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THE BULLETIN

Volume: 7 Issue – 06 | Date: 15th Oct. 2026

AI and Labour: Preparing for a Future We Cannot Stop

By Uday Kumar Varma

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There is a question about artificial intelligence being asked almost everywhere today: Will AI take away our jobs?

It is an understandable question, but perhaps not the best one with which to begin. Every major technological transformation has changed the nature of work. The steam engine, electricity, computers and the internet each eliminated some occupations, created others and transformed many more. AI is different in one important respect: it is entering the domain of human cognition—analysing, writing, translating, designing, diagnosing, predicting and making decisions. And it is doing so at extraordinary speed.

The anxiety is reflected in a recent paper, The AI Layoff Trap, by researchers associated with Boston University and the Wharton School. Using a mathematical model, they describe a possible dystopian outcome in which competition drives firms towards excessive automation: each gains by replacing workers, but widespread layoffs eventually weaken the purchasing power on which the economy itself depends. It is a theoretical model, not a prediction, but it raises a disturbing question. At the other extreme, Elon Musk has envisaged a future in which AI and robots could make employment largely optional, creating a world of abundance.

Between these extremes lies the future governments must actually confront: a transition in which some jobs disappear, many are transformed and new ones emerge. The question is not whether this transformation can be stopped. It is how we prepare for it, protect people from its undesirable consequences and use its possibilities for their benefit.

The Job May Survive—But Change

The most visible concern about AI is job loss. Some jobs will undoubtedly disappear. But an equally important possibility is that many jobs will survive while the work within them changes dramatically.

A lawyer may spend less time researching; a doctor may work alongside intelligent diagnostic systems; a factory worker may supervise increasingly autonomous machinery. The International Labour Organization has similarly suggested that, in many occupations, AI is more likely to transform or augment work than eliminate entire occupations.

The worker's greatest vulnerability, therefore, may not always be unemployment but the obsolescence of skills.

Skill development must consequently become a continuing process. The idea that education is acquired in youth and then used throughout a career is becoming outdated. Workers may have to learn, unlearn and relearn several times during their working lives.

The State has to prepare for that reality.

When the Boss Becomes an Algorithm

There is another, less visible change. Algorithms can increasingly participate in recruitment, allocation of work, performance assessment and scheduling. A worker may receive an assignment from an app, have his performance continuously assessed by software or find that an algorithm has influenced whether he is retained.

This raises a simple but uncomfortable question: if a machine makes a decision about me, who do I appeal to?

Workers may need new rights in the age of AI—the right to know when an important decision has been influenced by an algorithm, the right to an explanation and human review, and protection against discriminatory or intrusive systems.

Technology can assist management. It should not make management unaccountable.

Social Security Must Follow the Worker

AI will also expose weaknesses in traditional social-security arrangements. The worker of tomorrow may move between regular employment, gig work, self-employment, unemployment and retraining. If benefits remain tied to a particular employer, workers may repeatedly fall through the cracks.

Social security must therefore increasingly follow the worker, not the job.

India has begun laying foundations through e-Shram and the recognition of gig and platform workers in the social-security framework. The next step should be more portable, life-cycle protection covering pension, provident fund, health, disability, maternity, accident protection and assistance during periods of transition.

AI could make such a system more responsive. Instead of expecting a worker to know which benefits he is entitled to and how to claim them, technology could help identify his eligibility and guide him through the process.

The principle is simple:

The worker should not have to discover the welfare system; the welfare system should discover the worker.

Prepare. Protect. Leverage.

The State's response to AI and labour can, I believe, be reduced to three words.

Prepare. Anticipate which occupations and skills are likely to change and provide opportunities for continuous learning and retraining. A worker whose occupation is disrupted by technology should not simply be told to “adapt” and left to fend for himself.

Protect. AI-era labour rights will need to address algorithmic decision-making, workplace surveillance, discrimination and the use of personal data. We should also consider an AI Labour Impact Assessment when major technological changes are likely to affect large numbers of workers. It could examine employment effects, skill requirements, retraining needs, occupational safety and social-security implications. Its purpose would not be to stop automation, but to make technological change socially responsible.

Leverage. Perhaps the most overlooked opportunity is to use AI itself for the benefit of labour. It could help labour inspectors identify establishments where violations are most likely, detect patterns preceding workplace accidents, identify workers entitled to social-security benefits and make grievance redressal easier.

Imagine a worker being able to ask, in his own language: What are my rights? What benefits can I claim? Where do I complain?

