

India's Sum of All Fears: The Convergence Crisis We're Not Preparing For

By Vipul Tamhane

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In Tom Clancy's insightful novel, "The Sum of All Fears," disaster occurred not from the most evident threat but from latent vulnerabilities that, altogether, posed an existential threat. Today, India faces its own sum-of-all-fears scenario, not a single catastrophic event, but a web of interconnected crises lurking in plain sight that could amplify one another into collapse.

While our national security establishment remains fixated on border and threat conventional military threats, the more silent dangers may be found with the slow erosion of resilience in five key areas, viz. water security, digital insecurity, social cohesion, economic fragility, and biosecurity. These threats are individually manageable, however as a combination, they may overwhelm state capacity and lead to a cascading failure that no amount of military power would be able to address.

The Water Time Bomb

India ranks among the most water-stressed countries in the world but has not considered it an existential security risk, instead managing it as a permanent state of affairs. The over-dependence on unreliable monsoons, unchecked groundwater depletion, and increasing interstate disputes have diverted attention from a greater threat: climate change, increasing population pressures, and geopolitical tools of power.

Think of the cascade, i.e. failings monsoons leave Punjab, Haryana, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu with great water scarcity. Border disputes over water sharing become violent, blocking national highways and disrupting food supply chains. Lakhs of farmers give up farming and flood cities that are already crowded and straining to accommodate more people.

At the same time, China has used its construction of diversion canals in the headwaters of the Brahmaputra to weaponise water during border disputes, paralyzing the northeast of India without firing a bullet.

This isn't hypothetical. Chinese projects in the upstream areas are already impacting water flows. Water conflicts between states are already paralyzing governance. The fear is that both of these scenarios intersect in a combined impact of acute climate shocks, where every citizen turns on each other and governance is useless.

Digital Fragmentation and the Reality Wars

What lies beyond fake news is something far worse, the purposeful dismantling of shared reality itself. Using deep fakes, encrypted messaging apps, and algorithmically driven echo chambers, our adversaries are exploiting our digital networks to deepen communal, caste, and regional divides.

Picture a large-scale terrorist attack followed shortly thereafter by conflicting, manipulated narratives of the event being pushed by state and non-state actors. Different communities have fundamentally different views of the same event happening at the same time. Violently opposed protests erupt in simultaneous cities across the country. Law enforcement officers on the scene don't know what is true and are met with violence from all sides. Faith in elections, the judiciary, and the legitimacy of the government crumbles.

While India is boasting about its Digital Public Infrastructure as the showpiece for public infrastructure development and globally, we have created significant attack surfaces. Depending on imported semiconductors, 5G equipment, and non-civilian surveillance equipment further complicates the potential vulnerability. Wars will be waged in the code just as much as they will be waged in combat and we have left ourselves exposed.

The Debt-Fueled House of Cards

Underneath India's remarkable growth narrative lies a layered debt crisis: legacy non-performing assets in the public sector banks, vulnerable non-banking financial companies providing service to millions of MSMEs, and a growing household debt that is allowing increased levels of consumption.

A combination of a global recession or a sustained shock to oil prices would precipitate corporate defaults, collapsing systemic NBFCs and freezing credit to the informal sector, the largest employer in the country. Millions would lose their jobs overnight. Panic ensues. With fear settling in, household consumption is cut, crashing the economy into a deep recession. This is not merely a corporate sector problem, or crisis; this is a heart attack for the nation's finances that ends with desperate citizens on the street, forming a complete economic collapse across the nation that a fiscal stimulus will not quickly remedy.

Urban Infrastructure at Breaking Point

Economic vehicles in India's megacities operate above their carrying capacity. Daily traffic jams, and seasonal flooding, are everyday occurrences of urban living which muffle the potential for simultaneous infrastructure failure of catastrophic proportions.

Imagine, for instance, a week-long, severe heat wave sparking massive increases in power demand. The already burdened grid fails. In the absence of power, the water treatment and sewage infrastructure fails. Fast-forward to unbearable temperatures and the absence of clean water; looting occurs as people panic. Police are overwhelmed. Two or three large metros (Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai) simultaneously paralyze effectively ceasing national GDP and showcasing a fundamental failure of the state.

The Silent War: Gray Zone Aggression

What might be most harmful, however, is the coordinated attacks that fall beneath the threshold of conventional warfare, such as: a cyberattack on critical infrastructure reported as a "technical glitch"; strategic corruptions dismissed as "political scandals"; the gradual undermining of institutional independence described as an academic debate.

