

Conversations at the Edge of History -I Dwarkesh Patel and the Rise of the Serious Podcast

By Uday Kumar Varma

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In recent years, the long-form podcast has evolved from a niche digital experiment into one of the principal arenas of contemporary discourse. Politicians, scientists, entrepreneurs, philosophers, and cultural figures increasingly prefer podcasts over conventional television interviews or newspaper conversations when they wish to reflect freely, speculate openly, or engage difficult questions without the tyranny of brevity. Yet the proliferation of podcasts has also produced an overwhelming abundance of mediocrity. Much of the medium is noisy, repetitive, self-indulgent, or intellectually thin, driven more by sensation and instant visibility than by depth or inquiry.

Against this crowded and often forgettable landscape, Dwarkesh Patel has emerged as an unusually serious and consequential presence.

At just twenty-four, Patel occupies a distinctive place in the contemporary technological imagination. He is neither a celebrated scientist nor the founder of a major technology company, nor even a conventional journalist supported by a powerful media institution. Yet in the intensely competitive world of artificial intelligence, he has become one of the most influential conversationalists of his generation. In Silicon Valley—where intellectual credibility is guarded fiercely—the leading architects of the AI revolution willingly sit across from him for long, searching, and unusually candid conversations.

His rise has been rapid enough to seem almost emblematic of the age he chronicles. Born in India in 2000 and taken to the United States as a child, Patel grew up in a family that moved frequently because of his father's medical profession. He studied computer science at the University of Texas at Austin, but his deeper education appears to have occurred outside formal classrooms—in voracious reading, historical curiosity, and a restless engagement with the largest questions of science and civilisation. Around 2020, while still very young, he began conducting interviews under the title 'The Lunar Society', which later evolved into the widely followed 'Dwarkesh Podcast.'

Today his guests include figures such as Mark Zuckerberg, Satya Nadella, Demis Hassabis, and many of the foremost researchers associated with Open AI, Anthropic, and DeepMind. Yet Patel's importance lies not merely in access to eminent personalities. Many interviewers secure famous guests; very few persuade them to think aloud. His conversations are distinguished by meticulous preparation and an unusual willingness to explore fundamental questions: What is intelligence? Can machines acquire agency? What happens to labour, creativity, governance, and even human meaning when cognition itself can be scaled industrially?

Perhaps the secret of Patel's appeal lies in his intellectual temperament. He is neither intoxicated by technological utopianism nor paralysed by apocalyptic fear. He inhabits the more demanding territory between wonder and scepticism. In discussions on the future of artificial intelligence, he has suggested that artificial general intelligence may emerge within the coming decades, while simultaneously acknowledging the formidable technical, economic, and energy constraints that remain unresolved. What distinguishes his conversations is not certainty but disciplined curiosity—an attempt to think historically about transformations unfolding at bewildering speed.

This quality is visible even more clearly in his recent book, *The Scaling Era: An Oral History of AI, 2019–2025*. Built around extensive conversations with researchers, CEOs, economists, and philosophers, the work attempts to capture a civilisation standing at the threshold of unprecedented change. Rather than advancing a rigid thesis, Patel assembles a chorus of voices wrestling with questions that may shape the future of humanity itself: the economics of superintelligence, the possibility of billions of AI workers, the transformation of education and labour, and the philosophical challenge posed by minds potentially surpassing human cognition.

What makes Patel especially interesting is that he belongs to a new intellectual formation created by the digital age. Earlier generations looked to universities, newspapers, and television networks as the principal custodians of serious public conversation. Increasingly, however, some of the deepest discussions on science, technology, politics, and civilisation now occur through independent long-form podcasts heard across continents. Authority is no longer derived solely from institutional affiliation; it is earned through preparation, seriousness, intellectual range, and the ability to sustain genuine inquiry.

There is something faintly symbolic in the image of this young interviewer seated across from the titans of Silicon Valley, asking questions on behalf of an anxious and fascinated world. Artificial intelligence may yet redefine human history in ways we scarcely comprehend. In that unfolding conversation about the future of intelligence, humanity, and civilisation, Dwarkesh Patel has already become one of the most thoughtful chroniclers of the age.

The long-form podcast is increasingly emerging as one of the defining archival forms of the twenty-first century. It is becoming a living repository not merely of contemporary achievements and breakthroughs, but also of the anxieties, ambitions, arguments, speculations, and intellectual ferment of our age. For the first time in human history, the makers of a technological revolution are speaking continuously, publicly, and in extraordinary depth even as the revolution itself unfolds before our eyes.

This assumes particular significance at a moment when Artificial Intelligence is beginning to redefine, reconfigure, and perhaps fundamentally reinvent human life and cognition itself. Historians of the future may therefore look upon our age with a peculiar advantage unavailable to scholars of any earlier civilisation. In that vast emerging archive of conversations, the dialogues of Dwarkesh Patel may well occupy a distinctive place.

