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# THE NEWS ANALYTICS HERALD



# SHADOWS TO SPOTLIGHT

## IN FOCUS

DEFIANCE IN A SHIFTING  
WORLD ORDER

## BIG STORY

RESURGENT RUSSIA DEFIES  
GLOBAL ISOLATION

## EXCLUSIVE

INTERVIEW WITH HONOURABLE  
AMBASSADOR OF UKRAINE

# THE POWER PANEL



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# || FOREWORD



## MOSCOW MOVES TO THE FOREFRONT

Recent global developments have significantly enhanced President Putin's credibility and international standing, ending his diplomatic isolation and marking a personal and strategic triumph. Russia has withstood Western sanctions and deepened alliances, especially with non-Western powers, enabling a more proactive global role and contributing to the rise of a multipolar world.

At the recent Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit in Tianjin, Putin's high-profile engagements with leaders from India, China, and Africa underscored Russia's ability to shape multilateral platforms and realign global relationships based on pragmatic interests, challenging Western dominance.

Russia's renewed geopolitical prominence is reflected in its economic adaptation, strategic deterrence, and assertive diplomacy. Putin has steered the Ukraine peace narrative in a direction more favourable to Russia, leveraging the country's strengthened position to push for negotiations while safeguarding its territorial gains.

The West continues to advocate a peace settlement grounded in sovereignty and international law. However, Russia's current leverage has enabled it to adopt a dual strategy: offering dialogue while aggressively pursuing strategic objectives, including limiting NATO and EU influence and seeking territorial concessions from Ukraine.

This edition of The News Analytics Herald explores a wide perspective to the possible resolutions. However, the hardened stance risks prolonging the conflict. The West may continue military and financial support for Ukraine, leading to a stalemate. As multipolarity gains traction, forums like BRICS and SCO may offer alternative mechanisms for conflict mediation. As things pan out, the peace process could lead to a fragile "cold peace," marked by ceasefires without a lasting resolution - an uneasy balance amid shifting global dynamics.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Srikumar Menon". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined.

Ambassador Srikumar Menon, IFS (Retd.)  
(Former Ambassador of India to South Sudan,  
Angola and Sao Tome & Principe)

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The News Analytics Herald is a premier national news magazine dedicated to analysing global developments that shape India's geostrategic landscape. From shifting currents in international relations and geoeconomics to emerging security challenges and transformative military technologies, we provide sharp, contextual insights into the issues that matter most. Guided by a commitment to factual depth and clarity, our analyses offer fresh perspectives on complex debates authored by an esteemed panel of global scholars, diplomats, armed forces veterans, international correspondents, and leading academics. Covering critical domains of diplomacy, defence, and military technology, the magazine brings a distinctly global and scholarly perspective to complex events. Each article is crafted to engage decision-makers, industry leaders, and globally aware readers alike.

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# EDITOR'S NOTE



## RUSSIA OUT OF THE SHADOWS

*The past month has seen Russia step firmly back into the global spotlight, challenging narratives of its supposed isolation. President Vladimir Putin's unprecedented visibility and diplomatic manoeuvres have reshaped conversations not only in Europe but across global power corridors. Far from being marginalised, Moscow is actively recalibrating its role, asserting itself as a pivotal player in the evolving world order.*

*This renewed engagement carries profound implications for the Ukraine conflict. While the battlefield remains tense, there is now greater recognition of the need for dialogue. Russia's presence in discussions surrounding a possible peace initiative signals that any durable solution cannot exclude Moscow. Whether through backchannel negotiations, regional mediations, or international summits, Russia is repositioning itself as an indispensable actor in shaping the contours of peace.*

*The ripple effects extend well beyond Ukraine. Russia's assertive diplomacy is altering the balance of global geopolitics, compelling both allies and adversaries to reassess strategies. For Europe, this means navigating a more complex security environment. For Asia, it underscores Russia's continued relevance as a strategic partner. For the Global South, Moscow's outreach offers new avenues of cooperation beyond Western frameworks.*

*This edition of The News Analytics Herald takes a deep view of the Russian outreach and grand standings amidst conflicting signals from Washington. From the red carpet of Alaska to the threat of bigger sanctions on Russia, the US has walked on a predicted path. As the shadow of isolation lifts, Russia's re-emergence raises both opportunities and uncertainties. The coming months will define not only Russia's future trajectory but also the wider geopolitical landscape.*

Jai Hind!

**Sandhya Srivastava**  
Editor in Chief &  
Business Director

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# BALTIC STATES BRACE FOR HYBRID WARFARE

## BATTLEGROUND

*Hybrid warfare, blending military coercion with cyberattacks, sabotage, disinformation, and weaponised migration, poses mounting threats to Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Russia's strategy increasingly targets critical infrastructure, elections, and social cohesion, with ripple effects across Poland, Finland, and Germany. While the Baltic states have strengthened resilience through energy diversification and NATO cooperation, vulnerabilities in infrastructure and society remain dangerously exposed.*



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

Hybrid operations, unlike traditional warfare, bridge martial coercion with non-military measures like sabotage, cyberattacks, disinformation, interference in elections, energy blackmail, and weaponised migration. These processes are intentionally vague, cheap but high-impact, allowing state and non-state actors to destabilise their competitors without crossing transparent thresholds.

The Russian hybrid war strategy has been a security concern

for the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. However, the danger does not end there in the Baltics: Poland, Finland, and Germany are also at risk due to shared energy and digital infrastructure, political interdependence, and disinformation.

Critical infrastructure—notably submarine cables, energy supplies, and digital networks—has also been a key target. With an assault upon such an asset requiring minimal effort but with ripple effects containing security, economic, and



psychological consequences. At least 11 North and Baltic Sea underwater cables have been severed since 2023, both demonstrating the technical possibility and the deniable nature of such an act. This article examines hybrid war strategy across the Baltic states, quantifying regional resiliency and defining policy measures to be taken in defence of their infrastructure.



## HYBRID THREATS AND ACTIVITIES

Hybrid war threatens Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania seriously, attacking the cohesion of society, infrastructure, and democratic procedures using methods of sabotage, cyberattacks, disinformation, and disruptions of energy supplies. These are intended to destabilise the Baltic states without triggering traditional war, exploiting vulnerabilities in linked systems.

Disinformation is highly effective in hybrid warfare, often employed through AI-generated content, deepfakes, and targeted social media campaigns on platforms such as Telegram, TikTok, and local networks. All are designed to produce narratives around specific strategic interests, with linguistic or cultural minorities targeted to be manipulated into divisions. For example, messages can utilise themes of discrimination, nostalgia, or suspicion of international coalition-building. Classic cases such as the 2003 Lithuanian presidential foreign-linked funding scandal illustrate how external actors exploit political weaknesses. Current disinformation operations are more likely to erode support for active conflicts, destabilise international partnership trust, and amplify societal fault lines.

***Military displays in strategic regions amplify hybrid strategies by reinforcing the perception of a credible threat.***

Low-tech sabotage can be thoroughly debilitating to social cohesion and infrastructure. For example, the 2024 arson assault on a Vilnius storage facility disclosed weakness in key logistics networks. Likewise, the demolition of historic monuments across regions has been utilised as a means of stirring ethnic or cultural tensions. Deployment of incendiary

devices transported through logistics networks in attacks also demonstrates the capabilities for covert disruption. Attacks on key infrastructure—e.g., submarine cables carrying transatlantic communications, financial transactions, and military communications—are often attributed to accidents but raise concern about intentional sabotage. These attacks highlight the asymmetric benefits pursued through precision disruption, taking advantage of vulnerabilities in interdependent systems.

Cyber war is a key component of hybrid strategy, and organisations often conduct distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks on government networks, energy organisations, and public services. For instance, in 2022, a cyberattack on a Baltic energy organisation disconnected thousands of customers. In showpiece events, such as the 2023 Vilnius NATO Summit, cyberattacks were conducted on public websites and ministries to cause embarrassment and instability.

Espionage is used to support these activities, with nationals reportedly being recruited to collect intelligence or conduct minor sabotage operations. These activities are intended to erode confidence and destabilise institutions by taking advantage of insider access or local dissatisfaction.

Energy infrastructure is also a primary target in hybrid warfare, and physical and cyberattacks are employed to erode confidence in alternative energy sources. Diversification

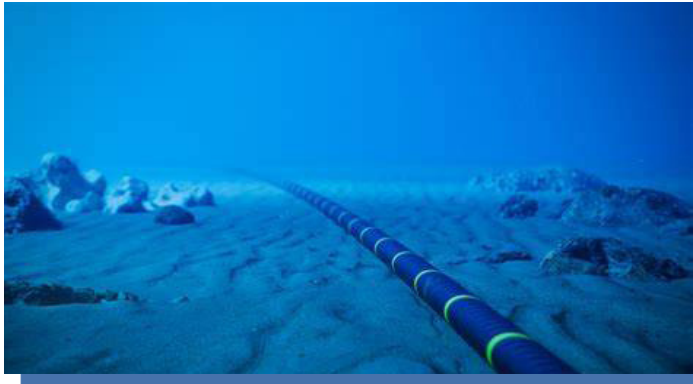


policies—such as the Baltic connection to the EU power grid in 2024 or the construction of LNG terminals and pipelines, have mitigated these risks. Nevertheless, ongoing attacks on critical infrastructure highlight the long-term problem of safeguarding energy networks against hybrid methods.

Humanitarian crises can sometimes be used for strategic purposes through organised waves of migration. In the 2021 EU border crisis, migrants fleeing war zones were guided towards border regions, putting pressure on local governments and testing regional security efforts. Such crises are intended to challenge global coalitions and politicise public discussion of migration and security, exerting pressure on governments and societies.

A display of military strength in strategic regions can serve to enhance hybrid strategies by providing the context of

a credible threat. Mass movements, which mimic rapid penetrations into extensive areas of terrain or clandestine activities in border regions, increase tensions and amplify the impact of covert operations. They capitalise on geographical proximity and cultural ties to vulnerable areas, thereby enhancing the perceived threat of escalation.



Election interference is a popular hybrid method that employs cyberattacks, the leakage of sensitive information, and disinformation as tools to influence public opinion. Social media mobilisation campaigns predicated on the amplification of controversial issues—whether nationalist feelings or ethnic grievances—can influence closely fought elections. They seek to delegitimise democratic institutions and undermine governments amenable to confronting strategic interests.

## REACTION CAPABILITY

Despite the seriousness of the threat, the Baltic states have been largely resilient. They have come a long way in countering such vulnerabilities with modernisation, social integration, and neighbourhood cooperation. Investments in energy diversification—for instance, Lithuania's terminal for liquefied natural gas and the Baltic disconnection from old energy grids in 2024—have reduced reliance on external sources. Nevertheless, critical infrastructure such as underwater cables, energy networks, and democratic systems remains an attractive target for low-cost, deniable assaults.

Estonia hosts the Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (CCDCOE) of NATO. Cyber defence and information warfare coordination are instead functions of Lithuania's National Cyber Security Centre and Latvia's Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence. Civil defence institutions—such as Estonia's 15,000-strong National Guard—facilitate rapid mobilisation in times of crisis.

Integration of the Baltic states' power grid with European grids, the Świnoujście terminal in Poland, and the Klaipėda LNG terminal are achievements of energy security. These steps limit Moscow's influence and bolster NATO's strategic depth.

Integration has been supported through the establishment of citizenship rights and the encouragement of learning the Russian language, which helps in recognising their cultural identities. These efforts are essential in reducing feelings of

alienation. Still, some challenges persist because of the ongoing tension between policies aimed at promoting integration and nationalist ideas that emphasise linguistic sameness.

Interagency coordination in the region is weak. Border control, crisis management, and intelligence exchange often do not operate in a coordinated manner. Latvia's border guards, for example, have been criticised compared to more advanced Estonian and Nordic counterparts. NATO and American surveillance capabilities compensate to some extent, but reform at the national level remains necessary.

## STRENGTHENING BALTIC DEFENCES

Strengthening Baltic defences against hybrid threats involves building inclusive integration, establishing a Comprehensive Resilience Ecosystem (CORE), protecting critical infrastructure, modernising electricity laws, enhancing transparency, and strengthening regional and international cooperation. Recommendations include:



- Facilitate Inclusive Integration: Expand programs to provide equal civic, economic, and political opportunities to cultural and linguistic minorities, fostering national unity in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.
- Envision a Comprehensive Resilience Ecosystem (CORE): Design an integrated system among the defence, cybersecurity, energy, and communications sectors to develop national resilience in the context of hybrid threats, tailored to Baltic priorities.
- Guard Critical Infrastructure: Prioritise the protection of submarine communications cables and offshore energy installations, leveraging regional cooperation.

***Protecting Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania from hybrid warfare is not just regional; it is a global challenge demanding international support for vulnerable neighbouring nations in conflict zones.***

- **Modernise Legal Frameworks:** Encourage modernisation of international treaties, such as the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), to counter hybrid threats to maritime and critical infrastructure, with the Baltic states coordinating regional action.
- **Increase Transparency in Deployments:** Clearly inform Baltic citizens of regional defence measures to reassure them while dissuading potential aggressors, highlighting national sovereignty.
- **Upgrade Specialised Forces:** Enhance Baltic special forces and civilian defence units with assistance from premier intelligence and surveillance capabilities in cooperation with allied countries.
- **Upgrade Regional Exercises:** Regularly conduct exercises such as BALTOPS and Baltic Sentry, including cyber, maritime, and information warfare drills.
- **Enhance Monitoring and Reaction:** Collaborate with national cyber units and regional allies to track disinformation in real time, quickly discredit fakes, and ensure a Baltic-led response.
- **Enhance Intelligence Sharing:** Expand cooperation with European and Indo-Pacific partners.
- **Global Norms:** Promote global norms to safeguard crucial infrastructure such as submarine cables and cyberspace, positioning the Baltic states as leaders in securing the global commons.

Defending Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania against hybrid war is not merely a regional security problem—it is a global issue requiring support for smaller neighbouring nations in a war zone. There is a need to maintain resilience in the information, digital, and physical spaces. The Baltic states can help find solutions to hybrid threats and ensure long-term stability by promoting domestic societal cohesion, fostering regional cooperation, and enhancing infrastructure security.



