Executive Summary

1. The Quad or the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, comprising Japan, Australia, India and the United States, was revived in 2017 after being in abeyance since the idea was first proposed in 2007.

2. The first iteration of the Quad turned out to be a false start not least because of the lack of a clear purpose. Australia’s withdrawal and India’s reluctance to embrace it because of the staunch opposition from China, and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s departure from Japan’s leadership position in late 2007, all added to its abandonment.

3. China’s vigorous criticism was also a factor against its further development. None of the countries, especially India and Australia, wanted to annoy China. They aimed to engage and deepen their economic ties with the rising economic powerhouse.

4. The Quad’s rebirth can be attributed to the changing strategic landscape, in particular China’s growing assertiveness and often unacceptable, even coercive economic and military behaviour. There are growing concerns about China among Quad members and a willingness to cooperate on issues of regional and global concerns.

5. Coalition building of nations with similar goals and strategic outlook is one approach that the Quad nations have adopted to handle China’s deemed unacceptable behaviour. The re-formed Quad complements the Japan-led Free and Open Indo-Pacific and is a capstone project of strategic partnerships between and among the four members, bilaterally and trilaterally.

6. India was initially a reluctant Quad partner. Some even called it the weakest link and suspected its credentials. However, recent developments suggest that India is now a willing partner and a strong member. India’s hesitancy dissipated with its 2020 border skirmish with China.
7. India is no doubt an odd member of the Quad. The others are in a military alliance and a ‘hub and spokes’ relationship. India is neither an ally of the United States nor in a military alliance with any partner. While tying itself closely and tightly to the United States and partner nations’ strategies in the Quad, India maintains its policy of strategic autonomy and multi-alignment.

8. Unlike other Quad partners, India engages Russia and China via minilateral frameworks, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS) groupings.

9. Despite India’s attachment to its strategic autonomy and its continuing institutionalised engagement with China and Russia, it is now clear that India has embraced the Quad process much more tightly. This engagement is unlikely to change as India considers Quad partners as like-minded nations.