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At the BRICS summit held in Rio de Janeiro, Prime Minister Narendra Modi strongly advocated for a greater role for the Global South in international decision-making. The summit's declaration echoed many of India's long-standing concerns, including cross-border terrorism and the need for reforms in global governance structures.

Key Highlights of the Summit:

1. Representation of the Global South:

- PM Modi emphasized that two-thirds of humanity lacks proper representation in global institutions created in the 20th century.
- Called out the double standards in global governance and the ineffectiveness of current institutions in addressing global challenges.

2. Global Governance Reform:

- India demanded reforms in institutions such as the UN Security Council (UNSC), IMF, and World Bank to reflect present-day geopolitical realities.
- The BRICS Declaration supported India's and Brazil's aspirations for greater roles in the United Nations, including the Security Council.
- Significance: This strengthens India's diplomatic push for permanent membership in the UNSC.

3. Counter-terrorism Measures:

- The declaration condemned the Pahalgam terror attack and reaffirmed BRICS' commitment to combat cross-border terrorism.

Developing world should have a greater role in key decisions, says Modi at Brazil BRICS meet

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

The majority of the world's population is not properly represented in key global institutions, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Sunday, addressing fellow leaders of emerging nations at the BRICS summit in Rio De Janeiro.

The BRICS Leaders' Declaration, adopted at the summit in the Brazilian city on Sunday, reflected India's key concerns, especially on cross-border terrorism and global governance reforms.

Noting that the Global South has often faced "double standards", the Prime Minister, speaking at the BRICS session on "Peace and security and reform of global governance", called for a greater role for the developing world in international decision-making.

"Two-thirds of humanity still lack proper representation in global institutions built in the 20th century. Many countries that play a key role in today's global economy are yet to be given a seat at the decision-making table. This is not just about representation, it's also about credibility and effectiveness," Mr. Modi said, reiterating that global institutions have "failed to offer effective solutions".

Mr. Modi also welcomed



Reform drive: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with other leaders of BRICS in Rio de Janeiro on Sunday. AFP

the expansion of BRICS, saying that it shows the grouping's ability to "evolve with the times", as the leaders welcomed Indonesia as a new member state of BRICS.

Reflecting some of India's core concerns, the declaration adopted by BRICS leaders condemned the Pahalgam terror attack in the "strongest terms", and called for a more "representative" international order.

BRICS leaders expressed commitment to combat terrorism, including "cross border" terrorism, and called for "expeditious finalization" of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism within the framework of the United Nations.

They described the Israel-U.S. military strikes

against Iran as a violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, and expressed "serious concern" over the "deliberate" attack on Iran nuclear facilities.

The declaration also recorded support from Russia and China, two permanent members of the UN Security Council, "to the aspirations of Brazil and India to play a greater role in the United Nations, including its Security Council".

The summit welcomed the "new BRICS partner countries" - Belarus, Bolivia, Kazakhstan, Cuba, Nigeria, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, Uganda, Uzbekistan, and called for promotion of "dialogue and consultations" among developing countries.

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- It reiterated the need for the early adoption of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT) under the UN framework—a key Indian proposal pending since 1996.

4. Welcoming New BRICS Members:

- Expansion of BRICS to include Indonesia and dialogue partners like Belarus, Bolivia, Nigeria, Malaysia, etc.
- Modi termed it as an example of BRICS' ability to evolve with time, enhancing the multipolarity of global governance.

5. Geopolitical Statements:

- The declaration criticized the U.S.-Israel military actions on Iran as violating international law and expressed concern over the attacks on Iranian nuclear facilities.
- This reflects the growing independent voice of BRICS against Western unilateral actions and their alignment with non-interventionist principles.

Critical Analysis:

• Relevance for India:

- Strengthening BRICS enhances India's strategic autonomy and provides a platform for South-South cooperation.
- India's stance against terrorism and for global governance reform gains broader multilateral legitimacy through such summits.

• Challenges:

- Diverging interests within BRICS, especially between India and China, often dilute collective action.
- Expansion may dilute the coherence and efficiency of BRICS unless supported by institutional reforms and clear criteria for membership.

• Opportunities:

- The inclusion of new member countries expands India's outreach to Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America, reinforcing its Act East and Global South diplomacy.
- India can leverage support from Russia and China (both UNSC members) to further its UNSC reform agenda.

Way Forward for India:

- Strengthen coalitions with like-minded nations to push for UNSC reforms.
- Utilize BRICS and other platforms (G20, SCO, IORA) to amplify Global South concerns.
- Continue leadership in areas like counter-terrorism, climate action, and digital governance to shape global narratives.

Conclusion:

The Rio BRICS summit underscored India's assertive diplomacy in calling for a more equitable and representative international order. As the geopolitical balance shifts towards multipolarity, India continues to position itself as a leading voice for the Global South, demanding fairer participation and decision-making power in key global institutions.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques: Global governance structures no longer reflect contemporary geopolitical and economic realities." In the light of this statement, critically examine India's call for reform of global institutions and the role of platforms like BRICS in advancing the interests of the Global South. **(250 Words)**

The Ad Hoc Working Group under the Plant Treaty is meeting in Peru (July 7–11) to discuss proposed amendments to Annex I of the treaty. These amendments are raising serious concerns among Indian farmers, scientists, and policymakers regarding their impact on India's seed sovereignty and farmers' rights.

