

# PERSPECTIVE

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## INDIA-JAPAN TIES : OLD PARTNERS, NEW PRIORITIES

HARSH V. PANT & PRATNASHREE BASU



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MENTORSHIP

The August edition of our PSIR magazine charts India's navigation through a "broken template of geopolitics", defined by coercive American diplomacy and strategic Chinese rivalry. We analyze the direct challenge to India's "strategic autonomy", framing U.S. tariffs and pressure not as mere trade disputes but as a new "imperialism" that treats allies as "vassals"

This external pressure is compounded by "The Asia Challenge". We decode China's geoeconomic strategy to slow India's manufacturing and dissect the "new technocapitalism", an aggressive, deregulatory U.S. model threatening India's IT sector. In this volatile environment, India pivots to "old partners" like Japan, now positioned as a "most reliable ballast".

We also scrutinize India's neighborhood dilemmas, featuring a call for a "progressive" policy on Myanmar that leverages India's democratic values to assist the opposition and create a clear distinction from China. This balancing act extends globally as India faces "collateral damage" from U.S. pressure over Russian oil.

The edition delves into the theoretical roots of these political discomforts. Pratap Bhanu Mehta critiques the "discomforts of modernity", arguing that our moral debates are trapped in "emotivism", mere expressions of sentiment: making social life a field of manipulation. This connects to the "paradox of the nation-state", which demands homogeneity for political unity but relies on diversity for cultural vibrancy, thus structurally creating an "other".

This structural tension manifests in India's internal politics, from the crisis of "hyphenated nationality" to debates on institutional integrity. We probe a "case for judicial introspection" over the 2023 law altering ECI appointments and analyze a new constitutional bill that precariously balances the quest for clean politics against the legal "presumption of innocence".

Through these articles, the August magazine maps the critical tensions reshaping India and its world.



Rahul  
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PSIR OPTIONAL FACULTY  
DIRECTOR & CHIEF MENTOR  
@ ANANTAM IAS



# STAND UP TO TRUMP

SHYAM SARAN

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Donald Trump, who was initially seen as being possibly positive to India in his second term, has instead proved to be a major problem.

- His strategy is more than just trade wars, as he unapologetically **utilizes trade as a tool of geopolitical warfare** to coerce nations into US alignment.
- India has not been targeted only for its surplus in trade and tariffs but also for keeping strategic relationships with Russia, Iran, and BRICS.

Such measures target the very heart of India's policy of strategic autonomy, a characteristic of its foreign policy since independence. Upsetting India-US relations, thus, is far more than a trade controversy; it compromises India's vital interests and independent global stance.

Comparison with China highlights Trump's selective strategy. Despite China's much larger trade surplus against America,

- Trump has not taken harsh approaches, since **China possesses rare minerals** that are critical to US high-technology and defense industries.
- In contrast to India, China resists pressure and prefers to bear economic costs instead of giving in.

This shows Trump's hesitation to confront Beijing, which is in contrast to his belligerence towards India.

To this, India has a number of options.

- Firstly, it must recognize the increasingly adversarial tone in relations with Washington and reject a bid to impose its foreign policy. Trade talks must resume but on mutually acceptable terms.
- Secondly, India should protect worthwhile cooperation with the US in defense, intelligence, and technology.
- Third, Giving in to bullying would invite more pressure; maintaining ground even at a cost will serve long-term interests better.
- Lastly, India's history of spurning the **NPT in 1968, resisting CTBT in 1995, and holding out in climate negotiations** proves its character in standing up for autonomy.

Finally, India has to cherish its credibility among developing countries, founded on morally sound positions. Although opposition to Trump will clip GDP growth by 2%, such a sacrifice is a little price to pay for protecting national interests. If the US pulls out of the Quad summit, India will have to re-evaluate the role of the Quad in its Indo-Pacific strategy.

# WHY A PROGRESSIVE INDIAN POLICY ON MYANMAR IS MORE THAN PLAUSIBLE

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ANGSHUMAN  
CHOUDHURY

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India's foreign policy towards Myanmar should become more progressive and value-based, suggests Angshuman Choudhury. This would serve to not only safeguard India's national interest, but also its regional influence, and create an essential difference from China. Four immediate shifts for the new NDA government to implement:

One, India needs to use its status as a big democracy to aid Myanmar's pro-democracy opposition. By assisting this opposition by capacity-building and sharing of knowledge, India can bypass China in its backyard. Though both India and China sell war hardware to Myanmar, **only India can sell "the spirit of federal cooperation"**

Second, India needs to cease all arms sales to Myanmar's military at once. Indian state-owned enterprises have sold semi-lethal and non-lethal gear to the junta. The weapons are used by the Myanmar military to assault civilians with imprecise lethal tactics.

