



## Mains Practice Question

**Q.** 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)

14 May, 2024 GS Paper 2 International Relations

### 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.

▪ **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.