



**QUADRILATERAL SECURITY DIALOGUE: BURGEONING CHINA AND ITS
IMPACT ON POTENT WORLD POWERS**

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ABSTRACT

The world order is always changing. The Atlantic to Pacific axis has shifted in the twenty-first century. Asia's rise in a variety of fields has piqued the world's interest. The big Asian nations have carved out a niche for themselves, particularly in terms of international security. Today, the Indo-Pacific area has become an important part of international affairs. India and China have risen to prominence as Asia's key power centres. China's scientific, military, and economic advancements are now posing a threat to the global order. In many places, it has claimed territorial and maritime spaces. Because Sea Lines of Communications (SLOCs) run through the Indo-Pacific area, it has gained importance. It has grown in importance as a resource-rich region in terms of oil and natural gas. Chinese claims to the South China Sea have been made. This has sparked disputes among the littoral states in the South China Sea, as the majority of China's claims overlap with the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) of other countries such as Vietnam and the Philippines. The purpose of this research paper is to examine China's policy in the South China Sea and the Indo-Pacific region as a whole. It then goes on to discuss India's interest in the region and the initiatives it has implemented to develop its ties with the SCS littoral states. Furthermore, the article delves into the genesis of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue concept. The study paper also discusses the United States', Australia's, India's, and Japan's approaches to ensuring freedom of passage in the Indo-Pacific through the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue. In the short and medium term, the study suggests policy alternatives for India in relation to the Indo-Pacific region and the Quad.

OBJECTIVE OF RESEARCH

1. The purpose of this project is to follow the development of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue since its inception. Analyse each partner's goals and evolving policies in relation to the Quad. To make predictions about the Quad's future cooperation in the near and medium term.
2. To examine and forecast China's policies in relation to the South China Sea littoral and the Indo-Pacific region as a whole.



3. To gain a better understanding of India's interests in the South China Sea littoral states and the wider Indo-Pacific.
4. To recommend short- and medium-term policy choices for India in relation to the Indo-Pacific region and the Quad.

DATA SOURCES

The research will primarily rely on secondary sources. It concentrated on online citations, journals, articles, magazines, books, and government websites, among other things.

INTRODUCTION

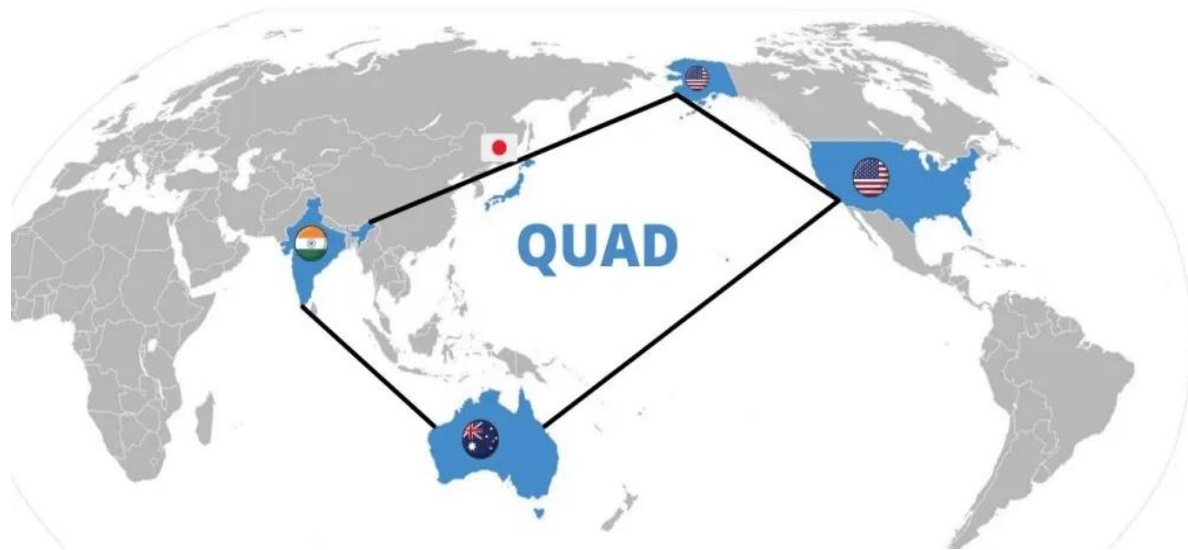
As we all know, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue promotes the concept of a "Free, Open, and Prosperous Indo Pacific." India has begun to exert itself in the field of maritime security through the QUAD. India has the potential to play a substantial role in guaranteeing freedom of navigation, security, and rule-based order in the Indo-Pacific in the future years. Furthermore, India has the capabilities to play a critical role in the South China Sea, particularly in light of Chinese aggression in the area. China's policies have direct and indirect implications for India's security dimensions.

