

# Defining the Diamond

*The Past, Present, and Future of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue*

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MARCH 2020

## THE ISSUE

- **The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue among the United States, Japan, India, and Australia (The Quad) has returned to prominence** after an eight-year hiatus.
- **Senior foreign ministry officials from the Quad nations have met bimonthly**, the grouping has also convened at the ministerial level and formed the basis for a tabletop exercise
- **The CSIS Alliances and American Leadership Program performed an informal “temperature taking” survey of policy elites in the Quad nations** to gauge possible steps forward.
- **The survey results inform several achievable policy proposals** to help continue the momentum of the Quad in the years to come.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since its first senior official-level meeting in 2007, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (the Quad) among Japan, the United States, India, and Australia has operated both as a meeting format for senior officials to discuss regional security issues and as the basis for a single naval exercise and a single tabletop exercise. The four countries first formed a “core group” during the joint response to the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami. This cooperation provided the basis for the first iteration of the Quad; it met briefly in 2007 before coming apart in 2008. However, eight further years of destabilization in the region led to a growing convergence in foreign policies among the four states, with a focus on securing a free and open Indo-Pacific, taking joint action against terrorism, and promoting a rules-based system. Resultingly, the Quad re-formed

in 2017 and began convening on a bimonthly basis. From the outset, the Quad’s ideological and geographic foundations were envisioned by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, whose “Confluence of the Two Seas” speech provided the foundations for the grouping. Indeed, this ideological and geographic bounding has naturally led to contrasting presumptions about the intent and future of the Quad: that it is the genesis of an “Asian NATO,” that it is a network to contain the rise of China, or that it is simply a disparate grouping of countries that will never unite behind a common strategic vision.

The CSIS Alliances and American Leadership Project sought to examine these bumper-sticker notions in detail 15 years after the initial Quad discussions in the aftermath of the tsunami and two years after its 2017 reconvening. Through a “temperature-taking” survey, the

research team sought to obtain a broad outline of elite opinions in the Quad countries, particularly regarding the mission of the Quad and its future activities. The survey revealed that strategic elites from all four countries were open to a summit meeting of Quad leaders and a role for the Quad in coordinating regional economic and development assistance. Strategic elites of the Quad nations were less enthusiastic about proposals for a standing military task force and Quad secretariat. In tailoring the surveys for each nation, the research team further asked qualitative response questions that uncovered obstacles to further Quad integration, such as Australia's exclusion from the Malabar exercise series or Indian concerns about explicit anti-China alignment. The survey project culminated in a public event at CSIS that presented the survey data and featured several panel discussions that identified possible areas of convergence among the Quad nations.

The contents of these panel discussions, and the recommendations within this report based upon the panel discussions, are predicated upon over a decade of history underpinning the Quad and its predecessor, the "Democratic Security Diamond," as first envisioned by Prime Minister Abe. The growing consensus over China's revisionist behavior in the wake of the disintegration of the first iteration of the Quad in 2008 galvanized motivations in each Quad nation to further integrate bilaterally, trilaterally, and finally quadrilaterally in the early-2010s. The story of the Quad is one of gradual convergence, not rapid institutionalization.

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Charting the evolution of the dialogue must necessarily consider this narrative of convergence, both for countries within and outside of the network. For the nations of the Quad, the converging narrative of free and open order in the Indo-Pacific region provided the foundation for bilateral, trilateral, and eventually quadrilateral action to realize that vision. For countries outside of the Quad, China's insistence that the Quad was little more than a containment network directed at China has driven a narrative that was fatal to the first instantiation of the Quad. The public coverage of these dueling narratives has often meant that much of the serious legwork toward creating an effective strategic network has been done from the bottom up, with

working-level, bilateral meetings setting the stage for the Quad's reemergence.

This brief outlines the past, present, and potential future of the Quad, presents data from a survey taken of strategic elites in the Quad nations, and prescribes achievable policy objectives for the Quad based on the results of the survey. It provides a roadmap to achieving actionable steps forward to deepen the Quad's reach and scope as a mechanism for dialogue and security in the Indo-Pacific.

## THE HISTORY AND CURRENT STATE OF THE QUAD

### ORIGINS OF THE QUAD

The beginning of the Quad as a grouping of the United States, Japan, India, and Australia can be found in the so-called "Tsunami Core Group," an ad-hoc grouping that sprang up to respond to the devastating Boxing Day tsunami of 2004.<sup>1</sup> The Core Group, a "new type of diplomacy" that created a new network in the face of an emerging challenge, brought together the four nations best equipped to swiftly mobilize tsunami aid.<sup>2</sup> Though the group disbanded as the recovery effort wound down, the quadrilateral template had established a successful track record as a vehicle for addressing issues of regional concern.

