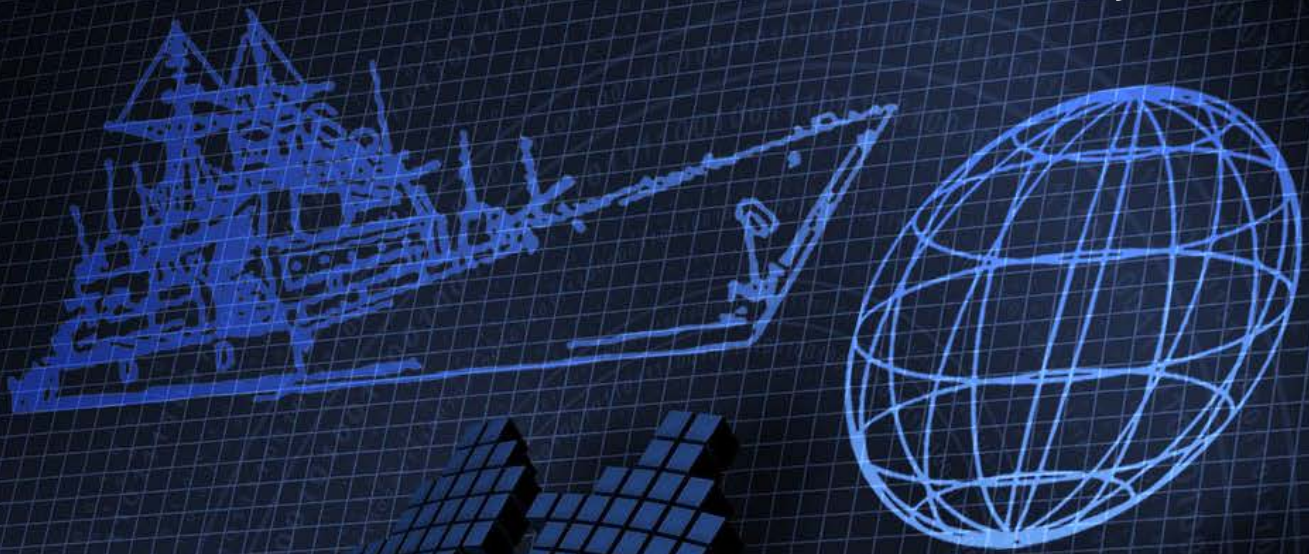


SOUTH KOREA, INDIA, AND THE EMERGING QUAD PLUS CALCULUS

February 7, 2024



Webinar Report

Panelists

Dr. Choong Yong Ahn is currently a Distinguished Professor at the Graduate School of International Studies, Chung-Ang University Seoul. He was a Co-Chair of the Korea-India Strategic Dialogue organized by the Seoul International Forum. Previously, he was Chairman, Korea Commission for Corporate Partnership (2014-2018) to induce voluntary collaborations between Korea's big businesses and SMEs, and also Chairman of the Board, Korea Electric Power Corporation. Before taking the KCCP post, he served as presidentially appointed Foreign Investment Ombudsman (2006-2014) for foreign direct investors in Korea. He is also the former Chairman of the Presidential Regulatory Reform Committee (2010-2012). While on sabbatical from Chung-Ang University, he also served in several posts such as the President of the Korea Institute for International Economic Policy (2002-2005); Chair of the APEC Economic Committee (2002-2005); Chair of the Board, Choheung Bank; consultant to the World Bank; UNIDO Chief Technical Advisor to the Economic Planning Unit of Malaysia to design Malaysia's industrial master plan; and served as President of several academic societies in Korea including the Korea International Economics Association, Korean Association of Trade and Industry Studies, and the Korea Econometric Society. He is the author of the forthcoming book 'South Korea and Foreign Direct Investment: Policy Dynamics and the Aftercare Ombudsman' (Routledge, 2023). Dr. Ahn is the co-investigator of the Korea

Foundation funded ISDP project "Framing an India-South Korea Connect in Indo-Pacific: Minilateralism to Multilateralism".

