

PSIR & GS-2 Daily Brief

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Article - 1 : AI is bringing the battle to the door of the national security bureaucracy

AI is bringing the battle to the door of the national-security bureaucracy



RAJA MANDALA
C RAJA MOHAN

SINGAPORE'S FOREIGN minister, Vivian Balakrishnan, has opened a window into the future of diplomacy. In a Facebook post, he declared that "the diplomat who learns to work with AI will have a meaningful edge". The remark accompanied his unveiling of a personal AI agent using open-source software and a low-cost computer.

That a sitting foreign minister coded his own AI assistant is remarkable: that he published the entire architecture on GitHub is even more so. He has shown how accessible AI tools have become, how entry barriers to using AI are lowering, and how profoundly they could reshape diplomatic practice.

The AI assistant that Balakrishnan built is not a regular chatbot. It connects to the minister's communication channels, processes voice notes and images, schedules tasks, and — crucially — retains structured memory. Unlike conventional AI assistants that forget everything between sessions, his AI assistant extracts facts, synthesises them into a knowledge graph, and recalls them when needed. Balakrishnan describes it as an "invaluable" research assistant and admits, "I don't dare switch it off."

Diplomacy has always rested on two pillars: institutional memory — the accumulated record of who said what, when, and why in the engagement between governments — and individual craft, honed through years of negotiation abroad and persuasion at home. A self-learning AI system does not replace either; it reorganises and amplifies them. It makes institutional memory instantly searchable and aids the diplomat's ability to assess the relevant context in real time.

Balakrishnan's experiment is part of a wider trend. Foreign ministries across the world are beginning to embed AI tools into their workflows. The old machinery of diplomatic craft — slow, paper-bound, and hier-



ILLUSTRATION: C R SAKSHI

archical — struggles to keep pace with the velocity of contemporary diplomacy and the growing weight of the cognitive load on its practitioners. AI tools will inevitably emerge as a force multiplier in modern diplomacy. A well-tuned AI system can draft communications in minutes and cross-check decades of treaties for consistency. It could generate alternative formulations calibrated to different audiences and improve the choices for the political decision-makers.

In the past, diplomatic advantage often flowed from sheer manpower. Major powers could overwhelm smaller delegations by deploying large teams of experts. AI changes that equation. A five-person delegation equipped with a sovereign AI stack could possibly match the analytical and drafting capacity of a 50-person mission. This technological levelling empowers middle powers and small states to shape agendas rather than merely respond to them.

The deeper transformation lies elsewhere — in what AI removes. Much of diplomatic work is procedural drudgery — drafting, summarising, cross-referencing, and record-keeping. AI eliminates this "documentary friction", freeing diplomats to focus on the irreducible

As AI systems begin to simulate negotiation outcomes, generate policy options, and model crisis responses, the temptation to let them decide will grow

human dimensions of their craft. Deeper awareness of other societies, political judgment and relationship-building.

Balakrishnan himself has drawn a clear line between AI augmentation and AI automation in diplomatic work. Speaking at the UN Security Council last September, he warned that diplomacy has long assumed that one is negotiating with another human intelligence — "one with a brain and a heart", each shaped by unique cultural, political, and economic characteristics.

If diplomatic decision-making is outsourced to machines, that assumption comes under stress. The danger is not hypothetical. As AI systems begin to simulate negotiation outcomes, generate policy options, and model crisis responses, the temptation to let them decide will grow. While AI can scan vast archives and detect patterns, it can also make serious errors in interpreting history or assessing present circumstances. Assistants like NanoClaw, used by Balakrishnan, are getting better at contextual understanding, but they remain far from replicating the human ability to read political nuance, weigh competing interests, and judge the mood of a counterpart.

AI's impact on diplomacy is not

the first technological disruption of the profession. The telegraph in the 19th century collapsed physical distance, allowed capitals to instruct envoys in real time, and reduced the autonomy of "plenipotentiaries".

The rise of mass communication and radio brought public opinion into foreign policy, forcing diplomats to operate under constant scrutiny. The internet revolution extended this transparency to every corner of global politics, accelerating information flows and constraining older systems of assessment. AI differs from these earlier technologies because it introduces a new kind of agency.

AI tools do not merely relay information; they interpret, predict, and simulate. They can act as an intellectual sparring partner — capable of parsing complex treaty language, forecasting crises, and identifying creative compromises that human negotiators might miss. But in the end, it cannot replace the essence of diplomacy: Empathy, trust-building, and persuasion in pursuit of national interest.

