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GS Paper II: International Relations

1. India–US Defence Partnership Framework 2025

a. Introduction

India and the United States have entered a new stage of strategic cooperation through the 10-year Major Defence Partnership Framework (2025–2035).
This agreement deepens military collaboration and reflects a shared vision for a free, open, and rules-based Indo-Pacific region. It provides a structured plan for cooperation in defence production, logistics, technology development, and joint operations.

The framework is the result of trust built over two decades. It signifies India's rise from being a regional power to becoming a strategic security provider and a responsible actor in maintaining stability across the Indo-Pacific.

b. Background and Context

The 2025 framework builds on earlier milestones in India–US defence cooperation, beginning with the 2005 Defence Framework Agreement. Over the years, both countries have signed three foundational pacts that provide the institutional backbone of their defence relationship:

- LEMOA (2016): Allows reciprocal access to each other's bases for logistics and refuelling.
- COMCASA (2018): Enables secure communications and interoperability between armed forces.
- BECA (2020): Facilitates the sharing of advanced geospatial and mapping data for targeting and navigation.

Together, these agreements have enabled joint exercises, intelligence-sharing, and real-time coordination.
The new 2025 framework expands this cooperation into areas such as joint production, maintenance, innovation in emerging technologies, and resilient defence supply chains.

Even when trade or energy issues created friction between the two countries, defence cooperation has consistently remained the most stable and forward-moving pillar of their strategic relationship.

Building upon this foundation, the new framework offers a comprehensive and long-term structure for defence collaboration.

c. Key Aspects of the 2025–2035 Defence Framework

i. Duration – Spans 10 years (2025–2035), ensuring long-term predictability and strategic continuity.

ii. Scope – Encompasses joint production, logistics, repair, innovation, and training across both nations.

iii. Technology Focus – Advances the INDUS-X initiative, fostering cooperation in AI, drones, space, and cyber defence technologies.

iv. Operational Interoperability – Strengthens coordination through regular joint exercises like *Yudh Abhyas*, *Malabar*, and *Vajra Prahar*.

v. Industrial Cooperation – Promotes co-development and co-production of aircraft engines, artillery systems, and naval equipment under the *Make in India* framework.

vi. Strategic Goal – Aims to support regional stability in the Indo-Pacific and ensure the security of open sea lanes.

vii. Institutional Mechanisms – Supervised through the Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI) and the annual 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue.

Beyond these features, the framework carries broader strategic, industrial, and diplomatic implications that shape the future of India–US defence relations.

d. Analytical Discussion

i. Strategic Significance
The framework reflects India's transition from a defence importer to a co-developer of advanced technology. It strengthens India's maritime presence and deterrence capability in the Indo-Pacific — a region increasingly marked by competition for influence.
For the United States, India serves as a dependable democratic partner and a key contributor to regional stability.

ii. Operational and Industrial Integration
India already operates several U.S. defence platforms, such as the C-17 Globemaster, C-130J, P-8I Poseidon, Apache, and Chinook helicopters. The new framework promotes shared maintenance and logistics systems, which reduce operational costs and increase readiness.

iii. Economic and Technological Benefits
The framework supports the goals of *Atmanirbhar Bharat* by involving Indian companies and start-ups in global supply chains. It will promote dual-use innovation in fields like cyber, electronics, and space technology — areas with both military and civilian applications.

iv. Regional and Diplomatic Impact
It strengthens the Quad framework (India, U.S., Japan, Australia) and reassures smaller Indo-Pacific countries about India's role in maintaining a rules-based maritime order. India also continues to balance this partnership with its tradition of strategic autonomy and multipolar diplomacy.

v. Institutional Stability
Defence cooperation has received bipartisan support in both countries, making it resistant to political change or temporary policy disagreements.