Should crisis tensions arise, a state adversary may carry out synchronized multi-vector attacks, such as: crippling the stock exchange, the UPI system managing utilities, and the railway network; promoting short videos of critical leaders making statements;

conducting major terrorist attacks through proxies. The state reacts with difficulties owing to lost trust and tenuous coordination, and the response is slow and confused. There is no need for a tank to cross the border in order for a nation to lose its responsiveness.

The Perfect Storm

The real sum of all fears starts to surface when all these threads intertwine: a climate shock results in economic crisis and mass urban movement, which hostile states seize to exacerbate with synchronized digital and information assault on institutional trust and total systemic breakdown.

It is not an external enemy we are facing, but vulnerabilities on the inside. Unlike conventional threats that elicit a spirited assembly, these diffuse risks become normalized until suddenly rattled by shock. A resource stress drives migration and insurrection. Social unrest is heightened by disinformation and erodes governance. Economic fragility shrinks the scope of defense and health expenditures. A bio-crisis fuels polarization.

India's most pressing security concern is not checking the next border clash, but building resilience across water security, social cohesion, financial stability, urban resilience, and institutional legitimacy. We need to recognize that within hybrid-war, the most lethal threats incrementally compound in plain sight.

The edited question is not simply whether India can win conventional wars, but are we in fact building to stave off the converging crises that are potentially fast-tracking our unravelling from inside? Both the US adversaries will know this, it is time for our security bureaucracy to lock in.

COP30: From a 'COP of Truth' to a 'Theatre of Delay' India and the Search for a Fair Climate Path

By Uday Kumar Varma

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COP30 has concluded, but the conversations it provoked continue to echo through diplomatic channels, civil society networks, and editorial pages. When the conference opened in Belém, Brazil, it was hailed—almost with hope and relief—as the “COP of Truth.” By the time it ended, the disappointment for many, inside the venue was, as one observer put it, as pervasive as the diesel fumes from the generators outside the pavilions. What many expected to be a decisive step toward a fossil-free future ended up being described by several activists and analysts as yet another “Theatre of Delay.”

Even the moral appeals of Pope Francis, urging delegates to act with urgency and compassion for the planet and its poorest inhabitants, could not shift entrenched positions.

The most visible sign of this retreat was the softening of the language on fossil fuels. An early draft had clearly called for a transition away from coal, oil, and gas. By the final version, this clarity had been diluted to a vague, almost evasive line acknowledging that “the global transition towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development is irreversible.” The omission of the words that mattered—fossil fuels—many believed, became the symbol of a summit that could not summon the courage to confront the heart of the climate crisis.

A further disappointment was palpable. Climate scientists pointed out that without concrete roadmaps or timelines, the world risks drifting further from the 1.5°C target. Colombia went so far as to refuse to join parts of the final decision, accusing negotiators of “denying the best available science” and sending a dangerously mixed message to the world. Their resistance briefly forced the plenary to pause, underscoring the fragility of a consensus-driven process.

Yet COP30 was not without accomplishments. There was progress in operationalising the Loss and Damage Fund, a longstanding demand of climate-vulnerable nations, and the establishment of a more coherent framework for a just transition mechanism. Former Irish President Mary Robinson called these steps imperfect but “evidence that multilateralism can still function in fractured times,” invoking the Brazilian ideal of *mutirão*— collective, voluntary, community-driven effort—as the spirit that held the process together.

But for India, as for many developing countries, the most consequential debate was not about the symbolism of failure but about the realism of transition. As negotiators sparred over language, India’s position remained steady and unapologetically grounded in the arithmetic of development. The country reiterated that any meaningful global climate agreement must recognize the developmental compulsions of the Global South. Poverty eradication, industrial expansion, and rising energy demand are not negotiable goals; they are foundational to national progress. This duality—of ambition shaped by constraints—has become a hallmark of India’s climate diplomacy.

India welcomed the outcomes with characteristic sobriety. Speaking at the final plenary, its delegation underscored that the decisions reflect a collective will to act, however cautiously, and reaffirmed India’s commitment to climate action anchored in equity, sustainable development, and technological innovation. India reiterated that global climate goals must advance in a manner that is fair, just, and cognizant of developmental realities—yet it also acknowledged that the decisions mark progress, and that the world must build on this momentum with trust and mutual responsibility.