Dr. Pooja Bhatt is the author of the book titled 'Nine-Dash Line: Deciphering the South China Sea Conundrum' (Knowledge World 2020). Dr. Bhatt was a part of the prestigious Indian Navy history book, 'A Decade of Transformation: The Indian Navy 2011-21' released by the President of India on Navy Day 2022. Previously, she taught as an Assistant Professor in the School of Defence and Strategic Studies at Rashtriya Raksha University, Gandhinagar. She was also Consultant with Ministry of External Affairs. Dr. Bhatt received her doctoral degree from the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. She is currently Visiting Research Fellow at Centre for Air Power Studies, New Delhi.

Mahima Duggal is a doctoral researcher at the German Institute for Global and Area Studies (GIGA) in Hamburg, and an Associated Research Fellow at the Institute for Security and Development Policy (ISDP) in Stockholm. She is also an Editorial Assistant to the Series Editor for Routledge Studies on Think Asia and a Pacific Forum Young Leader (2024 cohort). Previously, she was an Associate Fellow at the Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS), the think tank of the Indian Air Force, in New Delhi. Ms Duggal is a former Fellow of the Emerging Leaders program of the

National Institute of Unification Education (Ministry of Unification of South Korea), as well as the Daniel K Inouye Asia-Pacific Centre for Security Studies (DKI-APCSS) in Hawaii. She holds a master's in international security from the University of Warwick. Ms Duggal's work is focused on promoting peace and security in the Indo-Asia-Pacific region, with her current project investigating Europe's engagement with the region.

Dr. Stephen Nagy is a Professor at the International Christian University in Japan. He received his PhD in International Relation/Studies from Waseda University in 2008. He is also a fellow at the Canadian Global Affairs Institute (CGAI); a visiting fellow with the Japan Institute for International Affairs (JIIA); a senior fellow at the MacDonald Laurier Institute (MLI); and a senior fellow with the East Asia Security Centre (EASC). He also serves as the Director of Policy Studies for the Yokosuka Council of Asia Pacific Studies (YCAPS) spearheading their Indo-Pacific Policy Dialogue series.

Dr. Brendon J. Cannon is an Assistant Professor of International Security at Khalifa University, Abu Dhabi, UAE. He earned a Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Utah, USA (2009) and held previous academic positions in Tokyo and Nairobi. His research is at the nexus of international relations, security studies, and geopolitics. He has published on topics related to regional security and geopolitics, the arms industry, and shifting distributions of power across the Indo-Pacific. Cannon's

articles appear in *Defence Studies*, *Global Policy*, *Asian Security* and *Third World Quarterly*. His most recent book, edited with Kei Hakata, is 'Indo-Pacific Strategies: Navigating Geopolitics at the Dawn of a New Age' (Routledge, 2021).

Moderator

Dr. Jagannath Panda is the Head of the Stockholm Center for South Asian and Indo-Pacific Affairs at the Institute for Security and Development Policy, Sweden. He is also a Senior Fellow at The Hague Center for Strategic Studies, The Netherlands, and an International Research Fellow at the Canon Institute for Global Studies in Japan. Dr. Panda has testified to the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission at the US Congress. He is also the Series Editor for Routledge Studies on Think Asia. As a senior expert on China, East Asia, and the Indo-Pacific affairs, Dr. Panda's research focuses primarily on India's relations with Indo-Pacific powers (China, Japan, Korea, U.S.); China-India Relations, EU-India Relations; and EU's infrastructure, connectivity and maritime initiatives in Indo-Pacific. Dr. Panda is the principal investigator of the Korea Foundation-funded ISDP project "Framing an India-South Korea Connect in Indo-Pacific: Minilateralism to Multilateralism".

