

THE
NEWS ANALYTICS
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**A
YEAR OF
DISRUPTIONS**

IN FOCUS

EUROPE'S CRISIS OF UNITY,
CONFIDENCE AND IMAGINATION

BIG STORY

INSIDE TRUMP'S 2025 SHOCKWAVE
THROUGH US-TAIWAN TIES

EXCLUSIVE

INTERVIEW WITH HONOURABLE
SECRETARY GENERAL, BIMSTEC

THE POWER PANEL



KEONI EVERINGTON

American Senior Journalist Based in Taiwan. Specialises in China-Taiwan and US-Taiwan Relations. News Analytics Taiwan & China Correspondent.



AIR MARSHAL ANIL KHOSLA (R)

Former Vice Chief, Indian Air Force Researcher & Analyst Distinguished Fellow - USI & CAPS.



LT GEN DP PANDEY(R)

Former Corps Commander Chinar Corps, DG Territorial Army and Commandant of Army War College.



JUSTUS NAM

Africa and International Relations Scholar, Nairobi, Kenya. Covers Africa for News Analytics.



DR. AFTAB ALAM

Dean, Faculty of international Studies, Aligarh Muslim University.



NADIA HALLAK

Senior Journalist from Beirut, Lebanon. Extensive Experience of the Arab Region. News Analytics Arab Correspondent.



PROF. SUBHASH DHULIYA

Former Vice Chancellor, Uttarakhand Open University. Researcher and Commentator on Global Politics & International Communication.



NOEL ADALIA DIMASACAT

Defence Analyst and East Asia Scholar, Manila, Philippines. Covers East Asia and Defence Technology for News Analytics.



DR AMIT DUA

Associate Professor Computer Science and Information System Department, Birla Institute of Technology and Science, Pilani.



KUNDAN DAS

Consultant on Energy Transition and Decarbonisation. Specialises in Integrating Nuclear Energy Solutions for Sustainable Manufacturing.

|| FOREWORD



THE YEAR OF UNFINISHED WARS AND UNSTABLE PEACE

The year 2025 will be remembered not as a continuation of old patterns, but as a decisive rupture in global affairs. It was a year when the world’s strategic, economic, and technological fault lines shifted visibly, sometimes violently, reshaping the very grammar of international relations. Wars that many assumed would fade instead deepened. Alliances once thought permanent showed signs of fatigue. New power centres emerged, not always from strength, but from the vacuum created by uncertainty.

From the Arctic to the Red Sea, from AI governance to the militarisation of space, the very idea of “global order” was repeatedly stress-tested. The US–China technology cold war entered a sharper phase, the Middle East redrew its security map once again, Europe grappled with an extended war on its borders, and Asia witnessed the rise of both confrontation and coalition-building in equal measure. Even non-state actors, hackers, insurgent networks and cyber-mercenaries altered the balance of influence in ways that no treaty had anticipated.

For India, 2025 was a paradox: a year of heightened external turbulence, yet also of growing strategic confidence. From energy corridors to digital diplomacy, New Delhi expanded its footprint while navigating a landscape where disruption became the norm, not the exception.

This special Signature Edition of The News Analytics Herald is not a chronicle of events alone; it is a curated map of global developments in 2025. A year-end dossier of conflicts, breakthroughs, realignments, and lessons that will shape 2026 and beyond.

History rarely announces turning points in real time. 2025 did!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MM Naravane'.

General (Dr) MM Naravane (R)
PVSM, AVSM, SM, VSM, PhD
Former Chief of Army Staff and
Chair of the Chiefs of Staff Committee

|| ABOUT US

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.


|| PUBLISHER

Sandhya Srivastava


 editor@newsanalytics.in

|| OUR EDITORIAL BOARD

Air Marshal Anil Khosla (Retd)
Former Vice Chief of the Indian Air Force

 airmshlanilkhosla@newsanalytics.in


Lt Gen Raj Shukla (Retd)
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 srikumarmenon@newsanalytics.in

Vice Admiral Makarand Aravind Hampiholi (Retd)
Former Commander-in-Chief of the Training
Command of the Indian Navy

 mahampiholi@newsanalytics.in

|| WHAT WE ARE

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EDITOR'S NOTE



2025: A YEAR OF DISRUPTION

As 2025 draws to a close, the world stands at the edge of a strategic inflexion point. This year has not just added new chapters to global affairs, it has rewritten assumptions, alliances, and the very rule of power. From the frozen trenches of Ukraine to the shifting sands of West Asia, from an assertive Indo-Pacific to a fragmented Europe, 2025 has reminded us that geopolitics no longer moves in

linear cycles; it accelerates in shocks.

In Global Affairs & Diplomacy 2025, we track shifting power equations: rising middle powers, deal-based diplomacy, and fading security guarantees. Defence & Security 2025 analyses wars that reshaped doctrine, logistics, and political resolve. Emerging Technologies 2025 decodes tomorrow's battlespace lasers, autonomous swarms, military AI, quantum espionage, and the race to weaponise data.

This edition is also a moment of institutional significance for us. The News Analytics Herald is privileged to be engaging closely with BIMSTEC. It is now a part of its media outreach programme, at a pivotal moment in the organisation's trajectory. In this special edition, we bring a dedicated feature on BIMSTEC's evolution and expanding strategic relevance, along with an exclusive interview with the Honourable Secretary General — offering readers a rare perspective on how the bloc is reshaping the next arc of Asian geopolitics.

As the world resets for 2026, The News Analytics Herald remains committed to clarity over noise, substance over spectacle, and journalism that respects its readers as thinkers.

Jai Hind!

Sandhya Srivastava
Editor-in-Chief &
Publisher

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Editor in Chief

Sandhya Srivastava

Editorial Board

Ambassador Srikumar Menon, IFS(R)

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Creative Designer

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Legal Advisor

Adv Deepak Verma

Web Partner

Abhi Technosoft

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Email: reachus@newsanalytics.in

Website: www.newsanalytics.in

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EUROPE'S CRISIS OF UNITY, CONFIDENCE AND IMAGINATION

IN FOCUS

From political fragmentation and economic slowdown to energy insecurity and migration chaos, Europe faces its gravest internal test since the Cold War. As populist forces gain strength and traditional elites falter, the continent stands at a crossroads—between renewal and disintegration.



PROF. SUBHASH DHULIYA
FORMER VICE CHANCELLOR, UTTARAKHAND OPEN UNIVERSITY
FOR NEWS ANALYTICS

Europe, once hailed as a model of post-war peace, prosperity, and unity, is now struggling to hold itself together. The continent that built the European Union (EU) as a symbol of collective strength and liberal democracy faces a confluence of crises—economic stagnation, migration pressures, energy insecurity, political fragmentation, and the rise of populism. From Berlin to Budapest, Paris to Warsaw, cracks are widening within the European project. Europe's security architecture has become increasingly uncertain due to the Ukraine war and the United States' wavering commitment to NATO.

The optimism that followed the fall of the Berlin Wall and the expansion of the EU eastwards has faded into anxiety. European citizens are questioning the credibility of their leaders, the sustainability of their economies, and the very idea of a unified Europe.

THE NEW EUROPEAN SICKNESS

Europe's economic engine is sputtering. The Eurozone's growth has stalled, with Germany—the bloc's largest economy—teetering on the edge of recession. High inflation, sluggish productivity, and declining industrial competitiveness have weakened Europe's position in global markets.

Europe's global competitiveness is under threat. The United States, with its Inflation Reduction Act, is attracting European industries with subsidies and tax breaks. China's cheap exports

The Ukraine war revealed Europe's energy fragility; losing Russian gas forced rapid LNG diversification, yet prices remain unstable and dependence risks persist.



and dominance in green technologies, batteries, solar panels, electric vehicles, are eroding Europe's industrial edge.

DEBT BURDEN THREATS

Europe's debt burden has reached historic levels, raising concerns over fiscal sustainability and the continent's economic future. According to recent Eurostat data (Q2 2024–Q1 2025), the Eurozone's overall debt-to-GDP ratio stands at around 88%, while for the European Union as a whole, it is roughly 81.5%. Most major European economies continue to breach the EU's 60% debt ceiling set under the Stability and Growth Pact.

Greece remains the most heavily

indebted country in Europe, with public debt hovering around 163.6% of GDP. Italy follows with debt close to 137% of GDP, reflecting structural weaknesses and slow growth that make fiscal consolidation difficult. France's public debt stands at 114.1% of GDP, while Belgium's is 106.8%, and Spain's at 103.5%, each grappling with the long-term effects of pandemic spending, energy subsidies, and welfare costs. Even Germany, traditionally Europe's fiscal anchor, now carries debt at about 62.5% of GDP, slightly above the EU threshold.



Europe's debt challenge is thus not just economic—it is political. It exposes divisions between the north and south over fiscal rules and between those advocating austerity and those demanding growth-oriented spending. The sustainability of Europe's welfare model, and its ability to fund energy transition and defence, will depend on whether governments can strike a balance between prudence and recovery.

ENERGY INSECURITY

The war in Ukraine exposed Europe's deep energy vulnerabilities. For decades, Europe depended heavily on Russian gas—a relationship that ended abruptly with Moscow's invasion of Ukraine in 2022. While the EU has made strides in diversifying supplies—importing liquefied natural gas (LNG) from the U.S., Qatar, and Norway—energy prices remain volatile.

Germany's energy transition is struggling with the closure of nuclear power plants and overreliance on renewables without adequate storage solutions. Eastern European countries, more dependent on fossil fuels, face mounting energy bills and industrial disruptions.

Migration is now framed as an identity threat, fuelling populism, polarising societies, and eroding political consensus and EU solidarity.

The push for green energy, though vital for the planet, has sparked domestic political backlash. Farmers, truckers, and industrial workers fear that climate regulations are being imposed at the cost of jobs and livelihoods. Energy insecurity is now not only an economic issue—but also a political one, reshaping party systems across Europe.

THE DIVISIVE DILEMMA

Migration remains one of the most polarising issues in Europe. The 2015 refugee crisis, triggered by wars in Syria and Afghanistan, reshaped European politics. Today, a new wave of migration from Africa, the Middle East, and Ukraine has reignited tensions.

Southern nations like Italy, Greece, and Spain bear the brunt of arrivals across the Mediterranean, while northern states such as Germany and Sweden face internal backlash against refugee integration. The EU's asylum policies remain fractured, with eastern nations like Hungary and Poland resisting quotas for refugees.



The issue is no longer about numbers but identity. Populist parties frame migration as a threat to Europe's cultural fabric, national security, and welfare systems. The resulting polarisation has eroded political consensus and weakened EU solidarity.

Countries like Germany, Italy, and Spain face acute labour shortages in key sectors such as healthcare, construction, and technology. Yet, despite this demographic reality, public sentiment toward immigration remains deeply divided. Governments find themselves caught between economic necessity and political backlash, struggling to design migration policies that reconcile humanitarian obligations with domestic concerns over integration, identity, and security. It is a paradox that lies at the heart of Europe's social and political dilemmas.

RISING POPULISM

Across the continent, populist parties are reshaping the political map. In Italy, Giorgia Meloni's Brothers of Italy leads a right-wing government. In France, Marine Le Pen's National Rally continues to challenge President Emmanuel Macron. In the Netherlands, the far-right Party for Freedom has gained momentum. Germany's Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) is now a formidable force in regional politics.

Europe's internal rifts persist, with northern states demanding strict fiscal discipline while southern nations seek flexible spending to revive growth.

The traditional centrist consensus that defined post-war Europe—Christian democrats, social democrats, liberals—is eroding. Populist parties exploit economic anxieties, cultural fears, and the perception that mainstream leaders are out of touch with ordinary citizens. The liberal dream is virtually coming to an end.



DIVISIONS WITHIN

Europe's internal divides are becoming harder to bridge. The North-South split over fiscal discipline—visible since the Eurozone crisis—remains unresolved. Northern economies like Germany, the Netherlands, and Finland push for budgetary restraint, while southern nations like Italy, Spain, and Greece demand flexibility to stimulate growth.

Meanwhile, the East-West divide over democratic values, migration, and relations with Russia continues to widen. Poland and Hungary have openly challenged EU institutions over judicial independence and media freedom. The war in Ukraine has deepened these divisions, with some states demanding harsher sanctions against Russia while others prioritise economic stability.

THE FAILING EUROPEAN ELITE

Europe's ruling class—political, bureaucratic, and corporate—appears unable to respond decisively to these mounting crises. The European Commission's grand visions often clash with national politics. Leaders like Emmanuel Macron and Olaf Scholz face domestic resistance to EU-wide reforms. Britain's exit from the EU still casts a long shadow, reinforcing scepticism toward Brussels.

The EU's foreign policy machinery is equally divided. While Ursula von der Leyen pushes for “strategic autonomy,” the

continent remains dependent on U.S. defence under NATO and on China for trade and technology. The inability to craft a coherent stance toward the wars in Ukraine and Gaza has exposed the EU's limited geopolitical clout.

Many Europeans perceive their leaders as technocrats insulated from real-world struggles. This democratic disconnect fuels voter apathy and opens space for populists who promise direct action and national control.

EXTERNAL PRESSURES

Externally, Europe faces mounting challenges from all directions. Russia's aggression in Ukraine threatens its eastern borders. The Middle East crisis—spilling over from Gaza and Lebanon—poses risks of new refugee inflows and energy shocks.

The United States, though a strategic ally, has shifted its focus to the Indo-Pacific. Under both Trump and Biden, Washington has pressed Europe to spend more on defence and reduce its economic ties with China. Yet Europe remains divided on how far to go—Germany and France advocate “strategic autonomy,” while Eastern Europe clings to U.S. protection.



Beyond economics and politics lies a deeper cultural malaise. Europe's post-war identity—rooted in liberal democracy, social welfare, and human rights—is under strain. The rise of nationalism, religious conservatism, and anti-immigrant sentiment challenges the continent's liberal values.

At the same time, secularisation, digital alienation, and generational divides have eroded social cohesion. Youth unemployment and housing shortages have created a sense of disenchantment among younger Europeans, who no longer see the EU as a guarantor of prosperity.

The far-right has capitalised on this identity vacuum, offering narratives of belonging and strength. Meanwhile, progressives

A deeper cultural crisis is unfolding as Europe's liberal, post-war identity is strained by rising nationalism, conservatism, and anti-immigration sentiment.

struggle to articulate a unifying vision that balances openness with security.



EUROPE AT THE CROSSROADS

As Europe stands at a crossroads, its leaders face a historic choice: retreat into nationalism and decline, or reinvent the European project for the 21st century. The outcome will determine not only Europe's destiny but also the shape of the emerging global order.

Europe still holds major strengths—wealth, technology, soft power, democratic depth—but without strategic unity it risks irrelevance in a fast, competitive multipolar world.

The global order itself is in profound transformation. The rise of India and China has redefined the global balance of power, shifting economic gravity toward Asia. The decline of U.S. dominance—reflected in internal political divisions, inconsistent foreign policy, and a retreat from global leadership—has further unsettled the international system that Europe long relied upon for stability and protection.

As new power centres emerge and alliances shift, the architecture of global governance is being rewritten. BRICS expansion, Asian regionalism, and the assertiveness of the

Global South all point to a world moving away from Western-centric structures. Amid this transformation, Europe must decide where it stands—as a coherent geopolitical actor with a shared strategic vision, or as a collection of nations reacting to forces beyond their control.

Europe still retains enormous assets: advanced economies, soft power, technological capability, and deep democratic traditions. But without unity of purpose, it risks losing influence in a multipolar world increasingly defined by speed, competition, and strategic clarity. To remain relevant, Europe must think beyond crisis management—it must reimagine its place in a rapidly evolving world order.

Ultimately, Europe's future will not be determined by external threats alone, but by its ability to rebuild confidence, restore cohesion, and rediscover ambition. The continent's true crisis is not merely economic or political—it is a crisis of imagination. Whether Europe chooses renewal or resignation will define not just its own fate, but the moral and strategic direction of the 21st century.



