

IR-II

Q8(i) Expansion of BRICS and SCO

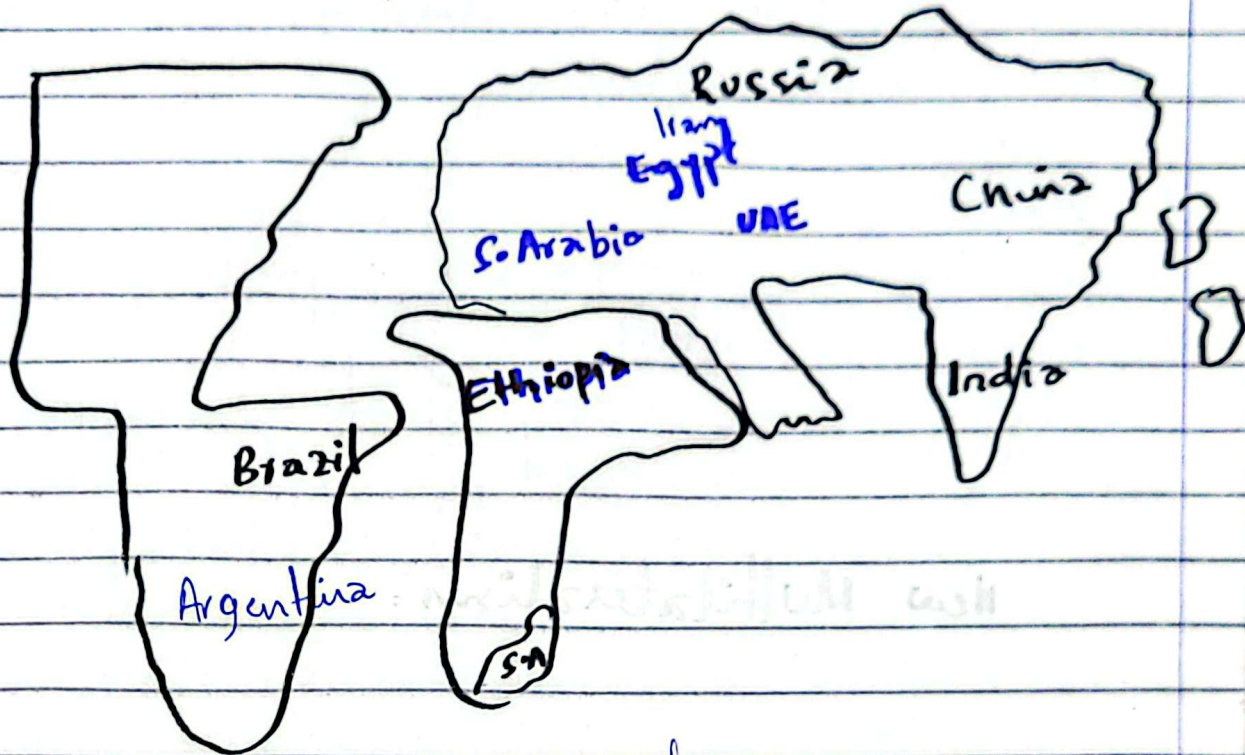
Introduction.

The international world is experiencing significant shifts in power and cooperation patterns as new groupings emerge. Two prominent examples are BRICS, originally consisting of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, which has recently expanded its membership, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), whose reach has grown across Eurasia. These developments raise questions about evolving forms of multilateralism and the nature of global order.

Expansion of BRICS and SCO:

BRICS has expanded by inviting additional emerging economies such as Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt, and Iran, increasing its geographic reach, economic

weights and political influence.



Countries in Black → Initial brics countries

Expansion : Argentina, Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Egypt. UAE

SCO:

The SCO, initially formed as a Eurasian security forum, has broadened its membership and cooperation agenda to include security, economic and political coordination among major regional powers. Both groupings now represent a larger share of global population, GDP, and diplomatic weight.

Old vs. New Multilateralism.

Old multilateralism describes institutions established in the mid-20th century, such as the United Nations, IMF, World Bank and NATO, which are formal, rules-based, and heavily shaped by Western States, particularly the United States. These institutions embody structured cooperation and are designed to manage global politics through agreed norms and procedures.

