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India's Place in the World

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Editorial

The Rajiv Gandhi Institute for Contemporary Studies (RGICS) works on five themes:

1. Constitutional Values and Democratic Institutions
2. Governance and Development
3. Growth with Employment
4. Environment, Natural Resources and Sustainability
5. India's Place in the World

This issue of Policy Watch is on the theme - India's Place in the World. It carries articles on the G-20, SCO, Quad and I2U2 or the New Quad. This is the time when India assumed the Presidency of the G-20. Just a little before that, India had assumed the Presidency of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, SCO, arguably the largest grouping of nations with no Western participation. Like the May 2022 issue, this issue is a digest of articles, all published elsewhere. The thematic digest has been put together by RGICS Senior Visiting Fellow, Prof Somnath Ghosh, who did his doctoral work at the Jawaharlal Nehru University's School of International Studies.

The first article is a brief announcement of India's assumption of the G-20 Presidency and it is followed by an article by Amb Bhawati Mukherjee, written from an official point of view as it credits the Prime Minister with having originated many of the ideas espoused at the assumption of the G-20 Presidency. Key priority areas of India in that role have been stated as "sustainable growth, accelerated progress on SDGs, addressing climate change including through Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE), tech-enabled development and digital public infrastructure, multilateral reforms and women's empowerment" by Shri Amitabh Kant, the Indian "Sherpa" of G-20. He went on to state the challenges that will be faced in delivering outcomes on these priorities - post pandemic blues, debt distress, food and energy security and the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, along with instability and conflict that are impacting people globally.

The article also describes the mechanics of how the G-20 works, including the -'Finance Track', with its eight work streams (Global Macroeconomic Policies, Infrastructure Financing, International Financial Architecture, Sustainable Finance, Financial Inclusion, Health Finance, International Taxation, Financial Sector Reforms), the 'Sherpa Track', with 12 work streams (Anti-corruption, Agriculture, Culture, Development, Digital Economy, Employment, Environment and Climate, Education, Energy Transition, Health, Trade and Investment, Tourism) and '10 Engagement Groups' of private sector/civil society/independent bodies (Business 20, Civil 20, Labour 20, Parliament 20, Science 20, Supreme Auditors 20, Think 20, Urban 20, Women 20 and Youth 20). India is expected to host over 200 G20 meetings across India, commencing from December 2022.

The third article is a critique by former External Affairs Secretary Vivek Katju of the speech by the External Affairs Minister, S Jaishankar, at the UN General Assembly on 25th Sep 2022. In an article in The Hindu, Katju had said that the speech raised several deeply troubling questions. In the interview based on this article, Katju tells Karan Thapar of the Print that EAM Jaishankar has broken with India's well-established diplomatic tradition by raising at the UN domestic differences and divisions over interpretations of history as well as over the way governments and prime ministers before Shri Narendra Modi are viewed by the present regime. So that the readers can delve more into this issue, we carry the YouTube links of the speech by the EAM as well as of the interview of Vivek Katju by Karan Thapar of the Print.

The fourth article introduces the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) whose Presidency was also taken over by India in Sept 2022. Though arguably, the SCO is the world's largest regional organization, it is China centric and has been used by China to promote its agenda such as the Belt and Road Initiative. In the fifth article, Ayjaz Wani argues that the SCO Presidency gives India the chance to start global and regional counterterrorism measures as well as regional efforts to combat the illicit drug trade, which is currently being utilised by India's hostile neighbours to do social harm and target its youth. He further argues that India can use its age-old relations with Iran, Russia, and the Central Asian Republics to confront and neutralise the China-Pakistan axis.

The sixth article, by Prof Akshay of the Symbiosis University, Pune, for The Diplomat deals with how India is using its presence in Quad, an Indo-Pacific security forum comprising Japan, the US, Australia and India, to broaden its agenda from security to issues such as climate change, and to open up its membership. Ranade asserts that India has always insisted that the Quad becomes an open, constructive forum that ties together the capabilities of member countries to ensure security and stability in the region in a comprehensive way, not limited to security aspects.

The seventh article, by Sankalp Gurjar, Fellow ICWA, examines the rationale for India's presence in the I2U2 formation, which includes India, Israel, the UAE and the US, in what is being called the "new" Quad in the Western India Ocean (WIO) region. India, Israel, the US and the UAE are key players in the WIO and have stakes in shaping the emerging political and security order in the region. On account of their naval presence and strategic engagement, India and the US are important players in the WIO. In view of the growing Chinese presence in the region, India and the US are boosting their partnership in the WIO.

We acknowledge our gratitude to the authors and the journals where these articles were originally published.

We hope the readers find this digest of articles useful and interesting. We welcome your feedback.

Vijay Mahajan
Director, Rajiv Gandhi Institute for Contemporary Studies

India takes over the presidency of G-20



वयुधेव कुटुम्बकम्
ONE EARTH • ONE FAMILY • ONE FUTURE

India formally took over the presidency- of G-20 which rotates annually between members - of the Group of Twenty countries on Thursday, 1st Dec 2022. Indonesian President Joko Widodo had officially handed it over to Mr Modi at the end of the G20 summit in November. Mr Modi had said then that it was a "matter of pride" for Indians.¹

On Thursday, in an editorial published in major Indian newspapers, Mr Modi wrote that India's G20 agenda will be "inclusive, ambitious, action-oriented and decisive". He also called for member countries to make India's G20 presidency one of "healing, harmony and hope". The theme of India's presidency is 'One Earth, One Family, One Future', inspired by the Sanskrit phrase 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'.

The G20 is a group of countries which meets to discuss plans for the global economy. Between them, the 20 countries account for two-thirds of the global population, 85% of the world's economic output and 75% of world trade. Every year, a different G20 member state takes over the presidency and sets the agenda for meetings.

Digital issues and reforms of multilateral financial institutions are expected to be key focus areas for India during its one-year tenure. At the November summit, India had said it would work to bridge the digital divide, especially in developing countries. "India's experience of the past few years has shown us that if we make digital architecture inclusive, it can bring about socio-economic transformation," Mr Modi said at the Bali summit.

In the editorial published on Thursday, Mr Modi wrote, "We have leveraged technology to create digital public goods that are open, inclusive and inter-operable." He added that India's G20 priorities will be shaped in consultation with "our fellow-travellers in the global South, whose voice often goes unheard".

