

India-US Relations: Deterioration and Way Forward

By Dr. Uttara Sahasrabuddhe

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The India-US relations dipped to the lowest point after the Trump Administration imposed additional 25% tariffs on Indian imports, as a 'penalty' for continued Indian import of Russian oil on 6 August 2025. This followed the Executive order of 31 July to impose 25% tariffs on Indian goods. These tariffs are interpreted as US pressure on India to accept US demands in the bilateral trade negotiations. The Office of the US Trade Representative reports that while the US had a marginal surplus in trade in services, it had a deficit of \$ 45.8 billion in 2024 in trade in goods – an increase of 5.9% over 2023. New Delhi's reluctance to open the farm and dairy sectors to US products is an important reason for the failure of trade negotiations. Indeed, Washington has been insisting on seeking a concession New Delhi has not conceded to any of its trade partners so far.

Falling apart of the trade negotiations, however, is one of the many reasons causing the steady decline of India-US relations since May 2025. Continued Indian purchase of Russian crude is another irritant in the India-US relations – though data shows that these imports have decreased in 2025. One more irritant is India's participation in the BRICS and the SCO, which are perceived as anti-American groups by the US President.

However, President Trump's statement of on 10 May 2025, claiming to have "mediated" to end the conflict between India and Pakistan, might have been the trigger for the downhill journey of bilateral relations. Worse, the US President "announced" the cease fire even before the Governments of India and Pakistan formally did so. If Trump was being ignorant of Indian sensitivities in using the term "mediation"; in repeating the claim several times he was being tone-deaf to Indian official statements. If this is indeed the turning point in the India-US relations, it is important to understand the history of a couple of post-1998 India-Pakistan conflicts.

Post-1998 India-Pakistan Conflicts and the US

India claims that all disputes and differences between itself and Pakistan will be resolved bilaterally and rejects mediation by any third party in bilateral disputes. It has been the consistent position of New Delhi since the signing of the Simla Agreement, 1972. However, 1998 was a turning point in the way the international community in general, and the US in particular, looked at conflicts between the two South Asian neighbours. Subsequent to their respective nuclear tests in May 1998, both India and Pakistan had become nuclear weapons states. Any conflict between the two, thus, had the potential to become a nuclear conflict. Therefore, the international community felt obliged to seek quick de-escalation of any conflict between India and Pakistan. The US, specifically, has acted towards this goal during two post-1998 India-Pakistan conflicts – the Kargil conflict, 1999 and India's mobilisation of forces following the terrorist attack on the Indian Parliament in 2001.

As the Kargil conflict unfolded, the Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif requested a summit with the US President Clinton. Bruce Riedel, an advisor on South Asia in Clinton Administration has revealed that, during his meeting with Clinton Sharif was advised to retreat to the old position on the Line of Control (LOC). This summit is believed to have changed the course of the conflict, although later it led to a coup in Pakistan and ouster of Sharif. The second conflict was the ten month-long military stand-offs along the LOC, named Operation Parakram – the Indian response to a terror attack on its Parliament. India mobilised forces along the LOC and Pakistan responded by similar action. By May 2002, the tensions had peaked, and invoking fears of escalation and nuclearization of the conflict. Washington felt the need to diffuse tensions and Donald Rumsfeld, the US Secretary of Defence visited New Delhi in June 2002 with the purpose. He urged the Indian leadership to maintain restraint. A recent report points out that many other foreign leaders visited India including the US Secretary of State Powell, British Prime Minister Blair, Deputy Prime Minister of Canada and Vice Foreign Minister of Japan, with the same agenda, as did Rumsfeld. India began to demobilise its forces by October 2002.

In both these conflicts, Washington played a role in bringing about de-escalation. The US offered its “good offices” in order to diffuse the conflicts, which is different from “mediation”. As per International Law, the two mechanisms of conflict resolution are distinct from each other. While there is involvement of a third party in both mechanisms; in case of good offices, the third party simply offers its services, and does not actively participate in the talks. Whereas, in case of mediation, third party actively participates in the talks and makes suggestions so as to resolve the dispute. In case of Operation Sindoor, whatever the back channels of diplomacy used by the US have been – if at all there were any – they indicate the use of “good offices”. By using the term “mediation” instead, President Trump not only erred diplomatically, but also technically. It is no surprise that the repeated use of this term has irked New Delhi.