Yet the significance of figures like Dwarkesh Patel may extend beyond the world of artificial intelligence or even the evolution of digital media. The extraordinary proliferation of long-form podcasts raises a larger and still insufficiently explored question: are we inadvertently creating one of the greatest real-time archives in human history? For perhaps the first time, scientists, entrepreneurs, philosophers, and political actors are recording their anxieties, ambitions, disagreements, and speculations continuously and publicly while profound historical change is actually unfolding. What this may mean for future historians—and for the preservation of human memory itself—is a question worth considering separately.

Cracks in The Atlantic: Europe's Search for Strategic Autonomy

By Viraj Vaidya

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In his most famous speech at Munich Security Conference in 2007, the President of Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, warned of the divisive structure of European security, which side-lined Russia rather than integrating it into a common security framework. Nearly two decades later, Europe finds itself restructuring its security architecture once again, thanks to the Ukraine war, its overdependence on the USA for security guarantees, and poor economic choices. This recalibration of the security framework reflects a fundamental change in the transatlantic relationship, as the USA seems increasingly reluctant to provide open-ended security guarantees without greater European burden-sharing.

Russia is not just negotiating a victorious way out of the Ukraine war but also wants to make sure that it gets a better deal on European security with the USA. And this is coming at the time when the USA wants to disengage from European defence and wants to revitalise the transatlantic relationship, which is also reflected in the words of Secretary of State Marco Rubio, in his Munich Security Conference 2026 address, that “we in America have no interest in being polite and orderly caretakers of the West’s managed decline. We do not seek to separate but revitalise an old friendship and renew the greatest civilisation in human history”. To put it simply, the USA is seeking a new alliance with Europe, in which it wants Europe to take responsibility for its own defence while reinforcing economic reciprocity.

Europe has learned hard lessons in 2025, and President Donald Trump’s foreign policy is proving more detrimental to its allies than to its partners. Trump's approach to dealing with countries compels them to give up their strategic autonomy by subordinating their national interests to American political interests. Europe understood this very well, though very late, but is now moving in a direction that would require collective efforts to build its strategic autonomy. In this era of multipolarity, where there are many independent or autonomous centres of decision-making, Europe can emerge as a new sphere of influence, as there is a strategic reawakening of Europe.

Over the past three decades, Europe has consolidated itself as a powerful economic bloc, despite the diverse political interests of its member states. Today, however, it faces mounting strategic and geopolitical challenges that require it to act, or at least position itself, as a more coherent political entity with genuine strategic autonomy. Such autonomy cannot emerge without diversifying partnerships and reducing excessive dependence on the United States.

In this context, leaders such as Emmanuel Macron and Giorgia Meloni have advanced the idea of diplomatic re-engagement with the Kremlin as a pathway toward ending the war in Ukraine. Their proposals surfaced at a moment when Russia, Ukraine, and the United States were reportedly engaged in trilateral discussions aimed at resolving the largest war in Europe since the Second World War, notably without direct participation from the European Union.

The central question, therefore, is whether Europe can sustain its own defence architecture without relying on the United States. This debate has intensified following the rhetoric of Donald Trump regarding potential withdrawal from North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and his insistence that member states raise defence spending to 5 percent of GDP. In such a scenario, countries like France, the United Kingdom, and Germany would need to assume a far greater responsibility for European security in the absence of American leadership.

At the Munich Security Conference, Emmanuel Macron emphasised that Europe must adopt a long-term strategic outlook, including the development of deep strike capabilities and a reassessment of how France's nuclear deterrent could be integrated into the bloc's future security architecture. Given that France and the United Kingdom are nuclear powers, they could theoretically extend their nuclear umbrella across Europe to deter external aggression. However, such an arrangement would necessitate a coherent collective nuclear doctrine, which in turn depends on a much higher degree of political unity among European states.

The potential recalibration of the US role in European security would inevitably reshape global politics. A more strategically autonomous Europe could attract deeper engagement from countries in the Global South, particularly if it presents itself as an economically strong and politically coherent actor capable of long-term commitments. Greater predictability in European policy making could strengthen confidence among external partners seeking durable strategic relationships.

However, political unity in Europe is far more complex than economic integration. While economic cooperation distributes tangible benefits across member states, deeper political integration would require governments to concede portions of national sovereignty in exchange for collective security and influence. Much like the logic of Thomas Hobbes' social contract, security at the collective level demands a transfer of authority to a higher structure. Whether European states are willing to undertake such a step remains the central question.

Europe is at an important turning point. The changing role of the United States in European security has shown that long-term dependence on one power carries risks. The issue today is not just about defence spending or alliance politics, but about Europe's ability to take responsibility for its own future in a multipolar world. If Europe wants to become an independent centre of power, it must go beyond being only an economic bloc and develop real political unity and military strength. Strategic autonomy cannot be built on speeches alone. It requires coordination, shared commitment, and a willingness to put collective security above narrow national interests. The real challenge for Europe is internal, not external. Its future role in global politics will depend on whether it can act together with clarity and purpose, rather than continue relying on uncertain external guarantees.

