



IRAN PROTESTS
SPREAD GLOBALLY
AMID CRACKDOWN



RUSSIA LAUNCHES
FRESH STRIKES IN
UKRAINE CONFLICT



NORTH AMERICA
HIT BY SEVERE
WINTER STORM



GLOBAL LEADERS
MEET AT WORLD
ECONOMIC FORUM
IN DAVOS



MIDDLE EAST
TENSIONS RISE
OVER US-IRAN RIFT



2026 WINTER
OLYMPICS
CONCLUDE WITH
GRAND CEREMONY



CHINA WARNS
TAIWAN OVER
MILITARY DRILLS

FEBRUARY 2026

THE CILIRD WAY

PREDICTIONS

THE UNPREDICTABILITY OF THE CURRENT WORLD ORDER



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LETTER FROM THE EDITORIAL BOARD

With the release of this edition of our newsletter, we are delighted to be a part of a dialogue that is growing and ever so relevant to this day. What started as a group idea has instead emerged at a meaningful dialogue platform within the realm of International Law, Relations, and Diplomacy.

This mirrors our dedication to change and a sense of continuity. These articles that are being featured today tackle the current global events, the rising legal issues, and the story that is being crafted in the world of diplomacy that make up the world that we are living today.

As the editorial board, we take the stance that knowledge is an entity that flourishes when shared. It is not the intent of this newsletter to simply be an assortment of writings, but also an opportunity to mull, discuss, and indulge our curiosities. It is our hope that this newsletter inspires readers to challenge accepted knowledge, investigate alternative perspectives, and stay abreast of the ever-changing realm of global governance.

We remain grateful for the support of all those who contributed towards this edition. Your encouragement is what drives us to improve and revamp this space with every edition.

We eagerly await continuing this journey together.

-The Editorial Board

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his southern bank,
have been wrecked



A collage of torn paper with the text "CILIRD 2026" and "WAY" repeated in various orientations. The text is in a serif font, and the paper has a textured, torn edge appearance. The background is a solid light beige color.

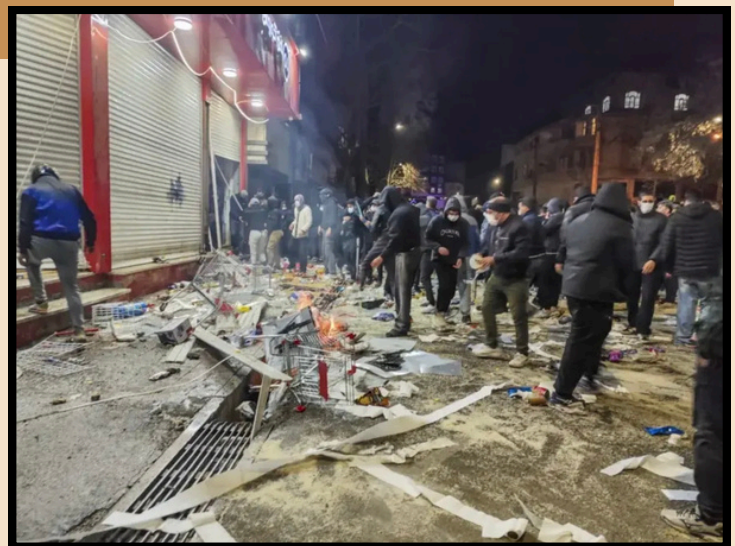
IRAN'S NATIONWIDE INTERNET BLACKOUT AMID ESCALATING PROTESTS

IRAN IMPOSED A NEAR-TOTAL NATIONWIDE INTERNET BLACKOUT FOLLOWING THE RAPID ESCALATION OF ANTI-GOVERNMENT PROTESTS ACROSS MAJOR CITIES, INCLUDING TEHRAN, ISFAHAN, AND SHIRAZ. THE DEMONSTRATIONS WERE INITIALLY TRIGGERED BY WORSENING ECONOMIC CONDITIONS, SOARING INFLATION, CURRENCY DEPRECIATION, AND UNEMPLOYMENT BUT QUICKLY EVOLVED INTO BROADER POLITICAL DISSENT CHALLENGING STATE AUTHORITY.

DIGITAL RIGHTS MONITORING GROUPS REPORTED THAT AUTHORITIES DISRUPTED MOBILE DATA SERVICES, RESTRICTED SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS, AND THROTTLED BROADBAND CONNECTIVITY IN AN ATTEMPT TO PREVENT COORDINATION AMONG PROTESTORS. THE BLACKOUT RAISED SERIOUS CONCERNS REGARDING VIOLATIONS OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION UNDER INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAW. CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS AND DIASPORA GROUPS ALLEGED EXCESSIVE USE OF FORCE BY SECURITY PERSONNEL, WITH REPORTS OF MASS DETENTIONS AND CASUALTIES.

THE CRISIS REPRESENTS ONE OF THE MOST SUSTAINED EPISODES OF DOMESTIC UNREST IN IRAN IN RECENT YEARS. IT ALSO UNFOLDS AT A SENSITIVE GEOPOLITICAL MOMENT, AS TEHRAN SIMULTANEOUSLY NAVIGATES NUCLEAR DIPLOMACY AND REGIONAL POWER COMPETITION. THE GOVERNMENT'S RELIANCE ON DIGITAL SHUTDOWNS REFLECTS A BROADER GLOBAL PATTERN IN WHICH STATES DEPLOY INTERNET RESTRICTIONS AS A TOOL OF CRISIS MANAGEMENT.

FROM AN INTERNATIONAL LAW PERSPECTIVE, THE SITUATION REVIVES DEBATES ON DIGITAL SOVEREIGNTY VERSUS UNIVERSAL HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTIONS. THE BLACKOUT'S IMPLICATIONS EXTEND BEYOND DOMESTIC POLITICS; INSTABILITY IN IRAN DIRECTLY AFFECTS ENERGY MARKETS, GULF SECURITY ARCHITECTURE, AND REGIONAL ALIGNMENTS. AS EXTERNAL ACTORS MONITOR DEVELOPMENTS CLOSELY, THE INTERSECTION OF INTERNAL DISSENT AND INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMACY REMAINS A DEFINING FEATURE OF IRAN'S POLITICAL TRAJECTORY IN 2026.



IMF WORLD ECONOMIC OUTLOOK PROJECTS UNEVEN GLOBAL GROWTH

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THE JANUARY 2026 EDITION OF THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND'S WORLD ECONOMIC OUTLOOK PROJECTED GLOBAL GROWTH AT APPROXIMATELY 3.3 PERCENT FOR THE YEAR, SIGNALLING RELATIVE RESILIENCE DESPITE PERSISTENT STRUCTURAL PRESSURES.

WHILE INFLATION HAS MODERATED IN SEVERAL ADVANCED ECONOMIES, GROWTH TRAJECTORIES REMAIN UNEVEN.

EMERGING MARKETS ARE EXPECTED TO OUTPERFORM ADVANCED ECONOMIES, DRIVEN BY DEMOGRAPHIC ADVANTAGES AND INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT. HOWEVER, TRADE FRAGMENTATION, GEOPOLITICAL TENSIONS, AND SUPPLY CHAIN RECONFIGURATION CONTINUE TO POSE RISKS TO GLOBAL ECONOMIC STABILITY. THE IMF WARNED THAT RISING DEBT LEVELS IN LOW-INCOME COUNTRIES MAY CONSTRAIN FISCAL SPACE AND EXACERBATE INEQUALITY.

THE REPORT EMPHASISED THAT POLICY COORDINATION REMAINS CRITICAL IN PREVENTING ECONOMIC FRAGMENTATION. TRADE BARRIERS AND INDUSTRIAL POLICY COMPETITION, PARTICULARLY IN TECHNOLOGY AND GREEN ENERGY SECTORS ARE RESHAPING GLOBAL COMMERCE PATTERNS. THE REORIENTATION OF SUPPLY CHAINS AWAY FROM OVERDEPENDENCE ON SINGLE REGIONS REFLECTS A NEW ERA OF STRATEGIC ECONOMIC POLICY.

FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS SCHOLARS, THE OUTLOOK UNDERSCORES THE LINK BETWEEN MACROECONOMIC STABILITY AND GEOPOLITICAL ORDER. ECONOMIC RESILIENCE INFLUENCES DIPLOMATIC LEVERAGE, ALLIANCE COHESION, AND DOMESTIC POLITICAL STABILITY. AS STATES PRIORITISE ECONOMIC SECURITY, THE TRADITIONAL LIBERAL TRADE ARCHITECTURE FACES MOUNTING STRESS. JANUARY'S ECONOMIC PROJECTIONS THEREFORE REFLECT MORE THAN FISCAL STATISTICS; THEY REVEAL DEEPER TRANSFORMATIONS IN GLOBAL GOVERNANCE, ECONOMIC INTERDEPENDENCE, AND STRATEGIC COMPETITION.



INTENSIFICATION OF THE RUSSIA–UKRAINE CONFLICT DURING WINTER

JANUARY 2026 WITNESSED RENEWED INTENSITY IN THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT, PARTICULARLY THROUGH TARGETED STRIKES ON UKRAINE'S ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE. AMID SEVERE WINTER CONDITIONS, MISSILE AND DRONE ATTACKS DISRUPTED ELECTRICITY GRIDS, WATER SUPPLY SYSTEMS, AND HEATING NETWORKS IN SEVERAL REGIONS. THE HUMANITARIAN IMPLICATIONS WERE IMMEDIATE, WITH CIVILIANS FACING BLACKOUTS DURING FREEZING TEMPERATURES.

UKRAINE'S LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISED THE STRIKES AS ATTEMPTS TO WEAKEN CIVILIAN MORALE AND STRAIN NATIONAL RESILIENCE. WESTERN ALLIES REAFFIRMED MILITARY AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT, INCLUDING ADVANCED AIR DEFENCE SYSTEMS AND RECONSTRUCTION ASSISTANCE. HOWEVER, DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS TOWARD A CEASEFIRE REMAINED LIMITED, WITH BOTH SIDES MAINTAINING ENTRENCHED POSITIONS.

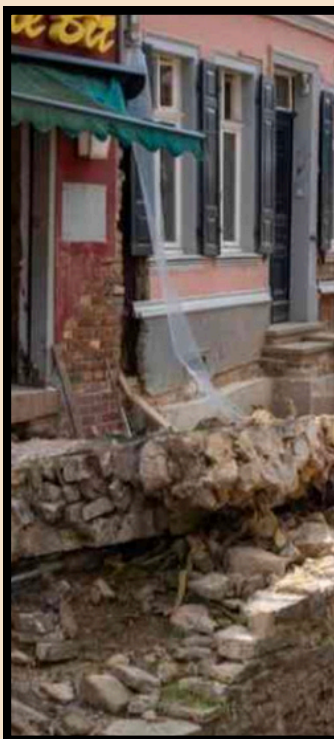
THE CONFLICT'S CONTINUATION UNDERSCORES ITS TRANSFORMATION FROM A REGIONAL WAR INTO A BROADER GEOPOLITICAL CONTEST. NATO MEMBER STATES CONTINUE TO NAVIGATE BALANCING DETERRENCE WITH ESCALATION MANAGEMENT, WHILE GLOBAL FOOD AND ENERGY MARKETS REMAIN SENSITIVE TO DEVELOPMENTS ON THE BATTLEFIELD.

FROM A LEGAL STANDPOINT, RENEWED INFRASTRUCTURE ATTACKS HAVE SPARKED DISCUSSIONS REGARDING COMPLIANCE WITH INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW, PARTICULARLY THE PRINCIPLES OF DISTINCTION AND PROPORTIONALITY. ALLEGATIONS CONCERNING CIVILIAN HARM AND INFRASTRUCTURE TARGETING HAVE PROMPTED CALLS FOR INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATIONS.