As a result, it is critical for India to express its dominance in the region by partnering with other countries on a variety of issues such as oil and gas exploration, climate change, and the security of sea lines of communication, among others. In this framework, we must consider India's expanding influence in the area and the Indo-Pacific's future prospects. The fact that countries like the United States, Japan, and Australia are currently members of the Quad and have positive relations with India speaks volumes about India's prominence in this region. Former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe described it as a "Democratic Security Diamond," which makes it more relevant for India, the world's largest democracy.

With China's expanding influence in our neighbouring nations such as Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Myanmar, and Bangladesh, it's even more important for India to protect its maritime space. India faces a geopolitical problem as China builds military facilities and asserts its claim to the majority of the islands. In this framework, the study looks at India's maritime policy in relation to the South China Sea and the Indo-Pacific as a whole. Over time, the Indian political leadership has been perceived as becoming more proactive in the region. The success of the Malabar exercises is a testimony to this. As a result, the study's goal is to assess the Indo-

Pacific's geostrategic and geo-economic significance, as well as to comprehend China's policy and, eventually, India's policies in the region.

Map 1: COUNTRIES OF QUADRILATERAL SECURITY DIALOGUE`



*Source: Indian Foreign Affairs; <https://indianforeignaffairs.com/3rd-quad-ministerial-meeting-what-isquadeverything-you-need-to-know/>

INDO-PACIFIC:AN EMERGING GEOPOLITICAL CONCEPT

Only in the last decade has the term "Indo-Pacific" gained widespread recognition as a geopolitical idea, having emerged in diplomatic and security circles. The geographical boundaries of the Indian Ocean-Pacific Ocean combination, on the other hand, are not precisely defined.

❖ QUAD CHRONICLE

The Indo-Pacific area is home to the world's greatest population, busiest commerce routes, and most powerful militaries. Following their successful collaboration in coordinating tsunami aid in 2004, Australia, India, Japan, and the United States (the Quad, short for Quadrilateral Security Dialogue) had discussions and a military exercise in 2007. Although the grouping's operations were cut short in 2008 due to China's growing aggressiveness in the region, it continued to participate in bilateral and trilateral security cooperation. Senior official meetings resumed in



Manila in November 2017. The Quad navies staged a significant military exercise in November 2020. In March 2021, the first Quad summit was held.

➤ **QUAD 1.0: ORIGIN**

Following the 2004 tsunami, the United States, along with Australia, India, and Japan, led the international relief effort, coordinating their military forces to provide relief and paving the way for future multilateral cooperation. Japan began work on the concept's development.

In May 2007, a gathering was held at Manila. The event was dubbed as "QUAD effort" by a remark in the Japan Times. In an August 2007 speech to the Indian parliament, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzō Abe spoke about the confluence of the two seas, a concept intended to serve as the foundation for a broader Asia evolving into an open and transparent network spanning the entire Pacific Ocean, including the United States and Australia, and allowing people, goods, capital, and knowledge to freely circulate.

The four Quad navies, along with Singapore's, undertook military exercises in the Bay of Bengal in September 2007 as part of Malabar Exercise. However, the four countries were not on the same page at the time when it came to the risks facing. Abe stepped down as Prime Minister a few weeks after the naval drill, and the idea of strategic collaboration began to lose steam. The Canberra became closer to Beijing. The political instability led to the QUAD becoming dysfunctional in 2008.

