

PSIR & GS-2 Daily Brief

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Article - 1 : In a shifting world order, five principles should guide India's diplomacy

In a shifting world order, five principles should guide India's diplomacy



RAJA MANDALA
BY C RAJA MOHAN

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi's brief stop in the United Arab Emirates en route to Europe this week comes amid growing uncertainty over the fragile ceasefire between the United States and Iran and the danger of an intensifying regional war. Modi's presence in Abu Dhabi underlines an enduring principle of sound diplomacy: Stand by your partners when they need you.

Cynics will argue that no relationship is permanent. But when two countries are bound by deep economic interests, share stakes in regional stability, and support each other's core interests, there is no room for Indian hesitation in demonstrating solidarity. The UAE has emerged as one of India's most important partners. It is a major supplier of energy, a growing source of investment, and home to millions of Indians whose contributions bind the two countries in ways that go far beyond formal agreements. Over the last decade, the relationship has expanded from trade and remittances to encompass security cooperation, logistics, food security, new technologies, and coordination on regional issues.

The lesson is straightforward. In foreign policy, there is no substitute for nurturing trusted partnerships even while seeking new opportunities. Modi's Gulf visit will be

followed by a tour of Europe, including the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, and Italy, as well as a Nordic summit in Oslo.

Meanwhile, the world's attention will be riveted this week on the encounter between Donald Trump and Xi Jinping in Beijing — the US president's first trip to China in nine years. India will also host meetings of the BRICS and Quad foreign ministers in New Delhi and convene an India-Africa summit at the end of the month. Each of these events reflects a different strand of Indian diplomacy. Together, they illuminate five principles that should guide India in a period of extraordinary international turbulence.

The first principle is reciprocity. The UAE has been a consistent partner on issues of central importance to India, including Kashmir and cross-border terrorism. Modi's visit signals that India, in turn, stands with the Emirates at a time of heightened threat to its security.

The second principle is diversification. Modi's European tour underlines how far India's engagement with Europe has evolved. During the Cold War, India's view of Europe was often filtered through its close ties with the Soviet Union. In the decades after the Cold War, India was slow to recognise Europe's strategic significance.

That is no longer true in Delhi. Europe is now central to India's search for export markets, capital, advanced technology, and green-energy partnerships. It has also become a major destination for Indian students, professionals, and tourists. Even Europe's smaller states possess capabilities of direct relevance to India's economic, industrial, and technological modernisation.

The conclusion of trade agree-

ments with the European Union and the European Free Trade Association was a reflection of Delhi's new strategic appreciation of Europe.

The third principle is strategic flexibility. India's outreach to Europe unfolds amid the return of great-power politics and a rapid restructuring of relations among the United States, Europe, Russia, and China. The Donald Trump-Xi Jinping summit in Beijing may not resolve the structural rivalry between the US and China, but it could alter the terms on which they manage competition.

For India, the challenge is not to predict every turn in great-power relations. It is to secure its own interests, limit the negative fallout, and seize new possibilities.

The BRICS and the Quad are often portrayed as ideologically opposed formations — the former as a vehicle for the East to dethrone the Western hegemony, the latter as a strategic bulwark against China. Such descriptions exaggerate the coherence of both groups.

The BRICS includes countries with divergent interests and direct conflicts. The Quad, for all its growing practical cooperation, is not a formal alliance. Delhi, in particular, argued against turning the Quad into a forum for deeper and structured security cooperation.

For India, the emphasis must remain on pragmatic pursuit of interests rather than vacuous ideological slogans. It is also important to note that India's interests in the two forums are not symmetrical. At a time when even longstanding institutions such as NATO and the transatlantic partnership are under strain, and the famed Anglo-Saxon unity looks shaky, it would be unwise to as-

sume that newer coalitions are immune to internal differences.

The fourth principle is strategic expansion. The India-Africa summit at the end of the month highlights a region whose importance to India will grow steadily in the decades ahead.

Africa is central to the future of the global economy. Its youthful population, expanding markets, and rich endowment of critical minerals are attracting increasing attention from all major powers. Parts of the continent are also emerging as important theatres of geopolitical competition.

India's ties with Africa are rooted in anti-colonial solidarity. But the relationship now requires greater strategic focus on trade, investment, connectivity, and security cooperation. Delhi can't forget for a moment that Africa has many powerful suitors who promise more and deliver faster than India.

The fifth and most important principle is domestic renewal. No amount of diplomatic activism can compensate for the economic sclerosis at home. Managing the consequences of geopolitical turbulence, the restructuring of global trade, and the rise of disruptive technologies requires rapid internal reform. That will not be easy. Bureaucratic resistance to change and the political comfort with the status quo remain formidable obstacles. But world history reminds us that only those countries that continually reinvent themselves at home are the ones that leverage the world for the peace and prosperity of their citizens.