AS THE WAR APPROACHES ANOTHER YEAR OF SUSTAINED HOSTILITIES, JANUARY'S DEVELOPMENTS DEMONSTRATE THE PERSISTENCE OF HIGH-INTENSITY WARFARE AND THE FRAGILITY OF DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS. THE BROADER EUROPEAN SECURITY ORDER REMAINS IN FLUX, WITH LONG-TERM IMPLICATIONS FOR DEFENCE SPENDING, ALLIANCE STRUCTURES, AND STRATEGIC DETERRENCE.



ESCALATING CLIMATE EXTREMES HIGHLIGHT URGENCY OF ADAPTATION



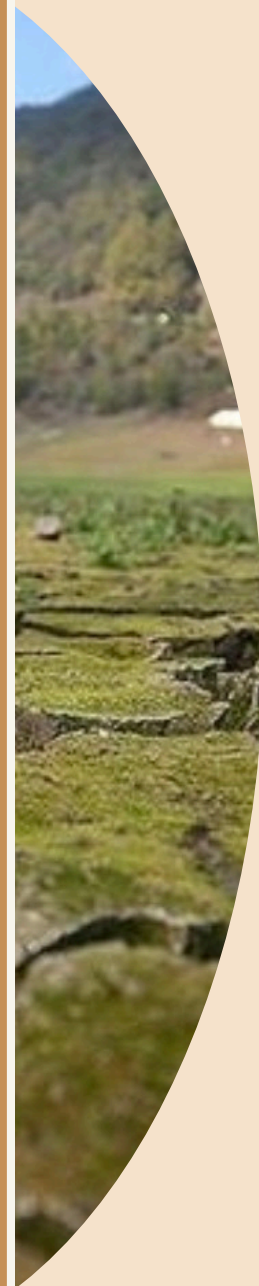
JANUARY 2026 RECORDED MULTIPLE EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS ACROSS CONTINENTS, REINFORCING SCIENTIFIC WARNINGS ABOUT ACCELERATING CLIMATE VOLATILITY. SEVERE FLOODING IN PARTS OF SOUTHERN AFRICA DISPLACED THOUSANDS, WHILE RECORD WINTER HEAT ANOMALIES WERE REPORTED IN SEVERAL NORTHERN HEMISPHERE REGIONS. LANDSLIDES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA AND WILDFIRE OUTBREAKS IN OTHER REGIONS COMPOUNDED HUMANITARIAN PRESSURES.

THE WORLD METEOROLOGICAL COMMUNITY REITERATED THAT RISING GLOBAL TEMPERATURES ARE INTENSIFYING WEATHER UNPREDICTABILITY, INCREASING BOTH FREQUENCY AND SEVERITY OF DISASTERS. VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES REMAIN DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECTED, PARTICULARLY IN DEVELOPING NATIONS WITH LIMITED ADAPTIVE INFRASTRUCTURE.

THE EVENTS RENEWED CALLS FOR ACCELERATED CLIMATE FINANCE COMMITMENTS AND IMPROVED EARLY-WARNING SYSTEMS. DESPITE INTERNATIONAL PLEDGES UNDER GLOBAL CLIMATE FRAMEWORKS, ADAPTATION FUNDING GAPS PERSIST. MANY DEVELOPING COUNTRIES ARGUE THAT LOSS-AND-DAMAGE MECHANISMS REQUIRE GREATER OPERATIONALISATION.

FROM A DIPLOMATIC PERSPECTIVE, CLIMATE SECURITY INCREASINGLY INTERSECTS WITH MIGRATION, FOOD INSECURITY, AND CONFLICT DYNAMICS. ENVIRONMENTAL STRESSORS ARE EMERGING AS SIGNIFICANT DRIVERS OF DISPLACEMENT AND ECONOMIC FRAGILITY.

JANUARY'S CLIMATE DEVELOPMENTS REINFORCE THE URGENCY OF TRANSLATING MULTILATERAL COMMITMENTS INTO TANGIBLE RESILIENCE MEASURES. AS 2026 PROGRESSES, CLIMATE GOVERNANCE REMAINS CENTRAL TO INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, AND LONG-TERM GLOBAL STABILITY.





CENTRAL ASIAN CONNECTIVITY INITIATIVES EXPAND

UZBEKISTAN AND PAKISTAN SIGNED MULTIPLE COOPERATION AGREEMENTS AIMED AT STRENGTHENING TRADE CORRIDORS, DEFENCE COLLABORATION, AND TRANSPORT CONNECTIVITY. THE AGREEMENTS FOCUS ON EXPANDING TRANSIT ROUTES LINKING CENTRAL ASIA TO SOUTH ASIAN MARKETS, POTENTIALLY ENHANCING REGIONAL ECONOMIC INTEGRATION.

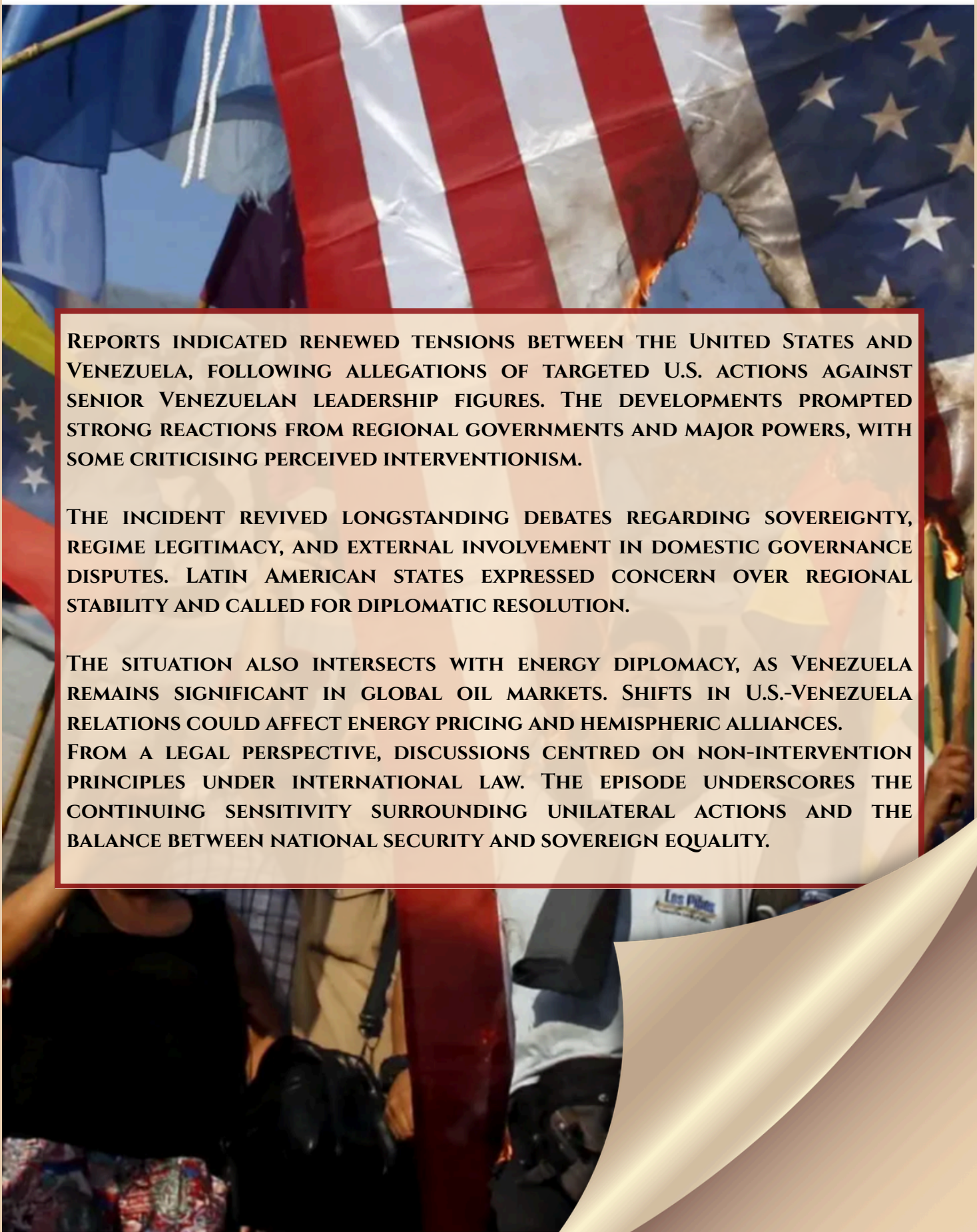
THESE INITIATIVES ALIGN WITH BROADER EFFORTS TO DIVERSIFY TRADE NETWORKS AND REDUCE DEPENDENCY ON SINGULAR TRANSIT ROUTES. INFRASTRUCTURE COOPERATION, INDUSTRIAL PARTNERSHIPS, AND ENERGY CONNECTIVITY FORM THE CORE OF THE BILATERAL FRAMEWORK.

THE AGREEMENTS REFLECT CENTRAL ASIA'S GROWING STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE AMID SHIFTING GLOBAL ALIGNMENTS. REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY PROJECTS ARE INCREASINGLY SHAPED BY OVERLAPPING INTERESTS OF MAJOR POWERS, INCLUDING CHINA, RUSSIA, AND EMERGING REGIONAL ACTORS.

FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS OBSERVERS, THESE DEVELOPMENTS ILLUSTRATE THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY AND GEOPOLITICAL BALANCING. INFRASTRUCTURE CORRIDORS NOT ONLY FACILITATE COMMERCE BUT ALSO SHAPE STRATEGIC INFLUENCE.

THESE AGREEMENTS THEREFORE SIGNIFY MORE THAN BILATERAL COOPERATION. THEY HIGHLIGHT EVOLVING REGIONAL DYNAMICS IN EURASIAN GEOPOLITICS AND THE GROWING SALIENCE OF CONNECTIVITY DIPLOMACY.

U.S.-VENEZUELA TENSIONS REIGNITE DIPLOMATIC DEBATE



REPORTS INDICATED RENEWED TENSIONS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND VENEZUELA, FOLLOWING ALLEGATIONS OF TARGETED U.S. ACTIONS AGAINST SENIOR VENEZUELAN LEADERSHIP FIGURES. THE DEVELOPMENTS PROMPTED STRONG REACTIONS FROM REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS AND MAJOR POWERS, WITH SOME CRITICISING PERCEIVED INTERVENTIONISM.

THE INCIDENT REVIVED LONGSTANDING DEBATES REGARDING SOVEREIGNTY, REGIME LEGITIMACY, AND EXTERNAL INVOLVEMENT IN DOMESTIC GOVERNANCE DISPUTES. LATIN AMERICAN STATES EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER REGIONAL STABILITY AND CALLED FOR DIPLOMATIC RESOLUTION.

THE SITUATION ALSO INTERSECTS WITH ENERGY DIPLOMACY, AS VENEZUELA REMAINS SIGNIFICANT IN GLOBAL OIL MARKETS. SHIFTS IN U.S.-VENEZUELA RELATIONS COULD AFFECT ENERGY PRICING AND HEMISPHERIC ALLIANCES. FROM A LEGAL PERSPECTIVE, DISCUSSIONS CENTRED ON NON-INTERVENTION PRINCIPLES UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW. THE EPISODE UNDERSCORES THE CONTINUING SENSITIVITY SURROUNDING UNILATERAL ACTIONS AND THE BALANCE BETWEEN NATIONAL SECURITY AND SOVEREIGN EQUALITY.