➤ **QUAD 2.0: RETURNS**

In 2010, China became the largest economy in Asia, surpassing Japan. Since 2013, when Xi Jinping assumed China's leadership, bilateral tensions between China and the Quad countries have increased. Abe called for a Democratic Security Diamond, a remake of the Quad, in 2012, just before re-election as Prime Minister of Japan. Quad 2.0 was formed as a result of its disintegration.

On security concerns, the Quad countries engaged in bilateral and trilateral collaboration. The first trilateral dialogue between Australia, India, and Japan took place in 2015. Former US President Donald Trump outlined the vision of a 'free and open Indo-Pacific' in a speech delivered in Da Nang (Vietnam) in November 2017. The Indo-Pacific was mentioned multiple times in the US national security plan, which was released in December 2017. In July 2018, they established a trilateral partnership in Indo-Pacific infrastructure projects. The United States, Japan, and India had their first trilateral summit in December 2018. The US approved the Indo-Pacific Strategic Framework in February 2018, with the goal of preserving US strategic primacy in the area and preventing China from developing new, illiberal zones of influence. The regularity

of the Quad countries' bilateral exercises, as well as the signing of agreements aimed at improving their cooperation and building trust among their militaries, promoting interoperability, and laying the groundwork for stronger political ties, provided the ideal conditions for the launch of the 'Quad 2.0'. The third QUAD foreign ministerial meeting took place in February 2021.

The Quad conducted its inaugural summit in virtual mode in March 2021. They reaffirmed their vision of an Indo-Pacific that is free, open, inclusive, healthy, grounded in democratic ideals, and unencumbered by coercion, and their support for ASEAN's unity and centrality. The corona virus pandemic was a hot issue at the meeting. Recognizing climate change as a global concern, the leaders pledged to step up climate efforts, and established a Quad climate working group. The final declaration did not include China, but the leaders reaffirmed their commitment to North Korea's total denuclearization. By the end of 2021, they plan to meet in person.

CONSENTING PARTIES TO QUAD

- **JAPAN: ATTEMPT OF POLITICAL VIGOR**

Japan has been a major player in the QUAD as it was Japan, under the leadership of Shinzo Abe, who first propounded the concept of QUAD in 2007 with an aim of "free and open Indo-Pacific". He has left back a strong legacy of crafting out a successful forum in the Indo-Pacific. The Indo-Pacific plan can be traced back to Abe's 2007 address in the Indian Parliament entitled "Confluence of Two Seas". Abe's statement underlined the belief that because India and Japan are at the confluence of two seas, it is their joint obligation to maintain peace, stability, and freedom of navigation.

The QUAD has been revived over the years, with Japan playing a key role in expanding the QUAD's scope and perspective. For Japan, this implies that it will be able to work more closely with countries in Southeast Asia, the Indian Ocean, and the Pacific. The QUAD plus framework also empowers Japan to think and act beyond security and marine challenges, including economic cooperation with Vietnam, New Zealand, and South Korea. Japan might form ties with these countries in the areas of marine and defence cooperation as well. As a result, QUAD serves as a tool for Japan to expand its trade, economic, and cultural ties with the QUAD plus states, as well as a geo-strategic forum. (J. Panda, 2020)

Thus, if we try to reposition Japan in the Indo-Pacific, it appears that Japan has not softened its stance toward China and is continuing to cultivate ties with other QUAD states in order to guarantee peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific while also countering China's expanding hegemony.

