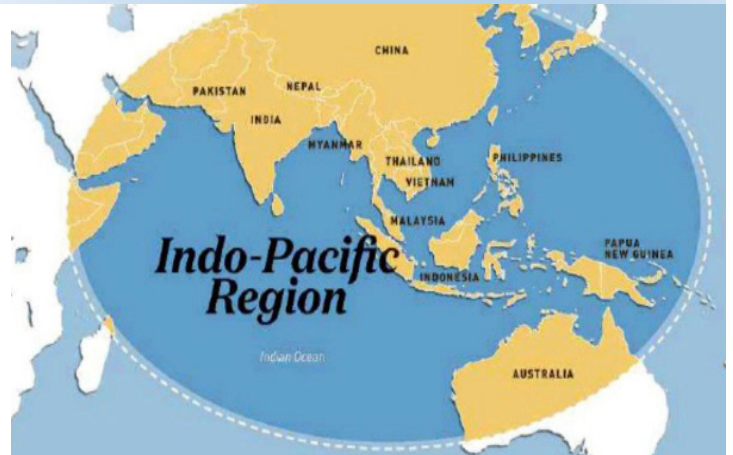




# CENTRE FOR AIR POWER STUDIES (CAPS)

Forum for National Security Studies (FNSS)

## INDO-PACIFIC NEWSLETTER



A monthly Newsletter on Security and Strategic Issues on Indo-Pacific Region from Centre for Air Power Studies

### From Editor's Desk

*The Taliban's takeover of Kabul last month has made this an uncertain time in international politics, with grave implications for the security of Indo-Pacific countries, especially India. For a deep dive into how the events in Afghanistan will have repercussions for New Delhi's strategic thinking and Indo-Pacific calculus, we bring to you an excellent commentary by eminent scholar and former journalist Manoj Joshi. We have also collated for you some exceptional articles providing astute analysis on some key developments in the region—including India's rather successful term as UNSC President for August 2021 with substantive outcomes and the economic dimension of the Quad partnership.*

*Next, I want to highlight that our aim with this newsletter is to bring to you some diverse and expert viewpoints that highlight the major themes in the region's security discourse and prompt further debate and discussion among our readers. Accordingly, I am excited to announce that we will be making several significant changes in our newsletter moving forward. Starting with this issue, the newsletter will be a monthly publication, and delivered to you promptly in your inboxes on the 7th of each month. In response to constructive feedback, and to help our readers interact with the newsletter better, we have also shuffled and amended our layout. Now onwards, the newsletter will be more compact and concise. In our new 'Snapshot' section, we will assemble a range of more succinct assessments that explore varied facets of the Indo-Pacific. The newsletter will also focus a great deal on the vastly popular SM Corner, with links to more videos, webinars and podcasts, for your viewing pleasure. The CAPS team remains committed to providing you a newsletter that not only informs but also instigates further debate—and we will continue to strive in our endeavours. We are always happy to hear any suggestions you may have to further enhance the newsletter.*

*As always, stay healthy and stay safe. And do keep an eye out for upcoming, insightful research from CAPS scholars on the Indo-Pacific domain!*

Jai Hind

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<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/jostling-in-indo-pacific-for-influence-and-geostrategic-space-navy-chief/articleshow/85706768.cms>

Malabar 2021

<https://japan-forward.com/malabar-2021-more-important-than-ever-for-peace-in-the-indo-pacific-region/>

### QUOTE

*"The United States is a proud part of the Indo-Pacific and this region is critically important to our nation's security and prosperity."*

*-Kamala Harris  
Vice President, US*

## Opinions/Review/Expert View

### Afghanistan and the Indo-Pacific

The events in Afghanistan have underscored something that has always been staring at us in the face: There is a vast gulf that separates India and United States' (US) interests in the Indo-Pacific. We are assuming here the Indian definition of Indo-Pacific, which is geographic, rather than political and as last spelt out by Prime Minister Modi in 2018, essentially sees a region stretching from "the shores of Africa to that of the Americas." The US notion of the Indo-Pacific differs as it begins from the western shores of India to those of the Americas.

The Indo-US strategic partnership does not include the western Indian Ocean and its hugely important littoral, which includes the Saudi peninsula, East Africa, and the our key continental concerns which lie in what is virtually the fulcrum of Eurasia—Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Central Asia.

So, it was not surprising that our Indo-Pacific strategic partner kept us out of the Doha process, did not see it useful to have us in its now still-born western Quad comprising of US, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Uzbekistan. In these circumstances, there was no question of keeping India abreast with the developments in Afghanistan, including

**Indo-Pacific strategic partner kept us out of the Doha process, did not see it useful to have us in its now still-born western Quad comprising of US, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Uzbekistan.**

the nitty-gritty of the US plans to retreat from there. This, despite the fact that whatever we did in the country—which was not insubstantial in terms of reconstruction efforts—depended crucially on the American security umbrella.

