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Article - 1

The world that China desires and is shaping :
The Hindu

Article - 2

Why Venezuela matters to India : Vivekananda International Foundation

Article - 3

From farms to factories, trade pact with UK : Indian Express

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Article - 1 : The world that China desires and is shaping

The world that China desires and is shaping

The sheer destructiveness of American foreign policy under United States President Donald Trump is obscuring a quiet but consequential shift in global politics. Mr. Trump's Liberation Day tariffs, the disastrous war against Iran, and systematic alienation of allies and partners have dominated headlines and consumed diplomatic bandwidth. And rightly so. The U.S., architect of the post-war international order, is now taking a machete to the very frameworks it built. But the chaos emanating from Washington is drawing attention away from what China is doing with the space this creates.

The Chinese alternative

Last week, Beijing released a white paper on global governance, which offers a systematic articulation of how it is reshaping the world order. As expected, the paper presents China as a defender of the international system, warning that humanity must not be allowed to return to "the law of the jungle". Beijing argues that it has paid its United Nations dues ahead of schedule in 2025; it has backed the restoration of the WTO's Appellate Body; and its four global initiatives are a demonstration of its responsibility as a great power. This is not, however, the full picture. A close reading of China's diplomacy shows that it is not simply defending the post-war order. Rather, it is selectively revising it, largely preserving the institutional scaffolding while quietly rewriting the normative substance that gives it meaning.

Understanding this requires disaggregating the international order into two dimensions: the institutional and the normative. The institutional order comprises the UN system, the Bretton Woods institutions, and the multilateral architecture built in the years following the Second World War. The normative order encompasses the principles that animate these institutions, from Westphalian norms of sovereignty and non-interference to liberal norms



Manoj Kewalramani
Chairperson of the Geostrategy Programme at the Takshashila Institution

of human rights, democratic governance, free markets, and the rule of law. On the institutional front, Beijing is deeply invested. It is the second-largest contributor to the UN budget, having raised its share of the UN regular budget from under 1% in 2000 to over 20% in 2025, a proactive participant in WTO reform, and a builder of complementary institutions such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the New Development Bank, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. These are not designed to replace the existing system but to expand China's authority within it while creating parallel platforms that advance its agenda. This is institutional revisionism, not revolution.

Normative ambitions

The real action, however, is in the normative domain, where China's ambitions are far more transformative. Beijing's four global initiatives – on development, security, civilisation, and governance – collectively represent a sustained campaign of norm entrepreneurship. Individually, each sounds benign. The Global Development Initiative links itself to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The Global Civilization Initiative (GCI) calls for respecting civilisational diversity. The Global Security Initiative (GSI) emphasises sovereignty and non-interference. And the Global Governance Initiative explicitly says that reform "does not mean to overturn the existing international order".

But look closer. The GSI's emphasis on taking "legitimate security concerns of all countries seriously" has been operationalised to dilute Ukraine's sovereign right to choose its own alliances, a position that conveniently serves Beijing's broader interest in weakening the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The GCI's call for diverse interpretations of universal values is, in practice, an effort to recast human rights as culturally contingent rather than universal,

shielding authoritarian governance from scrutiny. And China's redefinition of democracy in explicitly outcome-based terms, where legitimacy derives from material delivery rather than political participation, institutional independence, or accountability, represents a fundamental departure from liberal norms.

Meanwhile, China's own behaviour reveals the limits of its professed commitment even to the Westphalian norms it champions. In the South China Sea, it rejected the 2016 Permanent Court of Arbitration ruling as "null and void". Along its borders with India and Bhutan, periodic standoffs persist. The Belt and Road Initiative, while framed as development cooperation, has often blurred the line between external partnership and internal influence in recipient states.

A different world

Seen in this light, what emerges is a picture not of a revolutionary power seeking to torch the existing system, but of a sophisticated selective revisionist – one that preserves the institutional architecture it finds useful while systematically hollowing out the normative foundations to align with its objectives. Beijing supports sovereignty when it suits its interests and dilutes it when it does not. It endorses multilateralism in trade while practising selective openness and securitisation at home.

This matters enormously at a moment when reckless American policies appear to be making Beijing's revisionism seem palatable to many. The risk is not that the institutional order collapses. Both Washington and Beijing, for different reasons, remain invested in its survival. The risk is that the principles animating that order are gradually redefined in a way that undermines the sovereign equality of states, weakens civil society and individual rights, and erodes the rule of law. This is a future that does not align with India's strategic interests.

China's recent white paper outlines a transformation of the norms beneath the international order

Context China has released a global-governance white paper that reveals it is not defending that order but selectively rewriting its rules from the inside.