Farmers, policymakers raise concern over proposal to amend Plant Treaty

A.M. Jigeesh
NEW DELHI

As the Ad Hoc Open-Ended Working Group to enhance the Multilateral System (MLS) under the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (the 'Plant Treaty') meets in Peru from July 7 to 11, scientists, policymakers and activists from India have flagged concerns over the proposal to amend the treaty, particularly the Annex I of the treaty.

They argue that the proposals are not only detrimental to the interests of Indian farmers, but also inconsistent with the Plant Treaty's Preamble, and Articles 10 and 11 and would impact the seed sovereignty of India as well.

The Indian Council of Agricultural Research



Cropping concerns: Farmers' groups have written to the Union Agriculture Ministry against the proposed amendments. PTI

(ICAR), however, said the country's interests would be placed first, and protected during the negotiations.

India has nominated Principal Scientist, ICAR-National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources, Sunil Archak, to the meeting as he has been looking after the activities related to the

Plant Treaty for several years, ICAR Director General M.L. Jat told *The Hindu*. "He is highly competent to safeguard Indian interests," Mr. Jat said.

Meanwhile, the Bharath Beej Swaraj Manch and the Rashtriya Kisan Mahasangh, two farmers' groups, have written to the Union Agriculture Ministry

against the proposed amendments. Kerala Agriculture Minister P. Prasad, in a letter to Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, also said the Centre should not approve the amendments.

"The Centre should consult farmers' organisations and States before deciding on the amendments," K.V. Biju of the Rashtriya Kisan Mahasangh said. "Several scientists have also supported the stand of the farmers," Mr. Biju said.

The proposed amendments would mean India will be legally obligated to share all of its plant germplasm under standard material transfer agreement (SMTA) determined by the Governing Body (GB) of the Plant Treaty, and not under India's own terms and conditions, the letter to the government said.

About the Plant Treaty:

- Officially known as the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA).

- A legally binding treaty under the FAO of the United Nations, adopted in 2001.
- Aims:
 - Conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources.
 - Fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from their use.
 - Establishes a Multilateral System (MLS) for access to 64 major food crops and forages via Standard Material Transfer Agreement (SMTA).

Key Issue:

- Proposed amendments may oblige India to share all its plant germplasm under globally determined SMTAs.
- This would remove India's sovereign right to decide terms and conditions for access to its plant genetic resources.

Concerns Raised:

- Loss of seed sovereignty: India's rich agricultural biodiversity could be globally accessed without adequate control.
- **Undermining farmers' rights:**
 - The PPV&FR Act, 2001 grants Indian farmers the right to save, reuse, and sell seeds.
 - The amendments may dilute these protections.
- **Unfair benefit-sharing:**
 - India's traditional varieties could be commercially exploited globally without adequate compensation to Indian farmers.
 - Risk of biopiracy.
- **Bypassing States and stakeholders:**
 - No consultation with States and farmers' groups before international negotiations.
 - Violates the principle of cooperative federalism.
- Impact on indigenous knowledge systems and community-held resources.

Stakeholder Reactions:

- Farmers' groups (e.g., Bharath Beej Swaraj Manch, Rashtriya Kisan Mahasangh) have written to the Union Agriculture Ministry opposing the amendments.
- Kerala Agriculture Minister urged the Centre to hold consultations before taking a final decision.
- Scientists and activists have also supported farmers' concerns.

India's Stand:

- ICAR has assured protection of national interests in the negotiations.
- Sunil Archak, Principal Scientist at ICAR-NBPGR, is India's representative at the Peru meeting.

- ICAR Director General M.L. Jat stated that the official is well-versed and capable of safeguarding India's seed sovereignty.

Legal and Constitutional Dimensions:

- **PPV&FR Act, 2001:** Protects farmers' and breeders' rights in India.
- Biological Diversity Act, 2002: Ensures benefit-sharing for use of biological/genetic resources.
- **Constitutional backing:**
 - Article 39(b): Equitable distribution of material resources.
 - Article 48A: Duty to protect the environment and biodiversity.

Way Forward:

- Ensure consultation with States, farmers' organizations, and scientific experts before any commitment.
- Reaffirm India's sovereignty over plant genetic resources in treaty negotiations.
- Demand strong, enforceable benefit-sharing mechanisms at the international level.
- Maintain consistency with domestic laws like PPV&FR and Biodiversity Act.
- Promote parliamentary oversight on international treaty obligations that affect agriculture and biodiversity.

Conclusion:

While global cooperation is essential for food security and biodiversity conservation, it must not come at the cost of India's autonomy and farmers' livelihoods. India should adopt a cautious and rights-based approach, ensuring that its vast and diverse genetic resources are not exploited under externally imposed frameworks.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques: Discuss the role of cooperative federalism in shaping India's stance on international agricultural treaties. Should states be consulted before treaty negotiations? **(250 Words)**

Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah, at the 4th Foundation Day of the Ministry of Cooperation in Anand, Gujarat, emphasized the role of cooperatives as engines of inclusive growth. He unveiled a five-point roadmap for cooperative sector reform and expansion.

Cooperatives must be India's economic backbone, says Shah

Union Minister calls for transformation of India's cooperative sector, at the fourth foundation day celebrations of Ministry of Cooperation; he introduces five-point road map for growth, and says Amul's turnover will cross ₹1 lakh crore next year

Abhinay Deshpande
AHMEDABAD

Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah on Sunday called for a transformation in India's cooperative sector, stating that transparency, technology adoption, and member welfare were key pillars for success.