Way Forward

A rather unintended effect of Trump “diplomacy” could be to push India closer towards not only Russia, but also China. It has provided India with an opportunity to resolve the ongoing border stand-off with China and restore normalcy in trade-economic relations with China. This may also lead to strengthening of the BRICS and revival of the Russia-India-China (RIC) trilateral. An important question, however, is whether there will be a dramatic change of geo-strategic equations.

In all possibility, it is unlikely to happen. So far, the response of New Delhi to Trump’s “mediation” claim has been remarkably restrained. India’s national interest requires countering both, the US and Chinese hegemony – at the global and regional level, respectively. There is a clear understanding in New Delhi that India-US friendship precedes the current administration and will outlive it. Therefore, it is important to be careful not to give away the advantage of relations cultivated over many years, and to keep channels open with the US.

Trump has already held a meeting with his Russian counterpart. Such a meeting with the Chinese President cannot be ruled out. Therefore, it is equally important to continue with the carefully crafted policy of not leaning singularly towards either US or Russia or China.

The Asian Century by 2050: Three Possible Scenarios for Regional Power and Global Leadership

By Lt Col Manoj K Channan (Retd.)

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Whether dominated by China's singular might, led by India's democratic coalition, or governed through shared stewardship, the path Asia takes by 2050 will profoundly influence the global balance of power, ethical governance, and economic prosperity. India's role, whether as counterweight or partner to China, will be critical.

As the 21st century unfolds, Asia is poised to shape the global order economically, politically, and morally. The interactions between its two most influential powers, China and India, will be especially critical. By 2050, three main scenarios could define Asia's path and its influence on the world: one where China dominates unilaterally; one where India becomes the leading force with coalition partners; and one where both countries share responsibility for the region's future. Each scenario presents unique implications for the balance of power, governance, economic growth, and global moral leadership.

Scenario 1: China as the Dominant Power

In this scenario, China continues its rapid economic growth and technological modernization despite challenges like demographic shifts and debt burdens. By 2050, China could establish itself as the world's largest economy, accounting for over a third of global GDP. Its investments in infrastructure through initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative would have expanded its influence across Asia, Africa, and Latin America, creating a vast network intertwined with Chinese capital, technology, and military presence.

China's military modernization aims to create a top-tier global force capable of projecting power across key maritime routes, including the Indian Ocean and Pacific. Its influence in shaping international economic and governance standards could surpass Western-dominated institutions, with China advocating for an alternative multipolar world order aligned with its strategic goals.

However, this dominance might lead to increased geopolitical tensions. Rivalries with India and the United States could intensify, particularly over disputed territories and influence in the Indo-Pacific. Internally, China may face pressures to reform politically to allow more openness and social freedoms, but the authoritarian Communist Party is likely to keep tight control.

In this vision, China's rise may test global norms, with a focus on stability through strength and infrastructure development but limited emphasis on liberal democratic values. The global moral compass would tilt toward realpolitik, balancing economic pragmatism and state sovereignty.

Scenario 2: India as the Leading Power with Strategic Partnerships

Alternatively, India could rise to become Asia's leading global power by 2050, leveraging its democratic governance model, demographic dividend, and burgeoning economy projected to be the second or third largest globally. This scenario sees India consolidating its role as a coalition leader, actively collaborating with partners in the Quad (including the US, Japan, and Australia), as well as cultivating ties with Africa, Southeast Asia, and Central Asia.

India's success would depend on harnessing its large youthful population to drive innovation, manufacturing, and renewable energy aided by ambitious goals such as achieving net zero emissions by 2070 and cultivating green technologies. Its commitment to democratic pluralism, soft power through culture and diplomacy, and emphasis on fair and inclusive growth would set a contrasting tone to China's model.

India would serve as a counterbalance to China's assertiveness, maintaining vigilance over its borders while promoting a stable, inclusive Indo-Pacific order rooted in shared rule of law and human rights. Through this scenario, Asia would embody a multipolar, cooperative model with greater space for individual liberties and civil society to flourish.

Challenges include overcoming internal inequalities, climate change vulnerabilities, and infrastructure gaps. Yet India's pluralistic ethos could foster a more balanced global moral leadership aligned with fairness, equity, and sustainable development.

