



# Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power

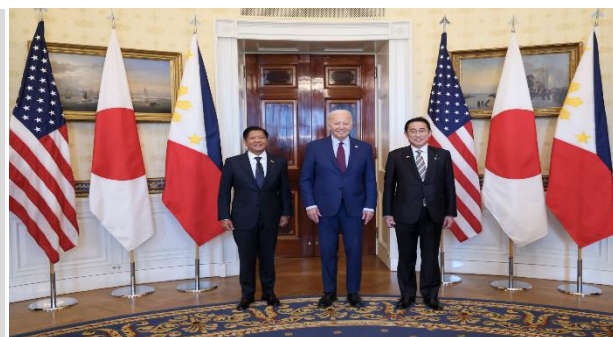


## GLOBAL HORIZONS

APRIL 2024

*Author*

Nalin Surie



Volume II, Issue 4



**Delhi Policy Group**

Core 5A, 1st Floor, India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road, New Delhi- 110003

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



# Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power

## Global Horizons

Vol. II, Issue 4

April 2024

### ABOUT US

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.

At a time of disruptive change in the global order, DPG aims to deliver research based, relevant, reliable and realist policy perspectives to an actively engaged public, both at home and abroad. DPG is deeply committed to the growth of India's national power and purpose, the security and prosperity of the people of India and India's contributions to the global public good. We remain firmly anchored within these foundational principles which have defined DPG since its inception.

### Author

Ambassador Nalin Surie, I.F.S. (Retd.), Distinguished Fellow for Diplomacy, Delhi Policy Group

*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 Images:

*US President Joe Biden, President of the Republic of the Philippines Ferdinand Marcos and Prime Minister of Japan Fumio Kishida, held a Japan-US-Philippines summit meeting, on April 11, 2024. Source: [Prime Minister's Office of Japan](#)*

*French President Emmanuel Macron delivered a speech on his vision for Europe at the Sorbonne University on April 25, 2024. Source: [X/@EmmanuelMacron](#)*

*US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken met Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to discuss ways to achieve a ceasefire deal on May 1, 2024. Source: [X/@SecBlinken](#)*

© 2024 by the Delhi Policy Group

### Delhi Policy Group

Core 5A, 1st Floor,

India Habitat Centre,

Lodhi Road, New Delhi- 110003.

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

## Global Horizons

April 2024

by

Nalin Surie

April was a month in which US foreign and security policies were both under severe pressure, precipitated in part by a divided Congress which has hamstrung the Administration in pursuing its preferred policies towards the war in Ukraine, the Israel-Hamas war and strengthening the US posture in the Indo-Pacific. Congress finally passed authorisations on April 20 that would enable the US to provide the military and other wherewithal for this purpose to Ukraine, to Israel and Taiwan etc.

At the same time, major steps were taken by the US to manage and constrain the China challenge; this was undoubtedly the highlight.

US pressure on Israel to change course in Gaza to mitigate civilian casualties and allow humanitarian assistance began to have some effect, even though in public PM Netanyahu asserted that the military operation in Rafah to eliminate Hamas's fighting capacity would continue irrespective of whether there is a deal on hostages. Negotiations with Hamas for the return of hostages remained ongoing, with US Secretary of State Blinken on his seventh visit to the region since the Hamas attack on October 07, 2023.

In the meantime, demonstrations against PM Netanyahu for his inability to secure the release of Israeli hostages and his management of the war in Gaza continued in Israel. More concerning for the US, especially in a presidential election year, was the outbreak of serious anti-Israel student protests and sit-ins in major US universities, including Columbia University in New York, where police was called in and ugly scenes of confrontation took place. At month end, student protests were continuing at campuses across the country.

As expected, Iran reacted to the Israeli attack on its mission in Damascus on April 1, 2024 in which several IRGC officers were killed. A barrage of missiles and drones were launched against Israel on April 13, but most were neutralised by Israeli, US, UK and other countermeasures. It became critical thereafter to ensure that the Israeli reaction was controlled to ensure that the counter attacks did not lead to Iran becoming a direct participant in the war against Hamas. Israel did hit targets near Isfahan on April 19, but this was not acknowledged by the Iranians. Both sides had tested each other and drawn their own

conclusions, assuaged public opinion, but decided not to exacerbate the situation in the region at this time even though Israel continues to target Hezbollah fighters in south Lebanon. The role of the US in ensuring that the lid remains on the cauldron needs to be underlined.

In the meantime, to keep its toe in the game, China undertook attempts to mediate between the rival Fatah and Hamas Palestinian Factions Beijing.

The situation in Gaza and the region remained a complex and dangerous humanitarian catastrophe. Reports that the ICC may be issuing warrants of arrest against PM Netanyahu and other senior Israeli officials will add fuel to the fire.