This is the first time ever that the G20 troika - the top grouping that consists of the past, current and next presidencies - is made up of developing countries: Indonesia, India and Brazil. India will host the next G20 summit in New Delhi in September 2023.

¹ Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-63817822>

India and the G20 Presidency: priorities and challenges

Amb. Bhawati Mukherjee²

Created in the aftermath of the devastating World War II, it is important to underline that the United Nations and its Security Council as well as the Bretton Woods institutions and the G7 reflect the world order which prevailed immediately after the World War II as well as the new power balance created by its victors. The G 20 is a reflection of an emerging order, which brings the G7 together with other major economies as equal partners. It also includes the P5 with other major emerging economies.

Conceived as an international mechanism for governance of the global economy, the G20, which includes all the major economies, has evolved over time into one of the most powerful economic and financial groupings. At present, it comprises 85% of global GDP, 75% of international trade and two/thirds of the global population. It represents the world's key body for handling global economic and developmental issues.

Held under a rotational Presidency on an annual basis since 2011, the G20's initial focus was on broad macro-economic policy. Formally known as the "Summit on Financial Markets and the World Economy", the G20 has made continuous efforts until the pandemic toward achieving robust global economic growth. It re-doubled its efforts after the pandemic. More recently, the G20 focus shifted to include a wide range of global issues including climate change and energy, health, counter-terrorism and migration.

What is the composition of the G20? It comprises 19 countries (Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, UK and USA) and the European Union (EU). It has become a relevant and influential global grouping. The regular participation of international and regional organisations such as the African Union, NEPAD and ASEAN as invitees in the G20 process makes it both inclusive and representative.

The G20's initial focus was on financial and socio-economic issues. Since it was raised to the level of Heads of State and Government, the G20 has evolved to address every contemporary issue and challenge. There are 20 Working Groups between the Sherpa and Finance Tracks and 10 Engagement Groups, which bring together the civil societies, think tanks and other key stakeholders of the member countries.

Existing G20 Tracks

The G20 currently comprises several tracks including:

- '*Finance Track*', with 8 work streams (Global Macroeconomic Policies, Infrastructure Financing, International Financial Architecture, Sustainable Finance, Financial Inclusion, Health Finance, International Taxation, Financial Sector Reforms).
- '*Sherpa Track*', with 12 work streams (Anti-corruption, Agriculture, Culture, Development, Digital Economy, Employment, Environment and Climate, Education, Energy Transition, Health, Trade and Investment, Tourism). Shri Amitabh Kant is the Indian Prime Minister's Sherpa for this period.
- '*10 Engagement Groups*' of private sector/civil society/independent bodies (Business 20, Civil 20, Labour 20, Parliament 20, Science 20, Supreme Audit Institutions 20, Think 20, Urban 20, Women 20 and Youth 20).

² Source: <https://indiafoundation.in/articles-and-commentaries/india-and-the-g20-presidency-its-priorities-and-challenges/>

3 G20 TRACKS



India's Presidency

India has been a member of the G20 since its inception in 1999. As an important member of the grouping, India ensured that its perspective on issues of vital national importance did not go unheard in the global financial narrative. India will be assuming chairmanship of the G20 for one year from 01 December 22.

India's Presidency comes at a watershed moment coinciding with a period of flux, internationally. The global community is facing multiple challenges, politically and economically. The Russia-Ukraine conflict has vitiated relation between Russia and the industrialised Western countries, most of which are members of the G20. The conflict and the resulting unilateral sanctions imposed by the West has upset the post pandemic global recovery, sharply impacted oil and gas prices as well as food availability. As always, the impact is felt most sharply by the most vulnerable, the developing countries and LDC's.

India would, in the true spirit of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (the world is one family), seek to find pragmatic global solutions for the well-being of all. India's vision for the global development agenda is shaped by the rapid transformation of its economy and society launched by the Prime Minister, particularly green and digital transformations. The after-effects of the pandemic are also of importance, as it underlined the importance of resilient healthcare and global co-operation.

PM Modi has transformed India's foreign policy to focus on the 'global common good'. Through its G20 leadership, India hopes to extend this principle towards finding sustainable solutions to some of the key global challenges emerging out of the interconnectedness of the world, such as climate change, new and emerging technologies, food and energy security, etc. As the incumbent G20 President, India will set the agenda, identify the themes and focus areas, conduct discussions and deliver the outcome documents. India will identify, highlight, develop and strengthen international support for priorities of vital importance in diverse social and economic sectors, ranging from energy, agriculture, trade, digital economy, health and environment to employment, tourism, anti-corruption and women's empowerment, including in focus areas that impact the most vulnerable and disadvantaged.

India is currently part of the G20 Troika (current, previous and incoming G20 Presidencies) comprising Indonesia, Italy and India. From December 22, during India's Presidency, Indonesia and Brazil along with India would form the Troika. This would be the first time when the Troika would consist of three developing countries and emerging economies. It is hoped that as a result there would be a shift in the balance of power within the G20. It is time for emerging economies to have a greater share in decision making at this grouping.

India will host the G20 Leaders' Summit at the level of Heads of State / Government on 9th and 10th September 2023, in New Delhi. Under its Presidency, India is expected to host over 200 G20 meetings across India, commencing from December 2022. India is preparing to hold up to 190G20 meetings on a pan-India basis. In our effort to organise an Impeccable and Uniquely 'Indian' G20, we strive to take this mega event closer to the lives of the people of India making it 'People's G20'.

Establishment of G20 Secretariat

A G20 Secretariat has been established with Cabinet approval. Former Foreign Secretary Harsh V. Shringla has been appointed as India's chief G20 Coordinator at Secretary Level. His tenure commenced on 1st May 22 till 31st December 23. The G20 Secretariat will be responsible for implementation of overall policy decisions and arrangements needed for steering India's Presidency.[i]

The Secretariat will be responsible for smooth transition from the previous Presidency, preparations and conduct of all G20 meetings during the year, consultation and coordination with stakeholders and finally handing over to the next Presidency in December 2023. The Secretariat will also enable capacity building, including knowledge and expertise, for supporting India's leadership on and contribution to global issues in multilateral forums in the years ahead.

