

EDITORIALS - 5TH OCT 2026

1. Two or three? (GS Paper I Society, GS Paper II Governance)

This editorial 'Two or three?' was published in **The Hindu** on 5th Oct 2026, highlights the **shortcomings** of the **three-language policy** and the case for **student choice** through internal assessment.

Judicial Scrutiny and Implementation

- The **Supreme Court** seeks to ease **student burden** until schools are prepared; current Class 6 students should receive the relief granted to Classes 7–9, with the third language internally assessed in Class 10.
- The Court earlier questioned starting implementation in **2026** instead of **2027**, while the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) repeatedly resisted compromise.
- Introducing a new language in Class 9 could disrupt students without prior exposure to a second **Indian language**; the Court also questioned categorising **English** as foreign.

Language Choice and Policy Implications

- **English**, used in India for at least 300 years, dominates education, courts and professions, serves as a **link language**, and supports global employment, particularly in information technology.
- The **National Education Policy 2020** advocates two Indian languages while recognising **foreign-language learning** as a means to facilitate global employment mobility.
- With English as the medium of instruction, **CBSE schools** may retain it as their only foreign language; Hindi–Sanskrit or regional-language combinations could displace **Spanish and French**, limiting cross-regional learning.
- Although learning more Indian languages can strengthen **federalism**, compulsory study of an additional language offers limited **practical utility** when driven by attachment to the past.

BEYOND EDITORIAL

Educational Equity in Multilingual Schooling

- **Teacher availability:** The Appointment of Language Teachers Scheme supported Hindi teachers in northeastern States and Urdu teachers across States and Union Territories, addressing language-teaching needs.
- **Resource disparities:** The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) launched 52 Indian-language primers in March 2024, expanding materials for children speaking less-represented languages.
- **English access:** National Education Policy 2020 envisages bilingual science and mathematics materials in English and the mother tongue, supporting English access without displacing home languages.

- **Household costs:** Samagra Shiksha provides free elementary-level textbooks, including tribal-language materials, reducing learning expenses for disadvantaged families.
- **Migrant inclusion:** Education Ministry guidelines facilitate migrant children's admission to nearby government schools with minimal documentation; language assistance remains necessary for learning continuity.
- **Accessible learning:** Indian Sign Language became a secondary-level subject, while national institutions developed over 1,200 signed educational resources to support hearing-impaired learners.
- **Wider exposure:** Bhasha Sangam offers 100 everyday sentences in 22 scheduled languages through school materials and an app, enabling multilingual exposure beyond examinations.

2. Colby's mid-term report card, what it means for India (GS Paper II International Relations)

This editorial 'Colby's mid-term report card, what it means for India' was published in **The Hindu** on 5th Oct 2026, highlights how evolving **U.S. defence priorities** create **opportunities for India** to build strategic leverage while preserving autonomy.

Changing U.S. Defence Strategy

- Elbridge A. Colby's assessment of the **2026 National Defense Strategy** identifies four priorities: homeland defence, China deterrence, greater partner contributions, and rebuilding the **defence industry**.
- Washington seeks greater **burden-sharing**: Europe should lead its defence, South Korea contribute more on the peninsula, and Japan–Australia assume larger **Indo-Pacific** roles.
- The U.S. retains strategic leadership, advanced capabilities and **extended deterrence**, while partners supply more troops, infrastructure, funding and **industrial support**.

China and Russia Calculations

- **China deterrence** centres on preventing Indo-Pacific domination, especially along the **First Island Chain**, even as Washington negotiates trade and other issues with Beijing.
- India's value to Washington rests substantially on **China** and the Indo-Pacific; shifting U.S.–China competition and cooperation mean bilateral interests overlap without always aligning, complicating **strategic convergence**.
- Washington seeks lower **Ukraine war** costs and greater European security responsibility while limiting Russian power; India must navigate its Russian defence ties, energy needs and **strategic autonomy**.

Implications for India

- India's location, **military potential**, Indian Ocean position and technology ambitions underpin its enduring importance across U.S. administrations; Washington now expects greater contributions to the **regional balance**, defence cooperation and technology–supply-chain projects.

