



Japan and the Development of Quadrilateral Cooperation

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Introduction

The Australia-India-Japan-United States consultation group, the so-called “Quad,” has been one of the most important multilateral frameworks that Japan has engaged since the early 2000s.¹ In fact, as the US-China strategic competition intensifies, the Quad have been rapidly institutionalized as shown in two summit meetings that were held in March and September 2021 and instituted several working groups, focusing on potentially vital strategic fields, such as climate crisis, COVID-19, emerging and critical technologies, infrastructure, and cyber security. The Quad members also reached out to other states for policy coordination in a specific issue area as shown in two COVID-19 with external states, including New Zealand, Vietnam, Brazil, Israel and South Korea, the so-called “Quad-Plus.”²

Nevertheless, the institutionalization processes of the Quad have never been straight forward. The very origin of the grouping derives from the “core group,” by which four democratic states—Australia, India, Japan, and the United States—coordinated their humanitarian assistance/ disaster relief (HA/DR) operations in the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami. As the military coordination was successful, the four states considered a possibility of establishing the quadrilateral dialogue in 2007. However, this was not realized because of the differing security interests and perspectives among the four (Madan, 2017). Later in 2017, when China was seen as more capable and assertive in the new geographical concept, Indo-Pacific, the Quad was quietly revived as the so-called “Quad 2.0.” However, because of the previous institutional fall-out, the member states’ diverging geographical location stretching from the Eastern Pacific to Oceania to East Asia to South Asia, and their different strategic perceptions, analysts and scholars were significantly divided in evaluating Quad 2.0. In fact, some were positive on its prospect, and others were quite uncertain about its future, skeptical about its military functionalities, or even assumed its long-term unsustainability (Panda, 2017; Joshi, 2017; Choong, 2018; Grahan, 2018).

Despite these differing perspectives, the Quad has been rapidly institutionalized since the Biden administration was inaugurated in 2021. A more structured format and formally regularized meetings are essentially different from Quad 2.0, and it is now evolving into Quad 3.0. In this context, certain questions arise—how has Japan’s policy toward the Quad evolved over time? Has Japan’s strategic posture toward the Quad fluctuated since the idea of the grouping emerged? What strategic role did and will Japan play in further institutionalizing the Quad?

I argue that Japan under the first and second Abe administration in 2006-2007 and 2012-2020 played a pivotal leading role in creating and institutionalizing the Quad while Japan took a more supportive role in the post-Abe administrations because of a plethora of immediate domestic issues, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic confusion, the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, and leadership transitions. However, there are still unique roles that Japan can play in furthering the Quad, such as configuring its institutional relations with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

This paper is structured into four parts. First, I will discuss the origin and the development of the Quad from 2004 to 2007, and second, I will examine the relationship between Japan's FOIP strategy and Quad 2.0 from 2016. Third, I will analyze the rapid institutionalization of the Quad from 2020—Quad 3.0—and Japan's evolving role in the Quad. Lastly, I will provide the future prospects of Japan's policy toward the Quad and challenges that Japan and the Quad member states need to tackle.

Origin and Collapse of Quad 1.0

The prototype of the Quad was born in 2004, when Japan, the United States, Australia and India as the “core group” coordinated their HA/DR operations in the Indian Ocean Earthquake and Tsunami (Huxley, 2005: 124). At this point, there were strong strategic linkages between Japan and the United States and between Australia and the United States as they were long-standing treaty allies. However, their relations with India were relatively weak because India was not a US ally and maintained strategic autonomy. Furthermore, as India conducted nuclear tests in 1998, the international community, including Japan, the United States, and Australia, condemned such an act, and even Japan and the United States imposed economic sanctions on India. From the early 2000s, their relationships gradually improved on the basis of their interests to strengthen economic cooperation, yet such improvement was still at the initial stage. As a result, the core group did not have a strong strategic traction and remained ad-hoc, and thus disbanded after the HA/DR cooperation.³

However, Japan began to see potential strategic ties with these four states in shaping the regional balance of power in a broader Asia in the future. Indeed, while Japan was nurturing a political and security partnership with Australia and enhancing the US-Japan alliance, Japan began to show its growing interest in strengthening ties with India from the early 2000s because Japan and India shared democratic values, did not have historical antagonism, and started to strengthen bilateral ties (Abe, 2021: 95-96). These strategic maneuvers were conducted in the context of China's increasing economic and military capabilities in East Asia and the deterioration of Japan-China relations.

To be sure, Japan and China strengthened their diplomatic ties after 1997, when the Asian Financial Crisis caused serious economic and political turbulence in the region. At first through ASEAN+3 (Japan, China, South Korea), and then through the East Asia Summit and the Japan-China-South Korea trilateral framework, the line of communication was ensured, and their socio-economic cooperation was actively proposed. However, the bilateral tie was constantly strained by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's annual visits to *Yasukuni* Shrine from 2001 to 2006, resulting in massive anti-Japanese demonstrations in China. Also, China's maritime activities in the disputed East China Sea maritime borders became more visible as China conducted fait accompli natural resource extraction from 2004 (MOFA, 2006: 43). Japan became more concerned about China's future behavior, and it started to check and balance China's behavior (Koga, 2018).