The Secretariat will handle work relating to knowledge, technical, media, security and logistical aspects of the Presidency. The Cabinet Secretariat said in a statement: "It will be manned by officers and staff from the Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Finance, and other relevant line Ministries/Departments and domain knowledge experts. The Secretariat will be functional till February 2024".

The India Trade Promotion Organisation (ITPO) has almost completed re-development of Pragati Maidan for setting up of a world class Integrated Exhibition-cum-Convention Centre (IECC) at a cost of Rs 2254 crore. It is the venue of the Summit.[ii] The Government has commenced the process of recruitment to the Secretariat. In a tweet citing a tweet by Ministry of External Affairs Spokesperson Arindam Bagchi confirming that recruitment had started, Prime Minister tweeted: "This is an exciting opportunity..."[iii]

In accordance with past tradition, the Presidency usually invites some 'Guest' countries and International Organisations (IOs) to its G20 meetings and Summit. MEA has announced that as President, India will invite Bangladesh, Egypt, Mauritius, Netherlands, Nigeria, Oman, Singapore, Spain and UAE as 'Guests'. Bangladesh is the only South Asian neighbour invited as 'Guest' to the Summit.

Further, in addition to regular International Organisations (UN, IMF, World Bank, WHO, WTO, ILO, FSB and OECD) and Chairs of Regional Organisations (AU, AUDA-NEPAD and ASEAN), India, as G20 Presidency, will be inviting as 'Guest IO's' the ISA (International Solar Alliance), the CDRI (Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure) and the ADB (Asian Development Bank).

Priorities of the Presidency

What would be the priorities of the Indian Presidency? According to MEA: "Ongoing conversations...revolve around inclusive, equitable and sustainable growth; LiFE (Lifestyle For Environment); women's empowerment; digital public infrastructure and tech-enabled development in areas ranging from health, agriculture and education to commerce, skill-mapping, culture and tourism; climate financing; circular economy; global food security; energy security; green hydrogen; disaster risk reduction and resilience; developmental cooperation; fight against economic crime; and multilateral reforms." [iv]

Among its key priorities are climate, digital and health. The Presidency provides an opportunity to showcase India's leadership inter-alia in climate action and climate commitments. Prime Minister Modi has pointed out that India's dedication to climate commitments is clear. India has achieved the target of 40% energy capacity from non-fossil sources, nine years before the deadline. At the COP26 Summit last year, Mr Modi announced the 'Panchamrit' or five major areas of climate action commitments by India, including creating a net zero economy by 2070. Access to climate finance and technology would be critical in facilitating these ambitious goals particularly for developing countries.

Prime Minister emphasised the importance of behavioural change for catalysing climate action and highlighted the need for collective action by the global community as part of a movement called LIFE – Lifestyle for Environment. These are most relevant for the G20 today. On digital, India hopes that our start-up sector and our proven capabilities to create tech models that balance the need for global integration and priorities at a national level can be internationalised. Digital India would go global. A new tech order must combine cross-border flows of technology and investment with development and growth aspirations.

On health, India has demonstrated new and innovative approaches to tackle complex challenges including Covid 19. India's efforts to track the COVID pandemic's spread relied on the success of the Aarogya Setu digital platform. India's successful vaccination campaign which saw 2 billion vaccines administered across our populace, was underpinned by the Co-WIN digital platform. Under India's Presidency, efforts would be made with other G20 partners to create mechanisms that strengthen the capacity of developing countries to tackle health crises like the Covid19 pandemic.

The Indian Sherpa

The Sherpa plays a crucial role in ensuring that the priorities of the Indian Presidency under P M Modi are supported by G20 member states. India's G20 Sherpa, Amitabh Kant, is an officer of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), who headed the NITI Aayog for last month six years before his selection as Sherpa by PM. He is supported by the G20 Secretariat.

Kant led an official Indian delegation to the third G20 Sherpa meeting of Indonesia's G20 Presidency, held in Yogyakarta from 26th to 29th September 2022. (The first Sherpa meeting under the Indonesian Presidency was held in December 2021 and the second in July 2022). At the meeting, according to MEA: "Amitabh Kant reaffirmed India's commitment and active support to Indonesian Presidency's efforts...He emphasised the need for G20 to bring enhanced global focus on and strengthen international cooperation and efforts in key priority areas such as sustainable growth, accelerated progress on SDGs, addressing climate change including through Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE), tech-enabled development and digital public infrastructure, multilateral reforms and women's empowerment".[\[v\]](#)

Significantly, Kant also highlighted Prime Minister Modi's recent statement on 16 September: "Today's era is not of war... diplomacy and dialogues are things that touch the world". On the sidelines of the G20 Sherpa meeting, Kant held bilateral interactions with his visiting Sherpa counterparts from Brazil, France, Germany, Japan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Spain, UK and USA. According to informed sources, the Indian delegation led by Kant through its constructive interventions was able to infuse greater positivity and optimism in G20 deliberations, in preparation for the Indian Presidency.

Challenges Identified by the Sherpa

On 5th September 22, on Twitter, Kant provided a unique insight into PM Modi's vision for the Indian Presidency. He gave a broad-brush perspective on the core issues of importance noting: "India believes that the G20 countries must close ranks and work together. While the agenda and priorities for the Presidency are still evolving, India is committed to focussing on issues of critical importance to the world [\[vi\]](#).

The world is facing huge challenges due to post pandemic blues, debt distress, food and energy security and the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, along with instability and conflict that are impacting people globally.

The global development agenda is facing monumental challenges at present. The pandemic came on the eve of “Decade of Action” and has disrupted decades of developmental progress globally on many fronts. These effects are compounded by the additional effects of ongoing conflict in Europe. India believes that a conversation on economic growth with sustainability is the need of the hour. The G20 should lead the discussion on how countries can work together to ensure return to economic growth, but one which is rooted in sustainability and sustainable lifestyle.

The concept of LiFE was introduced by PM Modi during the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of Parties (COP 26) in Glasgow 21. India hopes to highlight LiFE as a critical focus area for discussion and action during our Presidency. India believes that digital technology and digital public platforms are key to deepening engagements of government with citizens. Our belief is that digital identity, content-based framework and payments are key building blocks for a digital future. Digital solutions to traditional problems have transformed and elevated the lives of people across the world. During India's Presidency, we would like to help take this discussion forward.

