

## MAINS MATRIX- Integrate Your Knowledge, Ace the Exam

### TABLE OF CONTENT

1. India's strategic autonomy in a multipolar world
2. The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has notified the Environment Audit Rules, 2025.
3. U.S. 'lost' India, Russia to 'darkest' China: Trump
4. Why Punjab Keeps Flooding

### 1. India's strategic autonomy in a multipolar world

- **Author:** Shashi Tharoor / **Source-** TH

#### **Core Concept: Strategic Autonomy**

- **Definition:** A nation's ability to make sovereign decisions in foreign policy and defence without being constrained by external pressures or alliance obligations.
- **What it is NOT:** Isolationism or neutrality.
- **What it IMPLIES:** Flexibility, independence, and the capacity to engage with multiple powers on one's own terms.
- **Historical Roots in India:** Traced back to the determination of a free India to never let others decide its place in the world, from Nehru's non-alignment to the current government's "multi-alignment".

#### **Current Global Context**

- **Shift:** The unipolar (American-dominated) world order has given way to a fragmented, multipolar, and volatile one.
- **Key Factors:**



## India's Core Interests to Safeguard-



---

## India's Relationships with Major Powers

### 1. United States

- **Nature of Relationship:** Deepened dramatically; a mature strategic partnership.
- **Areas of Cooperation:**
  - Defence cooperation & intelligence sharing.
  - Joint military exercises & technology transfers.
  - Membership in groupings like the **Quad** and **I2U2**.
  - The **India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)**.
  - Shared concerns over China's rise.
- **Points of Friction:**
  - Erratic U.S. trade policies and tariffs.
  - Pressure to reduce energy/defence dealings with Russia.
  - Pressure to align more closely with Western positions.
- **India's Approach (Strategic Autonomy in Action):**
  - Continue engagement.
  - Maintain independent positions on global conflicts.
  - Insist on the primacy of national interest.
  - A refusal to be subsumed by American priorities (not anti-Americanism).

### 2. China

- **Nature of Relationship:** A complex challenge; both a partner and a rival.
- **Challenges:**
  - 2020 border clashes shattered illusions of benign coexistence.
  - Tensions remain high.
- **Interdependencies:**
  - One of India's largest trading partners.
  - A key player in regional institutions (e.g., BRICS, SCO).

- **India's Approach (Cautious Engagement & Firm Deterrence):**
  - Strengthen border infrastructure.
  - Deepen ties with Indo-Pacific partners.
  - Invest in indigenous defence capabilities.
  - Participate in China-led multilateral forums (a "difficult but necessary balancing act").
- **Strategic Autonomy Means:**
  - Resisting both confrontation and capitulation.
  - Refusing to be another country's counterweight to China.
  - Controlling Chinese access to the Indian economy.
  - Keeping channels of communication open.
  - Recognizing that rivalry does not preclude diplomacy.

### 3. Russia

- **Nature of Relationship:** Rooted in Cold War solidarity, defence cooperation, and shared strategic interests.
- **Current Context:** Tested by Russia's closeness to Beijing and global isolation post-Ukraine.
- **India's Actions:**
  - Maintains ties (buying oil, importing weapons, engaging diplomatically).
  - Stands firm against Western criticism.
- **Strategic Autonomy Means:**
  - Refusing to choose sides in a binary contest.
  - Crafting a foreign policy that reflects India's unique geography, history, and aspirations.
  - Diversifying military imports and investing in indigenous production *without* abandoning old partnerships.

---

### India's Stance and Broader Vision

- **Self-Declaration:** The "voice of the Global South" – unbowed, plural, and potent.
- **Guiding Principle (as stated by EAM Jaishankar):** Partnerships must be shaped by interest, not sentiment or inherited bias.
- **Defining its Diplomacy:** "Diplomacy with a spine" – assertive, pragmatic, unapologetically Indian, seeking to be "non-West" without being "anti-West".
- **Broader Resonance:** This stance resonates across the Global South, where nations seek agency and a voice, not vassalage or alignment into great-power rivalries.

---

## Challenges to Strategic Autonomy

### 1. Global Headwinds:

- Interdependent global economy.
- Technological ecosystems dominated by a few players.
- Defence modernisation requires partnerships.
- Climate diplomacy demands coordination.

### 2. Domestic Factors:

- Political polarisation.
- Economic vulnerabilities.
- Institutional constraints.

### 3. Modern Domains: Autonomy must now extend to:

- Cyber threats.
- Artificial Intelligence warfare.
- Space competition.
- Data sovereignty.
- Digital infrastructure.
- Supply chain security.

