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INDIAN INSIGHTS INTO A CHANGING WORLD

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POWER, POLITICS & THE NEW WORLD ORDER

The Global South After BRICS: Can India Turn Leadership into Leverage?

India's Defence Diplomacy at BRICS: Can Strategic Partnerships Become Defence Partnerships?

And more inside

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A Message from the Founder's Desk

Rudraksh Aneja; Director, The Geojuristoday Research Foundation



Dear Readers,

The third edition of GRF Monthly comes at a defining moment in **India's engagement with a rapidly transforming world**. From knowledge sovereignty, digital markets and e-commerce to climate justice, healthcare, financial reform and de-dollarisation, this edition examines the forces reshaping our economic and strategic landscape.

At its centre is **India's BRICS Chairship** and the New Delhi Declaration, which advances cooperation across trade, technology, finance, climate, development and security, while strengthening the voice of the Global South and advocating reform of global institutions. Our discussions on innovation, startups, defence diplomacy, India-China relations and Viksit Bharat further explore **how India can convert global partnerships into national capabilities**. Through this edition, we **ask a larger question**: how can India move from navigating global change to shaping it?

This question assumes particular significance as the boundaries between economic power, technological capacity and strategic influence become increasingly intertwined. The pursuit of **Viksit Bharat** therefore extends beyond economic growth alone, it encompasses institutional resilience, technological self-reliance, strategic autonomy, human capital and the capacity to participate in, rather than remain subject to, the structures governing the global order.

At the same time, India's expanding **engagement with the Global South** reflects a broader transformation in its diplomatic imagination. Partnerships across BRICS and other multilateral platforms provide avenues not merely for cooperation, but for **articulating alternative perspectives** on development, representation and global governance. Yet influence cannot be sustained through diplomacy alone. It must be **reinforced** by domestic capability, intellectual confidence and the ability to translate partnerships into **tangible outcomes.**

This edition of **GRF Monthly** seeks to examine precisely that intersection between India's domestic transformation and its international ambitions. Across our essays and analyses, we explore not simply what is changing in the world, but what India can **build, shape and contribute** in response.

Happy Reading.

Letter from the Editor-in-Chief

Samridhi Seth: Core Team, The Geojuristoday Research Foundation



Dear Readers,

Welcome to the third edition of **GRF Monthly**.

This edition comes at an interesting moment for India and the world. The international order is changing, new centres of economic and strategic influence are emerging, and countries across the Global South are seeking a greater role in shaping global institutions. This year, India found itself at the centre of that conversation as it took over the **BRICS Chairship and hosted the BRICS Summit in New Delhi**.

BRICS gives us an interesting lens through which to understand this changing world. The discussions around the Summit extended far beyond diplomacy, touching on trade and finance, technology, critical minerals, climate, development, security, and global governance. For India, these developments raise a larger question: **what does a changing world order require from us at home?**

That is the question at the heart of this edition.

Across our sections, we look at the policy, economic, social, technological, and defence implications of these shifts. We examine how India is responding to a world that is becoming more competitive and more multipolar, where economic resilience is increasingly linked to strategic security and technological capabilities are becoming central to national power.

But understanding the response is only one part of the conversation. We also ask where India needs to do more. What policies and institutions will we need? How can we strengthen our economy and technological capabilities? What does this changing environment mean for Indian society? And how should India prepare for the security challenges that will accompany a more contested global order?

The aim of this edition is therefore not simply to examine **BRICS**, but to use it as a starting point for a larger conversation about **India in a new world order, how we are responding to it, and what we need to do next**.

As India looks outward at a changing world, there is an equally important task at home: building the confidence, capabilities, and institutions to shape that world rather than simply respond to it.

We hope this edition gives you a chance to think about both.

Happy reading.

Letter from the Managing Editor

Kuvamjeet Singh: COO, The Geojuristoday Research Foundation



I wish to talk of History with all of my beloved readers,

There are moments in history when the world does not simply change; it rearranges itself.

The third edition of **GRF Monthly** arrives at one such moment. India's BRICS Chairship and the Summit in New Delhi have placed our country at the centre of a wider conversation about the future of the international order. Yet BRICS, in itself, is **only one manifestation of a much larger transformation. Power is being redistributed, economic and technological dependencies are being reconsidered, strategic competition is deepening**, and the Global South is increasingly demanding not merely a seat at the table, but a greater role in determining the shape of the table itself.

For India, this changing landscape **presents both opportunity and obligation**. The question before us is not simply how India responds to a multipolar world, but **whether we possess the institutions, economic strength, technological capabilities and strategic imagination necessary** to shape it. Foreign policy cannot exist in isolation from domestic capacity; national security cannot be separated from economic resilience; and development, technology and statecraft are increasingly intertwined. The world outside our borders is changing rapidly, but the foundations upon which India meets that world are built within them.

This edition therefore attempts to look beyond the headlines. Across its pages, our contributors examine the economic, political, technological, social and defence dimensions of a **world in transition.** We have sought not merely to document change, but to interrogate what it means for India: where we stand, where we are moving, and where we must strengthen ourselves.

The task of a young policy institution is **not to predict the future with certainty. It is to cultivate the intellectual discipline required to confront it** without illusion. GRF Monthly is an attempt at that discipline. I hope this edition provokes questions as much as it provides answers, and encourages our readers to look beyond immediate events towards the larger forces shaping our national and international landscape.

To navigate the century ahead, we will require not only ambition, but knowledge; not merely aspiration, but capability; and above all, the confidence to imagine an India capable of shaping the world around it.

Happy reading.



NITI
नीति

The Next Artificial Intelligence Race Is for Knowledge. How Can India Get Ahead?

Type a simple prompt for a world map into DeepSeek, and the system quietly redraws international borders, rendering Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh as Chinese territory. It is easy to dismiss this as a minor software glitch, but it points to a much larger geopolitical reality: modern digital platforms do not merely process facts, they enforce and broadcast the sovereign claims of the corporations and nations that build them.

As these platforms become the global lens for accessing information, the race to power them has triggered an aggressive, industrial-scale harvest of human knowledge. In California, Anthropic's covert *"Project Panama"* saw paper cutters shred millions of physical books to convert published works into training data, eventually forcing a $1.5 billion settlement in *Andrea Bartz & Ors. v. Anthropic PBC*. In India, a similar dynamic unfolded in court when the Delhi High Court issued an interim ruling in *ANI v. OpenAI*. The court refused to restrain ChatGPT from scraping Indian news reporting, holding on a prima facie basis that storing scraped archives qualifies as "fair dealing" for research under Section 52(1)(a) of the Indian Copyright Act.

Together, these cases illustrate a troubling legal mismatch: rules drafted for human readers are being used to cover machine-scale data extraction. Without a clear policy framework, India's knowledge assets remain exposed, creating a future where Indian institutions might have to pay foreign platforms to access digitized versions of their own history, journalism, and cultural heritage.

This vulnerability took center stage at the recent BRICS Summit in New Delhi. In the New Delhi Declaration, member nations explicitly addressed AI training and copyright, calling for respect for intellectual property rights and fair remuneration for rights holders. While India has made strong progress in building out hardware and raw computing power, infrastructure is only half the equation. True national resilience requires Knowledge Sovereignty, a strategy that treats data, historical archives, and cultural memory as vital strategic assets with the same policy priority as critical digital infrastructure.

A Global Race for Knowledge: Three Models Are Emerging

Knowledge is already being treated as a strategic national resource in different parts of the world, as it shapes not just what AI systems can do, but what they know and whose account of the world they carry forward. There are currently three major approaches to regulating the use of the world's accumulated knowledge to train machines.

The American approach leans on courts rather than legislators to draw the boundaries, primarily through the fair use doctrine. On the infrastructure side, the US does have significant public digitization efforts - the Library of Congress's Chronicling America newspaper archive being one example - but these remain fragmented projects rather than a

coordinated national knowledge policy. **India's judiciary** appears to be converging on a similar path. But litigation is not the same as strategy, and India's high judicial pendency makes it difficult to sustain this approach.

Europe pairs stronger default copyright protections and AI transparency obligations with something the US and India largely lack - a deliberate, publicly funded infrastructure for treating cultural and knowledge assets as shared digital resources. Europeana, the EU's digital cultural heritage platform, aggregates millions of items from museums, libraries, and archives across member states.

Building on it, the EU-funded AI4Culture project has developed an online capacity-building hub that gives cultural heritage institutions access to open datasets, reusable AI tools, and training materials, with components built to be interoperable with the common European data space for cultural heritage. In effect, Europe is actively constructing the public infrastructure that determines what 'AI-ready' cultural data looks like and who controls it. The lesson here is that legal certainty and public knowledge infrastructure reinforce each other.

China treats archives and language data as strategic capability rather than legal or cultural questions alone. The Ministry of Education has issued a national guideline aiming to establish a national corpus and strategic language-resources database by 2027, to significantly expand the Chinese language's presence in global AI systems by 2035. Alongside this, the National Library of China is running a large-scale project to digitize the country's classical texts, building what is described as the world's largest digital resource-sharing platform for Chinese ancient books. Universities are folding this material directly into AI development: Beijing Normal University's Classical Chinese language model, trained on digitized ancient texts and inscriptions, is one such pilot.



This mirrors the State's approach to compute - its "Eastern Data, Western Compute" programme built national infrastructure hubs the same way its language and archive guidelines are now building national knowledge hubs.

The global consensus indicates that the next frontier of **AI diplomacy** will center on datasets, digital heritage, and archival agreements as much as silicon supply chains. Countries that govern their archives will hold leverage when international standards are negotiated. Securing national knowledge is hence not cultural pride alone; it is public infrastructure that shapes soft power in the digital era.

India's Missing Pillar: Knowledge Sovereignty

India has taken several meaningful steps to facilitate AI development. It has allocated

over 10,372 crore rupees to the IndiaAI Mission, launching multilingual translation platforms through Project Bhashini, and supporting domestic developers like Sarvam AI and Krutrim. However, the underlying hardware math reveals a stark reality. While public initiatives aim to deploy 10,000 GPUs, global technology conglomerates regularly build single training clusters with over 100,000 advanced chips. Matching that level of physical compute requires vast capital and years of infrastructure work. The more immediate, invaluable advantage that India possesses is a rich, unbroken record of human knowledge and cultural diversity. And it is a critical missing element in India's AI story.

Matching that level of physical compute requires vast capital and years of infrastructure work. The more immediate, invaluable advantage that India possesses is a rich, unbroken record of human knowledge and cultural diversity. And it is a critical missing element in India's AI story.

Knowledge Sovereignty refers to a country's capacity to preserve, digitize, govern, and strategically deploy its own cognitive record rather than surrendering it to corporate extraction. This covers the living memory of the nation, including ancient manuscripts, parliamentary debates, court judgments, local journalism, and District Gazetteers. Failing to secure this knowledge layer creates four fundamental risks.

First, Archives held by state libraries and regional institutions continue to deteriorate before they can be digitized and made machine-readable, risking the permanent loss of valuable records.