India’s argument is not rhetorical. Its per capita emissions remain far below the global average and a fraction of those in industrialised economies, whose prosperity was built on more than a century of fossil-fuel-driven growth. For these nations to now prescribe rapid phase-outs without offering adequate financial and technological support would risk widening, rather than narrowing, global inequality. India insisted that climate ambition cannot be divorced from equity; the burden of transition cannot fall hardest on those who contributed the least to the crisis.

Yet, India did not present this dilemma as an alibi for inaction. On the contrary, its record on green energy growth stands among the most credible in the G20. Over the past decade, India has built one of the world’s largest renewable energy capacities—especially in solar power—and has significantly reduced the emissions intensity of its GDP. Its policies for green hydrogen, grid modernisation, energy efficiency, and electric mobility reflect a painstakingly constructed long-term strategy. This progress is not a display of self-congratulation; it is a demonstration that development and decarbonisation can proceed together when supported by coherent policy and accessible technology.

For India, as also for the developing world at large, the larger global picture remains troubling. Climate finance continues to lag far behind the scale required. Technology transfer, long promised, remains entangled in commercial and political constraints. This is where the ethos of *mutirão* resonates most strongly. India’s transition is not solely a governmental enterprise; it is a cumulative outcome of public policy, private investment, technological adoption, and community-level cooperation. The cooperative spirit that COP30 celebrated is, in many ways, embedded in India’s own energy story—quiet, steady, and rooted in both necessity and innovation.

COP30 may not have lived up to its promise as a “COP of Truth,” but it has illuminated the truths the world can no longer avoid. The time for incrementalism is over; the time for cooperative courage—true *mutirão*—has arrived. Where does this leave the world? Perhaps with a clearer recognition of both the possibilities and the limits of multilateralism. COP30 revealed that global cooperation is still possible, but fragile. It showed that ambition remains, but so do hesitation and distrust. Above all, it reminded the world that without integrity in language, generosity in financing, and sincerity in commitments, the climate process risks losing its moral centre.

For India, the path forward is equally demanding and hopeful: to keep expanding renewable energy, deepen adaptation strategies, strengthen technological innovation, and ensure that the benefits of transition reach the poorest first. It must continue to speak for the developing world while demonstrating through action what a balanced, equitable, low-carbon development model can look like.

In the end, COPs rest on consensus. And consensus, by their very nature, are never perfect; they are rarely the boldest or the best. They are compromises framed in broad, sometimes vague, formulations that every nation can live with. Yet this is the grammar of multilateralism. To secure decisive and irreversible progress, the global community will need far greater maturity, imagination, and the courage to look beyond narrow national interests. Until then, each COP will inch us forward—imperfectly, unevenly, but forward, nonetheless.

For the rest, we wait.

How Asim Munir's Gaza Gamble Can Misfire: From Fortress of Faith to Broker of Peace

By N. C. Bipindra

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For decades, Pakistan has styled itself as the conscience of the Muslim world, the “fortress of Islam,” the state that speaks when others remain silent. Yet this self-anointed guardianship has always been more about calculation than conviction. The ‘ummah’ narrative offered Pakistan’s elite a convenient moral currency; it elevated domestic legitimacy, won external patronage, and [...]

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The ‘ummah’ narrative offered Pakistan’s elite a convenient moral currency; it elevated domestic legitimacy, won external patronage, and cloaked failures of governance in the language of faith.

But Gaza exposes the limits of that illusion. The same establishment that once claimed to defend Palestine now courts Washington’s approval for a peacekeeping role conceived by its allies.

The rhetoric of solidarity, it turns out, was never a principle; it was policy camouflage.

The notion of Pakistan as Islam’s citadel, the so-called quaid-e-ummat (leader of the Muslim world), was always a myth sustained by propaganda and insecurity, not belief.

Nearly five decades after championing the Palestinian cause at the 1974 Lahore Islamic Summit, Pakistan now stands on the brink of a striking policy reversal.

Reports suggest that Islamabad may send up to 20,000 troops to Gaza as part of a US-backed International Stabilisation Force (ISF) tied to Donald Trump’s 20-point Gaza Peace Plan.

The move that, if confirmed, would mark Pakistan’s first indirect engagement with Israeli security interests and a sharp break from its long-proclaimed ideological stance.