RENEWED U.S.–IRAN NUCLEAR NEGOTIATIONS IN GENEVA

RENEWED DIPLOMATIC ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND IRAN TOOK PLACE IN GENEVA, MARKING ONE OF THE MOST CONSEQUENTIAL NON-PROLIFERATION EFFORTS IN RECENT YEARS. THE TALKS AIM TO PREVENT FURTHER ESCALATION OF IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAMME AND EXPLORE A FRAMEWORK FOR RESTORING VERIFIABLE LIMITS ON URANIUM ENRICHMENT. WHILE BOTH SIDES HAVE PUBLICLY MAINTAINED CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM, SUBSTANTIAL DIFFERENCES REMAIN REGARDING SANCTIONS RELIEF, VERIFICATION MECHANISMS, AND THE SEQUENCING OF COMMITMENTS.

THE NEGOTIATIONS OCCUR AGAINST A COMPLEX BACKDROP. IRAN CONTINUES TO FACE DOMESTIC UNREST AND ECONOMIC PRESSURE LINKED TO INTERNATIONAL SANCTIONS, WHILE REGIONAL TENSIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST REMAIN HEIGHTENED. THE UNITED STATES, ALONGSIDE EUROPEAN PARTNERS, HAS EMPHASISED THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY (IAEA) MONITORING AND TRANSPARENCY MEASURES TO REBUILD TRUST.

FROM AN INTERNATIONAL LAW PERSPECTIVE, THE TALKS REPRESENT A REAFFIRMATION OF DIPLOMACY OVER UNILATERAL ESCALATION. THE BREAKDOWN OF EARLIER NUCLEAR ARRANGEMENTS DEMONSTRATED THE FRAGILITY OF MULTILATERAL AGREEMENTS IN POLARISED GEOPOLITICAL ENVIRONMENTS. THE RENEWED DIALOGUE SUGGESTS RECOGNITION THAT MILITARY CONFRONTATION WOULD DESTABILISE NOT ONLY THE GULF REGION BUT ALSO GLOBAL ENERGY MARKETS.

THE OUTCOME OF THESE NEGOTIATIONS CARRIES IMPLICATIONS FAR BEYOND BILATERAL RELATIONS. A BREAKTHROUGH COULD STRENGTHEN THE GLOBAL NON-PROLIFERATION REGIME, WHILE FAILURE RISKS ACCELERATING REGIONAL ARMS COMPETITION. AS DISCUSSIONS CONTINUE, GENEVA ONCE AGAIN SERVES AS A FOCAL POINT FOR HIGH-STAKES DIPLOMACY SHAPING INTERNATIONAL SECURITY.



MEDITERRANEAN MIGRATION CRISIS INTENSIFIES

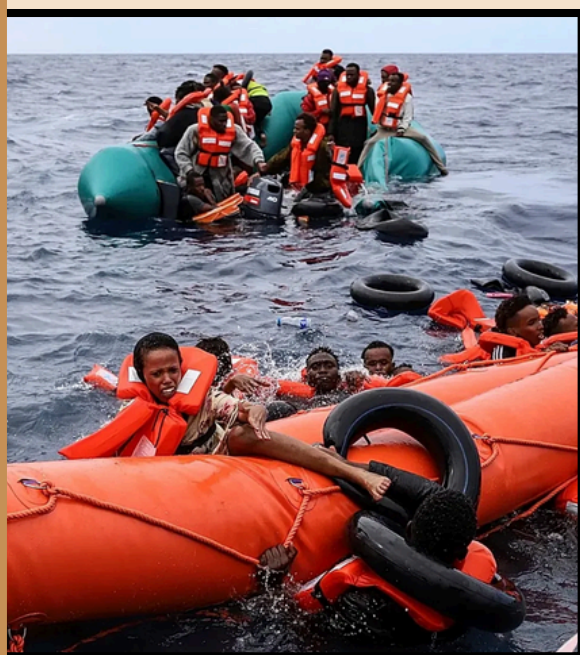
WORLD WITNESSED A SHARP RISE IN MIGRANT FATALITIES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA, WITH HUMANITARIAN AGENCIES REPORTING OVER 600 DEATHS OR DISAPPEARANCES SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR. SEVERAL VESSELS CAPSIZED NEAR GREEK AND ITALIAN WATERS, HIGHLIGHTING THE PERSISTENT DANGERS FACED BY INDIVIDUALS FLEEING CONFLICT, POVERTY, AND ENVIRONMENTAL INSTABILITY.

THE CRISIS HAS REIGNITED DEBATE WITHIN THE EUROPEAN UNION OVER MIGRATION GOVERNANCE. WHILE SOUTHERN MEMBER STATES ADVOCATE FOR STRONGER BURDEN-SHARING MECHANISMS AND ENHANCED SEARCH-AND-RESCUE OPERATIONS, OTHERS PRIORITISE BORDER ENFORCEMENT AND DETERRENCE STRATEGIES. THE ABSENCE OF A UNIFIED POLICY RESPONSE CONTINUES TO STRAIN EU COHESION.

INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS HAVE STRESSED THE LEGAL OBLIGATION OF STATES UNDER MARITIME AND REFUGEE LAW TO PROTECT INDIVIDUALS IN DISTRESS AT SEA. THE PRINCIPLE OF NON-REFOULEMENT REMAINS CENTRAL TO ONGOING DISCUSSIONS, PARTICULARLY REGARDING RETURNS TO UNSAFE TERRITORIES. HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCATES ARGUE THAT RESTRICTIVE POLICIES MAY PUSH MIGRANTS TOWARD INCREASINGLY DANGEROUS ROUTES.

BEYOND EUROPE, THE MIGRATION SURGE REFLECTS DEEPER STRUCTURAL DRIVERS, INCLUDING PROTRACTED CONFLICTS IN PARTS OF AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST, AS WELL AS CLIMATE-INDUCED DISPLACEMENT. FEBRUARY'S DEVELOPMENTS UNDERSCORE THE INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF HUMANITARIAN CRISES AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY.

THE MEDITERRANEAN REMAINS A CRITICAL THEATRE WHERE INTERNATIONAL LAW, DOMESTIC POLITICS, AND HUMANITARIAN IMPERATIVES CONVERGE. WITHOUT COMPREHENSIVE MULTILATERAL COOPERATION ADDRESSING BOTH RESCUE OPERATIONS AND ROOT CAUSES, THE REGION IS LIKELY TO WITNESS CONTINUED TRAGEDY AND POLITICAL TENSION



UNITED NATIONS CALLS FOR REFORM OF GLOBAL SECURITY ARCHITECTURE

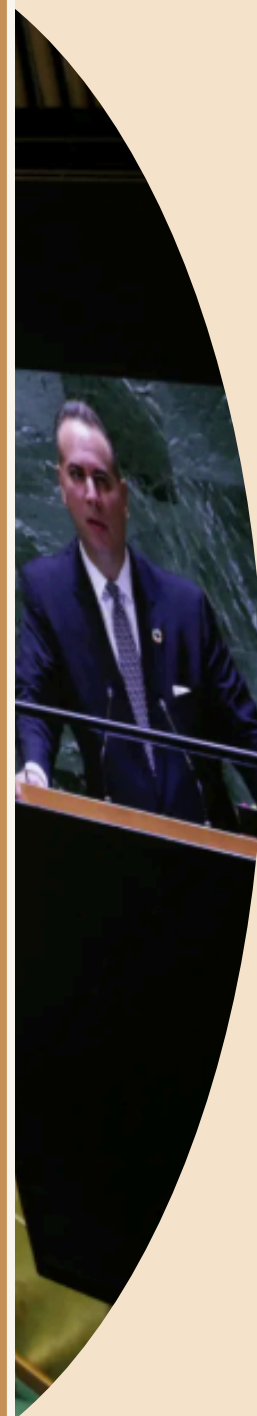


UN SECRETARY-GENERAL ANTÓNIO GUTERRES ISSUED A STRONG APPEAL FOR REFORMING THE GLOBAL SECURITY ARCHITECTURE TO ADDRESS CONTEMPORARY THREATS. SPEAKING AT A HIGH-LEVEL FORUM, HE EMPHASISED THAT INSTITUTIONS CREATED IN THE AFTERMATH OF WORLD WAR II ARE STRUGGLING TO RESPOND EFFECTIVELY TO CYBER WARFARE, CLIMATE-DRIVEN INSTABILITY, AND MULTIPOLAR GEOPOLITICAL RIVALRY. GUTERRES HIGHLIGHTED THE URGENT NEED TO REVITALISE MULTILATERALISM AND ENHANCE PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY MECHANISMS. REFORM OF THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL, LONG DEBATED BUT RARELY ADVANCED, WAS IMPLICITLY REFERENCED AS CENTRAL TO RESTORING CREDIBILITY AND REPRESENTATIVENESS. EMERGING POWERS CONTINUE TO ARGUE THAT CURRENT STRUCTURES DO NOT REFLECT TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY REALITIES.

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ALSO STRESSED THE GROWING NEXUS BETWEEN CLIMATE CHANGE AND CONFLICT, NOTING THAT ENVIRONMENTAL STRESSORS ARE INCREASINGLY LINKED TO DISPLACEMENT AND INSTABILITY. TECHNOLOGICAL THREATS INCLUDING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE WEAPONISATION AND CYBER INTRUSIONS WERE CITED AS NEW FRONTIERS REQUIRING INTERNATIONAL REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS.

FEBRUARY'S ADDRESS RESONATED AMID ONGOING CONFLICTS AND STALLED DIPLOMATIC PROCESSES WORLDWIDE. CRITICS OF THE CURRENT SYSTEM ARGUE THAT VETO POLITICS AND GEOPOLITICAL FRAGMENTATION HAVE WEAKENED COLLECTIVE SECURITY RESPONSES.

WHILE STRUCTURAL REFORM REMAINS POLITICALLY COMPLEX, THE SPEECH SIGNALLED MOUNTING INSTITUTIONAL AWARENESS THAT INCREMENTAL ADJUSTMENTS MAY NO LONGER SUFFICE. THE DEBATE OVER GLOBAL GOVERNANCE REFORM IS LIKELY TO INTENSIFY AS STATES CONFRONT SHARED TRANSNATIONAL CHALLENGES REQUIRING COORDINATED SOLUTIONS.



EUROPEAN UNION DIVIDED OVER NEW RUSSIA SANCTIONS

DIVISIONS WERE WITNESSED WITHIN THE EUROPEAN UNION AS MEMBER STATES STRUGGLED TO REACH CONSENSUS ON AN ADDITIONAL SANCTIONS PACKAGE TARGETING RUSSIA. THE PROPOSED MEASURES AIMED TO TIGHTEN RESTRICTIONS ON FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS, ENERGY EXPORTS, AND DUAL-USE TECHNOLOGIES AMID ONGOING HOSTILITIES IN UKRAINE.

HOWEVER, CERTAIN MEMBER STATES EXPRESSED ECONOMIC CONCERNS, CITING ENERGY DEPENDENCY AND DOMESTIC POLITICAL PRESSURES. THE IMPASSE HIGHLIGHTED THE CHALLENGE OF MAINTAINING UNITY WITHIN A DIVERSE BLOC FACING VARIED NATIONAL INTERESTS. WHILE MANY GOVERNMENTS ARGUED THAT SUSTAINED PRESSURE IS ESSENTIAL TO DETER AGGRESSION, OTHERS ADVOCATED FOR CALIBRATED MEASURES TO AVOID FURTHER ECONOMIC STRAIN.

