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Article - 1 : How India should navigate the Great disruptions?

VIVEKANANDA INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION
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VALEDICTORY FUNCTION
38TH NAVAL HIGHER COMMAND COURSE

ADDRESS
India's Strategic Options in a Disruptive World

Dr Arvind Gupta

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How India Should Navigate the Great Disruptions?

Arvind Gupta, Director, VIF

May 25, 2026 Views: 99 Comments: 0

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Director, VIF
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How India Should Navigate the Great Disruptions?
(Given below is Dr Arvind Gupta, Director VIF's address to the 38

Towards a Comprehensive India-Africa Engagement Framework: P India and Africa

Context India should protect its interests and build its strength in a world disturbed by wars, weak global institutions, climate crisis, new technology and changing diplomacy.

Facts

■ Six major disruptions: security, economy, global governance, environment, technology and warfare diplomacy.

■ Global economy under stress - deglobalisation, fragmentation, WTO dysfunction, debt crisis & supply-chain concentration.

■ UN charter is "all but broken" and "Might is Right" is the new reality.

Analytical Crux

India's foreign policy challenge is not to choose sides, but to preserve strategic space in a disturbed world. India should combine civilisational confidence with practical state capacity. Moral language alone is not enough, it must build economic, military, technological & institutional strength. India to avoid passivity and focus on long-term resilience, Atmanirbharta and strategic autonomy.

Verbatim Quotes

"We are experiencing unprecedented global disruptions; the moral and ethical compass has disappeared. Weakness is considered as death."
- Arvind Gupta

"India should avoid getting entangled in unwarranted zero-sum conflicts. Short-termism should not triumph over long term stability and prosperity of country."
- Arvind Gupta

Article - 2 : India and Australia- bridging the trade and trust barrier

India and Australia – bridging the trade and trust barrier

Is a comprehensive India-Australia Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in the offing? With the Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong in India for the Quad Foreign Ministers' meeting, there is anticipation that a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) may be inked. This would expand the 2022 Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA) that had opened 100% of the Australian market to India while India reciprocated with roughly 70% market access covering nearly 91% of trade value. Canberra has since been pushing for parity, both privately and publicly. Meanwhile the West Asia crisis has forced upon India – in the words of the Chief Economic Adviser – a “balance of payments crisis stress test”, making trade expansion and courting investments an urgent necessity for the country.

India has been in a hurry over the past year to conclude trade agreements; geopolitical fragility and the unpredictability of tariff politics have pushed India to sign agreements with the EU, the U.S., New Zealand and the U.K. CECA fits neatly into this larger recalibration.

The problems with Australia

But with Australia, the trade situation is complicated. Since ECTA, bilateral merchandise trade doubled from \$12.2 billion in FY 2020-21 to \$24.1 billion in FY 2024-25. These gains, however, have not been evenly shared. Australian exports to India account for nearly two-thirds of the bilateral trade.

Even in services, where bilateral trade has crossed \$10 billion, Australia's higher education sector alone accounts for close to 60%. In contrast, investment tells the opposite story: as of 2024, Indian investment in Australia had touched nearly \$32 billion against Australia's cumulative FDI into India of about \$18 billion.

The bilateral relationship is thus beset by interconnected problems. Australia wants parity in market access. But the question for India is not whether India should simply concede more market access; it is whether India can trade more market access for a more balanced overall



Vaibhav Jain
Incoming delegate of the Australia-India Youth Dialogue



Raja Karthikeya
Former delegate of the Australia-India Youth Dialogue

An India-Australia trade deal must prioritise balance over parity

relationship. Australia's 2025 Economic Engagement Roadmap for India identified four bilateral 'superhighways': clean energy, education, tourism, and agribusiness. On the first three, there appears to be broad alignment but not on the fourth. Agriculture is where this bargain becomes most difficult. India has restricted access to its agricultural market in nearly all its major trade agreements. Despite being compelled to keep India's most vulnerable sectors (dairy, wheat, rice, sugar and chickpeas) outside ECTA, Australian farm exports to India have risen by nearly 90%, while Indian agricultural exports to Australia have grown more modestly by 35%.

This asymmetry reflects two very different agricultural realities. The average Indian farm is about 0.73 hectares; the average Australian farm exceeds 1,400 hectares. Agriculture contributes around 16% to India's GDP and 2.5% to Australia's. For Australia, agriculture is an export industry. For India, it is a livelihood that supports more than half of its population and remains the bedrock of its food security.

