

Welcome remarks

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QUADRO: A New Architecture for Global Leadership

Welcome Address & Context Setting Remarks

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Occasion: QUADRO Roundtable in collaboration with Chintan Research Foundation

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Opening

Distinguished experts, colleagues from the Chintan Research Foundation, and fellow travellers on this journey towards reimagining global cooperation—a very warm welcome to this roundtable.

We gather here not merely to discuss, but to dare. To dare to imagine a world where collective leadership replaces the tired old cycle of hegemonic succession. To dare to challenge the orthodoxy that global stability must forever depend on a single dominant power calling the shots.

Before I set the context for our discussion, let me acknowledge what we are attempting here is, quite frankly, audacious. Some might even call it naive. But then again, in 1944, Bretton Woods seemed audacious too. And here we are, 81 years later, watching that architecture crumble whilst desperately needing something to take its place.

The Trap We're In

Let me be direct: the world has walked straight into what scholars call the Kindleberger Trap. And unlike a mousetrap, there's no cheese to show for it—just mounting uncertainty.

Here's the uncomfortable truth: America, the erstwhile provider of global public goods, is retreating. Not gracefully like the British did in handing over to them, but reluctantly, defensively, sometimes even destructively. Meanwhile, China, now the world's largest economy at 41 trillion dollars in purchasing power parity terms, hasn't quite decided whether it wants to pick up the tab for global public goods or simply expand its own sphere of influence.

The result? A leaderless world lurching from crisis to crisis.

The rules-based trading system that took decades to build is being dismantled brick by brick. As UNCTAD has been warning us, it's not even the tariffs anymore—it's the sheer *uncertainty* that's paralysing global commerce. You can estimate probability of risk; you cannot estimate probability of uncertainty. And that's precisely what's killing businesses and livelihoods.

On climate change, whilst islands sink and forests burn, the wealthy nations that caused the problem are busy arguing about burden-sharing rather than shouldering burdens. The poor and vulnerable are paying with their lives whilst we debate in air-conditioned rooms.

And security? We're one miscalculation away from a confrontation between NATO and an axis comprising Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea. The ripple effects would spare no one.

The United Nations—bless its well-meaning soul—is missing in action. Paralysed by the very power dynamics it was meant to transcend.

The QUADRO Proposition: Two Clear Objectives

Now, here's where we get provocative, and where I invite your scepticism, scrutiny, and hopefully, your eventual support.

What if, instead of waiting for another century of conflict to determine who's the next hegemon, we tried something radical? What if China, America, India, and Russia, QUADRO or if you will, the G4, came together in a model of collective leadership?

"These four can barely sit in the same room without glaring at each other."

Fair point. But consider this: By 2075, just 50 years from now, Goldman Sachs projects that China's economy will reach 57 trillion dollars, India's 52.5 trillion, and America's 51.5 trillion. Russia, at nearly 7 trillion, rounds out a formidable

quartet. Together, QUADRO would command roughly 168 trillion dollars, more than twice the rest of the world combined.

These aren't just numbers. This is the future knocking on our door. The question is whether we open it willingly or let it be kicked in by crisis.

But let me be absolutely clear about what we're proposing. The G4 has two explicit, non-negotiable objectives:

First, building a peaceful world order. Not peace through dominance. Not peace through balance of terror. But peace through genuine collective security arrangements where no single nation holds veto over global stability. A world where disputes are resolved through dialogue, not drones. Where territorial integrity is respected, not violated. Where the instruments of war are progressively subordinated to the institutions of peace.

Second, restoring and strengthening a rules-based international order. And I emphasise *restoring* because let's be honest, we've watched it crumble. An order where rules apply equally to the powerful and the weak. Where trade flows according to comparative advantage, not coercive diplomacy. Where international law matters, not merely as rhetoric but as binding constraint on state behaviour. Where multilateral institutions have teeth, not just talk.

