



PRAYAAS
INSTITUTE OF  EXCELLENCE



INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

GENERAL STUDIES - 2
Class Notes

UPSC / MPSC MAINS



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INDEX

1.	Effect of Policies of developed	1
2.	Geopolitics	20
3.	India's Neighbourhood	32
4.	Extended Neighbourhood	54
5.	Indian Diaspora	77
6.	UNSC Reforms	80
7.	Global Groupings	83
8.	International Agencies	94

International Relations

Syllabus Topic - Effect of policies of developed and developing countries on India's interest.

Let us see the past year questions.

Question	Keyword/Demand	Theme
The newly tri-nation partnership AUKUS is aimed at countering China's ambitions in the Indo-Pacific region. Is it going to supersede the existing partnerships in the region? Discuss the strength and impact of AUKUS in the present scenario. (2021)	Geo-political place of AUKUS in the Indopacific and its strengths and impacts.	Contemporary Current Affairs.
The aim of Information Technology Agreements (ITAs) is to lower all taxes and tariffs on information technology products by signatories to zero. What impact would such agreements have on India's interests? (2014)	Impact of plurilateral and economic agreements on India - the question not merely about ITA , but transcends to more broader area of economic partnerships and their impacts.	Contemporary Current Affairs.
The proposed withdrawal of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) from Afghanistan in 2014 is fraught with major security implications for the countries of the region. Examine in light of the fact that India is faced with a plethora of challenges and needs to safeguard its own strategic interests. (2013)	briefly address the part of challenges that India is facing and move forward towards implications and the need to safeguard strategic interests.	Contemporary Current Affairs.
What do you understand by 'The String of Pearls'? How does it impact India? Briefly outline the steps taken by India to counter this. (2013)	String of pearls and its impact on India and the steps to counter it.	Contemporary Current Affairs.
The protests in Shahbag Square in Dhaka in Bangladesh reveal a fundamental split in society between the nationalists and Islamic forces. What is its significance for India? (2013)	The question demands to outline lessons that India needs to learn from such incidents and finally you should highlight some steps also to prevent such incidents from happening in India.	Contemporary Current Affairs.

India's Soft Power

CONCEPT OF SOFT POWER -

The concept describe the ability of a country to attract and persuade other countries without using hard power . The soft power of a country rests on three main resources-

1. Culture of a country
2. Political values
3. Foreign policy of a Country.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) defines soft power as the ability to influence others through appeal and attraction, using non-coercive means.

Therefore soft power can influence the behavior of other states through seduction.

In contrast to economic and military power, which is dependent on payoff's and coercion, soft power works through attraction and co-optation.

Use of soft power and cultural diplomacy constitutes an integral part of MEA's overall strategy for achieving the key objectives of Government's foreign policy and thus play an integral part of MEA's overall strategy.

Manifestation -

The expression "soft power" may be understood in terms of a usable national capacity to advance foreign policy objectives and priorities of a country by non-coercive means. Being an ability to shape a broader narrative in bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, it remains a vital instrument in foreign policy by itself or as a complement to the application of "hard power", that is, military power or other types of compelling diplomacy.

Constituting a wide spectrum, it manifests itself through -

- Economic to socio-cultural elements ,
- Diverse cultural and historical heritage,
- Political values like Democracy , an open culture in society, tolerance to multi-cultural ethos,
- Civilisational elements, messaging,
- Just and fair foreign policy- e.g. NAM, Gujarat Doctrine,
- Strategic communication in official dialogues and,
- By means of a wider targeted public outreach using diverse media platforms and Cinema.

Dynamics of Soft Power in context of India-

- As a culturally diverse, democratic country with a large aspirational, extroversive population pursuing socio-economic mobility, India's image is that of a benign country confident of its growing role in the international community in support of democracy, international cooperation, stability, and commitment to multilateralism as an effective way to meet our common global challenges.

- It is not that of an aggressive, revisionist power and its growing military strength is not seen as threatening by an overwhelming number of countries both near and afar.
- Oldest civilization, very old culture, home of Yoga and Alternative medicines, inventor of Zero and Decimal system, etc .
- The cinema of Bollywood - largest films producing country in the world, and influence of such movies across the world-e.g. recently RRR movie nominated for Oscar Award and it created wider enthusiasm in world public towards Indian films.
- Indian Diaspora - worlds largest diaspora population (18 million), many CEOs of MNCs are of Indian origin.
- India,s rise as the worlds largest global service provider.
- Its millennial civilisation and growth story within a democratic framework evokes considerable interest in practically all regions of the world as a wide range of countries experience raucous internal debates about the best policy tools for their own cohesive, inclusive progress.
- The civilisational depth and breadth make it possible for nearly all countries to find something in India to relate to and to find an easy comfort level.
- In the prevailing milieu of deepening strategic distrust among countries, this circumstance is a significant facilitator of a successful pursuit of our national strategic interests.
- India's medical and space diplomacy is also playing a crucial role shaping soft power of India- e.g. Vaccine Diplomacy through ' Vaccine Maithri'.
- India's Foreign Policy is also part of its soft power appeal - Fair policy of NAM , championing the cause of developing countries in forums of G-20, BRICS, UN, WHO, WTO.

