



# **DAILY EDITORIAL ANALYSIS**

**TOPIC**

---

**INDIA'S STRATEGIC PIVOT: NEW  
DIRECTION TOWARD ASIA**

---

[www.nextias.com](http://www.nextias.com)

## INDIA'S STRATEGIC PIVOT: NEW DIRECTION TOWARD ASIA

### Context

- The focus of India's foreign policy toward Asia reflects the evolving global order, where Asia is emerging as the epicenter of economic dynamism, technological innovation, and geopolitical influence.

### Why Does Asia Matters More Than Ever?

- **Economic Powerhouse:** Asia is home to some of the **world's fastest-growing economies**, including China, India, South Korea, and ASEAN nations.
  - ♦ It contributes **over 60% of global GDP growth**, making it a magnet for trade, investment, and innovation.
- **Shared Cultural and Historical Ties:** India's civilizational links with Southeast and East Asia offer a foundation for trust and cooperation that Western alliances often lack.
- **Regional Stability and Multipolarity:** A stronger Asian bloc can counterbalance Western dominance and foster a more equitable global governance structure.
  - ♦ Frameworks like **BRICS**, **SCO**, and **ASEAN** are becoming increasingly interlinked.

### Asia's Strategic Centrality and Pivotal Role

- The **Tianjin SCO Summit (2025)** symbolized Asia's growing unity, as heads of states from **Russia, India and China** came together — a moment comparable to the cohesion **traditionally seen in G7 meetings**.
- The **'G2' Summit** in **Busan** between **USA and China** reflected a deeper global realization: **the center of power has shifted to Asia**.
- The **US Secretary of State** acknowledged that 'the story of the 21st century will be written in Asia'.

### India's Role in the Asian Order

- Historically, India's foreign policy has **leaned toward the West**, especially in the **post-Cold War era**.
  - ♦ Strategic partnerships with the **US, Europe, and Australia** have brought defense cooperation and economic benefits.
  - ♦ India's stakes in West Asia are immense, with over 9 million Indian expatriates and \$30 billion in remittances from the Gulf.
- It led to **missed opportunities for India in Asia**, where regional frameworks like **RCEP and ASEAN-led initiatives** have progressed without India's full participation.
- Currently, India is navigating complex relationships with **China, the US, and Russia** to balance great powers and **maintain strategic autonomy** while engaging in multilateral forums like the **SCO and the QUAD Forums**.
- India's choice is not between the **USA and China**, but rather toward **an integrated Asian future**.
  - ♦ Asia's cooperation differs from the colonial or rules-based order of the West — it's built on **shared supply chains and mutual interests**.

### Concerns & Challenges For India

- **India's Strategic Inflection Point:** India's improving ties with **China** and **Russia** highlight a regional recalibration, with **US unilateralism reducing multilateral space**.
  - ♦ The US's implicit concern — preventing another China — underscores why India needs to pursue **'trust but verify' diplomacy** with China, especially amid border negotiations that could redefine Kashmir's geopolitics.
- **Fragmented Regional Focus:** India's 'strategic silence' in West Asia, despite the region's critical importance—hosting over 9 million Indian workers and supplying 40% of India's oil.
  - ♦ It undermines India's credibility as a consistent regional actor.

- **Neighbourhood Dynamics:** China's retreat from the **CPEC**, Pakistan's new debt dependence on **ADB loans**, and **US ambitions for a Bagram base** reflect a volatile neighbourhood.
  - ♦ India's **six-month waiver** on US sanctions over **Chabahar Port** opens strategic access to **Iran, Afghanistan, Central Asia, and Russia**.
  - ♦ The time is ripe for a **national debate on defence allocations**, emphasizing **innovation-driven capability** rather than imported platforms.

### Way Forward: India's Assertion on Strategic Autonomy

- **Reasserting Strategic Autonomy:** India's **strategic autonomy** needs to recognize its **dual global agendas** — as a **fast-growing economy** and as a representative of the **Global South**.
  - ♦ Its priorities in sustainable development, technology, and value-chain integration should reflect **India's unique trajectory**, not imported frameworks.
  - ♦ India's uniqueness lies in balancing **high growth and development priorities**. Within the **UN**, its SDGs align more with the **Global South**.
- **Embracing New Global Rules:** The **interconnected digital economy** now defines **technological capacity, economic growth**, and **military power**. India must therefore:
  - ♦ Protect **national data sovereignty**;
  - ♦ Accelerate **endogenous technological innovation**;
  - ♦ Strengthen **local defense manufacturing**; and,
  - ♦ Promote **inclusive economic growth**.
- **Cyber Warfare as the New Frontier:** Cyber warfare, not land-based operations, will dominate 21st-century security.
  - ♦ India's advantage in **AI, digital defense, and cyber capability** need to become the **core pillar of national security**.
- **AI Sovereignty:** Artificial Intelligence will define India's **economic and strategic future**. The **Parliamentary Standing Committee** has rightly called for a **20-fold funding increase** to build sovereign AI capacity. These include:
  - ♦ **National strategic AI collaboration**;
  - ♦ **High-end computational infrastructure**;
  - ♦ **Development of proprietary AI models**; and,
  - ♦ **Talent pipelines driven by the Prime Minister's Office**.
- **Redefining Global Rules:** The **technological interdependence** drives power in the 21st century.
  - ♦ It means **no compromise** on national data, local innovation, defence production, and inclusive growth for India.
  - ♦ India can ensure **double-digit inclusive growth** and **global power status by 2047** with **AI sovereignty**.

Source: TH

### Daily Mains Practice Question

[Q] Examine the rationale behind India's strategic pivot toward Asia. In what ways can this shift redefine India's role in regional and global geopolitics?

