



Drishti IAS

Mains

MARATHON

Important Q & A for Mains

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International Relations



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1. **What are the main factors and objectives behind OPEC+ decision to decrease its oil production? Evaluate the impact of this decision on India and how shall India tackle the situation. (250 words)**

Approach:

- **Introduction:** Begin your answer by providing a brief overview of OPEC+ and its decision to decrease oil production.
- **Body:** Discuss the main factors and objectives driving OPEC+'s decision to reduce oil production. Evaluate the impact of the OPEC+ decision on India and discuss various measures that India can undertake to mitigate the impact of rising oil prices.
- **Conclusion:** Summarize the key points discussed in your answer, emphasizing the importance of a comprehensive approach for India to tackle the impact of decreased oil production by OPEC+.

Introduction:

OPEC+ is a group of 23 oil-producing countries which aims to secure fair and stable prices for petroleum producers; an efficient, economic and regular supply of petroleum to consuming nations. The group has been coordinating its oil production policy since 2016 to balance the global oil market and support oil prices. OPEC+ has decided to extend the crude production cut announced in November 2022.

Body:

The main factors and objectives behind OPEC+'s decision to decrease its oil production are:

- To counter the weakening global oil demand and prices due to the uncertainty of the global economy and the oil market.
- To counter rising production by US.
- To maintain a stable and balanced oil market and avoid a supply glut that could lead to a price collapse and damage the revenues and budgets of the oil-producing countries.
- To maintain the value of its main export as in recent times dollar in which the crude is generally traded has seen a decline in its value.
- To exert pressure on the oil-consuming countries, who have been urging OPEC+ to increase its output to ease the inflationary pressures and energy shortages in their economies.

The impact of OPEC+'s decision to decrease its oil production on India:

- India, as the world's third-largest oil-importing and consuming country, will face higher oil import bills and inflationary pressures due to the rise in global oil prices.
 - According to some estimates, every USD 10 per barrel increase in crude oil prices could widen India's current account deficit by 0.4% of GDP and increase its inflation rate by 0.5%.
- India will also face challenges in ensuring adequate and affordable energy supplies for its economic recovery and growth, especially in sectors such as transport, agriculture, industry and power generation.
 - India imports about 85% of its crude oil requirements, mainly from OPEC+ countries.

How India should tackle the situation:

India should tackle the situation by diversifying its sources and modes of energy imports, enhancing its domestic production and refining capacity, promoting energy efficiency and conservation measures, making strategic reserves, accelerating its transition to renewable and alternative sources of energy such as nuclear energy, and engaging diplomatically with OPEC+ countries to convey its concerns and interests.

Conclusion:

OPEC+ decision to decrease its oil production is driven by various factors and objectives that aim to stabilize the oil market and protect the interests of the oil-producing countries. However, this decision has negative implications for India, which relies heavily on oil imports for its energy needs and economic growth. India should adopt various measures to cope with the situation and secure its energy security and sustainability.

2. **What are the challenges and opportunities for India in the Indo-Pacific region? Discuss the role of Quad in enhancing India's strategic interests. (250 words)**

Approach:

- Start your answer with a brief introduction of Indo-Pacific.
- Explain challenges and opportunities for India in the Indo-Pacific region.
- Discuss the role of Quad.
- Conclude accordingly.

Note:

Introduction:

- The Indo-Pacific region is a vast maritime space that stretches from the eastern coast of Africa to the western Pacific Ocean, encompassing the Indian Ocean and its adjacent seas. It is a region of immense geostrategic significance, as it accounts for more than half of the world's population, trade and GDP, and hosts several emerging and established powers, such as China, Japan, Australia, Indonesia and the US.
- India, as a rising power with a long coastline and a vision of SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region), has a vital stake in the peace and stability of the Indo-Pacific region.

Body:**Challenges:**

- China's assertive and expansionist behaviour in the South China Sea, East China Sea and the Indian Ocean, which threatens the freedom of navigation, maritime security and sovereignty of other countries in the region.
- The lack of a common understanding and framework among the countries of the Indo-Pacific region on the concept, scope and principles of the Indo-Pacific vision, which hampers regional cooperation and integration.
- The emergence of non-traditional security threats, such as terrorism, piracy, cyberattacks, climate change, natural disasters and pandemics, which pose transnational challenges to the region.
- The uneven development and governance gaps among the countries of the Indo-Pacific region, which create socio-economic disparities and vulnerabilities for some sections of the population.

Opportunities:

- The potential for enhancing trade, investment, connectivity and people-to-people ties with the countries of the Indo-Pacific region, especially in sectors such as infrastructure, energy, digital economy, blue economy and tourism.
- The scope for strengthening strategic partnerships and multilateral mechanisms with like-minded countries in the Indo-Pacific region, such as Japan, Australia, Indonesia, Vietnam and the US, to promote a rules-based order, maritime security and regional stability.
- The opportunity for leveraging India's soft power assets, such as democracy, diversity, culture,

diaspora and development assistance, to enhance its image and influence in the Indo-Pacific region.

- The possibility for harnessing India's scientific and technological capabilities, such as space, nuclear, renewable energy and biotechnology, to address some of the common challenges and aspirations of the Indo-Pacific region.

Role of Quad:

- The Quad or the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue is an informal grouping of four democracies - India, Japan, Australia and the US - that share common interests and values in the Indo-Pacific region.
- The Quad was revived in 2017 after a decade-long hiatus, in response to China's growing assertiveness and challenges to the regional order.
- The Quad aims to uphold a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific region based on respect for sovereignty, international law and peaceful resolution of disputes.
- The Quad also seeks to enhance cooperation on various domains such as maritime security, counter-terrorism, cyber security, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR), connectivity and infrastructure development, climate change mitigation and adaptation, vaccine diplomacy, critical technologies, education, women empowerment, etc.
- The Quad can play a significant role in enhancing India's strategic interests in the Indo-Pacific region by:
 - Providing a platform for dialogue and coordination with other major powers on regional issues
 - Offering a counterweight to China's dominance and coercion in the region
 - Expanding India's economic opportunities and connectivity with other countries in the region
 - Supporting India's capacity building and resilience in various sectors
 - Amplifying India's voice and vision on global issues

Conclusion:

The Quad is an important element of India's Indo-Pacific strategy that can help India achieve its goals in this region. However, it should not be seen as an exclusive or antagonistic bloc, but rather as an open, flexible, issue-based, cooperative, consultative, complementary, constructive, credible, consistent, and, confident, mechanism that respects the diversity and sovereignty of the region.

Note:

3. Do you agree with the view that India should not join NATO+? Give reasons for your opinion. (150 words)

Approach:

- **Introduction:** Start your answer with a brief overview of NATO+ grouping and advantages of joining it.
- **Body:** Discuss the reasons why should India not join the NATO+ group.
- **Conclusion:** Conclude by summarizing key points and with a forward-looking approach.

Introduction:

NATO+ is a term used to refer to a coalition consisting of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and five countries, namely Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Israel, and South Korea. The primary objective of this group is to **enhance global defense cooperation**. Membership in NATO+ would offer several advantages to the members, such as seamless intelligence sharing, access to cutting-edge military technology, and a strengthened defense partnership with the United States.

Body:

Despite having several advantages, India shouldn't join NATO+ for following reasons:

- **Loss of strategic autonomy:** India has always followed a policy of non-alignment and strategic autonomy in its foreign relations. Joining NATO+ would compromise India's ability to pursue its own interests and values independently, as it would have to align with the collective decisions and actions of the alliance.
- **Regional dynamics:** India is located in a geopolitically sensitive region with its own complex security challenges. Joining NATO+ could complicate relations with its neighbors, particularly China, potentially escalating tensions and adversely affecting regional stability.
- **Diverse security partnerships:** India has a longstanding history of maintaining bilateral and multilateral security partnerships with various countries. Joining NATO+ may lead to the perception that India is aligning more closely with Western powers, potentially straining its relationships with other important partners such as Russia.

- **Can drag India into conflicts:** India would also have to abide by Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, which stipulates that an armed attack against one member shall be considered an attack against all members. This could drag India into conflicts that are not directly related to its security or interests.
- **Lack of mutual benefits:** India does not share much in common with most of the NATO+ members, except for the US and Japan. India's security concerns and priorities are different from those of Europe, Israel, or South Korea.
- **May not be of much value addition for India:** India already has bilateral or multilateral defense partnerships with many of these countries, such as the Quad, Malabar exercises, and defense trade agreements. Joining NATO+ would not add much value to India's existing defense cooperation.

Conclusion:

India should prioritize its strategic autonomy and maintain its non-aligned foreign policy stance. While cooperation with NATO+ members on specific issues is valuable, full membership would entail more costs than benefits for India's security and foreign policy. Instead, India should continue to engage with NATO+ members on a case-by-case basis, depending on its national interests and objectives.

4. Analyse the challenges and opportunities for India in the Indo-Pacific region. How can India leverage its strategic and economic interests in the region? (250 words)

Approach:

- Start your answer with a brief introduction of Indo-Pacific.
- Write Challenges and Opportunities for India in the Indo-Pacific Region.
- Explain India's strategic and economic interests.
- Conclude accordingly.

Introduction:

The term "Indo-Pacific" emphasizes the interconnectedness of the two oceans and highlights the increasing significance of India as a key player in the region. The Indo-Pacific has gained attention due to the rise of China, evolving power dynamics, maritime disputes, and the

Note:

pursuit of economic opportunities. Various countries, including India, Japan, Australia, and the United States, have shown a keen interest in shaping the region's security and economic architecture to maintain stability and promote shared prosperity.

Body:

Challenges for India in the Indo-Pacific Region:

- **Geopolitical Competition:**
 - The region witnesses intense competition among major powers, such as China and the United States, for influence and control, which can create challenges for India in maintaining a balanced approach.
- **Maritime Security:**
 - The Indo-Pacific region encompasses vital sea lanes, and India faces challenges related to piracy, terrorism, and territorial disputes that impact maritime security and freedom of navigation.
- **Economic Integration:**
 - India faces hurdles in effectively integrating its economy with the region due to complex trade agreements, regulatory barriers, and varying economic systems among countries.
- **Infrastructure Development:**
 - The lack of robust connectivity and infrastructure poses challenges for India to enhance regional connectivity and exploit economic opportunities.

Opportunities for India in the Indo-Pacific Region:

- **Strategic Partnerships:**
 - India has opportunities to build strategic partnerships with like-minded countries in the region, such as Japan, Australia, and the United States, to promote a rules-based order, uphold freedom of navigation, and counterbalance China's influence.
- **Economic Engagement:**
 - The Indo-Pacific region offers immense economic potential, and India can leverage this by actively participating in regional trade agreements, promoting investment and trade, and engaging in infrastructure development projects.
- **Security Cooperation:**
 - Collaborative security initiatives and military exercises with regional partners enhance India's

security cooperation, foster interoperability, and strengthen its capabilities to address shared security challenges.