Third, India must open cross-border humanitarian corridors to aid civilians caught up in the conflict in Sagaing Region, Chin State, and northern Rakhine State. This entails canceling plans to fence the border and **restoring the Free Movement Regime**. The government must also cooperate with local and international aid networks to deliver emergency relief, making sure the aid is not handed out by the junta, which has a disastrous track record in this regard.

Lastly, the government needs to desist from holding and deporting Myanmar asylum seekers. These people, several of whom have been deported from Manipur and Assam, are refugees who have escaped violence and must be treated as refugees, even though **India is yet to ratify the 1951 Refugee Convention**.

## ANGSHUMAN CHOUDHURY SUGGESTS:

### 1. AID DEMOCRACY:

- CAPACITY-BUILDING
- KNOWLEDGE SHARING
- "FEDERAL COOPERATION SPIRIT"

### 3. STOP ARMS SALES:

- CEASE ALL MILITARY SALES
- NO SEMI/NON-LETHAL GEAR
- PREVENT CIVILIAN HARM

## INDIA'S MYANMAR POLICY

### 2. HUMANITARIAN CORRIDORS

- OPEN BORDERS (SAGAING, SAING, CHIN, RAKHAN)
- CANCEL FENCING PLANS
- RESTORE FREE MOVEMENT REGIME
- COOPERATE WITH AID NETWORKS
- CIRCUMVENT JUNTA CONTROL

### 4. PROTECT ASYLUM SEEKERS

- DESIST FROM DEPORTATIONS
- TREAT AS REFUGEES: ESCAPED VIOLENCE (MANIPUR, ASSAM)

# AGAINST IMPERIALISM

PRATAP BHANU  
MEHTA

It would be a big mistake for India to think of its commerce talks with the United States as an exclusively trade issue. There is a loud **"accede to America lobby"** in India's higher circles contending that India and the U.S. can be useful allies, that India requires internal economic reform, and that the nation should comply with a global "capitalist reset" to prevent falling behind.

Yet these arguments do not see the current moment as an intensely imperial moment. The U.S. government, led by President Trump, is not merely recasting capitalism in a direction toward a new, containable form that includes **equitable protectionism or novel social safeguards.**

Rather, the U.S. is acting like a 19th-century imperialism. It insists other countries reduce their tariffs to zero while it retains its own, effectively instituting an asymmetric system. It employs threats to force nations to purchase certain American products, shields its own subsidized farming while expecting others to overthrow their policies, and ignores agreed-upon regulations in favor of discretionary practices.

This is also the chief barrier to tackling climate change, aiming instead to grow a fossil fuel economy. It constantly intrudes into other nations' domestic rules, from technology to legal proceedings, and employs its military power for extractive mercantilism. It treats allies with disdain, since the U.S. wants vassals, not partners. Global institutions that offer global public goods are systematically being dismantled.

This alleged reset is in reality a move towards a more coercive political order that speeds oligarchy, promotes speculation, and depends upon the naked coercion of other countries. The American model is not new but the eventual form of the most deals-based, **oligarchic inclinations of the previous system.** Surrendering to this new American imperial state in the guise of reform or realism would be a violation of India's honor and interest, and also harmful to the world's future.

# INDIA'S PRESENCE AMID A BROKEN TEMPLATE OF GEOPOLITICS

T.S TIRUMURTI

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World geopolitics is in disarray, India's alliances with its significant allies have strained in recent developments. For example, while in **Operation Sindoor**, India's strategic partners were not prepared to condemn Pakistan for sheltering terror groups. Although India's firm response to terror camps in Pakistan, the United States of America under President Donald Trump took credit for the ceasefire. Following the incident, Pakistan Field Marshal Asim Munir was invited to have dinner with Trump. In addition, the U.S. has been insensitive towards India's security interests by attributing its counter-terrorism and regional stability efforts to Pakistan. This has led to a rapid erosion of mutual trust.

Trump-planted obstacles in front of India. On the same day that the **India-U.S. collaboration, the NISAR satellite was launched**, Trump imposed a **25% tariff on India**. Trump even threatened a rising tariff on India's Russian oil purchase and asked American companies to avoid investment in India. America has also acted against Indian interests in Bangladesh and is **destabilizing India's northeast by posturing in Myanmar**. The European Union (EU) has also been concerned about India's energy security through imports by sanctioning India's Vadinar Refinery, a Russian company's possession.

