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India and order transition in the Indo-Pacific: resisting the Quad as a 'security community'

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ABSTRACT

Managing order transition in the Indo-Pacific is as much about negotiating the *character* of regional order as it is about mounting balance of power challenges or establishing countervailing institutional arrangements. For this reason, members of the Quad have expressed ambitions to deliver shared security on the basis of collective identity and values—though at times more in discourse than in practice. This article argues that India is actively contesting and, in some ways reconfiguring, the legitimating narratives of the Quad as an Indo-Pacific 'security community'. Under the leadership of Narendra Modi, India has approached the socialising imperative of liberal identity cues selectively and ambivalently. More widely, India has declined to pursue an overt, collective strategy of Chinese containment and has propounded distinctive visions of regional security provision. India's vision for liberal order in the Indo-Pacific stands apart from the 'security community' that the other Quad partners have enunciated in their foreign policy discourse, with consequences for the future of order transition in the Indo-Pacific.

KEYWORDS India; Indo-Pacific; order transition; Quad; security community

Introduction

India's contemporary status as a crucial swing state in world politics is woven into the geopolitical imaginary of the Indo-Pacific, a region defined in large part by US-China rivalry. Yet the currency of the Indo-Pacific idea lies also in its framing by key regional actors—not least the United States, Japan, Australia and India—as a space of shared values: 'free and open'. Characterisations within and beyond the region of China as an order challenger have galvanised efforts to defend and consolidate a liberal order across the Pacific and Indian Ocean space. 'Freedom and openness' therefore represent a counterstrategy

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to China's expanding regional and global influence and stand as values upon which the security and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific depend.

As a member of the quadrilateral security dialogue or Quad, and through the caveated embrace and leverage of a liberal vision for the Indo-Pacific, India has seen a recent and swift elevation of its status and agency in the region. In the short-term, India may have overextended its strategic reach and ambition and compounded certain of its longstanding risks and challenges vis-à-vis China, as also Pakistan (Singh, 2021). Yet India's mid to long-term economic and strategic outlook holds promise, despite recent economic challenges stemming from the Covid-19 pandemic, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and their combined consequences for India's already strained defence budgets (Bansal et al., 2020; Massey, 2022). Importantly, India's significance in the region is not only that of a potential material swing state. In the contest over who gets to make order, India's enhanced agency at the level of norms and institutions matters for the future of the Indo-Pacific. India derives increasing recognition, status, trust, and material benefits from supporting what I call a *low-resolution liberal order* in the region, that is, an order whose normative content is weakly defined. A higher-resolution examination reveals that India understands several aspects of the apparently shared Quad objectives of 'freedom and openness' and the other Quad members' linkage of 'security and values' distinctively.

In this article, I argue that India certainly envisions security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific as an instrument to manage China's growing influence, but is actively contesting and, in some ways reconfiguring, the legitimating narratives of a liberal Indo-Pacific in ways that will have consequences for the future of order transition in the Indo-Pacific. Recent works have usefully examined India's cautious yet evolving material responses to the growth of Chinese power and influence and the sharpening of US-China rivalry, as also India's participation in institutional balancing in the region, including via the Quad (He, 2021; Madan, 2022; Rajagopalan, 2020). However, order transition in a region—whether through balance of power challenges or collective counterbalancing via institutions—also matters for how it prompts the negotiation of a new regional consensus on values, rights, and duties among more and less powerful states. As Goh (2013, p. 3) argues in her study of order transition in East Asia, '[t]he most crucial strategic developments … reside in these wider negotiations and contestations over ideas, collective beliefs and bargains about power, authority, security, and community; in other words, about the character of regional order.' Framed in the language of the three-pillars of order transition mapped in the introduction to this special issue, my emphasis here is broadly on the pillar of 'norms', rather than the two pillars of 'power' and 'institutions' (Introduction, this issue).

In order to examine normative contestation around the 'character of regional order' in the Indo-Pacific at a moment of order transition, I zoom in,

past important and interesting debates around the ongoing construction of the Indo-Pacific space[1], to take as my focus India's participation in the quadrilateral security dialogue, or Quad. The Quad is a grouping of four Indo-Pacific democracies—Australia, India, Japan and the United States—who reconvened in late 2017 following a failed effort to develop a cooperative grouping a decade earlier (Tow, 2019). India's pattern of engagement with the Quad reveals distinctive strategic and political visions of liberal order in the Indo-Pacific compared to the other three partners. Certainly, since 2017, India has shifted from circumspect engagement with the Quad to embracing elements of its institutionalisation, including summit level meetings and working groups. However, India's relationship with the Quad has remained caveated, leading some US analysts to refer to India as the Quad's 'weakest link' (Grossman, 2018; Lee, 2021). While in 2020, 2021 and 2022, India approved the expansion of the US-India-Japan Malabar naval exercise to include Australia, for example, Indian officials formally delinked this quadrilateral exercise from the Quad (Madan, 2022, p. 52). More widely, India has resisted any discussion of the Quad as a potential alliance that could practice collective defence, has declined invitations from the United States to enforce freedom of navigation via patrols in the South China Sea, has continued to procure Russian defence equipment that poses barriers to interoperability with Quad partners, has insisted—at odds with the other Quad partners—on charting an independent foreign policy following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and has propounded distinctive visions for regional security provision. But—importantly for this quadrilateral partnership of four *democracies*—where domestic political identity cues are concerned, too, ministers affiliated to India's ruling Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government have pushed back against open criticism from US civil society and expressions of concern from the Biden administration that India has undergone democratic erosion under the leadership of Narendra Modi. The term 'free and open' may well intend to reference the character of the Indo-Pacific *region* rather than that of individual *regional states*, but the Quad powers' persistent, collective celebration of their shared identities as democracies produces a paradox at the heart of the grouping: it has created a permissive space for illiberalism and democratic erosion in India, alongside tolerance for diversity in domestic governance models across the region.

