



EDITORIAL: THE HINDU

GENERAL STUDIES 2: INTERNATIONAL RELATION
TOPIC: NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES (INDIA-CHINA)

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India, China at 75 — a time for strategy, not sentiment

Overview of Current India-China Relations

- As India and China mark 75 years of diplomatic relations, the editorial stresses the importance of moving beyond emotional narratives and focusing on strategic clarity.
- The bilateral relationship is now defined by **structural strategic rivalry**, **military tension**, **border disputes**, and **economic interdependence**, rather than historical goodwill or cultural affinity.

Key Strategic Issues in the Relationship

China as a Structural Factor in Indian Foreign Policy

- China's rise and assertiveness have become central considerations in India's foreign policy planning.
- Strategic decisions on **infrastructure building in border areas**, **trade policy shifts**, and **defence collaborations** (like Quad) are shaped by concerns over Chinese behaviour and intentions.

Border and Security Tensions

- The India-China border, especially the Line of Actual Control (LAC), remains a flashpoint despite confidence-building measures.
- Incidents like the **Galwan clash (2020)** and lessons from the **1962 war** underscore the need for constant **military preparedness**.
- However, a purely military approach is inadequate. The editorial suggests combining military vigilance with **long-term political and diplomatic solutions**.

Economic Interdependence and 'Competitive Coexistence'

- Despite political friction, China remains India's **largest trading partner**.
- India imports a large share of electronic components, APIs, and machinery from China, creating critical dependencies.
- The editorial highlights India's evolving strategy of "**competitive coexistence**," which balances **economic ties** with **strategic caution**.

Navigating Multilateral Platforms



- India manages a dual approach by engaging with China on platforms like **BRICS** and **SCO** while also participating in counterbalancing alliances like the **Quad**.
- This reflects India's commitment to **strategic autonomy**, avoiding alignment with any single global power bloc.

China's Expanding Presence in South Asia

- China has deepened its influence in India's neighbourhood, investing in countries like **Sri Lanka (Hambantota Port)**, **Nepal (infrastructure projects)**, and **Maldives (strategic agreements)**.
- India has responded through **diplomatic outreach**, **development aid**, and **infrastructure partnerships** to retain its regional influence.

Power of Narratives and Perception

- In today's geopolitical landscape, **soft power** and **information dominance** matter as much as hard power.
- PM Modi's **March 2025 podcast** was highlighted as an example of shaping perception — projecting India as a responsible, dialogue-oriented power, earning even China's appreciation.

Implications of the U.S.-China Rivalry

- The editorial warns India against being drawn too closely into the U.S.-China rivalry, especially under a possibly more confrontational U.S. administration (like Trump's return).
- India's foreign policy must stay rooted in **non-alignment** and **strategic independence**, preserving room for flexible engagement.

Ecological and Geopolitical Concern: Yarlung Tsangpo (Brahmaputra)

- China's dam-building activity near Arunachal Pradesh on the **Yarlung Tsangpo (Brahmaputra)** raises alarms over:
 - **Water security for Northeast India**
 - **Lack of formal water-sharing agreements**
 - **Ecological damage and unilateral upstream control**
- India is yet to establish any robust framework to address such transboundary water issues with China.

Editorial Recommendations: 4-Pillar Strategy on China

1. Military Readiness



- Maintain strong defensive posturing across the LAC without engaging in provocations.
- Invest in logistics, surveillance, and modernisation of armed forces in frontier areas.

2. Economic Diversification

- Reduce dependence on Chinese imports, especially in **electronics, pharmaceuticals, and critical minerals**.
- Promote **Make in India, PLI schemes**, and alternate trade partners (ASEAN, Japan, South Korea).

3. Diplomatic Engagement

- Reinvigorate **bilateral communication channels** like Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination (WMCC).
- Explore **new confidence-building measures** and **regular high-level meetings**.

4. Narrative Control

- Use media, public diplomacy, and global forums to shape India's image as a **peaceful, responsible power**.
- Counter China's narratives in global South and regional circles by highlighting transparency, democracy, and trust.

Vision for the Future: Towards an Asian Security Architecture

- The editorial proposes an **India-led regional framework** rooted in:
 - **Mutual Respect** — Respect for sovereignty and national interests
 - **Sensitivity** — Culturally and politically attuned diplomacy
 - **Mutual Interest** — Cooperation on trade, climate, and connectivity
- This model would offer an **indigenous alternative** to relying excessively on the West for Asia-Pacific balance.

