

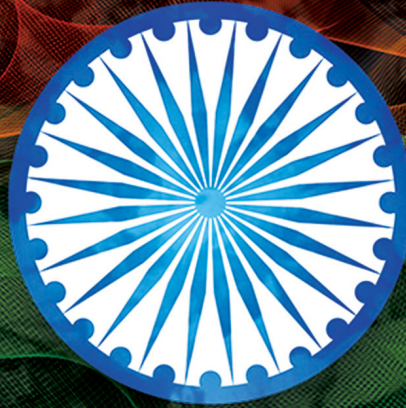
PRGI REGN NO: UPENG/25/A1463

ISSN 3107-782X

THE
NEWS ANALYTICS
HERALD

August 2026 | Vol 2 | Issue 2

₹ 450/-



**THE NEW
GEOMETRY
OF POWER**

IN FOCUS

THE RETURN OF ECONOMIC
STATECRAFT

BIG STORY

INDIA AND THE AGE OF
UNDECLARED WAR

NEXT FRONTIER

WHEN AI MEETS THE
PHYSICAL WORLD

THE POWER PANEL



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|| FOREWORD



POWER BEYOND POLARITY

The global order is undergoing one of its most profound transformations since the end of the Cold War. The assumptions that shaped international politics for decades are giving way to a far more fluid and competitive landscape in which power is no longer concentrated in a handful of capitals, nor measured solely by military strength or economic size. Instead, influence is increasingly determined by a nation's ability to innovate, forge resilient partnerships, secure critical supply chains, dominate emerging technologies, and shape the strategic environment beyond its borders.

This edition's focus on The New Geometry of Power explores the contours of this emerging world. It examines how economic leverage, military modernisation, maritime competition, technological leadership and strategic connectivity are creating new centres of influence while altering the balance between established and rising powers. The Indo-Pacific has emerged as the principal theatre where these changes are most visible, but the consequences extend across Europe, West Asia, Africa, the Arctic and the Global South, where competition and cooperation now unfold simultaneously.

The old binaries of allies and adversaries are increasingly giving way to flexible coalitions, issue-based partnerships and multi-aligned diplomacy. Nations are recalibrating their foreign and security policies to navigate an era marked by strategic uncertainty, geopolitical fragmentation and rapid technological disruption. As artificial intelligence, cyber capabilities, space technologies and critical minerals become instruments of national power, the very definition of security is expanding.

In this changing landscape, understanding this power geometry is no longer an academic exercise—it is essential for policymakers, businesses and citizens alike. This issue of The News Analytics Herald seeks to explain these evolving dynamics and illuminate the forces that will shape international affairs in the years ahead.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Anil Wadhwa'.

(Ambassador Anil Wadhwa, IFS (Retd)
Former Ambassador to Italy, Thailand,
Oman, Poland and Former Secretary (East)
Ministry of External Affairs)

|| 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.

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Title – The News Analytics Herald.

(Certified by Press Registrar General of India. PRGI Regn No: UPENG/25/A1463)

Publication Frequency – Monthly.

Year of Commencement – 2025.

Subjects – Multidisciplinary Subjects. Focus on Diplomacy, Defence & Military Technology.

Language – English.

Format – Print.

EDITOR'S NOTE



THE NEW GEOMETRY OF POWER

Power is no longer measured solely by military strength or economic size. It is increasingly determined by the ability to influence supply chains, dominate technologies, secure financial systems, shape narratives, protect digital infrastructure and build resilient partnerships. The geometry of global power is changing, becoming more multidimensional, interconnected and far less predictable than the strategic order of the past.

This edition of The News Analytics Herald examines these emerging contours. We explore the return of economic statecraft as nations increasingly weaponise trade, investment and critical technologies. We analyse the normalisation of grey-zone conflict, where cyber operations, information warfare and economic coercion increasingly replace conventional military confrontation. The issue also examines the geopolitical contest surrounding digital payment systems, China's expanding maritime strategy, the evolving security architecture of West Asia following the Iran crisis, the future relevance of nuclear deterrence, and the growing strategic divergence across the transatlantic alliance.

Alongside these geopolitical shifts, technology is redefining the future battlespace. Artificial Intelligence is rapidly converging with robotics to reshape economies, industry and defence, while pre-emptive cybersecurity is becoming indispensable for safeguarding national resilience in an era of machine-speed cyber warfare.

As India celebrates its 79th Independence Day, we extend our heartfelt greetings to every reader. Over nearly eight decades, India has evolved into a confident democracy, a trusted strategic partner, an emerging technological powerhouse and an increasingly influential voice in global affairs. Its growing role in shaping international discourse reflects both national capability and civilisational confidence.

The News Analytics Herald remains committed to providing balanced, research-driven analysis that helps readers understand not only what is changing, but why it matters. In a world where the geometry of power is constantly being redrawn, informed strategic thinking has never been more essential.

Happy 79th Independence Day to all our readers.

Jai Hind!

Sandhya Srivastava
Editor-in-Chief &
Publisher

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Vol 2 || Issue 2 || August 2026

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Edited & Published By

Sandhya Srivastava on behalf of
Geostrat Media Ventures

Published At

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Mahanagar, Izzat Nagar, Bareilly
Uttar Pradesh – 243122
+91-9557597977

Printed At

New Delhi

Printed By

Viba Press Pvt Ltd
C-66/3, Okhla Industrial Area, Ph-2
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+91- 98100 49515

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THE RETURN OF ECONOMIC STATECRAFT

IN FOCUS

Economic power has become the preferred instrument of twenty-first-century competition. Tariffs, sanctions, export controls and critical minerals are increasingly shaping geopolitical outcomes, demonstrating that influence is no longer measured solely by military strength, but by the ability to weaponise interdependence without firing a shot.



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

For much of the post-Cold War period, globalisation rested on the idea that countries tied together by trade, investment and technology would have fewer reasons to confront one another. Economic relations were treated as a source of prosperity, while diplomacy and military power occupied the strategic realm. That separation is now fading.

Governments increasingly view economic policy as an instrument of national security. Tariffs are used to pressure trading partners, sanctions to weaken adversaries, export controls to deny access to advanced technology, and critical minerals to gain leverage

The battle for global influence is increasingly being fought through markets, supply chains, finance and technology rather than battlefields.

over industries that depend on them. Supply chains are no longer judged only by price and efficiency. They are judged by resilience.

This is the return of economic statecraft, which is the deliberate



use of economic tools to influence the behaviour of other states and protect national interests. It has not emerged because globalisation has ended, but because governments have become more conscious of the vulnerabilities created by interdependence. A foreign supplier may be efficient in normal times, yet become a liability during war, political tension, a pandemic or a transport disruption.



TARIFFS AS PRESSURE INSTRUMENTS

Tariffs offer the clearest example of this shift. Once associated mainly with protecting domestic industry, they are now used as bargaining weapons. The trade confrontation between the United States and China was not simply about deficits. It reflected concerns over industrial subsidies, technology transfer, market access, manufacturing dependence and strategic rivalry. Duties on steel, electric vehicles, batteries, solar products and other goods have become part of a contest over future industrial power.

Tariffs can encourage firms to relocate production, reduce dependence on a rival or create pressure for negotiation. Yet they remain blunt instruments. They raise costs for consumers and manufacturers, invite retaliation and can protect inefficient industries. Their effectiveness depends on the size of the market imposing them and on whether the targeted country can find alternative buyers. Even so, their growing use shows that trade policy can no longer be separated from foreign policy.

WEAPONISING INTERDEPENDENCE

Sanctions have become another important tool because they allow states to impose costs without direct military action. They may freeze assets, block financial transactions, restrict access to capital markets, target banks or limit energy and technology exports. The measures imposed on Russia after its invasion of Ukraine demonstrated the scale of its financial power. Russian banks were restricted, sovereign assets were immobilised, and access to advanced technologies was curtailed.

The same case also exposed the limits of sanctions. Russia redirected trade, relied on intermediaries and deepened

economic ties with countries that did not join Western restrictions. Sanctions can therefore weaken an economy without necessarily forcing a change in political behaviour. Their impact depends on coalition unity, enforcement and clear objectives. Overuse also carries a long-term risk, as targeted states may seek alternative payment systems, diversify reserves and reduce reliance on Western financial networks.

Export controls are more precise. Their purpose is not merely to reduce trade, but to slow the technological progress of a strategic competitor. Advanced semiconductors illustrate this approach. Chips are essential to artificial intelligence, military systems, telecommunications and modern manufacturing. By restricting the export of high-end chips and chipmaking equipment to China, the United States has tried to exploit critical chokepoints in the technology chain.

Such controls can delay access to sensitive capabilities, but they also have costs. Domestic firms may lose revenue, allies may resist restrictions that hurt their industries, and the targeted country may accelerate investment in indigenous alternatives. This is why export controls work best when countries controlling different parts of the supply chain coordinate their policies. Far from replacing diplomacy, they often require more of it.

Countries that control critical technologies, minerals and financial networks will hold the strategic advantage in the emerging global order.

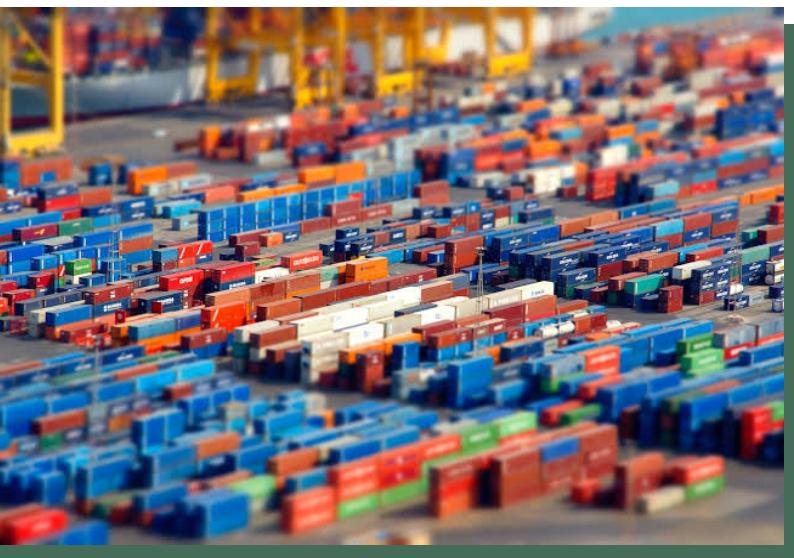


STRATEGIC DEPENDENCE

Critical minerals have created another arena of competition. Lithium, cobalt, nickel, graphite, gallium, germanium and rare-earth elements are essential for batteries, renewable energy, semiconductors, aerospace and defence. The strategic issue is not only where these minerals are mined, but where they are refined and processed. China's dominant position in the processing of several critical minerals gives it influence over supply chains on which many economies depend.

Restrictions on exports of minerals have shown how control over raw materials can become political leverage. In response, countries are investing in alternative mines, recycling, strategic reserves and partnerships with trusted suppliers. Critical-mineral diplomacy is beginning to play the role that oil diplomacy played in the twentieth century.

Economic coercion can also operate below the level of formal sanctions. Customs delays, tourism restrictions, consumer boycotts, regulatory pressure and licence denials can be used to punish another country while retaining plausible deniability. The dispute between China and Lithuania, following tensions over Taiwan, showed how trade pressure can be applied indirectly, including through multinational firms using products from the targeted country. Such methods are difficult to challenge because they can be presented as ordinary administrative decisions.



REBUILDING RESILIENCE

The international response is not a complete retreat from globalisation. Instead, countries are attempting to make economic relationships more secure and less vulnerable to political pressure. Governments are pursuing "de-risking", which means reducing excessive dependence in sensitive sectors without ending trade altogether. Governments are encouraging companies to diversify suppliers, maintain alternative production centres and avoid relying on a single country for critical goods. Many companies now follow a "China-plus-one" strategy, spreading production across additional countries rather than relying on a single base.

Friend-shoring is another response. Semiconductor, battery, defence and critical-mineral supply chains are increasingly being organised among politically trusted partners. Industrial policy has also returned, with governments offering subsidies, tax incentives and procurement guarantees to attract strategic industries. The United States, the European Union, Japan and other major economies are supporting domestic production in sectors that were previously left largely to market forces.

The European Union has created an Anti-Coercion Instrument to respond when another country uses trade or investment restrictions to interfere with the sovereign decisions of an EU member, while several states have tightened investment-screening and export-control rules.

The result is a world economy that remains interconnected but is becoming more fragmented, selective and politically managed.

INDIA'S STRATEGIC BALANCE

India's response reflects its need to balance strategic autonomy with economic integration. It must reduce vulnerabilities while continuing to attract investment, import energy and obtain advanced technology. Its approach has therefore been to strengthen domestic capability without formally joining a single bloc.

Atmanirbhar Bharat and the Production-Linked Incentive schemes are central to this strategy. The objective is not only import substitution, but also to position India as an alternative production base for firms diversifying away from China.

The India Semiconductor Mission addresses another major weakness. India has strong design talent but limited fabrication capacity. Support for chip manufacturing, assembly, testing and packaging is intended to build a deeper domestic ecosystem and reduce dependence on external suppliers.



Critical minerals are equally important. The National Critical Mineral Mission focuses on exploration, mining, processing, recycling and overseas acquisition. India is also working with the United States, Japan and Australia through the Quad, and with Japan and Australia through the Supply Chain Resilience Initiative.

India is broadening its economic relations with the Gulf,



Europe and the Indo-Pacific. Its position on sanctions reflects the same balancing instinct. It has generally resisted automatically adopting measures not authorised by the United Nations and has continued buying Russian energy when it serves domestic needs.

However, strategic autonomy does not mean immunity from global economic pressure. Indian companies operating internationally must still consider restrictions affecting banking, insurance, shipping, technology and secondary sanctions.

India has also strengthened its own export-control framework through the SCOMET list, which regulates the export of dual-use goods, specialised chemicals, materials, equipment and sensitive technologies.

Globalisation has not ended; it is being reengineered around resilience, trusted partnerships and national security priorities.

WIDER TRANSFORMATION

The return of economic statecraft, therefore, represents more than a change in trade policy. It reflects a wider transformation in international politics. Tariffs create bargaining pressure, sanctions exploit financial power, export controls target

technological capability, and critical minerals provide leverage over essential industries. Economic coercion allows states to impose costs without crossing the threshold into open conflict.

The world is responding by diversifying supply chains, rebuilding domestic industries and forming new economic partnerships. India is following a similar path while attempting to preserve its freedom of action.

The emerging order will not be defined by the end of globalisation, but by a more guarded form of globalisation in which security increasingly shapes economic decisions. Countries that combine industrial strength, technological capability, resource access and trusted partnerships will possess the greatest influence.

Economic power has always mattered in international relations. What is different today is the speed, scale and precision with which it is being used. Diplomacy has not disappeared, but it is increasingly being conducted through markets, supply chains, financial networks and control over technology.