➤ **Soft Power Diplomacy:**

- India's cultural and historical ties with countries in the Indo-Pacific region provide opportunities for soft power diplomacy, facilitating people-to-people exchanges, cultural cooperation, and public diplomacy efforts.

Leveraging Strategic and Economic Interests:

➤ **Strengthening Regional Partnerships:**

- Deepening strategic partnerships, such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), and engaging in multilateral forums like the ASEAN-led mechanisms, enable India to assert its interests and contribute to regional stability.

➤ **Infrastructure Development:**

- By investing in regional infrastructure projects, India can enhance connectivity, trade facilitation, and economic integration, which will benefit both India and other countries in the region.

➤ **Trade and Investment Facilitation:**

- India can leverage its economic interests by actively participating in regional trade agreements like the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and fostering trade and investment ties with countries in the Indo-Pacific region.

➤ **Defense and Maritime Cooperation:**

- Strengthening maritime security cooperation, conducting joint naval exercises, and sharing intelligence among partner countries enhance India's capabilities to ensure maritime stability and security in the region.

Conclusion:

India faces challenges and opportunities in the Indo-Pacific region. By strategically engaging with regional partners, leveraging economic opportunities, enhancing security cooperation, and actively participating in regional initiatives, India can effectively safeguard its strategic and economic interests in the Indo-Pacific region. A balanced approach that promotes regional stability, upholds international law, and fosters inclusive development will contribute to India's position as a significant player in the evolving dynamics of the Indo-Pacific.

Note:

5. Critically examine how far the various judgments of the Supreme Court bring independence and accountability in the Central Bureau of Investigation. (250 Words)

Approach:

- Start the answer with the introduction of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).
- Discuss how far the various judgments of the Supreme Court bring independence and accountability in the CBI.
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction:

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is the premier investigating agency dealing with cases of corruption, economic offenses, terrorism, and other serious crimes. However, the CBI has often faced criticism for being influenced by political and bureaucratic pressures, compromising its autonomy and credibility. Therefore, the role of the Supreme Court in ensuring the independence and accountability of the CBI is crucial.

Body:

The Supreme Court has delivered several landmark judgments to protect the CBI from external interference and to enhance its professionalism and transparency. Some of these judgments are:

- **Vineet Narain v. Union of India (1997):** This judgment laid down several steps to secure the autonomy of the CBI, such as the appointment of the CBI director by a high-powered committee, and the fixed tenure of two years for the CBI director.
- **Subramanian Swamy v. Director, CBI (2014):** This judgment quashed **Section 6-A of the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946**, which required prior approval of the Central Government for inquiry or investigation into corruption cases against senior civil servants. The Supreme Court held that this provision was unconstitutional and violated Article 14 (equality before law) of the Constitution.
- **Common Cause v. Union of India (2018):** This judgment upheld the validity of **Section 4A of the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946**, which provided for a selection committee comprising the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, and the Chief Justice of India or his nominee to appoint or remove the CBI director. The Supreme Court also directed that any

transfer or change in the CBI director's duties should be done only with the prior consent of this committee.

These judgments have brought some degree of independence and accountability in the CBI by reducing political interference, ensuring stability and security of tenure, and establishing a transparent and participatory process for appointment or removal. However, there are still some challenges and limitations that need to be addressed, such as:

- **The lack of financial autonomy** and administrative control over its personnel, as the CBI depends on the Department of Personnel and Training under the Ministry of Home Affairs for its budget and cadre management.
- The **delay and difficulty in obtaining sanctions** for prosecution from competent authorities hamper the timely and effective disposal of cases.
- The **inadequate infrastructure, manpower, and resources** to deal with the increasing workload and complexity of cases.

Conclusion:

The Supreme Court has played a significant role in strengthening the independence and accountability of the CBI, but there is still scope for further reforms and improvements to make it a more efficient and credible institution.

6. What will be the development and concerns of Africa and the world, after Africa's joining the G20? (250 Words)

Approach:

- Introduce your answer by writing briefly about G 20 and Africa's inclusion in it.
- What will be the impacts in the G 20 and Africa due to the inclusion of Africa in G 20?
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction:

The G20 is a forum for global economic and financial cooperation among 19 countries and the European Union. It accounts for about 80% of global GDP, 75% of global trade, and 60% of global population. Recently, at the 2023 G20 summit in Delhi, invited the African Union (AU), an intergovernmental organisation of 55 member states of the African continent, to take a seat at the table as a permanent member. This move has implications for both Africa and the world in terms of development and concerns.

Note:

Body:**For Africa, joining the G20 can bring several benefits, such as:**

- It can give Africa a voice and visibility on global issues that affect its interests, such as trade, debt relief, climate change, health, security, migration, etc.
- It can enhance Africa's integration into the global economy by facilitating access to markets, investments, technology, infrastructure, etc.
- It can foster regional cooperation and solidarity among African countries by promoting a common agenda and position on global matters.
- It can enable Africa to learn from the best practices and experiences of other G20 members in addressing developmental challenges and achieving sustainable development goals.

However, joining the G20 also poses some challenges and concerns for Africa, such as:

- It can increase Africa's responsibility and accountability to contribute to global public goods and comply with international norms and standards.
- It can expose Africa to external pressures and influences that may not align with its priorities and values.
- It can create internal divisions and conflicts among African countries due to divergent interests and perspectives on global issues.

For the world, having Africa in the G20 can also have several impacts, such as:

- It can enrich the diversity and legitimacy of the G20 by representing the views and aspirations of the poorest and most climate-vulnerable region of the globe.
- It can foster mutual understanding and cooperation between the G20 and Africa on common challenges and opportunities, such as combating poverty, inequality, terrorism, pandemics, etc.
- It can support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change by mobilising resources and actions from both developed and developing countries.

Conclusion:

Therefore, it can be concluded that Africa's joining the G20 is a historic and significant development that has both opportunities and challenges for both Africa

and the world. It requires a balanced and constructive approach from all stakeholders to maximise the benefits and minimise the costs of this new partnership.

7. Analyze the repercussions of the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict on India's economy, energy security, and foreign policy. (150 Words)**Approach:**

- Begin with a brief introduction to the Israel-Hamas conflict, providing context on the effects of the conflict.
- Discuss possible repercussions of the conflict on India. Also, discuss some of the suggestive measures.
- You can conclude your answer with a way forward approach.

Introduction:

The ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict has serious implications for India's economy, energy security, and foreign policy. India has strong ties with both Israel and Palestine, as well as other countries in the region, such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Turkey. 80% of India's total consumption depends on oil imports, to fulfill this consumption demand India is heavily dependent on the Middle East for its oil imports.

Body:**Some of the possible repercussions of the conflict on India:**

- **Trade Relations:** An escalation in the conflict could impact India's trade with Israel, particularly in critical areas like defense equipment. Israel is a significant supplier of defense technology to India, and any disruption in this trade relationship could affect India's defense preparedness.
- **Diplomatic Challenges:** India has traditionally maintained a balanced approach in its foreign policy towards Israel and Arab countries. If the conflict escalates and draws in other Arab nations, it could pose diplomatic challenges for India. Balancing its ties with Israel and maintaining good relations with Arab nations may become more complex.
- **Economic and Strategic Ties with the Middle East:** India's economic and strategic ties with the Middle East have grown in importance, particularly in the context of initiatives like the India-Middle East-Europe economic corridor. If the conflict intensifies and involves other regional actors like Hezbollah and Iran, it could destabilize the West Asian region.

Note:

- **Energy Supply:** The West Asian region is a crucial source of energy imports for India. Any disruption in the stability of the region could potentially impact India's energy supply, leading to economic challenges.
- **Welfare of Indian Expatriates:** India has a significant expatriate population working in various Middle Eastern countries. The welfare and safety of these Indian nationals could be at risk if the conflict escalates, and it becomes essential for India to ensure their protection.

India should consider various factors and interests in its foreign policy. However, some possible suggestions are:

- **Uphold two-state solution:** India should uphold the two-state solution for Israel and Palestine, aligning with UN resolutions and international law as in the past.
- **Continue strategic partnership:** India should continue its strategic partnership with Israel in defense, counter-terrorism, and technology to bolster security, development, and relations with countries like the US, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE.
- **Leverage diplomatic influence:** India can leverage its diplomatic influence to promote peace, encourage dialogue, and provide humanitarian aid in Gaza, Israel, and its diaspora.
- **Partnership with other stakeholders:** India should seek partnerships with Egypt, Jordan, Turkey, Russia, China, and the EU to address the conflict and use its UN Security Council position and Non-Aligned Movement leadership to promote West Asian peace.

Conclusion:

Therefore, it is in India's interest to see a peaceful resolution of the conflict and a restoration of stability in the region. India should use its diplomatic leverage and goodwill to urge both sides to exercise restraint and resume dialogue. India should also coordinate with other regional and international actors to facilitate humanitarian assistance and prevent further violence.

- 8. Geopolitical and Socio-Economic dimensions across the globe are undergoing changes which call for United Nations Security Council (UNSC) reforms pending since its coming into existence. Elucidate (250 words)**

Approach

- Begin by providing a brief overview of the United Nations Security Council.
- Describe how geopolitical and socio-economic shifts in the past few decades call for UNSC reforms.
- You can conclude by summarizing the key factors in the UNSC reforms and its relevance in the present context.

Introduction

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) stands as a central institution in the global geopolitical landscape, tasked with the critical responsibility of maintaining international peace and security. However, the structure and composition of the UNSC have remained largely unchanged since its inception, and this has become increasingly inadequate in addressing the complex challenges of the modern world. While the UNSC was designed to reflect the post-World War II world, the current geopolitical and socio-economic dimensions are markedly different.

Body

Changing Geopolitical Dynamics:

- **Post-World War II Structure:** The UNSC was established in the aftermath of World War II, and its composition reflects the power dynamics of that era, with the P5 (permanent members) - the United States, Russia, China, France, and the United Kingdom - holding veto powers. The world today is vastly different from the bipolar power structure of that time.
- **Emergence of New Powers:** Rising powers such as India, Brazil, South Africa, and Germany, often referred to as the G4, have assumed significant roles in global affairs. These countries have economic, political, and military influence, yet they remain excluded from the permanent membership of the UNSC.
- **Shift in Economic Centers:** The global economic landscape has shifted, with emerging economies gaining prominence. India and China, in particular, have witnessed rapid economic growth and are now among the world's largest economies. This shift warrants a more inclusive representation in global governance.
- **Changing Alliances and Conflicts:** The emergence of new security threats, non-state actors, and changes in alliances and conflicts underscore the need for a more adaptable and representative UNSC to effectively address these challenges.

