

INDO-PACIFIC

INSIGHT SERIES



The Quad: Security Cooperation Between the US, Japan, India and Australia

The quadrilateral dialogue, an informal gathering between officials from the US, Japan, India and Australia, has been revived after a decade-long hiatus. The return of the “Quad” has been met with mixed reactions. Some view it as an essential mechanism to promote regional rules and the freedom of navigation; while others remain concerned that it is aimed at curtailing China’s role in the region, and that there is a need to balancing these goals alongside the desire to engage with China. In order for the Quad 2.0 to be successful, it must balance these concerns and concentrate on concrete, focused and tangible areas of cooperation that will ensure the grouping delivers substantive outcomes.

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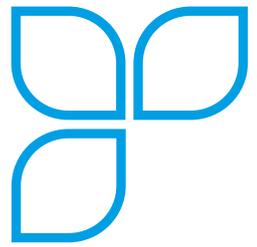
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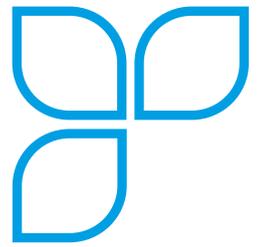




EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The revival of the quadrilateral dialogue (or “Quad”), through informal consultations in November 2017, has raised expectations in the region of the possibility for a greater strategic alignment between the US, Japan, India and Australia.
- The Quad’s resurgence is notable, especially considering the convergence – in some respects – of the four countries regional approaches to the Indo-Pacific.
- Despite this, it will be important for the participating governments to remember the challenges involved with the first attempt at quadrilateral discussions in 2007, and commit to move the dialogue beyond aspirational rhetoric.
- The Quad should not look to directly combat China’s regional presence, but rather stand for shared values, norms and laws – such as the freedom of navigation and the peaceful resolution of disputes through legal means.
- In order to achieve tangible results, the Quad should prioritize cooperation between bureaucracies (especially in the areas of foreign affairs, defense, and coast guards) rather than high-level diplomatic engagement.
- The Quad is not a silver bullet solution to the plethora of regional security concerns in the Indo-Pacific, and should be seen as a mini-lateral complement to other regional security mechanisms.





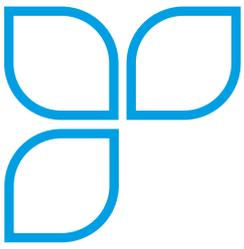
THE INDO-PACIFIC STRATEGIC CONTEXT:

The Indo-Pacific region is facing a host of shared security challenges, from maritime piracy and crime to heated territorial disputes. Moreover, there is a pressing need to enhance regional capacity and readiness for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) in order to mitigate the impact of natural disasters. In this vast maritime space – stretching from East Africa to the Pacific island chains – the foundations of regional commerce and security are ensured through the freedom of navigation and secure sea lines of communication (SLOCs). Similarly, the maritime passage that connects the Indian and Pacific oceans is a highway for global commerce and trade, providing a critical link for supply chains from East Africa and the Middle East all the way to the Far East. Indeed, the Indo-Pacific supply chain is blanketed with key ports and rapidly growing infrastructure aimed at enhancing its connectivity.ⁱ

Alongside these economic opportunities are a number of key challenges to the rules and order in the region that have underpinned security and prosperity for the littoral states. In the South China Sea, Beijing continues to practice extensive land reclamation, the imposition of military equipment and the diplomatic splitting of states in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). All of this is done with little regard for international law and in direct defiance of the ruling from the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) at the Hague in 2016, which thoroughly denounced China's expansive maritime claims.ⁱⁱ

Meanwhile, China also continues to stoke concerns with Japan through its constant incursions into the maritime and airspace surrounding the Senkaku/Diaoyou islands – also claimed by China – in the East China Sea.ⁱⁱⁱ Since 2012, China has diversified its approach through dispatching an exotic mix of vessels around the islands: these range from fishing fleets and commercial tankers, to coast guard vessels and submarines. The goal, it seems, is to 'normalize tensions', without provoking conflict with either Japan or the US.

These concerns in the maritime realm are not limited to the East and South China Seas. In the Indian Ocean region, there has been a build-up of Chinese infrastructure in critical areas such as deep ports in Sri Lanka and Pakistan.^{iv} These moves have acutely informed the decision making of policymakers in India, who are wary of China's long-term geopolitical motivations in their periphery. Indeed, regional geopolitics is also shaping strategic shifts in thinking as many states in the region – such as US, Japan, India and Australia – remain concerned about China's growth and push outside its borders, evidenced by initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB).^v There are also other concerns in the region that threaten SLOCs, including maritime piracy, organized crime and the ability to quickly recover in the aftermath of a natural disaster.