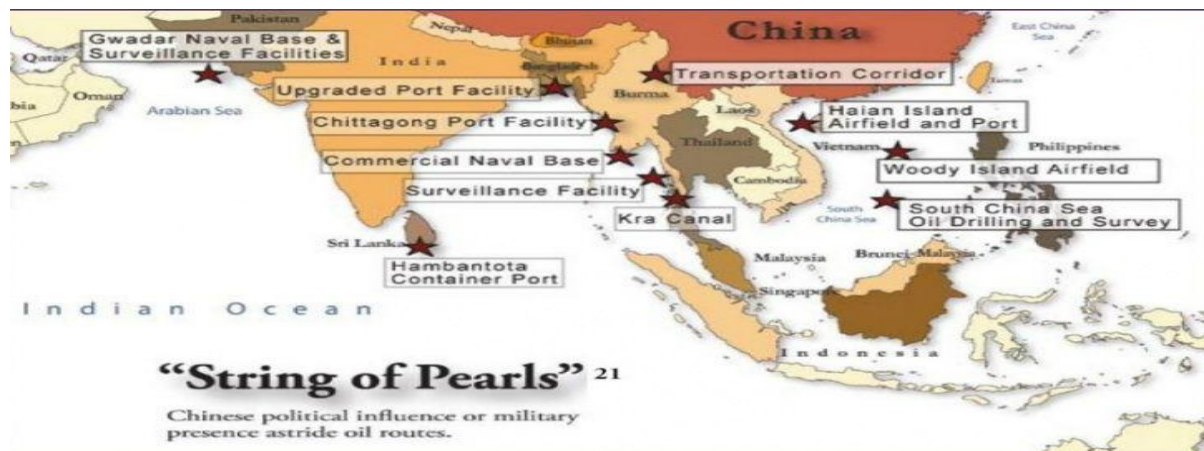
- **INDIA: VISION OF EMERGING SUPER POWER**

India has been a member of QUAD since the beginning. India appeared to be less enthused about the QUAD at the beginning. The QUAD's initial attempts were unsuccessful. The forum has been renewed by the four countries since 2017. Since its start, India has not viewed the QUAD as an anti-China platform. The QUAD's origins can be traced back to India's Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief (HADR) efforts following the 2004 Tsunami.

As a result, the Indian leadership saw QUAD as a venue for disaster management and relief that could be carried out with the help of Japan, the United States, and Australia. However, when the geopolitical realities in the Indian Ocean changed, India was concerned about Chinese aggression in the South China Sea as well as in India's surrounding states. The Chinese construction of port facilities in the countries bordering India, dubbed the "String of Pearls," together with the One Belt One Road plan, has raised concerns in New Delhi about the China's growing presence in the Indian Ocean. It was seen as China's attempt to encircle India.

Furthermore, the standoff at the Doklam tri-junction has heightened these concerns. The QUAD has primarily focused on the Western Pacific Ocean, while India sees the necessity for a broader Indo-Pacific policy. It was best expressed in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's statement at the Shangri-La Dialogue, where he stated that India's Indo-Pacific vision extended "from the shores of Africa to the borders of the Americas" wherein India would promote a "democratic, rule-based order, in which all nations small and big thrive". (Ministry of External Affairs, 2018). He also said, "India does not see the Indo-Pacific region as a strategy or as a club of limited members. Nor as a grouping that seeks to dominate. And by no means do we consider it as directed against any country."

MAP 2: STRING OF PEARLS BY CHINA



*Source: India Times; <https://www.indiatimes.com/news/india/here-is-all-you-should-know-about-string-of-pearlschina-s-policy-to-encircle-india-324315.html>

India thus tried to maintain a balance in the QUAD 1.0 and has time and again reiterated that QUAD isn't established for the purpose of cornering China. QUAD 2.0 is undoubtedly viewed by India as a strategic pivot towards China, but the fact that India has been attempting to retain good relations with China illustrates India's policies of trying to maintain a balance.

➤ **AUSTRALIA: ATTEMPT TOWARDS CONTAINMENT OF CHINA**

Australia's geographical location is critical in the Indo-Pacific, because it is situated at the confluence of the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Australia was initially hesitant to join the QUAD because it did not want to provoke another clash with China. However, Australia has become more involved and cooperative with QUAD in recent years.

In 2020, India urged Australia to participate in the Malabar exercises, which it accepted mostly due to China's increasing use of coercive statecraft in the region. For example, the AUSINDEX naval exercise has been held between Australia and India.

In the current setting, relations between Canberra and Beijing have deteriorated, particularly after Canberra requested an investigation into the Corona virus. The QUAD for Australia is not only a strategic alliance aimed at containing China's assertiveness in the region, but it also provides Australia with a number of other benefits. As an island continent, Australia must contend with a variety of dangers. QUAD might help Australia combat problems such as piracy, human trafficking, and climate change. In addition, co-operation is evident in the frequent Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Operations that have been carried out. The preservation of sea lines of communication, particularly the vital straits, is another major worry for Australia, as all of Australia's trade is dependent on strategic marine routes.