It is in this context that Japan made significant strategic steps to formulate the Quad in 2006-2007. While Japan maintained the traditional line of the Japanese foreign policy strategy—upholding and strengthening the US-Japan alliance—Prime Minister Abe sought for the creation of a democratic coalition, expressing his desire to facilitate democratization in a broader Asia and conduct strategic dialogues at the summit level with those who shared the fundamental rights, particularly Australia and India.⁴ This proposal was soon followed up by Foreign Minister Taro Aso who launched his foreign policy vision, the “Arc of Freedom and Prosperity” in November 2006, to nurture the democratic coalition and spread market economy in the geographic areas between Japan and Europe.⁵ On the other hand, Japan's trilateral relations with the United States and Australia had been already enhanced by upgrading the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD) to the ministerial level in March 2016, and bilaterally, Japan and Australia strengthened its security ties by issuing the “Japan-Australia Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation” in March 2007, although its security focus was primarily on non-traditional security issues (U.S. Department of State, 2006). In addition, Abe made a historic speech at the Indian Parliament in August 2007, “Confluence of the Two Seas,” which aimed to strengthen its strategic ties with India as Japan's democratic and strategic partners located in the Indian Ocean and to create a strategic network with the United States and Australia.⁶

With a new strategic vision and the developments of Japan's bilate-

ral and trilateral cooperation with the United States, Australia, and India, the Abe administration pushed forward the establishment of QSD (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue)—Quad 1.0. In February 2007, when Vice President Dick Cheney made a visit to Japan, Abe discussed the enhancement of the Japan-Australia-US relations and expressed his desire to organize the Quadrilateral Dialogue by inviting India.⁷ Cheney agreed and discussed the idea with Australian Prime Minister John Howard bilaterally, and Howard agreed with the idea in principle although he also showed cautiousness to realize such an idea (Smith, 2020). Consequently, while all the four members did not necessarily share the same perception, Japan and the United States gave a diplomatic traction to consolidate strategic cooperation among the four states.

This steady cooperation culminated in the actual Quad cooperation in 2007. In May, assistant-secretary-level officials from Japan, Australia, India, and the United States met at the ASEAN regional forum (ARF) in Manila (Chellaney, 2020). The meeting was “exploratory” and informal without any pre-set agendas, but this was seen as the very first step for developing the Quad framework (Smith, 2020: 4). While the US-India annual joint military exercise in April, Malabar, invited Japan for the first time and conducted a joint military exercise in the Western Pacific, in September 2007, another Malabar exercise, Malabar-2007-2, expanded its participation by including Japan, Australia, and Singapore, and thus brought the Quad member-states together militarily for the first time (Panda, 2020; Shrikhane, 2020).

However, this diplomatic momentum was suddenly lost in 2008 mainly because of China’s concerns about the grouping and the change in Australia’s leadership. After the Quad meeting at the sideline of the ARF in 2007, China quickly responded by sending a “demarche” to Japan, the United States, Australia and India to understand the purpose of the Quad, showing its concern about the Quad’s potential encirclement of China (Varadarajan, 2007). Although this action did not take immediate effect, China’s concern was registered in the four states’ diplomatic calculation. In December 2007, when Kevin Rudd assumed prime ministership in Australia, he perceived Japan’s ambition to counter China and took China’s concern seriously, resulting in Australia’s decision in 2008 to disengage from the Quad activities.⁸ Since there was also implicit diplomatic hesitation in the United States and India in the rapid institutionalization of the Quad, and

since Japan faced a sudden resignation of Abe who took the leading role, the Quad idea was dissipated in 2008 (Madan, 2020). Instead, the four states continued to pursue the enhancement of bilateral and trilateral cooperation.

Emergence of Japan's FOIP and Quad 2.0

After the demise of Quad 1.0, the idea of such a grouping was put on the backburner in Japan's foreign policy agendas until 2012. This is mostly caused by the frequent leadership changes from 2006 to 2012, when Japan had six prime ministers, namely Abe Shinzo, Fukuda Yasuo, Aso Taro, Hatoyama Yukio, Kan Naoto, and Noda Yoshihiko. During this period, each prime minister could spend only one year which was too short to implement their own diplomatic vision, such as Hatoyama's "East Asian community." Furthermore, Japan experienced a devastating natural disaster in March 2011, the Great East Japan Earthquake, causing nuclear crises by the collapse of the nuclear plants in Fukushima, which made Japan preoccupied with its domestic disaster relief.

That said, the idea of Quad re emerged after Abe regained prime ministership in December 2012. Just before his inauguration, Abe published the op-ed, "Asia's Democratic Security Diamond," expressing his long-standing political desire to formulate a coalition of Japan-India-Australia-the United States in the Indo-Pacific in order to counter China's assertive behavior in the maritime domain and to ensure the freedom of navigation and overflight (Abe, 2012). By 2012, Southeast Asian states faced China's growing maritime presence in the South China Sea, and Japan struggled for managing China's increasingly assertive behavior near the Senkaku Islands, which China also claimed as its own. This was illustrated by the 2010 maritime clash between Japanese coastguard ships and a Chinese fishery boat as well as the 2012 bilateral disputes after Japan's "nationalization" of the Senakaus—transferring the ownership of three islands from a private owner to the Japanese government (Koga, 2016). This strategic development in East Asia propelled Abe to advocate once again the formulation of the quadrilateral strategic cooperation.

To be sure, Abe's op-ed was written when his political party, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), was not in power, and thus Abe had certain freedom to frankly express his strategic ambition. However, after Abe became prime minister, he did not immediately advocate for the establishment of the Quad. Rather, he concentrated on strengthening bilateral and trilateral ties with the United States, Australia, and India, so that Japan could nurture a possibility of multilateralizing those strategic networks in the future. Also, such cautiousness derived from the experience of Quad 1.0 failure, which was caused by a rapid institutionalization without reaching consensus on the general direction of the quadrilateral cooperation.