Second, all Indic languages combined currently represent less than one percent of major web datasets like Common Crawl. Limited and externally curated datasets risk perpetuating data colonialism, where dominant tech powers extract raw cultural data and re-encode it through foreign lenses. Trained on thin, externally curated data, global AI models flatten or misstate Indian history, law, and regional nuance, embedding cultural bias directly into global software.

Third, Indian researchers are dependent on foreign platforms as domestic institutions lack extensive digital repositories of Indian knowledge, forcing Indian researchers to buy subscription access to their own digitized heritage.

Lastly, the burden of broader policy questions hence shifts to the judiciary in the absence of clear rules on AI's access to knowledge in India.

AI Capability & Knowledge Governance

This moment calls for the next phase of India's AI strategy. India's national framework currently rests on three pillars: Compute, Talent, and Indigenous Models. To complete this foundation, India must formally establish Knowledge Governance as its fourth pillar through two practical steps.



1. National Knowledge Strategy for AI: The Ministry of Culture's Gyan Bharatam Mission has digitized over 1.19 crore manuscripts using AI and OCR, and non-profits like the Manuscripts & Inscriptions Digitization Foundation (MIDF) are converting scans into structured records AI

systems can search, without destroying the physical archives.

India must apply this template beyond ancient heritage to cover modern knowledge infrastructure to unify its policies into a national strategy.

2. Robust Framework for Artificial Intelligence:

As the *ANI v. OpenAI* litigation demonstrates, courts can only interpret existing law on a case-by-case basis. The absence of a national framework goes beyond copyright. The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 governs personal data, but explicitly exempts archival and research processing from its scope, leaving existing institutional knowledge assets like Abhilekh Patal outside any data-protection or sovereignty framework at all. The legal framework on intellectual property and other laws affecting the input and usage of Artificial Intelligence needs to be updated. This will replace prolonged judicial uncertainty with predictable rules, serving AI developers and rights-holders alike.

Every technological revolution has been defined by control over a strategic resource. The industrial age depended on coal, the information age on data, and the AI age on knowledge. India's archives, scientific literature, legal records, newspapers, and linguistic diversity are **strategic assets for the future**. India is already investing in building AI capability. The next challenge is ensuring that the knowledge powering those systems is preserved, governed, and leveraged on India's own terms. A truly sovereign AI ecosystem requires Indian compute, Indian models, and Indian knowledge



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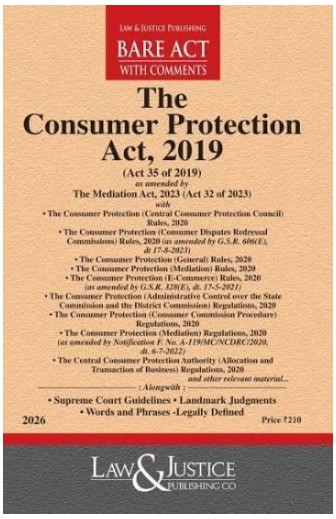
India's New E-Commerce Rules: *Can Regulation Make Digital Markets Fairer?*

The rapid expansion of digital commerce in India has transformed the retail ecosystem, turning platform operators into central gateways for trade. As multi-sided digital marketplaces grow, they exercise significant power over product visibility, pricing structures, seller participation, and consumer access. In response to growing concerns over deceptive interface designs, predatory practices, and algorithmic bias, the Ministry of Consumer Affairs notified the Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) (Amendment) Rules, 2026. Scheduled to take effect on January 1, 2027, this revised legal framework attempts to curb market distortions and safeguard consumer rights without placing disproportionate compliance burdens on tech enterprises. Examining this regulatory evolution provides critical insight into whether legislative interventions can effectively balance digital innovation with equitable marketplace principles.

A brief Background & Regulatory Framework



India's e-commerce regulation stems from the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 - the parent law through which the 2020 E-Commerce Rules were first issued. In the few years since, the advent of dark patterns, deceptive search indexing, and hiding of platform algorithms made clear that structural failures had been left unaddressed under initial policy instruments. Industry estimates and government data from the Ministry of Consumer Affairs indicate that grievances regarding deceptive online trade practices surged significantly, with National Consumer Helpline data showing e-commerce grievances climbing to over 511,000 cases (accounting for roughly 29% of total registered grievances), revealing systemic vulnerabilities where major platforms frequently abused search algorithms and self-preferenced proprietary brands to capture up to 40% of marketplace visibility. Early drafts in the law-making process sought to cap self-preferencing and platform dominance explicitly within the consumer protection act. Yet, this was met with institutional conflicts about whether competition issues in fact belonged in the consumer protection agency, or whether they were best placed in the Competition Commission of India.

The 2026 architecture bridges this institutional overlap, replacing the previous avoidance of direct structural remedies with a new emphasis on algorithmic transparency, obligatory seller disclosure, and accentuated price clarity. The new regulatory architecture substitutes broad structural bans with targeted interventions into the user interface and the algorithmic level to remove systemic market disparities. This shift intends to rid the market of

asymmetries, while keeping consumer welfare intact.

Key Regulatory Provisions and Transparency Mandates

A major pillar of the amended rules is the mandate for systemic transparency in product discovery and pricing mechanics. E-commerce entities are prohibited from manipulating search rankings or search indexes to artificially favor specific listings, higher-margin items, or proprietary brands. Furthermore, to eliminate deceptive flash sales and artificial discount claims, platforms displaying price cuts must disclose the prior reference price, defined as the lowest price at which the goods or services were offered during the preceding 30 days. Sponsored listings must also carry explicit, prominent labels to prevent paid advertising from being mistaken for organic search results.



This framework lays down strict operational responsibilities to safeguard consumer information and curb manipulative design choices. Platforms are required to abide by the Guidelines for Prevention and Regulation of Dark Patterns, 2023, conduct annual self-audits to ensure that they are free from deceptive design features, and publicly display a certificate of compliance. To address sneaky fees, the framework prohibits platforms from charging bundled fees for any services not associated with the main purchase, except for standard membership or loyalty programs. Regarding the use of data, the operators of marketplaces are prohibited from utilizing consumer data for designated commercial ends unless they have received specific affirmative consent.

Grievance redressal systems have also been updated to enhance platform accountability. E-commerce entities are now required to integrate directly with the National Consumer Helpline convergence system and provide consumers with formal copies of their recorded complaints. The convergence mechanism operates via an automated API bridge that routes grievances lodged on platform interfaces directly to the central grievance monitoring portal, ensuring that ticket statuses are synchronized in real-time and subject to mandatory resolution timelines managed by designated nodal officers. Additionally, seller disclosure mandates have been expanded to require clear displays of country-of-origin details, importer specifications, best-before dates, and relevant tax identification numbers to reduce information asymmetry.

Stakeholder Perspectives: Consumer Rights and Seller Protection

This policy sounds like a considerable move towards the eradication of exploitative digital practices for the sake of consumer protection.

This policy sounds like a considerable move towards the eradication of exploitative digital practices for the sake of consumer protection. By establishing unambiguous regulations for calculating purchases, misleading benchmarks for pricing disappear and buyers are able to evaluate the real worth of goods. On the other hand, clearly defined tags for commercial products and ranking methodologies protect consumers from

being led to commodity options with the aid of undisclosed agreements between platforms. Institutional affiliation with national helplines lets buyers track complaints and offers effective ways to resolve issues.

For small and medium businesses, the principles create more equal opportunities for fair competition. In particular, the rules hinder big platforms from using sellers' and consumers' transaction information to compete with them in the market. In this regard, independent sellers will be better protected from unfair processes of copying practices initiated by platforms. Moreover, obligatory registration and seller information make trust higher and allow small sellers to position themselves at the same level with well-known brands.

Implementation Challenges and Compliance Burdens

Despite these advantages, industry stakeholders raise valid concerns about compliance costs and operational complexity. Carrying out annual dark-pattern audits, redesigning search algorithms to ensure that parameter disclosures are in line with the requirements, and monitoring historical prices for thirty days for millions of stock keeping units imply significant technological components. While key players in the market handle such compliance costs easily, newbie digital startups may suffer from those costs both in terms of finance and administration. Strict regulations regarding bundled fees as well as cross promotions may also restrict the use of business models which enable reducing acquisition costs.

Enforcement has been the ongoing administrative challenge for regulatory authorities. As algorithmic ranking systems are complicated and change according to user's behavior, place, and stock level it is hard to understand if search output is an example of dynamic personalization or manipulation of platform.



The Central Consumer Protection Authority has also to control the compliance of authorities with a large number of transactions every day which raises the crucial question whether regulatory authorities are able to keep up with the fast development of digital systems.

Global Perspectives on E-Commerce Regulation

Examining international approaches reveals how other major jurisdictions tackle similar market challenges.



The European Union's Digital Markets Act (DMA) introduces stringent ex-ante obligations for designated "gatekeeper" platforms, explicitly banning self-preferencing and enforcing strict interoperability and data-sharing mandates under heavy financial penalties. Similarly, countries like Australia, through the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) and the United Kingdom have focused heavily on mandatory codes of conduct for digital platforms to address bargaining power imbalances between tech giants and third-party vendors. These global frameworks

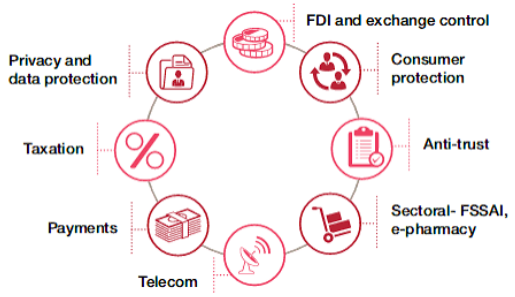
demonstrate a strong international regulatory convergence towards treating dominant digital platforms as regulated public utilities rather than neutral marketplaces, offering valuable lessons for India's enforcement strategy.

Policy Outlook



The new regulatory framework for e-commerce represents a significant step in promoting transparency, safety of consumers, and market fairness in an ever-growing digital economy in India. The regulations focusing on disclosure requirements, prevention of misleading design practices, and disclosure of algorithms, ensure a level of protection for the consumers while keeping the market accessible to small traders. The long-term success of these measures will depend on how effectively compliance frameworks adapt to emerging marketplace practices without inadvertently stifling digital enterprise.

To ensure that such updates are carried out smoothly, the regulatory authorities must focus on compliance measures that are effective in practice. For instance, introducing consistent self-auditing tools for verifying the presence of dark patterns will create clear benchmarks for the platforms and avoid arbitrary enforcement. Furthermore, enabling authorities to evaluate complicated ranking algorithms, track past prices correctly, and monitor multi-layered platforms will require the establishment of proper auditing functions at these bodies.



Regulatory authorities should keep an open and consultative communication with all market players to make operational rules more efficient. By setting up effective communication channels for obtaining feedback, small companies and digital startups can efficiently deal with compliance obligations, while huge market players are kept under full responsibility. Finally, achieving a flexible balance between efficient consumer protection and commercial freedom will define whether the digital market in India can be competitive, innovative, and just enough on the global scale.