For this reason, the South Block seems to be in an overdrive to show that the US-India strategic partnership is alive and well and has even been flourishing in the chaos of Kabul. Efforts are being made to show how much coordination and cooperation India got from the US to complete its diplomatic evacuation from the city. While the key role played by the Taliban in facilitating the move has been played down or ignored.

Looking into the future now one wonders whether a coherent Indo-Pacific policy is even possible. Having left Afghanistan, the way they did, the US is not likely to be in a hurry to make fresh commitments in the region.

From the US point of view, a departure from the Middle-East region makes sense. The Americans no longer depend on oil from that fractious region. Today, their principal concern is probably merely the security of Israel. This will actually help them focus on their competition with China in their definition of the Indo-Pacific region.

But geography, the immovable part of geopolitics, requires that India remain where

it is. And from there, the Afghan disaster does not look not pretty. In Afghanistan, we had little choice, but we cannot avoid the blame for having burnt our bridges with Iran at the instance of the US. Don't be surprised now if the US actually resumes its deal with Iran, while Tehran vents its ire on India for its pusillanimity, by denying us access to Chahbahar whose utility to India, in any case, now remains moot.

But the greater setback New Delhi has suffered is in Afghanistan where it has considerable goodwill amongst the populace and close ties with the government. This included cooperation with its intelligence service, the National Directorate of Security (NDS), through which it could mount operations in Pakistan.

Just how much influence Pakistan will have with the new Taliban is difficult to gauge, despite having facilitated their resurgence with arms, money, and a safe haven. The Taliban, however, have opened pathways to Iran and Russia, ensuring that Islamabad's hold on their logistics will be reduced. People like Mullah Baradar, who was detained and ill-treated by the Pakistanis for eight years have long memories. But the Pakistanis have an important trump card in the Haqqani network, which is now perhaps the strongest element in the coalition that makes up the Taliban.

India's western headaches are likely to increase as Pakistan and China enhance their cooperation and seek to include Afghanistan in their new trilateral. In a phone call on Wednesday, Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi laid out four suggestions to his counterpart of Pakistan, Shah Mehmood Qureshi. First, on the need to support the establishment of a broad-based, inclusive political structure in Afghanistan; second, to support the process that will ensure that the country does not become a haven for terrorism again; third, on the importance of the safety and security of Chinese and Pakistani personnel in Afghanistan; and fourth, promoting international cooperation involving Afghanistan.

**Xi Jinping called President Ebrahim Raisi of Iran and President Barham Salih of Iraq separately.**

On the same day, Xi Jinping called President Ebrahim Raisi of Iran and President Barham Salih of Iraq separately. With Iran, Xi expressed strong support for bilateral cooperation and opposition to "external interference". In addition, he supported Iran's "legitimate concerns" over the comprehensive nuclear agreement.

Whatever may be Pakistan's goals, China will not be interested in stirring up trouble in Afghanistan. Its approach is defensive, aimed at preventing any spillover of either American power or Islamist radicalism in Central Asia. Beijing has substantial financial investments in Central Asia, Iran, and Pakistan as part of

its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and now its goal would be to incorporate Afghanistan into it as well.

Already there have been reports, (here and here) on how China may exploit the US \$1 trillion of minerals, especially rare earths which Afghanistan has. According to Global Times, the Chinese are committed to the Afghan mining sector since 2009 and that they already have some US \$630 million of direct investment in the mining communications and road communications sector there, along with US \$0.5 billion of trade.

Indian investments and trade are much greater than that of China currently. India has built roads, dams, electricity transmission lines, sub-stations, schools, hospitals, gifted buses, and trained personnel. India and Iran had joined hands to exploit the Hajigak mining deposits as well. But now there will be a big question mark there. The Afghans will view this through the new geopolitical lenses that any new regime in Kabul will wear, and, of course, vica versa..

Already, we are witnessing little shifts in geopolitical developments that give us little comfort. Besides the deepening of the China–Pakistan relationship, there is increased American interest in Islamabad. The US indicated a desire to establish counterterrorism bases in Pakistan, but when Islamabad firmly

pushed back on that score, the US backed off. But given Washington’s long investment in Pakistan, that is not likely to be the end of the story.

On the other side of the Indo-Pacific, both the US and China continue to spar, most recently at the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). While the meeting was addressed by Wang Yi and Antony Blinken, India chose to field the Junior Minister of External Affairs Rajkumar Ranjan Singh. Wang revealed that a tentative agreement had been reached at an earlier ministerial meeting on a Code of Conduct that China is negotiating with the ASEAN for over 20 years. What Wang was seeking to do was to show that China and the ASEAN were for

**India and Iran had joined hands to exploit the Hajigak mining deposits as well. But now there will be a big question mark there.**

a diplomatic solution to the problems of the South China Sea, in contrast to the US which is rallying India and a European naval coalition for “freedom of navigation” exercises. Beijing is seeking to include in the Code of Conduct whose draft was produced in August 2018, a clause barring military exercise and resource development by extra regional countries.