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THE GEOSTRATEGIC SPACE FOR THE QUAD'S RETURN:

In November 2017, senior officials of the US, Japan, India and Australia met on the sidelines of the East Asia Summit in Manila. With this meeting, the quadrilateral dialogue was reborn after a ten-year hiatus.

There has been a lot of discussion over the past few years on the opportunities of reviving the quadrilateral dialogue.^{vi} This renewal of interest in cooperation between the US, Japan, India and Australia was largely a result of shifting geopolitical tides in East Asia and – most importantly – the resurgence of China in the region. China's sustained and remarkable economic growth has benefitted the region, and the globe, but has also changed the strategic landscape in Asia. Regional concerns over China's geopolitical ambitions and approach to maritime borders have stoked tensions with several of its neighbors.

Despite the geostrategic changes in Asia over the past decade, it is important to contextualize the revitalization of the quadrilateral idea.

First off, the Quad is not a new idea. Indeed, the first iteration of the Quad was in 2007, when the four parties – at the rank of assistant secretary of states - gathered on the sidelines of a multilateral meeting in the Philippines and conducted exploratory discussions on the idea of a quadrilateral dialogue.^{vii} The four sides also gathered, along with Singapore, in the Bay of Bengal later that year to conduct a joint naval exercise – under the rubric of the Malabar Exercises - as a more concrete indication of their convergence on strategic issues.^{viii}

The idea of the Indo-Pacific as a strategic concept has been around several years and has been discussed by academics, think tank professionals and policy makers, especially in Japan and Australia.^{ix} Perhaps the clearest and highest profile introduction of the concept came from Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, during his first term as Prime Minister in 2007, in a speech to the Indian Parliament.

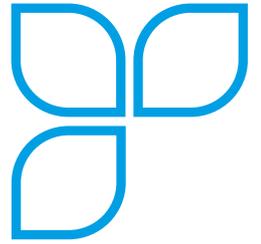
At that time Abe remarked on how Japan and India were natural partners through the “confluence of two seas” – the Pacific and Indian oceans. Abe remarked that:

“The Pacific and the Indian Oceans are now bringing about a dynamic coupling as seas of freedom and of prosperity. A “broader Asia” that broke away geographical boundaries is now beginning to take on a distinct form. Our two countries have the ability -- and the responsibility -- to ensure that it broadens yet further and to nurture and enrich these seas to become seas of clearest transparency.”^x

In addition, there was more concrete work leading to the geostrategic salience of the Indo-Pacific. In 2005, the US, Japan and Australia – a network of two separate alliances - launched the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue and incrementally aimed to bolster their converging security relationships.^{xi} The Quad in many respects was seen as an evolution of this growing trilateralism, and a way to link the US and its key Pacific allies with the region's largest democracy, India.

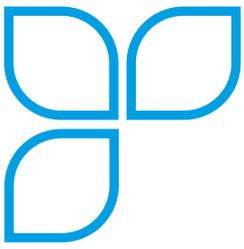
Initial discussions on the Quad in 2007 did not lead to the realization of a more formalized mechanism. There was deep wariness in both India and Australia of how the quadrilateral dialogue was being perceived in China.^{xii} Indeed, at that time China protested the development as a thinly-veiled attempt to encircle and contain Beijing's rise.^{xiii} China's diplomatic protest carried significant weight at the onset of the quadrilateral experiment in 2007, as a result of its economic rise and the strong desire from all regional states to pursue a growing relationship with China. Therefore, the first attempt at the Quad was paralyzed before it could gain any substantial traction.

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After China raised its objections to the grouping, Australia quickly wavered on its motivations and vision for the initiative and soon made the decision not to participate.^{xiv} At that time, the then Australian Defense Minister went out of his way to soothe concerns in China by noting that the Quad was not a security-focused mechanism and remained aspirational rather than concrete.^{xv}

In addition to concerns in Australia on the need to balance relations with China, there also remains longstanding reservations in India about joining any formal “quasi-alliances” – even if they are more symbolic than substantive – that would break with its historic doctrine of non-alignment.^{xvi} A final factor in the Quad’s initial demise was the abrupt departure of Abe, its principal proponent, when his first period as Japanese Prime Minister ended in 2007.