I begin by examining, at the conceptual level, how and why we might locate social expectations of India in a 'free and open' Indo-Pacific through the community of the Quad. I draw on influential ideas of collective security, security communities, and liberal international order to map how appropriate identity cues and legitimate behaviours can become attached to social understandings of Quad membership. I draw on these established conceptual frames precisely because order contestation in the Indo-Pacific

implies, in part, the defence of previous understandings of order, but I do not assume that such an order has ever been extant or singular in the Indo-Pacific region. In the following section, I do however present evidence that supports the salience of these understandings in the contemporary policy discourse and practice of the three non-Indian Quad powers. I show how established ideas about what constitutes legitimate liberal identity and behaviour not only provide a fruitful way to analyse and interpret Quad partner policy statements, but also present clear overlaps with the ways in which Indian leaders themselves appear to make sense of, apprehend and contest social expectations of India in the region. Such understandings therefore serve as a useful lens through which to gauge where India's vision for both the Indo-Pacific is divergent from, and in some cases shapes, Quad discourse and action. They also present clues to where the Quad might be heading.

Overall, despite India's stated commitment to a low-resolution (or weakly defined) understanding of liberal values in the Indo-Pacific, India's preferred vision for liberal order stands apart from the vision of a security community that other Quad partners have enunciated at various moments (albeit themselves neither identically, nor consistently). Key are India's defence of diversity at the inter-state level—largely to create space for India's own 'liberal distinctiveness'—and insistence on inclusive rather than exclusive order management in the Indo-Pacific space (though not, I will argue, in the Indian Ocean)—largely as a means of retaining the possibility of a region that enjoys productive relations with China. At the same time, India's vision for a liberal Indo-Pacific signals directions in which India would be content for regional order to travel. In closing, I explore two possible alternative models for order management in the Indo-Pacific consonant with India's vision: a consociational model of order, and a concert of powers, both of which include China. I briefly discuss the advantages and disadvantages of these alternatives to the Quad for US-China rivalry and for India's future.

Identify formation and recognition in a bounded order: the 'free and open' Indo-Pacific

Responding to the growing salience of the Indo-Pacific, a refrain of Chinese leaders has been that the United States is seeking, through its Indo-Pacific strategy, to contain China and erode Chinese influence and partnerships in Asia (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2020b, 2020c). The Quad, in particular, has drawn accusations from Beijing that it is an alliance: a 'mini NATO' whose target is China, and a product of a US

'Cold War mentality' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2020a).

The debate over whether the Quad is an alliance or instrument of collective defence in the shape of NATO has been laid to rest—in the negative—for the time being. The joint statements released at the first (virtual) and second (in-person) 'Quad Leaders' summits in March and September of 2021 were devoid of binding mutual security commitments of the kind seen in traditional alliances. They centred instead on capacity-building issues, linked to a broad conception of security, including Covid-19 vaccines, climate change, critical technologies, infrastructure development, and cyber and space governance, in addition to regional security challenges in Afghanistan, Myanmar and North Korea (Quad Leaders, 2021a, 2021b). The third (virtual) summit in March of 2022 took place under the shadow of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, yet the joint statement yielded little more than the Quad leaders' 'commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific, in which the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states is respected and countries are free from military, economic, and political coercion' and an affirmation of the Quad 'as a mechanism to promote regional stability and prosperity' (Quad Leaders, 2022a). The fourth (in-person) summit similarly designated the Quad in a circumscribed manner as 'a force for good, committed to bringing tangible benefits to the region,' and—continuing the emphasis on capacity building and the provision of international public goods—added maritime domain awareness and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to the grouping's schedule of activity (Quad Leaders, 2022b). Analysts generally concur that the grouping is not an alliance but is instead focused on cooperation across areas of shared interest, in accordance with a very broad conception of security (Madan, 2022; Narayanan Kutty & Basrur, 2021; Rajagopalan, 2022; Smith, 2021a).

NATO should not be entirely discarded as a historical referent on the basis of which academics and practitioners model their readings of the Quad as a community of states significant to Indo-Pacific security, however. Within a decade of the end of the Cold War and despite the disappearance of its principle security purpose as a means to contain the Soviet Union, NATO had not disappeared, but instead emerged as a 'dominant institution in contemporary security relations' (Williams & Neumann, 2000, p. 357). In its early Cold War afterlife, NATO presented a range of lessons and cognitive frames that revealed the possibilities of a contemporary 'security community' as a means of structuring a region's security relations.

According to one definition, the 'fundamental collective-security aspiration' is 'to build and uphold a sense of solidarity and shared responsibility in matters affecting international peace and security' (Yost, 1998, p. 137). The early post-Cold War evolution (rather than demise) of NATO owed its

success to the institutionalisation of mechanisms that mobilised and shaped the democratic norms and identities of its expanding membership (Williams & Neumann, 2000, p. 358). This removed mutual threat perceptions and permitted the identification of common security challenges at a moment of instability and flux—the end of the Cold War. The 'new NATO' advanced collective security by uniting diverse states against threats to peace, and grew to be characterised by deep levels of trust and collective identification (Acharya, 2014; Adler, Barnett, & Smith, 1998). It produced a regional community engaged in shared efforts towards peace, prosperity and progress (although things looked rather different from Moscow).

In essence, in this first decade after the end of the Cold War, NATO took the form of what Adler (1997, p. 248) describes as a socially-constructed 'community-region' that provides compelling identity cues beyond those of the political and territorially organised nation-state. A security community functions by mobilising shared identity and values via power relations embodied and expressed through its institutions and narrative resources (Williams & Neumann, 2000, p. 360). Through this symbolic power, a security community projects the legitimate identity and appropriate action of its members. For Adler (1997, p. 250), 'institutions can help diffuse and internalise norms and knowledge about how to peacefully resolve conflicts—the norms and knowledge which form the basis of security communities—[and] they can play a critical role in the social construction of these communities.' A security community therefore implies a teleology: with institutionalisation, we should ultimately expect to see socialisation, as members of the security community seek recognition that they meet the legitimate social standards for community identity and behaviour (ibid.).

Processes of identity-construction and recognition are of particular interest during periods of order transition. As Williams and Neumann (2000, p. 364) argue, 'a period of transformation involves a struggle over the forms of identity and action which will be regarded as legitimate within the emerging order.' Since security communities are bound into a unit by 'intersubjective knowledge and shared identity,' we would expect that attempts to foster a new security community in the Indo-Pacific would centre on generating agreed identity cues, but that as states jostle for leadership, these would undergo a process of contestation (Adler, 1997, p. 250).