Trump’s 20-Point Peace Plan and Pakistan’s Dilemma

On September 29, 2025, United States President Donald Trump unveiled his comprehensive 20-point Gaza Peace Plan, which outlined a proposal for a temporary ceasefire lasting 72 hours,

with the return of hostages, and the establishment of a “New Gaza” under the aegis of international surveillance.

The plan proposed the deployment of an International Stabilisation Force (ISF), primarily consisting of personnel from Muslim-majority countries, to supervise the reconstruction of Gaza and to facilitate the incremental withdrawal of Israeli forces.

One week prior, Trump engaged in discussions with leaders from eight Muslim nations, including Pakistan, who collectively advocated for a complete withdrawal of Israeli forces and reaffirmed their commitment to the two-state solution.

However, the final reprise of Trump’s proposal disregarded these stipulations, linking the withdrawal to the disarmament of Hamas and placing the oversight responsibilities under a “Board of Peace” presided over by Trump himself and reportedly including figures such as former British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

Furthermore, in Islamabad, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif offered a measured endorsement of the plan, while reports from Politico and CNN-News18 indicated that Pakistan was being considered as a potential contributor of up to 20,000 troops to the envisioned International Stabilization Force (ISF).

The purported meetings between Pakistan’s Army Chief, Field Marshal Asim Munir, and United States officials in Egypt underscore the delicate nature and possible volatility associated with Islamabad’s anticipated involvement in Gaza.

If confirmed, this development would signify Pakistan’s inaugural indirect collaboration with Israel, representing a notable deviation from decades of ideological opposition and serving as a revealing indicator of the extent to which Islamabad is prepared to compromise its principles in pursuit of national survival.

The Gaza Gamble: Pakistan’s Double Game

Gaza is the latest arena for Pakistan’s timeworn game of political contradiction.

For a nation teetering on the brink of economic collapse, Pakistan’s potential participation in Washington’s postwar Gaza framework represents not diplomacy but expediency, a bid for survival disguised as moral purpose.

By aligning with a US-designed peace plan shaped, indirectly, by shared interests, Pakistan’s military establishment appears willing to trade ideological fidelity for geopolitical relevance and financial reprieve.

With public sentiment overwhelmingly pro-Palestinian, this gambit is fraught with peril. Any visible cooperation with an American-or Israeli-led mission risks triggering mass unrest at home.

Moreover, Islamist groups like Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) have already declared that participation in such a venture would cross a “red line.”

For Field Marshal Asim Munir, already navigating political volatility and discontent within the ranks, the optics of Pakistani troops operating under Western oversight could fatally erode both his domestic credibility and the military’s moral authority.

For decades, Pakistan’s ruling elite have mastered the politics of leverage, extracting aid from Washington and legitimacy from religious sentiment.

Gaza follows the same script: moral symbolism traded for money, and ideological constancy exchanged for short-term relief.

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Fujian's Commissioning: China's Carrier Leap and India's Strategic Crossroads

By – Group Captain Praveer Ashok Purohit (retd)

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Introduction

China's commissioning on 05 November 2025 of its third aircraft carrier, 'Fujian' (Type 003), marks a turning point in the naval balance of power in Asia. It is not merely another ship joining the PLA Navy (PLAN). Rather, it represents Beijing's belief that maritime dominance and not continental mass is the currency of great-power status in the 21st century. India cannot afford to view this development as symbolic or distant. Fujian encapsulates a Chinese maritime strategy that is maturing faster than most of the Indo-Pacific expected, and its ripple effects will be felt squarely in India's primary area of responsibility, the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

Significance of Fujian

The Fujian is a significant step forward from its predecessors. Unlike China's first two carriers, the 'Liaoning' and the 'Shandong', which use "ski-jump" ramps that enable a Short Take-off But Arrested Recovery (STOBAR) capability, Fujian is equipped with an Electro-Magnetic Aircraft Recovery System (EMALS) and an arrestor gear. This upgrade dramatically expands the number and types of aircraft it can launch and recover, the payload the aircraft can carry, and their operational reach. Besides, with a displacement of around 80000 tonnes, the Fujian is the world's largest conventionally powered aircraft carrier.

