

Report

Panel Discussion: “Geopolitical Churning, Technological Disruptions and Modern Warfare: Navigating Conflict, Strategic Autonomy and India’s Readiness in an Uncertain Age”

Dr. Ambedkar International Centre (DAIC), in collaboration with the World Intellectual Foundation (WIF), organized a panel discussion on “Geopolitical Churning, Technological Disruptions and Modern Warfare: Navigating Conflict, Strategic Autonomy and India’s Readiness in an Uncertain Age” on Tuesday, 16th September at Samrasta Hall, DAIC.

The event featured an eminent panel of speakers like Lt. Gen. Raj Shukla, PVSM, YSM, SM (Retd.), Member UPSC, Amb. Anil Trigunayat, IFS (Retd.), Lt. Gen. Devendra Pratap Pandey, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd.) and Sandeep Unnithan, Senior Journalist who shared diverse perspectives on global power shifts, technological disruptions in warfare, and India’s strategic imperatives. The panel discussion was moderated by Col. Akash Patil, Director, DAIC. The discussion offered rich perspectives on the rapidly evolving global order, the transformative role of technology in warfare, and India’s imperative to balance strategic autonomy with preparedness in an increasingly uncertain world.

Lt. Gen. Raj Shukla, in his address, emphasized the enduring relevance of Chanakya’s wisdom “If you forget shastra, you lose culture; if you abandon shastra, you lose the nation” to highlight the link between knowledge, security, and sovereignty. He highlighted Operation Sindoor as a positive development but cautioned that it also marks the onset of multiple crises, conflicts, and confrontations, noting that these challenges are being deliberated upon in the ongoing Combined Commanders’ Conference. He noted how technology has become a decisive factor in geopolitics and national security, citing examples from the Ukraine conflict where innovations such as drones with camera-chip navigation countered GPS jamming, AI, and data engineers were embedded in infantry battalions to enhance combat effectiveness. He also underlined the role of rapid adaptation through 3D printing, such as modifying rocket motors, to gain operational advantages. Placing these lessons in India’s context, he reflected on the challenges posed by China, the necessity of preserving strategic autonomy in a multipolar world, and India’s pragmatic policy of “multi-alignment.”

Ambassador Anil Trigunayat emphasized that India’s foreign policy is anchored in strategic autonomy, carefully balancing relations with major powers such as the US, Russia, and China, while avoiding entanglement in the US-China rivalry. He highlighted India’s approach of multi-alignment, engaging simultaneously with diverse platforms like the Quad, SCO, etc., to safeguard its interests amid

shifting geopolitics. For India to emerge as a global comprehensive power, he stressed the importance of a strong but defensive military, a resilient economy capable of withstanding unilateral sanctions, social cohesion, and smart diplomacy. In this context, India continues to balance ties with Russia and the West despite tensions over Ukraine, while leveraging bilateral trade agreements and economic diplomacy to strengthen its geoeconomics position.

Lt. Gen. D P Pandey underlined that pride in your country's culture and history is fundamental to national security, preventing both external manipulation and internal fractures. Linking the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 with Surakshit Bharat, he stressed that technology acts as the vital bridge between development and security. He emphasized that national security today is a shared responsibility of every citizen, not just leaders or the military, and called for stronger institutional support such as a dedicated national security academy, industry participation, and business investment in defence. Highlighting the changed nature of warfare, which now extends far beyond traditional frontlines, he noted that while technologies, countries, and global organizations evolve, Bharat's geographical reality remains constant. Yet, shrinking borders and challenges from neighbours like Pakistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Nepal, along with the growing influence of external ideologies from China, Russia, the West, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the Vatican, pose risks, particularly as many youths are drawn abroad and shaped by external moorings. In this context, he underscored the importance of developing a common national character and pride, especially as technology, information flows, and social media sharpen awareness of internal challenges.

Sandeep Unnithan traced the evolution of the Russia-Ukraine conflict over three and a half years, noting how drones increasingly shaped the battlefield, with 2024 marking a turning point as they began replacing traditional platforms like aircraft, artillery, tanks, and infantry. He highlighted Russia's use of nearly 800 kamikaze drones, particularly the "Geran Two," a variant of Iran's Shahed-136, originally inspired by West Germany's Dornier anti-radiation drone concept of the 1990s. The Shahed-136 exemplifies how drones are versatile, low-cost, and effective are transforming warfare across artillery, air defense, and long-range bombing roles. He connected this to regional dynamics, pointing out how drone strikes forced the entire Pakistan Air Force to withdraw to depth bases, disrupting its nuclear delivery capabilities by grounding aircraft carrying air-launched nuclear bombs and restricting the movement of TELs (Transporter Erector Launchers) without air cover. In response, during Operation Sindoor, Pakistan reached out diplomatically to the White House, underscoring the significant psychological impact the operation had on its military establishment.

The panel discussion concluded with an engaging question-and-answer session, where participants sought deeper insights into the themes of technology,

geopolitics and national security. The interactive exchange enriched the discussion, bringing diverse perspectives and practical reflections to the fore.

The discussion drew a vibrant and engaged audience comprising university students, professors, academicians, UPSC aspirants, and policy enthusiasts, creating a dynamic platform for the exchange of ideas between practitioners, scholars, and future leaders.

PHOTO GALLERY