*(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**.)*

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- *Hybrid tactics destabilise societies without triggering open conflict.*
- *Disinformation exploits minorities, trust, and democratic institutions.*
- *Sabotage targets cables, energy, and logistics networks.*
- *Cyberattacks disrupt governments, energy, and public services.*
- *Baltic resilience grows, but vulnerabilities persist.*

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# RESURGENT RUSSIA DEFIES

## BIG STORY

*Russia's re-emergence on the global stage has upended assumptions of isolation, sanctions, and Western dominance. From the battlefields of Ukraine to high-profile summits, Moscow has shown resilience, adaptability, and defiance. This edition of The News Analytics Herald examines how Russia has shifted from isolation to influence, reshaping geopolitics and challenging conventional notions of power.*



NEWS ANALYTICS EDITORIAL DESK

Russia's 'special operations' in Ukraine have been a global reminder of the fragile peace that was being endured till early 2022. There was complacency among the global powers at the time that the world had firmly moved out of major wars and that economic diplomacy had finally overwhelmed the subject of conversations across the spectrum of issues. Trade and business deals had settled into new tools of coercion that worked across all domains and all times.

This perspective was highly lucrative for the West as it found the global yearning for development and better opportunities a universal desire, dictating governments to find alternate methods of interaction, move beyond conventional friction, and re-negotiate their way out of historical conflicts.

The assessment wasn't entirely misplaced; there had been urgency in the Middle East to accommodate Israel in the overall framework of regional growth and diplomacy. The signing of the Abraham Accords was seen as a major push

in that direction. The issue of the Iranian nuclear programme was attempted to be addressed through negotiated settlements. Europe's influence in Africa was expected to continue despite visible hiccups, and China was unofficially designated as a 'strategic competitor'. This stance allowed the West to continue drawing out new business deals with adversaries and competitors while simultaneously playing the guardians of democracy and freedom.

Understandably, Russia wasn't really in the equation; it was assumed to have been fully absorbed into the new 'global reality' and world order being dictated through economic power. The West held the myth that its connection with Russia now ran so wide and deep that it was no longer a 'threat' to Europe. It was safely assumed that, whatever the geopolitical challenges may be, Russia could not afford to leave the negotiation table. This perception was pleasant as it not only reassured Europe of its security but also gave it a feeling of holding the control lever vis-à-vis Russia. Europe was confident



# GLOBAL ISOLATION

of firmly dictating the course here onwards, with assured compliance. This explains the approach of some European negotiators till late 2021 on the question of Ukraine's NATO membership.

It was baffling that NATO planners were actively creating grounds for seeking out Russia. The alliance was continuously expanding and working overtime to share borders with the Russian Federation rather than letting those states act as a strong buffer between them.



## MAXIMUM PRESSURE

The possibility of a breakout of the Russia-Ukraine conflict was comprehended very late, and many still believed it to be just posturing by President Putin. NATO headquarters was tracking troop movements, repositioning of heavy-calibre weapons systems, and logistics relocations, but all were categorised as Russian grandstanding. The big decision to avert a conflict or not was left with Brussels and not Kyiv; Ukraine was probably sleep-walked over the minefield.

The strong guilt of that decision continues to haunt Europe. Indeed, the war broke out, and a deadly one at that. The world was told that the flaws lay with Russia, it remained the 'aggressor', and that President Putin bore all responsibility and would be made accountable. Russia was sanctioned, demonised, and ostracised from global forums as 'punishment' for orchestrating the war. President Putin was almost singled out for the decision to go to war, and a plethora of sanctions were announced, targeted at the Russian president.

The Central Bank of Russia was denied access to over \$400 billion in foreign-exchange reserves held overseas, while the EU imposed sanctions on several Russian businessmen and politicians. On 1 March 2022, French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire announced that the total value of Russian assets frozen under sanctions had reached USD 1 trillion. The list of sanctions was unprecedented, targeting individuals,

the banking system, businesses, banks, exports, and imports. The then Russian deputy finance minister said it was "the economic nuclear bomb falling on Russia," while the *South China Morning Post* announced it as "almost unprecedented," citing Singapore's unilateral decision to sanction Russia.

## RUSSIA'S RESURGENCE

Western assistance to Ukraine in terms of weapons, training, intelligence, and funds was presumed to create a strong counter to Russian plans and force Russia to a negotiated settlement. It indeed reflected on the battlefield in patches. The sustained opposition of Russian attacks by Ukrainian troops drew high admiration, but as is the nature of any conflict, the worst to suffer remains the unspoken ordinary population. The continued conflict in Ukraine has had a devastating impact on society and basic infrastructure. Warfighting apart, what is heartbreaking is the suffering of common people in the villages and cities of Ukraine.

Western countermeasures against Russia—blocking trade, travel, assets, and exclusion from forums like the G8—failed to make the Russian Federation blink. On the contrary, the Kremlin continued to pursue its war objectives more vigorously.



The war, now in its fourth year, has shattered many presumptions held earlier. The era of swift and decisive war never arrived; there are limitations of economic coercion, and it doesn't work as a standard template against all. When people are dying, the moral, material, and financial support has a shelf life. There isn't any single country or conglomerate of nations with the capacity to continue mass-producing weapons as a freebie for years.

Russia, on its part, played hardball with equal élan. It secured its economic interests by diversifying trade, opening new financial routes, and trading in local currency. It strengthened old associations, showing its presence and maintaining visibility at every possible forum. It ensured that it aptly exploited the new openings caused by Western complacency, especially

*Ukrainian troops' resistance to Russian attacks earned admiration, yet, as in all wars, ordinary civilians endured the greatest suffering.*

in Africa. If the Western measures against Russia were “unprecedented,” so were the Russian counteractions; they too bore the stamp of an “unprecedented response” against the most severe and hostile global setup that no country has ever witnessed yet.



The fact that the war that Russia ostensibly initiated is still underway with devastating ferocity is a testament to the failure of sanctions and imposed isolation. The most comprehensive efforts from the Western nations have not resulted in the desired end state of pushing the Russian Federation into submission. Everything they didn't expect appears to be unravelling to great unease in Western capitals. Worse still, the initiative is probably still not with them. All that appears is an aimless trial-and-error approach by actors resigned to destined outcomes.

## FROM ISOLATION TO INFLUENCE

Since this August, the images widely shared from global news agencies reflected a watershed moment for Russia and President Putin in particular. The big Alaska handshake, red-carpet welcome, ride on the Beast—all in return for ‘no concession’. President Putin demonstrated that diplomatic niceties and battlefield realities are two different things. A sharp contrast from President Trump, who believes everything can be a deal. Unfortunately for some, this round went to the president of the Russian Federation. These powerful images, broadcast worldwide, communicated a strong message: Russia is holding firm and in full control.

Another major fallout for the West was that three years of global isolation for President Putin were completely washed off within six hours of his stay in Alaska! Someone must

have calculated this maths, no doubt Europe was in shock. What was left for consolidation was further fractured by the back-to-back appearance of President Putin during the high-octane SCO Summit in Tianjin, China. The summit received massive global reportage on the back of an unexpected trade dispute between the US and India, follow-up on President Putin from the Alaska Summit, and the meeting of PM Modi with the Chinese President.

*Conflicts and methods to generate non-existent ones need to be stopped at once. Economic warmongering is no tool to make a nation great again.*

Many of the powerful images broadcast were surreal: the interaction between President Putin, PM Modi, and President Xi, the Russian president accompanying PM Modi in his official car for the summit. Global pundits were busy deciphering geopolitical signalling behind pictures and body language. What stood out was a clear impression that there's more to the world than the Western perception.

Russian isolation is no longer relevant; the cost of war doesn't appear to deter the course, and the price of a conflict is not exclusive—everyone pays. There are new realities, new realignments, and expectedly new opportunities. The dividends of peace and the costs of war have contrasting truths. Conflicts and methods to generate non-existent ones must be stopped at once. Economic warmongering is no tool to make a nation great again.

There is no such thing as a winner in a war, whether on the battlefield or in trade; it's just a battle of perception at the end. The futile efforts to present one's ego as superior to others will hardly lead to solutions.

The global low and devastation of once-prosperous Ukraine must be reversed; it's not an ideology or statement of submission, but respect for mutual sensitivity and confidence in capacity. Discussions must take a new approach if old concepts are not working. Harping upon a failed agenda will keep repeating a doomed outcome. Leadership is about charting unexplored avenues to find enduring solutions. The world has moved fast, and people have progressed even faster. It's best for nations to sync with some home truths and relearn the art of coexistence. Unfortunately, the alternate path has assured common destruction for all!

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- *U.S. retreat opens strategic space for China and Russia's influence.*
- *China deepens energy, infrastructure, and technology partnerships across the Gulf.*
- *Russia leverages arms sales and regional conflicts to expand influence.*
- *Saudi-Iran rapprochement signals fragile but important regional realignment.*
- *Energy chokepoints like Hormuz remain global security vulnerabilities.*

# YOUR TAKE

News Analytics receives a high volume of thoughtful comments and perspectives from well-informed global readers, all of which we review with care. We are pleased to share a selected cross-section that reflects the diversity of our global readership. Please continue sending your insights to [info@newsanalytics.in](mailto:info@newsanalytics.in) we highly value your engagement.



**Liubym Gerasymenko,**  
CEOs' and Boards' business partner  
Charlotte | North Carolina | United States

I take it, investing money from the proceeds of his ridiculous \$TRUMP and \$MELANIA coins (for which we still don't know who the original buyers were and what they paid that money for)?



**Regina French, CRS, GRI, SRS, ASP**  
Retired - Active Broker's License  
Missouri | United States

I believe it is illegal for him to do that while in office. Oh but when has something illegal or unconstitutional stopped him before 🤔



**Gianpaolo Pavone**  
Formatore & Autore  
Apulia | Italy

MACRON'S merciless failure shouldn't point the finger at Russia or France itself, but should focus on Emmanuel Macron and his presidency itself!



**Sarwan Aggarwal, Ph.D.**  
Nashua | New Hampshire | United States

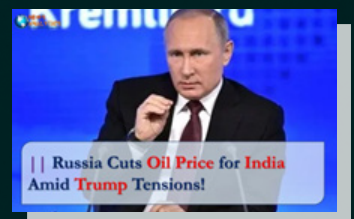
Proud of the leadership.

You can't ditch a friend who stood by for so long. Russia always voted for India in Security Council on Kashmir issues. At least the current leadership is showing resolve to maintain its own interests.



**Steve McCutcheon**  
Nackawic | New Brunswick | Canada

Trump hit India with the 'stick'; Putin is plying India with 'honey'. Guess who India is siding with.



# GLOBAL INFLUENCER

## VLADIMIR PUTIN: PRESIDENT

NEWS ANALYTICS | SPECIAL COVERAGE

The month gone by has seen the return of Russia, and specifically its President, Vladimir Putin, to the forefront of global attention. Long characterised in Western narratives as an isolated leader presiding over a pariah state, Putin has instead demonstrated a remarkable ability to seize the initiative and reframe international discourse. His prominence in recent weeks has compelled the world to reassess not just Russia's role in Ukraine, but its wider position in global geopolitics.

In recognition of these developments, The News Analytics Herald has chosen Vladimir Putin as the Global Influencer of the Month. This title is not a reflection of approval or endorsement of any particular policy, but rather an acknowledgment of influence: the ability to shape events, dominate debate, and alter trajectories at the international level. Putin's re-emergence from the shadow of isolation marks one of the most significant geopolitical developments of the season.

### BREAKING THE NARRATIVE

Since the start of the Ukraine war, the Western consensus has been one of portraying Russia as diplomatically isolated and economically crippled. Sanctions, expulsions from international forums, and attempts to build alternative coalitions all aimed at shrinking Moscow's global space. Yet, the past month has offered ample evidence that this narrative no longer holds sway.

Putin's recent diplomatic initiatives, bilateral meetings, and high-profile speeches have drawn unprecedented global coverage. Leaders from Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America continue to engage Moscow—often in defiance of Western pressure. From energy summits to regional peace conferences, Russia has shown that it retains the ability to attract partners and build coalitions. Far from being isolated, Moscow is leveraging this renewed visibility to assert its indispensability.

### THE UKRAINE PEACE DIMENSION

Central to Putin's resurgence is the Ukraine question. While fighting persists, the conversation is slowly shifting from absolute victory narratives to pragmatic peace discussions. Putin's insistence that Russia must be part of any meaningful settlement has gained traction, even among nations previously aligned with Western positions.

For Ukraine, a stalemate has become more visible; for Europe, fatigue and economic pressure are mounting; and for the Global South, the conflict's ripple effects on food, energy, and trade remain deeply disruptive. Against this backdrop, Russia's reassertion of its voice in peace talks is seen less as an obstruction and more as an inevitability.

By positioning Russia as a necessary stakeholder, Putin is subtly redefining the endgame. Whether through overt diplomacy or indirect influence, he has ensured that any serious attempt at resolution cannot exclude Moscow.



# OF THE MONTH

## OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

In this sense, he has transformed the narrative from Russia as aggressor to Russia as negotiator—at least in the optics of global debate.

### GLOBAL RIPPLE EFFECTS

Putin's resurgence cannot be understood only through the prism of Ukraine. His diplomatic outreach reflects a much wider geopolitical recalibration. In Asia, Russia continues to be a key partner for China, India, and Central Asia, particularly in energy and defence. In Africa, Moscow has made significant inroads through resource deals and security cooperation. In the Middle East, Russian influence in Syria and its dialogue with regional powers provide it with a voice disproportionate to Western attempts at exclusion.

This global outreach has a twofold effect: first, it reassures partners that Russia remains a dependable power; second, it unsettles Western strategies of containment. Putin's ability to remain relevant across continents underscores why he has emerged as an unavoidable figure in current geopolitics.

As cracks appear in the Western consensus, Putin's push for a negotiated outcome carries increasing weight. Moscow's overtures suggest readiness for talks under conditions that preserve its strategic interests, such as recognition of territorial changes or security guarantees.

Putin's re-emergence has wider implications. For Europe, it complicates strategies built on isolating Moscow. For Asia, it reinforces the view that Russia remains a key node in security and energy. For the Global South, it confirms Moscow as a counterweight to Western dominance.

