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Index

Mapping the way forward: on China and its neighbours.....	2
Prime Minister congratulates scientists and engineers for achieving another milestone.....	4
China's economic slowdown, its ripple effect.....	6
The rise and fall of a Russian warlord.....	9
Coup in Gabon: On the trends in Africa.....	12
The implications of the expansion of BRICS.....	14
India extends support to SCO Member Countries to enhance legal and judicial capabilities.....	17
Finding Seoul in the Indo-Pacific.....	20
Building consensus: The Hindu Editorial on the G-20 summit in Delhi, India's presidency.....	23
Restoring order: The Hindu Editorial on ASEAN and Myanmar.....	25
Eastern hedge: The Hindu Editorial on the need for India to stay closely engaged with ASEAN members.....	27
Prime Minister Narendra Modi meets President Biden.....	29
Joint Statement from India and the United States.....	31
21st EDITION INDIA FRANCE BILATERAL NAVAL EXERCISE 'VARUNA' – 2023.....	40
G20 Leaders' Summit begins in New Delhi today.....	42
G20 leaders endorses Goa Roadmap and 'Travel for LiFE' program to provide big boost to tourism sector.....	51
India-Brazil Joint Statement.....	54
India-France Joint Statement.....	59
India's moment: on the G-20 Summit outcomes.....	62
India-UK hold 12th Economic and Financial Dialogue (EFD) in New Delhi.....	64
The New Delhi Leaders' Declaration reaffirms the world's commitment to equitable and sustainable education - Shri Dharmendra Pradhan.....	69
India and Russia explore Northern Sea Route (NSR), Eastern Maritime Corridor (EMC) in an effort to widen maritime cooperation.....	73
4th G20 Sustainable Finance Working Group Meeting concludes in Varanasi with finalisation of the G20 Sustainable Finance Report, 2023.....	79
Bharat becomes the 13th country in world that can issue Internationally Accepted OIML (International Organization of Legal Metrology) Certificates.....	82
Assessing the outcomes of G20 summit.....	84
Sanctions for change: The Hindu Editorial on America's policy towards Iran.....	87
Serious allegations: On Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's charges against India.....	89
The 'mantras' that powered success at the G-20 summit.....	91
Three years of the Abraham Accords.....	94
Vietnam, key piece of America's Indo-Pacific puzzle.....	97
INDIAN NAVAL SHIPS, SUBMARINE & LRMP AIRCRAFT REACH SINGAPORE TO PARTICIPATE IN SIMBEX 23.....	100
Political red herring: The Hindu Editorial on the move to impeach Joe Biden.....	103
India and the great power contest in West Asia.....	105

MAPPING THE WAY FORWARD: ON CHINA AND ITS NEIGHBOURS

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September 01, 2023 12:20 am | Updated 12:20 am IST

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A week after the first conversation in many months between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and [Chinese President Xi Jinping](#), India and China appear nowhere near coming to any kind of understanding to repair their relations. On the contrary, [relations this week have faced yet another storm, with the two sides](#) clashing over China issuing a new map and reports on Thursday suggesting that Mr. Xi may skip the [G-20 Summit in New Delhi next week](#). The Chinese Foreign Ministry did not confirm those reports, but it also chose not to deny them. Events this week, meanwhile, served a reminder of the currently low levels of trust, with relations arguably at their lowest since the normalisation of ties in the 1980s. On August 28, [China issued what it called a "standard map" for 2023](#), which showed the entire State of Arunachal Pradesh, the Aksai Chin region and the South China Sea as Chinese territory, drawing protests from India, Malaysia and the Philippines. Beijing defended the map as "routine" and asked India to not "over-interpret" it, after the Ministry of External Affairs lodged a strong protest. While it may be true that the map made no new territorial claims and depicted borders as in previous Chinese maps, it is clear that the needless issuing of a new map, amid multiple, live territorial disputes, has only further complicated them. The responses of China's neighbours make that clear.

When India in 2019 issued a new map following the internal reorganisation of Jammu and Kashmir and creation of the new Union Territory of Ladakh, Beijing responded with strong statements and initiated discussions at the United Nations Security Council, even though that map, too, did not change India's external boundaries or territorial claims vis-à-vis China. In the view of some observers, China's increasingly aggressive mobilisation on the Line of Actual Control, leading to the on-going crisis that has plunged relations to this low level, was partly a response to India's reiteration of its claims to Aksai Chin in 2019. In the recent up-and-down history of India's ties with China, summit meetings have offered the platform for the two countries to dial down tensions by giving the two leaders the opportunity for high-level interventions, as was the case at the 2017 BRICS Summit following the Doklam stand-off. Regardless of whether Mr. Xi visits New Delhi next week, the prospects of a similar rapprochement remain dim. Repairing relations will require slowly rebuilding trust on a foundation of greater mutual sensitivity. Indeed, China would do well to show its neighbours the sensitivity that it demands of them, if it has any inclination towards repairing increasingly fraught relations.

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PRIME MINISTER CONGRATULATES SCIENTISTS AND ENGINEERS FOR ACHIEVING ANOTHER MILESTONE

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - China

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has congratulated scientists and engineers for achieving another milestone. The first largest indigenous 700 MWe Kakrapar Nuclear Power Plant Unit-3 in Gujarat started operations at full capacity.

In a X post, the Prime Minister said;

“India achieves another milestone.

The first largest indigenous 700 MWe Kakrapar Nuclear Power Plant Unit-3 in Gujarat starts operations at full capacity.

Congratulations to our scientists and engineers.”

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CHINA'S ECONOMIC SLOWDOWN, ITS RIPPLE EFFECT

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'China continues to add a significant number of the working age population as each new batch graduates. That is why unemployment numbers are soaring' | Photo Credit: AFP

The news about China's economic slowdown has caused mixed reactions. China, for long, had been worried about fears of a slowdown and a middle-income trap. Now, there are [fears of deflation](#) which may bring bad news for China and the rest of the world. Thus, understanding the causes and the magnitude of China's present-day economic challenges is essential.

Speaking at the National People's Congress (NPS) in 2007, then Premier Wen Jiabao had cautioned that "the biggest problem with China's economy is that the growth is unstable, unbalanced, uncoordinated, and unsustainable". It was expected that some form of course correction would be undertaken in the subsequent period. However, as the world experienced the global financial meltdown in 2008, China chose the strategy of investing in infrastructure that included railways, highways and the energy and construction sectors. It had swept the core problems of a lack of consumption, regional inequality, and lack of social security under the carpet in order to sustain double-digit growth rate. Why it did was simple — the domestic legitimacy of the leadership in China has depended on creating prosperity and making it available to a greater number of citizens, year on year. However, by the time Xi Jinping came to power, the steroids had run their course and the wean-off period was worse off. Chinese financial markets suffered from lack of regulatory oversight since loans to business were distributed on the basis of proximity, or the famous Chinese term Guanxi — the nodal networks based on factions, friendships and relationships.

When Mr. Xi says that China is the world's second largest economy, he is right. And he is also right when he says that China is the world's largest developing country. During the 19th party congress of the Chinese Communist Party in 2017, Mr. Xi announced that from here on, the party would focus on quality-of-life issues as part of its growth strategy. Within this announcement there was a recognition that people's expectations of the state had changed; but there was also an acceptance that the era of growth driven by exports, infrastructure spending and big-ticket investments was over. China termed this an era of "new normal" where the country had to overcome the two-and-half-decade-long habit of enjoying more than 10% growth. The higher growth had translated into more jobs and greater disposable income. Now, with lower than usual rates, new jobs were hard to come by. China continues to add a significant number of the working age population as each new batch graduates. That is why unemployment numbers are soaring. It is also why the government is advising students to delay their graduation and to do extra courses.

During the first term of Mr. Xi (2012-17), exports growth rates had cooled dramatically, a hint that China's labour costs were rising due to wage increase and social security investments. This was the consequence of the Foxconn suicides issue, which was seen as a political embarrassment and a social challenge. On the other hand, bad investments and easy credit availability have meant that sectors such as housing, energy, and construction have got into the bad habit of overproducing far beyond the immediate projected demand. As a consequence, these sectors have been stuck with inventory without any demand. This has happened despite the early success of the supply side reforms which shut down many underperforming companies and regulated the commodities markets.

No other country has as much a political economy as China does. China's ability to overcome its economic challenges today also has to be a political choice. In December 2020, Mr. Xi used the term "Disorderly expansion of capital"; while this term was not elaborated upon much either by Mr. Xi or by others, its timing of having appeared within a few weeks of the withdrawal of the Ant Group IPO was seen to be significant. Most scholars of China have doubted the Chinese economy's ability to be truly innovative while the party wants to control what the capitalists can and cannot do. Having made the promise of allowing the markets play a greater role in the allocation of resources during the third plenum of the 18th Central Committee in 2013, Mr. Xi has rolled back many of the promises made then. It was hoped then that political interventions in loans and investment decisions would reduce; the government did intervene when the stock markets tumbled in 2015, forcing banks to acquire stakes in slow moving stocks. It has tightened the convertibility of the RMB.

The Chinese, who save more than 50% of their income did not like that their money was going to be locked in longer because of speculation by a few others, leading to a few protests. China has initiated several social security measures to counter this tendency of saving a huge proportion of income but progress has been really slow. Also, policies such as "Common Prosperity" (aimed at sharing the fruits of the progress better), and "Dual Circulation" (aimed at increasing domestic consumption and competitiveness of the domestic markets and cutting down inter-provincial red tape) have not succeeded to the level the leadership would have liked.

There is a perception that China's serious slowdown began in 2015 but was held in control by government spending on projects such as urbanisation. The trade war between the United States and China and policies such as de-risking and China plus one (that seeks alternate production destinations for investments) accelerated the process. Finally, China's zero-COVID policy may be considered as the last straw as far as the economy is concerned. Recent data from the second quarter of the year suggest that people and companies have become even more cash conscious and are holding onto their cash. It has been hard to come out of the COVID-19 experience — food supplies ran out even in the urban areas in some parts of the country. For investors, there is a fear of an even bigger slump, thus making them wait for new bottom out levels.

The state-owned enterprises or the SoEs, have been another problem for the political leadership. Their assured contracts and political networks mean that they get away by political bargain and without changing their methods of operation. They also provide social security to several hundred thousand working and retired workers which means that touching them is a politically sensitive issue.

The Evergrande crisis (2020–2023) exposed China's housing bubble. It was also a symptom of misregulation and path-dependency which may be considered as symptomatic of the ills that affect the Chinese economy in general. The fact that path-dependency may cause a crash landing has been feared for nearly a decade, and the leadership is also aware of it. The middle income trap has been another long-term concern as well as China's desire to climb up the value

chain — that is, not just making things in China but also designing them — may be a distant dream. It may also affect Mr. Xi's national targets for 2035 and 2049.

Even then, China's economy growing at an estimated rate of 5% would mean adding more value when compared to India's projected growth rate of 6.1% for 2023 given the size difference. For India, it may mean a cooling off of the prices of crude oil and other commodities such as cement and steel for which China has been a gigantic market. Whether economic instability would change China's perception of its rise and its risk appetite on the border is another important issue to watch.

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THE RISE AND FALL OF A RUSSIAN WARLORD

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September 04, 2023 12:08 am | Updated 01:23 am IST

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At a memorial, in Moscow | Photo Credit: AFP

On June 24 this year, [Yevgeny Prigozhin](#), the leader of the Russian private military company, the [Wagner Group](#), marched his troops to within 200 kilometres of Moscow, [protesting against the Russian Defence Ministry](#). This was the most noteworthy challenge to the regime of Russian President Vladimir Putin ever since he took over power in 1999. The mutiny ended within a day with the intervention of Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko. The Wagner Group was exiled to Belarus in exchange for criminal immunity.

Two months later, Russian officials confirmed that Prigozhin had died in a plane crash near Moscow along with other top officials of Wagner, that included Dmitry Utkin, the co-founder of the group and a former military intelligence officer who was in charge of Wagner's operations, and Valery Chekalov, its security chief. Speculation is rife within Russia and abroad about who is responsible for the death of the popular leader (Prigozhin was often photographed with soldiers on the battlefield in sharp contrast to top officials in the Russian Defence Ministry). While the West has put the blame on Mr. Putin, the Kremlin has denied any responsibility and has launched an investigation.

Regardless of the results, Prigozhin's death would be welcomed by some and cause uneasiness in others in Russia. It strengthens Mr. Putin's hands, bolstering his image as a strong leader; his compromise with Prigozhin, whom he had described as a "traitor" after the mutiny had led to perceptions of him being weak and not in control. However, deeply aware of Prigozhin's popularity, Mr. Putin chose his words of condolence carefully: he hailed Prigozhin as a "talented businessman" who had "made some serious mistakes in his life". Mr. Putin is facing an election in March 2024 and he would be wary of hurting the sentiments of his electorate. In fact, there was speculation that Prigozhin himself had political ambitions.

His death would have come as a relief to the Russian Defence Minister, Sergei Shoigu and General Valery Gerasimov, chief of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces and First Deputy Minister of Defence, both of whom were criticised by Prigozhin for their conduct of the war and their poor leadership skills. Again, just before the plane crash, their rival, General Sergei Surovikin — he was a friend of Prigozhin's and was being investigated for having advance information about the Wagner mutiny — was removed from his post as the head of Russian aerospace force. Gen. Surokovin, or General Armageddon as he was known, was briefly in charge of Russian military operations in Ukraine, between October 2022 and January

2023. Therefore, Prigozhin's passing along with Surokovin's demotion is a shot in the arm for the the two men, who are valued by Mr. Putin for their loyalty.

Many ordinary Russian citizens saw Prigozhin as a patriot for his exploits in Ukraine, particularly because of Wagner's role in capturing Bakhmut; several makeshift memorials came up quickly across the country for them to mourn. The nationalists, who support the invasion of Ukraine but feel the war is not going as well as expected and want the war to be waged more aggressively, had cheered Prigozhin as a national hero for criticising the military, and will understandably grieve for him. The elites and the oligarchs, some of whom had sympathy for Prigozhin's march and are feeling the adverse impact of western sanctions, will see his death as another reminder of the regime's iron-clad hold on the state. For the liberals, many of whom are in prison, the death only reinforces their perceptions about the regime's habit of punishing those who oppose it.

Prigozhin's death will have little impact on the war in Ukraine because the Wagner group had pulled out of Ukraine a few weeks ago. Moreover, many members of the group have signed contracts with the Russian Defence Ministry. However, his death could affect the group itself because its top leadership has been wiped out now and the group does not have a clear leadership structure like traditional militaries do. So, it is uncertain who will take over.

However, it is possible that Mr. Putin will get someone more subservient to him to lead the group and strengthen his hold on it or even bring the group under the Defence Ministry or an intelligence agency. But this might not go down well with the Wagner mercenaries, many of whom are deeply loyal to Prigozhin. The Wagner Group will probably continue as a Russian proxy force in West Asia and Africa as it is an instrument of Russian influence abroad and has billions of dollars in assets in Africa. But in Africa, as the Wagner Group recoups from Prigozhin's death, there will be some respite for the French and the Americans, who have been fighting Russia's renewed influence in the region because of Wagner. The message to the rest of the world is that the regime in Russia remains stable despite the mutiny, despite Prigozhin's death and despite the sanctions.

Explained | [Understanding the Wagner mutiny](#)

Overall, therefore, Prigozhin's death will have little impact on Russian domestic politics or on Mr. Putin's influence. In fact, his death might enable Mr. Putin to exert greater control over the activities of the Wagner group. Otherwise, life will go on as usual in Russia. As will the protracted war in Ukraine.

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COUP IN GABON: ON THE TRENDS IN AFRICA

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September 06, 2023 12:10 am | Updated 12:54 am IST

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In July, when the pro-western regime of [President Mohamed Bazoum](#) was toppled in [Niger in a military coup](#), regional powers and the West took a tough position against the putschists — an ultimatum to restore democracy in the West African country. Several countries in Africa, including Sudan, Mali, Burkina Faso and Guinea, have witnessed coups in recent months and the ease with which the generals have seized power in all these countries has set a dangerous trend across the continent. But the new rulers of Niger dismissed the western ultimatum. Within a month, another regime in Africa was toppled — this time, resource-rich Gabon. In the case of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, all affected by Islamist militancy, the military promised better security and economic opportunities and managed to consolidate power rather quickly. In Gabon, the Republican Guard, a unit of the armed forces whose job was to protect the President, moved to seize power after the incumbent, Ali Bongo, was declared the winner of a disputed election. Mr. Bongo, who came to power in 2009, was a close French ally like his father Omar Bongo, who ruled the country for nearly 42 years. Ali Bongo's attempts to preserve the oil-rich country's reserve forests, which cover 90% of Gabon, earned him international applause, but at home, he never managed to fill his father's shoes.

Gabon, an OPEC member, is one of the richest countries of Africa in terms of per-capita income. Yet, over a third of its 2.4 million people live in poverty, and 40% of those between 15 and 24 years are unemployed, according to the World Bank. When Omar Bongo was in power, the regime got French protection in return for business favours. But Ali Bongo's regime came under systemic pressure, with the Opposition demanding free and fair elections and economic equity. The military, probably emboldened by the successful coups elsewhere in the continent, seized on public resentment. Following the coup announcement, thousands were in the streets of Libreville celebrating. Whether the putschists had public support or not, these coups speak of two major trends in Africa. First, traditional regimes are coming under increased pressure from within and a generation of risk-taking generals are making swift moves to grab power. This could turn out to be a transborder threat to elections, regime stability and order. Second, the coups also reflect the continent's changing geopolitical dynamics. All these countries were former French colonies. In Mali and Burkina Faso, the Russians have expanded their reach after the coup. Gabon has already replaced France with China as its most important trading partner. And the western calls upon the putschists to go back to the barracks have predictably fallen on deaf ears.

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THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE EXPANSION OF BRICS

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'BRICS challenges the West-led world order' | Photo Credit: AP

On August 24, the 15th BRICS summit in Johannesburg announced that the five-member grouping (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) had invited six new members — Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) from West Asia; Egypt and Ethiopia from Africa, and Argentina from Latin America. It was reported that 40 countries have shown interest in BRICS' membership, with 22 having submitted formal applications. From 2009, BRICS has met annually at summit level, and is backed by several ministerial and expert conclaves. It has spawned two major institutions – the New Development Bank (NBD) to provide development assistance and the Contingent Reserve Arrangement that supports countries facing short-term balance-of-payments pressures. The NBD has already financed 96 projects valued at \$33 billion.

BRICS members have been united in their dissatisfaction with the West-dominated international institutions that had emerged after the Second World War — the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the United Nations and its various bodies, particularly the Security Council, and more recently, the World Trade Organization. At Johannesburg, the UN Secretary General António Guterres described them as reflecting “yesterday's world”. The United States has led the western alliance in both the political and economic areas.

BRICS challenges this West-led world order: it promotes intra-BRICS economic and political cooperation, builds institutions outside western control, and agitates robustly for wide-ranging reforms to accommodate the presence and interests of emerging economies. The Johannesburg Declaration categorically asserts that the members' “strategic partnership” will be directed at achieving “a more representative, fairer international order”. The recent expansion of BRICS's membership has shaped a grouping that is aligned in terms of global perceptions and interests, and collectively provides considerable economic clout to the enlarged conclave. With the proposed expansion, BRICS will have 46% of world population, while its share of the global GDP will go from 31.5% in PPP terms to 37%, far ahead of the GDP of 30.7% of the G-7. The five core members account for 23% of global exports and 19% of global imports; with the new members, these figures will be boosted by 3.7% and 3%, respectively. The major impact will be on the energy sector: out of global oil production of about 90 million barrels per day (mbd) in 2022, the earlier five BRICS members had accounted for 20% of global output; this will go to 42%.