*(Prof. Subhash Dhuliya is the former Vice Chancellor of Uttarakhand Open University. He is a researcher, educator, and commentator with a focus on global politics, media, culture, and international communication. The views expressed are of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of **The News Analytics Herald**.)*

QUICK INSIGHTS

- *Europe's reliance on Russian gas collapsed after the Ukraine war, exposing deep energy vulnerability.*
- *LNG imports from the U.S., Qatar, and Norway helped replace Russian supplies.*
- *Energy prices remain volatile despite diversification efforts and emergency policy measures.*
- *The crisis forced Europe to accelerate renewables, storage, and energy-efficiency strategies.*
- *Long-term stability depends on reducing external dependence and building resilient domestic energy systems.*

INSIDE TRUMP'S 2025 SHOCKWAVE

BIG STORY

Donald Trump's return to the White House has disrupted expectations around US-Taiwan ties. Once viewed as a stabilising force in cross-strait tensions, the relationship now faces uncertainty due to Trump's unpredictable trade measures, mixed security messaging, and abrasive diplomacy. Although formal commitments stand, Washington's altered tone and tactics have unsettled Taipei, injecting fresh ambiguity into a key Indo-Pacific partnership.



KEONI EVERINGTON, TAIPEI, TAIWAN
TAIWAN & CHINA CORRESPONDENT, NEWS ANALYTICS

Since the US switched diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing in 1979, the Taiwan Relations Act has defined the unofficial relationship. Under it, Washington pledges to provide Taiwan with defensive arms and maintain the capacity to resist coercion, but without guaranteeing intervention. This deliberate ambiguity has allowed successive US administrations to support Taiwan while managing ties with China.

Taiwan's position has grown increasingly vital as it has evolved into a global technology hub and a linchpin in semiconductor production. Its democracy and critical role in global supply chains make it a strategic partner for Washington, especially as China under Xi Jinping ramps up military and economic pressure on the country.

By late 2024, when Trump reclaimed the presidency, the US-Taiwan relationship was stable but faced new challenges.

Taipei had deepened defence cooperation and expanded chip investment in the US, while Beijing had stepped up grey-zone military activities around the country. Many in Taiwan hoped Trump's tough stance on China would translate into firmer US backing. What they encountered instead was unpredictability.

TRADE AND TARIFF SHOCKS

One of the earliest disruptions came through trade. In spring 2025, the Trump administration revived its "America First" agenda by threatening tariffs on Taiwanese imports, particularly

The tariff threat signalled a shift from partnership to pressure, turning Taiwan into a trade target and raising doubts about US security reliability amid growing economic-political overlap.



THROUGH US–TAIWAN TIES

electronics and auto parts, unless Taipei committed to expanding US investment and production.

Trump framed the move as a matter of “reciprocity,” accusing Taiwan of “stealing” the chip industry. In April, he announced 32% tariffs on a wide spectrum of Taiwan-made goods.

The rhetoric sent ripples through Taipei’s export-driven economy. Government officials scrambled to reassure Washington of Taiwan’s commitment to supply chain cooperation, while investors worried about potential retaliatory measures, sending the Taiwan stock market through wild swings.



Taiwan responded swiftly and proactively, with President Lai Ching-te saying his country was included in the first group to enter trade talks with the US. Lai pledged to strengthen bilateral investment and industrial cooperation and communicate more with Washington. In April, Lai began promoting a “Taiwan plus one” policy with the US that created a “Taiwan investment in the US team” to boost investment, strengthen trade, reduce the deficit, and foster mutual development.

The tariff threat, even if temporary, represented a marked shift in tone: Taiwan was being treated less as a strategic partner and more as a trade target. This presented the prospect of economic friction undermining confidence in US security commitments, blurring the line between political leverage and commercial pressure.

By September, the Trump administration proposed that Taiwan relocate 50% of its chip production to the US. Opposition Kuomintang (KMT) lawmakers condemned Washington’s proposal, and Vice Premier Cheng Li-chiun dismissed speculation that Taiwan had agreed to such a split. This clash reinforced the perception that Washington’s new policy was driven less by shared strategy than by transactional bargaining. The message Taipei received from Washington was simple: invest more in America, or face tariffs.

STRATEGIC SIGNALLING

The year’s second major disruption came in the defence arena. In February, the US State Department briefly removed language from its website stating that Washington “does not support Taiwan independence.” Although the phrase was later restored, the change triggered immediate outrage from Beijing and confusion in Taipei.

Chinese officials condemned the edit as a “serious regression” in the US stance on Taiwan, while US diplomats downplayed it as a “routine update.” For Taiwan, the episode symbolised the mixed messaging that has defined Trump’s foreign policy — alternating between reassurance and provocation.

Meanwhile, Trump’s team sent contradictory signals on military assistance. On one hand, US officials in May said Trump aimed to exceed his first term’s weapons sales to Taiwan, including advanced drones and missiles. On the other hand, news broke in September that Trump had personally blocked over US\$400 million in direct military aid to Taiwan as he tried to secure a trade deal with Xi.

Still, cooperation at the operational level persisted. In 2024, Taiwan News reported that US Green Berets were permanently stationed on Taiwan’s outlying islands for the first time, marking an unprecedented deepening of security cooperation. The programme continued quietly into 2025 despite political turbulence, demonstrating that the institutional defence relationship remained intact even as political signals fluctuated, with 500 US military personnel reportedly providing training in Taiwan as of May.

A Brookings Institution poll conducted from February to April found that only 37.5% of respondents believed the US would intervene militarily if China attacked, down from 44.5% in 2024. That erosion of public confidence underscored how Trump’s unpredictable messaging was reshaping perceptions of America’s role in the Taiwan Strait.

DIPLOMATIC AND POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR

Diplomacy proved equally volatile. In interviews while on the campaign trail, Trump questioned the US obligation to defend Taiwan, comparing it to an “insurance policy” and suggesting Taiwan should “pay us money for the protection.” In one October appearance, Trump claimed that China “doesn’t want to attack Taiwan,” implying that media hype, not Chinese aggression, was inflaming tensions. He declined to answer a question about whether Taiwan would be sacrificed for a deal with China and said, “I want to be good to China. I love my relationship with President Xi. We have a great relationship.”

At the same time, Trump’s transactional diplomacy spilt into

Trump’s military signals to Taiwan were mixed: he pledged larger arms sales, yet later blocked US\$400 million in aid while pursuing a trade deal with Xi.

symbolic arenas. When Taiwan's president planned a routine US transit in July, the White House reportedly denied approval to avoid upsetting Beijing ahead of trade negotiations. The move sparked criticism from Congress, where bipartisan lawmakers had just introduced the Taiwan International Solidarity Act, affirming Taiwan's sovereignty under international law.

For Taiwan's domestic politics, the uncertainty carried costs. The ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) faced criticism from Blue media outlets such as UDN for "over-reliance" on Washington. Opposition figures from the KMT argued that Trump's unpredictability proved the need for renewed cross-strait dialogue. Scholars warned that the perception of the US wavering could increase scepticism towards Washington and provide an opening for Beijing to push its narrative among Taiwanese that unification is the best option.

Taiwan is widening ties with Europe and Indo-Pacific partners to hedge against US unpredictability, yet remains stuck — too reliant on Washington to detach, too uncertain to fully trust it.

TAIWAN'S CAUTIOUS RECALIBRATION

Facing mixed messages from Washington, Taiwan has sought to project steadiness. President Lai has repeatedly emphasised the need to deepen the strategic partnership with the US while quietly hedging through diversified diplomacy. Taipei has strengthened security links with Japan and deepened dialogue with key European partners such as the UK, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, and Lithuania.

In September, US State Department officials continued to reassure Taipei of support despite the turbulence. Behind closed doors, US diplomats stressed that operational cooperation and intelligence sharing were unaffected by political rhetoric. Still, the damage inflicted on US–Taiwan ties is reputational. Even if the underlying commitments remain, the perception of unreliability can be just as destabilising. That perception matters not only in Taipei but across the region, where US allies watch for clues about Washington's staying power.

BROADER IMPLICATIONS

The disruptions in US–Taiwan relations have reverberated beyond bilateral ties. For Beijing, Trump's ambivalence created both opportunity and risk. Chinese officials welcomed

rhetoric that downplayed the threat of invasion but worried that US unpredictability could still trigger crises. Chinese military flights around Taiwan continued at record levels, while the US did little substantive beyond urging Beijing to refrain from further actions.

For US allies like Japan, Australia, and the Philippines, Trump's transactional approach raised doubts about alliance reliability. If Washington wavers on Taiwan — a democracy central to Indo-Pacific strategy — it would inflict immense damage on the credibility of its security guarantees elsewhere.

Economically, Taiwan's vulnerability exposed the limits of its export model. As tariffs and technology restrictions reshaped global supply chains, Taipei simultaneously pushed to build out local high-tech capacity and attract investment from non-US partners. However, although these moves improve economic resilience, they do not substitute for Taiwan's traditional role in supporting the US–Taiwan technology alliance underpinning deterrence.

THE BOTTOM LINE

For now, US–Taiwan ties remain structurally strong. The Taiwan Relations Act still anchors legal commitments, bipartisan support in Congress remains solid, and the Pentagon continues coordination with Taipei. Yet the tone from the Trump administration has unsettled what was once a predictable partnership.

The disruptions of 2025 — in trade, security, and diplomacy — reveal less a collapse than a recalibration. Under Trump, the US relationship with Taiwan has become more transactional, less predictable, and more dependent on personal politics than institutional policy. For Taiwan, that means balancing gratitude for enduring US support with realism about shifting priorities in Washington.

As Trump's second term unfolds, the central question is whether unpredictability will remain a feature or give way to renewed strategic coherence. For a small democracy perched between superpowers, clarity can be as critical as commitment. Until that returns, Taiwan will continue navigating its most important partnership with caution.

*(Keoni Everington is an American senior journalist based in Taipei, Taiwan with 15 years of experience covering news about Taiwan and China. Everington specialises in subjects such as cross-strait relations, US-Taiwan ties and international geopolitics. The views expressed by the author and any guest experts do not necessarily reflect the views of **The News Analytics Herald**.)*

QUICK INSIGHTS

- *Trump's return unsettled a previously steady US–Taiwan partnership, creating sharp diplomatic uncertainty.*
- *Aggressive tariff threats recast Taiwan from trusted ally to trade target, undermining economic confidence.*
- *Conflicting US military messaging weakened perceived security guarantees and simultaneously emboldened Beijing's posture.*
- *Taiwan responded by strengthening strategic and economic partnerships with Europe and key Indo-Pacific nations.*
- *Relationship now transactional, unpredictable, and driven by Trump's personal politics over policy.*



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The News Analytics Herald is proud to announce its inclusion in the BIMSTEC Media Outreach Programme, marking a significant milestone in our mission to provide credible, analytical, and future-focused coverage of global affairs.

This arrangement with the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) strengthens our editorial access to key regional developments spanning diplomacy, security, trade, and technology bringing greater value to our esteemed readers and partners.

Expanding The Horizon- Far & Beyond



BIMSTEC'S EXPANDING

SPECIAL FEATURE

Since its inception on 6 June 1997 with the signing of the Bangkok Declaration, BIMSTEC has grown from a modest Bay-of-Bengal economic cooperation initiative into a steadily more consequential regional actor with Indo-Pacific ambitions. The organisation, comprising Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand, now encompasses roughly 1.7 billion people and a combined GDP of several trillions of US dollars.



NEWS ANALYTICS EDITORIAL DESK

FROM REGIONAL COOPERATION TO STRATEGIC PLATFORM

When BIMSTEC began (then under the banner BIST-EC: Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand), the charter emphasised economic and technical cooperation in six sectors: trade, technology, energy, transport, tourism and fisheries. Over time, its sectoral footprint expanded to include agriculture, public health, disaster management, environment, culture, people-to-people contact, and climate change.

But beyond sectoral breadth, BIMSTEC's underlying geography matters: it links South Asia with Southeast Asia via the Bay of Bengal, providing connectivity across two major sub-regions. This bridging role gives the organisation a strategic rationale beyond pure economic cooperation. Scholars note that BIMSTEC has steadily become “a natural means of Indian regional integration” because, unlike the now-defunct South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), it does not include Pakistan and avoids some of South Asia's long-standing intra-regional faultlines.

STRATEGIC RELEVANCE ACROSS INDO-PACIFIC

The Bay of Bengal is not simply a sea area: it is a dynamic zone of maritime trade, energy flows, critical sea-lines of communication (SLOCs), and strategic contestation. BIMSTEC's evolution reflects recognition that regional cooperation must account for these broader geostrategic contours. As one study puts it, the Bay of Bengal has become a “prime zone of strategic competition” between China and India with respect to energy resources, SLOCs and cultural influence.

In this light, BIMSTEC's relevance also extends into the broader Indo-Pacific architecture. For example, proposals

such as multimodal connectivity corridors, coastal shipping frameworks, regional energy grids, maritime shipping protocols and digital-trade initiatives are increasingly embedded in a larger Indo-Pacific agenda of connectivity and resilience. The Asian Development Bank-backed BIMSTEC Transport Infrastructure and Logistics Study (BTILS) and the Master Plan for Transport Connectivity are illustrative of this shift.

Moreover, BIMSTEC's multi-sectoral cooperation helps address non-traditional security challenges—disaster management, climate resilience, cyber-security, transnational crime, drug-trafficking—that span beyond strictly national borders. In an era when the Indo-Pacific is increasingly defined by hybrid threats, climate risks and multi-domain strategic competition, BIMSTEC offers a regionally anchored but outward-looking platform.

7 core areas led by member states:

- Trade, Investment & Development (Bangladesh)
- Environment & Climate Change (Bhutan)
- Security (India)
- Agriculture & Food Security (Myanmar)
- People-to-People Contact (Nepal)
- Science, Technology & Innovation (Sri Lanka)
- Connectivity (Thailand)

SIGNIFICANCE FOR INDIA

For India, BIMSTEC occupies a uniquely important position on multiple fronts—geographic, economic, strategic and diplomatic.

Key to it's Act East Policy: India's foreign-policy orientation articulated under the Act East policy envisions deeper

STRATEGIC RELEVANCE

engagement with Southeast Asia, leveraging infrastructure, connectivity, trade and culture. BIMSTEC is the prime vehicle for this strategic ambition: it stitches India's eastern flank (including its Northeastern states) with the broader ASEAN-dominated region through Bangladesh, Myanmar and Thailand. This connectivity enhances India's outreach eastward in a way that SAARC could not.

Maritime and Blue-Economy Interests: India's "SAGAR" (Security and Growth for All in the Region) vision emphasises the Indian Ocean and adjacent seas. The Bay of Bengal and BIMSTEC's maritime domain align directly with India's maritime security and blue-economy imperatives. The negotiations around BIMSTEC's Maritime Transport Agreement (MTA), for example, if implemented, would significantly enhance Indian maritime connectivity linkages and intra-regional trade across the Bay.

Regional Trade and Connectivity: India's trade links with BIMSTEC-member nations remain modest relative to their potential. By advancing cooperative frameworks (trade facilitation, customs harmonisation, digital-trade infrastructure), BIMSTEC provides India with an institutional mechanism to deepen economic integration with neighbours.

Strategic Hedging & Influence: With China's Belt and Road Initiative actively engaging many BIMSTEC states, India has an interest in offering alternative connectivity and cooperation pathways. BIMSTEC helps India extend its influence in the eastern maritime domain and provides a buffer against unilateral external dependencies.

External Stability and Internal Integration: Better integration with BIMSTEC also bolsters India's internal objective of stabilising its northeastern region by creating corridors and trade links that bypass the narrow Siliguri Corridor, and connect the northeast with Southeast Asia via Bangladesh and beyond.

Thus, for India, BIMSTEC is not just another multilateral forum—it is a strategic instrument to realise multiple policy goals: neighbourhood engagement, eastern connectivity, maritime-security projection, infrastructure diplomacy and economic integration.

Challenges and Opportunities Ahead: Despite its promise, BIMSTEC faces structural constraints. Its decision-making remains slow, some institutional mechanisms are weak, and intra-regional divisions persist. For India and other members to fully harness the platform, key steps are necessary:

- Accelerated implementation of flagship projects (ports, connectivity corridors, power grids).
- A robust Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiation to actualise economic integration.
- Stronger institutional capacity at the BIMSTEC Secretariat and better alignment of member-state action-plans.
- Deeper strategic cooperation beyond trade—security dialogues, maritime-domain awareness, technology linkages.

At the same time, the evolving geopolitical environment offers opportunities. The shift in global strategic focus to the Indo-Pacific, the emerging importance of digital-economy linkages, the urgency of climate-resilience frameworks and the growing relevance of middle-power coalitions provide BIMSTEC an opening to punch above its weight.

THE ROAD AHEAD

Moving from the Bay of Bengal to the broader Indo-Pacific, BIMSTEC can recalibrate its identity. For example, its vision documents (such as the BIMSTEC Bangkok Vision 2030) emphasise terms such as "prosperous, resilient and open" region, pointing towards a mindset of connectivity, intra-regional trade, security cooperation and openness to wider partnerships.