"Without technology, there is no prosperity for cooperatives," Mr. Shah said at Amul Dairy in Anand, Gujarat at the fourth foundation day celebrations of the Union Cooperation Ministry.

"Transparency, technology, and keeping members' interests at the centre – these three principles must become the work culture of every cooperative from Jammu and Kashmir to Kamakhya (in Assam), and every village of the country," he said.

Outlines vision

The Minister outlined an ambitious vision for the sector, citing the govern-



Critical sector: Union Minister Amit Shah, along with Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel, during the fourth foundation day celebrations of the Union Cooperation Ministry in Anand, Gujarat on Sunday. VIJAY SONEJI

ment's achievements since establishing a dedicated Cooperation Ministry in 2021. "Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, we have registered two lakh primary agricultural credit societies (PACS), established India's first cooperative university, and created three national-level dairy cooperatives," he said.

Mr. Shah introduced a five-point road map for cooperative growth, and said: "First – People, meaning every initiative must benefit ordinary Indians. Second – PACS, strengthening our primary cooperative networks. Third – Platforms, meaning digital infrastructure. Fourth – Policy reforms. And fifth – Prosperity, not

just for individuals but for entire communities, especially our farmers and labourers."

Success stories

Highlighting success stories, the Union Minister said: "Amul's turnover will cross ₹1 lakh crore next year. This is the power of the cooperative model when implemented pro-

perly." He inaugurated several new Amul facilities including a mozzarella cheese plant and automated processing units.

Mr. Shah paid tribute to Bharatiya Jana Sangh founder Syama Prasad Mookerjee on his birth anniversary, attributing the integration of Jammu and Kashmir with India to Mr. Mookerjee's efforts.

He recalled Mr. Mookerjee's opposition to Article 370 and referenced his slogan – "One country cannot have two Constitutions, two Prime Ministers, and two flags".

Mr. Shah said Mr. Mookerjee's position laid the foundation for the removal of the Constitutional provision and the region's full integration into India.

The Bharatiya Janata Party leader concluded with a call to action: "The cooperative movement must become India's economic backbone. With 60-plus initiatives already launched, we're committed to making this sector a driver of inclusive growth."

Background:

- Ministry of Cooperation was created in 2021 to strengthen the cooperative movement and streamline related policies.
- Cooperatives in India operate across agriculture, dairy, credit, housing, and marketing — with over 8.5 lakh cooperatives, they are vital to the rural economy.

Key Highlights from the Address:

- **Vision for Cooperatives:**
 - Cooperatives must become the economic backbone of India.
 - They should operate on the three principles of transparency, technology, and member welfare.
- **Five-Point Roadmap:**
 1. People: All cooperative initiatives must focus on empowering ordinary citizens.
 2. PACS: Strengthening of Primary Agricultural Credit Societies, the grassroots institutions.
 3. Platforms: Building robust digital infrastructure for cooperatives.
 4. Policy Reforms: Enabling a favourable regulatory and financial ecosystem.
 5. Prosperity: Enhancing the well-being of farmers, labourers, and rural communities.

Institutional Achievements:

- Registration of 2 lakh PACS in a short span.
- Establishment of India's first Cooperative University.
- Launch of three national dairy cooperatives.

Success Example:

- Amul, a cooperative dairy giant, expected to cross ₹1 lakh crore turnover in the coming year.
- New Amul facilities inaugurated: mozzarella cheese plant, automated processing units.

Broader Significance:

- **Economic Inclusion:**
 - Cooperatives offer employment, credit, and market access in rural areas.
 - They are instrumental in achieving self-reliance (Aatmanirbharta) in agriculture and allied sectors.
- **Digital and Policy Integration:**
 - Use of technology and digital platforms can enhance efficiency, accountability, and reach.
 - Policy support is essential for cooperatives to scale and compete with corporates.
- **Decentralised Growth:**
 - Cooperatives promote bottom-up development, aligning with Gandhian ideals of village-centric economy.
 - Their democratic structure allows for community participation and ownership.

Challenges in the Cooperative Sector:

- Political interference and poor governance.
- Lack of digitization, data transparency, and professionalism.
- Fragmentation and limited access to capital and markets.
- Varying levels of success across States due to policy and implementation gaps.

Constitutional & Policy Framework:

- Entry 32 of State List: Cooperatives are a State subject under the Constitution.
- 97th Constitutional Amendment (2011):
 - Gave constitutional status to cooperatives (Part IXB).
 - Later partially struck down by the Supreme Court (2021) for bypassing states' rights.
- New Cooperation Policy (Draft under consultation): Aims to modernize and empower the sector through reforms.

Way Forward:

- Strengthen PACS and district-level cooperatives through capital infusion, training, and digitization.
- Ensure autonomy and democratic functioning of cooperatives.
- Promote cooperative entrepreneurship in sectors beyond agriculture — e.g., fisheries, textiles, housing.
- Integrate cooperatives into e-NAM, ONDC, and digital commerce frameworks.
- Foster Centre-State coordination respecting federal principles, while ensuring national standards.