Scenario 3: Shared Stewardship and Multipolar Cooperation

A third, more optimistic scenario envisages China and India sharing stewardship of the Asian Century, balancing competition with cooperation to shape a multipolar regional order. Both powers would recognise their mutual dependencies, avoiding direct conflict while pursuing complementary roles.

China might continue its infrastructure and technological investments, while India leads on governance innovation, climate action, and democratic representation. Together, they could co-chair multilateral frameworks and institutions that reflect Asian values and address global challenges like poverty, inequality, and environmental sustainability.

This scenario would require both countries to mature politically China potentially adopting greater openness and India sustaining strong growth and social cohesion. Trust-building efforts, crisis management mechanisms, and collaborative economic corridors could underpin an Asia that is prosperous, stable, and morally responsible on the global stage.

The shared stewardship approach would highlight Asia's diversity and complexity, promoting a global moral compass centred on dialogue, inclusiveness, and respect for sovereignty and human rights. It offers the most hopeful blueprint for realising the full promise of the Asian Century without replicating past hegemonic mistakes.

Asia's pivotal crossroads

These three scenarios highlight Asia's pivotal crossroads. Whether dominated by China's singular might, led by India's democratic coalition, or governed through shared stewardship, the path Asia takes by 2050 will profoundly influence the global balance of power, ethical governance, and economic prosperity. India's role, whether as counterweight or partner to China, will be critical in shaping a more inclusive, peaceful, and sustainable global future. The choices made today by these Asian giants and their neighbours will define whether the Asian Century is marked by confrontation or collaboration and ultimately, whether the global moral compass points toward justice or division.

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Implications of US Withdrawal from UN Organs

By Vappala Balachandran

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The Trump administration announced on July 22 that it was withdrawing from UNESCO, the UN cultural and education agency, as it was biased against Israel. State Department spokeswoman Tammy Bruce said that “continued involvement in UNESCO is not in the national interest of the United States.”

Tammy Bruce added that UNESCO's decision to admit the 'State of Palestine' as a member state was “highly problematic, contrary to US policy, and contributed to the proliferation of anti-Israel rhetoric within the organization.”

In 2017 too President Donald Trump had withdrawn from UNESCO on “reforms” which President Joe Biden rescinded. This is the third time America is withdrawing from UNESCO.

It is interesting to note that Israel was an important factor during all these three occasions. On 24 December 1983 the New York Times said that President Ronald Reagan decided to quit UNESCO despite “The United States Commission for UNESCO” voting to stay in the organisation by a majority 41 to 8 at its annual meeting on Dec. 16. Part of the reason was UNESCO’s “ban of Israel from agency activities, which was subsequently lifted”.

Other charges against UNESCO in 1983 from US Congressmen were “its bloated bureaucracy” and that US was “subsidizing an organization hostile to their nation” which was embracing “positions of the third-world bloc and the Soviet Union that are biased against free-market economics and tolerant of press abuses”. At that time America contributed a quarter of the UNESCO budget of US \$ 374.4 million.

This time the Trump administration has also pulled out of the World Health Organisation (WHO) and UN Human Rights Council which would mean halting financial aid to United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) which was created by the UN General Assembly in 1949 for helping millions of Palestinian refugees expelled by Israel.

UNESCO was founded in 1945 to advance peace, sustained development and human rights through education, science (natural, social and human), culture, communications and information. It is the successor body to the League of Nations “International Committee on intellectual cooperation” (ICIC) created in 1922 on the initiative of eminent persons like French philosopher Henri Bergson, noted scientists like Albert Einstein, Marie Curie and others.

These developments are sad as America had played pivotal role from 1943 onwards for the creation of United Nations under the leadership of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The story starts during the 1943 Quebec Conference when US Secretary of State Cordell Hull and British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden agreed to draft a declaration to create “a general international organization, based on the principle sovereign equality of all nations.”

This declaration was issued after a Foreign Ministers Conference in Moscow in October 1943. The Roosevelt- Joseph Stalin meeting in Tehran in November 1943 decided to set up an international organization comprising all member states with US, UK, Soviet Union and China as “the four policemen.”

