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INDIA'S EXTERNAL RELATIONS – APPROACH, DETERMINANTS, FACTORS, EVOLUTION, AND CHALLENGES

1. India's Approach to External Relations

- ▣ Principles:
 - Non-alignment (NAM) and strategic autonomy
 - Panchsheel (Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence)
 - Multilateralism and commitment to a rules-based global order
 - Act East and Neighbourhood First policies
- ▣ Current Approach:
 - Shift towards multi-alignment (balancing relations with US, Russia, China)
 - Engagement with global powers (Quad, SCO, BRICS)
 - Focus on economic diplomacy and technological partnerships
 - Strategic autonomy with partnerships in defence and security

2. Determinants of India's Foreign Policy

- ▣ Geographical Factors:
 - Strategic location in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region
 - Border proximity to Pakistan, China, and other SAARC countries
 - Maritime interests and influence in the Indo-Pacific
- ▣ Historical Influences:
 - Colonial past and experiences with global powers
 - Non-alignment movement legacy
 - Evolution from NAM to current multi-alignment policy

- ▣ Economic Factors:
 - Globalization and trade interests, FDI inflows, and energy security
 - Role in WTO, G20, and regional trade agreements like RCEP
 - Aspirations to become a \$5 trillion economy
- ▣ Domestic Factors:
 - Political stability, economic priorities, and resource management
 - Public opinion and influence of diaspora
 - Defence modernization and self-reliance (Atmanirbhar Bharat)
- ▣ Global Factors:
 - Rise of China and changing power dynamics
 - US-India strategic partnership and Indo-US defence cooperation
 - Climate change, health diplomacy, and technological advancements

3. Key Factors in Shaping India's Foreign Policy

- ▣ Strategic Autonomy:
 - Maintaining independence in decision-making while engaging globally
- ▣ Defence and Security:
 - Balancing traditional security concerns (China, Pakistan) with emerging threats (cybersecurity, terrorism)
- ▣ Economic Interests:
 - Focusing on trade, investment, and energy security partnerships
- ▣ Diaspora and Cultural Diplomacy:
 - Leveraging soft power through the Indian diaspora, yoga, and cultural exchanges

4. Evolution of India's Foreign Policy

- ▣ Post-Independence Era (1947–1960s):

- ▶ NAM and Cold War neutrality, close ties with USSR, limited military engagement
- Post-1971 Period:
 - ▶ Shift after Indo-Pak war and closer ties with USSR; increased regional influence
- 1991 Liberalization and Beyond:
 - ▶ Economic reforms, opening up of markets, Look East Policy initiation
- 21st Century Developments:
 - ▶ Multi-alignment, Indo-US partnership, Indo-Pacific strategy, and defence reforms (strategic partnerships and defence exports)

5. Challenges to India's Foreign Policy

- Geopolitical Rivalries:
 - ▶ Balancing relations with China (border disputes, economic competition) and Pakistan (security and terrorism)
- Regional Instability:
 - ▶ Managing regional security concerns (Afghanistan post-US withdrawal, terrorism, and insurgency)
- Global Power Shifts:
 - ▶ Adapting to the rise of China and changing US policies (e.g., Indo-Pacific strategy)
- Economic and Energy Security:
 - ▶ Securing energy resources, maintaining trade flows amidst global supply chain disruptions
- Climate and Health Diplomacy:
 - ▶ Commitments to climate change, sustainable development goals (SDGs), vaccine diplomacy during COVID-19
- Cybersecurity and Technology:
 - ▶ Responding to cybersecurity threats, fostering technology alliances, and balancing data sovereignty with innovation

6. Relevant Theories and Concepts

- Realism and Strategic Autonomy:
 - ▶ Balancing power with pragmatic alliances (e.g., Quad, BRICS)
- Soft Power and Cultural Diplomacy:
 - ▶ Using soft power assets like the diaspora and cultural heritage (Nye's theory of soft power)
- Complex Interdependence:
 - ▶ Global partnerships in trade, climate, and security (Keohane and Nye's theory)

7. Current Affairs and Recent Developments

- Quad and Indo-Pacific Strategy:
 - ▶ India's strategic engagement with the US, Japan, and Australia to counterbalance China in the Indo-Pacific.
- Climate Change Commitments:
 - ▶ India's leadership in the International Solar Alliance (ISA) and commitments in COP26 for carbon neutrality.
- Defence Initiatives:
 - ▶ S-400 purchase from Russia, defence partnership agreements with the US, and Atmanirbhar Bharat in defence production.
- Economic Diplomacy:
 - ▶ India's stand on RCEP, trade relations with the EU, and FTA negotiations with the UK and Australia.

PERSONALITY AS A FACTOR IN INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY

1. Jawaharlal Nehru:

- ▶ Advocated for **Non-Alignment** and **Panchsheel** (Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence).

- Emphasized **non-intervention** and **neutrality** in global conflicts, establishing an independent foreign policy foundation.

2. Indira Gandhi:

- Adopted a more **assertive and strategic** foreign policy.
- Key Decision: **Support for Bangladesh's independence** in 1971, marking a shift towards interventionism in South Asia.
- Showed readiness for **security-driven diplomacy** in regional conflicts.

3. Rajiv Gandhi:

- Focused on **modernizing India's global image** and **strengthening ties with superpowers**.
- Advocated for **nuclear disarmament** while asserting India's regional leadership.
- Key Move: Deployment of **Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF)** in Sri Lanka, signaling India's proactive regional role.

4. P.V. Narasimha Rao:

- Introduced **economic pragmatism** with the **"Look East Policy"** and strengthened ties with ASEAN.
- His **1991 economic liberalization** reshaped foreign policy, prioritizing **economic diplomacy** and global integration.

5. Atal Bihari Vajpayee:

- Combined **pragmatism with strategic autonomy**, exemplified by the **1998 nuclear tests**.
- Promoted **dialogue with Pakistan** (e.g., Lahore Summit) while maintaining a firm stance on national security.
- Emphasized a balanced approach of **diplomacy and regional stability**.

6. Narendra Modi:

- Known for **proactive and image-driven diplomacy**, focusing on **Act East policy**, **Quad participation**, and **diaspora outreach**.

- Emphasizes **personal diplomacy** to strengthen global partnerships and raise India's profile as a confident global player.

Key Takeaways

- **Ideological Shifts:** Leaders' ideologies shaped foreign policy direction, from Nehru's idealism to Rao's economic pragmatism.
- **Adaptability:** India's foreign policy evolved to address changing global dynamics, shifting from non-alignment to economic diplomacy and strategic alliances.
- **Balance of Continuity and Change:** While foundational principles remain, each leader's personal influence brought adaptability, reinforcing Indian foreign policy's dynamic nature.

INDIA'S MIDDLE POWER COALITION

1. Introduction to Middle Power Concept

- **Definition of Middle Power:** Countries that are not superpowers but have significant regional influence and global diplomatic roles.
- **Characteristics:** Middle powers engage in coalition-building, support multilateralism, and act as stabilizing forces in regional and global politics.

2. India as a Middle Power

- **Geopolitical Influence:** India is recognized as a middle power due to its strategic location, strong military, growing economy, and democratic framework.
- **Global Ambitions:** India seeks a larger role in shaping regional and global governance but avoids superpower rivalries.
- **India as Fulcrum in Global Politics:** India acts as a pivotal point, balancing relations between global powers and advancing collective interests in international affairs.

3. Key Middle Power Coalitions and Groupings

- ▣ BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa):
 - Platform for emerging economies to address global economic inequalities.
 - India uses BRICS to advocate for a multipolar world and reform in international financial institutions.
 - During the 2024 BRICS Summit, India supported the inclusion of new member countries, reflecting its commitment to a multipolar world order.
- ▣ QUAD(Quadrilateral Security Dialogue: India, USA, Japan, Australia):
 - Security and strategic coalition aimed at ensuring a free and open Indo-Pacific.
 - India's role balances security interests with economic cooperation, aligning with middle power objectives.
 - In 2024, the Quad nations conducted joint naval exercises in the Indian Ocean, enhancing maritime security cooperation.
- ▣ G20:
 - Platform for major economies to discuss global financial stability.
 - India uses G20 to address global economic challenges and support inclusive growth.
 - In 2023, India hosted the G20 Summit, emphasizing inclusive growth and digital transformation, showcasing its leadership in global economic discussions.

4. Objectives of India's Middle Power Coalitions

- **Regional Stability:** India collaborates with other middle powers to ensure regional peace and prevent dominance by any single power.

- **Multilateralism:** India promotes a rules-based international order and pushes for reforms in institutions like the UN, IMF, and World Bank.
- **Global Governance:** India supports issues like climate change, health security, and sustainable development in global coalitions.
- **Balancing Great Powers:** India engages in coalition-building to counterbalance superpower influence, especially in the Indo-Pacific region.

5. Key Areas of Cooperation and Influence

- **Economic Cooperation:** Advocates for fair trade practices, financial stability, and economic inclusion in forums like G20 and BRICS.
- **Security:** Works with QUAD and other middle powers on maritime security, counter-terrorism, and cyber security.
- **Climate Action:** Uses coalitions like IBSA and BRICS to support sustainable development and climate action, including renewable energy initiatives.
- **Health and Development:** Through G20 and South-South cooperation, India addresses global health issues, such as vaccine distribution and poverty alleviation.

6. Challenges for India's Middle Power Strategy

- **Balancing Relations with Superpowers:** Navigating relationships with the US, Russia, and China while maintaining strategic autonomy.
- **Intra-Coalition Conflicts:** Differences within groups like BRICS (e.g., India-China tensions) can complicate unified positions.
- **Resource Constraints:** Limited resources may hinder India's ability to consistently lead or contribute to multiple coalitions.
- **Global Power Shifts:** Changing global dynamics require India to adapt its middle power strategy continuously.

Conclusion

- ▶ India's middle power coalition strategy allows it to play a stabilizing role in regional and global politics, promoting multilateralism, economic stability, and regional security.
- ▶ By aligning with other middle powers, India leverages collective strength to influence international issues while maintaining its strategic autonomy and regional influence, truly positioning itself as a **fulcrum in global politics**.

WHAT KEY ASPECTS SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHEN STUDYING AND WRITING ANSWERS ON THE THEME OF INDIA'S RELATIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBOURS IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS FOR UPSC MAINS?

Key Aspects to Consider for Studying and Writing Answers on "India and Its Neighbours" in International Relations

1. Historical Context:

- ▶ Outline historical ties, colonial legacies, and significant events that shape India's relations with each neighbor.
- ▶ **Example:** India's role in Bangladesh's independence, historical border disputes with China.

2. Geopolitical Significance:

- ▶ Emphasize the strategic location of each neighboring country and its impact on India's security, economy, and regional influence.
- ▶ **Example:** Nepal as a buffer state between India and China, Pakistan's proximity to Kashmir.

3. Diplomatic Framework:

- ▶ Note bilateral agreements, treaties, and diplomatic dialogues that structure India's relations.

- ▶ **Example:** Indus Waters Treaty with Pakistan, the Peace and Friendship Treaty with Nepal.

4. Defense and Security Concerns:

- ▶ Address border management, terrorism, insurgency, and other security challenges.
- ▶ **Example:** Cross-border terrorism from Pakistan, border clashes with China in Ladakh.

5. Economic and Trade Relations:

- ▶ Include trade volumes, major imports/exports, and investment projects, highlighting both opportunities and dependencies.
- ▶ **Example:** Energy trade with Bhutan, economic investments in Afghanistan's infrastructure.

6. Cultural and People-to-People Ties:

- ▶ Discuss shared cultural, religious, and linguistic ties that shape diplomatic and informal relations.
- ▶ **Example:** Buddhism linking India and Sri Lanka, Tamil ethnic connections in Sri Lanka.

7. Multilateral and Regional Cooperation:

- ▶ Explain India's role in regional organizations such as SAARC, BIMSTEC, and how these shape neighborhood relations.
- ▶ **Example:** India's leadership in SAARC, engagement in BBIN initiatives (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal).

8. China's Influence:

- ▶ Assess China's growing footprint in India's neighborhood and its implications for India's foreign policy.
- ▶ **Example:** China's Belt and Road Initiative projects in Pakistan (CPEC), Sri Lanka (Hambantota Port).

9. Border and Water Disputes:

- ▶ Detail ongoing border and resource-sharing disputes and India's diplomatic approaches to resolve them.
- ▶ Example: Kalapani border issue with Nepal, Teesta River water-sharing with Bangladesh.

10. Recent Developments and Current Affairs:

- ▶ Highlight recent policy changes, high-level visits, agreements, and conflicts to add relevance and depth.
- ▶ Example: Recent high-level talks with Bhutan on hydroelectric projects, tensions along the India-China LAC.

11. India's Policy Approaches:

- ▶ Mention specific policies such as the "Neighbourhood First" policy, Act East policy, and SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region).
- ▶ Example: Neighbourhood First policy in assisting Sri Lanka during its economic crisis.

GUJRAL DOCTRINE & NEIGHBOURHOOD FIRST POLICY

1. Gujral Doctrine: Principles and Significance

- ▶ **Non-Reciprocity:** India extends unilateral concessions to neighbours without expecting reciprocity, fostering goodwill.
- ▶ **Non-Interference:** Commitment to non-interference in the internal affairs of neighbouring countries.
- ▶ **Territorial Integrity:** Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty.
- ▶ **Non-Use of Territory:** Ensuring that one's territory is not used for activities harmful to neighbours.

- ▶ **Peaceful Resolution:** Resolving disputes through peaceful means and dialogue.
- ▶ **Example:** India's assistance to Bangladesh during the Rohingya refugee crisis exemplifies the non-reciprocity principle, providing humanitarian aid without expecting returns.

2. Neighbourhood First Policy: Objectives and Implementation

- ▶ **Regional Integration:** Prioritizing relations with neighbouring countries to ensure regional stability and economic integration.
- ▶ **Connectivity Enhancement:** Developing infrastructure and connectivity projects to facilitate trade and people-to-people contact.
- ▶ **Security Cooperation:** Collaborating on security issues, including counter-terrorism and maritime security.
- ▶ **Development Assistance:** Providing economic aid and technical assistance to neighbouring countries.

3. Recent Developments Illustrating the Policies

- ▶ **India-Bhutan Relations:** In April 2024, India and Bhutan signed agreements to enhance cooperation in hydropower and digital connectivity, reflecting the Neighbourhood First policy's emphasis on development assistance and connectivity.
- ▶ **India-Maldives Cooperation:** In October 2024, India offered financial support to the Maldives, including a \$100 million treasury bills rollover and a \$400 million currency swap agreement, demonstrating commitment to regional stability and economic support.
- ▶ **India-Sri Lanka Economic Partnership:** In August 2024, India extended a \$500 million line of credit to Sri Lanka to assist in economic recovery, showcasing the Neighbourhood First policy's focus on economic assistance.

4. Challenges and Criticisms

- ▶ **China's Influence:** China's growing presence in South Asia challenges India's traditional influence, necessitating strategic recalibration.
- ▶ **Internal Political Dynamics:** Political changes in neighbouring countries can impact bilateral relations, as seen in the Maldives' shifting foreign policy stance.
- ▶ **Security Concerns:** Cross-border terrorism and insurgencies continue to pose challenges to regional stability.
- ▶ **Example:** The pro-China stance of the Maldives' new administration in 2024 highlights the challenge of external influences on India's neighbourhood policy.

Conclusion:

- ▶ The **Gujral Doctrine** and **Neighbourhood First** policy underscore India's commitment to fostering harmonious relations with its neighbours through principles of non-reciprocity, mutual respect, and regional cooperation.
- ▶ Recent initiatives and agreements reflect these policies in action, though challenges such as external influences and security concerns require continuous engagement and strategic adaptation.

INDIA-PAKISTAN: STOMACH ACHE OF SOUTH ASIA

1. Historical Context

- ▶ **Partition and Kashmir Dispute:** The 1947 partition led to the creation of India and Pakistan, accompanied by mass migrations and violence. The subsequent dispute over Jammu and Kashmir has been a central issue, resulting in multiple wars and ongoing tensions.

2. Challenges in Bilateral Relations

- ▶ **Cross-Border Terrorism:** Incidents such as the 2019 Pulwama attack have escalated hostilities, with India attributing such acts to Pakistan-based groups.
- ▶ **Kashmir Issue:** The revocation of Article 370 in August 2019, which granted special status to Jammu and Kashmir, led to heightened tensions and Pakistan downgrading diplomatic ties.
- ▶ **Ceasefire Violations:** Despite agreements, ceasefire violations along the Line of Control have been frequent, undermining peace efforts.

3. Impact on South Asia

- ▶ **Regional Stability:** The adversarial relationship hampers regional cooperation and economic integration, affecting initiatives like the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).
- ▶ **Economic Implications:** Limited trade and investment between the two nations restrict economic growth and development in the region.

4. Prospects for Improvement

- ▶ **Dialogue Initiatives:** Engagements through multilateral forums like the SCO provide opportunities for dialogue, though bilateral talks remain limited.
- ▶ **Confidence-Building Measures:** Resuming trade, cultural exchanges, and people-to-people contacts could help in normalizing relations.
- ▶ **International Mediation:** Global powers and organizations can play a role in facilitating dialogue and reducing tensions.

5. Recent Developments

- ▶ **Statements on Terrorism:** In July 2024, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi accused Pakistan of using "terrorism" and "proxy war" to stay relevant, highlighting ongoing security concerns.

- ▶ **Diplomatic Engagements:** In October 2024, Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar visited Pakistan for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit, marking the first such visit in nearly a decade. However, he ruled out bilateral talks during this visit.
- ▶ **Economic Relations:** Trade between India and Pakistan remains minimal. In fiscal year 2022–2023, India's exports to Pakistan were only \$627 million, a mere 0.1% of its total exports, indicating strained economic ties.

6. Conclusion

- ▶ The India–Pakistan relationship continues to be a significant challenge in South Asia, affecting regional stability and development.
- ▶ While recent diplomatic engagements offer a glimmer of hope, substantial efforts are required from both sides to address longstanding issues and build a peaceful and cooperative future.

INDIA–BANGLADESH RELATIONS: A COMPREHENSIVE OVERVIEW

1. Historical Context

- ▶ **Liberation War of 1971:** India played a pivotal role in Bangladesh's independence, establishing deep-rooted ties.
- ▶ **Land Boundary Agreement (2015):** This historic agreement resolved border disputes, enhancing India–Bangladesh cooperation on security and border management.

2. Political and Diplomatic Engagements

- ▶ **High-Level Visits:** Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to India in September 2023 highlighted strengthened diplomatic and trade relations.

- ▶ **Joint Consultative Commission (JCC):** The 7th JCC meeting in June 2024 focused on enhancing cooperation in trade, connectivity, and security.

3. Economic Cooperation

- ▶ **Trade Relations:** Bilateral trade reached \$14.01 billion in FY 2023–24, making Bangladesh India's largest trading partner in South Asia.
- ▶ **Investment Initiatives:** India extended four Lines of Credit to Bangladesh, amounting to approximately \$8 billion, for infrastructure projects.

4. Connectivity and Infrastructure

- ▶ **Rail and Road Links:** The Agartala–Akhaura rail link, inaugurated in November 2023, enhances connectivity.
- ▶ **Inland Waterways:** The Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade facilitates cargo movement, reducing transport costs.

5. Energy Cooperation

- ▶ **Power Trade:** Bangladesh imports 1,160 MW of electricity from India, contributing significantly to its energy security.
- ▶ **Adani Power Agreement:** Adani Group's recent power supply reduction to Bangladesh due to payment issues highlights challenges in energy collaboration.

6. Security and Defense Collaboration

- ▶ **Joint Military Exercises:** Exercises like 'Sampriti' enhance military interoperability and counter-terrorism cooperation.
- ▶ **Counter-Terrorism Efforts:** Joint efforts combat terrorism and transnational crime, ensuring regional stability.

7. Cultural and People-to-People Ties

- ▶ **Cultural Exchanges:** Initiatives like the India–Bangladesh Youth Delegation foster mutual understanding.

- **Visa Facilitation:** E-Medical visas simplify travel for Bangladeshi nationals seeking medical treatment in India.

8. Recent Challenges and Strategic Implications

- **Political Changes: The Impact of Sheikh Hasina's Ouster**

- **Internal Security:** Sheikh Hasina has been a key ally in supporting India's counter-terrorism efforts, particularly in curbing anti-India elements within Bangladesh. Her removal may lead to a rise in insurgent and extremist activities along the India-Bangladesh border, creating security challenges for India.
- **Economic Relations:** With Hasina's ousting, political instability could affect ongoing bilateral economic projects and investments, leading to uncertainty for Indian businesses operating in Bangladesh.
- **India's Status as a World Power:** Hasina's leadership aligned with India's strategic interests, strengthening India's regional influence. Her departure could diminish India's leverage, especially if Bangladesh's new leadership aligns more closely with other global powers, such as China.

- **China's Influence in Bangladesh**

- **Economic Influence:** China has invested heavily in Bangladesh's infrastructure, including the Padma Bridge and various power plants, positioning itself as a significant economic partner.
- **Strategic Ties:** China's growing presence in Bangladesh is part of its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), aiming to increase influence in South Asia. Bangladesh's recent defense acquisitions from China highlight this shift.

- **Implications for India:** Increased Chinese influence could impact India's economic and security interests, potentially reducing India's ability to maintain a stronghold in Bangladesh and affecting regional power dynamics in South Asia.

9. Conclusion

- India and Bangladesh share a multifaceted relationship rooted in historical, economic, and cultural ties. However, recent political shifts and the increasing influence of China present new challenges.
- The ousting of Sheikh Hasina may impact internal security, economic projects, and India's strategic interests in South Asia.
- As Bangladesh navigates its evolving alliances, continued diplomatic engagement and regional cooperation are essential for India to sustain its influence and counter external powers.

DOCILE AFGHANISTAN? ANALYSING AFGHANISTAN'S STABILITY AND REGIONAL DYNAMICS

1. Introduction

- The term "Docile Afghanistan" suggests a nation exhibiting compliance and stability. However, Afghanistan's complex socio-political landscape, especially under Taliban rule since August 2021, challenges this characterization.
- This handout examines Afghanistan's internal dynamics and its interactions with neighbouring countries especially India, focusing on recent developments.

2. Internal Stability

- **Governance Under the Taliban:** Since their return to power, the Taliban have established a regime marked by strict

interpretations of Islamic law, significantly impacting human rights, particularly women's rights. The regime's policies have led to international isolation and economic challenges.

