



# Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power

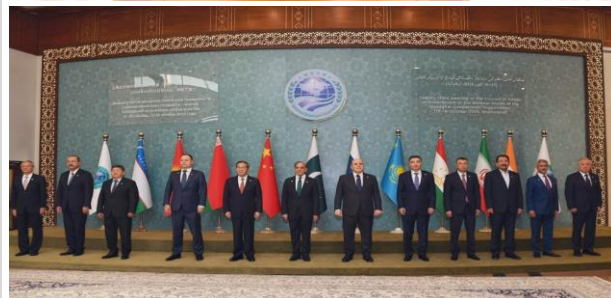


## GLOBAL HORIZONS OCTOBER 2024

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**Delhi Policy Group**

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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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*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:

*President of China, Xi Jinping, President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, and Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi during a concert ahead of an informal lunch for the heads of BRICS delegations held as part of the 16th BRICS summit in Kazan, on October 22, 2024. Source: [BRICS 2024 Russia](#)*

*Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a bilateral meeting with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz at Hyderabad House, New Delhi on October 25, 2024. Source: [Prime Minister of India](#)*

*India's Minister of External Affairs, Dr. S Jaishankar represented India at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Council of Heads of Government in Pakistan, on October 16, 2024. Source: [Dr S. Jaishankar \(X/@DrSJaishankar\)](#)*

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## Global Horizons

October 2024

by

Nalin Surie

The non-stop and intemperate melodrama of the US Presidential election campaign dominated the policy discourse and the news and social media landscape during the month, to the serious detriment of resolving grave ongoing crises in different parts of the world including the war in Ukraine, the situation in Gaza/West Bank/Lebanon, and the civil war and humanitarian crisis in Sudan, among others.

That the outcome of the US election may be challenged only added to the gravity of the situation. It also highlighted the still overarching importance of the US in international relations.

The uncertainty in the US permitted Israel to go about its objectives of trying to destroy Hamas and Hezbollah in an unrestrained manner, laying waste to large parts of Lebanon in the process, while ensuring the safety of its citizens in the West Bank and keeping the pressure on Iran to reign in its so-called proxies. Seemingly, strenuous US efforts to bring about a ceasefire seemed at best to be a pretence at showing to be doing something. Israel had a virtual carte blanche to act as it wanted till the US elections are over. What happens post the US Presidential elections remains to be seen. Electoral rhetoric and the compulsions of office often do not match.

Israel has formally informed the UN that, three months hence, UNRWA will not be permitted to function from Israeli territory, and its government will not have any contact with the Agency. Israel believes that the Agency has been infiltrated by Hamas.

The only restraint the US seems to have succeeded in imposing on Israel is to prevent the latter from attacking, on November 26, Iranian nuclear and oil installations in retaliation for Iranian missile attacks on Israel earlier in the month. The Iranian response to the Israeli attack was verbal, and contained a threat to retaliate at a time of its choosing. Notably, the US deployed its THAAD system in Israel in case of a wider conflagration in the region that might affect Israeli security. It had earlier strengthened its force deployments in the eastern Mediterranean.

In Ukraine, President Zelenskyy faced setbacks, with advances by Russian forces and reports of DPRK troops being deployed in the Kursk region of Russia to push back Ukrainian troops. If true, the latter could have serious implications for Eurasian security and NATO outreach to East Asia.

Zelenskyy's so-called "victory plan" seems to have found few serious takers, either in the US or Europe. Ukraine has received no authorisation from NATO/US to hit targets deep in Russia.

US President Biden made what is perhaps his farewell visit to Europe on October 18, where he met with Chancellor Scholz of Germany, President Macron of France and PM Starmer of the UK. Serious thought is being given in Europe to the reliability of the security alliance with the US going forward, since the attitude of the new US administration is difficult to gauge. Biden no doubt wanted to affirm US commitment to NATO and the Euro-Atlantic partnership. The outcome of the war in Ukraine, and the development and durability of the Sino-Russian alliance, will no doubt seriously impact the latter.