In a broader sense, Putin's visibility reflects the deeper transformation of the international system. The unipolar moment of American primacy is fading; multipolarity is no longer theory but practice. Russia, through Putin's manoeuvres, remains at the heart of this shift.

### THE ROAD AHEAD

The coming months will test whether Putin can convert visibility into tangible outcomes. Will his prominence translate into genuine peace talks on Ukraine? Can he consolidate partnerships beyond opportunistic alignments? Will Russia's resilience hold against sanctions and economic strain? These are open questions, but the fact that they must be asked underlines his enduring influence.

For now, Putin has achieved what many thought impossible: stepping out of isolation and compelling the world to re-engage with Russia. This reassertion of presence is itself a significant geopolitical development.

Whether admired or criticised, Putin cannot be ignored. His ability to set agendas, mobilise partners, and redefine narratives makes him the standout global influencer of this moment. For a world searching for stability amid turbulence, his re-emergence raises as many questions as it answers.

But influence is about presence, and presence he has in abundance. A recognition of his ability to keep Russia, and himself, firmly in the centre of the global stage.

# DEFIANCE IN A SHIFTING WORLD ORDER

## IN FOCUS

*As global tensions escalate with wars in Ukraine and Gaza, Western sanctions, and an erratic Trump presidency, Bharat stands firm in strengthening ties with Russia. Energy, defence, and strategic cooperation define this enduring partnership, even as the West pressures New Delhi to fall in line. In a polarised world, Bharat asserts its autonomy and global agency.*



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

In the last few months, the world has changed, with the Ukraine and Gaza wars, an unpredictable and unreasonable America, a Russia determined to reclaim its spot as a superpower, an unstoppable Bharat, and an angry China beset with domestic issues. One funny-looking fellow in the White House has upended our world. He is mercurial, unpredictable, and egotistical, committed to making America Great Again (MAGA).

Making the ridiculous claim that Bharat's oil purchases from Russia are enabling Moscow to fund its war in Ukraine, Trump has ordered his European minions to pressure us to

end our oil purchases from Russia. Having almost lost China, they issue statements and threats, but are unwilling to lose the growing Indian market. Besides, they themselves buy huge amounts of gas from Russia. Attempts to spin an anti-India/Russia narrative continue, but no mention is made of Europe's massive gas purchases from Russia.

The leader of Kiev, who just a day earlier had phoned Prime Minister Narendra Modi to seek India's help to end the devastation of his country, quickly joined the American bandwagon by claiming that the unusual tariffs on Indian exports to America were totally justified.



## ENDURING RUSSIA TIES

In full public view, Bharat is strengthening relations with Russia. It is a powerful reconfirmation to the West that its issues with Russia do not impact New Delhi-Moscow relations. If the West cannot manage its relations with Russia, that is not our problem. Western pressure on us to downgrade ties



with Russia has not worked. The West tried to wean China away from Russia, and managed to push the two closer together.

We are buying Russian oil despite Western pressure, even as Europeans, too, most hypocritically, are buying Russian gas. India, whose imports of oil from the former Soviet Union and from Russia were negligible, began importing large volumes of Russian oil after its military operation against Ukraine in February 2022. Massive Western oil sanctions compelled Moscow to explore other markets. India, the world's third-largest oil-consuming and oil-importing nation, was offered discounted oil in sweetheart deals. Bharat is an energy-hungry nation that needs oil to power its development.

Our military ties with Russia are solid, and we shall sustain them. The first batch of several thousand AK assault rifles made in Bharat with Russian technology has just been handed over to the Bharati army.

***Western attempts to undermine India-Russia relations are dumb. Our ties with Russia have several dimensions and have stood the test of time.***

## TRUMP'S PRESSURE TACTICS

President Donald Trump knows that he runs by far the largest economy in the world, and he uses that indisputable fact to clobber every other nation into submission. A century ago, European nations ruled three-quarters of the world. In 2025, the defining image of our world order is European leaders sitting in front of the American President like schoolboys being chastised by their principal.

'If you don't follow my orders,' he tells them, 'I will hit you with my latest cane, called tariffs.' On his way to emasculating

China, which poses a direct challenge to America, he wants to isolate and weaken Russia, leaving America the undisputed Emperor of the Universe.

In response, President Vladimir Putin is successfully strengthening ties with Trump-oppressed regimes such as China, Iran, North Korea, and many in Africa. Bharat is a special case, an unbending nation of 1.4 billion, with a burgeoning middle class. Our high profile and global presence, our leadership of the so-called Global South, annoy Washington, DC.

## BHARAT AND MOSCOW

An angry Trump called Russia and India 'dead' economies, a few days after the mid-August 2025 red-carpet welcome in Alaska for President Vladimir Putin for the summit that never was. Trump blasted the August-September 2025 Shanghai Cooperation Summit in China when the world saw the leaders of Bharat, Russia, and China chatting like old buddies.

He lamented that America had lost India and Russia to 'deepest, darkest China', but the very next day boasted that the Bharat-US relationship remained special and that he continued to share a strong personal bond with the 'great Prime Minister' Narendra Modi. Even as he whispered sweet nothings, his vitriolic sidekick, Repeater Bizzaro, contractor



and ex-convict, went on yet another rampage, abusing India (about which his knowledge is antediluvian) of all kinds of dirty things. Trump's Commerce Secretary, some chap called Coward Sputnik, also lashed out at Bharat. We rightfully ignored them.

Western attempts to undermine India-Russia relations are dumb. Our ties with Russia have several dimensions and have stood the test of time. In February 2025, Ursula von der Leyen, a German politician and physician, President of the European Commission since 2019, led the largest-ever European Union delegation (22 countries) to India for the New Delhi Raisina Dialogue.

## STRATEGIC DEPTH

Vladimir Putin is coming to Bharat later in 2025, for the first time since his invasion of Ukraine. *Dobro pozhalovat' v*

*Indiyu, Vladimir Putin* (Welcome to India, Vladimir Putin). *Ya tebya lyublyu* (We love you!). Trade, investment, energy, defence, among other sectors, will be on the agenda.

Bharat has invested heavily in Russia's oil sector, the biggest investment India has made in the hydrocarbon sector abroad. As of September 2025, Bharat's investments in Russia are around USD 16 billion. Russian oil producer Rosneft was given access to India's fuel retail market in 2017 (under the name Nayara Energy) when it acquired private refiner Essar Oil for USD 12.9 billion. Donald Trump has asked Bharat to boot out Nayara.

In June 2025, news came that Russia had offered its ultra-modern SU-57 fighter planes to India with full transfer of technology and full source and activation code access. The planes will be made in India. No other defence supplier has offered India such a deal.

## STRONG PARTNERSHIP

In January 2025, Union Minister Hardeep Puri said India would continue to buy crude from Russia if available at a discount, while as a percentage of Indian crude oil imports, Russian crude had surged from 0.2% in 2022 to 30% in 2025, even though, of late, imports have declined owing to a reduction in discounts. India is not very concerned with American finger-wagging.

The Russian President spares no opportunity to praise Prime Minister Narendra Modi's economic policies, especially the Make in India programme, which he compares to Russia's own indigenisation process. He also talks of enhancing Russia's investment in Bharat.

On 8–9 July 2024, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was in Russia for the first time since the Ukraine war, after meeting the world's rich nations at the June 2024 G7 Summit in Italy. He hugged President Vladimir Putin, and the West saw red while the leadership of Kiev went mad. Russia conferred its highest civilian honour on him.

***Russia shows everyone that it is close to the world's largest democracy, that it is not isolated, that it has powerful friends beyond China.***

The Russian economy has withstood the combined pressures of the world's largest economic bloc and of NATO. Thanks to thousands of sanctions and exclusion from the international financial and banking system (SWIFT), Russia is the most de-dollarised economy in the world. And yet it thrives. Along with its friends like China and Iran, Russia is trying to create an alternative to the Western-dominated global financial system.

Putin accused the West of unleashing an economic war against Russia and described the seizure of its dollar reserves in Western banks as pure theft. In a powerful example of Robert Merton's Law of Unintended Consequences, the confiscation of Russia's assets sends a powerful message to the Global South that if its members do not play by Western rules, their foreign currency holdings can be frozen.

Countries like Bharat are quietly converting their dollars into gold to be held in Bharat. Our trade with Russia is growing and is done in Indian rupees, which Russia is using for huge investments in Bharat's energy, telecom, defence, banking, railways, and steel sectors.

I would rather have Russia as an ally than as an adversary – so would many Western regimes if they can get over their anti-Putin OCD. That Russia supplies over half our defence needs is an invaluable supplement to our growing defence cooperation with the US, Europe, Japan, and Vietnam in repulsing China's aggressiveness.

What does Russia gain from enhancing ties with Bharat? It shows everyone that it is close to the world's largest democracy, that it is not isolated despite the West's best efforts, and that it has powerful friends beyond China.

What does Bharat gain? Its requirements are in defence, space, energy, trade, connectivity, and technology. Bharat has had uninterrupted summit-level annual dialogues since Vladimir Putin came to power in 2000. Not afraid to bluntly state its national interests, India has come of age!

*(Ambassador 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.)*

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- *Despite Western pressure, Bharat strengthens Russia ties through oil imports, defence, and investment.*
- *Ukraine, Gaza wars and Trump's erratic policies reshape global geopolitics dramatically.*
- *Defence cooperation deepens with AK rifles and SU-57 fighter jet deal.*
- *Putin's upcoming India visit highlights deepening trade, energy, and defence cooperation.*
- *India asserts autonomy, balancing Global South leadership with strategic partnerships.*

# SCO REWIRING GLOBAL POWER EQUATIONS

## INSIGHT

*The 25th SCO Summit in Tianjin marked a turning point for Eurasia. With leaders representing nearly half the world's population and a quarter of global GDP, the summit showcased China's influence, Russia's resilience, and India's multi-alignment strategy. Proposals on finance, energy, AI, and connectivity signalled a bold push towards a sanctions-resilient, multipolar order beyond Western dominance.*



**AMBASSADOR SUSHIL KUMAR SINGHAL, IFS (R)  
FOR NEWS ANALYTICS**

The SCO Summit in Tianjin (August 31–September 1, 2025) was a gathering of leaders representing 42% of the global population and 25% of global GDP. It gave President Xi Jinping an opportunity to showcase the heft of China in global affairs. The joint statement spelled out an unprecedented institutional agenda that included finance, energy, payments infrastructure, and technology interoperability. The declaration became important as it was against the backdrop of US tariff pressure on India and wider decoupling dynamics. The Summit also gave a clearer contour of possible India–Russia–China

(IRC) alignment inside a larger Eurasian setting, which, if continued, could even rebalance trade and security architectures for the rest of the decade.

The SCO began as a security group and, over two decades, it has evolved into a broad political-economic forum, now having ten members including Belarus (the first European member, admitted in 2024). In Tianjin, members pushed beyond communiqués into proposals that (if implemented) would create new capabilities: an SCO Development Bank

*The optics do matter. India can bargain with the USA on trade, etc., from a position fortified by visible options in Eurasia.*



(or an EDB-anchored workaround), SCO-wide energy cooperation, and national currency settlement with a shared payments/depository system.

Two proposals stood out. First, China revived its long-standing proposal for an SCO bank, though Russia is wary of ceding financial control to China and floated the compromise of issuing SCO-labelled bonds. Either path would institutionalise non-Western project finance and facilitate intra-SCO trade in local currencies. Second, China proposed BeiDou satellite services and an AI cooperation centre, providing SCO members with a dual-use alternative to US-centric GPS and AI ecosystems.



## SUMMIT DECLARATION

New financial instruments, energy platforms, and digital interoperability are not rhetorical; they are blueprints of the future. The bond proposal of President Putin and calls for shared payments/depository systems suggest a sanctions-resilient financial stack. Xi's Global Governance Initiative and funding pledges gave the agenda money muscle.

Astana 2024 brought Belarus aboard and SCO now boasts key logistics hubs that link the Arctic, Baltic, Central Asia, the Persian Gulf, and the Indian Ocean. This is no longer symbolic; it is how oil, gas, grains, critical minerals, and manufactured goods will be routed if tariff/sanctions frictions persist.

Prime Minister Modi met Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin, and emphasised the India–China development partnership while safeguarding strategic autonomy. The optics do matter. India can bargain with the USA on trade, etc., from a position fortified by visible options in Eurasia. It can engage with Russia on energy and corridors (INSTC, Rasht–Astara) while keeping channels with the West open. This is multi-alignment and an expression of strategic autonomy.

## NEW COLLABORATION

Russia needs stable southern outlets, Iran wants economies of scale for east–west/north–south routes, and India wants cheaper crude oil and shorter trans-shipment times. The INSTC rail link (like Rasht–Astara) has now gained momentum, and SCO cover provides diplomatic insurance for working around sanctions choke points.

If an SCO bank or an EDB-anchored window emerges, syndicated projects denominated in RMB or baskets of national currencies would become a reality. Putin's push for SCO bonds and a common depository/settlement interface is a direct response to dollar system risks. It also satisfies India's desire to reduce volatility in trade settlement without giving up monetary independence.

*It is pertinent to mention that despite current tensions, US–India ties are not going to collapse any time soon.*

## IMPLICATIONS FOR GLOBAL TRADE

A functioning SCO finance system would not dethrone the US dollar in the near future, but it would lower risks for SCO-internal trade and restrict the ability of the USA to weaponise clearing networks. Even partial uptake – e.g., using a depository bridge to settle energy bills in national currencies – would erode single-point leverage.

With Belarus inside the SCO and Iran as a full member, a north–south spine (Russia–Caspian–Iran–India) and an east–west belt (China–Central Asia–Caucasus–Europe) would gain institutional approval. If insurance, customs, and port digitisation are harmonised under SCO standards, it would



reduce per-container friction. This can be true even if routes outside the SCO remain more expensive or change rules more often; standardisation inside the SCO still makes its routes faster and smoother.

The SCO's promotion of BeiDou and data platforms would provide a sovereign-technology posture in trade logistics, fintech, and smart infrastructure. Exporters will face dual standards (US/EU versus SCO-centric), requiring costly compliance or strategic market choosing. SMEs would likely follow the standard dominant in their primary financing channel.

