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## **From Vision to Action: Envisioning Quad-ASEAN Partnership for Regional Resilience**

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### **SYNOPSIS**

*The fourth Quad Leaders' Summit, held on 21 September 2024, emphasised expanding humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. As ASEAN faces growing pressure to achieve its Vision 2025 for disaster management and meet the Sendai Framework targets by 2030, the Quad's focus on regional HADR cooperation, even without directly referencing ASEAN, underscores the importance of aligning efforts to bolster regional resilience.*

### **COMMENTARY**

[The ASEAN Vision 2025 on Disaster Management](#) envisions a disaster-resilient region with a collective and coordinated emergency response capacity. However, achieving this vision is becoming increasingly complex with the growing diversity and number of HADR actors. The push towards enhancing local resilience is reignited and new aid funding models such as the [Pooled funds](#) are becoming increasingly relevant.

The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (the Quad), comprising Australia, India, Japan, and the United States, has increasingly focused on HADR as a key area for cooperation. The establishment of the [Quad Partnership on HADR](#) in May 2022, the [guidelines](#) for this partnership in September 2022, and the [2024 leaders' summit](#) signal serious intent to deepen HADR coordination with various actors, such as the United Nations and ASEAN, for long-term resiliency efforts in the Indo-Pacific Region.

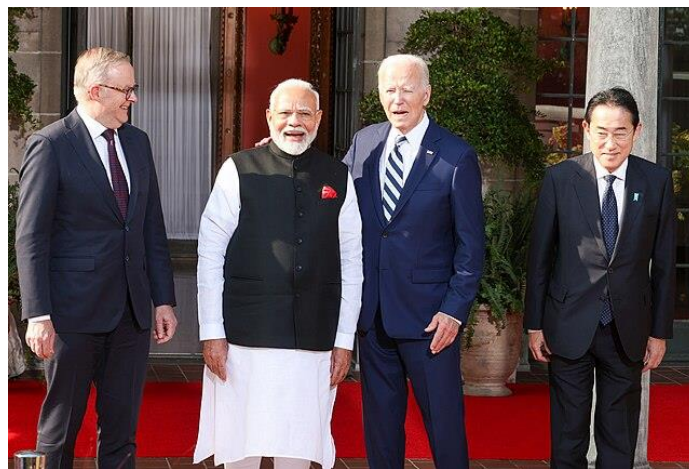
ASEAN and the Quad already have a strong foundation for collaboration in addressing humanitarian challenges. The [Declaration on One ASEAN, One Response](#), signed in 2016, laid the groundwork for a cohesive regional disaster response both within and

beyond the region. The Quad Guidelines for Partnership on HADR in the Indo-Pacific, which came into effect on 23 September 2022, align with ASEAN's longstanding vision, particularly the Vision 2025, which emphasises enhancing disaster management capabilities through institutionalisation and communications, finance and resource mobilisation, and partnerships and innovations.

Furthermore, the 2024 Quad Leaders' Summit recognised the urgency of establishing proactive HADR and the existential threat of climate change. These frameworks reflect a shared understanding of and commitment to addressing the evolving humanitarian landscape, prioritising efforts related to climate change, disaster management, and collaborative strategies.

Although a coordinated extra-regional response by ASEAN is yet to be witnessed, the Quad can potentially support and complement it with its efforts to coordinate HADR across the broader Indo-Pacific. Aligning the Quad's HADR-related goals with that of ASEAN's disaster management objectives will create mutually beneficial outcomes.

Such collaboration will enable the Quad and ASEAN to make meaningful contributions to the [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction](#) (SFDRR) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as outlined in the [ASEAN Disaster Resilience Outlook](#). Given the Indo-Pacific's shared risks and the changing humanitarian landscape — where climate change, pandemics, and evolving risks demand new strategies — HADR will be a critical component of the partnership between the Quad and ASEAN.



Expanding humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) cooperation in the Indo-Pacific was one of the main topics of discussion during the Quad Leaders' Summit on 21 September 2024. Aligning the Quad's HADR aims with ASEAN's disaster management objectives will be mutually beneficial and significantly enhance disaster preparedness in the region. *Image from Wikimedia Commons.*

## The Quad and HADR

The Quad has shown its commitment to HADR cooperation with the establishment of the Quad Partnership on HADR in May 2022. This commitment was solidified with the signing of the guidelines for the partnership in September 2022, outlining strategic frameworks for collaborative action. The 2024 Quad Leaders' Summit also highlighted the alliance's proactive stance, including its coordinated assistance for Papua New Guinea following a [landslide in May 2024](#) and Vietnam due to the [impacts of Typhoon Yagi](#). Upcoming plans to conduct a tabletop exercise and ensure the readiness to respond continue to reinforce the Quad's commitment to regional resilience.

While these do not explicitly mention ASEAN, they align with ASEAN's own disaster management goals, particularly under the ASEAN Vision 2025, suggesting potential for deeper collaboration between the Quad and ASEAN in HADR efforts.

