

**AUGUST
2025**

THE CILIRD WAY

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF CILIRD



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Talks with
India, Tariffs
Escalate**



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Strengthens
Ties with
Nepal**



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Letter from the Editorial Board

Launching the very first edition of the CILIRD Newsletter feels a little like sending a ship out to sea. Months of thought, planning, and quiet excitement finally meeting the open waters. This publication was conceived as more than a record of events; it is meant to be a living space where ideas in international law, relations, and diplomacy can be explored and debated with both depth and openness.

In these pages, you'll find the perspectives of students from diverse backgrounds and academic stages: each piece a reminder that fresh voices often bring the most compelling questions and ideas to the table.

Our hope is that this newsletter will not only inform but also provoke questions that make you look twice at the headlines, reconsider your assumptions, and imagine different ways the world could work. If, after reading, you find yourself wanting to write, respond, or challenge what's here, we'll count that as a success.

Here's to beginnings — and to the many conversations ahead.

— The Editorial Board of the Centre for International Law,
International Relations and Diplomacy

MAJOR NEWS

July and August 2025

ICJ: States Must Curb Emissions or Face Legal Blame

On July 23, 2025, the International Court of Justice issued a landmark advisory opinion on climate change. The ICJ ruled that the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C limit is legally binding, and that "all states, in particular the largest emitters, must take ambitious mitigation measures in line with the best available science". It affirmed that international law – not just climate treaties – obliges countries to prevent "transboundary environmental harm," including by regulating private polluters. The court stressed that while merely emitting greenhouse gases is not per se unlawful, failing to prevent foreseeable climate damage (for example by opening new coal mines or subsidizing fossil fuels) can be a wrongful act under international law. The ICJ said states must act now or be held internationally responsible – for example, by stopping harmful policies or providing reparations for climate loss. Although advisory opinions aren't directly enforceable, this one carries weight: it puts fossil fuel producers on notice and will likely influence future litigation and diplomacy.

For India, a top emissions country, the ruling underscores its obligations under Paris and customary law. India's leaders have pledged net-zero by 2070, but the ICJ opinion adds pressure to accelerate action (e.g. more renewable targets) or face "international legal responsibility" if climate harm worsens. Indian courts have already recognized environmental rights (e.g. a "right to be free from the adverse effects of climate change"). New international norms like this opinion could strengthen domestic climate litigation and push India's policy-makers to invest further in clean energy. Diplomatically, India will engage in climate talks (COP30 etc.) mindful that global law now emphasizes accountability for inaction, which could affect trade, finance and development assistance tied to India's climate performance.



IACHR: Stable Climate Declared a Human Right

In early July 2025 the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACtHR) issued a sweeping advisory opinion recognizing a human right to a stable climate. The Costa Rica-based court held that the American human-rights system (the OAS framework) requires states to protect "people alive today and future generations" from climate harms. It affirmed that the right to a healthy environment "includes the right to a stable climate". States must therefore take "urgent and effective" actions to cut greenhouse gases, adapt to impacts, and cooperate internationally. The opinion explicitly calls for legal measures – requiring stricter emissions rules, environmental impact assessments for fossil projects, and duties on polluting companies (especially big fossil-fuel firms) to avoid rights violations. Importantly, the advisory applies to all 35 OAS members (including the US and Canada), not just those who ratified the convention.

Though binding only as persuasive international law, the ruling cements a trend linking climate and human rights. For example, it suggests businesses can be held accountable for climate damage and victims may seek compensation for state failures. It is likely to influence courts and policies across the Americas (and beyond) by framing climate change as a rights violation rather than a purely economic issue. The IACtHR's approach could inspire similar doctrines elsewhere (e.g., under European or national rights law).

Impact on India: India is not an OAS member, but this development resonates globally. India's Supreme Court has recognized a right to a clean environment (interpreting the right to life), and young Indians have sued for stronger climate action. The Inter-American opinion reinforces a universal norm that may bolster Indian climate litigation and policy debates. It could encourage India to advocate stronger climate standards at UN forums (where India has co-sponsored climate rights language) and to integrate rights-based arguments in its strategies. On the diplomatic front, India, which maintains good ties with both the US and Latin America, may use this as leverage to push for equitable climate funding for developing countries.



UN Cybercrime Treaty Adopted, Spurs Cooperation and Rights Concerns

In late 2024, the UN General Assembly adopted the first global Convention on Cybercrime that will be effective soon. This landmark treaty aims to facilitate cross-border cooperation in tracking and prosecuting crimes involving information networks (e.g., fraud, child exploitation). Key provisions create obligations for nations to develop investigatory powers, share electronic evidence, and form a 24/7 transnational assistance network. Supporters say it will strengthen law enforcement against serious online crime globally. However, human-rights groups have warned of "grave" surveillance risks. Human Rights Watch cautioned that the treaty's broad scope (it covers any "serious crime" on networks) and weak safeguards could enable mass snooping and target dissidents. Critics note it could criminalize whistleblowing or journalism by labeling many actions as crimes.

The EU and major democracies are moving to ratify the convention, signaling backing for international standards (the EU plans to formally sign in late 2025). At the same time, civil liberties advocates call on governments to attach human-rights reservations before joining. The treaty's rules – for example, on obtaining data from tech firms across borders – will require significant legal changes in member states, and will likely influence data and privacy law debates worldwide.

India participated in drafting the treaty and may ratify it to help its cybercrime agenda. Currently, India has stringent IT and telecom regulations (e.g. data localization, broad police powers). The new treaty could prompt India to update laws like the Information Technology Act and the forthcoming Digital India Act to align with international standards on evidence sharing. India will also scrutinize human-rights implications; Indian tech firms cooperating under the treaty could face pressure on privacy standards. Diplomatically, India might leverage the convention to seek more support (and training) from other countries in cybercrime cases, while also emphasizing that enforcement must respect free speech. Economically, clearer rules on cyber offenses and evidence could benefit Indian IT companies that work on security, though they will need to navigate compliance with any new global data-sharing protocols.

UK-Germany “Kensington Treaty” Deepens Defense Ties

On July 17, 2025 the UK and Germany signed a historic bilateral security pact (informally dubbed the “Kensington Treaty”), their first such agreement since World War II. The deal pledges mutual defence assistance and tighter defence-industrial cooperation. Key points include joint campaigns to export advanced fighter jets, collaboration on defense technology (e.g. helicopters and munitions), and a commitment that an attack on one is an attack on the other. The treaty also commits both countries to bolster support for Ukraine, including further military aid and sanctions against Russia. Unusually, it extends into non-military areas: the countries agreed to coordinate on controlling “irregular migration” and on cybersecurity issues, reflecting shared concerns about authoritarian threats. British Defence Secretary Grant Shapps and his German counterpart emphasize that this cements a “new era” of UK-EU security ties after Brexit.

