



## MULTI ALIGNMENT - GS II MAINS

**Q.** India is navigating the current global geopolitics through a multi-alignment policy. Elaborate. (10 marks, 150 words)

**News:** *On India's Multi-Alignment Policy – Express View on Modi-Putin call*

### What's in the news?

- The current moment in international affairs is marked by renewed great power rivalry.
- The conflicts in Europe and West Asia – between Russia and Ukraine, Israel and Hamas – and the broader tussle between the US and China on economic, technological and strategic fronts make it tempting to view the global scenario in binaries.

### Key takeaways:

- Two recent events, however, show that New Delhi has managed to engage with diverse partners who are often at odds with each other.
- If India's non-alignment during the Cold War was — in principle if not practice — defined by its claim of equidistance from the two blocs, its current “multi-alignment” is guided by national interest and the need to forge bilateral relationships.

### Key takeaways:

The current geopolitical scenario is marked by increasing power rivalries. For instance:

- **Conflicts in Europe and West Asia** – between Russia and Ukraine, Israel and Hamas.
- **Rivalry between the US and China** on economic, technological and strategic fronts.

### Multi-alignment:

- Multi-alignment means having a series of parallel relationships that strengthen bilateral partnerships and seek a common approach towards security, economic equity and the elimination of existential dangers like terrorism.
  - Non alignment meant not about joining any of the bloc and taking a balanced approach.
- Policy of Non-alignment had its genesis in the backdrop of cold war. However scenario has significantly changed with emergence of multiple power dynamics with a shift towards multi-alignment and multi-polar world.

### India's Multi-alignment:

India has managed to engage with diverse partners who are often against each other. Its current “multi-alignment” policy is guided by national interest and the need to forge bilateral relationships. For instance:

#### 1. Engaging with Russia:

- Recently, India's PM and Russian President Vladimir Putin had a phone conversation.



- They reportedly discussed the “special and privileged strategic partnership”, the Ukraine conflict and a deepening of bilateral ties.
- Russia is India’s long term friend. The strong links that exist between the two nations still exist.
- Russia is regaining its position as India’s principal defence supplier.
- The list of agreements drawn up in Moscow covers nuclear, space, energy and defence. Russia has committed to building additional nuclear reactors at Kudankulam (Tamil Nadu) and in Andhra Pradesh.

## 2. Engaging with Iran:

- Recently, India’s External Affairs Minister visited Iran where he finalised cooperation on developing the Chabahar Port.

## 3. Maintaining Ties with USA:

- The US put considerable pressure on India to take a stronger position against Russia’s aggression in Ukraine.
- However, India maintained its relations with both the major powers.

## 4. Maintaining Ties with West Asia:

- Middle East is one of major supplier of oil to India and relations with missile east countries has reached new heights recently.
- India has deep partnerships with Israel and Saudi Arabia, even though they are in a regional cold war with Iran.
- Significant investment has been made by Middle East countries in India.

## 5. Relations with Japan:

- Japanese relations with India, is more than strategic, with defence, foreign policy and economic aspects all receiving attention.
- Japan’s willingness to cooperate on peaceful nuclear energy and willingness to acknowledge India as a reliable and trustworthy nuclear power (despite not being a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty) is again certain to have a positive impact on nuclear establishments across the world.

## 6. Relations with China:

- India’s biggest border dispute is with China. Despite the 1962 war, serious localised fighting at the Nathu La and Cho La passes in 1967; and the Doklam stand-off in June 2017, China maintains good economic relations with India.
- It was because of the maturity of political leadership on both sides, as well as a commitment made by the two nations to non-violence three decades before.

## 7. Focus on Asia:

- India is a member of QUAD which partners Japan, US, Australia and India. It looks to further Indian interest in pacific region creating a major power bloc in the region.
- India is also member of major groupings such as BRICS, ASEAN and BIMSTEC etc. Emphasising Indian engagement in multiple global fronts.

## 8. Change in attitude for Israel:

- India today has vibrant relations with Israel which were earlier marred with Palestinian considerations.



- India's traditional stance has always been of recognition of Arab rights of Palestine and limited relations with Israel.