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

QUICK INSIGHTS

- *Economic statecraft increasingly complements military power in shaping global strategic competition.*
- *Tariffs, sanctions and export controls have become major geopolitical instruments.*
- *Critical minerals now underpin technological leadership, industrial resilience and strategic influence.*
- *Nations increasingly prioritise resilient supply chains over maximum economic efficiency.*
- *India pursues strategic autonomy while strengthening domestic capabilities and trusted partnerships.*

INDIA AND THE AGE OF UNDECLARED WAR

BIG STORY

Why must New Delhi build a national doctrine for grey zone conflict? Modern conflicts increasingly unfold without formal declarations or traditional battlefields. Adversaries now exploit ambiguity through cyber operations, economic pressure, proxy networks and information warfare. For India, securing the future requires recognising that strategic competition has already moved beyond conventional military domains.



**LT GEN A B SHIVANE (R)
FOR THE NEWS ANALYTICS HERALD**

War no longer announces itself. For generations, conflict had a recognisable shape, mobilisation orders, border crossings and declarations that signalled a nation was at war. That certainty has faded. Today's contests often remain below the threshold of open conflict while using cyber intrusion, information manipulation, economic pressure, proxy violence, engineered narratives and international mechanisms as tools of coercion.

This is the grey zone, the space between war and peace; it has become a preferred arena for India's adversaries. Pakistan understood this reality decades ago. Its proxy campaign against India demonstrated that terrorism, operating under layers of deniability, could impose costs without inviting the response that a conventional attack would trigger.

China has adopted a broader version of the same logic. Along the Line of Actual Control, it has built infrastructure, expanded presence and used calibrated actions designed to change realities without crossing thresholds that lead to full-scale confrontation. Neither approach resembles traditional war. Yet both seek outcomes historically associated with war: strategic advantage, political pressure and erosion of an opponent's options.

Grey zone conflicts seek the outcomes of war without its declarations, using ambiguity as the newest weapon of strategic competition.

The strength of grey zone operations lies in ambiguity. There is often no single event that clearly justifies escalation. A cyber intrusion probing critical infrastructure, a disinformation campaign during sensitive moments, a trade restriction presented as regulation or legal pressure through international institutions may appear isolated. Combined over time, however, these actions form a sustained campaign that weakens national resilience without triggering a conventional response. India faces almost every element of this playbook simultaneously. To the west, Pakistan continues to rely on proxy instruments. To the north, China integrates territorial pressure, economic influence and information operations as part of a wider strategic competition.

Indian financial systems, defence networks and critical infrastructure remain targets for persistent cyber activity. Coordinated information campaigns seek to influence

narratives, exploit social divisions and shape international perceptions. Increasingly, lawfare, the use of legal and multilateral platforms as strategic instruments, is becoming another dimension of competition. The battlefield has expanded far beyond borders.

TECHNOLOGY AS MULTIPLIER

Artificial intelligence has dramatically accelerated the grey zone threat. Capabilities that once required sophisticated resources are now widely accessible. Synthetic videos, manipulated audio and automated influence campaigns can be generated rapidly and deployed at scale. A fabricated clip released during an election, border crisis or period of social tension can spread faster than traditional institutions can respond.

The challenge is no longer only identifying false information; it is responding at the speed at which digital narratives evolve. Economic coercion has also become more sophisticated. Dependence on limited suppliers for critical minerals, pharmaceutical ingredients, electronics or strategic technologies is no longer just a commercial concern. It creates vulnerabilities that can be exploited during periods of geopolitical tension.

Supply chains have become instruments of national power. Nations that fail to understand and diversify their dependencies risk allowing economic relationships to become tools of strategic pressure.

NATIONAL RESPONSE ARCHITECTURE

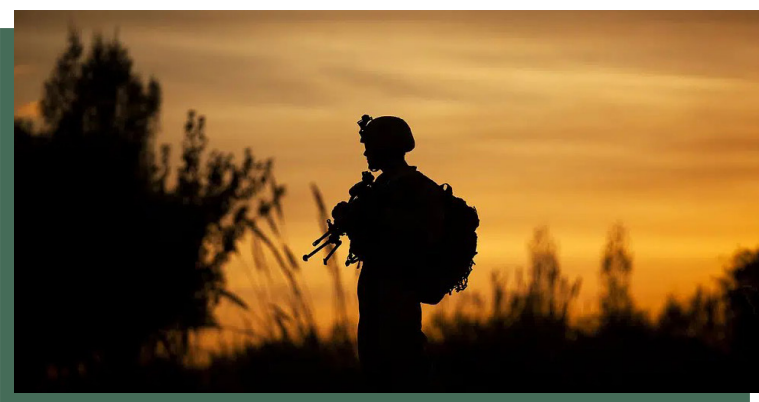
India's first requirement is doctrinal clarity. While individual institutions address aspects of hybrid threats, India requires a comprehensive national framework that integrates the armed forces, intelligence agencies, diplomatic establishment, economic ministries and private sector.



Grey zone conflict cannot be countered through isolated responses. A permanent coordination mechanism close to national security decision-making is essential to identify threats early and direct whole-of-government responses before small actions mature into strategic challenges.

The speed of modern competition demands anticipation, not reaction. India's armed forces must also view grey zone capability as a core requirement alongside conventional deterrence. Future conflicts will not begin only with tanks crossing borders or aircraft entering hostile airspace.

Dedicated capabilities in cyber defence, information operations and counter-proxy warfare need deeper integration into operational structures. Intelligence systems must detect early indicators, whether they appear as coordinated digital activity, economic pressure or unusual diplomatic moves. Modern deterrence requires the ability to recognise conflict before it formally begins.



RESILIENT POWER SYSTEMS

India must continue identifying and reducing critical vulnerabilities across sectors such as rare earth elements, semiconductors, energy systems and pharmaceutical supply chains. This does not mean economic isolation. A globally integrated economy cannot and should not disconnect itself. The objective is diversification and redundancy, ensuring no single external actor can convert dependence into strategic leverage.

Industrial policy and national security are now closely linked. Citizens are increasingly on the frontline of information warfare. A digitally connected population offers enormous strength but also creates exposure to manipulation.

India requires stronger digital literacy programmes involving educational institutions, civil society, technology platforms and public outreach initiatives. A society capable of questioning sources, identifying manipulation and resisting artificial narratives becomes a powerful defence mechanism.

At the same time, India needs rapid-response structures capable of identifying and countering fabricated content

Artificial intelligence has industrialised information warfare, allowing narratives to be manufactured, amplified and deployed before truth can respond effectively.

quickly. In the information space, delayed truth often struggles against early misinformation. Speed has become a strategic requirement.



EXPANDING SECURITY FRONTIERS

International forums, legal institutions and regulatory mechanisms are increasingly used as competitive spaces. India cannot remain reactive in environments where narratives and legal interpretations influence strategic outcomes.

A specialised legal capability combining international law expertise with national security understanding can help anticipate challenges, respond effectively and expose adversarial grey zone activities. The legal domain itself has become part of strategic competition.

The private sector must also become a deeper national security partner. Much of the infrastructure targeted in future grey zone campaigns will not be government-owned. Financial networks, communication systems, digital platforms and critical technologies increasingly sit within the private sector.

Technology companies, financial institutions and infrastructure operators must therefore become active partners in national security planning. A national security framework that excludes major private stakeholders leaves critical vulnerabilities unaddressed.

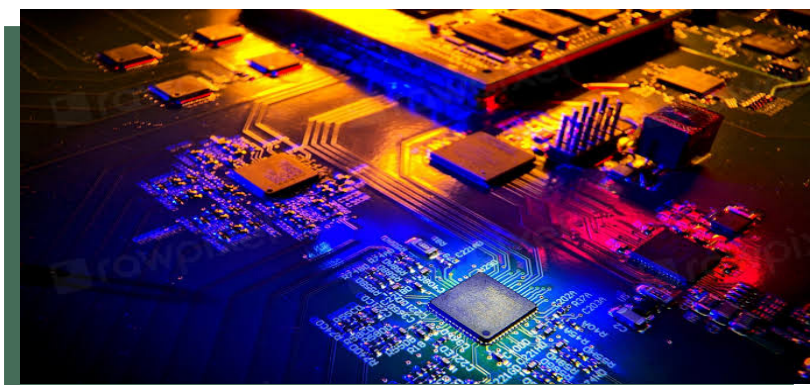
None of these changes reduces the importance of conventional military power. India must continue strengthening its Army, Navy and Air Force, especially given the challenges along

Future national security will depend not only on military strength but also on information resilience, economic security and societal preparedness.

its borders. However, conventional strength alone cannot answer every form of modern competition.

A country may possess powerful military capabilities yet remain vulnerable if its information systems, economic dependencies, digital infrastructure and legal preparedness are insufficiently protected.

India's adversaries have repeatedly demonstrated their preference for exploiting spaces where responses are complicated and thresholds are unclear. The character of conflict has changed. The question is whether institutions can adapt with equal speed.



Grey zone competition rewards preparation, coordination and resilience. It does not wait for formal declarations or visible crises. India does not need only stronger defences; it needs a wider understanding of what defence means in the modern era. The battlefield has expanded. The response must expand on it.

*(Lt Gen A B Shivane (R), Former DG Mechanised Forces, Indian Army. TEDx Speaker, Strategic Defence Consultant, Analyst & Corporate Mentor. The views expressed by the author do not necessarily reflect the views of **The News Analytics Herald**.)*

QUICK INSIGHTS

- *Grey zone conflicts increasingly blur the distinction between peace, coercion and conventional warfare.*
- *Cyber, economic and information domains now shape twenty-first-century strategic competition and influence.*
- *Artificial intelligence dramatically amplifies cyberattacks, disinformation campaigns and narrative warfare capabilities.*
- *India requires integrated national institutions to counter evolving hybrid and grey zone threats.*
- *Future national security demands military strength alongside economic, technological and societal resilience.*



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GLOBAL INFLUENCER

PRABOWO SUBIANTO: THE GENERAL STEERING

POWER PROFILE

As great-power competition reshapes the Indo-Pacific, Indonesia's President seeks to transform Southeast Asia's largest nation from a regional player into a global strategic voice.

In an era when global power is no longer defined only by traditional superpowers, the rise of influential middle powers has become one of the defining features of international politics. Countries positioned between competing power centres are increasingly shaping global outcomes through economic weight, strategic geography, and independent diplomacy. Among these emerging voices, Indonesia under President Prabowo Subianto represents one of the most consequential transformations underway in the Indo-Pacific.

As leader of the world's fourth-most populous country, Southeast Asia's largest economy, and a maritime nation located across some of the world's most critical sea routes, President Prabowo commands influence far beyond Indonesia's borders. His presidency comes at a time when the Indo-Pacific has become the central arena of geopolitical competition, with major powers competing for influence, resources, technology, and strategic access.

A former military commander turned political leader, he brings a security-focused worldview shaped by decades of experience in defence and national affairs. His leadership style reflects a blend of nationalism, strategic pragmatism, and ambition to elevate Indonesia's

global profile. Unlike leaders who define their foreign policy through alignment with established blocs, President Prabowo has emphasised Indonesia's tradition of independent diplomacy while seeking a larger role for Jakarta in global decision-making.

THE MIDDLE POWER MOMENT

Indonesia occupies a unique position in the evolving world order. It is not a conventional great power, yet it possesses attributes that few nations can ignore — a population exceeding 280 million, abundant natural resources, growing industrial capability, and control over maritime geography linking the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

The strategic significance of Indonesia's location cannot be overstated. The Malacca, Sunda, and Lombok Straits are among the world's most important maritime passages, carrying critical flows of global trade and energy. As competition intensifies across the Indo-Pacific, Indonesia's choices increasingly influence regional stability.

President Prabowo's challenge is to convert these structural advantages into strategic influence. His administration has focused on strengthening defence capabilities, improving economic resilience, expanding industrial capacity, and ensuring that Indonesia is viewed not merely as part of Southeast Asia, but as an independent global actor.



OF THE MONTH

INDONESIA'S STRATEGIC RISE

This approach reflects a wider trend among emerging powers: a desire for partnerships without dependency and cooperation without automatic alignment.

One of his key challenges is navigating Indonesia's role amid intensifying great-power competition. While China remains a major economic partner, Jakarta continues expanding cooperation with the United States, India, Japan, Australia and others, pursuing strategic autonomy rather than rigid alignment. This multi-vector approach reflects the aspirations of emerging middle powers seeking influence without dependency. With his military background, President Prabowo has also prioritised defence modernisation to secure Indonesia's vast archipelagic geography and critical maritime routes. His calibrated approach aims to strengthen Indonesia as a capable maritime power while maintaining its role as a stabilising Indo-Pacific actor.

A NATURAL STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

For India, Indonesia carries special significance. The two nations share deep historical links, maritime connectivity, democratic traditions, and a common interest in a stable Indo-Pacific. As two major Asian powers located on either side of critical oceanic routes, India and Indonesia have a natural convergence in maritime security, economic

cooperation, and regional stability. India's Act East Policy and Indonesia's vision as a maritime fulcrum create opportunities for deeper cooperation in connectivity, defence, trade, technology, and blue economy initiatives.

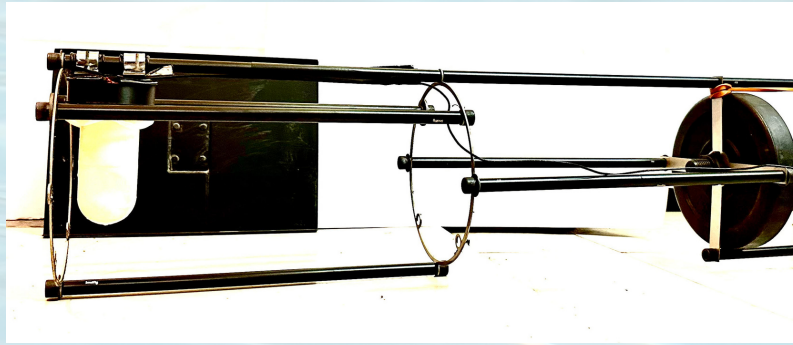
The Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Indonesia's Aceh region sit close to some of the world's busiest sea lanes, making maritime cooperation particularly important. As strategic competition expands into the Indian Ocean and Western Pacific, stronger India-Indonesia engagement could become an important pillar of regional balance. Prabowo's



emphasis on strategic autonomy also resonates with India's own multi-alignment approach. Both countries seek constructive relations with major powers while preserving independent decision-making.

Prabowo Subianto's influence lies not only in leading Indonesia but in representing a larger geopolitical transition. The coming decades may not be shaped solely by rivalry between major powers, but also by the choices of countries capable of influencing outcomes without belonging to traditional power blocs. Indonesia's rise reflects the growing importance of middle powers in shaping trade, security, technology, and diplomacy. Under President Prabowo, Jakarta seeks a seat at the table where global decisions are made, rather than remaining an observer of decisions made elsewhere.