Four years after the Abe administration was inaugurated, the strategic environment in East Asia changed significantly. The Japanese government was more concerned about China's continued assertive behavior, and particularly two international events alarmed Japan that were seen as China's explicit challenge against the existing international order (Kogan 2019; 2020). One is the growing influence of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Given BRI's less socio-economic conditionalities for development assistance, regional states in the Indo-Pacific region, including Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Maldives, were attracted by this initiative. Since China's development standards were not always matched with international ones that considered such factors as environmental protection, financial sustainability, and labor right, this raised international concerns. For Japan, the wake-up call was its bid for the Jakarta-Bandung highspeed railway that was lost by China in 2015.⁹ The other is China's growing maritime assertiveness. Given that China's encroachment continued as indicated in the 2012 Scarborough Incident that China effectively controlled the shoal by expelling the Philippines, the Philippines filed its South China Sea case to the arbitration tribunal under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in 2013. Eventually, the arbitral award came out in 2016 that overwhelmingly favored the Philippines' claims. However, China continuously refused to recognize this award, and this was seen by Japan as a clear challenge against the existing international rules and norms.¹⁰

In this context, Japan launched its "Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy" in 2016. The concept was explained by Abe's speech at the Sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development, TICAD, in

Kenya.¹¹ The speech envisioned the important economic and security connectivity between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean as well as between Asia and Africa. Given the economic potential of Africa and Asia's economic and political success, Abe considered that the Asia-Africa connection should be enhanced. To realize such a connectivity, he emphasized the importance of the Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs), the rule of law, freedom, the market economy, prosperity, and the non-use of force or coercion. Although Abe himself did not use the term, the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific," this statement has become the very basis of Japan's FOIP concept.

The primary objective of Japan's FOIP is to maintain and enhance a rules-based international order in the Indo-Pacific region on the basis of the existing international order. This existing order was largely constructed by the United States post-World War II, and Japan considered that the order had strategically and economically benefited post-war Japan as it gave Japan economic prosperity and strategic stability in Northeast Asia. This strategic view has also persisted since the post-Cold War era when the United States became the sole superpower, yet for Japanese eyes, the rise of China was the precarious factor to destabilize such an order. In this sense, Japan began to express its strategic concern more clearly over China, and in the FOIP concept, it emphasized the importance of cooperation with regional states, particularly the United States, Australia, and India.¹²

Initially, Japan's FOIP concept laid out vague principles and did not contain specific policy objectives and the means to achieve them.¹³ Today, Japan clarifies the concept by presenting its three-pillars, namely (1) "promotion and establishment of the rule of law, freedom of navigation, free trade, etc.," (2) "pursuit of economic prosperity (improving connectivity and strengthening economic partnership including EPA/FTAs and investment treaties," and (3) "commitment for peace and stability (capacity building on maritime law enforcement, HA/DR cooperation, etc.)."¹⁴ However, these principles became only after the summit meeting in November 2017 that Japan and the United States laid out the principles of the FOIP vision.

At the 2017 bilateral summit meeting, Japan and the United States agreed on three principles in pursuing the FOIP, 1) "Promotion and establishment of fundamental values (rule of law, freedom of

navigation, etc)”; 2) “Pursuit of economic prosperity (improvement of connectivity, etc)”; and 3) Commitment for peace and stability (capacity building on maritime law enforcement, etc).¹⁵ Both also highlighted that the FOIP did not exclude any state which shared the same vision, but this also inferred that they would be unwilling to, or at least hesitant to cooperate with those who disagreed with the principles (Koga, 2021: 97). Soon after this bilateral dialogue, senior officials from Japan, Australia, India and the United States met in the Philippines on November 12, focusing on means to maintain a free and open order in the Indo-Pacific region, which was considered the resurrection of the Quad—Quad 2.0.¹⁶

Obviously, the initial reactions from the Quad states were not necessarily congruent, which required further policy coordination by understanding member states’ strategic position of the day. For example, in the very first meeting of Quad 2.0, Japan, the United States and Australia agreed to maintain “the rules-based order” in the Indo-Pacific region, but India was cautious about the notion, emphasizing the importance of realizing and shaping “a free, open, prosperous and *inclusive* Indo-Pacific region” in the future.¹⁷ Also, Japan, the United States and Australia explicitly expressed their willingness to continue the quadrilateral dialogue, while India was silent about its format and continuity. Additionally, the term, “Free and Open Indo-Pacific,” were shared between the United States and Japan, yet Australia and India did not use the same terminology. Some of these differences such as the terminology relating to the Indo-Pacific principles were relatively easy to be coordinated, but others such as the quadrilateral military cooperation required more time for further coordination.

In this sense, while Quad 2.0 had a potential to be a core minilateral framework in the Indo-Pacific region for the member states, its future was not yet certain because the meeting essentially remained on an ad-hoc basis. Therefore, there was always a possibility that some member would defect because of the divergence in the member-states’ national interests.

From Quad 2.0 to Quad 3.0

The Quad's institutional development has accelerated since 2020, moving from a mere ad-hoc consultation meeting to a more structured, institutionalized grouping. This indicates that the Quad has evolved from Quad 2.0 to Quad 3.0. There are three important characteristics that differentiate Quad 2.0 to Quad 3.0.