Significance of India's Soft Power -

1. India's quest for Global Leadership will be shape more positively by soft power - e.g. Establishment of CDRI , ISA, and initiating Vaccine Maithri to help less developed counties.
2. Dynamic, Loyal and influential Diaspora- large flow of remittances, acting as bridge helping India access local knowledge, expertise , and markets, and it also wields a greater leverage over policy negotiations -e.g. 123 Civil Nuclear cooperation, post-Pokhran diplomacy.
3. With diffusion of power and rising power of NON-state actors in the 21st century, the use of hard power for economic and even for geo-strategic gain is often too costly relative to the expected gains.
4. Countering Rising China through low cost but sustainable instrument of soft power - e.g. in African countries, India adopted the approach of capacity building and training of local population.
5. Building people to people contacts and leveraging its potential at strategic level - e.g. India's investments in Afghanistan have develop a greater goodwill among the people of Afghanistan.
6. More robust developmental partnerships and cooperation- e.g. India has started developmental partnerships on an equal footing even with the smaller neighbors, " Assistance Development Partnerships " with Nepal, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, etc.

Challenges and limitations that inhibit India's soft power and cultural diplomacy-

1. Inadequate financing- while China spends about \$10 Billion a year just on its Confucius Institutes and soft power promotion , whereas ICCR (Indian Council of Cultural Relations) and other agencies of India spends merely around 300-400 crore. And most of India's expenditure goes for establishment and administration requirements.

2. Lack of coordination among various institutions,
3. Shortage of skilled manpower,
4. Lack of clarity on the mandate of Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR),
5. Absence of clear cut policy on our soft power projection hinders creative and fullest utilization of soft power instruments.
6. Despite being sustainable and long-term, the soft power is largely intangible and hard to be shaped by mere government policies. Soft power resources often lie beyond the control of the governments and that require many year to shape up.
7. Lack of policy coherence and efficacy in foreign policy engagement - e.g. the sacrificing of democratic solidarity for a realpolitik, which failed to realize strategic gains in Burma illustrates.
8. Significant capacity constraints - lack of quality diplomatic personnel's, inadequate diplomatic community.
9. Internal contradictions - like poverty , status of women, corruption, and commensalisms proves major impediments to realization of its full potential.

Recent developments-

1. Vaccine Diplomacy- " Vaccine Maithri"
2. MEA and the Ministry of Culture embraced digital and virtual mode to carry forward India's soft power and cultural diplomacy during the pandemic and asked the Ministry to adopt innovative ICT technologies to make India's soft power and cultural diplomacy more effective and relevant in the post-covid world.

Way forward measures-

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs' tabled its 16th report, titled 'India's Soft Power and Cultural Diplomacy: Prospects & Limitations' in the Parliament during the winter session of 2022. In the report, the committee made a slew of recommendations on how India can better project this soft power in conjunction with conventional & cultural diplomacy-

1. MEA must assess India's soft power potential and come up with strategies to utilize them.
2. Further, a National Policy Document on India's soft power projections need to be constructed.
3. The committee called for constituting a coordination committee consisting of representatives from the ministries of external affairs, culture, youth and sports affairs, AYUSH and science and technology to overcome the lack of coordination among multiple institutions in projecting India's soft power.
4. Channelization of Multilateral Diplomacy and abundantly incorporate "Track 2" and " Track 3" Diplomacy in India's foreign policy strategies.
5. Best international practices on leveraging soft power instruments should be studied- MEA was also recommended to study international best practices on how countries are leveraging their soft power instruments. It noted that the soft power organization of China, UK, Japan, USA, Russia, and France focused on language promotion, leadership programme, cultural activities, and promotion of art forms. Indian Council for Culture Relations (ICCR) does most of these activities in India.
6. Restructure and Overhaul of ICCR - The committee observed that there is an urgent need for a complete overhaul of the structure, mandate and functioning of the ICCR so that it can project Indian culture in a comprehensive, cohesive, transparent, and inclusive manner. ICCR was asked to

adopt a suitable motto and have a well-defined vision and mission statement.

7. Adequate Budgetary Allocation to enhance the appeal of India's soft power -the committee suggested an increase in ICCR's budgetary allocation by at least 20% for better outcomes. Enhanced annual budgetary allocation of Rs. 500 crores for ICCR to conduct India's soft power and cultural diplomacy was also recommended.
8. Separate Division should be established for reviving monuments with Indian influence abroad- a new and separate division to handle projects abroad should be established by MEA with ASI and the Ministry of Culture.
9. ICCR should explore financial models like public private partnership to supplement the grants-in-aid received from MEA.
10. Improved human resource policy, appointment of genuinely interested persons, mechanism to share human resources to the fullest in cultural centres should be undertaken.
11. Tourism sector should be boosted as it is an important indicator of soft power- the government should adopt a country-specific approach for promotional activities and come up with proposals incorporating feedback from all types of travelers for the same.
12. Promotion of AYUSH & Yoga abroad to boost India's exports- MEA should facilitate the opening of more AYUSH centers overseas in a strategic and planned manner.
13. Media and cinema as tools of soft power-The popularization of Indian personalities and historical events on a regular basis with the active involvement of Indian Missions/Posts abroad, revamping the focus, structure and functioning of Doordarshan India for its global outreach, and popularizing Indian movies and regional cinema abroad needs to be undertaken.

