

# CUTS International *Global Affairs*

MonthlyNews Wrap #106, May 2026

## **Beyond Optics: A De Facto G2 in a Multipolar World?**

May 2026 underscored a defining feature of contemporary geopolitics: intensifying strategic competition has not diminished the need for diplomacy; it has made it indispensable. Across regions, states increasingly found themselves balancing rivalry with cooperation, deterrence with dialogue, and national interests with the realities of deep economic interdependence.

The Trump–Xi summit exemplified this paradox. Despite persistent tensions over trade, technology, and strategic influence, Washington and Beijing recognised the risks of allowing competition to spiral into confrontation. The meeting, including a big business delegation from the US, served as a reminder that while great-power rivalry remains the organising principle of international politics, managing that rivalry has become an equally important imperative.

As regional actors grapple with growing uncertainty, the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore highlighted the continued importance of strategic communication and confidence-building mechanisms in preventing competition from escalating into conflict.

India's diplomatic outreach during the month reflected its growing role in shaping this evolving order. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's engagements with leaders from the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, and Italy, alongside participation in the third India–Nordic Summit, highlighted the expanding strategic content of India's partnerships with Europe. Discussions increasingly centred on semiconductors, advanced manufacturing, renewable energy, defence cooperation, and resilient supply chains, areas that will define economic competitiveness and strategic influence in the decades ahead.

Coming months after the conclusion of the India–EU Free Trade Agreement, the visit reinforced the steady transformation of India–Europe ties from a predominantly economic relationship into a broader strategic partnership.

The Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting in New Delhi offered further evidence of this shift towards practical cooperation. The grouping announced initiatives on maritime surveillance, port infrastructure, critical minerals, energy security, and regional maritime coordination, while advancing efforts under the Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA).

***P.S.:** From mpox to Ebola, recurring disease outbreaks in Africa continue to expose weaknesses in global health governance. As these health emergencies increasingly transcend borders, is it time for global health cooperation to move beyond emergency response and focus on strengthening prevention, disease surveillance, and long-term healthcare resilience and capacity-building?*

## Message for our Readers

This is the 106th edition of the monthly news wrap from the Centre, which carries select published news or comments on a relevant issue. There are equally important issues that may have been overlooked to keep the news wrap short and easy to read.

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### Trump's Trillion-Dollar Delegation Eyes China Deals

US President Donald Trump's state visit to Beijing was accompanied by a delegation of 17 leading American business executives from the technology, finance, aerospace, and semiconductor sectors, collectively holding over US\$1tn in personal wealth. The delegation underscored continued corporate interest in China's market despite persistent geopolitical tensions.



Key participants, including Elon Musk and Jensen Huang, sought to expand commercial opportunities in China while navigating evolving regulatory and technological constraints, reflecting the complex interdependence underpinning contemporary US-China economic relations.

[China's Africa trade push: Partnership or power grab?](#) | DW News

[Jensen Huang pledges \\$150 billion a year in Taiwan for Nvidia](#) | Yahoo Finance

[Interim trade deal: US may offer to lock-in India's tariffs to insulate from Section 301 penalties](#) | Business Line

[EU-US trade: Council and Parliament strike a deal to implement the tariff elements of the Joint Statement](#) | European Council

# Strategic Issues

## Third India-Nordic Summit

India and the Nordic countries have progressively expanded their multidimensional partnership since the First India-Nordic Summit in 2018, with cooperation centred on innovation, clean energy, green technologies, and sustainable development.

The Third India-Nordic Summit held in Oslo on May 19, 2026 further deepened collaboration in trade, investment, digital innovation, emerging technologies, maritime cooperation, resilient supply chains, STEM research, and defence partnerships. The partnership also reflects India's broader use of diplomatic soft power to strengthen strategic engagement with the Nordic region.



- [Europe's fear that Putin could expand the war beyond Ukraine has moved from background anxiety to active planning concern](#) | [WSJ](#)
- [Japan and Philippines agree to elevate ties to new level amid China concerns](#) | [The Japan Times](#)
- [44 countries to attend 23rd Shangri-La Dialogue; Vietnam's president to deliver keynote address](#) | [The Strait Times](#)
- [A Forced Diplomatic & Geopolitical Reset for Pakistan](#) | [Friday Times](#)



## 50+ Nations Back Fossil Fuel Exit Push

Nearly 60 governments convened in Santa Marta, Colombia, to explore strategies for accelerating the global transition away from fossil fuels. Against the backdrop of an energy crisis linked to the Iran conflict, discussions underscored the importance of expanding renewable energy capacity.

