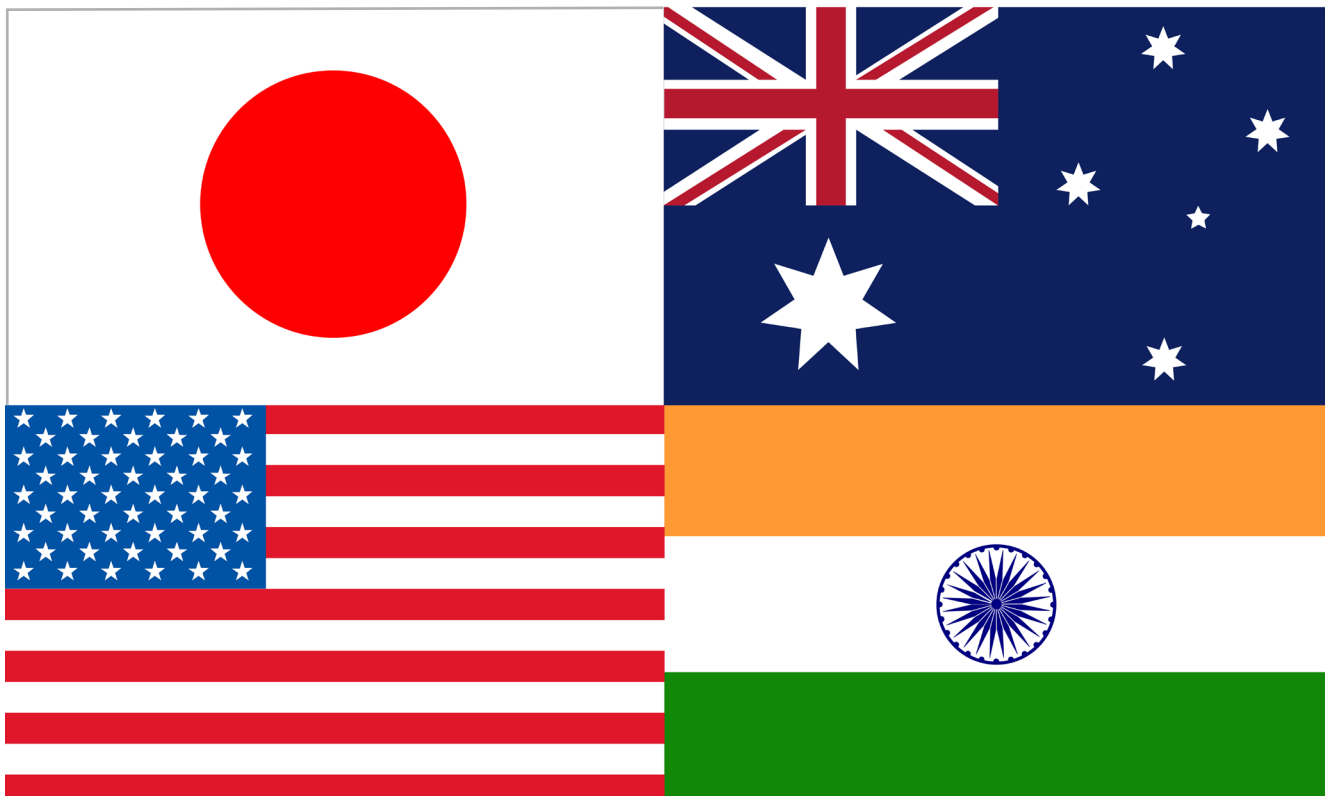


SPECIAL REPORT no. 161

The Rise and Rise of the ‘Quad’: Setting an Agenda for India

Harsh V Pant and Shashank Mattoo, Eds.



SEPTEMBER 2021

Introduction

The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (or Quad, of India, the United States, Australia and Japan) began as a coordination mechanism to respond to the humanitarian crisis in the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami that killed 227,898 people and displaced nearly two million others. It has since then morphed into one of the world's most significant forums whose work could have important ramifications to global geopolitics. The Quad's journey has been far from smooth, from its birth and early—some say, ignominious—demise in 2007, to its revival in 2017. Each of the Quad's members followed their own paths to support the grouping: India and Japan clashed with China over disputed territories; Australia reckoned with the influence the East Asian power had come to exercise over its politics and economy; and the United States came to terms with the challenges posed by China to American interests in Asia. A decade after Quad 1.0 dissipated, these four nations found themselves ready to reassemble in order to pursue common goals: a rules-based international order, freedom of navigation, and the peaceful settlement of territorial disputes.

The rise of the Quad signals the acceptance, both within and beyond the member countries, of the “Indo-Pacific” as a strategic concept. Starting with then Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's “Confluence of the Two Seas” speech before the Indian parliament in 2007, the traditional understanding of what constituted the Asia-Pacific region started to change. Today the Quad represents a maturation in thinking by major powers in the region. For Japan and the US, their traditional understanding of “security” has expanded beyond the narrow confines of Northeast Asia; the US has declared that its sphere of interest now stretches “from Hollywood to Bollywood”. For India, its membership in the Quad represents an evolution in strategic thinking that began with its Look East policy in the early 1990s. Australia, too, has realised that the Indian Ocean, and not just the Pacific Ocean, is critical to its national interest.

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In pursuit of their goals, the Quad has intensified its military activities in recent years—and this has not escaped global attention. For one, the navies of all four nations participate in the high-profile Malabar exercises. At the same time, bilateral military ties, in the form of exercises and defence agreements, have heightened as well. Equally important, high-level 2+2 dialogues between member nations have become a regular feature of the diplomatic calendar.

To be sure, however, the members of the grouping realise that while security deterrence and political coordination forms a key component of their *raison d'être*, it is not adequate. They will need to develop a more broad-ranging approach to the key challenges facing the region, if they wish to build an effective coalition to safeguard values that undergird the regional order.

