

The US is eager to strengthen India's technological capabilities for defence and security. Delhi needs to move quickly to create internal environment for such partnerships with Quad members.

President Joe Biden's decision to begin his first visit to Asia at a semiconductor facility in South Korea underlines the role of critical technologies in his Indo-Pacific strategy. Calling his visit to the Samsung plant an "auspicious start", Biden noted that the chips produced at the plant "are the key to propelling us into the next era of humanity's technological development — artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, 5G, and so very much more".

Referring to the impact of Covid-19 and the Russian invasion of Ukraine on the global economy, Biden emphasised the importance of reorienting technology supply chains away from countries that don't share common values. The way forward, according to Biden, is to procure "more of what we need from our allies and partners and bolster our supply chain resilience".

For Prime Minister Narendra Modi — who is participating in today's summit of the Quadrilateral Forum that brings together Delhi, Canberra, Tokyo, and Washington — this is a major opportunity to enhance India's national technological capabilities that can be the source of robust security and economic policies.

But is Delhi ready to go beyond its cautious and incremental approach to the Quad? Can it turn the Quad into an instrument to realise India's significant potential as a technological power? Can India join its Quad partners in drawing up new rules to govern critical technologies that are rapidly transforming the global economic order and international security politics?

Reports from Tokyo say India will combine its space and maritime resources with those of the Quad partners to counter the growing problem of illegal and unregulated fishing in their vast exclusive economic zones. The possibilities for pooling India's technological resources with its Quad partners to promote peace and prosperity across the Indo-Pacific are immense.

The question of peace today is not limited to Europe amid the war in Ukraine. The impact of the Ukraine war on the Asian economy and security is coming into sharp view in this week's high-powered diplomacy in Asia. Although Biden is unlikely to mention Beijing by name, there is no question that China's muscular assertiveness is the driving force behind the Administration's Indo-Pacific strategy.

One of the main objectives of Biden's visit is to demonstrate that the US can simultaneously handle the Russian aggression in Europe and the Chinese challenge in Asia.

While the Russian invasion of Ukraine is an urgent priority, the Biden Administration is insisting that China remains the more demanding and longer-term challenge for the US. In a counter-intuitive turn, the Ukraine crisis has improved US prospects in the Indo-Pacific. Xi Jinping's all-out support for Vladimir Putin has not panned out well and has helped Washington rustle up support for its Indo-Pacific initiatives.

If many in the Indo-Pacific scoffed at the idea of a "rules-based order", the Russian invasion of Ukraine has highlighted the first principles of such an order — respect for territorial integrity, peaceful resolution of disputes, and no violent change in national borders. For the first time since the Second World War, the Ukraine war has reversed the positions of the West and China on the question of territorial sovereignty so deeply valued by the Asian nations. It is the US and the West that are defending the sovereignty of states in Europe and Asia, while Russia and China are grabbing the territory of other states by force. As Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida affirmed, Russia's Ukraine invasion "shakes the very foundation of the international order" and that such "unilateral attempts to alter the status quo cannot be tolerated anywhere in the world."

India might not say this directly about Russia's invasion, but it has underlined the principles of territorial sovereignty and peaceful resolution of disputes in its response to the war in Ukraine. After all, India faces enduring threats to its territorial integrity from China.

Fear of Ukraine-like military aggression by China against Taiwan and in the disputed islands of the Western Pacific has pushed Japan and South Korea to take bolder steps in building national defence capabilities, strengthening the alliance with the US, and taking a larger regional role. Greater technological collaboration between the US and its northeast Asian allies is emerging as a major pillar of Indo-Pacific security. The US is also eager to strengthen India's technological capabilities for defence and security. Techno-military cooperation figured prominently in the 2+2 dialogue of defence and foreign ministers last month in Washington and is expected to be an important part of the conversation between Biden and Modi.

These developments follow the pattern set by the AUKUS alliance, under which London and Washington plan to help Australia build nuclear-powered submarines and acquire other advanced military technologies.

The question of technology is also at the core of the new Indo Pacific Economic Framework launched in Tokyo on Monday. The IPEF visualises cooperation across the region on fair trade, digital commerce, resilient supply chains, and clean energy among other issues. Progress on many of these fronts depends on technological collaboration between like-minded partners. For India, which is not part of any region-wide trade agreement, the IPEF opens the door for economic reengagement with Asia. IPEF offers a very different setting than the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) that binds 15 Asian nations in a trade liberalisation agreement. India had walked out of the RCEP, just before it was finalised in November 2019, citing the economic threat from China as the main reason. While India might have reservations, Delhi has been right in deciding to join the consultations on IPEF.