➤ **UNITED STATES OF AMERICA: ACT OF PERPETUATING POWER**

The USA has been a staunch backer of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue from its inception. It has been debating Indo-Pacific security challenges and appears to be particularly concerned about them. It has, however, been very careful not to explicitly upset China while also using the QUAD as a tool to deal with China's ambition in the region. The National Security Strategy of the USA of 2017 and the National Defence Strategy of USA of 2018, both mention US concerns over China's growing power in the Indo-Pacific which it believes threatens the freedom of trade and navigation in the Indo-Pacific. The US passed the Asia Reassurance Initiative Act (ARIA) into law in December 2018, with the goal of "developing a long-term strategic vision and comprehensive, multifaceted US policy for the Indo-Pacific region, and for other purposes." A report on the Indo-Pacific Strategy: Preparedness, Partnership, and Promoting a Networked Region was produced by the Pentagon the same year.



As a result, it is reasonable to conclude that the QUAD is viewed not just as a strategic grouping, but also as a grouping that promotes democratic trade and transparency in the Indo-Pacific.

CHINA'S ATTEMPT OF REVANCHISM

China has risen to become a major economic, military, and political force in the twenty-first century. Over time, the globe has gotten more complex and interdependent. China has benefited from the increasing global value chains system, which has enabled millions of poor Chinese to live rich lives. Nonetheless, China's leadership is a major threat to the international order. It has broken numerous treaties, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, to which it is a signatory. The South China Sea and the Indo-Pacific are two major places where China could engage in hostile behaviour. Chinese operations in these areas are the first step in establishing short-term regional hegemony and eventually achieving global importance. China has been steadily building up its military over the years in order to accomplish this objective. China has deployed anti-ship cruise missiles and long-range surface-to-air missiles in the South China Sea. Not only has it been expanding and modernizing its military forces, but it has also been building and updating its cyberspace. China plans the ideals of freedom of navigation and free flow of commerce, as well as limiting the sovereignty of other countries. China has been a vocal critic of the QUAD, referring to it as the Asian-NATO. These Chinese activities have been seen on a big scale in the maritime domain in recent years.

➤ THE SOUTH CHINA SEA: ISSUE OF CONTENTION

In the Indo-Pacific, South China is strategically located. Brunei, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines are its neighbours. Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam are all countries in Southeast Asia. The region is home to a significant portion of the world's commerce shipping. The South China Sea is a source of petroleum, natural gas, and raw materials, as well as significant Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs). The sea also includes significant fishing grounds that provide food for the littoral republics. The region, often known as the "Second Persian Gulf," is thought to be at the heart of Eastern Asia's future economic expansion.

Control over these areas is crucial for China because the majority of its oil imports originate from the Persian Gulf and Africa, making control of the sea lines of communication a question of national security for the country. Another key source of concern for China is the United States' presence in the region, which it thinks would stifle the Chinese economy if the US prevents China's access to the sea lanes. Chinese strategies have been given a variety of titles by observers.



However, the Chinese have been at the forefront of increasing their power in the region and will continue to do so in the future years. As a result, Chinese strategies in the South China Sea and the Indo-Pacific are a mix of hard and soft power diplomacy. The growth of China has caused the world to reconsider the value of marine space. All four QUAD countries are deeply concerned, and each has devised its own set of counter-China tactics.

BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE VS FREE AND OPEN INDO- PACIFIC

The BRI (or yidaiyilu) was revealed in 2013 after President Xi Jinping's speeches in Astana, Kazakhstan, and Jakarta, Indonesia. Its official name is "the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-century Maritime Silk Road". The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is widely regarded as Xi's "signature project", representing China's long-term master plan to "integrate Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and Africa into a Sino centric network through the construction of land- and sea-based infrastructure".

