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International Relations

Series

By Strategic Sangam

“ A concise series analyzing key global affairs for GS Paper 2 of the UPSC Mains. Each issue offers clear insights to boost conceptual understanding and improve answer writing. ”

Volume: 2

1. **India's Latin America Outreach**
2. **India's Mediterranean Diplomacy**
3. **BRICS Summit 2025- India & Global South**
4. **De-dollarization**



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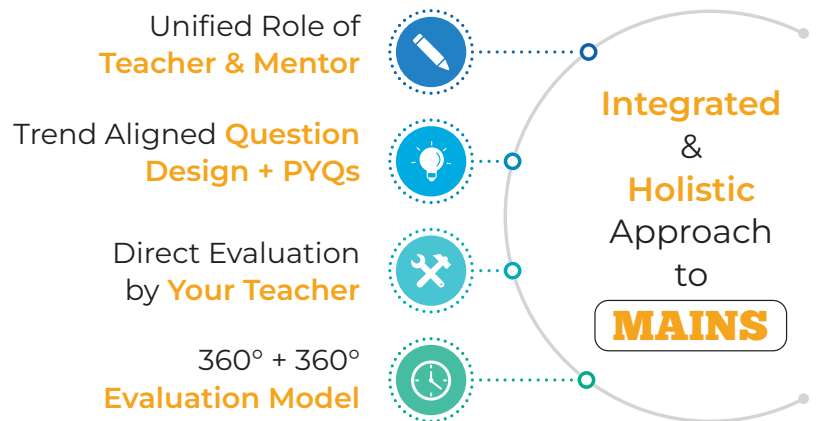
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Many aspirants who were stuck in the **Prelims–Mains** cycle for years were able to break through under the guidance of **Mr. Monish Bhawale**. Not only did they reach the interview stage, but several went on to secure top ranks in the **UPSC CSE**.”



Thank you, **Monish Sir**, for your consistent guidance. Your daily feedback on my **GS 2** and **GS 4** answers helped me identify gaps and improve steadily. Greatful for your time and support.
- **Madhav Agarwal, AIR 16**



Under guidance of
MR. MONISH BHAWALE

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INDEX

1. India's Latin America Outreach – Argentina, Brazil, Canada (2025) ...Page 3
2. India Cyprus & Mediterranean Diplomacy (June 2025).....Page 6
3. BRICS Summit 2025 – India's Global South StrategyPage 8
4. De-dollarization: A Strategic Shift in Global Finance.....Page 10



**For future diplomats, administrators and change makers. Connect the Dots.
Conquer the Mains Examination.**

-Strategic Sangam

India's Latin America Outreach – Argentina, Brazil, Canada (2025)

Background

India's diplomatic and economic engagement with Latin America has historically been limited. However, in 2025, Prime Minister Modi's visits to **Argentina, Brazil, and Canada** signaled a strategic recalibration toward this resource-rich, geopolitically vital region. These visits were aimed at enhancing cooperation in **critical minerals, agri-tech, space, defense exports, pharma, and diaspora-driven soft power**—all aligned with India's broader goals of self-reliance (**Atmanirbhar Bharat**), strategic autonomy, and South-South solidarity.

Strategic Significance for India

1. Argentina – Lithium Diplomacy & Space Cooperation

- **Lithium Triangle Access:** Argentina is part of the South American “Lithium Triangle” (with Bolivia & Chile), holding one of the world's largest lithium reserves—vital for India's EV and battery storage ecosystem. India's state-owned KABIL has begun exploration projects in Catamarca province.
- **ISRO–CONAE Collaboration:** Renewed cooperation in satellite imaging, climate tech, and disaster response. Argentina has also shown interest in India's defense sector.
- **Pharma & Health Diplomacy:** India is a leader in low cost generic drugs. They are widely used and new export agreements were signed.

Strategic Value: Securing lithium ensures energy transition success under India's EV roadmap. Satellite collaboration helps India scale low-cost innovation in the Global South.

2. Brazil – BRICS Leadership & Ethanol Energy

- **BRICS Chair in 2025:** Brazil hosted the 2025 BRICS Summit and PM Modi's visit is the second by an Indian PM in 57 years. It strengthens India's role within the bloc.
- **Biofuels & Ethanol:** MoUs signed for ethanol blending and knowledge transfer, aiding India's 20% ethanol target.
- **Food Security & Agri/Defence Tech:** Shared interest in agri-innovation, including drought-resistant seeds and AI in farming. Mutual interest in additional defense cooperation.