For India, encouraging BIMSTEC to become an effective sub-regional pillar of the Indo-Pacific architecture carries multiple gains: it strengthens India's leadership credentials, enhances economic corridors eastwards, diversifies strategic partnerships, and embeds India deeper into regional supply chains and value systems. It also helps India link its eastern states and landlocked neighbours with sea routes, mitigating the "chicken's neck" bottleneck of the Siliguri Corridor.

A NEW ERA

In 2025, BIMSTEC stands at a strategic junction: its evolution from a modest sub-regional cooperative forum to a platform of strategic relevance is firmly underway. For India, the platform is of great significance—as a conduit for its eastern ambitions, a maritime lever, and a regional integration vehicle. As global power patterns shift, and as the Indo-Pacific becomes the central theatre of geopolitics, BIMSTEC's ability to deliver concrete connectivity, trade, security and institutional outcomes will determine whether it becomes a fulcrum of regional power or remains a marginal conversation. For New Delhi, the imperative is clear: to invest purposefully, to deliver region-wide connectivity, and to shape the grouping into a credible pillar of Indo-Pacific strategy.

POWER RIVALRIES IGNITE THE HORN OF AFRICA IN 2025

BATTLEGROUND

The Horn of Africa has become one of the most contested geopolitical zones of 2025, where global rivalries, regional ambitions, and local insecurities collide. From militarised sea lanes and foreign bases to climate-driven instability and state fragmentation, the region is no longer a periphery but a strategic battleground. As external powers deepen their footprint, African actors struggle between dependency, diplomacy, and emerging agency.



JUSTUS NAM | NAIROBI, KENYA

EXPERT ON AFRICA | GEOPOLITICAL ANALYST FOR NEWS ANALYTICS

As 2025 draws to a close, the Horn of Africa stands at a dangerous yet defining crossroads. The region's geography has always invited contestation, but rarely with the intensity witnessed today. The Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, vital maritime chokepoints, have become geopolitical arteries through which the world's anxieties about trade, migration, and militarisation converge. Global powers are no longer observing from afar; they are entrenching themselves within the region, each claiming to secure stability while deepening a competitive scramble for influence.

CHAOS AS CURRENCY

The paradox of the moment is stark: the Horn's strategic value rises in direct proportion to its instability. Foreign powers

intervene precisely because governance remains weak. In effect, chaos has become a market. Fragile institutions and fragmented states create openings for lucrative security contracts, resource concessions, and influence deals that are less attainable in more regulated environments. Turbulence now sustains an international ecosystem of risk management, private military contracting, and aid conditionalities, each profitable in its own right.

Sudan's civil war alone has displaced nearly five million people across Chad, Egypt, South Sudan, and Ethiopia, creating one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. Ethiopia, though recovering from internal conflict, remains fragile. Renewed tensions between Addis Ababa and



Mogadishu over Somaliland's port deal have revived old anxieties about borders and maritime sovereignty. In Somalia, the withdrawal of the African Union Transition Mission (ATMIS) has exposed the limits of both international guarantees and domestic capacity. Al-Shabaab has proven resilient, adapting through social media, rural control, and taxation networks to outlast foreign interventions.



MILITARISED WATERS

The Horn's security architecture is overstretched even as foreign presence expands. The United States maintains about 700 troops in Somalia focused on counterterrorism and intelligence. China rotates roughly 1,000 personnel through its Djibouti base, its first overseas military foothold. Gulf states, notably the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia, have expanded their presence in Berbera, Assab, and Port Sudan, driven by maritime access and Red Sea security. Turkey continues to train Somali forces, having already supervised an estimated 2,500 troops. The European Union, through its Coordinated Maritime Presences mechanism, sustains naval patrols in the Gulf of Aden, signalling Europe's intent to safeguard critical shipping lanes.

African agency is re-emerging as IGAD strengthens regional security coordination, the AU adopts maritime governance, and Ethiopia-Kenya cooperation grows through joint infrastructure and energy projects like LAPSSET.

Behind these deployments lies an emerging maritime chessboard where ports, logistics hubs, and sea lanes serve as instruments of strategic competition. What was once a peripheral frontier has become a testing ground for new doctrines of great-power projection and counter-projection. The militarisation of the Red Sea corridor is now as much about intelligence and digital infrastructure as it is about bases and ships.

These deployments expose a regional contradiction. While African leaders champion "African solutions to African problems", their most militarised frontier has become a theatre of external management. Djibouti, the smallest state in the region, now hosts bases from at least six foreign

powers, effectively turning its territory into an international security condominium. Leaders invoke sovereignty even as they lease it out, weakening collective bargaining and deepening dependency.

EMERGING REGIONAL AGENCY

Still, the Horn is not devoid of agency. African diplomacy is evolving in subtle but important ways. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), long dismissed as slow and bureaucratic, is repositioning itself as a convening platform for regional security coordination, catalysed by the pressures of Sudan's war. The African Union (AU) has integrated maritime governance into its peace and security agenda. Meanwhile, Ethiopia and Kenya, despite competing ambitions, increasingly cooperate on energy corridors and infrastructure, notably the Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia Transport Corridor (LAPSSET) project linking Lamu Port to South Sudan and Ethiopia.

These developments signal the stirrings of pragmatic regionalism, rooted less in rhetoric and more in functional cooperation. In addition, IGAD's evolving early-warning systems and mediation networks reveal a quiet institutional maturity. The organisation is learning to bridge the divide between diplomacy and security, aligning its conflict-resolution work with trade, migration, and environmental management. Such reforms, though often overlooked, mark the beginnings of an indigenous approach to complex regional challenges.



ECONOMIC FAULTLINES

Economic recovery, however, remains uneven. The Horn's combined GDP is projected to grow around 4 per cent, driven by agriculture and infrastructure spending, yet debt ratios remain perilously high. Food insecurity persists, with over 25 million people facing acute hunger across Ethiopia, Somalia, and Sudan. Climate shocks have worsened: erratic rainfall and rising sea temperatures disrupt livelihoods, and drought cycles now occur every three years instead of five. Ecological fragility has become a multiplier of conflict and displacement.

Trade patterns reveal shifting alignments. China remains

the top trading partner for Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Sudan, accounting for nearly a quarter of total trade. Gulf states collectively represent another fifth, largely through energy and

Africa's strategic agenda in the Horn is still shaped by foreign powers, not regional coordination, resulting in fragmented interventions that promise stability but fail to deliver lasting peace.



logistics. The United States and European Union, though still major donors, now compete on less favourable terms in infrastructure and financing. Western aid, long tied to governance and democracy conditionalities, pales beside the transactional speed and autonomy of Chinese and Gulf financing. For many governments, these deals offer immediacy and flexibility, even at the cost of long-term institutional reform.

THE ROAD AHEAD

Meanwhile, the Horn's diaspora, estimated at 15 million people, has emerged as a vital bridge between local resilience and global networks. Remittances exceed USD 13 billion, surpassing foreign direct investment. Beyond capital, diaspora communities amplify soft power through media, entrepreneurship, and policy advocacy. In Nairobi and Addis Ababa, returnees from the Gulf and North America are reshaping the tech and creative industries, hinting at a more self-determined regional economy.

Beneath these dynamics lies a deeper continental question: who defines Africa's strategic priorities? Despite the rhetoric of multipolarity, the Horn's agenda is still largely shaped in foreign capitals. Washington's Red Sea Strategy, Beijing's Maritime Silk Road, and Abu Dhabi's Blue Economy Corridor converge on the Horn but rarely through African coordination. The AU's Peace and Security Council remains reactive, struggling to translate declarations into operational action. The result is a patchwork of interventions, many claiming to stabilise, few delivering lasting peace.

Yet an assertive African voice is beginning to surface. In Addis Ababa, the AU's Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security is drafting a Red Sea and Gulf of Aden Strategy to coordinate maritime engagement. Kenya and Ethiopia are quietly working with Egypt on navigation and energy security frameworks, recognising that shared water and energy corridors can be more stabilising than arms races. Regional universities and think tanks in Addis Ababa, Nairobi, and Djibouti are increasingly generating indigenous analyses on maritime law, debt diplomacy, and resource governance — areas once dominated by Western consultancies. These intellectual shifts are critical: African agency must also be epistemic, rooted in reclaiming the power to define problems and solutions from within.

The Horn now epitomises both the promise and peril of Africa's geopolitical awakening. It is the one region where global ambitions, regional rivalries, and local survival intersect most visibly. Yet amid this contest, there are quiet stirrings of adaptive sovereignty. Kenya's mediation in Sudan, Ethiopia's linkage of industrial policy to port diplomacy, and Somalia's gradual reclamation of airspace control all signal a maturing strategic posture. If sustained, these acts of autonomy could turn the Horn from a theatre of dependency into a laboratory of African resilience.

(Justus Nam is a geopolitical analyst for The News Analytics Herald and covers Africa. The views expressed are of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The News Analytics Herald.)

QUICK INSIGHTS

- *Foreign powers exploit weak governance, turning instability into a geopolitical marketplace.*
- *Red Sea militarisation accelerates as US, China, Gulf states expand bases.*
- *Regional diplomacy slowly matures through IGAD, AU, and Ethiopia–Kenya cooperation.*
- *Economic recovery remains fragile amid debt, hunger, climate shocks, and shifting trade patterns.*
- *Horn's future hinges on African agency: strategy, unity, and financial independence.*

FLOTILLA SEIZED, LAW SUNK: ISRAEL'S BLOCKADE FACES GLOBAL LEGAL STORM

INSIGHT

In October 2025, Israel's seizure of the Marinette—a humanitarian flotilla bound for Gaza—sparked global outrage and reopened the debate on the legality of its long-standing naval blockade. Beyond a single incident, it symbolises the erosion of international maritime law, raising the question: how far can security be invoked to justify actions that defy global humanitarian principles?



DR. AFTAB ALAM | DEAN, FACULTY OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES | ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY FOR NEWS ANALYTICS

On 3 October, Israeli naval commandos intercepted and seized the *Marinette*, the final vessel of the 44-ship Global Sumud Flotilla, as it sailed through international waters towards Gaza. This followed the interception of other flotilla vessels on 1 October. The flotilla carried over 500 parliamentarians, lawyers, journalists, and activists united in a desperate bid to deliver humanitarian aid to Gaza's two million besieged residents. Defiant, the Freedom Flotilla Coalition, the umbrella organisation behind many such missions, launched a similar effort from Italy the very next week.

The seizure of the Global Sumud Flotilla has sparked global condemnation, igniting a fierce debate over its legality under international law. Human rights groups denounce the interception of a humanitarian mission in international waters as a flagrant violation of international law guaranteeing

maritime freedom. Colombia has cut diplomatic and trade ties; several European nations have urged respect for the rights of detained crew members; and UN experts have denounced the interceptions as an “illegal abduction” amid growing concern for Gaza's civilians. Yet Israel defends its actions as necessary security measures, asserting that its naval blockade, enforced since 2009 to thwart weapons smuggling to Hamas, is both lawful and essential. Israel has consistently characterised flotillas seeking to break the Gaza blockade as “propaganda” or “stunts” orchestrated by “terror

activists” allegedly linked to Hamas — a claim widely rejected by flotilla organisers, participants, human rights experts, and numerous international governments, with the Swedish activist Greta Thunberg remarking that “nobody would risk their lives for a publicity stunt.”

“Freedom of the seas cannot be suspended by politics or power.” – Maritime Law Scholar, Geneva Institute.

A PATTERN OF FORCE AT SEA

This is, however, not an isolated incident. Israel has successfully intercepted almost all aid flotillas bound for Gaza for over a decade, with one exception in 2008. Every attempt since then has been foiled by Israeli forces. The most infamous incident



occurred in May 2010, when Israeli commandos stormed the lead ship of the Gaza Freedom Flotilla, the Mavi Marmara, in international waters, killing nine Turkish nationals and injuring dozens. Undeterred by the deadly 2010 raid, the flotilla movement has persisted with remarkable resilience. However, a clear pattern is evident, as subsequent similar efforts in 2011, 2015, 2018, and 2021 met the same fate:



interception, seizure, and the detention and eventual deportation of activists. This pattern continues unabated. In 2025 alone, Israel intercepted the aid ships *Conscience* in May, *Madleen* in June, and *Handala* in July. These actions clearly demonstrate a consistent Israeli policy: treating every humanitarian flotilla as a security threat to be met with force.

This pattern of seizing aid flotillas flouts the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which governs maritime navigation. UNCLOS designates waters beyond the 12-nautical-mile (19 km) territorial sea as international waters, where all states enjoy unfettered navigational rights. Article 2 of the 1958 Convention on the High Seas and Article 87 of UNCLOS provide that the high seas are open to all states and guarantee freedom of navigation. Furthermore, Article 88 of UNCLOS stipulates that the high seas must be used exclusively for peaceful purposes.

According to Article 92(1) of UNCLOS and Article 6(1) of the 1958 Convention, a vessel on the high seas is, in principle, subject only to the jurisdiction of its flag state. States may not seize vessels in international waters except in narrow circumstances, including piracy, the slave trade, illicit drug trafficking, unauthorised broadcasting, and situations where a vessel is suspected of sailing under a false flag. However, none of these exceptions applies to Israel's actions against the *Sumud Flotilla*. Thus, by intercepting the *Global Sumud Flotilla* 70 nautical miles (130 km) off Gaza's coast, Israel brazenly violated UNCLOS, trampling the fundamental right to maritime freedom and denying vital aid to a desperate population. It sets a dangerous precedent by allowing states to project their domestic security policies hundreds of miles into international waters.

"A blockade in international waters, absent UN approval, is a perilous precedent."

THE LAW BREACHED

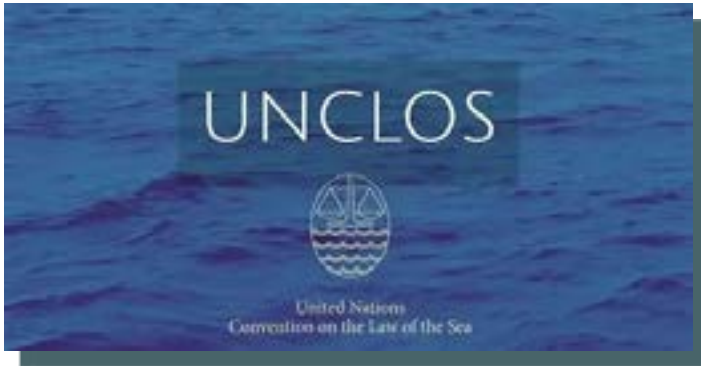
Israel justifies its actions by invoking the law of naval blockade, arguing that, as a state engaged in an armed conflict with Hamas, it has the legal right to intercept vessels attempting to breach this blockade. This stance, however, rests on a legally tenuous and contradictory foundation. It also raises two critical questions. First, can a state legitimately impose a naval blockade on a territory it is widely considered to control as an occupying power? Second, can such a blockade be enforced without exceptions, prohibiting all civilian humanitarian aid?

Traditionally, a naval blockade, as an act of war, restricts access to ports and coasts under enemy control to prevent vessel traffic from any state. Consequently, an occupying power cannot legally declare war against a territory it already controls. Due to its effective control over Gaza's borders, airspace, territorial waters, population registry, and the entry and exit of goods, Israel is widely regarded as the occupying power in Gaza — a status disputed by Israel but affirmed by international bodies such as the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the International Court of Justice. The definition of a naval blockade suggests that Israel cannot legally establish or enforce such a blockade on Gaza's coastline. This interpretation is grounded in customary international law, as reflected in the 1909 London Declaration and the 1913 Oxford Manual, and supported by modern military manuals from Germany, Australia, and the United States.



Furthermore, within the contemporary United Nations framework, a naval blockade is fundamentally considered an act of force and is therefore prohibited under international law. For such a blockade to be considered lawful, it must meet one of two stringent criteria: it must be explicitly authorised by the UN Security Council as a measure to address a threat to international peace and security, or it must be a necessary and proportional act of self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter, enacted in response to an ongoing armed attack. Israel's blockade of Gaza meets neither of these conditions, as it was neither mandated by the Security Council nor a legitimate act of self-defence, as Article 51 applies only in response to an armed attack by one state against another.

Israel is not engaged in conflict with another state but rather with Hamas, a non-state resistance organisation.



THE LEGAL VOID

Even if Israel’s naval blockade of Gaza is considered legal, international law imposes stringent limitations on it. A blockade that disproportionately harms civilians and undermines their living conditions is a clear violation of international law applicable during armed conflict. Accordingly, Israel must not cause disproportionate harm to civilians and is obligated to ensure the unimpeded passage of essential humanitarian aid to meet the civilian population’s needs. The Gaza blockade deliberately subjects the Palestinian population to mass starvation, a method of warfare strictly prohibited under Article 54 of Additional Protocol I (AP I) to the Geneva Conventions.

The San Remo Manual on International Law Applicable to Armed Conflicts at Sea (1994) expressly prohibits a blockade if its sole purpose is to starve a civilian population or deny it other objects essential for its survival, or if the damage to the civilian population is, or may be expected to be, excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated. It further imposes a positive obligation on the blockading state to provide free passage of such foodstuffs and supplies if the civilian population of a blockaded territory is inadequately supplied with essentials.

“When famine is man-made, neutrality is complicity.”
– UN Humanitarian Rapporteur, Geneva.

GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITY

Likewise, Article 59 of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 mandates occupying powers to permit the free passage of humanitarian aid. The ICRC’s study on customary international humanitarian law further requires parties to a conflict to ensure the rapid and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian relief to civilians in need. Consequently, seizing peaceful vessels carrying such aid directly violates these obligations.

Moreover, a UN-backed IPC panel recently confirmed a famine in Gaza, attributing it to Israel’s “systematic obstruction” of aid. A January 2024 ICJ provisional ruling also mandated Israel to “take immediate and effective measures” to enable humanitarian aid — a demand echoed by UN Security Council Resolutions 2720 and 2728, which call for unimpeded humanitarian access. By these standards, Israel’s blockade of Gaza and its interception of humanitarian vessels are legally untenable. Following the Mavi Marmara killings, the Human Rights Council also deemed Israel’s blockade unlawful, its enforcement in international waters illegal, and its use of force disproportionate. These findings remain directly applicable to today’s flotillas.

Israel’s interception and seizure of the Global Sumud Flotilla cannot be justified as lawful enforcement of a naval blockade. It violates freedom of navigation, disregards humanitarian exceptions in blockade law, breaches the Fourth Geneva Convention, defies binding UN Security Council resolutions, and contravenes the International Court of Justice’s January 2024 ruling mandating humanitarian aid access. While Israel, as an occupying power, may inspect vessels to prevent weapons smuggling to Hamas, intercepting flotillas carrying solely humanitarian aid to a famine-stricken population is indefensible. This action undermines the international legal order and sets a dangerous precedent for global humanitarian efforts. What is now needed is to move beyond routine verbal condemnation and take concrete, collective measures to hold those responsible for violations of international law to account.

*(Dr Aftab Alam is the Dean, Faculty of International Studies and teaches international law at Aligarh Muslim University. The views expressed are of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of **The News Analytics Herald**.)*

QUICK INSIGHTS

- Israel’s 2025 seizure of the Global Sumud Flotilla reignited debate on maritime law violations.
- UNCLOS guarantees freedom of navigation; Israel’s interception 70 miles offshore breached this right.
- The blockade, lacking UN approval, violates proportionality and humanitarian access obligations.
- Global famine warnings and ICJ rulings demand unimpeded aid to Gaza’s civilians.
- The case exposes a deeper crisis: power overriding law in international waters.

IN CONVERSATION



**H.E. Indra Mani Pandey,
Honourable Secretary General, BIMSTEC**



Sandhya Srivastava
Editor in Chief

In a pivotal year for regional cooperation, BIMSTEC stands at the centre of Asia's emerging strategic and economic architecture. As the organisation sharpens its mandate and prepares its roadmap for 2026, The News Analytics Herald—now engaged through the BIMSTEC Media Outreach Programme—presents an exclusive conversation with its Honourable Secretary General. In this interview with Ms Sandhya Srivastava, Editor-in-Chief, The News Analytics Herald, the Honourable Secretary General of

BIMSTEC, H.E. Indra Mani Pandey, offers rare insights into the organisation's evolving role in connectivity, security, and regional integration across the Bay of Bengal community. Excerpts from the conversation.

Q1. Your Excellency, warm greetings from The News Analytics Herald. As BIMSTEC completes over 28 years of its journey, The News Analytics Herald is honoured to join its Media Outreach Programme. How would you describe the organisation's founding vision and the way its role has evolved over the years amid the rapidly shifting Indo-Pacific landscape?

The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) was established with the understanding that the Bay of Bengal region possesses a unique convergence of geography,

culture and economic potential. Its founding vision was to create a bridge between South and Southeast Asia and to promote technical and economic cooperation based on shared interests and priorities in order to deal with common challenges.

During the past 28 years, BIMSTEC has evolved as an intergovernmental organisation. BIMSTEC's Agenda, comprising 18 areas of cooperation, reflects the shared priorities of its seven member States. Over more than 28 years, BIMSTEC has developed its institutional mechanisms and structures, including the establishment

of its permanent Secretariat in Dhaka, which enables it to engage in tangible regional cooperation in areas on its Agenda.

The adoption of the BIMSTEC Charter in 2022 and Bangkok Vision 2030 in 2025 has further strengthened this foundation by formalising the organisation's guiding values, institutional structure and modalities of cooperation and providing a roadmap for the future. In the rapidly evolving Indo-Pacific landscape, BIMSTEC has remained committed to forging tangible cooperation. Given the centrality of the Bay of Bengal in Indo-Pacific, the salience of BIMSTEC has grown.

Q2. Since the adoption of the BIMSTEC Charter in March 2022 at the Colombo Summit, the forum now operates with a formal institutional mandate. What are the most meaningful changes this Charter has enabled in terms of structure, decision-making and global engagement?

The adoption of the BIMSTEC Charter at the 5th Summit in Colombo is considered a milestone in BIMSTEC's institutional evolution. The Charter provides BIMSTEC with a formal legal identity, a defined mandate and a set of guiding principles.

The Charter strengthened the organisation's structure by clarifying the roles of the Summit, Ministerial and Senior Officials' Meetings, Sectoral mechanisms and the Secretariat. It also formalised the sectors of cooperation, under which each member State serves as the Lead for one sector in accordance with its expertise and regional priorities.

Equally important, the Charter institutionalised consensus-based decision-making and reaffirmed BIMSTEC's identity as a non-political, implementation-oriented regional organisation.

The Charter has also established a clear framework for BIMSTEC's engagement with external partners, ensuring that all cooperation with development agencies, regional organisations or international institutions remains aligned with the collectively agreed principles. This institutional foundation has been reinforced by the Bangkok Vision 2030, which provides a long-term strategic direction for BIMSTEC.

Q3. In a world of multiple and at times overlapping groupings like SAARC, IORA, ASEAN, QUAD, IPEF, what sets BIMSTEC apart as a regional

platform for cooperation? Does the loss of momentum with SAARC in the recent past offer an indication of important guardrails to be built for an organisation like BIMSTEC, allowing it to remain focused on the ethos it was founded upon?

BIMSTEC was conceived 28 years ago as a unique regional platform that brings together countries from both South and Southeast Asia, linked by geography and shared interests. The Organisation's Agenda has evolved to cover almost all SDGs. The non-political ethos of BIMSTEC and impeccable commitment of all its member States set it apart as a regional organisation.

For BIMSTEC, the main lesson has been the importance of maintaining a non-political consensus-based approach and a focus on cooperation that delivers tangible benefits. The Charter and the Bangkok Vision 2030 further reinforce this orientation by setting out clear objectives, institutional principles and long-term priorities agreed by the member States. As an organisation, we should remain committed to our foundational ethos, vision, goals and priorities, and continue to strive towards deepening regional cooperation to fulfil people's aspirations.

Q4. The 6th BIMSTEC Summit in Bangkok (April 2025) was attended by all the Heads of state and government of its seven member States. It is seen as a major success and turning point in the BIMSTEC growth trajectory. What key decisions from the summit will define the organisation's path in the coming decade?

The 6th Summit in Bangkok endorsed a wide range of decisions that will guide BIMSTEC's work over the coming decade. A major outcome was the adoption of the BIMSTEC Bangkok Vision 2030, which outlines a shared aspiration for building a prosperous, resilient and open BIMSTEC region by 2030. The Summit also adopted the Rules of Procedure for BIMSTEC Mechanisms, which strengthen institutional coherence and ensure regular convening of all mandated meetings at the Summit, Ministerial, Senior Officials' and sectoral levels. Member States also signed the Agreement on Maritime Transport Cooperation to enhance maritime connectivity, facilitate cross-border trade and support wider economic integration.

In terms of institutional strengthening, member States commended the Report of the Eminent Persons' Group (EPG) on the future direction of BIMSTEC and called

for its swift implementation. Besides, Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) between BIMSTEC and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) were also signed.

The Declaration by the leaders of member States underlined the imperatives of regional cooperation in various sectors on its Agenda and issued specific directives for future cooperation. Collectively, the outcomes of the Summit reflect the shared priorities of all seven member States and reaffirm BIMSTEC's character as a consensus-based non-political regional organisation.



Q5. The signing of the Maritime Transport Cooperation Agreement was widely welcomed. How will this reshape logistics, trade routes, and blue economy opportunities in the Bay of Bengal?

The Agreement on Maritime Transport Cooperation provides a structured basis for enhancing cooperation among the member States in areas related to maritime transport, port operations and merchant shipping. The Agreement provides a comprehensive framework for cooperation in port access, treatment of vessels, seafarer documentation, maritime safety, facilitation of cargo movement and mutual recognition of certificates. It also includes provisions on assistance to vessels and crew, port formalities, civil and criminal proceedings and the establishment of a Joint Shipping Committee to oversee the development of Standard Operating Procedures and to facilitate the Agreement's implementation.

Regarding trade routes, the Agreement provides for non-discriminatory treatment of vessels engaged under its framework and facilitates access to designated ports

on the basis of mutual benefit. Such arrangements can strengthen the movement of goods among member States and also complement ongoing connectivity initiatives under the BIMSTEC Master Plan for Transport Connectivity.

The Agreement is also relevant in the blue economy domain. By promoting cooperation on maritime safety, environmental protection and exchange of information, it supports efforts to ensure that maritime activities are safe, sustainable, and aligned with the broader development agenda of the region.

Q6. Connectivity, energy, and climate cooperation are seen as BIMSTEC's flagship pillars. How is the Secretariat facilitating tangible progress in these domains, particularly in cross-border infrastructure and sustainable energy transition?

The Secretariat's role is to facilitate the coordination and implementation of decisions taken by the member States in various sectors. In connectivity, Secretariat assists member States in advancing the BIMSTEC Master Plan for Transport Connectivity, including through coordination meetings and technical exchanges. The Secretariat also works with the relevant authorities to support progress in deliberation on the draft BIMSTEC Motor Vehicle Agreement, etc.

In the energy sector, Secretariat facilitates cooperation under the BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection Master Plan, including renewable energy, power system resilience and regional electricity trade. The establishment of the BIMSTEC Energy Centre in Bengaluru, India, provides an institutional platform for technical collaboration in regional grid interconnection, energy efficiency and green energy transition.

On environment and climate cooperation, the Secretariat helps advance the priorities outlined in the BIMSTEC Plan of Action on Environment and Climate Change, including knowledge sharing on adaptation, disaster resilience, coastal and mountain ecosystems and sustainable energy transition. It has also been engaging with external partners to advance regional climate action.

Across all three domains, the Secretariat's work remains facilitative and member State-driven, ensuring that cooperation is guided by consensus and equality.

Q7. Your Excellency, given BIMSTEC's chartered mandate on security cooperation in the area of Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime, how is the organisation addressing shared challenges—ranging from border insurgencies to trafficking and maritime risks, across the India, Myanmar, Bangladesh sub-region?

The Bay of Bengal region faces a range of traditional and non-traditional security challenges that transcend national boundaries, including terrorism, transnational organised crime, drug trafficking, cyber threats, human trafficking and maritime security challenges. In recognition of these shared challenges, Security cooperation has been identified as a sector under BIMSTEC's cooperation framework.

Through mechanisms such as the Joint Working Group on Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime and its sub-groups, as well as the BIMSTEC National Security Chiefs' Meeting, member States exchange information, share assessments and identify areas for capacity-building on issues such as counter terrorism, violent extremism, human trafficking, narcotics control, cyber security and maritime security.

The Security sector has also made progress in negotiating a legal and institutional framework for cooperation. The BIMSTEC Convention on Combating International Terrorism, Transnational Organised Crime and Illicit Drug Trafficking has been in force since March 2021 and it is being implemented. The Convention on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters has been signed and is being ratified by the member States. The text of the Conventions on Human Trafficking, Extradition and Trafficking in Persons is being negotiated. Work in emerging areas, such as cyber and maritime security, is guided by frameworks including the Five-Year Action Plan for Cybersecurity Cooperation and the Guidelines for the Maritime Component of Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HA/DR).

Partnerships have also expanded in areas where Member States consider international expertise useful. The MoU with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and BIMSTEC's Observer Status at the Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering (APG) provide access to technical support and help align cooperation with relevant global standards, as appropriate. Overall, we have made progress in addressing various security challenges faced by our member States, which are

transnational and regional in their nature and implications.

Q9. Disaster management and climate adaptation are now urgent shared challenges. What role does BIMSTEC play in fostering joint early-warning systems, resource sharing, and humanitarian coordination?

Disaster management and climate resilience have remained central areas of BIMSTEC cooperation, reflecting the region's vulnerability to cyclones, floods, landslides, coastal hazards and other climate-induced risks. BIMSTEC plays a facilitative role in strengthening early-warning cooperation, improving preparedness, and supporting coordination among member States in responding to natural disasters. It provides mechanisms for national authorities to exchange information, share technical expertise and develop approaches that support national systems while taking into account the broader interests of all member States.

The primary institutional mechanism for advancing cooperation is the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Disaster Management Cooperation (EG-DMC). The Expert Group has finalised the Plan of Action to improve preparedness and coordination for responding to natural disasters in the Bay of Bengal region. The establishment of a BIMSTEC Centre of Excellence in Disaster Management in India is under implementation.

To strengthen practical cooperation, BIMSTEC conducts Disaster Management Exercise (DMEx), which brings together national disaster response agencies to strengthen communication, assess operational readiness and identify areas where additional capacity-building may be beneficial. Four exercises have been conducted to date, including the most recent one in July 2025.

For early-warning systems and scientific collaboration, the BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate (BCWC) has been established in Noida, India, which facilitates cooperation in weather prediction, climate modelling, research and capacity building among member States.

BIMSTEC has also been engaging with specialised international organisations, such as the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre (ADPC) and Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI). These partnerships help complement regional initiatives with technical knowledge and global best practices.

WAVES OF TENSION: HOW CHINA'S MARITIME PUSH IS REWRITING ASIA'S POWER MAP

DIplomacy

The West Philippine Sea (WPS) is part of the larger South China Sea—but for the Philippines, it is a very special area. It touches many islands, reefs, and coastal zones that are vital for fisheries, trade routes, security, and nature. When people talk about “defending the West Philippine Sea,” they mean protecting both these waters and the rights of Filipinos over them. But why does it matter not just to the Philippines, but to the world? And how can the Philippines act to protect it?



NOEL ADALIA DIMASACAT
DEFENCE ANALYST AND EAST ASIA SCHOLAR | MANILA, PHILIPPINES
FOR NEWS ANALYTICS

The WPS lies along some of the world's busiest shipping lanes. Goods from many countries pass through these waters. If stability fails here, if vessels cannot pass freely or are threatened, it could raise costs, disrupt supply chains, and affect global trade.

The area is believed to have fish stocks, oil and gas deposits, and other seabed resources. For the Philippines, these mean food, jobs and economic development. Globally, how a country handles disputes over sea rights sets an example for how international law is applied and how resources are shared.