Identity Is Security: A Logical Case for NRC and CAA

By Vipul Tamhane

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There is a deceptively simple idea at the heart of both the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA): a nation that does not know who its citizens are cannot protect them. Not economically. Not physically. Not legally. The political arguments which have surrounded these two policies because they involve security rights to national security protection have completely obscured their basic principle which states that identity protection must exist as a separate right. The situation needs better assessment because it requires objective examination. The NRC system establishes a proven Indian citizen registry while the CAA system offers expedited citizenship to non-Muslim refugees from Afghanistan Bangladesh and Pakistan who experienced religious persecution. But understood together, they form a coherent, two-pronged instrument for something India has long needed: identity integrity. And identity integrity, as modern governance and global security frameworks have established beyond doubt, is the foundational requirement for both national security and financial security.

The Shadow Population Problem

India's porous borders, particularly with Bangladesh, have, over decades, allowed a significant undocumented population to settle across border states and beyond. This is not a communal assertion; it is an administrative reality that has been acknowledged across successive governments. The problem with a shadow population is not merely demographic: it is structural. Individuals without verifiable legal identity operate outside the systems that make modern states function, the tax system, the financial compliance system, and the security surveillance system.

Terror networks understand this well. The Pakistani and Bangladeshi cross-border networks together with their sleeper cells and operatives have used identity confusion to establish their presence in various communities. The forged Aadhaar cards and fake PAN numbers together with ghost ration card entries function as operational tools which enable attackers to execute their plans against India. The 2008 Mumbai attacks together with the Samjhauta Express bombing showed India that its security system vulnerabilities represent an opportunity for its external enemies to attack. The NRC closes that crack. The system creates biometric verification through document-linked citizenship verification which provides a solution to terror networks that depend on anonymous operations. The system identifies all individuals who did not register for the program and assigns them to tribunal evaluation which may result in deportation or prosecution under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. The security dividend is significant: intelligence agencies are no longer searching for a handful of actors within millions of unverifiable residents, they are working within a mapped population.

The Financial Crime Connection

Financial regulators and counter-terrorism analysts have known this truth for a long time: monetary regulation requires reliable identification of individuals. The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) establishes international standards which require anti-money laundering (AML) and counter-terror financing (CFT) programs to use identity verification as their core operational component. India's own improvements in AML compliance in recent years have tracked its progress in strengthening Know Your Customer (KYC) systems and developing its capacity for effective customer identification. The NRC is, in essence, a national-scale KYC exercise.

The financial crime linkages are direct and traceable. Undocumented immigrants frequently open multiple bank accounts using forged documents, not because they are, individually, criminals, but because they have no legal alternative. These accounts, however, become attractive instruments for those who are: hawala operators routing illicit cross-border funds, terror financiers moving money through mule accounts, real estate launderers, and tax evaders. A person not on the NRC cannot legally open a bank account, register property, or obtain formal credit. This single restriction chokes an entire ecosystem of financial opacity.

The Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) becomes significantly more enforceable when cross-referenced with a verified citizens' database. Shell companies lose their anonymity. Identity fraud in digital finance becomes harder. The informal economy, which serves as the oxygen supply for financial crime, shrinks as more economic participants are drawn into the formal system. For legitimate small traders and entrepreneurs, many of them from minority communities, this is not an abstraction: it means fewer competitors gaming the system tax-free, and more government revenue available for the welfare programs they depend on.

Redirecting the Nation's Resources to Its Citizens

The economic argument for the NRC functions as a distributive justice argument which serves as its fundamental basis. The Public Distribution System and Ayushman Bharat and PM Jan Dhan Yojana and minority scholarship programs together form India's welfare architecture which aims to assist its most vulnerable citizens. When undocumented non-citizens access these systems through forged documentation, the result is not merely waste; it is a transfer of resources away from the very people the state is constitutionally obligated to serve.

Even conservative estimates show that ghost beneficiaries who include undocumented immigrants cause leakages which cost the Indian exchequer tens of thousands of crores every year. If even a fraction of this leakage is plugged through a clean citizens' register, the fiscal dividend is real and redirectable. That money can go toward education for minority youth through the Maulana Azad Education Foundation, toward NMDFC loans for minority entrepreneurs, toward tribal health infrastructure and Dalit housing schemes. It can go, in short, to India's poorest legitimate citizens, who are disproportionately from minority communities.

The fiscal logic extends further. The undocumented workers who operate in construction domestic work and petty trade sectors do not pay income taxes and make no social security contributions but they use public health services and educational facilities and public infrastructure. The tax-to-GDP ratio increases and debt-to-GDP pressure decreases when the population either becomes formalized through CAA for eligible individuals or gets identified and processed through legal channels. The government achieves financial flexibility to fund security infrastructure and hospital and school projects that benefit its citizens.

CAA: Legal Inclusion as a Security Instrument

The CAA's role in this architecture is often misread. Its humanitarian dimension is real, it provides legal refuge to Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, and Christians who fled documented religious persecution in three neighboring countries. But its security and financial logic is equally important. The existence of stateless people and undocumented individuals makes them an easy target for exploitation by criminal organisations and extremist groups. The CAA establishes a pathway for eligible refugees to obtain legal citizenship status which transforms an undocumented population into a recognized citizen group with legal protections and ability to be monitored. The CAA establishes a distinct legal framework which together with the NRC system enables authorities to separate two groups of people: genuine persecuted refugees who will receive protection and undocumented economic migrants who pose security or fiscal risks and will undergo identification through legal procedures. This distinction matters enormously for security agencies, who are otherwise forced to sift through enormous ambiguity. It also matters for India's legitimate Muslim citizens, who have long suffered the social indignity of being arbitrarily suspected of being Bangladeshi infiltrators, a stigma that an objective, universally applied citizenship register definitively resolves.

