



# Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



## DPG POLICY BRIEF

### The World After 2022

#### *Author*

Hemant Krishan Singh

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**Delhi Policy Group**

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

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



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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.

### Author

**Ambassador Hemant Krishan Singh**, I.F.S. (Retd.), Director General, Delhi Policy Group

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*Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Joe Biden holding a bilateral meeting during the Quad Summit in Tokyo, May 24, 2022. Source: PTI*

*The Quad Leaders at their Summit in Tokyo, May 24, 2022. Source: Website of the Prime Minister of Japan*

*Prime Minister Narendra Modi meeting Russian President Vladimir Putin at Samarkand, September 16, 2022. Source: Twitter (@PMOIndia)*

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**The World After 2022**  
by  
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# The World After 2022

by  
Hemant Krishan Singh

## I. Highlights

Global turmoil gathered momentum over the past year. Stability and order, which are vital for the progress and prosperity of humanity, receded. The curtain came down on a crumbling post-Cold War order shaken by power rebalancing, geopolitical contestation and pushbacks against globalisation. The world's great powers shed most constraints to their behaviour to pursue power politics, aggrandise their influence and interests, resort to military and economic unilateralism and coercion, and seek domination through alliances and spheres of influence.

A divided world is traversing an era of great power contests for global, regional, economic, technological and military domination.

While there was much rhetoric about rule-abiding democracies confronting unrestrained forces of authoritarianism, this was not a straightforward global contest of virtue. There were very significant differences between the outlook of the West<sup>1</sup>, and that of China and Russia, but also some similarities. Authoritarian powers challenging the domination of the West, and the Western guardians of world order, both in their own ways contributed to its decline.

If China expects the nations of the world to subordinate their interests to those of Beijing, so do the nations of the West looking to revive their "end of history" moment of 1991.

The burden was borne mainly by developing countries, whose interests were marginalised. The North-South divide, and inequality among sovereign nations, deepened.

The underlying weaknesses of authoritarian regimes (China, Russia, Iran, DPRK) were in evidence. The presumptions of ascendancy widely prevalent among Western democracies disregarded the role and aspirations of the unaligned "Rest".

The US made major strategic gains in securing cohesion among allies and partners to better serve its interests. The Russia-China "no limits" axis held

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<sup>1</sup> (Refers to the United States, its European allies, Japan and Australia)

together, despite Russia's faltering campaign in Ukraine, on the strength of mutual support for their respective "core interests". As competing great powers, the US and China engaged in a search for "the right way" to get along, within their defined redlines.

Europe's post-national, post-historical and post-power pretensions were jolted with the return of yet another bloody European conflict, this one thirty years in the making. US influence over Europe, which had been waning, increased dramatically.

Conflicts of ethnicity, religion and civilisation are not new to Europe. An earlier conflict in the 1990s had brought about the collapse of non-aligned Yugoslavia into seven states that are aligned with the West. Now there is talk of bringing down an adversarial, multi-ethnic, imperial, and "artificial nation" Russia.

China's top-down, disastrous, "Zero-Covid" policy came to an abrupt end, but not before wreaking havoc across its society and economy. The aftermath of its rapid reopening could be worse, for China and the world.

Global challenges of climate change, terrorism, pandemics and others were overshadowed by geopolitics.

Climate extremism's ever more utopian goals of saving humanity with radical energy transformations came apart against the hard reality of carbon demand.

The relevance of enfeebled and ineffectual multilateralism further declined.

The resilience of India's strategic independence was severely tested, but also validated by global developments. Democratic stability, economic growth and steadfastness against China's bullying raised India's profile in the world.

India's task in forging consensus and common purpose as chair of G20 in 2023, and advocacy of the interests of the Global South, will pose a formidable challenge.

History is far from over, and 2023 will likely be another troubled year of great power conflict, economic uncertainty and social distress.

## II. Developments

Unquestionably, Russia dealt a harsh blow to world order with its premeditated and increasingly brutal military aggression against Ukraine in February 2022,

but reaped a bitter harvest which will greatly diminish its strategic power, influence and global standing.

That said, the conflict was also the by-product of miscalculations, perceptions of US weakness, failure of preventive diplomacy and the breakdown of conventional deterrence in Europe.

The United States gained strategically as a result, wresting control over its Trans-Atlantic alliance partners, and more broadly reshaping its approach to the world as an offshore influencer leveraging diplomacy-led “integrated deterrence” through allies, partners and institutions to assert its continued global primacy.

The US lacks the capability of dual containment of China and Russia; its power and influence is now increasingly dependent on the contributions of its allies. This recognition raised the importance of India in the US strategic calculus.

The US took concerted steps to strengthen its economic and technological sinews at home, and to reshape resilient supply chains, particularly in areas of high technology, to its strategic advantage.