Note:

Changing Socio-Economic Dimensions:

- **Globalization:** The process of globalization has made the world more interconnected than ever before. Economic and social issues transcend borders, requiring comprehensive and coordinated global responses.
- **Climate Change:** Climate change has emerged as one of the most pressing global issues. Its implications go beyond environmental concerns and impact peace and security, making it a topic that demands UNSC attention.
- **Pandemics and Health Security:** The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for global cooperation in addressing health crises. Health security has become a vital aspect of global security and requires the UNSC's engagement.
- **Human Rights and Humanitarian Crises:** Increasing instances of human rights abuses and humanitarian crises demand the UNSC's intervention. A reformed UNSC should better represent diverse perspectives on these issues. Recent Examples are UNSC's failure to curb human rights violations in Myanmar's Junta government and Sudan in Africa etc.

Need for UNSC Reforms:

- **For Inclusivity and Legitimacy:** The current composition of the UNSC is seen as undemocratic and lacking legitimacy. Reforms should aim to include more countries that reflect the contemporary global balance of power. The P5 nations, particularly Russia and China, have consistently resisted any reforms that might dilute their veto powers. This has been a major impediment to progress in reform discussions.
- **For Equitable Representation:** The G4 nations, along with several others, have argued for their inclusion as permanent members. They advocate for a more democratic representation that reflects the world's changing power dynamics.
- **For Enhanced Effectiveness:** A reformed UNSC should be more effective in addressing contemporary security challenges. Expanding its membership and eliminating the veto power could foster a more cooperative and responsive body. Reaching a consensus on reforms among the 193 member states is a complex and challenging process, as each country has its own set of priorities and demands.

- **For Global Governance:** Addressing global governance issues such as climate change, health crises, and humanitarian issues necessitates a reformed UNSC that can play a role in setting global governance standards. The historical context of the UNSC's formation, centered on the aftermath of World War II, has created resistance to changes from certain quarters.

India's Perspective:

- **Permanent Membership:** India has consistently pushed for permanent membership in the UNSC. It argues that as the world's largest democracy and one of the fastest-growing economies, it has a rightful claim to permanent membership, reflecting its global influence.
- **Peacekeeping Contributions:** India has been one of the largest contributors to UN peacekeeping missions, demonstrating its commitment to global peace and security. This, in India's view, underscores its suitability for permanent membership.
- **Regional Stature:** India plays a crucial role in South Asia and has a substantial influence in the broader Asian region. A permanent seat in the UNSC would better reflect this regional stature.
- **Multilateral Diplomacy:** India's tradition of non-alignment and commitment to multilateral diplomacy aligns with its goal of UNSC reforms that emphasize the importance of cooperation and collective decision-making.
- **Veto Power:** India, along with other countries, advocates for limiting or phasing out the veto power. The veto, in its current form, has often been an impediment to the UNSC's effectiveness.

Conclusion

The geopolitical and socio-economic dimensions across the globe are indeed undergoing profound changes. These shifts demand a reevaluation of global governance structures like the UNSC, which, despite its vital role, is in need of reform to better reflect the contemporary world. The persistence of obstacles, primarily the resistance of the P5 nations, has hindered the reform process. However, with the recognition of the pressing need for change and the advocacy of emerging powers like India, it is essential that the international community continues its efforts to ensure a more representative and effective UNSC.

Note:

9. **The United Nations (UN) is often criticized for its failure to maintain peace and security in the world, despite its commendable work. Analyze the challenges faced by it and suggest some reforms to enhance the UN's role and effectiveness in the 21st century. (250 words)**

Approach:

- Start your answer with a brief introduction of the UN and mention some examples where it has been criticized for its failure.
- Discuss the challenges and limitations faced by the UN.
- Suggest some reforms to improve the UN's performance and credibility.
- Conclude with a balanced approach.

Introduction:

The United Nations (UN) is the most prominent and influential multilateral organization in the world, with the primary goal of maintaining international peace and security. However, the UN has also faced many challenges and criticisms for its failure to prevent or resolve some of the most violent and complex conflicts in recent history, such as those in Syria, Yemen, Myanmar, Libya, and South Sudan.

Body:

Some of the the challenges faced by UN:

- **Lack of Political Will and Consensus:** The permanent members (P5) who have veto power, often use their veto or threat of veto to protect their own interests or allies, regardless of the humanitarian consequences or the UN Charter principles.
 - For example, Russia and China have repeatedly blocked resolutions on Syria that would impose sanctions or authorize military intervention.
- **Outdated and Unrepresentative:** The UNSC has not changed its membership since 1965. Many regions, such as Africa, Latin America, and South Asia, are underrepresented or not represented at all in the UNSC.
 - Moreover, some emerging powers, such as India have been demanding a permanent seat in the UNSC for decades.

- **Issues with Peacekeeping forces:** UN peacekeeping operations suffer from inadequate resources, stretched capacity, and numerous challenges, including hostile environments, consent issues, human rights violations, and funding reliance on member state voluntary contributions.
- **Weak Coordination and Coherence:** The UN has a complex and fragmented structure that sometimes leads to duplication, overlap, or competition among different entities.
 - For example, there are multiple mediators or envoys for the same conflict, such as in Libya or Yemen.

To enhance the UN's role and effectiveness in the 21st century, some possible reforms:

- **Security Council Reform:** Consider restructuring the Security Council to make it more representative and reduce the influence of the P5 veto power. This could include expanding its membership to include more regions and emerging powers such as India; limiting or abolishing the veto power; improving its working methods and decision-making processes; and strengthening its oversight and evaluation mechanisms.
- **Strengthening the UN peacekeeping operations:** This could include increasing their funding and resources; enhancing their training and equipment; developing clear and realistic mandates; ensuring compliance with international law and human rights standards; and fostering partnerships with regional organizations.
- **Improving the coordination and coherence:** This could include streamlining their mandates and structures; enhancing their communication and information-sharing; fostering a culture of collaboration and innovation; and aligning their strategies and actions with the UN Secretary-General's vision of prevention.
- **Civil Society Engagement:** Involve civil society organizations and non-governmental actors in peacebuilding and conflict resolution efforts. They can provide valuable local knowledge and grassroots support.
- **Adapt to Modern Conflicts:** Recognize and adapt to the changing nature of conflicts, including cyber warfare, terrorism, and environmental crises, by developing strategies and capabilities to address these challenges effectively.

Note:

Conclusion:

The UN has made significant contributions to global peace and security over the past 75 years. However, it also needs to adapt to the new challenges and realities of the 21st century. By implementing these reforms, the UN can become more effective, efficient, credible, and relevant for its member states and people around the world.

10. 'The expansion and strengthening of NATO and a stronger US-Europe strategic partnership works well for India.' What is your opinion about this statement? Give reasons and examples to support your answer. (Answer in 250 words, UPSC Mains 2023)

Approach:

- Begin with stating the opinion on whether the expansion and strengthening of NATO, along with a stronger US-Europe strategic partnership, is beneficial for India.
- Discuss the factors because of which expansion and strengthening of NATO, along with a stronger US-Europe strategic partnership works for India.
- Mention some challenges for India in closeness with the Western countries.
- Conclude by summarizing the key points.

Introduction:

While the world seems to be embracing the concept of multipolar world quite well, it is no doubt that NATO and European Union remain the centres of power internationally. India looks forward to becoming a major power in the coming years but for now it will also benefit from a strengthened NATO and US-Europe relationship.

Body:**Why it works for India**

- **China Problem:** Since NATO and EU seem to be in consensus on the Chinese aggression problem, it is in favour of India to engage in strategic partnerships with them.
- **Economic Returns:** The amount of world GDP that is held by these countries is enormous. India will benefit from trade relations from these countries and additionally from the politico-economic stability that is brought about by their partnership.

- **Democratic Values:** Shared ideological values of democracy that are being upheld by these groupings aligns with India's interest as contrasted against its two hostile neighbours.
- **Defence Capabilities:** Increased engagement with the western military, will benefit India in terms of technological know-how, advanced military trainings, and strategic collaboration.
- **Tackling Terrorism:** India being a country with history of dealing with terrorist attacks would greatly appreciate any effort towards ending or at least mitigating terrorism which would be an indirect benefit of the US-Europe strategic partnership.

Few challenges

- **India-Russia Relations:** A closeness with the Western countries would have to be done in a way that does not offend India's relationship with its long-term partner, Russia. Balancing between USA and Russia is a test of Indian diplomacy.
- **Increased Competition:** A stronger EU and US relationship would mean increased competition in sectors where India is trying to grow, e.g., the IT industry and pharmaceuticals.

Conclusion:

Overall, India would benefit immensely from a strengthened NATO and a stronger US-Europe strategic partnership if it can tackle the challenges that come with it.

11. 'Sea is an important Component of the Cosmos' Discuss in the light of the above statement the role of the IMO (International Maritime Organisation) in protecting environment and enhancing maritime safety and security. (Answer in 250 words, UPSC Mains 2023)

Approach:

- Begin with discussing the significance of the seas and the role of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO).
- Discuss the role of IMO in protecting the environment and enhancing maritime safety and security.
- Conclude by reinforcing the role of the IMO.

Note:

Introduction:

Seas are incredibly important for the earth considering their rich biodiversity and for humans considering the rich resource pool and providing ways for transport. A specialized agency of the United Nations, the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) works to improve the safety and security of international shipping and prevent pollution from ships.

Body:**Environment protection**

- **Ballast Water Management Convention:** Guidelines for management, treatment, and discharge of ballast water that is held in the tanks of ships to stabilize them, were decided and standardized by IMO.
- **MARPOL Convention:** It is an international convention that prevents pollution caused by ships such as oil spillage, chemical pollution, etc.
- **Greenhouse Gas Emissions:** Stringent emission limits of sulfur and nitrogen oxide are fixed for ships. These help in reducing pollution, especially in coastal areas.
- **EEXI and CII:** The Energy Efficiency Existing Ship Index (EEXI) and the Carbon Intensity Indicator (CII) have been adopted by IMO to look into decreasing the environmental cost of the shipping industry.

Maritime safety and security

- **ISPS Code:** The International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code lists measures to enhance the security of ships and port facilities.
- **SOLAS Convention:** The International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) ensures that the ship's construction, equipment, and operation are compatible with its guidelines.
- **STCW Convention:** The International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW) ensures standard training and certification for seafarers to achieve a basic level of competency.
- **Search and Rescue (SAR):** The SAR Plan by IMO ensures global availability of search and rescue services saving lives and improving the overall safety of maritime navigation.

Conclusion:

The International Maritime Organisation (IMO) plays a major role in protecting the environment and enhancing maritime safety and security, functioning under the ambit of various conventions and exercising various codes.

12. Analyze how the India-Nepal Joint Commission can effectively address common concerns and promote mutual interests between Nepal and India. (150 Words)

Approach:

- Write a Brief Introduction about the India-Nepal joint commission.
- Write joint commission's effectiveness in addressing shared concerns.
- Write a conclusion.

