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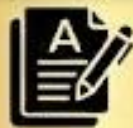
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A new world order needs a credible architect. India must claim that role



THAROORTHINK
BY SHASHI THAROOR

THE ANNALS of history are often written in the ink of unintended consequences. As the fragile ceasefire enters its second week, the US naval blockade takes effect in the Strait of Hormuz. With potential escalations threatening mayhem, the world finds itself staring at a landscape transformed by a conflict few desired and none can claim to have won. For India, a nation that historically prides itself on its moral heritage, this crisis has exposed the fragility of our energy security and our lack of leverage with the big powers. But more importantly, it has presented a moment of existential choice: In the wake of the collapse of the peace negotiations, will India continue to hedge its bets in the shadows of giants, or will it stand up to be counted as a principled architect of a new, durable global order?

The Iran war, launched under the banner of "Operation Epic Fury", was framed by Washington as a surgical necessity — a mission to degrade Iran's nuclear capabilities and proxy networks. Yet, as the war dragged into its second month, the goalposts shifted with dizzying frequency. From regime change to the desperate restoration of maritime navigation, the shifting objectives revealed a fundamental truth: Modern warfare is a blunt instrument incapable of resolving geopolitical problems surgically.

The primary casualty of this military hubris was the Strait of Hormuz. By attempting to "secure" the region, the offensive triggered the very insecurity it sought to prevent: A blockade of the strait. The result was a self-inflicted irony of global proportions: US President Donald Trump called the reopening of the strait his major war aim, though the strait had been open and functioning smoothly till the war began, and then announced a blockade himself! As of today, we have a stalemate. There is talk of peace negotiations resum-



ILLUSTRATION: C. R. SAKSHI

ing on Friday in Islamabad, while an economic chokehold is applied to Iran against a backdrop of threats and attacks that leaves every underlying tension unresolved and the region more volatile than ever.

In the arithmetic of this war, the big winners (and some of the losers) were not those on the battlefield. Russia, despite its own war in Ukraine, found a lifeline in the chaos. As global attention drifted away from Eastern Europe, Moscow saw surging revenues from booming (and temporarily sanction-free) energy sales. China, too, emerged as a quiet net beneficiary. By settling discounted Iranian crude in yuan rather than petrodollars, Beijing accelerated the de-dollarisation of the global economy without firing a shot. And as the US, once the guarantor of world order, behaved as its biggest disruptor, China's statesmanlike restraint enhanced its global image.

The big losers were the Gulf countries, forced to confront the fragility of their prosperity and the precariousness of their security, and the broader region, including India, whose economies were imperilled by new gas and related shortages. NATO allies, wary of a

conflict that seemed driven by whim rather than collective security, largely declined direct involvement. This sparked Trump's renewed questioning of the alliance's utility, raising ominous dilemmas for European security. Gulf states found themselves in an invidious position: Publicly calling for diplomacy while privately urging Washington to destroy Iran's capabilities, countries like Saudi Arabia and the UAE bore the brunt of retaliatory strikes they could neither prevent nor avoid. The porous US security umbrella was exposed, leading to a new consciousness of vulnerability. Saudi Arabia's strategic mutual defence agreement with Pakistan, and China anchoring its Gulf engagement in economics rather than military might, reflect new geopolitical calculations.

For India, the closure of Hormuz, through which half of our crude imports flow, remains a national emergency. The resulting surge in crude imports from Russia to over 2 million barrels per day and increasing LNG supplies from the US, plus slashing fuel taxes, demonstrated tactical dexterity: India managed to keep the lights on and the pumps running by pi-

When India remains passive as expletive-laden threats fly and violations of the UN Charter multiply, it risks losing the very credibility that makes it a leader of the Global South. It is time for a proactive, principled diplomacy

voting with unprecedented speed, but gas shortages still meant the war affected the Indian kitchen.

However, the diplomatic arithmetic was less straightforward. India's silence on the US-Israeli strikes that triggered the war suggested a foreign policy driven more by the constraints of the moment than by the convictions of a rising power, "the voice of the Global South". I had argued in these pages that India's strategic restraint makes sense when principle collides with national interest. India has far too much at stake in the US and in the Gulf Arab states currently facing Iranian missile and drone attacks to afford to grandstand. But when India remains passive as expletive-laden threats fly and violations of the UN Charter multiply, it risks losing the very credibility that makes it a leader of the Global South. It is time for a proactive, principled diplomacy that prioritises viable supply corridors, energy diversification, and a coherent security framework.

For now, the world's focus is on Hormuz. Continuing our strategic restraint is the wisest course for now, but as a nation claiming strategic autonomy, India must recognise that preserving its credibility as an autonomous actor is not just a moral aspiration; it is a vital national interest. The war nobody wanted has produced a vacuum in the global order. The old structures of security have proved to be either too feeble or too porous to prevent catastrophe.

In the longer term, India can no longer afford to be a passive observer of the fires in our neighbourhood. We are not merely an "affected country"; we are a stakeholder in the survival of the global commons. Whatever happens next, the world is looking for a credible, principled voice to help build the architecture of a new order. India must deploy its relationships with all sides to claim that role. It is time to move beyond the tactical manoeuvring of survival, toward the strategic clarity of diplomatic leadership. For the sake of our own growth, for the stability of our region, and for the moral conscience of the world, India must lead the way back from the brink. The war nobody wanted has given us an opening we must not forfeit.

The writer is Member of Parliament for Thiruvananthapuram, Lok Sabha, and chairman, Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Strategic Autonomy**

The ability of a nation to pursue its foreign policy objectives based on national interest calculations rather than being compelled by external powers. India's policy of non-alignment during the Cold War exemplified this approach. For instance, India's continued purchase of Russian oil despite Western sanctions demonstrates strategic autonomy in practice.

- **Global South**

A term referring to developing countries primarily located in Africa, Asia, and Latin America that share common challenges of poverty, inequality, and historical marginalization in global governance structures. India positions itself as a voice for these nations, advocating for reformed multilateralism.

- **De-dollarisation**

The process of reducing dependence on the US dollar for international trade and financial transactions. When China settles Iranian crude payments in yuan rather than dollars, it challenges the dollar's status as the global reserve currency. This has significant implications for American economic influence worldwide.

- **Strait of Hormuz**

A narrow waterway connecting the Persian Gulf to the Arabian Sea, through which approximately 20% of global oil trade passes daily. Its width at the narrowest point is merely 33 kilometers, making it vulnerable to disruption. For India, roughly half of its crude oil imports transit this chokepoint.

- **UN Charter Violations**

The United Nations Charter prohibits the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, except in self-defense or with Security Council authorization. Unilateral military actions without UN sanction constitute violations of this fundamental principle of international law.

- **Petrodollar System**

An arrangement where global oil trade is predominantly conducted in US dollars, compelling nations to maintain dollar reserves and reinforcing American financial hegemony. This system emerged from the 1970s agreements between the US and Saudi Arabia.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- **Core Thesis**

The contemporary global order faces a leadership vacuum created by the diminishing credibility of traditional powers. India possesses both the moral authority and strategic positioning to transition from passive stakeholder to active architect of a reformed international system.

- **Primary Arguments Advanced**

- *Argument One: The Erosion of Western Leadership Credibility*

The analysis presents military intervention as inherently counterproductive. Attempts to secure maritime routes triggered precisely the disruption they sought to prevent. This circular logic reveals fundamental flaws in coercive approaches to international security. Traditional guarantors of order increasingly behave as disruptors, undermining their own legitimacy.

- *Argument Two: Unintended Consequences Favoring Strategic Competitors*

While the primary actors become entangled in conflict, other powers accrue benefits without direct engagement. Russia finds economic relief through enhanced energy revenues. China advances de-dollarisation objectives and enhances its image as a responsible stakeholder. This dynamic shifts the center of gravity in global affairs.

- *Argument Three: India's Existential Vulnerability*

Energy security remains India's critical vulnerability. The concentration of import routes through geographic chokepoints exposes the economy to external shocks beyond Indian control. While tactical adjustments provide temporary relief, structural dependence persists.

- *Argument Four: The Credibility Deficit*

Strategic restraint, while pragmatic in specific circumstances, carries reputational costs. When principle consistently yields to expediency, a nation forfeits the moral authority that distinguishes genuine leadership from mere power politics. The Global South requires voices willing to articulate its concerns without qualification.

- *Argument Five: The Window of Opportunity*

Periods of systemic disruption create openings for architectural redesign. Nations that demonstrate vision during such moments can shape institutional arrangements for decades. India's relationships across geopolitical divides position it uniquely to convene constructive dialogue.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- **Pre-Independence Period (Before 1947)**

India's strategic thinking was subordinated to imperial British interests. The subcontinent served as a base for projecting power westward toward the Persian Gulf. Energy security considerations did not yet exist, though maritime routes through the Indian Ocean were recognized as vital arteries of empire.

- **Nehruvian Era (1947-1964)**

Non-alignment emerged as India's defining foreign policy doctrine. The Bandung Conference of 1955 established India's leadership credentials among newly independent nations. Panchsheel principles articulated a vision of international relations based on mutual respect rather than power hierarchies. However, this period also witnessed the 1962 border conflict, exposing limitations of moral suasion unsupported by adequate power.

- **The 1971 Watershed**

India's intervention in East Pakistan demonstrated willingness to use force in pursuit of national interests and humanitarian concerns. The subsequent treaty with the Soviet Union represented a departure from strict non-alignment toward strategic partnership. Energy considerations began entering strategic calculations following the 1973 oil crisis.

- **Post-Cold War Reorientation (1991-2000)**

The Soviet collapse compelled fundamental reassessment. Economic liberalization created new constituencies for engagement with Western powers. The Look East Policy initiated outreach to Southeast Asia. Relations with Israel were normalized. Each adjustment reflected pragmatic recalibration rather than ideological rigidity.

- **Nuclear Tests and Strategic Assertion (1998-2008)**

Pokhran-II announced India's determination to shape its security environment. The subsequent civil nuclear agreement with the United States, culminating in the 2008 NSG waiver, represented a high-water mark of strategic convergence with Western powers. India began articulating claims to a permanent UN Security Council seat.