We aim to deliver outcomes in areas of critical intent such as integrating the climate and development agenda, accelerating progress towards achieving the 2030 agenda, furthering development cooperation, supporting small and marginal farmers, enhancing food security and nutrition, addressing global skill gaps, promotion of blue economy and coastal sustainability, digital health solutions, green hydrogen and tech-enable learning.

India also hopes to bring into the G20 discussions a focussed conversation on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). The average annual loss from disasters globally is approximately USD 218 billion. We believe that a working group on DRR would help the global efforts in reducing the loss of life and livelihood. India believes that the G20 countries must come together to deliver on matters of crucial importance to the world and not let the Russia-Ukraine crisis dominate the broader agenda. The G20 should show the necessary leadership and flexibility to accommodate differences among its members to effectively deliver outcomes”.

While concluding, Kant stated: “The G20, in India, will comprise around 200 events to be held across all the States and Union Territories. The intention is to execute them to perfection and send back every guest as a brand ambassador of India. Our aim is to create a uniquely Indian experience, which is spiritually invigorating and mentally rejuvenating. India's achievements—both nationally and internationally—have earned us goodwill. India's stature is extremely tall in the hearts of people. The G 20 will elevate it to even greater heights”.[vii]

Ukraine-Russia Conflict as a possible Spoiler

India has thus so far meticulously prepared for the Presidency. While the focus will be on sustainable economic growth, there are many challenges ahead with the Ukraine-Russia conflict being a possible spoiler. This is despite PM Modi's determination not to let it become the spoiler.

The G20 Presidency coincides with the domination of a neo-conservative US approach with regard to Russia. Of concern is also a negative narrative on India emanating from some sections of the Western media as well as politicians, the most recent being the Greens German Foreign Minister. This could be due to resentment at India's rise and India's independent stand on Ukraine-Russia. Calls for a negotiated end to the conflict have gone unheeded by the West who seems determined to bring down President Putin. More unfortunate, Russia's recent reverses seem to have whetted the appetite of NATO to reduce Russia to a subordinate status.

The West seems to be in no mood to listen to Kissinger who at 99, in a recent article, had invaluable advice to offer to the West: “The question will now be how to end that war. At its end a place has to be found for Ukraine and a place has to be found for Russia — if we don't want Russia to become an outpost of China in Europe.”[viii]

The war has entered a crucial stage and the Russian armed forces have been forced to retreat from some strategic areas it had conquered. President Putin has ordered a partial mobilisation. For the first time, ordinary Russians are feeling the impact of the war. A businessman in Moscow describes a growing sense of vulnerability by quoting from Kipling's 'Jungle Book', which is a favourite of President Putin as follows: "When a leader of the pack has missed his kill, he is called the Dead Wolf as long as he lives, which is not long".[\[ix\]](#)

President Putin's dilemma of whether to consolidate gains which are being reversed by expanding the range of weapons (which is implicitly acknowledging the possibility of using tactical nuclear weapons) is bringing the international community closer to a major conflict than any other time since the Cuban Missile Crisis.

The contradictions in US position on Ukraine has been high-lighted as follows: "First, that of enabling Ukraine to mount a robust defence – a humanitarian intervention; second, and emphasised in repeated bulletins from President Joe Biden's administration, the intent to "cripple" Russia, not only in the current conflict but in any future (unspecified) military adventurism. This, far from offering protection to Ukraine, guarantees that the war will drag on, with ever greater levels of death and destruction. It has also led to both Russia and the US on hair-trigger launch policy, raising the spectre of two equally catastrophic "next steps": a grievously wounded Russia lashing out – as Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has threatened as much – or, accidental or inadvertent nuclear action by, for instance, computer error". For now, one hopes that Benjamin Abelow's last word is not prophetic: "False narratives lead to bad outcomes."[\[x\]](#)

Several Western writers and thinkers have a similar perspective. They regret the insistence of the West to dominate the world even when economic power has shifted to Asia. Jeffrey Sachs says: "We are at the 60th anniversary of the Cuban missile crisis, which I've studied all my life and I've written about, having written a book about the aftermath. We are driving to the precipice, and we are filled with our enthusiasm as we do so. And it's just unaccountably dangerous and wrongheaded, the whole approach of U.S. foreign policy. And it's bipartisan".[\[xi\]](#)

As incumbent President of the G 20, P M Modi has spoken several times to both President Putin and President Zelensky and most recently to President Zelensky. India is ready to support all efforts at de-escalation. India insists that the global order should be anchored in the principles of the UN Charter, international law and respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of all States. There can be no doubt that the direction of this conflict may cast a long shadow on India's Presidency.

Concluding Reflections

In the post-pandemic period, this will be undoubtedly the most important multilateral event being organised outside the UN. India had hosted NAM and CHOGM Summits in 1983 and International Solar Alliance Summit in 2018. These meetings, though important, did not include all P5 and major countries. The G 20 Presidency will be at the beginning of Amritkaal, the next 25 years after the 75th anniversary of India's independence, which makes it both futuristic and inclusive. India is also Chair of SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organization) from September 2022 to September 2023 and President of the UN Security Council for the month of December 2022.

As the world's largest democracy, the third largest economy of the world in PPP terms and 2nd most populous country of the world, India will make a meaningful contribution in the G 20 to support faster, sustainable and inclusive growth. The G 20 Presidency would place India on the global stage, and provide an opportunity for India to place its priorities and narratives on the global agenda.[\[xii\]](#) It would also provide a unique opportunity to showcase India's progress and developments as well as its rich culture heritage and diversity.

India hopes it can contribute to a speedy end to the Ukraine Russia conflict during its Presidency. India's hopes for its G 20 Presidency can be summed up in this verse from the Rig Veda:

"May the stream of my life flow into the river of righteousness.

Loose the bonds of sin that bind me.

Let not the thread of my song be cut while I sing;

And let not my work end before its fulfillment".[xiii]

Amb. Bhaswati Mukherjee is a career foreign service officer. She is one of the most experienced diplomats on Indo-EU relations. In a distinguished career of over 38 years, she has been the Indian Ambassador to The Netherlands as well as India's Permanent Representative to UNESCO in Paris.