The BRI is more than a series of infrastructure projects with smaller developing countries; it is a grand strategy that serves "China's goal for itself as the region's undisputed leading force." BRI has been criticized by many since 2017 for its lack of transparency and potential hazards for participating countries. For example, China's 99-year control of the port of Hambantota in Sri Lanka "sparked worldwide alarm about Beijing's strategic intentions, along with allegations that China was setting a "debt trap" for smaller countries," while Malaysian PM Mahathir bin Mohammad described his country's railway projects with China as "unequal" and a "new version of colonialism."

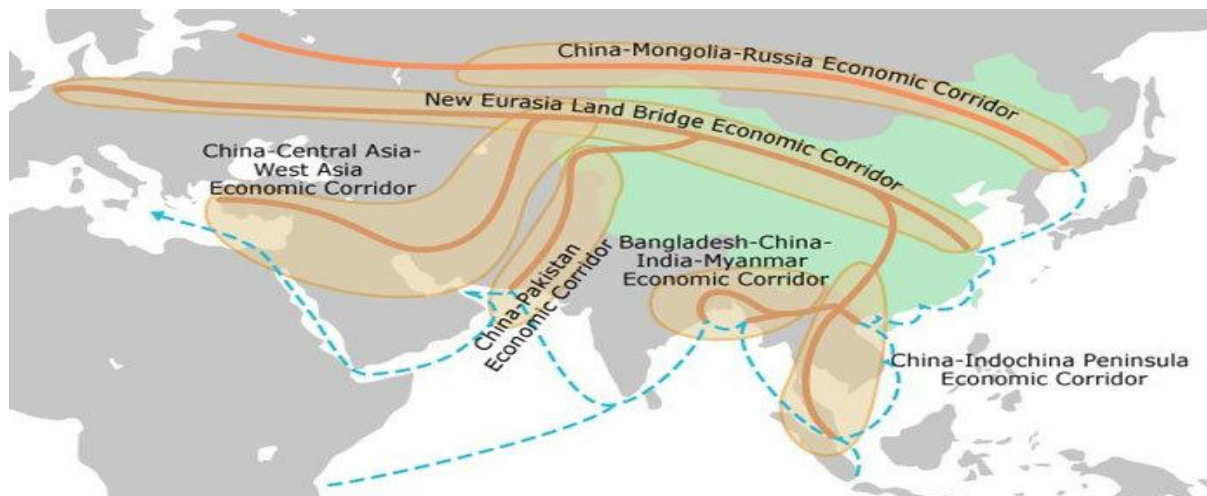
The Trump administration started the FOIP approach in 2017 as suspicions about China's underlying objectives for the BRI began to surface. The term "Indo-Pacific" was first used in the US security discourse during President Obama's first term, with a particular focus on the "Quad" grouping of four "like-minded" democracies, namely Australia, Japan, India, and the United States. The Trump administration has chosen a "more confrontational stance" than the Obama's administration, publicly labelling China as a "strategic rival." President Trump emphasized the importance of a "free and open" Indo-Pacific.

China's enormous funds and ability to act quickly have given it significant access and influence in a variety of capacities around the globe. While this has undoubtedly raised concerns among countries about the goal, shape, and scope of Beijing's footprints. Many countries – particularly those with limited resources – appreciate the financial assistance and development opportunities it provides. In international politics, financial help is nothing new, but support from China causes concern, partly because of the terms under which it is delivered. Debt burdens of infrastructure

projects which turn out to be insurmountable are usually compensated with total control over the project in question and often also land which is allotted as collateral.

Beijing claims that the BRI is designed to generate economic benefits for all members through leveraging connectivity. However, this argument has some flaws, as China has been chastised for what is now known as its debt trap diplomacy and predatory economics. One of the first instances of infrastructure funded by China and later taken over is the port at Djibouti which happened to become (despite initial claims to the contrary) China's first overseas military base. This, understandably, raises concerns about sovereignty.

