



KALINGA INSTITUTE OF
INDO-PACIFIC STUDIES

KIIPS Event Report



Picture Courtesy: ANI

Brainstorming Session

on

**‘Quadrilateral Security Dialogue Initiative: Prospects and
Challenges’**

7 August 2021

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- A moot point regarding the future of the Quad centres on the prospects and challenges of the Quad acquiring a more institutionalised form. While some contend that formalisation would lead to clarity of purpose and mutual expectations, others argue that a less formal and flexible Quad would be more feasible given the complex Indo-Pacific that will require the Quad members, with other like-minded partners to manage the ramifications of China's rising aggression and intransigence.
- A pertinent suggestion that evolved regarding the future direction of the Quad was for the grouping to adopt a holistic agenda without letting only military matters dominate.
- The Quad, it was argued, should develop cooperative and coordinated models on areas such as education, cybersecurity and economic development. The Quad grouping, it was pointed out, should encourage more collaborations on business-to-business and people-to-people models, building a multi-actor centrality rather than focusing only on interstate dynamics.
- It was emphasised that the Quad countries need to have a unified and standard message to China to prevent conflict and focus on institution building within the Indo-Pacific region, which is extremely significant in terms of trade, commerce and connectivity.
- Nevertheless, there is a distinct security aspect of the Quad, and it was contended that the Quad should maintain (and further develop) the potential of countering China's aggression and intransigence by presenting an 'integrated deterrence'. Varying forms of defence partnerships populate the Indo-Pacific region ranging from formal military alliances to strategic partnerships, and realising the potential as well as the limitations of each will be crucial.

- The Kalinga Institute of Indo-Pacific Studies (KIIPS) organised a Brainstorming Session on the theme ‘Quadrilateral Security Dialogue Initiative: Prospects and Challenges’ on 7 August 2021, bringing together experts from all the Quad member countries, and also from Canada and the European Union. During the session, the experts reflected on the convergences and divergences of perspectives regarding Indo-Pacific affairs and the future of the Quad. The genesis of the Quad, its current status and its future formed the major focus of the discussion among the panelists. The discussion covered both the security and economic dimensions of the Quad, with a number of contending points on what the Quad is and what it is not; what it should be and what it should not be.
- The overriding aspect of debate and deliberation during the session was on the prospects and challenges of Quad acquiring a more institutionalised form in the future. While some contended that it was too early for the Quad, to become formalised, others argued that a less formal and more flexible Quad would be more feasible given the complex Indo-Pacific that will require the Quad members, with other like-minded partners to deal with China. The question of ‘what could be a realistic and workable Quad’ to ensure peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific remained a major part of the debate.
- A degree of scepticism was expressed when it came to looking at the Quad as a military bloc against China, arguing the prevailing deficiency of interoperability between India and the other Quad members who happen to be military allies. While Australia was not expected to venture into the South China Sea, Japan suffers from an ageing population. Moreover, despite security concerns, China has emerged as the largest trading partner of many stakeholders of the Indo-Pacific and most countries are interlocked with the Chinese economy in a number of ways. For instance, Australia’s interlinkages with China extend to areas like education, tourism, agriculture, services, etc.
- It was suggested, that the Quad should not let military matters dominate the agenda, and should look at a more holistic dimension, in order to deter China’s assertion and intransigence. Some probable areas of cooperative assertion from the Quad could be, for instance, in terms of leading a more concerted vaccine strategy and a more practical framework for dispute resolution mechanism with special focus on the South China Sea dispute. Furthermore, the Quad partners could work towards developing a Quad educational policy aimed at coordinating to upgrade educational facilities in the Indo-Pacific region and a Quad policy on cybersecurity given China’s recent cyber offensives on the Quad countries. The utility of Quad could be in first acknowledging China’s strengths beyond the military dimension. It was opined that a better strategy for the Quad countries to counter China would be in tackling its economic influence, and not to be stuck in Cold War rhetoric of military means only.