The quadrilateral template gained an ideological component when then-candidate Shinzo Abe proposed an "Arc of Freedom and Prosperity" in 2006.<sup>3</sup> The "arc" envisioned a network of states across the Eurasian continent linked by newly expanded Japanese diplomatic efforts to promote freedom and the rule of law.<sup>4</sup> Foreign Minister Taro Aso also paid significant attention to the democratic, free-market nature of the future Quad, but with a vastly expanded network that encompassed states as near as Vietnam and as far as Ukraine.<sup>5</sup> It was in December 2006 that the geographic bounds began to fall into place. On a visit to Tokyo, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh announced in a joint statement that both countries were eager to begin a dialogue with other "like-minded countries in the Asia-Pacific region" to address themes of "mutual interest."<sup>6</sup>

A flurry of diplomatic activity kicked off once U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney signaled American interest in a Quad dialogue in early 2007.<sup>7</sup> After Cheney consulted Australian Prime Minister John Howard on the potential for a Quad during a visit in February 2007, Howard and Indian foreign minister Pranab Mukherjee soon traveled to Tokyo to reaffirm the momentum for the dialogue

group.<sup>8</sup> Aso and Abe's respective April visits to India and Washington sealed the deal for the first quadrilateral meeting.<sup>9</sup>

The first meeting of the initial Quad was held in May 2007 as officials gathered for the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) meeting in Manila.<sup>10</sup> The meeting was characterized as an "informal grouping" that touched on areas of common interest to the dialogue partners, including disaster relief.<sup>11</sup> Late September saw the only military exercise associated with the first Quad, an enlarged version of the U.S.-India Malabar series. This exercise, the second Malabar of 2007 (Malabar 07-02), featured the four navies, together with the Singaporean navy, exercising in the Bay of Bengal.<sup>12</sup> The maneuvers featured exchanges of personnel and drills in sea control and multi-carrier operations, among other skills.<sup>13</sup>

Malabar 07-02 was the final act for the first iteration of the Quad. Signs of the grouping's fragility had been clear for months. Outside the dialogue, China had intensified a campaign against the Quad, filing official demarches with each of the four countries. The Republic of Korea, America's major Pacific ally not affiliated with the Quad, had also expressed its hesitation about the grouping and was unwilling to be forced to choose between the United States, its security ally, and China, its growing economic partner.<sup>14</sup> The lack of specificity about the Quad's purpose and objectives gave critics room to seize on the most radical speculation: that the Quad would soon turn into an Asian NATO or otherwise evolve into a security alliance.<sup>15</sup> Mounting Chinese pressure led to reticence among Australia, India, and the United States to formalize the dialogue. Indeed, officials of the four countries soon began to distance the dialogue from any sort of security concerns. Australian Defence Minister Brendan Nelson expressed on a July 2007 visit to Delhi that Australia preferred to restrict the Quad to issues of trade and culture, while Prime Minister Manmohan Singh emphasized that the Quad held "no security implication."<sup>16</sup> Significant protests in India over Malabar 07-02 threatened Singh's precious political capital for passage of the U.S.-India civil nuclear deal, leading to further reticence on the Indian side.<sup>17</sup> Prime Minister Abe's resignation in September 2007 deprived the Quad of its main cheerleader and architect. Following the election of the Rudd Government in late 2007, Australia decided that the Quad did not suit its strategic outlook and announced that it would not seek to participate in the Quad dialogue in January 2008, assuring China that it had no intention of participating in a second Quad

meeting.<sup>18</sup> The crumbling of Quad 1.0 did not necessarily mean that the big-picture idea of an Australia-U.S.-Japan-India dialogue was a non-starter, but it became obvious that the four countries were simply not on the same page regarding the major threats facing the region or the means of addressing those challenges.

### **INCREASING TIES WITHIN THE NETWORK**

After the dissolution of the original Quad in 2007, work clearly needed to be done to strengthen the various bilateral and trilateral relationships among the Quad nations before attempting to reconstitute the four-nation dialogue. The 10 years between Quad 1.0 and 2.0 afforded further time for ties among the four nations to mature and more time for the strategic balance in Asia to become more uncertain. Upgrading of intra-Quad dialogues to the ministerial level and the evolution of traditionally bilateral exercises into "mini-lateral" arrangements illustrated the growing alignment of the Quad nations in the time between Quad 1.0 and 2.0.