As the preeminent liberal actor in the Indo-Pacific and the Quad, the United States commands particular social power in the shaping and consolidation of a prospective Indo-Pacific security community. Despite President Trump's incongruous 'America First' strategy, his administration promoted an Indo-Pacific order based on the conventional building blocks of US regional engagement: a strategic order aimed at managing regional conflict, an economic order that aimed to 'advance U.S. global economic

leadership while promoting fair and reciprocal trade', and a political order favouring democratic governance (Ford, 2020; US Strategic Framework for the Indo-Pacific, 2021). The Biden administration continued and in many ways intensified these trends, though his regional outreach has been wider and deeper—he personally (though virtually) attended the ASEAN Summit in October 2021, for example, and pioneered Quad meetings at the summit level. For the Biden administration, also, as the scholar Giulio Pugliese (2022, p. 2) argues, 'democratic allies are key.' Biden has positioned the defence of democracy and the protection of human rights at the centre of US foreign policy, including through the convening of a Summit for Democracy in December 2021 (with a second Summit planned for March 2023).

One prominent counter to the notion of the Quad as a security community is the argument that both the Quad grouping and the wider Indo-Pacific concept are primarily driven by shared interests in counterbalancing China, with values playing a subordinate role, if any role at all, in regional cooperation. However, we can both accept the structuralist argument that rising Chinese power and influence in the region have fuelled varying degrees of strategic convergence between the United States, Japan, Australia and India and yet still identify powerful reasons why values matter in the Quad grouping.

First, we might read the Quad as one numerically small but significant institution within an Indo-Pacific conceived as a 'bounded order', where bounded orders comprise 'a set of institutions that have limited membership' and 'are usually regional in scope' (Mearsheimer, 2019, pp. 11–12). For Mearsheimer (2019, p. 12), the purpose of a bounded order is to allow the dominant great power in a region to 'wage security competition' with one or more powers outside the order, demanding that such a great power 'work hard to foster cooperation among the member states, coercing them if necessary.' According to this definition of a bounded order, the Indo-Pacific will be hierarchical and there will also exist cooperative rules of the game. While Mearsheimer is more interested in what he understands to be the 'Realist' *function* of a bounded order (waging security competition outwards), there is no reason why we should not examine the internal criteria for membership of any given institution within a bounded order or the prescriptions or prohibitions of its social context, especially if they help us to understand the distinctive behaviour of a state such as India in relation to that order. In other words, identifying the common interests at the root of the Indo-Pacific and the Quad grouping does not rule out the presence of identity scripts that resemble those of a security community.

Second, what matters for India's behaviour are *perceptions* of such scripts. India has long contested key elements of the US-led liberal international order because India's experiences of that order have not always been positive (Ganguly, 2013; Ollapally, 2018; Piccone, 2016; Virk, 2013). From the

vantage point of New Delhi, the United States in particular has a frustrating track record of unilateralism and Indian leaderships have viewed liberal international institutions as calibrated to serve the interests of their great power architects rather than the interests of all (Singh, 2020, p. 18). India's longstanding and continued ambivalence toward the liberal international order stems not from endogenous, static, unchanging traits, such as a commitment to 'nonalignment' or 'strategic autonomy' preserved like *achār* (pickle), but from perceptions of ongoing risks linked to that order. It is the continued management of those risks that demands India's continued policy commitments of 'nonalignment' or 'strategic autonomy'. Given the recent history of post-Cold War efforts on the part of successive US administrations to integrate non-Western states into the liberal international order through democracy promotion, economic liberalisation, and even military intervention, US 'democracy talk' in the context of Quad membership likely conveys more than simply a rhetorical veneer for a security partnership to states outside of the core of the liberal international order. As we shall see, the vehemence of Indian reactions to US criticism of India's deviation from specific liberal scripts suggests that there are high stakes at play.

Third, since the Indo-Pacific order is relatively new and still in flux, and the Quad grouping still in the process of institutionalisation, we would expect India to want to shape these formations in ways that reflect its own identity and interests. If we expect India, as a rising power, to possess and advance 'different understandings of normative appropriateness that make it difficult to find a common denominator regarding which norms and rules of governance should prevail and what status should be accorded to states', then we can also expect to see Indian 'authority claims' or efforts to see India's choices about how best to manage security in the Indo-Pacific prevailing, in service of both material dividends and reputational gain (Müller, Rauch, & Wurm, 2017, p. 12; Pouliot, 2016). Successive Indian leaderships have been clear that India has special contributions to make to the management of international affairs (Sullivan, 2015). Moreover, if the United States implicitly seeks to mobilise counter-China institutions and networks in service of the defence of 'Western' civilisation and enlightenment values, an India whose current leadership has sought to emphasise a distinctive brand of Indian civilisational identity might be particularly keen to stress and imprint Indian difference and distinctiveness. We can therefore expect that India will seek to place its own normative imprint on any liberal order for the Indo-Pacific region. The current context of flux and the pivotal significance attributed to India's balancing function in the region by order defenders appear to be giving India greater agency over the kinds of identity and behaviour that can be considered legitimate in a liberal space.

We should be clear that none of these social goals rank above India's serious security concerns in the region. Rather, they coproduce the overall framing logics of India's efforts to structure security relations in the Indian Ocean and wider Indo-Pacific.

Do the non-Indian members of the Quad seek a security community?

Unsurprisingly at a moment of order transition, both values and security feature prominently in the 'Indo-Pacific talk' of Quad policymakers. As early as 2001, Dennis Blair, then Commander-in-chief of the US Pacific Command, explicitly championed the idea of a post-Cold War security community in the Asia-Pacific. He proposed building out the post-WWII bilateral security alliance system of the United States 'to form a web of regional relationships and capabilities that reinforce security' (Acharya, 2014; Blair & Hanley, 2001, p. 16). A turning point in the early 2000s saw National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice (2002) leveraging values to deliver security by speaking of 'a balance of power that favours freedom.' Michael J. Green, who served on the staff of the National Security Council from 2001 to 2005, would later opine that 'democracy promotion and security cooperation among like-minded democracies will remain a central objective of American foreign policy in Asia because those elements magnify American power and facilitate US goals' (Green & Twining, 2008, p. 1). For Green, 'the ideational balance of power in Asia directly affects the material balance of power' (ibid).

A decade later, in 2017, President Donald Trump (2017) announced his administration's vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific at the APEC Summit in Vietnam. At this summit, Trump framed his vision inclusively, describing the Indo-Pacific as 'a place where sovereign and independent nations, with diverse cultures and many different dreams, can all prosper side-by-side, and thrive in freedom and in peace.' He defined the free and open Indo-Pacific as centred on 'individual rights, and freedom of navigation and over-flight, including open shipping lanes,' albeit while emphasising China's unfair trade practices and the resultant trade deficits, in line with his wider hard-line economic nationalism.

