



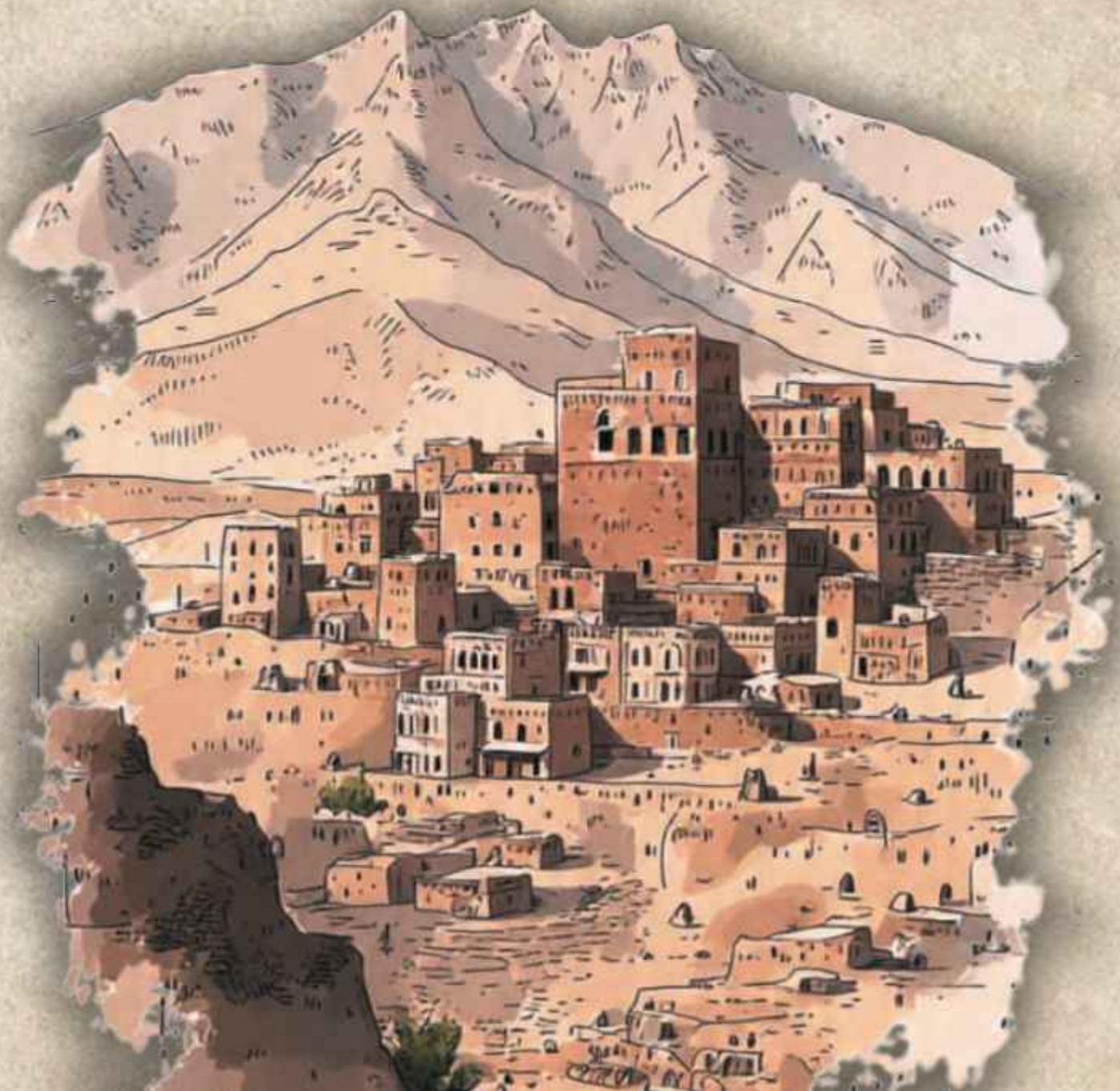
**Red Lantern
ANALYTICA**

THE VISHWA MITRA DILEMMA:

**HOW INDIA NAVIGATES THE FAULT LINES
OF EURASIAN CONFLICTS**

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NEW DELHI — *"The international system established after World War II was largely shaped by the West, for the West, and from the West... Expecting the geopolitical order of 1945 or 1989 to remain unchanged forever is unrealistic."*