As AI "second-brain" tools spread through foreign ministries, the asymmetry between prepared and unprepared diplomatic corps will widen. And as media, academia, and civil society gain access to similar tools, the foreign policy discourse will broaden. This may democratise debate, but it also increases the cognitive load on foreign offices, which must now respond to a more technologically empowered audience — both friendly and hostile.

Like in so many other domains, AI is beginning to envelop one of the most conservative professions — diplomacy and statecraft. Balakrishnan's AI assistant is only one of several new tools that will emerge in the coming years. Foreign offices are among the most conservative, given the implications of their work. But they have no choice but to adapt to the AI revolution. The battle between the inertia of the national-security bureaucracy and the speed of AI-driven technological change will be an absorbing one to watch in Delhi.

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Context

AI is changing diplomacy by making diplomatic memory, drafting, analysis & decision-support faster, while still leaving empathy, judgement & persuasion to human diplomats.

Facts

AI removes "documentary friction" like drafting, summarising & record-keeping and introduces "a new kind of agency" to interpret, predict and simulate.

A five-person delegation with a sovereign AI stack can match the analytical and drafting capacity of a 50-person mission.

Analytical Crux

AI will not replace diplomacy, but it will change the balance between prepared and unprepared states. Smaller states and middle powers can use AI to reduce the advantage of large diplomatic machines. The value of AI is in memory, drafting, speed and pattern recognition; the real danger is outsourcing judgement to machines. Diplomacy will remain human because trust, nuance, persuasion & national interest cannot be automated. For India, the lesson is that the national security bureaucracy must adapt fast or lose strategic speed.

Verbatim Quotes

“Diplomacy has always rested on two pillars: institutional memory - the accumulated record of who said what, when and why in the engagement between governments - and individual craft, honed through years of negotiation abroad and persuasion at home.”

— C. Raja Mohan

Article - 2 : Trump's tragedy of errors



Context Trump's war against Iran shows how weak democratic checks, impulsive leadership and fossil-fuel dependence can create deep political, economic and global instability.

Facts

Democracy as a system of error correction - subject decisions affecting large numbers of people to deliberative processes that include checks & balances.

AI data centres support one-third of US growth.

Analytical Crux

Democracy is not only a moral value ; it is also a system to prevent costly errors. When war decisions escape checks and balances , the cost is paid not only by soldiers & civilians , but also by global supply chains , food systems , energy markets and ordinary consumers. Fossil-fuel dependence makes the world vulnerable to unstable political leaders. Europe's search for sovereignty & the global green transition may be the long-term response.

Verbatim Quotes

"If Trump's war accelerates the green transition globally, it will have a significant silver lining."

- Joseph E. Stiglitz

"The history of authoritarian and absolutist political rule is rife with figures whose mistakes proved calamitous not just for themselves but for the societies they ruled."

- Joseph E. Stiglitz

Article - 3 : Judicial independence and the emergency

1 Columns

Judicial independence and The Emergency

On the 50th anniversary of the ADM Jabalpur judgment, we remember and celebrate the courage of those High Court judges Courts who bore the brunt of a disgruntled government.



Declaration of National Emergency (The Hindu, June 26, 1975) Pic Courtesy: Indpaedia

Context How many High Court judges defended civil liberties during the Emergency & suffered transfers or non-confirmation for acting independently.

Facts

ADM Jabalpur judgement was pronounced on April 28, 1976 and is now overruled.

Habeas corpus, an instrument to protect against illegal imprisonment, mentioned in Articles 32 and 226.

Analytical Crux

The Emergency shows that judicial independence is not an abstract idea; it is tested when judges are punished for protecting liberty. The Supreme Court failed in ADM Jabalpur, but several High Courts kept constitutional coverage alive through Habeas Corpus. Transfers and non-confirmations were used as tools to discipline independent judges. The institutions survive not only by written provisions, but also by people who act with conscience.

Verbatim Quotes

“Judicial independence is not a mere philosophy for academic discussion; it is the actual working of a judge without fear or favour.”
- Amit A. Pai

“The Shah commission called it a subversion of well-established convention and practices and an abuse of authority and misuse of power.”
- Amit A. Pai

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Upcoming Batch : 20th April, 2026

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Upcoming Batch: 22 June, 2026

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