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QUAD AS A TOOL FOR INDIA'S COMPETITIVE MILITARY  
ADVANTAGE

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**ABSTRACT**

The world is going through the tough time during this pandemic period. Millions of people have lost their life and billions of people have lost their livelihood both in organized and unorganized sector. There are different theories going through the origin of the corona virus. Many people including the scientific community suspect that the virus was man made as a biological weapon and unintentionally has spilled over outside, though there are no concrete evidence to prove that theory. But the origin of this virus is China which leads to a strong voice from the world community to isolate that country and it must be made accountable. On the other hand, China has taken a powerful weapon called 'expansionist strategy' to become a super power in the near future. In this context, some of the most powerful countries in the world have come forward to join hands to thwart any Chinese misadventures and to protect the friendly countries. Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) was formed by world's four great democratic countries such as India, the United States of America, Japan and Australia more than a decade ago. Quad has become an important tool for India's competitive military advantage. This article tries to provide insights into 'Quad', and its importance in India's foreign policy.

**INTRODUCTION**

Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) was formed in the year 2007 by four countries— the US, India, Japan, and Australia to protect their territorial interests. However, it did not take off initially for several reasons and was

revived in 2017 after almost a decade due to reasons such as growing convergence among countries, increasing significance of the Indo-Pacific region, rising threat perceptions vis-à-vis China among others. Since then, Quad has emerged as a platform for diplomatic consultation and coordination of member nations who meet periodically at the working and ministerial levels to discuss mutual interests such as ensuring free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific and rules-based international order.

At the middle of year 2019 there were some reports on suspicious activities in a city called Wuhan in China. The Chinese Federal Government though tried to cover-up it could not do so and the cat has come of the bag. Yes, the disaster has taken place and at that point of time no person in the world would have thought that this tiny virus is going to create a havoc and destruct the world. The corona virus has started spreading throughout the city of Wuhan and people started dyeing in clusters. The situation got out of control and very rapidly beyond our imagination it started spreading throughout the world like a wild fire. Thousands of people marched towards the hospitals and many died. The world scientific community was at shock, because there were no medicines or vaccines then to cure people from this dreadful virus.

Many world leaders said this virus was purposefully created in a lab by the Chinese scientific community as a biological weapon, though it was vehemently opposed by the Chinese Government. Former President of the United States Mr. Donald Trump said the world must make the Chinese accountable for this and trillions and of dollars must be claimed from them to compensate the families of people who lost their lives and many who have lost their livelihood. The world economy has shrunk because of the loss of productivity across the globe. The President of the United States has instructed his intelligence agencies to probe the origin of the corona virus and submit a report to him.

In this context, when the whole world is crying, still China has not abandoned its expansionist strategy and bullying its neighbors. Last year China and India have almost come to the war, because of this effect. Now the world has realized that China must be contained of this destructive strategy, otherwise there is no second thought that it will be a threat for the world peace in the future.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

According to Australian Strategic Policy Institute, October 2018 'If the Indo-Pacific is accepted as the new organizing principle of their foreign policies, then the four democracies coming together in the Quad as an informal grouping is a logical outcome'. The main recommendation it gives for the Quad is: make it happen. The findings prove that there's a belief that the Quad would be positive for regional stability.

According to Digitala Vetenskapliga Arkivet (DiVA), Malmo Universitet, 2019, P.46, 'Given the previous research on the QSD and theoretical discussions, this thesis points out the two key factors that contributed to the re-emergence of the QSD: the shared threat perception towards China and the shared objectives in the Indo-Pacific region. The content analysis of a number of official policy documents and press statements revealed that Japan, the U.S.,

Australia and India have increasingly perceived China as a threat and coordinated their policy objectives in the Indo-Pacific region under the concept of the Free and Open-Indo Pacific’.

