

The Resurgent India

A Monthly National Review

October 2025



“Let us all work for the Greatness of India.”

– The Mother

Year 16

Issue 7

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SUCCESSFUL FUTURE

(Full of Promise and Joyful Surprises)

Botanical name: Gaillardia Pulchella

Common name: Indian blanket, Blanket flower, Fire-wheels

Year 16

Issue 7

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A Declaration

We do not fight against any creed, any religion.

We do not fight against any form of government.

We do not fight against any social class.

We do not fight against any nation or civilisation.

We are fighting division, unconsciousness, ignorance, inertia and falsehood.

We are endeavouring to establish upon earth union, knowledge, consciousness, Truth, and we fight whatever opposes the advent of this new creation of Light, Peace, Truth and Love.

– The Mother

(Collected works of the Mother, Vol. 13, pp. 124-25)

HIGHLIGHTS

DEVELOPMENTS IN RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

The Russia-Ukraine war has been marked by a visible increase in the use of hybrid warfare by both sides. In recent times, Russia innovated in ballistic missile and drone upgrades which were successfully able to evade Ukraine's air defenses and strike within Ukraine. Through its hybrid warfare mode, Russia has also been able to launch a series of minor offensives over the past two months to test the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) eastern frontiers. Their success in rattling the NATO and Ukraine have propelled Russia to continue these tactics, without risking any direct military confrontation. Prior to the onset of winter, Russia has intensified these tactics to put Ukraine under renewed pressure.

At least three direct outcomes are visible from the present trajectory:

First, they may have given Russia an illusionary sense of confidence. Military breakthroughs and psychological upmanship in gaming the adversary tends to do that. But without any decisive victory, it not only remains illusionary, but also prevents attempts at peace. That is, likely, why despite attempts at outreach by the Trump administration to host a Trump-Putin meeting in Budapest, as a follow-up to their Alaska summit, the efforts ended in a failure.

The upshot of this failure was the hardening of diplomatic lines, as the U.S. was quick to impose sanctions on Russia's two large oil companies.¹ This, in turn, ensured that consistent

¹ Lukoil and Rosneft are the two biggest oil companies. The U.S. decision

buyers of Russian oil began to drawdown their purchases. Russia, in turn, in a show of recalcitrance, announced the deployment of the nuclear-propelled *Burevestnik* cruise missile. The U.S. responded by indicating that it would now begin nuclear testing once again. This fast pace of militarization has not deterred Russia or brought it to the negotiating table. This shows that Russia has now firmly embarked on a self-destructive trajectory, propelled by a false sense of impending victory, in which it is killing all chances of even a basic ceasefire. That Russia has repeatedly rejected a temporary ceasefire in favour of a permanent political settlement reinforces its disdain for peace attempts and reveals its pan-European imperialist ambition.

Second, it has resulted in greater militarization in, both, Russia and Ukraine. That, despite the strain on its economy, resources and manpower, Russia is still able to innovate to sustain the war, shows the intensive effort being put into militarization. However, what is more significant is the fact that Ukraine is responding in equal, if not greater measure, thereby placing it on a trajectory towards a strong and permanent nationhood which it will not be possible to shake in the future.

Since the start of the war in 2022, Ukraine's defence sector has grown by almost 350 percent. The country is now becoming a leading innovation hub. It leads globally in tactical and long-range drones, aiming to become the world's "drone capital", and is also taking a lead in AI-driven autonomous warfare. This innovation is not only based on latest technology but is

saw a quick drop in their market values. India responded by drawing down on its purchase of Russian oil, as if it was waiting for an opportunity to do so, while other buyers like Turkey and China are expected to use this to their advantage.

also low-cost and based on rapid model of production, thereby giving Ukraine asymmetric advantage that has advanced its capability to strike deep within Russia.

Third, changing military capacity and balance of power – which ensures that Russia cannot score a decisive victory – shows that the question of Ukraine needing to join NATO for its own security is now in a reverse mode. In fact, the present reality indicates that it is NATO, and especially the European countries, that need Ukraine more. Despite not formally being a part of NATO, Ukraine, through its various programmes and initiatives,² has been able to successfully integrate itself with Western defence firms, becoming a fertile field for NATO to trial and test weapons in live combat conditions for rapid integration. This has made Ukraine's defence sector a kind of bulwark for European security, as it ensures that Ukraine becomes a source for supplying cost-effective, battle-proven technologies that enhance NATO, thereby solidifying Ukraine as Europe's defensive backbone.

TECHNOLOGY AND POLITICS

The increasing proliferation of AI models has led to their rapid adoption across public and private spaces. That this rapid proliferation has coincided with the rise of techno-nationalism and the receding of the age of liberal globalization, has made the political potential of these AI models particularly susceptible to misuse. In India, these risks are now being acknowledged. In recent times, various government departments are moving *en masse* to indigenous digital platforms using AI models.

