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Q9

'The West is fostering India as an alternative to reduce dependence on China's supply chain and as a strategic ally to counter China's political and economic dominance.' Explain this statement with examples.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2024 · GS II · 10 marks · India and its Neighbourhood

India and its neighborhood - relations.

Core demand of the question

- Explain the West's pitch of India as a China+1 supply-chain node
- Explain the pitch of India as a strategic ally against China's political and economic dominance
- Give examples without swallowing the statement whole
- Show India's agency

Revision summary

China+1 and Indo-Pacific strategy are the two clauses of the Western pitch.

- **Examples:** electronics assembly, iCET, Quad and Malabar, production-linked incentives in electronics and pharma.

India still depends on Chinese intermediates; decoupling is incomplete.

Delhi keeps Russian oil and SCO while taking US technology - strategic autonomy, not a hired counterweight.

Galwan pushed maritime and enabling agreements further than 2010 would have allowed.

The statement explains a courtship, not a finished alliance.

Introduction

After the pandemic, export controls and the Himalayan clash, Western capitals began to say a sentence India had wanted to hear: diversify away from China, and do it with Delhi. The sentence has two clauses - **supply chain** and **strategic ally**. Both are real. Neither makes India a spare factory on a US payroll.

Body**Supply chain**

China remains the workshop for many active pharmaceutical ingredients, rare earths, solar wafers and electronics assembly.

- **Peg: China+1** is the corporate name for not betting the whole firm on one political system; India offers a large market, **production-linked incentives**, engineers, and a seat in Indo-Pacific economic talks.
- **Peg:** Apple's expanded assembly in India, **Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology** talks with the United States on chips, generic-drug security after Chinese API scares, and

critical-mineral talks with Australia and Washington are the examples.

- **Peg:** The limit is blunt: a phone finished in Tamil Nadu can still depend on a Chinese part; friend-shoring is a direction, not a completed decoupling.

Strategic ally

The security clause of the same sentence is the Indo-Pacific, not a NATO article.

- **Peg:** The **Quad**, Malabar exercises, logistics pacts with the United States, Japan, Australia and France, and shared worry about the South China Sea are the alliance-shaped half of the pitch.
- **Peg:** After the Galwan clash, maritime domain-awareness sharing and enabling agreements such as **COMCASA** and **BECA** went further than would have been thinkable a decade earlier.
- **Peg:** Washington often describes India as a counterweight; Delhi describes the same relationship as strategic autonomy with better kit.

India's own sentence

The West fosters India when interests rhyme; India does not volunteer to be only an alternative.

- **Peg:** India buys Russian oil, sits in the **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation** and BRICS, and will not become a treaty ally with automatic war.
- **Peg:** China remains a huge goods partner in many recent years; the alternative is **alongside** China in some chains, not a replacement.
- **Peg:** The statement is a Western wish that partly matches Indian industrial policy; it is not a finished dual-use alliance.

Flow diagram

West -> China+1 supply
West -> Indo-Pacific partner
India -> China+1 supply
India -> Indo-Pacific partner
India -> Russia SCO autonomy
China intermediates -> India

Conclusion

The West is courting India as a China+1 node and as an Indo-Pacific partner. India is using that courtship for production-linked incentives and for kit. It is not volunteering to be only an alternative.

Facts & figures

Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET)

United States-India track on semiconductors, space, defence technology and artificial intelligence.

Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad)

Australia, India, Japan and the United States - a diplomatic-security grouping in the Indo-Pacific, not a NATO.

Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes

Union industrial policy meant to pull electronics, pharma and other chains onto Indian soil.

COMCASA and BECA

Enabling agreements that deepen secure communications and geospatial sharing with the United States.

Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

Eurasian table where India sits with China and Russia - a reminder that Delhi will not be only a Western alternative.

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