That is not AI replacing labour. It is AI working for labour.

A Future We Can Shape

We cannot—and should not—stop technological progress. But neither should workers be left alone to absorb its costs. The gains from higher productivity must not accrue only to those who own the technology while the risks are borne by those who depend upon their labour.

The real challenge is not to decide whether we are for or against AI. It is to ensure that, as machines acquire greater capacity to make decisions, human beings do not surrender their capacity to make the important decisions about machines.

We may not be able to determine how intelligent machines will become. We can still determine what role we allow them to play in the lives of working people.

How Do We Read the FLYDUBAI FZ1073 Incident?

By - Vappala Balachandran

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As this is written, there is no confirmation on the exact motive of Omani pilot Hamam Alhamami that made him hit his Captain Smit Machchhar with a crash axe while flying Flydubai FZ1073. True, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Al-Arabiya had announced that he was radicalised. However other reports had hinted his alleged suicidal tendencies. As a result, the Boeing 737 suddenly lost 16,000ft of altitude in one minute which would have resulted in crash-landing with 174 passengers on board.

It is learnt that Israel, which usually insists on pre-flight background checks of foreign pilots landing in Israeli airports, had stipulated they should be from countries that have diplomatic relations with Israel. However, The Jerusalem Post (October 2) said that "the bilateral aviation agreement between Israel and the United Arab Emirates did not stipulate that pilot operating flights between the two countries must be nationals of countries maintaining diplomatic relations with Israel". This was intriguing as Oman has no diplomatic relations with Israel.

In my last column in this paper "A call for action on the 9/11 twenty-fifth anniversary" (September 20) I had stated that global counterterrorist (CT) agencies had never "imagined" that al-Qaeda would use passenger planes as weapons of terrorism although, in retrospect, we had found that there were 71 prior "US President's Daily brief products" indicating that possibility. It was because of this that the 9/11 US National Commission had remarked in their report: "We believe the 9/11 attacks revealed four kinds of failures: in imagination, policy, capabilities, and management."

In Israel this incident has generated deep worries especially as it had occurred when the country was bracing for the anniversary of the 7 October 2023 Hamas attacks. Their worry should be of concern to us too: like 9/11 are we facing a new phase of terrorism when we, the helpless passengers, must watch even those aviators who carry us all over the world? Is this the new strategy of Islamic State (IS) which, in the past, had perfected the "lone wolf" attacks using vehicles?

That made me scan our reputed global terrorism surveys to ascertain whether any of them had mentioned this possibility. The first report I studied was the compilation in 2026 for the year 2025 made by The Institute for Economics and Peace, a global think tank headquartered in Sydney with branches in New York City, Mexico City and Oxford.

Its report indicated that Western terrorism fatalities rose sharply by 280 per cent to 57 in 2025, largely driven by antisemitism, Islamophobia and political terrorism, although global terrorism deaths fell by 28 per cent to 5,582, and incidents decreased by 22 per cent to 2,944,

marking the lowest figures since 2007. It said that 93 per cent of all fatal incidents in the West were lone-wolf attacks perfected by Islamic State which was responsible for 17% of global attacks. Pakistan was the “worst affected” with 1,139 deaths and 1,045 incidents in 2025, its highest level since 2013.

Another compilation and prognosis I studied was by the EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report of Europol which said that the “the lines between established terrorist ideologies and other forms of violent extremism are increasingly blurred” enabling terrorist organisations to reach individuals directly. Also “it gives the space to self-radicalised perpetrators to mobilise independently, often without formal membership or previously established direction”. This is most dangerous as conventional CT watching ecosystem would fail to detect such lone actors and self-initiated cells who are able “to radicalise, mobilise and act autonomously”.

The missing Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370 in 2014 is a standing example of this problem: was it suicide terrorism or accident? Two BBC reports in 2015 (16 April and 6 May) suggested pilot’s suicide bid like a Germanwings flight that crashed into the French Alps in 2015 because the co-pilot made “a rapid descent only hours before he sent the plane plunging into the mountainside intentionally” due to suicidal tendencies.

Article first published in Lokmat Times Nagpur Main on October 04, 2026

From Article 51 to Think Tanks: How India Thinks About the World

By Dr. Santhosh Mathew

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As India marks Indian Foreign Service Day on October 9, it is worth asking where the country's foreign policy ideas come from. The answer lies in a constitutional commitment, a generation of institution builders, a changing set of diplomatic doctrines and, increasingly, a growing community of think tanks.

