



# Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



## GLOBAL HORIZONS

JULY 2024

*Author*

Nalin Surie



Volume II, Issue 7



**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 7

July 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:

*India's External Affairs Minister, Dr Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, Japanese Foreign Minister, Yoko Kamikawa, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken pose for a group photo after the Quad Foreign Ministers' meeting, on July 29, 2024. Source: [X/@DrSJaishankar](#)*

*Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi convened his first bilateral meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, since the Ukraine War in Moscow, on July 9, 2024. Source: [Narendra Modi Official Website](#)*

© 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

July 2024

by

Nalin Surie

Perhaps the most consequential decision impacting international relations during the month was the announcement on July 21 by US President Joe Biden that he was not going to stand for reelection in November. This had been in the making since his very indifferent performance in the first Presidential debate with former President Donald Trump on June 27. The failed assassination attempt on Trump at an election rally on July 13 had also queered the pitch for Biden and given his opponent a boost. His support, announced thereafter, for Vice President Kamala Harris to replace him as the Democratic Party's candidate, and the rapid coalescing of Democratic Party support for her, radically changed the scenario for the outcome of the election. Harris is now being seen as a credible challenger to Trump, and would make history if she wins.

The world now awaits, with an admixture of anxiety and discomfiture, the outcome of the US presidential election in November. There is lack of clarity on the way forward on a host of critical issues on the international agenda. President Biden and Mr. Trump's positions could have been predicted to a considerable extent. Would a potential President Harris follow the Biden play book in its entirety? Not necessarily. She has already made her opposition to the impact of Israeli actions against civilians in Gaza clear, while condemning Hamas. Her positions on the war in Ukraine, on Russia, on NATO, on the China challenge, on Europe, on alliances with Japan and ROK, on Taiwan, on the Indo-Pacific, on the Americas, on India and the Global South, on technology, on reformed globalization and critical issues of the global commons, will have to be discerned and assessed. She is most unlikely, though, to countenance any weakening in the stature and standing of the US as the world's most dominant power and "leader" of the free world.

President Biden remains in office till his successor takes over, but between now and the end of the year, all major participants in the business of international relations will need to factor in an element of uncertainty with regard to the outlook going forward. Lack of resolve in US policy making will energise the opponents of the Western alliance system and complicate decision making for other major powers and the Global South. Those allies over-dependent on the

US may be tempted to push boundaries, to cater for a less friendly Washington in the new year.

For its part, the Biden team shows no sign of going slow on the pursuit of current US foreign, security and economic policies. Ministerial Meetings during the month with ASEAN, Japan, Singapore, the Philippines, Mongolia and others are indicative of that effort. So too is the US decision to appoint a more empowered commander for US forces stationed in Japan.

Israel continued to enjoy a free hand in ruthlessly pursuing its objectives in Gaza, against Hamas and Hezbollah, which could not happen without constant support and supply of military equipment from the US. In fact, Israel appears to continue to be completely unrestrained in its offensive against Hamas and now Hezbollah, even at the risk of initiating a greater conflagration in the region and endangering the lives of Israeli hostages still held by Hamas. The killing of the Hezbollah commander in Beirut on July 30 following a deadly attack on the Israeli occupied Golan Heights, and of the senior most political leader (and hostage negotiator) of Hamas in Teheran on July 31, are clear pointers towards this. The Hamas leader was in Teheran for the inauguration of that country's new President. Iran has threatened serious retaliation. Israel is confident it can militarily take on Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis and Iran.

NATO celebrated its 75th anniversary summit in Washington D.C. on July 9-11. A detailed Declaration was issued on July 10. It was announced that "Russia remains the most significant and direct threat to Allies' security... NATO is determined to constrain and contest Russia's aggressive actions... and terrorism, in all its forms and manifestations, is the most direct asymmetric threat to the security of our citizens and to international peace and security".