It would be a fatal mistake to assume that China's aircraft carrier project is about prestige and parades. Instead, it is a deliberate strategy to serve four important goals. The first is to build credible military muscle to support Chinese political coercion of its rivals like Japan, Philippines, and Taiwan. A survivable, long-range Carrier Battle Group (CBG) enables China to shadow adversaries, overwhelm smaller regional navies, pressurize Taiwan and Japan, and challenge the U.S. forward presence. Second, it extends Chinese naval influence in the IOR. Logistics and naval facilities at Djibouti, Gwadar, and potentially Ream in Cambodia give the PLAN options for rotational or more frequent forward deployment. In future, a Fujian-led task group sailing into the Arabian Sea is no longer fiction. The third, is an enhanced capability to counter the Quad in the Indo-Pacific. Last, in the realm of maritime diplomacy and deterrence, China's growing carrier force backs its broader geopolitical goals, including protecting Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC), especially under the Belt & Road Initiative (BRI), asserting its role in key maritime zones, and showcasing itself as a global power.

From what is known about the Fujian, some take-aways about its capabilities are noticeable. China's air power capability at sea is significantly enhanced by the Fujian's air wing. It is expected to embark the J-35 stealth fighter, the J-15T (catapult capable fighter), the KJ-600 AEW aircraft, multi-role helicopters and even UAVs. The KJ-600 is crucial since it gives the carrier group a "brain in the sky," extending situational awareness and command-and-control reach far beyond what helicopter-based systems allow. Yet, there are trade-offs. The Fujian is conventionally powered (i.e., not nuclear), which limits its endurance and the tempo of sustained operations, compared to nuclear-powered supercarriers. Also, its flight deck layout may constrain simultaneous launch and recovery operations, reducing sortie rates compared to U.S supercarriers. Still, this is likely the PLAN's most capable carrier to date and a meaningful step towards a truly blue-water navy.

Implications for India

India's maritime interests - from energy routes to trade are overwhelmingly concentrated in the IOR. For decades, India enjoyed substantial advantages by virtue of being the natural resident power. China seeks to rewrite that geography. The Fujian and its follow-on carriers give China the ability to enhance its naval presence as well coercive options against India in the IOR. It also gives China and Pakistan another domain (maritime) for more extensive collusion against India. PLAN carriers operating from Djibouti or supported by dual-use ports around the Indian Ocean would threaten Indian naval deployments, complicate India's island-based surveillance, and sustain China's naval presence near key chokepoints.

The Indian Navy has long argued the need for three aircraft carriers for effective sea control. The commissioning of Fujian makes that argument more urgent, not less. The Indian Navy's challenges are not all external (from PLAN). They are also internal. Foremost amongst these is the debate over the effectiveness of aircraft carriers in modern warfare. Budgetary constraints, delays in warship programmes, thinly spread and inadequate air power, and limited underwater surveillance capability are some other.

China's growing ability to operate a sophisticated CBG raises the cost of escalation during crises. It has the potential to create a decision dilemma amongst the littorals in any likely India-China confrontation at sea. India must therefore give serious thought to ways and means to maintain and retain credible escalation control in the IOR and the wider Indo-Pacific. China's message through Fujian is straightforward - the era of uncontested Indian dominance in the Indian Ocean is over.

What Must India Do: A Policy Blueprint

Notwithstanding the Chinese propaganda lauding the commissioning of Fujian, India still has noteworthy advantages that need building upon. These are:-

- Geographic centrality in the IOR
- Intensive operational experience in carrier-based aviation
- Friendly ties with island states in the IOR
- A defence-industrial ecosystem that is showing promise
- Strategic convergence with the Quad countries

But influence cannot be sustained by geography and diplomatic statements alone. It needs a focused, deliberate effort and the ability to respond to Chinese power-play, with substance. For starters, India needs to fast-track the approval and construction of the third aircraft carrier (IAC-2). It would be prudent to ensure this carrier has a minimum of 60000 tonnes capacity, capable of embarking more fighters and fixed-wing AEW aircraft. Leveraging the strategic partnership with the U.K. or France to collaborate on the project could be explored. A CATOBAR-capable IAC-2 will ensure continuous air cover, support expeditionary operations, and counterbalance China's growing presence. The government needs meet the Navy's original requirement of 57 Rafale-M deck-based fighters. Work needs to begin simultaneously on the design and development of carrier-capable UAVs for ISR and attack roles.

Air power at sea is still crucially dependent upon shore-based air power. To enhance the reach, lethality and effectiveness of air power at sea, it is imperative to equip the IAF with more Air-to-Air Refuelling (AAR) aircraft, AWACS and swing-role fighters.

