

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2023 · 15 marks

Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) performs an important role in India's strategic balancing act to withstand the dominance of China in Asia. Discuss.

FLOW SNAPSHOT — how the answer moves

Intro routes

R1 four Indo-Pacific democracies in dialogue → India's balancing instrument, but indirect, no alliance **R2** 2004 tsunami origins → dormant → revived 2021 as China encircles → Quad as India's answer

Body flow

tsunami 'core group' / **Shyam Saran** → 2021 leaders' revival / South China Sea militarisation + BRI encirclement → **Pant:** counterbalance, rise above middle-power, 'like-minded' defence + info links, Vaccine Maitri + supply chains → maritime edge (domain awareness, coast guard) → **Tarapore:** "zone balancing" — shape the region, build partners' resilience, not a direct race → limited hard balancing after Galwan

Counter-view

Beijing = AUKUS clique / Lavrov "Asian NATO" vs no treaty obligation → suits strategic autonomy + Japan's pacifist constitution

Conclusion routes

R1 balance without entanglement → value lies in coalition, not alliance **R2** withstand Chinese dominance while keeping the freedom to choose

The Quad brings four Indo-Pacific democracies, Australia, Japan, India & the US into a security dialogue. For India it is a balancing instrument against China, but one that works indirectly, without the burdens of an alliance.

Shyam Saran argues that "India's full capabilities came as a surprise to the world." It lay dormant, reviving at leaders' level only in 2021. China's militarisation of the South China Sea & the BRI's port facilities produced a sense of encirclement in New Delhi.

Harsh V. Pant argues that India counterbalances China's presence, rises above middle-power status & turns "like-minded" ties into defence and information-sharing links. The Vaccine Maitri & supply chain diversification add economic weight. Its practical edge is maritime where domain awareness and coast-guard initiatives help regional states secure their waters.

Azran Tarapore views India's post-2020 embrace of the Quad as "zone balancing" shaping the region of competition and building partners' resilience rather than a direct race with Beijing.

Beijing equates the Quad with AUKUS, and Sergey Lavrov calls it an "Asian NATO". But it carries no treaty obligation which suits India's strategic autonomy and Japan's pacifist constitution alike.

The Quad gives India balance without entanglement. Its value lies in staying a coalition, not an alliance. It is a way to withstand Chinese dominance while keeping the freedom to choose.