The Legitimate Minority Citizen Is the Greatest Beneficiary

There is a fundamental irony in the framing of NRC and CAA as threats to minority citizens. The evidence points in precisely the opposite direction. The indigenous minorities together with Assamese Muslims and Bengali-speaking Hindus and tribal communities in border states such as Assam and West Bengal and Tripura have experienced the most severe effects from unregulated illegal immigration. The undocumented workers who enter the country without authorisation create wage suppression because they compete against legal workers in the labour market. The population changes in the area have resulted in land loss because of changes in how people own and control property. The cross-border elements who intend to harm India have intentionally increased communal tensions between different groups.

A verified NRC restores economic rights to these communities. It tightens labour markets, raising wages for legitimate workers. It clarifies property rights. It removes the fog of demographic ambiguity that has been weaponized against indigenous minorities for decades. And for Muslim citizens who are legitimate Indians, the vast majority, the NRC is an instrument of vindication, not persecution. It provides objective, document-backed proof of citizenship that no official can arbitrarily override. It converts the right to belong from an assertion into a legal fact.

The Binding Argument

National security and financial security are not parallel tracks, they are the same track. A state with leaking welfare systems cannot fund its defense and internal security. A state with opaque identity systems cannot enforce its financial laws. A state that cannot distinguish its citizens from non-citizens cannot protect the former or regulate the latter. The combined implementation of NRC and CAA programs provides a solution which addresses this fundamental problem.

The strategic value of these measures lies in their attempt to re-engineer the relationship between identity, finance, and security. The organisation intends to achieve financial transparency through two methods which include decreasing anonymity and creating permanent records of all residents in the country. The organisation intends to achieve three objectives which include identifying and stopping illegal operations and ensuring all public funds reach their designated recipients and establishing stronger internal security systems for the country. The outcome of their work relies on two main factors which need proper implementation while maintaining accuracy and fairness and all institutional operations. If implemented with these qualities, they represent not a threat to India's minorities, but the most powerful administrative guarantee of their rights that the Indian state has yet offered.

The only losers from a clean citizens' register are those who profit from the absence of one: terrorists who hide in plain sight, financial criminals who launder money through ghost identities, and those who exploit undocumented workers while keeping them in permanent legal limbo. The NRC and CAA provide Indian citizens of all faiths and languages and communities with a simple identification system which enables the Indian government to identify them and provide necessary protection.

How Pakistan Gets Closer to President Trump

By - Vappala Balachandran

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The chaotic US withdrawal from Afghanistan in July-August 2021 during the Joe Biden era, including the “Abbeygate Bombing” on 26 August 2021 resulting in 173 deaths (160 Afghans and 13 US soldiers), is still reverberating, this time through the US law courts.

I had included this incident as one of the major global “intelligence failures” in my book “Intelligence Over Centuries” (2022). It may be recalled that Wall Street Journal (28 October 2021) had concluded, after perusing classified US records, that this situation arose due to “intelligence shortfalls”.

This incident also indicates how Trump prioritises his foreign security policy directions and how much he takes care to impress his MAGA audience by effectively using America’s coercive power to apprehend its enemies.

Trump, after taking over as US President on 20 January 2025, told the US Congress during his joint address on 4 March 2025 that American agencies could arrest Daesh leader Mohammad Sharifullah who was actively involved in the Abbeygate Bombing. He also made appreciative references about the cooperation from Pakistan in making this arrest.

He also used this occasion to attack President Joe Biden’s “inefficient” handling of the Afghanistan withdrawal. He said that he spoke to the families of the service members who were killed on a call before his speech “and they did nothing but cry with happiness.”

Simultaneously the Trump camp claimed that this was one of the priority tasks he had given to his CIA designate John Ratcliffe in January 2025 itself,

who in turn liaised with ISI Director-General Lt. Gen. Asim Malik, and then in a separate meeting with him during the Munich Security Conference.

‘Arab News’ quoted Ratcliffe telling Fox News: “My second day on the job I spoke with the head of Pakistani intelligence....I shared with him that we had intelligence indicating that Jafar was located in the Afghan-Pakistan border region.”

He also told Malik to make the capture of the Daesh commander “a high priority” if Pakistan wanted to work with President Donald Trump and “have good relations with our country. So, we worked with Pakistani intelligence,” Ratcliffe added. “Jafar was apprehended in short order and is in US custody.”

The question is, why did the Biden administration, especially the CIA, fail to fathom the feelings of US soldiers’ families and put pressure on Pakistan to apprehend Sharifullah? That the whole nation was deeply touched by grief was apparent by the headline in National Public Radio’s report on March 8, 2023: “An injured Marine gives searing testimony on the chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan”.

