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# Foreign Policy Survey 2025

## YOUNG INDIA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

Harsh V. Pant | Nilanjan Ghosh | Sayantan Haldar  
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YOUNG INDIA AND  
THE MIDDLE EAST

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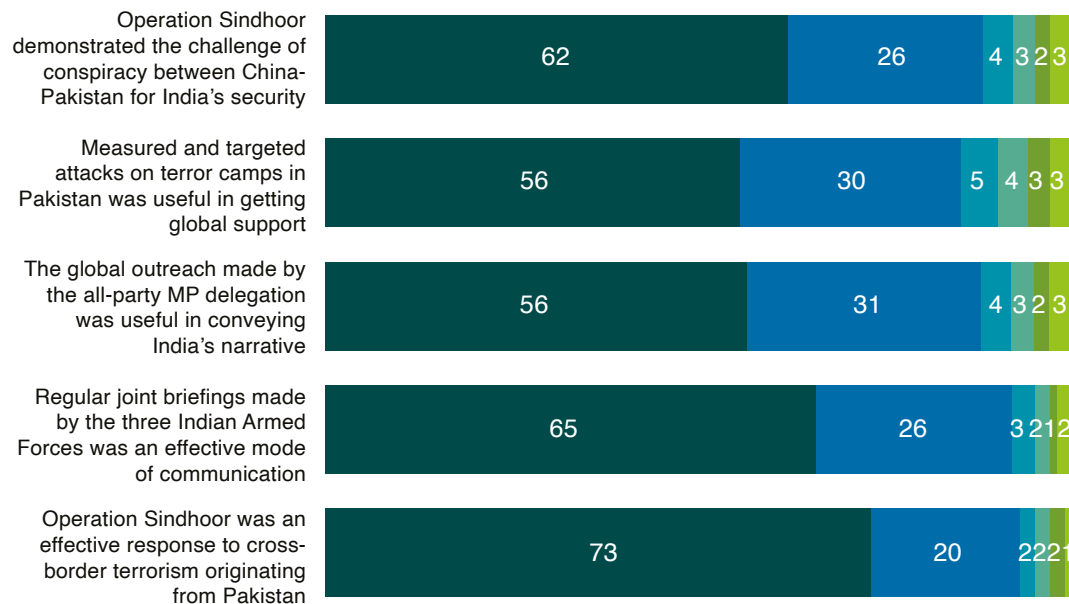
# Preface

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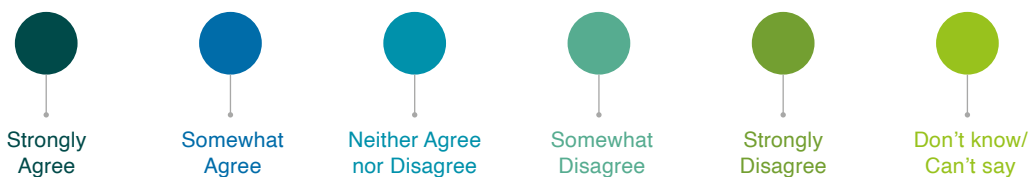
**W**orld orders do not collapse. They transition. And the transition underway today is demanding a clarity of purpose—and the courage to act on it—that the existing architecture of global leadership has consistently failed to provide. India enters this moment not as a bystander but as a protagonist scripting its own terms as it moves towards becoming a ten-trillion-dollar economy, the third largest in the world.

The year 2025 has been consequential. India confronted cross-border terrorism with a decisiveness that marked a generational shift in its security calculus. Operation Sindoor, launched in the aftermath of the Pahalgam attack in April, did not merely respond to provocation. It redrew India's red lines. The findings of this survey reflect strong public endorsement for that action, for the diplomatic outreach that followed, and for India's broader posture towards Pakistan.

### To what extent do you agree with the following statements on Operation Sindhoor? (Single response per option)



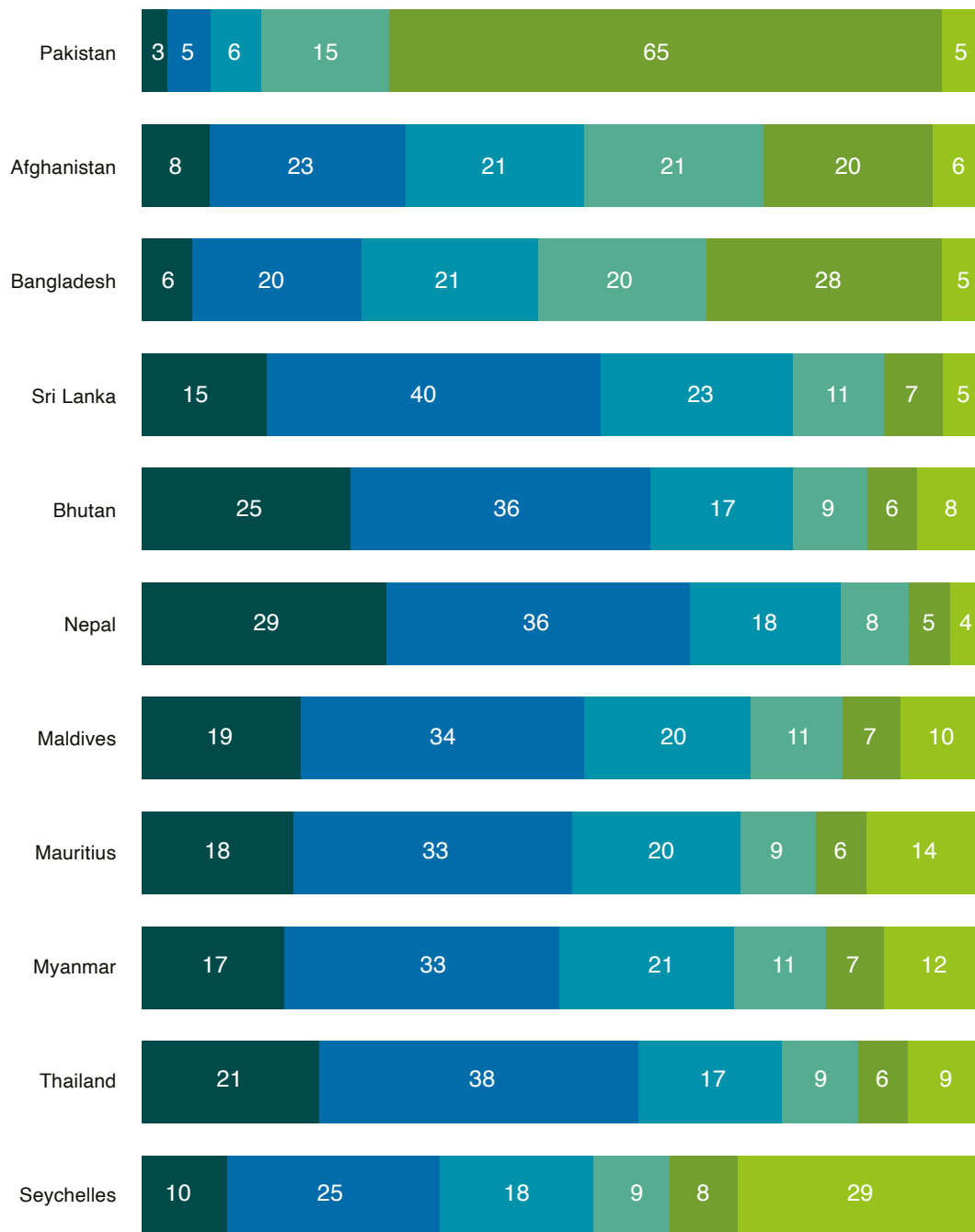
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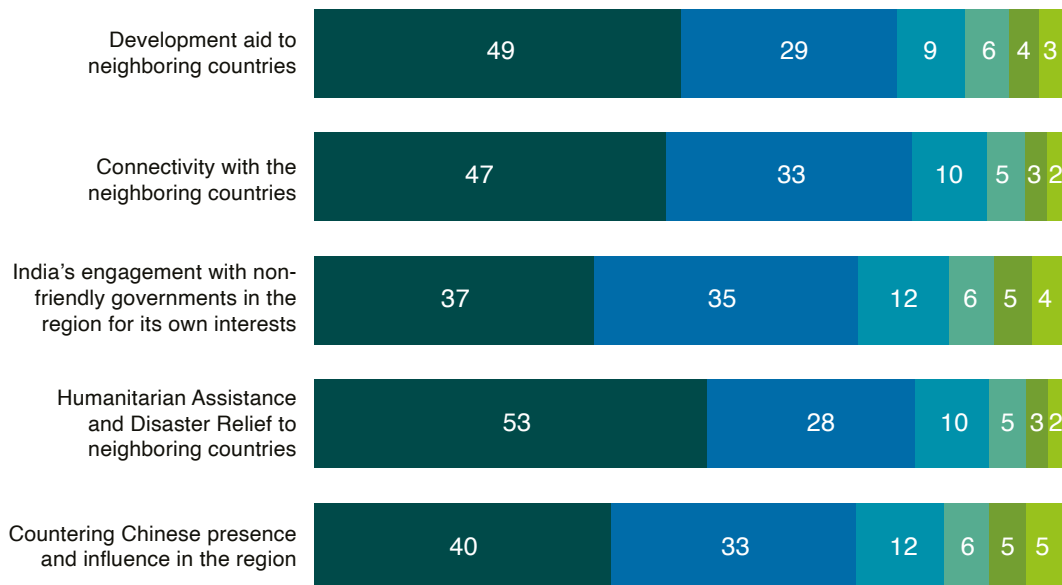
Beyond security, the survey captures something equally important: how India's urban youth read the world. They are broadly optimistic about India's neighbourhood relationships, particularly with Nepal, Bhutan, and Thailand. They recognise India's role as a first responder in the region. They see connectivity not as

charity but as strategy. And they remain committed to multilateralism, even as they acknowledge its imperfections, supporting India's permanent membership in the UN Security Council while simultaneously endorsing plurilateral frameworks such as BRICS and the SCO.

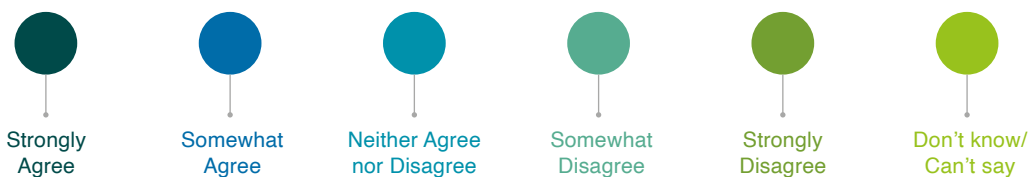
**How do you assess the status of India’s bilateral relationship with each of the following neighbouring countries? (Single response per option)**



### What is the most successful component of India’s “Neighborhood First” policy? (Single response per option)



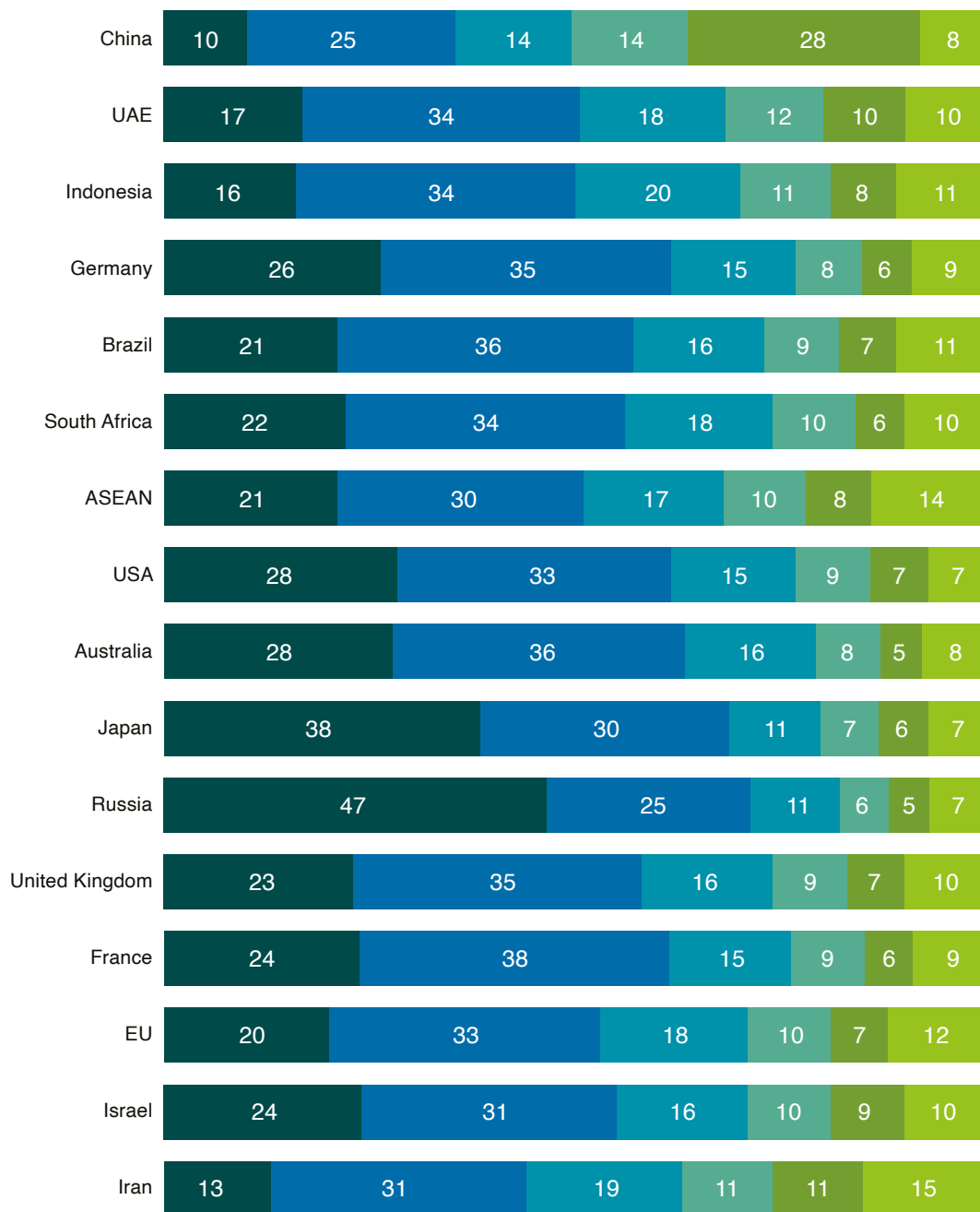
8



Trust, however, is being redistributed. Russia and Japan register as India’s most trusted partners in this edition. The United States has seen a decline, a signal worth taking seriously given the

consistent contradictions emanating from Washington. This is not sentimentality—it is a structural reading by a generation that is watching and drawing conclusions.

**In the next ten years, how likely are each of the following countries/ groupings to become India’s leading partners? (Single response per option)**



Very Likely



Somewhat Likely



Neither Likely nor Unlikely



Somewhat Unlikely



Very Unlikely

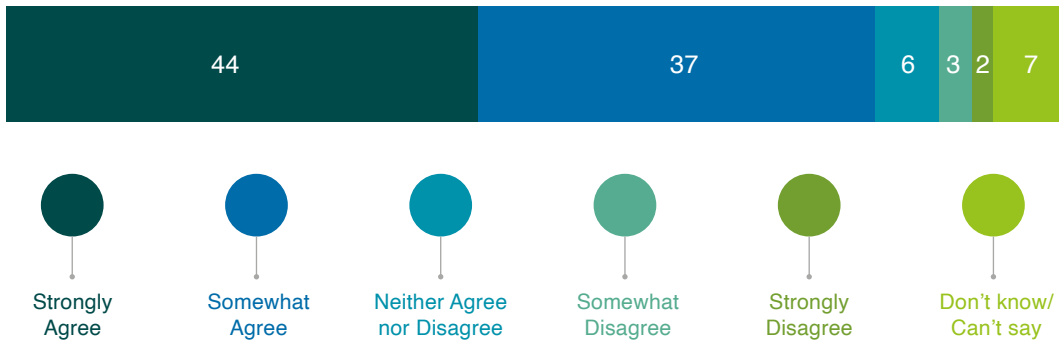


Don't know/Can't Say

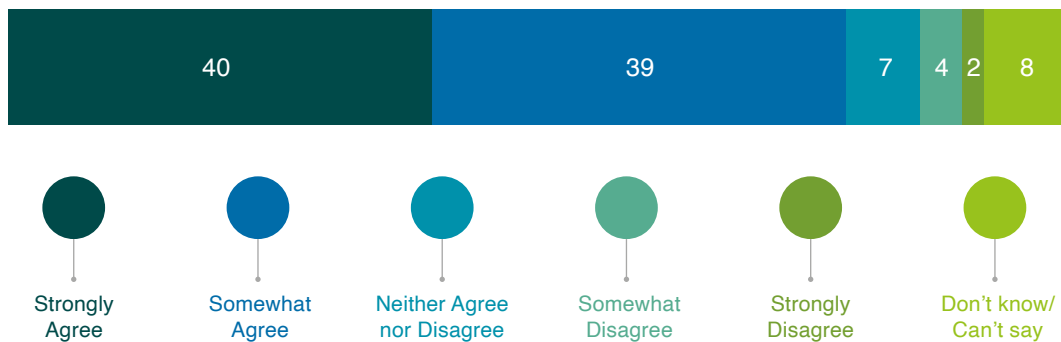
The Middle East has emerged as one of the most significant geographies in India's growth story. What Dr. S. Jaishankar has called India's "extended neighborhood" is now a pivot for economic transformation, technological collaboration, and shared security interests. The growing eminence of the Indian diaspora in the region

reinforces what policy has been building: a relationship defined by mutual interest and deepening interdependence. The India-UAE partnership, in particular, commands exceptional levels of support among young Indians, with the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement seen as its most successful expression.

**Do you agree that the Indian diaspora will make a significant contribution to the growth of the Middle East? (Single response)**



**Will the India-Middle East trade cooperation rewrite economic partnerships of the next decade? (Single response)**



Optimism around Free Trade Agreements remains high, and the recently concluded agreements with the United Kingdom and the European Union have added momentum to the belief that India's trade architecture can be redesigned in service of its ten-trillion-dollar ambition.

It is worth noting that this survey predates the current hostilities in the Middle East. That makes it a cleaner lens, one that captures baseline perceptions before the noise of crisis intervenes.

Taken together, the consecutive editions of this survey since 2021 offer something rare: a longitudinal read of how young

India's strategic thought is evolving in real time, carried forward by a generation that will inherit a volatile, dynamic, and structurally fragile international system. Their perceptions are not peripheral data. They are the early indicators of where Indian foreign policy will travel next. That is what makes this exercise worth doing, and worth reading carefully.

**Dr Samir Saran**  
**President, ORF**  
**May 2026**

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# Key Findings

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1

**Support for India's foreign policy remains high.** Eighty-six percent of respondents hold a positive perception of India's foreign policy. Overall support has remained consistently high across all five iterations of ORF's Foreign Policy Survey so far.

2

**India's urban youth remain committed to multilateralism despite strains in the global order.** Seventy-eight percent of respondents view the United Nations as an effective and efficient platform for managing global crises. While 44 percent of respondents believe that cooperation through multilateral institutions should remain India's preferred mode of engagement over other formats, 92 percent support India's bid to secure a permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council.

3

**Bilateral economic cooperation with the UAE guarantees growth and prosperity for India.** Seventy-six percent of the respondents are of the view that continued bilateral economic cooperation with the UAE will remain essential to India's growth story.

4

**Russia and Japan are deemed India's most trusted partners amidst declining support for the United States (US).** India's urban youth are most satisfied with India's bilateral ties with Russia (72 percent) and Japan (69 percent) and believe that both will remain India's leading partners over the next decade. Support for the US has dropped from 83 percent in 2024 to 56 percent in 2025.

5

**Cross-border terrorism and border conflicts with China and Pakistan are viewed as India's biggest challenges.** Ninety-two percent of respondents name cross-border terrorism as India's biggest foreign policy challenge, followed by border conflicts with China (89 percent) and with Pakistan (88 percent).

6

**There is strong urban youth backing for Operation Sindoor and India's Pakistan policy.** Ninety-three percent of respondents agree that Operation Sindoor was an effective response to cross-border terrorism originating from Pakistan. Seventy-eight percent support India's decision to keep the Indus Water Treaty (IWT) in abeyance.

7

**Border infrastructure and enhanced troop deployment has furthered India's regional security goals.** Eighty-one percent of respondents support these activities in the region, followed by support for counter-terrorism initiatives (80 percent), nuclear deterrence (79 percent), maritime exercises and joint patrolling (77 percent), and developing security and defence infrastructure in neighbouring countries (74 percent).

14

8

**Concerns over China's activities in the neighbourhood persist.** As in the previous year, Chinese ownership of the Hambantota port in Sri Lanka remains a major concern (71 percent). Other sources of apprehension are Bhutan-China border talks (69 percent) and the docking of Chinese spy vessels and submarines in Sri Lanka and the Maldives (69 percent).

9

**Urban youth have little trust in Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan.** Among India's neighbours, respondents trust Nepal the most (66 percent), followed by Bhutan (62 percent) and Thailand (59 percent). Trust for Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan remains the lowest.

10

**HADR and connectivity fuel the success of India's Neighbourhood First Policy.** Respondents name India's role as a first responder in the provision of HADR (81 percent) as the most successful component of the 'Neighbourhood First' policy, followed by connectivity with neighbouring countries (80 percent).

11

**India's involvement in the Middle East is viewed positively.** Eighty-five percent of India's urban youth trust the IMEC to become the future of connectivity efforts in the Middle East. Eighty percent of respondents consider I2U2 as essential to fostering cooperation efforts in the Middle East.

12

**The Middle East is seen as a new hub of economic growth and technological innovation.** Seventy-seven percent of respondents view financial capitals in the Middle East as emerging centres of global economic growth and technological innovation.

13

**India-Middle East partnership is expected to reshape trade and energy cooperation.** Seventy-nine percent of respondents agree that India-Middle East trade cooperation will redefine economic partnerships in the coming decade, while 82 percent expect the relationship to shape the future of energy cooperation.

14

**The Indian diaspora is a key architect of growth in the Middle East.** Eighty-one percent of respondents consider the Indian diaspora as essential to economic progress and prosperity in the region.

15

**US tariff policies under Trump are seen as a sign of economic decline.** Seventy-five percent of respondents agree that the Trump administration's use of trade tariffs signals a decline in the US's global economic standing.

16

**BRICS is an alternative to the West-led global system.** Seventy-three percent of respondents see the potential of BRICS as a credible alternative to the West-led global order.

17

**FTAs will pave the way for India's US\$10-trillion economy.** Eighty-one percent of respondents agree that FTAs are important for India to realise its ambitions of growing into a US\$10-trillion economy.

# Results of the PROBIT Model

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- 1** | **There was a strong baseline consensus across almost all the core issues.** The high values of the intercepts obtained from the PROBIT models indicate broad approval of India's foreign policy and strong consensus on security-related questions, including perceptions of China–Pakistan collusion and Operation Sindoor.
- 2** | **The respondents' geographic location emerged as the most consistent differentiator.** Geographic location emerged as the most significant variable explaining perceptions on foreign policy approval, security responses, multilateralism, and US economic power.
- 3** | **The consumption of news has influenced respondents' institutional and economic views.** Following foreign policy or international news significantly increased approval of India's foreign policy and optimism about multilateral engagement, trade, and energy cooperation. However, its impact on core security threat perceptions was limited.

4

**Income and occupation were important determinants of economic optimism.** Perceptions regarding Middle East economic hubs and trade cooperation were significantly conditioned by income and occupational status, with middle-income groups and economically active respondents displaying differentiated optimism.

5

**Demographics played a limited role in explaining responses.** Age and education did not emerge as statistically significant explanatory variables in most models, suggesting that foreign policy attitudes in 2025 were broadly common across social groups, while the divergences in responses were largely explained by location and information.

# 1.

## Introduction

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**T**he global order today is marked by uncertainty. With active conflicts persisting across various strategic theatres, the steady weaponisation of trade and economic interdependence by the US, and the seeming overall collapse of the West-led rules-based order, global stakeholders are increasingly confronted with complex choices to navigate the current world order to uphold their interests and pursue their compulsions.

At a time when uncertainty defines the current global order, the Middle East has

emerged as a complex geography. While global attention remains focused on the region's protracted conflicts and intra- and inter-regional wars, it is also making rapid strides in advancing geo-economic, technological, energy, and environmental cooperation. The Middle East has emerged as an important hub of technological innovation, including Artificial Intelligence and Automated Systems, supported by sustained investments in research and development. Cities in the Middle East serve as key nodes in global trade and connectivity architectures. Following the success of COP28 in 2023,<sup>1</sup> the

United Arab Emirates and several other countries in the region are taking the lead in fostering cooperation for a just green transition and advancing broader climate and environmental initiatives.

Over the past decade, India-Middle East ties have grown at an unprecedented pace, driven in large part by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's efforts to place the region at the centre of India's foreign policy calculus. While India's ties with the Middle East have a historical context of ancient trade routes and cultural commonalities, over the last decade the region has emerged as a key area of priority for India. Three critical long-standing interests appear to be driving India's focus on the Middle East: energy imports from the region; remittances generated by the vast Indian diaspora; and expanding security partnership, particularly in defence procurement and intelligence cooperation.<sup>2</sup>

Building on this momentum, 2025 was an active period for India-Middle East ties. In 2025, Prime Minister Modi visited three countries in the region, including Saudi Arabia,<sup>3</sup> Oman, and Jordan.<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, New Delhi hosted the Amir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani, in February 2025.

As India charts its path towards becoming the world's third-largest economy, partnerships with the Middle East are likely to remain a cornerstone of its growth strategy. India's embeddedness in the region is marked by its interest in the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), conceptualised during India's G20 presidency, and the I2U2 (India-Israel-UAE-USA) grouping. Market complementarities between India and Middle Eastern economic hubs continue to shape the trajectory of India's economic growth. The India-United Arab Emirates Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement signed in 2023, along with the India-Oman Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement concluded in December 2025, signals New Delhi's growing emphasis on strengthening trade ties with the region. Taken together, these developments suggest that the India-Middle East trade partnership could reshape economic alignments in the coming decade.

