

PSIR & GS-2 Daily Brief

About this initiative : Briefs, scans the best academic platforms, national newspapers & leading think tanks to pick the most relevant articles & research. It converts them into crisp, high-impact points you can directly use in your mains answers.

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Optional by
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Article - 1 : Look beyond strategic autonomy, & closer at the Quad possibility

Look beyond strategic autonomy, and closer at the Quad possibility



RAJA MANDALA
BY C RAJA MOHAN

THOSE IN Delhi who are antsy about US President Donald Trump's visit to Beijing and the prospect of a Sino-American détente should be even more worried as Xi Jinping serenades Vladimir Putin in Beijing this week. Those perennially anxious about a G-2 between the US and China should worry even more about China's deepening partnership with Russia. One of the core arguments for Russia's centrality in India's national strategy is that it serves as a balancing power in Eurasia. But the Eurasian story of the last quarter-century is about Russia's growing bonds with China — India's principal challenge in both economic and geopolitical terms.

If Trump's visit was about moving the US from confrontation to stabilisation of ties with China, Putin's is about celebrating the strategic partnership unveiled 25 years ago. Since Putin's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Russia has become even more dependent on China. What do the two pilgrimages to Beijing mean for India?

First, India should not be rattled by every shift in great-power relations. Since World War II, relations among the US, China and Russia have changed repeatedly, often violently. Taken in pairs, they have been allies,

friends, enemies and frenemies at different moments. Dealing with that change is part of the national mandate.

Second, the real challenge for India is addressing the consequences of China's rise and assertion. Since the 1980s, China's relative power — economic, technological and military — has grown rapidly against every other actor in the system. For India, the problem is especially acute: Along, disputed and tension-prone boundary: Beijing's growing influence in India's neighbourhood; an expanding Chinese footprint in global institutions; and a trade deficit now above \$110 billion, rooted in India's deepening dependence on Chinese manufactured goods.

Third, the answer lies partly in accelerating India's own rise. Shifts in great-power relations, the emergence of wars and global crises — these are variables India cannot control. What it can drive is its own modernisation. Although India has performed well on several fronts in the reform era that began in the early 1990s, its uneven scope and unsteady pace mean the gap with China is growing. China's economy is today five times larger, and the disparity in higher education, R&D, technology and military capability is widening.

Fourth, India cannot close the gap with China anytime soon, but it can reduce the impact of the power imbalance through external cooperation that reinforces internal self-strengthening. Much like China, India has turned to the West for capital, export markets, technology and regional security. Since the 1990s, engagement with the US and Europe has grown rapidly.

Elevation of that engagement to

higher levels is obstructed by an enduring suspicion of the US and the West in the Indian political mind, across Left and Right. Anti-imperialists and nativists alike have long united in limiting significant Western cooperation. It is this sentiment that gives sustenance to the idea of "strategic autonomy" — a term framed as neutral, but whose political content has always been about maintaining distance from the West. If the US and Europe were the problem, the answer was seen as lying in deeper ties with Russia and China, bilaterally, trilaterally and in multilateral forums.

This discourse, constructed in the 1990s, has run into a fundamental problem: An assertive China has become India's principal challenge. Russia has become rising China's most important partner, and India's stakes in Western partnership have grown enormously. You may say the US under Trump is unreliable — but it is not occupying Indian territory. It is India's largest export market, a major source of technology, and home to an influential diaspora.

Consider this number: India exports more goods to the Netherlands — a country of 19 million people — than to China and Russia combined. There is no starker illustration of how far Indian strategic discourse has drifted from basic economic reality.

While Russia and China dominate India's mindspace, the Netherlands and other small but important European partners barely figure in India's debates. Independent India, which long privileged the Russian partnership over European ones, is now making amends. The Indian discourse may have acquired "strategic autonomy"

from the imperatives on the ground, but the government has had no choice but to reconnect foreign policy to first principles, reflected in the fact that India fought to preserve its trade relationship with the US, has pushed hard for a trade deal with the EU, and has focussed on deeper technology cooperation with both in the last two years.

Hosting the Quad foreign ministers' meeting early next week follows the same logic. The Quad's revival a decade ago was rooted in the need to build a multipolar Asia amid intensifying challenges from China. One Trump visit to Beijing does not alter that imperative. Over the last decade, several voices in Delhi warned that the Quad would "entrap" India in a military alliance against China and insisted on slow-walking it. Many of the same voices now say the US is about to "abandon" India. The government has taken a more measured view and has actively sustained several rounds of official consultations with Quad partners.

The enthusiasm to write obituaries for the Quad may be both premature and excessive. The visit of Secretary of State Marco Rubio — who also serves as Trump's National Security Adviser — provides a valuable opportunity to get a first-hand account of the US-China summit, assess Washington's changing approach to alliances, and develop a productive and sustainable agenda for the Quad.

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Context India should rethink old ideas of "strategic autonomy" because Russia is moving closer to China and it has become India's major challenge.

Facts

India's trade deficit with China ~ \$110 billion.

Need of Quad's revival - for multipolar Asia amid China's rise.

Since World War II, US-China-Russia relations have shifted between alliance, friendship, enmity and "frenemy" positions.

Analytical Crux

India's foreign policy debate shifts from old ideological comfort to strategic facts. China is India's principal challenge and Russia is no longer a reliable balancing power because it is getting closer to China. Real autonomy does not mean keeping distance from the West; it means building India's own strength through markets, capital, technology and security cooperation. The Quad should be seen as a tool to manage China's power and make Asia multipolar.

Verbatim Quotes

"India cannot close the gap with China anytime soon, but it can reduce the impact of the power imbalance through external cooperation that reinforces internal self-strengthening."

