



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



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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.

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Cover Images:

President of the United States Joe Biden and his predecessor, former President Donald Trump met in the key battleground state of Georgia for their first debate of the 2024 election cycle, on June 27, 2024. Source: [Livestreamed by CNN](#)

Chairman of State Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea Kim Jong-un held an official welcoming ceremony for President of Russia Vladimir Putin on Kim Il-sung Square on June 19, 2024. Source: [President of Russia](#)

Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi on the invitation of Prime Minister of Italy, Giorgia Meloni attended the G7 Outreach Summit on June 14, 2024. Source: [X/@narendramodi](#)

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by

Nalin Surie

A series of developments took place during the month of June which can have serious geostrategic and geopolitical consequences going forward, especially in Eurasia and for trans-Atlantic relations. The cumulative impact of these was such that, if the international media is to go by, the war in Ukraine and the Israel-Hamas war were pushed into the background.

The first was the results of the elections to the European Parliament held between June 6-9, 2024. The extreme right nationalists did well as expected in several countries, including in Germany, although the three parties which had the majority in the outgoing parliament retained their overall majority but with a lesser numbers of seats.

The success of the extreme right in France, however, led to the inexplicable decision by President Macron to announce a snap national election in France on June 29, well before it was due. It was hoped that this might prevent a similar result in the national parliament elections, but the results of the first round show the President's party losing substantially to the extreme right party, National Reform, led by Marine Le Pen. The horse trading has now begun before the second round of elections to be held on July 07 to prevent Le Pen's party from winning a majority in the French national parliament. If they do get a majority, that could leave Macron in a lame duck situation till the end of his second and final term in 2027. Given France's role as one of the principal anchors in European affairs, this could have serious implications for the EU, EU/NATO policies and the war in Ukraine going forward. It could also impact the French role in the UN, where it is a permanent member of the UNSC.

The second important development was the performance of US President Biden in his first scheduled televised debate held on June 27 against his challenger, former President Trump. By all accounts, Mr. Biden's performance was well below par and his age showed. His challenger didn't throw too many punches, but perhaps he didn't have to. This has led to an uproar in the US media and political circles, including in sections of the Democratic Party, and there is an open call in several quarters for the Party to replace Mr. Biden as its candidate for the November elections. US allies across the world are, understandably, seriously concerned and its detractors are also unsure of what

might happen if the less than predictable Mr. Trump comes back to power. Mr. Biden, meanwhile, has vowed to fight on.

The resulting uncertainty on the eve of NATO's 75th anniversary summit in Washington in July can no doubt be unnerving for many, especially with the ongoing war in Ukraine, the Israel-Hamas war, the growing challenge from China, the growing Sino-Russian alliance and President Putin's recent manoeuvres in East and South East Asia. Not to mention the problem in Sudan, of terrorism and other challenges in the global commons. Europe will also be concerned about its own security going forward.

The third set of developments arise out of Russian President Putin's back to back substantive visits to the DPRK and Vietnam on June 19-20, which are detailed below. It is clear that following the negative fallout of its war in Ukraine, Russia is not going to allow itself to be isolated (it has already reached out to Africa and Iran), nor is it going to play second fiddle to China in South East and East Asia, but will actively seek to re-establish and strengthen old partnerships from the time of the FSU.

The fourth set of developments of interest emanated from China's announcements at the Summer Davos at Dalian in late June 2024 that China was more than open for business with the world. Speaking at the event on June 26, Premier Li Qiang stressed that the rapid rise of China's new industries is in line with the global trend of the sci-tech revolution and green development, and is rooted in its unique comparative advantages. He also underlined the need to reject bloc confrontation and decoupling. This needs to be read together with the much awaited announcement that the important Third Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPC will be held in Beijing from July 15-18. The plenum will lay down directions for China's economic policies going forward. The intention is to ensure deepening of reform and broaden prospects for modernisation, so as to complete the building of a high standard socialist market economy by 2035. Reforms will ostensibly be based on a people-centred philosophy, innovation, institutional improvements and adopting systems thinking to balance key relationships between the economy and society, government and market, efficiency and fairness, vitality and order, and of course development and security.

The future direction of the Chinese economy will undoubtedly have a concrete impact on several aspects of the regional and international economy, and in the balance between development and security.

The G7 summit was held in Apulia, Italy on June 13. An extensive communique was issued. This was described as a crucial moment in history. The G7 has

committed to “support more effective, inclusive and equitable governance that reflects our changing world”. Actions going forward will demonstrate the seriousness of this commitment.

The unity and determination of the G7 grouping was underlined, as was the intention to strengthen international rules and norms for the benefit of all. However, the decision to use future flows of extraordinary revenues stemming from the immobilisation of Russian sovereign assets held in the EU and other relevant jurisdictions to provide funding for Ukraine is not quite consistent with this stated intent.