The virtual Quad Summit in March 2021 reflected precisely this understanding. As COVID-19 infections raged, the Quad nations leveraged their unique strengths in medical technology, pharmaceutical manufacturing, and logistics to design the Quad Vaccine Partnership with the ambitious goal of providing 1 billion vaccine doses by the end of 2022. With the worsening climate crisis threatening the global commons more than ever before, all four powers pledged to create a Quad Working Group on Climate. Nowhere does this joint effort to tackle common challenges come

through more clearly than with the Quad's Critical Technologies Working Group—in coming together to jointly develop new technologies, design global standards, and construct resilient supply chains, the Quad is demonstrating its commitment to mould technologies for the future in the image of the values shared by all four. The Quad has also declared its commitment to exploring opportunities for cooperation in counterterrorism.

The future is not without challenges. India's massive pandemic crisis, especially at the peak of its second wave in April and May 2021, led many to wonder whether the Quad could deliver on its ambitious vaccine production goals.

“The Quad will need to develop a more broad-ranging approach to the key challenges facing the region, if they wish to build an effective coalition to safeguard values that undergird the regional order.”

Similarly, on climate action, observers have questioned whether the grouping can add to the existing multilateral frameworks to combat what may be humanity's greatest challenge in contemporary history. In the realm of technology, members are divided by disagreements over data localisation. The Biden Administration's withdrawal from Afghanistan, which may spawn the rise of terror networks in the troubled nation, may undercut the Quad's joint commitment to combating terror besides raising questions about America's willingness to recommit resources to the grim task of dismantling the terror networks it believed had been already defeated. Further, in the absence of a cohesive economic strategy that seeks to build cohesive and secure supply chains, the Quad risks standing on only one leg in a region that cares deeply about economic integration and statecraft. Most importantly, the Quad must convince deeply ambivalent nations,

especially in Southeast Asia, that it offers partners more than just military power and security. As the leaders of all four nations head to Washington in late September, these concerns are undoubtedly playing on the minds of each of the parties.

In this Special Report, ORF scholars examine the challenges and opportunities before the Quad. From the Quad's groundbreaking work securing maritime routes to fighting climate change and terrorism, ORF analysts dissect the forum's policy proposals, explore India's role in operationalising them, and outline the strengths and weaknesses where they exist. The aim is to help illuminate a more effective path forward for the Quad.

- Harsh V Pant and Shashank Mattoo

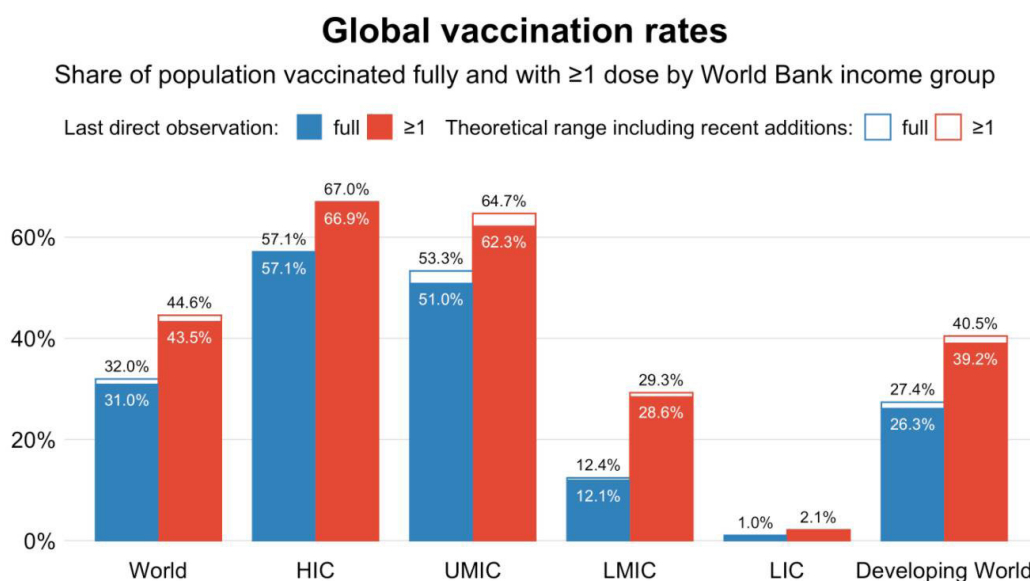
The Quad’s Push for Global Vaccine Equity

Oommen C Kurian

High-income and upper-middle-income countries of the world have already fully vaccinated more than 50 percent of their overall population; meanwhile, low-income countries are still struggling at 1-percent levels of full vaccination coverage (see Figure 1). Even the lower-middle income countries have managed

to fully vaccinate just over 12 percent of their population—an average pulled up substantially by the over-14-percent coverage that India has achieved, somewhat distorting the overall situation due to its high population.

Figure 1:
Income Disparities in the Global Vaccination Effort



Source: <https://pandem-ic.com/>

In this context, the Quad Vaccine Partnership announced in March 2021 assumes greater significance. The partnership's stated goal is to expand safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing for the Indo-Pacific region in close coordination with multilateral mechanisms including WHO and COVAX. Leveraging India's manufacturing capacity, the idea is to produce at least 1 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines by the end of 2022. Japan, in parallel, is to provide soft loans to expand manufacturing capacity in India, and Australia will give "last-mile" delivery support with a focus on Southeast Asia, along with financial support for the provision of vaccines. The Quad plans include supporting countries with vaccine readiness and delivery, vaccine procurement, health workforce preparedness, responses to vaccine misinformation, community engagement, immunisation capacity, and related interventions.

The manufacturing hub of Quad's ambitious vaccine partnership, i.e. India, was already exporting or distributing a substantial proportion of all vaccines manufactured, to the rest of the world at the time of the announcement. However, India's vaccine diplomacy efforts, which largely followed its Neighbourhood First policy—along with its exports to the COVAX facility in line with the contractual obligations of the Serum Institute—were short-lived as the country was soon overwhelmed by a devastating second wave of infections and deaths,

leading to a focus on domestic vaccination. India's deadly wave in April 2021, and the export disruption it caused, created a vaccine supply vacuum in the region, and the following months saw many countries depending on China for their supplies. India's initial vaccine diplomacy effort was a high-stakes bet on the possibility of there being no second wave in the immediate future, based on the available information on high seroprevalence and low case numbers. Unfortunately, that was not to be the case.