1 Manann Donoghoe et al., "The successes and failures of COP28," The Brookings Institution, December 14, 2023, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-successes-and-failures-of-cop28/>

2 Dhruva Jaishankar, *Vishwa Shastra: India and the World* (New Delhi: Penguin Random House India, 2024), pp. 279-280.

3 Elizabeth Roche, "Modi's Saudi Arabia Visit Sets Tone For Long-term Engagement," *The Diplomat*, April 28, 2025, <https://thediplomat.com/2025/04/modis-saudi-arabia-visit-sets-tone-for-long-term-engagement/>

4 "Visit of Prime Minister to Jordan, Ethiopia, and Oman (December 15 - 18, 2025)," Ministry of External Affairs of India, December 11, 2025, [https://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/40443/Visit\\_of\\_Prime\\_Minister\\_to\\_Jordan\\_Ethiopia\\_and\\_Oman\\_December\\_15\\_\\_18\\_2025](https://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/40443/Visit_of_Prime_Minister_to_Jordan_Ethiopia_and_Oman_December_15__18_2025)

India remains committed to enduring peace in the region to facilitate a stable order in the Middle East. Its balanced, multi-stakeholder engagement has paved the way to ensure New Delhi's diplomatic ties with the region remain uninterrupted. This, in many ways, has evolved as a critical currency to play a larger role in facilitating dialogue among stakeholders. What Prime Minister Modi said about how this is “not an era of war” encapsulates New Delhi's active diplomatic engagement with the region. As the crisis in the Middle East remains vulnerable to negatively impacting global de-nuclearisation efforts, New Delhi's approach of active diplomacy is likely to augur well to usher in stability in the region.

In the aftermath of Operation Sindoor, India exerted effort to garner global support and solidarity, as well as raise awareness about the long arc of cross-border terrorism emanating from Pakistan, impinging on India's national security. The Middle East was a vital geography in India's outreach, with three separate delegations of Members of Parliament visiting various countries across the region.<sup>5</sup>

Public support remains essential to the credibility and sustainability of foreign policy choices. As India continues to engage the Middle East across the vast spectrum of shared opportunities that

presents itself, this volume, *ORF Foreign Policy Survey 2025: Young India and the Middle East*, assesses how India's urban youth view the country's diplomatic, economic, and security partnerships with the region. This edition of ORF's annual Foreign Policy Survey builds on the findings of the previous iterations (2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024) and delineates how India's urban youth view the country's foreign policy choices and its engagements with the Middle East, the evolving world order, and its neighbours.

Given the respondents' overwhelming support for the UAE as a critical economic and strategic partner, this report offers a special section, 'India-UAE Spotlight', on the various aspects of India-UAE relations. The respondents are of the view that economic partnership with the UAE will be a pillar of India's growth and prosperity. Furthermore, policy frameworks such as the India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, which seek to consolidate such complementarities are favoured as the most consequential dimension of the burgeoning bilateral relations between the two countries.

Global geopolitics is undergoing a churn today amidst the war in the Middle East which, along with the subsequent strain in the global energy market, has demonstrated how countries that may not be directly involved in the conflict

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5 “India's Global Outreach on Operation Sindoor: Full List of Delegation Members and Destinations,” *The Hindu*, May 22, 2025, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-diplomatic-push-operation-sindoor-delegation-leaders-countries-mission-details/article69590359.ece>

are left vulnerable to the fallout. The disruptions in the global energy market pose detrimental cascading effects on various other sectors, carrying long-term consequences. Indeed, India's youth, the leading stakeholders in India's economy in the coming years, must remain cautious of the trajectory of this conflict. (This survey, however, does not capture the opinions of India's urban youth about the specific conflict that broke out on 28 February 2026 as the survey was concluded in 2025.)

### 1.1 Context and Rationale for the Poll

Since 2021, ORF's Foreign Policy Surveys have sought to map urban youth perceptions of India's foreign policy, its relations with other countries and regions, and its responses to regional and global crises. The inaugural edition, conducted against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, examined shifts in the global order and India's response. It surveyed 2,037 respondents aged 18-35, was administered in eight regional languages in addition to English, and covered 14 cities.<sup>6</sup>

Subsequent editions expanded both sample size and demographic reach. The 2022 edition focused on 75 years of India's independence, covering 5,000 respondents ages 18-35 across 19 cities, with questionnaires administered in 11 languages.<sup>7</sup> The third edition examined urban youth perceptions of multilateralism and India's place in the world.<sup>8</sup> The fourth edition, released in July 2025, centred on 'Young India and the China Challenge.'<sup>9</sup> The emphasis on a particular theme, along with a consistent focus on the broader contours of India's foreign policy apparatus, has helped ascertain insights into how India chooses to engage with the world. This latest edition focuses on the Middle East and explores how Indian youth perceive India's growing engagement with the region.

Over time, foreign policy has become an increasingly important factor in a country's domestic calculus, transitioning from an issue that seemed to capture the interests of only the elites to finally finding resonance with the larger public. Attempts to gauge how different groups in India see and understand India's international

6 Harsh Pant et al., *The ORF Foreign Policy Survey 2021: Young India and the World*, August 2021, Observer Research Foundation, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/the-orf-foreign-policy-survey-2021-young-india-and-the-world>

7 Harsh V Pant et al., *The ORF Foreign Policy Survey 2022: India @75 and the World*, November 2022, Observer Research Foundation, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/the-orf-foreign-policy-survey-2022>

8 Harsh V Pant et al., *The ORF Foreign Policy Survey 2023: Young India and the Multilateral World Order*, Observer Research Foundation, February 2024, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/the-orf-foreign-policy-survey-2023-young-india-and-the-multilateralworld-order>

9 Harsh V Pant et al., *The ORF Foreign Policy Survey 2024: Young India and the China Challenge*, Observer Research Foundation, July 2025, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/foreign-policy-survey-2024-young-india-and-the-china-challenge>

engagement have also increased in response to this change. While over the years, different organisations and individuals have examined Indian public opinion on foreign policy, much of this work has remained fragmented, focusing on individual issues rather than offering a holistic overview.

A survey conducted by the Brookings Institution in 2018 covered 290 respondents from India's strategic community.<sup>10</sup> In 2019, Aidan Millff, Paul Staniland, and Vipin Narang undertook an assessment of public attitudes towards India's foreign policy since the 1960s, based on data from the annual and biannual surveys conducted by the Indian Institute of Public Opinion (IIPO) between 1959 and 1988. These IIPO surveys covered 1,000 to 1,500 respondents, targeting individuals with basic literacy levels from the four metropolitan cities of Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai, and Mumbai.<sup>11</sup> In their analysis, the authors also take into account the 2006 Chicago Council Survey, which focused on US and

international public opinion on the rise of India and China, and the Gallup World Poll conducted between 2008 and 2016.<sup>12</sup> The Chicago Council survey had responses from 2,458 Indians aged eighteen and above, excluding those without formal education.

In 2009, Devesh Kapur analysed Indian public opinion on foreign policy using data from a pan-India survey conducted between 2005 and 2006, which covered 2,12,563 interviewees and examined perceptions of India's position in the world.<sup>13</sup> In 2013, the Lowy Institute and the Australia India Institute released a survey titled *India Poll*, based on a sample of 1,233 respondents.<sup>14</sup>

In August 2022, the Stimson Center released findings from 'Confidence and Nationalism in Modi's India', a telephonic survey of 7,000 Indians that assessed public attitudes towards India's international conflict scenarios. Conducted in 12 languages across 28 Indian states and union territories, the survey focused

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- 10 Dhruva Jaishankar, "Survey of India's Strategic Community," Brookings Institution, March 2019, <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Survey-of-India%E2%80%99s-StrategicCommunity.pdf>
  - 11 Aidan Milliff and Paul Staniland, "Public Opinion Toward Foreign Policy in a Developing World Democracy: Evidence from Indian Views of China," SocArXiv, March 2021.
  - 12 Marshall M. Bouton et al., "The United States and the Rise of China and India: Results of a 2006 Multination Survey of Public Opinion," The Chicago Council of Global Affairs, <https://globalaffairs.org/research/public-opinion-survey/2006-chicago-council-survey>
  - 13 Devesh Kapur, "Public Opinion and Indian Foreign Policy," *India Review* 8, no. 3 (August 13, 2009): 286–305, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14736480903116818>
  - 14 Rory Medcalf, "India Poll 2013" (Sydney, 2013), <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/india-poll-2013>

primarily on China, Pakistan, and the US.<sup>15</sup> The Bharat Pulse Survey in 2024 polled people across five categories, one of which was foreign policy.<sup>16</sup>

Some issue-specific surveys have also been conducted over the years. These include surveys following the 1991 Gulf War, the 1998 Pokhran-II nuclear tests, the 1999 Kargil war, the 2003 Iraq War, and the 2008 civil nuclear deal, alongside broader surveys assessing public opinion on foreign policy themes.<sup>17</sup> In 2019, there was a paper on the findings of a survey on the implications of counter-insurgency operations in Kashmir.<sup>18</sup>

In recent years, there have also been attempts to gauge the perceptions of the youth belonging to India's neighbouring

countries towards India as well as other countries in the region. In 2024, an ORF report, 'Young Bhutan and the World', drew insights from a survey of 115 respondents from Bhutan (who were then pursuing higher education) which asked questions about how they perceive India's role in their country.<sup>19</sup> In 2024, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace also conducted the second edition of a nationally representative online survey of 1,206 Indian-American adults. It had 100 questions covering different aspects of India-US ties.<sup>20</sup> The Pew Research Center conducted a survey between January and April 2025 to gauge how respondents from 24 countries view India.<sup>21</sup> It also conducted a survey in 2023 among 2,611 Indian adults to see how Indians view the leadership of the

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15 Christopher Clary, Sameer Lalwani, Niloufer Siddiqui, and Neelanjan Sircar, "Confidence and Nationalism in Modi's India," Stimson Center, August 2022, <https://www.stimson.org/2022/confidence-and-nationalism-in-modis-india/>

16 Bharat Pulse Survey Results, NewsX Live, <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLDPE5u-MQ9P45jltJ4zyl7tJfSPJpjh-y>

17 Shivaji Kumar, "India's Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: A View from New Delhi," *India Review* 17, no. 4 (August 8, 2018): 353–71, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14736489.2018.1510158>.

18 Gautam Nair and Nicholas Sambanis, "Violence Exposure and Ethnic Identification: Evidence from Kashmir," *International Organization* 73, no. 2 (2019): 329–63.

19 Aditya Gowdara Shivamurthy, *Young Bhutan and the World*, Observer Research Foundation, February 2025, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/young-bhutan-and-the-world-a-preliminary-survey-of-perceptions-on-foreign-policy>

20 Sumitra Badrinathan, Devesh Kapur, and Milan Vaishnav, "Indian Americans at the Ballot Box: Results from the 2024 Indian American Attitudes Survey," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 2024, <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/10/indian-american-voters-election-survey-us?lang=en>

21 Sneha Gubbala, Andrew Prozorvosky, "How people in 24 countries view India," Pew Research Center, August 2025, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2025/08/13/how-people-in-24-countries-view-india/>

prime minister as well as India's influence on, and relations with other countries.<sup>22</sup> The Takshashila Institution released their first Pulse of the People: State of India-China Relations Survey Report in 2024, which had 11 questions about India and China and received responses from 655 individuals between the 16-86 age group.<sup>23</sup>

The limitations related to some of these surveys include the size of the sample, the demographic chosen, as well as the concentration of responses among only literate, urban individuals. While ORF's Foreign Policy Survey is also limited to perspectives from the urban youth, it attempts a more encompassing view of India's foreign policy, targeting a demographic that constitutes over 26 percent of the country's population.

By examining perceptions of India's foreign policy trajectory, its relations with other countries, and its standing in its neighbourhood—alongside a focused assessment of New Delhi's growing partnership with the Middle East—this present survey provides insights into how young Indians expect India to navigate its external engagements. Responses were analysed across multiple parameters like

age, employment, gender, occupation, geography, income, and familiarity with the news.

## 1.2 Sample Design and Description

The 2025 edition of the Foreign Policy Survey is driven by the central question of how India's urban youth perceive the country's engagements with the Middle East. It highlights young Indians' perspectives on the nation's global engagement, with a particular focus on the Middle East, and on India's expanding socio-political and economic footprints globally. Conducted by Impetus Research, the survey collected national-level data from a representative sample of 5,058 respondents ages 18-35 across 19 Indian cities. The survey was conducted between 8 October and 26 November 2025. A structured questionnaire was administered in 11 languages (Assamese, Bangla, Gujarati, Kannada, Marathi, Odia, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu, Hindi, and English).

The sample was drawn using a stratified, multi-stage cluster sampling approach. As Census data do not provide population figures for the 18-35 age cohort, the sample frame and state-wise sample

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22 Pew Research Center, "Views of India Lean Positive Across 23 Countries," Pew Research Center, August 29, 2023,

<https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2023/08/29/views-of-india-lean-positive-across-23-countries/>

23 Anushka Saxena, Manoj Kewalramani, and Amit Kumar, "Pulse of the People: State of India-China Relations," December 2024, The Takshashila Institution, <https://takshashila.org.in/content/publications/20241217-pulse-of-the-people.html>

size for this group were estimated using linear interpolation based on data from the *Report of the Technical Group on Population Projections* (November 2019) by the National Commission on Population, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, drawing on the estimated 2018 population derived from the 2011 Census.

Fieldwork was conducted through face-to-face interviews using internet-enabled tablets, ensuring real-time data capture and enhancing response accuracy. Only individuals from urban households were included in the study, maintaining the focus on the urban youth demographic. The survey was programmed to function offline in low-connectivity environments and to synchronise the results in real time when cellular or Wi-Fi networks became available. Additionally, every interviewer

was provided with a unique user ID to access the programmed survey. For the 'India-UAE Spotlight' questions, 530 respondents from 11 cities were surveyed between the 18-35 age group.

Table 1 presents the sample composition by region. The gender composition of the sample was 55.75 percent (2,820) male and 44.24 percent (2,238) female. To ensure heterogeneity in responses, data were collected by considering various socio-economic characteristics, including income brackets, education qualifications, employment status, and regional representation. The survey included respondents from diverse educational, occupational, and income backgrounds. Detailed breakdowns are provided in Tables 2, 3, and 4.

**Table 1: Sample Composition, By Region**

Region	No. of Respondents	Percentage
North	1,544	30.53
South	1,047	20.70
East	1,347	26.63
West	1,120	22.14
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,058</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 2: Sample Composition, By Education**

Education Degree	No. of Respondents	Percentage
No formal education	64	1.26
Upto class 10th	1,041	20.58
Upto class 12th	1,374	27.16
Undergraduate degree or equivalent	585	11.56
University graduate	1,509	29.83
Postgraduate degree/Professional or Higher	472	9.33
Doctorate or equivalent	7	0.13
Declined to specify	6	0.11
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,058</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 3: Sample Composition, by Occupation**

Occupation	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Self-employed Professional	325	6.42
Businessman/Trader	480	9.48
Government Sector Employee	81	1.60
Private Sector Employee	1,229	24.29
Skilled Worker	391	7.73
Unskilled Worker	105	2.07
Housewife	1,144	22.61
Unemployed – Seeking Employment	220	4.34
Student	1,063	21.01
Retired	0	0
Declined to specify	20	0.39
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,058</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 4: Sample Composition, By Income**

Income	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Below INR 30,000 per month	2,347	46.4
INR 30,001–60,000	1,538	30.41
INR 60,001–90,000	447	8.83
INR 90,001–120,000	148	2.93
INR 120,001–150,000	66	1.3
Above INR 150,000 per month	71	1.4
Don't Know/ Can't Say	297	5.87
Declined to specify	144	2.85
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,058</b>	<b>100</b>

### 1.3 Methodology

The methodology was two-pronged. In the first stage, the report addressed questions relevant to the report's central concern, presenting the frequency distribution of the surveyed respondents' perceptions of critical questions related to India's foreign policy and its relations with countries in the Middle East. In the second stage, econometric analyses—mostly probit models—were employed to examine

relationships between respondents' perceptions and their socio-economic and demographic characteristics. This provided deeper insights into the spatial (across regions) and vertical (education and income) classification of the various responses and explained whether perceptions were determined by socio-economic and regional characteristics.

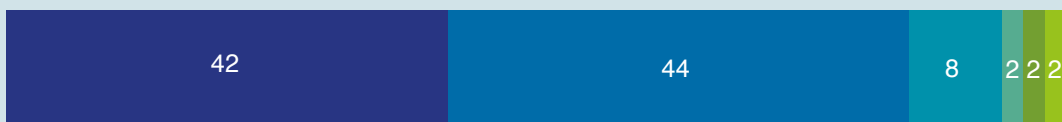
# 2.

## India's Foreign Policy

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2.1

How would you rate India for its foreign policy on an overall basis? (Single response)



Very Good



Good



Neutral



Poor



Very Poor



Don't Know/  
Can't Say

***India's urban youth continue to support India's foreign policy.***

Eighty-six percent of the respondents rated India's foreign policy positively. While support has remained consistently high across all five editions of the Foreign Policy Survey, there is a marginal decline of two percentage points compared to the 2024 edition.

Across all educational groups, respondents with educational qualification of up to Class 10 showed the highest support (89 percent), whereas respondents with a doctorate degree or equivalent gave the least support (57 percent). This has thrown up a critical contrast vis-a-vis last year's findings, where the support for India's foreign policy among respondents with a doctorate degree or equivalent was the highest (100 percent).

Disaggregated by income, respondents earning above INR 150,000 per month showed the highest support (92 percent), a steep rise from last year's findings, where the percentage of respondents

in this category was 78 percent. Respondents falling within the bracket of monthly income of INR 90,001-120,000 remained relatively less at 80 percent.

Among the various age groups, support for India's foreign policy remains the highest for respondents within the age bracket of 31-35 years (90 percent).

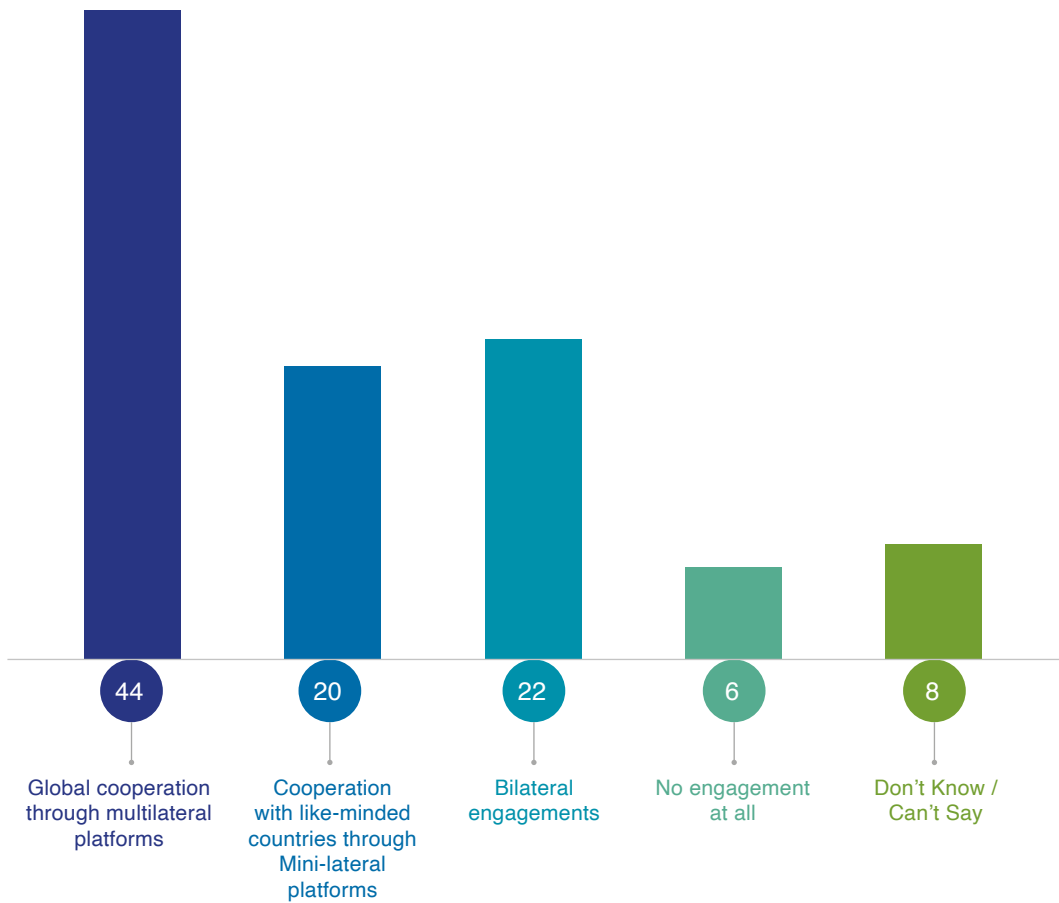
Building on last year's results, this year's survey also found marginally greater support for India's foreign policy among women (87 percent), whereas 84 percent of male respondents supported India's overall foreign policy.

Respondents from Kolkata and Mumbai rated India's foreign policy the highest, with both at 97 percent. Support continues to remain significantly high across all regions of India (76-90 percent).

Gender and consumption of news had no impact on the responses.

2.2

In your opinion, what should India's preferred mode of engagement with other countries be? (Single response)



### ***India's urban youth prefer engagement through multilateral platforms.***

Forty-four percent of respondents favoured global cooperation through multilateral platforms as India's preferred mode of engagement with other countries. This was followed by a preference for bilateral engagement (22 percent) and cooperation through minilateral platforms (20 percent). Last year, respondents favoured minilateral cooperation over bilateral engagement.

There has been a vital continuity in the overwhelming support for multilateral platforms across previous iterations of the survey. Even though there has been a minor dip of one percentage point in the support for cooperation through multilateral platforms in this year's survey, a vast majority of the respondents continue to favour it as the preferred mode of engagement. This year, the respondents preferred the bilateral mode over minilateral, support for which dipped by 4 percentage points.

Across all educational categories, support for cooperation through multilateral platforms was the lowest among respondents with no formal education (31 percent), whereas respondents

with a doctorate degree or equivalent preferred multilateral platforms the most (86 percent).

Multilateralism as a chosen format of engagement got the highest support from the Eastern regions (48 percent). A city-wise breakdown of the data reveals that respondents from Guwahati and Raipur were most in favour of multilateralism (80 and 67 percent, respectively). Respondents from Vijayawada chose the bilateral format of engagement as their preferred mode of engagement (53 percent), over multilateralism (19 percent) and minilateralism (5 percent).

The support for cooperation through multilateralism aligns with the responses in Question 2.3, where respondents showed overwhelming support for India's bid for a permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and the optimism regarding the efficiency of the UN in managing the crises in the current world order (Question 5.1.).

Gender, income level, and occupation had no impact on the responses.

2.3

**India seeks to secure a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council. Do you personally think that this is an important goal for India? (Single response)**



***There is overwhelming support for India’s bid for a permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council.***

Support for India’s bid to secure a permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) remains high at 92 percent. Despite a minor dip from last year’s 93 percent, the overall endorsement for a seat at the UNSC as an important goal for India’s foreign policy suggests that there should be continued emphasis on India’s role in mitigating global crises in the domain of security. Indeed, India has sought to play a role in mitigating conflicts across various geographies by way of its diplomatic outreach. The high degree of support for a permanent seat at the UNSC among respondents demonstrates the keenness of India’s urban youth for institutional recognition in the multilateral system. This outcome aligns with the overall support for multilateralism as a chosen format for engagement by India (Question 2.2.).

Across all educational categories, respondents with a university degree showed the highest support for India’s

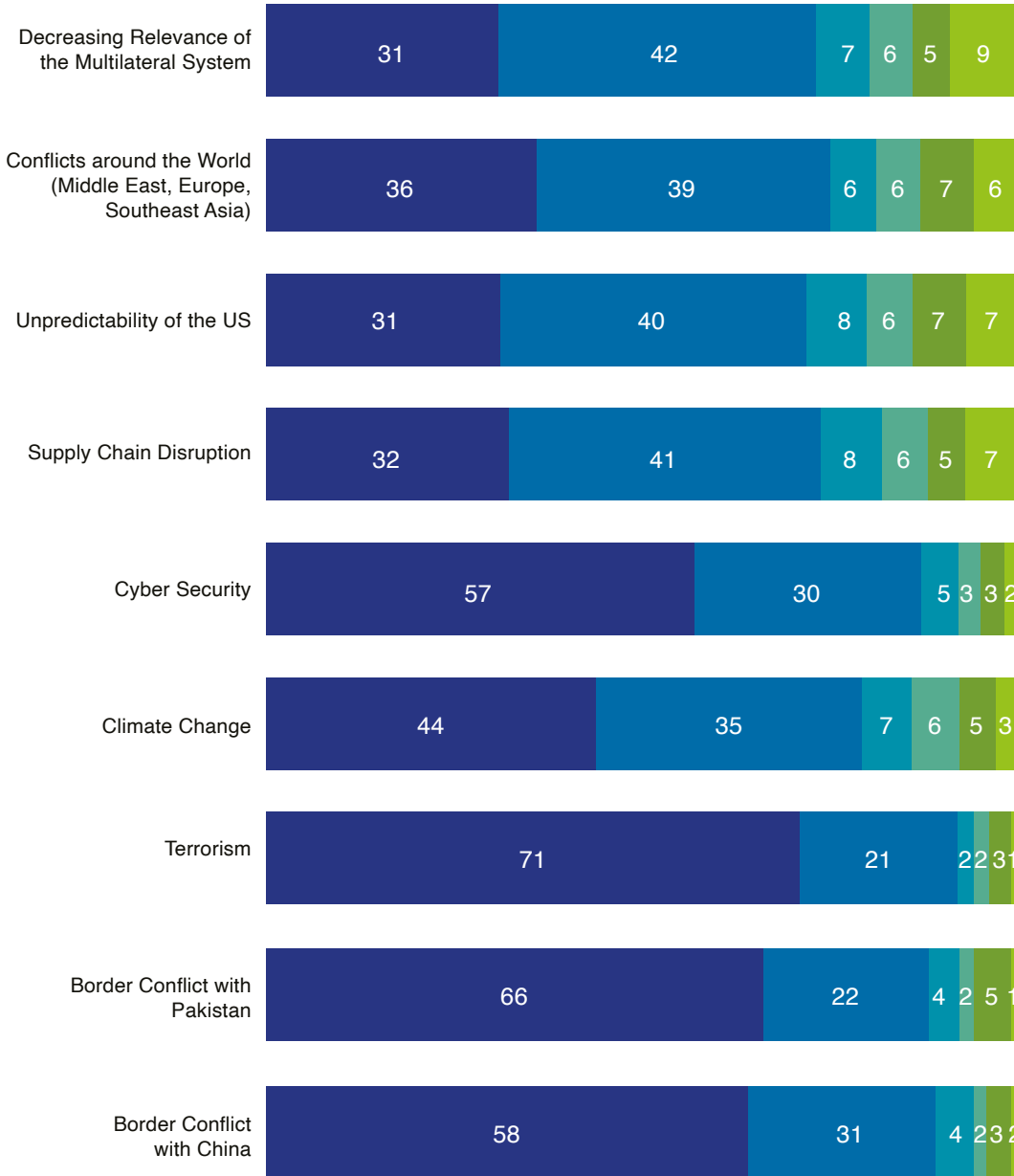
bid for a permanent seat at the UNSC (93 percent), whereas those with a doctorate degree or equivalent showed the least support (71 percent).