- ▶ **Humanitarian Crisis:** Afghanistan faces one of the world's most severe humanitarian crises, with widespread poverty and food insecurity affecting millions. The situation is exacerbated by international sanctions and the suspension of foreign aid.

3. Regional Relations

- ▶ **Pakistan:** The Taliban's rise has strained Afghanistan-Pakistan relations. The Taliban's non-recognition of the Durand Line and alleged support for Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) have led to increased border tensions.
- ▶ **China:** China has engaged with the Taliban, focusing on economic interests and regional security. The Taliban have sought Chinese investment, particularly in mining and infrastructure, to bolster Afghanistan's economy.

4. India-Afghanistan Relations: Current Developments and Implications

- **Diplomatic Re-engagement:**
 - ▶ Since the Taliban takeover in 2021, India has cautiously resumed diplomatic presence in Kabul with a technical team in 2022.
 - ▶ November 2024 saw Indian officials hold discussions with Taliban representatives to explore potential cooperation.
 - ▶ Focus remains on humanitarian aid and infrastructure projects to support Afghanistan's stability.
- **Impact on India's Internal Security:**
 - ▶ Afghanistan under the Taliban raises security risks due to potential influence over militant groups impacting separatist sentiments within India, especially in Kashmir.

- ▶ Presence of ISIS-K and other extremist groups poses a threat of regional destabilization and cross-border terrorism.

■ Impact on Connectivity with Central Asia:

- ▶ Afghanistan is crucial for India's trade and energy connectivity with Central Asia, essential for projects like the Chabahar Port and the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).
- ▶ Stability in Afghanistan is necessary for these projects, but China's expanding Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) complicates India's strategic goals in the region, requiring a balanced approach.

5. International Recognition and Diplomacy

- ▶ **Diplomatic Status:** As of November 2024, the Taliban administration manages 39 Afghan embassies and consulates worldwide. However, formal international recognition remains limited, with only a few countries, such as China and the UAE, accepting Taliban-appointed ambassadors.
- ▶ **United Nations Engagement:** The Taliban's lack of formal recognition affects their participation in international forums, including the United Nations General Assembly. The international community remains divided on engaging with the Taliban regime.

6. Security Concerns

- ▶ **Terrorism and Militancy:** The Taliban's control has not eradicated terrorist threats. Groups like ISIS-K continue to operate, posing security challenges within and beyond Afghanistan's borders.
- ▶ **Opium Production:** Despite a ban on narcotics cultivation, opium production has increased by 19% in 2024, indicating challenges in enforcing the ban and addressing the illicit economy.

7. Conclusion

- ▶ Labelling Afghanistan as “docile” oversimplifies its complex realities. The nation faces significant internal challenges, including governance issues, humanitarian crises, and security threats.
- ▶ Regionally, Afghanistan’s relations are marked by strategic engagements and tensions, reflecting its pivotal role in South Asian geopolitics.
- ▶ Understanding Afghanistan’s dynamics requires a nuanced analysis beyond the notion of docility.

INDIA-CHINA RELATIONS: THE UNFULFILLED ‘HINDI-CHINI BHAIBHAI’ PROMISE

1. Historical Context

- ▶ **Early Friendship:** Post-independence, India and China embraced the slogan “Hindi-Chini Bhai-Bhai” (Indians and Chinese are brothers), symbolizing camaraderie. The 1954 Panchsheel Agreement underscored mutual respect and non-aggression.
- ▶ **1962 Border Conflict:** The Sino-Indian War shattered this goodwill, leading to a protracted boundary dispute and mutual distrust.

2. Contemporary Developments

- ▶ **Border Tensions:** The 2020 Galwan Valley clash marked the deadliest confrontation in decades, escalating tensions. Subsequent military stand-offs, including the 2022 Tawang sector incident, have strained relations.
- ▶ **Diplomatic Engagements:** Despite tensions, both nations have engaged in multiple rounds of military and diplomatic talks. In October 2024, India and China reached a breakthrough agreement on border tensions, indicating a potential thaw.

3. Economic Interactions

- ▶ **Trade Relations:** Bilateral trade reached \$136.26 billion in 2022, with India facing a significant trade deficit. Despite political strains, economic interdependence persists.
- ▶ **Investment Dynamics:** India has scrutinized Chinese investments, banning numerous Chinese apps and tightening FDI norms to safeguard national security.

4. Strategic Concerns

- ▶ **China-Pakistan Nexus:** China’s deepening ties with Pakistan, exemplified by the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), raise strategic concerns for India.
- ▶ **Indo-Pacific Strategy:** India’s participation in the Quad alliance with the U.S., Japan, and Australia aims to counterbalance China’s influence in the Indo-Pacific region.

5. The Tibet Issue

- ▶ **Historical Context:** Tibet’s annexation by China in 1950 and the subsequent asylum granted to the Dalai Lama in India have been longstanding points of contention.
- ▶ **Recent Developments:** India has maintained a nuanced position on Tibet, balancing its support for the Tibetan community with its diplomatic relations with China. However, China’s increased militarization of the Tibetan plateau and infrastructure development near the border have heightened India’s security concerns.

6. String of Pearls

- ▶ **Meaning:** It refers to China’s strategy of establishing a network of commercial and military facilities along key maritime routes in the Indian Ocean, aiming to secure its energy supplies and enhance its naval presence.

- Example: This includes investments in ports and infrastructure in countries like Pakistan (Gwadar), Sri Lanka (Hambantota), and the Maldives. India perceives this as a strategic encirclement, potentially undermining its influence in the region.
- In response, India has adopted a multifaceted approach:
 - **Strategic Partnerships:** India has strengthened ties with countries such as Japan, the United States, and Australia, exemplified by its active participation in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), to promote a free and open Indo-Pacific.
 - **Infrastructure Development:** Initiatives like the Chabahar Port in Iran aim to provide alternative trade routes, reducing reliance on routes influenced by China's infrastructure projects.
 - **Maritime Security Initiatives:** Through the Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) doctrine, India emphasizes collective maritime security and economic growth in the Indian Ocean Region.
 - **Regional Engagement:** India has increased diplomatic and economic engagements with neighboring countries to counterbalance China's influence, offering development assistance and capacity-building programs.

7. Recent Diplomatic Initiatives

- **High-Level Meetings:** In October 2024, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping met on the sidelines of the BRICS summit, marking their first formal meeting in five years. This engagement suggests a mutual interest in easing border tensions.

- **Border Disengagement:** Following the leaders' meeting, both nations initiated troop disengagement along disputed border areas, indicating a move towards de-escalation.

8. Challenges Ahead

- **Trust Deficit:** Historical conflicts and recent skirmishes have deepened mistrust, complicating diplomatic efforts.
- **Regional Rivalry:** Both nations vie for influence in South Asia and the Indian Ocean, leading to strategic competition.
- **Economic Imbalance:** The trade deficit and investment restrictions pose challenges to economic cooperation.

9. Conclusion

- The "Hindi-Chini Bhai-Bhai" sentiment remains an unfulfilled aspiration.
- While recent diplomatic engagements and agreements on border tensions offer hope, enduring challenges necessitate sustained efforts to rebuild trust and foster a stable, cooperative relationship between India and China.

SRI LANKA & INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY

1. Historical Context

- **Cultural and Ethnic Ties:** India and Sri Lanka share deep-rooted cultural and religious connections, especially through Buddhism and the Tamil ethnic community in Sri Lanka.
- **Strategic Location:** Sri Lanka's location in the Indian Ocean makes it crucial for India's maritime security, trade routes, and regional strategy.

2. Importance of India and Sri Lanka to Each Other

- ▢ Importance of Sri Lanka for India:

- ▶ **Strategic Buffer:** Sri Lanka acts as a crucial buffer in the Indian Ocean, helping India monitor maritime traffic and protect its southern coast.
- ▶ **Gateway to Indian Ocean Trade:** Control over vital sea lanes passing by Sri Lanka is essential for India's energy security and trade.
- ▶ **Cultural & Religious Linkages:** Shared heritage strengthens diplomatic ties and people-to-people connections, making cultural diplomacy significant.

■ Importance of India for Sri Lanka:

- ▶ **Economic Support:** India is one of Sri Lanka's largest trading partners and a source of investment and aid.
- ▶ **Security and Stability:** India's military and intelligence cooperation helps Sri Lanka combat terrorism and address internal security concerns.
- ▶ **Counterbalance to Chinese Influence:** India provides a strategic counterbalance to China's growing presence in Sri Lanka, ensuring Sri Lanka maintains balanced foreign relations.

3. Political Relations and Recent Developments

- ▶ **High-Level Engagements:** In July 2023, President Ranil Wickremesinghe's visit to India resulted in agreements enhancing cooperation in trade, energy, and infrastructure.
- ▶ **New Leadership Dynamics:** The election of President Anura Kumara Disanayake in September 2024 brings potential shifts, with a focus on balancing ties between India and China.

4. Economic Cooperation

- ▶ **Trade Relations:** Bilateral trade reached \$5.45 billion in 2022, with India being a key trade partner for Sri Lanka.
- ▶ **Development Assistance:** India has extended Lines of Credit and grants, especially for housing, transportation, and infrastructure development projects in Sri Lanka.

5. Security and Defence Cooperation

- ▶ **Maritime Security:** Joint naval exercises like SLINEX enhance security cooperation, crucial for safeguarding the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
- ▶ **Counter-Terrorism:** Intelligence-sharing agreements help both nations address transnational terrorism and related security threats.

6. Cultural and People-to-People Ties

- ▶ **Educational Exchanges:** India offers numerous scholarships to Sri Lankan students, fostering educational and cultural linkages.
- ▶ **Tourism:** India is a major source of tourists to Sri Lanka, bolstering local economies and enhancing bilateral goodwill.

7. China's Role and Influence in Sri Lanka

- ▶ **Infrastructure Investments:** China's heavy investments, notably in the Hambantota Port and Colombo Port City, have deepened its influence, raising India's strategic concerns.
- ▶ **Debt Diplomacy:** Sri Lanka's debt to China has created dependency, prompting India to engage more actively to provide alternatives for development funding.
- ▶ **Regional Competition:** China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in Sri Lanka challenges India's influence, making diplomatic and economic engagement with Colombo vital for India's strategy.

8. Strategic Implications

- ▶ **Neighbourhood First Policy:** India prioritizes a stable and cooperative relationship with Sri Lanka to ensure regional peace and mutual growth.
- ▶ **Counterbalancing China's Influence:** India's increased engagement in economic projects, infrastructure, and security is part of a broader strategy to counterbalance China's expanding footprint in Sri Lanka.

9. Conclusion

- ▶ India's foreign policy toward Sri Lanka is shaped by deep cultural connections, strategic interests, and economic interdependence.
- ▶ China's role as a powerful third-party actor adds complexity to this relationship, necessitating a nuanced and proactive Indian approach to maintain influence, foster mutual growth, and ensure stability in the region.

INDIA AND ITS LIMITED OPTIONS IN MYANMAR

1. Introduction

- ▶ India's relationship with Myanmar is multifaceted, encompassing strategic, economic, and security dimensions. The military coup in Myanmar in February 2021 has presented significant challenges to India's foreign policy, limiting its options in engaging with its eastern neighbour.

2. Strategic Significance of Myanmar

- ▶ **Geopolitical Location:** Myanmar serves as a land bridge between South and Southeast Asia, making it crucial for India's Act East Policy.
- ▶ **Security Concerns:** The India-Myanmar border, spanning 1,643 kms, is sensitive due to insurgent activities and cross-border movements.

3. India's Dilemma Post-Coup

- ▶ **Balancing Act:** India faces the challenge of supporting democratic values while maintaining strategic interests. Engaging with the military junta risks international criticism, whereas distancing could cede influence to China.
- ▶ **Security Implications:** The coup has led to increased violence in Myanmar's border regions, affecting India's northeastern states. The influx of refugees and potential insurgent activities pose security threats.

4. Limited Policy Options

- ▶ **Diplomatic Engagement:** India has adopted a "twin-track" approach, engaging with the military regime while advocating for a return to democracy. This strategy aims to protect India's interests without overtly supporting the junta.
- ▶ **Humanitarian Assistance:** India has provided aid to Myanmar, including COVID-19 vaccines and medical supplies, to maintain goodwill among the populace.
- ▶ **Border Management:** India is enhancing border security to prevent illegal crossings and insurgent movements. Plans to fence the entire India-Myanmar border have been announced to curb free movement.

5. China's Expanding Influence

- ▶ **Economic Investments:** China has increased its investments in Myanmar, particularly through the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor, enhancing its strategic foothold.
- ▶ **Military Support:** Reports suggest Myanmar has procured military equipment from China, indicating deepening defence ties.

6. Rohingya Refugee Crisis and its Impact on India-Myanmar Relations

- ▶ **Rohingya Influx:** Post-2017, violence in Myanmar's Rakhine state forced thousands of Rohingyas to flee to neighbouring countries, including India.
- ▶ **India's Stance:** India has refrained from recognizing Rohingyas as refugees, citing national security concerns and potential links to extremist groups.
- ▶ **Strained Relations:** Myanmar views India's attempts to deport Rohingya refugees as support for its security agenda but expects India to assist in regional stability, creating diplomatic complexity.
- ▶ **Recent Developments:** In May 2024, India deported several Rohingya refugees, signalling a hard stance and balancing regional security with humanitarian concerns.

7. Internal Security Concerns Along the India–Myanmar Border

- ▶ **Insurgency Issues:** Northeastern India shares a porous 1,643-km border with Myanmar, where insurgent groups often find refuge.
- ▶ **Cross-Border Militancy:** Groups like NSCN-IM and PLA use Myanmar as a base to conduct operations in India, impacting internal security.
- ▶ **Counterinsurgency Efforts:** India has engaged Myanmar's military to conduct joint operations, though Myanmar's internal instability post-coup has limited its cooperation.
- ▶ **Current Security Alert:** In September 2024, Manipur was placed on high alert due to reports of militant influx from Myanmar, underscoring ongoing border challenges.

8. Connectivity Projects and India's Act East Policy

- ▶ **Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project:** Designed to connect India's northeastern states to Myanmar's Sittwe Port, reducing dependency on the Siliguri Corridor.
- ▶ **Delays and Setbacks:** Political instability in Myanmar has slowed progress, affecting India's connectivity ambitions.
- ▶ **India–Myanmar–Thailand Trilateral Highway:** Aims to establish road connectivity to Thailand and other ASEAN countries through Myanmar, enhancing trade and people-to-people links.
- ▶ **Challenges:** Security issues in Myanmar and local insurgency have delayed project completion, affecting India's trade prospects in Southeast Asia.
- ▶ **Impact of Chinese Influence:** China's infrastructure investments in Myanmar, including the China–Myanmar Economic Corridor, have heightened India's strategic concerns in the region.

9. Conclusion

- ▶ India's options in Myanmar are constrained by the need to balance democratic principles with strategic interests.
- ▶ The increasing influence of China and security concerns along the border further limit India's policy choices.
- ▶ An advanced approach, combining diplomatic engagement with strategic caution, is essential to navigate the complexities of the Myanmar situation.

INDIA–MALDIVES: KEY TO DOMINANCE OVER INDIAN OCEAN

1. Introduction

- ▶ The Maldives, an archipelago in the Indian Ocean, holds significant strategic importance for India. Its location along major maritime routes makes it pivotal for India's maritime security and regional dominance.

2. Historical Context

- ▶ **Diplomatic Ties:** India and the Maldives established diplomatic relations in 1966, fostering close strategic, military, economic, and cultural connections.
- ▶ **Operation Cactus (1988):** India's swift military intervention to thwart a coup in the Maldives underscored its role as a security provider in the region.

3. Strategic Importance

- ▶ **Geopolitical Location:** Situated near key international shipping lanes, the Maldives is crucial for monitoring and securing maritime traffic in the Indian Ocean.
- ▶ **Maritime Security:** The Maldives' proximity to India's southwestern coast enhances India's ability to project power and ensure security in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

4. Recent Developments

- ▶ **Political Shifts:** The election of President Mohamed Muizzu in 2023 introduced complexities in bilateral relations, given his 'India Out' campaign during the election.
- ▶ **Diplomatic Engagements:** In October 2024, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Muizzu agreed to set up a core group to deepen their partnership, indicating efforts to strengthen ties.

5. Economic and Development Cooperation

- ▶ **Infrastructure Projects:** India has been involved in significant infrastructure projects in the Maldives, including the Greater Malé Connectivity Project, aimed at enhancing regional connectivity.
- ▶ **Financial Assistance:** In October 2024, India offered financial support to the Maldives, including a \$100-million treasury bills rollover and a \$400-million currency swap agreement, to aid economic recovery.

6. Security Cooperation

- ▶ **Defence Collaboration:** India has provided military assistance, including training and equipment, to bolster the Maldives' defence capabilities.
- ▶ **Maritime Surveillance:** Joint efforts in maritime surveillance and anti-piracy operations have been pivotal in ensuring security in the IOR.

7. Challenges and Concerns

- ▶ **China's Influence:** China's growing presence in the Maldives, through infrastructure investments and strategic partnerships, poses challenges to India's traditional influence in the region.
- ▶ **Examples:** China-Maldives Friendship Bridge (Sinamale Bridge), housing projects in Hulhumalé etc.
- ▶ **Political Instability:** Internal political dynamics in the Maldives, including shifts in foreign policy orientation, can impact bilateral relations and regional stability.

8. Conclusion

- ▶ The Maldives' strategic location and political orientation are crucial for India's maritime security and regional dominance in the Indian Ocean.
- ▶ Strengthening bilateral relations through diplomatic engagement, economic cooperation, and security collaboration is essential for India to maintain its influence and ensure stability in the region.

GEOPOLITICAL SETTINGS & INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY

1. Introduction

- ▶ India's foreign policy is intricately shaped by its geopolitical environment, necessitating a strategic approach to navigate complex regional and global dynamics.

2. Geopolitical Context

- ▶ **Strategic Location:** Situated in South Asia, India shares borders with China, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Myanmar, and has a significant coastline along the Indian Ocean, influencing its maritime strategy.
- ▶ **Regional Dynamics:** The presence of nuclear-armed neighbours, territorial disputes, and regional organizations like SAARC and BIMSTEC impact India's foreign policy decisions.

3. Key Elements of Indian Foreign Policy

- ▶ **Non-Alignment to Multi-Alignment:** Transitioning from the Non-Aligned Movement, India now engages in multi-alignment, balancing relations with major powers to serve its national interests.
- ▶ **Neighbourhood First Policy:** Prioritizing relations with neighbouring countries to ensure regional stability and economic integration.

- ▶ **Act East Policy:** Enhancing economic and strategic relations with Southeast Asian nations to counterbalance China's influence.
- ▶ **Extended Neighbourhood Concept:** Engaging with regions beyond immediate neighbours, including Central Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, to expand strategic depth.

4. Recent Developments

- ▶ **India-China Relations:** The 2020 Galwan Valley clash escalated tensions, leading to increased military deployments along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). Diplomatic talks continue, but border disputes remain unresolved.
- ▶ **India-Pakistan Dynamics:** The abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir in 2019 heightened tensions. While ceasefire agreements have been reaffirmed, underlying issues persist.
- ▶ **Indo-Pacific Strategy:** India's active participation in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) with the U.S., Japan, and Australia aims to ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific, countering China's assertiveness.
- ▶ **Engagement with the U.S.:** Strengthened defence and economic ties, exemplified by the signing of the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) in 2020, enhancing geospatial intelligence sharing.
- ▶ **Russia-India Relations:** Despite global tensions, India maintains a strategic partnership with Russia, focusing on defence cooperation and energy security.

5. Challenges

- ▶ **Border Disputes:** Ongoing territorial disputes with China and Pakistan pose security challenges.
- ▶ **China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI):** China's infrastructure projects in neighbouring countries, including the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), affect India's strategic interests.

- ▶ **Regional Instability:** Political instability in neighbouring countries like Afghanistan and Myanmar impacts regional security and refugee flows.
- ▶ **Energy Security:** Dependence on energy imports necessitates stable relations with Middle Eastern countries.

6. Strategic Responses

- ▶ **Strengthening Alliances:** Deepening ties with like-minded countries through forums like Quad and BRICS to balance regional power dynamics.
- ▶ **Infrastructure Development:** Investing in regional connectivity projects, such as the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) and Chabahar Port, to enhance trade routes.
- ▶ **Maritime Security:** Enhancing naval capabilities and engaging in joint exercises to secure maritime interests in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
- ▶ **Economic Diplomacy:** Leveraging economic partnerships and trade agreements to bolster economic growth and strategic influence.

7. Conclusion

- ▶ India's foreign policy is a dynamic interplay of its geopolitical realities and strategic imperatives.
- ▶ By adopting a multi-aligned approach and proactively engaging with global and regional actors, India aims to safeguard its national interests and contribute to regional and global stability.

SOFT POWER LIMITATIONS OF INDIA

1. Introduction

- ▶ Soft power, as defined by Joseph Nye, refers to a nation's ability to shape the preferences of others through appeal and attraction, encompassing culture, political values, and foreign policies.

- ▶ While India possesses significant soft power assets, several limitations hinder its effective utilization on the global stage.

2. Key Parameters of India's Soft Power Diplomacy

- Cultural Heritage and Tourism:
 - ▶ India's rich history, heritage sites, and spiritual traditions attract global interest.
 - ▶ **Challenge:** Limited global marketing and lack of investment in promoting tourism infrastructure reduce its effectiveness.
- Indian Diaspora:
 - ▶ India's large and influential diaspora, especially in the U.S., U.K., and Canada, promotes Indian culture and strengthens India's global image.
 - ▶ **Challenge:** Insufficient structured engagement and inconsistent policies limit their potential as cultural ambassadors.
- Educational and Academic Exchanges:
 - ▶ Institutions like IITs and scholarships for foreign students, as well as partnerships with universities, contribute to India's educational outreach.
 - ▶ **Challenge:** Bureaucratic processes and inadequate resources limit India's ability to attract more international students.
- Yoga and Ayurveda:
 - ▶ India's unique contributions like yoga, Ayurveda, and traditional medicine resonate globally, with the International Day of Yoga as a successful initiative.
 - ▶ **Challenge:** Insufficient regulation and commercialization issues can dilute their cultural authenticity.
- Bollywood and Entertainment Industry:
 - ▶ Bollywood films, music, and other cultural productions are popular worldwide, showcasing Indian society and values.