Experts see this as largely symbolic (both are NATO allies) but nevertheless significant: it signals post-Brexit UK’s resolve to maintain a strong EU partnership and shows Germany’s willingness to project military power abroad. By aligning on tech (like fighter jets) and strategic planning, the partners aim to ensure interoperability.

India, which also faces regional security challenges, will watch this European embrace with interest. India has separately been deepening defence ties with both nations (e.g. joint exercises and tech projects). The pact’s emphasis on tech co-development could signal opportunities: India might seek technology transfers or co-production deals via its defense partnerships with the UK and Germany. For instance, India is negotiating European fighter jet purchases (like Rafale’s successor) and the Kensington Treaty’s focus on jets could intersect with India’s own procurement plans. On the diplomatic front, India’s interest in a free and open Indo-Pacific aligns with allied support for Ukraine; a cohesive Europe bolstering rules-based order could mean more European backing for stability in Asia, which India could tap. On migration, the EU-UK focus contrasts with India’s positions; India may quietly note how major powers tackle cross-border flows without provoking human-rights concerns. Overall, the UK-Germany alliance reinforces a security landscape that India must navigate in its Europe and global outreach.



Thailand-Cambodia Border Ceasefire: ASEAN Monitors Deployed

After deadly clashes in late July 2025, Thailand and Cambodia agreed to an ASEAN-brokered truce, and each side will now host ASEAN observers along the disputed border. Foreign ministers and generals met in Kuala Lumpur (the ASEAN chair) on August 7 to finalize terms. They pledged to extend the ceasefire – which had halted five days of fighting triggered by a July 16 landmine blast – and keep troops on either side. Both governments will form interim observer teams drawn from other ASEAN armies, under Malaysia’s coordination, until a formal multinational mission is deployed. The United States hailed the move: Secretary of State Marco Rubio praised ASEAN’s role and reminded Thailand and Cambodia of trade privileges at stake if they resumed conflict.

However, some issues remain tense. Cambodia has insisted the 18 Cambodian soldiers captured by Thailand on the first day of the truce must be released unconditionally. Thailand calls them “prisoners of war” and refuses to free all until there is a “complete cessation of hostilities”. Both sides have accused each other of ceasefire violations in the first days. The observer teams are meant to help resolve such disputes. Local and regional media report that people along the border – including ethnic Khmer and tribal communities – are desperately hoping the monitors can keep the peace.



UN Summit Launches 15-Month Plan Toward Palestinian Statehood

At the UN’s July 28–30, 2025 conference on Palestine, 125 countries endorsed a declaration (the “New York Declaration”) supporting a phased two-state solution. The meeting, called under a UNGA resolution, aimed to jump-start peace after years of war. The declaration sets out a plan culminating in an independent, demilitarized Palestinian state living peacefully alongside Israel. It envisions the Palestinian Authority (PA) taking over governance of Gaza and the West Bank, with Hamas disarmed and international forces helping enforce a ceasefire. Importantly, the declaration calls on countries to recognize Palestine as an “essential” step toward peace. France announced it will recognize Palestine at the UN General Assembly in September, and the UK pledged conditional recognition (pending a Gaza ceasefire and progress). Israel boycotted the conference (as did the US), arguing it was “ill-timed” and not neutral. Conference speakers condemned all civilian killings: for the first time Arab governments publicly denounced the Hamas October 2023 attacks alongside condemning Israel’s Gaza offensive. While the declaration itself is not legally binding, it reflects an unprecedented global consensus urging a “path to a Palestinian state” and concrete steps toward it. Many Arab and European states see it as the beginning of a 15-month timeline to establish Palestinian state institutions, with a follow-up summit planned for late 2025.

India has traditionally supported a negotiated two-state solution and recognized Palestine in 1988, even as its relationship with Israel has grown closer. In this context, India will likely welcome renewed international focus on Palestinian statehood, which aligns with its long-standing UN position (India abstained on a past Palestinian statehood vote but has consistently urged direct talks). India’s sizable Muslim population and diaspora in the Gulf mean Middle East stability is always a factor in foreign policy. A credible plan for Palestine could improve regional security and protect India’s economic interests (trade, remittances, energy). Legally, India may view the UN declaration as reflecting emerging international consensus – this could influence India’s votes in UN bodies and its diplomatic efforts in the Arab world. However, India will also balance its firm ties with Israel and the US. Overall, the summit’s outcomes give India additional diplomatic cover to push for a two-state framework, while emphasizing humanitarian relief (for instance, renewing calls at the UN for aid to Gaza and for resumption of peace talks).

In July 2025, Greece enacted an emergency asylum law targeting boat arrivals from North Africa. Parliament approved a three-month suspension of asylum processing for migrants coming by sea from Libya and other nearby countries. The government says the surge of up to 1,000 arrivals per day was overwhelming island reception centres (especially on Crete), forcing drastic action. According to Greek officials, all new Mediterranean arrivals will now be intercepted and returned to North African ports without formal refugee interviews. The measure passed narrowly, despite fierce opposition from left-wing parties and human-rights advocates.

Almost immediately, the law provoked an outcry. The UN refugee agency UNHCR warned that border control “must be in line with international and European law”. UNHCR and the Council of Europe’s human-rights commissioner said the suspension likely violates the right to seek asylum and the principle of non-refoulement (not returning people to danger). Amnesty International denounced the move as “shameful” and illegal, arguing it “flagrantly violates international law” by punishing refugees based on how they arrive. Amnesty’s migration expert said Greece cannot simply turn back boat people without assessing their individual circumstances. Rights groups warn the new provisions risk unchecked mass deportations and arbitrary detention (Greece also plans new reception camps on Crete). The European Commission has hinted it may launch infringement proceedings if Greece’s measures contravene EU asylum rules.

Economically, Greek tensions could slightly affect India’s interests if EU trade or visa policies shift, but likely impact is minor. Overall, India may sympathize with Greece’s challenges but will also stress compliance with international law in bilateral and UN forums.

Duterte Surrendered to ICC on “Drug War” Murder Charges

In a historic step for accountability, former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte was arrested and handed over to the International Criminal Court in March 2025 on charges of crimes against humanity. The ICC chief prosecutor, Karim Khan, issued a warrant after investigating Duterte’s 2016–2022 “war on drugs,” which reportedly killed thousands. Duterte landed in The Hague on March 11, 2025, and “was taken into custody by the ICC”. Rights groups and victims’ families celebrated the arrest as overdue justice; one Amnesty International spokeswoman called it a “monumental and long-overdue step for justice” for thousands of victims. Meanwhile, Duterte’s supporters criticized the move as “absurd” and politically motivated, and the Philippines’ current president (Ferdinand Marcos Jr.) faces pressure over cooperating with the court.