Respondents from the East and North showed the highest support for India’s bid for a permanent seat at the UNSC, with 94 and 93 percent, respectively.

Across all occupational categories, students showed the highest support (95 percent), followed by those involved in the business sector (93 percent). Respondents in the occupational category of unskilled workers showed the least support (77 percent). Furthermore, respondents with a monthly income between INR 30,001-60,000 showed the highest support (95 percent), whereas those with a monthly income between INR 90,001-120,000 showed the least support (87 percent).

Gender and consumption of news had no impact on the responses.

**2.4** How concerned are you about the following major foreign policy challenges confronting India? (Single response per option)



***India's urban youth consider terrorism the biggest challenge confronting India's foreign policy.***

The year 2025 marked a period of major disruptions in geopolitics, presenting several critical challenges for India's foreign policy. As India's foreign policy navigates the complex realities of the events unfolding across various geographies, the respondents considered terrorism as the biggest concern (92 percent). Given the terror attacks in Pahalgam in April 2025, much of India's urban youth continue to view terrorism as a critical challenge to India's foreign policy.

The border conflict with China, which respondents identified as the top concern in last year's survey, remains a major issue and ranks second this year (89 percent). This is followed by border conflict with Pakistan (88 percent) and cybersecurity (87 percent). Despite considerable efforts by India's foreign policy planners to stabilise relations with China, respondents' perceptions suggest persistent scepticism regarding China and the status of the border dispute. Furthermore, the question of border conflict with Pakistan continues to be a major concern. This is in alignment with Question 3.1. and 3.2., where the respondents rated India's relations

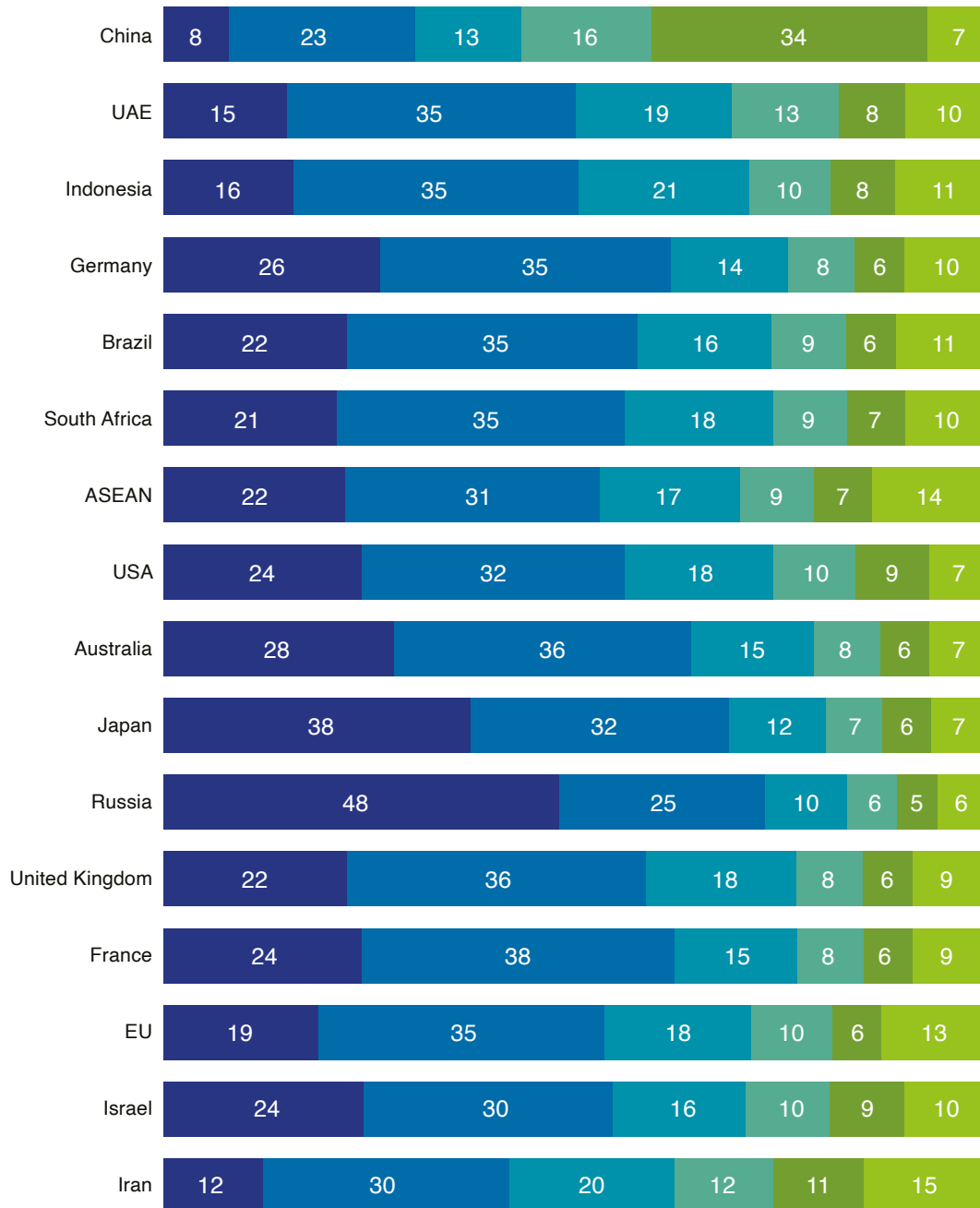
with Pakistan as the lowest in the neighbourhood (Question 3.1.), along with the least trust level in the neighbourhood (Question 3.2.). Like the previous year's survey, this survey also found border conflict with Pakistan as the third major concern in India's foreign policy. Cybersecurity has emerged as a core area of concern. This is reiterated by the respondents in Question 4.1., where there was large agreement over the notion that AI and Automated Systems appear to be shaping the future of warfare.

Geographically, respondents from the Eastern regions considered border conflicts with China and Pakistan as the biggest concerns (94 and 92 percent, respectively), whereas respondents from the Northern regions expressed the highest concern for terrorism as a challenge for India's foreign policy (95 percent). Cybersecurity was considered a major challenge by respondents from the East (92 percent), followed by those from the North (90 percent).

Gender, income, occupation, education, and consumption of news had no impact on the responses.

**2.5**

**How satisfied are you with India's bilateral relationship with the following countries/group of countries? (Single response per option)**



Very Satisfied

Somewhat Satisfied

Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied

Somewhat Unsatisfied

Very Unsatisfied

Don't Know/Can't Say

***India's urban youth are most satisfied with India's relations with Russia and Japan.***

India's foreign policy has grappled with complex relations with other countries over the past year. The responses tend to reflect the complex realities of India's foreign ties. While 86 percent of respondents in last year's survey rated India-US relations as satisfactory, this year's survey revealed a considerable dip in the extent of satisfaction with India's relations with the US (56 percent). This shift appears to be in alignment with Question 2.4., where 71 percent of the respondents rated unpredictability of the US as a major challenge to India's foreign policy. This can be attributed to the somewhat complicated trajectory of India-US ties over the past year, especially after the US claimed a role in the so-called mediation between India and Pakistan after India launched Operation Sindoor following the terror attack in Pahalgam in April 2025. The respondents rated India's relations with China the lowest (31 percent).

A large majority of the respondents considered India's ties with Russia and Japan as most satisfactory (72 and 69 percent, respectively). While satisfaction with India's bilateral ties saw varying

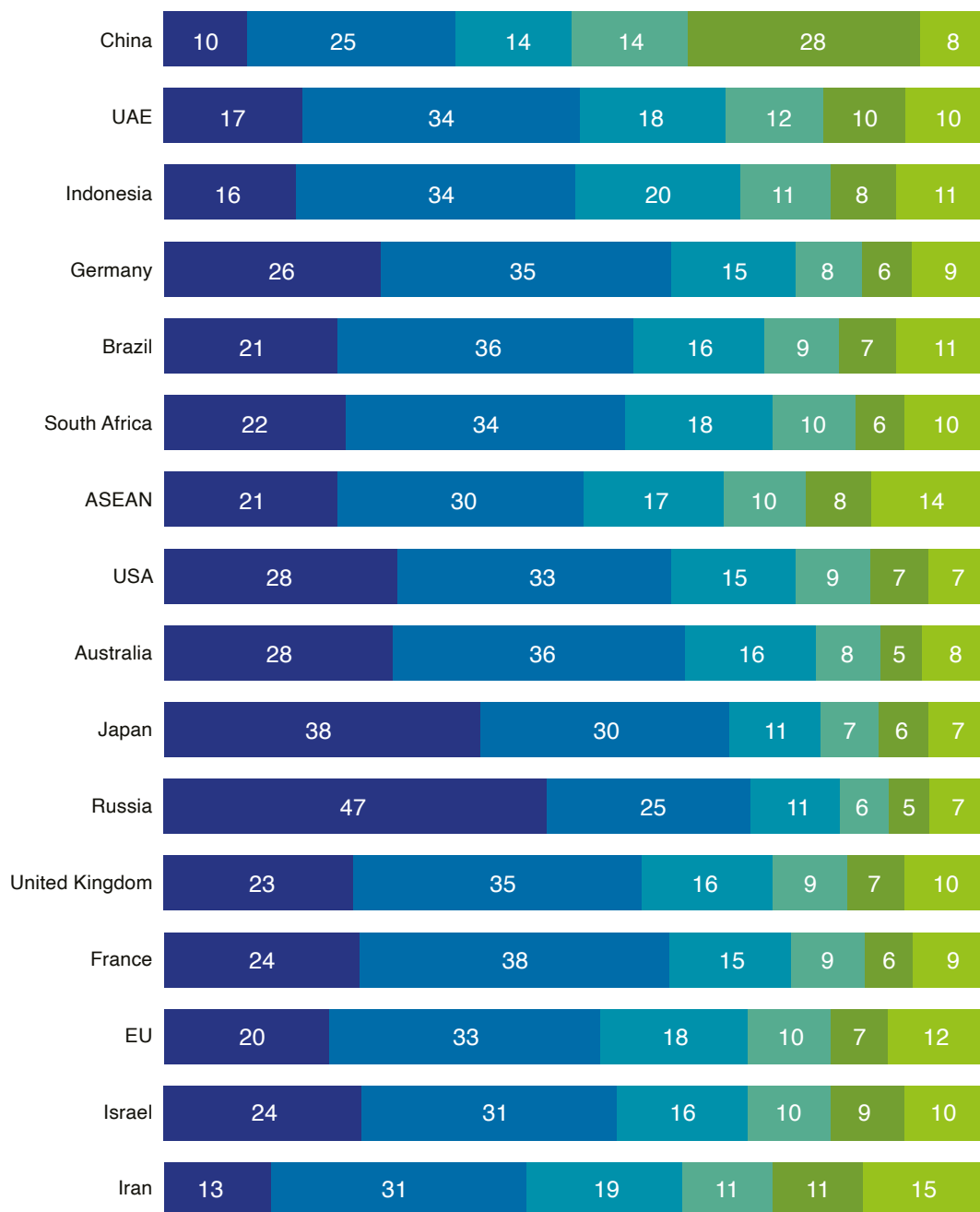
degrees of decline, India-Russia bilateral ties continue to be seen favourably by the respondents. This year, India-Russia ties were considered satisfactory by 72 percent of the respondents, almost similar to last year (73 percent).

Notably, India's relations with countries in the Middle East fared well according to this year's survey. Fifty percent of the respondents saw India-UAE relations as satisfactory, while India's relations with Israel and Iran were seen as favourable by 55 and 42 percent of the respondents, respectively.

Of the two regional multilateral groups, 53 percent of the respondents saw India-European Union ties as satisfactory, whereas 52 percent viewed India-ASEAN ties as satisfactory. The continued momentum in the degree of satisfaction with the India-EU compact is likely to galvanise further as India and the EU signed an FTA in January 2026.

Gender, income, occupation, region, age, and consumption of news had no major impact on the responses.

**2.6** In the next ten years, how likely are each of the following countries/groupings to become India's leading partners? (Single response per option)



Very Likely

Somewhat Likely

Neither Likely nor Unlikely

Somewhat Unlikely

Very Unlikely

Don't Know/Can't Say

***The country's urban youth see partnerships with Russia and Japan as the most consequential for India's foreign policy in the coming decade.***

Respondents view Russia (72 percent), Japan (69 percent), and Australia (64 percent) as the leading partners for India in the next ten years. This is in tandem with the respondents' support for the ongoing India-Russia compact, as also revealed in the survey before. Furthermore, this is in alignment with Question 2.5., where respondents expressed the highest levels of satisfaction for India's relations with Russia and Japan. Importantly, the US, which was seen as the most important partner for India for the next decade in last year's survey (87 percent), saw a considerable drop, with only 61 percent of the respondents considering it a leading partner in this year's survey.

Among Middle Eastern countries, 55 percent of the respondents identified Israel as a leading partner for India, followed by the UAE at 51 percent. Meanwhile, 44 percent of the respondents saw merit in Iran as a leading partner for India in the next ten years. This demonstrates the growing value of the Middle East and particularly of Israel and the UAE as vital partners, which will shape the curve of India's foreign policy trajectory going forward.

Support for the UAE as a leading partner for India in the coming decade was the highest among respondents from the western regions (59 percent), followed by the North (51 percent), South (48 percent), and East (45 percent). This may be attributed to the long history

of ties between the Middle East and the western region of India on account of trade, including maritime trade, and people-to-people relations.

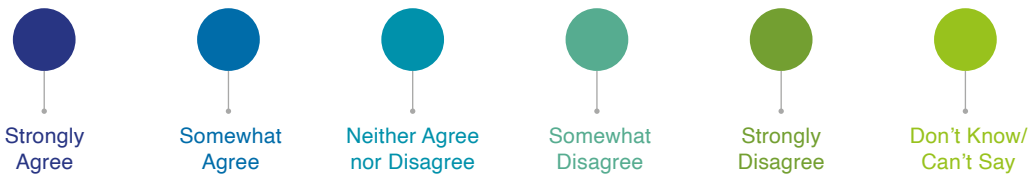
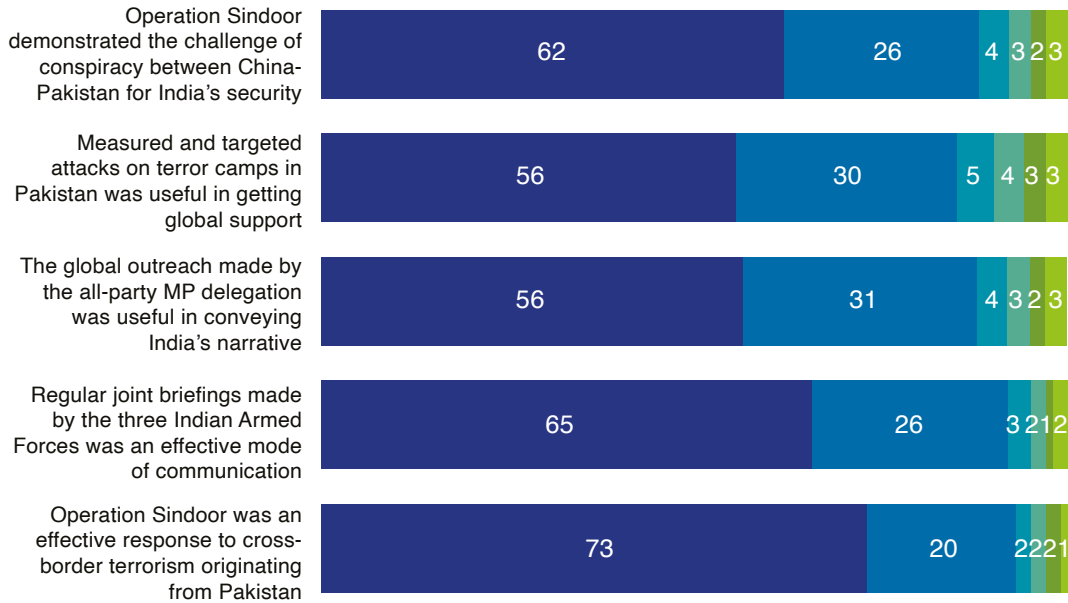
Trust in China as a potential leading partner continues to remain low in this year's survey (35 percent), despite seeing an increase from last year's survey (24 percent). This year's survey suggests that China ranks the lowest among the respondents as a leading partner for India in the coming decade. Support for China remained minimal from respondents from the East and West (both at 26 percent). The increase in percentage points, however, captures the realities of the India-China relationship. Despite ongoing differences regarding borders, trade dependencies continue between the two countries, as do the diplomatic efforts to achieve a thaw in the stalemate.

The EU and European countries too, fared well as a potential leading partner for India in the coming decade. Fifty-three percent of the respondents viewed the EU as a potential partner for India in the next ten years. Among the European countries, Germany and France received the highest support from the respondents (62 and 61 percent, respectively). The UK, with whom India recently concluded an FTA, received support from 58 percent of the respondents.

Gender, occupation, income, education, and age had no impact on the responses.

2.7

To what extent do you agree with the following statements on Operation Sindoor? (Single response per option)



***There is overwhelming support for Operation Sindoor's efficiency as an effective response to cross-border terrorism originating from Pakistan.***

Given that terrorism was viewed by the respondents in this year's survey as the biggest challenge confronting India's foreign policy (Question 2.4.), Operation Sindoor and its various facets, received vital support from the respondents.

Ninety-three percent of respondents viewed Operation Sindoor as an effective response to cross-border terrorism originating from Pakistan. A key effort made by India during the course of Operation Sindoor was directed at ensuring transparency and dissemination of information. Towards this end, regular joint briefings made by the three services of the Armed Forces were an integral strategy. Ninety-two percent of the respondents believed that these briefings were an effective mode of communication. In the aftermath of Operation Sindoor, India sent all-party delegations to various countries as an outreach effort to augment the Indian narrative against Pakistan-sponsored terrorism and India's efforts towards counterterrorism. Eighty-seven percent of the respondents believed that India's outreach by way of sending all-party delegations was useful in conveying the Indian narrative. Furthermore, 86 percent of the respondents believed that Operation Sindoor was successful in garnering global support because of the measured and targeted attacks on terror camps in Pakistan. Finally, 88 percent of the respondents agreed that Operation Sindoor demonstrated the China-Pakistan

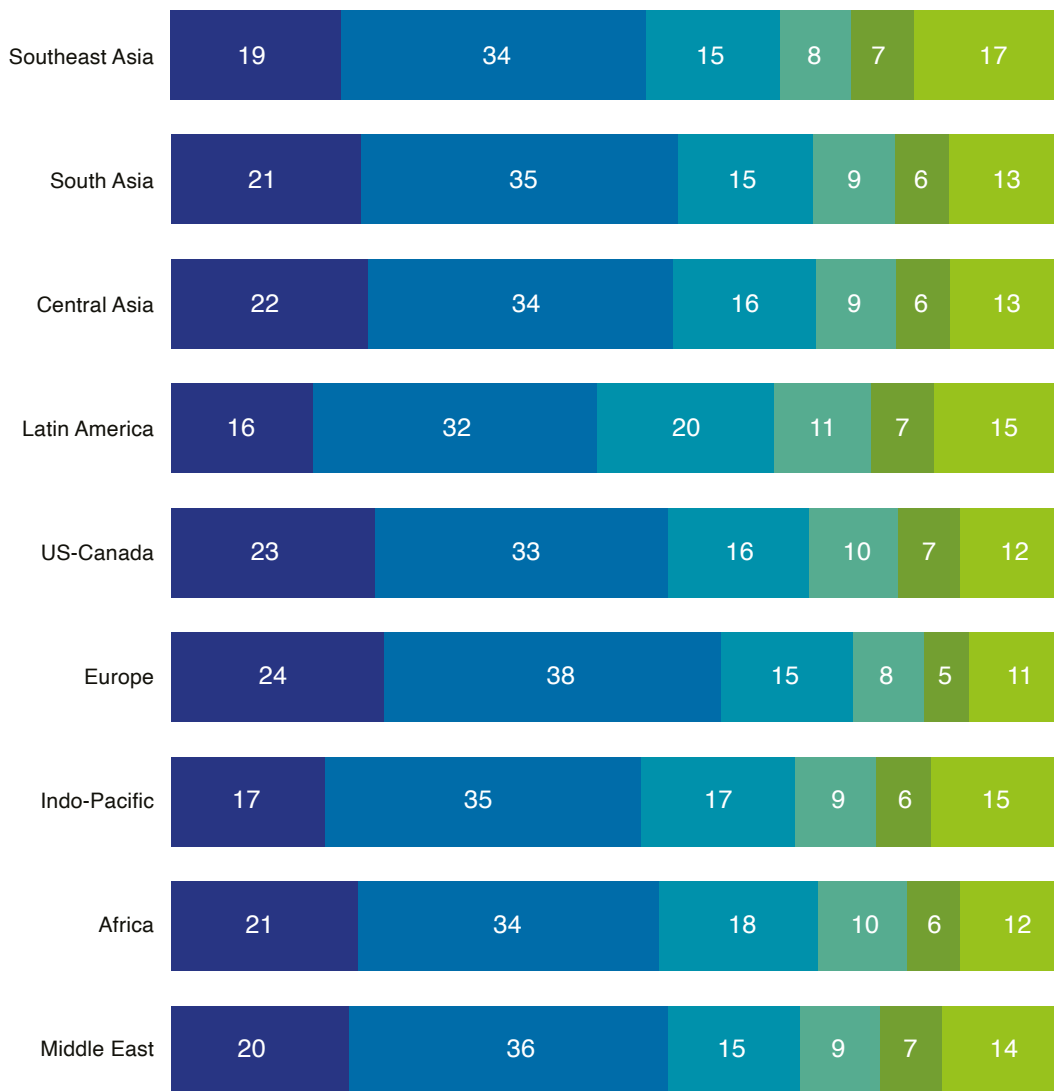
collusion as a major challenge for India's national security. Overall, there appears to be overwhelming support for Operation Sindoor and its various facets, including the post-operation global outreach.

Disaggregated by region, respondents from West and North showed the highest support for considering Operation Sindoor as an effective measure of cross-border terrorism originating from Pakistan (95 and 94 percent, respectively). Given that Pakistan shares its border with states from the north and west, the support for Operation Sindoor from these regions demonstrates its effectiveness.

A key facet of counter-terrorism efforts has been narrative dissemination and information warfare. India's efforts to maintain transparency in communication while the operation was underway were a pillar of its efforts. Respondents who consume news either daily or twice a week have endorsed the notion that regular joint briefings have indeed been an effective mode of communication (both at 94 percent). This is reflective of the global narrative regarding terrorism originating from Pakistan and India's effective response to the same.

The various aspects of Operation Sindoor received overwhelming support across all variables. Gender, age, occupation, income, and education had no impact on the responses.

**2.8** Which of the following geographies has seen an upscale in Indian Foreign Policy engagement in the last five years? (Single response per option)



***India's urban youth agree that India's relations with Europe have seen the highest upscale over the last five years.***

Expanding geographies of engagement have been a core priority for India's foreign policy for the last five years. India's outreach to new geographies has evolved in tandem with bolstering partnerships with traditional geographies. The respondents of this year's survey consider Europe (61 percent), South Asia (57 percent), and the Middle East and US-Canada (both at 56 percent) as the key geographies which have seen the highest upscale in engagement in India's foreign policy.

Since 2022, the Russia-Ukraine war has been a cornerstone of the foreign policies of European countries. India's position has remained somewhat more nuanced and contrary to the European position. Despite this divergence, the high support for Europe as a geography that has seen an upscale in India's foreign policy suggests that the depth of the India-Europe compact remains strong. Similarly, India's South Asia neighbourhood has seen a turbulent period over the last five years. With

regime changes prompted by public protests in three out of the eight South Asian countries, governments leaning towards China, and limited advancement of regional institutional multilateralism, the region continues to see high support from the respondents. This demonstrates the resilience of India's Neighbourhood First policy, the strategic framework guiding New Delhi's foreign policy in the region.

Importantly, the Middle East, too, has emerged as an important geography, which according to the respondents has seen a high degree of upscale in Indian foreign policy engagement (56 percent). Given the contested geopolitics in the region, the flexibility shown by Indian foreign policy in engaging with all stakeholders demonstrates agility and diversity in India's ties with regional stakeholders in the Middle East.

Gender, age, occupation, income, education, and region had no major impact on the responses.