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SAMAAJ

समाज

Carbon Trade Barriers and Climate Justice: *Can the Global South Compete on a Level Playing Field?*

Since 1st January, 2026, the European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) has applied. It covers imports of iron and steel, aluminum, cement, fertilizers, electricity and hydrogen. Importers must account for emissions embedded in these goods, with certificates priced against the EU Emissions Trading System. The EU intends this to discourage carbon leakage, when EU production shifts abroad or is displaced by more carbon-intensive imports. Its aim is an equivalent carbon price for domestic and imported products, with a deduction where a carbon price has already been paid abroad.

That design poses a question for India and other developing economies. Can a uniform charge produce a fair result when firms differ in their access to clean power, finance and verification services? The answer depends on both the integrity of the emissions rules and the practical support available to producers asked to change how they manufacture goods.

Two Rules, Different Questions

The Paris Agreement says climate action should reflect equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in light of different national circumstances. This principle recognizes that countries share a climate goal but have unequal historical responsibilities and capacities. It does not exempt developing countries from reducing emissions. It does, however, make the distribution of transition costs a legitimate policy concern.

The Paris Agreement says climate action should reflect equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in light of different national circumstances.

Trade law starts elsewhere. The World Trade Organization's non-discrimination rules protect competitive opportunities for imports, while Article XX of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade permits certain environmental measures under conditions that guard against arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination and disguised trade restrictions. Those tests do not automatically decide CBAM's legality. They do show why the way a border measure is designed and applied matters as much as its stated climate purpose.

Where the Burden Falls

The EU has a defensible concern: without a comparable carbon cost on imports, domestic producers that pay for emissions could lose sales to more carbon-intensive competitors. Exporters also have an incentive to measure and reduce emissions when market access rewards cleaner production. Yet equal pricing does not mean equal adjustment costs. A producer with reliable low-carbon electricity and affordable capital can respond differently from one without them.

UN trade & development UNCTAD

A 2021 UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) model found that a proposed EU carbon border measure could shift some exports from developing to developed countries, while reducing global emissions only modestly. This was a scenario study conducted before the current regime, not evidence of losses already caused by CBAM. It supports a narrower conclusion: the distribution of costs deserves scrutiny alongside the environmental benefit. Developing countries are diverse, so the burden should be assessed by product, production process and exporter rather than attributed to the Global South as a whole.

India's Practical Test

For an Indian steel or aluminum exporter, the immediate challenge is to produce credible data on emissions embedded in its goods and find recognized verification. Cleaner electricity and industrial equipment may reduce future exposure, but require investment and dependable power. Energy security and industrial competitiveness therefore sit alongside the climate objective. The costs of measurement, independent checks and altered production also matter; a certificate price alone cannot describe the full adjustment. These constraints should be measured rather than assumed to affect every exporter equally.

The India–EU trade-agreement text offers a practical diplomatic channel. Its annex on carbon border measures provides for technical dialogue on product scope, emissions accounting, default values and verification, including the possible mutual recognition of accreditation bodies. That is a framework for cooperation, not proof that these problems have been solved. India can use it to seek clear data rules and workable verification; the EU can show whether its implementation gives foreign producers a credible way to demonstrate their actual emissions.

A Fairer Route

Three steps would make the test more exact. First, the EU and its partners should publish clear, comparable methods for calculating emissions and make verification accessible to exporters, including smaller firms. Second, India should identify which plants and products face the greatest exposure, then target clean-power access, technical assistance and finance accordingly. Third, both sides should assess whether existing carbon prices are credited as intended and whether support reaches producers that can cut emissions but cannot finance the shift alone.

These steps would preserve the incentive to decarbonize while making the costs more transparent. They would also give the India–EU dialogue measurable questions to answer: how many exporters can use verified plant data, what compliance costs they face, and whether recognition arrangements improve access. Without such evidence, claims that CBAM is either wholly fair or necessarily protectionist go beyond what can be established.

CBAM brings climate policy directly into trade decisions. Its environmental rationale is clear, but its fairness will be judged in implementation: whether carbon costs are calculated consistently, existing payments are recognized, and exporters have a realistic path to cleaner production. India should focus on evidence about affected sectors and use the bilateral technical dialogue to resolve verification and accounting barriers. The development to watch is whether those processes reduce compliance costs while still rewarding lower emissions.

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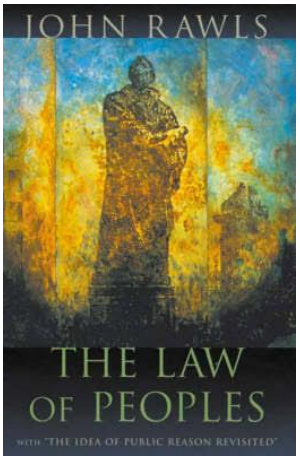
Access to Healthcare as a Global Justice Question: *Can BRICS Challenge the Patent-Public Health Trade-off?*

Each year, preventable and treatable diseases continue to haunt people in low and middle-income countries due to medicines priced right out of their reach. This gap between medical capability and patient access has increasingly been framed as a matter of global justice, testing whether a wealthy, rules-based international order owes obligations to distant strangers whose survival depends on medicines they did not develop and often cannot afford.

Healthcare as a Global Justice Question

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that nearly 2 billion people - about a third of humanity- lack regular access to essential medicines. The distribution of resources compounds the gap; a Global Health Watch analysis found that 42% of global medicine expenditure is spent on the 5% of the world's population living in North America, while only about a fifth is spent on the far larger populations carrying the world's heaviest disease burden across Africa, Asia and Latin America, a mismatch reflected in annual per-head medicine spending of roughly $396 in high-income countries against $4 in low-income ones. These figures are not natural facts; they are outcomes of specific institutional arrangements, which is what turns an access gap into a justice question rather than merely a tragedy.



The modern debate related to Global justice traces to John Rawls's *The Law of Peoples* (1999), which asked whether principles of domestic justice extend across borders, which became a basis for substantial literature on global justice. Thomas Pogge's cosmopolitan argument is that existing global institutions, including the international patent regime, are not neutral background conditions but actively contribute to remediable poverty and ill health, generating a duty on the states and

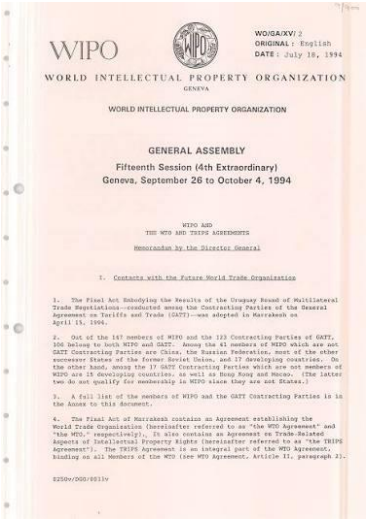
firms that designed and benefit from those institutions to reform them, rather than merely to donate charity afterwards. Pogge's own Health Impact Fund (HIF) proposal, which would reward pharmaceutical innovators for a medicine's actual health impact rather than for a patent-protected price markup, is a direct attempt to redesign the institution he holds responsible.

As far as the legality of the Right to health is concerned, Article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) recognizes the right of everyone to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, and General Comment 14 translates this into a concrete state obligation that healthcare, including essential medicines, should be available, accessible, acceptable and of adequate quality (the "AAAQ" framework), regardless of a country's income level. It treats access to medicine as a baseline entitlement states have already bound themselves to progressively realize.

Together, this shows the empirical gap from different directions: one is locating responsibility in the design of global institutions, the other in a standing legal obligation, but they converge on the same practical question: does the patent system, since it does more than anything else to set the price of medicine, live up to what the theory says justice requires?



The Patent-Public Health Trade-off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WO/GA/XV/ 2
ORIGINAL : English
DATE : July 18, 1994

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GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Fifteenth Session (4th Extraordinary)
Geneva, September 26 to October 4, 1994

WIPO AND
THE WTO AND TRIPS AGREEMENTS

Memorandum by the Director General

I. Contacts with the Future World Trade Organization

1. The Final Act Embodying the Results of the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations--conducted among the Contracting Parties of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)--was adopted in Marrakesh on April 15, 1994.

2. Out of the 147 members of WIPO and the 123 Contracting Parties of GATT, 106 belong to both WIPO and GATT. Among the 41 members of WIPO which are not GATT Contracting Parties are China, the Russian Federation, most of the other successor States of the former Soviet Union, and 17 developing countries. On the other hand, among the 17 GATT Contracting Parties which are not members of WIPO are 15 developing countries, as well as Hong Kong and Macao. (The latter two do not qualify for membership in WIPO since they are not States.)

3. A full list of the members of WIPO and the GATT Contracting Parties is in the Annex to this document.

4. The Final Act of Marrakesh contains an Agreement establishing the World Trade Organization (hereinafter referred to as "the WTO Agreement" and "the WTO," respectively). It also contains an Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (hereinafter referred to as "the TRIPS Agreement"). The TRIPS Agreement is an integral part of the WTO Agreement, binding on all Members of the WTO (see WTO Agreement, Article II, paragraph 2).

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The 1995 TRIPS Agreement obligated all member countries of the World Trade Organization to grant minimum periods of patent protection, including in the pharmaceutical sector, on the basis that patents create an incentive for expensive research that will yield new drugs. At the same time, the very same protection may maintain the price of medicines excessively high above the cost of production for the entire duration of the patent period, precisely when poor patients are in dire need of affordable medicine. This is not about right versus wrong parties, but about conflicting goals.

TRIPS also has its own provisions for resolving such a dilemma, namely the compulsory licensing provision under Article 31, where a government is allowed to authorize the production of a patented drug without the consent of the patent holder but with proper compensation. These provisions were contested until the adoption of the Doha Declaration on TRIPS and Public Health in 2001, when there was a crisis over treatment access for diseases like HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria. It affirmed that TRIPS "does not and should not prevent" states from protecting public health, and that each member retains the

freedom to determine the grounds for compulsory licensing.

In practice, indeed these safety valves have proven hard to use. Compulsory licensing of production at first was confined largely to domestic markets in disadvantaged countries without any manufacturing capacities, an opening partially plugged up by the administratively cumbersome "Paragraph 6" export mechanism adopted in 2003. Many bilateral and regional trade agreements include additional TRIPS-plus measures such as data exclusivity and patent term extension, which limit flexibilities recognized in Doha.

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The 2013 Supreme Court of India decision in Novartis v. Union of India upheld Section 3(d) of the Patents Act of India, which forbids patents for minor modifications not leading to increased therapeutic efficacy, and is considered the key measure preventing "evergreening" of patents and allowing affordable access to cancer medication.



Indeed, the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic sparked off this discussion once more, as the 2020 Indian-South African proposal for a broad TRIPS waiver met serious, documented objections from the EU, UK, Switzerland and initially the US, while the final Ministerial Decision in June 2022 covered just one aspect of it, Article 31(f) for exports of COVID-19 vaccines, leaving diagnostics and therapeutics unresolved.

Can BRICS Challenge the Trade-off?

BRICS countries do, however, have a genuine stake in this issue in structural terms. India has historically been estimated to supply around a fifth of the world's generic medicines by volume, with the World Health Organization identifying it as the primary supplier of generic medicines for developing countries.