² Such as Brave1, Defense City, and Test.

They have flagged the risk of foreign AI models misusing the data provided to them. Such data could be used by these AI models to glean more information about decision-making, priorities of government, planning and other critical information. This now constitutes a major gap and vulnerability that the government is looking to bridge, as it directly compromises national security.

Apart from India, China is also embarking on a path towards self-reliance, as it seeks to indigenize chip production, and reduce reliance on the U.S. To that effect, it has sought to provide electricity subsidies to run large data centres which would eventually support major AI models. A major reason for providing these subsidies is the fact that domestic chip making units still run on lower energy efficiency standards, thereby making them more expensive. To offset this, China has decided not to provide subsidies to data centres that use chips made by American companies, whom China has accused of compromising the country's security. As the AI race, thus, heats up, both great power politics as well as security considerations have begun to redefine country priorities.

US-CHINA RELATIONS: TEMPORARY BRIDGES

If there is one event, in recent times, where the massive gap between rhetoric and reality is so thoroughly camouflaged by rhetoric as to completely render the facts ambiguous, it is the recent summit between Donald Trump and Xi Jinping, on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in South Korea. Trump had attempted to influence the public discourse to showcase renewed cooperation between the U.S. and China in a bid to project normalization. Not only

this, but he had also referred to the two countries as “G2” or the group of two, invoking the idea that both are superpowers. As eager as Trump was, Mr. Xi’s sense of disengagement was visible. Even the optics could not hide the fact that the meeting, instead of producing any concrete positive outcome, was merely instrumental in halting the spiralling negative outcomes of the recent U.S.-China tensions.

At least two implications were clearly visible:

First, this meeting was merely a trade ceasefire, and this temporary ceasefire does not appear to be meant to give way to any broader agreement but merely provides the space to the two powers to bide their time and prepare for alternative scenarios. For the U.S., this temporary agreement – wherein China agreed to lift export controls on rare earths for a year – represents breathing space where the US realizes that it needs to aggressively cultivate its own rare earth processing capacity, as well as look for alternative countries which possess these reserves. The U.S. would now be interested in accelerating investments and acquisitions in these countries. That is what sparked temporary U.S. interest in Pakistan. It is now more seriously investing in Brazil, as the latter is working on expanding its capacity in this area. The objective of the U.S. is to reduce dependence on China, as these rare earths are critical components of defence production as well.

For China, the objective was to ensure that restrictions on semiconductor exports, imposed by the U.S., are lifted. At the same time, China is also actively working to reduce its dependence on the U.S. This is visible in the fact that it is actively subsidizing its AI and chip companies, giving them incentives to indigenize chip production. It has also refused to

buy chips from Nvidia – one of the biggest American tech conglomerates for which China used to be a critical market – accusing it of weaponizing its chips to compromise security. Even if the quality of chips is not world class, for now China is prioritizing insulating itself from the U.S. more thoroughly. Already, the U.S. no longer represents a very big direct market for China, as was visible in the little impact that Trump’s tariffs had.

Second, for both the countries, trade now no longer relates to the debate on interdependence versus delinking from each other. Rather, it has become a domain of selective weaponization by each side. In this sense, much like everything else (such as environment and technological innovation) trade has also been subordinated to great power politics. In this game of selective weaponization, both sides are using high-value channels of exchange – such as, technology, materials, and capital – as instruments to shape the other’s behaviour. Each side, thus, exploits the persistence of trade ties to impose costs and extract concessions.

The recent U.S.-China thaw should, therefore, be seen for what it is – a temporary truce in inevitable great power rivalry, rather than a step towards bringing back reliable globalized supply chains. That ship has long sailed.

THE CHANGING CONTOURS OF CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT – PART II

In recent times, there has been a marked increase in the incidence of environmental disasters. Not only this, but these disasters are taking a markedly virulent form. The events that were assumed to be slow onset have accelerated in pace, while the frequency of sudden disasters has gone up. This is now leading to undeniable acceptance of the fact that human-driven climate change is the single most important driving factor behind the present phase of environmental changes. Some of the most evident manifestations of this are visible in the form of ecosystem degradation, species extinction and transformations, spread of illnesses and pandemics triggered by changes in atmospheric patterns, erratic weather patterns which affect livelihoods etc.

By embarking on the present, suicidal trajectory of development, we have ensured that the climate impacts on our environment occur at a much more accelerated pace. Within the next decade, there is a high probability, that we will cross the 1.5 C temperature limit and exhaust the global carbon budget associated with that limit. This would represent a breach of a critical threshold which would trigger climate impacts that will contribute to changing the planet as we know it. To say that environment requires our immediate attention and action would be a moot point now, as that ship has long sailed. We are now at a point where preventing the inevitability of environmental impacts is no longer an option.

