



# **DAILY EDITORIAL ANALYSIS**

**TOPIC**

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**INDIA'S STRATEGIC AUTONOMY  
IN A MULTIPOLAR WORLD**

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## INDIA'S STRATEGIC AUTONOMY IN A MULTIPOLAR WORLD

### Context

- The concept of strategic autonomy is shaping India's foreign policy decisions amid rising global turbulence, as the global order shifts from unipolar dominance to multipolar complexity.

### What Is Strategic Autonomy?

- Strategic autonomy is not isolationism or neutrality. It is the ability to make **sovereign decisions in foreign policy and defence** free from external pressures.
- Historically rooted in India's colonial experience and **Nehru's non-alignment**, the concept has evolved under successive governments into **today's 'multi-alignment' approach** — flexible, pragmatic, and guided by national interest.

### India's Pursuit of Strategic Autonomy

- **US–China Rivalry and Indo-Pacific Tensions:** As tensions escalate between the United States and China, India is under increasing pressure to pick sides, and it continues to walk a diplomatic tightrope:
  - ♦ India is a key member of the **QUAD, I2U2, and IMEC** aimed at countering China's influence. Simultaneously, India engages with **China through BRICS & SCO** and maintains dialogue on border disputes.
  - ♦ China remains a top trading partner and key regional actor.
- **Russia's Isolation and India's Leverage:** Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, many Western nations imposed sanctions.
  - ♦ India, however continued importing Russian oil and defense equipment, and avoided condemning Russia at the UN, citing national interest.
  - ♦ It has increased India's leverage with Russia, allowing it to play a more influential role in global diplomacy—without compromising its ties with the West.
- **Defense and Technology Partnerships:** India's strategic autonomy is visible in its diversified defense procurement:
  - ♦ It buys S-400 missile systems from Russia.
  - ♦ It co-develops jet engines and drones with the US.
  - ♦ It invests in indigenous platforms like Tejas fighter jets and INS Vikrant.
- **Middle East Diplomacy and Global South Leadership:** India's nuanced positions on conflicts like Gaza and Ukraine show its desire to lead with principle and pragmatism:
  - ♦ It supports a two-state solution in Palestine but maintains strong ties with Israel.
  - ♦ It champions the Global South at forums like G20 and BRICS, advocating for equitable development and climate justice.
- **Global South and India's Voice:** India positioned itself as a **voice of the Global South**, during its **G20 presidency in 2023**.
  - ♦ India emphasizes **partnerships driven by interests, not inherited bias**, that resonates with many nations seeking **agency over alignment**, reinforcing India's image as a plural, sovereign pole in global politics.

### Redefining Autonomy in a Connected World

- True strategic autonomy in modern times goes beyond defence and diplomacy. It requires:
  - ♦ **Economic resilience** and technological self-reliance.
  - ♦ **Data sovereignty and digital security** in the face of cyber and AI threats.
  - ♦ **Supply chain diversification** and critical mineral security.
  - ♦ **Domestic political coherence and institutional strength** are equally vital for sustaining independent decision-making.

**Conclusion**

- Strategic autonomy, for India, means **partnering without dependence, deterring without provoking, and engaging without surrendering agency.**
- India walks a delicate tightrope in navigating ties with the **US, China, and Russia.**
- But in doing so, it reclaims its space as a civilisational power — standing not alone, but tall, resilient, and self-assured in a turbulent world.

Source: TH

**Daily Mains Practice Question**

Q. In the context of a rapidly evolving multipolar world, to what extent can India maintain its strategic autonomy without compromising its global influence and national interests?

