

Global Centres of Power — II · Japan · Europe · China

Revise → write a little → don't break the chain.

PART A India & Japan

The least encumbered by dispute, the most under-realised — political warmth ahead of economic and defence content.

I Nature of the relationship

Civilizational base. Rooted in Buddhism and spiritual affinity from the monk **Bodhisena**, who consecrated the Lord Buddha statue at the **Todaiji Temple** in Nara in 752 AD. The **Japan-India Association** (1903) is the oldest international friendship body in Japan. Japan entered the political consciousness of Indian nationalists through the **1904–05 Russo-Japanese War**; associated Indians include Vivekananda, Tagore, JRD Tata, Subhas Chandra Bose and Judge **Radhabinod Pal**. In 1949 Nehru gifted an elephant to Tokyo's Ueno Zoo.

Given the depth of Indian ideas in Japanese arts and language, “without Indian influence, Japanese culture would not be what it is today.” — **H. Nakamura**

Distinctive character. Unlike ties with China, there are no competing national interests, no simmering rivalry and no historical baggage — the two have **never been adversaries**. Under the US Indo-Pacific framework India is to be the **net provider of security**; for India, Japan can be the region's stability provider. Close ties take India out of the South Asia box and past South-East Asia, where the Look East policy stopped.

Asia is shaped by the outlook of the US, the power of China, the weight of Russia, the collectivism of ASEAN, the volatility of West Asia and the rise of India — one imponderable, Japan's future posture, could change the calculus entirely. — **S. Jaishankar**

How the partnership is framed. **Shinzo Abe** called India Japan's **natural ally** and, addressing Parliament, invoked Dara Shikoh's “confluence of the two seas.” **Deepa Gopalan Wadhwa** notes bipartisan Japanese support whoever governs India; **Kanwal Sibal** calls the present the “cherry blossom time”; **Harsh V. Pant** holds it the best the relationship has ever been, Abe having been first to envision a “broader Asia” joining the two oceans.

2 The four phases — what actually drove each

Phase (Waltz level)	Core developments
I · Pre-Independence (systemic + perceptual)	Russo-Japanese War made Japan a symbol of Asian resurgence; Congress cooled after the 1937 invasion of China and the Bose association. At the Tokyo Tribunal, Judge Radhabinod Pal — the sole Indian — held all twenty-five Class-A accused not guilty; Nobusuke Kishi , a Class-A suspect never charged, became PM in 1957 (Abe's grandfather).
II · Nehru Years 1951–66 (individual level)	India declined the San Francisco Peace Treaty (1951) — it excluded China and the USSR and left Japan short of full sovereignty — and signed a separate Peace Treaty (June 1952) between ‘equals’, waiving reparations, with mutual MFN. India favoured a strong Japan east of China to divert Beijing. Iron-ore supply and yen loans (1958) followed.
III · Estrangement 1966–91 (structural + domestic)	Rival Asian-security visions: Nehru's ‘Monroe Doctrine for Asia’ vs Japan's Yoshida Doctrine (economics first, US alliance). India saw Japan as ‘America's surrogate in Asia’ (Limaye). Japan neutral in 1962 and 1965; the 1971 Friendship Treaty with the USSR put them in opposite camps; the 1974 test upset Tokyo. Maruti-Suzuki was the one 1980s bright spot.
IV · Re-engagement post-1991 (structural + domestic)	Soviet collapse, the BoP crisis and reforms, the rise of China, sea-lane security and the nuclear question. The Bank of Japan helped in 1991; Look East opened East Asia. Japan named India (with China and Vietnam) ‘Asia's new economic frontier’ and de-hyphenated India from Pakistan ; since 2003 India is the top recipient of Japanese ODA .

3 The Modi years — the upgradation ladder



- High-level cadence: Modi to Japan in 2014, 2016, 2018, 2019, 2022, 2023; Abe to India 2014, 2015, 2017; Kishida 2022, 2023.
- Japan's technology and finance meet India's infrastructure needs; defence advanced through the 2014 Memorandum of Cooperation, the 2015 framework agreements and relaxed Japanese defence-export rules; the 2016 civil nuclear agreement opened the energy sector.
- Shinzo Abe** saw India as the way to widen Japan's security options beyond a US-centric frame; Modi sees Japan as central to Act East. Japan's **FOIP** names India an “indispensable partner.” 2022 marked the 70th anniversary of ties.

4 Areas of cooperation

Economic & development

- Trade: **US\$ 17.63 bn** (FY 2018-19) → **US\$ 21.96 bn** (FY 2022-23). Japan is India's **4th-largest FDI source** (USD 3.1 bn in 2023-24); cumulative FDI ~US\$ 32.058 bn (2000–Sep 2019); about 1,441 Japanese companies operate in India.
- Japan is India's **largest bilateral donor** since 1958 (highest ODA commitment FY 2018-19, JPY 522.405 bn); the **Delhi Metro** is the model project.

Flagship infrastructure	Detail
Mumbai–Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail	Shinkansen technology; 81% JICA financing; Gujarat stretch targeted Dec 2027, full line Dec 2029.
Freight & industrial corridors	Western DFC ; DMIC with twelve townships; Chennai–Bengaluru Industrial Corridor.
Act East Forum (2017)	Roads, bridges and energy links knitting the North-East into a Bay-of-Bengal value chain.

Security & defence

- Tri-service exchanges institutionalised; Coast Guard exchanges since 2006; **ACSA** negotiations from 2019. Exercises: the trilateral **Malabar**, **JIMEX**, **Dharma Guardian** (Mahajan ranges), **Veer Guardian**, Shinyu Maitri and MINEX/EODEX.
- Both oppose any unilateral change to the status quo in the East or South China Sea and uphold a **Free and Open Indo-Pacific**; the US-India-Japan trilateral is at ministerial level; the newest forum is the **QUAD**.