The ordering of threats followed. These are "strategic competition, pervasive instability and recurrent shocks"; "conflict, fragility and insecurity in Africa and the Middle East" that lead to forced displacement, fuelling human trafficking and irregular migration; and "Iran's destabilising actions".

Notably, it is only after the above threats have been listed that China figures, and that too as a country whose "stated ambitions and coercive policies continue to challenge our interests, security and values". The different dimensions of the deepening Russia-China strategic partnership "are a cause for profound concern". Paras 26 and 27 of the NATO Declaration deal specifically with China, not in an offensive or prescriptive manner but in the nature of warnings. For example, it is postulated that "the PRC cannot enable the largest war in Europe in recent history without this negatively impacting its interests and reputation". Further, while "the PRC continues to pose systemic

challenges to Euro-Atlantic security” for a variety of serious reasons, NATO “remain open to constructive engagement with the PRC, including to build reciprocal transparency with the view to safeguarding the Alliance’s security interests”. In effect, for a variety of reasons, for the present, more carrot than stick with China, but guard rails have been established. High level bilateral visits to China continued during the month, including those by the President of Poland and the Prime minister of Italy.

For Ukraine, the outcomes of the NATO summit were within parameters that had been defined in advance. It has been reaffirmed that its future is in NATO and NATO will “continue to support it on its irreversible path to full Euro-Atlantic integration, including NATO membership”. But an invitation to join for the latter will happen only “when Allies agree and conditions are met”. At the same time, Ukraine will continue to get military and other assistance from NATO countries, though not necessarily without conditions.

Interestingly, Ukraine, where the indiscriminate killings and stalemate on the battlefield continues, seems now to want some kind of end to its war with Russia. Zelenskyy himself is reported to have said on July 15 that at the next international conference on Ukraine, Russia may have to be invited. Foreign Minister Kuleba was in Beijing on July 23 and Chinese support seems to have been sought towards finding a settlement. There are also unconfirmed media reports that a senior Indian minister may visit Kiev in August, possibly as a follow up on PM Modi’s visit to Moscow on July 8-9 and his meeting with Zelenskyy on the sidelines of the G7 summit last month.

The NATO Declaration recognises that the Indo-Pacific is important for it since developments in that region “directly affect Euro-Atlantic security”. For this purpose, dialogue is being strengthened with Asia-Pacific partners to tackle cross regional challenges and undertaking flagship projects in cyber defense, countering disinformation and technology. The ardour for the Indo-Pacific appears to be waning.

The Third Plenum of the Central Committee of the 20th Party Congress was held in Beijing from July 15-18. Traditionally, this meeting lays out the principal economic policy directions for the coming years. It was a year late this year, probably on account of internal differences on the best way forward to meet China’s ambitious goals covering the national economy, defense and security, internal stability, growing inequality, problems in agriculture and global ambitions. Also, since the external environment facing China is no longer as conducive for its growth and development as it has been till a few years ago,

essentially on account of a series of self goals. There are also other internal challenges and issues of deep vested interests and corruption.

In his explanation of the Resolution to the Plenum, Xi Jinping again noted that “external attempts to suppress and contain China are escalating” and “Various ‘black swan’ and ‘gray rhino’ events have the potential to occur at any time”. He also acknowledged the obstacles towards high quality development on account of the present state of unbalanced and inadequate development.

A 68 page resolution was adopted at the Plenum on further deepening reform comprehensively to advance Chinese modernisation. To glean the real substance from this document is not easy. It is an extensive listing of what needs to be done. What will probably happen is that some aspects will get priority for implementation at different points in time in the coming period, depending on both the internal and external situation. But the basic thrust laid out by Xi Jinping in recent times remains and the so-called reformists will have to bide their time.

It is clear from the outcome of the Plenum that nothing will be allowed that would weaken control of the Party over all aspects of governance while realising socialist modernisation by 2035.

