



# **DAILY EDITORIAL ANALYSIS**

**TOPIC**

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**LONG AND WINDING ROAD OF INDIA-  
CHINA RELATIONS**

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## LONG AND WINDING ROAD OF INDIA-CHINA RELATIONS

### Context

- India and China, two of the world's most populous and influential nations, share a complex and multifaceted relationship. Over the years, their interactions have been marked by cooperation, competition, and conflict.

### India-China Relation: Historical Background

- After India's Independence:** India was among the first countries to recognize the People's Republic of China in 1950, formally establishing **diplomatic ties on April 1, 1950**.
  - It was exemplified by the **Panchsheel Agreement (1954)**, which laid the foundation for peaceful coexistence, and slogan 'Hindi-Chini Bhai-Bhai' (Indians and Chinese are brothers) symbolized the early optimism.
  - However, tensions emerged over territorial disputes, particularly in **Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh (Sino-Indian War of 1962)**.
- Cold War and Strategic Divergences (1962–1990s):** China aligned itself with Pakistan and the United States, while India deepened ties with the Soviet Union.
  - Border skirmishes continued, most notably in 1967 (Nathu La and Cho La clashes) and 1987 (Sumdorong Chu Standoff).
  - India established a **Joint Working Group on the boundary issue** and paved the way for improved diplomatic engagement in 1988 after Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's visit to China.
- Era of Engagement and Economic Cooperation (1990s–2010s):**
  - 1993 & 1996:** Agreements on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility and Confidence-Building Measures along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).
  - 2005:** Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for Border Settlements; Strategic and Cooperative Partnership
  - Trade relations** flourished, with China becoming **India's largest trading partner**. Economic engagement peaked with initiatives like the **BRICS alliance** and participation in regional forums such as the **Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)**.
- Rising Tensions and Border Confrontations (2010s–Present):**
  - 2013:** Depsang standoff, and Border Defence Co-operation Agreement;
  - 2014:** Chumar incident during President Xi Jinping's visit to India.
  - 2017:** Doklam standoff, where Indian and Chinese troops faced off for 73 days.
  - 2020:** Galwan Valley clash, the deadliest confrontation in decades, leading to casualties on both sides. Military tensions remain high along the LAC, despite multiple rounds of talks.

### Current Dynamics: Key Areas of Conflict

- Economic Ties:** Despite tensions, bilateral trade remains significant, with China being **India's largest source of imports** (*bilateral trade crossed \$125 billion in 2024, with 1.9% year-on-year growth*).
  - However, the **trade imbalance** remains a concern for India.
  - India has imposed restrictions on Chinese investments and apps due to security concerns.
- Geopolitical Rivalry:** Competition in the Indo-Pacific, China's ties with Pakistan, expansion in the Indian Ocean, and Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) challenge India's strategic interests.
- Border Disputes:** The LAC remains a flashpoint, with frequent skirmishes and military build-ups. Ongoing tensions in **Ladakh, Arunachal Pradesh, and Sikkim**.
  - Efforts to resolve the border issue through diplomatic and military channels continue, but progress has been slow, and **border tensions persist**.

### Pathways for the Future

- **Economic Diversification:** Both countries can benefit from deeper engagement in sectors such as renewable energy, digital technology, and infrastructure development.
  - ♦ India must reduce dependency on Chinese imports while promoting domestic industries.
  - ♦ Trade agreements addressing the imbalance can foster stronger economic bonds.
- **Military Preparedness:** Strengthening border infrastructure and strategic partnerships with allies.
  - ♦ Sustained military and diplomatic talks are crucial for preventing conflicts.
  - ♦ Confidence-building measures (CBMs) along the border can enhance trust.
  - ♦ **Working Mechanism for Consultation & Coordination (WMCC)** and Corps Commander-level talks have been key platforms for negotiations.
- **Regional and Global Cooperation:** Climate change, trade, and counter-terrorism offer potential areas of collaboration.
  - ♦ Regular summits and diplomatic dialogues are crucial.
- **Cultural and Educational Exchanges:** Encouraging student exchanges, tourism, and academic collaboration can improve people-to-people relations.

### Conclusion

- India-China relations remain complex, marked by **both cooperation and conflict**. While economic ties provide a foundation for engagement, border tensions and strategic competition continue to shape the trajectory of their relationship.
- Managing this relationship requires careful diplomacy, strategic foresight, and pragmatic decision-making.

Source: TH

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### Mains Practice Question

What strategies and policies should India and China adopt to navigate their differences, manage border disputes, and foster long-term cooperation in the geopolitical landscape of the Indo-Pacific region?

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