In Sudan, the food crises worsened on account of the ongoing civil war, and the threat of famine looms. The international community continues to neglect this crisis, only to greater peril in Africa. The new US administration could, if it wishes, bang a few external supporting heads together and help restore peace in Sudan.

In the midst of the uncertainty generated by the war in Ukraine and by the outcome of the US Presidential election, Russian President Putin hosted a successful sixteenth summit of BRICS in Kazan on October 23. Of the founder members, PM Modi attended, as did Presidents Xi Jinping and Ramaphosa. President Lula was unable to attend on account of an accident to his person.

A detailed BRICS Declaration was adopted, that seeks solutions to many of the challenges arising from the impact of unilateral actions taken in recent years by G7 countries, singly or acting collectively, especially those post the Russian attack on Ukraine.

It was also made clear that BRICS decisions are taken on the basis of sovereign equality, solidarity, democracy, openness, inclusiveness, collaboration and consensus. In effect, no country can impose its will in BRICS decision making. This is a critical consideration in the evolution of BRICS, particularly for original founder members such as India and Brazil, and for the development of multipolarity.

The above was evident, for instance, in the formulation on the Ukraine war where it is simply stated that “we recall national positions concerning the situation in and around Ukraine as expressed in appropriate fora, including the UNSC and UNGA.”

Also, use of local currencies in financial transactions between BRICS countries and their trading partners was simply “welcomed”, and it was stated that enabling settlements in local currencies is “voluntary and non-binding”. Importantly, it was “highlight”(ed) that “secure, resilient, stable, effective and open supply lines are crucial for sustainable development”. There was not much joy for China in these formulations.

No new members were admitted in addition to those already inducted last year, viz., UAE, Iran, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Ethiopia. However, thirteen “partner countries” were announced, viz., Algeria, Belarus, Bolivia, Cuba, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Nigeria, Thailand, Turkey, Uganda, Uzbekistan and Vietnam. These included four major ASEAN countries, two large Central Asian countries, the most populous country/big economy in Africa, and a NATO member. This was quite an eclectic and influential mix of potential new members, who see benefit in joining to help rebalance international structures and make them more equitable and multipolar.

India must continue to systematically contribute to the development agenda and evolution of BRICS alongside other like-minded members, current and potential. It can also act as a bridge to the G7 and direction setter/enabler in G20, the latter being “the premier global forum for multilateral economic and financial cooperation”.

The new Japanese Prime Minister Ishiba’s gamble to hold early elections to the Diet did not succeed, and his LDP lost its majority both on its own and along with its traditional partner Komeito. He is now attempting to cobble together a minority or coalition government. This does not necessarily bode well for Japan to be able to meet the growing challenge from China and DPRK in East Asia.

Britain bowed to the inevitable, for a variety of reasons, when it agreed at the beginning of October to restore sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago to Mauritius, the last UK colony in Africa. This had unlawfully been separated from Mauritius when it gained independence in 1968 from Britain. The local population there had been forcibly displaced. The agreement, though, permits the US-UK military base in Diego Garcia to be retained for 99 years, extendable for an “uncontested long-term future”, according to UK Foreign Secretary David Lammy. Diego Garcia is considered vital in the context of assuring

freedom of navigation etc. in the Indian Ocean region from anticipated Chinese naval depredations in the years ahead. This chain of events has been welcomed by India.

October was a particularly active and consequential month for Indian foreign policy.

At his press briefing on October 21 on PM Modi's forthcoming visit to Kazan for the BRICS Summit, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri announced that following several rounds of discussions, India and China had arrived at an agreement on disengagement and patrolling along the LAC in the remaining two areas affected by the Chinese violation of CBM agreements in East Ladakh in summer 2020. In essence, the agreement was that patrolling as per past practice will resume in Depsang and Demchok. (Chinese aggression etc. in Eastern Ladakh had brought bilateral relations to a virtual standstill.)

The agreement paved the way for a meeting between PM Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping in Kazan on the sidelines of the BRICS summit on 23 October. Their last meeting took place almost five years ago, also on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit in Brasilia in 2019.

