



# Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



## GLOBAL HORIZONS MAY 2023

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Volume I, Issue 5



**Delhi Policy Group**

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[www.delhipolicygroup.org](http://www.delhipolicygroup.org)



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Founded in 1994, the Delhi Policy Group (DPG) is among India's oldest think tanks with its primary focus on strategic and international issues of critical national interest. DPG is a non-partisan institution and is independently funded by a non-profit Trust. Over past decades, DPG has established itself in both domestic and international circles and is widely recognised today among the top security think tanks of India and of Asia's major powers.

Since 2016, in keeping with India's increasing global profile, DPG has expanded its focus areas to include India's regional and global role and its policies in the Indo-Pacific. In a realist environment, DPG remains mindful of the need to align India's ambitions with matching strategies and capabilities, from diplomatic initiatives to security policy and military modernisation.

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*The views expressed in this publication are those of the author and should not be attributed to the Delhi Policy Group as an Institution.*

### Cover Image:

*Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, met with Quad Leaders Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, Prime Minister of Japan Fumio Kishida and President of the United States, Joseph Biden, in Hiroshima for the Quad Leaders' Summit 2023 on May 20, 2023. Source: PIB*

*Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi and other dignitaries in a group photograph during the G7 Summit in Hiroshima on May 20, 2023. Source: Prime Minister's Office of Japan*

*Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi and Prime Minister of Australia, Anthony Albanese at the Indian Community Programme in Sydney on May 23, 2023. Source: PIB*

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## Global Horizons

by

Nalin Surie

May was a month of hectic activity especially at the highest political levels. Ukraine was never far from focus but critically, the West ( and NATO) led by the U.S. moved in a determined manner to put in place what might become a revised structure for international political, security and economic relations. Arguably, the intention is to restore the primacy of West-dominated structures in global decision making, neutralise the growing challenge and threat from China, and further marginalise Russia.

The critical meeting in the above context was the G7 Summit in Hiroshima, held on May 19-21, 2023. Apart from a lengthy summit declaration, the G7 adopted separate standalone detailed statements on Ukraine, Nuclear disarmament, Economic resilience and economic security, a Clean energy action plan and an Action statement for resilient global food security. The non-G7 invited summit participants, including India, were party to the last one. The purpose behind these standalone texts is quite clear and addresses challenges and threats that the G7 believe have emerged post the Covid-19 pandemic, the Ukraine war and equally important, the China threat conundrum.

The Summit declaration contains a long section on China. Read together especially with the seven point approach outlined in the action statement on economic resilience etc., the intention is to clearly signal to China how the G7 intend to address the China challenge/threat and the terms of cooperative engagement going forward. Not surprisingly, the Chinese reaction was furious and dismissive of the G7's prescriptive approaches. It also remains to be seen whether the West can sustain its unity on all issues Chinese. The EU and Japan already seem to have succeeded in ensuring that on economic issues, 'derisking' and not 'decoupling' is to be the way forward.

The reality of the existing deep economic partnerships the West has developed over the past 3-4 decades with China cannot be ignored; not even by the U.S., which has since already reached out to the Chinese. Talks were held between Chinese Politburo member Wang Yi and U.S. NSA Sullivan in Vienna on May 10-11, and by the Chinese Commerce Minister with counterparts in Washington D.C. on May 28. The EU has its own ongoing outreach to the Chinese. The U.S.-EU Trade and Technology Council, which met for the fourth time on May 31, 2023, will probably be used to settle differences in the approach

towards China and Russia, and on outlining the broader parameters of agreements on secure production and technology transfer chains going forward. The latter will necessarily impact the evolution of international rules, regulations and standards on trade, technology, research etc.

Now that the U.S. Government has overcome the debt limit hurdle issue in Congress, it will project its preferred G7 positions in right earnest in international negotiations with the support of its allies and partners.

From the Indo-Pacific perspective, the convening of the third in person summit of the QUAD in Hiroshima on May 20, 2023 was an important development. The summit was to have been held in Australia after the G7 summit, but had to be relocated and curtailed since President Biden had to rush back to ensure a satisfactory resolution of the debt limit issue by the U.S. Congress.

Importantly, the ambit of the Quad's vision was specifically extended to cover the ASEAN, the PIF and IORA. The summit also outlined the steady incremental progress on agreed activities intended to ensure that no country dominates the region and no country is dominated. Also to support the region's development, stability and prosperity. Maritime domain security continues to receive focus.