The Constitution has no chapter on foreign affairs, but Article 51 in the Directive Principles offers a moral compass. It directs the State to promote international peace and security, maintain just and honourable relations between nations, respect international law and treaty obligations, and encourage the settlement of disputes by arbitration. Though not enforceable in court, it has shaped India's preference for negotiation over confrontation and its faith in the United Nations.

Even before Independence, Indian leaders understood that diplomacy needs scholarship. In 1943 the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) was set up in New Delhi, with the eminent lawyer and liberal statesman Tej Bahadur Sapru playing a leading role. Sapru saw that a self-governing India would need its own tradition of international study rather than borrowed perspectives. ICWA soon launched India Quarterly, one of the country's earliest journals on world affairs, and Sapru House became a meeting place for scholars and policymakers.

The intellectual centre of early foreign policy was Jawaharlal Nehru, who served as both Prime Minister and External Affairs Minister. His internationalism rested on the conviction that colonialism must end, that newly independent nations deserved a voice, and that India should stay out of Cold War blocs. The term non-alignment is often credited to V.K. Krishna Menon, Nehru's forceful envoy at the UN, though some accounts credit Nehru himself. It meant not passivity but strategic autonomy, the freedom to judge each issue on its merits. It grew into the Non-Aligned Movement, launched in Belgrade in 1961.

Nehru's idealism found its best-known expression in Panchsheel, the five principles of peaceful coexistence in the 1954 India-China agreement on Tibet: mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-aggression, non-interference, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence. The 1962 war badly damaged faith in them, yet they still echo in India's language on sovereignty.

In the past decade, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given foreign policy a distinctive stamp, and his government deserves credit for several shifts. Neighbourhood First and Act East sharpened India's focus on its immediate and eastern periphery. The Vaccine Maitri initiative supplied Covid-19 vaccines to dozens of countries. Evacuation drives such as the Vande Bharat Mission and Operation Ganga showed the state's reach in protecting citizens abroad. India's 2023 G20 presidency, during which the African Union was admitted as a permanent member, and its Voice of Global South summits positioned New Delhi as a bridge between developed and developing nations, a role Nehru would have recognised. The International Solar Alliance, launched with France, added a climate dimension.

Two ideas stand out.The first is what many describe as dharma diplomacy, the use of civilisational and spiritual heritage as soft power. Buddhism is its most visible thread: the Buddha's relics have travelled abroad for exhibition, India has hosted a Global Buddhist Summit, and the government has promoted Nalanda and other pilgrimage heritage to reach Sri Lanka, Japan, Thailand, Myanmar and beyond. Yoga, celebrated globally through the International Day of Yoga, and the idea of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, the world as one family, work in the same spirit. Supporters see this as a natural extension of India's identity; sceptics caution that heritage outreach must be matched by hard delivery in trade, security and development.

The second is maritime.In 2015, in Mauritius, Modi announced SAGAR, short for Security and Growth for All in the Region, to frame India's role as a responsible power in the Indian Ocean. In March 2025, again in Mauritius, he unveiled MAHASAGAR, Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions. The new formulation widens the lens beyond the Indian Ocean toward the Global South, adding trade, technology, capacity building and sustainable development to maritime security. It reflects both India's growing capabilities and the competition with China for influence across the ocean.

Behind these doctrines stands a wider ecosystem of ideas. Foreign policy is now too complex for governments alone, with trade, technology, climate, maritime security and the diaspora all demanding specialised expertise. The Observer Research Foundation (ORF), established in 1990 with backing from the Reliance group, has become one of India's most visible think tanks, and its Raisina Dialogue, co-hosted with the Ministry of External Affairs, brings global leaders to Delhi. The Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, the former IDSA renamed after the late defence minister, is the leading centre on strategic questions. The Vivekananda International Foundation and the India Foundation add research and events on national security, the neighbourhood and civilisational themes, while the Chintan Research Foundation focuses on development and governance. The Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service, named after the late External Affairs Minister, is different in kind, since it trains diplomats rather than producing independent research. But it reflects the same recognition that diplomacy needs continuous learning.

These bodies influence policy by producing papers officials read, hosting Track II dialogues where ideas can be tested informally, and nurturing analysts who move between government, media and academia. Yet a healthy debate needs diversity. Critics note that funding and ideological leanings can colour research, and that India still has fewer truly independent, well-resourced institutions than the United States or Europe.