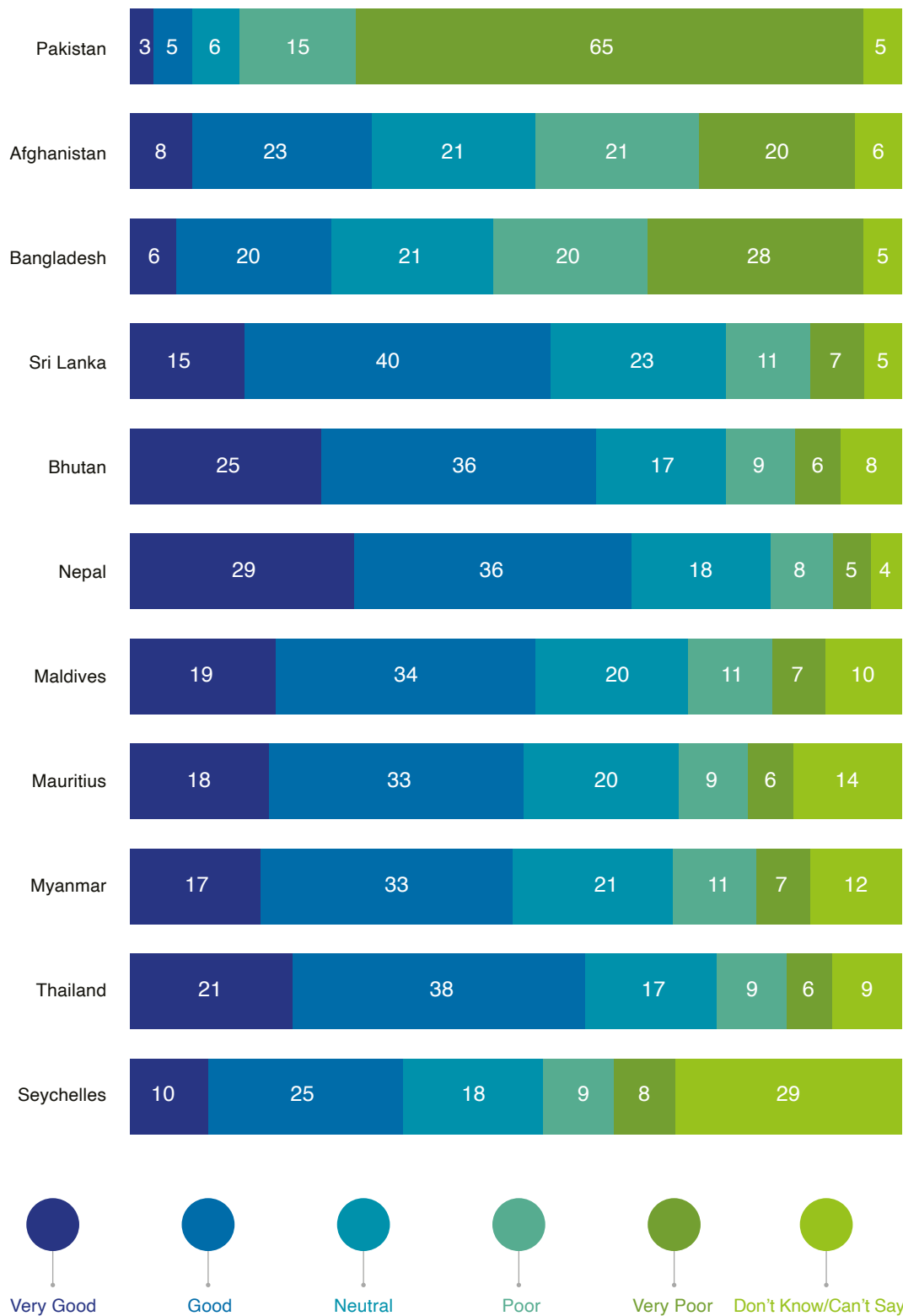
# 3.

## India and the Neighbourhood

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**3.1**

**How do you assess the status of India's bilateral relationship with each of the following neighbouring countries? (Single response per option)**



### ***India's urban youth hold positive views of most of India's neighbours.***

The current status of India's relationship with its neighbours is considered satisfactory by the country's youth. This is also reflected in the high degree of trust posed by them in the neighbours (Question 3.2). The bilateral relationship with Nepal is seen very favourably (65 percent), followed closely by Bhutan (61 percent) and Thailand (59 percent). These responses align with the level of trust shown in these neighbours in Question 3.2. Relations with Sri Lanka (59 percent), Maldives (52 percent), and Myanmar (50 percent) are also considered 'very good' and 'good'.

Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, on the other hand, have seen a higher unfavourable outlook as opposed to others. The Afghanistan-India relationship is still viewed with scepticism as the favourable responses have decreased by one percentage point (from 32 percent in the 2024 edition to 31 percent now), while the negative perception has seen a three percentage-point rise, from 39 percent in the 2024 edition to 42 percent this year. This is despite the recent improvement in ties between the Indian government and the Taliban-led regime in Afghanistan, indicating that for young urban Indians, the stability of an effective security architecture in the neighbourhood remains of paramount importance. Relations with Pakistan are also generally viewed unfavourably, with more respondents seeing the ties as 'very poor' and 'poor' (80 percent) than

'very good' and 'good' (8 percent). The favourable responses have decreased by three percentage points while the share of unfavourable responses has increased by four percentage points. The percentage of negative responses for Bangladesh has also increased while there has been a reduction in the positive perceptions. Notably, there has been a two percentage point increase in the optimism for the status of India's ties with Seychelles from the 2024 edition of the survey (2024- 33 percent; 2025- 35 percent), reflecting growing awareness about the country.

Responses across cities were varied. Respondents from Vijayawada had a negative perception of ties with most countries: Nepal (33 percent), Thailand (26 percent), Maldives (25 percent), Bhutan (23 percent), Myanmar (17 percent), and Mauritius (14 percent). Cities such as Kolkata, Ranchi, Bengaluru, Raipur, Ludhiana, Dehradun, Patna, Bhubaneswar, Faridabad, Vijayawada, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, and Mumbai had a very low positive perception about relations with Pakistan (0 to 6 percent).

For Afghanistan and Thailand, a favourable perception about the bilateral relationship increased with an increase in the level of education, from respondents with no formal education to respondents with doctorate degrees or equivalent (Afghanistan - respondents with no formal

education: 20 percent; doctorate degrees or equivalent: 43 percent. Thailand - respondents with no formal education: 42 percent; doctorate degrees or equivalent: 71 percent).

In terms of income, there was no clear relation between an increase/decrease in income levels with an increase/decrease in the level of optimism and pessimism, with only Seychelles seeing an increase in favourable responses with an increase in income levels, with 14 percent of respondents earning below INR 30,000 per month viewing the relationship as positive to 38 percent of respondents earning above INR 150,000 monthly holding the same view.

While the responses were largely unanimous across regions, there were some highlights. Respondents from the East saw ties with Bangladesh as less positive and more negative than respondents from other regions (18 percent and 61 percent, respectively).

This outcome seems to be of particular relevance given the region's (East) geographical proximity to Bangladesh.

In terms of news consumption, Bhutan and Mauritius saw a decrease in optimism with a fall in the respondents' consumption of news. For Bhutan, the percentage of favourable responses fell from 65 percent of daily news readers to 56 percent of those who read it less often, while for Mauritius, it fell from 55 percent of daily news readers to 48 percent of those who read it less often. Afghanistan and Seychelles saw an increase in an unfavourable outlook with a decrease in news consumption—Afghanistan, from 34 percent of those who read it daily to 53 percent of those who read it less often; Seychelles, from 20 percent of readers who read it daily to only 12 percent favourable response from those who read it less often.

Gender and occupation had no impact on the responses.

**3.2** For each of the following neighbouring countries, please indicate how much you trust them. (Single response per option)



***Nepal, Bhutan, and Thailand are the most trusted neighbouring countries for India's urban youth.***

India's Neighbourhood First Policy completed a decade in 2024, while being a defining element of India's outreach to its neighbours. Despite the multitude of challenges facing neighbouring countries—including endemic political and economic instability and security risks—India's urban youth continue to repose a high degree of trust in them. This aligns with the findings in Question 2.8, where engagement with South Asia was believed to have increased substantially in the last five years (57 percent). Of all the countries, Nepal enjoys the highest degree of trust (66 percent), followed by Bhutan (62 percent) and Thailand (59 percent). Sri Lanka, Maldives, Mauritius, and Myanmar also enjoy a high level of trust (58 percent, 53 percent, 51 percent, 51 percent, respectively). The predominant support for trade and economy related engagements (Question 3.5) in the neighbourhood, despite concerns about heavy Chinese presence in the region (Question 3.6), indicates that urban youth gauge the trustworthiness of neighbours independent of their relationship with other countries. A similar question was asked in the first four editions of the survey.

Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh have seen a fall in the level of trust reposed in them. Trust for Afghanistan saw a seven-percentage-point drop, from 37 percent in the 2024 edition to 30 percent this year, while distrust increased from 46 percent in 2024 to 48 percent in the 2025 edition. This is despite India's

recent re-engagement with the Taliban-led regime, aimed at safeguarding India's security interests in its neighbourhood.

Pakistan is trusted the least by the respondents (8 percent), falling by three percentage points from last year. This reflects the continued state of mistrust prevalent in the perception of India's urban youth towards Pakistan, even as India bolsters its counterterrorism strategy in the aftermath of Operation Sindoor, and the consequent crisis. The level of distrust is also at its highest this year, as compared to previous editions, reaching 83 percent, a two-percentage-point increase from last year.

Trust in some neighbours correlated with respondents' exposure to the news. Respondents with the least exposure to news also showed lower levels of trust in neighbours (4 to 58 percent), except for Nepal and Maldives, for which the least trust was shown by respondents who read the news at least once in two weeks (67 percent and 53 percent, respectively). For Seychelles, respondents who read the news daily were less trustful of the country (34 percent). Afghanistan, Bhutan, and Mauritius witnessed a fall in their level of trust with a decrease in the respondents' consumption of news (Afghanistan - 35 percent to 25 percent, Bhutan - 66 percent to 58 percent, Mauritius - 54 percent to 45 percent). For Afghanistan, the level of distrust increased with a decrease in the consumption of news, from 40 percent

trust from respondents who read the news daily to 58 percent from those who were less exposed to news.

Across all regions, while there is no extensive fluctuation in the level of trust and distrust, there were some variations. Pakistan received the least trust from the East (4 percent). This aligns with the findings in Question 2.4, where respondents from the East see border conflict with Pakistan as the biggest challenge facing the country. The West (5 percent) closely follows this. Bangladesh was considered the least trustful and the most distrustful by respondents from the East (19 percent and 65 percent, respectively), while for Sri Lanka, respondents from the North showed the least trust and the most distrust (Trust - 55 percent, Distrust - 22 percent). On the other hand, respondents from the West had the least trust for Maldives and Thailand (47 percent and 56 percent, respectively).

Across all occupational categories, government sector employees considered Afghanistan as very trustworthy (42 percent) whereas Bangladesh received the least trust (17 percent).

Broken down by educational qualifications, only Thailand showed an increase in the level of trust with an increase

in the educational qualification of the respondents, with 50 percent of respondents with no formal education and 71 percent of doctorate degree holders or equivalent trusting the country. The corresponding level of distrust also fell with an increase in the level of education, from 23 percent of respondents with no formal education to 14 percent with doctorate degrees or equivalent.

Across all age groups, trust for Nepal decreased with an increase in age group, from 68 percent of respondents in the 18-21 bracket to 65 percent in the 31-35 group deeming the country trustworthy. On the other hand, for Maldives, distrust fell with an increase in age, from 19 percent in the 18-21 age group to 18 percent in the 31-35 bracket.

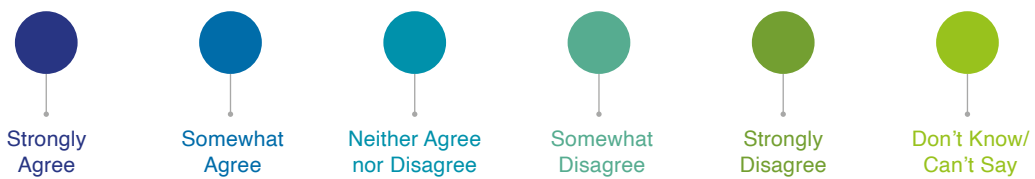
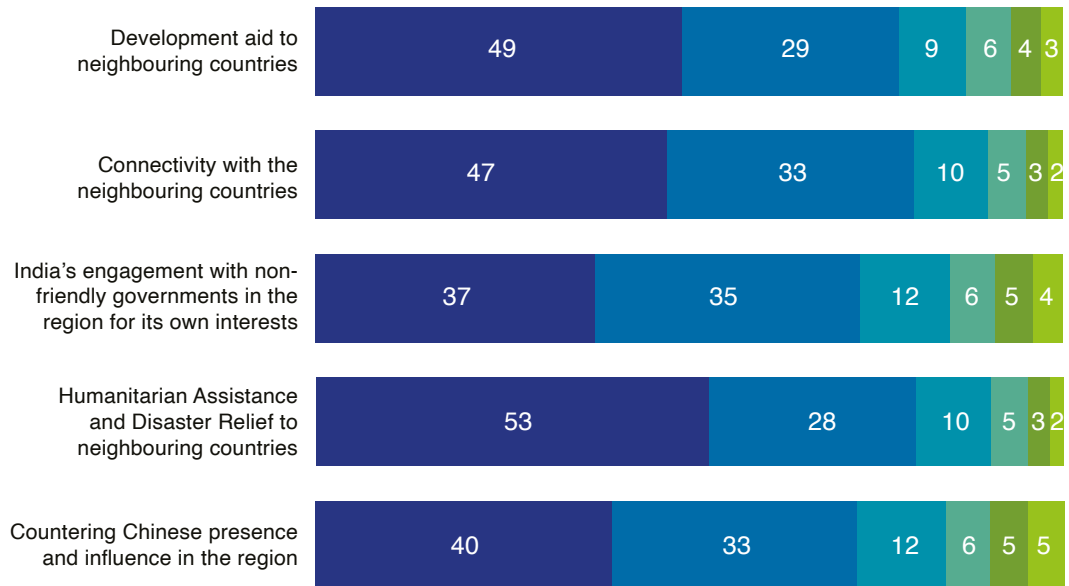
Both male and female respondents showed similar degrees of trustworthiness towards India's neighbours.

Across all cities, Kolkata showed the least trust for Pakistan and Bangladesh, while Vijayawada reposed the least trust in Myanmar, Mauritius, and Maldives (18 percent, 17 percent, and 24 percent, respectively).

Income and age did not have a significant impact on the responses.

**3.3**

**What is the most successful component of India’s “Neighbourhood First” policy? (Single response per option)**



***Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) and Connectivity are the most successful aspects of India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy.***

India's urban youth consider India's role as a first responder in the provision of Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) as the most successful component of the "Neighbourhood First" policy (81 percent), followed by connectivity (80 percent). Support for HADR has increased by six percentage points since the 2024 edition of the survey (74 percent). The facilitation of development aid to neighbours was also perceived positively, with 78 percent of the respondents considering it as successful.

While India's neighbourhood is currently in a state of flux with political instability in Nepal, Myanmar, and Bangladesh, deteriorating relationship with Pakistan and overall sense of socio-economic distress, the support for these elements reflects an appreciation of New Delhi's willingness and ability to engage with its neighbours despite political challenges. "Countering Chinese presence and inroads in the neighbourhood" (73 percent) and "India's engagement with non-friendly governments in the region for its own interests" (72 percent) were also deemed successful. While India has shown a willingness to work in tandem with some countries in the region, like the US and Japan, it has been sceptical of the presence of others like China as reflected in the response. This aligns with the responses in Question 3.6,

where respondents showed heightened concern about certain Chinese actions in the neighbourhood. India's willingness to engage with non-friendly governments in the region has seen a fall of three percentage points since the 2024 edition.

In the 2024 edition of the survey, development aid and connectivity were considered the most successful (86 percent). It was followed by countering China's presence and engagement with unfriendly regimes.

Support for HADR decreased with an increase in age group, with 83 percent of respondents falling in the 18-21 bracket seeing it as successful as opposed to 79 percent support from the 31-35 age group. Respondents in the 18-21 bracket had a higher positive perception about all four aspects of India's "Neighbourhood First" policy (73 to 83 percent).

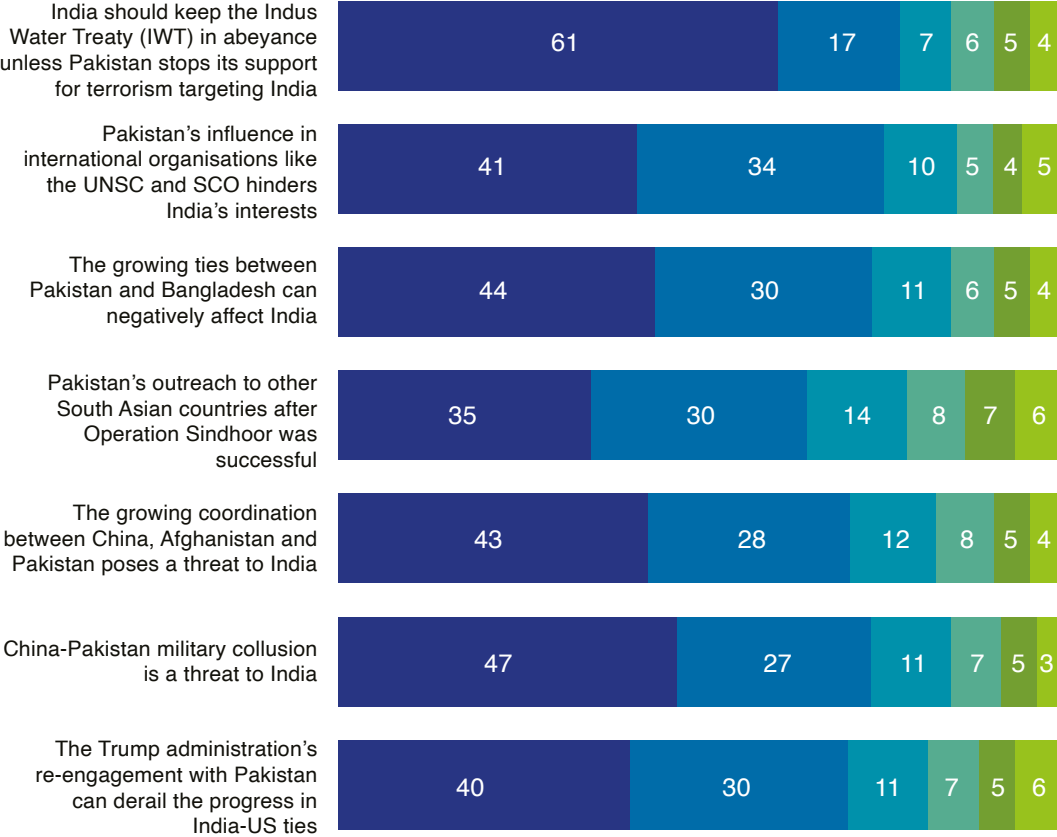
While across all educational categories, there was no correlation between the level of education and increased support for different aspects of the neighbourhood policy, respondents with doctorate degrees or equivalent considered them as most successful (86 to 100 percent).

Broken down by region, respondents in the East had more positive attitude towards India's "Neighbourhood First" policy as reflected in the higher support

for all four policy actions (77 to 96 percent), while respondents in the West had the least positive perception (64 to 76 percent). This could be a result of the sensitive situation on the western front in the aftermath of Operation Sindoor and relatively positive developments with countries in the eastern sector, even as that region has also become more restive today.

While there was unanimous support for all four aspects in terms of the degree of news consumption, respondents perceived the provision of development aid and countering Chinese incursions in the region as increasingly more positive as they increased their news consumption (77 percent to 82 percent and 72 percent to 75 percent, respectively).

**3.4** To what extent do you agree with these statements on Pakistan? (Single response per option)



***India's urban youth recognise the threat posed by Pakistan and support the government's actions against it.***

The importance of Pakistan in the region's security calculus has been on the rise since the May 2025 conflict between India and Pakistan. The urban youth's perception about risks associated with Pakistan has intensified, with terrorism perceived as the major foreign policy challenge facing India (Question 2.4), followed closely by border conflicts with China and Pakistan (Question 2.4). It is in this backdrop that Pakistan's relevance as a security challenge for India has become more pronounced.

The youth in India agree with the Indian government's decision to keep the Indus Water Treaty (IWT) in abeyance unless Pakistan stops its sponsorship of terrorism (78 percent) following Operation Sindoor. They also see Pakistan's influence in the UNSC and SCO as adversely affecting India's interests (75 percent). In the aftermath of Operation Sindoor, Pakistan doubled down on its diplomatic outreach to the rest of the region. While a marginally lower percentage of respondents consider Pakistan's outreach to other countries in South Asia as successful (65 percent), they perceive the growing ties between Pakistan and Bangladesh as adversely affecting India (74 percent), the relationship between China and Pakistan and their military collusion as a threat (72 percent), and the growing coordination between China, Pakistan and Afghanistan (72 percent) as a threat as well. These perceptions also align with findings from Question 2.7,

where Operation Sindoor highlighted the challenge of the growing ties between the two countries. The increasing negative perception for Bangladesh is reflective in the growing distrust for the country (Question 3.2). In the aftermath of the protests in July 2024 and the fall of the Hasina-led government, the perceptions of India's youth about Bangladesh and the ensuing situation have increasingly become more negative. The respondents also showed high agreement with the adverse impact of the Trump administration's re-engagement with Pakistan on India-US ties (70 percent).

Across all cities, respondents from Ranchi and Hyderabad expressed the highest levels of agreement across most statements. Respondents from Ranchi showed particularly strong support for keeping the IWT in abeyance (97 percent) and identified coordination between China, Afghanistan, and Pakistan as a major threat (90 percent). Respondents from Hyderabad agreed the most with the adverse impact of growing ties between Bangladesh and Pakistan (92 percent). Pakistan's influence in the UNSC and SCO and the impact of Trump's engagement on India-US ties received equally high support from Ranchi and Hyderabad (94 percent and 92 percent, respectively). Only on "Pakistan's outreach to other South Asian countries after Operation Sindoor was successful", Raipur expressed the most support (88 percent). Respondents from Mumbai and

Chennai expressed the least agreement for all the statements (22 to 45 percent and 45 to 60 percent, respectively).

The threat perception about Pakistan's relationship with other countries, particularly China and Afghanistan, decreased with an increase in the respondents' age group. This reflects a growing perception of threat amongst the younger age groups and the possible impact of the recent hostilities between India and Pakistan. The percentage of respondents who see China-Pakistan military collusion as a threat decreased by six percentage points, from 77 percent of respondents in the 18-21 age bracket to 71 percent of the respondents in the 31-35 age group. The growing coordination between China, Afghanistan, and Pakistan and its adverse impact on India also fell from 74 percent to 68 percent between the youngest and oldest age groups. Pakistan's outreach to other countries in South Asia in the aftermath of Operation Sindoor also saw less agreement, from 83 percent of respondents in the 18-21 age bracket deeming it successful to 74

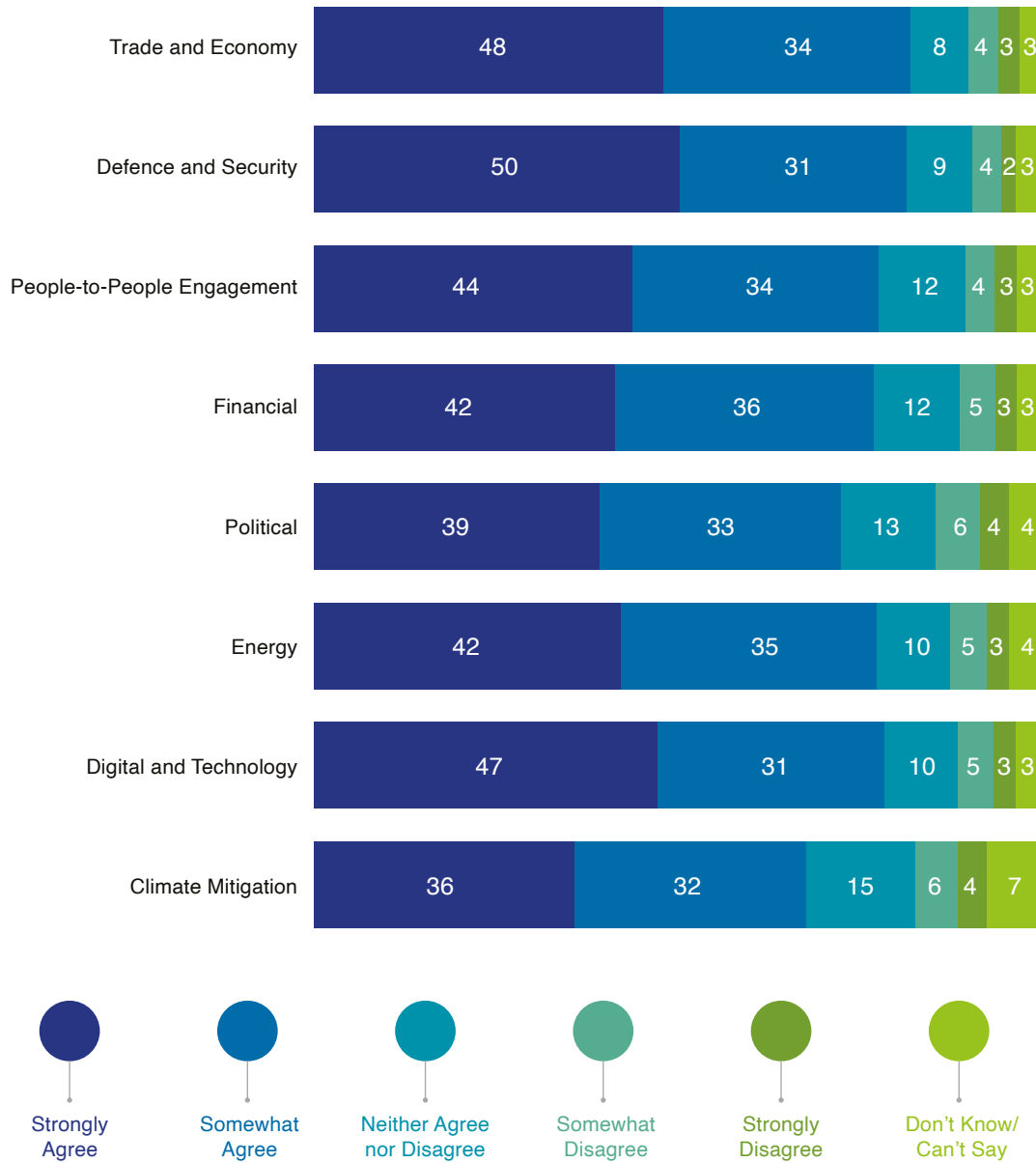
percent of respondents in the 31-35 age group thinking the same.

Self-employed individuals expressed the most agreement with all the statements (79-87 percent) except for China-Pakistan military collusion, for which students showed a higher percentage of agreement (80 percent) and Pakistan's outreach to South Asian countries, for which skilled workers showed the most agreement (74 percent). On the other hand, Unskilled Workers had the highest 'Don't Know/Can't Say' responses for all the statements (10-16 percent).

Across all regions, respondents from the East had a higher propensity to agree with all the statements (72 to 88 percent) while those from the West agreed the least (57 to 70 percent), except for Pakistan's diplomacy post-Operation Sindoor, which had the least support from the North (61 percent).

Age, gender, news consumption, and income had no impact on the responses.

**3.5** To what extent do you agree that India's engagement with its neighbours has been adequate in the following sectors? (Single response per option)



***India's urban youth consider the country's engagement in trade and the economy, and defence and security, to be adequate.***

When asked to assess the adequacy of India's engagement with its neighbours across important sectors, a high proportion of respondents deemed engagement in trade and economy as the most adequate (82 percent), followed closely by defence and security engagement (81 percent). This overwhelming support for trade and economic engagement also aligns with a higher proportion of support for connectivity as an important aspect of India's neighbourhood first policy (Question 3.3).