- ▶ **Challenge:** Language barriers and limited distribution networks constrain its reach beyond the Indian diaspora.

- Democratic Values and Political Diplomacy:
 - ▶ India's democratic system and secular principles resonate with countries that value pluralism and democracy.
 - ▶ **Challenge:** Domestic political issues, such as communal tensions and human rights concerns, affect India's democratic image globally.
- Economic Diplomacy and Development Assistance:
 - ▶ India provides financial and developmental assistance to countries, particularly in South Asia and Africa, as part of its goodwill initiatives.
 - ▶ **Challenge:** Limited resources compared to global powers and inconsistent delivery impact the credibility of this diplomacy.

3. Cultural Diplomacy Challenges

- ▶ **Underutilization of Cultural Assets:** Despite a rich cultural heritage, India's efforts in promoting its culture abroad are sporadic and lack a cohesive strategy. The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) has faced criticism for its limited reach and impact.
- ▶ **Language Barrier:** The global dominance of English and the limited international reach of Indian languages constrain the dissemination of Indian literature and media.

4. Political and Social Constraints

- ▶ **Domestic Issues Impacting Image:** Internal challenges, such as communal tensions, human rights concerns, and restrictions on freedom of expression, tarnish India's democratic credentials and affect its global image.

- **Policy Inconsistencies:** Inconsistencies in foreign policy, including fluctuating stances on international issues, can undermine India's reliability as a partner.

5. Economic Limitations

- **Resource Allocation:** Limited financial resources dedicated to soft power initiatives, such as cultural centers and international broadcasting, restrict India's global outreach.
- **Infrastructure Deficits:** Inadequate infrastructure for hosting international events and conferences limits opportunities for cultural exchange and diplomacy.

6. Diplomatic Challenges

- **Bureaucratic Hurdles:** Cumbersome visa processes and bureaucratic inefficiencies deter international students, tourists, and professionals, affecting people-to-people connections.
- **Diaspora Engagement:** While India has a vast diaspora, leveraging this asset is hindered by inconsistent policies and lack of structured engagement strategies.

7. Media and Communication Barriers

- **Global Media Presence:** India's international media outlets, such as Doordarshan and All India Radio, have limited global reach compared to counterparts like BBC or CNN, affecting narrative control.
- **Digital Diplomacy:** Although India has a significant IT sector, its digital diplomacy efforts are nascent, lacking coordinated strategies to project soft power online.

8. Strategic Limitations

- **Competing Narratives:** Rival nations, particularly China, have invested heavily in soft power through initiatives like Confucius Institutes and global media networks, overshadowing India's efforts.

- **Regional Tensions:** Conflicts with neighbouring countries, such as Pakistan and China, divert attention and resources from soft power initiatives to hard power strategies.

9. Conclusion

- While India possesses substantial soft power potential through its culture, democratic values, and diaspora, several limitations impede its effective projection.
- Addressing these challenges requires strategic investments, policy coherence, and a concerted effort to align domestic actions with international aspirations.

RAISINA DIALOGUE AND SHANGRI-LA DIALOGUE: IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY

1. Introduction

- The Raisina Dialogue and the Shangri-La Dialogue are pivotal platforms influencing India's foreign policy. These forums facilitate high-level discussions on geopolitics and security, enabling India to articulate its strategic perspectives and engage with global stakeholders.

2. Raisina Dialogue

- **Overview:** Initiated in 2016, the Raisina Dialogue is India's flagship conference on geopolitics and geo-economics, co-hosted by the Ministry of External Affairs and the Observer Research Foundation.
- **Objectives:**
 - Project India's role as a proactive global player.
 - Foster multilateral discussions on contemporary global challenges.
 - Strengthen diplomatic ties through Track 1.5 diplomacy.

- ▢ Recent Developments:
 - The 9th edition, held from February 21-23, 2024, featured Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, emphasizing India's commitment to multilateralism.
 - Discussions addressed global challenges such as climate change, digital transformation, and regional security dynamics.

3. Shangri-La Dialogue

- ▢ Overview: Established in 2002 by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), the Shangri-La Dialogue is Asia's premier defense summit, convening annually in Singapore.
- ▢ Objectives:
 - Provide a platform for defence ministers and military chiefs to discuss regional security issues.
 - Facilitate bilateral and multilateral defence cooperation.
 - Address emerging security challenges in the Asia-Pacific region.
- ▢ India's Engagement:
 - In 2018, Prime Minister Modi delivered the keynote address, outlining India's vision for a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific, emphasizing ASEAN centrality.
 - India's participation underscores its commitment to regional security and multilateralism.

4. Implications for Indian Foreign Policy

- **Strategic Autonomy:** Participation in these dialogues reinforces India's policy of strategic autonomy, allowing engagement with diverse global actors without aligning exclusively with any bloc.
- **Indo-Pacific Strategy:** These platforms enable India to articulate its Indo-Pacific vision, promoting a rules-based order and freedom of navigation, countering unilateral assertions in the region.

- **Multilateral Engagement:** Active involvement showcases India's dedication to multilateralism, addressing global challenges collaboratively, and enhancing its diplomatic stature.
- **Defence Diplomacy:** Engagement in the Shangri-La Dialogue facilitates defence cooperation, intelligence sharing, and capacity building with regional and extra-regional powers.

5. Challenges and Considerations

- **Balancing Act:** India must navigate its relationships with major powers, ensuring that its participation in these forums does not alienate key partners or provoke regional adversaries.
- **Resource Allocation:** Effective engagement requires substantial diplomatic and economic resources, necessitating prioritization in line with national interests.
- **Domestic Consensus:** Formulating coherent foreign policy positions for these platforms requires alignment among domestic stakeholders, including political entities and strategic communities.

6. Conclusion

- The Raisina and Shangri-La Dialogues are instrumental in shaping and projecting India's foreign policy.
- Through active participation, India can influence regional and global discourses, advocate for its strategic interests, and reinforce its role as a responsible global actor committed to peace, stability, and development.

TERMS IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS IMPORTANT FOR UPSC MAINS

Types of Diplomacy

- **Track 1 Diplomacy:** Official, government-to-government interactions for conflict resolution or negotiation.

- ▶ **Track 2 Diplomacy:** Informal, non-governmental dialogues, often involving academics, NGOs, or influential citizens to foster understanding.
- ▶ **Track 1.5 Diplomacy:** Hybrid approach involving both official and unofficial actors to facilitate communication and problem-solving.
- ▶ **Public Diplomacy:** Government outreach to the public of another country to influence opinions, often through cultural exchanges and media.
- ▶ **Cultural Diplomacy:** Using cultural assets like art, music, and literature to build mutual understanding between countries.
- ▶ **Economic Diplomacy:** Promoting national interests through economic tools, including trade agreements, aid, and investment.
- ▶ **Soft Power:** Ability to attract and influence through culture, values, and policies rather than force or coercion.
- ▶ **Hard Power:** Using military and economic means to influence other nations' behaviour.
- ▶ **Smart Power:** Combination of hard and soft power strategies to achieve foreign policy goals effectively.
- ▶ **Extended Neighbourhood Policy:** Expanding engagement to regions slightly beyond immediate neighbours, such as Central Asia and the Indian Ocean.
- ▶ **Balance of Power:** Distribution of power among nations to prevent any one from dominating.
- ▶ **Strategic Depth:** Ability to use geographical or political advantage to influence outcomes or secure a buffer against adversaries.
- ▶ **Strategic Partnership:** A long-term alliance between countries to collaborate on shared interests, typically involving defence, economic, and political cooperation to strengthen mutual security and influence.

Regional and Strategic Concepts

- ▶ **Indo-Pacific:** Geopolitical concept extending from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific, focusing on maritime security and economic connectivity.
- ▶ **Maritime Security:** Measures to protect maritime boundaries, trade routes, and address piracy and illegal trafficking.
- ▶ **Blue Economy:** Sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods, and ocean health.
- ▶ **China's String of Pearls:** Strategy of building maritime assets in the Indian Ocean region to secure sea routes and expand influence.
- ▶ **India's Security Dilemma:** Challenges posed by neighbours and regional instability, particularly with Pakistan and China.
- ▶ **Energy Security:** Securing stable and affordable energy supplies to sustain economic growth.
- ▶ **Debt-Trap Diplomacy:** Practice of lending to developing nations in a way that potentially creates dependency or control over their resources (often associated with China's Belt and Road Initiative).

Foreign Policy Strategies and Concepts

- ▶ **Strategic Autonomy:** Maintaining independence in decision-making without aligning exclusively with any major power bloc.
- ▶ **Non-Alignment:** Policy of not aligning with any military alliance or bloc, historically associated with the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).
- ▶ **Look East Policy:** India's initial policy to strengthen relations with Southeast Asia.
- ▶ **Act East Policy:** Evolved from Look East, focusing on deeper economic and strategic ties with East and Southeast Asia.
- ▶ **Neighbourhood First Policy:** Prioritizing relations with immediate neighbours to ensure regional stability and cooperation.

Conflict and Security Terms

- ▶ **Non-Traditional Security:** Security challenges beyond military threats, such as climate change, cybersecurity, and health pandemics.
- ▶ **Hybrid Warfare:** Use of both conventional and unconventional methods, including cyber and psychological warfare, to disrupt or destabilize.
- ▶ **Strategic Restraint:** A policy choice to avoid escalation or confrontation, typically to maintain peace and stability.
- ▶ **Gray Zone Tactics:** Actions that fall between war and peace, such as cyber-attacks, economic sanctions, and proxy warfare.
- ▶ **Collective Security:** System where states agree to respond jointly to threats or aggression against any member state.

Economic and Trade Terms

- ▶ **Free Trade Agreements (FTAs):** Agreements between countries to reduce or eliminate trade barriers on goods and services.
- ▶ **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP):** Asia-Pacific trade agreement, including ASEAN and regional powers, aimed at economic integration.

- ▶ **Line of Credit (LoC):** A type of loan provided by one country to another, often for infrastructure projects in developing countries.
- ▶ **Aid Diplomacy:** Providing financial or developmental assistance to build relationships and influence recipient countries.
- ▶ **Resource Diplomacy:** Engaging with countries to secure access to natural resources essential for economic and industrial growth.

Miscellaneous Diplomatic Vocabulary

- ▶ **Bilateral/Multilateral Engagements:** Interaction between two countries (bilateral) or involving multiple countries (multilateral) to address common issues.
- ▶ **Pivot:** A significant shift in foreign policy focus, e.g., the US "Pivot to Asia."
- ▶ **Geo-Politics:** Influence of geographic factors on political decisions, especially power and security.
- ▶ **Hedging Strategy:** Diversifying alliances or strategies to minimize risks without fully committing to one side.
- ▶ **Diplomatic Leverage:** Advantage or influence in negotiations or diplomatic exchanges, often through economic or strategic means.



KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR STUDYING & WRITING ON THE EFFECT OF POLICIES AND POLITICS OF DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES ON INDIA'S INTERESTS, INDIAN DIASPORA

1. Economic Interests & Trade

- Trade Policies: Examine how protectionist or liberal policies (e.g., tariffs, FTAs) from developed countries affect India's exports (IT, textiles, pharma).
- Global Supply Chains: Consider the impact of strategies like "China Plus One" on India's role in global manufacturing.
- Regional Trade Blocs: Analyse how India's trade is influenced by its involvement or non-involvement in regional trade agreements like RCEP.

2. FDI & Technology Transfer

- Investment Policies: Review how FDI policies in developed nations affect India's foreign investments.
- Technology & Innovation: Highlight the role of technology transfer and intellectual property agreements with the U.S., EU.
- Bilateral Initiatives: Note agreements like U.S.-India STA-1 for critical technology access.

3. Diaspora's Role & Influence

- Remittances: Assess the influence of immigration policies on remittances, especially from the Gulf and the West.

- Soft Power: Consider how the Indian diaspora fosters soft power and influences policies favouring India.
- Diaspora Lobbying: Mention the role of the diaspora in lobbying for Indian interests, such as the U.S.-India Nuclear Deal.

4. Strategic & Security Dimensions

- Defence Cooperation: Examine partnerships in the Indo-Pacific, including the Quad, to counterbalance China.
- Cybersecurity & Counterterrorism: Emphasize collaborations for shared security challenges with developed countries.
- Geopolitical Conflicts: Discuss how major geopolitical tensions (e.g., U.S.-China, Russia-Ukraine) impact India's strategy.

5. Climate & Sustainable Development

- Climate Policies: Explore how developed nations' climate actions, like the Paris Agreement, shape India's environmental strategies.
- Green Tech & Funding: Discuss access to clean technology and funding support.

6. Multilateral Relations & Global Governance

- Global Institutions: Highlight India's role in the UN, WTO, IMF, and challenges posed by policies of powerful members.
- Reform Advocacy: Address India's push for UNSC and IMF reforms, often hindered by developed countries.

7. Social & Cultural Impact on Diaspora

- Education & Employment: Assess immigration and education policies in the U.S., U.K., and Canada on Indian students and professionals.
- Visa & Citizenship Rules: Consider how visa regulations affect diaspora residency and integration abroad.

8. Sanctions & Global Conflicts

- Sanctions: Analyse sanctions' impact on India's trade, especially in energy from countries like Iran.
- Non-Alignment Strategy: Mention India's balanced stance in international conflicts, emphasizing strategic autonomy.

INDIA-US RELATIONS IN THE POST-COLD WAR ERA: A COMPREHENSIVE OVERVIEW

1. Introduction:

- Transformation:** Post-Cold War, India and the U.S. moved from estrangement to a strategic alliance, recognizing shared democratic values and mutual interests.
- Current Status:** In 2020, both nations designated their relationship as a "Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership," emphasizing cooperation across security, economics, and technology.

2. Strategic and Security Cooperation

- Diplomatic Designation:** The 2020 partnership aims to address global security, economic, and technological challenges.

- Defence Agreements:** Key agreements like LEMOA (2016), COMCASA (2018), and BECA (2020) enable interoperability and data exchange. Joint exercises, like Malabar, strengthen Indo-Pacific security.
- Indo-Pacific Strategy:** Through the Quad, India collaborates with the U.S., Japan, and Australia to ensure a free, open Indo-Pacific. S. Jaishankar highlights India's "multi-aligned" strategy, balancing relations with the U.S. and other global powers.

3. Economic and Technological Relations

- Trade and Investment:** The U.S. is India's largest trading partner, with bilateral trade hitting \$191 billion in 2022-23. U.S. firms contribute significantly to India's FDI, particularly in defence and technology.
- Technological Initiatives:** The iCET, launched in 2023, focuses on AI, quantum computing, and 5G. Space and cybersecurity partnerships further underscore collaboration.
- Energy and Climate:** The U.S. supports India's renewable energy goals and civil nuclear cooperation, with recent agreements in 2024 on critical minerals for clean tech.

4. Diaspora and Cultural Diplomacy

- Indian Diaspora Influence:** The 4-million-strong Indian-American community strengthens economic, political, and cultural bonds, with prominent figures like Kamala Harris bolstering ties.
- Educational and Cultural Exchange:** India is a leading contributor to U.S. international student enrolments, enhancing academic and cultural collaboration.

5. Current Diplomatic Initiatives and Challenges

- ▣ **Strategic Autonomy:** India balances close U.S. relations with ties to Russia and Iran, especially regarding energy and regional stability.
- ▣ **Global Forums:** The U.S. backs India's bid for a UNSC seat, acknowledging India's global stature. India and the U.S. also push for climate initiatives in forums like COP.
- ▣ **Trade Challenges:** Ongoing issues over tariffs, digital sovereignty, and data localization are being addressed through bilateral negotiations.

6. Expert Opinions

- ▣ **C. Raja Mohan:** Highlights the partnership as a "strategic convergence," where India is a key regional player in the Indo-Pacific.
- ▣ **Shyam Saran:** Sees the relationship evolving from idealism to "pragmatic alignment," with shared priorities in security and stability.

7. Conclusion

- ▣ India-U.S. relations now represent a mature, pragmatic partnership rooted in shared democratic values and strategic interests.
- ▣ The "Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership" is key to promoting regional stability, economic growth, and technology, allowing both countries to address global challenges in a multipolar world.

INDIA-RUSSIA RELATIONS IN THE NEW ERA OF GLOBAL POLITICS

1. Introduction

- ▣ **Historical Context:** India and Russia share a longstanding strategic

partnership dating back to the Cold War, with strong defence and economic ties.

- ▣ **Post-Cold War Shift:** Relations evolved in the 1990s with a focus on multipolarity and regional security alignment.

2. Strategic Dimensions

- ▣ **Defence Cooperation:** Russia remains a key supplier for India's military, with landmark deals like the S-400 and joint ventures like BrahMos missiles.
- ▣ **Energy Security:** India has stakes in Russian energy (e.g., Sakhalin and Vostok Oil), and Russia aids in India's nuclear energy projects, like Kudankulam.
- ▣ **Space and Technology:** Joint efforts include supporting India's Gaganyaan mission, highlighting strong technology collaboration.

3. Geopolitical Context

- ▣ **Russia's Asia Pivot:** Russia seeks to balance Western influence by focusing on Asia, deepening ties with India and China.
- ▣ **India's Strategic Autonomy:** Through "Non-Alignment 2.0," India balances U.S. and Russian relations, underscoring its strategic independence.
- ▣ **Indo-Pacific Tensions:** India's Quad alignment contrasts with Russia's wariness of the Indo-Pacific, often seen as a U.S.-led strategy.

4. Economic Relations

- ▣ **Bilateral Trade:** With a target of \$30 billion by 2025, trade spans defence, pharmaceuticals, and agriculture.

- **Emerging Sectors:** IT, digital economy, and energy see increased collaboration, underscoring economic diversification.

5. Impact of Russia-Ukraine War

- **Neutral Stance:** India's balanced position emphasizes dialogue and diplomacy, crucial amid Western pressure.
- **Energy Strategy:** India imports discounted Russian oil, showcasing pragmatic ties despite geopolitical complexities.
- **Defence Dependence:** Sanctions on Russia highlight India's need to diversify defence suppliers for reliability.

6. Multilateral Engagement

- **BRICS and SCO:** Shared views on a multipolar world foster collaboration in BRICS, while SCO membership addresses security.
- **Global South Advocacy:** Both nations push for reform in global institutions, amplifying voices of developing countries.

7. Key Diplomatic Initiatives

- **Chennai-Vladivostok Corridor:** Boosts connectivity and trade between India's east coast and Russia's Far East.
- **Annual Summits:** High-level interactions ensure continued adaptability in the partnership.

8. Experts' Perspectives

- **C. Raja Mohan:** Describes the relationship as "deeply entrenched in pragmatism," balancing India's ties with global powers.

- **S. Jaishankar:** Highlights "multi-alignment," showcasing India's independent approach in maintaining ties with diverse partners, including Russia.

9. Challenges

- **Russia-China Nexus:** Russia's China alignment poses strategic challenges, especially in light of India-China tensions.
- **Technological Diversification:** India's defence partnerships with the U.S. and Europe signal a diversification away from Russian dependence.

Conclusion

- India-Russia relations, embedded in trust and mutual interests, continue to adapt to global shifts. As both navigate a complex world order, their ability to respond to emerging challenges will define this enduring partnership, rooted in a shared commitment to multipolarity and strategic autonomy.

INDIA AND THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR: NAVIGATING COMPLEX DIPLOMACY

1. Introduction

- **India's Balancing Act:** The Russia-Ukraine conflict challenges India's foreign policy, requiring a nuanced approach due to historical ties with Russia and growing strategic interests with the U.S. and Europe.
- **Geopolitical Context:** India's response illustrates its principle of strategic autonomy as it avoids direct involvement and promotes diplomacy.

- ❑ **Significance:** India's stance impacts its energy security, defence dependency, and evolving role in the multipolar world.

2. Historical Ties with Russia

- ❑ **Defence Dependency:** Russia has been India's top defence partner since the Cold War, providing around 60% of India's defence equipment.
- ❑ **Strategic Partnership:** India-Russia ties span nuclear energy (Kudankulam), space cooperation, and joint defence ventures like the BrahMos missile.
- ❑ **Shared Geopolitical Vision:** Both nations support a multipolar world order and emphasize sovereignty, often resisting Western-led sanctions.

3. India's Stance on the Conflict

- ❑ **Neutral Position:** India abstained from UN votes condemning Russia but consistently calls for peaceful dialogue and a return to diplomacy.
- ❑ **Focus on Sovereignty:** India emphasizes respecting sovereignty and territorial integrity, reflecting a balanced stance.
- ❑ **Bilateral Engagement:** Indian leaders continue high-level engagements with both Russia and Ukraine, underscoring India's role as a bridge in dialogue.

4. Energy Security Concerns

- ❑ **Oil Imports:** Russia offers discounted oil to India, which increased its imports to mitigate rising global prices. This decision aligns with India's energy needs.

- ❑ **Strategic Autonomy in Energy:** India's reliance on Russian oil (at discounted rates) and diversified sources reflects its focus on energy security amid global disruptions.

5. Impact on Defence Relations

- ❑ **Sanctions and Dependence:** Western sanctions on Russia highlight India's defence dependency on Russian equipment and spare parts.
- ❑ **Need for Diversification:** India is accelerating initiatives like Atmanirbhar Bharat in defence to reduce reliance and exploring partnerships with Western defence manufacturers.

6. Geopolitical Implications for India

- ❑ **U.S.-India Relations:** The conflict tests the India-U.S. partnership, with the U.S. urging India to reduce Russian dependency.
- ❑ **European Relations:** While the EU and UK seek alignment on sanctions, they recognize India's unique stance, facilitating diplomatic engagement.
- ❑ **Russia-China Nexus:** Russia's closer ties with China post-conflict impact India's regional strategy, particularly with ongoing India-China border tensions.

7. Economic and Trade Dimensions

- ❑ **Bilateral Trade Shift:** India and Russia aim to boost trade to \$30 billion by 2025, covering defence, energy, and emerging sectors.
- ❑ **Economic Corridors:** The Chennai-Vladivostok Corridor enhances connectivity and trade between India's east coast and Russia's Far East, a strategic move amid global supply chain disruptions.

8. Experts' Insights

- ▣ **Harsh Pant:** Pant notes that India's stance, while rooted in pragmatism, signals India's emergence as a middle power committed to sovereignty and independence in policy choices.
- ▣ **S. Jaishankar:** Jaishankar has defended India's energy choices, emphasizing that energy security is national security, reflecting India's needs over external pressures.

