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THE QUAD AND REGIONAL HEALTH SECURITY

IMPLICATIONS AND PROSPECTS FOR THE INDO-PACIFIC

Policy Report
February 2022

Amalina Anuar and
Nazia Hussain

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Executive Summary

Since its resurrection in 2017, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), involving the United States, Australia, Japan and India, has often made headlines as a China-containment mechanism. This extensive focus on the minilateral's military–security value, however, overlooks the Quad's potential to deliver regional public goods. This report examines the Quad's health security initiatives. Although the Quad is only one institution among many playing the health diplomacy game, it has an outsized capacity to contribute to health security outcomes and diplomatic processes in the region due to, for instance, its medical resources and financial heft. It is thus worth assessing the challenges and opportunities for the Quad's health security initiatives, as well as what the Quad's evolving health security prong means for the wider region. This report first analyses the evolution, prospects and implications of the Quad's health security prong. It then recommends policy initiatives the Quad can take to leverage synergies and secure buy-in from regional institutions with the aim of making health regionalism more inclusive.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has irrevocably altered the tone and tenor of diplomacy. Perhaps one of the most marked changes is a newfound emphasis on health security and cooperation, which has generally received less attention in the region compared with traditional political and economic security issues.¹

Actors in the Indo-Pacific, such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), the dialogue platform involving the United States, Australia, Japan and India, have increasingly integrated health security into their foreign policy portfolios. The form of such medical diplomacy has evolved over the course of the pandemic. Yet, whether it involves masks, vaccines or information exchange, countries are providing international aid or engaging in cooperation that promotes health mainly with a view to achieving non-health-related foreign policy aims.²

This report analyses the Quad's medical diplomacy efforts. The Quad is better known among pundits for its military–security value as a China-containment mechanism. This reading of the minilateral, however, often overlooks its potential to deliver regional public goods. The Quad has an outsized capacity to contribute to health security outcomes and diplomatic processes in the region due to, for instance, the medical and financial resources of its members. Additionally, the Quad's stated purpose is to alter the geopolitical balance in the Indo-Pacific, and health security is one means of doing so. Amid the different outlooks and visions prevalent in the Indo-Pacific, as well as the pressing need to expedite post-pandemic recovery, it is thus worth assessing what the Quad's evolving health security prong means for the region and considering ways to synergise these initiatives with other health diplomacy efforts. This report maps the Quad's evolving health security dimension and discusses the implications of its various initiatives for health security and health multilateralism in the Indo-Pacific. Finally, the report recommends steps the Quad can take to leverage synergies and secure buy-in from regional institutions with the aim of strengthening inclusivity in the regional health security architecture.

¹ Mely Caballero-Anthony, *Negotiating Governance on Non-Traditional Security in Southeast Asia and Beyond* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), p. 53.

² Tanisha M. Fazal, "Health Diplomacy in Pandemical Times," *International Organization* 74, no. 51 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818320000326>

History and Evolution

The pandemic has offered the Quad an opportunity for a small but significant pivot, if not a total reorientation. Countries across the world confronted an unprecedented transnational disease outbreak. With health diplomacy gaining new credence, an opening emerged for the Quad to ply the Indo-Pacific with concrete deliverables rather than lofty strategic machinations.

In March 2020, the Quad joined hands with South Korea, New Zealand and Vietnam for COVID-19 cooperation. This “Quad Plus” arrangement became a series of weekly meetings covering topics such as “trade facilitation, vaccine development, challenges of stranded citizens, assistance to countries in need, and sharing technologies”.³

One year later, the Quad launched its Vaccine Partnership and Vaccine Experts Group in March 2021.⁴ Collectively, the Quad members have outsized capacity to provide vaccines as a global public good owing to a significant vaccine development and manufacturing base (see Table 1).

