



## AUKUS, quad, and the rise of middle-power security networks in the indo-pacific: Policy, finance, and defence integration

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### Abstract

The study explores the evolution of the security architecture of the Indo-Pacific region with a particular focus on the role of minilateral arrangements such as the Quad and the AUKUS that is on the rise. In the past decade, regional security has been redefined to be less reliant on the conventional bilateral relationships and more complicated and adaptive assemblage of cooperative accords. The study primarily seeks to discuss how these frameworks can be used to attain a networked regional security order. Particularly, the study attempt to (i) expound on the strategic assumptions and strategic intent of the Quad and AUKUS, (ii) assess their respective roles in the overall security framework of the Indo-Pacific, and (iii) theorise minilateralism as the hallmark of contemporary security management. The study approach is the qualitative approach based on secondary data, including the policy documents, strategic reports and academic literature. The findings demonstrate that the Quad and AUKUS are complementary and lead to enhanced strategic coordination and capabilities development. In general, the study highlights that minilateralism is emerging as an important instrument in favour of flexibility, adaptability, and cooperative security governance in the Indo-Pacific region.

**Keywords:** Indo-pacific security, minilateralism, quad, AUKUS, Middle powers, security architecture, defence integration

### Introduction

The Indo-Pacific region has developed into a major platform for strategic rivalry, due to changes in power equations, issues related to maritime security, and technology-related transformations (Koga, 2022) <sup>[17]</sup>. With time, the prevailing system of security architecture, which is rooted in alliances and international organizations, has shown its inadequacy in handling multifaceted problems, like those associated with disruptions in the supply chain, cyber-attacks, and strategic rivalry between countries (Ikenberry, 2020) <sup>[15]</sup>. Academic scholars have observed that this new situation demands more flexible means of cooperation.

In this regard, the emergence of the idea of minilateralism can be viewed as a response to challenges faced by the current governance regime (Acharya, 2017) <sup>[1]</sup>. Minilateral approaches refer to a situation where like-minded countries cooperate in addressing a particular issue in order to enhance efficiency (Park, 2025) <sup>[25]</sup>. The examples of such arrangements include the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) and AUKUS. The Quad deals with policy coordination, economic and technological cooperation, while AUKUS focuses on military issues. This diversity in security arrangements is observed within the Indo-Pacific (Cheng, 2022) <sup>[9]</sup>.

However, despite the significance of the aforementioned frameworks, studies tend to concentrate solely on one of them in the course of analysis (Bisley, 2023) <sup>[2]</sup>. In fact, there is a lack of research devoted to analyzing the role of both frameworks within the framework of emerging networked security architecture (Wang & Meng, 2021) <sup>[31]</sup>. Moreover, the role of middle powers (India, Japan, and Australia) in shaping these frameworks needs to be further explored (Rossiter & Cannon, 2020) <sup>[27]</sup>.

In light of this, the purpose of this paper is to understand the changing Indo-Pacific security structure through an assessment of the complementary roles of the Quad and AUKUS from a networked perspective. In pursuing this

research, the following research objectives are identified: (i) To identify the organizational and operational features of the Quad and AUKUS; (ii) To evaluate their strategic role in the regional security framework; and (iii) To theorize minilateralism as a form of security infrastructure.

The importance of this study can be understood in terms of its attempt to go beyond compartmentalized analysis to provide a holistic approach to the relationship between minilateral structures (Panda & Ohn, 2024) <sup>[24]</sup>. By bringing together policies, defense, finance, and technology, this study offers a broader view of security governance in the contemporary Indo-Pacific region (Markowski *et al.*, 2024) <sup>[21]</sup>.

The study adds value to the existing literature by contributing to it in two major ways. Firstly, it introduces a new conceptual approach, which understands minilateralism as security infrastructure as opposed to a fleeting or ad hoc practice (He & Li, 2020). Secondly, it conducts a comparative examination of the Quad and AUKUS, emphasizing their complementary nature in the context of developing a complex and interconnected security landscape.

The rest of the paper proceeds as follows. In section 2, a review of the existing literature on Indo-Pacific security and minilateralism is provided. In section 3, the influence of middle powers on regional strategic realignment is discussed. In section 4, a comparative examination of the Quad and AUKUS is presented. The wider trend of minilateralism is analysed in section 5. A new conceptual framework of minilateralism as security infrastructure is developed in section 6. Concluding remarks are made in sections 7 and 8.