India has tremendous scope to leverage the democratic credential as soft power tool-

- India is the world's largest democracy. The country's parliamentary democracy with a multi-party-political system and orderly change of government through periodic peaceful elections has global appeal.
- Promotion of democracy as India's strength is being undertaken by MEA along with Parliament Secretariat and Election Commission.
- ICCR's 'Next Generation Democracy Network Programme' helps young leaders witness India's democratic system.
- Therefore, India has tremendous scope to leverage the democratic credential as a soft power tool.

In sum, the projection of soft power would need to convey to the international community at large a narrative as to what makes India pulsate. It is about a poor, socially unequal country, at the time of its independence in 1947, charting a successful journey to become a major geopolitical and geo-economic actor today within the steady institutional framework of a constitutional democracy.

It is about a people who are self-assured enough in their civilisational moorings not needing to be sequestered from "foreign" ideas. It is a holistic narrative underpinning India's image which is to be leveraged to realise the foreign policy objectives set by the Prime Minister.

SPACE DIPLOMACY

Basics about the concept -

- Space diplomacy refers to the integration of the collaboration of the knowledge, technology, and legislation involved in science diplomacy as applied to the expanded exploration of space.

- In short, it is an art and practice of using space to conduct foreign affairs and advance national interests is Space Diplomacy.
- As diplomatic relationships are integral to the mitigation of various health, scientific, natural or technological issues across nations, space diplomacy is a growing field in which various nations can come to a consensus on what is fair when it comes to the exploration and commercialization of space travel.
- In the context of highly complex and competitive space dynamics the arena of space and related emerging technologies offers great source of international recognition, status

Brief overview-

The country's burgeoning space sector could be a useful foreign policy tool.

When nations could not manage diplomacy on the ground, they took it to space which gave rise to the modern-day phenomenon of 'space diplomacy'. The phenomenon is not only real but challenging given the marathon to have the maximum satellites staged in space.

Space diplomacy has no such confined meaning, but to describe it in a layman's language, it simply refers to how a country tries to manipulate 'things from above' by sending space machines and equipment. However, recent times have seen countries fighting over a 'space' in 'space', ironically.

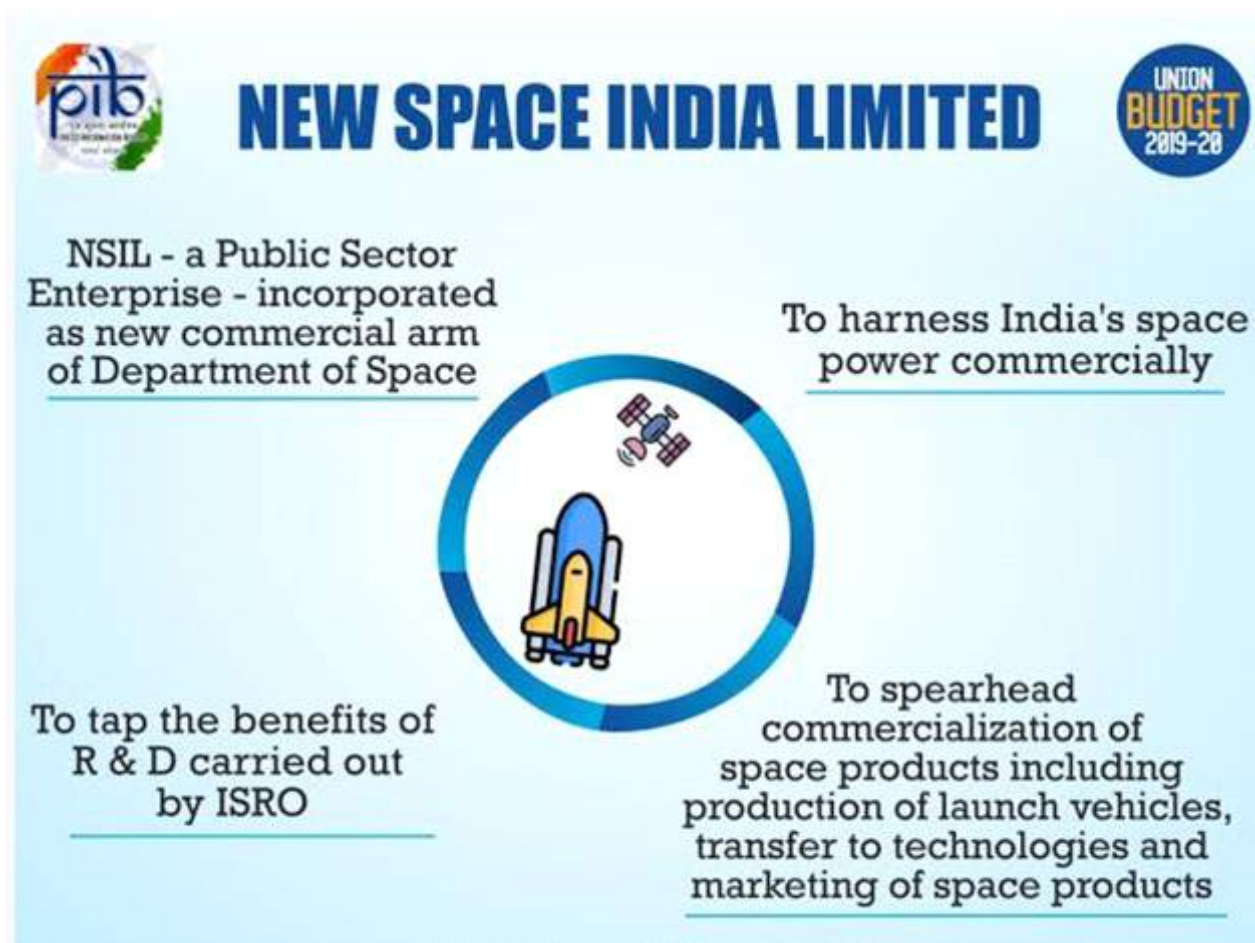
Diplomacy over space articles have come to define international relations in the present times and now with Elon Musk's SpaceX, the world witnessed how commercial satellites can be easily launched, therefore, challenging the already high paced loop for space diplomacy and developments. The more space satellites the better scope for the practice of soft power between the countries.

