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BRIEF ISSUE 177

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DAILY BRIEF

ABOUT THIS INITIATIVE

Briefs, scans the best academic platforms, national newspapers & leading think tanks to pick the most relevant articles & research. It converts them into crisp, high-impact points you can directly use in your mains answers.



PSIR OPTIONAL BY
Amit Pratap Singh
| ForumIAS |

SOURCES SCANNED TODAY



ARTICLE 01

A middle power in a bi-multipolar world : The Indian Express

ARTICLE 02

Normalisation without trust with China : ORF

ARTICLE 03

Why India's electoral math is different : ThePrint

ARTICLE 04

Theatre commands need political direction : ThePrint

ARTICLE 05

The Gulf of Guinea back on the map : Carnegie

Daily Brief · Source Plan (Monday to Saturday)

Common Daily

The Hindu · The Indian Express · Deccan Herald · The Statesman

read every day, alongside the day's sources below

Day-wise Sources

Monday	**ORF** (Observer Research Foundation) · **Foreign Affairs** · **The Diplomat**
Tuesday	**MP-IDSA** · **EPW** (Economic & Political Weekly) · **Gateway House**
Wednesday	**Firstpost** · **South Asia Monitor** · **ICWA** (Indian Council of World Affairs)
Thursday	**ORF** · **Frontline** · **Bar & Bench** · **World Focus**
Friday	**MP-IDSA** · **Carnegie Endowment** · **VIF** (Vivekananda International Foundation)
Saturday	**Firstpost** · **Project Syndicate** · **The Economist**

As per relevance, articles from other relevant sources such as NatStrat, ThePrint and The Telegraph (India) will also be included.

India’s time will come. For now, it is a middle power in a bi-multipolar world

India’s time will come. For now, it is a middle power in a bi-multipolar world

Both the US and China pose a challenge for India. Neither is an option in dealing with the other. Neither can be weaponised against the other.

Written by:
Sanjaya Baru

Nov 6, 2026 06:44 AM IST

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Context

Sanjaya Baru opens with Subrahmanyam Jaishankar's reply to a European interlocutor who wondered whether India, like the European states, was a middle power rather than a Big Power: India, the minister said, was a power in the middle. Baru uses the quip to reopen a harder question. China's rise over two decades, and the slowing of India's growth over the last one, have unsettled the claim about India's place in the world.

The argument runs through economic performance. Baru holds that economic status alone does not define power or influence, but that it matters, and that the world's view of India changed at the turn of the century when growth improved and Indian information technology became sought after. He then sets against this the exaggerated claims of recent years, the slower growth of the past decade, and China's emergence as a knowledge power.

Baru's conclusion is that India should concede middle-power status rather than pretend to a third pole. He describes the present order as bi-multipolar, with the United States and China as the two powers of global reach and several middle powers defining the other ends. India's route, on this reading, lies in alliances with Russia, the European Union, the United Kingdom, Japan, Brazil and South Africa, and in stability with both giants.

India's time will come. For now, it is a middle power in a bi-multipolar world

Facts

- **Growth rates behind the reassessment :** Baru records India's long-term growth rising from 3.5 per cent in 1950-80 to 6.0 per cent in 1980-2010, with a peak of over 8.0 per cent during 2003-2010. He adds that Viksit Bharat by 2047 would require the economy to grow well above 8.0 per cent a year over the next decade, which he does not expect.

- **The books that framed India's rise :** The Goldman Sachs BRIC report, clubbing India with China, Brazil and Russia, appeared in 2001, the same year as Stephen P Cohen's India: Emerging Power. The Japanese diplomat Hiroshi Hirabayashi titled his book India: The Last Super Power, and by 2007 Lee Kuan Yew was calling China and India two engines of Asia's rise.

- **Claims the author disputes :** Baru writes that the Prime Minister claimed national income would reach $5 trillion by 2020, and that officials last year claimed India is now the third largest economy when it is still the sixth largest. He also recalls being asked by K Subrahmanyam to write a paper for the National Security Advisory Board in 2000.

Analytical Crux

1. Economic status alone does not define either power or influence in world affairs, but it matters; India's long-term growth, rising from 3.5 per cent in 1950-80 to 6.0 per cent in 1980-2010, made the world look at India with new eyes.

2. Between 2010 and 2025 China emerged as a knowledge power with advanced capabilities in science and technology, and the BJP's obsession with electoral dominance at home and the unleashing of bigotry, majoritarianism and antediluvianism have combined to damage the narrative of India's rise.