### Literature Review

#### 1. Evolution of Indo-Pacific Security Architecture

The strategic environment in the Indo-Pacific region has undergone a fundamental change in recent times, and the

main reason for this change has been the growing geopolitical rivalry and the power dynamics in the region (Rumley, 2021) <sup>[28]</sup>. Most of the recent literature has put this change in the context of the growing strategic rivalry, especially between the U.S. and China, which has redefined the security agendas and architecture in the region (Prajapati, 2023) <sup>[26]</sup>. The earlier security architecture, including the U.S.-led hub and spokes alliance system and ASEAN-centred multilateralism, has traditionally provided the basis for security in the region, although it has come to be viewed as insufficient in meeting the demands of the security environment in the region.

Research indicates that recent trends are tilting towards a more flexible and functionally driven format, which has come to be known as “minilateral” relationships (Chauhdry *et al.*, 2025) <sup>[7]</sup>. The advantage of this format lies in its ability to respond to situations in a much quicker turnaround compared to the traditional multilateral format. The current security environment in the Indo-Pacific, therefore, cannot be explained through the dominance of a single system but through a multiple-level structure of relationships (Harris Rimmer, 2020) <sup>[13]</sup>. The changing format of relationships, therefore, indicates a move towards a hybrid model of security, where the military, economic, and technological dimensions intersect with one another. The recent formations of AUKUS and Quad, therefore, cannot be viewed in isolation from this broader changing environment of relationships (Liu & Jamali, 2021) <sup>[20]</sup>.

## **2. Theoretical Foundations: Balance of Power and Minilateralism**

Most of the analytical foundations of the current literature are based on realist theory and neo-realist theory, particularly on the theory of balance of power (Sudan, 2022) <sup>[29]</sup>. According to this theory, the resurgence of strategic groups in the Indo-Pacific is a response to the rapid development of the Chinese economy and military. Most of the literature refers to AUKUS and Quad as tools for strategic balance in the region.

However, the concept of minilateralism has come to the fore as a viable approach in understanding the developments in the region. Unlike other alliances or multilateral groups, the main emphasis of minilateralism is on the achievement of efficiency and the shared interests of the members (Kumar *et al.*, 2020) <sup>[18]</sup>. It is a framework that allows the members of the group to work together without the procedural barriers normally observed in other groupings (Byrne, 2020) <sup>[5]</sup>. This has been a key advantage in the region with its divergent political systems and strategic thinking.

## **3. The Quad: From Normative Platform to Strategic Instrument**

A good example to understand the flexibility of minilateralism is the evolution of the Quad. The Quad was originally designed as a consultative dialogue among democracies. The understanding of the Quad has mostly been defined in terms of norms such as the rule of law, freedom of navigation, and democracy (Vijaya, 2024) <sup>[30]</sup>. However, recent research has suggested a new orientation for the Quad, with a greater emphasis on delivering operational cooperation in a variety of areas.

This is evident from the evolution of the agenda for the Quad, which now includes issues such as maritime security, development of critical infrastructure, supply chain security,

and technology (Chan, 2020) <sup>[6]</sup>. It is interesting to note that the Quad has managed to sustain its informal character without becoming an alliance, which is a rigid form of an alliance. This allows the states to balance their national interests with their alliance interests.

## **4. AUKUS: Deepening Defence Integration and Strategic Signalling**

While the Quad has a broad and flexible agenda, AUKUS is a more focused and institutionalized form of cooperation in the area of defence integration. The main concern of nurturing the capabilities of the technological advancements is a three-way coalition, namely, AUKUS (Legrand, 2025) <sup>[19]</sup>. The biggest programme of the AUKUS is the supply of nuclear-powered submarines to Australia which totals a radical leap in the strategic posture of the member countries of the alliance.

AUKUS has always been identified in the literature as a type of high-level defence integration that is characterized by intelligence sharing, development of joint capabilities, and long-term industrial cooperation (Deb & Wilson, 2021) <sup>[10]</sup>. The scope of such cooperation is a distinguishing factor of AUKUS over other regional arrangements, and a proactive effort towards expanding deterrence in the Indo-Pacific. Nevertheless, the broader consequences of AUKUS concerning the regional security situation also spill over to the signalling intent and its effects on the perceptions of the military balance.

## **5. Comparative Perspectives: Complementarity and Divergence**

Comparative analysis of AUKUS and the Quad shows that there is convergence as well as divergence in the strategic purpose of these groupings (Wei, 2022) <sup>[32]</sup>. On the one hand, both groupings are a part of the larger strategic purpose of consolidating stability in the Indo-Pacific region through cooperative means. On the other hand, the operational purpose and characteristics of these groupings differ significantly from each other. For example, the emphasis of the Quad is on the non-military domains of engagement compared to the focused engagement of AUKUS on defence and advanced military capabilities.