THE SANCTIONS DEBATE UNDERSCORES BROADER QUESTIONS ABOUT EUROPEAN STRATEGIC AUTONOMY AND DECISION-MAKING MECHANISMS. THE REQUIREMENT FOR UNANIMITY IN FOREIGN POLICY DECISIONS OFTEN COMPLICATES SWIFT COLLECTIVE ACTION. AT THE SAME TIME, THE EU HAS MAINTAINED SIGNIFICANT SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE THROUGH FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AND HUMANITARIAN AID. FROM AN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS PERSPECTIVE, FEBRUARY'S DEVELOPMENTS ILLUSTRATE THE BALANCING ACT BETWEEN SOLIDARITY AND SOVEREIGNTY WITHIN MULTILATERAL INSTITUTIONS. THE CREDIBILITY OF SANCTIONS AS A DIPLOMATIC INSTRUMENT DEPENDS LARGELY ON COHESION AND ENFORCEMENT CONSISTENCY. THE OUTCOME OF INTERNAL NEGOTIATIONS WILL SHAPE NOT ONLY EU-RUSSIA RELATIONS BUT ALSO THE BROADER PERCEPTION OF EUROPE'S CAPACITY TO ACT AS A UNIFIED GEOPOLITICAL ACTOR IN TIMES OF CRISIS.





CONCLUSION OF THE MILANO-CORTINA 2026 WINTER OLYMPICS

THE 2026 WINTER OLYMPICS CONCLUDED IN FEBRUARY IN MILAN AND CORTINA D'AMPEZZO, ITALY, MARKING ONE OF THE MOST GLOBALLY VISIBLE EVENTS OF THE YEAR. DESPITE LOGISTICAL CHALLENGES AND COST-RELATED DEBATES DURING PREPARATION PHASES, THE GAMES WERE ULTIMATELY DEEMED SUCCESSFUL BY INTERNATIONAL SPORTING AUTHORITIES.

BEYOND ATHLETIC COMPETITION, THE OLYMPICS FUNCTIONED AS A PLATFORM FOR SOFT POWER DIPLOMACY. LEADERS AND DIPLOMATS ENGAGED IN BILATERAL MEETINGS ON THE SIDELINES, REINFORCING THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL SPORTING EVENTS AS ARENAS FOR INFORMAL DIALOGUE. CULTURAL EXCHANGE AND SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATION REMAINED CENTRAL TO THE EVENT'S DIPLOMATIC SIGNIFICANCE.

HOWEVER, THE GAMES ALSO OCCURRED AGAINST A BACKDROP OF GEOPOLITICAL TENSION, RAISING QUESTIONS ABOUT ATHLETE NEUTRALITY, POLITICAL EXPRESSION, AND THE INTERSECTION OF SPORT AND INTERNATIONAL POLITICS. THE INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE REITERATED ITS COMMITMENT TO MAINTAINING POLITICAL NEUTRALITY WHILE ACKNOWLEDGING THE BROADER GLOBAL CONTEXT.

FEBRUARY'S OLYMPICS DEMONSTRATED HOW MEGA-EVENTS CONTINUE TO OPERATE AT THE CROSSROADS OF CULTURE, ECONOMICS, AND DIPLOMACY. AS GLOBAL AUDIENCES CONVERGE AROUND SPORT, STATES LEVERAGE SUCH PLATFORMS TO PROJECT NATIONAL IDENTITY AND FOSTER ENGAGEMENT, EVEN AMID BROADER GEOPOLITICAL UNCERTAINTY.

UNITED KINGDOM ANNOUNCES EXPANDED MILITARY AID TO UKRAINE



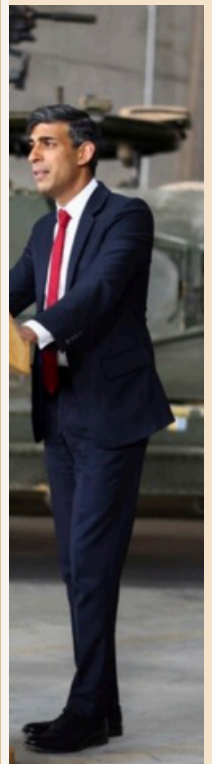
THE UNITED KINGDOM ANNOUNCED AN ADDITIONAL £540 MILLION MILITARY ASSISTANCE PACKAGE FOR UKRAINE, REINFORCING WESTERN SUPPORT AMID ONGOING HOSTILITIES. THE PACKAGE REPORTEDLY INCLUDES ADVANCED AIR DEFENCE SYSTEMS, AMMUNITION SUPPLIES, AND LOGISTICAL SUPPORT AIMED AT STRENGTHENING UKRAINE'S DEFENSIVE CAPABILITIES.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT REFLECTS SUSTAINED TRANSATLANTIC COMMITMENT DESPITE WAR FATIGUE IN CERTAIN QUARTERS. BRITISH OFFICIALS EMPHASISED THAT CONTINUED ASSISTANCE IS ESSENTIAL TO UPHOLD EUROPEAN SECURITY PRINCIPLES AND DETER FURTHER AGGRESSION. THE MOVE ALIGNS WITH BROADER NATO EFFORTS TO ENHANCE COLLECTIVE DEFENCE READINESS.

CRITICS CAUTION THAT PROLONGED MILITARY SUPPORT WITHOUT PARALLEL DIPLOMATIC INITIATIVES MAY ENTRENCH CONFLICT DYNAMICS. NONETHELESS, POLICYMAKERS ARGUE THAT CREDIBLE DEFENCE CAPACITY IS NECESSARY TO CREATE CONDITIONS CONDUCTIVE TO NEGOTIATION.

FROM A STRATEGIC STANDPOINT, THE AID PACKAGE HIGHLIGHTS THE EVOLVING SECURITY ARCHITECTURE IN EUROPE. DEFENCE SPENDING ACROSS THE CONTINENT HAS INCREASED SIGNIFICANTLY SINCE THE CONFLICT'S ESCALATION, RESHAPING LONG-TERM MILITARY PLANNING AND ALLIANCE COORDINATION.

FEBRUARY'S DEVELOPMENT REAFFIRMS THAT THE UKRAINE CONFLICT REMAINS CENTRAL TO EUROPEAN AND GLOBAL SECURITY DISCOURSE. THE TRAJECTORY OF MILITARY SUPPORT AND DIPLOMATIC ENGAGEMENT WILL CONTINUE TO INFLUENCE THE BROADER BALANCE OF POWER IN THE REGION



INTERNATIONAL
Law

WEAPONIZATION OF ECONOMIC SANCTIONS: LEGAL TOOL OR POLITICAL INSTRUMENT?

~ ISHITA JAIN

Economic sanctions are also one of the most popular means of international relations in the modern world order. To control the actions of the government, institutions or individuals, states and international organizations often put limitations on trade, financial dealings or access to the world markets. Sanctions are commonly described as a non-violent alternative to war, which entails a coercive, non-violent mechanism of imposing international standards or penalties of illegal behavior. Their increased significance in international relations, though, has produced a major debate: are economic sanctions the main legal means of international law or political means to serve strategic purposes? Although sanctions may have a very definite legal foundation in some situations, their unilateral application is increasingly prevalent, which indicates that they are often applied with political intentions and blurs the distinction between legal execution and geopolitical coercion.



Legally, sanctions like economic sanctions are best explained by their application on a multilateral basis by the United Nations Security Council. Article 45 of the Charter of the UN delegates to the Security Council the authority to impose measures that do not entail the use of force in the form of a trade embargo, freezing of assets, or a travel ban to uphold or restore peace and security in the international community. These sanctions are binding to all member states and are a part of the collective security system which was created after the Second World War. Due to the fact they are enforced by an internationally recognized institution that is representing the entire global community, these sanctions are usually seen as valid legal measures, but not a coercive action on its own. They are usually intended to deal with such threats as armed conflict, terrorism, or nuclear proliferation, and usually accompany diplomatic talks or peacebuilding. In this regard, sanctions may serve as the means of international governance, and it will be possible to implement norms without the use of military power.

The international law also so permits states to take retaliatory steps in reaction to internationally wrongful acts, subject to certain conditions. Theoretically, unilateral sanctions can be included in this category when they are supposed to stimulate the adherence to the law and are balanced and can be reversed. This implies that sanctions do not necessarily become criminal just because they are not issued by multilateral entities but individual states. The question of the legality of unilateral sanctions is much more complicated in reality, however. The issue of proportionality, necessity, and even the danger of violating the sovereignty of the targeted state are raised. In cases where sanctions are used to compel alterations in the political structures within a country or even foreign policies, they can be perceived as forceful interference of affairs within the internal capacity of a state. This has led to the grey zone in which the legality has been questioned and is usually subject to political interpretation due to the lack of a universally accepted legal framework governing unilateral sanctions.

The political sanctions especially are clearly eminent when they are not only used to threaten to obey but also to announce ideological stands, keep off competitors or redefine the power arrangements of the region. The sanctions may limit access to important technologies, undermine economic development, or add internal stress on the governments by raising domestic suffering. Although they are technically aimed at political elites or certain sectors they can have an economic impact on the entire population. This has made some observers call sanctions a kind of economic warfare, which can have structural economic harm without a direct military conflict. This ability is precisely the strategic value of sanctions: states can put the other states under considerable pressure without incurring legal and humanitarian costs of armed conflict.

The growing dependency on unilateral and extraterritorial sanctions points to their political nature. The economic advantage and economic strength of powerful states allow taking sanctions that practically isolate the specified countries, depriving them of international financial channels or chain distribution. Smaller states, in their turn, hardly have an equivalent capacity. This imbalance maintains the cognition that the means of sanctions are not as neutral legal and more as the tools of geopolitical impact. This perception is even enhanced by selective implementation. Similar breaches of international standards can result in severe sanctions in one and minor reaction in another case, depending on the strategic significance of the state under consideration or its alliances. This lack of uniformity is damaging to the idea that sanctions are merely objective reactances to wrongdoing and rather indicate that they are inherent in more extensive power politics.

One of the most problematic ways of economic sanctions is humanitarian concerns. Wholesale sanctions, especially one that impacts the financial systems or key imports, will interfere with food, medicine, infrastructure, and workplaces. Even though modern sanctions regimes are increasingly focusing on so-called targeted or smart sanctions, e.g. asset freezes or travel bans directed at certain individuals or organizations, the overall economic effect can regularly be still felt. Monetary limitations may completely discourage international companies to deal with the targeted country at all, a phenomenon otherwise termed as over-compliance. Through this, even well planned sanctions will unintentionally negatively affect civilian populations than political decision-makers. This brings to mind grave ethical concern regarding their validity particularly when the humanitarian cost involved is seen to be out of proportion to the desired political goal. Aside the humanitarian issues, the success of sanctions as behavioural changing tools is not clear. As the history demonstrates, sanctions do not necessarily have a desired policy effects and in some cases they can inculcate the very governments they are aimed at. The force of the economy can reinforce nationalism, and political authorities may use it to explain the domestic crises by the external aggression. Sanctions in other instances have been used to help isolate economies without making any significant diplomatic concessions. This ambivalent history points to the supposition that sanctions represent a highly effective enforcement mechanism of international norms and makes it possible that their symbolic meaning sometimes far surpasses their efficiency in application



Regardless of these criticisms, sanctions as a mode of international policy still play a significant role since it offers a way out between a diplomatic protest and military action. In the case of governments that are confronted with international crises, the sanctions are a very visible and immediate form of response that illustrates the dedication of international norms without being exposed to the dangers of armed intervention. They are versatile tools, able to rise gradually or even partially in accordance with the behaviour of the state of interest. Moreover, globalization and expansion in the integration of the financial systems have amplified their possible effect. The power to dominate international banking networks, reserve currencies, and technological supply networks has enhanced the power of some states to exploit the economic dependency as a political instrument. The trend has led to what is increasingly becoming known as the weaponization of economic networks in international relations by scholars.

