

WRAP Exams · wrapexams.com

Prelims PYQ, Mains model answers, and copy evaluation. Write to the desk for this paper, a doubt, or the AI waitlist.

ask@wrapexams.com · +91 85951 84903 · wrapexams.com

Q8(a)

What are the external determinants of the Foreign Policy of a State?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2023 · PSIR GS 2 · 20 marks · Indian Foreign Policy

Indian Foreign Policy: Determinants of foreign policy; institutions of policy-making; continuity and change.

Core demand of the question

- Discuss the external determinants of foreign policy
- Write at 20-mark length. Illustrate with India's setting where useful

Revision summary

External determinants are systemic power, geography, economic dependence, and international institutions.

Waltz and Mearsheimer emphasise **anarchy** and great-power threat; Keohane adds regimes and interdependence.

Cox adds the hegemonic structure of ideas and production.

India's live external set includes China, Pakistan, Myanmar 2021, Afghanistan 2021, and sanctions maps.

Governments still choose among constrained options, which is why multi-alignment is a policy, not a geography.

Introduction

External determinants are facts outside a State that shape what its foreign policy can attempt. They include the distribution of power, geography, economic dependence, international institutions, and the behaviour of neighbours and great powers. Domestic politics still matters. This question asks for the outside set.

Body

Systemic structure

- Kenneth Waltz's neorealism puts **anarchy** and the distribution of capabilities first. A unipolar, bipolar, or multipolar setting changes alliance and nuclear choices.
- John Mearsheimer adds that a rising regional hegemon in Asia forces other States to balance or buck-pass. China's rise is that kind of external determinant for India.
- **Robert Keohane's complex interdependence adds non-military channels:** trade, finance, and regimes that constrain even strong States.

Geography and neighbourhood

- Borders, chokepoints, and the presence of unstable neighbours are standing external facts. For India: Pakistan, China, Myanmar after 2021, and Afghanistan after August 2021.
- Land-locked neighbours and island States create different demand for transit and navy.

- Extra-regional bases and navies in the Indian Ocean are part of the same map.

Economic and technological environment

- Energy prices, food prices, and semiconductor or medicine supply chains set daily diplomacy. The WTO TRIPS-COVID fight was an external legal-economic determinant.
- Sanctions regimes created by the United States or the UN Security Council shape third-party trade, as in India-Iran and India-Russia oil.
- Climate and pandemic shocks, treated as human security in 3(c), arrive from outside any one cabinet.

Institutions and ideas

- **UN Charter** rules, the NPT club, IMF conditionality, and climate treaties are external legal facts.
- **Robert Cox** stresses that world order includes ideas and production structures. A State's foreign policy is made inside a hegemonic or post-hegemonic order, not in a vacuum.
- Diasporas and transnational media are external-social determinants that still act on capitals.

How they operate

- External determinants set the menu. They do not write every line. India still chose multi-alignment rather than a US treaty.
- **Ranking matters:** a border war crowds out a trade talk. A financial crisis can reverse a doctrine for a decade.
- Functionalist agencies and the EU show that some regions thicken institutions so that external determinants become shared rules. South Asia has not.

Flow diagram

System polarity China US -> Foreign policy menu
Borders ocean neighbours -> Foreign policy menu
Energy sanctions WTO -> Foreign policy menu
UN NPT ideas Cox -> Foreign policy menu

Conclusion

Foreign policy is bounded by **anarchy** and power, by geography and neighbours, by energy and sanctions, and by international rules and hegemonic ideas. For India those bounds now include China, a thin South Asian region, and a contested American-led order. Choice remains, inside that set.

Facts & figures

Anarchy

Absence of a world government; the starting external condition in Waltz.

Polarity

Number of great powers; a shift from US unipolarity toward contested multipolarity is an external change.

Secondary sanctions

Third-State penalties that shape India-Iran and some India-Russia transactions.

UN Charter

Legal external frame for force, sovereignty, and Council politics.

Robert Cox

World order as material capabilities, institutions, and ideas together, not as a single foreign-ministry will.

WRAP Exams · Write. Read. Analyse. Practice. · [https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/psir-gs-2/2023/what-are-t](https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/psir-gs-2/2023/what-are-the-external-determinants-of-the-foreign-policy-of-a-state/)
[he-external-determinants-of-the-foreign-policy-of-a-state/](https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/psir-gs-2/2023/what-are-t) · ask@wrapexams.com · wrapexams.com