The development of so-called "mini-lateral" networks among the Quad nations provided momentum for the establishment of Quad 2.0. In particular, India and Japan emerged as the critical components of two different trilateral relationships, one involving Japan, India, and the United States (which first met in 2011 at the assistant secretary level and presently occurs at the ministerial level) and another involving Japan, India, and Australia (first occurring in 2015 at the vice-ministerial level).<sup>19</sup> Yet more tightening can be seen in the growth of the various bilateral relationships of the Quad nations. India added to its stable of ministerial-level "2+2" (defense and foreign minister) meetings with Japan and the United States through the addition of a similar meeting with Australia in 2017.<sup>20</sup> India and the United States further signed a communications compatibility and security agreement (COMCASA) in 2015 and a logistics exchange memorandum of agreement (LEMOA) in 2016.<sup>21</sup> Finally, a major obstacle to closer Japan-India relations was removed with the passage of the landmark Japan-India civil nuclear cooperation agreement in May 2017.<sup>22</sup>

Of further note is the development of bilateral and trilateral military-military relationships among the Quad nations in the intervening decade. Japan became a permanent member of the formerly bilateral U.S.-India naval exercise, Malabar, in 2015.<sup>23</sup> The AUSINDEX exercise between Australia and India grew in size and scope, with Australia sending the landing helicopter dock HMAS *Canberra*, and India further joined the

Australian air defense exercise Pitch Black for the first time in 2019.<sup>24</sup> The Australia-U.S. exercise Talisman Saber has also seen the addition of Japan, with Japan's participation in 2019 upgraded to include the addition of the helicopter destroyer JS *Ise* and the landing ship tank JS *Kunisaki*.<sup>25</sup> Japan's increased participation in Talisman Saber comes on the heels of similarly increased participation in the Southern Jackaroo (2017) and Kakadu (2016) multilateral exercises, all hosted in Australia.<sup>26</sup> Finally, India and Japan confirmed their first bilateral fighter exercise at a 2+2 in December 2019 (to be held in Japan in 2020).<sup>27</sup> The function of these bilateral and multilateral exercises was to create trust among the militaries of the Quad nations, promote interoperability, and set the foundation for political ties at a deeper level.

### **CHINESE COERCIVE BEHAVIOR POST-2015**

Chinese coercion post-2015 further crystallized the alignment of interests underpinning the Quad. India found itself on the receiving end of direct military coercion by China, engaging in a standoff at the Doklam trijunction with Bhutan and China in the summer of 2017.<sup>28</sup> India also found itself blocked from membership in the nuclear suppliers group by China.<sup>29</sup> Australia witnessed its relationship with China change dramatically from the halcyon days under former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd. Revelations of several Australian politicians accepting money from organizations and individuals connected to the Chinese Communist Party, as well as the exposure of significant United Front Work Department activity in China, led to the adoption of a foreign interference law in 2018.<sup>30</sup>

Japan also saw a significant uptick in coercive Chinese behavior in the time between Quad 1.0 and 2.0. With the nationalization of the Senkaku islands in 2012, Japan saw vastly increased "gray-zone" coercive behavior by China Coast Guard and maritime militia vessels.<sup>31</sup> The arrest of a Chinese fishing captain by the Japan Coast Guard further inflamed tensions. In the years since the 2012 crisis was resolved, the Japan Air Self-Defense Force set records year after year for scramble interceptions against encroaching Chinese aircraft, and the Maritime Self-Defense Force and Japan Coast Guard responded to increasingly regular incursions of China Coast Guard and fishing vessels into the contiguous zone of the Senkakus. Chinese ships and aircraft began to pass through the Miyako strait on their way to the Western Pacific, a fact that underlined that the Chinese military viewed Japan's southwestern islands as a barrier to open ocean access.<sup>32</sup>

