

G 20 and Its Relationship with Security

Indian Presidency: G20

This is the first time India has hosted a G20 summit, the annual convening of the world's 19 leading economies plus the European Union, which combined contribute 80% of global GDP. The G20 was founded in 1999 in response to several world economic crises and is the premier forum to facilitate global economic cooperation as the world recovers from pandemics, inflation, supply-chain disruptions and the costly consequences of climate change over recent years.

It also brings together major militaries. With robust domestic defence industrial capabilities, the group's members include most of the world's top 20 arms exporters though Sweden and Spain large arms exporting countries are not individual members but part of the EU. It is undoubtedly a forum for delivering important outcomes.

There was no doubt that the centre stage at the recently concluded G20 Summit was dominated to a large degree by India which was boosted by it having joined an elite club of countries having recently landed Chandrayan 3 on the moon. The carefully drafted Delhi Declaration which many felt would have not have been issued said it all; "Today's era must not be of war".

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said "The Summit adopted a leaders' declaration, which reflects China's proposition and states that the G20 would act in concrete ways through partnerships, sending a positive signal".[\[1\]](#)

In a world which is increasingly volatile, uncertain complex and ambiguous with the spectrum of interstate relations ranging from cooperation at one end to degrees of coexistence, competition, contestation, confrontation and finally culminating in conflict, the summit also reflected the emergence of India as one of the world's leading powers.[\[2\]](#)

Though not on the agenda, defence remains a vital ingredient of a nations Comprehensive National Power (CNP) and remains an important pillar that has contributed to the rise of India. Though G-20 is a premier forum for economic cooperation as the world faces complex crises, collaboration is becoming increasingly important. The war in Ukraine had cast a shadow on the summit and threatened the very foundation of cooperation. Though it did find mention in the main declaration issues regarding defence were discussed at the bilateral level.

Indo-US Defence Engagements

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

They 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 supported the advancement of this unprecedented co-production and technology transfer proposal.[\[3\]](#)

President Biden welcomed the issuance of a Letter to procure 31 General Atomics MQ-9B (16 Sky Guardian and 15 Sea Guardian) which will enhance the intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities.

Both countries 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 with the second Master Ship Repair Agreement and welcomed further commitments from US industry to invest more in India's maintenance, repair, and overhaul capabilities and facilities for aircraft.[\[4\]](#)

The two leaders also commended the India-US Defence Acceleration Ecosystem (INDUS-X) and the announcement by the Indian Innovations for Defence Excellence and the US Defense Innovation Unit to launch two joint challenges, which will invite start-ups to develop solutions to shared defence technology challenges.

France & India to Enhance Defence Cooperation

During their meeting at the G20 summit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and French President Emmanuel Macron expressed their commitment to enhancing the defence cooperation between India and France. They emphasised the importance of collaborating on the design, development, and production of advanced defence systems, even for other nations in the Indo-Pacific region. They also urged for the swift completion of the planned defence industrial roadmap.[\[5\]](#)

In July, India had given approval for the purchase of these naval variant Rafale jets from France, as well as for the procurement of three French-designed Scorpene class submarines.

The joint statement acknowledged 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".[\[6\]](#)

The day after the event, the Indian Air Force Chief was in Seville, Spain to receive the first C-295 transport aircraft built by Airbus. In 2021, India had signed a Rs 21,935-crore deal with Airbus for 56 C-295 to modernise its transport fleet. 16 aircraft are to be delivered in a flyaway condition, while the rest will be assembled at a Tata facility in Vadodara.

Japan: Free & Open Indo Pacific

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida of Japan said he sees India as an "indispensable" partner in the Indo-Pacific and Japan is keen to develop deeper defence cooperation to ensure maritime security in the region.

On 10 September, he stated; "Our Self-Defence Forces and the Indian Armed Forces have already conducted joint exercises this year between all services of land, sea and air. Our cooperative relationship is deepening steadily".[\[7\]](#)

"For example, as we did last year, our maritime Self-Defence Forces and the Indian Navy engaged in joint exercises this July and the Japan-Australia-India-U.S. Quad joint drill Malabar was also held on a continuous basis. So, going forward, to ensure the Indo-Pacific will not be a region that will be decided by force, and will be a region that values freedom and rule of law, we will continue active defence cooperation and exchanges with India".

He talked about India's role in his new Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) strategy. Japan's FOIP was "An inclusive and open concept and has no specific country in mind". At the same time, he described "An increasingly harsh security environment in the region" and said Japan was "opposed to unilateral changes to the status quo in East and South China Seas", and also "Firmly condemned North Korean's missile activities".

"The FOIP that Japan is promoting is a concept to uphold and reinforce a free and open international order based on rule of law in the Indo-Pacific region. And by doing so we aim to ensure peace and stability and prosperity in the entire region and ultimately across the world. That is the vision. India is an indispensable partner to realise a FOIP".