Science, technology, nuclear & space

- S&T Agreement (1985); India-Japan Science Council (1993); joint laboratories in AI, IoT and Big Data; DAILAB and the Indian Beam Line at KEK Tsukuba; ~570 under SAKURA Science.
- **Civil nuclear agreement** in force 2017 — India the **first non-NPT country** among Japan's thirteen such partners. ISRO–JAXA MoU (2016) with a prospective joint lunar mission; the first Space Dialogue (2019).
- The 2023 MoC and the **India–Japan Semiconductor Supply Chain Partnership** cover design, manufacturing, research and supply; 5G under the 2021 ICT MoU.

Health, climate & people-to-people

- **AHWIN** for Ayushman Bharat; SISTERS for drug development; Ayurveda cooperation with Kanagawa. The 2022 **Clean Energy Partnership** targets carbon neutrality through hydrogen, LNG and ammonia.
- Vivekananda Cultural Centre, Tokyo (2009); the Japan-India Tourism Exchange Year (Apr 2023–Mar 2025, ~400,000 travellers in 2024); the Technical Intern Training and Specified Skilled Worker pathways. Both are **G4** partners on UNSC reform.

5 Areas of concern and contestation

- **Alignment gap.** Japan is in the US alliance and sanctioned Russia; India did not. India is reserved on the South China Sea and Taiwan while vocal on the LAC.

Relations have tended to be “low on ambition and high in rhetoric.” — S. Jaishankar

- **Shivshankar Menon:** India's preference for **strategic autonomy** and its three priorities — security, development, status — restrain how far it will go; the non-alignment tradition is unlikely to be abandoned, which can frustrate a Tokyo keen to balance China.
- **Economic underperformance.** Despite CEPA, trade slipped from \$18.43 bn (2011-12) to \$17.63 bn (2018-19), dwarfed by Sino-Indian trade. Divergence on **RCEP** (Japan pushed India in; India stayed out) and Osaka Track e-commerce.
- **Shyam Saran:** India failed to catch the Japanese trend to diversify away from China; the special leader-to-leader bond has not become a commercial partnership.
- The **Asia-Africa Growth Corridor**: up to \$200 bn reportedly mooted, but nothing concrete since 2017.
- **Geography** keeps them far apart; defence-industrial cooperation is thin (the US-2 amphibious talks are protracted); language and Japan's exacting standards raise entry costs; neither has a specific China policy, even though India's China trade is more than 20% of Japan's total trade.

6 India & Japan amid US–China tensions · and in Africa

- **Rajaram Panda:** China is uneasy that India and Japan are finding common ground and reads the friendship as ganging up against it; **Manmohan Singh's** 2013 Tokyo visit, when Sino-Japanese ties were frosty, discomfited Beijing. Barring Pakistan and North Korea, Asia is unhappy with Chinese assertiveness — the Senkaku with Japan, the border with India.
- **C. Raja Mohan:** Japan's new '**realism diplomacy**' has three parts — reorienting diplomacy, building deterrence, and deepening defence partnerships with India, the US and Australia — spurred by Ukraine, Taiwan and the Beijing–Moscow “alliance without limits.” Yet the specific disputes each has with China are bilateral and territorial; it is not clear they can back each other on these.
- Regional architecture reflects the jostling: FOIP, AUKUS, the Quad, and IPEF.

Africa — the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (Purnendra Jain)

- An **AAGC** vision document, commissioned after the Nov 2016 Modi–Abe summit, named four areas (capacity and skills, quality infrastructure, development projects, people-to-people) but offered no implementation roadmap.
- It runs against China's growing footprint and the BRI, both viewed with suspicion — a new competition with Africa as the playground, with possible unintended effects on the Indo-Pacific balance.

7 Scholars · theory · policy (Japan)

Views of scholars

- **Rohan Mukherjee & Anthony Yazaki:** the advances since 2006 trace to Abe's active security policy — the National Security Council, a National Security Strategy, and the reinterpretation of Article 9 to allow collective self-defence.
- **Jagannath P. Panda:** Abe's "broader Asia" rested on four aims — a stronger Japanese maritime position in the IOR, joint leadership with India, security ties beyond the US alliance, and new commerce in India.
- **Satoru Nagao** and **Jeff M. Smith** read expanded defence ties as convergence against a disruptive China; **Shivshankar Menon** (*Choices*) sees Manmohan Singh's values-driven policy complementing Japan.

Theoretical lenses

Realism — counterbalance China

Liberalism — rules-based order, Quad

Balancing vs bandwagoning

Soft power — anime, Bollywood

Policy direction

- The tie needs years of intensive high-level engagement before it self-sustains. **C. Raja Mohan:** Ukraine helped a pacifist Japan connect diplomacy with defence; both were too deferential to China and must add military content.

"Diplomacy needs to be backed by defence capabilities, and reinforcing defence capabilities will also lead to persuasiveness in carrying out our diplomatic efforts." — **Fumio Kishida**

PART B India & Europe

The largest economic partner and the narrowest strategic one — until the Indo-Pacific supplied a shared security frame.

8 Nature of the relationship · and the European Union

India's engagement is principally with the **European Union** and its member states, most of them in Western Europe.

The European Union at a glance

Founders: Germany, France, Italy, Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg · **Capital:** Brussels. A **supranational** political-economic union of **27 member states** — the world's largest trade bloc, about a fifth of global trade.

Historical depth. **Shashi Tharoor:** ties reach back to the Roman Empire — Kerala's Roman port Muziris, and a first-century-BCE Lakshmi ivory found at Pompeii.