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FUTURE PROSPECTS – OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

While the first iteration of the Quad faltered as a strategic diplomatic initiative, there was more success in the realm of maritime security. In addition to the Malabar exercises in the Bay of Bengal in 2007, there was regular communication between the four sides on disaster relief – an especially critical element after the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004. The four parties discussed their coordinated response to the devastating natural disaster through the Tsunami Core Group.^{xvii} During the decade where the Quad was in hiatus, other mini-lateral groupings (such as the US-Japan-India and Japan-India-Australia) were created and evolved to complement the pre-existing Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD) between Japan, Australia and the United States.

The Quad's resurgence appears once more to be centered principally on maritime security. The importance of connectivity in the maritime sphere has grown stronger over the years for all four states. India and Japan's strategic relationship has grown under Abe, who returned to office for the second time in late 2012, and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Both sides agreed, in their most recent joint statement, to align their two regional strategies: Japan's Open and Free Indo-Pacific Strategy^{xviii} and India's Act East Policy. There has also been a degree of strategic convergence between the US and Australia. Australia's most recent White Paper^{xix} stresses the importance of the Indo-Pacific region as a strategic domain, while the most recent US National Security Strategy^{xx} adopts Japan's language on the call for a "free and open Indo-Pacific".

In November 2017, the four sides appeared at ease with this convergence of strategies. After the East Asia Summit, the Quad states released separate statements on the meeting referring to "consultations on the Indo-Pacific".^{xxi} While the statements differ on some elements, there was a broad consensus on the importance of a free and open Indo-Pacific upheld by international law. The four sides also agreed to work more closely on issues such as terrorism and shared concern regarding tensions on the Korean peninsula.^{xxii}

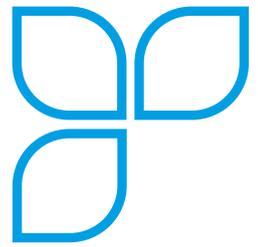
Significantly, China responded to the initiative with concern, but did not raise the issue with

the same intensity as it did in 2007. The Chinese foreign ministry remarked on the development:

"China is glad to see relevant countries develop friendly and cooperative relations, but we hope that such relations would not target a third party and should contribute to regional peace, stability and prosperity. And this principle and policy is applicable to all new initiatives and proposals."^{xxiii}

How can the Quad move beyond conceptual consensus to substantive activities? In other words, will the members be content with the Quad operating as a dialogue process, which is high on symbolism but low on concrete actions? One of the key challenges will be for India to move beyond its reservations about a more formalized structure, and increase tangible cooperation with the US, Japan and Australia, while still maintaining its balance at home and preference to avoid alignments. Of course, the perceptions of China—with which India continues to quarrel on a range of issues, including its most recent flare-up over the Doklam plateau^{xxiv}—still continue to be important to India. India will need to continue to calibrate its approach with the US, Japan and Australia while balancing its natural desire to engage with China.

Australia also grapples with challenges. On one hand, there has been a renewed firm approach by the Turnbull government to protecting Australia's foreign policy independence. This is especially the case with China's actions that are seen as antithetical to Australia's interests – such as its assertive behaviors in the South China Sea and foreign interference operations^{xxv} – which may endanger Australia's national security. The Turnbull government has been forthright in its criticisms of Chinese behavior in this regard. Despite this, there remains a deep and obvious need to maintain cordial relations with China – which remains an essential Australian trade and investment partner.



A WAY FORWARD: FOCUSED GOALS AND MANAGED EXPECTATIONS

Understanding the historical legacy and challenges associated with the Quad are critical in order to assess how the mechanism may progress over the coming years. With regards to the Quad's output, it is important to, on one hand, embrace and nurture its revival – as it can serve as an important driver towards shared goals of its four proponent governments.

However, it is similarly essential to underplay recent developments by not placing too much emphasis on the Quad as the foundation for a new geopolitical strategy or “quasi-alliance”. It is highly unlikely, for example, that there will be any sudden evolution of the Quad into something more aspirational like Abe's “Democratic Security Diamond”^{xxvi} concept. The main reason is that Australia and India are not as invested in the notion, due to concerns that Abe's dream would be overly adversarial to China.

On the other hand, the quadrilateral dialogue would not be an effective tool if the goal is solely to change China's strategic calculus in the region, or its expansive sovereignty claims in the East and South China Seas. In fact, depending on the Quad's approach to maritime security issues, China might escalate its assertiveness for fear of containment and encirclement. Moreover, none of the Quad members have a desire to create an entirely antagonistic relationship with China as evidenced by their muted statements following last November's quadrilateral meeting.