The **India-Nepal Joint Commission** is a bilateral mechanism at the **Foreign Ministers' level** that reviews the entire spectrum of **Nepal-India relations**. It was established in **1987** and has held seven meetings so far, the latest one being in **January 2024**.

Body:**Challenges associated with India-Nepal Relations:**

- **Boundary Issue:**
 - The Indo-Nepal ties face a significant challenge in the **Kalapani boundary dispute**, stemming from conflicting interpretations of historical agreements. The **2019** escalation, marked by India's new political map and Nepal's counter-map, underscores the ongoing tension over territorial claims.
- **Treaty of Peace and Friendship:** The 1950 treaty between India and Nepal grants special privileges and rights to the citizens of both countries, such as free movement, trade, and employment.
 - However, some sections of Nepalese society view the treaty as unequal and outdated and demand its revision or abrogation.
- **Eminent Persons' Group (EPG) report:** In 2016, India and Nepal established the EPG to **review bilateral relations** and suggest improvements. The group submitted its report in 2018, proposing various recommendations such as the **Revision of the 1950 Nepal-India Treaty** of Peace and Friendship and enhanced economic cooperation. But the report remains officially unimplemented, adding to the frustration in India-Nepal relations.

Note:

- **Development Projects:** Indo-Nepal ties face challenges with delayed and problematic development projects, including **Pancheshwar Multipurpose** and **Arun III Hydropower**. Concerns also arise from a growing **trade deficit, limited market access, and non-tariff barriers**, impacting major initiatives like **Integrated Check Posts** and **Cross-Border Railways**.

Joint Commission's Role in India-Nepal Relations:

- The **Joint Commission** can facilitate resolution by initiating **dialogue**, expediting the **Joint Technical Committee's work** on boundary demarcation, and promoting trust by refraining from unilateral actions.
- The Commission can **aid EPG report** implementation by addressing India's concerns on treaty revision, recognizing positive aspects, and monitoring progress for fostering cooperation and mutual benefits.
- The Joint Commission can advance projects by facilitating cross-country coordination, addressing technical and financial hurdles, and ensuring transparency. It should also enhance **trade cooperation, remove barriers**, and explore new collaborative areas like **digital connectivity, health, education, tourism, and agriculture**.

Conclusion:

The unique India-Nepal relationship requires nurturing through the Joint Commission, addressing challenges, fostering dialogue, and promoting mutual interests. Leveraging cooperation opportunities, enhancing connectivity, and upholding principles of mutual respect and non-interference are key to strengthening this special bond.

- 13. Discuss the significance of BRICS as a non-Western forum in reshaping global governance in the 21st century, with special reference to India's perspective. (150 Words)**

Approach:

- Write a brief introduction about the BRICS as a Non-Western forum.
- Mention the role of BRICS in reshaping global governance in the 21st century.
- Write a conclusion.

Introduction:

BRICS, consisting of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, has evolved from an economic bloc to a key non-Western platform shaping global governance. Beyond

its initial focus on emerging economies, BRICS now encompasses political, diplomatic, and strategic aspects. It offers member countries, like India, a unique platform to assert interests, promote South-South cooperation, and challenge Western-dominated global institutions.

Body:

- **Collective Voice of Developing Nations:** BRICS represents approximately **40%** of the global population and contributes to over a quarter of the world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). With the recent inclusion of six more nations such as Argentina, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. BRICS now encompasses nearly half of the world's population. This expansion strengthens BRICS as a representative body of the developing world.
- **Anti-United States Sentiment and Multipolarity:** The growing interest in BRICS is fueled by two key motivations. Firstly, there exists a significant anti-United States sentiment globally, prompting these countries to seek a platform where they can collectively address challenges.
 - Secondly, there is a strong inclination towards multipolarity, a desire for a forum through which Global South countries can demonstrate their unity. BRICS provides precisely such a platform, allowing these nations to assert their voice and influence.
- **Challenging Western Hegemony:** While economic performance within the BRICS consortium varies, geopolitical dynamics have shifted. The conflict in Ukraine has united Western nations and reinforced strategic collaboration between China and Russia.
 - Consequently, BRICS has evolved into an ambitious entity capable of challenging the established Western geopolitical outlook.
 - It positions itself as a counterforce to forums like the G7 and the World Bank.
 - The process of expansion further enhances its potential to bring about significant alterations within the global governance landscape.
- **India's Strategic Position:** For India, the expanded BRICS serves as a crucial forum. It allows India to introduce a fresh and fairer outlook on global collaboration while addressing pressing challenges. India strategically positions itself as the voice of the Global South and the new growth engine of the world within this influential bloc.

Note:

Conclusion:

BRICS stands as a formidable non-Western entity reshaping global governance, with India's active involvement signaling its dedication to fostering a fairer and more inclusive international system. BRICS presents a significant opportunity for India to participate in reshaping global governance in the 21st century. While challenges exist, India's active engagement can help steer the forum towards promoting a more multipolar, equitable, and responsive global order.

14. Discuss the concept of "intelligence diplomacy" and its significance in contemporary international relations. (150 Words)

Approach:

- Write a brief Introduction about intelligence diplomacy.
- Mention the relevance of intelligence diplomacy in contemporary international relations.
- Write a conclusion.

Introduction:

Intelligence diplomacy, a nuanced and strategic approach to international relations, represents a fusion of traditional diplomatic practices with intelligence gathering and analysis. In an era characterized by complex geopolitical challenges, rapid technological advancements, and evolving security threats, intelligence diplomacy has emerged as a critical tool for states to safeguard their interests, mitigate risks, and pursue their foreign policy objectives.

Body:

Intelligence diplomacy holds immense relevance in contemporary international relations due to its multifaceted impact.

- **Security Challenges and National Interests:**
 - The role of intelligence in national security has expanded significantly. Threats like international terrorism, cross-border criminal networks, economic competition, and technological advancements demand robust intelligence cooperation among nations.
 - Intelligence diplomacy ensures timely information sharing, early threat detection, and coordinated responses to safeguard national interests.

- Intelligence sharing with friendly nations like the US, Israel, and Japan has been crucial in thwarting terror attacks, apprehending criminals, and safeguarding India's maritime interests.

- **Geostrategic Relations and Diplomatic Strategies:**

- Intelligence informs diplomatic strategies by providing critical insights into adversaries' intentions, capabilities, and vulnerabilities. It enables diplomats to negotiate from a position of strength.
- For example, During the Doklam standoff with China in 2017, robust intelligence gathering provided insights into China's troop movements and intentions, allowing India to formulate effective diplomatic strategies and garner international support.

- **Challenging Geostrategic Relations:**

- Intelligence helps counter adversaries' advantages, shaping the balance of power in international affairs.

- **AI Diplomacy and New Topics:**

- Artificial Intelligence (AI) is reshaping international relations. It introduces new topics on the global agenda, challenging traditional paradigms.
- AI serves as a tool for diplomats and negotiators, aiding decision-making, conflict resolution, and crisis management.
- India is actively developing AI capabilities for its military and intelligence agencies. This includes using AI for analyzing satellite imagery, monitoring social media activities, and predicting potential threats.

- **Ethical Considerations and Covert Operations:**

- Intelligence diplomacy navigates the delicate balance between information gathering and covert actions. Ethical discussions around control, policy, and morality are crucial.

- **Cultural Context:** Understanding cultural nuances impacts intelligence gathering and perception. Understanding the cultural nuances of neighboring countries like Pakistan and China is crucial for effective intelligence gathering and interpreting their actions.

Conclusion:

Intelligence diplomacy stands as a vital instrument in navigating the complexities of contemporary international relations. As states grapple with diverse security challenges, evolving geopolitical dynamics, and the transformative impact of technologies like artificial intelligence, the role of intelligence in shaping diplomatic strategies and safeguarding national interests becomes increasingly indispensable.

Note:

15. Assess the importance of the India-Maldives relationship. Identify the challenges within this bilateral relationship and suggest strategies to overcome them. (250 words)

Approach:

- Start the answer with a discussion that sets a context for the question.
- Discuss the importance of the India-Maldives relationship.
- Discuss the challenges within this bilateral relationship.
- Suggest strategies to improve the bilateral ties.
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction:

India and Maldives share ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious and commercial links steeped in antiquity and enjoy close, cordial and multi-dimensional relations. Maldives is a focal point for the Indian government's priorities under the 'Neighbourhood First Policy.'

Body:

The importance of the India-Maldives relationship:

- **Strategic Significance:** Maldives' proximity to the west coast of India and its position at the hub of commercial sea lanes running through the Indian Ocean imbue it with significant strategic importance to India.
- **Economic Engagements:** India is among the largest sources of visitors to the Maldives, which is heavily dependent on tourism to run its economy.
 - In 2023, India topped the chart in sending the largest number of tourists to the Maldives (2,09,198), with around 11.8 % market share.
- **Trade Agreements:** India emerged as Maldives' 2nd largest trade partner in 2022. The bilateral trade had crossed the USD 300 million mark for the first time in 2021.
- **Infrastructure Projects:** In August 2021, Afcons, an Indian company, signed a contract for the largest-ever infrastructure project in Maldives which is the Greater Male Connectivity Project (GMCP).
- **Cultural Connectivity:** India and Maldives share ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and religious links steeped in antiquity. According to anthropologists, the origins of Dhivehi (the Maldivian language) date back to Sanskrit and Pali.

- The Indian expatriate community in the Maldives has an approximate strength of 27,000. The majority of the expatriate teachers in Maldives are Indian nationals.

The Key Issues in the India- Maldives Relationship:

- **The Ongoing Lakshadweep Issue:** The controversy ensued when three deputy ministers from the Maldives made derogatory comments about India and the Prime Minister following his recent visit to Lakshadweep.
 - This controversy has led many Indians to cancel their holiday bookings in Maldives. The incident underscores the dangers of hypernationalism in the region.
- **The India Out Campaign In Maldives:** The 'India Out' initiative seeks to amplify animosity by instilling scepticism regarding India's investments in the Maldives, the defence partnerships between the two nations, and India's security provisions in the region.
- **Sovereignty and Security Dilemma:** The democratic system in the Maldives is still in its early stages, grappling with regional socio-political instability influenced by major global players.
 - The opposition in Maldives strongly feels that the Indian military presence in the Maldives is a threat to the country's national security and sovereignty.
- **Revocation of Hydrographic Survey Agreement:** Maldives has apprehensions about India's hydrographic activity being a form of intelligence collection.
 - Maldives' recent decision to revoke the agreement with India for joint hydrographic surveys in its waters, causing concern in Indian strategic circles.
- **The China Factor in the Indian Ocean Region:** The Maldives has emerged as an important 'pearl' in China's "String of Pearls" construct in South Asia.
 - Maldives has massive Chinese investment and became a participant in China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Several measures can be considered as a way forward:

- **Discover and Develop Tourism Destinations in India:** India's coastline is adorned with a mix of well-known and undiscovered beach destinations. It is opportune to explore and cultivate the potential of undisclosed and hidden treasures along India's coast.
 - Possible destinations may include places like Goa, Kerala, Lakshadweep and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Note:

- **Political Engagement with Local People:** At present, the 'India Out' campaign has support from a limited population, but this should not be taken for granted by the Indian government.
 - The strength of bilateral relations hinges on the ability of a partner government to garner public support for its policies.
 - The government should engage in effective public diplomacy, which involves not only communicating with foreign governments but also with their own citizens and the international community.
- **Unwavering Support for Capacity Building Programmes:** As a development partner, India should provide unwavering support to the Maldives in realizing their aspirations for broad-based socio-economic development and strengthening of democratic and independent institutions in the region.
- **Maximise Maritime Security:** India should participate in efforts to ensure the safety and freedom of navigation in critical sea lanes, contributing to the overall security architecture in the Indian Ocean.
- **Maximize Resources:** India should keep its commitment to regional security by actively participating in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations. India can actively engage through QUAD to counter Chinese aggression in the region.