The two-sidedness of sanctions as both legal and political tools implies that they may turn out to be legit locally depending on their design and operation. Multilateral authorization, legal goals, and procedural protections are more expected to be viewed as legitimate. Humanitarian exemptions, frequent review procedures, and appeal mechanisms can be used to address the issues of fairness and proportionality. On the other hand, unilateral sanctions in the name of wide-scale political objectives, without any evident legal rationale or responsibility, can contribute to the destruction of the international legal standards and strengthen the impression of coercive superiority.

In the modern international relations, thus, the issue at stake is not whether the economic sanctions are legal devices or political ones, but how the balance between the two aspects is to be maintained. Sanctions are not going to vanish, as they will be deemed as useful in strategical terms and states will not want to use only diplomacy or military power. It is difficult to make sure that they are used in correlation with the rules of international law, observance of sovereignty, and the defense of the welfare of civilians. Enhancing multilateral supervision and elaborating more explicit principles of the use of unilateral sanctions might help minimize the threat of abuse to the maximum extent the strategy of unilateral sanctions might be employed to provide effective and legitimate international regulation. Finally, economic sanctions represent the unique convergence of law, power, and morality in international politics. They may serve as acceptable mechanisms of ensuring peace in the international system when used in a collective, responsible manner, but they also may serve as a mechanism of geopolitical pressure when used selectively or coercively. Their increased application is indicative not only of the opportunities, but also of the strains of a globalized world where economic relations have taken over the forefront of political power. This dual nature should be understood when analyzing the consistency of sanctions not just in terms of legality but also concerning its more general impact on justice, stability and future of international order.



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IS STATE SOVEREIGNTY DECLINING IN THE AGE OF GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

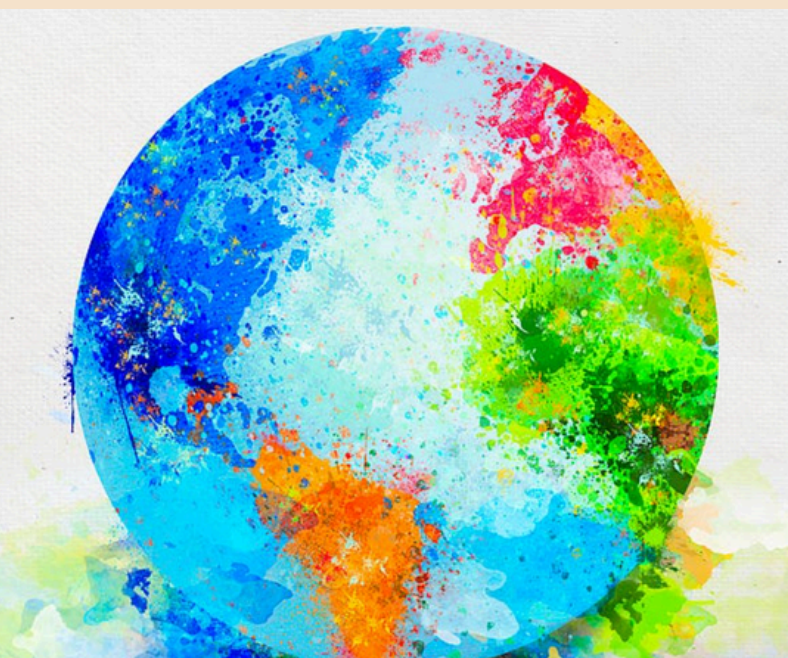
~HASAN MADHAN

International relations today depend on institutional frameworks which include multiple regimes and transnational organizations that act together with state authority and sometimes operate outside its control. The current situation has sparked fresh discussions about whether global governance has diminished state sovereignty which has served as the fundamental principle of international relations since the Peace of Westphalia. Some scholars argue that expanding international norms, economic interdependence, and regulatory regimes constrain state autonomy, while others contend that states remain the primary architects and beneficiaries of these structures. This article studies how global governance affects sovereignty changes while predicting upcoming international relations and international law and diplomatic relations changes which will occur in 2026. Sovereignty exists today through cooperative frameworks and technological control systems and multi-actor governance networks. The analysis indicates that international relations will develop adaptive patterns which preserve sovereignty as their main element.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF SOVEREIGNTY AND THE RISE OF GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

Modern sovereignty developed through the establishment of supreme territorial control which enabled states to achieve equal legal standing. For centuries international relations followed the principles of non-interference and diplomatic recognition between states. The international system established after 1945 created permanent cooperation mechanisms through its establishment of the United Nations and Bretton Woods institutions and its conclusion of multilateral treaties. The international system established obligations that restricted states from acting independently while it improved their ability to work together in solving problems.

The late twentieth century and early twenty-first century brought an acceleration of globalization-related developments. The global system experienced a breakdown because economic ties between countries and their technological dependencies and their transnational climate change and pandemic and cyber threat challenges created boundaries which traditional territorial governance systems could not resolve. Countries started to accept international monitoring systems together with the legal obligations and regulatory frameworks which they included. Critics interpreted these developments as a gradual erosion of sovereignty. States required these regimes which they created to work together on common issues while safeguarding their power in a system based on mutual dependency. The historical path shows that sovereign power has not declined over time but instead has developed into different types of sovereignty which maintain essential national authority.



Current governance systems function through institutional overlaps and specific issue coalitions instead of following one central authority. The system shows its disunity through climate clubs and digital trade agreements and regional security arrangements and financial regulatory bodies. States use these international systems to control results while protecting their sovereignty. The development of new technologies is speeding up the process which redistributes power between different authorities. Digital platforms and artificial intelligence systems and global data infrastructures now function as the primary channels through which people conduct economic and social activities between nations. Control over data flows and algorithms and digital standards has become a core dimension of power. States are establishing their digital sovereignty through data-localization requirements and cybersecurity policies and artificial intelligence regulations. The control over sovereignty now extends beyond physical territory to include technological authority. The power which governments previously held to create rules now resides with non-state groups including technology companies and financial institutions and cities and international networks. These organizations develop technical standards and manage enforcement procedures and establish policy direction. The expanding power of these groups results in governance systems which allow states to keep their control through shared power arrangements.



INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

The development of sovereignty creates new international relations patterns that affect state interactions with one another. Countries now practice both interdependence and strategic rivalry which results in what analysts call competitive cooperation. States work together to address worldwide dangers while fighting for power in security and economic fields. The combination of these two forces will grow stronger through the year 2026 as nations work to achieve both their need for integration and their need for independence.

The current international system exhibits a trend toward modular multilateralism which establishes flexible partnerships between states that work together on specific issues. Governments create various overlapping agreements to handle different aspects of their international relationships which include technology standards and climate governance and supply-chain security. The sovereignty practice demonstrates sovereignty adaptation through state decision-making power and capability sharing to handle situations that require international cooperation.

This environment requires middle powers and emerging powers to take on a main role. The multiple governance platforms they join enable them to gain diplomatic power without needing to form formal alliances. The resulting system exists as a network system which combines unipolarity and multipolarity through networked sovereignty that needs participation and rule development instead of power control.

INTERNATIONAL LAW AND GLOBAL GOVERNANCE IN A NETWORKED ORDER

International law experiences major effects from global governance. The traditional legal system requires three elements for its operation: territorial jurisdiction, sovereign equality, and treaty obligations based on mutual consent between parties. The modern regulatory frameworks which exist today depend on three elements: their operational standards, their non-binding legal frameworks, and the compliance networks which function outside traditional treaty agreements.

Plurilateral agreements and technical bodies establish digital governance frameworks, climate reporting mechanisms, and financial transparency regimes as their primary creation channels rather than through universal conventions. States adopt these standards to maintain market access and technological compatibility. The legal authority of the system exists because people participate in the system and not because of any compulsion. The process creates a new system which establishes legal requirements through its existing structure instead of normalizing the concept of state power. The ultimate source of legitimacy for states remains unchanged but they now use collaborative decision-making methods to exercise their power. International law will progress towards multiple and overlapping legal systems which represent divided yet united governance in 2026.

DIPLOMACY AND MULTILATERAL STRATEGY

Diplomacy develops new methods of operation which govern multiple stakeholders and technical domains. The modern negotiation process involves diplomats together with scientists and private sector representatives and regulatory officials. Technical coordination is essential for solving AI safety issues and establishing cyber norms and developing pandemic preparedness and climate adaptation solutions.

States establish minilateral and sector-specific forums to enhance their ability to work with partners who share their values. Governments use these arrangements to maintain their sovereign rights while they work together to combat international threats. The field of diplomatic practice has shifted from alliance politics to risk governance which includes standards development and information sharing and joint regulatory efforts.

Cities and regional authorities are also becoming active diplomatic actors in areas like climate policy and migration management. Their engagement demonstrates how governance activities have spread into different governmental levels which create a system of shared authority that replaces complete sovereignty.

CONCLUSION

The present period of global governance implementation results in a state sovereignty transformation which operates as a reorganization process. International relations will develop competitive interdependence by 2026 when states will maintain their independence while engaging in cooperative international systems. International law will continue developing through multiple legal systems which emerge from technical standards and sector-specific agreements. Modern diplomacy will develop into multiple actor environments which require new competencies for effective risk management beyond traditional diplomatic methods.

State sovereignty will maintain its status as the main element of international relations systems yet its implementation will require states to establish technological networks and governance systems and international organizations. Adaptive sovereignty will develop as the future path because states remain essential yet their power functions through worldwide systems which extend beyond their national borders.