³ Nazia Hussain & Amalina Anuar, “BRI and Indo-Pacific: Geopolitics of Multilateralism?”, *RSIS Commentaries*, 13 August 2020, <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/cms/global-health-security-covid-19-and-its-impacts-bri-and-indo-pacific-geopolitics-of-multilateralism/#.Yba6eC0RrBJ>

⁴ The White House, “Fact Sheet: Quad Summit”, 12 March 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/03/12/fact-sheet-quad-summit/>

Table 1: Vaccine development and production capacity in Quad member countries⁵

Country	Number of Vaccine Developers	Vaccine and Vaccine-related Production Capacity
United States	126	Arcturus Therapeutics: Drug substance manufacturing
		AstraZeneca: Drug substance manufacturing; Fill-and-finish
		Bharat Biotech: Fill-and-finish; End-to-end manufacturing
		Janssen Pharmaceuticals: Drug substance manufacturing; Fill-and-finish
		Inovio Pharmaceuticals: Drug substance manufacturing; End-to-end
		Medicago Inc: Adjuvant manufacturing
		Medigen Vaccine Biologics: Adjuvant manufacturing
		Moderna: Excipient supplier; Drug substance manufacturing; Fill-and-finish
		Novavax: Adjuvant manufacturing; Drug substance manufacturing; Fill-and-finish
		Orogenics: Drug substance manufacturing
		Pfizer BioNTech: Excipient supplier; Drug substance manufacturing; Fill-and-finish
		Saiba: End-to-end
Spicona: Drug substance manufacturing		
Japan	9	AstraZeneca: Drug substance manufacturing; Fill-and-finish
		Novavax: End-to-end
		Translate Bio-Sanofi: Drug substance manufacturing
		VLP Therapeutics: Drug substance manufacturing

⁵ Data compiled from UNICEF COVID-19 VaccineMarket Dashboard.

Australia	7	Commonwealth Serum Laboratories: Bulk manufacturing; Fill-and-finish
		EnGeneIC: Develop, manufacture and commercialise nanocell technology
		Institute of Drug Technology Ltd: Drug substance manufacturing
		Vaxine: Adjuvant manufacturing
India	30	Bharat Biotech: Bulk manufacturing; Fill-and-finish
		Biological E: Bulk manufacturing; Fill-and-finish
		Gland Pharma: Fill-and-finish
		Panacea Biotec: Fill-and-finish
		Serum Institute of India: Bulk manufacturing; Fill-and-finish
		Zydus Cadila: Bulk manufacturing; Fill-and-finish

Thus far, India is in charge of the bulk of vaccine manufacturing, with the vaccines then being exported to countries bilaterally as well as multilaterally via the global COVAX initiative. Meanwhile, the US Development Finance Corporation is funding the expansion of India's Biological E Ltd's vaccine manufacturing capacity to a 1 billion dose output rate by end 2022, whereas the Japan International Cooperation Agency will provide loans to New Delhi to expand vaccine manufacturing for export. Under this division of labour, Australia is taking point on logistical support to coordinate last-mile vaccine delivery and distribution, particularly for Southeast Asia and the Pacific. The wealthier Quad members are also bolstering domestic vaccination and healthcare infrastructure across the region. Japan, the United States and Australia are supporting vaccine procurement, cold chain networks, and immunisation initiatives to the combined tune of over US\$200 million.

At their follow-up summit in September 2021,⁶ the Quad members revised their pledged donations upwards to at least 1.2 billion doses by end 2022 and provided additional financing for existing health security schemes.

⁶ The White House, "Fact Sheet: Quad Leaders' Summit", 24 September 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/09/24/fact-sheet-quad-leaders-summit/>

Implications

What does the Quad's foray into health security mean for the Indo-Pacific? We discuss the impact in two parts: first, the implications for the Quad as a minilateral, and second, the implications for regional health security outcomes.

A Win for the Quad?

The Quad has come a long way since its resurrection in 2017, from holding only senior officials' meetings in the early years to concluding two leader-level summits last year. Despite scepticism about Quad 2.0's ability to institutionalise its set-up and lingering memories of how it previously faltered in the face of external pressure, especially from China, the elevation of the Quad in recent years and the broadening of its scope indicate that there is enough political will to cooperate on issues of mutual interest this time around.

Indeed, the Quad's foray into health security cooperation, with concrete initiatives such as its ambitious Vaccine Partnership, argues for the minilateral grouping's potential to become a substantive mechanism in the Indo-Pacific, focused on functional collaboration to deliver regional public goods. The Quad's health security dimension could be a starting point in carving out its role in a post-COVID era. Even as concerns about China's unilateral actions loom in the background, the Quad is moving beyond the hazily defined scope of a traditional security partnership in the Indo-Pacific to evolve into more than just an "anti-China talk-shop" as deemed by Beijing. A new framing of the Quad which distances itself from the anti-China narrative that has plagued the grouping since its first ideation will also ensure greater buy-in from the ASEAN countries, which remain careful not to get embroiled in the intensifying US-China competition in the region.

