GLOBALISATION IN TRANSITION: CAN INDIA REDUCE STRATEGIC DEPENDENCE ON CHINA WITHOUT LOSING THE BENEFITS OF GLOBAL TRADE?

Himanshu Jee, Amity University Noida, Uttar Pradesh

ABSTRACT

Globalization has created closer ties between nations through its market and industrial and technological and human connections. The program has enabled businesses to reach new markets while decreasing their manufacturing expenses and generating possibilities for economic expansion. The current worldwide situation combined with increasing international political conflicts has demonstrated that nations should not rely entirely on one country for their vital goods and manufacturing resources. The manufacturing dominance of China in the global market has created significant problems for India's economic development. The Indian economy benefits from Chinese imports but the country faces risks because of its high dependence on Chinese suppliers during times of trade conflicts and supply chain interruptions and international diplomatic shifts.

The research study investigates ways for India to decrease its strategic reliance on China while still maintaining the economic advantages of international trade. The research investigates two main areas of study which encompass the dangers that essential supply chains present and the challenges which complete economic separation creates. The research study employs secondary data which includes government reports and official trade statistics and published research to examine how globalisation has evolved over time. The study demonstrates that India does not have to select between total self-sufficiency and ongoing Chinese dependency. The Indian economy will benefit more from a mixed strategy which enables international trade while developing domestic capabilities and creating dependable supply chains. The research demonstrates that globalisation will keep developing through the unrestricted exchange of goods and services while countries develop their abilities to manage economic hazards and sustain international partnerships.

Keywords: Globalization, India-China Trade Dependence, Supply Chain Resilience, Strategic Autonomy, Atmanirbhar Bharat

1. INTRODUCTION

Globalization links national economies through four main elements which include trade and investment and technology and production networks. The connections between countries enable businesses to achieve lower operational costs while accessing additional markets and acquiring new knowledge. The essential inputs of production create a risk because their procurement depends on a single country. A major supplier disruption will impact multiple industries and jeopardize economic security despite the efficiency benefits from international specialisation.[1]

The central role of China in worldwide manufacturing creates an ongoing concern for India. Indian manufacturing operations rely on raw materials that come from China throughout their production processes which include active pharmaceutical ingredients and electronics and telecom components and solar manufacturing inputs and rare-earth technology materials. The study's results show that different import categories create different levels of impact because some import items can be easily replaced but other items need special testing because they threaten public health and energy transition and critical infrastructure systems. The government should develop a system to handle essential security threats which should include all vital components that protect national interests.[2]

Extended supply chains showed their fragile nature during the COVID-19 pandemic, while India raised its economic and national security concerns after the 2020 Galwan Valley border clash. India established Press Note 3 in April 2020 to control all investments from neighbouring countries which share a land border to India that required government permission for investments which included specified beneficial ownership. [3] Debates about China plus 1 sourcing and friend-shoring which take place in different countries have prompted both governments and businesses to examine their supply chain practices while maintaining their international trade activities.

[1] United Nations Industrial Development Organization, *International Yearbook of Industrial Statistics 2024* (United Nations Industrial Development Organization 2024).
[2] Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers, Department of Pharmaceuticals, Government of India, *Annual Report 2023–24* (Government of India 2024); Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Department of Commerce, Government of India, *Export Import Data Bank.*
[3] Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India, *Press Note No. 3 (2020 Series): Review of Foreign Direct Investment Policy for Curbing Opportunistic Takeovers/Acquisitions of Indian Companies Due to the Current COVID-19 Pandemic* (17 April 2020).

The article establishes that India has more options than selecting between total self-sufficiency and ongoing reliance on China. The study investigates methods for India to enhance its domestic capacity while establishing multiple supplier options and working with international partners to achieve worldwide economic advantages. The research utilizes a policy-and-legal framework which analyse secondary data together with official trade statistics and government reports and published research. The research investigates India's exposure to specific economic sectors together with the economic limitations of total decoupling and the domestic and international policy tools which can assist in developing a resilient trade strategy for international markets.

2. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

India's industrial sector and consumer market depend on Chinese imports for both intermediate products and finished goods, which creates supply interruption risks and economic exploitation dangers and geopolitical instability threats. The complete decoupling process would create major transition expenses while it would disrupt existing production systems and it would endanger the advantages which India receives from international trade. The primary challenge involves discovering methods for India to decrease its strategic weaknesses which occur due to heavy Chinese supply dependence without creating restrictions that would harm its trade advantages. The research investigates which policy and legal and institutional solutions can enhance supply chain resilience while maintaining international economic ties and domestic industrial strength and low-cost resource availability.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1: In which sectors and input categories is India’s dependence on China most strategically significant, and what factors make these dependencies particularly vulnerable?

RQ2: What are the principal economic and policy limitations of pursuing complete economic decoupling from China?

RQ3: Which domestic measures, including manufacturing incentives, supplier diversification and trade and investment regulation, has India adopted or could adopt to reduce strategic dependence?

RQ4: How can India combine domestic capability-building with international cooperation to manage strategic vulnerabilities while preserving the benefits of global trade?

4. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

O1: The first objective requires identification and assessment of sectors and inputs which India depends on China for their assessment of strategic risks which will reveal critical vulnerabilities and normal commercial import dependencies.

O2: The second objective is to examine the economic costs, industrial constraints and policy limitations associated with complete economic decoupling from China.

O3: The third objective requires analysis of current and future domestic policy instruments which include production incentives and investment screening and indigenous manufacturing and supplier diversification to achieve reduced strategic dependence.

O4: The fourth objective requires creation of a balanced policy framework which combines domestic industrial capability with international partnership diversification and ongoing global trade participation.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researchers used secondary data sources to conduct their analytical research which focused on policy development. The research utilized government reports from the "Ministry of Commerce and Industry" and the "Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade" and Department of Commerce official trade statistics and Reserve Bank of India information and published studies about supply-chain resilience and India–China trade to complete its research. The research does not create any new empirical data. The study combines existing statistical data with legal and policy documents to evaluate strategic weaknesses and assess existing policy options while developing recommendations that meet the research goals.

6. RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

India can decrease its strategic reliance on China by developing domestic capabilities and finding new suppliers in key dangerous fields without needing to stop all economic relations with China. The strategic vulnerability of the bilateral trade relationship exists because specific

critical inputs and supply chains create the most risk, this leads to particular critical points of vulnerability which need protection. A differentiated policy approach should therefore offer a more proportionate and economically sustainable response than comprehensive decoupling.

7. LITERATURE REVIEW

The research studies which examine globalization establish a conflict between organizations' operational efficacy and their ability to safeguard supply chains. The conventional just-in-time systems decrease both inventory levels and operational expenses but COVID-19 pandemic disruptions showed that organizations should adopt more diversified approaches together with strategic reserves and just-in-case capacity methods. The ongoing discussion centers on the methods which governments should use to address concentrated supply risks while still maintaining the advantages of international specialisation.[4]

Research on India–China economic relations frequently examine India's merchandise trade deficit and reliance on Chinese intermediate goods. The official trade statistics serve as the foundation for researching imports that pertain to electronics and pharmaceutical active ingredients and solar manufacturing.[5] The sources prove that overall trade imbalances need to be separated from specific trade vulnerabilities because a country which has a large trade deficit, must face strategic threats from all its imported products.

The Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative and Production Linked Incentive PLI schemes together with Press Note 3 of 2020 which established government approval requirements for particular investments from land-bordering nations of India serve as the framework through which policy literature assesses India s responses to these initiatives. [6] The various trade diversification efforts, which include the India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement and ongoing 'India-European Union free trade agreement negotiations' and Quad supply-chain

[4] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Global Value Chains: Efficiency and Risks in the Context of COVID-19* (OECD Policy Responses to Coronavirus (COVID-19), 2020).
[5] Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Department of Commerce, Government of India, *Export Import Data Bank*; Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers, Department of Pharmaceuticals, Government of India, *Annual Report 2023–24* (Government of India 2024).
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resilience initiatives, provide businesses with additional ways to decrease their risk of concentrated exposure while sustaining their global operations.[7]

The existing policy framework continues to have a significant gap that remains unaddressed. Discussions frequently frame decoupling and continued engagement as competing strategic choices, without consistently distinguishing critical inputs requiring resilience-focused intervention from ordinary commercial goods for which competitive international sourcing remains beneficial. The article fills this research gap through its proposal of a sector-specific evaluation method to measure strategic dependency. The study assesses which situations require domestic manufacturing and alternative suppliers and international cooperation to handle potential disruptions while identifying cases where broad restrictions will lead to excessive economic burdens. The study presents a different framework which connects resilience measures to specific strategic risks instead of treating bilateral trade dependence as an identical policy challenge.

8. ANALYSIS

The assessment of India's dependence on China requires assessment of both import value and assessment of strategic value of imported goods and assessment of alternative supplier possibilities and assessment of domestic production capacity development time. The official trade statistics show that bilateral merchandise trade between the two countries reached about US12940 billion during the 2024 to 2025 period because India imported US11515 billion worth of goods and exported US1425 billion worth of goods. The relationship shows an imbalance because of its size, yet the policy response needs to concentrate on particular weaknesses instead of considering all imports to be equally hazardous.

8.1 Mapping Strategic Dependence

Through their focus on specific market areas, pharmaceutical companies demonstrate strategic concentration. Government data show that China accounted for 74.1 percent of India’s imports of active pharmaceutical ingredients, bulk drugs and drug intermediates by value in 2024–25.[8]

[7] Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India, *India–UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement* (2022); European Commission, *EU–India Trade and Investment Relations*; The White House, *Quad Leaders’ Joint Statement* (2021).

[8] Department of Pharmaceuticals, Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers, Government of India, Import of Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients, Rajya Sabha Starred Question No. 183 (10 March 2026).

The pharmaceutical manufacturers face financial risks from price fluctuations and supply interruptions because their business relies on these conditions. Domestic production is essential for public health security because it provides more than just an alternative to imported products. The process of achieving complete replacement needs dependable production capabilities for starting materials and affordable manufacturing costs and products that meet quality standards and production capacities that meet market needs.

The second vulnerability arises from electronics and telecommunications systems. India has developed local mobile phone assembly capacity together with electronic export capabilities but domestic semiconductor production will not result from these assembly operations. The evaluation of resilience depends on understanding the difference between domestic product assembly and the ability to control essential upstream materials. [9] The solar manufacturing industry faces a challenge because India has increased its capacity to produce solar modules while domestic supply needs to be enhanced through better production of wafers and solar cells. The NITI Aayog assessment determines that India lacks sufficient manufacturing capacity for upstream photovoltaic production processes.[10] The technologies that depend on rare earth elements need to be examined because the concentrated processing capacity of these elements impacts permanent magnets and electric vehicles and electronics and defence applications.

The two sectors require different methods of identification. Inputs which sustain vital medicines and essential infrastructure and defence production need stronger protective measures. The standard consumer products which multiple competing suppliers offer present reduced risk to the entire system. The strategic importance of an item depends on its supply chain factors and replacement duration and the impact of its unavailability and its origin country.

8.2 Limits of Full Decoupling

The process of complete decoupling will create significant financial burdens during both the short term and the medium term. Chinese suppliers maintain large-scale operations while they connect their businesses to nearby manufacturing systems. The quick replacement of these

[9] Press Information Bureau, Government of India, Production Linked Incentive Scheme for Large Scale Electronics Manufacturing (2026).
[10] NITI Aayog, $ReportonIndia'sSolarPhotovoltaicManufacturingValueChain$ (2025). Verify the exact report title and publication details before submission.

components will lead to higher costs and production delays which will decrease the ability of Indian manufacturers to compete who rely on imported parts. The effects of these changes will impact export industries that depend on low-cost resources to maintain their international market position.

