

**General Studies-2; Topic: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests; India and its neighbourhood- relations**

**Strategic Importance of Quadrilateral**

**1) Introduction**

- In a significant geostrategic move India, the US, Japan and Australia revitalized their quadrilateral grouping on the sidelines of the Asean summit in Manila.
- The 'quad' has endorsed a free, open, prosperous and inclusive Indo-Pacific region that isn't monopolised by a single country.
- The cooperation rests on a foundation of shared democratic values and principles.

**2) Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD)**

- The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD) is a strategic dialogue between the United States, Japan, Australia and India
- The dialogue was initiated in 2007 by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan
- Securing a rules-based global order, liberal trading system and freedom of navigation are believed to be the guiding principles.

**3) Need for setting up of the Quad**

- The move to set up the quadrilateral comes in the backdrop of growing Chinese assertiveness in the South China Sea.
- It has also raised concerns regarding freedom of trade and navigation through the waters of the South and East China seas.
- China's aggressive posturing along land borders with countries like India and Bhutan.

**4) Significance of Quad**

- Free, open, prosperous and inclusive Indo-Pacific region serves the long-term interests of all countries in the region and of the world at large.
- Tackle common challenges of terrorism and proliferation
- Upholding the rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific and respect for international law, freedom of navigation and overflight
- Cooperation "to curtail DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea)'s nuclear and missile programmes and unlawful acts
- Involving the U.S. and Japan in development projects in South Asia will yield the necessary finances.

**5) Significance for India**

- By joining the quad India has taken a significant turn in its policy for the subcontinent.
- It gives New Delhi a powerful platform to advance its interests in East Asia, coordinate strategies with powerful friends and add more strength to its Act East initiative.
- The geostrategic term "Indo-Pacific" as opposed to "Asia-Pacific" has been gaining currency
- It will deepen India's ties with US, Australia and Japan with benefits in diplomatic leverage and sharing of burden in defence.
- Working with US and its allies in the Asia-Pacific will provide New Delhi significant leverage in shaping US policies in Afghanistan-Pakistan to the benefit of India.

### 6) Involving Britain and France to the Quad

- Japanese foreign minister had suggested that Britain and France too could be involved in this grouping.
- The unreliability of the US is one of the reasons being given for their inclusion
- Security collaboration among a larger group is a challenging task as success depends on the credibility and commitment of each participant.
- Greater the number of people at the table, narrower the agenda on which a consensus can be achieved.
- Therefore, there isn't much rationale for involving Britain and France at this stage.

### 7) Concerns / Challenges

- Emergence of new players like the U.S. and Japan has only increased multiple regional rivalries in the region.
- While the quadrilateral grouping will bring developmental projects, it will considerably erode India's primacy in the neighbourhood.
- India had impeded Chinese demand for a diplomatic mission in Bhutan, now it would be a challenge if US pursues the same.
- India objected to Chinese naval presence in Sri Lanka. Now India will not be able to object to U.S. naval warships and Japanese presence there.
- India while pursuing aspirations in global alliances falls short of its regional commitments. New Delhi has changed its position on Hambantota several times, ambivalent on tackling political issues in Nepal, Maldives crisis, Myanmar Rohingya issue etc.
- Strategic analysts argue that India is dragging itself into the US-China rivalry.

### 8) Way Forward

- World Bank and Asian Development Bank must focus on infrastructure funding in the region that would promote economic growth.
- This can counter China's large scale infrastructure building in countries of Southeast Asia to Africa under the Belt and Road Initiative.
- India and Japan are already in discussions for the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor which is the step in right direction.
- Owing to India's presence and impact in South Asia the neighbourhood first policy should not take backseat.