



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:

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Prime Minister of Australia, Anthony Albanese, held the second Australia-India Annual Summit on the sidelines of the Group of 20 (G20) Summit in Rio de Janeiro, on November 19, 2024.

Source: [Narendra Modi](#)

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the President of the Council of Ministers of the Italian Republic, Giorgia Meloni, held talks during the G20 Summit in Rio de Janeiro, on November 18, 2024. Source: [Narendra Modi](#)

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi receiving the 2nd Highest Honor – Grand Commander of the Order of Nigeria - from Nigerian President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, in Abuja, Nigeria, on November 17, 2024. Source: [Narendra Modi](#)

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by

Nalin Surie

The decisive victory of Donald Trump in the US presidential election held on November 5, 2024, and the majorities obtained by the Republican Party in both the US Senate and House of Representatives was undoubtedly the high point during the month, as had been foreseen in the October issue of Global Horizons. The world has since watched with both great interest and trepidation the President-elect's pronouncements on personnel and policies.

November was a busy and complex month with developments centred around the APEC (Lima, November 15-16) and G20 (Rio de Janeiro, November 18-19) summits, COP29 in Baku, and developments over the war in Ukraine and the Israeli attacks in South Lebanon.

At the same time, the world continued to wait and watch the dying efforts of the Biden administration in trying to ensure that the major policy moves it had initiated in the international arena can be sustained. These were matched by the almost continuous string of Cabinet appointments and policy announcements of actions he intends to take by President elect Donald Trump. Willy-nilly, the international community has no option but to factor in the Trump pronouncements in its own preparatory processes and policy orientations going forward.

Closer to home, developments in Pakistan and Bangladesh were a cause of continuing concern, while the outcome of the elections in Sri Lanka pointed towards political stability.

In Europe, political developments in Romania (the unexpected political rise of the right) and Georgia (clashes between pro-Russian and pro-EU forces) suggest growing political uncertainty there.

The opponents of President Assad in Syria, encouraged perhaps by the weakening of Hezbollah and Iran, launched an offensive and reportedly now control Aleppo and intend to push on further. They are said to have the backing of Turkey, while Assad will expect continued support from Russia and Iran.

With the war in Ukraine not going in its favour, the constant Russian attacks on infrastructure, war weariness in Ukraine itself, the less than fulsome support from some of its allies (the rhetoric notwithstanding), and the possibility of a new approach by the incoming US administration, President Zelenskyy appeared to be reviewing his hardline stance on seeking a settlement with Russia. He now seems to be suggesting the freezing of the battle lines, with NATO guarantees of its original territorial integrity, as an interim arrangement. At the same time, the war rages on, and the Biden administration's effort is to ensure that US military supplies approved for Ukraine are supplied before the new President assumes office. Europe continues to reiterate its fulsome support for Ukraine and its territorial integrity, but it is not clear if this position will sustain if US policy is tweaked or changed. President Zelenskyy was not, for instance, enthused by the conversation between Chancellor Scholz of Germany and President Putin on November 15, 2024.

It remains to be seen when and in what form a dialogue to end the war in Ukraine will begin. The decision by the US and UK to allow their supplied medium range missiles to attack targets in Russian territory has enraged the Russian side, which has contended that this move widens the war and could allow Russia to use all means necessary, including nuclear weapons, to respond.

Any settlement, to be acceptable to Russia, will also have to address many of the sanctions imposed on Russia and its leadership since the war began.

The unrelenting Israeli military actions against Hezbollah and Lebanon were brought to an end as a result of US pressure and French efforts, and a 13 point agreement arrived at drawing on UNSC resolution 1701 of 2006. The ceasefire came into effect on November 27, and the deal hopes to establish permanent peace in the region. Israel will withdraw its forces from Lebanon over 60 days, while the Lebanese army will take control over the border with Israel and ensure that Hezbollah does not re-establish itself in southern Lebanon.

Israel's PM Netanyahu made it clear that any violation by Hezbollah or attempt to rearm, would be responded to by decisive force. He also explained that he had accepted the ceasefire deal to focus on addressing the threat from Iran, replenish Israeli military equipment and ammunition, and give troops a much needed rest. The ceasefire will also give Israel the opportunity to go after Hamas in Gaza without further distraction from the north.

Questions over the longevity and effectiveness of the ceasefire agreement with Lebanon are already being raised. Lebanon will have to bear the burden to make

it work. It remains to be seen whether Hezbollah has been weakened enough to allow that to happen.