Walter Lohman in his book, *The Quad Plus: Towards a Shared Strategic Vision for Indo Pacific*”, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. (Wisdom Tree, 2015) argued that the formation of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue was intended for the containment and encirclement strategy against the rising power in the Indo-pacific region. The four committed democracies joined hands in a Track II dialogue to discuss their common security concerns in this region such as countering the Chinese threat.

Ashok Rai in his article, *Maritime Affairs: Journal of The National Maritime Foundation of India* 14, no. 2 (2018): 138-148, Quadrilateral Security Dialogue 2 (Quad 2.0) – A Credible Strategic Construct or Mere Foam in the Ocean, argued that the US-China strategic competition was bringing a wide range of structural changes in the international system. The Trump administration came up with network security architecture to keep the region free from coercion with open sea lanes and infrastructure.

David, E. (2019). *The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue: Towards an Indo-Pacific Order*. *RSIS*, 1(16), 19–45. ‘The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue was revived in 2017 to create a rule-based International order. Although the four countries have different visions in the regional strategic trend, the countries, at this time, have a greater alignment of interests and are provided with an opportunity to maximize cooperation in the region.

### ***The Foundation for Quadrilateral Security Dialogue***

In the early 1980s, exactly a decade before India started its ‘Economic Liberalization Policy’, China started liberating its economy. Many business units from the Western World with the wholehearted support from their respective Governments started their shops in the Chinese soil. The reasons are many. Few to name are cheap labor, autocratic Federal Government, no opposition parties, no trade unions, no independent judiciary, no independent press, even social media companies are not allowed except, their government controlled one named ‘Weibo’. All these reasons really attracted many Multi-National Companies to start their production facilities in China. Because if there is any labor exploitation taking place or violation of international labor code means no one can raise the issue.

With the support of many foreign players, the Chinese GDP started moving up. There is nothing wrong in a government developing its economy, but the problem started when the autocratic Chinese Government started its ‘expansionist strategy’

### ***India’s Challenge with the BRI***

China is well aware of the fact that, if there is a country in this region, which can challenge it with its military might and economy wise also, it is none other than India, not only now but also in future. So, the President of the Peoples

Republic of China has taken an important project in his hand to contain India. Earlier it was named as 'One Belt One Road' (OBOR) and now it is being rechristened as 'Belt and Road Initiative' (BRI). With this project China intends to connect many countries through sea and land routes. By initiating this project China started encircling India with its military strategy. Take the case of India's western neighbor. China already has a military base at Pakistan, and now it has connected Pakistan with the mainland China through the Himalayan Road and named it as 'China Pakistan Economic Corridor' (CPEC). Ironically this road passes through the Indian Territory, i.e Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK). In the down South, with Sri Lanka joining the China's prestigious BRI project and with the passage of Colombo Port City Bill by the Sri Lankan Parliament, that country has handed over not one, but two ports - Colombo and Hambantota ports to the Chinese for ninety-nine years lease. China has hinted that it will pay the employees here in Yuan. Now these two places literally have become Chinese colonies in Sri Lanka. Though Sri Lanka and China says that both these ports will be used purely for economic purpose, the real reasons are quite obvious. Some of the reasons are as bellows-

- If India wants to move its naval warships and submarines from its west coast to east coast, it has to take a circuitous route encircling Sri Lanka. So now by way of sitting at Colombo port, at India's backyard, China can very clearly monitor the movement of Indian navy
- By strategically sitting at Colombo, China can have a clear surveillance over the southern part of India
- Can use it like a military base in the Indian Ocean Region (if India's apprehensions are true) where majority of oil supplies to the world are passing through. So far it is under the exclusive domain of India and now China wants to take a pie out of it

