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Issue 01 | January 2023

INTERVIEW

"Once global competition becomes unrestricted, it is hard to predict where it will stop."

Dr. S Jaishankar

Coming Around
to the Quad

Views from
Australia
India
Japan
United States

Why the New
Great Tech Game

A JOURNAL OF GEOPOLITICS
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“The Quad is a force for good, committed to bringing tangible benefits to the region.”

– President Joseph R. Biden



Quad senior officials meeting



Indo-Pacific Quad meeting



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A JOURNAL OF
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Foreword

Dr. Mukesh Aghi

Since its inception in 2007, the Quad has had a sense of nebulousness about it. In the years before, it was seen as an amorphous loose grouping, almost missing the oomph that it needed. The four had different approaches."

From maritime cooperation that began between the Quad members shortly after the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004, to now upholding the sacrosanctity of the UN Conventions on Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), all four countries espouse a free and open Indo-Pacific."

As of 2021, leaders in all four countries have become more aligned in their shared concerns about China's increasingly assertive behavior in the region and are more willing to define a constructive agenda of cooperation.

On the multilateral front, smaller pacts have better outlined vision and mission as compared to a single large NATO umbrella, which may lose its focus with the shifting sands of geopolitics.

Through the Quad working group, New Delhi can work towards developing critical and emerging technology, particularly the rollout of 5G network in the emerging market world and securing data privacy and strengthening cyber security. Furthermore, New Delhi through the Quad can work towards creating alternate supply chain networks to shift the monopoly away from Beijing. New resilient supply chains are needed to withstand this pandemic's harmful effects other future health crises.

For India, any grouping that enhances the security of the Indo-Pacific region enables New Delhi to focus on its own strategic interests while maintaining complete strategic autonomy.

The rampant pace at which the Quad has moved from idea to inception to inspiration is a testament to the shared vision and priorities of all four democracies.

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OPENING REMARKS

A journal for a new world disorder



Few would disagree that the present international order is changing, and changing rapidly. There is less agreement on what is driving that change and what will replace, if anything, the existing order.

Such dissonance arises because identifying how the world is changing depends a lot on which lens one is looking through. Judging by political and security relations, the tectonic shifts seem obvious. There is increased contestation between the United States and China. There is a growing convergence between Russia and China. There are unprecedented security debates in Europe and Japan. There are many below-the-horizon twists and shifts, like strengthening ties between the US and India.

If one were to look through a prism that refracted trade and investment numbers, the world would look different. China's relationship with most countries would be largely unchanged, even deepening with many supposed adversaries. By some indices, Beijing's relations with the US or India would seem in the pink of health.

The picture gets fuzzier lower down the ranks of nations. Thailand is a full-blown defence treaty ally of the US, but its economic future is increasingly reliant on China. Taiwan is among China's 10 largest trading partners. The United Arab Emirates, Indonesia and Singapore doggedly sit in a geopolitical no man's land as part of plans to be geoeconomic hubs of plenty. Colours on maps bleed even more if one looks at cross-border data flows, people-to-people movements, or the consumption of soap operas.

Many historical analogies are invoked like the Cold War, the Warring States period or the Peloponnesian War. History doesn't repeat though it often rhymes. Yes, the world is dividing itself into new coalitions but ones marked by smudges rather than thick dark lines. Global players can be plotted not on a single matrix, but on several overlapping ones. Sensible governments take red pills to move from one coalition to another.

One reason such divisions are different today, is the global supply chain. A legacy of half a century of globalization is economic chains made of links between finance and technology, personnel and

connectivity, and old-fashioned commerce. They are extremely difficult to unwind and replacing stakeholders extremely painful. The disruptions the world has experienced because of Covid and Ukraine are a warning that a supply chain parting would be a bitter sorrow.

Quadplus is an attempt to place all these trends under a microscope, apply a scalpel to them, and then see if some crystal-ball gazing is possible. The first issue takes a special look at the Quad, a technology-driven coalition of the US, Japan, India and Australia, from the perspective of strategic thinkers from all four countries. The journal is also honoured to have an inaugural interview on this and more with the Indian foreign minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar.

The Quad is representative of a new type of international organization: non-binding and not necessarily consensual, minus a treaty document or a secretariat, designed to be nimble and nuanced in a world prone to surprises. It draws on a recognition that the heart of future power lies in the nerdy things: semiconductors rather than strike forces, technology rather than trade agreements. Hence, this issue includes an article by investor Anirudh Suri laying out a beginner's guide to how and why geopolitics is increasingly seen in terms of 21st century technologies.

In future, Quadplus hopes to delve deeper into many of these critical technologies with a political spade. It will provide glimpses from officials, businessmen and intellectuals who have had a role in the policy genesis that is defining a new world order today. And it will explore not just the Quad but the many new networks and arrangements that have begun to populate the globe, each designed to mitigate and even benefit from the changing ways of today's world.

Pramit Pal Chaudhuri
Editor

INTERVIEW

"Once global competition becomes unrestricted, it is hard to predict where it will stop."



India's Minister of External Affairs Dr. S. Jaishankar is among the most peripatetic and articulate foreign ministers in the world today. He is particularly willing to speak on how India should navigate and even leverage an increasingly fluid and unpredictable international order. One of the elements that underpins his foreign policy thought is a need to recognize that technology, to use his own words, is no longer "agnostic" and increasingly has "political connotations."

Dr. S. Jaishankar, in conversation with Quad Plus editor, Pramit Pal Chaudhuri, shares his thoughts about the geopolitics of technology and the role of the Quad in the world of today.

Q : You have said "technology is at the heart of geopolitics" and can no longer be seen as politically neutral. While this has always been true for nuclear and military knowhow, today it seems to include mundane products like vaccines and telecom gear. Why has this happened and what are the implications?

A : Let me begin by emphasizing that technology was never viewed narrowly by strategists. After all, historically speaking, non-military technologies also helped give European powers the decisive edge. Even in terms of technology controls in current times, this extended to dual-use items. And if you look at comprehensive national power, it covers a wide range of domains. Where to draw a line has always been tricky.

What has now changed is the extent of dependence and the intensity of the impact. Our daily routine uses technology much more. And in that process, especially digitally, technology becomes much more exploitable.

The second change is the concentration of capabilities and production. This has created the possibility of more effective leveraging in international relations. It could apply to manufacturing, products, resources and data.

And the third is that in certain cases, even the internal firewalls that could act as a restraint are porous, or even absent.

As a result, many more activities and transactions can become weaponised. At the end of the day, this is more behavioural than capability-driven. Once competition becomes unrestricted, then it is hard to predict where it will stop. This is one of the key questions in international relations today.

"[Technological trends] mean many more activities and transactions can become weaponised"

Q : The Quad is among the first strategic groupings built around common interests regarding critical technologies. But it began as a disaster relief body, nearly broke up before being resurrected in its present form. Could you describe how this evolution took place and what factors, external and internal, drove this development?

A : I would not define the Quad primarily in terms of an agenda. If you see its evolution since 2017, it is coming together in terms of four nations in different corners of the Indo-Pacific realizing their convergences. This very much a work in progress. The underlying thinking is that their contribution to global good would be stronger if they did it in cooperation.

What form that takes depends on the challenges that the world confronts. It could be HADR [humanitarian assistance and disaster relief], maritime safety, or connectivity. Or something quite different like education, health or technology. Some will work better than others. At the end of the day, it will all depend on the coordinated capabilities of Quad members and the nature of global demand.

Q : You have spoken about collaborative globalisation versus oligopolistic globalisation. Could you explain what you meant by this and how relevant is to the Quad?

A : I don't think this is a Quad issue; in fact, it is something much bigger. The Covid pandemic clearly indicated the need for more resilient and reliable supply chains. It has also raised concerns about the inadequate diversification of global manufacturing.

Similarly, when it comes to the digital domain, many societies put a premium on trust and transparency. This shapes their choice of partners.

Much of the current concern about the globalization of the last two decades is that it has served national agendas very unevenly. That is why we see a backlash, domestic or global. And for that reason, if globalization is to advance, it must be collaborative and not narrow.

"The Quad members'...underlying thinking is that their contribution to global good would be stronger if they did it in cooperation."

Q : Many of the technology working groups are not in a position to ensure standards or dictate supply chain resilience without other countries aligning themselves as well. Some of the articles in Quadplus, for example by Nobukatsu Kanehara, argue other countries including those outside the Indo-Pacific need to be partnered with the Quad. What would your point of view be on this?

A : The Quad is the Quad. By that I mean that there is a right sizing of its members and a particular comfort level. I am not sure this can be readily shared by others.

Q : How exactly does the Quad fit into the larger strategic jigsaw of the Indo-Pacific and what other bodies are needed to complement the Quad?

A : There are multiple realities in the Indo-Pacific and Quad is one of them. It has never pretended to be more than what it is. I would therefore not frame the question in the manner that you have. This is a collaborative effort intended to optimize outcomes. Obviously, it has its importance but remember, it is still unfolding.

At the same time, there are other platforms and relationships in play, many of them pre-existing. Where relevant, they will find their equations. I would not waste time searching for structured answers.

"[Globalization] has served national agendas very unevenly...And for that reason, if globalization is to advance, it must be collaborative and not narrow."

Q : The Quad did not command a domestic consensus in all of its four members for many years. Has a consensus been achieved in all four and what led to that consensus being forged?

A : I believe that in each of the Quad members, strategic opinion appreciates the value of this initiative. As to why this has happened now, the answer is a mix of the respective bilateral relations getting more comfortable and the realization that collaboration is essential to address global issues.

Q : Polls show that young Indians are more familiar and interested in the Quad than they are with, say, the Nonaligned Movement. What does that tell us about Indian foreign policy thinking among the public?

A : My belief is that young Indians value our sense of independence and a commitment to advance national interests. They evaluate most developments from those perspectives. No one wants to give other nations a veto on our choices. Sometimes, there is more continuity than you may tend to assume.

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VIEW FROM AUSTRALIA

How the Quad Defied the Doubters

By Rory Medcalf



The new Quad rhetoric is much about spirit and vision, but it is also about defining coexistence with China from a position of strength. The Quad leaders have signalled theirs will be a flexible coalition – ready to work with others, issue by issue

Intelligence agencies reported to the Australian government – and journalists to the public – that the nation's largest trading partner was inflicting interference, influence and espionage, using all means from cyber to people to money.

When the next Quad summit is held in Australia in 2023, this institution will truly have arrived. For there was a time when Australia was considered – wrongly or rightly – to be the weakest link in this diplomatic chain. Now Canberra's bipartisan support is unbreakable.

This was affirmed just a day after the May 2022 election of the centre-left government of Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, when he travelled to Tokyo for a Quad summit. That meeting underscored his government's commitment to the full Quad agenda and its vision of supporting strategic balance while delivering public goods across a contested Indo-Pacific region.

Once upon a time Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi dismissed the Quad – the quadrilateral dialogue of India, Japan, Australia, and the United States – as nothing more than an attention-grabbing idea that would “dissipate like ocean foam”. Instead, the Quad has defied the sceptics and is here to stay. Indeed, its main problem now is an enviable one: how to manage great expectations.