A Word of Thanks

This Webinar Report is part of the Project “Framing an India-Korea Connect in Indo-Pacific: Minilateralism to Multilateralism” carried by the Stockholm Center for South Asian and Indo-Pacific Affairs, Institute for Security and Development Policy, and supported by the Korea Foundation. ISDP expresses its gratitude for the generous support and collaboration with the Korea Foundation.

This report is prepared by Giorgia Piovesan and Ana Carolina De Oliveira Assis.



In Short

- South Korea, under the Yoon government, has shifted towards a more explicit engagement with the Indo-Pacific region, departing from the ambiguous stance of the previous administration. The Indo-Pacific policy of South Korea underscores a recognition of the liberal values-based architecture of the region and a desire to actively participate in it.
- South Korea's strategic partnership with India holds significance in the context of the Indo-Pacific, given India's leadership role and strategic location in the region.
- Key questions include Seoul's motivations for cooperation with the Quad, the potential shape of South Korea's collaboration within the Quad, and the prospects for India-Korea cooperation in the Indo-Pacific.
- Dr. Choong Yong Ahn focused on the strategic promotion of bilateral FDI between India and South Korea in areas like infrastructure, arms collaboration, and high-tech investments, citing potential benefits for both countries and highlighting the need to diversify partnerships away from China.
- Dr. Pooja Bhatt discussed trends shaping the Quad's evolution towards broader cooperation beyond traditional security, suggesting potential collaboration between India, South Korea, and other Asian countries in areas like submarine cables while highlighting obstacles such as balancing common values and particular interests.
- Dr. Brendon J. Cannon presented a cautious view of the Quad's effectiveness and partnership potential with South Korea, citing impediments such as divergent priorities and concerns over dilution of purpose, though he saw South Korea as the best option for enlargement.
- Mahima Duggal emphasized the Quad's reliance on bilateral relationships, suggesting exploring functional cooperation within and outside the Quad, particularly in areas like climate change, infrastructure, and digital connectivity. She underscored the importance of middle-power partnerships within the Quad framework amidst potential shifts in U.S. foreign policy.

Welcoming Words

By Dr. Jagannath Panda

On February 7, the Stockholm Center for South Asian and Indo-Pacific Affairs (SCSA-IPA) held a webinar on India, South Korea, and the Emerging Quad Plus Calculus with the presence of experts in Korean and Indo-Pacific issues. The webinar was moderated by Dr. Jagannath Panda, Head of the SCSA-IPA, to assess whether there is a realistic chance for India and Korea to collaborate within the Quad Plus format and which areas both countries can further to deepen their partnership.

Dr. Panda elaborated that, recently, under the Yoon administration, the Indo-Pacific has taken on unprecedented relevance for South Korea. Through its Indo-Pacific policy, the country has taken a rel-



evant turn to point its foreign policy compass more directly towards the region, which, coupled with the government's vision of the country as a Global Pivotal State (promoting democratic and liberal values, peace and prosperity through cooperation), leads to challenges about how to articulate its foreign policy agenda with a more significant partnership with other states.

Among these states, India is a potential like-minded country with which South Korea can cooperate.

Dr. Panda expressed his gratitude to the participating speakers and invited them to reflect on and answer what the potential areas for India-Korea cooperation are and how they can promote minilateral formats, in particular the Quad Plus format.

Strategic Promotion of Bilateral FDI between India and South Korea in the ROK's Indo-Pacific Prism

By Dr. Choong Yong Ahn

In his presentation, Dr. Choong Yong Ahn elaborated on bilateral FDI trade between India and South Korea and how the two countries can enhance their cooperation. Obtaining a wider insight due to his economist background, Dr. Ahn said that bilateral relations between India and South Korea can be explained by their trade and investment ties, primarily through the strategic promotion of the bilateral foreign direct established between the two countries.

