

# Defense News Conclave

## *Stories of U.S. - India Defense Partnership*

### Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) in U.S.-India Defense Relations (Part – I)

## *The Relevance of QUAD and India-U.S. Defense Relations in the Indo-Pacific Region*

### 1. How do the Asia-Pacific and Indo-Pacific concepts differ?

Asia-Pacific and Indo-Pacific, both are ideas, concepts, and a way for governments to frame the international environment to suit their policy objectives in particular circumstances.

The term ‘Asia-Pacific’ refers to the part of Asia that lies in the Pacific Ocean. On the other hand, the Indo-Pacific is an integrated region that combines the Indian Ocean, the Pacific Ocean, and the landmasses that surround them. Geographically speaking, the Indo-Pacific is an extension of the Asia-Pacific region. Thus, although they may not have been sharply defined, this new conception includes the shores of eastern Africa, besides the island countries. Please refer to Figure 1.1 for a pictorial understanding.

As you can see below, India and African countries are not part of the Asia-Pacific region. The Indo-Pacific rhetoric reframes the Asia-centric region to reflect growing connectivity and competition across two oceans, paving the way for an expansive array of new partnerships.

The Indo-Pacific concept’s growing use in recent years also reflects the impact of China’s rise (and the growing fear in the region). Moreover, it’s the result of the general westwards re-weighting of power within Asia – from Japan to China, from the Chinese coast to the Western provinces and then to India<sup>1</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> “Asia-Pacific vs. Indio-Pacific: Just Different Words or Different Visions for a Region?” ISPSW, [https://www.ispsw.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/591\\_Vermeer.pdf](https://www.ispsw.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/591_Vermeer.pdf).

Finally, while Asia-Pacific is more of an economic conception rather than a security-related notion, Indo Pacific is both a strategic as well as an economic domain comprising important sea lines of communication and thus, associated with maritime security and cooperation<sup>2</sup>.

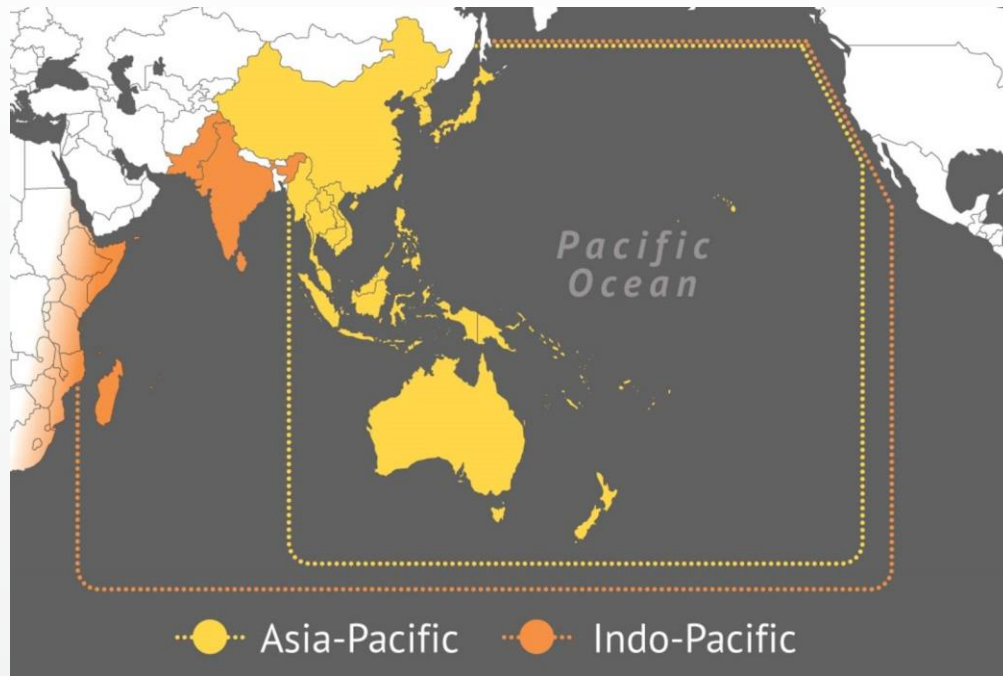


Figure-1.1

## 2. Is the India-U.S. strategic convergence and defense partnership restricted to the maritime sphere?

The strategic convergence between the United States and India, has been growing since the Cold War Era. The United States declared India as a Major Defence Partner (MDP) in 2016<sup>3</sup>. The India-U.S. defense partnership is not just restricted to the maritime sphere. It expands to the spheres of Land, Air, Space and even Cyber Security. Additionally, they cooperate on complex security challenges, like terrorism, counter-proliferation, narcotics and disaster relief.