9. Multilateral Responses and Diplomacy

- ▣ **Engagement with the Global South:** India advocates for the Global South, calling for diplomatic solutions and humanitarian aid in the conflict, reflecting its leadership in multilateral forums.
- ▣ **Role in the UN:** India's position in the UNSC has been cautious, focusing on dialogue, non-interference, and peaceful settlement principles.

10. Future Challenges

- ▣ **Balancing Multipolarity:** India faces the challenge of balancing ties with the U.S., Europe, and Russia while managing China's influence in the region.
- ▣ **Indigenous Defence Push:** Reducing defence dependency through indigenous production and exploring new alliances is key for India's long-term security strategy.
- ▣ **Global Economic Repercussions:** India must navigate global inflation, supply chain shifts, and food and energy security implications stemming from the ongoing conflict.

Conclusion

- ▣ India's response to the Russia-Ukraine war demonstrates its commitment to strategic autonomy, reflecting its focus on sovereignty, energy security, and regional stability. As the world reconfigures into a multipolar order, India's balanced stance and advocacy for diplomatic resolution enhance its role as a stabilizing middle power.

INDIA-JAPAN DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

1. Introduction

- ▣ **Strategic Partnership:** India-Japan relations are designated as a "Special Strategic and Global Partnership", reflecting a deep and multidimensional connection.
- ▣ **Historical Ties:** Relations between India and Japan trace back centuries, with cultural exchanges, particularly Buddhism, forming a foundation of mutual respect.
- ▣ **Contemporary Relevance:** In a shifting Indo-Pacific, both nations share common interests in regional stability, economic growth, and counterbalancing China's growing influence.

2. Diplomatic Framework and Initiatives

- ▣ **Act East Policy:** India's Act East Policy aligns with Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) vision, promoting India's engagement with Japan in the Indo-Pacific, focused on economic and security cooperation to counterbalance regional power dynamics.

- ❑ **Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP):** Japan's FOIP strategy emphasizes rule-based order, freedom of navigation, and infrastructure development in the Indo-Pacific. This aligns with India's vision of a stable, prosperous region and supports India's maritime strategy under SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region).
- ❑ **Annual Summit Meetings:** Regular high-level summits between the Indian Prime Minister and the Japanese Prime Minister facilitate open dialogue on strategic and economic issues.
- ❑ **Quad Cooperation:** India and Japan, as key members of the Quad (alongside the U.S. and Australia), work towards regional stability, particularly in the context of China's assertive posturing in the South China Sea and Indian Ocean.

3. Economic and Trade Relations

- ❑ **CEPA (Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement):** Signed in 2011, CEPA aimed at reducing trade barriers and boosting bilateral trade in goods and services.
- ❑ **Investment Initiatives:** Japan is a major investor in India, supporting critical infrastructure projects like the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail (bullet train), Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC), and metro rail projects in various Indian cities.
- ❑ **Trade Figures:** Bilateral trade reached approximately \$20 billion in 2022, with growth prospects in areas like digital technology, pharmaceuticals, and automotive sectors.
- ❑ **Supply Chain Resilience:** Both nations are collaborating on a

supply chain resilience initiative with Australia, aimed at diversifying and securing supply chains, especially in critical sectors like semiconductors and rare earth minerals.

4. Security and Defence Cooperation

- ❑ **2+2 Ministerial Dialogue:** This mechanism allows for deepening defence and foreign policy coordination, underscoring a commitment to shared security objectives.
- ❑ **Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA):** Signed in 2020, this allows mutual logistical support between the Indian and Japanese armed forces, enhancing operational readiness and collaboration.
- ❑ **Military Exercises:**
 - ❑ **Dharma Guardian:** Annual bilateral army exercise focused on counter-terrorism and interoperability.
 - ❑ **Malabar Exercise:** Initially a U.S.-India exercise, Japan is now a permanent member, enhancing maritime security in the Indo-Pacific.
- ❑ **Strategic Alignment on China:** Both nations view China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and assertive maritime strategy as challenges, prompting joint efforts to uphold freedom of navigation in the Indo-Pacific.

5. Cultural and People-to-People Ties

- ❑ **Indian Diaspora:** The Indian community in Japan is growing, contributing to academic, technical, and entrepreneurial fields, thus strengthening ties.
- ❑ **Cultural Exchanges:** Regular cultural events, educational programs, and tourism initiatives foster mutual understanding and goodwill. Initiatives like "KIZUNA" foster cultural ties.

- ▣ **Student Exchange Programs:** Scholarships and collaborative programs in technology and management fields between Indian and Japanese institutions expand academic partnerships.

6. Technological and Digital Cooperation

- ▣ **Digital Partnership:** Launched in 2022, this initiative aims to foster collaboration in artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and 5G technology, reflecting a shared commitment to the Fourth Industrial Revolution.
- ▣ **Space Cooperation:** Joint satellite projects and collaboration on space exploration exemplify deepening technological ties, with joint research conducted between ISRO and JAXA (Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency).
- ▣ **Healthcare and Pharmaceuticals:** Japan's investment in Indian pharmaceutical firms and healthcare infrastructure projects has grown, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic emphasized the need for robust healthcare systems.

7. Energy and Environmental Collaboration

- ▣ **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):** India and Japan work closely to achieve global SDG targets, including climate resilience and poverty alleviation.
- ▣ **Renewable Energy:** Japan supports India's transition to renewable energy through investments in solar and wind projects, as well as energy-efficient technologies.
- ▣ **Clean Energy Partnership:** Announced in 2022, this partnership aims to develop sustainable energy systems, particularly in hydrogen and electric mobility.

8. Expert Insights

- ▣ **C. Raja Mohan:** He describes India-Japan relations as an "axis of stability" in Asia, critical for counterbalancing regional shifts.
- ▣ **Harsh Pant:** Pant notes the strategic depth added by Japan's economic strength and India's growing military capabilities, labelling the relationship as a cornerstone of Asia's evolving security architecture.

Conclusion

- ▣ **Mutual Strategic Interests:** India-Japan relations exemplify a comprehensive partnership aimed at fostering stability, economic growth, and technological advancement in the Indo-Pacific.
- ▣ **Future Prospects:** With ongoing collaborations in digital technology, defence, and renewable energy, India and Japan continue to set a robust example of bilateral ties built on mutual respect, shared values, and strategic imperatives.
- ▣ **Navigating a Multipolar World:** As key players in a multipolar world, India and Japan's partnership strengthens regional security, fosters economic cooperation, and contributes to the global rules-based order.

AUSTRALIA-INDIA SCRIPTING A 'NEW CHAPTER' IN BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. Introduction

- ▣ India and Australia have embarked on a transformative journey, enhancing their bilateral relations across multiple domains.

- ▢ This evolution reflects a shared commitment to regional stability, economic growth, and strategic cooperation.

2. Strategic Partnership and Defence Cooperation

- ▢ **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP):** Established in 2020, the CSP underscores mutual interests in security and prosperity, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region.
- ▢ **Defence Agreements:** The Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (MLSA) facilitates reciprocal access to military bases, enhancing operational synergy. Regular joint military exercises, such as AUSINDEX and participation in the Malabar Exercise, bolster interoperability.

3. Economic Engagement

- ▢ **Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA):** Signed in April 2022, ECTA aims to double bilateral trade to \$45–50 billion within five years by eliminating tariffs on a significant portion of goods.
- ▢ **Investment and Technology:** Collaborations in critical minerals, technology, and innovation sectors are expanding, with Australian investments in India's mining and education sectors, and Indian investments in Australia's IT and healthcare industries.

4. Multilateral Collaboration

- ▢ **Quad Alliance:** As members of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), alongside the U.S. and Japan, both nations work towards a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific,

addressing challenges such as maritime security and supply chain resilience.

- ▢ **Climate Change Initiatives:** Joint efforts in renewable energy, particularly solar and hydrogen technologies, align with global sustainability goals.

5. Cultural and People-to-People Ties

- ▢ **Diaspora and Education:** The Indian diaspora in Australia contributes significantly to multiculturalism and economic development. Educational exchanges and partnerships between universities enhance academic and research collaborations.
- ▢ **Tourism and Cultural Exchanges:** Initiatives promoting tourism and cultural understanding, such as festivals and art exhibitions, strengthen societal bonds.

6. Diplomatic Engagements

- ▢ **High-Level Visits:** Frequent exchanges between leaders, including Prime Ministerial visits and 2+2 Ministerial Dialogues, reflect the depth of the relationship.
- ▢ **Policy Alignment:** Shared perspectives on global issues, including counter-terrorism and cyber security, facilitate coordinated policy responses.

7. Challenges and Future Prospects

- ▢ **Geopolitical Dynamics:** Navigating regional tensions and differing stances on global conflicts requires continuous dialogue and understanding.
- ▢ **Economic Diversification:** Expanding trade beyond traditional sectors to include emerging industries like digital technology and renewable energy is crucial for sustained growth.



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Conclusion

- India and Australia are scripting a new chapter in their bilateral relations, characterized by strategic alignment, economic collaboration, and cultural affinity.
- This partnership not only benefits both nations but also contributes to regional and global stability.

EVOLUTION OF INDIA'S RELATIONS WITH ISLAMIC COUNTRIES

1. Introduction

- India's relations with Islamic countries have developed significantly, adapting to changing geopolitical, economic, and security landscapes.

2. Historical Foundations and Political Ties

- Non-Aligned Movement (NAM):** India's post-independence foreign policy of non-alignment aligned with many Islamic nations, fostering solidarity around sovereignty and anti-colonialism.
- Support for Palestine:** India's consistent support for the Palestinian cause has cemented goodwill, with India being one of the first countries to recognize the PLO in 1974, balancing relations with Israel and the Arab world.

3. Economic Partnerships and Trade Relations

- Energy Security:** India depends on Gulf nations for energy imports, sourcing over 80% of its oil from countries like Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Iraq.

- CEPA with UAE (2022):** India signed a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement with the UAE to strengthen trade ties, aiming to boost bilateral trade to \$100 billion by 2030.
- Strategic FDI:** Gulf countries, particularly the UAE and Saudi Arabia, have been substantial sources of FDI in Indian infrastructure and renewables.

4. Strategic and Security Cooperation

- Counterterrorism:** India's counterterrorism cooperation with Saudi Arabia and the UAE addresses regional security, while maritime security partnerships in the Arabian Sea combat piracy.
- Diaspora and Remittances:** India's diaspora in the Gulf region, contributing over \$80 billion annually in remittances, forms a crucial economic bridge with the Islamic world.

5. Diplomatic Initiatives and Key Policies

- "Look West" Policy (2005):** This policy underscored the significance of West Asia to India, especially in economic and security matters.
- Strategic Partnerships:** The Comprehensive Strategic Partnerships with Saudi Arabia and the UAE reflect shared interests in defence, technology, and regional stability.

6. Geopolitical and Regional Balance

- Balancing Ties with Israel and Iran:** India maintains strong relations with both Israel and key Islamic nations. India's engagement with Iran, particularly through the Chabahar Port, is crucial for regional connectivity and strategic access to Afghanistan.

- ▣ **Response to Regional Conflicts:** India's neutral stance in Yemen's conflict and measured approach post-Taliban takeover in Afghanistan underscore its pragmatic diplomacy.

7. Recent Developments and Initiatives

- ▣ **Vaccine Diplomacy:** India's "Vaccine Maitri" provided medical aid to Gulf nations during COVID-19, enhancing its image as a reliable partner.
- ▣ **Food Security and Trade:** Recent agreements on food corridors with the UAE aim to diversify trade beyond energy dependence.

8. Expert Insights

- ▣ **C. Raja Mohan:** India's Islamic diplomacy balances economic pragmatism with careful neutrality, especially in energy security.
- ▣ **Harsh Pant:** India's engagement with Islamic nations reflects "strategic autonomy," balancing its partnerships with Israel and other Arab nations.

Conclusion

- ▣ India's relations with Islamic countries have evolved from ideological to strategic, driven by energy needs, economic cooperation, and regional security.
- ▣ Balancing ties with Israel, Iran, and the Gulf, India's "Look West" policy and strategic partnerships with Saudi Arabia and the UAE underscore a pragmatic approach aimed at stability and mutual benefit in West Asia.

STRATEGIC FRIENDSHIP WITH ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINE QUESTION

1. Introduction

- ▣ India's relationship with Israel has evolved significantly over the past few decades, characterized by strategic cooperation in defence, technology, and agriculture.
- ▣ Simultaneously, India maintains its longstanding support for the Palestinian cause, underscoring its commitment to a balanced and pragmatic foreign policy approach in the Middle East.

2. Historical Background and Diplomatic Balancing

- ▣ **Initial Support for Palestine:** India was one of the earliest supporters of Palestinian self-determination, recognizing the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1974 and maintaining a pro-Palestinian stance in alignment with the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).
- ▣ **Normalization with Israel (1992):** Full diplomatic ties with Israel were established in 1992, marking a shift toward a more diversified Middle Eastern policy that included close cooperation with Israel while continuing support for Palestinian rights.

3. Strategic Cooperation with Israel

- ▣ **Defence and Security:** Defence ties with Israel are central to India's strategic interests. Israel is one of India's top defence suppliers,

providing advanced military technology, including missile systems, drones, and surveillance equipment.

- ▣ Example: The Barak-8 missile system, jointly developed by Israel and India, enhances India's naval defence capabilities.
- ▣ **Intelligence Sharing:** Israel's expertise in counterterrorism and intelligence has been pivotal for India's internal security. This cooperation has deepened, particularly after the 2008 Mumbai attacks.
- ▣ **Agricultural Innovation:** Through the India-Israel Agricultural Project (IIAP), Israel has shared advanced agricultural techniques, boosting productivity in several Indian states by implementing water-saving techniques and crop management practices.

4. Economic and Technological Collaboration

- ▣ **Trade and Investment:** Trade between India and Israel reached nearly \$7 billion in 2023, with key sectors including diamonds, technology, and defence. The countries are negotiating a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) to enhance bilateral trade.
- ▣ **Technology and Innovation:** Israel is a global leader in technology and innovation, and India-Israel collaborations focus on cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and space technology. Initiatives like the i4F (India-Israel Industrial R&D and Innovation Fund) aim to fund joint research projects in these fields.
- ▣ Example: Israeli water technology, crucial in arid regions, is being implemented in Indian agriculture to combat water scarcity.

5. Continued Support for the Palestinian Cause

- ▣ **Two-State Solution:** India has consistently supported a two-state solution, advocating for peaceful coexistence between Israel and Palestine. India's stance emphasizes respect for international law and the aspirations of the Palestinian people for sovereignty.
- ▣ **Aid to Palestine:** India provides financial and developmental assistance to Palestine, including educational scholarships and support for health infrastructure.
- ▣ Example: In 2023, India pledged \$10 million for Palestine's COVID-19 recovery efforts and educational projects through UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency).

6. Balancing Act: Diplomatic Nuances

- ▣ **Independent Foreign Policy:** India's dual engagement with Israel and Palestine reflects its commitment to an independent foreign policy, often described as "strategic autonomy." This approach enables India to forge alliances without fully aligning with any particular bloc.
- ▣ **Neutral Stance on Regional Conflicts:** India has consistently avoided taking sides in conflicts between Israel and Palestine, emphasizing the importance of dialogue and restraint.

7. Recent Developments in India-Israel-Palestine Relations

- ▣ **High-Level Visits and Agreements:** In 2023, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu agreed to expand cooperation in critical sectors, including renewable energy and defence.

- ▣ **Support for Palestinian Statehood at the UN:** India reiterated its support for Palestinian statehood in recent UN General Assembly sessions, balancing its relations with Israel by maintaining its pro-Palestine stance on international platforms.

8. Expert Opinions

- ▣ **S. Jaishankar:** The Indian Foreign Minister emphasizes that India's relationship with Israel is pragmatic and issue-based, focusing on areas of convergence, particularly in security and technology.
- ▣ **C. Raja Mohan:** Mohan argues that India's policy of balancing relations with both Israel and Palestine reflects a "realist" approach, allowing India to safeguard its national interests while promoting peace and stability in the Middle East.
- ▣ **Harsh Pant:** Pant notes that India's cooperation with Israel enhances its counterterrorism and defence capabilities, while India's support for Palestine aligns with its commitment to global justice and NAM principles.

9. Challenges and Criticisms

- ▣ **Domestic Sensitivities:** India's Muslim population often voices concerns regarding its growing partnership with Israel. Balancing this domestic sentiment while strengthening ties with Israel remains a delicate aspect of India's Middle Eastern policy.
- ▣ **Geopolitical Complexities:** The Middle East's volatile geopolitical environment poses challenges to India's balanced approach. Any major escalation in Israel-Palestine tensions could complicate India's dual-engagement strategy.

Conclusion

- ▣ India's policy toward Israel and Palestine demonstrates its nuanced strategy in the Middle East, aligning security interests with long-held principles on Palestinian sovereignty.
- ▣ This approach positions India as a stable, autonomous actor in a complex region, advancing both strategic and diplomatic goals.

ENERGY DIPLOMACY: FUELLING NATIONAL INTEREST

1. Introduction:

- ▣ India's energy diplomacy aims to secure stable, diversified, and affordable energy resources essential for its economic growth and development.
- ▣ As one of the world's largest energy consumers, India's approach includes partnerships, investments in renewable energy, and efforts to ensure energy security in a geopolitically volatile landscape.

2. Key Objectives of India's Energy Diplomacy

- ▣ **Energy Security and Diversification:** To reduce reliance on any single source or region, India actively pursues energy supplies from various countries, including the Middle East, Africa, and the U.S.
- ▣ **Strategic Oil Reserves:** India maintains strategic petroleum reserves to guard against supply disruptions and price volatility.
- ▣ **Promoting Renewable Energy:** India has set ambitious targets for renewable energy to transition away

from fossil fuels and reduce carbon emissions. The International Solar Alliance (ISA), initiated by India and France, exemplifies India's leadership in solar energy.

3. Major Aspects of India's Energy Diplomacy

- ❑ **Oil and Gas Imports:** Nearly 80% of India's crude oil comes from imports, primarily from the Middle East, underscoring India's strategic engagement with Gulf countries like Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Qatar.
- ❑ **Diversifying Suppliers:** India has strengthened ties with the U.S. and Russia to reduce its dependence on traditional oil suppliers. Deals with Russia's Rosneft and U.S. shale gas producers exemplify this diversification.
- ❑ **Natural Gas Partnerships:** India's partnerships for liquefied natural gas (LNG) include deals with countries like Qatar and Australia. The government also promotes natural gas usage domestically as a cleaner energy source.

4. Renewable Energy and Climate Commitments

- ❑ **International Solar Alliance (ISA):** India co-founded the ISA to foster global cooperation in solar energy, making renewable energy a key element of its energy diplomacy.
- ❑ **Hydrogen Energy Mission:** India is developing green hydrogen technology as a sustainable alternative, aiming to become a global hub for green hydrogen production.

5. Regional and Global Engagements

- ❑ **West Asia and Central Asia:** As the Middle East remains a dominant energy supplier, India actively

cultivates strong ties with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. India is also exploring the TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) gas pipeline to access Central Asian energy.

- ❑ **Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and Maritime Security:** India's focus on maritime security in the IOR, as part of the SAGAR initiative, ensures the safety of key energy supply routes, vital for safeguarding oil imports.

6. Strategic Partnerships and Agreements

- ❑ **U.S.-India Energy Partnership:** Agreements with the U.S. on clean energy and nuclear power represent a shift towards reducing carbon emissions and advancing sustainable growth.
- ❑ **Russia-India Energy Ties:** Through deals like those with Rosneft and investments in Russian oil fields, India continues to deepen its energy cooperation with Russia.

7. Expert Opinions

- ❑ **C. Raja Mohan:** He views India's energy diplomacy as essential for both economic security and geopolitical stability, particularly in maintaining strong relations with the Gulf.
- ❑ **Harsh Pant:** Highlights the role of energy diplomacy in strengthening India's global stature, especially through initiatives like the ISA.
- ❑ **S. Jaishankar:** Stresses the importance of securing diverse energy supplies in light of global volatility and India's rapid energy demand growth.

Conclusion

- India's energy diplomacy underpins its economic ambitions and aims to provide stable and sustainable energy resources.
- By diversifying energy sources, pursuing renewables, and bolstering energy partnerships,
- India's diplomatic strategy effectively balances immediate needs with long-term climate goals, enhancing its resilience in a fluctuating global energy market.

INDIA'S MARITIME SECURITY & KEY STAKEHOLDERS

1. Introduction

- India's maritime security is essential for safeguarding its economic and strategic interests, especially in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and the wider Indo-Pacific.
- With a significant portion of trade and energy supplies passing through these waters, India's approach involves coordinated efforts across multiple stakeholders.

2. Objectives of India's Maritime Security

- Securing Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs): Ensuring safe passage for trade and energy supplies through key maritime routes.
- Addressing Non-Traditional Threats: Tackling piracy, illegal fishing, smuggling, and other threats to maritime stability.
- Countering Strategic Encirclement: Guarding against the "String of Pearls" influence by China in the Indian Ocean.

- Blue Economy Development: Promoting sustainable use of maritime resources, such as fishing and offshore energy.

3. Key Stakeholders in India's Maritime Security

- Indian Navy:** Central to maritime defence, conducting patrols and exercises like Malabar to enhance regional stability.
- Indian Coast Guard:** Protects coastal waters, addresses piracy, and partners with other agencies for effective coastal security.
- National Security Council & National Maritime Security Coordinator (NMSC):** Coordinates policy and strategy across stakeholders.
- Ministry of External Affairs (MEA):** Advances maritime diplomacy through SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) and the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI).
- Directorate General of Shipping & Ministry of Ports:** Oversees maritime trade, regulatory frameworks, and port development.

4. Major Initiatives and Collaborations

- Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI):** Enhances cooperation in maritime security, resource sustainability, and disaster response.
- Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR):** Supports intelligence-sharing and situational awareness with IOR partners.
- SAGAR Initiative:** Strengthens regional collaboration on security and development with IOR nations.

- ▣ **Quad Partnerships:** Collaborates with the U.S., Japan, and Australia to ensure a free, open Indo-Pacific and counterbalance China's assertive actions.