As Space diplomacy takes precedence in modern-day politics, the approach could be perplexing too. The battle to occupy more resources in space has resulted in the 'weaponization' of space articles which again is an equal deterrent to nuclear missiles. The mechanisms around the conduct of space assets and diplomacy remain unraveled and hence the debate on it calls interjections, benefitting countries and citizens.

India on the front of Space Diplomacy and Leadership-

- The march for space diplomacy and assets is being led by the US, of course, but India does not lag in this. Apart from the 'symbolism' attached, the fight over space diplomacy could be seen as an extension of territorial politics too.
- A report published by the World Economic Forum mentioned that around 1950 active satellites orbit the earth and more are to join them in the future. The USA has about 830 satellites and compared to that, India has only 54 active satellites orbiting the earth. However, the range of space diplomacy and assets go beyond the number of active satellites because the trend set now is more focused on policy formations and implementation of cooperation to push the boundaries for exploration and knowledge.
- Also, The entry of private players has accelerated the process of sending more assets into space.
- With the Anti-Satellite Test that was conducted in March 2019, India was able to showcase its efficacy in shooting down satellites in space, thereby joining the 'elite' club which holds this potential.
- The biggest breakthrough in space diplomacy for India came when it decided to dedicate a separate agency known as the Defence Space Research Organization (DSRO) which will work as the development of space technologies and warfare wing for the country.

- In addition to that, the DSRO will also be providing all materials related to research and development to the Defence Space Agency, the latter being a tri-service wing of the Indian Armed Forces.
- Speaking of India which is not much behind in this competition as the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) has launched several PSLVs, helping the country to formulate geopolitical strategies.
- France and the Middle East has been the closest aid to India when it comes down to the development of technologies of space assets.
- Moreover, independently the satellites launched have helped SAARC nations and also operations in Brunei, Indonesia and Mauritius.



NEW SPACE INDIA LIMITED

NSIL - a Public Sector Enterprise - incorporated as new commercial arm of Department of Space

To harness India's space power commercially

To tap the benefits of R & D carried out by ISRO

To spearhead commercialization of space products including production of launch vehicles, transfer to technologies and marketing of space products

Steps taken by India in line with space modernisation and Space diplomacy-

1. INSpaCE
2. NSIL, ANTRIX
3. SAARC Satellite
4. IRNSS-NAVIC - enable regional countries of South Asia to use its positioning service .
5. India is planning a space pact with Saudi Arabia.
6. Cooperation with QUAD countries .

7. NISAR
8. India partnered with NASA for Chandrayaan mission .
9. Indian satellite data is widely exchanged with friendly countries for astronomical research - that promotes goodwill .
10. ISRO's Telemetry, Monitoring and command Network(ISTRAC) serves international stations at Brunei, Indonesia, and Mauritius.
11. India set up ground station at 5 neighbour:

SPACE DIPLOMACY

5 large ground stations, one each in Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Maldives and Sri Lanka. To be equipped with 7.5m antennas

500 VSAT terminals, 100 each in the 5 countries; Bhutan will get 35 ROTs in addition

₹5-6cr
Cost of implementation of the project, at an estimated ₹5 cr in each country

➤ Maldives to get **1 disaster management alert system** in 100 of its 200 islands