The case is procedurally complex: the Philippines withdrew from the Rome Statute in 2019, but the ICC determined it still has jurisdiction over killings that happened while the country was a member. Duterte made an initial appearance in June 2025, confirming his identity and charges. Pre-trial judges will now decide if there is enough evidence to proceed to trial. A confirmation hearing is expected in September 2025. If convicted of murder as a crime against humanity, the 79-year-old could face life in prison.



U.S. “Big Beautiful Bill” Overhauls Global Tax Rules

In mid-2025 the U.S. Congress passed a sweeping tax reform (the “One Big Beautiful Bill” Act, signed July 4), revamping key corporate tax provisions. Its international measures significantly alter how U.S. multinationals are taxed. The 2017 global-intangible-low-taxed-income (GILTI) regime is reworked: it is renamed “Net CFC Tested Income” (NCTI) and its preferential deduction is cut from 50% to 40%, raising the effective U.S. rate on foreign profits to 12.6%. Meanwhile the Foreign-Derived Intangible Income (FDII) break is scrapped and rebranded FDDEI (“Foreign-Derived Deduction Eligible Income”). Its deduction shrinks from 37.5% to 33.34%, meaning non-U.S. sales now face about a 14% tax. The law also tightens foreign tax credit rules (raising the “haircut” and eliminating a 10% deemed return), brings back limits on earnings stripping, and permanently lowers the BEAT tax rate to 10.5%.

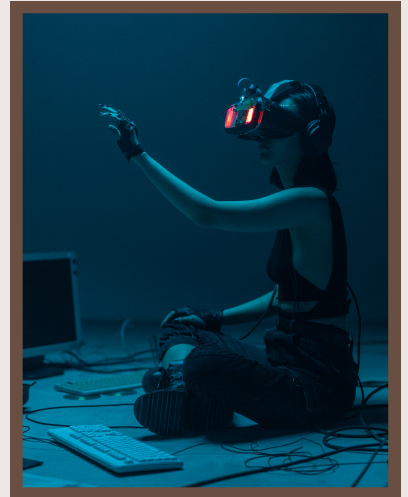
These changes curb incentives to park profits in low-tax havens. By raising taxes on earnings of foreign subsidiaries, the U.S. aims to prevent companies shifting income offshore. For multinational businesses, this means a higher U.S. tax bill on foreign income. At the same time, the act reinstates full expensing and relaxes interest deductibility to boost domestic investment. Economists say the net effect is that U.S. companies pay a bit more tax on their overseas earnings, while the global minimum tax (Pillar Two) negotiated in OECD talks is effectively embedded in U.S. law. This move makes the U.S. international tax code more consistent with global rules and may lead other countries (including India) to adjust their own tax policies in response. Impact on India: Although these are U.S. laws, they will affect Indian companies with U.S. operations and tax treaties. Indian IT, pharma, and manufacturing firms that earn income in the U.S. or own subsidiaries there will see higher effective taxes on foreign profits. India’s own multinational groups (e.g. Tata, Infosys) will need to recalibrate transfer pricing and repatriation plans in light of the reduced deductions. The changes also set a higher floor on global tax rates, bolstering India’s support for a global minimum tax (India’s MAT tax already reflects this trend). For investors, the reforms could slightly dampen after-tax returns from U.S. investments abroad, which might influence financial flows between the U.S. and India. Diplomatically, India will note that the U.S. has joined the push for taxing global tech profits; this could strengthen India’s hand in OECD negotiations. Finally, the act’s emphasis on taxing digital services revenues (as part of FDDEI) echoes India’s recent digital tax law, suggesting India and the U.S. might find common ground on taxing Big Tech in future talks.



Add a little bit New Research: Multi-Layer AI Verification Frameworks

In July 2025 researchers at RAND Corporation proposed a novel framework for verifying international AI agreements. A new working paper outlines “six layers of verification” to ensure countries comply with global AI safety rules. These layers include hardware-based attestations, auditing of AI models, monitoring compute usage, and even whistleblower reporting mechanisms. The authors argue that even major powers (e.g. the U.S. and China) could use these tools to demonstrate adherence to agreed limits on advanced AI development. While recognizing technical and trust challenges, the paper suggests combining multiple approaches (e.g. secure supply-chain checks, shared threat-intel, and model watermarking) to create a robust oversight regime.

This research comes amid a flurry of AI ethics initiatives (UNESCO’s AI guidelines, the EU AI Act, the G7’s code of conduct, etc.). The RAND framework is primarily theoretical, but it highlights concrete methods (like requiring chip manufacturers to certify AI usage, or using encrypted logs of supercomputer runs) that could eventually underpin treaties or pacts on AI. It reflects growing consensus that voluntary codes may be insufficient: some form of technical compliance monitoring will be needed if states are to trust each other in limiting AI risks.



Add a little bit of bSafety Treaty: Experts Urge Compute Thresholds and Oversight

Also, this summer, AI safety experts published a detailed proposal calling for a formal international AI safety treaty. In an arXiv paper (July 2025), Scholefield et al. review existing AI governance ideas and recommend a treaty that sets a compute threshold: any AI model trained with computing power above a certain level would be subject to stringent oversight. Above this threshold, developers would need to allow model audits, adhere to security protocols, and report to an international network of “AI Safety Institutes” (AISIs). These institutes, envisioned as a global watchdog network, could even have authority to pause dangerous AI development. The treaty would combine enforceable measures for high-risk AI with a flexible structure to adapt as technology advances.

The paper reflects growing alarm about “frontier AI” and builds on calls from scientists for global action (including reports from the UK and EU). While purely academic, the proposal mirrors discussions at G7/G20 summits about binding AI controls. It suggests using a concrete metric (compute used in training) to decide which AI systems need international governance. This approach could complement existing efforts (like the UN and OECD AI frameworks) by adding teeth: it moves beyond voluntary ethics to mandatory checks on super-powerful AI.

On the other hand, India will be cautious about capping technology: as a major digital exporter, it would insist on fair thresholds and not disadvantage its firms. Overall, these proposals add to the global dialogue that India participates in, and may inform how India frames its demands at UN bodies or technology forums: advocating for practical, enforceable checks on AI advancement.