Conclusion:

Amit Shah's renewed push highlights the government's intent to make the cooperative sector a pillar of inclusive, sustainable, and grassroots-led growth. With reforms focusing on technology, policy, and people-centric governance, cooperatives can play a transformative role in realizing the vision of Viksit Bharat @2047.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques: Cooperatives are key instruments of participatory governance and rural empowerment. In the light of recent government initiatives, discuss the potential and limitations of the cooperative model in India.

The ₹72,000-crore Great Nicobar Infrastructure Project (GNIP) — involving a transshipment port, airport, township, and power infrastructure — has come under scrutiny due to concerns that the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) report underplays seismic risks in a geologically sensitive area.

Environment impact study for Nicobar project downplays earthquake risks

The report says probability of a mega earthquake, such as the one that led to the 2004 tsunami, is 'low'; however, an IIT-Kanpur report had pointed to uncertainty in 'prediction of future earthquakes'; professor who led IIT study urges infrastructure planners to conduct 'site-specific' analysis

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

The Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) study carried out for the ₹72,000-crore Great Nicobar Infrastructure Project (GNIP) downplays the risk of future earthquakes that could trigger tsunamis on the scale that was seen in 2004, despite several scientists suggesting that few on-ground scientific assessments have been done in the region.

According to the nearly 900-page EIA report commissioned by the Andaman and Nicobar Islands Integrated Development Corporation and executed by a private consultant, Vimta Labs, the probability of a mega earthquake, such as the earthquake of 9.2 magnitude that led to the 2004 tragedy, was "low".

The EIA study, while acknowledging the region's proximity and susceptibility to massive earthquakes, primarily draws on a 2019 study by scientists of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT)-Kanpur stating that the "return period", a term for the likelihood of a similar-



Ground zero: Aerial view of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

sized earthquake reoccurring, is 420-750 years for mega-earthquakes (magnitude of 9 or more). The return period is a shorter 80-120 years for large-magnitude earthquakes (>7.5).

Missing detail

The IIT-Kanpur report had analysed sediments from the Badabalu beach in South Andaman and revealed evidence of at least seven large tsunami events in the last 8,000 years in the region. The report states: "Andaman Segment has enough accumulated strain to trigger a mega tsu-

namigenic subduction zone earthquake in near future and that there was a 2,000-year gap in the region's sediment history added uncertainty to the prediction of future earthquakes." This bit doesn't appear in the EIA study.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Professor Javed Malik, the scientist who led the IIT-Kanpur study, said while their study did trace the history of major tsunamis, planners of any major infrastructure project in the Nicobar Islands should ideally conduct a "site-specific study". This was

because an earthquake, such as the one in 2004 that was centred in Indonesia's Banda Aceh, could play out differently if the origin point was the Nicobar Islands. The Andaman-Sumatra fault line was known to be vulnerable to massive earthquakes and there was still insufficient knowledge regarding what stretches along this line were likely to rupture.

C.P. Rajendran, geo-scientist and Professor at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru, said that his own studies over the years and



Earthquake recurrence is a non-linear process. You could go centuries without any major mega quake and then witness a massive one. The GNI is highly geo-dynamic.

C.P. RAJENDRAN
Geo-scientist and Professor at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru

emerging studies have shown that while the Banda Aceh event may have released a certain amount of pent-up energy, there were several other "parallel rupture lines south of the Andamans [and towards Nicobar] whose pent-up energy and history were unknown".

"To add to that, earthquake recurrence is a non-linear process. You could have centuries without any mega-quake and then suddenly a massive one. There are local fault lines in the Great Nicobar Island [GNI] as well as changes in land levels prior to a massive earthquake. This is an extremely geo-dynamic area and major infrastructure projects here are particularly vulnerable," he told

The Hindu. "It is better to avoid such an area for a port or a container terminal."

'Calculated risk'

A senior scientist in the Ministry of Earth Sciences acknowledged that while no specific site studies in the Nicobar Islands were commissioned for the project, it would be impossible to forecast when a massive earthquake was likely and a "calculated risk" had to be taken in executing the project. "Depending on the nature of buildings and infrastructure, design codes will be incorporated but we can never say when the next major quake or tsunami will occur. There is much that is unknown," the scientist said.

The GNIP envisages a transshipment port, an international airport, township development, and a 450 megavolt-Amperes (MVA) gas and solar-based power plant in the GNI. Though accorded an environment and preliminary forest clearance by the Centre, concerns about the potential loss of biodiversity, tree-felling, and impact on resident tribes prompted the National Green Tribunal to order a review.

Key Issues Highlighted

1. Underestimation of Earthquake & Tsunami Risks

- The EIA report claims low probability of a mega-earthquake like 2004 (magnitude 9.2), based on return period estimates of 420–750 years.
- However, IIT-Kanpur's 2019 study warns of:
 - Seven major tsunamis in last 8,000 years.
 - An existing strain accumulation in the Andaman segment.
 - A 2,000-year data gap increasing uncertainty in predicting future seismic events.
- This critical detail was omitted from the EIA.

2. Lack of Site-Specific Seismic Studies

- Experts including Prof. Javed Malik (IIT-K) and Prof. C.P. Rajendran (NIAS) argue for site-specific geological studies, given:
 - The local fault lines in Great Nicobar Island.
 - Unmapped subduction zones with unknown energy potential.
 - The non-linear nature of earthquake recurrence.