Even with the convergence of the two countries' geo-economic national strategic interests - on the part of India to achieve

sustainable and autonomous development as one of the world's largest economies, and South Korea to increase the resilience of its supply chain and greater outreach of its economy to the Global South - the volume of FDI between the two countries is still low,



especially when compared to the flow between South Korea with Vietnam and Indonesia, and between India and Japan and the Netherlands.

In addition to the traditional variables that explain the border trade and FDI flow (geographical distance and Economic size, usually measured in GDP), Dr. Ahn added two variables to the discussion: psychological distance and security connectedness. These last two variables are mentioned as potential reasons for explaining the difference in FDI flows between India and South Korea compared to other partners.

However, this situation could change due to South Korea's recent strategy of diversifying its partnerships (as a way of reducing its dependence on China) and India's more positive direction toward a policy of inducing Foreign Direct Investment. In this context, Dr. Ahn listed three critical areas in which South Korea can apply its FDI in India: Infrastructure (to mitigate structural problems that persist in the Indian country in the areas of transport, electricity, and logistics, among others); arms collaboration (as a way of helping India to reduce its dependence on Russian arms, to

build trust between them and trade in products with a high added technological content); and high-tech investments (mainly in the area of semiconductors, since China is experiencing difficulties in this sector due to U.S. sanctions).

Regarding the collaboration between India and South Korea at the minilateral and regional levels, Dr. Ahn pointed to the need for the ROK to develop the ROK-ASEAN-India triangular industrial cooperation corridor to expand relations with countries in the region; as well as for ROK to

join India in the Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI) within the framework of the Quad together with Australia and Japan to mitigate dependence on China and increase the flow of FDI to India.

According to Dr. Ahn, South Korea should also be more active in the Quad's working groups (especially in the area of maritime cooperation for the Indo-Pacific), and the country should join India in seeking greater autonomy and voice in the regional order since Dr. Ahn noted with concern U.S. unilateral protec-

tionist measures in the region, which have the potential to harm less powerful allies.

Lastly, Dr. Ahn also warned of the potential detriment to the situation in the region with a possible victory for Donald Trump in the United States. This makes it essential for the ROK to expand its outreach in the global South in pursuit of a liberal system (an aspect in which India would have a lot to teach) and for the leaders of the two countries to demonstrate strong political will in order to invest in their strategic partnership.

India and South Korea Collaboration in the Maritime Domain: The Undersea Cables Case

By Dr. Pooja Bhatt

Following Dr. Ahn's presentation, Dr. Pooja Bhatt spoke about the contextual trends in which Quad currently operates and is being shaped, the potential for partnerships between India, South Korea, and other Asian countries in the area of submarine cables, and the challenges that the countries may face in their quest for greater cooperation in the Indo-Pacific.

Regarding the context in which Quad is inserted, according to Dr. Bhatt, three trends permeate and shape Quad. First, there is a noticeable shift in the Indo-Pacific countries' vision from an inner-looking defense perspective to a broader threat perception of security issues for the region as a whole; second, as Quad becomes more institutionalized (through more ministerial and high-level meetings), the areas of cooperation are shifting from traditional security topics to



non-traditional issues, such as supply chain resilience, climate change, development of critical and emerging technologies, vaccines, among others.

The third trend that permeates the context of Quad and its enlargement is the debate on interests and values as factors that drive or restrict partnerships. In this latter respect, on the one hand, since the cooperation topics expanded from a more traditional security approach to issues based on values that affect humanity as a whole (health, climate, sustainability of ocean use), there is a possibility of greater

cooperation between the parties. However, cooperation between countries can be hindered on topics such as trade barriers and the transfer and sharing of technology, which are more geared towards domestic interests.

Among the potential areas for cooperation, Dr. Bhatt pointed to the maritime field, which can benefit South Korea, India, and other Asian countries. As pointed out in the previous presentation by Dr. Ahn, India still needs to improve in the infrastructure sector, which can be overcome with South Korea's high tech-

nological apparatus, whether in ports, development, or submarine cables, among others.