Unwavering support for Ukraine was reiterated for as long as it takes, as was an unwavering commitment to a two state solution for the issue of Palestine.

Partnership with Africa will be fostered. This is an important challenge to China on that continent.

Peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific is considered key to promoting global prosperity, and developments there can affect global security.

The G7 are seeking constructive and stable relations with China and recognise the importance of direct and candid engagement to express concerns and manage differences. It is argued that the G7 are not trying to harm China or thwart its economic development, but are concerned by China’s persistent industrial targeting and comprehensive non-market policies and practices. Hence, they are de-risking and diversifying supply chains where necessary and fostering resilience to economic coercion. Additionally, peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait is indispensable to international security and prosperity.

The G7 are deeply concerned at the PRC support for Russia in the war in Ukraine. The question that arises is whether China will suffer any substantive consequences because of this, or whether lip service will continue to be paid while protecting ongoing and future economic partnerships.

The jousting of the G7 with China and Russia is likely to continue and could impact seriously on peace, security and development in Eurasia. The need for guardrails is clear.

The Ukraine peace summit called by Kiev was held on June 15-16 in Burgenstock, Switzerland. Russia was not invited. China did not attend. India was represented at Vice-Minister level. A final communique was issued and signed by 81 participants, but key countries such as Brazil, India and Saudi

Arabia did not sign. It was explained that India's consistent approach is to facilitate a lasting and peaceful resolution to the conflict through dialogue and diplomacy, and that such a resolution requires a sincere and practical engagement between the parties to the conflict.

It is clear that the West does not have the unstinted support of the international community for its position on the war in Ukraine.

In the meanwhile, the destruction, deaths and creeping stalemate in the war continues. Interestingly, while speaking to the Russian media on June 20 after his visits to Pyongyang and Hanoi, President Putin, when asked about his recent proposal to settle the Ukraine war, said: "Everything will depend on how the situation changes on the ground. I think that some level-headed politicians will think about whether my proposals are realistic enough, unbiased, and in accord with the interests of all contracting parties and all of Europe, including, if it really wants an end to the conflict in the centre of Europe".

He went on to say: "Isn't what our partners presented an ultimatum? Some wordings were invented, although we have a result of our talks in Minsk and Istanbul. Why doesn't anyone remember it? There, I have said about it a hundred times, if we agreed back then and have the signature of the head of the Ukrainian negotiating team that the agreements reached in Istanbul were, in principle, acceptable to the Ukrainian side. What has happened on the ground, on the battlefield, that allows them to advance some additional conditions that are in no way related to our agreements in Istanbul?"

It remains to be seen whether Ukraine and its partners will seriously respond to Putin's comments and seek to find a solution based on the ill-fated Istanbul agreement.

Israel's campaign against Hamas didn't flag. The focus reportedly moved to south and central Gaza, including Rafah. There was no progress on the proposed cease fire. Death, destruction and humanitarian crisis remained the order of the day. PM Netanyahu refused to budge before US pressure and persuasion. Nor to the pressure on him from within Israel to secure the release of the remaining Israeli hostages. He remained unmoving on his objective of eliminating Hamas and unwilling to address the question of how Palestine would be governed once the war ended.

The danger of the conflict spreading to the fight against Hezbollah in Lebanon continued to grow.

The US and Europe will need to exercise their leverage to find an early way out of the quagmire that is Gaza today.

President Putin of Russia visited the DPRK and Vietnam on June 19 and 20. These were important visits with substantive outcomes. On both occasions, Putin reminded his hosts of the important role the former Soviet Union had played in their struggle for independence and development.

The visit to Pyongyang was in return for Kim Jong Un's visit to Russia in September 2023. The highlight of the visit was the signing of a Treaty on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership which apparently had been under negotiation for several months. KCNA promptly published the text which has attracted serious attention because of the following provisions : "in case a direct threat of armed invasion is created against any one of the two sides, the two sides shall immediately operate the channel of bilateral negotiations for the purpose of adjusting their stands at the request of any one side and discussing feasible practical measures to ensure mutual assistance for removing the prevailing threat.

In case any one of the two sides is put in a state of war by an armed invasion from an individual state or several states, the other side shall provide military and other assistance with all means in its possession without delay in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter and the laws of the DPRK and the Russian Federation."

Interestingly, when asked, Putin clarified that these provisions were not new but were almost identical to those contained in a treaty signed in the early 1960s by the then FSU with DPRK.

Kim Jong Un stated that bilateral relations between the two countries have "risen to a new high level of alliance", and to be able to "reliably protect peace and security in the region".

The Treaty also highlights other areas of collaboration, including railway connectivity.

The importance of the visit and the Treaty cannot be lost on the US, China, ROK and Japan, among others. The West's efforts to isolate Russia are impacting Eurasia in more than one significant and disturbing manner.