3. Infrastructure Vulnerability in a Geo-dynamic Zone

- Massive infrastructure (port, power plant, airport) is planned in a disaster-prone zone, raising concerns about:
 - Long-term safety and resilience.
 - Disaster response preparedness.
 - Risk to ecological balance and tribal communities.

4. Government's Response: "Calculated Risk"

- A senior Ministry of Earth Sciences scientist acknowledged:
 - No site-specific seismic surveys were conducted.
 - Project is proceeding on a "calculated risk" basis.
 - Design codes may account for general earthquake resistance, but prediction of exact events is not feasible.

Broader Implications

Environmental Governance & EIA Loopholes

- The case reflects persistent issues in EIA processes:
 - Over-reliance on secondary data.
 - Ignoring contradictory or inconvenient scientific inputs.

- Absence of independent peer review.

Disaster Risk Ignorance in Planning

- GNIP violates key principles of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) under the Sendai Framework.
- It also raises questions about the Precautionary Principle in environmental law.

Development vs. Sustainability Debate

- The project, while promising economic benefits (e.g., logistics hub, strategic security), may undermine:
 - Environmental sustainability.
 - Disaster resilience.
 - Rights of indigenous tribes (Shompen, Nicobarese).

Way Forward

1. Mandate Site-Specific Disaster Assessment in all large-scale projects in sensitive zones.
2. Strengthen EIA regulatory framework:
 - Peer review by independent scientific institutions.
 - Mandatory disclosure of all conflicting scientific data.
3. Adopt Environmental Carrying Capacity studies before granting clearance.
4. Incorporate Earthquake zoning maps & risk modeling in urban and coastal planning.
5. Empower institutions like National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) to vet high-risk infrastructure.

Conclusion

The GNIP case exemplifies the tension between infrastructure development and environmental safeguards in disaster-prone regions. Ignoring geophysical realities may yield short-term gains but poses significant long-term risks to human lives, ecology, and economic sustainability. A science-based, precautionary approach is vital for resilient and responsible development.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques: Discuss the significance of incorporating site-specific seismic studies in infrastructure projects in geologically active regions. How can disaster resilience be mainstreamed into India's infrastructure planning? **(250 Words)**

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India's cautious and balanced diplomatic response to the recent Israel-Iran conflict and its broader approach to West Asian geopolitics is being viewed as an example of strategic maturity and calibrated diplomacy. The article argues in favor of India's measured foreign policy stance, especially in conflict zones, highlighting its shift from reactionary positions to one grounded in national interest and global stature.

India's diplomacy is measured, not mute

On June 13, Israel struck Iranian targets in several provinces, even as it continued its war against Hamas. Its conflict with Iran in an already unstable West Asia lasted 12 days.

India's response to the Israel-Iran conflict was cautious. India called for restraint and de-escalation to maintain peace in the region. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has repeatedly expressed concern for humanitarian losses and has reiterated that this cannot be an era of war. Under his leadership, the Indian government has been quick to provide humanitarian aid when requested; voted in favour of a permanent ceasefire in Gaza at the United Nations General Assembly; and swiftly evacuated its citizens from conflict zones. Most recently, as part of Operation Sindhu, India evacuated citizens, mostly medical students, from Israel and Iran.

A sign of strength

The world recognises India's growing credibility and diplomatic weight. India's strategic silence is a sign of its growing stature — it speaks when it matters most, acts when it counts, and leads when it is required to. India has strategic interests in West Asia, including close defence co-operation with Israel, energy and trade ties with Iran, and a large diaspora spread across many Gulf countries. One of Prime Minister Modi's diplomatic successes has been to overhaul ties with Arab nations so much so that some of them have become India's largest foreign investors and trading partners. For India, the fourth largest global economy, economic ties have to take centre stage in diplomatic calculations. To unnecessarily intervene in a war which is not ours is against national interests and irresponsible. Being able to maintain an independent stance doesn't betray India's values; rather, it allows the country to engage with all sides and assert its interests more deliberately.



Priyam Gandhi-Mody

Director of
VishwaMitra
Research Foundation,
a Mumbai-based
foreign policy
think tank

India's strategic silence is a sign of its growing stature — it speaks when it matters most, acts when it counts, and leads when it is required to

Today's international diplomacy prioritises protecting national interests. The recent Pakistan-led terror attacks in Pahalgam, India's retaliative Operation Sindoor, and the subsequent global response to the India-Pakistan conflict were telling of the changing geopolitical times we live in. Over the years, several nations, particularly western powers and multilateral bodies, which are seemingly against terror, have extended funds and other military support to embolden Pakistan, a known sanctuary to terror groups. The western world, a large part of which has worked overtime to build strategic relationships with India, once again re-hyphenated Pakistan and India, which the Indian government had managed to de-hyphenate in its past two terms. Several countries remain oblivious to Pakistan's official role in sponsoring terror activities, many of which are directed towards India, so that they can obtain access to ports and airbases in Pakistan, which will provide an edge to them in their own conflicts with Iran and China. Pakistan's loyalty, which seems to be on sale to the highest bidder, is being courted with loans from the International Monetary Fund, state-of-the-art military equipment, and lunches with its leaders. The irony is that the same countries which are often quick to give lectures on democracy and invade nations to "protect democratic values" are eager to engage with Pakistan's unelected military regime because it suits their interests. The Arab world, despite growing ties with India, is also quick to side with Pakistan as it is bound by religious brotherhood with the country. India's foreign policy calculations take into account all these nuances. India's diplomatic position also prioritises its own national interests, security, value system, and growth story.