In a 2018 speech at the Shangri-La Dialogue, US Secretary of Defense James Mattis linked ideas of freedom and openness in the Indo-Pacific explicitly to the Quad and to the maintenance of regional peace and stability. Mattis opted not refer to the Quad in the main text of his speech, but in his impromptu response to a question about this omission he observed that,

> all four [of Australia, Japan and India and the United States] are democracies. That's the first thing that jumps out at you. So we have four democracies that are talking about how do we maintain stability? How do we maintain open

> navigation? How do we talk about basically keeping things on a peaceful dispute-resolution path? And I think … it's absolutely an idea fit for its time *(Mattis, in* Mattis & Chipman, 2018).

A June 2019 report on the Indo-Pacific by the Pentagon emphasised the idea of a 'networked region' and stated that '[the US] vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific recognizes the linkages between economics, governance, and security that are part of the competitive landscape throughout the region' (US Department of Defense, 2019, p. 3). In August 2020 at a US-Indian strategic dialogue, Deputy Secretary of State Stephen Biegun (2020) spoke of the Quad representing 'four extraordinarily solid democracies' and said that a NATO-like initiative 'could be something that would be very much worthwhile to be explored.' And in October 2020, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo (cited in Akita & Sugiura, 2020) expressed the desire to institutionalise a values-based Quad as a means to contain China. In a media interview just before the Quad foreign ministers meeting in Tokyo, he stated, 'Once we've institutionalized what we're doing—the four of us together—we can begin to build out a true security framework' (ibid.). This framework, he declared, would produce a 'fabric' that could 'counter the challenge that the Chinese Communist Party presents to all of us.' Pompeo offered a wide but values-specific definition of a security framework:

> Remember, when one talks about security, one's talking about economic capacity and the rule of law, the ability to protect intellectual property, trade agreements, diplomatic relationships, all of the elements that form a security framework. It's not just military. It's much deeper … It's the kind of power that democracies have [and] that authoritarian regimes can never deliver on (ibid).

After assuming office in January 2021, President Biden, too, emphasised the value of like-minded Quad countries working together for security ends. After early uncertainty over whether his incoming administration would embrace the idea of the Indo-Pacific and further the Quad, he did both, convening Quad Leaders meetings in 2021 and 2022. At the March 2021 meeting, the first multilateral summit he hosted as president (albeit virtually), he stated that the purpose of the Quad was to bring about 'a free and open Indo-Pacific' to 'achieve stability' and ensure the region was 'free from coercion' (Quad Leaders, 2021a). He described the September summit as a 'group meeting of democratic partners who share a world view and have a common vision for the future, coming together to take on key challenges of our age' (Quad Leaders, 2021b). That a range of US actors have, though with different shades of emphasis, linked democratic governance to security and expressed ambitions to further institutionalise the Quad presents support for the claim that the United States has, in discourse at least, presented the Quad as a potential security community. As one

commentator has argued, 'The United States is clearly bent on competing with China and autocracy more broadly' (Scott, 2021).

Japan, too, has been a major and early rhetorical promoter of a values-based Indo-Pacific order. In his first term, from 2006 to 2007, the late Prime Minister Shinzo Abe championed the concept of an Arc of Freedom and Prosperity, which encompassed the Indian and Pacific Oceans and sought to counterbalance China. Pugliese (2022, p. 4) argues that Abe's discourse around 'universal values such as democracy, human rights and the rule of law, did not replace the traditional Japanese pragmatism in foreign and security policy' and was intended to strengthen relations with India, Australia and Southeast Asia, as well as 'bolster the US-Japan alliance'. In 2007, Abe delivered his 'Confluence of the Two Seas' speech before the Indian parliament and spoke not only of the 'dynamic coupling' of the Indian and Pacific oceans—a precursor to the Indo-Pacific space—but characterised them as 'seas of freedom and of prosperity.' Later, in a 2012 article published soon after returning to leadership, Abe (2012) stressed that 'Japan's diplomacy must always be rooted in democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights' and envisioned a 'security diamond'—'a strategy whereby Australia, India, Japan, and the US state of Hawaii form a diamond to safeguard the maritime commons stretching from the Indian Ocean region to the western Pacific.' He expressed readiness 'to invest, to the greatest possible extent, Japan's capabilities in this.'

If Abe's 2012 statement was, as one analyst argues, 'an explicit re-endorsement of the Quad which had lapsed under Chinese pressure five years earlier,' then he was clearly discursively linking shared democratic values to a blueprint for regional security and projecting a common values-based vision to all three Quad partners (Reilly, 2020, p. 119). By 2019, Abe's enthusiasm had not dimmed—the scope of his ambition had increased. In a speech before the Japanese Diet, he declared,

> We will make the vast seas and skies from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific Ocean the foundation of peace and prosperity from which every country, whether large or small, can benefit. Japan will create a 'free and open Indo-Pacific,' working together with all the countries that share this vision (Abe, 2019).

Across Abe's tenure and among his successors, Japan's Indo-Pacific vision shifted to placing less emphasis on democracy, in favour of liberal values such as the rule of law and transparency, in support of Japan's economic engagement in the Indo-Pacific region. Yet at the same time, Tokyo increasingly looks to the Quad as 'a coalition of like-minded countries … for help in stabilizing its security environment' (Smith, 2021b).

Australia's 2017 foreign-policy White Paper introduced the vision of an 'open, inclusive and prosperous Indo-Pacific region, in which the rights of all states are respected' (Australian Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade,

2017). It set out Australia's intention to work in small, plurilateral groupings within the Indo-Pacific, and underscored economic, security and domestic governance synergies with liberal powers across the region, including Japan, the United States, and India. The White Paper signalled a decisive re-emergence of values in Australian foreign policy:

> Australia's values are a critical component of the foundation upon which we build our international engagement. Our support for political, economic and religious freedoms, liberal democracy, the rule of law, racial and gender equality and mutual respect reflect who we are and how we approach the world (Australian Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade, 2017).