At Maldives, another small country in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), with the change in regime, India has successfully prevented Chinese mayhem. During the previous regime Maldives had literally thrown out all Indian businesses including the prestigious Male GMR airport project at the behest of Chinese influence. In the eastern side of India, at Myanmar the military junta which is now ruling the country is directly being controlled by the Chinese military and has direct influence over them. Myanmar has already signed the Chinese 'Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)' and has become part of this. At Nepal, a Himalayan country, the earlier regime of Communist Party of Nepal had considerable influence from the Communist Party of China. All sort of anti-Indian activities was being coordinated from the other side of the border. But recently the Supreme Court of Nepal had directed President of Nepal Mrs. Bidya Devi Bhandari to appoint opposition Nepali Congress Chief Mr. Sher Bahadur Deuba as Prime Minister of Nepal. This is a setback to China. Also, China tried its best to take over the Chittagong Port of Bangladesh on the similar lines of taking over the Colombo port, but unfortunately it could not succeed in its efforts because of the strong influence exercised by India. When there were some indications available like Bangladesh joining the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, China's ambassador to Bangladesh openly threatened that country saying that the China - Bangladesh ties will be hit if it joined the QSD which led to Bangladesh hitting back saying it is a sovereign country and only it will

decide on its foreign policy and there is no scope for a third country like China interfering in its internal decisions. Like this through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) China has fulfilled some of its aspirations of encircling India in all the directions to check India.

### ***The South China Sea Episode***

China has issues almost with all its neighbors as a result of its expansionist strategy. If we take the case of South China Sea, countries like Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Cambodia, Brunei, Singapore, Taiwan and Vietnam have legitimate Exclusive Economic Zone rights over the sea. But China claims rights over the whole sea despite a clear ruling against the Chinese maritime claims by the United Nations Convention on the Law on the Sea (UNCLOS) and giving equal rights to other stakeholders. China has created man-made islands in the sea and using it as a military base to threaten other countries. The irony is since this sea is an international water, any country can exercise its navigational rights over this sea. But only few countries in the world like India, the United States of America and France has the guts to take their naval warships through this sea fearing Chinese retaliation. Because these countries always use to claim that they have the right to navigate on the international waters. Even during the last year's 'Galvan Valley' clashes when India and China almost went for a war, the Indian navy took strategic positions on the South China Sea to take on the Chinese.

### ***The East China Sea Episode***

In the East China Sea there are disputes between China, Japan and South Korea over the extent of their Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs). Moreover, rounds of disputes about some island's ownership in the East China Sea had triggered both official and civilian protests between China and Japan. The dispute between China and South Korea concerns Socotra Rocks, a submerged reef on which South Korea has constructed a scientific research station. China has objected to Korean activities there as a breach of its Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) rights.

### ***Importance of Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad)***

The former Japan Prime Minister Shinzo Abe played a key role in reviving this multilateral forum Quad. After the last year's China – India 'Galvan Valley' clashes India has also started showing much importance over the Quad. As soon as the new President of the United States of America Mr. Joe Biden has taken the charge of the White House, he has deputed his Secretary of State and Defense Secretary to visit some of the Quad countries to reaffirm the United States of America's continuous support to the Quad movement and the leaders of these countries have already met through online and it has been officially decided by these four countries to conduct a summit involving the leaders of these countries physically in this year. Now another two great democracies in the world – France and United Kingdom are likely to join in this multilateral forum shortly and the forum shall be called as Quad + 2.

The main objectives of the Quad are as follows:

1. advancing the security and the economic interests of all countries having legitimate and vital interests.
2. to develop a new strategy to keep the critical sea routes in the Indo-Pacific free of any influence (especially China). This has become important for the Indian Navy with the increased presence of the Chinese Navy in the Indian Ocean. Quad is facilitating information exchange and cooperation among member nations. Since 2008, in the guise of anti-piracy patrols China has an enhanced presence in the Indian Ocean Region. China has deployed submarines for the above purpose. This has resulted in China formally opening its first overseas base in Djibouti, in the Horn of Africa in 2017.
3. Thus, from an Indian point of view, the rising dominance of China is the new and emerging security concern.

