



October 19, 2020

The Honorable Taranjit Singh Sandhu  
Ambassador  
Indian Embassy to the United States  
2107 Massachusetts Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20008

Dear Ambassador Sandhu,

We write in strong support of India's decision to formally invite Australia to participate in the annual Exercise Malabar, which was made following the recent 2+2 ministerial meeting of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (the Quad) in Tokyo.

The Quad represents a security forum for like-minded democracies to preserve and promote the rules-based order in the region through shared commitments and close collaboration. From an operational perspective, the addition of such a uniquely capable and stalwart partner, like Australia, to this naval exercise is invaluable, providing increased interoperability, strengthening threat assessment abilities and enhancing the maritime roles and missions of the four naval powers. However, of equal importance is the symbolic nature of Australia's inclusion in Malabar, marking the first time that the United States, India, Japan and Australia will engage collectively at the military level since the formation of the Quad and the Quad-plus-Singapore naval exercises held in September 2007.

In the face of China's rising military and economic assertiveness, strengthening of the Quad has become increasingly important. As the world addresses the fallout caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, China has opportunistically looked to expand its military footprint across the Indo-Pacific. From the South China Sea to the Himalayas, Beijing continues to use methods of intimidation and territorial aggression to test the resolve of regional actors. In response to these malign actions, the U.S. has signaled its increased commitment to the region with the newly proposed Pacific Deterrence Initiative, which will complement the Asia Reassurance Initiative Act (ARIA) to provide a more robust military presence. However, without coordinated efforts among committed and capable partners, solitary actions will not sufficiently address these ever-evolving security challenges.

The Quad additionally provides an existing institutional framework for increased quadrilateral cooperation on non-security issues. As you know, it was the joint response to the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami, the deadliest natural disaster in modern history that led to the first iteration of the Quad. As such, humanitarian aid and disaster relief are natural areas where Quad members can, and should, expand collaborative efforts, especially given the ongoing pandemic. It is critical that the U.S. and India build upon recent discussions among Quad members, as well as New Zealand, South Korea and Vietnam, to coordinate efforts to contain the spread of the virus and develop an effective vaccine.

The pandemic has also exacerbated concerns about China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and resulting debt-trap diplomacy. A free and open Indo-Pacific must come with sustainable investment in the region and infrastructure that is physically secure, financially viable and socially responsible. BRI's opaque and predatory nature fails to meet these standards. However, given that the Indo-Pacific region's need for infrastructure will total as much as \$50 trillion by 2040, more collaboration among Quad members on infrastructure investment is needed. For instance, the Blue Dot Network (BDN), launched in 2019 by the U.S., Japan and Australia, is an initiative that will bring together governments, the private sector, and civil society to certify projects that uphold global infrastructure principles. Given that three Quad partners are already involved in BDN, we encourage India's participation in this promising initiative.

Almost three decades ago, the Malabar Exercise acted as a launching pad for increased U.S.-Indian relations. We hope that Japan's inclusion in the exercise, and now Australia's, will have a similar effect, strengthening cooperation among the Quad as we collectively defend our shared vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Sincerely,



David A. Perdue  
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons  
United States Senator



John Cornyn  
United States Senator



Mark R. Warner  
United States Senator



Marco Rubio  
United States Senator



Ted Cruz  
United States Senator



James Lankford  
United States Senator



Thom Tillis  
United States Senator



---

Dan Sullivan  
United States Senator



---

Marsha Blackburn  
United States Senator



---

Kevin Cramer  
United States Senator



---

Martha McSally  
United States Senator



---

Josh Hawley  
United States Senator



---

Kelly Loeffler  
United States Senator