Significance for India in utilizing space as tool of foreign policy -

1. Opportunity to project Soft-power- as India always try to share the fruits of developments in space technology with neighbors, it boosts India's soft power and goodwill among the countries.
2. Furthering Neighbourhood first Policy- e.g. SAARC Satellite.
3. Comparative and Competitive advantage over AMERICAN OR European counterparts , as India's ISRO offers a cheaper alternative to launching satellites for developing countries.
4. Creating greater economic opportunities at domestic space market commercialisation and will create new areas of cooperation to further improve bilateral relations.
5. Greater technological diffusion and have potential to generate more high-tech oriented partnerships - e.g. India-France, Indira- UAE.
6. Greater Private sector participation- e.g. GAGANYAAN mission .
7. Countering China at border as well as internationally - China has advanced satellite tracking centers in Tibet that can not only track, but also blind Indian satellites. Neighborhood Ground Stations would help India fight rising Chinese influence.

MAKING INDIA SELF-RELIANT IN SPACE SECTOR

Private Sector Participation in Space Activities Approved



- 

Reforms to help India leapfrog to next stages of space activities; to become a **Global technology powerhouse**
- 

To enhance socio-economic use of space assets & activities; **Large-scale employment opportunity in technology sector**
- 

IN-SPACe* to provide level playing field for private companies to use Indian space infrastructure
*Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre
- 

NSIL** to reorient space activity models from 'supply driven' to a 'demand driven'
**New Space India Limited
- 

Allow ISRO to focus more on R&D activities, exploration missions & human spaceflight programme

Challenges and Concerns-

1. Space Warfare and Increasing Space militarisation- The human curiosity to know what lies beyond the earth landed them in space and with speeding upgrades in technology the possibilities of space warfare is likely emerging.
2. Space Debris-
3. Inadequate developments on legal frameworks at international level- there is lack of clear treaty outlining categorically space as zone of peaceful use.
4. Global disparity between nations further perpetuates dependency as few countries has capability to deliver efficient and affordable space commerce.
5. Little international consensus has been reached on the vertical range of sovereign space.

Way forward -

1. India must step up its game when it comes to acquiring more space and developing assets.
2. As more countries deplore in space for research and development, space diplomacy takes precedence especially for a country like India where it is highly important to grow defense and surveillance strategies in a dynamic geopolitical setting.

3. Streamlining the National Guidelines on Outer Space - Guidelines for long-term sustainable use of outer space had been adopted in 2019 which looks into the regulations, capacity building and awareness of space activities.
4. Addressing the problem of Space Debris - through effective regulation of outer space and use nano satellites-e.g. UNNATI mission of ISRO.
5. Undertaking exploration and scientific mission by ISRO to prove its Matel in the space leadership.
6. Proactive Approach for space Projects - India should avoid hyper-fixation and over-commitment on selected outer space related projects.

MEDICAL DIPLOMACY

Basic concept-

- In normative terms it is "an emerging field that addresses the dual goals of improving global health and bettering international relations". It also means "winning hearts and minds of people in poor countries by exporting medical care, expertise and personnel to help those who need it most" .
- In more technical terms it is a "multi-level, multi-actor negotiation processes that shape and manage the global policy environment for health".
- Health Diplomacy occupies the interface between international health assistance and international political relations. It may be defined as a political change agent that meets the dual goals of improving global health while helping repair failures in diplomacy, particularly in conflict areas and resource-poor countries.
- The idea of health diplomacy started as the phrase 'medical diplomacy' coined by the special assistant to U.S. President Jimmy Carter, Peter Bourne, in 1978. Bourne's idea was that "the role of health and medicine as a means for bettering international relations has not been fully explored by the United States. Certain humanitarian issues, especially health, can be the basis for establishing a dialogue and bridging diplomatic barriers because they transcend traditional and more volatile and emotional concerns".

Brief Overview-

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on 12 May 2020, stated that while India believes in self-reliance, it does not agree with self-centric arrangements, while referring to the ancient Sanskrit dictum Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, meaning 'the world is one family'. This philosophy has guided India's cooperation with more than 123 countries.