However, instead of looking at these groupings from an oppositional point of view, the latest research has indicated that these groupings are actually a complementary part of the larger strategic purpose in the Indo-Pacific region. This implies that the Indo-Pacific region is actually developing a layered structure where the groupings deal with certain aspects of the larger strategic purpose (Mohan & Govella, 2022) <sup>[23]</sup>. This also implies moving beyond the oppositional view of these groupings and the need to consider the larger strategic purpose of these groupings in a shared strategic space.

## **6. Middle Powers as Strategic Network Builders**

A major part of the literature has also focused on the redirection of focus towards the middle powers and their impact on the changing security environment (Dei, 2025) <sup>[11]</sup>. The countries of India, Japan and Australia are no more seen as marginal players but as a major stakeholder when it comes to the formation of regional security networks. Their involvement in AUKUS activities and the Quad is an indication of pragmatism among these countries as far as ensuring a trade-off between cooperation and independence

is concerned (Chen, 2020) [8]. The countries are seen as bridges between different players, and their involvement can be seen as an indication of their capability to survive in the complexities of the geopolitical situation. The term network building assumes a significant role in understanding the role of such countries in the formation of regional security networks (Bisley, 2025) [3]. This is because it implies that they can connect different initiatives within a single system.

### 7. Research Gap

The literature review Indo-Pacific security architecture suggests that some significant gaps in research exist. Despite the well-explored nature of the development of regional security structures, the creation of minilateralism and the strategic roles of groupings such as the Quad and AUKUS in the existing literature, it is largely descriptive and theoretically oriented, with a significant focus on the realist and balance of power approaches.

There have been only limited efforts to create integrative or empirical models which elucidate in a systematic fashion the operation of these minilateral arrangements within a networked security order. In addition, although the complementary nature of the Quad and AUKUS has been acknowledged, there has been little attention on assessing their performance, relationship, and measurable outcomes in the governance of regional security.

Middle powers as network builders have been recognised but their agency is not theorised and is not empirically substantiated in terms of the processes of coordination and their strategic impact. Furthermore, the existence of military, economic, and technological overlap of these frames is not thoroughly studied. Therefore, the creation of a multi-dimensional analytical framework to comprehend

the functional dynamics, complementarities and real world implications of minilateral security arrangements of the Indo-Pacific region remains a big gap.

### Methodology

A qualitative and comparative research design form the basis of this paper and explore the evolving architecture of security in the Indo-Pacific, and the Quad and AUKUS structures more specifically. The rationale is backed up by secondary sources, collected in the frames of a diversity of credible sources, including the official policy documents (including Quad joint statements and AUKUS agreements), governmental strategy white papers of such states as India, United States, Japan, and Australia, peer-reviewed scholarly articles published between 2015 and 2025. The sources were chosen in terms of their topicality to the Indo-Pacific security, minilateral cooperation and strategic policy development.

A thematic analysis method was used to analyse this data systematically and the key themes such as policy coordination, defence integration, financial mechanisms, and technological cooperation were identified and analysed. These themes were used to compare the Quad and the AUKUS in terms of their structure, functionality, and strategic role. Conceptual interpretation approach has also been used in the work to shape the model of the minilateralism as security infrastructure to relate the observations of the empirical findings to the theoretical views. This approach enables us to possess an ordered thinking of the overlap and incompatibility of the two frameworks and underline the complementary roles of both frameworks in a networked security system.