The new BRICS members will bring considerable geo-strategic value to the grouping. Those

from West Asia are already closely tied to BRICS members: 35% of Saudi oil production goes to China and India; Russia, already a major oil supplier to China and India, is now looking at Brazil as a market. Despite sanctions by the United States, Iran has increased oil production from a low of 400,000 barrels per day in the Trump period to 2.2 mbd in August this year, most of it going to China. Egypt and Ethiopia are an important presence in the strategically important Horn of Africa and the Red Sea, while Argentina is the second largest economy in Latin America.

Rather than look at the issues being raised at BRICS' summits and other meetings, western commentators have disparaged the grouping as having no shared vision and being a "talk-shop" with no worthwhile achievements. These criticisms have little substance. BRICS leaders have met over 15 years and every time have overcome their internal divisions and competitions to issue a consensual "Declaration". Over the years, the declarations have expanded in content, focused on specific deliverables and have steadily expanded their areas of interest.

In the Johannesburg Declaration, while several paragraphs call for wide-ranging reforms in international organisations, the bulk of the document focuses on intra-BRICS cooperation and outreach to other developing countries. Thus, members have agreed to "encouraging the use of local currencies in internal trade and financial transactions" between BRICS and other trading partners.

The Declaration also reflects the shared views of its members on several political issues — the centrality of the United Nations; the problems in West Asia, i.e., Syria, Yemen, Palestine, the Arab peace Initiative, and the Iran nuclear agreement; the war in Ukraine and global terror.

The new BRICS members, particularly those from West Asia, naturally fit into this political and economic framework. From 2020, both Saudi Arabia and the UAE have shrugged off the U.S. yoke and shaped independent foreign policy paths for themselves. Saudi Arabia has pursued de-escalation and dialogue, ending the Qatar blockade in January 2021, engaging with Turkey, and opening interactions with Iran from April 2021. These regional engagements culminated in the China-brokered accord with Iran in March this year.

The UAE has also normalised ties with Iran and is focusing on expanding its maritime footprint across the Gulf, the Gulf of Aden, the Red Sea and the Horn of Africa. Iran's entry into BRICS is propitious in that, besides its role in the energy sector, it opens up opportunities for accelerated regional economic cooperation, besides the revival of the moribund north-south connectivity projects through the Chabahar port with which India is associated.

While western writers continue to harp on the emerging global binary divide and the "new cold war", India and other BRICS members reject this short-sighted view and insist on asserting their strategic autonomy in a multipolar world order, with member-nations demanding that their voices be heard and their interests respected. It is not surprising, then, that a recent media report described the Johannesburg summit as a "turning point in modern history".

Talmiz Ahmad is a former Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Oman and the United Arab Emirates

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INDIA EXTENDS SUPPORT TO SCO MEMBER COUNTRIES TO ENHANCE LEGAL AND JUDICIAL CAPABILITIES

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: International Treaties & Agreements, and other important organizations

The 10th meeting of the Ministers of Law and Justice of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) countries was held today via video conferencing. Speaking on the occasion, Minister of State for Law and Justice Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal emphasised on India's commitment to the SCO charter and its principles of mutual trust, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity and mutual benefit. The Minister said this commitment is based on Prime Minister of India's vision that "India has emerged as Viswa Mitra (Universal friend) and India's greatest strength is trust, our trust in each individual, trust of each individual in government, trust of each one in a bright future for the nation, and world's faith in India as well. This trust is for our policies and practices."

The Minister highlighted how India has embarked on a path of Legal reforms- the cornerstone of which is simplification of laws and reducing the piled-up load of old laws and enactments which are no longer in use with the passage of time and thus have become obsolete. 1486 such laws have already been repealed and more such archaic laws are being identified. This would go a long way in improving the lives and living for citizens besides easing the doing of business in India. As part of this, the government is also actively promoting 'Alternative Dispute Resolution' and encouraging the citizens to adopt 'mediation' as a mainstay for conflict and dispute resolution.

The Minister also said that the body of law and legal process in a country need to be in sync with the changing realities of any society. Keeping this in view, the government of India has taken steps towards making some epoch-making changes in its legal and judicial systems.

The Minister informed the members about the recent initiatives taken by the Government to usher in reforms in the criminal justice system by contemporizing those laws relating to criminal jurisprudence which have their origin in the colonial era, like the Indian Penal Code(1860), Indian Evidence Act (1872) and Criminal Procedure Code (1898) and replacing them with laws which while drawing inspiration from fountain of our traditional and ancient legal knowledge are tuned to the needs and realities of modern and vibrant India.

Reaffirming India's deepest concern and commitment to digital data protection, the Minister urged the member countries to dedicate themselves to the same and resolve to work towards protection of digital data and development of a safe and secure digital ecosystem worldwide.

SCO is an intergovernmental organisation founded in Shanghai in June 2001. Since its inception, the SCO has mainly focused on regional security issues, its fight against regional terrorism, ethnic separatism and religious extremism. To date, the SCO's priorities also include regional development.

The 10th meeting of the SCO Justice Ministers began in a cordial atmosphere with reading out of a message from President Xi Jinping of the People's Republic of China.

President Xi, in his message, appealed to the members to work with a spirit of cooperation and understanding so as to realise the objectives and visions of the SCO and optimise its

contribution towards the holistic development of the region.

A joint statement was signed by all the Ministers of Justice of the SCO Member countries that emphasised on the cooperation in the field of law and justice achieved in the last 22 years among the Member countries. Emphasising the mutual understanding reached on the development of the legal systems of the SCO member states, taking into account the agreements and tasks envisaged in the SCO development strategy 2025, the Ministers of Law and Justice of the SCO Member States through the Joint Statement declared the following:

It was decided to hold the next meeting of SCO Ministers for Law and Justice in the Republic of Kazakhstan in 2024.

SS/AKS

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FINDING SEOUL IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

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September 08, 2023 12:08 am | Updated 12:47 am IST

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(From left) South Korea's President Yoon Suk Yeol, U.S. President Joe Biden and Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida at Camp David | Photo Credit: AP

The [historic Camp David summit](#) in August this year among the leaders of the United States, Japan, and the Republic of Korea (ROK) marks the new beginning of the strategic partnership among the three traditional allies. As India and ROK commemorate the 50th year of their diplomatic relations, the Camp David summit, and a refreshingly new strategic thinking in Seoul, offer a unique opportunity for New Delhi to reimagine its relations with South Korea especially in the Indo-Pacific. Along with Japan and the U.S., ROK has the potential to emerge as a key piece in India's Indo-pacific strategy. It is however important to view the prospects of the India-ROK strategic partnership in the broader context of the recent geopolitical developments in the East Asian region. Here is an outline of some of them.

One of the most significant developments in the region has been the South Korea-Japan-U.S. trilateral meeting in the U.S. or the Camp David summit last month. For one, it indicates a much-needed repair in Seoul-Tokyo relations. This positive bilateral development is the function of a recognition of the changing regional security environment by the three countries. This could, along with [AUKUS \(the U.S, the United Kingdom, Australia\)](#), the [Quad \(India, Japan, Australia, the U.S.\)](#), or CHIP 4 Alliance (the U.S., Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea) lead to a strengthened U.S.-led alliance structure — though dispersed to reflect the multipolar urges of the contemporary international system — in East Asia.

Second, the summit has the potential to set South Korea on a new strategic direction in the Indo-Pacific with improved relations with Tokyo, more synergy with the American view on China, and enhanced engagement of the Indo-Pacific.

Third, this also marks a strategic shift in Seoul's traditional approach of not offending China at any cost. The previous government, for instance, was far too shy of articulating the China challenge given its potential strategic fallouts and Seoul's economic proximity to Beijing (around 20% of its total exports go to China). The new thinking appears to indicate the view that trade dependence on China does not mean passivity towards a growing Chinese military presence in the region.

Fourth, there is today a keen desire in ROK to join the Quad grouping. Seoul has wanted it for some time, but it was unsure whether Tokyo would support its bid given lingering bitterness from

historical memories. The Camp David summit may have changed that and it is possible that South Korea might apply for a membership in a Quad Plus next year.

Finally, there is a new foreign policy enthusiasm in Seoul today. President Yoon Suk Yeol has declared that the main goal of his foreign policy would be to make South Korea a “global pivotal state”. The country’s engagement of the U.S. and Japan, support to Ukraine, articulation of the China challenge and a desire to play a bigger role in the Indo-Pacific underline this new vision.

This geopolitical context provides a unique opportunity for India and ROK to enhance their strategic partnership in the 50th year of their diplomatic relationship. There are a number of reasons why ROK is a natural partner for India in the Indo-Pacific. For one, ROK’s location in the Indo-Pacific, close to China, while being a U.S. ally provides India with a like-minded strategic partner. Second, for both ROK and India, the rise of China and its unilateral attempts at reordering the Asian security architecture are of great concern even if the two sides hesitate in clearly articulating the China threat. Third, for India, Seoul can be an important regional partner at a time when India is closer to the U.S. than ever before in its history, and is concerned about Chinese intentions and power like never before in history.

There are several areas where the two countries could focus on in order to strengthen their relationship. At the political and diplomatic levels, the two sides should consider establishing an annual summit at the level of the Foreign Ministers, and a 2+2 format dialogue (India currently has 2+2 dialogues with the U.S., Japan, Australia and Russia). The partnership could also benefit from reciprocal visits by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Mr. Yoon to each other’s country. Perhaps the two sides could be even more ambitious and explore the possibility of negotiating a South Korea-Japan-India-U.S. initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET), along the lines of the recently-concluded India-U.S. iCET. Defence is another area where they could strengthen their relationship. South Korea’s willingness and ability to cater to India’s defence needs within the ambit of India’s ‘Make in India’ programme must be utilised. The K9 Vajra, a 155 mm self-propelled howitzer, built by L&T with technology from South Korea’s Hanwha Defense is an example in this regard. South Korean-built K2 Black Panther tanks could also be co-produced in India for the Indian Army or third countries.

Another area of collaboration still could be in the context of Korean-built civilian nuclear reactors. Even after the conclusion of the India-U.S. civil nuclear deal, India-International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards agreement and the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) waiver, New Delhi has not been able to import any nuclear reactors due to the difficulties foreign suppliers have with India’s nuclear liability law. Given India’s growing need for clean energy and Seoul’s remarkable track record in supplying cheaper and faster nuclear reactors to the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and central European states, New Delhi could consider purchasing Korean-built reactors so as to expand the share of nuclear energy in the country’s energy basket — if indeed Seoul is open to working within the Indian liability law and the subsequent assurances given by the Indian government.

ROK, with a new strategic outlook, and along with the U.S., Japan and Australia, is uniquely placed to help India advance its interests in the Indo-Pacific.

Happymon Jacob teaches at the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, and is the founder of the Council for Strategic and Defense Research

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BUILDING CONSENSUS: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON THE G-20 SUMMIT IN DELHI, INDIA'S PRESIDENCY

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: G20

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September 08, 2023 12:20 am | Updated 09:25 am IST

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India's big moment as [host of the G-20 Summit](#) will arrive this weekend, as world leaders gather in New Delhi for the main event marking the year of its presidency. The group is seen as a more egalitarian version of the G-7 as it includes the leadership of the developing world, and is now the "pre-eminent forum for global economic cooperation". At the start of its presidency last December, it was clear that India would be hamstrung by several events. The global economic headwinds, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, meant a challenging environment for New Delhi in ensuring that all countries were willing to contribute resources for imperatives such as climate finance, and investment in health and poverty alleviation. The Ukraine conflict and the sanctions against Russia were next, practically splitting the G-20 down the middle. This made forging a joint statement even last year difficult. But Indonesian President Joko Widodo was able to ensure a tenuous consensus by travelling to Moscow and Kyiv and enlisting India's support. India's presidency also came amidst continuing bilateral tensions with China over its border moves. This has become an additional problem for India's G-20 Sherpa team as China has played spoiler at many a meeting. The government's decision to hold the G-20 summit two months early, instead of in November, the practice, has given officials less time to ensure that the Leaders' declaration is ready; some of the heavy lifting on building consensus will now be left to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to handle.

In the face of such odds, India's efforts to ensure the vitality of the G-20 process have been valiant and also a well-thought-out one. Mr. Modi made it clear from the beginning that India would not take sides in the Ukraine conflict, and instead focused on issues affecting the global south, holding a summit of developing countries, putting issues of food, fertilizer and energy security, multilateral reform and global governance above geopolitical issues. India even hosted the Voice of Global South Summit. Mr. Modi also championed the induction of the African Union into the G-20, which will be a feather in India's cap if it goes through. Internally, the Indian G-20 presidency has been marked by a distinct effort to "democratise" the process by holding 220 meetings across 60 Indian cities, which, though colossally expensive, has ensured a showcasing of India's diversity. India's G-20 moment is already memorable, but the days ahead will be crucial in cementing its legacy. That legacy hinges on ensuring a truce among its fractious members, that allows for a consensus over the vision of "One Earth, One Family, One Future" in the next few days.

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RESTORING ORDER: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON ASEAN AND MYANMAR

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September 08, 2023 12:10 am | Updated 12:10 am IST

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The 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has finally shown the courage to call out the junta in Myanmar for the ongoing violence and its failure in implementing the Five-Point Consensus that was reached between the two sides, aimed at addressing the post-coup crisis in the country. Myanmar has seen a security and economic decline ever since the military ousted the democratically elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in February 2021. Under the ASEAN plan, reached in April 2021, the junta had promised to stop the violence and start inclusive political dialogue, but has continued violating the consensus. ASEAN kept pushing the generals, but stopped short of antagonising them. However, the latest statement from ASEAN, issued after its annual summit in Jakarta, suggests a hardening of its stand. It has “strongly condemned” the continued acts of violence, and directly urged the “armed forces in particular and all related parties concerned... to ... stop targeted attacks on civilians”. The grouping has also decided to deny Myanmar the bloc’s chairmanship, which it was to assume in 2026. The Philippines will now take over, as the chairmanship goes in alphabetical order, and Myanmar will have a long wait ahead.

The military, unlike earlier when it saw opposition from democratic forces, is now facing enhanced pressure following the civil war. The political opposition has formed a National Unity Government (NUG) with a military wing that has joined hands with some ethnic separatist groups, thus posing a challenge to the junta. The military is still in control of most of the population centres, but at a huge cost. A recent report by United Nations investigators has said that the military regime has been committing war crimes, that include mass executions and sexual violence. More than two years of conflict have left about 18 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, and displaced two million. The military has also killed thousands in indiscriminate attacks on rebels and civilians. But despite this disproportionate use of violence, the regime has been unable to stifle dissent. In August, the military drew condemnation from the UN Security Council over “unrelenting violence”. Now, with the ASEAN move, it is evident that the regime stands isolated, while the domestic situation remains untenable. It is not clear whether a tough stance by ASEAN will have any immediate meaningful impact on the regime’s behaviour. But the bloc, which has leverage over the country, should continue to push the generals to end the violence and start talks. The only solution to the multiple crises Myanmar is facing is the restoration of a legitimate, responsible and responsive regime.

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EASTERN HEDGE: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON THE NEED FOR INDIA TO STAY CLOSELY ENGAGED WITH ASEAN MEMBERS

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: South-East Asia, ASEAN and India

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September 09, 2023 12:20 am | Updated 08:40 am IST

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi's whistle-stop summit sojourn to the Indonesian capital of Jakarta earlier this week was primarily aimed at deepening India's engagement with the economically significant grouping of 10 Southeast Asian nations. Coming on the eve of India's hosting of the [G-20 summit in New Delhi](#) as the current holder of the bloc's presidency, [Mr. Modi's presence at the annual ASEAN-India summit](#) was an opportunity to cement traditional ties with the neighbouring Asian economies at a time of heightened global trade uncertainty. As the trade facilitation body UNCTAD noted in its [June 21 'Global Trade Update'](#), the 'outlook for global trade in the second half of 2023 is pessimistic as negative factors' including downgraded world economic forecasts, persistent inflation, financial vulnerabilities and geopolitical tensions dominate. Against this backdrop, the joint leaders' statement on ['Strengthening Food Security and Nutrition in Response to Crises'](#) at the ASEAN-India summit underscores the shared vulnerability the region perceives in the face of the ongoing heightened global food insecurity, which has been exacerbated by the war in Ukraine, climate change and national policy responses to inflationary pressures. India's recent curbs on export of rice have triggered some alarm, with the prices of the regional staple reportedly nearing a 15-year high. The onset of an El Niño, which is historically associated with disruptive weather events, queers the ground further, and ASEAN leaders are justifiably wary.

Mr. Modi's pitch, laying stress on the need for a rules-based post-COVID-19 world order and a free and open Indo-Pacific, was clearly directed at members among the Asian bloc who are increasingly disquieted by China's recent muscle flexing and claims over the South China Sea. The Prime Minister's not-so-veiled message to the ASEAN members is that India is a more reliable long-term strategic and economic partner, which has no territorial ambitions that could discomfit them. India also sought to position itself as a voice to amplify the concerns of the Global South, stressing that it would be mutually beneficial for all. For India, grappling as it is with an underwhelming free trade agreement (FTA) with the 10-nation grouping, trade ties with the eastern economies have grown in volume but asymmetrically, with imports far outpacing the country's exports. The widening trade deficit and the perception that Chinese goods are taking advantage of lower tariffs under the FTA to find their way into the Indian market, have among other factors precipitated a review of the pact that is likely to be completed in 2025. In the meantime, India needs to stay closely engaged with the ASEAN members both as a trade hedge against the slowdown in its main western markets and to highlight its significance as an all-weather ally.

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PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI MEETS PRESIDENT BIDEN

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - USA

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi met President of the USA, H.E. Mr. Joseph R. Biden in New Delhi today. President Biden, who is visiting India for the first time in his capacity as President, will be participating in the G20 Summit in New Delhi on September 9-10, 2023.

Prime Minister conveyed his appreciation for President Biden's vision and commitment to further strengthen the India-US Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership, which is based on shared democratic values, strategic convergences and strong people-to-people ties.

The two leaders commended the progress in implementing the futuristic and wide-ranging outcomes of Prime Minister's historic State visit to the U.S. in June 2023, including under the India-U.S. Initiative for Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET).

The leaders welcomed the sustained momentum in bilateral cooperation , including in the areas of defence, trade, investment, education, health, research, innovation, culture and people-to-people ties.

President Biden warmly congratulated Prime Minister and the people of India on Chandrayaan-3's historic landing near the lunar south pole and highlighted deepening cooperation between the two countries in Space.

The two leaders also exchanged views on a number of regional and global issues. They agreed that India- US partnership was beneficial not only for the people of the two countries but also for global good.

Prime Minister thanked President Biden for the consistent support received from the United States in ensuring success of India's G20 Presidency.

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JOINT STATEMENT FROM INDIA AND THE UNITED STATES

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - USA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi welcomed United States President Joseph R. Biden, Jr., to India today, reaffirming the close and enduring partnership between India and the United States. The leaders expressed their appreciation for the substantial progress underway to implement the ground breaking achievements of Prime Minister Modi's historic, June 2023, visit to Washington.

