



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



GLOBAL HORIZONS

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Cover Images:

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the 22nd ASEAN Summit 2025 meeting held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia virtually, on October 26, 2025. Source: [Narendra Modi](#)

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi receives the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom Keir Starmer in Mumbai, Maharashtra on October 9, 2025. Source: [Prime Minister of India](#)

President Donald Trump held a bilateral meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping, at Gimhae Air Force Base in Busan, South Korea on October 30, 2025. Source: [White House](#)

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by

Nalin Surie

Developments in October and early November suggested that the foreign policy game plan under President Trump is on track. From his perspective, he notched up a series of successes.

The United States was able to finally bring about a cease fire in Gaza; the beginning of the implementation of the so called 20 point, Trump plan. So far, the ceasefire seems to be holding and the exchange of hostages has happened. But, Israel continues to watch like a hawk and unilaterally intervenes, if it feels that Hamas is stepping out of line. It has also bombed parts of Southern Lebanon when it felt that its security interests were being compromised.

The ceasefire on October 10 was followed by a grand International Summit in Sharm Al Shaikh, Egypt on October 13, presided over by President Trump. However, representatives of Israel and Hamas did not attend. The summit was attended by 30 countries and 4 organisations, including the EU and UN. The attendees included the Presidents of Azerbaijan, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Indonesia, Palestine, Paraguay, Turkey and US; the Prime Ministers of Armenia, Canada, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iraq, Italy, Kuwait, Netherlands, Norway, Pakistan, Spain, and UK; the kings of Bahrain and Jordan, the Emir of Qatar; the vice president of UAE, the foreign minister of Saudi Arabia and Oman, India's Minister of State for External Affairs, and Japan's ambassador to Egypt.

The summit adopted a joint declaration, entitled the Trump Declaration for enduring Peace and Prosperity. The declaration, was signed by the Presidents of the US, Egypt, Turkey and the Emir of Qatar, presumably the guarantor states, and is long on principles which have in the past been more violated than adhered to. On the critical issue of Palestinian statehood, the declaration simply states that we understand that lasting peace will be one in which both Palestinians and Israel can prosper with their fundamental human rights protected, their security guaranteed and their dignity upheld.

Details of the other 20 points are evidently being worked out by the United States and its partners. The path ahead will be long and complicated and will require regular heavy lifting by the United States.

In so far as the conflict in the Middle East is concerned, there seems to be considerable continuity in the current US administration's policies when compared with those of the Biden administration. The situation in Gaza has to be seen in the broader context of US and Israeli actions in related geographies such as Lebanon, Syria, Iran, and Yemen. There appears to be a clear understanding on this with the Gulf nations, Egypt, and even Turkey, although with the latter, there is likelihood of friction over Syria in particular.

The United States, it is clear, has no intention to weaken its control over the Middle East. This is not surprising given the fact that the region is so important to it from several perspectives, including the challenge from China, and for the United States to maintain its pre-eminent super power status.

Later in the month, President Trump's focus shifted to south east and east Asia. He attended the East Asia Summit in Kuala Lumpur in late October and thereafter visited Japan and ROK, the latter both for a bilateral visit and technically for the APEC Summit, though he did not participate in the latter but instead used the opportunity to hold an important bilateral meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

The visit highlighted the importance of the Indo-Pacific in US foreign and security policies. The US ability to force finalising, during the visit, trade and investment agreements of advantage to it and, inter alia, on supply of rare earths and critical minerals with countries such as Japan, ROK, Vietnam, Malaysia, Cambodia, and Thailand, suggests that these countries clearly want the US to remain engaged in the Indo-Pacific. The China factor clearly looms large in these countries and this needs to be balanced. The interesting factor was that Trump's meeting with Xi happened after he had tied up trade and other arrangements with several US partners in ASEAN and East Asia including with the new Japanese Prime Minister Ms. Sanae Takaichi. The downside for him perhaps was the fact that the Trump-Putin summit planned to be held in Budapest on October 21 did not happen, reportedly on account of Russian intransigence on territorial issues etc. in Ukraine. Not surprising, though, since Putin would not want to have strengthened Trump's hand before his meeting with Xi.

The Trump-Xi meeting on October 30, the first in person meeting since Trump assumed the presidency of the US in January this year, represented a tactical thaw following the antagonistic buildup over trade, supply chain issues, and punitive reciprocal policies followed by both sides on trade and economic matters in recent

months. The spill over of the latter, axiomatically, impacted the security dimension, especially on Taiwan.

