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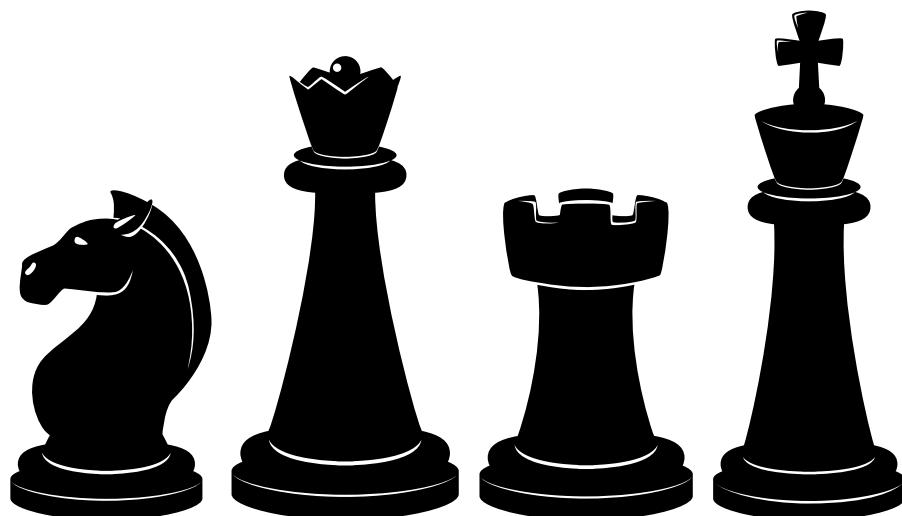
FEATURED ARTICLE

**The QUAD Alliance Unveiled:
Strategies and Implications for Global
Stability**



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India's Maritime Strategy and the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)

by Ameya Dusane

The Indian Ocean holds immense significance for India, particularly in the realms of trade, security, and regional influence. Home to major shipping routes connecting Asia, Africa, and Europe, the Indian Ocean plays a pivotal role in India's economic growth, with over 80% of its crude oil imports passing through its waters. Geopolitically, India's strategic positioning along the Indian Ocean not only provides it with leverage but also contributes to regional stability and security. Control over these waters is crucial for safeguarding national interests and power.

Historically, the Maratha Navy under Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj established a powerful naval force to defend against coastal invasions and secure maritime trade routes. His vision and strategies laid the foundation for India's maritime defence principles. The story of Shivaji Maharaj's Navy begins in the later years of the 1650s when he realized the strategic importance of the Indian coastline, which today extends over 7,000 kilometers. Since Indian rulers after the Cholas did not focus much on these coastlines, foreigners like the Portuguese and British began their control over what was an entry point into the Indian mainland.

Realizing the strategic importance of the coastline, Shivaji Maharaj began the work on a naval fleet from scratch, learning from the Portuguese and Dutch, whose permission was required at the time to use the ports and coastline that belonged to India. By 1674, when he was crowned, Shivaji had a fleet of over 50 ships and many sea forts, protecting the Konkan coast.

His naval power worried the Mughals and European powers. Under the fierce leadership of Kanhoji Angre, India's first naval commander who exercised strategic tactics to dominate the west coast amid fierce opposition from the Portuguese, British, and Mughal allies, and along with admirals like Daulat Khan and Darya Sarang Ventjee, Shivaji Maharaj's Navy, though not fully structured, laid the base for today's Indian Navy.

Recently, On the 76th Independence Day in August 2022, Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasized the need to decolonize India in his speech. Building on this call, he took a significant step by commissioning the Indian Navy's indigenous aircraft carrier, Vikrant, at Cochin Shipyard in Kochi. During this event, he unveiled a new naval Ensign, replacing the previous design that featured St. George's Cross, a symbol of India's colonial past. The new Ensign, which displays the Indian Navy crest on a navy blue background within an octagon, is inspired by the 'Rajmudra,' the royal seal of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. The octagon shape symbolizes the navy's multidirectional strategy and its capability to protect India from threats in all directions. Prime Minister Narendra Modi highlighted that Chhatrapati Shivaji's powerful navy kept enemies on their toes, and this new emblem honours his legacy and the strength of India's maritime power.





A key element of the present Indian Navy is the construction of advanced warships, including the INS Vikrant aircraft carrier. This formidable warship embodies a mini-airbase at sea, equipped with fighter jets and helicopters for offensive and defensive capabilities. The Vikrant serves as a powerful symbol of India's growing commitment to safeguarding the Indian Ocean region.