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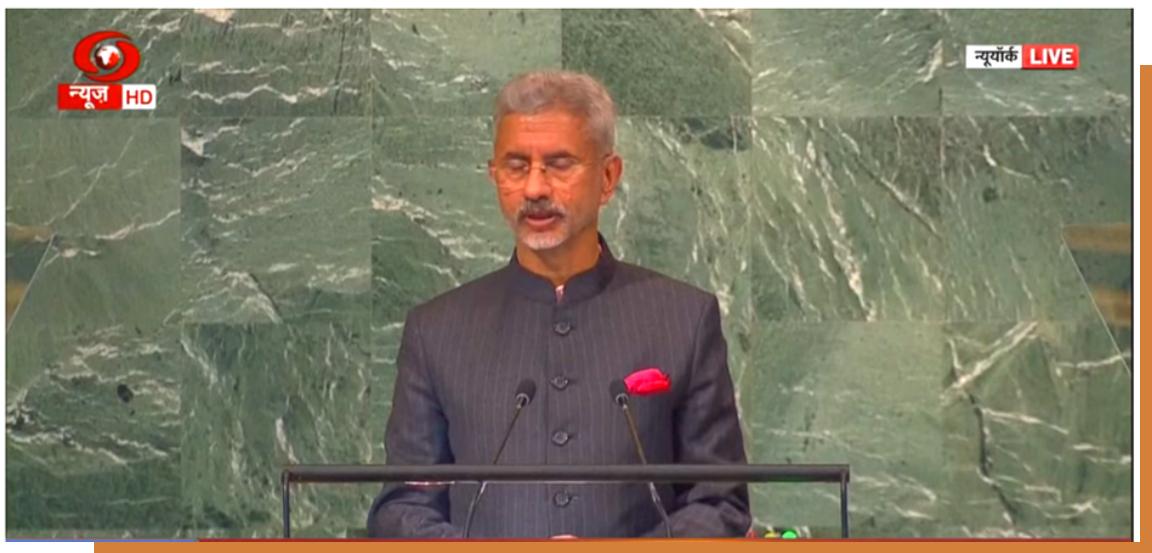
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EAM S Jaishankar's speech at the UN General Assembly on 25th Sept 2022 "raises several deeply troubling questions"

Vivek Katju, former Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs



In an interview where he focuses on three aspects of foreign minister S. Jaishankar's recent speech at the UN General Assembly, Vivek Katju, a former secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs has said the speech "raises several deeply troubling questions". Katju says Jaishankar has broken with India's well-established diplomatic tradition by raising at the UN domestic differences and divisions over interpretations of history as well as over the way governments and prime ministers before Narendra Modi are viewed by the present regime. However, Katju repeatedly refused to say whether this was done deliberately or by accident or perhaps as a result of carelessness. Instead, he said, "I leave it to him" to explain, adding "I cannot read his mind".

Katju also expressed great concern about a third point made by Jaishankar in his UNGA speech when the foreign minister said, referring to the prime minister's five pledges, "We will liberate ourselves from a colonial mindset." This, Katju pointed out, not only is tantamount to telling the UN that even after 75 years of independence India remains colonial and needs to be liberated but, perhaps more importantly, dismisses and throws in the dustbin India's proud record of leading de-colonisation in the 1950s and 1960s. This is a record that won India high praise from leaders like Nelson Mandela, Kenneth Kaunda, Julius Nyerere, Kwame Nkrumah as well as others like Gamal Abdel Nasser, Sukarno and even Josip Broz Tito.

Katju said: "India's role in the entire de-colonisation process after the Second World War is one which this country can be justifiably proud of." Now, after Jaishankar's speech, people will wonder how a country which is still in a colonial mindset, as Jaishankar claims, could have led the de-colonisation process of the 1950s and 1960s. Rather than be proud of India's role, Jaishankar has dismissed it and effectively thrown it in the dustbin.



To see the full 33 min interview with Vivek Katju, click on <https://youtu.be/1h5ydKVHEIg>

The interview began with a discussion of Jaishankar's statement that India is "rejuvenating a society pillaged by centuries of foreign attacks and colonialism". The phrase "pillaged by centuries of foreign attacks" refers to the period starting with Muhammad of Ghor in the late 12th century and ending with the end of the Mughal Empire. It is, as Katju says, "a disparaging reference" to Muslim rule in India. But it's also how the Modi government refers to this period at home. Why was it wrong to use this terminology at the UN? Katju explains this in detail in the interview.

Thereafter, the interview discusses Jaishankar's claim that "India's rejuvenation is ... 'reflected in more authentic voices and grounded leadership'". The phrase "authentic voices and grounded leadership" is a disparaging reference to governments and prime ministers who ruled India before Modi. It suggests they were inauthentic and ungrounded. Again, this is how this government speaks of previous governments and of Nehru, in particular. Katju explains in detail why it is wrong to do so at the UN.