Fixture of Australian Strategy

This four-nation group has rapidly become a fixture in Australian strategy, a diamond of trust with a comprehensive and promising agenda of cooperation. Our Quad diplomacy has been confident and creative and is paying dividends. As the smallest of the four, Australia draws leverage from the fact that the Biden Administration has made the Quad so central to its strategic policy settings. After all, President Biden's first international summit was the inaugural meeting, albeit virtual, of Quad leaders back in March 2021. Then in September that year at the White House he convened the first in-person Quad summit.

The Quad is the solidifying core of a loose balancing arrangement against Chinese power. But it will contribute most effectively to

Australia's security if we know its limits as well as its strengths. It is not a formal alliance, the kernel of an 'Asian NATO'. Of course, in theory, the four would make a formidable military combination: bringing together the world's first, third, ninth and 13th largest defence spenders, their advanced maritime capabilities and strategic geography, weaving a powerful net across the sea lanes of the Indo-Pacific.

The Malabar exercises hint at that potential. In 2021, Australia was admitted to this India-led activity, which has expanded in scale and seriousness over many years among the other countries. Since then, Malabar has involved warlike training – including anti-submarine operations. But India remains averse to formal alliances, and it is important to underscore that Malabar is not, strictly speaking, a Quad activity.

And that is fine. For Australia, India being India – determined and capable in protecting its wide interests – is enough. The US-India defence partnership and our integrated training through Malabar can deepen that capability. Moreover, Malabar should be seen alongside a whole web of bilateral and trilateral military exercises and arrangements. If one day, Quad members contemplate coordinated military action in a crisis, that will be entirely China's doing.

For the time being, however, the Quad is more significant in all the other security dimensions, and in contingencies short of war. For instance, perhaps its most promising and fast-moving area of cooperation is on supply chain resilience, critical technologies, and education, such as through scholarships to develop new generations of Indian scientific expertise.

There is healthy debate about whether the Quad needs more institutional frameworks, such as a standing secretariat. But the new tempo of constant engagement – officials, ministers, leaders and even a new forum for

industry and investment – confirms that the Quad has been formalised and normalised. It is broadening into something more comprehensive and durable than either mere talk shop or shadow alliance.

The leaders have committed to "a region that is a bedrock of our shared security and prosperity – a free and open Indo-Pacific, which is also inclusive and resilient". In March 2020, the first Quad summit recast the grouping's agenda to include the provision of public goods to the region: cooperation and capacity in critical technologies, vaccines, and climate policy.

The in-person summit in September reinforced this action plan, introducing new technology standards consistent with democratic values, tracking a vaccine rollout predicted to reach two billion doses in 2022, and promoting civilian maritime security like a 'green shipping' arrangement to reduce coastal pollution.

A Flexible Coalition

All this was hardly hawk talk and unmasked the theatrics of fulmination that the Quad previously attracted from the Chinese propaganda machine. The new Quad rhetoric is much about spirit and vision, but it is also about defining coexistence with China from a position of strength. The Quad leaders have signalled theirs will be a flexible coalition – ready to work with others, issue by issue. The choice of cooperation or competition is China's.

The Quad is now accepted across most of the international system as a normal, legitimate and useful part of the regional diplomatic

architecture in the Indo-Pacific. The Quad is a foundation for larger coalitions to address shared problems. In 2020, the Quad countries were joined by Vietnam, South Korea, and New Zealand in one setting, and Brazil, South Korea



The four Quad Leaders at the second Quad Summit in Tokyo, Japan, in May 2022 featuring Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, US President Joe Biden and Australian Prime Minister Antony Albanese.

Image Source: Embassy of India, Washington D.C.

and Israel in another, for talks on managing the pandemic and supply chain risks.

There is scope to coordinate overlapping groups: the Quad, the 5-Eyes (US, UK, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand), the G-7, and perhaps even larger groupings of democracies, such as the 11 self-proclaimed "open societies" – G-7 plus India, South Korea, Australia and South Africa – that assembled in Britain in mid-2021. Already we see hints of "Quad Plus" arrangements. French, British, and Canadian forces have exercised with all Quad powers, whether all together or in smaller combinations.

And for all the clamour that the Quad is somehow dangerous, the reality is that middle powers are quietly accepting the balance it brings. Opinion polling has shown that Southeast Asian elites recognise the Quad as complementing rather than displacing their cherished ASEAN as the hub of regional diplomacy.



Inaugural In-Person Quad Summit at the White House in Washington D.C. in September, 2021

Image Source: Embassy of India, Washington D.C.

In the past, the Quad served as something of a lightning rod for Chinese ire, a distraction from US alliances or their combination via the Australia-Japan-US trilateral security dialogue. In a sense, the Quad was making the world safe for trilateralism. Now one could say that the AUKUS arrangement has become Beijing's new favourite target for diplomatic pressure, making the world safe for the Quad.

Humanitarian Origins

In India, support for the Quad is so great that the arrival of AUKUS requires strategists to explain why this new arrangement would not in turn supplant the Quad – which of course it won't, since a trilateral technology pact which makes Australia stronger will, among other things, boost the capability we offer as a Quad partner.

It is fairly clear that the governments of Japan and India soon came to see AUKUS and the Quad as mutually reinforcing in that way: a point underscored by New Delhi's October 2022 statement to the International Atomic Energy Agency rec ambitions.

As it evolves in responding to transnational risks – such as recognizing the seriousness of Canberra's efforts to address non-proliferation concerns regarding its nuclear submarine D-19 and climate change – the Quad is proving true to its origins. After all, a cross-border humanitarian crisis is how it all began. On Boxing Day 2004, a massive earthquake occurred at the northern tip of Sumatra. It sent tsunami waves east and west. This was a global trauma: more than 230,000 people were killed. Four countries – the US, Japan, India and Australia – rapidly mobilised military assets for a coordinated effort at disaster relief, concentrating their help on Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Thailand. It was a novel coalition of first responders, breaking down preconceived ideas of "Western" or "Asian". If the four had a shared geography, it spanned two oceans, just as the tsunami itself showed no distinction for 20th century mental maps like East Asia, South Asia, Australasia, and the Asia-Pacific. But this core group was bound by more than some emerging geopolitical consciousness of the Indo-Pacific: interests in a stable maritime region, capabilities close at hand, and a willingness to help. Their contribution was immense: Australia alone provided a billion dollars of support for Indonesia's recovery.

Of course, there is no pure altruism in international relations, and this humanitarian operation had a complex geopolitical backdrop. In those post 9/11 years, confronted by terrorism, consumed by its Iraq misadventure and conscious that a strengthening China would bring risk as well as opportunity, the US was thinking afresh about its partnerships. It was cultivating a rising India after decades of estrangement. Japan was emerging as a more normal strategic power after half a century of abnegation. Australia was seeking practical ways to engage with the region, balancing the US alliance and the unrealities of ASEAN diplomacy with a new self-confidence defined by its stabilising interventions in East Timor and the South Pacific.

The proto-Quad was never purely about China. Indeed, in parallel, all four participant nations were trying to build constructive ties with Beijing. This was a time of high and hopeful globalisation. American admirals imagined a 'thousand ship navy' involving all countries, including China, keeping the sea lanes open for trade and ocean resources stewarded for the common good. If there was a political message in the tsunami core group, it was less about China and more about demonstrating to a mostly Muslim Indonesia that – whatever the divisions of the so-called war on terror – America and friends were here to help.

Four Maritime Democracies

Yet there was another strategic message, intended or not. Four unlikely and capable friends – four maritime democracies – had assisted a region in need, where a rising China had failed to deliver. Moreover, the four had marshalled their navies around a zone of acute security interest to China: The Bay of Bengal and Malacca Strait. This was a highway for Beijing's burgeoning lifeline of oil imports. Navies learning teamwork for aid could one day apply it to blockade.

Or so China feared. This became apparent a few years later, when in May 2007 the four got back together to discuss lessons learned from their humanitarian cooperation. Maybe they also shared a few words about the changing regional balance of power. But they can't have said much. The dreaded Quad talks began as four mid-level officials meeting for 45 minutes on the sidelines of an ASEAN Regional Forum conference in Manila. It should have been no big deal. Instead, Beijing saw a

The 25th edition of Malabar, in the Bay of Bengal from 12th –15th Oct 2021.

Image Source: Embassy of India, Washington D.C.



phantom menace, and soon went into diplomatic hyperdrive.

One reason was the proximity – intended or otherwise – of the Manila dialogue to a major naval exercise a few months later. India and America had long held modest annual naval drills, called Malabar. These expanded in ambition as US-India ties strengthened, so that in 2007, Malabar was held twice and with special guests. First, Indian, American, and Japanese forces combined in the Pacific. Then

a second round brought in warships from Australia and Singapore, the five navies converging in the Bay of Bengal.

China reacted with public outrage and diplomatic protests. Its officials and media portrayed that brief consultative meeting as a plot to forge an "Asian NATO". The reality was very different. The exercise had been a one-off. Commitment to the dialogue was fragile. Japan's attachment weakened after Prime

destabilising behaviour. Yet even while the original Quad stepped aside, Beijing chose such a road anyway. The perils the Quad's critics thought it would invoke ended up indisputably arising in its absence. The next decade brought such geopolitical instability that the four governments became convinced their disbanded dialogue had been an idea ahead of its time.

The narrative is depressingly familiar now. In 2008 the Global Financial Crisis emboldened China to abandon its decades of restraint. From 2012, the regime of Xi Jinping prioritised a strategy of relentlessly pursuing greatness: expansive assertiveness and uncompromising nationalism abroad combined with extreme authoritarian control at home.

Chinese paramilitary forces confronted Vietnam, the Philippines and Japan in disputed seas.

As Japan held firm, China shifted to the passive aggression of manufacturing and fortifying islands in the South China Sea, in violation of international law. Fears grew of escalation, even war. America pivoted to join allies and partners in pushing back, but not always convincingly. The Obama Administration secured undertakings from Xi that rampant cyber theft would cease and artificial islands are not militarised. The flagrant breach of such promises underscored the failure of engagement, while waking America to the extent and nature of the China challenge.

In Japan, the return of Abe to office in 2012 led an assertion of Japan's strategic normality and pushback against China. High on this agenda was the cultivation of ties with India and Australia, plus a strengthening of the US alliance. In 2013, Australia recognised new realities with a defence policy redefining the region as the Indo-Pacific, a two-ocean system where China's push into the Indian Ocean was of growing concern. That same year, Beijing itself redefined the region as

nothing less than One Belt and One Road: a vastness of land and sea across which it planned infrastructure, investment, and influence.