The writer is a contributing editor on international affairs for The Indian Express.

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The lesson is straightforward. In foreign policy, there is no substitute for nurturing trusted partnerships even while seeking new opportunities

Context India should follow five principles in diplomacy: reciprocity, diversification, strategic flexibility, strategic expansion and domestic renewal.

Facts

India - UAE ties include security, logistics, food security & technology.

India - Africa ties emphasize on youth, markets and critical minerals.

Europe - central to India for capital, markets, technology and green energy.

Analytical Crux

India's diplomacy must be practical, not slogan-driven. India should stand with trusted partners, diversify towards Europe, stay flexible between competing power blocs and expand towards Africa. The main concern is that foreign policy cannot succeed without domestic reform. India's global rise depends on both external balancing and internal renewal.

Verbatim Quotes

"In foreign policy, there is no substitute for nurturing trusted partnerships even while seeking new opportunities."

- C. Raja Mohan

"For India, the emphasis must remain on pragmatic pursuit of interests rather than vacuous ideological slogans."

- C. Raja Mohan

Article - 2: The new Geoeconomic landscape - Three scenarios for west Asian conflict

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The New Geoeconomic Landscape: Three Scenarios for West Asian Conflict

Prerna Gandhi, Associate Fellow, VIF

May 12, 2026 Views: 457 Comments: 0

It is said that geopolitical conflicts don't create fragility but rather expose

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Introduction Entire world will keenly observe the developments

Context The West Asian conflict and uncertainty around the Strait of Hormuz can disturb energy, fertilizers, shipping, food security, industrial supply chains and India's growth.

Facts

One-fifth of global energy supplies pass through the Strait of Hormuz.

The Gulf accounts for 50% of global sulfur & one-third of global helium exports.

More than 45 million people could face acute hunger if conflict extends through June 2026.

Analytical Crux

West Asia is no longer an oil centre, it is also a hub for fertilizers, sulfur, helium, shipping, finance and technology-linked supply chains. Therefore, a conflict around Hormuz can become a global inflation, food security and industrial crisis. For India, the energy security, fertilizer access, shipping costs and rupee stability are foreign policy concerns. Thus, strategic autonomy is not just diplomatic language; it is an economic survival need.

Verbatim Quotes


“Geopolitical conflicts don't create fragility but rather expose pre-existing structural weaknesses. The structural dependence built over decades cannot be reversed in years.” — Prena Gandhi

“The West Asian conflict, thus, is not only a fossil fuel shock but hinders energy transition causing stagflation driven by supply-side pressures.” — Prena Gandhi

Article - 3 : Busan to Beijing-What Trump's visit to China means

VIVEKANANDA INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION
Seeking Harmony in Diversity

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Busan to Beijing: What Trump's visit to China Means

Dr Anupam Kumar, Research Associate, VIF
May 12, 2026 Views: 407 Comments: 0

Context Trump's China visit may shape US-China rivalry on tariffs, rare earths, AI chips, Taiwan, Iran and global trade stability.

Facts

The US expects a structured trade framework, rare earth commitments, a 500 Boeing aircraft deal & agricultural imports.

China wants a stable trade environment, predictable tariffs and market access for EV makers like BYD.

Issues in US-China talks - rare earths, AI chips, tariffs and Taiwan.

Analytical Crux

US-China rivalry is fought through tariffs, chips, rare earths, sanctions and Taiwan. The summit is taking place amid the US-Iran war, closure of Strait of Hormuz, Russia-Ukraine war and US-China tariff control. China's strength comes from its control over critical minerals and its handling of the West Asia energy shock. The US has technological and financial power, but its image has weakened due to the Iran crisis.

UPSC LINK

- 1. GS-II 2025: “Energy security constitutes the dominant kingpin of India’s foreign policy, and is linked with India’s overarching influence in Middle Eastern countries.” How would you integrate energy security with India’s foreign policy trajectories in the coming years?**
- 2. PSIR Paper II 2025: “Explain the non-traditional security threats in the context of food and environmental crises.”**
- 3. PSIR Paper II 2025: “The tariff threats have pushed India and the European Union closer. Evaluate the India-EU partnership.”**
- 4. GS-II 2024: “The West is fostering India as an alternative to reduce dependence on China’s supply chain and strategically to counter China’s political and economic dominance.” Explain this statement with examples.**
- 5. PSIR Paper II 2023: “Discuss the significance of ‘West Asia Quad’ in the light of India’s ‘Look West’ policy.”**
- 6. PSIR Paper II 2023: “Discuss the major drivers of India’s interests in Africa.”**

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