General Studies-2: Topic: Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate.

Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad)

Introduction
- The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) of four countries, Japan, the US, Australia and India, was formed in 2007 with the initiative of Japanese PM Shinzo Abe.
- The aim of the Quad is to support a “free, open and prosperous” Indo-Pacific region.

Background
- Due to lack of participation and no proper institutional framework, QUAD remained dormant for quite some time.
- By realising the threat China’s expansionist policy is causing, in November 2017, the four countries developed a new strategy to keep the critical sea routes in the Indo-Pacific free of any influence, especially Beijing’s.
- In November 2020, the Quad conducted Malabar Naval drills in the Indian Ocean.

China’s Response
- China affirmed that the activities of the Quad do not affect it.
- China could create conflicts among the members and reduce the pace of the activities of the group.
- China has been looking to tap the huge resources in South China Sea and ensure that it asserts its dominance in the region.
- Thus, Beijing has invested heavily in the East Indian Ocean region all the way up to Djibouti and Port Sudan.
- Examples of this are the Hambantota port and Colombo Port City projects in Sri Lanka.
- The Colombo Port City Project showed another version where the Chinese public company brought its own labourers to build the port instead of Sri Lankan ones.
- China started the construction of a deep-water port at Kyaukpyu in Myanmar and leased the island of Feydhoo Finolhu in the Maldives and the Gwadar port in Pakistan.
- Saudi Arabia and the UAE has been largely dependent on Chinese resources to sustain its economy.
- China has been facing an internal debt crisis due to the overlending of funds to the BRI and therefore, has been restricting the expenditure the way it did for CPEC in Pakistan.
- Experts suggest China would be most likely to adopt a new approach to fund the BRI through multilateral bodies such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank to reduce the debt burden.

Quad vs Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)
- The BRI promises economic security but not human security by providing funds to developing countries with a debt trap.
- Here, the Quad can play a vital role as it is a group of democratic countries.
- Quad should provide a choice to the nations as to where they want to borrow the money for development purposes from.

India’s Maritime Policy & Quad
- India’s maritime policy has been dependent on China’s plans in the Indian Ocean.
- The South China Sea has been the dominant shipping route in Asia and harbours huge natural gas resources.
- India needs to develop positive relations with its neighbours that have already been tapped by China.
Uncertainty regarding India’s policy with Bangladesh and vice versa has left a void that Beijing is filling, and China’s investments in Dhaka have increased over the years.

Way Forward

- The Quad needs to be institutionalised and given a formal structure where India needs to be the aggressor.
- The advantage that India has is that the other members are geographically cut off from the Indian Ocean region.
- The only nation with big-enough naval power to rival China in this area is India and thus it can bring peace, stability and security in the region.
- Quad members can benefit from pooling resources through multilateral bodies such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, which will benefit India in expanding its scope in the Indo-Pacific.
- It is up to the members to take proactive steps to come together in these conducive times when China is also reeling under world pressure due to its involvement in the Covid-19 outbreak.
- A sustained movement to limit China’s expansionist policy by the Quad will set a precedent for the European Union as well.
- Such a precedent will go a long way in undermining China’s threats and policies on the international stage.