How scholars frame it

- **Christian Wagner:** often called '**natural partners**' for shared democracy, plural society and counter-terrorism; frequent summits since the 1996 Enhanced Partnership place India among a select group with Russia, the US, China, Canada and Japan.
- **Rajendra K. Jain:** the association is many-sided — the EU is India's top trading partner, a large FDI source, a donor, a technology source and host to a big diaspora; India now sees it as a political player, not only a trade bloc.
- **Shashi Tharoor:** Indians dislike being lectured to; Europe's tendency to preach on human rights — which India treats as a domestic matter — is a recurring irritant. **David M. Malone:** no part of Indian foreign policy is harder than its underwhelming tie with Europe.
- **Christian Wagner** also collects the sceptics' labels — a "charade" (**Jaffrelet**), a "loveless arranged marriage" (**Khandekar**), at "risk of stagnation and political marginalization" (**von Muenchow-Pohl**), and marked by "friendly disinterest" (**Gröning**).

9 Why Europe matters for India

- Largest bloc and market; France and the UK are nuclear powers and **P5** members; Germany is a strong UNSC-expansion candidate; four EU states sit in the G-8.
- **Dhruva Jaishankar:** as a single entity the EU mirrors India's federal, multilingual structure; European states broadly share India's liberal-democratic, secular, multicultural values; Britain and France are key defence suppliers; Europe hosts a diaspora above **1.7 million**.
- **Complementarity:** India's market, cost-competitiveness, services growth and demography against Europe's technology, stability and ageing population; Europe is a source of strategic technology and gives India room to bargain with the US, Russia and China.

10 Cold-War era — why the partnership underperformed

- **David M. Malone:** India's early encounters with Europe were rooted in maritime trade; Portuguese naval forces arrived in 1498, and four colonial powers followed over four and a half centuries. Indian forces fought under the British across both World Wars.
- **Rajendra K. Jain:** India took little interest in European unification early; attention came only when Britain sought Common Market membership (1961). **Jawaharlal Nehru** argued the EEC would deepen Cold-War divisions, widen the rich-poor gap and weaken the Commonwealth.

C. Raja Mohan on the causes of difficulty

- Seeing the continent **through British eyes**; alignment with the USSR skewed the view.
- Non-alignment and criticism of European alliances put Delhi out of touch with Cold-War manoeuvring.
- Western alignment with Pakistan pushed India toward Moscow, which then shaped its European lens.
- Privileged access to Eastern Europe could not be used under bloc politics.
- The **East-West divide** compounded by the **North-South conflict**; anti-colonial non-alignment left little room for strategic cooperation.
- Socialist policies constrained foreign capital and weakened commercial ties built by 1947.

The **Treaty of Rome** made no reference to the wider Third World; India's bid for an Association Agreement (1961–63) was ruled out for “non-associates.”

II After the Cold War · the twenty-first-century reorientation

- **C. Raja Mohan**: the Soviet collapse forced a rethink — India found ties with the US, Europe, China and Japan all underdeveloped. Reforms drew European interest, but Europe was far more taken with China after Deng's reforms and found India's pace frustrating.
- The **1993 Joint Political Statement** and **1994 Cooperation Agreement** are foundational; 2004 made both strategic partners — the EU has such partnerships with only five others (US, Canada, Russia, Japan, China).
- Brussels issued an **India Strategy (2018)** on four themes — a rules-based order, sustainable modernisation, foreign-policy coordination, and security. The EU produced its **Indo-Pacific Strategy (2021)**, driven by Chinese assertiveness, supply-chain strain, and the 2020 signing of **RCEP**, which raised fears of a China-centred Asian bloc.

India's strategy is “engaging with the USA, managing China, cultivating relations with Europe, reassuring Russia, and bringing the Japanese into active participation.” — S. Jaishankar

Once a critic of European colonialism, New Delhi is now eager to welcome Europe back into Asia; alongside the **Quad** it uses the West Asian **I2U2** with Israel, the UAE and the US. In 2022 Modi visited Germany, Denmark and France; the Green Strategic Partnership was the standout of the Denmark leg.

12 Areas of cooperation

Economic — the essence of the relationship

- The EU was India's largest trading partner in 2010 (€86 bn); by 2021 its third-largest (€88 bn goods, 10.8%), with India the EU's 10th (2.1%). EU FDI stock in India reached €87.3 bn (2020); about **6,000 European companies** provide 1.7 million direct jobs.

The two 2025–26 trade deals — CETA and the EU FTA

- **India–UK CETA** — concluded May 2025, signed 24 July 2025, in force **15 July 2026** (with the Double Contribution Convention). The UK removes duties on about **99%** of India's tariff lines from day one (textiles, leather, marine, processed food, engineering and auto parts); services open across 137 sub-sectors; India opens central-government procurement for the first time and, in a first, cut car-import duties from over 100% to 10% within quotas — while shielding dairy, cereals, millets, edible oils and apples.
- **India–EU FTA** — concluded **27 January 2026** at the 16th India–EU Summit, text published February 2026; signing expected end-2026, then European Parliament consent and entry into force in early 2027. India gains preferential access on **97%** of EU tariff lines (99.5% of its export value), with nearly **US\$33 bn** of labour-intensive exports going to zero duty; the EU opens 144 services sub-sectors, India 102, with a social-security framework to follow. India shields dairy, cereals, poultry and soymeal; the EU excludes beef, chicken, rice and sugar; India cuts wine and olive-oil tariffs.
- **The wider run** — India signed with Oman, New Zealand, the UK and the EU across 2025–26, adding to the UAE, Australia and EFTA; it now holds FTAs with **14 of the 16 RCEP economies**, with only China outside its FTA network.