In 2018, the US granted India Strategic Trade Authorization Tier 1 (STA-1), easing regulations for US high-tech defence and aerospace exports. The two countries have also been collaborating on aircraft carrier technology since 2015. Moreover, India and the US have expanded and upgraded a range of military exercises—from Yudh Abhas (Army) to Malabar (Naval), Red Flag

<sup>2</sup> Javaid, Arfa. “What is the difference between the Indo-Pacific and the Asia-Pacific?” *Jagran Josh*, 9 February 2021, <https://www.jagranjosh.com/general-knowledge/indo-pacific-vs-asia-pacific-1612883032-1>.

<sup>3</sup> Saran, Samir, and Richard Verma. “Strategic Convergence: The United States and India as Major Defence Partners | ORF.” Observer Research Foundation, 25 June 2019, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/strategic-convergence-the-united-states-and-india-as-major-defence-partners-52364/>

and Cope India (Air force), Tarkash, SEALs and Vajra Prahar (Special forces), and the more recent Tiger Triumph exercise (Tri-service). The US has also been invited to join India's MILAN naval exercise.

High-level defence and security-related dialogues have also proliferated in the diverse areas of Maritime Security Dialogue, Space Dialogue, Homeland Security Dialogue, Cyber Security Dialogue, Strategic Security Dialogue, Joint Working Group on Counterterrorism, and Inter-Agency Task Force to foster defence trade<sup>4</sup>.

Under the "2+2" defence and foreign ministers dialogue, U.S. and India signed three key "foundational" military agreements: (i) the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA), which was signed in 2016 (ii) the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA), signed in 2018 and (iii) the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA), which was signed in 2020. These allow for the reciprocal provision of logistics support and services; the transfer and use of encrypted communications equipment; and the exchange of geospatial intelligence. Furthermore, the countries signed a helicopter cross-decking agreement (HOSTAC), an Industrial Security Annex (ISA) and the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) agreement which allows the US government to share classified data with Indian defence firms<sup>5</sup>. In April 2022, The United States and India also signed a Space Situational Awareness (SSA) arrangement, which lays the groundwork for more advanced cooperation in space.

### **3. What is an anti-access and anti-denial strategy? How does China hamper the free and open Indo-Pacific region?**

Anti-Access/Area Denial or A2/AD strategy is an attempt to deny an adversary's freedom of movement on the battlefield, or in this case, a territorial region. Anti-access – of enemy military movement into an area of operations – utilises attack aircraft, warships, and specialised ballistic and cruise missiles designed to strike key targets. While Area denial – denial of enemy freedom of action in areas under friendly control; employs more defensive means such as air and sea defence systems<sup>6</sup>.

---

<sup>4</sup> "Strategic Convergence: The United States and India as Major Defence Partners | ORF." Observer Research Foundation, 25 June 2019, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/strategic-convergence-the-united-states-and-india-as-major-defence-partners-52364/>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> "China's Anti-Access Area Denial – Missile Defense Advocacy Alliance." Missile Defense Advocacy Alliance, 24 August 2018, <https://missiledefenseadvocacy.org/missile-threat-and-proliferation/todays-missile-threat/china/china-anti-access-area-denial/>.

Across much of the Indo-Pacific region, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is using military and economic coercion to advance unlawful maritime claims and threaten maritime shipping lanes, destabilising the region, all while violating the regulations set by the United Nations Convention on the Law Of the Sea (UNCLOS).

China has emerged as an assertive regional power in the Asia-Pacific with forceful A2/AD capabilities, using advanced ballistic and cruise missiles in conjunction with air and maritime defence systems to deter the U.S. military operations in the region (refer to Figure 1.2). China's A2/AD is concentrated around Taiwan and the South China Sea, thus cutting off access to the oceans near East Asia. This disrupts freedom of navigation not just for the United States, but also for the international community. It severely mitigates their ability to conduct any operations in the Asia-Pacific as they are left vulnerable. Thus, China's use of A2/AD directly opposes the local and regional interests of the U.S. and its allies in the Indo-Pacific Region, hampering the vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific.