The sentiment is confirmed ; at the Raisina Dialogue 2026, Jaishankar said: "When we look back at these 70 years, the expectation that we can freeze a 1945 or a 1989 forever was a very unrealistic one." However, the specific phrasing "shaped by the West, for the West, and from the West" does not appear in any verified transcript. The article presents this as a direct quote (in quotation marks), but it appears to be a paraphrase or composite of Jaishankar's broader views, not his exact words. This is a significant journalistic problem ; attributed quotes in quotation marks must be verbatim

Dr. S. Jaishankar, India's External Affairs Minister, was defining rather than merely observing a change in global politics when he made this direct observation during the Raisina Dialogue in March 2026. The message was very clear: the days of a few powerful countries controlling international policy are ended. The world has become a multipolar, highly fractured place where middle powers are increasingly determining their own fates.

This shift explains why the vocabulary of Indian foreign policy has evolved. The assertive, top-down concept of Vishwaguru (the world's teacher) has been replaced by a more collaborative, realistic anchor: Vishwa Mitra (the world's friend). **OVERSIMPLIFICATION.** The Vishwaguru framing has not been formally abandoned or "replaced." It remains in official use in some contexts (including in PM Modi's own speeches). The shift the article describes is a real rhetorical evolution in emphasis, but calling it a clean replacement is an overstatement. Prolly the author's interpretive framing. While this terminology signals a desire to act as an empathetic, stabilising bridge, the ground reality has forced New Delhi to confront the structural limits of universal friendship.

Across the volatile fault lines of Eurasia—from the battlefields of Ukraine to the compounding crises in West Asia—India's strategic space is shrinking. The challenge is no longer just about maintaining a polite distance from global rivalries; it is about managing a transactional international environment where choosing a side is constantly demanded, and remaining neutral carries its own distinct costs.

THE EURASIAN FAULT LINE: KEEPING THE WEST AND MOSCOW IN CHECK


The ongoing crisis between Russia and Ukraine continues to be the major stage of this diplomatic tightrope walk. India's relationship with Moscow has been viewed as a tried-and-true geopolitical and defense alliance for many years.

India pursued a course of purposeful ambiguity when the war started, consistently abstaining from UN resolutions denouncing the Kremlin. In order to meet its internal energy demands and protect its rapidly expanding economy from global inflationary shocks, New Delhi quickly increased its economic engagement rather than cutting relations, absorbing massive supplies of cheap Russian crude oil. Bilateral trade targets between the two nations have surged toward an ambitious goal of \$100 billion by 2030, reinforced by expanded cooperation in nuclear energy and the maritime operationalisation of the Chennai-Vladivostok eastern corridor.

However, this economic lifeline to Moscow has caused severe tension with Western allies, especially the US. Washington has continuously put pressure on New Delhi on its ongoing engagement with Russia via the extremely transactional lens of global alignment. Changes in US trade policy, such as reciprocal taxes on important Indian export industries like textiles and engineering goods, have exacerbated this pressure and put bilateral confidence at risk.

India's response has been an exercise in multi-alignment, which is the process of forming separate, parallel alliances based only on national interests relevant to a certain issue rather than inflexible ideological blocs.

- **Dialogue and Engagement:** Prominent diplomatic trips to Moscow and Kyiv highlight a concerted effort to present India as a reliable, impartial mediator.



- The Quad vs. BRICS: In order to counter Chinese assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific, New Delhi continues to strike a balance between its participation in the expanded BRICS and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) forums and its membership in the Western-facing Quadrilateral Security Dialogue.


- The West Asian Fracture: Energy, Expats, and Broken Corridors

India's economic and human security are immediately at risk due to the unstable West Asian architecture, even if Eastern Europe represents a diplomatic challenge. This was emphasized in March 2026 when Dr. Jaishankar told the Indian Parliament on the dramatic intensification of the regional issue, reminding them that West Asia is essentially India's neighboring region with a \$200 billion yearly trade footprint.

The modern approach used by New Delhi in this area is largely based on what policymakers call the "Four Es":

- Energy Security: Maintaining steady crude and gas flows from the Gulf.
- Expats: Protecting the livelihoods and safety of nearly 10 million non-resident Indians who live and work in the Gulf nations. SLIGHTLY OVERSTATED. Estimates put the Indian migrant population in West Asia at 8 to 9 million, with the Gulf Cooperation Council hosting about 8.5 million according to India's Ministry of External Affairs. India's own MEA spokesperson in March 2026 referred to "almost one crore" (10 million) Indian citizens in the Gulf region. So "nearly 10 million" is consistent with official Indian government language, but independent data sources put it at 8.5–9 million. The figure is defensible but leans toward the top of the range.
- Economic Engagement: Expanding trade through comprehensive economic partnership agreements, particularly with the UAE.
- Evolution of Corridors: Building structural transit networks to connect South Asia with Europe.

