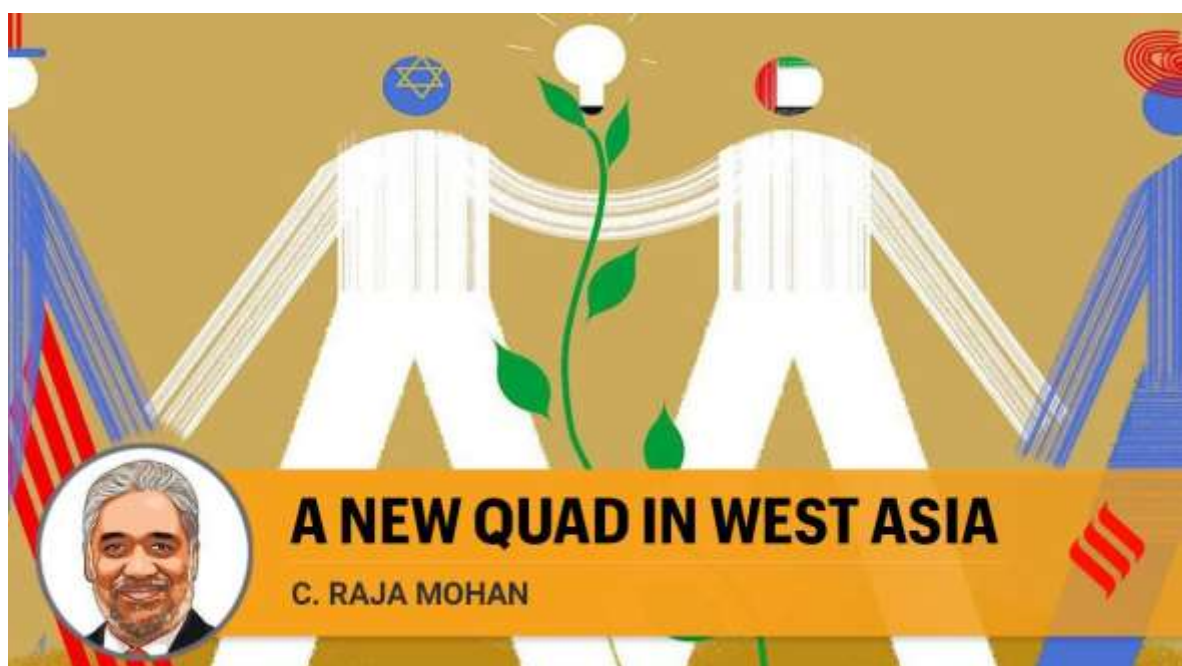


The other QUAD

Bottom line: India must retain strong ties with Iran as it seeks a partnership with the U.S.-Israel-UAE bloc.



1. India, Israel, the United Arab Emirates and the United States have decided to launch a new quadrilateral economic forum. The quadrilateral builds on ongoing cooperation between the U.S., Israel and the UAE after the Abraham Accords last year and the India, Israel and UAE cooperation that was launched since.
2. The grouping had decided to establish an international forum for economic cooperation, and specifically discussed “possibilities for joint infrastructure projects.
3. The four countries discussed “expanding economic and political cooperation in the Middle East and Asia, including through trade, combating climate change, energy cooperation, and increasing maritime security.
4. Business groups in India, the UAE and Israel have predicted that the potential for agreements backed by Israeli innovation, UAE funding and Indian manufacturing.
5. In the first such venture, a UAE project for robotic solar panel cleaning technology was signed by Israeli company Ecoppia that has a manufacturing base in India.

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The changes in West Asian geopolitics

1. India, the U.S., Israel and the UAE is a strong manifestation of the changes in West Asian geopolitics. If Israel and the UAE did not even have formal diplomatic relations a year ago, their growing economic and strategic cooperation is opening up opportunities for other powers, including India.
2. The four-nation meeting also points to India's strategic desire to adopt a regional foreign policy strategy towards West Asia, transcending its bilateralism.
3. Israel is one of India's top defence suppliers. The UAE is vital for India's energy security. The Gulf country, which hosts millions of Indian workers, has also shown interest to mediate between India and Pakistan.
4. In the past, there were three pillars to India's West Asia policy — the Sunni Gulf monarchies, Israel and Iran.
5. Now that the gulf between the Sunni kingdoms and Israel is being narrowed, especially after the Abraham Accords, the normalisation agreements signed between Israel and the UAE and Bahrain under the tutelage of the Trump administration, India faces fewer challenges to a regionalist approach.

But India should also be mindful of the challenges in the region.

1. The U.S. is clearly seeking to lessen its footprint here as part of its pivot to East Asia to tackle China's rise, which is redrawing West Asia's traditional equations.
2. India should be careful not to get sucked into the many conflicts of West Asia that could intensify amid growing regional rivalries.
3. The contradiction between this emerging bloc and Iran remains as intense as ever. So the challenge before New Delhi is to retain a healthy relationship with Iran even as it seeks to build a stronger regional partnership with the U.S.-Israel-UAE bloc.
4. Significantly, neither the quadrilateral meeting nor the trilateral meeting discussed the issue of Palestine and resuming the "Middle East peace process", although the Joe Biden administration has expressed support for a "two-state solution", that is in line with India's broader position.