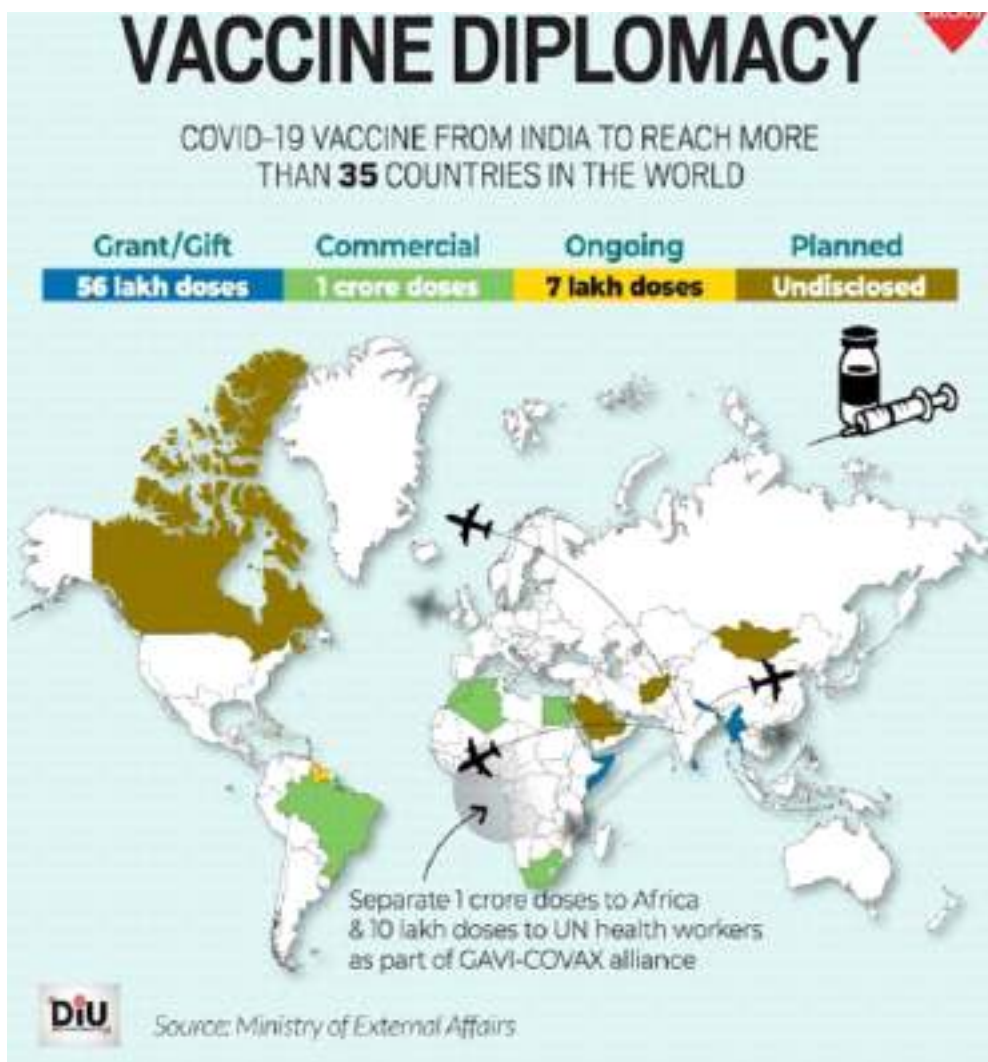
India's international cooperation is an answer to the United Nations Secretary-General's call for world leaders to come together for an urgent and coordinated global response. This cooperation has been termed as 'medical diplomacy' by eminent political commentators.

The countries India has reached out to, mainly belong in the global south as listed under the Group of 77+ China, possessing limited capacities to manage the epidemic. Hence, such engagements must be analyzed through the lenses of South South cooperation (SSC).

The concept of security has shifted, moving away from a macro focus solely on the security of nations and other large entities to also include a micro-level focus on the security of individuals and communities, in which securing the standard of health and protecting life has been one of the primary concerns. In the recent years, health has been adapted as a strategic foreign policy and diplomatic concern for many countries and regions of the world.

Indian dynamics of Medical Diplomacy-

Being a recent arena of diplomacy, Indian diplomats and foreign policy practitioners have started growing an understanding and developing India's diplomatic initiatives in the health sector. Most of the global health initiatives originate in the United Nations and under the aegis of the World Health Organisation (WHO). Many countries have added a full-time health attaché to their diplomatic staff in recognition of the importance and complexity of global health deliberations; others, along with India, have added diplomats to the staff of international health departments. Their common challenge is to navigate a complex system in which issues in domestic and foreign policy intertwine the lines of power and constantly influence change, and where increasingly rapid decisions and skillful negotiations are required in the face of outbreaks of disease, security threats or other issues.



Why Health Diplomacy becoming more visible and profound-

Health is on the radar of foreign policy because it has become integral to three global agendas:

1. Security — driven by the fear of global pandemics or the intentional spread of pathogens and an increase in humanitarian conflicts, natural disasters, and emergencies;
2. Economic — concerned not only with the economic effect of poor health on development or of pandemic outbreaks on the global market place but also the gain from the growing global market in health goods and services;

3. Social justice — reinforcing health as a social value and human right, supporting the United Nations millennium development goals, advocating for access to medicines and primary health care, and calling for high income countries to invest in a broad range of global health initiatives.