Collaborative exercises like the Malabar naval exercise with the US, Japan, and Australia strengthen interoperability and regional security alliances, reinforcing India's maritime influence. However, with the rise of a new geopolitical landscape, India needs to address emerging challenges in the Indian Ocean region. One such emerging challenge is China's ambitious "String of Pearls" strategy in the Indian Ocean region. As part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China has invested heavily in port infrastructure across the Indian Ocean, from Gwadar in Pakistan to Hambantota in Sri Lanka, Chittagong in Bangladesh, and ports in East Africa and Iran. These investments, often referred to as the "String of Pearls," are seen as dual-use facilities that can serve both commercial and military purposes.

The "String of Pearls" strategy is perceived as an attempt by China to encircle India with a network of strategic bases and infrastructure. This encirclement could potentially limit India's strategic options and influence in the region. In response to this perceived threat, India has implemented a multi-pronged strategy to counter China's growing presence in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). This strategy, often referred to as the "Necklace of Diamonds," focuses on enhancing its own capabilities and fostering strategic partnerships in the IOR. One important part of the plan is to make India's navy even stronger. This includes improving the islands of Andaman and Nicobar, which are in a strategic location. By ensuring the rapid movement of soldiers and supplies, and keeping a close eye on the Indian Ocean, India can ensure it has a powerful presence in the region.

Another big part of the plan is to team up with other countries. India has been making allies with other powerful nations nearby and around the world, like the United States, Japan, and Australia. This group, called the QUAD, works together to keep the Indo-Pacific Ocean free and open for everyone to use, not just China.

Since ports and facilities are important too, India is building its own network of these in the Indian Ocean. For example, Singapore's Changi Naval Base grants Indian vessels a vital refueling and resupply point while navigating the strategically important South China Sea. Similarly, India secured military access to Sabang Port in Indonesia in 2018. This strategically located port sits right at the entrance of the Malacca Strait, a chokepoint through which a significant portion of global trade and China's crude oil imports pass.



Beyond access to existing ports, India is also developing new facilities. Duqm Port in Oman, acquired in 2018, sits between two key Chinese "pearls" - Djibouti in Africa and Gwadar in Pakistan. This strategic placement allows India to monitor Chinese activity in the region and safeguard its own crude oil imports from the Persian Gulf. India's deliberate vision extends further west with the development of a naval base on Assumption Island in Seychelles. This agreement, signed in 2015, provides a crucial foothold for India in the Indian Ocean and counters China's ambitions to expand its presence in Africa through the maritime Silk Route.

Finally, Chabahar Port in Iran, under development since 2016, offers India access to landlocked Afghanistan and a vital trade route to Central Asia. This well thought out partnership not only bolsters India's economic ties with the region but also provides an alternative route for Afghan goods, bypassing Pakistan.

After several years of delay, the India-Russia mutual logistics agreement is now close to being finalized, marking an important step in their defence partnership. Latterly, Russia approved the draft agreement, moving the Reciprocal Exchange of Logistics Agreement (RELOS) closer to being signed. This agreement will allow India to use Russian facilities in the Arctic region, which is becoming more important as new shipping routes open. This is particularly significant as India continues to increase its investments in Russia's eastern regions.

The "Necklace of Diamonds" strategy isn't just about reacting to what China is doing.



It involves setting up outposts in important locations throughout the Indian Ocean. These outposts help India keep an eye on what's happening at sea, so they can respond to any threats quickly. India also works closely with the countries where these outposts are located, doing military exercises together to get stronger. In a way, India is continuing the legacy of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, protecting our nation and its interests on the high seas!