First, the Quad has become significantly structured and formalized. As indicated in Table 1, from 2017 to 2019, the meetings were held back-to-back with other regional forums, such as EAS and Shangri-La dialogue. In September 2019, the first Foreign Ministers' meeting was held back-to-back by the UN General Assembly, but it did not produce any joint statement. The meeting remained low-key as indicated by the fact that Australia and India even did not provide any meeting information in their foreign ministries' websites. However, despite its ad-hoc basis, the senior official meetings were regularly held from 2017, culminating in significant progress from 2020. The first progress was the status of diplomatic autonomy, by which the meeting started to be held independently. It is true that because of the emergence of the COVID-19, the main diplomatic interaction turned to online, but in October 2020, Japan hosted a face-to-face foreign ministers' meeting in Tokyo, and subsequently, the United States hosted the 2nd Quad summit in Washington, D.C. in September 2021. The second progress was the formal regularization of senior officials, foreign ministers, and summit meetings. While these meetings were held previously, they were on the ad-hoc basis. This ensured a regular interaction among the four members. The third progress was to issue joint statements. While the summit has been the only venue to produce such documents, this was unprecedented before 2021. In this sense, the steady institutionalization of the Quad has become more visible than before.

Table 1. Institutionalization of the Quad From 2017 to 2021

	Date	Venue	Level	Back-to-Back
1	Nov. 12, 2017	Philippines	Senior Official	East Asia Summit (SOM)
2	June 7, 2018	Singapore	Senior Official	Shangri-La Dialogue
3	Nov. 15, 2018	Singapore	Senior Official	East Asia Summit (SOM)
4	May 31, 2019	Thailand	Senior Official	East Asia Summit (SOM)
5	Sept. 26, 2019	The United States	Foreign Ministers	UN General Assembly
6	Nov. 4, 2019	Thailand	Senior Official	East Asia Summit (SOM)
7	Sept. 25, 2020	Virtual	Senior Official	-
8	Oct. 6, 2020	Japan	Foreign Ministers	Independent
9	Dec. 18, 2020	Virtual	Senior Official	-
10	Feb. 18, 2021	Virtual	Foreign Ministers	-
11	Mar. 12, 2021	Virtual	Summit	-
12	Aug. 12, 2021	Virtual	Senior Official	-
13	Sept. 24, 2020	Washington	Summit	Independent

(Compiled by the Author)

Second, the Quad has had more focused areas of cooperation among the four member states. In 2017, the Quad was only the consultation group, and no member had a clear idea whether the meeting would continue in the future. The meeting agenda was not clearly set, discussing broader strategic concepts, such as “free and open international order,” “free and open Indo-Pacific,” and “free open, prosperous and inclusive Indo-Pacific.”¹⁸ Also, while Japan, the United States, and Australia indicated their willingness to continue the discussion, India was still uncertain about the future of the Quad. From the second to the seventh meeting, the four members consolidated their understanding of “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” and emphasized the shared

principles, such as their supports for ASEAN centrality and unity, yet the issue areas that each emphasized differed, resulting in discussing a broad range of the issues such as development and connectivity, digital infrastructure, good governance, democratic values, maritime security, proliferation, supply chains and cyber security. However, the first summit in February 2021 began to clarify the Quad's focus by creating the three working groups, namely COVID-19 countermeasures, emerging and critical technology, and climate crisis. Even though the second summit in September expanded the areas of cooperation from three to seven areas, adding infrastructure, people-to-people exchange and education, cyber security, and space, their strategic foci have become much clearer.¹⁹

Third, the Quad has become a broader strategic grouping rather than a focused-military coalition. Given the fact that the Quad's origin stems from the core group in 2004, an ad hoc military cooperation in HA/DR, it was natural to observe how the member states would promote military cooperation. In fact, the India-US annual military exercise, Malabar, has evolved from the bilateral form to the trilateral in 2015 by formally including Japan. Although India rejected Australia's request several times, Australia started to participate from 2020 (Pant and Singh Mann, 2020). As the exercise includes anti-submarine warfare drills that are useful to check and deter external threats in the Indo-Pacific, its strategic implication became significant.²⁰ Nevertheless, this military cooperation exists in parallel with the Quad meetings, and there was no formal linkage between them although it would be possibly created in the future, depending on the strategic circumstance. Rather, the Quad's strategic objective has been evolving into rule-making and order-building in the Indo-Pacific. While the Quad members support the existing rules and norms that are recognized by the majority of states, such as the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), they also attempt to coordinate their policies in the emerging areas, such as digital infrastructure and environment, which require the creation of new rules.

With these three institutional developments, Quad 3.0 has assumed two important diplomatic functions—external signaling and internal coordination. On external signaling, the Quad can send a stronger diplomatic signal to the international community with its agenda-setting power in the Indo-Pacific region. This informal agenda-setting power

is attained because these four regional powers have sufficient material capabilities and diplomatic influence in shaping regional rules and norms. Obviously, since the Quad still has the political connotation of “anti-China,” not all regional states are willing to formally cooperate with the group (Koga, 2021a). However, as the so-called “Quad-Plus” meetings for the COVID-19 countermeasures were held in March and May 2020 by inviting external states, such as South Korea and Vietnam, some would likely participate for the betterment of policy coordination and rule-making in a particular issue area (Koga, 2022). As the Quad has focal issue areas now, the group can be a useful tool to lead the international discussion on rule-making and policy coordination with like-minded states.

On internal coordination, the Quad has become a useful forum for information sharing and policy coordination. The ad-hoc characteristics of Quad 2.0 were useful for information sharing and flexible arrangement, but it also faced a danger that a member would defect, which could result in institutional breakdown like Quad 1.0. However, the regularization of various levels of diplomatic interactions, including the summit level, ensures the institutional continuity and stable expectations. As such, the longer-term policy planning and coordination become possible, which goes beyond mere information sharing. Defense cooperation among the four members that have divergent national interests and strategic perspectives would be usually difficult, yet Quad 3.0 can make it possible to not only hold joint military exercises, such as Malabar, but also defense technology transfers.

