

Q.1) "In the wake of escalating tensions between Israel and Iran, examine the implications of this conflict on India's strategic, energy, and diaspora-related interests." (150 words, 10 marks)

Introduction

India maintained civilizational ties with Iran and supported Palestine while unofficially engaging Israel since the **1960s**. The **post-1992** balancing act faces new pressure amid escalating Israel–Iran tensions, impacting India's strategic, energy, and diaspora interests.

Body

Timeline of Escalation

- **April 2024:** Hamas launched a surprise multi-pronged assault on Israel, killing civilians and sparking a full-blown conflict.
- **May 2024 onward:** Israel responded with a prolonged offensive in Gaza, causing heavy casualties and a humanitarian crisis.
- **Early to mid-2025:** Regional tensions escalated as Iran and its proxies engaged directly, culminating in a exchange of strikes between Iran and Israel.

Effect on India's Strategic Interests

1. **Balancing ties:** India must maintain strategic neutrality—Israel is a key defence and tech partner; Iran is vital for regional connectivity and balancing Pakistan.
2. **Chabahar port calculus:** Escalation may derail India's Chabahar investment and INSTC plans, which are critical for access to Afghanistan and Central Asia.
3. **Defence procurement:** Israel supplies over **40%** of India's imported drones and advanced surveillance tech; any disruption may affect modernization efforts.

Energy Security

1. **Oil imports from the region:** Over **60%** of India's crude comes from West Asia. Wider conflict could spike prices, disrupt shipping via Strait of Hormuz, and strain India's energy bill.
2. **Diversification push:** Tensions may accelerate India's moves to diversify sources—renewables, Russian oil, and increased deals with the US, Brazil, and Africa.
3. **Strategic oil reserves:** India may need to release strategic reserves or expand them to mitigate short-term shocks.

Diaspora-Related Interests

1. **Indian workers in the Gulf:** Over 8 million Indians live in the Gulf, especially UAE and Saudi Arabia. A wider West Asian war could endanger lives and remittances.
2. **Evacuation readiness:** Operation Ganga and Vande Bharat Missions have set templates for evacuations, but large-scale movement from multiple countries would pose major logistical challenges.

3. **Social tensions at home:** Escalation may trigger communal tensions in India, impacting internal harmony and foreign policy posture.

Way Forward

1. **Diplomatic neutrality:** India must call for restraint, avoid taking sides, and use its goodwill with both countries to push for de-escalation.
2. **Energy resilience:** Boosting strategic reserves, diversifying imports, and investing in renewables are key to cushioning future shocks.
3. **Diaspora protection:** Pre-positioning evacuation plans and enhancing consular services across West Asia will be crucial for safeguarding Indian citizens.

Conclusion

As Jaishankar noted, "India's foreign policy is about advancing national interest amidst contradictions." The Israel–Iran crisis tests this ethos, demanding deft diplomacy to secure energy needs, strategic leverage, and the safety of Indian lives abroad.

Q.2) "Indian diaspora has evolved from a passive community abroad to a strategic asset for the country." Discuss the challenges and opportunities associated with this transformation. (150 marks, 10 marks)

Introduction

With over **32 million** Indians living abroad, the diaspora today acts as a "**living bridge**" between India and the world, as **PM Modi** calls it—growing from a quiet presence to a powerful partner in India's progress.

Body

From Passive Presence to Strategic Asset

In earlier decades, the diaspora mostly maintained **cultural ties** and **sent remittances home**, with limited influence on global affairs. Over time, rising success and India's outreach turned this quiet presence into a **strategic national asset**.

1. **Diaspora diplomacy:** India connects with its diaspora through high-level visits, Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, and India Houses, improving visibility worldwide.
2. **Economic contribution:** With over \$125 billion in remittances in 2023, the diaspora helps strengthen India's economy and supports families back home.
3. **Soft power & advocacy:** Indian-origin leaders like Rishi Sunak and top CEOs showcase India's image and increase its influence globally.

Opportunities for India

1. **Tech and innovation linkages:** Professionals in Silicon Valley and other hubs help bring in investments and share new ideas.
2. **Crisis response:** Diaspora groups helped during COVID-19 and Ukraine evacuation efforts by providing support and resources.

3. **Strategic lobbying:** Indian-origin lawmakers in the US, UK, Canada, and Australia often support India's interests in foreign parliaments.

Challenges in Diaspora Engagement

1. **Diaspora divisions:** Some groups, like pro-Khalistan supporters or CAA critics, create internal conflicts and tensions.
2. **Host country sensitivities:** Strong diaspora involvement sometimes raises concerns about interference in local politics.
3. **Migration issues:** Problems like worker exploitation in Gulf countries or visa fraud hurt India's image and create serious challenges.