It is pertinent to mention that despite current tensions, US–India ties are not going to collapse any time soon. But with tariff frictions spiking, India can flaunt Eurasian options as leverage. India would ask for tariff rollbacks or carve-outs while signalling that SCO finance/energy channels can offset pressure.

## SECURITY RAMIFICATIONS

SCO has earlier set up the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), but now the security-economics fusion, with trade and finance becoming integral to the group, would increase the political cost of cross-border militancy and narcotics flows that destabilise member regimes. It also builds a passport for coordinated border technology (drones, sensors, AI analytics) anchored to shared standards.

President Xi and President Putin pushed the narrative of democratised multilateralism and a Eurasian security model that would sideline US bloc politics. Whatever one thinks of the rhetoric, the mechanism would regularise SCO-CSTO-EAEU consultations plus energy/payment coordination, becoming the operating system for crisis management from the Levant to the Pamirs. India prefers issue-based coalitions and can easily plug into pieces instead of committing to the whole architecture.

The USA still has the most sophisticated capital markets, deep tech, and security partnerships across the Indo-Pacific. But Tianjin marks a confident bid to build redundancy: finance that clears without New York, satellites that time without GPS, corridors that ship without Suez chokepoints dominated by Western insurers. In that world, US coercive tools – e.g., tariffs, export controls, secondary sanctions – retain bite but face diminishing returns among states that can reroute trade and payments.

For India, the calculus is surgical. It wants US technology, capital, and market access. It also wants discounted Russian energy, Iranian transit, and less foreign exchange risk. The more functional the SCO toolkit becomes, the greater would be India's negotiation space with the USA on tariffs, visas, and market access – exactly what India is currently trying to achieve in the renewed trade talks after the tariff shock.

## RISKS AND CONSTRAINTS

A new bank or payments hub could tilt towards Chinese preferences. Russia will try to avoid becoming a junior partner in finance after already conceding technological and trade leverage since 2022. One can expect hard bargaining over governance, seat allocation, and currency composition.

Tianjin's warmth does not erase the border situation for India. Any sharp deterioration along the LAC could stall India's participation in sensitive SCO tech or financial pilots. Conversely, incremental de-escalation, flight resumption, and trade facilitations would make functional cooperation easier.

If SCO finance becomes a channel for sanctions evasion, expect counter-measures: tightened export controls, compliance blacklists, or secondary sanctions from the West. That would force India and Central Asians to delicately balance between opportunity and risk.

## THE CHABAHAR SHOCK

The US decision to remove the sanctions waiver for India's operations at Chabahar Port in Iran adds another layer of urgency and complexity to these SCO plans. Chabahar has long been India's strategic gateway to Afghanistan and Central Asia, bypassing Pakistan and anchoring the International North–South Transport Corridor (INSTC). Its development has been critical for India's credibility as a connectivity provider within the SCO framework.

With the waiver gone, Indian investments and operations at Chabahar are now exposed to secondary sanctions risk. Within SCO, this will be read as a stress test of the club's ability to provide institutional cover against external sanctions. It is likely to accelerate conversations around using SCO finance mechanisms and local currency settlements as ways to shield projects from Western pressure.

For India, the dilemma is real. Retreating from Chabahar undermines its strategic autonomy and weakens its SCO presence; continuation risks friction with the USA at a time of tariff and visa disputes. India would like to negotiate carve-outs while simultaneously doubling down on SCO connectivity pilots, positioning itself as both resilient and indispensable.

The Tianjin summit declaration is not anti-Western grandstanding; it is the methodical construction of options for Eurasian states. For India, it means leveraging trade and energy security while bargaining harder with the USA on tariffs and mobility. For Russia, it means a sanctioned economy respiration via southern corridors and non-dollar finance. For China, it means standards leadership and a platform that translates industrial scale into rules others must follow. If – and that is a big if, given the differences in SCO – even half of the proposed instruments graduate from communiqués to operations, the global system will feel less like a wheel with a single axle and more like a web of hubs. That future will be messier, but also more resilient.

*(Ambassador Sushil Kumar Singhal, IFS (R), former Ambassador to Angola. He has served in Tanzania, Belgium, Bangladesh and Hungary. The views expressed are of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The News Analytics Herald.)*

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- SCO Tianjin Summit gathered leaders representing 42% population and 25% global GDP.
- Proposals included SCO bank, energy cooperation, and BeiDou–AI integration frameworks.
- India–Russia–China alignment gained traction amid US–India tariff frictions.
- New finance tools aim at sanctions resilience and reduced dollar dependence.
- Chabahar waiver removal adds urgency to India's Eurasian connectivity strategy.

# IN CONVERSATION



**H.E. Dr. Oleksandr Polishchuk**  
**Honourable Ambassador of Ukraine to India**



**Sandhya Srivastava**  
Editor in Chief

*The Ukraine conflict continues to reshape global geopolitics, with India's role emerging as both a balancing force and a trusted partner. In this exclusive interview with Ms Sandhya Srivastava, Editor-in-Chief, The News Analytics Herald, the Honourable Ambassador of Ukraine to India, H.E. Dr Oleksandr Polishchuk, speaks about Prime Minister Modi's historic visit, the likely visit of the President of Ukraine to India in the near future, prospects for deepening trade and defence cooperation, and Ukraine's assessment of ongoing peace initiatives. Excerpts from the conversation.*

**Q: Your Excellency, warm greetings from The News Analytics Herald. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations in January 1992, India and Ukraine have maintained sustained momentum in bilateral relations through multiple challenging global environments. In this context, how do you view Prime Minister Narendra Modi's historic visit to Ukraine in August 2024, and what long-term impact do you foresee on bilateral ties?**

Namaskar!

The visit of the Honourable Shri Narendra Modi Ji to Ukraine last year truly opened a new chapter in our multi-faceted bilateral relations. It is worth recalling that the visit occurred on 23 August — the eve of Ukraine's Independence Day, a day on which we pay tribute to

our National Flag. Thus, we regard the first-ever visit of Indian Prime Minister to Ukraine at this particular time is a bright demonstration of India's political support for Ukraine in its just struggle against the imperial ambitions of a neighbouring state.

This historical visit became a logical continuation of the regular interaction between the leaders of Ukraine and India. We look forward to further high-level exchanges, including the visit of the President of Ukraine to India in the nearest future.

Equally significant is the decision, reflected in the Joint Statement of our leaders, to elevate bilateral relations from a Comprehensive Partnership to a Strategic Partnership. This provides a clear roadmap for our future

cooperation within the Intergovernmental Commission framework and through our diplomatic missions.

The progress made in implementing this decision has been both encouraging and inspiring. To date, all scheduled meetings of the joint working groups have been successfully held during the preparatory stage for the IGC session, identifying priority areas and setting the concrete objectives for cooperation over the next two years. At the upcoming IGC session in New Delhi, we intend to jointly adopt the relevant Roadmap to ensure the achievement of full scope of a Strategic Partnership by 2032, when we will celebrate the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relationship.

**Q: Bilateral trade rebounded by over 70% in 2024–25. What steps can be taken to sustain and further accelerate this growth, especially in priority sectors like agriculture and pharmaceuticals?**

Before the full-scale Russia invasion, bilateral trade between our countries had reached nearly 3.1 billion USD in 2021. However, the war caused a sharp decline: supply chains were disrupted, logistics routes were blocked, and several sectors, particularly agriculture, were severely affected.

However, in 2024–25 we witnessed a rebound our trade of more than 70 percent. This is clear demonstration that despite the war, we have strong demand and genuine complementarities between our economies. Today, we observe a steady recovery and a strong commitment from both governments and business communities for further deepening of our cooperation.

To sustain and accelerate this growth, we should advance in several key domains. The agriculture sector remains a natural priority: Ukraine has long been a reliable supplier of grain, oils, and agri-technologies, and with proper demining efforts and investment in logistics, these flows can be both expanded and diversified. The pharmaceutical and healthcare sectors offer vast opportunities: Ukrainian companies can benefit from India's scale and cost efficiency, while Indian partners can access Ukrainian expertise and markets through joint manufacturing and research initiatives.

Equally important is the task of improving logistics chain to insure secure corridors for the trade. Finally, it is essential to work on harmonising standards and regulatory frameworks. This will allow the agricultural

and pharmaceutical products to move faster, with fewer obstacles, thereby benefiting producers, consumers, and the overall economic partnership between our countries.

In this context, it would be timely to initiate discussions on a possible Free Trade Agreement between India and Ukraine. Such an arrangement could provide a solid institutional framework for expanding trade, generate new incentives for businesses, and send a clear long-term message of commitment from both governments.

**Q: Defence cooperation has been a strong pillar in bilateral relations between India and Ukraine. What new opportunities do you see in joint manufacturing and emerging defence technologies?**

Defence cooperation, as highlighted in the Joint Statement, is an important element in strengthening relations between the defence institutions of our two countries.

Ukraine remains as important partner for India to maintain the operational readiness of its armed forces. However, some experts exaggerate India's dependence on imported components and spare parts for Soviet-era equipment. India already produces about 75% of the military equipment for its armed forces and, in my opinion, will become completely self-sufficient in this sector within the next 10–15 years. Moreover, India now is in transition from being one of the world's largest importers of defence equipment to one of its leading exporters.

Ukraine and India share a strong mutual interest in closer scientific and industrial cooperation in the defence sector, technology transfer etc. The superiority of modern Ukrainian and Western defence technologies on the battlefield is evident — particularly in aviation, UAVs, electronic warfare, C3 systems etc.

In turn, the depth of military-technical cooperation depends solely on India. This is precisely the sphere where maintaining “strategic autonomy” or “strategic balance” is impossible. Due to the complexity of integrating different combat systems into a joint comprehensive combat ecosystem, which India has recently experienced firsthand and also can have a lesson learned on the example of the Turkish S-400.

Defence-technical cooperation also requires a very high level of trust between partners — I would say “strategic trust”. It is not only about protecting sensitive technologies,

but also about avoiding any steps that could raise doubts or concerns. For example, the grave concern of Ukraine and its European partners over participation in Russian exercises directed against the security of Europe and the sovereignty of certain EU member states.



**Q: How do you see the role of the Indian-Ukrainian Intergovernmental Commission (IGC) in driving concrete outcomes and shaping the future of bilateral cooperation?**

In addition to my earlier points, I would like to emphasize that Ukraine and India fully recognise the key role of the IGC in shaping and implementing the bilateral cooperation agenda. Considering the strategic importance of its development, we mutually agreed last year to elevate the co-chairmanship of the IGC to the level of the Ministers of Foreign/External Affairs.

The implementation of the adopted Roadmap for achieving the Strategic Partnership Goals by 2032 will allow us to reach measurable results through regular assessment by Joint Working Groups under the co-chairmanship leadership. This is precisely what makes the Roadmap different from the many declarative documents that often remain on paper.

**Q: Thousands of Indian students once studied in Ukraine, especially in medicine. How is Ukraine addressing student safety and ensuring their future educational opportunities?**

We take great pride in the thousands of Indian students who have studied in Ukraine, many of whom are now practicing doctors across India. Even in wartime, we have seen inspiring examples of Indian students who chose to continue their studies in Ukraine and supported local communities through volunteering, helping save

lives and assist those in need.

Today, despite the ongoing war, Ukraine has managed to provide a safe and stable environment for newly enrolled students. Our medical universities remain a popular choice for Indian students, and we are actively aligning our curricula with the latest NMC regulations and requirements to ensure that graduates are fully recognised in India.

At the same time, we are expanding beyond medical education to promote technical studies and institutional partnerships.

Looking ahead, one particularly promising opportunity is the establishment of Ukrainian university branches in India — an option already open to other international universities under the University Grants Commission.

We are also partnering with the Global Coalition of Ukrainian Studies, an initiative launched by Ukraine's First Lady, Olena Zelenska, to introduce Ukrainian studies programmes at Indian universities.

**Q: India maintains close relations with both Ukraine and Russia. How do you assess India's balancing role, especially regarding peace initiatives?**

Like any sovereign nation, India and Ukraine build their foreign policy on the foundation of national interests. Based on these core interests and shared values, nations form alliances and partnerships. This approach is very different from Russia's idea of "multipolarity," which is essentially about creating blocs of some countries against others. The democracy sees multipolarity as an opportunity to connect diverse nations on the basis of common values, to work in harmony for shared prosperity, peaceful coexistence, and genuinely equal relations.

This is the essence of the philosophy of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, which underpins the Prime Minister of India's statement that "this is not an era of war." India has long enjoyed good relations with both Ukraine and Russia. At first glance, this might suggest that India should keep an equal distance from both sides to remain neutral. But it is difficult to see how to stay "equally distant" from an aggressor and a victim, or how economic gains could outweigh political and moral responsibility. As India's leaders repeatedly stated during Operation Sindoor, "one cannot equate the victim with the perpetrator."

Clearly, Russia's war against Ukraine has challenged India's traditional policy of "neutrality and non-alignment," which was shaped in the post-colonial and post-war periods. How relevant and justified this policy remains today, especially in light of India's ambitions to play a leading regional and global role, including as a permanent member of the UN Security Council — will be revealed over time. After all, neutrality can be viewed and assessed from different perspectives. I now see a gap between what might be called "active" and "passive" neutrality, especially in matters of respect for international security and international law.

From the very first days of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the Prime Minister of India took a principled position. He shared it with President Zelenskyy during his visit to Ukraine last year and reiterated during his meeting with US President Donald Trump in February this year. In his view, the world was mistaken in thinking that India was somehow "neutral" in this situation. In fact, India stands on the side of peace and calls for dialogue, diplomacy, and a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

**Q: Your Excellency, what are Ukraine's possible pathways to peace, and where do you see India's role in facilitating it?**

We are grateful that Prime Minister Modi has voiced this position directly to the Kremlin leader. At the same time, the world expects that India, building on this position and taking into account its leading role on the global stage, will initiate more active diplomatic efforts aimed at achieving peace in Ukraine. India has every opportunity to do so.

The recent tragic events in Kashmir have shown that India is capable not only of conveying to the international community its firm position of rejecting acts of international terrorism, but also of building international support for its efforts to combat such threats. In a similar way, Ukraine views the war unleashed by Russia as an act of state terrorism that requires a consolidated response, both from members of alliances and from neutral countries. In this regard, it seems logical to combine the efforts of our two countries in countering international terrorism, addressing issues of nuclear and radiological safety, food and energy security, combating ecocide, and other global challenges.