With this rapid institutional evolution from 2020, the question then becomes why China was largely unsuccessful in driving a wedge between Japan, Australia, India, and the United States as it did in 2007. The simple answer was that the four have begun to share more similar threat perceptions toward China. The perception gap is a source for external actors to drive a wedge, and this was effectively applied in 2017, when China’s strong concerns about Quad 1.0 divided the Quad members. Indeed, China seemingly expected this gap as Foreign Minister Wang Yi in 2018 dismissed the grouping as one of the “headline-grabbing ideas” that “may get some attention, but soon will dissipate.”²¹ When the Quad did not disappear, China turned to raise its serious concerns and rebuked it as US attempts to establish an “Indo-Pacific NATO” that would destabilize regional security.²²

Nevertheless, the institutional breakdown did not occur in 2020 as each of the Quad members has perceived more acute threats from China. Japan has been concerned about China's fait accompli strategy to conduct "unilateral development of natural resources" in the East China Sea and steadily increase its maritime presence near the Senkaku Islands.²³ India more frequently faced land border disputes as illustrated by the military standoff at a disputed border in Doklam with China in 2017 and military skirmishes in Ladakh in 2020 and 2021 (Panda, 2017; Anbarasan, 2021). Australia has begun to shift its strategic posture to balance against China particularly since 2017, when Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull raised the issue of China's foreign interference, resulting in the adoption of foreign interference laws in 2018 while tightening its strategic ties with the United States (Kassam, 2020). The United States under the Trump administration explicitly declared its firmer stance against China defined as a revisionist power in the 2017 National Security Strategy and conducted tough measures on China's economic practices and technological policies from 2018, the so-called "trade war" and "tech war."²⁴

Further, China's assertive behavior continued in the Indo-Pacific region. Most notably, its behavior in the South China Sea alarmed East Asian states. Admittedly, after China explicitly rejected the 2016 South China Sea Arbitral Award, China became more eager to mitigate the tensions with the other claimant states and ASEAN and showed its willingness to conclude a Code of Conduct in the South China Sea while facilitating bilateral negotiations over its territorial disputes. However, after the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic that made regional states preoccupied with its countermeasures in the South China Sea, China continued to send energy exploration survey ships and conducted large-scale military exercises, which alarmed regional states more acutely (Storey, 2020). With China's increasing military and economic capabilities and diplomatic influence in the region through such strategic visions as the BRI, these Chinese actions made its assertive behavior in the Indo-Pacific more threatening and made its general threat more credible. This is the critical trigger that the Quad has elevated into a more institutionalized form, Quad 3.0.

Japan and Quad 3.0

By 2021, the Quad has become an indispensable tool to realize its FOIP vision. Japan aims to shape a rules-based regional order in the Indo-Pacific through supporting Quad's institutional development, facilitating policy coordination among the member states, and exploring areas of cooperation with the member states and beyond. At the same time, as the Quad evolved, Japan's diplomatic role toward the Quad also changed. Unlike Abe's strong political desire to create the Quad, Japan's diplomatic enthusiasm toward the Quad gradually dissipates. While this does not mean that Japan's strategic posture has changed, Japan's leadership role in the Quad is not as visible as it used to be. There are mainly three reasons for this.

First, Japan's diplomacy toward China slightly shifted from 2018 to 2019. While the United States began to put more diplomatic and economic pressure on China from 2017, Japan maintained the possibility of re-engagement with China. This diplomatic maneuver was alluded to by Abe's 2017 speech at the International Conference on the Future of Asia, stating a possibility of cooperation with China in the field of infrastructure development under the condition of openness, transparent and fair procurement, economic viability, and financial soundness.²⁵ The potential collaboration under these four conditions were repeatedly emphasized by Japan, resulting in the bilateral summit meetings between Abe and Premier Li Keqiang and between Abe and President Xi Jinping in May and October 2018 as well as the conclusion of the "G20 Principles for Quality Infrastructure Investment" in July 2019 which China also agreed with.²⁶ As China agreed with Japan's infrastructure conditions in principle, Japan was ready to engage China and planned to hold a bilateral summit in April 2020, which was indefinitely postponed because of the COVID-19 pandemic.²⁷ With the help of India's diplomatic posture to nurture cooperative atmosphere toward China around 2018 which was indicated in the China-India Summit at Wuhan and Chennai in 2018 and 2019, this positive prospect between Japan and China contributed to weakening Japan's incentive to fasten the institutionalization process of the Quad (Ramachandran, 2019).

Second, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted Japan's foreign policy activities. Facing the confused management of the cruise ship ca-

lling at Yokohama, *Diamond Princess*, which had COVID-infected passengers in January 2020 and produced 713 and at least 14 deaths, the Japanese government was not able to provide clear guidelines to counter COVID-19.²⁸ The Abe administration distributed cloth masks to the Japanese public, but it was significantly delayed, and by the time they were distributed, surgical masks were already commercially available.²⁹ In addition, increasing uncertainty about the 2020 Tokyo Olympics exacerbated the government's indecision, which affected the public support for the Abe administration.³⁰ Indeed, the disapproval rate increased from April 2020, shifting to over 45 percent, while the approval rate stagnated around 36 percent until Abe's resignation in September.³¹ Suga Yoshihide, who was Abe's Chief Cabinet Secretary, took over Japan's prime ministership, was also preoccupied with the COVID-19 and the Tokyo Olympics, while he did not have diplomatic experience and political capital to create proactive diplomatic agendas (Koga, 2021a). However, Suga miscalculated the public perception, particularly the perception toward a "go-to-travel" campaign that encouraged the Japanese for domestic travels to revitalize the economy because the number of infected increased significantly after the campaign. Eventually, the Suga administration faced the three COVID waves—December 2020-January 2021, April-June 2021, and August-September 2021, which created a negative image toward Suga.³² While the approval rate remained somewhat stable until April 2021, it significantly dropped from 44 percent in April 2021 to 29 percent in August 2021.³³ With these domestic problems, the Japanese leaders were unable to conduct proactive diplomacy.