During the BRICS 2022 health ministers meeting presided over by China, the bloc endorsed the Indian-South African initiative for the TRIPS waiver and emphasized the need for increased local production and technology transfer. The BRICS Vaccine Research and Development Centre, first proposed at the BRICS 2018 summit held in Johannesburg and officially launched in March 2022, intends to consolidate the research and production capacity of the five countries in case of future health emergencies.

However, there are a number of internal differences and external inequalities that prevent the group from exercising significant leverage. China's patent filing regime has become the largest in the world since 2019, which means that it has a much more complex position concerning the

flexibilities for generics compared to India's generics export industry. Russia and Brazil have concentrated on different aspects of health cooperation, such as warning systems and traditional medicine, whereas South Africa's initiative to establish the waiver was the result of its previous struggles with HIV medication accessibility in the country.

BRICS does not have any enforceable mechanism among its members, and they still need to negotiate individually as WTO members against established pharmaceutical-exporting economies such as the US and EU, whose branded-drug industries hold much stronger bargaining positions. The 2022 waiver ended up much narrower than what was originally proposed, showing that even when developing countries push together, they can't easily overcome a well-resourced opposing coalition.

The Uncertain Path Ahead for BRICS



What is uncertain is whether BRICS presents itself as a credible justice-oriented challenge to the patent system, or as a coalition of producer states with a shared commercial and manufacturing agenda that also coincides with equity considerations;

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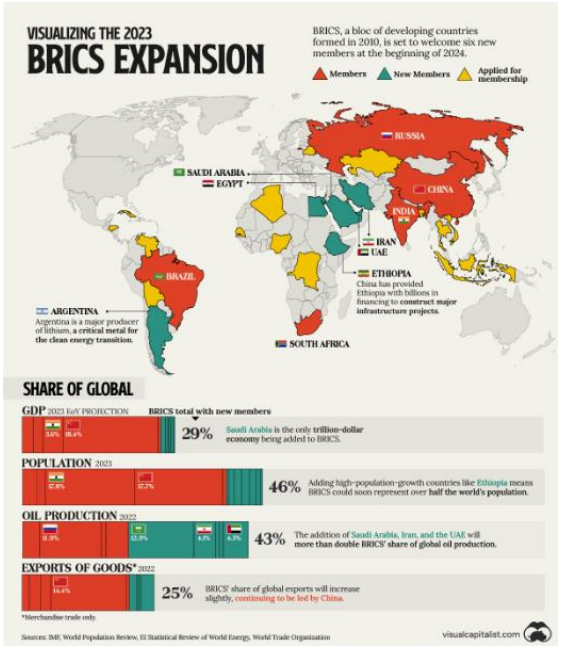
it is an empirically answerable question rather than a settled one.

The history after the Doha declaration seems to indicate some progress, albeit a contested one, in which there is space for legal policymaking, but which is inconsistently exploitable in practice, and where BRICS collaboration through research and development, a shared stance at the WTO, and initiatives such as the Vaccine Centre have only marginally contributed to opening this space without reconciling the tension between innovation incentives and price accessibility.



As newer members bring their own pharmaceutical policies into the bloc, the more telling test will be whether coordination can outpace the fragmentation of interests that has so far limited BRICS's reach.

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De-Dollarization Without De Dollarizing: *What Does India Actually Gain from BRICS Financial Reform?*

Between March and May 2026, India paid for roughly $14.6 billion of its imports in rupees. That accounts for 7.1 per cent of all merchandise imports, up from 2.4 per cent in the three months before, according to Indian Express calculations using RBI data. Most of it was Russian oil. This month, the BRICS summit in New Delhi put local-currency trade, payment cooperation and local-currency lending back at the centre of the bloc's agenda. The word that follows these discussions everywhere is de-dollarisation. For India, I believe it may be the wrong frame. New Delhi is not trying to dethrone the dollar, and has said so. What it can gain is quieter and more useful: cheaper settlement where the numbers work, safer debt for projects that earn in rupees, and supply chains that do not all run through one country.

Background

India's rupee settlement story began with sanctions. In July 2022, months after sanctions on Russia disrupted dollar payments, the RBI allowed trade to be invoiced and settled in rupees through Special Rupee Vostro Accounts that foreign banks hold with Indian lenders. A year later, an RBI inter-departmental group published a roadmap for internationalizing the rupee. It was candid that wider use depends less on payment plumbing than on what foreigners can actually do with the rupees they earn.

BRICS, meanwhile, has built institutions of its own. The New Development Bank (NDB), headquartered in Shanghai, approved its first loans in 2016. China runs CIPS, a cross-border payment system for the renminbi, and several central banks, China's among them, have built mBridge, a shared platform for settling payments in central bank digital currencies.



India's official line has not really moved. In August 2025, as Brazil's President Lula pushed for a common BRICS trade currency and Washington raised tariffs on Indian goods over Russian oil, the Ministry of External Affairs put it plainly: *"De-dollarisation is not part of India's financial agenda."*. So, the real question is not whether India wants to leave the dollar. It is what India can take from BRICS without doing so. At the same time, the risk is that in loosening one dependence, we may walk into another.

Where Does the Rupee Go?

The 2026 numbers show that rupee settlement can carry real volume. They also show how narrow it still is. One commodity and one supplier do not make a trade currency. The deeper problem arrives after payment. In May 2023, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov complained that

Russia was sitting on billions of rupees it could not use (Bloomberg, 2023). A seller paid in rupees has to be able to spend, invest or convert them. If it cannot, the next contract gets priced in dollars again. The RBI's roadmap recognizes this, though its caution has a logic too: opening the capital account too fast invites volatile flows.

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In parallel, there is the sheer weight of the dollar. The BIS found it on one side for 89.2 per cent of all foreign-exchange trades in April 2025, against 8.5 per cent for the renminbi (the shares total 200 per cent, since every trade involves two currencies). Rupee settlement is worth it only where payment, conversion and hedging together come out cheaper. And oil priced off a dollar benchmark carries dollar risk whatever the invoice currency.

Project Debt

The stronger case is not trade at all but rather debt. Take a one-year dollar loan at 6 per cent. If the rupee falls 5 per cent before repayment, the real cost in rupees is 11.3% (1.06 × 1.05, minus one). For a highway or power project earning tolls and tariffs in rupees, that gap is not a rounding error. It can wipe out the interest savings that made the dollar loan look cheap, and it eats into the debt-service coverage ratio, the cash a project has against what it owes.

This is where the NDB is most useful. Its 2022–26 general strategy targets 30 per cent of lending in local currencies. Rupee loans with longer maturities, and repayment schedules that follow a project's actual cash flows, would arguably do more for Indian infrastructure than any BRICS payment system.

But the bank has limits, and 2022 exposed them. When it put new transactions in Russia on hold that March, it was acknowledging that it borrows in global markets and answers to their rules (NDB, 2022). It is an extra source of development finance, not an escape hatch from Western capital.

Payments Do Not Change What India Buys

India imported $113.45 billion of goods from China in FY2024–25 and sold back $14.25 billion, a deficit of $99.20 billion (Department of Commerce, 2026). Paying in a different currency does nothing to that number. Blanket import cuts would not help either; much of it is components Indian factories need.

Rare earths show the exposure at its sharpest. The International Energy Agency estimates that in 2024 China accounted for 60 per cent of magnet rare-earth mining, 91 per cent of refining and 94 per cent of sintered magnet production. A mine in Brazil means little if the ore still has to travel to China to be processed. And BRICS membership does not guarantee the mine.

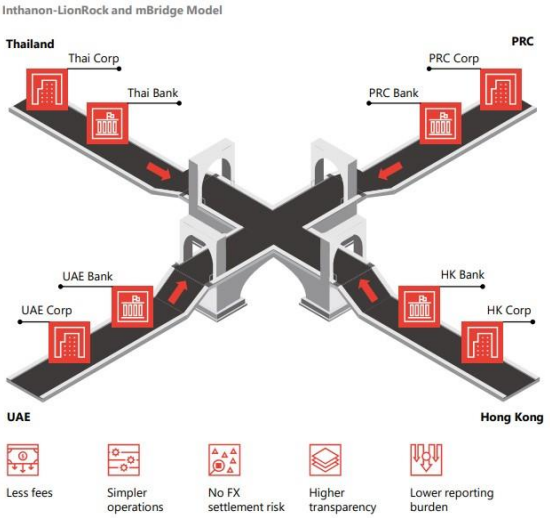


In April 2026, USA Rare Earth announced a $2.8 billion takeover of Brazil's Serra Verde, alongside a fifteen-year purchase arrangement involving a US-backed entity (Reuters, 2026).



Washington's 2025 deal with MP Materials, a ten-year floor of $110 per kilogram for neodymium-praseodymium, shows what it is prepared to pay to build processing at home (MP Materials, 2025).

The Risk of a New Dependence



Alternatives come with their own owners and issues. CIPS is supervised by the People's Bank of China, and overseas participants without direct renminbi clearing rely on designated custodians for liquidity (CIPS, 2026). Leaning on it would put Indian banks within reach of Chinese regulatory decisions. mBridge is jointly governed, but joint governance alone does not answer who sees the transaction data, or who supplies liquidity in a crisis. Each member wants something different.

For Russia, non-dollar payment is a way around sanctions. Brazil wants a common trade currency. China gains every time the renminbi is used. India's interests line up with Brazil's on development finance and part ways with Russia's and China's on the dollar itself. Washington, for its part, treats de-dollarisation talk as hostile

A Narrower, More Useful Agenda

None of this requires India to use the dollar less. The useful agenda is narrower: rupee lending at the NDB, deeper hedging markets at home, processing capacity for critical minerals, and new payment platforms joined only on published rules. Worth watching are the rupee share of imports as Russian oil volumes shift, the NDB's next strategy after 2026, and Washington's stance on local-currency settlement.

The real test is whether the rupee can find takers who are not Russia. If it can, BRICS widens India's options; if not, it stays a workaround for a single trade corridor.

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The Battery in the Scrapyard: *Can India Turn South-South Innovation into Global Scale?*

There sits a lithium battery in a Scrapyard at Tikri Border in Delhi, but what really is this object on the borders of the national capital? The *kabadiwala* (scrap dealer) who bought it by weight thinks it is the junk of the privileged. The recycler three lanes over sees it as a small mine to extract lithium,



The oldest rule of power is that whatever stands near the machinery of war gets drafted into the war, willingly or otherwise. GPS was built by the Pentagon to guide missiles to their targets, today influencers use it to find the most instagramable Vietnamese iced tea. The sky that belonged to astronomers and poets for most of human history and then briefly to astronauts, is now a crowded shelf of satellites that watch us and if someday our treaties and talks of privacy hold any less firmly than we like to claim, may do much worse.

So, what stands closest to critical minerals, clean energy, semiconductors and drones today? Startups.

A twenty-seven-year-old founder in his rented office and a loan has been sitting beside the armory for years, eating lunch, absolutely unaware that China is stalking him. Since 2023, China has tightened licensing on gallium, germanium and cobalt, lead and graphite. About 38 kilometers away in Central Delhi, someone with a map of supply chokepoints says in his presentation that it's a vulnerability so the ministry gives it a serial number.

