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# **QUAD PLUS AND INDO-PACIFIC**

**THE CHANGING PROFILE OF  
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

Edited by  
Jagannath P. Panda  
and Ernest Gunasekara-Rockwell



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## 6 Fracturing architecture?

### The Quad Plus and ASEAN centrality in the Indo-Pacific

*Evan A. Laksmana*

Will South-east Asian states and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) embrace the expansion of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or the Quad, into a Quad Plus arrangement by adding South Korea, Vietnam, New Zealand, Brazil, and possibly others? What are the trade-offs of pushing for a Quad Plus and will it alter the broader regional security architecture? This chapter provides several answers to these questions. First, there is no singular “South-east Asian” view of both the Quad and Quad Plus. Some South-east Asian states like Vietnam appear to welcome a stronger, additional counterbalance to China while others like Indonesia are more concerned with the negative repercussions of the US–China strategic competition.

Second, the Quad members—Australia, India, Japan and the United States—should not be “too fast and too furious” at expanding the grouping into a Quad Plus arrangement. For one thing, they should focus on institutionalising the Quad following their first summit in March 2021. After all, getting the four countries on the same page and commitment regarding the Quad was already challenging. For another, all Quad members already have bilateral strategic partnerships and alliances with potential Quad Plus members like South Korea or Vietnam. It remains unclear whether formally inducting these states into a Quad Plus brings significant added strategic value, especially if such an arrangement might limit the Quad’s flexibility. Furthermore, it remains unclear whether a Quad Plus arrangement can be separated from the pandemic-triggered and Trump-conceived context of its origins. This not only hinders the broader and long-term appeal of the Quad Plus, but it might complicate the domestic political calculations of potential new members.

Finally, it remains unclear to what extent the Quad—let alone a new Quad Plus—will reorder the existing ASEAN-led regional security architecture. On the one hand, the Quad meetings came out of the sidelines of ASEAN-related meetings. So, to some extent, ASEAN institutions facilitated the rise of the Quad. But on the other hand, a more robust and functional Quad would have a different set of agenda and priorities compared to those developed by ASEAN. For more than two decades, ASEAN has developed a set of

region-wide institutions, including the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Plus (ADMM+), and the East Asia Summit (EAS) to engage regional powers, from China and Russia to all the four Quad members. It remains to be seen whether the Quad will complement, supplant, or simply co-exist with these institutions that collectively make up the ASEAN-led regional security architecture. But it is hard to ignore the possibility that as the Quad develops its own robust institutions, the ASEAN-led regional security architecture might fracture.

The following sections expand and elaborate these arguments. The first examines how South-east Asian states view the Quad. It will also consider whether and how ASEAN Centrality could exist alongside the Quad. The second section analyses the trade-offs of expanding the Quad and explore the potential implications of the Quad Plus for the ASEAN-led regional security architecture. Subsequently in the third section, I suggest the broader policy implications of expanding the Quad and consider options to mitigate potential adverse effects a Quad Plus arrangement might have. Finally, I draw some broader conclusions about the future of the Indo-Pacific security order in light of our discussion of the Quad Plus and ASEAN centrality.

### **South-east Asian views of the Quad and ASEAN centrality**

We cannot easily keep the prospect of a Quad Plus separate from two primary contexts. First, the differing if not ambivalent views of the Quad among South-east Asian countries. Second, the specific conditions under which the Quad Plus arrangement appear to have taken off: the COVID-19 pandemic and the hardening of the US–China strategic competition. I will discuss the second context in the next section while I focus on the first one here. Examining these two contexts will help us better understand the trade-offs and implications of expanding the Quad into a Quad Plus arrangement. It should be noted that there is no “ASEAN view” of the Quad, whether in its first iteration in 2007 or the latest Quad 2.0 that reconvened in 2017.<sup>1</sup> There is certainly no official ASEAN-related mechanisms or dialogues, as of yet, involving the Quad. What we have are instead different South-east Asian views about the potential trade-offs associated with the Quad.