- Partnerships with France, Europe, Japan, Australia and the Gulf, alongside continued Russian ties, expand India's **capabilities** and **strategic choices**.
- **Bargaining power** depends on economic scale, military strength, technology, market access and control over strategic capabilities; importance to Washington alone cannot secure favourable **cooperation terms**.
- China's economic and technological strength illustrates **strategic leverage**; India's growing capabilities can similarly increase influence, but building such **negotiating strength** takes time.

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Risks of Strategic Entanglement for India

- **Conflict exposure:** India declined the U.S. request for troops in Iraq in 2003, linking reconsideration to an explicit United Nations mandate and preserving deployment discretion.
- **Technology dependence:** The U.S. Government Accountability Office found that missing technical data forced military maintainers to rely on contractors for some F-35 corrosion repairs.
- **Procurement pressure:** Turkey's Russian S-400 purchase led to its suspension from the F-35 programme in 2019, illustrating how partnerships can constrain equipment choices.
- **Sanctions exposure:** Washington sanctioned Turkey's defence procurement agency in December 2020 over its S-400 purchase, demonstrating that alliance membership does not prevent sanctions.
- **Regional perceptions:** China portrayed the Quad as a containment mechanism in September 2024, illustrating diplomatic friction arising from closer regional security cooperation.
- **Spending pressure:** The North Atlantic Treaty Organization's 2014 Wales pledge sought defence spending towards 2% of gross domestic product, illustrating partners' potential burden-sharing demands.
- **Commitment safeguards:** India's 2016 Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement permits reciprocal logistical support but excludes bases or basing arrangements, demonstrating the value of explicit cooperation limits.

3. How regulation stifles HEIs (GS Paper II Governance)

This editorial '**How regulation stifles HEIs**' was published in **The Hindu** on 5th Oct 2026, highlights how **compliance-driven** regulation can **undermine** higher education quality, institutional integrity and innovation.

Regulation versus Educational Quality

- The **Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan (VBSA) Bill, 2025**, under legislative review, seeks higher education reform through quality, accountability, minimum standards and

malpractice prevention; another overarching regulator could undermine **educational quality**.

- When **external supervision** replaces institutional integrity, Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) prioritise minimum paper requirements over meaningful learning; Alan Greenspan's critique of fear-based regulation stresses its neglect of the **moral basis** of institutions.
- **Compliance pressure** shifts teachers towards inspection evidence and authorities towards rankings and accreditation, producing documentation without necessarily improving **intellectual engagement**.

Compliance Burden and Institutional Distrust

- The **regulatory architecture** includes the University Grants Commission (UGC), All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), and National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE); inconsistent directives generate further clarifications and **regulatory proliferation**.
- **UGC Regulations, 2018** prescribe a 40-hour working week but physical campus availability of only five hours daily; such inconsistencies risk reducing teaching's **intellectual substance** to arithmetic compliance.
- Standardised work and **regulatory surveillance** create distrust, encouraging institutional and teacher **risk aversion**, suppressing innovation and making conventional mediocrity the safest option.

Autonomy as a Quality Enabler

- **Institutional autonomy** distinguishes IISc, IITs, IIMs, NITs and IISERs from other HEIs: greater freedom over curricula, recruitment and resource allocation supports their own **institutional strategies**.
- These institutions challenge the claim that intensive regulation drives **quality**; extending the VBSA framework to them could undermine the **autonomy** supporting their performance.

BEYOND EDITORIAL

Student Protection within Autonomous Institutions

- **Fee accountability:** University Grants Commission (UGC) grievance regulations, 2023 cover charges exceeding declared fees and delayed or denied admissible refunds, protecting students against financial exploitation.
- **Truthful disclosures:** The 2023 regulations require advance prospectuses detailing fees, faculty and infrastructure, while recognising misleading disclosures as grievances to protect informed admissions.
- **Academic mobility:** The Academic Bank of Credits, introduced in 2021, supports credit accumulation and transfer across participating institutions, helping students preserve completed learning.

- **Equal treatment:** The 2023 grievance framework covers alleged discrimination against Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, women, minorities and persons with disabilities.
- **Campus safety:** UGC's 2009 anti-ragging regulations provide institutional committees and squads to prevent ragging and oversee responses, making autonomy compatible with student protection.
- **Independent appeals:** The 2023 framework permits appeals against grievance committee decisions to an Ombudsperson, who should seek resolution within 30 days.
- **Student participation:** The 2023 regulations include a student representative as a special invitee on grievance redressal committees, incorporating learners' perspectives into institutional accountability.