The joint statement coming out of the Quad's first ever in-person leaders' summit held in September 2021 sheds some light on the scope and direction of the agenda going forward, focusing on health security, connectivity and infrastructure, emerging technologies, climate action, and education. The broadening agenda may find support in the Quad Plus, which has been

⁷ Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan, "Towards a Quad-Plus Arrangement", Observer Research Foundation, 7 May 2020, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/towards-a-quad-plus-arrangement-65674/>

⁸ The White House, "Joint Statement from Quad Leaders", 24 September 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/09/24/joint-statement-from-quad-leaders/>

dormant for some time now despite initial plans to convene on a weekly basis.⁷ Acknowledging the Quad’s network of “like-minded partners”,⁸ the joint statement touched upon the potential of a Quad-Plus format in helping the grouping realise its stated goals, particularly by extending the logistical and supply network chains.

The door may not be completely shut yet on the possibility of a Quad-Plus format, which is still in its early stages. A few months after the first Quad-Plus meeting, the United States demonstrated its interest in keeping dialogue within the Plus format going by hosting another Plus meeting in May 2020, this time extending the invitation to Brazil and Israel.⁹ The COVID-19 pandemic provided an impetus for the Quad to demonstrate its practical utility and for the Quad Plus to remain as a flexible ad hoc multilateral mechanism.

The challenge now for the Quad will be to ride on the momentum, take stock of promises and deliver. Sustained delays or failure to deliver on its health security initiatives will result in a loss of credibility for the Quad — something the grouping cannot afford as it has relatively little to show for in terms of tangible outcomes and ground implementation. India’s abrupt ban on vaccine exports just months after the Quad Vaccine Partnership was announced left low- and middle-income countries to scramble for alternatives — a gap that China and Russia rose to fill. Going forward, the Quad has to realistically account for what it can and cannot promise while managing expectations. Moreover, if the Quad allows its health security initiatives to quietly fizzle out, it will only play up the narrative that its foray into health security cooperation was merely a geopolitical calculation to counter China’s vaccine diplomacy in the region. Successful execution of promises on the ground, in close alignment with multilateral mechanisms such as COVAX, will help counter this narrative.

A Win for Health Security?

The Quad’s health security dimension augurs well for the maturing of the Quad, but its effects on regional health security outcomes are less clear-cut. This is partly due to the Quad Plus’s disappearance and to the stuttering progress of the Quad Vaccine Partnership.

It is not known whether the handful of Quad-Plus sessions last year have significantly informed pandemic management responses in the region. The Quad Vaccine Partnership, the flagship project of the Quad’s health security prong so far, has yet to reach its full potential either. Of the 1 billion

⁹ Jagannath Panda, “Making ‘Quad Plus’ a Reality”, *The Diplomat*, 13 January 2022, <https://thediplomat.com/2022/01/making-quad-plus-a-reality/>

or more vaccines promised to the Indo-Pacific, only 79 million have been delivered as of December 2021. Of these, almost 46 million doses have gone to ASEAN members.¹⁰

This is a reminder of the limits of minilateralism, with the Quad entailing only four members,¹¹ and another cautionary tale on domestic priorities trumping international cooperation. The Quad Vaccine Partnership depends heavily on India as its vaccine factory. However, India could not produce for the Quad — or meet its contractual obligations to COVAX, for that matter — once the Delta variant wreaked havoc on its shores in early 2021. New Delhi found itself woefully lacking in vaccines and subsequently placed an indefinite halt on all exports of Covishield, the AstraZeneca shot manufactured locally by Serum Institute of India.¹² Exacerbating the vaccine crunch for the Partnership was vaccine nationalism, even among like-minded allies. A de facto export ban triggered by the US Defence Production Act meant that the Serum Institute was scrambling for raw materials used in vaccine manufacturing.¹³

As of November 2021, India has resumed exports to COVAX.¹⁴ Yet expectations and promises should be tempered. With recent reports indicating a third wave of the pandemic in India, domestic concerns and needs must be taken into account. Vaccine nationalism can manifest itself in a pushback against both vaccine donations and future technical assistance, constituting an indefinite threat.

