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STUDIES

GL/27/24

# STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS IN A PERIOD OF GLOBAL POWER TRANSITION

BY

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ORGANISED BY CENJOWS  
03RD OCTOBER 2024

**STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS IN A PERIOD OF GLOBAL POWER TRANSITION**  
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**OP JINDAL GLOBAL UNIVERSITY**  
**ORGANISED BY CENJOWS ON 3 OCTOBER 2024**

Prof Sreeram Chaulia, delivered a talk titled "Strategic Partnerships in a Period of Global Power Transition." His discussion revolved around the importance of strategic partnerships in determining India's future trajectory in international affairs. Prof Chaulia examined India's significant bilateral strategic partnerships with Japan, Australia, the US, Russia, France, Israel, and the UAE, confining the central argument that India's position as a rising power in today's transitory global order shapes its approach to these partnerships. In a world characterized by turmoil and uncertainty, India is positioning itself as a credible leader and partner, capable of forging meaningful alliances across the globe.

Prof Chaulia began by mentioning that the Post-Cold War Era has ended and this period is witnessing a transition of global power. Historically, such transitions have seen shifts from one dominant hegemon to another, with significant implications for international politics. He referenced the power transition theory, which traditionally focuses on competition between the first and the second global power. However, today's reality presents a more complex picture, with six to seven major powers contending for influence. This multipolarity has introduced a new configuration of strategic partnerships and alliances across the world. As a fast growing economy, India has assumed an important role for navigating the global power shifts of this era.

A key difference according to Prof Chaulia is between 'alliances' and 'strategic partnerships'. While alliances imply formal, binding agreements; strategic partnerships are more fluid, reflecting shared interests rather than rigid commitments. This distinction becomes crucial during periods of power transition, as the nature and scope of

partnerships may shift. This raises a question of – when global powers transition, what happens to these strategic partnerships? The answer lies in the adaptability of such relationships, where counterbalancing elements emerge, shaping the evolution of these partnerships.

He further explored the contemporary US approach to global challenges, which has shifted towards not just building connectivity with partners but also enhancing military coordination. Accordingly, India's approach to strategic partnerships factors the global configuration of power. Historically, India was considered a middle power, especially in the 1940s and within groupings like BRICS. However, today, India has transcended this label and is establishing new partnerships, including with countries like Poland and Greece, to reflect its growing status.

This has changed the depth and character of India's partnerships. Military and economic collaborations are more comprehensive, reflecting the geopolitical contestation in the Indo-Pacific region (IOR). Prof Chaulia noted that India must continuously reconfigure its relationships with old partners to adapt to the shifting global landscape to ensure its interests.

The talk touched on the question of whether multilateralism is a path to great power status. While middle powers often lean on multilateralism as a cornerstone of their foreign policy, India's ascent may require a more nuanced approach, combining both bilateral and multilateral engagements. Finally, Prof Chaulia discussed China's growing influence in the Middle East and how India is responding through initiatives like I2U2 and IMEC. He concluded by questioning the utility of strategic partnerships and emphasized that they should be based on rational calculations rather than emotional affiliations.