New Multilateralism, in contrast, refers to more flexible, informal, or regionally focused cooperation among states outside or parallel to Western-dominated frameworks. BRICS and the SCO fall into this category, as they are less constrained by formal rules and emphasize consensus, sovereign equality and is issue-based cooperation rather than universal normative frameworks.

Application of ^{Neo-}Realism

Neo-Realism is a theory of 3rd great debate which started right after WWI ~~in 1919 and lasted till 1939~~ in the year 1960 and lasted till 1970's, posits the international system is anarchic

meaning there is no overarching authority above states. States are rational actors seeking to maximize their security and power, and they engage in alliances of cooperation based on strategic interests rather than ideals or shared values.

From a neo-realist perspective, the expansion of BRICS and the SCO is driven by power dynamics and strategic balancing rather than purely normative aspirations. Major and rising states are seeking to enhance their autonomy, reduce vulnerability to unilateral pressures, and balance against perceived US dominance in global economic and security institutions. By banding together, these states accumulate greater collective weight in international negotiations and reduce reliance on Western-led systems such as the global financial architecture dominated by the US-dollar.

Old Vs. New Multilateralism in ^{Neo-}Realist Terms.

Under-^{Neo}Realism, "old multilateralism" is seen as an extension of American power projection. Institutions like the IMF, World Bank have historically been structured in ways that reflect US-strategic ~~partnership~~ preferences and

reinforce its influence. "New multilateralism"
~~is a response to the dominance of the US~~
~~represented by BRICS and the SCO~~

represented by BRICS and the SCO,
is a response to this dominance: these
forums allow states to pursue cooperation
and power aggregation while preserving
autonomy. The flexible nature of these
groupings suits realist expectations that
states will only commit to cooperation
when it serves their own strategic interests.

A Challenge to the US-led International Order:

The expansion of BRICS and the SCO
does challenge aspects of the US
led international order, particularly
in terms of power distribution and
normative influence.

1. Economic Diversification:

A larger BRICS bloc can push
for alternative financial mechanisms and
increase pressure for reforms in global financial
governance, reducing reliance on Western-
dominated institutions.

2. Strategic Balancing:

The SCO enhances cooperation among major regional powers like Russia, China, and India, limiting unilateral Western influence in security matters across Eurasia. This shift softens the structural dominance of US alliances in those regions.

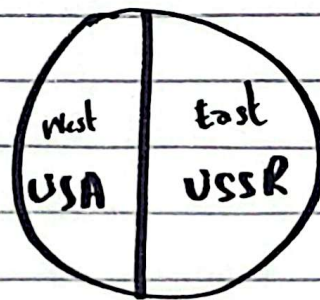
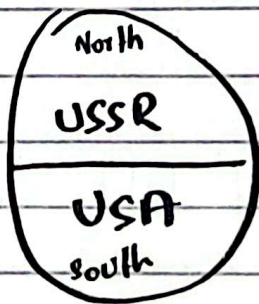
However, Neo-Realism also suggests that challenging does not mean overthrowing the order. BRICS and SCO have limited institutional depth compared to the long established bodies, and they still operate within the broader international system in which US remains a central actor. Their expansion increases multipolarity, a diffusion of power, rather than creating a completely separate order.

Conclusion:

In summary, the expansion of BRICS and the SCO reflects a form of new multilateralism that contrasts with the old multilateralism of Western led institutions by being more flexible and interest

driven. Through the lens of Realism, this expansion is best understood as a strategic balancing - states seeking to maximise power autonomy and bargaining leverage in an anarchic world. While this development challenges elements of the US-led international order, it does not yet fully replace it. Instead, it contributes to a more multipolar global landscape where power is distributed among a wider array of actors and institutional platforms.

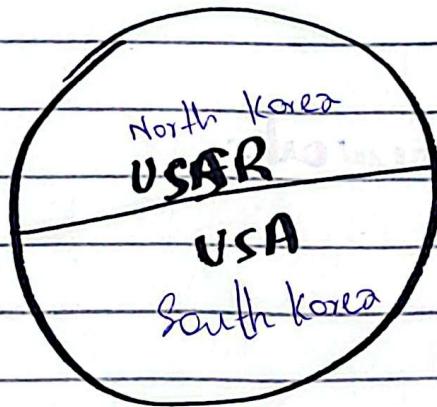
Q2 Cold War:



