

Sansad TV Perspective: QUAD for Free Indo-Pacific

In the series Sansad TV Perspective, we bring you an analysis of the discussion featured on the insightful programme 'Perspective' on Sansad TV, on various important topics affecting India and also the world. This analysis will help you immensely for the [IAS exam](#), especially the mains exam, where a well-rounded understanding of topics is a prerequisite for writing answers that fetch good marks.

In this article, we feature the discussion on the topic: QUAD for Free Indo-Pacific

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Context:

The foreign ministers of the Quad grouping vowed to work vigorously to achieve the grouping's shared vision of a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific at the 4th Quad Ministerial Meeting.

What is Quad?

- The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) is a partnership of Australia, India, Japan and the US.
- Know more about the [Quadrilateral Security Dialogue \(QUAD Group\)](#).

About the Fourth Quad Ministerial Meeting:

- Australia hosted India, Japan and the United States for the fourth Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Melbourne.
- This is the **first time Quad Foreign Ministers** are meeting since the two Quad Summits.
- **Highlights of the meeting:**
 - Quad resolved to speed up the delivery of more than a billion COVID-19 vaccines to be manufactured in India.
 - The Quad reaffirmed a commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific in which states strive to protect the interests of their people, free from coercion.
 - Quad aims to hold a special meeting on climate change in 2022, and to step up efforts to ensure maritime security in the region.

What is a 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific'?

- A free and open Indo-Pacific means that individual countries will be able to choose their own path and their own partners.

- Free and Open Indo-Pacific is an umbrella term that aims to develop a free and open Indo-Pacific region as “international public goods”, through ensuring rule-based international order and prosperity in the region as a whole.
- Three pillars to realize a free and open Indo-Pacific:
 - Promotion and establishment of the rule of law, freedom of navigation, free trade, etc.
 - Pursuit of economic prosperity
 - Commitment for peace and stability

Indo-Pacific:

- The Indo-Pacific region is a geopolitical area that spans two regions of the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean.
- It is the region stretching from the US's Pacific coastline to the Indian Ocean, and outlines its political, military, strategic and economic importance for the US.



Image source: www.indiandefencereview.com

Quad's recent progress addressing global challenges includes:

- **COVID-19:** The partnership is expanding COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing to produce at least 1 billion doses in India by the end of 2022.
- **Climate change:** Quad announced a new green shipping network that will promote environmentally friendly port infrastructure and seek to decarbonize the shipping value chain.
- **Emerging technologies:** The Quad is working to advance diverse, resilient and secure fifth-generation telecommunications systems.
- **Human rights:** Quad announced plans to advance emerging technologies with a respect for democratic values and human rights.
- **Infrastructure:** Quad launched an infrastructure coordination group that will support the development of transparent, high-quality projects that support local communities.
- **Cybersecurity:** A new Quad cyber group focuses on driving improvements, including shared standards, secure software and trustworthy digital infrastructure.
- **Space:** Quad leaders began discussions on space cooperation with an agreement to share satellite data to monitor climate change, prepare for disasters and better use ocean resources.

Significance of QUAD for Free and Open Indo-Pacific:

- The Quad recognises that international law, peace, and security in the maritime domain underpins the development and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific.
- Quad reiterates the importance of adherence to international law, particularly as reflected in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea ([UNCLOS](#)).
- The Quad is supporting regional neighbours to build resilience and counter disinformation.
- Quad will also coordinate to address the growing threat of ransomware and to ensure resilient cyber security across the Indo-Pacific.

Significance of Quad for India:

- Quad strategically counters China's economic and military rise. In the event of a rise in Chinese hostilities on its borders, India can take the support of the other Quad nations to counter it.
- India can even take the help of its naval front and conduct strategic explorations in the Indo-Pacific region.
- The Quad arrangement gives India an opportunity to work multilaterally on all kinds of initiatives that can help create a free and open Indo Pacific region.
- Quad will strive for an Indo-Pacific region that is free, open, inclusive, and unconstrained by coercion.
- Quad aims to develop a new strategy to keep the Indo-Pacific sea routes free of any influence, amidst China's growing military presence in the strategic region.
- Quad also aims to counter China's rising military manoeuvring in the resource-rich region and claims in the [disputed South China Sea](#).

India's Core Objectives of Free and Open Indo-Pacific:

- **Enhancing strategic cooperation with countries that share India's security interests.**
- **Promoting fundamental principles such as freedom of navigation and the rule of law.**
- **Advancing prosperity by enhancing connectivity, including infrastructure development.**
- **Demonstrating a commitment to peace and stability in areas such as capacity building for maritime law enforcement and disaster risk reduction.**
- **Enhancing shared prosperity through fair and reciprocal trade and private sector investment in the Indo-Pacific.**

The challenge of building a “free and open” Indo-Pacific

- **South China Sea:** The biggest challenge to the “free and open Indo-Pacific” strategy relates specifically to the South China Sea as it is a highly strategic corridor that connects the Indian and Pacific oceans.
- **Security Challenges:** The Indo-Pacific region is at the centre of global challenges that relate to [terrorism](#), extremism, ocean piracy, and threats to the safety of sea lanes.
- **Strategic concerns with international law:** The United States has still to accede to the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). China has sought to unilaterally interpret UNCLOS's provisions in its favour to assert maritime claims. This was apparent when the Philippines filed a South China Sea-related complaint against China in 2013 with the [International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea \(ITLOS\)](#).

Conclusion:

The Quad has evolved as a unique partnership and is poised to play a meaningful role in promoting stability, security and development in the Indo-Pacific region. The Quad countries recognise each other's approaches and have endeavoured to revive the group by building on the areas of convergence. Playing by international rules and not seeking to redraw borders by force are central to peace and security.