MAP 3: SIX ECONOMIC CORRIDORS OF THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE



*Source: china-trade-research.hktdc.com/business-news/article/The-Belt-and-RoadInitiative/The-Belt-and-Road-Initiative/obor/en/1/1X000000/1X0A36B7.htm

INDIA'S INTEREST IN BROADER INDO-PACIFIC AND ITS UPSHOTS

The region serves as a crossroads for key marine commerce routes and has a wealth of energy resources. India and China, two of the world's most powerful nations, are largely reliant on them. The importance of the region has been enhanced by significant choke points such as the Bab-El-Mandab in the west and the Malacca strait in the east.

The importance of South China is underscored by the fact that it serves as a crossroads for important global economic routes. India has been a supporter of "freedom of navigation" across the QUAD. India has significant geopolitical, geo-economic, and geostrategic interests in the region, and its 'extended neighbourhood' strategy has resulted in diplomatic relations with littoral governments in the South China Sea. "Our concerns and contacts go much beyond South Asia," the Atal Bihari administration announced. Extended neighbourhood for India stretches



from the Suez Canal to the South China Sea and includes West Asia, the Gulf, Central Asia, South East Asia, East Asia, the Asia Pacific and the Indian Ocean Region.

Among them, the Southeast Asian region is vital because China has been extending its dominance in the region, particularly in the South China Sea, and has taken on a critical role in India's policymaking. China's footprints in the region are also a source of concern for India, particularly due to Chinese claims to islands, reefs, and other natural resources. India has to develop its ties with the littoral governments in the region to be able to travel through unrestricted access. The region's stability and peace are critical for India, as over 55 percent of the India's trade passes through this region. Despite the fact that India is not geographically part of the South China region, it has a number of interests there, including oil and gas exploration, naval exercises, and a reliance on sea lines of communication. Furthermore, because it is a part of the 'Indo-Pacific', India must have freedom of navigation in these waters. India now has started thinking beyond its continental borders and talks of maritime security. This could be seen as India developed the IOR-Indian Ocean Region Division within its Ministry of External Affairs.

➤ **LOOK EAST POLICY and ACT EAST POLICY CHANGING PERSPECT**

Since the early 2000s, India has been paying close attention to ASEAN. The 'Look East Policy,' created under the leadership of former Prime Minister P.V. Narsimharao, has been upgraded to the 'Act East Policy,' which was formally enunciated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the 12th ASEAN India Summit and the 9th East Asia Summit in Nay Pyi Taw in 2014 (Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 2018). With the announcement of the Act East Policy, India wants to improve its ties with the SCS littoral states while simultaneously attempting to resist Chinese predominance in the region. India and China, wherein China's dominance is greater than India's.

India's strategy should be regarded through the prism of a "security maximiser" not a "power maximiser". Many natural disasters, such as earthquakes and tsunamis, are prone to the Southeast Asian region. As a result, there is a larger demand for disaster relief, rescue, and disaster mitigation and preparedness operations. As a result, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief activities play a larger role in catastrophe recovery and mitigation.

The Indian economy is one of the world's fastest expanding economies, and it is in desperate need of coal, oil, and gas. India has also understood that finding alternative sources of oil and natural gas other than West Asia is critical. When India accepted Vietnam's invitation to explore for oil and gas in disputed South China Sea waters in 2011, it received harsh condemnation from China. India has worked with a number of countries to explore natural gas, minerals, and oil, but



New Delhi has been wary of becoming involved in the disputes or taking sides. Because of India's diverse interests in the South China Sea and the wider Indo-Pacific, it has adopted a variety of measures to strengthen ties with the littoral states. To maintain regional stability, India and the Southeast Asian countries must work together. The ASEAN members may have economic interests in China, but India's connections with the country are not only commercial, but also security-related, and India has an advantage over China in this regard.

INDIAN CONSIDERATIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS IN LIEU OF INDO-PACIFIC REGION

After COVID 19 wreaked havoc on the world economy, the global order has changed. China, which was the first country to be infected with the disease, used a variety of methods to combat it. In this context, the COVID pandemic has caused countries to place a greater emphasis on domestic issues. China has been using its position in the Indo-Pacific and the South China Sea since the outbreak of the pandemic. China has taken advantage of this chance to expand its health diplomacy by giving ventilators, masks, and PPE kits, among other things. To fight Chinese prosperity and establish itself as a regional and global actor, India must develop a robust policy. India, together with Japan, the United States, and Australia, might patrol the SCS. It might moor its ships in ports in Vietnam, the Philippines, and other countries.