The West’s extraordinary military and economic support to Ukraine was projected as an investment in global security and democracy. But demanding a “just peace” with “no compromises” entails major escalation risks, as a “decisive Ukrainian victory” cannot be achieved without the direct involvement of NATO against a major nuclear power. On the other hand, a prolonged war of attrition will become a test of resolve, resources and endurance.

In geo-strategic terms, Ukraine is now an instrument in the hands of the maritime West to decisively dismantle the continental power of Russia, Mackinder’s “World Island”.

Whether and to what extent the West will succeed remains to be seen, but there will be major adverse consequences, above all for a Europe trapped in an energy and economic crisis. Long unsettled disputes within the European civilisation over mutual security will face an even more difficult future. Continuation of the Ukraine conflict in pursuit of zero-sum outcomes will destabilise what remains of the world order, and the impact of Europe’s structural antagonisms will radiate eastward into Eurasia and beyond.

The West in general, and Europe in particular, rushed to conflate its interests with those of the “international community”, and demand a unified response to Russian aggression. However, nations across West, South and South East



Asia, well aware that a self-preoccupied Europe is far removed from issues of stability and strategic balance in Asia, declined to jump on the bandwagon, maintaining that challenges to political independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity need to be resisted everywhere, not just in Ukraine; global order based on the UN Charter and international law must be upheld without exception; and the peaceful resolution of disputes through dialogue and diplomacy provides the best way forward.

More importantly, the Ukraine conflict itself, and the subsequent unilateral coercive measures (euphemistically termed as “economic sanctions”) imposed by the West, caused widespread disruptions across the global economy, with devastating consequences for developing countries, from an energy, food and fertiliser crisis to undermining the rules-based financial, monetary and trading order. Remedial summits convened by the US with emerging and developing nations from across the world had at best a marginal impact.

Authoritarian China, over which Xi Jinping extended his one-man one-party rule, took advantage of the European preoccupations of the West by flexing its muscles in Asia, from the Himalayas to East Asia. China’s hostility towards India became structural, and it expanded its coercive influence in South Asia to contain India, while also seeking to counter India’s asymmetric advantage in the IOR maritime in the near term.

The growing Russia-China axis was troubling for India, particularly as Russia maintained its strong rejection of the “Indo-Pacific” and the Quad to align itself with China’s rhetoric against “bloc confrontation”.

Long-standing ties with Russia have served India’s interests, but have become increasingly transactional. Unsurprisingly, India did not join the West in public condemnation of Russia, or in imposing economic sanctions, over its aggression in Ukraine. But a new balance in bilateral relations is being signalled, with PM Modi conveying to President Putin that this must not be an era of war; dialogue and diplomacy provide the way forward to peace. India cannot play any meaningful role of peacemaker when the great power protagonists in the Ukraine conflict remain locked in uncompromising positions.

India’s pursuit of an equitable, inclusive and multipolar world order free from domination was dealt a setback. Sustaining India’s strategic independence necessitated an ever more delicate balancing of its principles and values with its realist core interests. This task will become even harder in 2023.



India will confront daunting challenges as it presides over G20 with the hope of uniting the world in the coming year. Amidst rampant great power rivalry, pushing for a more equitable distribution of power, resources, finance and technology will be a difficult task.

There will now also be less room for progress on effective and reformed multilateralism; the UN and other key global institutions (IMF, WB, WTO) have already been sidelined or repurposed to serve mainly Western interests.

The West's security, economic and financial policy coordination centres around NATO and the G7, whose foremost agenda is the West's geopolitical and economic assertion, and neither of which are representative of the comity of nations.

India will need to work closely with Japan, which will lead the G7 over the coming year, to ensure that its objectives for G20 are realised.

A fractured world divided into three distinct blocs – the US and its Western allies, the Russia-China axis, and the unaligned nations along with the Global South – has become a distinct possibility. There are many imponderables, but the final outcome will be influenced by the manner in which the Ukraine conflict is brought to an end, and the resulting balance of power in the world.

### III. India and the US

As the world's largest democracy, India shares fundamental values with the West. Unlike the West, it promotes democracy by the sustained power of example, and not judgemental admonishment.

The US remains the world's pre-eminent power and is an indispensable strategic partner of India across multiple domains. It will continue to be in India's interest to work closely with the US, and the US-led West, where our interests align, as they do in the Indo-Pacific and the Quad.

However, India will also need to exercise a degree of caution as US policy, and that of US allies, is based on the presumption of US primacy in the world order. The US may recognise the Indo-Pacific as the epicentre of 21<sup>st</sup> century geopolitics and a vital engine of the global economy, but it continues to rely on the foundational role of its Trans-Atlantic partnerships (and the Anglo-sphere), which constitute the centre of gravity of its power and influence, for addressing global challenges.





