



DAILY EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

TOPIC

**INDIA AND OTHERS ARE BUILDING A
'G MINUS TWO' FOR INDO-PACIFIC**

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Context

- PM Modi's eastward tour, covering Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand, alongside recent visits by Japan's PM Takaichi and South Korea's President Lee to Delhi, points to an **emerging pattern termed "G Minus Two."**

What is "G Minus Two"?

- Rejecting the G2 idea:** Indian strategists have long been uneasy about the idea of a US China condominium quietly running Asia. President Trump's occasional G2 references and his administration's discomfort with the term Indo-Pacific have deepened this anxiety.
- Not a bloc, not containment:** G Minus Two is not an anti-China alliance nor an independent third bloc. It is simply an overlapping web of bilateral and minilateral partnerships among Asian powers, built to create breathing room.
- Still anchored to America:** This is not about distancing from the US. Countries like Japan, Australia, South Korea and New Zealand continue to deepen security ties with the US, since no combination of Asian powers can balance China's military weight alone.

Why This Shift is Happening?

- Trade interdependence with China cannot be wished away:** India's trade with China stands near \$150 billion, while Japan and South Korea each cross \$300 billion, and ASEAN's trade with China has crossed a trillion dollars. Complete decoupling is simply unrealistic.
- The real goal is de-risking, not decoupling:** Countries want to reduce the chance of China weaponising this interdependence, whether through export curbs or supply disruptions, without pretending they can walk away from the relationship entirely.
- Trump's unpredictability adds urgency:** Tariff wars and shifting US posture have pushed Asian partners to hedge by strengthening ties with each other, rather than depending solely on the US's consistency.

What Each Partner Brings India?

- Japan:** Advanced manufacturing, defence technology and infrastructure financing.
- South Korea:** Strength in shipbuilding, semiconductors and defence production.
- Australia:** A critical partner for minerals, maritime security and stability in the eastern Indian Ocean.
- Indonesia:** The geographic and strategic heart of the Indo-Pacific, sitting at the meeting point of two oceans, making deeper India Indonesia cooperation a long overdue link in the regional picture.
- New Zealand:** A smaller but useful partner in trade, education and select technologies.

Significance for India

- More diplomatic room:** India is no longer boxed into choosing between US and China; it can build independent value with the rest of Asia.
- Defence industrial gains:** Working with technologically advanced Asian militaries can feed directly into India's own defence manufacturing ambitions.
- Strengthened regional credibility:** Deeper security and economic transfers to Southeast Asian partners help India position itself as a dependable regional security provider, not just a recipient of partnerships.
- Greater multilateral weight:** Stronger bilateral relationships with major Asian industrial powers can, over time, support India's case for a larger role in global institutions.

Challenges/Concerns

- **Structural limits of middle power cooperation:** However coordinated, these countries acting together still cannot substitute for either US or Chinese weight in the region; the strategy widens space, it does not create parity.
- **Economic interdependence with China remains a real constraint:** Even the most security conscious partners cannot easily unwind commercial ties built over decades.
- **Success depends on India's own homework:** The value of these partnerships is capped by India's pace of internal economic reform and defence self reliance. Summit diplomacy alone cannot substitute for these deeper structural changes.
- **Coordination without formal structure has its limits:** Since G Minus Two deliberately avoids becoming a treaty bound bloc, it also lacks the binding commitments that a formal alliance would offer, making follow through dependent on sustained political will.

Way Forward

- **Convert high level visits and dialogues into concrete, sector specific outcomes** in defence co-production, critical minerals and technology.
- **Prioritise India's own economic competitiveness** and manufacturing depth, since partnerships can only be as strong as what India brings to the table.
- **Use minilateral formats pragmatically**, choosing partners for specific complementary strengths rather than symbolic breadth.

Conclusion

- "G Minus Two" marks a quiet but significant **shift in India's Indo-Pacific thinking**, away from anxious commentary on US China intentions and toward practical coalition building with capable Asian partners.
- But the real test of this framework is not in summit optics but in whether India can match this outward **diplomatic energy with the internal economic and defence reforms** that needed to make these partnerships genuinely deep and lasting.

Source: IE

Daily Mains Practice Question

[Q] Examine the role of middle power minilateralism (India, Japan, South Korea, Australia, Indonesia) in shaping a more balanced Indo-Pacific order amid uncertainty in US-China relations.

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