Track	Bilateral weight carried by the big three
France	36 Rafale and 6 Scorpene (P-75); exercises Shakti / Varuna / Garuda ; the 2018 Joint Strategic Vision in the IOR and reciprocal logistics; MTCR backing (2016); ISA co-founder; Jaitapur nuclear.
United Kingdom	Exercises Ajeya Warrior / Indradhanush / Konkan ; defence-intelligence and counter-terror dialogue; UKIERI, GIAN and the Skills India Mission; the largest ethnic-minority diaspora (~1.5 million).
Germany	A major ODA partner since the 1950s; built IIT Madras; S&T a main pillar since 2007; pledged an extra €10 bn (2022) toward India's 2030 climate targets.

Political, security, climate & technology

- 31 dialogue mechanisms; a Security Dialogue since 2006; the Connectivity Partnership (2021); the India-EU Common Agenda on Migration and Mobility.
- Climate: the EU-India Climate Change Dialogue; the EU **Green Deal** (carbon neutrality by 2050); the Denmark Green Strategic Partnership (2022); ISA, ITER and Arctic Council observer status.
- Technology: Galileo, ITER, New INDIGO (2009), and COVID-era research ties; **Anil Wadhwa** and **Samir Saran** see room in AI, biotech and 5G/6G. The **Trade and Technology Council** (2023) runs working groups on strategic technologies, digital governance and clean-energy technologies.

13 Areas of concern · and Brexit

Trade, regulation & politics

- **CBAM is the sharpest live friction**. India won no exemption from the EU's **Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism**, only an assurance that any flexibility given to third countries would extend to it; iron and steel make up nearly **90%** of India's CBAM-exposed exports, with compliance costs put at US\$2–4 bn a year against a €500 m EU green-transition pledge. Other frictions — **data security** (the EU withholds ‘data-secure’ status), IPR and compulsory-licensing limits, opened procurement, and the loss of GSP preferences that had kept Indian textiles competitive with Bangladesh.
- Political irritants: criticism of Indian policy on Jammu & Kashmir and the Citizenship (Amendment) Act; divergent expectations over Ukraine.

Trade as a hedge — the geoeconomic reading

- Both deals were settled while the United States, under a second Trump administration, put **50% tariffs** on India (peaked 2025) and pressed it over Russian-oil purchases; a February 2026 interim deal cut the reciprocal tariff to 18% and dropped the Russian-oil penalty, and the US Supreme Court later struck down the emergency-power reciprocal tariffs. Many read the deals as **hedging, not alignment** — in **Iván Gonzalez-Pujol's** terms a mixed strategy of cooperation and competition under uncertainty, with FTAs a means of economic diversification.

- **Chietigj Bajpae** (Chatham House) and **Shairee Malhotra** (ORF) read the run of FTAs as a reaffirmation of **strategic autonomy** and a shift toward predictable partners. **Sankalp Gurjar** frames it through **geoeconomics** — India's strategy since 2019 on three pillars (staying out of RCEP, Atmanirbharta, FTAs with trusted partners), all serving one goal: managing the China challenge. **Alberto Rizzi** (ECFR) applies the same lens from Europe's side; **Mark Linscott** is the sceptic — the 'mother of all deals' label is "political hyperbole" with only a modest near-term return.

"India, faced with US tariffs, is pushing for certainty in its trade relations, while Europe is seeking diversification to reduce reliance on an increasingly erratic American administration." — **Alberto Rizzi, ECFR**

Geopolitical strains inside Europe

- The **AUKUS** announcement — made without consulting France, a day before the EU's Indo-Pacific strategy — shocked Paris; failures over Crimea (2014) and the 2015 refugee crisis exposed disunity; Brexit weakened cohesion; the EU's China-market reliance and BRI participation complicate alignment with India.

Brexit and India

- Concerns: the welfare of a near-three-million diaspora; a large moving population of tourists, professionals and students; and work-visa curbs that had already cut Indian student numbers.
- Offsetting gains: the **Commonwealth** gains significance; Britain stays a key partner for services trade, defence supply and P5 weight, and has reoriented toward the Indo-Pacific through AUKUS. For the EU tie, Delhi loses its most familiar interlocutor — which raises the value of engaging Brussels and all 27 members directly.

14 Scholars · theory · policy (Europe)

Views of scholars

- **Rajiv Bhatia**: the relationship stands at an inflection point to shape a multipolar, just order. **Dhruva Jaishankar**: Europe is a strong target for India's multipolar strategy — a major power centre without the complications of the US and China relationships.
- **Harsh V. Pant**: the EU cannot speak with one voice; its faith that foreign policy is merely an outcome of economic policy is a '**liberal fallacy**' — the economic system rests on political order, not the reverse.
- **Shada Islam, Samir Saran, Christian Wagner** and **Rajesh Mehta**: an ambitious FTA plus 5G/AI/biotech and climate/defence convergence, with two-way mobility and regular high-level engagement, can lift the partnership.

Theoretical lenses

Realism — strategic autonomy, balance vs China

Liberalism — interdependence, WTO/RUN

Constructivism — shared values

Dependency → equitable partnership

Policy direction

- Spend more energy on **France** — experts argue it can become 'the new Russia' for India (P5, IOR presence, reactors, climate and multilateral convergence); put the best foot forward with **Britain**; reorient the **Euroscenics** in Indian officialdom; and improve the trade and regulatory regime European policymakers find restrictive.
- **S. Jaishankar** (Bled, 2021): Delhi under-attended to Brussels amid focus on the big countries, and now engages all 27 members and seeks a more 'compact' relationship.

