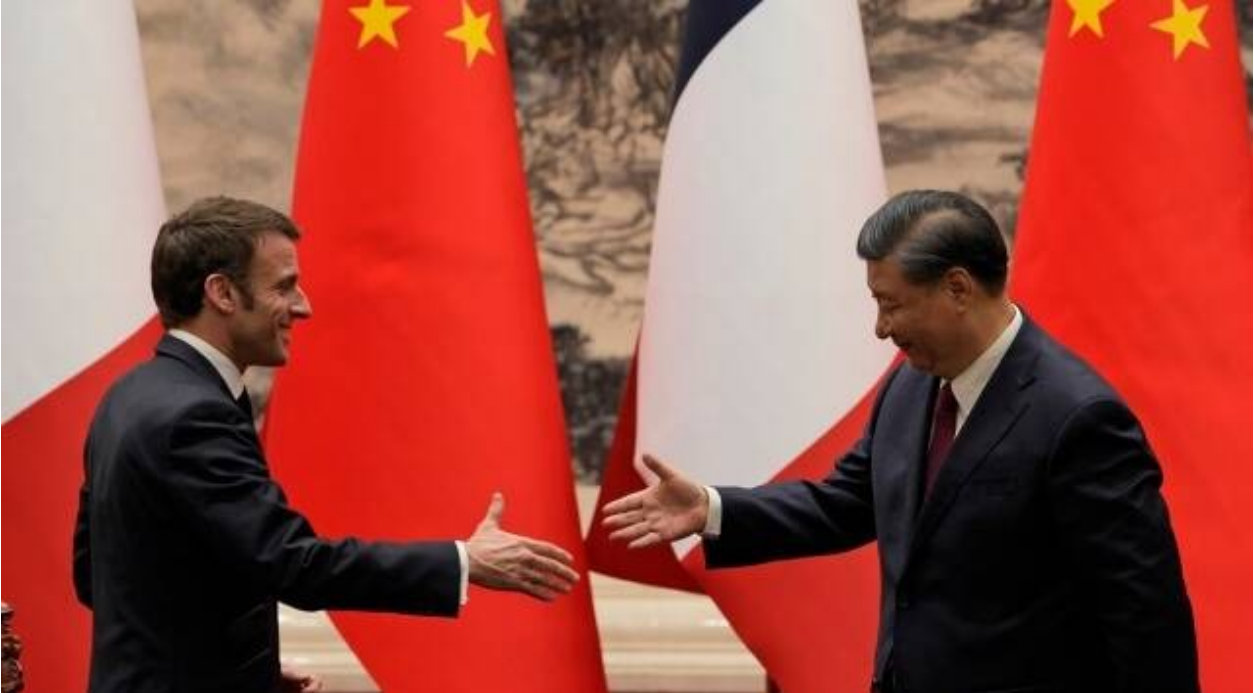


4. Macron's Statement On China and India's Own Possibilities In Europe

Prelims Syllabus: International Relations

Mains Syllabus: GS-II International Relations | Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and agreements involving India



Why in News?

- French President Emmanuel Macron's recent declaration that France is an ally but not a vassal of the United States and his comments that Paris does not share Washington's hostility towards China have generated significant reactions in the US and Europe. Beijing's official media has praised Macron's strategic autonomy approach towards China, and Russia hopes that France and other European countries will be less politically tied to the US.

Macron's comments on China and Taiwan and reactions:

- **Outrage in the US and Europe:** Macron's comments that France does not share the US's hostility towards China and does not see the Taiwan crisis as a threat to Europe have generated outrage in the US and Europe.
- **China praised:** Beijing sees Macron's model of strategic autonomy as a positive example for other nations to follow regarding China.
- **India criticized:** India has criticized the remarks, noting that the principle and power are at stake in both Ukraine and Taiwan.

What is mean by Vassalisation?