As Reilly (2020, p. 118) observes, within the 2017 White Paper, the idea of a rules-based international order and democratic values are 'frequently discussed in tandem, or seen as complementary.' However, like Tokyo, Canberra has also emphasised the need to embrace the full diversity of states in the Indo-Pacific. Apart from the White Paper's early definition of the Indo-Pacific as an inclusive space, Prime Minister Scott Morrison (2019) clarified in 2019 that 'it … does not serve our national interests when international institutions demand conformity rather than independent cooperation on global issues.' He contended that, 'The world works best when the character and distinctiveness of independent nations is preserved within a framework of mutual respect.' The term 'rules-based order' has facilitated this diversity by operating in an inclusive way towards liberal democratic and non-democratic regimes alike (Reilly, 2020, p. 118).

Australia's stand for inclusiveness in the Indo-Pacific region stemmed from fears of alienating or angering China. As Morrison made clear in 2019, 'even during an era of great power competition, Australia does not have to choose between the United States and China.' Australia's position on China was already hardening, however, owing to national controversies over foreign influence and interference and perceptions of China's growing maritime influence and assertiveness in the region (Medcalf, 2019). It shifted decisively after Beijing launched a trade war in the wake of Canberra's call for an independent investigation into the origins of the coronavirus pandemic (Sheftalovich & Lau, 2021). This precipitated what one analyst called a 'remarkable collapse in Australia-China relations and a massive deterioration in Australia's security outlook' (Shoebridge, cited in Sheftalovich & Lau, 2021).

Morrison's key June 2021 foreign policy speech entitled 'A world order that favours freedom,' accordingly displayed signs of greater defensiveness. Morrison (2021) argued that 'patterns of cooperation within a liberal, rules-based order' were 'under renewed strain.' He declared that Australia's challenge was 'to reinforce, renovate and buttress a world order that favours freedom' and argued,

> Our interests are inextricably linked to an open, inclusive and resilient Indo-Pacific region … And to a strategic balance in the region that favours

> freedom and allows us to be who we are – a vibrant liberal democracy, an outward-looking open economy, a free people determined to shape our own destiny in accordance with our own national sovereignty (ibid).

Assuming the premiership in May 2022, Anthony Albanese pledged a reset in Australia's ties with China and a shift away from Morrison's 'anti-China strategy' (Martin, 2022). His 'first act' as prime minister was to attend the fourth Quad leaders' summit in Tokyo, during which he declared his government 'committed to the Quad', though in very general security terms ('better economic security, better cybersecurity, better energy security and better environmental and health security'), and noted that 'Our cooperation is built on the values that we share. A commitment to representative democracy, the rule of law and the right to live in peace' (Albanese, 2022).

In the recent past, the United States, Japan and Australia have all championed through their discourse the idea of a security community whose purpose is to defend aspects of an existing liberal international order. They have framed the Quad within a wider ambition to establish a community-region in the Indo-Pacific that delivers shared security on the basis of liberal values. Japan and Australia have both grappled with visions for the region that underscore inclusiveness and a tolerance for diversity among states. With the sharp downturn in relations with China, Australia emphasised the importance of liberal values to hard security more than before, though the 2022 change of government looks set to cast the idea of security more widely. Taken together, the linkage of security and values in the Indo-Pacific talk of these three Quad partners present identity cues for membership within the Quad community.

Indian resistance to the Quad as security community

A dilemma facing Washington (in particular since 2021), Tokyo and Canberra is that their embrace of India as a fellow Quad democracy has coincided with growing illiberalism within India's domestic democratic governance (Markey, 2022). Since 2014, democratic erosion under two successive governments under the leadership of Narendra Modi has led to assessments that India forms part of a new wave of global autocratisation (Maerz, Lührmann, Hellmeier, Grahn, & Lindberg, 2020). India's elevation as a crucial democratic partner in the Indo-Pacific sits awkwardly with external (and also domestic) readings of India's illiberal domestic political trends. Moreover, India's growing indispensability and recognition as a state that will contribute to a liberal, rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific at times serve to validate—indirectly—the Indian government's illiberal domestic policies. Biden invited Modi to speak as part of a select group at the opening plenary of Biden's Summit for Democracy in late 2021, for example, and earlier in the same year, at India's flagship conference on geopolitics, the Raisina

Dialogue, Morrison (2021a) declared a that India and Australia shared a passion 'for our democratic freedoms, our commitment to the rule of law, a free and open Indo-Pacific.'

The United States, in particular, has privately expressed disquiet over backsliding on human rights and democracy to Indian leaders. Members of US Congress have raised concerns over the detention of political leaders and significant curbs on civil liberties in Kashmir; legislation that threatens the status of minorities, especially Muslims; and the decline of religious freedom and the space for dissent (Madan, 2021). Under the new Biden administration, in March 2021, the US Department of State (2021b) raised concerns over India's human rights record. During his visit to Delhi in July 2021, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken (2021) walked a careful line, emphasising the shared values of the United States and India and their common belief in 'human dignity, in equality of opportunity, the rule of law, fundamental freedoms, including freedom of religion and belief', disguising, as Indian journalist Prem Shankar Jha (2021) observed astutely, 'admonition as praise'. Blinken also urged both countries to move ever closer to meeting their democratic ideals.

Even if the United States and Australia have conveyed identity cues by signalling that India's attractiveness lies precisely in its democracy, diversity and tolerance, India has faced no obvious penalties or challenges in relation to its Quad membership or its bilateral relationship with each country. Notably, Abe did postpone a visit to Assam in India's Northeast in August 2020 amid violent protests over parliamentary approval of a new citizenship law understood to be unconstitutional (Mehta, 2020; Reynolds, 2020). In general, however, India's increased international status as a member of the Quad has arguably politically strengthened the Modi leadership, lending weight to its efforts to project to domestic audiences a wholesale transformation of the nation, including in India's foreign policy (Hall, 2019). It has also sharpened the confidence of some Indian leaders that India can shape the regional order of the Indo-Pacific. In late 2020, External Affairs Minister (EAM) and a chief architect of India's regional (and wider foreign policy) strategy, S. Jaishankar (2020), declared to an audience of Indian business leaders that, 'The Indo-Pacific speaks as much for the changes in the world as in our own aspirations. It reflects a New India.'

Liberal values and Indian contestation

Welcomed to a team of 'order defenders' by the most significant post-Cold War liberal actor and two of its most significant liberal allies in the Indo-Pacific, India's vision for leadership in the region must contend with entrenched ideas about what constitutes the legitimate identity and action of

a liberal polity. The lack of obvious sanction for India's democratic backsliding has not meant that the Indian Government is comfortable with the implicitly didactic democracy speak of Quad partners. Indian officials have sought to resist the imposition of fixed or over-specified interpretations of liberal values.