Post-COVID, governments see a lead in biomedical research and development (R&D) as a competitive advantage for their economic growth and security. To give but one example, despite support for COVAX and the COVID-19 intellectual property waiver at the World Trade Organization (WTO), Washington has been reluctant to more strongly compel American

¹⁰ “Quad Country COVID-19 Response in the Indo-Pacific Dashboard”, last accessed 12 January, 2022, https://share.usaid.gov/views/QUADCountryCOVID-19ResponseDashboard/Indo-PacificRegionOverview?%3AshowAppBanner=false&%3Adisplay_count=n&%3AshowVizHome=n&%3Aorigin=viz_share_link&%3AisGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y&%3Aembed=y

¹¹ Amalina Anuar & Nazia Hussain, “Minilateralism for Multilateralism in the Post-COVID Age”, *RSIS Policy Reports*, 19 January 2021.

¹² Emily Schmall & Karan Deep Singh, “India and its vaccine maker stumble over their pandemic promises”, *The New York Times*, 7 May 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/07/world/india-serum-institute-covid19.html>

¹³ Chad P Bown & Chris Rogers, “The US did not ban exports of vaccine supplies. But more help is needed”, Peterson Institute for International Economics, 7 June 2021, <https://www.piie.com/blogs/trade-and-investment-policy-watch/us-did-not-ban-exports-vaccine-supplies-more-help-needed>

¹⁴ “India resumes coronavirus vaccine exports to COVAX,” Reuters, 26 November 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/india/indias-serum-institute-resumes-covishield-vaccine-exports-under-covax-facility-2021-11-26/>

pharmaceuticals to share their know-how with the World Health Organization.¹⁵ There are competing pressures in favour of vaccine multilateralism as well: India co-initiated the aforementioned WTO waiver and has offered vaccine technology transfer to interested countries.¹⁶ Vaccine multilateralism for India also holds strategic implications as an answer to China's growing influence in the neighbourhood, especially in the context of the Sino-Indian rivalry, which has heated up in recent years. It remains to be seen, however, whether the latter forces will overcome the seemingly more salient trends of vaccine nationalism among the Quad.

Moreover, the Quad has not reassessed its division of labour in light of the Partnership's rough start. India remains the main manufacturer for the Partnership, while the other Quad members continue to donate doses. But the Quad could involve more members in vaccine manufacturing. Australia, for example, can manufacture 1 million AstraZeneca doses per week; up to 800,000 doses have been continuously exported to the wider Pacific and Southeast Asia weekly to boost vaccination rollout.¹⁷ However, production is expected to wind up by early 2022 despite vaccines still being in short supply in several countries across the Indo-Pacific. Neither did the United States step in to do the heavy-lifting of vaccine manufacturing when India's exports faltered. This was a missed opportunity to strengthen US commitment to Southeast Asia, which has felt relatively neglected by the Biden administration, and to bolster the credibility of the Quad as a cohesive minilateral capable of rising above internal conflicts and coordination issues.

Vaccines aside, the Quad's health diplomacy has made a positive dent in other aspects. The regional health security architecture is characterised by networks of bilateral and plurilateral health cooperation. The East Asia Summit (EAS), as the region's apex ASEAN-led forum, has defined health security as one of eight operational areas, but its mandate and agenda on this front are still ill-defined. As some analysts have pointed out, the EAS failed to launch any regional health initiatives in the early days of the pandemic.¹⁸ ASEAN members instead largely undertook regional cooperation among themselves

¹⁵ Amalina Anuar, "How a reliance on market forces undermines US attempts at vaccine diplomacy", *South China Morning Post*, 24 November 2021, <https://www.scmp.com/comment/opinion/article/3156972/how-reliance-market-forces-undermines-us-attempts-vaccine-diplomacy>

¹⁶ ANI, "India ready to partner with interested countries for technology transfer, manufacturing indigenous COVID vaccines", *The Times of India*, 16 September 2021, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/india-ready-to-partner-with-interested-countries-for-technology-transfer-manufacturing-indigenous-covid-vaccines-shringla/articleshow/86268756.cms>