The leaders called on their governments to continue the work of transforming the India-U.S. Strategic Partnership across all dimensions of our multifaceted global agenda, based on trust and mutual understanding. The leaders re-emphasized that the shared values of freedom, democracy, human rights, inclusion, pluralism, and equal opportunities for all citizens are critical to the success our countries enjoy and that these values strengthen our relationship.

President Biden lauded India's G20 Presidency for further demonstrating how the G20 as a forum is delivering important outcomes. The leaders reaffirmed their commitment to the G20 and expressed confidence that the outcomes of the G20 Leaders' Summit in New Delhi will advance the shared goals of accelerating sustainable development, bolstering multilateral cooperation, and building global consensus around inclusive economic policies to address our greatest common challenges, including fundamentally reshaping and scaling up multilateral development banks.

Prime Minister Modi and President Biden reaffirmed the importance of the Quad in supporting a free, open, inclusive, and resilient Indo-Pacific. Prime Minister Modi looked forward to welcoming President Biden to the next Quad Leaders' Summit to be hosted by India in 2024. India welcomed the U.S. decision to co-lead the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative Pillar on Trade Connectivity and Maritime Transport, further to the U.S. decision to join IPOI in June 2023.

Continuing to share the view that global governance must be more inclusive and representative, President Biden reaffirmed his support for a reformed UN Security Council with India as a permanent member, and, in this context, welcomed once again India's candidature for the UNSC non-permanent seat in 2028-29. The leaders once again underscored the need to strengthen and reform the multilateral system so it may better reflect contemporary realities and remain committed to a comprehensive UN reform agenda, including through expansion in permanent and non-permanent categories of membership of the UN Security Council.

Prime Minister Modi and President Biden reaffirmed technology's defining role in deepening our strategic partnership and lauded ongoing efforts through the India-U.S. Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET) to build open, accessible, secure, and resilient technology ecosystems and value chains, based on mutual confidence and trust, which reinforce our shared values and democratic institutions. The United States and India intend to undertake a midterm review of iCET in September 2023 to continue to drive momentum toward the next annual iCET review, co-led by the National Security Advisors of both countries, in early 2024.

President Biden congratulated Prime Minister Modi and the scientists and engineers of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on Chandrayaan-3's historic landing at the south polar region of the Moon, as well as the successful launch of India's first solar mission, Aditya-L1. Having set a course to reach new frontiers across all sectors of space cooperation, the leaders welcomed efforts towards establishment of a Working Group for commercial space

collaboration under the existing India-U.S. Civil Space Joint Working Group. Determined to deepen our partnership in outer space exploration, ISRO and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) have commenced discussions on modalities, capacity building, and training for mounting a joint effort to the International Space Station in 2024, and are continuing efforts to finalise a strategic framework for human space flight cooperation by the end of 2023. India and the United States also intend to increase coordination on planetary defence to protect planet Earth and space assets from the impact of asteroids and near-Earth objects, including U.S. support for India's participation in asteroid detection and tracking via the Minor Planet Center.

The leaders reiterated their support for building resilient global semiconductor supply chains, noting in this respect a multi-year initiative of Microchip Technology, Inc., to invest approximately US\$300 million in expanding its research and development presence in India and Advanced Micro Device's announcement to invest US\$400 million in India over the next five years to expand research, development, and engineering operations in India. The leaders expressed satisfaction at the ongoing implementation of announcements made in June 2023 by U.S. companies, Micron, LAM Research, and Applied Materials.

Sharing a vision of secure and trusted telecommunications, resilient supply chains, and global digital inclusion, Prime Minister Modi and President Biden welcomed the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Bharat 6G Alliance and Next G Alliance, operated by Alliance for Telecommunications Industry Solutions, as a first step towards deepening public-private cooperation between vendors and operators. They further acknowledged the setting-up of two Joint Task Forces focused on collaboration in the field of Open RAN and research and development in 5G/6G technologies. A 5G Open RAN pilot in a leading Indian telecom operator will be undertaken by a U.S. Open RAN manufacturer before field deployment. The leaders continue to look forward to the participation of Indian companies in the U.S. Rip and Replace Program; President Biden also welcomed India's support for a Rip and Replace pilot in the United States.

The United States reiterated its commitment to working together with India in the quantum domain, both bilaterally and through the Quantum Entanglement Exchange, a platform to facilitate international quantum exchange opportunities; and welcomed the participation of India's S.N. Bose National Centre for Basic Sciences, Kolkata, as a member of the Quantum Economic Development Consortium. It was also recognized that the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay joined the Chicago Quantum Exchange as an international partner.

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Reaffirming their commitment to building resilient technology value chains and linking defence industrial ecosystems, the leaders recommitted their administrations to promoting policies and adapting regulations that facilitate greater technology sharing, co-development, and co-production opportunities between Indian and U.S. industry, government and academic institutions. They also welcomed continued engagement through an inter-agency monitoring mechanism under the auspices of the bilateral Strategic Trade Dialogue, launched in June 2023.

The leaders welcomed the signing of an MoU between Indian universities, represented by the Council of Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT Council), and the Association of American Universities (AAU) to establish the India-U.S. Global Challenges Institute, with a combined initial commitment of at least US\$10 million. The Global Challenges Institute will bring together leading research and higher-education institutions from across our two nations, including beyond AAU and IIT membership, to advance new frontiers in science and technology, spanning collaboration in sustainable energy and agriculture, health and pandemic preparedness, semiconductor technology and manufacturing, advanced materials, telecommunications, artificial intelligence, and quantum science.

The leaders also welcomed the growing number of multi-institutional collaborative education partnerships, such as those between New York University-Tandon and IIT Kanpur Advanced Research Center, and the Joint Research Centers of the State University of New York at Buffalo and IIT Delhi, Kanpur, Jodhpur, and BHU, in the areas of critical and emerging technologies.

The leaders affirmed the importance of efforts to close the gender digital divide in the digital economy, noting a G20 commitment to halve the digital gender gap by 2030 and expressed support for the Women in the Digital Economy Initiative, which brings together governments, private sector companies, foundations, civil society and multilateral organizations to accelerate progress toward the closure of the digital gender divide.

Prime Minister Modi and President Biden reaffirmed their commitment to deepen and diversify the India-U.S. Major Defence Partnership through expanded cooperation in new and emerging domains such as space and AI, and accelerated defence industrial collaboration.

The leaders welcomed completion of the Congressional Notification process on 29 August 2023 and the commencement of negotiations for a commercial agreement between GE Aerospace and Hindustan Aeronautical Limited (HAL) to manufacture GE F-414 jet engines in India, and recommitted to work collaboratively and expeditiously to support the advancement of this unprecedented co-production and technology transfer proposal.

The leaders applauded the conclusion of a second Master Ship Repair Agreement, with the most recent agreement signed by the U.S. Navy and Mazgaon Dock Shipbuilders, Ltd., in August 2023. Both sides recommitted to advancing India's emergence as a hub for the maintenance and repair of forward-deployed U.S. Navy assets and other aircraft and vessels. The leaders also welcomed further commitments from U.S. industry to invest more in India's maintenance, repair, and overhaul capabilities and facilities for aircraft.

The leaders commended the India-U.S. Defence Acceleration Ecosystem (INDUS-X) team for establishing a robust collaboration agenda to harness the innovative work of the U.S. and Indian defence sectors to address shared security challenges. INDUS-X convened the inaugural Academia Start-up Partnership at IIT Kanpur, with the participation of Penn State University, and initiated the Joint Accelerator Program for Indian Startups, through a workshop led by U.S. accelerator M/s Hacking 4 Allies (H4x) and IIT Hyderabad in August 2023. Both sides also welcomed the announcement by the Indian Ministry of Defence's Innovations for Defence Excellence and the U.S. Department of Defense's Defense Innovation Unit to launch two joint challenges, which will invite start-ups to develop solutions to shared defence technology challenges.

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Reiterating the importance of nuclear energy as a necessary resource to meet our nations' climate, energy transition, and energy security needs, Prime Minister Modi and President Biden welcomed intensified consultations between the relevant entities on both sides to expand opportunities for facilitating India-U.S. collaboration in nuclear energy, including in development of next generation small modular reactor technologies in a collaborative mode. The United States reaffirmed its support for India's membership in the Nuclear Suppliers Group and committed to continue engagement with like-minded partners to advance this goal.

The leaders welcomed the inaugural meeting of the India-U.S. Renewable Energy Technologies Action Platform [RE-TAP], in August 2023, under which the two countries will engage in lab-to-lab collaboration, piloting, and testing of innovative technologies; collaboration on policy and planning to advance renewable energy and enabling technologies; investment, incubation and outreach programmes; and training and skill development to accelerate the uptake and adoption of new and emerging renewable technologies and energy systems.

Reiterating the importance of decarbonizing the transport sector, the leaders welcomed progress to expand electric mobility in India, including joint support for a payment security mechanism financed through both public and private funds. This will accelerate the procurement of 10,000 made-in India electric buses including those for the Indian PM e-Bus Sewa program that will include the associated charging infrastructure. The two countries are committed to working together to help diversify the global supply chain for e-mobility.

India and the United States are also advancing the creation of investment platforms to lower the cost of capital and accelerate the deployment of greenfield renewable energy, battery storage and emerging green technology projects in India. Towards this end, India's National Investment and Infrastructure Fund and the U.S. Development Finance Corporation exchanged letters of intent to each provide up to US\$500 million to anchor a renewable infrastructure investment fund.

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Prime Minister Modi and President Biden pledged to sustain the high-level of engagement between our governments, industries, and academic institutions and realize their ambitious vision for an enduring India-U.S. partnership that advances the aspirations of our people for a bright and prosperous future, serves the global good, and contributes to a free, open, inclusive, and resilient Indo-Pacific.

DS/ST

Prime Minister Narendra Modi welcomed United States President Joseph R. Biden, Jr., to India today, reaffirming the close and enduring partnership between India and the United States. The leaders expressed their appreciation for the substantial progress underway to implement the ground breaking achievements of Prime Minister Modi's historic, June 2023, visit to Washington.

The leaders called on their governments to continue the work of transforming the India-U.S. Strategic Partnership across all dimensions of our multifaceted global agenda, based on trust and mutual understanding. The leaders re-emphasized that the shared values of freedom, democracy, human rights, inclusion, pluralism, and equal opportunities for all citizens are critical to the success our countries enjoy and that these values strengthen our relationship.

President Biden lauded India's G20 Presidency for further demonstrating how the G20 as a forum is delivering important outcomes. The leaders reaffirmed their commitment to the G20 and expressed confidence that the outcomes of the G20 Leaders' Summit in New Delhi will advance the shared goals of accelerating sustainable development, bolstering multilateral cooperation, and building global consensus around inclusive economic policies to address our greatest common challenges, including fundamentally reshaping and scaling up multilateral development banks.

Prime Minister Modi and President Biden reaffirmed the importance of the Quad in supporting a free, open, inclusive, and resilient Indo-Pacific. Prime Minister Modi looked forward to welcoming President Biden to the next Quad Leaders' Summit to be hosted by India in 2024. India welcomed the U.S. decision to co-lead the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative Pillar on Trade Connectivity and Maritime Transport, further to the U.S. decision to join IPOI in June 2023.

Continuing to share the view that global governance must be more inclusive and representative, President Biden reaffirmed his support for a reformed UN Security Council with India as a permanent member, and, in this context, welcomed once again India's candidature for the UNSC non-permanent seat in 2028-29. The leaders once again underscored the need to strengthen and reform the multilateral system so it may better reflect contemporary realities and remain committed to a comprehensive UN reform agenda, including through expansion in permanent and non-permanent categories of membership of the UN Security Council.

Prime Minister Modi and President Biden reaffirmed technology's defining role in deepening our strategic partnership and lauded ongoing efforts through the India-U.S. Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET) to build open, accessible, secure, and resilient technology ecosystems and value chains, based on mutual confidence and trust, which reinforce our shared values and democratic institutions. The United States and India intend to undertake a midterm review of iCET in September 2023 to continue to drive momentum toward the next annual iCET review, co-led by the National Security Advisors of both countries, in early 2024.

President Biden congratulated Prime Minister Modi and the scientists and engineers of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on Chandrayaan-3's historic landing at the south

polar region of the Moon, as well as the successful launch of India's first solar mission, Aditya-L1. Having set a course to reach new frontiers across all sectors of space cooperation, the leaders welcomed efforts towards establishment of a Working Group for commercial space collaboration under the existing India-U.S. Civil Space Joint Working Group. Determined to deepen our partnership in outer space exploration, ISRO and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) have commenced discussions on modalities, capacity building, and training for mounting a joint effort to the International Space Station in 2024, and are continuing efforts to finalise a strategic framework for human space flight cooperation by the end of 2023. India and the United States also intend to increase coordination on planetary defence to protect planet Earth and space assets from the impact of asteroids and near-Earth objects, including U.S. support for India's participation in asteroid detection and tracking via the Minor Planet Center.

The leaders reiterated their support for building resilient global semiconductor supply chains, noting in this respect a multi-year initiative of Microchip Technology, Inc., to invest approximately US\$300 million in expanding its research and development presence in India and Advanced Micro Device's announcement to invest US\$400 million in India over the next five years to expand research, development, and engineering operations in India. The leaders expressed satisfaction at the ongoing implementation of announcements made in June 2023 by U.S. companies, Micron, LAM Research, and Applied Materials.

Sharing a vision of secure and trusted telecommunications, resilient supply chains, and global digital inclusion, Prime Minister Modi and President Biden welcomed the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Bharat 6G Alliance and Next G Alliance, operated by Alliance for Telecommunications Industry Solutions, as a first step towards deepening public-private cooperation between vendors and operators. They further acknowledged the setting-up of two Joint Task Forces focused on collaboration in the field of Open RAN and research and development in 5G/6G technologies. A 5G Open RAN pilot in a leading Indian telecom operator will be undertaken by a U.S. Open RAN manufacturer before field deployment. The leaders continue to look forward to the participation of Indian companies in the U.S. Rip and Replace Program; President Biden also welcomed India's support for a Rip and Replace pilot in the United States.

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21ST EDITION INDIA FRANCE BILATERAL NAVAL EXERCISE 'VARUNA' – 2023

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

Phase II of the 21st edition of Varuna (Varuna-23) bilateral exercise between Indian and French Navy was conducted in the Arabian Sea. The exercise witnessed participation of guided missile frigates, tanker, Maritime Patrol Aircraft and integral helicopters from the two sides. The exercise was conducted over three days and witnessed joint operations, underway replenishment and various tactical manoeuvres. Units of both navies endeavoured to enhance and hone their war fighting skills, improve interoperability and demonstrate their ability to promote, peace, security and stability in the region. The first phase of 'Varuna-2023' was conducted off India's Western Seaboard from 16 to 20 Jan 23

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Indian & French Navy bilateral naval exercise was initiated in 1993. The exercise was later christened as 'Varuna' in 2001 and has since become a hallmark of robust India-France strategic bilateral relationship. Having grown in scope and complexity over the years, this exercise provides an opportunity to learn from each other's best practices and procedures. The exercise also facilitates operational level interaction between the two Navies to foster mutual cooperation for good order at sea, underscoring the shared commitment to ensuring security, safety and freedom of the global maritime commons.

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G20 LEADERS' SUMMIT BEGINS IN NEW DELHI TODAY

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: G20

The first ladies and spouses of G20 member countries experienced the Agricultural prowess of India first-hand, in a one-of-a-kind exhibition organized by Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare at IARI Campus, Pusa, today. The event featured a range of captivating components, such as a millet-focused live cooking session led by celebrity chefs Kunal Kapur, Anahita Dhondy, and Ajay Chopra, as well as the display of cutting-edge agricultural technology from prominent Indian startups, interaction with Indian women agri-champions, 'Agri-Street'.

The spouses made their way to the exhibition area, prior to that they had a brief pitstop at the 'Rangoli Area', which featured two massive 'Millet Rangolis'. The beautiful artworks were prepared using millet grains and local Indian motifs. The first rangoli captured the theme of "Harmony of Harvest" unveiling India's deep-rooted agricultural traditions. This installation showcased India's agricultural strength, emphasizing women's pivotal roles in enhancing agricultural resilience. Curated with indigenous toys symbolizing women's diverse agricultural contributions, millets, and rustic terracotta pots, this captivating Rangoli became a major highlight of the event. The second rangoli piece echoed India's cultural philosophy - "The World is One Family", emphasizing global unity. India as a prominent agriculture nation, plays a crucial role in global food security. The second rangoli, thus, celebrated India's global commitment towards unity and sustenance.



In the exhibition area, the spouses witnessed the dynamic Agri-startup ecosystem, where 15 Agri-startups showcased their innovative tech solutions to address ground-level challenges and digitize agriculture. Climate Smart Agriculture, Innovation in Agriculture Value Chain, Agri-logistics & Supply Chains, Quality Assurance for Sustainable Consumption, and Millets: Sustaining Health, Empowering Agriculture, were a few themes that were covered in the exhibition. Additionally, diverse members of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) from across the nation displayed a range of edible products marketed nationwide, aligned with the theme 'Empowering Rural Prosperity through Collective Agriculture.'



An enthralling 'Live Cooking Session' showcased a wide variety of millet-based culinary delights. This event was aligned with the celebrations of the International Year of Millets. It was helmed by three celebrity chefs - Kunal Kapur, Anahita Dhondy, and Ajay Chopra, who were joined by two culinary experts from the ITC Group, chef Kusha and chef Nikita. In the designated 'Live Cooking Area,' these five chefs prepared a 'full course meal' with a special focus on millets. This meal encompassed appetizers, salads, main courses, and desserts.



Chef Anahita, Chef Kunal, and Chef Ajay were each responsible for crafting a starter, main course, and dessert. For instance, Chef Anahita created a Raw Banana Barnyard Millet Tikki topped with puffed Amaranth. Meanwhile, Chef Kunal whipped up a delightful Jowar-Mushroom Khichda. Finally, Chef Ajay brought the multi-course millet experience to a close with a Millet Thekua and a Lemon Shrikhand Mille-feuille dessert. Within the exhibition, there was a dedicated culinary section that showcased millet-based dishes from all G20 member countries, paying homage to each nation that participated in the event.

The exhibition also highlighted India's Research and Development achievements via the stalls presented by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), demonstrating the latest innovations in precision agriculture, agricultural technology, and mechanization advancements driving sector growth. Each stall showcased specific crop advancements backed by government

initiatives. Some of the key stalls focused on themes like the journey of the Basmati revolution, its role in the prosperity of millions of Basmati farmers, and its status as a 5 billion USD forex earner. Another stall highlighted India's status as the "Land of Spices" emphasizing the wide variety and global fame of Indian spices, along with future scope. A neighbouring stall provided insights into the nutritional and medicinal significance of mushrooms, their extensive diversity in India, and their potential for export. Additionally, the esteemed guests also viewed the sensor-based system that facilitated the real-time monitoring of environmental conditions during the transportation, storage, and ripening of bananas, among other interesting exhibits of ICAR.

The 'Agriculture Street' was another major component of the exhibition curated by the Ministry, serving as a captivating journey into India's agricultural legacy and offering insight into its vibrant past as well as the future. Here the Ministry presented a comprehensive view of agricultural practices, uniting experts, scientists, and farmers under one roof. This street was composed of nine interactive stalls, each adorned with rustic decor, creating an immersive environment for the spouses of G20 Head of States. Here, they could explore the diverse facets of agriculture, with a particular emphasis on millets. It also highlighted India's initiatives aimed at enhancing food and nutritional security. One of the key highlights of the Agri Gully were the exhibits of Lahri Bai, a young female farmer from Dindori, Madhya Pradesh who conserved more than 150 indigenous seed varieties including about 50 varieties of millet seeds in her two-room hut earning the title of 'Millet Queen' of India.