The road was short for the Maritime Silk Road, the ports and sea lanes across the Indian Ocean to Africa and the Middle East. China's strategic presence was extending across the Indo-Pacific. In the Indian Ocean, the People's Liberation Army-Navy arrived in 2009 to counter piracy, and never left. Hopes receded for a cooperative future with India. Xi's

For its part, Australia was discovering that hazard loomed at least as large as opportunity in relations with the new China. Intelligence agencies reported to government – and journalists to the public – that the nation's largest trading partner was inflicting interference, influence and espionage, using all means from cyber to people to money. Strategic risks that had seemed confined to Asian waters now manifested close by in the South Pacific. And objecting to such developments prompted diplomatic pressure and economic coercion.



US President Biden and Indian Prime Minister Modi hold a virtual meeting before the fourth edition of the '2+2' talks.

Image Source: Alamy Images

meeting with new Indian prime minister, Narendra Modi, was clouded by China's military incursions on the disputed mountain border, its submarines in the Indian Ocean, and its growing strategic stake in India's rival Pakistan. By the time of a military standoff in the Himalayas in 2017 – prelude to the brutal clash of June 2020 – the Modi government was grimly aware that the relationship of respect Xi wanted was categorically one-way.

Great Power Competition

Globally, great-power competition was back. Then in November 2016, America's struggling credibility in Asia was replaced by Trump's destabilising dysfunctionality. Australia, Japan and India, along with Washington's other regional allies and partners, now found themselves hedging between a revisionist China and an unpredictable America. They sought to shore up their ties with Washington, while taking out the insurance of strengthening cross-bracing bonds with each

other and looking more seriously to their own defences.

Yet the Trump Administration was rattling China too. For all its narrow nationalism and capricious anti-diplomacy, the US was giving China pause, and on this at least there was bipartisanship in Washington. A national security strategy warned of comprehensive strategic competition with Beijing, including contesting Chinese dominance of the Indo-Pacific.

In November 2017, the Quad reconvened at last. But this was as much an act of American followership as leadership. Japan had been extolling a "quadrilateral security diamond" for years, and Australia and India were now more than ready. Bit by bit, they had used the Quad's fallow decade to weave a wider security web: some strands with the US, some strands productively without. Australia and Japan had intensified their American alliances, but other bilateral security relations had rapidly solidified: the US and India, Japan and Australia, Japan and India, Australia, and India. Defensive triangles had formed too: intelligence sharing and complex military exercises among Australia, the US and Japan were augmented by trusted trilateral dialogues. A Quad by stealth had already emerged through these intersecting triangles.

Australia, Japan and India conferred on how to engage and temper Trump's America. Meanwhile America, India and Japan had kept their own conversation alive, with the Malabar naval exercises now permanently including Japan, and Australia patiently pressing to be invited back in. The old Quad had served as a lightning rod for much of China's ire, but beneath its cover the maritime democracies had found themselves aligning all along.

Charting the strange voyage of the quadrilateral dialogue provides much-needed context. Not even its most ardent advocates pretend it is the sole solution to the strategic problem of navigating a contested Indo-Pacific. Rather, it is just part of a hybrid diplomatic architecture, a layered diplomacy with elements of bilateralism, multilateralism and practical minilateralism in between. The challenge ahead is to deliver on sufficient of the Quad promise, manage expectations, and identify scope to coordinate with others. In 2022, Japan and all Quad countries lost the institution's founding statesman, Abe Shinzo, to an assassin's bullet. But the tragedy of his passing also confirms the strength and durability of the institution he, more than any other leader, gave to the Indo-Pacific. The Quad has survived political and leadership change across its member states. It has a strategic life of its own.



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VIEW FROM INDIA

QUAD PATH TO A GLOBAL ROLE

By C. Raja Mohan



Few developments reflect the profound changes in India's worldview better than the construct of the Indo-Pacific maritime space and no institution today has greater salience than the so-called quadrilateral forum, or the Quad, in India's international relations. While the Indo-Pacific now provides a regional anchor to India's foreign policy, the Quad provides a solid basis for a larger Indian regional and global role. Although India's major power ambitions date back to its independence, Delhi is closer than ever in realising those ambitions today — thanks to the relative rise in its own position in the international system and the partnership with other members of the Quad — Australia, Japan, and the United States.

Delhi's active participation in the Quad appears counterintuitive, given the traditional framing of India's foreign policy around the idea of non-alignment. It is, and thereby hangs the tale of the recent transformation in India's global engagement.

Accidental Origins

The origins of the Quad, according to the record, dates to an accidental naval collaboration between India, the US, Japan, and Australia in offering relief following the Boxer Day tsunami in the eastern India Ocean in December 2004. The event marked an important break from India's military isolationism. For decades during the Cold War, India cut off military engagement with major powers in the name of non-alignment. Although a cautious military re-engagement with the world began in the 1990s, Delhi was hesitant to imagine a coalition strategy with other powers in securing its interests in the region. A coalition with the US and its allies, in particular, seemed a bridge too far.

But a series of developments began to give traction to the idea of India building a regional coalition with the US and its Asian allies. One was the 21st century transformation of bilateral relations with Washington. The ties which took a nosedive with the US sanctions that followed India's nuclear tests in May 1998 were followed by a determined effort by both sides to make a new beginning. The bold departures of George W. Bush Administration in its South Asia policy—which saw the de-hyphenation of India from Pakistan, suspension of US activism on Kashmir, and a readiness to see Delhi through the prism of Asian balance of power—provided a new template for India-US relations. Two important developments emerged out of this framework. One was the historic US-India civil nuclear initiative of July 2005; the other was an ambitious framework agreement for defence cooperation between Delhi and

Washington unveiled a few weeks earlier in May 2005.

With the stage set for new ties with the US, India now had openings to rebuild relations with America's Asian allies—Japan and Australia. Both had reacted harshly to India's 1998 nuclear tests but were now ready to take a fresh look. It was Japan's late prime minister, Abe Shinzo, however, that provided the twin bases for the regional coalition between the four nations. One was the reimagining of the Indian and Pacific oceans as a single geopolitical space — the "Indo-Pacific" — and the other was a four-cornered "diamond of democracies" that would help promote peace and prosperity in the newly defined theatre. He first outlined these ideas in his address to the Indian Parliament in August 2007. The new mini-lateralism got an unintended boost from the Indian Navy when it convened a five-nation naval exercise in the Bay of Bengal (the Quad members and Singapore) in September 2007, drawing significant regional attention. The first meeting of the senior officials of the four nations took place in November 2007 and the stage appeared set for founding the Quad. But the forum quickly became moribund.

Second Thoughts

In India, both the idea of the Indo-Pacific and the Quad ran into rough weather. Underlying this was anxiety within the Congress Party-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government about getting too close to the United States and potentially alienating its giant Asian neighbour China and its traditional partner Russia. On the bilateral front, continuing suspicions about the US led to vigorous political resistance against the civil nuclear initiative despite the fact the deal was entirely in India's favour. Amid the political self-doubt, the UPA government was also hesitant in implementing the defence framework agreement with the US. It seemed to drift back to the old verities of nonalignment. Top UPA policy makers presided over the articulation of

a new doctrine called "Nonalignment 2.0" that called for a careful navigation between Washington and Beijing. China's vigorous campaign against the fledgling Quad as "Asian NATO" also helped put the centre-left UPA coalition on the defensive.

To be fair, India was not the only one to have second thoughts on the Quad. Australia ostentatiously declared that Quad was not a priority, primarily to appease China. Abe's successors in Tokyo did not seem so interested in pursuing his ideas on the Quad. The US too was preoccupied with the land wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. All four nations had put great value on stable and productive relationships with China and were unwilling to strain those ties for the sake of an uncertain future with the Quad.



The four leaders of the Quad meet at the Tokyo Summit in May 2022.

Source: Alamy Images

“China's muscular assertiveness in the region consolidated the Indo-Pacific idea and revitalised the Quad”

It needed China's muscular assertiveness in the region to consolidate the Indo-Pacific idea and revitalise the Quad. China's aggressive attitude to territorial disputes with India, Japan and its Southeast Asian neighbours, and its

ambition to replace the US as the dominant power in Asia began to change the terms of discourse. India, which seemed hesitant to resuscitate the Quad in the final years of the UPA government, began to develop considerable stakes in rebuilding the Quad into a credible forum during the Narendra Modi years.

Returning to the Quad

In India, the arrival of Narendra Modi as prime minister in 2014 saw an end to the ambivalence that defined the Manmohan Singh government's engagement with the US. Modi sought to wrap up the residual issues in implementing the civil nuclear initiative, renewed the framework agreement for defence cooperation with the US in 2015, invited for the first time an American president (Barack Obama) to be the chief guest at the annual Republic Day celebrations, embraced the idea of the Indo-Pacific, and revived the Quad. Equally important was the special importance that Modi attached to the relationship with Japan and personal enthusiasm for Abe. This introduced new energy into India's bilateral engagement with Japan. Modi also ended New Delhi's prolonged strategic neglect of Australia and pushed for elevating bilateral ties with Canberra.

In rejuvenating ties with the US and its Asian allies, Modi had to transcend three important mental barriers in the Indian establishment. One was to overcome the deeply held political suspicion of the US and the entrenched ideology of non-alignment and strategic autonomy that insisted on keeping a safe distance from the US and its allies even when cooperation was patently in India's interest. Unlike his predecessor Manmohan Singh and large sections of his own party, Modi was not burdened by the traditional Indian baggage of anti-Americanism and was willing to engage Washington based on pragmatism and self-

interest. His absolute majority in the lower house and a solid command over the ruling party, ensured that there would be less political resistance to moving forward with the US. Yet, Modi had to continually overcome the reluctance within the bureaucratic establishment to rethink the relationship with the US, despite his declaration that the "historic hesitations" in engaging the US are over.

The second challenge was the strategic warmth to China in India's political and policy establishment. Despite continuing problems with China since independence, the Indian elite firmly believed in befriending China as a strategic national imperative. This mindset had induced an enduring deference to China's sensitivities, which were all too easy to offend. The romanticization of the relationship with China tended to cloud judgments about Beijing's own national ambitions as well as the implications of the growing power gap with it.

Although Modi did not buy into the traditional ideology, he came into power betting on the possibilities of a pragmatic engagement with China. As the chief minister of Gujarat, he had expansive engagements with China and believed in building a productive relationship with Beijing at the national level. Modi pressed on with this approach even during military crises on India's China frontier in 2014 and 2017, but the 2020 Galwan Valley clash which led to the deaths of 20 Indian soldiers convinced Modi of the importance of balancing China. While offering firm military responses to the crises on the border, Modi made decisive moves to energize the Quad and elevate it into one of India's most consequential foreign policy initiatives.



Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida shakes hands with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the Quad Summit in Tokyo in May 2022

Source: Alamy Images

“Modi made decisive moves to revive the Quad and elevate it into one of India's most consequential foreign policy initiatives”

Third was the challenge of transcending the "Asianist" idea that was firmly etched in India's worldview. These involved notions of regional and extra-regional powers, "Asia for Asians," an Asian order built and led by the Asians, and strong opposition to alliances and coalitions in the region led by the US and other Western powers. Making the Quad central to India's foreign policy involved breaking these ideological barriers.