His success in transforming Indonesia's potential into lasting influence may significantly shape the future balance of the Indo-Pacific and the emerging global order.



HYDRO-ACOUSTIC VECTOR SENSOR

Applications:-

- AVS Arrays for Sonar systems (conventional systems employ hydrophones that measure only pressure)
- Detection of submarine, torpedo or ships against the background underwater noise.
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THE NEW GEOPOLITICS OF PAYMENTS

GEOECONOMICS

Digital payments have evolved into instruments of geopolitical influence, financial sovereignty and strategic competition. While the U.S. dollar remains dominant, emerging alternatives like India's UPI, Brazil's Pix, China's CIPS and Russia's SPFS reflect a growing shift towards financial diversification.



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For decades, the post-war financial order revolved around the U.S. dollar, anchored by SWIFT messaging, dollar-invoiced trade, and a near-universal appetite for U.S. Treasuries. Then, at the beginning of the 1970s, came the petrodollars. Every nation had to buy dollars to pay for its oil imports. The United States could then print dollars as if there were no tomorrow: no inflation, a huge amount of investment in U.S. soil by the petro-monarchies, and American military expansion and expenditure around the globe.

The new great-power contest is expanding beyond territory and technology into the architecture of money, payments and financial influence.

Today, that architecture is not crumbling, but it is evolving. As Ambassador Mohamed A. Qubaty, former Yemeni Cabinet Minister and strategic affairs analyst, observes, the world's

great-power rivalry is shifting: competition now extends beyond territory, trade routes, technology, or energy, and into "the architecture of money itself." While the dollar's dominance remains unchallenged in the near term, its unrivalled pre-eminence is now tempered by states' drive for resilience and strategic autonomy.

This global shift is as political as it is economic. Prof. Rodrigo Fagundes Cezar of Fundação Getúlio Vargas in São Paulo sees alternative payment systems as instruments of economic statecraft, vehicles for signalling intent as much as for moving money. Brazil's embrace of BRICS payment discussions, he argues, is less technical than diplomatic: it signals a strategy of equidistance, a careful balancing act to hedge against U.S. pressure while keeping lines open to China, India, and Russia. Pix, the Brazilian instant payment system, in this light, is not merely a domestic fintech innovation but a government-backed backbone now at the centre of wider contests over financial influence and U.S.



credit card interests in Brazil.

Other analysts highlight the defensive rationale. Hussein Askary, based in Stockholm, argues that platforms such as China's Cross-Border Interbank Payment System (CIPS) and Russia's System for Transfer of Financial Messages (SPFS) are designed to escape America's 'long-arm control' over global commerce. These tools, he notes, increase economic sovereignty and gradually erode the potency of sanctions. Indian analyst Rajan Mishra concurs: finance has become weaponised, making payment redundancy and monetary autonomy urgent for many states.



Economics professor Samuele Murtinu of Utrecht University explains that the dollar system endures because payment networks are 'winner-takes-all' markets, where high switching costs and network effects keep rivals at bay. De-dollarisation is therefore pragmatic, not ideological. Kristian Alexander, a geopolitical analyst in Dubai, observes that post-2022 sanctions made states more aware of their vulnerabilities, prompting interest in local-currency settlements and central bank digital currencies (CBDCs). For BRICS+ and the New Development Bank, the objective is gradual redesign: building a more plural financial order rooted in local lending and South-South cooperation.

PAYMENT POWER SHIFT

China's CIPS offers an alternative settlement infrastructure for yuan trade with Russia, Iran, and the Global South; Russia's SPFS plays a similar defensive role. India contributes a different tool: UPI, its instant-payment system, which has been extended abroad by NPCI International to ten countries. Brazil brings Pix, its own instant-payment platform, plus a bilateral mechanism in which a Brazilian exporter is paid in reais while the Chinese buyer pays in yuan, with the two central banks settling the exchange directly and no dollar step involved. These systems feed into BRICS Pay, a shared messaging layer designed to interlink CIPS, SPFS, UPI, and Pix; the bloc has targeted full deployment ahead of its September 2026 New Delhi summit, though it is not there yet.

CBDCs add another layer: China's e-CNY and pilots like Project mBridge (linking China, Thailand, UAE, and Saudi

Arabia) test direct central-bank settlement that bypasses correspondent banking, the very chokepoint through which sanctions typically operate. Infrastructure routing around that clearing weakens sanctions as a policy tool.

Yet dollar dominance persists structurally: IMF Currency Composition of Official Foreign Exchange Reserves (COFER) data put the dollar at 56.92% of global reserves in the third quarter of 2025. Trade tells a similar story: roughly 40% of international trade is settled in dollars, while, per ECB-IMF research, the renminbi's share in trade invoicing remains under 2%, even as its share of SWIFT payment messaging climbed to 3.5% by early 2025.

Crypto is smaller still once trading noise is stripped out: McKinsey's analysis with Artemis Analytics puts real stablecoin payment volume at about \$390 billion a year, roughly 0.02% of global payments value, dwarfed by far larger headline figures driven by crypto trading rather than actual payments.

The realistic trajectory is partial, steady diversification, and the dollar still keeps its anchor role. However, when the BRICS payment mechanisms are operational, the diversification curve will be steeper, and this will provide greater freedom for commerce, especially for nations under U.S. sanctions.

FINANCIAL STATECRAFT

The story here is not one of imminent dollar collapse, but of a global appetite for options. As Amb. Prof. Mohamed A. Qubaty observes that the world is witnessing a shift in great-power rivalry — not just over territory, technology,



and energy, but over "the architecture of money itself." The dollar's supremacy endures for lack of a credible alternative, Prof. Qubaty notes, but its hegemony is being slowly diluted as states seek insulation from geopolitical coercion, sanctions, and financial shocks.

Payment networks have become strategic infrastructure where economic sovereignty, sanctions resilience and geopolitical leverage are increasingly interconnected.

Payment systems now matter as much as ports, pipelines, or undersea cables; whoever controls this digital infrastructure controls economic leverage. Indian analyst Rajan Mishra captures this in geoeconomic terms: today's financial infrastructures are the new tools of statecraft, shaping everything from liquidity to sanctions risk.

Utrecht University's Prof. Samuele Murtinu adds that payment networks are classic network industries, where the contest is not just within markets, but for the market itself. This explains the resilience of the dollar system, not due to a lack of alternatives, but because the costs of switching and the power of network effects remain formidable.

A second shift is underway, more pragmatic than ideological: alternative financial infrastructures are expanding states' room for manoeuvre. According to Hussein Askary, China's CIPS and Russia's SPFS are less about forging new hegemons and more about evading the 'long-arm control' of the U.S. over global transactions. Kristian Alexander sharpens the point, noting that local-currency settlements, regional clearing houses, and CBDCs are giving states greater strategic flexibility. As a result, sanctions become less comprehensive, and payment infrastructure becomes a linchpin of geopolitical power.

STRATEGIC AUTONOMY

Brazil's Pix and India's UPI are emblematic of this broader trend. Prof. Rodrigo Fagundes Cezar interprets Brazil's debate over Pix as more than a technical matter; it is a geopolitical signal. The push for BRICS Bank alternatives and dollar-bypassing payment channels reflects a strategy of equidistance: if U.S. pressure mounts, Brasilia can pivot towards Beijing, New Delhi, or Moscow. The United States Trade Representative's scrutiny of Pix, which is considering measures against Brazil under Section 301 of the US Trade Act, thus resonates far beyond Brazil; here, national payment infrastructure becomes diplomacy written in code.

BRICS+ does not yet pose a serious challenge to the dollar's global order, but it is constructing a new institutional vocabulary. Qubaty contends that BRICS+ is less an anti-Western alliance and more a platform for strategic diversification. Alexander echoes this, predicting a pluralistic future rather than outright replacement. Askary further notes that the expanded BRICS brings together distinct assets: the UAE offers financial firepower and sovereign wealth, while Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia, and Indonesia inject regional clout and ambition.



MULTIPOLAR FINANCE

The BRICS New Development Bank (NDB) embodies this agenda. Its mission is not to topple Bretton Woods institutions, but to fund projects in local currencies, issue domestic bonds, and reduce dependency on dollar-denominated debt. Reserve-currency status depends not just on scale, but on trust, liquidity, legal certainty, and capital mobility, domains where the dollar remains formidable. Yet, BRICS+ is gradually enlarging the playing field, carving out spaces where alternative rules and currencies can gain traction.

De-dollarisation is not a sudden break from the existing system but a strategic hedge towards a more multipolar financial order.

In sum, the real story is not de-dollarisation as rupture, but as hedging. Most states in the Global South are not abandoning the dollar system; they are striving to avoid being locked within it, as the dollar has become increasingly weaponised. This pursuit means investing in multiple digital payment and settlement infrastructures, expanding local-currency trade, and developing public digital infrastructure, all to secure greater bargaining power with Washington, Beijing, and others.

The dollar era is far from over, but it now faces a world less willing to accept a single centre of financial gravity.

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

QUICK INSIGHTS

- Global finance is increasingly emerging as a major arena of strategic competition among leading global powers.
- Alternative payment systems are reflecting growing efforts by nations to achieve greater financial autonomy and resilience.
- BRICS financial mechanisms primarily seek diversification of global finance, not immediate replacement of the U.S. dollar.
- Digital currencies and cross-border payment networks are steadily reshaping geopolitical influence and economic statecraft worldwide.
- The U.S. dollar retains dominance, yet financial multipolarity is gradually emerging through parallel monetary ecosystems.

CHINA'S MARITIME ENCIRCLEMENT STRATEGY

GEOSTRATEGIC

China is becoming more active at sea, and this is now a major issue in global security and trade. Many countries are watching how China expands its navy, builds overseas ports, and increases control over key sea routes. This is often called a “maritime encirclement strategy.” It is not a formal plan, but a mix of actions that expand China’s influence across major oceans.



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Most global trade (about 80–90%) moves by sea, including oil, gas, food, electronics and raw materials. The Indo-Pacific region is especially important because it connects Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas through busy shipping routes.

The Strait of Malacca is one of the most important chokepoints because a large share of global trade and energy passes through it. China depends heavily on sea routes for energy imports from the Middle East and Africa. If these routes are blocked, it could seriously harm China’s economy.

Because of this, China focuses on protecting sea lanes and expanding naval power. China’s navy has grown very quickly and can now operate far from its coastline. It has aircraft carriers, destroyers, submarines, amphibious ships and advanced

China’s maritime expansion is not only about naval strength but also about securing trade routes, resources and strategic influence.



warships. China also has strong shipbuilding capacity, allowing the rapid production of ships for both military and commercial use.

The navy now operates in the South China Sea, East China Sea, Indian Ocean and near Africa. It also takes part in anti-piracy missions and international exercises. The goal is to protect trade routes, energy supplies and overseas investments.



STRATEGIC SEA NETWORK

China builds and funds ports and infrastructure in other countries. Some of these are “dual-use”, they can support both commercial shipping and military needs. These projects are located in places such as Pakistan, Sri Lanka and East Africa. Djibouti is especially important because it sits near the Red Sea and the Suez Canal, one of the busiest trade routes in the world.

China says these projects support development and trade. Critics worry that they may also increase China’s strategic influence at sea. China’s maritime strategy is part of the Maritime Silk Road, which links Asia, Africa and Europe through trade routes and infrastructure.

It focuses on building ports, improving shipping lanes and strengthening global trade connections. Chinese companies often help finance and operate these projects. Supporters say this improves trade and development. Critics worry that it may create long-term economic dependence.

“Maritime encirclement” is a term used by analysts, not an official policy. It describes China’s combined sea power, including its navy, overseas ports, trade routes and access to key chokepoints. Together, these expand China’s reach across the Indo-Pacific. Some see this as protecting trade. Others see it as increasing China’s global influence.

INDO-PACIFIC CONTEST

The Indo-Pacific is one of the most sensitive and heavily contested regions in the world today. It is important not only for trade but also for military strategy, political influence and

energy security. Since so many global shipping routes pass through this region, even small tensions can have worldwide effects.

One major issue is territorial disputes. The South China Sea is the biggest flashpoint, where China has overlapping claims with the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Indonesia. China has built artificial islands in disputed waters and developed them with runways, ports, radar systems and missile installations. These structures increase the military presence in areas that are also claimed by other countries.

Another major issue is freedom of navigation. The United States and its allies regularly send naval ships through disputed waters to ensure that international sea lanes remain open. These operations are known as Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOPs). China often views these movements as provocations and responds with naval shadowing or patrols, which increases the risk of misunderstandings.

Military build-up is also increasing across the region. Countries such as Japan, India and Australia, along with several ASEAN members, are expanding their navies, improving surveillance systems and strengthening defence partnerships. This is partly a response to China’s growing naval power and partly due to wider global competition.

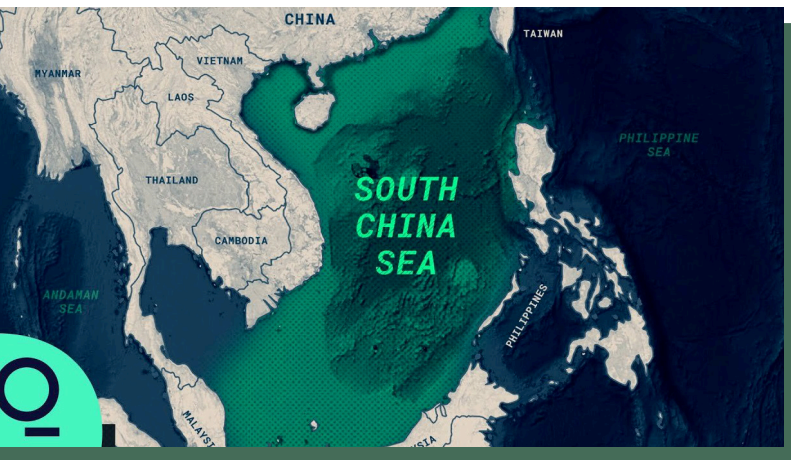
The Indo-Pacific has emerged as the defining maritime arena where trade, security and great-power competition increasingly intersect.



Another key concern is the presence of strategic chokepoints. These include the Strait of Malacca, the Bab el-Mandeb Strait near the Red Sea and the Strait of Hormuz near the Middle East. These narrow waterways are extremely important because a large percentage of global oil and trade must pass through them. If any of these chokepoints are blocked due to conflict, piracy or political tension, it could disrupt global supply chains and raise energy prices worldwide.

There is also concern about accidental conflict at sea. With more naval ships operating in close proximity, especially in

the South China Sea and East China Sea, there is a higher risk of miscommunication or accidental clashes. Even small incidents, such as close tracking or unsafe manoeuvres, could escalate quickly if not managed carefully.