China's submarines have increased their forays in the IOR. A denser anti-submarine and underwater surveillance network comprising seabed acoustic sensor chains, Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) helicopters, Maritime Reconnaissance (MR) aircraft, and ISR will enable better monitoring and enhance deterrence. Simultaneously, bolstering our hunter-killer submarine fleet will give added freedom of operations to our CBG.

Hardening our island territories (often referred to as ‘unsinkable aircraft carriers’) with more offensive air power and better ISR can prove to be an effective deterrent to the Chinese CBG.

India must also integrate its maritime strategy with the industry. This requires our defence eco-system to move faster, scale better and coordinate more tightly with naval operational needs.

Conclusion

Although the Fujian’s commissioning symbolises China’s advancements and is a significant step towards a maturing carrier force, it does not automatically translate into Chinese superiority. It is one thing to commission a warship and quite another to operationalize it. The challenges in operationalizing an aircraft carrier are multi-fold, and China is still far from achieving it on the Fujian. China is likely to soon launch its fourth aircraft carrier that is likely to be nuclear- powered and even larger. This vision underlines China’s long game for global maritime supremacy. For India, it is an added challenge but also an opportunity. A challenge because the strategic gap risks widening, and an opportunity because bold, forward-looking decisions now can determine India’s maritime future. India must adapt, modernize, and marshal its resources to build hard power and ensure that its naval influence in the Indian Ocean remains robust. India must preserve a favourable maritime balance in the IOR and the Indo-Pacific in concert with Quad. India can deter, influence, and shape outcomes across the IOR - but only with deliberate investment in naval power and strategic clarity. If it does not, the Fujian might be just the first act in a larger play that reduces India to a mute spectator. The commissioning of Fujian is a wake-up call. India must answer it with ambition, not anxiety.

On 26/11 Anniversary, a few Things India Must Make Trump Understand About Pakistan

By Vappala Balachandran

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There was a third party behind 26/11 attacks besides Pakistan’s ISI and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT). Al Qaeda had its own reasons for supporting the attack

How do we assess the significance of the 17th anniversary of the 26/11 attacks on Mumbai in the background of the recent bonhomie between US President Donald Trump and Pakistan’s 11th army chief, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir Ahmed Shah who had threatened to “shatter India’s geographical immunity”?

Should we refresh the President’s memory on what American strategist Bruce Reidel had pointed out years ago, that there was a third party behind the 26/11 attacks besides Pakistan’s ISI and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT)? Reidel said that it was al Qaeda, which had its own reasons for supporting that attack. He had argued that al Qaeda deliberately kept a low profile and allowed LeT to select the Mumbai targets, making it appear that it was purely an Indo-Pak issue.

Why did al Qaeda get involved in 26/11? Reidel said that it had “big hopes” that after 26/11, India would attack Pakistan which, in turn, would disrupt NATO operations in Afghanistan by way of drone attacks on it. “Instead, India chose to use diplomacy and avoid a military response. We all dodged a bullet,” he added.

Reidel also added that LeT had planned a big attack on New Delhi during the 2010 Commonwealth Games, which “was thwarted by prompt intelligence from the British services”. International media had quoted Michael Leiter, the then director of the US National Counterterrorism Centre disclosing to the US Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee that the Commonwealth Games in New Delhi would be “an appealing target for Lashkar-e-Taiba due to their political and economic significance for India”.

In 2009, Stephen Tankel, an internationally recognised authority on LeT, published a paper, ‘Lashkar-e-Taiba: From 9/11 to Mumbai’, according to which the Mumbai attacks revealed “Lashkar’s progression toward al-Qaeda’s global jihad” against Western interests.

On July 3, 2024 the chair of the UN Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 of 2011 wrote to the president of the Security Council that al-Qaeda in Afghanistan remained “strategically patient, cooperating with other terrorist groups in Afghanistan and prioritising its ongoing relationship with the Taliban”.

However, it continued to operate “covertly” to project the image of Taliban adherence to the provisions of the Doha Agreement to prevent the use of Afghan soil for terrorist purposes. The report added that although the Taliban had claimed that it had done much to constrain the activities of al Qaeda and their affiliates, “member states remarked that its reorganisation and training activities, as well as new travel into Afghanistan, indicate that the group still uses Afghanistan as a permissive haven under the Taliban, raising questions about al Qaeda’s intent”.