Xi spelt out at the Plenum that structural economic reform will remain the priority. For this purpose, new growth drivers and strengths shall be fostered; state capital and state owned enterprises will get stronger, bigger, do better and have their core functions and core competitiveness enhanced; and the non-public sector will benefit from a private sector promotion law to help unleash internal driving forces and creativity.

Productive forces will be developed that are characterised by high technology, high efficiency and high quality. Funding for future oriented industries will be provided. Urban-rural development will be integrated.

Critically, institutions and mechanisms for high standard opening up will be refined and reformed for inward and outward investment, regional development and high quality cooperation under BRI. China will actively participate in reform of global economic governance. China needs the world for its requirements for technologies, resources and markets.

China's strengths in strategic S&T will be boosted. The system for comprehensive cyber space governance is to be improved and a more effective international communication system established.



Internally, the income distribution system will be improved, and a sound social security system built to serve people in flexible employment, rural migrants and those in new forms of employment. The invidious Hukou system that applies to rural workers will be lifted and the health and Medicare system further reformed. Ecological conservation will be further developed. These people-centric proposals are necessary to build support for the Party.

It has been made clear by Xi himself that national security will get higher priority in the balance with development. This has been his long standing position. A series of measures will be taken to ensure this, including faster development of strategic defense forces and new domain forces with new combat capabilities.

Clearly, China intends to double down on the path set by Xi Jinping. His legacy will depend on the outcomes in the period ahead, both domestically and in international relations.

Elections were held in two major European countries during the month. On July 04 in the UK where, as anticipated, the Labour Party won a landslide victory (411 seats) and the Liberal Democrats improved their tally to 72, to become the third largest party. The Conservatives were reduced to a meagre 121, although the outgoing Prime Minister Sunak and some of his close associates retained their seats. Keir Starmer is the new Prime Minister and has the onerous responsibility for steering the UK out of a series of crises ranging from the NHS to inadequate infrastructure to inadequate financial resources to internal security concerns, to migration issues and Brexit related disabilities.

The new government will have no option but to focus on providing financial, economic and social benefits to the vast majority of the population. The road ahead is not going to be easy and the UK leader seems perfectly aware of that. The financial constraints are real. The new government is in its honeymoon period and will want to make the best of it to be able to further entrench itself with the public and demonstrate its intention to set right the events of the past few years. It would help if the relationship with the EU were to be enhanced.

The second leg of elections to the French Parliament was held on July 07 after the inconclusive first round on June 30. The latter had been inexplicably announced well before time by President Macron after he misread the impact of the gains made in France by the extreme right in the elections to the European Parliament. His effort was to ensure that the same does not happen in the French Parliament. The extreme right did make gains in the first round but these were not decisive, and in the second round deals were worked out by the other parties to deprive them of a majority. While that tactic worked, no

other party obtained a clear majority either while a left front emerged as the largest group and Macron's party again lost out. Negotiations continue to work out a coalition and a new Prime Minister has still to be sworn in. In the meantime, the Olympics started in Paris on July 26; the inevitable has been postponed and the Macron-appointed PM Gabriel Attal remains as caretaker.

The impact of the political impasse in the French Parliament is not quite clear, but analysts believe that Macron stands diminished. However, cohabitation has happened before in France, and it cannot be ruled out that Macron will be able to negotiate his way through a Parliament not controlled by his party and allies.

The US along with Saudi Arabia has taken the initiative to try to stop the horrendous killings and limit the humanitarian crises in Sudan caused by the ongoing war between the Sudan Army and the Rapid Support Force. It was announced by Secretary of State Blinken on July 23 that the talks between the parties will be held in Switzerland starting August 14. Saudi Arabia would cohost with the US and the AU, Egypt, UAE and the UN would be observers. Blinken announced that "The talks in Switzerland aim to reach a nationwide cessation of violence, enabling humanitarian access to all those in need, and develop a robust monitoring and verification mechanism to ensure implementation of any agreement. These talks do not aim to address broader political issues. As the Sudanese people have long demanded, Sudan's governance must return to civilians and civilians must play the leading role in defining a process to address political issues and restore Sudan's democratic transition."