Simultaneously Allied representatives succeeded in setting up several “task-oriented organizations” like Food and Agricultural Organization (May 1943), the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (November 1943), the UNESCO (April 1944), the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank (July 1944), and the International Civil Aviation Organization (November 1944).

In August and September 1944 U.S., British, Soviet, and Chinese representatives met at Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection in Washington, DC to draft the charter of a postwar international organization with a General Assembly and a Security Council consisting of the Big Four plus six members chosen by the Assembly. Later in April-June 1945 representatives of 50 nations met in San Francisco to finalise the Charter of the United Nations.

US is still United Nations’ pivot, and its withdrawal would create conditions akin to the failure of the League of Nations which was powerless to stop Germany after 1935. Another reason for the League’s demise was the 1938 Sudeten crisis when Britain and France started appeasing Germany, ignoring the League.

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Mission Sudarshan Chakra: From Mythological Insights to Strategic Power

By Pavneet Singh

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When we speak of weapons in mythology, there are many — bows, arrows, divine astras, thunderbolts of the gods. But none shines brighter than one weapon: the Sudarshan Chakra. It is not a sword, not a bow, not a spear. It is a wheel. A wheel of fire. A wheel of time. The weapon of Lord Vishnu, wielder of balance, preserver of the universe. When Vishnu takes human form as Krishna, this wheel becomes the ultimate guarantee of victory for dharma. What made the Chakra extraordinary was not just its power. It was its character. It always struck precisely. It never missed. It was never misused. And it always returned to its master. Imagine a weapon that combined laser-like precision, infinite speed, and divine morality. That was the Sudarshan Chakra. The scriptures tell us it was not only destructive, but it was also protective. When Arjuna was bound by a vow to kill Jayadratha before sunset, Krishna obscured the sun with the Chakra, creating the illusion of night. Jayadratha stepped out in relief, only to meet his fate. The Chakra here was not just a blade, it was strategy, deception, protection — all in one. And so, every Indian child grows up hearing the stories: Shishupala beheaded in an instant, arrogance ended at Krishna's silent command. Arjuna saved at Kurukshetra by the Chakra's protective veil. The Chakra is remembered not only as a weapon, but as the divine turning of time itself, punishing arrogance, shielding the righteous. But why does this matter today? Because mythology is not only memory. It is instruction. It is strategic imagination passed down as story. And the lessons of the Sudarshan Chakra are lessons India still needs today.

First lesson: precision is superior to brute force. The Chakra did not scatter armies; it eliminated the one who threatened balance. Today, in an age of drones, terror rockets, and hypersonic missiles, precision matters more than ever.

Second lesson: defence and offence are inseparable. The Chakra did not just shield Arjuna; it also killed Shishupala. A shield alone invites further attack. A strike alone leaves you vulnerable. The Chakra teaches us the integration of both.

Third lesson: psychology is half the war. When Krishna veiled the sun, Jayadratha lost his confidence. The war was won in his mind before the arrow was loosed. Modern conflict is the same: cyber deception, electronic warfare, narrative dominance. Weapons must fight both matter and mind.

India, facing Pakistan and China, needs its own Chakra. Because what are our challenges today? Pakistan — the Shishupala of our age. Provoking endlessly with terror strikes, UAV intrusions across Punjab, tactical nuclear threats like the Nasr missile, always hiding behind the illusion of a nuclear umbrella. China — the Jayadratha of our time. Intimidating with hypersonic missile tests, encirclement in the Indian Ocean, and psychological warfare to make India doubt itself. Against both, India does not need only numbers, it needs a wheel of precision, protection, and punishment. And that is exactly what India is building today.

At the centre of this vision lies the most secretive covert Project KUSH, one of the boldest projects by the DRDO. With a budget of twenty-one thousand seven hundred crore rupees, it is the forge where India's blades are being shaped. Project KUSH will create interceptor missiles. What are interceptors? They are weapons designed not to attack another country's land, but to destroy enemy missiles in the sky, mid-flight, before they ever touch Indian soil. Imagine a sword that meets another sword in the air and cuts it down. That is what interceptors do.

There are three. The M-1, with a 150-kilometre range, designed for drones, short-range rockets, low-altitude missiles. The kind Pakistan often sends across our borders. Think of it as the quick spin of the Chakra, cutting down threats as soon as they rise.