### **THE QUAD RETURNS**

With a decade of relationship building and further strategic alignment in hand, the stage was set in 2017 for a resumption of the Quad. Shinzo Abe, the original champion of the Quad, returned to office in 2012 and wasted no time in calling for a "democratic security diamond," a Quad 2.0 in all but name.<sup>33</sup> The momentum came to a head in October 2017 with then-Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono proposing a resumption of the quadrilateral dialogue format.<sup>34</sup> Representatives from the four nations (at the assistant secretary level) met in Manila on November 12, 2017.<sup>35</sup> On the margins of the Manila ASEAN Summit, the officials discussed a wide variety of issues, including the denuclearization of North Korea, support for the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" concept, and the promotion of a rules-based system in the Indo-Pacific region. Notable other areas not shared among the four readouts included the United States, Japan, and Australia citing freedom of navigation and overflight; the United States, India, and Australia discussing connectivity; and the United States, Japan, and Australia discussing the coordination of maritime security efforts.<sup>36</sup> In the nearly two years since the initial meeting of the revived Quad in November 2017, the meetings have continued at the "senior official" level on a biannual basis. The most recent meeting as of this writing, in November 2019, marked the resumption of senior official-level meetings after the first ministerial-level meeting in September 2019.<sup>37</sup>

Just as it did during the initial Quad in 2007, China has officially protested Quad 2.0 as a thinly veiled attempt at containment. Editorials in state-run Chinese media have regularly lambasted the grouping as a threat to not simply China's own ascent to power but also traditional diplomatic touchstones such as ASEAN centrality; further criticism can also be readily found attacking the Quad nations for insufficient care regarding the infrastructure needs of Southeast Asian nations.<sup>38</sup> The United States did not aid its case for an inclusive Quad when Secretary of State Mike Pompeo made clear in an October 2019 speech to the Heritage Foundation that the Quad would "[ensure] that China retains only its proper place in the world," an allusion to containment that made waves in the Australian foreign policy community.<sup>39</sup>

Ambiguity over the mission and purpose of Quad 2.0 has diluted many of China's criticisms, particularly in Southeast Asia. Readouts from Quad meetings regularly cite the importance of ASEAN centrality to Southeast

Asian affairs, illustrating that the Quad is not deaf to Southeast Asian concerns of ASEAN displacement. With no official working groups stemming from the Quad—most of the serious diplomatic, informational, military, and economic coordination is done at the trilateral or bilateral level—the idea that the Quad is solely a venue to coordinate Chinese containment strategies is difficult to accept. Indeed, studies have shown that the Quad is broadly popular among Southeast Asian elites and that surveyed elites further support tightening the Quad’s mandate to avoid dilution of purpose.<sup>40</sup> Signs of such a tightening began to emerge in late 2019, when news reports indicated that the Quad nations would meet in New Delhi for a counterterrorism-focused tabletop exercise.<sup>41</sup>

With the Quad on considerably firmer diplomatic and political ground than before, the question of the group’s trajectory comes to the fore. To obtain a better idea of the group’s possible trajectory, the CSIS Alliances and American Leadership Program surveyed a small number of strategic elites in each of the four nations.

## SURVEY RESULTS

### METHODOLOGY

The chief motivation for this research project was to take an informal survey of the opinions of “strategic elites” on the present status and possible future direction of the Quad.<sup>42</sup> The research team identified 20 strategic elites from each of the four Quad nations who would serve as respondents.<sup>43</sup> We emphasize that the small size of the survey, and the relative informality of its design, means that the project does not represent broad-based popular opinion but rather “takes the temperature” of select policymakers and thinkers in each nation.

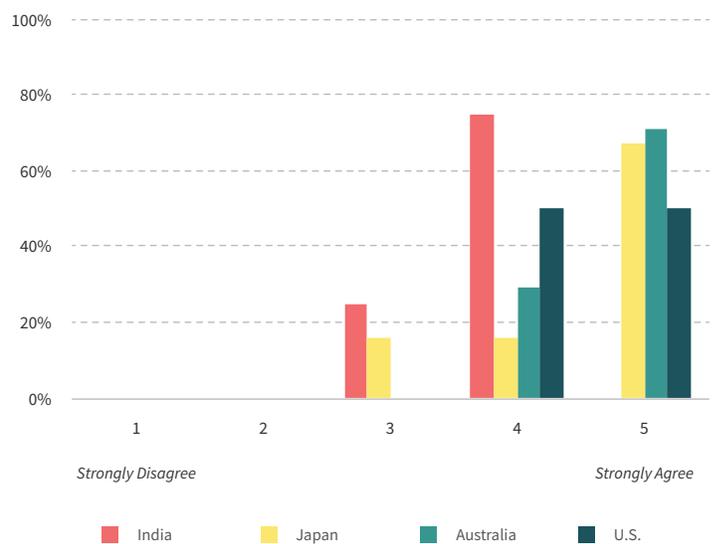
In undertaking this project, the research team created a Google survey with eight total questions. Respondents were asked to answer four questions by selecting from one (strongly oppose) to five (strongly support); the other four questions asked respondents to briefly enter a qualitative response describing their reaction to the question asked. The four quantitative questions were kept identical for each country to create a rough basis for comparison. Qualitative questions were modified slightly from nation to nation in order to more precisely address questions and concerns about the Quad most appropriate to each. The research team presented the initial findings from the quantitative section of the survey at a conference hosted at CSIS on March 29, 2019, “Examining the Future of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue.”<sup>44</sup> In