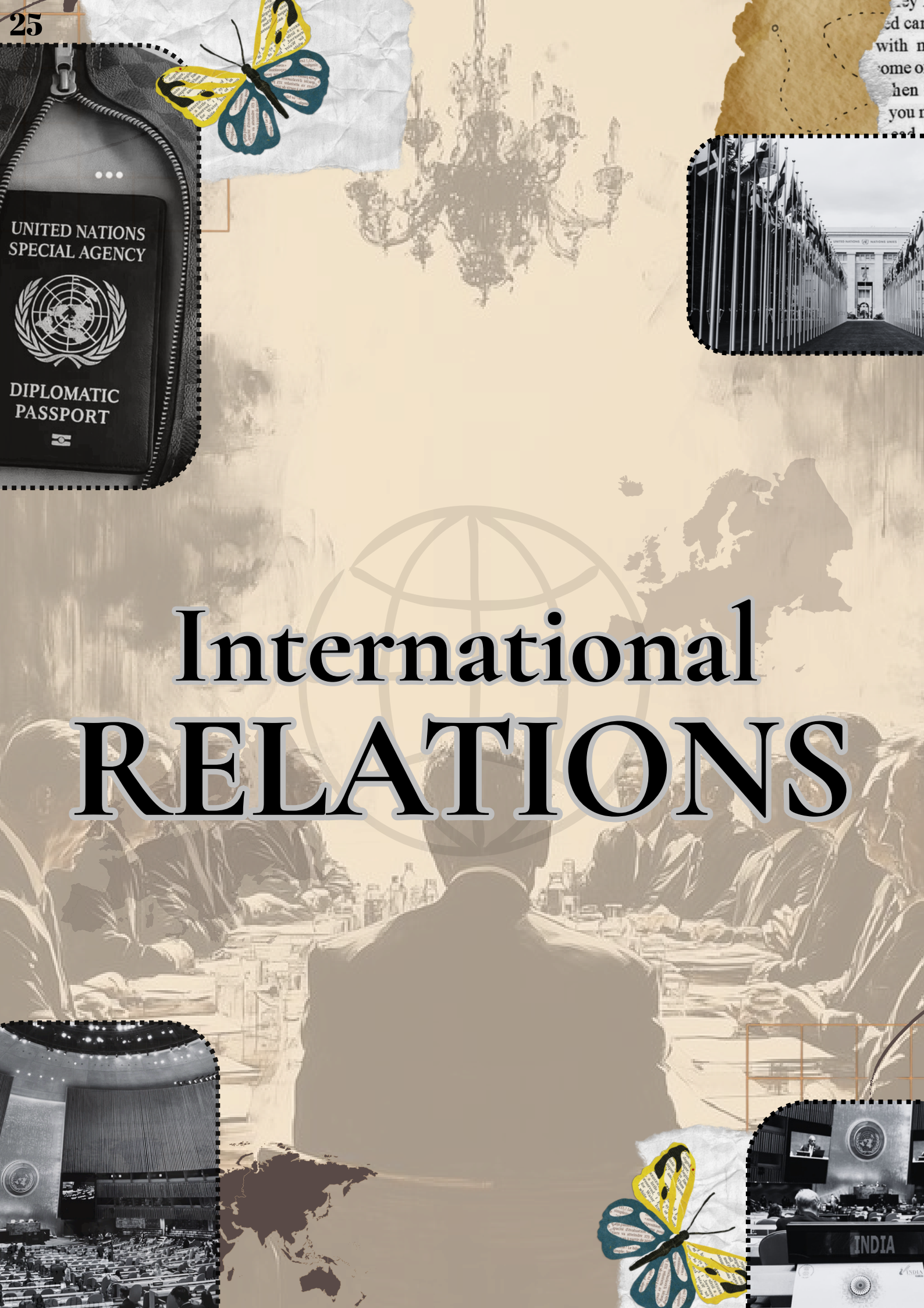
SOVEREIGNTY: DECLINE OR ADAPTATION

The evidence shows that sovereignty remains intact because it undergoes transformation. States maintain their ability to use force and their status as legal entities and their power to negotiate treaties. Effective governance now requires organizations and individuals to work together through institutional networks. Countries today establish their sovereignty through their ability to control international systems instead of their capacity to remain independent.

Global governance systems improve state capabilities because increased participation enables governments to extend their regulatory power and solve complex problems. States that withdraw from cooperative frameworks often lose influence over rules that nonetheless affect them. Sovereignty therefore exists through both practice and active participation in society



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International RELATIONS



RISE OF MIDDLE POWERS: HOW COUNTRIES LIKE INDIA ARE RESHAPING GLOBAL DIPLOMACY

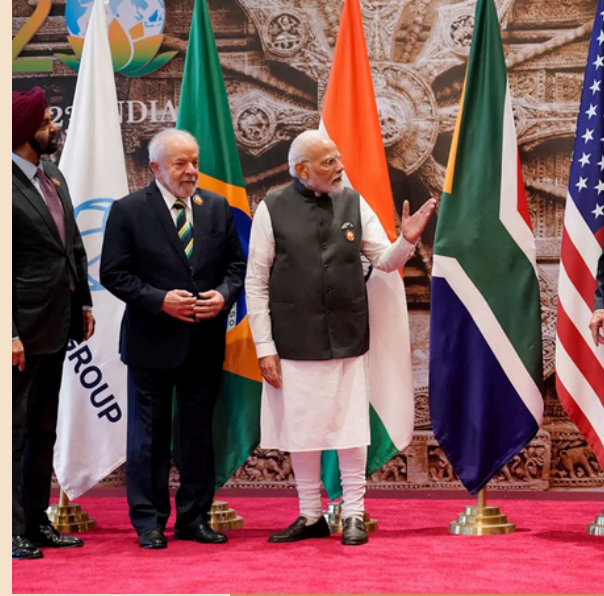
~ AYUSHI JAYA

International politics have never been stable. Since imperial dominance, the Cold war bipolarity, and post-Cold war unipolarity, international relations have been dominated by few dominant states. However, it seems that today the world order is also going through another change, a transition that is not characterized by the emergence of one new superpower, but by the increased power of what is usually termed as the middle powers. There is a growing influence of countries like India, Brazil, Indonesia, South Africa, and Turkey in determining the outcome of diplomacy, determining the state of the region and shaping world governance. They have not only been an expression of redistribution of power by them, but also of a more profound change in the way international diplomacy is being practiced and negotiated. The size or military might of a middle power does not qualify it as middle power, but as having the capacity to influence by positioning, coalition-building, and by institutional participation.

They do not have the domineering influence of the big powers, but they do have the regional power and diplomatic resources to influence the agenda and broker competing interests. In the past, these states tended to act as brokers of multilateral collaboration or as encouragement of international standards. The current events, however, are the difference of scale and confidence with which these countries are going to establish themselves. Instead of being marginal to global politics, they are becoming, in several aspects, agenda-setters and institutional reformers, especially around such issues as climate governance, digital regulation, and development financing. The emergence of India offers a very good example of this change. With economic growth, technological advancement, population size and the ever-growing pace of diplomatic activity, India has established itself as a key figure in the politics of the modern world. However, its impact is determined not so by the traditional pattern of alliances but by a strategy of strategic independence. Instead of being committed to any one of the geopolitical blocks, India is involved in ties with several centres of power at the same time.



This has come to be referred to as multi-alignment and it represents a more general change to flexibility and problem-centred cooperation over commitment to alliances. This kind of diplomatic flexibility, though, creates structural tension as well. Although the middle powers have maintained the strategic independence through the use of the multi-alignment, it may bring about ambiguity in case of any geopolitical crisis when the competing demands of various partners arise. It takes long-term diplomatic credibility and policy consistency to manage the balancing of various relations and the sustainability of such strategies in the long run is controversial. The flexibility which makes influence more powerful can also make it hard to make the decision in the time when it is necessary to have a clear direction. On another note, the participation of middle powers in global governance by bilateral relations is growing through multilateral relations.



The international forums are now critical platforms through which the emerging economies express common interests especially the Global South common interest. India has been actively involved in the promotion of equitable development structures, climatic justice and institutional adjustment. Merely being actors in it. Meanwhile, their capacity to revolutionize international administration is limited. Most international establishments reproduce past distributions of power, and, thus, structural change is lengthy and contentious. Although middle powers are capable of affecting the discourse and agenda-setting, the challenge has been to convert that into institutional change at the systemic level. Their increasing visibility is not necessarily equal to structural power. The other characteristic of middle power diplomacy is mediation and bridge-building. The external relations between countries that lie along geopolitical lines may act as intermediaries in a global world where competition among the power giants is increasing. Their comparative autonomy allows them to communicate when there might be restriction or tension in contact between opposing powers. Such a role increases the diplomatic topicality, especially in a disintegrated international system. Mediation, however, puts them as well under rival pressures and their impact is still conditioned by more economic and security interdependencies, defined by bigger powers. Although this increase in prominence, the growth of middle powers does not inevitably result in an efficient or stable multipolar order. Increased involvement in the international decision making process can increase the level of representation, but it can be a problem in coordination. A more pluralistic system brings in plural views but can also create incoherent global crisis consensus and rejections. Dissemination of influence is not necessarily a balancing factor; it can also be a source of complexity and competition.



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In addition, the international impact of the middle powers is also closely related to the domestic capability. The credibility of their involvement in the world arena is highly determined by economic resiliency, institutional capacities, and domestic stability. The lack of consistency in the international role of the latter can be constrained by the persistence of inequalities, governance issues, and the security pressures of the region. Their universal impact can not be made outside their domestic developmental patterns. The emergence of middle powers hence is an opportunity as well as a structural challenge. Wider engagement in global governance can result in international decision-making being more inclusive, but it also could bring other competing agendas and coalitions. Nations such as India are not simply accustoming themselves to a preexisting world order of internationality they are actually engaged in rearranging it. It is not clear that the result of this changing multipolarity is a more balanced world or a more fragmented one. The point is that, though, what is becoming evident is that global diplomacy is no longer marked by dominance and gradually setting in by the way of negotiation, interdependence as well as influence that is shared and yet at contested.



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MULTIPOLAR WORLD ORDER: IS US DOMINANCE TRULY ENDING?

~ NITEEN KUMAR JEETHANI

The worldwide diplomatic situation now progresses toward a multipolar structure which operates beyond the arrangements of American dominance that existed during the 21st century. Scholars and policy-makers debate whether the United States hegemonic role is decreasing and a more inclusive order in which diverse states collaborate within reformed institutions can ensure global cooperation. This article examines the historical context of U.S. dominance, current power shifts, and near-term projections for 2026. The research examines recent analyses and reports to identify their effects on international relations, international law and diplomatic strategy.

Historical Context of U.S. Dominance and the Post–Cold War Order

The United States established a liberal international order after World War II, which included the United Nations, NATO, and the Bretton Woods system, which consisted of the IMF, World Bank and GATT/WTO, plus the actual international standards of open markets, collective security, and human rights. The order established by this system allowed the United States to control international relations during the Cold War period. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 led to the emergence of a unipolar order. Many liberal internationalists believed that the U.S.-shaped order would "survive and thrive" by co-opting new powers. For a period, Washington maintained total control over international affairs without facing any opposition. Then, in the decade of the 2000s and 2010s, it brought about multiple difficulties which emerged during that time. The United States faced multiple challenges due to its hegemonic status, including domestic political divisions, the emergence of international competitors, and economic shocks, including the 2008 financial crisis. The Trump administration established its position by openly questioning established NATO ties, which had existed for multiple decades and rejecting various international treaties. The norms and institutions established through American leadership face increasing challenges to their authority. Some analysts now argue that the United States can no longer dictate the international agenda as decisively as before, and others contend that its underlying preeminence remains substantial.



Emerging Multipolar Trends and Power Shifts

Contemporary society believes that power distribution among people has reached its highest level. The economic and strategic importance of countries is now moving toward the Asian and Global South regions. The Asian continent achieved approximately 57 per cent of global GDP growth between 2015 and 2021 and approximately 42 per cent of worldwide economic output measured in purchasing power parity (PPP). China demonstrates rapid economic growth because it has reached the status of the second-largest global economy and the top international trading and investment nation. President Xi Jinping advocates for a multipolar world system through which China and emerging nations will create new global governance structures that reflect current power distributions. It exercises international influence through its Belt and Road Initiative, along with its control over 5G and AI technology standards and its military expansion efforts. It has built the largest navy in the world through its defence spending and ship construction activities while modernising its nuclear capabilities.

India has developed into a three trillion-dollar economy and now seeks to become a major global power. New Delhi maintains its historical relationship with Russia while establishing closer diplomatic connections with the United States and Japan, and other democratic nations through its strategic autonomy policy of multi-alignment. India upholds the principles of sovereignty and non-interference while its leaders advocate for a fairer international system.

Russia maintains its status as a powerful military force and nuclear deterrent, but its economic capacity remains limited when compared to its geographical reach. Moscow proceeds to advance its "multipolar" concept, which envisions Russia controlling its allied territories as a functional sphere of authority. The organisation works to create Western disunity by using military campaigns such as the Ukrainian invasion and by establishing close relationships through energy pipelines and weapon sales to its allied countries. Western powers have implemented severe sanctions, which have led to detrimental effects on the economy.

