

PSIR & GS-2 Daily Brief

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Article - 1 : Just war, power balance and modern conflict

Just war, power balance and modern conflict

Alexander Pope's famous line, "Now Europe balance'd, neither side prevails: For nothing's left in either of the scales", reminds us that peace without war is perhaps best achieved when there is a balance of power. Hugo Grotius's concept of a just war was swallowed by the ambiguities of international law and the realpolitik of national self-interest. Special treaties of 1815 and 1839 guaranteed Switzerland and Belgium protection from attack but provided less protection for the latter. The Hague Convention III of 1907 established procedures requiring a formal declaration of war or an ultimatum before hostilities could begin. The Covenant of the League of Nations (Article 12D) believed that antecedent arbitration or judicial settlement and a three month cooling period would obviate war. The Kellogg-Briand Pact (1928) condemned recourse to war and to settle controversies which were prescribed to be achieved by pacific means.

The issue of 'self defence'
There are ambiguities in Article 2(4) of the United Nations Charter which, in one interpretation, invalidate the "threat or use of force (not war)" against the territorial integrity or political independence of a state. Was this too limited? Certainly, 'self defence' finds a prominent place in Article 51 of the UN Charter to recognise an "inherent right of individual or collective self defence (against) armed attack".

There are textual differences on anticipatory self defence against any imminent danger of attack. The words of the French text invokes this using the word "*dans le cas où un Membre est l'objet d'une agression armée*" to support the right to self defence before the attack, unlike the Spanish: "*en caso de ataque armado*", suggesting, as in the English, self defence if the armed attack occurs. This has direct relevance to the U.S. aggression against Iran and Tehran's right of self defence. Article 51 should not be seen as an exception to Article 2(4) seeking to abolish war. No doubt, collective defence treaties such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) are permitted under Article 53, which, in turn, allows NATO to trigger collective self-defence under Article 5 if a member is attacked. This fully explains the remonstrance of NATO countries not to join U.S. President Donald Trump: "This is not our war". However, the United Kingdom provided support to America through the use of its bases, while Spain denied the U.S. the use of its airspace.

This bilateral attack by the U.S. and Israel on Iran was justified by claims that Iran was developing a nuclear bomb, even though its nuclear facilities had been open to international



Rajeev Dhavan
Senior Advocate of
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of India

inspection. But the U.S. and Israel want Iran to become defenceless and surrender all its missiles and weaponry as well. If any country should do this, it should be Israel.

The realities of just wars have been diluted out of any respectable meaning with the fall of the Soviet Union. The balance-of-power protections outlined in Pope's poem have disappeared. The nub of all this is the concept of anticipatory self defence which the U.S. unswervingly has used in its attack on Vietnam, Libya, Afghanistan, Iraq, Venezuela, and now Iran. Under the doctrine of state responsibility, the U.S. used any excuse to retaliate against the Latin American states in the 19th century if its citizens were threatened claiming that international law sanctioned these because it had the 'responsibility' to protect its citizens.

In the famous Caroline incident of 1837, where an American ship was smashed over the Niagara Falls, the British claimed self defence. America's Daniel Webster (lawyer and diplomat) contemporarily warned against its unchecked disproportionate uses. For Mr. Trump, no law has any meaning. America can no longer claim its role as the peacekeeper of the world.

The West Asia war
But let us turn to the West Asia war. Israel's pretence of self-defence against the state of Iran is thin. Its responses in Gaza, Iran, Lebanon and Syria involve territorial aggression and are illegal and genocidal. Mr. Trump's imperialism is guided by Israel. One recalls seeing a T-shirt in Jerusalem with the legend: "Don't worry America, Israel is behind you". It is difficult to understand how survivors of the Holocaust can inflict such inhumane violence.

At the root of the conflict are three important aspects. The first, the Gulf countries have never had the military prowess to defend their oil interests, property and the excessive lifestyle of governing elites. West Asia was broken into a number of nations whose military defence came from imperial nations – earlier from England, and now America. In this helpless situation, they are unlikely to give up their defence arrangements with the U.S. even though its leaders or even populace do not want adverse relations with neighbouring Iran. They are cautious. Eventually, they will side with the U.S. after Iran's counterattack on their military and energy installations and on the opening of the Strait of Hormuz.