After the event concluded, the G20 Spouses received a token of appreciation in the form of a hamper. The hamper's contents were carefully chosen to represent India's vibrant cultural and artistic heritage. These items included handwoven stoles crafted from silk sourced from the Sal forests of Chhattisgarh, a handcrafted bell metal figurine created using an ancient lost wax technique reminiscent of the method used for the iconic 'Dancing Girl' artifact from the Harappan civilization (3300 BCE to 1300 BCE), and a Cheriya Painting.



The visit provided the First Ladies and Spouses with an understanding of the progress India has made in the agricultural sector, including the area of millet farming. The women farmers who were invited from 10 millet producing states which are Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Bihar and Assam symbolize the grassroots-level changes occurring and interacting with them allowed the first ladies and spouses to gain insight into the evolving millet value chain in the country. Renowned chefs curated a remarkable feast to emphasize the versatility of millets and Indian cuisine to the distinguished guests, while Start-Ups and Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) showcased their latest technologies and products, creating a unique and memorable experience for all those in attendance.





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An enthralling 'Live Cooking Session' showcased a wide variety of millet-based culinary delights. This event was aligned with the celebrations of the International Year of Millets. It was helmed by three celebrity chefs - Kunal Kapur, Anahita Dhondy, and Ajay Chopra, who were joined by two culinary experts from the ITC Group, chef Kusha and chef Nikita. In the designated 'Live Cooking Area,' these five chefs prepared a 'full course meal' with a special focus on millets. This meal encompassed appetizers, salads, main courses, and desserts.



Chef Anahita, Chef Kunal, and Chef Ajay were each responsible for crafting a starter, main course, and dessert. For instance, Chef Anahita created a Raw Banana Barnyard Millet Tikki topped with puffed Amaranth. Meanwhile, Chef Kunal whipped up a delightful Jowar-Mushroom Khichda. Finally, Chef Ajay brought the multi-course millet experience to a close with a Millet Thekua and a Lemon Shrikhand Mille-feuille dessert. Within the exhibition, there was a dedicated culinary section that showcased millet-based dishes from all G20 member countries, paying homage to each nation that participated in the event.

The exhibition also highlighted India's Research and Development achievements via the stalls presented by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), demonstrating the latest innovations in precision agriculture, agricultural technology, and mechanization advancements driving sector growth. Each stall showcased specific crop advancements backed by government initiatives. Some of the key stalls focused on themes like the journey of the Basmati revolution, its role in the prosperity of millions of Basmati farmers, and its status as a 5 billion USD forex earner. Another stall highlighted India's status as the "Land of Spices" emphasizing the wide variety and global fame of Indian spices, along with future scope. A neighbouring stall provided insights into the nutritional and medicinal significance of mushrooms, their extensive diversity in India, and their potential for export. Additionally, the esteemed guests also viewed the sensor-based system that facilitated the real-time monitoring of environmental conditions during the transportation, storage, and ripening of bananas, among other interesting exhibits of ICAR.

The 'Agriculture Street' was another major component of the exhibition curated by the Ministry, serving as a captivating journey into India's agricultural legacy and offering insight into its vibrant past as well as the future. Here the Ministry presented a comprehensive view of agricultural practices, uniting experts, scientists, and farmers under one roof. This street was composed of nine interactive stalls, each adorned with rustic decor, creating an immersive environment for the spouses of G20 Head of States. Here, they could explore the diverse facets of agriculture, with a particular emphasis on millets. It also highlighted India's initiatives aimed at enhancing food and nutritional security. One of the key highlights of the Agri Gully were the exhibits of Lahri Bai, a young female farmer from Dindori, Madhya Pradesh who conserved more than 150 indigenous seed varieties including about 50 varieties of millet seeds in her two-room hut earning the title of 'Millet Queen' of India.



After the event concluded, the G20 Spouses received a token of appreciation in the form of a hamper. The hamper's contents were carefully chosen to represent India's vibrant cultural and artistic heritage. These items included handwoven stoles crafted from silk sourced from the Sal forests of Chhattisgarh, a handcrafted bell metal figurine created using an ancient lost wax technique reminiscent of the method used for the iconic 'Dancing Girl' artifact from the Harappan civilization (3300 BCE to 1300 BCE), and a Cheriya Painting.



The visit provided the First Ladies and Spouses with an understanding of the progress India has

made in the agricultural sector, including the area of millet farming. The women farmers who were invited from 10 millet producing states which are Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Bihar and Assam symbolize the grassroots-level changes occurring and interacting with them allowed the first ladies and spouses to gain insight into the evolving millet value chain in the country. Renowned chefs curated a remarkable feast to emphasize the versatility of millets and Indian cuisine to the distinguished guests, while Start-Ups and Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) showcased their latest technologies and products, creating a unique and memorable experience for all those in attendance.



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G20 LEADERS ENDORSES GOA ROADMAP AND 'TRAVEL FOR LIFE' PROGRAM TO PROVIDE BIG BOOST TO TOURISM SECTOR

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: International Treaties & Agreements, and other important organizations

The G20 Leaders' Summit in Delhi stands as a testament to India's leadership in fostering global unity and collaboration. The summit witnessed the convergence of the world's most influential leaders, united by a shared vision for the future. Their collective commitment to addressing global challenges reaffirms the spirit of global cooperation.

A significant milestone achieved during the G20 Leaders' Summit in Delhi was the unanimous endorsement of tourism and culture's pivotal role in sustainable socio-economic development and prosperity. **The 'G20 Leaders Declaration' adopted during the summit underlined the significance of the 'Goa Roadmap for Tourism as a vehicle for achieving SDGs.**

Delhi Declaration provides a new direction for tourism sector with G20 Goa Roadmap outlining the challenges, objectives, opportunities and recommendations for tourism sector to achieve sustainable development goals.

'GOA Roadmap', the key deliverable of India's G20 Tourism Track, is a pioneering initiative that provides a blueprint for sustainable global tourism. Goa roadmap, aligned with the theme of India's G20 Presidency, underscores the role of tourism in society, the economy, and environmental stewardship.

By focusing on the five interconnected priorities identified and endorsed by the G20 Tourism Working Group - Green Tourism, Digitalization, Skills, Tourism MSMEs, and Destination Management - the roadmap offers a comprehensive strategy for nations to align their tourism policies with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030.

In furtherance of our commitment, the Ministry of Tourism, in collaboration with the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), has launched the G20 Tourism and SDG Dashboard. This pioneering initiative will serve as a global repository, showcasing the best practices and case studies of sustainable tourism practices and policies from G20 nations. It aims to be a comprehensive resource, aiding nations and industry stakeholders in their journey towards achieving the SDGs through tourism.

As we move forward, the Ministry of Tourism aims to facilitate the implementation of the GOA Roadmap through education and awareness campaigns to sensitize the State/UT Governments and private stakeholders about incorporating key recommended actions in their operations for the creation of more sustainable, resilient, and inclusive tourism.

The Ministry of Tourism is also launching a national competition on 'Tourism for Tomorrow' to identify best practices and case studies aligned with five priorities of G20 Goa roadmap, which have successfully been implemented by States, Destinations and Industry Stakeholders, which can be replicated and scaled up across the country. The competition will be launched on World Tourism Day on September 27.

In another significant development, the G20 leaders' declaration has further noted the launch of the "Travel for LiFE" initiative, emphasizing its transformative potential in promoting responsible

and sustainable tourism.

Travel for LiFE program has been inspired by Hon'ble Prime Minister's vision of LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment), which is extremely relevant for tourism sector. Travel for LiFE nudges all tourists and tourist businesses to take simple actions, which have tremendous signification for environment protection and climate action.

Ministry of Tourism has aligned its programs and initiatives for promoting sustainable tourism under 'Travel for LiFE' program and the campaign will cover the entire tourism ecosystem, motivating and inspiring all actors to contribute in making tourism sector sustainable and responsible. While recognizing the LiFE actions by tourists, the Ministry will also recognize the tourism businesses as TFL certified based on STCI criteria of the Ministry. It will also encourage the tourists and tourism businesses to take a "Travel for LiFE' pledge, which will reflect their commitment for sustainable practices.

Ministry of Tourism is championing a future that is greener, cleaner, and harmonious. It is our mission to ensure that growth is not just robust but also just, equitable, and sustainable for every individual.

The Ministry of Tourism also envisions transforming and promoting the host cities of the G20 Meetings in India into global MICE destinations for national and international meetings. Our commitment is unwavering, and our resolve is strong. We are poised to lead the way in fostering sustainable tourism practices that will echo across the world for years to come.

Sushil Kumar

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INDIA-BRAZIL JOINT STATEMENT

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

His Excellency Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of the Republic of India, and His Excellency Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, met in New Delhi on September 10, 2023, at the sidelines of the G20 Summit.

Marking the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Brazil and India, celebrated in 2023, both leaders emphasized that bilateral ties have flourished based on common values and shared objectives, including the pursuit of peace, cooperation, and sustainable development. They reaffirmed their commitment to bolstering the Brazil-India Strategic Partnership and to sustaining their distinctive roles in global affairs. Both sides expressed satisfaction at the progress achieved under various institutional dialogue mechanisms.

The two leaders reaffirmed their commitment to the comprehensive reform of the Security Council including its expansion in the permanent and non-permanent categories, with increased representation of developing countries in both, to improve its efficiency, effectiveness, representativeness, and legitimacy in order to better meet contemporary challenges in international peace and security. They reiterated their mutual support for their countries' permanent membership in an expanded UNSC.

The leaders stated that Brazil and India will continue to work closely together in the framework of G-4 and the L.69. They also agreed on having regular bilateral coordination meetings on Security Council Reform. The two leaders expressed disappointment at the paralysis created at the Inter-Governmental Negotiations on UN Security Council reform, which have not produced tangible progress. They agreed that time has come to move towards a result-oriented process that aims to achieve concrete outcomes in a fixed time frame.

PM Modi welcomed President Lula's announcement of Brazil's support to the Indian candidature for non-permanent seat of the UNSC for the 2028-2029 term.

Both leaders acknowledged the urgency of a fair and equitable energy transition. They noted the vital role of biofuels and flex-fuel vehicles in decarbonizing the transport sector, especially in developing nations. They commended bilateral initiatives in bioenergy, involving both governmental and private sectors, and celebrated the establishment during India's G20 presidency of the Global Biofuels Alliance, of which both countries are founding members.

Both leaders recognize that climate change represents one of the greatest challenges of our time that needs to be addressed in the context of sustainable development and of efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger. The two countries commit to broadening, deepening and diversifying their bilateral cooperation on climate, as well as their joint efforts towards a strengthened global governance under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), its Kyoto Protocol and its Paris Agreement. They also pledge to work together to ensure that the UNFCCC multilateral process from COP28 to COP30 paves the way for a course-correction on climate, while uniting the international community around the ultimate objective of the Convention and the goals of its Paris Agreement, in the light of equity and the best available science, taking into consideration the gravity and sense of urgency emanated from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)'s Sixth Assessment Report (AR6). They reiterated their determination to enhance the multilateral response to climate change in a way that also tackle inequalities within and among countries, including by working closer

together within the Group of 77 and China and the BASIC Group of countries. India welcomes Brazil's presidency of BASIC and fully supports the Brazilian prospective presidency of the 30th Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP30), in 2025. Both countries also agreed to increase joint projects in partnership with ISA (International Solar Alliance) and CDRI (Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure) in third countries.

Highlighting their roles as major global food producers, the leaders reaffirmed their resolve to increase cooperation in sustainable agriculture and rural development, including at the multilateral level, with the aim of safeguarding food and nutritional security of both countries and of the world. They underscored the need for open, unimpeded and reliable food supply chains and called upon the international community to ensure that agricultural trade is not affected by unilateral restrictions and protectionist measures, duly taking into consideration the Multilateral trade rules. The two leaders expressed satisfaction over the formation of Joint Technical Committees to facilitate trade in agriculture and animal husbandry products.

Acknowledging the recent increase in bilateral trade and investment, the leaders agreed that economic exchanges between Brazil and India have the potential for further growth, taking advantage of the scale of their respective economies and the potential for forging industrial partnerships.

Expressing satisfaction over the growing trade between India and Mercosur, both leaders agreed to work together for the expansion of India-Mercosur PTA during Brazil's Mercosur Presidency, to leverage the full potential of this economic partnership.

They welcomed the establishment of the India-Brazil Business Forum as a dedicated platform for private sector collaboration.

The leaders welcomed the increased defence cooperation between India and Brazil including participation in military exercises, exchange of high-level defence delegations, and substantive industry presence in each other's defence expositions. The leaders encouraged the defence industries from both sides to explore new collaboration avenues and commence joint projects to co-produce technologically advanced defence products and build supply chain resilience.

The leaders noted with satisfaction the conclusion of domestic procedures for the entry into force of the India-Brazil Social Security Agreement.

President Lula congratulated PM Modi and India for the historic achievement of Chandrayaan-3's landing in the south polar region of the Moon, as well as the successful launch of India's first solar mission, Aditya-L1, both important feats which mark remarkable milestones in space exploration.

Celebrating the 20th anniversary of the IBSA Forum, the leaders vowed to foster higher-level dialogues among the three IBSA partners and affirmed the strategic significance of IBSA in safeguarding and advancing the interests of the Global South on the global stage, including at the multilateral and plurilateral bodies. PM Modi extended full support to Brazil's IBSA Chairship.

Regarding the recent BRICS Summit in South Africa, both leaders acknowledged its positive outcomes, particularly the renewed and strengthened support for the reform of the United Nations Security Council and the invitations extended to six countries to become full members of BRICS.

President Lula congratulated PM Modi for India's successful G20 presidency and pledged to collaborate closely with India during Brazil's G20 tenure, commencing in December 2023. Both

leaders welcomed the consecutive presidencies of developing countries in the G20, which elevates the Global South's influence in world governance. They noted with satisfaction the formation of a G20 troika comprising the three IBSA countries during Brazil's presidency.

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INDIA-FRANCE JOINT STATEMENT

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi had a bilateral meeting over lunch with the President of the French Republic, H.E. Mr. Emmanuel Macron during the G-20 Leaders' Summit at New Delhi on September 10, 2023. The two leaders discussed, assessed and reviewed the progress in bilateral relations since their last meeting in July, 2023 in Paris. They also exchanged views on important international and regional developments.

President Macron's visit to India comes after the historic visit of Prime Minister Modi to Paris on July 13-14, 2023 as the Guest of Honour on the occasion of French National Day on 14 July 2023, commemorating the 25th anniversary of the India-France strategic partnership.

Acknowledging the strength of India France partnership, founded in deep trust, shared values, belief in sovereignty and strategic autonomy, a resolute commitment to international law and principles enshrined in the UN Charter, an abiding faith in multilateralism and a mutual pursuit of a stable multi-polar world, both leaders emphasized the need to expand their collaboration to address regional and global challenges. They reiterated their unwavering commitment to collectively serve as a force of good, carrying the message of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' i.e. 'one earth, one family, one future', during tumultuous times reshaping the global order.

With the 'Horizon 2047' Roadmap, the Indo-Pacific Roadmap and other outcomes during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit serving as recent points of reference, the two leaders discussed overall progress and next steps on the implementation of the new and ambitious goals for cooperation in areas of defense, space, nuclear energy, digital public infrastructure, critical technology, climate change, education, and people-to-people contacts. They also carried forward their discussions on India-France partnership in the Indo Pacific region and Africa, including in infrastructure, connectivity, energy, biodiversity, sustainability and industrial projects. They underlined their role of providers of solutions for the Indo-Pacific through their cooperation in the framework of the International Solar Alliance, launched by India and France, and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure.

President Macron congratulated Prime Minister Modi on India's success of Mission Chandrayaan 3. The two leaders recalled six decades of India-France Space cooperation and reviewed the progress since holding of the first Strategic Space Dialogue in June 2023. They acknowledged the strong India-France civil nuclear ties, good progress in the discussion for the Jaitapur nuclear plant project and welcomed the continuing engagement of both sides to expand bilateral cooperation to establish a partnership for co-developing SMR and AMR technologies as well as the forthcoming signature of a dedicated declaration of intent. France reiterated its steadfast and unwavering support for India's membership in the Nuclear Suppliers Group.

Both leaders reiterated their commitment to strengthen the defence cooperation through partnership in design, development, testing and manufacture of advanced defence technologies and platforms, and expand production in India, including for third countries in Indo-Pacific and beyond. In this context, they also called for early finalisation of the Defence Industrial Roadmap.

Laying emphasis on areas such as digital, science, technological innovation, education, culture, health and environment cooperation, both leaders called for strengthening of institutional linkages in these domains, on the model of the Indo-French Campus for the Indo-Pacific. In this context, they also reaffirmed commitment to expand cultural exchanges and work together in

development of museums.

Prime Minister Modi thanked President Macron for France's continued support to India's Presidency of G-20, which had advanced inclusiveness, unity and cohesion in international efforts to address global challenges and build a more stable global order. India and France also welcomed African Union's membership to the G-20 and look to work with AU, for the progress, prosperity and development of Africa.

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INDIA'S MOMENT: ON THE G-20 SUMMIT OUTCOMES

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

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The [Leaders' Summit of India's presidency of the G-20 grouping](#), held over the weekend, resulted in major success with the [unanimous adoption of the New Delhi Declaration](#) — especially significant as there was little hope of one. Experts, diplomats and officials had downplayed expectations of India's negotiators being able to pull off what few have achieved thus far: a détente between the “western” G-7-EU axis and the Russia-China combine over the issue of the Ukraine war. At the UN Security Council, not a single statement has been passed so far as a result of vetoes by both sides. While Indonesian G-20 negotiators in 2022 were able to pull off a joint statement with references critical of Russia (the G-7 pushed for these), the consensus did not last, and Russia and China refused to have them repeated this year. As every Indian ministerial meeting ended without success in a joint statement, India's negotiating team took the more considered approach — to achieve consensus on other issues, before tackling the paragraphs on Ukraine. There was a breakthrough after the G-7 compromised on its insistence of language critical of Russia by having more neutral paragraphs. The Declaration statement achieved what is truly impossible in today's global polarisation. In that, India's “middle path” policy has been its biggest strength, along with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's personal outreach to many G-20 leaders over the year. Another key initiative was enlisting the “Global South”, including many G-20 members, who were reluctant to take sides in the tussle, and wanted instead to shift priorities to global development issues. As a result, the 83-paragraph Declaration made progress on cryptocurrency regulation, and crystallised a figure of nearly \$10 trillion needed for climate change adaptation and mitigation projects for the Global South, although it failed to agree on any fossil fuel “phase-out” deadlines.