Facts

● China presenting itself as a defender of the system against a return to "the law of jungle".

● China is 2nd largest contributor to UN budget : 1% in 2000 to over 20% in 2025.

● China's complementary institutions: Asian Infra Investment Bank, New Development Bank (NDB) & Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

● China's global initiatives: Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative and Global Governance Initiative.

Analytical Crux

China is not trying to burn down the global order, it is trying to keep the building & change what it stands for. On the institutional side China builds the AIIB, NDB and SCO, and stays firmly inside the UN. On the normative side it is redefining sovereignty, recasting human rights as "culturally contingent", & reducing democracy to mere delivery of results. For India the risk is not that the UN collapses but that its underlying principles i.e. sovereign equality, individual rights, the rule of law get slowly hollowed out. These principles are important for a rising democratic power that needs to be protected.

Verbatim Quotes

"China is selectively revising it, largely preserving the institutional scaffolding while quietly rewriting the normative substance that give its meaning. Beijing supports sovereignty when it suits its interests and dilutes it when it does not."

— Manoj Kewalramani

Article - 2 : Why Venezuela matters to India



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Why Venezuela Matters to India?

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Armenia held its
parliamentary
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Facts

India became Venezuela's second-largest crude oil importer, after US & China.

ONGC Videsh & Venezolana del Petroleo (CVPR) run a joint venture in San Cristobal.

India - Venezuela diplomatic relations : established in 1959, embassies in New Delhi and Caracas.

Context

A Venezuela's president visit becomes a window into how India is choosing energy security & hard-headed pragmatism over old ideological lines in a fractured world.

Analytical Crux

With the Strait of Hormuz under stress, India is widening its sources and Venezuela's discounted heavy crude is perfect for both the budget and the strategy. It will help India reduce dependence on Russia; a "Global South" partnership is braided into India's larger balancing act between the US and Russia. India is shifting from ideology to interest and from a buyer-seller transaction to a multi-sector, industry led relationship. The relation with Venezuela is an example of strategic autonomy and energy security working together.

Verbatim Quotes

"For India, Venezuela represents both an energy partner and a strategic opportunity. For Venezuela, India offers a pathway to economic recovery and diversification."

- Aakriti Shah

Article - 3 : From farms to factories, trade pact with UK

From farms to factories, trade pact with UK opens new opportunities in India

THE LANDMARK India-UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) will help Indian farmers, fishermen, artisans and small businesses prosper globally and accelerate job creation. It will enable the common man to access high-quality goods at competitive prices, contributing significantly to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's *Viksit Bharat 2047* mission. The transformational win-win agreement, which comes into force on July 15, will ensure comprehensive market access for Indian goods in the UK across sectors, particularly labour-intensive ones. It will immediately eliminate tariffs on about 99 per cent of tariff lines, covering almost 100 per cent of trade value, creating enormous opportunities for Indian exports.

A people-centric agreement, CETA was signed last year in the presence of PM Modi and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer. It delivers benefits across society. Farmers gain access to premium export markets without compromising their domestic interests. Fisherfolk benefit from enhanced seafood exports to the vast UK market. Workers gain new employment opportunities in labour-intensive sectors. Women entrepreneurs, youth, start-ups and MSMEs receive improved access to global value chains. Professionals benefit from enhanced mobility and recognition opportunities.

CETA unlocks the premium UK market for Indian farmers, matching or exceeding the benefits enjoyed by other European nations. Turmeric, pepper, cardamom and processed goods such as mango pulp, pickles and pulses will receive duty-free access. Higher agricultural exports will boost farm incomes and create greater incentives for quality, packaging and certification. It will also generate numerous jobs across the

agricultural value chain. At the same time, CETA excludes India's most sensitive agricultural sectors to protect domestic farmers, particularly those involved in dairy products, cereals, millets, apples, oats and cooking oils. These exclusions reflect the government's strategy of prioritising food security, domestic price stability and vulnerable farming communities.

Immediate duty-free access to the vast UK market will rev up Indian manufacturing, allowing traditional artisans, large-scale factories, and regional industrial hubs to compete effectively. Small businesses will prosper as Indian products gain a clear competitive edge over rivals. Companies manufacturing soccer balls, cricket gear, rugby balls and toys, among other products, are poised to significantly expand their business in the UK. The removal of duties addresses longstanding tariff barriers, particularly in labour-intensive sectors, and is expected to generate immediate gains in export competitiveness and scale. From the looms of Tiruppur to the labs of Bengaluru, from diamond artisans in Surat to coders in Hyderabad, this agreement touches the real economy.