The line running from Article 51 to Sapru House to Delhi's think tanks shows a country that has always treated foreign policy as a matter of ideas as well as power. On Indian Foreign Service Day, the diplomats deserve their applause, but behind them stands a wider community of scholars and analysts who help the country think before it acts.

The ISKP-Radicalisation Nexus: Understanding the rise of Extremism in South Asia

By Julia Jose

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There has been a rise in number of radicalized cases in Kerala since many years which calls for immediate attention. One such case is with respect to rising recruitment to ISIS in Afghanistan and Syria that too people from Kerala. This comes as national security threat to India as those recruits are trained and send back to India for further action. There are definately other means of radicalization like mosques and madrasas but its not limited to them. There are many cases were people are lured in the name of money or love for faith by extremist outfits to fulfil their agenda. One such group outfit is Islamic state of Khorasan Province.

ISKP was founded in the year 2014 and their main objective is to establish an Islamic caliphate in Afghanistan. This was after the return of Taliban to Afghanistan which further led to a tensed situation which made them to look out for more recruits. The main motive of ISKP is to expand themselves beyond Afghanistan. Their search for recruits has led to onset of radicalization in Kerala as majority of the recruits are from Kerala according to the cases reported. They carried out their recruitment keeping in mind two factors sectarianism across the region and the minority plight. Even though the issue regarding caste was not new to the state it was there since historical times when Arabs came and got well settled in the state which resulted in the formation of mapilla muslims from mapilla. Further we did see mapilla rebellion where mapilla muslims fought against britishers and hindu landlords for the oppressive tax regime. This was again a concern taken advantage of in present times, by non-state actors in the region as well as from other countries. There are numerous case which support the issue. For instance, Najeeb comes across as case who has played significant role in a major attack. He is 23-year-old engineering student who has successfully made Hijrah from India to Afghanistan through Inghimasi. Another very prominent case is regarding Abu Khalid Al Hind like Najeeb he also made his way to be part of ISKP in Afghanistan and wanted martyrdom. He was the one to attack Sikh temple in March 2020 and has killed 6- people post which he has blown himself up. Similarly, a medical doctor has joined ISKP and was responsible for suicide attack in Jalalabad prison on August 2,2020. These cases tell us the rising influence of ISKP in the region.

Many a times people who migrate to Afghanistan or Syria in search of money and join terrorist outfit wants to come back or their parents wants them back but the government shows reluctance to extricate in regard to public opinion as people don't feel safe to accept the one who has already been part of terrorist outfit. This reluctance may be seen as violation of fundamental rights enshrined in part three of the constitution but it can be threat to nation concerning further radicalization within the state. But many a times the scenario is different like that of Indian Islamic state widows. There were three widows all the three of them were interrogated and they were not ready to return back to India considering the need for income. They were named Sonia Sebastain, Alias Ayisha, Nimisha alias Fathima by Indian officials. They fled between the time period of 2016 to 2018 with their husbands to be part of ISIS.

If we look into the legal system there are many loopholes within that according to expert scholars like Kabir Taneja for instance the Kalyan case ran for 8 years and court couldn't prove him guilty considering the lack of evidence. there was only one case of Majeed who was released on bail after being tried in court. This itself says a lot about the need for reform is must as suspects should be tried in court before trying them guilty. when we check the record of detention camps over 2000 ISIS recruits are in detention camps in Syria as foreigners. even after trial, reverse migration or coming back to native land is questionable even according to international norms like resolution 2178 of UNSC which describes a foreign terrorist fighter who migrate to other state as one who was involved in planning and engagement in terrorist acts. Moreover, Indian law, UAPA 1967 also considers the one who migrated to foreign land as ISIS recruits would be engaged in terrorist acts.

This again put the country from where the recruitment is happening in dilemma whether extradition should happen and even if it happens fair procedures should be there for trial in court and they should be sent to reform cell before taking them back. This is important considering the further radicalization in state the security of people and nation. There should also be ways to understand the reason for their joining this outfits and proper channel to address the same.

Indian Hero of Flight FZ1073 and a Miraculous Flight Rescue

By Savio Rodrigues

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On September 30th, Indian Pilot Smit Machchhar thwarted a major air disaster, saving lives of 174 passengers onboard. In the morning hours of the day, Flight FZ1073 of Fly Dubai Airlines was flying from Dubai to Tel Aviv. Mid-air, the flight's co-pilot, identified as an Omani national, allegedly stabbed the pilot. This led to the flight cruising at 34,000 ft suddenly plunged to an abnormal level of 20,000 ft within 30 seconds. Despite sustaining major injuries, Indian Pilot Smit Machchar resisted the attack and managed to open the cockpit door. The passengers were thus able to help him resist the attacker and take control of the aircraft.

