



India and the World

Perspectives from Northern Europe on India in world affairs. Issued on a regular basis by the Project for Nordic-India Relations at the Swedish Institute of International Affairs (UI).



India and the evolving scope of cooperation of the Quad

India's Heads of Mission recently gathered in Kevadia to exchange notes and to connect with domestic developments. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar mentioned in a [tweet](#) that the group had "assessed global rebalancing, emergence of multipolarity, as also prospects of Reformed Multilateralism" in their discussion. The world is changing rapidly. The Indo-Pacific region - to which India is central - may become as consequential for trade and security for our time as the Transatlantic region was to the emergence of the modern period. Today's global multilateral institutional architecture does not reflect these developments, and New Delhi reminds us it has a limited buy-in with global structures that do not accommodate neither India's own rise, nor the interest of emerging or developing economies more generally. Hence, New Delhi's focus on [reformed multilateralism](#). There is, however, little movement on reforms. India is therefore engaging flexible country and issue-based coalitions, guided by common interests, and centred around initiatives, working groups, and summit diplomacy. A paramount example of this approach is the [Quad](#). To many the Quad is known as a format for cooperation between Australia, India, Japan, and the US, on traditional security issues. The grouping has however evolved. It is becoming a "[regional solutions-provider](#)", in Tanvi Madan's words. The Quad 3.0 as [Garima Mohan and Kristi Govella](#) calls its most recent upgrade, now covers initiatives regarding health and vaccines; infrastructure; climate; people-to-people exchanges; critical and emerging technologies; cybersecurity; space; humanitarian assistance and disaster relief; and Maritime Domain Awareness. The Quad has no formal secretariat. It is not anchored in any treaty or charter. Yet a process of formalisation through working groups and evolving inter-ministerial coordination in respective countries is ongoing. India has been a driving force in broadening the scope of cooperation. A wider agenda helps India to balance China more comprehensively, amplifies New Delhi's foreign policy initiatives in the Indo-Pacific, and builds capacity at home. Naturally, India will have preferences in where to place its resources. In private correspondence with the author, Yoishiro Sato at Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University suggests that cyber security is high on New Delhi's Quad agenda. As late as September, the Quads foreign ministers issued a joint statement on [cyber-attacks](#). Maritime Domain Awareness is also likely to receive New Delhi's budgeting priorities, due to China's growing naval activities. Climate and "quality aid" initiatives are likely to be given least priority, and vaccine diplomacy is becoming less prioritized as the Covid-19 Pandemic recedes, Sato says.

Regional developments could revert India and other Quad member's attention back to traditional security issues. This would give cooperation the [harder edge](#), which some commentators have called for. However, India is cautious not to antagonize China and be dragged into great power rivalry, through the Quad's activities. A wider scope of cooperation may be just right for now to serve balancing rather than confrontational purposes.



Dr Henrik Chetan Aspengren
Senior Analyst and Project Lead, UI
henrik.aspengren@ui.se
+46(0)708986797



Mihir Swarup Sharma
Director Centre Economics and Growth Programme, ORF
Mihir.swarup.sharma@orfonline.org