China's move also concerns us, as China has escalated activity in India's backyard. It is propounding new alignments to **exclude India and has promoted Mandarin names for locations inside Arunachal Pradesh**. China is building its biggest dam near the Indian border in Tibet, along the Yarlung Zangbo river (the Brahmaputra). China is also shrinking India's supply lines, taking advantage of its trade surplus with India.

In response to these testings, India has begun to depart from the broken template of geopolitics and is voicing protest against the U.S. and EU targeting of India. India has to abandon its policy of being a passive onlooker of international conflicts and become more assertive in order to continue its strategic autonomy. India's economic and technological growth is directly connected to its geopolitical power today. Therefore, India must lead in global affairs to receive similar support from its allies.

# THE NEW TECHNO-CAPITALISM

C RAJA MOHAN

In **1975, the Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE)** was a pioneering collaboration between the US National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). It used an American satellite to **transmit instructional programmes to over 2,400 Indian villages**. This endeavour was for the United States an expression of **"scientific internationalism,"** the belief that technology could be used to establish peace and prosperity through international collaboration. But this idealism was soon dispelled by the 1974 nuclear test by **India, and Washington started to worry about non-proliferation**. It would take three decades to regain bilateral trust. Attempts at resuscitating cooperation reached their peak with the **2023 introduction of the Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (ICET)**.

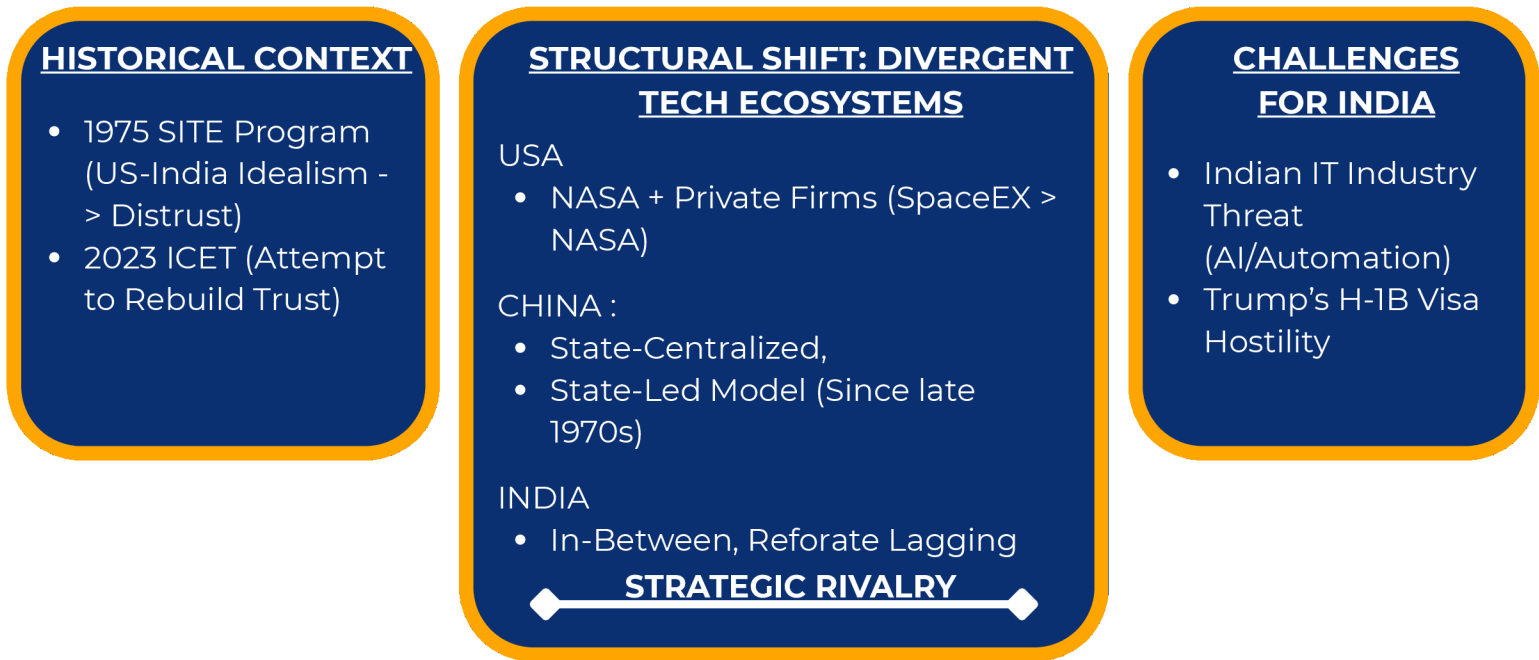
But more structurally, however, a new challenge has emerged: the increasingly divergent directions of Indian and American technology ecosystems. Though there was **private sector investment in the SITE program**, the American technology landscape has since undergone a significant transformation. NASA now shares space with private firms like SpaceX, which launches more than the government space agency. The US technology industry not only accelerated innovation but also gave America a strategic edge during the past two decades.