As of now, India still has enormous production capacity; the problem during the second wave was that the need had overwhelmed the production capacity then online. Capacity has since been expanded on a war footing, and more possible vaccine candidates are coming into play almost every month. At the same time, the supply requirements are enormous. Even when exports are ceased and all the vaccines produced are used for its own population, India has fully vaccinated only under 15 percent of its population, and has given one dose to 44 percent of the population. Globally, India's share is only about 13.5 percent of all COVID-19 vaccinations even as it is home to 18 percent of the world population. At the time of writing, nearly 6 billion doses of the COVID-19 vaccine have been administered across the globe, and there is a clear shortage.

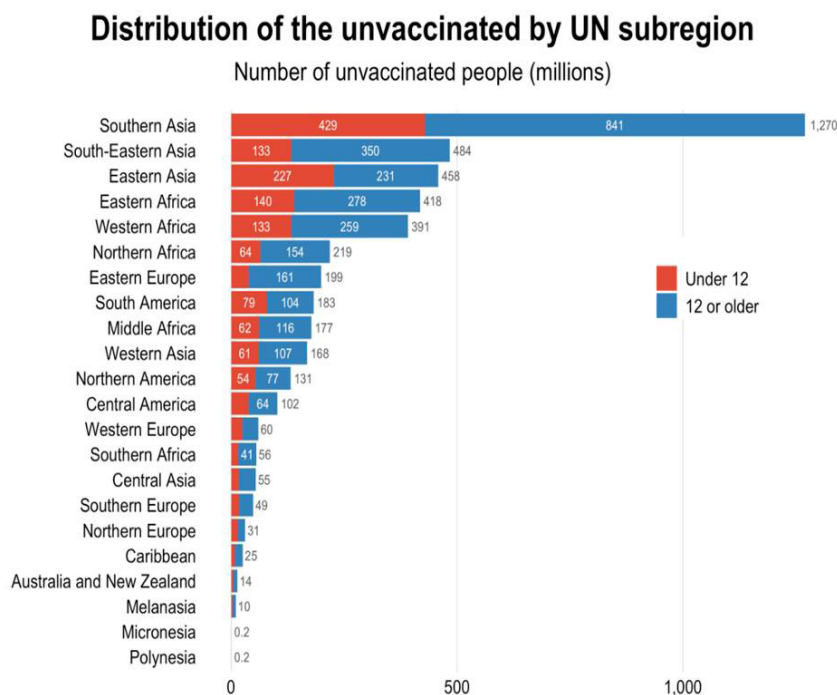
In order to achieve the target of making available 1 billion vaccine doses by the end of 2022, the primary challenge for the Quad Vaccine Partnership in the Indo-Pacific will be to strike a balance between India's domestic requirements and those of other countries in the region. Even at the beginning of the devastating second wave, India had shown admirable political will to continue exporting vaccines and take a considerable political risk domestically. As most parts of the country still have low vaccination coverage, freeing up supplies for the rest of the world will not be easy. In an unexpected turn of events, India made an announcement on 20 September that vaccine exports will resume in the next quarter. However, there is bound to be strong pushback from the states and civil society. With competing vaccine candidates getting emergency approvals, some even approved for use among children, getting contracts drawn up with companies holding significant manufacturing capacity may prove to be a challenge. India's under-18 population alone is around 400 million.

The Quad Vaccine Partnership's manufacturing plans revolve around the Johnson and Johnson single-dose COVID-19 vaccine, which obtained emergency-use approval in August 2021. No delivery timeline has been announced yet. Because of the uncertainties involved, the Quad's vaccine diplomacy plans need to go beyond efforts to ensure supply, to include helping countries with the challenges of conducting large vaccination drives in

low-income settings. Platforms of cross-learning can be established and along with manufacturing of vaccines, this could be an equally important contribution that India as a Quad partner can make to the world. By making the COWIN software open-source, India has announced that it is willing to actively share its experience with other nations, and the Quad can be an effective platform for catalysing an exchange of such solutions.

“To achieve the target of making available 1 billion vaccine doses by the end of 2022, the primary challenge for the Quad Vaccine Partnership in the Indo-Pacific will be to strike a balance between India's domestic requirements and those of other countries in the region.”

Figure 2: The Unvaccinated in the world



Source: <https://pandem-ic.com/>

As Figure 2 shows, the Indo-Pacific region has the largest unvaccinated population in the world, and any effort to ensure vaccine coverage becomes a moral imperative. To counterbalance China’s hegemonic presence and expansionism through its aggressive health diplomacy efforts despite the questionable efficacy of its vaccines, the Quad partners will have to come up with a healthcare equivalent of the Malabar exercise in the short term, to help ensure COVID-19 vaccine

security in the Indo-Pacific, focusing on both quantity as well as quality. There is a vacuum in the region being filled up largely by Chinese supplies. In the coming months, Quad partners will need to move quickly, and leverage each other’s strengths to ensure mass inoculation in the region. A starting point could be a stocktaking of the progress made over the six months since the launch of the Quad Vaccine Partnership.

Maritime Diplomacy is Vital for the Quad's Success

Abhijit Singh

At the first India-Australia 2+2 ministerial meet in early September, India's foreign minister, S Jaishankar made an important clarification regarding the Quad. In response to reports in the media of Chinese attempts to portray the Quad as an "Asian NATO", Jaishankar said that it was a seeming "misrepresentation of reality".¹ The Quad, he averred, was but a "platform for four countries to cooperate for their benefit and for the benefit of the world...Unlike NATO, a Cold War term, the Quad looked very much to the future, reflecting globalisation and the compulsions of countries to work together."²

That explanation, evidently, did little to convince mandarins in Beijing. Ahead of the Quadrilateral summit in New York in late September—the first in-person meeting of these country leaders—a Chinese spokesperson denounced the Quad as "a clique formed to target a third country."³ The group's "zero sum thinking and ideological bias", the official complained, "was unsuited for trust building and cooperation between regional states."

This is not the first time that Chinese officials have criticised the Quad. Since March 2021, when the group held its first leader-level summit and issued a leader-level communiqué, China has been wary of warming ties between Quad states.⁴ At the time, Quad leaders' pledges of commitment for a free and open Indo-Pacific region had seemed partly rhetorical. Since then, naval engagement between Quad states has intensified, making it clear to Chinese observers that the military-Quad represents a significant challenge to Beijing's maritime ambitions in Asia.