ENVIRONMENT AS A SUBSET: THE TRADE-OFFS

Up until a few years ago, the reality of environmental changes had begun to be acknowledged, even if through crude and rudimentary formulations, and there were attempts by various countries to integrate climate change into their development planning. These attempts were, of course, underlined by commercial motives which exposed their double standards and ineffective impact, but at least there was a collective realization that the urgency of climate and environmental degradation could no longer be denied. Therefore, countries sought to make ambitious environmental commitments and work towards fulfilling them. The strides made in the field of renewable energy were the most prominent in this regard. The focus was on taking initiatives which could protect the environment and reverse environmental degradation yet be commercially attractive. It is this predominance given to commercial motive that has made sustainability a rather hypocritical discourse, implying the fact that the world's governments would do the needful to deal with environmental challenges, but only within the existing framework of capitalism and democratic compulsions.

Therefore, despite the onset of new environmental and climate commitments and domestic initiatives by various countries,¹ environment has continued to be subordinate to

¹ China's trajectory in renewable energy deployment has been phenomenal in this regard. Prior to Trump, the US too has made advances in this field. Presently, India, after intensive renewable energy deployment mainly through solar, has now catapulted to become the world's third largest producer of renewable energy after US and China. This has all been made possible due to the seamless integration of renewable energy into existing economic supply chains as well as the falling costs of solar energy deployment.

the commercial motive. And this commercial motive has been designated, in a morally sophisticated manner, as ‘development.’ Initiatives – such as renewable energy deployment – that are being successfully undertaken by countries are those which could be integrated into the existing economic supply chains because of their rising commercial viability, and thereby, the existing developmental model. Such initiatives have not required any drastic changes to the existing developmental model. Therefore, even as there has been a proliferation of such environmentally compatible and sustainability-oriented changes, only those which integrate into our present notions of material development have been undertaken. Therefore, up until now, environment has continued to be subsumed to development, albeit in a sophisticated, hidden form.

This is no longer the case now. Now, even the pretentious veneer of environmental protection is off, with environment firmly taking a backseat to other significant changes that are sweeping the world. The rupture brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war in 2022 laid bare these commercial motives as environment increasingly began to take a backseat to geopolitics and the new technology race.

The years following the post-2021 pandemic have increasingly reflected that the world is entering a period of rapid ‘poly-crisis’, where the multiple challenges facing the planet have all become interconnected. This means that issues like environment & climate, development & economy, foreign policy & wars, and health and science & technology can no longer be seen in isolation from each other. This new period of ‘poly-crisis’ that we are entering into has made visible the broad vulnerabilities which reflect the misplaced approach to environment till now.

Fragmenting the Environment: An Unviable Approach

First, the idea of isolated international regimes to deal with each issue separately is becoming irrelevant. When environmental issues began to command increased attention on the global stage, they were organized through the formation of specialized regimes for each of the areas. Thus, climate change had one regime, biodiversity another, desertification was relegated to a separate regime, the issue of species extinction and protection was made the work of a separate regime altogether, while oceans had a separate regime. Although all these areas impact the environment collectively, yet the global response was to parcel and divide these issues into siloes.

The result has been that areas that were politically and commercially more appealing not only received more attention, but the discourse around them was also framed in a way which could advance individual countries' power projections and agendas. Such a political response has caused more harm than good to the environment. While the climate change regime – sensationalized by politicians, economists and activists – received overwhelming attention which marginalized other concrete environmental areas, even the debate around the climate regime was framed through a political lens.

Instead of focusing on how climate responses should be used to stop species and biodiversity extinction, air and water pollution, and oceans degradation, the focus was on reducing emissions as the only criterion to show that progress is happening. This overwhelming focus on emission numbers has given the countries immense space to fudge their data through

double counting,² by showing illusionary emissions reductions through market-exchange instruments like carbon trading. The present situation is such that many countries and big conglomerates are stipulating ‘net zero’ emissions targets and engaging in fraudulent ‘greenwashing’ practices³ to show reduced emissions numbers.

In this way, the whole domain of climate action has been comprehensively hijacked by the single-pointed focus on emissions-reduction to achieve climate mitigation, dissociating it from the spiraling environmental harm that has accelerated around the world. *The idea is that as long as emissions are being reduced, everything else – from the comprehensive destruction of nature and biodiversity, accelerating deforestation, rising pollution and species extinction – can be ignored. There are no numerical criteria for measuring this natural environmental destruction that is taking place even as countries*

² Carbon markets are the primary way through which countries – developed and developing, alike – have tried to achieve emissions reductions, instead of going for comprehensive economic decarbonization. These markets function based on the principle that countries which can successfully reduce emissions can earn credits. If a country has extra credits, it has the option of selling these surplus credits in the carbon market to another country which was not able to meet its emissions reduction targets. The functioning of carbon markets have provided a very wide scope for fraud and double counting, wherein it is common to see both the seller country and the buyer country showing the same exchanged credits in their respective accounts. This leads to the perception of large-scale overall emissions reductions than what has been achieved.