addition to the presentation of findings, the research team also polled the audience.

The graphs below are presented as such: the X axis is a spectrum of support, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The Y axis designates the percentage of answers among the total pool of respondents. The research team collated the answers from the four surveys into a single graph for each quantitative question.

### RESEARCH FINDINGS

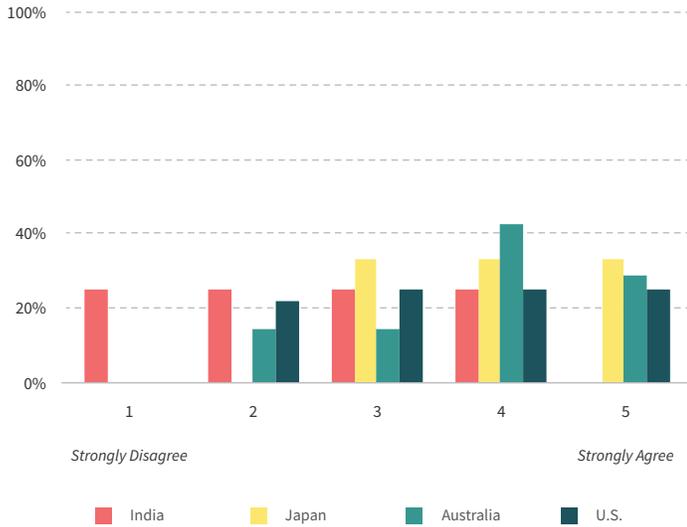
**Question 1: To what extent would you support a standing annual meeting of the heads of government of the four Quad partners (including regular ministerial level sessions)?**



Respondents were generally in favor of a standing annual meeting of the heads of government of the four Quad partners with regular ministerial-level sessions to supplement the head of government meetings. Nearly 80 percent of the Indian and Japanese strategic elites, 100 percent of the U.S. strategic elites, and 100 percent of the Australian strategic elites surveyed responded positively to the idea of an annual heads of government meeting.

While no Indian respondents voted in favor of “strongly agree,” this result illustrates that the conventional wisdom that India is opposed to furthering the Quad relationship is incorrect.<sup>45</sup> While the logistics of organizing a standalone summit among the heads of government of the four nations may be difficult, the result demonstrates a willingness among some strategic elites of the four nations to accept a more vocal Chinese criticism for the sake of tighter policy coordination.

**Question 2: To what extent would you support the creation of a permanent Quad secretariat, with chairmanship rotating every three years among the members?**



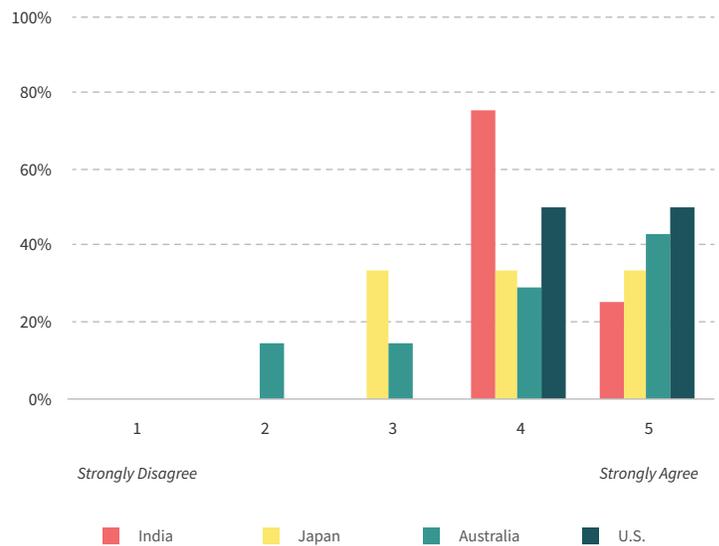
Unsurprisingly, reactions to the notional institutionalization of the Quad were more mixed. Responses from strategic elites from all four nations were far more mixed than for Question 1. Given the significant diplomatic lift involved in establishing a new secretariat, some respondents were particularly skeptical. As one respondent wrote: “I don’t see this as a worthy effort, absent a significant shift in regional security perceptions (like a limited armed clash). Better to keep the quad a small ‘q’ effort.” The mixed results on Quad institutionalization dovetail with the fears noted in Huong Le Thu’s survey of Southeast Asian attitudes toward the Quad, which reports a fear of dilution of already-existing institutions such as ASEAN and the EAS.<sup>46</sup>