- The term vassalisation refers to a state or country that is in a subordinate or dependent relationship with another, usually more powerful, state or country.
- It suggests a lack of independence and autonomy in decision-making and an obligation to follow the policies and interests of the more powerful state.
- Important trends highlighted by the debate on the vassalisation of Europe and Russia

Different perspectives on Taiwan and Ukraine

- Macron's claim on Taiwan not being a concern to Europe reinforces India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's criticism of Europe's mindset that their problems are the world's problems.
- The Ukraine conflict has debilitating consequences for the world, and a shooting war between the US and China over Taiwan could be more devastating and costly to the international system.
- Macron's contradictory approach to the Indo-Pacific is disappointing, and his wavering resolve on China may lead Asian countries to think less of French resolve.

Macron does not represent all of Europe

- President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, has a different take on China than Macron.
- Central Europeans trust the US more than France or Germany to defend their security interests.
- Europe is deeply divided on how to address contemporary security challenges, undermining Macron's ambition to turn Europe into the world's third superpower.
- The only common belief in Europe today is the political faith in Beijing's capacity to end Russia's war in Ukraine.
- A weaker and divided Europe enhances the prospects for a bipolar world
- Multipolarity has been an important objective of India's foreign policy for over three decades.
- The talk of multipolarity could become academic as the US and China pull way ahead of other powers, get deeper into confrontation, and shape the choices of the rest of the world.
- The belief that Europe and Russia can act as elements of a multipolar world is becoming increasingly untenable.

India's possibilities in Europe and Russia

- Delhi should not turn its back on Europe despite its current predicament with China.
- Macron's China push underlines India's own possibilities in Europe.
- Western Europe that follows the money in China could do the same in India, providing much strategic benefit to India in its partnerships with Brussels and individual European actors.
- India is stepping up its engagement with Russia on the calculation that Moscow's current dependence on Beijing is temporary.

India needs to work more closely with the US and its Asian allies

- The inability or unwillingness of both Russia and Western Europe to balance China means India needs to work much more closely with the US and its Asian allies to secure a more favourable balance of power in its Indo-Pacific neighbourhood.
- India's strategic value will only go up for the US amidst the European reluctance to stand up to China's hegemonic ambitions.
- Few countries in Asia face more urgent and daunting challenges from China than India, and few Asian capitals have more political will to stand up to Beijing than Delhi.
- The reduced standing of Europe and Russia in great power relations is accompanied by Asia's rise, with emerging strategic opportunities for Japan, India, and South Korea.

Europe-China relations

- **Europe-China relations have been complex and multi-faceted over the years:** On the one hand, China is Europe's second-largest trading partner, and there is a lot of economic interdependence between the two. On the other hand, there are concerns about human rights violations, lack of market access for European companies in China, and China's increasing assertiveness in the Asia-Pacific region.

Some important developments include

- **The EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI):** Negotiated in December 2020, the CAI is a landmark investment deal between the EU and China aimed at improving market access for European companies in China and increasing investment flows between the two regions. However, the agreement has been met with criticism from some EU member states and civil society groups, who argue that it does not do enough to address human rights abuses in China.

- **Increasing concern over Chinese human rights abuses:** Europe has been increasingly critical of China's human rights record, particularly in the wake of the crackdown on pro-democracy protesters in Hong Kong and the treatment of Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang. The EU has imposed sanctions on Chinese officials involved in human rights abuses, and there is growing support for a boycott of the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing.
- **Growing competition in the Indo-Pacific region:** Europe is becoming more engaged in the Indo-Pacific region, which is seen as a key area of strategic competition between China and the US. Some EU member states, such as France and Germany, have developed their own Indo-Pacific strategies and are seeking to deepen security partnerships with countries in the region.
- **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI):** China's massive infrastructure project, the BRI, has raised concerns in Europe about China's growing influence in the region. Some EU member states, such as Italy and Greece, have signed on to the initiative, while others have been more cautious.

Conclusion:

- Macron's comments on China have sparked debates about Europe and Russia's relationship with China and the US. A weaker and divided Europe enhances the prospects for a bipolar world dominated by the US and China, which makes it important for India needs greater engagement with European geopolitics and to work closely with the US and its Asian allies to secure a more favorable balance of power in the Indo-Pacific region.