Then the M-2, with a 250-kilometre reach. This blade is for medium-range threats — ballistic missiles launched from further away, capable of reaching our cities. This is the mid-flight strike, the Chakra turning its angle to strike what thinks it is safe.

And finally, the M-4, the deadliest of all, with a range of 400 kilometres, designed to cut down hypersonic missiles. Hypersonic means five, six, even ten times the speed of sound, zigzagging to confuse radars. Today the world fears hypersonic. But India is preparing to cut them in mid-air. This is the Chakra's supernatural speed reborn. And the Chakra does not stay bound to the land. These interceptors will be deployed on naval destroyers, spinning over the oceans. The Sudarshan Chakra once circled the skies; today it will circle the seas. But Project KUSH is only the inner blade. The larger vision is Mission Sudarshan Chakra, announced in 2025. What is Mission Sudarshan Chakra? It is India's attempt to create a multi-layered dome of protection. Imagine a shield over the nation. Radars that see hundreds of kilometres. Satellites that track from space. AI — artificial intelligence, computers that think and react faster than humans — deciding instantly which interceptor to fire. And missiles at every layer, waiting. It is, in essence, Krishna's Chakra in steel and silicon. 360-degree coverage. Eternal spinning — detection, interception, reload, readiness. And most important — offence within defence. If Pakistan fires, it will be stopped mid-air. But that is not all. The system is linked to retaliatory precision strikes. The attacker will be punished. And what will this mean for Pakistan? Their doctrine collapses. Their drones over Punjab — intercepted. Their Nasr nuclear rockets — intercepted. Their bluff — ended. Like Shishupala, arrogance cut down in one strike.

What will this mean for China? Their intimidation breaks. Hypersonic missiles — intercepted by the M-4. Naval encirclement — met by destroyers carrying the Chakra into the seas. And just as Krishna veiled the sun, India will veil the battlefield with cyber deception, electronic jamming, and decoys. Their illusion collapses. Their psychological dominance is broken. But here lies the most important truth. The Sudarshan Chakra of mythology was unique. No other god, no other hero, no other culture possessed it. Today too, India is building its Chakra indigenously. Not imported, not borrowed, not dependent. Created by Indian minds, Indian hands, Indian faith. Atmanirbhar Bharat in its purest form. This is why Mission Sudarshan Chakra is not just a defence project. It is a civilizational statement. Once, the Chakra spun to protect dharma on Kurukshetra. Today, it spins again to protect Bharat in the 21st century. Pakistan will fear it. China will respect it. And India will know — the stories our grandparents told us were not just stories. They were prophecies. The Sudarshan Chakra is back. Not as myth. As reality. As shield. As sword. As destiny. And once again, it will ensure that dharma stands protected, and arrogance is cut down.

India's Defence Innovation Pathway to Viksit Bharat @2047

By Umesh Rathod

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Introduction

India today stands at a decisive crossroad—technologically, economically, and strategically. As the nation aspires to become a Viksit Bharat (Developed India) by 2047, its centenary of independence, one sector that demands urgent attention is defence and national security.

While India has made great strides in building indigenous capacity through iDEX, Agnipath, Defence Corridors, and the Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP 2020), the challenge lies in ensuring deeper integration of youth, academia, startups, and civil-military collaborations.

The Strategic Context

The coming decades will not only redefine global security but also reshape labour markets. According to the World Bank, developing countries may face a massive job crisis owing to increasing automation, decline in labour-intensive exports, and slow adaptation of education to employable skills. For India, home to the world's largest youth population, the stakes are especially high. To avoid a demographic dividend turning into a liability, the country must channel its young workforce towards skill-based entrepreneurship in critical sectors like defence and dual-use technology. As Honourable Prime Minister Narendra Modi has emphasized, 'India cannot remain dependent on others for its defence. We must make India self-reliant in defence production and become a global exporter of security solutions.'