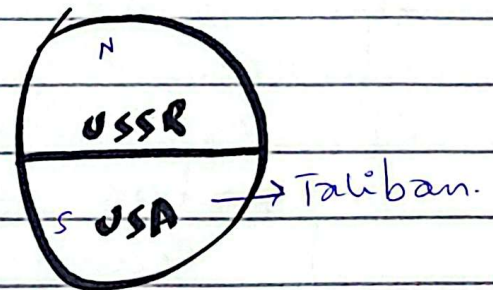
Germany



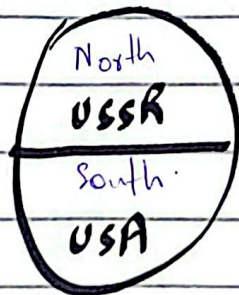
Korea



Afghanistan



Vietnam



Introduction:

Containment, articulated by George F. Kennan in 1947, was a US grand strategy to prevent further Soviet expansion by using political, economic and military instruments short of all-out war. It combined alliance building, forward basing, economic assistance to vulnerable states, and selective use of force or proxy interventions to limit Soviet influence without triggering nuclear war. Kennan's diplomatic analysis informed

The Truman Doctrine, Marshall Plan and NATO.

Neo-Realism framework:

Neo-Realism especially Kenneth Waltz's Structural Realism, (a theory of 3rd Great Debate, originating in the 1960's), argues that state behaviour is shaped by the international spheres, principally the distribution of capabilities, rather than by domestic ideology or leaders' ~~performance~~ preferences. States seek security and survival and therefore balance against threats. Under neo-realism, containment is judged by whether it successfully alters the balance of power or prevents adversary expansion without provoking excessive costs.

Strengths of Cold War Containment:

Balancing and coalition formation:

Containment institutionalised balancing. NATO and allied networks aggregated Western capabilities to offset Soviet power. Collective security arrangements reduced the risk that any single ally would be overwhelmed and enhanced

deterrence

2. Flexible instruments short of nuclear

war: By combining economic aid (Marshall Plan), political influence and limited military engagement (Korea, indirect support elsewhere), containment allowed the US to check Soviet Expansion without triggering superpower thermonuclear conflict - consistent with neorealist prudence under nuclear stalemate.

3. Long-term structural effect:

Containment helped stabilise regional balances, sustained allegiance alliances, and constrained Soviet overseas reach until internal Soviet weaknesses emerged, demonstrating how structural pressures and sustained balancing can produce strategic success.

Limitations of Containment.

(neorealist critique)

1. Overextension and Cost: Sustained global containment required enormous resources military bases, economic aid, and

political capital~~is~~, which risk strategic overstretch and domestic backlash. Neorealists warn that balancing strategies can become unsustainable if costs grow faster than capabilities.

2. Proxy wars and escalation risks:

Containment often produced local wars and proxy conflicts (Korea, Vietnam) with heavy costs and ambiguous results. Such engagements can drain power without decisively changing structural balances.

Applying Containment to US-China tensions under Neo-Realism.

Neo-Realism prescribes balancing to preserve relative position. Applying containment to China would therefore aim to limit Beijing's regional military predominance, protect alliance networks and constrain coercive behaviour. But structural differences shape feasibility.

Unlike the largely Atlantic Cold War Soviet bloc, China is deeply integrated into global trade supply chains.

and finance. Economic containment risks high self-harm for the United States and partners and invites counter measures such as trade decoupling costs and global market disruption.

China's influence is regional and global, but not identical to Soviet expansionism. Beijing can leverage economic statecraft, technological ecosystems and alternative institutions, and it can form partnership for example with Russia to blunt US moves. Neo-realism ~~pro~~ predicts balancing will occur, but the form may be soft balancing (coalitions, economic measures) ~~not~~ rather than hard military containment.

Conclusion:

Under Neo-realism, Cold War containment succeeded where it adjusted structural balances through alliances and sustained pressure, but it imposed costs, provided proxy wars and relied on bipolar context. Transposing containment to US-China rivalry requires adaptation: structural difference, deep-economic interdependence, regional complexities,

and nuclear deterrence meaning
that the US should pursue selective,
alliance based balancing and offshore
strategies rather than a classic,
global containment campaign. Neo-Realism
therefore advises calibrated power aggregation
which preserves security without
unsustainable overreach.