

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

### Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad)

#### Introduction

- The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) is an informal strategic forum between the **United States, Japan, Australia and India** that is maintained by semi-regular summits, information exchanges and military drills between member countries.
- The forum was initiated as a dialogue in 2007.
- The diplomatic and military arrangement was widely viewed as a **response to increased Chinese economic and military power**.
- Securing a **rules-based global order**, liberal trading system and freedom of navigation are believed to be the guiding principles.

#### Second foreign ministers' meeting of the Quadrilateral

- The recent meeting of foreign ministers is evidence of how important the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) has become as a mode of geopolitical signalling.
- The present meeting strengthened four important elements of the Quad's present stage of evolution.
- **All the member-states represent a domestic political consensus on the Quad** and its importance in **balancing China in the Indo-Pacific**.
- This was not true in the past. Australia, for example, changed its Quad policy when there was a change in government.
- The **expanded areas the members have agreed to work together**, from the maritime realm to cyberspace, **are aimed at countering China's influence and capabilities**.
- With foreign ministers' agreeing to meet at least once a year and upholding the importance of Southeast Asia indicates that both institutionally and in terms of geographic spread, the **Quad is set to deepen and widen**.

#### Background

- The original Quad was a disaster-relief exercise.
- It broke up, came together again, and then struggled to find convergence among its members.

#### Quad's Evolution

- The most important driver of the Quad's evolution is China.
- **China's military aggression** against India and Japan, its attempts to subvert Australian civil society and its embrace of open geopolitical rivalry with the US is the strategic glue of the Quad.
- China's actions across the region and its "sudden turn toward gross aggression" are the factors currently driving the members of Quad.
- US wants to formalise and expand this informal grouping.

#### India and Quad

- India is all set to invite Australia for the annual Malabar naval exercises with the United States and Japan already confirming their participation.
- The move is expected to further lay the foundations for the eventual formalisation of the QUAD grouping.

## 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.
- Involving the U.S. and Japan in development projects in South Asia will yield the necessary finances.

## 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.
- It will deepen India's ties with US, Australia and Japan with benefits in diplomatic leverage and sharing of burden in defence.

## Concerns / Challenges

- The recent meeting **failed to produce a joint statement.**
- Critics argue that the Quad dialogue remains informal grouping and the only tangible accomplishment of Quad is its existence.
- This has raised questions among experts as to whether the Quad can effectively work as a counterweight to China.
- Strategic analysts argue that India is dragging itself into the US-China rivalry.

## Way Forward

- Discussions on 5G networks, supply chains and rare earths are important to define how far the Quad can go on the military and strategic side.
- **Quad countries must work towards post-Covid-19 world order** and a coordinated response to challenges, including financial problems, emanating from the pandemic.
- This includes increasing the resilience of supply chains, and enhancing access to affordable vaccines.
- US must support the others in the Quad to counter the pandemic and rebuild their economies.
- **Connectivity, humanitarian assistance, maritime security, health security and counter-terrorism** are the areas which must be focused upon.
- Quad must support the centrality of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and work towards realising a common vision for the Indo-Pacific.
- Owing to India's presence and impact in South Asia the neighbourhood first policy should not take backseat.