³ The incidence of repetition and recurrence of such practices – where companies brand themselves as sustainable, while camouflaging the negative environmental impacts of their operations – are among the highest in the United State (at 42%) and the European Union (at 39%) (Muelemeester, 2024).

show “progress” in reducing carbon emissions. Furthermore, even these emissions reduction go through a process of sophisticated manipulation and result not from economy-wide decarbonization – which would threaten the existing bases of the capitalist economy – but through easily manageable market instruments.

In this way, the mutual dissociation and division of various global environmental regimes into separate and competing issue areas – climate/biodiversity & nature/desertification/species etc. – has enabled countries to rig the environment rather than devise any collective response.

Geopolitics and Geoeconomics: Great Power Rivalry and Environment

In the post-2021/22 period, there has been an accelerated shift in technologically driven geopolitical faultlines which will shape the priority environment receives. The coronavirus pandemic and then the Russia-Ukraine war were instrumental in laying bare the weak and illusory foundations of the global economy and showed how the current supply chains through which the system of globalization works is dependent on politics more than anything else. In doing so, this period has heralded a new shift from geopolitics to geoeconomics. Under such changing conditions, the environment has merely been reduced to a subset of the political economy, especially influenced by the priorities of great power politics, driven by changing technological orientation.

After the pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war, the world has witnessed numerous other conflicts, wars and ethnic strife breaking out. Further, the return of Donald Trump to the

American Presidency has heralded a period of the survival of the fittest, in which countries are expected to bolster their own national defence, and there has been a rapid unravelling of international consensus across all global institutions. This has precipitated in great precarity, both, in terms of the countries' security dilemma in relation to their defence requirements and in terms of the uncertainty in procurement of energy and other materials needed to ensure even their basic functioning. The response of various countries to the rising security dilemma has been to ramp up defence production, while the quest for energy security, threatened in the wake of the numerous wars and conflicts, has been to bolster the reliance on secure and widest possible basket of energy sources.

Countries are now waking up to the weakness of their defence industrial bases and how this might negatively affect them in war scenarios. Major powers such as Europe, United States, China and Russia have already started expanding their defence industrial base through increased armament and domestic production of weapons, while even middle powers such as India, South Korea and Japan are set to join the bandwagon. Revisionist countries, based on radical Islamic ideology, such as Iran and Pakistan are not far behind.

Europe has seen a mushrooming of numerous defence start-up companies which have become key suppliers of drones and other weapon systems to Ukraine and is also seeing a revival of its earlier static major defence conglomerates. Within Europe, Germany, France, Ukraine and Poland have taken the lead in this movement, while nearly all European countries aim to amp up their defence spending. Russia has seen an unprecedented rise in its defence production as it rapidly moves away from outdated Soviet era weapons systems to retain an

upper hand in its war. United States and China are also engaged in competition over defence production, as the former's stagnating base, despite being the largest, now seeks to further reinvent itself against China's more robust and massive one.

All these patterns indicate how the major economies – especially the United States – are shifting to an emergency defence model, which would be capable of waging not only one or two wars but at least three wars simultaneously. This portends a shift from the “just-in-time, just-enough economy model to a peak demand model” in the defence arena (Detsch, 2024). It harkens back to the Cold War era when the United States, the former Soviet Union and China had rapidly built up their defence industrial bases by deploying capital- and labour-intensive modes of production. In the post-Cold War period, the false dawn of liberal globalization led to the United States and Europe outsourcing their defence production to the private sector, leading to dependency on foreign-controlled supply chains through which critical defence components were provided.⁴ In the US, the post-Cold War ennui saw the merger of defence companies and a significant slowing down of production lines, even as China continued to robustly build its arsenal.⁵

⁴ At the height of Cold War in 1960, the U.S. defence spending accounted for about 36 percent of the global research and development. By 2019, this had fallen to only 3.1 percent. Today, thanks to the legacy of the post-Cold War period, in the U.S., the private sector outpaces the Defence Department in 11 out of the 14 technology areas that the Pentagon has labeled as being critical for success (Harman & Edelman, 2024).

