India and multilateralism of BRICS

Mains: *GSII - International relations*

Why in News?

The 18th BRICS Summit, held in New Delhi on September 12–13, 2026, highlighted BRICS' role in promoting multipolarity, strategic autonomy and global governance reforms amid growing geopolitical rivalries.

How BRICS contribute to a more multipolar global order?

To know about **BRICS** in detail, click **here**

- **India's Strategic Autonomy** – BRICS enables India to pursue multi-alignment by engaging the U.S., China, Russia and the Global South simultaneously.
- **Consensus Despite Contradictions** – Despite internal differences, members cooperate on global governance, climate, technology and opposition to unilateralism.
- India-China tensions and Iran-UAE differences illustrate these contradictions.
- **India-China Engagement** – BRICS provides a platform for India-China dialogue, helping manage mistrust and promote competitive coexistence.
- **West Asia Diplomacy** – BRICS enables India to engage with Iran and Gulf countries while maintaining wider strategic partnerships, supporting diplomatic flexibility.
- **Emerging Multipolar Order** – BRICS promotes global governance reforms, Global South representation and cooperation on trade, finance, climate and technology, supporting multipolarity.

Why BRICS Matters for India?

- **Strategic Autonomy** – It enables India to diversify its strategic partnerships rather than becoming dependent on a single power.
- **Global South Leadership** – BRICS strengthens India's ability to articulate the concerns of developing countries on development, finance, technology and climate change.
- **Economic Opportunities** – The grouping provides avenues for cooperation in trade, investment, infrastructure, energy and financial systems.
- **Diplomatic Balancing** – India can simultaneously engage the U.S., Russia, China, Iran and other major powers.
- **Reform of Global Governance** – BRICS supports India's longstanding demand for greater representation in institutions such as the UNSC and international financial institutions.

What are the Challenges before BRICS?

- **Internal contradictions** – India-China strategic competition, divergent interests among members and regional rivalries can restrict deeper integration.
- **Divergent geopolitical orientations** – Members do not necessarily share common positions on every international conflict or strategic issue.
- **China's economic weight** – China is considerably larger economically than most other members, creating concerns regarding asymmetry within the grouping.
- **Institutional limitations** – BRICS remains primarily a coordination platform rather than a deeply institutionalised organisation with binding decision-making mechanisms.
- **Expansion-related complexity** – The growing membership increases the diversity of interests and can make consensus-building more difficult.

What is the Way Forward for India?

- **Interest-based engagement –** India should pursue a balanced and interest-based engagement with BRICS rather than an alternative to its Western partnerships.
- India can:
    - Preserve strategic autonomy through multi-alignment.
    - Strengthen BRICS cooperation on development and Global South priorities.
    - Use BRICS and SCO platforms to maintain dialogue with China and Russia.
    - Deepen economic and technological cooperation without compromising national interests.
    - Promote reforms of global governance institutions.
    - Encourage consensus-based cooperation despite bilateral disputes.
    - Simultaneously strengthen relations with the U.S., EU, Japan, Australia and other partners.

What lies ahead?

- BRICS should not be viewed simply through the lens of pro-West versus anti-West politics.
- Its importance for India lies in the diplomatic space it creates for pursuing strategic autonomy in an increasingly contested international environment.
- Its internal contradictions may limit its ability to become a cohesive geopolitical bloc, but those very differences can prevent domination by any single member and preserve its character as a plural multilateral platform.
- For India, the objective should therefore be to use BRICS as pathways towards a multipolar, representative and while retaining productive partnerships across geopolitical blocs.

Reference

[The Hindu| India and the plausible multilateralism of BRICS]

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