- One of the important points brought forth during the session was a call for an alternative construction of the Quad grouping from being more security oriented to incorporating the framework of a developmental model. The contention was for the Quad to evolve, in order to respond more creatively and holistically to China's assertion in a tense geopolitical environment. How to respond to the shifting balance of power, without pushing China into a corner, remained a major point of debate. Rather than harping on the rhetoric of liberal democracies, and promising goals that they cannot deliver, it was argued that the Quad would benefit by giving much-needed space to other regional players in the Indo-Pacific.
- The Quad grouping, it was pointed out, should encourage more collaborations on business-to-business and people-to-people models, building a multi-actor centrality rather than focusing only on interstate dynamics. The impetus was on looking at the Quad, as a grouping, working towards providing public goods not limited to security goals, but encompassing the multifaceted dimensions of human security. Giving importance to cooperation and collaboration on diverse areas of economic, technological, social and logistics will provide countries in the Indo-Pacific with alternatives to what China provides. It was opined that the Quad could be seen as a collective security mechanism against China's aggressiveness, but one that could do well by providing a more holistic framework, to establish a rules based order, by incorporating multiple players in its developmental model where cooperation among different actors is critical to its success, without terminating ties with Beijing.
- Nevertheless the session also deliberated quite comprehensively on the security aspect of the Quad, contending that the Quad should maintain (and further develop) the potential of countering China by presenting an 'integrated deterrence'. Varying forms of defence partnerships populate the Indo-Pacific region ranging from formal military alliances to emerging strategic partnerships, and realising the potential as well as the limitations of these partnerships will be crucial. Military flashpoints like that of the Taiwan Straits was also discussed, and the focus of the arguments remained on the impact that China's aggression vis-à-vis Taiwan, could have on the extent to which Quad countries would upgrade their relations with Taiwan to deter China's behaviour. As far as the economic dimension of the Quad is concerned, one of the main arguments put forth was relating to the prospect of the Quad members sharing an explicit economic interdependence in the Indo-Pacific. Such a prospect, it was argued, was being held back by America's relative reluctance for economic involvement in the Indo-Pacific, coupled with the rise of China's economic influence in the region, bilaterally as well as through multilateral financial platforms such as the AIIB and the ADB. How America's attempts to rewire global supply chains and recalibrate the production centres of high-tech commodities could impact the economic dynamics of the Indo-Pacific remains to be seen. Quad counter-proposals to China's investments, such as promoting African Connectivity, could be a viable option to challenging the China's economic clout. However, the Quad, it was opined, needs to develop more tangible projects rather than repackaging existing aid-plans into new models.

- One of the clear paradoxes of the Quad and the spectre of China's rise remains the growing security tensions with China, but simultaneously an upward in trade relations. This clearly lends a complex sense of interdependence in the evolving dynamics between the Quad countries and China. In the evolving cold confrontation between the United States and China, a probing question was raised relating to the reliability of partners in the Quad. It was argued that in the different theatres of the Indo-Pacific, the Quad members could be seen as having differing priorities of vision and implementation. For instance, Japan's focus would be in the East China and South China Seas, while India's primary concerns would fall in the Indian Ocean. Therefore, different countries would be looking at their own backyards, thus questioning the extent of common purpose and goals. However, during the discussion, a contrary view was also expressed that more could be gained out of delimiting each other countries' area of operations within their own strategic backyards, and hence building an integrated deterrence against China's coercion, rather than expecting countries to go beyond their backyards, and stretch their areas of operations, without effective results.
- The short term, midterm and long term benefits of the security framework of the Quad, was seriously pondered upon, from the perspectives of different countries. Whether a security focus of the Quad grouping aimed at China's aggression could fracture globalisation and lead to a bifurcated global system was discussed and deliberated. From the lens of different stakeholders including Canada and the European Union, it was argued that the Quad must be more than the security framework. It needs to focus on economic development, institution building, creating a standard set of rules and behaviour in the Indo-Pacific. It was emphasised that the Quad countries need to have a unified and standard message to China to prevent conflict and focus on institution building within the Indo-Pacific region, which is extremely significant in terms of trade, commerce and connectivity. More specifically in terms of maritime trade, the region occupies a pivotal position, which at the same time is infested with challenges like maritime piracy, which requires more coordination and cooperation among stakeholders.
- How the political and economic developments in the United States impacted the evolution of the Quad and how it approached the Indo-Pacific also formed an important part of the discussion. It was also pointed out that lack of a clear and unified vision for the Indo-Pacific on the part of the United States, exhibited strategic deficiencies. The announcement for constituting a new Quad comprising the United States, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Uzbekistan, it was opined, reflected a strategic distraction, sending out confusing signals to partners and hence leading to a question on whether the US was now the weakest link in the Quad. An overriding point of the discussion during the brainstorming session were the arguments relating to how formal and institutionalised the Quad should be, and whether a holistic Quad, focussing on several other aspects beyond the security domain, will create greater incentives for other countries to actively partner with the Quad.



*KIIPS invites all to
a brainstorming session
on*

**Quadrilateral Security Dialogue
Initiative: Prospects and Perspectives**

**7th August, 2021
6 PM IST**

Chair
*Prof. Chintamani Mahapatra, Rector, JNU &
Honorary Chairperson, KIIPS*

Speakers

	<i>Amit Gupta, Associate Professor, Air War College, USAF, Alabama.</i>		<i>Prof. Yoichiro Sato, Dean of the College of Asia Pacific Studies, Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University</i>		<i>Prof. Jonathan Ping, Associate Dean, Bond University, Australia</i>
	<i>Dr. Stephen Nagy, Senior Associate Professor, International Christian University in Tokyo</i>		<i>Jakub Zajczkowski, Professor, Institute of International Relations, University of Warsaw.</i>		<i>Dr. Ernest Gunasekara-Rockwell, Editor-in-Chief, Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs & Director, Consortium of Indo-Pacific Researchers</i>

Chief Editor: **Prof. Chintamani Mahapatra**, Founder and Honorary Chairperson, KIIPS

Executive Editor: **Dr. Monish Tourangbam**, Honorary Director, KIIPS

A team of KIIPS Research Interns covered the event as Rapporteurs:

- **Ashmita Rana, Rahul Jaybhay, Khushmita Dhabhai, Neeraj Singh Manhas, Niharika Shukla, Neil Banerjee and Mohammed Baleegh**



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