There were several other initiatives too: the admission of the 55-member African Union has corrected an imbalance that so far only allowed the EU in as a regional grouping in the G-20. The Global Biofuel Alliance was an important step towards more research and delivery of alternative energy sources for a world still dependent on fossil fuels. Finally, an India-Middle East-Europe Corridor with the promise of U.S. investment has dazzling possibilities, but details of its funding and execution still need to be drawn out. India's attempt to take the G-20 outside of the ordinary, single-venue template, to hold 200 meetings in over 60 cities, drawing more than 1,00,000 official visitors from 125 countries, has been noted as a unique initiative, albeit at considerable extra cost; it remains to be seen whether future G-20s will find it a viable example to follow. Above all, India's G-20 leaves an indelible mark in its attempt to “popularise” an organisation seen till now as a staid and boring event bringing world leaders to a high table where arcane subjects are discussed, decisions made are not scrutinised, and without bringing real change to the lives of the wider global population. To that end, Mr. Modi's decision to hold a

virtual “review” meeting in November, before India gives up its presidency, is a chance to ensure implementation and scrutiny of the decisions made over the weekend, that has been dubbed “India’s G-20 moment”.

COMMENTS

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INDIA-UK HOLD 12TH ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL DIALOGUE (EFD) IN NEW DELHI

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - UK

The 12th Round of Ministerial India-UK Economic and Financial Dialogue was held today in New Delhi. The Indian delegation was led by Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman, Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs, and the U.K. delegation was led by Rt. Hon. Mr. Jeremy Hunt, MP, Chancellor of the Exchequer, U.K.



India and UK reiterated the commitment to deepen their collaboration on Financial Services, building on each other's strengths and supporting mutual aspirations towards financial inclusion and sustainable development. There was optimism in terms of the activities being done by India to promote financial services and investment in GIFT IFSC and UK's commitment to support the same.

The focus of the dialogue was also towards enhancement of the knowledge exchange, cooperation and support between India and UK to further the infrastructure development priorities, robust FinTech partnership and Sustainable Finance towards long-term growth objectives.

Both sides also deliberated on enhancing mutual cooperation on macroeconomic and multilateral issues. The two countries announced the India-UK Infrastructure Finance Bridge, a collaborative initiative to leverage expertise and investment in support of India's National Infrastructure Pipeline.

The Dialogue concluded with the adoption of the Joint Statement by Union Finance Minister of India and Chancellor of Exchequer of United Kingdom.



The meeting was also attended by the representatives from Ministry of Finance, Ministry of External Affairs, Reserve Bank of India, Securities and Exchange Board of India and International Financial Services Centres Authority. with representatives from UK Treasury, Bank of England and the Financial Conduct Authority.

At the sidelines of the Dialogue, the Ministers also participated in the India-UK Financial Partnership (IUKFP) meeting co-chaired by Mr. Uday Kotak and Mr. Bill Winters. The participants included key business leaders from India and UK as well as the representatives from financial regulators from both countries. The IUKFP meeting, *inter alia*, held discussions on policy papers as well as ideas for deeper financial exchange and collaboration between the two countries.



Annexure:

NB/VM/KMN

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Annexure:

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THE NEW DELHI LEADERS' DECLARATION REAFFIRMS THE WORLD'S COMMITMENT TO EQUITABLE AND SUSTAINABLE EDUCATION - SHRI DHARMENDRA PRADHAN

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

The Union Education Minister Shri Dharmendra Pradhan has expressed his deepest gratitude and sincere thanks to Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi for his visionary leadership of the G20, in keeping with India's timeless spirit of 'Vasudhaiv Kutumbkam' and bringing in a human-centric approach to ensure One Future for this One Family living together on this One Earth. This inclusive vision has been realized through India's leadership in the successful inclusion of the African Union (AU) into this coveted group, truly democratizing the G20 and lending strength to the voice of the Global South. In a statement to the media, Shri Pradhan said India's presidency is rightly being applauded for changing the global order based on consensus, collaboration and cooperation.

Speaking about educational priorities under G20, Shri Pradhan said that the New Delhi Leaders' Declaration, by prioritizing deliberations on critical areas like **Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN)**, **Tech-enabled learning**, **Building Capacities for Lifelong learning and the Future of Work** and **Strengthening Research and innovation through Collaboration**, has renewed the global resolve to work for an equitable and sustainable future through education and has provided a roadmap for the same. Shri Pradhan lauded the visionary leadership and clear narrative provided by our Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi to take forward the global education agenda under the G20 architecture. He said this has resulted in world recognition for India's education and skill ecosystem and endorsement for the major principles and priorities of our National Education Policy 2020.

The Minister further added that the Leaders' Declaration resonates with the education working group priorities on the three identified accelerators of Digital Transformation, Just Green Transition, and Women-led Development. This is reflected in the commitment to enhancing women's meaningful participation as decision makers, including in quality education; focus on developing Digital Public Infrastructure including in education, and promoting LiFE. Shri Pradhan also thanked Prime Minister for emphasizing in the Leaders' Declaration, the need to support accessible, affordable, safe and nutritious food and healthy diets in school meal programmes, which is the objective of our PM POSHAN programme.

The Education Minister further highlighted the following points on education that have been included in the Leaders Declaration :

Speaking on the follow up action being taken further to the G20 Education Working Group meetings, Shri Pradhan informed that research collaborations are being actively done with several countries. This is being reflected through our joint initiatives such as the signing of MoUs between Council of Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT Council), and the Association of American Universities (AAU) to establish the India-U.S. Global Challenges Institute, that will bring together leading research and higher-education institutions from across our two nations, to advance new frontiers in science and technology, spanning collaboration in sustainable energy and agriculture, health and pandemic preparedness, semiconductor technology and manufacturing, advanced materials, telecommunications, artificial

intelligence, and quantum science. We are also witnessing a many new emerging multi-institutional collaborative education partnerships, such as those between New York University-Tandon and IIT Kanpur Advanced Research Center, the Joint Research Centers of the State University of New York at Buffalo and IIT Delhi, Kanpur, Jodhpur, and BHU, in the areas of critical and emerging technologies, IIT Bombay joining the Chicago Quantum Exchange and the start of the India-US Defence Acceleration Ecosystem (INDUS-X) Similarly we are exploring university level collaborations with other countries like Australia, UAE, Taiwan, UK and others in many critical areas.

In the skill sector one of the key focus areas is the sanitization of transnational standards with member countries by creating an *International Reference Classification* of occupations based on skill and qualification requirements, leading to better cross-country comparability and mutual recognition of qualifications. This commitment included a pledge to establish well-managed, regular, and skills-based migration pathways that mutually benefit origin and destination countries. To support these efforts, they focused on identifying global skill gaps and prioritizing policies aimed at addressing them, which involved strengthening national statistical data and expanding the International Labor Organization (ILO) and OECD Skills for Jobs Databases to encompass G20 nations.

ILO and OECD proposed 12 basic and 14 extended indicators for monitoring and measuring global skill gaps. These indicators have been agreed to by the G20 countries. Going forward, ILO & OECD would be responsible for implementing the intervention to monitor and measure global skill gaps in G20 countries basis the agreed indicators.

Shri Pradhan shed light on how India's G20 presidency gave our education priorities, contextual realities and national initiatives, an acceleration and a platform for demonstrating long term systemic policy vision. By fostering collaboration, knowledge sharing, and innovative approaches, India and its G20 partners created impetus for furthering coordinated action on futuristic education and training systems, he added.

SS/AK

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INDIA AND RUSSIA EXPLORE NORTHERN SEA ROUTE (NSR), EASTERN MARITIME CORRIDOR (EMC) IN AN EFFORT TO WIDEN MARITIME COOPERATION

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - Russia

The Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways and Ayush, Shri Sarbananda Sonowal met with the Minister of the Russian Federation for the Development of the Far East and the Arctic, Mr. A.O. Chekunkov at the Pavilion of Kamchatka Territory, “Far East Street” in Vladivostok, Russia today. During the meeting, both the leaders discussed wide range of items of maritime communication between India and Russia to widen maritime cooperation including possibility of usage of new transport corridors like the Northern Sea Route (NSR) as well as the Eastern Maritime Corridor (EMC) between Vladivostok and Chennai. It was also decided that India and Russia agreed to train of Indian seafarers in Polar and Arctic waters at the Russian Maritime Training Institute, named after GI Admiral Nevelsky, which is equipped with simulator training facilities, in Vladivostok, Russia.



Speaking on the occasion, Shri Sonowal said, “The relationship between Russia and India has deep historical roots and is based on mutual respect and shared interests. We remain committed to maintaining strong ties and fostering strategic cooperation across various sectors. With the support from the Russian government, our team visited the ports of Vladivostok, Vostochny, Nakhodka and Kozmino in May, 2023, which helped us gain insights and collaboration forged during the visits to these ports has contributed to our understanding of requirements for the full-scale operationalisation of the Eastern Maritime Corridor (EMC). Our proposed workshop in Chennai will discuss the operationalisation of the EMC, and we envision to involve pertinent stakeholders involved in the trading and transportation of potential commodities such as coking coal, oil, and liquefied natural gas along this corridor. I am also happy to inform you that we have extended an invitation to Russia to participate at the upcoming Global Maritime India Summit (GMIS), 2023.”



Speaking at the meeting, the Minister of the Russian Federation for the Development of the Far East and the Arctic, Mr. A.O. Chekunkov, said, “We discussed the development of maritime communications between our countries, as well as the prospects for using the Northern Sea Route. This dynamic of contacts is the foundation for further strengthening our partnership. Cooperation with the Republic of India is one of the priorities of the international activities of our Ministry; we intend to develop relations with Indian partners in the Far East in all areas of mutual interest.”



Highlighting the role of other alternative routes for exploring trade and commerce opportunities between India and Russia, Shri Sonowal said, “India is keen to collaborate a partnership regarding the development of the Northern Sea route, recognising the potential it holds for enhanced connectivity and trade.”



Speaking on the alternative routes for trade, Mr AO Chekunkov said, “We agree with your conclusions that the potential cargo base of the line will be coking coal, oil, LNG and fertilizers. In the Far East, this product range is present in sufficient quantities, and in the east of India, the infrastructure to receive it is being built up. Taking into account the specialization of the Far Eastern ports, the project should be implemented in an expanded geographical scope, including other regions in addition to Primorye, primarily the Khabarovsk Territory. We are ready to visit Chennai this October on a business mission and, with the participation of leading Russian exporters, to develop mutually beneficial solutions with the Indian side for the launch of the above lines. The NSR is a global transport project. Its development can provide economic benefits to both Russia and non-regional states. For India, this is an opportunity to increase sales of shipbuilding products and gain income from participation in the general logistics business in northern latitudes.”

MJPS/NSK

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4TH G20 SUSTAINABLE FINANCE WORKING GROUP MEETING CONCLUDES IN VARANASI WITH FINALISATION OF THE G20 SUSTAINABLE FINANCE REPORT, 2023

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: G20

The 4th and the last meeting of the G20 Sustainable Finance Working Group (SFWG) held under India's G20 presidency, successfully concluded in Varanasi today. The two-day meeting witnessed proactive engagement from over 80 delegates from G20 member countries, invitee countries and International Organisations including World Bank, New Development Bank, among others. Many other organisations joined the meeting virtually.

Kicking off the 4th [#SFWG](#) meeting in Varanasi under [#G20India](#) Presidency, discussions underway on the progress so far and actions taken to advance [#G20](#) [#Sustainable](#) [#Finance](#) Roadmap. [@g20org](#) [@RBI](#) [#OneEarthOneFamilyOneFuture](#) [#VasudhaivaKutumbakam](#) [#Varanasi](#) pic.twitter.com/H8uEEvgZZI

The G20 Sustainable Finance Working Group (SFWG) aims to mobilise sustainable finance to help ensure global growth and stability, and promote the transition towards greener, more resilient and inclusive societies and economies. The main purpose of the Group is to advance international work to help scale up private and public sustainable finance and in doing so, accelerate the implementation of the Paris Agreement and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The G20 Sustainable Finance Roadmap, as finalized in 2021, is the core around which the SFWG functions and takes up future work.

Towards this end, the SFWG in 2023 carried out work for enabling finance for SDGs along with the mobilisation of timely and adequate resources for climate finance as agenda priorities. The SFWG during India's G20 presidency has made recommendations on the following six areas, viz, (1) Mechanisms for Mobilisation of Timely and Adequate Resources for Climate Finance; (2) Policy Measures and Financial Instruments for Catalysing the Rapid Development and Deployment of Green and Low-Carbon Technologies; (3) Scaling-up the adoption of social impact investment instruments; (4) Improving Nature-related Data and Reporting; (5) G20 Technical Assistance Action Plan; (6) Overcoming data-related barriers to climate investments. In addition, the members have finalised the compendium of case studies on financing SDGs and the compendium on non-price policy levers to support sustainable investments.

The G20 New Delhi Leader's Declaration 2023 which was adopted in the Leader's Summit held recently, has welcomed the work undertaken by the SFWG under India's G20 presidency. The four Sustainable Finance Working Group (SFWG) meetings were held in Guwahati, Udaipur, Mahabalipuram and Varanasi. The two-day meeting in Varanasi aimed at jointly agreeing on the final G20 Sustainable Finance Report 2023 that assimilates the work carried out by the SFWG in the form of recommendations for the identified priority areas. The 4th meeting also discussed the progress made by G20 members and International Organizations (IOs) on the G20 Sustainable Finance Roadmap.

Achieving sustainable development requires collective efforts from all member countries. All through the SFWG meetings, both the Co-Chairs, US and China, members and invitee countries, as well as international organizations actively participated and contributed in the finalization of deliverables as key outcomes under the SFWG this year.

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BHARAT BECOMES THE 13TH COUNTRY IN WORLD THAT CAN ISSUE INTERNATIONALLY ACCEPTED OIML (INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF LEGAL METROLOGY) CERTIFICATES

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Indian Diaspora

OIML is an Intergovernmental organization which was established in 1955. Bharat became its member in 1956. It has 63 Member States and 64 Corresponding Members. Bharat has now become authority for issuing internationally accepted OIML certificate for selling weights & measures anywhere in the world. To sell a weight or measure in the International market an OIML Pattern Approval certificate is mandatory, which Department of Consumer Affairs can issue now.

Bharat follows OIML recommendations and procedures of testing and calibration of weights and measures. The reports prepared by the Legal Metrology's Regional Reference Standards Laboratories are now acceptable to the OIML issuing authorities. Now, Bharat is an authority for issue of OIML pattern approval certificates and can act as support system for indigenous manufacturers. The domestic manufacturers can now export their weighing and measuring instrument worldwide without incurring additional testing fees, resulting in significant cost savings.

Bharat can also support the foreign manufacturers by issuing OIML pattern approval certificates from our certified RRLs. By issuing the OIML approval certificates of weighing & measuring instrument to the foreign manufacturers Bharat will also generate forex in terms of fees etc.

Bharat may now influence the OIML's policies and provide input to the OIML Strategy. This system allows OIML Certificates issued by OIML Issuing Authorities in OIML Member States to be accepted by other participants as the basis for issuing national or regional type approvals for measuring instrument. The other OIML Members can thus issue national type approval certificates without the need for expensive test facilities by relying on these certificates.

Bharat now joins an exclusive group of nations, including Australia, Switzerland, China, Czech Republic, Germany, Denmark, France, United Kingdom, Japan, Netherlands, Sweden, and Slovakia, as the 13th country worldwide, authorized for issuing OIML approval certificates.

Today, we proudly announce Bharat's ascent to the ranks of globally recognized OIML Certificates Issuing Authorities, a testament to our nation's commitment to quality standards and international trade facilitation.

Secretary (Consumer Affairs), Shri Rohit Kumar Singh, shared this significant achievement with the press during a conference, where a presentation and video were presented to illustrate the importance of this accomplishment.

Mr. Paul Dixon, Executive Secretary, OIML-CS, also joined from OIML's Paris Headquarters for the briefing, re-affirming Bharat's role as an OIML Certificates Issuing Authority and assuring continued cooperation.

AD/NS

OIML is an Intergovernmental organization which was established in 1955. Bharat became its member in 1956. It has 63 Member States and 64 Corresponding Members. Bharat has now become authority for issuing internationally accepted OIML certificate for selling weights & measures anywhere in the world. To sell a weight or measure in the International market an OIML Pattern Approval certificate is mandatory, which Department of Consumer Affairs can issue now.

Bharat follows OIML recommendations and procedures of testing and calibration of weights and measures. The reports prepared by the Legal Metrology's Regional Reference Standards Laboratories are now acceptable to the OIML issuing authorities. Now, Bharat is an authority for issue of OIML pattern approval certificates and can act as support system for indigenous manufacturers. The domestic manufacturers can now export their weighing and measuring instrument worldwide without incurring additional testing fees, resulting in significant cost savings.

Bharat can also support the foreign manufacturers by issuing OIML pattern approval certificates from our certified RRSLs. By issuing the OIML approval certificates of weighing & measuring instrument to the foreign manufacturers Bharat will also generate forex in terms of fees etc.

Bharat may now influence the OIML's policies and provide input to the OIML Strategy. This system allows OIML Certificates issued by OIML Issuing Authorities in OIML Member States to be accepted by other participants as the basis for issuing national or regional type approvals for measuring instrument. The other OIML Members can thus issue national type approval certificates without the need for expensive test facilities by relying on these certificates.

Bharat now joins an exclusive group of nations, including Australia, Switzerland, China, Czech Republic, Germany, Denmark, France, United Kingdom, Japan, Netherlands, Sweden, and Slovakia, as the 13th country worldwide, authorized for issuing OIML approval certificates.

Today, we proudly announce Bharat's ascent to the ranks of globally recognized OIML Certificates Issuing Authorities, a testament to our nation's commitment to quality standards and international trade facilitation.

Secretary (Consumer Affairs), Shri Rohit Kumar Singh, shared this significant achievement with the press during a conference, where a presentation and video were presented to illustrate the importance of this accomplishment.

Mr. Paul Dixon, Executive Secretary, OIML-CS, also joined from OIML's Paris Headquarters for the briefing, re-affirming Bharat's role as an OIML Certificates Issuing Authority and assuring continued cooperation.

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ASSESSING THE OUTCOMES OF G20 SUMMIT

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

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September 18, 2023 01:57 am | Updated 11:57 am IST

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi with U.S. President Joe Biden, Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, and President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen at the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment; India-Middle East-Europe Economics Corridor event during the G20 Summit 2023, in New Delhi. | Photo Credit: PTI

The [18th G-20 Summit](#) produced the '[New Delhi Leaders' Declaration](#)'. In the days building up to the summit, there was anxiety about the chances of its success. It hinged on the question of whether the summit would end in a consensus-based, full-spectrum declaration or in a 'Chair's summary', with its portions marked to show a split among the members. Yet, by the afternoon of day 1, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that complete consensus was reached on the declaration's contents. This, together with the [inclusion of the African Union \(AU\) in the G-20](#) as a member, turned concern into joyous celebration. Now it is time to evaluate the declaration and assess its value on the three-fold yardstick of consensus, additionality, and implementability (CAI). The attempt is to dissect only the more important elements of the text.

Editorial | [India's moment: on the G-20 Summit outcomes](#)

Six paragraphs of the 'Preamble' and the last paragraph of the 'Conclusion' reveal the goals and driving motivations of the G-20 leaders. "We are One Earth, One Family, and we share One Future", they noted. The notion of unity and a shared destiny was aptly stressed to convey the gravity of the multiple challenges facing humankind today. The way out for the world is to be driven by the "the philosophy of living in harmony with our surrounding ecosystem." They worked on harmonising development with environment, stating that "no country should have to choose between fighting poverty and fighting for our planet."

Paragraph 5 lists 12 goals to which the members are fully committed. These range from securing inclusive growth and accelerating full implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda to addressing debt vulnerability, reform of Multilateral Development Banks, and integrating the perspectives of the Global South into the "future G-20 agenda." The document's last paragraph reiterates the determination "to steer the world out of its current challenges" and build a bright future. That this will be a long-term project was evident.