The pharmaceutical sector demonstrates the transition problem because India needs to rely on imported APIs which cannot be eliminated through import restrictions. Domestic facilities must achieve three essential requirements which include competitive production costs and regulatory compliance and dependable output. Likewise, developing semiconductor fabrication together with specialised materials and upstream solar manufacturing requires investment in both capital and advanced technology and its workforce development over an extended period. Import restrictions which government officials implement before alternative solutions reach market readiness will result in supply shortages instead of creating resilient systems.

India's trade performance shows that India needs to proceed with trade activities. The country's international trade operations depend on its export-import activities which are part of worldwide production networks, and its imported materials will enable production of goods which will be sold to international markets. The implementation of a broad disengagement strategy will result in domestic companies losing their ability to access international supply networks. The evidence proves that targeted diversification should be pursued instead of assuming that decreased bilateral trade will result in better economic security.[11]

8.3 Domestic Policy Levers

India has pursued manufacturing incentives and investment screening and industrial ecosystem development. The Production Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes operate across fourteen sectors which contain electronics and pharmaceuticals and bulk drugs and telecommunications and solar photovoltaic modules and advanced batteries. Government-reported figures recorded cumulative investment exceeding ₹2.16 lakh crore and production or sales exceeding ₹20.41 lakh crore across the schemes by December 2025.[12] The results show higher industrial activity

[11] Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India, Export Import Data Bank, India–China trade statistics for 2020–21 to 2024–25.
[12] Press Information Bureau, Government of India, Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Schemes: Progress and Achievements (27 March 2026).

because the combined investment and production numbers do not provide proof of reduced strategic dependence between the two parties.

The PLI program for large-scale manufacturing in electronics has enabled domestic production and export of mobile phones to succeed. Yet domestic value addition and essential component procurement must be assessed as part of policy evaluation.[13] The bulk-drug PLI program and bulk-drug manufacturing facilities in pharmaceuticals aim to increase domestic production capacity of specific essential medicines. The evaluation of their success should be based on their ability to maintain commercial production while achieving cost efficiency and decreasing import dependency which should be evaluated through their actual production capacity.

The Semicon India programme aims to establish manufacturing capabilities for semiconductor manufacturing together with related technical resources. The semiconductor industry needs both fabrication facilities and packaging testing design materials equipment and skilled professionals for its operational capacity. Press Note 3 of 2020 established government investment approval requirements for organizations from countries with land borders to India which included rules about their beneficial ownership.[14] The system solely handles investment screening procedures while it does not handle the direct replacement of imported products. The strategic worth of the system needs to be assessed through its comparison against standard operational methods which require different sources of technological and financial resources.

8.4 International Cooperation Levers

International cooperation can reduce concentrated exposure by widening access to suppliers, technology, investment and markets. India can establish commercial ties with new partners through its trade agreements with the United Arab Emirates and Australia and its ongoing efforts to expand trading relationships. The evaluation of agreements needs to assess their practical ability to assist multiple sourcing methods instead of assuming they will automatically enable diversification. The Quad and the Supply Chain Resilience Initiative which includes India Japan and Australia establish multiple channels for sharing information and managing operations and funding essential supply routes. The partnership between the two countries on

[13] Press Information Bureau, Government of India, Production Linked Incentive Scheme for Large Scale Electronics Manufacturing (2026).
[14] Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India, Press Note No. 3 (2020 Series): Review of Foreign Direct Investment Policy for Curbing Opportunistic Takeovers/Acquisitions of Indian Companies Due to the Current COVID-19 Pandemic (17 April 2020).

critical minerals and recycling and processing activities demonstrates its vital importance to clean energy development and advanced manufacturing processes. [15] The existing arrangements enable domestic capacity expansion through distribution of production activities to trusted partners who maintain viable business operations.