The notion of a “level playing field” between these two systems is hence a misframing of the problem. Indian farmers, even with subsidised inputs, remain structurally exposed to monsoon variability, fragmented landholdings and thin margins. Protecting the Indian market from cheap Australian imports, particularly wheat, is not a negotiating position; it is a political necessity. Yet, given the industrial scale of Australia's farming, Canberra will understandably push India to open up its market fully.

Using agriculture as an opportunity

Nonetheless, agricultural trade talks between the two countries need not become a zero-sum game. Agriculture can become the sector through which India converts Australia's demand for market access into a broader opportunity for institutional cooperation and investment. Two low-hanging fruits stand out.

First, the future of India-Australia agricultural trade must depend less on tariff concessions and

more on mutual recognition of biosecurity and phytosanitary standards. Building on the 2025 organic products arrangement, both countries can expand cooperation in digital certification, quarantine protocols and regulatory alignment. This would give Indian farmers a fairer shot at the Australian market even as India considers reciprocal access for Australian farmers.

Second, Australia's strategic opportunity in India may lie beyond agricultural commodities and in exporting the systems that make modern agriculture possible: precision farming technologies, cold-chain infrastructure, water management expertise and climate adaptation practices. India loses anywhere from 15% to 35% of its agricultural output to pests, disease and post-harvest inefficiencies every year. Australia's extensive experience in dealing with drought cycles, heat extremes and water scarcity is knowledge that would interest India.

However, this experience sharing must go hand-in-hand with real investments. Australian capital, technology and know-how must register a deeper presence inside India's agricultural sector – in storage facilities, logistics networks, farm-level tools and agri-technology partnerships between firms, universities and local governments. The recently launched India-Australia Smart Farm Network Initiative points in the right direction.

Need for complementarity

Agriculture is too politically important in India to be treated as just another line item in a trade schedule; equally, it is too economically important to be left outside the bilateral partnership altogether. Rather than making the new FTA one of absolute symmetry in market access alone, India and Australia should make it an agreement based on complementarity across trade and investment.

Should the diplomats succeed, the day when Chyawanprash and Vegemite sit on the same breakfast table in the two countries is not far.

The views expressed are personal

Context India & Australia can deepen their trade partnership through CECA, without exposing Indian agriculture to unfair competition from large-scale Australian farming.

Facts

India Australia trade - from \$12.2 billion to \$24.1 billion in FY 2024-25.

Australian farm exports to India - 90% ; Indian farm exports to Australia - 35%.

India loses 15% to 35% of farm output due to pests, disease and post-harvest inefficiencies.

Analytical Crux

Trade diplomacy is not only about tariff reduction. India cannot treat agriculture as a market sector because it is linked to livelihood, food security & political stability. Australia's demand for market access should be fulfilled by cooperation in standards, cold chains, water management and climate-smart farming. A fair India-Australia trade deal should be based on complementarity, not blind equality.

Verbatim Quotes

"Protecting the Indian market from cheap Australian imports, particularly wheat, is not a negotiating position; it is a political necessity. It should not become a zero-sum game."

"The future of India-Australia agricultural trade must depend less on tariff concessions and more on mutual recognition of biosecurity & phytosanitary standards."

Article - 3 : Xi is getting the Thucydides trap all wrong



Xi Is Getting the Thucydides Trap All Wrong

Paul Poast May 22, 2026



Context

Xi Jinping is using the idea of the Thucydides Trap in a misleading way, because the real danger is not the rise of China but the use of rising power for revisionist and imperial aims.

Facts

China and Russia have a "no limits" partnership.

Taiwan is a major issue in China-US relations.

Analytical Crux

There is a need of correction to the Thucydides Trap argument. A rising power does not automatically create war; war becomes more likely when the rising power tries to revise the existing order. China's Taiwan posture is more important than China's economic rise. Power shift creates anxiety, but revisionist ambition creates danger.

Verbatim Quotes

“A more accurate understanding of the Thucydides Trap is the rising power's imperial ambitions that prompted war. It's possible the China and US may walk into Thucydides trap.”

- Paul Poast

- **2025 PSIR Paper-II:** “Trump’s unilateral imposition of reciprocal tariffs on scores of countries poses impending threat to the future of the rule-based multilateral global trading system under the WTO.”
- **2025 GS-II:** “With the waning of globalization, post-Cold War world is becoming a site of sovereign nationalism.”
- **2025 PSIR Paper-II:** “Explain the non-traditional security threats in the context of food and environmental crises.”
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- **2024 GS-II:** “The West is fostering India as an alternative to reduce dependence on China’s supply chain and as a strategic ally to counter China’s political and economic dominance.”
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