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**Topic: GS2 - IR: Challenges to
India's Foreign Policy**



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Looming Challenges to India's Standing

Changing Global Situations Posing Challenge to India's Goal:-

- Today India is facing a host of geopolitical and economic issues that needs to be reconciled. While we were fortunate in the past to be able to take advantage of **a rare combination of favourable conditions**, this situation no longer exists.
- In the past, we did manage a shift from **non-alignment** to **multi-alignment**, could improve our relations with the United States without jeopardising our long-term relationship with Russia, and paper over our prickly relations with China without conceding too much ground; all the while maintaining our **strategic independence**. This is too much to hope for at the present time as the global situation that made all this possible has altered.
 - Rivalries among nations have intensified.
 - There is **virtual elimination of the middle ground in global politics**, and it has become far more adversarial than at any time previously.
 - Even the definition of a **liberal order** seems to be undergoing changes. Several more countries today profess support for their kind of liberalism, including Russia and China. At the other end, western democracy appears far less liberal today.

Challenges to India in Current International Politics:-

- Challenge to Check Slide in South Asia: South Asia is a region of our highest priority, according to the new External Affairs Minister, **S. Jaishankar**, needs close attention. The region is **one of the most disturbed** in the world and India has little or no say in any of the outcomes taking place.
 - **India-Pakistan relations** are perhaps at their **lowest point**. Tarring Pakistan with the terror brush is hardly policy, and stable relations continue to be elusive.
 - India has **no role in Afghan affairs** and is also excluded from current talks involving the Taliban, the Afghan government, Pakistan, the U.S. and even Russia and China.
 - India might have recouped its position more recently in the Maldives, but **its position in Nepal and Sri Lanka** remains tenuous.
- Countering Challenge Poses by China in Asia: Across much of Asia, China is the major challenge that India has to contend with. Smaller countries in the region are being inveigled to participate in China's programmes such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).
 - India and Bhutan are the only two countries in this region that have opted out of the BRI, and they seem like the odd men out.

- **Challenges Posed by Deepening India-US Relations:** Deepening India-U.S. relations today again carry the danger of India becoming involved in **a new kind of Cold War**.
 - India must ensure that it does not become a party to the conflicts and rivalries between the U.S. and a rising China, the heightened tensions between the U.S. and Russia, and also avoid becoming a pawn in the U.S.-Iran conflict.
 - The **strategic axis** forged between the **Russia and China** will impact not only the U.S. but also India's position in both Asia and Eurasia, with India being seen as increasingly aligned to the U.S. Hence, India needs to devise a policy that does not leave it isolated in the region.
- **Current Inadequacies in the Realm of Disruptive Technologies:** Today, disruptive technologies have **tremendous danger potential** and nations that possess these technologies have the ability to become the dominant powers in the 21st and 22nd Centuries.
 - The U.S., China, Russia, Israel and few other countries dominate these spheres as also **cyberspace** and **cyber methodologies**.
 - New policy parameters will need to be drawn up by India, and our capabilities enhanced in areas such as **artificial intelligence**, **biotechnology** and **cyber methodology**, all of which constitute critical elements of the disruptive technology matrix.

- **Challenges With Current Economic Situation in India:** None of above challenges, however, be overcome unless India pays greater heed to its economy.
- The state of the economy remains a matter of increasing concern.
 - Notwithstanding India's ambition to become **a \$5-trillion economy by 2024-25**, the reality today is that the economy appears to be in a state of decline.
 - Jobs, specially skilled jobs, are not available in sufficient numbers and this should be a matter for concern.
 - The ability to sustain a rate of growth between 8.5% and 9.5% is again highly challenging task. For this rate of growth, robust plan for more opportunities for skilled labour, and greater potential for investments is needed.

Conclusion:-

- The looming challenge for India in the coming five years, therefore, would be how to build **a strong economic foundation**, one that is capable of providing the kind of **power structure** needed for an emerging power, and also one possessing the best liberal credentials.