Conclusion:

A coordinated synergy between India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy and the Maldives' 'India First' approach is essential for strengthening a mutually beneficial partnership.

16. Assess the successes and limitations of the 13th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Recommend reform strategies for the WTO to maintain its significance amid changing global dynamics. (250 words)

Approach:

- Start the answer with a brief introduction to the 13th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO).
- Discuss the successes and limitations of the 13th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO).
- Recommend Strategies for the WTO to maintain its significance amid changing global dynamics.
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction:

Recently, the 13th Ministerial Conference (MC13) of the **World Trade Organization** took place in Abu Dhabi, UAE. Ministers from diverse levels of development and varying geopolitical perspectives convened to address a wide array of crucial subjects, including but not limited to food security, e-commerce, fisheries subsidies, WTO reform, domestic regulations of services, and investment facilitation.

Body:

The Key Successes of WTO's 13th Ministerial Conference:

➤ Accessions:

- MC13 endorsed **the accession to the WTO of two least-developed countries—Comoros and Timor-Leste**. This brings the organisation's Membership to 166, representing 98% of world trade.

➤ Reform of the Deliberative and Negotiating Functions:

- At MC13, ministers welcomed the work already undertaken to:
 - Improve the functioning of WTO Councils, Committees, and Negotiating Groups,
 - Enhance the organisation's efficiency and effectiveness, and
 - Facilitate Members' participation in WTO work.
- They instructed officials to continue their **"reform by doing"** process and to report progress to the 14th Ministerial Conference (MC14).
- At MC13, ministers renewed their commitment to achieve **a fully functional dispute settlement system** accessible to all Members by 2024.

➤ E-Commerce:

- At MC13, ministers decided to renew the e-commerce moratorium until MC14 or 31 March 2026, whichever is earlier.

➤ TRIPS Non-Violation and Situation Complaints:

- In a decision that has often been linked to the e-commerce moratorium, ministers also decided to extend a moratorium on so-called **"non-violation"** and **"situation"** complaints under the **TRIPS Agreement**.

Note:

- **Special and Differential Treatment:**
 - Ministers adopted a decision to improve the use of **special and differential treatment (S&DT) provisions**, in particular those in the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade and the Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures.
- **Plurilateral Agreements and Initiatives:**
 - **WTO Plurilateral initiatives** are discussions at the WTO in which only a subset of Members are participating. They can aim to create new rules, secure mutual liberalisation of tariffs, create a new process or launch a conversation.
 - At MC13, several such plurilateral initiatives reached agreements or reported on the results of their work in important areas.
 - An important plurilateral initiative concerns **Investment Facilitation for Development (IFD)**.
- **Domestic Regulation of Services:**
 - A commercially significant outcome of MC13 was the agreement reached on implementing new disciplines for domestic regulation of services, integrating them into the WTO framework.
 - These disciplines are designed to facilitate trade in services by streamlining and simplifying regulatory procedures.
- **Sustainability-Related Initiatives:**
 - Members have also come together in different groupings to work on a series of sustainability-related initiatives.
 - **The Dialogue on Plastics Pollution and Environmentally Sustainable Plastics Trade**, an initiative comprising 78 Members, identified trade and trade-related measures and policies to reduce plastics pollution.
 - Finally, 48 Members reported on progress toward **Fossil Fuel Subsidy Reform**.
- **Fisheries Subsidies:**
 - At MC12, members concluded an **Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies (AFS)** which prohibits the granting or maintaining of subsidies to entities involved in **illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing** or the fishing of overfished stocks.

- At MC13, ministers welcomed the progress over the past 20 months towards the AFS's entry into force. As of 1 March 2024, 71 Members have ratified the agreement.

The Challenges currently undermining the WTO's effectiveness:

- **Erosion of Multilateralism:**
 - There has been a noticeable erosion of multilateralism in recent years, with **increasing trade disputes** and the **rise of unilateral trade actions**.
 - This trend undermines the effectiveness of the WTO as a forum for resolving trade conflicts and negotiating trade agreements.
 - The MC13 also failed to make progress on key issues like fisheries subsidies, reflecting serious divisions among 166 member countries.
- **Protectionism and Trade Wars:**
 - The proliferation of tariffs, quotas, and other trade barriers undermines the principles of free trade and poses a threat to the rules-based trading system.
 - For instance, the **trade dispute between the US and China** has strained the multilateral trading system and challenged the WTO's ability to mediate and resolve such conflicts.
- **Dispute Settlement Mechanism Crisis:**
 - The WTO's dispute settlement mechanism, often regarded as the crown jewel of the organisation, has faced a crisis in recent years.
 - The Appellate Body, responsible for adjudicating trade disputes, has been **rendered dysfunctional due to the US' blocking of new appointments** to the body.
 - The absence of a functioning dispute settlement mechanism erodes confidence in the multilateral trading system and encourages unilateralism.
- **Development Divide and Special and Differential Treatment:**
 - Despite the principle of **Special and Differential Treatment (S&D)** aimed at providing flexibility and support to developing nations, disparities persist in their capacity to participate effectively in trade negotiations and implement trade-related reforms.
 - **Least-developed countries (LDCs)** often lack the resources and technical assistance needed to capitalise on trade opportunities, perpetuating their marginalisation in the global economy.

Note:

➤ **Digital Trade and E-commerce:**

- The rapid growth of digital trade and e-commerce presents both opportunities and challenges for the WTO. While digital technologies have the potential to enhance trade efficiency and facilitate economic growth, they also raise new **regulatory and policy issues that fall outside the scope of traditional trade agreements**.
- The WTO faces the challenge of adapting its rules and agreements to accommodate the evolving nature of digital trade while ensuring a level playing field for all member countries.

➤ **Environmental and Sustainability Concerns:**

- The WTO faces **growing pressure to incorporate environmental and sustainability considerations** into its trade rules and agreements. Climate change, biodiversity loss, and other environmental challenges have significant implications for global trade patterns and practices.
- **Balancing environmental objectives with trade liberalisation** goals requires innovative approaches and cooperation among WTO members to develop rules that promote both economic growth and environmental sustainability.

➤ **Public Health and Access to Medicines:**

- The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of public health considerations in trade policy. **Access to affordable medicines and medical supplies has become a critical issue**, particularly for developing countries facing challenges in procuring essential healthcare products.
- The WTO faces the **challenge of reconciling intellectual property rights** with the need to ensure access to medicines for all, particularly during public health emergencies.

➤ **Agriculture and Food Security;**

- Although updating WTO disciplines on agriculture has been on the agenda of Members since 2000, little progress has been made. At MC13, members failed again to reach a consensus on the scope, balance, and timeline of agriculture negotiations.
- This failure resulted, in particular, from broad disagreement over the issue of **“public stockholding for food security purposes”**

Necessary Reforms in the World Trade Organization (WTO):

➤ **Revitalising Dispute Settlement Mechanism:**

- Restoring the functionality of the Appellate Body is crucial to ensuring the timely and effective resolution of trade disputes.
- Immediate action is needed to address the deadlock in appointing new members to the Appellate Body and to uphold the integrity of the WTO’s dispute settlement mechanism.

➤ **Suitable Provision For Punishment:**

- If a country has done something wrong, it should swiftly correct its faults. And if it continues to break an agreement, it should offer compensation or face a suitable response that has some remedy — although this is not actually a punishment: it’s a “remedy”, the ultimate goal being for the country to comply with the ruling.
- Such countries can be mandated to submit mandatorily a particular amount to the **Green Climate Fund** if found on the wrong side.

➤ **Updating Trade Rules to Reflect Modern Realities:**

- The WTO’s rules and agreements need to be updated to address emerging issues such as digital trade, e-commerce, and environmental sustainability.
- Immediate reforms should focus on modernising trade rules to accommodate new technologies, promote sustainable development, and facilitate inclusive economic growth.

➤ **Strengthening S&D Provisions:**

- Enhancing the effectiveness of S&D provisions is essential to support the development objectives of developing and least developed countries (LDCs).
- Immediate reforms should aim to make S&D provisions more operational and responsive to the specific needs and challenges faced by developing countries, particularly in areas such as agriculture, IPRs, and services trade.

➤ **Addressing Trade Distortions and Subsidies:**

- Urgent action is needed to address trade-distorting practices, including subsidies that distort market competition and undermine fair trade.

Note:

- Reforms should focus on strengthening disciplines on subsidies and other forms of government support to ensure a level playing field for all WTO members.

➤ **Promoting Inclusive Decision-Making:**

- Ensuring inclusive decision-making processes within the WTO is essential to strengthen its legitimacy and effectiveness.
- Immediate reforms should focus on promoting greater participation and representation of all member countries, including developing and LDCs, in WTO negotiations, committees, and decision-making bodies.

Conclusion:

The World Trade Organization (WTO) must undertake visionary reforms to sustain its legitimacy and central role in the rapidly evolving global economy. This entails prioritising inclusivity to ensure the voices of all member countries are heard, adapting swiftly to emerging challenges and opportunities through modernisation and innovation, and upholding transparency and accountability to build trust among stakeholders.

17. Discuss the significance and challenges of India's 'Neighbourhood First Policy' in fostering regional cooperation and addressing geopolitical dynamics. (250 Words)

Approach:

- Start the answer by introducing the Neighbourhood First Policy.
- Illustrate the significance of India's 'Neighbourhood First Policy' in fostering regional cooperation.
- Evaluate challenges of India's 'Neighbourhood First Policy' in addressing geopolitical dynamics.
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction:

India's 'Neighbourhood First Policy' is a cornerstone of its foreign policy, aimed at strengthening ties with its immediate neighbors. However, while the policy holds significant potential in fostering regional cooperation and addressing geopolitical dynamics, it also faces several challenges.

