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THE UN: (UN)REPRESENTATIVE & (UN)BALANCED

IN FOCUS
NON-PERMANENT MEMBERS OF UNSC: AN UNENDING JOKE

BIG STORY
THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL: REFORM, RESISTANCE AND THE ROAD AHEAD

COUNTERVIEW
'FAILED MARSHALS' OF PAKISTAN DEGRADING HIGHEST MILITARY OFFICE

THE POWER PANEL



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FOREWORD



A COUNCIL OUT OF SYNC: MODERN WORLD, OUTDATED MANDATE

The News Analytics Herald has always focussed on issues that are important and thought provoking. The subject of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) reforms very much requires in-depth discussion. Even after more than three decades of debate, efforts to modernise this vital institution have remained stalled, undermining its legitimacy.

The world has changed dramatically, yet the UNSC remains anchored in the 1945 structure. A primary barrier to UNSC reforms is the veto held by the five permanent members. As crises from Gaza to Ukraine have shown, the Council often remains paralysed while global tensions escalate. Compounding this obstruction is the "Coffee Club" members opposed to adding new permanent seats. Their strategic opposition, likely aligned with certain permanent members, has kept reform efforts symbolic.

This structural inertia disproportionately harms the Global South. Nations that joined the UN post-1945 continue to see their voices marginalised. They all remain underrepresented in decisions affecting their futures. Reform is not just about fairness, but it is about restoring the UNSC's credibility and capacity to act.

The coming years could be pivotal. India and its allies are rallying under the G4, while other nations, from Kazakhstan to African Union representatives, are adding incremental proposals, like expanding permanent seats without granting veto rights, that might offer a pragmatic pathway forward.

This issue of The News Analytics Herald has examined various aspects of UNSC reforms to make the UN relevant again. As the UN edges into its eighth decade, the case is urgent: the Council must evolve or face becoming a relic. Only comprehensive, inclusive reforms can reaffirm the UN's purpose, ensuring that every nation's voice counts.



Ambassador Sushil Kumar Singhal, IFS (R)
(Former Ambassador to Angola. He has served in Tanzania, Belgium, Bangladesh and Hungary)

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE



THE UNITED NATIONS – TIME FOR REFORM, TIME FOR INDIA

The United Nations, born out of the ideals of global fairness and cooperation, today stands at a crossroads, plagued by outdated structures and an unrepresentative power dynamic that fails to reflect the aspirations of the Global South, especially India. Despite being the world's most populous nation and a leading contributor to UN peacekeeping, India remains excluded from the Security Council's permanent membership, an exclusion that starkly highlights the UN's structural imbalance.

The P5 veto system continues to protect the strategic interests of a privileged few, namely the United States, Russia, China, the UK, and France, while the voices of over 180 nations are marginalised. This power monopoly has repeatedly stalled action on urgent global challenges, from conflicts and humanitarian crises to climate change and terrorism issues that deeply impact the developing world.

In this edition of The News Analytics Herald, we spotlight India's rightful demand for a permanent seat, the call for Security Council reform, and the urgent need to reimagine global governance through a multipolar lens.

As India rises as a responsible power advocating for equity, justice, and peace, the real question emerges: can the UN remain relevant without acknowledging India's voice and reshaping its foundations?

Jai Hind!



Sandhya Srivastava
Publisher &
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NON-PERMANENT MEMBERS OF UNSC: AN UNENDING JOKE

IN FOCUS

The United Nations Security Council's non-permanent seat elections are marked by backroom deals, intense lobbying, and diplomatic horse-trading, despite offering limited real power. Countries still aggressively campaign for temporary prestige, driven by the illusion of influence. Meanwhile, the UN's global relevance is rapidly fading. With declining participation from key world leaders and growing calls for reform, the institution risks becoming a ceremonial relic in an evolving, multipolar world order.



AMBASSADOR DR. DEEPAK VOHRA, IFS (R)
FOR **NEWS ANALYTICS**

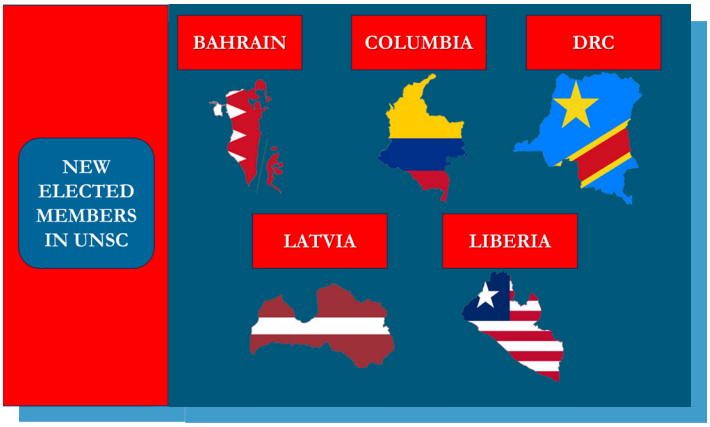
The United Nations Security Council held an election for five non-permanent members in June 2025, for a two-year term beginning 01 January 2026 and ending 31 December 2027. Some of us may not have even heard of some of these countries, or at best be vaguely familiar with them. Bahrain, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Latvia, and Liberia will replace Algeria, Guyana, the Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone, and Slovenia, whose terms end in December 2025.

In 2026, five more members will be elected to replace five existing ones. If they are non-permanent members with just two years of glory, why all the excitement, manipulation, and manoeuvring?



UNSC POWER DYNAMICS

Why do the candidates expend so much political capital in getting elected? The UNSC is the only one of the six principal organs of the United Nations that issues resolutions that bind member states. The now discredited United Nations was created 80 years ago at the end of the Second World War amid much hope and excitement. The UN Security Council was established with 11 members: 5 permanent members (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States) and 6 non-permanent members.



Not many countries were happy with the concept of the panchayat (or five permanent members of the Security Council) that arrogated to itself the right to determine the future of humankind forever and ever. To deflect criticism about a few countries alone deciding the future of humanity, the number of non-permanent members was increased from 6 to 10 in 1965.

This change also formalised the regional groups used for electing non-permanent members to provide for global representation with a focus on international peace and security. The non-permanent members are elected by the General Assembly via secret ballot and must secure two-thirds of the votes of the 193 members of the General Assembly. The election process for non-permanent seats on the UNSC involves regional groups nominating their candidates.

There are four regional groups: Africa, Asia-Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Western European and Others Group (which includes countries like Denmark and Greece). Each group picks one candidate, but the Western European and Others Group selects two. Each regional group typically agrees on candidates to present to the General Assembly for a two-year term. This process aims to ensure regional representation within the Security Council, reflecting global geopolitical diversity and interests, and since the non-permanent members have the same powers as the permanent ones (except the veto), they play an equal role in global peace and development, at least that is the theory.

The position of a non-permanent member of the UNSC offers both opportunities and challenges. Apart from providing a platform for influence and diplomatic engagement, it also involves navigating the power dynamics of the Council and dealing with the limitations imposed by the permanent members. In practice, while non-permanent members can influence the UNSC's agenda and decisions, they ultimately lack the veto power held by the five permanent members.

Non-permanent members can raise issues and propose resolutions, but the permanent members often dominate the agenda-setting process and have the power to block or significantly alter proposals.

POWER, INFLUENCE, LEGACY

So why do countries want to be in the UNSC? Serving on the UNSC provides opportunities for non-permanent members to build relationships with other countries and enhance their diplomatic standing. They can boast at home and abroad of setting the global agenda. However, this can also lead to increased dependence on the permanent members and their willingness to cooperate. While non-permanent members gain greater international visibility and can advocate for their national interests on a global stage, the Council's effectiveness in addressing major global challenges can be hampered by the permanent members' disagreements and the limitations on non-permanent members' power.

Every non-permanent member, having tasted power and influence (even though the United Nations has neither), wants to reform the United Nations system but faces ferocious resistance from the permanent members who benefit from the current structure.



Non-permanent members are delighted to take on greater responsibility in peacekeeping operations and humanitarian efforts, but they lack the resources and capabilities of the permanent members. I am familiar with the deals that are made during the elections of the five non-permanent members annually. Formal notes are exchanged. Country A and Country B have agreed that they will vote for each other in the years that they seek election.

Despite having no veto power, non-permanent members fiercely compete for seats, seeking global recognition, diplomatic leverage, and a fleeting moment of international prominence.

UN CREDIBILITY CRUMBLES

Are some agreements broken? Yes, they are, since the voting for non-permanent members is by secret ballot in the General Assembly, cheaters are difficult to expose. The lobbying involves three stages. The candidates belonging to a particular region seek the support of the other members of the group so that they are the only contenders and hence have a strong chance of being unanimously approved by the UNGA. They pleaded with the other members of the regional Group to accept them as the sole candidates of the region.



Sometimes, consensus is difficult to achieve, so the competing countries from a particular region try their luck in the General Assembly. This is the second stage when they beg the capitals of the UNGA members to support them and swear eternal fealty. If no one gets a two-thirds majority, the top two vote-getters compete in the "finals", with the winner taking all.

I remember in the mid-1990s when I was posted in Kuala Lumpur, we wanted to represent the Asia-Pacific Group, Japan opposed us, we could not match the financial assistance promised by Japan, and we lost!

As the United Nations loses its lustre and relevance, calls for its reform or abolition grow louder, the Permanent Members of the Security Council will not allow any rearrangement that dilutes their power and influence. We are stuck in a time warp with no sunlight on the horizon.

In a television interview in 2024, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres frankly admitted that he neither had the clout nor indeed the money to make a difference, but he would make himself heard loud and clear at every opportunity. It is abundantly clear what criteria need to be emphasized when the next Secretary General is chosen: lung power rather than geopolitics.

Something is wrong when the main geopolitical event of September, the United Nations General Assembly, where at least 193 nations get together to yell and scream and argue and declaim, was replaced by attractions such as Roger Federer, Priyanka Chopra and Princess Kate Middleton.

Out of the 5 permanent members of the Security Council, only President Joe Biden attended the September 2024 UNGA session. This does not count since he was merely undertaking local travel. The British representative was there, but not all the G-20 leaders attended; at best, 5 attended. Among emerging countries, Brazil and South Africa alone participated at the highest level.

FADING INFLUENCE

What does this tell us about the importance of the UN? For many diplomats, the absence of big players sends a signal that the United Nations is not the main platform for multilateralism anymore. The UN has been in terminal decline for some time.

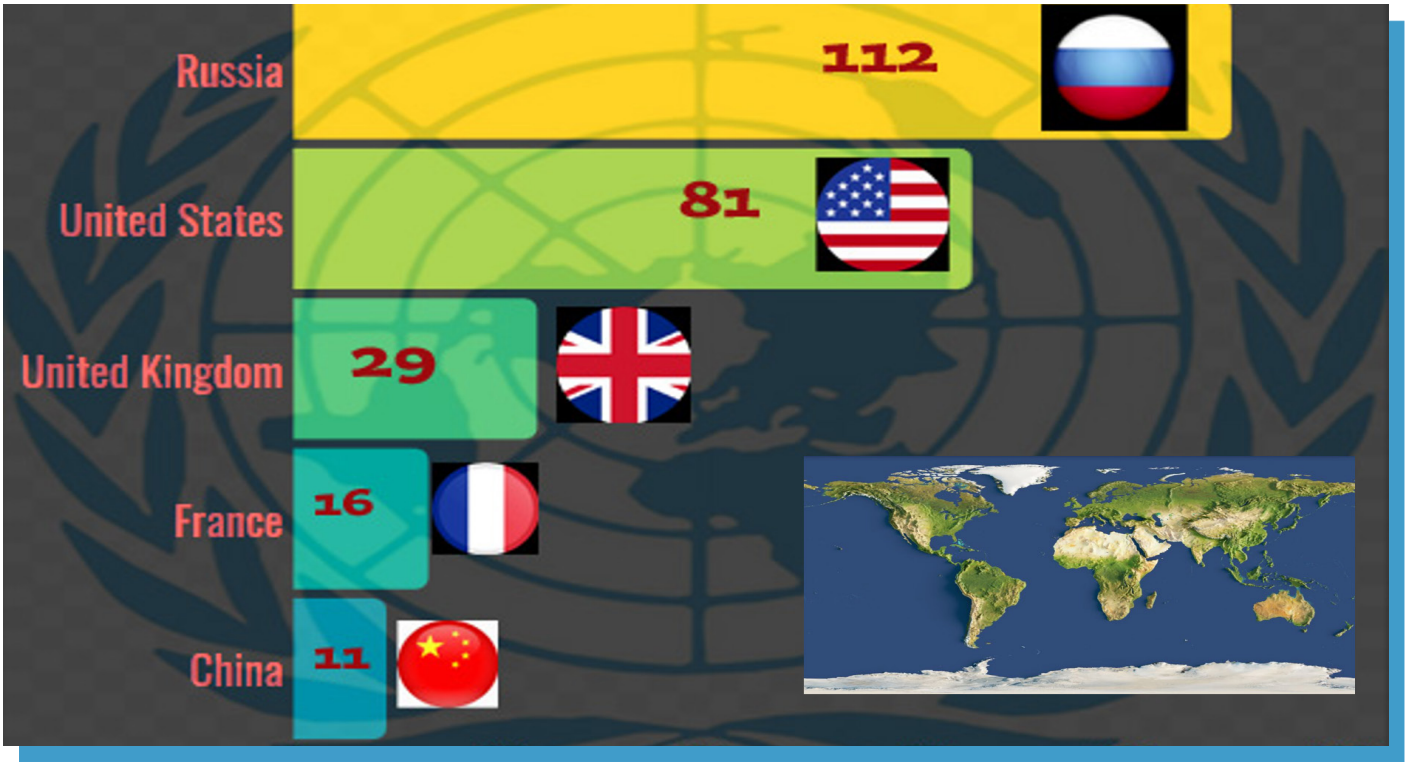
The UN Security Council is supposed to deal with matters relating to war and peace, but it is hard to avoid the impression



that the P5 is at war with itself and seeks peace with the rest of the World when it suits them.

The UN General Assembly has become too general for its

UNGA's irrelevance grows as spectacle overshadows substance, with celebrities replacing statesmen and geopolitics giving way to grandstanding, eroding the UN's credibility and purpose.



good and is now a vast assembly of a motley group of putative world leaders. Millions of years ago, the dinosaurs became extinct when the climate changed. In the 21st century, the geopolitical climate is changing, and another dinosaur risks extinction. It used to be called the United Nations.

(Ambassador Dr. Deepak Vohra, IFS (R) is a former Ambassador to Armenia, Sudan and Poland. He was also a special Advisor to the Government of South Sudan. The views expressed are of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of ***The News Analytics Herald.****)*

MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS

- ***Non-permanent UNSC seats lack power but offer symbolic, short-term diplomatic prestige.***
- ***Voting relies on lobbying, secret ballots, and deals, reducing it to diplomatic games.***
- ***The UN's relevance declines as leaders skip summits and multilateral focus shifts elsewhere.***
- ***The P5 resist reform to keep veto power, leaving the UN stagnant and weak.***
- ***Once a symbol of unity, the UN now faces irrelevance amid global power shifts.***



THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL: REFORM,

BIG STORY

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC), born from the ashes of World War II, is increasingly seen as outdated and ineffective in addressing 21st-century global challenges. With veto-wielding powers still reflecting a 1945 world order, growing calls for reform are clashing with entrenched interests. As elections for non-permanent seats proceed, the debate intensifies: should the UNSC adapt to global realities, or risk fading into irrelevance?



RICARDO MARTINS, CURITIBA, BRAZIL
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The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) was conceived in the aftermath of the Second World War as a keystone of the new international order, responsible for maintaining global peace and security. Its unique structure – particularly the veto power wielded by its five permanent members (P5: the United States, United Kingdom, France, Russia, and China), reflected the geopolitical hierarchy of the time. Seventy-nine years later, that post-war order is increasingly out of step with contemporary global realities.

As the world observes another round of elections for five of the ten non-permanent UNSC seats, the core tension becomes increasingly apparent: a Council tasked with representing the international community remains governed by a structure designed for a very different era. How did the UNSC become so resistant to change? Who benefits from the status quo? And is meaningful reform still within reach – or already a lost cause?