Indeed, the growing synergy between Quad navies has been all too evident. Since November 2020, when the Royal Australia navy joined the navies of India, Japan and the US for the Malabar exercises⁵ in the Bay of Bengal, there have been a series of multilateral naval engagements between the Quad partners.

In April this year, Quad powers joined France for exercise *La Perouse* in the Eastern Indian Ocean—an elaborate affair comprising complex interoperability exercises that involved carrier strike groups, anti-submarine warfare aircraft, and attack submarines.⁶ Quad navies met again in August for the first phase of the Malabar 2021 exercise off the coast of Guam in the Western Pacific.⁷ If these were not enough to unnerve observers in Beijing, India announced it would hold a tri-services exercise with the Royal Navy in October 2021, and the US, UK and Australia revealed plans for a new trilateral alliance that will help equip Australia with nuclear-powered submarines. Many Chinese analysts now feel their apprehensions about the Quad stand vindicated.⁸

To be sure, many in India share Chinese assessments about the Quad. Indian political observers and foreign policy analysts, too, believe that Australia's inclusion in the Malabar naval exercises imparts more than a military dimension to the Quadrilateral; it in fact signals unified resolve to Beijing.⁹ Not only is India willing to make common cause with partners to counter Chinese unilateralism in the Indian Ocean, Indian analysts aver, New Delhi is no longer hesitant to offend Chinese sensitivities in the Western Pacific. Some theorists advocate an even more aggressive Indian response in the littorals. The Indian navy, they say, must consider “interdicting Chinese oil tankers in the Eastern Indian Ocean.”¹⁰

This is more than bluster. Many in India's strategic community believe that maritime competition between China and India is inevitable.¹¹ The People's Liberation Army Navy's (PLAN) expansion in the Indian Ocean, they reckon, is bound to eventually contradict Indian interests. Realists say that China's quest to dominate India's neighbourhood would inevitably create the conditions for maritime conflict.

Yet an aggressive Indian strategy in the Andaman Seas is likely to be complicated. Aside from the fact that ‘trade warfare’ is known to be ineffective in peace-time, Indian attempts to interdict Chinese shipping in the Indian Ocean could trigger regional blowback against India. ASEAN and Bay of Bengal states are bound to view the disruption of regular shipping in the high seas as a hostile act that imposes unacceptable costs on neutrals. Targeting Chinese oil tankers in the Andaman Sea could even render Indian shipping vulnerable in the Western Pacific. So far, the Chinese navy has been careful to largely keep clear of Indian red lines. For all its assertive manoeuvring in the South China Sea, PLAN has desisted from deploying in and around India's territorial waters or the Exclusive Economic Zones. But things could go rapidly south if India were to try and interdict Chinese shipping in the littorals.

It is worth bearing in mind that the PLAN is the world's second most powerful navy. Chinese commanders may be constrained by the absence of operational logistics, ship-based air cover, and land-based maritime reconnaissance capabilities in the Indian Ocean—gaps that the Indian Navy hopes to exploit—but it would be folly for India to underestimate Chinese combat capacity.

Instead the Indian Navy should focus on tracking Chinese naval activity in the Bay of Bengal to preempt and prevent a Chinese build-up in the neighbourhood. In recent years, the real challenge to India has come from Chinese non-military deployments: research and survey vessels, intelligence ships, and mining vessels with underwater drones. China has also looked to leverage its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects to reduce its tactical deficit in the Eastern Indian Ocean.¹² The Indian navy then would do well to prioritise intelligence and information sharing, and maritime diplomacy in the Bay of Bengal. New Delhi should ensure Chinese-built facilities are not used as supply hubs for PLAN warships and submarines.

China-skeptics in India, however, need not see an IN-PLAN clash as imminent or inevitable. However fraught the bilateral relationship may be in the Himalayas, Delhi and Beijing have been largely respectful of each other's maritime sphere of interest, keenly aware of the dangers of an inadvertent flare-up. Quad posturing aside, the

Indian navy has been careful not to engage in multilateral exercises around contested regions of the South China Sea. In the Indian Ocean, too, the IN has desisted from aggravating moves that could complicate efforts to ensure a peaceful land border with China.

Quad engagement in the Indian Ocean would certainly be useful in developing the habits of cooperation with friendly naval powers. The Indian navy must seek to deepen engagement with navies of Japan, Australia, Britain, France and the United States—not only to enhance interoperability, but also to acquire critical strategic technology. But India's naval leadership must recognise the virtues of maritime diplomacy. Military signaling to China must not be an invitation to conflict, especially at a time when both sides are trying to negotiate a truce on the contested border in Ladakh.

“Quad engagement in the Indian Ocean would certainly be useful in developing the habits of cooperation with friendly naval powers.”

A Supply Chain Resilience Agenda for the Quad

Akshay Mathur

There is a palpable churning in geopolitics and geoeconomics taking place; the US-China trade war, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, and a breakdown of the multilateral system are forcing an evaluation and reconfiguration of global supply chains. The relocation of global supply chains that began with the US-China trade war was further catalysed by the pandemic, which lifted the veil on the grave vulnerabilities in production networks of essential commodities.

Today there is global consensus that nations have to design their foreign trade policy in a manner that addresses vulnerabilities, manages disruptions, and reduces concentration. India has a unique chance to leverage these developments to attract global value chains, especially by exploring partnerships with strategically and geopolitically aligned nations such as the members of the Quad.

Within the Quad, India's supply chain resilience agenda can be guided by three principles: financing for resilience, attracting technology multinationals, and addressing raw-material dependencies.

First, India's foreign direct and foreign institutional investments come mainly from the capital-rich countries of the G7 and OECD such as the US, UK, Europe, and Japan through financial centres such as Singapore, the Netherlands, and Mauritius. India can be an 'economic pivot' for the Quad in the Indo-Pacific if the Quad can commit financing to support its entry into Quad-led global supply chains.

Though the Quad has declared that among its objectives are “mobilisation of private finance for development finance” and “enhancing the impact of multilateral public finance”,¹ most of the initiatives remain unfunded. Even the Supply Chain Resilience Initiative has yet to be backed by any serious joint funding commitments.