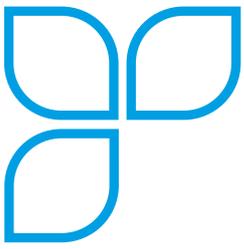
When evaluating the future of the Quad, there are four key considerations. Firstly, it is important to clarify what the Quad *should* and *should not* do. It would be counterproductive for the quadrilateral to have an expansive agenda on the wide range of issues and priorities the four nations share, such as climate change, regional trade groupings, and non-regional security issues. It will be tempting – due to the sensitivities of focusing too much on areas that touch relations with China – for the Quad's members to window-dress their meetings with broad

discussion on regional peace and security challenges rather than focus on the most important issues that they all face. Such a move would turn the Quad into yet another regional talkshop, rather than a meaningful institution for multilateral cooperation on maritime security.

Therefore, the Quad should select specific and concrete areas to cooperate on that will have tangible impacts but still allow the member states to maintain cordial relations with China. One example would be to establish a mid-senior level interagency working group, which could focus on maritime capacity building in the Indo-Pacific region. This group, which could be a mix of officials from foreign, defense and coast guard ministries, should establish an evergreen database to be shared in real time between the four countries. This database would outline the focus of previous capacity building efforts (for example those related to maritime domain awareness and coast guards), and – more importantly – look at current efforts alongside future priorities.

This process would streamline and make more effective maritime security capacity building efforts and avoid any potential duplication or redundancies. Moreover, each of the Quad members have unique capabilities in helping regional coast guards of littoral states and building maritime domain awareness in the region and also have strong pre-existing bilateral relationships with states in the region (e.g. Japan with the Philippines; India with Myanmar). These relationships can be leveraged so that efforts can be more targeted and effective for the respective bureaucracies.

Secondly, the Quad could focus on is the building and maintenance of infrastructure in the maritime domain, such as ports and harbors. This is a point Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe recently made in an interview with the Australian press.



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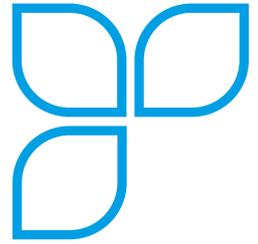
At the time Abe noted, that it will be important for the four countries to

“ensure international standards in running infrastructure like the ports and harbours. Infrastructure investment must be open and transparent. It must also have the fiscal health. So, infrastructure projects must follow international standards.”^{xxvii}

The third consideration for the Quad is the need for elevating cooperation between the navies of the US, India and Australia, along with Japan's Maritime Self Defense Forces. In this respect, India could extend a formal invitation for Australia to join this year's Malabar naval exercises (where Japan and the US are already permanent fixtures). Australia's inclusion in Malabar would signal an important elevation of the defense relationship and importance of shared goals in the maritime domain.

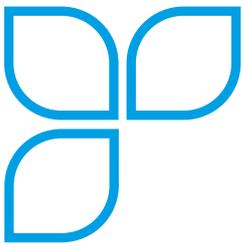
There has already been some positive momentum with the meeting of four senior naval heads from the Quad countries at this month's Raisina Dialogue in India. Raisina has spurred hopes for more concrete cooperation between the Quad navies. In addition to this, there are raised expectations of India's commitment with the announcement that Modi will be the keynote address at the Shangri-la Dialogue – one of the premier defense and security forums in the region – later this year.

A final consideration is the Quad's place in the current patchwork of bilateral, mini-lateral and multilateral security arrangements in the region. There is finite time on the bureaucratic calendar for senior officials of all four countries to meet. Therefore, it will be crucial to prioritize and focus meetings (both in frequency and scope) alongside pre-existing mechanisms such as the TSD, the US-Japan-India trilateral dialogue and the Japan-India-Australia trilateral dialogue. At this point, it is unlikely the other mini-lateral groups can be superseded by the Quad. Simply put, the Quad is not yet ready to do the unique things that other groupings focus on. This is especially true with the TSD – which has evolved into a very successful mechanism with many tangible outcomes.



CONCLUSION

The Quad 2.0 is a notable and long-anticipated development, that marks the convergence of Indo-Pacific strategies amongst the US, Japan, India and Australia. All sides should look at nurturing this moment and finding the right balance, so that the Quad can be focused and effective yet not overly adversarial – especially in light of concerns from China. In order to combat this, its proponent governments should avoid using the Quad purely in high-level diplomatic terms and rather first place emphasis on tangible achievements that can be done at the working and senior official level.

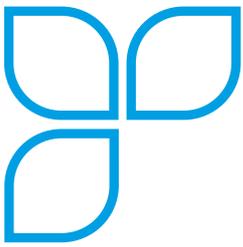


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