Xi Jinping's aggressive posture on the disputed border made it clear that a productive regional partnership with China was likely out of reach. Beijing had also been unsupportive of India's global ambitions in the multilateral arena, including on the reform of the United Nations system to make it more representative, specifically by making India a permanent member of the UN Security Council (something US leaders support). Even more urgently, China's growing strategic footprint in the Indian Subcontinent and the Indian Ocean undermined India's strategic position in the neighbourhood and the extended neighbourhood.

Building a better strategic balance in Asia then became a more overriding objective for India than joining hands with China in shaping Asia's future. On the economic front too, India's decision to walk out from the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership at the end of 2019 underlined India's refusal to be sucked into a China-led Asian economic order. The Modi government realised the impact of Chinese trade policies in hollowing out India's manufacturing capabilities and understood the need to secure the country's nascent digital economy from Chinese data theft. Following from this, Delhi wanted to reorient its national economic strategy away from the debilitating interdependence with China. Here again the Quad partners and other Western actors acquired a new salience in India's new strategy of building national capabilities with "trusted partners".

Great Transformation

India began the post-Cold War era with a firm conviction of building a multipolar world that would limit the dangers of a US-dominated "unipolar moment". India is now deeply committed to the construction of a multipolar Asia in partnership with the US and its Asian allies. The Quad has evolved from consultations on a limited range of issues between senior officials in 2017 to a forum that sees frequent leader-level summits since March 2021. The agenda of the Quad cooperation has expanded substantially covering areas ranging from vaccine production to maritime domain awareness

and building resilient supply chains to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

Although this marks a profound change in India's world view and the orientation of its foreign and security policy, some are disappointed by India's reluctance to turn Quad into a formal alliance. Some critics see India as the weak link of the Quad that is unwilling to endorse all major steps of the US in the region that Australia and Japan do. It is important to remember that putting "Indo" into the "Pacific" and the creation of the Quad were about bringing New Delhi into a wider Asian coalition that goes beyond the traditional US alliances. India is not seeking a formal alliance with the US; nor is Washington offering one to Delhi.

India and the US today have a common interest in constructing a stable balance of power system in the Indo-Pacific that has been destabilised by a rising China's expansionism. For the US, a coalition with India brings much more geopolitical heft to Asia than the traditional alliances. India and its Quad partners are building on this agenda at a reasonable speed that might not satisfy those who want to see a much quicker transformation of the Quad and may alarm those who think the coalition is too disruptive to regional stability. New Delhi, Washington, Canberra, and Tokyo have good reasons to build this coalition at a measured pace, develop a sustainable agenda for the long term, and produce outcomes that are beneficial to the entire Indo-Pacific region.



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VIEW FROM JAPAN

An Emerging Liberal Order in Asia

Nobukatsu Kanehara



Today, for the first time in history, a liberal international order is emerging in Asia. Most Asians followed a very different historical path than Westerners and Japanese. They were colonized and racially discriminated against for generations. After World War I, Asian nations proudly rejected colonial rule and declared independence, with many having to fight for freedom. Asian nations did not look to Western-style democracy right after independence, for the colonial powers were, for the most part, democracies.

Many tried various types of dictatorship: communist regimes like Vietnam, military rule in South Korea, Taiwan, Indonesia and Myanmar, or populist dictatorships like the Philippines. Although these regimes were oppressive, they achieved significant economic development.

In 1980s, just before the end of the Cold War, the Asian nations turned one by one to democracy. And most are now proud members of the club of freedom.

Asia occupies 60% of the world population and soon will represent 60% of the world GDP. The industrial revolution that happened in the Great Britain changed the world forever. The derivative nations are today's advanced industrial democracies. Now the waves of industrialization wash the shore of Asia. China and India are taking back their original size and weight in world politics and economy. China, which benefited the most from the open and liberal international system, has become the second biggest economy on earth. Unfortunately, China is now standing as challenger to the liberal international order and wants to carve out its own sphere of interests. The Communist Party of China seems determined to survive as a dictatorship and dominate Asia.

The West – and Asia - face a Chinese challenge. This is a watershed moment that will determine whether a liberal order expands in Asia or surrenders to Chinese dominance.

Know where China stands

When Japan was defeated in the Pacific and the Americans stopped cooperating with the corrupt Kuomintang, Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin took the chance to help Mao Zedong conquer China. A brief honeymoon between Russia and China started. Mao established the People's Republic of China in 1949, a country born from the gun, and its army is still the army of the party, not of the nation. Human dignity,

conscience, freedom and God were all denied for the sake of the revolution.

Mao's Great Leap Forward in 1950s starved tens of million people to death. Mao was almost marginalized by the party leadership. To take back leadership, he started the Cultural Revolution and incited youngsters to destroy the existing ruling system. From the chaos, Mao restored his dictatorship but suffused it with a personality cult. Mao split with Russia's Nikita Khrushchev who sought to better relations with the West. In 1969, Mao started a military clash on Damansky island in the Ussuri River in Siberia. The Russian army defeated Mao's human wave tactics. A frightened Mao decided to break ice with the United States and Japan who, on their part, saw a strategic gain in weaning China away from Russia.

“The West and Asia face a Chinese challenge. This is a watershed moment that will determine whether a liberal order expands in Asia or surrenders to Chinese dominance.”

After the death of Mao in 1976, Deng Xiaoping, skillfully balancing the old communist guard of Li Peng with reformers like Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang, opened China for foreign investment and technology. After relations were normalized, Japan helped China and did not hesitate to deliver official aid of several trillion yen. The United States and Europe also invested heavily in China, making it the “factory of the world.”

But the collapse of the Soviet Union terrified China's communist leadership. They saw the communist world in Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia collapse overnight. Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu was shot dead with his wife. Victory of freedom was celebrated, and a liberal atmosphere spread

around the globe. Deng turned his back on democracy. He turned on Hu Yaobang, his chief reformist, and Hu died during an excited debate in the Politburo. The Tiananmen massacre followed. Japan still helped China immediately after Tiananmen because Japan believed that Deng was the only hope for reform and that the West should not drive back China into Maoist extremism. In the end, China stayed with the West.

Quad and Western Unity

China took advantage of the Western open system and became a very successful economy. Many believed that China would be like us one day and embrace political reform to follow its economic opening. This expectation was misplaced. As communist ideology faded away thanks to Deng's reform and the economic development, the Chinese leadership began to fear the infiltration of Western liberal ideas and set about consolidating the power of the Communist Party.

The leadership needed a new source of legitimacy and developed a narrative about the glory of the Chinese Communist Party which built today's great China. They use history well: highlighting the humiliations and conflicts brought by the West including the Opium Wars, the 1856 Arrow incident, the Sino-French war over Indochina, Sino-Japanese war over Korea, Boxer Rebellion and consecutive sacking of Beijing, the loss of Far East Siberia to Russia, Mukden incident, the second Sino-Japanese war and finally civil war with Chiang Kai-shek. The history is emotionally loaded to create a sense of revanchism among the Chinese people against the West.

The legend is also used for fueling nationalism. The glory of five thousand years of Han people's history is told to the Chinese. This neglects that the Qing dynasty that the party replaced was not Han but Manchu and many ethnic groups like the Mongols, Uyghurs and Tibetans were part of the empire. Much of this



Chinese President Xi Jinping shakes hands with then US Vice President Joe Biden in Beijing, China in December 2013.

Source: Getty Images



Chinese soldiers salute during a ceremony in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, China November 2013.

Source: Alamy Images

cannot stand up to academic scrutiny, but it is a part of a controlled narrative necessary for the leadership of the party. The present policy of forcible and cruel assimilation of minorities is a consequence of this narrative.

The combination of a historical sense of revanchism and mounting nationalism drives China to expansionism, in particular maritime expansionism, and aggression around disputed borders. China believes it can carve out a vast ocean area to provide it strategic depth to defend the heartland of China. It claims the Bohai Sea, Yellow Sea, East China Sea and South China Sea. The South China Sea was formally claimed by China with a note to the United Nations in 2006 even though it is wider than the Mediterranean and claimed in part by six other nations. To enforce its claims, China is militarizing South China Sea islets and shoals after having its coast guard seize them forcibly. Since 2012, China has been bullying Japan over the Senkaku islands.

Xi Jinping is adding a new aggressive flavor to China's expansionism. Xi is from the extreme Maoist generation of Red Guards and shares no Western values. Under Xi, it is prohibited legally to discuss the universal values, including those enshrined in China's own constitution. Xi has extended his term in office beyond the traditional two five-year terms and is succeeding at absolute control not seen since Mao. And the trophy he desires, the prize with which he hopes to outshine Mao, is the conquest of Taiwan.

"The Quad, what Abe called the diamond of democracies in the region, must expand. The first efforts of engagement should start with the Europeans."

No nation except the US can face China alone. China may surpass the US economically by 2030 but it cannot outpace the US and its allies and partners in Asia including Australia, New Zealand, Southeast Asia, and India. China's population is already shrinking, and its power

will peak in 20 years' time. That means that the West can still engage China from a position of strength, but if and only if it is united. Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine revitalized the unity of the West. Now that the first strategic priority is to build on that unity outside of Europe.

India is the most important element of the Indo-Pacific strategy. Its population will surpass that of China next year and is, on average, 10 years younger than China's. And its economic size will surpass Japan in 15 to 20 years. Japanese and Americans tend to forget



The Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy was the initiative of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who was tragically assassinated on July 8, 2022. Abe's idea was that the Indo-Pacific rim nations, mostly industrial democracies and/or market-oriented economies, should realign to make this vast and rapidly growing area into a major part of the liberal international order. Two existing alliances provided an underpinning, Japan-US and Australia-US. South Korea has a 600,000-strong military and its military budget is the size of Japan's or Britain's. Seoul's strategic direction was confused under the leftist regime of President Moon Jae-in but the conservative President Yoon Suk-yeol now in the Blue House has revived trilateral cooperation with Japan and the US.

Tsai Ing-wen, President of Taiwan
Source: Alamy Images

that one consequence of their rapprochement with China was to push India towards the Soviet Union. India has never forgotten its battles with China in the 1950s and its war in 1962 and needs to ensure a source of advanced weaponry. In addition, India is wary of China's close relationship with Pakistan.

Now that China stands against the West, India is gradually shifting under Prime Minister Narendra Modi while rhetorically supportive of non-alignment. With China, Japan and the US did not share values, but with India they do. The future Western strategic framework with

India will be based not only on strategic interests but also on universal values.

Japan, US, India, and Australia make the Quad, and this developing coalition, what Abe called the diamond of democracies in the region, must expand. The first efforts of engagement should start with the Europeans who share values and whose military and economic weight is far greater than ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations). The AUKUS (Australia-United Kingdom-United States) arrangement will be a major contribution to regional defense. France is a Pacific power and should be involved in the new architecture. Germany whose strategic view was limited to NATO area and did not see beyond Afghanistan is now waking up to see China from a more strategic perspective. The European Union Commission has also come to see China as a problem to the liberal international order.