As expected, the war in Ukraine was majorly focused on by Western governments, groupings and media. President Zelenskyy was in the limelight, so was stress on an imminent Ukrainian spring offensive for which the U.S. and other NATO countries have supplied more and more lethal hardware and training, but still short of Ukrainian demands. While the offensive has not happened yet, Western experts and media have been busy arguing that the Ukrainian army will succeed in its objectives. The latter though remain ambiguous with respect to the so called spring offensive. There have been alleged Ukrainian attacks in Moscow and some border regions of Russia, and Russian drone and missile attacks on Kiev and other cities. Whether this is shadow boxing before the curtain goes up on the counter offensive is unclear.

The G7 standalone statement on Ukraine comprehensively covers western reactions to the war so far and also promises to further punish Russia. It calls for Russia to immediately, fully and unconditionally withdraw its forces and equipment entirely from the internationally recognised territory of Ukraine. Whether this is feasible unless Russia is defeated is the moot question. Within the Western alliance positions vary on how the war could be brought to an end peacefully. And hence, the G7 conclusion that it will mobilise all policy instruments and together with Ukraine make every effort to bring a

comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine as soon as possible may be a case of easier said than done.

President Zelenskyy was given pride of place as a special invitee and addressed the G7 summit. Before that he addressed, in person, the Arab League Summit on May 19, 2023 in Riyadh where the response he received can be best described as polite.

The Chinese envoy for Ukraine (Li Hui), announced by President Xi, made the rounds of Moscow, Kiev, Paris, Berlin and Warsaw. He reportedly made no headway. This was not unexpected given the Chinese support for Russia, and since this was essentially a probing visit to follow up on Xi's effort to keep China's foot in the door and suggest that it is a responsible power.

The Ukraine war has had several other unintended consequences that will no doubt make both China and Russia uncomfortable. NATO is now arguing that the Ukraine war is not simply a European matter but also impacts security in the Indo-Pacific. Japan has agreed that NATO can open an office in Japan. There are others who are arguing that a country like India should also be involved in NATO matters.

Japan has of late taken the position that the question of Taiwan is linked to international peace and security. The G7 has in fact at Hiroshima described "peace and stability across the Taiwan Straits as indispensable to security and stability in the international community". This is in effect a red rag to China.

Additionally, Japan and the ROK have decided to put aside their past differences and work much more closely together, both in security and economic matters and to collaborate with the U.S. in the East Asia and Indo-Pacific regions. Japanese PM Kishida was in Seoul on May 7, and again (for the third time) met with ROK President Yoon in Hiroshima during the sidelines of the G7 summit on May 21.

Chinese moves in the Pacific Islands have also generated strong push back from Japan, Australia, the U.S. and India among others. For instance, after participating in the G7 summit in Hiroshima, PM Modi attended the third FIPIC Summit in Papua New Guinea on May 22, 2023. Important new project initiatives were announced in the health, IT, cybersecurity, SMEs, solar, water security and capacity building sectors. These are part of a 12 step action plan. Several projects were also launched.

President Marcos of the Philippines visited Washington on May 1, 2023. In the joint statement issued at that time, President Biden, inter-alia, reaffirmed the United States' ironclad alliance commitments to the Philippines, underscoring that an armed attack on Philippine armed forces, public vessels, or aircraft in the Pacific, including in the South China Sea, would invoke U.S. mutual defense commitments under Article IV of the 1951 U.S.-Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty. In effect, Chinese muscle flexing in East and South East Asia is forcing concrete countervailing reactions by affected countries in the region.

China, as earlier mentioned, has responded to US led moves with considerable fury. In response to a question on May 20, 2023, the spokesperson of the Chinese Foreign Ministry said, inter-alia, that despite China's concerns, the G7 used issues concerning China to smear and attack China and brazenly interfere in its internal affairs. This was strongly deplored and firmly opposed. It was stressed that Taiwan is China's and the question must be resolved by the Chinese. Further, that affairs related to Hong Kong, Tibet and Xinjiang are purely China's internal affairs.

The spokesperson went on to state that as for "economic coercion", the U.S. is the real coercer that politicises and weaponises economic and trade relations.

China it was stated is firmly committed to a defensive nuclear strategy; has a NFU policy etc; that China will never accept the so called rules imposed by the few. Further it was contended that the international community does not and will not accept the G7 dominated Western rules that seek to divide the world based on ideologies and values. China will not succumb to "America first" interests.

The G7 were urged by China to get back to the right path of dialogue and cooperation.

China was active during the month with efforts to further consolidate its position in Eurasia. The inaugural China- Central Asia summit was held in Xian on May 19, 2023 with heads of state from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Apart from bilateral meetings, President Xi Jinping spoke of the importance of this format to ensure a stable Central Asia and ensuring respect for sovereignty, security, territorial integrity and independence. He proposed an eight point cooperation agenda covering strengthening of institution building, expanding trade and economic ties, deepening connectivity, expanding energy cooperation, strengthening dialogue among civilisations, enhancing capacity for development and safeguarding peace in the region.