In general, most South-east Asian states are not publicly and fully embracing the Quad, nor are they actively working to challenge or denounce the grouping. A recent regional elite survey by the Singapore-based Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute) shows that support for the Quad was “soft”, as less than half the respondents consider the grouping as having a “positive” or “very positive” impact on regional security (more than half view it as having either “negative”, “very negative” or “no impact”).<sup>2</sup> Somewhat paradoxically, however, more than 60 per cent expressed that South-east Asian countries should participate in the Quad’s security initiatives and military exercises. However, different South-east Asian

countries appear to have different degrees of ambivalence. According to the same survey, Indonesia, Malaysia, Laos, Thailand and Cambodia are the top sceptics of the Quad; Vietnam and the Philippines, on the other hand, are the biggest supporters.

These findings confirm earlier surveys. For example, according to the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI), roughly more than half of regional experts were on the fence, disagreed, or strongly disagreed with the Quad.<sup>3</sup> In fact, the same survey notes that almost 40 per cent thought that the Quad had more of a “diplomatic and symbolic value”, rather than becoming a critical initiative for the Indo-Pacific. It also notes that different South-east Asian countries view the Quad differently. On the one hand, Vietnam, Thailand and the Philippines appear to be among the biggest supporters of the Quad, while Singapore and Indonesia were the sceptics.<sup>4</sup>

While these two elite surveys differ in their specific country-by-country results, they still demonstrate the absence of a coherent picture. On the one hand, the Quad sceptics do not necessarily share identical reasonings for their reticence. Indonesia is more concerned about the side-lining of ASEAN—and by implication, its own regional leadership profile—while Singapore is likely to be more concerned about the sharpening of the US–China competition. Indonesia under the current Joko Widodo administration also appears to be less concerned about foreign policy issues that are not “popular among its people”, including the Quad.<sup>5</sup> Laos and Cambodia, meanwhile, are more likely to be wary of the impression of the Quad as an “anti-China” coalition, given their increasingly close ties with Beijing.

On the other hand, those who are potentially more welcoming of the Quad seem to share similar concerns over China’s recent behaviours, especially in the South China Sea. Vietnam and the Philippines are perhaps the two South China Sea claimants that have been increasingly at loggerheads with China.<sup>6</sup> This was particularly the case over the landmark 2016 UNCLOS tribunal ruling that favoured Manila over Beijing and practically invalidated China’s infamous “nine-dash line” map. But other South China Sea claimants like Malaysia and Brunei appear to be more muted in their responses to China’s militarisation and aggressive behaviours—largely due to domestic politics and economic constraints. In any case, there is no clear, consistent and coherent picture of South-east Asian views of the Quad other than the fact that some appear to be sceptical of the grouping while others may (partially) welcome it.

Aside from these country-specific concerns, this general lack of clarity is a function of several factors. First, there is a lack of clarity among the Quad members themselves; they have yet to fully agree on what the group is and could be, although this is slowly changing. They also define the Indo-Pacific in different ways.<sup>7</sup> The group’s 2017 meeting addressed seven broad themes: (1) a rules-based order in Asia, (2) freedom of navigation and overflight in the maritime common, (3) respect for international law, (4) enhancing connectivity, (5) maritime security, (6) the North Korean threat and non-

proliferation, and (7) terrorism.<sup>8</sup> The first Quad summit in March 2021 may have added more clarity on these issues, although it led with vaccine diplomacy and created three new working groups on vaccines, emerging technology and climate.<sup>9</sup>

Second, there is a lack of a clarity among South-east Asian states on whether China—the unspoken “threat” the Quad is seeking to address—represents the biggest challenge for their respective interests. Numerous studies have noted that different South-east Asian states consider China as representing varying degrees of opportunities (especially economic) and challenges (especially security).<sup>10</sup> For that matter, South-east Asian views of the United States have also been historically ambivalent as well.<sup>11</sup> Despite the aspirations of many analysts, the structural ambivalence between South-east Asia and the great powers is unlikely to change anytime soon. Extending the Quad into a Quad Plus arrangement is unlikely change this structural feature. If anything, the more the Quad seeks to engage South-east Asia driven by great-power politics, the more likely this structural ambivalence becomes more pronounced.