Multilateral trade rules create important effects on international trade. The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade establishes discipline for quantitative restrictions through Article XI which allows specific exceptions and other World Trade Organization regulations to apply.[16] India needs to create trade restrictions and trade incentives and trade remedies which comply with its international trade obligations. The combination of transparent regulatory practices and multiple sourcing methods and focused industrial growth initiatives creates a more sustainable approach than using blanket restrictions which increase expenses without delivering reliable solutions.

9. CRITICAL ANALYSIS AND ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION

India needs to solve its strategic reliance on China through specific policies designed for different industry sectors instead of complete economic separation. The strategic value of an import depends on its supplier distribution, the ability to find alternate products, the speed of restocking, and the impact of service interruptions. The manufacturing process needs pharmaceutical ingredients for medicine production, specialized electronics components, and essential minerals, which require specific resilience measures. Ordinary commercial goods available from multiple suppliers generally require less intervention. The current approach treats these two groups as identical, which leads to public resource waste on low-risk imports while essential security threats remain unprotected.[17]

India's existing policy tools partially solve the problem but fail to recognize the difference between essential strategic needs and general production goals. The Production Linked Incentive (PLI) programs establish domestic manufacturing capacity through their funding of fourteen different sectors which include electronics and pharmaceuticals and solar photovoltaic

[15] Government of Japan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Quad Critical Minerals Initiative: Framework among the United States, Japan, Australia, and India (26 May 2026).
[16] General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade 1994, art. XI.
[17] Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Department of Commerce, Government of India, *Export Import Data Bank*; Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers, Department of Pharmaceuticals, Government of India, *Annual Report 2023–24* (Government of India 2024).

modules.[18] The widespread industrial applications of their work create job opportunities and attract investments and generate export revenue, but their incentive system for full sector coverage does not ensure that they will prioritize their most difficult-to-substitute inputs. Evaluations should therefore examine domestic value addition, supplier concentration, cost competitiveness and measurable reductions in critical import exposure. The system will result in wasteful production because it provides excessive incentives, which prevents any production to reach economic viability. The system will result in wasteful production because it provides excessive incentives, which prevents any production to reach economic viability.

The third press release from 2020 establishes a new purpose because it requires governmental permission for particular investments that involve countries which share land borders with India.[19] The process of investment screening will help address security issues but fails to create new alternative suppliers and domestic manufacturing facilities. The screening process requires implementation at a level which maintains its expected results while establishing a system to develop different types of investments together with technology transfer and expertise development.

The article presents a Strategic Import Risk Classification Framework which consists of three different levels. The first tier which is called strategic-critical covers all inputs which when interrupted will disrupt essential medicine supply and critical infrastructure and defense operations and all other important systems that depend on these inputs especially in situations where there are only few suppliers and no available replacement products. The government will prioritize these inputs for developing domestic production capabilities and obtaining supplies from multiple sources and establishing emergency stockpiles and conducting regular contingency planning activities. The TierII strategic-moderate tier requires inputs which present substantial concentration risks but exist as more expensive and slower alternatives. The proper response should include both supplier diversification and monitoring together with targeted incentives. The TierIII ordinary-commercial category includes products which have many available suppliers but do not create major systemwide effects. The governing rules for

[18] Press Information Bureau, Government of India, *Production Linked Incentive Schemes: Progress and Achievements* (2026).
[19] Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India, *Press Note No. 3 (2020 Series): Review of Foreign Direct Investment Policy for Curbing Opportunistic Takeovers/Acquisitions of Indian Companies Due to the Current COVID-19 Pandemic* (17 April 2020).

these matters should follow competition standards and regular trade policies while focusing on cost-effectiveness.

