

Daily Editorial Analysis 22 November 2025

November 22, 2025 • vajiramandravi.com

Rethinking a Symbol of 'Environment Responsibility'

Context

- Globally, efforts to ease industrial norms have increasingly targeted one of the most visible indicators of environmental responsibility, **green cover** within industrial estates.
- These relaxations, often framed as measures to promote **ease of doing business**, are frequently justified through international comparisons, where green-cover mandates appear lower.
- Yet such reasoning rarely accounts for **ecological context**.
- While reduced requirements may simplify compliance and enhance land-use flexibility, they raise a critical question: **Are we mistaking administrative convenience for sustainability?**

The Limits of On-Site Green Belts

- **Industrial development** inevitably alters ecosystems by clearing vegetation and disrupting habitats.
- Green belts within industrial premises are typically viewed as compensatory measures, but their functions are inherently mitigative rather than restorative.
- Empirical studies show that **well-designed plantations** can reduce total suspended particulate matter by up to 65% and reduce noise by **10-17 decibels**, offering benefits such as dust suppression, thermal comfort, and microclimate regulation.
- However, these gains are spatially limited.
- **Internal green belts** cannot replicate the multifaceted ecological services that natural systems provide, carbon sequestration, hydrological regulation, soil formation, biodiversity support, and habitat connectivity.
- Industrial plantations tend to be narrow, monocultural, and prone to degradation over time.
- They buffer immediate environmental impacts but cannot offset the **ecological costs of large-scale land conversion**.
- Thus, while on-site greening remains important, it cannot be mistaken for **ecological restoration**.

Why International Comparisons Fall Short

- Policymakers often refer to countries with **lower industrial greening ratios** to justify local relaxations.
- Yet **such comparisons are misleading** without considering differences in population density, ecological resilience, industrial intensity, and land availability.
- Nations with extensive open spaces and low population pressure can afford smaller **on-site green requirements** because surrounding natural landscapes still provide ecological buffering.

- In densely populated, industrially stressed regions, green cover plays a far more critical role in maintaining environmental quality and public health.
- Applying uniform percentages across diverse geographies is akin to prescribing the same diet to people with different health needs.
- **Effective policy transfer** requires ecological calibration, not numerical imitation.
- Borrowing green-cover norms from elsewhere without considering local environmental stress, climate conditions, and landscape fragmentation undermines **evidence-based policymaking**.

The Path Forward

• Toward a Balanced, Landscape-Level Approach

- Rather than merely reducing green-cover requirements within industrial plots, especially when inconsistent mandates create confusion, a more sustainable approach lies in integrating industrial growth with **landscape-scale greening**.
- This involves allowing **partial relaxation** of on-site requirements while mandating off-site ecological commitments that contribute to regional environmental resilience.
- Such commitments may include:
 - Developing State- or region-level green reserves linked to **industrial clusters**
 - Restoring degraded lands, river basins, and buffer zones around protected areas
 - Enhancing habitat connectivity through **ecological corridors**
 - Integrating industrial greening into green credit or carbon offset programmes

• Industries as Partners in Ecological Stewardship

- Industries drive national progress and elevate living standards, yet their **ecological footprint** remains substantial.
- Historically, **stewardship responsibilities** rested with communities through forestry and local conservation programmes, while industries were regulated and penalised.
- Today's sustainability paradigm reframes this dynamic: **industries can become essential contributors** to ecological well-being.
- Through **calibrated reductions** in on-site greening paired with compensatory ecological duties, including biodiversity offsets and circular practices, industries can participate meaningfully in environmental regeneration.
- **Citizen participation** further strengthens this blended approach, fostering a practical balance between development and protection.

Conclusion

- **Green belts** within industrial premises function like medicine applied to a wound, immediate and local.
- **Expanding natural green cover** around industrial clusters, however, strengthens the entire ecological system, preventive, long-term, and indispensable.

- The future of sustainable industrial development will depend not on the **number of trees inside factory gates**, but on how deeply industries root themselves in the health of surrounding landscapes.
- Only by **linking industrial progress with ecological regeneration** can growth and nature truly thrive together.

Rethinking a Symbol of ‘Environment Responsibility’ FAQs

Q1. Why are relaxations in industrial green-cover norms considered risky?

Ans. They are risky because they prioritise convenience over sustainability and ignore the ecological context needed to maintain environmental resilience.

Q2. What is the main limitation of on-site green belts within industries?

Ans. Their benefits are localised and mitigative, and they cannot replace the broader ecological functions provided by natural ecosystems.

Q3. Why are global comparisons of green-cover requirements often misleading?

Ans. They are misleading because they overlook differences in population density, ecological stress, and landscape capacity between countries.

Q4. What is the core idea behind a landscape-level greening strategy?

Ans. It aims to combine on-site mitigation with off-site restoration to strengthen regional ecological health while allowing industrial growth.

Q5. How can industries become ecological stewards rather than mere compliance actors?

Ans. They can do so by participating in off-site restoration efforts, adopting circular practices, and contributing to broader ecological renewal programmes.

Source: **The Hindu**

The New Direction for India Should be Toward Asia

Context

- At the 2025 Tianjin SCO Summit, a striking photo of Putin, Modi, and Xi engaged in an animated discussion signalled increasing alignment among major Asian powers — a dynamic often seen in G-7 meetings.
- A month later, at the Busan “**G2**” **summit**, a contrasting image of a visibly uneasy U.S. President Donald Trump beside a calm Xi Jinping further highlighted the shifting global balance toward Asia.
- Acknowledging this shift, the U.S. Secretary of State told the Senate that the 21st century will be shaped in Asia.
- Yet, U.S. priorities—articulated by Ambassador Sergio Gor—focused on pulling India closer to Washington and discouraging its cheap Russian oil imports.