How to Safeguard Taiwan

The West should pay more attention to ASEAN nations. In population they are half of China and have a three-trillion-dollar economy. They cherish free trade though mechanisms like CPTPP (Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership) and RCEP (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership), but both major trade frameworks do not include the US or India. ASEAN strategic interests and threat perceptions vary greatly from nation to a nation and with the US and its Quad partners. Yet ASEAN nations are becoming worried China that seeks to make them tributary states. Indonesia and the Philippines are like Japan and have never been tributary states of China. Vietnam, which got independence from China in the 10th century, is the most wary of its northern neighbor. Thailand and Singapore feel a historical affinity with China, but they are an ally or a quasi-ally of the US respectively. ASEAN has developed a splendid multilateral diplomacy over the years.

And many of them are now proud democracies. The West must engage ASEAN.

The biggest security challenge in 21st century Asia is the possible Chinese invasion of Taiwan. Xi Jinping, who is now becoming more and more like a "petit Mao," thinks seriously of realizing Mao's impossible dream: annexation of Taiwan by force. Taiwan has 23.5 million free people who are very proud of their economic achievement, freedom, and democracy. Its economy is almost G-20 size (it ranks 21st) and its firms, like semiconductor giant TSMC, are an indispensable part of today's global semiconductor supply chain. If it is lost to Beijing, China will dominate the East and South China Seas and even the Western Pacific. Taiwan has a distinctive identity as a free nation despite its ambiguous international status. Taiwanese are now more likely to say

"Now that China stands against the West, India is gradually shifting under Narendra Modi while rhetorically supportive of non-alignment."

proudly "I am a Taiwanese" and no longer say "I am a Chinese and a Taiwanese." This shift of identity is real. That angers and scares the Chinese leadership. It also challenges the leadership of the West. If the West loses Taiwan, the world will consider the West to have surrendered the whole of Asia, not only Taiwan, to Chinese dominance.

Taiwan is not an easy island to invade. It is the continuation of the Japanese volcanic archipelago next to Okinawa Islands. Its western side has mountains as high as 4000 meters. It is a rocky island where there are only limited places for amphibious attacks. China will not launch a full-scale amphibious attack immediately. Prior to it, they will assassinate leaders by special operations, intensify cyberattacks and cut deep sea cables to isolate

Taiwan. They will try to put in place a puppet government which will call for Chinese intervention and flood Taiwanese cyberspace with fake news. Beijing will then declare that any foreign intervention will constitute the violation of the core interests of China and interference in its domestic affairs. Beijing will back these words with military force.

China is not capable of doing so today. But Xi Jinping has directed the military to have the ability to invade Taiwan by 2027, when his third term expires. His aim is to be able to deter US forces from intervening on Taiwan's behalf or prevent them from doing so.

Many analysts view the invasion of Taiwan as a matter of when, not whether it will happen. Japan will be involved immediately for several reasons. One, China claims Senkaku Islands as part of Taiwan. Two, Japanese Yonaguni island and other Sakishima islands are only 110 kilometer away from Taiwan and Chinese war zone will include these islands. Japanese military bases are in Sakishima islands and China might wish to neutralize them. Three, US forces will use bases in Japan for operations to help Taiwanese and China might wish to neutralize them too.

Japan has repeatedly said the peace and stability of Taiwan Strait are essential to Japan's security. The same passage is present in the recent joint declaration between Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga and President Joe Biden. This is exactly what Japan said along with the US before and after the two normalized relations with China. Japan-US alliance treaty's Article 6 stipulates that US forces can use bases in Japan for the peace and stability of Far East. "Far East" here means the Koreas, Taiwan, and the Philippines. They are ex-Japanese imperial territories or US colonial territories that have remained under US sphere of influence since 1945. These countries represented a power vacuum when Japan was defeated in World War II. The US wanted to protect them using bases in Japan

while Japan accepted the responsibility to defend Korea and Taiwan given the vacuum the represented and the size of the hostile armies of Russia, China, and North Korea. This US-Japan security arrangement is the understanding that underpinned Far East regional security after World War II. The One China policy maintained after recognition of



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, shakes hands with the late Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on the sidelines of the G-20 Summit in Hamburg, Germany in 2017

Source: Alamy Images

the PRC was on the condition that the peace and stability of the Taiwan Strait not be disturbed by force. If the peace is broken, the basis of the One China policy will be broken.

Quad and India's Role

India can contribute to the liberal international order as a new leader. In 2007, then-Prime Minister Abe came to Delhi and delivered a famous speech in the Indian Parliament entitled "Confluence of Two Seas." His message in the speech was clear. India must be

international relations with a new strategic framework: Free and Open Indo-Pacific. The US military's Pacific Command even changed its name to the Indo-Pacific Command. The FOIP is not a product of power politics, it not simply about the principle that "my enemy's enemy is my friend." The FOIP is a conceptual framework of nations who share fundamental values that include developing common rules for the international commons, freedom of navigation, and peaceful resolution of disputes.

India is the crown jewel of the Quad concept while China (and Russia) stand against it. S&P and Morgan Stanley forecast that India's economy will be bigger than Japan's by 2030 - 2035, the number three economy on the globe. And India is a responsible power which possesses nuclear weapons with an unblemished non-proliferation record. India should be and could be the last hope to strategically counter the rise of China.

Cooperation with Stalin to defeat Hitler and working with Mao to face the Soviet Union were the product of European-style power politics. This time, cooperation with India is very different. This is not about strategic convenience. Cooperation with India can lay down the basis of a strategic framework for sustaining the liberal international order in this century. The bonds between the US, Canada, UK, France, Germany, India, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Australia, New Zealand, ASEAN and other EU nations, Mexico, Peru, and Chile can make a foundation for an Indo-Pacific liberal order. And in this ring of freedom, India is the new center piece.

For the West, competition with China will be a marathon that involves every dimension of military, economy, and ideology. Although China has everything, military power, nuclear weapons, big economy, abundant money, big population, large land, and natural resources,

Japan's new partner to sustain the liberal international order. In his second term, Abe built on this speech, launching his new vision of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific.

This new strategic framework spread at an amazing speed. The US, European nations, Australia, and ASEAN nations started to think

it lacks one important thing to be a world leader, its ideas. In this context, India's importance cannot be underestimated.

The universal principles of the UN Charter that should shape the 21st century derive from the belief all humans are equal. Conscience teaches compassion which in turn helps people to overcome difficulties together, promoting inclusivity. The rules of society must be made by the consent of the ruled. These principles derive from human nature itself. Humans work together and care for each other to overcome difficulties. This is evident in all the great religions: "love" in Christianity, "仁" (pronounced "jn" in Japanese or "ren" in Chinese) in Confucianism and "compassion" in Buddhism. These principles are commonplace in Western society today, but they were achieved with tremendous efforts and bloodshed over the last century.

Mahatma Gandhi led India to independence. He proved that human nature need not be about struggling against each other. He rejected the 19th century's rule of the jungle: that the strong defeats the weak or that the fittest and the superior survives, and the others must obey or be extinct. He argued that every human has a window of conscience in himself to see God/Truth in his heart and that this is

nothing but love. With his leadership, India stood on its feet in 1947. Indian independence sent ripples all over the world, the ripples turned into a tsunami and washed the Asian and African continents. The tsunami of self-determination swept away almost all the colonialism from the globe in 1950s and 1960s.

It should be noted the Western nations changed too. The US abolished institutionalized racial discrimination in 1950s and 1960s thanks to the civil rights movement led by Martin Luther King Jr. This was another inflexion point in history, another movement of non-violence inspired by Gandhi. South Africa's apartheid system was abolished following pressure from outside the country and by another hero, Nelson Mandela.

It is now time for the West to engage the Indo-Pacific in full. And India is the best partner in such an effort. The mission must be to engage Asian nations to accept the universality of values like freedom, democracy, and rule of law. Asian powers like India and Japan have a special role because they must prove these universal values are valid, that these values are ones Asians have always nurtured in their domestic politics for centuries and that Asia can be a major pillar of the liberal international order in the 21st century.



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VIEW FROM THE UNITED STATES

Fall and Rise of the Quad

Lisa Curtis



The defining national security issue for the United States for the foreseeable future is strategic competition with China. Beijing will continue to try to circumvent global norms and rules to gain strategic advantage; use economic coercion to bring countries in line with its policies and strategies; and dominate critical technologies and harness them to push its authoritarian ideology both at home and abroad.

One of the most important tools for balancing China's rise and promoting a liberal order in the Indo-Pacific is the Quad—four powerful democracies coming together with a shared vision of the region and pooling their resources and capabilities to realize that vision. After a false start in 2007, the Quad is finally developing into a consequential strategic grouping that is likely to set the course of the Indo-Pacific region for decades to come.

Since the Biden administration took power in January 2021, there have been four Quad summits (two held in person and two held virtually) and the establishment of six coordination groups on critical and emerging technologies, vaccine distribution, climate, space, infrastructure, and cyber security. When Trump administration officials revived the Quad in 2017, they never imagined the progress the group would achieve just five years later. The reason behind the advance of the Quad in such a short period of time can largely be credited to Chinese behavior on the global stage, which took a sharply aggressive turn in the final year of the Trump administration, coinciding with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Slow Emergence

The Quad has been slow to emerge as an organized grouping. During the late Shinzo Abe's first term as prime minister of Japan (2006 to 2007), he pushed to include India into the trilateral security talks held by the United States, Japan, and Australia, proposing a Quadrilateral Security Dialogue. The first-ever official security consultation among the four nations was held in May 2007. Beijing, catching wind of the meeting before it occurred, issued demarches to each nation questioning why they were undertaking such an initiative and whether it was aimed at containing China. The concept of the Quad flowed in part from the successful cooperation among the four nations' navies in

carrying out disaster relief efforts following the December 26, 2004, tsunami that struck South and Southeast Asia. Abe also was convinced that India, as a maritime power and democracy, had an integral role to play in shaping the "Indo-Pacific"—a phrase he coined in a speech to the Indian parliament in 2007.

"The Quad has become the linchpin of US strategy to maintain peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific and to counter increased Chinese aggression and hegemony."

The negative Chinese reaction to the first Quad meeting in 2007 and changes in political leadership in Australia and Japan later that same year contributed to the rapid demise of the Quad. In early 2008, then-Foreign Minister of Australia Stephen Smith announced that Canberra was no longer interested in participating in the Quad. Although Australia's announcement set a narrative that lasted for several years that the Rudd government was primarily to blame for the earlier disbanding of the Quad, former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd argued in a March 2019 article in Nikkei Asia that the dissolution of the Quad a decade prior also was attributable to Abe's loss of power in late 2007 and a general lack of enthusiasm for the grouping in both New Delhi and Washington. An article by Shinzo Abe dated June 10, 2022, and published posthumously by the Japan Times backed up Rudd's arguments, noting the following about receptivity toward the Quad idea when Abe originally proposed it in 2007.