These questions loom large, not only for diplomats and statesmen but for the broader community of nations that depend on the legitimacy and functionality of multilateral institutions in an increasingly fragmented world.



RESISTANCE AND THE ROAD AHEAD

Despite global calls for change, the UNSC's reform faces resistance from the P5, who benefit from a veto system that undermines democratic decision-making.



CURRENT STRUCTURE

The UNSC consists of 15 members: five permanent and ten non-permanent, the latter elected by the UN General Assembly for a two-year term. The non-permanent seats are distributed regionally: Africa (3), Asia-Pacific (2), Latin America and the Caribbean (2), Western Europe and Others (2), and Eastern Europe (1). Despite the regional diversity of these rotating members, their actual influence is sharply curtailed by the veto power held exclusively by the P5.

This configuration reflects the distribution of power in 1945, when the Allied victors shaped the institutional architecture of the UN. The veto was intended as both a pragmatic and political mechanism to ensure that the most powerful states remained invested in the system, thereby preventing a repeat of the League of Nations' failure. Yet today, it stands as a blunt instrument of paralysis.

The current elections, though procedurally democratic, do little to address these deeper systemic issues. They are often shaped by bloc politics, regional rivalries, and diplomatic horse-trading. While non-permanent members can occasionally influence debates or shape agendas, any substantive resolution can be unilaterally blocked by a single permanent member, rendering the institution ineffective in many of the world's most pressing crises.

FROZEN IN TIME

Critics argue that the UNSC has become a relic of a bygone era, structurally incapable of reflecting the 21st-century global order. Key among these critics is Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who, during his state visit to France in June 2025, once again underscored the need for comprehensive reform. Speaking in Paris, Lula noted that the geopolitical landscape has evolved dramatically since the UN's founding. "The veto power at the UN Security Council – a central body of the organisation – is making it dysfunctional," he stated pointedly.

Lula recalled a striking historical irony: in 1948, when Brazil presided over the General Assembly session that created the state of Israel, the UN had the authority and unity to shape the world map. Today, that same body seems unable to create a Palestinian state, let alone bring closure to the Israel-Palestine conflict.

President Lula joined a growing chorus of global voices calling for expanded representation. He specifically named India – the world's most populous democracy and a regional power – alongside Brazil, South Africa, Germany, and Japan as deserving of permanent seats. Yet Lula did not delve into technical details, such as whether Europe should retain two or three permanent members or one in a rotating system, how the veto would be restructured, or the ideal number of permanent and non-permanent members.



Still, provocative ideas are being floated in this realm: in a reformed UNSC, a single nation's veto should not be enough to block a decision. Instead, at least two or three permanent members and at least one non-permanent member should be required to veto a resolution. Such a change could curtail the abuse of veto power while preserving checks and balances.

THE 'CONSPIRACY' OF INACTION

Why has the push for reform stalled, despite its overwhelming moral and political logic? The answer lies in a complex web of interests, power politics, and institutional inertia.

Some observers refer to a "conspiracy of inaction" – a deliberate strategy by the P5 to maintain their privileged

positions. This theory finds support in actions and statements from global powers, especially the United States. While President Donald Trump had acknowledged the emerging multipolar world, placing the U.S., China, and Russia at the top, current rhetoric from American officials reveals a reluctance to cede ground.



At the German Marshall Fund Brussels Forum on June 11, 2025, U.S. Ambassador to NATO Matthew Whitaker declared that the United States remains "the sole superpower" and urged Europeans to help contain China. In both tone and substance, the message was clear: true superpowers do not share power willingly.

Indeed, the U.S. has a history of disengaging from multilateral frameworks where power is distributed evenly. The League of Nations – the UN's predecessor – never gained American membership. And when the World Trade Organization (WTO) began issuing unfavourable rulings against the U.S., Washington systematically worked to undermine its authority, blocking appointments to its appellate body and eventually rendering it inoperative.

France and Great Britain have not driven the UNSC reform agenda either. While President Macron has privately expressed support to PM Modi and President Lula for India's and Brazil's bids, European powers recognise a hard truth: with Germany pleading to maintain its influence, having three European permanent members is unlikely to gain acceptance from existing P5 members or the wider international community. Given Europe's declining influence and the UK's status as a dependent nuclear power, any future UNSC reform would likely offer Europe only a single permanent seat or introduce a rotating system that could include Germany.

Meanwhile, China and Russia have shown little appetite for changes that could dilute their UNSC influence. However, contrary to expectations, at the last BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Rio de Janeiro—held from April 28 to 29, 2025—Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi reaffirmed China's support for UNSC reform and backed the candidacies of Brazil and India.

Compounding this is the fragmentation among aspiring powers. The G4 nations (India, Brazil, Germany, Japan) have made strong reform proposals, yet face opposition from the "Uniting for Consensus" group, which includes countries like Italy, Pakistan, and Argentina. These nations argue that new permanent seats will only deepen inequalities and propose instead a larger pool of rotating seats.

Leaders like Brazil's Lula da Silva demand expanded representation, yet disagreements among reform advocates and opposition from vested powers stall any real structural transformation.

REFORM OR IRRELEVANCE

While talk of a "conspiracy" may suggest deliberate obstruction, the broader reality reflects structural inertia and deeply entrenched power dynamics. Reforming the UNSC requires amending the UN Charter – a feat demanding not only two-thirds support in the General Assembly but also ratification by all five permanent members. The built-in veto over reform makes change nearly impossible without consent from those most threatened by it.

Could a major geopolitical rupture – a global war, financial collapse, or revolutionary shift in global norms – shake the system loose? Possibly. But waiting for catastrophe is hardly a responsible strategy.

Instead, pressure must come from below and from the periphery. Civil society, academic institutions, non-aligned movements, and coalitions of small and medium powers can play a catalytic role. They can push for transparency, build diplomatic consensus, and demand accountability.

Some propose an incremental approach: expanding the number of non-permanent members or introducing semi-permanent seats with renewable terms. Others advocate for a more



radical reconstitution of the Council, possibly even outside the current Charter framework, should obstruction prove insurmountable.



Despite its shortcomings, the United Nations continues to contribute meaningfully to the world in humanitarian coordination, public health, climate governance, and conflict mediation. Yet its credibility and effectiveness in matters of peace and security are eroding. Like the WTO before it, the UNSC risks sliding into irrelevance. Worse, it could follow the path of the League of Nations, whose inability to adapt led to its dissolution.

In sum, the UNSC stands at a crossroads. Reform is not merely a matter of fairness or symbolism; it is a prerequisite for legitimacy and functionality in a world no longer dominated by a handful of Western powers. President Lula's remarks in Paris served as a reminder that history moves on, even when institutions do not.

(Ricardo Martins. PhD in Sociology, specialising in international relations, geopolitics, and Latin American politics. He recently completed his postdoctoral fellowship at Utrecht University in the Netherlands and covers major developments in Latin America for News Analytics. The views expressed are of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of ***The News Analytics Herald.****)*

MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS

- ***UNSC's outdated 1945 structure disconnects it from today's dynamic, multipolar global reality.***
- ***Any one P5 member can veto, paralysing the Council during global crisis resolution.***
- ***Major powers resist reforms that may dilute influence, using political and procedural hurdles as shields.***
- ***India, Brazil, and South Africa seek permanent seats to reflect today's geopolitical landscape.***
- ***Without reform, UNSC risks fading into irrelevance, much like the defunct League of Nations.***

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GLOBAL INFLUENCER

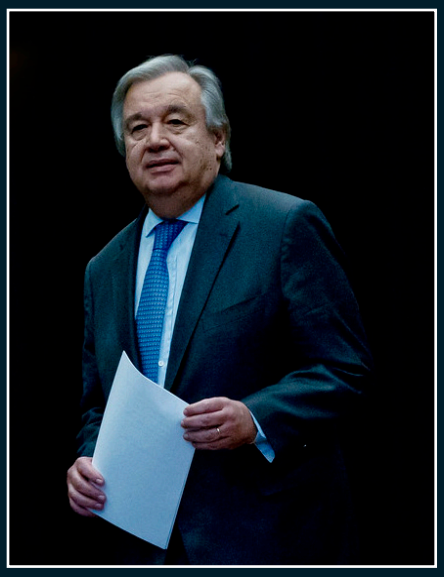
ANTÓNIO GUTERRES: GUIDING THE

NEWS ANALYTICS | Special Coverage

The UN Secretary-General has been at the epicenter of global crises, from escalating Middle East tensions to a transformative ocean summit and institutional reform. His decisive public interventions, backed by a new wave of diplomacy and policy advocacy, have reshaped international discourse, reinforced the UN's relevance, and positioned him as a central force for global action.

A LEADER FOR CRITICAL TIMES

Born in Lisbon in 1949, António Guterres served as Portugal's Prime Minister from 1995 to 2002 before becoming UN High Commissioner for Refugees from 2005 to 2015. In 2017, he assumed the role of UN Secretary-General. His tenure has been marked by a determined push toward multilateral reform, climate action, equitable development, and peacekeeping, guided by his "Our Common Agenda" vision and the Pact for the Future, which urges UN institutions to evolve for 21st-century challenges.



CONFRONTING GLOBAL CONFLICT

In June 2025, Guterres publicly called for an immediate cessation of strikes between Israel and Iran, declaring: "Enough escalation. Time to stop. Peace and diplomacy must prevail." His appeal resonated globally as regional tensions risked spiralling beyond control.

Meanwhile, the UN is undergoing sweeping internal reforms amidst a severe funding crisis. Guterres' UN80 initiative aims to cut regular budget expenditures by 15–20%, including a 20% staff reduction affecting approximately 2,800 positions. Emphasising that the restructuring stems from persistent delays in member-state contributions, rather than singling out U.S. aid reductions, he's reinforcing financial accountability while safeguarding peacekeeping and humanitarian operations.

At the Berlin Peacekeeping Conference (May 2025), Guterres raised alarms about diminishing mission budgets, noting an 8.2% year-on-year drop. He stressed that without urgent and full funding, the UN's eleven ongoing peace operations could falter, undermining global security architecture.

CHAMPIONING CLIMATE GOVERNANCE

June marked a milestone for ocean conservation as the UN hosted a high-level summit in Nice. Guterres took centre stage, urging the world to shift from "plunder to protection" and pushing for the conservation of 30% of global oceans by 2030. He sounded warnings against deep-sea mining and destructive fishing practices. With over 60 heads of state in attendance, and France's announcement of a 5 million km² marine protected area, Guterres successfully reframed ocean health as both a geopolitical and security priority.

Simultaneously, he continued his long-standing advocacy for climate diplomacy. Drawing from the Pact for the Future, Guterres has pushed for significant investments in climate finance and universal digital governance. His January 2025 speech at Davos warned private entities to "stay on the right side of history"—a statement that has since echoed through corridors of power, reasserting the UN's climate leadership.

OF THE MONTH

UN THROUGH TURBULENT WATERS

GLOBAL COOPERATION

Ahead of the upcoming Summit of the Future, Guterres has doubled down on the need for a Global Digital Compact—a UN-led framework promoting inclusive digital governance and AI regulation. His creation of a multi-stakeholder AI advisory body reflects his conviction that "governance must benefit all humanity," and not be monopolised by a few nations or corporations. His leadership in digital diplomacy continues to set a precedent for global coordination in regulating emerging technologies.

In June 2025, Guterres launched the UN's intergovernmental process on AI governance, co-facilitated by Spain and Costa Rica. This marks the first globally coordinated initiative to establish multilateral principles for responsible AI development. The process is designed to be inclusive, with participation from governments, civil society, and tech leaders, aligning closely with Guterres's broader goals of ensuring that digital progress is rooted in human rights and sustainable development.

As geopolitical tensions grow over AI arms races and misinformation, Guterres's leadership in convening this initiative reinforces the UN's centrality in guiding digital transformation through fairness, ethics, and global cooperation.



INDIA CONNECTION

Guterres's visit to New Delhi for the Ocean Conference in May 2025 highlighted India's growing role in global sustainability conversations. At the event, he urged the international community to protect biodiversity in the high seas, and curb overfishing, calling oceans the "ultimate shared resource."

This aligns with India's recent ratification of the BBNJ Treaty (Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction) and its commitments to marine conservation. Guterres's vision of oceans as a global commons finds a strong partner in India's scientific and diplomatic engagement. India's digital infrastructure push also mirrors Guterres's vision in the Global Digital Compact, laying the groundwork for future Indo-UN cooperation in AI ethics and cybersecurity governance.

UN IN A SHAKY WORLD

In a deeply polarized world, António Guterres stands out as a true diplomat steady, proactive, and committed to reform. Whether in mediating regional conflicts, pushing ocean preservation, confronting climate threats, or pioneering AI governance, he has ensured the UN doesn't just react, but leads.

As the organisation approaches its 80th anniversary, Guterres is steering it into an era defined by adaptability, inclusion, and urgency. His work is not just about preserving global order; it's about transforming global governance itself. That's what makes him our Global Influencer of the Month: a rare statesman whose actions match his ideals, and whose vision keeps the UN relevant in an increasingly complex world.

ASEAN PLACES HIGH-STAKES BET ON GCC-CHINA TRILATERAL COOPERATION

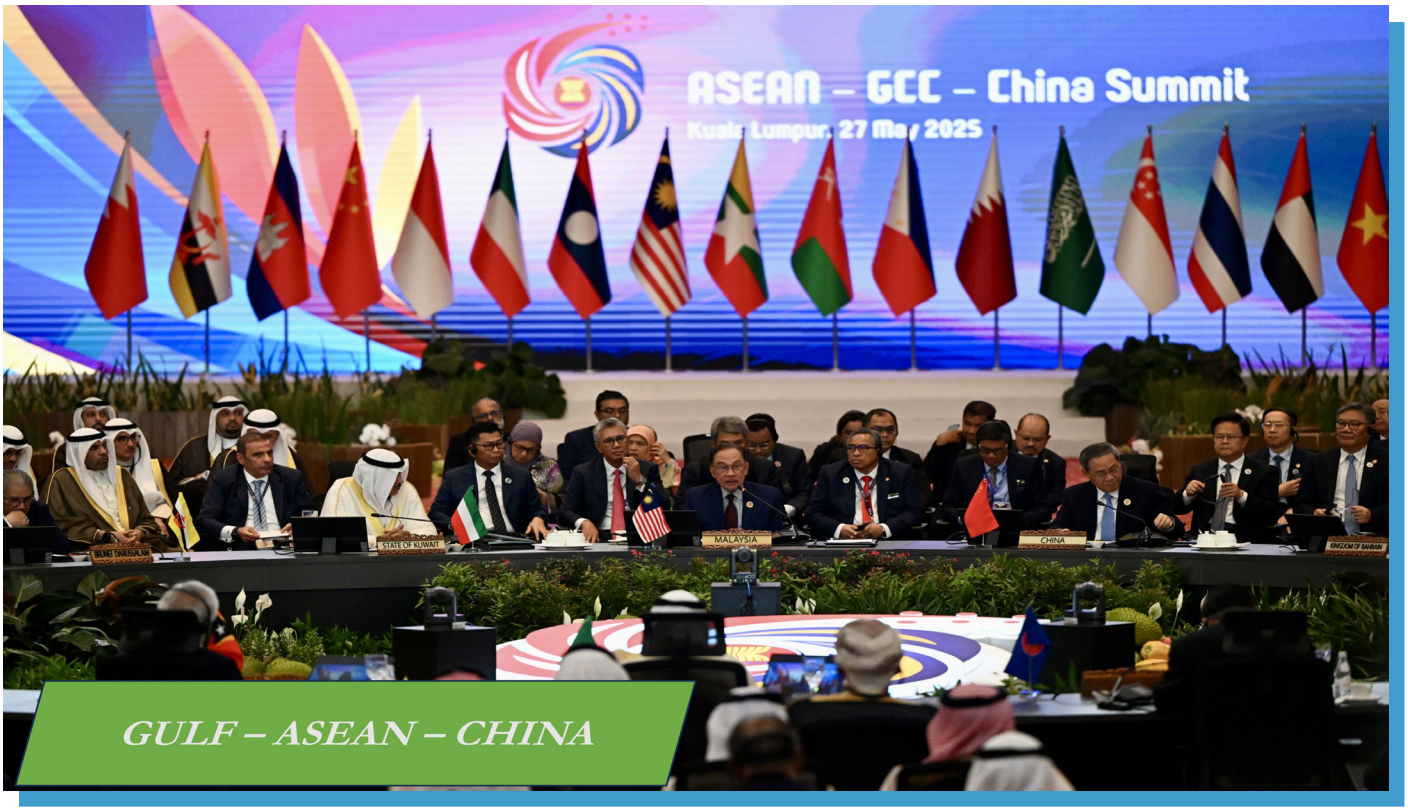
POWER & ALLIANCES

On May 27, 2025, Kuala Lumpur hosted the first-ever ASEAN-GCC-China Summit, signalling a bold trilateral pivot in global diplomacy. Amid rising U.S. tariffs and growing protectionism, this summit, spearheaded by Malaysia, aims to reinforce ASEAN centrality, deepen South-South cooperation, and diversify economic ties. While its ambitions are high, the success of this initiative hinges on managing complex geopolitical dynamics, structural gaps, and divergent national interests across the three blocs.