Analytical Crux (contd.)

3. The global balance of power system is best seen as a bi-multipolar system, with the US and China as the two dominant powers with global reach; it is best to build alliances with other middle powers including Russia, EU, UK, Japan, Brazil and South Africa.

Verbatim Quotes

"In this system, there is no point in India pretending to be a third big power."

- Sanjaya Baru

Normalisation Without Trust: The Security Limits of India's China Reset

Normalisation Without Trust: The Security Limits of India's China Reset

AUTHOR : HRITIKA SHARMA

Expert Speak Young Voices

Published on Nov 05, 2026

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Context

Hritika Sharma takes a single stalled proposal as her entry point. In January 2026 Alipay+, the cross-border payments network run by Ant International, proposed linking up with India's Unified Payments Interface so that Indian travellers could pay merchants in China, Hong Kong and elsewhere in Asia. Ten months later the proposal has stalled on national security grounds, even as political ties with Beijing have been recovering.

Her argument is that two tracks are moving at very different speeds. Diplomatic contact, travel and parts of the investment regime have reopened, while payments data, telecom networks, mobile applications and the boundary have not. She reads the decisions on Alipay+, on Press Note 2, on Huawei and ZTE and on the app bans as separate agencies arriving at the same security judgement about China-linked entities.

The implication Sharma draws is that India has learnt to separate engagement from trust. Contact, flights and pilgrim travel can resume because they are reversible; infrastructure, data and territory are not. Boundary talks, she writes, manage the dispute rather than settle it, and the real test of the reset will be whether engagement survives the next serious escalation on the border.

Normalisation Without Trust: The Security Limits of India's China Reset

Facts

- ***The boundary talks and their output :*** The 24th round of Special Representatives talks was held in India in August 2025 and the 25th in Beijing on 25 August 2026. The two sides agreed that an Expert Group on delimitation and a Working Group on border management would carry the discussions forward, and agreed on two additional military hotline channels in the Eastern and Middle Sectors.

- ***Press Note 2 and the investment route :*** Press Note 2 of March 2026 narrowed what counts as land-border ownership and allowed automatic-route investment where land-border shareholders hold up to 10 per cent without control, with a 60-day timeline for specified manufacturing sectors such as capital goods, electronic components and polysilicon. Entities incorporated in China or Hong Kong remain excluded from that route.

- ***Restrictions that have not moved :*** Huawei and ZTE were left out of India's 5G trials in 2021 and that exclusion has not been reversed. In June 2020 India banned TikTok and 58 other Chinese-owned apps, and by September 2020 the IT Ministry told Parliament it had blocked 224 apps under Section 69A of the IT Act. The trade deficit with China stood at US$105.93 billion for January-September 2026.

Analytical Crux

1. India is restoring contact with China across a widening range of areas, but withholding trust where a security compromise would be hard to reverse: payments data, telecom networks, apps, and the boundary itself; what is emerging is selective normalisation, not strategic rapprochement.

2. The stalled Alipay+ and UPI link-up is a new decision taken during the thaw, not a 2020 holdover, and when different agencies keep reaching the same answer on new questions, the security logic behind the 2020 decisions is still shaping policy.

Analytical Crux (contd.)

3. India appears to treat engagement and trust as distinct currencies: diplomatic contact, travel and some investment can resume because the risks are manageable or reversible, while infrastructure, data and territory carry higher and less reversible costs, and boundary talks mainly manage the dispute rather than resolve it.

Verbatim Quotes

"For now, what is being normalised is not trust, but the ability to keep a working relationship going without it."

– Hritika Sharma

Opinion | Sharp Edge | The FinePrint

Narendra Modi isn't Donald Trump. India's electoral math makes it harder to humble BJP

Things are easier for BJP, with or without Gyanesh Kumar, than they are for Donald Trump. It's the numerical factor alone that suggests Narendra Modi could beat anti-incumbency.



VIR SANGHVI 05 November, 2026 05:38 pm IST

Context

Vir Sanghvi writes against a mood rather than an event. Liberals everywhere, he observes, have cheered the Republican reverses in the United States mid-term elections, and many educated Indians have drawn a hopeful parallel with their own politics. His piece asks whether that parallel holds, and answers that it does not hold in the way its admirers assume.

He grants the resemblances. The speeches of victorious Democratic candidates, on the demonising of Islam, on a politics of love, on oligarchs growing richer, would have sounded at home in an Indian campaign. But he argues that the Republicans did not lose because of divisive politics. Inflation, the war with Iran and the tariffs did the damage, and Trump's core constituency largely held.