## **Aligning Prospects**

A partnership between the Quad and ASEAN has the potential to enhance existing mechanisms and initiatives — adopting new aid funding models, accommodating the diversification of humanitarian actors, and addressing emerging threats, all while aligning with ASEAN's goals and even global objectives (SFDRR and SDGs).

The ASEAN vision emphasises exploring sustainable and innovative ways to fund and mobilise resources for disaster management. Adopting a Pooled funds mechanism typically allows for more flexible and rapid disbursement of aid during emergencies. For instance, the [ASEAN Disaster Management and Emergency Relief Fund](#) allows contributions from other sources (subject to the decision of or approval by the Parties), ensuring that additional resources can be quickly accessed in times of need. This model highlights ASEAN's commitment to efficient resource mobilisation and aligns with the Pooled funds approach.

Building on this, the Quad can enhance disaster relief efforts by establishing an HADR-focused investor and philanthropy network akin to the [Quad Investors Network](#) which fosters co-investment in critical technologies. Such a network can actively engage the private sector and philanthropic organisations in funding disaster-related initiatives that enhance the speed and sustainability of support for HADR.

The [Exercise Coordinated Response](#) (Ex COORES), which involves militaries and civilians, and the recent [ASEAN Regional Disaster Emergency Response Exercise](#) (ARDEX), which tested multi-sectoral mechanisms of ASEAN and Indonesia's line ministries, demonstrate the importance of large-scale disaster simulations. However, these exercises should recognise the growing role of non-traditional actors (civil society organisations, private sector, faith-based organisations, philanthropic organisations, academic and research institutions etc.), who are capable of making significant contributions to disaster response.

Such large-scale exercises should veer away from participation tokenism and instead integrate these actors in meaningful ways that reflect their potential impact. The Quad countries' long-standing involvement in Ex COORES highlights the potential for expanding participation in such exercises. Expanding participation in the ARDEX outside the ASEAN system can similarly foster stronger partnerships and align with ASEAN's goal of becoming a global leader in disaster management.

The Quad can also assist in developing early warning systems and coordinate data sharing across the ASEAN region and the wider Indo-Pacific. A good example is the alliance's [Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness](#) (IPMDA) [launched at the 2022 Quad Leaders' Summit in Tokyo](#), which aims to improve awareness and response to climate change and disasters using satellite data.

Additionally, leveraging Japan's [earthquake early warning system](#), India's [tsunami early warning system](#), and [DisasterAWARE](#) by the Pacific Disaster Center-Global of the United States can significantly enhance regional preparedness, given that only [59% of countries in Asia and the Pacific](#) currently have multi-hazard monitoring and forecasting systems coverage. This will complement the goal of preparing for increasing and emerging threats and advancing early warning, monitoring, and response information systems as in the ASEAN vision and even the SFDRR global target (g) to “substantially increase the availability of and access to multi-hazard early warning systems and disaster risk information and assessments to people by 2030”.

Furthermore, the “[Early Warnings for All](#)” initiative, launched by the United Nations, aims to ensure that every person on earth is protected by early warning systems by 2027, addressing the gaps in coverage for vulnerable populations. Collaborating on these fronts will enable ASEAN and the Quad to significantly enhance disaster preparedness across the region.

### **Potential Challenges**

Within ASEAN, [perceptions](#) of the Quad differ from country to country. The improved perception of the partnership’s benefits for the region in 2024, from 31.0% to 40.9%, was attributed to an active showing in 2023 — [Joint Statement of March and September 2023](#) and the [Quad Leaders’ Summit](#) and [Vision Statement of May 2023](#). Nevertheless, as the Quad is still perceived to be competing with ASEAN-led mechanisms instead of complementing ASEAN efforts, it can potentially hamper cooperation.

The Quad also faces the need to carefully navigate its role to avoid being perceived as a [divisive force](#) in the region amid [rising geopolitical tensions](#). While the Quad has a significant military dimension through joint exercises and defence cooperation, prioritising HADR cooperation can better address concerns about the Quad’s strategic intentions.

By complementing ASEAN-led HADR mechanisms such as Vision 2025, providing transparent, multilateral aid as the recommended HADR investor network, and promoting inclusive partnerships through the inclusion of non-traditional actors and integration of early warning systems, the Quad can build trust, shift the narrative from competition to collaboration, and demonstrate its commitment to regional resilience and consequently, regional stability.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, a partnership between the Quad and ASEAN can be mutually beneficial in addressing and preparing for the evolving humanitarian landscape. As ASEAN strives to meet its Vision 2025 and Sendai Framework targets, and as the Quad works towards the next steps charted at the recent summit, closer collaboration on disaster response, early warning systems, and resilience-building efforts can significantly strengthen regional resilience. This partnership will promise a more effective and comprehensive HADR strategy for ASEAN and the Quad in the Indo-Pacific.

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