The one year trade/tariff truce announced at the end of the meeting between Presidents Xi and Trump on October 30, is an important development. There were, though, no winners. Implementation is happening but is the truce going to be sustainable? Will this help effectively reduce the underlying strategic, economic, technological and financial tensions between them? Was it a coincidence that Mr. Trump announced that the US would resume nuclear weapon tests just before his summit with Mr. Xi? Will it have implications for the US position on Russia on the Ukraine war? Mr. Trump reportedly sought Chinese assistance to end the war/bring about a cease fire. In effect, there are still too many imponderables in play and the need going forward is for intensive discussions to seek peaceful outcomes.

US efforts to strengthen its position in Asia continued in early November with the focus on strengthening collaboration with the countries of Central Asia. This is an important development and if sustained will no doubt elicit responses, from China in particular. Russia will also be watching these moves with care and concern. In early November, it was announced that Kazakhstan would join the Abraham Accords, a flagship Trump initiative from his first presidency, for the Middle East.

While the US was focused on Asia during the month, the war in Ukraine continued unabated with serious attacks by Russia on Ukrainian infrastructure, civilian targets etc. Death and destruction continued with little respite. Ukraine for its part, sustained its resistance and counter attacked. The situation on the ground changed but at a snail's pace, reportedly in favour of Russia. The need for a cease fire was never greater.

The continuity in US policy towards the Ukraine-Russia war has been disrupted by the policies of the new Trump administration. The reasons for this change and for President Trump's willingness to give Russia a long rope would suggest that the United States has no intention of giving up on Russia but would want to weaken the latter's partnership with China. The importance of Asia and Eurasia in current US foreign and security policies is perceptible.

Europe for its part continues to scramble to establish its own effective defence and security identity and defence manufacturing capabilities. Its relations with Russia are in disarray. It is not necessarily unified on all aspects of its support for Ukraine.

Closer to home, serious hostilities broke out between Pakistan and Afghanistan following the former's attacks on so called TTP bases in Afghanistan and subsequent military operations against each other; and some particularly intemperate statements by some Pakistani leaders. Mediation efforts were undertaken by Qatar and Turkey, but have not so far yielded satisfactory results to bring about restoration of peace between the two countries. To compound Pakistan's woes, the decision of the Taliban in Afghanistan to normalise relations with India has become a cause of concern. The irony of the situation could not be lost on Pakistan for it has consistently viewed Afghanistan as providing strategic depth for Pakistan against India. And the Taliban, their creation in part, are no longer an ally. Pakistan has perhaps forgotten the historical fact of the Afghan determination to defend their territorial integrity and independence.

With the RSF seizing control over El Fasher, the capital of North Darfur, the situation in Sudan got much worse. The UN Security Council was informed that RSF forces were raping women and girls and mutilating and killing people with impunity. Tens of thousands have reportedly fled. The UN Assistant Secretary General for Africa conveyed that the implications for Sudan and the wider region were profound. Further, the territorial scope of the conflict between the SAF the RSF was widening.

The response from the UN Security Council was merely the issue of a press statement by the Council President on October 31! The only hint that the Council could not pass a strong resolution on account of the involvement of important member states with the different factions was the urging of all member states to refrain from external interference which seeks to foment conflict and instability etc.

With a view to address the ongoing crisis in resource rich eastern DRC, France along with Togo organised a conference on October 30 in Paris, in support of peace and prosperity in the Great Lakes region. At the end of the conference, French President Macron announced that Euro 1.5 billion had been pledged in aid. Not all of this, though, is additional. At the conference, UNSG Guterres noted that the humanitarian situation there is amongst the worst in the world. This year alone, hundreds have been killed in armed violence and thousands injured. More than 21 million people need humanitarian aid, 5.7 million are displaced and over 27 million are food insecure. Essential services are collapsing and there are horrifying reports of forced recruitment, executions, and sexual and gender based violence. He noted that, in spite of the peace agreement facilitated by the United States and Qatar between the DRC and Rwanda, the situation remains extremely concerning.

For their part, the US led joint oversight committee for the peace agreement met on November 11, at which it recognised lagging progress and committed to redouble efforts to implement the Washington peace agreement. There are too many fingers in the pie and resolution will require much more determined efforts on the part of the US, EU and the UN.