Finally, some South-east Asian states remain concerned about the extent to which the Quad may supplant, rather than complement, existing ASEAN-led mechanisms such as the EAS or the ADMM+.<sup>12</sup> After all, the above-mentioned agenda that the Quad seeks to address are also policy issues that ASEAN-led institutions purport to address as well. At some point, regional policymakers are bound to ask whether it is worth investing in the Quad or ASEAN when they both seek to address, for example, maritime security threats. There is also a concern that the “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” concept inherent in the Quad may be another way to “step on China’s toes”.<sup>13</sup> These concerns persist despite the fact that Quad meetings have taken place on the side-lines of the ARF and EAS meetings over ASEAN-promoted issues. In short, ASEAN-related mechanisms have “facilitated the Quad process rather than the Quad process threatening ASEAN”.<sup>14</sup>

However, concerns over the Quad’s supposed challenge to ASEAN are less about both institutions coexisting in the same strategic sphere. The concerns are instead about: (1) whether the Quad gets to drive the broader regional agenda (a distinct possibility given the strategic heft of its members), (2) whether different members of ASEAN, ARF and EAS might decide to spend more energy and resources for the Quad or Quad Plus rather than ASEAN-related institutions, and (3) whether some ASEAN members like Indonesia could afford to “surrender” regional order management to others at a time when they do not have strategic alternatives beyond ASEAN.<sup>15</sup> In other words, for all the talk about ASEAN Centrality, some ASEAN members remain deeply insecure about the prospect of an alternative regional order-making institution like the Quad.

It should perhaps be noted that ASEAN Centrality is more of a process than an outcome. As defined by the ASEAN Charter, Centrality is the notion that ASEAN should be the “primary driving force” in shaping the group’s external relations in a regional architecture that is open, transparent

and inclusive. In other words, ASEAN Centrality is, at heart, an ongoing process of continuous engagements with external partners.<sup>16</sup> As such, a significant feature of ASEAN Centrality lies in whether regional and great powers are “willing” to surrender regional initiatives and agenda-setting to ASEAN.<sup>17</sup> This is part of the reason why ASEAN champions like Indonesia are often “sensitive” to the possibility of ASEAN no longer driving the regional agenda.

### **Quad Plus and regional security architecture**

The concerns outlined in the previous section might worsen if the Quad morphs into a Quad Plus arrangement and incorporates both ASEAN’s dialogue partner (e.g. South Korea) and one of its key leaders (e.g. Vietnam). For one thing, while theoretically ASEAN and Quad Plus memberships are not mutually exclusive, one cannot be faulted for allocating limited resources to a few, limited set of strategic tools given the worsening strategic environment. In other words, if ASEAN and the Quad Plus are both seeking to address similar or overlapping regional security challenges without a clear division of labour or functional differentiation, then at some point members might choose to focus more on one tool over the other. To some extent, this problem is merely an extension of the broader ASEAN–Quad problem discussed in the previous section.

For another, it is difficult to ignore some of the specific contexts in which the Quad Plus came about, especially the sharpening of the US–China competition before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. We can trace the Quad Plus to March 2020 when US Deputy Secretary of State Stephen Biegun initiated a weekly online meeting with his counterparts from India, Japan, Australia, Vietnam, South Korea and New Zealand to coordinate responses to the pandemic. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo subsequently held a video conference with the foreign ministers of India, Australia, Japan, Brazil, Israel and South Korea. Various calls featuring these configurations have happened since. These meetings are not just about how to handle the pandemic, but the US also views this group “from the prism of its competition with China and sees it as a way to reemphasise its leadership in the Indo-Pacific”.<sup>18</sup> The Quad Plus, in other words, was driven and strengthened by the US–China strategic competition, rather than by a conscious effort to make the Quad more inclusive.