The results in this year's survey are similar to the responses received in the 2024 edition, where Trade and Economy and Defence and Security received the highest responses (90 and 87 percent, respectively). Despite a marginal fall in support, respondents still see India's role in furthering these two elements as adequate. Other sectors followed closely: people-to-people engagement, digital and technology, and energy engagement (78 percent); financial engagement (77 percent); political engagement (72 percent); and climate mitigation, which was an additional option offered this year at 67 percent. The marginally less support for political engagement is indicative of the recent changes in governments in the region through elections and/or revolutions and the precarious nature of engaging with a new regime.

The overall support for defence and security engagement has increased over the years (2024: 87 percent, 2023: 85

percent, 2022: 81 percent). This reflects their positive perception of India's role as a first responder (Question 3.3). The support for political engagement has also increased by one percentage point from the 2024 edition. This is because of the ongoing political instability in the region.

Across all age groups, the percentage of respondents perceiving trade and economy as most adequate decreased with an increase in the age bracket- from 83 percent respondents falling in the 18-21 age group considering it adequate to 80 percent respondents in the 31-35 age group feeling the same. The positive perception about the adequacy of climate mitigation-related engagement also decreased with an increase in the respondents' age group- from 72 percent of 18-21 age group respondents to 64 percent from the 31-35 age group.

While both male and female respondents considered India's engagement with its neighbouring countries as adequate in all sectors, for climate mitigation, more females (69 percent) saw it as adequate as opposed to 66 percent of males.

Across cities, respondents from Ranchi showed the most support for trade and economy (94 percent), people-to-people (93 percent) and financial (87 percent) engagement. Respondents from Mumbai agreed the least with all aspects related to India's neighbourhood policy (30 to 67 percent), except for political engagement, for which Chennai showed the least

agreement (53 percent). Chennai also had the same degree of agreement for trade and economy, financial, and energy cooperation as Mumbai (67 percent, 62 percent, and 58 percent, respectively).

Across all educational categories, respondents with doctorate degrees or equivalent expressed the most support for all types of engagements (86 to 100 percent) except for people-to-people, which was viewed as most adequate by university graduates (80 percent) while doctorates agreed with it the least (71 percent).

Students and skilled workers were generally the most positive about India's engagement with its neighbours. Students expressed the strongest support for trade and economy (86 percent), defence and security (85 percent), financial (81 percent), energy (81 percent), digital (84 percent) and climate mitigation (76 percent), whereas for people-to-people engagement (85 percent), skilled workers expressed the most agreement. Political engagement was perceived as equally adequate by both students and skilled workers (75 percent). Surprisingly, government sector employees expressed the least optimism with the trajectory of India's engagement in trade and economy (77 percent), political engagement (57 percent), and energy (74 percent).

Across all income categories, respondents falling below the INR 30,000 monthly income bracket considered India's engagement in people-to-people ties, digital and technology, and climate

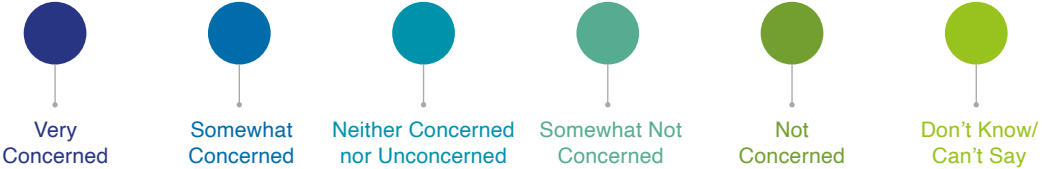
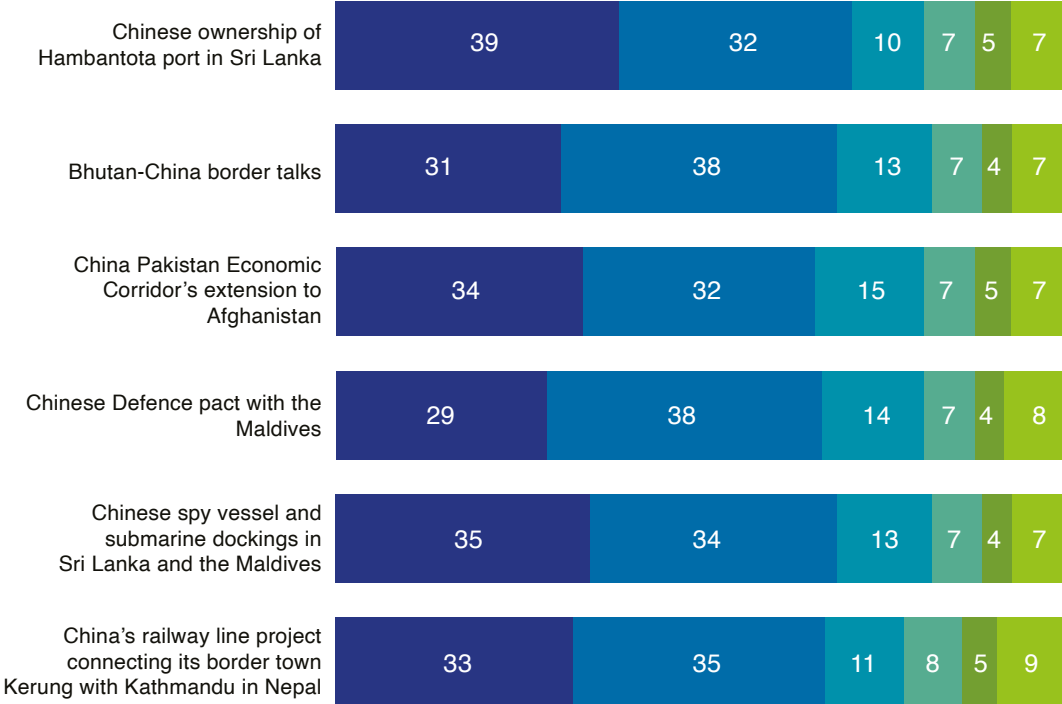
mitigation (81 percent, 80 percent, and 74 percent, respectively) as most successful. This reflects a growing appreciation for India's efforts to enhance digital connectivity with its neighbours through the facilitation of payments through UPI in Nepal and leveraging digital public infrastructure to enhance integration. The higher support for climate mitigation engagement from respondents falling in the lower income bracket reflects the increased vulnerability of people from lower socio-economic groups to climate-related disasters and thus an increased acknowledgement for efforts to mitigate the adverse impacts.

Respondents from the East had a relatively higher positive perception for all aspects of India's engagement with its neighbours while respondents from the West agreed relatively less (East- 71 to 86 percent; West- 57 to 79 percent), except for political engagement, in which respondents from the South showed the least agreement (67 percent). This is despite the good ties which India shares with its southern neighbours and a high degree of trust posed in Sri Lanka and Maldives (refer to Question 3.2). On climate mitigation, respondents from the North saw it as most adequate (72 percent).

Respondents who read the news at least twice a week agreed more with all aspects of India's engagement with its neighbours (71 to 84 percent), except for trade and economy, in which respondents who read the news less expressed more agreement (85 percent).

3.6

How concerned are you about the following Chinese actions in India's neighbourhood? (Single response per option)



***India's urban youth remain concerned about China's actions in the country's neighbourhood.***

In 2025, India and China signalled an intent to reset their ties and look for a speedy resolution of the boundary dispute. This saw an increase in the satisfaction shown by the youth with the trajectory of the bilateral relationship and a decrease in the negative responses (Question 2.4). But despite this, respondents still remain concerned about Beijing's actions in the neighbourhood. Majority of the respondents consider China's ownership of Hambantota Port in Sri Lanka as the most concerning development vis-a-vis its actions in India's neighbourhood (71 percent). This is followed by concerns surrounding Bhutan-China border talks and the presence of Chinese spy vessels and submarine dockings in Sri Lanka and the Maldives (69 percent each), China's railway line connecting its border town Kerung with Kathmandu in Nepal, and the Chinese defence pact with the Maldives (67 percent each). The possibility of CPEC's extension to Afghanistan (66 percent) is also seen as concerning. This is reflective of the heightened threat perception regarding the growing coordination between China, Pakistan, and Afghanistan (72 percent; Question 3.4) and the risks posed by China-Pakistan military collusion after Operation Sindoor (Question 2.7).

A similar question was asked in the 2024 edition of the survey. The Chinese ownership of Hambantota port was still seen as most concerning in 2024 (81 percent), followed by Bhutan-China border

talks (75 percent). Except for China's defence pact with Maldives, which has seen a one-percentage-point increase—concern for all the other statements has seen a drop since the 2024 edition. The persistence of border conflict with China as a vital threat (Question 2.4) and the support for countering Chinese presence in the region as an important aspect of India's "Neighbourhood First" policy reflects the scepticism surrounding China despite an official reset in ties (Question 3.3).

Across all age groups, concerns about the extension of CPEC to Afghanistan decreased with an increase in the respondents' age group, from 67 percent in the 18-21 age bracket seeing it as a cause of concern to 65 percent in the 31-35 group. For all of the other statements, the highest concern was shown by respondents falling in the 21-25 age group: Chinese occupation of Hambantota port in Sri Lanka (75 percent), Chinese defence pact with Maldives (68 percent), Chinese spy vessel and submarine dockings in Sri Lanka and the Maldives (71 percent), China's railway line project connecting its border town Kerung with Kathmandu in Nepal (71 percent), and except for China-Pakistan military collusion, in which the 18-21 age group showed the most concern (67 percent), and Bhutan-China border talks, for which the 26-30 age group showed the most concern (70 percent).

There is a marginal difference in the concern expressed by both genders, with males showing relatively higher concern than females (Male: 67 to 72 percent; Females: 64 to 70 percent). But the difference in the 'Don't Know/ Can't Say' responses between the two genders is stark (Male: 5 to 7 percent; Female: 9 to 11 percent). Broken down by education, university graduates expressed the most concern for all the statements (71 to 77 percent), except for the Chinese defence pact with the Maldives, where holders of doctorate degrees or equivalent also expressed the most concern (71 percent).

Across all occupational categories, respondents working as unskilled workers had the highest 'Don't Know/ Can't Say' responses for all the statements (21 to 27 percent) while those working as Government Sector employees showed the least concern for Bhutan-China border talks (62 percent), China-Pakistan Economic Corridor's expansion to Afghanistan (57 percent) and China's railway line project connecting its border town Kerung with Kathmandu in Nepal (49 percent).

For all these actions, respondents earning between INR 120,001-150,000 per month expressed the most concern (73 to 77

percent), except for Chinese spy vessel and submarine dockings in Sri Lanka and Maldives, for which respondents falling in the INR 90,001-120,000 bracket expressed the most concern (81 percent).

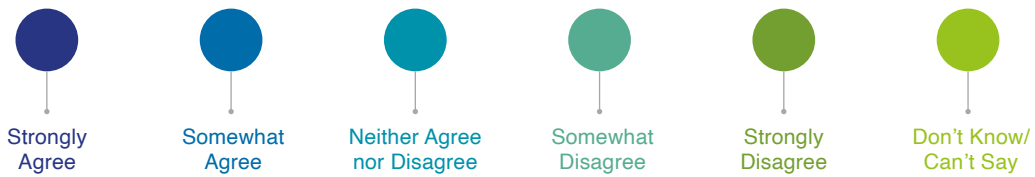
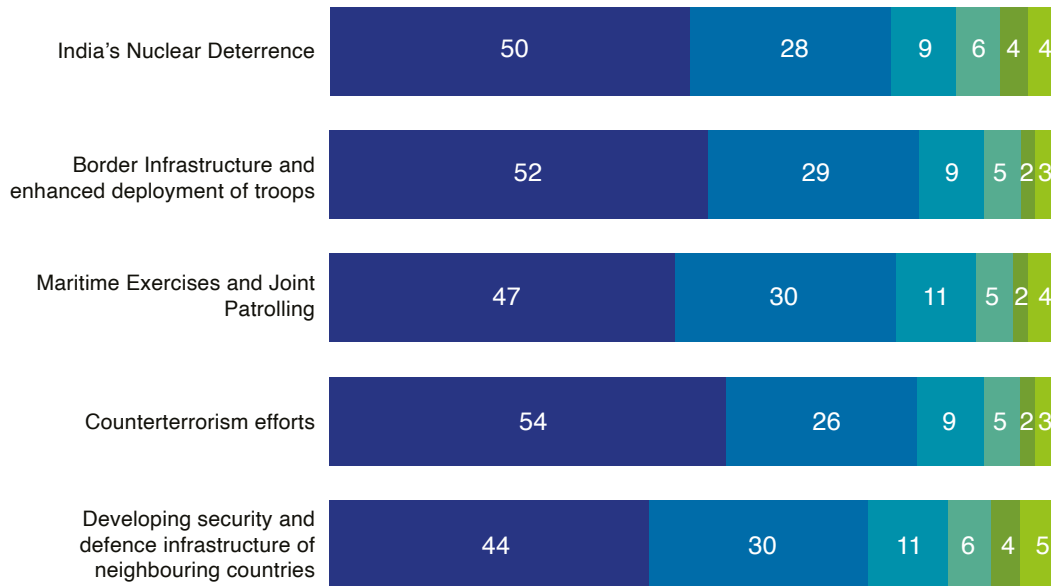
Region-wise, respondents from the East showed the most concern for all of these actions (56 to 80 percent), while those from the West showed the least concern for Chinese occupation of Hambantota (65 percent), Chinese defence pact with the Maldives (64 percent), Chinese railway line project connecting its border town Kerung with Kathmandu in Nepal (56 percent).

There was a correlation between the consumption of news and the degree of concern shown vis-a-vis each of the mentioned statements- respondents who read the news daily showed greater concern for all the statements (70-74 percent), while concern for Bhutan-China border talks decreased with a decrease in the consumption of news, from 73 percent concern by daily news readers to 62 percent by those reading it less often.

Respondents' city of origin had no impact on the responses.

**3.7**

**To what extent do you agree that these policies/ actions of India have strengthened India’s regional security goals? (Single response per option)**



***The development of border infrastructure, along with enhanced troop deployment and counter-terrorism efforts, further India's regional security goals.***

Young Indians consider the development of border infrastructure and enhanced troop deployment as the most effective measure for furthering India's regional security goals (81 percent). This perception reflects heightened concerns regarding terrorism and border conflicts with Pakistan following Operation Sindoor, as well as with China (Question 2.4). This is followed by support for India's counterterrorism efforts as effectively furthering its security goals (80 percent), nuclear deterrence (79 percent), maritime exercises and joint patrolling (77 percent) and developing security and defence infrastructure of neighbouring countries (74 percent).

In the 2024 edition of the survey, nuclear deterrence received the most support (88 percent), followed by border infrastructure (84 percent). Except for counter-terrorism efforts, which have seen a four-percentage-point increase—support for other measures declined marginally. This reflects the growing threat posed by terrorism, as reflected in Question 2.4, and the looming threat posed by Pakistan.

Across all cities, respondents from Mumbai expressed the lowest levels of support across most policy measures (35 to 51 percent), with the exception

of border infrastructure development and enhanced troop deployment.

In terms of age groups, the support for nuclear deterrence and counter-terrorism initiatives decreased with an increase in the age groups, from 18-21 to 31-35: for nuclear deterrence (81 to 76 percent) and counter-terrorism initiatives (82 to 77 percent). In terms of education, respondents with doctorate degrees or equivalent had the highest support for nuclear deterrence and counter-terrorism initiatives (86 percent for both).

While the support across regions has not seen a major difference, respondents from the North and East had a more positive perception about all the options. The responses were as follows: nuclear deterrence (North-80 percent; East- 87 percent), border infrastructure (North-80 percent; East- 90 percent), maritime exercises and joint patrolling (North- 78 percent; East- 86 percent), counterterrorism initiatives (North- 81 percent; East- 87 percent), developing infrastructure of neighbouring countries (North-78 percent; East- 81 percent). More respondents from the East had a higher positive perception about India's regional security policies. The highest support for the development of border infrastructure also reflects the heightened

risks vis-a-vis their location. On the other hand, respondents from the West had the most negative responses for all of these policies (10 to 17 percent), except development of border infrastructure which had the most negative responses from respondents in the North (9 percent).

Respondents who read the least news had the highest 'Don't Know/ Can't Say' responses for all the policies (6 to 10 percent).

Gender, age, occupation, and income had no visible impact on the responses.

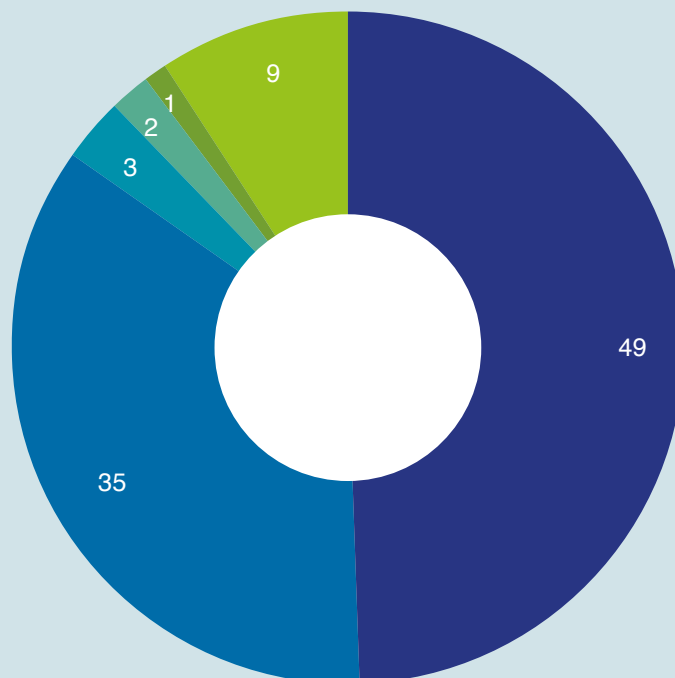
# 4.

## India and the Middle East

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4.1

Can IMEC become the future of connectivity efforts in the Middle East? (Single response)



Strongly Agree

Somewhat Agree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Somewhat Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Don't Know/Can't Say

***India's urban youth see IMEC as an important means of furthering connectivity in the Middle East.***

The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor, or IMEC, announced on the sidelines of the G20 Summit hosted by India in 2023, is a cornerstone project promoted aggressively by New Delhi. Hence, there is no surprise that it garnered positive support. 85 percent of respondents viewed it favourably.

Across all age groups, respondents ages 18-21 expressed the highest optimism, with 87 percent agreeing that IMEC has the potential to boost connectivity in the Middle East.

Support for IMEC remains high across the spectrum in education (71 to 87 percent, across all educational levels).

Across all occupational categories, unskilled respondents showed the least optimism (70 percent) while students expressed the most optimism (90 percent), followed by businessman/trader. Respondents earning between INR

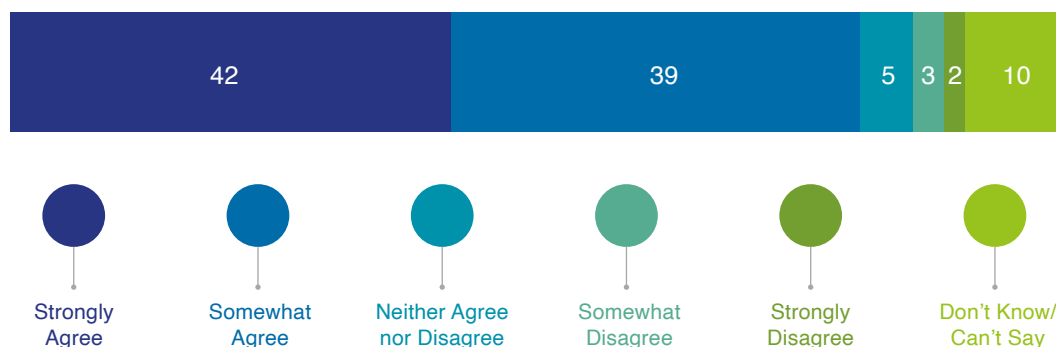
120,001-150,000 per month expressed the highest degree of support to IMEC (95 percent).

In terms of agreement across all cities, respondents from Kolkata showed the most agreement (95 percent), followed by Hyderabad and Jaipur (93 percent each). There was unanimous support for the IMEC's potential to boost connectivity efforts in the Middle East across all regions (78 to 89 percent).

Support was consistent across gender, with 84 percent of male respondents and 85 percent of female respondents viewing IMEC favourably. Optimism regarding the project also increased with higher news consumption, rising from 79 percent among respondents who consume news less frequently to 89 percent among daily news consumers, reflecting the largely favourable media coverage surrounding IMEC.

## 4.2

## Can I2U2 (India, Israel, the UAE and the United States) lead cooperation efforts in the Middle East? (Single response)



**India's urban youth see I2U2 as an effective grouping to lead cooperation efforts in the Middle East.**

The I2U2 grouping, formed in October 2021, elicited comparatively cautious support among respondents. Against the backdrop of heightened regional confrontations in 2025, overall agreement on the grouping's ability to foster regional cooperation stood at 80 percent.

Smaller Indian cities outside the major metros expressed notably stronger support. Respondents from Jaipur (92 percent) and Lucknow (90 percent) reported higher agreement compared to New Delhi, where support stood at 74 percent.

Across all educational groups, respondents holding doctorate degrees or equivalent expressed 100 percent agreement.

Similar to Question 4.1, unskilled respondents agreed the least with the I2U2's ability to foster cooperation (71 percent), while businessmen/traders agreed the most (84 percent).

In terms of income, respondents earning below INR 30,000 per month agreed with it the least (78 percent), while those earning above INR 1,50,000 per month showed the most agreement (86 percent).

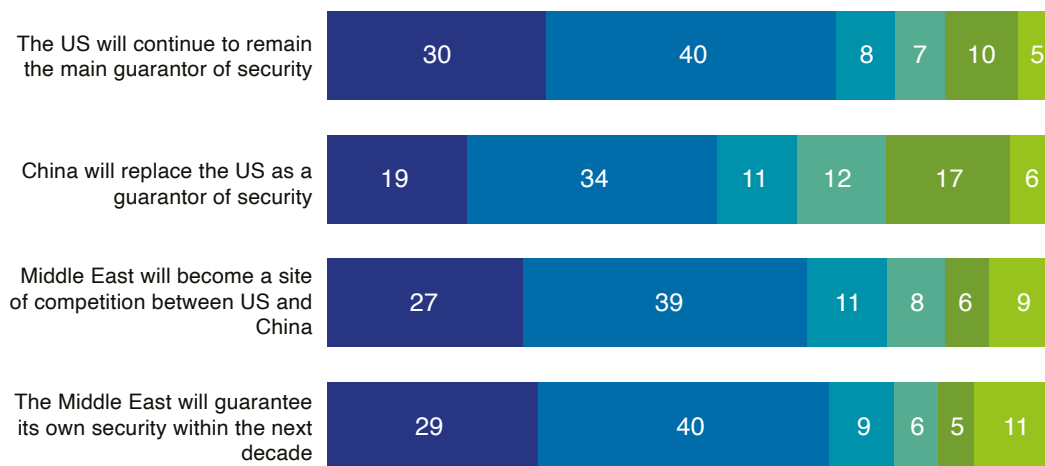
Support for I2U2's ability to foster cooperation remained significantly high across all regions of India (73 to 83 percent).

The support for the I2U2's effectiveness in bringing cooperation also increased with an increase in the respondents' consumption of news, from 72 percent of respondents reading the news less often considering it an effective means of increasing cooperation in the region to 85 percent respondents reading the news daily.

Gender and age had no significant impact on the responses.

4.3

**To what extent do you agree with the following statements on the future of security in the Middle East? (Single response per option)**



***The majority of respondents agree that the US should continue to remain the main guarantor of security in the Middle East.***

India’s urban youth are divided over how they perceive the future of security in the Middle East. While 70 percent of respondents believe that the US will continue to remain the main guarantor of regional security, 69 percent believe that the Middle East will guarantee its own security in the next decade. Nearly six out of ten respondents also see the region as becoming a site of competition between the US and China, with a relatively lesser share of respondents seeing China emerge as the guarantor of security in the region (53 percent). The percentage of respondents

disagreeing with this statement is also the highest, at 29 percent, reflecting scepticism regarding China’s growing role in international crises.

Across all age groups, support for the statement, “Middle East will become a site of competition between the US and China” decreased with an increase in the respondents’ age group, from 69 percent of respondents falling in the 18-21 bracket agreeing with it to 64 percent of the respondents in the 31-35 age group thinking the same. Except for ‘The Middle East will guarantee its own security

within the next decade,' which received the most support from respondents falling in the 22-25 age group (72 percent), for all the other statements, the most agreement was shown by respondents from the 18-21 age bracket (55 to 74 percent). Respondents aged 18 agreed with all the statements the most (59 to 81 percent).

In terms of education, respondents with no formal education expressed the least support for all the statements (44 to 61 percent), except for 'The US will continue to remain the main guarantor of security' for which respondents with doctorate degrees or equivalent expressed the least support (57 percent).

While lower income brackets come out as more worried about China's play, middle and high income are more sceptical of Beijing replacing Washington.

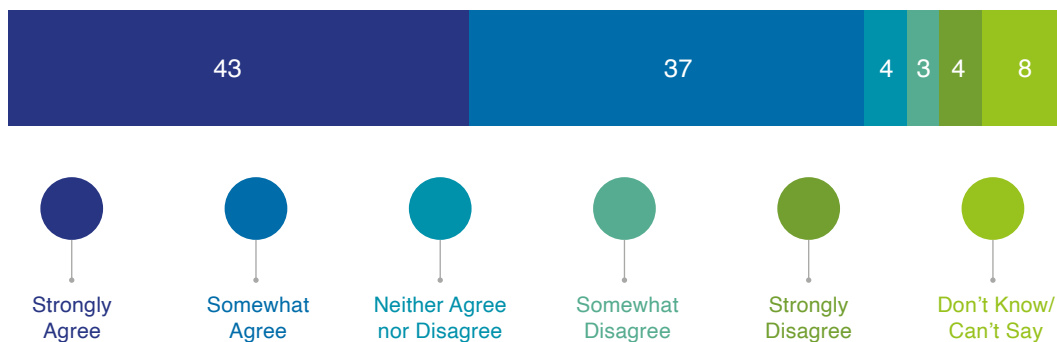
As gender is an important metric in the region, both males and females across the board remained around the same level of agreement for all the statements, with the females expressing a slightly higher degree of agreement for the US' continuation as the main guarantor of security in the region (68 percent males and 73 percent females).