Body:

Significance of Neighbourhood First Policy:

➤ **Strategic Importance:**

- India's neighborhood comprises countries that are strategically crucial for its security and economic interests. Strengthening ties with these nations enhances India's geopolitical standing and security.
- India-Bangladesh relations have seen significant improvement in recent years, with cooperation in areas such as trade, security, and connectivity.
- The Land Boundary Agreement (LBA) and the Teesta River water-sharing agreement are examples of successful bilateral initiatives.

➤ **Trade and Economic Opportunities:**

- Proximity to neighboring countries provides significant trade and economic opportunities.
- Enhanced cooperation can lead to increased trade volumes, investment flows, and economic growth for all parties involved.

➤ **Regional Stability:**

- Building strong relationships with neighboring countries contributes to regional stability by addressing common challenges such as terrorism, extremism, and cross-border crimes.

➤ **Cultural and People-to-People Ties:**

- India shares deep cultural and historical ties with its neighbors. Strengthening people-to-people connections fosters mutual understanding and trust, laying the foundation for durable diplomatic relations.

Challenges in Implementing Neighbourhood First Policy:

➤ **Historical Baggage:**

- Historical conflicts and territorial disputes pose significant challenges to fostering cooperation. Deep-rooted distrust and animosities hinder progress in bilateral relations.
- Despite numerous attempts at dialogue, India-Pakistan relations remain strained due to issues like cross-border terrorism and Kashmir.
 - The lack of progress in resolving these contentious issues highlights the complexities involved in implementing the Neighbourhood First Policy.

Note:

➤ **Chinese Influence:**

- China's growing influence in the region presents a challenge to India's Neighbourhood First Policy.
- Beijing's economic investments and infrastructure projects often compete directly with India's initiatives, creating geopolitical tensions.

➤ **Internal Instabilities:**

- Many neighboring countries grapple with internal instabilities, including political unrest, ethnic conflicts, and governance issues. These internal challenges hamper efforts to build sustainable partnerships.

➤ **Asymmetric Power Dynamics:**

- India's size and capabilities sometimes lead to perceptions of hegemony among smaller neighbors, creating resistance to Indian initiatives and interventions.

➤ **Infrastructure Deficits:**

- Inadequate connectivity and infrastructure deficits hinder regional integration efforts.
- Improving physical connectivity through projects like the BBIN (Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal) initiative is crucial but faces implementation challenges.

Strategies to Overcome Challenges:

➤ **Diplomatic Engagement:**

- Continuous diplomatic engagement at various levels is essential to address concerns and build trust. Regular high-level visits, diplomatic dialogues, and Track II diplomacy can help overcome historical mistrust.
- China's BRI projects in South Asia, such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), pose challenges to India's influence in the region.
 - India's response through initiatives like the International Solar Alliance (ISA) demonstrates its efforts to counterbalance Chinese influence through alternative development models.

➤ **Economic Cooperation:**

- Emphasizing economic cooperation can mitigate geopolitical rivalries. Initiatives such as the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) and regional connectivity projects like the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) promote economic integration.

➤ **Soft Power Diplomacy:**

- Leveraging India's soft power through cultural exchanges, educational scholarships, and tourism can help bridge divides and foster people-to-people connections.

➤ **Multilateral Approaches:**

- Engaging in multilateral forums such as SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) and BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) allows for broader cooperation beyond bilateral constraints.

➤ **Conflict Resolution Mechanisms:**

- Prioritizing conflict resolution mechanisms and confidence-building measures can address territorial disputes and historical grievances. The importance of dialogue and negotiation cannot be overstated in resolving longstanding conflicts.

Conclusion:

India's Neighbourhood First Policy holds immense significance in fostering regional cooperation and addressing geopolitical dynamics in South Asia. Despite challenges, India's efforts to enhance ties with its neighbors reflect its commitment to promoting peace, stability, and development in the region.

18. Discuss the impact of India's changing relations with its neighbors on regional stability and India's foreign policy objectives. (250 Words)

Approach:

- Start the answer by introducing the India's neighbourhood.
- Illustrate the impact of India's changing relations with its neighbors on regional stability.
- Evaluate the impact of India's changing relations with its neighbors on foreign policy objectives.
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction:

India's neighborhood, often referred to as South Asia or the Indian subcontinent, comprises countries that share geographical proximity and historical, cultural, and economic ties with India. The region is of strategic importance to India due to its impact on regional stability, security, and economic growth.

Note:



Note:

Body:**Historical Context:**

- India's relations with neighbors have been shaped by historical, cultural, and geopolitical factors.
- Post-independence, India aimed for regional leadership, emphasizing non-alignment and regional cooperation.
- However, challenges such as border disputes and security concerns have strained relations at times.

Current Scenario:

- **China Factor:** China's growing influence in South Asia, highlighted by initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), has led to strategic concerns for India, impacting regional dynamics.
- **India-Pakistan Relations:** India-Pakistan relations, marred by conflicts and terrorism, have a significant impact on regional stability. Despite efforts, issues like Kashmir remain unresolved.
- **Bangladesh:** Improved relations with Bangladesh have led to cooperation in areas like trade and security, positively influencing regional stability.
- **Sri Lanka:** India-Sri Lanka relations have been complex, with issues like the Tamil minority rights impacting ties. However, recent cooperation in areas like maritime security signals positive developments.
- **Nepal:** Historically close ties with Nepal have faced challenges such as Kalapani border dispute etc. India's focus on people-centric projects aims to strengthen relations.
- **Bhutan:** Strong historical ties with Bhutan have been reinforced through development cooperation, contributing to regional stability such as development of Gelephu Millennium City.

Impact on Regional Stability:

- **Security Concerns:** Tensions with Pakistan have implications for regional stability, especially regarding nuclear proliferation and terrorism.
- **China Factor:** China's growing influence in the region, particularly through initiatives like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, adds complexity to India's relations with its neighbors.

- **Economic Cooperation:** Enhanced economic ties with neighbors promote stability by fostering interdependence and shared prosperity such as Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Bhutan etc.
- **Transnational Challenges:** Issues like cross-border terrorism, illicit trade, and environmental degradation require regional cooperation for effective management.
- **Soft Power Diplomacy:** India's cultural diplomacy, through initiatives like the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) and Bollywood, helps foster goodwill and stability in the region.

India's Foreign Policy Objectives:

- **Neighborhood First Policy:** Prioritizing relations with neighbors reflects India's commitment to regional stability and prosperity.
- **Act East Policy:** Strengthening ties with Southeast Asian countries enhances India's strategic presence in the Indo-Pacific region, countering China's influence.
- **Strategic Autonomy:** India seeks to balance its relations with major powers like the US, Russia, and China while safeguarding its national interests.
- **Economic Integration:** Initiatives like the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) aim to promote economic integration and development in the region.
- **Global Leadership:** Aspiring for a greater role in international affairs such as permanent UNSC Seat, India's engagements with neighbors contribute to its image as a responsible global actor.

Way Forward:

- **Security Dilemmas:** Balancing security concerns with the imperative for dialogue and cooperation remains a challenge, particularly in conflict-prone regions like Kashmir.
- **China's Influence:** Addressing China's expanding footprint in the region requires nuanced diplomacy and strategic partnerships with like-minded countries.

Note:

- **Domestic Politics:** Domestic political dynamics in neighboring countries such as Nepal can impact bilateral relations, necessitating flexibility and pragmatism in India's approach.
- **Economic Disparities:** Addressing economic disparities among neighbors is crucial for sustainable development and regional stability, requiring investments in infrastructure and capacity-building like India's assistance to Sri Lanka in seeking IMF's bailout.
- **Track II Diplomacy:** Strengthening people-to-people contacts and Track II diplomatic initiatives can complement official channels, fostering mutual understanding and trust.

Conclusion:

India's evolving relations with its neighbors have far-reaching implications for regional stability and its foreign policy objectives. While challenges persist, proactive engagement, dialogue, and cooperation offer avenues for advancing mutual interests and fostering a conducive environment for peace and prosperity in the region.

- 19. Analyze the major factors behind the persistence of Left-Wing Extremism in certain regions of India. Suggest strategic measures required to combat this threat effectively. (150 words)**

Approach:

- Start with the status of Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) in India.
- Mention factors behind its persistence.
- Touch current strategies addressing left-wing extremism.
- Propose strategic measures to combat LWE.
- Conclude with SAMADHAN Doctrine.

Introduction:

Left-Wing Extremism, commonly known as the **Naxalite movement**, continues to be a significant internal security challenge for India. While there is a **53% decline in districts** reporting Left-wing extremist violence From 2010 to 2022, it still persists in economically disadvantaged and tribal regions of central and eastern India.

Body:

Factors Behind Persistence of Left-Wing Extremism:

- **Socio-Economic Disparity:** Endemic poverty and lack of basic amenities like healthcare and education create fertile ground for Maoist recruitment.
 - Also, social injustices and discrimination are often overlooked by development policies, as noted by the **D Bandyopadhyay Committee**.
 - These inequalities lead to movements that align Dalit and tribal grievances with leftist ideologies.
- **Resource Dispossession and Unfulfilled Promises:** Land alienation due to **mining projects** and infrastructure development often fuels LWE activities.
 - A recent example is the mining project in the ecologically sensitive **Niyamgiri Hills** of Odisha.
- **Governance Gap and Weak Grievance Redressal Mechanisms:** Weak state presence in remote areas allows Maoists to establish a **parallel administration** and exploit the lack of trust in government institutions.
 - For instance, in the recent incident of a Maoist attack on a **CRPF patrol** in Chhattisgarh, the remoteness of the area and limited security presence were cited as contributing factors.
- **Cross-Border Infiltration and Support Networks:** LWE groups operating in India sometimes receive support and safe havens across porous borders with neighbouring countries.
 - The arrest of a top Maoist leader in Nepal, allegedly involved in activities in India, highlights this issue.

Current Strategies Addressing Left-Wing Extremism:

- **Inclusive Growth and Empowerment:** Schemes like **Forest Rights, PESA, and MNREGA** empower marginalized communities, addressing root causes and reducing susceptibility to LWE.
- **Infrastructure and Connectivity: Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana** is improving access to markets and services, reducing isolation in remote regions and undermining extremism.

Note:

- **Education and Skilling:** Programs like **Eklavya Model Schools and Skill India Mission** offer alternatives, reducing support for extremist ideologies.
- **Tribal and Rural Development Models:** Initiatives like **Jharkhand Alternative Development Initiative, Kerala Kudumbashree Programme, and Andhra Pradesh Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty** demonstrate effective strategies to counter LWE through development.