Putin's visit to Vietnam was in response to an invitation from the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam and to mark the 30th anniversary

of the Treaty on Foundation of Friendly Relations. The two countries are also bound by a comprehensive security partnership.

The President of Vietnam conveyed that Russia is a priority foreign policy partner; they stand for equal and indivisible security cooperation in the Asia Pacific region; they will work together including on the 1982 UNCLOS; they will further reinforce the strategic partnership; and they will increase trade and investment ties, improve performance of projects in energy and gas, enhance cooperation in education, research, technology, vocational training, and tourism.

Putin noted that the comprehensive strategic partnership with Vietnam remains a key priority for Russian foreign policy. Also, that the energy sector including hydro is a strategic point of cooperation and nuclear energy cooperation holds promise. He also pointed out that settlement of transactions is increasingly in national currencies, to the extent of 60% in the first quarter of 2024.

Putin conveyed that in the Asia Pacific, there is mutual interest in building a strong and reliable security architecture based on the principles of non-use of force and peaceful settlement of disputes, with no room for closed military blocs.

A Joint Declaration was issued. It emphasises, inter alia, that defence and security cooperation play a special role in the overall Vietnam-Russia relationship. It also affirms the universality and integrity of UNCLOS which is the legal foundation for all acts at sea and ocean, and emphasises the need to maintain the integrity of the Convention. The two sides will also focus on the further development of their economic relations, including new oil and gas projects.

The signals to both the US and its allies, and to China, particularly on UNCLOS, security and the economy, are quite clear. Both Russia and Vietnam have options.

South Africa formed a government of national unity after the ANC lost its majority in parliament in the last election. Cabinet announcements were made on June 30. The ANC was allotted 20 portfolios, including defence, finance and foreign affairs, and the (white dominated) Democratic Alliance 6, including home affairs, basic education and agriculture (of special interest to the white farming community). The remaining 6 are with the smaller coalition partners.

The challenge before the new government will be to sink their fundamental differences and address the many serious challenges facing South Africa, including on issues such as black empowerment, unemployment, corruption, and economic growth. The entire continent and the world will watch with interest and hope for successful cohabitation.

In Kenya, President Ruto was compelled by mass protests to withdraw his IMF inspired tax proposals from parliament. The protests, organised through social media, were youth-led and had been met with a strong reaction from the Kenyan police and military. Over 20 protesters were killed and sections of the Parliament building set on fire. The protests are not simply against austerity but also for political change, and were not restricted to the capital Nairobi. The President will now have to walk a tightrope. The need is for both political and economic reform. As a very important member of the East African community, what happens in Kenya will be closely watched not only in the neighbourhood but also in Africa and the Global South at large. Kenya is an Indo-Pacific nation.

At its meeting on June 27, the EU Council, inter alia, adopted the Union's Strategic Agenda for 2024-29. The intention is to promote the overall harmonious development of the EU, enhance economic, social and territorial cohesion, aim for continuous upward convergence, reduce disparities, increase the EU's resilience and competitiveness, and stimulate long-term growth across the Union. Broad priorities for implementation are to have a free, democratic, strong, secure, prosperous and competitive Europe.

The Council also elected former Portuguese PM Antonio Costa as President of the EU Council for the period 01/12/2024 to 31/05/2027. It proposed to the European Parliament that it elect Ursula von der Leyen as President of the European Commission for a second five year term. This is expected to happen, in spite of the changes in the European Parliament's composition following the recent elections. Finally, it proposed that the new Commission President appoint the Estonian PM Kaja Kallas as High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security policy.

For its part, NATO announced that its next Secretary General would be Mark Rutte, the PM of the Netherlands.

In India, a new coalition government led again by PM Narendra Modi of the BJP was sworn in on June 9. There was no change in the new cabinet of the constituents of the Cabinet Committee on Security, namely, the ministers for defence, foreign affairs, home and finance.

In his very first visit abroad as the third-term PM of India, Mr. Modi attended the G7 Summit Outreach in Italy at the invitation of the host, the PM of Italy, on June 14. The other invitees included Algeria, Argentina, Brazil, Jordan, Kenya, Mauritania, Tunisia, Turkey and UAE. The agenda covered global challenges “disproportionately” affecting the Global South, and included Africa and the Mediterranean, AI and Energy issues.

The meeting enabled PM Modi to meet his G7 and outreach counterparts (including President Zelenskyy of Ukraine) soon after his reelection, and underline continuity in India’s foreign, economic and security policies. He pointed out that “It is our resolve to build a developed India by 2047. Our commitment is that no section of the society should be left behind in the country’s development journey. This is also important in the context of international cooperation. The countries of the Global South are bearing the brunt of global uncertainties and tensions. India has considered it its responsibility to place the priorities and concerns of the countries of the Global South on the world stage”.

Going forward, India will be judged by the extent to which it fulfils these commitments towards the developmental concerns and interests of the Global South.



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