Government sector employees expressed the least support for 'The Middle East will become a site of competition between the US and China' across all occupational categories (53 percent).

Disaggregating the results by region, a higher percentage of respondents from the North and East also see the Middle East as becoming a guarantor of its own security opposed to those from the West and South (North: 67 percent; East: 72 percent; West: 60 percent; South: 62 percent). Less than half of the respondents from the East agree that China can emerge as the main guarantor of security in the Middle East, with 37 percent of the respondents disagreeing with the statement.

The degree of agreement with the statement decreased with a fall in the level of news consumption of the respondents for the following statements: 'The Middle East will become a site of competition between the US and China', from 71 percent of the respondents who read the news daily to 59 percent agreement from those who read it less often; and 'The Middle East will guarantee its own security within the next decade', from 73 percent agreement from respondents who read the news daily to 61 percent from those who read it less often.

## 4.4

**Will the Iran – Israel war negatively impact global de-nuclearisation efforts? (Single response)**

***Respondents see the war between Iran and Israel as having an adverse impact on global de-nuclearisation efforts.***

Nuclear weapons are often seen as a crisis more attached to the Cold War-era rivalry between the US and the erstwhile Soviet Union. The young generation of today was either born at the tail end of the Cold War or well after it ended in 1991. Hence, there is no surprise that contemporary conflicts such as the Iran-Israel war have on average 80 percent respondents across the board, male and female, agreeing it will de-stabilise de-nuclearisation efforts.

Across all educational categories, respondents with educational qualification up to university graduation showed the highest support (84 percent), followed by those with education up to class 12 and undergraduate or equivalent (both at 81 percent, respectively). Respondents with no formal education showed the least support (72 percent).

Regionally, respondents from East showed the highest support (85 percent), followed by those from West and North (82 and 80 percent, respectively). Respondents from South showed the least support (73 percent). Across cities, respondents from Kolkata showed the highest support (93 percent), whereas those from Faridabad showed the least support (52 percent).

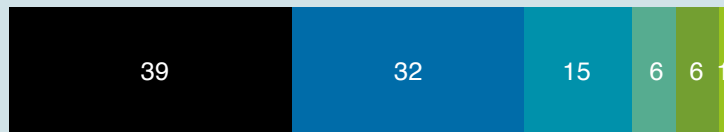
Across occupational categories, students and businessmen/traders or business sector showed the highest support (both at 85 percent), whereas unskilled workers showed the least support (67 percent).

Disaggregated by income, respondents falling within the bracket of a monthly income of INR 120,001–150,000 showed the highest support (89 percent), whereas those with a monthly income of less than INR 30,000 showed the least support (77 percent).

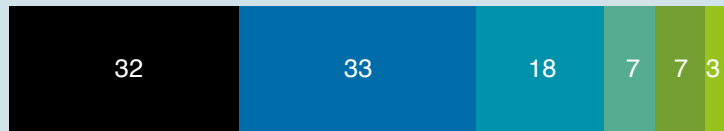
# India-UAE Spotlight

**A1** To what extent do you agree with the following statements on India-UAE ties?

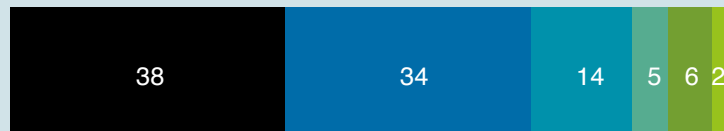
The Indian diaspora is a key architect of UAE's growth and prosperity.



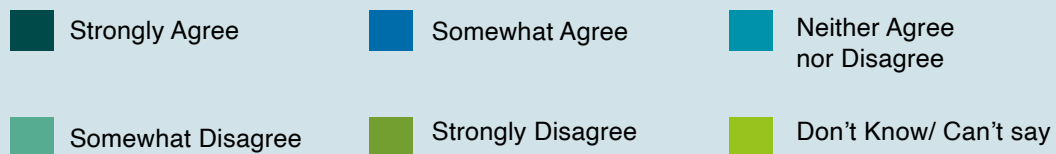
India-UAE are natural partners in climate cooperation.



India and UAE have complementary interests in efforts to strengthen technological innovation.



A strong India-UAE economic partnership will guarantee mutual growth and prosperity.



India's urban youth perceive the India-UAE bilateral relationship as a net positive for both countries. Seventy-six percent of the respondents agree that a strong India-UAE economic partnership will guarantee mutual growth and prosperity, followed by 72 percent of respondents who see India's and UAE's interests in technological innovation as complementary. These responses align with responses in Question 4.6 where 77 percent of India's urban youth consider that the new financial capitals in the world, including Dubai, will be hubs of economic growth and technological innovation.

Underscoring the importance of the diaspora in furthering cooperation between the two sides, 71 percent of respondents see them as a key architect of the UAE's growth and prosperity. This aligns with the responses in Question 4.6 where a large majority of respondents (81 percent) see the diaspora's potential in furthering the growth of the region as a whole. Sixty-five percent of respondents also see India and the UAE as natural partners in climate cooperation.

In terms of the consumption of news, the percentage of respondents agreeing with

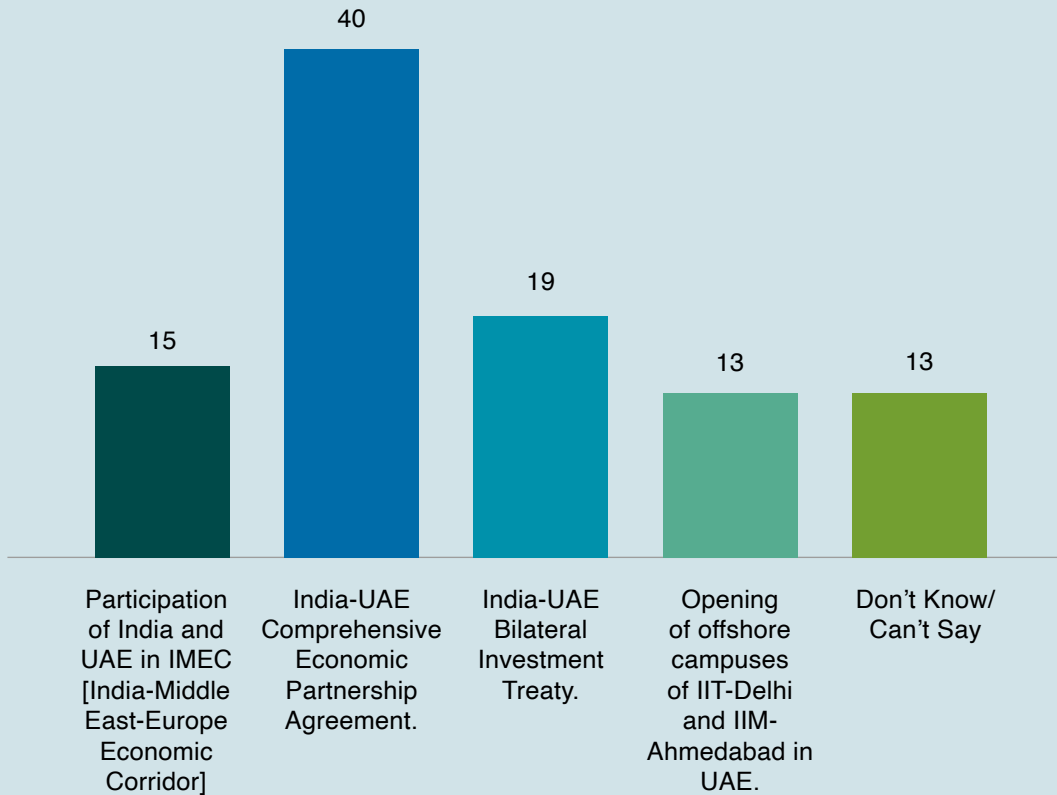
the statements decreased with an increase in the consumption of news for the following two statements: 'India-UAE are natural partners in climate cooperation', from 80 percent of respondents who read the news less often agreeing with the statement to 61 percent agreement from those who read it daily; and 'India and UAE have complementary interests in efforts to strengthen technological innovation, from 88 to 67 percent. Except for the statement - 'The Indian diaspora is a key architect of UAE's growth and prosperity', for all the other statements, respondents reading the news the least often expressed the most optimism (80 to 88 percent).

For 'India-UAE are natural partners in climate cooperation,' the respondents agreeing with the statement decreased with an increase in the respondents' age group, from 79 percent in the 18-21 age group to 58 percent in the 31-35 age group. For all four statements, respondents falling in the 18-21 age group showed the most support (79 to 86 percent).

Income had no measurable impact on the responses.

A2

### What is the most successful component of India-UAE ties?



73

India-UAE ties have scaled unprecedented growth over the last decade, owing to the vast spectrum of complementarities between the two countries. The growing synergy between the two countries remains anchored on the significant share of Indian diaspora continually contributing to UAE's economic growth and prosperity. However, in recent years, the momentum in ties between New Delhi and Abu Dhabi has assumed a critical economic logic, which continues to manifest by way of cooperation in proposed connectivity corridors, bilateral trade agreements, and cooperation through education and other crucial elements of soft power.

On the question of what remains the most successful component of India-UAE relations, India's urban youth rate the India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, signed in 2022, most favourably (40 percent), followed by India-UAE Bilateral Investment Treaty (19 percent). Joint cooperation between India and UAE through participation in the proposed India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) and the opening of offshore campuses of flagship educational institutions of India – Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi (IIT Dehi), and Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad (IIM Ahmedabad) are also

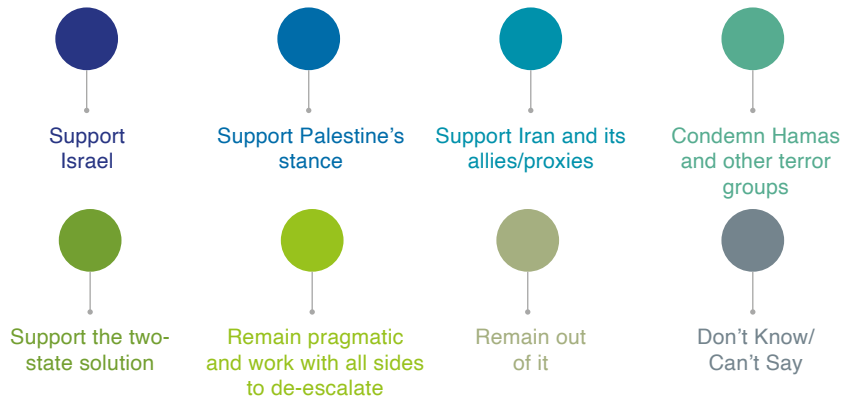
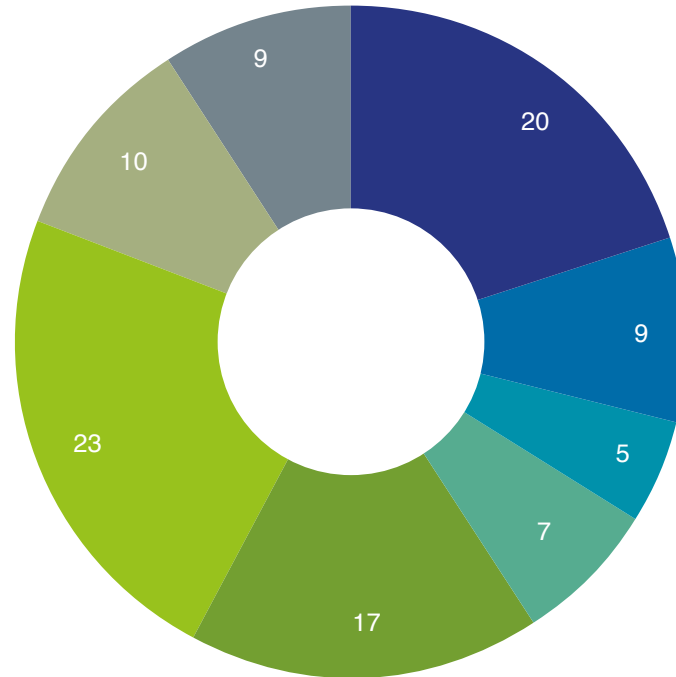
seen as vital aspects constituting the success of the India-UAE bilateral ties (15 and 13 percent, respectively).

Across all regions, support for joint India-UAE CEPA was the highest among respondents from North (49 percent), West (46 percent) and South (34 percent). Whereas respondents from the East of India showed highest support for India-UAE Bilateral Investment Treaty (32 percent).

Across all occupational categories, support for India-UAE CEPA was highest among all respondents, in exception of respondents who are government employees, who rated India-UAE Bilateral Investment Treaty (50 percent) as their highest preference.

Support for the India-UAE CEPA was unanimously highest among respondents across age groups, education, income levels and extent of consumption of news.

**4.5** Amid the ongoing crises in the Middle East, what should India's stance be, in your opinion? (Single response)



***Urban youth want India to maintain a pragmatic stance in the current crisis in the Middle East and work with all sides for de-escalation.***

India's urban youth were divided over how India should respond to the ongoing crises in the Middle East. The highest support was for India to maintain its pragmatic approach and work with all sides to de-escalate, with 23 percent of the respondents opting for this option. This was followed by 20 percent of the respondents urging India to support Israel and 17 percent of the respondents calling for India to support a two-state solution.

The share of respondents saying that India should completely remain out of it was lower (10 percent), highlighting a growing sentiment for New Delhi to engage with international crisis points as a rising power.

The share of respondents saying that India should support Palestine's stance (9 percent) was close to that of respondents calling for India to condemn Hamas and other terror groups (7 percent). Only 5 percent of the respondents saw it fit for India to support Iran and its allies/proxies in the region to manage the crisis.

Support for Israel through all age groups polled was high, owing to common positions on countering terrorism. The youngest age group (18-21) had a higher support rate for Israel (23 percent) while there was more support for Palestine in the oldest age group 31-35 (11 percent).

Respondents aged 19 expressed the most support for Israel (32 percent) and the least support for India to work with Iran and its allies/proxies (2 percent).

While males showed more support for Israel (22 percent) and Palestine's stance (9 percent), as opposed to females (18 and 8 percent, respectively), more females wanted India to support the two-state solution than males (Males: 16 percent, Females: 18 percent).

Respondents with doctorates or equivalent degrees expressed the least support for India to support Israel in the current crisis (14 percent) while respondents with no formal education agreed with this proposition the most (28 percent). Doctorate respondents also expressed the most support for New Delhi to support Iran and its proxies (14 percent), the two-state solution (29 percent) and for India to remain out of the crisis (14 percent).

Across all occupational categories, government employees had the most support for India to support Iran and its allies/proxies in the current crises (15 percent) and condemn Hamas and other terror groups (15 percent) and the least support for New Delhi to maintain a pragmatic stance and work with all sides to de-escalate (16 percent).

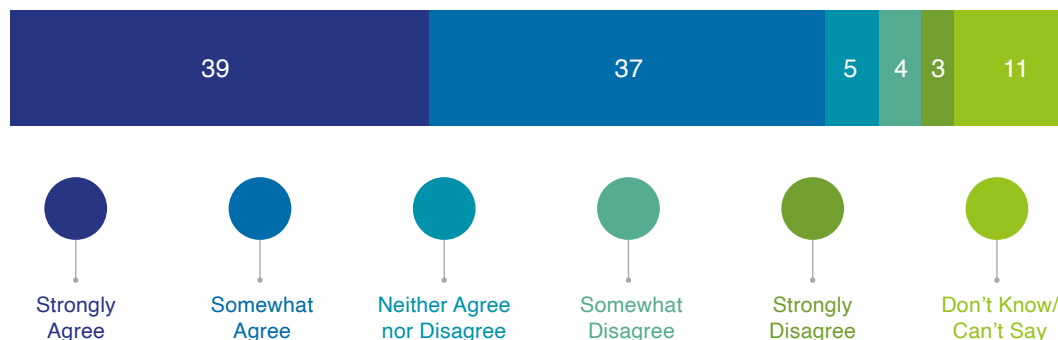
While respondents wanting India to support Israel showed unanimous agreement across all regions (17 to 22 percent), those from the West showed the highest support for India to extend support to Palestine's stance (15 percent) as opposed to the other three regions (4 to 8 percent). While the highest number of respondents from the East urged India to condemn Hamas and

other terror groups (13 percent), southern respondents showed the most support for India to aid the two-state solution (24 percent) and the least support for India to remain out of the crises (5 percent).

Income and consumption of news had no significant impact on the responses.

**4.6**

**Do you agree that Middle Eastern hubs like Dubai, Riyadh, Doha etc. are the new centers of global economy and technology? (Single response)**



***Urban youth regard Middle Eastern cities like Dubai, Riyadh, and Doha as new hubs of technology and the economy.***

Overall, 77 percent of India’s urban youth believe that new financial capitals in the Arab world will be hubs of economic growth and technological innovation.

The city-wise distribution showed that India’s own technological hubs, such as Bengaluru and Hyderabad, recorded high agreement regarding the centrality of cities such as Dubai and Riyadh (82 and 90 percent, respectively), with the city of Mumbai, widely regarded as an economic and financial hub of India, adding to their support (80 percent). Aspirational small-town India, in cities such as Bhopal (75 percent) and Jaipur (85 percent), also aligned with this broader trajectory, viewing Gulf capitals as centres for future opportunities. Faridabad and New Delhi showed the least support (36 and 49 percent, respectively).

The trend was further corroborated by respondents with undergraduate education and above, who saw considerable merit in these centres of growth, with 77 percent of undergraduates and 80 percent of university graduates agreeing.

More male respondents saw the rise of Dubai, Riyadh, and Doha as centres of global technology and economy (77 percent) than female respondents (75 percent).

Both students and private sector employees further added credence to the idea that these Middle Eastern success stories are the future (79 and 75 percent, respectively). 83 percent of businesspeople attested to their success, backed by a consensus that the likes of the UAE are a magnet for ease of doing

business. Unskilled workers, on the other hand, showed the least agreement (63 percent).

Across all monthly income categories as well, more support is shown by respondents falling in the middle-income brackets: INR 30,001-60,000 (84 percent), INR 60,001-90,000 and INR 90,001-120,000 (both at 81 percent, respectively), seeing these cities as avenues for further income generation.

While respondents hailing from the eastern states agreed the most with the statement (83 percent), those from the other three regions had a relatively

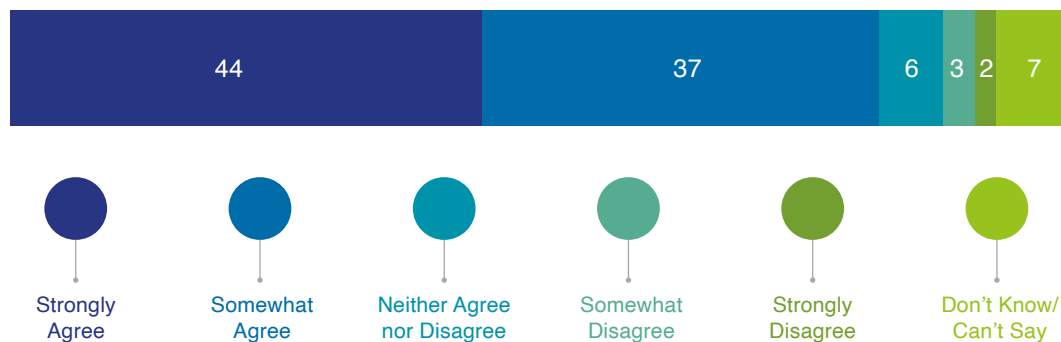
toned-down agreement: West (76 percent), South (74 percent), and North (73 percent).

The consumption of news also influenced the respondents' responses, with those reading the news less often agreeing the least (63 percent) while those with daily consumption expressed overwhelming optimism with these cities' emergence as the new centres of technology and economy (82 percent).

Age group and age had no notable impact on the responses.

4.7

**Do you agree that the Indian diaspora will make a significant contribution to the growth of the Middle East? (Single response)**



***The Indian urban youth recognise the diaspora's potential to contribute to the growth of the Middle East.***

The Indian diaspora has been a cornerstone of India-Middle East ties, with over 9 million Indians working across the wider Gulf region. It is, therefore, unsurprising that an overwhelming 81 percent of respondents agreed that the Indian diaspora will make major contributions to the region's growth.

City-wise, respondents from Ranchi overwhelmingly agreed with the Indian diaspora's ability to contribute to the growth of the Middle East (97 percent), followed by Jaipur (94 percent), whereas Chennai and Faridabad agreed with it the least (55 and 49 percent, respectively).

Across educational groups, university graduates agreed the most with the statement (85 percent), while respondents with no formal education and those who hold doctorate degrees or equivalent showed the least agreement (70 and 71 percent, respectively). In terms of occupation, those involved in the business sector expressed the most agreement

(87 percent), indicating potential business opportunities in the region, followed by Students (85 percent).

There is no surprise that lower-income sections have a high percentage agreeing that the Indian diaspora will play a major role, as it has done in the past, specifically in cities such as Dubai. Those earning between INR 30,001-60,000 monthly expressed 84 percent agreement, seeing the Gulf capitals as significant opportunities.

Even though the migration to countries in the region is more from the southern states, respondents in the east agreed the most regarding the Indian diaspora's contribution to the growth of the Middle East (86 percent) while those from the South expressed the least agreement (75 percent)

Gender, age group, and age had no significant impact on the responses.

4.8

Do you agree that the partnership between India and Middle Eastern countries will shape the future of global energy cooperation? (Single response)



***India and the Middle East will shape the future of global energy cooperation.***

Along with the economy and the diaspora, energy is perhaps the most important binding factor for India-Middle East cooperation. Despite the geopolitical upheavals witnessed in the region throughout 2025, 82 percent of the respondents consider the future of energy cooperation to be on a positive trajectory.

Respondents with no formal education agreed the least (73 percent), while those with doctorate degrees or equivalent agreed the most with the potential of the India-Middle East partnership in shaping global energy cooperation (86 percent).

In line with the trajectory of responses in Questions 4.1. and 4.2., unskilled respondents agreed the least (68

percent) whereas those involved in the business sector agreed the most with the statement (89 percent).

Energy's wide-ranging impact—from inflation to cost of living—means it is a closely followed commodity, from businesses to households. Respondents falling in the above INR 1,50,000 monthly income bracket expressed the least optimism about the potential of India and Middle Eastern countries in driving energy cooperation, whereas those falling in the INR 30,001-60,000 and 60,001-90,000 monthly income brackets agreed with it the most (85 percent).

Regionally, respondents from the East agreed with it the most (87 percent), even though they are geographically

distant, whereas those from the Southern states showed the least support (73 percent).

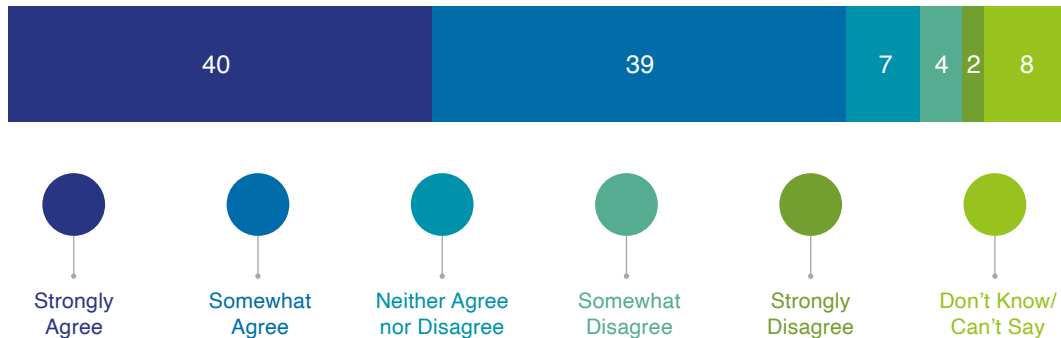
The consumption of news amongst the respondents also had an impact on their optimism regarding the partnership for energy cooperation, with the percentage

of agreement increasing with an increase in the consumption of news- from 75 percent agreement from respondents who read the news less often to 87 percent agreement from those who read it daily.

Gender, age group, and age had no impact on the responses.

## 4.9

## Will the India-Middle East trade cooperation rewrite economic partnerships of the next decade? (Single response)



***India's urban youth see the role of cooperation with countries in the Middle East in rewriting the economic partnerships of the next decade.***

Given the flux in the global economic order, it is imperative for India to seek new partners to advance trade cooperation to usher in a new paradigm of economic partnerships in the coming decade. India's growth trajectory is at a momentous juncture, and much of the pace of India's growth story is likely to take shape in the coming decade as India seeks to achieve a US\$10 trillion economy. 79 percent of the respondents believe that India-Middle East trade cooperation will rewrite economic partnerships in the next decade.

Across all educational categories, respondents with educational qualification up to Class 12 and those with a university degree showed the highest support, reiterating the potential of India-Middle East trade cooperation as a catalyst of economic partnerships in

the coming decade (both at 81 percent), whereas those with a doctorate degree or equivalent showed the least support (71 percent).

Respondents from the East showed the highest support (86 percent), followed by North and West (81 and 75 percent, respectively), whereas respondents from South showed the least support (71 percent).

Based on the extent of consumption of international news, respondents who consume news daily showed the highest support (84 percent), followed by those who consume news at least twice a week (81 percent). Those who have minimal consumption of international news or consume at least once a week showed the least support (both at 74 percent, respectively).

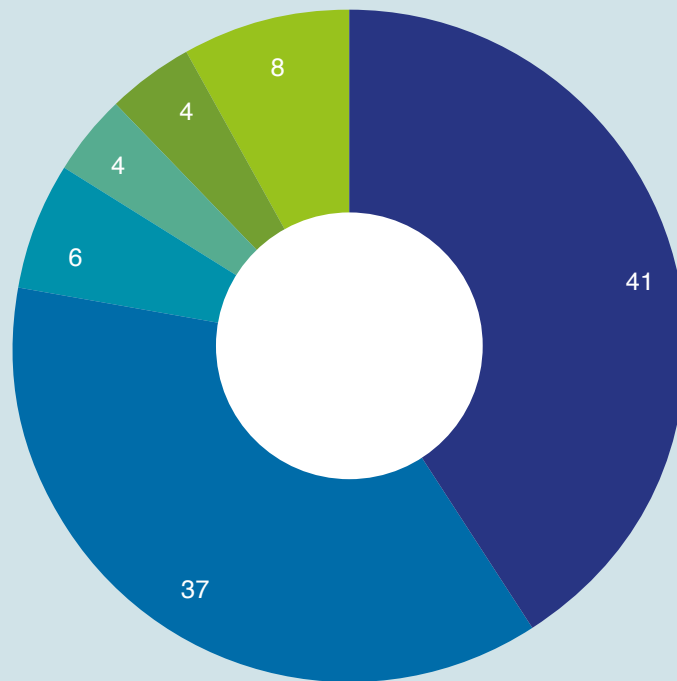
# 5.