To add to this, China's "String of Pearls" strategy (refer to Figure 1.3) is monopolising strategic choke points in the Indian Ocean region by investing in geopolitically important ports, thus encircling neighbouring countries, particularly India. For instance, the Coco Islands of Myanmar, allegedly leased to China since 1994, are located at a crucial point in traffic routes between the Bay of Bengal and the Strait of Malacca. The Coco Islands thus serve as an ideal location for monitoring Indian naval and missile launch facilities, in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and maritime movements throughout the eastern coast of India.



Figure-1.2

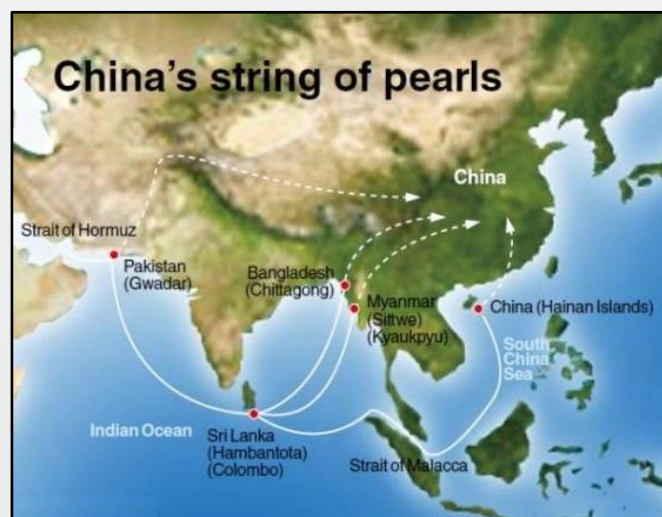


Figure-1.3



#### 4. Why is India an optimal location for establishing Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) facilities for Quad countries, and in what way will it enhance India's strategic Capabilities?

The Indian MRO industry size is expected to increase from US\$ 1.7 billion in 2021 to US\$ 4.0 billion by 2031, at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 8.9 per cent against the expected Global CAGR of 5.6 per cent. A competitive Indian MRO industry helps local airlines reduce expenses on such works which are currently done mostly overseas and enables India to render MRO services to other countries. For MRO facilities, India has all the capacities, manpower and soft skills required, with the availability of low-cost, multi-lingual educated workforce, a diverse pool of highly qualified engineers and a vast geographical coastline. Hence, with India's growth potential, it is an optimal destination to set up MRO facilities for the Quad countries.

India has 13 major ports (refer to figure-1.4) and many more important ports, located in the Arabian Sea, Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean region. Thus, India can provide MRO support to the ships passing through the region from the Quad countries or their facilities, like the US base in Diego Garcia. Instead of going to Gwadar or Chabahar ports, the Quad nations can save time and costs with easy access to Indian ports. For instance, in August 2022, a US Navy Ship (USNS) Charles Drew docked at the Indian port,



Figure-1.4

Kattupalli port in Tamil Nadu, for mid-voyage repairs. Indian advancements and initiatives like the SAGAR scheme, which envisions “Security and Growth for All in the Region”, assume a special significance in furthering the strategic partnership between nations. Thus, India can showcase and increase its strategic and defense capabilities through its MRO industry and help achieve the vision of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific.

## **5. How can the Quad mitigate the non-traditional security challenges in the Indo-Pacific Region?**

In the first-ever in-person Leaders' Quad Summit in September 2021, the leaders put forth ambitious initiatives that advance practical cooperation. These included ending the COVID-19 pandemic, by increasing production and access to safe and effective vaccines; promoting high-standards infrastructure; combatting the climate crisis; partnering on emerging technologies, space, and cybersecurity; and cultivating next-generation talent in all of its member countries<sup>7</sup>. This was a major initiative in mitigating the non-traditional security challenges in the Indo-Pacific Region.

A broader Quad agenda that covers cooperation on Non-Traditional Security (NTS) challenges, can include selected ASEAN member countries on issue-based cooperation, without being seen as directed against China. This is the reason why the Quad countries are emphasising the centrality of ASEAN to the Indo-Pacific concept, as a bridge between the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

On the sidelines of the Quad Leaders' Tokyo summit, in 2022, the US and India launched an initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies ([iCET](#)) to facilitate outcome-oriented cooperation in areas such as AI, quantum computing, 5G/6G, biotech, space and semiconductors. It would aim at forging closer linkages between the government, academia and industries.

India, from the beginning, has emphasised a broader agenda for the Quad, including humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, piracy, human trafficking, uncontrolled fishing, resource scarcity and irregular migration. In this way, the Quad is working on developing a robust architecture for disaster management and capacity-building within the Indo-Pacific.

