

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2018 · 10 marks

“India's current foreign policy marks significant qualitative shifts from that of previous regimes”. Discuss.

FLOW SNAPSHOT — how the answer moves

Intro routes

- R1 shift is real → but measured in ambition, pace, risk-appetite → not a break with core interests
- R2 question tests rupture vs evolution → stake: qualitative shift genuine, yet grounded in continuity

Body flow

change of self-image: balancing power → leading power → institutional markers (Quad, JAI trilateral, Act East, foundational agreements with US, SAGAR) → West Asia recalibration: **Desai** (Palestine no longer zero-sum) → **Pant** (old balancing dropped, UAE/Saudi ties) → firmer posture (Doklam, surgical + pre-emptive strikes) → new risk-appetite

Counter-view

continuities persist → Gandhian idealism, Gujral Doctrine with some neighbours, strategic autonomy, South-South cooperation

Conclusion routes

- R1 **Raja Mohan's** 'Third Republic' → new chapter after Nehruvian and Manmohan eras
- R2 shifts genuine but build on strategic autonomy + civilisational identity → evolution, not rupture

The shift under the present government is real, but lies in ambition pace and risk-appetite. It is not a break with India's core interests.

Its sharpest marker is a change of self-image i.e. where India once accepted the role of balancing power, PM Modi has claimed that of a leading power. It shows in new markers like the Quad, the JAI trilateral, Act East, foundational agreements with the US and SAGAR.

According to Ronak Desai, India no longer treats the Palestine question in zero sum terms. Harsh V. Pant states that its engagement has dropped the old balancing approach, deepening ties with the UAE and Saudi Arabia. A firmer posture like Doklam, the surgical strikes & pre-emptive strikes against Pakistan confirms a new appetite for risk.

These roots on Gandhian idealism, the Gujral Doctrine with some neighbours, strategic autonomy & South-South cooperation all persist. This is why C. Raja Mohan, in Modi's World, calls the change as India's "Third Republic", after the Nehruvian and Manmohan eras.

The shifts are therefore genuine, but build on continuities of strategic autonomy & civilisational identity.