Strategic Measures to Combat LWE:

- **Tech-Powered Intelligence:** Employing advanced technologies and data analytics to monitor and track Naxalite movements, gather intelligence, and plan targeted operations.
 - Additionally, leveraging social media and digital platforms for **counter-narrative campaigns** can help counter Naxalite propaganda and ideological indoctrination.
- **Fast-Track Development Corporations:** Establish dedicated development corporations or authorities for LWE-affected regions, with a mandate to **fast-track infrastructure projects, promote entrepreneurship, and create employment opportunities.**
 - These corporations could have special powers and resources to ensure rapid and effective implementation of development initiatives.
- **Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Hubs:** Establish skill development and entrepreneurship hubs in Naxal-affected areas, providing vocational training, business incubation support, and access to markets.
 - This can empower the youth, create alternative livelihood opportunities, and reduce the appeal of Naxalite ideology.
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** Encourage public-private partnerships (PPPs) in affected regions, leveraging the resources and expertise of the private sector to drive development, infrastructure projects, and job creation.

- This can also promote **corporate social responsibility** initiatives in these areas.

- **Psychological Operations:** Integrate **psychological operations (PsyOps)** into counterinsurgency strategies, using targeted messaging, propaganda, and influencing tactics to undermine Naxalite ideology, disrupt recruitment efforts, and encourage surrenders.
- **Regional Cooperation:** Enhancing regional cooperation with neighboring countries like **Nepal, Bhutan, and Myanmar**, where Naxalites may seek safe havens or transit routes. Coordinated intelligence sharing, joint operations, and border management can help disrupt their activities.

Conclusion:

SAMADHAN doctrine aligned with the **National Policy and Action Plan to address LWE** holds the key to effectively countering the persistent threat of LWE and fostering lasting peace and development in vulnerable regions.

20. **Assess the significance of the QUAD grouping in the Indo-Pacific region and analyze its implications for regional security, focusing on India's strategic interests and the evolving geopolitical landscape. (250 words)**

Approach:

- Start the answer with introducing the QUAD grouping.
- Mention significance of QUAD on Regional Security and India's Strategic Interests.
- Delve into key challenges in QUAD amidst evolving geopolitical landscape
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction:

The **Quadrilateral Security Dialogue** or **QUAD grouping**, comprising **India, the United States, Japan, and Australia**, has emerged as a significant strategic partnership in the Indo-Pacific region, with far-reaching implications for regional security, geopolitics, and India's strategic interests.

Note:



Body:

Significance of QUAD:

➤ On Regional Security:

- **Countering China's Assertiveness:** The QUAD allows the countries to have a collective **bargaining power** on issues like the **South China Sea disputes**, counterbalancing China's influence.
- **Cooperative Security Architecture:** The QUAD promotes a cooperative approach to security challenges.
 - Joint naval exercises like **Malabar Exercise 2024** projects a united front for a **free and open Indo-Pacific**, deterring unilateral actions.
- **Shared Values and Norms:** The QUAD emphasizes adherence to **UNCLOS**, **freedom of navigation**, and peaceful resolution of disputes.
 - This normative framework aims to uphold a rules-based order in Indo-pacific.

➤ On India's Strategic Interests:

- **Hedging Strategy Against China:** China's increasing naval presence and establishment of military bases in the Indian Ocean such as in **Djibouti**, has raised concerns for India's maritime security and freedom of navigation in its strategic backyard.
 - The QUAD provides India with a **strategic hedge** against China's rise.
- **Securing Unimpeded Trade:** The QUAD provides a platform for India to collaborate with like-minded partners to ensure its **primary maritime interest of unimpeded trade** and energy flows through critical sea lanes like the **Strait of Malacca and the Strait of Hormuz**.

Note:

QUAD in Evolving Geopolitical Landscape:

- **Potential Arms Race:** The QUAD's efforts to counter China's assertiveness could prompt increased military expenditure and modernization efforts by both sides, fueling an arms race.
 - China already has a perception of the QUAD as an "Asian NATO".
- **Lack of Formal Structure:** QUAD lacks a formal alliance structure. This ambiguity creates uncertainty about the level of commitment each member is willing to make in a crisis.
- **Diplomatic Entanglement for India:** Maintaining a balance between leveraging the QUAD for strategic interests and preserving stable relations with China through other multilateral forums like BRICS and SCO is a significant challenge for India.
- **The Taiwan Dilemma:** The QUAD's stance on Taiwan's status is a potential flashpoint. A unified approach is difficult considering the varying degrees of diplomatic recognition each member accords to Taiwan.

Conclusion:

Given the evolving geopolitical dynamics surrounding the QUAD, India must strike a delicate balance between leveraging the QUAD to safeguard its strategic interests and maintaining stable relations with China through diplomatic channels. Strengthening its comprehensive national power, including economic, technological, and military capabilities, will enhance India's **strategic autonomy and bargaining power** in navigating the complex geopolitical dynamics of the **Indo-Pacific region**.

21. Discuss the challenges associated with the political developments in West Asia on India's energy security and suggest ways to address these challenges. (250 words)

Approach:

- Start with the recent political developments in West Asia.
- Mention the challenges associated with the political developments in West Asia on India's energy security
- Suggest ways to address these challenges.
- Conclude Suitably.

Introduction:

India's energy security is heavily dependent on a stable and predictable flow of oil from West Asia. However, recent political developments like the fragile reconciliation effort between Iran and Saudi Arabia, the uncertainties surrounding the US troop withdrawal from Iraq, and the rise of domestic unrest and authoritarian tendencies in the region pose significant challenges, threatening this crucial supply chain. Historically, West Asia has dominated India's crude oil imports, with a share of more than 80% of total crude oil imports.

Body:

Challenges Associated with the Recent Political Developments in West Asia on India's Energy Security:

- **Supply Disruptions and Price Fluctuations:**
 - Political instability in West Asia, including conflicts and civil wars (e.g., in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen), can lead to significant disruptions in the supply of oil and gas supplies. These disruptions can affect India's energy imports, leading to shortages and increased prices.
 - For instance, tensions in the Strait of Hormuz, a critical choke point for global oil shipments, can have immediate and severe impacts on India's oil supply.
- **Reliance on a Few Suppliers:**
 - India's heavy reliance on a few West Asian countries for its oil and gas supplies makes it vulnerable to political developments in those nations.
 - For example, India imports a significant portion of its oil from countries like Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and the UAE. Any political instability or policy change in these countries can directly impact India's energy security.
- **Geopolitical Alliances and Rivalries:**
 - West Asia is a region of complex geopolitical alliances and rivalries, involving not only regional powers like Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Turkey but also external powers such as the USA, Russia, and China.
 - Navigating these dynamics while maintaining steady energy imports is challenging for India. The need to balance relations with opposing blocs in the region can complicate India's foreign policy and energy strategies.

Note:

➤ Sanctions and International Policies:

- International sanctions, particularly those imposed by the United States on countries like Iran, pose significant challenges.
 - For example, India has had to reduce its oil imports from Iran due to US sanctions, despite the favorable terms offered by Iran.

Ways to Address the Challenges Associated with India's Energy Security:

➤ Diversification Beyond West Asia:

- India needs to accelerate its efforts to diversify its oil and gas import sources by investing in exploration and production projects in Africa, Central Asia, and the Americas.

➤ Hedging with Strategic Partnerships:

- While building on the Iran-Saudi Arabia rapprochement, India should maintain strong relations with both countries and other major producers.
- This allows for hedging against supply disruptions and securing competitive prices.

➤ Boosting Domestic Production and Strategic Storage:

- Investing in domestic exploration and refining capabilities can significantly reduce India's reliance on imported oil, mitigating the impact of external shocks.
- India should increase its strategic petroleum reserves to buffer against potential supply disruptions caused by regional instability or price volatility.

➤ Promoting Regional Stability:

- India can leverage its growing influence to promote dialogue and peaceful conflict resolution mechanisms within West Asia.
- A more stable region fosters a more reliable energy supply environment.

➤ Investing in Renewables:

- Accelerated investment in renewable energy sources like solar and wind can significantly reduce India's dependence on fossil fuels from West Asia in the long run.

➤ Exploring the Potential of Nuclear Energy:

- Nuclear power plants generate clean, baseload energy, reducing reliance on volatile fossil fuels.
- Investing in nuclear technology can strengthen India's energy independence and ensure long-term energy security.

Conclusion:

The recent political uncertainties in West Asia threaten India's energy security. India must diversify oil imports, build strategic partnerships, and invest in domestic production and renewables to navigate this complex landscape and ensure its long-term energy needs.

22. Discuss the reasons behind India's decision not to sign the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. Also, discuss the current refugee challenges that India faces. (150 words)

Approach:

- Introduce with 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol.
- Mention reasons for India's decision not to sign the convention and its protocol.
- Delve into current refugee challenges faced by India.
- Conclude with a forward looking approach.

Introduction:

The 1951 Refugee Convention, a UN treaty, defines **refugees, their rights, and state obligations for their protection**. The 1967 Protocol expanded its scope globally.

- Together, they form an internationally recognized legal framework for refugee protection, including non-refoulement and minimum standards for treatment in areas like courts, employment, and education.
- It was opened for signature in Geneva in July 1951, but India has not signed it.

Body:

Reasons for India's Decision Not to Sign the 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol:

- **Security Concerns:** India has porous borders with its neighbors, and any conflicts or crises in the region can lead to **mass influxes of refugees**.
 - This could **impact local infrastructure** and upset the demographic balance in border areas, which are already sensitive.
 - There are concerns about potential threats from **terrorists, militants, or other anti-national elements** infiltrating as refugees.
- **Resource Constraints:** As a developing country, India already struggles to provide basic amenities to its own population.
 - Taking on legal obligations to provide for a large number of refugees could further **strain limited resources** and hamper development efforts.

Note:

- **Example:** The 1971 influx of over 10 million refugees from Bangladesh led to a **cholera outbreak** due to the drain on resources.
- **Retaining Policy Flexibility:** Signing the Convention would legally bind India to principles like **non-refoulement (no forced repatriation)**, which could limit its ability to manage refugee flows based on ground realities.
 - India prefers to **retain flexibility in its refugee policies** to address unique regional challenges and domestic compulsions.
- **Humanitarian Tradition of Refugee Protection:** Despite not being a signatory, India has a long history of providing refuge to displaced people on humanitarian grounds.
 - **Tibetan refugees**, for instance, have found shelter in India for decades. India argues that its existing practices demonstrate its commitment to refugee protection.
- **Focus on Bilateral Agreements:** India prefers to handle refugee situations through **bilateral agreements with neighboring countries**. This approach allows for more tailored solutions considering the specific circumstances of each situation.

Current Refugee Challenges faced by India:

- **Rohingya Refugee Crisis:** India hosts a significant number of Rohingya refugees who have fled persecution in Myanmar.
 - Their legal status and rights remain contentious, with concerns about potential security threats and the burden on resources.
 - **Example:** UNHCR says nearly 79,000 refugees from Myanmar, including Rohingya, live in India.
- **Sri Lankan Tamil Refugee Situation:** India has hosted a large number of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees fleeing the civil war in Sri Lanka.
 - While some have been repatriated or granted citizenship, about 58,000 Sri Lankan refugees are still living in 104 camps across Tamil Nadu.
- **Afghan Refugee Influx:** With the recent **political turmoil in Afghanistan**, India has witnessed an influx of Afghan refugees, including individuals who had previously sought refuge in India during the earlier conflicts in Afghanistan.
- **Lack of Legal Framework:** India's absence from the Refugee Convention and Protocol has led to a lack of a

comprehensive legal framework for addressing refugee issues, leading to **ad-hoc policies and inconsistent treatment** of different refugee groups.