UK Bans Palestine Action, Triggering Protests

In early July 2025 the UK government moved to ban Palestine Action, a small British pro-Palestinian protest group, under its terrorism laws. The Home Secretary proscribed the group effective July 5, meaning membership or support carries up to 14 years in prison. This was approved by Parliament and upheld by UK courts: a legal challenge by the group’s co-founder failed at the last minute. UK authorities argue that Palestine Action’s direct actions (such as storming Israeli arms factories) fall under the law’s broad definition of “terrorist activities.” This marked the first time a domestic protest group has been banned alongside international terror organizations like ISIS.

The decision sparked immediate controversy. Lawyers and rights advocates blasted it as extreme and unwarranted. A senior barrister called it “absurd” to equate non-violent civil disobedience with terrorism. Hundreds of protesters marched in London with placards saying “We are all Palestine Action,” defiantly warning they would continue to protest UK complicity in Gaza genocide. International observers joined in condemnation: UN human-rights experts and civil liberties groups labeled the ban “draconian” and a violation of free-expression norms. The case is now heading back to court for a full judicial review on July 21, where the group will challenge its proscription. Meanwhile, UK police warned that showing solidarity (even peaceful) could technically become a crime under the new law, raising alarms about a chilling effect on political speech.

This controversial UK move is likely to resonate in India’s political and legal circles. India has used anti-terror laws (like the UAPA) to ban militant and extremist outfits, but banning a non-violent protest group is unprecedented even by those standards. Indian civil-society activists may see parallels to debates over the limits of dissent and anti-terrorism. The Indian government, which has close relations with both Israel and the UK, will probably stay publicly neutral, but human-rights observers will watch how freely pro-Palestine voices can operate without fear of terrorism charges. In foreign policy terms, India usually balances its historic support for Palestinian statehood with strong ties to Israel; Delhi might quietly note that its ally (the UK) is taking a hard line against certain pro-Palestinian activists. India’s legal community could cite the UK case in discussing the scope of laws like the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act: it might serve as a cautionary example for India’s own democracy in distinguishing militancy from political protest.

Sagar to Mahasagar : Steering India's Maritime Destiny

India's maritime diplomacy has witnessed nothing short of a strategic renaissance over the past decade. From a hesitant coastal observer, India has stepped into the role of a confident regional maritime power. This shift has not been accidental — it is born out of geography, necessity, and a growing recognition that the Indian Ocean is the true stage where India's rise will be tested.

With a 7,500 km coastline, strategically placed island territories, and near-total dependence on maritime routes for trade and energy, India simply cannot afford complacency. Nearly 80 percent of the country's crude oil imports pass through some of the world's most vulnerable chokepoints—the Strait of Hormuz, Bab-el-Mandeb, and the Strait of Malacca. Any disruption here is not a minor inconvenience; it is an existential threat to India's economic lifeblood.

The Indian Ocean is not just a blue expanse on the map. It is the conveyor belt of global commerce, linking West Asia's oil wells to East Asia's factories, Africa's resources to global markets. And it is increasingly a zone of strategic contestation, where the flags of multiple navies flutter with intent. In this environment, passivity is peril. India's decision to move from a defensive stance to actively shaping the regional order is not just strategic wisdom—it's strategic survival.

SAGAR: From Coastal Sentinel to Regional Balancer

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 2015 launch of the SAGAR doctrine - Security and Growth for All in the Region - was a turning point in India's maritime thought. SAGAR recognized what was long overdue: security cannot be divorced from economic growth, environmental stewardship, and disaster preparedness. Under SAGAR, India began to wear the mantle of "net security provider" with visible confidence. Anti-piracy patrols in the Gulf of Aden and the Western Indian Ocean became routine, ensuring that global shipping lanes stayed safe. The creation of a Maritime Domain Awareness network—with radar chains across Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles, and Sri Lanka feeding data to the Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) gave India eyes and ears across vast stretches of ocean. Naval exercises like Milan, Malabar, and Varuna were no longer symbolic; they were proof of operational synergy with like-minded partners such as the US, Japan, Australia, and France. Connectivity diplomacy complemented this security outreach. Chabahar port in Iran opened doors to Afghanistan and Central Asia, while Sittwe in Myanmar brought the Northeast into maritime play. Submarine optical fibre cables to the Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Maldives, and Mauritius improved communications while subtly reinforcing strategic depth.

Even the blue economy - once an afterthought - became a policy priority. India began exploring regulated fisheries, marine biotechnology, ocean-based renewable energy, and sustainable seabed mining. And diplomatically, platforms like IORA, IONS, and BIMSTEC allowed India to push for a free, open, and rule-based maritime order. Yet, despite these gains, challenges multiplied. China's String of Pearls—ports and bases from Gwadar to Djibouti—was not an abstract theory; it was a living, expanding network of influence. Climate change loomed as an existential crisis for small island states. Non-traditional threats like piracy, trafficking, maritime terrorism persisted. SAGAR was strong, but it was no longer enough.



Mahasagar Vision: Thinking Beyond the Horizon

India's response is to evolve SAGAR into the Mahasagar Vision, an unapologetically ambitious maritime doctrine that accepts the 21st century's reality: hard security is essential, but soft power, economic integration, and environmental leadership are equally critical. On security, Mahasagar envisions a bolder India. Forward operating bases will extend the navy's reach. Logistics agreements with the US, France, Australia, and Japan will ensure that Indian warships can refuel and resupply from Africa's eastern coast to the Western Pacific. Spacebased ocean surveillance will give India real-time tracking of both hostile ships and illicit activity, from smuggling to unregulated fishing. This is not just deterrence; it is strategic presence. But Mahasagar is not a war plan. It is also a blueprint for capacity-building. India is training partner nations in navigation, port management, and sustainable fishing, while expanding its humanitarian assistance and disaster relief capabilities. These efforts are not charity—they are investments in goodwill, influence, and regional stability. When a cyclone hits or a tsunami strikes, the first ship on the horizon should fly the Indian flag. The environmental plank is perhaps Mahasagar's most revolutionary aspect. Unlike traditional doctrines where "green" issues are token add-ons, here environmental stewardship is the pivot. Green shipping corridors aim to slash maritime emissions. Regional climate adaptation funds will help vulnerable states survive rising seas. And sustainable marine resource exploitation will ensure that growth today doesn't destroy the ocean's future. At its core, Mahasagar rests on three interlocking pillars: security, connectivity, and sustainability. Security ensures open, safe, and coercion-free sea lanes. Connectivity fosters trade, cultural exchange, and technology transfer. Sustainability safeguards marine ecosystems—not as a moral afterthought, but as a foundation for economic resilience.



