



CENTRE FOR AIR POWER STUDIES

In Focus

New Delhi

CAPS InFocus: 16/2022

07 March 2022

The Fourth Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting

Air Commodore SP Singh VSM (Retd)
Senior Fellow, CAPS

Keywords: Quad, Indo-Pacific, India, US strategy



Image Source: The print



Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Centre for Air Power Studies [CAPS]

This work is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution – Non-Commercial – No Derivatives 4.0 International License.

On February 11, 2022, the fourth Quad foreign ministers' meeting was hosted by Australian Senator Marise Payne in Melbourne. It was attended by Dr. S. Jaishankar from India, Mr. Hayashi Yoshimasa from Japan, and Mr. Anthony Blinken from the US.¹ This is the third in-person meeting of Quad foreign ministers, following Tokyo in October 2020 and the inaugural meeting in New York City in September 2019. The ministers had last met virtually in February 2021. This fourth meeting of the foreign ministers of the Quad is a testament to the importance that the Quad members attach to this grouping, as the foreign ministers of three countries invested their time, effort, and energy to travel to Australia for the meeting. The pace at which the Quad has evolved over the last four years is quite extraordinary, and India can assume quite some credit for this rapid advance and the momentum that the Quad has registered in recent years.

The Quad foreign ministers' meeting was primarily focused on the implementation of the decisions taken since the first Summit in March 2021. The Group of Ministers (GoM), in this meeting, resolved to hasten up delivery of more than a billion Covid vaccines manufactured in India, to hold a special meeting on climate change this year and to step-up efforts to ensure maritime security in the region. Additional important issues that were on the agenda ranged from collaboration in critical and emergent technologies, Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA), infrastructure, Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Response (HADR), education, counter-terrorism, cyber security, infrastructure, the peaceful use of outer space, education, and countering disinformation.²

All these issues find considerable space in the Joint Statement issued at the conclusion of the meeting. The ministers appear to have realised that the time for general omnibus statements and pronouncements is over, and it is essential to demonstrate action on the ground to inspire confidence and trust of the international community in the grouping. The ministers had largely been successful in achieving this objective. In addition, without naming China or Pakistan, the statement expresses its strong condemnation of their activities in the maritime domain (in the case of China, and terrorism in the case of Pakistan)³.

It is pertinent to note that, at a time when the US Secretary of State was attending this meeting and also met with the diplomats of several nations, the new "Indo-Pacific Strategy Document" of Biden administration was released, interestingly on the same day.⁴ The White House has released this new Indo-Pacific Strategy, the first under President Joe Biden's administration, almost three years after Donald Trump's version. This 12-page strategy for the Indo-Pacific reflects a shift in policy that is closer to India's vision of the Indo-Pacific in the form of the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI). One of the significant changes that have emerged is that, while the earlier Indo-pacific strategy under the Trump administration was issued by the US

Department of Defense (DoD), the present policy document has been released by the White House itself.⁵

The GoM, while reaffirming the Quad's commitment to supporting the Indo-Pacific countries' efforts in advancing a free and open Indo-Pacific region, asserted that the region would remain inclusive, resilient, and be maintained free from coercion. This joint statement of the Quad meeting was circulated by the Ministry of External Affairs, India.⁶ It enunciated every aspect of the discussions and decisions taken during the meeting. These were:-

- *Vaccines initiative*: Renewed commitment to the 'flagship' [Quad vaccine initiative](#) to deliver at least one billion vaccines produced in India by the end of 2022 to the Indo-Pacific countries and to a pledge to donate 1.3 billion vaccine doses globally.
- *Security and Intelligence*: The call for justice for the 26/11 terror attacks in Mumbai (2008) and the Pathankot airbase attack (2016) was taken for the first time since the group was formed. It was brought out that, while Quad is already cooperating on sharing intelligence on threats in the Indo-Pacific region, all countries must ensure that territory under their control is not used to launch terror attacks. They made a veiled reference to China's actions in the [South and East China seas](#), reaffirming a commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific, "in which states strive to protect the interests of their people, free from coercion."⁷
- *Myanmar Crisis*: The Quad group indicated their grave concern about the crisis in Myanmar and called for an end to the violence and the release of all those arbitrarily detained, including foreigners. The GoM reaffirmed Quad's support for the [Association of Southeast Asian Nations \(ASEAN\)](#) efforts to seek a solution in Myanmar and called on the military regime to urgently implement [ASEAN's Five-Point Consensus](#) and swiftly return Myanmar to the path of democracy.
- *Quad's Stand on Other Issues*: In the meeting, progress on the other fields for cooperation identified during the Quad summit in 2021, including [climate change](#), critical and emerging technologies, HADR and MDA, was also discussed. Ministers agreed to work on [5G technology](#) and vendor diversification to maintain a diverse, open, and interoperable telecommunication ecosystem through a collaboration of like-minded partners.

India's Stand in the Meeting

- India is committed to supplying safe and affordable Covid vaccines made in India under the Quad vaccine partnership.⁸
- India stressed upon a shared vision for a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific.
- India, Japan, and Australia pledged to further the agreed Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI) towards building more trusted and resilient supply chains for inclusive growth in the strategic Indo-Pacific region.
- On the Myanmar issue, India pointed to the challenge of insurgency along the Indo-Myanmar border.

India reaffirmed its commitment to work together towards furthering peace and stability and economic prosperity in the Indo-Pacific.

NOTES

¹ "Quad Foreign Ministers meeting today", *Hindustan News Hub*, New Delhi/Canberra, February 11, 2022, <https://hindustannewshub.com/india-news/quad-foreign-ministers-meeting-today-discussion-will-be-held-on-increasing-cooperation-in-open-and-free-indo-pacific/> Accessed on February 13,2022

² "International relations", *Drishti*, February 14, 2022, <https://www.drishtiias.com/daily-updates/daily-news-analysis/4th-quad-foreign-ministers-meeting> Accessed on February 16,2022

³ Ibid

⁴ "Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States" , *The White House release*, February 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/U.S.-Indo-Pacific-Strategy.pdf> Accessed on February 17, 2022

⁵ ibid

⁶ "Joint statement press release", *MEA, Gol*, February 11, 2022, <https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/34854/Joint+statement+by+the+Foreign+Ministers+of+Australia+India+and+Japan+and+the+Secretary+of+State+of+the+United+States+following+the+4th+Quad+Foreign+Ministers+Meeting>, Accessed on February 17, 2022

⁷ ibid

⁸ ibid