Also, this context cannot be easily disentangled from how badly President Trump handled the pandemic in his last year in office. The way the administration ramped up its anti-China rhetoric by blaming China for the pandemic makes it difficult to separate the geopolitical concerns from domestic partisan ones.<sup>19</sup> In other words, one could argue that the Quad Plus was not just another tool to expand the “anti-China” coalition, but it also had the added benefit of deflecting responsibility from the administration’s catastrophic failure to tackle the pandemic. Indeed, since Trump’s re-election



campaign could not be based on ending the trade war, it shifted gear into blaming China for the virus and the economic downturn the US faced by late 2020.<sup>20</sup>

One problem with this pandemic-induced context is that as far as most of South-east Asia is concerned, China was there for them—in terms of medical supplies and vaccine distribution—earlier and in a scale that the US and its allies simply did not and could not match. The growing global vaccine inequality by early 2021 reinforces the narrative that “China stepped up while the West did not”. A commitment to one billion vaccines proposed by the Quad Summit will not easily reverse this narrative, especially since India seems to be struggling with its own vaccine commitments. The narrative that the Quad Plus was an extension of US domestic politics and Trump’s failure will make it harder to dislodge those concerns. Furthermore, pandemic management and economic recovery is now closely tied to the domestic legitimacy of many regional states. Trying to push for the Quad (or the Quad Plus) further using “vaccine diplomacy” might backfire if it means disrupting existing plans regional policymakers already have in place, including arrangements with Chinese companies on medical and vaccine research and supplies.

Given these China-driven, Trump conceived, and pandemic-triggered contexts, any prospect for the Quad Plus to reorder regional security architecture depends on whether the Quad finds ways to engage ASEAN, rather than expanding the group’s membership. Even South Korea, rather than going full speed to join a Quad Plus arrangement, is now considering cooperation with the Quad on an issue-by-issue basis.<sup>21</sup> There are certainly benefits for expanding the Quad. Japan, for example, finds the Quad Plus beneficial to strengthen its “strategic synergy” in the maritime domain with the new set of countries, while Tokyo seeks to create a sustainable post-COVID-19 economic structure in Asia.<sup>22</sup> But whether these benefits outweigh the cost of the broader buy-in from regional states remains a question mark. Indeed, many in South-east Asia do not appear excited for the expansion of the Quad. As the 2018 ASPI survey notes, a median of 68 per cent across all ASEAN member-states think that the Quad should not be further expanded.<sup>23</sup> Rather than being seen as “prying away states from China” (and ASEAN, for that matter) by developing the Quad Plus, the Quad in its current format should find ways to complement and strengthen ASEAN-led institutions and gain a wider buy-in from South-east Asia. Once there is a wider buy-in, extending the Quad into a Quad Plus arrangement may be less challenging.

Such an argument requires Quad leaders to make a mental switch from “expand the Quad to demonstrate resolve and pry South-east Asian states away from China” to “strengthen South-east Asian states’ strategic autonomy so they can choose for themselves”, even if that means some of them may be critical of the Quad. For all its faults and inability to deal with strategic crisis like the South China Sea, ASEAN remains the only regional mechanism that *all* South-east Asian states embrace. If the Quad could invest in boosting ASEAN-led mechanisms, it could increase a wider buy-in from

South-east Asian states. After all, doing so complements existing bilateral and minilateral engagements each of the Quad members has developed with different South-east Asian countries over the past decade (e.g., in maritime security). In short, for the Quad to remain “central” in the minds of South-east Asian policy makers, the group should find practical ways to boost ASEAN-led mechanisms rather than expanding into a Quad Plus.