West Asia is one of the most politically unstable regions in the world. There are multiple ongoing

and recurring conflicts and a network of non-state actors in the region. In such a highly volatile environment, to be in possession of nuclear weapons would dramatically increase the risk of escalation and unauthorised use. Nuclear weapons could lead to prolonged conflicts and have disastrous consequences on civilians. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is already under pressure. A nuclearised West Asia will embolden other conflict regions such as in parts of Africa and South America to pursue more aggressive nuclear weapons acquisition programmes. A stable West Asia requires arms control, de-escalation, and regional cooperation.

Selective outrage

Often, ill-informed preaching, which is often politically motivated, demonstrates a limited understanding of today's evolving global dynamics. India cannot selectively ignore the role of Iran in destabilising the region. Indian diplomats cannot ignore the horrific October 7, 2023, attack by Hamas on Israel or its use of civilian Palestinian infrastructure as a shield in diplomatic response calculations. Selective outrage and heated opinions often disguised as moralistic views run a dangerous undercurrent against the core interests of the country. Many people hold views that are passionate but under-informed. If their opinions are taken seriously, it could lead to dire diplomatic consequences and stall India's strong economic progress.

India's strategic autonomy reflects its quiet confidence, conviction, and clarity. We live in an India that is confident of its growth story. This is also an India that is capable of maintaining its own opinions and upholding the ability to engage with both warring sides instead of getting swayed into making public statements due to pressure from any one side during global conflicts.

Key Arguments in Favor of India's Measured Diplomacy

1. Cautious but Consistent Response

- India's response to the Israel-Iran conflict and the Gaza war focused on:
 - Humanitarian concerns (condemning violence, aiding civilians),
 - Calls for de-escalation, and
 - Evacuation of citizens via Operation Sindhu.
- This avoids impulsive alignments and reflects a principled neutrality.

2. Strategic Autonomy as Strength

- India balances its ties with:
 - Israel (defence and tech),
 - Iran (energy, Chabahar Port, trade), and
 - Arab countries (diaspora, investments, trade).
- This reflects India's ability to engage with multiple poles without compromising its sovereignty or values.

3. Focus on National Interest

- India's diplomacy is economic-centric, not ideologically driven.
- Realpolitik demands not intervening in others' wars unless core interests are at stake.
- India speaks when necessary, acts when needed, and avoids performative politics.

4. Terrorism & Pakistan Factor

- Post Pahalgam terror attacks and India's Operation Sindoor, the article criticizes:
 - Western rehyphenation of India-Pakistan (seen as equals),
 - Global actors ignoring Pakistan's state-sponsored terrorism, and
 - Their tendency to prioritize strategic bases over ethical positions.
- India, in contrast, continues to dehyphenate its global identity from Pakistan.

5. West Asia's Volatility and Nuclear Threats

- Risks of nuclear escalation in a volatile West Asia are high.
- A nuclearised West Asia would erode the credibility of NPT, embolden other conflict regions, and spark arms races.
- India supports de-escalation, arms control, and regional dialogue.

Selective Outrage and Diplomacy

- **The article criticizes:**
 - One-sided narratives that ignore Hamas’s October 7 attacks, and
 - The politicization of foreign policy through emotionally charged, under-informed commentary.
- Diplomacy must remain informed, balanced, and aligned with India's long-term interests.

India’s Foreign Policy Doctrine — Key Elements Evident

Principle	Evidence in Current Policy
Strategic Autonomy	Engaging with Israel, Iran, and Arab states independently
Multi-Alignment	Relations with U.S., Russia, EU, and Gulf States simultaneously
National Interest First	Economic partnerships, diaspora safety, energy security
Humanitarian Approach	UN vote for Gaza ceasefire; Operation Sindhu evacuations
De-hyphenation	Treating Pakistan separately from broader foreign policy

Conclusion

India’s diplomacy, far from being muted or indecisive, reflects a mature, deliberate, and self-assured foreign policy driven by strategic autonomy and national interest. In a fragmented and volatile world order, balanced engagement with conflicting parties — while safeguarding domestic priorities — is the hallmark of a rising global power.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques: India’s foreign policy is increasingly shaped by its national interests rather than ideological alignments.Examine this shift with reference to India’s stance on the Israel-Iran and Israel-Hamas conflicts.(250 Words)

Page : 08 Editorial Analysis

The new battle challenge of China-Pakistan collusion

On July 4, the Deputy Chief of Army Staff, Lieutenant-General Rahul R. Singh, confirmed an important aspect of the China-Pakistan nexus that has been discussed in the strategic community since the four-day military hostilities with Pakistan (Operation Sindoor, May 7-10).

Speaking publicly, he said that China was an ever-present factor bolstering Pakistan's military efforts through unprecedented battlefield collusion during Operation Sindoor. Lt. Gen. Singh also spoke of the military assistance extended by Türkiye, but that was of a much lesser order of magnitude.