India needs to convey to the Trump administration that this background needs to be kept in mind to read and interpret the November 10 Red Fort Metro bomb attack on India which has exposed an extremely dangerous group of educated persons which was preparing to attack Indian cities.

In the present case, it was the remarkable alertness, on October 19, of Srinagar Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Sundeep Chakravarthy of Jammu and Kashmir police, that led our agencies to Maulvi Irfan Ahmad, the Shopian cleric, then to the terrorist modules across J&K, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh and finally to the Red Fort bombing.

Normally, none would have cared to go deep into the origins of such protest posters as they occur almost daily in J&K. However, Chakravarthy insisted on finding out who was behind the posters, and connected the dots. The CCTV cameras revealed the perpetrators, which led to the sleeper modules.

The importance of Chakravarthy’s alertness cannot be understood without comparing it to our earlier experience with the Indian Mujahideen (IM) which had burst onto the scene two decades ago anonymously, playing havoc with our security and indulging in wanton killings on a pan-Indian model between October 2005 and January 2018.

We could identify these killers only in November 2007 after the synchronised bombing of three law courts (Varanasi, Lucknow and Faizabad) in Uttar Pradesh, killing 18 persons for which they claimed credit. Investigations later revealed that IM was responsible for 23 bomb blasts all over India, including the 2005 Delhi bombings.

Putin’s Visit to India: A Pivot to New Order?

By - Dr. Uttara Sahasrabudhe

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Vladimir Putin, the President of Russia, paid a two-day visit to India on 4-5 December 2025, marking twenty-five years of the Strategic Partnership between the two countries. Putin was in India to attend the Annual Summit hosted alternatively by India and Russia each year. The grand reception accorded to Putin in New Delhi was watched with curiosity by the world, particularly by the West. Putin had brought along a big delegation that included his ministers as well as business leaders. Reports indicate that bilateral negotiations produced several agreements, ranging from co-operation in academics and media to cultural initiatives; and in areas from chemicals and fertilizers to healthcare and shipping.

While no major announcement on purchase of weapons such as S-400 missiles was made; the two sides declared intention to increase collaboration in the nuclear energy and space sectors.

However, the significance of the Putin-Modi summit goes beyond the optics of the protocol-breaking welcome and the bilateral agreements. It underlined, once again, India's strategic autonomy and also reaffirmed Russia's position in world affairs. Despite the fact that Europe and the US have made every effort to isolate Russia; the BRICS summit in July, the SCO summit in August-September and the G-20 summit in November 2025, signified the failure of these efforts. Now, the India-Russia bilateral summit has further legitimised Russia as an important power in global politics. On the other hand, India stood resolutely amid the additional 25% 'punitive' US tariffs; concluded trade treaties with the UK and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA – which includes Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland), and continued to import crude from Russia. Its role in the SCO and G-20 summits coupled with this bilateral summit sends a message that India cannot be pressurised to follow a policy which New Delhi perceives is not in its interest.

A Complex Triangle

Make no mistake. India needs good relations with the US just as much as it needs good relations with Russia. And New Delhi is keenly aware of it. India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and his US counterpart Pete Hegseth signed a 10-year Defence Framework Agreement in October 2025, on the sidelines of ASEAN plus Defence Ministers' meeting. This was followed up recently with a sustainment deal with Lockheed Martin for the Indian Navy's MH-60R Seahawk helicopters. A few days ago, the Economic Times reported an interesting development – Clean Core Thorium Energy, a US-based company being given export license for technology transfer, just before the introduction of Atomic Energy Bill 2025 by the Indian Government in the Parliament in the current winter session. The Bill, if passed, will allow private participation in India's nuclear energy sector. If all boxes are ticked, this promises to be a very significant development for India's nuclear energy sector. Thus, while the 'punitive' tariffs occupy centre-stage on the media, New Delhi and Washington seem to continue behind the scene effort to keep the ship of bilateral relations steady.

On the other hand, it is also important to appreciate the fact that both the US and Russia need India as much as the latter needs them. The US needs India both as a counter to China and Russia. (Thus, the tariffs have an ironical effect, to say the least.) And Russia needs India as a counter to the US. This new position of India is gradually sinking in with the statesmen, diplomats and analysts around the world. Given this geopolitical importance of India, the India-Russia summit may prove to be a pivot to a new order.

A New Order?