The conclusion turns on arithmetic rather than sentiment. Trump fell from close to half the vote to about a third, a collapse in a two-party race. India's multi-party system sets a far lower bar, and the BJP has rarely needed more than the high thirties, concentrated in the Hindi belt. On Sanghvi's reading the party could lose ground and still form a government.

Narendra Modi isn't Donald Trump. India's electoral math makes it harder to humble BJP

Facts

- **The vote shares Sanghvi compares :** Sanghvi notes that Trump took 49.8 per cent of the vote when he beat Kamala Harris and can still count on a hardcore of around 34-35 per cent today. He sets this against the BJP, which he says rarely wins more than 37-38 per cent of the vote but converts that into a majority or near majority.

- **Where the BJP's votes are concentrated :** The BJP's seats come from a concentration of votes in a few areas, mostly Hindi belt states. Sanghvi argues that even a fall to 35 per cent, a losing figure in an American presidential race, would probably still leave the party able to form a government with allies, and that it would have to drop to about 30 per cent before that became doubtful.

- **Two differences beyond the numbers :** He points to the media and to timing. Enough mainstream outlets in the United States still report the truth, whereas most Indian mainstream media reports only the government's successes. On timing, he writes that Modi began thinking months ago about next year's Uttar Pradesh elections, one reason he is fighting to keep Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar in place.

Analytical Crux

1. A strong man with no commitment to the ideals that his nation was founded on can easily override all checks and balances, can turn the legislature into his poodle, rely on the Supreme Court, terrorise the media, target minorities and make a mockery of collective decision-making.

2. The Republicans did not lose because Trump followed socially divisive policies and preached hatred of minorities; the polling evidence suggests that inflation was a powerful factor in these defeats, so was the unnecessary and interminable war with Iran, and so were the foolish tariffs Trump levied on most of the world.

Analytical Crux (contd.)

3. In a multi-party system like India the figures required for victory are totally different, because the BJP rarely wins more than 37-38 per cent of the vote but gets enough seats for a majority as its votes are concentrated in a few areas, mostly Hindi belt states.

Verbatim Quotes

"But in a multi-party system like India, the figures required for victory are totally different."

- Vir Sanghvi

Opinion

India’s theatre commands need political direction, not endless military deliberations

Theatre commands are not about redistributing service turf. They are about how India will fight future wars, which will increasingly be joint, multi-domain and technology-intensive.



LT GEN H S PANAG (RETD) 05 November, 2026 12:37 pm IST

Context

Lt Gen H S Panag writes on the Integrated Theatre Commands, which he describes as a reform in danger of being consulted to death. Nearly seven years after the Chief of Defence Staff was appointed with theaterisation in his mandate, the three services are still debating structure. A proposal for three commands has gone to the Defence Minister, yet the Indian Air Force's reservations persist.

He states the Air Force case fairly before answering it. Aircraft are not confined to the area in which they are based, force multipliers are scarce, and with 29 fighter squadrons against an authorised 42.5, a permanent division of assets could weaken air power at the decisive point. Panag's answer is that allocation is not the same as division, and that operational assignment can be reviewed as the situation changes.

The piece ends on civil-military authority rather than on service doctrine. Panag holds that inter-service disagreement of this order cannot be settled by consensus among equals, and that the Chief of Defence Staff carries responsibility without the authority to impose a settlement. He asks the Cabinet Committee on Security to issue a formal political directive, with timelines, an empowered steering committee and parliamentary oversight.

India's theatre commands need political direction, not endless military deliberations

Facts

- **The proposal now before the government :** In May the former Chief of Defence Staff, General Anil Chauhan, completed the military deliberations and submitted a proposal for three Theatre Commands, western, northern and maritime, to Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, endorsed by the three Service Chiefs. Panag writes that the existing arrangement has 17 geographically dispersed single-service commands.

- **The Air Force position on record :** In a PTI interview on 25 October, six days before his retirement, Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal AP Singh said theaterisation was not an exercise to permanently divide fighter assets geographically and that the Air Force was fully committed to jointness. He advocated centralised control where necessary and decentralised execution where appropriate, citing Operation Sindoor.

- **The American precedents he cites :** Panag notes that in the United States the Joint Chiefs of Staff allocate resources through a Unified Command Plan approved by the President and hold no operational command over theatre commands. Citing Admiral Arun Prakash, he records that the United States needed the Key West Agreement of 1948 and the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 to settle the question politically.