The incident involves a lot of surprising elements. One of the passengers was an Israeli plumber named Yaniv Hayun. Reportedly, he put the attacker in a chokehold and pulled him away from the controls. Other passengers then helped restrain him the attacker. While the aircraft was in a steep descent, Hayun went back toward the controls and pulled back on the control column, saying he knew what to do from watching the television programme Air Crash Investigation. He told Israeli media that he watches the programme and had seen how aircraft controls work and had gained familiarity with aircraft controls. He then pulled the controls back and the aircraft began to level out.

Fortunately for the passengers aboard, there were also off-duty pilots travelling as passengers. They took control, stabilised the aircraft and diverted it to Tabuk, Saudi Arabia, where it made an emergency landing. All 180 people, including 174 passengers, landed safely. The Indian Pilot remains stable and is receiving medical treatment, while the attacker has been arrested by Saudi Arabia's security forces.

Indian Pilot Smit Machchar has been hailed as a 'Hero' by the media worldwide for this act of bravery and saving so many lives – not just those of the passengers onboard but even of those where the plane could have crashed, had he not acted so wisely. Major world leaders like Donald Trump, Bibi Netanyahu and Narendra Modi also called him a 'Hero'. Israeli government, media and India's Embassy in Israel, highlighted his bravery.

There is also a striking contrast in how this story has been framed. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said, “My salute to the Indian pilot Captain Smit Machchhar for his extraordinary bravery”, while US President Donald Trump, speaking to reporters, only said, “The pilot was in very bad shape, and I guess he still is in very bad shape. But he had the sense to open the door.”

Several Western media outlets followed a similar framing. CNN’s headline read, “Pilot stabs fellow pilot on flight to Israel before passengers intervene to stop attack”, while that of The Guardian read, “Hero pilot, plumber and dentist among those who saved flydubai flight to Israel”. The sub-title of a CNN article said “Indian Pilot who thwarted hijack attempt hailed as hero back home”. Is he not being hailed as a hero across the world?

This is worth noticing because the opposite often happens when an Indian is connected to a negative story. His Indian identity can become part of the headline and the central frame of the story. In this case, when the Indian was the one who displayed extraordinary courage, that identity was far less prominent in the initial Western headlines. The contrast raises a legitimate question about how nationality is framed when Indians are associated with wrongdoing compared with when they are the victims or the heroes of a story.

Captain Smit Machchhar was not simply “the pilot” on that flight. He was an Indian who, despite being stabbed and seriously injured, helped open the cockpit and gave the passengers a chance to stop the attacker. Indians should tell that story. Because, narratives matter. If one Indian's wrongdoing can sometimes become a reason to judge Indians collectively, then one Indian's courage should not disappear into the background either. Indians should step up and ensure that India’s stories are represented globally and speak about our people's achievements and make sure that stories of Indian courage travel as far and as loudly as the others.

A Swiss 'Guy' comes to India

By Aniruddha Phadke

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President of the Swiss Confederation, Guy Parmelin, paid a State Visit to India from 05-07 October 2026. This was the President's second visit to India in 2026. Earlier, he had attended the AI Impact Summit in New Delhi in February 2026. The Summit's next edition will be hosted by Switzerland. Later, in June 2026, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had met him at Geneva Airport while he was enroute to participate in the G7 Summit in France.

The last State visit of the President of India to Switzerland was in 2019. Prime Minister Modi paid an official visit to Switzerland in 2016 and in 2018. A small trivia is that 26 May is commemorated as Science Day in Switzerland to honour India's ex-President Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam who was on a State visit to Switzerland from 25-29 May 2005.

President Parmelin's visit comes against the larger backdrop of the second India-EFTA Prosperity Summit on October 7, commemorating the first anniversary of the Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) coming into force.

During the President's visit, India & Switzerland formalized five agreements on -

° Migration and Mobility Partnership,

° Exchange of Young Professionals,

° Promotion and Collaboration on Transportation Technologies, Mobility Systems and Infrastructure in Identified Areas,

° Letter of Intent between Department of Science and Technology and Swiss National Science Foundation, and

° Implementation Arrangement for cooperation in Innovation, Technology Transfer and Entrepreneurship.