**Question 3: To what extent would you support the creation of a standing military task force comprised of the four members under the direction of a joint command?**



There was a disparity between Indian and American strategic elites on this question. Given India’s continued reliance on non-U.S. equipment for major weapons systems, as well as the continued influence of the non-aligned strategy in Indian strategic thinking, negative results from Indian respondents were predictable. As the most militarily integrated of the Quad nations, Australia, the United States, and Japan would undoubtedly serve as the backbone of any such task force—three powerful navies standing astride China’s important sea lanes. Skeptical strategic elites in our survey expressed concern that any such effort could “provoke China into more aggression,” as one respondent put it.

**Question 4: To what extent would you support the Quad undertaking a coordinating role in regional economic and developmental assistance, including loans, technical development, and human rights promotion throughout the Indo-Pacific?**



As a “softer” initiative compared to the creation of a standing military task force or the standing up of a Quad secretariat, the research team was unsurprised to see greater support for a Quad role in coordinating economic development and human rights promotion policies in the Indo-Pacific. Just as with the military domain, Quad members already cooperate on joint infrastructure development projects in the Indo-Pacific region, such as a recently announced initiative among Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and the United States to build out the electrical grid on Papua New Guinea.<sup>47</sup>

**POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations largely focus on staff-

level initiatives that will build the groundwork for greater collaboration among Quad member governments in the years to come.

### **RECOMMENDATION 1: ESTABLISH WORKING GROUPS ON DEFENSE AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

Fleshing out the Quad from a biannual meeting at the senior official-level will require an agenda and contacts among lower-level officials. The establishment of working group meetings will go far toward laying the groundwork of the recommendations that follow below. There are a multitude of formats that a working group meeting series might take, but the gradual institutionalization of the U.S.-Japanese alliance might serve as a helpful guide for creating further contacts among Quad bureaucrats. As a major pillar of the Quad network that spans a litany of functional areas of cooperation and has global scope, U.S.-Japanese alliance institutions could serve as a model for Quad working groups.<sup>48</sup> With defense and infrastructure cooperation as the most plausible avenues for tighter Quad activity, working groups in these areas would serve as the basis for further activity.

The foundation of the U.S.-Japanese alliance working groups, and the most critical point of reference for the Quad, is the “2+2” meetings of foreign and defense ministers. Much of the work of managing the alliance is performed at 2+2 working groups that then report up to the Security Consultative Committee, the highest-ranked 2+2, consisting of the foreign and defense ministers.<sup>49</sup> Leader-level summits set the tone and create further opportunities for collaboration between different ministries and departments, touching on energy, space, and other such areas of mutual interest.<sup>50</sup> High-level meetings typically occur on an annual or biennial basis, while working-level groups meet either in person or via secure video teleconference more regularly.

The 2+2 framework is particularly salient as all of the Quad nations already maintain 2+2-level meetings with one another. Broadening the current Quad format of foreign ministry senior official-level meetings to include representatives from defense ministries would be a necessary first step toward creating a whole-of-Quad “working 2+2.” The concerns of some member states about military signaling can be eased by ensuring that representation of defense officials at the working 2+2 is kept at a level lower than that of the foreign ministry officials. As described below, salient working groups could be formed on regional infrastructure development and military exchanges.