5. Challenges

- ▣ **Chinese Naval Presence:** China's growing influence in the IOR, including military bases and port projects.
- ▣ **Non-State Threats:** Persistent risks from piracy, trafficking, and cyber threats to maritime infrastructure.
- ▣ **Climate-Related Disruptions:** Rising sea levels and extreme weather impacting coastal and port infrastructure.

6. Expert Insights

- ▣ **C. Raja Mohan:** Stresses the importance of a multi-stakeholder, comprehensive approach to maritime security.
- ▣ **Harsh Pant:** Highlights Quad's role in promoting a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific.
- ▣ **S. Jaishankar:** Advocates for the Indo-Pacific framework to integrate SAGAR and IPOI, positioning India as a regional leader.

Conclusion

- ▣ India's maritime security framework is a comprehensive approach involving defence, diplomacy, and regulatory initiatives to maintain regional stability and uphold a rules-based order in the IOR.
- ▣ Through initiatives like SAGAR and IPOI, and partnerships within the Quad, India aims to strengthen its maritime influence and ensure secure, sustainable use of its maritime resources.

INDIA'S BID FOR A PERMANENT SEAT IN THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL (UNSC)

1. Introduction

- ▣ **UNSC Structure:** Comprises 15 members, including 5 permanent members (P5) with veto power.
- ▣ **Significance of Permanent Membership:** Grants substantial influence on global security, peace, and decision-making.

2. Arguments for India's Permanent Membership

- ▣ **Demographic and Economic Influence:** As the world's most populous democracy and fifth-largest economy, India brings a significant global presence.
- ▣ **Global Diplomatic Influence:** India's active role in peacekeeping, climate advocacy, and South-South cooperation enhances its legitimacy.
- ▣ **Strategic Stability:** India's stable nuclear stance and contributions to regional security strengthen its bid.
- ▣ **Regional Representation:** India's inclusion would add South Asian representation and balance China's influence.

3. Theoretical Perspectives

- ▣ **Realism:** India seeks UNSC membership to enhance global influence and power.
- ▣ **Multilateralism:** Advocates for a rules-based order aligned with 21st-century realities.
- ▣ **Constructivism:** India's identity as a responsible, non-aligned nation reinforces its claim.

4. Challenges to India's Permanent Membership

- ❑ **P5 Reluctance on Veto Reform:** Existing members are hesitant to dilute veto power.
- ❑ **China's Opposition:** China's opposition, influenced by regional dynamics and competition, complicates India's bid.
- ❑ **Regional Tensions:** Rivalries with countries like Pakistan impact regional consensus.

5. India's Strategy and Diplomacy

- ❑ **G4 Coalition:** Formed with Japan, Germany, and Brazil to push for UNSC reforms.
- ❑ **African Engagement:** Building support from African nations to champion broader UNSC representation.
- ❑ **Advocacy for a Rules-Based Order:** Promotes democratic global governance through forums like G20 and BRICS.

6. Global Perspectives and Support

- ❑ **U.S. and France:** Advocate for India's inclusion, recognizing its Indo-Pacific and strategic significance.

- ❑ **Russia:** Supportive but cautious, balancing its interests within the P5 structure.
- ❑ **Wider Global South:** Many nations view India as a voice for developing countries and support its bid.

7. Current Affairs and Developments

- ❑ **Recent Endorsements:** U.S. President Biden and others reaffirmed support for India's bid.
- ❑ **UNGA 2023:** India's call for reform highlights the need for a more inclusive UNSC.
- ❑ **Quad and Indo-Pacific:** India's role within these coalitions strengthens its case for global leadership.

Conclusion: A Long-Term Vision

- ❑ India's bid reflects its commitment to a balanced, equitable global order. While challenges remain, its status as a regional power and advocate for multipolarity underscores the importance of UNSC reform.
- ❑ As S. Jaishankar noted, the UNSC's legitimacy in today's world hinges on its inclusivity, with India's membership marking a crucial step towards a representative global governance model.



Harnessing New Opportunities in a World of Declining Multilateralism

1. Introduction to Declining Multilateralism

- ▣ Multilateralism refers to coordinated actions among multiple states, typically via international institutions.
- ▣ Decline in Multilateralism: Driven by rising nationalism, economic protectionism, and ineffective global institutions. Key global players like the USA, China, and Russia increasingly pursue individual interests, leading to the erosion of traditional frameworks like the UN and WTO.

2. Key Drivers of Decline

- ▣ Nationalist Policies: Rise of protectionist agendas (e.g., Brexit, "America First").
- ▣ Power Shifts and Geopolitical Rivalries: Growing tensions, especially between the USA and China, impacting global stability.
- ▣ Global Institutional Inefficiencies: Failure of organizations like WHO and IMF to address contemporary issues effectively.
- ▣ Fragmented Global Response: COVID-19 pandemic response underscored the limitations of current multilateral frameworks.

3. Opportunities in a Multipolar World

- ▣ Regional and Issue-Based Coalitions: Alliances like the Quad and RCEP offer focused collaboration.
- ▣ Emergence of Alternative Financial Institutions: Institutions like AIIB and New Development Bank provide alternatives to traditional financial structures.

- ▣ Digital & Technological Partnerships: New domains, including cybersecurity and AI, have spurred cooperation outside traditional multilateralism.

4. Strategic Approaches for Nations

- ▣ Adapting Diplomacy: Embracing flexible, issue-based coalitions and regional agreements.
- ▣ Enhancing South-South Cooperation: Amplifying Global South voices on global platforms through groups like G-77.
- ▣ Innovative Alliances: Encouraging collaborations on issues like climate action (e.g., International Solar Alliance) and disaster resilience (e.g., Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure).
- ▣ 5. India's Role
- ▣ Promoting New Multilateralism: With its leadership in the Global South, India has a pivotal role in shaping alternative multilateral approaches and regional coalitions.
- ▣ Focus on Regional Partnerships: Strengthening regional bodies like BIMSTEC aligns with India's strategic interests and influence in South Asia.

Expert Opinions

- ▣ Raja Mohan:
 - Raja Mohan notes that the decline of traditional multilateralism reflects a shift towards "minilateralism" where smaller, focused coalitions achieve specific objectives more effectively than large, bureaucratic organizations.
 - He emphasizes India's role in crafting flexible coalitions to address regional and global issues, particularly in Asia.
- ▣ Harsh V. Pant:
 - Pant argues that India must capitalize on regional and issue-based coalitions to counterbalance the great power rivalries.

- He underscores that while traditional multilateralism is struggling, smaller, pragmatic alliances allow emerging powers like India to assert influence without direct confrontation.

Conclusion

- A shift toward pragmatic, multipolar cooperation reflects the limitations of traditional multilateralism, opening space for regional and issue-specific frameworks.
- Nations like India, through adaptable diplomacy and leadership, can drive these coalitions to address pressing issues in a fragmented global order.

Minilateralism – Weighing the Prospects for Cooperation and Governance

1. Introduction to Minilateralism

- Definition: Minilateralism involves small, focused groups of states working together on specific issues, often bypassing large, slow-moving multilateral institutions.
- Key Drivers: Dissatisfaction with the inefficiencies of multilateral institutions, the need for agile responses, and the rise of regional issues (e.g., climate, security, trade) that require specific expertise.
- Emerging Relevance: As multilateral organizations struggle to address global challenges effectively, mini-lateral frameworks offer a practical approach to collaborative governance.

2. Advantages of Minilateralism

- Flexibility and Efficiency: Smaller groups can make decisions quickly and adapt to changing dynamics.

- Focused Agenda: Concentration on specific issues allows deeper engagement, avoiding the broad scope and conflicting interests of larger organizations.
- Enhanced Accountability: With fewer stakeholders, accountability and commitment to agreements are often stronger.

Examples:

- Quad (Australia, India, Japan, USA): Focus on Indo-Pacific security.
- G7: Major economies coordinating on economic policies and geopolitical issues.
- International Solar Alliance: Emphasizing solar energy use and collaboration.

3. Challenges and Limitations

- Exclusivity Concerns: Smaller groups risk alienating countries left out of these frameworks, which can deepen divides in the international community.
- Limited Scope: While effective on targeted issues, mini-lateral frameworks may struggle with broader or interconnected global challenges.
- Risk of Fragmentation: As more mini-lateral arrangements emerge, the lack of a unified global approach can result in fragmented governance.

4. Minilateralism in Key Areas

- Security and Defense: Mini-lateral groups such as AUKUS (Australia, UK, USA) enable targeted defense cooperation in response to regional threats.
- Climate Change: Initiatives like the International Solar Alliance focus on sustainable development goals specific to member states' needs.

- Trade and Economy: Regional trade pacts, such as RCEP, facilitate economic integration with fewer complications than global trade bodies like the WTO.

5. India's Role in Minilateralism

- Strategic Involvement:** India's participation in the Quad, BRICS, and other mini-lateral frameworks enables it to address regional issues while building alliances beyond traditional multilateral setups.
- Advancing National Interests:** Minilateralism allows India to pursue its economic, security, and environmental goals effectively in partnerships that align with its strategic interests.
- Balance with Multilateralism:** While engaging in mini-laterals, India remains active in multilateral platforms like the UN to maintain a balanced approach.

6. Expert Insights

- Harsh V. Pant:**
 - Pant argues that mini-laterals empower regional players to take on leadership roles, filling the gap left by multilateral inefficiencies.
 - He notes that mini-lateral arrangements help India to address strategic concerns without over-relying on traditional institutions.

Conclusion

- Balanced Approach to Global Governance:** Minilateralism is not a replacement for multilateralism but a complementary approach that allows nations to pursue pragmatic goals effectively.
- Strategic Importance for Emerging Powers:** For countries like India,

minilateralism is an opportunity to engage in issue-based cooperation, manage regional challenges, and maintain an influential role in global governance.

- Future Outlook:** As mini-lateral initiatives grow, maintaining alignment with broader global goals is essential to ensure cohesive governance and avoid fragmentation.

Continuity in India's Ties with Central Asia

1. Introduction

- Historical Ties:** India's connection to Central Asia dates to the Silk Route, fostering economic and cultural exchanges.
- Modern Strategic Importance:** Central Asia serves as a bridge between South Asia and Eurasia, vital for India's goals in connectivity, energy, and regional stability.

2. Core Areas of Engagement

- Political Relations:** India holds regular high-level meetings and strategic dialogues, such as the India-Central Asia Dialogue.
- Economic Interests:** Expanding trade and investment, especially in energy and agriculture, though direct connectivity remains challenging.
- Security Cooperation:** Emphasis on counterterrorism and stability due to Central Asia's proximity to Afghanistan.
- Cultural Ties:** Scholarships and cultural programs deepen soft power influence, leveraging shared history and cultural affinity.

3. Strategic Significance

- ▣ Energy Security: Central Asia's oil, natural gas, and uranium reserves are critical for diversifying India's energy sources.
- ▣ Regional Stability: Stability in Central Asia is essential for managing Afghanistan's security spillovers.
- ▣ Connectivity: Projects like the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) and the Chabahar Port are crucial for bypassing restrictive routes, especially Pakistan.

4. Key Initiatives and Policies

- ▣ Connect Central Asia Policy: Initiated to boost trade, connectivity, and security ties.
- ▣ Chabahar Port & INSTC: Development of Iran's Chabahar Port, linked with INSTC, enhances trade access to Central Asia.

5. Challenges

- ▣ Connectivity Barriers: Geographic and infrastructural limitations impede direct access.
- ▣ Great Power Influence: China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and Russia's influence pose competitive pressures.
- ▣ Afghan Instability: Security in Afghanistan impacts India's outreach efforts in Central Asia.

6. Opportunities

- ▣ Energy Collaboration: Potential for joint ventures in oil, gas, and renewable energy.
- ▣ Tech & Digital Cooperation: India's IT expertise could aid Central Asia's digital infrastructure.

- ▣ Cultural Diplomacy: Scholarships and cultural exchanges foster deeper ties and leverage soft power.

7. Expert Opinions

- ▣ Sumit Ganguly: Argues that strong engagement with Central Asia is key for India's energy security and as a buffer against security threats from Afghanistan.
- ▣ Bharat Karnad: Views Central Asia as a critical space for India's aspirations to establish itself as a major power, noting that strategic infrastructure projects will help India compete effectively in the region.

Conclusion

- ▣ Sustained Commitment: Continued focus on connectivity, security, and energy diversification will help India secure its strategic interests in Central Asia.
- ▣ Balanced Approach: Leveraging regional partnerships, while balancing relations with Russia and China, is vital for India's influence.
- ▣ Outlook: Central Asia remains a promising avenue for India to expand its regional role, particularly with projects like INSTC and Chabahar.

Maritime Opportunities for India-France-Japan Trilateral

1. Introduction to the India-France-Japan Trilateral

- ▣ Context: Growing need for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific amid China's increasing maritime presence.
- ▣ Trilateral Objective: Enhance security, economic development, and sustainable resource management in the Indo-Pacific.

- ▣ **Geostrategic Importance:** Located at crucial junctions in the Indo-Pacific, India, France, and Japan have overlapping interests in promoting a rules-based order and ensuring maritime security.

2. Key Areas of Cooperation

- ▣ **Maritime Security:** Joint exercises to enhance naval interoperability, information sharing, and surveillance to counter challenges like piracy, illegal fishing, and territorial threats.
- ▣ **Blue Economy Initiatives:** Sustainable economic development in the Indo-Pacific, focusing on sectors like fisheries, renewable ocean energy, and marine biotechnology.
- ▣ **Infrastructure and Connectivity:** Collaborating on high-quality, transparent infrastructure projects, which offer an alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative, particularly in Southeast Asia, East Africa, and Pacific Island nations.
- ▣ **Disaster Resilience:** Enhancing regional response to natural disasters through joint humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations (HADR).

3. Strategic Significance of the Trilateral for Each Country

- ▣ **India:** Secures its maritime interests in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), strengthens regional ties, and counterbalances China's influence.
- ▣ **France:** As an Indo-Pacific resident power (due to territories like Réunion and French Polynesia), it enhances its role in regional security and stability.
- ▣ **Japan:** Reinforces its Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) vision, which emphasizes respect for international laws, ensuring safe and open sea lanes vital for its trade.

4. Ongoing Initiatives and Joint Activities

- ▣ **Naval Exercises:** Joint maritime exercises like La Pérouse and the Malabar exercises with Quad members enhance operational coordination.
- ▣ **Pacific Environmental Cooperation:** Collaborative projects to preserve marine biodiversity and mitigate pollution.
- ▣ **Connectivity Projects:** Japan and India's Asia-Africa Growth Corridor and France's infrastructure expertise provide high-standard alternatives in the Indo-Pacific.

5. Challenges to Cooperation

- ▣ **China's Regional Influence:** China's expanding maritime activities and Belt and Road projects pose a challenge to trilateral initiatives.
- ▣ **Resource Constraints:** Coordination on projects requires substantial resources, commitment, and alignment among the three countries.
- ▣ **Geopolitical Risks:** Rising tensions and militarization in the South China Sea and East China Sea increase the risk of confrontations.

6. Opportunities for Growth and Deepening Ties

- ▣ **Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA):** Expanding MDA capabilities to track and monitor activities in the Indo-Pacific.
- ▣ **Expansion of HADR Initiatives:** Joint response training and disaster preparedness activities to enhance regional resilience.
- ▣ **People-to-People Exchanges:** Maritime education, research, and technical training exchanges to foster a shared understanding of maritime issues.

7. Expert Opinions

- Harsh V. Pant: Views this alliance as a significant step for India in diversifying its strategic partnerships, especially in non-Quad formats, to reinforce its Indo-Pacific presence.
- Dr. Brahma Chellaney: Highlights the strategic depth the trilateral brings by combining military capability (France, Japan) with India's geographic leverage in the Indian Ocean.

Conclusion

- Strategic Synergy:** The India-France-Japan trilateral aligns with each country's vision for a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific.
- Balanced Approach:** Through strategic, economic, and environmental cooperation, this trilateral can counterbalance China's influence and promote sustainable maritime development.
- Future Prospects:** The trilateral has the potential to evolve into a broader security and economic partnership, contributing to a stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific.

Relevance of OPEC for India's Energy Security

1. Introduction to OPEC and India's Energy Needs

- OPEC Overview:** Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) is a 13-nation consortium that coordinates petroleum policies among member countries, impacting global oil prices and production.
- India's Dependency on OPEC:** As the world's third-largest oil consumer,

India imports over 80% of its crude oil, with the majority sourced from OPEC countries, making it vulnerable to fluctuations in OPEC's policies.

2. OPEC's Influence on India's Energy Security

- Price Volatility:** OPEC's production decisions directly impact global oil prices, influencing India's import costs and inflation.
- Supply Security:** OPEC countries have been key suppliers for India, ensuring a steady supply of crude oil essential for the Indian economy's energy needs.
- Geopolitical Influence:** Many OPEC members are in geopolitically sensitive regions (Middle East, North Africa), adding a layer of risk to India's energy security due to regional tensions.

3. Challenges of OPEC Dependence for India

- Price Sensitivity:** Oil price spikes due to OPEC's output decisions impact India's economy, widening the trade deficit and increasing inflation.
- Supply Disruptions:** Conflicts or sanctions affecting OPEC members (e.g., sanctions on Iran, instability in Iraq) disrupt India's energy supply chain.
- Push for Green Transition:** India's goal to reduce carbon emissions and transition to renewable energy complicates its dependence on OPEC oil.

4. Strategies to Mitigate Risks

- Diversification of Energy Imports:** India is sourcing more oil from non-OPEC countries (e.g., the USA, Russia) to reduce dependency on OPEC.

- ▣ Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPR): India has built strategic reserves to buffer against supply disruptions and price shocks.
- ▣ Investment in Renewables: Accelerating renewable energy initiatives (solar, wind) and natural gas usage to reduce long-term dependency on crude oil.

5. Future of India-OPEC Relations

- ▣ Balancing Act: India continues to engage diplomatically with OPEC to maintain favourable supply terms while securing alternative sources.
- ▣ Energy Transition Goals: As India scales up renewables, it may reduce reliance on OPEC; however, oil will remain essential for India's energy mix in the near term.
- ▣ Potential Collaborations: Joint investments in energy infrastructure and exploring stable pricing agreements are potential avenues for India-OPEC cooperation.

6. Expert Opinions

- ▣ C. Raja Mohan: Emphasizes the need for India to diversify energy sources and enhance strategic autonomy in energy security to reduce OPEC reliance.
- ▣ Dr. Vandana Hari (Energy Analyst): Highlights that while renewable energy adoption is increasing, OPEC will remain significant for India's oil needs in the medium term due to limitations in renewable capacity.

Conclusion

- ▣ Continued Relevance of OPEC: Despite diversification efforts, OPEC remains central to India's energy security due to India's heavy oil dependency.

- ▣ Strategic Transition: To secure energy resilience, India must maintain balanced ties with OPEC while advancing renewables and building partnerships with non-OPEC countries.
- ▣ Future Outlook: The transition to a low-carbon economy will gradually reduce OPEC's role in India's energy mix, though it will remain a key player in the foreseeable future.

The Security Conundrum in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)

1. Introduction to the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)

- ▣ Geostrategic Importance: The IOR is a major maritime route connecting Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, with 80% of global maritime oil trade passing through it.
- ▣ Key Stakeholders: Major powers like India, China, the USA, and regional countries (e.g., Sri Lanka, Maldives) all have significant interests in the region.
- ▣ Security Conundrum: The IOR's strategic importance has led to intense competition, overlapping security concerns, and rising military presence, especially due to China's growing influence.

2. Security Challenges in the IOR

- ▣ China's Expanding Presence: China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and its "String of Pearls" strategy involve establishing ports and infrastructure in IOR countries, increasing its influence and naval reach.

- ❑ Piracy and Maritime Crime: Piracy, human trafficking, and illegal fishing are persistent issues, especially in areas like the Gulf of Aden and near the Horn of Africa.
- ❑ Geopolitical Rivalries: The USA, India, and China are vying for influence in the region, with the Quad (India, USA, Japan, Australia) emerging as a counterbalance to China.
- ❑ Environmental and Economic Security: Climate change and unsustainable fishing practices threaten the region's ecological and economic stability, impacting food security and livelihoods.

3. India's Security Concerns in the IOR

- ❑ China's Military Presence: China's increasing presence, including the establishment of a military base in Djibouti and port investments (e.g., Gwadar in Pakistan, Hambantota in Sri Lanka), raises security concerns for India.
- ❑ Terrorism and Extremism: Proximity to conflict zones and fragile states like Somalia increases the risk of terrorist activities spilling into the IOR.
- ❑ Strategic Choke Points: Vital passageways like the Strait of Malacca are crucial for India's trade and energy security, making them areas of strategic interest.

4. India's Strategy to Address Security in the IOR

- ❑ Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA): India is an active member of the IORA, which promotes regional cooperation on security, economic growth, and disaster risk management.
- ❑ Naval Modernization and Partnerships: India has strengthened its navy and enhanced ties with key players like the USA, France, and Quad members to maintain its influence in the IOR.

- ❑ Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA): Collaborating with regional partners to improve surveillance and tracking capabilities, ensuring enhanced awareness of maritime activities.

5. Collaborative Security Initiatives

- ❑ The Quad: India, USA, Japan, and Australia coordinate on maritime security to maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific.
- ❑ Regional Military Exercises: Joint naval exercises (e.g., Malabar Exercise) foster interoperability and strengthen regional defence cooperation.
- ❑ Humanitarian and Disaster Relief (HADR): Collaborative efforts for disaster response and resource sharing, especially given the region's vulnerability to natural disasters.

6. Expert Opinions

- ❑ David Brewster (Indian Ocean Expert): Believes that managing the "China factor" in the IOR is central to India's maritime strategy, advocating for stronger regional institutions like IORA.

7. Conclusion

- ❑ Balancing Security and Cooperation: To manage the IOR's security conundrum, India must balance its military presence with diplomatic efforts, collaborating on regional initiatives for sustainable security.
- ❑ Strategic Autonomy and Partnerships: While India must preserve strategic autonomy, partnerships like the Quad are essential to counterbalance rising threats and maintain stability in the region.
- ❑ Future Outlook: With rising geopolitical tensions, India's proactive and collaborative approach in the IOR will be crucial to safeguarding its interests and ensuring regional security.

The EU–India–Indo-Pacific Triangle

1. Introduction

- Context: The EU–India–Indo-Pacific triangle is an emerging alignment focused on stability, security, and sustainable development in the Indo-Pacific.
- EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy: Aims for a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific, with emphasis on security, digital connectivity, and environmental goals alongside regional partners like India.