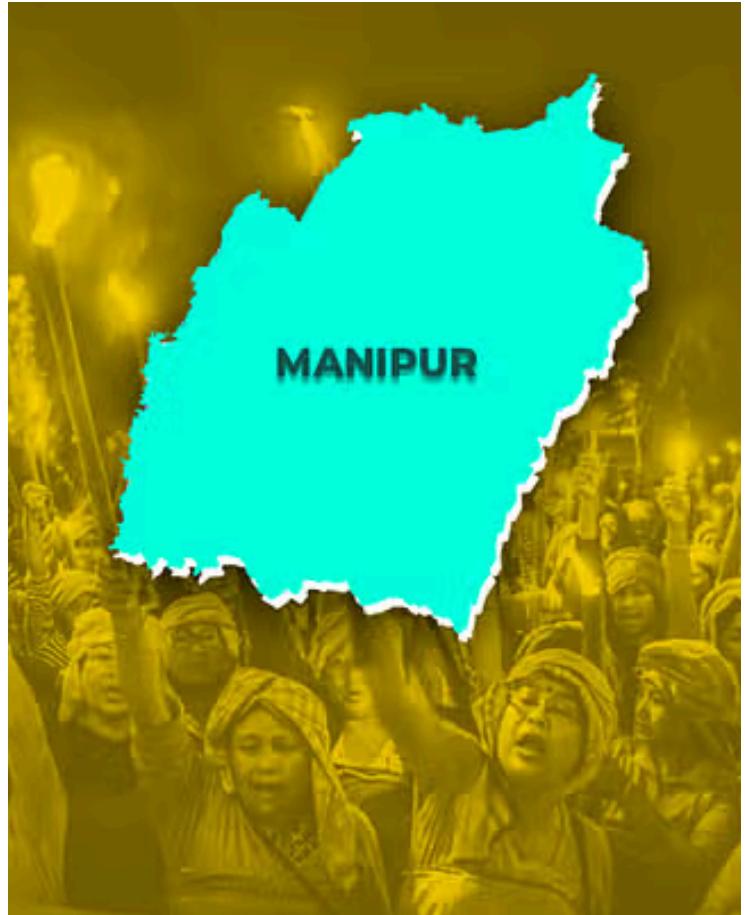


Manipur's Crossroads: Navigating Conflict and Identity

by Anand Lavhale

Manipur, a vibrant state in India's northeast, stands at a crossroads, grappling with historical complexities, ethnic diversity, and socio-political challenges. The conflict in Manipur is deeply rooted in its rich history and diverse cultures, making it a unique yet challenging issue to address. This conflict is deep, entangled in issues of identity, land rights, and political power, creating a situation that remains volatile. The Meitei community, primarily settled in the Imphal Valley, makes up about 64% of Manipur's population. The Kuki and Naga tribes, who are primarily Christian and inhabit the hilly regions surrounding the valley, account for approximately 35%. These communities have coexisted for generations, but differences in culture, religion, and socio-economic status have often led to friction.

The Anglo-Manipur War of 1891 marked the beginning of British colonial influence, disrupting traditional power structures and straining local relations. These historical events set the stage for the complex conflict that Manipur faces today. The roots also stretch back to the controversial merger with India in 1949. This event was not just a political shift but a significant blow to many Manipuris who felt their sovereignty was taken away. This sense of loss and forced integration laid the groundwork for the persistent unrest that followed.



The merger with India sparked resistance, which eventually evolved into a full-blown insurgency. This resistance was fueled by the diverse ethnic makeup of Manipur, home to groups like the Meiteis, Nagas, and Kukis, each with its own identity and aspirations. Incidents like the 1982 ambush on a Sikh Regiment, resulting in the deaths of 21 Jawans, highlight the intensity of this conflict. Assassinations and violent clashes have been common, underscoring the deep-seated nature of the struggle.



Areas of Contention

One of the significant points of contention is the demand by the Meitei community for inclusion in the Scheduled Tribe (ST) list. The Meiteis argue that they were recognized as a tribe before Manipur's merger with India in 1949, and their exclusion from the ST list has led to marginalization in their own land. They believe that ST status would help preserve their culture, language, and land, which they feel is under threat from both internal and external forces. This demand, however, has met with strong opposition from the Kuki and Naga tribes, who fear that granting ST status to the Meiteis would exacerbate their marginalization. The Meiteis already dominate the political and economic landscape of Manipur, and the tribal communities believe that ST status would allow the Meiteis to encroach upon their lands and opportunities reserved for the hill tribes.

On the other side, the Kuki tribe has been vocal about their need for a separate homeland within Manipur. Their demand stems from a history of ethnic violence and perceived neglect by the state government. The Kukis argue that a separate homeland would provide them with the autonomy to protect their culture, land, and rights against the dominance of the Meiteis and the state machinery that they perceive as biased. The conflict is not just about land or political power; it's also about preserving cultural identity. The Meiteis, who are predominantly Hindu, have different cultural practices compared to the Christian Kukis and Nagas. This cultural divide has only deepened the mistrust between the communities, making reconciliation efforts challenging. The 2015 ambush in Chandel district, which resulted in the deaths of 18 soldiers, exemplifies the ongoing struggle for control and autonomy among Manipur's diverse population.





Government, Policies and Regional Challenges

The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) of 1958 remains a contentious issue. Granting the military extensive powers in "disturbed areas," AFSPA has been criticized, fueling mistrust between the local population and the government. The 2021 ambush on an Assam Rifles convoy, where five soldiers and two civilians were killed, reflects the ongoing violence and the controversy in the region. Incident of violence against women in May 2023 sparked the urgent need for justice and effective measures to ensure the safety and dignity of women. While various political parties have emphasized on various solutions to deal with the Manipur violence, the challenge still persists in striking a balance between prioritizing security & economic measures and comprehensive conflict resolution.