This increases cooperation between these countries and external partners, especially in surveillance, missile defence and maritime security. As a result, the First Island Chain is not only a geographical boundary but also a long-term security framework that influences military positioning, diplomacy and stability across the Indo-Pacific.

The first island chain represents more than geography; it symbolises the strategic competition shaping future Indo-Pacific security.

FUTURE SEA ORDER

China says its actions protect trade, energy and national security. It also says its infrastructure projects help developing countries grow. Critics argue that China's naval expansion and overseas ports may increase its global influence and shift the balance of power at sea.

Cybersecurity and surveillance are additional issues. Modern naval systems rely heavily on digital communications, satellites and data networks. This creates risks of cyberattacks, electronic interference and intelligence competition between major powers.

Because of all these factors, the Indo-Pacific is now considered a high-risk but highly strategic region. Countries in the region are trying to balance economic cooperation with military preparedness while also avoiding direct conflict.

ISLAND CHAIN STRATEGY

The First Island Chain is a line of islands stretching from Japan through Taiwan and the Philippines down to Borneo. It forms an important strategic barrier close to China's coastline in the Indo-Pacific region.

For the United States and its allies, the First Island Chain acts as a forward defence line. It is used to monitor and limit naval movement from China into the wider Pacific Ocean. This is done through military bases, joint exercises, intelligence sharing and naval patrols to help keep sea routes open and stable.

For China, the chain creates strategic pressure by limiting easy access to the open ocean. In response, China strengthens its navy, expands its submarine and missile systems, and builds artificial islands to improve access to the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

This leads to ongoing competition, as both sides increase military activity and partnerships, making the First Island Chain a key factor in Indo-Pacific security tensions. The First Island Chain also plays a major role in shaping regional alliances and defence planning. Countries within the chain, such as Japan, the Philippines and Taiwan, become strategically important because they sit near key sea lanes and military movement routes.

Both views shape global discussions and policy decisions.



China's maritime growth will continue to affect global trade and security. Since most goods move by sea, any disruption can affect prices, energy supplies and the world economy.

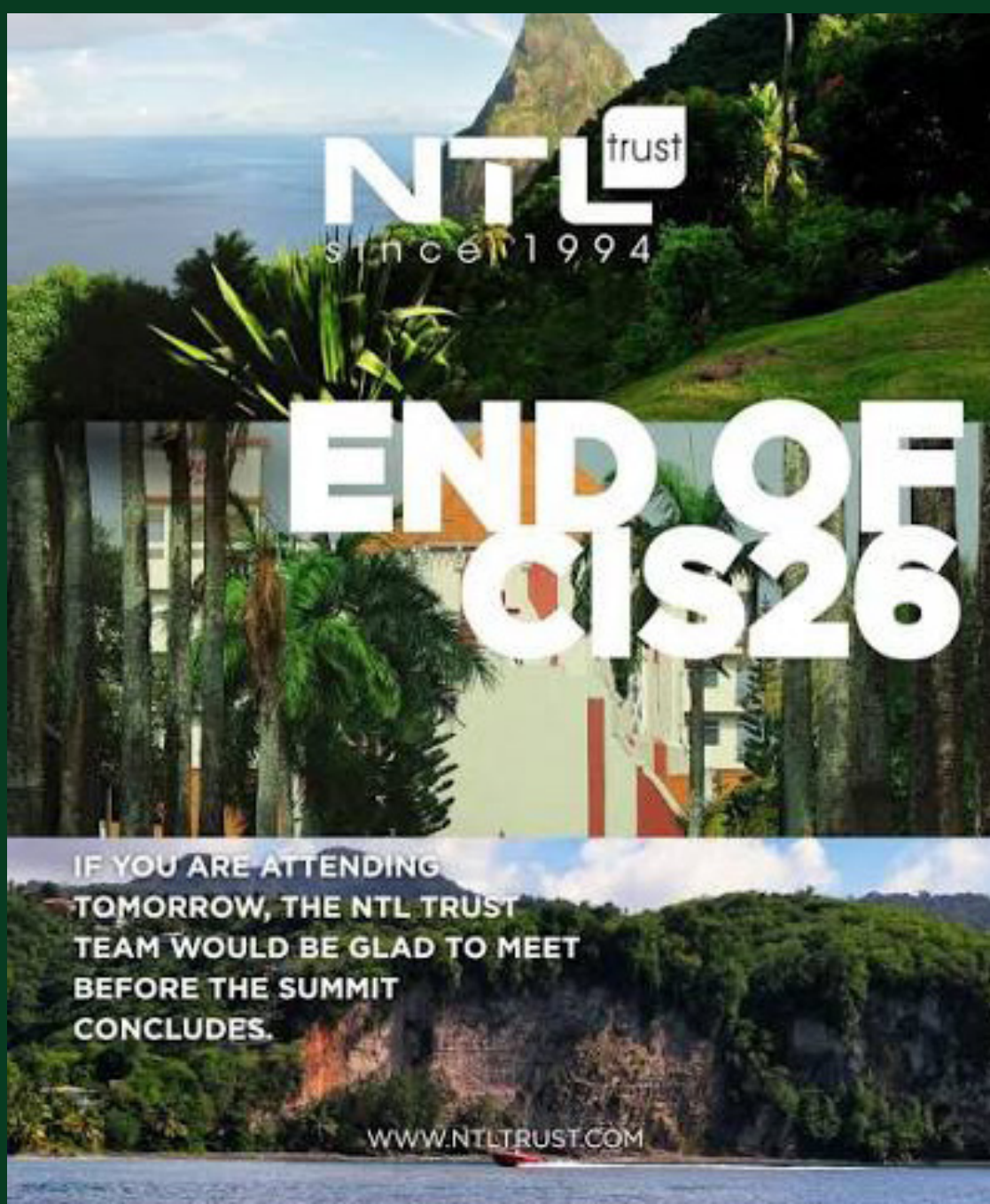
The Indo-Pacific will remain the most important region for

trade and military competition. At the same time, there is room for cooperation in disaster response and maritime safety. In the future, countries will need to balance competition and cooperation to avoid conflict and keep global trade stable. Overall, China's maritime rise is changing how power and trade operate in the modern world.

*(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

- *China's naval growth signals ambitions for global reach beyond coastal defence priorities.*
- *Strategic overseas ports expand Beijing's maritime presence, influence and operational access worldwide.*
- *Indo-Pacific chokepoints remain vital for global energy security and commercial connectivity.*
- *First Island Chain strategy drives regional defence planning and power competition.*
- *Future maritime stability requires balancing strategic rivalry with practical global cooperation.*



SPECIAL FEATURE

INDIA @79: THE CONFIDENT REPUBLIC

As India celebrates its 79th Independence Day, the occasion is far more than a remembrance of political freedom achieved in 1947. It is a celebration of an extraordinary national journey, one that has transformed a newly independent nation into one of the world's most influential economic, technological, diplomatic and strategic powers. Today's India stands taller, more confident and increasingly central to shaping the future global order.

The remarkable story of independent India is not merely measured by economic statistics or military strength. It is reflected in the resilience of its democracy, the aspirations of its 1.4 billion citizens, the ingenuity of its scientists and entrepreneurs, the professionalism of its Armed Forces, and its growing reputation as a trusted partner across continents. From being a nation focused primarily on development challenges, India has evolved into a country increasingly recognised as a contributor to global solutions.



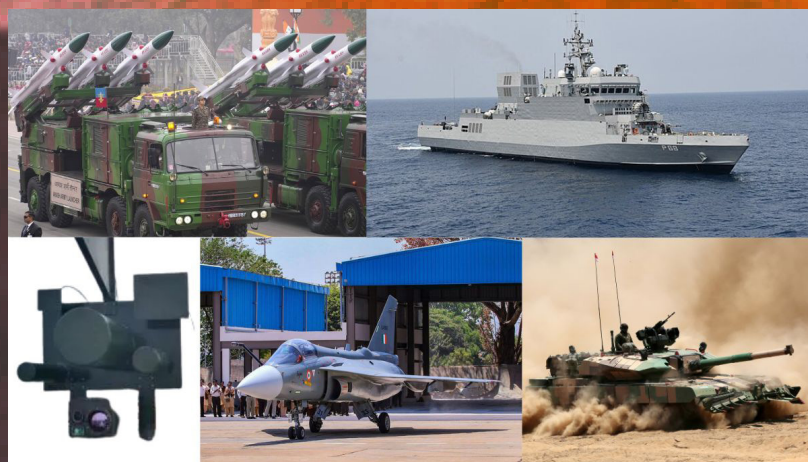
Economically, India's transformation has been exceptional. Today, it ranks among the world's largest economies and continues to remain one of the fastest-growing major economies despite repeated global disruptions. Structural reforms, digital innovation, expanding infrastructure, manufacturing initiatives and a vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem have fundamentally altered India's economic landscape. The country is steadily positioning itself as a global manufacturing destination while simultaneously emerging as a leader in digital public infrastructure, financial inclusion and technology-driven governance.

India's technological achievements have equally strengthened its international standing. The country's digital revolution has demonstrated how technology can transform governance at scale. Digital payment platforms, identity systems and public digital infrastructure are increasingly studied by countries seeking affordable and inclusive development models. Simultaneously, India's rapidly expanding start-up ecosystem, artificial intelligence initiatives, semiconductor ambitions and growing innovation capacity reflect a nation determined to compete at the frontiers of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Few sectors illustrate India's rise more vividly than space. The achievements of the Indian Space Research Organisation have demonstrated remarkable technological capability at globally competitive costs. From lunar exploration and Mars missions to satellite launches serving numerous countries, India's space programme has become a symbol of scientific excellence, self-reliance and international cooperation. It reinforces the confidence that Indian innovation can successfully compete with the world's best.

India's diplomatic profile has also undergone a profound transformation. Today, New Delhi maintains productive partnerships across diverse geopolitical groupings while preserving its strategic autonomy. Whether engaging with the United States, Europe, Russia, Japan, ASEAN, the Gulf, Africa or the Global South, India increasingly pursues a multi-vector foreign policy guided by national interest rather than bloc politics. This balanced approach has enhanced India's credibility as an independent voice capable of engaging all major powers without compromising its own strategic priorities.

National security has witnessed comparable progress. India's Armed Forces continue to modernise across land, sea, air, space and cyber domains while enhancing joint operational capabilities. Indigenous defence production, expanding maritime presence across the Indian Ocean, growing space and cyber capabilities, and increasing defence partnerships demonstrate India's determination to safeguard its interests in an increasingly uncertain strategic environment. At the same time, India's commitment to responsible nuclear stewardship



and regional stability reinforces its image as a mature security provider.

India's global influence is also strengthened by its immense soft power. The worldwide popularity of Yoga, Ayurveda, Indian cuisine, cinema, literature and cultural traditions continues to deepen international goodwill. Equally influential is the Indian diaspora, whose contributions across business, science, academia, medicine and public service have enhanced India's reputation in virtually every major region of the world.

Yet perhaps India's greatest achievement lies in its confidence. The nation increasingly approaches global challenges not merely as a participant but as a contributor, offering ideas, technologies, partnerships and leadership across domains ranging from climate action and digital governance to maritime security and disaster resilience.

As the Tricolour flies proudly on India's 79th Independence Day, it symbolises far more than the memory of freedom won. It represents the confidence of a nation that has steadily transformed adversity into opportunity, diversity into strength and ambition into achievement.

The journey towards Viksit Bharat 2047 is still unfolding. Challenges undoubtedly remain, and much work lies ahead. Yet India's trajectory is unmistakably upward. Guided by democratic values, powered by innovation, strengthened by strategic confidence and inspired by the aspirations of its people, India enters its 80th year of independence with renewed purpose.

The celebration of Independence Day is therefore not merely a tribute to the sacrifices of the past—it is an affirmation of India's growing role in shaping the future. A nation once seeking its place in the world now increasingly helps define the world that is emerging.

WEST ASIA AFTER THE IRAN CRISIS

INSIGHT

The recent US–Israeli war against Iran has altered West Asia's strategic landscape in ways few anticipated. Rather than consolidating military dominance, the conflict accelerated geopolitical realignment, exposed enduring vulnerabilities and compelled regional powers to rethink long-held assumptions about security, deterrence and diplomacy.



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West Asia has witnessed countless wars over the past century, but few have reshaped the regional balance of power as profoundly as the recent US–Israeli war against Iran. Far from delivering the decisive strategic victory that Washington

trade. Yet the ceasefire is unlikely to produce a durable peace because the underlying disputes that fuelled the war remain unresolved. Serious doubts also remain about whether Washington achieved its broader political objectives.

and Jerusalem had anticipated, the conflict exposed the limits of military power, shattered long-held strategic assumptions, accelerated a fundamental regional realignment, and may ultimately mark the beginning of a new regional order.

The guns have largely fallen silent following the US–Iran peace deal signed on 17 June, bringing to an end more than four months of war that began with the coordinated US–Israeli attack on Iran on 28 February. The campaign sought to dismantle Iran's nuclear and missile capabilities, degrade its

network of regional proxy groups, reassert American military primacy and, ultimately, bring about regime change in Tehran. Yet the Trump administration's repeated reformulation of its war aims left the campaign's real purpose increasingly blurred.

Despite occasional ceasefire violations and mutual accusations of non-compliance, the agreement has offered the region a fragile but much-needed respite, easing immediate concerns over disruptions to global energy supplies and international



Military superiority won battles, but failed to deliver the political outcomes necessary to reshape West Asia's strategic order permanently.

Yet the peace deal has done far more than end a war. It marks the beginning of a profound geopolitical transition whose consequences extend far beyond Iran and Israel. The conflict

exposed the limits of military power as an instrument of political coercion, revealed the vulnerability of even the region's most sophisticated defence systems and critical energy infrastructure, and compelled every major regional actor to reassess its security assumptions. The war accelerated the Gulf monarchies' search for greater strategic autonomy, intensified competition among external powers for influence, and exposed the absence of a durable regional security architecture. More fundamentally, it called into question the sustainability of a regional order built around American military primacy and Israeli military dominance, both of which now appear to generate strategic risks alongside deterrence.



LIMITS OF POWER

The war also exposed the limits of military superiority as an instrument of strategic statecraft. Despite overwhelming technological and conventional advantages, the United States and Israel discovered that battlefield dominance alone cannot eliminate strategic threats, compel political outcomes or produce a durable regional order.

For Israel, the consequences extend beyond the battlefield. The conflict may prove to be the greatest setback yet to its long-term project of regional normalisation. By driving the Gulf monarchies closer to Tehran and reinforcing Saudi Arabia's insistence that Palestinian statehood must precede normalisation, the war has made the expansion of the Abraham Accords even more difficult.