In the waters of the SCS, the Indian Navy can take a more proactive stance and expand their operational area beyond the Malacca Strait. India has created a new network of ports in the Indian Ocean Region in response to Chinese plans such as the 'String of Pearls'. These include the Changi Naval Base in Singapore, Sabang Port in Indonesia, Duqm Port in Oman, Assumption Island in Seychelles, and Chabahar Port in Iran. India can play a constructive role in the Indo-Pacific with the cooperation of these nations and other states in the region, as well as through QUAD.

The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue might be broadened to create stronger ties with additional countries in the region. This approach has begun to take shape, as seen by a meeting of officials from the Quad countries on March 20 to discuss the COVID-19 pandemic. Three more partners joined the virtual meeting: South Korea, Vietnam, and New Zealand. These three countries are emerging economies in the Indo-Pacific, and they are apprehensive about China's hegemonic development.

Although India established the Look and Act East programme, it has mostly focused on individual countries such as Vietnam and Singapore. Cooperation with Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines has been minimal. In addition, even in the Indo-Pacific, India has



placed a greater emphasis on its South Asian neighbours than on the East Indian Ocean and littoral states. These nations' relations must be expanded and re-examined.

Furthermore, New Delhi has been very clever to handle the geopolitical and boundary disputes with China separately. It is aware of the fact that managing China makes more sense rather than countering China, as India does not have military and technological resources to do so. India therefore should continue its approach to engage with China and strengthen the multilateral mode of association.

India has also attempted to strengthen its ties with countries in the IndoPacific region, particularly during the COVID outbreak, by giving medications and vaccines. India, for example, was one of the first countries to assist Mauritius and the Seychelles in dealing with COVID-19 by sending a shipment of life-saving, drugs, including hydroxychloroquin.

India must make use of its pharmacy expertise, as well as competent doctors and nurses, to develop a new way to addressing health issues. The Ayushman Bharat programme, which is the world's largest healthcare insurance plan, could be expanded further, and India can also encourage African and South Asian countries to develop comparable universal healthcare plans for other countries. As a result, the healthcare sector's focus should not just be on selling commodities, but also on collaborating with developing countries to combat the different diseases that afflict them. A multifaceted approach that combines diplomacy, external affairs, health, trade, urban planning, and finance, among other things, is required.

CONCLUSION

For India to be a regional and global player, the Indian Ocean and Pacific remain critically geostrategic. The growth of China has thrown the region's regional equilibrium off. The world's major countries, particularly the United States, are concerned about the region's security and believe that India can play a critical role in maintaining peace in the Indo-Pacific.

India might be a key participant in the region due to its economic, military, and non-aggressive attitude. This may be observed in the desire of various countries to collaborate and support India in the face of Chinese assertiveness in order to achieve a free and open Indo-Pacific. China has been expressing its regional authority in a variety of areas, including culture and the military. The US has dramatically boosted its engagements in the Malacca Strait, the South China Sea, and the East China Sea in order to curb Chinese strength. India must also increase its regional engagements if it is to become a norm-maker. The Chinese military budget has climbed by double digits over the last two decades, while India, Japan, and Australia are also increasing their military budgets. India's Look East, Act East policy, SAGAR project, Vaccine Maitri, and other initiatives are some of the most important efforts it has undertaken to remain a key player in the



area. On the same line, India and the United States, Japan and Australia have articulated a 'Free, Open, and Rules-Based' Indo-Pacific order.

It should be underlined that the development of a single state as the region's hegemony will jeopardize security, thus regional and extraterritorial authorities must assure that any attempt in this direction will be damaging to everyone's growth and prosperity. The QUAD proposes that the region, which is critical for trade, tourism, and the economy, be free, open, and rules-based to ensure that each country progresses without having to contend with others. As a result, all nations in the region, whether large or little actors, should base their policy decisions on cooperation, collaboration, and collective decisions. As a result, India should continue to work in this direction.

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