⁵ What is raising particular concern in the United States is China's growing ability to effectuate a rapid and seamless civil-military fusion ecosystem which is now powering the latter's defence industrial base, making it more robust. While earlier China's defence sector was plagued by

Today, the world is back to a point where wars are mushrooming at a record pace, and the nature of warfare has been transformed through technological deployment. Western countries now face the challenge of breaking their dependency on Chinese-controlled supply chains⁶ and revive their defence production capacity once more. This not only requires technological edge, but also revival of factories, deployment of labour manpower and a revival of robust defence bureaucracies and scientists. The entire ecosystem of the Cold War is now in the process of being revived. In addition, it is being combined with various modes of automation which have been made available by today's technological advancements.

In recent times, the American administration has undertaken unprecedented decisions which bear out America's dawning realization of the inevitability of geopolitical conflict. These

monopoly of state control, giving rise to an opaque system which bred corruption and inefficiency, in the last few years, this has changed. China is now integrating its defence sector with the civil areas, by bringing in private companies as well as research and academia. This represents an integration of its success in the civil commercial ecosystem (including areas such as renewable energy, artificial intelligence, etc.) with its defence base. In doing so, it is fast replicating America's ability to leverage commercial assets for battlefield advantage.

⁶ A case in point is China's stranglehold over the global supply chains for rare earth metals, arising from the fact that China not only has the world's largest known reserves for rare earths, but also the largest global processing capacity. These rare earths are used ubiquitously in daily technologies, renewable energy fields as well as in weapons systems. In other words, if China stops the export of these rare earths, the American defence industry would be significantly compromised, unless the US delinks itself from the Chinese-controlled supply chains and indigenizes rare earths processing and alternative routes of procurement. China's recent imposition of export controls bears out this scenario amply.

decisions show the twin track policy of the Trump administration. On the one hand, under Trump, the American government is moving increasingly towards a model of state intervention in industry. The American government acquiring a major shareholder stake in big American technology companies like Intel cannot just be dismissed as crony capitalism but indicates a calculated strategy which can help the revival of these stagnating chip-making companies as well as bring them under state oversight to indicate their importance to national interests.⁷ On the other hand, Trump's recent decision to restart the testing of nuclear weapons based on the information that China and Pakistan are doing the same raises further concerns about the spiralling cycle of insecurity. South Korea and Japan already possess nuclear latency and are well poised to take the road towards nuclearization, both in action and intent.

Clearly, the immediate casualty of this spiralling cycle of rearmament and the increasing likelihood of wars is the global environment, as militaries are among the largest consumers of fossil fuels and their expansion will result in various forms of air, soil, water and other environmental hazards. The current track of military and technological expansion will also result in carbon emissions, as defence production – as well as the energy needed to power automated artificial intelligence systems – is highly energy intensive. Presently, the global carbon footprint of the military industrial complex is around 5%. It will increase further as defence production expands.

⁷ Similarly, the Trump administration's major takeover and revival of the little-known MP Minerals is another significant move which indicates how the government is prioritizing the rapid indigenization of critical minerals and rare earth metals production.

Environment, thus, now seems to have taken a backseat, as renewed defence manufacturing which will certainly bring environmental externalities, revival of the nuclear age and the acceptance of unclean sources of energy to ensure energy security have become vital.

More importantly, environment has not only taken a backseat, but more dangerously, it is being redefined. The impending destruction of nature through deforestation, destruction of natural habitats and rise in wildfires, all in the quest for national power through development and defence is being camouflaged by projecting emissions reduction as the way to save environment. In that pursuit, nuclear power is being marketed as the only solution to the environmental crisis facing the world. It has now been accepted that renewable energy alone will not suffice to reduce emissions⁸, and that the world has few other viable options to tackle the environmental crisis before us. The revival of nuclear power – through technological advancements in relatively ‘safe’

⁸ Despite the cheap prices of renewable energy inputs, such as solar panels, it continues to be a costly option for many countries. If we take the case of India – despite being the world’s third largest producer of renewable solar energy, more than 70 percent of India’s electricity grid continues to be powered by coal. This is because while India is ahead in installed renewable capacity, its generation capacity still lags. Further, India continues to import solar panels from China. Its import-dependency is also visible in storage systems which require critical minerals in battery production. A course correction will not only require exploration of expensive solutions like developing battery storage systems and reduction of import dependency but also reforming our inefficient power sector to revamp the electricity distribution grid. In turn, this may require tough political reforms in which the role of state governments – along with their proclivity to promise subsidized electricity to farmers and other vote banks – will have to be minimized.

options like small modular reactors – is well in line with the revival of the nuclear sector in national defence as well.⁹

Vacuous Power Projections: Illusions of Leadership

Finally, the present period, by heralding a dominance of politics over everything else, has made the environmental domain a space for power projection and advancement of narrow national interests. This heralds a subtle shift from the earlier universally accepted idea that issues like environment and climate change (and even health emergencies like pandemics) affect the world as a whole and require a collective solution based on global cooperation. Even though the tendency to pay lip service to this idea has increased in recent times with the rise of new challenges, yet in fact and action, we see its clear demise. Today, every domain related to the environment has become a way for countries to project selfish interest under the garb of environmentalism, with powerful countries having more advantage.