---

## Conclusion & The Way Forward

- **Strategic Autonomy is:** A strategy, not just a slogan. "The art of navigating a world of multiple poles without becoming a pole-vaulting acrobat for any one of them."
- **The Goal:** To build a nation so strong, prosperous, and technologically advanced that its autonomy is self-evident and its choices are respected.
- **Final Assessment:** India's strategic autonomy is a work in progress, but its pursuit is essential for its future.

### Key Quotes from the Article for Answer Writing:

- **On India's Approach:** "Partnerships must be shaped by interest, not sentiment or inherited bias." (EAM Jaishankar) - Use this to justify India's ties with Russia or the US.
- **On Multi-Alignment:** "The art of navigating a world of multiple poles without becoming a pole-vaulting acrobat for any one of them." - A powerful metaphor for the entire doctrine.
- **On the Goal:** "To build a nation so strong, prosperous, and technologically advanced that its autonomy is self-evident." - Links strategic autonomy to the broader goal of comprehensive national power.

## Key Takeaways for UPSC MAINS

### 1. GS Paper II: Governance, Constitution, Polity, Social Justice & International Relations

This is the most direct and significant application of the topic.

- **India and its Neighborhood- Relations:**
  - The entire article provides the framework to analyze India's relations with all its major neighbors and global powers. You can use the concept of strategic autonomy to explain:
    - **China:** The "cautious engagement & firm deterrence" approach explains the dual policy of participating in BRICS/SCO while strengthening the Quad and border infrastructure.
    - **Pakistan:** The principle of not being subsumed by another's priorities (e.g., US) explains India's consistent stance on tackling cross-border terrorism bilaterally.
    - **Smaller Neighbors (Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Maldives):** India's role as a "net security provider" and its investments in regional connectivity (e.g., Neighbourhood First policy) are tools to safeguard its strategic autonomy and counter Chinese influence in its immediate periphery.
- **Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests:**
  - This is a core area of application. Use the article to critically analyze India's participation in various groupings:
    - **Quad (US, India, Japan, Australia):** Not an alliance but a partnership of convenience based on shared interests in a free Indo-Pacific, perfectly illustrating "multi-alignment."
    - **BRICS and SCO:** Engagement with these China & Russia-led forums allows India to maintain strategic autonomy, voice Global South concerns, and avoid total alignment with the West.
    - **I2U2 (India, Israel, UAE, USA) & IMEC:** Examples of issue-based coalitions that serve India's economic and strategic interests without binding it into a formal alliance.
    - **Non-Alignment to Multi-Alignment:** The article provides the intellectual evolution from Nehru's non-alignment to the current government's multi-alignment, both under the overarching principle of strategic autonomy.
- **Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's interests:**
  - Analyze how the policies of major powers create both opportunities and challenges for India's autonomy:
    - **US Unpredictability:** How erratic US trade policies or demands to cut ties with Russia test India's independent decision-making.

- **China's Assertiveness:** How Chinese actions on the border force India to deepen partnerships with others while still engaging economically.
- **Russia's Revisionism:** How the Ukraine war forces India to balance its historic defence ties with Russia against Western pressure and its own moral positions.

#### GS Paper IV: Ethics, Integrity, and Aptitude

- **Ethics in International Relations:**
  - The concept provides a rich ground for ethical dilemmas:
    - **Dilemma:** Balancing national interest (buying cheap Russian oil to aid economic growth) with ethical positions on global issues (condemning aggression in Ukraine).
    - **Values:** The policy exemplifies **pragmatism** (interest-based), **righteousness** (standing up to pressure), and **responsibility** (towards its citizens' economic well-being).

## 2. The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has notified the Environment Audit Rules, 2025.

- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has notified the **Environment Audit Rules, 2025**.
- **Objective:** To strengthen environmental monitoring and compliance by moving beyond the sole reliance on pollution control boards.

#### 2. Problem Addressed:

- Existing bodies—**Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBs), and Environment Ministry's regional offices**—are overburdened.
- They face severe constraints in **manpower, resources, capacity, and infrastructure**.
- This has hampered their ability to effectively monitor and enforce compliance across India's vast number of projects and industries.

#### 3. Key Features of the New Rules:

- **Introduction of Accredited Auditors:** Private agencies can now be accredited as **environment auditors** (similar to chartered accountants).
- **Role of Auditors:** They will be licensed to evaluate:
  - Compliance of projects with environmental laws.
  - Adherence to best practices in pollution prevention, control, and abatement.
- **Broader Scope:** Audits will also cover compliance with the **Green Credit Rules**, where sustainable activities generate tradeable credits.