In the India-Pakistan military confrontations of 1965 and 1971, and even during the Kargil operations in 1999, China was a background player, offering diplomatic backing and token military gestures on Pakistan's behalf, without engaging directly in hostilities. This time, however, China's posture was distinctly more layered and collusive, leveraging its robust defence-industrial base, sophisticated intelligence-surveillance-reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities, practised interoperability, and geostrategic assets to reinforce Pakistan's war efforts without overtly crossing red lines. This represents a major progression in China's traditional strategy of building up Pakistan's strategic and conventional capabilities through overt and covert help to counter India and keep it off-balance.

Subtle but strategic diplomatic signalling

In the diplomatic arena, China refrained from condemning the Pahalgam terrorist attack (April 22) until a belated telephonic conversation on May 10 between Foreign Minister Wang Yi and National Security Adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval. In fact, China's official responses mirrored Pakistan's narrative – advocating a “quick and fair investigation” of the Pahalgam attack and expressing “full understanding” of Islamabad's “legitimate security concerns”. The May 7 strike by India on terrorist targets was deemed “regrettable” by the Chinese Foreign Office spokesperson. China also collaborated with Pakistan in diluting the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) press statement, excising any direct reference to The Resistance Front, the group behind the Pahalgam attack.

Significantly, India avoided any political-level contact with China in the context of Pahalgam and Operation Sindoor (until the NSA's conversation with Wang Yi), unlike with other UNSC members (excepting Pakistan), signalling India's assessment of China's unhelpful stance.

The Chinese media played a very active role in shaping perceptions. State-affiliated platforms amplified Pakistan's propaganda, which included exaggerated claims about the loss of Indian fighter aircraft. Social media commentators aligned with the Pakistan Army's Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR)-fuelled psychological warfare efforts – this included celebrating the alleged success of Chinese-origin military platforms deployed by Pakistan in its first-ever encounter with advanced western weapon platforms in a combat situation.

This digital landscape underscored not only China's active informational support but also its alignment with Pakistan's strategic messaging. By omitting the context of the terror attack's severity, Chinese reports sought to imply that



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India's military actions were disproportionate. A recurring theme among Chinese experts was the concern that the crisis could escalate into a nuclear conflict, prompting calls for international diplomatic intervention to prevent further escalation.

Hardware, ISR and tactical integration

China's military collusion, however, went beyond diplomatic alignment and propaganda. The less-likely scenario of a “two-front war” – with China and Pakistan launching simultaneous military operations against India – has distinctly metamorphosed into the more imminent challenge of a “one-front reinforced war”, where a conflict with Pakistan can now openly involve China.

For the first time, advanced Chinese-origin systems were visibly employed by Pakistan in a live operational environment. The Pakistan Air Force's deployment of Chinese J-10C fighters armed with PL-15 beyond-visual-range missiles, alongside HQ-9 air defence systems, demonstrated enhanced capability through operational integration honed over the years of joint exercises such as the Shaheen-series. This interoperability was not just symbolic. It was translated into tactical advantages in real-time combat.

Drones, cyber operations, and net-centric warfare elements employed by Pakistan showed unmistakable imprints of the “Chinese military playbook”. As Lt. Gen. Singh has confirmed, Chinese ISR systems provided real-time data, situational awareness, and surveillance capabilities to the Pakistani forces. Even civilian assets such as the Chinese fishing fleet were reportedly leveraged to monitor Indian naval deployments, while Pakistan's Navy remained coastal-bound.

China's BeiDou satellite navigation system played a critical role, including in missile guidance for the PL-15, reaffirming the direct integration of Chinese systems into Pakistani battlefield operations. Reports also indicate the fusion of the Swedish Saab 2000 Erieye airborne early warning and control (AEW&C) platform alongside Chinese systems to down Indian aircraft, reflecting a sophisticated convergence of multi-origin platforms, many of which are enabled or integrated by Chinese technologies.

This evolving situation compels several conclusions. First, the significant role of Chinese hardware, ISR, and battlefield advisory inputs have radically complicated India's deterrence framework. China's ability to provide real-time support without overt military engagement allows it to play a long strategic game. It can test India's red lines while avoiding direct escalation.

Second, a “new normal” is emerging wherein India finds greater latitude for conventional operations against Pakistan despite the nuclear overhang. China and Pakistan are, in parallel, constructing their own “new normal” of battlefield coordination. This includes stepped-up defence procurements: Pakistan's announcement on June 6 of China offering it its fifth-generation J-35 stealth fighters, the KJ-500 AEW&C aircraft, and the HQ-19 ballistic missile defence system reinforces its position as the foremost recipient of Chinese frontline military hardware.

Third, Operation Sindoor may have inadvertently served as a “live-fire demonstration” for China's defence industry,

validating its platforms and collecting performance data in real combat against western systems.

This success offers China greater leverage in global arms markets and incentivises continued grey-zone tactics, probing India's thresholds without initiating open hostilities.

Fourth, India now faces live borders with both China and Pakistan. Despite the October 2024 disengagement in Eastern Ladakh, forces remain heavily deployed along the northern frontier. Simultaneously, the ceasefire along the Line of Control and the international boundary with Pakistan – restored in 2021 – has effectively collapsed.

This dual-front deployment forces India to spread its resources: troops, ISR assets, logistical chains, and conventional platforms must be available simultaneously on both flanks. The demand is not just for preparedness but for sustained deterrence.

Preparing for the future

India is entering a period where sub-conventional conflict and conventional operations blur across a composite threat from China and Pakistan. This “one-front reinforced” challenge demands strategic imagination, conventional build-up, institutional coordination, and diplomatic clarity.