- **Challenges in Refugee Camps:** Refugee camps and settlements in India often face issues such as **overcrowding, inadequate infrastructure**, limited access to education and healthcare, and concerns about security and safety.

Conclusion:

While India's concerns about **security, resources, and policy flexibility** have shaped its stance on the Refugee Convention, the evolving refugee challenges underscore the need for a robust **legal and institutional framework** to address this critical humanitarian issue effectively and uphold India's commitment to protecting vulnerable populations.

- 23. The rise of regional powers and blocs is reshaping the global order. Discuss the potential implications for established multilateral institutions like the UN. (250 words)**

Approach:

- Introduce with highlighting the shifting global order
- Delve into regional powers and blocks reshaping the global order
- Highlight its implications for established multilateral institutions like the UN
- Conclude positively

Introduction:

The current global order is undergoing a **metamorphosis**. The rise of regional powers and blocs is challenging the established preeminence of the **United Nations (UN)**. This dynamic presents a **double-edged sword for the UN**, a potential decline in relevance alongside opportunities for renewed purpose.

Body:

Regional Powers and Blocs Reshaping the Global Order:

- **Emergence of new economic powerhouses:** The rise of regional blocs is altering global economic dynamics.
 - For instance, the growing economic clout of the **BRICS nations (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa)** challenges the dominance of traditional Western powers like the **G7**.

Note:

- **Evolving Security Landscapes:** Regional blocs are shaping regional security issues. The **North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)** is a prime example and its influence in the Russia-Ukraine conflict demonstrates its evolving role.
- **Alternative Development Models:** Regional development banks like the **Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)** offer alternative financing models to the **World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF)** traditionally dominated by Western powers.
 - This signifies a shift in influence over development finance and infrastructure projects, potentially leading to a more multipolar approach.
- **Emerging Normative Frameworks:** Regional blocs are promoting alternative norms and values.
 - The **ASEAN** emphasis on non-interference in member states' affairs stands in contrast to the **interventionist approach** sometimes favored by Western powers.

Implications for Established Multilateral Institutions like the UN:

- **Challenges:**
 - **Erosion of Multilateralism:** Regional powers may prioritize their own interests and regional alliances over multilateral cooperation, potentially undermining the UN's role as a global forum for dialogue and cooperation.
 - **Example:** the **China-led Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)** focuses on infrastructure development within a regional framework, potentially bypassing the UN's role in global infrastructure planning.
 - **Competing Interests and Gridlock:** Divergent interests and priorities among regional powers and blocs can lead to fragmentation and gridlock within the UN, hindering its ability to respond effectively to global challenges.
 - **Example:** The disagreements between the **U.S. and China** on issues like **human rights** have paralyzed UN efforts to find common ground.
 - **Challenges to the UN's Authority:** Regional powers and blocs may increasingly question the UN's authority and decision-making processes, perceiving them as outdated and unrepresentative of the current global order.
 - **Example:** The inability of the **UN Security Council** to effectively address conflicts like the **ongoing Russian-Ukraine War** has highlighted the need for reform and representation of emerging powers.

- **Opportunities:**
 - **Catalyst for Reform and Adaptation:** The rise of regional powers could serve as a catalyst for **much-needed reforms within the UN**, pushing for more inclusive and representative decision-making processes.
 - **Example:** India's bid for a **permanent seat on the UN Security Council**, supported by several regional powers, reflects the demand for reforming the UN to better reflect the current global order.
 - **Addressing Transnational Challenges:** **United Nations can collaborate with** regional powers and blocs as they can contribute valuable resources and expertise to address transnational challenges that require collective action, such as **pandemics, and terrorism**.
 - **Facilitating Multilateral Diplomacy:** Regional powers can act as bridge-builders within the UN, forging consensus and bridging divides.
 - The **role of India as a bridge** between developed and developing countries is a prime example.

Conclusion:

The rise of regional powers presents a complex challenge for the UN. The institution needs to adapt by leveraging **regional strengths, addressing its own limitations, and fostering a more inclusive, representative global order**. The future of the UN hinges on its ability to harness the power of regionalism for the collective good.

24. Evaluate the effectiveness of India's Act East Policy in strengthening its strategic and economic ties with Southeast Asian nations. Also delve into potential areas of cooperation between India and ASEAN countries. (250 words)

Approach:

- Introduce by mentioning the goal of India's Act East Policy
- Highlight the effectiveness of Act East Policy in economic as well as strategic terms
- Delve into potential areas of cooperation between India and ASEAN
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction:

India's Act East Policy, initiated in November 2014 as a diplomatic initiative to promote economic, strategic and cultural relations with the vast **Asia-Pacific region** at different levels especially with **Southeast Asian nations**.

Note:

Body:**Effectiveness of Act East Policy:**

- **In Strengthening Strategic Ties:**
 - India has actively participated in various ASEAN-led mechanisms, such as the **East Asia Summit, ASEAN Regional Forum, and the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus.**
 - These platforms have **facilitated dialogue and cooperation** on regional security issues, thereby strengthening India's strategic engagement with Southeast Asia.
 - **Strategic Partnerships:** India has upgraded its relations with several ASEAN countries to the level of Strategic Partnerships, including **Singapore, Vietnam, and Indonesia.**
 - These partnerships have facilitated deeper cooperation.
- **In Strengthening Economic Ties:**
 - **Trade and Investment:** Bilateral trade between India and ASEAN has witnessed significant growth, reaching **USD 131.58 billion** in the fiscal year **2022-23,**
 - India has implemented the **ASEAN-India Free Trade Agreement (AIFTA)** to facilitate trade and investment flows.
 - However, the trade balance remains **skewed in favor of ASEAN,** indicating potential areas for improvement.
 - **Connectivity Initiatives:** India has undertaken various connectivity projects, such as the **India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway** and the **Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project,** to enhance physical and economic connectivity with Southeast Asia.
 - These initiatives aim to facilitate the movement of goods, services, and people, thereby boosting economic integration.

Potential Areas of Cooperation between India and ASEAN:

- **Maritime Cooperation:** Enhancing maritime security cooperation, including **joint patrols, information sharing, and capacity building,** to address challenges like piracy, illegal fishing, and territorial disputes in the **South China Sea.**

- **Digital Economy and Emerging Technologies:** Collaborating on developing a robust **digital infrastructure, promoting e-commerce,** and fostering innovation in areas like artificial intelligence, blockchain, and the **Internet of Things (IoT).**
- **Renewable Energy and Green Transition:** Collaborating on the development and deployment of renewable energy technologies, such as **solar, wind, and hydrogen,** to meet climate change goals and promote sustainable development.
- **Space Exploration and Satellite Technology:** Collaborating on space exploration initiatives, including **satellite development, remote sensing, and space-based applications** for areas like disaster management, navigation, and environmental monitoring
- **Blue Economy and Marine Resource Management:** Enhancing cooperation in the sustainable use of marine resources, maritime security, and the development of the blue economy, including areas like **fisheries, aquaculture, and coastal tourism.**
- **Connectivity and Infrastructure:** Collaborating on accelerating the infrastructure development projects under India's Act East Policy and **ASEAN's Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025.**

Conclusion:

India's Act East Policy has bolstered its strategic and economic ties with Southeast Asian nations. By leveraging complementary strengths and addressing shared challenges, India can forge a **robust, future-oriented partnership** that contributes to **regional stability, sustainable development, and collective prosperity.**

25. Discuss the strategic significance of India's engagement with African nations and how it aligns with India's broader foreign policy objectives. (150 words)

Approach:

- Introduce the answer by highlighting India-Africa Relation and its alignment with India's Foreign Policy goals.
- Highlight the strategic significance of India's engagement with african nations
- Delve into the challenges associated with India-Africa ties
- Conclude positively.

Note:

Introduction:

India's relationship with Africa is **no longer a historical footnote**, but a strategic imperative. Driven by a desire to counter rising powers, secure resources, and expand its global footprint, India's Africa engagement aligns seamlessly with its core foreign policy goal of **Reformed Multilateralism and Development-centric diplomacy**.

Body:**Strategic Significance of India's Engagement with African Nations:**

- **Countering China's Influence:** China has been aggressively expanding its economic and political influence in Africa through substantial investments and infrastructure projects.
 - India has extended substantial lines of credit and undertaken development projects in Africa, competing with **China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**.
 - India sees deeper ties with Africa as a way to balance China's dominance and **promote a multipolar world order**.
- **Securing Access to Resources:** Africa has 40% of the world's gold and up to 90% of its chromium and platinum. The largest reserves of cobalt, diamonds, platinum and uranium in the world are in Africa.
 - India imports many raw materials to Africa, including minerals, crude oil, and other resources.
 - Increased engagement allows India to secure **reliable sources of these resources and diversify its import basket**.
 - **Example:** India imports a significant portion of its crude oil from African nations like **Nigeria**.
- **Expanding Trade and Investment Opportunities:** Africa presents a vast **potential market for Indian goods and services**. Deeper ties can boost bilateral trade, create new investment opportunities, and enhance India's economic footprint globally.



- **Example:** The **India-Africa Forum Summit**, held every three years, focuses on economic cooperation and explores new avenues for trade and investment.
- **Strengthening Maritime Security:** The Indian Ocean is a **vital trade route for India**. Cooperation with African nations bordering the Indian Ocean can **enhance maritime security, combat piracy, and counter terrorism threats**.
 - **Example:** India conducts joint military exercises (like **AFINDEX 2023**) with several African countries and provides training and assistance for their maritime security forces.
- **Promoting Global Leadership and South-South Cooperation:** India seeks to position itself as a leading voice for developing nations.
 - **Stronger ties with Africa amplify India's voice on issues of global governance** and promote South-South cooperation on matters of mutual interest.
 - **Example:** The **inclusion of the African Union (AU) as a permanent member of the G20** during India's G20 Presidency showcases India's advocates for greater representation of African nations in international institutions.

While the strategic significance of India's Africa engagement is undeniable, there are challenges to navigate. Infrastructure limitations like Navigating regional power dynamics due to **several military coups, underdeveloped transportation networks, competition with other global powers** can hinder the smooth flow of trade.

Conclusion:

India must adopt a comprehensive and nuanced approach that balances its economic and strategic interests with its principles of **non-interference, respect for sovereignty, and sustainable development**. By leveraging its strengths in **capacity building, technology transfer, and people-to-people ties**, India can enhance its soft power and deepen its strategic partnerships with African nations.

Note: