



Mains Practice Question

Q. Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD)' is the transforming itself into a trade bloc from a military alliance, in present times. Discuss.

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Approach

- Start your answer by briefly discussing what is a Quad.
- Discuss the need for Quad from a geo-economic prism rather than as a military bloc.
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction

Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) is the informal strategic dialogue between India, the USA, Japan, and Australia. The Quad was established, primarily as a strategic bloc, to counter China's aggressive stance in the South China Sea.

However, Quad's shared objective to support a "free, open and prosperous" Indo-Pacific region, could also form the basis of a trade agreement and turn it into a major trade bloc.

Body

Transformation of Quad Into A Trade Bloc:

- **Complex Interdependence:** In the world of complex interdependence whereby nations have trade dependency over each other or collective responsibility of global commons, a military bloc reminiscent of the cold war era seems quite outdated.
 - In this context, it is more plausible that Quad member countries envision themselves from a geo-economic prism.
 - Also, a military bloc may bring all great powers (US, China, India, Russia) to the brink of a war, which is not in the interest of these countries and global peace.
- **Inclusive Indo-Pacific Region:** Quad member countries agreed that a free, open, prosperous, and inclusive Indo-Pacific region will serve the long-term interests of all countries in the region and of the world at large.
 - Quad also envisages addressing the common challenges of terrorism and proliferation linkages impacting the region, as well as on enhancing connectivity.
- **Blue Dot Network:** It is a multi-stakeholder initiative (led by the US along with Japan and Australia) to bring together governments, the private sector, and civil society to promote high-quality, trusted standards for global infrastructure development.
 - It could directly counter China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).
- **Tackling Global Challenges:** Challenges emanating from Covid-19 highlighted the need for improving the resilience of supply chains and self-sufficiency also.

- In this context, the transformation of Quad into a trade bloc can help tackle future global challenges more effectively.

Way Forward

- **Need For Clear Vision:** The Quad nations need to better explain the Indo-Pacific Vision in an overarching framework with the objective of advancing everyone's economic and security interests.
 - This will reassure the littoral States that the Quad will be a factor for the regional benefit, and a far cry from Chinese allegations that it is some sort of a military alliance.
- **Integration of Projects:** The connectivity projects of Quad member countries (the US' Indo-pacific economic corridor, Japan's Asia-Africa Economic Corridor, India's Project Mausam) should be integrated to be more proactive in pushing ahead the vision of connectivity.
- **Expanding Quad:** The Quad should focus on building a robust regional consultation mechanism and coordinate with ASEAN nations on issues of regional importance.

Conclusion

If ever a Quad trade agreement were to become a reality, a reduction in trade costs would go a long way towards fulfilling the economic potential of the alliance. However, there is a need to put the military component and the economic component together. This will help Quad to emerge as a very strong alliance as without military muscle all other fields cannot be excelled.

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