More specifically, on the issue of submarine cables, three areas could be explored by the South Koreans in partnership with India as well as other Asian countries: First, the cable-laying vessel developed by the manufacturer Taihan (the world's largest underwater telecommunication network), that can work for offshore wind power management, a crucial factor for countries in South and South-east Asia, which wish to migrate to cleaner energy.

Second, another possibility for cooperation would be through the expansion of the South Korean underwater telecommunications company KT's project, which currently seeks to connect the South-east Asian belt, Japan, China,

Taiwan, Vietnam, Thailand, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Singapore. Third, the Quad can provide valuable support and reinforcement to existing international mechanisms and organizations for the protection of these areas as a law enforcement agency. Given the presence of maritime law enforcement agencies such as coastguards and border forces within the Quad, including those of India and South Korea, these resources can be effectively utilized to uphold a rules-based maritime order in the Indo-Pacific region. Cooperation between India and South Korea's coast guards could be particularly instrumental in this regard, contributing to enhanced security and governance in the maritime domain.

Dr. Bhatt also listed three obstacles that could hinder

cooperation between India, South Korea, and Quad: the search to balance common values and the particular interests of conglomerates and entrepreneurs (especially in sensitive areas for trade); the creation of independent party support for cooperation projects (since opposition may arise or future administrations may face small political and popular support for this endeavor); and how to create common governance over under-explored areas.

Finally, Dr. Bhatt expressed optimism about the Quad's progress, especially the discussions about what the Quad should look like for its functions rather than stressing over its form, and the potential benefits that India, South Korea, and other countries can bring to the Quad.

Challenges for India, South Korea, and Quad Cooperation

By Dr. Brendon J. Cannon

Dr. Brendon J. Cannon brought a more nuanced and geopolitical view of the Quad's potential to function and partner with a new partner, South Korea, and current member India. His presentation focused on the main geopolitical and domestic challenges the Quad currently faces. Despite being successfully created as a counterweight to China, even before a direct systemic conflict emerged, the Quad has some strengths and weaknesses in terms of its members' cooperation. First, the current members prefer the Quad's club-like nature to facilitate discussions about common security concerns; second, the four members can focus on their joint interests vis-à-vis China; third, the shift of the group to discuss non-traditional security topics, as supply chain, connectivity, among others, may diverge from the original purpose of the Quad, which can be a source of disagreement and also a source of cheap riding



or free riding by some parts.

For South Korea and India, even if they share common interests with the Quad, Dr. Cannon saw their priorities as divergent from the main interests of the group – with India's primary concern less on the Pacific and more on the Indian Ocean and South Asia region, and South Korea focusing more on North Korea, and the challenges of ephemeral domestic support for its support of Quad.

However, for Dr. Cannon, of the different choices to enlarge the Quad, South Korea is

by far the best option. Despite the obstacles mentioned before, South Korea brings to the table its strategic geographical relevance, shared concerns about China, and national capabilities that could be interesting for the group.

Quad Plus South Korea: Navigating Challenges and Unveiling Collaborative Horizons

By Mahima Duggal

Mahima Duggal aligned with Dr. Cannon's view on the implausibility of a Quad Plus South Korea framework, underscoring the intricate evolution of the Quad. She emphasized the extensive time and effort invested in building mutual trust and synergy, culminating in regular interactions, including annual leader meetings and various working groups. Despite its current operationalized state, the Quad lacks full institutionalization and a standing secretariat or formal charter. Ms Duggal highlighted that the Quad relies on robust bilateral relationships and the growing alignment of strategic concerns among its members. Considering the inherent structural challenges associated with the Quad Plus framework and the varied interpretations of its role by different countries, a pragmatic approach involves exploring avenues for expanding func-



tional collaboration within and outside the Quad. Across member countries, bipartisan support and continuity across different administrations signal a robust foundation for the Quad's endurance. Despite changes in leadership, such as those witnessed in the U.S., the Quad has demonstrated persistence. It seems likely to remain a fixture in the Indo-Pacific region's institutional architecture, although its specific impact is yet to be fully realized.