- **Multipolar Hedging (2008-Present)**

The global financial crisis accelerated power diffusion. India deepened ties with all major powers simultaneously—Quad engagement with the US, Japan, and Australia; SCO membership alongside China and Russia; BRICS participation; continued defense relationships with Russia. The Ukraine conflict tested this approach, with India refusing to condemn Russian actions despite Western pressure.

- **Contemporary Context**


Recent years have witnessed growing Indian assertiveness in global forums. The presidency of G20 in 2023 provided a platform for articulating Global South concerns. Simultaneously, China's growing assertiveness and American relative decline create both constraints and opportunities. The conceptual scenario examined in the analysis reflects actual vulnerabilities that have long concerned Indian strategic planners.

INDIA'S CLAIM TO A NEW WORLD ORDER: A STRATEGIC ANALYSIS

THE VACUUM (Failure of the Old Order)



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Modern Warfare as Blunt Instrument- it risks losing the ans, tank, so that the mogent montal evolving the Horrmoz.



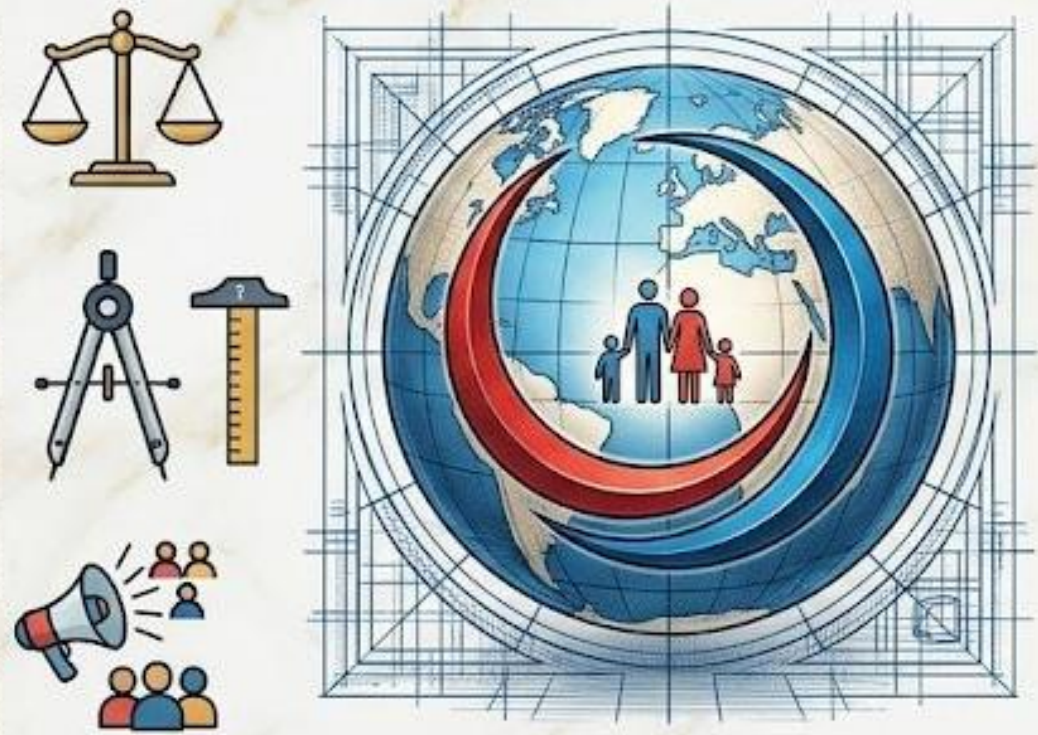
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“ When India remains passive... it risks losing the very credibility that makes it a leader of the Global South. ”


THE CLAIM (India's Strategic Pivot)




Credible Architect of New Norms (in Esauto)

“ Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam: The world is one family. ”


THE CHALLENGES & WAY FORWARD



Economic Dependency & De-dollarisation
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conclusion

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- **Logical and Philosophical Base**

- **Realist Underpinnings**

The analysis accepts the fundamental realist premise that international politics operates in an anarchic system where security remains the primary concern of states. National interest calculations rightly take precedence over abstract principle when survival interests are engaged. The acknowledgment that India cannot "afford to grandstand" when vital relationships are at stake reflects classical realist logic.

- **Liberal Institutionalism Elements**

Despite realist foundations, the argument draws significantly from liberal institutionalist thought. The call for "principled diplomacy" and "credible architecture" assumes that international institutions and norms can meaningfully constrain state behavior. The critique of unilateral action implies that multilateral processes produce more legitimate and durable outcomes.

- **Constructivist Dimensions**

The emphasis on credibility, moral authority, and the social construction of leadership roles reflects constructivist insights. States are not merely power-maximizing entities but actors whose identities and legitimate roles are constituted through social recognition. India cannot simply declare itself a Global South leader; it must perform that role through consistent principled action.

- **Post-Colonial Perspective**

The analysis implicitly draws on post-colonial critiques of international hierarchy. The Global South concept challenges the structural inequalities embedded in post-1945 institutions. The call for architectural redesign acknowledges that existing arrangements reflect power distributions that no longer correspond to global realities.

- **Gandhian and Nehruvian Echoes**

The tension between pragmatic accommodation and principled resistance echoes longstanding debates within Indian strategic thought. Gandhi's insistence that means must align with ends finds resonance in concerns about credibility erosion. Nehru's conviction that India had a civilizational mission to model alternative international behavior informs the argument for leadership.

- **Philosophical Tensions**

The analysis navigates between consequentialist and deontological ethical frameworks. Consequentialism prioritizes outcomes—strategic restraint when national interests require it. Deontology emphasizes the intrinsic rightness of principled action regardless of immediate consequences. The argument seeks to reconcile these approaches by suggesting that long-term consequences ultimately favor principled consistency.


- **Epistemological Assumptions**

The analysis assumes that historical patterns provide reliable guides for future action. The claim that military solutions prove "blunt instruments" rests on inductive reasoning from observed cases. However, this may underestimate the possibility that specific circumstances could produce different outcomes.



- **Multidimensional Analysis**
- **Social:** Global instability leads to rising fuel and food prices, directly impacting the "Indian kitchen" and social stability.
- **Political:** Domestic pressure to protect Indian diaspora and energy interests dictates foreign policy shifts.
- **Legal:** The erosion of the UN Charter's authority challenges the international legal order that protects smaller/developing states.
- **Ethical:** Does India have a moral duty to intervene in conflicts, or is its primary duty to protect its own citizens' economic well-being?
- **International:** The shift toward "De-dollarisation" by competitors like China poses a long-term challenge to the Western-led financial system.
- **Economic:** Energy security is the linchpin; a blockade in the Strait of Hormuz is a "national emergency."

- Linkages with NCERTs
- **Class 9 Democratic Politics – “Democratic Rights”**
 - Concepts of rights, constitutionalism, and international covenants.
- **Class 10 Democratic Politics–II – “Working of Institutions”, “Democracy and Diversity”**
 - Role of institutions, checks and balances, and pluralism (analogous to global institutions and diversity of states).
- **Class 11 Political Science – “Politics in the World Today” (Contemporary World Politics)**
 - Cold War, unipolarity, multipolarity, NAM, globalisation, and international organizations.
- **Class 12 Political Science – “Contemporary South Asia”, “International Organisations”, “Security in the Contemporary World”, “India’s Foreign Policy”**
 - Directly relevant: evolution of world order, UN system, collective security, India’s foreign policy principles, NAM, nuclear policy.
- **Class 12 Economics – “Macroeconomics” (open economy, BoP)**
 - Impact of global crises on trade, capital flows, exchange rate, and domestic inflation.
- **Class 12 Geography – “India: People and Economy” (transport and trade)**
 - Sea lanes, chokepoints like Strait of Hormuz, and their economic significance.

- 
- Linkages with UPSC CSE Syllabus
 - 1. GS Paper I
 - World history (post-World War II, Cold War, decolonization).
 - Impact of global events on Indian society (diaspora, migration, cultural changes).
 - 2. GS Paper II
 - Functions and responsibilities of the Union regarding external affairs.
 - India and its neighborhood, bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements.
 - Important international institutions, agencies, and fora—their structure and mandates.
 - Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests.
 - India's role in promoting peace, security and development.
 - 3. GS Paper III
 - Indian economy and issues relating to planning, growth, employment and external sector.
 - Effects of liberalization and globalisation on the economy.
 - Linkages between development and extremism (radicalization due to wars).
 - Security challenges and their management in border areas and Indian Ocean region.
 - Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security.
 - 4. GS Paper IV (Ethics)
 - Ethics in international relations, moral dimensions of foreign policy.
 - Values like justice, responsibility, compassion in dealing with conflicts.
 - Case-study angles: arms exports, refugees, humanitarian interventions, sanctions.

- **Way Forward**

- **1. For India's Foreign Policy**

- Articulate clear, consistent principles: sovereignty, non-aggression, protection of civilians, opposition to terrorism, and respect for UN Charter.
- Build issue-based coalitions with Global South and like-minded middle powers on reform of UNSC, global financial architecture, climate justice, and technology governance.
- Enhance diplomatic capacity: more missions, specialized desks (cyber, climate, health, AI), deeper think-tank engagement.
- **2. For Global Governance**
- Push for realistic UNSC reforms (inclusion of India, Africa, Latin America) and stronger accountability mechanisms for use of force.
- Support new norms on cyber warfare, autonomous weapons, drones, sanctions, and data sovereignty.
- Promote inclusive platforms like G20 as bridges between formal UN processes and informal major-power diplomacy.
- **3. For Domestic Policy–Foreign Policy Synergy**
- Strengthen economic fundamentals—growth, manufacturing, innovation—to increase bargaining power.
- Align domestic rights and democratic governance with external advocacy for rule-based order.
- Invest in strategic communication to explain foreign policy choices to domestic audiences, reducing misinformation.
- **4. For Ethical and Humanitarian Leadership**
- Offer mediation and good offices where credible, especially in the extended neighbourhood.
- Expand humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, and peacekeeping roles.
- Use cultural diplomacy, knowledge sharing, and development partnerships to build lasting relationships.