International Relations and its Implications

The multipolarity research predicts that countries will pursue extensive balance activities. Traditional realists demonstrate that increasing power creates two problems because they produce security uncertainties and dangers: e.g. Taiwan and Ukraine tensions continue to increase. The existing system combines strong economic relationships with influential institutions, which historians and theorists failed to recognise during the pre-1914 period. Ikenberry and other scholars believe that U.S. power will decline, but the trade norms, alliances, and legal commitments which America established will continue to exist and influence how American rivals behave. The U.S. will handle fewer responsibilities, which leads to a conflict reduction through this "lock-in" mechanism.

Another notable trend is the empowerment of middle powers. Stewart Patrick shows that G20 countries, excluding the United States and China, have the power to establish international cooperation in essential fields, form trade alliances, climate clubs, and tech standards bodies to achieve substantial outcomes in a global environment where the United States leads unpredictably, and China lacks universal trust. This will create partial alliances which consist of changing groups that combine different interests instead of forming a single block. The United States will pursue plurilateral diplomacy with India when it participates in Western counter-terrorism efforts, while India collaborates with Russia and China on energy matters. The Cold War period of strict alliance systems has reached its conclusion.

The multipolar shift has not reached full development yet, according to U.S. strategists and other analysts who observe that the United States and China continue to function as the primary international power centres. The two superpowers have the power to disrupt projects whenever they perceive threats to their fundamental interests. The new international system which emerges will be multi-polar rather than truly bipolar.



International Law and Global Governance in a Multipolar World

The shift in power dynamics has profound legal implications. The post-1945 international legal order is founded on principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, and collective security (the UN Charter). Multipolarity is straining these norms. For one thing, great-power competition has renewed debates over intervention. Western states generally cite human rights or R2P to justify interventions (or sanctions) in places like Syria, Libya, or Ukraine, but such actions often occur without Security Council mandates. Indeed, critics point out that NATO's Kosovo intervention (1999) and the Iraq war (2003) bypassed the UN. By contrast, China, Russia, and many developing countries emphasise strict non-interference and reject unilateral sanctions as violations of the UN Charter. This divergence means international law is being interpreted through competing lenses, reducing consensus.

As Dan Steinbock argues, there is a widening gap between the “rules-based order” rhetoric and a universal international law framework. The U.S. itself has oscillated between championing international norms and acting unilaterally. For example, the U.S. promotes the ICC in principle but exempts its own personnel, and it has imposed many sanctions outside any UN mandate. From the Global South perspective, this double standard (“rules for others, flexibility for the rule-maker”) undermines legitimacy.

Global governance institutions are also under stress. The UN Security Council is highly polarised over Russia's repeated vetoes on Ukraine, and the U.S. vetoes on Middle East resolutions have exposed its limits. Observers note that the Security Council was designed with veto paralysis as a feature to prevent major-power conflict, but today many argue it has become nearly dysfunctional. U.S. analysts warn that if P5 members consistently block one another, countries will bypass the UN in favour of regional or issue-specific groups. Indeed, some states have already turned to the General Assembly or ad hoc coalitions when the Council stalls (e.g. G77/G20 initiatives, AUKUS, climate pacts).

At the same time, demands for institutional reform are growing. Many leaders – from Brazil to South Africa to the EU – are calling for an update to global governance to reflect current realities. Proposals include expanding the Security Council, revising IMF quotas, and creating new global tax or health regimes. For example, at recent UN assemblies, Global South delegations reiterated that old institutions remain skewed and urged more equitable structures. There is a sense of “Southern agency”, an active push to reshape rules, not abandon them. If a new equilibrium emerges, it will likely enshrine a mix of principles: the UN Charter foundation of sovereignty will remain, but with additional norms (on climate, pandemics, digital technology) negotiated among a broader set of powers.

Diplomacy and Multilateral Strategy

Diplomacy is currently undergoing a transformation process. The UN system operates its functions and UN peacekeeping missions decrease conflicts, but Northern countries view the system as inflexible. Northern governments now utilise minilateral arrangements, according to one analyst, because they prefer to create small and medium-sized partnerships rather than depending on large and diverse institutions. The G20 acts as a global leadership body which requires consensus among its members, while special clubs manage various matters from nuclear security through the six-party talks to digital norm development. The G7 considers expanding its membership to preserve its relevance in international affairs.

The Quad functions as a security and technology consultative forum between the United States, India, Japan, and Australia, but it lacks formal alliance status in the Indo-Pacific region. The United States, the United Kingdom and Australia established AUKUS to create binding defence contracts. The democratic countries that share similar values receive democratic tools that enable them to establish partnerships without needing to create official alliances. China promotes BRICS+ expansion and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank initiatives to present them as alternatives to Western-led institutions. Smaller states can choose among these venues to advance their interests, and a Southeast Asian country might attend Quad meetings for security dialogue while also engaging China-led forums on trade.

The development of international political economies depends on economic statecraft. Both the West and China utilise trade and investment to gain power over other countries. The United States employs tariffs and export controls to restrict Chinese technology, while China provides infrastructure loans to countries and allows them market access. The Brookings analysis shows that current economic nationalism, together with trade fragmentation processes have replaced rules-based frameworks. States are developing new trading arrangements in response to economic nationalistic policies which disrupt existing trading systems.

U.S. Influence: Persistence and Transformation

The current period shows diminishing American power, together with rising Chinese power. The United States maintains its position as the leading global power according to multiple evaluation criteria. The United States maintains global strength since it controls 26 per cent of worldwide economic output and possesses the strongest military through its defence spending of 849 billion USD, which will occur in 2025 and maintains military bases and international treaties with NATO and the US-Japan alliance and ANZUS. The United States maintains essential global financial systems together with its educational institutions, technology companies, and media organisations, which generate extensive soft power. The United States maintains greater global power than any individual competitor or the totality of emerging countries that seek to rise.

The United States now operates under a different leadership structure which has their past leadership style. The U.S. ability to set global policies through its military strength has disappeared, according to this statement. The United States today is viewed as more of a peer among peers. The United States started to exercise international power through independent international activities, according to Steinbock, who tracked American diplomatic trends from the post-Cold War period. The United States has officially declared its decline as the leading global power through its current intelligence assessments. The U.S. intelligence council report states that "the United States no longer holds the power to sustain global order in the same way which means the United States has reduced its responsibility to maintain worldwide order. The report from the committee describes America to foreign observers as a "predatory rogue actor" which damages its past alliances and international organisations.

The United States maintains its global dominance because no other nation can challenge its power on all military and diplomatic fronts, according to observers. The international order has not collapsed; it is adjusting. By 2026, the United States will still be a central actor in every major issue (from climate to security), even if it must do so with more negotiation. Whether its influence continues to erode further will depend on factors like domestic politics, economic performance, and the success of alliances. The coming years will show if the U.S. can adapt its strategy (as some analyses urge), perhaps by reaffirming alliances and multilateral engagement or if it will cede more ground to alternative powers and blocs.

The transition into a multipolar world exists as a complicated process which neither follows a structured path nor remains uncontrolled. The world will enter a "multi-alignment" phase in 2026 when multiple countries will choose to participate in different diplomatic negotiations while creating special interest groups for specific matters. New power realities will cause international law and institutions to change, but their main principles, which include sovereignty and some form of collective security, will continue to exist in modified versions. Global diplomatic efforts will become more decentralised without reaching complete disorder because international organisations will need to establish operational partnerships with smaller groups to address their most pressing challenges.

The United States maintains its status as a crucial element of the global system even though its dominance has decreased since its peak during the unipolar period. The U.S. will impact global affairs through its actions, yet the methods of its influence remain to be determined. The question now asks whether the United States will support more democratic governance, which its allies desire or whether major powers will create greater national boundaries between themselves. The answer will emerge gradually. The present situation shows that U.S. power will undergo changes which lead to its current dominant position. The international order of 2026 will establish a new power equilibrium which exists as a multipolar system but retains the structural elements which the United States established through its international organisations and norms.

DIALOGUE

Interview

DESK

Q WHAT WILL DEFINE INDIA'S SUCCESS AS A MARITIME POWER AND RESPONSIBLE SECURITY ACTOR IN THE INDIAN OCEAN REGION IN THE COMING YEARS?

India's success in the Indian Ocean region will depend on a holistic integration of naval capability, maritime domain awareness, and diplomatic leadership. The country has already expanded its strategic outlook through initiatives such as SAGAR and Mahasagar, increased naval investments, strengthened partnerships with regional and global actors, and enhanced capacity-building efforts with smaller littoral states. However, India's role is not necessarily to act as a traditional "net security provider" with global dominance, but rather as a responsible respondent—one that contributes through capacity building, humanitarian assistance, maritime security, and collaborative leadership. With limited resources and multiple strategic priorities, India must adopt a balanced, whole-of-government approach that combines capability, awareness, and diplomacy to steadily strengthen its influence and ensure stability in the Indian Ocean region.

Q WHICH WILL MATTER MORE FOR INDIA'S MARITIME INFLUENCE GOING FORWARD? WOULD IT BE HARD NAVAL POWER, BETTER MARITIME AWARENESS, OR DIPLOMATIC LEADERSHIP?

I think it is all the three that will matter, and not just one. I mean, you cannot pinpoint that only this will matter, that, or neither can you put it in a chronological order as first, second, or third. I think we need to have this in collaboration and not in silos. Smart diplomacy, smart maritime diplomacy, is very important, but diplomacy is of no use if you do not have maritime domain awareness. And it is futile without any resources. Leadership will only gain credibility globally if it has the idea, that is awareness and if it has resources. So, leadership is one thing, "the willingness". Willingness is about leadership. It's about your infrastructure and capacity. It's awareness. So, I think we need to have an amalgamation, and we need to have this idea that if we work in silos. All the three aspects have to be taken into account together. We can ensure our leadership, a very cordial leadership and acceptable leadership in the Indian Ocean. India needs to move ahead with a very holistic approach to maintain and grow its influence in the maritime domain.



Well, as you know, in 2015 we came up with the SAGAR initiative—Security and Growth for All in the Region. Last year, we introduced another initiative known as Mahasagar. Through this, we have broadened our understanding of the Indian Ocean and now view it as a larger Indian Ocean region. With this expanded horizon, we are also investing more. Our military capability, including our naval capability, has increased its efforts in collaborations, joint exercises, procurement, and indigenous production. One example is the acquisition of Marine Rafale (M Rafale) from France to enhance our capability. We are also working on expanding our submarine strength.

Moreover, we have developed several centers for collaboration and information sharing. Most importantly, we are focusing on capacity building for our partner countries, especially smaller states, so that they can act as a first line of defense when any problem arises. Earlier, we believed our coastline was about 7,200 kilometers, but recent scientific data shows it is over 12,000 kilometers. This highlights how important the maritime domain is for us.

India is therefore increasing its naval strength and expanding collaborations. We are working more closely with Gulf states, which are critical for our energy security. We have enhanced collaboration with Israel and are conducting more joint defense exercises with Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. We are also expanding partnerships with African states. Additionally, traditionally friendly partners like France and the UK can play an important role.

However, the idea of being a “net security provider” is complex and value-laden. As a developing state, we do not yet have the resources to fully assume that role. Instead, we can act as a responsible respondent by providing a security net—supporting capacity building, reconnaissance, and acting as a first responder in HADR situations. Expecting India to operate globally like the United States is not practical, as we have other priorities, including continental challenges with Pakistan and China. With limited resources, we must use them judiciously. The seas are vital for our energy security, growth, and future, but everything must be viewed in perspective. Naval power will definitely play a crucial role in enabling India to steadily and progressively expand its influence in the region.

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Q HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE CURRENT STATE OF INDIA-US RELATIONS IN 2026? ARE WE LOOKING AT A STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP, OR SOMETHING DIFFERENT?

