



Delhi Policy Group

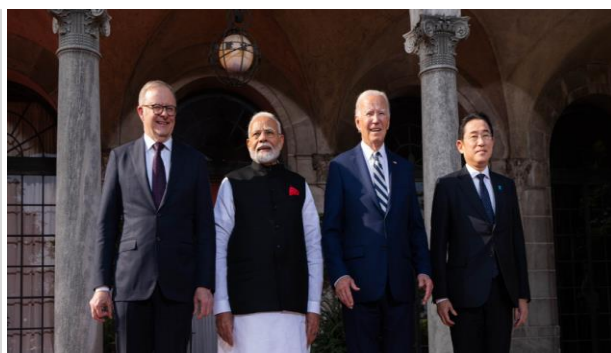
Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power

GLOBAL HORIZONS SEPTEMBER 2024

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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.

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Cover Images:

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, along with fellow Quad Leaders, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, President of the United States Joseph Biden Jr. and Prime Minister Kishida Fumio of Japan attended the 2024 Quad Leaders' Summit, on September 21, 2024. Source: [Australian Government - Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet](#)

Indian External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar delivered India's statement at the opening ceremony of the 79th United Nations General Assembly, on September 29, 2024. Source: [X/@DrSJaishankar](#)

Singapore's Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Lawrence Wong, welcomed Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his official visit to Singapore from September 4 to 5, 2024. Source: [X/@LawrenceWongST](#)

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Global Horizons

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by

Nalin Surie

September was a month of contradictions, as the de facto breakdown of the international political order coexisted with the desire, perhaps even desperation, to keep alive and reform the multilateral order represented by the United Nations.

On the one hand you had an Israel which threw all restraint to the wind and continued to go after Hamas. Following its moves into the West Bank, it proceeded to go after Hezbollah in southern Lebanon and then at the end of the month sent troops into southern Lebanon in what it claims is intended to be a limited operation. The killing of Hezbollah leader Nasrallah and his principal military commanders was not sufficient. The collateral death of hundreds of civilians and other destruction did not make any difference, nor did pleas of reaching a limited ceasefire promoted by the US and some European leaders.

The fact that the US did not take any step to limit or sanction Israel's actions was a clear signal to Tel Aviv that it was turning a Nelson's eye to Israeli plans to impose its own final solution to the Palestinian question. Iran's verbal threats, or those by the Houthis, did not impress the Israeli PM. On the contrary, he used his speech at the high level segment of the UNGA to warn all his enemies, including Iran, that they were all within reach of Israeli power and would not be spared.

The UN and its Security Council remained, at best, mute spectators to the unfolding debacle. The US has strengthened its military presence in the region, in case wider hostilities break out and Israel needs support.

On October 1, Iran finally reacted to Israeli actions and launched almost two hundred ballistic missiles on Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and Jaffa. Most were intercepted by Israel with US assistance. No serious casualties were reported. How Israel and the US will react to this provocation is not clear at the time of writing. The prognosis for the international community is grim at best, unless sensible and wise heads prevail. The implications of a wider conflagration in the Gulf and West Asia for a country like India can be devastating, for its

diaspora and development. Better sense will hopefully prevail in Tel Aviv and Teheran to pull back from the brink.

At the same time, the war in Ukraine grinds on and President Zelenskyy continues to plead with the US to provide more warfighting materiel, and to allow it to use long-range weapons to strike targets in Russia to weaken the latter's military capabilities. NATO members cannot move on this request without US approval. Russia has threatened that were this to happen, it may amend its nuclear doctrine to address this new challenge. China remains deeply committed in its support for Russia.

Both Russia and Ukraine seem to want a way out to end the war. The UN is no help. PM Modi met President Zelenskyy on the sidelines of the UNGA at the latter's request. PM Modi and President Biden also discussed the Ukraine war in their bilateral meeting.

The situation in Sudan continues to fester.

The election outcome imbroglio in Venezuela continues. President Maduro refuses to budge and the Latin Americans are unable to find a solution. Nor is the US and concerned European countries.

The civil war in Myanmar continues to rage. Chinese domination in the South China Sea, and its threat to Taiwan, remains unmitigated. Many other conflicts continue unresolved in other parts of the world, including Libya, Syria and Ethiopia.

A part of the problem is that in recent years, the US, which remains the most consequential power in the world, has over stretched and its policy directions have not been consistent. In the interim, countries like China have used the opportunity to create their own spheres of interest and wish to become serious rule makers. In political and security terms, Europe has floundered. Its economy is not doing too well either, partly on account of the impact of the Ukraine war.

New structures of international governance and multilateralism have not emerged, but plurilateral structures have begun to evolve, e.g. SCO, BRICS, G20, and the Global South. The problem today is compounded by the uncertainty over the outcome of the US Presidential elections in November, and the world view of the new US President. The possible election of Donald Trump is not viewed with equanimity in most major world capitals. That of Kamala Harris may suggest continuity with the policy thrust of the Biden administration, but

obviously there may be differences on approaches to major policies. There is at present lack of clarity.