Second, the U.S. wants to control, with the Strait firmly under its control. This is the third phase objective of the 'undeclared' war after the first and second phases of the war targeted military and then energy recourses. Mr. Trump

wants a negotiated unilateral surrender though his objectives change by the day. If the Strait is to be released from Iran's control, a limited aerial and a ground attack on Kharg Island and southern Iran will alter the war irretrievably.

The third question concerns who will be responsible for the reconstruction of Iran after the conflict ends, and whether reparations will be provided by the U.S., or by China and Russia, to restore the country and the balance of power.

The talks in Islamabad/Pakistan were bound to fail. The conditionalities of both parties were incompatible. The only issue that should have been discussed was the limited logistics of ceasefire. Other issues did not have a 'yes' or 'no' answer. Each issue needed to be discussed, step by step in later meetings. Nuclear energy is resolvable by oversight. Iran was open to inspection but this was defeated in Mr. Trump's first term. Giving up missiles altogether is unreasonable for either side.

Reducing America's military presence in the Gulf and West Asia will take time and require a multi-lateral meeting of the Gulf states. The answer to the Strait of Hormuz is neither Mr. Trump's impending war, nor a negotiation between America and Iran. It requires a multilateral discussion initiated by the United Nations or a consortium of nations, including all affected countries, including China, not just Pakistan as a proxy. They have to join the peace initiative anew. Otherwise it is Munich of 1938 all over again. Pakistan has played its part. A wider initiative is needed to look for a solution not thwarted by conditionalities, proxies, or Mr. Trump's mood and zeal for war.

People and a moral voice
The UN has become meaningless as a peace keeper. Perhaps Mr. Trump wants to lead a U.S.-aligned international council that includes participation from some Gulf countries. We are also witnessing the WTO, which was created to defend America's imperial economic interest, descending into chaos along with climate change treaties.

The post-World War II which envisaged a human rights-based democratic order has been exposed as a moral façade for global predation and has failed to protect people humanely, while providing moral excuses for imperial actors. Too many sins are created in the name of democracy and human rights.

But to return to the concept of a just war, unsupported by a balance of power to preserve world peace: the concept of a just war has become meaningless except as a much-needed moral voice. This moral voice rests with the people of the world – all of us, not our rulers.

Context The old idea of 'just war' has lost meaning in modern conflicts, especially when powerful states use self-defence & international law to justify aggression.

Facts

Hugo Grotius's idea of just war is weakened by real-politik & international law.

US used anticipatory self-defence in Vietnam, Libya, Venezuela, Afghanistan, Iraq & Iran.

UN Charter Article 2(4) - no threat or use of force against territorial integrity or political independence.

UN Charter Article 51 - inherent right of individual or collective self-defence against armed attack.

Analytical Crux

The law can become a weapon in the hands of powerful states. 'Just war' has become weak because the global balance of power has collapsed. The U.S. & Israel are using self-defence to cover aggressive action, especially in West Asia. However, peace cannot depend on one powerful state's will; it needs balance, law, multilateralism and moral pressure from people.

Verbatim Quotes

"The UN has become meaningless as a peace keeper. For Mr. Trump, no law has more legal authority than the U.S. itself."

- Rajeev Dhavan

"US led multilateral initiative, not a narrow US-Iran negotiation is needed. This moral voice rests with all the people of the world."

- Rajeev Dhavan

Article - 2: At India-Nordic summit, turn historical sambandh into future partnership