On the diplomatic track, under the guise of "peace

proposals," the Russians insist unequivocally on Ukraine's de facto military capitulation, demanding not only the surrender of our territories but also the renunciation of our national identity, culture and religion.

These conditions are unacceptable for Ukraine. We are working tirelessly on the diplomatic front to achieve a ceasefire and to secure a just and lasting peace that reflects Ukraine's interests and is agreed with us.

This is, in fact, one man's war. Putin alone bears responsibility for starting it and insists on continuing it. As President Zelenskyy has stressed, Putin decides everything in Russia, and it is Putin who must decide to end this war. That is why any meaningful negotiations must involve him directly.

In my view, the leadership of India, having direct contacts with Putin, could use its influence to persuade him to come to the negotiating table. This would be the first step toward a deeper involvement of India in the peace process.

And, undoubtedly, one of the key instruments to end the war could be economic pressure on Russia. The Russian leadership is desperately converting the money it receives from trade into missiles and bombs with which it kills Ukrainians. If the Kremlin is deprived of the ability to continue financing this war, which, in reality, is destroying the Russian economy, then Putin will be forced to choose the path of diplomacy. Based on this, we support any international efforts and initiatives aimed at cutting off Russia's sources of financing for this war.

**Q: Looking beyond the conflict, how does Ukraine envision its global partnerships evolving, with India as a key partner in reconstruction and stability?**

We are not waiting for the war to end to begin recovery: the rebuilding and reconstruction of Ukraine is already underway. The IGC has significant potential to serve as a platform for discussing India's practical involvement in these projects — both in the bilateral and multilateral formats.

I hope that Indian businesses will realise the existing business opportunities and begin entering the Ukrainian market now, and that the Government of India will assist them by contributing to the peace and strengthening India's image as a friend and reliable partner of Ukraine.

# POWER SHIFTS IN THE GULF

## TIMEPIECE

*The Arabian Gulf is undergoing a historic transformation in its geopolitical order. America's long-standing dominance is gradually giving way to the growing influence of China and Russia, reshaping power balances across the region. Simultaneously, Gulf states are recalibrating alliances, from Saudi-Iran rapprochement to deepening economic ties with Beijing, while also engaging in U.S.-brokered frameworks like the Abraham Accords. These shifts carry both opportunities for stability and risks of renewed rivalries, with global energy security hanging in the balance.*



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The Arabian Gulf is undergoing profound transformations in its geopolitical landscape, where local and regional interests increasingly intertwine with major global power rivalries. These changes are redrawing the map of power balances and security challenges in one of the world's most vital and strategic regions. At the heart of these shifts lies the relative decline of traditional American influence, a pillar of Gulf stability for decades, alongside the rising roles of emerging powers like China and Russia. Simultaneously, new regional alliances are reshaping the political landscape, marking a departure from the patterns that defined the region for much of the past century.

This article provides an in-depth exploration of these evolving dynamics, analysing how they are impacting security, politics, and economics in the Gulf, while offering a closer look at the emerging alliances and their potential implications for the future of the region and beyond

### DECLINING U.S. INFLUENCE

For over half a century, the United States has played the role of main security guarantor in the Gulf, relying on strategic partnerships with Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, particularly Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Washington's involvement has focused on securing vital oil routes, protecting



maritime trade, and countering both Iranian influence and earlier Soviet and later Russian expansions.

However, recent decades have witnessed a noticeable shift in U.S. strategy, as Washington pivots its focus toward Asia and the Indo-Pacific, a policy often referred to as the “Pivot to Asia.” This shift has left some Gulf states feeling increasingly uncertain about the consistency of American military and political support, particularly in light of key developments such as the U.S. withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal in 2018, its partial disengagement from Iraq and Afghanistan, and ongoing policy divergences regarding Iran. This relative U.S. retreat has opened space for other global powers to step in and assert their influence across the region.



## CHINA AND RUSSIA'S RISING ROLES

China has emerged as a major player in the Gulf, not only as a top consumer of Gulf oil and gas, but also as a strategic investor in infrastructure and renewable energy projects. Its engagement aligns with the Belt and Road Initiative, aimed at enhancing economic and political connectivity with the Middle East, including the Gulf states. With its massive economic capabilities, China offers Gulf nations alternatives as they seek to diversify their economic partnerships beyond long-standing Western dependencies. Energy partnerships and funding of large-scale projects in the transportation and communication sectors highlight China's growing role.

Russia, meanwhile, is leveraging its historical ties with Iran and select Gulf countries to establish itself as a military and economic actor. Through arms sales and cooperation in conflict zones like Yemen and Syria, Moscow is promoting its “open-door” policy in the Gulf, aiming to position itself as a multi-faceted player that avoids exclusive alignment with any single side. Together, these trends reflect an intensifying rivalry between the United States on one hand, and Russia and China on the other, each vying to shape the regional order in the Gulf.

## SHIFTING REGIONAL ALLIANCES

One of the most striking regional developments is the recent thaw in relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran, long-time regional rivals with complex webs of influence across Syria, Yemen, and Lebanon. Diplomatic efforts, facilitated by international and regional mediators, are now aimed at de-escalating tensions and breaking the cycle of indirect conflict. This rapprochement could reshape regional influence dynamics and potentially reduce the risk of military confrontation in the Gulf. However, significant challenges remain unresolved, including Iran's nuclear program and contentious issues in Bahrain and Yemen. Still, the move reflects a growing recognition that protracted conflict has failed to deliver tangible gains for either side, and that strategic coexistence may offer a more sustainable path toward regional security and development.

The Gulf's evolving partnership with China is central to the region's geopolitical transformation. As China becomes the largest importer of Gulf energy, its importance as a strategic partner grows. It is also heavily investing in renewable energy projects across the region and expanding cooperation in technology and trade. For Gulf states, Chinese investments support their economic diversification goals and help reduce long-standing dependence on oil. These partnerships are part of a broader strategy to balance relations between global powers, although they also invite deeper Chinese political and economic influence into the region.



Another major realignment in recent years has been the normalization of relations between Israel and several Arab states, most notably the UAE and Bahrain, under the U.S.-brokered Abraham Accords. These agreements have opened the door for unprecedented security, intelligence, and technological cooperation, realigning traditional alliances in the region around a shared concern over Iran. However, this shift remains controversial, particularly in light of the unresolved Palestinian issue, which continues to pose a major obstacle to long-term regional stability.

*Russia is capitalising on historic ties with Iran and Gulf states to expand its military and economic role.*

*The Gulf is witnessing a historic reshaping of alliances and power, where U.S. dominance steadily gives way to China and Russia's expanding regional influence.*

## ENERGY AND SECURITY CHALLENGES

These geopolitical shifts are deeply intertwined with the global energy market. The Gulf supplies around 30% of the world's oil exports and holds vast reserves of natural gas. Any disruption in Gulf relations with major powers like China or the U.S. can immediately affect energy prices and supply stability. The Strait of Hormuz, a critical chokepoint through which about 20% of global oil passes, remains a flashpoint. It is a contested area where multiple actors with conflicting interests operate. Rising tensions between Iran and Gulf states, or between global powers, could seriously threaten maritime security and global energy flows. As Gulf countries deepen their cooperation with China and Russia, the traditional maritime power balance could shift, adding another layer of complexity to international navigation and security concerns.



Despite promising new alliances and economic initiatives, the Gulf's geopolitical realignment is not without risks. Many of these emerging partnerships remain fragile or driven by short-term interests. Long-standing sectarian divides, unresolved conflicts, and persistent foreign interference continue to pose serious threats to regional stability. While initiatives like the Saudi-Iranian rapprochement and expanded economic partnerships with China offer potential for sustainable development, they also face considerable obstacles. The growing involvement of global powers such as China and Russia introduces new layers of competition that could further complicate the security landscape.

The Gulf is currently undergoing a historic reconfiguration of alliances and power dynamics. As regional and global actors compete for influence, the longstanding dominance of the United States is being gradually balanced by the rising presence of China and Russia. Meanwhile, Gulf states themselves are taking more active roles in shaping their strategic futures, pursuing diversified partnerships, regional diplomacy, and economic reform. Yet the success of this transition will ultimately depend on the ability of all actors to manage old rivalries wisely, resolve core conflicts, and cultivate mutual interests that support long-term security and prosperity. The Gulf remains the lifeblood of the global energy system, and its stability is a matter of international concern.

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## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- *U.S. retreat opens strategic space for China and Russia's influence.*
- *China deepens energy, infrastructure, and technology partnerships across the Gulf.*
- *Russia leverages arms sales and regional conflicts to expand influence.*
- *Saudi-Iran rapprochement signals fragile but important regional realignment.*
- *Energy chokepoints like Hormuz remain global security vulnerabilities.*



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# EDCA'S NEW ROLE IN PHILIPPINES— U.S. RELATIONS

## WAR STRATEGY

*In today's fast-changing world, keeping a country safe is more important than ever. The Enhanced Defence Cooperation Agreement, or EDCA, between the Philippines and the United States is one of the most important tools for the Philippines to protect itself. While some have questioned the agreement before, it has become crucial now due to rising threats in the region, especially from China's growing military actions.*



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The West Philippine Sea, also called the South China Sea internationally, has become a hotspot for conflicts. China has claimed almost the whole sea, including areas that belong to the Philippines. In recent years, China's navy and coast guard have become more aggressive. There have been many reports of Chinese vessels colliding with Filipino ships, creating dangerous situations.

One of the most serious concerns is China's continuous

approach to the BRP Sierra Madre, a grounded Philippine Navy ship stationed on the Ayungin Shoal (Second Thomas Shoal). This old ship serves as a symbol of Philippine sovereignty in the disputed waters. Chinese vessels often come near, trying to intimidate Filipino troops stationed there. This creates tension and risks a possible confrontation. Such aggressive moves from China show why the Philippines cannot face these challenges alone. It needs strong allies and better defence capabilities.



## STRENGTHENING DEFENCE CAPABILITIES

EDCA allows the U.S. military to visit and use Philippine bases on a rotating basis. This agreement is more than just military presence; it provides training, equipment, and technology that help the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) improve their defence skills. With EDCA, Filipino



soldiers have more chances to train with American troops. They learn modern ways to protect the country, from fighting on land and sea to handling new threats like cyberattacks.

The partnership also means the Philippines can improve its military bases and infrastructure. Upgraded facilities and equipment help the AFP be ready to respond quickly and effectively to Threats. Working with Allies to Patrol and Protect EDCA is not just about the Philippines and the U.S. working together; it also opens the door for more cooperation with other friendly countries.

In the past few years, the Philippines, the U.S., Japan, Australia and other allies have held joint maritime patrols and military exercises. These activities help all countries involved keep an eye on important sea routes and protect their waters. The combined presence of allied navies and coast guards sends a clear message to countries like China: aggressive behaviour in these waters will not be tolerated.

Joint patrols improve communication and coordination among allied forces, making it easier to respond to emergencies, illegal activities, or any military threats. This teamwork builds a stronger regional defence network, which benefits the Philippines and its neighbours.

***EDCA allows both countries to quickly work together during disasters. U.S. forces can bring aid and equipment faster, helping communities recover more quickly.***

## ALLIANCES AND SOVEREIGNTY

The BRP Sierra Madre, grounded on the Ayungin Shoal (Second Thomas Shoal), is more than just a ship; it is a

symbol of the Philippines' claim to part of the West Philippine Sea. Chinese ships regularly come close to this area, trying to block supplies and pressure Filipino troops stationed there. This situation creates tension and risks escalating into conflict. Through EDCA, the Philippines gains support from the U.S. to protect this important location. American troops and equipment help Filipino forces hold their position and ensure the country's rights are respected.

This protection is vital because losing control over the Second Thomas Shoal could weaken the Philippines' claim to its surrounding waters and resources. The Philippines faces other security challenges, too. Terrorism in parts of Mindanao continues to threaten peace and safety. Fighting these groups requires skills and support. EDCA allows the U.S. to help with intelligence-sharing and training. This cooperation makes anti-terrorism efforts stronger and more effective.

The Philippines is often hit by typhoons, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions. These events cause damage and loss of lives. EDCA allows both countries to quickly work together during disasters. U.S. forces can bring aid and equipment faster, helping communities recover more quickly.



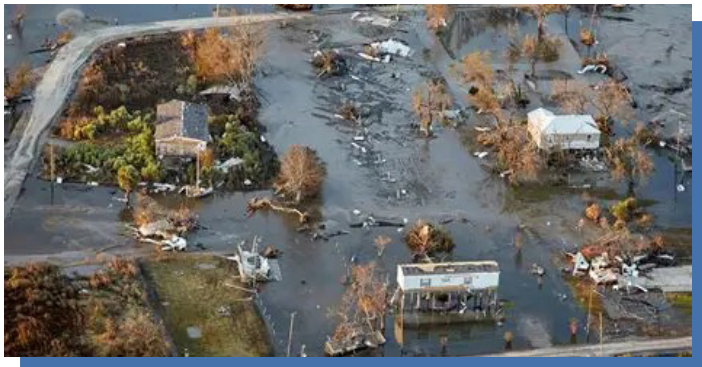
In today's world, threats are not just physical but digital. Cyberattacks can target government systems, critical infrastructure, and private businesses, causing chaos and loss. Through EDCA, the Philippines gains access to advanced U.S. cybersecurity technology and training. This helps protect important information and systems from hackers. Working together also means faster responses to cyber threats and the sharing of information about new dangers. Strengthening cybersecurity is now a vital part of national defence and economic security.

One key benefit of EDCA is the transfer of military technology and knowledge. The Philippines has traditionally lagged in modern equipment. Under EDCA, the Philippines can acquire better ships, planes, radar, and communication tools. This modern equipment helps the AFP be ready for different kinds of missions, whether defending borders or assisting in humanitarian crises.

*Having EDCA means the Philippines can better monitor these activities and coordinate with allies to respond if needed.*

## ECONOMIC AND DIPLOMATIC GAINS

Training programmes with American troops teach Filipino soldiers to use these technologies effectively. Security and economic growth are closely linked. A stable and secure country attracts investors and businesses. By improving its



defence and working with strong allies, the Philippines becomes more attractive for foreign investments, especially in key industries like shipping, energy, and tourism.

EDCA also brings jobs in the military and civilian sectors through base improvements, training programmes, and logistics. Better infrastructure and stronger defence create a positive cycle of growth and security. EDCA strengthens the Philippines' position in international politics. It shows that the country is serious about protecting its sovereignty and interests. The agreement allows the Philippines to have a stronger voice in regional groups like ASEAN and the Quad. It also encourages other countries to support the Philippines in its disputes and security challenges. This diplomatic strength helps promote peace and cooperation in the region.

Critics fear EDCA weakens Philippine sovereignty, but U.S. bases need consent and remain temporary. The Philippine government retains full control, ensuring sovereignty is safeguarded.

By choosing to work with the U.S., the Philippines gains protection without giving up its freedom to decide.

Responding to China's Growing Military Presence, China's military build-up in the West Philippine Sea includes building artificial islands with runways, missile systems, and naval facilities. This challenges not only the Philippines but all countries in the region. The Chinese Coast Guard has also increased patrols and used aggressive tactics to push others away from disputed areas. The collisions and close encounters between Chinese and Filipino vessels risk serious conflicts that could escalate quickly.

Having EDCA means the Philippines can better monitor these activities and coordinate with allies to respond if needed. The West Philippine Sea and the South China Sea are among the busiest sea lanes in the world. Billions of dollars in trade pass through these waters every year. Freedom of navigation is critical for the global economy and for the Philippines as a maritime nation.

EDCA helps the Philippines work with allies to keep these waters open and safe from threats. Together, they conduct patrols and exercises that remind all nations about the importance of following international law.

The Enhanced Defence Cooperation Agreement is more than just an agreement on paper; it is a vital part of keeping the Philippines safe and strong. With tensions rising in the West Philippine Sea, especially due to China's aggressive actions near the BRP Sierra Madre and other disputed areas, the Philippines needs EDCA more than ever.

The pact helps the country defend its waters, improve its military, work with allies, and respond to threats and disasters. By using EDCA wisely, the Philippines can protect its sovereignty, grow economically, and play an important role in regional peace. EDCA is a game-changer that the Philippines cannot afford to ignore.

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## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- *China's aggressive actions in the West Philippine Sea heighten tensions and sovereignty concerns.*
- *BRP Sierra Madre symbolises Philippine claim; Chinese intimidation risks confrontation and instability.*
- *EDCA boosts defence, training, technology transfer, disaster response, and cybersecurity cooperation with the U.S.*
- *Joint patrols with allies strengthen regional security, deterrence, and protection of vital trade routes.*
- *EDCA enhances sovereignty, attracts investment, creates jobs, and amplifies Philippines' diplomatic voice internationally.*

# IN THE SPOTLIGHT

## TRUMP WARNS NATO FROM BUYING RUSSIAN OIL



U.S. President Donald Trump declared his readiness to impose major sanctions on Russia but stressed this would happen only if all NATO allies acted in unison. He insisted that every NATO nation must cease purchasing Russian oil and introduce its own sanctions to exert real pressure on Moscow, aiming to end its war in Ukraine, now stretching beyond three years. Writing on his Truth Social platform, Trump framed the statement as a letter to NATO members and the world, underscoring that without collective action, Washington alone would not proceed with sweeping new measures

## PTI DEMANDS RELEASE OF ELECTION REPORT



Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has urged a foreign observer mission to publish its findings on the 2024 general elections, insisting the report exposes “systemic rigging, institutional bias, and deliberate targeting” of the party and its founder, Imran Khan. The demand follows revelations by independent outlet Drop Site News, which alleged the Commonwealth Observer Group (COG) suppressed its assessment after concluding that the February 8 polls were marred by irregularities. PTI argues that withholding the report undermines transparency and denies Pakistanis a clear account of electoral flaws that, it says, compromised the legitimacy of the results.

## TRUMP ADMITS 50% TARIFF DAMAGED US-INDIA TIES



US President Donald Trump admitted Friday that his decision to impose a 50% tariff on India over Russian oil imports had soured relations between Washington and New Delhi. India was Russia’s biggest customer. I put a 50% tariff on India because they’re buying oil from Russia. That’s not an easy thing to do.” Donald Trump admitted that his 50% tariffs on India for Russian oil purchases strained ties between Washington and New Delhi. The move triggered anti-US anger in India, worsening relations even as both countries maintain broader strategic cooperation.

## NATO LAUNCHES ‘EASTERN SENTRY’ AFTER DRONE INCURSION



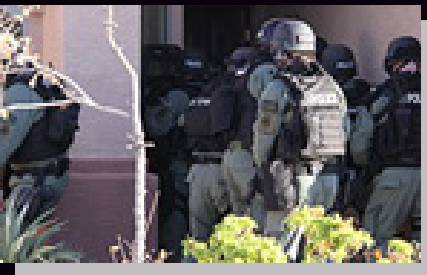
NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte announced a new mission on Friday to bolster Europe’s eastern flank after a Russian drone incursion into Polish airspace. The “Eastern Sentry” operation will see assets deployed from Denmark, France, the UK, Germany, and others. NATO announced “Eastern Sentry,” a multinational mission to reinforce its eastern flank after a Russian drone entered Polish airspace. Troops and assets from Denmark, France, the UK, Germany, and other allies will join to strengthen Europe’s defense posture.

## RUSSIA-BELARUS LAUNCH 'ZAPAD-2025' AMID NATO TENSIONS



Alarm bells rang in Europe after NATO jets scrambled to intercept a Russian drone incursion in Poland. Now, unease grows as Russia and Belarus begin Zapad-2025, massive joint drills simulating the defense of their “Union State.” Following a Russian drone breach into Poland’s airspace, Russia and Belarus have begun Zapad-2025 military drills to test combat readiness. The wide-ranging exercises cover training grounds in both nations and naval zones in the Baltic and Barents Seas.

## U.S. ARRESTS AND DEPORTS 300 SOUTH KOREAN WORKERS



U.S. immigration authorities have deported over 300 South Korean workers on a chartered flight from Atlanta, a week after detaining them for allegedly working illegally at a South Korean–invested electric vehicle battery plant in Bryan County, Georgia. Images of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents handcuffing and chaining the wrists, waists, and ankles of skilled technicians have sparked outrage in South Korea, where the treatment of the detained workers has drawn widespread condemnation and concern.

## NETANYAHU VOWS: ‘NO PALESTINIAN STATE’



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared Thursday that “there will be no Palestinian state” as he signed an agreement advancing the controversial E1 settlement expansion. The project, cutting across West Bank territory claimed by Palestinians for a future state, will add thousands of new housing units to the Ma’ale Adumim settlement near Jerusalem. Visiting the site, Netanyahu insisted, “This place belongs to us,” vowing to double the settlement’s population while pledging to “safeguard our heritage, our land, and our security.” Critics warn that the plan would effectively derail any prospects for a two-state solution.

## AZERBAIJAN BLAMES INDIA OF BLOCKING SCO BID



Azerbaijan has alleged that India is taking “revenge” on global platforms because of Baku’s close relations with Pakistan, claiming New Delhi blocked its bid for full membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). Azerbaijani media accused India of violating multilateral diplomacy by opposing its ambition, linking the decision to Baku’s support for Islamabad during Operation Sindoor, the India-Pakistan conflict earlier this year. During the SCO Summit in Tianjin, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev met Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, congratulating him on what he described as Pakistan’s “victory” over India in the clash.

# AFRICA'S G20 MOMENT: JOHANNESBURG ON CENTRE STAGE

## COUNTERVIEW

*Africa takes centre stage as the G20 convenes in Johannesburg for the first time, with South Africa leading calls for multilateral reform. Amid rising debt, climate crises, and global inequality, Pretoria seeks to amplify Africa's voice and push for systemic change. The summit could redefine Africa's role in shaping global governance and the future world order.*



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When the world's most powerful leaders convene in Johannesburg for the upcoming G20 Summit on 22–23 November 2025, the meeting will carry significance far beyond the host city, shaping debates on multilateral reform and the future of global governance. For the first time in the grouping's history, the G20 meets on African soil, marking a defining moment for a continent long at the margins of global governance. This is not simply South Africa's turn in a rotating presidency; it is Africa's G20 moment, one that symbolises a historic shift in the world order. Under President Cyril Ramaphosa's leadership, and with the presidency's theme of 'Solidarity, Equality and Sustainability,' inspired by the African philosophy of ubuntu, South Africa

is positioning the summit as a platform to demand overdue reform of multilateral institutions and to amplify the Global South's call for a more just, representative, and sustainable system of international cooperation.

### AFRICA RISING

This moment is decades in the making. Africa is no longer merely a subject of global discussions on aid, conflict, or climate vulnerability. It is increasingly an active agent of change. With its population projected to nearly triple from about 1.3 billion today to roughly 3.9 billion by 2100, vast mineral reserves critical for the green energy transition, and some of the fastest-growing economies in the world, including



Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, and Tanzania, the continent possesses undeniable demographic and economic leverage. The African Union's accession in 2023 as a permanent member of the G20 formalised this rising influence. South Africa, as both a G20 and BRICS (the emerging economies bloc comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) member, now bears the weighty responsibility of channelling Africa's collective voice into tangible outcomes. Johannesburg is therefore not just another summit. It is a stage where Africa insists on being recognised as a co-author of global rules, not merely their subject.



## REFORMING INSTITUTIONS

At the heart of Africa's agenda is the urgent reform of multilateral institutions designed in the aftermath of the Second World War. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank reflect a 1945 balance of power that no longer corresponds to today's realities. The UNSC's legitimacy is increasingly questioned. Africa, the region most frequently on its agenda, has no permanent representation among the five veto-wielding members. South Africa argues that the Council cannot claim credibility while systematically excluding over a billion Africans from permanent decision-making structures. Expansion to include permanent African representation, Pretoria insists, is not just symbolic but essential for global security.

The IMF and World Bank face similar crises of legitimacy. Despite accounting for approximately 18% of the world's population, Africa collectively holds less than 7% of the voting power in the IMF—less than Germany alone. This imbalance skews policy. More than half of low-income countries are now in or at high risk of debt distress, according to the World Bank, yet the solutions on offer remain inadequate. From Zambia to Ghana, debt restructuring has dragged on, often tied to painful austerity measures that stifle growth and erode public trust.

South Africa, backed by African peers, is pushing for reforms that include:

- Restructuring IMF quotas to reflect today's economic weight.
- Expanding local-currency lending and reducing reliance on the dollar.
- Creating lending frameworks sensitive to climate and biodiversity costs.

- Improving transparency in credit-rating methodologies.
- Establishing fairer mechanisms for debt sustainability.

If these changes are advanced, they will not only benefit Africa but also restore global confidence in multilateralism at a time when it is under severe strain.

***For Pretoria, the G20's challenge is to provide systemic crisis financing and enduring solutions, not stopgaps, while placing climate justice firmly at the heart of discussions.***

## INEQUALITY AND DEBT

South Africa has sought to use its presidency to highlight issues affecting poorer nations, particularly rising inequality and sovereign debt. President Ramaphosa recently launched a G20 expert task force on global wealth inequality, led by Nobel Laureate Joseph Stiglitz and UNAIDS Executive Director Winnie Byanyima. Their findings will be tabled in Johannesburg, with proposals ranging from progressive global wealth taxes to fairer frameworks for development financing. The timing is crucial. Today, the most recent comprehensive data from the World Inequality Report 2022 shows that the richest 10% of humanity own 76% of global wealth, while the poorest half hold just 2%. More recent analyses suggest the gap has only deepened. The latest UBS Global Wealth Report, summarised by some newspaper



reports in 2025, finds that just 1.6% of adults now control nearly half of the world's \$470 trillion in assets.

Africa's debt crisis is equally urgent. According to the IMF, more than 20 African countries spend more on debt servicing than on health and education combined. For Pretoria, the G20 must deliver more responsive crisis financing and systemic solutions—not temporary fixes. Climate justice will also be central. Africa contributes just 4% of global emissions, yet suffers the worst consequences. The 2022 floods in Nigeria, the 2023 droughts in the Horn of Africa, and South Africa's

own rolling blackouts highlight the continent's vulnerability. South Africa will press for the fulfilment of the USD 100 billion annual climate finance pledge and the expansion of Just Energy Transition (JET) Partnerships, ensuring that Africa can decarbonise without sacrificing industrialisation and job creation.



## GEOPOLITICAL BALANCING

South Africa's task is complicated by its precarious geopolitical position. As a founding member of BRICS, South Africa belongs to a bloc that positions itself as a counterweight to Western hegemony. BRICS, which has expanded to include Egypt, Ethiopia, and Iran, now accounts for around 35% of global GDP (PPP), compared to the G7's 30%. It is pioneering financial alternatives through the New Development Bank and promoting trade in local currencies to reduce dependence on the US dollar.

This alignment enhances South Africa's leverage, but also creates tensions with the United States and its allies. Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Pretoria has maintained a non-aligned stance, calling for dialogue rather than signing on to Western sanctions. Its naval exercises with Russia and China earlier this year, coupled with allegations of covert arms transfers to Moscow, pushed US–South Africa relations to their lowest point since apartheid. In Washington, frustration is mounting. Congress has debated measures to reassess South Africa's eligibility for the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). US President Donald Trump even threatened to boycott the Johannesburg summit over South Africa's land expropriation law, framing it as 'anti-white genocide.' Meanwhile, US officials have warned that Pretoria's 'anti-American tilt' undermines trust.

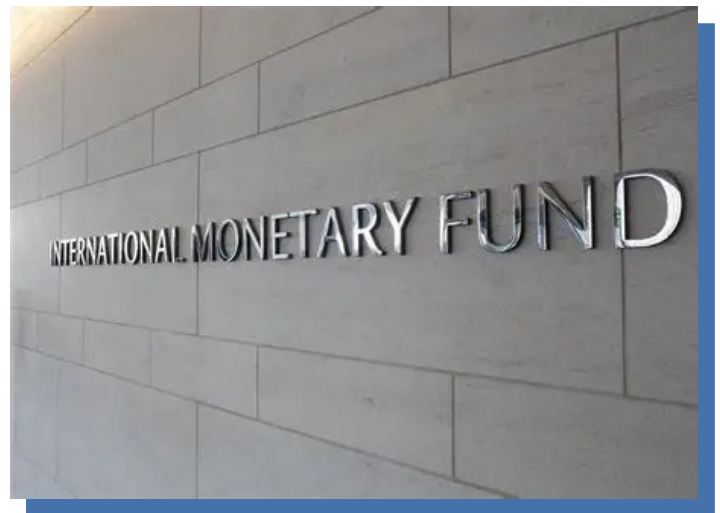
Despite this, South Africa knows it cannot afford to alienate the West. The US and EU remain among Africa's largest trading partners and sources of investment. Moreover, cooperation from G7 powers is essential to advance the very multilateral reforms Africa seeks. Ramaphosa's strategy, therefore, is to frame Africa's demands not as an attack on the West but as a necessary evolution to secure global

stability in the face of borderless challenges like climate change, pandemics, and financial instability.

## HISTORICAL ECHOES

The symbolism of Johannesburg in 2025 echoes longer historical currents. In 1955, newly independent leaders gathered in Bandung, Indonesia, to chart a path of autonomy for Asia and Africa. That meeting laid the groundwork for the Non-Aligned Movement, declaring that the Global South would not be trapped in Cold War binaries. Seventy years later, Johannesburg may mark a similar turning point. But unlike Bandung, which was primarily declarative, the G20 summit must be operational. Its test will be whether Africa's rhetorical calls for justice are translated into structural reforms—on IMF quotas, debt relief, and climate financing. If so, Johannesburg could represent the most significant shift in global governance since the Cold War's end.

*Success hinges not on rapid institutional overhaul, but on South Africa forging consensus, sustaining Africa's visibility, and driving momentum towards long-term structural reforms.*



South Africa's G20 stewardship faces multiple hurdles:

- **African Unity:** With the AU now a permanent G20 member, the continent must avoid fragmentation. Divergences among heavyweights like Nigeria, Kenya, and Egypt risk diluting Africa's bargaining power.
- **Western Engagement:** If the US and EU disengage or boycott, reforms could stall. Without consensus, South Africa's presidency risks being remembered for lofty rhetoric but little progress.
- **Concrete Deliverables:** The G20 is often accused of producing statements without substance. Johannesburg must deliver measurable steps on MDB reform, climate finance, and debt restructuring.



- Global Rivalries: Rising US–China tensions risk overshadowing Africa’s agenda. South Africa must keep the summit from becoming a proxy battlefield for great power politics.

The Johannesburg G20 Summit is more than a diplomatic gathering. It is a statement of Africa’s rising agency in global governance. South Africa’s presidency, anchored in the ubuntu-inspired theme of ‘Solidarity, Equality and Sustainability,’ embodies the continent’s insistence on equity, inclusion, and reform. Success will not be measured by overnight institutional overhauls—those take decades, but by whether South Africa can forge consensus, keep Africa’s priorities visible, and build momentum for structural change. If it succeeds, Johannesburg may be remembered as the moment when Africa shifted from the periphery to the

centre of global decision-making. From Bandung in 1955 to Johannesburg in 2025, the arc of history is unmistakable: the Global South is no longer content to sit on the margins. Africa’s G20 moment has arrived. Whether the world listens will shape not only the legacy of this summit but also the contours of international cooperation for decades to come.



*(Justus Nam is a geopolitical analyst for The News Analytics Herald and a former Research Fellow at the Lancaster University China Centre. He specialises in African politics, diplomacy, and the shifting global power dynamics that shape the continent’s future. The views expressed are of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The News Analytics Herald.)*

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Africa hosts its first G20 Summit, symbolising its rising global influence.
- South Africa pushes reform of UNSC, IMF, and World Bank structures.
- Key agenda: debt relief, fairer IMF quotas, climate finance, inequality reduction.
- Geopolitical balancing between BRICS and Western cooperation will be the focus.
- G20 2025 could mark Africa’s shift from periphery to global decision-making centre.

## FULL-AIRFRAME PARACHUTE RESCUE SYSTEM: A REVOLUTION IN AVIATION SAFETY:

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# AI IN DEFENCE – POWER, PERIL AND THE HUMAN FACTOR

## ECOSYSTEM

*Artificial intelligence has transformed from experimental technology to a battlefield reality, shaping how modern militaries operate. From intelligence and targeting to logistics, cyber defence, and medical support, AI now drives faster decisions and greater precision. Yet alongside these advances come profound ethical dilemmas, operational risks, and strategic challenges, demanding disciplined adoption, clear accountability, and unwavering human authority.*



### NEWS ANALYTICS TECHNOLOGY DESK

Artificial intelligence has advanced from laboratories to battlefields with remarkable speed, becoming integral to modern military operations. No longer a futuristic concept, AI is now embedded in cockpits, command posts, logistics systems, and surveillance feeds, shaping how wars are planned, fought, and sustained.

A major breakthrough has been the development of foundation models and multimodal systems. By integrating text, imagery, video, audio, and sensor inputs, these systems generate mission-ready insights, propose options, and provide red-teaming support. Crucially, they are being compressed for edge deployment, enabling uncrewed aircraft, vehicles, and small tactical teams to make real-time decisions even with limited connectivity.

Autonomy has reached the tactical edge, powered by reinforcement learning classical autonomy techniques.

Swarms of drones, robotic ground systems, and unmanned surface vessels now perform reconnaissance, logistics, and combat support. Concepts like loyal wingman drones extend the range and survivability of manned platforms, while resilient mesh networking allows dispersed systems to act collectively, even in GPS-denied environments. Counter-drone defences have also improved, integrating multiple sensors with AI-driven classification to accelerate detection and response.

AI is equally transforming decision-support and sustainment. It fuses ISR, cyber, and EW data into evolving operational pictures, highlights anomalies, and runs rapid wargames. Predictive maintenance, streamlined supply chains, and optimised casualty evacuation improve resilience and readiness.

Defence AI now mirrors commercial innovation, with cloud-to-edge pipelines, synthetic data, and rapid retraining.



For warfighters, the conclusion is clear: AI is already a decisive force multiplier across the kill chain and the sustainment backbone of military power.

*Autonomy strengthens air, sea, and land operations, with drone swarms conducting reconnaissance and decoys, while unmanned vessels deliver persistent surveillance and effective mine clearance.*



## AI IN ARMED FORCES

Artificial intelligence is no longer experimental in defence, it is now embedded across the full spectrum of operations. In intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), AI enables rapid multi-sensor exploitation, automatically detecting vehicles, artillery, radars, and maritime contacts. Pattern-of-life analytics stitch together satellite, drone, and ground data to highlight anomalies such as unusual logistics or sudden construction. Open-source intelligence, once overwhelming, is streamlined as language models translate, cluster narratives, and flag disinformation campaigns.

Targeting and fire support have become faster and more precise. AI correlates sensor tracks with shooter availability, recommending the most effective effector while ensuring humans retain final authority under rules of engagement. Counter-battery and air defence responses are accelerated against drones, rockets, and loitering munitions. Post-strike imagery is scored automatically, with uncertainty levels clearly displayed for commanders.

Autonomy now enhances operations across air, sea, and land. Drone swarms conduct reconnaissance and decoy missions, while unmanned vessels provide mine clearance and persistent surveillance. Ground robots extract casualties and haul supplies, keeping troops safe. Lethal use remains tightly controlled by humans.

In cyber and electronic warfare, adaptive AI learns enemy behaviour, tunes jamming profiles in real time, and supports

automated cyber defence. Training, simulation, sustainment, and medical support also benefit from predictive AI, sharpening readiness while preserving human authority in critical decisions.

## ETHICAL CHALLENGES

Artificial intelligence promises powerful advantages for modern militaries, but its adoption brings equally profound risks. Ethical considerations are not optional add-ons; they form the backbone of operational credibility, legitimacy, and trust.

Accountability remains the foremost concern. If an AI-assisted strike inadvertently harms civilians, responsibility cannot be lost in a technical black box. Clear accountability chains must extend from developers to commanders, with all decisions aligned to international humanitarian law and domestic statutes. Documenting rationale for AI-enabled actions ensures transparency and allows post-action audits.

Automation bias represents another critical vulnerability. Under stress, operators may place undue trust in machine outputs, especially when systems provide confidence scores without nuance. Such over-reliance risks mis-targeting, fratricide, or mission failure. Interfaces must therefore communicate uncertainty, present alternative possibilities, and encourage human questioning rather than passive acceptance.

Data integrity is equally vital. Adversaries exploit contested electromagnetic environments by spoofing GPS, jamming



networks, or poisoning data streams. AI models trained on clean datasets can behave dangerously when exposed to manipulated inputs. Designing systems resilient to adversarial deception is as important as building physical armour.

Bias and dual-use harms add further complexity. Skewed data may lead to misidentification of civilians or cultural sites as military targets. Tools initially designed for humanitarian planning can be misappropriated for repression. Ethical review processes must anticipate such mission creep.

Escalation dynamics pose perhaps the gravest strategic risk.

By compressing decision timelines, AI risks triggering rapid spirals of conflict at machine speed—potentially outpacing human diplomacy. Additional challenges include opaque models undermining trust, difficulties of continuous testing, dependency that erodes human skills, disinformation campaigns enabled by generative AI, and supply chains vulnerable to divergent standards.

These risks are not hypothetical. They directly threaten the credibility and effectiveness of armed forces. Addressing them demands doctrine, discipline, and deliberate design, not rhetoric.



## A REALISTIC WAY

The central challenge for armed forces is to harness AI capabilities at speed while ensuring operations remain lawful, ethical, and strategically prudent. Success demands a practical framework rooted in doctrine, rigorous testing, resilient design, and embedded ethical safeguards.

Doctrine must uphold human authority. Humans should always remain in or on the loop when lethal force is involved. AI can assist with positive identification and collateral damage estimation, but ultimate responsibility lies with commanders. Defensive systems that operate at machine speed, such as counter-UAS or air defence, must include time-gates and circuit-breakers to prevent uncontrolled escalation. Degradation playbooks must prepare soldiers to fight when AI is denied, spoofed, or fails altogether.

Testing must replicate battlefield realities. Red teams should probe systems with adversarial AI, jamming, cyberattacks, and deception tactics. Training data must reflect the messy complexity of combat—clutter, camouflage, poor visibility, and incomplete signals. Each model should carry a clear “model card” outlining purpose, limits, and thresholds. Continuous monitoring is essential to detect drift early and retrain models before performance collapses.

Strong data governance reinforces trust. Cryptographic signing secures pipelines, Bias audits must account for civilians,

cultural sites, and protected objects. Synthetic data can fill gaps without overfitting to the familiar.

Responsibility cannot blur. Chains of accountability, legal reviews, and operator accreditation is must for command confidence. Interfaces should highlight uncertainty, show alternatives, and provide post-action feedback to reduce automation bias.

Ethical governance must be embedded, not bolted on. Operational veto power for ethics boards, after-action reviews, and careful vetting of export partners strengthen legitimacy.

*Artificial intelligence is shaping modern warfare now, not in the future. Applied responsibly, it shortens decision cycles, extends reach, improves precision, and safeguards both military and civilian lives.*

Finally, resilience and interoperability matter. Manual control modes, redundant hardware, and “no-AI drills” preserve soldier skill. Shared standards and federated learning make coalition operations smoother, while strict boundaries keep autonomy mission-bounded and defensive. Finally, procurement must match AI’s pace. Modular architectures and outcome-based contracts enable faster adaptation. Incorporating



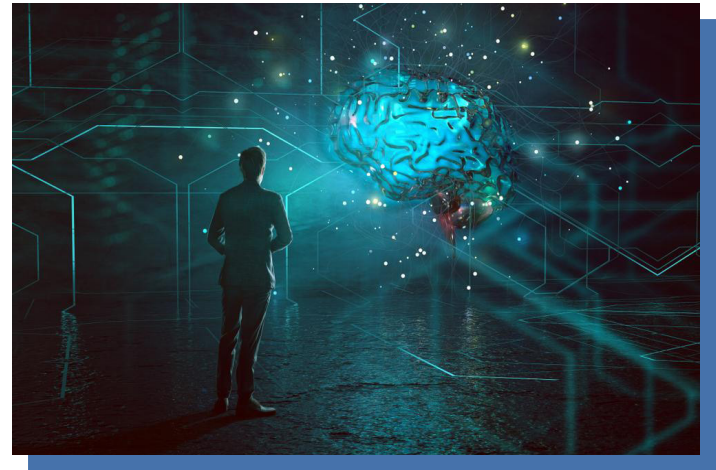
red-teaming, and post-deployment monitoring as contract deliverables ensures performance and accountability.

Key principles can be summarised as follows:

- Human control for lethal effects must remain absolute.
- Test and retrain systems under combat-like stress.
- Secure data and track provenance with rigour.
- Design interfaces that reveal uncertainty, not hide it.
- Build redundancy and train forces to fight degraded.



and prepare to operate even when machines fail. If forces internalise these practices, embedding doctrine, relentless testing, ethical governance, and coalition interoperability, they will harness AI’s strengths while preserving legitimacy. Combat autonomy must remain bounded by law, mission, and geography. Decisions over life and death must remain human. Only then will AI truly serve as a force multiplier, making militaries not only faster and smarter, but also more trustworthy in the eyes of those they defend.



## HUMANS IN COMMAND

Artificial intelligence is no longer a vision of the future, it is shaping warfare today. Used wisely, it compresses decision cycles, extends reach, enhances precision, and saves lives, both military and civilian. Used recklessly, it risks misjudgement, escalation, and erosion of the very values armed forces are sworn to protect.