The Stakes for India - and the Region

If Mahasagar is realized in full, the Indian Ocean could be transformed from a chessboard of rivalries into a highway of shared prosperity. But if India falters—if it over-militarizes without building trust, or pushes trade without environmental checks—the region could slide into the very zero-sum competition it seeks to avoid. This is why the doctrine's balance is crucial. The Indian Ocean's destiny will not be decided solely by who has the largest fleet, but by who can combine power with partnership, presence with principles. India has both the moral claim—as a resident power with millennia of maritime heritage—and the practical capacity to lead. But leadership is not declared; it is earned, wave by wave, port by port, crisis by crisis. From the cautious steps of SAGAR to the sweeping reach of Mahasagar, India's maritime journey mirrors its larger foreign policy evolution: more confident, more integrated, and more willing to shoulder responsibility. In the end, this is about more than securing India's coasts. It is about shaping the maritime future of an entire region—ensuring that the Indian Ocean remains, not a battleground for empires, but a shared space of peace, prosperity, and resilience.

The question is not whether India can do this. The real question is whether India will have the will to see it through, because in the Indian Ocean, as in the tides, opportunities do not wait.

India and Multilateralism: Reforming the United Nations Security Council

The Security Council of the United Nations is an agency regarded to be the foremost guardian of peace and security of the world. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is supposed to be the main guardian of peace and security in the world. However, almost 80 years after the Council was created, its composition reflects the realities of geopolitics in 1945, instead of those of the 21st century. As the global order transitions towards multipolarity, India has so far become the primary voice calling for reform, arguing that the UNSC must reform to stay legitimate and representative and hence, effective.

India's Claim to a Permanent Seat:

Several interrelated arguments support the candidature of India for permanent membership in the Council. Being the most populous country and largest democracy, India represents a significant segment of humanity and embodies democratic values on a scale that no other nation can match. On the economic front, India emerges as the fifth-largest economy, with power and potential markets and trade links and technological innovations, creating an essential platform in the world economy. It has established itself as a country committed to peace and stability, being always one of the largest contributors to the UN peacekeeping operations, often sending troops to some of the most dangerous conflict areas. Strategically, India has an extensive network of partnerships, balancing relations with the major powers and the Global South alike. These make a strong argument in favor of a permanent seat for India on the Security Council.



Multilateralism in Action:

India's stance is multilateralism-based, recognizing that unilateralism and great-power dominance cannot confront shared global threats. It promotes the UNSC expansion in conjunction with the G4 alliance (comprising Brazil, Germany, Japan, and India) and supports its reform agenda in other forums, including BRICS, G20, and the Quad.

Challenges Ahead:

While support is growing, the opposition of some P5 members, particularly China, still is a major stumbling block. Progress is delayed due to worries about regional rivalries and the dilution of veto power. The issue of reform becomes even more convoluted in the absence of an agreement on the size, scope, and criteria for new permanent members.

Why It Matters?

Reforming the UNSC is not just about India's ambitions; it is about making the institution truly representative of the world today. An inclusive Council with the voices of emerging economies and the Global South would lend greater legitimacy to Council decisions and strengthen its ability to cope with global crises.

Looking Forward:

India's campaign for the reform of the UNSC is not simply a matter of diplomatic intent; instead, it reflects a larger vision of a fair, more inclusive international order. The Security Council will continue to gain importance as power becomes more diffused globally. Through the hustle of coalition-building and growing economic clout and narrative shaping in multilateral forums, India is destined to remain at the forefront of this historic push for change.

Between General Data Protection Regulations and the Great Firewall: India's Data Laws and Global Position

In early August 2023, after more than half a decade of debate, the Indian Parliament enacted the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023. By codifying India's first comprehensive data-privacy regime, New Delhi has signaled that the law's implications go far beyond domestic consent notices. The big question is how this law will position India on the global data map. India appears to be charting a middle course, a pivot towards the rights-affirming General Data Protection Regulation of the European Union, while also employing a calculated strategy of regulatory positioning in the global digital order. The DPDP Act indeed includes consent-based rules and some individual rights, but it also embeds wide state exemptions and localization elements. Instead of imposing blanket bans, the Act allows cross-border flows to certain notified countries. The DPDP Act is as much about India's international alignment as about personal privacy. It threads a needle between the EU's rights-first model and the East's sovereignty-first approach.

The Law in Brief - DPDP Act's

Core Provisions

The DPDP Act mandates that personal data processing generally be based on consent. Individuals (or "data principals") must give clear, informed consent before a data fiduciary can process their data. In practice, this consent must be "free, specific, informed, unconditional and unambiguous," similar to the GDPR's standard. The law grants data principals rights such as accessing, correcting, and erasing their data. On paper, this mimics the EU framework; privacy commentators note that India's notice-and-consent requirements "are comparable to the EU GDPR". However, the Act also brings in broad government powers. For example, Section 17 largely exempts state bodies: it explicitly allows processing "in the interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India, security of the state, etc." effectively placing intelligence and law-enforcement agencies outside the law's purview. The government may also notify classes of data fiduciaries (e.g., startups) to be exempted from obligations for up to five years. In short, most state uses of data face little oversight under the DPDP Act. On international flows, the Act takes a whitelisting approach. Transfers to countries may proceed under contractual safeguards. Notably, there is no EU-style adequacy mechanism: India is not pledged to meet any external standard. Instead, the default is openness to all countries not barred. A legal analysis finds this "does not provide for an adequacy decision" as in the GDPR, but only leaves it to future rules. Regulatory oversight also differs from Europe. The law establishes a Data Protection Board (DPB) in lieu of the independent Data Protection Authority envisaged in 2019. But the DPB is not an autonomous watchdog. It is appointed by the government and empowered mainly to handle breach investigations and impose penalties. It cannot issue binding rules or conduct broad supervision in advance. The DPDP Act establishes a consent-based baseline (with penalties up to ₹250 crore), yet it omits some hallmarks of the European model: there is no independent regulator with rulemaking power, and no preset "adequacy" path for cross-border transfers. These omissions will shape how global partners read India's intentions.

Positioning India: GDPR vs Great Firewall.