### **RECOMMENDATION 2: DEVELOP AN INDO-PACIFIC INFRASTRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT COORDINATION WORKING GROUP**

A working group on infrastructure stands out as the opportunity most ripe for Quad cooperation. Per the informal survey, strategic elites across the four nations noted that the Quad should play a role in “coordinating regional economic and developmental assistance.” Indeed, as noted elsewhere, Australia, the United States, Japan, and New Zealand have committed to an initiative to build out the Papua New Guinea electrical grid, demonstrating the willingness of three of the four Quad nations to work together on regional infrastructure projects.<sup>51</sup> The November 2019 announcement of the “Blue Dot Network,” an initiative of the U.S. Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), Japan Bank of International Cooperation (JBIC), and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) provides the ideal vehicle for realizing an infrastructure-development component of the Quad.<sup>52</sup> India is uniquely positioned as both a recipient of infrastructure development aid and a major donor itself. It is a major donor to South Asia, recording a total of \$1.5 billion in 2016.<sup>53</sup> India is also the top borrower from the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB).<sup>54</sup> As one Indian respondent put it, linking together Quad nations on mini-lateral financing would help plug the gap of funding afforded by solely the Asian Development Bank.

The Blue Dot Network remains vague, more of a guide to transparent, high-quality infrastructure projects than a funding pipeline. Encouraging India to join the network would demonstrate that all four Quad nations are committed to creating a roadmap to sustainable, high-quality infrastructure for developing countries. It would further permit the streamlining of various inter-Quad infrastructure initiatives, including the Japan-India sponsored Asia-Africa growth corridor.<sup>55</sup>

Much as Japan has engaged China on third-country infrastructure development projects and India has established itself as a major component of the AIIB, the notional Indo-Pacific Infrastructure and Development Coordination Agency could similarly interact with Chinese financing vehicles to raise the overall quality of regional infrastructure. Such engagement would encourage transparency for negotiation, the tender process, and contracting for future projects.

### **RECOMMENDATION 3: ESTABLISH AN ANNUAL HEAD OF GOVERNMENT MEETING**

The 2+2 working group format will be useful in laying the

groundwork for an annual or biennial head of government meeting among the Quad nations. Given the already packed schedule of all of the heads of government, scheduling a further, separate summit meeting purely for the Quad would likely be impossible. Instead, adding a summit meeting on the margins of an annual summit like the East Asia Summit or the G-20 would be a more realistic means of accomplishing this goal.

While the working groups discussed above will be critical for giving the Quad an actionable agenda moving forward, leader-level summits are critical; the “control tower” and signaling functions played by such meetings are invaluable toward setting the overall direction of the Quad initiative. Just as the leader-level summits of the U.S.-Japanese alliance and the other 2+2 meetings among the Quad nations set initiatives for the working groups to meet, so too will a regular head of government meeting. These meetings will provide top-down instruction for the relevant working groups on infrastructure and military exchange detailed in this section. Further, the symbolism of all four leaders meeting regularly together will demonstrate that the members of the Quad are prepared to elevate the visibility of the Quad, to quite literally take it before the cameras. The present system of senior official-level meetings are closed to the press and are revealed only by statements issued by each country.

Given the possible diplomatic sensitivities, the G-20 would provide the optimal setting for the summits. While both APEC and the EAS would provide for a helpful geographic backdrop to the Quad (which will certainly be focused on the Indo-Pacific region), the Quad nations might put the EAS or APEC host nation in the uncomfortable diplomatic position of being seen as accommodating a Quad summit that will inevitably be lambasted by China as an element of “containment.” Fewer Asian nations are represented in the G-20, which would allow for more host nations that could conceivably permit the Quad summit. The margins of the United Nations General Assembly could serve a similar role.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 4: PURSUE AN ANNUAL MEETING OF JOINT OPERATIONAL COMMANDS AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF EXCHANGES**

As the research results demonstrate, any Quad project involving the military will prompt concern in some members that the initiative is taking too sharp of an anti-China focus. But there is no need for a meeting of operational commands to concern itself simply with high-end warfighting. As the Quad’s origins in the Tsunami Core

Group indicate, the provision of public goods is written into the group’s DNA. Strategic elites across the Quad nations have demonstrated interest in pursuing a Quad role in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR). Other contemporary work on a possible future role for the Quad further indicates that HA/DR could be a useful starting point to build out a military dialogue.<sup>56</sup> Attaching a meeting of joint operational commands would be a natural extension to a civilian working group on HA/DR.