M A HOSSAIN, DHAKA, BANGLADESH
SENIOR JOURNALIST, COVERS SOUTH ASIA & ASEAN REGION
FOR **NEWS ANALYTICS**

Kuala Lumpur hosted an unprecedented diplomatic event on 27th May: the inaugural ASEAN-GCC-China Summit. This trilateral gathering, convened under Malaysia's ASEAN chairmanship, brought together leaders from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), and China. Spearheaded by Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, the summit reflects a bold attempt to carve out a new economic alliance in a world increasingly defined by geopolitical fragmentation and economic protectionism. While its ambitions are lofty—promoting ASEAN centrality, fostering South-South cooperation, and countering the fallout of U.S. tariffs—the summit's success will hinge on navigating structural challenges, geopolitical ambiguities, and the delicate balance of aligning diverse interests. This moment, though nascent, signals a pragmatic pivot for the Global South, one that deserves scrutiny for its potential and its pitfalls.



A NEW ALLIANCE

The summit's backdrop is a global economic order under strain. The reimposition of steep U.S. tariffs under President Donald Trump's second term—ranging from 10% to 49% on Southeast Asian exports—has jolted ASEAN economies, which rely heavily on the U.S. as a key market. A 90-day pause on these tariffs, announced in April 2025, has given ASEAN a fleeting window to recalibrate. Meanwhile, the U.S.'s declining influence in the Global South, coupled with its polarising Middle East policies, has created fertile ground for alternative alignments.



Anwar's initiative seizes this moment, positioning ASEAN as a proactive player in a multipolar world. As he declared at the 46th ASEAN Summit, which coincided with the trilateral gathering, "a transition in the geopolitical order is underway, and the global trading system is under further strain." His call for an ASEAN-U.S. summit to address tariffs underscores the urgency, but the ASEAN-GCC-China framework signals a broader strategy: diversifying economic partnerships to reduce reliance on any single power.

The economic rationale for this trilateral summit is compelling. Together, ASEAN, the GCC, and China represent a combined GDP of $23.7 trillion (22.3% of global GDP in 2023) and a market of 2.15 billion people. ASEAN-China trade reached $700 billion in 2023, while ASEAN-GCC trade hit $130.7 billion, largely in energy and financial services. GCC-China trade, valued at $316.4 billion in 2022, reflects deepening ties. Foreign direct investment (FDI) flows further illustrate the potential: Chinese FDI into ASEAN was $17.7 billion in 2023, while GCC FDI into ASEAN grew from $265.8 million in 2018 to $390.2 million in 2023.

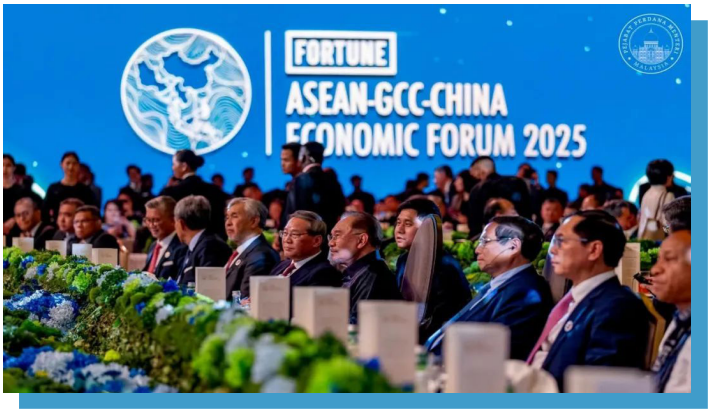
These figures suggest a robust foundation for collaboration in areas like clean energy, digital economies, electric vehicles, halal products, and infrastructure. Yet, numbers alone do not guarantee success. The summit's promise lies in harnessing these strengths into structured, actionable frameworks—no small feat given the regulatory and structural differences among the three parties.

REINFORCING ASEAN CENTRALITY

The summit's first aim is to reinforce ASEAN centrality, a cornerstone of the bloc's identity. The ASEAN Community Vision 2045 envisions an outward-looking ASEAN, integrated into the global economy through partnerships with emerging powers. By bringing the GCC and China into a trilateral dialogue, Malaysia seeks to amplify ASEAN's voice in a world where multilateral arrangements are proliferating. This is not merely diplomatic posturing. ASEAN's collective GDP of $3.8 trillion and its strategic location make it a vital hub for global trade and supply chains.

However, the bloc's ability to project unity is tested by internal divisions—Myanmar's ongoing crisis, South China Sea disputes, and varying economic priorities among its ten members. The Kuala Lumpur Declaration on ASEAN 2045, signed during the summit, emphasises deeper economic integration, harmonised trade standards, and sustainable policies to position ASEAN as the world's fourth-largest economy by 2045.

The second rationale—forging a South-South economic alliance—is equally ambitious. The GCC, with its energy wealth and growing interest in diversifying beyond oil, sees ASEAN and China as partners in meeting surging energy demand and expanding into sectors like finance and technology. China, for its part, views the summit as aligning with its broader Global South agenda, though its cautious stance—yet to confirm high-level representation or specific deliverables—suggests a wait-and-see approach. Existing frameworks like the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area (ACFTA) and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) offer potential models for trilateral cooperation, particularly in areas like e-commerce and investment facilitation.

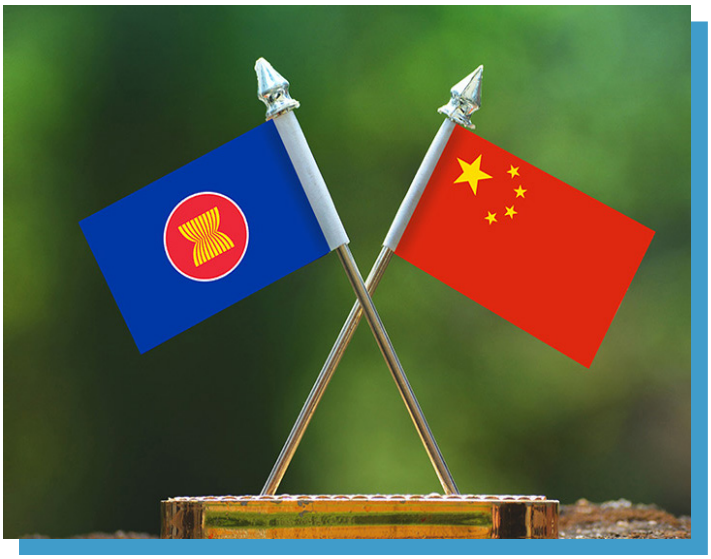


However, the GCC's lack of a supranational structure, unlike the EU or even ASEAN's charter-based system, complicates matters. Internal rivalries, such as the Saudi-UAE competition and lingering tensions from the 2017 Qatar Crisis, underscore the GCC's fragility as a cohesive bloc. ASEAN must tread carefully to avoid being drawn into these fault lines.

The summit highlights ASEAN's proactive push for economic resilience through multipolar partnerships, reducing overreliance on Western markets, and countering disruptive U.S. trade policies.

TARIFF TURBULENCE

The third goal—countering U.S. tariffs and export restrictions carries both opportunity and risk. ASEAN leaders, as Anwar emphasised, reached a consensus that bilateral trade deals with the U.S. must not harm fellow members. This collective stance aims to protect ASEAN's $3.8 trillion market and 660



million people from being pitted against each other in a tariff war. The GCC and China offer alternative markets and technological access, potentially offsetting U.S. restrictions. China's Premier Li Qiang, speaking at the summit, urged the removal of trade barriers and the strengthening of a WTO-centered multilateral order—a not-so-subtle jab at U.S. unilateralism.

Yet, ASEAN's vulnerability to U.S.-China geopolitical tensions remains a concern. As a middle power, ASEAN seeks to leverage the GCC and China as counterweights, but it risks entanglement in great-power rivalries. The summit's ability to deliver new markets or technological partnerships will depend on concrete agreements, not just aspirational rhetoric.

GEOPOLITICAL TIGHTROPE

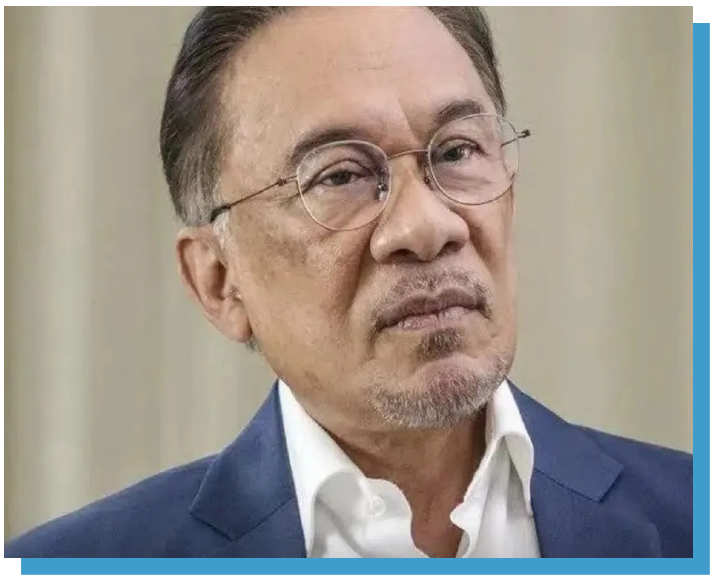
Geopolitically, the summit sends mixed signals. For ASEAN, China's inclusion enhances the platform's economic and diplomatic weight but complicates its neutrality. The South China Sea disputes, involving several ASEAN members and China, loom large, and the summit's agenda carefully avoids such flashpoints. The GCC, meanwhile, is navigating its own balancing act. Despite close ties with the West, the GCC has selectively deepened economic relations with China, reflecting a pragmatic shift toward Eastern partners.

However, its internal divisions and differing stances on issues like the Gaza conflict limit its ability to act as a unified bloc. China's measured engagement suggests it sees the summit as a test case rather than a full commitment, aligning with its broader strategy of fostering Global South coalitions without overextending itself.

OPPORTUNITY TO OUTCOME

The summit's functional potential—in areas like renewable energy, digital economies, and halal markets—is undeniable. Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia have thriving bilateral ties with GCC states in energy, infrastructure, and finance, but ASEAN-GCC cooperation as regional blocs remains underdeveloped. The first ASEAN-GCC summit in 2023 marked progress, with agreements for biennial meetings, but institutional follow-through is critical. Translating opportunities into outcomes will require clear frameworks, regular dialogue, and alignment of priorities—none of which are guaranteed given the parties' diverse systems and interests.

Sceptics might argue the summit is a one-off, a diplomatic flourish unlikely to evolve into a regular fixture. Its success depends on ASEAN's ability to integrate this trilateral format into its broader agenda without undermining existing frameworks like the ASEAN+3 or the East Asia Summit. Malaysia's chairmanship, with its emphasis on inclusivity and resilience, provides a strong foundation, but ASEAN's track record on Myanmar and maritime disputes raises doubts about its efficacy. As Anwar noted, ASEAN's "peace, stability, and prosperity" depends on an open, rules-based order—a principle now challenged by protectionism and unilateralism.



By engaging both the GCC and China, ASEAN aims to foster inclusive growth, clean energy collaboration, and regulatory alignment, though internal divisions and rivalries may hinder progress.

A CAUTIOUS LEAP

Ultimately, the ASEAN-GCC-China Summit is not a geopolitical pivot but a pragmatic experiment in economic resilience. It reflects the Global South's growing agency in a world where traditional powers are retreating into



protectionism or disarray. If managed with precision, this platform could bridge Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and China, unlocking economic synergies and amplifying ASEAN's global role. But it must overcome structural hurdles, geopolitical sensitivities, and the risk of overpromising. For now, the summit stands as a bold signal of intent—one that merits cautious optimism and rigorous scrutiny.

(M. A. Hossain, senior correspondent and journalist from Bangladesh. He is a seasoned political and defence analyst on international affairs. He covers major developments in South Asia and ASEAN Region for News Analytics. The views expressed by the author and any guest experts do not necessarily reflect the views of ***The News Analytics Herald.****)*

MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS

- ***ASEAN summit counters U.S. tariffs, boosting ties with GCC and China for diversification.***
- ***With a $23.7 trillion GDP and 2.15 billion consumers, the trilateral bloc offers major trade potential.***
- ***ASEAN aims for leadership, but divisions and conflicts like Myanmar and, South China Sea hinder unity.***
- ***Despite deeper ties, internal rifts, and a lack of central authority, turns GCC into a fragile partnership.***
- ***Without clear frameworks and follow-up, the summit may stay symbolic; institutionalisation is key to progress.***

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RIO HOSTS 17TH BRICS SUMMIT: AGENDA, EXPECTATION AND POTENTIAL OUTCOMES

INSIGHT

The 17th BRICS Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, scheduled for July 6, 2025, brings together emerging powers to shape a multipolar global order. With geopolitical tensions and economic instability escalating worldwide, the summit provides a pivotal platform for member nations to collaborate on issues like trade, security, climate change, and AI governance. India, in particular, eyes this moment to bolster its global leadership and strategic influence within the Global South.



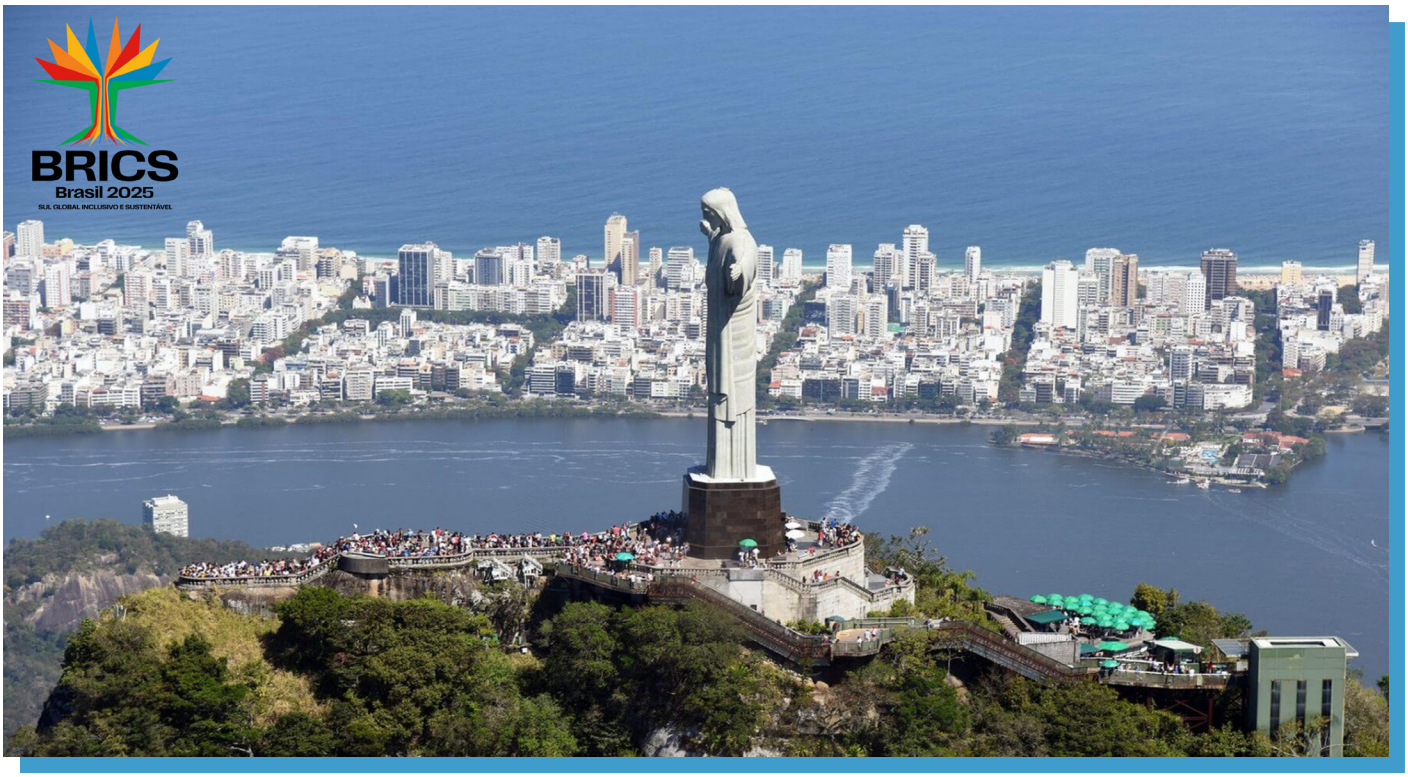
AMBASSADOR SRIKUMAR MENON, IFS(R)
FOR **NEWS ANALYTICS**

Leaders from BRICS countries will gather in Rio de Janeiro from July 6, 2025, to attend the 17th edition of the group's annual summit. As expected, because of the size of the event, the bloc's global influence, and the importance of the discussions and decisions, political experts around the world will be closely watching. They'll be looking for key signals that could shape the next stage of international relations.