What Must Change

For QUADRO to work—and let me be clear, it won't be easy—each power must undertake a fundamental rethink.

America must accept, gracefully, that it's no longer the sole superpower. Not in terms of economic size, not in terms of technological prowess, and certainly not in terms of soft power. The choice is between a dignified evolution and a desperate, destructive clinging to fading primacy. History will remember which path was chosen.

China must understand that great power brings great responsibility—not just rhetoric about win-win cooperation whilst engaging in debt diplomacy by coercion. China's model works for China. It cannot and will not work for democratic nations. China must diversify its growth, make it consumption-driven, and remember that Keynes' paradox of thrift haunts every economy, however glossy it may appear.

India—our own nation—must step up from being a rule-taker to a rule-shaper. With 52.5 trillion dollars projected by 2075, we'll have the economic muscle. Do we have the diplomatic imagination? The domestic consumption capacity? The infrastructure to support manufacturing for the world? These are uncomfortable questions we must answer *now*, not in 2074.

Russia must recognise that resources alone don't make a 21st-century power. Integration into global value chains, technological innovation, and institutional trust matter just as much as energy reserves. The world needs Russia's participation, not its intimidation.

Why This Matters for the Global South

Let me bring this home to what matters most to us at CUTS International: the welfare of ordinary people, particularly in the Global South.

If QUADRO doesn't emerge—if we slide instead into a new Cold War or, worse, a fragmented world of competing blocs—it's not the elites of Washington, Beijing, Moscow, or Delhi who'll suffer most. It's the garment worker in Bangladesh. The smallholder farmer in Kenya. The street vendor in Jaipur. The families already struggling with climate-induced migration, joblessness, and inflation.

Without a functioning multilateral trading system, these people lose market access. Without climate cooperation, they lose their homes. Without security cooperation, they lose their children to needless conflicts.

This isn't abstract geopolitics. This is about whether hundreds of millions of people have a shot at dignified lives or remain trapped in what I can only describe as an Orwellian nightmare—where, like animals in *Animal Farm*, they're told all are equal whilst watching a privileged few grow fatter.

The Task Before Us

Which brings me to why we're here today, partnering with the Chintan Research Foundation.

We need a new Bretton Woods. Not a copycat, but a reimagined global architecture for the 21st century. One that genuinely balances the Washington

Consensus's faith in markets with the Beijing Consensus's emphasis on state-led development, whilst learning from both their failures.

Collective leadership through mutual respect, shared responsibility, institutional resilience, and genuine commitment to multilateralism—this is the clarion call of our time.

Today's discussion is a starting point. We're bringing together thought leaders and eventually business leaders from India to begin this conversation. Because change doesn't start in Geneva or New York or Brussels. It starts in rooms like this, with people willing to think differently.

Invoking Tagore

Every educated Indian knows Rabindranath Tagore's prayer: *"Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high / Where knowledge is free / Where the world has not been broken up into fragments / By narrow domestic walls..."*

What we're seeing today, the export controls, the visa restrictions for scholars, the monitoring of book imports, the fragmentation of the internet, the weaponisation of trade, all of it represents those "narrow domestic walls" that Tagore warned us against.

QUADRO is our attempt to demolish those walls. Not naively—we're not utopians. But systematically, pragmatically, with eyes wide open to the difficulties.

Closing

So, as we begin our discussions today, I invite you to bring your sharpest critiques, your deepest scepticism, and your most creative thinking.

Can four rivals truly lead together? What mechanisms would make it work? What are the non-negotiables? What are the trade-offs? How do we ensure smaller nations aren't trampled in this great power concert? How do we make QUADRO genuinely responsive to the Global South rather than just another elite club?

These are the questions we must wrestle with. Not because we have all the answers, but because someone must ask the questions.

The alternative—a world trapped between a declining hegemon and an emerging one, with everyone else as collateral damage—is simply too grim to accept.

Thank you, and I look forward to a robust, honest, and hopefully transformative discussion.