One form of Indian contestation has centred on recent efforts by the Hindu nationalist BJP-led Government to locate rhetorically the origins of Indian democracy as chronologically prior to India's experience of European colonialism. This serves to militate against a fairly ingrained narrative in academic, journalistic and policy circles in North America and Western Europe of democracy having diffused historically outwards from the West, with post-colonial nations such as India only weakly or incompletely able to replicate it. While earlier, Indian leaders tended to emphasise that India's post-colonial experience of state formation—such as insurgency or communal conflict—posed particular challenges to Indian democracy, BJP leaders have instead sought to present Indian democracy as derived from India's ancient civilisational ethos and by implication, immanently great and in no need of contemporary, external 'correction.' For example, in 2019, the late and then-External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj (2019) declared at the Raisina Dialogue, that India 'stands for a democratic and rules based international order' but that India's engagement with the world was 'rooted in its civilisational ethos: co-existence, pluralism, openness, dialogue and democratic values.' At the 2021 Summit for Democray, Modi (2021) made a more elaborate statement, claiming evidence of elected republican city-states in India 2500 years ago and referencing a 10th century temple inscription from the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu that described a system of self-governance. Following a wider Hindu nationalist narrative that foreign invasions and European colonialism interrupted the trajectory of a glorious and ancient Hindu civilisational past, he further underscored that,

> Centuries of colonial rule could not suppress the democratic spirit of the Indian people. It again found full expression with India's independence, and led to an unparalleled story in democratic nation-building over the last 75 years (Modi, 2021).

Another form of contestation has been more overt. In early 2021, the Washington-based Freedom House (FH)—an organisation that conducts research and advocacy on democracy, political freedoms, and human rights—released a report that demoted India from 'free' to 'partly free' for the first time since its upgrade in the opposite direction in the late 1990s (Freedom House, 2021a). While FH (2021b, 2021c) self-describes as 'an independent watchdog organization,' in the financial year 2020–2021 it received 92 percent of its funding from different US government agencies. In addition to its activities 'dedicated to the expansion of freedom and democracy around the world,' FH's evaluations of democracy abroad have tended to

align with US interests and favour friendly countries (Herman & Chomsky, 2010; Steiner, 2016). That India was demoted to 'partly free' after five years of US-Indian strategic convergence—the United States designated India as a Major Defense Partner in 2016—ran counter to this trend and triggered consternation in the Indian Government. A BJP spokesman declared that the 2021 FH report, which directly argued that Modi and his party were driving India toward authoritarianism, was 'biased and (politically) motivated' (Verma, cited in Kumar, 2021).

Around the same time as the release of the 2021 FH report, the Swedish Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Institute found that 'the world's largest democracy'– India—had turned into an electoral autocracy' (the United States under Trump was similarly indicted as an 'autocratising' state) (Alizada et al., 2021). Both reports triggered questioning of India's EAM, S. Jaishankar, about the management of India's international image at a major and widely publicised media event in India. Jaishankar's scathing response directly targeted the symbolic power and identity cues that hold sway in the liberal international order. He also drew attention to what he saw as hypocrisy among that order's chief proponents:

> you have a set of self-appointed custodians of the world who find it very difficult to stomach that somebody in India is not looking for their approval, is not willing to play the game [in the way] they want it to be played. So … they invent their rules, their parameters, pass their judgements and then make out as though this is some kind of global exercise … I am quite self-assured. I don't need certification from outside, certainly not from people who clearly have an agenda (Jaishankar, 2021a).

Later, during a discussion at the EU Foreign Affairs Council, Jaishankar (2021b) did not claim, as more hard-line Hindu nationalist ideologues might have done, that liberal values had their origins in ancient Hindu civilisation. But he did question whether they 'belong' to the West: 'today, when you speak about a liberal order, when we speak about trust and transparency, I think these are issues which at one time may have been more central to a western discourse but are today increasing shared beyond the western world.'

New Delhi's resistance not only centres on contestation around domestic liberal values, but regional ones, too. In their first joint statement, the Quad Leaders (2021a) declared their support for the liberal values of freedom and openness in the Indo-Pacific and pledged to 'prioritize the role of international law in the maritime domain, particularly as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).' India's stance on freedom of navigation is different, however, to that of the United States (a non-signatory to UNCLOS). India, like China, asserts rights to restrict the activities of foreign military vessels in its Exclusive

Economic Zone, in opposition to US readings of customary law, and as a consequence India has been a longstanding (and unhappy) target of US freedom of navigation operations (Roy-Chaudhury and Sullivan de Estrada, 2022). India did accept the outcome of arbitration proceedings through UNCLOS over its maritime boundary dispute with Bangladesh in 2014, and has rhetorically, though carefully, supported the outcome of the 2016 arbitral tribunal that favoured the Philippines' claims over those of China in the South China Sea. Yet India has avoided participation in US freedom of navigation patrols in the South China Sea, despite persistent invitations from Washington to do so. The meanings of freedom and openness for India in the maritime sphere, too, are distinctive.

Taken together with India's reluctance to embrace the Quad as an alliance-like institution—as we will see—the Modi government's contestation around domestic and regional liberal values presents a clear picture of Indian resistance to taking on the role of socialisee among Indo-Pacific democracies.

Strategic differences within the Quad

Given the pre-existing close security alliances of the United States, Japan and Australia, it is apparent that the Quad's focus on non-traditional security issues comes 'at New Delhi's insistence' (Rajagopalan, 2022). More widely, India has signalled an absence of will to pursue an overt collective strategy of Chinese containment. This may be less due to a concern over strategic autonomy: the United States and India have recently and rapidly consolidated a significant bilateral defence partnership (US Department of State, 2021a). New Delhi's appetite for naval exercises, intelligence sharing and military logistical arrangements at the bilateral and trilateral levels has grown well beyond earlier expectations. Since the tense—and at one point violent—border standoff between Chinese and Indian troops in the Galwan Valley in mid-2020; in the context of fears that China may seek to challenge India in the Indian Ocean; and against a backdrop of China's reassertion of territorial claims to Arunachal Pradesh and pressure on the India-Bhutan-China border, New Delhi's appetite for strategic partnerships has grown, and its caution over strategic cooperation, with the United States in particular, has receded—to an extent (Rajagopalan, 2017, p. 5). Yet New Delhi appears to harbour concerns about a deeper institutionalisation of the Quad along hard security lines. In a 2020 survey of strategic elites in Quad countries undertaken by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, India was the most sceptical of all four Quad partners about the idea of creating a standing Quad military task force under the direction of a joint command (Buchan & Rimland, 2020).