## **6. What is Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA)? How does the Quad's Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness enhance the security of the region?**

Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) refers to developing an actionable understanding of the ocean environment that helps promote the safety, security and sovereignty of nations, individually and collectively. Broadly, MDA entails the collection, fusion, analysis, display and dissemination of actionable information and intelligence<sup>8</sup>. It is aimed at delivering on promised

<sup>7</sup> "Fact Sheet: Quad Leaders' Summit." PIB, 25 September 2021, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1757944>.

<sup>8</sup> Das, Himadri. "MARITIME DOMAIN AWARENESS IN INDIA: SHIFTING PARADIGMS." National Maritime Foundation, 30 September 2021, <https://maritimeindia.org/maritime-domain-awareness-in-india-shifting-paradigms/>.

goals of enhancing maritime security and domain awareness in the region via technology, training and support.

One of the substantive new initiatives to emerge from the Quad summit in Tokyo in April 2022, was the plan to build an Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness ([IPMDA](#)). The objective is to develop and disseminate real-time activity information, especially dark shipping in the Indian Ocean, Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands, that will help the littoral states gain greater control over their waters. Besides allowing states to combat illicit and unregulated (IUU) fishing in the Indo-Pacific, the IPMDA will enhance regional capabilities to address natural and humanitarian disasters.

Each of Quad members' have their own space-based assets for maritime surveillance, which are supplemented by their airborne and land-based sensors and by collaborating, the Quad countries can support or operate regional fusion centres. This would include India's, IOR IFC, Australia's sponsored Pacific Fusion Center in the South Pacific, Japan's MDA situational indicational linkages and the US Navy's Sea Vision Platform. By collaborating, like-minded countries could have a shared understanding of developments and threats at the sea.

## **7. What are the prospects of the Quad-AUKUS partnership in the region?**

AUKUS, which is Australia, UK and US trilateral information and collaboration group, on its surface, does not seem to be directly connected to the Quad, but at the strategic level, they are driven by the same concern of growing militarism and violation of laws in the free and open Indo-Pacific region.

The AUKUS which is primarily sharing information and collaborating to develop a nuclear submarine programme indigenous to Australia and working together to develop hypersonic weapons and launch vehicles can become a potential group to counter offensive tactics by adversaries. A strong Australian naval presence in the Indo-Pacific, certainly makes the Quad much more balanced, and the Quad and AUKUS together may increasingly be aligned mutually based on the hardcore real interest for security in the Indo-Pacific.

Through this partnership, the nations of this region would secure their lucrative maritime rights and hold on to their sovereignty. The Quad-AUKUS partnership would make the region look much more balanced against a rapidly militarising and rapidly growing Chinese military presence.

## 8. Why is Quad relevant to enhancing India's capabilities in Critical and Emerging Technologies?

Quad leaders are committed to working together to foster an open, accessible, and secure technology ecosystem. Since establishing a new critical and emerging technologies working group in March 2022, they have organised their work around four efforts: technical standards, 5G diversification and deployment, horizon-scanning, and technology supply chains. Last year, the Quad leaders even launched a statement of principles on technology, along with new efforts that together will advance critical and emerging technologies shaped by our shared democratic values and respect for universal human rights.

Thus, the Quad is relevant and essential in enhancing India's capabilities as it will:

- **Publish a Quad Statement of Principles**, after months of collaboration, on technology design, development, governance, and use that we hope will guide not only the region but the world towards responsible, open, high-standards innovation.
- **Establish Technical Standards Contact Groups** on Advanced Communications and Artificial Intelligence focusing on standards-development activities as well as foundational pre-standardization research.
- **Launch a Semiconductor Supply Chain Initiative** to map capacity, identify vulnerabilities, and bolster supply-chain security for semiconductors and their vital components. This initiative will help ensure Quad partners support a diverse and competitive market that produces the secure critical technologies essential for digital economies globally.
- **Support 5G Deployment and Diversification** to support the critical role of Quad governments in fostering and promoting a diverse, resilient, and secure telecommunications ecosystem. The Quad has launched a Track 1.5 industry dialogue on Open RAN deployment and adoption, coordinated by the Open RAN Policy Coalition. Quad partners will jointly facilitate enabling environments for 5G diversification, including efforts related to testing and test facilities.
- **Monitor Biotechnology Scanning** and trends in critical and emerging technologies, starting with advanced biotechnologies, including synthetic biology, genome sequencing, and biomanufacturing. In the process, we will identify related opportunities for cooperation.