Strategic Value: Brazil supports India's Global South leadership. Ethanol diplomacy diversifies energy sourcing and strengthens India's bioeconomy, defense relationship adds to strategic diplomacy.

3. Canada – Resetting Ties with Strategic Minerals

- **Post-Freeze Diplomacy:** Relations soured in 2023–24 over Khalistan issues. 2025 marked a calibrated reset when the Canadian PM invited India for G7 summit with a focus on trade, tech, and people-to-people ties. (**Canada is North America, not Latin America**)

International Relations

- **Critical Minerals (Cobalt, Nickel):** Canada offers reliable alternatives to Chinese-dominated supply chains, it can supply key minerals like cobalt, nickel, graphite and rare earths.
- **Diaspora Diplomacy:** Over 1.8 million people of Indian origin live in Canada—an influential soft power asset.

Strategic Value: Canada becomes a key part of India's rare earth diversification and research collaboration, especially in cleantech and AI.

India's Latin America push shows a **diverse and pragmatic foreign policy**: securing critical minerals, aligning with Global South leadership through BRICS while also resetting Western ties. This policy is based on ethics, energy self-reliance and strategic outreach.

GS Linkages

GS Paper	Themes Covered
GS2	Bilateral diplomacy, South-South Cooperation, BRICS, diaspora outreach
GS3	Energy security (lithium, ethanol), rare earths, bio-economy, critical tech supply chains
GS4	Diplomacy with restraint (Canada), ethical sourcing (Argentina), South-South responsibility

UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS2

Q1: "India's outreach to Latin America is no longer symbolic—it's strategic." Analyze this in the context of 2025 visits.

Answer Blueprint:

- Overview of Latin America's resource wealth
- Lithium, ethanol, pharma, BRICS reform
- Outcome-based diplomacy

GS3

Q2: Examine how India's critical minerals and biofuel diplomacy with North and Latin American countries supports its technology and energy security.

Answer Blueprint:

- Lithium: Argentina link to EVs
- Cobalt/Nickel: Canada & clean energy
- Ethanol: Brazil's model
- Impact on Atmanirbhar Bharat goals

GS4

Q3: Can strategic diplomacy coexist with principled restraint? Discuss with reference to India–Canada ties in 2025.

Answer Blueprint:

- Ethics in diplomacy post-crisis
- Avoiding escalation, opting for economic reset
- Role of diaspora, trade, and dialogue.



India Cyprus & Mediterranean Diplomacy (June 2025)

Background

In mid-June 2025, Prime Minister Modi visited **Cyprus**, the first in 20+ years, marking a diplomatic reset after decades of limited engagement. The visit culminated in a **Joint Declaration and five-year roadmap** across defence, maritime security, trade, connectivity, fintech relations.

Strategic Significance

1. Eastern Mediterranean & India–Middle East–Europe Corridor (IMEC)

- Cyprus is being positioned as a **gateway to Europe**, to facilitate the **India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)**: a sea and rail route linking India, Gulf, and EU.
- Strengthening port infrastructure and logistics in Nicosia and Limassol creates an alternate to Chinese BRI-linked corridors.

2. Maritime & Defence Cooperation

- Joint commitment to **naval visits, search-and-rescue exercises, cybersecurity, and counter-terrorism intel sharing.**
- This enhances India's naval footprint beyond the Indian Ocean, and deepens interoperability with EU maritime forces.

3. EU Strategic Engagement & Trade Pathways

- Cyprus, holding EU Council presidency in early 2026, pledged to support India–EU Free Trade Agreement by end-2025.
- A trilateral business council (India–Greece–Cyprus) and fintech MoUs (e.g., UPI integration, GIFT-Cyprus) bolster economic and digital linkages.

4. Ethical & Cyber Diplomacy

- Mutual support for UNSC reform, UN Charter norms, terrorism conventions, and sovereign rights.
- Commitment to secure cyberspace and maritime areas through information exchange platforms fosters responsible conduct.