The war also underscored subtle but potentially significant strains in the US–Israel strategic partnership. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government was the principal advocate of military action against Iran, arguing that diplomacy had run its course and that only force could permanently degrade Tehran's nuclear and missile capabilities. Washington ultimately embraced that assessment, joining Israel in an unprecedented military campaign. Yet, as the conflict reached a point of diminishing returns, President Donald Trump pivoted towards negotiations, culminating in the peace agreement with Iran despite Israel's evident reservations. The episode suggests that although Israel continues to wield

considerable influence over American regional policy, it can no longer determine Washington's strategic endgame.

GULF REASSESSMENT

If the war exposed the limits of military power, it also laid bare the strategic vulnerabilities of America's Gulf partners—Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain and Kuwait. For decades, they relied on the American security umbrella, reinforced by an extensive network of US military bases across the Gulf. The war demonstrated that this guarantee no longer assured immunity.

Following the US–Israeli strikes, Iran retaliated against American military installations and strategic infrastructure across the Gulf. The attacks demonstrated that foreign military bases can become liabilities as readily as strategic assets, leaving host states increasingly exposed to retaliation.

Despite their repeated calls for restraint and diplomacy, Washington chose escalation, exposing the Gulf States to retaliation. Significantly, with the exception of Israel, the war was neither sought by most of Washington's regional partners nor preceded by any meaningful consultation with them.

The episode reinforced the perception that American strategic decisions are driven more by Washington's own priorities than by the interests of its regional partners. The conflict also reinforced long-standing doubts among America's Gulf partners about Washington's ability—or willingness—to



The gulf monarchies emerged from the war more determined to hedge, diversify partnerships and reduce exclusive dependence on Washington.

restrain Israel when its military actions risk wider regional escalation.

As a result, the Gulf States are unlikely to regard exclusive reliance on the United States as sufficient for their long-term security. This realisation is likely to accelerate their pursuit of

greater strategic autonomy—not by abandoning Washington, but by reducing their exclusive reliance on it.

This divergence was reflected in the Gulf monarchies' carefully calibrated, though not entirely uniform, response. While the UAE reportedly deepened security coordination with Israel, Saudi Arabia invested greater diplomatic capital in promoting de-escalation.



Publicly, most Gulf States called for restraint and reportedly denied the use of their territory or airspace for offensive operations against Iran. Yet media reports suggest that some leaders—notably Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman—privately welcomed the attack as an opportunity to weaken Iran's military capabilities.

This apparent contradiction reflected not inconsistency but strategic pragmatism: they favoured a weaker Iran without becoming direct participants in the war.

Their caution also reflected a sober assessment of the costs of war. Having witnessed the vulnerability of oil facilities, ports, desalination plants and logistics hubs to missiles and drones, the Gulf States recognise that an open confrontation with Iran would endanger their economic transformation agendas, disrupt energy exports, undermine investor confidence and expose critical infrastructure to attack.

The post-war phase is therefore likely to witness a more nuanced Gulf strategy: preserving strategic ties with the United States while deepening diplomatic engagement with Iran, expanding regional confidence-building measures and diversifying external partnerships.

Their objective will not be to choose between competing regional and external powers but to avoid being forced into exclusive alignments. Strategic hedging, rather than bloc politics, is likely to define the Gulf's foreign policy in the years ahead.

EMERGING ALIGNMENTS

Beyond the regional powers, the war also reshaped the role of external actors competing for influence in West Asia.

Despite their strategic partnerships with Iran, neither China nor Russia entered the conflict directly. Both condemned the use of force, opposed Iran's international isolation and sought to expand their influence without assuming the costs and risks of military intervention.

Their conduct reflected an emerging pattern of great-power competition in which economic leverage, intelligence cooperation and diplomacy increasingly replace direct military engagement.

The war also exposed the growing limits of military coercion as an instrument of strategic statecraft. Washington and Jerusalem believed that the mass anti-government protests in January, decades of crippling sanctions, and Iran's recovery from the 12-day war fought barely six months earlier had left the Islamic Republic sufficiently vulnerable to be coerced into capitulation or even regime change.

Although the United States and Israel inflicted extensive damage on Iran's nuclear infrastructure, missile capabilities, military leadership and economy, they failed to compel Tehran's surrender or exclude it from the regional balance of power.

Instead, Iran emerged strategically more consequential, retaining the capacity to impose costs well beyond the battlefield, most visibly through its ability to disrupt the Strait of Hormuz. Faced with this strategic reality, Washington ultimately abandoned military coercion in favour of direct negotiations, culminating in the ensuing peace agreement.



The post-war order will be shaped less by military victory than by diplomatic adaptation, strategic restraint and regional accommodation.

THE DIPLOMATIC TEST

The diplomatic process remains fragile, yet both Washington and Tehran appear to recognise that a renewed military

confrontation would be far more costly than sustained diplomatic engagement.

The United States has implicitly acknowledged that no durable security order in West Asia can be built by bypassing Iran, while Tehran increasingly views diplomacy as the most effective means of consolidating its strategic gains and pursuing economic recovery and sanctions relief.

Yet decades of mistrust, unresolved disputes and the enduring influence of hardliners on all sides ensure that the diplomatic process will remain fragile and vulnerable to reversal. The

opportunity is real, but so is the risk of relapse.

Whether this rare strategic opening matures into a stable and peaceful regional order will ultimately depend less on military superiority than on sustained diplomacy, political restraint and a willingness to accommodate competing security interests.

*(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

- *US-Israeli campaign accelerated strategic realignment across an increasingly multipolar West Asia.*
- *Gulf monarchies are pursuing strategic autonomy through calibrated diplomatic hedging.*
- *Military superiority alone proved insufficient to secure enduring political outcomes.*
- *Iran retained significant regional leverage despite extensive military and economic damage.*
- *Durable regional stability now depends more on diplomacy than military coercion.*

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THE BAY OF BENGAL'S STRATEGIC AWAKENING

INDO-PACIFIC

The Bay of Bengal has quietly emerged as one of the Indo-Pacific's most consequential strategic theatres. As great-power competition shifts from battlefields to ports, supply chains and connectivity, this once-overlooked maritime space is rapidly becoming the new centre of Asian geopolitics.



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History often transforms overlooked frontiers into the center of global affairs. The Suez Canal reshaped nineteenth-century geopolitics, while the Persian Gulf became the strategic heart of the Cold War energy order. Today, another maritime region is undergoing a similar transformation. Quietly but unmistakably, the Bay of Bengal is emerging as one of the defining geopolitical arenas of the twenty-first century.

The Bay of Bengal has become the geographic hinge connecting

the Indian and Pacific Oceans, making it indispensable to the Indo-Pacific strategy. It sits astride the sea lanes leading to the Strait of Malacca, through which a substantial share of global trade and East Asia's energy imports passes. As supply chains diversify and strategic competition intensifies, the Bay has evolved from a peripheral waterway into a vital maritime corridor. For India, it is a strategic buffer; for China, a gateway to the Indian Ocean; and for the United States and its allies, a critical arena for preserving freedom of navigation and a rules-based maritime order.

Their competition is no longer confined to military deployments. It is unfolding through ports, industrial corridors, digital infrastructure, undersea cables, energy connectivity, and maritime logistics. The struggle is not simply over who commands the sea. It is about who will shape Asia's economic and strategic architecture for decades to come.

In the Indo-Pacific, ports, supply chains and digital networks increasingly deliver more enduring strategic influence than naval firepower alone.

INFRASTRUCTURE RACE

For much of modern history, military strength was measured by fleets and firepower. Today, influence is increasingly built through infrastructure. Across the Bay of Bengal, billions of dollars are flowing into deep-sea ports, special economic zones, highways, railways, and digital networks. These projects promise economic development, but they also carry long-term strategic consequences.

Bangladesh's Matarbari Deep Sea Port is perhaps the clearest



example. Once fully operational, it will accommodate the world's largest container vessels, reducing the country's dependence on regional transshipment hubs such as Colombo and Singapore. More importantly, it will give Bangladesh greater control over its own trade routes and strengthen its position in regional commerce.



China, meanwhile, continues developing Myanmar's Kyaukphyu Deep Sea Port under the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor. Combined with oil and gas pipelines linking the Bay directly to Yunnan Province, the project provides Beijing with an alternative route to the Indian Ocean that reduces reliance on the vulnerable Strait of Malacca, through which most of China's imported energy traditionally passes.

India is pursuing its own strategic response through the development of Great Nicobar Island, envisioned as a major transshipment hub overlooking one of the world's busiest shipping lanes. For New Delhi, maritime infrastructure has become as vital to national security as naval modernization itself.

These investments represent more than commercial development. They determine whose logistics systems dominate regional trade, whose digital standards become the norm, whose financial institutions finance growth, and whose technology becomes embedded in critical infrastructure. In today's geopolitical competition, supply chains often generate more lasting influence than warships.

UNDERSEA COMPETITION

Economic competition has not replaced military rivalry; it has become intertwined with it. The Bay of Bengal is witnessing one of the Indo-Pacific's most significant naval buildups.

India is expanding its eastern maritime capabilities through INS Varsha near Visakhapatnam, explicitly designed as a counterweight to China's expanding Longpo facility on

Hainan Island. This base is designed to support nuclear-powered submarines and strengthen surveillance across the eastern Indian Ocean. The project reflects growing concern over China's expanding maritime presence.

Beijing, meanwhile, continues extending its strategic footprint across the northern Indian Ocean. Commercial facilities at Hambantota in Sri Lanka, Kyaukphyu in Myanmar, and expanding maritime cooperation with Bangladesh have prompted concerns in New Delhi and other capitals over the dual-use potential of Chinese-backed infrastructure. Although officially commercial, these facilities could provide logistical support during future military contingencies.

REGIONAL BALANCING

Geography has handed Bangladesh a rare inheritance. Perched at the eastern rim of South Asia, it sits precisely where the subcontinent's trade routes could, in theory, flow seamlessly into Southeast Asia — a positional advantage few states possess and even fewer manage to convert into real leverage. The harder task is what comes next: Dhaka must extract capital from Beijing, security cooperation from New Delhi, and institutional capacity-building from Washington, all without becoming beholden to any one of them.

That is a delicate equilibrium, not a one-time negotiation. The instruments available are unglamorous but essential — issue-by-issue alignment instead of bloc loyalty, full transparency in how infrastructure deals are structured, and



a defense capability sturdy enough that sovereignty means something more than a diplomatic talking point. Fail at this balancing act, and Bangladesh drifts toward exactly the outcome its own foreign policy has spent decades trying to avoid: strategic irrelevance dressed up as partnership.

The Bay of Bengal is no longer merely a maritime passage—it is becoming the geopolitical hinge connecting South Asia, Southeast Asia and the wider Indo-Pacific.

New Delhi views the Bay through a proprietary lens rather

than a shared one. It treats these waters as its natural sphere of influence, working to limit outside, particularly Chinese, naval presence while simultaneously building out its own island bases, littoral defenses, and nuclear deterrent posture along the eastern seaboard. That ambition extends well past

with reason to insist the Bay remain a shared corridor rather than the exclusive property of any single power.

Whoever shapes the Bay of Bengal's connectivity, infrastructure and maritime architecture will significantly influence the Indo-Pacific balance of power.



coastal defense. Through infrastructure at Great Nicobar and the older gateway at Haldia, India is angling to become the practical gatekeeper of the Malacca Strait, arguably the single most consequential chokepoint in global trade.

It is a bold claim to make in an era of contested seas, and holding it will require India to out-invest and out-build a rival with considerably deeper pockets. Still, the strategic logic is clear: New Delhi wants the Bay of Bengal to function, in effect, as an extension of Indian sovereignty rather than a contested commons open to any power willing to show up.

Southeast Asia's stake in the Bay is easy to overlook and impossible to overstate. The energy shipments and trade flows sustaining East Asian economies pass directly through these waters, which means ASEAN's own prosperity is quietly hostage to whether the Bay remains open or slides into contested territory. Physical connectivity is accelerating that dependency further. Corridors linking India and Myanmar through Thailand, alongside the Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal initiative, are steadily weaving South Asia's easternmost states into the same economic circuitry as ASEAN, replacing a loose geographic neighborhood with genuine interdependence. The consequence cuts in both directions: Southeast Asia now has a direct stake in how Bay of Bengal security unfolds, while Bangladesh and India gain a broader coalition of partners

GLOBAL IMPLICATIONS

The Bay of Bengal's transformation extends far beyond regional politics. Nearly two billion people live in the countries surrounding the Bay. The region links some of the world's fastest-growing economies, major energy routes, and increasingly integrated manufacturing networks. Decisions made here will influence global supply chains, maritime security, energy markets, and the future balance of power across the Indo-Pacific.

American strategist Robert D. Kaplan argued more than a decade ago that the Bay of Bengal was "returning to the center of history." Recent developments suggest that prediction is proving remarkably accurate.

THE TURNING TIDE

The Bay of Bengal is no longer a peripheral waterway overshadowed by events elsewhere in Asia. It has become one of the principal arenas where the future balance of power in the Indo-Pacific is being negotiated.

Ports now matter almost as much as naval fleets. Digital infrastructure increasingly rivals military hardware as an instrument of influence. Supply chains, submarine cables, artificial intelligence, and maritime logistics are becoming the new vocabulary of geopolitics. Now, the defining question is whether the nations along its shores will shape this transformation themselves—or allow superpowers to shape it on their behalf.

(M. A. Hossain, senior journalist and international affairs analyst based in Bangladesh. He covers South Asia and the South-East Asian region for News Analytics. The views expressed are of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The News Analytics Herald.)

QUICK INSIGHTS

- *The Bay of Bengal is rapidly emerging as the Indo-Pacific's foremost geopolitical maritime theatre.*
- *Infrastructure and connectivity increasingly shape regional influence more decisively than traditional military power.*
- *India and China are competing through ports, logistics, digital networks and maritime infrastructure investments.*
- *Bangladesh's strategic location makes balanced diplomacy essential for preserving sovereignty and regional relevance.*
- *Control of the Bay will significantly influence future Indo-Pacific security, trade and global power dynamics.*



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SPECIAL COVERAGE

BIMSTEC STRENGTHENS ITS COLLECTIVE SECURITY ARCHITECTURE



BY THE NEWS ANALYTICS HERALD |
MEDIA OUTREACH PARTNER FOR BIMSTEC



The 5th Meeting of the BIMSTEC National Security Chiefs, held in New Delhi on 16 July 2026, marked another significant step in the Bay of Bengal grouping's evolution from an economic cooperation forum into an increasingly structured regional security platform. Hosted by India's National Security Adviser Ajit Doval, the meeting brought together National Security Advisers and Heads of Delegation from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand to discuss traditional and emerging security challenges confronting the region.

Originally established to promote economic and technical cooperation, BIMSTEC has steadily expanded its security agenda as the geopolitical importance of the Bay of Bengal has grown. Today, regional stability depends not only on economic connectivity but also on coordinated responses to terrorism, organised crime, cyber threats, maritime security, disaster management and energy resilience.