The classification system needs to base its decisions on evidence while maintaining transparent processes and executing regular evaluation procedures. The opposing viewpoint states that geopolitical risks remain unmeasurable because emerging technologies will create new security weaknesses which current evaluations fail to detect. The framework needs to allow three activities which include precautionary assessment and stakeholder consultation work and emergency supply condition reassessment. Permanent status should not be granted to any tier. The method provides better financial resource distribution than comprehensive decoupling and undifferentiated diversification yet it cannot completely remove all financial uncertainties. The system links resilience expenditures to specific outcomes while maintaining existing trade agreements and enabling India to manage emerging threats.

10. FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

10.1 Findings

India experiences its most critical strategic weaknesses through supply chains which depend on three specific product categories. The importance of these elements needs evaluation through their replacement possibilities and the number of sources needed to supply them and the effects which will occur during their absence.[20]

The second finding shows that complete decoupling will create excessive costs during the first two stages because it will increase input expenses and create production interruptions and decrease market competitiveness. India which participates in international value chains needs to adopt diversified sourcing strategies instead of complete economic disconnection.

The third finding shows that Production Linked Incentive PLI schemes and semiconductor programs and pharmaceutical manufacturing assistance and investment screening measures strengthen resilience, but their success depends on domestic value creation and competitive manufacturing and lower dependency on essential resources. The fourth finding shows that

[20] Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Department of Commerce, Government of India, Export Import Data Bank; Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers, Department of Pharmaceuticals, Government of India, Annual Report 2023–24 (Government of India 2024); NITI Aayog, Report on India's Solar Photovoltaic Manufacturing Value Chain (2025).

trade agreements together with international supply-chain partnerships enable businesses to expand their sourcing choices while maintaining their ability to access worldwide markets. The research hypothesis is substantially supported targeted capability-building and diversification provide a credible solution which replaces economy-wide disengagement but requires implementation together with measurable vulnerability reduction to succeed.

10.2 Suggestions

India needs to create an official risk-tiering system which will categorize imports into three different classes: strategic-critical, strategic-moderate, and ordinary-commercial. The classification process needs to evaluate supplier concentration, substitutability, and replenishment time together with the impact of disruptions using clear assessment standards and scheduled evaluation periods.

The PLI support should focus its resources on strategic-critical sectors which have demonstrable gaps between their current capabilities and necessary requirements for essential pharmaceutical inputs and high-dependence electronics components. The funding decisions should base their evaluation on three factors domestic value addition and cost competitiveness and resilience outcomes instead of depending only on investment or production announcements.

India benefits from establishing new trade agreements which enhance its existing trade relationships while improving its current trade deals. The organization needs dependable partners to achieve its goals of developing alternative sources and transferring technologies and obtaining essential minerals.

The institutional system requires personnel from relevant ministries and trade authorities together with industry stakeholders to conduct regular assessments of strategic-dependence categories using current trade data and new technological advancements and geopolitical changes.[21]

[21] Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India, *Press Note No. 3 (2020 Series): Review of Foreign Direct Investment Policy for Curbing Opportunistic Takeovers/Acquisitions of Indian Companies Due to the Current COVID-19 Pandemic* (17 April 2020); Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Department of Commerce, Government of India, *Export Import Data Bank.*

10.3 Conclusion

India can achieve economic security through methods that do not need to choose between complete self-sufficiency and ongoing economic ties with China. The analysis shows that strategic risks affect various sectors differently thus requiring different methods of assessment. Domestic manufacturing needs to be targeted while alternative suppliers and international partnerships will help decrease vulnerabilities yet maintain the benefits of global trade.

The proposed risk-tiering framework offers a structured basis for directing public resources towards inputs whose disruption would have the greatest consequences. The system needs accurate data and suitable rewards together with clear evaluation methods and scheduled updates to function correctly. The executive branch and Parliament need to enhance their policy coordination efforts while future studies must evaluate whether these policies succeed in decreasing important import dependency for an extended period. The future trade strategy of India should focus on establishing resilient global connections through strategic readiness and market advantage with ongoing international collaboration.

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