Economic challenges, particularly high unemployment and underdevelopment, play a significant role in sustaining the insurgency. With limited opportunities, many young people are drawn to insurgent groups, viewing armed resistance as a viable path to a better future.

Pathways to Peace and Stability

Manipur's path to peace requires a comprehensive approach. Engaging all stakeholders—ethnic groups, insurgent leaders, and government representatives—in meaningful dialogue is crucial. Economic development should aim at reducing unemployment and addressing underdevelopment to offer alternatives to insurgency. Revisiting policies like AFSPA could help rebuild trust and ease tensions. By addressing the root causes of conflict and respecting the diverse aspirations of its people, Manipur can move towards a more peaceful and balanced future.

From Roots to Rhetoric: The Reversal in Ideology of America's Two Biggest Parties Today

by Manorama Mudgal

As the European powers expanded their influence across the Atlantic, the American colonies began to evolve into a mosaic of ambitions.

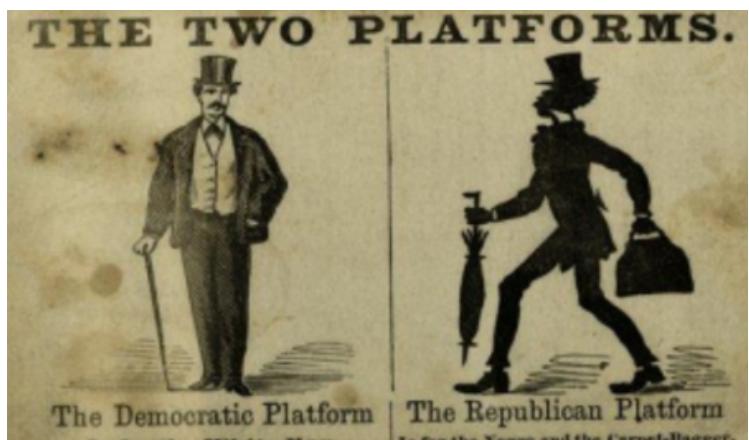
In 1619, a Portuguese slave ship, the São João Bautista, travelled across the Atlantic Ocean with a hull filled with human cargo captive Africans from Angola. This was the beginning of the selling of African Americans as merchandise to the Americans. "The iron entered into our souls," lamented an occupant named Caesar, as he remembered the shackles he had to wear onboard during the travel from his home in Africa to the New World.

The economy was driven by plantations in the South that produced the great export crops: tobacco, rice, and indigo which had become the economic engine of the burgeoning nation. Their fuel of choice? Human Enslavement.

By the 1800's, Slave Labour was looked on as an imperative system for prosperity. For the greed of a good economy, it swelled huge support in South America. The landscape was now set for the uprising of a new political entity: The Democratic Party. Founded in 1829, this party consisted of all such individuals who believed that Slave Labour was an essential and that nothing - not even the belief that all men were created equal - would dislodge this ideology.

On the other hand, The Northern United States of America consisted more of industrialised businesses and leaders who were split upon this issue of slavery and viewed it as a threat to free labour.

Imagining oneself as a working-class voter, one would likely be opposed to the prospect of competing with enslaved people for jobs. While morality may or may not have been the question, the Northerner's knew that the growing number of slave states would hurt the free white workers of America. In a demonstrated act of defiance against the south, the Northerners formed their own Political faction, today known as The Republic Party of America.



The Republicans were then liberals, and the Democrats, conservatives.

The friction between these two fractions of America first ignited the fire of War when in 1861, Abraham Lincoln won the presidency of the Republicans. This was seen as an open, direct and lethal threat to Slavery by the Southern States, who drew from the Union immediately after, leading to the beginning of the American Civil War. Over four gruelling years, the battlefields were drenched in the blood of countless nationalists.



By the end of 1865, the Southerners waved their white flags in defeat marking the end of the War. The North had won, and slavery was abolished Nationwide.

Post-war, the Republicans tried to ensure that recently freed slaves, especially slaves in the South, had their rights. They passed the Civil Rights Act 1866, the 14th and 15th Amendments. About four million slaves were freed and gained their citizenship, and the right to vote.

However, amidst all progress, something sinister had begun to happen.

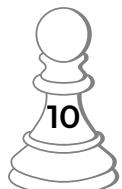
The dynamics of thought within the Republican Party had begun to change. Government spending in the North during the war had made some businessmen extremely rich who entered politics afterwards. While the South was resisting racial reforms, the Republicans which now consisted of Industrialist Leaders thirsty for control, began to tone down their stance on it. These men felt that they had done enough justice for enslaved people and that holding on to black lives in a majorly white country did not seem the best way to hold onto power. They resigned from action, and the Black citizens were left to the wrath of the South.