In effect, the longstanding Chinese policy of strengthening its ties with Central Asia is being sustained and strengthened. This may well raise red flags in Moscow.

Interestingly, the EU Council President held the second high level dialogue with the same five countries and leaders in Cholpon-Ata (Kyrgyzstan) on June 2, 2023. The first formal summit will be held in 2024, perhaps in Uzbekistan.

The importance of Central Asia in the Eurasian context has clearly been recognised not only by Russia and China but also by the EU. Will the U.S. remain a laggard? Central Asia does not lack suitors. Other players include Turkey, India and the Gulf nations.

Russian PM Mishustin was in Beijing on an official visit on May 24, 2023. Several agreements were signed and he met both PM Li Qiang and President Xi. Xi stressed to Mishustin "that China will work with Russia to continue to firmly support each other on issues concerning respective core interests" and strengthen cooperation in multilateral arenas; that China wishes to enhance levels of cooperation in economy, trade, investment, energy and connectivity and synergise activities of the BRI and Eurasian Economic Forum (EEU). Mishustin described the bilateral relationship as being of "special and exemplary significance in international relations". In effect, both sides need each other at this juncture.

President Xi addressed, online, the second EEU Forum on May 25, 2023 which was held in Moscow and underlined that China is a member of the Eurasian family; called for synergy with the BRI; and spoke of new prospects for Asia-Europe cooperation.

The re-election of Islamist President Erdogan in Turkey against formidable odds was yet another significant development that will not only have internal ramifications in Turkey but also an impact on regional and international relations. The former, since the Turkish polity is now almost divided down the middle, with Erdogan influential in the central rural geographical region, and the liberals more influential virtually along the entire outer geographical (also urban) periphery. Externally, Erdogan has already demonstrated his ability and continued desire to use Turkey's geographical location, size, historical background, partnerships etc. to punch way above its weight especially in the region, the Islamic world, the Ukraine war, NATO and as a possible bridge to Russia.

The election results in Thailand threw up a considerable surprise, with democratic and anti-monarchy sentiment parties achieving a majority. The

political path ahead is not going to be easy to negotiate, and major outside forces such as the U.S. and China are not disinterested parties. There may also be an impact on the functioning of ASEAN, of which Thailand is a significant member.

The situation in Sudan remains grim. The humanitarian crisis is worsening. Cease fires are not holding. The U.S., Saudi Arabia and the AU need to sustain efforts to mitigate the crisis and for others not to add fuel to the fire. A longer term durable solution will clearly need much more time.

Indian diplomacy was in full play during the month. The very successful visits of PM Modi to Japan for the G7 and QUAD summits; to Papua New Guinea for the third India-PIF summit; and to Australia for a standalone bilateral visit, demonstrate the importance India attaches to a free, open, inclusive Indo-Pacific, to shared democratic values and to ensuring peace, stability and prosperity in the region. (The almost concluded negotiations on May 27 on the IPEF framework on supply chains, and progress on other pillars, bodes well for this important process.)

India's partnership with Australia now stands at the cusp of sustainable acceleration.

At the G7, PM Modi focused on issues critical to the Global South such as sustainability of the planet; the need to address multiple crises in the food and health sectors, in development and on gender issues; and the importance of working towards a peaceful, stable and prosperous world.

Important meetings of nine G20 working groups were held in different locations in India, namely on Development, Health, Trade and Investment, Disaster risk reduction, Tourism, International financial architecture, Employment, Energy transition and Environment & climate sustainability.

India is currently, for the first time, also chair of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and the SCO summit is scheduled to be held online on July 04, 2023. Several working group meetings were held during the month, though the meeting of the Foreign Ministers in Goa on May 4-5 was the highlight. In his remarks at the meeting, India's External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar, recalled that current problems facing the international community notwithstanding, "the menace of terrorism continues unabated" and member states cannot take their eyes off this menace that is "detrimental to our security interests". He called for multilateral approaches to address global challenges; offered to share Indian experiences with start ups; called for reform and modernisation of SCO to keep it relevant; and proposed texts for the Summit



declaration and of four thematic joint statements on cooperation in de-radicalisation strategies, promotion of millets, sustainable lifestyles to address climate change, and digital transformation.

Minister Jaishankar assessed that the meeting of Foreign Ministers was productive and useful in preparing for the forthcoming summit.

As we look ahead, June promises to be yet another month of complex developments in international relations. Danger looms and sane voices are needed to focus on diplomacy and dialogue to ensure that the processes of peace, development, equal security for all and stability are kept in the foreground. India should not hold back in helping make this happen.

New Delhi June 03, 2023.

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