



Mains Practice Question

Q. India is navigating an increasingly complex and dynamic geopolitical environment. Discuss how India seeks to balance its multilateral engagements with the pursuit of strategic autonomy in foreign policy. (150 words)

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Approach:

- Introduce India's position in global geopolitics and the importance of balancing multilateralism with strategic autonomy.
- Discuss key multilateral forums where India is involved also highlight India's concept of strategic autonomy, and how India maintains a balance between multilateral cooperation and strategic independence.
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction:

Indian foreign policy is to serve Indian people. We will do whatever it takes to discharge that responsibility - S Jaishankar." India's foreign policy **strikes a balance between multilateral engagements and strategic autonomy**. As a rising power in a multipolar world, India engages in global forums while protecting its independence to shape policies based on national interests.

Body

India's Multilateral Engagements in a Shifting Geopolitical Landscape:

- **BRICS and G20:** India actively participates in global forums such as BRICS and G20. These platforms allow India to strengthen its ties with **emerging economies** and help India voice its concerns on global issues affecting developing countries.
 - India has used the **G20 Presidency in 2023 to elevate the status of the African Union**, showcasing its leadership in bridging divides between developed and developing nations.
- **Quad:** India's involvement in the Quad, a strategic forum with the **United States, Japan, and Australia**, reflects its commitment to enhancing regional security and promoting a free and open Indo-Pacific, and countering China's influence in the region.
- **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO):** India's participation in the SCO underlines its role as a key player in regional security and economic cooperation.
 - The SCO provides India with an opportunity to engage with **both China and Russia**, ensuring its interests in Central Asia while also managing **complex regional dynamics**.
- **UN and Global Institutions:** India is an active member of global institutions like the United Nations, where it has consistently advocated for reforms to the **UN Security Council** to reflect the evolving geopolitical realities.
 - India's active role in climate negotiations and initiatives like the **International Solar Alliance** shows its commitment to addressing global challenges.
- **Climate Change and Trade:** India is also actively involved in climate negotiations and WTO

discussions, aiming to ensure that global economic frameworks address the needs of developing nations, particularly in the context of **climate justice and trade imbalances**.

Strategic Autonomy in a Shifting Geopolitical Landscape:

- **Independence in Foreign Relations:** India's tradition of strategic autonomy, rooted in its **Cold War-era Non-Alignment policy**, continues today through its independent engagement with major powers like the **United States (through economic and strategic cooperation)**, **Russia (through defense and energy ties)**, and **China (despite border tensions)**.
 - While deepening ties with the West, India continues its historical relationship with Russia.
- **Independent Defense Policy:** India's **defense procurement** strategy reflects its strategic autonomy. India has diversified its sources of defense equipment, acquiring Rafale jets from France, MQ-9B drones from the US, and continuing its **defense cooperation with Russia**.
 - This diversification allows India to avoid over-dependence on any single power while enhancing its defense capabilities.
- **Economic and Trade Relations:** India's decision to withdraw from the **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) in 2019** exemplified its strategic autonomy in economic matters, prioritizing domestic economic interests over joining a multilateral trade bloc dominated by China.
 - This decision was made to protect local industries and ensure that India's economic policies remained flexible.

Balancing Multilateralism and Autonomy in a Shifting Geopolitical Landscape:

- **Delicate Balance:** India has managed to maintain a delicate balance in its relationship with Russia and the West during the **Russia-Ukraine conflict**. While continuing to engage with Russia, India has also **expressed concern over the war's impact** and called for a peaceful resolution.
 - Similarly, India has balanced ties with **Israel and Palestine** by condemning the 2023 Hamas attack while urging a **peaceful, two-state resolution**.
- **Middle East Diplomacy:** India's involvement in the **I2U2 (India, Israel, UAE, USA)** group demonstrates its approach to balancing strategic interests in the Middle East.
 - India maintains strong ties with Israel, while also preserving its long-standing relationship with Iran (through initiatives like the Chabahar Port).

Conclusion:

India's foreign policy approach effectively balances its multilateral engagements with the pursuit of strategic autonomy. As a rising global power, **India should continue to refine this balance to safeguard its national interests** and maintain its sovereignty in an increasingly interconnected world.