NPR quoted U.S. Marine Corps Sgt. Tyler Vargas-Andrews telling the US House of Representatives’ Foreign Affairs Committee: “My body was overwhelmed from the trauma of the blast. My abdomen had been ripped open. Every inch of my exposed body took ball bearing and shrapnel.” He said no one interviewed him about the attack in the investigation that followed. They felt that “they were abandoned”.

US court records indicated that Mohammad Sharifullah, also known as “Jafar”, had been kept in US-Afghan prison from 2019 until two weeks prior to the Abbey Gate attack. It was not known when he was released and by whom.

However, Islamic State (IS- Daesh) members contacted him as soon as he was released, to help them in the Abbeygate attack. He further received instructions to help IS member Abdul Rahman al-Logari to detonate his suicide vest at Abbey Gate, killing 13 U.S. military service members.

Also important were his previous IS related activities: Sharifullah had participated in over a dozen ISIS-K attacks between 2016 and 2025. In particular, he had conducted prior surveillance and had also transported the suicide bomber on 20 June 2016 for the attack on Canadian embassy in Kabul where Nepali security guards outside were the victims. He was also actively involved in the March 22, 2024, Crocus City Music Hall near Moscow which had killed 151 members of audience.

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The Human Rights Debate

By - Dr. Shrikant Paranjpe

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Helle Lyng, the Norwegian journalist who has suddenly come into limelight with her observation that the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi refuses to entertain questions from journalists or take a press conference, the attention that her social media posts have received have once again brought the role of western media and intellectuals and their views about India to the forefront. The question to the Prime Minister was posed as he was exiting the venue and as such it was unlikely that there would be any response from him. Later at a press conference organised by the Indian Ministry of External Affairs Lyng raised the question of human rights violations in India.

The social media caught up this debate with Lyng being accused of deliberate attempts to embarrass India on the global stage and Lyng defending her confrontational journalism as a product of a country that stands on the number one spot on the World Press Freedom Index.

While the accusations levelled by Lyng are not new, the violent reactions from India on the social media platforms appear to have missed the core issue in their reply. The core issue revolves around two related phenomena: the approach to human rights and the English language press in India. The concept of human rights as has evolved in the post war era and has been enshrined in the Human Rights Declaration has rested on the assumption that political and civil rights and liberties constitute the fundamental foundations of human rights in the world. The concept of democracy or good governance also revolves around the approach to civil and political rights and liberties. This foundation presumes a relatively developed and stable social, political and economic situation in any country. Post-colonial countries were struggling to achieve some degree of development had to confront themselves with different set of problems. For them the demands of socio-economic welfare of the masses were more important in their effort to achieve any degree of development. Consequently, they argued that in terms of human rights the need to satisfy the requirements of food, shelter, clothing, education and health would take priority over the demands of political and civil liberties and rights. The Indian constitution that has considered social welfare as the basis of governance believes in this perception of human rights. The Nehruvian model of development stressed on this, so did the approach to tackle poverty that has been a constant in Indian politics. The efforts at economic liberalisation that began in the nineties had similar goals that are being pursued under the Viksit Bharat agenda. This is not to deny the acceptance of political and civil freedoms, a matter that has been achieved through the system of representation that has been implemented at all levels, from the gram panchayat to the parliament. Unfortunately, India or its intelligentsia has not stressed and 'marketed' through appropriate narratives this approach to human rights that considers food, shelter, clothing, education and health as core human rights followed by political and civil liberties and rights. The Indian elite along with Indian non-state actors continue to accept the western perspective of human rights as the ultimate guide. Interestingly, the Chinese have been far more vocal on this issue and have taken the same stand as India and refused to be cowed down by the western pressures.

The issue of democracy and good governance is closely related to the assertion of human rights. Two observations merit attention: Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's comments of the issue of democratic traditions in India and American Vice President's scathing remarks on European approaches to democracy made at the Munich Security Conference. In his reply to the debates in the Constituent Assembly Dr. Ambedkar noted 'It is not that India did not know democracy. There was a time when India was studded with republics, and even where there were monarchies, they were either elected or limited. They were never absolute. It is not that India did not know Parliaments or Parliamentary Procedure. A study of Buddhist Bhikshu Sanghas disclosed that not only were there Parliaments – for Sanghas were nothing but parliaments- but the Sanghas knew and observed all rules of Parliamentary Procedure known to modern times'. Vice President Vance reminded Europeans that the threat to Europe was not Russia or China or any other external actor. The threat was from within, the retreat of Europe from some of its most fundamental values — values shared with the United States of America. He pointed out that the EU commissars warned citizens that they intended to shut down social media during times of civil unrest the moment they spotted what they judged to be hateful content. He feared that even in Britain, and across Europe free speech was in retreat. He further stated 'I believe deeply that there is no security if you are afraid of the voices, the opinions, and the conscience that guide your very own people. Europe faces many challenges, but the crisis this continent faces right now, the crisis I believe we all face together, is one of our own making. If you're running in fear of your own voters, there is nothing America can do for you'.

He pointed out that one cannot win a democratic mandate by censoring your opponents or putting them in jail. Both these illustrations present a perspective of the reality of the civilizational ethos of India on the one hand and the tragedy of modern Europe on the other.

