

## **Editor's Note**

# **India's Moment**

**T**he year 2023 is a momentous one for India. The 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its Independence marks India's unmistakable rise as an Asian and global leader. As the fifth largest global economy whose GDP is set to overtake Germany and Japan in the next few years, and the fastest growing large economy at a time when all the other major states are facing low growth, high inflation and the prospect of recession, there are high expectations of a bright Indian future. India has scale, a young population, a large market, hard power and attractive soft power in music, films, fashion, cuisine, literature, sculptures, spectacular monuments, philosophy, Ayurveda and Yoga, and rich ancient wisdom and civilisation. As it modernises rapidly, India's influence will grow. Her ability to work and cooperate with nations of diverse political hues for the global good is also proven and undeniable.

With strong political, strategic and economic partnerships with the United States, Japan, France, Russia, Germany, Australia, South Korea, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and Brazil, among others, India is a crucial actor for global peace, security and economic stability. It is therefore significant that Delhi is set to hold the world stage in 2023 bestowed with the trust of all its partners to steer the G-20 through a most difficult and tumultuous period in world politics and economy. Almost all the G-20 leaders, the UN Secretary General António Guterres and leaders of the Global South have pinned their hopes on India to successfully navigate through the global crisis, creating a consensus with other powers on ways to tackle the debt crisis, financial stability, repairing disruptions in critical supply chains in food, fertilisers, energy, and getting the Western powers to provide the much needed USD 100 billion a year in climate finance that it promised to support the developing states control and cut their carbon emission. The West clearly has large money to finance the Ukraine War and the earlier wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, but it is hesitant to spend enough to support the developing world struggling to tackle the impact of climate change that Western industrialisation, economic policies and consumption patterns have principally brought about since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.

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This is also the year in which India will lead the large Eurasian group, somewhat incongruously, called the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) that brings India, Russia, China, the Central Asian States, Iran and Pakistan together, even as war rages at its one end, invasions are threatened at another, and mass upheavals and extremism flares in its underbelly. With India's ties with China strained, Russia engaged in a conflict, Iran facing mass protests for months, and Pakistan sinking into a deepening economic and political morass, leading the group towards meaningful agreements and collaboration won't be easy. Afghanistan under Taliban rule presents a further set of challenges for peace, stability and welfare. Four areas are of immediate Indian concern. These are:

- To work with its partners to ensure a consensus on opposing and sanctioning terrorism and extremism;
- To agree on a collective approach towards Kabul and the Taliban regime that would both help protect the basic rights of its citizens and meet their urgent welfare needs;
- To ensure that all states agree to resolve differences and conflicts, including border disputes, peacefully through negotiations;
- To approve a plan for the smooth flow of energy through secure pipelines in the region.

### **Global Crisis and Responsibilities**

While 2023 would be a landmark year for India, it comes with enormous responsibilities and geopolitical and economic challenges that Indian leaders know well enough. They would have to deftly grapple with them and work with others to overcome them. It is not going to be easy – given the deep divisions between the US-led G-7 developed states, and Russia and China. India's own relations with China are critically poised with Chinese amassing troops along the disputed border, apparently restive for another showdown and land grab. That's not all. China's policy swing between Covid isolationism and recent full relaxation has cast a shadow over the economy and health security in the region. Its threat to militarily takeover Taiwan remains high.

The geopolitical crisis— whose impact on the global economy keeps growing— will, therefore, be a constant shadow over the ecosystem at the G-20 (and the SCO), influencing the direction of the deliberations leading to the Summit in September. It

cannot be missed that the preceding Indonesian Presidency was marred by the Ukraine conflict with the G-7 insisting that Russia be condemned and refusing to even speak or sit with Russian leader Putin in the same room.

India with its all-round approach and an effective and dynamic leadership whose political capital with the other 19 members remains high, is perhaps best placed within the G-20 to bridge some of the bitter differences and steer the presidency through the turbulence caused by the growing tensions between the West and its principal rivals—Russia and China. But for that to happen Washington and Moscow would have to begin talking and reach an understanding on Ukraine.

