



# CUTS International *Global Affairs*

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## **Manmohan Singh: Architect of India's Global Aspirations and Economic Renaissance**

Dr Manmohan Singh's demise marks the end of an era in Indian politics, leaving behind an indelible legacy as an economist, statesman, and visionary leader. His pivotal role in shaping modern India's economic and foreign policy framework has been lauded, particularly his success in finalising the US-India Civil Nuclear Agreement.

Singh believed that India's development priorities should guide its foreign policy, aspiring to create a global environment conducive to India's growth. This vision culminated in his historic meeting with President George W. Bush in 2005 on the margins of the United Nations General Assembly. At the time, India faced numerous embargoes following the 1998 nuclear tests. Singh's request for US assistance in accessing clean energy was the seed for a transformative partnership.

After three years of complex negotiations, the US-India Civil Nuclear Agreement was finalised in 2008. It not only secured India a waiver from the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) to engage in nuclear commerce without signing the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) but also elevated India's global diplomatic stature. This agreement underscored Singh's conviction that the deal aligned with India's interests, despite intense opposition from Left parties and risking his coalition government. Sonia Gandhi's support further strengthened his resolve to see the agreement through.

The landmark deal symbolised a new chapter in US-India relations, built on mutual trust and shared goals. Its legacy continues, underpinning bilateral initiatives like the Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET). Singh's pragmatism and foresight ensured India's integration into the global economy, fostering long-term partnerships and regional cooperation.

Singh's foreign policy was rooted in five guiding principles, including stable, mutually beneficial ties and a "shared destiny" for South Asia. He advocated for greater regional connectivity and valued India's plural, secular democracy as a model for global inspiration. His efforts extended beyond the nuclear deal, encompassing improved ties with ASEAN, the Look West Policy to bolster Gulf relations, and an enduring focus on poverty alleviation through trade and economic integration.

While his tenure saw criticism for being "soft" on Pakistan, Singh pursued back-channel diplomacy, nearing a non-territorial solution to the Kashmir issue. His pragmatic engagement with China, including infrastructure projects in Arunachal Pradesh and deft handling of border tensions, highlighted his nuanced approach to diplomacy.

Manmohan Singh's contributions to India's economic reforms, beginning with the 1991 liberalisation, transformed the nation's trajectory. His humility, simplicity, and dedication to consensus-building resonate deeply. As India mourns one of its noblest sons, his enduring legacies in economic reform and international diplomacy will continue to guide the nation's aspirations.

Pradeep S. Mehta  
Editor

**P.S.:** With this year's G20 Summit in South Africa, we look forward to further integration of Africa in the tumultuous global economic order and how the "dark continent" can benefit.

## Message for our Readers

This is the eighty-first edition of the Monthly Brief from the Centre, which carries select published news or comments on a relevant issue. There are equally important issues which may have been missed out to keep the Monthly Brief short and swiftly readable.

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## Trump threatens to take back Panama Canal over 'ridiculous' fees

Donald Trump has demanded the Panama Canal's return to the US, criticising Panama's fees and warning against Chinese influence. Panama rebuffed the threat, asserting its sovereignty. Amid drought-induced disruptions, Trump highlighted the canal's strategic importance, while Nicaragua unveiled plans for a rival canal, courting Chinese and American investment.



- [EU tech chief strikes a conciliatory tone with Elon Musk](#) | Irish Times
- [BlackRock's billionaire bonanza](#) | Financial Times
- [U.S. hikes tariffs on imports of Chinese solar wafers, polysilicon and tungsten products](#) | The Hindu

# Strategic Issues

## Bangladesh-Pakistan axis creates security challenge for India

Bangladesh's interim government eased visa rules for Pakistanis, removing the need for security clearance, raising India's security concerns along its borders. Historically strained Bangladesh-Pakistan ties under Awami League governments stemmed from the 1971 genocide and ISI's role in Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's assassination. Pakistan's outreach to BNP leadership raises further regional tensions.