While the framework offers many opportunities, it also raises certain challenges that India must address with care.

e. Challenges and Concerns

i. Strategic Autonomy – India needs to deepen cooperation with the U.S. without compromising its independent foreign policy, particularly regarding ties with Russia and other regional partners.

ii. Technology Access Barriers – U.S. export controls and intellectual property (IP) regulations may slow down technology transfer and co-production processes.

iii. Dependence Risks – Over-reliance on U.S. defence platforms could lead to supply chain vulnerabilities during crises or geopolitical tensions.

iv. Regional Sensitivities – Certain neighbouring countries might perceive the partnership as part of a containment strategy against China, potentially raising regional tensions.

v. Economic Differences – Trade disputes and diverging energy or industrial interests could occasionally strain the broader strategic relationship.

Addressing these challenges requires a balanced approach that blends strategic ambition with policy prudence.

f. Way Forward

i. Advance Co-Development and Co-Production:
Expand joint R&D under *INDUS-X* in next-generation aircraft engines, drones, and autonomous systems.

ii. Secure and Diversify Supply Chains:
Create regional hubs for Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) in India to serve Indo-Pacific partners.

iii. Integrate Quad Defence Cooperation:
Enhance maritime domain awareness, disaster response, and humanitarian assistance under the Quad framework.

iv. Balance Autonomy and Alignment:
Continue diversified defence partnerships with Russia, France, and Israel while deepening interoperability with the U.S.

v. Invest in Innovation and Skills:
Foster collaboration between universities, start-ups, and industries in AI, space systems, and cyber defence.

vi. Promote Strategic Communication:
Publicly emphasise that the partnership aims to enhance regional stability and preserve inclusivity, not to form exclusive blocs.

These policy steps will ensure that the partnership remains both technologically progressive and strategically balanced.

Conclusion

The India–U.S. Defence Partnership Framework (2025–2035) marks a major step in India's evolution from a defence buyer to a co-producer and strategic partner. It reflects growing trust, shared democratic values, and a joint commitment to a secure Indo-Pacific.

Its long-term success will depend on how effectively India leverages this cooperation to achieve technological self-reliance, operational readiness, and balanced strategic autonomy — combining power with prudence and partnership with independence.

GS Paper III: Economics

2. China's Industrial Dominance and the Global Supply Chain Shift

a. Introduction

Over the last four decades, China has emerged as the centre of global manufacturing, reshaping both the world economy and global trade geography.
What began in the late 1970s under Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms as a limited experiment in opening up has evolved into a system of state-guided capitalism — where market incentives operate within a framework of strong state planning.

Today, China accounts for nearly 28% of global manufacturing output, more than the United States, Japan, and Germany combined.
This dominance has created a new global economic structure in which the United States remains the world's largest consumer, while China has become its most indispensable producer.

To understand how China achieved this transformation, it is important to look at its economic evolution and the key milestones that shaped its industrial rise.

b. Background

China's rise unfolded through two major turning points:

- The 1978 Economic Reforms:
  The *Open Door Policy* dismantled collective farming, encouraged private enterprise, and invited foreign investment. The creation of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) offered global firms low-cost production bases and access to a vast labour force.

- WTO Accession in 2001:
  Entry into the World Trade Organization gave China full access to global markets, allowing it to dominate export-oriented manufacturing.

Over time, China shifted from an export-led model to a dual-circulation strategy — aiming to balance global demand with domestic consumption and innovation-driven productivity.

These stages together explain how China built its unmatched manufacturing ecosystem.

c. Evolution of China's Industrial Power

Phase	Period & Key Developments
Export-Led Take-Off (1980s–1990s)	Relied on cheap labour, foreign investment, and joint ventures to begin industrialisation.
Supply Chain Deepening (2000s)	Became part of complex global value chains, dominating sectors such as textiles, electronics, and consumer goods.
Technological Consolidation (2010s)	Shifted toward high-tech manufacturing — robotics, semiconductors, electric vehicles — under the *Made in China 2025* plan.
Dual-Circulation Strategy (2020s)	Focused on domestic demand and innovation while staying globally competitive amid trade restrictions.