PART C India & China

The only relationship where the primary question is security, not opportunity — trade up, trust down, and after 2020 the border conditions everything else.

15 Nature — two civilizational states, one paradox

Both are civilizational states with long historical legacies that still shape perception. **Alka Acharya**: Buddhism travelled from India to China with the legends of Fa Xian, Xuan Zhang and Kumarajiva; in the 16th–17th centuries both were strong trading empires; the 19th–20th brought decline under imperialism.

Pardesi's core claim

Manjeet S. Pardesi: India and China have been locked in intense strategic rivalry since the late 1940s. They hold the world's longest unmarked land border and grapple with Tibet, China's tie to Pakistan, and military-nuclear disparities. The rivalry is a contest for **influence and status in overlapping spheres** — South and South-East Asia, the Tibetan plateau, the Himalayan states, parts of Central Asia and the Indian Ocean.

The **yin and yang** of the relationship is a paradox — expanding engagement and rising trade alongside low mutual trust, with a persistent belief that Beijing aims to impede India's ascension. — **Alka Acharya**

Typologies scholars use

- **Zorawar Daulet Singh**: **competition-cooperation-discord**. **Manoj Joshi**: the four C's — **conflict, competition, cooperation, containment**. **Shashi Tharoor**: a "cold peace" turned icy.
- **Shyam Saran**, on China's **Middle Kingdom complex**: China sees itself as the civilized centre; India never claimed such centrality (Bharatvarsha, with India as one petal, Jambudwipa) — a worldview gap that makes confrontation likelier than cooperation, worsened by India's poor familiarity with China.
- **Samir Saran**: China wants to be the sole continental power — a Chinese adage, "one mountain cannot contain two tigers." **Zhao Gancheng**: a prisoner's dilemma left by the 1962 worst-case start; Panchsheel idealism no longer works.

16 The four phases — what actually drove each

Phase (Waltz level)	Core developments
I · 1947–59 (individual level)	Nehru backed Tibetan independence ‘under Chinese suzerainty’ (a British legacy, per K.P.S. Menon); K.M. Panikkar advised recognising Tibetan independence in 1948, Nehru declined. The PRC annexed Tibet (1950–51) , making China contiguous. Border: the McMahon Line (Simla 1913–14) in the east, rejected by all Chinese governments; no accepted western frontier. Per S.A. Hoffman , India decided in 1953 that Aksai Chin belonged to J&K (the Dogra kingdom). With Panchsheel India recognised Tibet as China’s; Nehru equated Chinese silence on maps with acquiescence. The Dalai Lama’s escape (Mar 1959) and asylum brought the border to the fore.
II · 1959–62 (domestic politics)	Parliament pushed Nehru toward assertiveness. Nehru had held the border settled; in Sep 1959 Zhou publicly claimed the entire border unmarked and laid claim to 40,000 sq mi. Sumit Ganguly : the Forward Policy was a strategy of compellence — forward posts to reclaim ground — but the army was ill-prepared. China attacked 20 Oct 1962 , declared a unilateral ceasefire (21 Nov), re-established the McMahon Line as the LAC in the east and consolidated Aksai Chin. Six non-aligned states framed the Colombo Proposals .
III · 1962–88 (systemic)	India aligned first with the US, then the USSR; China with Pakistan, and with tacit US backing after 1971. The US refused the nuclear umbrella and imposed an arms embargo (1965); China threatened a second front in 1965. The 1971 Treaty with the USSR answered the US–China–Pakistan alignment. The 1969 Sino-Soviet clashes drew the US toward Beijing; the USS Enterprise entered the Bay of Bengal (1971). The Karakoram Highway, Siachen (1984) and the Sumdorong Chu crisis followed; the 1987 Sino-Soviet border accord shocked Delhi.
IV · Since 1988 (systemic + domestic)	China’s rising power and the China–Pakistan tie as constant threats; India’s growth building a constituency for engagement and internal balancing; latterly, convergence with the US while keeping strategic autonomy. Rajiv Gandhi’s 1988 visit set up the JWG; the 1993 and 1996 agreements reduced tension but produced no political settlement (Pardesi) . Repair came via Jaswant Singh’s 1999 visit after the 1998 tests.

17 The Modi years · and post-2020 deterrence

- The first year began badly — China left out of the swearing-in; Modi’s Arunachal visit drew objections. **Xi’s Sep 2014 visit** brought a \$20 bn pledge but coincided with a Ladakh incursion; Modi declined APEC. Boundary talks (Doval–Yang Jiechi) produced little.
- At **Raisina 2017** China pressed OBOR; India objected to **CPEC** through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and refused to join. The **Doklam standoff (Jun 2017)** raised alarm near the Siliguri Corridor. The **Wuhan (2018)** and **Mahabalipuram (2019)** informal summits were largely inconsequential.

Why Galwan mattered (Mayuri Banerjee)

June 2020 — 20 Indian soldiers killed. It broke the **1988 consensus** that had kept the border separate from the wider relationship, moving the frontier to the centre of ties; with the border-management framework severely compromised, interaction becomes more adversarial and volatile.