## 9. International Institutions:

- Gaining a seat on the G20, the global management table post 2008, itself reflected a shift from its usual solidarity with the G77, or the global trade union of developing countries.
- It has simultaneously invested in institutions that have called for a greater voice for emerging powers in global governance such as BRICS and the AIIB, despite the fact that these groupings and institutions were designed fundamentally to challenge some of the biases of the liberal world order.

## Stand Firm of Core Principles:

At the same time, India hasn't compromised on its core principles such as

- War cannot be a solution (in context of the Ukraine conflict)
- Zero tolerance for terror (in context of the Houthi attacks)

## Why does India needs Multi-alignment?

### 1. Economic Rise:

- The size of India's market as well as its potential for future growth gives it both strategic and diplomatic weight.
- Economic needs of the fast developing India had to be supported by opening of its economy and getting more foreign assistance.

### 2. Counterbalance to an Aggressive China:

- As China has grown more aggressive in Asia and beyond, the US and the West see India as a crucial regional counterbalance.
- Emergence of economic powerhouse in form of China has also posed a new challenge in front of India.

### 3. Democratic Credentials:

- Its credentials as a liberal, pluralist democracy make India an attractive partner.
- Indian foreign policy is evolving to encompass the growing needs of its national security and prosperity.

### 4. US as a Global Power:

- World that emerged post soviet era saw the rise of US as both an economic and strategic power. It was difficult to pursue India's growth trajectory without engaging with US.

### 5. Rising Globalisation:

- Globalisation, growing interdependence and the emergence of transnational challenges have pushed India to engage with multiple global partners.

## Problem with India's Multi-alignment Stand:

### 1. No Condemnation for Violations of International law:

- India has refused to condemn violations of international law, as in the case of Russia's invasion of Ukraine or the February 2021 coup in Myanmar (New Delhi abstained from United Nations General Assembly and Security Council resolutions).



- This may be understandable as India has often taken an evasive position on conflicts that involve its traditional allies.
- However, critics are not unreasonable in arguing that this ambiguity does not behove a nation aspiring to become a permanent member of the UNSC, which implies a commitment to speak as a global voice against territorial aggression and rights violations similar to what Russia has unleashed on Ukraine.

## 2. Not in the Position to Play the Role of a Mediator:

- A pursuit of 'multi-alignment' may have given New Delhi some diplomatic space in the ongoing war in Ukraine. However, it may not be sufficient for India to try to play the role of a mediator between Russia and Ukraine.

## 3. Lowest Ranker:

- The latest State of Southeast Asia Survey has shown that India ranks the second lowest (at only 1 percent) among ASEAN and nine middle powers in its leadership in maintaining a rules-based order and upholding international law.

## 4. Not a Party to Newly Formed Mechanisms:

- What often gets overlooked is how India has steered clear from US-led regional security mechanisms like AUKUS and 5-Eyes.

## WAY FORWARD:

### 1. Rising Middle Power:

- Despite all the problems, the diplomatic success of India as a rising middle power has not gone unnoticed.
- It would have been unthinkable barely a decade ago to envisage a situation where India receives UAE finances and Israeli technology, geared to US involvement, for stepping up agricultural production for its western neighbours.

### 2. Rise in Trust Levels:

- Furthermore, India has enjoyed a significant increase in trust levels this year at 25.7 percent compared to only 16.6 percent last year.
- Among those who trust India, there is a significant increase among those who felt that India's military power is an asset for global peace and security.

### 3. Potential of Balancing and Assume a Greater Role:

- As India's influence increases, it can assume a greater role as a bridging power and play a moderating role in the Quad, G7, BRICS and the SCO.

India's External Affairs Minister and a former diplomat S. Jaishankar, describes the present foreign policy of India as an **'issue-based alliance'**, building strong partnerships with like-minded states on specific subjects. India, he says will have to **"nimble expand the space to pursue its interests and not be caught flat footed by dogma"**. The nation will have to position itself by optimizing ties with all major players and this will include **"cultivating America, steadying Russia, managing China, enthusing Japan and attending to Europe"**.