



Mains Practice Question

Q. A de-hyphenated Look West Policy is the best way-forward in serving India's national interest in Middle East. Critically examine. (250 words)

20 Mar, 2019 GS Paper 2 International Relations

Approach:

- Explain in brief about de-hyphenated Look West Policy
- How it can be best way-forward in serving India's national interest in Middle East
- Give a critically examination of the policy.

Introduction

- **De-hyphenated Look West Policy:** It means India's relationship with Israel would stand on its own merits, independent and separate from India's relationship with the Palestinians.
- Over the decades, India has managed to create a system where its interests and ambitions in West Asia are protected via a web of diplomacy. As India moves towards becoming a larger player in global politics and economics, these pre-existing policies are increasingly in need of review, and de-hyphenating Israel and Palestine was a process long past its due date.
- India's improving relations with both Iran and Saudi Arabia is a testament of our new foreign policy.

Body

Serving India's national interest in Middle East

- The key to India's diplomatic success lies in its de-hyphenation of relations with countries locked in zero-sum rivalries and its focus on forging bilateral win-win relations with each country individually.
- By pursuing a highly balanced, non-partisan policy, India can to a great extent be able to protect and secure its growing stakes and vital interests in the region that range from energy, maritime trade, security and the safety of its 8 million strong diaspora that sends back over \$40 billion in annual remittances.
- Although India has been maintaining good relations with countries in the West Asian region for a long time, some observers had earlier felt the need for a more proactive, high profile engagement that could provide a new drive and direction to relations.
- Some major bilateral agreements of India with Middle east:
 - Israel offers technological solutions for India's problems and India provides for it a huge market. If channelized in the right direction, both countries can gain from each other. Israel highlighted the common security challenges and the need to strengthen the "India-Israel alliance".
 - In Palestine, Prime Minister Modi was accorded a grand welcome and was awarded the 'Grand Collar of the State of Palestine' medal. Both countries signed agreements worth US \$50 million.
 - India cannot afford to lose Iran's Chabahar port and un-cordial relations with Saudi Arabia. At present for India, Iran is as important as we have had and has Saudi Arabia.

A critical examination of the move -

- Palestinian stand: India needs to balance the de-hyphenation of its ties with the two countries, considering that one is an internationally condemned transgressor state and the other fighting for independence from it.
- India's defense ties with Israel make this even more difficult. Palestinian embassy officials in Delhi who monitor India-Israel ties have expressed unhappiness over the increasing defense relationship between India and Israel.
- It will be a challenging task for India to maintain good relations with Iran, Saudi Arabia, Israel and Palestine without offending any.
- Our improving relations with Israeli government might affect our relations with Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.
- Palestine is a bone of contention between India and Israel relations. Supporting Israel government despite its human right violations in Palestine and West Bank might question our democratic spirit.
- The government's strong engagement with Israel has tilted the balance in favour of Israel because even an equidistance policy in a highly asymmetrical conflict, such as the one between Palestine and Israel, would favour the stronger party

Conclusion

As India elevates its strategic partnership with Israel in areas such as defence, security, agriculture, water management and innovation, New Delhi and Ramallah must tread carefully in their own relationship, which must forge a path independent of India-Israel ties. As the US administration adopts a harder pro-Israel line, India, with its vote in the UN on the issue of Jerusalem, has demonstrated the willingness and capability to follow its own geopolitical and pragmatic interest.

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