EDITORIALS - 21ST NOV 2026

1. THREE TO TANGO (GS PAPER II INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS)

This editorial '**Three to tango**' was published in **The Hindu** on 21st Nov 2026, highlights the need for a **roadmap for nuclear arms** talks among the **U.S., China** and **Russia** after the **Shenzhen summit**.

Shenzhen Summit and Strategic Interests

- The first U.S.–China–Russia **trilateral summit**, held in Shenzhen on **19 November**, set terms for great-power engagement in a changing global order, whereas Yalta in 1945 addressed post-war Europe.
- After **New START** expired in February 2026, Russia signalled readiness for talks, while Trump sought to include China in **warhead reduction** talks to build strategic stability.
- The summit reinforced **China's parity with the U.S.** and gave Putin a diplomatic opening amid Western efforts to isolate Russia after its **invasion of Ukraine**, as Moscow sought closer ties with Beijing.
- The leaders agreed to start **trilateral arms talks** and jointly affirmed that **nuclear war** cannot be won and must never be fought.

Diplomatic Limits and Global Governance

- The summit produced no breakthrough on **arms reduction**, non-proliferation or the Ukraine war, and a future **U.S. administration** could change course towards Russia and China.

- The leaders called for **UN reform**, but wider institutional reform should involve rising **middle powers** such as India, South Africa and Brazil.

BEYOND EDITORIAL

Implications of Trilateral Nuclear Arms Control for India

- **Deterrence planning**: SIPRI estimated China's arsenal rose from 500 to 600 warheads between January 2024 and January 2025, making verifiable limits relevant to India's deterrence planning.
- **Pakistan factor**: A trilateral deal would leave India reliant on separate safeguards with Pakistan, including the annual exchange of nuclear facility lists under the 1988 non-attack agreement.
- **Nuclear transparency**: New START's data exchanges and on-site inspections offer a model that could help India assess changes in China's arsenal.
- **Missile defence**: The 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty limited U.S. and Soviet missile defences, illustrating why India must assess China's defences alongside its warhead numbers.
- **Missile-test notifications**: The 2005 India–Pakistan ballistic missile test notification pact offers India and China a model for reducing the risk of misreading a launch.
- **Crisis communication**: India and Pakistan used their military hotline to reaffirm the Line of Control ceasefire in 2021, demonstrating its value for de-escalation.
- **Multilateral engagement**: India's sponsorship of the 2025 UN draft resolution on *Reducing Nuclear Danger* shows how it can advance risk reduction outside trilateral talks.

2. INDIA'S CIVILISATIONAL GAMBIT IN CHINA'S BACKYARD (GS PAPER II INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS)

This editorial '**India's civilisational gambit in China's backyard**' was published in **The Hindu** on 21st Nov 2026, highlights India's use of the **SCO's civilisational dialogue** to shape Eurasian diplomacy and advance **democratic pluralism**.

Civilisation in Global Diplomacy

- The inaugural **SCO Civilisational Dialogue Forum** opened at Purana Qila on **20 November**, bringing together SCO culture ministers and dialogue partners from over 25 countries after India proposed it at Tianjin in 2025.
- Beijing challenged the West's post-Cold War dominance over the language of universal values through its **Global Civilization Initiative** in 2023, securing **UN General Assembly** recognition of 10 June as the International Day for Dialogue among Civilizations in 2024.

India's Strategic Objectives

- India seeks **soft connectivity** through Buddhist circuits, Sufi lineages and historic trade routes linking **Taxila and Samarkand**.
- A flagship Indian initiative gives New Delhi **agenda-setting influence** in the Beijing-based SCO despite its rejection of the **Belt and Road Initiative**, disputes with Pakistan and lingering post-Galwan distrust.
- India presents **democratic pluralism** as compatible with **civilisational continuity**, challenging Beijing's use of antiquity to justify centralised order.

- India's **multi-alignment** spans BRICS, semiconductor cooperation with the EU, supply-chain ties with the U.S. and Japan, and **Quad maritime security**, allowing each partnership to hedge the others.