In the above context, the UN Summit of the Future would appear to be a serious, though desperate, effort particularly by the Global South to sustain multilateralism and keep alive the United Nations. (Interestingly, PM Modi chose to address this Summit and did not make the Indian statement at the UNGA's High Level Segment. The latter was delivered by EAM Jaishankar.)

The outcome documents of the UN Summit are a well-meaning effort in that direction, even though the Pact for the Future and Declaration on Future Generations largely represent compromise formulations on the wide spectrum of issues addressed. That the document was adopted by consensus was an achievement of sorts. Obviously, many countries compromised on issues of interest to them. The US and its allies couldn't have been too pleased, for instance, at the absence of any reference to "rules based order". India couldn't be too pleased with the sections on terrorism, or transforming global governance.

The critical question, though, is whether this well-meaning compact can rescue the UN and multilateralism for the benefit of mankind. Given the deep political divide in the world today and major ongoing conflicts, will the required financial and technological resources be made available for the development of developing countries, to meet the SDG goals and to meet the challenges of the global commons? At this point in time, some skepticism is warranted.

There was one clearly positive outcome of the Summit of the Future, namely the adoption of the Global Digital Compact. The successful implementation of this in a time bound manner, mostly by 2030, could not only be a game changer but also a significant economic development multiplier, for developing countries in particular.

President Xi Jinping delivered a major policy address at the ninth Forum on China-Africa Cooperation on September 5, at which he proposed that the China-Africa partnership be elevated to the level of "strategic relations" and "an all-weather China-Africa community with a shared future for mankind". The importance of Africa in China's new scheme for international relations represented by Xi's three flagship initiatives, Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative and Global Civilisation Initiative, was explicitly enunciated in his speech, and fleshed out in his list of ten partnerships for the next three years. These cover mutual learning among civilisations, trade prosperity, industrial chain cooperation, connectivity (China will undertake 30 infrastructure connectivity projects), development cooperation, health,

agricultural livelihood, P2P relations, green development (China will do 30 clean energy projects), a China-Africa Forum on peaceful use of nuclear technology, and action for common security (China will provide a RMB 1 billion grant for military assistance, training etc.).

Over the next three years, China will extend RMB 210 billion as credit lines, RMB 80 billion as assistance, and RMB 70 billion worth of investment by Chinese companies in Africa. Needless to say, the bulk of this will happen on a bilateral basis. Lessons have been learnt from past mistakes and inadequacies. The commitment to Africa is in China's short and long term interest and remains firm.

On September 30, Xi addressed the celebrations marking China's 75th anniversary. The central task ahead, he announced, is to build China into a "strong country" by pursuing "Chinese modernisation". He warned that the road ahead for this will not be smooth, but China will prevail.

On Taiwan, he reiterated that it is an integral part of China's territory and that "complete reunification is an irreversible trend and righteous cause"; no one can stop the wheel of history.

Just before the celebrations, China announced much awaited financial and monetary incentives and pulled back, at least temporarily, from current Xi Jinping economic orthodoxy, to boost domestic demand and address the housing problem so that the growth rate can pick up and deflationary pressures are mitigated. Inability to achieve the annual 5% growth target would cause serious concern in China. It remains to be seen whether these measures will be able to address the malaise negatively impacting the Chinese economy. Opinion on this among economists is divided. There are no indications so far to suggest that the Xi economic strategy focus on high end and new technologies to ensure China's future growth and development is about to see a major change.

Japan has a new Prime Minister, Shigeru Ishiba, following the expected resignation of Fumio Kishida. The new PM has announced elections to the Diet on October 27. It remains to be seen whether post these elections there will be any real change in Japanese foreign and security policy postures, or whether the Abe dynamics will revive. Present indications are that the status quo will prevail. The relationship with both the US and China will be carefully managed, unless the latter steps out of line. The impact on the QUAD will provide an important barometer of Japanese intentions.

September was a particularly active month for Indian diplomacy, and not only because of the standard flurry of meetings, bilateral, regional and plurilateral, during the start of the annual UNGA session in New York.

The situation in Bangladesh continued to evolve. The Indian High Commissioner in Dhaka was in contact with several of the Advisors in the interim government following his earlier meeting with Chief Advisor Muhammad Yunus on August 22. Yunus utilised his address to the UNGA on September 27 to sharply criticise the government of Sheikh Hasina that had been overthrown, which he said had led to an “epochal transformation” in Bangladesh. He said that “our people, particularly youth gained us independence from an autocratic and undemocratic regime”, and that this cohort seeks a “just, inclusive and functioning democracy”.

