

## THE 4<sup>TH</sup> QUAD SUMMIT: KEY TAKEAWAYS

By  
**Muhammad Ali Baig**  
*Research Associate*

&  
**Danish Shakoor**  
*Intern*

*India Study Centre (ISC), ISSI*

Edited by  
**Dr Arshad Ali**

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*(Views expressed in the brief are those of the author, and do not represent those of ISSI)*



Image Source: Prime Minister's Office of Japan<sup>1</sup>

The 4<sup>th</sup> Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) Summit took place on May 24, 2022, in Tokyo, Japan. It was the 4<sup>th</sup> one in line with the maiden summit taking place about over a year ago. The Quad allies agreed upon the need for practical cooperation and coordination keeping in view both the regional (Indo-Pacific) and global affairs like Russia-Ukraine conflict and Covid-19. The summit came to an end with a pledge to meet again in 2023 in Australia.<sup>2</sup> The Summit was held at a critical time with ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict and the growing global inflation. The occasion was used to respond collectively to the current regional and global issues.

### ***The Joint Statement: An Overall Summary***

A special focus was put on the importance of resisting any “unilateral attempt at disrupting the status quo.”<sup>3</sup> The stance was kept particularly in the context of Russia and to a greater extent China. All the four leaders acknowledged the importance of keeping a check on China in the Indo-Pacific. They condemned the Chinese activities in the East and South China Seas and emphasized the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in the region.

<sup>1</sup> “QUAD Leaders’ Meeting Tokyo 2022,” *Prime Minister’s Office of Japan*, May 24, 2022, <https://www.kantei.go.jp/quad-leaders-meeting-tokyo2022/index.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> “Quad Joint Leaders’ Statement,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan*, May 24, 2022, [https://www.mofa.go.jp/fp/nsp/page1e\\_000401.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/fp/nsp/page1e_000401.html).

They manifested their faith in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions as a solution to the bilateral and international conflicts. The allies agreed upon the denuclearization of North Korea. The allies have also recalled the terrorist activities like the Mumbai Incident and Pathankot Attacks, and urged that such events are never repeated. Moreover, the Myanmar issue was raised, and discussed the importance of democratic values. It was believed that peace in Afghanistan can lead to peace in the region. They pledged their support to the Western-Pacific nations in terms of infrastructure and security providence. A “strong support for the *Asean* unity” was the slogan used repeatedly. The Covid-19 related imperatives and other boiling contemporary issues like climate change were also raised.<sup>4</sup>

### ***All Eyes on the Indo-Pacific***

The strategic worth of the Indo-Pacific can be estimated in a way that the Indian Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra highlighted the agenda of the summit even before its original date. He maintained that “one of the primary focuses of the Quad is the Indo-Pacific region and naturally when the leaders sit together they would talk about developments, challenges and the areas of concerns in the Indo-Pacific region.”<sup>5</sup>

On May 23, 2022, the Indo Pacific economic framework was launched by President Biden. The framework is an initiative of the United States (U.S.) and there are twelve participating countries as of now. The participants are supposed to have collective discussions in the future. The four supporting pillars of the whole framework include:

1. Free trade.
2. Undisrupted supply chains.
3. Clean energy.
4. Transparency (taxes and anti-corruption).

Nevertheless, it is important to note that in the presence of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) like Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)<sup>6</sup> and the Comprehensive and Progressive

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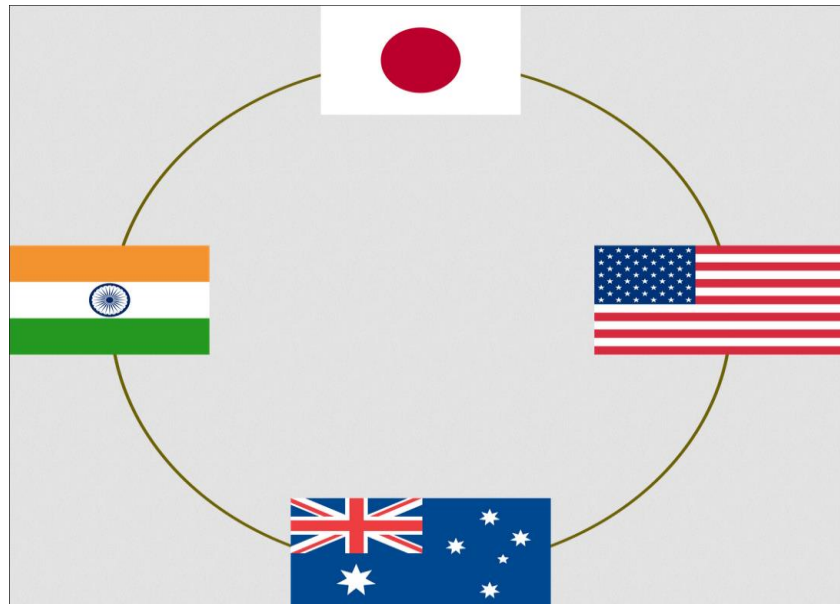
<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> “Quad Summit’s Focus Will Be Indo-Pacific Region: Foreign Secretary,” *Business Standard*, May 21, 2022, [https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/quad-summit-s-focus-will-be-indo-pacific-region-foreign-secretary-122052100761\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/quad-summit-s-focus-will-be-indo-pacific-region-foreign-secretary-122052100761_1.html).