The MoU on Migration and Mobility provides for multiple entry visa upto 5 years, including stays of upto 6 months on each visit and renewable 1 year student permits. The Agreement on Exchange of Young Professionals covers young people taking temporary employment in the other country to enhance their professional and language skills within their field. This agreement incorporates an exchange of 300 people annually per country, which "may" increase to 500, and a timeline of 30/90 days for verification of nationality/residency status, among other provisions.

The bilateral trade between the two states has seen a 75% growth between 2014 - 2024, and reaching US$ 25.48bn in F.Y. 25-26. Switzerland is India's 12th largest source of FDI, with accumulative FDI to India from April 2000 to March 2026 amounting to US$ 11.35bn. Around 340 Swiss companies are present in India and over 150 Indian companies have established subsidiaries in Switzerland. Indian community of 30,000 people and around 2600 Indian students reside in the Alpine country. A total of 1,62,068 Indian tourists visited Switzerland as compared to 46,528 Swiss tourists visiting India in 2025. Both countries have also set up 'Parliamentary Friendship Group' in their respective Parliaments.

India × EFTA

Switzerland, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway comprise the European Free Trade Agreement (EFTA). Signed on March 10, 2024, it came into force on October 1, 2025. India is EFTA’s 5th-largest trading partner, with US$ 24.4 billion in two-way trade in 2024–25, while Switzerland is India’s largest EFTA trading partner.

EFTA states have offered concessions on 92.2% of their tariff lines, covering 99.6% of the value of India's exports to them. India, in turn, is granting concessions on 82.7% of its tariff lines, covering 95.3% of the value of EFTA's exports. Under Article 7.1 of the Agreement, EFTA states plan to invest US$ 100 billion in India over the next 15 years aiming to create 10 lakh direct jobs.

Switzerland is bringing precision machinery, pharmaceuticals, MedTech and specialty chemicals to this agreement — the kind of intermediate goods and technical capability that will feed into Indian manufacturing rather than compete with it.

Benedikt Höskuldsson, Iceland's Ambassador to India believes that TEPA "is not a rival to the European Union (EU) - India Free Trade Agreement (FTA) but a complement to it". It is here that the contributions of Makane Moïse Mbengue are relevant - his scholarship teaches that a developing state need not always be a rule taker under international investment law, but can also be a rule shaper through its treaty practice.

Hiccups in Bern - Delhi ties

Though both capitals have agreements on Migration and Mobility, it remains to be seen how it is perceived and accepted from some anti-immigration elements back in Europe. In June 2026, Swiss citizens rejected a proposal through a referendum to limit the country's population to 10 million. The proposal came from Swiss People's Party which has long campaigned on an anti-immigration platform. It is noteworthy here that, 27% of Switzerland's population are not Swiss citizens.

Switzerland and India often have differing opinions and viewpoints on human rights. At the 60th session of UN Human Rights Council, India had termed Swiss comments on India's internal affairs as "surprising, shallow and ill-informed". It is important for both nations to be sensitive to each other's varied social composition.

As democratic and neutral states, Bern and Delhi should work together to chart a common path that is acceptable to all parties with respect to the wars going on in Europe and West Asia.

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When a State visit is underway, usually the norm dictates that a Joint Statement is released by the two states but it is surprising that no such Statement was released, only a 'List of Outcomes' was provided. Maybe in the Joint Statement, Switzerland's explicit backing to India's bid at UNSC 2028-29 might have added as a sweetner! Contesting along with India for the UNSC 2028-29 term for its very first bid is Tajikistan who has never been at the UNSC - but this is a discussion at some other time.

The Swiss 'Guy' and his wife departed India with 3 award winning cheeses - Gulmarg, Konark and Yeoor, an intricately hand carved Kashmiri walnut wood wall panel, and a Kutchi shawl in a Sadeli box as gifts from Prime Minister Narendra Modi who has been a campaigner of 'Vocal for Local' and has used such gifts as a tool of Soft Power diplomacy.

World War 3 Loading?

By – Viraj Vaidya

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When the Russia-Ukraine war started, many people quickly said it would turn into World War 3, but that did not happen. Now, with rising tensions between the United States, Israel, and Iran, the same fear is coming back. Military strikes, missile attacks, and growing involvement of other regional players have made the situation in the Middle East more serious and uncertain. This has once again raised a big question: are these wars just regional conflicts, or could they grow into World War 3?