Finally, it is the question of the sources used by foreign intellectuals to understand India and the Indian media's presentation of what is contemporary India. The key source used by international scholars writing on India has been the English language press emanating from India and the writings of Indian scholars that are put out in various media platforms in English language. One needs to understand the reality of print media and other media platforms that originate from India. At one level there is the English language media and on the other the regional language media. The former has a dedicated clientele that is predominantly urban, middle and upper class, western educated, with a liberal outlook. There is also the upwardly mobile aspirational class that seeks English language education in the belief that that would provide an opening into the global competitive world. Consequently, this media uses the western liberal world view in its presentation of Indian stories. The regional language media, on the other hand does not have to cater to this clientele, it is more likely to provide more realistic ground level information as it has a better access to the grassroot level developments. It is this media that gives you a better understanding of India, a media that tends to be totally ignored by the western intellectuals in their analysis of India. Therein lies the problem.

A Lyng or any other reporter may create a storm on the social media and Indian media may pick up the criticism as it may suit their ideological requirement, but it would not reflect the ground level reality of India that has seen over 90 % voting in an election that ensured that people could vote without fear. Elections are only one parameter of what representative systems bring to the table, the other more critical are the welfare measures that have sought to create a more humane society. Therefore, while elections would constitute the political and civil rights and liberties, the real welfare and therefore good governance would have to be achieved through providing food, shelter, clothing, education and health to all the populace.

Japan and Article 9: From Hiroshima's Memory to Military Reality

By - Dr. Santhosh Mathew

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A nation that once renounced war now stands at the edge of rewriting its identity. Japan, shaped by the ashes of World War II, built its global reputation on peace, restraint, and constitutional idealism. Today, that very foundation is shifting. The winds of change blowing through Tokyo signal more than a policy adjustment. They point to a historic turning point that could redefine Asia's security landscape. Japan's Parliament, the Diet, has moved closer to approving changes to its pacifist Constitution. Both chambers—the House of Councillors and the House of Representatives—support the move. Public sentiment tells a different story. Surveys conducted by Kyodo News reveal that nearly 80 percent of Japanese citizens oppose amending the Constitution. A deep divide has emerged between the political leadership and the people.

At the center of this debate stands Article 9, a clause born out of unimaginable destruction. The atomic bombings of Hiroshima bombing and Nagasaki bombing forced Japan into a moral reckoning. The Constitution that followed rejected war as a sovereign right and ruled out the maintenance of military forces for combat. Article 9 became more than law. It became a symbol of hope in a war-torn world. Japan's strategic environment has transformed rapidly.

The rise of China as a global power has altered regional dynamics. Maritime disputes in the South China Sea continue to intensify. North Korea keeps the region on edge with missile developments. These realities shape the arguments of those calling for constitutional revision. Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi and her allies present a clear case. They argue that Japan must build stronger defence capabilities to protect its sovereignty and contribute to regional stability. Their vision includes transforming Japan's Self-Defence Forces into a more conventional military. The language of deterrence now replaces the language of restraint.

A stronger Japanese military presence could trigger an arms race across East and Southeast Asia. Joint military exercises involving Japan, the United States, and the Philippines near Luzon highlight a growing security alignment. The Indo-Pacific region begins to resemble a high-stakes arena where alliances deepen and rivalries sharpen. The phrase "roller coaster relations" captures the uncertainty shaping the region. Economic factors add another layer to this transformation. Japan once dominated the global economy. In 1994, it accounted for 17.8 percent of global GDP. That share now stands near 3.4 percent. China, in contrast, has surged to nearly 19 percent. This dramatic shift fuels concerns about national decline and global influence. Inside Japan, structural challenges continue to mount. The country faces an aging population and a declining birth rate of around 1.2. Public debt exceeds 200 percent of GDP. Industries struggle to maintain growth. These pressures shape the national mood. Increased defence spending, now nearing 2 percent of GDP, places additional strain on public finances. Budget cuts in healthcare, education, and welfare have sparked protests across the country.

The alliance with the United States plays a decisive role in Japan's strategic thinking. Washington views a stronger Japan as vital to maintaining balance in the Indo-Pacific. Military cooperation between the two nations continues to expand. American bases across Japan, including those in Okinawa, form a critical part of this partnership. This relationship shapes Japan's evolving defence posture. A more capable Japanese military supports broader efforts to counterbalance China's growing influence. The Indo-Pacific strategy of the United States depends on reliable regional partners. Japan fits that role with its technological strength and strategic location. The devastation caused by nuclear warfare left scars that have not faded. More than 300,000 people lost their lives in the atomic bombings. Survivors, known as Hibakusha, endured decades of suffering due to radiation exposure. Their stories continue to serve as powerful reminders of war's human cost. The global movement for nuclear disarmament drew inspiration from Japan's experience. Thinkers such as Bertrand Russell and scientists like J. Robert Oppenheimer reflected deeply on the consequences of atomic weapons. Oppenheimer's recollection of a verse from the Bhagavad Gita during the first nuclear test captured the enormity of that moment.

