhancing Indo-Pacific’s capacity to participate in high-integrity carbon markets</li> <li>▪ Disaster risk reduction efforts through the New Delhi-based Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure</li> <li>▪ Launching Quad Climate and Information Service Task Force to integrate and facilitate climate information services to Indo-Pacific states</li> </ul> <p><b>Critical and Emerging Technologies Working Group</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Since its formation, the group HAS mapped Quad’s collective capability and vulnerabilities, and launched Common Statement of Principles on Critical Technology Supply Chains</li> <li>▪ Exploring industry collaboration through Open RAN Track 1.5 dialogues</li> <li>▪ Released a Memorandum of Cooperation on 5G Supplier Diversification and Open RAN</li> <li>▪ Launched an International Standards Cooperation Network for information-sharing on technical standards, and increase situational awareness, coordination and influence</li> <li>▪ Coordinating with the private sector via a Quad Investors Network for access to capital</li> </ul> <p><b>Cybersecurity Partnership</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Building on the new joint cyber principles, Focuses on critical-infrastructure protection (led by Australia), supply-chain resilience and security (India), workforce development and talent (Japan), and software security standards (US)</li> <li>▪ Strengthening information-sharing of Quad states’ Computer Emergency Response Teams</li> <li>▪ Coordinating cybersecurity standards for software procurement</li> <li>▪ Launching a Cybersecurity Day campaign to strengthen awareness and action in the region</li> </ul> <p><b>Space Partnership</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sharing of space-based civil Earth observation data to promote open science in the Indo-Pacific; US will also coordinate on its cooperative civil Earth observation programs</li> <li>▪ Cooperation on disaster mitigation and humanitarian assistance through workshops and conventions of technical experts</li> <li>▪ Workshop for Indo-Pacific countries on Long-term Sustainability Guidelines</li> </ul> <p><b>Infrastructure Coordination Group</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ High-level collaboration by Quad states’ development-financing agencies in digital connectivity, transportation, healthcare, clean energy and climate resilient infrastructure</li> </ul> <p><b>Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Mechanism</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Coordinating and mobilizing joint civilian-led relief efforts in the Indo-Pacific, with support from civil defense and military assets</li> </ul>
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Sources: White House, “Fact Sheet: Quad Summit,” March 12, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov>; White House, “Fact Sheet: Quad Leaders’ Summit,” September 24, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov>; Office of the Spokesperson, “Joint Statement on Quad Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific,” US Department of State, February 11, 2022, <https://www.state.gov>; White House, “Joint Readout of Quad Leaders Call,” March 3, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov>; White House, “Fact Sheet: Quad Leaders’ Tokyo Summit 2022,” May 23, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov>.

## Quad 4.0: The Security Debate

The most prominent headline to come out of the Tokyo summit in May 2022 was that the Quad is (and aspires to be) a “force for good” that is “committed to bringing tangible benefits” to the Indo-Pacific. It is steadfastly dedicated to a positive, practical and purposeful agenda that helps the grouping deliver on their vision of a free, open, inclusive, rules-based and resilient region.

At the same time, the Quad’s evolution from its first to present iteration has left several questions unanswered about its future. Amongst these, a key strategic question in the hotwash after the Tokyo summit is whether the next step in the Quad’s trajectory – Quad 4.0 – should move the grouping towards traditional security and military cooperation.<sup>18</sup> Post Russia’s military action against Ukraine, there is significant concern that Beijing may learn from Moscow’s example and attempt to exert greater unilateral force – particularly against Taiwan<sup>19</sup> and Tibet. In this context, the question becomes: how, if at all, critical is it for the Quad to become a rigid collective security alliance in the Indo-Pacific (much like NATO is in the North Atlantic) and stand as a silver bullet against China?

Cooperation in the traditional security domain has remained glaringly absent from Quad statements as of yet, with focus on delivering solutions to shared issues. In fact, whether the Quad should now look to build itself into a security focused alliance has become a major point of debate. Several critics of the Quad, including Beijing, have long portrayed the group as an Asian form of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) that was directed towards China.<sup>20</sup> In a turn from its earlier rhetoric of calling the Quad a “headline-grabbing idea” and “sea foam” that was likely to dissipate,<sup>21</sup> Beijing has increasingly begun criticizing the Quad as an “Indo-Pacific NATO” that poses a grave security risk to China. More recently, on March 20, 2022, China’s Vice Foreign Minister Le Yucheng pointed to NATO’s expansion in Europe as a cause of Russia’s military operation in Ukraine and as an example of how “going against the trend to pursue the Indo-Pacific strategy” could “provoke trouble” and set the region “off course toward fragmentation and bloc-

based division”.<sup>22</sup> Days prior to the Tokyo Quad Leaders’ Summit, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in a virtual meeting with his Japanese counterpart, Yoshimasa Hayashi, issued a thinly veiled warning that Japan should not work with the US to provoke a bloc confrontation or harm China’s sovereignty; instead it should “act prudently, rather than pull the chestnuts from the fire for others and take the wrong path of beggar-thy-neighbor”.<sup>23</sup> Further, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin argued that the Quad’s actions of “building small cliques and stoking bloc confrontation [was] the real threat to a peaceful, stable and cooperative maritime order”.<sup>24</sup> Such comments demonstrate that for China, the Quad is undeniably moving towards becoming an Asian NATO-like, rigid security alliance that is led by the US and aimed at balancing China’s growing power.