- UPSC CSE Mains – GS II / IR
- 2013–2014: “Discuss India’s policy of Non-Alignment and its relevance in the contemporary world.”
- 2014–2015: “Critically examine India’s claim to a permanent seat in the UN Security Council.”
- 2015–2016: “What are the challenges to India’s foreign policy in a multipolar world?”
- 2017: “Discuss India’s role in the emerging multipolar world order.”
- 2018: “India’s relations with major powers are increasingly issue-based, not ideology-based. Discuss.”
- 2019: “How far do you agree that India is emerging as a leader of the Global South?”
- 2020: “Examine the impact of US–China rivalry on India’s foreign policy choices.”
- 2021: “Discuss the significance of QUAD in India’s foreign policy and its implications for regional security order.”
- 2022: “Critically analyse India’s approach to Russia–Ukraine war in light of its strategic autonomy and global image.”
- 2023–2024 (pattern): Questions on G20 presidency, Global South summits, reform of multilateral institutions, India’s Indo-Pacific strategy.
- UPSC CSE Prelims – (Conceptual Areas)
- Questions on NAM, Panchsheel, G20, BRICS, SCO, QUAD, UN organs, UNSC reform debates.
- Questions on sea lanes of communication, choke points like Strait of Hormuz, Bab-el-Mandeb, Suez Canal.

It is not surprising that a section of the Indian commentariat was rattled when Pakistan hosted what may prove to be the most consequential direct dialogue between the United States and Iran since the Islamic Revolution. The meeting at Islamabad's Serena Hotel—an enduring symbol of the Aga Khan's contribution to Pakistani *mehsana-sanaazi*—brought together Vice President J D Vance and Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, with Islamabad positioning itself as the convening power behind the encounter.

The shock was understandable. The conclusions drawn from it, however, have been largely misplaced.

Pakistan's achievement in Islamabad was primarily about optics and its foundations remain fragile. A country associated in recent memory with exporting instability and terror, dependent on IMF bailouts and grappling with internal fractures has managed, briefly, to present itself as a moderate Muslim interlocutor with convening authority.

But this should not surprise us. What is at work is a familiar pattern—what might be called *chakoti* in Urdu—the Kusthyan dexterity with which Rawalpindi and Islamabad have inserted themselves into Trump's strategic calculus through a mix of flattery, transactional engagement bordering on skullbaggery and opportunism.

As the American South Asia expert Stephen P Cohen observed during the Cold War in the 1960s, India would at times deny him a visa while General Zia ul-Haq offered him a plane to the Afghan border. Pakistan's centralised, praetorian decision-making structure allow for a nimbleness that India's bureaucracy often cannot match. Its longstanding partnership with China only reinforces this flexibility.

Yet, this moment is unlikely to endure. No agreement emerged from the meeting and none may be imminent despite the hopes floated. Any progress would have to contend with a fragmented Iran negotiating from a position of constraint, an unpredictable American administration led by a deranged President oscillating between deal-making and denunciation, and a Pakistani state whose domestic legitimacy continues to erode. What took place at the Serena Hotel may amount to little more than an Andy Warhol-esque 15 minutes of fame. The architecture of this diplomacy may appear elegant; its foundations are less certain.

This is precisely the moment for India to think more clearly—and more ambitiously—about its own strengths, which it has consistently underutilised. India's

Islamabad has inserted itself into Washington's strategic calculus through an opportunistic deal. India, with its civilisational links and no Shia-Sunni conflict, has a more consequential hand to play

TIME TO USE THE CARDS UP INDIA'S SLEEVE

AMITABH MATTOO



Dean, School of International Studies, IIT
Former member, National Security Advisory Board



ILLUSTRATION BY

assets in the extended neighbourhood are not Pakistan's; they are of an entirely different order. Where Pakistan offers tactical flexibility and geographic utility, India brings something rarer: the accumulated authority of a democracy that has, over millennia, engaged with the Persian world, Central Asia, the Gulf and the Indian Ocean region not as a colonial extractor, but as a civilisation in sustained dialogue and whose contemporary record, for the most, is true to that legacy. This is not rhetoric. It is a strategic asset—if India chooses to use it.

The question is whether Indian foreign policy has the imagination to match these strengths. India's strategic culture has often been more comfortable with restraint than initiative, more fluent in the grammar of hedging than in the practice of shaping regional architecture. When a rival scores a diplomatic

success, the instinct is to critique rather than to rethink. The Islamabad moment demands precisely that rethinking.

India's relationship with Iran runs deeper than anything Pakistan can offer. Persian shaped Mughal court culture, Urdu poetry and the administrative vocabulary of the subcontinent. Shia intellectual traditions in Iran resonate with longstanding institutions in India—from Lucknow's *imambara* culture to scholarly exchanges across centuries. These are not mere soft-power talking points; they are the foundations of a relationship that can be activated with political will.

These connections are not only historical; they are also personal and lived. In my family, an heirloom survives in the form of the *Sokandranama*, a *Kāvya* by 12th-century Persian poet Nizami, written in exquisite calligraphy by my great-grandfather. It is a reminder

that these civilisational ties were not distant abstractions, but part of a shared cultural inheritance—one that can still inform contemporary statecraft. The deep ethnic fault lines—along the lines that exist between Shias and Sunnis in Pakistan—have no resonance in India.

Similarly, India's standing in the Gulf—built on decades of labour migration, remittances and the quiet contribution of millions of Indian workers—has created a reservoir of goodwill that neither Pakistan nor China can replicate. The Arab street does not conflate India with its adversaries. That, too, is a strategic advantage, if recognised as such.

Equally, India's relationship with Israel adds another layer to this strategic profile. What may appear, in narrower geopolitical frames, as a pro-sum alignment is better understood as evidence of India's ability to sustain diverse partnerships. The capacity to engage Israel while retaining credibility across the Arab world and Iran is not a liability; it is a diplomatic strength. There have, of course, been tactical missteps. Narendra Modi's high-profile visit to Israel before the current war and the delay in formally conveying condolences on the death of Ali Khamenei created avoidable perceptions. But these are tactical errors, not strategic contradictions. They should be acknowledged and then moved beyond.

None of this suggests that India should replicate Pakistan's role or seek to mediate in US-Iran relations. Instead, India should articulate its own strategic idiom, rooted in civilisational depth rather than transactional utility.

That means sustaining the partnership with Israel, while engaging Iran not merely through the lens of energy and sanctions, but as a long-term partner whose regional role matters independently of Washington's shifting priorities. It means treating Central Asia as a natural civilisational hinterland, not just a transit space. And it means leveraging India's democratic legitimacy and reputation as a responsible power to shape the broader regional order—proactively, not reactively.

The Islamabad meeting should not generate anxiety. Pakistan has demonstrated, once again, that even a State with limited resources can occasionally punch above its weight. India, with far greater resources and standing, has no excuse for punching below its own.

The last time I was at the Serena Hotel was for a Pugwash peace meeting, where President Pervez Musharraf engaged with a Track II delegation. That process lasted only weeks. This moment may last even less. (Vance) are persona)

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Mehmana-nawazi**

An Urdu/Persian term referring to the cultural tradition of hospitality and hosting guests with utmost respect and generosity. In diplomatic contexts, it signifies a nation's capacity to serve as a neutral, welcoming venue for sensitive negotiations.

- **Chalaki**

An Urdu word denoting cleverness, dexterity, or cunning—often used to describe tactical shrewdness in navigating complex situations. In strategic discourse, it refers to the ability to maneuver through difficult geopolitical terrain through agility rather than structural strength.

- **Kautilyan Dexterity**

A reference to Chanakya (Kautilya), the ancient Indian political philosopher who authored the *Arthashastra*. The term describes statecraft characterized by pragmatism, realpolitik, opportunism, and the use of all available means—diplomatic, military, economic, and covert—to advance national interest.

- **Praetorian Decision-Making Structure**

Derived from the Praetorian Guard of ancient Rome, this term describes political systems where the military (particularly the army high command) exercises disproportionate influence over foreign policy and national security decisions. In Pakistan's context, it refers to the "Rawalpindi-Islamabad" axis where the military establishment drives strategic choices.

- **Andy Warhol-esque 15 Minutes of Fame**

A cultural reference to pop artist Andy Warhol's observation about fleeting celebrity in modern media culture. Applied to diplomacy, it suggests temporary, optics-driven success that lacks structural durability.

- **Track II Diplomacy**

Unofficial, informal dialogue between non-state actors—academics, retired officials, civil society representatives—that runs parallel to formal government-to-government (Track I) negotiations. It allows exploration of sensitive issues without official commitment.

- Main arguments and substantive parts
- **Pakistan's mediation is opportunistic and fragile**
 - Pakistan's attempt to position itself as a mediator between the US and Iran rests on tactical access and personal networks, not deep, stable foundations.
 - Its domestic fragility, economic dependence, and history of using strategic rents (e.g., during the Cold War, War on Terror) make its role contingent and reversible.
- **India holds deeper, more durable "cards" in West Asia**
 - India's civilisational links with Iran (Persian cultural influence, shared heritage, Shia traditions in parts of India) and the Arab world give it a reservoir of goodwill.
 - The absence of a Shia–Sunni involvement by the Indian state, coupled with a large, relatively integrated Muslim population, allows India to be perceived as more neutral.
 - Long-term labour migration to the Gulf, remittances, and India's economic role in the region create structural stakes on both sides.
- **India should avoid reactive competition with Pakistan for a mediation role**
 - Competing with Pakistan over who mediates between Washington and Tehran would reduce India to an actor in someone else's script.
 - Such competition may force India into taking positions that compromise its strategic autonomy, especially given its already close ties with the US, Israel, and Arab Gulf states.
- **India must think in terms of long-term strategic architecture, not episodic moves**
 - India's diplomacy should focus on leveraging its civilisational ties, economic weight, and reputation to shape the broader regional order—rather than chasing headline-grabbing but shallow roles.
 - That involves independent engagement with Iran, Arab states, and the US; building connectivity (ports, energy, logistics); and acting as a stabilising, norm-shaping presence.
 - The underlying message for an aspirant: the "cards up India's sleeve" are long-term assets, not one-off diplomatic stunts.