What is this object?

Graphite. Another rule of power is that a mineral is only a mineral till it becomes a weapon, so every founder building anything with a battery in it woke up one morning inside a conflict.
Into this arrives the BRICS Incubator Network at the New Delhi Declaration in September with a Startup Knowledge Hub and a Startup Forum. Its companion proposal, a Startup Innovation Fund was not approved and remains under ‘further consideration.’



Emerging economies talking to one another about innovation instead of waiting for a fund in San Francisco to discover that they exist is overdue by about twenty years. Now that the bloc is bigger: eleven members, from Indonesia to the UAE, it is also more diverse than it was with its original five. BRICS declarations tend to be generous with intent, ‘Strengthening cooperation’ is fair enough this early. The real test is whether a startup in Pune will be

able to sign a contract in Johannesburg faster in 2028 than it can today. While the obvious pitch for India is, Indian Startups, BRICS markets, scale. Funding, *applause*, it is probable that India will not win a contest of capital or manufacturing muscle inside this bloc because China is in the room with us and China is enormous. To walk in as one more exporter of companies might not lead to a*pplause* for India.

Instead, start with the rails. UPI already works in Singapore, the UAE, Bhutan, Nepal, France and Cambodia and in February NPCI piloted a wallet that lets a foreign visitor use UPI without an Indian phone number or bank account, which is wonderful. A piece of public infrastructure built so that a *chaiwala* could be paid without change is what other countries find wonderful too. This market is for India to win and rule. China lends money and builds ports. India could offer protocols, a shared software that other countries' startups operate with. On this reading, Scale could be how many foreign firms stand on Indian Foundations but it's hard to put that on a banner even if it is the only way for India to write the terms.

The biggest complication in this room is that several BRICS members are talking about local-currency settlement and linked payment systems because Russia was cut off from SWIFT in 2022. Thus, India is threading with a difficult needle: get the rails business without being read as building sanctions-evasion infrastructure for Moscow in Washington.
To its credit the Reserve Bank has been visibly and sensibly cautious about how far to go. Every founder who builds on UPI's protocols abroad will inherit this caution, as per the rule of power.

And at the Delhi Border, is the scrapyard. India has thin mineral reserves and an enormous, ever growing mountain of e-waste, dead batteries and industrial scrap which, the government believes to be raw material instead. This year, a ₹1,500 crore scheme was approved to subsidize recycling capacity for just this scrap while restricting the export of black mass [the powder recovered from shredded batteries] because mineral value should stay home. This is the right domestic instinct; BRICS could extend this across a border. The mining members of the bloc including Indonesia, which sits on about half the world's nickel, could send their end of life batteries to us and take back refined material and a share of the value.

Startups have been known to prove themselves in America first and then descend graciously to the emerging markets, but a product that survives patchy connectivity, cash heavy-economies and customers who count every rupee will be hardened in a way no Silicon Valley pilot can manage.

Two things would need to align to make that work. First, importing battery scrap to India requires hazardous-waste clearance and a case by case DGFT license but a dedicated fast-track lane for BRICS partners built on the customs cooperation mechanisms already under discussion would let the idea move at the pace it needs to be. Second, China again is in the bloc with us and it just cut its own tariff on imported battery black mass to feed recyclers sitting at overcapacity. The scrapyard idea works if India's refining is cheap and quick to scale, which is well within reach.

Startups have been known to prove themselves in America first and then descend graciously to the emerging markets, but a product that survives patchy connectivity, cash heavy-economies and customers who count every rupee will be hardened in a way no Silicon Valley pilot can manage. Said product can go west afterwards wearing the 'battle tested' label

with no doubts about it being robust and cheap. And since India cannot out muscle anyone in this bloc, how about we measure them instead?



Publish a Startup Reciprocity Index that ranks each member on visa speed, data rules, IP enforcement and access to public procurement. Another rule of power is that whoever writes the scoreboard shapes the behavior of the people being scored. This could go wrong, as the World bank has demonstrated before with the Doing Business report being shut down in 2021 after an investigation found that the staff had leaned on the data to flatter China's score, among others. So, India will have to publish its own weak spots on data rules and procurement access alongside everyone else's, put the methodology in the open, run it through an independent secretariat rather than a ministry and score ourselves first.

Defence sits oddly in this conversation because it barely sits in the brief at all. The 2026 agenda splits BRICS into three major tracks: Political and Security Cooperation on one side and Economic and Financial Cooperation including the Incubator Network on another. The overlap is thinner than what the photographs of the summit suggest. Presuming everyone will want to sprint towards defence, it has to be understood that India and China share a disputed border with *brics* of mutual suspicion and to put lethal technology on the table of this forum with rivals might turn into a hostage situation.

Walking away from weapons does not mean walking away from China. Trade did not stop 1914 and it could not stop the clash at Galwan in 2020 either but a rival with genuine stake in your infrastructure, your payment rails, your supply chains has one more reason to calculate before it moves and one more channel open when it needs to back down. So, stay with dual use fields instead; deming, disaster drones, maritime awareness, satellite analytics and cyber security to keep the table open even where trust is thin. This keeps India's technology ties with the West intact too.



It is entirely possible that the network becomes another well-lit stage with no play and that bilateral deals or small coalitions like India with Brazil and South Africa will do more than the entire bloc. If so, the bloc becomes cover for the real work done elsewhere. *Diplomacy. The final rule of power.*

The choice is larger than one forum. Everything that stands near power is being weaponized and India cannot let its founders drift into someone else's war over supply chain and standards, it has to give them rails, refineries and rules to stand on.

The battery in the scrapyard is still waiting for an answer. *So, what is this object*?

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The Dragon & The Elephant: *Relations of the Sino-Indian sphere are Reactionary and Seek Predictability in Geopolitical Flux*

The 18th BRICS Summit in New Delhi between 12-13 September 2026 brought India and China to the same platform roughly two week after PM Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping **shared stage** at the 6th Council of Heads of State Meeting of the SCO. Seen collectively, from PM Modi's visit to China in 2025, India's relaxation of visa procedure for the Chinese, resumption of border trade through Lipulekh and Nathu La and meeting between NSA Ajit Dowal and Foreign Minister Wang Yi since 2025 signals a **cautious** thaw between India and China since the military standoff in Galwan, 2020 and inflated tensions since.

The New Delhi Declaration 2026 **fuels** this argument. With the resolution from an included unanimous support for India and Brazil to be included as permanent UNSC members; condemning terrorism with specific mention to Pahalgam Attack; to push back against unilateral tariffs violating WTO procedure; calling for ceasefire in Gaza and a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine; South-South cooperation in climate action and committing to Global South AI-governance framework. The Declaration reflected a commitment to an alternate to the Washington Consensus; thereby operationalized pragmatic cooperation areas for BRICS members-states, in absence of a charter.

However, **BRICS'** expanding membership and unanimous declarations are no proof of institutional cohesion. BRICS has acted as a venue for **confidence-building** between India and China, and both may unite on issues concerning the restructuring of the international system. Major bilateral national interests compete along with clashing foreign policy positions, reinforcing geopolitical stains, and declaratory platitudes of multilateral symbolism, seldom translate into actionable policy action. Even as India and China **stressed** on the need for peace and tranquility; without resolutions to outstanding territorial disputes and insecurities over trade **imbalances** Sino-India relations are far from at a reset. The thaw manages **strategic** d**ifferences** without eliminating underlying **structural asymmetries.**

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Till structural issues remain at-large, even as India and China cooperate under BRICS' South-South diplomatic language, Sino-Indian relation cannot progress into partnership and certainly not an alliance. Engagement may indicate intent to address bilateral ties but does little to remedy the deep-seated mistrust and structural asymmetry in Sino-India relations. The willingness to come together at multilateral and regional platforms when mutually beneficial doesn't sideline bilateral issues but reassert the precarity of Sino-India

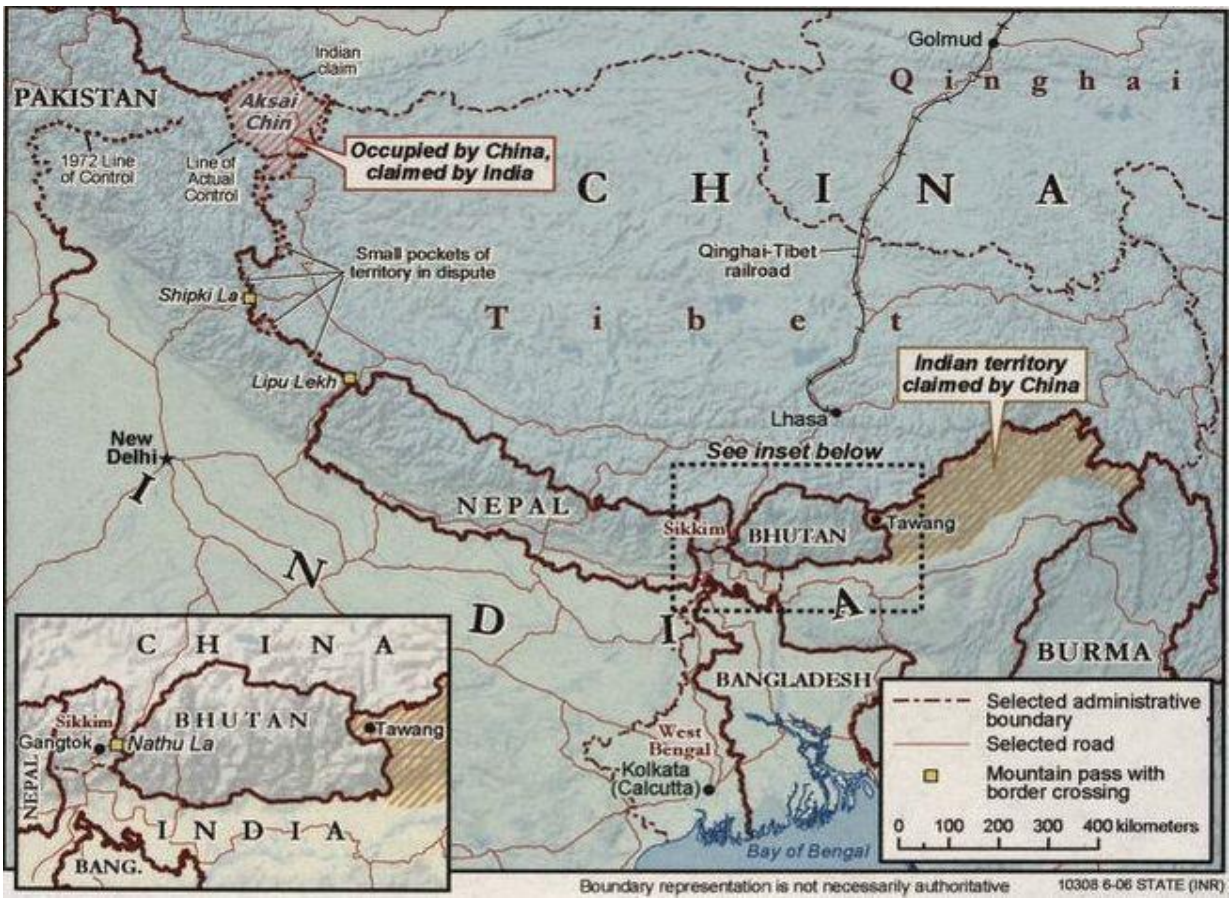
relation, which consciously separates unavoidable differences from actual disputes and expanding cooperation in areas of mutual interest.