However, Ms Duggal was rather pessimistic regarding

the likelihood of its expansion: she said that discussing any formal expansion of the Quad is premature, even if it eventually becomes a possibility years down the road. The speaker expressed concern that South Korea's formal inclusion could dilute the Quad's central purpose of balancing China without appearing overtly anti-China. The flexibility and effectiveness of the Quad, rooted in solid bilateral relations, might be compromised: focusing on expanding functional cooperation with countries in the

region through parallel engagements and bilateral consultations might be the most beneficial approach.

Indeed, the Quad has demonstrated an expansion of its scope, incorporating economic and non-traditional security issues: South Korea's Indo-Pacific pillars -inclusiveness, trust, and reciprocity- perfectly align with subsidiary programs and working groups.

Ms Duggal identified three key areas of potential cooperation. First, the common concerns regarding climate change could be a crucial opportunity for closer collaboration, particularly in areas such as climate-focused infrastructure development, green shipping, and hydrogen initiatives. Second, quality infrastructure development represents a key area for collaboration. The significant demand for high-standard infrastructure in the Indo-Pacific necessitates a transparent, sustainable, and economically efficient framework, and it will contribute to job creation and capacity building. South Korea's active involvement in economic cooperation and bilateral projects in the region positions it favorably

for potential participation in offering technical assistance and capacity building. Finally, digital connectivity represents a strong interest in the Quad, as demonstrated by a joint effort between India and South Korea in establishing hydrogen smart cities. Leveraging South Korea's expertise, demonstrated by the successful establishment of 10 hydrogen smart cities domestically, could significantly contribute to shared initiatives. Specifically, bilateral cooperation between India and South Korea on projects like hydrogen smart cities could bring broader collaboration within the Quad framework. The ongoing trilateral dialogues on critical technologies see South Korea taking the technological lead, auspiciating collaboration with the Quad.

Still, challenges in cooperation, such as strategic differences and inconsistent technological policies, subsist. Moreover, while collaboration among Quad countries is crucial, it may not be sufficient to counterbalance China's regional influence. Therefore, collaboration should be broadened to include more like-minded partners such as other middle powers or ex-

tra-regional entities like the EU.

The speaker concluded by emphasizing the importance of middle-power partnerships, especially in the face of potential changes in U.S. foreign policy. They stress the need for greater India-South Korea cooperation within the Quad, particularly in reaching out to smaller countries in the region.

Last year, representatives from various agencies and private enterprises in India and South Korea collaborated to discuss potential future collaborations. The director of KIEP, Dr. Cho, proposed a groundbreaking green hydrogen smart city pilot project, already shaping a new era in India-Korea bilateral relations. Two Indian states, Sikkim and Rajasthan, have already formalized agreements, while three more states, Maharashtra, Jammu and Kashmir, and Uttar Pradesh, are on the verge of signing final agreements. These mega projects promise numerous benefits, attracting Korean investments, enhancing the presence of Korean enterprises in India, and fortifying bilateral economic ties. Importantly, they also create opportunities for third-coun-

try cooperation between South Korea and India, potentially evolving into larger Quad-related projects. Discussions between India and South Korea extend beyond their borders, considering joint projects in countries like Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. Though these talks are in the early stages, there is substantial potential to coordinate these bilateral efforts with those of the Quad. Furthermore, these projects offer avenues for collaboration in futuristic industries and critical technologies, where South Korea's global technological leadership can play a pivotal role, particularly in areas such as 5G infrastructure, where Samsung is recognized as the partner of choice for ASEAN countries. The recent launch of a trilateral initiative

with the U.S. and India focusing on next-generation critical and emerging technologies exemplifies this cooperation. They are set to hold their first National Security Council-led consultations on the topic in the first quarter of 2024, highlighting areas such as artificial intelligence, batteries, clean energy, biotechnology, biomanufacturing, semiconductors, and digital connectivity- with many of these areas overlapping with the Quad's interests. Despite challenges such as strategic differences and inconsistent technological policies, initiating a separate trilateral dialogue is seen as a constructive step to build cooperation, potentially serving as a building block for greater collaboration with the Quad.