China, on the other hand, has followed a state-centralized, state-led model of technological development since the late 1970s. Huge scientific research spending has brought China to a leading position in terms of global technological strength, particularly in AI and space technology. India's own path lies somewhere in between. Recent reforms have brought more dynamism into India's space program, but Delhi is still far from bringing its private sector fully into action.

The world tech environment is being remade by the US developments. The Trump administration has introduced sweeping plans on AI and cryptocurrency that represent a new vision of "techno-politics". In contrast to President Biden, who attempted to regulate Big Tech, Donald Trump has left it to its own devices, redefining the American state as an **"enthusiastic enabler"** and not a regulator. This new "techno-capitalism" philosophy is characterized as unapologetically post-liberal, aggressively nationalist, and ferociously deregulatory. The AI policy of the administration is focused on tearing down regulatory walls and unlocking hundreds of billions of dollars of investment. The newly passed **"GENIUS Act"** on cryptocurrency is intended to shore up the US dollar as the world's reserve currency and push back on mounting demands for "de-dollarization".

At the ideological core of this revolution is Peter Thiel, a venture capitalist who is a supporter of Trump's tech agenda. He argues that genuine innovation comes from entrepreneurs free of liberal-democratic shackles. This perspective combines libertarian individualism with a robust nationalism that sees China as the main technological rival. The **"tech brologarchy," in which Silicon Valley mandarins and Washington march together in a bid for technological dominance for strategic benefit.**

These changes will heavily affect India. The Indian IT industry is under serious threat with AI now starting to automate most services, which can render mainstream jobs obsolete. **Trump's increasing hostility towards H-1B visas also threatens India's digital workforce.** For India, the imperatives are alike: it must revamp its domestic technology sector, increase investment in scientific research, and integrate private enterprise more effectively into national strategies of innovation. It needs to get its industry, labor force, and regulatory institutions ready for a new age of technological change.



**GLOBAL TECH SHIFT: US-INDIA-CHINA DIVERGENCE & "TECHNO-CAPITALISM"**

**TRUMP'S : TECHNO-POLITICS:**

- Enthusiastic Enabler
- Post-Liberal, National, Nationalist, Deregulatory
- AI Policy (Tear Down Walls)
- GENIUS Act (Shore up USD)
- Peter Thiel: Ideological Core

**IMPERATIVES FOR INDIA**

- Revamp Domestic Tech
- Increase Scientific Investment
- Integrate Private Enterprise
- Prepare Industry, Labor, Institutions

# DECODING CHINA - THE LESSONS FOR A VULNERABLE INDIA

SHASHI THAROOR

The latest withdrawal of more than 300 Chinese engineers from iPhone manufacturing plants of Foxconn in India is a deliberate geo-economic move by Beijing. This is part of a grand strategy intended to slow down India's ascending manufacturing aspirations and **ensure China's economic leadership in a "unipolar Asia"**.

China's multi-pronged strategy seeks to restrict the flow of high-end technology and maintain India's reliance on Chinese inputs.

- The summoning of specialist technocrats with irreplaceable knowledge is an intentional roadblock to the flow of knowledge.
- At the same time, China has blocked exports of the rare earths such as gallium and germanium, imposed informal restrictions on the export of the essential capital and solar gear to India.

These limitations are normally introduced by way of non-formal channels such as administrative holdups, thus becoming hard to challenge but efficient in undermining supply networks and inducing insecurity among Indian manufacturers.

These measures are motivated by China's serious domestic issues.

- An ageing population
- a housing crisis
- poor internal consumption

have left China heavily dependent on export revenues to sustain economic advance and cover essential spending such as domestic security and defense outlays.