Eight paragraphs were devoted to defining the grouping's view of what the preceding ministerial meetings had called "geopolitical issues." A fine balance was struck between the Russian red

line and the insistence by G7 on ensuring respect for “territorial integrity and sovereignty or political independence.” This middle path, crafted by Indian negotiators, with the valuable help from other countries’ diplomats, was seen as the only way to save the summit.

The general verdict was that Russia gained a little more, while the G7 lost a little to prevent the summit’s failure. The leaders agreed to call for “a comprehensive, just and durable peace in Ukraine.” Whether their labour will have any serious effect on the two warring sides and their backers remains doubtful.

The first-ever expansion of G-20 membership was imbued with much significance. The document depicts the AU as “a permanent member” even though G-20 does not have permanent and non-permanent members; it has only members and guests. The admission was agreed in the name of creating a more inclusive world. The leaders’ commitment on what follows will be watched with real interest; they observed, “We commit to strengthen our ties with and support the African Union realise the aspirations under Agenda 2063.” To begin with, G-20 may have to offer ample assistance to facilitate AU’s participation in G-20 activities at the level of governments and miscellaneous Engagement Groups.

G-20’s central agenda relating to economic and financial sectors, climate action and energy transitions, implementation of SDGs, technological transformation through Digital Public Infrastructure, reform of international financial institutions, trade, and taxation, and securing gender equality and empowerment of “all” women and girls is wide-ranging, ambitious, and even aspirational. Relevant domain experts are in a better position to assess the prospects of this agenda’s implementability. A question that is often asked is, from where will additional financial resources come for achieving all these goals? John Kirton, Director, G-20 Research Group at the University of Toronto, noted, “There was little new money mobilised for debt relief for developing countries, for reform of MDBs and the International Monetary Fund, for global health, or for food security, education and other social needs.”

Paragraph 47 propounds the view that global challenges of the 21st century can “only be addressed through reinvigorated multilateralism, reforms and international cooperation.” It wants the UN institutions to be “more responsive” to the entire membership. The need to make the global governance “more representative, effective, transparent and accountable” has been stated clearly. The fact that these formulations have the support of the entire G-20 leadership creates a glimmer of hope of some progress in the future, even though realism demands that the proponents of reform to remain cautious.

On the CAI yardstick, it is obvious that the declaration is not only backed by “100%” consensus, but it also breaks new grounds and records progress in terms of concepts, goals, and objectives, as compared to the Bali Declaration. The key criterion for the success of the summit is the degree of implementation of its decisions. But this will be accorded an answer only in the medium term.

Meanwhile, there should be no hesitation in recognising that the summit has been a major political and diplomatic success for G-20 and its current president, India.

Rajiv Bhatia is Distinguished Fellow, Gateway House, a former Ambassador and author

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SANCTIONS FOR CHANGE: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON AMERICA'S POLICY TOWARDS IRAN

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A [year after the death of Mahsa Amini](#), the 22-year-old Kurdish woman who was [arrested by Iran's morality police for allegedly flouting the country's mandatory hijab rules](#), anti-government [protests](#) seem to have lost their momentum. But the theocratic regime remains vulnerable to more such shocks. The Islamic Republic, which is struggling with economic woes due to crippling American sanctions, has witnessed a wave of protests, with a demand for reforms, and at times, regime change. The [protests triggered by the custodial death of Amini](#) had rattled the regime initially, which had sent mixed signals on disbanding the infamous morality police force and altering the hijab laws. But it later recovered from the setbacks and tightened the crackdown on the protesters. According to rights organisations, more than 500 people, including 71 minors, have been killed in the unrest and hundreds wounded and arrested in the past year. Iran has also executed at least seven people linked to the protests. On the first anniversary of Amini's death, there were reports of the security personnel detaining activists to prevent any kind of memorial events for the woman, whose name has emerged as a rallying cry for reforms and women's freedoms in a country that has been tightly held by Shia Mullahs since the 1979 revolution.

The Biden administration of the United States has [imposed a new set of sanctions on the first anniversary of Amini's death](#), targeting officials in Iran's security apparatus. President Joe Biden and other officials have repeatedly called out rights violations. But the U.S.'s policy towards Iran has its own problems. First, while the sanctions have hit the Iranian economy hard, inflaming resentment, they have done little in changing the behaviour of the regime. Second, when it comes to protecting its interests, Washington has chosen to engage with the Mullahs, irrespective of its rhetoric over human rights. The U.S. and Iran are in an advanced stage of finalising a prisoner swap deal as part of which the U.S. would agree to transfer some \$6 billion Iranian funds frozen in South Korean accounts to Qatar, which Tehran can tap for humanitarian purposes. Instead of this off-and-on hostility and engagement which is not helping the Iranian people, the West should adopt a more consistent policy of engagement and pressure to extract compromises from Iran in return for economic rewards. For the Mullahs, the recurring protests should serve as a reminder that a large section of the population has already turned hostile towards their reign. The protesters may not have attained a critical mass for now, but it may not remain so forever in a country with a history of radical revolutions if the underlying problems of economic crises, regime rigidity and lack of reforms are not addressed.

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SERIOUS ALLEGATIONS: ON CANADIAN PRIME MINISTER JUSTIN TRUDEAU'S CHARGES AGAINST INDIA

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[Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's startling allegation](#), tying the killing of [Canadian Khalistani leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar](#) in June, to “agents of the Government of India”, marks a new low in their unravelling ties. Mr. Trudeau’s accusation — he said evidence had been shared with India and also raised in a bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi last weekend — has set off a chain of events. After [Canada expelled a senior Indian diplomat](#), India summoned the Canadian High Commissioner and expelled Canada’s Station chief for intelligence on Tuesday. The United States and Australia, partners with Canada in the “Five Eyes” intelligence sharing agreement, have expressed “deep concerns” over the issue. The External Affairs Ministry has also accused Canadian diplomats of “anti-India” activities, indicating that more diplomats may be under scrutiny, while the Canadian government has spoken about the violation of the international rule of law, and of Canadian “sovereignty”, which could invoke other areas of confrontation. Given the support Mr. Trudeau received from his political rivals in Parliament, remarks critical of India by leaders such as Pierre Poilievre and Jagmeet Singh, it is also likely that the chill will outlast this government, if voted out in elections due in 2025. Unlike with Pakistan, where such allegations, name-calling and public confrontation have become routine, it is worth remembering that Canada is a part of the western NATO alliance, and home to Indians and Indian-origin Canadians, and the impact of the rupture will be felt wider.

The first step at such a fraught moment has to be some cold reflection over the next steps. For Mr. Trudeau, the priority must be to publicly prove his very serious allegations, or admit he is unable to. India’s assertions over Canadian safe havens for anti-India, separatist violent Khalistani groups have already been proven by many incidents, beginning from the early 1980s to more recent targeting of Indian diplomats and Indian community centres. That Nijjar, chief of the “Khalistan Tiger Force” — he was wanted in India, accused of being behind terror operations in Punjab in the 1990s, and had an Interpol red corner notice — was a Canadian citizen speaks for itself. New Delhi must also consider how it wishes to proceed on its ties with Canada. The government had hailed Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s visit to Canada in 2015, the first bilateral visit by an Indian PM since 1973, with the assumption that decades of mistrust over the Khalistan issue could be brushed aside. Earlier this year, India and Canada attempted another reset, with visits by Canadian Foreign Minister Melanie Joly, and fast-tracking free trade talks. However, after the acrimonious Trudeau-Modi meeting on the sidelines of the G-20, and the latest allegations by Mr. Trudeau, diplomatic niceties are clearly at an end, while the FTA talks

have been put on pause.

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THE 'MANTRAS' THAT POWERED SUCCESS AT THE G-20 SUMMIT

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At the opening session, in New Delhi | Photo Credit: Getty Images

Reports of the death of multilateralism are greatly exaggerated, it would seem, from the outcomes of the G-20 summit in India, especially the New Delhi Leaders' Declaration (NDLD). Throughout India's G-20 presidency, no ministerial meeting had been able to issue a joint statement and the 'Sherpas' most closely involved with negotiations said they often thought that they could not bring all the G-20 members on board in the context of the language of the document, especially on the subject of Ukraine. While the Sherpa team methodically whittled away at the language, ensuring a document that was acceptable to all, the government's bilateral forays succeeded in giving nearly all G-20 members a stake in the success of India's presidency. In the past year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Japan, Australia, the United States, the United Arab Emirates, France, South Africa and Indonesia, and hosted leaders of Germany, Italy, Australia and Japan, all members of the G-20 with considerable influence on the process. Regardless of their reasoning, the absence of Russian and Chinese Presidents at the G-20 summit ensured a less fractious gathering, and helped more than hindered. To look at it more broadly, it is India's policy 'mantras' of multilateralism, multipolarity and the "middle way" that won the day at Bharat Mandapam, the venue of the G-20 summit in Delhi.

To begin with, it is clear that the desire to support multilateralism is what drove the concessions made in order to achieve consensus at the G-20. The 'western bloc' comprising the G-7 countries (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the U.S.), the European Union (EU), and U.S. allies Australia and South Korea made the larger part of these concessions by agreeing to the removal of direct pointers to Russia in the operative paragraphs that referred to the war in Ukraine. The only mention of Russia in the statement was a positive one, pertaining to the Black Sea Grain Initiative, and the desire of all members to revive the mechanism that would give Russia more access to the international SWIFT financial system, and, in return, a removal of blocks to Ukrainian grain export.

In public statements, western bloc leaders and officials denied a climbdown, although proffering that the "preservation of G20" was their topmost consideration. Away from the cameras, they said the choice they were given was between agreeing to the statement finalised hours before the summit began, or to send the G-20 process to its "death". Had there been no joint declaration, questions would have been posed not just to India's leadership but also on the

sustainability of the G-20 itself (one of the only remaining organisations that includes the western bloc, the Russia-China combine, and the “non-aligned” group of India, Brazil, Argentina, Indonesia, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Türkiye). The last group is made up of countries that do not approve of the Russian war in Ukraine, but do not join western sanctions. And, coincidentally, nearly all (with the exception of Türkiye), members or observers of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

If New Delhi failed to find consensus at the G-20, the fear was that the G-20 itself would fragment, possibly into the G-7 western bloc, and the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) bloc. After all, the G-7 has stated its united stand on the Ukraine war, and BRICS (now made up of 11 countries), included a consensus paragraph on the Ukraine war at its summit, managing a joint statement despite the deep India-China tensions. It was equally significant that it was the “Troika-Plus” combine of Indonesia-India-Brazil-South Africa (the first such series of developing countries to be hosts/future hosts of the G-20), which proposed the winning formulation on Ukraine. Indonesia is the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) chair while South Africa is BRICS chair, and their multilateral heft added to their efforts. Japan too, as G-7 chair, played a role in bringing the U.S. and Europe on board. Eventually, the outcome strengthened the G-20 itself as an organisation that has pulled off a consensus two years in a row despite the polarising war in Ukraine. This is no mean feat given that the United Nations Security Council has not been able to forge a single non-vetoed resolution on the Ukraine issue since February 2022.

The other fillip to the success of the G-20 summit came from the growing support for a multipolar world — one which India has been a leading votary of. It has often been said that in the post-Cold war scenario, the U.S. has tried to build a unipolar world, China has pushed for a bipolar one (where it is the only challenger to America’s leadership of the world and the unrivalled leader of Asia), while India has sought a multipolar world.

The U.S. may remain the most powerful country in the world for the foreseeable future. But it has also given the world a glimpse of what it would mean were it to decline as a global power in the Donald Trump era (2017-2021), as the U.S. walked out of a number of multilateral and UN organisations, as well as the Paris Accord and the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action nuclear agreement with Iran. With the next U.S. presidential elections in 2024, where Mr. Trump and others with similar worldviews are contenders, it remains to be seen which way Washington will proceed. China’s remarkable rise over the 1990s-2010s has shown that it is a possible rival to the U.S. — Beijing will mark the tenth anniversary of its Belt and Road Initiative at a grand event in October. China’s spending of over one trillion dollars on infrastructure projects in tie-ups with about 90 countries, has given it untrammelled influence in many parts of the world. However, the manner of its rise has also spread discomfort. Its goodwill has been depleted by its actions such as those during the COVID-19 pandemic, its predatory financing of small countries, as well as its aggression toward its neighbours that includes transgressing boundaries with countries that include India.

In geographical terms, the Third Pole refers to the Hindu-Kush Himalayan Region, or upper South Asia, as it has the largest volume of ice and snow outside of the North and South Poles. In development economics, however, it is clear that the Global South is now seen as the third pole, and many global powers are coming to terms with its worth. While the Global South, made up of more than 125 countries, may not compare in wealth with the ‘North’, it is increasingly becoming a voice to be heard — a voice which resets the priorities at the global forum on issues such as development, climate change, health and the digital divide. India’s championing of the Global South, and within it the membership of the 55-nation African Union (AU), was another reason for the desired outcomes at the G-20. What is to be noted is the particular role of regional organisations in multilateral fora after the EU and AU; it will be the turn of ASEAN and

the Community of Latin American & Caribbean States (CELAC) to seek G-20 membership.

Finally, it is apparent that India's success at the G-20 owes itself to its decades-old tradition of abjuring alliances and following a "middle path" on global discord. This has meant making compromises at times, such as the Indian government's refusal to criticise or cut off ties with Russia, or to invite Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to address the G-20. But it has put India in a better position to be able to strike a balance between the Global South and North, and the East and West. It is this bridging role that is most needed in a time of global polarisation, keeping in mind what UN Secretary-General António Guterres said at the Delhi summit: "Because if we are indeed one global family, we today resemble a rather dysfunctional one."

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THREE YEARS OF THE ABRAHAM ACCORDS

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Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stands with U.S. President Donald Trump after signing the Abraham Accords on the South Lawn of the White House in Washington D.C. on September 15, 2020. | Photo Credit: Reuters

This week marks an important milestone for West Asia and North Africa: three years since the signing of the [Abraham Accords](#) between Israel and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain, under the auspices of the U.S. government. Three months later, in December 2020, [Morocco joined the process](#), signing a normalisation agreement with Israel.

The catalyst that enabled these historic accords was the decision by the parties to promote a stable future for West Asia.

The agreements have ushered in a new era of normalisation and peace that not only connects governments but also brings people together, despite the differences in their language, religious beliefs, cultures and more. The Abraham Accords have also opened up exciting opportunities for India and its thriving business community, which maintains strong relations and active engagement with our nations.

So far, the Abraham Accords have offered a mere glimpse into the full potential of regional cooperation. Even so, the scope of trade between Israel and other West Asian countries increased 74% between 2021 and 2022. Another example is tourism, mostly non-existent in the past, which has skyrocketed. In 2021, visits from Israel to the UAE increased by 172%. Meanwhile, the number of Israelis flying to Bahrain since the establishment of direct flights has increased exponentially.

The enhanced regional connectivity has also brought significant benefits to the people of India. The vibrant Indian diaspora in the Gulf now has the convenience of direct flights between the UAE and Israel, as well as between Israel and Bahrain. Indian students are enjoying increased ease of travel, gaining improved access to our universities and the opportunity to explore international study programmes.

The Accords have also had a significant influence on reinforcing Israel's relations with neighbouring countries. For example, the Prosperity Green & Blue agreement between Israel, the UAE, and Jordan determined that a solar field to supply 600 megawatts of electricity to Israel would be established in Jordan, while in return, a desalination plant in Israel would deliver 200

million cubic meters of water to Jordan.

Furthermore, the Accords have laid the foundation for expanded regional and multinational cooperation, and this has resulted in a flow of economic opportunities reaching India. Notably, we have witnessed substantial commercial collaborations between companies from the UAE, Israel, Bahrain, and the U.S., partnering with the Indian private sector.

A concrete illustration of this high-level economic cooperation between our governments is the establishment of the I2U2 Group, formed by Israel, India, the UAE, and the U.S. The Abraham Accords made the I2U2 Group possible, and its primary focus will be on joint investments in critical areas such as water, energy, transportation, space, health, and food security.

In a region where 65% of the population is under 30 years of age, providing the younger generation with opportunities is a key factor in preventing instability. To that end, youth delegations have been initiated, encouraging bonds between tomorrow's leaders. Delegations in which young influencers experience each other's cultures and visit important religious and historic sites while focusing on community building are effective tools for strengthening ties.

The Abraham Accords encourage collaboration and education. In the summer of 2022, Ben-Gurion University welcomed students from Morocco. Additionally, a number of Emirati students have enrolled in Israeli universities. Bahrain has also embraced the prospects for shared educational activities and signed a number of agreements with Israel to advance student and professor exchanges.

In a notable example of how these initiatives can foster mutual understanding, after Emirati Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan visited the Yad Vashem Holocaust Remembrance Center in Jerusalem, the UAE incorporated Holocaust education into its school curriculum as a mandatory subject, attestation to the ability of the Abraham Accords to foster coexistence and religious tolerance.

The Abraham Accords have shown unity's power to inspire. They offer a window into the potential future of the region and demonstrate that when both the leaders and ordinary citizens prioritise peace and cooperation, a far better future for West Asia is possible.

Israel hopes that many more countries will join this endeavour, creating a brighter tomorrow for the sake of all our children.

India holds a significant position among our partners, and the scope of our collaboration underscores our shared interests, including championing a sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, expanding trade, addressing climate change, and countering threats to international security.

Through the concerted efforts of our countries' public and private sectors, we are poised to deliver promising outcomes for the entire world. Our nations share a special bond with India and its people, and we remain committed to realising the full potential of the Accords as partners in peace and prosperity.

Naor Gilon is Israel's Ambassador to India

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VIETNAM, KEY PIECE OF AMERICA'S INDO-PACIFIC PUZZLE

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At the Presidential Palace in Hanoi | Photo Credit: AFP

In international relations, strategic turnarounds are not uncommon, and are in fact embedded in the very tapestry of anarchical structural realities. Yet, even by those standards, the immediacy and scale of the volte-face in relations between the United States and Vietnam since the Cold War has been remarkable. On September 10, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam Central Committee, Nguyen Phu Trong, and the U.S. President, Joe Biden, met in Vietnam during Mr. Biden's visit, marking a new phase in the bilateral relationship between the two countries. The standout from this meeting was the elevation of U.S.-Vietnam relations to a U.S.-Vietnam Comprehensive Strategic Partnership from a U.S.-Vietnam Comprehensive Partnership forged in 2013 between Vietnam President Truong Tan Sang and U.S. President Barack Obama.

Given the complex history of U.S. involvement in Vietnam during the Cold War, this elevation marks a significant step up. Vietnam's strategic restraint notwithstanding, motivations for an upgrade in bilateral relationship have existed on either side, at least since 2013, if not before. Vietnam's reservations about entering into a strategic partnership with the U.S. have both contemporary and historical relevance. The geopolitics involving China's growing belligerence in the Pacific theatre, felt most palpably in the waters surrounding Vietnam and the broader South China Sea, has proven to be a first order deterrent for Vietnam's great power engagements. On the other hand, the historical legacy of Vietnam's contested relations with the U.S. during the Vietnam War, an axile relationship with the communist states China and the Soviet Union, culminating in the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with Soviet Union in 1978, had together imparted a direction diametrically opposite to U.S. interests. This complex foreign policy legacy is the reason why hitherto Vietnam has entered into a 'comprehensive strategic partnership' with only four nations: China, Russia, India and South Korea.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Paris Peace Accords signed in 1973 to end the Vietnam War. Much water has flown under the bridge, in that Vietnam's relations with the U.S. have come a long way. Mr. Biden's Indo-Pacific policy now counts Vietnam as among the U.S.'s 'leading regional partners' in the region. Vietnam is the 10th largest goods trading partner of the U.S. In 2020, the total value of trade in goods and services between the U.S. and Vietnam amounted to approximately \$92.2 billion and exceeded \$138 billion in 2022. In May 2022, the

Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) was launched by the U.S., with Vietnam as a founding member along with 13 other countries to revive Washington's economic dynamism in the Asia-Pacific.

