

QUAD MEET FOCUSES ON INDO-PACIFIC COOPERATION

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In contrast, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who has backed the sanctions, pushed for countries to stop arms trade with the Myanmar military.

The grouping announced plans for a Quad summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi, U.S. President Joe Biden, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida in Tokyo in the “first half of 2022”.

The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson called the Quad mechanism “only a tool to contain China”. “This is a deliberate move to stoke confrontation and undermine international solidarity and cooperation,” spokesperson Zhao Lijian said in Beijing, calling on Quad countries to “abandon the outdated Cold War mentality”.

The Foreign Ministers of Australia, Japan and U.S. also took a sharp line on the build up of Russian troops along the border with Ukraine in the recent weeks, with Mr. Blinken warning that “an invasion [by Russian troops] could begin at any time”. Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne expressed “deep concern” about Russian “aggression”, while Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa raised tensions over Ukraine as well. However Mr. Jaishankar did not speak about the issue, nor did the Russia-Ukraine situation find any mention in the joint statement.

Asked by Australian journalists about India’s stand, Mr. Jaishankar said the Quad meeting was “focused on the Indo-Pacific”. “So I think you should figure out the geography there, and where we stand,” he added.

The joint statement issued included a renewed commitment to the “flagship” Quad Vaccine initiative to deliver at least one billion vaccines produced at Hyderabad’s Biological E facility by the end of 2022 to Indo-Pacific countries.

Mr. Jaishankar also held separate bilateral meetings with Mr. Blinken and Japanese Foreign Minister Hayashi Yoshimasa. He is due to meet Mr. Blinken in Washington for a “2+2” along with Indian and U.S. defence ministers, for a meeting that has been delayed since November.

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