In the ARF meeting, Blinken attacked China’s record on human rights in Hong Kong, Tibet, and Xinjiang and raised the issue of the growing Chinese nuclear arsenal. But, there was little visible ASEAN reaction and some pushback on US lecturing on human rights. This is unlikely to change after the current

regional tour by Vice President Kamala Harris.

The big problem is not the navies and ships, but the economic policy. The US withdrawal from the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) undermined a viable response to China and there are no signs that the US plans to conclude trade deals with the region in the near term. Likewise, India decided to stay away from RCEP.

Now, the US and the Quad are speaking of an ability to compete with China across the board—from vaccines, to climate change mitigation and cooperation in international standards, and innovative technologies of the future. But, all this depends on the building blocks of trade agreements and investments that we are yet to see.

To go by the officially leaked US Indo-Pacific strategy in January this year, the US seeks to maintain US primacy in the region which is an “engine of US, regional and global economic growth” and at the same time “encourage India’s engagement beyond the Indian Ocean Region.” While the document does speak of helping India to “address continental challenges,” this is limited to issue relating to the border dispute with China.

As is obvious, this is something that simply does not address a vast stretch of India’s foreign and security policy commitments.

As it is, across the world there are worries

about the reliability and credibility of the United States as a guarantor of security. You could argue that by cutting off a diseased limb of Afghanistan, the US will become more capable in dealing with challenges like China in

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East Asia. But a lot depends on how these issues are playing out domestically in the US. It would be foolhardy to take American credibility on external commitments as a given. While there are fewer doubts about US commitments to Europe and the NATO, the looser arrangements in the Indo-Pacific leave open many questions.

*Source: Manoj Joshi, ORF*

<https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/afghanistan-and-the-indo-pacific/>. 20 Aug, 2021.

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## Why the Quad Needs to Improve Its Economic Game

Since its inception in 2007, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, better known as the “Quad,” has had a sense of nebulosity about it. But while the COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked insurmountable havoc on the global economy and has taken close to 5 million lives globally, it has perhaps inadvertently galvanized the momentum around the Quad, accentuating its global presence.

In November 2020, for the first time in nearly a decade, the navies of the four Quad nations participated in a joint naval exercise. And earlier this year, the Quad received

fresh impetus on two fronts. There was a high-profile delegation of foreign ministers in February, which was furthered bolstered by the virtual meeting in March of the respective heads of government: Prime Ministers Suga Yoshihide, Scott Morrison, and Narendra Modi, along with U.S. President Joe Biden. Recently in Washington, top envoys of India, Japan and Australia and Indo-Pacific coordinator Kurt Campbell had a Quad ambassadorial meeting. Within his first hundred days in office, Biden has prioritized the Quad, signaling his administration's foreign policy priorities.

The Indo-Pacific region has gained significant importance considering the geopolitical implications of an increasingly belligerent China and its attempts to establish itself in a pivotal role in the region and globally. Beijing's bellicosity will no doubt continue to reinforce the importance of the Quad. However, in addition to countering China, there are three critical areas on which the leaders of the Quad countries have chosen to focus, including the creation of a Vaccine Experts Quad Group, a Quad Critical and Emerging Technology Group, and a Quad Climate Working Group.

While the first two fit well into the overall objective of the Quad, the significant issue of climate change should be addressed through other existing international platforms, as this grouping can make little progress without the

participation of key Asian economies such as China, South Korea, Vietnam, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Perhaps the elephant in the room, which should take priority in the higher echelons of the Quad's strategy, is the promotion of trade and commerce, which could subsequently mitigate the geopolitical trade kerfuffle between Washington and Beijing.

Currently, the combined GDP among the Quad countries sits at a whopping \$34 trillion, with Washington making up the lion's share, followed by Tokyo, New Delhi, and Canberra, all of which have recently been in Beijing's crosshairs. An established trade architecture amongst the Quad grouping will

**Trade, investment, and supply chain security need to be high on the agenda of the four-nation grouping.**

help counter the economic challenges that China poses in the Indo-Pacific. Not only are these countries well-equipped in resources; they also have the balancing capacity to fulfill each other's needs and make up for their respective economic weaknesses. For example, India, an energy dependent economy that needs to constantly upgrade its infrastructure, could rely heavily on subsidized imports from Australia, a commodity rich economy.