The Biden administration has depicted an unusual nimbleness in its strategic embrace of Vietnam. The visits by U.S. Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin and Vice President Kamala Harris to Vietnam in 2021, the meeting between Secretary Austin and Vietnamese Minister of National Defence of Vietnam General Phan Van Giang in Singapore in June 2022, and visits by U.S. Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken and Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen this year have culminated in Mr. Biden's visit and augmenting of the bilateral relationship.

The U.S.-Vietnam relationship is now rapidly expanding its bilateral spectrum with an emphasis on enhancing political trust, strengthening science, technology, health and digital innovation cooperation, training of high-quality workforce, addressing climate change, and establishing a strong defence relationship in the backdrop of China's increasing assertiveness. Addressing legacy issues underlines these cooperative efforts.

The war in Europe has thrown new challenges for Vietnam as its weapons import from Russia — its largest defence supplier — has been hit by West-led sanctions. These limitations in the face of Vietnam's resolve to modernise its military, coupled with an ever-growing assertiveness from China, is also gradually nudging Vietnam in a new direction. China's dramatic steps in 2014 to place oil rigs in Vietnam's Exclusive Economic Zone and subsequent assertive posturing have tested its avowed policy to stay clear of great power politics in the region. Undoubtedly, Washington senses an opportunity here and bolstering the defence and security relationship with Vietnam is a key piece of America's grand strategy in the Indo-Pacific.

An important component of Mr. Biden's visit was to start the process of friend-shoring supply chains in the semiconductor industry to Vietnam, even as it seeks to boost Hanoi's chip manufacturing capabilities. As the two countries seek an expanded economic partnership by increasing investments in critical technologies, chips and Artificial Intelligence, there is space for linking such partnerships across the broader realms of the Indo-Pacific with like-minded partners. India's initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET) partnership with the U.S. along with the Quad's Principles of critical and emerging technology could provide an overarching framework in the Indo-Pacific for a standardisation of technology in its design, development and use. A supply chain arch which extends from Vietnam to Europe via West Asia, and anchored by India with the newly-launched India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor during the recent G-20 meet in India could symbolise 'comprehensive strategic partnership' in an apt way.

Harsh V. Pant is Vice President for Studies at the Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi. Vivek Mishra is Fellow, Americas at the Observer Research Foundation

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INDIAN NAVAL SHIPS, SUBMARINE & LRMP AIRCRAFT REACH SINGAPORE TO PARTICIPATE IN SIMBEX 23

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

Indian Naval Ships Ranvijay and Kavaratti and submarine INS Sindhukesari arrived in Singapore to participate in the 30th edition of the Singapore India Maritime Bilateral Exercise (SIMBEX), an annual bilateral Naval exercise between the Indian Navy and Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN), which is being conducted since 1994. SIMBEX holds the distinction of being the longest continuous naval exercise that Indian Navy has with any other country.

SIMBEX-2023 is being conducted in two phases - Harbour Phase at Singapore from 21 to 24 September 2023, followed by a Sea Phase. Besides Ranvijay, Kavaratti and Sindhukesari, Long-Range Maritime Patrol Aircraft P8I is also participating in the exercise.

The Harbour Phase will witness a wide range of professional interactions, cross-deck visits, Subject Matter Expert Exchanges (SMEE) and sports fixtures, aimed at enhancing interoperability and mutual understanding between the two navies.

The Sea Phase of SIMBEX 23 will involve complex and advanced air defence exercises, gunnery firings, tactical manoeuvres, anti-submarine exercises and other maritime operations. Units of both the navies will endeavour to hone their war-fighting skills while consolidating their capability to undertake multi-discipline operations jointly in the maritime domain.





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POLITICAL RED HERRING: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON THE MOVE TO IMPEACH JOE BIDEN

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The recent announcement by the U.S. House of Representatives Speaker, Republican Kevin McCarthy, that the lower chamber of Congress would move to impeach President Joe Biden is likely to be along expected lines as far as Democrats are concerned. With the next presidential election in a little more than 13 months, the Republicans have much to gain by muddying the waters and distracting voters from the fact that the U.S. economy has rebounded from the pandemic-years slowdown. Amidst a dearth of obvious political targets within the Democratic machinery, Mr. McCarthy has chosen to go after the President's son, businessman Hunter Biden, training his guns on his business dealings that allegedly resulted in benefits accruing to the senior Mr. Biden during his term as Vice President in the Obama administration. The House majority case against the Biden clan appears to be tenuous. With regard to the August memorandum of the House Oversight Committee, which alleged that Mr. Biden and his associates were paid more than \$20m by "foreign sources", the Chair of the very same Committee, Republican James Comer, conceded recently that a scrutiny of bank records did not yield evidence. Similarly, allegations that the Biden "brand" was used to peddle influence in business matters to the favour of Mr. Biden do not appear to be standing up to scrutiny, according to a report from the Congressional Integrity Project, a Democrat-aligned watchdog group. Finally, claims based on an "unverified FBI tip", that Mr. Biden paid off prosecutors to end an inquiry into Burisma, a Ukrainian energy firm on whose Board Hunter Biden had a seat, have also failed to unearth a smoking gun; so too allegations, based on the testimony of two whistle-blowers that the Justice Department "intentionally interfered in a multi-year investigation into Hunter's tax return".

Even if Mr. McCarthy manages to drag Mr. Biden through a full impeachment, the 46th President will be acquitted in the Senate. The elephant in the House is the double impeachment of former U.S. President Donald Trump. Perhaps in a bid to seek a false equivalence to that dubious record and in the hope of dampening voter support for Democrats next year, Mr. McCarthy is attempting to simultaneously win favour with Mr. Trump and shore up his own wobbly support base in the House. Whatever his motivations, Mr. McCarthy's proposed public spectacle risks a serious voter blowback in next year's election, as Democrats may rally to Mr. Biden's cause in greater numbers, and the all-important independent voters may associate this manoeuvre with unproductive partisanship and Mr. Trump's long shadow over the Republican Party.

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INDIA AND THE GREAT POWER CONTEST IN WEST ASIA

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At the G-20 | Photo Credit: ANI

At the G-20 summit in New Delhi earlier this month, United States President Joe Biden and others unveiled a U.S.-backed infrastructure project to connect India, West Asia and Europe with shipping lanes, rail networks, pipelines and data cables. A week earlier, a high-level U.S. delegation had visited Saudi Arabia, chasing a normalisation agreement between the Sunni kingdom and the Jewish state of Israel, two of America's allies in the region. These seemingly unrelated but geopolitically contiguous developments offer a broad framework of Mr. Biden's approach towards West Asia, a geostrategically important region where the U.S. had a domineering presence for decades, but which is now being challenged by multiple factors.

Mr. Biden's West Asia strategy has two parts. One is the continuation of the Trump-era policy of bringing America's two pillars in the region — the Gulf Arabs and Israel — closer to meet their common geopolitical challenges such as Iran's rise. The Abraham Accords reached under Mr. Trump's tutelage set the stage for the transformation of Israel's ties with the United Arab Emirates. But the true potential of this policy would not be reached unless there is a deal between Israel and Saudi Arabia, arguably the most influential Arab country today. Mr. Biden, who as a candidate had vowed to make Saudi Arabia "the ***** that they are", has come a long way as President in reaching out to the Kingdom. The administration believes that a Saudi-Israel deal would transform Arab-Israel ties, strengthening the U.S.'s position in the region without further military commitments.

The second part of Mr. Biden's approach is to reassure America's friends and allies that the U.S. is not exiting West Asia. In 2012, leaders of India, Israel, the U.S. and the UAE held a virtual summit of what is now called the I2U2 minilateral. The idea behind I2U2 is to create a new platform that could expedite economic integration between West Asia and South Asia and offer economic and technological solutions to the problems faced by the Global South.

India's presence in a grouping of the Abraham Accords countries was seen as a legitimate recognition of India's presence in the region. The India-Middle East-Europe Corridor, announced at the G-20 summit (referred to in the first paragraph), enhances New Delhi's standing. It seeks to build an economic corridor from India's western coast, through the Gulf (the UAE and Saudi Arabia), Jordan and Israel, to the Mediterranean, bringing India and Europe closer. If this project takes off, the U.S. hopes that it could retain its channels of influence in West Asia, control the

major shipping lanes and reassure its allies of its staying capacity.

The U.S. may not want to exit West Asia, but it has deprioritised the region in terms of its security commitments as its focus has shifted back to Eastern Europe and East Asia. But the U.S.'s deprioritisation of the region does not diminish the strategic value or potential of West Asia. As the U.S. is pivoting to East Asia, China, which is dependent on imports for over 70% of its oil requirements, is enhancing its focus on West Asia. China has not only emerged as the biggest trading partner of America's Gulf Arab allies and a major investor in the region but has also shown a willingness to play a bigger role as peacemaker, which was evident in the Iran-Saudi reconciliation agreement.

This poses a dilemma to the U.S. deprioritisation of the region is a strategic reality for Washington as it is now facing far bigger conventional challenges in Russia and China. But it cannot just exit West Asia because China would try to fill the vacuum. America's answer to this challenge is to forge closer ties between its allies in the region and strengthen the U.S. security architecture, and bring India in as a bigger, stable partner to write the new rules of economic engagement and integration, competing with China. India seems willing to take this bet.

But it is to be seen how far the Biden plan would help the U.S. retain or extend its influence in the region at a time when China is trying to do the same thing. Primarily, the Biden plan is dependent on a potential Saudi-Israeli deal. But let us say such a deal is not improbable — Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman said in an interview recently that both sides are getting closer to each other every day. Even if a deal is materialised in the near future, there are other challenges.

The U.S. deprioritisation of the region has loosened its grip on its allies and left a security vacuum which have collectively prompted regional powers to autonomise their foreign policies and take steps toward a more predictable engagement with both friends and foes. This was evident in the Saudi-UAE détente with Iran, the decision to end the Saudi-led blockade of Qatar and the Arab reconciliation with Syria's Bashar al-Assad. Saudi Arabia and the UAE are also trying to formulate policies independent of U.S. goals and strengthening ties with rising powers. Their decision to join the BRICS grouping (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) is a case in point. So, they might welcome America's diplomatic push or economic integration plan, but they may not remain client states, like they were during the Cold War and the unipolar world, any more.

Second, the Biden administration, despite its limited engagement, continues to see Iran as a hostile power. Also, the rivalry between Iran and Israel would remain the central geopolitical contradiction of West Asia. By reaching a détente with Iran, Gulf Arabs have made it clear that they would not like to get stuck in the Iran-Israel rivalry, which has the potential to spill over into a conflict. Such an outcome would destabilise the region again, derailing America's plan to stay as a benevolent great power.

For India, the U.S.-China competition in West Asia opens new avenues of engagement. The U.S. sees India, with its size, the size of its economy and the legacy of its historical engagement and cultural connect with the region, as an important partner in its bid to continue to shape West's Asia's geopolitics. India should welcome the moment but should not look at it through the prism of another Cold War — or it should not put all its eggs in one basket as it did in Afghanistan. It is already part of the near-functional International North-South Transport Corridor that connects India to Russia through Iran and Central Asia. The 'Middle East Corridor' would open another economic channel. India's overall policy towards the region should stay anchored in this idea of multi-engagement — not in appeasing or containing any great power. With or without the U.S., or irrespective of China's presence in the region, India should strive to play a

major geopolitical role in West Asia, its extended neighbourhood, without upsetting its traditional balance.

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AN ECONOMIC CORRIDOR, THE ISRAEL LINK AND THE GEOPOLITICS

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September 25, 2023 12:08 am | Updated 12:08 am IST

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A the G-20 summit | Photo Credit: ANI

The 2023 summit of the G-20 under India's presidency went exceptionally well given the group's limited economic approach to the complex issues that the world faces, from climate change and underdevelopment, wealth concentration and poverty and, most critically for our times, falling democratic norms and principles of peace. India's remarkable success at the summit this year, in early September, was captured by the global press, except in China, for various outcomes such as the inclusion of the African Union in the G-20, a tangible offer of clean energy through a biofuel alliance, increasing substantial aid for Asia-Africa, an economic corridor that connects India, West Asia and Europe using an ambitious rail and shipping link, and the Delhi Declaration which was a joint statement of all the group.

The joint statement called the Delhi Declaration is newsworthy because of the fractured international order and power struggles between India and the United States with China or the U.S. with Russia. Despite the absence of China's President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin at the summit, India still got their agreement for the declaration which sums up the achievement. Substantially speaking, the statement is *pareve* (the Hebrew word for characterless things; read banal here) as it does not name Russia for aggression against Ukraine; but it does evoke the United Nations charter and principles of territorial sovereignty. An Indian official revealed the recipe for this over-applauded collective statement: "India needed a text that had something for everyone, so that each member can go back with a win."

But the boldest outcome, and unanticipated by many, was the announcement of the economic corridor (the "India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor"), of a rail-ship route, to transport goods to Europe from India via the United Arab Emirates-Saudi Arabia-Jordan-Israel. Such a project will change the geopolitics for the future. The fact that it challenges China's Belt and Road Initiative is beside the more significant point. U.S. President Joe Biden called it 'a real big deal', which is transformative for all those involved and the rest of the world. Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was prompt to show that Israel has been eager to be a part of such a project.

Interestingly, in the statement, Mr. Netanyahu thanked Mr. Biden, and did not mention Mr. Modi for this idea and initiative to which Israel will provide all its skills and support. Mr. Netanyahu is

forbidden from diplomatic trophies due to his domestic politics and not paying attention for long to the expectations of Mr. Biden's foreign policy goals. If he persists on this path, Israel's foreign policy will suffer. The normalisation of ties with Saudi Arabia is a precondition for this economic corridor to materialise.

In its report on the G-20, Arab News found that 'India's G20 leaders' summit had an unprecedented Middle Eastern Presence'. India 'set a precedent in G20 history by inviting the most Middle Eastern countries ever to take part as guests in the group's key summit', and one wonders why Israel, India's strategic partner also from the region, was not given such an invitation. As a host, India invited nine non-member countries — Bangladesh, Egypt, Mauritius, Netherlands, Nigeria, Oman, Singapore, Spain, and the United Arab Emirates — to the summit. It is all the more perplexing when the economic corridor was to be announced at the same summit and Israel is a part of the plan. Mr. Modi and Mr. Netanyahu share a good friendship. Perhaps factors such as a meet between Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and Mr. Netanyahu may have been impossible unless there was diplomatic normalisation. Mr. Biden might have also preferred an event without Mr. Netanyahu because he has avoided him for the last eight months due to his domestic politics.

Saudi Arabia is willing to end the diplomatic boycott of Israel. It is a historical change because such an acceptance of Israel by the most important, religiously speaking, Muslim country, will help Israel with other countries such as Pakistan (already willing), Indonesia and Malaysia. For such a change, Saudis demand that Israel commits to the two-state solution and the well-being of the Palestinian people, even if the occupation does not end soon. Currently, on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, Saudi Arabia, in partnership with the Arab League and the European Union, has joined forces with Egypt and Jordan to launch a 'Peace Day Effort' aimed at incentivising Israelis and Palestinian leaders to compromise. Israel-Palestine peace is a very challenging aim and given the rise of extremism on both sides, it appears all the more impossible. Saudi Arabia is aware of it and is still interested in having deliberations to walk smoothly among Arabs and other Muslims while working with the Biden administration to make peace with the State of Israel. The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor will have to wait until this happens.

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WAR IN CAUCASUS: ON AZERBAIJAN'S RECAPTURE OF NAGORNO-KARABAKH

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September 26, 2023 12:10 am | Updated 09:06 am IST

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[Azerbaijan's brisk military recapture of Nagorno-Karabakh](#), an Armenian-populated enclave within its borders, shows the changing [power dynamics in the Caucasus](#), where American, Russian and Turkish interests collide. The roots of the conflict go back to the final days of the Soviet Union when the enclave's majority Armenian-Christian population held a referendum to break away from the Shia majority [Azerbaijan. Nagorno-Karabakh](#) was then run by Armenian separatists, backed by the Republic of Armenia, until recently. In 2020, Azerbaijan, backed by Turkey, fought Armenia, a Russian treaty ally, and captured much of Nagorno-Karabakh. The Russians then did little to help Armenia, but brokered a ceasefire that left Stepanakert, Nagorno-Karabakh's biggest city, in the hands of the locals. The peace did not hold. Azerbaijan blockaded the Lachin Corridor, the main road connecting Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia, leaving the 1,20,000 population of the enclave to face mounting economic miseries. Facing international criticism for the blockade, Azerbaijan promised to lift it, but established a checkpoint, continuing to control the flow of goods and medicines. Last week, it attacked Stepanakert, forcing the separatists to hand over full control to Baku.

In effect, Azerbaijan achieved in a day what it had failed to do in three decades. Two major geopolitical shifts seem to have helped Baku. First, Turkey, keen to play a bigger role in the Caucasus region, the former periphery of the Ottoman Turks, threw its weight behind Azerbaijan, with political and military support. Second, Russia's Ukraine invasion, which tied Moscow to its western front, has led to a substantial erosion of Russian power in the Caucasus. Armenia had often expressed displeasure with Russia's lack of action. Moscow did nothing besides issuing statements when Azerbaijan gradually dismantled the ceasefire agreement. Baku realised that the geopolitical situation favoured it and then moved in to take over the enclave. It is widely recognised that Nagorno-Karabakh is a part of Azerbaijan. But there is a history of mistrust and violence. Armenians in the region, having gone through a genocide and several conflicts, have a sharp historical memory and remain wary of any change in the status quo. Azerbaijan's takeover has triggered a massive refugee outflow to Armenia. There are already allegations that Baku is committing genocidal crimes. For Azerbaijan, this can be an opportunity to integrate Nagorno-Karabakh without further bloodshed. But for that, Baku should ensure equal rights for the Armenian population and respect its autonomy. If not, Azerbaijan could face prolonged local resistance, which could not only deny it a clean victory but also turn its quest to control the enclave ugly.

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G-20 DIPLOMACY AND A SHIFTING WORLD ORDER

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'India, for its own sake, has to be wary, given the fluid situation across the globe' | Photo Credit: ANI

India scripted amazing success at the G-20 meeting in Delhi on September 9 and 10 and, despite the odds, succeeded in producing a consensus Declaration worthy of an event of this magnitude. Securing an agreement on almost a hundred issues on the agenda, apart from that on the Russia-Ukraine war, was no mean achievement. All told, the G-20 outcomes seemed to mirror the hopes and the wishes of the wider global community. India, as the host, could rightfully take a large measure of credit for this result. The New Delhi Declaration does indeed seem to have something for everyone. From condemnation of terrorism to climate issues, from trebling of renewable energy capacity to matters such as lifestyle for sustainable development and reform of multi-lateral development banks, apart from highlighting India's contributions such as digital public infrastructure and Unified Payments Interface, the Declaration seemed to echo the prevailing mood in the G-20 of favouring compromise over conflict and fully endorsing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's dictum of "One Earth, One Family, One Future".