Third, the United States has played a strong leadership role in institutionalizing the Quad. While Japan was trying to seek a possibility of engagement with China in 2018 and 2019, the United States emphasized the importance of the Quad in countering China. Under the Trump administration, State Secretary Mike Pompeo argued that "once [the four states have] institutionalized [the Quad], [the four] can begin to build out a true security framework" that could "counter the challenge that the Chinese Communist Party presents to [the four]." (Akita, 2020) This strategic enthusiasm was more or less carried over to the Biden administration, and in 2021, the United States organized two summits, formally regularized ministerial and summit meetings. Although the Biden administration does not actively emphasize the role

of the Quad in countering China, its vision to maintain and enhance the free and open Indo-Pacific comprehends defense from challenges posed by China.³⁴ In this context, Japan's role in institutionalizing the Quad became low key in comparison with its initial proactiveness to create a grouping in 2012.

With these three main factors, Japan has essentially conducted institutional bandwagoning, by which Japan facilitated the creation of the Quad and invited the United States and let the United States take a leading role in consolidating the group when it was ready to do so (Koga, 2018: 55). Although the international and domestic factors, such as Japan's own diplomatic posture toward China, its leadership transition because of the domestic confusion caused by COVID-19, and the intensification of the US-China strategic rivalry, led the United States to play a more active role, given the US diplomatic influence backed with superior military and economic capabilities, Japan's institutional bandwagoning was seen as a rational choice in stabilizing a regional balance of power in the Indo-Pacific.

Japan's new administration led by Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has indicated that Japan's policy priority is its domestic economic reform while emphasizing the importance of diplomacy and security policy under the FOIP vision in cooperation with like minded states, particularly the Quad members (Kishida, 2021). As such, Japan will likely actively support Quad 3.0. However, whether Japan can take an active role in further institutionalization of the Quad remains unclear as Kishida has yet to clarify his diplomatic vision on Japan's role in the Quad.

Conclusion: Future Challenges for Japan's Role in Quad 3.0

Japan has taken an active role in promoting Quad 1.0 in 2007 and pushed forward the idea of democratic coalition with Australia, India, and the United States to pursue its value-oriented diplomacy under the banner of the "Arc of Freedom and Prosperity." Although this initial idea was thwarted, Quad 2.0 emerged in 2017. The path for such resurrection was not straightforward, but Abe's strong desire to formulate the so-called "Democratic Security Diamond" and its creation of a

new diplomatic doctrine, FOIP, persuaded the United States to work together for nurturing the Quad framework. In Quad 3.0, Japan's role is not as strong as it used to be, but Japan has played a significant leading role in creating the Quad and still played an active supporter role for its institutionalization led by the United States.

So, has Japan done with its work and will continue to take only a supporting role for the Quad in the future? Japan may continue to do so, but there are still emerging challenges that Japan needs to address, namely elucidating the Quad's relations with ASEAN in the Indo-Pacific and locating the "fundamental rights" in Japan's FOIP vision.

ASEAN has been the core multilateral framework in East Asia in the post-Cold War era and actively engaged with regional states under its institutional principle, ASEAN Centrality. With this principle, ASEAN aims to be the center of regionalism in a region that it commits to, and in 2019, ASEAN adopted the "ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific" (AOIP), highlighting ASEAN Centrality in the Indo-Pacific (ASEAN, 2019). This is generally a welcome assertion because AOIP indicates that Southeast Asia will not be a battleground for great power competition and will be able to resist great powers' wedge strategy (Koga, 2021C). However, this also creates a potential problem because Quad 3.0 now shapes its regional institutional architecture. Although the Quad members explicitly expressed their strong support for ASEAN Centrality, there has yet to be any clear policy outline on the distribution of institutional roles between them. Furthermore, the emergence of new minilateralism, such as AUKUS, which would create additional complications. This is because ASEAN member's perspectives on these new groupings differ, and they can become a source of ASEAN divide, which can weaken ASEAN Centrality and be exploited by external powers. Japan has been one of the staunch supporters for ASEAN, and thus, it should provide an initial conceptual map for institutional arrangements in the Indo-Pacific.

Another challenge is the management of the "fundamental rights"—the basic democratic values—in the Indo-Pacific. While advocating for democratic values and human rights protection, Japan has long taken a softer approach to non-democratic countries in Asia. This has resonated with ASEAN member states' *modus operandi* although the United States and other western partners tend to take stronger measures, such

as economic sanctions, to change non-democratic behavior. Given this, there was a differing approach to the fundamental rights among the Quad member states. However, this trend is now changing. While ASEAN engaged the junta leader after the Myanmar military coup in February 2021 and reached the “5 point consensus,” ASEAN decided not to invite the junta leader for ASEAN summit in October 2021 because the unclearness of the legitimate leader in Myanmar caused by a lack of implementation of the agreement by the junta (Connelly, 2021). Inevitably, this ASEAN’s diplomatic maneuver deviated from its traditional approach as it defied a strict non-interference principle that ASEAN had protected. Politically, Japan’s FOIP vision and the Quad member’s posture are compatible with ASEAN’s action, but at the same time, this would facilitate ASEAN’s internal division, although the Quad strongly supports ASEAN centrality. Strategically, this could lead Myanmar to tilt toward China, which strictly adheres to the non-interference principle as a hedging policy (Koga, 2021). In this sense, Japan needs to clarify how to respond to the Myanmar issues through the Quad.