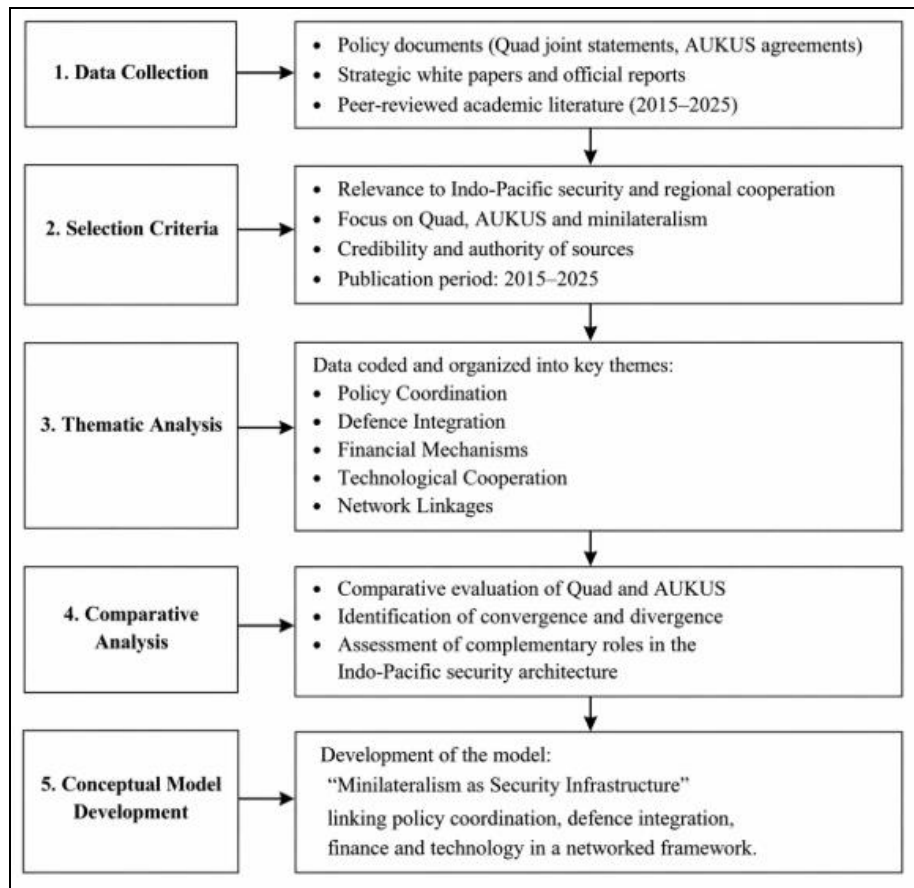


Fig 1: Research Methodology Framework

Fig 1 highlights the process followed in conducting the research, starting from data collection from policy papers, white papers, and academic literature. It shows the steps taken for analyzing the collected data through various filters and criteria. This framework will result in the creation of the conceptual model for the concept of “minilateralism as security infrastructure.”

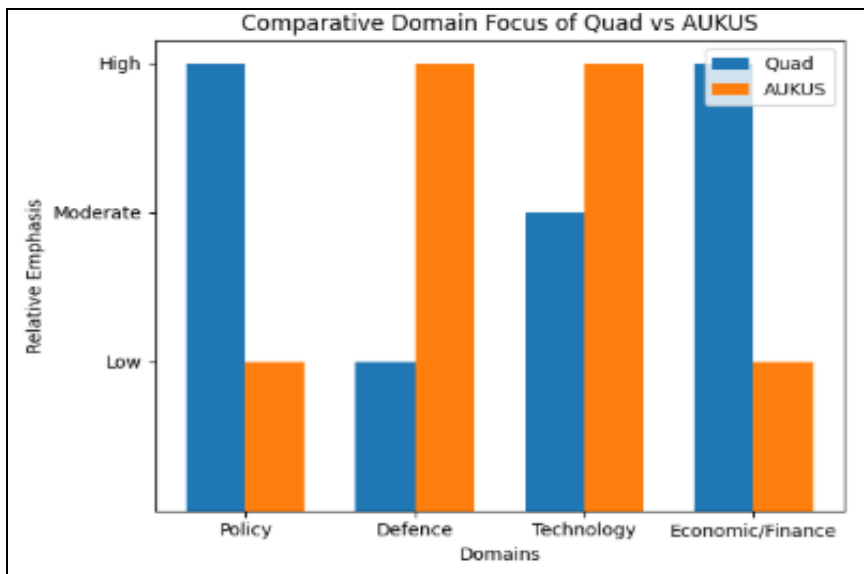
**Results**

Results demonstrate a paradigm shift within the Indo-Pacific security architecture through increased involvement of minilateral alliances like the Quad and AUKUS. Security cooperation within the region is characterized by an increase in flexible and issue-based cooperation, which implies that a layered and adaptable security system is emerging. Thematic analysis reveals that the Quad concentrates mainly on coordinating policies, economic cooperation, and

governance issues, such as supply chains, infrastructure development, and technology innovations. On the other hand, AUKUS exhibits deeper defense integration, which includes technological innovation in the form of cyber security and artificial intelligence.