The world is facing a piquant and dizzy situation that could well spiral into another fiery phase of trade, economic, and political uncertainty. For speculators and serious followers of international relations, the stage is set at Rio for an intense period of intrigue, as an increasingly polarised world braces itself to find answers to troubling existential questions.

GEOPOLITICAL STAKES

The four-nation BRIC grouping of Brazil, Russia, India, and China (later to include South Africa in 2010) was conceptualised in 2006 and held its first summit meeting in 2009. It was perceived in its formative years as "a much-needed alternative



to international institutions, which, being predominantly Western-agenda driven, did not support developing countries".

Collectively, the BRICS countries were projected to have the potential to emerge as the world's largest economies by 2050. This prediction has been reinforced by a recent report by the OECD, projecting the BRICS nations to account for 50 per cent of global growth by 2030.



In the past two years, the bloc has expanded and opened its membership to include Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, UAE, and Indonesia, with countries like Belarus, Bolivia, Kazakhstan, Cuba, Malaysia, Nigeria, Thailand, Uganda, and Uzbekistan being inducted as partner countries. Saudi Arabia has been invited to join.

In its currently expanded form, the BRICS assembles 11 major global emerging economies, representing almost 50 percent of the world's population, covering 40 percent of global GDP, and 26 percent of global trade. What is notable is that, in 2018 itself, the BRICS countries had overtaken the G7 countries' share of the world's total GDP, in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP). To get a sense and perspective of its growing influence, suffice it to say that the BRICS bloc has a combined GDP of over US$ 25.85 trillion (2021/ 2022 figures), marginally greater than the United States. Within BRICS, China has the largest GDP at US$ 16.86 trillion, with other members trailing behind with GDP figures below US$ 3 trillion.

INDIA'S ROLE AND EXPECTATIONS

From India's perspective, the BRICS forum provides India a platform to push its core foreign policy principles, while exercising strategic autonomy and balancing its relations with global partners, without entering into any formal alliances. The BRICS membership affords India to productively engage with both China and Russia while counter-balancing its engagement with the United States and western countries through the Indo-Pacific Quad. Above all, the forum helps India to continue to be the voice of the Global South.

Back in 2021, during the 15th year of its inception, India had ably led the grouping by focusing on the theme of "Intra-BRICS Cooperation for Continuity, Consolidation and Consensus".

The 2025 summit now provides another opportunity for India to reinforce and assert its influence, foster unity among member states, while securing and promoting its national interests to reshape economic alliances and geopolitical strategies.

Foremost among India's expectations from the forthcoming 2025 summit will be to persuade partners to forge a collective strategic response to the chaotic disruptions caused by tit-for-tat trade wars, protectionist, assertive trade policies, and tariff barriers.

Then, there is the need for India to articulate its regional stance, amid renewed tensions with Pakistan after Operation Sindoor. India will seek strong support and commitment from other BRICS nations to counter the threat of terrorism, which has emerged as a global phenomenon, more so in recent years.

India will highlight its role in ensuring regional stability in South Asia by opting to take the path of restraint without escalating the conflict crisis. It will seek a consensus



on regional and global security by encouraging the group to take a collective stance on conflict resolution and discouraging actions that could destabilise regions.

The Summit will be an ideal staging ground for India to strategically strengthen trade relations with fellow BRICS nations to reduce its dependence on Western markets. Leveraging its BRICS membership, India will also seek to challenge Western-dominated international institutions; push for greater representation of emerging economies, thereby contributing to geopolitical balance and the emergence of a strong multipolar world order.

BRICS has, of late, been discussing alternative trade payment systems - to reduce what it terms 'the world's over-arching reliance on the US dollar'. The BRICS currency proposal, though still in a preliminary stage, could potentially mean a "shared currency" or "a basket of currencies". This comes out of the demand from within the group to secure the member nations' economic sovereignty and financial autonomy and neutralise Western sanctions on Russia.



The BRICS already has an institutional mechanism in the form of the New Development Bank (NDB), which supports infrastructure and sustainable development projects in BRICS and other developing countries through loans, guarantees, equity participation, and other financial instruments.

On its part, India will have to take a nuanced stand on this issue. It will have to walk the tight rope - pushing for an alternative payment system, without ruffling the feathers of its strategic economic partner - the United States. A hard task and a real challenge in itself, given that the US has been threatening to 'up the ante' on tariffs if BRICS nations challenge the US dollar's predominant role in the global economy.

India will push for counter-terrorism cooperation, digital innovation, and green partnerships while maintaining a strategic balance between Western alliances and BRICS commitments.

AGENDA OF THE RIO BRICS SUMMIT 2025

Brazil had assumed the BRICS Chairmanship on 1 January 2025 with the theme - 'Strengthening Global South Cooperation for more Inclusive and Sustainable Governance'. The Chair has outlined six priority areas, namely - Cooperation for Global Health; Trade, Investments, and Finance; Climate Change; Artificial Intelligence Governance; Cybersecurity, Digital infrastructure development, Multilateral Architecture for Peace and Security; and Strengthening the Institutional Framework of the BRICS.

The July summit will push for ethical development and regulation of artificial intelligence, commitment to global health collaboration, strengthening of BRICS internal governance structures, and establishment of a permanent BRICS secretariat.

Interestingly, the Rio summit will be followed by the COP-30 summit in Brazil in November. As the host, Brazil, along with other BRICS partners, will advocate sustainable development, environmental justice, climate finance, and financing mechanisms for developing countries.

The summit's agenda reflects BRICS' ambition to lead in global governance reforms, sustainable finance, and technology ethics amid global economic volatility and rising multipolar aspirations.

CHALLENGES

There will be challenges posed by recent geo-political flashpoints, like the recent escalation of hostilities between Iran and Israel. BRICS has consistently advocated de-escalation and diplomatic resolution in the Middle East, consistently reiterating the importance of restraint and dialogue; de-escalation to maintain regional peace and stability, while calling for a halt to military actions in Gaza and Lebanon. BRICS will continue to advocate peaceful negotiations and offer platforms for dialogue to address ongoing tensions.

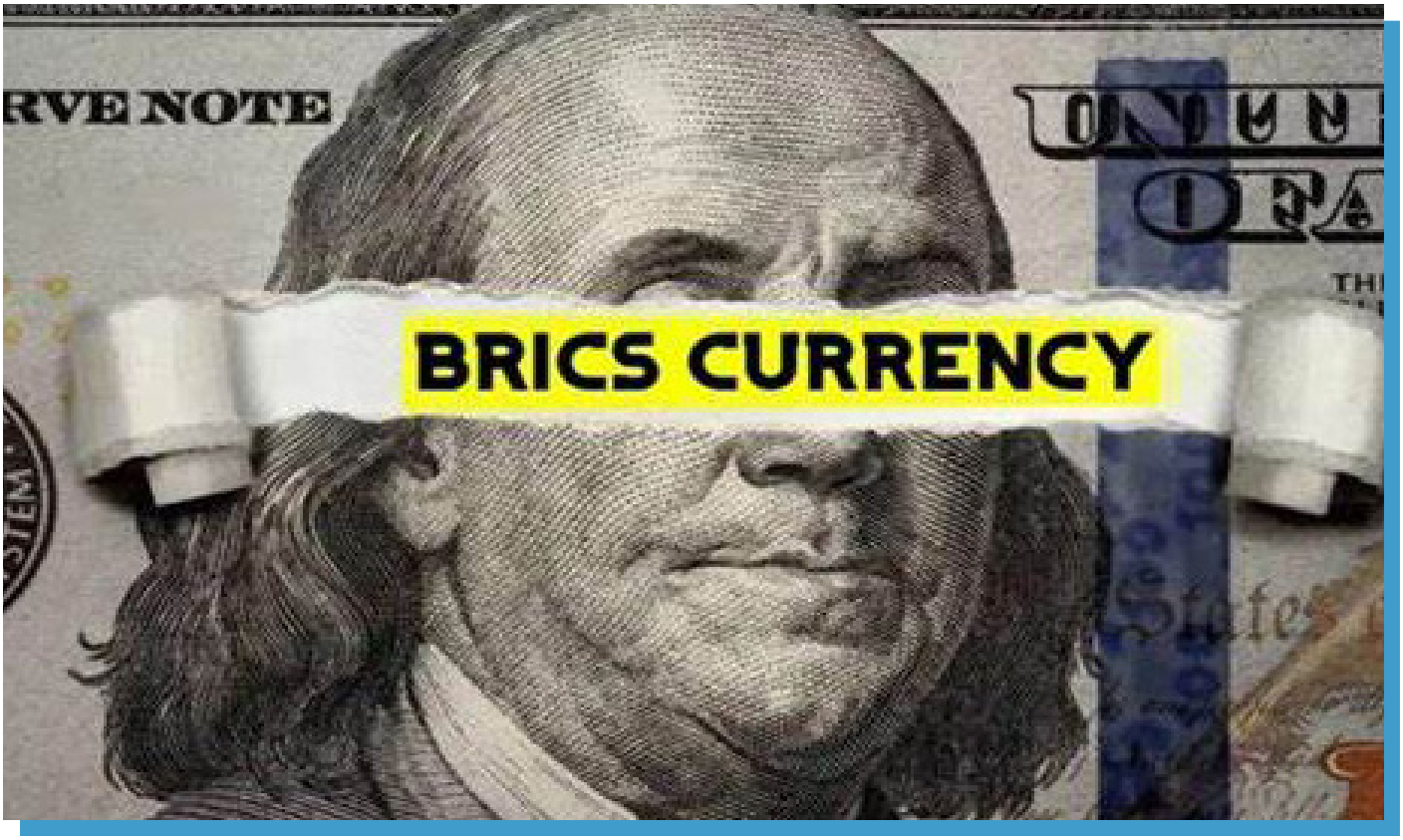
BRICS nations would also seek to respond effectively to the challenges posed by US President Trump's aggressive trade and tariff policies. The bloc would seek to promote economic cooperation and integration, diversification and resilience, by promoting intra-BRICS trade, diversifying trade partners,



supporting and strengthening multilateral institutions, such as the WTO to promote free trade, and encouraging members to invest in infrastructure development and FDI.

All said and done, BRICS, as a widely representative grouping, is set to play an important stabilising role in global affairs, amplifying the voice of developing countries and challenging the dominance of Western powers.

The last word must belong to India's External Affairs Minister - S. Jaishankar. He succinctly states that the "BRICS is not just a group of emerging economies, but a platform that represents the aspirations of the Global South. It is a symbol of multipolarity, a shift towards a more balanced world order." This perfectly captures the essence of BRICS' efficacy and relevance in today's geopolitics.



The Rio Summit will hopefully prove to be a watershed moment in BRICS' relentless journey in pursuit of shaping the global economic, political, and cultural agendas of this fast-emerging multipolar world that we all are part of now.

(Ambassador Srikumar Menon, IFS (R.), former Ambassador of India to South Sudan, Angola and Sao Tome & Principe. The views expressed are of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of ***The News Analytics Herald.****)*

MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS

- ***India aims to tackle terrorism, promote stability, green growth, and promote a balanced global order.***
- ***With Egypt and Iran, BRICS represents half the world, challenging ongoing Western dominance.***
- ***Talks on dollar alternatives reflect BRICS' push for economic sovereignty and financial realignment.***
- ***AI governance, climate action, health, and trade reform top Brazil's 2025 BRICS agenda.***
- ***BRICS positions itself as the Global South's voice, opposing unilateralism and promoting multipolar diplomacy.***



CURTAIN RAISER

AI FOR GOOD GLOBAL SUMMIT

The fourth annual AI for Good Global Summit, organised by the United Nations' International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in partnership with over 40 UN agency collaborators, and co-convened by the Government of Switzerland, is set to take centre stage at Geneva's Palexpo from 8 to 11 July 2025. This will be the most inclusive edition yet, expecting more than 10,000 on-site attendees alongside a 35,000-strong online community via the AI-powered "Neural Network" platform.

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WHY IT MATTERS

Originating in 2017 as a vision to harness AI for global good, the Summit has evolved into the primary UN platform aligning AI with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This year's edition will intensively explore the security implications of rapidly advancing AI systems—an area that has surged in urgency following early warnings from UN bodies about the weaponisation of autonomous systems and the use of AI in cyber threats.



Importantly, discussions will build on the momentum generated by the Global AI Action Summit held in Paris in February 2025. That gathering saw more than 100 countries convened, co-hosted by France and India, and culminated in calls for a Public Interest AI Platform, a global capacity-building incubator, and a voluntary international framework on inclusive, trustworthy AI.

AI ACTION SUMMIT

At the Paris Global AI Action Summit (10–11 Feb 2025), leaders like President Macron and PM Modi brought together over 1,000 participants across 100+ nations to transition from AI safety dialogue towards action-oriented, public benefit frameworks. The summit endorsed a joint declaration, signed by 58 countries, though notably not the US and UK, urging for inclusive, safe, ethical, and transparent AI. It introduced a Public Interest AI incubator, an initiative for capacity building, and proposed funding mechanisms for open-access AI infrastructure. The stage is thus set: Geneva's summit will focus on rolling out real-world solutions derived from these commitments.

SUMMIT AGENDA HIGHLIGHTS

The programme spans several thematic days. On 8–9 July, there will be core sessions called AI for Good Global Summit on AI-powered approaches to climate, health, education, humanitarian aid, and robotics. 10th July is AI Governance Day, where dialogues will focus on global standards, ethical frameworks, regulation, public policy, and security risks. 11 July; International AI Standards Day, will focus on interoperability, technical benchmarks, and data transparency standards.

Among the spotlight themes are:

- Security & Safety: Mitigating the misuse of autonomous systems (from drones to smart infrastructure).

- Capacity building: Alliance-building to train nations, NGOs, and communities in AI deployment, echoing the Paris vision for global AI readiness.
- Governance & Standards: Developments on a global platform for pre-standardisation and norm-setting to ensure reliable, open, public-interest AI.
- Youth & Innovation: Special "Youth Zone" with hands-on robotics and humanitarian tech challenges. The coveted Robotics for Good Youth Challenge finals will bring together teams from Africa, Asia, and Latin America in real-time demos.



VOICES TO WATCH

Speakers from diverse fields will converge, from global policymakers to ground-breaking researchers such as ITU Secretary-General Doreen Bogdan-Martin, AI visionaries Geoffrey Hinton (via video), and Turing laureate Yoshua Bengio will be in attendance.