Consensus on the Ukraine conflict became possible with the West agreeing to 'climb down' from its demand not to point fingers at Russia for the Ukraine conflict, and giving up on the insistence to proclaim Russia as guilty. The New Delhi Declaration thus sharply differs from the Bali Declaration of November 2022 where, by a majority vote, the Russian Federation was condemned for its aggression in Ukraine. The difference between two Declarations is that while Bali was accusatory in tone, New Delhi sought a resolution to the conflict. Russia and China have since hailed the New Delhi Declaration in sharp contrast to their criticism of the Bali Declaration.

For India, which is a founder-member of the G-20, formed in 1999 as a grouping of Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors (it was upgraded to summit level in 2008), and which hosted the G-20 meeting in 2002 (of Finance Ministers and central bank governors), the world has come full circle. Today, India is amongst the leaders whose word counts. A better outcome could not have been wished for.

Euphoria about the G-20 outcome under India's presidency, however, needs to be tempered, given the many dark clouds that exist on the horizon. China might have welcomed the Delhi Declaration, but there is inherent foreboding in its affirmation that the G-20 was intended to be a 'forum for economic cooperation' and 'not a platform for resolving geo-political and security

issues'. Also, while welcoming the establishment of an India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor Plan (announced during the G-20), China has sent an implicit warning that it should 'not become a geo-political tool'. It is evident that China's perception is that the G-20 was being used by the West solely to try and impose its world view. A few other world leaders also do not seem to have given the Delhi G-20 a 'thumbs up', with some observing that hardly any of the geo-strategic and geo-economic issues had been sorted out. The South Korean President, for instance, warned that the world is in a 'period of poly-crisis encompassing geo-political competition, spiralling inflation and continuation of the protracted war with Ukraine'.

India, for its own sake, has to be wary, given the fluid situation across the globe. China remains a hegemon in Asia, notwithstanding China's economy becoming embroiled in an extended stalemate. While many in the West view China's situation of 'debt deflation and demographic decline' as an opportunity, they remain oblivious to the reality of China's known capacity to resort to various means to overcome its problems. India, however, cannot afford to do so.

India remains an obvious target for China and is in its 'cross-hairs'. While the West can possibly live with a situation in which several of its strategies to contain China have failed, India cannot. Two aspects — the West's acknowledgment of India's growing economic strength, and India's membership of the Quad (which is now openly accepted as a key grouping in the anti-China phalanx) — call for abundant caution on India's part, since China is unlikely to take kindly to either.

Ineluctably, the character of G-20 has been changing in recent years. Contrast the role of G-20 during the 2008-09 economic crisis, (when leading economies tried to find ways and means to prevent the world from plunging into a prolonged economic crisis) with its role in recent years, where the main focus of the G-20 has been on global political conflicts and less on the nature of the global economic landscape. Many analysts hew to the view that under the rubric of the G-20, a subterranean conflict is being waged today by two opposing blocs to alter the balance of power. The two camps (one led by the West and the other by China-Russia) have already earned the sobriquet of 'enduring rivals', engaged in a battle for global supremacy.

The 'rules-based world order', meanwhile, has become a 'catch-all phrase' of merely one segment. The reality is that the world faces 'emerging world disorder', the return of two antagonistic blocs, and shrinking space for the non-aligned. The stalemate in the Ukraine conflict and the eclipse of Russia's hope of a quick walkover in Ukraine seem to have encouraged the U.S. to strengthen and expand the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) under its leadership.

A new NATO is set to become even more dependent on the U.S. for military supplies and capabilities, to be able to act as a bulwark against 'Russian expansionism'. It has, in turn, raised the prospect of a U.S.-equipped 'territorial force' emerging in Ukraine. Outside Europe, a number of non-NATO allies are being inveigled to join a U.S.-led alliance to counter 'authoritarianism' (represented by Russia and China) which is proceeding apace. Japan and South Korea have already capitulated to the West's wooing. Australia has become a key partner in the U.S.-led alliance in the Southern Hemisphere.

Russia and China, in turn, are deepening their 'strategic alignment'. Countries such as North Korea are cementing their relations with this bloc. The recent meeting in Moscow between Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has further deepened their relationship. China is exploiting its frontage in the Pacific Ocean to openly challenge U.S. naval power here. Russia and Türkiye have deepened their relationship based on shared interests and the personal friendship between Mr. Putin and the Turkish leader, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Russia is once again seeking to expand its footprint in Africa, and Russia's recent

agreement to supply food grains to African States at subsidised prices, or even for free, is aimed towards this end.

The many new alignments are set to deal a death blow to the concept of non-alignment. It is proving increasingly difficult for countries to remain non-aligned in the truest sense of the word. Even existing formations such as BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) are tending to find the situation untenable. Given the multiplicity of relationships and the 'lattice work' of security agreements that have emerged, the space for non-alignment has dramatically shrunk.

With the strengthening of rival camps holding divergent visions of the international order, the world confronts a dismal future. It may not be too far wrong to surmise, that notwithstanding all the glitz surrounding the 18th G-20 in New Delhi and the obligatory references to the importance of the Global South among its priorities, countries such as India (despite all the hard work they put in), will still remain notional pieces on the checkerboard of international politics, with hardly any decisive voice in determining the course of world events.

M.K. Narayanan is a former Director, Intelligence Bureau, a former National Security Adviser, and a former Governor of West Bengal

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THE NEED FOR QUIET DIPLOMACY TO CLEAR THE AIR

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi extends his hand for a handshake with his Canadian counterpart Justin Trudeau in New Delhi on February 23, 2018. | Photo Credit: Reuters

Indian and Canadian leaders and diplomats have never really engaged; rather, they have talked passed each other. This is occurring today too. For decades, India has felt that Canada has shown scant respect for its interests, especially on the Khalistan issue. On the other hand, Canada believes that India displays little understanding of its laws and governance system, which prevents it from taking actions that India wants. These differing perceptions have been accumulating over the years and a trigger was needed to publicly bring them out. The Nijjar case has been just that.

Significantly, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said, “Canada has shared the credible allegations that I talked about... with India. We... are there to work constructively with India and we hope that they engage with us so that we can get to the bottom of this very serious matter”. The operative words here are “constructively” and “engage”. For India, the problem is that Canada has never shown a willingness for a constructive engagement on its concerns.

At the UN headquarters on September 21, Mr. Trudeau emphasised that Canada is a country based on the rule of law, and on the need for the global community to uphold a rules-based world order. Canada has obviously made the murder of Hardeep Singh Nijjar a test case for upholding such an order. Implicit in its approach is the proposition that whatever may be the grievances of a country against Canada, the causing of harm to any its nationals is unacceptable. Canada's allies — the U.S., the U.K., and Australia — are clearly endorsing this proposition by asking India to cooperate with Canada in the investigation. The Indian government has called Mr. Trudeau's accusation “absurd” and “motivated,” but has offered to look into Canadian concerns if it is given specific evidence.

For India, national laws cannot become a shield for calling for secession and staging protests which glorify murder. If there is an absence of such laws, then it is necessary for a country to enact them. What Canada is currently doing is condemning Khalistani propagandists involved in hate speech, but not taking legal action against them. There is also a deeper issue. The Canadian law enforcement system does not seem to trust the Indian system. Otherwise, what can be the reason for Khalistani supporters, accused of violence and murder in India, not being sent back to face the law? The principle of ‘constructive engagement’ that Canada wants demands a quiet engagement on the entire gamut of legal processes and practices of both

countries so that all grievances can be satisfactorily addressed.

This is especially so because a strong body of Indians believes that Canadian approaches to governance systems of countries like India is coloured, if not racist. For them, the intrusive questions raised by Canada of Indian visa seekers who belong to the security services are unacceptable, for example. They ask if U.S. and British security or defence services personnel who have served in the world's troubled spots or are accused of torture are asked similar questions. It is the sovereign right of states to give or deny visas, but it is clearly an infringement of the global rules-based order to seek answers that violate a country's laws and rules. A full bilateral engagement is needed on this issue too.

Indian frustrations with Canada on the Khalistan issue go back more than four decades. The Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) was established in 1984. As many CSIS officers were taken from the police, they were aware of Khalistani activities which, as Stewart Bell notes in his work *Cold Terror*, began in 1969 when the Khalistan Commando Movement led by Jagjit Singh Chauhan "declared unilateral independence for Punjab" and set up "consulates" in Vancouver, Winnipeg, and Toronto. The Canadian authorities did not take these seriously even when it became apparent in the 1980s that Khalistani supporters were willing to use terror. Tragically, Air India's Kanishka bombing in June 1985 did not lead to a determination in Canada that terrorism was a universal threat. The threads of Khalistani terror go back to India's western neighbour. India has given evidence on this score but if Canada and other countries wish to have a quiet dialogue on any of these aspects, India should be willing to have one.

This background is necessary to recall because it has contributed to Indian responses to Canada's recent charges. Besides, it would have been wiser for Mr. Trudeau to have sought "constructive engagement" in the Nijjar case in his remarks to the Canadian Parliament; instead, he used harsh language. Mr. Trudeau should have also refrained from expelling a senior Indian diplomat. That would have elicited a more measured Indian response. The Indian tradition of calmly but firmly responding to diplomatic situations has given way to 'giving it back'. This is popular but is it wise? Measured language is an attribute of strength.

Canadian officials have publicly refused to divulge the exact nature of the intelligence they possess. They have leaked to the media though that they have human and signals intelligence of India's involvement in Nijjar's murder. Naturally, all this has to be converted into evidence which will stand judicial scrutiny. Is this likely even if Canadian allies with Khalistani populations have made it known that they helped Canada gather intelligence in the case? Mutual recriminations are never helpful, especially in resolving issues in important bilateral relationships. Quiet and mature diplomacy is required to clear the air on the Nijjar case and on old but continuing issues.

Vivek Katju is a retired member of the Indian Foreign Service

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PAKISTAN'S INTERNAL CHALLENGES, SHIFTING DYNAMICS

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Taliban security personnel at the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in Torkham | Photo Credit: AFP

Former Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani's persistent efforts to engage Pakistan to rectify its strategic errors in Afghan policy, faced unmet expectations. In a critical meeting in May 2021 between Mr. Ghani, the Pakistan Army Chief, General Qamar Javed Bajwa, the head of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence, Lt. General Faiz Hamid, and the Chief of Defence Staff of the United Kingdom, Gen. Sir Nicholas Patrick Carter, it became evident that promises made by the Pakistani military were often diluted through their chain of command. Mr. Ghani noted a consistent drop in implementation percentages, as orders traversed from Gen. Bajwa to Gen. Faiz Hamid to subordinate field commanders. This decline, attributed to a sympathetic disposition of mid-level commanders towards the Taliban, underscored the complexities within Pakistan's military.

However, following the Taliban's unexpected triumph in Afghanistan, the mood shifted dramatically within Pakistan. A sense of victory, liberating Afghanistan from a perceived oppression, led to celebrations and jubilation among military and political leaders. Yet, as the international community's views transitioned from jubilant acceptance to the condemnation of the Taliban's actions, Pakistan's claims of being a victim of terrorism found little traction. A similar scepticism resonated from within Pakistan, where doubts persisted about the military's narratives.

Mr. Ghani's insistence that Pakistan's chosen military approach in Afghanistan represented a lose-lose-lose scenario remained steadfast.

In the wake of the Taliban's seizure of Kabul, Pakistan witnessed a shift that caused concern. The Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) saw almost 40 allied groups joining its ranks, triggering a surge in insecurity that was marked by a rise in suicide attacks. Pakistan now found itself as the new battleground. The TTP's emboldenment fuelled this transformation through the Taliban's victory in Afghanistan, while Pakistan grappled with an intensifying phase of radicalisation.

Strategically, Pakistan's military, facing criticism and security lapses, sought to shift focus from its Afghan policy. The Afghan Taliban became the target of blame, with accusations of inaction against the TTP, which allegedly exploited Afghan soil for attacks inside Pakistan. Contrarily, the Afghan Taliban dismissed TTP as a domestic concern, revealing internal divisions and mutual

distrust.

The TTP emerged as a more potent force, displaying heightened sophistication across domains — structural, communication, and public relations. Bolstered by existing grievances and the marginalisation of the Pashtun and Baloch communities, the TTP capitalised on radicalised groups across Pakistan, particularly in Punjab. Can Pakistan effectively combat the TTP? The outlook is grim. Ingrained structural grievances, widespread radicalisation, and a degree of local sympathy all play into the TTP's favour. Noor Wali Mehsud, the Amir of TTP, outlined the group's resurgence in his book, *Inqilab Mehsud*. The text emphasises local alliances and organisational discipline, while mirroring the Afghan Taliban's provincial structure with a focus on urban insurgency. Employing slick media tactics, the TTP strategically comments on financial, governance, and corruption issues, in order to rally public support.

The TTP leverages a potent narrative that resonates with Pakistanis, exploiting existing divisions and grievances while presenting Afghanistan's Taliban success as a model for governance. In contrast, Pakistan's present government narrative is feeble due to economic struggles, governance lapses, a fragmented political elite, and societal divisions. Events such as those on May 9 in Pakistan, underscore public frustration with the military's role. Additionally, the absence of support from the United States in terms of intelligence, drone operations, and financial aid further compounds Pakistan's challenges.

A significant shift in strategy has become evident. Pakistan's historical pursuit of strategic depth in Afghanistan, which encompassed the backing of non-state actors against amicable governments, has undergone a notable alteration. The dynamic has reversed with the Afghan Taliban securing a strategic foothold within Pakistan. This was achieved through the backing of entities such as the TTP and other radical groups operating within Pakistan. Should the Taliban decide to take action against the TTP, it risks forfeiting its leverage against Pakistan in its future dealings. The TTP, formerly aligned with the Afghan Taliban, is now engaged in 'jihad' inside Pakistan, signifying a multifaceted partnership that has spanned over two decades.

There are several reasons why the Afghan Taliban cannot and will not take solid military action against the TTP. First, the Afghan Taliban avoids strong action against the TTP to avert internal division, preventing the potential loss of its ranks to the TTP or other extremist factions such as the Islamic State—Khorasan Province and al-Qaeda. Second, the Taliban comprehend that antagonising the TTP could result in them losing secure havens across Durand Line which they once utilised when facing off against international forces and Afghan security (all under the shelter of the TTP's umbrella). The TTP has the capability and a strategic geographical edge that could challenge the Taliban's authority in Afghanistan. Should the Afghan Taliban's dominance be contested, the TTP has the potential to forge alliances with other groups to mount a formidable challenge. Third, Pakistan's historical use of religious madrasas to exert influence and issue fatwas against Afghan governments is now in the hands of the Afghan Taliban. Their extensive network established in the last 25 years within Pakistan, involving students, teachers, and friends across thousands of madrasas, provides substantial support. Fourth, while Pakistan once tolerated public charity drives to fund the Afghan Taliban, according to many local sources, similar support is now flowing from Afghans to TTP groups, complicating the situation and indicating a paradigm shift.

Navigating a way forward demands a thorough re-evaluation of Pakistan's policy on cultivating radical Islamist groups, domestically and internationally, for the sake of foreign policy gains. Notably, while many nations that once supported Afghan resistance against the Soviet invasion, including the Gulf states in the 1980s, have abandoned the practice of backing global Jihadist and Islamist militant groups, Pakistan remains steadfast in continuing this policy, a choice that now casts a shadow over the nation's trajectory. Rather than seizing the opportunities presented

by the era of globalisation, and economic growth, Pakistan has persisted in channelling its resources toward cultivating terrorist organisations. Hence, it is imperative that the nation's military redefine its role to prioritise the interests and welfare of the populace, respecting the mandate of civilian governance.

The Pakistan military must lend its support and create a partnership with the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM). This movement advocates regional peace and takes a stand against Pakistan's dual-centric policy, which involves nurturing militancy to safeguard the military's interests along the Pakhtoon belt of Pakistan across the Durand Line.

Moreover, the urgency of veering away from exporting radicalism is underscored by rampant radicalisation within the country, pervasive poverty, the beleaguered state of the economy, and India's continued advancements. Pakistan stands at the crossroads, where adopting a new path is imperative to secure a more stable and prosperous future and establish working relationships with its neighbours, specifically India and Afghanistan.

Tragically, the price of the recent abysmal policies executed by the military leadership is borne by the innocent citizenry. It is disheartening to witness individuals with abundant talent and resources grappling with the harsh reality of mere survival; and for some, even survival is a distant aspiration.

Aziz Amin is a fellow at the Brenthurst Foundation. He has served as the Principal Secretary and Special Assistant to former President Ashraf Ghani of Afghanistan. Prior to this role, he worked for Afghanistan's Independent Election Commission as Deputy CEO, Director-General of Public Communication and Donor Relations at the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing, and Director of Policy Research Analysis and Development for the Office of the President. Twitter: @iamazizamin

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FREE FALL: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON THE CANADA-INDIA DIPLOMATIC ROW AND THE WAY OUT

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India and Canada took their [diplomatic row](#) over the killing of [Canadian Khalistani activist Hardeep Singh Nijjar](#) into the rink at the UN General Assembly this week. External Affairs Minister S. [Jaishankar warned](#) that the response to “terrorism, extremism and violence” should not be determined by “political convenience”, in what seemed to be a reference to India’s concerns over Khalistani extremism in Canada. He added that countries must not “cherry pick” when to respect “territorial integrity and non-interference in internal affairs” — a clear reference to Canada’s allegations that Indian “government agents” were responsible for the Nijjar killing in Surrey in June. Canadian UN Ambassador Robert Rae [appeared to double down on the Canadian allegations](#), as he spoke about the “extent to which democracies are under threat” due to foreign interference. In effect the statements reflected the impasse between both countries more than 10 days since Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau made his claims in the Canadian Parliament. After expelling each other’s diplomats, India and Canada have curtailed people-to-people ties. While [India has suspended all visas to Canadians](#), Canada has put trade talks on hold. These actions have been taken even before Canada has made any evidence of its allegations against India public, and New Delhi has reiterated that despite two visits by the Canadian National Security Adviser to discuss the Nijjar issue, no concrete evidence has been provided. Nor has Canada completed its own investigation or begun any trial. Despite this, there have been calls from Canadian [“Five Eyes” allies](#) that India must cooperate, indicating some pressure from Canada.

The only way out is for Canada to take the first step in proving its allegations, which, in the absence of verifiable evidence, seem to have been levelled prematurely. Mr. Jaishankar has made it clear that such judicial inter-state killings are not the policy of the Indian government. However, it is hard to believe that the leader of one of the most developed countries would make these claims without sufficient cause, and if evidence is shared, the next logical step would be for New Delhi, which has denied the allegations strenuously, to cooperate on any information needed to conclude the Canadian investigation. India’s grievances against Canada for “soft-peddling” the issue of Khalistan extremism and providing “safe havens” for wanted terrorists, as well as Canadian claims of rights violations by security forces in Punjab, and Indian intelligence operations in Canada, date back to the 1980s, and these were the cause of their high-level engagements being frozen for decades. However, never before have trade, travel and tourism ties been cut down so quickly as in the past week. With students, the business community, and the diaspora feeling the brunt, it is hoped the two countries move with some urgency to arrest

the free fall in ties.

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