### **Policy implications and recommendations**

As the Quad is picking up some strategic steam, its leaders should be careful not to move too fast and too furious at challenging China while sidelining ASEAN-related mechanisms. An overly critical push on China might create unease for regional countries currently vulnerable to and dependent on China in terms of their economic and pandemic recovery plans. Reinventing the wheel on options to address regional security challenges without incorporating ASEAN-led mechanisms worsens the fear of Quad sceptics. So, what should be the ideal next step? First, the Quad needs to provide a systematic, coherent and consistent framework to institutionalise and deepen cooperative mechanisms among its own members. If the Quad members cannot agree on a long-term strategic framework for the grouping, there is no reason the region should take it seriously. If anything, the Quad could learn from ASEAN’s missteps when the latter organisation tried to expand its mechanisms beyond South-east Asia in the 1990s and 2000s without first solidifying its own integration projects.<sup>24</sup> Overall, the Quad’s prospects will be determined by the extent to which national interests and threat perceptions align across all four of its members.<sup>25</sup> The March 2021 Quad Summit was, therefore, a step in the right direction.

Second, if and when the Quad could develop and implement its own long-term strategic framework, then its leaders should find ways for the group to engage South-east Asian states individually as well as with the wider set of ASEAN-related institutions, from ARF to ADMM+. After all, there is no South-east Asian consensus rejecting any future role for the Quad. Indeed, almost half the respondents in the 2018 ASPI survey thought that the Quad complements existing regional security frameworks to varying degrees.<sup>26</sup> In other words, bearing in mind the concerns above, there is nothing inherently “toxic” about the Quad’s future engagement with ASEAN.

The key, therefore, is to find “the right ladder and the right rung”. The Quad’s engagement with ASEAN would be effective if it meets the strategic interests of both groups (the right ladder) and when the specific mechanisms are a good match between ASEAN’s pre-existing initiatives and capacity with what the Quad could offer (the right rung). In the long run, finding the right ladder means figuring out the convergence of strategic interests between the Quad as a minilateral grouping and ASEAN as a multilateral one. These include, for example, (1) the extent to which regional order depends on multilateral and collective efforts, rather than unilateral power projections; (2)

the extent to which regional institutions enhance strategic autonomy, rather than becoming extensions of great-power politics; and (3) the extent to which prosperity and security are not mutually exclusive, just as no regional country should be left out of regional institutions.

These normative benchmarks should not be too difficult for leaders of the Quad and ASEAN to agree on. The ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP), for example, is filled with normative principles many regional countries have agreed to for years. Surely the Quad members could easily align the group with and support the AOIP in principle. After all, since the AOIP commits no resources and practical mechanisms, there is virtually no risk for the Quad members to publicly declare their support for AOIP. In other words, while the AOIP may have been “defective at birth” as far as strategic outcomes are concerned, it can still provide an initial normative launching pad for closer collaboration with other regional groupings such as the Quad.<sup>27</sup>

The more difficult challenge lies in how the two groups could build on shared normative principles to practical engagements. In this regard, finding the right rung is essential. This means that the Quad should avoid reinventing the wheel in terms of regional initiatives, whether about maritime security, trade or military exercises. Instead, the Quad should aim to be a strategic filler, supporting and elevating existing ASEAN-led initiatives where they exist and suggesting collaborative new ones where they are absent. In the defence sphere, for example, the Quad could provide an additional layer of cooperative engagement, from joint exercises to training, in areas where ASEAN-related institutions (e.g. ADMM+) remain underdeveloped.<sup>28</sup> The Quad could also support ASEAN-led initiatives such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) or the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity. After all, ASEAN has traditionally been more comfortable with the so-called “ASEAN Plus” mechanisms—dialogues and cooperative mechanisms between ASEAN and a single or several strategic partners.<sup>29</sup>

To sum up, the Quad should ideally consider how it could persuade and obtain buy-in from the South-east Asian states. Differences regarding China aside, almost every South-east Asian state is unlikely to challenge initiatives seeking to strengthen ASEAN-led mechanisms. Given the geopolitical and geostrategic centrality of South-east Asia within the Indo-Pacific, whether there is regional buy-in could very determine the Quad’s long-term strategic viability. The Quad leaders should also formulate a gradual, long-term engagement strategy built around (1) a strategic commitment to a set of shared principles and interests, and (2) a set of institutionalised mechanisms to provide strategic amplification to ASEAN-led mechanisms. In other words, rather than waiting for different South-east Asian states to come around on their own volition to engage the Quad, leaders of the Quad should present ways the grouping could strengthen ASEAN. At the very least, the efforts made to find the right ladder and the right rung between the Quad and ASEAN could create channels of communication and habits of dialogue that were not present before.

