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EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

India and Canada Reset: Critical Minerals, Technology and Firm Red Lines

 THE HINDU

20 July 2026 · IR · GS2 · GS3

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 The Hindu

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GS2

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THE LIFT LINE

A relationship that fell to its lowest point in a generation is being rebuilt not on sentiment but on shared interest, and the test of the reset is whether both capitals can separate genuine cooperation from the non-negotiable question of security.

WHY THIS EDITORIAL MATTERS FOR YOUR EXAM

The India-Canada story is a live case study in how middle powers manage a rupture and then a repair. It sits at the intersection of diplomacy, [diaspora](#) politics, sovereignty and the new geopolitics of **critical minerals**. For an aspirant, it is a rare chance to write about a [bilateral](#) relationship where the arc from crisis to calibrated recovery is visible in real time, and to show that engagement and firmness are not opposites.

GS Paper 2: India and its neighbourhood, bilateral relations, effect of policies of developed countries on Indian interests, and the Indian diaspora. **GS Paper 3:** security challenges from anti-India activity abroad, and the economics of critical minerals for the clean-energy transition. For **Prelims**, hold the specifics: the reset followed the 2023-24 strain over the **Nijjar affair** and the mutual expulsion of diplomats; both sides moved to restore **High Commissioners**; **Canada** hosted the **G7 summit in 2025**; Canada holds large reserves of **lithium, nickel, cobalt and rare earths**; and the two countries have discussed a **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)**. For **Mains**, frame the argument as interest-based pragmatism paired with a firm [sovereignty](#) line, and connect it to India's wider push to diversify supply chains for the energy transition.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The relationship dipped sharply in 2023 when public allegations linked Indian agencies to the killing of a Canadian citizen, Hardeep Singh Nijjar, on Canadian soil. India rejected the allegations as unsubstantiated and pointed to Canada giving space to extremist and secessionist elements that campaign against Indian unity. Diplomats were expelled on both sides, visa services were disrupted, and trade talks were paused. For nearly two years the relationship ran cold.

The thaw has been gradual and **deliberate**. A change of leadership in Ottawa, the practical costs of a frozen relationship, and the pull of complementary economies created room for a reset. The restoration of **High Commissioners** signalled that both governments wanted working channels again. India has been consistent throughout: it welcomes engagement, but it will not trade away its position that campaigns for the break-up of India, and violence in their name, are a red line.

THE CORE ARGUMENT / ISSUE

Complementary economies, real gains

The economic logic is strong. Canada is a resource and technology economy with a small population; India is a manufacturing and talent economy with vast demand. The overlap is largest exactly where the future is being decided: aerospace, space technology, clean energy and the minerals that power it.

Critical minerals as the anchor

India's energy transition and its electronics and battery ambitions depend on secure access to **lithium, nickel, cobalt and rare earths**. Canada holds significant reserves of all four and runs a mining-and-processing ecosystem that India can partner with to reduce dependence on a single dominant supplier. This is where a reset converts into strategic value.

PILLAR	WHAT EACH SIDE BRINGS	THE OPPORTUNITY
Critical minerals	Canada: reserves and processing	Secure supply for India's battery and EV chain
Aerospace and space	Canada: components; India: launch and scale	Joint manufacturing and satellite services
Trade	CEPA framework under discussion	Predictable market access both ways
People-to-people	Large Indian diaspora and student population	Skills, remittances, innovation links
Indo-Pacific	Shared interest in a rules-based order	Coordination in multilateral forums

The diaspora and student dimension

Canada hosts one of the largest **Indian diaspora and student populations** in the world. This is a source of strength and also of friction, because the same openness that welcomes students has at times sheltered anti-India extremism. A durable reset must protect the students and professionals who anchor the relationship while denying space to those who work against India's territorial integrity.

HOW TO THINK ABOUT THIS (ANALYTICAL FRAME)

Read this through the lens of compartmentalisation. Mature powers cooperate on economics and technology even while they disagree elsewhere, but they do not compartmentalise core security. India's frame is simple: expand the areas of shared interest, and keep sovereignty and counter-extremism outside the bargaining table. The reset succeeds if Ottawa acts against violent secessionist networks under its own law, and if New Delhi keeps engagement steady rather than episodic. The failure mode is a transactional thaw that collapses at the next provocation.

THE DIAGRAM IN WORDS

2023-24 rupture (Nijjar affair, expulsions) -> restore High Commissioners -> compartmentalise: economics and tech advance -> critical minerals and CEPA anchor gains -> India holds security red line on extremism -> durable interest-based partnership

WAY FORWARD

- 1 **Institutionalise the critical-minerals track.** Sign a government-backed minerals partnership with offtake and processing tie-ups so that lithium, nickel, cobalt and rare-earth cooperation survives political weather.
- 2 **Close CEPA on realistic terms.** Revive and conclude the **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement** in phases, locking in predictable market access for goods, services and mobility.
- 3 **Secure the security floor.** Insist, through law-enforcement and intelligence channels, that Canada acts against violent anti-India extremism, and keep this delinked from trade so cooperation does not become *leverage*.
- 4 **Protect the human bridge.** Restore full consular and visa capacity and safeguard Indian students and professionals, because the diaspora is the relationship's most resilient asset.

PYQ LINKAGE AND PRACTICE

This connects directly to the recurring UPSC theme of how domestic politics of a partner country shapes bilateral ties, and to questions on India's diaspora as a foreign-policy instrument. It also links to Prelims-style factual questions on critical minerals and the clean-energy transition.

Practice question: "A reset in India-Canada relations must expand economic and technology cooperation without diluting India's security red lines." Examine the opportunities in critical minerals and technology, and the conditions under which such a reset can endure. (15 marks, 250 words)

Sources: The Hindu Editorial, Ministry of External Affairs

Source: India and Canada Reset: Critical Minerals, Technology and Firm Red Lines — Ujjayari.com | Free UPSC & State PCS Editorial Analysis

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