

General Studies-2; Topic: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests

India's quest for Rules based Multi-Polar World Order

1) Introduction

- The rules-based world order can generally be described as a shared commitment by all countries to conduct their activities in accordance with agreed rules such as international law, regional security arrangements and trade agreements.
- India believes that under the rules-based order globally, no one power, or a regional power, or no group of powers or no one, have the right to unilaterally change this order.
- India is now seen as a global influencer of policies, and takes its leadership role globally.

2) Need for Rules based Multi-Polar World Order

- We are living in an intensely globalised and inter-connected world where inter-dependency is the dominant trend.
- Rules based world order is essential for the world to prosper.
- When rule prevails and oceans are open, nations prosper.
- We live in an interdependent world and nations need to rise above the divisions and work together.
- Rule based systems will ensure international stability in trade and commerce.
- Help in maintaining peace and security.
- Only by working together, stability to the world order can be brought about.
- For mobilising collaborative responses to tackle emerging challenges such as global warming, pandemics, cyber crime, drug trafficking and international terrorism.

3) Present Status

- India is associated with several forums such as ASEAN, the East Asia Summit (EAS), the BRICS Summit, the Shanghai Co-operation Organization, the G-20 Summit, the Mekong-Ganga Co-operation, the International Solar Alliance etc.
- India has also been associated with forums such as the Commonwealth and the Non-Aligned Movement for more than 50 years.
- The Neighbourhood First policy aimed to give priority to improving relations with India's neighbours.
- India's focus on maritime security has been increasing.
- India part of Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) that aims at facilitating economic co-operation and development among the countries located in the Indian Ocean Region.
- Oceans carry 90 per cent of Indian trade and oceans have always played an important role in the region.
- The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue or the Quad is another new multilateral forum for India in the maritime domain.

4) India's Role

- India the world's largest democracy has a role to shape a new world order in this century.
- For most part of the post-independence period India remained marginalised in the international system.
- But following the opening of the economy in the early 1990s, India has seen a steady rise as an economic power.
- Presently India is the fastest growing economy in the world, with a 7 percent growth rate.

- The economic rise demands India's active participation in strategic affairs at the regional and global level.
- China's economic and strategic expansion by way of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) makes a compelling case for India to expedite the process of its own strategic assertion.
- India's policy in this regard has been towards the creation of a multi-polar world order.

5) Concerns / Challenges

- India has fared better in bilateral rather than multilateral relations.
- Pakistan being one of the important countries in China's BRI project is a steep strategic challenge for India.
- China's strategic and economic presence in South Asia has enabled it to exercise political pressure on its allies.
- China's growing military assertiveness in the disputed South China Sea.
- China's involvement in the Maldives crisis and growing proximity to Nepal are recent examples.
- Competing with China for economic and strategic space in several forums.
- Relevance and effectiveness of organizations such as the Commonwealth and the Non-Aligned Movement.
- India's troubled relations with Pakistan have meant that the Neighbourhood First policy has yielded few results.
- SAARC has also been hampered by poor India-Pakistan relations thereby not being able to function effectively.
- Growing protectionism in goods and services.
- Concern over terrorism and radicalisation.

6) Way Forward

- To work towards a multi-polar order India has to deal with three areas
- These are – India's participation in multilateral forums, the Neighbourhood First policy and the maritime domain.
- The way forward in each of the three areas is either through participation in, or formation of, multilateral groupings.
- If India is to shape the world order, it has to come out with its own clearly defined vision and think beyond containment of China.
- India must deepen its strategic and economic co-operation with all entities and to avoid delays in carrying its commitments.
- Being in the initial stage the Quad requires more clarity regarding its goals.
- India can play a big role in the Commonwealth by actively contributing towards transforming the Commonwealth into a vital pillar of a new multipolar global order.
- Freedom of navigation and over flight must be respected by all countries and governed by rules-based order.
- Determination to combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.
- India's foreign policy must serve twin goals of pursuing economic development at home and ensuring peace and stability in its neighbourhood.
- India should try and shape a multipolar order with the support of other major powers, which is likely to be more stable and more conducive.
- India possesses all the necessary attributes to lead the way in shaping such a new order.
- Indian diplomacy should rise and grasp a historic opportunity. Let us shape events rather than be shaped by them.