Its persistent **industrial overcapacity** forces it to strongly suppress prices in overseas markets, strangling competition to protect its economic interests. Beijing thereby perceives any possible manufacturing rival like India as an existential threat.

China's industrial superiority is systematic, with dominance of key industries such as AI, 6G communications, and electric vehicles, where it also dominates global supply chains. **India's manufacturing ecosystem, in sharp contrast, is in its infancy, with infrastructure deficits and bureaucratic obstacles weighing it down.** India is still excessively dependent upon imports of critical components such as chips, semiconductors, and sensors. From Beijing's point of view, its action cancels out possible "noise" from India while it deepens relationships with allies elsewhere. In the end, India's lesson is that it has to do so internally by concentrating on intrinsic development to actually compete on the world stage.

# HYPHENATED NATIONALITY AND THE PARADOX OF THE NATION STATE

SWATAHSIDDHA

SARKAR

Recent incidents involving the harassment and deportation of migrant workers from West Bengal, who were accused of being illegal Bangladeshi migrants, expose underlying tensions of belonging within the Indian nation-state. This issue is part of a broader discourse on "hyphenated nationality," where the "Indianness" of communities like Muslims, Indian Nepalis, and Sri Lankan Tamils is questioned, rendering them "metics" or insecure citizens. This phenomenon is pan-South Asian, mirrored by the status of Muhajirs in Pakistan and Madhesis in Nepal.

As philosopher **Etienne Balibar** noted, the modern nation is founded on **allegiance to a "sacred heritage,"** a logic that simultaneously assimilates and excludes. It presumes that an individual's ethnicity is inescapably tied to an external ethnic homeland, for example, connecting Indian Muslims to Pakistan or Madhesis in Nepal to India.

Migrant workers' citizenship is questioned due to ethnic and linguistic bias.

Nation-states create exclusion by demanding cultural homogeneity.

Legal identity often clashes with social acceptance in multicultural nations.

The Westphalian nation-state model ("one nation one state") presents an inherent paradox: it requires diversity for economic and cultural vibrancy but demands homogeneity for political unity and national identity. This tension inevitably produces an "other." Postcolonial theorist **Homi K. Bhabha** frames this as a clash between "**pedagogy**" (the official laws and narratives of belonging) and "**performative strategy**" (the lived, everyday practice of identity).

For the Bengali laborers, the performative act of speaking their language in Hindi-speaking regions overpowered the pedagogy of their legitimate legal documents. Citizenship in post-colonial nations requires both legal recognition by the state and ethical or moral acceptance by society. The workers face a crisis where negative social narratives override their legal status.

This demonstrates that such exclusion is not mere political opportunism but a structural contradiction of the nation-state. The very mechanism that creates national belonging by intertwining ethnic, territorial, and political identity also, by definition, creates exclusion, highlighting the model's inadequacy for multicultural societies.

# WILL INDIA CAVE IN TO U.S. PRESSURE ON RUSSIAN OIL?

SUHASINI HAIDAR

On August 6, U.S. President Donald Trump said that a 25% punitive tariff on Indian goods will be imposed because India is buying Russian oil, which will be effective on August 27. This tariff is additional to 25% reciprocal tariffs that have started from August 7 after the U.S.-India negotiators have been unable to strike a Free Trade Agreement.

India made no overt action against the U.S. tariffs yet. Its response has been in the guise of a chain of statements. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) **criticized the U.S. and EU for "targeting" India for Russian oil while they continue to pursue their own business with Russia.** The MEA described the U.S. actions as "extremely unfortunate" and "unreasonable". Prime Minister Narendra Modi suggested that trade talks broke down on agricultural market access, demonstrating that India has a difficult choice to make regarding allowing concessions on market access or skipping Russian oil

The tariffs can be suspended. The summit between President Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin will be conducted on August 15. If a pact for the termination of the war in Ukraine is signed, **President Trump has the "modification authority" to cancel the sanctions against India.** India's MEA has welcomed the planned summit. Secondly, the visit of a U.S. trade delegation to Delhi on August 25 can result in a mini-trade agreement, which can slash the tariffs.

India brought in very little Russian oil before February 2022. But after the EU blocked Russia, India began purchasing discounted Ural crude. 35-40% of Indian imports came from Russian oil by May 2023 and made Russia its largest supplier. This cooperation has saved India an estimated \$13 billion up to 2024. The energy cooperation is also deep, with Indian PSUs investing over \$5 billion in Russian oil fields and Russian oil behemoth Rosneft holding a 49% stake in India's Nayara Energy. It would be politically as well as economically daunting for the government to succumb to American pressure. It is a **policy u-turn** from 2018-2019, when India had yielded to pressure from America to stop importing oil from Iran and Venezuela.