This is particularly visible in how countries project their political leadership and normative power. European Union's 'New Green Deal', Saudi Arabia's 'Vision 2030', China's techno-

⁹ This is perhaps why European countries are already reviving their dormant nuclear factories. Russia and China already dominate the new nuclear market, while India is a fast entrant. European experiences with renewable energy – such as Spain's unprecedented blackout as well as import dependency on China of critical components used in renewable energy – show the limited options available. That is why, the field of environmental protection, is now being redefined to accept the fact that clean energy will have to go hand-in-hand with fossil fuels and other bridging options like nuclear, gas and oil, to be able to mitigate the harsh impact of environmental depletion as well as sustain the present system of global capitalism.

environmentalism and America's capitalistic environmental nationalism (which has assumed varying forms under Biden and Trump Presidencies, but remains the same in essence) have all become grand ways to project national hegemony and power, even as they remain wedded to utilitarianism, and narrow the scope for global cooperation.¹⁰

Further, due to the dominance of geoeconomics, environment is more prominently being subordinated to national trade and economic interests, even as the latter is projected to show environmental protection and leadership on the part of certain countries. Measures that are designed to target trade and advance commercial interests are ostensibly taken in the name of domestic environmental protection. European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), UK's carbon border tax and formerly under Biden, US's Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) have been mainly trade competitiveness measures redesigned to retrofit the lens of environmental protection. The idea is to use economic measures to achieve political and

¹⁰ Consider the case of Europe. Despite its projections of normative leadership in the domain of climate change and despite its projected stringent emissions reduction targets, Europe continues to witness rapid natural destruction. In the past decade alone, Europe's natural carbon sinks – especially forests and peatlands – have declined by about 30%. Europe is also the fastest warming continent on earth. Despite this, exploitation and degradation of nature, resulting in biodiversity loss, continues unabated. This is borne by the fact that nearly 15% of Eurozone's industrial assets are on floodplains and almost three-quarters of companies producing goods and services within the Eurozone are highly dependent on at least one natural ecosystem, with about 75% of bank loans being granted to companies that rely on natural resources for their business. Thus, Europe's 'projected' climate leadership is just that – a projection. Under the garb of emissions reductions and lofty climate targets what is taking place is unabated biodiversity destruction (Hancock, 2025).

foreign policy aims in the domain of environment, as the world sees a marked shift away from the existing forms of production in the capitalist economy to a new form of capitalism in which environment is set to play a crucial role.

INDIA'S ROLE IN A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT: NARROWING AVENUES OF CHOICE

At a time when the environment has, thus, been reduced to a mere subset in the great utilitarian trade-offs, the Indian Subcontinent, and India in particular, are in a particularly difficult position. India occupies a unique position in many respects:

First, despite undertaking the expansion of energy sector along polluting lines in the name of development, India has not been able to assure access to all sections of the population. Even though the country has not contributed to historical emissions which have precipitated in global climate change, India now has the world's third largest total emissions, after the U.S. and China. At the same time, India's per capita emissions continue to be very low. In 2023, the country's per capita emissions were around 2.05 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent, much lower than the global average of 4.76 metric tons of CO₂ equivalent, and vastly lower compared to the U.S. (at 16.5 tons) and China (at 15.2 tons).

The lower per capita emissions and high total annual emissions indicate that while India continues to undertake environmentally polluting activities and expand its energy sector¹¹ in the name of development, yet due to the country's

¹¹ The energy sector, particularly coal-reliant power generation, is the largest source of emissions in India.

vast population, the access to energy has not been assured to all sections of the population. This exposes the hollowness of the developmental agenda even at a very basic material level.

Second, India is now at a point where it can no longer adopt the option of merely balancing environment and development, as other countries have done. India's environmental vulnerability is not merely static but is rapidly increasing and assuming irreversible forms. The incidence of local environmental disasters and challenges is very pronounced in the Indian context. This is seen in the form of rising seriousness of the problem of air and water pollution, rising incidence of heat waves, floods, drought, erratic rainfall and the more pronounced way monsoonal patterns are changing in India.¹² India is also facing the rising challenge of ground water depletion and the visible water scarcity in cities as well as the problem of land subsidence. Each region – from the unique placement of the Himalayan region to the coastal one of the South – in the country not only has its own unique geography and ecology, but the uniform attempts at development and urbanization have precipitated in each of these regions facing their own unique set of local environmental challenges.