GS Linkages

GS

Paper

Strategic Themes

- | | |
|------------|---|
| GS2 | Bilateral diplomacy with EU's Southern flank; IMEC; Maritime Triangular Cooperation (India-Greece-Cyprus) |
| GS3 | Maritime security, blue economy logistics, fintech innovation, cyber defence |
| GS4 | Ethical partnerships, rule-based international order, non-coercive corridor-building |

UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS2

Q1: Evaluate India's 2025 Cyprus visit in the context of its Mediterranean and EU outreach.

Answer Blueprint:

- Introduce IMEC
- Highlight EU presidency support, trilateral business forum, maritime and cyber ties
- Conclude with India's strategic diversification.

GS3

Q2: How does India–Cyprus fintech and security cooperation align with its economic and cyber strategy?

Answer Blueprint:

- Mention UPI integration, stock exchange linkage, naval liaison office setup, digital corridors, cyber intel-sharing.
- Link to supply chain, cyber resilience.

GS4

Q3: Can corridor-building and maritime diplomacy coexist with ethical foreign policy? Discuss with reference to India–Mediterranean cooperation.

Answer Blueprint:

- Show IMEC vs BRI
- Emphasise consent-based approach;
- Governance values (UNCLOS, UN Charter) vs unilateralism.

Final Takeaways

India's Cyprus engagement is a game-changer in maritime and Mediterranean diplomacy. It stands as a model of **ethical, rules-based, multi-dimensional foreign policy** with economic, security, and technological depth—shaping India's global footprint beyond Asia.

BRICS Summit 2025 – India’s Global South Strategy

Background

At the 2025 BRICS Summit in **Brasília, Brazil**, India played a crucial role in shaping discussions on **Global South development, BRICS+ expansion, and alternative global financial architecture**. Leaders from Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, along with invited countries like Egypt, UAE, and Ethiopia debated reforms in trade, currency settlements, digital technologies, and climate finance. The summit also confronted U.S. concerns over de-dollarization.

Strategic Significance for India

1. Global South Leadership & Equitable Multilateralism

- India pushed for a **Global South development bank**, emphasizing sovereign borrowing and infrastructure financing for emerging nations.
- Reiterated support for BRICS included countries (Brazil, South Africa, UAE), stressing collective influence in bodies like UN and WTO.
- Reinforced India’s role as a voice of the Global South—poised between Western institutions and China-led alliances.

2. De-dollarization & Financial Autonomy

- India backed rupee settlements with partners like **Brazil and South Africa** to reduce dependence on the U.S. dollar.
- Explored **alternative payment platforms** (e.g., BRICS Pay), advocated representative governance in institutions like IMF/WB.

3. BRICS+ Expansion with Strategic Balance

- India opposed unilateral dominance by China; supported equitable decision-making in BRICS+.
- Advocated open architecture: additional members based on shared development goals, not political blocs.

4. Technology, Climate, and Digital Governance

- Launched working groups on **climate financing, digital public infrastructure, and AI ethics**.
- Emphasized ethical tech protocols that counter both digital authoritarianism and surveillance capitalism.

GS Linkages

GS

Paper

Themes & Issues

GS2	India's BRICS diplomacy, multipolar balancing, Global South solidarity
GS3	De-dollarization, alternative payment systems, development banking, digital public goods
GS4	Ethical multilateralism, fair global governance, responsible tech cooperation

UPSC Mains Practice Questions

GS2

Q1: “India’s position at BRICS 2025 reflects its commitment to the Global South.” Discuss.

Answer Blueprint:

Show India’s advocacy for climate/development finance, rupee settlements and membership criteria based on development ethos, not on bloc politics.

GS3

Q2: What is the significance of de-dollarization for India’s economic sovereignty?

Answer Blueprint:

Explain global dollar dominance, outline BRICS Pay, rupee-BLR trade, explore IMF/WB reform proposals.

GS4

Q3: Can emerging powers like India uphold ethical global governance while pursuing strategic autonomy?

Answer Blueprint: Use India’s position in BRICS for negotiation; compare to critique of China and US monetary policies; stress fairness over bloc politics.

Final Takeaways

India’s interventions at BRICS 2025 underscore its aspiration to be the champion of **South-led global governance**, working for financial alternatives, ethical tech, and inclusive development. The strategy safeguards autonomy while propelling India onto the global decision-making table.



De-dollarization: A Strategic Shift in Global Finance

What is De-dollarization?