NATO and G7 Foreign Ministers, at their meetings on April 3-4 and April 19, 2024 respectively reaffirmed their unwavering support for Ukraine, its sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence, as well as their commitment to provide Ukraine with defense and security assistance. But the reality is that for several months now because of the logjam over Ukraine aid in the US Congress and the resulting lack of artillery shells, air defense and long range weapons, among others, Ukraine has had to concede some territory and can at best hold Russian troops at bay while facing regular attacks over its cities and power infrastructure. President Zelenskyy warned that Ukraine may actually lose the war unless military assistance comes in quick, in quantity and of a type that can allow serious damage to be inflicted on Russia.

With the US Congress approving funds for weapon supplies to Ukraine, the latter's ability to regain some momentum in inflicting damage on Russia may improve. Whether the US and NATO will provide the wherewithal to Ukraine to take the war deep into Russia, though, remains to be seen.

The feeling of helplessness, frustration and anger that must have built up in Ukraine over the last two years can only be imagined by outside observers. Besides, there are still no clear manifestations of any peace deal being worked out with Russia. The stakes for European security and stability are extremely high, and the US will not wish to dilute its status in Europe and the Euro-Atlantic alliance.

In the above context, the underlying message in French President Macron's lengthy address at the Sorbonne University on April 25 is of particular interest. The views he expressed were not wholly new; he had taken a similar stance in 2017. But the context now is very different. In brief, it was argued that the EU was falling behind and there was need to deepen the single market, develop an EU industrial policy to support R&D, reform EU trade policy to take into account

environmental and social factors, adopt a Buy European policy, and mobilise private investment. This had become necessary because big players like the US and China had stopped respecting rules in matters of trade. It was suggested that the days of relying on the US for security were over; that Europe should not be a vassal of the US; there should be closer defense ties with the UK; and that nuclear deterrence was at the heart of French defense strategy. He also spoke of uninhibited regional forces such as Russia and Iran (not China: Xi Jinping will be in Paris in early May), surrounding Europe. Importantly, he posited that Russia must not be allowed to win in Ukraine.

Macron's views will no doubt give rise to considerable debate and discussion within the EU, NATO and other countries. That was perhaps his intention.

Interestingly, EU Council President Michel, in his speech on April 29, on the 20th anniversary of the 2004 expansion of the EU, spoke of enlargement then and now. The 2004 enlargement, he said, was transformative for Europe and gave the EU more global clout. But today the EU faces three major shocks, namely, of climate change and biodiversity, of technology and of a chaotic geopolitical transition. The Kremlin, he said, "has a clear goal-to crush the European dream. Why? Because the Kremlin is terrified of freedom and democracy at its doorstep." He argued that the EU had become over dependent on energy from Russia, on critical raw materials from China, and even on defense from the US. The gap with competitors has grown, and hence Europe must make up for lost time. The response, he said, is a strategy called "European sovereignty or Strategic autonomy." This, inter alia, requires building a strong and more competitive economy, freeing the potential of the Single Market, deepening the European Capital Markets Union to ensure that European savings are invested at home and do not flee to the US, and building defense readiness.

The debate on the issues raised by Macron and Michel will no doubt be joined by the international community. The Global South will need to watch trends and outcomes with particular care and join the debate to ensure that outcomes are not weighted against the interests of developing countries. Fragmentation is not in India's interest, nor is a division among the US, EU and China on international trade, investment and technology development.

There were important developments in US-Japan and US-Japan-Philippines relations during the month. Summit level meetings were held in Washington D.C. on April 10 and 11 respectively. These meetings were an integral part of the US efforts to strengthen its alliances in the Indo-Pacific region, and appear to suggest a qualitatively new and upgraded strategy to constrain China.

As outcomes of PM Kishida's state visit to the US, it was announced that defense and security ties constitute the core of the US-Japan alliance and are the cornerstone of regional peace and security. The two sides are to develop a "seamless integration of operations and capabilities", deeper ISR cooperation, and cooperation with Japan on Pillar 2 of AUKUS advanced capability projects, enhanced defence coordination with Australia, deeper US-Japan defence industry cooperation and leveraging regional maintenance and repair.

Other areas of cooperation identified include space, AI, a new S&T partnership, development of infrastructure and resilient supply chains, critical minerals supply chains, and energy.

The US and Japan have the "conviction that security in Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific regions are interlinked" and have launched a new strategic dialogue to coordinate global diplomacy and development efforts. Japan remains firmly in support of Ukraine.

The first ever trilateral summit among the US, Japan and the Philippines was held on April 11 in Washington. This was a significant new development, given the aggressive approach China has been adopting vis-a-vis both the Philippines and Japan. Its evolution will bear close scrutiny.