There will be security experts, including Prof. Stuart Russell (UC Berkeley) and counter terrorism strategists speaking about the intersection of artificial intelligence and global security, AI-powered threat detection, and strategies to mitigate potential risks associated with advanced AI systems. Several Industry leaders from Microsoft, Cisco, AWS, and regional innovators such as Hugging Face's Sasha Luccioni are expected to attend.

Global change-makers like Cherie Blair, and youth leaders shaping AI ethics and inclusion will discuss the importance of diverse perspectives in AI development, ensuring fairness, transparency, and benefits for all, while exploring ways to harness AI for social good.

The Summit will unveil the inaugural AI for Good Impact Awards, celebrating breakthrough initiatives across "AI for People", "AI for Planet", and "AI for Prosperity". Expect bold robotics demos: drones monitoring biodiversity, brain computer prosthetics in action, autonomous demining bots, and scalable AI health tools—all exemplifying practical strides toward enabling positive global impact.

WHAT TO EXPECT IN JULY

This July's AI for Good Global Summit will mark a pivotal shift as broad policy commitments made in February evolve into concrete actions, particularly in three core areas. First, security safeguards will take centre stage: against the backdrop of the UN raised alarms about autonomous systems, deliberate sessions and framework proposals now aim to significantly strengthen protections against the malicious misuse of AI, anchoring governance in safety and resilience.

Second, capacity at scale emerges as a global imperative, with plans to launch a multilingual, open-source capacity-building platform for AI in developing countries, complete with training modules, standardized toolkits, and public interest models, helping bridge skills and infrastructure gaps. Third, next generation engagement features prominently: a Youth Zone hosting the Robotics for Good Challenge final, Innovation Factory showcases, and regional deep dive events will elevate grassroots innovators and empower youth as architects of inclusive AI solutions.

In sum, the summit will transcend mere exposition: it will be the moment when UN-backed commitments materialise into global governance mechanisms, regulatory frameworks, technical standards, and people-centered innovation, ensuring that AI's power is harnessed securely, equitably, and for the public good. With security, equity, and public interest at its heart, the Summit aims to translate February's policy pledges into action, to guard against threats, and to build a safer, fairer digital tomorrow.

‘FAILED MARSHALS’ OF PAKISTAN DEGRADING HIGHEST MILITARY OFFICE

COUNTERVIEW

Pakistan is the only country to have produced two Field Marshals despite losing all wars, conflicts, and prestige in its 78 years of existence. Ayub Khan became the President through a military coup in 1958 and appointed himself the Field Marshal in 1959 to consolidate power. After 66 years, Asim Munir appointed himself Field Marshal through a compliant proxy government whose survival depends on his whims.



LT GEN DP PANDEY(R)
FOR **NEWS ANALYTICS**

The Pakistani Field Marshals have had a contrasting journey of life, except that it was dubious and nothing to be proud of. The unique similarity between the two Field Marshals was that both lost military confrontations with India. The difference was that Ayub Khan lost a war as a Field Marshal, while Asim Munir became one after a humiliating drubbing in a small military confrontation lasting less than four days.

As a norm in the world, Field Marshals were a century-old concept when military operations spanned vast geographical spaces involving multinational forces and engagement with local civilian representatives. These instances were rare and reserved for distinguished and phenomenally successful military commanders. In rare instances, a few dictators have also appointed themselves as Field Marshal. In contemporary history, or at least in the last five decades, the appointment of a Field Marshal has not been heard of.

Therefore, the appointment of Asim Munir as Field Marshal, on May 20, 2025, surprised the world. The dismay was also fuelled because Asim Munir led Army had failed miserably in a short military duel, lasting only eighty-eight hours, against



the Indian Armed Forces. Therefore, he has earned the honorific, Failed Marshal, in whispers within the country and brazenly across social media and legacy media platforms outside.



PAKISTANI HEIRLOOM

Field Marshal Ayub Khan launched a miscalculated military adventure in 1965 using non-state actors as a front led by the Pakistani military officers and soldiers in Operation Gibraltar for 'liberating' Jammu and Kashmir, which rapidly flared up into the second India-Pakistan war. The intruders were reported by the Kashmiris to the Indian Army and evicted promptly. As India expanded the military operations all along the International Borders, capturing some extremely critical and strategic objectives, Pakistan sought the intervention of the USA for the ceasefire.

The script remained unchanged, albeit at an extremely low scale. General Munir employed three terrorists, all Pakistanis and one of them confirmed SSG commando, to kill 26 innocent and unarmed civilians on April 22, 2025, in Pahalgam, a tourist destination in South Kashmir, particularly for newlyweds, in front of their families and friends, based on religious segregation. Only male members were asked to recite Kalma, a unique short prayer in Islam, made to strip down for verification through physical examination of the religious identity and then shot dead at short ranges, recording and transmitting the entire process on procam for the masters across.

Within 15 days, nine terror global headquarters and launchpads in Pakistan and PoK were destroyed in a blistering military operation, aptly named Operation Sindoor. Sindoor is the vermilion colour used by Hindu women on their forehead to signify they were married, and in the ibid killings, it was the women who were left alive but widowed, and the military operation was a revenge of sorts. Though Asim Munir tried to escalate, the situation quickly went out of his control with the comprehensive decapitation of the Pakistani Air Defence and damage to critical airfields and some very important strategic targets. The script ran similar to 1965 when Pakistan, after having suffered a humiliating setback, sought American intervention.

CONTRASTING LIFE JOURNEY

Ayub was a Pashtun from the North West Frontier Province and belonged to the Tareen tribe. His father was a senior non-commissioned officer in the 9th Hodson's Horse in the British Indian Army. Ayub belonged to the physical geographical boundary of Pakistan. On the other side, Asim was from a humble family with no military background. Though he was born in present-day Pakistan, his family were originally from Jalandhar in India and therefore were referred to as Mohajirs, a derogatory term in Pakistan, a name given to all those who migrated from the United Province and elsewhere from the present Indian borders during the partition of 1947.

Ayub Khan studied at Aligarh Muslim University and attended the Royal Military College, Sandhurst in the UK. However, Asim received early education at the Markazi Madrasah Darul



Tajweed in Rawalpindi and grew up primarily in a religious environment. He was trained in a not-so-elite military training establishment.

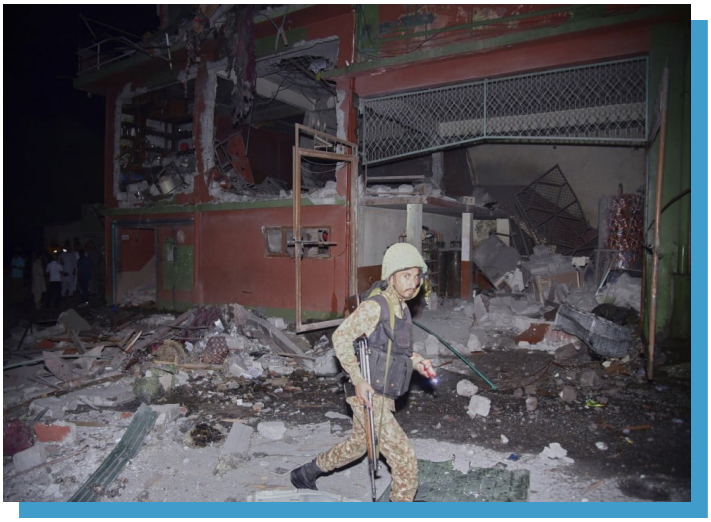
Ayub was stylish, confident and more comfortable in elite society and environment. He was adept at true military leadership nuances and capable of immersing in the geo-political and strategic realms through the lens of modern statecraft. Asim Munir followed the path of religious immersion. His military career started in a highly religiously charged environment where Pakistani leadership found radical Islam the only way to bind the artificial country.

In line with the Islamic thought of deception, Asim claimed

Pakistan's terror-led attack in Kashmir triggered India's swift military response, Operation Sindoor, destroying key targets; history echoed 1965 as Pakistan sought U.S. intervention.

proudly to be a “deceiver”. As a Lt Col, he became a “Hafiz e Quran” while posted in Saudi Arabia. He often quoted from the Quran. His favourite was on the path of religious warfare that is "imaan, taqwa aur jihad fi Sabeelillah" (faith, piety, and jihad in the path of Allah). This influenced the worldview and leadership style of Asim Munir.

As compared to Ayub, a modern, liberal, forward and outward-looking General who positioned himself more as a statesman, Asim focused on the religiosity of the Pakistan Army and was more inward-looking, conspiring and thriving in intrigue.



Pakistani tradition of sorts, displacing Iskander Mirza in a military coup to become the President himself. Thereafter, he appointed himself as the Field Marshal in 1959.

On a similar track but yet a different one, Asim Munir became the Chief of the Pakistan Army on November 29, 2022, two days after his retirement date of November 27, 2022. Rules were changed under the instructions of Nawaz Sharif, who was convinced that only Asim Munir could keep Imran Khan, the most popular leader in Pakistan, at bay. Eventually, Asim Munir ensured the incarceration of Imran Khan on trumped-up charges in prison. The Sharief government was ever indebted. Instead of being sacked, Asim Munir was appointed Field Marshal.

Another similarity in the two Field Marshals is emerging. It is in the developing relationship with the US. Ayub Khan had given complete access to the Americans of the air bases inside Pakistan, most notably outside Peshawar, from where spy missions over the Soviet Union were launched. A similar tilt towards the USA by Asim Munir is being witnessed. Pakistan requested the USA on May 10, 2025, for intervention for a ceasefire, disregarding the influence of the “iron brother” China. Asim Munir was invited for lunch by President Trump, bypassing the political and diplomatic conventions, on June 19, 2025. This bond, rather than bondage, to the USA has come at a major cost.

Self-appointment to Field Marshal by Ayub Khan in 1959 was in line with establishing authority in those times. But Pakistan has set a new low by debasing the highest military office of Field Marshal by appointing Asim Munir, known as Mullah General and a radical to core, as an act of survival by the ad hoc government to cover up the humiliating military loss in May 2025 making Pakistan a laughing stock in the world and renaming the appointment as Failed Marshal.

Under the leadership of Ayub Khan and Asim Munir, the outcomes and performances towards the country could not have been more contrasting.

DARK PARALLELS

There are a few similarities, grim and dark, in the journey of the two Fields. Both were brought in as the Chief of the Pakistan Army due to political convenience and compulsions superseding rightful and deserving candidates. Ayub Khan was brought in by Liaquat Ali Khan, the then Prime Minister, who thought him to be loyal, superseding many others, as the Commander-in-Chief of the Army in 1951. Eventually, Ayub took on the mantle of Defence Minister in 1954 and remained so till 1958. On October 7, 1958, Iskander Mirza, the President, dismissed the Pakistan Government, abrogated the constitution and appointed Ayub Khan as the Chief Martial Law Administrator. Within two weeks, Ayub established a

(Lt Gen DP Pandey (R), Former Corps Commander, Chinar Corps, DG Territorial Army, Director of Military Intelligence, Foreign Division and the Commandant of the Army War College. The views expressed are of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of ***The News Analytics Herald.****)*

MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS

- ***Pakistan named Ayub Khan, Asim Munir Field Marshals, despite repeated failures, weakening the rank’s prestige.***
- ***Both led failed campaigns against India, prompting Pakistan to seek U.S. help after defeats.***
- ***Ayub Khan was modern and Western-educated, while Munir is ideological, religious, and rigid in approach.***
- ***Both were promoted for political convenience, bypassing seniors and strengthening military control over governance.***
- ***Munir’s promotion after defeat drew global ridicule, making the rank a tool of politics.***

YOUR TAKE

News Analytics receives a large number of comments, views and opinions from it's well-informed readers from across the world, which we read very carefully. We are pulling out some of them to share a wide range of opinions and perspectives from our Global Readership. Thank you and keep sharing your views on info@newsanalytics.in.



Ned Sader
Principal & Founder at Kellows Group
Honesdale, Pennsylvania, United States
Commenting on News Analytics DnD forum's post of : Chinese Navy Operating Two Carrier Strike Groups in Pacific For The First Time.



Interesting picture showing U.S. Naval Vessels underway; two CVNs, one Arliegh Burke Class DDG and a Ticonderoga Class Cruiser. What no shinny new hulls from the PRAN??
The ocean is vast, deep and dangerous as the PRAN will learn in many ways as they seek to have a true blue water force; the U.S. and allies are centuries ahead in training and are battle tested in the Indo-Pacific. The CCP would be wise to consider the consequences of any action against Taiwan or its neighbors in SE Asia.



Jose Pedro
Lisboa, Lisbon, Portugal
Commenting on News Analytics DnD forum's post of : Bulgaria's decision To Join Eurozone in 2026 After European Central Bank's Approval.



This is such a stupid decision. We are starting to wake up to the fact that we need to leave the Euro. While others keep making the same mistakes



Jim Anders
Mechanical Design Engineer
Southampton, Pennsylvania, United States
Commenting on News Analytics DnD forum's post of : EU Slams Trump's 50% Tarrifs Hike On Steel And Aluminium.



But the EU has very high tariffs against the US. Isn't that a tad hypocritical?



Muhammad Omar Ali Khan
Netherlands
Commenting on News Analytics DnD forum's post of : Ukraine Launched A Daring Drone Attack, Dubbed "Spiderweb"



Did Trump even thank him for that?



Sivakumar S
Hyderabad, Telangana, India
Commenting on News Analytics DnD forum's post of: Yunus Government Plans For April 26' Election In Bangladesh



He is forced to resign, (Bangladesh) Army Chief asked for election...since last week Yunus position is shaky ...

OPERATION SPIDER'S WEB AND LESSONS FOR INDIA

WAR STRATEGY

Operation Spider's Web, Ukraine's bold drone strike inside Russia, showcased how low-cost FPV drones and strategic deception can cripple advanced military assets. By damaging Russia's bomber fleet, it marked a shift in modern warfare. For India, it underscores the urgent need for drone defence innovation, anticipation, and operational preparedness.



AIR MARSHAL ANIL KHOSLA (R)
FOR **NEWS ANALYTICS**

On June 1, 2025, Ukraine executed one of the most daring and innovative military operations of the Russo-Ukrainian War, codenamed Operation Spider's Web. This covert drone assault targeted Russia's strategic long-range aviation assets, striking five air bases deep within Russian territory. The operation, meticulously planned by Ukraine's Security Service (SBU), showcased a masterful blend of low-cost technology, human ingenuity, and strategic deception. By leveraging inexpensive drones smuggled into Russia and launched from disguised trucks, Ukraine inflicted billions of dollars in damage, destroyed or damaged a significant portion of Russia's bomber fleet, and shattered the notion that rear military bases are safe havens.

The SBU supposedly began planning the operation in late 2023. The goal was clear: degrade Russia's ability to conduct long-range missile strikes by targeting its irreplaceable strategic bombers. The operation's "Spider's Web" codename reflected its intricate design and broad geographical scope, spanning five Russian oblasts across multiple time zones. The SBU's approach combined commercially available drone technology, open-source software, and covert logistics to create a low-cost yet devastating strike capability.

PLANNING & DECEPTION

The operation's success hinged on meticulous planning and deception. Ukrainian operatives smuggled 117 first-person view (FPV) drones into Russia over time. These low-cost drones were concealed in shipping containers disguised as wooden sheds and loaded onto trucks driven by unsuspecting Russian contractors. The drivers, instructed via mobile phones to park near target air bases, were unaware of the drones' presence. This tactic, reminiscent of the mythical Trojan Horse, allowed Ukraine to position its weapons deep inside enemy territory without arousing suspicion.

The SBU established a nerve centre for the operation near



a regional office of Russia's FSB intelligence service in Chelyabinsk, adding a layer of audacity to the plan. Ukrainian operators used Russia's domestic 4G/LTE networks to pilot the drones remotely, embedding control signals within civilian data traffic to evade detection. The drones were equipped with ArduPilot, an open-source autopilot software, enabling pre-programmed flight paths and precise targeting of vulnerable aircraft components, such as fuel tanks and wings. Some reports suggest AI-assisted machine vision may have enhanced strike accuracy in the drones' terminal phase, though this remains unconfirmed.