Asia, where India geo-strategically belongs, is civilisationally and historically distinct from Europe. There is talk in the West of expanding the remit of NATO and drawing European powers into the Indo-Pacific, which is home to the leading post-colonial emerging powers of Asia. From India's perspective, the secular shift of relative power from the Euro-Atlantic to the Indo-Pacific must not be derailed or diminished.

The critical task of Indian and US diplomacy will be to manage these nuances and address areas of dissonance to ensure that strategic imperatives to uphold rules-based order and regional stability continue to predominate in India-US relations. That India aspires to be a strong, independent power, while also strengthening its strategic alignment with the US, still has some way to go in gaining wider acceptance across the US establishment, which prefers India firmly boxed in its corner and continues to see India largely through a South Asian subcontinental prism.

Here are some additional factors that need to be borne in mind in the conduct of India's relations with the US over the coming year:

- The US can tolerate a degree of multipolarity, but only within the limited context of its own allies and partners. It will not nurture or promote multipolarity, which it regards as destabilising and a threat to its primacy.
- The US proclivity to resort to unilateral sanctions as an instrument of policy coercion will continue to bear watching.
- The chaotic and disastrous US withdrawal from Afghanistan, which signalled strategic failure and an isolationist decline, has added to India's neighbourhood security challenges. India does not need any more adversaries and vulnerabilities in the continental space. Ties with Russia will remain important in this context.
- US cultivation of its Major Non-NATO Ally to India's west is back in favour, for which disingenuous arguments are once again being proffered: countering terrorism and China. Pakistan is the decisive element in bolstering China's influence in South Asia and access to the western IOR. The Pak-China nexus poses the most significant collusive threat to India's security. We must maintain strong pressure on the US to avoid measures that undermine India's security interests and jeopardise the positive direction of our partnership.
- India's primary concern is with authoritarian expansionism and coercion in Asia. With US attention predominantly focused on Russia, China has



- gained more strategic space to persist with its regional assertions, particularly against India.
- The Quad and IPEF are integral elements of India's ties with the US, with both playing an important role in regional soft balancing, strategic signalling and economic rule making. India must continue to play a proactive role in agenda-setting and driving progress of the Quad and IPEF.
  - The new I2U2 Indo-Abrahamic quadrilateral can help shape regional economic cooperation and play a stabilising role in West Asia.
  - Progress on technology access and transfer with the US has been long discussed but not delivered. The logic of India's "AatmaNirbhar Bharat" and "Make in India" policy in defence manufacturing is strong. We cannot be working to reduce one legacy of external dependence (Russia) with another (US).
  - In the Indo-Pacific maritime, where our interests largely converge, the US focus is on East Asia and India's on the Indian Ocean. Enhancing India's capability to deter aggression and ensure free and open access to the Indian Ocean region is a welcome goal of the US NDS. This must lead to a better alignment of our respective threat mitigation strategies if these are to be mutually reinforcing.

#### IV. India and Japan

The revised National Security Strategy, National Defence Strategy and Defence Plan approved by PM Fumio Kishida's Cabinet on December 16, 2022 has marked a significant turning point. Discarding the hesitation and ambivalence of the past, these documents underline a commitment to modernise Japan's capabilities to deter and combat regional threats, strengthen Japan's defence industrial base, acquire long-range missile capabilities and double Japan's defence spending over the next five years. Implementation can yet pose difficulties, from sources of funding to overcoming the public fixation with pacifism, but the direction has been set.

After citing a range of China's threatening and coercive actions, Japan's NSS states: "...China's current external stance, military activities, and other activities have become a matter of serious concern for Japan and the international community, and present an unprecedented and the greatest



strategic challenge in ensuring the peace and security of Japan and the peace and stability of the international community....”

For a nation which remains heavily interdependent with China in the trade, technology and economic arena, an assertion of this nature represents unprecedented change. The prospects for Japan’s own contributions to regional security have risen, even though its focus will remain predominantly on East Asia and its dependence on the security alliance with the US will continue.

Japan’s NDS underlines the desire to further deepen bilateral and multilateral defence exchanges with India, from maritime security and cyber security to defence equipment and technology.

These developments augur well for higher levels of strategic coordination, security and defence cooperation between India and Japan in the Indo-Pacific, where the critical interests of both lie. With persisting differences over trade, and economic ties lagging behind their potential, this must increasingly become an important area of the India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership (SSGP).

Updating the bilateral Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation, which dates back to 2008, and the accompanying Action Plan of 2009, to reflect current-day security challenges should be a priority for both sides in the year ahead. Japan’s limited perception of India’s importance as a SLOC security provider in the Indian Ocean has to expand substantially to view the bilateral SSGP as an integral component of the broader Asian strategic balance, reflecting the vision of former PM Shinzo Abe.

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New Delhi - 110003  
India

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