The DPDP Act blends elements of both Western and Eastern models of data governance, reflecting India's strategic calculus. From the EU's perspective, the law has familiar trappings: it enshrines user consent, limits processing to declared purposes, and gives citizens rights over their data. In that sense, it looks like a GDPR-style regime. Yet beneath the rhetoric, the safeguards are comparatively weaker. In Europe, data protection is a fundamental right enshrined in the EU Charter, backed by strong independent authorities and judicial oversight. India's law, by contrast, is purely statutory and perched atop the related right to privacy enshrined in Article 21 of the Constitution. The government-appointed DPB lacks the autonomy of EU regulators; it cannot pre-approve data practices or compel compliance beyond punishing violations after the fact. India's privacy rights sit lower than in the EU: they exist by law, not by constitutional guarantee. When it comes to cross-border data, India's stance is more flexible than Europe's. Under GDPR, any transfer to a third country typically requires an EU Commission adequacy finding or rigorous safeguards to assure comparable protection. The DPDP Act opts instead for a negative list of blacklisted nations. Any country not blacklisted is, at least initially, treated as safe for transfers. In theory, New Delhi could even use its list in trade talks with Washington or Brussels, promising cross-border flows to a partner in exchange for concessions. For now, however, the law simply signals that India will not erect a blanket firewall against foreign data, leaving it agile in negotiations. On the other hand, the DPDP Act echoes the sovereignty-first model of China. Section 17's exemptions for "sovereignty, integrity, and security" mirror Beijing's data-security laws that treat information as a national asset. China's 2021 Data Security Law and Personal Information Protection Law impose strict controls on data deemed sensitive: they require domestic storage of "core" data and bar providing Chinese-held data to foreign authorities without state approval. India similarly harbors a legacy of localization – the Reserve Bank's 2018 rule mandating that payment data stay in India, or CERT-In's 2022 directive on log retention. While the DPDP Act itself does not harden localization, its allowance for restricting transfers by notification keeps the idea alive. Like China, India's logic is that some data flows may conflict with national interests. By exempting government uses and preserving localization authorities, the DPDP Act frames digital information partly as an element of Indian sovereignty. Why does this hybrid stance matter? Because it lets India engage both with the EU and the Global South. By retaining some GDPR-like safeguards, India can claim it respects individual rights and is capable of "EU-grade" regulation – a vital selling point in adequacy discussions. Yet by emphasizing sovereign controls, it aligns with the BRICS/Global South refrain that data rules must not trap developing nations in an asymmetric digital game. India's negotiators frequently invoke the "digital divide," arguing that unfettered data flows simply entrench Big Tech's advantage over emerging economies. In line with this view, India has resisted WTO e-commerce proposals (the E-Commerce JSI) that would lock in liberal data commitments. Observers see this as a deliberate "pivot" from a purely hardline position: one analysis notes the new law provides a compromise path, giving India room to satisfy neither Eurocrats pushing data free flow nor hardliners demanding absolute localization. This middle path is a statement of identity in itself: India is neither fully in Brussels' camp nor locked in Beijing's sandbox, but trying to bridge the two.

The Diplomacy Dimension - India's Global Digital Identity

The choices in India's data law will play out on multiple international stages. In the EU–India free trade agreement (FTA) negotiations, digital trade is a live issue. The EU, as one of India's largest services investors, wants clear commitments on data flows; India's prior insistence on localization has been a hurdle. Press reports note that the latest FTA draft includes a digital chapter covering cross-border data flows and privacy. However, India "has traditionally resisted altering its stance on data localization ... to preserve policy space," even in plurilateral talks like the WTO work program. In Brussels, officials are watching closely. A European Parliament question explicitly asked whether India's law, amid concerns about surveillance, can meet GDPR adequacy standards^[19]. The EU's assessment will likely hinge on how Indian authorities implement the Act: if New Delhi demonstrates robust enforcement and limits on exemptions, Europe may be more inclined toward an adequacy finding; if the law remains vague and pliable, Europe's trust will be thin.

Beyond the EU, India is asserting a distinct posture in other forums. As co-chair of the G20 Digital Economy Working Group under India's 2023 Presidency, it pushed the concept of digital public infrastructure (DPI). Ministers in Bengaluru endorsed DPI — secure, interoperable, open networks to drive inclusion and trust — and this definition bore India's imprint. This success allows New Delhi to export its "India Stack" model (e.g., Aadhaar, UPI) as a development tool. At the same time, in multilateral bodies like the UN and WTO, India stresses data sovereignty. India often frames its position as protecting developing-country rights: it argues that data governance should "drive development" and help narrow the digital divide, not simply facilitate Western tech dominance. On the WTO floor, India allied with South Africa to oppose declarations like the G20 "Data Free Flow with Trust," seeing them as one-size-fits-all. India also declined to join the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework's (IPEF) trade pillar, in part citing the need to maintain its data-localization flexibility. Meanwhile, India's emerging role in groups like the Quad (with the US, Japan, and Australia) mixes these signals. Quad technology ministerial statements emphasize "open, interoperable, reliable, and secure" digital connectivity (a language that echoes both GDPR and India's DPI narrative). India is positioning itself as a leader for the Global South on digital issues — for example, by hosting the Asia regional consultations on the UN's Global Digital Compact, where it championed non-discriminatory and inclusive access. Importantly, observers note that India's recent approach to data has improved its credibility. An Atlantic Council analyst argues that this "data localization pivot" has opened space for "robust digital diplomacy" to bridge the gaps between major democracies. By not fully abandoning either the EU model or the Chinese model, India hopes to sell itself as a bridge-builder in digital governance: a country that can uphold privacy and innovation while defending strategic autonomy.

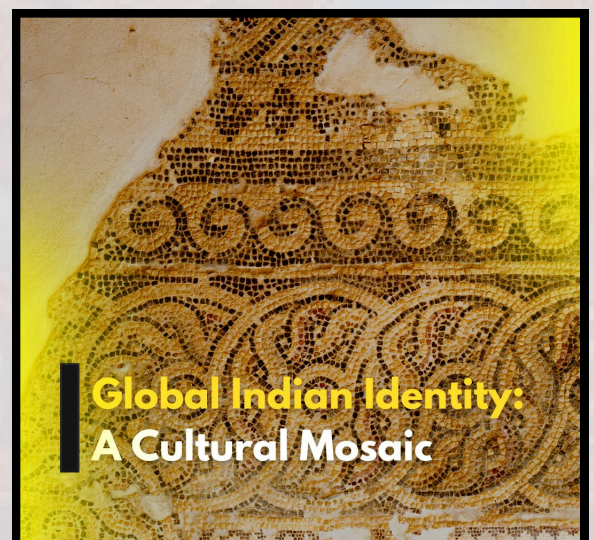


About India's Global Identity

India's DPDP Act ultimately reveals a calculated middle path. It is not a wholesale adoption of the EU's rights-based GDPR regime, nor a mere mimicry of China's Great Firewall. Instead, India has constructed a hybrid framework: one that borrows the language of consent and user rights, but places them under a canopy of sovereign discretion. In doing so, New Delhi is signaling that it seeks to occupy the space between the Global North and the Global South in the digital order. This "middle way" could be India's strength, allowing it to negotiate with both Brussels and Beijing, and to champion a role as a mediator in global tech norms.