De-dollarization refers to the intentional reduction in the use of the **US dollar** in global trade, finance, and reserves. It aims to build **financial sovereignty**, reduce exposure to **US monetary policy** and create alternative systems to the **Western-led economic order**.

Why Is It Gaining Momentum Now?

1. Weaponization of the Dollar

- The U.S. has used the dollar-based financial system to impose sanctions (e.g., on Russia, Iran, Venezuela).
- Sanctioned countries are increasingly cut off from **SWIFT**, the global payment messaging network dominated by Western banks.

2. Geopolitical Realignment

- **China and Russia** are leading efforts to use **local currencies** in bilateral trade (yuan-ruble).
- **BRICS 2025 Summit** in Brazil discussed alternate payment platforms like **BRICS Pay** and cross-border CBDCs (central bank digital currencies).

3. Global South Aspirations

- Many developing nations want **financial resilience** from dollar volatility and US interest rate hikes.
- They support **multipolar finance**, a greater say in **IMF**, **World Bank** and trade settlement options beyond the dollar.

India's Calibrated Stand on De-dollarization

India supports a **balanced and strategic** approach:

1. Expanding Rupee Trade Mechanisms

- Countries like **Russia, Sri Lanka, UAE** are now settling some trade in **INR (Indian Rupee)**.
- Objective: Promote rupee internationalization, lower forex costs, and insulate trade from sanctions.

2. Promoting UPI Internationally

- India is exporting its fintech model (UPI) to countries like **France, Singapore, UAE**, as a soft-power tool.
- Supports **BRICS Pay** but cautious of China's digital yuan dominance.

3. Avoiding Bloc Politics

- India **resists** turning BRICS into an **anti-West** or **anti-dollar** alliance led by China.
- Instead, India pushes for **inclusive reforms** in IMF, World Bank, and WTO to reflect Global South needs.

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Trump's Reaction to BRICS and De-dollarization

U.S. President **Donald Trump**, in recent statements (2024–2025) has:

- **Mocked BRICS** as a “China puppet club,” claiming it undermines global transparency.
- Warned that **de-dollarization is a threat** to American economic supremacy, threatened tariffs.

Analysis:

- Trump views BRICS-led de-dollarization as a **challenge to American hegemony**.
- His rhetoric appeals to domestic audiences by portraying BRICS as undermining U.S. jobs and global dominance.
- For India, this creates **diplomatic tightropes**, it must **balance ties with the US and BRICS partners** like Russia and China. India is not pushing de-dollarisation but prefers diversification of payment mechanisms.

Strategic Significance for India

Area	Why It Matters
Sovereignty	Reduces reliance on volatile US monetary policy and sanctions risks.
Soft Power	Positions India as a tech and fintech leader (UPI, DPI).
Multipolarity	Strengthens India's role as a bridge between West and Global South.
Energy Security	Enables rupee-based oil trade with Russia/Iran without facing secondary sanctions.

Key Challenges

- Dollar's dominance in oil and gold trade.
- Trust deficit in INR or yuan for reserves.
- Technology and governance gap in BRICS Pay vs SWIFT.
- Fear of bloc polarization (US vs China-Russia).

UPSC Mains Practice Question

“De-dollarization is both a financial and geopolitical movement. Discuss its implications for India's economic sovereignty and foreign policy.”

Answer Blueprint:

- Define de-dollarization and its drivers (sanctions, tech push, multipolar finance).
- Explain India's rupee trade, UPI diplomacy, BRICS engagement.
- Show Trump's and US concerns; explain India's balancing act.
- Conclude with a strategy of **strategic autonomy**, **reform-oriented diplomacy**, and **ethical multilateralism**.



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Thank you, Monish Sir, for your consistent guidance. Your daily feedback on my GS 2 and GS 4 answers helped me identify gaps and improve steadily. Greatful for your time and support.

- Madhav Agarwal, AIR 16

Expressing my gratitude to Monish Sir. I wrote daily GS 2 and GS 4 answers before prelims under his guidance. It helped me to identify mistakes early on.

- Suramya Sharma, AIR 281

Monish Sir helped me improve the quality of my answers. The personal attention given by Sir on my answer copies with detailed feedbacks helped me a lot. I thank Sir for my success.

- Gaurav Singh, AIR 859