Such predictions often show a limited understanding of how the First and Second World Wars actually began and spread across continents. In this blog, we will examine what truly defines a world war, explore the real reasons why major wars start, and explain why, despite rising tensions in places like Eastern Europe and the Middle East, World War 3 is highly unlikely under today's geopolitical realities.

Before delving deeply into the nature of World War, it's essential to understand its definition. A world war is a large-scale conflict involving numerous countries and regions across the globe. Typically, these conflicts are characterised by widespread participation of nations, significant military engagements on multiple fronts, and far-reaching consequences for geopolitics, economies, and societies.

Now, why were World War 1 and World War 2 referred to as World Wars? According to the aforementioned definition, a World War involves many countries and regions across the globe. Indeed, in both World War 1 and World War 2, we observe their widespread impact across continents. The main reasons for their global spread were complex military alliances and the existence of vast empires.

The territorial expansion of empires, such as the British, French, Russian, and German empires, played a crucial role in the global spread of these wars. Attacks on any part of these empires were perceived as attacks on the entire empire, thus escalating conflicts to a global scale.

Another significant factor contributing to the global nature of these wars was the existence of complex military alliances. These alliances created a chain reaction in which a conflict between two countries could quickly draw several others into the war.

For instance, when Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia in 1914, Russia supported Serbia, while Germany backed Austria-Hungary. Germany's subsequent declaration of war on Russia and France, followed by its invasion of Belgium, brought Britain into the conflict. Moreover, these European powers possessed vast colonial empires across Asia, Africa, and other parts of the world. As a result, their colonies, troops, and resources became part of the war effort, extending the conflict far beyond Europe. Thus, a regional dispute gradually escalated into a global war, involving countries and territories across multiple continents.

Therefore, the territorial vastness of empires and the intricate web of military alliances were pivotal factors that propelled both World War I and World War II into truly global conflicts, thus earning them the designation of "world wars."

Today, while military alliances still exist, with NATO being the most prominent, the absence of vast empires and colonies means that any potential conflict, even between major powers like Russia and NATO, would likely be confined to specific regions, particularly Europe. Therefore, in today's world order, the expansive global scale characteristic of World War 1 and World War 2 is unlikely, making the prospect of World War 3 improbable.

The prominent reason for wars often lies in the shifting of the balance of power. When one country increases its power, rival nations often attempt to counterbalance it, sometimes resorting to extreme measures as security becomes paramount in this perilous world.

The admission of Ukraine into NATO heightened Russia's insecurity, perceiving a shift in power balance in favour of NATO. Consequently, Russia launched an attack on Ukraine. To grasp how wars originate from such power dynamics, one must delve into the systems of world order.

Renowned American Political Scientist John Mearsheimer delineates three types of world orders: Bipolar, Balanced Multipolar, and Unbalanced Multipolar.

A Bipolar world order is the most stable due to several reasons:

1. With only two great powers, the likelihood of confrontations diminishes.
2. Power is typically evenly distributed, reducing the occurrence of security dilemmas.
3. The deterrence mechanism between the two great powers is robust, dissuading conflict-inducing decisions. The Cold War exemplifies the stability of the bipolar world order, with the USA and the USSR being equally formidable in military prowess and nuclear capabilities.

Balanced Multipolarity is more susceptible to war compared to bipolarity for the following reasons:

1. With multiple great powers, the probability of confrontations escalates.
2. There's a risk of coalitions forming among multiple great powers against others.
3. Power distribution among great powers is unlikely to be equitable, leading states with significant capabilities to seek dominance over others.

Unbalanced Multipolarity represents the most precarious world order. In this scenario, multiple power centres exist, but one state surpasses others in power. This potential hegemon remains unsatisfied with the existing balance of power and aims to ascend to the status of a superpower, viewing hegemony as the pinnacle of security. Consequently, other powers become apprehensive of the hegemon's intentions, fostering a climate of mistrust.

Presently, the world is trending towards multipolarity, irrespective of whether it becomes balanced or unbalanced. However, this shift signifies a move towards a more confrontational global landscape. Great powers in a multipolar world strive for hegemony, potentially leading to widespread chaos

Nuclear deterrence is indeed a significant factor preventing nuclear states from engaging in direct warfare with each other. It operates on the principle that the threat of nuclear retaliation deters potential aggressors from initiating an attack. This strategy is closely tied to the concept of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD), which underscores the notion that any nuclear conflict would result in catastrophic consequences for all involved parties.