- [NATO's European members discuss 3% target for defence spending](#) | Report
- [Rheinmetall joins forces with US software specialist on combat drone development](#) | Financial Times
- [Vladimir Putin says I'm ready to compromise with Donald Trump on the Ukraine war](#) | BBC
- [Biden approves US\\$571m Taiwan aid](#) | Taipei Times





## ICJ begins hearing on landmark climate change case: Why is this significant?

The recently concluded annual climate talks in Baku, Azerbaijan, ended in disappointment for the developing countries. The main agreement negotiated at this conference promised to mobilise just US\$300bn a year in climate finance for the developing countries, far less than the US\$1.3tn a year they had been demanding in line with their requirements assessed by several studies. (Paywall)



- [Geothermal Energy: India, China To Dominate World's New Clean Energy Source As Coal Usage Going Down](#) | Eura Asia Times
- [Pakistan's Punjab province needs a long-term plan to tackle toxic smog](#) | Nikkei Asia
- [Ecuador completes \\$1.5 billion debt swap for Amazon conservation](#) | Economic Times
- [Greece, 'Israel' sign deal on seabound green electricity corridor](#) | Almayadeen



**'Transactionalism' will be key for Indo-US ties under Donald Trump: IMD chief David Bach**

IMD Business School President David Bach foresees the US adopting a transactional approach with India under Trump, while maintaining strategic partnership against China. India stands to benefit from the 'China-plus one' strategy as businesses diversify. Bach emphasizes India's need to improve managerial practices and productivity for sustained growth. (Paywall)



- [World Bank Raises Record \\$100 Billion for Aid to Poorest Nations](#) | Bloomberg
- [The Trump-Xi bromance has a chance in 2025](#) | Deccan Herald
- [Do not write off Trump's America](#) | The Hindu
- [Brazil's left forced to consider post-Lula future](#) | Financial Times
- [Nepal Prime Minister Oli Wanted To Show Off His Chinese Connection To India, But Was Conned By Beijing](#) | Swarajya
- [Russia boosts lending to India, Bangladesh, and other friendly nations](#) | Nikkei Asia



## World Bank Raises Record \$100 Billion for Aid to Poorest Nations

Donor countries pledged US\$23.7bn to the International Development Association (IDA), enabling US\$100bn for grants and concessional loans to 78 vulnerable nations. Despite inflationary concerns, the replenishment marks a historic high, with 17 donors increasing contributions. Climate finance remains central, especially for African nations, amid pressure on aid budgets. (paywall)



- [Syria's ousted leader Assad sends \\$250M in cash to Russia amid sanctions, war](#) | AA
- [Killing the budget bill let China off the hook](#) | The Washington Post
- [Xi Jinping says China will remain the world's 'growth engine'](#) | Financial Times

- [BIS warns politicians to rein in spending or risk market turbulence](#) | Financial Times
- [Don't think the US will go hammer and tongs against India on tariffs: Former RBI governor Raghuram Rajan](#) | Economic Times

Events   Webinars	Op-eds	Media Coverage
<a href="#">India's Indo-Pacific Strategy</a> December 12, 2024	<a href="#">The Sovereignty Conundrum in the South China Sea</a> - Usanas Foundation, December 09, 2024	<a href="#">India's Indo-Pacific Strategy: A Vision for Peace, Prosperity, and Partnership</a> <i>The Economic Times</i> , December 13, 2024
<a href="#">I2U2: Towards a Transformative Quadrilateral Partnership</a> December 18, 2024	<a href="#">PARADIPLOMACY'S ROLE IN Shaping Global Collaborations</a> First India, December 31, 2024	<a href="#">I2U2 &amp; IMEEC chart a new course for global economic cooperation: Experts</a> <i>The Economic Times</i> , December 22, 2024
<a href="#">Future of the G20 and Africa – Ambassador Anil Sooklal, High Commissioner South Africa to India</a> December 17, 2024		