Given the ongoing geopolitical and security challenges in the Indo-Pacific, dependence on China for raw materials and other resources, and the critical nature of maritime trade routes through the South China Sea, there is an urgent need to add a trade component to the

Quad's agenda. While bilateral trade may be more viable, a multilateral trade partnership would help build diversified supply chains and promote economic stability in the post-pandemic era.

Currently, among the four Quad countries, the total share of trade within the grouping stands at 41 percent for the U.S., 34 percent for Japan, 14 percent for India, and 11 percent for Australia. There has been some resistance to establishing free trade agreements between the Quad nations, but such agreements could pave the way for enhanced trade cooperation and commercial activity.

During the March summit, the Quad leaders also committed to expanding the global vaccine supply for the Indo-Pacific in order to end the devastating impact that COVID-19 has had on the health sector, economy, and supply chains across sectors, impacting the movement and manufacturing of critical medical equipment and drugs. Struggling to meet domestic demands, countries amended their existing policies on procurement and exports to focus on their own populations. This seismic shift stems from an overdependence on China, specifically during the pandemic, which has led to massive disruptions in global supply chains. With a trade partnership, the Quad nations could pave the way for the creation of new supply chains across the dynamic Indo-

**Beijing's bellicosity will no doubt continue to reinforce the importance of the Quad.**

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Pacific region.

The four powers have also made a commitment to set up a Vaccine Experts Quad Group comprised of prominent scientists and government officials from all four countries. The mandate for the group is to impart each government's COVID-19 planning to ensure last-mile delivery in difficult-to-access communities, and support organizations such as the World Health Organization and its COVAX initiative, which is currently playing a critical role in vaccine management and distribution.

In March, the Quad made a commitment of delivering up to 1 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines to the ASEAN nations by 2022. So far, there has been little progress on the financing and manufacturing uptake in the vaccine production within the grouping. Most countries in the region are struggling to vaccinate their populations as COVID-19 variants continue to mutate and once again set countries on the backfoot. The immediate execution of the vaccine group's commitments should thus become a priority for the Quad.

Despite the commitment made by the Quad leaders, there are certain obstacles preventing them from meeting these goals. For instance, India, the world's largest pharmaceutical manufacturer, still awaits a steady supply

of active pharmaceutical ingredients and other raw materials from the U.S., the key in diversifying drug manufacturing and in fighting the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. For the past 18 months, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has stalled inspections in India, leading to delays in drug manufacturing and innovation, which has been cataclysmic as India battled its horrendous second wave. Such roadblocks not only impact trade between the U.S. and India, but also impact global supply chains and the existing partnership in the healthcare space.

The Quad leadership acknowledged that for a free, fair, and open Indo-Pacific to flourish, technology would need to be a crucial element. A Critical and Emerging

Technology Working Group was established to generate dialogues on important technology supply chains, support diversification of equipment suppliers, support cooperation in communications, monitor trends and opportunities in varied fields of technology, and coordinate standards for technology development both at the national and global levels.

However, it is also important that contentious issues like data privacy and data localization are not the focus of this group. The intent is to build a partnership, not to create barriers and walls, which would defeat the purpose of the Quad, leading to friction and

mistrust among the four nations. The current data policy and regulatory landscape in India is leading to doubts and mistrust. Building data-related walls will only lead to disintegration in the grouping at a time when sharing data and technology is critical to the partnership. Without trust, the Quad will stagnate and lose sight of its key goals at the time when the world order is in a state of flux.

The Quad's intent is clear, as demonstrated by the three pillars of cooperation that the leaders of the four countries have spelled out.

**The intent is to build a partnership, not to create barriers and walls, which would defeat the purpose of the Quad, leading to friction and mistrust among the four nations.**

It is vital now to accelerate the pace of implementation in the areas of cooperation and beyond, adding trade, investment, and global supply chains to the mix. These aspects need to play a significant role in the discussions and planning of the Quad's agenda.

Geopolitically, the landscape in the Indo-Pacific is rapidly evolving. The four Quad countries should now set the pace to implement the agreed upon deliverables from March and present initial outcomes at the next leadership summit scheduled this fall in Washington, D.C. The key element of trust needs to be nurtured among the Quad nations, otherwise it will defeat the very purpose for which it has been created. Without trust, the Quad will turn into yet another grouping with no concrete objective, but just mere symbolism.



Source: Mukesh Aghi, *The Diplomat*

<https://thediplomat.com/2021/08/why-the-quad-needs-to-improve-its-economic-game/>. 30 Aug, 2021.