At India-Nordic Summit, turn historical sambandh into future partnership

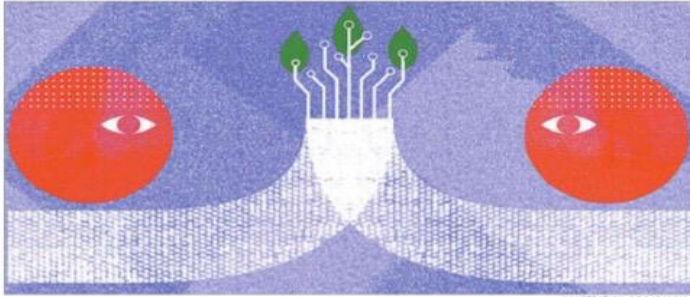


THAROORTHINK
BY SHASHI THAROOR

AS PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi arrives in Oslo next week for the forthcoming India-Nordic Summit, the visit carries the weight of a long-overdue diplomatic milestone. This is the first time an Indian Prime Minister has set foot on Norwegian soil since Indira Gandhi's visit in June 1983 — a gap of over four decades that belies the profound, if often understated, historical and contemporary linkages between our two nations. From the linguistic resonances of the word *sambandh* (connection) in Hindi and *samband* in Norwegian, to the pioneering fisheries projects of the 1950s, the roots of this relationship run deep. Yet, as the Prime Minister joins his counterparts from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden, the agenda is less about nostalgia and more about a strategic recalibration towards a partnership of the future.

The Nordic region, often viewed through the prism of its exceptional social models and tranquil landscapes, has emerged as a powerhouse of specialised technology and capital. For an India navigating a volatile global order, the "Nordic way" offers more than just inspiration; it offers concrete solutions to the most pressing challenges of our century. The Oslo Summit represents a pivot from traditional diplomacy toward a "Green Strategic Partnership" that spans the blue economy, renewable energy, and deep-tech innovation.

Norway occupies a unique position in this constellation. It was among the first countries to recognise an independent India in 1947, and our developmental journey has been quietly intertwined ever since. In the early 1950s, Norway launched its first-ever international development programme in Kerala. This pioneering initiative, focused on modernising fisheries and introducing motorised boats, was a hallmark of the Nehru-Gerhardsen era. It is a testament to



the project's success that its legacy lives on through the National Institute of Fisheries Post Harvest Technology and Training (NIFPHATT), remaining a vital part of Kerala's coastal economy.

Today, the opportunity exists to replicate this model of localised excellence by deepening cooperation with selected Indian states — such as Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Gujarat — that possess the coastal or industrial infrastructure to absorb Norwegian expertise. The economic logic for a deeper engagement is now irrefutable, especially following the landmark EFTA-India Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA). This agreement is a game-changer, committing EFTA countries — including Norway — to a target of \$100 billion in investments in India over the next 15 years. Central to this will be the role of the Government Pension Fund Global, Norway's sovereign wealth fund. As one of the world's largest investors, its increased exposure to the Indian market would not only provide the long-term patient capital required for India's infrastructure but also signal a vote of confidence in our economic trajectory.

One hopes the Prime Minister's discussions in Oslo will pave the way for more direct institutional investment into India's burgeoning green-tech and manufacturing sectors. Energy security remains the

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cornerstone of our strategic complementarity. Norway's technology in offshore wind, green shipping corridors, and carbon capture and storage (CCS) is a perfect match for India's scale and manpower. As India seeks to decarbonise its heavy industries, the Norwegian experience in the circular economy and renewable energy offers a viable roadmap. Our collaboration on green shipping corridors, in particular, could revolutionise maritime trade, making the "blue economy" a sustainable engine for growth. The potential for Norway to assist in scaling up India's hydrogen mission or providing specialised maritime competence is immense.

Furthermore, the Arctic-Indian Ocean linkage is a burgeoning frontier for scientific cooperation. The Arctic and the Indian Ocean are no longer disparate geographies; they are ecologically and strategically linked by the science of climate change, demanding a shared response. India's interest in the Arctic is not merely academic; the melting of polar ice has direct consequences for the Indian monsoon and our food security. By strengthening ties with Norway, a key Arctic Council member, India can enhance its polar research capabilities and contribute to global climate monitoring.

This scientific synergy is underpinned by a shared commitment to multilateralism, the rule

of law, and a democratic world order — values that resonate strongly in both New Delhi and Oslo. India's relations with the Nordic countries remain an under-exploited asset in our foreign policy. We have no major disputes dividing us, and the few irritants that have arisen — such as Denmark's refusal to extradite an arms-smuggling pilot or Norway's controversial custody decision involving an Indian child, rooted in cultural incomprehension of practices like eating with one's hands — should be seen as episodic incidents rather than structural obstacles. The misunderstandings over these matters linger, but their potency has been defused, and they are best resolved through sustained dialogue and a willingness to appreciate cultural differences. Beyond such episodes, the potential for partnership is immense. Scandinavia's reputation for social innovation, green technology, and democratic resilience aligns well with India's own aspirations for inclusive growth and sustainable development. At a time when the turbulence of the Trumpian era has unsettled global norms, India and the Nordic countries share a common interest in defending world order and stability. Making common cause with them would not only diversify India's diplomatic portfolio but also strengthen our voice in shaping a multipolar system that values fairness, cooperation, and rules-based governance. The opportunity is clear: To transform a relationship free of major conflicts into one of purposeful collaboration.