Without support, capital-intensive industries such as automobiles and telecommunications will be impossible to move. For instance, a 2020 study by McKinsey found that Dell and Lenovo, the world’s largest computer companies based in the US and China, respectively, have between 4,000 to 5,000 tier 1 and tier 2 suppliers with a remarkable 2000 of them in common.² Such corporate dependency is impossible for most policymakers and businesses to fathom, let alone decouple.

Second, India must seek entry into global value chains of the future, particularly those focused on electronics, electrical machinery, and telecommunications. Nearly 40 percent of all FDI into India since 2000 has flowed to these sectors.³ Electronics manufacturing has grown at a CAGR of nearly 23 percent in the last five years, with domestic production of electronics hardware touching \$76 billion in 2019-20.⁴ Still, India remains worryingly dependent on China, particularly on electrical machinery: China constitutes nearly 60

percent of the country’s imports in that segment.⁵ The global market for IT hardware is dominated by seven companies which account for about 70 percent of the world’s market share.⁶ Therefore, the most recent commitment by the Government of India of \$7 billion for Large-Scale Electronics Manufacturing, along with nearly a billion dollars for IT hardware, shows that the government is serious about positioning India as a global hub for Electronics System Design and Manufacturing (ESDM).

Unfortunately, just as India is preparing to globalise, Western multinationals are in the process of de-globalising by reshoring or near-shoring their activities. According to the *World Investment Report 2020*, the average ‘transnationality’ of multinationals—an indicator that tracks their relative share of foreign assets, sales and employees—has stagnated at 65 percent in the past decade. Multinationals have a choice of diversifying their supply chains to manage risks arising from climate change, conflicts and pandemics.⁷ For Western multinationals to choose diversification to India over reshoring, the strategic benefits must be made more compelling by the Quad.

“India’s supply chain resilience agenda can be guided by three principles: financing for resilience, attracting technology multinationals, and addressing raw-material dependencies.”

Third, India has to diversify its own supply chains, particularly those on which it is most dependent. The early days of the COVID-19 pandemic revealed the world’s dependency on pharmaceutical APIs, 70 percent of which come from China. Similarly, the critical minerals that India needs for new-age industries such as electronics and renewable energy come from limited sources. The International Energy Agency reports that China extracts 60 percent of rare-earths and 64 percent of graphite, but it also processes 58 percent of lithium, 65 percent of cobalt, 35 percent of nickel, and 40 percent of copper. Similarly, nearly 70 percent of cobalt is extracted from the Democratic Republic of Congo, 33 percent of nickel, from Indonesia and 22

percent of lithium from Chile. India is estimated to have the fifth largest deposits of rare-earths but accounts for only 2 percent of global production.⁸

A Paulson Institute analysis found a high degree of concentration and inter-dependence in supply chains for lithium-ion batteries, chips and sophisticated displays between Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, US, and China.⁹ While the R&D lies with the US, UK, Japan and Taiwan, China leads in fabrication and assembly, as well in providing crucial raw material. With investments from the Quad, India can develop its own base of rare-earths and even collaborate on developing technologies that rely less on these critical minerals.

The first-ever in-person meeting of Quad Leaders in Washington D.C. on 24 September is an opportune time for India to table its own supply chain resilience agenda for the grouping.

A Quad 2.0 Agenda for Critical and Emerging Technologies

Trisha Ray

The Quad, once thought to belong to the graveyard of international relations, is witnessing a Renaissance, with critical and emerging technologies as its keystone. Its resurgence was underscored by the first Quad Summit in March 2021, where the Quad Critical and Emerging Technology Working was established by the member states.¹

While countering Chinese influence in technology spheres—ranging from rare earths to undersea cable—remains a prominent part of the Quad’s narrative, it will also now want to shed this “limited purpose” image, especially as it increasingly seeks to weave itself into the current web of architectures in the region, not least the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). In doing so, the Quad must also find the balance between its hard security-oriented goals and its larger role as an enabler of digital economies, and

shaper of technology flows and regimes in the Indo-Pacific, the latter of which holds greater resonance for India and the other countries in the region.

From the Ashes, a New Quad

Where Quad 1.0 suffered from misaligned interests, changes in leadership, and divergent views on the Indo-Pacific,² Quad 2.0 is a product of opportune timing and an unprecedented convergence of interests. This convergence was punctuated by China’s increasingly aggressive actions along and beyond its maritime and land borders, as well as in cyberspace. Eventually, even the benefits of economic relations with China could not stem the deterioration of security relations.

By 2018-19, emergent narratives in the capitals of all four Quad states centred on technology supremacy and self-reliance, as well as potential threats emanating from over-reliance on technology vendors subject to an increasingly belligerent Beijing.³

The Quad's alignment on critical and emerging tech issues is epitomised in the realm of 5G. Australia banned 'high-risk vendors', implicitly Huawei and ZTE, from its 5G rollout in August 2018, followed in December the same year by Japan, a series of Executive Orders from the White House in 2019, and lastly India's soft ban in 2020.⁴ While each Quad state's decision on Chinese vendors followed their own trajectory and triggers—whether border clashes or foreign interference in domestic politics—the Quad has now reached a broad consensus on the need for trusted vendors, as well as global standards underpinned by democratic values. The next challenge for the Quad, however, is to outline what “trusted” means in this context, beyond measures targeting China.