Current Policy Landscape

India has already laid strong foundations for this journey. The Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP 2020) prioritises indigenous procurement under the "Buy Indian – IDDM" category. The Defence Production & Export Promotion Policy (DPEPP 2020) targets ₹1.75 lakh crore production and ₹35,000 crore exports by 2025. Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) provides a platform funding startup to solve defence problem statements. The Agnipath Scheme (2022) inducts youth as Agniveers for four-year terms in the armed forces. The Defence Industrial Corridors in UP & Tamil Nadu are building a manufacturing base. Meanwhile, AICTE–MoE Innovation Network with 15,000+ IICs and lakhs of student innovators actively contributes to national innovation.

Key Challenges Hindering Growth

Despite progress, challenges remain. Most higher education institutions lack awareness, mentorship, or incentives to work on defence innovation. Agniveers often exit service without structured pathways into startups or innovation roles, wasting trained talent. Unlike the U.S. or Israel, India's DRDO technologies are not easily available for academic or startup collaboration. Defence corridors lack integration with local universities, missing opportunities for research-driven clusters. Less than 2% of MoE's startup ecosystem focuses on national security. Women remain underrepresented in defence R&D and leadership. The absence of a single-window platform or monitoring framework weakens institutional accountability. As the Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan stated, 'Future wars will be won not by numbers alone, but by superior technology, innovation, and adaptability.'

Policy Recommendations & Strategy with Global benchmarks

To unlock India's potential, a multi-pronged policy framework is required. Defence Innovation Cells (DICs) should be set up in 2,000 higher education institutions to conduct innovation challenges, bootcamps, and field visits to defence R&D units. An Agniveer-to-Innovator Program can offer one-year fellowships combining technical and entrepreneurial training, startup grants, and co-incubation opportunities. A Defence IP Vault must be created as a digital platform to showcase DRDO technologies with licensing options and co-development models. National competitions like the Viksit Bharat DefenceTech Challenges should fund and deploy innovative solutions for the armed forces. State-level defence startup policies, faculty fellowships, unified portals, women-led innovation programs, and school-level awareness initiatives are all critical steps. Finally, the creation of a National Defence Innovation Ranking will incentivize and benchmark institutional contributions.

Globally, India can learn from benchmarks like Israel's Talpiot program, the U.S. DARPA and Skill Bridge pathways, China's Military-Civil Fusion clusters, and Russia's liberalised IP policies. Each offers insights on soldier-researcher-startup integration, smooth defence-to-startup transitions, and leveraging MSMEs for innovation and exports.

These reforms align directly with the Viksit Bharat vision. They empower Agniveers as entrepreneurs (Jai Jawan), promote defence-grade agritech for border farming (Jai Kisan), strengthen academic research through defence challenges (Jai Vigyan), and spin off innovations into civilian applications (Jai Anusandhaan). They also promote inclusive development by engaging Tier-2/3 institutions, empower youth with fellowships and grants, ensure diversity through women-led initiatives, and establish accountability through rankings.

Implementation Roadmap (2024–2030)

The implementation roadmap is clear. By 2024–25, India must launch pilot Defence Innovation Cells, the Defence IP Vault, and Agniveer programs in five states. By 2025–27, 2,000 HEIs should be onboarded and state-level defence startup policies rolled out. By 2027–30, India must integrate with global export ecosystems and create international collaboration nodes. A secure, innovation-driven India cannot rely on troop strength or imports alone. Its true strength lies in the fusion of soldiers, scientists, farmers, students, and innovators into a cohesive ecosystem.

The path to Viksit Bharat @2047 is clear: harnessing youth energy, empowering academia, opening defence IP, and creating inclusive innovation pathways. If pursued boldly, India will not just defend its sovereignty but also lead the world in pioneering technologies that shape the future of security and prosperity.

Unfurl Sturdy Sails to Navigate Trade Doldrums

By KM Chandrasekhar

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Donald Trump's tantrums, which began during his first term as US president, seem to have peaked in his second term. During his first term, Trump initiated the virtual destruction of the World Trade Organization (WTO), an organisation established to ensure orderliness in global trade and facilitate gradual movement towards free trade taking into account the diverse development stages of the members. He achieved this by blocking the appointment of appellate body members, thereby preventing the powerful dispute settlement mechanism from functioning and enabling aggrieved members from imposing retaliatory tariffs on the aggressor.

This brings me back to my days as India's ambassador to the WTO. We were under constant pressure to reduce our tariffs. We received lectures about the benefits of free trade from the US, the EU, and several other allies within their camp and from the director general of the WTO. We had defensive interests in agriculture— there was no way we could let our farmers down. The EU also had defensive interests, and we initially aligned with them.