Global Health Diplomacy - A Strategic Opportunity for India:

1. The foreign policy and policymakers in India are committed to strengthening cooperation and sharing of experiences in the public health sector. India uses foreign assistance as a diplomatic tool for foreign trade and investment; and sustained cooperation to many developing and under-developed nations including Africa.
2. AN opportune moment for Global Leadership- from SAARC to G20 , India has played a major role in addressing present crisis.
3. South-South Cooperation - India strongly believes in the concept of south-south cooperation and is critical about western donor-aid concept. Indian foreign assistance typically includes technical cooperation, grants, and contributions to international organizations, soft loans, and Export-Import (EXIM) Bank lines of credit with subsidized interest rates.
4. For long thought of as a net recipient of global health benefits, India is turning into a global healthcare provider. This will be a major pillar of its diplomacy in the years to come.
5. The Covid-19 pandemic has brought about a new dimension in India's role as a global health provider, and its health diplomacy - From hydroxychloroquine medicines, to now shipping out Covid-19 vaccines to its neighbors, and others in need, India is stepping up its health diplomacy.
6. India spotted the opportunity to propel health as a significant tool of diplomacy - e.g. Promotion of an international yoga day and spreading Ayurveda around the world.
7. Now the Covid-19 pandemic has been an opportunity for India to showcase the best of its pharmaceutical manufacturing talents- India is considered as world's Pharmacy manufacturing leader as evident from the fact that India contributes around 70% of global vaccine production.
8. India is already making a concerted push towards Digitisation through its programs like Digital India and stand to take advantage from the changed circumstances.

India's Medical Diplomacy during COVID –

- On occasion of a once in a century crisis , India's COVID diplomacy is enabling Delhi to emerge as a responsible and reliable international power at a time when many established international actors have failed to support margin countries.
- India has sent dispatches of rescue medicines as gifts to neighboring countries to help them fight the coronavirus pandemic.
- The government was sending drugs to Bhutan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Nepal, Myanmar, Seychelles, Mauritius, and some African countries.
- Supplies have made to the Gulf in the backdrop of growing strategic partnerships.
- The government has also cleared the export of Covid-19 drugs to countries such as the US, Spain, Brazil, Bahrain, Germany, and the UK in line with the commercial contracts signed with Indian pharmaceutical companies.

Challenges -

1. Economically, sustaining health prominently in foreign policy is becoming more difficult because the international economic context and domestic fiscal crises adversely affect governments, societies, international organizations and non-state actors.
2. Concerns are still raised by Big Pharma about intellectual property rights issues and inadequate protection concerns.
3. Lack of international Leadership to support decisively the agenda of Health for Humanity.
4. Lack of consensus in WTO over the extent of Waiver, thereby hurting developing countries more.
5. Lack of technology transfer and financial devolution by developed countries affects performance of underdeveloped countries.

Way forward-

1. India's engagement in global health diplomacy needs to be formulated and implemented not only to generate revenue but also to have an increased global political engagement.
2. India is also the leading producer of generic medicines around the world. Therefore India should focus on further building medical diplomacy as a facet of diplomatic relations.
3. Promoting Multilateralism - SAARC, BIMSTEC,
4. Further G20 provides India an opportunity to revive multilateralism, become a strong and credible champion of internationalism, and assume a leadership role.



Conclusion-

There is a large reservoir of highly trained experts and scientists in knowledge based industries, such as, information technology, science, research and development etc. They can play an important part in developing India as a Research & Development centre. The overseas Indians have distinguished themselves in the field of medicine and healthcare in the countries of their residence. They can play an important role in secondary and tertiary healthcare in India. The Diaspora can also help in promoting India as a healthcare destination. They can effectively contribute to the expansion and growth of the pharmaceutical industry. The faster Indian foreign policy institutions adapt using as an integral element in their decision making apparatus, it would not only register as an altruistic behavior of the state machinery, but a strategic move to bring regional and sub regional integration, along with creating a global forum to having an integrative mechanism to be responsive not only during times of exigency but to be apt in adapting with the changing global health necessities.

Health diplomacy, then, is likely to become a powerful and more enduring facet of India's engagement with the world as the country seeks to tell a holistic story about itself and its contribution for greater common good.

It is one of the most powerful ways that India can show that it is a friend in need, and a friend 'in deed'.

Important Military Exercises

S.No.	Name of exercise	Participating country	Nature of exercise
1.	YUDH ABHYAS	India & United States	Army exercise
2.	KUVERIN	India & Maldives	Army exercise
3.	AUSINDEX	India & Australia	Naval exercise
4.	MITRA SHAKTHI	India & Sri Lanka	Army exercise
5.	Malabar Naval Exercise	India & US & Japan	Naval Exercise
6.	Sundarban Maitri	India and Bangladesh	Border Security Force (BSF) and Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB)
7.	Suryakiran	India and Nepal February 8 to 21, 2016	Army Exercise;
8.	Ex Lamitye VII	Indo-Seychelles Joint Training	Army Exercise; 15 February to 28 February 2016
9.	SAADMEx	SAARC	Disaster Management Exercise by NDRF
10.	Exercise Livewire	IAF's annual exercise	Indian Air Force
11.	HAND-IN-HAND	India & China	Army exercise
12.	SLINEX	India & Sri Lanka	Naval Exercise
13.	Indra	India & Russia	Army exercise
14.	SAMPRITI	India & Bangladesh	Army exercise

Minilateral Vs Multilateral Institutions

Brief summary-

- As progress in global governance fora decelerates, minilateralism is increasingly pushed to the fore as a complement, and more provocatively, as an alternative to multilateralism.
- In contrast to the multiple interests of an expanding and diverse membership, as well as the geopoliticisation of governance issues stemming from escalating US-China tensions, minilaterals offer an edge vis-à-vis informality, select membership, and a narrower issue- based focus. Despite this promise, however, minilateralism has a mixed track record given factors, both external and internal, to minilaterals themselves.
- Considering a recent slew of recommendations for greater minilateral participation on the part of ASEAN members, and more broadly, countries within the Indo-Pacific, this report examines opportunities for and challenges to enhancing the effectiveness of minilateralism in a post-COVID-19 era, with an eye towards strengthening multilateral governance.