Mr. Trump's actions could undermine the India-U.S. relationship, crafted over a quarter-century of cooperation. Delhi is therefore stepping up to strengthen its strategic autonomy in response. Senior officials are making overtures to Moscow, and PM Modi is also set to meet Chinese President Xi Jinping. The success of Mr. Modi and Mr. Trump in mending ties ahead of the Quad summit in November will be decisive.

# INDIA-JAPAN TIES - OLD PARTNERS, NEW PRIORITIES

HARSH V. PANT &  
PRATNASHREE BASU

At a time of transition in global geopolitics, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's August 29 Japan visit is a grave matter of bilateral and international concern. The visit comes at a time when India-China relations are tentatively thawing, while there is increasing uncertainty regarding New Delhi's engagement with a Trump White House that appears to be shifting India away.

The focal point of the visit is **Japan's pledge of ¥10 trillion (approximately \$68 billion) of investment in India over the next 10 years**. The mega project is to boost infrastructure, manufacturing, clean energy, and technology partnership, symbolizing Japan's interest in India's growth in the long run. The tie-up involves sharing state-of-the-art technology such as the E10 series Shinkansen for the Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train project.

Strategically, the two nations will update their **2008 Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation to remain in line with modern times**. There will be a new Economic Security Initiative that includes key areas like semiconductors, strategic minerals, and pharma to allow India to diversify supply chains. Besides, there will be a more robust digital partnership that now includes artificial intelligence and startup ecosystems. These initiatives put India-Japan relations at the forefront of technological and security collaboration within the continent, underlining their collective commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific.

The timing of the visit is significant as PM Modi is scheduled to participate in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit in China soon after his meetings in Tokyo. This back-to-back outreach is one demonstration of India's strategic balancing, proof that it can have a relationship with a reliable friend like Japan and a rival like China without the one in one nation affecting the other. Defence and economic security are the priority with Tokyo, while with Beijing, the tensions must be managed.

This balancing is even more important with the unpredictability of the Trump administration having cast doubt on the reliability of the United States as an ally. Trump's second term could reverse years of improvement in the New Delhi-Washington relationship, built up by successive governments from George W. Bush through to Joe Biden. The future path of the Quad is also in doubt, since its success has always depended on sustained U.S. commitment, which today is uncertain.

Lastly, the Tokyo visit is less concerned with short-term gains and more concerned with showing India's steady strategic hand. It demonstrates that India is ready to ride U.S. volatility, keep channels open with China, and fortify long-term partnerships with like-minded regional players. With Washington's resolve wavering and Beijing remaining an adversary, **Japan becomes India's "anchor partner"**. Tokyo offers stability, resources, and a shared vision of strategy rooted in democratic values, and is thus India's "most reliable partner" in the time of geopolitical turbulence.

# INDIA–JAPAN STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP: NAVIGATING GEOPOLITICAL SHIFTS

## CONTEXT

- Modi Japan visit (Aug 29) during shifting geopolitics.
- India-China thaw; US-India uncertainty (Trump).
- Before SCO China meet → strategic balancing.

## BALANCING ACT

- Manage Japan (ally) + China (rival) ties separately.
- Defence/economy with Tokyo; tension control with Beijing.
- US unpredictability makes balance vital; Quad uncertain.

## ECONOMIC PILLAR

- Japan: ¥10 trn (\$68 bn) for infra, energy, tech.
- Bullet train (E10 Shinkansen).
- Long-term growth + tech sharing.

## SECURITY & DIPLOMACY

- Update 2008 Security Declaration.
- New Economic Security Initiative: chips, minerals, pharma.
- Boost digital, AI, start-ups.
- Goal: free, open Indo-Pacific.

## JAPAN – INDIA: ANCHOR PARTNER

- Stable, democratic partner amid US, China shifts.
- Offers stability, resources, shared values.
- India’s “reliable partner.”

## CHALLENGES

- US commitment uncertain under Trump
- China remains an adversary
- Need to translate agreements into tangible outcomes.
- Sustaining momentum and political will on both sides is key.



# THE CHALLENGE IN ALASKA

C RAJA MOHAN

A crucial summit is underway in Alaska between American President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin, the latter's first visit to United States soil in a decade. The negotiations, excluding Ukraine, revolve around the war and overall US-Russia relations with far-reaching implications for Eurasian security. India has a vested interest in the results, incurring a 25% US tariff on its exports as a result of its imports of Russian oil.

