

BACK IN THE GAME: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON QUAD AND INDIA-U.S. TIES

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: QUAD and India

Prime Minister [Narendra Modi's summit meeting with U.S. President Joe Biden](#), and his [first in-person meet of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue](#) mark an important step forward in India's engagement with major global powers as it seeks to revive its economy and strategic role in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis. At the heart of the two leaders' meeting was the issue of vaccine availability — and a critical victory for the Biden administration as it received Mr. Modi's assurance that as the world's largest vaccine manufacturer, India would resume supplies to the global COVAX pool under its 'Vaccine Maitri' programme. The breakthrough comes after turmoil in this space earlier this year, when India halted exports after facing criticism for domestic supply bottlenecks as it contended with a devastating second wave of COVID-19. Around the same time the U.S. also invoked its Defense Production Act, effectively preventing the export of raw materials for vaccine manufacture in a bid to prioritise domestic production. With both countries now moving forward on their domestic vaccination programmes, albeit with the U.S. still struggling to overcome vaccine hesitancy in certain States, the summit provided them a timely opportunity to take up long-pending conversations on trade, defence ties and more. At the confluence of those two areas was the reaffirmation by Mr. Biden that India remained a 'Major Defence Partner', making it a key nation with which Washington could share information and strengthen cooperation in advanced military technologies, including, for example, a recent project to co-develop air-launched unmanned aerial vehicles.

Issues of global concern, including the ongoing pandemic, climate change, technology cooperation, supply chains and security, and preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific were themes that came up at the Quad gathering. Following on the heels of the first virtual summit of the four leaders in March 2021, this meeting builds upon the intention of the Quad member nations — India, the U.S., Australia, and Japan — to ensure an Indo-Pacific region "free from coercion and disputes... solved in accordance with international law". While India has sought to disassociate its role as a member of the Quad from the recently announced Australia-U.K.-U.S. (AUKUS) partnership, there is little doubt that the creation of a fleet of nuclear-powered submarines for Australia under the AUKUS framework will have significant and positive implications on India's strategic calculus regarding the Indo-Pacific region. From New Delhi's perspective, health concerns and economic revival remain at the very apex of the policy agenda. This is a time for India to rapidly deepen cooperative initiatives with the U.S. regarding vaccines and trade and continue engaging vigorously with the Quad for regional stability. That is the optimal strategy to navigate the uncertain global ecosystem that it now finds itself in.

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U.S. President Biden should not buckle to pressure from irate anti-vaccine campaigners

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