¹² Even existing ecosystems are degrading at a rapid rate. A preliminary study reveals that the Ganga river – which sustains more than 600 million people and is a central part of the Indian Subcontinent – is now drying up at a rate not witnessed in more than a millennium. In the post-1990 period, the river has witnessed a drying which is about 76% more intense than the worst 16th century drought, driven by factors such as weaker summer monsoon, human-driven land and water use changes and other changes driven by climatic shifts (Ghosh, 2025).

What makes the environmental crisis more complex for India is the fact that these local environmental challenges are increasingly being shaped by changes in global climatic patterns. With a coastline of more than 7500 km, India is as vulnerable to sea-level rise as any other coastal country. Further, temperature increases have resulted in monsoon variability and erratic weather patterns. Presently, around 75% of India's districts are vulnerable to climate extremes, and over 80% of the population lives in districts at risk from climate-induced disasters. This shows India's narrowing options in the environmental crisis that is upon us.

Till now, we have been talking about how climate change can reduce economic growth. Not many have been able to relate to this abstract formulation. But presently, when we see infrastructure, such as roads, ports, bridges and power grids, being vulnerable, and food and livelihoods being endangered due to environmental crisis, the latter becomes more real. It is not simply the economic cost that matters here, but the repeated disruptions of everyday life that makes the environmental crisis more concrete.

Under such circumstances, India needs to realize that we are at a point where sustainable development merely becomes a moot and vapid discourse. Environment and development have long gone past the phase of balancing, and have entered a phase of trade-offs, where the fulfilment of one lead to a compromise with the other. India is now at a stage where it is able to achieve neither with satisfaction, as its developmental gains face rapid unravelling by the force of environmental crisis.

Third, while the environment-development relationship may

be one of trade-offs, with the environmental crisis becoming an undeniable reality before the world, yet not all countries face the same dilemma as India. The case of China may be instructive. Till a few years ago, it also faced severe air and water pollution, as it rapidly expanded low-cost manufacturing. However, now we see China in a phase of enormous infrastructural expansion as well as at a point where it has dealt more concretely with its local environmental challenges. That India has been able to do neither shows that the problem lies somewhere else. In particular, it lies in the psychological turpitude that has given rise to material corruption and has been plaguing the country.

The psychological and material structures that we have imported from the West, through our legacy of colonial subordination, have deeply influenced the nature of national development and the formation (or lack thereof) of our national character. From western education, language and cultural mores to western-denominated models of economic development to the British innovation of Parliamentary system of democratic government, there is scarcely any field where India has not been influenced by the West. The British, during their rule over India, laid the foundations of the present model of ecological exploitation in the name of development. The subsequent governments, in Independent India, have carried it forward.

On the one hand, we have been shaped by the conviction that development is equivalent to the Western-designated path of extractive modernization through which the developed countries became prosperous. In this quest, India has experimented with various varieties of socialism and capitalism. On the other hand, the compulsions of Parliamentary democracy

– in a diverse country like India – have laid fertile ground for vote-bank politics and elevated the formula of pursuit of selfish political interest as the only way to political survival. When short-term electoral interest is repackaged as national interest, many things are sacrificed, but environment is, perhaps, the first to go, as it is not even an electorally appealing plank. In contrast, semi-dictatorships like China or democracies in the West – where people care about factors such as quality of life, local environment etc. – have been better able to deal with the local and temporary environmental challenges.¹³ Psychologically, in these countries, there is more commitment to the nation and culture, which also, albeit to a lesser extent, encompasses the environment in its ambit. In India, where people are mobilized around deeply sectarian lines and have been taught to self-doubt and question their own nationhood and culture, issues like environment and civic culture automatically go under the carpet.

Finally, it is worth questioning what options India has, in the face of this combination of deep-rooted structural problems which have become a major cause of environmental degradation in the country. Perhaps, a few years ago, it might have been possible to imagine a scenario where India could have made balance and struck adjustments in advancing environmental protection while expanding on its strategic priorities. However,

¹³ Even Islamic autocracies like Iran have, in recent times, given more priority to the environment. Latest reports suggest how, in response to land subsidence, Iran is now debating whether to shift the capital out of Tehran. This was largely in response to the concern that local Iranians have expressed regarding their deteriorating environment and the rising congestion in Tehran. In India, the picture is diametrically opposite, people continue to thrive in conditions of worsening air and water contamination and have not expressed any concern at the destruction of local ecology.

at least two factors have upended this calculus. One is the factor of climate change, and the other is the factor of the rapidly changing geopolitical reality facing India.

On the one hand, the inevitability of climate change conveys to us that whatever we now do in the name of environmental protection – this applies to not just India, but all other countries, with varying degrees of vulnerability – will never be enough to halt the irreversibility of the impacts of climate change. Even vocal proponents of climate action¹⁴ have now accepted this reality that any climate action undertaken now will be too little and too late, and that now the world must learn how to adapt under conditions of a rapidly changing climate.