India also continued to procure Russian defence equipment, most conspicuously the S-400 missile defence system, despite the threat of sanctions under the US Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act. High-level defence cooperation with Russia poses barriers to India's interoperability with the other three Quad partners, whose alliance partnerships among themselves permit deeper levels of advanced technological exchange. As one US career naval officer commented—in a personal capacity—'An honest evaluation of the Quad militarily will highlight the fact that India is hampering its overall effectiveness. What's interesting is that this is by choice' (Lee, 2021).

The importance of India's relationship with Russia as an indicator of India's commitment to strategic autonomy has become particularly salient following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. India opted for neutrality toward Russia within official pronouncements; abstention from successive votes in the UN Security Council, General Assembly, and Human Rights Council that condemned Russian aggression in Ukraine; and failed to openly identify Russia as the instigator of the crisis (Tellis, 2022). Attentive listeners might have heard India's coded criticism of Russia's actions during Jaishankar's intervention in the Indian parliamentary debate on Ukraine in March 2022. There, he detailed how India had 'called for immediate cessation of violence and end to all hostilities', reiterated 'at the highest levels of our leadership to all parties concerned that there is no other choice but the path of diplomacy and dialogue,' and emphasized 'to all member States of the UN that the global order is anchored on international law, UN Charter and respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty of states' (Jaishankar, 2022).

However, for members of the Quad, India's neutrality on the international stage has been disappointing, since it signals divergence on fundamental issues of global order. The convergence of some Quad interests within the Indo-Pacific does not equate to India's straightforward embrace of US, Japanese or Australian ideas of global order. As Jaishankar (cited in Times Now, 2022) argued in November 2022, 'the Quad was never envisioned as four countries having identical positions on all issues.'

In short, India has resisted the formation of the Quad as a grouping that practices collective defence and adopts identical strategic positions in favour of a loose association whose activities have centred on capacity building and international public goods, in line with India's preferred approach to influence-building in its own 'strategic backyard,' the Indian Ocean Region. This choice appears to have successfully impacted the remit of Quad activities: while 2021 saw the elevation of the Quad through a Summit-level meetings, its working groups and proposed activities centred on soft, not hard, security issues. The establishment and announcement of AUKUS in September 2021, a trilateral security partnership between the

USA, UK and Australia to provide Australia with nuclear-powered submarines in the Indo-Pacific region, appeared to overshadow not only the second Quad Leaders Summit that followed shortly afterwards, but to present a clear comparative grouping of western, liberal democratic states in an explicit alliance partnership, for the purpose of containing China, and ready to share and develop and secure high technology among themselves.

Regional logics as viewed from New Delhi

Indian leaders have certainly challenged the dominant logics of a values-based security community. At the same time, however, they have also contested the regional logics of the space within which the Quad is imagined. In a major statement at the 2018 Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, Modi (2018) first set out his vision for the Indo-Pacific, arguing that 'India does not see the Indo-Pacific region as a strategy or as a club of limited members' and that India instead prioritises regional 'inclusiveness', recognising in particular the 'centrality of ASEAN to any ordering and decision-making in the Indo-Pacific.' A similar framing was evident within the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative, launched by India in 2019, which aims to be inclusive rather than exclusive, appears centred on rules based on basic common interests rather than shared values, and has no plans for institutionalisation. It is, in other words, not like the Quad. Nor does it resemble India's vision for the Indian Ocean.

India's vision for the Indian Ocean region has stood apart from its framing of the Indo-Pacific region. In March 2015, Prime Minister Modi visited three small but significant Indian Ocean island states—Seychelles, Mauritius and Sri Lanka. During this tour, he unveiled India's strategic vision for the Indian Ocean: Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR). In the same year, Jaishankar (2015), then Foreign Secretary, noted that 'considerable thought has been given to an integrated Indian Ocean strategy' and that 'collective action and cooperation will best advance peace and security in our maritime region.' Significantly, however, he underscored that 'those who are resident in this region have the primary responsibility for peace, stability and prosperity in the Indian Ocean.' Modi (2017) repeated this sentiment at the 2017 Raisina Dialogue, to an international audience.

SAGAR seeks to differentiate India's leadership from the modus operandi of other regionally-active major powers and to reassure littoral states as India's maritime influence grows. Yet as a vision for the Indian Ocean Region, it also seems designed, at the level of identity and values, to exclude China. To an audience of Indian Ocean states at the second Indian Ocean Conference in Colombo September 2017, Jaishankar characterised the Indian Ocean as an 'English speaking lake' (implicitly not a Chinese-speaking one) and argued that though the Ocean's 'deep historical traits' were 'pluralism and syncretism', they had been

'strengthened by liberalism as well.' Subtly invoking coercive and extractive forms of Chinese engagement in the region, he added that,'[t]he Indian Ocean is about people. It must be approached with empathy, not as a business. It must be treated as a partner, not as an arena. The goal must be inter-dependence, not dominance' (Jaishankar, 2017). All of this sounded as though India were setting out the terms for a liberal security community in the Indian Ocean, but with India as the chief arbiter of social power. In 2019, at the Third Indian Ocean Conference, Jaishankar declared that India's SAGAR vision was intended to be 'consultative, democratic and equitable'. These subtle, rhetorical efforts at the social exclusion of China contrast markedly with India's more inclusive visions of the Indo-Pacific.

At the same time, however, India's concerns over Chinese influence in the Indian Ocean region have led to New Delhi's embrace of major power engagement in the Indian Ocean. By 2021, India had agreed a joint strategic vision of India-France cooperation in the Indian Ocean, and was planning operational coordination in the Western Indian Ocean with the United Kingdom, having already moved in this direction with the United States. As Jaishankar (2019) framed it in late 2019, 'the independent mindset that drove non-alignment and then protected our strategic equities can today be better expressed in multiple partnerships.' However, it is clear that India's appetite for the presence and influence of other regional and extra-regional powers in the Indian Ocean has limits. According to one maritime commentator, the Indian Ocean faces a risk of 'getting over-crowded sooner or later with defence pacts and multiple navies crisscrossing one another' and New Delhi should 'check against independent "friendly intrusion" by non-regional friends' (Moorthy, 2020).