During the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, the placement of Soviet nuclear missiles in Cuba prompted a tense standoff with the United States. President John F. Kennedy's decision to implement a naval blockade around Cuba, rather than opting for a direct invasion, reflected an understanding of the potential escalation to a full-scale nuclear conflict. The proximity of nuclear weapons and the high stakes involved underscored the importance of exercising caution to avoid triggering a devastating war between nuclear powers.

In contemporary times, various regions around the world remain potential flashpoints for conflict, such as Europe, the South China Sea, the Middle East, and the India-China border, as well as the issue of Taiwan. However, the geopolitical landscape today is characterized by the presence of international institutions like the United Nations, the European Union, and regional organizations, providing platforms for dialogue and diplomatic resolution of disputes.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's assertion that "Today's era is not an era of war" reflects the global recognition of the imperative for peaceful coexistence and conflict resolution through non-violent means. While the threat of warfare persists, the combination of diplomatic channels and the deterrent effect of nuclear arsenals serves as crucial mechanisms for maintaining stability and preventing the escalation of regional conflicts into global catastrophes.

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors. They do not purport to reflect the opinions or views of the FINS or its members.

India is Proud of:

Dr. Ramchandra Godbole (An Ayurvedic Physician, BAMS) and Smt. Sunita Godbole

Dr. Ramchandra Godbole (an Ayurvedic physician, BAMS) and Smt. Sunita Godbole (a social worker with MSW degree) are a dedicated couple originally from Satara district in Maharashtra. They have been jointly awarded the Padma Shri 2026 for their exceptional, selfless service in providing healthcare and social upliftment to tribal communities in the remote, Naxal-affected regions of Chhattisgarh, particularly the Bastar division (Dantewada/Barsur area) and Abujhmad forests.

In 1990, shortly after their marriage, the couple made a life-changing decision to leave the comfort of Maharashtra and settle in the Barsur area of Dantewada district in Chhattisgarh. Instead of pursuing a conventional urban career or comfortable practice, they chose to serve in one of India's most challenging and inaccessible tribal heartlands — dense forests with no roads, electricity, or mobile connectivity. For over 35–37 years (some accounts mention 40+ years of overall dedication), they have walked on foot through forest paths, carrying medical kits, to reach isolated villages where government healthcare facilities rarely reached.



Dr. Ramchandra Godbole (affectionately called “Doctor Bhaiya” by the locals) is a trained Ayurvedic doctor. He has treated over one lakh (100,000) tribal patients, providing free treatment for common illnesses, infections, injuries, maternal health issues, malaria, and especially malnutrition. He combines Ayurvedic principles with basic modern medicine and focuses heavily on preventive healthcare, hygiene, nutrition, and health education. He conducts regular medical camps and works through initiatives like the Trust for Health, Vanvasi Vikas Samiti, and the Bastar Rural Healthcare Project.

Smt. Sunita Godbole complements her husband’s medical work with a strong focus on social aspects. With her Master’s in Social Work, she has worked extensively with tribal women and children, educating them on pregnancy care, child nutrition, anemia prevention, hygiene, and overall family health. She has been instrumental in programs such as the MAAS scheme for identifying and treating malnourished children and in creating awareness that has led to behavioural changes — such as women seeking regular health check-ups and families adopting better nutrition practices using locally available resources.

Together, through their organisation Trust for Health, the Godbole couple has reached hundreds of villages (estimates go up to 400–500), organised medical camps, fought malnutrition, spread health awareness, and built deep trust with the tribal communities by living a simple life among them and respecting local customs. Their work has been particularly remarkable because it continued uninterrupted even in Naxal-affected areas with limited resources and security challenges. They never treated service as a business; Dr. Godbole has often said he sees the tribal person as “God”.

In January 2026, their names were announced for the Padma Shri (in the field of Medicine/Social Service). The formal investiture by President Droupadi Murmu took place recently (around 25–26 May 2026), which matches the "2 days ago" timeline you mentioned. Their recognition is widely seen as an honour not just for the couple but for the entire Bastar region and for all grassroots workers serving in India's remotest areas.

Their story is a powerful example of nishkaam seva (selfless service) in the medical and social sector — proving that dedicated individuals can bring hope and healing where systems often struggle to reach. Chhattisgarh Chief Minister and various ministries have praised their decades-long contribution to tribal healthcare and welfare.

You are right — while every field has both good and bad people, the medical field has produced many such inspiring examples of extraordinary service. The Godboles are shining examples of that spirit.

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