2. Shared Objectives

- Security and Stability: Focus on maritime security and counter-terrorism to ensure a stable region.
- Economic Cooperation: Expanding trade and investment and supporting resilient supply chains.
- Green and Digital Collaboration: Partnering on renewable energy, climate action, and secure digital infrastructure.

3. Key Areas of Cooperation

- Maritime Security: Joint naval exercises and freedom of navigation efforts to protect crucial trade routes.
- Trade and Investment: Working on trade agreements and diversifying supply chains to reduce reliance on China.
- Infrastructure Development: Collaborative, transparent infrastructure projects offering alternatives to China's BRI.

4. Strategic Importance

- Countering China's Influence: EU and India aim to balance China's dominance.

- Securing Trade Routes: Ensuring safe, open maritime routes critical for global trade.

5. Challenges

- Differing Priorities: EU's focus on economics vs. India's security-centric approach.
- Geopolitical Tensions: Rising tensions with China and within the Indo-Pacific can complicate efforts.

6. Expert Opinions

- C. Raja Mohan: Views the partnership as a "strategic counterweight" to China.
- Bruno Maçães (Foreign Minister of Portugal): Highlights EU's commitment to Indo-Pacific stability, with India as a key ally.

7. Conclusion

- Mutual Benefits: EU–India–Indo-Pacific triangle enhances security, economic growth, and sustainability.
- Future Prospects: By aligning strategic goals, the EU and India can strengthen a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific.

Southeast Asia – Importance in the US' Indo-Pacific Strategy

1. Geopolitical Importance

- Strategic Location: Southeast Asia's position along key maritime routes makes it vital for a free and open Indo-Pacific.
- Counterbalancing China: The US seeks to support regional countries in countering China's assertive actions, especially in the South China Sea.

2. US Objectives in Southeast Asia

- Strengthening Partnerships: The US enhances ties with ASEAN to build resilience and support a rules-based regional order.
- Securing Trade Routes: Ensuring the openness of key routes, like the Malacca Strait, essential for global trade.

3. Key Initiatives

- US-ASEAN Strategic Partnership: Cooperation on security and economic issues.
- Quad Engagement: Collaboration with India, Japan, and Australia for maritime security impacting Southeast Asia.

4. Challenges

- ASEAN's Neutrality: Southeast Asian countries balance relations with both the US and China, complicating unified support.
- Economic Influence of China: China's trade and investment in the region pose a challenge to US influence.

5. Expert Opinions

- Kurt Campbell: Describes Southeast Asia as a "center of gravity" in the Indo-Pacific.

6. Conclusion

- Strategic Necessity: Southeast Asia is crucial for the US Indo-Pacific strategy, requiring ongoing partnerships, economic initiatives, and security cooperation.

India's Role in QUAD, I2U2, and AUKUS

7. Introduction to India's Multilateral Engagements

- Strategic Collaborations: India's involvement in QUAD, I2U2, and AUKUS reflects its approach to strengthening security, economic resilience, and regional stability.
- Geopolitical Context: With rising challenges from China and evolving global dynamics, these alliances align India with like-minded countries, focusing on shared interests in the Indo-Pacific and beyond.

8. QUAD (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue)

- Members: India, USA, Japan, and Australia.
- Objectives: Promote a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific, enhance maritime security, counterbalance China, and uphold international law.
- Key Activities: Joint naval exercises, vaccine diplomacy, technology sharing, and supply chain resilience efforts.

9. I2U2 (India, Israel, UAE, USA)

- Focus: Economic partnership in the Middle East, with emphasis on food security, water technology, energy, and infrastructure.
- Strategic Significance for India: Strengthens ties with Middle Eastern allies, diversifies economic engagement, and leverages India's expertise in agriculture and tech.

10. AUKUS (Australia, UK, USA)

- Focus: Primarily a security pact providing Australia with nuclear-powered submarines to counter Chinese influence in the Indo-Pacific.

- India's Perspective: Although not a member, AUKUS complements India's security interests by boosting allied presence in the Indo-Pacific, indirectly supporting India's strategic goals.

11. Key Benefits for India

- Enhanced Security: Collaborative defense exercises and intelligence sharing bolster regional security.
- Economic and Technological Growth: Partnerships in I2U2 and QUAD support technological advancement and supply chain diversification.
- Counterbalancing China: Each alliance, directly or indirectly, helps India manage regional challenges posed by China.

12. Challenges and Considerations

- Balancing Non-Alignment: India's traditional non-alignment approach is tested by these deepening partnerships.
- Regional Reactions: Pakistan and China view these alliances with suspicion, which could impact regional stability.

13. Conclusion

- Strategic Alignment: India's role in QUAD, I2U2, and its support for AUKUS reflects a balanced approach to maintaining sovereignty while engaging in strategic partnerships.
- Future Prospects: Through these platforms, India can enhance security, promote economic cooperation, and assert its influence in a multipolar world.

BIMSTEC Needs to Reinvent Itself

1. Introduction to BIMSTEC

- Overview: The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and

Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is a regional organization with seven members: Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Nepal, and Bhutan.

- Strategic Significance: Positioned between South and Southeast Asia, BIMSTEC aims to enhance economic cooperation, connectivity, and security across the Bay of Bengal region.

2. Challenges Facing BIMSTEC

- Slow Progress: Limited implementation of agreements, lack of clear strategic direction, and bureaucratic delays.
- Overlapping Memberships: Many BIMSTEC members are also part of SAARC or ASEAN, leading to fragmented priorities and competition.
- Geopolitical Pressures: The influence of external powers like China in member countries complicates regional cohesion and decision-making.
- Insufficient Institutional Capacity: Lack of a robust secretariat and institutional mechanisms hinders effective coordination and progress.

3. Key Areas for Reinvention

- Strengthening Institutional Framework: Developing a stronger secretariat, dedicated funding, and streamlined decision-making processes.
- Enhanced Connectivity Projects: Prioritizing infrastructure projects, including road, rail, and maritime links, to foster seamless regional integration.

- ▣ **Focused Security Cooperation:** Addressing security threats such as terrorism, trafficking, and maritime security, particularly in the Bay of Bengal.
- ▣ **Economic Integration:** Establishing a BIMSTEC free trade agreement to boost intra-regional trade and investment, which remains limited.

4. Strategic Importance of BIMSTEC for India

- ▣ **Alternative to SAARC:** With SAARC's limited effectiveness, BIMSTEC provides a viable platform for India to engage with neighbors.
- ▣ **Counterbalancing China:** Enhanced cooperation with BIMSTEC members helps India strengthen regional influence and balance China's presence.
- ▣ **Economic and Security Goals:** BIMSTEC aligns with India's "Neighborhood First" and "Act East" policies, fostering economic ties and regional stability.

5. Expert Opinions

- ▣ **C. Raja Mohan:** Emphasizes the need for BIMSTEC to adopt a clear strategic focus and prioritize achievable goals to increase its relevance.
- ▣ **S.D. Muni:** Highlights the importance of institutional reform within BIMSTEC to streamline decision-making and ensure sustained progress.

6. Conclusion

- ▣ **Reinvention Path:** For BIMSTEC to become effective, it needs a robust institutional framework, prioritization of connectivity and trade, and a focused security agenda.

- ▣ **India's Role:** As a major regional power, India can take a lead role in reforming BIMSTEC to make it a dynamic and relevant organization for the region.

India's 10-Point Plan to Strengthen India-ASEAN Relations

1. Introduction to India-ASEAN Relations

- ▣ **Significance:** ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) is a key partner in India's "Act East" policy, with shared interests in trade, security, and regional stability in the Indo-Pacific.
- ▣ **Objective of the Plan:** Enhance cooperation across economic, cultural, and security domains to foster a comprehensive strategic partnership.

2. India's 10-Point Plan for Strengthening Ties

- ▣ **Enhancing Trade and Investment:** Prioritize negotiations on the India-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (FTA) to improve trade flows, reduce tariffs, and address market access barriers.
- ▣ **Infrastructure and Connectivity:** Develop physical and digital infrastructure projects, including the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway and initiatives to improve digital connectivity.
- ▣ **Maritime Security Collaboration:** Strengthen joint efforts on maritime security through coordinated patrols, anti-piracy efforts, and capacity-building programs in the Indo-Pacific region.

- ❑ Defense and Security Ties: Enhance defense cooperation through joint exercises, intelligence sharing, and capacity-building in counter-terrorism and disaster response.
- ❑ Supply Chain Resilience: Work with ASEAN to build resilient supply chains, reducing dependency on single-source suppliers and ensuring stability in critical sectors.
- ❑ Promoting the Blue Economy: Collaborate on sustainable ocean-based economic initiatives like fisheries, tourism, and renewable ocean energy to promote regional growth.
- ❑ People-to-People Connectivity: Expand educational, cultural, and tourism exchanges, including scholarships, university partnerships, and visa facilitation.
- ❑ Digital and Technological Partnership: Foster cooperation in areas like cybersecurity, 5G, artificial intelligence, and digital economy frameworks to build a digitally connected future.
- ❑ Climate and Environmental Action: Collaborate on environmental sustainability through joint projects on renewable energy, disaster risk management, and climate change adaptation.
- ❑ Enhancing Political and Strategic Dialogue: Strengthen diplomatic dialogue mechanisms, holding regular summits and foreign minister meetings to ensure open communication and policy alignment.

3. Strategic Importance of the Plan for India

- ❑ Economic Growth: ASEAN's dynamic economy offers trade and investment opportunities essential for India's growth.

- ❑ Indo-Pacific Security: Strengthened relations support India's strategic interest in a free and open Indo-Pacific, balancing China's regional influence.
- ❑ Cultural Ties: ASEAN's shared cultural and historical links with India help reinforce mutual understanding and cooperation.

4. Expert Opinions

- ❑ Harsh V. Pant: Views the 10-point plan as a comprehensive approach to reinforce India's strategic presence in Southeast Asia.
- ❑ C. Raja Mohan: Emphasizes that deepening ties with ASEAN is crucial for India's Act East policy, especially amid growing Indo-Pacific challenges.

5. Conclusion

- ❑ Mutual Benefits: India's 10-point plan for ASEAN strengthens economic, security, and cultural bonds.
- ❑ Path Forward: Sustained commitment to these initiatives will help India and ASEAN build a resilient partnership, vital for regional stability and growth.

US, Japan, Australia reviving 'Blue Dot'

1. Introduction:

- ❑ The Blue Dot Network (BDN) is a collaborative initiative launched in 2019 by the United States, Japan, and Australia to promote high-quality, sustainable infrastructure development worldwide.

- ▣ The network aims to certify infrastructure projects that adhere to robust international standards, ensuring they are open, inclusive, transparent, economically viable, and environmentally and socially sustainable.

2. Recent Developments:

- ▣ Expansion of Membership: In November 2023, Switzerland joined the Blue Dot Network Steering Committee, joining the United States, Japan, Australia, the United Kingdom, and Spain. This expansion underscores the growing international commitment to promoting quality infrastructure.
- ▣ Official Launch: On April 9, 2024, the Blue Dot Network was officially launched at the OECD in Paris. The OECD hosts the BDN Secretariat, which oversees the certification mechanism and ensures alignment with international standards.

3. Objectives of the Blue Dot Network:

- ▣ Certification of Quality Infrastructure: BDN provides an internationally recognized certification for infrastructure projects that meet stringent criteria, promoting transparency and sustainability.
- ▣ Mobilization of Private Investment: By certifying projects, BDN aims to attract private sector investment into infrastructure, particularly in developing countries, to bridge the global infrastructure investment gap.
- ▣ Promotion of Sustainable Development: The network emphasizes projects that are environmentally friendly, socially responsible, and economically viable, aligning with the G20 Principles for Quality Infrastructure Investment.

4. Strategic Implications:

- ▣ Counterbalance to Competing Initiatives: The Blue Dot Network is viewed as a counterbalance to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), offering an alternative framework for infrastructure development that prioritizes quality and sustainability.
- ▣ Strengthening Multilateral Co-operation: The revival and expansion of BDN signify a commitment by member countries to collaborate on setting global standards for infrastructure, fostering a rules-based international order.

5. Conclusion:

- ▣ The revitalization and expansion of the Blue Dot Network highlight a concerted effort by the United States, Japan, Australia, and other partners to promote high-quality, sustainable infrastructure development globally.
- ▣ By providing a certification framework, BDN seeks to attract private investment and ensure that infrastructure projects contribute positively to economic, social, and environmental outcomes.

Defence Diplomacy and Environmental Security – Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific and Beyond

1. Introduction

- ▣ Defence Diplomacy: Use of military cooperation to strengthen partnerships, foster trust, and prevent conflicts.

- Environmental Security: Recognizes environmental threats (e.g., climate change, resource depletion) as critical to national and regional stability.
- Importance in the Indo-Pacific: With rising strategic competition and environmental challenges, defence diplomacy and environmental security are key for regional stability and resilience.

2. Why Defence Diplomacy and Environmental Security Matter in the Indo-Pacific

- Strategic Significance: The Indo-Pacific is a focal point of global trade and security interests, with competing influences, especially between the US and China.
- Environmental Challenges: The region faces rising sea levels, extreme weather, biodiversity loss, and pollution, which threaten economic and human security.
- Cooperation Imperative: Collective action is required to address transboundary issues and maintain peace amid growing military presence in the region.

3. Defence Diplomacy Mechanisms in the Indo-Pacific

- Joint Naval Exercises: Multinational exercises (e.g., Malabar, RIMPAC) enhance maritime security and foster operational coordination.
- Capacity-Building Programs: Training and technical support to smaller nations strengthen their ability to respond to security threats, including humanitarian assistance.
- Strategic Dialogues and Alliances: Partnerships such as the Quad (India, USA, Japan, Australia) enable dialogue on shared concerns, including environmental security.

4. Environmental Security Initiatives

- Disaster Relief and Resilience: Collaborative efforts in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) to respond to natural disasters like cyclones and tsunamis.
- Blue Economy Initiatives: Promoting sustainable use of marine resources, such as fisheries management and ocean conservation, to support long-term ecological and economic stability.
- Climate Adaptation Projects: Investments in climate-resilient infrastructure, renewable energy, and conservation efforts to mitigate climate change impacts.

5. Examples of Cooperation in Defence and Environmental Security

- The Quad's Maritime Security Focus: Coordinated maritime patrols, information sharing, and joint exercises focusing on freedom of navigation and environmental protection.
- Indo-Pacific Environmental Security Forum: A platform led by the US Indo-Pacific Command, bringing together military, governmental, and NGO representatives to discuss environmental security threats.
- Regional Disaster Response Mechanisms: Initiatives like the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) focus on capacity-building for disaster response and regional resilience.

6. Challenges to Cooperation

- Divergent Interests: While environmental security is critical, differing national priorities can impact collaboration, especially with regional powers like China.

- Resource Limitations: Smaller nations often lack the resources for robust environmental and defence capabilities, requiring sustained external support.
- Geopolitical Tensions: Strategic competition, especially in the South China Sea, can complicate multilateral initiatives on environmental and security fronts.

7. Expert Opinions

- C. Raja Mohan: Highlights defence diplomacy as a tool for enhancing regional resilience, especially in maritime security and environmental protection.
- Harsh V. Pant: Emphasizes the importance of defence partnerships like the Quad for addressing non-traditional security threats, including climate change impacts on regional stability.
- Dr. Brahma Chellaney: Advocates for a proactive approach to environmental security as a component of Indo-Pacific strategy, stressing that climate resilience is central to sustainable peace.

8. Conclusion

- Integrated Approach Needed: Combining defence diplomacy with environmental security can strengthen regional resilience in the Indo-Pacific.
- Future Pathways: By continuing cooperation in HADR, climate resilience, and security, countries can address both traditional and non-traditional threats, fostering a stable and sustainable Indo-Pacific.

India and the Geopolitics of Technology

1. Introduction to the Geopolitics of Technology

- Definition: The geopolitics of technology refers to the strategic power struggles around technological advancement, access, and control, impacting global influence and national security.
- India's Role: As a major digital economy and a growing tech hub, India holds a strategic position in the global technology landscape, with interests in cybersecurity, digital sovereignty, and economic growth.

2. Key Areas of Technological Geopolitics for India

- Digital Sovereignty: Balancing global digital integration with protecting national data and technology infrastructure.
- Cybersecurity: Addressing threats to critical infrastructure, ensuring cybersecurity resilience, and collaborating on international cybersecurity norms.
- 5G and Emerging Technologies: Managing partnerships and competition in the development and deployment of 5G, artificial intelligence, and quantum computing.
- Supply Chain Security: Securing supply chains for essential technologies (e.g., semiconductors) to avoid dependencies on foreign powers, particularly in critical sectors.

3. Strategic Partnerships and Initiatives

- ▣ Quad Tech Initiatives: Collaborating with the US, Japan, and Australia on emerging tech, cybersecurity, and supply chain security to counterbalance China's tech influence.
- ▣ India-US Tech Ties: Partnerships on tech innovation, cybersecurity, and AI development through frameworks like the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF).
- ▣ Digital and Data Diplomacy: India's engagements in global forums (e.g., G20, BRICS) to shape digital governance and advocate for an equitable digital landscape.

4. Opportunities for India

- ▣ Global Digital Economy Leadership: India's strong IT sector, large workforce, and digital innovation capacity position it as a leader in the global digital economy.
- ▣ Exporting Digital Solutions: India's expertise in digital services (e.g., fintech, digital payments) enables it to support digital infrastructure development in Global South countries.
- ▣ Strengthening Domestic Capabilities: Investment in R&D, innovation hubs, and tech-focused education to enhance self-reliance and reduce dependency on foreign technologies.

5. Challenges for India in the Tech Geopolitics Arena

- ▣ Dependency on Foreign Technology: Reliance on imports, particularly in semiconductors and high-tech components, poses a vulnerability.

- ▣ Balancing Western and Chinese Influence: Navigating relations with the US and China, particularly in 5G and AI, while protecting India's technological autonomy.
- ▣ Regulatory and Policy Gaps: Developing comprehensive frameworks to address data protection, digital taxation, and tech innovation to match global standards.

6. Expert Opinions

- ▣ Arvind Gupta: Emphasizes the importance of building a resilient digital infrastructure and supporting local tech startups to enhance India's digital sovereignty.
- ▣ Harsh V. Pant: Highlights the critical role of India's partnerships, such as with the Quad, to secure supply chains and develop shared tech standards in the Indo-Pacific.
- ▣ Samir Saran: Advocates for India's proactive role in global digital governance to ensure that digital policies align with India's strategic interests and values.

7. Conclusion

- ▣ Strategic Leverage: By advancing its technological capabilities and strengthening alliances, India can secure its position in the global tech landscape.
- ▣ Future Prospects: Continued investment in domestic tech innovation, regulatory frameworks, and strategic partnerships will be essential for India to maintain technological sovereignty and play a key role in the geopolitics of technology.

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India and the Geopolitics of the Moon

1. Introduction to Lunar Geopolitics

- ▣ Concept: Lunar geopolitics refers to the competition and collaboration among nations for access to the Moon's resources, territory, and strategic positioning, impacting future space dominance.
- ▣ India's Position: India's growing space capabilities make it a significant player in lunar exploration, contributing to its scientific, technological, and strategic goals in space.

2. Key Drivers of Moon Geopolitics

- ▣ Resource Extraction: The Moon contains resources like helium-3, rare earth elements, and water ice, critical for future energy needs and sustaining deep-space missions.
- ▣ Strategic Positioning: Establishing bases on the Moon is advantageous for scientific research, exploration, and as a launchpad for further space missions.
- ▣ Influence on Space Governance: As more nations pursue lunar missions, shaping international norms and agreements (e.g., the Artemis Accords) becomes crucial to prevent conflicts.

3. India's Lunar Capabilities and Missions

- ▣ Chandrayaan Program: India's Chandrayaan-1 mission discovered water molecules on the Moon, while Chandrayaan-2 advanced exploration capabilities with an orbiter and lander mission.

- ▣ Chandrayaan-3: Successfully achieved a soft landing in 2023, showcasing India's technological prowess and boosting its position in the lunar exploration community.
- ▣ Future Plans: India aims to advance lunar exploration with potential human missions and more sophisticated robotic exploration, strengthening its scientific and strategic stakes.

4. Strategic Partnerships and Collaborations

- ▣ US and Artemis Accords: India has shown interest in collaborating under the Artemis program, which promotes sustainable exploration and shared values in space activities.
- ▣ Russia and BRICS: India has previously collaborated with Russia on space technology; BRICS cooperation in space could expand lunar exploration efforts.
- ▣ ISRO's International Partnerships: Collaborations with ESA (European Space Agency), JAXA (Japan), and other space agencies allow India to share data, resources, and technological expertise.

5. Opportunities for India in Lunar Geopolitics

- ▣ Strengthening Space Economy: Lunar exploration opens up possibilities for India's space industry, from mining resources to space tourism, positioning India as a leader in the space economy.
- ▣ Leadership in Space Governance: India can play a role in shaping lunar regulations and contribute to multilateral frameworks that ensure fair access and peaceful use of the Moon's resources.

- ▣ Technological Advancement: Building advanced lunar technology—rovers, habitats, ISRU (In-Situ Resource Utilization) systems—will reinforce India's global standing in space technology.

6. Challenges for India in Lunar Geopolitics

- ▣ Funding and Resource Constraints: Space exploration is costly, and limited funding could constrain India's capacity for sustained lunar missions.
- ▣ Balancing Competing Alliances: Engaging in collaborations (e.g., Artemis) while maintaining strategic autonomy can be challenging, particularly with rising competition among spacefaring nations.
- ▣ Space Policy and Regulatory Gaps: Developing a comprehensive national space policy that addresses

resource extraction, private sector involvement, and space diplomacy is essential.

7. Expert Opinions

- ▣ Dr. Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan: Argues that India's role in lunar exploration can enhance its diplomatic influence, emphasizing the need for India to actively shape space governance frameworks.
- ▣ G. Madhavan Nair (Former ISRO Chairman): Highlights the importance of investing in lunar missions to ensure India doesn't miss out on future opportunities for resource utilization and strategic positioning.
- ▣ Ajey Lele: Stresses that India must be proactive in international lunar agreements, contributing to rules that govern lunar exploration and prevent a "race to the Moon" mentality.