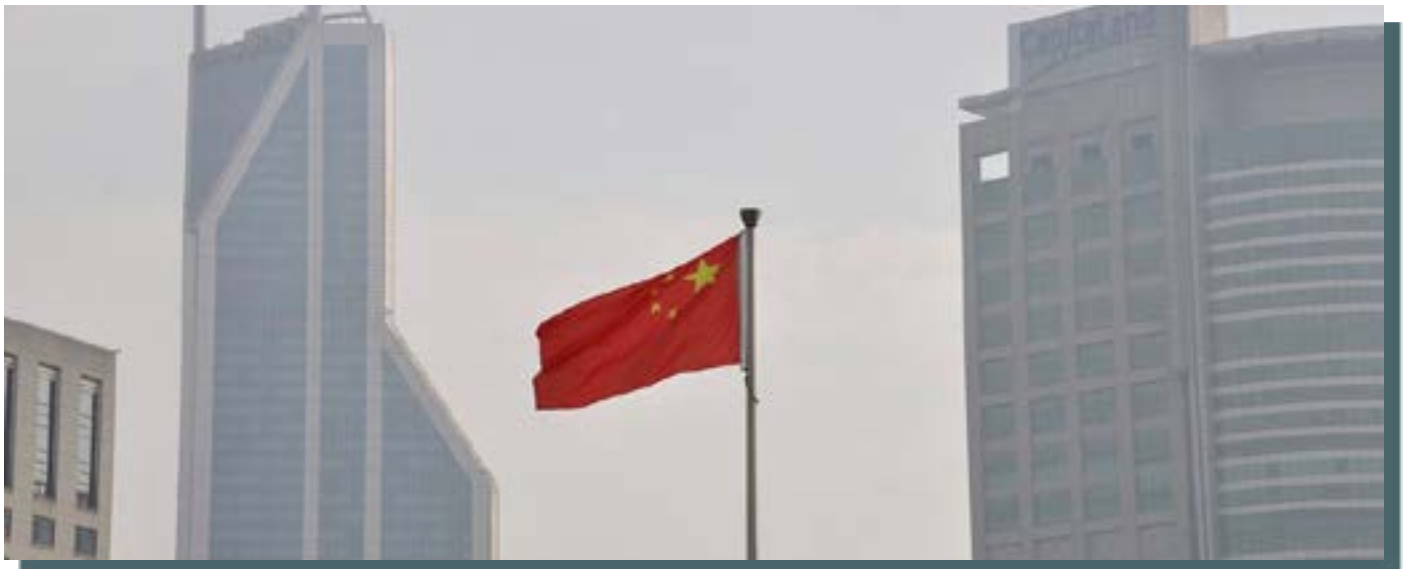
The Philippines won a major case in 2016 at the Permanent Court of Arbitration, which ruled parts of China's sweeping claims invalid. How that ruling is respected—or ignored—

will affect the credibility of international law. If powerful states ignore rules, smaller states may suffer. For the rest of the world, this matters for fairness, peace, and stability.

Seas and reefs are fragile. The WPS has coral, marine life and habitats that sustain local fisherfolk and coastal communities. Damage here can lead to ecosystem collapse, which can ripple out to climate resilience, food security and coastal safety.

ESCALATING INCURSIONS

Several reported incidents involving China (People's Republic of China) and the Philippines claimed waters in the West Philippine Sea occurred during the first ten months of 2025. In mid-January, the Philippine Coast Guard reported that a large Chinese Coast Guard vessel (CCG 5901, dubbed the “monster ship”) remained illegally inside the Philippine



Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). On 17 January 2025, the PCG noted that the vessel had been present for 13 days within Philippine waters near Zambales.

China's actions in the West Philippine Sea erode Philippine sovereignty, endanger livelihoods, undermine international law, and threaten regional security and global freedom of navigation.



On the same day, the Philippine Navy held a live-fire exercise near the disputed Scarborough Shoal (also called Bajo de Masinloc) within the Philippines' EEZ amid tensions over China's presence.

On 17 June, the Philippine Armed Forces publicly rejected Chinese claims that the Philippines' inviting allies for joint patrols was the cause of tension. Instead, the AFP pointed to China's incursions into the WPS.

On 31 July 2025, the Philippine Coast Guard reported that two Chinese research vessels—Zhu Hai Yun and Xiang Yang Hong—entered the Philippine EEZ near Balagtas Reef off the west coast of Luzon without Philippine permission, sparking concerns over possible unauthorised marine scientific activity.

On 12 October 2025, a serious incident occurred when a Philippine Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources vessel, BRP Datu Pagbuaya, anchored near Pag-asa Island (Thitu Island) to protect Filipino fishermen, was fired upon by a water cannon and rammed by a Chinese coast guard ship, causing minor structural damage.

Later in October, videos emerged showing Chinese ships using high-powered water cannons and ramming Philippine vessels in the WPS. In the same month, China's plan to designate certain parts of the WPS as a "nature reserve" was

criticised by Filipino civil society groups as a guise for occupation and reinforcement of Chinese claims.

On 24 October 2025, Chinese fishing boats carrying suspected cyanide breached the BRP Sierra Madre perimeter at Ayungin Shoal. Philippine forces intercepted the vessels, removed the illegal gear, and escorted them out, safeguarding both the reef and national sovereignty.

These incidents together show an escalating pattern of Chinese maritime operations inside areas the Philippines claims, often without Philippine consent and often with disruptive or intimidating actions.

Each incident might seem local, but its effect is broader. They challenge the Philippines' sovereign rights over its marine zones and resources. They set precedents: if such actions go unchecked, similar actions may occur elsewhere. They increase the risk for Filipino fisherfolk, coast guard and naval personnel, and for local food security. They weaken the credibility of international law if such large states acts with impunity. They raise the stakes for regional security and the global principle of freedom of navigation.



DEFENCE PATHWAYS

Here are several practical steps that the Philippines can take to defend the WPS, using tools that are non-technical but effective.

Strengthen Monitoring and Presence: The Philippines should continue regular patrols by the Philippine Navy (PN), the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) in contested zones. Regular presence helps deter unauthorised intrusions and signals to the world that the Philippines is serious.

Improve Training and Equipment: When your "guards" have modern tools—vessels, surveillance systems, communications—they can respond more quickly. Training in maritime domain awareness (knowing who is where, what they're doing) is key.

Satellite imagery, drones, AIS tracking, and maritime surveillance allow the Philippines to monitor covert Chinese activity and use evidence for diplomatic or legal action.

If personnel are equipped to document incursions (photos, videos), it builds the case internationally.

Use Diplomacy: The Philippines can continue to appeal to international law, such as the 2016 arbitral award, and work through multilateral bodies like ASEAN, and engage alliances and partners (e.g., U.S., Australia, Japan). Global attention strengthens its position. Protests, formal complaints and diplomatic work matter.

Regional Partnerships: Working with other claimant states or interested countries increases leverage. Joint patrols, information-sharing, and coordinated diplomatic efforts help show unity and deter unilateral action.

Public Outreach and Transparency: Fishing villages and coastal communities in the WPS need support—legal, technical and financial. If fishermen are harassed or blocked, it harms their livelihoods. The Philippine government can provide support, legal protection, community awareness, and emergency response for those affected.

Empower Local Communities: Ordinary citizens should be informed and aware of what’s happening in the WPS. When Filipinos understand why it matters—they fish, trade, protect sovereignty—they become allies in safeguarding those waters. Transparency in actions and incidents builds domestic consensus.

Develop Sea Economy: Protection is more than defence. If the Philippines develops its marine resources—eco-tourism, responsible fishing, research—it strengthens its claim. A vibrant, active Philippine presence in its waters reinforces sovereignty and makes incursions more costly for others.

Use Technology: Satellite imagery, drones, automatic identification systems (AIS) for ships, and maritime domain awareness tools help the Philippines keep track of what happens. If Chinese ships operate covertly or near Philippine features, the data can be used in diplomatic or legal actions.

Clarify Roles: The government must clearly define what its navy, coast guard and fishery agencies do. Clear mandates reduce confusion, ensure coordination, and improve response times. Training and standard operating procedures for harassment, ramming and water cannoning must exist.

Measured Defence Posture: While the Philippines does not want war, it must show it is ready and will defend its rights. But the posture must be measured—avoid provocation, but also avoid passivity. When a vessel is rammed or displaced, proper documentation and response matter.



SKIRMISHES AND VIOLATIONS

The West Philippine Sea is not just a remote maritime zone—it matters for every Filipino, and it matters for the world. The Philippines’ ability to protect its rights there is tied to trade, food, security, law and environmental stability. The recent skirmishes and violations by China from January to October 2025 show that the situation is serious and evolving. But they also show that the Philippines is not passive.

By strengthening its naval and coast guard presence, using diplomacy and international law, partnering with allies, protecting local communities, and involving ordinary citizens, the Philippines can defend the WPS more effectively. For a safe, just, and sustainable future—not just for the Philippines, but for everyone who depends on an open, fair, and peaceful sea. When we say “Atin Ito – The West Philippine Sea is ours”, it means we all have a stake in it.

*(Noel Adalia Dimasacat, is a Defence Analyst & East Asia scholar specialising in technology. He is also the Chief Technology Officer at GWT Philippines. He is the Awardee of World CIO 200-2024 & 2023 – Transformative Technology Leader. The views expressed are of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of **The News Analytics Herald**.)*

QUICK INSIGHTS

- *The West Philippine Sea is vital for trade, resources, security, and global maritime law.*
- *China’s escalating incursions challenge Philippine sovereignty and the international legal order.*
- *Skirmishes in 2025 reveal rising militarisation, harassment, and environmental threats.*
- *The Philippines can respond through patrols, diplomacy, alliances, technology, and community protection.*
- *National defence requires joint action: government, military, fisherfolk, citizens, and global partners.*

WILL WINTER 2025 DECIDE THE FATE OF THE RUSSIA–UKRAINE WAR?

GEOSTRATEGIC

The Russia–Ukraine war, now in its fourth year, has shifted from fast-paced manoeuvres to a grinding war of attrition, with winter emerging as the decisive battlefield. As military exhaustion deepens, economies strain, and Western support wanes, both nations face a punishing season that may determine not just territorial control but the future geopolitical balance between Russia, the West, and a war-weary world.



LT GEN DP PANDEY(R)
FOR NEWS ANALYTICS

More than 100,000 Ukrainian soldiers are dead, and many civilians as well. The estimates are much worse on the Russian side. The approximation of the cost of damages to both Russia and Ukraine is unimaginable in terms of human losses, suffering, and physical infrastructure. Two nations that lived together and fought together are now at each other's throats, sucking life, virtually, together for the interests of outside forces. The fight of the US, NATO, and other European countries "to the last Ukrainian" has been ongoing since February 2014, when the Russians, following Ukraine's Revolution of Dignity, occupied Crimea. The latest conflict, the longest and deadliest in the region since the Second World War, started on

24 February 2022, when, in a dramatic strategic manoeuvre, the Russian airborne forces landed near Kyiv for capture, with a ground pincer from the north to encircle and link up rapidly.

"General Winter 2022" had other plans, and so did the Ukrainians. The northern arm of the invasion floundered under the force of the winter, with heavy equipment, tanks, and mechanised columns lined up along narrow roads, becoming easy targets. They could not leave the roads due to soggy ground, and those who did were bogged down. The Ukrainians exploited rocket launchers and air power for a comprehensive blunting of the northern force and therefore



avoided encirclement and capture of Kyiv. However, the Russians made some successes elsewhere, and the war rapidly transitioned into a war of attrition. The General Winter of 2022 broke the back of the Russian offensive before it could commence. Now, the winters of 2025–26 are being viewed with a fresh perspective and respect for the war between Ukraine and Russia and watched keenly by the world.



WHO IS WINNING?

No one but America is a winner in this war. The Europeans, suffering from a slowed economy that was further impacted by COVID, had to suffer the public humiliation of closing the oil and gas pipelines from Russia and diversifying on the orders of the Americans. This diversification process, not yet completed, shows how economic entanglement and mutual dependence have kept regional peace since the Cold War. The NATO countries now have to raise investments in defence and security to a minimum of 5% of GDP when their economies are in dire straits. The image of all the top leaders of NATO being schooled by Trump during the conference at The Hague, where these directions were passed and reluctantly accepted, is embarrassing to the countries concerned. The conflict has fractured peace and broken the back of the already fragile economy of the European world.

Ukraine is the worst hit, of course. Led by Zelensky, a famous comedy actor in a previous avatar and a mercurial personality now facing corruption charges of siphoning off war funds, Ukraine has been able to face off the Russian onslaught. Ukraine, bolstered by the Western powers and the bravery of its soldiers and the resilience of common citizens, has persevered against a much superior Russia, even though territories have been lost, by making the contest a replica of the trench warfare last fought in the First World War.

The Russians have suffered as well. Putin calls it a Special Operation and has yet to declare it as a war. The geopolitical isolation in the Western-led world, where the international organisations and financial institutions are still in the firm grip of the US and Europe, means the sanctions are hurting Russia's oil-based economy. The undeclared battlefield losses, estimated to be more than 250,000, have had a significant impact.

Though for three years, Putin has been able to circumvent

the sanctions, the recent ones on oil companies like Rosneft have implications even for steadfast friends like India and China, where diversification is being witnessed. In terms of infrastructure losses and the costs of war, Russia has been able to withstand the challenges. However, the geopolitical leverage has been significantly degraded with the loss of Syria and influence elsewhere, with space being ceded to China. These losses on the geopolitical stage will be irrecoverable, as will the trust in the European landscape.

Ukraine is fiercely resisting further losses, but Russia's slow, relentless advance, backed by harsh attrition tactics and infrastructure destruction, is reshaping the conflict into a grinding, unprecedented war.

THE STRATEGIC DYNAMIC

More than the military, now the targets are civilians and civilian infrastructure. The primary targets are power generation plants critical to surviving the extreme cold. Though both sides are accused of these war crimes, Ukraine is hit significantly. There are attempts at escalation by a few members of NATO to bring in ballistic weapons of longer range and greater destructive capability. The unveiling of Burevestnik, a nuclear-powered cruise missile that can cruise in low orbit around the Earth undetected, and Poseidon, a nuclear-powered



underwater drone, both intended to carry nuclear warheads, by Russia, is an obvious attempt to push the world towards a ceasefire by stopping the funding of Ukraine.

The war is now more influenced by international support for each side, but sanctions are the central argument to control Russia — and not, unfortunately, diplomacy. Though severe sanctions are in place, it seems that these are hurting the Europeans and the rest of the world more than the Russians. The Americans are the only ones surely profiting, even though they point fingers towards China and India. Russian oil has brought more grief to the world due to Trump than to Putin. At times, one wonders whether the war is about NATO's expansion, fear of Russian influence and a presumed expansionist agenda, or simply America setting the stage for

profiteering when both the world economy and theirs are down.

The Russians have virtually achieved the military and political objectives they set out for nearly four years ago. A few land enclaves are being heavily contested. There are reports of a large Ukrainian force, estimated between 5,000 and 10,000, having been surrounded by the Russians in the region of Kursk. While Ukraine, having lost significant territory, is now fighting to retain the balance of the Russian-claimed territory, the attempt to regain and retake it is met with ferocity unimaginable.



RESILIENCE AND ENDURANCE

The costs on Ukrainian civilians are going to be extremely prohibitive as the gloves are off and any infrastructure related to power, heating, and water to endure the oncoming winter is being destroyed. The allies and partner countries can provide funds, guns, missiles, and intelligence, but cannot rebuild infrastructure for the winter for the common civilian.

The winters preclude speedy manoeuvres in the face of the ill-famed “General Winter” in the Russian region, and therefore, the slugfest of trench warfare will be the focus. The exploitation of new emerging variants of drones and other destructive

Ukraine faces a severe manpower crisis as casualties mount, winter intensifies losses, and replacements dwindle, while Russia—though strained—retains a larger reserve, widening the numerical disadvantage.

technologies has become extremely cost-prohibitive in terms of soldiers’ lives along the front lines. Russians and Ukrainians have both invested in these and are innovating more lethal small-to-large drones and other systems.

RELEVANCE OF THE WINTER

The winter worldwide is forecast to be severe and longer than average. Therefore, the risks and consequences are higher for both warfighters and civilians. The Russians do not have much challenge, even though their energy infrastructure has been hit multiple times, but the real issue is for Ukraine, which is short of storage space and whose gas imports are far below the required quantity.

The diminishing numbers of recruitable male or even female population for warfighting is a major cause of concern. The Russians, with a larger population base, are also struggling but have enough bench strength. A double challenge of enemy and weather will claim lives that will need replacements. The replacement numbers have shrunk for either side, but more for Ukraine.

As American interests wane in the war and new sets of sanctions further isolate the Russians, the doors to diplomacy are being shut firmly. The cost will be borne directly by Russia and Ukraine. The Russians have diversified and found alternatives to manage through the sanctions, even at some major cost. The severity of the economic challenges will be felt by Ukraine.

As winter escalates casualties and replacements will fall short. Russia, despite its own strain, still commands a broader manpower base, deepening Ukraine’s numerical disadvantage on the battlefield.