On the other hand, some proponents of the Quad have argued for the grouping to acquire a more security centered characteristic. In a 2017 paper, American experts Ashley Townshend, Brendan Thomas-Noone and Matilda Steward contended that a strategy of collective defense in the Indo-Pacific was fast becoming crucial as a way to offset America’s atrophying and ill-prepared military force in the Indo-Pacific region.<sup>25</sup> As many of the US (and allied) bases in the region are exposed to potential attacks by China, America’s logistics capabilities in the Indo-Pacific stand threatened. In this context, the paper argued that Washington’s focus in the region must be to revitalize existing alliances and establish new partnerships that could help enhance the country’s collective defense (or deterrence) and joint operational capabilities with security allies like Japan and Australia, and special security partner India. Such partnerships – as through the Quad – should be geared towards improving the states’ aggregate capabilities, infrastructure, networked logistics and regional posture.

More recently too, Indo-Pacific watchers and experts, including those in India, have similarly argued the need for the Quad to deepen security cooperation in the region in order to ensure balance of power is maintained. Days before the Tokyo Summit, Dhruva Jaishankar and Tanvi Madan categorically stated in

their *Foreign Affairs* article that the Quad needs to acquire a “harder edge” and that it was time for the group to “prioritize its security agenda”.<sup>26</sup> Only then, they contended, would the Quad be able to adapt to the fast-evolving security environment and have a lasting effect. Similarly, several voices within India have contended that while the Quad has come far within a short time, it must now deepen security cooperation<sup>27</sup> even as it continues to provide public goods to the region.

### **Towards a Collaborative Security Arrangement?**

The Quad’s aim is not to become an anti-China alliance but a pro-Indo-Pacific one. In other words, the Quad’s foremost goal has been to gain greater acceptance and integrate better in the region. In this context, ASEAN centrality has been consistently highlighted within the Quad’s narrative (refer Figure 1) in an effort to enhance its acceptability in the region and move it further away from being framed as an ‘anti-China’ security alliance in the traditional sense, to a regional forum of like-minded powers collaborating with each other for the common good.

While it may yet have a long way to go to evolve into a security alliance, the Quad’s expanded agenda already addresses several non-traditional security issues in the region. Its evolution from a mere dialogue to an action-oriented grouping working to deliver tangible results has only been possible because of the flexibility inherent in the framework’s design: as a minilateral forum, rather than an institutionalized, collective defense-oriented organization. While the Quad’s agendas and actions – like vaccine partnership, climate change, critical and emerging technologies, supply chains, cyber and space cooperation, infrastructure partnership, disaster risk reduction efforts and the maritime domain awareness initiative – may not fall under traditional security cooperation, they are nevertheless vital in constructing a new regional security architecture and balancing China’s expanding influence in the region.

There is little doubt that Xi Jinping wants to create a hierarchical arrangement where China stands at the top and sets the tone for a global socialist order with Chinese characteristics. It is making a real-

***The Quad’s goal must be to support regional partners by combining security with public goods provision. This can help with capacity building and ensuring small states are able to remain autonomous without compromising their political sovereignty.***

time effort to challenge the status quo and expand its geopolitical and military footprint in the Indo-Pacific. In tandem with its rise, China has displayed a lack of respect for international law (like UNCLOS), it has sought to expand territorial claims where there are power vacuums, and it has attempted to exert economic dominance or other non-military methods to expand influence in countries across the Indo-Pacific. This is evident in the Indian Ocean, for example, where it is trying to build a new energy route through control of strategically located ports.

Initiatives like the recently introduced maritime awareness domain are an example of how the Quad is using its public goods platform to take forward its security agenda and safeguard a rules-based region. Under this program, the Quad will help track dark shipping (or ghost shipping, where vessels switch off their transponder systems so as to avoid being detected), and other tactical-level activities. A substantial addition to the Quad’s practical cooperation in the region, the initiative will draw data from commercial satellites and stream it to countries across the region.<sup>28</sup> At present, most maritime activity is monitored through antiquated technologies that are primarily aimed at avoiding collisions rather than detecting dubious activities.<sup>29</sup> These systems are unreliable, inefficient, or can easily be turned off when vessels seek to mask their movements, leaving law enforcement and

security agencies of regional countries without effective maritime domain awareness. While space-based remote sensing may be able to fill the gap, the vast waters of the Indian and Pacific Oceans requires persistent monitoring at a correspondingly large scale, making it a rather expensive endeavor. Moreover, not all countries possess the advanced capabilities required to collect and process data at the large scale necessary.<sup>30</sup> Hence, the best solution for near-real time satellite monitoring seems to be the “tip and cue technique” that enables coverage of a vast region by a cost-effective, low-resolution sensor, with the information gathered passed through a high-resolution sensor for deeper investigation of suspicious activities.<sup>31</sup>