This progression highlights not just economic growth but also China's evolving control over the world's production networks.

d. Analytical Discussion

i. Structural Inversion of Power
The global balance between production and consumption has reversed. The United States, once the world's manufacturing hub, now relies on China for crucial products — from electronics and rare earths to medical supplies. China's long-term economic planning gives it a strategic advantage in coordination compared to the short policy cycles of Western democracies.

ii. Limits of the Tariff War
The 2017–2020 U.S.–China tariff war aimed to reduce trade deficits but achieved little reindustrialisation in America. Many supply chains merely relocated to third countries like Vietnam or Mexico, while China retained its central position through re-exports and innovation.

iii. China's Adaptive Strategy
Rather than resisting global pressures, China adapted. It expanded domestic consumption, invested

in high-tech industries, and promoted regional trade through RCEP (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership) — turning external challenges into opportunities for internal strength.

iv. Dual-Circulation and Self-Reliance
The dual-circulation model seeks to reduce vulnerability by combining export power with domestic innovation and consumer demand. It reflects China's effort to sustain growth even under Western technology restrictions.

v. Geoeconomic Leverage
China controls large reserves of rare earth elements and plays a dominant role in the global supply of intermediate goods. This gives it significant leverage in sectors like electronics, renewable energy, and defence manufacturing.

e. Comparative Analysis: The U.S. and China

Parameter	United States	China
Core Strength	Innovation, finance, and consumption-led growth	Manufacturing scale, state planning, and supply chain control
Planning Horizon	Short-term, influenced by electoral cycles	Long-term, guided by national plans
Trade War Outcome	Limited reshoring; higher costs for consumers	Sustained exports through diversification
Global Manufacturing Share	Around 17%	Around 28%
Dependency Link	Depends on China for rare earths and manufacturing	Depends on the U.S. for advanced chip design and patents

The comparison shows that both countries remain interdependent — a reality that makes full economic decoupling unrealistic.

f. Implications for the Global Economy and India

i. Global Supply Chains – Complete decoupling from China is economically impractical; the world remains deeply tied to Chinese production networks.

ii. U.S.–China Rivalry – The next phase of competition will centre on *technology and digital ecosystems*, rather than traditional tariff battles.

iii. India's Opportunity – As firms adopt *China+1* strategies, India can attract greater investment—*provided it strengthens infrastructure, skills, and logistics*.

iv. India's Challenge – China's vast scale and *deeply integrated supply networks* still far outmatch India's current industrial capabilities.

v. Regional Dynamics – Countries like *Vietnam, Mexico, and Bangladesh* are already capturing segments of restructured supply chains; India must act quickly to remain competitive.

g. Way Forward for India

i. Deepen Domestic Manufacturing:
Build strong value chains in electronics, green technology, and electric mobility, supported by predictable policies and infrastructure.

ii. Strengthen Domestic Demand:
Link *Make in India* with rising consumer demand through better skills, MSME growth, and rural income expansion.

iii. Upgrade Trade Infrastructure:
Improve port logistics, customs procedures, and connectivity to meet international supply-chain standards.

iv. Forge Strategic Partnerships:
Use platforms like QUAD and IPEF to gain access to technology, enhance maritime security, and build supply-chain resilience.

v. Invest in Innovation:
Create ecosystems linking universities, start-ups, and industry to move from assembly to design and invention.

vi. Balanced Engagement with China:
Maintain pragmatic cooperation — competing in manufacturing while collaborating in areas like climate change and global trade governance.

By focusing on competitiveness, innovation, and ethical governance, India can turn global uncertainty into a long-term strategic opportunity.

Conclusion

China's rise represents not just economic growth but a systemic shift in global power — from Western-led consumption to East Asian production.
Its transformation into a "factory-plus-fortress" economy has made global supply chains more dependent and more vulnerable at the same time.

For India, this realignment is both a challenge and an opening. The goal is not to replace China, but to emerge as a credible, transparent, and resilient alternative — combining manufacturing depth with democratic governance and sustainable development.