Upward and Onward to the Next Summit

At present, the main mechanism for technology cooperation in the Quad is the Critical and Emerging Technology Working Group (or the Quad Working Group) established in March 2021. The Working Group announcement highlighted three broad areas for collaboration: 1) Telecommunications; 2) Principles on technology development, design, and deployment; and 3) Collaboration between national standards bodies. There also exists a Track 2 initiative, supported by Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, called the Quad Tech Network, which promotes research and public dialogue on technology issues, focusing on the Indo-Pacific.⁵

There are several areas ripe for collaboration within the group, including a) Trusted and resilient supply chains for critical minerals, semiconductors, telecommunications equipment and undersea cables; b) Inclusive Digital Transformation, including future skills, cybersecurity capacity, APIs; and c) Global governance of technologies, including in data governance, cyber norms, and 5G standards.⁶

Collaboration on secure 5G technologies appears to be the most active of these areas, as evidenced by the establishment of a 5G subgroup under the Working Group, as well as the convening of the Quad Open RAN Forum in July 2021.⁷ There is also talk that the Quad will announce steps toward collaboration on semiconductor supply chains.⁸

That said, a few issues are likely to loom large over India's engagement with the September 2021 summit. The first is AUKUS—the Australia, UK, US partnership on technology and security—announced a mere week before the summit.⁹ The new arrangement is significant not because of the diplomatic fallout with a key ally—i.e., France—but because it is a stark reminder to India of the invisible fence around the US and its treaty partners. While Indo-US relations have come a long way since the Cold War lows, and India now has a strategic partnership with the US, Japan, and Australia, deeper security cooperation will be limited by the absence of a treaty-level arrangement, as well as friction over India's close ties with Russia.¹⁰

Another pressure point is India's 5Gi standards, which—while part of India's vision for connectivity for all—would isolate India's 5G ecosystem from the standards dictating 5G markets elsewhere.¹¹

Consequently, this development would put a dampener on any ambitions for a homegrown Indian 5G vendor or service provider to become a globally-competitive alternative to the “big five”.^a 5Gi is also symptomatic of the larger struggle in New Delhi to strike a balance between *aatmanirbharta* (self-sufficiency) and India's ambitions to be a consequential actor in the shaping of global technology norms and regimes.

Finally, the Quad must keep up with the evolution of the Indo-Pacific construct. The “Indo-Pacific” has matured beyond its maritime security roots: it captures the varied interpretations of countries within and outside its geographic bounds and now encapsulates issues including sustainable development, trade, infrastructure, and inclusive digital transformation. Key to this shift is the transformation of the Indo-Pacific as a term synonymous with the Quad, to a larger ecosystem that the Quad is simply a part of.

a The term refers to the major 5G vendors: Ericsson, Nokia, Huawei, Samsung and NEC.

“The Quad must keep up with the evolution of the Indo-Pacific construct; today it encapsulates issues beyond the maritime: sustainable development, trade, and inclusive digital transformation.”

This sentiment was made clear in the March 2021 Quad Leaders' Joint Statement on “The Spirit of the Quad”:¹²

Together, we commit to promoting a free, open rules-based order, rooted in international law to advance security and prosperity and counter threats to both in the Indo-Pacific and beyond... We reaffirm our strong support for ASEAN's unity and centrality as well as the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific. Full of potential,

the Quad looks forward to the future; it seeks to uphold peace and prosperity and strengthen democratic resilience, based on universal values.

For the Quad to eventually outgrow its roots in conflict, it will need to promote an emerging technology agenda that will outlast any elected government as well as short-term trends, focused not just on exclusion but on raising the overall security, resilience and vibrancy of technology supply chains and ecosystems.

Climate Action and the Quad

Aparna Roy

Climate change is one of the most anticipated issues on the agenda of the upcoming first-ever in-person meeting of the Quad scheduled to be held on 24 September.¹ A White House media release indicated that amidst the global dangers confronting the planet's future, including the crisis in Afghanistan and the COVID-19 pandemic—India, Australia, Japan, and the United States are expected to discuss ways by which they can deepen ties on another looming global danger – the climate crisis.²

With the global narrative on climate action fast gaining pace in the run-up to the Glasgow COP 26 Event in November 2021,³ there is a need to streamline, strengthen and enhance climate actions globally. The Quad countries cover a critical regional arc encompassing the United States in the Pacific, India and Japan in South Asia and Southeast Asia, and Australia. All four countries are home to many important regions that are suffering the manifold impacts of cascading climate crises. For each of these countries, global warming poses multiple fronts for

action and change. As an important grouping of states that are home to a quarter of the world's population and roughly 35 percent of the world's GDP,⁴ the Quad can prove to be a torch-bearer for the global climate agenda.

To this effect, during the first Quad meeting held virtually in March this year, the nations declared the establishment of the Climate Working Group (CWG) to promote cooperation on climate mitigation, adaptation, resilience, technology, capacity building and climate finance to align domestic, regional and global actions for the implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. While it is too early to assess the performance of the Quad CWG or the members of the CWG, it has been noted that the Quad's commitments for climate change are mostly general statements that appear to recognise that the four powers have different stakes in this particular global agenda.⁵

To begin with, there are crucial issues within the Quad countries that need to be addressed in order to ensure joint climate action. For instance, while the US and Japan have pledged to achieving net-zero emission status by mid-21st century, India and Australia have chosen to not announce any concrete net-zero targets yet. As India is being acclaimed as one of the nations that are aggressively pursuing the climate agenda, Australia, Japan and the US have not displayed comparable effort. According to the Climate Change Performance Index released by Germanwatch, the New Climate Institute and the Climate Action Network in 2021, India was ranked 10th, while its Quad partners are many slots below: Japan at 45th and Australia at 54th, and the US ranking last in a list of 61 countries.⁶

Before deliberating the ways to address such issues and streamline climate action within and beyond the Quad region, it is worthwhile to note the historical context in which this forum was originally established.

The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad)⁷ was born following the tsunami crisis in 2004, turning into a diplomatic dialogue in 2007, and

revived in 2017, as a space to jointly cooperate for safeguarding the security and other interests of the Indo-Pacific region. On 12 March 2021, the first-ever leader-level summit of the Quad was convened virtually among the heads of the four states.⁸ The leaders pledged to strengthen cooperation to address the defining current challenges facing their people and committed to a shared vision for an Indo-Pacific region that is free, open, resilient and inclusive, rooted in international law to advance security and prosperity, whilst countering threats to Indo-Pacific and beyond.⁹ A joint statement¹⁰ identified and outlined three urgent global challenges: the economic and health impacts of COVID-19, and vaccine development as a response; climate change; and future technologies. In pursuit of these challenges, working groups were formed.¹¹ Inching closer towards the end of 2021, the leaders are meeting in person for the first time on 24 September 2021, with a focus on deepening ties and advancing practical cooperation on the main areas identified above, including the climate crisis.¹²

In this context, as the Quad comes of age¹³ and is being touted as an important pillar of stability, essential questions are being raised: What are the Quad's tangible measures in helping regional countries to reduce emissions as part of their commitments under the Paris agreement? How does the Quad envisage addressing climate change outside the ambit of other existing international platforms?