Any observer of International Relations can see that a new geopolitical order is in the making. While it may take years, even a decade, for a new order to unfold, the changes are significant and unmistakable. The Western domination, and that of the US in particular, is on the decline. This can be seen from the various developments in the past four years.

- The US and the West were not able to isolate Russia after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine. Economic sanctions have failed. Indeed, many European countries continue to buy Russian fuel via India. And the US is willing to negotiate with Russia for the rare earth minerals.
- Further, despite the Western sanctions, Russia has emerged as a force to reckon with in global relations. Through its membership of groups like SCO and its friendly bilateral ties with China and India, it is able to influence world politics.

- It is definitely premature to say that India has emerged as the third or fourth ‘pole’ in contemporary international relations. However, the warmth of relations between New Delhi and Moscow seen during the recent summit indicates that India is not making policy within the framework of existing (read ‘Western’) norms and rules of foreign relations, but it is making norms and writing rules.

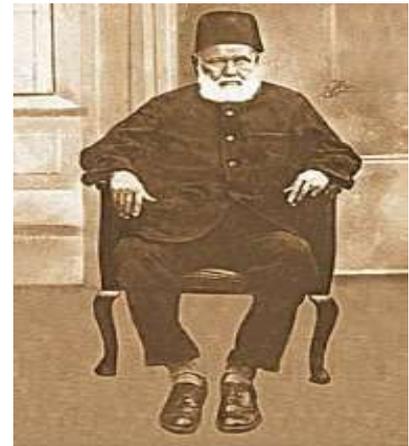
- The cliché of the twenty-first century being the ‘Asian Century’ is becoming a hard reality. China, the biggest challenger to US dominance, is an Asian power. India, the largest and fastest emerging power, is Asian too. And the third force in current world politics, Russia, is a Eurasian power. Not by design and certainly not in tandem, but the three of them are challenging the order established by the West. In many ways they have begun to rewrite the rules of the game.

It will be interesting to see how the US and the West respond.

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors. They do not purport to reflect the opinions or views of the FINS or its members.

India is Proud of:

Rai Bahadur Hem Chandra Bose & Quazi Azizul Haque Inventor of Fingerprint Classification System



Rai Bahadur Hem Chandra Bose was an British Indian police officer and reputed mathematician at the Calcutta Anthropometric Bureau (later the Fingerprint Bureau). Supervised by Edward Henry, he along with Quazi Azizul Haque developed the first Fingerprint classification system in the world, which is known as Henry Classification System for cataloging fingerprints.

Bose was born in 1867 in Damurhuda Upazila of the then Nadia District of undivided Bengal, in a Hindu Bengali Kayastha family. His father was a postman. After topping the matriculation examination in the year 1883 from Jessore Zilla School, he studied Mathematics at the Sanskrit College of Calcutta on a Scholarship from the Natore Raj and completed his Bachelor of Science in 1888. He joined the Bengal Police Service as a sub inspector in 1889. Between 1889 and 1894 he was posted as an investigating officer in police stations in districts of the then United Bengal. His keen detective work was noticed and in 1894 he was posted at the Directorate Headquarters of the Criminal Investigation Department, or CID, of Bengal Police in Calcutta. There he worked on the fingerprinting system, and remained posted at the CID headquarters, except for a short stint as Instructor at the Sardah Police Training School in 1914–1917, until his retirement as a Dy SP in 1925.

After his retirement he lived in a small apartment in Maniktala in Calcutta with his family, till his death from natural causes in 3/1 April 1949. His grandson Amiya Bhusan Bose joined the West Bengal Police Service in the 1952 batch of the WBCS and retired as a DIG of West Bengal Police in 1988.

On 12 June 1897, the Council of the Governor General of India approved a committee report that fingerprints should be used for classification of criminal records. After that year, the Kolkata Anthropometric Bureau became the world's first Fingerprint Bureau. Hem Chandra Bose was working in the Calcutta Anthropometric Bureau with Azizul Haque. He and Haque were the two Indian fingerprint experts credited with primary development of the Henry Classification System (named for their supervisor, Edward Richard Henry). The Henry Classification System is still used in all English-speaking countries (primarily as the manual filing system for accessing paper archive files that have not been scanned and computerized).

Although Hem Chandra Bose and Quazi Azizul Haque were the pioneers and inventor of Fingerprint Classification system, but due credit was denied to them in the international arena and this is known as Henry Classification System.

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