As the leaders gather in Oslo, they will find that the complementarity is striking. Norway has the specialised competence; India has the scale to drive global solutions. From the historic church of St Olav in Serampore to the high-tech shipyards of the present, the journey of India and Norway has been one of quiet, steady growth. Forty-three years after the last prime ministerial visit, the Oslo Summit is the moment to transform this historical *sambandh* into a transformative strategic alliance for the 21st century. The northern lights may be distant from the tropics, but the horizons we seek are increasingly one and the same.

The writer is a fourth-term Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) for Thiruvananthapuram and chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs

Context India - Nordic relations

should move from historical friendship to a future-oriented partnership in green technology, blue economy, energy and climate cooperation.

Facts

Norway's Kerala fisheries programme (NIFPHATT) model of localised cooperation, modernise fisheries and motorised boats.

EFTA - India TEPA targets \$100 billion investment in 15 years.

Analytical Crux

India-Nordic ties considered as a practical partnership, not just a friendly relationship. The Nordic countries offer technology, green capital and climate expertise, while India offers scale, manpower & markets. Climate change in the polar region can affect India's monsoon & food security and thus arctic is important. The middle & small powers are significant partners in a changing world order through technology, climate and multilateral values.

Verbatim Quotes

"India's relations with the Nordic countries remain an under-exploited asset. The Nordic region's commitment to sustainability and environmental protection is a beacon of hope."

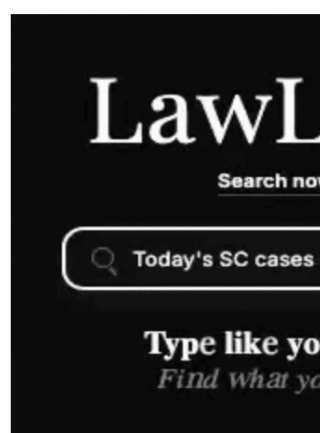
- Shashi Tharoor

Article - 3 : SIR-Three doctrinal questions awaiting Supreme Court

1 Column

SIR: Three doctrinal questions awaiting the Supreme Court

The risk is that a future Commission, perceiving an institutional template, treats every ex ante violation of statute as repairable through ex post supervision.



Context

Whether the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls is a lawful administrative exercise or a threat to the constitutional right of voter registration.

Facts

Section 21(2) of RPA, 1950 allows periodic revision.

Section 21(3) - special revision 'for reasons to be recorded'.

SIR in Bengal deleted 91,02,577 names, or 11.88% of the pre-revision electorate.

Analytical Crux

The question is not about voter-list correction; it is about the nature of Indian democracy. If an existing voter has to prove eligibility again, the burden shifts from the State to the citizen. This weakens natural justice and can turn voting from a constitutional entitlement into an administrative favour. The election management must remain rule-bound, transparent and rights-based, otherwise democratic legitimacy becomes weak.

Verbatim Quotes

“Special Intensive Revision appears nowhere in the parent statute. This issue is whether voter rolls are a constitutional command or a statutory entitlement controlled by the executive.”

-Vedant Chaudhary and Hardik Malik

- 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.”**
- 2. GS-II 2025: “The reform process in the United Nations remains unresolved, because of the delicate imbalance of East and West and entanglement of the USA vs. Russo-Chinese alliance.”**
- 3. GS-III 2025: “What is Carbon Capture, Utilization and Storage (CCUS)? What is the potential role of CCUS in tackling climate change?”**
- 4. PSIR-I 2025: “There is a debate on the procedure for appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners to the Election Commission of India. Analyse its various aspects.”**
- 5. GS-II 2024: “Examine the need for electoral reforms as suggested by various committees with particular reference to ‘one nation – one election’ principle.”**
- 6. PSIR-II 2023: “What are the challenges and limitations in India–Iran relations?”**

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