Intersecting Geo-economics and Geopolitics

1. Introduction to Geo-economics and Geopolitics

- ▣ Geo-economics: Refers to the use of economic instruments (e.g., trade, investment, sanctions) to achieve strategic goals in international relations.
- ▣ Geopolitics: Focuses on power dynamics and territorial interests among nations.
- ▣ Intersection: Economic policies increasingly serve as tools for geopolitical influence, impacting global alliances, economic dependencies, and regional stability.

2. Key Areas of Intersection

- ▣ Trade and Investment as Strategic Leverage: Nations use trade relationships, investments, and economic dependencies to influence political decisions (e.g., China's Belt and Road Initiative).
- ▣ Sanctions and Economic Pressure: Countries impose sanctions to alter other states' behaviours, as seen in the US sanctions on Iran and Russia, affecting their geopolitical capabilities.
- ▣ Technology and Digital Competition: Technological dominance, data control, and cybersecurity influence both economic strength and national security (e.g., US-China tech rivalry).

3. Examples of Geo-economic Tools with Geopolitical Impact

- ▣ China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI): Expands China's influence through infrastructure investment, creating

dependencies among participating nations and enhancing China's strategic reach.

- ▣ US Economic Sanctions: The US uses sanctions against Iran, Russia, and other countries as a tool to influence global behavior, aligning economic measures with foreign policy goals.
- ▣ EU's Green Deal and Carbon Border Adjustment: Aims to lead in global environmental standards, impacting trade policies and placing economic pressure on countries with lower environmental regulations.

4. India's Approach to Geo-economics and Geopolitics

- ▣ Strategic Diversification: Reducing reliance on any single country (e.g., China) by diversifying trade partners and sourcing, especially in critical sectors like technology and pharmaceuticals.
- ▣ Regional Trade Initiatives: Engaging in partnerships like the Quad, I2U2, and BIMSTEC to balance geopolitical and economic interests in the Indo-Pacific.
- ▣ Focus on Self-Reliance (Aatmanirbhar Bharat): Developing indigenous capabilities in manufacturing and technology to reduce economic vulnerability and enhance strategic autonomy.

5. Challenges and Risks

- ▣ Economic Coercion and Dependencies: Heavy reliance on a single country (e.g., dependence on China for manufacturing) creates vulnerabilities and can limit strategic choices.
- ▣ Technology and Data Control Conflicts: Competition over technology standards, 5G, and cybersecurity creates both economic and security risks.

- Climate and Environmental Policy Pressures: Geo-economic policies around climate action (e.g., carbon taxes) affect trade and create new competitive dynamics among nations.

6. Expert Opinions

- C. Raja Mohan: Highlights the importance of balancing economic engagement with strategic autonomy, emphasizing the need for India to diversify its partnerships.
- Harsh V. Pant: Argues that geo-economics should support geopolitical goals, advocating for economic alliances that enhance India's strategic position in the Indo-Pacific.
- Parag Khanna: Emphasizes the role of connectivity and infrastructure in shaping global power structures, urging India to strengthen its regional infrastructure influence.

7. Conclusion

- Strategic Balance: Countries must carefully align economic and geopolitical objectives to avoid dependencies that can compromise strategic interests.
- Path Forward for India: By leveraging geo-economic tools (e.g., trade diversification, regional alliances, self-reliance), India can strengthen its geopolitical influence and ensure resilience in a complex international order.

Iran – India's Dilemma in West Asia

1. Introduction to India-Iran Relations

- Strategic Importance: Iran is a crucial partner for India in West

Asia, providing access to energy resources, a gateway to Central Asia, and a strategic location for countering regional threats.

- The Dilemma: India's relationship with Iran is complicated by its ties with the US and Israel, which view Iran with suspicion, especially concerning its nuclear ambitions and regional influence.

2. Key Areas of India's Interest in Iran

- Energy Security: Iran was once a major oil supplier for India, providing affordable energy and helping diversify India's import sources.
- Connectivity Initiatives: Iran's Chabahar Port offers India a strategic route to Afghanistan and Central Asia, bypassing Pakistan.
- Regional Stability: India seeks to balance relations with Iran to maintain stability in West Asia, a region critical to its security and economic interests.

3. Challenges in India-Iran Relations

- US Sanctions on Iran: US sanctions on Iran under the "maximum pressure" policy limit India's ability to trade, invest, and import oil from Iran, impacting bilateral relations.
- Iran's Proximity to China: Iran has strengthened ties with China, including a strategic partnership agreement, which could reduce India's influence and access in Iran.
- Balancing Relations with the US and Israel: India's partnerships with the US and Israel, both adversaries of Iran, add complexity to India's diplomatic engagements with Tehran.

4. Strategic Approaches by India

- ▣ Diversifying Oil Imports: India has sought alternative energy suppliers, such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE, to reduce dependency on Iran amid US sanctions.
- ▣ Maintaining Strategic Dialogue: Despite external pressures, India continues to engage diplomatically with Iran to preserve its influence, particularly regarding the Chabahar Port project.
- ▣ Regional Alliances: Through the Quad and other strategic partnerships, India strengthens its regional standing, providing a counterbalance to Iran's partnerships with China.

5. Opportunities in India-Iran Relations

- ▣ Chabahar as a Gateway: By investing in Chabahar Port, India gains access to Afghanistan and Central Asia, critical for trade and regional influence.
- ▣ Potential Resumption of Oil Imports: If US-Iran relations improve, India could re-establish oil imports from Iran, diversifying its energy sources and reducing costs.
- ▣ Cultural and Historical Ties: India and Iran share deep historical, cultural, and linguistic ties, which bolster people-to-people and diplomatic connections.

6. Expert Opinion

- ▣ Dr. Talmiz Ahmad (Former Indian Ambassador): Suggests that India should pursue an independent West Asia policy, emphasizing long-term interests over temporary pressures.

- ▣ Conclusion
- ▣ Balancing Act: India must carefully navigate its relationship with Iran, balancing its strategic needs in West Asia with its ties to the US and Israel.
- ▣ Future Prospects: Continued engagement with Iran, focused on strategic projects like Chabahar, will be vital for India's long-term regional influence and energy security.

Geopolitical Implications of a Green Hydrogen Economy with India's Perspective

1. Introduction to the Green Hydrogen Economy

- ▣ Definition: Green hydrogen is produced using renewable energy sources through electrolysis, offering a zero-emission alternative for sectors like heavy industry, transportation, and power.
- ▣ India's Green Hydrogen Vision: As part of its energy transition and emissions reduction goals, India aims to be a major player in green hydrogen production to achieve energy self-reliance, reduce fossil fuel imports, and become a global supplier.

2. Key Geopolitical Implications with India's Role

- ▣ Energy Independence for India: Green hydrogen can reduce India's dependency on imported oil and gas, enhancing energy security and saving foreign exchange on energy imports.
- ▣ Positioning as a Global Green Hydrogen Hub: With abundant solar resources and ambitious renewable energy goals, India has the potential

to become a major exporter of green hydrogen to energy-scarce regions like Europe and Southeast Asia.

- ▣ **Technological and Strategic Alliances:** India's partnerships with the EU, Japan, and other technology leaders in green hydrogen will help boost India's technological capabilities and position it as a green hydrogen innovator.

3. Potential Winners and Losers with Indian Context

- ▣ **India as a Potential Winner:** India's renewable energy capacity and commitment to green hydrogen position it as a potential beneficiary in the green hydrogen economy, with initiatives like the National Hydrogen Mission aimed at accelerating growth.
- ▣ **India's Oil and Gas Sector:** India's fossil fuel companies are exploring green hydrogen, adapting to the transition. Reliance Industries and Indian Oil Corporation, for instance, are investing in green hydrogen projects to diversify portfolios and maintain relevance.
- ▣ **Collaboration with Renewable-Rich Regions:** India's collaboration with renewable-rich nations, such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE, allows it to secure energy supplies while advancing green hydrogen technology.

4. Impact on Traditional Energy Partners

- ▣ **Reduced Dependence on Middle Eastern Oil:** As India moves toward green hydrogen, its dependence on Middle Eastern oil could decrease. However, the strategic partnerships will continue as these nations also invest in green hydrogen (e.g., Saudi Arabia's NEOM).

- ▣ **Diversified Energy Relationships:** With the focus shifting to green hydrogen, India will establish new energy relationships with renewable-rich regions like Australia, and Europe, expanding its energy partnerships.

5. India's Strategic Alliances and Trade Shifts

- ▣ **India-EU Green Hydrogen Alliance:** Collaborating with the EU on green hydrogen production and infrastructure standards to support mutual trade and investment in the green hydrogen sector.
- ▣ **Quad's Role in Clean Energy Cooperation:** The Quad partnership (India, the US, Japan, and Australia) includes clean energy cooperation, with green hydrogen as a focal point for regional energy security.
- ▣ **Export Potential to East Asia and Europe:** India's green hydrogen could find markets in East Asia and Europe, enhancing India's export economy and elevating its geopolitical standing as a reliable green fuel supplier.

6. Challenges and Considerations for India

- ▣ **Infrastructure and Cost Constraints:** The high cost of green hydrogen infrastructure poses a challenge, requiring significant investment and government support.
- ▣ **Water Scarcity Issues:** Green hydrogen production requires substantial water resources, which could pose challenges in water-stressed regions of India, necessitating water-efficient technologies.
- ▣ **Securing Supply Chains for Electrolyzers and Critical Minerals:** India will need to develop domestic

capabilities in electrolyzer production and secure access to rare earth materials, reducing dependencies on global suppliers.

7. Expert Opinions with Indian Context

- Amitabh Kant (Former NITI Aayog CEO): Stresses that green hydrogen can transform India's energy sector, providing a pathway to carbon neutrality and creating a new green economy.
- Dr. Ajay Mathur (Director General, International Solar Alliance): Highlights that India's green hydrogen initiatives can position it as a global leader in clean energy, advocating for international collaborations to build India's hydrogen capacity.

8. Conclusion

- Strategic Opportunity for India: India's commitment to green hydrogen provides an opportunity for energy independence, economic growth, and leadership in sustainable energy.
- Path Forward: By leveraging renewable energy potential, securing strategic partnerships, and advancing green hydrogen policies, India can enhance its geopolitical influence and contribute to a global green hydrogen economy.

Israel-Hamas Clash – Implications for West Asia and India's Position

1. Introduction to the Israel-Hamas Conflict

- Current Situation: The recent Israel-Hamas clash has intensified tensions across West Asia, leading to significant

loss of life and infrastructure damage, with potential for broader regional involvement.

- Regional Significance: This conflict impacts not only Israel and Palestine but also shifts political dynamics and stability across West Asia, affecting regional alliances, economies, and security.

2. Geopolitical Implications for West Asia

- Regional Stability and Security: The conflict risks escalating into a broader regional crisis, potentially involving countries like Lebanon, Iran, and Syria, and could spur proxy wars among regional powers.
- Shifts in Regional Alliances: Traditional alliances may realign as Arab countries with diplomatic ties to Israel, such as the UAE, Bahrain, and Morocco, face domestic pressure to reconsider their positions.
- Impact on US and Global Influence: The US's support for Israel could strain its relations with Arab nations, affecting its influence in West Asia. Other major powers like Russia and China may leverage the situation to increase their presence in the region.

3. Economic Impact

- Oil Market Fluctuations: With West Asia being a major oil-producing region, the conflict has led to fears of supply disruptions, causing global oil prices to fluctuate.
- Trade Routes and Energy Security: Increased instability may disrupt trade routes, impacting India's energy imports and potentially raising costs.
- Economic Strain on Regional Nations: Countries like Jordan, Lebanon, and Egypt, which have high levels of

Palestinian refugees, face additional economic strain, which could have cascading effects on their economies.

4. Humanitarian Crisis

- ▣ Casualties and Displacements: Massive civilian casualties and displacement, particularly in Gaza, have exacerbated the humanitarian crisis, with a significant toll on infrastructure, healthcare, and basic services.
- ▣ International Response: The UN and other humanitarian organizations have called for ceasefires and increased aid. The sustained conflict is heightening global calls for peace negotiations.

5. India's Position and Strategic Concerns

- ▣ Diplomatic Balance: India maintains a delicate balance, expressing support for Palestine's sovereignty while strengthening its diplomatic and defense ties with Israel. The conflict complicates India's policy of neutrality in the region.
- ▣ Energy Security: India imports a significant portion of its oil from West Asia. Any disruption due to the conflict impacts energy security, leading to price fluctuations and increased import costs.
- ▣ Diaspora Concerns: With a large Indian diaspora in Gulf countries, India remains cautious, as instability in West Asia could threaten the safety and livelihoods of Indian nationals working in the region.

6. India's Strategic Response and Opportunities

- ▣ Role in Peacebuilding: India's longstanding position advocating

for a two-state solution gives it diplomatic credibility. India could potentially mediate or contribute to peacebuilding efforts.

- ▣ Diversifying Energy Sources: India's efforts to diversify energy suppliers and invest in alternative energy sources are crucial in reducing dependency on West Asia amid such conflicts.
- ▣ Strengthening Regional Ties: India's partnerships with Gulf countries and Israel offer a platform for dialogue, reinforcing its role as a stabilizing force in West Asia.

7. Expert Opinion

- ▣ Alyssa Ayres (South Asia Expert): Notes that the conflict highlights the need for India to secure energy alternatives and strengthen regional partnerships, balancing its ties with both Arab nations and Israel.
- ▣ Conclusion
- ▣ Complex Diplomatic Path: India's approach to the Israel-Hamas conflict requires careful navigation to protect its interests in West Asia while maintaining its balanced policy.
- ▣ Path Forward: By advocating for peace, investing in energy security, and leveraging its ties in the region, India can reinforce its role as a stabilizing influence in West Asia.

Arctic Ocean and its Relevance – Indian Perspective

1. Introduction to the Arctic Ocean

- ▣ Geographic Importance: The Arctic Ocean, surrounding the North Pole, is a unique region rich in resources and sensitive to climate change impacts.

- ❑ Global Significance: With melting ice creating new shipping routes, the Arctic has become a focus for geopolitics, resource competition, and environmental concerns.

2. Why the Arctic Matters Globally

- ❑ Climate Impact: The Arctic serves as a “climate regulator,” with its ice and snow reflecting sunlight, helping cool the planet. Melting ice accelerates global warming, impacting weather patterns worldwide.
- ❑ Economic Potential: The region is estimated to hold vast untapped reserves of oil, gas, and minerals, attracting interest from countries seeking energy resources.
- ❑ New Shipping Routes: Melting ice opens the Northern Sea Route (NSR) and other passages, potentially reducing shipping distances between Europe and Asia by up to 40%, reshaping global trade.

3. India's Strategic Interests in the Arctic

- ❑ Climate and Environmental Impact on India: As a climate-sensitive region, changes in the Arctic significantly impact India's monsoon patterns, agricultural productivity, and weather systems.
- ❑ Energy Security and Resource Access: India's growing energy needs have led to interest in Arctic resources. Although a non-Arctic nation, India seeks access to oil, gas, and other minerals in the region.
- ❑ Scientific Research: India operates the Himadri research station in Svalbard, Norway, to study climate, atmospheric sciences, and Arctic ecology, contributing to a better understanding of climate change's global impact.

4. India's Role and Involvement in the Arctic

- ❑ Observer Status in the Arctic Council: India has observer status in the Arctic Council, allowing it to participate in discussions on sustainable development, environmental protection, and scientific research in the Arctic.
- ❑ Scientific Collaborations: Through partnerships with Arctic countries like Norway and Russia, India participates in polar research, studying the Arctic's effects on global climate and ecology.
- ❑ Arctic Policy 2022: India's Arctic Policy aims to expand its scientific, economic, and strategic presence in the Arctic, focusing on environmental protection, sustainable resource use, and cooperation with Arctic nations.

5. Challenges for India in the Arctic

- ❑ Geopolitical Competition: The Arctic is increasingly militarized, with nations like Russia and the US vying for influence. India must balance its engagements, particularly as China seeks a strong Arctic foothold.
- ❑ Environmental Concerns: Arctic resource extraction poses risks of oil spills and environmental degradation, which could impact global climate patterns, including India's monsoon system.
- ❑ Resource and Investment Requirements: Arctic exploration and extraction are costly, requiring substantial investment, advanced technology, and collaboration with other nations.

6. Strategic Implications for India

- ❑ Energy Diversification: Access to Arctic resources could support India's long-term energy security goals by diversifying supply sources and reducing dependency on traditional energy routes.
- ❑ Strengthening Global Partnerships: India's engagement with Arctic countries, through research and trade, enhances its global stature and strengthens ties with nations like Norway, Russia, and the US.
- ❑ Climate Leadership: India's Arctic research and environmental stance align with its climate action commitments, enhancing its role as a responsible actor in global climate governance.

7. Expert Opinions

- ❑ R. R. Rashmi (Climate Policy Expert): Highlights the importance of the Arctic for India's climate, advocating for India's active involvement in research and climate action in the region.
- ❑ Dr. M. Rajeevan (Former Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences): Emphasizes the Arctic's influence on India's monsoon and calls for more focused research on Arctic climate impacts.
- ❑ Harsh V. Pant: Suggests that India should deepen its Arctic engagements to counterbalance China's "Polar Silk Road" ambitions, enhancing India's strategic presence in global polar affairs.

8. Conclusion

- ❑ Strategic Balance: India's Arctic policy seeks a balance between scientific research, climate action, and potential resource exploration to support its energy and environmental security.

- ❑ Future Pathways: By expanding its Arctic presence and collaborations, India can strengthen its climate science, reinforce energy security, and enhance its position in international climate and polar governance.

Iran–Russia Relations and Their Implications for India

1. Introduction to Iran–Russia Relations

- ❑ Historical Context: Iran and Russia share a complex history, moving from rivalry to partnership in recent decades, with cooperation in strategic, economic, and military areas.
- ❑ Current Significance: Growing ties between the two countries are reshaping regional alliances and impacting global power dynamics, particularly in the Middle East and Central Asia.

2. Key Areas of Cooperation between Iran and Russia

- ❑ Military and Defense Collaboration: Iran and Russia are strengthening defense ties, with Russia supporting Iran's military capabilities. In 2024, Russia and Iran planned a comprehensive defense treaty, which is expected to enhance their military cooperation significantly.
- ❑ Economic Partnership: Russia and Iran have expanded trade, especially in energy. Russian firms like Gazprom and Lukoil are involved in Iranian oil and gas projects, and bilateral trade hit a record high in recent years.
- ❑ Strategic Alignment in Regional Conflicts: In Syria, both countries back the Assad regime, opposing Western

influence and playing a decisive role in regional geopolitics, especially in the Middle East.

3. Geopolitical Implications in West Asia and Central Asia

- **Countering Western Influence:** Russia and Iran align in opposition to US and European influence, challenging Western policies in Syria, Iraq, and other regions. This cooperation impacts the balance of power in West Asia.
- **Strategic Positioning in the Caspian and Central Asia:** Enhanced cooperation allows Iran and Russia to leverage the Caspian Sea for trade and military access, including a direct trade route between Iran and Russia via the Caspian.
- **Nuclear and Military Concerns:** Russia's potential support for Iran's nuclear and missile programs raises concerns among Western countries and Israel, affecting regional security dynamics.

4. Opportunities and Challenges for India in the Iran–Russia Relationship

- **Energy Security and Economic Gains:** Closer ties between Iran and Russia could benefit India through collaborative energy projects. Iran and Russia's increased cooperation in energy aligns with India's interest in stable and diverse energy sources.
- **Connectivity via the INSTC:** India, Iran, and Russia are partners in the International North–South Transport Corridor (INSTC), which links the Indian Ocean with Central Asia and Europe. Stronger Iran–Russia ties could enhance the effectiveness of this corridor, benefiting Indian trade.

- **Navigating Geopolitical Balancing:** India maintains ties with Iran and Russia as well as the US and EU. The growing Iran–Russia alignment complicates India's balancing act, as India seeks to avoid tensions with Western allies while pursuing its interests with Iran and Russia.

5. India's Strategic Approach in Response to Iran–Russia Relations

- **Strengthening INSTC and Regional Connectivity:** India continues to invest in the INSTC, which offers a reliable trade route and boosts India's access to Central Asia and Russia, providing a viable alternative to traditional routes.
- **Collaborative Energy Projects:** India is looking to invest in Iranian oil and gas fields and has engaged with Russian energy firms for joint ventures in the region.
- **Diplomatic Balance:** India maintains a neutral approach to navigate Iran–Russia cooperation while managing its relationships with the US, EU, and other global players, balancing its strategic and economic interests.

6. Expert Opinions

- **Harsh V. Pant:** Emphasizes that India must carefully manage its relationship with Russia and Iran, ensuring that its interests in the West and with the US are not compromised by its partnerships in West Asia and Central Asia.
- **Talmiz Ahmad (Former Indian Ambassador):** Suggests that the INSTC offers India a strategic advantage, allowing India to circumvent Pakistani routes and enhance trade with Russia and Central Asia.

7. Conclusion

- ▢ Balancing Act for India: Iran–Russia relations present both opportunities and challenges for India’s regional interests, requiring careful diplomatic navigation.
- ▢ Path Forward: By reinforcing energy ties, connectivity projects, and diplomatic flexibility, India can benefit from the Iran–Russia alignment while balancing its relations with Western allies.

Importance of the Abraham Accords for Stability in the Middle East – An Indian Perspective

1. Introduction to the Abraham Accords

- ▢ Background: Signed in 2020, the Abraham Accords normalized diplomatic relations between Israel, the UAE, and Bahrain, with Sudan and Morocco later joining the framework.
- ▢ Regional Significance: The Accords mark a shift in Middle Eastern alliances, promoting economic cooperation and reducing hostilities between Israel and Arab nations, fostering a more stable region.

2. Key Aspects of the Abraham Accords

- ▢ Diplomatic Normalization: The Accords encourage peaceful diplomatic relations and trade between Israel and Arab nations, setting a precedent for cooperation over conflict.
- ▢ Economic and Security Cooperation: Member nations collaborate on technology, infrastructure, and security, particularly in countering terrorism and stabilizing the region.

- ▢ Impact on Broader Arab–Israeli Relations: The Accords create a framework that other Arab nations could adopt, gradually reducing regional tensions and building a coalition for stability.