FROM VISION TO INSTITUTION

The foundation of BIMSTEC's security cooperation was laid during the Goa Retreat of BIMSTEC Leaders in October 2016, where member states recognised the growing threats posed by terrorism, violent extremism and radicalisation. The leaders agreed to institutionalise the Annual Meeting of BIMSTEC National Security Chiefs on Information and Intelligence Sharing, creating a dedicated platform for closer cooperation among intelligence, law-enforcement and security agencies.

Over the past decade, this framework has expanded considerably. BIMSTEC has established Expert Groups on Maritime Security, Cyber Security and Space Security, alongside the Himalayan Science Council, the Track 1.5

BIMSTEC Security Dialogue Forum, and a Think Tanks Dialogue on Regional Security. These mechanisms have gradually transformed security cooperation from periodic consultations into an institutionalised regional process.

EXPANDING SECURITY PRIORITIES

At the New Delhi meeting, the BIMSTEC Secretary General presented a comprehensive review of progress across the organisation's security initiatives. Delegations focused on practical and result-oriented measures to strengthen cooperation against terrorism and organised crime, while also addressing cybersecurity, maritime and energy security, connectivity, disaster management and emerging technological threats.

The discussions reflected a broader understanding of security in today's geopolitical environment. Protecting digital infrastructure, safeguarding maritime trade routes and strengthening institutional resilience are increasingly viewed as essential complements to conventional defence.

MARITIME COOPERATION IN FOCUS

The meeting produced two important operational outcomes.

Member states adopted Guidelines for the Maritime Component of Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR), enabling faster and better-coordinated regional responses during natural disasters and humanitarian emergencies. Given the Bay of Bengal's vulnerability to cyclones, tsunamis and other climate-related disasters, the guidelines significantly strengthen regional preparedness.

The National Security Chiefs also endorsed Guiding Principles for Maritime Law Enforcement Agencies during Interactions at Sea. These principles are intended to improve operational predictability, promote safety and strengthen coordination among maritime agencies during



routine interactions and joint activities. Together, these measures represent practical confidence-building initiatives that enhance interoperability while reducing the risk of misunderstanding at sea.

LOOKING AHEAD

As BIMSTEC approaches its 30th anniversary in 2027, the National Security Advisers reaffirmed their commitment to expanding regional cooperation, enhancing institutional capacity and promoting greater knowledge-sharing across the security domain.

The New Delhi meeting also highlighted India's continuing role in shaping BIMSTEC's evolving security agenda. While the meeting produced no headline-grabbing announcements, its significance lies in the steady institutionalisation of regional security cooperation. The adoption of common maritime guidelines, expanding expert-level mechanisms and greater operational coordination demonstrate that BIMSTEC is gradually moving beyond dialogue towards practical collaboration.

In an era where security increasingly encompasses cyberspace, maritime governance, disaster response and critical infrastructure protection, the 5th BIMSTEC National Security Chiefs Meeting reinforced an important reality: the future stability of the Bay of Bengal will depend not only on economic integration but also on collective security cooperation. As the region's geopolitical importance continues to rise, BIMSTEC is steadily positioning itself as a key pillar of regional resilience and Indo-Pacific stability.

U.S. ASSERTIVENESS AMID TRANSATLANTIC FRICTION

GLOBAL AFFAIRS

The transatlantic partnership is entering its most consequential transformation since the Second World War. As Washington revives hemispheric primacy and Europe pursues strategic autonomy, the international order is fragmenting into competing centres of influence, transactional alliances and increasingly contested geopolitical realities.



AMBASSADOR SRIKUMAR MENON, IFS(R)
FOR THE NEWS ANALYTICS HERALD

The contemporary international governance system is undergoing a significant strategic transformation. For nearly eight decades, the transatlantic alliance formed the institutional and political foundation of the Western-led international order, sustained by shared democratic values, multilateral cooperation and collective security.

However, recent changes in United States foreign policy, particularly under the "America First" doctrine, have fundamentally altered this relationship. Its growing emphasis on unilateral action, economic nationalism and regional dominance has weakened the consultative framework that traditionally underpinned transatlantic cooperation.



A defining feature of this strategic shift is the renewed American focus on the Western Hemisphere through a modern reinterpretation of the Monroe Doctrine. This approach, often characterised as a "Trump variant" of the Monroe Doctrine, seeks to reaffirm U.S. primacy in the Americas by countering extra-regional influence and reinforcing Washington's strategic dominance in the Western Hemisphere. Designed to reinforce American national security, this policy has intensified transatlantic tensions, altered Latin American alliance dynamics and fostered a fragmented international order.

It is worthwhile to examine the drivers of these developments and their implications for the evolving balance of power.

The revival of the Monroe Doctrine signals not a return to history, but a redefinition of American strategic priorities.

HEMISPHERIC REVIVAL

The Monroe Doctrine, announced by President James Monroe in 1823, established the principle that European intervention in the Western Hemisphere would be regarded as a threat to U.S. security. The subsequent Roosevelt Corollary of 1904 expanded this principle by asserting the United States' right to intervene in neighbouring states to preserve regional stability and protect American interests.



Contemporary U.S. strategy revives the Monroe Doctrine by placing homeland defence at the centre of national security. It seeks to secure the Western Hemisphere against migration, transnational crime, and Chinese and Russian influence, thereby denying external powers strategic space while reinforcing American regional primacy.

Unlike previous administrations that sought to balance regional influence with multilateral engagement, the approach of the Trump administration relies heavily on unilateral diplomatic, economic and, where necessary, military instruments. This renewed emphasis on hemispheric control is best illustrated by recent measures aimed at protecting critical infrastructure, safeguarding the Panama Canal, limiting Chinese investment in strategic sectors and disrupting Russian security partnerships.

TRANSATLANTIC STRAINS

The resurgence of hemispheric assertiveness coincides with a broader transformation in American foreign policy that has strained relations with Europe. Ever since the end of the Second World War, the legitimacy of U.S. leadership rested largely on consultation with allies and support for multilateral institutions. That consensus has gradually weakened, giving way to a more transactional approach to international partnerships.

There have been at least three significant developments that illustrate this trend. First, strategic priorities have changed. While European governments remain committed to preserving a rules-based international order through diplomacy and

institutional cooperation, Washington has increasingly prioritised geopolitical competition, burden-sharing and national sovereignty. Repeated demands for greater NATO defence spending and suggestions that American security commitments should be conditional upon allied contributions have generated uncertainty regarding the future of the alliance.

Second, economic relations have become increasingly contentious. The use of tariffs and other coercive economic measures against both competitors and traditional allies reflects a broader strategy of economic nationalism. Policies intended to reduce trade deficits, strengthen domestic industries, and address migration or fentanyl trafficking have also imposed costs on close partners, undermining confidence in the stability of transatlantic economic relations.

Third, unilateral American actions have raised broader concerns regarding alliance management. The limited consultation preceding major foreign policy initiatives, together with disputes involving Greenland, Venezuela and wider questions of territorial and strategic influence, has reinforced European perceptions that Washington increasingly favours coercive statecraft over collective decision-making.

Collectively, these developments appear to have encouraged European policymakers to reconsider their long-standing dependence on American leadership and to pursue greater strategic autonomy.

Latin America is increasingly choosing strategic flexibility over exclusive alignment, reshaping the geopolitics of the Western Hemisphere.



REGIONAL REALIGNMENTS

The renewed American focus on regional dominance has also transformed alliance politics across Latin America and the Caribbean. Historically, U.S. influence in the region alternated between cooperation and intervention. Today, the strategic environment has become considerably more

complex as China, Russia and other external actors expand their presence through investment, infrastructure development, defence cooperation and diplomatic engagement.

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has significantly increased Beijing's economic footprint across Latin America through investments in transport, energy, telecommunications and mining. On the other hand, Russia has strengthened



political and military relationships with governments such as Venezuela while expanding defence cooperation across selected states.

These developments directly challenge traditional American dominance in what Washington has historically regarded as its strategic sphere of influence. American responses have produced mixed regional reactions. Some governments welcome stronger U.S. cooperation in addressing organised crime, narcotics trafficking and border security. Others view renewed American activism as a return to interventionism and neo-imperialism, reviving historical memories of overt and covert external interference in domestic affairs, spanning the early twentieth century through the Cold War.

This perception of a renewed resurgence of American interventionism has prompted many Latin American countries to adopt strategies of "multi-alignment" rather than exclusive partnerships. Instead of choosing between Washington and Beijing, governments seek to maintain productive relationships with multiple major powers while maximising economic opportunities and preserving strategic autonomy. This approach reflects a broader transition from hierarchical alliances towards more flexible and interest-based partnerships.

EUROPE REPOSITIONS

Growing uncertainty surrounding American foreign policy has accelerated Europe's efforts to strengthen its own strategic capabilities. Although NATO remains the cornerstone of European security, increasing doubts about U.S. commitments have encouraged European governments to invest more

heavily in defence, industrial resilience and independent diplomatic initiatives.

The European Union has simultaneously diversified its economic partnerships beyond the United States. After more than 25 years of negotiations, the EU and the Mercosur bloc (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay) recently signed a formalised free trade agreement. Such agreements demonstrate Europe's determination to establish stronger commercial and political ties with Latin America independently of Washington. These initiatives are intended not only to enhance economic resilience but also to preserve European influence in an increasingly competitive international environment.

Strategic autonomy does not necessarily imply disengagement from the United States. Rather, it reflects Europe's attempt to reduce excessive dependence on a partner whose foreign policy has become increasingly unpredictable and transactional.

EMERGING WORLD ORDER

These developments collectively accelerate the transition from the relatively stable post-Cold War unipolar order towards a more fragmented and competitive international system. From a realist perspective, the renewed American emphasis on the Western Hemisphere represents a well-thought-out plan to consolidate regional dominance while preparing for long-term strategic competition with China. By securing its immediate neighbourhood, Washington seeks to allocate greater resources to broader geopolitical rivalry.



The future international order will be shaped less by permanent alliances than by adaptive coalitions, strategic autonomy and competing centres of power.

This strategy, however, carries significant risks. Over-the-board unilateralism poses the danger of alienating allies, encouraging anti-American sentiment and weakening the institutional

foundations of Western cohesion. Strategic competitors can exploit these divisions by expanding their political, economic and military influence in regions where American engagement has diminished.

China has already positioned itself as a champion of globalisation, infrastructure development and South–South cooperation through initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative and the expansion of BRICS. Russia continues to leverage political instability and security partnerships to maintain influence across several regions. At the same time, influential middle powers—such as India, Brazil, Türkiye, Indonesia and South Africa—are increasingly pursuing flexible diplomatic strategies that avoid rigid alignment with either Washington or Beijing.

The result is neither a return to bipolarity nor the emergence

of a stable multipolar equilibrium. Instead, the international system increasingly resembles one of fragmented multipolarity, characterised by overlapping spheres of influence, fluid coalitions and issue-specific partnerships.

The erosion of multilateral institutions further complicates this transition. As major powers rely more heavily on unilateral action and power politics, global cooperation on climate change, arms control, public health, cyber governance and non-proliferation becomes increasingly difficult. The predictability that once underpinned the liberal international order is gradually giving way to greater geopolitical uncertainty.

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

QUICK INSIGHTS

- *America First* reshapes transatlantic relations through renewed hemispheric strategic priorities.
- Europe increasingly pursues strategic autonomy amid uncertainty over American commitments.
- Latin America embraces multi-alignment to maximise autonomy and economic opportunities.
- Great-power rivalry increasingly fragments global governance and traditional alliance structures.
- Flexible partnerships increasingly replace rigid blocs in the emerging multipolar international order.



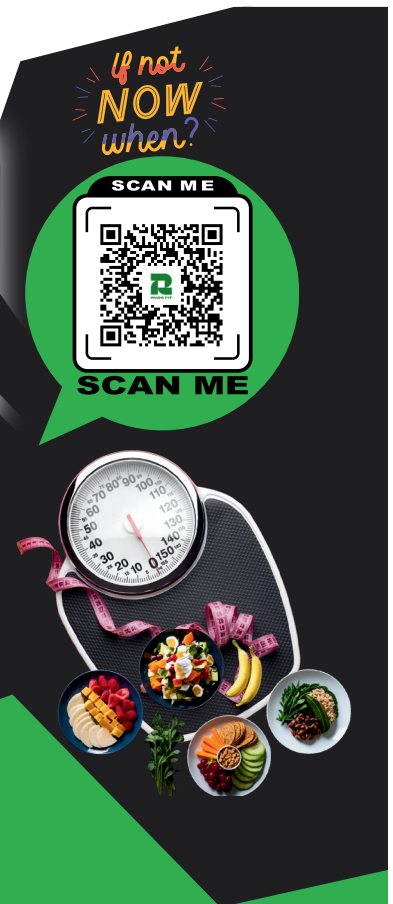
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WHEN AI MEETS THE PHYSICAL WORLD

NEXT FRONTIER

Artificial Intelligence is no longer confined to software; it is entering factories, hospitals, battlefields and public infrastructure through intelligent machines. As robotics and AI converge, the contest for technological leadership is becoming inseparable from economic competitiveness, military capability and national strategic influence.



**LT GEN KAPIL AGGARWAL (R) | FORMER DG EME INDIAN ARMY
FOR THE NEWS ANALYTICS HERALD**

The next frontier of Artificial Intelligence is not merely to think, but to act. As AI increasingly acquires a physical form through intelligent machines, humanity stands at the threshold of a new industrial and technological revolution. The convergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and robotics is fundamentally altering the way economies produce, militaries operate, healthcare is delivered and societies function. What was once confined to algorithms running on computers is now embodied in autonomous vehicles, robotic surgeons, warehouse robots, precision agricultural equipment, industrial cobots and autonomous defence systems.

This transition from software intelligence to physical intelligence represents one of the defining technological shifts of the twenty-first century. It promises unprecedented gains in productivity and innovation, but simultaneously raises critical questions relating to employment, ethics, security,

governance and global power dynamics. The global race in "Physical AI" has accelerated dramatically. According to the International Federation of Robotics, more than 4.28 million industrial robots are now operating in factories worldwide, while annual installations remain above 500,000 units, reflecting the rapid integration of AI into physical production systems.

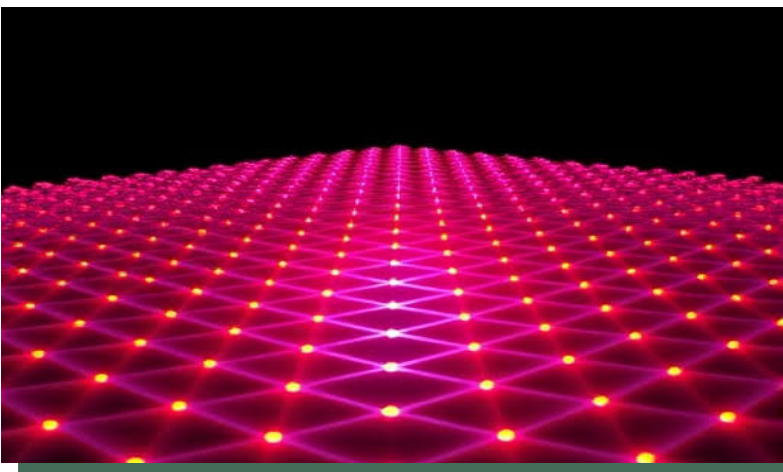
The next AI revolution will be measured not by smarter software, but by intelligent machines capable of acting in the physical world.

THE PHYSICAL AI REVOLUTION

Traditional robots have long been employed in manufacturing to perform repetitive, rule-based tasks. Their operations

were deterministic and dependent upon fixed programming. However, the integration of AI has transformed robots into adaptive, intelligent systems capable of perception, reasoning, learning and decision-making.

Powered by advances in machine learning, computer vision, natural language processing, edge computing and sophisticated sensors such as Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR),



radar and depth cameras, modern robots can interpret complex environments, collaborate safely with humans and continuously improve their performance through experience. This convergence has shifted automation from executing predefined instructions to achieving autonomous decision-making in dynamic environments.

INTELLIGENT INDUSTRIES

Manufacturing remains the largest beneficiary of AI-enabled robotics. The advent of Industry 4.0 has integrated AI, robotics, the Internet of Things (IoT), cloud computing and digital twins into highly intelligent production ecosystems. Collaborative robots, or cobots, are increasingly assisting workers in assembly lines, welding, inspection, packaging and quality control. Unlike conventional industrial robots operating in isolation, cobots can safely interact with human workers, thereby improving productivity without entirely replacing human labour.

AI-powered predictive maintenance is another transformative application. Sensors continuously monitor industrial equipment, enabling algorithms to predict component failures before breakdowns occur. Consequently, manufacturers reduce maintenance costs, minimise downtime and improve operational efficiency.

Countries investing aggressively in industrial automation are expected to enjoy higher manufacturing competitiveness, greater export potential and enhanced resilience against supply chain disruptions. BMW Group has already deployed the latest humanoid robots. Unlike conventional factory robots, the humanoid performs dynamic logistics tasks requiring

mobility, perception and AI-driven decision-making, illustrating the shift from automation to embodied intelligence.

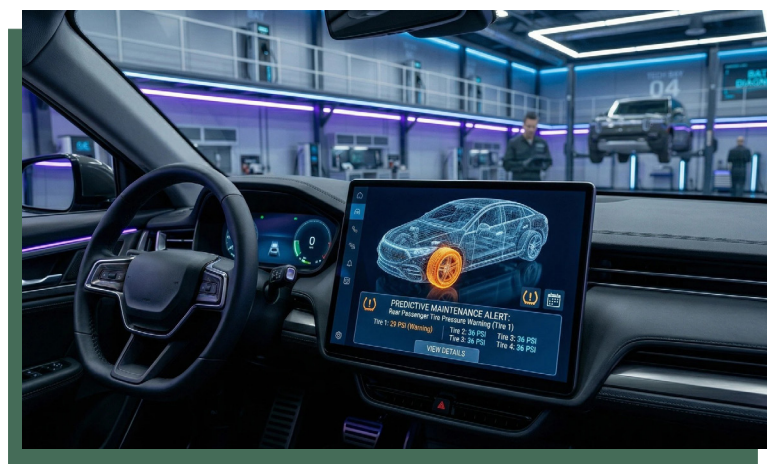
Construction is witnessing a similar transformation. In 2026, autonomous construction robots developed by Built Robotics were deployed to build solar infrastructure supporting Meta's Hyperion AI data centre, with robots driving up to 1,000 steel piles per day while operating in difficult terrain.

The countries that lead physical AI will define the next era of economic strength, military power and technological sovereignty.

SECURING THE FUTURE

The logistics sector is undergoing a dramatic transformation through intelligent automation. AI-driven warehouses employ fleets of autonomous mobile robots capable of locating, transporting and sorting inventory with remarkable speed and precision. Companies increasingly utilise AI to optimise delivery routes, forecast demand, manage inventories and improve warehouse operations.

AI-enabled autonomous trucks, warehouse robots and delivery drones promise reductions in cost and delivery times and are becoming commercially viable. Companies developing



autonomous freight technologies are expanding long-haul driverless trucking, while AI-powered warehouse robots significantly reduce order-processing time and improve inventory accuracy.

TRANSFORMING HEALTHCARE

Healthcare illustrates how physical AI can directly improve human well-being. AI-assisted robotic surgery enables minimally invasive procedures with exceptional precision, reducing blood loss, shortening hospital stays and accelerating patient recovery.

Rehabilitation robots assist stroke survivors and patients recovering from neurological disorders. Intelligent prosthetic

limbs, controlled through neural interfaces, provide enhanced mobility for amputees. Hospitals increasingly deploy service robots for medicine delivery, sanitation and patient assistance, thereby reducing the workload of healthcare professionals.



Physical AI also strengthens telemedicine through robotic systems that enable specialists to perform consultations or supervise procedures across geographical boundaries. As ageing populations increase healthcare demand worldwide, intelligent robots can help address shortages of medical personnel while maintaining high standards of patient care.

According to the World Health Organization, the global shortage of health workers could exceed 10 million by 2030, making AI-assisted robotics increasingly important for surgery, rehabilitation, elder care and hospital logistics. Nevertheless, human oversight remains indispensable, particularly in critical clinical decision-making, where empathy, ethics and contextual judgement cannot be fully automated.

A NEW STRATEGIC FRONTIER

Among all sectors, defence perhaps illustrates the most profound implications of physical AI. Militaries worldwide are rapidly integrating AI into autonomous drones, robotic combat vehicles, surveillance systems, underwater autonomous vehicles and missile defence platforms. Recent conflicts have demonstrated how AI-enabled robotics is changing warfare. In 2026, Ukraine extensively deployed unmanned ground vehicles capable of carrying heavy machine guns, transporting supplies, evacuating wounded soldiers and planting explosives.

AI significantly enhances intelligence gathering, battlefield awareness, logistics management, target recognition and

mission planning. Autonomous drones have demonstrated their operational effectiveness in reconnaissance, border surveillance, disaster assessment and precision operations.

Furthermore, AI-enabled warfare lowers operational costs while potentially increasing the speed of military escalation. Reports indicate that robotic systems have already participated in over 50,000 operational missions, highlighting how autonomous systems are becoming indispensable on the modern battlefield.

However, the emergence of lethal autonomous weapon systems has triggered intense international debate. Delegating life-and-death decisions to machines raises fundamental ethical concerns regarding accountability, proportionality and compliance with international humanitarian law.

GLOBAL TECHNOLOGY RACE

The convergence of AI and robotics is increasingly shaping global geopolitics. Technological leadership and sovereignty now determine not only economic competitiveness but also national security and diplomatic influence.

Major powers, including the United States, China, the European Union, Japan and South Korea, are investing heavily in AI research, semiconductor manufacturing, advanced robotics and quantum computing. There is intense competition in innovation, securing critical mineral resources, semiconductor supply chains and high-performance computing infrastructure.

Export restrictions imposed by the United States on advanced AI chips, large investments in domestic manufacturing and technology alliances reflect the growing recognition that AI represents a strategic national asset.

For India, this technological transformation presents a historic opportunity. Government initiatives such as the India AI Mission, Digital India, the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme, the National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence and semiconductor manufacturing initiatives provide a strong foundation for developing indigenous AI and robotics capabilities.

India's demographic dividend, robust software ecosystem and rapidly expanding digital public infrastructure position it favourably to become a significant player in physical AI, provided investments in research, advanced manufacturing and skill development continue.

ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION

AI-powered robotics is expected to contribute trillions of dollars to global GDP over the coming decades through higher productivity, reduced operational costs and accelerated innovation. New employment opportunities will emerge in robotics engineering, AI software development, semiconductor fabrication, systems integration, maintenance, cybersecurity and human-machine interface design.

However, routine manual occupations remain vulnerable to automation. Manufacturing workers, warehouse operators, drivers and administrative personnel may experience significant job displacement unless governments proactively invest in reskilling and workforce transition programmes.

The World Economic Forum, in its Future of Jobs Report 2025, estimates that while millions of jobs may be displaced by automation, AI and robotics could create around 170 million new jobs globally by 2030, resulting in a net increase in employment, provided workers are successfully reskilled.

The future workforce will increasingly complement intelligent machines rather than compete against them. Human capabilities such as creativity, emotional intelligence, ethical reasoning, leadership and complex problem-solving will become even more valuable.

GOVERNING INTELLIGENCE

As AI acquires physical agency, governance becomes substantially more complex. Unlike software errors, failures in autonomous machines can result in physical harm, making safety assurance paramount.

Key policy challenges include:

- Defining legal liability for accidents involving autonomous systems.
- Protecting privacy amid continuous data collection by intelligent machines.
- Strengthening cybersecurity against malicious manipulation of robotic platforms.
- Preventing algorithmic bias in decision-making systems.
- Establishing international norms governing autonomous weapons.
- Ensuring transparency, explainability and accountability in AI-driven decisions.

International organisations, governments, academia and industry must collaborate to develop harmonised regulatory frameworks that encourage innovation while safeguarding the public interest.

Physical AI is rapidly becoming the new engine of industrial growth, national resilience and strategic competition.

THE ROAD AHEAD

Artificial Intelligence is entering a transformative phase where intelligence is no longer confined to digital platforms but is embodied in machines capable of interacting with the physical world. This convergence of AI and robotics has the potential to redefine manufacturing, healthcare, logistics, defence and industrial productivity while fundamentally reshaping the global economy and geopolitical landscape.

Notwithstanding the above, technological capability alone cannot determine humanity's future. The true measure of progress will depend upon whether societies can deploy physical AI responsibly, equitably and ethically. Governments must create adaptive regulatory frameworks, industries must embrace responsible innovation and educational institutions must prepare citizens for an AI-driven economy.

History demonstrates that every industrial revolution has rewarded societies that successfully balanced technological advancement with institutional reform. The age of physical AI will be no different. If governed wisely, intelligent machines can become powerful partners in advancing human prosperity, strengthening resilience and addressing some of the world's most pressing challenges. If governed poorly, they risk amplifying inequality, insecurity and geopolitical tensions.

As Jensen Huang, CEO of NVIDIA observed, "The next wave of AI is Physical AI." The coming decade will therefore be defined not merely by intelligent software but by intelligent machines capable of working alongside humans in factories, hospitals, farms, warehouses and battlefields. The countries that successfully combine innovation with ethical governance, resilient institutions and human-centred policies will lead the next industrial revolution.

(Lt Gen Kapil Aggarwal (R), former Director General EME. He is an M.Tech in Electronics from IIT Kharagpur. The views expressed are of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The News Analytics Herald.)

QUICK INSIGHTS

- *Physical AI is transforming industries, defence, healthcare and national economic competitiveness.*
- *AI-enabled robotics is reshaping manufacturing, logistics and future workforce requirements globally.*
- *Technological leadership increasingly determines geopolitical influence and strategic national resilience.*
- *Responsible governance remains essential as autonomous machines gain greater real-world decision-making capabilities.*
- *India possesses strong foundations to emerge as a leading Physical AI power.*

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

GERMANY DEFENDS REARMAMENT AHEAD OF NATO SUMMIT



German Chancellor Friedrich Merz strongly defended Berlin's military-spending record after US President Donald Trump criticised Germany's previous defence commitments. The exchange occurred ahead of NATO's Ankara summit, where European members sought to demonstrate greater responsibility for continental security. Germany's defence expansion reflects the broader transformation of Europe's strategic posture following the Ukraine war and persistent doubts regarding the predictability of American security guarantees. European leaders hoped increased

expenditure would reduce transatlantic friction, strengthen NATO deterrence and show that Europe was preparing to shoulder a larger share of its defence burden amid growing Russian pressure and wider geopolitical instability.

TAIWAN TESTS RESPONSE TO BLOCKADE AND INVASION SCENARIO



Taiwan conducted a large-scale national-security exercise simulating a cascading crisis involving a Chinese maritime blockade, sabotage, natural disaster and possible invasion. More than 370 government and military officials participated as President Lai Ching-te's administration sought to improve whole-of-government preparedness. The exercise highlighted growing concern that Beijing could employ coercive measures below the threshold of immediate invasion, including economic disruption, cyberattacks and maritime isolation. Taiwan's planning increasingly emphasises civil resilience,

continuity of government, infrastructure protection and coordinated military response. The drill illustrated how the Taiwan Strait has become a central testing ground for modern hybrid warfare and Indo-Pacific deterrence.

CHINA REJECTS WESTERN CRITICISM OF NEW ETHNIC-UNITY LAW



China dismissed criticism from the United States and the European Union over a new ethnic-unity law that gives Beijing expanded authority to act against individuals beyond its borders. Western governments raised concerns that the legislation could facilitate transnational repression and further restrict cultural or political expression among ethnic minority communities. Beijing described the criticism as foreign interference and a malicious attempt to discredit Chinese governance. The dispute reflects a wider confrontation over sovereignty, human rights and the extraterritorial reach of domestic laws. It also adds another source of tension to already strained relations between China and Western democratic governments.

CHINA AND RUSSIA ANNOUNCE JOINT NAVAL EXERCISES



China and Russia announced joint naval exercises near Qingdao, involving operations in surrounding waters and airspace. The "Joint Sea-2026" drills demonstrated continued military cooperation despite both countries facing significant strategic pressures from the United States and its allies. Their exercises increasingly signal political solidarity, improve interoperability and challenge Western maritime influence. Although Beijing and Moscow do not maintain a formal military alliance, their expanding defence relationship has become an important feature of the emerging multipolar

order. The drills also drew attention to security competition across the Western Pacific, where Chinese naval modernisation and Russian strategic support increasingly affect regional planning.

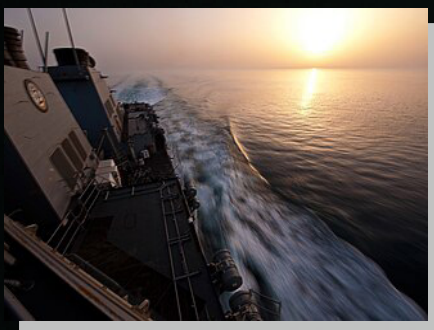
HAMAS ANNOUNCES DISSOLUTION OF GAZA ADMINISTRATION



Hamas announced that it had dissolved its de-facto government in Gaza and was prepared to transfer administrative authority to a body of Palestinian technocrats. The movement presented the decision as support for a US-backed political framework, but Israel dismissed it as a tactical gesture. The announcement nevertheless represented a potentially important development in discussions over Gaza's post-war governance. Central questions remained unresolved, including Hamas's armed capabilities, Israeli security control, reconstruction financing and the role of the

Palestinian Authority. The move illustrated the continuing struggle to separate humanitarian reconstruction from the larger political and security settlement required for sustainable stability.