From Israel's perspective, the decision of the ICC to issue warrants of arrest on November 21 against PM Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity in the Gaza conflict was obviously unpalatable. The US rejected the move, while Europe is divided on the issue.

The APEC summit was held in Lima, Peru and a Declaration issued on November 16 that reaffirmed that the Asia-Pacific remains the world's most dynamic and interconnected region. It reaffirmed support for the rules based multilateral system with the WTO at its core, and committed to working towards necessary WTO reform; to enhancing supply chain connectivity; to promoting trade facilitation; to advancing economic integration in a market driven manner; to recognising digital transformation and innovation as key drivers of economic growth; to bolstering competitiveness in the services sector; and to enhancing connectivity. These are unexceptionable objectives but will the current environment in the Asia-Pacific and anticipated changes in US policies permit effective implementation? The way forward may not be smooth.

A principal highlight of the APEC Summit this time was reportedly the prominence of Chinese President Xi Jinping. This, no doubt, since US President Biden leaves office in January 2025.

The Lima summit also provided for what was perhaps Biden's last face-to-face meeting as President with Xi Jinping. The White House readout described the meeting as a candid and constructive discussion. The Chinese foreign office readout made it clear why the discussion was candid: Xi's message was haughty and arrogant and addressed to incoming President Trump. Biden, it appears, was only the messenger.

Xi reportedly highlighted several redlines and paramount principles and stressed that these must not be challenged. These included: containing China is unwise, unacceptable and bound to fail; it is important to treat each other as equals; one side should not undermine the core interests of the other; China's four redlines which must not be challenged are the Taiwan question, democracy and human rights, China's path and system and China's development right. Xi added for good measure that major country competition should not be the underlying logic of our times; decoupling and supply chain disruption are not the solution, nor is the approach of "small yard, high fences".

Xi also dismissed the “irrational claim of the so-called cyber-attacks from China”.

The 19th G-20 summit held in Rio de Janeiro on November 18-19 was successful and built upon the work done at the Delhi summit last year. PM Modi attended. It was his eleventh summit in succession. During the summit he also held bilateral/pull-aside meetings with 17 Heads of State/Government, including those of the US, Indonesia, Portugal, Italy, Norway, UK, France, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Australia, Singapore, Spain, Egypt, ROK, the Secretary General of the UN, and the President of the EU Commission. The meetings, in particular with President Lula, the host, and PMs Albanese (Australia) and Meloni (Italy) were substantive.

With Australia, a Joint Statement covering six important segments of cooperation was issued. These are: economy / trade / investment, energy / s&t / space, defence & security, parliamentary cooperation, education / sports / p2p, and regional & multilateral cooperation. Both countries are making up for lost time.

With Italy, a ten-point bilateral Joint Strategic Action plan 2025-29 was adopted, covering: political dialogue, economic cooperation & investment, connectivity, science / technology / information technology, innovation and startups, space, energy transition, defence cooperation, security cooperation, migration and mobility, and culture. Both countries are making up for lost opportunities.

The Rio summit sent out a strong message on the fight against Hunger and Poverty for which a Global Alliance, to help expand access to food, was formed composed of 147 founding members including 81 nation states, the EU and the AU. It was noted that the world produces enough food to eradicate hunger.

The G20 Troika (India, Brazil and South Africa) also issued a Declaration on DPI, AI and Data for Governance.

The Rio Declaration reaffirms the role of the G20 as the premier forum for international economic cooperation; notes that progress towards only 17% of the SDG targets is on track; that there are good prospects of a soft landing of the global economy, but growth has been highly uneven across countries, and medium and long term growth prospects are below historical averages. There is thus need to collectively do much much more.

The Rio Declaration also reaffirms the commitment to support migrants, including migrant workers and refugees, in line with national policies ensuring full respect for human rights and their fundamental freedoms, regardless of their migration status. The importance of preventing irregular migration flows and smuggling of migrants is also recognised.

South Africa will host the 2025 G20 summit, and the US in 2026.

An interesting and relevant aside: Chinese President Xi Jinping combined his visit for the G20 summit with an important bilateral visit to Brazil. The latter is arguably China's most important partner in South America, and President Lula is well disposed towards China. The visit was successful. However, it is interesting to note that Brazil did not endorse Xi's signature concept of building a "community with a shared future for mankind". According to President Lula, he and Xi (instead) elevated their global strategic partnership to the level of a "China- Brazil community with a shared future for a more just world and more sustainable planet". Brazil did not sign up to the BRI either, but agreed to "establish synergies between Brazilian development strategies (four programmes were identified) and the BRI". For the latter purpose, joint task forces are to present priority projects within two months. Lula spelt it out: "we want to densify the value chain in our territory, as well as expand and diversify the agenda with our biggest trading partner".