The Communist Party of China concluded the very important Fourth Plenum of its Central Committee in Beijing on October 23. The principal focus was to adopt the recommendations for formulating the 15th Five Year Plan for economic and social development for the period 2026-2030. This was done. It was, however, recognised that China remains in a phase of development where strategic opportunities exist alongside risks and challenges and where uncertainties and unforeseen factors are rising. The confidence was expressed that China has the where with all to meet these. It was also recognised though that China must maintain strategic resolve and enhance its confidence of success.

In so far as the next five year plan is concerned, it was decided to pursue economic development as a central task with high-quality development as the main focus, reform and innovation as a fundamental driving force and meeting the people's ever growing needs for a better life as a fundamental goal.

Higher quality economic growth is to be promoted. Both development and security are to be ensured.

The following major objectives were set for the 15th five-year plan period: significant achievements in high-quality development; substantial improvements in scientific and technological self reliance and strength; fresh breakthroughs in further deepening reform comprehensively; notable culture and ethical progress across society; major new strides in advancing the Beautiful China Initiative (accelerate the green transition across the board) and further advances in strengthening the national security shield.

The focus will remain on the real economy. The share of manufacturing in the national economy shall be kept at an appropriate level and advanced manufacturing will be the backbone. China's strength in education, science and technology and human resources will be boosted. The strategy of expanding domestic demand will be pursued. Agriculture and rural modernisation will be accelerated, and China's regional economic layout shall be refined so as to promote coordinated regional development.

China shall continue to pursue its new three step strategy for modernising national defence and the armed forces and continue to enhance political loyalty in the military. This latter is a critical issue. Development of advanced combat capabilities would be speeded up.

On the question of Taiwan, the Plenum communique simply stated that China will promote the peaceful development of relations across the Taiwan Strait and advance the cause of national unification. No threat of military action was held out.

The importance of the world for China to achieve its ambitious future goals was also recognised at the Fourth Plenum. It has been decided that high standard opening up shall be promoted and new horizons created for mutually beneficial cooperation with other partners. China will continue to expand opening up at the institutional level, safeguard the multilateral trading system and promote broader international economy flows and pursue high-quality Belt and Road cooperation.

Asia will continue to be the first to witness China's future behaviour. Experience tells us that there is a significant gap between Chinese pronouncements on relations with other countries and their actions. China has in the past, and will most likely continue in the future, to seek one sided advantage of bilateral, regional and multilateral arrangements.

Syria under its new leader Al-Sharaa continued its external outreach while trying to manage significant internal pressures and continuing violence. The Syrian Democratic Forces have still to be incorporated into Syria's Defence and Interior ministries. The SDF seeks a secular and decentralised state that recognises Syria's diversity.

The external highlight during the month was Al-Sharaa's meeting with President Putin in Moscow on October 15. Russia, a firm supporter of the earlier Assad regime, is determined to retain influence in Syria and Al-Sharaa no doubt recognises the need to keep Russia in good humour. Additionally, the Syrian Foreign Minister visited Beirut in an effort to overcome obstacles with Lebanon and forge a new path that avoids the regular clashes of the past etc.

It was a busy month for Indian diplomacy. Visit by the Prime Minister of the UK was followed by those by the President of Mongolia and Prime Minister of Sri Lanka. The Foreign Minister of Canada also visited.

Prime Minister Modi attended the 22nd ASEAN-India Summit in Kuala Lumpur on 26 October 26, 2025 in remote mode. At the same time, India's National Statement at the 20th East Asia Summit in Kuala Lumpur on October 27 was delivered by the External Affairs Minister, S. Jaishankar.

UK PM Starmer's visit, on October 8-9, was centred around Mumbai. According to Foreign Secretary Misri, the visit gave both sides the opportunity to discuss deepening their strategic economic engagement to derive the full benefits from tariff reductions under the FTA signed earlier in the year. The two prime ministers announced new joint investments to boost the Climate Technology Startup Fund for supporting entrepreneurs in sectors of Climate Technology and AI. According to Misri, technology and innovation were the second major pillar of focus. Announcements were made with regard to the establishment of the India-UK Connectivity and Innovation Centre, the India-UK Joint Centre for AI, and a Critical Minerals Industry Guild to secure resilient supply chains and promote green technologies. The third important pillar addressed during the visit was education. So far nine leading UK universities have received approvals for opening their campuses in India. The fourth important pillar was collaboration in the defence sector. The two Prime Ministers also discussed cooperation in the maritime domain, including in the Indo Pacific.