- After Pelosi’s Taiwan visit India refused to reiterate its ‘one-China’ policy; **Tawang clashes (Dec 2022)** followed a new land-border law and objections to the India-US **Yudh Abhyas**.
- **The disengagement (21 Oct 2024)**. Agreement on patrolling in **Depsang and Demchok** — the last two of six points the PLA had blockaded since 2020 (Galwan, Pangong Tso, Gogra and Hot Springs the others); it restored patrolling and grazing rights and added coordinated patrols to avoid face-offs. Two days later Modi and Xi met at **Kazan (BRICS, 23 Oct 2024)**, the first bilateral since 2019, and directed the **Special Representatives** to meet.
- **The thaw**. Jaishankar told the Lok Sabha (3 Dec 2024) disengagement was “achieved in full” in eastern Ladakh, with de-escalation the next step (17 WMCC meetings, 21 senior-commander rounds since June 2020); the **23rd SR round** (Doval–Wang Yi, Dec 2024) revived the channel. At **Tianjin (SCO, 31 Aug 2025)** — Modi’s first China visit in seven years — the two called themselves “development partners and not rivals”, and Modi invited Xi to the **2026 BRICS Summit in India**. Direct flights, the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra and eased rare-earth-magnet curbs followed.

Disengagement is not resolution

The pool reads the deal as a pause, not a settlement. **Saheb Singh Chadha** (Carnegie India) shows progress came only when leader-level meetings framed the talks, with over **100,000 troops** still facing off; **Arzan Tarapore** holds it did not restore the status quo ante — disengagement has not led to de-escalation or de-induction; **Manoj Joshi** notes it restored patrolling rights, but the harder task of thinning the massed forces (roughly 20,000–30,000 PLA forward-deployed, surge near 50,000) still lies ahead.

Two meanings of ‘normalcy’

- India holds that **the state of the border sets the state of the relationship** (‘border first, development always’); China wants the boundary question **not to define or hold back** the overall picture. **Swaran Singh** places ties in ‘**management mode**’ — neither breakdown nor recovery; **Ghulam Ali** reads the rapprochement as durable, **Shanthie Mariet D’Souza** as unstable given deep distrust.

“They reaffirmed that the two countries were development partners and not rivals, and that their differences should not turn into disputes.” — **PMO / PIB, Tianjin readout, 31 August 2025**

“With China you have to compete, cooperate, co-exist, confront and contest.” — **Gen. Upendra Dwivedi, Chanakya Defence Dialogue, 1 October 2024**

18 The boundary dispute — three sectors

Sector	Line / disputed areas	Status
Eastern	The McMahon Line (Simla 1913-14); overlooked until Aitchison's 1937 edition. China claims Arunachal as "South Tibet," keen on Tawang on cultural-religious grounds (Dalai Lama's birthplace).	China acknowledges the line as the LAC but disputes the watershed principle.
Middle	Barahoti (Uttarakhand) and pockets in Uttarakhand and Himachal; the Sikkim sector.	China accepted Sikkim as an Indian state only after 2005; Nathu La reopened for trade.
Western	No accepted frontier in Kashmir at 1947. India claims Aksai Chin (~38,000 sq mi it accuses China of occupying; a cold desert of ~50,000 sq km); the Western Highway (1957); the Shaksgam Valley ceded by Pakistan.	China occupied it in 1962; markers absent, terrain uninhabited.

China's package proposal, and Shyam Saran's formula

- In 1985 China reinterpreted the **package proposal** — India to concede in the east (the largest disputed area) for undefined western concessions — and made an explicit demand for the "restitution" of Tawang, hardening its position.
- Shyam Saran** suggests an **LAC-plus** solution — a limited Chinese territorial concession on the Indian side against free access to Tawang for Chinese pilgrims — a 'Package Proposal without Tawang' meeting somewhere in the middle.

19 Areas of cooperation

Economic

- Reforms (China 1978, India 1991) built trade: China is India's **third-largest** trading partner, India China's thirteenth; two-way trade crossed **US\$ 100 bn (2022)** and reached **US\$ 127.7 bn** by FY2024–25. Investment rose in IT, pharma and automobiles; a combined market of 2.7 billion people and 20% of world GDP holds large potential.
- The tie is deeply **asymmetric** — India exports raw materials while importing manufactures; the trade deficit reached a record **US\$ 99.2 bn** in FY2024–25.

Multilateral, climate & energy

- Both work through the **G20**, **BRICS** (NDB, CRA), the **AIIB**, the **SCO**, the Russia-India-China trilateral and **BASIC** to dilute Western dominance of the IMF, WTO and World Bank.
- At **COP26** they aligned to turn a coal 'phase-out' into 'phase-down'; both sit in BASIC and the Like-Minded Group. China is the largest solar manufacturer, and India depends on it for panels and chips.
- Energy: the Oil Buyers' Club (2018), a Joint Working Group on energy (2019), ITER, and GAIL's 10% stake in China Gas Holdings.

20 Areas of contestation and competition

The trade deficit

- FY2024–25 was a record** — the deficit reached **US\$ 99.2 bn** on two-way trade of US\$ 127.7 bn (imports US\$ 113.5 bn against exports US\$ 14.25 bn), with India dependent on China for about **70% of pharmaceutical ingredients**. Causes — dumping of steel and low-quality goods, sanitary and phytosanitary barriers, undervalued farm exports, curbs on Indian pharmaceuticals even where US, EU and Japanese regulators approve, and limited IT market access.
- Amit Kumar** (Takshashila) argues almost all Chinese exports to India are substitutable, so Beijing's coercive room is limited and **de-risking**, not decoupling, is the sensible course; after 2020 India used investment screening and app bans, but the 2024 Economic Survey and business lobbies pushed to ease curbs to serve 'Make in India' — selective opening under caution, the deficit itself a standing concern.

Structural contests

- Political** — India's reluctance to endorse the **One-China policy** on Taiwan and Tibet; Chinese opposition to India's permanent UNSC seat and NSG entry.
- Regional** — rival influence in South Asia (Sri Lanka, Gwadar) and the Indo-Pacific.
- Cyber & technology** — alleged cyberattacks and espionage; concern over Chinese telecom equipment such as **Huawei** in 5G.
- Perception, military build-up and investment** — mutual encirclement fears, the enduring effect of 1962, escalation risk, and apprehension about Chinese investment in sensitive sectors.