#### 4. The Larger Context & Need:

- Environmental regulation has evolved beyond simple policing to include complex tasks like **carbon accounting** (measuring direct and indirect emissions).
- These complex tasks are beyond the current capacity of PCB officials.

#### 5. Potential Pitfall & Recommendation:

- **Risk:** Focusing on large-scale, complex auditing might come **at the expense of monitoring grassroots-level violations** (at district, block, panchayat levels).
- **Solution:** The new regime must also **empower local-level officials** with training and resources to prevent "flagrant environmental travesties" that currently go unnoticed.

### How to Use in UPSC Mains Syllabus

#### GS Paper III: Environment & Ecology

- **Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation:**
  - This is the most direct application. The article is a case study on **environmental governance**.
  - You can use it to discuss the **challenges in implementing environmental laws** in India (e.g., lack of capacity in SPCBs).
  - The new rules can be cited as an **innovative policy measure** to improve compliance through **participatory governance** (involving private sector).
  - It can be used in answers related to **pollution control, sustainable development**, and the **implementation gap** between policy and on-ground results.
- **EIA and Environmental Governance:**
  - The rules introduce a **post-environmental clearance monitoring mechanism**. This is a crucial part of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) cycle that is often weak.
  - Use it to suggest reforms for **strengthening the entire EIA process**, not just the approval stage.

#### GS Paper II: Governance

- **Important Aspects of Governance, Transparency and Accountability:**
  - The policy shift represents a move towards **outsourcing and accreditation** for better governance.
  - Discuss its **pros** (efficiency, expertise) and **cons** (potential conflicts of interest, accountability of private auditors).
  - It highlights the **governance challenge of limited state capacity** and explores a public-private partnership (PPP) model to address it.
- **Role of Civil Services in Democracy:**
  - The article implicitly critiques the capacity of existing regulatory institutions (SPCBs).



- It can be used to discuss the need for **administrative reforms, capacity building, and providing adequate resources** to government bodies to perform their core functions effectively.

### 3. U.S. 'lost' India, Russia to 'darkest' China: Trump

#### Context

- Former U.S. President Donald Trump criticized U.S. foreign policy, stating that America has “lost” India and Russia to China.
- Remarks made on his social media platform (Truth Social) during/after the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit in Tianjin.

#### Trump's Claims

- India and Russia are moving closer to China.
- Referred to China as “darkest, deepest China”.
- Expressed that India, Russia, and China “may have a long and prosperous future together”.
- Criticized U.S. for tariffs and trade measures that he claims “pushed” India away.

#### U.S. Administration's Actions / Issues

- Tariffs imposed on Indian goods (including 50% tariff on imports like Russian crude purchases).
- U.S. stance pressuring India on its Russia energy imports post-Ukraine war.
- Trump's Commerce Secretary (Lutnick) urged India to “stop being part of BRICS” and choose sides.

#### India's Position

- Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) responded cautiously.
- Stated that tariffs and Trump's remarks reflect a “**miscalculation**” of India's role.
- Reaffirmed that India:
  - Is the world's largest democracy.
  - Partners with the U.S. in multiple global platforms.
  - Will continue independent foreign policy decisions.
- India maintains “studied silence” on verbal attacks, prioritizing diplomatic engagement.
- Actively working on Russia-Ukraine ceasefire diplomacy.



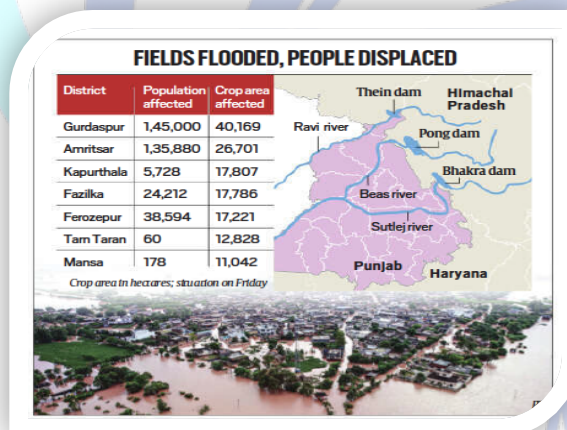
## Underlying Themes

- **India's Strategic Autonomy:**
  - India refuses to be drawn into binary choices (U.S. vs. China/Russia).
  - Continuation of multi-alignment strategy.
- **U.S.-India Tensions:**
  - Tariffs, trade frictions, and criticism over India's Russia ties.
- **China Factor:**
  - Perception of India drifting towards China exaggerated; in reality, India-China relations remain strained (border tensions, economic restrictions).

## 4. Why Punjab Keeps Flooding

### Context

- Punjab is facing one of its worst floods in recent memory.
- All **23 districts declared flood-hit** by the state govt.