It is a provocative political gesture on the part of Trump, considering twenty years of animosity in Washington towards Russia, driven by NATO's expansion to the east, the annexation of Crimea in 2014, and the invasion of eastern Ukraine in 2022.

Trump is acting from his worldview, which is motivated by an old ambition to ease relations with Russia, **his self-image as a "peace president,"** and an inclination to associate peace with profit. This "peace-for-business" strategy entails offers for business openings, including organized oil flows and Arctic collaboration, in return for de-escalation

But the road to peace is beset with obstacles. The format of the summit, refusing Ukraine and marginalizing Europe, calls into question its legitimacy. The central talks are multifaceted, surrounding five interlocking issues: a ceasefire, territorial conflicts, European security architecture, sanctions relief, and enforcement mechanisms. Their interests differ: Moscow seeks to prevent NATO expansion, **Kyiv demands sovereignty,** Europe is divided and does not want to be bypassed, and Beijing is concerned with a US-Russian reconciliation that could redirect attention to Asia.

For India, a Washington-Moscow reconciliation is typically to be welcomed, since the Russia-West confrontation has traditionally made China and Pakistan more powerful. But India has been made "collateral damage" in Trump's approach, targeted with tariffs meant to corner Moscow. Relief is far from guaranteed even if the summit is a success, since Trump sees tariffs as a valuable political tool. The piece ends on a lesson for New Delhi: **it cannot assume any great power and should develop independent relations with all of them, and not get into their rivalries.**


# THE DISCOMFORTS OF MODERNITY

PRATAP BHANU  
MEHTA


**Alasdair MacIntyre** was one of the most prominent 20th-century philosophers to give a robust critique of modernity. In his seminal work, *After Virtue*, he argued that **contemporary moral debates proceed as though "emotivism" is true**. Emotivism is the hypothesis that moral judgments are merely expressions of individual sentiment.

It is with this grounding that endless moral disputations are produced, since there is no common rational standard upon which differences may be resolved. Thus, the distinction between real persuasion and manipulation is eliminated, and all **social life becomes tantamount to manipulation**. It also feeds the perpetual outrage of politics; since there can be no objective truth, demonstrations tend to mobilize supporters rather than convince adversaries.


MacIntyre argued that liberalism, which appears to be a solution, does not work because such terms as "rights" also do not share a rational justification and are fictions. MacIntyre saw three powerful social archetypes in contemporary modernity: the aesthete, the therapist, and the manager. He was particularly harsh on managerial experts and claimed their knowledge claims are usually a pretence for social control and are based on precarious foundations.




Moral judgments today are based on emotion, not reason.



Liberal ideas like "rights" lack rational basis.



The aesthete, therapist, and manager define modern society.



Modernity breeds moral chaos and manipulation.

Although a strong critic of liberalism, MacIntyre was anti-authoritarian and did not advocate a political agenda. He assumed that all contemporary ideologies that attempt to remedy modernity's flaws, like Marxism or contemporary conservatism, eventually contain the very issues they are attempting to transcend. He characterized our state as a "new dark age" but cautioned against pessimism, labeling it a luxury we cannot afford in hard times.

# A CASE FOR JUDICIAL INTROSPECTION

KALEESWARAM RAJ

In 2023, the Indian government enacted a new law that changed the way members of the Election Commission of India (ECI) are appointed. This law was enacted to override a Supreme Court ruling of the case **Anoop Baranwal v. Union of India (2023)**.

In Anoop Baranwal's case, the Supreme Court had ordered that the

- Chief Justice of India (CJI) should be included in the committee for appointing Election Commissioners.
- The reason behind this was to take the process of appointment out of the **"exclusive hands of the executive"**
- And prevent a "pliable ECI" which would have its bias towards the ruling party.

The intent was to strengthen the ECI as a standalone "fourth branch" entity to assist democracy.

The 2023 law turned this on its head by removing the CJI from the committee of selection and adding a Cabinet Minister nominated by the Prime Minister.

This was challenged in the court, and a plea was sought to put the law in abeyance.

In a subsequent case, though, **Dr. Jaya Thakur and others v. Union of India (2024)**, a Supreme Court bench led by Justice Sanjiv Khanna rejected this appeal. The court ruled that **it would not do so because a law has a "presumption of validity"**.