Foremost, the Quad needs to acknowledge, in letter and in spirit, the essence of the principle declared in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change: that of “common but differentiated responsibilities”. With a stark carbon inequality between the developed and developing nations, making this principle a largely accepted norm is of utmost importance in charting a collective path for action. It would be unjust, for example, to demand that India—which emits less than 1.9 Mt CO₂ emissions¹⁴ per capita, or Japan—with 9.7 Mt¹⁵ CO₂ emissions per capita, to undertake the proportional costs associated with climate actions with nations like the US and its over 15.52 Mt CO₂¹⁶ emissions per capita or Australia, with 17.1 Mt CO₂.¹⁷ The Quad needs to reaffirm its collective belief in the principles of equity and inclusivity in the pursuit of climate goals.

Second, given the multifaceted manifestations of climate change in almost all development sectors, instead of looking at climate challenges *in silos*, the Climate Working Group must collaborate with other working groups such as the vaccines experts group or the critical and emerging technologies working group to implement climate action in a holistic manner. For instance, the cold chain plays an essential role in vaccine transportation and storage. It is important to explore ways of greening the cold chain infrastructure as it is estimated to contribute 3-3.5 percent of greenhouse gas emissions.¹⁸ Such cross-sectoral partnerships will prove beneficial in mitigating the carbon emissions associated with the cold storage value-chain and the life-cycle of vaccines. Additionally, knowledge sharing, technology transfer and responsible trade practices in emerging technologies, particularly green technologies, is a critical linkage binding the Quad working groups in generating valuable outcomes.

“First, the Quad needs to acknowledge, in letter and in spirit, the principle declared in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change: “common but differentiated responsibilities”.”

Third, the Quad needs to reconfigure its global perception as a group that is focused on military cooperation in order to tackle the problem of climate change at a truly global scale. By adopting a similar approach as it has in dealing with the global community on issues such as the territorial disputes in South China Sea and maritime security, the Quad needs to portray its commitment towards dealing with global threats like climate change in a united way. Even China, widely considered as the motivation for the revival of the group, has announced its climate commitments towards achieving net-zero targets by 2060.¹⁹ Thus, climate action can be a low-hanging fruit that will unite the fragile and scattered global actors against the common existential dangers of climate change.

Finally, the Quad should endeavour to translate the attributes of democracy to measurable action on the climate front. The group can serve as a model for institutionalising and delivering on a ‘just-transition framework’ while planning and undertaking measures for climate mitigation and adaptation. The Quad is best placed to conduct joint research, collaborate on sharing knowledge, and demonstrate its capacity to put people and justice at the core of its climate agenda. Various developments in this regard have been taken up domestically by the US and India: the US’s Just Transition Fund and India’s Just Transition Centre at iFOREST, for example, can serve as an apt entry point for institutionalising the just-transition approach across the Quad, the Indo-Pacific, and the world.

Hence the Quad, which encapsulates ‘stability’ as an attribute, can capitalise on the core essence of ‘democracy’ to further the vision and action related to the climate agenda. It is time that a truly comprehensive, inclusive and fair approach to regional cooperation is adopted in climate action.

The Quad's Counterterrorism Priorities

Kabir Taneja

The Quad's first in-person meet in late September, to be hosted by US President Joe Biden in Washington D.C., comes only weeks after the end of the two-decade-long war in Afghanistan and the fall of Kabul to the Taliban. The return of the Taliban has redefined the American 'war on terror', and new questions are being raised over counterterrorism policies and aims in the post-9/11 era. For the US, the movement from "war on terror" to "over the horizon" counterterror design is a forced shift in thinking with a blueprint that is yet to be formulated.

From the perspective of the Quad, counterterrorism is being highlighted as one of the main areas of cooperation for the grouping.¹ However, the design of such cooperation that the Quad can commit to on this arena remains loosely defined. Since the Quad started to debate matters of regional and global security, largely through the lens of the Indo-Pacific region, discussions from the perspective of counterterrorism have largely

been strategic in nature rather than tactical. The Quad members have all suffered terrorism in recent times. For example, Japanese journalist Mika Yamamoto was killed in Syria in 2015, and some years later, long-time social worker and doctor in Afghanistan, Tetsu Nakamura, was shot dead by unknown gunmen in 2019 in the city of Jalalabad.²

While counterterrorism has regularly featured in statements and communications released in and around talks held by Quad leaders, little has materialised. In November 2019, India's National Investigation Agency (NIA) hosted the first counterterrorism table-top exercise (CT-TTX) for Quad members.³ The purpose of the CT-TTX was to familiarise the new multilateral forum to the issue of terrorism.

It also aimed to discuss the building of an ecosystem based on an increased sense of partnership, comradeship and cooperation that could be institutionalised into mechanisms of formalised sharing of information on suspected groups and individuals, funding, and an increasingly challenging space of online radicalisation and recruitment, amongst other avenues for counterterrorism and countering violent extremism.

Direct counterterrorism cooperation between the Quad members without a framework of an alliance, however, poses roadblocks on issues such as sharing of intelligence (which is different from information). While there has been an increase in intelligence cooperation between India and the US on a bilateral level, a wider intelligence-sharing network amongst the Quad grouping is not in the near horizon. This needs to be prioritised, as the role of intelligence-sharing in counterterror architectures is fundamental. India, despite its own military and intelligence capabilities not measuring up to its massive strategic challenges on its border regions, could lead the charge for increased intelligence cooperation in the Quad, specifically after the eruption of India-China tensions in the Ladakh region in May 2020. However, commitments on this front from Tokyo and Canberra may be subject to their own bilateral strains with Beijing from a regional point of view rather than a multilateral one.⁴

Overall, counterterrorism cooperation could be achievable for the Quad; it could also serve to make the forum more cohesive. Strategically, rather than militarily, cooperation on this issue in geographies such as Southeast Asia and South Asia can offer a regional aim rather than one bound by a geographic vision of the Indo-Pacific and common threat perceptions. For the same, operationally, a point of convergence might be the development of commonly funded forums and agencies working against extremism and terrorism in peripheral geographies in and around the Indo-Pacific. This could be done by engaging civil society, universities, law enforcement agencies, and technology ecosystems to push back against extremist ideologies.