21 The China–Pakistan axis

- The axis has damaged India's rise and complicated its Afghanistan policy. Boundaries were demarcated before 1962; an entente formed before 1965; China threatened a second front in 1965.
- China has assisted Pakistan's nuclear programme across three decades — fissile material in the 1980s, missiles in the 1990s, reactors thereafter — and in 1969 set up a 'coordination bureau' to arm Indian insurgents; **Andrew Small** holds this policy was never fully abandoned.

Pakistan's real value is that "an India that is forced to look nervously over its shoulder at its western neighbour is easier for Beijing to manage." — **Andrew Small**

"China-Pak friendship is higher than the Himalayas and deeper than the deepest sea in the world and sweeter than honey." — **Nawaz Sharif**

- After the abrogation of Article 370, China helped internationalise Kashmir; **CPEC**, Gwadar and OBOR through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir are read as

encirclement using Pakistan as a proxy. **Manjeet S. Pardesi**: Gilgit-Baltistan borders China, and PLA presence there has raised talk of 'de facto control'. Pakistan is thus both a **Chinese pawn** against India and a platform for power projection.

22 India, China & the United States · and the Russia triangle

- **Manjeet S. Pardesi**: China's biggest concern is India's growing strategic link with the US — it noted Clinton's call to India to 'engage East and Act East' and resented the 2008 **NSG waiver** for a non-NPT India.
- China equates the **Quad** with **AUKUS**; India's **Yudh Abhyas 2022** within 100 km of the LAC was a show of strength, and the Tawang clash followed. The trade war since 2018 helped push Beijing toward the **Wuhan** reset.

To check China, India needs a 'Go West' strategy — using its Gulf goodwill — while the security dilemma risks a "vicious cycle of competition, arms race and conflict." — **C. Raja Mohan**

The India-China-US triangle and hedging

- **Harsh V. Pant & Atul Kumar** describe a **triangle of apprehension** held together by mutual mistrust, each power fearing it will be outflanked; they read Modi's China outreach as **hedging and calibrated multi-alignment**, sharpened by a sharp downturn with Washington — **50% US tariffs** (Aug 2025: a 25% reciprocal tariff plus a 25% Russian-oil penalty), the revoked **Chabahar** waiver and a **US\$100,000 H-1B levy**.
- **Anna Maria Treifeldt** (ICDS) reads the same outreach as continuity, not departure — a return to India's familiar hedging inside the older US-China-USSR triangle; **Ashley J. Tellis** is the sceptic — Washington's hope of turning India against China stays unrealised, and multi-alignment limits any joint effort. Both hedging readings agree: the China opening buys room to manage Washington, and is **no strategic tilt to Beijing**.

"New Delhi's aim is simply to maintain short-term stability with Beijing while it manages uncertainty with Washington." — **Anna Maria Treifeldt, ICDS, 2026**

India in the Russia-China-US triangle

- India manages this through **strategic autonomy**, but the Sino-Russian "no-limits" convergence unsettles Delhi: Russia turned to China after Western isolation; India's Russian arms share fell from 60% to 45%; Russia and China together rejected a G20 consensus statement under India's chair.
- India promotes itself as a Global South leader and has rejected the BRI; China remains its top strategic rival. **Manoj Joshi**: Delhi is a Eurasian swing power — military ties with Moscow, economic weight of Beijing, America as counterweight.

23 India, China & the neighbourhood — the 'five fingers'

- **John Mearsheimer**: a state secures itself only as a **regional hegemon**, and a rising power seeks to change the order — a pessimistic reading of China's rise. **Ye Hai Lin**: Indian and Chinese 'surrounding areas' overlap, and South Asia is the contested space.

The five-finger policy

Attributed to Mao's vision — **Tibet is the palm**, the five fingers are Ladakh Nepal Sikkim Bhutan Arunachal

- **Country picture**: Bhutan (a Buddha statue built; China wants diplomatic ties), Nepal (connected to Tibet), Bangladesh (loans, BCIM), Myanmar (junta-era help), Sri Lanka (Hambantota), Maldives (drift), Pakistan (Gwadar, CPEC). **T. Singh**: Chinese naval presence has narrowed India's sphere (Djibouti base, Hambantota). **Pattanaik**: today's competition is fiercer than before through large BRI projects; **RN Ravi** calls it neocolonialism through debt traps.

Bhutan — the border as India's security issue

- Bhutan is one finger; the **470 km** boundary is disputed in four areas — **Doklam** (west), Charithang, Sinchulimpa and Dramana. China seeks the western sector near the tri-junction, close to India's **Siliguri Corridor** (the 'chicken's neck'); the Chumbi Valley matters equally to China. Japan will open a mission in Thimphu, and Bhutan is no longer an Indian protectorate — Indian policy must be carefully calibrated.

24 Competition in the Indo-Pacific · and the South China Sea

- Indian Ocean sea lanes and chokepoints — Hormuz and Malacca carry more than half the world's maritime oil. India is the region's most important naval power and aspires to be the **net security provider**; its Andaman & Nicobar position gives it a hold over Chinese commerce through Malacca, which is why the maritime theatre suits Indian strategy better than the continental one.
- **South China Sea**: China claims the **Nine Dash Line** (71% of cargo passes through); the **Hague Tribunal (2016)** rejected it in *Philippines v. China*, and China rejects UNCLOS. India's position rests on **freedom of navigation** (the 2015 Joint Strategic Vision), Vietnam oil exploration, and opposition with Japan to any unilateral change of status quo.
- Restraint is deliberate — India is more reserved on the South China Sea and Taiwan than on the LAC, which invites the criticism of asymmetry with its own insistence on rules at the border.