### *China's Jittery Over Quadrilateral Security Dialogue*

As soon as the revival of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue has started it sent shivers in the spine of China. India and the United States of America is continuously conducting their 2 + 2 dialogue, that is the closed-door meeting between the pair of United States of America's Secretary of State and Defense Secretary with the pair of India's Foreign and Defense Ministers. When the leaders of India, the United States of America, Japan and Australia met online to take the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue to the next level, Chinese Foreign Ministry reacted sharply calling the QSD as another NATO and fuming that no country should form any alliance to contain any third party. Before the end of 2021 the Quad countries leaders have decided that they are going to meet for a summit like that in person – not online – which is no doubt will take the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue to the next level.

### *Malabar Naval Exercise and Its Importance*

Malabar Naval Exercise, originally started in 1992 as a bilateral coming together of both Indian and the United States of America's navies off the Malabar Coast in the Indian maritime area. In 2015 Japan got included in this exercise and it has become a trilateral exercise every year. After the 'Galvan Valley' clashes between the Chinese and Indian armed forces last year, annoyed India, as a well calculated military strategy, for the first-time invited Australia – a member in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue to join the Malabar Naval Exercise. Now it has become a quadrilateral naval exercise every year and this has once again isolated China further in the international arena.

## **DISCUSSION**

The Quad provides a platform to India to unite like-minded countries on various issues such as ensuring respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty and peaceful resolution of disputes and seek cooperation from them. This will result in a united front to check the threat from China. This is especially crucial in present times as relation between India and China has deteriorated considerably.

Quad has emerged as a platform for diplomatic consultation and coordination of participant countries who meet regularly at the working- and ministerial

levels to discuss mutual interests such as ensuring free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific and rules-based international order.

There is an increased need for India to be a Net Security Provider in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). To take up this role in the region, India's dominance in the Indian Ocean Region needs to be felt and sustained. Quad provides India a platform to enhance security through partnership in the region.

The Quad provides a platform to India to seek cooperation from like-minded countries on various issues such as ensuring respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty and peaceful resolution of disputes. It also helps in providing united front to check the military activities of China against India. This is very significant today since the relationship between India and China has deteriorated due to repeated border incursions along Indo-Tibetan border.

Other advantages for India through Quad are as follows:

- **Chinese strategy of surrounding India through String which is a threat to the maritime sovereignty of India** will be countered with Quad
- Quad will check any China's aggression **in the South China Sea** and which in turn leads to regional tension, Quad seeks to check any aggression
- **Counter-terrorism Table Top Exercise (CT-TTX)** for Quad members will enhance cooperation and shared capabilities to deal with emerging terrorist threats
- Converging issues such as connectivity and infrastructure development, security including counter-terrorism; cyber and maritime security; reform of multilateral institutions, etc. are addressed effectively through Quad
- **Maintaining post-COVID-19 international order** is another priority for India. The pandemic is affecting global supply chains, manufacturing activities and overall economies of countries. Quad will help India to check the effects of pandemic through a united front in the new world order
- In the year 2021, the Indian Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi has taken important measures to enhance coordination and cooperation among Quad member nations. The vaccine project of Indian Government is a first step in this direction.
- **Quad will assist India to enhance its defence capabilities.** Cooperation in defence is attained through joint patrols, exchange of strategic information, etc. This will help India to overcome its limitations in surveillance and naval capabilities
- **Quad will ensure free Indo-Pacific region,** governed by international law leading to freedom of navigation and peaceful resolution of its disputes

## CONCLUSION

When China started flexing its muscles over other countries by its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and its expansionist strategies, the major countries in the world have come to conclusion that if China is not stopped now with effective counter measures, it will certainly be a major destructive force soon, and this will disrupt the international peace to a large extent. So, China must be contained now at any cost. Moreover, at the beginning of this discussion we have seen that China has cleverly encircled India on all sides and thought that it has kept a check for India. Now, as a tit-for-tat policy, through the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue

India has encircled China to a larger extent and has kept an effective check on it which is considered by the international community as a major success in India's foreign diplomacy.

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