The decision to allow arms exports marks a significant policy shift. Advanced military equipment, including warships, fighter jets, drones, and missiles, will now be supplied to partner nations. Seventeen countries stand to benefit from these exports in the initial phase. This move reflects Japan's willingness to play a more active role in global security. Countries aligned with Japan welcome its new approach. The Quad grouping—comprising the United States, India, Australia, and Japan—views this shift as strengthening regional stability. China and North Korea interpret it as a sign of containment and respond with caution.

Southeast Asia emerges as a potential flashpoint. Territorial disputes, maritime tensions, and military build-ups converge in this region. Japan's growing involvement could influence the balance of power. The next theatre of war may well take shape in these contested waters. One path preserves the spirit of Article 9 and the moral authority it represents. The other embraces a more assertive role in global security. Both paths carry risks and opportunities. The choices made in Tokyo will resonate far beyond its borders. The idea of a "frozen peace" no longer holds.

The calm that defined East Asia for decades begins to shift. Strategic competition intensifies. Military preparedness gains importance. Diplomatic engagement continues, though under increasing strain. The end of Article 9, if it arrives, will mark more than a constitutional change. It will signal the transformation of Japan from a pacifist state into a proactive security player. This transition will reshape alliances, redefine regional dynamics, and influence global stability. A nation that once chose peace above all now prepares to navigate a world where power and security dominate the conversation. The story of Japan enters a new chapter—one filled with uncertainty, ambition, and far-reaching consequences.

The Power of the Powerless—

By - Dr. Shivshankar Mishra

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The present VUCA environment triggered by US tariff war has spurred the world to think critically and innovatively. Acutely self-centred narcissist US regime is withdrawing from the entire world polity like it is geographically distanced.

What transpired during India's Republic Day Celebrations in Delhi between Indian Government and the European Union leaders needs to be understood in conjunction with the classic risk management analysis by Mr. Mark Carney, the Prime Minister of the northern neighbour of the US, Canada. Mr. Carney's speech on 20 January 2026, at the 56th World Economic Forum at Davos deserves to be archived as a very powerful statement of the rest of the world against the US hegemony in world politics that always monetized relationships to best serve US interests. He talked about building strategic autonomy while maintaining human values of mutual respect. He reminded the US President Trump in his face that the days of old rules-based international order are over and that it's the time of opportunity for the middle powers of the world to unite and work together. World is in the midst of a rupture and not in transition. The multilateral institutions on which the middle powers so far relied – the WTO, the UN, the COP; were designed as an architecture of collective problem solving but they have come under threat. As a result of which many countries are forced to reach a conclusion that they must develop greater strategic autonomy, in energy, food, critical minerals, finance and the supply chains on alternative fora.

They feel it's a pivotal moment that can't allow hegemons to continually monetize relationships with others. The middle powers feel confident that they are no way powerless and can build up a more cooperative, flexible and resilient world order focused on human values, sustainable development, solidarity, sovereignty and respect for other's territorial integrity; unlike the false promises and lies of the US. They contemplate the power of the less power to vest in the policy of truthful and honest relationship. Such new world would distance itself from the US regime of subordination and the power-play of hard power rivalry. It is about a new multi-polar world.

At present India is where Germany used to be after WW-II, Japan after 1960's and China around 1980s. But their leaderships exerted hard to craft out their distinct brands. Germany, Japan and China have become the epitome of industrial grit and leadership calibration. They took innovative steps to grow and develop fast. The stories of their skill centres, upgraded capabilities of local masses, and low-cost production; are now subject matter of case studies in business schools. They are the models of how economic resolve and the political stability, working hand in hand, can produce miracles.

The Mother of all Deals [MOD] with EU has fallen through to represent a multilateral trade pact with as many as 27 countries of Europe. There is already a bilateral deal with Great Britain. That encompasses the entire Europe. If managed and administered well, in a couple of years' time the volume may touch several billion Euros; spurring Indian economy to a voluptuous size and indeed make it one of the top 5 economies of the world. It's a big opportunity and also a bigger challenge for India. The production, productivity, quality standards, and the legal framework of all processes, including the IPR laws, would need quicker paring and synchronization for quickest implementation, so the trade traffic could get moving in faster lane in double quick time. The onus would be on the syncretic calibration of bureaucratic governance system and the industry leadership of the country. That's the call they have to take; lest, it should smack like a multi-course dining plan without the availability of essential ingredients around! At present, India and the EU trade over €180 billion worth of goods and services annually which is visualized to double by 2032. The European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said, "The EU and India make history today, deepening the partnership between the world's biggest democracies. We have created a free trade zone of 2 billion people, with both sides set to gain economically. We have sent a signal to the world that rules-based cooperation still delivers great outcomes. And, best of all, this is only the start – we will build on this success, and grow our relationship to be even stronger".

For India, it is a double whammy where India gains in multi-lateral trade transactions and also in political recognition. India is already in a key position in the BRICS configuration that is now fully convinced that the US-led world economy is a rigged game. It is also the victory of Indian diplomacy of non-aligned strategic independence. But it was not easy to gain such trust overnight. At one point, EU was critical about India's policy to buy oil from Russia but it soon realized the strategic importance of India. It shall be little too early to prepare a full template of all working points; they will evolve but the story board is ready that's the fact. On the flip side, relations between India and China are in an "up cycle". That adds to the value.