Ultimately, within the Indo-Pacific, India's embrace of liberal identity and values has currency at a moment of flux in which India seeks status enhancement and a short-term security bulwark against China. India does not currently seem committed to an Indo-Pacific security community. More widely, if the underlying logics of the Indo-Pacific or the Quad are exclusivist and centre on a shared enemy image, they will sharpen the potential for rivalry in the region. As Williams and Neumann (2000, pp. 360–361) point out in relation to the early post-Cold War development of NATO, the decision to centre the new security community on liberal democratic values provided only limited roles to states outside the community-region. NATO's reconstruction as a security community left the Russian leadership with a choice of only two roles: 'Russia could either be an apprentice striving to join Western civilisation, thus entailing an acceptance of NATO enlargement as inevitable and positive; or, alternatively, Russia could be a counter-civilisational force, entailing opposition to NATO enlargement.' China appears to have already made its own choice in relation to the Indo-Pacific, and the strong institutionalisation of an exclusivist liberal order in the Indo-Pacific would force Beijing to express this.

Conclusion: India's imprint on Indo-Pacific futures

In the above discussion, I have argued that India, within and beyond the Quad, is contesting the structures of social knowledge that determine who is a legitimate liberal actor in the Indo-Pacific. It is doing so 'upwards', in particular vis-à-vis the United States and other custodians of a Western-led liberal international order, and 'downwards' via a discrete liberal imaginary of an Indian Ocean under Indian leadership. India's rejection of traditional alliance formation, resistance to formal institutions, insistence on inclusiveness, and refusal to accept external judgements on its democratic identity have already made their imprint on order building on the Indo-Pacific. Crucially, each of these Indian preferences will limit any future for a Quad cast as an exclusivist security community that pivots on US conceptions of order. The idea of the Quad as a liberal security community could become so diffuse that it no longer has much meaning, or the United States could decide that the Quad is no longer a viable mechanism through which to leverage security and liberal values in tandem and therefore pursue alternatives. The AUKUS arrangement presents perhaps one sign that this is so. As Jyoti Malhotra, a prominent Indian journalist asked, in the wake of the announcement of its establishment, 'does AUKUS expand the Quad tent of democracies or does it diminish it?' (Malhotra, 2021).

The United States under the Biden administration faces a 'security-democracy dilemma' as it seeks to maintain and advance security cooperation with an Indian leadership presiding over growing illiberalism and democratic erosion (Carothers & Press, 2021). India under Modi faces the same pairing of tensions but in a different way: both India's growing security threats in the wake of the violent episode with China at the border in June 2020 and its concerns at the potential—real or imagined—for US foreign policy activism in defence of democracy and human rights threaten Indian autonomy. A rigidly institutionalised alliance-like structure for the Quad could lock India into a logic of polarisation against China with no option for dialling back should India's interests require this. At the same time, while India will leverage the minilateral potential of the Quad for short or mid-term gain, India remains as averse as ever (but possibly more vocally than before) to accepting the role of socialisee into the legitimate social standards for identity and behaviour in a community of liberal states. New Delhi's refusal to condemn Russia's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine further underscores how strongly entrenched are beliefs that India's choices would be diminished were it to take sides at a moment of system-level geopolitical and ideological polarisation.

In negotiating the Indo-Pacific as a new kind of liberal space, India is currently shaping order towards greater pluralism and diversity at the inter-state level, in ways that are inconsistent with the discourse and rhetoric of the United States and its partners and allies. This may ultimately allow for a blunting of US-China rivalry—a positive outcome. However, it does pose concerns

for the trajectory of Indian democracy. It remains to be seen how far India's social power in negotiating the Indo-Pacific as a plural and rules-based space will require India to deliver an aspirational model of democracy at home. Looking at India's local ambitions in the Indian Ocean—through the SAGAR vision in particular—India appears content with collective security only if it is the one determining the values, and if those values respect the core norm of state sovereignty first and foremost. This may be enough to win the allegiance of elites in smaller states in the Indian Ocean. To exert wider and deeper influence across the societies of region, however, India may need to work harder to recover its former soft power as a country able to reconcile rapid economic development and social transformation with democratic values.

If a security community at the level of the Indo-Pacific does not work for India, what could be alternatives? India's defence of pluralism (at the inter-state level) and insistence on inclusion point to the possibility of what Acharya (2014, p. 159) terms a consociational order—'a relationship of mutual accommodation among unequal and culturally diverse groups that preserves each group's relative autonomy and prevents the hegemony of any particular group/s.' A consociational order would meet criticisms that the Quad threatens ASEAN centrality and is exclusivist. The question arises, however, of whether India would be satisfied sharing power with weaker states in such an order, since—despite India's rhetoric in favour of regional power sharing—consociational orders appear unlikely to deliver the status dividends of an elite club. Elite club membership in world politics has been a major preoccupation of Indian foreign policy elites since at least the end of the Cold War, and likely earlier (Basrur & Sullivan de Estrada, 2017).

Instead, India may prefer to interpret inclusiveness in terms of a concert of great powers in a multipolar region or world, with itself included, of course, as one of those powers. As a mode of ordering in world politics, a concert of powers, too, depends on institutionalisation. It is predicated on the mutual recognition of great powers and intends to manage relations between them, aiming to reduce but not rule out conflict (Humphreys, 2017). Moreover, as Humphreys (2017) argues, 'a concert is a feasible and relatively costless means of preserving pluralism' and 'a rule-governed pluralism is sufficiently good for now.' The Quad, since it is exclusionary of one (or more) of today's great powers, is not a concert. A concert would provide an order that is inclusive to all great powers, offers the possibility of institutional avenues to manage US-Chinese rivalry, and promises explicitly high status for its members. The problem with a concert 'now,' however, is that China is currently unlikely to recognise India as a great power, putting at risk India's membership in the concert and its ability to lead within its chosen sphere of influence, the Indian Ocean. A continued ambivalent relationship with a low-resolution liberal security community of Quad powers therefore seems the best option for India in the short-term.

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Notes

1. For an early discussion of different definitions of the Indo-Pacific see Roy-Chaudhury and Sullivan de Estrada (2018, pp. 183–184). For a 'political genealogy' of the Indo-Pacific, see Pugliese (2022). For an account of the role of Indonesia in developing the *ASEAN outlook on the Indo-Pacific* See Anwar (2020).

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