Steps Taken

1. **Dual-track strategy:** India mixes cultural celebrations with long-term partnerships to build trust and utility.
2. **Institutional support:** MEA's Overseas Indian Affairs Division, e-Migrate portal, and help centres assist with problems and safety.
3. **Awards and recognition:** The Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards and India@75 events recognize and connect overseas Indians.
4. **Schemes and initiatives:** SWADES, Vande Bharat Mission, MADAD, and Know India Programme help students, workers, and families abroad.
5. **People-first diplomacy:** PM Modi's events in the US and UK show India's focus on connecting directly with its people abroad.

Way Forward

1. **Enhancing diaspora mapping:** India should maintain better data on skilled diaspora to quickly involve them in nation-building.
2. **Countering misinformation:** The government should fight fake news and anti-India narratives with timely facts and outreach.
3. **Inclusive engagement:** India must also include migrant workers, students, and youth—not just elites—in its diaspora policies.

Conclusion

As PM Modi said, "The Indian diaspora is the Rashtradrouts (national ambassadors) of India." By supporting and engaging this global community, India can build stronger partnerships and raise its voice in the world.

Q.3) "Rising protectionist tendencies in the United States pose both challenges and opportunities for India's trade and technology sectors." Examine. (150 words, 10 marks)

Introduction

The US, India's largest trading partner, has shown rising protectionist tendencies in recent years—through tariffs, visa restrictions, and supply chain reshoring. While this poses challenges, it also opens doors for India's trade and tech aspirations.

Body

Rising Protectionism in the US: Key Trends

1. **Tariff and trade barriers:** Post-2018, tariffs on steel, aluminium, and tech products reflect a shift to America-first trade policies.
2. **Tech nationalism:** Restrictions on chip exports, tighter foreign investment scrutiny, and local manufacturing incentives aim to reduce tech dependence.
3. **Immigration curbs:** H-1B visa tightening and job protection narratives have limited Indian skilled workforce access.

Challenges for India

1. **IT and Services Sector Impact:** Indian IT firms rely heavily on US contracts and talent movement. Visa restrictions raise costs and reduce flexibility.
2. **Export Uncertainty:** Anti-outsourcing sentiment and Buy American policies affect pharma, steel, and engineering exports from India.
3. **FDI and Tech Ties:** Tighter US scrutiny under laws like CFIUS can deter Indian investments in sensitive tech areas.
4. **WTO strain:** US withdrawal from trade norms complicates India's position in global negotiations.

Opportunities for India

1. **China+1 Strategy Advantage:** US firms diversifying supply chains away from China are looking at India for manufacturing and R&D.
2. **Digital Trade Alignment:** Shared values on data protection, trusted 5G, and open internet help India gain US support in global tech rules.
3. **Collaborative Tech Ecosystems:** Quad-led initiatives and iCET (Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies) enable co-development in AI, semiconductors, and quantum.
4. **Make in India Boost:** US interest in Indian electronics and defence production supports domestic job creation and tech transfer.

Steps Taken by India

1. **iCET Launch:** India and the US are working on critical tech cooperation, talent exchange, and joint innovation hubs.

2. **PLI Schemes:** India's production-linked incentives for electronics, pharma, and semiconductors attract US firms amid rising US-China friction.
3. **Trade Talks Revival:** India-US Trade Policy Forum (2023) worked on resolving WTO disputes and increasing market access.
4. **Workforce Diplomacy:** India has pushed for smoother H-1B processing and mutual recognition of skills and degrees.

Way Forward

1. **Balancing Protectionism with Engagement:** India must continue to negotiate favourable access while leveraging complementarities in tech and innovation.
2. **Diversifying Markets:** Expanding ties with EU, ASEAN, and Africa can reduce overdependence on the US market.
3. **Strengthening Domestic Tech Base:** Investing in R&D, skilling, and digital infrastructure will help India compete globally despite trade barriers.

Conclusion

Though US protectionism challenges India's trade and tech sectors, it also creates space for **strategic rebalancing**. With smart diplomacy and robust domestic policies, India can turn these headwinds into meaningful long-term gains.

Q.4) India's aspiration for a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council reflects both its growing global stature and the need for a more representative multilateral system." Critically examine the prospects and challenges of UNSC reform in this context. (250 words, 15 marks)

Introduction

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC), created in **1945**, reflects the power structure of the post-WWII era. However, emerging powers like India argue that it no longer represents the geopolitical realities of the 21st century.