### Natural Factors

#### 1. Geography

- Drained by **three perennial rivers**: Ravi, Beas, Sutlej.
- Seasonal rivers: Ghaggar and several smaller rivulets.
- Rich alluvium soil → makes Punjab fertile (20% of India's wheat, 12% of rice from just 1.5% land).

#### 2. Rainfall & Catchment Issues

- Heavy monsoon rains in Punjab and upstream Himachal/J&K.
- Excess rainfall + snowmelt → rivers swell beyond capacity.
- Historical floods: 1988, 1993, 2019, 2023, 2025.

---

## Governance & Management Issues

### 1. Dam Management Problems

- **Thein (Ranjit Sagar), Pong, Bhakra Dams** → water held too long, then suddenly released in massive volumes.
- Poor communication between upstream & downstream authorities.
- Example: Madhopur Barrage gate collapse → worsened floods.

### 2. BBMB (Bhakra Beas Management Board) Issues

- Centre-controlled body prioritises irrigation & power, not flood control.
- Punjab feels underrepresented after 2022 amendment (more all-India officers included).

### 3. Dhusii Bundhs (Earthen Embankments)

- First line of defence against floods, but weakened by illegal mining and poor maintenance.
- Punjab govt estimates repairs need ₹400–500 crore, but funds scarce.

---

## District-Wise Impact (as per govt data)

- **Gurdaspur** – 1.45 lakh people affected, 40,169 ha crop area hit.
- **Amritsar** – 1.35 lakh people affected.
- **Kapurthala, Fazilka, Ferozepur, Tarn Taran, Mansa** – varying levels of devastation.

---

## Larger Governance Problem

- Experts repeatedly called for:
  - **Scientific dam management** (controlled releases, forecasting).
  - **Strengthening embankments.**
  - **Coordination between Centre, state, and local authorities.**
- Environmentalists:
  - “Heavy rain is natural, but damage is worsened by human mismanagement.”

---

## Key Takeaways for UPSC Mains

1. Punjab's geography makes it flood-prone, but **mismanagement of dams, embankments, and poor coordination worsen the crisis.**
2. Climate change is increasing rainfall variability, making floods more frequent.
3. Sustainable flood management requires:

- Investment in embankments & drainage.
- Transparent dam regulation.
- Cooperative federalism in water management.

### GS Paper 1 – Geography & Society

- **Physical Geography:**
  - Punjab drained by **Ravi, Beas, Sutlej** + seasonal rivers → flood-prone.
  - Alluvial plains = fertile but vulnerable to overflow.
  - Monsoon + upstream rainfall in Himachal & J&K.
- **Impact on Society:**
  - Villages submerged → **1.9k villages affected, 3.8 lakh displaced**.
  - Rural livelihood crisis: crop destruction (1.17 lakh ha farmland).
  - Human cost: deaths, migration, social distress.

---

### GS Paper 2 – Polity, Governance, Federal Issues

- **Governance Failures:**
  - Poor **dam management** (delayed release, sudden floods).
  - **Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB)** criticised → focus on power/irrigation, not flood control.
  - Weak coordination between Centre, Punjab govt, and local authorities.
- **Federal Issues:**
  - After 2022 amendment, BBMB top posts opened to outsiders → Punjab feels underrepresented.
  - Dispute over Centre vs. state responsibility in water management.
- **Disaster Governance:**
  - Weak flood warning system, communication gaps.
  - Example: Madhopur barrage gate collapse, sudden releases from Thein Dam.

---

### GS Paper 3 – Disaster Management, Economy, Environment

- **Disaster Management:**
  - Inadequate maintenance of **dhussi bundhs** (earthen embankments).
  - Illegal mining weakens flood defences.
  - Need ₹400–500 crore investment to strengthen embankments.
- **Agricultural Economy:**

- Punjab produces 20% wheat, 12% rice → national food security threatened.
  - Crop destruction worsens farmer distress & MSP dependence.
  - **Environment & Climate Change:**
    - Climate variability → intense rainfall events increasing.
    - Over-reliance on dams without scientific flood forecasting.
- 

#### **GS Paper 4 – Ethics & Governance**

- **Ethical Issues in Governance:**
  - Lack of transparency in water release decisions.
  - Accountability gaps between Centre and state institutions.
  - Neglect of embankments despite repeated disasters (1988, 1993, 2019, 2023, 2025).
- **Values in Public Administration:**
  - Need for **responsibility, foresight, and cooperative federalism** in disaster management.
  - Ethical governance demands balancing irrigation/power needs with safety of people downstream.

  
**MENTORA IAS**  
“YOUR SUCCESS, OUR COMMITMENT”