## Conclusions and Indo-Pacific security order

The Indo-Pacific is in a state of strategic flux. The US–China strategic competition risks creating a new bipolar structure across the region. The frequency and duration of crises among regional powerholders—between Japan and South Korea, India and China, Australia and China, North and South Korea and others—have also grown in recent years. Historical legacies, territorial and maritime disputes as well as broader strategic competition are creating regional flashpoints.<sup>30</sup> While these strategic trends are slowly unfolding, day-to-day security challenges, from illegal fishing to transnational crime, continue to strain the resources of regional countries. Domestic political populism across the region has also led to stronger protectionist and isolationist impulses, leaving cumbersome multilateral institutions fiercely competing for attention. The pandemic has also likely accelerated and exacerbated these destabilising trends.

Under these conditions, it would be strategic malpractice for Indo-Pacific states to not develop new foreign policy options. For more than two decades, ASEAN-led regional institutions have tried to develop a region-wide habit of dialogue and cooperation, on the one hand. On the other, traditional bilateral alliances and strategic partnerships have also proliferated. However, as the Indo-Pacific increasingly becomes a single geostrategic theatre, the slow-paced nature of multilateralism and the limited scope of bilateral partnerships are no longer seen as sufficient. The rise of minilateralism—more than two countries but less than a full multilateral grouping—across the Indo-Pacific has become a “new normal”.<sup>31</sup> The rise of the Quad fits this pattern.

Indeed, the Quad may seem like a strategic inevitability, even though some argue it is nothing more than “a forum for discussion and information exchange intended to lead to better policy coordination” between the four countries.<sup>32</sup> The United States, Japan, India and Australia certainly cannot “out compete” China on their own. The regular homage to ASEAN Centrality notwithstanding, these countries do not consider ASEAN institutions as sufficiently agile and capable to respond to the strategic challenges posed by China. Tokyo, New Delhi, Canberra and Washington are certainly aware of how divided ASEAN has been and how some member-states are publicly aligning themselves with China. Therefore, South-east Asian leaders are aware that getting the Quad leaders to disband may seem like a fool’s errand. After all, ASEAN itself has seen its own minilateral arrangements. The ASEAN Our Eyes information-exchange initiative on violent extremism, radicalisation, and terrorism (Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand) under the purview of the ADMM builds on existing subregional cooperation such as the Malacca Strait Patrols (Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore) and the Trilateral Cooperative Arrangement in the Sulu Sea (Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines).<sup>33</sup>

This is one of the reasons why Indonesia has pushed for the AOIP. If South-east Asia cannot stop the Quad in its strategic tracks, it can at least

articulate an alternative strategic vision—no matter how devoid of resources and practical steps it may be. After all, as Indonesian scholar Dewi Fortuna Anwar notes, because South-east Asia is located at the geographic midpoint between the Indian and Pacific Oceans and all the lands around and within them, ASEAN must continue to retain its centrality in the evolving Indo-Pacific construct.<sup>34</sup> South-east Asian states in general, after all, remain committed to strategic non-alignment and hedging—if only to avoid the impression that they are taking sides in the face of growing great-power rivalry.<sup>35</sup> However, that does not mean that they would seek to push back or prevent the Quad from moving forward.

