



## EDITORIAL: THE HINDU

**GENERAL STUDIES 2: INTERNATIONAL RELATION**  
**TOPIC: INDIA & NEIGHBOURS**

**DATE: 21.02.2025**

### The long and winding road of India-China relations

#### India-China Relations: Cooperation, Conflict, and Strategic Challenges

##### Context

- India and China, two of the world's **most populous and influential nations**, share a **complex and multifaceted relationship**.
- Their interactions have been marked by **cooperation, competition, and conflict**, shaping regional and global geopolitics.

##### Historical Background of India-China Relations

###### 1. Early Diplomatic Ties and Optimism (1950s)

- **India was one of the first countries** to recognize the **People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1950**.
- **Formal diplomatic relations were established on April 1, 1950**.
- The relationship was symbolized by:
  - The **Panchsheel Agreement (1954)**, which promoted **peaceful coexistence**.
  - The popular slogan **"Hindi-Chini Bhai-Bhai"** (Indians and Chinese are brothers).

###### 2. Territorial Disputes and 1962 War

- Tensions emerged over **border disputes in Aksai Chin (Ladakh) and Arunachal Pradesh**.
- **Sino-Indian War of 1962** resulted in a **major setback** for India-China relations.
- The war left deep mistrust, leading to decades of **strategic divergence**.

###### 3. Cold War Era and Strategic Alignments (1962–1990s)

- **China aligned with Pakistan and the US**, while India **deepened ties with the Soviet Union**.
- **Major border skirmishes occurred**, including:
  - **1967: Nathu La and Cho La clashes** (Indian victory).



- **1987: Sumdorong Chu standoff** in Arunachal Pradesh.
- **1988:** Prime Minister **Rajiv Gandhi's** visit to **China** improved diplomatic engagement.
- **Joint Working Group (JWG) on Border Issues** was established to explore peaceful resolutions.

#### 4. Era of Engagement and Economic Cooperation (1990s–2010s)

- Several agreements laid the foundation for improved relations:
  - **1993 & 1996:** Agreements on **Peace and Confidence-Building Measures** along the **Line of Actual Control (LAC)**.
  - **2005:** Framework agreement on **Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for Border Settlements**.
  - **Strategic and Cooperative Partnership for Peace and Prosperity** was initiated.
- **Economic engagement flourished:**
  - China became **India's largest trading partner**.
  - **India joined the BRICS alliance** and engaged in regional platforms like the **Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)**.

#### 5. Rising Tensions and Border Clashes (2010s–Present)

- **2013: Depsang standoff**, followed by the **Border Defence Co-operation Agreement (BDCA)**.
- **2014: Chumar incident** during Chinese President **Xi Jinping's** visit to **India**.
- **2017: Doklam standoff**—Indian and Chinese troops **faced off for 73 days** in **Bhutan's** territory.
- **2020: Galwan Valley clash**—the **deadliest confrontation in decades**, leading to casualties on both sides.
- Military tensions remain high, despite multiple rounds of **diplomatic and military talks**.

#### Current Dynamics: Key Areas of Conflict

##### 1. Economic Ties: Trade Dependence vs. Trade Imbalance

- **China is India's largest trading partner**, with bilateral trade **crossing \$125 billion in 2024** (1.9% YoY growth).
- However, **India faces a massive trade deficit** due to its heavy reliance on **Chinese imports**.





- **India has imposed restrictions on Chinese investments and banned several Chinese apps, citing security concerns.**

## 2. Geopolitical Rivalry and Strategic Competition

- **India and China compete for influence in the Indo-Pacific region.**
- China's close **ties with Pakistan** and expansionist policies in the **Indian Ocean Region (IOR)** challenge India's strategic interests.
- China's **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)** has further deepened tensions, as India opposes BRI's **China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)** passing through **Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK)**.

## 3. Border Disputes and Military Standoffs

- The **LAC remains highly volatile**, with **frequent military skirmishes** and confrontations.
- Key disputed areas include:
  - **Ladakh:** Standoff in **Galwan Valley, Pangong Tso, and Depsang Plains.**
  - **Arunachal Pradesh:** China claims it as "**South Tibet**", increasing tensions.
  - **Sikkim:** Periodic tensions in **Naku La and Doklam.**
- **Efforts to resolve the border issue through diplomatic and military channels continue**, but progress has been slow.

## Pathways for the Future: Strategic Considerations

### 1. Economic Diversification and Reducing Trade Dependence

- India should:
  - **Strengthen domestic manufacturing** under **Atmanirbhar Bharat (Self-Reliant India Initiative)**.
  - **Increase trade partnerships** with other nations to reduce dependency on Chinese imports.
  - **Encourage investments in renewable energy, digital technology, and infrastructure sectors.**
- **Balanced trade agreements** can help **address the trade imbalance** while maintaining economic engagement.

### 2. Strengthening Military Preparedness and Border Security

- **Enhancing border infrastructure** to ensure quick mobilization of troops and equipment.



- **Developing strategic partnerships** with allies like **the US, Japan, and Australia (QUAD)**.
- **Sustained diplomatic and military-level talks** to prevent border conflicts.
- **Implementing Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs)** to reduce tensions.

### 3. Strengthening Diplomatic Dialogue and Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

- **Regular summits and high-level meetings** to maintain diplomatic engagement.
- **Working Mechanism for Consultation & Coordination (WMCC) and Corps Commander-Level Talks** have been key negotiation platforms.
- Continued **track-2 diplomacy (backchannel talks)** to **de-escalate border tensions**.

### 4. Regional and Global Cooperation on Common Issues

- **Climate change, trade cooperation, and counter-terrorism efforts** offer potential areas of collaboration.
- India and China, as **leading emerging economies**, can play a vital role in global economic stability.

### 5. Promoting People-to-People Relations

- **Enhancing cultural and educational exchanges** can help **reduce hostilities**.
- Encouraging:
  - **Student exchange programs** between Indian and Chinese universities.
  - **Tourism and academic collaborations** for mutual cultural understanding.

### Conclusion

- **India-China relations remain highly complex**, shaped by a mix of **economic cooperation, geopolitical rivalry, and border tensions**.
- While economic ties **offer a foundation for engagement**, unresolved border disputes and strategic competition **continue to strain relations**.
- Managing this relationship **requires careful diplomacy, strategic foresight, and pragmatic decision-making** to maintain **regional stability and long-term cooperation**.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/the-long-and-winding-road-of-india-china-relations/article69243982.ece>