Yunus announced at the UNGA that his government had asked the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to send a fact finding mission to Bangladesh “to investigate into the gross human rights violations during the people’s movement, and to suggest for sustainable course correction”. He also informed the international community that his interim government had initiated independent commissions to reform the electoral system, the constitution, judicial system, civil administration and law & order sectors. Commissions on press and media are to follow.

Yunus called upon the international community to engage with “new Bangladesh”. He also sought assistance on the Rohingya issue.

India will necessarily continue to engage with this important neighbour in a fulsome, constructive and meaningful manner.

There was significant political change in Sri Lanka with the not unexpected election of Anura Kumara Dissanayake of the National People’s Party coalition as the new President. He assumed office on September 23. Dissanayake is a former Marxist and a member of the (reformed) Janatha Vimukti Peramuna. The JVP is part of the NPP, but has only three seats of its own in parliament. Dissanayake has accordingly announced fresh elections to Parliament on November 14. The hope and expectation no doubt is that his party and the NPP coalition can ride on their recent success in the Parliamentary elections as well.

India is well positioned to offer further cooperation and support to the new President and government as they grapple with Sri Lanka’s myriad problems and challenges arising out of its recent difficult history and mismanagement. This message appears to have been clearly conveyed to Dissanayake.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visits to Brunei and Singapore, September 3-5, continued the outreach to ASEAN and underlined the effort to further substantiate the "Act East" dimension. The visit to Brunei was long in coming; this was the first ever visit to that country by an Indian PM. A joint statement was issued.

The visit to Singapore enabled arriving at deeper understanding with the new PM of the important island state. A detailed joint statement was issued. The ratcheting up of the partnership to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and the identification of six pillars for further bilateral cooperation are important indicators that the bilateral relationship is to mutual advantage. These six pillars are: sustainability, digitalisation, skills development, health care & medicine, advanced manufacturing and connectivity. The importance of ongoing cooperation in the defence sector was also clearly recognised.

PM Modi also met with the new General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam in New York.

Similarly, the visit of the Crown Prince of UAE to India, on September 9-10, was part of further strengthening an important partnership in the Gulf. Agreements/MOUs were entered into in respect of nuclear power cooperation, energy and food parks.

PM Modi's visit to the US for the Quad Summit, and a bilateral summit with President Biden, assumed special importance given the current international confluence of events such as the Ukraine war, the conflict in Gaza, and the growing challenge of China. The Quad Summit was moved to the US since Mr. Biden is stepping down from the presidency at the end of his term. India, which was originally to host, will now do so in 2025. It was also the last Quad summit for Japanese PM Kishida, who has since been replaced.

The Quad's Wilmington Declaration makes clear that the four countries are now "more strategically aligned than ever before"; that over just four years, "Quad countries have built a vital and enduring regional grouping that will buttress the Indo-Pacific for decades to come". Also that "The Quad is here to stay". The Declaration lists areas of activity and future plans across identified sectors of cooperation.

The segment in the Declaration on regional and global issues is particularly noteworthy. The section on the South China Sea is stronger than in earlier declarations, and re-emphasises the importance of maintaining and upholding freedom of navigation and overflight, other lawful uses of the sea, and unimpeded commerce consistent with international law. It further re-

emphasises the universal and unified character of UNCLOS and reaffirms that the latter sets out the legal framework within which "All" activities in the oceans and the seas "Must" be carried out. The signal to those in violation is clear.

There are interesting nuances on the language used to describe various conflicts. There is "deepest concern" over the war in Ukraine. DPRK's ballistic missile launches are "condemn(ed)". On the situation in Myanmar, the Quad is "deeply concerned". Terrorism and violent extremism in all its forms and manifestations is "unequivocally condemn(ed)". "Great interest" is shared in achieving peace and stability in the Middle East.

The adoption by the Quad Summit of the Principles for Development and Deployment of Digital Public Infrastructure can justifiably be seen as a success for India.

The outcome of the bilateral India-US summit, held also on 21 September, ended with the issue of a Joint Fact Sheet on the continuing expansion of their Comprehensive and Global Strategic Partnership. Progress in the defence partnership has, it is stated, made it "a pillar of global security and peace". Biden commended Modi for his visits to Poland and Ukraine. US support for India's permanent membership of a reformed UNSC was articulated.

India-US collaboration in iCET and other key technology sectors such as in space, semiconductors and advanced telecommunications will be enhanced, as well as in AI, Quantum, biotechnology and clean energy. There is to be special emphasis on the next generation defence partnership, for which some details are listed. The US will assist in India's transition to green energy, for which resources have been allocated or identified for multilateral financing.

Having signed and ratified the overarching agreement on IPEF as also those for Pillars III and IV, India is now better enmeshed in the 14-country Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity. IPEF represents 40% of global GDP and 28% of global goods and services trade.

The outcomes of the Quad and India-US bilateral summits were substantial. It will now be up to the next US President and the new Japanese Prime Minister to ensure that Quad summit outcomes are faithfully implemented. India will not be found wanting.

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New Delhi.



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