The evolving Sino-Indian relationship is proof of an emerging tendency of "**episodic**" alignment rather than normalization between India and China. The cooperation is issue based, *ad hoc* and reactionary. Motivated largely in response to the unpredictability of the USA, the Sino-India thaw represents issue-based cooperation and hedging against Western dominance. While sidestepping bilateral disputes indicates that responding to Trump's unilateral, **erratic** and **andro-centric** style of diplomacy.

The **absence** of initiatives for a unified payment system for de-dollarization, an agenda of the BRICS implicates the strategic ambiguity between India and China. While both are willing to share a platform and share pragmatic cooperation on shallow, low-politics, like BRICS-AGRIN opposition to EU's CBAM; but not issues of high-politics like currency exchange and strategic partnership.

While post-2014 Modi era pointed towards an unprecedented partnership between India and USA; in an era of geopolitical flux has demonstrated the futility of relying on a singular great power. Since the origins of Nehruvian non-alignment to the contemporary emphasis on strategic



autonomy and multi-alignment India hedges against periodic geopolitical tensions with multilateral platforms like G20, SCO, BRICS, etc. The Sino-India engagement has entered a phase of **institutionalized competition** rather than an attempt to normalize relations, i.e., making conflict manageable and predictable without resolving it.



The **expansion** of hotlines, high-level military exchanges, Special Representatives dialogue, trans-river cooperation and bilateral **deals** on rare earth minerals are geared towards reducing risk of escalation between two nuclear powered states. However, whether this will further facilitate substantive progress on competing territorial claims, trade deficit and mutual mistrust by narrowing differences, is speculative. Despite the BRICS **assertion** of a multipolar international order without a unipolar centre of power; for both India and China, BRICS **represents** an opportunity to assert themselves as the leader of the Global South vis-à-vis parallel institution building and shaping rules of emerging world order.

India and China also **contradictory** in their world views and how they locate themselves in Asia's power politics. While both India and China represent themselves in terms of civilizational states and have routinized civilizational claims to leadership in Asia. But, there is a **fundamental** distinction between China's '*Tianxia*' foundation to its tribute seeking diplomacy with China **views** India through a lens of colonial subordination, while India's '*Jambudweep*' foundation relates itself to China as a civilizational peer, making sense of China through a lens of betrayal. The India-China competition is sustained vis-à-vis territorial dispute, military asymmetry and economic dependencies, but by two incompatible historical stories, where Chinese memory of India as a former instrument of Western power confronts India's memory of China as the post-colonial neighbor that betrayed the promise of Asian solidarity in 1962.

India's challenge in engaging further with an unreliable and untested relationship with China, is to prevent the thaw between New Delhi and Beijing from acquiring an explicitly anti-US position.

India's challenge in engaging further with an unreliable and untested relationship with China, is to prevent the thaw between New Delhi and Beijing from acquiring an explicitly anti-US position, adversely affecting its parallel strategic relationship with Washington D.C., given Trump's **negative** disposition towards BRICS. Alongside, the purpose of China's multipronged engagement with India must distinguish between de-risking strategic economic vulnerabilities, military deterrence and **asymmetric withdrawal**, i.e., the LAC from becoming the organizing principle of India's entire foreign policy.

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India's Defence Diplomacy at BRICS: *Can Strategic Partnerships Become Defence Partnerships?*



Two of the guests in New Delhi last month were not there for the group photo. On the sidelines of the 18th BRICS Summit on 12-13 September, Ethiopia and Malaysia told Indian officials much the same thing: they want deeper defence cooperation, and they want it soon. Joint training. Procurement. Raised, in both cases, in the same conversations as mining concessions and semiconductors. Vladimir Putin had landed a day earlier for a bilateral track of his own, with fighter aircraft, missile systems and military technology reportedly on his agenda. Notice where none of this happened i.e. inside an actual BRICS session. It happened around one, in the meetings that become easy to schedule when eleven heads of government are already in the same city. That gap, between what BRICS does and what its members do while the summit is on, is where India's defence diplomacy is really being built. It is also the reason the question in the title has a more complicated answer than either enthusiasts or sceptics of the grouping tend to allow.

A Summit That Was Never a Security Bloc

BRICS was built to argue about money, not militaries. Indian officials keep making that point, even as this year's summit pulled defence questions into its orbit. The grouping exists to press for reform of the global financial and governance architecture; it was never designed to settle geopolitical or security disputes between its own members. That is not a technicality. It means every defence conversation in Delhi this month ran on a separate, bilateral track that BRICS merely made convenient.

Consider what India already had in place before anyone arrived. A Comprehensive Strategic Partnership with Malaysia. A Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership with Russia. Steadily thickening ties with the UAE, Egypt and

Ethiopia. All of it predates the summit, and none of it depends on the summit. What the chairmanship offered New Delhi was compression: a density of bilateral meetings that would otherwise take a year of shuttle travel to assemble. Genuinely useful, but a logistics advantage is not an architecture. The distinction matters because India's defence-diplomacy strategy will be judged on whether it builds durable institutional plumbing, not on how many leaders it hosted in one week.

Where the Pull Is Already Real

If you want proof that a strategic partnership can convert into a defence one, the UAE is the case to study. In January 2026, during Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed's visit to Delhi, the two governments signed a letter of intent for a bilateral Strategic Defence Partnership, committing to work toward a full framework agreement covering defence-industrial collaboration, advanced technology, training and cyber space. By May, that intent had hardened into signed pacts on defence, energy and shipping during Prime Minister Modi's Abu Dhabi visit, with a five-billion-dollar Emirati investment commitment attached.

India's challenge in engaging further with an unreliable and untested relationship with China, is to prevent the thaw between New Delhi and Beijing from acquiring an explicitly anti-US position.

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri was careful about how he framed the sequence. This was not a scramble prompted by West Asian instability, he argued, but the accumulated weight of years of institutional work i.e. the Joint Defence Cooperation Committee process, service-to-service exchanges, and an existing small-arms production tie-up between India's ICOMM and the UAE's CARACAL. It is an unglamorous account of how defence relationships actually form, and probably the correct one.

The pipeline runs further. BrahMos Aerospace has been in discussions to make the UAE the missile's first Gulf customer. Egypt has been evaluating BrahMos requirements since presentations at its own defence exposition, with Red Sea security sharpening its interest in long-range precision strike and coastal defence. Brazil has surfaced as another possible buyer. None of these three is a treaty ally. All three are partners India cultivated using the same strategic-partnership vocabulary it applies to dozens of countries. Which suggests the label matters far less than the follow-through partnerships that get worked i.e. through joint commissions, expo floors, industry-to-industry memoranda i.e. eventually produce hardware contracts. Those that stay at the level of the communiqué produce nothing.

The Export Engine Behind the Diplomacy

The commercial logic driving all this is not subtle. India's defence exports reached a record ₹38,424 crore in FY2025-26, up nearly 63 percent in a single year, with BrahMos missiles, Akash air-defence systems and Pinaka rocket launchers reaching more than 80 countries through 145 exporting firms. Domestic production crossed ₹1.78 lakh crore over the same period, roughly double where it stood five years earlier, and the stated target is ₹50,000 crore in annual exports by FY2028-29. An industry expanding at that rate needs customers, and it needs them in markets where price sensitivity is high and Western suppliers impose end-use conditions. The Global South constituency that BRICS gathers in one room every year is where India holds the political relationships to compete.

The Problem the Calendar Cannot Fix

And then there is China. Xi Jinping's arrival in Delhi marked his first visit to India since 2019, and Indian commentary around it was unsentimental about what has not moved. The border standoff that began with the 2020 Galwan clashes is now in its seventh year. Analysts also pointed to Chinese military support for Pakistan during Operation Sindoor as a more recent blow to whatever trust survived. The trade relationship tells a parallel story of dependence without confidence: bilateral trade crossed 151 billion dollars this year, while India's deficit widened to roughly 112 billion. This is the structural answer to the question in the title. A grouping that contains the one member India cannot build any defence relationship with will never become a defence architecture in its own right, however much bilateral business gets transacted at its edges. BRICS can host India's defence diplomacy. It cannot house it.

Russia: Partner and Competitor at Once

Russia complicates matters differently, being simultaneously India's oldest defence supplier and a quiet competitor for the same buyers. Delhi and Moscow have discussed additional S-400 batteries, exposure to the Su-57 platform and an upgraded BrahMos package, continuing a supply relationship that has outlasted the Cold War that produced it. But Moscow is also selling into the Gulf and Africa, to the very governments India now approaches with indigenous systems, and its own use of

BRICS to diversify away from Western markets gives it every incentive to keep doing so. Partnership and rivalry are running on the same track.

Where This Leaves Things

Strategic partnerships are becoming defence partnerships. Just not because of anything BRICS itself does. The machinery is bilateral i.e. joint defence committees, exposition presentations, export financing, training offers i.e. and the summit functions as a scheduling convenience rather than a source of leverage. That distinction should shape what India does with the remainder of its chairship year and what it prioritizes afterward. Three things follow. First, converting Ethiopia's and Malaysia's stated interest into signed contracts will depend on the same unglamorous plumbing that worked with Abu Dhabi: a joint defence committee, a tailored training offer, an industrial memorandum, roughly in that order, rather than a line in a leaders' declaration. Second, stabilizing the China relationship is worth doing on its own merits, but expecting BRICS to convert that stabilization into a security dividend asks more of the grouping than its founding purpose allows. Third, as India and Russia increasingly chase the same emerging customers, what differentiates an Indian system is rarely the price tag. It is the political relationship underneath the sale i.e. the one built through exactly the partnership architecture this summit put on display.

For a country that has spent two decades insisting that strategic autonomy is compatible with deep partnership, this is a workable model. It asks India to be patient with institutions that move slowly and realistic about a grouping that will never be a bloc. BRICS did not create India's defence-diplomacy opening. It only made it easier to see.

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The New Delhi Declaration: *What Does It Mean for India's Vision of Viksit Bharat*

The 18th BRICS Summit in New Delhi ended with the adoption of a 140-point New Delhi Declaration covering trade, technology, finance, energy, development and security. For India, however, the significance of the declaration goes beyond the number of commitments it contains. Its broader importance lies in how it seeks to build resilience, promote innovation, deepen cooperation and advance sustainable development across an expanded BRICS. The more important question is what these commitments can mean for India's own development journey.

India's vision of Viksit Bharat@2047 isn't restricted to the distant ambition of a developed economy, it is grounded in a stronger manufacturing base, greater participation in global value chains, access to technology and capital, resilient supply chains, competitive exports and a secure environment for investment and development. The New Delhi Declaration creates opportunities In several of these areas and for India. The challenge remains converting these opportunities into actual economic gains.