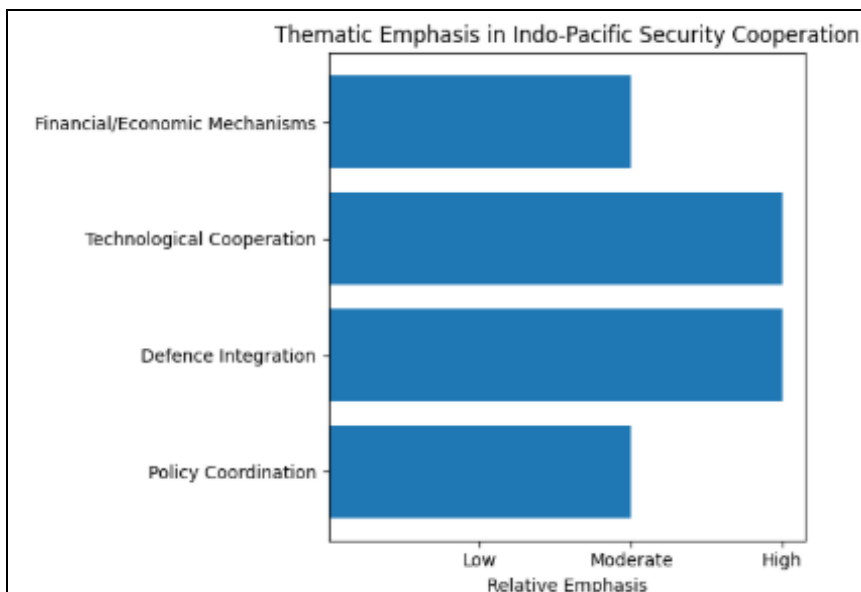
Based on the results of this comparison, it is clear that the Quad and AUKUS can be regarded as complementary initiatives, not competitors to one another. Although the Quad serves as an inclusive and flexible initiative, AUKUS enhances defensive capacities and deterrence measures; in addition, both initiatives form a hierarchical regional security architecture.

Furthermore, the research findings emphasize the importance of the middle powers – India, Japan, and Australia – in this respect. Finally, the paper puts forward the idea of “minilateralism as security infrastructure” as a theoretical concept.



**Fig 2:** Comparative Domain Focus of Quad and AUKUS

Fig 2 below compares the extent to which emphasis is placed on each aspect of security cooperation by both the Quad and AUKUS organizations. From the Fig below, it can be seen that the Quad is relatively focused on policy coordination and economics, while the AUKUS is focused more on defense and advanced technology aspects.



**Fig 3:** Thematic Emphasis in Indo-Pacific Security Cooperation

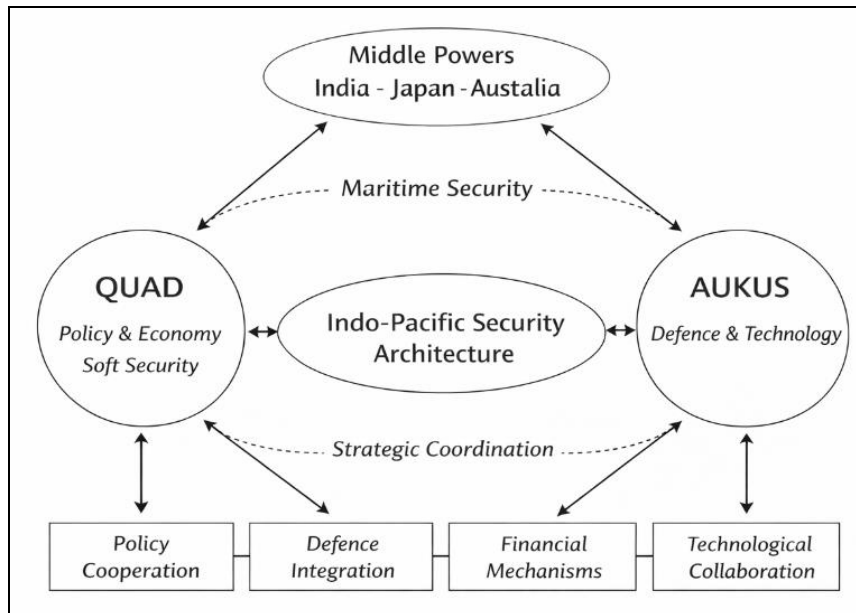
This chart (Fig 3) represents the comparative importance of various themes discovered through a qualitative analysis of Indo-Pacific security architecture. As can be observed from this chart, there is more attention paid to defence cooperation and technology, along with some degree of focus on policy cooperation and economics. This pattern confirms the thesis put forward by this research – namely, that Indo-Pacific security depends on several interrelated fields.

**Middle-Power Convergence and Strategic Realignment in the Indo-Pacific**

The changes in the security dynamics of the Indo-Pacific region are also linked to the evolving strategic trends of some of the important middle powers like India, Japan, and Australia. In light of the emerging competition and security threats, these states are now trying to move away from their traditional strategy of maintaining a bilateral alliance along with regional organizations for their collective defense. Instead, what has emerged is the adoption of a relatively flexible approach for security cooperation. For instance, while Australia was earlier interested in economic engagement with China, it is now adopting a security-

centric approach as seen by higher spending on defense and joining AUKUS. Japan has also taken steps to become an important player in regional security dynamics through strategic measures.

