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Q19

The question of India's Energy Security constitutes the most important part of India's economic progress. Analyze India's energy policy cooperation with West Asian Countries. (250 words).

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2017 · GS II · 15 marks · India and its Neighbourhood

India and its neighborhood - relations.

Core demand of the question

- The question of India's Energy Security constitutes the most important part of India's economic progress. Analyze India's energy policy cooperation with West Asian Countries

Revision summary

India's growth is exposed to imported oil; West Asia remains the nearest large hydrocarbon shelf.

Cooperation with Saudi Arabia, Iraq, the UAE, Kuwait and Qatar covers crude, LNG, storage and investment.

Iran offers geography and barrels but is constrained by sanctions and stalled pipelines.

Look West diplomacy, SPR, and Gulf capital in Indian energy widen the relationship beyond tankers.

Domestic efficiency and fuel diversification must accompany Gulf diplomacy.

Introduction

Energy security for India means enough oil, gas, and later cleaner fuels, at a bearable price, through routes that cannot be easily cut. West Asia - the Gulf, Iraq, Iran, and their neighbours - still supplies a large share of India's crude and a rising share of LNG. Economic progress that needs factories, farms, and cities therefore runs through Hormuz and through political relationships in that region. Cooperation is commercial, diplomatic, and increasingly strategic.

Body**Why West Asia sits inside India's growth story**

- India imports most of its oil. A shock in the Gulf raises the import bill, the current-account gap, and inflation, which can stall investment.
- The same region hosts millions of Indian workers whose remittances support households and foreign exchange. Energy policy and diaspora policy share a map.
- **Diversification to the Atlantic, Russia, or the United States does not erase geography:** tanker days from the Gulf remain short, and refining configurations still like Gulf grades.

Cooperation on oil and gas

- Long-term crude relationships with Saudi Arabia, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and others give volume and, at times, deferred payment or storage deals. Iraq and Saudi Arabia have been among the top suppliers in many recent years.
- The UAE and India have moved beyond spot cargoes to strategic petroleum storage on Indian soil and investment in each other's energy firms, which is policy cooperation, not only a purchase order.
- Qatar has been central to LNG; other Gulf producers are adding gas and petrochemicals to the basket as India switches some power and industry from oil and coal.
- Iran was a nearby, often cheaper, barrel and a gas-pipeline hope (IPI). Sanctions, the stalled pipeline, and delayed fields such as Farzad-B show that cooperation with Tehran is real on paper and fragile in the banking and insurance world.
- **Downstream:** Indian firms have sought stakes in producing fields and in Gulf refining and chemicals, while Gulf sovereign capital has looked at Indian fuel retail and infrastructure.

Beyond barrels: the policy frame

- Look West / Think West diplomacy treats the Gulf as a strategic neighbourhood, not only an oil well: counter-terror, sea lanes, and food-for-energy packages.
- **Chabahar in Iran is connectivity as energy-adjacent policy:** a port that can move goods and, in a wider design, support access to Afghan and Central Asian energy spaces, if sanctions allow.
- The International North-South Transport Corridor and talks on a Gulf-India corridor (rail and shipping via the UAE and then west) aim to shorten supply chains that include energy equipment and petrochemicals.
- **Renewable cooperation is the new chapter:** Gulf capital in Indian solar, and Indian firms in Gulf clean-energy zones, so that energy security is not only hydrocarbons.
- Strategic petroleum reserves, joint naval awareness in the Arabian Sea, and evacuation planning (as in past Gulf crises) are security tools of energy policy.

Constraints and analysis

- **Hormuz risk, intra-Gulf rivalries, and US-Iran tension mean Indian policy must multi-home:** Saudi and Iran, UAE and Qatar, Iraq despite its politics.
- Price is set in a world market. Bilateral friendship does not abolish OPEC+ maths; it can only win cargo priority, investment, and storage.
- Domestic reform - efficiency, biofuels, electric mobility, coal-to-clean transition - is the other half of energy security. West Asia cooperation cannot substitute demand restraint.
- **The analysis is therefore:** West Asia is necessary to Indian growth; cooperation is deepest with the GCC plus Iraq, cautious with Iran, and increasingly mixed with renewables and investment, not only crude.

Flow diagram

Indian energy security -> GCC Iraq crude LNG
 Indian energy security -> Iran barrels Chabahar
 Indian energy security -> SPR investment renewables
 GCC Iraq crude LNG -> Hormuz sea lanes
 Iran barrels Chabahar -> Hormuz sea lanes
 SPR investment renewables -> Growth with less shock

Conclusion

India's economic progress still depends on secure Gulf oil and gas at a manageable price, so energy policy cooperation with West Asia is a core external economic policy. It now includes long-term crude and LNG, storage and equity stakes, Iran's difficult but logical geography, and a growing clean-energy investment track. The cooperation works when India diversifies suppliers and fuels at home while keeping every Gulf door open.

Facts & figures

Strait of Hormuz

Chokepoint through which a large share of India's crude, including non-Iranian cargo, must pass.

Top Gulf suppliers

Saudi Arabia, Iraq and the UAE have been among India's leading crude sources in the 2010s.

Qatar LNG

A pillar of India's long-term liquefied natural gas contracts.

UAE strategic storage

Gulf investment in Indian strategic petroleum storage illustrates cooperation beyond spot oil.

IPI / Farzad-B

Iran-facing gas and field projects that show both the logic and the sanctions-bound limits of energy ties.

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