In my understanding, any relationship in foreign policy or global politics is fundamentally strategic. I look at it from a realistic perspective. When a strategic relationship is formed, it may be influenced by historical ties, cultural exchanges, and shared foundational principles such as democracy, individual freedom, and ethics. However, these factors are neither necessary nor sufficient conditions for a strategic relationship to sustain over time.

For example, if you look at India-China relations, India is a liberal democratic country, while China follows a communist political system. Despite these differences and ongoing tensions, economic exchange between the two continues, and India remains dependent on China for imports. This shows that relationships between countries go beyond ideological differences and are driven strongly by interests, not just material gains and losses but broader strategic considerations.

Similarly, India's relationship with the United States and other global actors must now be viewed through a new lens. Earlier, India was often seen as a bridge between the West and the Global South, especially during the 1960s to 1990s. However, with growing economic confidence and evolving security interests, India has adopted a far more realistic and transactional approach. It is willing to pursue independent relationships with countries such as Israel and the European Union, even if it occasionally differs from the United States.

Today, the world looks at India primarily as an economic opportunity and a major market. Therefore, India's foreign policy and global relationships must be understood through this contemporary framework, rather than older ideological perspectives of leadership of the Third World or purely value-based diplomacy



Q INDIA VALUES ITS STRATEGIC AUTONOMY, YET IT ACTIVELY PARTICIPATES IN INITIATIVES LIKE THE QUADRILATERAL SECURITY DIALOGUE AND THE INDO-PACIFIC ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK. HOW DO YOU INTERPRET THIS BALANCE BETWEEN INDEPENDENCE AND PARTNERSHIP?

I think the word “balance,” is important. What we often call strategic autonomy is, in reality, more transactional in nature. When you transact, you give something and, in return, you gain something. So, it is better understood as relative autonomy rather than absolute strategic autonomy. Even though we use the term strategic autonomy, it operates within a framework of relative autonomy, where India is constantly leveraging its interests by participating in different groups and partnerships to maximize its gains.

For instance, recent developments in India’s engagement with the European Union show how multiple strategic alignments helped create outcomes favorable to India. This reflects a balanced and interest-driven approach, where India uses its position effectively to strengthen its economic and strategic standing.

At the same time, this idea of relative autonomy applies not only to India but to all countries today. In the current era of globalization and post-capitalist economic development, no country can exercise complete autonomy in the way states once aspired to during the Cold War period. Global capital flows, interconnected markets, and digital integration have made all countries deeply interdependent. Therefore, claims of absolute strategic autonomy must be understood within this reality of global interconnectedness, where autonomy is always relative and shaped by mutual dependence.

Q LOOKING AHEAD, HOW DO YOU SEE INDIA-US RELATIONS SHAPING THE FUTURE OF GLOBAL DIPLOMACY, INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, AND INTERNATIONAL LAW OVER THE NEXT DECADE?

I cannot see much negative in this relationship. From a realistic and contemporary perspective of global politics, the India–U.S. relationship has acted as a bulwark for India in maintaining its interests. While India is engaging with Pakistan on one side and China on the other, this relationship will continue to play a very significant role. Similarly, in the Indo-Pacific and other emerging groupings, there is a lot of opportunity for India. Many countries today see India as a major opportunity, and it is now up to India to decide how effectively it can leverage this position.

Because Indians have moved to almost all parts of the world including Australia, Africa, and South America. India has a strong global presence through its people. The key question is how India can motivate its diaspora, including NRIs and PIOs, to return, invest, and contribute to India’s growth. At the same time, when countries see India as an important market and strategic partner, India must also explore its own opportunities by branding and rebranding itself as a global economic and strategic power.



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Q ARE CHINA-JAPAN RELATIONS STILL TRAPPED BY HISTORY, OR ARE THEY NOW BEING DRIVEN MORE BY HARD STRATEGIC REALITIES?

It is a combination of both historical legacy and modern strategic realities: In China, the state-led education system ensures that the historical narrative remains front and center. For Japan, the younger generation wants to move on and sees Japan as a "normal" country that should have a standing military. Look at Prime Minister Abe's legacy. He pushed for the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific." That wasn't just about trade; it was about creating an architecture that could counterbalance China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

In contrast, the younger generation in Japan increasingly views their country as a "normal" nation that should have conventional military capabilities. Japan is shifting its focus toward contemporary security threats, including missile developments in North Korea and China's expanding naval presence. While history remains relevant, strategic realities, especially security and defense considerations which now play a dominant role in shaping bilateral relations.

Q HOW CENTRAL IS MARITIME SECURITY TO THE FUTURE OF CHINA-JAPAN RELATIONS, ESPECIALLY IN THE EAST CHINA SEA?

Maritime security is absolutely central to the future of China-Japan relations. For China, the East China Sea is critical to its broader strategic objective of gaining control over the "First Island Chain." Control over this region would enable China to secure access to the Western Pacific, monitor U.S. military bases in Okinawa, and strengthen its strategic position around Taiwan.

For Japan, maritime routes known as Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) are essential for national survival. As an island nation heavily dependent on imported energy and food, Japan's economic stability depends on uninterrupted maritime access. If China were to dominate these waters, Japan's economic security would be severely compromised.

China's long-term military modernization goals, including its ambitions for a world-class military by 2027 and 2049, further underscore the importance of naval expansion. The East China Sea serves as a gateway for China's broader maritime ambitions, including its "String of Pearls" strategy in the Indian Ocean.

Q IN THE NEXT YEAR OR SO, WHERE SHOULD WE WATCH MOST CLOSELY FOR CHANGE IN CHINA-JAPAN RELATIONS? IS IT GOING TO BE SECURITY, DIPLOMACY, OR ECONOMIC ENGAGEMENT?

Security developments will be the most critical area to monitor. Japan's increasing defense budget, military modernization, and acquisition of counter-strike capabilities represent significant shifts in its security posture.

Economic developments, particularly supply chain diversification and technological competition in sectors such as electric vehicles, artificial intelligence, and battery technology, will also play a crucial role.

China's ongoing naval expansion and military modernization efforts will continue to shape the strategic environment, making security the primary domain of change.

Q IF CHINA-JAPAN RELATIONS DETERIORATE FURTHER, WHAT WOULD THAT MEAN FOR THE FUTURE STABILITY OF THE REGIONAL AND GLOBAL ORDER?

Further deterioration in China-Japan relations would significantly destabilize both the regional and global order. It would place smaller regional actors, particularly ASEAN countries, in difficult strategic positions, forcing them to navigate competing pressures from both powers.

The risk of miscalculation in contested maritime areas, particularly the East China Sea, would increase substantially. However, both countries are likely to avoid direct conflict due to the severe economic consequences such a conflict would entail.

Ultimately, the relationship is expected to remain one of managed rivalry, characterized by persistent competition but tempered by diplomatic engagement and economic pragmatism



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Q FROM A HISTORICAL LENS TO THE PRESENT, HOW WOULD YOU ASSESS THE EVOLUTION OF INDIA–GULF RELATIONS, AND WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT SHIFT IN THE PAST DECADE?

Seen from a long historical lens, India– Gulf relations were for centuries anchored in trade, migration, and later in oil and remittances, a largely functional relationship which was shaped by geography and necessity. What has changed most decisively in the past decade is the quality of engagement. The relationship has moved beyond a narrow transactional logic toward a structured strategic partnership. Gulf sovereign wealth funds and state investors are now making large, targeted, long-term investments in India's infrastructure, finance, digital economy, and manufacturing, including through new platforms such as GIFT City and direct partnerships with Indian corporates.

At the same time, India and major Gulf states, particularly the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Oman, have institutionalised their engagement through strategic councils, joint task forces, and trade and connectivity pacts, including corridor-based initiatives. Security cooperation has also matured, expanding from symbolic port calls to regularised naval exercises and trilateral maritime frameworks, reflecting deeper strategic trust and shared interests in Indian Ocean stability.

Such shift matters because it is driven by structural changes on both sides. Gulf states are deliberately pivoting toward Asia as they diversify their foreign policies and post-oil economic visions, and India is increasingly seen as both a growth market and a political hedge in a more fragmented global order. Simultaneously, India's economic rise has made it an attractive destination for long-term capital and downstream investment in energy, technology, and logistics. Together, these trends have transformed India from being simply a buyer of Gulf energy and an exporter of labour into a strategic economic and security partner with long-term stakes on both sides. In essence, it can be argued that the past decade marks India's transition from the Gulf's periphery to its emerging Asian centre of gravity.



Q ENERGY HAS TRADITIONALLY ANCHORED INDIA'S ENGAGEMENT WITH THE GULF. IS INDIA MOVING BEYOND AN ENERGY-CENTRIC RELATIONSHIP, AND IF SO, WHICH NEW SECTORS ARE REDEFINING THIS PARTNERSHIP?

Energy still anchors India's engagement with the Gulf, but it no longer defines the relationship in the way it once did. Over the past decade, India has clearly moved beyond a narrow hydrocarbons-and-remittances framework toward a broader strategic partnership. Gulf sovereign wealth funds are now among the most important long-term investors in India's infrastructure, digital economy, logistics, and manufacturing, creating a form of capital interdependence that did not exist earlier.

At the same time, cooperation has expanded into connectivity projects, ports, and trade corridors that position the Gulf as a strategic bridge between India, Europe, and Africa rather than merely a supplier of energy. Security and maritime cooperation have also deepened, reflecting shared concerns over sea-lane security and regional instability. Alongside this, newer areas such as technology, fintech, startups, food security, and the green energy transition, including renewables and green hydrogen, are reshaping the partnership. Therefore, it can be assumed that while oil and gas remain important, India–Gulf relations today are better understood as a multi-sector strategic engagement, with energy now one pillar among several rather than the organising principle of the relationship.

Q

LOOKING AHEAD, WHAT ARE THE KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR INDIA–GULF RELATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF REGIONAL SECURITY DYNAMICS AND EMERGING CONNECTIVITY INITIATIVES LIKE IMEC?

India–Gulf relationship carries significant potential if planned connectivity and capital flows materialise. The India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), formally endorsed in Delhi and being pursued through intergovernmental frameworks, could shorten trade routes, reduce logistics costs, and create new hubs for manufacturing, data, and clean-energy value chains that link Indian demand with Gulf capital and European markets. At the same time, Gulf sovereign wealth funds are moving away from short-term portfolio investments toward strategic, long-term commitments in India's infrastructure, technology, and industrial sectors. If IMEC is realised, it would amplify these investment flows and create new opportunities in downstream manufacturing, critical-minerals processing, green hydrogen, and broader energy-transition partnerships, while also helping build more resilient trade routes that reduce dependence on single corridors.

At the same time, the gains are fragile because the strategic environment around the corridor and the Gulf is unsettled. Maritime insecurity (notably the Red Sea/Gulf of Aden attacks since late 2023), and broader regional tensions have been raising insurance, transit-time and investor-confidence costs that can blunt IMEC's envisioned commercial logic unless security is stabilised. Geopolitics matters too: competition of great-power interests, diplomatic frictions and the technical-political complexity of stitching together infrastructure across several sovereign jurisdictions have already slowed momentum. That means realising the corridor will require sustained diplomacy, coordinated security arrangements, clear financing vehicles and robust commercial governance to reassure private and sovereign investors.

Hence, the opportunity is to translate capital, markets and logistics into durable industrial and green-energy links; the challenge is to secure the maritime and political environment and build multilateral institutions that make the corridor commercially viable and politically acceptable. For India, the pragmatic response is to deepen maritime cooperation, fast-track investment-screening and dispute-resolution mechanisms with Gulf partners, and pair corridor diplomacy with concrete social protections for migrant labour.



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