The targets were carefully selected: five air bases—Belaya, Dyagilevo, Ivanovo Severny, Olenya, and Ukrainka—housing Russia's Long-Range Aviation fleet. These bases, located up to 4,300 kilometers from Ukraine, were critical to Moscow's strategic bombing campaigns. The operation's timing, coinciding with Russia's Military Transport Aviation Day, was likely chosen to maximise psychological impact.

A COORDINATED STRIKE

On June 1, 2025, Operation Spider's Web unfolded with surgical precision. At dawn, 117 drones were launched simultaneously from their hidden truck-based platforms, targeting aircraft at the five air bases. The drones, flying in the "air littoral"—a low-altitude zone below traditional radar coverage—evaded Russia's air defences, which were ill-equipped to counter small, low-flying threats.

The strikes were devastating. Satellite imagery and Ukrainian footage confirmed significant damage, particularly at Belaya Air Base in Eastern Siberia, where seven bombers were destroyed on the tarmac. According to Kyiv, the operation destroyed or damaged over 40 aircraft, including Tu-95s, Tu-160s, Tu-22M3s, and an A-50 airborne early-warning jet, representing roughly one-third of Russia's long-range strike fleet and $7 billion in hardware. NATO estimates suggest 10 to 13 aircraft were destroyed, with over 40 damaged. Russian sources downplayed the losses, but independent analysts confirmed the operation's unprecedented scale.

The attack on Belaya, 4,300 kilometres from Ukraine, marked the farthest Ukrainian strike of the war, underscoring the operation's geographical reach. The SBU released four minutes of drone footage showing strikes on Tu-95 wings and Tu-22M3 fuselages, highlighting the precision of the attack. Russia's Defence Ministry admitted attacks in Murmansk and Irkutsk but claimed no casualties and minimal damage, a narrative contradicted by satellite imagery and Ukrainian reports.

Operation Spider's Web was not just a military success, but a strategic and symbolic triumph for Ukraine. The operation also had broader implications. As The New York Times noted, it marked a "defining moment in the evolution of modern warfare." Using inexpensive drones to destroy high-value assets challenged traditional military doctrines, which assume rear bases are secure. The "air littoral" concept gained prominence as drones exploited gaps in conventional air defences. This strategy, replicable by other nations or non-state actors, could reshape how air forces protect their assets, forcing them to harden, disperse, or treat runways as front lines.

INDIAN EXPERIENCE

On June 26–27, 2021, India faced its first terrorist drone attack at the Jammu Air Force Station. Two low-flying drones, likely modified quadcopters (possibly DJI Matrice 600 Pro), dropped IEDs with 1–1.5 kg of RDX, launched from Pakistan near the LoC. The first explosion damaged a building roof in the high-security technical area; the second detonated harmlessly on the ground. Two IAF personnel

Ukraine's strategic success reveals how deception, local networks, and commercial tech can bypass traditional defences, turning civilian tools into military game-changers.



sustained minor injuries, with no critical assets harmed and attributed to Lashkar-e-Taiba, with possible Jaish-e-Mohammad and ISI involvement. This incident highlighted the potential threat of low-cost, high-impact drone attacks and prompted India to bolster its counter-drone systems, including DRDO's laser technology and jammers.

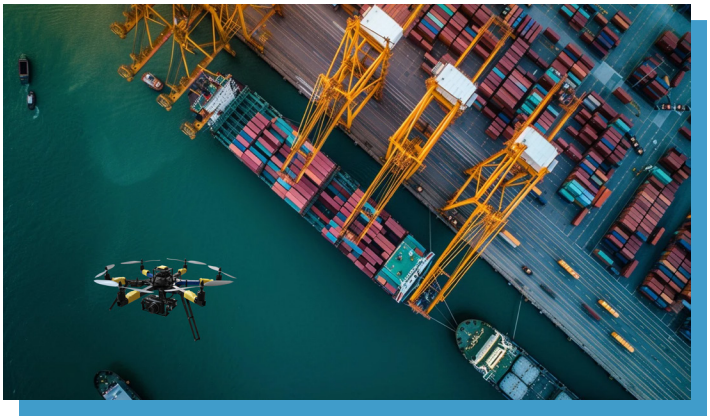
The attacks exposed vulnerabilities to small, low-altitude drones, previously used only for smuggling. It mirrored global trends seen in ISIS and Hamas tactics. This attack marked a strategic shift, highlighting drones' low-cost, high-impact potential.



LESSONS FOR INDIA

Ukraine's method of smuggling kamikaze drones into Russia to strike distant targets reveals new possibilities for attacks using smuggled weapons, even outside of wartime. Consider the potential for sabotaging critical infrastructure during peacetime or assassinating key leaders and commanders with micro kamikaze drones during public events, travel, or other vulnerabilities. This threat demands robust defence systems, tailored to its unique nature and scale. Operation Spider's Web provides vital insights for India to modernise its military strategy, advance technological innovation, and prepare for evolving warfare, especially amid regional security threats.

Emerging Threats: India's porous borders with Pakistan are vulnerable to low-altitude drone attacks. Adversaries could deploy similar tactics to target air bases, forward posts, or critical infrastructure like dams, refineries, or cities, using inexpensive drones operated by terrorist groups or state actors.



Defence Strategies: To counter these risks, India must implement robust defences. Install counter-drone systems at strategic installations and enhance homeland security with drone surveillance and interception in key areas. Develop rapid-response units to neutralise drone threats. Disperse aircraft and assets across multiple sites to mitigate swarm attack risks, and invest in fortified shelters, decoy systems, and rapid repair facilities.

Network Security: India's 5G expansion offers military integration potential but risks adversary exploitation. Strengthen cybersecurity to safeguard 5G infrastructure and establish secure, encrypted military communication networks.

Adopt Cost-Effective Drones: Accelerate indigenous drone programs under Make in India, focusing on affordable, scalable systems. Expand public-private partnerships to develop FPV drones with open-source software for rapid deployment in border conflicts.

Enhance Precision and AI: Integrate AI and machine vision



into drones to precisely target high-value assets like missile sites—partner with tech firms to develop AI algorithms for real-time target identification in diverse terrains.

Drive Innovation: Create innovation hubs within the Indian Armed Forces and collaborate with academia through hackathons to develop next-generation warfare tools, ensuring adaptability in modern conflicts.

TRANSFORMATIVE POWER

Operation Spider's Web is pivotal in military history, showcasing drone warfare's transformative power in redefining

India must reimagine its security protocols by adopting dispersed deployment, AI-integrated drones, and hardened infrastructure to deter or neutralise similar asymmetric drone threats.



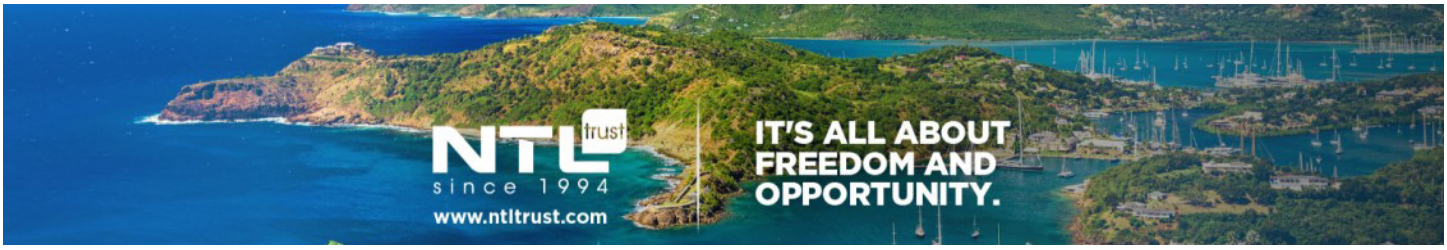
modern conflicts. Through a sophisticated blend of deception, technology, and precision, Kyiv delivered a strike that echoed beyond Russia's airfields, proving no target is truly secure in the drone era. This operation holds critical lessons for India.

Deploy advanced counter-drone systems at strategic sites and simulate Ukraine-style drone attacks in war games. Train Special Forces for covert drone missions, boost indigenous drone production, and prioritise swarm technology and AI. Secure 5G networks for military operations, update doctrines to embed drone warfare. Focus on asymmetry, deception, and precision in warfare. Push for global regulations to curb drone use by non-state actors. These measures will strengthen India's defence framework, ensuring a strategic advantage in 21st-century warfare.

(Air Marshal Anil Khosla (R), Former Vice Chief, Indian Air Force. Researcher & Analyst Distinguished Fellow - USI & CAPS. The views expressed are of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of ***The News Analytics Herald.****)*

MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS

- ***Low-cost drones and open-source tech can cause massive damage to high-value targets.***
- ***Strategic deception, like disguised logistics and civilian networks, enables covert drone operations.***
- ***Rear military bases and critical infrastructure are now vulnerable to deep-penetration drone strikes.***
- ***India must upgrade counter-drone systems, secure networks, and invest in AI-integrated drone tech.***
- ***Asymmetric drone warfare looms, India must adopt doctrines, foster innovation, and push global regulations.***



IN THE SPOTLIGHT

INDIA CREATES HISTORY IN SPACE



Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla became the first Indian astronaut to set foot on the International Space Station (ISS), marking a historic milestone 41 years after Rakesh Sharma's spaceflight. Aboard the Axiom-4 mission launched from NASA's Kennedy Space Center, Shukla joined a multinational crew for a two-week stay. The commercial mission, backed by ISRO and SpaceX, will conduct 60 scientific experiments, including seven from India. Shukla's experience is expected to shape India's Gaganyaan mission in 2027 and long-term space goals. A toy swan named Joy also accompanies the crew as a zero-gravity indicator.

INDIA, CANADA RESET DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS



India and Canada have agreed to restore diplomatic ties nearly two years after Ottawa accused New Delhi of involvement in the 2023 killing of Sikh separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar. On the sidelines of the G7 summit in Alberta, Prime Ministers Narendra Modi and Mark Carney announced the reinstatement of high commissioners in both countries. While the Nijjar issue wasn't mentioned publicly, both leaders emphasised cooperation in tech, food security, and critical minerals. Their meeting reflects a shift towards constructive engagement despite ongoing protests by Khalistani elements abroad and a continuing judicial investigation in Canada.

EU SAYS US INVOLVEMENT IN IRAN RISKS WIDER CONFLICT



European Union's High Representative Kaja Kallas warned that direct US military involvement in the escalating Israel-Iran conflict could drag the entire Middle East into a broader war. Following a call with EU ministers, she emphasised the bloc's commitment to de-escalation and diplomacy, distancing from Donald Trump's aggressive stance. Kallas also urged attention on Iran's nuclear ambitions, reaffirming Europe's support for a peaceful resolution. The EU activated its Civil Protection Mechanism to evacuate citizens and continues maritime operations in the Red Sea. Kallas opposed Russia's mediation role and supported lowering the Russian oil price cap amid rising global tensions.

VON DER LEYEN SLAMS CHINA TACTICS



At the G7 summit in Canada, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen accused China of using rare earths as economic weapons, calling out its "pattern of dominance, dependency, and blackmail." Appealing directly to Donald Trump's tough stance on Beijing, she proposed a united G7 front and new supply networks. Von der Leyen warned of a "new China shock" and labelled China's WTO behaviour as the root of global trade disruption. Her remarks reflect EU frustration with China's market distortions and aim to accelerate EU-US trade talks before a key July deadline amid broader geopolitical tensions.

G7 'USELESS' NOW, SAYS KREMLIN



The Kremlin declared the G7 "useless" following President Trump's remarks at the summit in Canada, where he criticized Russia's 2014 expulsion from the then-G8. Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov agreed, calling it a "big mistake" and claiming the G7 has "lost practical significance," especially compared to broader platforms like the G20. Trump asserted that excluding Russia contributed to the Ukraine invasion, suggesting Putin felt "very insulted." The comments signal growing disdain from Moscow for G7's role in global affairs and attempt to undermine any anti-Russia actions or sanctions the summit might propose amid the ongoing Ukraine conflict.

ISRAELI SURPRISE STRIKE KILLS TOP IRANIAN GENERALS



Israel's latest offensive against Iran has led to the killing of multiple top Iranian military figures. Chief of Staff Mohammad Bagheri, IRGC Commander Hossein Salami, and Aerospace Force head Ali Hajizadeh are among those confirmed dead. Intelligence chief Mohammad Kazemi and 14 senior nuclear scientists, including Fereydoun Abbasi, were also targeted. The strikes mark a significant escalation in the Israel-Iran conflict, which began Friday. Analysts fear the loss of such high-ranking officials could provoke further retaliatory attacks, heighten regional instability, and impact global oil and security dynamics.

BUGA SPHERE SHOCKS MEXICAN SCIENTISTS



The mysterious "Buga Sphere," recovered in Colombia in March 2025, continues to baffle scientists. A team from Mexico's UNAM discovered fibre-optic-like wires, a chip-like nucleus, and 18 microspheres within the metallic orb. The object reportedly altered its weight from 16 to 22 pounds, suggesting the use of "futuristic gravitational forces." Even more puzzling is the dried patch of grass where it landed—scientists suspect "invisible energy" rather than radiation caused the dehydration. Some researchers believe the sphere manipulates gravity and generates its own electromagnetic field, fueling theories of it being an advanced probe, though some experts suggest it's manmade.

AI REVOLUTION PACE BREAKS RECORDS



Mary Meeker, known as the "Queen of the Internet," has released a landmark report detailing how AI adoption is outpacing any previous technological revolution in history. Her 340-page document, Trends – Artificial Intelligence, reveals that ChatGPT reached 800 million users by April 2025, and AI models are now advancing at record speeds. Companies like NVIDIA, Google, and Meta are aggressively investing, while model development costs fall and data usage soars. Meeker compares today's AI surge to the slower spread of Internet 1.0, calling this shift truly "unprecedented" in speed, scale, and impact across global industries.

US 'GOLDEN DOME' SPARKS GLOBAL ALARM OVER WEAPONISED SKIES

BATTLEGROUNDS

The United States' newly announced "Golden Dome" initiative is an ambitious, $175 billion missile defence project aiming to create a global, space-based shield against advanced aerial threats. Announced by President Trump in May 2025, it envisions thousands of satellites and space interceptors in low Earth orbit to neutralise ballistic, hypersonic, and cruise missiles. While promising unmatched protection, the system also raises global concerns over cost, feasibility, and the weaponisation of space.



LT GEN KAPIL AGGARWAL (R)
FOR **NEWS ANALYTICS**

On January 27, 2025, the US President signed an Executive Order for the development of a "Golden Dome" missile defence system. It is a very ambitious program comprising thousands of space-based weapons or interceptors, distributed around the Earth, intended to shield the US from long-range and hypersonic missile threats. The system would employ a global constellation of satellites equipped with both sensors and space-based interceptors. For the first time in history, weapons are likely to be orbiting in space, marking the opening of a new frontier. On 20 May 2025, President Donald Trump announced the $175 billion project slated to be completed by the end of his term in early 2029.

The title "Golden Dome" appears to draw inspiration from the "Iron Dome" air defence system deployed by Israel, which saw extensive employment during multiple skirmishes with Iran, including the ongoing one in June 2025. The Golden Dome system, though, is much wider in scope, with offensive capabilities.

SPACE-BASED SYSTEM

The current missile defence systems have limited capability against higher-end ballistic threats, as well as novel hypersonic ones, employing a relatively small number of land-based interceptors tied to larger sensor and communications

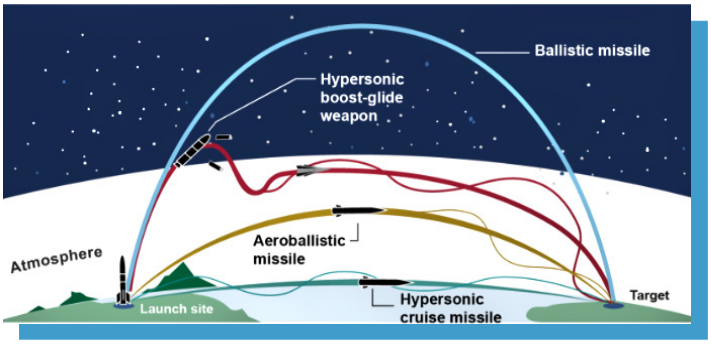


networks. The Middle East has long been a laboratory for testing these multi-layered air defence systems developed by Israel or by Israel in collaboration with the US.