## Evolving World Order

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5.1

Is the United Nations an effective and efficient platform to manage the crises in the current world order? (Single response)



Strongly Agree

Somewhat Agree

Neither Agree nor Disagree

Somewhat Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Don't Know/Can't Say

***India's urban youth regard the United Nations as an effective and efficient platform for managing crises in the current world order.***

Support for the United Nations (UN) as an effective and efficient platform to manage crises in the current world order remains high (78 percent). The role and efficiency of the United Nations have increasingly come under scrutiny because of its failure to manage prolonged conflicts raging across various geographies worldwide. This has also led to the belief that the moment of multilateralism is over, giving way to a multipolar order where various countries are now managing their challenges on their own. Despite these difficulties, the overwhelming endorsement of the UN by respondents in this survey reveals the commitment of India's urban youth to multilateralism as a chosen template for managing global crises. This further aligns with the support for multilateralism as a preferred mode of engagement for India's foreign policy (Question 2.2). Additionally, this is reinforced by the consensus among the respondents of this survey about the need for India to have a permanent seat at the UNSC (Question 2.3).

Across all age groups, support for the United Nations as an effective and efficient platform to manage the crises

in the current world order was highest among respondents aged 18-21 (80 percent), followed by those aged 31-35 (79 percent) and 26-30 (77 percent).

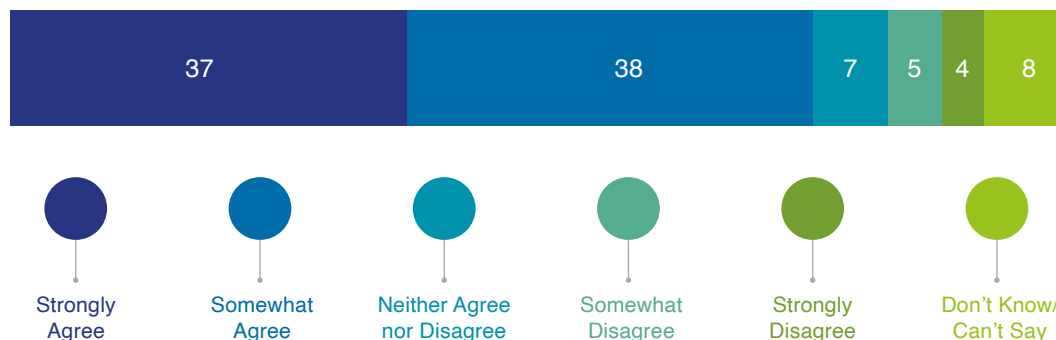
Respondents from the East had the highest support for the role of the UN as an effective and efficient platform (85 percent), whereas respondents from the South had the least support (70 percent).

On the basis of news consumption, respondents who followed international news either daily or twice a week showed the highest support for the UN (80 and 81 percent, respectively), whereas, those with minimal news consumption showed the least support (72 percent).

Across all occupational categories, respondents engaged in the business sector showed the highest support for the UN (84 percent), whereas unskilled workers showed the least support (67 percent).

Gender and income had no remarkable bearing on the responses.

## 5.2

**Are the US trade tariffs indicative of America's decline as a global economic power? (Single response)**

***The trade tariffs imposed by the US indicate its decline as a global economic power.***

Since the onset of the second Trump administration, trade tariffs have been a key feature of Washington's engagement with the world and, more broadly, US foreign policy. The US, once a champion of a free and liberal world order, has sought to weaponise its trade ties and impose tariffs as a strategy of pursuing its interests. However, in this paradigm of free trade, tariffs are believed by many to signal the decline of the US as a global economic power. 75 percent of the respondents agree that the US trade tariffs are indicative of America's decline as a global economic power.

Across all educational categories, respondents with a doctorate degree or equivalent appear to have the highest support for the notion that US trade tariffs mark the decline of the US as a global economic power (86 percent), whereas those with education up to the

10<sup>th</sup> grade have the least support for this statement (70 percent).

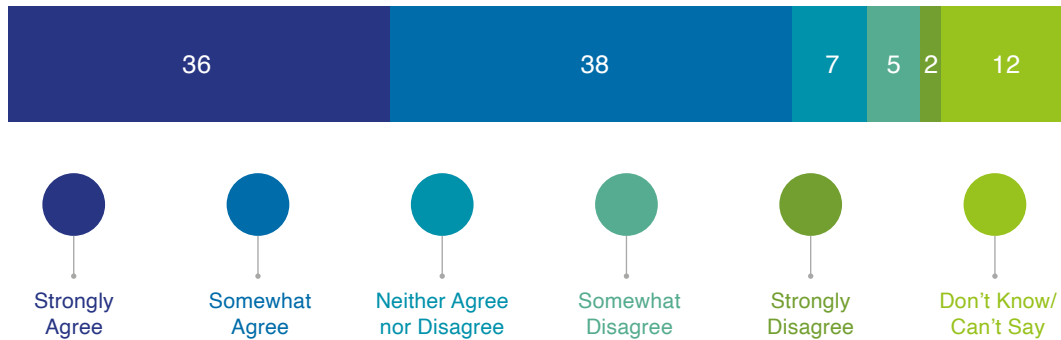
Across all geographical regions, respondents from the East showed the highest support for this statement (80 percent), followed by the West (75 percent) and the North (74 percent), whereas those from the South showed the least support for this statement (71 percent).

Respondents who followed international news either daily or at least twice a week showed the highest support for this statement (77 and 79 percent, respectively), whereas those who consume international news less frequently showed the least support (70 percent).

Gender, age, and income had no discernible impact on the responses.

## 5.3

## Can BRICS and Shanghai Cooperation Organization emerge as alternatives to the West-led global order? (Single response)



***BRICS and the SCO can potentially emerge as alternatives to the West-led global order.***

The state of global multilateralism led by the West appears to be collapsing. With critical strains emerging in transatlantic relations, the failure to accommodate the Global South in vital policy conversations shaping the global order, and the reluctance of the US to lead a cohesive global order, new groupings appear to be emerging. 73 percent of the respondents of this year's survey believe that BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) can emerge as alternatives to the West-led order. India's active engagement in the SCO and its chairmanship of the BRICS, assumed in 2026, appears vital in reaffirming the positive rating of India's youth about these groups.

Across all educational categories, respondents with an undergraduate degree showed the highest support for BRICS and the SCO as alternatives to the West-led global order (78 percent), whereas those with no formal education showed the lowest support (64 percent).

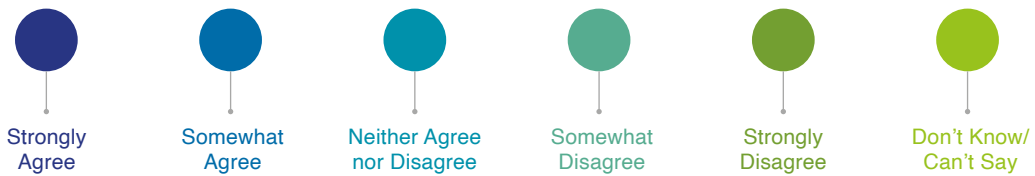
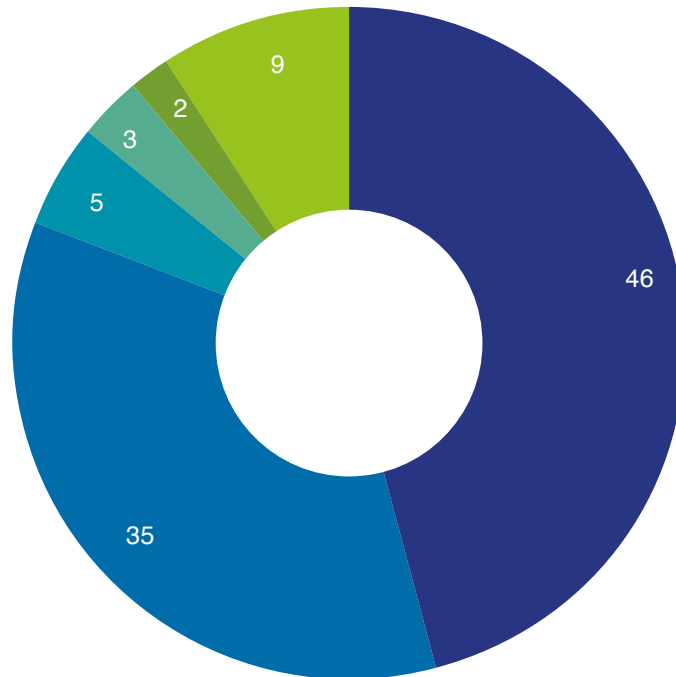
Based on income levels, respondents within the bracket of a monthly income of INR 30,001–60,000 showed the highest support for BRICS and the SCO (78 percent), whereas respondents within the bracket of INR 120,001-150,000 monthly showed the lowest support (67 percent).

Across all regions of India, respondents from the East and North showed the highest support (both at 76 percent), followed by the West (74 percent). Respondents from the South showed the lowest support (64 percent).

Based on news consumption, respondents who consumed international news daily showed the highest support (79 percent), whereas those with minimal news consumption showed the lowest support (65 percent).

Gender and age had no major impact on the responses.

**5.4** To what extent do you think Free Trade Agreements are important for India to realise its US\$10-Trillion economy ambition? (Single response)



***Young urban Indians see FTAs as an important tool for India to achieve its US\$10-trillion economic ambition.***

Eighty-one percent of India's urban youth agree that Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) are important for India to realise its US\$10 trillion economy ambition. This positive perception of FTAs appears to be critical in the context of New Delhi's renewed push to pursue FTAs with friendly countries. New Delhi successfully signed agreements with the EU on 27 January 2026 and with the UK, the EFTA, Oman, and New Zealand in 2025.

In the 2023 edition of the survey, on being asked about the region with which India should sign an agreement, respondents had named North America (73 percent) and Europe (69 percent). Respondents also had an overall positive perception about FTAs and their economic benefits.

While there was unanimous support for FTAs as an important means for India to realise its US\$10 trillion economy ambition across cities (65 to 93 percent), only Faridabad (50 percent) and Chennai (54 percent) expressed marginally less optimism.

Across all educational categories, university graduates showed the most support (84 percent), whereas respondents with doctorate degrees or equivalent agreed with the statement

the least (71 percent). Respondents with doctorate degrees or equivalent also expressed a slightly higher percentage of disagreement (14 percent) and also had the highest 'Don't Know/ Can't Say' responses (14 percent).

Respondents involved in the business sector showed more support regarding the role of FTAs in furthering India's US\$10 trillion ambition, with 88 percent extending their support, followed by students at 84 percent. Private sector employees and housewives showed the least support at 79 percent.

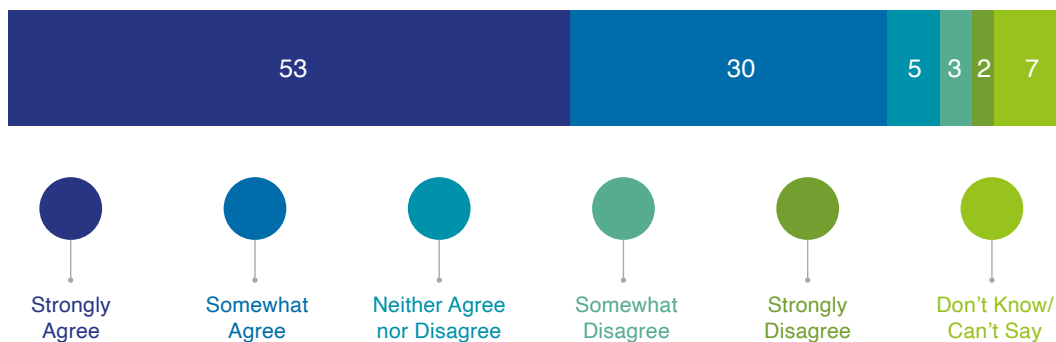
Respondents across all regions believe in the effectiveness of FTAs for India to achieve its US\$10 trillion target, with respondents from the East showing marginally more agreement (88 percent), whereas those from the South showed the least agreement (75 percent).

The support for FTAs also decreased with a decrease in the consumption of news, from 86 percent of daily news readers agreeing with the statement to 76 percent of respondents who read international news less often.

Gender, age group, and age had no impact on the responses.

## 5.5

**Do you think that the new technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and Autonomous Systems will impact the way wars would be fought in the future? (Single response)**



***India's urban youth agree that Artificial Intelligence and Autonomous Systems will impact how wars are fought in the future.***

The experience of Operation Sindoor brought to the fore the growing importance of automated systems during conflicts, with both India and Pakistan adopting a drone-centric approach to warfare in the region. 83 percent of young Indians believe that new technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence and Autonomous Systems, will impact the ways in which wars are fought in the future.

The support is unanimous across cities (70 to 96 percent), with only respondents from Faridabad and Chennai agreeing relatively less with the statement (53 and 59 percent, respectively).

There was a marginal difference between male and female respondents, with 84 percent of males agreeing with the growing role of AI and autonomous systems as opposed to 81 percent of females.

While there is no linear progression from the youngest to the oldest age group, respondents falling in the 18-21 age bracket perceived emerging technologies as having a higher bearing on the wars of the future (85 percent), whereas those in the 31-35 age group believed their impact to be relatively less (82 percent).

Across all educational categories, university graduates showed a higher degree of support (87 percent), whereas respondents with a doctorate degree or equivalent showed the least support (71 percent).

Regionally, respondents from the East expressed higher support (89 percent), whereas those from the South supported it the least (77 percent). This could be due to the vulnerability of the eastern frontier to more border conflicts and attacks and thus, a greater awareness of the role of emerging technologies.

The awareness around the growing importance of emerging technologies also decreased with a decrease in the respondents' consumption of news (88 to 76 percent).

There is no difference across age, income, occupation, and cities.

# 6.

## Impacts of Socio-Economic and Regional Characteristics on Responses: PROBIT Model and Interpretations

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### 6.1 Introduction and Methodological Framework

The earlier Foreign Policy Survey 2024 by ORF consisted of regression analyses based on PROBIT models to check the causal relations of perceptions of the respondents with some of the socio-economic and locational variables identified by the authors. That survey paid particular attention to perceptions about China, and the PROBIT models revealed a high baseline consensus on China-related foreign policy issues, with statistically significant heterogeneity driven more by region, occupation, and news consumption.

This year, a similar exercise has been carried out with a changed context and focus, in a largely comparable framework. The authors developed a series of PROBIT regression models to examine the impacts of socio-economic, demographic, occupational, informational, and regional characteristics on public perceptions about key foreign policy issues, particularly India's relations with the Middle East. The results are outlined in this chapter. The exercise sought to identify whether observed variations in responses are systematically associated with, and can be explained, by identifiable characteristics of the respondents.

As PROBIT analysis works on binary outcomes for the dependent variables, survey responses were recoded into binary outcomes. Responses of “Very Good,” “Good,” and “Neutral” were coded as approval (1), while “Poor” and “Very Poor” were coded as disapproval (0). Responses of “Don’t know/Can’t say” were excluded, as they do not fall into either evaluative category required for binary choice models. Statistical significance is reported using conventional thresholds.

Across all models, high intercept values indicate that for many questions, there exists a broad underlying consensus among respondents. The PROBIT results, therefore, primarily illuminate where, and along which dimensions, this consensus weakens or diverges. The detailed results are given in Appendix 2.

## 6.2 Overall Assessment of India’s Foreign Policy

As briefly mentioned earlier, the PROBIT results for the respondents’ overall evaluation of India’s foreign policy reveal a strong baseline of approval across the sample (See Tables A.2.1 to A.2.6 in Appendix 2). The high intercept suggests that positive assessments are widespread and cut across most socio-economic and demographic categories.

However, one needs to note that despite a common level of minimum support, its intensity depends on the locations of the respondents (Table A.2.1). The pivot of regional location as a significant differentiator is seen in the finding that

respondents from the southern regions exhibit a statistically significant lower probability of approving India’s foreign policy compared to the northern cohort. In contrast, respondents from the western regions show a significantly higher likelihood of approval. Respondents from the eastern regions do not differ significantly from the baseline of the northern reference group.

The effects of income show even more subtle results. While approval remains even across most income categories, respondents in the upper-middle income bracket (INR 90,001–₹1,20,000 per month) display a statistically significant decline in support (Table A.2.2). This suggests that economic conditions may explain expectations from foreign policy performance, particularly among respondents who are neither economically vulnerable nor at the highest income levels.

Occupational status also matters in select cases (Table A.2.3). Students and housewives are significantly more likely to express approval than the unemployed reference group, while most other occupational categories do not exhibit statistically significant effects. Age Groups (Table A.2.5) and Education (Table A.2.4), in contrast, do not emerge as meaningful explanatory variables, indicating that evaluations of overall foreign policy performance are broadly shared across educational groups. Those who follow foreign policy news are more likely to support India’s foreign policy (Table A.2.6).

### 6.3 Regional Patterns in Security and Counterterror Responses

There is a high degree of favourable response to the effectiveness of Operation Sindoor (Table A.2.7). The PROBIT results show a very strong intercept, indicating widespread agreement that the operation constituted an effective response to cross-border terrorism.

Within this broad consensus, regional variation is visible, albeit limited. Respondents from the southern regions are significantly less likely to endorse the effectiveness of the operation compared to those from the north. No statistically significant differences are observed between the northern, eastern, and western regions. This pattern suggests that while support for counter-terror operations is nationally dominant, regional political and strategic sensibilities can still shape marginal differences in evaluation.

### 6.4 Threat Perceptions and the Limits of Demographic Differentiation

The PROBIT analysis of perceptions regarding China–Pakistan military collusion as a threat to India reveals one of the strongest consensus findings in the survey (Table A.2.8). The high intercept and the absence of statistically significant coefficients across age groups indicate that threat perception is uniform.

Although coefficient estimates become progressively negative with age, these differences are not statistically meaningful.

The results, therefore, do not support the hypothesis that threat perception declines with age. Instead, the perception of China–Pakistan military collusion as a security challenge to India appears to be a shared national view, largely insulated from demographic differentiation.

### 6.5 Borders, Infrastructure, and Lived Geography

Responses concerning border conflict with China and Pakistan, and the associated support for border infrastructure development, show more differentiated regional patterns (see Tables A.2.9, A.2.10 and A.2.11).

While respondents from the western regions are statistically less likely than those from the north to express high levels of concern about China and Pakistan as foreign policy challenges, they are nevertheless significantly more likely to support the development of border infrastructure. This indicates that expressions of concern and support for policy responses do not necessarily move in tandem.

Respondents from the eastern regions stand out as the strongest supporters of border infrastructure development. This finding is consistent with geographic proximity to sensitive border areas and highlights how lived geography shapes preferences for tangible security investments, even when abstract threat perceptions are not significantly elevated.

## 6.6 Multilateralism and Institutional Effectiveness

Views on the effectiveness of the United Nations are shaped primarily by informational factors rather than socio-economic characteristics (Table A.2.12). Respondents who follow international news are significantly more likely to view the UN as an effective platform for managing global crises. However, the modest reduction in deviance suggests that news consumption explains only a limited portion of overall opinion variance, indicating that attitudes toward multilateral institutions are influenced by a wider set of considerations.

When examining preferences for India's mode of engagement with other countries, a clear geographic divide emerges (Table A.2.14). Respondents from the eastern regions are significantly more likely to support global cooperation through multilateral platforms, while those from the southern regions are significantly less likely to do so. Educational attainment does not exhibit any statistically significant effect, suggesting that preferences for multilateralism are not driven by formal education levels but are instead shaped by regional political and economic contexts.

## 6.7 Interpreting Global Power Shifts: Perceptions of the United States

Perceptions of whether US trade tariffs signal a decline in America's global economic power are explained primarily by regional location (Table A.2.13).

Respondents from the eastern and southern regions are significantly more sceptical of the notion of US decline compared to those from the north.

Neither occupation nor news consumption has a statistically significant effect in this model. This suggests that views on US economic power are shaped less by individual socio-economic positioning or information exposure and more by region-specific interpretations of global economic and strategic developments.

## 6.8 India–Middle East Economic and Energy Partnerships

Perceptions of Middle Eastern hubs as emerging centres of the global economy and technology are driven predominantly by income (Table A.2.15). Respondents in the ₹30,000–₹90,000 monthly income range are significantly more likely than the lowest-income group to hold favourable views, while occupational differences are not statistically significant once income is accounted for. This points to an income-conditioned optimism regarding emerging global economic centres.

Optimism about India–Middle East trade cooperation is explained by both occupation and news consumption (Table A.2.16). Following international news is the strongest predictor of positive expectations. Compared to the unemployed reference group, businessmen, students, and housewives are significantly more optimistic about the transformative potential of this cooperation.

In contrast, the authors found a different pattern in perceptions regarding India–Middle East energy cooperation (Table A.2.17). Significant explanatory variables here are news consumption that has a direct positive effect on the energy cooperation, while several active labour categories—including self-employed professionals, private-sector employees, and unskilled workers—are significantly more sceptical than the unemployed group. This could suggest that expectations regarding energy partnerships are filtered through occupational exposure to energy prices, employment vulnerability, and sector-specific risks.

### **6.9 Synthesis: What Shaped Foreign Policy Perceptions in 2025**

The PROBIT analysis for the Foreign Policy Survey 2025 highlights that public perceptions are structured around a common centrality, largely non-polarised, though there are regional and socio-economic nuances that need to be taken

into consideration. High baseline approval and strong intercepts across most models indicate a broad consensus on core foreign policy issues. Where variation exists, it is most consistently explained by regional location and information consumption.

Geography emerges as a critical lens through which foreign policy is interpreted—particularly on issues related to security, multilateral engagement, and global power dynamics. News consumption shapes views on institutions, trade, and energy cooperation, while having limited influence on core security threat perceptions.

Taken together, the PROBIT results underscore that foreign policy attitudes in 2025 were shaped by a combination of lived geography, economic standing, and informational exposure, offering a nuanced picture of how India’s urban public engages with an increasingly complex international environment.

# 7.

## Scope for Future Research

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**T**he fifth edition of ORF's Foreign Policy Survey gives a comprehensive overview of progress in India's foreign policy approach, further deepening the understanding of how India's positions on the global stage are perceived domestically, particularly among the country's urban youth. The findings from this year's survey can also act as a starting point to explore avenues of future research vis-a-vis certain themes related to New Delhi's engagement with the world, with a specific focus on the developments in the Middle East and the region's growing importance for India.

In line with the findings from the previous editions of the survey, overall support for India's foreign policy has remained positive despite flux in the current world order and the multitude of challenges facing the country. Unlike previous editions, however, where India's urban youth reposed considerable optimism in the India-US bilateral relationship, expectations regarding Washington's potential to emerge as India's leading partner in the next decade have reduced exponentially. The unpredictability of the US is also seen by the Indian youth as one of the major foreign policy challenges facing the country, while respondents overwhelmingly perceive the imposition

of tariffs by the current administration in Washington as a sign of America's economic decline. These findings are in stark contrast to the previous editions, making it critical to probe how they evolve in the coming year as the Trump presidency continues to upend the US's approach towards engaging with the world. Further assessments on whether the current state of the relationship has completely changed the nature of the strategic partnership between India and the US, or if it is a momentary blip, will be crucial in mapping the long-term trends in the partnership.

The continued support for Russia in the backdrop of growing dissatisfaction with ties with the US is also an important development. The survey was conducted before the visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin to India for the 23rd India-Russia Summit in December 2025, the first since the eruption of the Russia-Ukraine war in February 2022. This fresh momentum in the relationship could be reflected in future iterations of the survey. The continued strain in India-US ties can also have an impact on this bilateral relationship and warrants further attention.

The growing importance of India's relationship with countries in Europe, as well as with the EU, is also an important takeaway from this year's findings. The President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, along with the President of the European Council, Antonio Costa, were the chief guests at this year's Republic Day parade, and

India and the EU concluded and signed the long-awaited India-EU FTA on 27 January, marking the end of a two-decade-long negotiation. The impact of these developments on future survey findings—and their possible translation into greater appreciation of India's engagement with the EU—will be important to track. The signing of this FTA could also be an important indicator in the coming years for an increased support for FTAs in general.

While a majority of the respondents see BRICS and the SCO as potential alternatives to the West-led global order, India's chairmanship of the BRICS presidency this year will have some bearing on the respondents' perceptions in the subsequent editions of the survey.

In a break from the past iterations of the survey, the overall negative perception towards China has dropped, even as it remains higher than the rest of the countries. This reflects attempts by both sides to resolve bilateral issues—a sentiment that also received strong support last year, when respondents showed frustration with the stagnation in diplomatic ties. Despite this, there is still a very high degree of concern about Beijing's actions in the neighbourhood and its partnerships with countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan. Future assessments can help reconcile this dichotomy and determine whether the overall decrease in scepticism vis-à-vis China's actions is sustainable in the long-term.

This edition marked the first time respondents answered specific questions on the current situation in the Middle East and how India should engage with the region. The findings of the survey can aid in understanding the evolution of dynamics in the region in the coming years. IMEC and I2U2 are both perceived positively by the respondents; however, the impact of the Trump presidency on these initiatives, as well as ongoing regional crises, will merit close examination in future analyses.

While a higher proportion of respondents favour India adopting a pragmatic approach to regional crises—followed by support for Israel—a relatively lower proportion of respondents agree that India should extend support to Iran and its allies and proxies in the region; the relationship with both Israel and Iran was deemed satisfactory by the respondents. Understanding how India's strategic autonomy plays out in this context would be an interesting takeaway. The current crisis in Iran will also have a bearing on the responses in the future editions.

Across all occupational categories, unskilled workers have had a higher negative perception, similar to last year, whereas respondents engaged in the business sector and private sector employment expressed more positive views—particularly on themes related to India's economic engagement—as well as heightened concern regarding security-related issues.

The degree of news consumption, introduced as a variable in the survey

last year, has also influenced the responses, giving useful data on how awareness about events unfolding in the world currently influences how India's youth respond to them.