GS Paper III: Economics

3. Capital Formation and Local Governance: Twin Pillars of India's Balanced Growth

a. Introduction

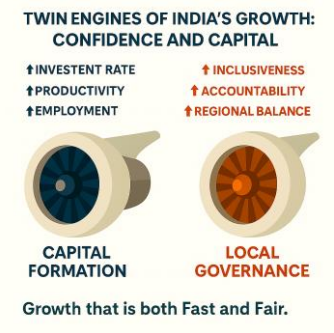
India's long-term development strategy rests on two interlinked pillars — the revival of private investment and the strengthening of decentralised governance. Together, they form the foundation for achieving sustained, inclusive, and regionally balanced growth.

While macroeconomic stability and corporate balance-sheet repair have improved the investment climate, the recovery in private investment remains moderate. The gross investment rate, hovering around 31–32 per cent of GDP, still falls short of the 34–35 per cent required to sustain growth above 7 per cent per annum.

This investment gap reflects not only financial constraints but also the limited institutional capacity at the grassroots to convert growth into broad-based development. True economic transformation therefore requires a two-pronged approach: revitalising private sector dynamism and deepening local-level empowerment to ensure that growth outcomes are both equitable and sustainable.

b. Background

Since the 1991 reforms, India's growth process has evolved through a delicate balance between consumption-led demand and investment-driven expansion. Private investment has remained the key driver of productivity enhancement, employment creation, and technological upgrading.



Policy instruments such as the National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP), Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme, and Make in India initiative have aimed to accelerate capital formation. Simultaneously, fiscal devolution under the 15th Finance Commission and welfare programmes like MGNREGA have sought to strengthen inclusive outcomes.

Theoretically, the Harrod–Domar model and the Incremental Capital Output Ratio (ICOR) underline that faster growth depends on higher and more efficient investment. With an ICOR of about four, sustaining a 7 per cent growth rate requires an investment rate near 35 per cent — illustrating that both the volume and productivity of investment are critical determinants of growth.

c. Structural Context of India's Investment Challenge

Despite stable macroeconomic indicators, private investment continues to face multiple structural and behavioural bottlenecks.

Dimension	Explanation
Corporate Caution	Although corporate balance sheets have improved, investment decisions remain cautious due to global uncertainty, regulatory delays, and weak contract enforcement.
Surplus Liquidity, Limited Expansion	Firms are maintaining large cash reserves rather than reinvesting profits, slowing employment and capacity expansion.
Public Investment as Catalyst	Government capital expenditure, particularly in infrastructure, has played a central role in crowding in private investment.
Domestic Savings Constraint	Dependence on volatile foreign capital flows underscores the need to mobilise domestic savings to sustain investment.
The "Missing Middle"	The shortage of medium-sized firms reduces manufacturing dynamism and employment intensity.
Export Linkages	Periods of sustained high growth have historically coincided with strong export performance and deeper participation in global value chains.

However, the benefits of investment can be fully realised only when economic expansion is matched by institutional depth and participatory governance at the local level.

d. Decentralisation and the Quest for Inclusive Growth

Decentralisation acts as the institutional complement to investment-led growth. Without effective local empowerment, rapid growth risks becoming spatially uneven and socially exclusive.

i. Empowering Local Institutions
The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments envisaged a three-tier framework of self-governance through panchayats and municipalities. Yet, progress in transferring the three "Fs" — *Funds, Functions, and Functionaries* — has been partial. Strengthening fiscal and administrative autonomy is essential for enabling local bodies to undertake meaningful planning and service delivery.

ii. MGNREGA as a Decentralised Model
The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act demonstrates the potential of

decentralised implementation. By routing resources through panchayats, it has enhanced rural wages, empowered women, created local assets, and revitalised community participation in governance.

iii. Technological Empowerment of Rural Economies
Digital platforms, rural fintech, and precision agriculture tools are redefining local production systems. When integrated with decentralised planning, these innovations create new pathways for income diversification and employment generation.

iv. Gender and Social Empowerment
More than half of MGNREGA participants are women — symbolising not only economic inclusion but also greater self-confidence, decision-making power, and engagement in governance.