In this context, the Quad wants to purchase data from commercial companies (such as the US-based HawkEye360) and distribute it to regional partners, thereby addressing a real and pressing need for small states in the Indian and Pacific oceans.<sup>32</sup> This will be a crucial step toward improving the ability of Quad’s Indo-Pacific partner states to fully monitor their waters so as to better protect their fisheries, tackle smuggling in the region, better respond to humanitarian disaster, and keep in check illicit activities by China’s maritime militia that undermine regional security.

As Cooper and Poling stated: “That this will highlight China’s illicit activities in the waters of many regional states is certainly a benefit from a strategic standpoint, but it is also an economic boon for the Indo-Pacific’s smallest players the most.”<sup>33</sup> ASEAN member-states and other small island powers in the Indo-Pacific have long been calling for the Quad to deliver on its promise to be a force for good and provide imperative public goods. For the Quad, balancing China in the region extends to limiting its reach and influence over small states, which are already dependent on it for economic growth. Initiatives like the vaccine partnership and commitment to bolster regional infrastructure are similarly designed to provide public goods but also ensure China cannot use strategies like vaccine diplomacy and immense financing under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to further expand its influence. Although the Quad may have initially been intended

to be a security provider, safeguarding a rules-based order and checking China’s unilateral attempts to redraw the regional security architecture have made it essential for the group to deliver tangible value to regional partners and gain acceptance within the Indo-Pacific.

Arguably, India, Japan, Australia and the US are the handful of powers in the region willing and able to stand up to Chinese belligerence. However, an explicit focus on security in the traditional sense – that is, in terms of reconstructing the grouping to formulate an Indo-Pacific version of NATO – would only serve to further tensions with China and add to regional instability. Notably, it would also make countries in the region, which are looking to avoid taking sides against the US or China, exceedingly anxious. A 2020 elite survey of ASEAN states, conducted by a Singapore-based institute, showed that a majority of respondents view the Quad to have either negative (14.4 percent) or no (38 percent) impact.<sup>34</sup> The 2022 version of the same survey found that almost 60 percent of respondents supported strengthening of the Quad, albeit with a non-security centric focus.<sup>35</sup> With China being a major economic partner, pushing back against Beijing at the risk of harsh retaliation is not yet an option for many countries. Under such conditions, the Quad’s first goal must be to support regional partners by combining security with public goods provision, especially in areas like maritime domain awareness and supply chain security. This can help with capacity building and ensuring small states are able to remain autonomous without compromising their political sovereignty.

Therefore, the Quad’s focus must not be to evolve into a collective security alliance, which would involve pooling resources under a unified command structure like the NATO, but move toward strengthening a collaborative security arrangement.<sup>36</sup> This would be a much looser, structurally agile framework that brings the Quad states together under a range of different groupings with different objectives that look to achieve a shared vision. It would provide the Quad necessary flexibility to respond to numerous challenges and threats within its operational theatre of the Indo-Pacific. Russia’s Ukraine invasion has

shown the clear limitations of Article 5; while it may be an effective tool of deterrence against a direct attack on a member-state, collective defense is severely limited in containing aggressive actions in the region against other members. In the Indo-Pacific therefore, such an alliance involving only the Quad countries makes little sense since it would be constrained in its response to Chinese aggression vis-à-vis Taiwan or ASEAN claimant states. Instead, a looser, flexible and collaborative defense arrangement can deploy swift aid, when necessary, without waiting for tedious and long-driven consensus-achieving processes. Under such an arrangement, the Quad would become a “rolling coalition” that allows member-states to make unique contributions to regional security (in keeping with their capability and willingness).<sup>37</sup> For example, in case of a Chinese attack on Taiwan, the four states could act in their respective theatres and apply pressure on Beijing from all directions to retract. The strategic environment in the Indo-Pacific is constantly changing; the Quad must sustain its flexibility to ensure it can work with partners in the region and respond to challenges posed in novel ways.

The Quad grouping has demonstrated that it functions well precisely because of its informal nature that allows it immense flexibility and quicker action. In fact, this characteristic is what distinguishes the grouping from other platforms in the region that have been relegated to becoming mere talking shops. Preserving such a construct is vital to the Quad’s future, and for this, its focus must not be on traditional security, but strategically establishing itself as the foremost public goods provider in the region.

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