It can only be hoped that the proposed talks will succeed and the humanitarian disaster mitigated to start with. The US and the backers of the two Sudanese factions will have to exert real pressure on the latter to make this happen and normalcy to be restored. Continuing to ignore this de-facto civil war between the two wings of the armed forces will only exacerbate peace and security in the region and hugely prolong the humanitarian crisis.

Presidential elections were held in oil rich Venezuela on July 28 where the incumbent Nicolas Maduro was seeking re-election. He has already served two terms and has been functioning in a dictatorial manner, which has served to debilitate the economy, isolate the country from important partners, and resulted in a very large number of its citizens fleeing to neighbouring Colombia and elsewhere. Revenues from oil have long oiled the wheels of the regime. The widespread expectation this time was that Maduro would lose. But not surprisingly, the election result, which appears to lack transparency, does not reflect that. Domestic protests against the outcome have begun and the fear of violence against the protesters is growing. Important neighbours such as



Brazil, Colombia and Mexico have reportedly demanded transparency in the election count. It remains to be seen, as of the time of writing, whether Maduro will relent or once again dig in his heels. Will Venezuela continue to remain a poor rich country?

July was a busy time for Indian foreign policy. Due to fresh manipulation among the major political parties in Nepal, the government led by PM Prachanda was replaced by a new majority coalition between the Nepali Congress, the UML and others, with KP Sharma Oli of the UML returning as PM. It remains to be seen whether the internal contradictions among the coalition partners will allow the new government to function in a stable and effective manner.

Bangladesh was wracked by violent protests over the reinstatement of the quota of one third of government jobs for relatives of those who fought for the country's independence in 1971. This quota was eventually set aside by the Supreme Court, which reduced it to 5%. But there is anger over the manner in which the protests were handled, and scores of protesters were killed. Inexorably, the issue has assumed a political dimension between the two main political forces in the country. From the Indian perspective, the spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs made it clear that "India considers the ongoing situation in the country to be an internal matter of Bangladesh". - - "We are hopeful that the situation in the country will return to normal soon". Indian students who were affected were safely brought back with the support of the Bangladesh government.

PM Modi paid an official visit to Russia and Austria, from July 8-10. The EAM represented him at the SCO Summit in Kazakhstan on July 04.

PM Modi's visit to Moscow was for the 22nd annual summit. The last summit was held in Delhi in December 2021. Two joint statements were issued, one entitled "Enduring and Expanding Partnership" and the second "Development of strategic areas of Russia-India economic cooperation for the period up to 2030". Nine sectoral MOUs were also entered into. The 23rd summit will be held in India in 2025. A target has been set to achieve trade of \$100 billion by 2030, including increased supply of goods from India to achieve balanced trade.

Extensive discussions were held, principally on economic matters (trade and market access, capital linkages, energy, science and technology cooperation, civil nuclear projects, connectivity corridors), on cooperation in the political sphere, on defence and security issues and developments in the regional and global situation. BRICS, SCO and UN issues were also addressed.

The Russia-Ukraine conflict was discussed reportedly at some length and India's position reiterated in private and public that this is not an era of war. Diplomacy and dialogue are the only way forward. PM Modi was also open about his distress at the attack on a children's hospital in Ukraine on July 08. His statement was also published on the Kremlin's website. He said: "Your Excellency, take a war, a conflict or a terrorist attack: any person who believes in humanity is pained to see people, especially innocent children, die. When we feel this pain, our hearts burst, and I had the chance to discuss these matters with you yesterday. As a friend, I always tell you that peace is indispensable if we want future generations to have a bright future. That is why we believe that war is not a solution. There may be no solution through war. Bombs, missiles and rifles cannot bring peace. This is why we emphasise dialogue, and dialogue is necessary. Your Excellency, I am very pleased that we had an informal conversation yesterday, and you expressed your views very openly, without emotional colouring. Our talks gave rise to very interesting ideas and absolutely new perspectives. Your Excellency, we also agreed yesterday that peace must be restored as soon as possible, and we are ready to assist in any way. I heard your position, your positive views and considerations, and I can assure you that India has always been on the side of peace. As I listened to you, I felt optimistic and hopeful about the future. I would like to thank you for that."