The UK has provided one of its most comprehensive service commitments ever, covering all major service sectors and 137 sub-sectors of export interest to India. Enhanced market access and regulatory certainty will support Indian service providers in IT and IT-enabled services, financial services, professional services, healthcare, education, engineering, telecommunications and consultancy services. India has secured favourable mobility provisions for skilled professionals, including contractual service pro-



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viders, business travellers, investors, yoga instructors, musicians and chefs. The agreement also provides predictable mobility pathways for business visitors, intra-corporate transferees, contractual service suppliers, independent professionals and investors. Further, 1,800 Indian chefs, yoga instructors and classical musicians will be able to access dedicated mobility opportunities annually under the agreement.

Under PM Modi's leadership, FTAs go far beyond goods and services and set new benchmarks. With the EFTA countries — Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein — India secured a commitment of \$100 billion in investment, expected to create 1 million direct jobs. In the FTA with New Zealand, the country secured an investment commitment of \$20 billion over 15 years, while the Australian FTA resolved the double-taxation issue that had troubled Indian IT companies.

A significant aspect of the agreement with the UK is the Double Contribution Convention. This landmark arrangement, entering into force alongside CETA, exempts Indian workers and employers from making dual social-security contributions in the UK during temporary assignments. More than 75,000 Indian professionals and over 900 companies are expected to benefit from continued social-security coverage for employees on temporary overseas assignments.

In 2014, the economy was struggling, with potential investors losing confidence. India was regarded as one of the "Fragile Five" economies after a decade marked by policy drift and corruption scandals involving astronomical sums. The Modi government adopted a

determined approach to rebuild global confidence in the Indian economy and make it attractive for investors. Signing FTAs with developed countries was the next step. FTAs also enhance investor confidence by reducing uncertainty around trade policies. The government pursued FTAs with developed economies that offer large markets while not directly competing with India's core trade interests. This creates a win-win situation, unlike the previous government's approach of endangering Indian businesses by recklessly opening India's doors to competitors.

Under PM Modi's leadership, India is now widely respected as a resilient economy and a trusted partner in a volatile world. It has established itself as a reliable partner with an attractive market and remains the world's fastest-growing major economy. Game-changing reforms, improvements in ease of doing business, the decriminalisation of minor offences, and the PM's global stature have helped position India as a compelling investment destination. Today, the world wants to participate in India's growth story — and sign FTAs.

These trade agreements have also ensured the gradual opening up of the domestic market. This makes the Indian market more competitive and encourages local manufacturers to produce high-quality goods at competitive prices, which is a key element of the PM's *Viksit Bharat* mission. CETA is a benchmark for equitable and ambitious trade agreements between major economies. It opens attractive global opportunities for the underprivileged without compromising India's core interests. It is a shining example of how New India does business.

The writer is Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Government of India

Context India - UK

CETA will lift farmers, artisans and small manufacturers while protecting India's sensitive sectors.

Facts

■ Duty-free access: turmeric, pepper, cardamom & processed goods like mango pulp, pickles and pulses.

■ Sensitive sectors excluded to protect domestic farmers: dairy, cereals, millets, oats, apples & cooking oils.

■ India - UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA): eliminates tariffs on about 99% of tariff lines, covering almost 100% of trade value.

Analytical Crux

The CETA opens the doors for labour-intensive exports but keep shield for dairy, cereals and edible oils. India is signing trade deals with developed economies that buy what India sells without crushing what India makes, which is a deliberate shift in strategy. Though the CETA is criticised for import surges, pressure on small producers and the limits of services mobility in practice. It is an example of how India balances both the demand & opportunities of our economy.

Verbatim Quotes

“CETA is a benchmark for equitable & ambitious trade agreements between major economies. From the looms of Tiruppur to the labs of Bengaluru, from diamond artisans in Swat to coders in Hyderabad, this agreement touches the real economy.”

— Piyush Goyal

PSIR PAPER II, 2025: For India, a multipolar world order would also mean a multipolar Asia. Comment.

PSIR PAPER II, 2025: India continues to invoke its time-tested policy of strategic autonomy vis-à-vis both the United States of America and Russia by rejecting US' offer of mediation on Kashmir issue and by refusing to criticize Russia in its ongoing war against Ukraine. Comment.

PSIR PAPER II, 2024: Does the idea of the 21st century as 'Asian century' continue to remain feasible given the growing friction between India and China?

PSIR PAPER II, 2024: Discuss the potential role that India could play as the leader of the Global South in realising the goal of establishing a new international economic order in the 21st century.

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