Unfortunately, the US initially took a cautious stance in consideration of China's stance at the six-party talks on North Korea's nuclear development, which were then under way. India, attentive to its tradition of nonalignment, stayed on the sidelines. Nonetheless, with the support of Australian Prime Minister John Howard, a high-level



People line up in the rain to get vaccinated against COVID-19 at the sports center of Fuyang Normal University.
Source: Alamy Images

dialogue among the four states (informally known as 'the Quad') occurred.

"When Trump administration officials revived the Quad in 2017, they never imagined the progress the group would achieve just five years later. The reason behind the advance of the Quad in such a short period of time can largely be credited to Chinese behavior."

A decade later, during the Trump administration—which had taken a more skeptical view of China and was in the process of developing its Indo-Pacific Strategic Framework—and shortly after a major two-month-long border stand-off between India and China, the Quad was revived. The first official Quad meeting in over a decade took place in November 2017 on the sidelines of the East Asian Summit and Association of Southeast Asian Nations meetings in Manila. It was held at the assistant secretary/director general level and was followed by a series of working-level meetings that culminated in a foreign minister-level Quad meeting on the fringes of the United Nations General Assembly in September 2019.

Even as the Quad was picking up steam during this period, India remained hesitant to publicly highlight its work and reluctant to issue joint

statements following the meetings. India also never warmed up to the Trump administration's idea to organize a meeting among the four countries' defence ministers. New Delhi's agreement to resume Quad meetings meant it likely recognized that the Quad could play a role in managing a rising and increasingly assertive China. However, New Delhi also wanted to exercise caution and calibrate its involvement in the Quad.

The Covid-19 crisis and China's aggressive behavior throughout 2020, particularly its military build-up along the India-China disputed border and its cutting of Australian imports in response to Canberra's calls for an independent investigation into the origins of Covid-19, kicked the Quad into high gear, and set the stage for the recent progress made by the Biden team. Following the increase in border tensions along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), a major confrontation between Indian and Chinese troops broke out in the Galwan Valley on June 15, resulting in the killing of 20 Indian soldiers and four Chinese forces—the first loss of life along their disputed borders since 1975. The border crisis was a seminal event for India and reinforced New Delhi's interest in reducing its economic reliance on China, especially in strategic sectors, and led it to place new restrictions on Chinese investments in the Indian economy and to ban over 200 Chinese smartphone applications. It also prompted new openness from New Delhi

regarding Quad activities, and for the first time in 13 years in the fall of 2020, India invited Australia to participate in its Malabar naval exercise along with the US and Japan.

Still, there has been a deliberate effort by all four Quad nations to underplay any military or defense angle to the grouping, most likely to placate the Southeast Asian nations, which are wary that the Quad will fuel tensions in the Indo-Pacific. The Southeast Asian nations also are susceptible to Chinese influence campaigns that seek to portray the Quad as an "Asian NATO."

A great deal has transpired with the Quad during the first two years of the Biden administration.

In addition to holding four Quad summits and establishing multiple working groups, the four countries have issued guidelines on principles of technology use and governance and introduced a major maritime security initiative. The intensive pace of Quad activity in the last two years reflects the urgency of its work and the sense that the four countries have lost precious time with the initiative. The Quad countries recognize that bending to Chinese irritation about the first-ever Quad meeting in 2007 was a mistake. Placating China by disbanding the Quad did not result in a friendlier China willing to cooperate on critical global issues. China also made significant progress on its military modernization campaign during the ten-year gap of Quad coordination.

Strategic Cooperation

In the last two years, the Quad has become the linchpin of the United States' strategy to maintain peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific and to counter increased Chinese aggression and hegemony. A major line of

effort of the Biden White House Indo-Pacific strategy, released in February 2022, is strengthening the Quad, and making it a "premier regional grouping" that will take collective action on issues like vaccines, critical and emerging technologies, climate change, infrastructure, cyber security, space, and other issues.

On technology, the Quad has an interest in meeting the challenge of China seeking to dominate the development of emerging technologies and to control supply chains for critical minerals and technologies. Whether it is building an international consensus around open access 5G networks that will provide alternatives to Huawei technology or cooperating to establish critical infrastructure like undersea cables, the Quad's work has been strategic but not militaristic.



US-India Joint Military Training Exercises part of the Yudh Abhyas 2021.
Image Source: Embassy of India, Washington D.C.

Even though the Quad is explicitly focused on non-military issues, make no mistake that these four nations have security issues on their mind. The Quad's commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific is a way to push back against China's increasingly assertive positions on its territorial claims in the East and South China Seas. The Quad's collective work on issues like vaccines, technology, and climate change is part of a broader effort to manage a rising China and ensure that democratic powers are meeting challenges in the region and shaping the future order of the

Indo-Pacific. The Quad countries are building habits of cooperation and could easily transition to cooperation on military issues, should the need arise.

Indeed, the Indo-Pacific Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA) initiative unveiled in May 2022 at the Quad summit in Tokyo shows a growing interest by the grouping to get involved in maritime security. The IPMDA seeks to bring together the nations of Southeast Asia, the Indian Ocean region, and the Pacific Islands to enhance collective maritime domain awareness. In the joint statement issued following the summit, the four nations reaffirmed, “resolve to uphold the international rules-based order,” and specifically condemned, “...militarization of disputed features, the dangerous use of coast guard vessels and maritime militia, and efforts to disrupt other countries’ offshore resource exploitation activities.” The statement signals that the Quad will defend nations against maritime aggression and infringement of their sovereignty.

China’s increasing reliance on grey-zone activities to enhance its influence and undermine the traditional rules-based order is raising concern among the Southeast Asian nations. Chinese grey-zone activities are not new. In 2012 Beijing effectively captured the disputed Scarborough Shoal with Chinese maritime surveillance vessels and has maintained a coast guard presence there ever since. More recently, the Philippines lodged a diplomatic protest in 2021 when China docked over 200 fishing vessels near the Whitsun Reef in the disputed Spratly Islands. Manila claimed the vessels were part of a maritime militia China was using to try to take over the disputed maritime feature.

In Indonesia, fishermen around the Natuna islands are increasingly being harassed by large Chinese vessels. The Natuna islands fall within Indonesia’s 200-nautical mile exclusive economic

zone, but China argues the area is within its so-called “nine-dash line” claim over most of the South China Sea. China rejects the 2016 international arbitral ruling, which ruled China’s “nine-dash-line” claims had no legal basis.

In August 2022, China docked a surveillance vessel in Sri Lanka’s Hambantota Port during Colombo’s worst economic crisis in 70 years—and despite Indian concerns the ship could be used to track nearby sensitive Indian defense installations. This is yet another example of China wielding its influence to undermine the rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific.

Quad and AUKUS

In contrast to the Quad, which is focused on a non-military agenda, the landmark Australia-United Kingdom-Australia (AUKUS) initiative announced in September 2021 represents explicit military cooperation among the three nations and signals the United States’ military commitment to the Indo-Pacific. AUKUS—a major information technology and industry cooperation agreement—also signifies the UK’s active role in Indo-Pacific security following its deployment last year of its HMS Elizabeth aircraft carrier task force group to Asia.



US Air Force, F-15 fighter jet
Source: Alamy Images

The AUKUS agreement pledges that the three nations will build a minimum of eight nuclear-powered submarines for Australia and opens the door for Australia’s acquisition of a range of new weapons systems and enhancement of capabilities in cyber, artificial intelligence, quantum computing, electronic warfare, and undersea sensors. The deal has the potential to transform the Australian military in terms of its structure and ability to partner with its allies. The nuclear-powered submarines will allow for longer duration deployments and will enable Australia to operate in contested waters with greater maneuverability and stealth capabilities.

AUKUS has received support from Japan and India, which contrasts with the lukewarm reception it has received from the Southeast Asian nations. India recently helped block a Chinese effort to table a resolution against AUKUS at the International Atomic Energy Agency. Shortly after the agreement was announced last year, Indonesian and Malaysian leaders expressed concern that it would fuel an arms race in the region. More recently, Indonesia formally raised concerns that AUKUS heightens the threat of global nuclear

proliferation at the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty Review Conference held in August 2022. The Quad and AUKUS will mutually reinforce support for a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific and should not be viewed as competitive initiatives. AUKUS functions as an arm of the region’s security architecture in tandem with the Quad and other mini-lateral and multilateral groupings. AUKUS not only strengthens defense and security ties among the US, UK, and Australia but will augment numerous regional security arrangements that will help create a web of deterrence and maintain peace in the Indo-Pacific.

Future in Indo-Pacific Security

There have been questions over whether India’s ties to Russia and its lack of condemnation of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine will strain cohesion of the Quad. The issue came to the fore in early September when India sent an army contingent to participate in Russia’s military exercises in Vostok. At one point this included drills in islands Japan considers part of its Northern Territories. The editorial board of a major Japanese newspaper called India’s move a “double cross.” India subsequently pulled out of that part of the exercises.

India’s decision to participate in the Russian military drills followed Russia and China demonstrating their opposition to the Quad by flying war planes in a joint patrol near Japanese airspace on May 24, 2022 — the day the Quad leaders met in Tokyo. The joint statement from the Tokyo meeting did not call out Russia by name, likely in deference to India’s wishes, but it did call for a rules-based order that respects the United Nations charter and maintains territorial sovereignty of all countries. It will become increasingly difficult for India to simultaneously maintain close ties with Russia and contribute to advancing the Quad’s goal of maintaining a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific, especially if Russia continues to threaten nuclear escalation in Ukraine, making

Russian President Vladimir Putin increasingly viewed as an international pariah.

Another question is whether the Quad will eventually take on a more active role in coordinating military and defense policies and activities in the Indo-Pacific. While Japan and Australia are treaty allies of the US and already

“The Quad countries recognize that bending to Chinese irritation about the first-ever Quad meeting in 2007 was a mistake. Placating China by disbanding the Quad did not result in a friendlier China willing to cooperate on critical global issues.”

engage in robust defense cooperation with Washington, India will never develop a military alliance with any of the three nations. However, India is developing closer security ties with the US, Japan, and Australia each on a bilateral basis. The US and India, for example, have concluded several foundational defense agreements in recent years that enable increased cooperation in areas like military communications and logistical access.