India's Expanding Economic Neighborhood

Today, the 11-member BRICS grouping represents some of the world's largest emerging economies accounting for nearly half of the world's population, around 40% of global GDP and about 26% of global trade. For India, this scale matters as it brings together a vast network of markets, resources, capital and production capabilities. The geography of the grouping also adds advantage. BRICS brings together countries that occupy strategically important positions in global trade and energy networks. Egypt controls the Suez Canal, the UAE and Iran are located around the Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz, while Indonesia sits along the Malacca Strait. This gives India an opportunity to use BRICS not only as a diplomatic grouping, but as a platform for deeper engagement with markets, logistics networks and supply chains.

Building India's Manufacturing Advantage

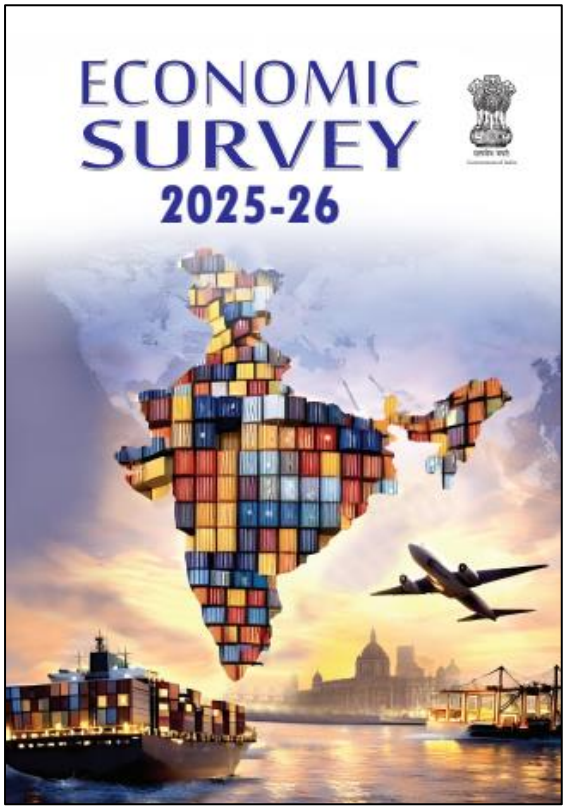


But there is an important opportunity that India cannot afford to overlook. Diplomatic relationships can open markets; the next step is to ensure that Indian industry is in a position to serve them.

India's trade with BRICS members shows both the scale of the opportunity and the room for expansion. In FY2024–25, India exported $4.88 billion worth of goods to

Russia against imports of $63.84 billion. With China, exports stood at $14.25 billion against imports of $113.46 billion. These figures show both existing trade imbalances and the scope to expand India's export presence in major emerging markets.

Russia is particularly relevant**.** India's longstanding political and economic relationship with Russia gives Indian businesses a strong foundation from which to seek greater market access. The question, therefore, is not simply whether India can access these markets, but how it can use that access to expand the range and scale of what it exports.



India already has important manufacturing capabilities; the next step is to deepen global value chain participation and move into higher-value segments. The Economic Survey 2025–26 notes that India's global value chain participation remains relatively limited, particularly in backward linkages involving imported intermediates and components, while deeper integration could raise domestic value addition and employment.

This is where BRICS can become a force multiplier for India's manufacturing ambitions. Greater market access, stronger supply-chain links and cooperation on technology can give Indian firms opportunities to expand production, enter new value chains and build scale. The objective is therefore not simply to export more to BRICS countries, but to use the grouping to strengthen India's position as a competitive manufacturing and production hub.

The declaration also recognizes that trade rules are increasingly intertwined with climate policy, including concerns over unilateral carbon border adjustment measures. For India, this makes cleaner and more competitive manufacturing increasingly important. Sustainability is therefore not only an environmental objective but an emerging part of maintaining competitiveness and access to global markets

Making Market Access Work for Indian Industry

Following in line with India's push for MSME, the declaration too has a great focus on MSMEs by recognizing that access to affordable finance remains a major constraint on MSMEs participating in international trade and global value chains. It welcomed the Jaipur Consensus to study an invoice discounting mechanism for BRICS members, which could help export-oriented MSMEs unlock working capital. It also endorsed guiding principles for credit assessment of export-oriented MSMEs.





This matters because India's manufacturing ambitions cannot depend only on large corporations. Consider a small Indian engineering firm that gains access to trade finance, finds a buyer in another BRICS economy and enters an international supply chain. With the right financing, market access and policy support, it can scale production, invest in new facilities and create jobs at home while expanding overseas. The larger opportunity is to help more Indian MSMEs make this transition, from domestic businesses into globally connected enterprises, strengthening India's manufacturing base and creating a pipeline of firms capable of competing internationally. The real test now is whether these mechanisms can help Indian firms move from domestic markets into international production networks.

Building India's Technology Advantage

The declaration recognizes digital public infrastructure as an important foundation for economic development and notes India's proposal for a BRICS Digital Public Infrastructure Repository and Pilot Projects for digital transformation. BRICS countries have also committed to implementing their Leaders' Statement on the Global Governance of Artificial Intelligence.

This gives India an opportunity to take its digital public infrastructure experience beyond its borders while learning from other BRICS economies. But the larger opportunity is to use technology cooperation to build the capabilities needed to move into higher-value production. For India, this means moving beyond assembling products to developing the technologies, components and industrial capabilities behind them.

The same logic applies to critical minerals. The declaration calls for resilient and diversified critical-mineral supply chains. For a country seeking to expand electric mobility, renewable energy, batteries, electronics and advanced manufacturing, secure access to minerals is only the starting point. The larger opportunity lies in connecting mineral security with domestic processing, component manufacturing and higher-value production.

Expanding India's Economic Infrastructure

BRICS engagement can also bring international economic activity into India, rather than only opening opportunities abroad. BRICS members expressed interest in taking forward India's proposal to establish a BRICS Risk Lab at the GIFT City International Financial Services Centre in Gujarat. The proposal is linked to broader discussions on strengthening reinsurance capacity and developing common risk models and specialist capabilities.



Similarly, discussions on local-currency settlements, cross-border payments and the

New Development Bank's role in development finance could reduce some of the frictions faced by emerging economies in trade and investment.

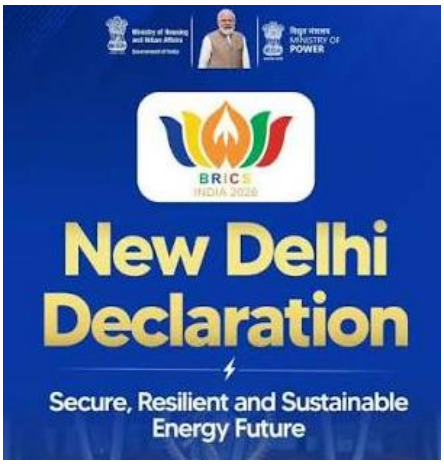
Linking Global Engagement with Viksit Bharat

At the same time, tariffs, sanctions and other unilateral measures have added uncertainty for developing economies. Against this backdrop, BRICS provides India and other emerging economies with an additional platform to shape cooperation on issues affecting trade, finance, technology and development.

The New Delhi Declaration comes at a time of growing uncertainty in the international environment. Conflicts and tensions, including continuing turbulence in West Asia, are disrupting trade, energy flows and supply chains. At the same time, tariffs, sanctions and other unilateral measures have added uncertainty for developing economies. Against this backdrop, BRICS provides India and other emerging economies with an additional platform to shape cooperation on issues affecting trade, finance, technology and development.

The declaration also underlines the security dimension of development, condemning the 2025 Pahalgam terrorist attack and calling for stronger international cooperation against terrorism, an acknowledgement that economic growth ultimately depends on a stable environment for investment and development.

This is also where multilateralism and minilateralism can complement each other**.** Institutions such as the United Nations and WTO remain essential for establishing universal rules and addressing global challenges. But smaller groupings such as BRICS can provide space for countries with shared interests to coordinate more closely, experiment with practical mechanisms and build cooperation in specific areas. The declaration reflects both a commitment to strengthening multilateralism and a growing network of practical BRICS cooperation.



For India, BRICS has both global and domestic significance. It provides a platform to work with other emerging economies while supporting a more representative multilateral system. Ultimately, the significance of the New Delhi Declaration for Viksit Bharat will depend on how effectively India converts this expanding network of partnerships into productive capacity, investment, technology and jobs. BRICS can create the space and opportunities; India's ability to build on them will determine the economic value generated at home

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The Global South After BRICS: *Can India Turn Leadership into Leverage?*

India hosted the 18th BRICS Summit in New Delhi on September 12-13, 2026. The year marks its fourth chairship of the grouping under the theme "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability." The bloc, now eleven members strong, accounts for around 40 per cent of global GDP and around half the world's population. This makes its summit relevant in debates on global economic governance. India has used its G20 presidency in 2023, the subsequent Voice of Global South Summits, and its BRICS chairship to cultivate a leadership role within the Global South, focusing on issues including debt relief, food security, climate equity and multilateral reform. BRICS 2026 has given India a louder platform to press that case.

Thus, the test of India's leadership is not just about India's ability to speak for the Global South but about its ability to build mechanisms through which Global South countries can act together.

Yet a platform is not the same as bargaining power. The New Delhi declaration adopted at the summit calls for reform of the Bretton Woods system. It argues that the current voting shares should better reflect the relative positions of economies in the global system. The real leverage for India would not be securing the consensus language of the declaration but making it visible through changes in institutional voting arrangements, greater access to development finance, trade outcomes, technology partnerships, or positions that alter the behavior of larger powers.

Thus, the test of India's leadership is not just about India's ability to speak for the Global South but about its ability to build mechanisms through which Global South countries can act together.

Voice to Platform

BRICS has expanded well beyond its founding five members - Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa - to include Iran, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt, Ethiopia, and Indonesia. Thus, India is chairing a more diverse coalition in 2026 than it did in 2012, 2016, and 2021. The New Development Bank (NDB), set up in 2015, has approved over 140 projects worth roughly $44 billion, mostly in infrastructure, energy, and urban development.

On the other hand, the quota system of IMF, which determines factors like voting power, borrowing access and Special Drawing Rights, has missed its five-year review cycle repeatedly since 2015. The deadline for the 17th General Quota Review too has been pushed back to April 2026 and is currently an ongoing process. This governance stalemate is the backdrop against which India's Global South advocacy, and its claim to speak for developing countries, has to be assessed.

The expansion gives India a larger diplomatic reach, but it also makes collective action harder. BRICS now brings together countries with different economic structures, geopolitical alignments, and relationships with the existing international order. The question therefore is not whether India can assemble countries around a

common language, but whether it can sustain common positions when those countries' material interests diverge.

Institutional Reform and the China Factor

BRICS members, in the New Delhi Declaration, collectively backed India's candidacy for a permanent UNSC seat; however, China's endorsement remained guarded. This asymmetry constrains India's Global South leadership: BRICS decision-making runs on consensus, and China's economic weight within the bloc gives it an informal veto over how assertively the grouping can challenge Western-led institutions.