As the above analyses have shown, the challenge is figuring out whose centrality matters and how to ensure that both the Quad and ASEAN not only coexist but also complement one another in regional architecture building. As a relatively new grouping, the ball is in the Quad's court, so to speak. The Quad leaders should be the ones to persuade South-east Asia of its strategic utility, rather than the other way around. As suggested above, finding the right ladder and the right rung is essential for the future of Quad–ASEAN relations. The Quad becoming a strategic filler to and a strategic amplifier for existing ASEAN initiatives and institutions are certainly not the only means forward for the group. Expanding the Quad into a Quad Plus arrangement by bringing in members like South Korea, Vietnam or Brazil may, for example, ameliorate the perception of the group as purely an “anti-China” coalition.

But if the Quad cannot exercise strategic prudence and expands too soon and too furiously anti-China, even if India and Australia are now all in, we might see a fracturing regional security architecture. A new Quad Plus might offer overlapping initiatives on regional security challenges with those proposed by ASEAN-led mechanisms like ARF, ADMM+ or EAS, eventually forcing members to prioritise one over the other. ASEAN member-states, unwilling to disrupt their economic and pandemic recovery plans that are likely dependent on their ties with China, might find the “anti-China” undertones of a Quad Plus to be an unnecessary distraction. Rather than working to revive ASEAN-led multilateral institutions to deal with great power politics, a Quad Plus arrangement might hasten their strategic demise.

It should be in the Quad's interest therefore to boost South-east Asia's collective strategic autonomy, including through ASEAN-led mechanisms. There is no need to “integrate” Quad-led institutions with ASEAN-led ones. Coordination and cross-sectoral support on key issues like maritime security underpinned by ASEAN-led mechanisms should be sufficient to lay the groundwork for the Quad and ASEAN to co-exist and strengthen one another in the Indo-Pacific. By strategically positioning the Quad as a strong supporter of ASEAN, the new grouping can challenge the Chinese view that it will be nothing more than “a foam in the ocean”.

## Notes

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- 7 See the discussion in Rahul Roy-Chaudhury and Kate Sullivan de Estrada, “India, the Indo-Pacific and the Quad”, *Survival* 60, 3 (2018), 181–194; and Sharon Stirling, ed., *Mind the Gap: National Views of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific* (Washington, DC: German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2019).
- 8 See Ankit Panda, “US, Japan, India, and Australia Hold Working-Level Quadrilateral Meeting on Regional Cooperation”, *The Diplomat*, 13 November 2017, <https://thediplomat.com>.
- 9 See Abhijnan Rej, “In ‘Historic’ Summit Quad Commits to Meeting Key Indo-Pacific Challenges”, *The Diplomat*, 13 March 2021, <https://thediplomat.com>.
- 10 See, for example, David Denoon, ed., *China, The United States, and the Future of Southeast Asia: US–China Relations* (New York: NYU Press, 2017); Don Emmerson, ed., *The Deer and the Dragon: Southeast Asia and China in the 21st Century* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020); and Sebastian Strangio, *In the Dragon’s Shadow: Southeast Asia in the Chinese Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2020).
- 11 See the discussion in John D. Ciorciari, *The Limits of Alignment: Southeast Asia and the Great Powers since 1975* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2010); and Evelyn Goh, “Great Powers and Hierarchical Order in Southeast Asia: Analyzing Regional Security Strategies”, *International Security* 32, 3 (2008), 113–157.
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- 13 Joel Ng, “The Quadrilateral Conundrum: Can ASEAN Be Persuaded?” *RSIS Commentary*, 17 July 2018.
- 14 Malcolm Cook and Hoang Thi Ha, “Formal and Flexible: ASEAN and the New Strategic Disorder”, *ISEAS Perspective*, 17 August 2020, 5, [www.iseas.edu.sg](http://www.iseas.edu.sg).
- 15 On Indonesia’s lack of Indo-Pacific options, see Evan A. Laksmana, “Buck-Passing from Behind: Indonesia’s Foreign Policy on the Indo-Pacific”, *Order from Chaos* (blog), 27 November 2018, [www.brookings.edu](http://www.brookings.edu).
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