Participants at the first Conference on 'Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels' highlighted electrification and renewable energy as central to enhancing energy resilience and advancing climate objectives, particularly amid limited progress in formal UN climate negotiations.

- [Cuba announces it has exhausted all its fuel reserves: 'We have absolutely nothing'](#) | EL PAIS
- ['Landmark Moment for Climate Justice': UN General Assembly Backs Historic World Court Climate Ruling](#) | Earth.org
- [Nuclear energy in the Middle East: A realistic choice or a risk?](#) | UN News
- [India, world's third-biggest oil consumer, scales back crude processing in April](#) | Baird Maritime



## Takeaways from the Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting

The 11<sup>th</sup> Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting, held in New Delhi on May 26, 2026, reaffirmed the grouping's commitment to a free, open, and stable Indo-Pacific. Discussions focused on maritime security, critical minerals, energy security, resilient supply chains, and maritime domain awareness, while indirectly addressing concerns over China's regional conduct.



The meeting demonstrated continued support for the Quad despite questions regarding its effectiveness and strategic direction. However, analysts highlighted persistent challenges related to implementation, differing national priorities, and the gap between announced initiatives and tangible outcomes.

[India, Greece are closing ranks. What their growing military ties mean for the region | TRT News](#)

[Iran's Araghchi, Russia's Lavrov to be in Delhi for BRICS huddle | Indian Express](#)

[NATO moves toward inviting Indo-Pacific partners to July summit | United Cultures](#)

[Romania says Russian drone hit apartment block, NATO vows to defend alliance territory | Reuters](#)



### **BRICS Under Stress? India's Leads Amid Goeconomic Flux**

The Gulf conflict has exposed the challenges facing an expanded BRICS, highlighting divisions among members with differing security interests and geopolitical alignments. While strategic consensus remains difficult, the crisis has reinforced the importance of practical economic cooperation.

As BRICS Chair in 2026, India has prioritised resilience, sustainability, and economic security through initiatives



on payment connectivity, supply chains, energy, food, and trade. The article argues that BRICS' future relevance will depend on its ability to mitigate economic disruptions rather than achieve political unity.

- [UAE leaves OPEC: What UAE's exit means for oil prices and India](#) | DTE
- [Uzbekistan, Japan's Sojitz discuss implementation of major infrastructure, energy projects](#) | Trend News
- [Xi and Putin wrap up talks in Beijing with no final details on gas pipeline](#) | BBC
- [Iran is considering taxing users of undersea cables in the Strait of Hormuz](#) | Le Monde



### **India-Canada Trade Mission Gains Momentum**

Canadian Minister of International Trade Maninder Sidhu hosted Indian Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and a high-level Indian trade delegation to advance bilateral economic cooperation. Discussions focused on trade, investment, and progress towards concluding the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) by the end of 2026.

Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to doubling bilateral trade by 2030, while expanding cooperation across energy, critical minerals, digital technologies, agri-food, and education sectors.



[Why Does Okinawa Have So Many US Military Bases?](#) | The Diplomat

### **CUTS EVENT**

[Advancing Australia-India Defence Industrial Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific](#)

The image shows a Zoom meeting interface. The main area displays a grid of video thumbnails for participants. The thumbnails are arranged in a 2x3 grid. The top row shows: Anjali Shekhawat, Mr. Chris Mills, and Capt. Sarabjeet S Parmar / CDR. The bottom row shows: Amreet Shah, Gen. Abhay Dayal, and SUNIL VYAS. A large white name bar at the bottom of the grid displays 'MRIDVI TALWAR' and 'Ms Vandana Sha...'. On the right side, there is a participant list with names and icons, including: CLTS International (Host, me), Anjali Shekhawat (Co-host), Gen. Abhay Dayal (Co-host), Amreet Shah (Co-host), Ashutosh Shukla (Co-host), Capt. Sarabjeet S Parmar CDR (Co-host), Mr. Chris Mills (Co-host), Ms Vandana Sharma (Co-host), Dalbir Ahlawat, Divyansh Gaba, Kannan Rajaratham, MRIDVI TALWAR, Ranjeet Sinha, Sourav Singh, and SUNIL VYAS. The interface also includes a search bar for participants and a 'You can release your video order here' notification.