India's own tensions with China further complicate the collective bargaining as a bloc, where its two largest economies cannot align, and it struggles to present a unified front at the IMF, the WTO, or the UN. India has therefore leaned towards practical, delivery-oriented cooperation that does not require Chinese support or higher-order governance questions like rupee bonds, digital public infrastructure exports, and other practical development partnerships.

Finance: Symbolic Wins but Structural Stalemate

On global finance, the New Delhi Declaration calls for accelerated quota reforms but changes nothing substantially. Any redistribution of IMF's voting shares requires the US to accept a reduction in its own share, a step that Washington has resisted since blocking a similar proposal in 2014. India's more reliable lever is the NDB, whose members have set the target of moving 30 per cent of the bank's lending portfolio into local currencies.

India is also advancing its own instrument within this push: the NDB is developing a rupee-denominated "Maharaja Bond", backed by the Reserve Bank of India, to deepen local-currency financing through Indian markets. This is de-dollarisation through balance-sheet engineering rather than a challenge to the dollar's reserve status. However, if scaled beyond individual transactions, it could give India a greater say in how development finance is disbursed.

Trade: Advocacy Without Enforcement Power



India completed its Eighth Trade Policy Review at the WTO in Geneva in July 2026, where its commerce secretary reiterated that reform of the organization should be development-oriented and allow space for developing countries. This is consistent with India's long-standing defence of Special and Differential Treatment provisions. Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal made a similar case at a WTO ministerial in Cameroon. He argued that reform must be based on non-discrimination and consensus-based decision-making rather than deals negotiated among a small set of members.

India can shape the terms of the debate and build coalitions among developing economies, but it cannot compel the WTO's dispute-settlement machinery back into full function, nor can it prevent a subset of countries from bypassing consensus-based negotiations by going for joint statement initiatives. Global South advocacy at

Geneva has thus far only produced sympathetic language rather than binding commitments. BRICS 2026 too failed to yield a substantial trade agreement that favours the Global South, thus denting BRICS' standing as any effective alternative for global trade institutions.

Technology: A Contested Third Way

India hosted the first AI Impact Summit held in a developing country in February 2026. It used the platform to position artificial intelligence governance around development outcomes and the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres used the summit to propose a $3 billion fund to help developing countries access advanced AI systems. Through the summit, India sought to provide the Global South a "third way" distinct from both American and Chinese AI ecosystems.

That positioning has come under strain. India joined the US-led semiconductor supply chain initiative known as Pax Silica, which came off as a shift toward India projecting itself as a middle power rather than a Global South standard-bearer. This raises questions about whether India's technological capacity and development indicators genuinely place it with advanced economies or still within the Global South it claims to represent. India itself has a dilemma: it needs capital and chip access from advanced economies to build its own AI capacity, but leveraging that access dilutes the South-South solidarity case it presents in front of poorer developing countries.

Agenda Setting to Institutional Change

India's chairship has strengthened its claim to speak for the Global South: it produced the most detailed BRICS declaration to date, kept quota and Security Council reform on the international agenda, and offered developing countries an alternative framework of AI governance. But none of this amounts to leverage in the sense of altered voting shares, enforceable trade concessions, or technological co-production on equal terms with advanced economies.

Converting the platform into power will depend on some issues that are still unresolved: whether BRICS members can coordinate effectively ahead of the 2027 IMF annual meetings to force a quota realignment, whether the NDB's local-currency lending target and rupee bond programme scale meaningfully beyond stand-alone transactions, and whether India can hold its Global South image up to any relevance even as its own AI partnerships pull it toward the very governance structure it has been trying to reform.

The declaration is in place, but the question remains open for 2027: can New Delhi turn agenda-setting into institutional change, or will the gap between diplomatic commitments and measurable outcomes remain? That would remain the most important question India would have to answer, not by language, but by action. The chairship of BRICS opens that opportunity for India to answer that question; whether that leadership can turn into leverage is yet to be seen.

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BOOK
OF THE
MONTH

In the Margins of Empires: A History of the Chicken's Neck by Akhilesh Upadhyay

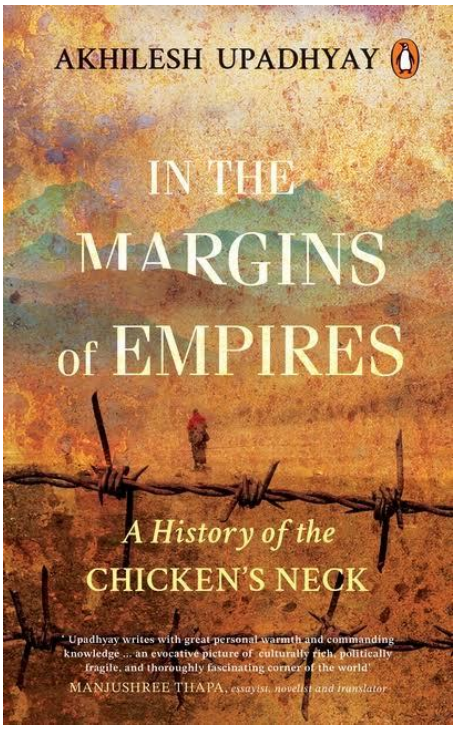
"We read the world wrong and say it deceives us."

The idea of a nation state emerged in the crucibles of blood scattered across the battlefields of early modern Europe. No-one has ever truly managed to ascertain the exact date when lines were first drawn up to divide and subsequently unite scattered ethnicities under the banners of a racial state. The reason international borders exist as they do and the impact, they have on the ones living under the shade of barbed wire fences was perhaps lost within the collective fog of individualized Volksgeist of countries, or perhaps buried beneath the ink of bureaucracy working for a future envisaged by the knowing.

Regardless, neither matters in the name of a broader shared purpose by those who nourish the nation state. How many men stop to think of the blood, sweat and tears shed by those who came before us? Think of the Indian Freedom Struggle, hammered into the mind of every student who sat through our post-colonial classrooms, how many stop to remember and cherish the blood of Bhagat, the ideas of Mohandas or the tears of Subhash?

The mainstream itself remains neglected, so how could we, as a state, ever stop to think of those who live on our peripheries? Beyond the shadows of Delhi, Beijing, Dhaka & Kathmandu, there remains a soil, frozen in spirit by the ink of treaties signed centuries ago.

The Book



The overall premise of the book is divided into two distinctive parts. They are neither comparable in length, nor in content. However, they work together seamlessly to build a narrative that pulls you in. The author indirectly acknowledges (and directly in some instances) that the region in question is nothing short of an alien land to the vast majority of India.

Perhaps that is exactly why the opening segment of the book is dedicated solely to the region's intricacies, a unique blend of personal anecdotes, tales from people the author encountered during his journey through the region and even news articles about events that altered the lives of those

in this corner of the world forever. Part I starts by narrating local troubles caused by Elephant migrations, whose nationality fluctuates depending on whose crops they damage, festival shopping sprees that blend Diwali through Dashain and even tales of the author's Grandfather who grew up in the region. These light hearted anecdotes grow with intensity as the reader turns their pages, Memories of the 1962 Indo-China War bleed through popular memory as the freezing cold of the Doklam Plateau is warmed by shrill cries of Soldiers who clashed over it in 2017.

The reader turns the pages still and finds closing border checkpoints, raised eyebrows over diplomatic appointments and channels and pointing fingers demanding obedience to treaties unheard of by those whose fates are governed by its text. Echoes of the Cold War, glimpses of clashing identities that plagued Indian States like Punjab in 1966, narrowing gene pools, religious strife and even the moral smuggling of relics away from appropriation by fanatical regimes whizz by like Khampa Bullets unless one pauses to think.



The seamless transition transforms the narration once again as the first part reaches its climax. The reader will indeed turn the page, going through what the author dubs “A Paradox called Siliguri”, 1 encountering the hard lives of those who traverse Yak Trails and Trade Tales while encountering Missionaries, Monks, Traders & even Spies. The subtleness of the growing horror the reader feels of this region’s importance is not truly realized until they find themselves under the shadows cast between Two Thrones.

Part II begins with a poem, one celebrating the Nepalese nation-state. Written by Parasmani Pradhan, it encapsulates the very spirit of what it means to be Nepali, the unending ties of blood and language. Yet, if you keep turning the pages, you find that Parasmani Pradhan, the epoch of this ode to the Nepalese National Spirit was an Indian Citizen. One barely recovers from the recoil of CIA Bren Guns and already stands face to face with the children of “Chyassi”, the Movement of 1986, a Movement for the legal right to be Nepali within the Indian Republic.

Why should you read it?

Harken back to the introductory paragraph of this review, a rant about nation states and the definitive lack of a moment in time that birthed these ideas. History indeed blurs the lines one observes emanating from certain events as the threads of fate that write history, however, what's evident is the fact that this blurring itself can be sliced in half by the will of man. The violent rise of the Gorkhas guided by the mind of Prithvinarayan Shah, the Aristocracy of Tibet, the marauding Mughals, Qing Governors of old, CCP Commissars and even the Namgyals of Sikkim, all exerting influence, each vying to establish states, states that would birth consolidated identities by mixing soil with the blood of the other.

The book has one flaw, the reader must be someone actually fascinated by tales carried in the Himalayan Winds that sweep across the mountain peaks. If so, then the allure of history is enough. If not, then one may still find themselves pulled in by personal anecdotes.

BOOK OF THE MONTH



The point of the book is clear and can very well be summarized in one sentence, printed upon its 80th page. The Nepalese Prime Minister, Girija Prasad Koirala is asked about travel restrictions in his own home country. His reply?

"Walung? Isn't that in Tibet?"

As stated before, the book is well aware of the neglect this land faces and as such, makes no attempts at appealing to the mainstream. It does however make a point to highlight and repeatedly so, the importance this small stretch of land holds. It caters not to the romantic traveler, not to individuals who gauge literary works by their "repost"-ability, the bored man seated on a train platform nor to the vast majority of people around you.

It caters to the bureaucrat, the politician who wishes to know (albeit rare), the budding economist, the sly trader and the odd entrepreneur, the teacher who actually teaches, the student who dreams of writing history, those knowing few who envisage a new world.

Those few, who shall one day, separate the blurring veil of history.

The Himalayas described within its pages are not relics of a forgotten century; they remain embedded within the strategic anxieties of the twenty-first. India and China may sit across the same table in BRICS and engage through the SCO, yet continue to negotiate an unresolved frontier whose tensions have repeatedly brought soldiers face-to-face. The same contradiction defines our age: a world increasingly speaking of multipolarity, connectivity and cooperation while simultaneously witnessing military mobilisation, hardened borders and the return of war as an instrument of statecraft. The Himalayas therefore cannot be understood merely as mountains separating states. They are corridors through which armies, traders, religions, intelligence and ideas have travelled for centuries, making places such as Sikkim, Nepal, Bhutan, Tibet and the Siliguri Corridor far more consequential than their apparent remoteness suggests.

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Making Sense of the world one issue at a time.

A NOTE ON THE PIECES

Views expressed are of those individual authors and do not necessarily represent the position of the Foundation

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