However, for the two warring countries, the one that sustains the winter with strength will turn the war in its favour in the summer. This winter is extremely crucial for both — to preserve and persevere.

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

QUICK INSIGHTS

- Winter 2025–26 is expected to decide the war’s military and political direction.
- Ukraine’s survival threatened by energy crisis, shrinking manpower and fading Western aid.
- Russia faces sanctions strain but retains battlefield leverage and endurance advantage.
- Conflict now driven by attrition, drones, infrastructure strikes and civilian suffering.
- Outcome may reshape global power, weaken Western influence, embolden Russia and China.

GLOBAL AFFAIRS &

The Year Geopolitics Redefined Power, Partnerships and Purpose

2025 was the year the world finally acknowledged that “disorder is the new order”. From NATO’s rearmament to AI’s diplomatic debut, from the oil shock in the Gulf to the quiet assertion of Asia’s middle powers, the rules of engagement shifted. The global map no longer divides neatly into allies and adversaries; it is now a mosaic of transactional alignments, digital rivalries, and climate fatigue. The year’s diplomacy was less about ideals and more about endurance — where nations recalibrated influence, sought resilience, and learned to negotiate uncertainty.



1. February 2025 — The AI Action Summit, Paris

“Algorithms became the new ambassadors.”

Hosted by President Macron and PM Modi the AI Action Summit transformed technology from an economic tool to a geopolitical force. Over 100 nations agreed on ethical AI frameworks and data sovereignty principles. The Paris Declaration established AI as a strategic asset—on par with oil or nuclear capability—and marked the birth of “technology diplomacy”, redefining global cooperation through code, data, and algorithmic governance.



3. April 2025 — EU-Central Asia Strategic Partnership, Samarkand

The European Union’s Samarkand summit produced a \$13.2 billion investment pledge, giving Central Asia an alternative to dependence on Moscow or Beijing. The partnership carved out new “Middle Corridors” for energy, infrastructure, and data connectivity. Europe’s reach into the Eurasian heartland signalled a long-term strategy to diversify supply lines and project influence eastward without confrontation.



2. March 2025 — East Asian Trilateral Security Dialogue, Tokyo

Japan, China, and South Korea reopened channels of dialogue after years of mistrust. The Tokyo meet underlined a maturing Asian diplomacy—less reactive to Western agendas, more regional in its pragmatism. Shared priorities on trade security, maritime crisis management, and supply-chain resilience hinted at an Indo-Pacific balance shaped increasingly by Asian agency, not external orchestration.

“2025 proved that power is no longer inherited — it is engineered, coded, and contested.”



4. June 2025 — Oil Shock and NATO Reset

The year’s twin flashpoints arrived together.

- Middle East Oil Crisis: Israeli strikes on Iranian assets sent Brent crude soaring 10 %, reminding markets how local wars still rule global economics.
- NATO Summit, The Hague: The 32-member alliance pledged 5 % GDP defence spending, refocusing on deterrence and readiness. The West rediscovered its collective muscle—though at the price of renewed polarisation.

“The Global South no longer speaks through others; it negotiates, invests, and leads on its own terms.”

DIPLOMACY 2025



5. July 2025 — Europe's Political Identity Crisis

The liberal-nationalist fault line deepened as populist parties gained ground across the continent. Immigration, energy costs, and Ukraine fatigue fractured consensus. For Europe, the test was not capability but cohesion—how to act strategically when the idea of “Europe” itself is under debate.



7. August–September 2025 — SCO Summit, Tianjin: The Rise of the Global South

The 25th Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Summit brought together leaders from China, India, Russia, Iran, and Central Asia—joined by Africa and Middle East observers. It showcased a new strategic geography: the Global South as a coherent diplomatic force. For China, it was a platform for non-Western governance; for India, an opportunity to balance engagement and independence within the Eurasian order.



9. October 2025 — U.S. Trade Nationalism and Economic Fragmentation

Washington's pivot to protectionism upended global trade. New tariffs, export controls, and supply-chain localisation created a “strategic economy” defined by security rather than efficiency. Nations scrambled to re-route manufacturing, diversify suppliers, and guard critical minerals. Economic diplomacy became weaponised, marking the formal death of hyper-globalisation.



“Europe's greatest challenge is not Russia — it is remembering why it united in the first place.”

6. August 2025 — U.S.–Russia Summit, Anchorage

After years of hostility, Washington and Moscow met in Alaska. No major breakthroughs followed, but the symbolism mattered: dialogue had resumed. Discussions ranged from nuclear posture to sanctions fatigue, revealing a tentative recalibration rather than reconciliation. Both powers appeared less interested in victory than in managing confrontation.



“AI and data are the new currency of diplomacy—invisible, valuable, and fiercely guarded.”

8. September 2025 — India–China Rivalry in Focus

Even amid SCO summit optics, the structural distrust between India and China persisted. Competition stretched across the Himalayas, the Indian Ocean, and tech corridors. The diplomatic choreography masked a strategic reality: Asia's two giants remain locked in a rivalry shaping the continent's military, economic, and digital futures.



DOHA 2025: A NEW GLOBAL AGENDA ANCHORED IN DIALOGUE AND DIPLOMACY

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

In a world marked by rapid transformations and growing divisions between East and West, all eyes are on Doha, now recognised as the city of dialogue and multi-track diplomacy. The Qatari capital will host the 23rd edition of the Doha Forum on 6-7 December 2025, under the theme 'Justice in Action: Beyond Promises to Progress'. This event is expected to be a pivotal milestone in shaping a new global agenda based on diplomacy, dialogue, and diversity.



NADIA HALLAK, BEIRUT, LEBANON
ARAB CORRESPONDENT, NEWS ANALYTICS

Over the past two decades, Doha has emerged as a hub for dialogue in a region where interests intersect and visions differ. From peace negotiations in Afghanistan to mediation efforts in Sudan and Lebanon, Qatar has developed a distinctive model of 'quiet diplomacy' founded on trust, openness, and non-alignment.

This approach has made Doha a symbol of 'active neutrality', a place where opposing parties can meet and find common ground. The Doha Forum 2025 crowns this trajectory by reinforcing bridge diplomacy connecting the Arab world with Asia (and beyond), paving the way for partnerships that transcend narrow geopolitical calculations. Diplomacy here is not limited to governments; it extends to civil society, academia, business leaders, and creatives embodying the concept of 'inclusive diplomacy'.

DEEP TRANSFORMATIONS

Over the past two decades, Asia, particularly China, India, Japan, and South Korea, has become the Arab world's largest trade and investment partner. With China's Belt and Road Initiative, cooperation has expanded to include ports, renewable energy, technology, maritime transport, and artificial intelligence. What is new in 2025 is that the relationship is no longer limited to exporting oil and importing goods; it has become reciprocal and strategic. Arab companies are now investing in Asian markets, while Asian universities and research centres are opening branches in the Gulf.

Forum reports show that trade between the two regions surpassed \$700 billion in 2025, reflecting the vast potential of the Arab-Asian economic alliance when framed within a long-term strategic vision.



The world is witnessing the end of the unipolar era and the emergence of a multipolar system, where Asia and the Arab world play an increasingly central role in rebalancing international relations.



Countries such as Qatar, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia are strengthening ties with China, India, and South Korea without compromising their relations with the West. This balanced approach embodies what is known as ‘positive pragmatism’, rooted in mutual interest and respect for sovereignty rather than alignment with any bloc. The Doha Forum 2025 provides a platform to discuss these transformations and explore the future of global multilateralism and the role of Arabs and Asians in building a fairer and more inclusive world order.

In an age of polarisation and conflict, Doha champions dialogue as courageous soft power, redefining diplomacy and reshaping global relations.

While politics and economics form the backbone of international relations, culture remains the most enduring and influential force in building trust. Cultural diplomacy takes centre stage at the Forum, aiming to bring people closer through art, education, heritage, and language.

In recent years, joint Arab–Asian initiatives, from art exhibitions and film festivals to academic exchanges, have flourished, fostering mutual understanding and affirming that dialogue between civilisations is the path to peace and security.

SOFT POWER FOR UNDERSTANDING

Qatar has long embraced soft power as a tool of international engagement. Through institutions such as the Qatar Foundation, Katara Cultural Village, and the Museum of Islamic Art, the country has promoted Arab culture and facilitated global knowledge exchange, particularly with Asia.

New initiatives within the Doha Forum 2025 include:

- Establishing an Arab–Asian University Network for joint research in technology and energy.

- Creating a Doha Centre for Cultural Diplomacy as a platform for academic and artistic dialogue.
- Supporting joint film, music, and theatre productions as instruments of mutual understanding.

Here, culture becomes a driving force of diplomacy, not just a complementary factor — a sustainable strategy rather than a symbolic gesture.

In an era of polarisation and geopolitical competition — from the war in Ukraine to conflicts in the Middle East and Asia — dialogue has become an act of courage, not just diplomacy. The Forum emphasises that dialogue is not a weakness but a form of soft strength capable of reshaping international relations. It is a means to understand others and prevent the misunderstandings that often lead to conflict.

Thus, the Doha Forum 2025 focuses on issues such as regional security, climate change, artificial intelligence, and energy — shared challenges that require collective solutions rather than isolated stances. What distinguishes Doha 2025 is not just discussion but its focus on tangible outcomes, through a ‘new global agenda’ built on three key principles:



- Preventive Diplomacy: Preventing conflicts before they erupt through open channels of communication.
- Inclusive Multilateralism: Empowering small and medium-sized states in global decision-making.
- Recognition of Cultural Diversity: As a shared human value that strengthens global peace.

These principles represent a philosophical shift in international relations — replacing the logic of power with understanding, dominance with cooperation, and self-interest with shared benefit.

MEDIATOR TO POLICY SHAPER

In the past decade, Qatar was primarily known for mediation. Today, it is recognised for shaping policy visions. No longer waiting for major powers to set the agenda, Doha now proposes its own — a blend of realism and ambition. Doha

is no longer just a bridge between rivals but a laboratory for new diplomatic ideas, where politics, culture, and economics intersect.

Qatar and its Arab partners champion balanced global partnerships, showcasing proactive, adaptive, and confident Arab leadership shaping a multipolar world.



In 2025, Qatar proves it is not merely a ‘bridge between East and West’ but a centre of the new East, actively contributing to the future of international relations.

The evolving Arab–Asian partnership presents vast opportunities alongside complex challenges. The scope for cooperation in renewable energy, artificial intelligence, infrastructure, and food security is immense, with Asian markets increasingly seeking Arab investment. Shared visions for sustainable development and energy security further deepen this engagement. Yet, differences in political systems, uneven development levels, and great-power rivalries continue to test regional independence. Sustained institutional coordination remains essential to prevent overlapping interests and to ensure that this emerging alliance translates potential into an enduring partnership.

The Doha Forum 2025 aims to turn these challenges into opportunities by establishing permanent mechanisms for dialogue and cooperation, such as the proposed Arab–Asian Cooperation Council, a flexible and realistic consultative framework for both regions.

NEW GLOBAL IDENTITY

Through this Forum, Qatar and its Arab partners present a new vision for international relations: Arabs are no longer passive recipients or peripheral players — they are active partners in shaping the global system. As traditional power centres wane, the Arab–Asian experience demonstrates that the world can be governed through balanced partnerships, not dependency or confrontation. Doha embodies what modern Arab leadership can be: proactive, adaptive, globally engaged, and confident in its identity.

As 2025 draws to a close, the voice of the new East — from Doha to New Delhi, Beijing, and Jakarta — grows louder in global affairs. It is a voice that does not seek dominance but strives for balance and mutual respect. The Doha Forum 2025 is more than a diplomatic event; it is a declaration of a new era in Arab–Asian relations, built on cultural, economic, and political cooperation.



مؤسسة قطر
Qatar Foundation

From the heart of the Arabian Gulf, Doha sends a message to the world: “The future is not written only in the great capitals, but in the cities that choose dialogue as a path, diversity as strength, and diplomacy as the language of tomorrow.”

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

QUICK INSIGHTS

- *Doha 2025 showcases Qatar’s evolution from neutral mediator to influential policy shaper in global diplomacy.*
- *The Forum highlights Arab–Asian partnerships driving trade, innovation, and technology beyond traditional oil economies.*
- *‘Inclusive diplomacy’ integrates governments, civil society, academia, and business for a broader global dialogue.*
- *Cultural diplomacy becomes Qatar’s soft-power tool, promoting shared heritage, education, and artistic collaboration.*
- *Doha 2025 advances a new multilateral vision—preventive diplomacy, balanced partnerships, and cultural diversity.*

ASIA'S FLASHPOINTS: RISING TENSIONS FROM THE GULF TO THE SOUTH CHINA SEA

WAR STRATEGY

Asia is the world's most dynamic yet most combustible region, a continent where booming economies coexist with nuclear rivals, disputed borders, and contested seas. From the Strait of Hormuz to the Taiwan Strait, every flashpoint carries global consequences. Energy routes, shipping lanes, technology supply chains, and regional alliances are tightly interlinked, making Asia's stability not just a regional concern but a global imperative.



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

Asia is the world's biggest and most dynamic continent, but it is also the most unstable. Stretching from the oil-rich Persian Gulf to the stormy Pacific, it is home to several of the planet's most dangerous flashpoints. On the continent, ancient rivalries clash with modern weapons, great powers vie for control, and every small skirmish carries the risk of global repercussions. The region's hotspots include the Strait of Hormuz, the South China Sea, the Taiwan Strait, the Korean Peninsula, and the Himalayan region. Any miscalculation in one of these areas could spark a major conflict.

In this region, the narrow Strait of Hormuz (only about 40 kilometres wide) is one of the most crucial shipping lanes. Around one-fifth of all the oil traded globally passes through this chokepoint every day. The tankers moving through it feed factories, power plants, and cars all over the world. If

Hybrid warfare has replaced open battlefields with cyberattacks, trade pressure, and digital coercion.



the Strait were to close for some reason, the impact would be felt worldwide. Oil prices would skyrocket immediately. Iran sits at the centre of this area and often threatens to block the Strait. The Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen continue to target Saudi, UAE, and commercial shipping interests in the Red Sea. These attacks cause significant disruptions to global trade. The Gulf remains a reminder that Asia's security problems exist on its energy routes.

THE MARITIME POWDER KEG

In the east are the world's busiest and most dangerous seas. The South China Sea carries roughly one-third of all global maritime trade. Beneath its waters lie rich fisheries and untapped gas reserves. Six governments (China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, and Taiwan) claim overlapping



parts of it. China claims almost the entire area of the South China Sea as its own. The international tribunal ruled in 2016 that the Chinese claim had no legal basis. However, Beijing has disagreed with the ruling. China is further militarising the artificial islands it created on the shoals and reefs.

These islands have become permanent military outposts of China, extending its reach deep into Southeast Asia. Every day, ships and planes from different nations cross paths here. Chinese coast guard vessels and civilian fishing boats (controlled by its maritime militia) swarm the contested areas and try to assert control. Other countries are upgrading their navies and pushing back by carrying out exercises and patrols. The result is a “grey-zone” conflict (neither war nor peace) where any confrontation could spiral into crisis. The South China Sea is a testing ground for the future of maritime law and regional order. If rules fail here, they could fail anywhere.

THE TAIWAN STRAIT

The 100-mile-wide Taiwan Strait separates China from the island of Taiwan. In Asia, it carries the greatest risk of major war. China considers Taiwan its “breakaway province”. China's leaders have vowed to reunify Taiwan, peacefully or by force if required. Taiwan is a thriving democracy with its own government and military. With its growing sense of national identity, Taiwan rejects Beijing's claim. The U.S. helps Taiwan arm itself but maintains a policy of “strategic ambiguity” regarding its direct intervention in the event of a Chinese invasion. Chinese military pressure has increased lately.

Fighter jets and bombers cross into Taiwan's air defence zone almost every day. Warships circle the island during drills simulating blockades and amphibious assaults. Beyond the military danger, the strait is an economic fault line. Over 60 per cent of the world's semiconductors are made in Taiwan. This includes the most advanced chips that power smartphones, AI systems, and fighter jets. A war or blockade here would disrupt global supply chains, devastating industries worldwide. Every year, the rising tension here increases the likelihood of a misstep that could cause a global crisis.

FROZEN CONFLICT, NUCLEAR THREATS

The Korean Peninsula is one of the world's most militarised and tense places. The Korean War never officially ended; it only paused with an armistice. Since then, North Korea has built a considerable nuclear arsenal. It continues to test missiles that can reach all of Asia and beyond. South Korea maintains a strong defence posture with the assistance of the U.S. Japan is also strengthening its defences and increasing



A war over Taiwan would not stay in Asia — it would cripple the world economy.

military cooperation with its allies. China and Russia support North Korea and protect it from international sanctions. South Korea is concerned about its long-term security. A deliberate hostile act or a miscalculation can disrupt the fragile peace in the region.

