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Q19

How will 12U2 (India, Israel, UAE and USA) grouping transform India's position in global politics?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2022 · GS II · 15 marks · Governance and Policy

Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Core demand of the question

- How will **I2U2** (India, Israel, UAE, United States) transform India's global position? (The 2022 paper printed 12U2; the grouping is **I2U2**.)

Revision summary

I2U2 is India, Israel, the UAE and the United States; the 2022 paper's 12U2 is that grouping.

It grew in the opening created by Israel-UAE normalisation and US convening.

The agenda is investments in food, water, energy, transport, space and health, not a military treaty.

It can seat India as a West Asian project partner, complementing the **Quad**'s eastward story.

Transformation is limited by delivery risk and by the need to keep strategic autonomy toward Iran and the Palestinian file.

The grouping matters as one lattice among several, not as a new world order.

Introduction

I2U2 is the minilateral of India, Israel, the United Arab Emirates and the United States, convened after the **Abraham Accords** opened Israel-UAE normalisation. It will not replace the UN or the **Quad**; it can still shift India from a looker-on in West Asian deals to a co-author of food, water, energy and technology projects that sit on both the Indian Ocean and the eastern Mediterranean.

Body

What **I2U2** is

- The four governments framed **I2U2** as a partnership for joint investments and new initiatives in water, energy, transport, space, health and food security, with a leaders' meeting in 2022.
- **It is a product of a changed West Asia:** UAE-Israel diplomatic ties, US willingness to convene, and India's already deep energy and diaspora links with the Gulf plus defence and water ties with Israel.
- The stem's "12U2" is a printing of **I2U2** - two I's (India, Israel) and two U's (UAE, USA).

How it can transform India's global position

- It places India inside a West Asian economic architecture that was long US-Gulf-Europe, not Delhi-Abu Dhabi-Jerusalem. That is a status shift from energy buyer to project partner.

- Food parks, hybrid renewable projects, and water technologies give India a development-diplomacy product to show in the Global South, distinct from a purely military alignment.
- **It complements the Quad and Indo-Pacific talk with a westward economic corridor:** the same India that talks sea lanes in the east can talk food and clean power in the west without choosing one ocean.
- Diaspora, IIT and start-up links with the US, Israeli innovation, and UAE capital can, if projects actually close, move India up the value chain in climate tech and agritech rather than only in IT services.
- Strategically, it signals that India can sit with the US and Israel without abandoning its Palestinian diplomatic line or its Iran-energy memory - a test of multi-alignment, not of camp membership.

Limits of "transformation"

- A four-country working group does not rewrite the Security Council, WTO, or China's role in West Asia; transformation is incremental and project-based.
- **Delivery risk is high:** hybrid energy and food corridors need land, tariffs, and politics in Gujarat or the UAE as much as a joint communiqué.
- Over-identification with one West Asian camp could raise costs with Iran or with domestic opinion; India's global position still depends on strategic autonomy as the brand.
- The US political cycle can cool minilaterals that a previous administration launched; India has seen this in other formats.

Net assessment

- **I2U2** transforms India's position if it produces visible public goods and if Delhi remains a convenor rather than a client.
- It is best read as one node in a lattice (**Quad**, **I2U2**, BRICS, SCO, ISA): the transformation is India's ability to inhabit several lattices at once, and **I2U2** adds the missing West Asia economic node.

Flow diagram

Abraham Accords context -> I2U2 India Israel UAE USA
 I2U2 India Israel UAE USA -> Food water energy space
 I2U2 India Israel UAE USA -> West Asia economic node
 West Asia economic node -> Multi-alignment with Quad
 Food water energy space -> Project delivery test

Conclusion

I2U2 can upgrade India from a Gulf energy customer to a co-investor in West Asian food, water and clean-energy public goods, sitting with Israel, the UAE and the US. That is a real shift in diplomatic geography. It becomes a transformation of global position only if projects land and if multi-alignment is preserved.

Facts & figures

I2U2

Minilateral grouping of India, Israel, the United Arab Emirates and the United States; first leaders' meeting in 2022.

Abraham Accords

2020 normalisation agreements that included UAE-Israel diplomatic relations, the political backdrop to I2U2.

I2U2 sectors

Announced focus on water, energy, transport, space, health and food security rather than a formal military alliance.

Quad

Australia-India-Japan-US grouping in the Indo-Pacific; I2U2 is a separate, westward economic minilateral, not a substitute.

India-Gulf economic ties

Pre-existing energy, remittance and diaspora links that I2U2 tries to upgrade into joint investment projects.

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