The Southerner's established "Jim Crow" laws which had "separate but equal" legal doctrines concerning facilities for African Americans. In theory, these "equal" doctrines meant that the African Americans were to be consistently

treated inferior, and were to be underfunded from the general public. The Black people couldn't use the same public facilities as white people, live in the same towns or go to the same schools. Interracial marriage was illegal, and most Black people couldn't vote because they were unable to pass voter literacy tests. All acts passed for the protection of slaves post-war were rendered completely futile.

In the corner, wounded, now lay the Democratic Party, which had completely diminished its appeal. The big boom of America was spearheaded by the Republicans and the only time the Democrats were mentioned was in 1913 when Woodrow Wilson won the presidency by fluke. It was by fluke because the votes were divided between two popular candidates of the Republican Party, consequently each got less votes than Wilson. A silver of the progressive stance of the Democrats was observed under Wilson, who led the United States into WWI to make the world "safe for democracy", but Wilson's brand of idealism and internationalism proved less attractive to voters during the spectacular prosperity of the 1920's than the Republicans' frank embrace of big business. All was well for the Republicans, until 1929, when the economy crashed.

The Great Depression (1929- 1939) began when, in a period of ten weeks, stocks on the New York Stock Exchange lost 50 percent of their value. A third of the banking system failed, savings were lost. Unemployment reached its peak, about every 1 in 4 workers were unemployed. With no savings and no job, thousands of Americans lost their homes all while the



Republican president, Herbert Hoover, opted not to intervene, earning him and his party the ire of the American public. This period ended up souring many Americans on the pro-business laissez-faire economic outlook the Grand Old Party had. The people felt strong government intervention was required, and they found this aspiration in a Democratic Presidential Candidate: Franklin D. Roosevelt who promised "action, and action now" with his stunning assertion that "the only thing we have to fear is fear itself."

In the 1932 Presidential election, Roosevelt defeated Republican President Herbert Hoover in a landslide victory.

He began to expand the Federal Government and signed what was then, the largest package of domestic government projects in history called The New Deal. It dealt with unemployment and sought to stabilise wages, prices, and working hours. The administration addressed questions of structural reform. The New Deal led to measurable results including financial system reform and stabilisation. It put people back to work. It saved capitalism. It restored faith in the American economic system, while at the same time it revived a sense of hope in the American people.

The federal government massively expanded, and the Democratic Party became synonymous with liberal economic policies and strong government regulations of industries. Now it was the Republicans turn to get sidelined. They had begun to oppose everything about FDR's government as they saw it harmful to the federalist foundation of the nation. Their blatant desperation to get back into power was obvious and they were called "The Opposition to Big Government" an identity that they still have today.

The problems of the Great Depression affected all sections of Americans but no group was harder hit than African Americans. By 1932, approximately half of African Americans were out of work. In some Northern cities, whites called for African Americans to be fired from any jobs as long as there were whites out of work. Racial violence was common again.

Although most African Americans traditionally voted Republican, the election of President Franklin Roosevelt began to change voting patterns. Roosevelt entertained African American visitors at the White House and was known to have a number of black advisors. Many African Americans were excited by the energy of execution of economic rebuttal delivered by the president and gained "a sense of belonging they had never experienced before" from his fireside chats. When the U.S. entered World War II, in 1941 President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802, stating that all persons, regardless of race or colour, would be allowed to participate fully in the defence of the United States. This Order set a precedent and provided a template to the population that the federal government could and would intervene to promote racial equality.



Africans had known freedom before they arrived in America, and they fought to regain it from the moment they were taken from their homes. The civil rights movement finally secured them. The culmination of the movement was in 1963 when Martin Luther King Jr. addressed a demonstrator crowd of over 2,50,000 with his iconic "I have a dream speech" making it the largest demonstration in US history.

Democratic President John F. Kennedy, who was elected in 1931, urged the nation to take action toward guaranteeing equal treatment of every American regardless of race. Kennedy proposed that Congress consider civil rights legislation that would address voting rights, public accommodations, school desegregation, non-discrimination in federally assisted programs.

Following the Democratic Party's stance of progressivism, it came as no surprise that on July 2 1964, The Democratic President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the civil rights act into law. It was instead, The Republican Presidential Nominee, Barry Goldwater who opposed it. As usual, Goldwater argued that it expanded federal government power far beyond necessity implying the Republic Party was the Party with a stance of staunch conservatism.

It was this moment in history, where the black voters watched as a dramatic switch-up took place between the two American Parties. It was now embossed in history that the Democrats would support the black people of America. The black people now felt safe under them, and converted entirely to support Democrats. Meanwhile, traditional white voters who began to resent the interference of the big government in school prayers, abortion

rights, and non-superiority status of the White man left the party outraged and joined the Republicans. Thus, the Republicans became the new face of the white voters. This completed the effective reversal of ideologies within the American Stage of government.