Ms Duggal concluded by

emphasizing that South Korean views of the Quad are influenced by its negative opinions of China and a desire for greater alliance solidarity with the U.S. Looking ahead, the speaker urged consideration of potential shifts in U.S. foreign policy, particularly in the context of a possible return of a Trump presidency in 2024. Strengthening middle-power partnerships, especially between like-minded nations such as India and South Korea within the Quad framework, becomes crucial in navigating evolving geopolitical dynamics and reaching out to smaller countries in the region. The overall sentiment is that greater cooperation among middle powers is essential in fostering stability and collaboration in the Indo-Pacific region.

Divergent Paths: The Quad's Challenges and South Korea's Strategic Engagement

By Dr. Stephen Nagy

Dr. Stephen Nagy raised important questions about the Quad, probing into its significance for different nations and the divergent perspectives held in Tokyo, Canberra, Washington, and Delhi. He highlighted the evolving nature of the Quad, suggesting that these nations are not entirely harmonized, particularly on security matters and public good provision. The absence of clear and sustained concrete outcomes from the Quad prompted Dr. Nagy to question its reliability as a strategic alliance. He emphasized the challenge of determining where South Korea fits in and called for a closer examination of the Quad's track record in delivering tangible results.

Moving on, Dr. Nagy acknowledged the Quad's shift towards public good provision over the past years, influenced by ASEAN concerns about the Quad becoming a security-oriented initiative



and India's stance. Still, the speaker underscored China's prominent role in shaping the Quad's future: if Beijing presses its interest across the Taiwan Straits, if China becomes more belligerent towards the Philippines, it might lead to an expansion of the Quad. India's reluctance to extend its security aims into regions prioritized by Japan, specifically the South China Sea, introduces a layer of uncertainty regarding the Quad's trajectory.

Dr. Nagy suggested a functional plug-in cooperation model for South Korea within the Quad, focusing on spe-

cific areas such as maritime security, supply chains, environmental sustainability, and the digital economy to concentrate on complementary activities in its domain of expertise. A regional approach would allow South Korea to add value to the Quad maritime domain in areas such as the Sea of Japan, the Pacific Islands, and the South China Sea, South Korea. While the Japanese enthusiasm for South Korean involvement in the Indian Ocean seems uncertain, there appears to be a potential willingness from Japan to embrace increased col-

laboration with South Korea when it comes to addressing North Korean concerns.

Notable divergences within Quad members would be a crucial concern regarding the sustainability of South Korea's involvement. The transition from the Moon to Yoon administration in South Korea didn't affect the nation's global engagement and mature approach to handling diplomatic challenges, particularly with Japan. However, uncertainties arise regarding the sustainability of the current Yoon administration and Modi ad-

ministration in India, with reservations about its alignment with the liberal values endorsed by other Quad members. Moreover, South Korea's economic vulnerability makes it susceptible to challenges in achieving economic cohesion. The ad hoc cooperation within the Quad may expose South Korea to heightened economic risks. On the other hand, India, less developed and less integrated with the Chinese economy, faces a different starting point, making it less susceptible to economic cohesion.

Considering broader participation in global public good initiatives, there's a need to determine the geographical focus of cooperation—whether to distribute efforts widely or concentrate where value can be added. South Korea can contribute significantly to maritime domain awareness activities and consolidating sea lines of communication in the eastern Indo-Pacific. Other Quad members might be better suited for collaboration with the EU, addressing issues in the Western Indian Ocean and the Red Sea.