25 Scholars · theory · policy (China)

Views of scholars

- **Manjeet S. Pardesi**: a contest over both territory and status; India should deal with China as a **great power and an independent pole** by building its own power. **Shivshankar Menon**: 'manage' ties — both negotiate assuming a better future position, so neither closes the deal; the modus vivendi "no longer holds."
- **Shyam Saran**: the asymmetry keeps widening; India must field asymmetric capabilities and enmesh itself in the US-led coalition. **C. Raja Mohan**: **cooperate wherever possible, contain wherever necessary**. **Brahma Chellaney** labels Beijing's posture the **'three-no'** policy; **Kanti Bajpai** lists the **4 Ps**

— perceptions, perimeters, partnerships, power.

- **Ashok Kantha**: build capacity and deterrence rather than confront head-on; **B. Chengappa**: use soft power and shed the image of an “arrogant, overbearing patriarch.”

India must be open-minded and imaginative; the **trade deficit is unsustainable**, the border is best managed by infrastructure and asymmetric capabilities, and equilibrium needs “three mutuals” — respect, sensitivity and interest. — **S. Jaishankar**

Theoretical lenses

Realism / realpolitik

Balance of power

Complex interdependence

Constructivism — identity

Security dilemma

Policy direction

- India works from ‘peaceful coexistence’, China from Mao’s ‘five fingers’. Both block each other — China on the UNSC and NSG, India on OBOR and the Quad. China prefers to “manage” not “resolve” the boundary, Tibetan refugees and river-water sharing, and is reluctant to build a consultative mechanism for South Asia even as it opposes Japanese investment in Arunachal while investing in Pakistan-administered Kashmir.
- Practical steps: blend deterrence, agile deployment and diplomacy; shift competition seaward through naval modernisation and coalitions (Quad, SAGAR, the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative); and deliver faster on connectivity under **Neighbourhood First**.

SYNTHESIS Assessment & Conclusion

26 Assessment — where each relationship stands

What the five have in common

- Each was frozen by the Cold War and thawed by the same three events — the Soviet collapse, the 1991 reforms, and the rise of China. The **systemic level** explains the direction, the **domestic level** the pace, and India’s economy sets how much it can absorb.

Relationship	One-line placement
United States	Deepest in capability, shallowest in obligation — an entente , not an alliance ; strongest in defence technology, maritime security and supply chains; weakest on trade, mobility and third-country questions.
Russia	Narrowest in content, widest in trust — defence and hydrocarbons carry it; the Sino-Russian embrace is the structural problem and diversification the only durable answer.
Japan	Least encumbered by dispute, most under-realised — investment, infrastructure and technology are real; defence-industrial and trade content lag the political warmth.
Europe	Largest economic partner, narrowest strategic one until the Indo-Pacific supplied a shared frame — bilateral tracks with France, Germany and the UK outweigh the Brussels track.
China	The only relationship where the primary question is security , not opportunity — trade has grown while trust has fallen, and after 2020 the border conditions everything else.

The three triangles

- India’s real bargaining now runs through **India–US–China**, **India–Russia–US** and **China–Russia–India**; India’s room to manoeuvre rests on being wanted by more than one party and committed to none. The binding constraint across all three is **capability** — **Shyam Saran** on the widening asymmetry with China, **Paul Staniland** on the limits of what a hard-pressed power can deliver.

27 Conclusion

India’s engagement with the great powers is no longer about choosing sides but about managing several relationships that pull in different directions at once — the US supplies technology and maritime weight; Russia, platforms and a veto; Japan, capital and a stake in the Indo-Pacific; Europe, markets, standards and investment; China, both the largest trading relationship and the principal security threat.

None can be treated in isolation, because each is now a variable in the others. What holds the strategy together is neither non-alignment nor alignment, but the insistence on retaining the **freedom to choose** — and that freedom is a function of capability.

Partnerships convert into influence only to the extent that India can absorb technology, deliver projects, and close the power gap — India will be judged by the **quality of its delivery**. — **S. Jaishankar**

28 How UPSC asks it — the last decade, mapped

Tie	Theme — how UPSC framed it	UPSC · marks
Japan	Growing assertiveness of China leading to multilayered Indo-Japan ties	2018 · 15m
Japan	Notable features of the ACSA and its value for India’s security	2020 · 15m
Japan	Main drivers of the India–Japan Strategic & Global Partnership	2022 · 20m
Japan	Growth of ties into a ‘special strategic & global partnership’	2025 · 10m

China	China's OBOR initiative and India's major concerns	2019 · 20m
China	Geo-strategic points of contention in the bilateral relationship	2020 · 15m
China	The QUAD and India's balancing against China's dominance in Asia	2023 · 15m
China	The China-Bhutan border as a security issue for India	2024 · 10m
EU	India's relations with the EU in the context of Brexit	2021 · 15m
EU	Tariff threats pushing India and the EU closer	2025 · 15m

29 Today's practice — write before the evening

UPSC 2022 · 20m What are the main drivers of India-Japan Strategic and Global Partnership?

UPSC 2020 · 15m Examine the Geo-strategic points of contention in the bilateral relationship between India and China.

UPSC 2025 · 15m The tariff threats have pushed India and the European Union closer. Evaluate the India-EU partnership.

Model answers drop tonight on the channel — [@psirbyamitpratap](#). Three relationships, one border that conditions the rest: keep the chain unbroken.

See you tomorrow with Day 47 — India & the UN System.