Foreign Secretary Misri described the India-UK partnership as one "for progress and shared prosperity".

The state visit of the President of Mongolia, October 13-16, marked 10 years of the bilateral strategic partnership and 70 years of the establishment of Diplomatic relations this year. The two countries share a Buddhist heritage and a deep sense of mutual trust. A joint statement was issued on strengthening the strategic partnership. 10 MOUs were signed and 10 announcements made, including on Quick Impact Projects, grant of e-visas on gratis basis to Mongolian citizens and sending of the holy relics of Arhants Maudgalyayana and Sariputra to Mongolia in 2026. According to the official briefing, the visit yielded substantive outcomes, both symbolic and practical, and strengthened the bilateral strategic partnership.

The PM of Sri Lanka Dr. Harini Amarasuriya, visited from October 16-18, on what can be described as a semi-official visit to be felicitated at her alma mater, Hindu College in Delhi. She also addressed the NDTV World Summit and met with India's PM and External Affairs Minister. This was her first visit to India after assuming office. Her visit enabled further strengthening of the ties of friendship and solidarity between India and Sri Lanka.

The visit of the Foreign Minister of Canada, Anita Anand, on October 13, resulted in the issue of a Joint Statement on renewing momentum towards a stronger partnership. With this, it is the expectation that bilateral relations that had been seriously impacted by the negative approach of the former Trudeau administration would return to the course of normalcy. The intention is to restore stability in the relationship and to pursue a constructive and balanced partnership grounded in respect for each other's concerns and sensitivities, strong people to people ties and growing economic complementarities. There is enormous potential and opportunity to be utilised to mutual benefit between India and Canada. Hopefully, both sides will ensure that they put behind them the unfortunate recent phase in bilateral ties and this potential converts into concrete mutually beneficial projects, trade & investment exchanges and broad-based cooperation.

Prime Minister Modi's participation, albeit in virtual mode, in the 22nd ASEAN-India Summit on October 26, was important. He could not attend in person on account of unavoidable domestic obligations. In his address to the summit, he recalled the shared geography, deep historical ties and shared values that bind India and ASEAN. He noted that India and ASEAN are companions in the Global South; not only commercial partners, but also cultural partners. Their cooperation in education, tourism, science and technology, health, green energy, and cyber security is moving ahead. He emphasised also the need for an early review of the ASEAN-India FTA.

Modi noted that in this era of uncertainties, the India-ASEAN comprehensive strategic partnership is emerging as a robust foundation for global stability and development. He expressed support for the summit's theme of inclusivity and sustainability whether it is reflected in digital inclusion or ensuring food security and resilient supply chains amid current global challenges.

He announced a 10 point program of collaboration with ASEAN, including extended support for implementation of the comprehensive strategic partnership (2026-2030) and declaring 2026 as the "ASEAN-India Year of Maritime Cooperation".

India's National Statement at the 20th East Asia Summit was delivered by EAM Jaishankar, in person, on October 27. He pointed out, inter alia, that there are concerns regarding reliability of supply chains and access to markets; technology advancement has become very competitive; the quest for natural resources even more so; and energy trade increasingly constricted. Principles are applied

selectively even though the realities of technology, of competitiveness, of market size, digitisation, connectivity, of talent and mobility cannot be ignored.

Multipolarity, he pointed out, is not just here to stay but to grow.

The Gaza peace plan was welcomed. India sought an early end to the conflict in Ukraine. These conflicts have, inter alia, undermined food security, energy flows, and disrupted trade.

Jaishankar emphasised that India's right of self-defence against terrorism can never be compromised.

India's participation in the ASEAN and EAS meetings once again underlined the importance that is attached to India's relations with the region and the participating countries.

Notwithstanding the warm sentiments expressed from time to time by President Trump for Prime Minister Modi, bilateral relations with the US during the month continued to be challenged. At the same time, relations were not frozen and some normal dialogue processes continued. For instance, an important ten year framework for the US-India Major Defence Partnership was signed by the Defence Ministers of India and the US on October 31 in Kuala Lumpur, on the sidelines of the 12th ADMM-Plus meeting. The framework is intended to provide a unified vision and policy direction to deepen defence cooperation.

The ball for restoring normalcy in India-US relations remains firmly in the US court.

The churn in international relations continues and there is lack of clarity on final outcomes. Dangers and complexity persist. The greater, thus, the need to dialogue, maintain peace and address outstanding challenges facing the international community in an equitable and transparent manner.



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