However, the very ambiguity of this approach also carries risks. If India appears too flexible – overly quick to carve out exceptions – it may undermine the trust of EU and U.S. partners who fear lax privacy standards. Conversely, if India's sovereignty claims become too rigid, it could scare away tech investors and free-trade proponents. India's digital sovereignty narrative must therefore be carefully calibrated: it has to persuade others that its policies protect domestic needs, without defaulting to isolationism.

In the end, the DPDP Act is one more step in India's ongoing project of defining itself as a digital power. Each legislative choice — from consent mechanisms to data localization rules — contributes to India's global identity. In a world of competing models, India is staking out its own plot, aiming to be neither an island behind a firewall nor a mirror of Western norms. In the era of digital sovereignty, that identity is still under construction — one law at a time.



DAMMED IF YOU DO: The Crosscurrents of the Indus Waters Treaty

INTRODUCTION

The Indus Waters Treaty, originally signed in 1960 and negotiated with the help of the World Bank, mentions in its preamble: ‘The Government of India and the Government of Pakistan ... in a spirit of goodwill and friendship ...’. Signed in the midst of an extremely tumultuous period in Indo-Pak relations, the Indus Waters Treaty is seen as one of the most successful cross-national treaties. It has survived continuous tensions—including, but not limited to, three wars and countless conflicts, skirmishes, and cross border operations. However, following the 2025 Pahalgam terrorist attacks (alleged to have been sponsored by Islamabad according to New Delhi), the aforementioned spirit seems to have run out. New Delhi has paused its participation in the treaty “until Pakistan credibly and irrevocably abjures its support for cross-border terrorism”. Given these recent developments, it becomes imperative to reassess the treaty’s relevance and practical enforceability amidst its fragile standing. This paper explores the feasibility of the Indus Waters Treaty in the current geopolitical situation, and if renegotiation of the treaty can become more than just a pipe dream between the two bitter rival nations.



HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND PAST UTILITY

The 1947 partition of the Indian subcontinent not only drew borders dividing a historically single state entity, but also separated the Indus waters river system, which supports a population of over 300 million people, between two nations. The border, divided by the parting colonial power, assigned the waters between the two newborn nations as heedlessly as they did the rest of the subcontinent. The birth of the Indus Waters Treaty was born with the help of the World Bank through the effort of countless negotiations, conferences, and scruples between the two increasingly hostile nations; but it was this endeavour that produced one of, if not the most, successful water-sharing treaties of the modern world. The treaty assigned the western rivers in the system—Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab—to Pakistan and their eastern counterparts—Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej—to India. The treaty’s terms also dictated for the creation of a Permanent Indus Commission, within which each country had to appoint a commissioner to ensure that a channel of communication remained open between the two countries over disputes regarding the rivers, etc. Its sophisticated and detailed conflict resolution mechanism aided the survival of the treaty through some of the most charged conflicts in South Asia over the years—Operation Gibraltar, where approximately 3000 Indian soldiers were martyred; the Third India-Pakistan war, where India supported Bangladeshis through their independence; Kargil War, one of the highest-altitude wars ever fought, etc. In recent times, however, with the degradation of good faith amongst nations, the treaty’s relevance has come under renewed scrutiny. Challenges posed by changing climate patterns, population pressures, and infrastructural advancements have begun to test the treaty’s rigidity. What was once hailed as a diplomatic triumph now sits at the edge of obsolescence, caught between the past it served and the future it may no longer be fit to navigate.

THE CURRENT GEOPOLITICAL REALITIES

The first drought in the now-drying riverbed of the Indus Waters Treaty came when India announced plans for the Baglihar hydroelectric project on the Chenab river. Islamabad claimed that the design was in direct violation of New Delhi’s treaty-bound obligations to allow the waters to flow, but tensions continued flowing strong even after a neutral design expert levied changes. This undercurrent of mistrust intensified with the Kishanganga project, where Islamabad accused New Delhi of diverting water from the Neelum, a tributary of the Jhelum. While the Permanent Court of Arbitration permitted the project with certain restrictions, the legal proceedings augmented the growing fracture in the Treaty’s operational trust. In the aftermath of the 2016 Uri attack, New Delhi signaled a more assertive stance, stating that “blood and water cannot flow together.” Meetings of the Permanent Indus Commission were suspended, and officials indicated a willingness to fully utilize India’s allotted share—moves Islamabad warned could escalate tensions. By 2019, New Delhi announced its intent to prevent any of its eastern river waters from flowing into Pakistan’s territory. In 2023, New Delhi formally issued notice seeking modifications to the Treaty, citing evolving geopolitical and hydrological realities. Islamabad rejected the move, labeling it unilateral and destabilizing. The most decisive rupture came in April 2025, following a terror attack in Pahalgam. New Delhi declared the Treaty suspended “for all practical purposes” and halted Chenab River flows at Baglihar. Islamabad termed the action an act of war and warned of severe retaliation. Once a symbol of cross-border resilience, the Indus Waters Treaty now stands on parched ground—dammed by distrust, and diverted by the shifting currents of regional strategy.

IS THE IWT STILL A FIT TODAY?

The IWT has been put under the pressure to go under review each time a fresh conflict ensues between India and Pakistan, with Indian political discourse commonly revolving around whether or not suspending it is a feasible diplomatic tool. Political pundits in favour of suspension argue that New Delhi doesn’t take enough advantage of being the upper riparian state in the river that sustains a large portion of the Pakistani population—the treaty rests on the sole goodwill of New Delhi as the upper riparian state, and if Islamabad is comfortable in allegedly sponsoring terrorism on Indian soil, they should be willing to deal with the consequences of New Delhi’s retaliation. This is the same justification recently given by New Delhi after putting the treaty into abeyance, claiming it won’t be lifted until Islamabad stops funding such internal disturbances. The former Secretary General of the UN Boutros Boutros-Ghali claimed that the next war in the Middle East will be fought over water, not politics. While he might have been wrong in terms of direct interpretation, this statement is quickly spiraling to becoming a reality in the South Asian context. Pakistan is moving from a ‘water-stressed’ state to a ‘water-scarce’ state. The Indus Basin Irrigation System irrigates land that makes up nearly 90% of Pakistan’s agricultural resources. With India threatening to withhold such precious water resources from Islamabad, the threat of these ‘water wars’ is closer now than ever. There is perhaps no argument against disregarding the treaty better than the deterrence of war. There is also the matter of the response of the international community that New Delhi has to consider, who will undoubtedly be in favor of Islamabad’s water crisis. However, it is undeniable that the treaty requires multiple renegotiations—no state whose internal sovereignty is being actively threatened by a neighbour can uphold the goodwill and friendship the original treaty is based off of.