<sup>6</sup> RCEP includes countries like Australia, Brunei, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. Please see:

Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP),<sup>7</sup> it is interesting how the framework is going to function if it becomes operational.<sup>8</sup>

The developmental goals were discussed at the summit in accordance with the Japanese vision of “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP).” This marks an extension to the preliminary goal of “security cooperation” prominent even in the name of Quad. It is believed that despite the fact that the members of the alliance have different perspectives, yet they are found on the same page in regards with their approach to FOIP.<sup>9</sup> The growing Chinese presence in the Indo-Pacific is leading towards enhanced concerns for the Quad allies. Also, the recent China-Solomon-Islands Security Deal has considerably added to the concerns of the Quad member countries.<sup>10</sup> The latter could be the primary reason that the Western-Pacific has also been highlighted in the joint statement; however, the area of prime concern remains to be the Indo-Pacific.



**Figure 1:** The Quad member countries.<sup>11</sup>

“Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement to Enter into Force on 1 January 2022,” *RCEP*, 2022, <https://rcepsec.org/>.

<sup>7</sup> CPTPP includes countries Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, and Vietnam. Please see: “Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP),” *Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade*, 2022, <https://www.dfat.gov.au/trade/agreements/in-force/cptpp/comprehensive-and-progressive-agreement-for-trans-pacific-partnership>.

<sup>8</sup> Girish Luthra, “Forward from the Tokyo Quad Summit and IPEF,” *Observer Research Foundation*, May 27, 2022, <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/forward-from-the-tokyo-quad-summit-and-ipef/>.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Kirsty Needham, “Exclusive Solomon Islands Considers Security Cooperation with China - Official,” *Reuters*, March 24, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/exclusive-solomon-islands-considers-security-cooperation-with-china-official-2022-03-24/>; Damien Cave, “China and Solomon Islands Draft Secret Security Pact, Raising Alarm in the Pacific,” *The New York Times*, March 25, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/24/world/asia/china-solomon-islands-security-pact.html>.

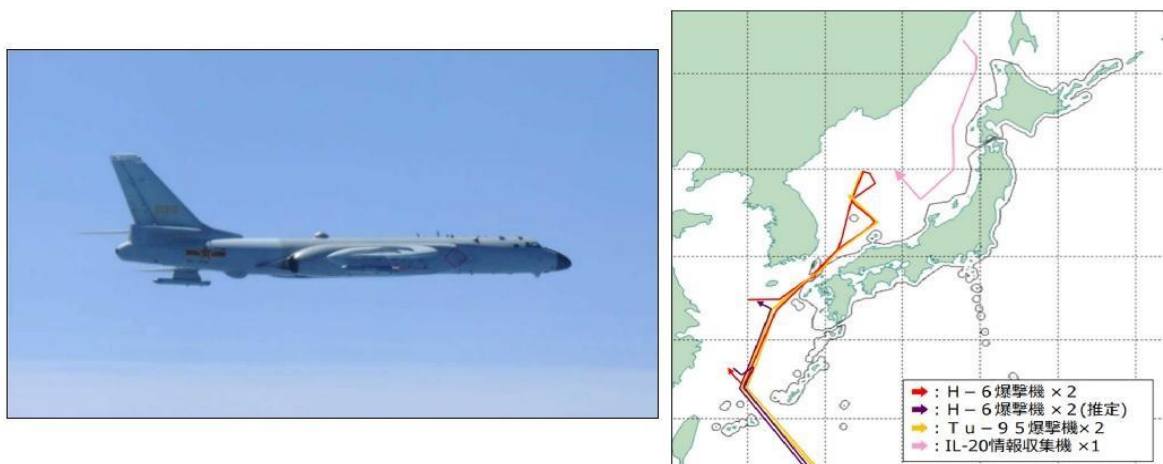
<sup>11</sup> “QUAD Leaders’ Meeting Tokyo 2022.”