Beyond the agreed-upon starting points of HA/DR, the dialogue could be built out to include further areas of demonstrated common concern, such as counterterrorism and maritime security. Indeed, the lack of public Chinese demarches concerning Quad counterterrorism tabletop exercise of November 2019 indicates that the sight of military professionals from all four nations exercising and learning together is not a surefire way to draw complaints of Chinese containment. The pre-exercise readout from the Indian National Investigative Agency, the convening authority, notes that the dialogue and TTX “aims to further improve the inter-agency [cooperation] between different CT and other agencies of QUAD countries.”<sup>57</sup> The readout further notes that the four countries share a commitment to promoting “maritime security cooperation.”<sup>58</sup> With the November 2019 CT-TTX as a guide, the joint operational command working group could further add a maritime security component to the growing retinue of Quad dialogues and exercises.

The promotion of personnel exchanges would be a further outgrowth of the above activity on joint operational command exchanges and the development of Quad working groups. The research team proposes the development of a specific “Quad fellowship” program at the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies (APCSS) in Hawaii given its geographic proximity to the rest of the Quad nations. The program would take mid-career foreign policy and defense professionals from all Quad nations and co-locate them at APCSS for a year-long rotation. The fellows would collaborate on research projects for new Quad initiatives and practice crisis exercises. Building a cohort of Quad fellows will breed more bottom-up initiatives by officials who have participated in the program and build familiarity among military officers and diplomats who may have otherwise had few opportunities to interact.

## **CONCLUSION**

From its ad-hoc beginnings as the Tsunami Core Group to the present day, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue has found tentative footing among its members and identified

a workable agenda for the years ahead. This progress was the hard-fought result of years of intra-Quad diplomacy and the convergence of a common threat narrative. After the dissolution of the first Quad in early 2008, nearly 10 years of bilateral and trilateral diplomacy followed among the Quad members. The resulting 2+2 bilateral and trilateral summits led to significant progress on a wide range of initiatives, from high-end warfighting exercises (Japan's permanent inclusion in Malabar, the Pitch Black Series, Talisman Saber, and others) to the resolution of major bilateral hurdles, such as the passage of the Japan-India civil nuclear cooperation deal. Coercive Chinese activity against all Quad nations galvanized a mutual understanding of the threat posed by an unchecked China.

The present Quad has met multiple times at the ministerial level and introduced a new tabletop exercise series. In early senior official-level meetings, the four nations found common ground on securing a free and open Indo-Pacific and promoting joint counterterrorism efforts. While the Quad has now met on a roughly biannual basis since its 2017 restart, questions still remain as to its ultimate purpose. The Quad continues to exist as an "informal" dialogue that nonetheless raises Chinese accusations of containment.

From its ad-hoc beginnings as the Tsunami Core Group to the present day, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue has found tentative footing among its members and identified a workable agenda for the years ahead.

In surveying a select group of "strategic elites" from the Quad countries, the CSIS Alliances and American Leadership Project identified crucial areas of bilateral disagreement, such as Australian frustration over exclusion from the Malabar exercise series, and demonstrated new ways forward, such as a leading Quad role in joint infrastructure development projects in the Indo-Pacific. The survey also demonstrated potential agreement among strategic elites from the four nations that a head of government meeting would be an effective way of creating further political momentum for the grouping; joint HA/DR and infrastructure development initiatives also stood out as key areas for working together.

The four policy recommendations—establishment of working level contacts, two specific working groups on joint

infrastructure development and military commands, and a regular head of government meeting—flow from these surveyed opinions. A working group discussion on military commands would come last. Head of government meetings will provide momentum to the first working groups on joint infrastructure development, whose work would in turn "normalize" the dialogue. Indeed, the November 2019 Quad counterterrorism exercise was a first step in this direction, an indication that the Quad initiative will continue to build momentum and eventually be seen as a "normal" dialogue similar to any of the bilateral or trilateral groupings within the Quad.

The events of late 2007 and early 2008 demonstrate that the Quad, like any informal diplomatic grouping, is vulnerable to the prevailing winds of politics. There is no guarantee that Quad 2.0 will succeed where Quad 1.0 failed. But with over a decade of diplomatic legwork to tighten the seams and given the context of years of Chinese coercion, the ties among the Quad nations and the threat narrative they share are tighter than ever. The true test will come when the parties in each nation that oversaw the restoration of the Quad fall out of power. Just as the Australian Labor party sank the first Quad, so too could a change in power from one government to another sink Quad 2.0. Developing the Quad further to maintain a joint message, with real-world outcomes that are clear to ally and adversary alike, will be crucial to maintaining the Quad as a pillar of stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

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*This brief is made possible by general support to CSIS. No direct sponsorship contributed to this brief.*

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