India participated very actively as usual in COP29, held in Baku from November 11-22. The outcomes from India's perspective, as also of the majority of developing countries, were most disappointing. India's G20 Sherpa, in an article in the Economic Times on November 29 justifiably argued that "COP29 failed miserably to deliver meaningful finance for the developing world even though the developed world is hailing the agreement to establish the New Quantified Collective Goal of \$300 billion annually as a significant breakthrough. For developing countries, this figure is a glaring reminder of the inequities entrenched in international climate negotiations" and "a glaring failure" of the commitment made by developed countries in Paris in 2015 to provide the necessary financial resources for mitigation and adaptation efforts in the Global South.

As long as the developed world does not fully acknowledge its overwhelming liability for climate change and adequately funds mitigation and adaptation in the developing world, countries such as India will have to soldier on in the fight against climate change while also assisting the Global South to do so to the best of their abilities.

The situation in Sudan remains grim. On November 18, Russia vetoed a UNSC Resolution moved by Sierra Leone and the UK aimed at strengthening measures to protect civilians and increase humanitarian aid access in Sudan. The remaining 14 members of the Council supported the resolution. The Russian argument was that the UK draft has a false understanding of who bears responsibility for the protection of civilians and border and security control in the country, or who should decide on inviting foreign forces in Sudan, and with whom should UN officials cooperate to address existing problems. In the Russian view, this responsibility should rest solely with the government of Sudan. The Cold War persists!

On his way to Rio for the G20 summit, PM Modi visited Nigeria on November 17-18, and on his way back, he visited Guyana. Visits at this level were long due, especially to Guyana which was the first after 56 years. In Georgetown, PM Modi also participated in the second India-CARICOM Summit. Joint statements were issued with both CARICOM and Guyana, respectively on November 20 and 21.

The visit to Nigeria came after 17 years; PM Manmohan Singh had last visited in 2007 and the two countries had entered into a strategic partnership. PM Modi was conferred the award of Grand Commander of the Order of Niger by the President of Nigeria. He is reportedly the first foreign leader to be conferred this award since 1969.

The India-Nigeria bilateral partnership is growing on the trade and investment side. Indian investment is around \$27 billion and the diaspora 60,000. The two leaders agreed on the need to increase trade, investment and cooperation in the education, energy, health, culture and p2p domains. India has offered to assist in agriculture, transportation, affordable medicines and digital transformation.

With CARICOM, apart from cooperation on climate change, UN reform and the Global South, it was agreed to strengthen economic and commercial relations in energy and infrastructure, agriculture and food security, health and pharma, technology and innovation, and human resources and capacity building.

With Guyana, ten MOUs were entered into and cooperation is to be enhanced in energy, development of solar energy, defence and security, agriculture, urban infrastructure, health and human resources development.

Follow-up and intensified contact with countries like Nigeria, Guyana and members of CARICOM will be required for credibility and mutual benefit.

India's immediate neighbourhood came into focus for the wrong reasons in so far as Bangladesh is concerned. The atrocities and attacks against the minority Hindu community since the overthrow of Sheikh Hasina are not only continuing, but seem to be worsening. India's calls to the so-called interim administration in Dhaka to ensure the safety of minorities have so far fallen on deaf ears. The silence of many of the traditional supporters worldwide of the human rights of minorities to the plight of the Hindu minorities in Bangladesh is deafening. The Government of India is under increasing pressure to do, or be seen to be doing, something. Hopefully, better sense will prevail in Dhaka.

In Pakistan, the latest effort in late November by supporters of jailed leader Imran Khan to force his release by bringing life in Islamabad to a standstill appeared to have fizzled out. Continued civil strife in Pakistan is of no comfort to India, but until Pakistan manages its polity better, it appears this malaise will persist and India will need to guard against any untoward repercussions.

The elections to the Sri Lankan Parliament on November 14 have given a clear mandate to the newly elected President, Dissanayake. His gamble in calling early elections has paid off and the onus is now squarely on him and his party, the National People's Power Party, to provide Sri Lanka the good governance, equitable development and social welfare that people there seek. Integration of the minorities is also required. India will undoubtedly be more than willing to help in these endeavours.

It remains to be seen whether Christmas this year will bring any real cheer to the international community.



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