A joint Vision Statement issued after this trilateral Summit underlined commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific that is connected, prosperous, secure, inclusive and resilient. The linkage with QUAD, AUKUS and the US-ROK-Japan trilateral was acknowledged. In the segment on partnering for peace and security, President Biden reaffirmed "iron clad" US alliance commitments to both Japan and the Philippines, so as to continue to help safeguard peace and security in the Indo-Pacific.

The Vision Statement contains interesting references to the PRC behaviour in East and South China seas, and on Taiwan. On the South China Sea it is stated that:

"We express our serious concerns about the People's Republic of China's (PRC) dangerous and aggressive behavior in the South China Sea. We are also concerned by the militarization of reclaimed features and unlawful maritime claims in the South China Sea. We steadfastly oppose the dangerous and coercive use of Coast Guard and maritime militia vessels in the South China Sea, as well as efforts to disrupt other countries' offshore resource exploitation. We reiterate serious concern over the PRC's repeated obstruction of Philippine vessels' exercise of high seas freedom of navigation and the disruption of supply lines to



Second Thomas Shoal, which constitute dangerous and destabilizing conduct. The final and legally binding July 12, 2016 Arbitral Tribunal determined that this feature lies within the Philippines' exclusive economic zone, and we call on the PRC to abide by the ruling."

On the East China Sea, the Vision Statement states that:

"We express our serious concerns regarding the situation in the East China Sea, and reiterate our strong opposition to any attempts by the PRC to unilaterally change the status quo by force or coercion in the East China Sea, including through actions that seek to undermine Japan's longstanding and peaceful administration of the Senkaku Islands."

On Taiwan, it is specified that:

"We affirm the importance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait as an indispensable element of global security and prosperity, recognize that there is no change in our basic positions on Taiwan, and call for a peaceful resolution of cross-Strait issues".

The lines have been clearly drawn for China, and it is not pleased at these efforts to create "small blocs" against it, and it will adopt counter measures to mitigate or neutralise these efforts. Consistently projecting Taiwan as an issue of global security and prosperity rankles China even more.

During the month, conscious efforts were made by the US to keep China engaged in high level dialogue. This started with a telephone conversation between Presidents Biden and Xi on April 02, which the Chinese claim was at US request. According to China's MFA, Xi told Biden that following their San Francisco meeting, relations were beginning to stabilise but negative factors were growing and needed to be addressed. For development of the relationship, he identified three principles: value peace, prioritise stability and uphold credibility. He reiterated that Taiwan independence was the first redline that must not be crossed. A second redline was efforts to impede or prevent China's high tech development or legitimate right to development. In either eventuality, China will not sit on its hands, but will react.

Xi's responses have to be viewed in the context of the issues flagged by Biden, namely maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait, PRC support for Russia's defense and industrial base and its impact on trans-Atlantic security (i.e., the Ukraine war), PRC's unfair trade policies and non market

economic practices, and that the US will prevent advanced US technologies from being used to undermine US security.

The above issues were among those that both US Treasury Secretary Yellen and Secretary of State Blinken also flagged in their discussions in China from April 3-9 and April 24-26 respectively. They also spoke of Chinese overcapacities in new tech industries, such as EVs, solar panels, and batteries, as being disruptive. The responses they received were not very different.

Xi told Blinken that the two sides should not engage in "vicious competition"; that "no progress means regress".

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told Blinken that the US should not create small blocs opposing China. The overcapacity argument was dismissed on economic grounds. Blinken's contention that China's help to Russia for the war in Ukraine went against European interests also fell on deaf ears.

President Xi is paying official visits to France, Serbia and Hungary in early May.

Given the situation of the war in Ukraine and the Israel-Hamas war, the US is having to tread carefully in its relations with China to ensure that dialogue is maintained and channels of communication remain open. At the same time, it continues to strengthen alliances and partnerships in the Indo-Pacific to prepare for future eventualities. In a presidential election year, that is a particularly challenging ask, but the bipartisan consensus in the US on the China challenge/threat makes the going more manageable.

In India, general elections are in full swing, but bilateral engagements at the ministerial and senior working levels are continuing. There is understandably enormous international interest in the outcome, and whether or not the current dispensation will win a consecutive third term. The fact of over 960 million voters exercising their franchise in a free and fair election is a matter of enormous significance and gratification. India has repeatedly proven that plural democracy has established firm and deep roots in this vast and rapidly growing developing country, which is also an ancient civilisation. This presents a fundamental ideological challenge to those who argue that developing countries cannot afford plural democracy.

\*\*\*





**Delhi Policy Group**  
Core 5A, 1st Floor,  
India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road  
New Delhi - 110003  
India

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