HIGH SCHOOL WRITE - UP



Introduction

Today, India commands the world stage with a voice that is firm, unyielding, and impossible to ignore- whether in geopolitics, economics, or global forums. Yet, this assertive stance was not born in comfort; it was forged in centuries of trial. The roots of this revolutionary thought trace back to a time when the very air of our homeland felt stolen- when the gruesome fingers of colonial rule wrapped itself around our throats. And for the first time, we felt choked. For years, we struggled in a futile but desperate attempt to breathe- and now, we were kneeling. Kneeling before captivity dressed as amity on our own soil. We were forced to yield, forced to become their Rooks. Why? All because they were bored, and frankly, had no other pawns to play with. They tortured us, exploited us, ashamed and kept us in rusted shackles.

From Oppression to opposition



National awakening was still a nascent concept, but it watered the seeds of unity with a haste that shook the very pillars of the British foundation. With the onset of germination, all we Indians had to do now was watch. Then it came- the tree of rathore, singh, gandhi, and the likes. The newfound branches of the tree to hold the leaves of our tenacity harboured fruits, speaking to tell us that that our time is now. It was made clear. The time was ripe- for us to gear up, and for the East India Company to hide.

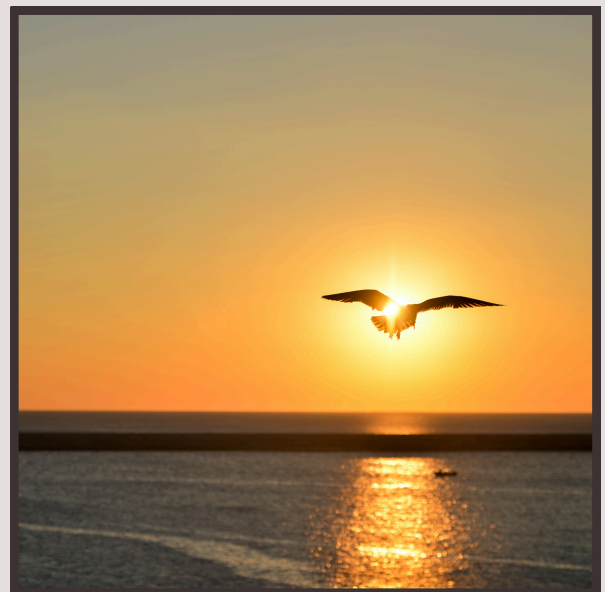
But this again was most like a candle in the wind. The flame was gone just as soon as it came. "Betrayal always stings worse when it comes from those we deem our friends." It's a quote we're all familiar with, and woefully, so were the Britishers. This led to their next best strategic move- divide the unity, multiply the disparity. This time too they attempted to tie us, to break us- and this time too, they failed. The religious divide and internal rebellion was the Trojan of their empire. Outwardly innocent, it oiled the hamster's wheel that quietly spun the gears in the minds of our revolutionary thinkers.

The Chains that Sets Us Free

With dawn breaking and revenge still due, the Indians witnessed the rise of something new, and luckily, certain. The Britishers bound us with shackles that were meant to make our resolve falter. Some of us tripped over our own feet, but some other of us took advantage of them. Pioneers like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Swami Vivekananda, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and many more believed that the shackles were on our feet, not our minds. "where fists fail, wits come in handy." They weaponised literature- the silent power behind our independence- and thus was borne the AlHilal. it was the lamp in the darkness that consumed our minds, transforming not only our perception, but also denting the good natured facade of the British.

Kesari and the Ghare-Baire seemed to illuminate the machiavellian words around our torturers: befool, exploit, deprive, win, discard, and of course, repeat. Thanks to the Britishers, our eyes were opened to injustice and corruption, all wisely interlaced with pretentious altruism. For 200 years, we bled. But in the process, we grew. We learnt. We became inured. We learnt to forgive, but never forget. And so, as retribution we impaled them with the same sword that they struck our backs with. They once taxed our salt. Now? we spice up their cuisine and sell it back for ten times the price.

We journeyed from an armed revolution to a revolution of the mind. The chains meant to bind us only set us free- transforming our pain into power, and our silence into a resounding anthem.





India's Calculated Path Through De-Dollarization: Independence in Finance

As our nation marks another Independence Day, it is worth acknowledging that freedom today reaches into global finance, where sovereignty is shaped by currency choices. India's stance on de-dollarization blends discretion with strategic foresight. At the Rio BRICS Summit in July 2025, leaders endorsed an alternative payment system to SWIFT, designed to make transactions among Global South nations more efficient, secure and resilient. It is a concrete step towards collective financial autonomy, grounded in shared pragmatism. India remains deliberate in its strategy. As External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar declared, "India has never been for dedollarization ... there is no proposal for a BRICS currency." This statement reveals India's intent to diminish reliance on the dollar through innovation, not disruption. On the domestic front, the Reserve Bank of India bolsters financial resilience by encouraging trade de-risking through local currency settlements and Vostro account structures. The rupee-dirham corridor with the UAE and the growing acceptance of UPI across nations in South and Southeast Asia signal India's methodical global currency diplomacy. Globally, central banks are accelerating gold accumulation as a strategic hedge. In Q1 2025, they purchased a record 244 tonnes of gold and added another 166 tonnes in Q2. This trend underscores gold's enduring role as a reliable reserve in times of geopolitical uncertainty. India saw a notable increase too. The RBI added 500 kg in June 2025, bringing its holdings close to 880 tonnes, with gold comprising over 12 per cent of its forex reserves, up from 8.9 per cent a year earlier. India's rejection of a unified BRICS currency is not timidity but realism. Economic diversity among member states and absence of fiscal coordination make a common currency risky and could compromise India's monetary sovereignty. Therefore, India advocates institutional reform and inclusion within bodies such as the New Development Bank and the IMF rather than symbolic monetary unity. This is not reactive posturing but assertive diplomacy. India positions itself as a thoughtful designer of the future financial order by modernising payments architecture, accumulating resilient reserves and prompting global governance reforms that reflect multipolar realities. If 1947 freed India from colonial chains, then 2025 is about liberating financial independence. Our flag may fly over the land, but the true measure of sovereignty lies in the strength of our economic choices.