In a recent paper published by the Center for a New American Security, titled “Operationalizing the Quad,” the authors lay out several potential areas for security cooperation, should the Quad move in that direction. The authors recommend the four nations quietly begin diplomatic discussions

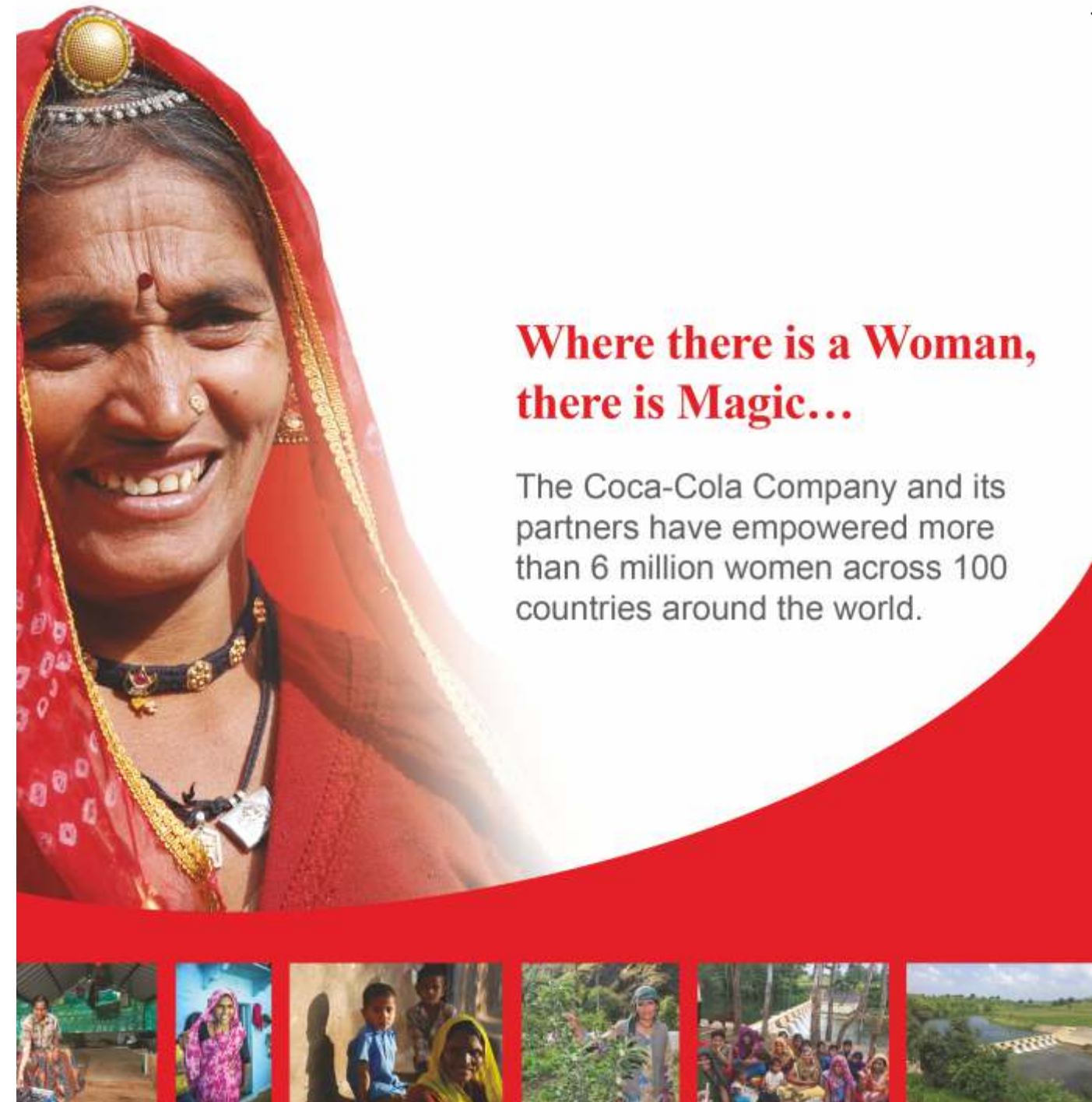
on regional contingencies and crisis management; hold joint Quad naval patrols; expand reciprocal access agreements; and consult on military applications of critical and emerging technologies. The paper further recommends that India be invited to attend the trilateral defense ministerial dialogue between the US, Japan, and Australia as an observer and that the four nations coordinate efforts to build military capacity of other regional nations. Given the four countries’ overlapping security concerns regarding Chinese naval activities and Beijing’s increasing challenge to the regional political and security order, it would serve their mutual security interests to consider ways they can increase interoperability among their militaries and coordinate strategic and tactical planning for potential military contingencies.

After 15 years of fits and starts, the Quad has finally taken shape and clearly defined its purpose, which is to preserve an open, free, transparent, and rules-based order that facilitates peace, security, open societies, and economic prosperity in the Indo-Pacific. It is now more important than ever that the Quad countries come together and increase their joint activities to deter conflict and advance prosperity in this vital region. As China’s global competitive edge sharpens across the military, economic, diplomatic, and technological domains, the extent to which the Quad countries can collaborate will be an important factor in determining whether China’s hegemonic designs on the Indo-Pacific will succeed.



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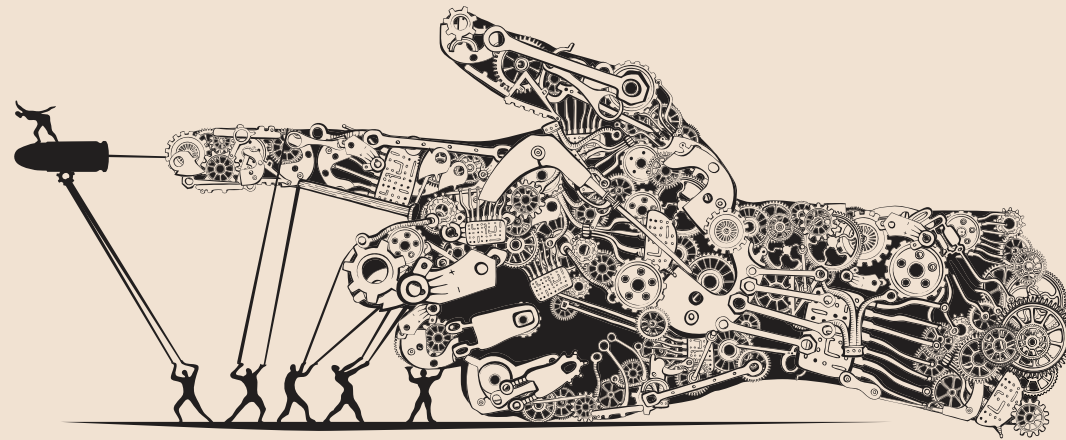
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THE GREAT TECH GAME

Where Technology and Geopolitics Meet

Anirudh Suri



Geopolitics has historically been about the intersection of territory, international politics and strategic objectives of nation states. Typically, geopolitical objectives would revolve around the protection and acquisition of territorial borders, trading routes or strategically important bases. That would constitute their strategic advantage.

Whether it was the Mediterranean powers such as the Minoans and the Phoenicians, Greek city-states, or the colonial empires all the way to the American empire, geopolitics has retained these characteristics.

The Greek city-states and Romans were fighting for grain, and access to fertile, irrigated land. The Mediterranean trading powers were fighting for trading routes and trading rights. The Islamic empires similarly fought to maintain control of the markets and trading points connecting East and West.

The empires of Britain and France fought for colonies, natural resources, and trading rights across three oceans. For the British empire, geopolitics was about acquiring control of more colonies, trade routes and choke points such as the Straits of Malacca and Suez Canal from strategic rivals such as Russia and France. And that is how the academics and practitioners of geopolitics—the likes of Emil Reich, Alfred Mahan, Halford Mackinder, Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski—have understood it.

“Behind closed doors governments are figuring out how they can leverage technological advancement to further their role in the world order.”

But there is a tectonic shift underway in the arena of geopolitical rivalry. While the traditional dimensions of geopolitics continue to remain relevant, a new significant layer has been added to geopolitics: technology. States are increasingly realizing that “technology will give them a strategic advantage in the twenty first century.” Today, the major powers in the world believe that “if you can get ahead in the technology race now, you’ll stay ahead for a very long time.” As White House National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan remarked at a Global Emerging Technologies Summit, “advancements in science and technology are poised to define the geopolitical landscape of the 21st century.”

While battles between Big Tech and regulators dominate mainstream media, behind closed

doors governments are figuring out how they can leverage technological advancement to further their role in the world order.

This is a big change. Until a couple of decades ago, the internet was left largely to fend for itself. But governments are now realizing they need to think strategically about controlling the technologies that are shaping our world today. Increasingly, countries are realizing that their strategic objectives in the technology era are sowing the seeds for conflict with other nations.

The Great Tech Game - this global contest for technological, economic and geopolitical dominance – is starting to shape the world order. The United States and China, more so than other countries, understand the long-term significance of the technology-driven battles that they are engaged in today.

Digital Achilles’ Heels

One of the key domains global technological competition is playing out in is control of the internet—infrastructure, content, norms, rules of conduct, standards and security. The ability to control the internet is becoming a source of state power and influence, both domestically and internationally. Along with strategically important shipping routes, we now have strategically critical information infrastructure such as undersea fiber optic cables and data centres. These are essentially information highways – the technology Silk Routes - and their security has become strategically important in geopolitical terms.

During peace time, these cables are just like any other piece of global infrastructure like roads or rail networks. Those who control them have the advantage of being able to monitor all the traffic that flows through them. In wartime, the ownership and security of these data cables—as with the telegraph cables in the 19th and 20th century—matters even more. These fibre optic cables now form the primary telecommunications backbone for all economic, political and military activity today.

Companies like Subcom (based in New Jersey), Alcatel Submarine Networks (Nokia-owned, based in France), Fujitsu (based in Japan), HMN Technologies (formerly Huawei Marine Networks, based in China) and NEC (based in Japan) are among the leading designers, manufacturers and operators of submarine cables. In case of a future military conflict, the firms that are responsible for these cables will become critical in restoring internet access if disrupted intentionally by adversaries. Countries that do not have strategic partnerships with such firms (for example India, Russia, and Vietnam) will find themselves at a disadvantage in case of a conflict with a stronger power with strategic access to these cable firms like China or the US.



Martin Radtke, technician, squats at a test stand for submarine cables in the new research hall of the Faculty of Mechanical and Marine Engineering at the University of Rostock, Germany.

Source: Alamy Images

“Major powers are fighting over control and dominance of emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, genetic engineering, climate and food technology that will shape future economic growth. These technologies promise to transform the destinies of nations.”

The control of internet infrastructure and the ability of a country or even a firm to defend its networks and damage those of opponents will be potent in case of a future escalation of conflict between major powers. As the nature of war itself changes to a hybrid future – combining traditional domains of warfare such as land, air and oceans with newer domains such as space and cyber – we can expect technology to be a key, though never the sole, determinant of geopolitical outcomes.

Major technology powers are also fighting for access and control of digital markets. Advanced nations and their tech firms are fighting hard to keep their opponents out of these markets. So just like the British and French competed for colonies, the Americans and Chinese are competing aggressively for control of new digital markets. Nations are also competing to be major suppliers of critical technologies for the world, such as 5G telecom gear, often to the exclusion of their rivals. And where needed, they will end up dividing up the markets among themselves.

The major powers are also fighting over control and dominance of emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, genetic engineering, climate and food technology that will shape future economic growth. These technologies promise to transform the destinies of nations, much like the mobile and the internet did in the last couple of decades. Self-sufficiency, reliable access and even dominance, where possible, of those technologies have become critical geopolitical concerns of nations.



Chinese printed circuit board
Source: Alamy Images

Because strategic technological dominance is beyond the reach of one country, many are also building new alliances and friendships, sometimes breaking old ties. In addition to the traditional determinants, such as a strategic geographical location or a shared cultural affinity, the strength of a country's technological capability, or the attractiveness of its technology market, will shape new strategic alignments.