3. Geopolitical Implications of the Accords in the Middle East

- ▢ Counterbalance to Iran: The Accords align Israel and Gulf countries like the UAE against shared regional concerns, notably the influence of Iran, creating a cooperative security front.
- ▢ Shift in Alliances: The Middle East’s power dynamics are shifting from traditional hostilities to alliances based on mutual economic and security interests, with countries realigning for stability and economic growth.
- ▢ Regional Economic Integration: With barriers between Israel and several Arab states removed, regional economic integration is improving, leading to trade growth, technology transfer, and investment opportunities.

4. Significance of the Abraham Accords for India

- ▢ Enhanced Economic Ties with the Middle East: The Accords create opportunities for India to engage with a more interconnected Middle East, increasing trade, investment, and infrastructure projects across the region.
- ▢ Energy Security and Investment: The stability fostered by the Accords benefits India by ensuring a secure energy supply from the Gulf, critical for India’s growing energy demands.

- ❑ Improved Access to Technology: With Israel and Gulf nations collaborating on technology, India has increased avenues for partnerships in fields like cybersecurity, defense technology, and innovation.

5. Strategic Benefits for India

- ❑ Boost to India's West Asia Policy: The Abraham Accords complement India's "Think West" policy, providing India with stable diplomatic channels to engage with both Israel and the Arab world.
- ❑ India's Position as a Neutral Partner: With ties to both Israel and Arab nations, India is positioned to mediate and engage in Middle Eastern affairs, potentially becoming a bridge between diverse regional interests.
- ❑ Collaborative Security Opportunities: The Accords encourage cooperation on counterterrorism and intelligence-sharing in the region, areas where India can strengthen collaborations for regional security and stability.

6. Challenges and Considerations for India

- ❑ Balancing Relations with Iran: While supporting the Accords aligns with India's interests in the Middle East, India must balance its ties with Iran, ensuring no disruption in relations with its significant energy partner.
- ❑ Navigating Regional Rivalries: As Middle Eastern alliances evolve,

India must carefully navigate its relationships to avoid taking sides in regional disputes, particularly between Gulf nations and Iran.

- ❑ Economic Dependency on the Gulf: India's heavy dependency on Gulf energy imports makes stability in the region crucial; any destabilization could impact India's energy security and economic growth.

7. Expert Opinions

- ❑ Harsh V. Pant: Highlights that the Accords align with India's goals in the Middle East by promoting stability, which is essential for securing India's energy and economic interests.
- ❑ Talmiz Ahmad (Former Indian Ambassador): Emphasizes that the Accords can aid India's "Look West" policy by expanding India's economic and strategic footprint in a stable Middle East.

8. Conclusion

- ❑ Stabilizing Force in West Asia: The Abraham Accords create a more stable Middle Eastern landscape, which aligns with India's strategic interests in regional security, energy security, and economic growth.
- ❑ Path Forward for India: India can leverage the stability brought by the Accords to enhance its role in West Asia, boosting trade, technological cooperation, and diplomatic engagement with Israel and the Gulf nations.



Racist Attacks on the Indian Diaspora Abroad

1. Introduction to Racist Attacks on the Indian Diaspora

- Definition: Racist attacks against the Indian diaspora involve violence, discrimination, and hostility towards individuals of Indian origin due to their ethnicity, nationality, or perceived foreignness.
- Global Presence of Indian Diaspora: With over 30 million Indians living abroad, the Indian diaspora is one of the largest and most diverse expatriate communities globally, playing significant roles in various sectors, from technology to academia.

2. Recent Incidents of Racist Attacks

- United Kingdom: In August 2024, Birmingham saw riots targeting the Muslim community, including individuals of Indian descent, due to misinformation around an incident linked to a Muslim migrant. Women wearing headscarves felt particularly vulnerable, leading to community leaders calling for dialogue and understanding.
- Ireland: In September 2024, an Indian student in Cork was assaulted with a rope placed around his neck in a racially motivated attack. This incident, among others, has prompted calls for a dedicated taskforce to address racially motivated violence in Cork.
- United States: In July 2024, Usha Vance, wife of U.S. politician J.D. Vance, faced racist attacks aimed at her heritage and their interracial family. These attacks highlight ongoing racial biases and their intersections with political identities.

3. Broader Context and Historical Incidents

- Historical Discrimination: Racist violence against the Indian community is not new. In the 1980s, the "Dotbusters" gang in Jersey City, New Jersey, specifically targeted Indian Americans with violent attacks.
- Post-9/11 Backlash: Following the September 11 attacks, individuals of Indian origin, especially Sikhs, were frequently mistaken for Middle Eastern individuals, resulting in hate crimes and violence. Notably, Balbir Singh Sodhi, a Sikh man, was killed in Arizona in a racially motivated attack.
- Rising Bias and Discrimination: Recent studies reveal that Indian Americans continue to experience workplace discrimination, scapegoating in industries like IT, and even violent hate crimes.

4. Implications of Racist Attacks on the Indian Diaspora

- Community Safety: Persistent racial violence creates an atmosphere of fear and insecurity, limiting the freedom and quality of life for Indian diaspora communities in affected areas.
- Strained Diplomatic Relations: Such incidents strain relations between India and host countries, prompting India to address these issues diplomatically and seek assurances for the safety of its citizens abroad.
- Policy Impact: Host countries face pressure to enforce stronger anti-discrimination and hate crime laws to protect minority communities, including the Indian diaspora.

5. Responses to Racist Attacks on the Indian Diaspora

- Indian Government's Diplomatic Interventions: The Government of India actively addresses these incidents with diplomatic representations, seeking stronger safety measures for Indian nationals abroad.
- Advocacy by Community Organizations: Indian diaspora organizations often advocate for hate crime legislation, cultural sensitivity programs, and community support systems to combat racial discrimination.
- Calls for Inclusive Policies in Host Countries: There is a growing push for host countries to implement policies promoting inclusion, enforce hate crime laws rigorously, and enhance social integration programs to foster tolerance.

6. Examples of Measures Taken

- Community Outreach and Education: Host countries and Indian communities often organize workshops to promote cultural awareness and counter prejudice.
- Government Hotlines and Support Centers: Some embassies and Indian community organizations have established hotlines for reporting hate crimes and providing support to victims of racial violence.
- Media Campaigns and Awareness Initiatives: Media campaigns are sometimes launched by Indian and local communities to raise awareness of the contributions of the Indian diaspora and counteract racial stereotypes.

7. Conclusion

- Long-term Solutions for Safety: Addressing racism against the Indian diaspora requires continuous efforts from both the Indian government and host countries, focusing on strict enforcement of anti-discrimination laws, community integration programs, and cultural awareness initiatives.
- Path Forward: Promoting cultural understanding, implementing robust legal protections, and ensuring active diplomatic engagement are essential steps to protect the Indian diaspora and foster safer, more inclusive societies abroad.

Prospects of Indian Diaspora in Politics Abroad

1. Introduction to the Indian Diaspora's Political Engagement

- Global Presence: With over 30 million individuals spread across continents, the Indian diaspora is one of the most widespread and influential expatriate communities. Members of the diaspora have increasingly become active in political roles in their host countries, shaping policies and representing diverse perspectives.
- Rising Influence: The Indian diaspora is gaining recognition for its economic contributions, educational achievements, and growing political engagement, which reflects positively on India's global standing.

2. Key Factors Driving Political Engagement of the Indian Diaspora

- Educational and Economic Success: The high educational attainment and professional success of Indian

diaspora communities, particularly in countries like the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada, have created pathways for political involvement.

- Cultural Integration and Community Leadership: Many diaspora members have built strong communities and networks, allowing them to act as bridge-builders and advocates, which is essential for gaining influence in local and national politics.
- India's Growing Global Influence: As India strengthens its global presence, the diaspora benefits from this momentum, gaining visibility and greater acceptance in political spheres abroad.

3. Notable Achievements of Indian-Origin Politicians Abroad

- United States: Prominent Indian-origin politicians include Kamala Harris, the first woman of Indian descent to serve as U.S. Vice President, and several U.S. Congress members like Pramila Jayapal and Ro Khanna, who advocate for progressive policies and Indian-American relations.
- United Kingdom: Rishi Sunak, of Indian descent, became the first British Prime Minister of Indian heritage in 2022, symbolizing the success of Indian-origin individuals in mainstream British politics.
- Canada: Jagmeet Singh, leader of Canada's New Democratic Party (NDP), represents a major Canadian political party and emphasizes diversity, minority rights, and progressive values.
- Singapore and New Zealand: In Singapore, Indian-origin leaders like Deputy Prime Minister Tharman

Shanmugaratnam have held significant influence, while in New Zealand, Priyanka Radhakrishnan serves as a Member of Parliament and cabinet minister.

4. Prospects and Opportunities for Indian Diaspora in Global Politics

- Increased Representation and Voice: As more members of the Indian diaspora enter political office, they bring a unique voice to the table, advocating for policies that reflect multicultural perspectives and representing minority concerns.
- Promoting Bilateral Relations: Indian-origin politicians abroad often serve as informal ambassadors, strengthening ties between their host country and India, and supporting policies that benefit Indian-origin communities globally.
- Influencing Policies on Immigration and Inclusion: Indian-origin politicians are positioned to impact immigration policies, labor rights, and anti-discrimination laws, supporting the interests of both Indian-origin communities and other immigrant groups.
- Advancing Diversity and Inclusion: Indian diaspora politicians embody diversity in governance, encouraging more inclusive policies that benefit marginalized communities in their respective countries.

5. Challenges Facing Indian Diaspora in Politics

- Navigating Identity Politics: Indian-origin politicians often balance their Indian heritage with their national identity, facing scrutiny or bias from sections of society that may question their allegiance.

- ❑ Addressing Stereotypes and Bias: Members of the Indian diaspora can encounter stereotypes and racial biases that challenge their political acceptance and require resilience to overcome.
- ❑ Differing Political Agendas: The Indian diaspora is not homogenous and holds diverse political beliefs, making it challenging for Indian-origin politicians to represent a single agenda that appeals to all Indian-origin communities.
- ❑ Potential for Multilateral Cooperation: Indian-origin leaders across the world can facilitate multilateral cooperation on issues such as climate change, health, and economic development, benefiting their countries and India.

“G-20 Minus or G-7 Plus” – Strategic Considerations for India

1. Introduction to the Concept

- ❑ Context: The concept of “G-20 minus” or “G-7 plus” reflects two different approaches to global multilateral forums, each offering unique strategic opportunities and challenges for India.
- ❑ G-20 Minus: Refers to a more streamlined version of the G-20, potentially reducing the influence of certain nations or excluding disruptive elements to focus on effective, action-oriented economic collaboration.
- ❑ G-7 Plus: Refers to an expanded G-7 that includes like-minded emerging economies like India, Australia, and South Korea, aiming to create a stronger, values-based coalition within global governance.

2. India’s Position in G-20

- ❑ Global South Representation: As a major voice for the Global South, India advocates for developing nations’ interests, including fair trade practices, climate justice, and inclusive economic growth within the G-20 framework.
- ❑ Strategic Importance of G-20 for India: The G-20 includes both developed and emerging economies, allowing India to balance its relationships with Western powers and non-Western nations such as China and Russia.

6. Role of India in Supporting Diaspora Engagement in Politics

- ❑ Strengthening Diplomatic Ties: India’s Ministry of External Affairs and overseas missions often engage with Indian-origin politicians, fostering relationships that enhance India’s image and influence abroad.
- ❑ Facilitating Cultural Exchange Programs: Initiatives such as the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas and cultural exchange programs help maintain diaspora connections to Indian culture, further encouraging Indian-origin leaders to advocate for India-friendly policies.
- ❑ Supporting Anti-Discrimination Efforts: India’s diplomatic efforts can support anti-discrimination policies abroad, ensuring that Indian-origin politicians have equitable opportunities and that the diaspora is protected.

7. Future Prospects and Potential Impact

- ❑ Strengthening Global Indian Influence: The growing representation of Indian-origin leaders worldwide indicates an expanding influence of the Indian diaspora, fostering a global network of leaders with roots in India.

- Economic Collaboration: The G-20 enables India to participate in global financial policy discussions, advocating for debt relief, sustainable development, and technology transfer to benefit emerging markets.

3. Prospects of a “G-20 Minus” for India

- Streamlined Cooperation: A G-20 minus format, excluding nations that disrupt multilateral consensus, could lead to more effective cooperation on key issues like trade, technology, and climate action.
- Challenges with Exclusionary Approach: Excluding nations could create geopolitical friction, potentially isolating countries with divergent interests (e.g., Russia and China) and affecting India’s ability to mediate between different blocs.
- Maintaining Strategic Neutrality: India’s position as a bridge between Western and non-Western powers might be compromised if a G-20 minus approach polarizes the forum, limiting India’s role as a neutral voice in global affairs.

4. Prospects of a “G-7 Plus” for India

- Increased Global Standing: Inclusion in a “G-7 plus” would elevate India’s international influence, aligning it with developed nations and expanding its role in economic governance and strategic security issues.
- Shared Democratic Values: A G-7 plus would likely include nations with shared democratic values, enhancing India’s alignment with countries like the US, Japan, and the EU in upholding a rules-based international order.

- Enhanced Security and Economic Partnerships: Membership in a G-7 plus format could boost India’s partnerships on security, trade, and technology, facilitating access to advanced technologies and collective action on global challenges.

5. Challenges and Considerations for India

- Balancing Non-Alignment with Strategic Interests: India has historically adopted a non-aligned stance, balancing Western and non-Western interests. A G-7 plus format could align India too closely with the West, complicating its relations with countries like Russia and China.
- Impact on Global South Leadership: As a representative of the Global South, India’s inclusion in an expanded G-7 could be seen as distancing itself from developing nations’ concerns. This could affect India’s image as a champion for equitable development and climate justice.
- Geopolitical Frictions: A G-20 minus approach could deepen global divisions, while a G-7 plus could isolate non-Western countries, leading to potential fragmentation of multilateral cooperation.

6. Strategic Path Forward for India

- Advocating for Inclusive Multilateralism: India can champion an inclusive approach within the G-20 to ensure that both developed and developing nations’ voices are considered, promoting balanced decision-making.
- Leveraging the G-20 for Global South Issues: India can use its G-20 platform to push for economic and

climate policies that favor emerging economies, reinforcing its role as a bridge between developed and developing worlds.

- ❑ Flexible Engagement with G-7 Plus: India could participate in a G-7 plus as an observer or associate member, maintaining flexibility to balance its relationships across geopolitical divides.

7. Expert Opinions

- ❑ C. Raja Mohan: Argues that India's inclusion in a G-7 plus format would enhance its strategic influence, but cautions against alienating non-Western allies.
- ❑ Harsh V. Pant: Emphasizes that India's leadership in the G-20 is vital for representing the Global South, suggesting that India should avoid formats that marginalize developing countries' voices.
- ❑ Shivshankar Menon: Believes that India can act as a bridge within the G-20, advocating for multipolar cooperation that transcends East-West divides.

8. Conclusion

- ❑ Navigating Between Two Formats: Both the G-20 minus and G-7 plus offer distinct benefits for India, yet each presents unique challenges. India's focus should remain on promoting inclusive, balanced multilateralism that upholds its strategic autonomy and Global South leadership.
- ❑ Path Forward: By maintaining flexibility in its approach, India can engage with both G-20 and G-7 dynamics, using these platforms to strengthen its voice on economic, environmental, and security issues.

Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and India

1. Introduction to SCO and India's Membership

- ❑ Formation and Expansion: The SCO, founded in 2001 by China, Russia, and Central Asian countries, aims to promote regional security and economic cooperation. India became a full member in 2017, alongside Pakistan, enhancing its strategic engagement with Eurasia.

2. India's Key Objectives in the SCO

- ❑ Security and Counterterrorism: India seeks to address terrorism, extremism, and drug trafficking in the region, particularly given security concerns from Afghanistan and Pakistan.
- ❑ Economic and Energy Cooperation: The SCO offers India opportunities to engage Central Asia's energy-rich markets and explore new trade routes.
- ❑ Connectivity: India promotes projects like the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) to enhance connectivity with Central Asia, providing an alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

3. India's Contributions and Engagement

- ❑ Counterterrorism Initiatives: India actively participates in SCO's Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), working on intelligence sharing and counter-terror measures.
- ❑ Cultural Diplomacy: India promotes people-to-people ties and has hosted SCO meetings to reinforce its commitment to regional cooperation.

- ❑ Challenges for India within the SCO
- ❑ India–Pakistan Rivalry: Ongoing tensions with Pakistan introduce challenges for cooperative efforts within the SCO.
- ❑ China's Influence: Balancing China's dominance in the SCO, particularly with its promotion of the BRI, remains a challenge for India.
- ❑ Opportunities for India in the SCO
- ❑ Strategic Access to Central Asia: The SCO provides a gateway for India to expand trade and security cooperation with Central Asia.
- ❑ Platform for Balancing China: India can offer alternative views on connectivity and security, promoting a balance to China's regional influence.

4. Conclusion

- ❑ Balancing Act: India's involvement in the SCO enables it to balance relations with major powers while promoting its regional interests in security, connectivity, and economic growth.

India's Arctic Ambitions

1. Introduction to India's Arctic Interests

- ❑ Significance of the Arctic: The Arctic region is gaining global importance due to its vast untapped natural resources, new shipping routes emerging from melting ice, and its critical role in climate regulation.
- ❑ India's Growing Interest: Although geographically distant, India has a strong scientific, environmental, and economic interest in the Arctic, underlined by its observer status in the Arctic Council since 2013.

2. Objectives of India's Arctic Engagement

- ❑ Climate Research and Environmental Impact: India is deeply invested in understanding how Arctic climate change affects the global climate, including Indian monsoon patterns. India's research station, Himadri, in Svalbard, Norway, supports studies on the Arctic's role in climate dynamics.
- ❑ Energy Security and Resource Access: India is exploring Arctic natural resources, including oil, gas, and rare minerals, as part of its long-term energy security strategy. Access to these resources could diversify and secure India's energy supply.
- ❑ Strategic Partnerships and Influence: India aims to strengthen partnerships with Arctic nations (e.g., Russia and Norway) for collaborative projects and to increase its influence in polar governance, emphasizing sustainable and peaceful use of the Arctic.

3. Challenges to India's Arctic Ambitions

- ❑ Geopolitical Tensions: Increasing competition among Arctic states, particularly Russia, the US, and China, creates a challenging environment for India to navigate while maintaining its non-aligned position.
- ❑ Resource and Technological Constraints: Arctic exploration requires advanced technology and significant investment, both of which India needs to develop further to effectively participate in Arctic projects.
- ❑ Environmental Concerns: Arctic resource extraction poses environmental risks, such as oil spills, which could accelerate global warming and impact India's monsoon system.

4. Strategic Path Forward

- ❑ Collaborative Research Initiatives: India aims to expand its scientific research through collaborations with Arctic nations, focusing on climate studies and sustainable practices.
- ❑ Developing Indigenous Technology: Investing in technology for Arctic exploration could enable India to participate more fully in economic activities in the region.
- ❑ Active Diplomatic Engagement: As an Arctic Council observer, India will continue promoting environmental protection and sustainable use of Arctic resources, balancing its resource interests with a commitment to environmental preservation.

Role of UNHCR – A Critical Analysis from the Indian Perspective

1. Introduction to the UNHCR

- ❑ Mandate: The UNHCR was established in 1950 to protect refugees and assist with their resettlement and voluntary repatriation.
- ❑ Role in India: Although India is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, it allows UNHCR to operate and support non-Tibetan, non-Sri Lankan refugees.

2. Positive Contributions of UNHCR in India

- ❑ Humanitarian Aid: UNHCR provides essential services to Afghan, Rohingya, and other refugees in India, including healthcare, education, and legal aid.
- ❑ Documentation and Social Inclusion: Refugee cards issued by UNHCR help refugees access basic services and integrate socially.

- ❑ Local Integration Programs: Through vocational training and employment assistance, UNHCR supports refugee self-reliance and community integration.

3. Challenges from India's Perspective

- ❑ No Formal Refugee Law: India's lack of a national refugee law creates challenges for UNHCR's operations, as India addresses refugees selectively.
- ❑ Sovereignty Concerns: India is cautious of UNHCR's influence on domestic refugee policies, especially due to security and socio-political concerns.
- ❑ Security Issues: Concerns about radicalization among refugee populations, particularly in sensitive regions, limit India's engagement with UNHCR.

4. Opportunities for Collaboration

- ❑ Framework for Refugee Protection: India and UNHCR could collaborate on a flexible framework to address refugee needs while considering security concerns.
- ❑ Skill Development: Joint programs for skill-building could enhance refugee self-sufficiency and economic contributions.
- ❑ Regional Solutions: India can work with UNHCR on regional refugee management solutions, reinforcing its humanitarian role in South Asia.
- ❑ Conclusion
- ❑ Balanced Approach: India's cooperation with UNHCR reflects a cautious approach, balancing humanitarian needs with sovereignty and security concerns.

- ▣ Path Forward: Strengthening partnerships on documentation, healthcare, and skill-building can optimize UNHCR's support while aligning with India's policies.

War Crimes and the Rules of War

1. Introduction to the Rules of War

- ▣ Definition: The rules of war, or international humanitarian law (IHL), set standards for humane treatment in conflict and restrict warfare methods to protect non-combatants.
- ▣ Framework: Governed by the Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocols, IHL aims to limit suffering in war.

2. War Crimes Explained

- ▣ Definition: War crimes are severe violations of IHL, such as targeting civilians, torture, and using banned weapons.

Examples:

- ▣ Attacks on Civilians: Targeting non-combatant populations and infrastructure.
- ▣ Prohibited Weapons: Using chemical or biological weapons.

- ▣ Torture and Hostage-Taking: Abusing prisoners and taking civilians hostage.
- ▣ Importance of IHL
- ▣ Humanitarian Protection: Limits harm to civilians and upholds dignity during conflicts.
- ▣ Accountability: War crimes are prosecuted by bodies like the International Criminal Court (ICC), ensuring justice and deterrence.

3. Challenges in Enforcement

- ▣ Complex Warfare: Conflicts with non-state actors complicate IHL adherence.
- ▣ Limited Jurisdiction: The ICC lacks enforcement power, and prosecution is often politically influenced.

4. Examples of War Crimes Trials

- ▣ Nuremberg Trials: Set a precedent after WWII.
- ▣ Recent Conflicts: Investigations into crimes in Syria and Ukraine are ongoing.
- ▣ Conclusion
- ▣ Adherence to IHL: Crucial for protecting civilians and maintaining ethical conduct in war.
- ▣ Path Forward: Strengthened enforcement and global cooperation are needed to uphold IHL standards.



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