Modi and Xi agreed that the Special Representatives on the boundary question will meet at an early date to oversee the management of peace and tranquility in border areas and to explore a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable solution to the boundary question. Also, dialogue mechanisms at the level of foreign ministers and other officials will also be utilised to stabilise and rebuild bilateral relations. This represents the crux of the agreement between the two leaders. In his press briefing on 23 October, India's Foreign Secretary Misri said that "as we have maintained during the last four years, the restoration of peace and tranquility in the border areas will create space for returning us towards the path of normalisation of our bilateral relations".

There are various factors, both internal and external, that have undoubtedly contributed to the two sides wanting to reduce the military confrontation postures on their borders, and attempt to restore a modicum of normalcy in their bilateral relationship. The impasse has cost China in several respects. But, China's long-term objectives have not changed and they are unwilling to see India as an equal partner, even though they know that the real challenge to them in Asia is from India. There is no acceptable explanation for why China tore up binding agreements on maintaining peace and tranquility along the LAC that worked reasonably well for decades. Trust is not going to be easy to restore. India will have to, systematically, first verify before moving forward in the process of restoring bilateral relations.

External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar visited Colombo on October 04 for detailed discussions with the new government, including his new Sri Lankan counterpart Vijitha Herath, the new PM Harini Amarasuriya, and President Dissanayake. India offered to continue fulsome support to Sri Lanka in the future. A detailed press note was issued by the Indian Foreign Office.

The Sri Lankan side confirmed that Jaishankar's visit was intended to congratulate the new government and demonstrate India's commitment in moving forward with the strong bilateral partnership, economic and development cooperation, social security, culture and cooperation in regional/multilateral fora and fisheries. Foreign Minister Herath welcomed the excellent bilateral cooperation and India's support for the economic progress of Sri Lanka.

This was an auspicious start that will need to be nurtured and sustained by both sides, based on trust and mutual benefit.

President Muizzu of the Maldives paid a state visit to India from October 06-10. A fresh start was made by the Maldivian side in the bilateral relationship, notwithstanding the relatively standoffish behaviour following Muizzu's election as President.

A Vision for Comprehensive Economic and Maritime Security Partnership was adopted by President Muizzu and PM Modi on October 07. The two leaders acknowledged that the time was "opportune for both sides to chart a new framework for cooperation with an aim to comprehensively transform the bilateral relationship". The new vision "will act as an anchor of stability in the Indian Ocean region".

The Vision adopted specifies concrete actions to be taken across a cross section of areas, ranging from political exchanges to development cooperation, trade and economic cooperation, digital and financial cooperation, energy cooperation, health cooperation and defence and security cooperation, capacity building and training, P2P linkages and cooperation in regional and multilateral fora. Implementation will have far-reaching benefits for mutual security and development and reinforce India's influence in the Indian Ocean region.

EAM Jaishankar visited Islamabad on October 15 to attend the SCO Council of Heads of Government meeting. The last visit at this level was by then EAM Sushma Swaraj nine years ago in 2015, and relations have been in cold storage since the Pulwama terrorist attack in February 2019. There had been unnecessary speculation on whether or not India would attend. The visit also

generated speculation on whether there would be any bilateral dimension to the visit, even though the Minister had made it clear that he was visiting for the SCO meeting only. Nevertheless, bilateral social exchanges could not be avoided, and were held with both sides at their best behaviour. The Pakistani hosts reportedly also ensured that at the SCO Meeting no issue was raised that would trigger the ire of the Indian side. Has the ice been finally broken? There are no indications to suggest that Pakistan's approach towards sponsoring terrorist activity in India is about to change. Without that, forward movement will not happen.

PM Modi attended the India-ASEAN Summit and the East Asia Summit in Vientiane on October 10 and 11. India's stress on deepening and diversifying its Act East policy and underlining its strategic nature remains a focus point.

In his address at the EAS, while reiterating India's support for the unity and centrality of ASEAN, Modi noted that "ASEAN is also pivotal to India's Indo-Pacific vision and Quad cooperation". He added that "peace, security and stability in the South China Sea are in the interest of the entire Indo-Pacific region" and that the "EAS is a key pillar of India's Act East Policy".