### Competition with China

The Quad allies have reiterated this oftentimes that the purpose of the alliance is more than just about containment of China. But if one watches closely the direction of the whole plot, the genre of the movie could easily be defined as anti-China. For instance, the motives such as “engagement with the blue dot network,” investment of more than 50 billion dollars in the Indo-Pacific, and emphasis on the UNCLOS in the Indo-Pacific, seem clearly targeted against China. Also, the focus on “critical and emerging military technologies” reflects the concern that the U.S. perceives Chinese mounting investment in the emerging technologies like the autonomous combat drones and robotics as a direct challenge to its technological as well as geopolitical hegemony.<sup>12</sup>

### Analysis and Afterthought

Michael Kugelman, Deputy Director at Wilson Centre, predicted before the summit that it will be focusing on regional security keeping in view the strategic significance of Indo-Pacific not just for the Quad but also for the common competitor China. That was certainly the top priority of the summit, especially with the Chinese and Russian bombers including the H-6, Tu-95, and IL-20 conducting dangerous manoeuvres near the coast of Japan (Figure 2).<sup>13</sup> With such a development it was easy to make a connection between what is happening in Ukraine and the dynamics of the Indo-Pacific. But at the same time, it is justifiably criticized that the Quad alliance can never functionalize to the fullest until there is a proper framework to it. A secretariat would help give it an institutional approach.



**Figure 2:** The Chinese H-6 strategic bomber (left), and the flight path of Chinese and Russian bombers released by Japanese Ministry of Defence [images adapted].<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Krzysztof Iwanek, “The Quad: All About China, or a Bit of Something Else?,” *The Diplomat*, May 31, 2022, <https://thediplomat.com/2022/06/the-quad-all-about-china-or-a-bit-of-something-else/>.

<sup>13</sup> Kosuke Takahashi, “China, Russia Fly 6 Bombers Near Japan Amid Quad Summit,” *The Diplomat*, May 25, 2022, <https://thediplomat.com/2022/05/china-russia-fly-6-bombers-near-japan-amid-quad-summit/>.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

Other than that, it is also argued that the ASEAN members have trade relations with China and if they are to take a pick between the U.S. and China, they have to prioritize their respective national interests. It is also believed that the U.S. has failed to grasp this trait of Chinese diplomacy.<sup>15</sup> Despite the fact that Quad countries share a common competitor, their national interests often contradict the overall purpose of the Quad.

The U.S.-India relations have had ups and downs too, in regards with the Indian posture towards Russian imports. The '2 Plus 2 Agreement'<sup>16</sup> has helped clear the dust to an extent; nevertheless, the contradictory national interests are going to affect the bond of Quad in the long run.

### **Conclusions**

It could be summarized that all eyes are going to be on the Indo-Pacific in the months to come. Russia has had a limited role in the region till now, but the state of affairs is likely to transform drastically while keeping the Russia-Ukraine conflict in the background. On the other hand, the Quad allies are going to have a rollercoaster ride in terms of the choices they have to make. The upcoming Quad Summit decided to be held next year in Australia will likely be crucial. However, for Quad to pose a real challenge to China's rise it has to come up with strategic plans that are more promising than the Chinese rhetoric of economic prosperity and regional connectivity dominating its foreign affairs.

Ostensibly, India has a considerable role to play in the Quad. India's tri-forces at its Andaman and Nicobar Islands along with the U.S. military presence at the island of Diego Garcia ensure a strong Quad presence in the Indian Ocean Region. Also, India's strategic agreements with the U.S. include the Civil Nuclear Deal (2006), Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) (2016), Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) (2018), and the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) (2020).<sup>17</sup> The aforementioned number of bilateral agreements of strategic nature further strengthen the role of India in the Quad.

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<sup>15</sup> Vikas Pandey, "Quad: The China Factor at the Heart of the Summit," *BBC News*, May 24, 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-61547082>.

<sup>16</sup> "Joint Statement on the Fourth India-U.S. 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue," *Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India*, April 12, 2022, <https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/35184/Joint+Statement+on+the+Fourth+IndiaUS+22+Ministerial+Dialogue>.

<sup>17</sup> Mahesh Ramaswamy and Asha Shivaswamy, "India's Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA): A Dysphoria in Disguise," *International Area Studies Review* 21, no. 3 (2018): 271–86, doi:10.1177/2233865918761922.

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