These have been repeatedly employed, post the 07 October 2023 attack on Israel, warding off multiple attacks from Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, and Iran, using a mix of short and medium-range rockets, drones, and long-range ballistic missiles. Although the layered missile defence system employed by Israel has acquitted itself well, it has not been found foolproof, and there are some cracks and voids that deserve to be liquidated.

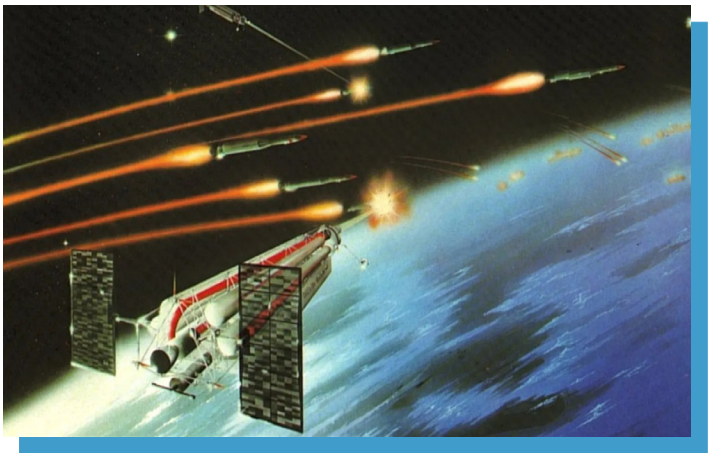
Israel's multi-tiered missile defense includes the Iron Dome for short-range threats (up to 70 km), David's Sling for medium-range missiles (up to 300 km), and the Arrow system for long-range ballistic missiles (up to 2,400 km). All three systems have demonstrated effectiveness in recent regional conflicts, including against Hezbollah and Houthi attacks.

The limitation of Earth-based air defence systems and radars is that their detection ranges for warding off an airborne attack are limited to a few hundred kilometres. Most of the existing configurations are multilayered air defence systems integrated into a dynamic command and control structure capable of real-time responses through surface-to-air missiles and other air defence elements. As stated, these terrestrial systems may still not be capable of thwarting attacks from supersonic and hypersonic missiles.



A graphic showing the difference in trajectories between a traditional ballistic missile and an unpowered hypersonic boost-glide vehicle, along with aeroballistic missiles and air-breathing hypersonic cruise missiles.

Operation Sindoor also offers a case study where the Chinese HQ 9 Air Defence systems, deployed by Pakistan, failed to neutralise the supersonic Brahmos missile attacks. On the other hand, the Integrated Air Command and Control System of the Indian Air Force, along with Akashteer system of the Army, managed to intercept and neutralise most air-borne threats from Pakistan, including a swarm of drones, loitering munitions, and missiles. However, there is still a requirement for surveillance from another domain (Space) for real-time detection and neutralisation of threats from Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles and Hypersonic Cruise Missiles.



An artist's conception of a space-based particle beam missile defence system

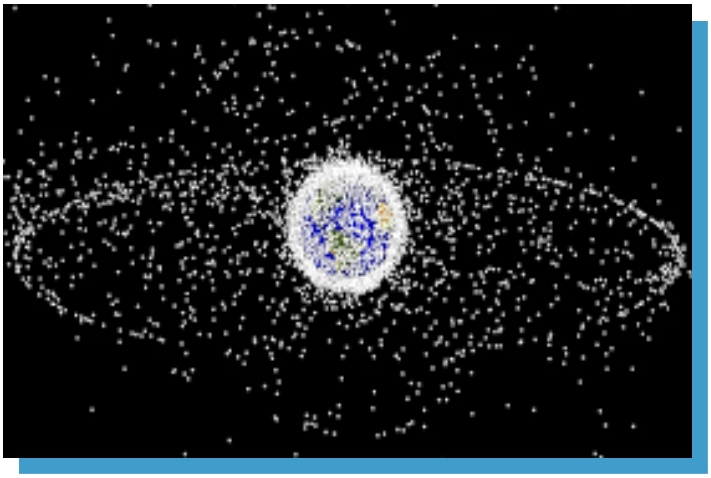
SYSTEM ARCHITECTURE

The Golden Dome system aims to be an operationally-proven, layered missile defence system which allows Commanders to make synchronised decisions about threats at any range, in any phase of flight, from any location in the world. It will be the first system to integrate all air defence assets across domains, including space, with a much wider scope than the Iron Dome, David's Sling, and Arrow systems. The U.S. President's Executive Order mandates the architecture to include at least eight key components:-

- Defence against ballistic, hypersonic, advanced cruise missiles, and next-generation aerial attacks.
- Acceleration of the deployment of the Hypersonic and Ballistic Tracking Space Sensor layer.
- Development and deployment of proliferated space-based interceptors capable of boost-phase intercept.
- Deployment of terminal-phase intercept capabilities to defeat countervalue attacks (Glide Phase Interceptors (GPIs)).
- Deployment of the Proliferated Warfighter Space Architecture (PWSA)'s Custody Layer.
- Deployment of capabilities to defeat missile attacks before launch ("left of launch" preemptive strike capabilities).
- Deployment of a secure supply chain for all components.
- Deployment of non-kinetic capabilities to augment kinetic attacks

Golden Dome, draws inspiration from Israel's Iron Dome but ventures into uncharted territory—weaponising space with global missile tracking, offensive capabilities, and satellite-based interceptors.

The Executive order declares, “The threat of attack by ballistic, hypersonic, and cruise missiles, and other advanced aerial attacks, remains the most catastrophic threat facing the United States”. The US Golden Dome is quite different from the Israeli Iron Dome.



The Golden Dome system would need more than 500 satellites in Low Earth Orbit to provide a worldwide shield. Given that each such satellite has a period of just about 15 minutes, over a particular spot, some experts estimate that for foolproof coverage, the number of satellites required will be much higher, bigger than any constellation that’s ever been launched, even more than the 7000 Starlink satellites currently operated by SpaceX. It is also estimated by them that this kind of Golden Dome system, even if it works, would take at least a decade to build, cost more than half a trillion dollars, and accelerate the global nuclear arms race and the weaponisation of space.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

On 20 May 2025, the US President alluded to former President Reagan’s Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI), popularly known as “Star Wars,” which proposed similar capabilities in the 1980s but was never fully realised. President Trump asserted that “Hypersonic missiles, ballistic missiles and advanced cruise missiles, all of them will be knocked out of the air.”

A down payment of $25 billion for Golden Dome was included in a Republican “reconciliation” spending bill that would add $150 billion to the Pentagon’s budget in fiscal year 2025. However, the Congressional Budget Office has estimated that the Golden Dome could cost between $161 billion and $542 billion over 20 years. Some Republican Senators involved in the program have even predicted the end cost would be "trillions of dollars.”

Some independent observers noted that although the U.S. military would treat the plan seriously, expecting it to be completed during Trump’s term was unrealistic. It is also felt that the system’s cost could consume a significant portion of the defence budget. Thus, the jury is still out on this, considering the experience of SDI, which was brought to a close in 1993 after spending some $30 billion.

GLOBAL ARMS RACE

The US, China, and Russia are modernising their nuclear arsenals and advancing space-based military systems. Trump’s “Golden Dome” with offensive potential could escalate a space arms race. China and Russia may target U.S. satellites, enhance missile stockpiles, or develop harder-to-intercept weapons like jamming tools, decoys, and underwater nuclear torpedoes.

On 21 May 2025, China criticised the Golden Dome plan, claiming it "violates the principle of peaceful use of space in the Outer Space Treaty". It called on the US to “give up developing and deploying a global anti-missile system”, which risked “turning space into a war zone.

The Russian Foreign Ministry said, "The United States Golden Dome project undermines the foundations of strategic stability as it involves the creation of a global missile defence system." Significantly, on 8 May 2025, China and Russia made a joint statement criticising the proposal's rejection of the "inseparable interrelationship between strategic offensive arms and strategic defensive arms", its "left-of-launch" capabilities, and its "orbital deployment of interception systems"

On 27 May 2025, North Korea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs criticised the proposal as representing "an outer space nuclear war scenario". It denounced "undisguised moves for space militarisation" and argued regional stability requires "the symmetry of the matchless power".

Canada’s ambassador to the United Nations compared U.S. President Donald Trump’s Golden Dome to a protection racket after the U.S. president said America’s northern neighbour must either pay $61 billion to join the program or agree to annexation (in which case inclusion would be free).



Patrycja Bazylczyk, a missile defence expert at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, said that the Golden Dome signalled a reorientation of US missile defence policy towards countering Russia and China, versus existing systems geared towards North Korea. The Arms Control Association notes that Moscow has been working to ensure it can overcome the threat of a future U.S. space-based interceptor network by developing anti-satellite weapons, undersea torpedoes, hypersonic glide



vehicles, and nuclear-powered cruise missiles. Beijing, meanwhile, may respond by increasing its nuclear-armed ballistic missile force.

Dome also revives memories of Ronald Reagan's SDI, which was also envisioned as an array of ground and space-based anti-missile capabilities, paired with new

Despite its strategic scope, critics warn of its destabilising impact, astronomical cost, and potential to ignite a dangerous new era of space-based arms races between superpowers.

AT CONCEPTUAL STAGE

The Golden Dome program represents one of the most ambitious missile defence initiatives in US history. Golden Dome, the next generation missile shield, still in the conceptual stage, has already triggered strong reactions from adversaries of the US. Its high cost and logistical complexity make the mission extremely challenging, incredibly complicated, and a costly proposition. The Golden sensors and communication networks. Unlike the fate of SDI, Golden Dome may successfully fructify, but at what cost and in what time frame would be an interesting conundrum.

(Lt Gen Kapil Aggarwal (R), former Director General EME. He is an alumnus of IIT Kharagpur, having done MTech (Electronics). The views expressed are of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of ***The News Analytics Herald.****)*

MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS

- ***Golden Dome is a U.S. space shield intercepting hypersonic, ballistic, and cruise missiles via satellites.***
- ***$ 175 billion allocated for project; full deployment by 2029, but costs may surpass $ 500 billion.***
- ***Critics China, Russia, North Korea warn of space militarisation and rising strategic instability fears.***
- ***Golden Dome includes offensive tech like "left-of-launch" strikes, shifting U.S. missile defense strategy.***
- ***It echoes Reagan's "Star Wars" plan, raising doubts on feasibility, cost, and true deterrence value.***

ABRAHAM ACCORDS: SYMBOLIC NORMALISATION, SUBSTANTIVE STALEMATE

TIMEPIECE

The Abraham Accords marked a watershed in Arab-Israeli relations, normalising ties between Israel and several Arab nations without resolving the Palestinian issue. While hailed by signatories as a step toward regional cooperation and security, the accords have deepened divisions in the Arab world and sidelined the Palestinian cause. With public rejection still strong and Israel's policies unchanged, normalisation appears more strategic than peaceful, raising questions about its long-term sustainability.



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Since the signing of the Abraham Accords in 2020, the Arab region has entered a new phase of political transformation and regional realignment, particularly with the wave of normalisation between some Arab countries and Israel. Sponsored by the United States, these accords began with the UAE and Bahrain, followed by Morocco and Sudan. They marked an unprecedented shift in the trajectory of Arab-Israeli relations after decades of declared hostility and the traditional Arab stance that linked normalisation with a just and comprehensive resolution to the Palestinian issue.

MOTIVATIONS BEHIND NORMALISATION

Today, a few years after the accords were signed, it has become evident that the wave of normalisation is not a mere diplomatic gesture, but rather a redrawing of the regional political map. This raises serious questions about the future of the Palestinian cause, the role of the regional Arab order, and the meaning of the new alliances that have started to take shape in the region.

Normalisation between some Arab states and Israel was



driven by various strategic interests, including the need for security partnerships to counter Iranian influence and the economic ambitions some states envision through cooperation with Israel, a country known for its leadership in technology and innovation. The decisive American role cannot be overlooked, as the Trump administration invested significant political capital to advance these agreements, offering substantial economic and political incentives to the signatory states.



SAUDI ARABIA'S STRATEGIC CAUTION

While Saudi Arabia has yet to sign the Abraham Accords, its stance is crucial in shaping the future trajectory of normalisation in the region. As the largest power in the Gulf Cooperation Council and a religious reference for the Muslim world, Riyadh recognises that any move toward normalisation with Israel carries not just political implications, but also requires a delicate balance between national interests and symbolic commitments to the Palestinian cause.

Since the signing of the accords, Saudi Arabia has adopted what is often described as a "strategic caution." The Kingdom has repeatedly emphasised that normalisation is contingent on achieving a just and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian issue, in line with the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002, originally proposed by Riyadh itself. However, in recent years, there have been significant indicators of gradual openness, such as allowing Israeli aircraft to fly over Saudi airspace, hosting Israeli figures at economic and diplomatic forums, and increasing public statements by Saudi officials about the importance of regional peace.

Some analysts believe the Kingdom is biding its time, waiting for the right political moment, whether in terms of regional realignment or developments in the Palestinian file, to make a major shift. This is partly tied to domestic transformations and the pursuit of new alliances aligned with Vision 2030, as well as the complex relationship with Washington, a key player in the normalisation process. Yet, Riyadh seems unwilling to rush. Saudi decision-makers understand that rapprochement with Israel without a meaningful breakthrough on the Palestinian front could compromise the Kingdom's traditional role as a defender of Palestinian rights and provoke public backlash. Thus, the Saudi stance will likely remain a calculated progression, waiting for more mature regional and international conditions.

THE PALESTINIAN CAUSE

The Abraham Accords have also caused a clear rift in the Arab position on the Palestinian cause. Palestinians see normalisation without addressing their rights as a breach of the Arab Peace Initiative, which stipulated recognition of Israel in exchange for its withdrawal from occupied territories and a just solution to the refugee issue. Accordingly, the accords were met with widespread Palestinian rejection and viewed as a deviation from a previously unified Arab stance. Practically speaking, normalisation has weakened the political support Palestinians once enjoyed from the Arab world. With some countries moving from conditional backing to diplomatic and economic partnership with Israel, the effectiveness of Arab collective pressure, once a key bargaining chip, has diminished. Additionally, internal voices in these countries have begun to advocate separating Arab-Israeli relations from the Palestinian issue, further weakening the Palestinian Authority's position and complicating future negotiations.

On the other hand, some argue that normalised relations between Israel and Arab states could offer an indirect path to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, by convincing Israel that full regional integration depends on a fair settlement with the Palestinians. This pragmatic approach bets on a gradual shift in Israeli policy driven by shared economic and security interests.



Yet, developments on the ground in the West Bank, Jerusalem, and Gaza, where Israel continues its settlement expansion and violations against Palestinian civilians, undermine this bet. Governed by one of the most extreme coalitions in its

Normalization offered short-term gains—economic partnerships and U.S. goodwill, but at the cost of Arab consensus on Palestine, weakening collective pressure for a fair resolution.

history and riddled with internal political division, Israel has shown no real willingness to engage in a new peace process. Instead, it strengthens its grip on the occupied territories, benefiting from the absence of a unified Arab deterrent.

At the level of the Arab regional system, the Abraham Accords have contributed to reshaping the alliance landscape. New blocs have emerged, such as the Israel-UAE-Bahrain axis, along with a form of security and economic coordination in response to Iran. While these alliances may serve national interests, they also deepen rifts within the Arab world and weaken the Arab League's ability to formulate unified positions.



In this fragmented context, other regional powers, namely Turkey and Iran—have become major players in the Palestinian cause. Iran positions itself as a supporter of the resistance, leveraging Arab divisions to bolster its influence among Palestinian factions like Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Meanwhile, Turkey attempts to play the role of mediator at times, despite maintaining unstable relations with Israel.

From the American side, U.S. policy on the Palestinian issue has seen no fundamental shift. While the administration continues to support the Abraham Accords, it has taken no significant steps to revive the peace process, offering rhetorical support for a two-state solution without backing it with concrete action. Nor has it shown any intention to pressure Israel's far-right government to curb settlement activity or rights violations.