e. Analytical Discussion

Sub-Theme	Analytical Insight
Investment-Led Growth	Public investment in infrastructure raises private confidence and reduces production costs, stimulating further investment.
The Multiplier Effect	Empirical estimates suggest that a 1 per cent rise in public investment can increase GDP by 2–2.5 per cent, depending on efficiency.
Uncertainty versus Opportunity	Investment hesitation reflects underlying challenges — policy unpredictability, regulatory complexity, and demand volatility.
Decentralisation and Efficiency	Local governance promotes better targeting of resources, reduces leakages, and fosters balanced regional development.
Global Headwinds	Slow world trade and fragmented supply chains necessitate dual strategies — diversification of exports and strengthening of domestic demand.

f. Way Forward

i. Stimulate Private Investment
Maintain long-term policy stability, simplify taxation, and strengthen contract enforcement. Use Public–Private Partnerships (PPPs) and targeted incentives to channel idle liquidity into productive assets.

ii. Strengthen Domestic Savings and Financial Inclusion
Encourage household savings through diversified instruments, expand institutional savings, and reduce dependence on foreign capital.

iii. Promote Labour-Intensive Industrialisation
Simplify labour and compliance frameworks, nurture industrial clusters, and link MSMEs with formal value chains.

iv. Deepen Decentralisation
Devolve fiscal powers to local bodies, introduce performance-based grants, and institutionalise participatory planning at the grassroots.

v. Leverage Technology for Rural Transformation
Expand digital tools for agriculture, procurement, and e-governance to enhance productivity and transparency.

vi. Revitalise Export Competitiveness
Invest in logistics, pursue selective trade agreements, and promote high-potential sectors such as renewables, electronics, and pharmaceuticals.

Collectively, these measures can foster an environment of confidence, efficiency, and inclusiveness in the growth process.

Conclusion

India's journey toward sustained and inclusive growth will depend equally on confidence and capital — the confidence of investors to expand, of local governments to act, and of citizens to participate.

Private investment provides the momentum for economic expansion, while decentralisation ensures that this momentum translates into equitable and regionally balanced outcomes. Together, they form the twin pillars of a self-reliant and democratic economy capable of combining macroeconomic dynamism with social justice.

GS Paper III: Environment

4. Ideologies of Climate Delay: Denial, Technological Faith, and the Crisis of Governance

a. Overview

The global debate on climate change often swings between two dangerous extremes — denialism, which refuses to accept the scientific evidence of human-caused climate change, and techno-solutionism, which believes that new technologies alone can solve the crisis.

Although these views seem opposite, both lead to the same outcome — delay in real action. They protect the existing political and economic systems from major reform. This results in climate complacency — a false sense of comfort that prevents the urgent transformation needed for a sustainable future.

To understand why such ideas persist, we must explore their roots in the larger framework of environmental governance and sustainable development.

b. Background

Global agreements such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (1992) and the Paris Agreement (2015) represent international recognition of the crisis. Their goal is to limit the rise in global temperature to within 1.5–2°C.

However, recent IPCC reports, especially the Sixth Assessment Report (2023), warn that the world is approaching irreversible tipping points — thresholds beyond which climate impacts become uncontrollable. This exposes the wide gap between global promises and real implementation.

Economist Martin Weitzman's "catastrophic tail-risk" theory explains that even a small chance of catastrophic warming justifies immediate action, since the cost of inaction could be infinitely higher.

Thus, while global awareness has grown, deep ideological divides continue to shape how different societies respond to climate change.

c. The Two Extremes in Climate Discourse

Approach	Core Belief	Consequences
Denialism	Rejects human responsibility for climate change and claims it is exaggerated or false.	Blocks international cooperation, discredits science, and fuels political divisions.

Approach	Core Belief	Consequences
Techno-solutionism	Believes technology, markets, and innovation will automatically fix the problem.	Promotes overconfidence and delays structural reforms.
Growth Fatalism	Assumes economic growth will naturally solve poverty and environmental issues.	Continues the cycle of overproduction and overconsumption.