- **Historical evolution of the issue**

- A. Pre-independence and early post-independence
- **Indo–Persian civilisational contact**
 - Persian as court language in much of pre-modern North India, cultural synthesis under Delhi Sultanate and Mughals.
 - Persian poetry, architecture, Sufi orders, and administrative vocabulary shaped Indian culture and governance traditions.
- **India and West Asia in early Nehruvian era**
 - Strong rhetorical commitment to anti-colonial solidarity, support for Arab causes, and non-alignment.
 - Limited capacity to project power but early recognition that West Asia is critical for oil, diaspora, and sea lanes.
- B. Cold War and after Iran’s 1979 Revolution
- **Pakistan’s strategic rent model**
 - Pakistan leveraged its geography for US and Chinese support in multiple phases: SEATO/CENTO, Afghan jihad (1980s), War on Terror post-2001.
 - This created a template of Pakistan as an “indispensable” intermediary for Washington in Muslim-majority conflict zones.
- **Iran’s revolution and India**
 - After 1979, India carefully balanced relations with the Islamic Republic, the US, and Arab monarchies.
 - The Iran–Iraq war, US sanctions, and Gulf wars complicated India’s energy and diaspora interests.
- C. Post-1991 liberalisation and deepening West Asia linkages
- **Economic reforms and Gulf remittances**
 - Rapid growth of Indian labour in GCC countries, major remittances from Kerala, Telangana, etc., making Gulf stability a core interest.
 - Energy dependence on West Asian crude further integrated India into the regional political economy.
- **Nuclearisation and India–US rapprochement**
 - 1998 tests, then 2005–08 nuclear deal, gradually brought India closer to the US strategic orbit while it still maintained ties with Iran and Russia.

1 CARD 1: PERSIAN LINGUISTIC & INTELLECTUAL TIES



- CENTURIES OF SHARED LITERARY HERITAGE
- Eg 'Sikandarnama' exchange
- Iranian influence
- Gulf

CENTURIES OF SHARED LITERARY HERITAGE

- Mughal court culture influence
- Shia intellectual exchange
- Indo-Iranian cultural affinity

Logical base: soft power as a hard asset



2 CARD 2: THE GULF WORKER & REMITTANCE POWER



OVER \$80 BILLION ANNUALLY

- Decades of labor migration
- Quiet contribution
- Reservoir of economic goodwill

Logical base: soft power asset

3 CARD 3: MULTI-ALIGNMENT & STRATEGIC AUTONOMY

- Professional country
- Engagement partners



- Engage diverse partners
- Credibility in Arab world
- Not a zero-sum game

Chabahar Port
Chabahar Port



THE UNTAPPED CARDS UP INDIA'S SLEEVE



ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK:
Inspired by Prof. Amitabh Mattoo
(Dean, SIS, JNU)

4 CARD 4: NATURAL CIVILIZATIONAL HINTERLAND



PAST-ORIENTED opportunistic actor

- Strategic decoupling from Washington's priorities
- Proactive regional shaping
- A responsible power

CHALLENGES
(Categorized):



IMPLEMENTATION
(US Sanctions)



RISKS
(Regional escalation)



INTERNAL HARMONY

WAY FORWARD:

INSTC acceleration

Cultural Diplomacy 2.0

Strategic Decoupling

Logical and philosophical base

Realist logic of power and interests

- States seek security and influence, not moral glory.
- Pakistan's activism is explained as a search for strategic rents; India's suggested restraint is about preserving long-term bargaining power, not idealism.

Constructivist emphasis on identity and narratives

- Civilisational links, shared cultural memory, and perceptions of "trustworthy" partners matter as much as hard capabilities.
- India's image as a plural, non-sectarian, ancient civilisation offers a distinct narrative compared to Pakistan's narrower ideological identity.

Republican and democratic ethos

- The argument implicitly values stable democracies over military-dominated states as more credible long-term partners.
- A democracy's authority rests on rule-of-law and public legitimacy, not just elite bargains.

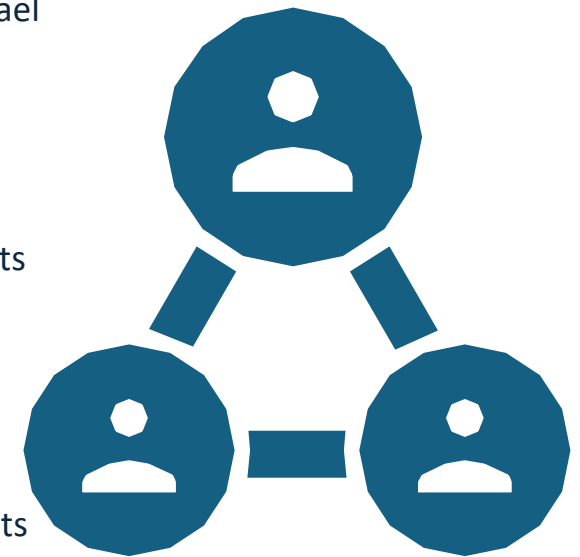
Ethic of responsibility vs ethic of conviction (Weberian frame)

- Ethic of conviction would push India to assert itself immediately as mediator to "not let Pakistan steal the limelight".
- Ethic of responsibility urges considering long-term consequences, capability constraints, and the risk of over-extension.

Non-alignment transformed into "multi-alignment"

- Philosophically, this is continuity with Nehru's emphasis on autonomy, with adaptation to a multipolar order.
- India must avoid becoming an extension of US policy or a client in regional rivalries; it should remain a pole in itself.

- Multidimensional analysis
- Social dimension
 - Large Indian diaspora in the Gulf (workers, professionals) makes regional stability a human and social concern, not just a strategic one.
 - India's image among ordinary people in West Asia is shaped by cultural exports, Bollywood, and labour relations; this can be a buffer in crises.
- Political dimension
 - Foreign policy choices in West Asia feed back into domestic politics (e.g., positions on Palestine, Iran sanctions, Israel ties).
 - Pakistan's attempts to monopolise the "Muslim world" narrative can impact India's political engagement with OIC and other forums.
- Legal dimension
 - India must navigate UN sanctions regimes, US domestic sanctions (like CAATSA-type laws), and bilateral agreements while engaging Iran and others.
 - Maritime law (UNCLOS), chokepoints like Strait of Hormuz, and legal protection for diaspora workers are relevant.
- Ethical dimension
 - Balancing realpolitik with concern for civilian suffering in conflicts (Yemen, Syria, Gaza, etc.).
 - Ethical questions around arms exports, intelligence cooperation, and whether India should offer mediation when its good offices could reduce violence.
- International dimension
 - West Asia is a theatre for great-power competition (US, China, Russia, EU).
 - China's growing economic footprint (Belt and Road, energy deals) sets a backdrop against which India's role is judged.
- Economic dimension
 - Oil prices, remittances, trade routes, and connectivity (ports, corridors) link West Asia tightly to India's growth story.
 - Sanctions on Iran or regional conflict can directly impact India's current account, inflation, and fiscal stability.



- Linkages with NCERTs
- **Class 12 – Politics in India since Independence**
 - Chapters on “India’s Foreign Policy” and “India and the World” discuss non-alignment, strategic autonomy, and relations with US, USSR, and neighbours.
 - The current issue is a contemporary expression of those core principles.
- **Class 12 – Contemporary World Politics**
 - Chapters on “US Hegemony in World Politics” and “Security in the Contemporary World” offer frameworks to understand US–Iran conflict, mediation, and strategic rents.
 - Also links to discussions on non-state actors, terrorism, and regional conflicts.
- **Class 11 – Themes in World History**
 - Units on “Nomadic Empires” and “The Three Orders” are less directly relevant, but the module on “Industrialisation and Urbanisation” can be used to understand migration and labour flows (e.g., Indian workers to the Gulf).
- **Class 11 – Indian Constitution at Work**
 - Chapter on “Constitution as a Living Document” and “Directive Principles of State Policy” (promotion of international peace and security) help connect foreign policy conduct to constitutional values.
- **Class 9/10 – India and the Contemporary World**
 - Sections on globalisation, international institutions, and post-war world order can be used to situate India’s dilemmas in a broader historical setting.

- **Linkages with UPSC CSE syllabus**

- **GS Paper 1**

- World history: Impact of events in the Middle East on India (oil shocks, diaspora).
- Indian society: Communal harmony, integration of minorities, diaspora communities.
- GS Paper 2
- International relations:
 - India and its neighbourhood (Pakistan, West Asia as extended neighbourhood).
 - Bilateral, regional, and global groupings (OIC, SCO, I2U2).
 - Effect of policies of developed and developing countries on India's interests (US sanctions on Iran, China's BRI in Pakistan).
- Governance and constitution:
 - Principles guiding India's foreign policy, strategic autonomy, non-alignment.
- GS Paper 3
- Economy:
 - Energy security, oil prices, and balance of payments.
 - External sector and remittances.
- Internal security:
 - Cross-border terrorism, radicalisation linked to regional conflicts.
 - Maritime security in the Indian Ocean.
- GS Paper 4 (Ethics)
- Case studies on dilemmas between strategic interest and ethical responsibility in foreign policy.
- Values: prudence, responsibility, global justice, moral leadership.

- Way forward
- **Develop a coherent West Asia policy document**
 - Integrate energy security, diaspora welfare, connectivity, and strategic partnerships into a single roadmap.
 - Institutionalise regular inter-ministerial coordination and parliamentary oversight.
- **Deepen independent ties with Iran while respecting constraints**
 - Progress on Chabahar and connectivity projects using creative financing and, where needed, multilateral frameworks to reduce sanctions risk.
 - Expand cultural, education, and people-to-people exchanges that draw on shared civilisational heritage.
- **Consolidate partnerships with Arab Gulf and Israel without exclusivism**
 - Continue security and economic cooperation but maintain clear messaging that India does not take sides in intra-Islamic rivalries.
 - Use India's diaspora goodwill to press for better labour rights and crisis-time protections.
- **Invest in diplomatic and intellectual capacity**
 - Strengthen area studies, language training (Persian, Arabic), and West Asia desks in MEA and think-tanks.
 - Encourage informed public debate rather than purely emotive or media-driven reactions.
- **Maintain strategic autonomy vis-à-vis big powers**
 - Support rules-based order, oppose unilateral sanctions when they hurt legitimate trade, and engage multiple poles (US, EU, Russia, China) without bandwagoning.
 - Avoid being drawn into proxy contests or military alliances that compromise freedom of manoeuvre.
- **Use moral authority selectively but credibly**
 - Offer good offices and humanitarian support where it can genuinely reduce suffering, but avoid headline-chasing mediation where India has little leverage.
 - Ensure domestic practice (rights of minorities, rule of law) aligns with the external narrative India wants to project.