Soft Power and Strategic Risks

- India can build **soft power** by shaping the diplomatic language of **Eurasia**, where China has greater spending power in Central Asia.
- India's **democratic credibility** could give Beijing's portrayal of universal standards as Western impositions the appearance of Asian consensus, while China can use its claims to **Buddhist heritage** to bolster its position on the Dalai Lama's succession.
- **Civilisational rhetoric** can legitimise authoritarian repression, while rival claims to antiquity can turn **multipolarity** into sharper competition.

BEYOND EDITORIAL

The Role of Non-State Actors in India's Cultural Diplomacy

- **Academic partnerships**: The student exchange between O.P. Jindal Global University and the University of Georgia School of Law illustrates how universities can build direct institutional ties.
- **Museum collaboration**: Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya exhibited Indian antiquities alongside loans from the British Museum, Getty and Berlin State Museums.
- **Diaspora networks**: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan's classical music and dance classes in London connect diaspora families and local learners with Indian traditions.

- **Artisan participation**: The Aga Khan Trust for Culture involved master craftspeople in restoring Humayun's Tomb, keeping traditional building skills in use.
- **Literary outreach**: Teamwork Arts brought the Jaipur Literature Festival to the British Library in 2026, connecting Indian literary programming with overseas audiences.
- **Regional representation**: Khamir's exhibitions on Kachchhi crafts, including pottery, give regional traditions and their practitioners greater visibility.
- **Independent funding**: Since 1976, the Inlaks Shivdasani Foundation has supported scholarships, arts residencies and fellowships, helping sustain exchanges across diplomatic cycles.

3. AFTER SHENZHEN: HOW INDIA CAN FORGE A FOURTH POLE (GS PAPER II INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS)

This editorial '**After Shenzhen: how India can forge a fourth pole**' was published in **The Hindu** on 21st Nov 2026, highlights how India can lead a **coalition of sovereign states** to shape an **emerging world order** centred on the U.S., China and Russia.

Case for a Fourth Pole

- After the **19 November Shenzhen summit**, China proposed a **Shenzhen International System**, reflecting the U.S., China and Russia's view of themselves as the principal powers shaping the global order.
- Low **per capita income** and rising inequality constrain India's economic standing, while incomplete **arms manufacturing self-**

reliance limits its military power, making coalition-building a route to greater influence.

- India can build on its **non-alignment** legacy by rallying countries that seek **strategic autonomy**, resist expansionism and insist on consultation over decisions affecting their sovereignty.

Diplomacy and Multilateral Reform

- With conflicts claiming nearly half a million lives in five years and exposing supply chains and capital markets, India's **diplomacy of conscience** should centre mediation on **civilian protection**, drawing on Nagorno-Karabakh, Sudan and Yemen while building on its Ukraine outreach.
- The **G20 and BRICS** can build trust, while hosting **UN and allied agencies** would help India strengthen its presence in multilateral institutions with wider legitimacy.
- India could build goodwill by yielding its **2028–29 UN Security Council** bid to first-time contender Tajikistan and rallying elected Council members behind a Latin American candidate for **UN Secretary-General**.
- India should lead the coalition in defending international law by signing and ratifying key instruments, including the **Convention Against Torture** and the **Refugee Convention**.

Nuclear Security

- Like-minded **nuclear powers** in the coalition could agree on rules for strategic arsenal growth and consider a **joint nuclear umbrella** to prevent the Shenzhen trio from becoming the sole arbiters of international security.

BEYOND EDITORIAL

Institutional Design of a Fourth-Pole Coalition

- **Membership criteria**: Article 4 of the UN Charter requires applicants to accept its obligations, offering a model for admission based on shared commitments.
- **Rotating leadership**: ASEAN's annual rotation of its chair offers a model for giving smaller coalition members a regular turn at setting the agenda.
- **Flexible participation**: ASEAN Minus X allows members, by consensus, to vary participation in economic commitments, offering a model for projects that some coalition members are ready to pursue sooner.
- **Internal mediation**: The ASEAN Charter lets disputing members request mediation by its chair or secretary-general, helping contain disputes before they disrupt wider cooperation.
- **Fair burden-sharing**: NATO bases common funding shares largely on gross national income, offering a model for contributions tied to economic capacity.
- **Practical cooperation**: ASEAN's regional disaster logistics system shows how members can pool relief supplies despite differences on wider foreign policy.
- **Peer accountability**: The African Peer Review Mechanism offers a model for voluntarily reviewing coalition commitments while preserving members' autonomy.