The visit of German Chancellor Scholz to Delhi for the seventh round of India-Germany inter-governmental consultations on October 25 resulted in substantive outcomes that would provide fresh impetus to this important partnership in Europe. A detailed Joint Statement was issued, along with a long List of Outcomes that include a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty in Criminal matters.

This was Scholz's third visit to India as Chancellor.

The emphasis on bilateral cooperation going forward will be on technology and innovation, labour and talent, migration and mobility, climate action, green and sustainable development and economic, defence and strategic cooperation. Concrete actions have been identified to progress these focus areas including a Roadmap on Innovation and Technology, a Green Hydrogen Roadmap and the Green and Sustainable Development Partnership (GSDP.)

Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific was highlighted, given the region's importance for prosperity and security and addressing global challenges.

Defence cooperation has, as stated above, been identified as a key pillar of the bilateral strategic partnership. Germany has committed to strategic exports to India and to encourage co-development, co-production and joint research between the respective defense industries. Germany welcomed India's



application for Observer status in the Eurodrone program of the Organization for Joint Armament Cooperation.

Both countries committed themselves to full implementation of the Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreement. Indian professionals now comprise over 25% of all blue card holders in Germany, and Indian students represent the largest group of international students there. Issues of irregular migration are to be addressed. This is an important area of cooperation going forward.

India's Europe policy received a welcome boost with the visit of Spanish PM Pedro Sanchez to India on October 28-29. The last such visit was 18 years ago. (PM Modi had visited Spain in 2017.) During the visit, the two leaders inaugurated the final assembly line plant of the C-295 aircraft, co-produced by Airbus, Spain and Tata Advanced Systems, in Vadodara.

A joint statement was issued, and an MOU on cooperation in Rail Transport signed, among others. Collaboration in energy & renewable energy, nuclear and smart grids, food processing, and healthcare will be progressed. These are areas of Spanish expertise. Spain is to establish a Consulate in Bengaluru, and India will operationalise its Consulate in Barcelona.

The India-Spain partnership is under developed and needs to be fleshed out. Spain is an important EU member. It can also facilitate India's growing outreach to Latin America. Much work remains to be done. Greater Spanish interest in developing bilateral ties would be helpful.

There was, however, one fly in the ointment in so far as Indian foreign policy was concerned. Actions by the Trudeau government, and its levelling of outlandish charges without a shred of evidence against the Government of India and Indian diplomats, including the High Commissioner, justifiably elicited a very harsh response from India. As a result, diplomatic ties are at a nadir, and India has withdrawn its High Commissioner, and declared senior Canadian diplomats in India persona non grata. Anti-Indian activities by Canadian Khalistanis, with the tacit approval of the Trudeau government, continue. The latest absurdity is the accusation that India's Home Minister had approved the killing of Khalistani activist Nijjar. Most recently, Canadian Khalistanis have attacked a Hindu temple and some Canadian police are clearly complicit in this. There are reports of retaliation by the Hindu and non-Khalistani Sikh communities.

The Trudeau regime evidently believes that for its survival, the relationship with India can be sacrificed. It needs to remind itself, though, that when you nurture a viper in your bosom it ultimately will strike at you. It remains to be

seen whether the Trudeau government will learn this lesson in time, or pay the price for its inexplicable folly. It also remains to be seen whether the damage being done to bilateral relations is repairable. For the latter to happen, the Canadian mainstream needs to stand up and be counted.

At the time of writing, Donald Trump has won the US Presidential election by a clear margin both in the electoral college and the popular vote. Equally significant, the Republican Party appears to have gained majorities in both the Senate and the House of Representatives. This would mean that in his second presidency, Trump would have a significant accretion in his power to work the US system in accordance with his stated and evolving agenda.

It remains to be seen what the new dawn has in store for the US and the world community. In terms of US foreign policy, implementation of his policies enunciated during the campaign on immigration, on the war in Ukraine, on relations with Russia and China, on the future of NATO and transatlantic relations, on the war in Gaza and the situation in West Asia, and on international trade, will attract immediate attention since they represent significant departures from those of the incumbent Biden Administration.

India is well placed to re-engage with Trump in his second term as US President.

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