- Prime Minister Modi later underscored that India's decisions and future trajectory cannot be dictated by external powers.
- This article highlights India's evolving foreign policy landscape at a time of major geopolitical shifts toward Asia.

A Critical Turning Point in India's Foreign Policy

- India is at a foreign policy crossroads as it approaches major economic power status.
- At the same time, U.S. actions — weakening multilateralism and narrowing India's strategic space — coincide with India's improving ties with China and strengthened relations with Russia.
- **Balancing China and Russia: A Non-Binary Choice**
 - India should not fall into the U.S.-framed binary of choosing either Washington or Beijing.
 - With China, India should adopt a **"trust but verify"** approach as border negotiations in Ladakh progress, potentially influencing broader issues such as Kashmir and future investments.
 - Russia remains a long-standing, dependable partner, demonstrated recently through the role of the S-400 system in "Operation Sindoor."
 - Western arguments that India must tilt fully toward the U.S. or China ignore India's multi-vector interests.
- **India's Strategic Pivot Toward Asia**
 - The emerging path for India lies in deeper engagement with Asia, whose combined market will soon surpass that of the U.S.
 - Asian integration is evolving on the basis of shared value-chain interests, not colonial legacies or fixed global rules.
 - Many regional powers seek closer ties with India due to its technological strength and economic weight capable of balancing China.
- **Asia's Centrality in Global Power**
 - Asia, home to two-thirds of global population and wealth, is returning to the world's centre stage.
 - Key regional groupings — BRICS, SCO, and ASEAN — will increasingly overlap and interlink.
 - India should also reconsider joining the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), where trade arrangements can be negotiated outside WTO constraints, including a pragmatic working arrangement with China to diversify markets away from the U.S.

India's Shift Toward Hard Strategic Choices

- India has shed earlier hesitation and now behaves like an emerging power capable of making tough decisions.
- Growing U.S. pressure has also contributed to forming a new national consensus on strategic assertiveness.
- **Redefining Strategic Autonomy for a Unique Dual Agenda**
 - India's strategic autonomy must reflect its distinctive position —
 - fastest-growing major economy
 - long-term demographic advantage
 - largest labour force; yet the highest number of poor.

- India's core sustainable development interests align with the Global South.
- Therefore, partnerships must be shaped carefully so India strengthens value chains without being pulled into frameworks that dilute its priorities.
- **New Global Rules Driven by Technology, Not Traditional Diplomacy**
 - The future will not resemble the past where Europe dominated through military and economic leverage.
 - **Technological interdependence** now determines power — economic, political, and military.
 - Innovation capacity is becoming the key driver of influence.
 - For India, certain areas are non-negotiable:
 - protection of national data
 - domestic technological innovation
 - local defence manufacturing
 - inclusive growth
 - These must guide foreign, security, and technology policies.
- **Cyber Warfare and Tech-Led Defence Must Take Centre Stage**
 - Cyber warfare should become the backbone of India's national security — not traditional theatre commands — because land-based threats have changed.

Geopolitical Shifts Influencing India's Security Outlook

- China has scaled back from the CPEC; Pakistan is turning to expensive ADB loans.
- The U.S. has expanded its influence in Bangladesh and has a mutual defence pact with Saudi Arabia.
- The U.S. is eyeing Afghanistan's Bagram base again.
- India secured a six-month U.S. sanctions waiver for Chabahar Port, maintaining strategic access to Iran, Afghanistan, Central Asia and Russia.

Need for Defence Reorientation

- The changing neighbourhood and technological landscape require a national debate on reforming defence allocations:
 - Consider reducing army size
 - Limit large, imported platforms
 - Invest heavily in domestic AI, missiles, drones, air defence, and space technologies
- These sectors can drive both security strength and broader economic innovation.

India's AI Sovereignty: The Next Big Imperative

- India must shape its own AI future to achieve sustained double-digit, inclusive growth.
- A Bernstein report warns that India's ₹10,372-crore AI Mission risks becoming irrelevant globally, with U.S. companies poised to dominate the field.
- A Parliamentary Committee has stressed the urgent need for indigenous foundational AI research to secure sovereign capability.

- Experts argue that India must increase funding at least twenty-fold to build national AI collaboration networks, high-end computing infrastructure, proprietary models, and a strong talent ecosystem — all coordinated at the highest level.
- Achieving **AI sovereignty** is now essential for India to become a true global power by 2047.

The New Direction for India Should be Toward Asia FAQs

Q1. Why is India's foreign policy at a turning point?

Ans. India is nearing major economic power status while global shifts, U.S. pressure, improving China ties, and strong Russia relations reshape its strategic environment.

Q2. Why should India pivot toward Asia instead of choosing between the U.S. and China?

Ans. Asia offers the world's largest markets, expanding value chains, and regional partnerships that align with India's economic and geopolitical ambitions without binary alignments.

Q3. How does technology redefine India's strategic autonomy?

Ans. Technological innovation, national data control, domestic defence manufacturing, and inclusive growth now determine economic strength and geopolitical influence, shaping India's independent strategic path.

Q4. Why must cyber warfare become central to India's security strategy?

Ans. Changing land-based threats and rapid tech militarisation demand prioritising cyber, AI, drone, missile, and space capabilities over traditional mass-force commands.

Q5. Why is AI sovereignty crucial for India's global ambitions?

Ans. Without indigenous AI research and robust investments, India risks dependence on foreign technology, undermining its goal of becoming a major global power by 2047.

Source: **TH**

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/daily-editorial-analysis-22-november-2025/>

© Vajiram & Ravi. For personal use only.