Despite the rapid evolution of the Quad that contributes to enhancing Japan’s strategic options, there emerge new challenges that Japan and the Quad need to tackle. Although Japan is currently under domestic political transition and it would take some time to consolidate its strategic posture toward the Indo-Pacific region, including the Quad, the strategic environment pushes Japan to immediately respond to regional contingencies. The Japanese government is expected to renew its National Security Strategy, which was last created under the Abe administration in 2013. Taking this as an opportunity, Japan should strategize its approach toward the Quad, ASEAN, and the Indo-Pacific.

NOTES

1. Despite the growing literature, here, minilateralism refers to a small inter-state grouping (consisting of 3-5 member states) that aims to facilitate either a single- or multi-functional cooperation. For other definitions, see Bhubhindar Singh and Sarah Teo (2020), "Introduction: Minilateralism in the Indo-Pacific," In Bhubhindar Singh and Sarah Teo, (eds.) *Minilateralism in the Indo-Pacific*. Routledge, pp. 1-12; Moises Naim (2009), "Minilateralism," *Foreign Policy*, June 21, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2009/06/21/minilateralism/>.
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3. For the US policy planning toward Asia, see Nina Silove (2016), "The Pivot before the Pivot: U.S. Strategy to Preserve the Power Balance in Asia," *International Security*, 40(4), pp. 45–88.
4. See: "Dai 165kai kokkai Shugi-in Honkaigi dai 3 gou Heisei18nen-9gatsu29nichi" (165th Diet—lower house, plenary session, no.3, September 29, 2016), September 29, 2016, <https://kokkai.ndl.go.jp/#/detail?minId=116505254X00320060929>
5. See: Singapore also participated in the Malabar 07-02. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Confluence of the Two Seas," no. 23; Ankit Panda, "Australia Returns to the Malabar Exercise," *The Diplomat*, October 19, 2020, <https://thediplomat.com/2020/10/australia-returns-to-the-malabar-exercise/>
6. See: MOFA, "Confluence of the Two Seas," August 22, 2007, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/pmv0708/speech-2.html>
7. See: MOFA, "Cheini beikokufukudaitoryo no rajijitsu" (Vice President Cheney's visit to Japan)," February 22, 2007, https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/usa/visit/dc_0702/kaidan_g.html
8. See: "Joint Press Conference with Chinese Foreign Minister," *Trove*, February 5, 2008, https://webarchive.nla.gov.au/awa/20090917143531/http://www.foreignminister.gov.au/transcripts/2008/080205_jpc.html; Kevin Rudd, "The Convenient Rewriting of the History of the 'Quad'," *Nikkei Asia*, March 26, 2019, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Opinion/The->

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9. See: “Indonesia defense bidding process for high-speed rail project after Japan angered at being rejected,” *The Straits Times*, October 1, 2011.
10. See: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of People’s Republic of China, “Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China on the Award of 12 July 2016 of the Arbitral Tribunal in the South China Sea Arbitration Established at the Request of the Republic of the Philippines,” July 12, 2016, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/nanghai/eng/snhwtlcwj_1/t1379492.htm
11. See: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, “Address by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at the Opening Session of the Sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD VI),” August 27, 2016, https://www.mofa.go.jp/afr/af2/page4e_000496.html
12. See Ministry of Defense, Japan, “National Defense Program Guidelines for FY 2014 and beyond,” December 17, 2013, https://warp.da.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/11591426/www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/2014/pdf/20131217_e2.pdf; MOFA, “Gaiko Seisho 2016,” 2016, https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/bluebook/2017/html/chapter1_02.html
13. For example, see Shinichi Kitaoka (2019), “Vision for a Free and Open Indo-Pacific,” *Asia-Pacific Review*, 26(1), pp. 7–17.
14. See: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, “Free and Open Indo-Pacific,” February 1, 2021, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/files/000430632.pdf> (accessed April 30, 2021).
15. See: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, “Japan-U.S. Working Lunch and Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting,” November 6, 2017, https://www.mofa.go.jp/na/na1/us/page4e_000699.html
16. See: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, “Australia-India-Japan-U.S. Consultations on the Indo-Pacific,” November 12, 2017, https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press4e_001789.html (accessed April 30, 2021).
17. *Emphasis added.* See: Ministry of External Affairs, India, “India-Australia-Japan-U.S. Consultations on Indo-Pacific,” November 12, 2017, https://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/29110/IndiaAustralia-JapanUS_Consultations_on_IndoPacific_November_12_2017