Conclusion: Redefining India's Global Role

- At 75 years of diplomatic ties, India must stop viewing China solely as a threat.
- Instead, it should treat the China relationship as a **strategic mirror** — an opportunity to craft a **bolder, more self-assured foreign policy**.
- The path forward involves **leading Asia** with confidence, clarity, and balance — not fear or dependency.



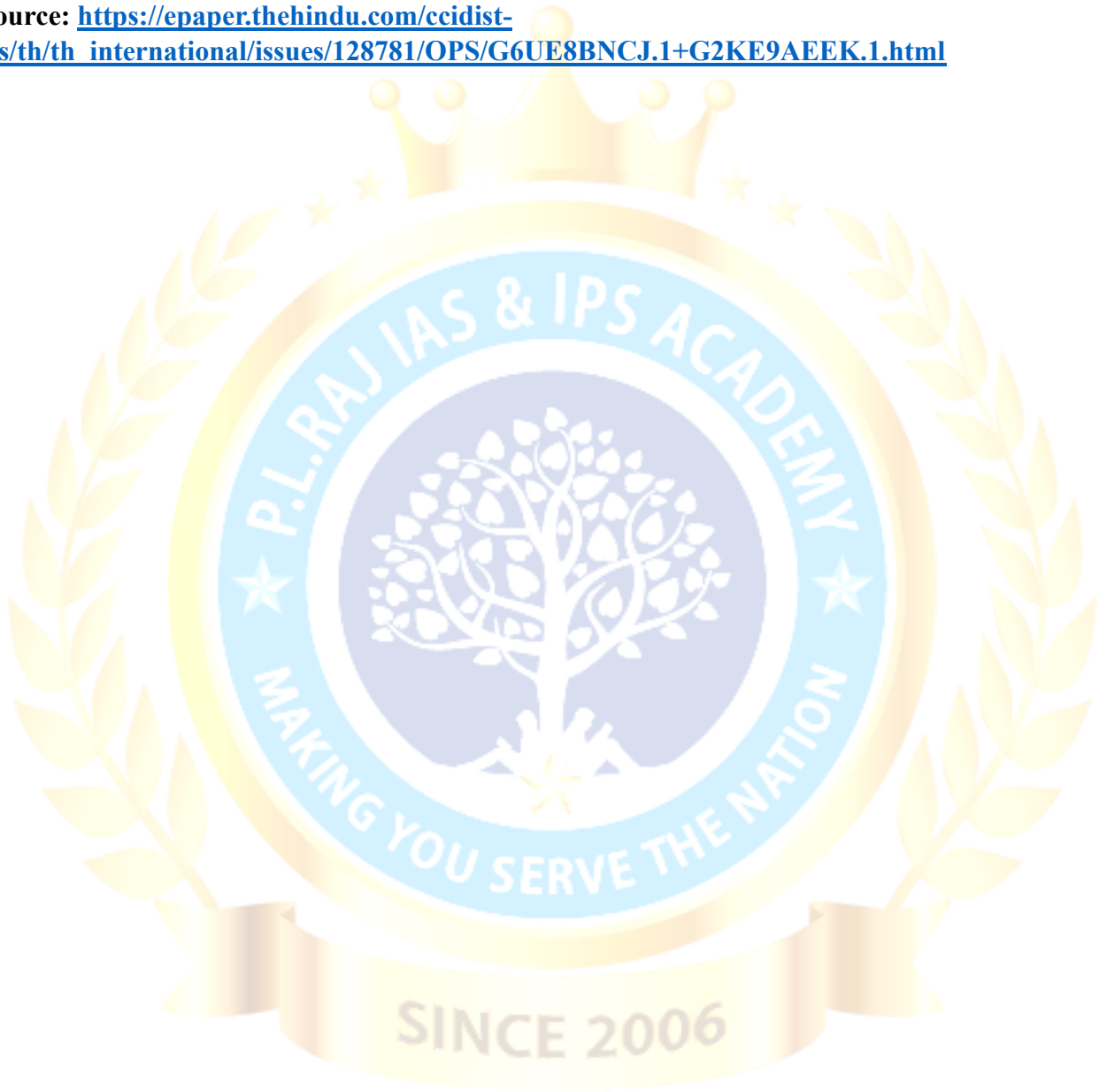
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