If the IPEF is about recasting the techno-economic relations of Asia and the AUKUS is a techno-military alliance, the Quad has become the vehicle to shape the techno-politics of the Indo-Pacific. The Tokyo summit will review the range of decisions taken at last year's Washington conclave on advancing technological collaboration in a wide range of areas. These include vaccine production,

clean energy, biotechnology, cybersecurity, and outer space to name a few. While the ambition is impressive, the Quad needs to demonstrate effective implementation and tangible benefits to the Indo-Pacific states.

In the end, the Quad's technopolitik is about boosting the national capabilities of its members. In his remarks at the South Korean semiconductor plant, Biden pointed out that Samsung is only one of the three companies in the world making advanced chips. He thanked Samsung for deciding to invest \$17 billion to build a similar semiconductor plant in Texas.

Biden also underlined his Administration's efforts to revitalise the US semiconductor industry that once dominated the world. He also pointed to the plans to significantly raise research and development funding in the US. The idea is to facilitate technological innovation at home and build resilient supply chains with trusted partners to cope with multiple domestic and global challenges at hand.

This is an even more urgent strategic imperative for India's security and economic policies. Delhi needs to move quickly and boldly to create the right internal environment for technological leapfrogging and seize the emerging external opportunities for deeper technological partnerships with the US and the Quad.



GS World Team Input

IN THE NEWS

Quad Group

Why in news?

- Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is on his two-day visit to Japan. During this, apart from participating in the Quad Leaders Summit, PM Modi will also meet leaders of many countries.
- Along with this, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will also attend the Quad conference.

What is?

- The Quad is an organization of four countries. This includes India, America, Australia and Japan. These four countries are also the economic powers of the world.
- In 2007, the then Prime Minister of Japan Shinzo Abe established the Quad organization to deal with this disaster after the Indian Ocean tsunami.
- It is a kind of informal alliance. Its full name is Quadrilateral Security Dialogue.

Why was it needed?

- The purpose of forming the Quad group was to preserve democracy and help countries in distress, but due to the lack of cohesion among this group, its image has developed as an anti-China faction.
- It has countries whose borders touch China. Mongolia and Korea were also to be included in this group, but this did not happen. It is also the goal of this group to protect the borders with China.

India can have these five economic benefits

- Semiconductor : Self-reliance in manufacturing semiconductors is the agenda of the Quad countries. This is also the main objective of India. He may proceed with the Quad countries to have a semiconductor production unit on his soil.
- New Age Technical Services : There is agreement in the Quad countries to expand 5G service in the field of communication. Member countries have imposed sanctions on Chinese companies for security reasons. Indian companies can take advantage of this.
- In the field of rare minerals : In the growing technological world, there is a high dependence on China for rare minerals used in smartphones, laptops, hybrid cars, watermills, solar cells and many other technical items. India has six percent of the global reserves of such mineral elements (lanthanide, scandium and ytium).
- Increasing trade : In the year 2019-2020, 15 percent of India's total trade was with America, Japan and Australia. This business relationship can be further strengthened through Quad.
- Infrastructure Development : The Quad countries have prepared a quality infrastructure development plan to compete with China's Belt and Road Initiative plan. In India also, work is being done on the National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP). Japan is already working on several projects in India. With America and Australia, it can also be taken forward in this area.

Expected Question (Prelims Exams)

Q. Consider the following statements-

1. Quad is an organization of four countries. This includes India, America, Australia and Japan.
2. All the four countries of the Quad participated in the Malabar exercise in the year 2020.
3. The Malabar exercise is a biennial trilateral naval exercise, conducted alternately in the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- (a) Only 3
- (b) 1 and 3
- (c) 2 and 3
- (d) 1 and 2

Expected Question (Mains Exams)

Q. What is the significance of the Indo-Pacific region for the Quad? Discuss the potential benefits and related concerns with India's participation in the Quad.

(250 Words)

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Note: - The question of the main examination given for practice is designed keeping in mind the upcoming UPSC main examination. Therefore, to get an answer to this question, you can take the help of this source as well as other sources related to this topic.