18. See: Ministry of External Affairs, India, “India-Australia-Japan-U.S. Consultations on Indo-Pacific,” November 12, 2017, https://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/29110/IndiaAustraliaJapanUS_Consultations_on_IndoPacific_November_12_2017; MOFA, “Australia-India-Japan-U.S. Consultations on the Indo-Pacific,” November 12, 2017, https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press4e_001789.html; U.S. Department of State, “Australia-India-Japan-U.S. Consultations on the Indo-Pacific,” November 12, 2017, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/australia-india-japan-u-s-consultations-on-the-indo-pacific/index.html>; Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia, “Australia-India-Japan-United States consultations on the Indo-Pacific,” November 12, 2017, <https://www.dfat.gov.au/news/media/Pages/aus-india-japan-us-consultations-on-the-indo-pacific>
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23. See: MOFA, “The Current Status of China’s Unilateral Development of Natural Resources in the East China Sea,” March 31, 2021, https://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/c_ml/page3e_000356.html; MOFA, “Trends in China Coast Guard and Other Vessels in the Waters Surrounding the Senkaku Islands, and Japan’s Response,” October 6, 2021, https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/page23e_000021.html
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25. See: Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, “Asia’s Dream: Linking the Pacific and Eurasia,” June 5, 2017, https://japan.kantei.go.jp/97_abe/statement/201706/1222768_11579.html
26. See: MOFA, “Ri Kokkyo Chukajinmin kyowakokuk kokumuin souri no hounichi (Heisei30nen5gatsu8nichi-11nichi)” (People’s Republic of China Premier Li Keqian’s visit to Japan (May 8-11, 2018)), https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/a_o/c_m1/cn/page4_003994.html; Ministry of Finance, Japan, “G20 Principles for Quality Infrastructure Investment,” June 8-9, 2019, https://www.mof.go.jp/english/policy/international_policy/convention/g20/annex6_1.pdf; MOFA, “Prime Minister Abe Visits China (October 25-27, 2018),” October 26, 2018, https://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/c_m1/cn/page3e_000954.html
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ABSTRACT

What strategic role will the Quad have in the Indo-Pacific region, and how has it evolved? The origin of the Quad (Australia-India-Japan-US consultative group) is the “core group,” by which the four states militarily cooperated in responding to the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami. While the group conducted humanitarian assistance/ disaster relief (HADR), one of the most important non-traditional security cooperation in Asia, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe attempted to elevate it for traditional security cooperation in 2007. This resulted in holding a summit and a joint military exercise in 2007, but the diplomatic traction was soon lost because of the concerns raised by China and the reluctance shown by Australia and India to antagonize their relations with China. And yet, in November 2017, the Quad meeting was quietly resurrected with the US declaration to increase its commitment to the Indo-Pacific region. While the meeting started at the senior official level, it soon became the ministerial level, and the Quad summit was held twice in March and September 2021. Furthermore, the Quad began to show its strategic cooperation on such issue-areas as COVID-19, climate crisis, infrastructure, and critical and emerging technologies. This paper explores the process and causes of the institutionalization of the Quad by analyzing the strategic motivations of the four members and illustrates its evolving role and future prospects in the Indo-Pacific region.

RESUMEN

¿Qué papel estratégico tendrá el Quad en la región del Indo-Pacífico y cómo ha evolucionado? El origen del Quad (grupo consultivo conformado por Australia-India-Japón-Estados Unidos) es el “grupo central”, mediante el cual los cuatro estados cooperaron militarmente para responder al tsunami del Océano Índico de 2004. Al tiempo que el grupo llevó a cabo asistencia humanitaria/socorro en casos de desastre, una de las formas de cooperación en materia de seguridad no tradicionales más importantes en Asia, el primer ministro japonés Shinzo Abe intentó elevarlo a la cooperación de seguridad tradicional

en 2007. Esto resultó en la celebración de una cumbre y una acción militar conjunta en 2007, pero la tracción diplomática pronto se perdió debido a las preocupaciones planteadas por China y la renuencia mostrada por Australia e India a antagonizar sus relaciones con China. Sin embargo, en noviembre de 2017, la reunión del Quad resucitó silenciosamente con la declaración de Estados Unidos para aumentar su compromiso con la región del Indo-Pacífico. Si bien la reunión comenzó con altos funcionarios, pronto se convirtió a nivel ministerial, y la cumbre del Quad se celebró dos veces en marzo y septiembre de 2021. Además, el Quad comenzó a mostrar su cooperación estratégica en áreas temáticas como COVID-19, crisis climática, infraestructura y tecnologías críticas y emergentes. Este artículo explora el proceso y las causas de la institucionalización del Quad mediante el análisis de las motivaciones estratégicas de los cuatro miembros e ilustra su papel en evolución y las perspectivas futuras en la región del Indo-Pacífico.

RESUMO

Qual papel estratégico o Quad terá na região Indo-Pacífico e como ele evoluiu? A origem do Quad (grupo consultivo Austrália-Índia-Japão-Estados Unidos) é o “grupo central”, por meio do qual os quatro Estados cooperaram militarmente para responder ao tsunami do Oceano Índico de 2004. Enquanto o grupo realizava assistência humanitária/socorro em casos de desastres (HADR), uma das maiores cooperações de segurança não tradicionais na Ásia, o primeiro-ministro japonês Shinzo Abe tentou elevá-la à cooperação de segurança tradicional em 2007. Isso resultou na realização de uma cúpula e uma ação militar conjunta em 2007, mas a tração diplomática logo se perdeu devido às preocupações levantadas pela China e à relutância da Austrália e da Índia em antagonizar suas relações com a China. No entanto, em novembro de 2017, a reunião Quad foi discretamente ressuscitada com a declaração dos Estados Unidos de aumentar seu compromisso com a região do Indo-Pacífico. Embora a reunião tenha começado com altos funcionários, logo se tornou de nível ministerial, e a cúpula do Quad foi realizada duas vezes em março e setembro de 2021. Além disso, o Quad começou a mostrar sua cooperação estratégica em áreas temáticas

como COVID-19, crise climática, infraestrutura e tecnologias críticas e emergentes. Este artigo explora o processo e as causas da institucionalização do Quad, analisando as motivações estratégicas dos quatro membros e ilustrando seu papel em evolução e perspectivas futuras na região do Indo-Pacífico.