The EU and the US had collaborated during the Uruguay Round to impose an Agreement on Agriculture that prioritised their interests while neglecting the rest. Agricultural exporting countries and those with defensive interests alike were dissatisfied because this agreement allowed the big two to increase subsidies on agriculture with the vast majority of other members were left out in the cold.

The US and EU attempted the same strategy again, reaching an understanding that protected each other's interests, sidelining all others. We took the initiative, along with Brazil, to form a new group comprising major developing countries like China, Egypt, South Africa, Thailand and others. This proved to be an unyielding opposition to the big two, resulting in the talks breaking down at the Cancun Ministerial Conference in 2003.

Nevertheless, we recognised that problems could be addressed only through negotiations and that we needed to correct some of the mistakes made during the Uruguay Round through the new round of talks initiated in 2001 at Doha.

We collaborated with other countries to endeavour to get the negotiations back on track through the July Framework Agreement of 2004. Unfortunately, thereafter there was no progress in the talks, and the Doha work programme was ultimately abandoned after many years of discussions.

The failure of these negotiations likely facilitated Trump's unilateral actions, which have thrown global trade into chaos. He imposes tariffs not only for trade reasons but also for political motives. For instance, in the case of Brazil, he imposed tariffs because he believes the current Lula government and the judiciary are persecuting the former right-wing President Jair Bolsonaro and his supporters. However, Brazil successfully engaged with American business interests, prompting them to intercede with Trump, which resulted in the effective rate being reduced from 50 percent to about 30 percent.

It may not be long before Trump imposes tariffs on a democratic nation if a party he disapproves of comes to power or pursues a policy he disagrees with, as in the case of India's purchasing of Russian oil. In his characteristically narcissistic manner, he seems to believe that the world is his empire. His whimsical approach has led to a state of utter confusion in global trade for both the global exporters and the American importers, who really do not know what price to quote in US trade.

Trump believes these new tariffs will benefit the US, but history does not support this view. As Michael Bordo and Mickey Levy noted in their paper, Trump's tariffs: disregarding lessons from history, scenarios and probable outcomes published in June, "Restrictions on global trade and capital flows were ramped up during WWI, beginning an extended era of US protectionism. New US laws sharply curtailed the immigration flow, and the Fordney-McCumber Tariff Act of 1922 imposed tariffs of 14 percent on all imported goods. With the onset of the Great Depression, the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act imposed effective tariffs of 20 percent on imports, exacerbating the economic contraction and initiating a period of constrained international trade, capital flows, and immigration." According to the authors, an average tariff level of 10 percent or more will lead to uncertainties, slowdowns, and recessions. An average tariff above 14 percent will have disastrous effects on the global economy. Additionally, the effects of tariffs on domestic inflation and their impact on the dollar will be adverse for the US.

What should India do? We are the 10th largest trading partner of the US, but unlike China, we cannot pressure Washington by cutting off essential lifelines for American industry. We need to focus on opening more markets for our exporters and seeking new sources of technology. The India-UK Free Trade Agreement was a step in the right direction. We must reach an agreement soon with the EU, which, like us, has defensive interests in agriculture. The BRICS platform should be strengthened.

The forthcoming visit of our Prime Minister to the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation meeting in Beijing can open new avenues for partnership with China. We must separate our border issues from trade. We must re-examine the possibilities of joining other free trade agreements like the CPTPP (Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership), from which the US has now withdrawn, and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, while also looking to open markets in Latin America, Arab countries and Africa. We need to be at the forefront of efforts to revive the WTO. The Centre must take the initiative to open a new chapter in cooperative federalism with states to revive internal reforms that will enhance our competitiveness in the global arena.

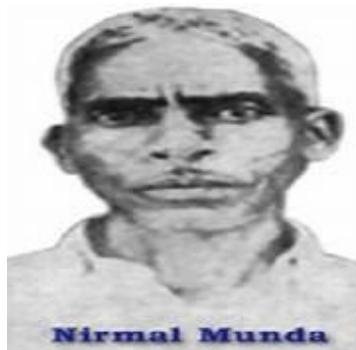
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India is Proud of:

Nirmal Munda (1893 -1973)

Amco Simco incident: Forgotten Jallianwala Bagh of Odisha



Amco Simco incident: Forgotten Jallianwala Bagh of Odisha. The Amco Simco incident, like Jallianwala Bagh, occurred on April 25, 1939, in Odisha's Janjati region. It was led by Nirmal Munda and local Janjatis...