- **UPSC Prelims**

- Questions on:
 - Chabahar port and its strategic significance.
 - Strait of Hormuz and its importance for India.
 - I2U2 / IMEC and related initiatives.
 - India–Iran gas pipeline, OPEC, and oil pricing.
- UPSC Mains – GS Papers
- **GS-2**
 - 2013/2014: India’s energy security and relationship with West Asian countries.
 - 2015: India–Iran relations in the context of nuclear deal and sanctions.
 - 2016: Discuss the significance of the Chabahar port for India.
 - 2017/2018: India’s balancing act in West Asia, including relations with Israel, Palestine, and Gulf states.
 - 2019: “India’s policy of non-alignment has evolved into multi-alignment.” Examine with examples.
 - 2020 onwards: Questions on India’s relations with the US and impact of US sanctions on India’s strategic choices.
- **GS-3**
 - Questions on energy security, oil price volatility, impact of West Asian crises on Indian economy and internal security (terrorism, radicalisation).
- **Essay**
 - Themes like “India as a balancing power in a multipolar world”, “Civilisational states and modern diplomacy”, “Ethics and realpolitik in foreign policy.”

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam:** Formally known as the Constitution (106th Amendment) Act, 2023, it mandates 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies.
- **Delimitation:** The act of redrawing boundaries of Lok Sabha and Assembly seats based on the recent census. The implementation of women's reservation is currently linked to this process.
- **Hindu Code Bill:** A series of laws passed in the 1950s (championed by Ambedkar) to codify and reform Hindu personal law, granting women rights to property, divorce, and inheritance.
- **Proxy Politics (Panchayat Pati Syndrome):** A phenomenon where women are elected to office but the actual power is exercised by their male relatives.
- **Viksit Bharat 2047:** The government's vision to transform India into a developed nation by the centenary of its independence.
- **Glass Ceiling:** An unofficial barrier that prevents women or minorities from rising to upper rungs of the corporate or political ladder, regardless of their qualifications.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- **The Core Thesis**

- Political representation is not merely a "favor" to women but a constitutional necessity for a functional democracy. The transition from symbolic participation to substantive legislative power is essential for India's development goals.

- **Key Points**

- **Ambedkarite Vision:** Dr. Ambedkar viewed the progress of a community by the degree of progress achieved by its women. His resignation over the Hindu Code Bill underscores that women's rights were never a secondary issue for him.

- **The 2029 Mandate:** There is a growing demand to decouple reservation from the long-delayed census/delimitation process to ensure 33% representation is a reality by the 2029 General Elections.

- **Beyond "Tokenism":** While women have excelled in grassroots politics (Panchayati Raj), their presence in the Lok Sabha (currently around 14%) and State Assemblies remains dismal, lagging behind global averages.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**
- **1. Pre-Independence and Colonial Era**

- Social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Jyotiba Phule and Savitribai Phule campaigned against practices such as sati, child marriage and denial of education to women.
- Colonial legislation (e.g., abolition of sati, Widow Remarriage, Age of Consent) began the process of state-led reform, but women’s political representation remained minimal and elite-dominated.
- **2. Freedom Movement and Constituent Assembly**
- Women like Sarojini Naidu, Sucheta Kripalani, Aruna Asaf Ali and others participated in national movement, strengthening claims for equal citizenship.
- The Constituent Assembly debates, influenced by Ambedkar and women members, emphasised equality before law, non-discrimination on grounds of sex, and special provisions for women under Articles 14, 15 and Directive Principles.
- **3. Early Republic and Hindu Code Reforms (1950s)**
- Ambedkar’s Hindu Code Bill faced fierce opposition; yet, between 1955–56, Parliament passed separate Acts that collectively reformed Hindu marriage, succession, adoption and guardianship laws, marking a watershed in women’s legal status.
- These reforms introduced monogamy, rights to divorce, expanded inheritance for daughters and widows, and legal adoption rights, laying the foundation for modern family law among Hindus.
- **4. 1970s–1990s: Feminist Movements and Local-Level Quotas**
- Feminist movements raised issues of dowry deaths, custodial rape, domestic violence and workplace discrimination, leading to legal amendments and new protections.
- The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments (early 1990s) reserved one-third seats in rural and urban local bodies for women, dramatically increasing their presence in grassroots politics and creating a “silent revolution” in many states.
- **5. 1996–2010: Early Attempts at Legislative Quotas**
- A Women’s Reservation Bill for Parliament and state assemblies was first introduced in 1996, but repeatedly lapsed amid political disagreements over OBC sub-quotas and party positions.
- In 2010, the Rajya Sabha passed a version of the Bill reserving one-third seats for women, but it stalled in the Lok Sabha and never became law.
- **6. 2010s–2020s: Renewed Focus and 2023 Bill**
- Over the last decade, women’s representation in Lok Sabha rose gradually but remained below 15%, and India’s global rank on women in parliament stayed low.
- The 2023 Women’s Reservation Bill (Constitution 128th Amendment) was passed to reserve one-third of seats for women in Lok Sabha, state assemblies and Delhi Assembly, including within SC/ST reserved seats, but its actual enforcement is linked to post-Census delimitation.
- Simultaneously, debates around intersectionality (Dalit, Adivasi, minority women), intra-party democracy, and quality of representation have deepened, often drawing implicitly on Ambedkar’s ideas on social justice.



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RISE ABOVE THE REST

ANALYSIS ON 'HONOURING BABASAHEB' & KEY INSIGHTS ON WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION



DR. B.R. AMBEDKAR'S LEGACY

"The progress of a community is measured by the degree of progress achieved by its women." - Key points:

- Hindu Code Bill advocacy
- Resignation over personal laws
- Vision for equal rights as a fundamental necessity.



WOMEN'S RESERVATION BILL (NARI SHAKTI VANDAN ADHINIYAM)

THE 2029 MANDATE

CHALLENGES

(e.g., Delimitation Link, 'Proxy Politics', Internal Consensus)



WAY FORWARD

(e.g., Decoupling Reservation from Delimitation, Capacity Building, Inner-Party Reforms)

Elephant vs. Baboon Leadership



VS.

BABOON

Pre-IVOLUTION OF Pre-Independence

1993

Representation, and Ammdment

2010

Women riity Advence

2023

Worldhorce

1993

Evolution of Women's Representation

1996

Ethics vixxa & Democracy

2010

Womens of Women's Women's Abs to academy

2023



DIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS



POLITICAL

- Representation gaps
- Winnability
- Women's gorts



ECONOMIC

- Lakhpati Didi
- Mudra
- Property rights



ETHICAL

- Ambedkarite perspective
- justice

SOCIAL

- Patriarchal norms
- Role models
- Hiorarchal hierriration

LEGAL

- Amendments
- constitutional equity

INTERNATIONAL

- Global comparisons
- Rwanda, compariso
- Rwanda, Mexico

Elephant vs. Baboon



SUSTAINABLE, STABLE, RESOURCE-CONSCIOUS



GLASS CEILING



GLASS FLOOR

UPSC RELEVANCE & SYLLABUS LINKAGES

- GS 1: Women's Role, Organizations, Empowerment
- Women's Role, Organizations, Empowerment
- GS 2: Constitution, Amendments, Parliament
- GS 4: Ethics in Governance
- Essay: Inclusivity & Democracy
- APSC specific themes are also included.

MODEL ANSWER FRAMEWORK

- Introduction - ► Body ► Body • Conclusion - Rrecommatation on a related question.
- Conclusion - Riwit and conderstard partner - vionts answer a related question.

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- Logical and Philosophical Base
- 1. Constitutional Morality and Social Justice
 - Ambedkar used the idea of constitutional morality to argue that social relations—including family and caste—must conform to principles of liberty, equality and fraternity.
 - The push for women’s legal rights and political representation rests logically on the belief that democracy is hollow if half the population is structurally excluded from decision-making, regardless of formal equality on paper.
- 2. Individual Rights vs Communitarian Norms
 - Ambedkar’s reforms shifted the focus from community-based status (as daughter, wife, widow) to the woman as an autonomous rights-bearing individual.
 - This pits universalist constitutional rights against patriarchal customs justified in the name of religion, caste or “tradition”, reflecting a liberal-egalitarian philosophical stance.
- 3. Substantive Equality, Not Mere Formal Equality
 - Philosophically, reservation and special provisions rest on the distinction between formal equality (same rules for all) and substantive equality (unequal treatment to correct historical disadvantage).
 - The logic is similar to that underlying SC/ST reservations: simply declaring equality is insufficient when structural barriers, social norms and resource gaps prevent disadvantaged groups from competing on equal footing.
- 4. Democratic Deepening and Deliberative Democracy
 - Greater presence of women is expected to broaden the range of experiences and perspectives in law-making, leading to richer deliberation and more responsive policies.
 - This resonates with deliberative democratic theory, which values inclusion of marginalised voices not only as a matter of justice but as a way to improve the quality of collective decisions.
- 5. Ambedkar’s Feminist Jurisprudence
 - Ambedkar’s approach can be read as an early form of intersectional feminism—he located women’s subordination at the intersection of caste, class, religion and patriarchy.
 - His insistence on codified, secular laws is grounded in a positivist belief that rational legislation can dismantle oppressive social structures over time.