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## India's focus on enhancing maritime security as the UNSC president: Leadership envisioning a global roadmap

The UN Security Council Open Debate on "Enhancing Maritime Security: A Case for International Cooperation", held in August 2021 and presided over by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been

momentous because it is the first time that maritime security was deliberated in a "holistic manner as an exclusive agenda item" in such a high-level global forum. Even if the UN

Security Council had discussed and passed resolutions on different aspects of maritime security on earlier occasions, an exclusive focus and statement on such an imperative agenda in a high-level forum reflects the strategic significance of the issue in preserving a much-needed equilibrium that shapes the contours of geostrategic stability in an evolving new world order. In this context, it is argued that India's leadership as the current President of UNSC in configuring a comprehensive approach for maritime security—at this critical juncture when ocean domains face increasing security concerns and threats—is appropriate

and timely. It revitalises the issue in the international community while demonstrating the urgency to effectively address the emerging maritime challenges with a spirit of reformed multilateral cooperation, heightened transparency in governance that further affirms and emboldens the established international law as reflected in the 1982 UN Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Such an assertion is further propelled by India's unique geographical position marked by its long coastline and the crucial intersection of the the Indian Ocean, the Straits of Malacca, and the

**As the current President of the UN Security Council, India has provided dynamic leadership and direction in envisioning a global roadmap on enhancing maritime security that will go a long way in shaping the contours of emerging world order**

volatile Indo-Pacific maritime corridor while connecting the wider Pacific waters. This directly impacts New Delhi's strategic geopolitical, security, economic, and maritime trade concerns.

In the contemporary era of global political and economic interdependence, it is a fact that sea routes are increasingly facing safety and security concerns as they are vulnerable to piracy, terrorism, and maritime disputes between many nations. The strategic sensitivities of the Indo-Pacific maritime domain, arising out of geopolitical competition and China's aggressive behaviour in India's immediate proximity in conjunction with security threats in the greater Indian Ocean region because of piracy and acts of terrorism, constitute the immediate causes of concern for New Delhi. Additionally, the

military contestation in the South China Sea and its ramifications across the wider Pacific are further threats to maritime security. Such continued maritime instability is proving to be unsustainable and poses a grave danger to global sea-trade routes. In this context, New Delhi's call for a coordinated global roadmap for maintaining a safe and secure maritime domain, essentially marked by enhanced international cooperation and transparency in governance, has been widely acclaimed as timely and appropriate intervention to effectively instate a global maritime equilibrium that is perceived to be a matter of paramount significance in the emerging post COVID-19 world order.

At the UN Security Council Debate, constituting the first standalone discussion on maritime security by the UN's highest body, India has provided a profound vision and direction to the international community on the issue of maritime security in a robust manner by emphasising climate change and natural disasters as integral components of the maritime domain while ensuring comprehensive preservation and use of shared maritime heritage. Towards this, in the current capacity as the UNSC President, India has proposed five principles that are imperative for ensuring maritime security. Such principles deal with removing barriers from legitimate maritime trade, encouraging

**Military contestation in the South China Sea and its ramifications across the wider Pacific are further threats to maritime security.**

responsible maritime connectivity, settling maritime disputes through peaceful means based on international law, jointly facing natural disasters and maritime threats created by non-state actors, and preserving the maritime environment and resources.

Removal of barriers to legitimate maritime trade has a strong underpinning in making maritime corridors in global space free and open, thereby, facilitating shared progress. On this, PM Modi highlighted India's leadership in promoting safe and secure maritime domain when he said,

"In today's context, India has defined the vision of SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) based on this open and inclusive ethos. Through this vision, we want to create an inclusive structure of maritime security in our region. This vision is of a safe, a secure, and a stable maritime domain. Free maritime trade also requires that we fully respect the rights of each other's sailors."

On the issue of settling contentious maritime disputes, the Indian PM averred that they "should be resolved peacefully and in accordance with international law," further adding that this was "extremely important for promoting mutual trust and confidence while ensuring global peace and stability." Importantly India's assertion on maritime security, which contained a tacit reference

to China's aggressive actions in the South China Sea, urged the international community for enhancing multilateral cooperation for securing freedom of navigation in accordance with prevailing international laws and in conformity to the 1982 UN Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). New Delhi's endeavour was largely supported by the international community at the UNSC, particularly the United States that observed that the South China Sea and the wider Indo-Pacific was witnessing dangerous encounters and provocative actions to advance unlawful maritime claims that intimidate nations in proximity, undermining the sovereignty of nations in the Indo-Pacific region.

The third principle that New Delhi advocated at UNSC relates to countries jointly tackling maritime threats from non-state actors as well as natural disasters.

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In this context, India's leadership role in the vast stretches of the Indian Ocean has been decisive and effective as net security provider. The fourth principle emphasised on the need to conserve maritime environment and marine resources from rampant pollution such as plastic waste and oil spills. India's fifth principle calls for responsible maritime connectivity through incorporating a viable structure that will accelerate maritime trade in consonance with the development of global norms and standards.

Importantly as the current President of UN Security Council, India's timely reference towards promoting maritime security is in congruence with its earlier initiatives and exemplary vision on this issue. Towards this, New Delhi's Indo-Pacific Oceans' Initiative (IPOI), proposed at the 14th East Asia Summit in Bangkok in November 2019, is considered a landmark intervention in propelling robust international cooperation with a focus on seven pillars of maritime security including maritime ecology; maritime resources; capacity building and resource sharing; disaster risk reduction and management; science, technology and academic cooperation; and trade connectivity and maritime transport. The comprehensive

nature of the India-led IPOI while perfectly synergising with the five principles propounded by New Delhi at the UNSC, further makes it a formidable geopolitical construct that has the power and capability to ensure maritime security, shared progress, territorial integrity, and international rules-based system while enabling enhanced maritime connectivity, strategic, and economic cooperation, and sustainable infrastructure development in the volatile Indo-Pacific corridor, thereby, setting a robust roadmap envisaging the much-needed power balance and geostrategic equilibrium in the greater Indian Ocean Region and beyond.

Moreover, India's advocacy for enhancing

maritime security at the UN's highest-level forum is in sync with its strategic engagement towards promoting multilateral cooperation in establishing stability, maritime security, and territorial integrity in the crucial Indo-Pacific. This is manifested by its pivotal role in QUAD architecture—an exclusive grouping comprising India, the US, Japan, and Australia—while facilitating a robust military collaboration in conjunction with identifying new vistas of strategic cooperation in areas related to maritime connectivity, maritime security, and trade with an objective of ensuring a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific maritime domain marked by territorial integrity and shared prosperity, that by extension includes the wider Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean frontiers as well. Furthermore, India's persistent and decisive interventions in bolstering geostrategic cooperation in the crucial Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) further propels New Delhi's potential as a formidable first responder in providing security in the greater Indian Ocean Region that links Asia, Africa, and beyond. Simultaneously, India's White Shipping Information Fusion Centre in conjunction with the training provided in Hydrographic Survey Support and Maritime Security to many countries has been landmark initiative in increasing shared maritime domain in regional and global dimensions.

**India's advocacy for enhancing maritime security at the UN's highest-level forum is in sync with its strategic engagement towards promoting multilateral cooperation.**

Such credible interventions effectively demonstrate India's commitment, statesmanship, and capability in steering global efforts towards enhancement of global maritime security. Prime Minister Modi's remarks, while presiding over UNSC High-Level Open Debate, rightfully showcases India's strong determination and resolve to play a leading role in envisioning a global roadmap towards configuring a robust construct on maritime security that would protect and support legitimate maritime activities while countering traditional and non-traditional threats in the maritime domain.

Source: Debasis Bhattacharya, ORF

<https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/indias-focus-on-enhancing-maritime-security-as-the-unsc-president/>. 26 Aug, 2021.

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## Snapshots

### Four dimensions of the Quad

Three months after its virtual summit on 12 March, the Quad – composed of the U.S., India, Japan and Australia – is attaining greater consolidation, even as its challenges acquire a sharper edge. As the US-China strategic contestation continues unabated, the progress of the new grouping has global implications.

The coalescing of three treaty allies and India, a strategic partner with each of them, compels attention. The Quad has begun planning for its first in-person summit, likely to be held in Washington in the autumn. The goal is to strengthen ‘The Spirit of the Quad’ (the title of the joint statement issued after the March summit) through expansion of the partnership in vaccines, climate change, critical technologies. Cooperation for infrastructure development, supply chain resilience and maritime security are also emerging as priorities.

**In this context, the Quad’s four dimensions merit a close look.**

First, India-U.S. ties received a boost during External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar’s substantive discussions in Washington in late May. Both the list of his interlocutors and the extensive agenda revealed the maturity of the relationship. His interactions with

key figures of the administration, Congress and corporate leaders were valuable. They focused on advancing cooperation in the fight against Covid, fine-tuning the strategy to deal with China, and deepening of security, defence, and economic relations with the U.S.

**The Quad nations also can create a mechanism to monitor takeovers of rare earth assets and critical mineral supply chains, especially by state-owned enterprises, which lead to monopolies and artificial shortages.**

Dr. Jaishankar’s informal meeting with the Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines, underlined the vital significance of intelligence-related cooperation in countering terrorism, Afghanistan’s condition after U.S. troop withdrawal and China’s aggressive postures in eastern Ladakh and the Indian Ocean. America’s generous assistance to India in the latest wave of the pandemic and increased frequency of consultations between Delhi and Washington has resulted in a closer convergence, contributing to the Quad’s blossoming.