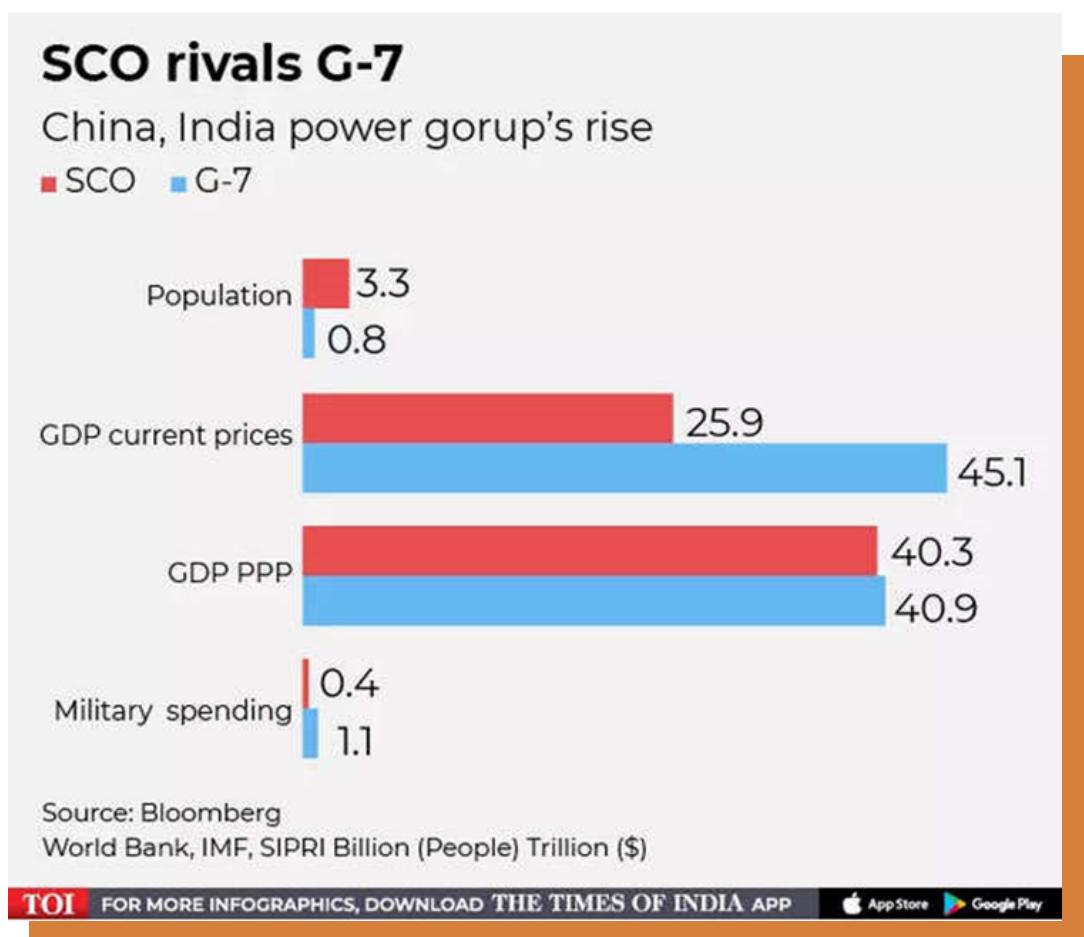
In this context, Katju argues that by calling earlier leaders inauthentic and ungrounded, Jaishankar is questioning the choices made by the Indian people in free and fair elections held on the basis of adult franchise. He, therefore, adds that what Jaishankar has done is present "an interpretation of democracy that troubles me". He pointedly said: "No one should question the integrity of our election process."

Katju said that he believes the foreign minister should clarify what he said and, in particular, his claim that India has a colonial mindset from which it needs to be liberated. However, in answer to a specific question, Katju said neither the foreign minister nor anyone from the ministry has got back to him with a defence of the foreign minister's speech. Katju first wrote about this in The Hindu on October 7.

India and the SCO

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization was founded in Shanghai on June 15, 2001 with 6 member states- China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. India and Pakistan were initially invited as observers and then admitted as full members in 2017. Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran and Mongolia are still observers. Sri Lanka, Nepal, Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Cambodia are dubbed “dialogue” partner countries, in a clear attempt to expand the grouping further in various directions contiguously.

The SCO is the world's largest regional organization, covering approximately 60% land area in Asia-Europe, over 40% of the world population, and more than 30% of global GDP and it rivals the G-7 in various parameters, as can be seen in the graphic below. However, as can be seen, there are no countries who are aligned with the US and EU powers in the SCO.



Source: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/india-in-the-shanghai-cooperation-organization-walking-a-fine-line/articleshow/94212941.cms>

Moreover, the SCO is China centric and China has used it to further its agenda such as pushing through the Belt and Road Initiative, which India did not join. Though India uses its ties with Russia as a balancing factor, it is an uneasy act. The priority areas of SCO as per its Charter finalised in St Petersburg in 2002, are regional security issues, fight against terrorism, ethnic separatism and religious extremism and to promote regional development.

We give below an article Ajyaz Wani written for the ORF, which assesses what can do in its Presidency of the SCO.

India's SCO presidency: leveraging opportunities

Ayjaz Wani³

On 16 September, 2022 India took over the rotating presidency of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. During this summit, member states discussed global challenges and threats, including the Russia-Ukraine conflict, challenges of economic recovery, obstacles in global supply chains, and energy and food crises. Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

In 2001, with the inclusion of Uzbekistan, The Shanghai Five comprising China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan evolved into the SCO. With the addition of India and Pakistan in 2017, the SCO grew to become one of the biggest international organisations, representing almost 30 percent of the global GDP and 40 percent of the world's population. Evolved over the past 20 years, the SCO, which now encompasses the geographies of Eurasia, South Asia, and Central Asia, is in dire need of regional and cross-regional connectivity for socio-economic development, trade, and people-to-people contact.

India and SCO

Since its admission to the SCO, New Delhi has steadfastly campaigned for the strengthening of collaboration on issues pertaining to regional security, defence, combatting terrorism, the illicit drug trade, etc. SCO is a useful platform for New Delhi to periodically engage with its regional counterparts on various regional, security, and political issues. India, as the world's largest democracy, has not only placed its perspectives and vision over these issues but has also been successful in motivating others to support the formation of an inclusive government in Afghanistan and aid the restoration of peace and the economic recovery of the country. The SCO also gives India the chance to start global and regional counterterrorism measures as well as regional efforts to combat the illicit drug trade, which is currently being utilised by India's hostile neighbours to do social harm and target its youth. For example, New Delhi can sensitise the SCO member countries not only on Pakistan's narco-terrorism but also its mindless use of terrorism in the extended neighbourhood of the Eurasian region.

In this regard, New Delhi can use SCO's Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) to boost cooperation and coordination for combating regional security challenges and information gathering and sharing. RATS maintains a database of terrorists and terror organisations from across its member countries. Furthermore, through joint counterterrorism exercises under RATS, member countries train armed personnel to strengthen their counterinsurgency grid and increase coordination amongst the group. The presence of dreaded global and regional terror outfits, such as the al-Qaeda, Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP), Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), and Islamic Jihad Union (IJU), can be a binding force for SCO member countries to counter these terror outfits for regional peace and security.

As a loud advocate for regional and transregional connectivity, New Delhi may use the SCO to pressure Pakistan to change its position and strategy on tying together Central Asia and South Asia.

India has made serious efforts to promote peace, prosperity, and stability throughout the whole Eurasian area, in general, and amongst the SCO members, in particular, since it gained full membership. As a loud advocate for regional and transregional connectivity, New Delhi may use the SCO to pressure Pakistan to change its position and strategy on tying together Central Asia and South Asia. Pakistan has previously obstructed India's interests in the geopolitical, economic, and cultural spheres by refusing to allow connectivity and energy projects such as The Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India (TAPI) Pipeline (TAPI) to pass through its borders. Additionally, New Delhi can utilise the SCO to promote the International North-South Transport Corridor and the Chabahar Port Project (INSTC). A trilateral working committee was also established in 2020 by India, Iran, and Uzbekistan to collaborate more closely on the Chabahar port and other connectivity initiatives.