- Multidimensional Analysis
- 1. Social Dimension
 - Greater representation and stronger legal rights can challenge patriarchal norms within families and communities, altering expectations around education, employment and marriage.
 - Role-model effects—seeing women as MLAs, MPs, panchayat leaders—can reshape aspirations of girls and boys alike, gradually normalising women in leadership roles.
- 2. Political Dimension
 - Women’s quotas can transform party strategies, ticket distribution and campaigning, potentially making politics more programmatic and less rooted in muscle-money power over time.
 - At the same time, internal party democracy and candidate-selection processes need reforms so that women are not limited to reserved seats alone.
- 3. Legal Dimension
 - The trajectory from Hindu Code reforms to contemporary gender laws illustrates how Parliament has progressively interpreted the Constitution to expand women’s rights.
 - Future litigation may examine issues like rotation, duration and sub-quotas, testing how far affirmative action can go while remaining consistent with equality and representation principles.
- 4. Ethical Dimension
 - Ethically, excluding women from power contradicts ideals of justice, fairness and respect for persons; it amounts to treating women as means to familial or community interests rather than as ends in themselves.
 - Affirmative action in representation can be defended as corrective justice, acknowledging historical wrongs and seeking to rebalance opportunities across generations.
- 5. International Dimension
 - Globally, many countries have adopted gender quotas (Rwanda, Nordic states, Latin American democracies), and India’s low rank in women’s parliamentary representation often features in international assessments.
 - Learning from global experiences—design of quotas, capacity building, party financing—can help India avoid pitfalls and adapt best practices to its federal and multi-party context.
- 6. Economic Dimension
 - Evidence from local bodies suggests that women leaders often prioritise public goods that improve human development indicators, which in turn enhance economic productivity.

Linkages with NCERTs

Class 6–8 Social and Political Life (Civics)

- Chapters on “Diversity and Discrimination”, “Understanding Laws”, “Women Change the World”, “Understanding Marginalisation”.
- Use them to illustrate how institutions, laws and social norms interact, and how legal rights are necessary but not sufficient for social change.

Class 9 Democratic Politics I

- “Democracy in the Contemporary World”, “Constitutional Design”, “Democratic Rights”.
- Connect Ambedkar’s role in constitution-making and the idea of political equality with the demand for women’s representation.

Class 10 Democratic Politics II

- “Gender, Religion and Caste”, “Working of Institutions”, “Democracy and Diversity”.
- This theme fits directly into discussions on political representation, horizontal inequalities and affirmative action.

Class 11 Indian Constitution at Work (Polity)

- Chapters on “Constitution as a Living Document”, “Citizenship”, “Rights in the Indian Constitution”.
- Use the Hindu Code Bill and women’s reservation to show how constitutional principles guide ordinary legislation.

Class 12 Politics in India Since Independence

- “Challenges of Nation Building”, “Recent Developments in Indian Politics”.
- Map the trajectory from early social reforms to contemporary debates on quota politics and representation.

Class 12 Indian Society / Social Change and Development in India

- Chapters on “Social Institutions: Continuity and Change”, “The Challenges of Cultural Diversity”, “The Story of Indian Democracy”.
- These help frame women’s rights as part of larger processes of social change, caste reform and democratic deepening.

- **Linkages with UPSC CSE Syllabus**

- **1. GS Paper I (Society & History)**

- Role of women and women's organisation; population and associated issues; poverty and developmental issues, social empowerment.
- Modern Indian history, contribution of Ambedkar and other reformers, and the freedom struggle's impact on social reforms.
- 2. GS Paper II (Polity & Governance)
- Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure.
- Salient features of the Representation of People's Act; Parliament and state legislatures—structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers and privileges.
- Mechanisms, laws, institutions and bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of vulnerable sections; issues relating to devolution of powers and finances to local levels.
- 3. GS Paper III (Economy & Development)
- Inclusive growth and issues arising from it; development processes and the development industry—the role of SHGs, NGOs and women's collectives.
- Issues related to employment, demographic dividend, and women's labour participation.
- 4. GS Paper IV (Ethics)
- Ethics in public administration; accountability and ethical governance, moral and political attitudes.
- Values of justice, equality, empathy and compassion in public life; case-studies on gender bias, representation and conflict of interest.

- Way Forward
- 1. Implement and Refine Women's Reservation
 - Ensure timely completion of Census and delimitation so that reservations in Parliament and state assemblies are operationalised within a clear, legally mandated timeframe.
 - Consider mechanisms to minimise negative effects of rotation, such as longer cycles or partial rotation, and debate sub-quotas for OBC and minority women in a transparent, consultative manner.
- 2. Strengthen Internal Party Democracy
 - Mandate party-level quotas for women in candidate lists, party executive positions and ticket distribution, with public reporting of compliance.
 - Encourage open primaries or transparent nomination procedures that allow grassroots women leaders, including those from panchayats, to move up the ladder.
- 3. Capacity Building and Support Systems
 - Establish non-partisan training academies and legislative support cells focused on women legislators, providing research assistance, legal briefings and constituency planning tools.
 - Introduce mentoring programmes pairing experienced leaders with first-time women representatives, and invest in local-language resources on legislative procedure and policy analysis.
- 4. Societal and Educational Interventions
 - Integrate gender sensitisation and Ambedkar's social-justice ideals into school curricula, NSS/NYKS activities and civil-service training to gradually transform social attitudes.
 - Promote media guidelines and positive narratives that portray women politicians as serious decision-makers, countering stereotypes and sensationalism.
- 5. Intersectional Focus
 - Design schemes and leadership programmes specifically targeted at Dalit, Adivasi, minority and rural poor women to ensure that representation is inclusive, not limited to elite groups.
 - Encourage data disaggregation by caste, class and region to monitor who benefits from quotas and where gaps persist.
- 6. Substantive Policy Priorities
 - Use the expanded presence of women to push for stronger laws and implementation on reproductive health, unpaid care work recognition, equal pay, violence against women, and women's land and property rights.
 - Align these priorities with SDGs and national development strategies, framing gender justice not as a "sectoral" issue but as a cross-cutting governance priority.

- A. UPSC CSE – Prelims
 - **2010–2024 (multiple years):** Questions on 73rd and 74th Amendments, reservation for women in PRIs and Urban Local Bodies, and related Articles.
 - **Questions on Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles:** equality before law, non-discrimination, special provisions for women and children.
 - **Questions on Ambedkar:** his role in drafting the Constitution, ideas on social justice, and key committees.
- B. UPSC CSE – Mains
 - **GS I – Society**
 - “Discuss the changing status of women in independent India.”
 - “Women’s movement in India has not addressed the issues of women of all social strata. Comment.”
 - “How do social movements in India contribute to democracy and social justice?”
 - **GS II – Polity & Governance**
 - “Women’s reservation in Parliament is a necessary but not sufficient condition for gender justice. Discuss.”
 - “Despite constitutional guarantees, women’s representation in Indian legislatures remains low. Analyse the reasons and suggest measures.”
 - “Ambedkar’s ideas on social justice continue to shape public policy in India. Examine.”
 - **Essay Paper**
 - Topics such as “Empowerment of women in India – myths and reality”, “Real development must mean the development of all”, “Rise of social movements and deepening of Indian democracy”, “The spirit of the Constitution”.

Building a resilient India

Resilience is about inter-dependence, not self-reliance. We need both domestic strength and international ambition



ILLUSTRATION: BIRAJ SHARMA

An old Chinese proverb says, "May you live in interesting times." It wishes "disorder, uncertainty, and turmoil" on the recipient. That about sums up the world in these last six weeks, as the United States and Israel have played soldiers, substituting plastic guns with their combined armed forces. The war has led to shortages of gas, widespread supply chain disruptions, and a huge jump in oil prices. How can we deal effectively with this world of uncertainty, turmoil, and disorder? As we deal with the immediate challenges, we need to address our need for long-term resilience. That is my focus in this article.

An immediate instinct is to turn inward and seek self-reliance. But the world, and certainly India, is too dependent on other countries for that to be an effective strategy. After Gabeau in 2020, we tried to reduce reliance on China. We imposed restrictions on foreign investment and tried to limit imports. What happened? Our exports of goods to China stagnated at under \$20 billion, our imports from China doubled, from \$100 billion to over \$200 billion, leading to a second trade deficit of \$200 billion.

The alternative to self-reliance is inter-dependence. We will remain dependent on others — for energy, for specialized machinery, for aircraft, for intermediate chemicals, for certain electronic components. What we should seek is that others are as dependent on us, for things only we can provide, or for products or costs that are distinctly better. There we have work to do. India must matter much more to the world. That demands both domestic strength and international ambition.

Building strength at home: The medium-term fundamentals of our economy are sound. Decent growth, low inflation, ample foreign exchange reserves, and robust bank and company balance sheets. So, while we cope with current disruption, we must work on the longer term. Domestic strength will come from a strong economy built on world-competitive and ambitious firms.

For firms to do the right thing, we need the right

incentives. This is a matter of structural change. Competitiveness needs to be forced through policy. The best way is by being open to imports from the best in the world. Going further, agreement of a truly competitive firm is exports. Can we successfully compete for our core business with the world's best on their home ground? The reforms post 1991 were characterized by churn in firms, with the exit of less competitive firms and the more successful ones prospering. Whole new sectors such as information technology (IT) services and the pharmaceutical industry rose to prominence, producing some of our most successful firms. Their competitiveness was proven by success in world markets. That churn decreased from the 2000s, we need to trigger it again. Exit is the essential partner of entry.

We must invest in proprietary technology. As this country has long argued, Indian industry needs to greatly increase its investment in in-house research & development (R&D). A good numerical target is to grow in-house R&D five-times from our current 0.3 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) to the world average of 3.5 per cent. But even more useful is to undertake some serious benchmarking with the top 10 or 20 firms in one's industry. How much do they invest as a percentage of sales? How many people do they have in R&D? With what qualifications? And what output does their R&D provide each year — what new products, what patents and design registrations, what entry into new businesses and markets? And aim to do better on all these metrics.

Most of this is about what firms must do themselves, supported by a policy environment that fosters competition. To build strength at home, industry and the state have equally important roles to play.

Building strength abroad: The other side of domestic strength is international ambition. Our flurry of free trade negotiations is welcome. We must see our free trade agreements (FTAs) to build a stronger strategic relationship in general. Our close relationships in West Asia should help us engage directly in the region's

reconstruction and recovery from the war. The European Union (EU) FTA is an opportunity for Europe and India to deepen ties across everything from defence and education to culture. We need, though, a deepening of foreign relations with much of Asia. Our policy of Act East must go from a slogan to, well, actually acting. At a minimum, we could renew and strengthen existing trade agreements with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Japan, and South Korea. We could evaluate joining the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, which brings together 11 major economies around the Pacific and a geographically challenged United Kingdom. It is a deep and wide agreement, with a high bar for everything from government procurement to investment. Studying what must change for us to qualify could identify useful domestic reforms, even if we conclude it isn't yet in our national interest.