Another tense front runs along the world's highest mountains.

India and China share a 3,400-kilometre Line of Actual Control that is not clearly defined. In 2020, troops from both sides engaged in a deadly hand-to-hand battle in the Galwan Valley. Since then, both have deployed troops and heavy weapons all along the LAC. The border is heavily militarised, increasing the chances of a confrontation. Hostility between India and Pakistan also keeps the region simmering. Pakistan-sponsored proxy attacks and frequent cross-border military exchanges occur at regular intervals. Collusion between China and Pakistan further exacerbates the matter.

The long-standing rivalry between Iran and Israel has escalated through a series of direct and proxy attacks. Iran's support for non-state actors like Hamas and Hezbollah continues to destabilise the region. The recent Israel–Hamas war has ravaged the region for two years. These regional ripples heighten fears of a broader conflagration.

CONFLICT WITHOUT BATTLEFIELDS

Modern conflict rarely begins with conventional weapons. Instead, it creeps in through cyberattacks, fake news, trade pressure, and legal manipulation. This is hybrid warfare — where military, economic, and informational tools blend together. China uses its maritime militia in the South China Sea — a hybrid tool disguising military intent behind civilian fleets. Iran uses drones for kinetic attacks along with non-kinetic cyberattacks against rivals across the Gulf.

North Korea uses cryptocurrency theft to fund its weapons programmes. Infrastructure projects (like China's Belt and Road Initiative) are being used for both economic outreach and strategic leverage. Even data is being weaponised. Control over semiconductors, undersea cables, and 5G networks shapes who holds power in the digital age. The battle for influence now runs through screens, supply chains, and satellite networks as much as through militaries. This invisible fight makes managing conflict harder.

Asia's security map is like a chessboard. The United States remains a key power and player, with a military presence across the region and alliances designed to counter China's expanding influence. China, the other major power, is investing heavily in military modernisation and deepening ties with Russia, Iran, Pakistan, and North Korea. Caught between these rivals, many Asian countries struggle to remain neutral and navigate the geopolitical currents. The result is not a simple

Cold War divide, but a tangled web of overlapping alignments.

The future of the 21st century will be decided in Asian waters, skies and supply chains.

These tensions are not local problems; they have worldwide consequences. A missile attack in the Gulf can double fuel prices in Europe. A clash in the South China Sea can block shipping routes that carry goods to Africa and America. A war over Taiwan could destroy the global semiconductor industry. A crisis in the Himalayas could pit two nuclear powers against each other, putting the entire world at risk. Asia is home to more nuclear-armed states than any other region, and its defence budgets are the fastest-growing. As military and cyber capabilities proliferate, the risk of miscalculation multiplies. Yet Asia's economic interdependence also encourages restraint — no one wants to destroy the markets that make them wealthy.

Avoiding catastrophe will require both deterrence and dialogue. Countries need to maintain open lines of communication. A well-defined code of conduct can prevent incidents from escalating. Regional organisations must create frameworks for conflict prevention and resolution. Hybrid threats must be countered by building resilience in digital and information systems. Above all, international law must be respected in letter and spirit. Resolving disputes through rules rather than force benefits all parties.

ASIA'S CENTURY

Asia stands at a crossroads. The region offers both the danger of destruction and the opportunity for prosperity. It holds immense promise, with a young population and booming economies, but also deep risks of major conflict. If managed wisely, competition and cooperation can coexist within frameworks of peace. If mismanaged, a spark in any one of these flashpoints could ignite a fire that engulfs the globe. Asia is already shaping the 21st century. Whether it becomes a century of prosperity or peril depends on how its leaders handle these flashpoints.

*(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**.)*

QUICK INSIGHTS

- *Asia's many conflict zones threaten global trade, security, and strategic balance.*
- *The South China Sea and Taiwan Strait are the most volatile maritime hotspots.*
- *Modern warfare now relies on cyber disruption, economic pressure, and information control.*
- *Evolving partnerships replace old blocs, creating complex and overlapping power rivalries.*
- *Lasting peace requires strong deterrence, sustained dialogue, and respect for international law.*

DEFENCE &

The Year Deterrence Went Digital — and Doctrine Turned Dynamic

The year 2025 redefined the very meaning of deterrence. Wars blurred across air, cyber, and orbit; lasers replaced missiles; and drones out-thought pilots. From Red Sea laser interceptions to renewed nuclear brinkmanship, the year proved that the next generation of power projection lies as much in algorithms as in arsenals. Nations didn't just race to rearm; they raced to automate, harden, and hybridise. Defence 2025 was not about winning wars; it was about ensuring survival in a battlespace where speed, data, and trust decide the outcome.



1. March 2025 — USS Preble and the Laser Age Begins

The U.S. Navy's USS Preble shot down 23 drones using the HELIOS laser, marking the first real-world laser combat success. It validated directed-energy weapons as the future of maritime defence — clean, fast, and cost-efficient. Lasers turned from prototypes into operational systems, changing how navies think about layered protection.



3. May 2025 — Autonomous Drone Swarms Over Ukraine

Ukraine's battlefield debut of AI-driven drone swarms shocked observers. Dozens of drones cooperated using decentralised algorithms, sharing sensor data and dynamically reallocating targets. For the first time, one operator commanded many drones — redefining air warfare and exposing the obsolescence of traditional command chains.



"The 2025 battlefield proved that code can disable missiles faster than missiles can destroy code."

2. April 2025 — Israel's Iron Beam Operationalised

Israel deployed its high-energy laser "Iron Beam" alongside Iron Dome during the Gaza conflict, destroying rockets at \$3 per shot. The success cemented lasers as a practical complement to missile interceptors and made Israel the first nation with dual-tier kinetic-and-energy defences.



"Lasers, algorithms, and autonomy replaced massed firepower as the true calculus of deterrence."

4. June 2025 — Russia Tests Hypersonic Strike Capability

Russia conducted successive Avangard and Kinzhal missile tests, reaching Mach 12. Though symbolic, the launches reminded NATO that deterrence still rests on speed and unpredictability. Western nations accelerated counter-hypersonic research, widening the gap between rhetoric and readiness.

SECURITY 2025



5. July 2025 — India Demonstrates Indigenous Directed-Energy System

DRDO's successful 30 KW laser field test placed India among the select few with operational-scale DEWs. Integrated with naval and air platforms, it signalled India's pivot from imported defence hardware to indigenous technological sovereignty.



"India's defence leap was not about weapons, but about the confidence to build them."

6. August 2025 — China Launches AI-Enabled "Blue Sword" Fleet

China unveiled the world's first partially autonomous destroyer group — the "Blue Sword" Fleet — equipped with AI combat management and predictive maintenance digital twins. The move accelerated Beijing's ambition to dominate "intelligentised warfare" by 2030, prompting global debate over human command in lethal systems.



7. September 2025 — NATO Integrates Quantum Command Network

At the Brussels Defence Lab, NATO rolled out a secure quantum-encrypted communications backbone linking early-warning sensors across Europe. The project neutralised traditional cyber-espionage routes and set a precedent for "quantum deterrence" as the next security layer in allied warfare networks.



"The Arctic melted — and the world discovered a new front line."

8. October 2025 — Cyber-Sabotage in the Taiwan Strait

A wave of coordinated cyberattacks on Taiwanese infrastructure exposed the depth of grey-zone warfare. Power grids and maritime tracking systems were temporarily crippled. The episode blurred lines between civilian targets and military pre-emption, underscoring that future wars will start in servers, not skies.



9. November 2025 — Arctic Militarisation Intensifies

The High North saw record naval drills as Russia, NATO, and China vied for Arctic access routes. New ice-class submarines and drone buoys signalled that the frozen frontier is now a live theatre of deterrence — where climate change meets strategic competition.



FROM LABS TO BATTLEFIELDS: DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES THAT SHAPED 2025

HI-TECH

The year 2025 marked a turning point in modern warfare. For the first time, directed-energy weapons, digital twin platforms, and autonomous drone swarms left the laboratory and entered real-world combat and defence systems. From the USS Preble's laser shoot-downs to India's digital-backbone military networks and Ukraine's AI-driven drone swarms, the battlefield is no longer defined by steel and gunpowder, but by algorithms, photons, and data.



DR. AMIT DUA

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR | COMPUTER SCIENCE AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS DEPARTMENT | BIRLA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY AND SCIENCE | PILANI

In March 2025, the USS Preble made headlines when its HELIOS laser system intercepted 23 drones during a Red Sea patrol. This achieved results once thought impossible by defence officials. For the first time, a ship protected itself with targeted bursts of electrical energy, eliminating threats without firing a single missile or relying on costly ammunition. This shift signalled not just technical progress but the beginning of a larger change in how militaries protect themselves.

What set 2025 apart was the move from experimental tests to real deployments of breakthrough systems. Laser weapons like

HELIOS, digital twins (virtual replicas of physical equipment), and AI-controlled drone swarms moved out of labs and into active service across the world. This transition was seen not only in the United States and Israel, but also in India, where

Laser weapons fuse radar, infrared, and optical sensors to detect and track fast aerial threats, while battle-management software selects laser or missile response based on cost and priority.



new digital twin platforms, indigenous high-energy lasers, and autonomous swarming tactics are now being integrated into military operations.

Yet these systems are not perfect. Each brings unique trade-offs, operational limits, and unforeseen challenges. Let us understand their work in detail.

DIRECTED ENERGY WEAPONS

Directed energy weapons (DEWs), particularly laser beam technology, have emerged as transformative tools in modern defence because they use concentrated electromagnetic energy to disable or destroy targets almost instantly.

Unlike traditional weapons that rely on physical projectiles or explosives, laser weapons deliver a tightly focused beam of light. They travel at the speed of light to a precise point on a target to cause damage through heat or structural failure. The journey from lab experiments to operational deployment has been driven by substantial advances in several key technological areas.



First, the core mechanism behind laser weapons is their ability to convert electrical energy into coherent light within a small and directed beam — similar to the beam-forming used in modern 5G technology. Modern high-energy lasers (HELs) can produce power outputs sufficient to melt or disable small aerial targets like drones and missiles. The effectiveness of these weapons depends significantly on how much energy can be delivered to the target's surface in a short period. This requires efficient beam generation and focusing.

Solid-state laser technology allows lasers to be more energy-efficient and reliable compared with earlier gas or chemical lasers. Traditional solid-state laser operation leaves a large amount of waste heat. Advances in thermal management (closed-loop liquid cooling systems) help maintain continuous firing without damaging sensitive components.

How do you compensate for atmospheric disturbances such as turbulence, heat waves, and moisture? Adaptive optics measures wavefront errors in real time and adjusts deformable mirrors. This keeps the beam tightly focused on its target with less distortion and scatter over longer distances (in

ranges of several kilometres). Laser weapon systems combine radar, infrared sensors, and electro-optical cameras for precision tracking and targeting. They detect, classify, and track fast-moving aerial threats. This sensor fusion allows the laser to maintain lock-on despite environmental factors and target manoeuvres. Active battle-management software further helps by deciding when to engage with lasers versus traditional interceptors based on cost and threat priority.

What made these technological advances possible now is decades of progress in multiple fields. The miniaturisation of high-power laser diodes, novel cooling solutions, fast and precise sensors, advanced algorithms for adaptive optics, and progress in real-time systems engineering made this complex integration a reality. These advancements overcame earlier limitations where lasers were too bulky, inefficient, or vulnerable to atmospheric and thermal constraints.

DIGITAL TWINS

Another technology that proved its power in 2025 was the digital twin.

Digital twin technology became the key tool in 2025 for maintaining and operating complex military fleets and industrial systems. By creating virtual replicas of physical assets, defence agencies and industries monitor and predict the performance of equipment in real time. The technology was integrated successfully into major aircraft, ships, and power plants, allowing complex systems to operate under demanding conditions while maintaining performance.



Digital twins rely on constant sensor data—temperature, pressure, vibration, and more—streamed in real time, enabling high-fidelity simulation and prediction through physics models and machine-learning analytics.

Digital twin technology creates a virtual replica of a physical system. This digital model mimics the entire system — its behaviour, status, and dynamics — in sync with

its real-world counterpart in real time. It enables engineers to optimise the physical asset from afar. The core of digital twin technology involves three key components: data acquisition, simulation models, and real-time analytics.

As expected, the foundation of a digital twin lies in collecting data continuously from sensors embedded in the physical system. These sensors gather diverse types of data — temperature, pressure, vibration, movement, fluid flow, and more. Advances in sensor technology, wireless communication,



and data streaming allow live data feeds directly into the digital twin. Stream analytics plays a crucial role in modelling and simulation. The high-fidelity simulation model is built using physics-based algorithms, machine learning, and data-driven techniques. It uses machine learning algorithms, including stream analytics tools like Kafka and Flink, to predict in real time.

The continuous data flow reflects the current state of the physical system with high accuracy, visualised through dashboards, 3D renderings, and analytical reports.

In 2025, digital twin technology was integrated into broader operational management platforms, linking fleet-wide assets and systems into a unified digital backbone. This networked approach allowed for holistic management and coordinated responses across naval fleets, aircraft squadrons, and manufacturing plants.

The cheaper availability of increased computational power allowed this complex real-time simulation to become commercially usable.

AUTONOMOUS DRONE SWARMS

We have seen major advancements in technology that have helped in defence (lasers) and maintenance/performance (digital twins). But 2025 also witnessed a technology primarily used for offence. The Ukraine war showcased advancements in autonomous drone swarms, which shook the world regarding technology’s future role. It changed how militaries think about tactical air operations. Ukrainian forces used AI-powered systems to coordinate groups of drones to strike targets, avoid defences, and adapt with minimal human input. These swarms managed complex tasks.

We have seen increasing use of drones since 2022, but for the first time, we saw splitting attack roles, sharing sensor data, and rerouting in response to electronic jamming. The

demonstration of autonomous teamwork under real combat conditions made it possible for one operator to command multiple drones at once.

Autonomous drone swarm technology represents a major leap in both artificial intelligence and distributed robotics. At its heart, it combines decentralised coordination, real-time sensor fusion, adaptive response algorithms, robust communication systems, and user-friendly human-machine interfaces. These advancements allowed swarms to operate effectively even in contested and unpredictable combat environments.

A key challenge in swarming is task allocation under weak connectivity. Ukrainian drones use auction-based algorithms to “bid” for targets, then switch to local rules if links fail.

Decentralised autonomy was seen at scale for the first time in 2025. Each drone in a swarm carries a copy of the mission plan, target priorities, and rules of engagement. Instead of relying on a continuous link with a ground controller or central hub, the drones communicate with one another when possible — and are still capable of operating independently if signals are jammed or lost. Coordination algorithms allow drones to make tactical decisions alone, guided by preset instructions and locally sensed information. This approach is called “graceful degradation”, meaning the system continues functioning even if communication links fail.

One key challenge in swarming is deciding which drone does what when the connection is weak or intermittent. Many Ukrainian systems used auction-based algorithms:



each drone “bids” for a target based on its location, fuel level, sensors, and payload. Targets are assigned based on these bids. If drones are cut off from the network, they fall back to local rules, avoiding overlap and maximising coverage.

Most small tactical drones previously had basic cameras and sensors, unsuitable for reliable target identification. Developers addressed this by investing in machine-learning models



trained on real-world drone footage to improve recognition of vehicles, personnel, and equipment in varied lighting or weather. Diffusion-based machine-learning algorithms now allow drones to “see” clearly through haze, wind, rain, and other extreme conditions.

Autonomous swarms do not remove human oversight. Instead, they enable a small team — often just one operator — to supervise ten or more drones. Interfaces with visual dashboards, quick status drilldowns, and simplified command controls make this possible without overwhelming the operator. The operator designates the zone and objectives; the system executes and coordinates autonomously.

Advanced communication resilience, adaptive response, and learning capabilities further enabled drones to overcome operational constraints unseen before.

2025 showed that when strong engineering meets agile, trust-driven deployment, breakthroughs happen fast — the real task now is making such successes repeatable.

LESSONS FROM 2025

The deployments of 2025 demonstrated that technology alone does not guarantee battlefield success. Human trust in new systems is the critical benchmark. Operators must learn when and how to rely on complex, often imperfect tools to meet military or commercial goals. That trust is built only through live experience and transparent system behaviour during failures.

