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Q19

'The expansion and strengthening of NATO and a stronger US-Europe strategic partnership works well in India.' What is your opinion about this statement? Give reasons and examples to support your answer.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2023 · GS II · 15 marks · India and its Neighbourhood

India and its neighborhood - relations.

Core demand of the question

- The expansion and strengthening of NATO and a stronger US-Europe strategic partnership works well for India
- Give your opinion with reasons and examples

Revision summary

India is not a NATO member and does not need NATO expansion for its own charter.

A cohesive US-Europe can free US focus and technology for the Indo-Pacific, which helps India versus China.

Quad, Malabar, France in the Indian Ocean, and iCET-type talks are the practical examples.

The Russia-West split after 2022 hurts India's energy and S-400-type defence links.

- **Opinion:** partly true as an indirect gain, false as a blanket; keep strategic autonomy.

Introduction

NATO is a North Atlantic alliance; India is not a member and does not seek to be one. A stronger US-Europe partnership can still serve Indian interests in the Indo-Pacific and on technology, while it can hurt Indian interests wherever it hardens a Russia-West split that India does not join.

Body**Why the statement is partly true**

- A Europe that is secure and aligned with the United States can free American military and diplomatic attention for the Indo-Pacific, where India faces China on the Line of Actual Control and at sea.
- Stronger trans-Atlantic capacity in defence production, semiconductors, and export controls can widen India's access to technology through the Quad, iCET-type US-India initiatives, and European Indo-Pacific strategies (France in the Indian Ocean, EU connectivity).
- NATO's own documents after 2022 named China as a challenge to Alliance interests; that shift, even if secondary to Russia, overlaps with India's China problem without making India a NATO partner.
- **Examples:** logistics and foundation agreements with the United States, Malabar with Quad navies, and growing defence-industrial talk with France and the United Kingdom all sit more

easily when Washington and European capitals are not divided.

Why the statement is overstated

- India needs discounted energy, fertiliser, and legacy defence from Russia, including the S-400 system; a NATO-Russia war and sanctions raise CAATSA-type and payment risks for New Delhi.
- NATO expansion is a European choice about European security; it is not designed for Indian continental defence and can inflame a bloc politics that Non-Alignment and later multi-alignment tried to avoid.
- A tighter US-Europe partnership can export extra-territorial sanctions, carbon border taxes, and technology-denial lists that hit Indian industry even when India is not the target.
- Strategic autonomy means India will buy from France, train with the US Navy, and still sit in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and BRICS; NATO cohesion does not dissolve those other tables.
- Example: after 2022 India increased oil imports from Russia while remaining a Quad member; that mix would be harder if "working well" meant copying NATO's Russia policy.

Opinion

- The statement works well for India only as an indirect Indo-Pacific and technology effect, not as a general rule.
- India should welcome a capable trans-Atlantic West that balances China and shares defence technology, and should refuse any expectation that New Delhi join NATO's Russia policy or host an Asian NATO.
- The useful Indian stance is issue-based partnership with the United States and Europe, plus continued Russia and Global South channels.

Flow diagram

Stronger NATO and US-Europe -> Possible Indo-Pacific attention
Stronger NATO and US-Europe -> Technology and defence industry
Stronger NATO and US-Europe -> Harder Russia channel
Possible Indo-Pacific attention -> Indian interest partial
Technology and defence industry -> Indian interest partial
Harder Russia channel -> Strategic autonomy cost

Conclusion

NATO expansion and a stronger US-Europe partnership help India where they free Western capacity for the Indo-Pacific and for technology. They do not work well as a package India must sign, because Russian energy and defence, and strategic autonomy, still structure Indian choices.

Facts & figures

North Atlantic Treaty Organization

Collective-defence alliance under the 1949 North Atlantic Treaty; India is not a member.

Quad

India, United States, Japan and Australia; a maritime and technology grouping, not a NATO Asian replica.

S-400 and CAATSA

Indian purchase of a Russian air-defence system that raised US sanctions-law risk; an example of the Russia channel's cost in a NATO-Russia crisis.

iCET

India-US Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology; an example of bilateral tech partnership that benefits from a working US political system, not from NATO membership.

France in the Indian Ocean

European resident power with territories and bases; a bilateral defence partner for India independent of NATO command.

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