In light of this altered reality, India must reassess its diplomatic calibration vis-à-vis China. Beijing's strategic enabling of Pakistan in battlefield conditions must carry costs. If “terror and talks” cannot coexist in India's Pakistan policy, then strategic collusion by China with Pakistan cannot be decoupled from its bilateral engagement with India.

India may need to signal consequences, both through diplomatic messaging and strategic policy shifts.

An obvious corollary to India's “new normal” of expanded scope of punitive conventional operations below the nuclear threshold is a significant expansion in conventional capabilities. This includes network-centric warfare, non-legacy platforms such as drones, and ISR capabilities to counter Chinese assets. The decline in defence spending, from 17.1% of central expenditure in 2014-15 to 13% in 2025-26, must be revisited if India is to meet the demands of an increasingly complex battlespace.

India must maintain a degree of unpredictability in its response to provocations from Pakistan, avoiding knee-jerk kinetic actions. If India predictably opts for punitive military strike, it could fall in a trap that would be exploited by Pakistan and China acting collusively. Instead, it must also explore alternative forms of retaliatory actions. The abrogation of the Indus Waters Treaty could be one such option, but there are other levers available which can be deployed without publicity.

Battlefield collusion is no longer a theoretical concern; it is a lived experience. Operation Sindoor should not only serve as a lesson in tactical innovation but also as a wake-up call for rethinking India's defence posture, force modernisation, and strategic signalling. The sooner this reality is integrated into India's strategic planning, the better prepared India will be for a future shaped not by isolated provocations but by a collusive China-Pakistan challenge across a contested battlespace.

The new ‘one-front reinforced challenge is no longer a theoretical concern; India needs to rethink its defence posture, force modernisation and strategic signalling

Paper 02 International Relations

UPSC Mains Practice Question: The China-Pakistan collusion during Operation Sindoor reflects a new dimension in India's strategic environment. Discuss the implications of this evolving axis on India's foreign policy and regional diplomacy.

Context :

The China-Pakistan collusion during Operation Sindoor (May 2025) represents a new escalation in regional military dynamics, with China moving from passive support to active battlefield enabler of Pakistan. Lt. Gen. Rahul R. Singh's statement confirming real-time Chinese support to Pakistan marks a paradigm shift in the conventional threat perception of India.

Key Strategic Shifts Highlighted

1. From Two-Front Hypothesis to One-Front Reinforced Reality

- Earlier Understanding: A potential "two-front war" (India vs. China + Pakistan simultaneously) was largely hypothetical.
- Now: India faces a collusive "one-front reinforced war", where conflict with Pakistan could be tactically and technologically supported by China without formal entry into war.

2. China's Multi-Dimensional Support to Pakistan

Military Hardware & Interoperability

- Use of Chinese-origin J-10C fighters, PL-15 BVR missiles, HQ-9 air defence systems in Operation Sindoor.
- Integrated use of BeiDou navigation, Chinese drones, and ISR systems by Pakistan.

Information & Perception Warfare

- Chinese state media amplified Pakistan's narrative and ISPR-driven propaganda, influencing international perception.
- Downplaying of Pahalgam terror attack severity, portraying India's response as "disproportionate".

Diplomatic Cover & UN Interference

- China delayed condemnation of terror, mirrored Pakistan's rhetoric, and diluted UNSC statements by omitting terror group names.

Implications for India's Security & Diplomacy

New Strategic Landscape

- Breakdown of 2021 LoC ceasefire, plus continued Chinese presence in Eastern Ladakh, has created live borders on two fronts.
- India must now allocate resources, ISR assets, and military readiness for simultaneous escalation risk on both flanks.

China's Grey-Zone Tactics

- Strategic support without open conflict allows China to:
 - Avoid escalation or international censure.
 - Test its own military platforms in real combat (validation for global arms markets).

- Challenge Indian deterrence subtly but significantly.

Policy Recommendations & Strategic Response

A. Diplomatic Realignment

- India must re-evaluate bilateral diplomacy with China, especially if China:
 - Continues to embolden Pakistan militarily,
 - Undermines anti-terror platforms at the UN,
 - Amplifies hostile narratives during Indo-Pak crises.
- Strategic collusion should not be de-hyphenated from India-China relations.

B. Force Modernisation & Budgetary Reallocation

- Current defence expenditure has declined to 13% of total central expenditure (from 17.1% in 2014-15).
- India needs investment in:
 - Network-centric warfare capabilities,
 - Non-legacy platforms (drones, cyber, satellites),
 - ISR systems and joint-command structures.

C. Strategic Signalling & Deterrence

- India must retain unpredictability in responses to provocations.
- Avoid being drawn into knee-jerk kinetic retaliation, which China-Pak may exploit.
- Explore non-public retaliatory tools like:
 - Legal review of the Indus Waters Treaty,
 - Cyber deterrence,
 - Economic and trade instruments.

Conclusion

The China-Pakistan battlefield synergy seen during Operation Sindoor is a strategic wake-up call. It demands that India move beyond theoretical military doctrines to real-time force integration, capability expansion, and policy recalibration. In a battlespace defined by blurred lines between conventional and grey-zone threats, India's deterrence must be visible, credible, and flexible. Strategic restraint must now be accompanied by preparedness, modernisation, and diplomatic clarity to deal with a new era of collusive regional adversaries.