

QUAD and the Indo-Pacific

Jindal Global Centre for G20 Studies ([JGCG20](#))

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JGU International Academy, Hotel Taj Mahal, New Delhi

Event report by Darshan Kumar

Introduction and Moderation by Prof. (Dr.) Sreeram S. Chaulia

Prof. (Dr.) Sreeram S. Chaulia opened the event with a comprehensive overview of the QUAD's development, its strategic basis in the Indo-Pacific, and the interconnected bilateral agreements shaping its evolution. He also set the framework for the panel discussion, ensuring it addressed both the historical context and the prospective trajectory of the QUAD. As a seasoned moderator and academic, Prof. Chaulia encouraged the speakers to offer candid and nuanced perspectives, contributing to an engaging and thought-provoking session.

Inaugural Address by Prof. Sanjay Bhattacharyya and Remarks by Ambassador (Dr.) Mohan Kumar

Prof. Sanjay Bhattacharyya, Director of the Jindal Global Centre for G20 Studies, delivered the inaugural address, focusing on the Quad's role in weaving together regional and global interests across the Indo-Pacific. He highlighted the proliferation of Indo-Pacific strategies among more than 20 nations and encouraged India to shape the future of regional dialogues. Prof. Bhattacharyya's remarks reflected a profound understanding of the evolving diplomatic landscape and the urgency for dynamic, proactive engagement.

Ambassador (Dr.) Mohan Kumar complemented this approach, emphasizing the importance of finding common ground and leveraging policy discussions to maximize India's influence within the Indo-Pacific. He highlighted the nuanced interplay between areas of overlap and divergence, calling for India to capitalize on such opportunities to foster multilayered and practical cooperation with its global partners.

Keynote Address by H. E. Amb. Shri. K. Nagraj Naidu

Ambassador K. Nagraj Naidu delivered a compelling keynote that traced the Quad's transformation from humanitarian crisis response (2004 tsunami) to a contemporary partnership addressing security, economic interdependence, and environmental challenges. He stressed that resilient frameworks are critical for both regional prosperity and stability. Ambassador Naidu also showcased the Quad's evolution into a grouping capable of dynamic action, demonstrated in joint exercises, technology partnerships, and climate policy initiatives, underscoring the coalition's unprecedented relevance in the face of both traditional and non-traditional threats.

Panel Discussion: Suhasini Haidar

Suhasini Haidar presented an incisive analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of Quad member relationships. She noted the coalition's lack of a unified purpose but praised the strong, non-contentious bilateral ties that contribute to the Quad's potential for multilateral action. Haidar also articulated that more explicit aims and a stronger identity would be essential for the Quad to overcome its current stagnation and become a more impactful regional actor.

Panel Discussion: Indrani Bagchi

Indrani Bagchi addressed the debate over the Quad's informal structure, arguing that its flexibility underpins its resilience but also raises questions about its ability to meet evolving security needs. She drew comparisons with regional alliances and cautioned against military overreach, emphasizing the need for inclusive, adaptive strategies. Bagchi's thoughtful reflections added depth to the discourse on regional cooperation, highlighting the Quad's potential as a provider of strategic alternatives beyond rigid security frameworks.

Panel Discussion: Ambassador Manjeev Singh Puri

Ambassador Manjeev Singh Puri offered a pragmatic evaluation of the Quad's purpose from India's perspective, suggesting its primary utility lies in diplomacy rather than containment. He drew attention to India's constraints in power projection and emphasized engagement with the United States as the primary strategic takeaway for India, rather than the Indo-Pacific narrative promoted by Western member states. Puri further stresses the importance of striking a balance between idealism and realism in shaping India's foreign policy, both within and beyond the Quad.

Panel Discussion: Dr. Happymon Jacob

Dr. Happymon Jacob examined the deeper international systemic factors driving the Quad's formation, relying on Mearsheimer's power-centric approach. He argued that the Quad reflects shifting global power relations and that any significant alteration in US-China dynamics could drastically change the coalition's relevance. Jacob concluded by stressing that the evolution of the Quad is ultimately a mirror of broader structural forces in international politics, making it a bellwether for global strategic alignments.

Panel Discussion: Commodore Abhay Kumar Singh (Retd.)

Commodore Abhay Kumar Singh (Retd.) recognized the Quad as a strategically vital platform for India, offering both multilateral balance and avenues for regional leadership. He made specific recommendations for increasing the Quad's utility, proposing more regular, lower-level meetings; people-centric and technological projects; cautious engagement on sensitive issues; and updated policy frameworks. Singh predicted an expanded role for India in the western Pacific through projects like Great Nicobar and, together with other panelists, underscored the value of preserving the Quad's informal character to maintain flexibility and adapt to changing strategic environments.

Conclusion

The event concluded with broad agreement on the Quad's continuing importance for India's diplomatic and strategic agenda. It was collectively acknowledged that the future effectiveness of the Quad will depend on its ability to evolve responsibly, maintain internal flexibility, and respond to shifting global dynamics. Participant insights highlighted both the coalition's current achievements and the need for ongoing reassessment and innovation if it is to remain a pillar of the Indo-Pacific order.