Battle for Dominance

Geopolitically savvy nations will look to ensure they are not reliant on unfriendly states for their core technology needs. For example, the US worked hard over the decades to build self-sufficiency and reduce, if not eliminate, its reliance on untrustworthy nations for oil and gas. Today, the US is working to eliminate its reliance on undependable nations for semi-conductors and rare earths and other such critical resources. Sullivan has acknowledged that US technological leadership is no longer “inevitable” and must be “renewed, revitalized, and stewarded.”

China, on the other hand, believes it has a “rare historic opportunity” to leapfrog past the US and other leading nations and gain control of several emerging technologies such as 5G internet, sensors and robotics, artificial intelligence and smart city infrastructure. Recently, at China's 20th Party Congress, President Xi Jinping's speech emphasized “great self-reliance and strength in science and technology,” recognizing that China is locked in an intense, highly consequential technological conflict with the US. By establishing leadership in these transformative technologies, China is aiming to become the most advanced science and technology power in the world by 2050. Its 2016 Innovation-Driven Development Strategy, which also included its Made in China 2025 plan, has emphasized development of China's digital ecosystem and an appropriate regulatory structure.

Through the Digital Silk Road initiative, Chinese companies have played a major role in boosting internet connectivity and infrastructure in Africa, Eurasia and Latin America. Beijing and Chinese companies have worked hand in hand to ensure access to new markets and customers. China has also understood the importance of world-class research and development, and the significant

“China has displayed a deep understanding of the complex mechanisms through which Europe and the US have retained economic leadership in the world, especially in the critical field of technology.”

advantage a well-trained talent pool can afford its strategic objectives. The Chinese have displayed a deep understanding of the complex mechanisms through which the Europeans and the Americans have retained economic leadership in the world, especially in the critical field of technology and telecommunications. In many

ways, it is seeking to replicate the Western strategies for success in the previous centuries.

The battle for dominance of emerging technologies and digital markets is playing out in another behind-the-scenes domain: the establishment of standards in international technical standards organizations. In addition to building and seeking control of the digital infrastructure, China is also seeking leadership roles in international bodies such as the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and ICANN, to get Chinese technology standards adopted by the rest of the world.

The US understands its overall global dominance is being challenged. Just a century ago, the US was the challenger to the then hegemon, the United Kingdom. Today China is attempting to turn the tables. The US is increasingly deploying its own multi-faceted playbook to block China's rise. As NSA Sullivan admitted, the US is “facing a competitor that is determined to overtake US technological leadership and willing to devote nearly

limitless resources to that goal.” The US is increasingly severely restricting any technology flows to China, whether through acquisitions or theft.

Another piece of the US strategy is decoupling its supply chains in core sectors from China, and reducing supply chain vulnerabilities. The decoupling and supply chain de-linkages are especially important from the US perspective, in view of ‘China's increasing domination of global upstream and downstream “manufacturing supply chains” in areas critical to US national security’. This includes everything from semiconductors to rare earths. As a result of these restrictive trade and export control rules, trade wars—which involve restrictions and rules such as export controls, and have been common throughout the industrial era—are now increasingly looking like technology wars.

In addition to slowing down China's rise, the US is also working to extend its lead by furthering tech innovation and competition. Like the 1945 Vannaver Bush memo to

President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the NDAA 2019, a comprehensive outline of the US's intended playbook, has emphasized the need for the US to develop a long-term science and technology strategy to ensure that it stays ahead of competitors in key technology areas, such as semiconductor manufacturing, AI and quantum computing. The recently passed CHIPS Act and the Inflation Reduction Act are clear steps in this direction.

Alliances and Alignments

The confluence of technology and geopolitics, and the race for technological leadership, are leading to new conflicts, new orientations and new alliances. In the past, relationships were based on factors such as strategic geographical considerations, economic interests, common political systems, or historical cultural affinities.

Countries are now rethinking their strategic interests and objective in the context of the technology-driven era of geopolitics. New permutations and combinations are on the table that might have seemed completely out

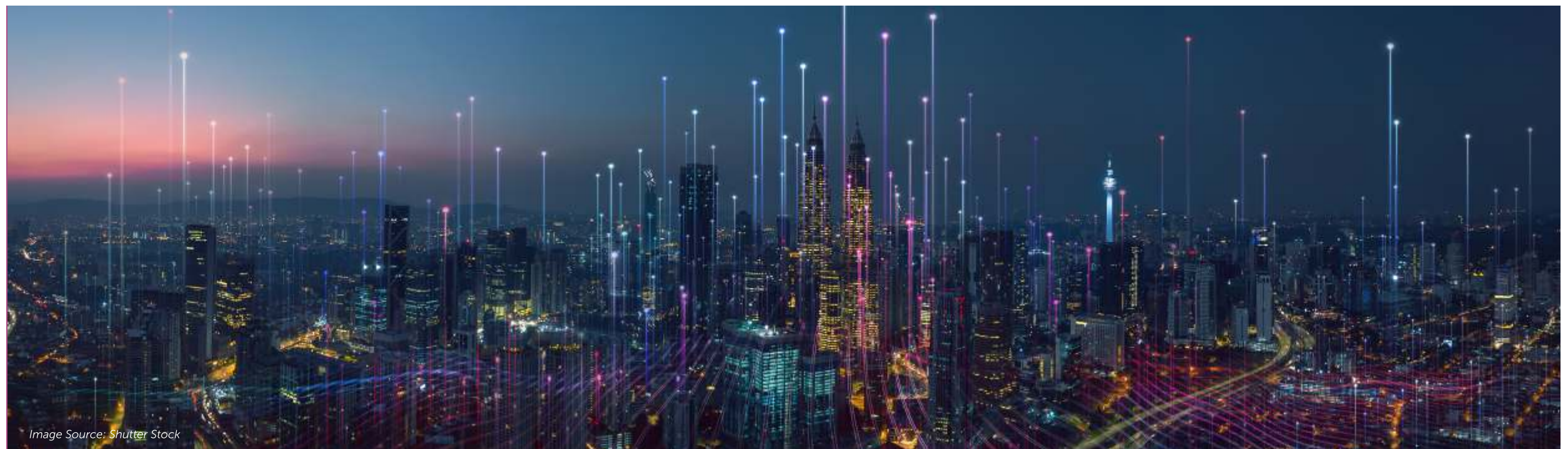


Image Source: Shutterstock

of the question earlier. Partnerships are also being formed based on the nations' technological capabilities and the attractiveness of technology markets. Technology is becoming a bigger part of the strategic calculus of countries.

Countries that are important from a technology perspective—either as large digital markets or innovation hubs or owners of critical minerals—are assuming greater importance as potential allies and partners. India, for example, has become a much more attractive strategic partner for many countries, given these changed considerations.

Future alliances in the twenty-first century will be more than military alliances. As Mira Rapp-Hooper suggests, alliances that go beyond military dimensions and work together on technological, space, intelligence and cyber dimensions will end up being more effective

and productive. For such cooperation, as new groupings like the Quad and AUKUS are beginning to do, allies will not necessarily need to raise their defense spending. Rather, they could contribute significantly through existing resources such as intelligence agencies, foreign ministries, technology firms and professionals, hacker groups, and national security establishments.

A strategic rethink will be needed for all countries, big and small, as technology shapes the nature and raison d'être for alliances. Countries that manage to build unique cyber weapons or cyber-capabilities will be in demand. Certain countries such as Australia will also be desirable as allies or partners because of the endowment of rare earths that they possess. Similarly, Netherlands will become a critical partner, given that the Dutch multinational ASML is the world's largest supplier of photolithography systems for the semi-conductor industry.



Technician working with an electronic microprocessor
Source: Alamy Images



An open-pit mine
Source: Alamy Images

The new grouping with the most potential to become a long-lasting one is the Quad, comprising the US, Japan, Australia and an emerging strategic partner, India. The Quad also serves as a great example of a 21st century alliance that is coming together on technology-driven considerations. In addition to cooperation on vaccine production and climate change, the Quad is focusing on shared technological innovation and collaboration on supply chain issues through its working groups. The supply chain issues being discussed in the Quad revolve squarely around US–China technological competition. The Quad countries are aligned on building a supply chain of semiconductors and microchips which is not dependent on China and plan to work out similar arrangements for other technology sectors.

Traditional US allies such as South Korea, Japan and Taiwan, which are the largest manufacturers of semiconductors and microchips in the world, will be core to this

effort. In addition, the US and its allies are propping India up as an alternative manufacturing hub for semiconductors and chips. Similarly, Australia might contribute with its significant reserves of rare earths, second only to China. Collectively, the Quad and other US allies could reduce, if not eliminate, reliance on China for critical raw materials.

“Alliances will be a key determinant of who wins this new Great Game for technological and geopolitical leadership. The US is likely to attempt to win the war for technological leadership by beating China at the partnership game.”

Ultimately, alliances will be a key determinant of who wins this new Great Game for technological and geopolitical leadership. Much like the over fifty alliances of all kinds

forged by the US during the Cold War, the US is likely to attempt to win the war for technological leadership by beating China at the partnership game.

Finally, the technological dimensions of geopolitics are also increasingly evident in the energy domain. Climate change has been a major global governance challenge for the world but is now a source of geopolitical tension. Our current global energy economy is undergoing a once-in-an-era transition from brown hydrocarbon-based fossil fuels to green renewables.

Tech, the Foundation of Power

Climate change has already become an arena of great power politics. The US has been increasingly ceding ground in the clean technology sector to China. China is already home to over 50 per cent of the world's electric vehicles, 60 per cent of solar panels, and 90 per cent of the world's critical minerals. China is currently dominating the global supply chains for solar photovoltaics, wind turbines, lithium-ion batteries and EV technologies, and its exports to the European Union, the US, Japan and other OECD nations have surged in recent years.

Transitions to these new energy technologies and determining who will set the standards of the products that use these technologies will become a critical driver of competitive

advantage for nations, economically and geopolitically. The US Congress, driven in part by a desire to edge out China in clean-tech innovation, are making a green funding push, evidenced in big part by the dominance of climate technology advancement in the landmark Inflation Reduction Act.

The strategic thinkers in these nations increasingly accept that 'technology is the real foundation of power', as was evident from the thinking underlying the Vannevar Bush memo to US President Roosevelt in 1945. But steadily, other regions and countries are beginning to grasp this view and the long-term implications for the world order as well. The Great Tech Game, the defining contest of the 21st century, is unfolding in front of our eyes.

Nations must understand that the nature of not just economic competition but also the geopolitical battles of the world is changing. For much of our memory, territories, trading routes and critical resources such as oil have driven geopolitical tensions and conflicts. Today, technology—specifically the quest for technological dominance—is driving geopolitical competition. A nation's capabilities have to accordingly evolve if it wants to be able to win these new geopolitical battles. Nations which hope to prosper in these new geopolitical alignments must develop an awareness of this new form of competition and then the capabilities in order to compete.



Anirudh Suri

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