In an era of multilateral and multi-vector foreign policy, SCO can be harnessed to ensure greater harmony amongst the member countries to meet common challenges and geostrategic concerns. So far, Russia and China seem to be in the driver's seat of SCO; however, India, with its growing regional and global economic clout and strong intellectual capital, has to think in terms of investing its diplomatic capital in evolving SCO's agenda and progressive programme.

Indian sovereignty is violated by CPEC's passage across Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, which forced India to remain aloof from BRI.

In order to strengthen its position within the forum, India can also take advantage of its long-standing bilateral ties with Russia, Iran, and the Central Asian Republics (CARs). China pursued imperial goals using the animosity between India and Pakistan. Additionally, it made use of the highly publicised Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to increase its commercial presence in Central Asia, which is strategically situated at the intersection of Asia and Europe. A key BRI initiative, India's geostrategic, geoeconomic, and security worries have grown. Indian sovereignty is violated by CPEC's passage across Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, which forced India to remain aloof from BRI.

India can use its age-old relations with Iran, Russia, and the CARs to confront and neutralise the China-Pakistan axis. India and the Eurasian region have a long-standing cultural connection. In addition, its rising economic clout and its young demographics can help boost its position within the grouping. India, for its part, has so far chosen to take the 'constructivist' approach that can be leveraged to make the SCO a platform of agreements rather than disagreements.

India and the QUAD



Source: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/india-in-the-shanghai-cooperation-organization-walking-a-fine-line/articleshow/94212941.cms>

³ Source: <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/indias-sco-presidency-leveraging-opportunities/>

How India influences the quad

Akshay Ranade⁴

From its stance on Russia to the tilt toward non-traditional security and public goods, India's fingerprints on the Quad agenda are clear.

The Quad is “a positive, constructive agenda so we don’t target a country or region for that. What we look forward to is that peace and stability in Indo-Pacific region should be adhered to.” So said India’s Ambassador to Japan S. K. Verma ahead of the recent Quad summit in Tokyo. This just reiterated the consistent Indian position that the Quad is not “against someone” (meaning China) but “for something.”

Since the re-emergence of the Quad in 2017, the grouping has been struggling to identify a foundational philosophy on which to build a sustainable framework. It has been an uphill battle to generate substance, even as the symbolism of the grouping generated curious debates within the strategic community. Recent developments, however, suggest that the Quad may finally be getting the much-needed direction to build a credible and sustainable framework.

From its rebirth in working-level meetings on the sidelines of some other multilateral engagements, the Quad has come a long way. Quad leaders have engaged in two summits this year, with the earlier one in March a virtual meeting occasioned by the Russian invasion of Ukraine and apparently divergent viewpoints on it within the Quad. The recently concluded in-person summit is another indication that Quad countries might have finally identified the “common denominator” in their individual policies in the region, enabling them to take the strategically significant grouping to its logical next level.

The optics and the substance of the May 2022 summit both suggest that India is playing a major role in normatively ordering the Quad to ensure it becomes an institutionalized framework suitable to address the existing and emerging issues in the Indo-Pacific and is not just limited to responding to one pressing military reality – i.e. the rise and expansionism of China.

India’s keenness to ensure that Quad doesn’t become an alliance-like structure is well recognized. India’s historical hesitations in getting involved with alliance politics notwithstanding, there are other critical Indian sensitivities. First, India is the only country among the Quad members that directly shares a land border with China – a disputed border, at that, with a troubled history. It is therefore reasonable for India to not want to be seen as being part of an arrangement that is overtly against China. Apart from this, India is conscious of the fact that any grouping with undertones of an alliance will invite apprehensions from Southeast Asian nations that have direct stake and responsibility in the stability of the region.

Also, a standalone military logic for the Quad is not in the long-term interest of the region, which is staring at an array of other concerns, including terrorism, climate change, and other critical issues. Addressing these challenges would require a forum that inspires confidence and cooperation from countries in the region.

Thus, India has always insisted that the Quad becomes an open, constructive forum that ties together the capabilities of member countries to ensure security and stability in the region in a comprehensive way, not limited to security aspects. Making sure the Quad does not overtly identify with “alliance politics” is one reflection of this attitude, which became clear in the way the Quad addressed the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Consistent with the earlier joint statement issued in March after the Quad leaders’ discussion on the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the statement this time also eschewed direct mention of Russia. Instead, it focused on the humanitarian aspect of the entire conflict. This was in direct contrast to the joint readouts resulting from the bilateral meetings which United States had with Japan as well as Australia.

⁴ Source: <https://thediplomat.com/2022/05/how-india-influences-the-quad/>

In case of the Australia-U.S. meeting, [the readout](#) was categorical in pointing out “Australia’s strong support for Ukraine since Russia’s invasion,” adding that “the leaders agreed on the importance of continued solidarity, including to ensure that no such event is ever repeated in the Indo-Pacific” – an obvious hint at China’s overtures toward Taiwan.

The United States’ [joint statement with Japan](#) was even more explicit. It maintained that two countries “shared the view that the greatest immediate challenge to this [rules-based international] order is Russia’s brutal, unprovoked, and unjustified aggression against Ukraine. The two leaders condemned Russia’s actions, and called for Russia to be held accountable for its atrocities.”

Compared to such rhetoric, the joint statement of Quad was extremely toned down when it referred to the developing situation in Ukraine as “tragic humanitarian crisis.”

The conspicuous stress on multilateralism in the Quad joint statement was another example of incorporating core Indian sensitivities. Generally, India has been reluctant to endorse unilateral or plurilateral actions in security and conflict matters and instead has preferred multilateral alternatives, specifically those endorsed by the United Nations. The joint statement was indicative of this trend when it stressed multiple times the Quad’s support for numerous multilateral initiatives.