On the other hand, the rising geopolitical conflict and the changing patterns of world politics have bred insecurity to such an extent – leading even to a revival of the long-dormant nuclear power – that India has no option but to also work on meeting its security requirements. Much like its climate vulnerability, India's geopolitical vulnerability is no less significant. Externally, the country is surrounded by an extremely volatile neighbourhood, which is plagued not just by political instability but also by Islamic religious extremism mostly directed against India. Internally, Islamic fanaticism to destabilise and the Christian determination to convert is getting further inflamed by the rise of Islamic and Christian driven power blocs in many significant countries, such as Pakistan and the U.S.

¹⁴ Bill Gates' recent argument to this effect bears this out, in which he concedes the irreversibility of climate change by arguing that the climate action is already too late, and that now we need to prepare for adapting to climate change rather than hoping to halt it.

In addition to the clear threats facing the country, India must also contend with the insecurity bred by larger geopolitical competition. As the U.S. upends its historical alliances and, in a mercenary fashion, seeks to promote revisionist Islamic states with the purpose of fulfilling its narrow interests, and as the likelihood of military wars, export controls and trade wars, the race towards nuclearization and the technology race heats up, India does not have many options before it. Much like other countries, India will also seek to expand its defence industrial base, by reinvigorating production, accelerating innovation and reducing its import dependency on supply chains which have increasingly become hostage to the geopolitical calculus. Already, in the aftermath of Operation Sindoor, both, India and Pakistan have embarked on a rapid military buildup in anticipation of future conflicts. India is rapidly commissioning new weapons systems and is accelerating and simplifying the rules of defence procurement. The country is also continuing to grant fast-track approvals to strategic border infrastructure projects.

All of this is bound to lead to environmental externalities. Many of these connectivity and infrastructure projects, admittedly, come at the cost of the environment. Rapid defence testing and production will also lead to pollution, as well as soil and water contamination. These risks will be further heightened once we shift towards nuclear energy, for both, civilian and military deployment. Further, as Trump's careless remarks on nuclearization portend, once the world moves towards the testing of nuclear weapons, environment will be a dead issue, as the extent of environmental and health damage will be magnified manifold. India, which is already one of the most environmentally vulnerable countries, is likely to bear

further environmental damage at a much bigger scale. At the same time, the world we are moving towards leave us with little options but to prioritise our military and security apparatus.

CONCLUSION: NO WAY OUT

Whether India and the world have a way out of the dilemma currently confronting the planet is not a question that has any immediate answers. What is, however, clear is that the environmental crisis facing us today is not merely an external ecological crisis, but an inner crisis of consciousness. That is why the effect of this crisis is visible in an interlinked manner across multiple arenas of human life, from psychological to material and spanning individual as well as collective domains. The external ecological crisis has now assumed existential forms which threaten the very survival of the planet. It has also reached a point which is beyond the scope of any political or economic/developmental interventions. Indeed, the latter is only further precipitating the crisis.

We are now at a point where it is only a fundamental change of consciousness which can chart the future direction for humanity. If Matter is only a play of Energy – as Science is also discovering – and the terrestrial unfolding of the Spirit, through the mechanism of the Prakriti, is the ultimate Source of this material creation, then all scientific causations and material laws end in the Spirit. There alone can be found the resolution of the seemingly irresolvable dilemmas – hardened into physical reality through the web of scientific laws and causations – that humanity has created for itself. Whether India re-discovers this knowledge and revives its lost consciousness will determine the future of any solutions.

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THE VALIDITY OF THE LAWS OF NATURE AND
THE VALUE OF THE EXPERIMENTS MADE IN THE
SPIRIT OF DOUBT AND RESERVE

“I believe in the superiority of the inner vision over the outer vision and this belief is based not merely on theoretical knowledge but on the thousands of examples I have come across in the course of a life which is already long. Unfortunately I am surrounded by people who, though they are here to practise yoga, are still convinced that “a cat is a cat”, as we commonly say in French, and that one can rely only on one’s physical eyes for seeing and observing, on one’s physical-mental knowledge for judging and deciding, and that the laws of Nature are *laws* – in other words, any exception to them is a miracle. This is false. This is what is at the root of all the misunderstandings and reservations. You already know, and I mention it only to remind you, that an experiment made in a spirit of reserve and doubt is not an experiment, and that outer circumstances will always conspire to justify these doubts, and this for a reason which is very easy to understand: doubt veils the consciousness and the subconscious sincerity, and into the action some small factors creep in which may seem unimportant, but which are just sufficient to alter all the factors of the problem and to bring about the result that one had anticipated by doubting.”

– The Mother
(CWM 16: 40-41)