

SQUAD Grouping of USA, Background, Members, Objectives, Challenges

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The Squad is an informal security grouping consisting of the United States, Japan, Australia, and the Philippines. Its purpose is to enhance cooperation on maritime security, intelligence sharing, joint military drills, and regional deterrence against rising challenges, especially China's assertive behavior in contested maritime zones.

The group first met in mid-2023, during the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore. In April 2024, the Squad nations carried out joint maritime patrols in the Philippine's exclusive economic zone, reflecting operational cooperation.

One of the important motivations is countering China's increasing presence and influence in the South China Sea. The Philippines, in particular, sees the alliance as a way to strengthen its defense posture. There are ongoing discussions about possibly expanding the Squad to include India and South Korea to broaden its strategic weight.

SQUAD Grouping of USA

The SQUAD Grouping of USA is an informal military partnership comprising the United States, Australia, Japan, and the Philippines. Its primary aim is to enhance security cooperation through intelligence sharing, joint military drills,

and coordinated operations, particularly to counterbalance China’s growing influence in the **Indo-Pacific region**.

Since 2023, the four nations have carried out joint maritime operations within the Philippines’ Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the South China Sea. These exercises focus on improving interoperability, strengthening maritime security, and asserting freedom of navigation in contested waters.

India’s Relationship with the SQUAD Alliance

- **Not a Formal Member:** India is not part of the SQUAD alliance, which includes the US, Japan, Australia, and the Philippines.
- **Shared Strategic Objectives:** Despite not being in the grouping, India aligns with its core goals, countering China’s assertiveness and maintaining a rules-based Indo-Pacific order.
- **Intersection with the Quad:** India plays a leading role in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), which overlaps with SQUAD’s objectives of ensuring a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific.
- **Strong Bilateral Relations:** India maintains close defence and strategic partnerships with all SQUAD members through joint exercises, dialogues, and intelligence-sharing.
- **Strategic Autonomy:** Guided by its non-aligned principles, India avoids formal military blocs, prioritising independent decision-making in foreign policy.
- **Broader Regional Engagement:** Beyond Indo-Pacific security, India focuses on connectivity, economic cooperation, and maritime security in the Indian Ocean region.
- **Selective Collaboration:** While not a member, India engages with SQUAD Grouping of USA on specific issues of mutual interest through trilateral dialogues and joint exercises.

SQUAD Grouping of USA Background

- **Expanding Presence:** China’s growing influence and military footprint in the Indo-Pacific has raised concerns for regional security.
- **South China Sea Disputes:** The South China Sea has become a major flashpoint, with Beijing’s territorial claims and militarisation sparking tensions with neighbouring states.
- **Strategic Response:** The “Squad” alliance (US, Japan, Australia, and the Philippines) emerged as a coordinated effort to counterbalance China’s assertiveness.
- **Objective:** Its core aim is to maintain regional stability, safeguard maritime routes, and uphold international law in the Indo-Pacific.

SQUAD Grouping of USA Members

The “Squad” alliance brings together four countries, United States, Japan, Australia, and the Philippines each contributing distinct strengths to balance China’s growing presence in the Indo-Pacific. The table below highlights their roles and motivations.

SQUAD Grouping of USA Members	
Country	Role and Contribution

United States	Leading member with strong military and diplomatic influence. Focused on protecting the rules-based order and ensuring freedom of navigation in the Indo-Pacific.
Japan	Close US ally with advanced military technology and strategic location. Concerned about China's maritime assertiveness and committed to regional security initiatives.
Australia	Strategic partner with key interests in maritime stability. Its geographic proximity to the South China Sea strengthens its ability to counterbalance China.
Philippines	Recently strengthened ties with Western allies under President Marcos Jr. Its firm position on territorial disputes in the South China Sea supports the alliance's objectives.

SQUAD Grouping of USA Objectives

The “Squad” alliance focuses on strengthening collective security and maintaining a stable balance of power in the Indo-Pacific. Its core objectives include:

- Promoting peace, stability, and deterrence in the Indo-Pacific region.
- Enhancing military interoperability by conducting joint patrols and exercises to address evolving security challenges.
- Bolstering intelligence-sharing and maritime cooperation to safeguard critical sea lanes and deter assertive actions.

SQUAD Grouping of USA Challenges

- **China’s Opposition:** Beijing perceives the alliance as an attempt to contain its rise, which could intensify regional tensions and trigger stronger countermeasures in the South China Sea.
- **Divergent Member Interests:** While the members share common concerns, differing strategic priorities, similar to the frictions occasionally seen within the Quad, may limit the alliance’s long-term cohesion and effectiveness.

SQUAD Grouping of USA Implications

- **Reshaping the Indo-Pacific Order:** The rise of the “Squad” marks a shift in the regional balance of power, reinforcing collective security efforts in response to China’s assertiveness.
- **US-China Rivalry:** It underscores the deepening contest between a US-led coalition and China for strategic dominance in the Indo-Pacific.

Broader Implications: Beyond security, the alliance influences global trade routes, maritime freedom, and economic stability, making it a key factor in international relations.

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