We claim to speak for the Global South; the Global South seems to have missed that. A useful approach might be a joint position in the World Trade Organization and the United Nations, and to expand ties and trade across Africa. And we need a new interest in Latin America, where there is great resonance in many areas, including the importance of family business and a heterogeneous society that accords equal importance to family ties.

While the state could lead in ensuring close relationships with all these countries that matter to us, industry must follow that lead with investment overseas. Our ambition in industry should be to build a strong international presence. How do our leading firms become comfortable operating in Europe, Southeast Asia, Africa, Latin America and West Asia, all at the same time? Consideration of Indian industry delegations to countries as varied as Sri Lanka, Indonesia, the UK, Oman and Egypt have received a message that Indian firms are being actively sought. We need to build on this welcome, recruiting local managers and local talents. There really is a whole world out there. The rest of Asia, without China, is three times our GDP. West Asia, Turkey and Africa would add over \$1 trillion, and Latin America over \$1 trillion. Add those together and we have a market bigger than the US or China. The EU doubles that.

Today, our IT services, pharmaceutical, and a few specialised firms in the textile and garment, auto-components, and engineering industries have a significant international presence. Indian industry with large must follow their lead. Many of our international firms are quite dependent on the US market and need to diversify — Mr Trump's tariff games of the last year have been a useful prompt.

A combination of domestic strength and international ambition can build dependence on India. By working in tandem, government policy and Indian industry can make India matter to the world and deliver an inter-dependent future.

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INDIA'S WORLD?

NAUSHAD FORBES

ILLUSTRATION: BIRAJ SHARMA

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

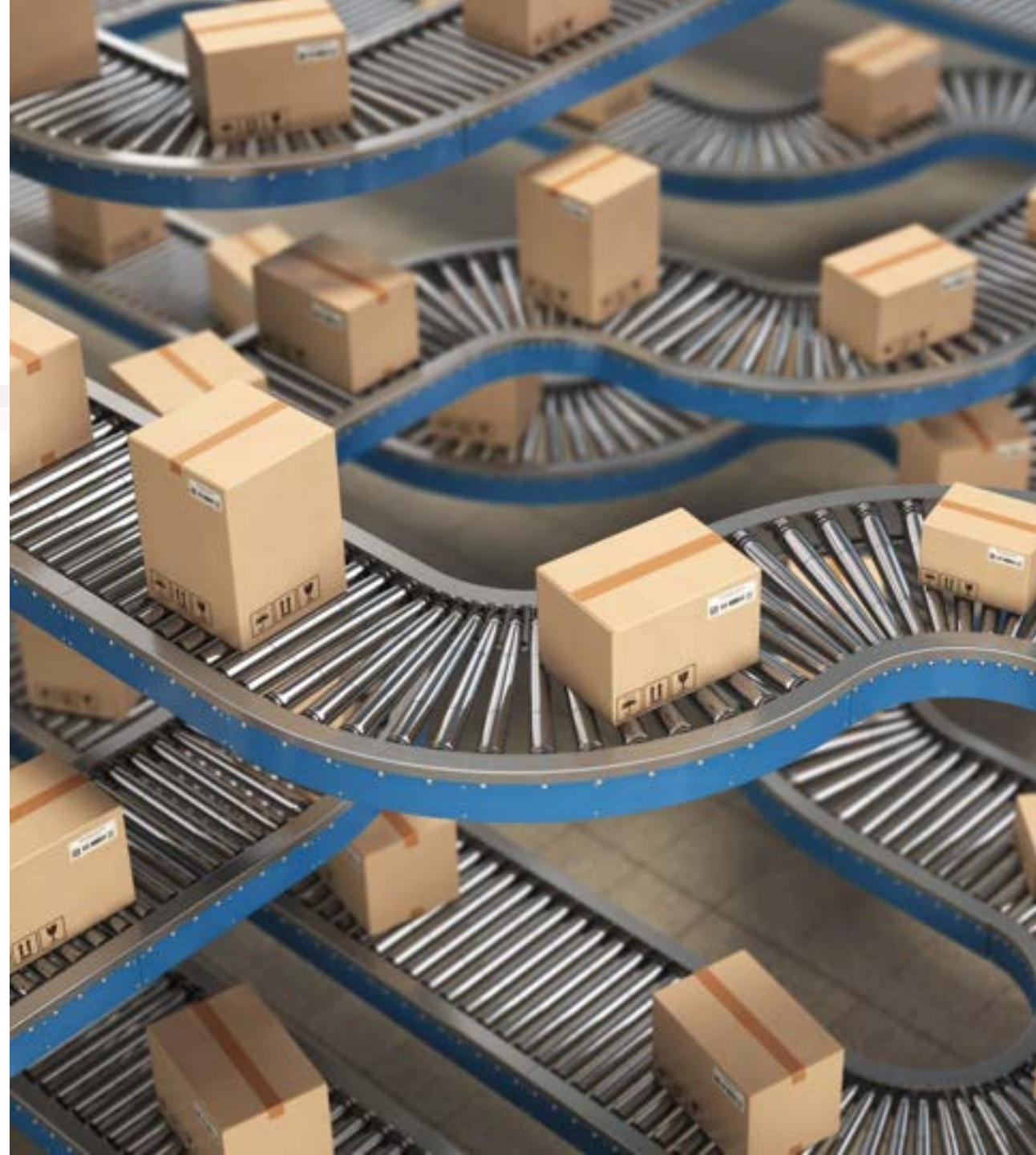
- **Inter-dependence:** Unlike isolationist self-reliance, this concept suggests a mutual reliance between nations. India becomes indispensable to the world for certain goods/services, just as it relies on the world for others.

- **Trade Deficit:** The difference between the value of a country's imports and exports. The article notes a widening deficit with China (approx. \$100 billion), emphasizing that import restrictions alone don't solve structural imbalances.

- **R&D Intensity:** The ratio of a company's or nation's investment in Research & Development to its total output (GDP or Sales). India's R&D-to-GDP ratio is roughly **0.7%**, while the global average is **1.5%**.

- **FTA (Free Trade Agreement):** A pact between two or more nations to reduce barriers to imports and exports. Examples include the proposed India-EU FTA and the **CPTPP** (Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership).

- **Act East Policy:** A diplomatic initiative to promote economic, strategic, and cultural relations with the vast Asia-Pacific region at different levels.



Main Arguments and Substantive Parts

The core thesis posits that **true resilience is born of strength and ambition, not insulation.**

The Failure of Inwardness: Post-2020 (Galwan), India tried to reduce reliance on China through restrictions. However, imports doubled while exports stagnated, proving that "self-reliance" through barriers is often ineffective.

Domestic Strength via Competition: Local industry survives not by protectionism, but through "churn"—where inefficient firms exit and competitive ones (like IT and Pharma in the 90s) thrive.

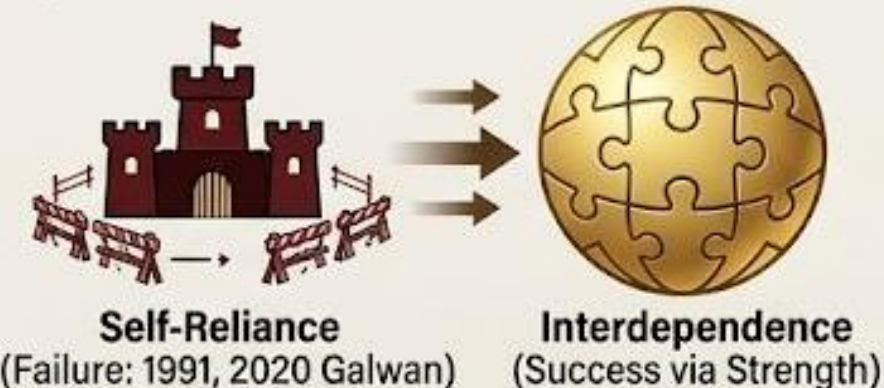
The R&D Imperative: To make the world dependent on India, Indian firms must own proprietary technology. The goal is to move from being "service providers" to "IP owners."

International Ambition: India must engage with the "Global South" and diverse markets like Latin America and West Asia, moving beyond a slogan-based foreign policy to actual investment-led presence.

- Historical evolution of the issue (Indian context)
- 3.1 Pre-independence foundations
- Colonial trade structure made India an exporter of raw materials and importer of finished goods, creating dependence and de-industrialisation.
- Nationalist economic thinking (Dadabhai Naoroji, Gandhi, Nehru, others) emphasized **self-reliance** and **swadeshi** as responses to exploitative interdependence.
- 3.2 Early post-independence: Import-substitution and state-led industrialization (1950s–1970s)
- Strategy: **Planned, state-led industrialization**, heavy industry focus (Mahalanobis model), high tariffs, quantitative restrictions.
- Objective: Build domestic industry, achieve technological independence, reduce external vulnerability.
- Outcome: Good creation of basic and heavy industries and some technological capacity, but also low competitiveness, shortages, and a “license-permit-quota raj”.
- 3.3 Gradual opening and crisis-induced liberalization (1980s–1990s)
- 1980s: Some deregulation and export promotion; early moves toward integration with world economy.
- 1991 BOP crisis: Triggered systemic reforms – de-licensing, tariff reduction, FDI liberalization, greater trade openness.
- Post-1991: Rapid growth, especially in services (IT), some manufacturing segments; integration into global value chains increased resilience but also exposure to global cycles.
- 3.4 Globalization, WTO and regionalism (1990s–2010s)
- India joined the WTO (1995), entered several FTAs (e.g., ASEAN, SAFTA) and deepened global trade and investment ties.
- Debate emerged: whether globalization has increased vulnerability (financial crises, competition, deindustrialisation) or enabled new export-led opportunities.
- 3.5 Post-2008, slowing growth and new vulnerabilities
- Global financial crisis, later Eurozone issues, and then the rise of protectionism and “reshoring” in advanced economies made export-led paths more difficult.
- India’s manufacturing share in GDP stagnated; questions arose about jobless growth and the need for structural transformation.
- 3.6 Covid-19, geopolitical tensions, and renewed self-reliance push (2020s)
- Covid exposed vulnerabilities in global supply chains (pharma APIs, electronics, medical equipment).
- India announced **Atmanirbhar Bharat** as a framework for self-reliant, resilient India, including PLI schemes and strategic sector support.
- Simultaneously, India’s G20 role, Indo-Pacific engagements, and digital public infrastructure showcased an inter-dependent yet assertive India.
- Current debate: find the right balance between self-reliance and integration; the article takes a clear stance towards **inter-dependence with strong domestic capacity**.