A shift from the previous iterations of the survey is the elevation of concerns related to terrorism as the biggest challenge facing the country's foreign policy, followed by border conflict with China and Pakistan. This is in response to the terror attacks in Pahalgam in April 2025 and the consequent strikes by India on terrorist infrastructure in Pakistan and PoK under Operation Sindoor. Respondents also repose the least trust in Pakistan. As New Delhi and Islamabad both stand at a cross-roads of a changed scenario where deterrence has been redefined, and a shift in the civil-military balance appearing to be underway in Pakistan, a continued assessment on how perceptions regarding Pakistan change in this new context will remain important.

Engagement for climate mitigation, which was added as an option under India's engagement strategy with the neighbouring countries in this year's edition of the survey, received the most support from females as opposed to males. More respondents from the lower income bracket also saw these efforts as being adequate, reflecting their vulnerability to climate disasters. Further research into whether climate mitigation efforts effectively address these sections owing to their overly adverse impact on their well-being could be important.

Across regions, respondents from the East were more positive for elements related to India's engagement with its neighbours. They showed a higher degree of support for the Neighbourhood First Policy, India's efforts to further its regional security goals through different policies, and the stance taken against Pakistan.

They also had a higher threat perception on questions related to Pakistan's engagement with other countries in the region and China's actions in the neighbourhood. It will be interesting to see how much bearing geography has in determining the positives and negatives of certain policy responses.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1. Survey Results

**2.1**

How would you rate India for its foreign policy on an overall basis?

Very Good	Good	Neutral	Poor	Very Poor	Don't Know/ Can't Say
42	44	8	2	2	2

**2.2**

In your opinion, what should India's preferred mode of engagement with other countries be?

Global cooperation through multilateral platforms	Cooperation with like-minded countries through Mini-lateral platforms	Bilateral engagements	No engagement at all	Don't Know/ Can't Say
44	20	22	6	8

**2.3**

India seeks to secure a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council. Do you personally think that this is an important goal for India?

Very Important	Somewhat Important	Neither Important/ Nor Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Very Unimportant	Don't Know/ Can't Say
65	27	2	2	2	3

## 2.4

## How concerned are you about the following major foreign policy challenges confronting India?

Statements	Very Concerned	Somewhat Concerned	Neither Concerned/Nor Unconcerned	Somewhat Unconcerned	Not Concerned at all	Don't Know/ Can't Say
Border Conflict with China	58	31	4	2	3	2
Border Conflict with Pakistan	66	22	4	2	5	1
Terrorism	71	21	2	2	3	1
Climate Change	44	35	7	6	5	3
Cyber Security	57	30	5	3	3	2
Supply Chain Disruption	32	41	8	6	5	7
Unpredictability of the US	31	40	8	6	7	7
Conflicts around the World (Middle East, Europe, Southeast Asia)	36	39	6	6	7	6
Decreasing Relevance of the Multilateral System	31	42	7	6	5	9

## 2.5

How satisfied are you with India's bilateral relationship with the following countries/group of countries?

Countries/Group of Countries	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Somewhat Unsatisfied	Very Unsatisfied	Don't Know/ Can't Say
China	8	23	13	16	34	7
UAE	15	35	19	13	8	10
Indonesia	16	35	21	10	8	11
Germany	26	35	14	8	6	10
Brazil	22	35	16	9	6	11
South Africa	21	35	18	9	7	10
ASEAN	22	31	17	9	7	14
USA	24	32	18	10	9	7
Australia	28	36	15	8	6	7
Japan	38	32	12	7	6	7
Russia	48	25	10	6	5	6
United Kingdom	22	36	18	8	6	9
France	24	38	15	8	6	9
EU	19	35	18	10	6	13
Israel	24	30	16	10	9	10
Iran	12	30	20	12	11	15

## 2.6

In the next ten years, how likely are each of the following countries/groupings to become India's leading partners?

Countries/Group of Countries	Very Likely	Somewhat Likely	Neither Likely nor Unlikely	Somewhat Unlikely	Very Unlikely	Don't Know/ Can't Say
China	10	25	14	14	28	8
UAE	17	34	18	12	10	10
Indonesia	16	34	20	11	8	11
Germany	26	35	15	8	6	9
Brazil	21	36	16	9	7	11
South Africa	22	34	18	10	6	10
ASEAN	21	30	17	10	8	14
USA	28	33	15	9	7	7
Australia	28	36	16	8	5	8
Japan	38	30	11	7	6	7
Russia	47	25	11	6	5	7
United Kingdom	23	35	16	9	7	10
France	24	38	15	9	6	9
EU	20	33	18	10	7	12
Israel	24	31	16	10	9	10
Iran	13	31	19	11	11	15

## 2.7

To what extent do you agree with the following statements on Operation Sindoor?

Statements	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/ Can't Say
Operation Sindoor was an effective response to cross-border terrorism originating from Pakistan	73	20	2	2	2	1
Regular joint briefings made by the three Indian Armed Forces was an effective mode of communication	65	26	3	2	1	2
The global outreach made by the all-party MP delegation was useful in conveying India's narrative	56	31	4	3	2	3
Measured and targeted attacks on terror camps in Pakistan was useful in getting global support	56	30	5	4	3	3
Operation Sindoor demonstrated the challenge of conspiracy between China-Pakistan for India's security	62	26	4	3	2	3

**2.8**

**Which of the following geographies has seen an upscale in Indian Foreign Policy engagement in the last 5 years?**

Geographies	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/ Can't Say
Southeast Asia	19	34	15	8	7	17
South Asia	21	35	15	9	6	13
Central Asia	22	34	16	9	6	13
Latin America	16	32	20	11	7	15
US-Canada	23	33	16	10	7	12
Europe	24	38	15	8	5	11
Indo-Pacific	17	35	17	9	6	15
Africa	21	34	18	10	6	12
Middle East	20	36	15	9	7	14

**3.1**

How do you assess the status of India's bilateral relationship with each of the following neighbouring countries?

Countries	Very Good	Good	Neutral	Poor	Very Poor	Don't Know/ Can't Say
Pakistan	3	5	6	15	65	5
Afghanistan	8	23	21	21	20	6
Bangladesh	6	20	21	20	28	5
Sri Lanka	15	40	23	11	7	5
Bhutan	25	36	17	9	6	8
Nepal	29	36	18	8	5	4
Maldives	19	34	20	11	7	10
Mauritius	18	33	20	9	6	14
Myanmar	17	33	21	11	7	12
Thailand	21	38	17	9	6	9
Seychelles	10	25	18	9	8	29

**3.2**

For each of the following neighbouring countries, please indicate how much you trust them.

Countries	Trust Completely	Trust Somewhat	Neither Trust nor Distrust	Distrust Completely	Distrust Somewhat	Don't Know/ Can't Say
Pakistan	3	5	5	10	73	5
Afghanistan	7	23	18	21	27	5
Bangladesh	6	21	18	17	34	5
Sri Lanka	16	42	19	10	9	4
Bhutan	25	37	16	8	8	6
Nepal	30	36	15	8	7	4
Maldives	18	35	21	9	9	8
Mauritius	18	33	19	10	9	12
Myanmar	18	33	19	10	9	11
Thailand	20	39	16	8	8	8
Seychelles	11	25	17	10	10	27

## 3.3

## What is the most successful component of India's "Neighbourhood First" Policy?

Statement	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/ Can't Say
Development aid to neighbouring countries	49	29	9	6	4	3
Connectivity with the neighbouring countries	47	33	10	5	3	2
India's engagement with non-friendly governments in the region for its own interests	37	35	12	6	5	4
Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief to neighbouring countries	53	28	10	5	3	2
Countering Chinese presence and influence in the region	40	33	12	6	5	5

## 3.4

## To what extent do you agree with these statements on Pakistan?

Statement	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/ Can't Say
India should keep the Indus Water Treaty in abeyance unless Pakistan stops its support for terrorism targeting India	61	17	7	6	5	4
Pakistan's influence in international organizations like the UNSC and SCO hinders India's interests	41	34	10	5	4	5
The growing ties between Pakistan and Bangladesh can negatively affect India	44	30	11	6	5	4
Pakistan's outreach to other South Asian countries after Operation Sindoor was successful	35	30	14	8	7	6
The growing coordination between China, Afghanistan and Pakistan poses a threat to India	43	28	12	8	5	4
China-Pakistan military collusion is a threat to India	47	27	11	7	5	3
The Trump administration's re-engagement with Pakistan can derail the progress in India-US ties	40	30	11	7	5	6

**3.5**

To what extent do you agree that India's engagement with its neighbours has been adequate in the following sectors?

Sectors	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/ Can't Say
Trade and Economy	48	34	8	4	3	3
Defence and Security	50	31	9	4	2	3
People-to-People Engagement	44	34	12	4	3	3
Financial	42	36	12	5	3	3
Political	39	33	13	6	4	4
Energy	42	35	10	5	3	4
Digital and Technology	47	31	10	5	3	3
Climate Mitigation	36	32	15	6	4	7

## 3.6

## How concerned are you about the following Chinese actions in India's neighbourhood?

Statement	Very Concerned	Somewhat Concerned	Neither Concerned nor Unconcerned	Somewhat not Concerned	Not Concerned	Don't Know/ Can't Say
Chinese ownership of Hambantota port in Sri Lanka	39	32	10	7	5	7
Bhutan-China border talks	31	38	13	7	4	7
China Pakistan Economic corridor's extension to Afghanistan	34	32	15	7	5	7
Chinese Defence pact with the Maldives	29	38	14	7	4	8
Chinese spy vessel and submarine dockings in Sri Lanka and the Maldives	35	34	13	7	4	7
China's railway line project connecting its border town Kerung with Kathmandu in Nepal	33	35	11	8	5	9

**3.7**

To what extent do you agree that these policies/actions of India have strengthened India's regional security goals?

Policies/ Actions	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/ Can't Say
India's Nuclear Deterrence	50	28	9	6	4	4
Border Infrastructure and enhanced deployment of troops	52	29	9	5	2	3
Maritime Exercises and Joint Patrolling	47	30	11	5	2	4
Counter terrorism efforts	54	26	9	5	2	3
Developing security and defence infrastructure of neighbouring countries	44	30	11	6	4	5

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**4.1**

Can IMEC (India Middle-East-Europe Economic Corridor) become the future of connectivity efforts for the Middle East?

Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/ Can't Say
49	35	3	2	1	9

**4.2**

Can I2U2 (India, Israel, the UAE and the United States) lead cooperation efforts in the Middle East?

Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/ Can't Say
42	39	5	3	2	10

## 4.3

To what extent do you agree with the following statements on the future of security in the Middle East?

Statements	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/ Can't Say
The US will continue to remain the main guarantor of security	30	40	8	7	10	5
China will replace the US as a guarantor of security	19	34	11	12	17	6
Middle East will become a site of competition between US and China	27	39	11	8	6	9
The Middle East will guarantee its own security within the next decade	29	40	9	6	5	11

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## 4.4

Will the Iran-Israel war negatively impact global de-nuclearisation efforts?

Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/ Can't Say
43	37	4	3	4	8

#### 4.5 Amid the ongoing crises in the Middle East, what should India's stance be, in your opinion?

Support Israel	20
Support Palestine's stance	9
Support Iran and its allies/proxies	5
Condemn Hamas and other terror groups	7
Support the two-state solution	17
Remain pragmatic and work with all sides to de-escalate	23
Remain out of it	10
Don't Know/Can't Say	9

#### 4.6 Do you agree that Middle Eastern hubs like Dubai, Riyadh, Doha etc. are the new centres of the global economy and technology?

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Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/Can't Say
39	37	5	4	3	11

#### 4.7 Do you agree that the Indian diaspora will make a significant contribution to the growth of the Middle East?

Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/Can't Say
44	37	6	3	2	7

**4.8**

**Do you agree that the partnership between India and Middle Eastern countries will shape the future of global energy cooperation?**

Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/ Can't Say
44	39	5	3	2	7

**4.9**

**Will the India-Middle East trade cooperation rewrite economic partnerships of the next decade?**

Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/ Can't Say
40	39	7	4	2	8

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**5.1**

**Is the United Nations an effective and efficient platform to manage the crises in the current world order?**

Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/ Can't Say
41	37	6	4	4	8

**5.2**

**Are the US trade tariffs indicative of America's decline as a global economic power?**

Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/ Can't Say
37	38	7	5	4	8

**5.3**

**Can BRICS and Shanghai Cooperation Organization emerge as alternatives to the West-led global order?**

Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/ Can't Say
36	38	7	5	2	12

**5.4**

**To what extent do you think Free Trade Agreements are important for India to realize its US\$10-Trillion economy ambition?**

Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/ Can't Say
46	35	5	3	2	9

**5.5**

**Do you think that the new technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and Autonomous Systems impact the way wars would be fought in the future?**

Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/ Can't Say
53	30	5	3	2	7

## Appendix 2. PROBIT Model Specification and Data Treatment

As stated in Chapter 6, PROBIT regression models were employed to examine the statistical significance of key socio-economic and demographic determinants, including income, education, occupation, age, and city of residence. The following data treatment and coding conventions were adopted to ensure consistency with the binary-response structure required for probit estimation:

- Survey questions included a response option of “Don’t know/Can’t say.” As this category does not correspond to either approval or disapproval, such responses were excluded from the probit analysis.
- Given the binary nature of the probit model, survey responses were recoded into dichotomous outcomes:
  - Approval (coded as 1): “Very Good,” “Good,” and “Neutral”
  - Disapproval (coded as 0): “Poor” and “Very Poor”
- Statistical significance levels are reported using conventional notation: \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*  $p < 0.05$ ; ·  $p < 0.10$ .

### Questions Posed and Results Obtained.

#### Q1. How would you rate India for its foreign policy on an overall basis.

**Table A.2.1. Regional Variations**

Reference Group – Region: North

	Estimate	Std. Error	z value	Pr(> z )
(Intercept)	1.74631	0.05694	30.67	<2.00E-16***
Region: East	0.1069	0.09718	1.1	0.271317
Region: South	-0.31868	0.08098	-3.935	8.31E-05***
Region: West	0.36865	0.09962	3.701	0.000215***

**Table A.2.2. Income Variations**

Reference Group – Income &lt; 30k per month

	Estimate	Std. Error	z value	Pr(> z )
(Intercept)	1.69708	0.04569	37.146	<2e-16***
Rs. 30001–60000	0.14513	0.07722	1.879	0.0602.
Rs. 60001–90000	0.16267	0.12553	1.296	1.95E-01
Rs. 90001–120000	-0.3841	0.14991	-2.562	0.0104*
Rs. 120001–150000	-0.26288	0.23286	-1.129	0.2589
Above Rs. 150000 per month	0.02138	0.26954	0.079	0.9368
Refused	0.33394	0.24228	1.378	0.1681
Don't Know/ Can't Say	0.33394	0.17434	1.915	0.0554.

**Table A.2.3. Do Responses Change with Occupation?**

Reference Group -Unemployed

	Estimate	Std. Error	z value	Pr(> z )
Self-Employed Professional	1.513185	0.132527	11.418	<2.00E-16***
Businessman/trader	0.002379	0.171031	0.014	0.9889
Government Sector Employee	0.215544	0.167541	1.287	1.98E-01
Private Sector Employee	0.131668	0.270893	0.486	0.62693
Skilled Worker	0.282482	0.148712	1.9	0.0575.
Unskilled worker	0.020935	0.166288	0.126	0.89981
Self-Employed Professional	0.228105	0.263864	0.864	0.38732
Housewife	0.445631	0.154725	2.88	0.00397**
Student	0.296946	0.151397	1.961	0.04984*
Refused	-0.261066	0.408584	-0.639	0.52285

**Table A.2.4: Does Education explain Responses?**

Reference Group - Illiterate

	Estimate	Std. Error	z value	Pr(> z )
(Intercept)	1.63669	0.27362	5.982	0.00000000221***
Up to Class 10th	0.08858	0.28243	0.314	0.754
Up to Class 12th	0.20763	0.28154	0.737	0.461
Undergraduate or equivalent (diploma/ technical course)	0.09982	0.2891	0.345	7.30E-01
University graduate	0.05778	0.27944	0.207	0.836
Post-graduate degree/ Professional or higher	0.18871	0.29517	0.639	0.523
Doctorate or equivalent	-0.56912	0.64686	-0.88	0.379
Refused	3.1825	59.99437	0.053	0.958

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**Table A.2.5: Do Responses vary with Age Groups?**

Reference Group – 18-21 Age

	Estimate	Std. Error	z value	P(z)
(Intercept)	1.81741	0.07204	25.228	<2e-16***
22-25	-0.15998	0.09598	-1.667	0.0956
26-30	-0.17149	0.09204	-1.863	0.0624
31-35	0.11527	0.10052	1.147	2.52E-01

**Table A.2.6: What happens with those who follow the news?**

	Estimate	Std. Error	z value	Pr(> z )
(Intercept)	1.60605	0.07774	20.658	<2e-16 ***
Follows_News	0.17563	0.08549	2.054	0.0399 *

## Operation Sindoor

### Q2. To what extent do you agree with the following statements on Operation Sindoor?

Operation Sindoor was an effective response to cross-border terrorism originating from Pakistan (region).

#### Table A.2.7: Is there a regional variation in the response?

Reference Group – Region: North

Variable	Estimate (Z-score)	Std. Error	z value	Pr(> z )
(Intercept)	1.95045	0.06618	29.471	< 2e-16***
Region: South	-0.50745	0.08825	-5.750	8.91e-09***
Region: East	-0.15710	0.10056	-1.562	0.118
Region: West	0.08936	0.10100	0.885	0.376

Null deviance: 1555.7 on 4985 degrees of freedom

Residual deviance: 1505.4 on 4982 degrees of freedom

(72 observations deleted due to missingness)

AIC: 1513.4

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### Q3. To what extent do you agree with these statements on Pakistan?

China-Pakistan military collusion is a threat to India.

#### Table A.2.8: Does Age-Group determine the response?

Reference Group – Age (18-21)

Variable	Estimate (Z-score)	Std. Error	z value	Pr(> z )
(Intercept)	1.188761	0.049675	23.931	< 2e-16***
Age 22-25	-0.004346	0.069769	-0.062	0.950
Age 26-30	-0.055489	0.066090	-0.840	0.401
Age 31-35	-0.097141	0.065357	-1.486	0.137

Null deviance: 3707.1 on 4889 degrees of freedom

Residual deviance: 3704.1 on 4886 degrees of freedom

(168 observations deleted due to missingness)

AIC: 3712.1

**Q4. How concerned are you about the following major foreign policy challenges confronting India? - Border conflicts with China and Pakistan are seen as big challenges, and hence, more support is needed for the development of border infrastructure (Q15, Q4\_1, Q4\_2).**

**Table A.2.9: Is there a regional pattern in responses about Border Infrastructure?**

Reference Group – Region: North

Predictor	Estimate	Std. Error	z value	Pr(> z )
(Intercept)	1.36545	0.04475	30.510	< 2e-16***
Region: East	0.44844	0.08940	5.016	5.28e-07***
Region: South	0.10996	0.07528	1.461	0.1441
Region: West	0.15097	0.06921	2.181	0.0292*

**Table A.2.10: Is there a regional pattern in the responses about China?**

Reference Group – Region: North

Predictor	Estimate	Std. Error	z value	Pr(> z )
(Intercept)	1.78132	0.05807	30.675	< 2e-16***
Region: East	0.07005	0.09788	0.716	0.474
Region: South	-0.09301	0.08930	-1.041	0.298
Region: West	-0.42079	0.07528	-5.590	2.28e-08***

**Table A.2.11: Is there a regional pattern in the responses about Pakistan?**

Predictor	Estimate	Std. Error	z value	Pr(> z )
(Intercept)	1.56848	0.05012	31.297	< 2e-16***
Region: East	0.07040	0.08419	0.836	0.403
Region: South	-0.02390	0.07953	-0.301	0.764
Region: West	-0.32647	0.06732	-4.850	1.24e-06***

**Q5. Does the difference in the consumption of news explain the support for UN's effectiveness and efficiency in managing the crises in the current world order?**

**Table A.2.12: News following as an explanatory variable**

	Estimate	Std. Error	z value	Pr(> z )
(Intercept)	1.20065	0.06661	18.025	<2.00E-16***
FollowsNews	0.18746	0.07242	2.589	0.00964**

Null deviance: 2746.9 on 4654 degrees of freedom

Residual deviance: 2740.3 on 4653 degrees of freedom

AIC: 2744.3

**Q6. “US trade tariffs are indicative of America’s decline as a global economic power”. Does the perception vary across region, news consumption, and income groups?**

**Table A.2.13. What explains perceptions around US trade tariffs?**

Reference – Region: North, Occupation – Unemployed (9)

Variable	Estimate (Z-score)	Std. Error	z value	Pr(> z )
(Intercept)	1.360806	0.143257	9.499	< 2e-16***
Region: East	-0.183327	0.073532	-2.493	0.0127*
Region: South	-0.364906	0.071049	-5.136	2.81e-07***
Region: West	0.028825	0.070993	0.406	0.6847
News Consumption (News1)	0.072020	0.074119	0.972	0.3312
Occupation 8 (Housewife)	0.173031	0.134684	1.285	0.1989
Occupation 3 (Govt)	-0.334858	0.206378	-1.623	0.1047
Occupation 4 (Private)	-0.129917	0.129030	-1.007	0.3140
Occupation 2 (Business)	-0.119882	0.142935	-0.839	0.4016
Occupation 1 (Self-Emp)	-0.078887	0.151455	-0.521	0.6025
Occupation 6 (Unskilled)	-0.058262	0.227827	-0.256	0.7982
Occupation 10 (Student)	0.001764	0.132286	0.013	0.9894

Null deviance: 3082.8 on 4662 degrees of freedom

Residual deviance: 3010.8 on 4649 degrees of freedom

(395 observations deleted due to missingness)

AIC: 3038.8

## Q7. Should Multilateralism be India's preferred mode of engagement?

**Table A.2.14. Are Region and Education factors explaining support for multilateralism?**

Reference – Region: North, Education: Illiterate

Variable	Estimate (Z-score)	Std. Error	z value	Pr(> z )
(Intercept)	1.55880	0.26059	5.982	2.21e-09***
Region: East	0.27345	0.10291	2.657	0.00788**
Region: South	-0.48787	0.07675	-6.356	2.07e-10***
Region: West	-0.02926	0.07908	-0.370	0.71140
Education 2 (Class 10)	-0.11411	0.26657	-0.428	0.66860
Education 3 (Class 12)	0.02085	0.26550	0.079	0.93741
Education 4 (UG Equiv)	0.21983	0.27541	0.798	0.42477
Education 5 (Graduate)	0.24025	0.26595	0.903	0.36633
Education 6 (PG)	0.10076	0.27595	0.365	0.71500
Education 7 (Doctorate)	-0.23979	0.63649	-0.377	0.70637

Null deviance: 2167.0 on 4661 degrees of freedom

Residual deviance: 2074.1 on 4651 degrees of freedom

(396 observations deleted due to missingness)

AIC: 2096.1

**Q8. Do you agree that Middle Eastern hubs like Dubai, Riyadh, Doha, etc. are the new centres of the global economy and technology?**

**Table A.2.15: Do occupation and Income variables explain the support for the above notion?**

Reference – Income: <30k, Occupation: Unemployed

Variable	Estimate (Z-score)	Std. Error	z value	Pr(> z )
(Intercept)	1.20019	0.06661	18.025	< 2e-16***
30k-60k	0.36313	0.06815	5.329	9.9e-08***
60k-90k	0.24262	0.10274	2.362	0.0182*
90k-120k	0.29402	0.17111	1.718	0.0857.
Occupation 5 (Skilled)	0.21711	0.16230	1.338	0.1810
Occupation 10 (Student)	0.17759	0.13899	1.278	0.2013
Occupation 8 (Housewife)	0.14514	0.13867	1.047	0.2953
Occupation 2 (Business)	0.13238	0.15553	0.851	0.3947
Occupation 4 (Private)	-0.07464	0.13583	-0.549	0.5827
Occupation 1 (Self-Emp)	-0.17737	0.15571	-1.139	0.2547
Occupation 6 (Unskilled)	-0.25057	0.20879	-1.200	0.2301

Null deviance: 2545.7 on 4515 degrees of freedom

Residual deviance: 2489.5 on 4499 degrees of freedom

(542 observations deleted due to missingness)

AIC: 2523.5

### Q9. Will the India-Middle East trade cooperation rewrite economic partnerships of the next decade?

**Table A.2.16: Do Consumption of News and Occupation variables explain the support for the above notion?**

Reference Group – Unemployed

	Estimate	Std. Error	z value	Pr(> z )
(Intercept)	0.96856	0.13758	7.04	1.92E-12***
Self-Employed Professional	0.05581	0.16115	0.346	0.7291
Businessman/trader	0.32653	0.15874	2.057	0.0397*
Government Sector Employee	0.32374	0.26738	1.211	0.226
Private Sector Employee	0.06626	0.1344	0.493	0.622
Skilled Worker	0.17408	0.16108	1.081	0.2798
Unskilled worker	0.44285	0.29238	1.515	0.1299
Housewife	0.35482	0.14068	2.522	0.0117*
Student	0.27978	0.1391	2.011	0.0443*
Refused	0.48948	0.50983	0.96	0.337
Follows News	0.41843	0.07537	5.552	2.82E-08***

Null deviance: 2201.6 on 4636 degrees of freedom

Residual deviance: 2152.6 on 4626 degrees of freedom

(421 observations deleted due to missingness)

AIC: 2174.6

**Q10. Do you agree that the partnership between India and Middle Eastern countries will shape the future of global energy cooperation?  
Q23**

**Table A.2.17: Do Consumption of News and Occupation variables explain the support for the above notion?**

Reference Group – Unemployed

	Estimate	Std. Error	z value	Pr(> z )
(Intercept)	1.57928	0.19885	7.942	1.99E-15***
Self Employed Professional	-0.6044	0.2167	-2.789	0.00529**
Businessman / trader	-0.3043	0.21568	-1.411	0.15829
Government Sector Employee	-0.31854	0.3065	-1.039	0.29867
Private Sector Employee	-0.55325	0.19775	-2.798	0.00515**
Skilled Worker	-0.4239	0.21785	-1.946	0.05167.
Unskilled worker	-0.70691	0.26955	-2.623	0.00873**
Housewife	-0.17367	0.20378	-0.852	0.39406
Student	-0.18106	0.20376	-0.889	0.37422
Refused	-0.13613	0.53174	-0.256	0.79794
FollowsNews	0.47533	0.07728	6.15	7.73E-10***

Null deviance: 1957.1 on 4680 degrees of freedom

Residual deviance: 1886.2 on 4670 degrees of freedom

(377 observations deleted due to missingness)

AIC: 1908.2

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