Discussion and Q&A Session

By Dr. Choong Yong Ahn, Dr. Pooja Bhatt, Mahima Duggal,
Dr. Stephen Nagy and Dr. Brendon J. Cannon
Moderated by Dr. Jagannath Panda



In the Q&A session, comments and questions from the public chat were addressed. The speakers provided insights into the Quad's purpose, potential areas of cooperation, and South Korea's stance on security and public goods.

Ms Duggal began by acknowledging Dr. Nagy's point on measuring the Quad's impact and emphasized the need to evaluate practical outcomes. She raised questions about the Quad's concrete deliverables, expressing skepticism about reported vaccine distribution numbers and urging scrutiny of functional

cooperation to ensure practical outcomes. Regarding South Korea's potential role in functional cooperation, the speaker envisioned four levels of cooperation: bilateral, coordination and cooperation, sub-quad mini laterals (such as the India-U.S.-South Korea trilateral), and the formal quad plus format involving a third country alongside the quad nations. The emphasis is on issue-based cooperation, with varying levels of participation and involvement based on the strengths and contributions of each actor.

With reference to Dr. Par-

mar's comment, Dr Nagy concurred with the necessity of acknowledging the diverse nature of Quad members, highlighting variations in their interests, priorities, and overall comprehension of the organization. He advocated for a nuanced perspective on expanding cooperation within the Quad, urging consideration of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF). In this proposed framework, the speaker suggested an a la carte approach, allowing member countries to selectively engage in specific areas of cooperation based on their

preferences and strengths.

Furthermore, the speaker underlined the importance of recognizing potential disparities among Quad members, such as differences in the geographic scope of activities like maritime domain awareness, even when there is alignment on certain issues like resilience supply chain initiatives. The emphasis is on fostering flexibility, enabling ad hoc participation tailored to the unique requirements of specific activities rather than adhering to a rigid, uniform strategy.

Dr. Cannon focused on deterrence, detente, and psychological self-help. He underscores the importance of the Quad's role as primarily a security grouping in countering Chinese hegemonism. While he cautioned against labeling it as an alliance or an "Asian NATO," he underscored its significant benefits for member countries in guaranteeing the security, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of its member nations despite disagreements on specific issues like Taiwan.

Dr. Bhatt suggested that the Quad is evolving beyond

its initial defense-centric cooperation, serving as a comprehensive framework for collaboration on various issues, including human security, such as vaccine distribution. She emphasized the Quad's role in shaping a comprehensive narrative on how security issues are understood and highlighted the flexibility it offers for countries to engage in bilateral or multilateral formats based on shared priorities and capabilities.

Professor Ahn discussed the Quad's prime purpose against China's Belt and Road Initiative and its role in preventing Chinese expansionism. He differentiated the Quad's focus from other regional partnerships and expressed South Korea's reluctance to completely decouple from China due to economic engagements and leverage over North Korea. Professor Ahn discussed the Quad's original purpose, viewing it as a response to China's BRI and actions in the South China Sea. While acknowledging the Quad's discussions on various maritime public goods issues such as climate change, green

industry, and cyber terrorism, Professor Ahn questioned the distinction between the Quad's efforts and those of regional economic partnerships like RCEP and APEC, in which China actively participates. He emphasized the need to differentiate the ultimate and prime purpose of the Quad, expressing skepticism about its blending with other public goods issues. On the other hand, South Korea maintains a cautious approach in not completely disengaging from China economically, given the existing economic ties and recognizing China's influential role with North Korea. Still South Korea's strategic security initiatives such as establishing nuclear consultations with the United States, arm export in Australia and the restoration of intelligence-sharing agreements, including GSOMIA, with Japan and the United States underscores balanced approach, which might involve an opening towards the Quad. Professor Ahn suggests that the Quad should be open to admitting China to address shared public goods concerns.