The path forward is disciplined adoption. Militaries must rigorously test, enforce transparent limits, embed oversight,

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- *AI revolutionises ISR, targeting, logistics, and cyber operations, providing real-time mission-ready insights and faster response.*
- *Autonomy empowers drone swarms, unmanned vessels, and ground robots, enhancing combat support and troop safety.*
- *Ethical risks include accountability gaps, automation bias, data manipulation, and escalations at machine speed.*
- *Resilient frameworks require doctrine, rigorous testing, secured data pipelines, and embedded ethical governance.*
- *Human authority over lethal decisions remains non-negotiable, ensuring AI strengthens legitimacy while safeguarding trust.*



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# CURTAIN RAISER

DEFENCE & SECURITY 2025 – “THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIP”

NEWS ANALYTICS | SPECIAL COVERAGE

As the biennial Defence & Security exhibition returns to Bangkok under the theme “The Power of Partnership”, the 2025 edition promises to be its most expansive and strategically consequential iteration yet. Two decades after the first Tri-Service defence event in 2003, the show has matured from a regional display of land, sea, and air capabilities into a marquee global platform, integrating internal security and emerging threats alongside conventional defence. This year, more than ever, the exhibit will serve as a barometer of shifting dynamics in military cooperation, industrial innovation, and regional strategy across Southeast Asia and beyond.

One of the first numbers that strikes the eye: over 500 military and internal security manufacturers from about 50 countries, featuring some 30 national pavilions, are expected to exhibit. On the visitor side, more than 20,000 professionals are anticipated, including over 400 official delegations from over 35 countries. These figures underscore two things: first, the growing global appetite for defence collaboration in Asia; second, the scale at which Thailand has positioned itself as a strategic nexus for trade, diplomacy, and their intersection in security.



## WHY THIS EDITION MATTERS MORE:

**Multipolar pressures & alliances:** With global defence realignments (in Asia, Europe, and the Indo-Pacific), nations are looking for new partnerships, sourcing, and cooperation outside traditional blocs. Exhibitions like this are where those networks are built.

**Technology acceleration:** Rapid advances in drone swarms, AI-aided surveillance, cybersecurity tools, and integrated systems are changing what defence means. Real-time demonstrations and hands-on presentations at Defence & Security 2025 will highlight where the bleeding edge is, and who is keeping pace.

**Internal security convergence:** The inclusion of internal security alongside defence (police, paramilitary, border control, disaster response, cybercrime) reflects a more holistic understanding of threats. ASEAN countries in particular are emphasising this convergence, as many challenges straddle internal and external domains.

**Economic & industrial opportunity:** National pavilions and exhibitors will not only pitch sales; they aim to set up supply chains, joint ventures, technology transfers, and local manufacturing. Southeast Asia remains a fast-growing zone for defence budget increases, but many countries want value, not just equipment.

**Diplomacy through display:** Defence expos are a kind of soft power theatre. They always have official delegations, but the conversations happen in pavilions, between booth leads, in seminars, and over meals. Watching who shows up, who partners with whom, and what products they bring reveals as much about current and future alignments as any press release.

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR

**National Pavilions with Local Twist:** The presence of ~30 national pavilions gives countries a chance to show both their legacy defence products and their R&D investments. Watch for emerging powers (India, South Korea, perhaps others) bringing lower-cost but innovative systems, especially in cyber, unmanned systems, and sensor networks.

**Live Demonstrations & Technical Presentations:** These will be critical this year. Live demos allow buyers and decision-makers to test performance; technical briefs expose not just features but integration and support. In technologies like AI, cyber, ISR (intelligence/surveillance/reconnaissance), readiness, connectivity, and resilience will be under scrutiny.

**Internal Security & Border Control Tools:** Expect strong showings in surveillance, drones for domestic use, crowd control tech, border fence systems, and disaster response platforms. For many ASEAN member states, internal security is just as urgent as external threats.

**Cybersecurity & Digital Threats:** As nations expand digital infrastructure, threats multiply. Exhibitors offering solutions for cybersecurity, digital forensics, secure communications, and counter-disinformation are likely to gain high attention.



**Strategic Implications & Broader Significance:** The show is not just a marketplace; it is a signal. The strengthening of defence and internal security sectors in Asia underlines how states see threats, not only from traditional military conflict but also from hybrid and non-military domains as well. The pressures from China's maritime posture, the shifting alliances in the Indo-Pacific, uncertainty in supply chains, the desire for autonomy in critical tech and arms—all come together in events like Defence & Security 2025.

For global and regional powers, this exhibition gives clues to where influence will be won or lost. Who wins contracts, who forms alliances, who leads technological innovation, and who lags, all will shape the balance of power not only in Southeast Asia, but in broader geopolitical theatres.

## FINAL WORD

Defence & Security 2025 is shaping up to be more than another arms expo. It is a stage where Asia's security architecture is being negotiated, quietly but decisively. As threats evolve, so too does the nature of cooperation among nations. The exhibition will reveal not simply what hardware is new, but how partnerships are shifting and who will set the benchmarks for capabilities, ethics, resilience, and regional interdependence.

# AGI COULD REDEFINE INDIA'S GROWTH AND SECURITY

## DEEP TECH

*Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) represents the next frontier in AI, machines with human-level reasoning across domains. Unlike today's narrow systems, AGI promises adaptive learning, intuitive decision-making, and transformative applications in healthcare, agriculture, and defence. For India, AGI presents opportunity and risk, requiring strategic foresight, ethical safeguards, and bold investments to shape technology that empowers, rather than destabilises, the nation's future.*



**DR. AMIT DUA**

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Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) represents the future of AI development, as it will enable machines to achieve human-level intelligence across various domains. We acknowledge that we have progressed significantly up to LLM models and they have been improving over the last couple of years. Yet, major AI laboratories throughout the world dedicate billions of dollars to AGI research because they view the arrival of AGI as an unavoidable event despite its current theoretical status. The technology offers development opportunities to India but the nation needs strategic management to handle its essential problems.

The current AI system uses domain-specific pattern-matching algorithms to achieve excellent results in defined areas but

fails catastrophically when it encounters situations outside its predetermined boundaries. The fraud detection algorithms of UPI process millions of transactions to find irregularities, yet they fail to understand basic written information. Food delivery recommendation engines use purchase history data to forecast customer preferences, but they lack the ability to identify medical issues. AGI would move beyond these current restrictions because it would have actual reasoning abilities and conceptual models that could apply to different fields of study.

The distinction between these two concepts creates substantial effects for the country of India. The population of 1.4 billion citizens, along with 22 official languages and diverse



socio-economic issues, from healthcare to agricultural optimisation, require systems that handle intricate situations better than following established protocols.



## TECHNICAL FOUNDATIONS

The creation of AGI requires solving fundamental problems which current systems cannot address. The main issue in neural networks is “catastrophic forgetting”, which happens when networks learn new information by discarding their previously acquired knowledge. A system which learns to identify medical signs will lose this capability after receiving instruction about legal precedents. AGI requires ongoing learning because new information should enhance its abilities instead of replacing them. The current elastic weight consolidation and progressive neural network methods operate within limited domains because they do not work across all possible scenarios.

The primary obstacle to understanding the concept of artificial intelligence is based on common sense reasoning. AI systems today do not possess intuitive physics because they fail to recognise that objects continue to exist when out of sight, and that liquids naturally move downward and unsupported things naturally drop. The research at BITS Pilani shows how causal reasoning in 6G networks improves system reliability for aviation, but these improvements stay limited to particular use cases.

Three primary technical paths toward AGI are being pursued globally, namely, scaled networks, hybrid systems and cognitive architectures. Let us discuss them one by one.

According to the theory of scaled neural networks, general intelligence will emerge when networks have enough parameters and receive enough training data. The training process of GPT-4 needed 25,000 A100 GPU-hours and more than \$100 million to achieve its 1.76 trillion parameters.

However, the system fails to demonstrate true understanding because it identifies patterns without grasping their meaning. The parameters in scaling laws follow the laws of diminishing returns because each step of parameter growth produces progressively smaller capability enhancements.

Hybrid neuro-symbolic systems unite the pattern recognition abilities of neural networks with the logical reasoning capabilities of symbolic AI. The Neural Theorem Prover from DeepMind and IBM's Neuro-Symbolic Concept Learner demonstrate this method by trying to unite perception with abstract reasoning. The main difficulty arises from uniting two distinct computational approaches, which include statistical learning methods and rule-based logical systems.

The design of cognitive architectures depends on human cognitive functions, which include working memory, attention systems and hierarchical planning mechanisms. The cognitive functions of SOAR and ACT-R systems are modelled in detail, yet these systems fail to handle actual real-world complexities. The latest transformer-based models with external memory systems demonstrate potential, but they have not reached the level of general intelligence.

## INDIA'S STRATEGIC POSITION

Indian institutions actively participate in AGI research activities through their limited budget. IIT Bombay's capsule networks solve two main problems in how convolutional neural networks process spatial hierarchies by enabling them to identify both objects and their spatial connections. IISc Bangalore conducts research on neuromorphic computing to



**Infrastructure growth is accelerating, with the Government's 10,000 GPU cluster at C-DAC crucial for securing national computing independence.**

create brain-inspired systems which show promise for building more efficient AGI systems than traditional methods.

The private sector in India shows the country's ability to reach success according to current initiatives. The OpenHathi model from Sarvam AI achieves Western model-level performance on Indic languages through its efficient processing system, which enables AGI to handle multiple languages. Their research addresses a critical requirement because large language models learn from English data, which prevents them from serving the multilingual users of India.



Infrastructure development has accelerated. The Government's planned 10,000 GPU cluster at C-DAC serves as a vital project for establishing national computing independence. The lack of domestic computing infrastructure makes India dependent on foreign cloud providers for AI development, which creates a strategic weakness because AGI will become essential for economic success. The research between Tech Mahindra and IIT Kanpur investigates how quantum algorithms can speed up Artificial General Intelligence development, which could enable India to bypass traditional methods.

The talent pool exists since plenty of AI researchers and practitioners work between academic institutions and industrial organisations. The system requires a major expansion of its user base at present. The development of AGI needs teams that combine programmers with cognitive scientists, ethicists and domain experts who will make sure the systems operate within Indian cultural boundaries.

## SECTORAL TRANSFORMATION AND RISKS

The healthcare sector will experience changes from AGI which go beyond the current diagnostic functions of AI systems. India's 4,635 distinct ethnic groups exhibit genetic variations that affect drug metabolism differently than Caucasian populations, on which most pharmaceuticals are tested. The system would be able to model biological systems in their entirety, which would enable the development of personalised treatments that are optimised for Indian genetic markers and would also be able to predict the effectiveness and side effects of these treatments in different populations.

Agriculture would see the integration of currently siloed systems. The system would integrate satellite hyperspectral imaging

with IoT sensors, weather models and market dynamics to function as a whole. The system would identify pest outbreaks by using AGI to analyse temperature patterns, soil composition and bird migration routes, which are beyond the capabilities of narrow AI systems. The situation requires immediate attention because 600 million Indians depend on farming to make a living.

The implementation of AGI in urban infrastructure management enables a 30–40% reduction in energy usage by optimising the distribution of loads between transportation systems, electricity and water networks, and waste management facilities. Smart grid management systems would enable India to save billions annually in transmission losses, which could then be allocated for development initiatives.

Yet risks are substantial. The IT services industry of India generates 7.5% of the country's GDP while employing millions of workers who perform duties that could be fully automated by AGI. The BPO sector still has significant employees who face similar displacement. The current wave of automation technology performs multiple job functions at once, whereas previous automation waves focused on individual positions.

The extensive number of social groups in India creates an environment where bias amplification becomes extremely dangerous throughout the country. The data used for training contains past discriminatory patterns that affected loan



approvals, hiring choices, and educational opportunities. The training of AGI systems with this data would result in large-scale discrimination that would be difficult to dispute because the systems would present their discriminatory actions as objective. The technical solution of fairness-aware learning exists, but the definition of fairness in India's diverse social structure continues to be a matter of debate.

The ability of AGI to perform inference across datasets leads to increased data privacy risks because it enables the reconstruction of behavioural profiles from incomplete information. The Data Protection Bill of India establishes some regulatory structure, but the capabilities of AGI systems surpass what current laws can manage. Security vulnerabilities exist because adversarial attacks lead AGI to misinterpret important information, which results in dangerous outcomes for autonomous vehicles and healthcare diagnostic systems.

**Workforces require extensive training to collaborate effectively with AGI systems, emphasising adaptation and partnership rather than direct competition.**



## STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES

India needs to create its own AGI system by building both the hardware and software components domestically. The development of AI chips for India requires specialised fabrication facilities and customised training systems that work in Indian environments, and distributed learning systems which allow collaborative development while maintaining data security. Theoretical research needs more funding than applications because it will create market dominance through its development of causal reasoning, continual learning and interpretability methods.

Regulatory frameworks need to be both flexible and based on technological understanding. Static rules cannot govern rapidly evolving technology. Regulatory sandboxes enable controlled testing of new approaches, while algorithmic auditing maintains system interpretability and prevents bias. India should take the lead in international AGI governance through G20 and UN platforms to create worldwide safety protocols while stopping the dangerous competition for development.

The transition of workforces needs extensive training initiatives which focus on teaching employees to work alongside AGI systems instead of trying to compete with them. The

educational system needs to start reforming right now to teach students computational thinking, probabilistic reasoning and critical evaluation of AGI outputs starting from primary school.

The experts predict that AGI will arrive between 2030 and 2050, with 2040 being the most likely year. The situation requires urgent intervention. India has the technical expertise and a wide range of data, along with intricate problems, which would enable our AGI development to become more powerful and adaptable than systems trained with Western data. The decisions made now determine whether India becomes an AGI producer or consumer, whether this technology reduces or amplifies inequality, and whether it serves all citizens or only elites. The selection process needs to create systems which will steer AGI development toward national goals while achieving universal advantages and positive results for all nations.



*(Dr Amit Dua is an Associate Professor at BITS, Pilani and Founder of YET Pvt. Ltd. He is a TEDx speaker and the author of books on Machine Learning and Machine Learning for Education. The views expressed are of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of **The News Analytics Herald**.)*

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- *AGI surpasses narrow AI with reasoning, adaptability, and conceptual models across domains.*
- *India must strategically manage AGI's opportunities and challenges to ensure inclusive benefits.*
- *Technical hurdles include catastrophic forgetting, bias, data integrity, and adversarial manipulation.*
- *Sectoral impact spans healthcare, agriculture, urban infrastructure, IT services, and defence.*
- *Strategic imperatives: domestic AGI, flexible regulation, workforce retraining, ethical governance, global leadership.*

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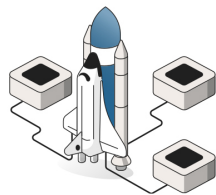
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