These calculations have been seriously upset by the escalation of regional confrontations involving Iran, Israel, and other non-state entities. The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), a massive infrastructure project introduced during the 2023 G20 Summit, has been the most notable victim of this uncertainty. IMEC was intended to be a multimodal network of ship-to-rail transit that would cut transit times to Europe by 40%, avoid conventional maritime chokepoints like the Suez Canal, and act as a strategic counterweight to China's Belt and Road Initiative



The network would span India, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Israel, and Greece. *PARTIALLY INCORRECT*. Greece is not a signatory country of IMEC. The core signatories are India, the US, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Jordan, France, Germany, Italy, and the European Union. Greece was discussed as a potential European entry point but is not named in the MOU. Should have said "Europe" or named a correct country (France, Italy, or the EU)

However, the development of this corridor has been halted by the local environment. IMEC's overland execution has been virtually halted by the ongoing regional war because its viability is essentially dependent on the normalization of diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Israel.

Global shipping lines have been compelled to detour around the Cape of Good Hope due to marine security risks in the Red Sea, which has increased freight prices and lengthened supply chains for Indian exporters. The prospect of secondary Western sanctions on companies doing business with Tehran continues to cast a shadow over India's strategic investments in Iran's Chabahar Port on its western frontier. TWO ISSUES:

1. Geographic error: Chabahar Port is on Iran's southeastern coast (in Sistan-Baluchestan province on the Gulf of Oman), not its "western frontier." This is a factual geography mistake.
2. The sanctions concern is real and well-documented. India signed a landmark 10-year contract with Iran in May 2024, but the Trump administration revoked India's sanctions waiver in September 2025, leaving the project's future uncertain. So the substance is correct, but "western frontier" is geographically wrong

These investments are meant to open a direct commercial gateway to landlocked Central Asia and Afghanistan while avoiding Pakistan.

THE CALCULUS OF STRATEGIC AUTONOMY:

Prioritizing Realism Over Rhetoric India's foreign policy establishment has learned a valuable lesson from the escalating crises in Eurasia: great rhetorical announcements, warm public embraces, and performative diplomacy have rigid limits when faced with genuine geopolitical conflict.



During a diplomatic briefing in May 2026, Dr. Jaishankar pointed out that rather than anticipating broad international agreements, tackling contemporary global difficulties necessitates creating "trusted and transparent partnerships". India has had to firmly anchor its Vishwa Mitra strategy in cold, realpolitik calculation in order to endure this period of profound disintegration. New Delhi's actions show a resolute reluctance to compromise its sovereign defense choices, energy security, or domestic growth in order to appease foreign powers' geopolitical interests.

This stance is a deliberate attempt to maintain strategic autonomy rather than an emotional desire to maintain neutrality. Indian strategists understand that India's northern security matrix along the Line of

Actual Control (LAC) would be considerably worsened by a totally isolated Russia, which would unavoidably slip deeper into a client-state relationship with China. New Delhi stops a hostile, unipolar Eurasian bloc led by Beijing from completely consolidating by maintaining open channels of communication and trade with Moscow.

However, India acknowledges that its long-term marine, technological, and economic interests are closely linked to those of the West. For crucial technology, high-value investment, and defense modernization, the United States, France, and the larger European Union continue to be essential partners.

CONCLUSION: THE PATH FORWARD FOR THE GLOBAL FRIEND

India cannot afford to withdraw into passive isolation or adopt a defensive narrative of global victimization as the geopolitical landscape of Eurasia continues to change. The world has become increasingly transactional, and there is less room for friendship among all people.

India's capacity to turn its issue-based multi-alignment into real diplomatic benefits will determine the Vishwa Mitra framework's actual success. India's leadership stated at the end of the 2026 spring diplomatic sessions that the country's own strengths, economic resiliency, and technological advancements—rather than the deeds or errors of foreign powers—must define the course of India's ascent. India's trip along the fault lines of Eurasia demonstrates that being a "global friend" takes considerably less romanticism and far more smart, resilient statecraft in an era characterized by shattered international institutions and precarious ceasefires.

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<https://doi.org/10.1080/14799855.2026.2629248>



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