Body

Why India seeks a permanent seat

1. **Global stature:** India is the world's **most populous** country, **5th largest** economy, and a nuclear power.
2. **Peacekeeping contributions:** India is one of the largest contributors to **UN peacekeeping missions**.
3. **Democratic credentials:** World's largest democracy, advocating multilateralism and **rule-based order**.
4. **Moral authority:** India has not misused force and has a record of **responsible nuclear behavior**.

Prospects of Reform

1. **Global support:** Countries like the US, France, UK, Russia support India's claim either explicitly or conditionally.
2. **G4 Momentum:** India works with **G4** (Germany, Japan, Brazil) pushing for expanded permanent membership.
3. **Africa's support:** African nations also demand greater representation, which aligns with India's position.
4. **Shifting power balance:** Rise of multipolarity and declining **credibility of UNSC** (due to veto misuse) strengthen reform calls.

Challenges to Reform

1. **P5 resistance:** Existing permanent members are reluctant to dilute their exclusive power, especially regarding the veto.
2. **Consensus deficit:** Intergovernmental Negotiations (**IGN**) lack progress due to differences between regional groupings.
3. **Regional rivalry:** Pakistan opposes India's bid; China remains non-committal; Africa and Latin America lack consensus on nominees.
4. **UfC opposition:** The **Uniting for Consensus (UfC)** group, including countries like **Italy, Pakistan, and South Korea**, opposes new permanent members.
5. **Procedural hurdles:** Amending the **UN Charter** requires approval from two-thirds of the General Assembly and all P5.

Way Forward

1. **Coalition building:** India should deepen coordination with **G4 and L.69 group** to push text-based negotiations.
2. **Diplomatic pressure:** Use its global partnerships and platforms like **G20 and BRICS** to lobby for reform.
3. **Public diplomacy:** Highlight UNSC's ineffectiveness in **Ukraine, Gaza**, etc., to build public opinion for reforms.
4. **Support Africa's cause:** Strengthen its credibility by endorsing equitable African representation in the permanent category.
5. **Referencing frameworks:** India can push reform proposals aligned with the **Ezulwini Consensus** or African Common Position.

Conclusion

While India's case for a permanent UNSC seat is strong, reform requires overcoming entrenched interests. Yet, as India's External Affairs Minister stated, **"A reformed multilateralism is not an option, it is an urgent imperative."**

Q.5) "In the context of growing trade disputes and developing nations' concerns, examine the role of the WTO in ensuring equitable global trade. How can India balance its interests within a weakening multilateral trade regime?" (250 words, 15 marks)

Introduction

The **WTO**, founded in **1995**, aims to foster **rules-based** global trade. Yet rising protectionism, disputes between rich and poor nations, and stalled reforms have weakened its credibility— affecting countries like India that rely on equitable trade access.

Body

Role of WTO in ensuring equitable global trade

1. **Rules-based framework:** WTO provides legal certainty and predictability in trade through binding agreements.
2. **Special and Differential Treatment (S&DT):** Allows developing nations like India longer timelines and flexibilities in obligations.
3. **Dispute resolution:** WTO's **Dispute Settlement Body (DSB)** offers a mechanism to resolve conflicts without resorting to unilateralism.
4. **Platform for negotiations:** WTO enables collective bargaining through rounds like Doha, aimed at addressing developmental issues.
5. **Capacity building:** WTO assists low-income countries with trade-related training, technical assistance, and policy support.

Challenges in current multilateral trade regime

1. **Dispute settlement paralysis:** The **Appellate Body** has been non-functional since 2019 due to U.S. opposition to appointments.
2. **Stalled negotiations:** The **Doha Development Agenda** remains unresolved, limiting progress on key developmental issues.
3. **Developed-developing divide:** Nations like the U.S. and EU question S&DT benefits, affecting India's policy space.
4. **Rise of FTAs and plurilaterals:** Countries bypass **WTO** by forming regional or selective trade agreements, weakening its centrality.
5. **Pressure on subsidies:** Demands to reduce farm and fisheries subsidies disproportionately affect India and other developing nations.

India's approach to balancing its interests

1. **Assertive multilateralism:** India actively defends its right to S&DT and highlights the equity dimension in trade talks.
2. **Strategic use of FTAs:** Engaging in bilateral/regional pacts (e.g., with UAE, Australia) while retaining WTO principles.
3. **Coalition building:** Partnering with Global South and groups like **G33** to push back against developed world's pressures.
4. **Trade policy review:** India is strengthening domestic manufacturing (**PLI schemes**), standards, and export competitiveness.

5. **Digital and services trade:** Advocates for policy space in e-commerce and data governance to protect domestic interests.

Conclusion

Despite a weakening regime, the WTO remains **vital for ensuring fair trade access**. India must continue to engage with multilateral platforms while adapting through strategic bilateralism and economic self-strengthening to protect its long-term interests.