NATO CONSIDERS MARITIME MISSION FOR THE STRAIT OF HORMUZ



France and Britain proposed a multinational maritime mission to protect commercial shipping through the Strait of Hormuz as renewed US–Iran tensions threatened global energy flows. The proposal was discussed at NATO's Ankara summit alongside Gulf Arab security concerns. Although several NATO states possessed naval assets in the region, diplomats acknowledged that the mission's effectiveness would depend upon political arrangements with Iran and regional governments. The initiative reflected Europe's determination to prevent another major energy shock while avoiding deeper involvement in the conflict. Hormuz's strategic importance again demonstrated how regional military escalation can rapidly become a global economic-security crisis.

NATO PLEDGES MAJOR NEW ASSISTANCE TO UKRAINE



At the Ankara summit, NATO members pledged approximately €70 billion in military support for Ukraine during 2026 and reaffirmed their commitment to collective defence under Article 5. The alliance also announced major arms agreements worth at least \$50 billion. Russia condemned the decisions as further militarisation of Europe and warned of potentially severe consequences. NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte argued that the summit demonstrated alliance unity despite disagreements involving defence spending, Iran and Greenland. The package showed that NATO remained committed to Ukraine even as diplomatic efforts continued and political tensions persisted between Washington and several European capitals.

ASIAN STATES EMPHASISE STRATEGIC FLEXIBILITY



Policymakers and business leaders in Asia argued that regional countries were increasingly pursuing strategic autonomy rather than choosing rigidly between Washington and Beijing. Thailand and other middle powers emphasised pragmatic partnerships based upon technology transfer, employment, investment quality and supply-chain resilience. Investors similarly described geopolitical fragmentation as both a risk and an opportunity. The discussions reflected a broader Asian trend towards multi-alignment: maintaining security links with the United States while preserving economic relations with China.

This approach demonstrates how middle powers are seeking greater autonomy within an increasingly competitive Indo-Pacific rather than accepting binary bloc politics.

PRE-EMPTIVE CYBERSECURITY: FROM DETECTION TO PREVENTION

TECH TONIC

Cyber warfare is rapidly shifting from reactive defence to predictive security. Artificial intelligence now enables nations to anticipate, identify and neutralise cyber threats before they materialise, making pre-emptive cybersecurity an essential pillar of future national security, technological sovereignty and strategic resilience.



TECH DESK

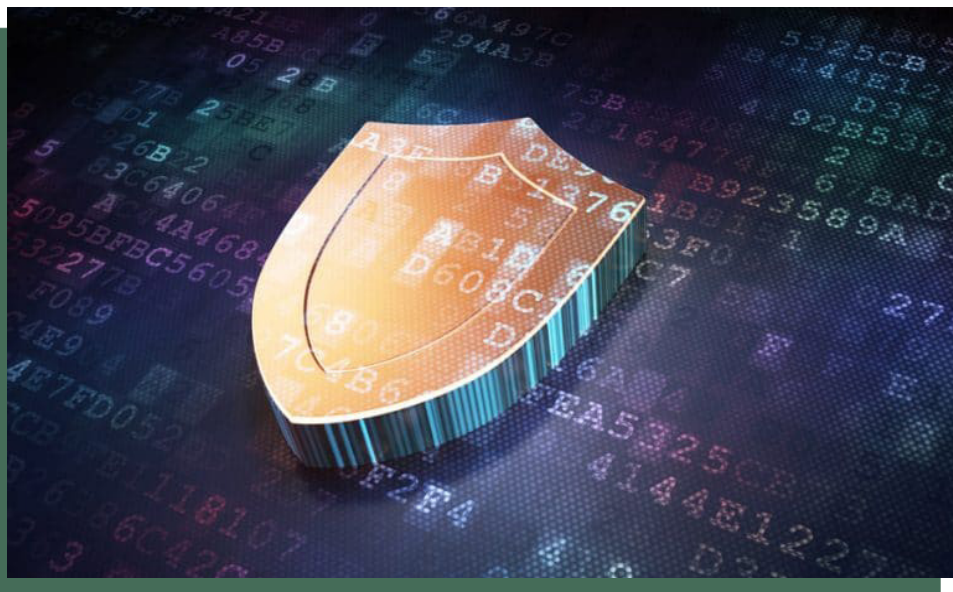
THE NEWS ANALYTICS HERALD

For decades, cybersecurity has resembled an endless contest between attackers and defenders. Organisations invested heavily in firewalls, antivirus software, intrusion detection systems and incident response teams, yet cyber defenders often remained one step behind increasingly sophisticated adversaries. By the time an intrusion was detected, sensitive information had already been stolen, critical infrastructure compromised or strategic systems disrupted. In the digital age, reacting after an attack is no longer sufficient. The future of cybersecurity lies not in detecting threats after they occur, but in predicting, preventing and neutralising them before they materialise.

Artificial intelligence is fundamentally transforming this transition. Rather than simply identifying known malware signatures, AI-enabled systems continuously analyse

vast quantities of network traffic, user behaviour, software vulnerabilities, device interactions and global threat intelligence to recognise subtle anomalies that would remain invisible to human analysts. Cybersecurity is therefore evolving from a reactive defensive shield into an anticipatory security architecture in which intelligent algorithms continuously forecast attacker behaviour, assess evolving risks and recommend preventive action. For nations increasingly dependent upon digital infrastructure, this evolution represents not merely a technological improvement but an essential pillar of future national security.

The future of cyber security will be decided not by detecting attacks faster, but by preventing them before they begin.



FROM REACTIVE TO PREDICTIVE

Traditional cybersecurity was designed around detection. Firewalls blocked suspicious traffic, antivirus software searched for previously identified malicious code, while security teams investigated incidents after systems had already been compromised. Although these defensive mechanisms remain indispensable, they struggle against modern cyber campaigns that constantly evolve through artificial intelligence, automation and zero-day vulnerabilities.

Predictive cybersecurity fundamentally changes this approach. Artificial intelligence enables security systems to understand behaviour rather than simply recognise known threats. Machine learning algorithms establish normal operating patterns across networks, users and applications. Any deviation from these behavioural baselines automatically generates early warnings. An employee downloading unusually large

volumes of confidential information, industrial control systems communicating with unfamiliar servers or unexpected changes in administrator privileges may all indicate the early stages of an attack.

Unlike traditional security software that waits for malicious code to appear, predictive systems seek evidence of malicious intent before the actual compromise occurs. This capability becomes increasingly valuable against Advanced Persistent Threats (APTs), where hostile actors often remain hidden inside networks for months before launching their primary objective. AI-powered behavioural analytics significantly reduce this dwell time, allowing defenders to interrupt campaigns long before strategic damage occurs.

Every attempted intrusion simultaneously becomes another learning opportunity. As algorithms encounter new attack methods, they continuously refine their predictive models, making future detection increasingly accurate.

AUTONOMOUS CYBER DEFENCE

Modern cyber warfare unfolds at machine speed. Sophisticated ransomware, automated malware and coordinated botnet attacks can spread across thousands of systems within minutes. Human operators simply cannot analyse, prioritise and respond rapidly enough. Consequently, cybersecurity is entering the era of autonomous defence.

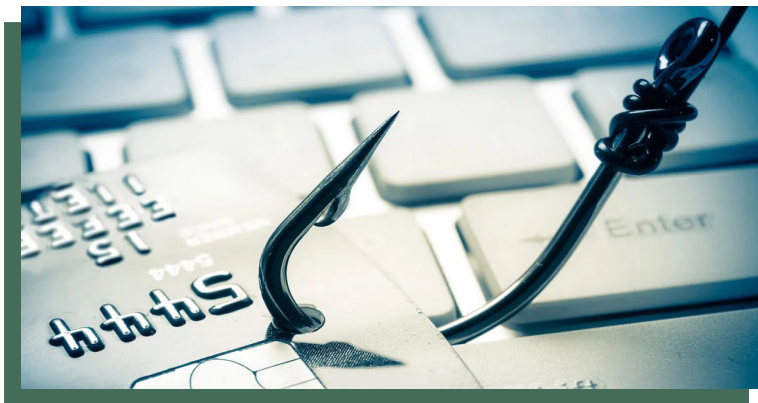
Artificial intelligence increasingly enables systems to isolate compromised devices, suspend suspicious user accounts, quarantine malicious software, redirect hostile traffic and initiate recovery procedures without awaiting human authorisation. Automated orchestration dramatically reduces response times while limiting attacker movement inside networks.

Security Operations Centres (SOCs) are evolving accordingly. Rather than spending countless hours investigating false alarms and repetitive alerts, cybersecurity professionals increasingly supervise AI-driven monitoring platforms capable of continuously hunting for threats across enormous digital ecosystems.

Human analysts will remain indispensable for strategic judgement, attribution, legal oversight and complex investigations. Artificial intelligence will augment rather than replace cybersecurity professionals by eliminating repetitive analytical workloads and allowing experts to concentrate on higher-level decision-making.

The future cyber defender will increasingly become a supervisor of intelligent systems rather than a manual incident responder.

Artificial intelligence is transforming cyber defenders from incident responders into strategic supervisors of autonomous digital defence ecosystems.



DEFENDING CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The importance of predictive cybersecurity extends far beyond protecting corporate information technology. Modern societies rely upon highly interconnected digital infrastructure spanning electricity grids, telecommunications, financial systems, healthcare, transportation, defence networks, satellite communications and public administration. Disrupting even one component can trigger cascading failures across multiple sectors.

The 2021 Colonial Pipeline ransomware incident demonstrated how cyberattacks can rapidly affect fuel distribution, supply chains and public confidence. Similar attacks targeting electrical grids, hospitals or air traffic management systems could produce far more severe national consequences.

Artificial intelligence enables continuous monitoring across these complex environments. Sensors distributed throughout industrial networks can identify abnormal equipment behaviour before physical disruption occurs. AI models analyse operational technology systems controlling power stations, water treatment facilities and transportation infrastructure, identifying vulnerabilities that conventional monitoring would overlook. This predictive capability transforms critical infrastructure protection from periodic auditing into continuous digital vigilance.

NATIONAL CYBER RESILIENCE

Cybersecurity has become inseparable from national security. Recognising this reality, many governments are establishing integrated cyber resilience strategies that combine military cyber commands, intelligence agencies, law enforcement, private technology companies, telecommunications providers and academic institutions into coordinated defensive ecosystems.

Artificial intelligence significantly enhances these national frameworks by continuously integrating information from multiple sources simultaneously. Threat intelligence gathered by one organisation immediately strengthens protection across the wider ecosystem.

Predictive analytics also assists governments in identifying systemic vulnerabilities throughout national digital infrastructure.

Rather than responding individually to isolated attacks, authorities increasingly analyse interconnected risks spanning software supply chains, cloud infrastructure, semiconductor dependencies and telecommunications networks.

Cyber resilience therefore extends beyond preventing individual attacks. It encompasses maintaining national functions despite sustained cyber pressure.

Countries capable of anticipating disruption, rapidly recovering from attacks and continuously adapting their digital defences will possess significant strategic advantages during future geopolitical competition.

AI AGAINST AI

Artificial intelligence is transforming not only cyber defence but cyber offence as well. Hostile states and cybercriminal organisations increasingly employ AI to automate phishing campaigns, develop adaptive malware, generate convincing deepfake videos and audio, identify software vulnerabilities, bypass authentication systems and personalise social engineering attacks at unprecedented scale.

Generative artificial intelligence allows attackers to produce highly convincing fraudulent emails in multiple languages, imitate senior executives through synthetic voice technology and create deceptive online identities capable of manipulating public opinion. Cyber warfare is therefore becoming increasingly automated. Defenders must respond using equally advanced technologies.

Large Language Models assist cybersecurity analysts by rapidly summarising threat intelligence, correlating attack indicators across multiple datasets and recommending appropriate mitigation strategies. Reinforcement learning algorithms continuously improve defensive decision-making through repeated exposure to evolving attack scenarios.

Artificial intelligence also enables organisations to simulate cyberattacks internally. Known as adversarial simulation or automated red teaming, these systems proactively search for weaknesses before hostile actors discover them.

The future cyber battlespace will therefore increasingly feature artificial intelligence confronting artificial intelligence, with competitive advantage determined by the speed of adaptation rather than simply technological sophistication.

TOWARDS CYBER DETERRENCE

Traditional military deterrence rests upon convincing adversaries that aggression will fail or impose unacceptable costs. The same principle increasingly applies in cyberspace.

Highly resilient AI-enabled defensive architectures reduce the probability that cyberattacks will achieve meaningful strategic objectives. Continuous monitoring, predictive analytics, automated containment and increasingly accurate

attribution collectively raise operational risks for hostile actors.

Future cyber deterrence will therefore depend not only upon offensive cyber capabilities but equally upon demonstrating credible defensive resilience. This represents a fundamental shift from punishment after attack towards denial before attack. However, predictive cybersecurity also raises important governance challenges.

Artificial intelligence must remain transparent, accountable and legally supervised. Excessive automation without appropriate human oversight risks false positives, unintended service disruption and potential infringements upon civil liberties. Maintaining trust in AI-driven security systems requires robust governance frameworks balancing technological capability with democratic accountability.

In the digital age, national power will depend as much on predictive cyber resilience as on conventional military capability.

THE NEXT SECURITY FRONTIER

The convergence of artificial intelligence, cloud computing, quantum technologies, advanced communications and autonomous systems is fundamentally redefining national security. Territorial defence alone can no longer guarantee national resilience. Data integrity, trusted digital infrastructure, secure software ecosystems and resilient supply chains are becoming strategic assets comparable to military bases, naval fleets and aerospace capabilities.

Countries capable of integrating predictive artificial intelligence into comprehensive cyber defence architectures will enjoy decisive strategic advantages. Those that remain dependent upon reactive security models risk persistent vulnerability to increasingly sophisticated cyber campaigns conducted by hostile states, organised criminal networks and autonomous malware.

The future of cybersecurity will not be determined by responding faster after systems have already been compromised. It will belong to those capable of preventing attacks before they begin. Artificial intelligence is making that objective increasingly achievable.

In tomorrow's digital battlespace, success will depend less upon building higher digital walls than upon constructing intelligent security ecosystems capable of continuously learning, anticipating adversaries and denying hostile actors the opportunity to strike successfully.

Pre-emptive cybersecurity is therefore no longer merely an emerging technological concept. It is becoming the foundation upon which future national security, economic resilience, technological sovereignty and strategic stability will increasingly depend. Nations that master predictive cyber defence will not simply protect their networks—they will shape the security architecture of the digital century.

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