There have been many positive statements made by the G-20 and other world leaders welcoming the Indian Presidency with expressions of hope for tangible success at the G-20. However, it may be pertinent here to cite a significant statement from a leading Pakistani commentator on India's key role in the global politico-economic-security dynamics and institutional architecture. It is rare for Pakistanis to say good words of praise for India, but even that is strangely happening. Perceptions of India are changing among its people and the more moderate elites. What Shazad Chaudhry, one of its leading columnists wrote in a recent opinion piece in its leading daily *The Express Tribune*, is worth citing:

“If I were Kissinger I would write a “treatise” on India....India is relevant to the world, not only in its size and girth but by its footprint and what matters to the world....India's global footprint is remarkable. She is invited to the G7 and is a member of the G20. It is leading a movement of the global South to represent what is critical to equitable progress in the times of climate change, pandemics and technology intrusion. It has a blueprint of establishing her own domain on the foreign policy front and sticks to it assiduously. She may seem arrogant and haughty at times triggering aversion but feels she has the space to assert her presence. It is a fine line but her foreign policy apparatus treads it skillfully. Modi has brought India to the point where she has begun to cast a wider net of its influence and impact. Pakistan has been skilfully reduced to a footnote in this Indian script. It is time to smell some real leaves.”

This wind of change in public opinion may not mean much in a polity dominated and controlled by a hostile military-bureaucratic-political elite that thrives on hate of

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India for its *raison d'être*. The country, after all, is sinking into internal political war and economic morass. But perhaps this is a sign that some significant groups in Pakistan are thinking of an alternative cooperative future. Perhaps that could be happening in China too, driven to the walls by Xi's ultranationalist and autocratic line and its rising costs.

### **India's Universal Agenda**

In this rapidly fragmenting and divided world where the institutional and politico-economic systems crafted at Bretton Woods and San Francisco, the post-Cold War understandings on common security outlined in the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), on arms control, the political agreements reached between the West and Russia, and the neo-liberal and democracy promotion agendas promoted by the US -- with devastating costs -- are rapidly breaking down. Bharat's (India) message for a new universal and constructive engagement pathway is imperative and has great relevance. Setting the fundamental ideas that would guide India's role in the G-20 and the world, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has stressed three important themes: *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* or the World is one family; the unity of nature and human life; and the need for reformed multilateralism. These themes are in keeping with the needs of a changed and fraying global order, and aimed at ameliorating the spreading geopolitical rivalries among the great powers, the climate crisis, and the dysfunction of several global institutions. Together these themes signify an interconnected world where nations need to come together to fight common challenges and prioritise cooperation over conflict. The centrality of environmental protection in all human activity, especially development planning, has to be recognised and actions that have already been agreed upon sincerely implemented. These are universal messages on which all can agree and then seek ways to actualise them in practice.

India will hold the G20 Presidency from December 1, 2022 to November 30, 2023. Prime Minister had emphasised at the G20 Leaders' Summit in Bali, Indonesia, India's "unwavering commitment to collectively address global challenges". The UN Secretary General António Guterres has expressed his hope that India's G20 presidency will allow for the creation of effective systems of debt restructuring. He stressed that the developing countries are facing acute debt, food, fuel, medical and other challenges as a result of the impact of the pandemic and increased food and fuel prices due to the Ukraine conflict. India's supply of Covid vaccines to over 70 developing nations even

as it was itself still vaccinating its vast population is a stand-out example of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam in action. India's resolve to be the voice of the global South in the G20, as has been spelt out by the External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, is crucial in this context. To expand the scope of participation and engage a wider group of other nations, India has invited 43 countries to be present at the G20 summit in September—the largest ever.