Second, the European dimension assumed special significance. Leading European countries – France, Germany, UK and the Netherlands – have been working on their Indo-Pacific policies. They were followed by the European Union (EU) announcing its Indo-Pacific strategy in April. The EU is set to “reinforce its strategic focus, presence and action” in the region, based on the promotion of democracy, rule of law, human rights and freedom of navigation. This could mean a higher profile for the EU in terms of maritime

presence, economic cooperation and diplomatic activism as the 27-member bloc strengthens synergies with India. However, the EU made it clear that its Indo-Pacific strategy was “not anti-China.” The Quad, therefore, will need to devise its own ways to be closer to the EU. India’s helped its own case with the historic India-EU Summit (8 May), aiming to expand its relationship with an important global player.

Third, the ASEAN dimension represents the Quad’s vulnerability. ASEAN nations – which are large trading partners equally with the EU, the US and China – have been largely silent on the Quad’s assertiveness. While China’s continuing aggression is ignored, the Quad’s will to constrain it is seen as a new cold war. Despite daily provocations ranging from harassment of Philippine fishermen to Malaysian air space violations, Chinese measures are underplayed, partly out of fear and partly economic temptations. Two ASEAN grievances are the Biden administration’s delay in connecting with major ASEAN capitals at the highest political levels, and the Quad’s silence on Myanmar, even as ASEAN’s mediation initiative on Myanmar received public support from China. The Quad can overcome this gap by cultivating close ties with key players – Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia, as also the Philippines.

**The Quad countries are preparing for an autumn summit in Washington, which will provide an opportunity to discuss multilateral cooperation in various sectors.**

Four, the Pacific dimension goes beyond the U.S. working closely with Japan, South Korea and the Philippines to enhance maritime security coordination concerning China. It relates to a promising turn for the Quad in the South Pacific. Against the recent background of public differences on China between Australia and New Zealand, Prime Ministers Scott Morrison and Jacinda Ardern held cordial discussions in Queenstown on 31 May. A common way forward to address the China challenge was crafted. In their joint statement, they expressed “serious concern” over developments in the South China Sea as well as human rights violations in Hong Kong and Xinjiang. Beijing reacted adversely by expressing its “firm opposition” to the joint statement.

Two additional policy suggestions can help. First, despite a deep-seated hostility towards Russia, the U.S. administration, in the larger interest of the Indo-Pacific, can initiate a rapprochement with Moscow. The Biden-Putin Summit in Geneva on 16 June offers an enticing opening. Will American policymakers remember how the Nixon-Kissinger team executed a strategic breakthrough in 1971, by weakening China’s alliance with the USSR?

Second, the Quad’s conflict with China is not only about maritime security and rule of law, but also about economy and new technology.

A comprehensive plan for both is necessary. Gateway House will soon release a blueprint of path-breaking recommendations, devised by an international taskforce of reputed experts from the Quad nations.

Source: Rajiv Bhatia, Gateway

[https://www.gatewayhouse.in/four-dimensions-of-the-quad/?utm\\_source=MadMimi&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_content=Special+Briefing%3A+The+Quad+Economy+and+Technology+Task+Force+Report&utm\\_campaign=20210826\\_m164499670\\_Quad+Special+Briefing&utm\\_term=Four+dimensions+of+the+Quad](https://www.gatewayhouse.in/four-dimensions-of-the-quad/?utm_source=MadMimi&utm_medium=email&utm_content=Special+Briefing%3A+The+Quad+Economy+and+Technology+Task+Force+Report&utm_campaign=20210826_m164499670_Quad+Special+Briefing&utm_term=Four+dimensions+of+the+Quad). 10 Jun, 2021

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### Europe's step into the Indo-Pacific

For a long time, the European Union has taken no official position on the Indo-Pacific. This ended, however, on 16 April, when the Council of the European Union announced a strategy for cooperation in the region.

This historic event comes amid a pandemic crisis that has caused drastic shifts in international politics. While the rest of the world is struggling to recover from COVID-19, China has successfully curbed the Delta variant, brought cases to zero, and is cautiously growing and working on its vision. China is one of few countries in the world to have grown its economy despite the COVID-19 chaos.

That said, other powers in the region haven't just been sitting on their hands. On 12 March, the first Quadrilateral Security

Framework, or 'Quad' summit was held, with the leaders of Australia, India, Japan, and the United States, who discussed major issues of international security.

It's in this environment that Europe's step into the Indo-Pacific has come.

The European Union's Indo-Pacific strategy could signal a seismic shift from an older understanding of the Asia-Pacific to the evolving doctrine of the Indo-Pacific.

A central focus of the Council of the European Union in its 'Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific' was that key word 'cooperation'. It was used in a very comprehensive manner throughout, and includes conventional and non-conventional security measures, which it says will contribute to "development and humanitarian assistance, tackling climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, concluding ambitious free trade agreements, and contributing to the upholding of international law including human rights and freedom of navigation".