¹⁷ Stephen Dziedzic & Liam Fox, "Australia plans to stop AstraZeneca vaccine production — but how will it affect our neighbours?" ABC, 14 October 2021, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-10-14/opposition-aid-groups-urge-government-extend-csl-astra-zeneca/100539494>

¹⁸ Malcolm Cook & Hoang Thi Ha, "Is the East Asia Summit suffering erosion?" *IASEAS Perspective*, 3 May 2021.

and with the ASEAN Plus Three partners. Nevertheless, collaboration among ASEAN members and their Plus Three partners has so far emphasised epidemiological surveillance and responding to infectious diseases rather than improving public health infrastructure.¹⁹ Where the Quad's efforts have complemented these initiatives, and could continue to do so, is thus through the financing and strengthening of public healthcare systems across the region.

Despite the above benefits of the Quad's health diplomacy, however, it is worth questioning whether the overall geopoliticisation of health augurs well for the Indo-Pacific. The Quad's vaccine diplomacy is, in some part, a response to China's vaccine diplomacy. Countries could well play major powers against each other to gain better concessions or more aid — and some have already done so, to some extent.²⁰ However, there is a latent risk of vaccine assistance and health diplomacy in general becoming contingent upon strategic calculations rather than human security needs in the region, with vaccines and medical goods serving as tools to pressure countries to choose sides in geopolitical spats.

¹⁹ Mely Caballero-Anthony, "Health and Human Security Challenges in Asia: New Agendas for Strengthening Regional Health Governance", *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 72, no 6: 602–616.

²⁰ ISEAS, "Webinar on The Geopolitics of COVID-19 Diplomacy in Southeast Asia", 27 August 2021, <https://www.iseas.edu.sg/media/event-highlights/webinar-on-the-geopolitics-of-covid-19-vaccine-diplomacy-in-southeast-asia/>

Policy Recommendations

Both the Quad Plus and Quad Vaccine Partnership have got off to a shaky start. Whereas the Quad-Plus meetings were short-lived, the Quad Vaccine Partnership has been bedevilled by vaccine nationalism, internal coordination hiccups, and regional wariness towards the geopoliticisation of health. For the Quad's health security prong to truly take off, these challenges must be addressed. The following initiatives could be considered:

1. Fulfilling promises and strengthening commitment

The Quad should deliver on the promises made, ensuring that the 1.2 billion doses of vaccine are disbursed by the end of 2022. This may require reassessing the current division of labour among Quad members and roping in more contractors to meet production targets rather than relying on India alone. Upping vaccine donations would similarly be useful. Ultimately, the Quad members must prove their long-term reliability in vaccine assistance and health security more broadly.

Importantly, the Quad should bear in mind that countries in the Indo-Pacific — ASEAN included — are interested in linkages, not dependencies. Donation efforts should be complemented by further commitments to technical assistance, capacity building and technology transfer in, for instance, vaccine research and production. For example, a plurilateral trade agreement for COVID-19 and future pandemics among the Quad members and other Indo-Pacific countries could build more resilient vaccine and medical supply chains, while enmeshing the United States and India in the regional economic architecture. Technology transfers may seem counterintuitive to the logic of maintaining competitive advantages in biomedical R&D for the Quad. However, further diplomatic assistance on this front would better establish the Quad's viability as a long-term partner for the sustainable development and security of countries in the Indo-Pacific.

2. Collaborating with existing ASEAN-led mechanisms

While the Quad has reaffirmed support for the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP), it should go beyond paying lip-service and actually engage ASEAN through existing ASEAN-led mechanisms for dialogue and cooperation. Drawing upon ASEAN's suite of multilateral platforms is especially salient since the AOIP does not intend to create new mechanisms or replace existing ones.²¹

²¹ "ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific", June 2019, https://asean.org/asean2020/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/ASEAN-Outlook-on-the-Indo-Pacific_FINAL_22062019.pdf