“A wide intelligence-sharing network amongst the Quad grouping needs to be prioritised, as the role of intelligence-sharing in counterterror architectures is fundamental.”

For example, a Quad-led ecosystem that will bring together countries such as Bangladesh, Maldives, Sri Lanka and Nepal for deliberations on best-practices in countering violent extremism and debating regulation of online spaces to create counter-narratives against terror groups would not require military programs or assets in the Indo-Pacific region. It would also be a way for the Quad to engage with other states as part of its formulation. From the point of view of government agencies, exercises such as CT-TTX can also be expanded to include observer states and agencies to participate on a rotational basis covering countries belonging to the Indo-Pacific geography.⁵

The NIA's hosting of the CT-TTX showed New Delhi's appetite to take a leading role in pushing the counterterror narrative within the Quad grouping. While these initial steps may have been temporarily stalled by the COVID-19 pandemic, India's growing call for stronger counterterror approaches across multilateral forums—such as the United Nations Security Council⁶ and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization—will spill over into the Quad as well.⁷

To be sure, some analysts question whether counter-terror cooperation has any space within a multilateral formulation that largely targets China's

rise in Asia and beyond. However, caging the Quad within geographic binaries is untenable beyond a point. Indeed, the US has highlighted its exit from Afghanistan as a recalibration of its strategy to manage newer threats in Asia (namely, China), and the collapse of Afghanistan and rise of the Taliban in that country is increasingly aided by a potentially strong Chinese support. If European states are declaring their respective Indo-Pacific policies, there are no viable reasons to limit counterterror cooperation within Quad frameworks only to the waters of the Indo-Pacific region. President Biden has said, “We’re engaged in a serious competition with China. There’s nothing China or Russia would rather have than the US to be bogged down another decade in Afghanistan.”⁸

Counterterrorism may not be among the primary tactical aims of the Quad. However, the Quad can still provide a strategic vision around counterterrorism, given how it has become a global priority. With India being pivotal to the Quad's future, counterterrorism will likely get a significant push as an issue to be tackled from the political, strategic, and tactical fronts. ORF

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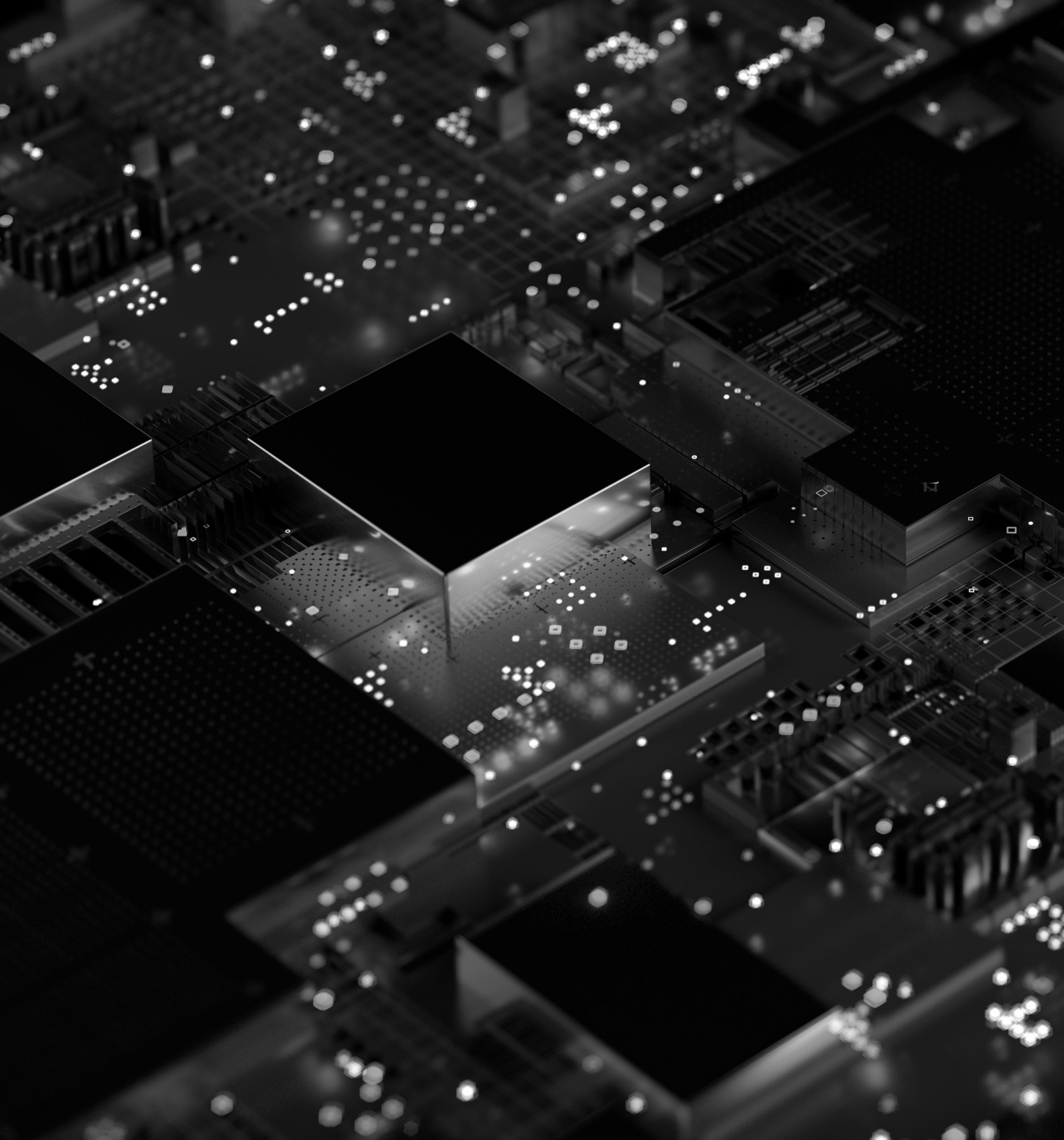
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