**Four dimensions which merit closer attention and are crucial to the group's future are the Indo-Pacific strategies of European countries and the EU, partnerships with ASEAN and its members, closer India-U.S. ties and maritime security issues in the Pacific.**

The goals of the strategy are to maintain the "stability, security, prosperity, and sustainable development" of the Indo-Pacific, which the Council wrote is based on the "promotion of democracy, rule of law, human rights, and international law."

These objectives will inform Europe's approach to the region's many difficult

problems – they will apply to the South China Sea dispute, for example.

The rising power of China is both a concern and an opportunity for the countries at the heart of this dispute, as they separately engage with China bilaterally and at ASEAN to try to forge acceptable norms in the region.

While the European Union may be

unlikely to get involved in such a dispute specifically, the rising assertiveness of China in the Indo-Pacific more broadly may have been the trigger for it to step into the region. The

European Union depends on maritime trade with Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, China, Australia, and other countries for its economic prosperity, and if disputes like this escalate, that could be threatened.

The Council has also shown some care not to step on other multilateral toes with its

move, acknowledging the importance of ASEAN to the stability and security in the Indo-Pacific region. The conclusions on a future strategy say that the

Council “reiterates its support for ASEAN centrality and looks forward to the ambitious realization of its new EU-ASEAN Strategic Partnership”.

Still, in embracing the Indo-Pacific as a strategic doctrine, the European Union

says it will attempt to work with ‘like-minded’ states in the region and reinforce ‘democratic values’ and international law, especially with respect to the sea.

In the Indian Ocean, an area of increasing security importance, the Council seems to be looking to consolidate its current strategic interest in the region.

**The European Union has put together a long-awaited strategy on the Indo-Pacific, and its goals and initiatives are sure to have wide-ranging effects for the whole region, Chander Shekhar writes.**

Historically, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and other countries in Europe have engaged with South, Southeast, and East Asian countries on various issues,

but the new strategy says it will strive to develop a “coherent overall approach to the Indian Ocean” built on cooperation with key partners in both Africa and Asia.

The document is not solely focused on international jostling, however. Given the threat of climate change to marine security, the strategy also promises initiatives to tackle

its effects, such as ‘green alliances’ and partnerships that will look to support the Paris Agreement and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

**So, what does this mean for the policymakers of the Indo-Pacific?**

The European Union’s long-awaited strategy on the Indo-Pacific will have wide repercussions, whether they be focused



on traditional security issues, aimed at advancing human rights and environmental outcomes, or even targeted at protecting maritime and marine resources from climate change.

Policymakers should look to take opportunities to engage with this change, and take advantage of the fact Europe's step to the Indo-Pacific has the potential to change the shape of the region into the future, both for their own countries, and the sake of the region overall.

Source: Chander Shekhar, Policy Forum

<https://www.policyforum.net/europes-step-into-the-indo-pacific/>. 30 Aug, 2021.

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## Social Media Corner

### Interview / View Point

1. EAM at Bled Strategic Forum panel discussion on "Partnership for a Rules Based Order in the Indo-Pacific" - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=efM2\\_W1hq-c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=efM2_W1hq-c).
2. The Pulse of the Indo-Pacific with Former Assistant Secretary of Defence Randy Schriver - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=efM2\\_W1hq-c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=efM2_W1hq-c).
3. The Future of Indo Pacific Conflicts and Cooperation - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q-SR9TeHnvc>.

## Debates

1. India - Taiwan Cooperation to be strengthened under the Southbound Policy - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cyJGRjHn5kg>.
2. India could assist Taiwan to join Quad and Quad+ projects - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W73Cpf7uRsE>.

## Podcast

1. Emerging geopolitical concept of the Indo-Pacific - <https://www.policyforum.net/national-security-podcast-in-the-middle-of-the-indo-pacific/>.
2. Indo-Pacific Futures – Geoeconomics - <https://podcasts.google.com/feed/aHR0cHM6Ly9mZWVkcj5hY2FzdC5jb20vcHVibGjl3Nob3dzLzEzZGU4NGVILTZmNTAtNDIwYi05ZjVhLTUyZTk0ZDNhMjU5Nw/episode/NjE5ZjBlNTdhMzhkMGlmMDFhZjcyM2Nh>.
3. Strategic anticipation and Indo-Pacific - <https://www.qcsp.ch/digital-hub/strategic-anticipation-and-indo-pacific>.

## Video links

1. Capability put to the test in Exercise Malabar- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EAMLz9xyG-k>.
2. Tensions in SCS Soar: Ignoring China's Law, US Insists to Continue Sailing and Hold Exercises in SCS - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cHyOqwKbZS0>.
3. US reaffirms commitment for cooperation and freedom of navigation in Indo-Pacific - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rYOBHjyy0I8>.



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