The Republicans are now conservatives, and the Democrats, liberalists.



President Lyndon Johnson signing the civil rights bill into law at the White House ceremony.

Fast forward to the playing ground of politics today, the basic framework of ideology with the two parties remains the same. Although the percentage of voters for each party from different sections of American society changes on an evergreen basis, Liberalism with the Democrats and Conservatism with the Republicans holds steadfast.

Arctic Resources and positioning of power players

by Mrugaja Joshi

The Arctic, once a remote and pristine wilderness, is rapidly transforming into a geopolitical hotbed. As climate change accelerates the melting of sea ice, a treasure trove of natural resources and new shipping routes is emerging, igniting fierce competition among global powers. The USA Geological Survey estimates that beneath the depths of the Arctic Ocean lie approximately 90 billion barrels of oil, along with vast reserves of natural gas and natural gas liquids. This newfound accessibility has heightened the geopolitical and economic stakes for a multitude of international actors, particularly those beyond the Arctic Council. Among these actors, the United States, Russia, and China stand out for their assertive and strategic maneuvers in the region.

The United States has emerged as a principal actor in the escalating competition for Arctic dominance. Prioritizing national security and strategic interests, Washington has adopted a multifaceted approach that includes bolstering military capabilities and investing in icebreaker technology. This strategic posture is driven by the recognition that control of the Arctic is essential for safeguarding North American security, accessing potential hydrocarbon resources, and maintaining global geopolitical influence.

While the United States adopts a security-focused approach, Russia takes a more assertive stance. It has emerged as a formidable competitor in the Arctic, asserting expansive territorial claims and aggressively pursuing resource development. With a keen focus on exploiting the region's vast oil and gas reserves and optimizing the Northern Sea Route for commercial shipping, Moscow has embarked on a substantial military and infrastructure buildup. These actions underscore Russia's determination to solidify its position as a dominant Arctic power, capitalizing on the region's strategic and economic potential.





China, while an observer in the Arctic Council, has rapidly expanded its Arctic ambitions. Seeking to capitalize on new shipping routes, abundant resources, and scientific advancements, Beijing has invested heavily in infrastructure, research, and diplomatic relations with Arctic states. This strategic overture positions China as a growing influence in the region, challenging the traditional dominance of Arctic Council members.

Despite the central role of the Arctic Council, the governance of the region is primarily shaped by the five littoral states. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) grants these nations extensive sovereignty and jurisdiction over their coastal waters, exclusive economic zones, and continental shelves, thereby empowering them to manage and exploit Arctic resources. This legal framework underscores the complex interplay between international cooperation and national interests in the Arctic.

The Arctic region has evolved into a microcosm of great power geopolitical interests. The United States, Russia, and China employ a blend of political, economic, and military strategies to carve out their share of the "Arctic pie".

Their actions reflect a complex interplay of national interests, strategic imperatives, and resource ambitions. This dynamic underscores the need for robust governance mechanisms and cooperative frameworks to manage the competing interests of these major powers.

The complexities of Arctic governance necessitate a shift from solely state-centric decision-making towards a more collaborative model. This model would involve fostering open communication and consensus-based decision-making processes that engage all relevant stakeholders. The Arctic Council, with its eight member states and diverse observer groups, serves as a crucial platform for such collaboration. However, strengthening its capacity for inclusive dialogue and joint action is essential. Additionally, involving non-regional states with vital expertise, intergovernmental organizations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that represent the interests of Indigenous peoples and environmental concerns would be crucial.

Sustainable utilization of Arctic resources requires prioritizing scientific research and knowledge sharing. Enhanced international cooperation in research initiatives would help develop a deeper understanding of the region's delicate ecosystems, resource potential, and the impacts of climate change. This knowledge would be fundamental for setting informed policies for resource management and environmental protection. Additionally, fostering knowledge exchange between scientific bodies, governments, and local communities would be critical. This collaborative approach would ensure that research findings directly inform policies and actions, ultimately leading to a sustainable future for the Arctic.



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Choice or Life: The Evolution of Women's Abortion Rights in America

by Yashada Mathad

In a nation that prides itself on its ideals of freedom and choice, the ongoing battle over women's abortion rights still goes on. The evolution of abortion rights in America has been a long journey with countless legal battles, social conflict, and an unending struggle for bodily autonomy. It's a personal fight for a right that has been granted, restricted, and debated endlessly.

This brings us to the question - where did it all start?

On January 22, 1973, the Supreme Court handed down its decision, agreeing that the Due Process Clause of the 14th Amendment - which says that no state shall "deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law" - implies a right to privacy. This basically meant that a woman's right to privacy superseded the state's right to ban abortion.

However, the ruling did not go unchallenged. Roe v. Wade faced multiple legal challenges over the decade, aimed at limiting its scope. One such major challenge was the 1992 "Planned Parenthood v. Casey" case. This case still had the core holding of Roe but allowed states to impose restrictions on abortion as long as they did not place an "undue burden" on the women seeking it. This case opened the door for various state-level restrictions, making access to abortion quite difficult for many women across the country. Ever since, Roe v. Wade has been modified, but not overturned. That is, until June 24, 2022, when the United States of America revoked the constitutional right to seek safe abortion care. This allowed the states to independently decide their laws regarding abortion, which of course, meant even more restrictions. It must be noted that although this decision put a stop to legal abortions in several states, it also led to a rise in the number of illegal procedures.



being carried out.

The ethical debate regarding abortion, to this day, is one of the most polarising issues in American society. Pro-life advocates argue that the foetus has an inherent right to live, declaring abortion to be morally equivalent to murder. This perspective usually finds its roots in deeply held religious and cultural beliefs. However, it often ignores the complex reality of giving birth and nurturing a life - completely undermining women's choice to make decisions about their own bodies. On the other hand, pro-choice supporters strongly believe that a woman's right to choose what happens to her body is of utmost importance. They argue that denying women the right to abortion not only strips them of their freedom but also subjects them to potential physical, emotional, and financial harm. The focus should be on empowering women to make their own informed choices rather than imposing restrictive laws driven by ideological beliefs.

The media as well as political activists play a crucial role in shaping public opinions. Many groups use misinformation to create fear and sway opinions, further increasing the divide between the two sides. It is important to acknowledge the influence of cultural and religious beliefs, but this should not dictate laws that affect a diverse population with varied values, beliefs and requirements.

Instead of delving into the whole 'rights of the foetus versus the rights of the mother' debate, the focus should be shifted to women receiving proper healthcare and being given the right to make decisions regarding their own lives without the government's interference.



In conclusion, the fight for women's reproductive rights is far from over. There is an urgent need for continued dialogue, respecting all the different viewpoints while prioritising women's health and autonomy. Women's right to choose should not be a matter of political debate but a fundamental aspect of human rights and dignity. There is a pressing need for increased awareness and education on reproductive health to dismiss commonly believed myths and create a more informed, open, and empathetic public discussion.

Special section

“The QUAD Alliance Unveiled: Strategies and Implications for Global Stability”

By Ameya Dusane, Arya Mhaske, Chinmay Joshi, Parv Sheth

Historical Overview

The circumstances of the 21st century have called for a shift in the security architecture from the Asia-Pacific to the Indo-Pacific, triggered by the rise of China, the growth of India's economic and strategic clout, and, most importantly, the growing importance of the Indian Ocean as a strategic trade corridor that carries almost two-thirds of global oil shipments and a third of bulk cargo. All these factors have led to the rise of regional stakeholders calling for a free and open Indo-Pacific, which in turn has led to the reestablishment of the QUAD.

The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or QUAD, is a strategic forum made up of four countries: Australia, India, Japan, and the United States. Formed in 2007, the QUAD emerged in response to the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004, when these countries collaborated on disaster relief efforts. This early cooperation brought together these democracies to work on common challenges, such as maritime security, economic cooperation, and upholding international laws. However, the QUAD's development was not linear.

Shortly after its formation, the group lost momentum and became inactive for nearly a decade. This was due to a mix of political changes and differing priorities among the member countries. Japan, under the leadership of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, was a strong advocate of the QUAD, highlighting the shared democratic values of its members. India, on the other hand, was more comfortable focusing on practical areas of cooperation, like economic and security ties, rather than framing the group in ideological terms. Australia temporarily withdrew from the QUAD, influenced by a change in government and shifting foreign policy priorities. Under Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, Australia sought to prioritize its relationship with China and reduce tensions in the region, leading to a pause in its active participation in the QUAD.

QUAD was not active all these long years, up until in 2017. Due to China's increasing domination in the Indo-Pacific, the region had become more strategically important, not only because of its economic significance but also due to increasing



tensions over territorial disputes and freedom of navigation, particularly in the South China Sea. As China's power continued to rise, the QUAD's member countries saw the need for closer collaboration to ensure that the Indo-Pacific remained free, open, and governed by international rules.

QUAD's Evolution And Stance

The QUAD Nations - Japan, India, Australia and The United States, each bring unique approaches to the partnership, shaped by their own geopolitical and economic interests. For the U.S., the Indo-Pacific is critical for maritime trade, with \$1.9 trillion worth of U.S. goods passing through the region in 2019. Ensuring free navigation is vital for its economy and military presence.

Japan, heavily reliant on maritime trade routes, also views the Indo-Pacific as essential to its security and economy, especially with China's increasing military activities near its territorial waters.

India, on the other hand, focuses on balancing China's regional dominance, particularly along its borders and the Indian Ocean, where China's Belt and Road Initiative threatens its sphere of influence. Australia's approach centers on safeguarding its trade routes, as it exports significant resources to Asia, while ensuring regional stability to counter growing Chinese influence in the South Pacific.

In recent years, Australia's focus has shifted towards addressing China's growing influence, both economically and militarily.



China is Australia's largest trading partner, but tensions have risen due to Beijing's increasing assertiveness, particularly in the South China Sea and the Pacific Islands. Australia is now balancing its economic ties with China while working closely with the QUAD to ensure regional security.

Role And Focus

In order to truly serve its purpose, each of the QUAD's four members must play more significant roles in balancing the threats and power plays in the Indo-Pacific. Every step forward by the QUAD will put Beijing in a challenging position in fulfilling China's great-power ambitions.

While the QUAD isn't a formal military alliance, its focus goes beyond just security. At its core, the QUAD is about cooperation. Its members work together to safeguard maritime routes, which are crucial for global trade and economic growth. They also collaborate

on a wide range of issues like cyber security, infrastructure development, disaster relief, and even vaccine distribution, as seen during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The QUAD countries are collaborating on satellite technology to improve their ability to monitor environmental changes and manage natural disasters. For example, they share satellite data to enhance early warning systems for cyclones and other extreme weather events.

NASA and the Indian space agency ISRO have been cooperating for several years on the NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR) Earth science mission. NASA also has a significant Share in Training Indian Astronauts For ISRO's Ambitious "GAGANYAAN" Mission, the first Crewed Flight of which is planned in Early 2025.

Notably, in 2019, the grouping upgraded the dialogue to the level of foreign minister/secretary of state. With COVID-19 becoming a key focus, the group was upgraded to "QUAD Plus," adding three additional Indo-Pacific countries—New Zealand, South Korea, and Vietnam—and some external stakeholders: Israel and Brazil. This expansion is driven by the logic of convergent security interests under the pandemic and jointly looking at a way forward.

The China Threat

China's relations with the QUAD countries have grown increasingly tense during the pandemic. U.S.-China tensions remain

high, while Australia faces harsh economic sanctions for supporting a probe into COVID-19 origins. India and Japan continue to clash with China over territorial disputes, with Japan's Prime Minister being openly criticized by Beijing for adopting what China calls an "outdated Cold War mentality." This suggests that China sees the QUAD's efforts to counter its influence as stuck in old, hostile power struggles rather than working together in today's interconnected world.

As public opinion in these countries turns increasingly negative towards China, QUAD leaders avoid military confrontation and instead emphasize cooperation in areas of mutual interest like trade and supply chains to counter China's regional influence.



QUAD's Sustenance

In 2022, Japan and Australia signed the Reciprocal Access Agreement, a defence treaty to enhance cooperation in response to China's aggressive stance in the Indo-Pacific. This agreement marks the growing collaboration within the QUAD as they confront regional challenges together. The Trump administration's efforts to chart the course of the alliance marked the point at which the Quad became significantly



active. It was mainly aimed at countering China's influence, with Trump leaning on the Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe for foreign policy advice.

The Biden administration further expanded the QUAD's role, mentioning it as a "premier regional grouping" in its 2022 Indo-Pacific strategy. Biden's approach emphasizes multilateral cooperation, holding the first-ever virtual QUAD summit in 2021, followed by regular in-person summits to strengthen diplomatic and military ties. Though the 2023 summit in Australia was cancelled due to Biden's return to Washington, it reflects the group's growing commitment to regional stability. The Biden administration also encourages broader regional partnerships through initiatives like the Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI) to reduce dependency on China.

Looking ahead, a potential second Trump term could maintain the QUAD's strategic focus, but with a preference for bilateral deals.

Conclusion

As tensions with China escalate, the QUAD is increasingly recognized as a platform for maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific. The group's enhanced military cooperation, evident in the recent Malabar exercises, and its commitment to broader regional collaboration through QUAD Plus initiatives, signal its evolving role. For the QUAD to succeed, it must continue to engage proactively with regional partners, demonstrate its value through tangible benefits, and ensure consistency. This balanced approach will be key in shaping a resilient, rules-based order that counters China's assertive policies while fostering stability and prosperity in the region.