This ruling allowed an ECI appointed by the new process to oversee the 2024 elections. This was a Supreme Court failure to uphold its own previous judgment. In order that this may be set right and democracy restored, the 2023 legislation must be repealed, and the process of selection as held in the **Baranwal case re-established**. A fresh ECI, appointed by a committee consisting of the CJI, would then need to be appointed to make inquiries into suspected electoral maladies.

# THE ASIA CHALLENGE

C RAJA MOHAN

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's trip to Tokyo and Tianjin during the upcoming Asian tour is a watershed moment for Indian diplomacy. The trip aims to infuse new energy into the India-Japan relationship while nudging the China relationship towards normalization in a soft way. This diplomacy comes under extra international scrutiny after recent, unanticipated tension in the India-US relationship.

The issues with China are profound and multifaceted.

- India's industry remains massively reliant on China, a weakness exposed by Beijing's blockades of critical supplies.
- Its economic reliance is supplemented by an **astronomical trade deficit, China's surplus standing at \$100 billion.**

Moreover, India's participation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is controversial.

- The organisation is involved in internal contradictions and has been reluctant to censure Pakistan over terrorism due to China's veto power and Delhi has criticized its stand.

Piling on to the complexity, what was a good bargain for procuring low-priced Russian oil is now a point of contention with the West.

While the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) lies inactive, Beijing has worked to further extend its role by bringing India's neighbors under the umbrella of the SCO. China is also **developing its own minilateral diplomatic structures**, becoming the most significant external actor in South Asia. This action coupled with reviving US ambitions for the region has the potential to undermine Delhi's strategic hegemony.

Unlike the intricacies of the SCO summit, the Tokyo visit is aimed at deepening the strategic partnership with Japan, with fresh ventures in defence, trade, and technology on the anvil. This is coming at a time when traditional US allies such as Japan are looking to increase self-sufficiency and diversified connections in the face of policy changes in Washington. Therefore, whereas the Tianjin summit might have soaring language, real progress is likely to be forthcoming from deepening the strategic alliance with Tokyo.

# THE NEW CONSTITUTION BILL, THE NEED FOR A BALANCING ACT

SAMAYETA BAL

The one proposed Constitution (One Hundred and Thirtieth Amendment) Bill, 2025, laid before the Lok Sabha on August 20, 2025, seeks to deal with criminality in the political class. The bill prescribes that the Prime Minister, Chief Ministers, and other Ministers have to resign or get **automatically disqualified if they continue to remain in custody for a continuous duration of 30 days for a criminal offence** punishable with five or more years' imprisonment. Although the Bill is a significant move towards cleaner politics, it raises some constitutional and political issues.

The Bill finds its foundation in Articles 75, 164, and 239AA of the Constitution and is backed by Supreme Court rulings on constitutional morality like in **S.R. Bommai vs Union of India**. But its key provision threatens to negate the legal principle of **"presumption of innocence" contained in Article 21**.

In contrast to [Section 8\(3\) of the Representation of the People Act](#), which disqualifies members of parliament only on conviction, this Bill envisages removal for detention alone. The double mechanism of removal on the advice of a Prime Minister/Chief Minister or otherwise automatically also comes with the risk of political abuse, enabling the leaders to protect friends or attack opponents

CONSTITUTIONAL CASES:

## **S.R. Bommai vs Union of India:**

Underscored constitutional morality as a guiding principle for democratic institutions.

## **Manoj Narula vs Union of India:**

Addressed the ethics of ministerial appointments, stating individuals with serious criminal charges should not hold executive power.

## **Lily Thomas vs Union of India:**

Held that a lawmaker is immediately disqualified upon conviction, striking down a three-month appeal window.

With **46% of successful candidates in the 2024 general election having reported criminal cases, change is needed urgently**. A more complex model, however, is required. Proposed options are connecting removal to the court's framing of charges, an independent review panel, or resorting to interim suspension of ministerial responsibilities. The ambit of the Bill should similarly be made more precise to pertain only to grave offenses of moral turpitude and corruption. The Joint Parliamentary Committee is directed to retool the Bill so that it balances the need for ethical governance with the protections of due process.

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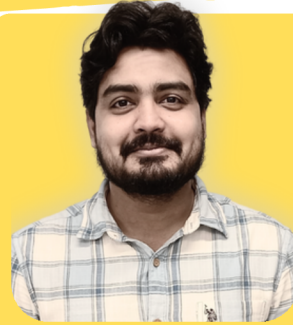
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