- C Raja Mohan

Article - 2 : Ocean governance and the exclusion of Global South seafarers

Ocean Governance and the Exclusion of Global South Seafarers

AUTHOR : KATIE EARNSHAW

Expert Speak Raisina Debates

Published on May 19, 2026



Ocean governance will remain unequal and unsafe until seafarers –especially from the Global South–have a real voice in shaping maritime rules and systems

Author



Context Global ocean governance looks strong on paper, but it remains unequal and unsafe because Global South seafarers are rarely heard in maritime decision-making.

Facts

■ UNCLOS, Maritime Labour Convention & IMO - Global ocean governance instruments.

■ Global South countries supply majority of shipping labour but remain underrepresented.

■ Abandonment of seafarers globally - highest in 2025.

Analytical Crux

Ocean governance should not be judged by the number of conventions and institutions. The test is whether workers at sea get safety, dignity & voice. There is Global North-Global South imbalance: Global South seafarers sustain world shipping, but rule making power remains elsewhere. Green shipping and new technology can become unjust if they increase workload, stress and criminalisation for workers.

Verbatim Quotes

“The question of who governs the oceans cannot be separated from whose voices shape maritime systems & who bears the risks & consequences when those systems fail.”

– Katie Earnshaw

“Equity in ocean governance is not an abstract aspiration, ethical or peripheral concern. It is central to the very fabric of ocean governance.”

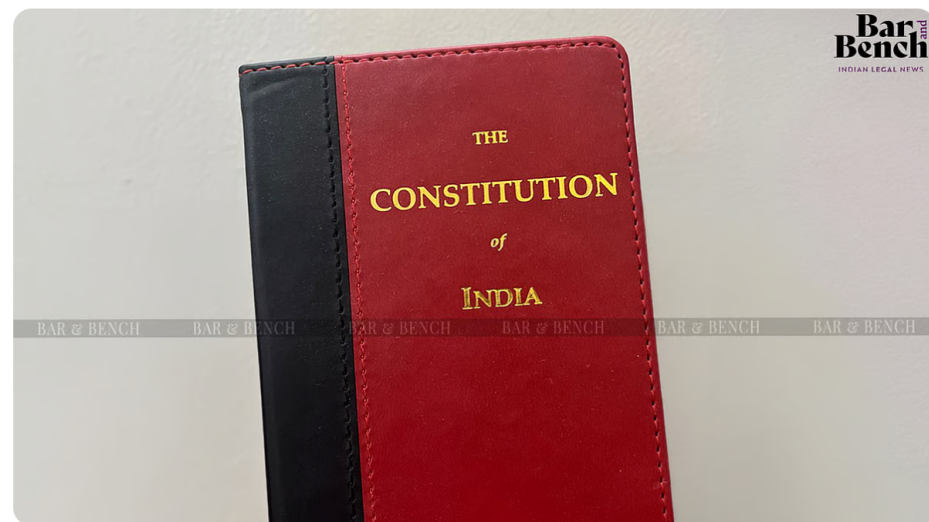
– Katie Earnshaw

Article - 3 : The constitution abolished untouchability, so why does law need spectators

1 Columns

The Constitution abolished untouchability, so why does law still need spectators?

Over time, anti-atrocity jurisprudence appears to have developed a troubling dependence on visibility.



Constitution of India



Context

Courts are increasingly linking caste humiliation under the SC/ST act to "public view", and this legal test fails to understand the private, silent & structural nature of modern caste.

Facts

NCRB 2024 recorded 55,698 crimes against SCs & 9966 against STs.

In Swaran Singh vs. State (2008)- 'public place' & 'place within public view' are not the same.

In Karuppudayar vs. State (2025) - an incident "within the four corners of the wall" without public presence failed the statutory threshold.

Analytical Crux

There is a tussle between legal proof & constitutional dignity. Courts are right to protect people from vague or false cases, but anti-caste law becomes weak if suspicion becomes its main lens. Article 17 was not about ending public untouchability; it was a moral break from a social order built on humiliation. Modern caste often works privately, silently and indirectly, so a narrow "public view" test can ignore the humiliation.

Verbatim Quotes

"More than 75 years later, that contradiction continues to shape Indian constitutional law in unsettling ways. Humiliation becomes legally legible when it is public, witnessed, exposed & capable of satisfying evidentiary comfort."

"Ambedkar feared that political democracy without social democracy would remain fragile. Article 17 therefore, never intended to operate only against visible ritual acts of untouchability."
— Sahil Hussain Choudhary

- 1. PSIR 2025, Paper I:** “Write a note on the Dalit perspective of Indian National Movement.”
- 2. PSIR 2025, Paper I:** “Caste remains a vital axis for political mobilisation in India. How would the caste census address the aspirations of people? Discuss.”
- 3. PSIR 2025, Paper II:** “India continues to invoke its time-tested policy of strategic autonomy vis-à-vis both the United States of America and Russia by rejecting US’ offer of mediation on Kashmir issue and by refusing to criticize Russia in its ongoing war against Ukraine. Comment.”
- 4. PSIR 2025, Paper II:** “India maintains strong ties with countries that will assure a free and open Indo-Pacific and guarantee greater connectivity with rest of the world. Analyze.”
- 5. GS Paper II, 2024:** “The West is fostering India as an alternative to reduce dependence on China's supply chain and as a strategic ally to counter China's political and economic dominance. Explain this statement with examples.”
- 6. GS Paper II, 2023:** “Sea is an important component of the Cosmos’. Discuss in the light of the above statement the role of the IMO (International Maritime Organisation) in protecting environment and enhancing maritime safety and security.”

PSIR & GS2 Daily Brief

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Upcoming Batch: 22 June, 2026

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