

## UPSCprep Free Daily Answer Writing Initiative

**Subject:** GS 2

**Syllabus:** International Relations

### Questions

Q1. Strategic autonomy is a powerful tool to design foreign policy in a more autonomous manner. What is strategic autonomy and why is it needed? Also, discuss the challenges to strategic autonomy.

(250 Words)

15

Q2. India and Sri Lanka share close relations since ancient times but there have been issues in recent times. Discuss.

(150 words)

10

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### Model Structures

**Q1. Strategic autonomy is a powerful tool to design foreign policy in a more autonomous manner. What is strategic autonomy and why is it needed? Also discuss the challenges to strategic autonomy. (250 Marks)**

15

#### Introduction

- Strategic autonomy in diplomacy and international relations mean the potential of a country to go for independent decision making in foreign policy matters when it comes to national interests.

#### Main Body

- Strategic autonomy is a relative concept in the current multi polar and globalized world. In core matters like nuclear weapons and the Jammu Kashmir issue, India has always resisted external pressure no matter what costs are involved. But in non-core matters, India has at times altered the policy under external pressure depending upon the

trade-offs. An example is India's vote against Iran and abstaining to vote on the Palestine issue under pressure from the west.

- This makes it clear that strategic autonomy is very much needed because it helps in -
  - Friends are temporary, interests are permanent. Thus multi alignment is must to fulfill own needs which is done by strategic hedging. This is seen in India's strategic defense relation with the United States which didn't come in the way of the S-400 deal and oil imports from Russia.
  - For beneficial ambiguity and geostrategic balancing, India maintains close ties with countries with different polity and beliefs. Like India's strong relationships with the US, Israel, Saudi Arabia do not come in the way of its diplomatic ties with Iran.
  - Realization of the role of realism and pragmatism in foreign policy as soft power alone cannot increase a country's clout.
- But due to varying interests, interconnected world and diverse needs, there are many challenges to strategic autonomy like-
  - India's manufacturing sector has remained stagnant and there is a dearth of skilled workforce. This has increased our dependence on the west for investments, defense equipment, technology and market. At times there is compromising of strategic autonomy to get these things in return.
  - The USA directs the geopolitical traffic and its unilateral actions like sanctions on countries like Iran, where India has a stake, compromise our strategic autonomy.
  - South Asia is a geo politically unstable area and India has 2 hostile neighbors in China and Pakistan with boundary disputes with both. This increases our reliance on regional and global groupings which affects our strategic autonomy.
  - Recent deepening of ties between Russia and Pakistan due to western sanctions had toughened the balancing act due to historical ties between India and Russia.
  - Rise of China in the last 4 decades, especially its clout in South-Asia has led to the notion that India promises but China delivers.

## Conclusion

- All countries have varying interests and there is a degree of autonomy required for taking decisions in national interest. Thus strategic autonomy is indispensable in geopolitics and foreign policy which further depends on local capability in areas like manufacturing, defense strength, technology, human capital etc.
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**Q2. India and Sri Lanka share close relations since ancient times but there have been issues in recent times. Discuss. (150 words) 10**

### **Introduction**

- India and Sri Lanka are close neighbors in South Asia and are part of many multilateral groupings like SAARC, BIMSTEC, IORA, SASEC etc. They share economic, cultural, religious and linguistic ties and have many shared interests.

### **Main Body**

- There is constant growth in trade and commerce along with cultural ties. Some important aspects of the relationship include-
  - Sri Lanka is important because it is India's second largest trading partner in SAARC. An FTA between the two goes back to 1998 with focus on increased trade relations and better commerce activities.
  - Security cooperation is another area with bilateral exercises like SLINEX and Mitra Shakti. India also provides military training to the Sri Lankan army and ensures better security in the Indian Ocean region.
  - India building Trincomalee port and Colombo airport is an important aspect of relations considering that these are strategic assets.
  - India's Education and health sector is important for Sri Lanka as a lot of scholarships and affordable health facilities are provided to them by India.
  - Cultural cooperation agreement was signed between India and Sri Lanka as Tamil, Yoga, Sangam literature and Buddhism are an important connecting link.

- Tourism is also an important connecting link between India and Sri Lanka with Tamil and Buddhist places serving as host destinations.
- But this traditional relationship and geographical closeness has been affected in recent times due to issues like-
  - Involvement of China has drifted Sri Lanka away from India. Granting lease of Hambantota port and inclusion in Maritime Silk Route has affected India's interests in Sri Lanka.
  - Fishermen issue very often brings both sides at loggerheads which is due to less clearly demarcated maritime boundary and impact of high and low tides.
  - Issue of Katchatheevu island, which is an uninhabited island, was ceded by India to Sri Lanka as part of peace efforts in 1974 but the Tamil fishermen still consider it as their own and this causes a lot of disputes.
  - Sri Lanka's growing indebtedness due to China's briefcase diplomacy has put it in a spot of arm twisting for favoring China over India.

## Conclusion

- In international relations, it is said that you can change friends and enemies but not neighbors. Also, India-Sri Lanka ties go way back since times immemorial. Thus there is a need to ensure an amicable solution to resolve any conflict and ensure no external power can influence bilateral relations.
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