In his official briefing on July 09, Foreign Secretary Kwatra described the outcome of the visit as "All in all, a highly successful Annual Summit which not only took detailed stock of the status of the bilateral partnership across the whole range of areas, but also laid out the vision of the two leaders for the partnership in the years ahead, principally focusing on the economic agenda in our cooperative partnership".

PM Modi paid an official visit to Austria on July 9-10, the first by an Indian PM in 41 years. The inexplicable absence of direct high level interaction has ended. The joint statement issued at the end of the visit acknowledges that Chancellor Nehammer and Prime Minister Modi recognised that the two countries have the potential to significantly upgrade their bilateral partnership to a higher level and agreed to adopt a strategic approach to advance this shared objective. To this end, in addition to closer political-level dialogue, they emphasised a future-oriented bilateral sustainable economic and technology partnership, covering a range of new initiatives and joint projects, collaborative technology development, research and innovation and business-to-business engagement, inter alia, in green and digital technologies, infrastructure, renewable energy, water management, life sciences, smart cities, mobility and transportation. The

two also discussed the importance of fighting terrorism and radicalisation, the India-EU relationship and the Russia-Ukraine war.

Austria has much to offer on the technology and economic fronts that can be of benefit to India. Austria can also be a useful ally in the EU and share its extensive knowledge of and connections with east Europe and Russia.

India's EAM Jaishankar represented PM Modi at the SCO Summit on July 3-4. In his interventions on behalf of PM, Jaishankar made six key points: priority to combating terrorism and isolating/exposing countries that harbour terrorists, provide safe havens and condone terrorism; fighting climate change; development of robust connectivity and infrastructure projects subject to respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity; creative application of technology which is a game changer for both development and security for the welfare and progress of our societies; creating multiple, reliable and resilient supply chains; and building on the deep civilisational ties India has with the region. It was also pointed out that as the world moves towards real multipolarity, the SCO will become more important.

EAM Jaishankar was also active in India's extended hinterland. He visited Mauritius (July 16-17); attended the annual ASEAN related meetings in Vientiane (July 25-27); and participated in the meeting of QUAD Foreign Ministers in Tokyo (July 28-30).

At the QUAD meeting, Jaishankar stressed that the meeting should send a clear message "that the QUAD is here to stay, here to do and here to grow". He described QUAD as a great contemporary example of trusted partners and international cooperation. The joint statement issued after the meeting underlined that "the Quad is a partnership that is evolving and delivering outcomes, and continues to present regional countries and the international community with solutions and options to meet the challenges of the day."

The next QUAD summit will be held in India later in 2024.

On the sidelines of both the SCO summit in Astana and the ASEAN meetings in Vientiane, EAM Jaishankar met with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi. The border issue was discussed. From information available in the public domain, it would appear that Chinese intransigence over restoring the status quo ante along the LAC in eastern Ladakh, and abiding by the agreements on border peace and tranquillity continues. Jaishankar underlined that "the state of the border will necessarily be reflected in the state of our bilateral ties" and spoke of the need for "mutual respect, mutual interests and mutual sensitivity" as the criteria for the handling of bilateral relations. Wang Yi on the other hand spoke

of the need to “take a rational approach to rise above differences and frictions” to promote the development of bilateral relations. What constitutes ‘rational’ will undoubtedly be defined by China! The serious impasse in bilateral relations continues.

The pieces on the international relations chess board moved in a very complex manner during the month, and the challenges before Indian foreign policy continue to mutate.

New Delhi. 01 August 2024.

\*\*\*



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

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