

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2023 · 15 marks

Discuss the significance of “West Asia Quad” in the light of India’s ‘Look West’ policy.

FLOW SNAPSHOT — how the answer moves

Intro routes

R1 Oct 2021 foreign ministers → July 2022 summit → significance is not the “Quad” label but what it did to Look West
R2 old Look West = oil, remittances, distance from Arab quarrels → I2U2 converts it into a geoeconomic partnership

Body flow

pooled comparative advantage: Emirati capital + location / Israeli technology / Indian scale → two concrete projects: \$2bn food parks, 300 MW Gujarat hybrid → India as producer and supply-chain node, not buyer of energy and exporter of labour → political payoff: Washington outside the Indo-Pacific without alliance + de-hyphenation + alternative to Chinese economic presence → **Saraswat**, “transformational” → IMEC (Sept 2023) extends the same logic

Counter-view

hard security excluded by design → momentum slowed after October 2023 → **Vakil**: Palestine question + Gulf rivalries weaken political cohesion → 2026 Iran war, Hormuz closure, Chabahar waiver lapse → exposure sits where the grouping does not reach

Conclusion routes

R1 economic architecture gained, strategic architecture not yet
R2 Look West now has a delivery mechanism, but its security test lies outside I2U2’s remit

The I2U2, grouping India, Israel, the UAE & the US, began as a foreign ministers' meeting in October 2021 & became a leaders' summit in July 2022.

Its significance lies less in the "Quad" label than in what it did to look West i.e. turning a policy built on oil imports, remittances & distance from Arab quarrels into a geoeconomic partnership.

It works by pooling comparative advantage i.e. Emirati capital & location, Israeli tech, Indian scale & production. There is a \$2 billion of UAE investment in integrated food parks across India & a 300 MW hybrid renewable project in Gujarat with US & Israeli private participation. India enters as a producer & supply chain node & not only a buyer of energy & exporter of labour.

India work with US outside the Indo-Pacific without joining an alliance. It completes the de-hyphenation of its ties with Israel & Palestine & offers Gulf states an alternative to Chinese economic presence. Deepika Saraswat therefore views it as "a transformational development in India's West Asia policy." The India - Middle East - Europe economic corridor of September 2023 follows the same.

Sanam Vakil argues that Israel's position on Palestine & Gulf rivalries weaken the political cohesion corridors need.

The 2026 war with Iran, the closure of Hormuz & the lapse of India's Chabahar waiver shows the India's real vulnerability.

Look West has therefore gained an economic architecture but not a strategic one.