Though different in form, these ideologies share a common effect — they divert attention from the political and structural roots of environmental degradation.

d. Structural and Ideological Dimensions

i. Technology within Power Relations
Optimism about technology often hides the real issue — who controls it. Access to green technology depends on money, patents, and political power, meaning that the benefits are unevenly shared.

ii. Misleading Trade-offs
It is false to suggest that climate action competes with poverty reduction. In reality, climate change worsens poverty, hunger, and disease, so the two goals must be pursued together.

iii. Institutional Complacency and Gradualism
Many governments, corporations, and global institutions talk about "balanced" or "gradual" reform, but this often becomes an excuse for inaction and avoidance of real change.

iv. Performative Environmentalism
Symbolic gestures like "net-zero" pledges or "green" branding often replace serious policy action, creating an illusion of progress.

These patterns appear worldwide — each region combining technological optimism with political caution in its own way.

e. Comparative and Policy Perspectives

Region	Policy Orientation	Underlying Concern
United States	Frequently shifts between supporting and withdrawing from climate agreements.	Strong influence of corporate lobbying and politicized science.
China	Invests heavily in renewable energy but still depends on coal and export-led growth.	The paradox of depending on technology while expanding emissions.
India	Advocates sustainable development but remains reliant on fossil fuels for growth.	Limited institutional capacity and financial constraints.
European Union	Promotes a "Just Transition" linking decarbonization with social justice.	Tries to balance equity with technological innovation.

These global trends make it clear that technology alone cannot solve the climate crisis — it must be supported by ethical governance and citizen participation.

f. Analytical Insights

i. Denialism and Complacency as Political Tools: Both approaches protect powerful interests by shifting responsibility from major polluters to individuals or future innovations.

ii. The Ethical Blind Spot of Techno-Optimism: When technology is unequally controlled, it can deepen inequality rather than solve it.

iii. Fatigue and Policy Fatalism: After decades of slow progress, public enthusiasm for bold action has faded, leading to acceptance of "adaptation" instead of real transformation.

iv. Erosion of Trust: Frequent swings between alarmism and false reassurance weaken public confidence in climate institutions.

g. Ethical and Governance Dimensions

Climate change is not only an environmental issue but also a moral and ethical challenge. Developed countries, which caused most historical emissions, have a moral duty to help poorer nations that are now suffering the worst impacts.

Delaying action today shifts both ecological and moral costs to future generations. Strengthening transparency, accountability, and independence in climate institutions is essential for rebuilding public trust and maintaining faith in global cooperation.

Understanding these ethical principles helps identify fair and practical ways forward.

h. Way Forward

i. Reject False Choices:
Climate action and poverty reduction go hand in hand. Community-based renewable energy projects can improve both incomes and resilience.

ii. Reform Global Finance:
Removing fossil-fuel subsidies and providing affordable finance to developing countries can reduce global inequality.

iii. Promote Participatory Governance:
Local communities should have a direct say in climate adaptation and land-use planning.

iv. Encourage Institutional Self-Reflection:
Global and national institutions must be open to self-assessment to avoid corporate or ideological capture.

v. Ensure Justice-Centered Innovation:
Green technologies must be designed and shared with fairness, accessibility, and inclusivity in mind.

vi. Rebuild Public Trust:
Governments and institutions must communicate honestly about risks and trade-offs to strengthen collective responsibility.

These measures should be guided by a shared moral vision — one that combines science, justice, and long-term responsibility.

Conclusion

Denialism harms humanity by rejecting science, while techno-optimism weakens urgency by promising easy fixes. True sustainability demands a balance of technological creativity, institutional honesty, and social justice.

In essence, climate action is not just a technical project — it is a civilizational choice between comfort and courage, between short-term convenience and the survival of future generations.

Reader's Note — About This Current Affairs Compilation

Dear Aspirant,

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While every effort has been made to balance depth with brevity, please keep the following in mind:

1. Orientation & Purpose

This compilation is curated primarily from the UPSC Mains perspective — with emphasis on conceptual clarity, analytical depth, and interlinkages across GS papers.

However, the PrepAlpine team is simultaneously developing a dedicated Prelims-focused Current Affairs Series, designed for:

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This Prelims Edition will be released separately as a standalone publication.

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