New Delhi has also been keen on ensuring that Quad members are sensitive to India’s direct concerns, emanating from its immediate neighborhood. The concern was concretely reflected with the statement’s emphasis on unequivocally condemning terrorism in all forms. The statement denounced “the use of terrorist proxies” and “emphasized the importance of denying any logistical, financial or military support to terrorist groups which could be used to launch or plan terror attacks, including cross-border attacks.”

Particularly striking was the mention of the 26/11 Mumbai and Pathankot attacks in the statement, alongside the possibility of Afghan soil being used for the perpetration of terror. Considering the complicity of Pakistan in these dastardly attacks and the active support Islamabad continues to accord to the perpetrators, this allusion in the joint statement was a direct reflection of the willingness of the other Quad members to incorporate issues that are core to Indian interests. The timing of this mention is even more pertinent with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) having recently noted the apparent “progress” made by Pakistan with regards to an action plan to combat money laundering and terrorism financing, despite extending Pakistan’s classification on the FATF gray list.

The Quad’s increasing bandwidth in terms of interest areas is another example of how it is incorporating core Indian concerns. As noted above, New Delhi does not want to see the Quad assuming the nature of an exclusivist group focused only on security matters. The diversification of the Quad’s areas of focus to include global health, infrastructure, climate change, new and emerging technologies, space, and maritime domain awareness among others informs the evolving nature of the grouping. This diversification is also strategically pragmatic, as cooperation in these functional areas would provide the necessary impetus for cooperation in other defense and security matters alongside providing a forum to comprehensively deal with the emerging issues in the Indo-Pacific, something India has consistently argued for.

The course the Quad has taken so far indicates that India has invested extensive diplomatic capital in normatively ordering the strategically crucial Indo-Pacific grouping. India’s efforts are meant to evolve an acceptable normative framework that will serve as a vision document for the Quad’s future course – a framework which structures the Quad as a forum promoting freedom, transparency, and openness, and aims at sustaining multipolarity in the region.

One of the effects of China’s rise has been the distortions to the regional order brought about by Beijing’s imperial and revisionist tendencies. The normative framework of the Quad should therefore challenge these distortions by promoting a regional order based on sovereign equality, openness and respect for international law. That would require a strong institutional response, which not only balances China but provides a strong normative response to it. The success of Quad will be determined by its ability to emerge as forum that will shoulder these realities in the Indo-Pacific.

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A new quad in the Western Indian Ocean

Sankalp Gurjar⁵

As geopolitical shifts unfold across the Western Indian Ocean, the coming together of a new grouping of countries with similar interests is likely to facilitate greater engagement with the region.

On 18 October, the foreign ministers of India, Israel, the US and the UAE held a meeting and formed a joint working group. The meeting discussed expanding political and economic cooperation between the four partners in West Asia and Asia more broadly. The discussion focused on areas such as climate change, maritime security, trade and energy cooperation, and public health. The coming together of these four partners is being dubbed as the 'new' Quad.

Geopolitical realities are never static, and shifts in the balance of power challenge old assumptions. Therefore, countries routinely adjust their strategies and find partners appropriate for responding to the evolving structure of the strategic environment. The 'new' Quad seeks to address the changing geopolitics of West Asia as well as the Western Indian Ocean (WIO).

The 'old' Quad between India, the US, Japan and Australia is focused on managing the rise of China and is naturally oriented towards the Eastern Indian Ocean and Western Pacific. However, in the WIO, until now there has been no such politico-security arrangement that would bring together countries sharing interests and similar threat perceptions. The 'new' Quad seeks to fill this gap.

The WIO, the region lying between India, the Suez Canal and South Africa, is strategically critical as it contains the key maritime chokepoints of the Bab-el-Mandeb and the Suez Canal. In 2018, nearly 6.2 million barrels of oil flowed through the Bab-el-Mandeb every day towards Asia and Europe. Sea lanes passing through the region are a critical node in the global energy network as well as economic security dynamics.

The presence of interconnected threats such as maritime piracy, illegal smuggling of drugs and weapons, and terrorism heightens the strategic importance of the region. Regional states host military bases of major powers including China, Russia, Japan and France, making it an arena of major power contestation.

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In this context, a minilateral working group of key regional and global players was long overdue. Unlike the 'old' Quad, the 'new' Quad is not directed against any particular threat. It is likely to be a flexible arrangement and is made possible by a convergence of interests in both the bilateral and regional dimensions.

In the last few years, bilateral engagement between India, Israel and the UAE has grown significantly. India has shed past inhibitions over engaging with Israel and is now investing considerable political capital in enhancing the relationship. Israel is emerging as a key partner in domains such as security, technology, energy and agriculture.

India's political outreach to the UAE is considered as one of the success stories of its foreign policy. The Gulf state was always a key economic and energy partner for India, but has now emerged as a close strategic partner as well.

⁵ Source: <https://rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/new-quad-western-indian-ocean>

Another building block of the ‘new’ Quad is the strengthening of ties between the UAE and Israel. The Abraham Accords, facilitated by the US, resulted in the establishment of diplomatic relations between the UAE and Israel last year. These states share concerns about terrorism, Iran’s regional behaviour and its nuclear programme.

Apart from the bilateral dimension, there is a broader, regional security dimension to the ‘new’ Quad. In the last few years, the strategic activities and interest of these four countries in the WIO have increased significantly.

Forming the Western flank of the Indo-Pacific region, the WIO is fast emerging as a strategic theatre in its own right, as well as being a part of the geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific. India, Israel, the US and the UAE are key players in the WIO and have stakes in shaping the emerging political and security order in the region.

A minilateral working group of key regional and global players in the Western Indian Ocean was long overdue.

The war in Yemen and intra-Gulf rivalries have been a significant contributing factor in shaping the geopolitics of the WIO. As a result, the UAE has assertively engaged with the region and projected its growing power into both the continental and maritime space of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.

Israel has reportedly established listening posts in Eritrea as well as on the island of Socotra. The strengthening of ties between the UAE and Israel opens up possibilities of working together in the WIO with close strategic partners such as India, France and the US.

On account of their naval presence and strategic engagement, India and the US are important players in the WIO. In fact, the WIO is considered as an ‘area of interest’ for the Indian Navy. In view of the growing Chinese presence in the region, India and the US are boosting their partnership in the WIO.

The interests and capabilities of all four countries are complementary to each other. Therefore, the ‘new’ Quad is likely to facilitate greater engagement with the region and maximise their strategic options.

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