Inclusion of African Union

One of the major steps was the inclusion of the African Union in the G20. There has been a massive Indian investment in the Nigerian Defence Sector and the Defence Minister Rajnath Singh met with President Tinubu of Nigeria. "I have no doubt that India-Nigeria defence ties will expand. We believe the Indian military-defence complex is something we can partner with".

Mr Ngelale, their spokesman, said, "In line with that, we are having discussions for defence deals worth over \$1 billion dollars to boost the Defence Industries Corporation of Nigeria for achievement 40 per cent self-sufficiency with the cooperation of the Indian government," he said. He further stated that Nigeria is interested in the LCA Tejas, and transfer of technology of drones and more advanced Armoured Personnel Carriers.[\[8\]](#)

India's Military Capabilities

The median age of India's population is one of the youngest. The Indian economy has expanded steadily over the last three decades, even during the pandemic. Among large economies, it now ranks as the world's fastest growing. Our military capability has been demonstrated during the standoff in Doklam and Galwan and technology during the recent landing of Chandrayan 3.

The bottom line is that economic security is closely intertwined with peace to maintain which building up of the deterrence in Armed Forces in terms of their capabilities, training, doctrines, equipment, technology, manufacturing and military cooperation with other nations though expensive is far cheaper than the cost of war.

The war in Ukraine has exposed some fundamental flaws in the way Europe approached its security concerns post the breakdown of the Berlin Wall. Peace was taken for granted and to quote Sweden's Defence Minister Pal Jonson; "Something so freely available that it is akin to air". The complacency and diversion of resources regarding defence has been a wakeup call. Peace and prosperity for the planet comes at a cost.

India woke up from this complacency post 1962. With unresolved borders with two of our neighbours and the threat of terrorism, India's security concerns have always been at the forefront. There has been a transition from a force driven by threats to one driven by its capabilities. This involves building strong collaborative structures while retaining unique service strengths, embracing technology-driven operations, fostering research and development through partnerships with the private sector, defence manufacture as envisaged by 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' and strengthening strategic thinking.

Conclusion

The US-China stand-off hasn't mirrored the Cold War in terms of dividing the world into a 'tight' bipolarity. But dispersal of power in the international system have created an environment which has offered opportunities to some nations to increase their leverage by pursuing an 'independent path' towards a "A world that is fair" and "Inclusive" to quote Cyril Ramaphosa, South Africa's President.

Today's world is a complex network of interconnections where trade, technology, migration, and the internet are bringing humans together as never before.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi summed up the vision of G20 when he said it would help the world move beyond greed and confrontation, and cultivate a "Universal sense of one-ness." The theme was "One Earth, One Family, One Future." Rather than war and rivalry, the Prime Minister had declared, the greatest challenges humanity faces today are climate change, terrorism, and pandemics—issues that "Can be solved not by fighting each other, but only by acting together." The Delhi Declaration called on countries to "Refrain from the threat or use of force to seek territorial acquisition."

The emergence of a multipolar world has resulted in significant instability, marking a pivotal moment for India to assume a substantial role on the global stage which it did during the G20 Summit.

The reality is that in the international arena, both economic strength and military capabilities contribute to a nation's standing and the benefits of cooperation on 'shared challenges' are immense.

End Notes

[1] Zoya Mateen, G20: China says Delhi declaration sent a positive signal, BBC, 12 September 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-66783015>

[2] Maj Gen Jagatbir Singh, Why the role of G20 in shaping international security is crucial for global power balance, The First Post, 17 September, <https://www.firstpost.com/opinion/why-the-role-of-g20-in-shaping-international-security-is-crucial-for-global-power-balance-13133652.html>

[3] Prime Ministers Office, Joint Statement from India and the United States, PIB, 08 September 2023 <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1955696>

[4] Ibid

[5] India-France Joint Statement, Ministry of External Affairs, 10 September 2023, <https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/37096/IndiaFrance+Joint+Statement>

[6] Ibid

[7] Ananth Krishnan, G-20 Summit 2023 | Japan keen to deepen military ties with India amid 'harsh' security environment, The Hindu, 10 September, 2023 <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/g-20-summit-2023-japan-keen-to-deepen-military-ties-with-india-amid-harsh-security-environment/article67292751.ece>

[8] Debanish Achom, At G20, Nigeria Eyes Massive Indian Investment In Defence, NDTV 07 September 2023, <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/at-g20-nigeria-eyes-massive-indian-investment-in-defence-4369427>

Major General Jagatbir Singh, VSM (Retd) is a Distinguished Fellow at the USI of India. Commissioned in 1981 into the 18 Cavalry, he has held various important command and Staff appointments including command of an Armoured Division.

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