The various working groups such as the Quad Vaccine Experts Group, the Quad Climate Working Group and the Quad Critical and Emerging Technology Working Group could collaborate with existing ASEAN mechanisms. For instance, the Quad might consider coordinating with the ASEAN Working Group on Climate Change. Separation of health and environmental policies should not be the norm. A study conducted by the Climate Smart Land Use (CSLU) in ASEAN project highlighted the nexus between the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change in terms of health challenges and threats to food security.²² The conclusion called for an integrated response to address both climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic. Another report, titled “COVID-19 and Climate-Smart Health Care: Health Sector Opportunities for Synergistic Response to the COVID-19 and Climate Crises”, indicated that countries that sought combined responses to the pandemic and climate issues managed to find “lower-carbon and more climate-resilient solutions” that benefit not just the environment but also healthcare systems.²³ One such case is in India, where a “climate-resilient, solar-powered COVID-19 facility for testing, isolation, and treatment was built to provide better insulation, natural lighting, 24/7 power, and improve healthcare quality”.²⁴ If ASEAN actively incorporates climate-smart health solutions to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic and strengthen health security cooperation, the Quad could extend its expertise and experiences in that regard.

Moreover, the September leaders’ summit saw the launch of the Quad Infrastructure Coordination Group, which aims to “map the region’s infrastructure needs, and coordinate on regional needs and opportunities”.²⁵ In line with this aim, the Quad should consider identifying avenues to collaborate with ASEAN’s Connectivity Masterplan 2025 (MPAC 2025). Emphasising the importance of connectivity to the region’s recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and for building resilience to deal with future pandemics, the MPAC 2025 mid-term review outlined the need to develop an updated COVID-19-focused narrative for MPAC 2025, focused on identifying synergies with ASEAN’s Dialogue Partners, which include all the Quad members.²⁶ Engagement with ASEAN in these areas would substantiate the Quad’s role in health security cooperation beyond vaccine exports in the long term. The Quad may have assuaged some of ASEAN’s anxieties for the time being by focusing on provision of public

²² ASEAN Climate Resilience Network, “Policy Brief Nexus of Climate Change, Food Security and COVID-19 in Southeast Asia”, 12 August 2021, <https://asean-crn.org/policy-brief-nexus-of-climate-change-food-security-and-covid-19-in-southeast-asia/>

²³ The World Bank, “COVID-19 Responses could help fight climate change”, 3 November 2021, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/11/03/covid-19-responses-could-help-fight-climate-change>

²⁴ The World Bank, “COVID-19 Responses could help fight climate change”.

²⁵ The White House, “Joint Statement from Quad Leaders”, 24 September 2021.

²⁶ “Masterplan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025: Mid-Term Review”, January 2021, <https://connectivity.asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/07-MPAC-MTR-Executive-Summary.pdf>

goods and engaging the ASEAN Secretariat for vaccine distribution. More can be done in this regard.

For its part, ASEAN must clarify its strategic vision for regional health security to cement its centrality and realise the AOIP. ASEAN already has a forum for cooperation in global health, including pandemics, in the EAS. It should take the lead in fleshing out an action-oriented agenda for regional health diplomacy that delivers public goods and proactively engage with the Quad via its mechanisms.²⁷

3. Keeping the momentum and taking stock of progress

The Quad should aim to keep up its steady pace of institutional development by holding regular summits and meetings of its various working groups. The Quad's momentum in health security cooperation will be strengthened as the grouping plans to host a pandemic preparedness tabletop exercise this year.²⁸ Moreover, the Quad's vaccine diplomacy needs to go beyond vaccine exports to assisting countries with "last-mile" challenges such as vaccine awareness and rollouts. For instance, Nepal requested the Serum Institute of India to delay vaccine shipments under the COVAX initiative as storage facilities were reportedly "full to the brim".²⁹ The country's authorities had failed to scale up vaccination drives, and vaccination rates remained low.³⁰ Taking stock of progress and further extending last-mile support beyond current focus regions (e.g., Southeast Asia) is key.

²⁷ Cook & Ha, "Is the East Asia Summit suffering erosion?"

²⁸ The White House, "Fact Sheet: Quad Leaders' Summit", 24 September 2021.

²⁹ Arjun Poudel, "Nepal's vaccination rate has slowed down despite enough doses in stock", *The Kathmandu Post*, 19 December 2021, <https://kathmandupost.com/health/2021/12/19/nepal-s-vaccination-rate-has-slowed-down-despite-enough-doses-in-stock>

³⁰ Arjun Poudel, "Nepal's vaccination rate has slowed down".

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About the Centre for Multilateralism Studies (CMS)

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