At the domestic level, Arab states that normalised ties with Israel face significant internal challenges, chief among them, popular rejection. In many of these countries, public opinion still views Israel as an occupying force and maintains strong support for the Palestinian cause on moral and national grounds. Protests and waves of anger, particularly during Israeli escalations in Gaza or attacks on Al-Aqsa Mosque, demonstrate that official normalisation has yet to translate into genuine popular acceptance.

A FRAGILE PATH

This disconnect between governments and their populations renders the Abraham Accords fragile and susceptible to reversal in the event of future crises. The link between normalisation and regional stability remains complex: while governments bet on cooperation with Israel as a path to development and security, critics argue that bypassing the Palestinian cause may fuel backlash and empower extremist movements.

Despite the new political landscape, the Palestinian issue remains central to Arab identity. Jerusalem, the right of return, and settlement expansion remain pivotal concerns that Arab governments cannot afford to overlook. The continued humanitarian and economic deterioration in the Palestinian territories, especcially post recent conflict, is a constant source of regional tension and a major obstacle to achieving comprehensive peace.

European initiatives, particularly by France, to revive the two-state solution underscore the continued global relevance of the Palestinian issue. Moreover, Saudi Arabia's undecided position as the Arab world's central power leaves room for a broader reassessment of the normalisation trajectory.

Saudi Arabia's calculated delay reflects wider concerns: regional stability, domestic opinion, and the fragility of a peace process genuine progress on Palestinian rights.



LEBANON AND SYRIA

As for other non-signatory states, Lebanon and Syria represent distinct cases of official resistance. In Lebanon, sectarian and political complexity, along with Hezbollah's influence, preclude any public rapprochement with Israel. In Syria, hostility remains part of official discourse, particularly given Israel's continued occupation of the Golan Heights. Still, political sources suggest that normalisation may be a matter of time in both countries, driven by shifting regional dynamics and growing economic and international pressures.

Among the remaining Gulf states, Kuwait continues to express firm reservations, linking any future normalisation to tangible progress on the Palestinian track. In contrast, signs of quiet engagement have emerged in countries like



Oman and Qatar, where indirect forms of contact with Israel are often framed as humanitarian or economic cooperation.

The Abraham Accords have redefined regional priorities and created a new reality in which Arab consensus on Israel is no longer intact. Yet the normalisation process remains fragile, subject to potential collapse if tensions in Palestinian territories escalate or if Israel continues its expansionist and discriminatory policies. Ultimately, the future of these agreements, however promising they may appear to some, is inseparable from the fate of the Palestinian cause, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the key to any lasting and genuine peace in the Middle East.

(Nadia Hallak, senior correspondent and distinguished journalist from Beirut, Lebanon. She has extensively worked in the Arab region and covers major developments in the Arab world for News Analytics. The views expressed by the author and any guest experts do not necessarily reflect the views of ***The News Analytics Herald.****)*

MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS

- ***Abraham Accords focus on economy and security, sidelining Palestine and reshaping Middle East alliances.***
- ***Normalisation reduced Arab leverage on Israel, weakening unity on Palestine and two-state solution hopes.***
- ***Riyadh open to ties, but prioritises Palestine, honouring regional stability and religious importance.***
- ***Widespread Arab public rejection keeps normalisation fragile, prone to backlash during regional crises.***
- ***Despite diplomatic progress, lasting peace requires resolving core Palestinian issues—land, sovereignty, and rights.***

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THE NEXT BIG

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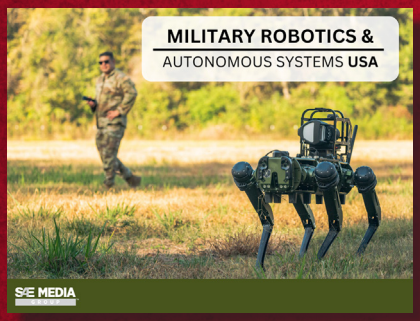

The Military Robotics and Autonomous Systems USA Conference on July 9-11, 2025, in Arlington, is the leading forum for Military Education and Training on Military Robotics & Autonomous Systems Programs. Take your place at the VA, don't miss out on the premier US event uniting ground robotics experts! It claims to be an unparalleled opportunity to network and collaborate with dynamic international militaries, offering unique perspectives on the latest advancements in robotic capabilities. The US DoD is investing heavily in land robotics to enhance warfighter lethality and safety. This event is essential for those who plan to stay ahead of the curve.
Official site:https://www.smgconferences.com/defence/northamerica/conference/robotics-usa#tab_overview

BASTILLE DAY CELEBRATIONS



France will celebrate Bastille Day on July 14th. In French, it's called le 14 juillet or la fête nationale. The day marks two important events in French history: the Storming of the Bastille in 1789 during the French Revolution, and the Fête de la Fédération in 1790, which is celebrated as national unity. People all over France celebrate with events, fireworks, and gatherings. The biggest celebration is a large military parade held in Paris on the Champs-Élysées. It is watched by the President of France, government leaders, and international guests, and is the oldest parade of its kind in Europe.

UNCREWED NAVAL SYSTEMS 2025



The Uncrewed Naval Systems (UNS) conference will be taking place from 15-16 July 2025 in London, UK. UNS are becoming vital assets for modern navies, offering strategic solutions to rising geopolitical tensions in regions like the Indo-Pacific, North America, Europe, and Asia-Pacific. With demand for uncrewed surface vessels (USVs) expected to grow from $1.1 billion in 2024 to $2.5 billion by 2034, the need for advanced naval platforms, sensors, navigation systems, and AI technologies is rapidly increasing. UNS 2025 presents a unique opportunity to engage with global defence leaders and innovators, fostering collaboration and accelerating progress in uncrewed naval capabilities. Don't miss this essential event shaping the future of maritime defence and autonomy.
Official site:https://www.defenceiq.com/events-uncrewed-naval-systems

THING

RIAT 2025



One of the world's largest military airshows, the Royal International Air Tattoo (RIAT), is scheduled at RAF Fairford from 18-20 July, offering three days of high-octane aerial displays, global participation, and aviation excellence. Far more than just an airshow, RIAT 2025 promises a multi-sensory experience—from the thunderous roar of jet engines overhead to the vibrant energy of spectators lining the runway.

Aircraft and air forces from around the world will gather in Gloucestershire for what is often described as a festival of flight. This year's edition offers enhanced viewing through exclusive hospitality zones, giving visitors a front-row seat to the action in a truly unforgettable setting.
Official site: https://www.airtattoo.com/

INDONESIA AERO SUMMIT 2025



The 2nd Annual Indonesia Aero Summit 2025 (IAS 2025) will be held in Jakarta from July 30–31, 2025, hosted by the Indonesia National Air Carriers Association. This premier event will bring together aviation leaders from across ASEAN to address key challenges and opportunities through expert insights, panel discussions, and exhibitions. As Southeast Asia's largest aviation market, Indonesia is projected to become the world's sixth-largest by 2034, with 390 million passengers. With 2024 marking a full recovery post-COVID, IAS 2025 offers a powerful platform for collaboration, innovation, and investment in aviation infrastructure, sustainability, and growth. Don't miss this milestone gathering of global aviation stakeholders.
Official site: https://www.indonesiaaerosummit.com/

SPEXA 2025



SPEXA, or the Space Business Expo is Japan's exhibition specialised in space business. It is being held from 30 July – 01 August in Tokyo, Japan. It is poised to become the global business centre hub that brings together companies and professionals in the space industry and various sectors. This space exhibition will connect users with companies and organisations specialising in space solutions such as outer space utilisation, satellite data utilisation, infrastructure, development and manufacturing, and other space-related services.
Official site: https://www.spexa.jp/tokyo/en-gb/press.html

DIGITAL SIEGE: NAVIGATING STATE-BACKED CYBER THREATS IN ASIA-PACIFIC

DEEP-TECH

The Asia-Pacific region is grappling with an alarming surge in cyber threats, including ransomware, espionage, and data breaches, many linked to state-sponsored actors. As governments and businesses digitise rapidly, vulnerabilities in digital infrastructure are increasingly exposed. The real challenge lies in striking a balance between bolstering cybersecurity and maintaining diplomatic ties. This article examines key cyber incidents, the evolving threat landscape, and how the region can build a secure, resilient digital future.



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FOR **NEWS ANALYTICS**

Cybersecurity has become one of the most pressing concerns for governments, businesses, and individuals across the Asia-Pacific region. The region, which is home to some of the world's fastest-growing economies and digital ecosystems, has witnessed a surge in cyber threats, including ransomware attacks, data breaches, and state-sponsored cyber espionage. Governments are increasingly wary of cyber actors who launch sophisticated attacks with geopolitical motives, targeting critical infrastructure, defence systems, and financial institutions.

The rise of cyber incidents allegedly involving state-sponsored hackers poses a persistent challenge: How can nations effectively combat cyber threats while maintaining diplomatic relations? Striking the right balance between security and diplomacy requires a multi-layered approach that includes international cooperation, cybersecurity regulations, and advanced technological solutions.

CYBERSECURITY THREAT

The Asia-Pacific region is one of the most vulnerable to cyber threats for several reasons:

- Rapid Digitalisation – Many countries in the region are undergoing digital transformation at a high speed, leading to increased reliance on cloud computing, online services, and internet-connected devices.
- Geopolitical Tensions – Long-standing rivalries between nations contribute to cyber espionage and intelligence-gathering efforts.
- Weak Cybersecurity Infrastructure – Some governments and businesses still rely on outdated security systems, making them easy targets for cybercriminals.
- Diverse Regulatory Frameworks – Differences in cybersecurity laws across nations make it difficult to establish unified defence measures.
- Cyber Skills Gap – The shortage of skilled cybersecurity professionals in some parts of the region limits the ability to combat advanced cyber threats.



CYBERSECURITY STATISTICS

Cyberattacks in Asia-Pacific increased by 15% in 2024, with ransomware being the most prevalent threat. 59% of businesses in the region reported being victims of cyberattacks in 2022, with 32% experiencing multiple incidents. IoT malware attacks surpassed 100 million globally, with Asia-Pacific being a major target due to rapid digitalisation. The financial sector was the fourth most commonly targeted industry by ransomware in 2023, highlighting vulnerabilities in banking and fintech.



MEGA INCIDENTS

Medibank Data Breach (Australia): One of the most significant cybersecurity incidents in recent years was the Medibank data breach in Australia, which occurred in 2022. Hackers infiltrated Medibank's network and gained access to personal health information, including treatment details, medical history, and contact information. The attackers attempted extortion, demanding payment in exchange for not leaking the data. However, Medibank refused to comply, leading hackers to release stolen data on the dark web.

Consequences:

- Loss of sensitive health records for millions of Australians.
- Legal repercussions and regulatory scrutiny for Medibank.
- Damage to Medibank's reputation and loss of customer trust.
- Increased scrutiny on cybersecurity measures within the healthcare sector.

APT41 Cyber Espionage (China): APT41 is a Chinese state-sponsored hacking group known for cyber espionage and financially motivated attacks across Asia-Pacific. The group has targeted government agencies, healthcare institutions, gaming companies, and telecom providers.

Consequences:

- Theft of trade secrets and intellectual property from tech companies.
- Compromised government data, raising security concerns in targeted nations.
- Economic damage due to cyber-enabled fraud and business disruptions.
- Strained diplomatic relations between China and the affected countries.

Philippines' Brute-Force Attacks: In 2024, the Philippines faced over 4.1 million brute-force cyber attacks, marking one of the most aggressive cyber offensives against the country. Brute-force attacks involve hackers systematically guessing passwords and login credentials to infiltrate databases, corporate accounts, and online platforms.

Consequences:

- Loss of sensitive business data and financial records.
- Increased demand for stronger cybersecurity infrastructure in the country.

Governments face the dual challenge of protecting digital infrastructure while avoiding diplomatic fallout from cyber attribution and retaliatory actions against suspected foreign actors.

EMERGING THREATS IN ASIA-PACIFIC

Ransomware Attacks on Critical Infrastructure- Ransomware attacks have surged in frequency and severity, posing significant challenges to businesses and government entities. Attackers often demand cryptocurrency payments for the release of compromised data. In Indonesia, a ransomware attack in June 2024 disrupted 282 public services, including airport operations and immigration services.

AI-Powered Cyber Threats- Artificial intelligence is being weaponised by cybercriminals to automate attacks, evade detection, and manipulate digital environments.

Cyber Espionage and Nation-State Attacks- State-sponsored cyber activities, including cyber espionage and information warfare, have considerably increased.

Supply Chain Vulnerabilities- Hackers exploit weaknesses in third-party vendors and service providers to breach organisations.

Disinformation and Cyber-Enabled Propaganda- Cyber-enabled disinformation campaigns are being used to manipulate public opinion, influence elections, and destabilise governments.

• Disruptions in the banking and corporate sectors.

• Regulatory push for enhanced authentication methods.

NEXT STEPS

Strengthening Cybersecurity Regulations- Governments must implement stricter cybersecurity laws and frameworks to ensure organisations comply with security standards. Regulatory bodies should enforce penalties for non-compliance and incentivise cybersecurity investments.

Collaboration between governments and private enterprises is crucial for sharing threat intelligence, developing cybersecurity solutions, and funding research initiatives. AI-powered cybersecurity solutions can enhance threat detection, automate responses, and improve overall security resilience.

Countries should engage in diplomatic discussions to establish cybersecurity norms and prevent cyber conflicts. Regional cybersecurity alliances can facilitate information sharing and coordinated responses to cyber threats.

Organisations must shift from a reactive cybersecurity approach to a proactive one. Cyber resilience should be embedded into corporate strategies, with strong authentication measures, AI-driven threat detection, and employee cybersecurity training becoming standard practices. Businesses must also collaborate with governments and cybersecurity firms to stay ahead of emerging threats.

Cybersecurity is not just the responsibility of governments and corporations; it is everyone's responsibility. Individuals must take steps to protect their personal data, use strong passwords, enable multi-factor authentication, and stay informed about cyber threats. A cyber-aware population is a powerful defense against cybercrime.

THE ROAD AHEAD

The future of cybersecurity in Asia-Pacific is not just about defending against attacks—it is about building a secure, trustworthy, and resilient digital ecosystem. Nations must work together to develop cybersecurity norms, strengthen cyber laws, and invest in cutting-edge technologies that safeguard digital assets. The battle against cyber threats is ongoing, but with collaboration, innovation, and vigilance, Asia-Pacific can emerge stronger, more secure, and better prepared for the digital challenges ahead.

Public-private partnerships, regional cooperation, and AI-driven security solutions are essential to safeguard economies without escalating tensions or compromising international relations.

THE FUTURE

The Asia-Pacific region stands at a critical crossroads in the battle against cyber threats. As digital transformation accelerates, cyber adversaries—ranging from financially motivated hackers to state-sponsored cyber operatives—continue to evolve, exploiting vulnerabilities in infrastructure, businesses, and government systems. Cybersecurity is no longer just an IT issue, it is a national security imperative, an economic necessity, and a societal responsibility. The future of cybersecurity in Asia-Pacific depends on how well nations can balance security measures with diplomatic engagement, ensuring that cyber defence does not escalate into geopolitical conflict.

Cyber diplomacy will play a crucial role in preventing cyber conflicts, ensuring that nations work together rather than against each other in securing cyberspace. Investing in cybersecurity infrastructure, intelligence-sharing agreements, and rapid-response mechanisms will be key to mitigating

Cybersecurity is about preserving the integrity of our digital world. The choices made today will shape the cybersecurity landscape for generations to come. The question is: Will Asia-Pacific rise to the challenge? The answer lies in the collective efforts of governments, businesses, and individuals to build a cyber-resilient future.

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MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS

- ***Rapid digital growth, instability, and weak cybersecurity leave region vulnerable to cyber threats.***
- ***China's APT41 targets sensitive data, escalating tensions and triggering economic, security consequences globally.***
- ***Healthcare, finance, and infrastructure face rising cyberattacks, shown by Medibank and Indonesia breaches.***
- ***All stakeholders must unite through regulation, education, and detection to curb cyber threats.***
- ***Cyber diplomacy, global norms, and alliances are key to preventing cyber warfare threats.***

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