Nirmal Munda was an agrarian leader, a freedom fighter and a World War I veteran from the Munda tribe from Bartoli village in the former princely state of Gangpur (now in Sundergarh district, Odisha). He was the leader of the Munda agitation of 1937-39, who organised the tribals of Gangpur to refuse to pay exorbitant taxes and demanded khuntkatti rights.

Nirmal Munda was born at Bartoli village under Raiboga P.S. in 1893, in the family of father Marha Munda and mother Gomi Munda in the ex-state of Gangpur. He received lower primary education at Bartoli. For his upper primary education, he went to Rajgangpur. After completion of upper primary education, he went to Karanjo (now in Jharkhand) for middle education. After that, in 1917, he went to Ranchi GEL Church High School. While studying in high school, he was recruited by the British Army and left for France on 17 November 1917, during the First World War. He returned to Bartoli in July 1919.

Between 1929 and 1935, the land revenue settlement of Gangpur increased at alarming rates. The Upendranath Ghosh settlement (1929-1931) followed by the Indrabilas Mukherjee settlement (1932-1935) marks the beginning of tribal discontent. The Mukherjee settlement of 1932 did allow the uplands to be left from assessment in exchange of bethi and begari (forced labour services without pay to the state by the tenant). Later it was realised that the practice of bethi and begari was only used for minor road repairs.

Bethi and begari were often misused and oppressive to the tribals as they would be forced to leave their work during busy times. In 1936, the system of leaving uplands from rent assessment in exchange for bethi and begari was discontinued; now all lands were assessed to rent. This was the major reason behind tribal discontent.

The Munda tribals of Dahijira village refused to pay rent and others supported them. The Mundas filed several petitions before the viceroy protesting the exorbitant taxes. In 1938, Nirmal Munda organised the tribals of the region to stop paying taxes. Inspired by Jaipal Singh, Nirmal Munda organized the tribals to stop paying taxes and demanded reduction of rent, He also demanded khuntkhatti rights and the abolition of bethi and begari. The agitation spread throughout Gangpur.

The darbar found it almost impossible to collect tax. Criminal cases were started, and warrants were issued against some of the agitators. These coercive measures did not stop the movement, Nirmal Munda made covert meetings at secret locations with the agitators. The queen of Gangpur sought help of the political agent at Sambalpur to suppress the agitation.

It was given out that the queen had accepted the agitators' demands and was going to declare good news at Simko village, where Nirmal Munda had a house. On 25 April 1939, thousands of tribals had gathered at the Amko Simko field under the leadership of Nirmal Munda. The queen, along with political agent Lt. E. W. Marger and two platoons of troops appeared at the field with the sole intention to arrest Nirmal Munda on charges of holding seditious meetings and assaulting a village chawkidar.

According to Fabianus Ekka - the queen asked, "Who is Nirmal Munda?" The crowd recognized the evil intention of the queen and introduced themselves as Nirmal Munda. Soon, scuffles broke out and the crowd armed with lathis, axes and other crude weapons resisted the arrest of their leader. The police, finding the situation unfavorable, opened fire upon the crowd. This led to the death of 49 and injured many. The dead bodies were given a mass burial at Brahmanmaara. Some sources suggest that the number of deaths were higher.

Nirmal Munda was arrested and sentenced to six years of imprisonment at Sundergarh and Sambalpur but was only released from jail on 15 August 1947. With the arrest of Nirmal Munda, the agitation came to an end.

Nirmal Munda contested the Odisha State Assembly elections in 1957 as an independent candidate from Bisra (ST) constituency and won. He was awarded tamra patra (bronze plaque) by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1972, recognizing him as a freedom fighter. He died in Bartoli on 2 January 1973.

This incident, Amco Simco movement proves that society always stood and fought against any misdeeds irrespective of powers which perpetuated that and even people laid down their life for the right cause.

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