There is a behavioural background to these mind changes also. Trump deserves compliments to allow the world to configure a multi-polar power distribution and also deserves sympathies for his mental condition. Numerous mental health professionals and observers in US have suggested that 'Donald Trump exhibits traits consistent with personality disorders, most commonly citing narcissistic personality disorder (NPD) and antisocial personality disorder (NPD). The overlap of the two often leads to Malignant Narcissism (MN), showing signs of narcissism, antisocial behaviour, paranoia, and sadism.'

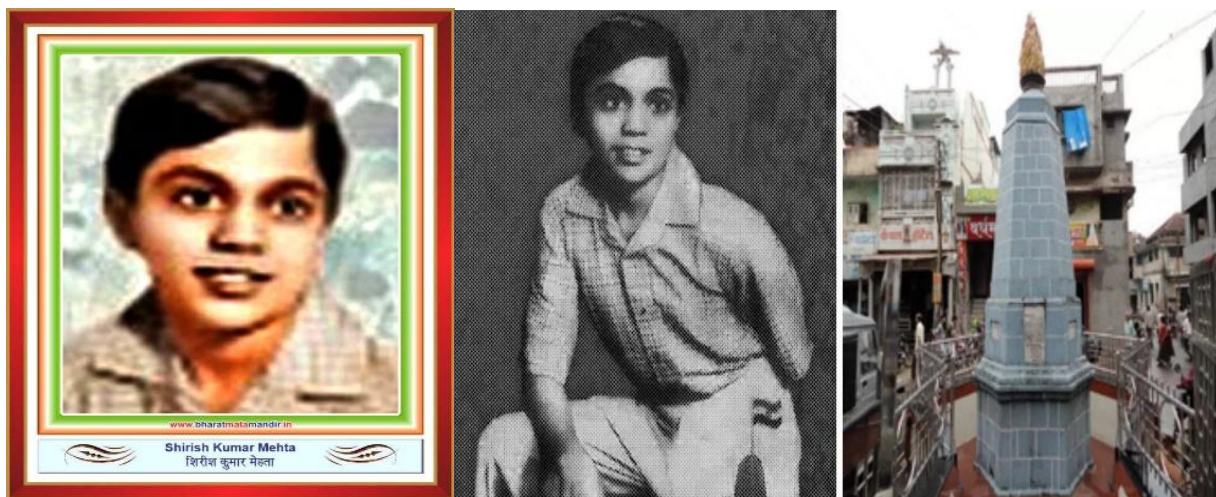
As for President Xi Jinping, he is badly embroiled in his domestic problems with his trusted and powerful generals who are under corruption purge. Xi needs to show an accommodative countenance to the world while maintaining his favourable trade balance. These two behavioural sub normalities are helping Middle power world to group around for self-protection. The MOD needs to be seen in this perspective.

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India is Proud of:

Shirish Kumar Mehta

The Youngest Martyr from Maharashtra in India's Freedom struggle (28 December 1926 – 9 September 1942)



Shirish Kumar Mehta participated in the Quit India Movement in Nandurbar.

This is the story of the youngest martyr of India's struggle for freedom. Shirish Kumar Mehta was born in 1926 in Nandurbar, Maharashtra. As a child, he was inspired by Mahatma Gandhi and Subhash Chandra Bose. The Quit India Movement was started by Mahatma Gandhi in 1942 against the colonial British Raj's political and military control of India. According to the website of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, "During this period, like other villages and towns in the country, the atmosphere of Nandurbar was filled with patriotic fervour and inspiration among the freedom fighters. Shouting slogans and taking out processions became a part of life for many people. In Nandurbar, everyone – right from youngsters to the aged – enthusiastically participated in this movement. On 9 September 1942, exactly one month after Gandhiji started the 'Quit India Movement', Mehta, who was studying in Class VIII then, participated in one such procession." This boy started leading the procession that saw participation by many school children. He started shouting the slogan in his mother tongue, Gujarati, "Nahi Namshe, Nahi Namshe, Nishan Bhoomi Bharatnu." The police had set up barricades around the Mangal Bazaar area, that would fall on the route of the procession. A lathi charge was unleashed on the protestors by the police, when they reach there. Kumar continued holding on to the Tiranga and kept moving forward with the procession. "They faced an unexpected challenge when a policeman intervened, attempting to seize the flag. Undeterred, the children passed the flag to another young participant, frustrating the officer's efforts. The march proceeded with chants of Bharat Mata Ki Jai and Vande Mataram, garnering even more support as it passed the girls' school, where students eagerly joined in," states the website of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav.

The procession culminated near the government office, where Mehta addressed the crowd. The children decided to hoist the flag atop the government building. However, their actions were met with resistance from the police officer, who ordered them to disperse. When the lathis failed to disperse the crowd, the British authorities opened fire. Shirishkumar Mehta was killed on the spot. He was just 15. Along with him Dhansukhlal Wani, Ghanshyam Das, Shashidhar Ketkar, and Laldas also died.

Well ! It may not be correct to say that Shirishkumar Mehta, a boy of 15 years of age just acted at that moment and lost his life, no it was that deep patriotism ingrained in him due to which he did this.

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