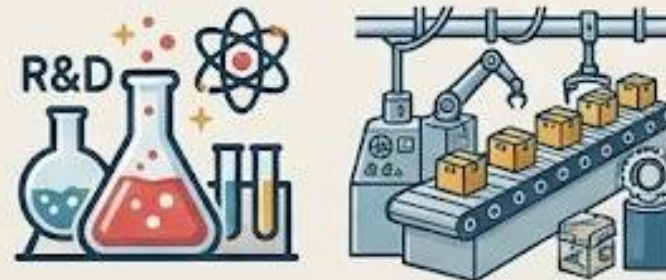
GLOBAL INTERDEPENDENCE: THE ROAD TO A RESILIENT INDIA - AN AXIA IAS ACADEMY ANALYSIS

1 The Shift: From Isolation to Integration



- **Failed Restrictions:** Imports doubled, Exports stagnated post-Galwan.
- **True Resilience:** In interdependence, not self-reliance.
- **A Matter of Structural Change:** Policies for competition.

2 THE DOMESTIC FOUNDATION OF STRENGTH







- **Double R&D Spend:** Goal 1.5% GDP (Current 0.7%). Industry must benchmark global leaders.
- **Policy for Competition:** Foster churn, allow exit of uncompetitive firms.
- **Proprietary Technology:** Move from services to IP ownership.

3 INTERNATIONAL AMBITION & PRESENCE



- **Deep Trade Relations:** Slogans (Act East) to actual action.
- **Diverse Markets:** Engage Global South (Latin America, Africa), West Asia.
- **FTA & Cooperation:** Opportunities with EU, UK, and potential CPTPP; collaborate with ASEAN, Japan, South Korea.

4 MULTIDIMENSIONAL IMPACT

-  **ECONOMIC:** High-value exports, trade surplus goal.
-  **INTERNATIONAL:** Multi-alignment and global influence.
-  **SOCIAL:** High-value jobs, reversed brain-drain.
-  **ETHICAL:** Intellectual Property Rights focus.



5 WAY FORWARD

(250-word answer structure)

- Institutionalize R&D incentives.
- Aggressive FTA strategy (EU/UK).
- Streamline exit processes (IBC reform).
- Balanced "Atmanirbhar" and "Vishwa-nirbhar"

- **Logical and philosophical base of the arguments**

- **4.1 Core logical structure**

- The world is structurally volatile; shocks are inevitable.
- No large complex economy can be completely self-sufficient in such a world.
- Therefore, resilience must mean **capacity to withstand and adapt to shocks**, not isolation.
- That capacity depends on:
 - Strong, competitive domestic capabilities.
 - Deep, diversified international linkages and rule-based systems.
- Hence, India should simultaneously:
 - Strengthen its internal economic, technological and institutional foundations.
 - Engage ambitiously and strategically with global markets and governance systems.
- **4.2 Philosophical underpinnings**
- **Liberal internationalist:** Belief that rules-based trade, multilateralism and cooperation can create mutual gains and reduce conflict, even in a competitive world.
- **Pragmatic realism:** Acknowledges that interdependence is already weaponised; hence, seeks diversification and domestic strengthening, not naive free-trade utopianism.
- **Developmentalism with market orientation:** State's role is to shape conditions for competitive firms (infrastructure, human capital, macro-stability, regulatory framework) rather than micro-managing production.
- **Ethical cosmopolitanism:** Implicit idea that India's rise should be tied to broader welfare of the Global South, not narrow nationalism.



- **Multidimensional analysis**

- **8.1 Social dimension**

- Potential for **mass job creation** in labour-intensive manufacturing and services if India integrates well into global value chains.
- But risk of **widening inequality** between globally connected sectors and lagging regions/classes if redistribution, social protection, and education are weak.
- **8.2 Political dimension**
- Debate on self-reliance vs openness is politically salient and links to nationalism, strategic autonomy, and electoral narratives.
- Inter-dependence requires **policy stability, institutional credibility and cooperative federalism**, as many levers (land, labour, local infrastructure) lie with states.
- **8.3 Legal and institutional dimension**
- Need for stable trade law, competition law, IPR regimes, and dispute resolution mechanisms to support competitive firms.
- International legal commitments (WTO, FTAs) must be reconciled with domestic regulatory objectives (consumer protection, environmental standards).
- **8.4 Ethical dimension**
- Issues of distributive justice: who bears adjustment costs of openness? Are workers and small producers adequately supported?
- Global ethics: India's stance on climate justice, fair digital trade rules, and equitable vaccine/technology sharing becomes central to its inter-dependent role.
- **8.5 International dimension**
- Inter-dependence offers India leverage in **regional and global institutions**; as a major market and talent hub, India can co-shape standards in technology, trade, climate, and finance.
- But it must navigate complex alignments (US-China rivalry, Indo-Pacific, BRICS, Global South coalitions).
- **8.6 Economic dimension**
- Inter-dependence, if well-managed, can accelerate growth through technology transfer, economies of scale, and export dynamism.
- Macroeconomic risks: exposure to external shocks (capital flow volatility, global demand downturns), requiring robust macro-prudential and social-protection frameworks.

- Linkages with NCERTs
- **Economics – Class 11, “Indian Economy 1950–1990”**
 - Explains import substitution, planning, public sector dominance – historical roots of self-reliance thinking.
- **Economics – Class 11, “Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalisation: An Appraisal”**
 - Covers LPG reforms, WTO, and integration with world economy – basis for understanding inter-dependence.
- **Economics – Class 12, “Balance of Payments” and “Open Economy Macroeconomics” (intro)**
 - Helps understand vulnerability, external sector, and how trade shocks affect domestic economy.
- **Political Science – Class 12, “India’s External Relations” & “Globalisation”**
 - Links India’s foreign policy choices with economic inter-dependence, strategic autonomy and domestic politics.
- **Geography – Class 12, “India: People and Economy” – chapters on manufacturing and international trade**
 - Examines patterns of industrialisation, special economic zones, export-oriented sectors.
- **Social Science – Class 10, “Globalisation and the Indian Economy”**
 - Accessible examples of MNCs, supply chains, and debates on pros and cons of globalisation.



- **Linkages with UPSC CSE syllabus**

- **10.1 GS Paper I**

- World history and post-World War economic order (rise of globalisation, Bretton Woods institutions).
- Indian society and regional disparities (social impact of open vs closed growth models).
- Modern Indian history – economic strands in nationalist movement (Swadeshi, self-reliance).
- 10.2 GS Paper II
- Governance and policy: role of institutions in trade negotiations, regulatory frameworks.
- International relations: India's foreign policy, strategic autonomy, role in WTO, G20, Global South, FTAs, Indo-Pacific.
- Government policies and interventions impacting growth, trade and industrialization.
- 10.3 GS Paper III
- Indian economy: growth, planning, industrial policy, liberalisation, changes in industrial structure.
- External sector: trade, balance of payments, WTO, FTAs, trade policy.
- Infrastructure, investment, R&D, technology, innovation ecosystem.
- Inclusive growth, employment, and social sector outcomes of different growth strategies.
- Security: economic and energy security in a turbulent world.
- 10.4 GS Paper IV (Ethics)
- Ethics in economic policy: balancing national interest, global obligations and distributive justice.
- Values in public policy: prudence, responsibility, long-termism, global solidarity.
- Case-study angle: handling trade-offs between protecting domestic jobs vs signing trade agreements.

Way forward – policy and practice suggestions

Calibrated openness with strategic safeguards

- Maintain openness to trade, technology and investment while identifying a narrow set of genuinely strategic dependencies (semiconductors, critical minerals, defence, health) where domestic capability and diversified sourcing are essential.

Aggressive domestic capacity building

- Prioritise human capital (education, skilling), strong innovation systems, and supportive infrastructure.
- Encourage firm-level R&D through stable tax incentives, public–private research partnerships, and outcome-based funding.

Re-thinking industrial policy

- Move from broad-brush protection towards **performance-linked support** (productivity, exports, innovation) and sunset clauses.
- Strengthen competition policy to avoid cronyism and concentration that stifles innovation.

Deepening and diversifying trade integration

- Conclude high-quality FTAs with major markets while investing in domestic adjustment (retraining, safety nets).
- Strengthen trade diplomacy capacity to negotiate standards on digital trade, climate and labour that reflect India's interests.

Inclusive and just transition

- Combine global integration with robust social protection – unemployment insurance pilots, portable social security, targeted support to MSMEs and workers affected by trade shocks.
- Special packages to help lagging regions plug into global value chains (logistics, skill hubs, industrial clusters).



- 13.1 UPSC CSE Mains
 - **GS-3 2020:** Question on “Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan” – how it can be an opportunity to strengthen and grow the Indian economy.
 - **GS-3 2019/2018 (multiple years):** Questions on the impact of WTO and globalisation on Indian agriculture, industry and services.
 - **GS-2 2018:** Question on how India’s foreign policy is influenced by economic concerns and globalisation.
 - **GS-3 2014/2015:** Questions on “Make in India” and the challenges of manufacturing-led growth.
 - **Essay (various years):** Topics on globalisation, national interest, “co-operative federalism in a globalised world”, etc.
- 13.2 UPSC CSE Prelims
 - MCQs related to:
 - WTO agreements, functions, Trade Facilitation Agreement.
 - Current FTAs/RTAs involving India.
 - Balance of payment, current account vs capital account.
 - Atmanirbhar Bharat or schemes like PLI, Make in India, etc.



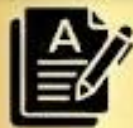
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