Such parallel trends have only helped to highlight the importance of different minilateral groupings such as the Quad, which provides a dynamic framework for policy coordination on a range of policy issues. In turn, the formation of AUKUS can be considered as an attempt at defense integration, which focuses on advanced military technologies. Overall, these trends demonstrate the development of a complex regional security architecture in the Indo-Pacific, with a clear emphasis on middle powers' participation in building the framework. This approach certainly faces a series of challenges regarding overall coherence and the strategic direction of the regional security architecture, which is bound to become increasingly difficult to define amid the development of different frameworks. Nevertheless, the involvement of middle powers directly in defining the regional security architecture suggests the transition toward a more network-centric approach to regional security governance.



**Fig 4:** Conceptual Framework of Indo-Pacific Security Networks

Fig 4 below shows the relationship within the Indo-Pacific security architecture that involves both Quad and AUKUS in the larger security architecture. The illustration shows the roles played by the middle powers in coordinating the security architecture in areas of policy, defense, finances, and technologies. The security architecture has changed from being linear to a networked security architecture.

**The Quad and AUKUS: Complementary Pathways in Indo-Pacific Security**

Concept of Quadrilateral Security Dialogue' and the 'Concept of AUKUS' are two different yet related concepts of security cooperation. The former is 'a loose and issue-oriented concept of security cooperation, wherein India, Japan, Australia and United States get together to work together on different issues.' While the latter is a 'tightly integrated and defence-oriented concept of security cooperation, wherein the above three countries get together

to develop advanced defence technologies such as nuclear submarines, cyber technologies, and artificial intelligence.' The differences between the two concepts of security cooperation are indicative of the division of labor in the emerging Indo-Pacific security architecture. While 'Quadrilateral Dialogue' is a concept of security cooperation that focuses on 'policy coordination and provision of public goods,' the 'AUKUS' is a concept of security cooperation that focuses on 'deterrence and defence capabilities. Nonetheless, despite their dissimilarities, both these systems – the Quad and the AUKUS – should not be viewed as competing tools but, instead, as complimentary components of a multi-tiered framework. Both the existence of these frameworks is indicative of an emerging doctrine of security networks, where multiple instruments work together in different domains to ensure regional security. While the inclusive nature of the Quad and its stress on cooperation makes it more acceptable to the regional actors, the AUKUS

contributes to it by introducing the element of capacity building and strategic communication. It indicates the role of middle powers alongside the major powers in designing a more dynamic and flexible security arrangement.

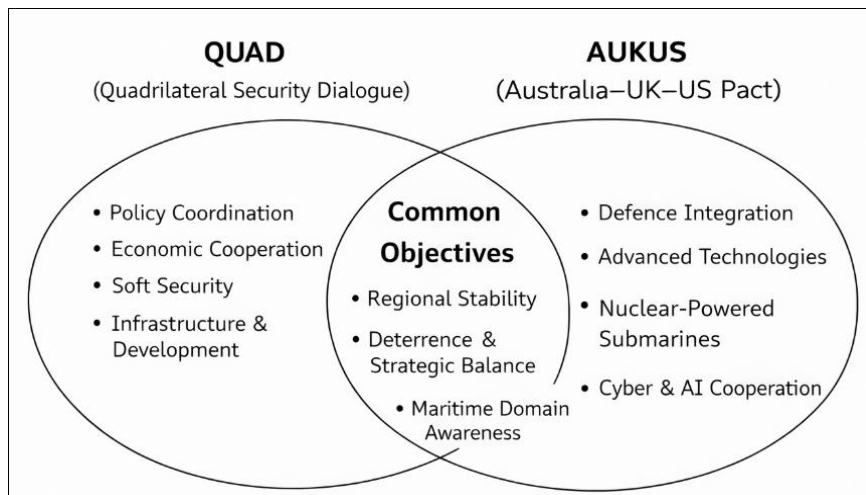
Nevertheless, this duality also raises concerns about the problem of integration and coherence as these instruments keep evolving their scopes and strategic objectives within the broader context of the Indo-Pacific region.

**Table 1:** Comparative Analysis of the Quad and AUKUS

Dimension	Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue)	AUKUS (Australia–UK–US Pact)
Nature	Informal, consultative framework	Formal, strategic security pact
Membership	India, Japan, Australia, United States	Australia, United Kingdom, United States
Primary Focus	Policy coordination, economic cooperation, soft security	Defence integration, advanced military capabilities
Security Orientation	Soft balancing, non-traditional security	Hard balancing, military deterrence
Institutional Depth	Low to moderate (non-binding commitments)	High (structured agreements and long-term commitments)
Operational Scope	Multi-domain (health, infrastructure, tech, maritime)	Primarily defence and high-end technology
Defence Cooperation	Joint exercises (e.g., Malabar), coordination	Deep integration (submarines, AI, cyber, quantum)
Technological Focus	Critical and emerging technologies, supply chains	Advanced military technologies and defence innovation
Economic Dimension	Strong (infrastructure, supply chains, resilience)	Limited (focused on defence-industrial collaboration)
Inclusivity	Relatively open and outward-looking	Exclusive and closed membership
Strategic Objective	Promote a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific	Strengthen deterrence and strategic advantage
Flexibility	High (non-binding, adaptive structure)	Moderate (structured but evolving)

The contrast between these two organizations is clearly outlined in Table 1. As can be seen, the Quad is a relatively flexible and multi-dimensional organization, while AUKUS is a more integrated defense organization. While the former

concentrates on cooperation and economic development, the latter is a much more advanced military construct aiming at deterrence. However, both are examples of a networked security construct in the Indo-Pacific region.



**Fig 5:** Quad vs AUKUS Functional Comparison Diagram

Fig 5 is a comparative visualization of the functional roles of the Quad and AUKUS in the security architecture of the Indo-Pacific region. It is clearly illustrated that the emphasis of the Quad is on policy coordination, economic cooperation, and soft security, while the emphasis of AUKUS is on defence integration and advanced technologies in the military domain. The common section of the two figures is the common security goals.

**The Turn to Minilateralism in Indo-Pacific Security**

This is an emerging trend in the Indo-Pacific region, and it has been viewed as a pragmatic approach in light of the incapability of the alliances as well as the major international organizations in addressing security challenges in the region. The above-mentioned alliances, although relevant, have been viewed as ineffective in addressing the security challenges in the region promptly and in an organized manner amid a dynamic security environment marked by security challenges in multiple dimensions. Therefore, minilateral arrangements such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue and AUKUS have become

appealing due to the flexibility that it offers to the member countries in addressing the security dynamics in the region, marked by security, technological, and economic challenges.

Meanwhile, there is also an underlying change with respect to how regional order can be maintained and sustained. The change has been instrumental in enabling the middle powers to strike a balance between their strategic autonomy and the necessity to engage in cooperation. As such, the change has enabled the middle powers to cooperate while avoiding any form of commitment that may compel them into an alliance. This is definitely a step in the right direction in view of how minilateralism is increasingly taking root and being pursued alongside various other initiatives aimed at addressing the many dimensions of regional order. There are challenges to the minilateralism framework as far as coordination, inclusiveness, and coherence are concerned. Nevertheless, it should be stressed that in developing the framework, no fragmentation of the broader security architecture of the region should occur.

**Minilateralism as Security Infrastructure in the Indo-Pacific**

The practice of minilateralism in the Indo-Pacific has evolved from being merely a mechanism of ad hoc cooperation and diplomatic convenience to becoming an architecture that helps shape the regional order. Two examples of such a framework include the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue and the AUKUS framework. While traditional alliance relationships were generally formed with the intent of supporting a set of institutional arrangements, this new form of arrangement has been characterized by its mechanism, which has remained flexible. For instance, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue facilitates interoperability, sharing of intelligence, and joint capabilities but also affords member countries the leeway to retain their flexibility. As a result, the practice of minilateralism has evolved into one of security architecture, which allows for deterrence and resilience rather than just supporting existing structures.

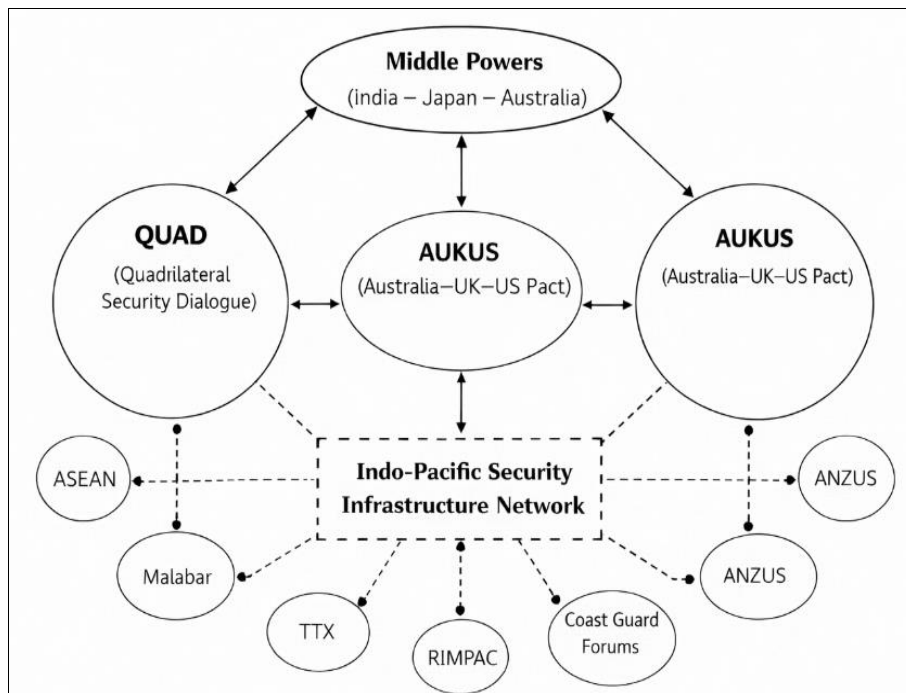
From an overall perspective, the evolution of minilateralism represents an indicator of the transition to a security governance model whereby security is achieved through a number of overlapping initiatives rather than through a single umbrella structure. Indeed, the minilateral groupings offer the structural links between policy coordination, defense cooperation, and economic collaboration which make possible a comprehensive solution for dealing with regional security threats. On the other hand, the rise of minilateralism as security architecture does not fail to raise some concerns related to the sustainability and coherence of the strategy, particularly in terms of the dangers of coordination problems due to lack of hierarchies and the potential for fragmentation owing to overlapping projects. The development of the institution of minilateralism implies that the concept is an essential element in achieving security within the Indo-Pacific region, where middle power agency plays a key role.

**Table 2:** Minilateralism as Security Infrastructure Model

Component	Description	Illustrative Example
Policy Coordination	Alignment of strategic priorities and joint policy initiatives among members	Quad leaders’ summits and joint statements
Defence Integration	Development of shared military capabilities and interoperability mechanisms	AUKUS nuclear-powered submarine programme
Financial Mechanisms	Investment in infrastructure, supply chains, and economic resilience initiatives	Quad infrastructure and supply chain initiatives
Technological Cooperation	Collaboration in emerging and critical technologies such as AI, cyber, and quantum systems	AUKUS advanced technology sharing (AI, cyber)
Network Linkages	Interconnected and overlapping partnerships enhancing regional coordination	Synergy between Quad and AUKUS frameworks

Table 2 shows that minilateralism is a structured and multi-dimensional approach to security, rather than a fleeting and temporary one. It provides an example of how the coordination of policies, integration of defense capabilities,

monetary tools, and technology cooperation combine together to provide regional security. This framework also highlights how security governance has evolved in the Indo-Pacific region.



**Fig 6:** Minilateralism as Security Infrastructure Model

The above Fig 6 represents the concept of minilateralism in terms of connected security architecture incorporating key

theories such as the Quad and AUKUS in the Indo-Pacific region. It illustrates the contribution of middle powers to

coordinating efforts through various functional domains within the model. The model reveals a security architecture that forms part of a connected partnership network.

### Discussion

The assessment of both the QSD and AUKUS indicates that there is an emerging trend in terms of security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region. The shift towards the use of a networked method in ensuring security is evident since the approach does not rely on an alliance system that emphasizes rigidity. Instead, security cooperation in this case emphasizes flexibility and functional specialization. This trend can be attributed to the increasing nature of challenges facing security in the contemporary period due to the fact that they have expanded from the conventional concept of military security to include technology, logistics, and economic security.

One possible observation that may result from the study of this new architecture is the influence of middle powers in its emergence. Apart from the engagement of middle powers towards the realization of a new strategic direction, it is also significant in the creation of new security architecture. Engagement of these countries via the platform of the Quad and AUKUS represents their ability to operate within an overlapping arrangement, utilizing each of these platforms for a specific strategic aim. This represents a form of distributed agency within regional security governance. Nevertheless, there are some problems that arise, particularly in relation to the coordination and coherence of efforts through the launch of various initiatives. Although the flexibility provided by minilateralism is an advantage, it also reflects the dangers of institutional fragmentation. It would depend on the capacity of these nations to operate together instead of against each other for success to be achieved.

### Conclusion

The study concludes that the Indo-Pacific security architecture is undergoing a significant transformation from traditional alliance-based systems to a more flexible, networked framework driven by minilateral arrangements such as the Quad and AUKUS. These frameworks perform distinct yet complementary roles, with the Quad focusing on policy coordination, economic cooperation, and technological collaboration, while AUKUS emphasizes defence integration and advanced military capabilities. The findings highlight that this layered and multi-dimensional approach enhances regional adaptability in addressing complex security challenges spanning military, economic, and technological domains. Additionally, the growing role of middle powers—India, Japan, and Australia—as strategic connectors underscores a shift toward distributed and network-centric security governance. However, the study also identifies challenges related to coordination, coherence, and the risk of fragmentation within overlapping initiatives. Overall, the paper advances the concept of “minilateralism as security infrastructure,” emphasizing that effective Indo-Pacific security will depend on balancing flexibility with institutional coherence and fostering deeper collaboration among participating states.

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