

The QUAD association comprising Australia, India, Japan and the United States have qualified to be a significant counterweight to the increasing dominance of China in the various facets of international politics. The stimulation of the same association which took place in 2017 has conducted several meetings since then with a cautious aim towards a free Indo-Pacific region and also take care of the China factor. Despite the raging pandemic, the QUAD leaders and their respective Foreign Ministers had not held themselves back to engage in deliberation and discussion. Even last month, after the Biden administration, took to the office that QUAD's active response in addressing global issues have caused political and economic relations between these countries to intensify.

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison speaking to a group of journalists in Sydney might have given away details for speculations. He mentioned, *"This will be a feature of Indo-Pacific engagement."* The Australian further added, *"It will be four leaders, four countries, working together constructively for the peace, prosperity and stability of the Indo-Pacific."* If this is expected to be the case, it will also be US President Joe Biden's first QUAD meet which is an impetus for India, Australia and Japan to review and revive their policies vis-à-vis with the United States. With Biden's incumbency, the world is awaiting a shift in major policies mostly undoing Trump's variables. Morrison also highlighted that he is waiting for swift actions between Australia and the US. The former's deteriorating relations with China have caused economic tensions and therefore the country assumes to regain momentum on the economic front as an alliance with the QUAD countries, particularly the US.

Morrison also communicated his intentions toward the association putting it across as "The QUAD is central". Referring to the ASEAN advocacy in the Indo-Pacific region he reaffirmed saying that the QUAD's centrality can also be viewed through the prism offered by the ASEAN partners, thereby laying out a map of parallel vision for the Indo-Pacific region. Similarly, India must also forge a resuscitated vision for the Indo-Pacific region keeping in mind Chinese dominance. The country's reluctance to refer to the association as 'QUAD' up until last month indicated India's willingness to employ the advocacy of these nations. Washington's willingness to counterbalance Chinese domination in the East could be a positive sign for India to participate in it and also an assuring element to ward off any future border disputes.



Image source: Bloomberg

However, the meeting last month spoke volumes about India's partnership in the QUAD. Despite the alleged reluctance, India has always prioritized the strategic sanity of the forum. With Biden in power and the swift change in the US's foreign policy, the world will have to understand the intricacies behind each association and forums. A similar such fate awaits India with respect to QUAD and the Indo-Pacific region. The primary agenda that hasn't much changed in the due course of various US administration is the underpinning of strategies to counter the dragon. Last year's border dispute between India and China has now resolved and resorted to disengagement, but the underlying tensions have yet not vanished. Therefore, it will be an understated argument to put that India does not recognize the importance of the forum, rather it recognizes more than ever the bounty opportunities it could strategize.

Another looming factor that might be worth India's consideration has a correlation to its partnership with Russia. The latter has always stated its wariness of the West and India does not want to create tensions with one of its natural allies. Given the regional

turbulences, the role of QUAD and India's contribution to it lies in pragmatic models now. The post COVID challenges have been immaculate in their ways and with the growing tension concerning China, North Korea and the South China Sea, it will be a daunting task for the QUAD nations to live up to this collective.

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