In 2025, we saw a major shift: countries moved towards adaptation rather than rigid doctrine. The lessons from Israel’s Iron Beam, the USS Preble’s HELIOS, India’s digital twins, and Ukrainian drone swarms highlight the same point — tactical advantage now depends on rapid feedback and iterative learning, not perfect technology.

2025 proved that rapid progress is possible when engineering fundamentals align with agile and trust-centred operational integration. The challenge ahead is to make those rare successes repeatable.

Looking forward, the question is whether defence institutions can absorb these lessons deliberately. Start-ups and defence were separate until recently. India recognised this in 2025, investing heavily in start-ups developing defence technology. The armed forces are actively integrating them. As survival now depends on technological edge, 2025 offered a stark reminder: even when wars are fought on physical battlefields, they will be won through technology.

(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.)

QUICK INSIGHTS

- Laser defence systems proved operational by destroying drones without missiles, reshaping naval combat economics.
- Digital twin platforms now monitor and predict the performance of complex fleets, aircraft, and power assets in real time.
- AI-enabled drone swarms executed coordinated strikes with minimal human input, redefining battlefield autonomy.
- Modern warfare increasingly depends on human trust in machine judgment, not just superior weapons.
- 2025 confirmed that rapid tech integration, not old doctrines, will decide victory in future wars.



NEWS ANALYTICS

GET THE GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

News Analytics is a platform to identify and analyse challenges surrounding global developments having a clear impact on geostrategic interests of India.

www.newsanalytics.in

editor@newsanalytics.in

FROM COAL TO KILOWATTS: NUCLEAR AS THE NEXT TRANSITION

ECOSYSTEM

Coal built India's industrial rise, but now it is becoming a liability. Still powering 73% of electricity and feeding steel, aluminium, and cement, coal also makes India the world's third-largest carbon emitter. With net-zero targets looming, the transition is urgent. Converting ageing coal plants into nuclear hubs offers a rare triple win- decarbonisation, energy security, and economic continuity. This paper examines how India can make that shift.



KUNDAN DAS
ENERGY TRANSITION AND DECARBONISATION CONSULTANT
FOR NEWS ANALYTICS

India's coal economy is not limited to public power generation—it is deeply embedded in the country's industrial backbone. The steel industry, the world's second largest, relies on captive coal plants and emits nearly three tonnes of CO₂ per tonne of output. Aluminium production, one of the most electricity-intensive sectors, sources almost all its power from dedicated coal stations to maintain uninterrupted smelting.

The cement sector, too, depends on coal for 25–35% of its energy needs in clinker and kiln operations. These industries are clustered around coal belts in Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Madhya Pradesh, where jobs, energy access, and local economies are tied to coal. As India shifts toward

cleaner energy, these very sites—already equipped with land, grid links, cooling systems, and skilled labour—could become ideal locations for advanced or modular nuclear reactors, enabling deep decarbonisation while revitalising regional economies.

These industrial clusters are typically located near coal belts in Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Madhya Pradesh—regions where energy access, employment, and livelihoods are intertwined with the coal economy. As demand evolves, these locations could serve as prime candidates for deploying advanced or modular nuclear reactors, offering both decarbonisation and regional revitalisation.



How the Coal-to-Nuclear (C2N) transition will help India

- **Energy Security:** With NTPC leading, coal ensures a reliable baseload for aluminium, iron, steel, and cement industries, sustaining growth and grid stability.



of producing heat and continuous operations for Aluminium, Iron, Steel, and Cement companies during clean transition phases.

- **Transition Financing:** NTPC’s modernisation allows carbon capture projects, co-firing hydrogen, and lifecycle upgrades—enabling low carbon transformation in allied industries.
- **Strategic Collaboration:** NTPC’s leadership fosters public-private synergy, leveraging existing coal infrastructure to fund future nuclear, hydrogen, and renewable integration programs.

FROM COAL TO NUCLEAR

According to the U.S. Department of Energy’s (DOE) C2N framework, repurposing coal plant sites for nuclear use can be significantly more economical than developing greenfield projects. Shared infrastructure—such as transmission lines, cooling systems, transport routes, and security zones—can reduce overall investment by 15–35%, accelerate project completion, and mitigate land acquisition delays.

Using existing transmission, cooling, transport, and security infrastructure can cut costs by 15–35%, speed up construction, and avoid land acquisition delays.



- **Economic Stability:** Persistent coal operations under NTPC safeguard industrial jobs, regional economies, and supply chains through partnerships with energy-intensive manufacturing sectors.
- **Industrial Backbone:** Coal power supports critical process

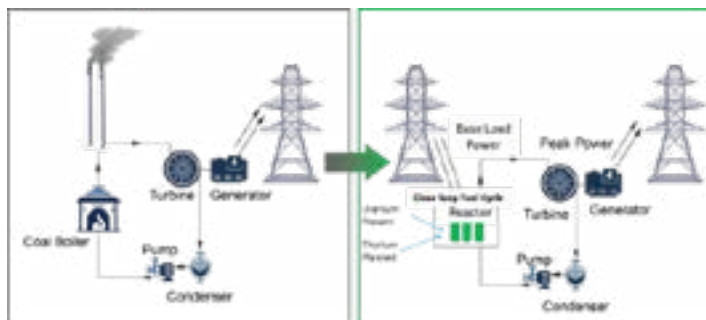
Focus Areas	Challenge / Status	Key Gap Identified	Global Context	Required Action for India
Nuclear Research & Skills	Limited academic depth	PhD and R&D shortfall	Advanced globally in Gen IV	Build talent, research ecosystem
Thorium Utilization	Untapped fuel cycle	Lack of fissile enrichment	India's unique reserves are unused	Accelerate thorium reactor R&D
Fusion Technology	Early participation only	Missing domestic innovation	US, EU investing billions	Fund the national fusion program
SMR & MMR Development	Initial discussion stage	Limited prototypes, design know-how	Korea, US, France advancing	Partner, co-develop modular tech
Geo political Cooperation	Fragmented collaboration	Need tech-sharing frameworks	Global nuclear deals expanding	Deepen alliances with key nations

In the Indian context, the Central Electricity Authority (CEA) has identified around 25 GW of subcritical coal units that are over 25 years old and due for retirement by 2035. These sites, located near industrial demand centres, provide ideal settings for small modular reactors (SMRs) or high-temperature gas-cooled reactors (HTGRs). Moreover, the reuse of cooling ponds, switchyards, and road infrastructure complements India's land-scarce energy transition strategy, where large renewable installations face significant siting constraints.



For India's twin demands of grid stability and high-temperature industrial heat, advanced nuclear technologies provide modular, scalable, and thermally flexible solutions.

SUITABLE REACTOR TECHNOLOGIES



For India's dual need—grid reliability and industrial heat—advanced nuclear technologies can offer modular, scalable, and thermally versatile options:

- Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs): Mature domestic technology with local manufacturing capacity, suited for large-scale baseload generation.
- Small Modular Reactors (SMRs): Compact 50–300 MWe units suitable for existing coal sites or industrial use. Their modular construction can reduce project time and capital intensity.

- High Temperature Gas Reactors (HTGRs): Can process heat up to 900°C, enabling decarbonisation of steel reheating, alumina calcination, and cement kilns.
- Molten Salt Reactors (MSRs): Future options for combined electricity, heat hydrogen production, aligning with India's National Green Hydrogen Mission objectives.

BENEFITS OF TRANSITION

Unlike intermittent renewables, nuclear power provides firm baseload energy essential for industrial operations and stable grids. Replacing ageing coal plants with modular nuclear reactors can ensure 24×7 clean electricity, complementing solar and wind generation. Reduced coal imports—currently over 200 million tonnes annually—strengthen India's energy independence.

Coal plant closures threaten local economies in states like Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh, where entire communities depend on coal operations. Nuclear conversion projects can sustain the same infrastructure while creating 300–500 skilled jobs per site, direct employment and many indirect, stimulating local economies through construction, maintenance, and services.

Economic modelling (based on DOE findings) suggests each converted plant could sustain hundreds of direct jobs, generate ₹2,000–3,000 crore in annual regional economic activity, and maintain local tax revenue streams. The transition can thus become a cornerstone of a “Just Transition” strategy for coal regions.

Nuclear energy can directly support low-carbon industrial transformation:

- Green Steel: HTGRs or advanced reactors can provide high-temperature heat or power for producing hydrogen and operating electric arc furnaces.
- Aluminium Smelting: Stable high-grade electricity from SMRs can replace captive coal units, reducing the sector's carbon footprint by up to 80%.
- Cement: Hybrid nuclear–electric heating for pre-calcination could offset fossil fuels in clinker production.

Replacing even 10% of India's coal power with nuclear could avoid up to 200 million tonnes of CO₂ annually while significantly cutting SO₂, NO_x, and particulate matter

Public concern over nuclear safety and waste hampers acceptance; a National Coal-to-Nuclear Repowering Mission could formalise the transition and build trust.

emissions. The smaller land footprint—only 10% that of solar or wind for equivalent output—also minimises ecological displacement. By eliminating coal ash disposal and reducing water contamination, nuclear conversion can substantially improve air and water quality across industrial regions.



CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS

Despite lifecycle advantages, nuclear projects demand heavy upfront investment. In India, the cost of PHWRs ranges from ₹18–20 crore per MW, and advanced SMRs may initially cost even more. Establishing sovereign green bonds, public–private partnerships, and viability gap funding could bridge financing gaps. Categorising nuclear under India’s green finance taxonomy and enabling private sector participation could unlock significant capital.

India’s nuclear governance, under the Atomic Energy Act (1962), centralises reactor ownership with the government. To encourage coal to nuclear conversion, the policy framework must evolve to allow joint development between public utilities (like NTPC or Coal India Ltd.) and NPCIL, or through build-operate partnerships where licensed PSUs manage operations within strict safety oversight by the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB).

Coal plant employees possess valuable thermal system knowledge but require certification in nuclear safety protocols and radiation management. Establishing dedicated nuclear retraining centres within current coal hubs—potentially through collaborations with the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) and technical universities—can facilitate a smooth labour transition and preserve community livelihoods.

PUBLIC PERCEPTION

Nuclear projects face social trust barriers, largely due to public concerns about safety and waste storage. To operationalise this transition, India could consider a National Coal Repowering with Nuclear Mission (NCRNM) built around three pillars:

Pilot Projects: Convert two ageing coal units into modular nuclear demonstration projects by 2032.

Industrial Integration: Deploy high-temperature nuclear reactors in steel/ aluminium clusters by 2035 for integrated power and heat supply.

Skill Development: Launch a “Coal to Clean Workforce Transition Program” jointly run by CIL, NPCIL, and Skill India.

Invest in Thorium MSR: India can invest in Thorium MSR through research funding, pilot reactors, public-private partnerships, recycling infrastructure, and regulatory support for closed fuel cycles.

This mission would align with the National Hydrogen Mission, Make in India, and Atmanirbhar Bharat initiatives, while positioning India as a global leader in hybrid nuclear industrial decarbonisation.

India’s journey from coal-driven growth to a carbon-neutral future demands innovative transitions that balance climate responsibility with economic progress. The conversion of coal power plants to nuclear energy provides such a pathway—leveraging existing infrastructure, preserving regional economies, and offering secure, low-carbon energy for both power and industrial sectors.

While challenges in financing, regulation, and social acceptance remain, strategic policy support and public-private collaboration can make this transition feasible and transformative. If successfully implemented, coal to nuclear repowering could not only decarbonise India’s power grid but also revolutionise its hard-to-abate industrial sectors—steel, aluminium, and cement—turning the legacy of coal into a foundation for a sustainable, nuclear-powered future.

(Kundan Das is an Energy Transition and Decarbonisation consultant specialising in integrating nuclear energy solutions for sustainable manufacturing. The views expressed are of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The News Analytics Herald.)

QUICK INSIGHTS

- Coal continues to generate 73% of India’s electricity and sustain major energy-intensive industries.
- Converting ageing coal plants to nuclear reduces emissions while retaining jobs and existing infrastructure.
- SMRs and HTGRs provide reliable, clean power alongside high-temperature heat for heavy industries.
- Repurposing coal sites for nuclear saves land, enhances energy security, and revitalises local economies.
- Successful Coal-to-Nuclear transition depends on financing, regulatory reform, and strong public acceptance.

EMERGING

The Year Machines Negotiated, Learned, and Chose Sides

2025 marked the convergence of innovation and insecurity. Artificial intelligence became both diplomat and disruptor; quantum computing redefined espionage; and the digital twin revolution blurred the line between simulation and strategy. The world's fastest-growing economies were no longer those with oil or steel—but with data and algorithms. This was the year when code became the currency of credibility, and technology turned from enabler to actor. "Emerging Tech 2025" is not about gadgets or labs; it's about how digital power became the new determinant of global influence.



"The semiconductor replaced the sword as the ultimate instrument of power."

1. January 2025 — AI Diplomacy Takes Centre Stage at Davos

The World Economic Forum opened with the "Algorithmic Compact," where 30 nations agreed on AI ethics, deepfake governance, and algorithmic transparency. It was the first time machine-learning policy was debated as foreign policy, birthing a new term: Tech Diplomacy — the negotiation of power between nations through data, not territory.

2. February 2025 — AI Action Summit, Paris

Building on the Compact, the Paris Summit codified principles for "responsible AI sovereignty." France and India co-chaired discussions that led to frameworks on data-sharing, cross-border AI testing, and intellectual property in generative models. The outcome: AI joined climate and trade as a third global diplomatic pillar.



"Lasers, algorithms, and autonomy replaced massed firepower as the true calculus of deterrence."

3. March 2025 — Quantum Espionage Exposed

The Quantum Security Consortium revealed breaches of traditional encryption by experimental Chinese and U.S. systems. Intelligence services worldwide raced to quantum-proof communications, making quantum espionage the new frontier of secrecy. It was the dawn of post-encryption geopolitics—where secrets had an expiry date.

4. April 2025 — Digital Twins Transform Defence Logistics

Following successful naval integration in India and the U.S., digital twin platforms connected fleets, bases, and supply chains in real time. By simulating engine wear, resource flow, and energy efficiency, they reduced downtime by 40%. Defence ministries now manage wars like predictive simulations, turning maintenance into deterrence.

TECH 2025



5. May 2025 — The Global Semiconductor Accord, Seoul

Amid rising trade restrictions, South Korea hosted a landmark pact among 14 nations to safeguard chip supply. The “Seoul Semiconductor Accord” sought to prevent chip nationalism and secure rare-earth dependencies. It became the economic NATO of microchips, underpinning both digital sovereignty and security resilience.



7. August 2025 — The Metaverse Turns Industrial

After years of hype, the metaverse became functional — not for gaming, but for manufacturing. Siemens, Tata, and Samsung built shared “Industrial Metaverses,” integrating AR and digital twins for remote plant management. The shift proved that virtual infrastructure could yield tangible economic growth.



9. October 2025 — The Rise of Defence AI Ethics Charters

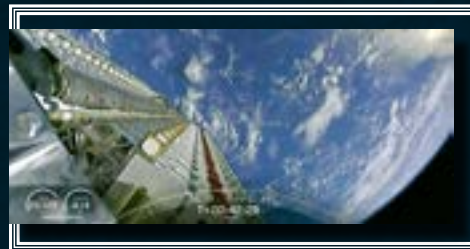
After Ukraine’s autonomous drone deployments and Gaza’s AI targeting controversies, global defence ministries signed voluntary AI ethics frameworks. The charters demanded human oversight in lethal decisions, real-time audit trails, and accountability for algorithmic bias. Warfare entered a moral algorithmic phase.



“Quantum espionage ended secrecy as we knew it; the future will be post-encryption.”

6. July 2025 — AI-Generated Cyberwarfare and the Tallinn Shock

An AI-driven cyberattack crippled Estonia’s grid for 48 hours, with no human signature found. The attack demonstrated AI’s capacity for autonomous intrusion and adaptation. NATO declared it a “Digital Article 5” moment, establishing AI-origin cyber threats as triggers for collective defence.



“2025 taught us that the next world order will be written in code, not constitutions.”

8. September 2025 — Space Becomes a Data Battlefield

Private constellations like Starlink, OneWeb, and China’s GW were drawn into geopolitical rivalry as satellite bandwidth became dual-use infrastructure. Nations debated whether space-based internet should be neutral. “Orbital sovereignty” entered diplomatic lexicons as the UN revisited its 1967 Outer Space Treaty for the digital era.



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