Analytical Crux

1. The IAF has consistently and rightly argued that its limited combat resources must remain available for concentration across multiple fronts rather than being permanently tied down to individual geographical theatres, but these concerns can be addressed through a flexible integrated command structure and must not become a veto over national military transformation.

2. Allocation is not the same as permanent division: aircraft can remain at their existing bases, under IAF administrative and technical control, while being assigned operationally to Theatre Commands, and their allocation can be reviewed and modified according to the changing operational situation.

Analytical Crux (contd.)

3. A major restructuring of the military like raising of the Integrated Theatre Commands cannot be left to the military to resolve through consensus, and the Cabinet Committee on Security must approve the broad framework and issue a formal political directive with the objectives, command relationships and implementation timelines laid down.

Verbatim Quotes

"The government is the ultimate authority and must provide political direction, settle inter-service differences, and ensure implementation."

- Lt Gen H S Panag (Retd)

ARTICLE

Energy Turmoil Puts the Gulf of Guinea Back on the Map

By Judd Devermont and Gabrielle Posner
Published on Nov 5, 2026

Context

Judd Devermont and Gabrielle Posner revisit a region Washington once courted and then forgot. In 2000 the National Intelligence Council expected West Africa to supply a quarter of North American oil imports by 2015; the share stayed below three per cent. The authors argue that the present disruption in energy markets has reopened the case for the Gulf of Guinea as an alternative source of supply.

Their middle section is about what has changed on the African side. Nigeria's Petroleum Industry Act, Angola's regulatory overhaul and Mauritania's transparency measures have made these economies more investable, and a regional maritime security architecture now exists that did not exist in the 2000s. Against this they set corruption, resource nationalism, pipeline vandalism and kidnapping for ransom in the Niger Delta.

The implication they draw is addressed to Washington. They ask American researchers, diplomats and development finance institutions to return to the region, arguing that Chinese financing and contracting already crowd out American investment. The wider reading for others is that energy security is being re-ordered by chokepoints and war risk, and that Atlantic suppliers gain from sitting outside them.

Energy Turmoil Puts the Gulf of Guinea Back on the Map

Facts

- ***The region's share of world reserves :*** The Gulf of Guinea, defined broadly as stretching from Mauritania to South Africa, holds 2.7 per cent of global gas reserves and 4.5 per cent of global oil reserves, with untapped offshore potential in deepwater blocks. Much of its crude is light and sweet, commanding premium prices and needing less complex refining than Middle Eastern grades.

- ***Nigeria's reform and its shortfall :*** Nigeria's Petroleum Industry Act of 2021 created separate upstream and midstream regulators and the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited. Shell announced a $5 billion Bonga North deepwater project in 2024, and the Dangote Refinery runs at 650,000 barrels a day. Even so, Nigeria missed its OPEC quota of 1.5 million barrels a day in all but three months of 2025, losing about $1.31 billion.

- ***Maritime security built since 2013 :*** Twenty-five West and Central African states signed the Yaoundé Code of Conduct in 2013, working through the subregional bodies and the Gulf of Guinea Commission. The United Nations Security Council has credited that architecture with a measurable decline in piracy since 2021, and in June 2026 six Gulf of Guinea countries launched a Combined Maritime Task Force.

Analytical Crux

1. Two decades ago the U.S. government elevated the Gulf of Guinea as a strategic energy frontier, driven in part by the need to diversify away from Middle Eastern oil dependence, but record-breaking domestic oil production and interlocking regulatory and security challenges in West Africa foreclosed this highly touted opportunity.

2. Located on the Atlantic Ocean, Gulf of Guinea producers can supply European and American markets without transiting the chokepoints that a hostile state or nonstate actor can exploit, and no rival holds structural control over the region the way that Russia does over Central Asian pipelines.

Analytical Crux (contd.)

3. Regulatory reform has only made incremental improvements in addressing deep-seated corruption issues, revenues are frequently siphoned off projects, and resource nationalism remains a thorny issue to navigate, while China's foothold in the energy sector's infrastructure and financing crowds out U.S. investment and operations.

Verbatim Quotes

"No oil-producing region is risk-free, but the relative reward the Gulf of Guinea offers is meaningful."

– Judd Devermont and Gabrielle Posner

UPSC LINK

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

- **PSIR Paper II, 2026:** Discuss various methods of Balance of Power.

- **PSIR Paper II, 2026:** India has adopted multi-alignment to fulfill its core values and interests in International relations. Discuss.

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