The 2022 Indonesian Presidency was focused on three main pillars as the result of the pandemic: Global Health Architecture, Sustainable Energy Transition, and Digital Transformation. Given the current concerns as expressed by the world leaders during consultations and India's own perspectives on global issues, the government has put forward six thematic priorities for the year-long deliberations of the group. They cover all the areas that are globally significant and of particular interest to India, as well as to the other member states and the Global South. These are:

- Green Development, Climate Finance & Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE)
- Accelerated, Inclusive & Resilient Growth
- Accelerating Progress on UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- Technological Transformation & Digital Public Infrastructure
- Multilateral Institutions for the 21<sup>st</sup> century
- Women-led Development

India has also committed to work for an agreement on debt servicing and finance, and Standard Operating Principles for crypto currencies.

The G20 is an economic forum but its agenda has steadily expanded over the years to include climate change and other consequences of economic activity. The Indonesian Presidency had also to deal with the differences caused by the Ukraine war between the G-7 states and Russia that threatened to derail the summit. The statement issued at the end of the G20 summit at Bali in November 2022 recognising that the G20 is not the forum to resolve security issues, acknowledged that “security issues can have significant consequences for the global economy.” It acknowledged “there were other views and different assessments” but also stated that International law must be upheld.

While keeping its focus on its ambitious agenda, it is unlikely that the geopolitical and security issues would not have any role to play under India's Presidency. India would have to navigate deftly without losing sight of its mission. The world counts on it.

### **In This Issue**

In keeping with the wider context of India's role and Presidency of the G-20, the current issue of *National Security* covers the tasks before India as it assumes the G20 Presidency and three key sectors of the Indian economy that are crucial to India's growth story—trade, the ongoing transition towards electric automobiles, and the ambitious transformation of the agriculture sector. In all it carries two essays, three articles and two book reviews.

It begins with the essay by Akshay Mathur setting India's G20 presidency in its current geopolitical and economic context. He calls for prioritising national interest while upholding global goals to shape India's G20 presidency next year, as well as its agenda in global forums beyond 2023. In her outstanding essay, Devsena Mishra opens up an entirely different perspective on the US Big tech companies and their operations. She shows in detail how their operations have been shaped by the work of B.F. Skinner and the Behaviourist school in social psychology. She draws attention to the scientific movement called *behaviorism* that surfaced in the US academia parallel to the tech developments in the previous century and the deep impact it has left on the operation of tech platforms. She makes a strong argument for Indians to devise their own method for India's tech platforms that serves its economic and other vital interests and is in keeping with its cultural values.

V.S. Seshadri in his analysis of India's international trade, finds many opportunities for India's trade expansion given the multiple initiatives of the government. He calls on Indian industry to fully utilise the recent initiatives launched by the government to build a strong, competitive export capacity to not only push forward growth but also address the high trade deficit. Suhas P. Wani and Dharendra Singh write on ways to transform India's agriculture. Rising population, increasing incomes, climate change, and uncertain weather bring with them price fluctuations in farm produce. Transformative changes are needed in agricultural policies and practices if the country is to have sustainable agriculture, food sufficiency and variety. Atul Sarma and Shyam Sunder discuss India's climate commitments and the development challenges it faces in its

green energy mission in the transportation sector with emphasis on Electric Vehicles (EVs). The authors also analyse the role and efforts of various stakeholders, including, the Central and State Governments and the industry.

In the book review segment, Arvind Gupta highlights the vital findings of the recently released magnum opus-- "Snakes in the Ganga: Breaking India 2.0" by Rajiv Malhotra and Vijaya Viswanathan. The book extensively documents and exposes the attack on Indian society and culture by leading Western academia such as Harvard, Stanford, Yale, based on an inaccurate and prejudiced reading of India. These institutions at the same time prevent the airing of alternative views, studies and debates that question their findings. Finally, Gunjan Singh does a balanced review of "The Long Game: How the Chinese Negotiate with India" by India's former Foreign Secretary, Vijay Gokhale.

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