Concept-

- Minilateralism- Minilateralism stems from the practice of multilateralism by breaking down complex issues into smaller ones before addressing them, i.e. building peace from pieces strategy. E.g. SCO, RCEP, CUSMA, AUKUS, FIVE EYES ALLIANCE, etc.
- Multilateralism- it is a process of organizing relations between groups of three or more states. Beyond that basic quantitative aspect, multilateralism is generally considered to comprise certain qualitative elements or principles that shape the character of the arrangement or institution. Those principles are an indivisibility of interests among participants, a commitment to diffuse reciprocity, and a system of dispute settlement intended to enforce a particular mode of behavior.
- Multilateralism has a long history, but it is principally associated with the era after World War II, during which there was a burgeoning of multilateral agreements led primarily by the United States - e.g. WTO, NATO, etc.

- Minilateral institutions- BRICS, MGC INITIATIVE, QUAD, RCEP, etc.
- Multilateral institutions- UN, WTO, WB, IMF, WHO, etc.

Difference Between Bilateral & Multilateral Groupings



Power

Bilateral groupings generally consist of more powerful nations coming together to form an agreement. Multilateral groupings have more space to accommodate smaller and less powerful countries and are important for the inclusion of the developing and underdeveloped world.

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Complexity and Time

Agreements (such as trade agreements) in bilateral groupings are less complex because they consist of only two countries and take in opinions only from these two countries. Coming to agreements in a multilateral grouping is a lot more complex since there are many countries involved.

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Multilateralism brief context and brief Historical evolution-

- Scholars have always struggled with the dilemma of interdependence in a world where nation-states have been the basic unit of political organization for over two centuries.
- As the primacy of the states continued and complex powers shift recurred, the initial optimism in a world government has come crashing down. Scholars have since then turned into diplomatic interaction between the states to analyze how they relate to each other and form cooperative international organizations, among them the multilateral and its new avatar, the minilaterals.
- Considering that it is not the absence of platforms for the states to relate to each other, but their astonishing diversity that concerns us, we must look into the efficiency of each one of them and why states have prioritized some above the others.
- The multilateral institutions since the Second World War have been instituted to formalize global norms and sustain a certain sense of predictability in the international system. Structurally, such forums like the UN and WTO have an institutional format with an independent bureaucracy and delegation from a large number of countries.
- In the qualitative sphere, multilateralism generally involves three features: generalized organizing principles, indivisibility, and diffuse reciprocity.

The premise of multilateralism: A brief overview

- The present geopolitical landscape has witnessed a seemingly drastic transition, with the widespread emergence of multifarious groupings, popularly referred to as "Minilaterals", premises upon the imperative understanding of peacebuilding and conflict resolution, and shared threat perceptions, with regards to numerous strategically viable areas.
- The growing realization of the virtual deficiencies of singular organizations in combating regional challenges , through calibrated options and the pronounced infringements of broader strategic interests, have accentuated the need for the constitution of such multilateral organizations.
- Also minilateralism in Asian theater has been emerging in form of AUKUS, SCO , QUAD, etc.
- The Indo- Pacific replete with a wider array of opportunities to broaden international partnerships, has emerged as the bastion of profound diplomatic engagements thereby taking shape as one of the most coveted realms of contemporary international relations.

Multilateralism understanding in two forms-

1. Multilateralism in the operation - it includes countries pooling their resource together, as in the case of the military acts carried out by a joint force.
2. Multilateralism in the authorization - it also known as 'diplomatic multilateralism' as it doesn't involve the participation of all countries, but requires a multilateral institution to grant authority to a state or a small group of states to conduct the operation as was the case of American involvement in the Gulf war.

Minilateralism- An Improvisation

- Multilateralism is a relatively later phenomenon that has come as a result of increasing difficulty in maintaining consensus-based traditional multiculturalism that reduces outcomes to the lowest denominator.
- They are informal, flexible, functional, and voluntary frameworks with varied "situational interests, shared values or relevant capabilities'.
- Though the number of minilateral forums has spontaneously spiked over the last few years, Minilateralism as a concept has been in existence for a long time in a disguised format.

Minilateralism as an alternative mode of diplomacy and rulemaking -

Following factors played critical role in furthering the minilateralism in recent context -

1. Mounting woes over seemingly irreconcilable interests in global governance,
2. The slow pace of multilateral negotiations,
3. The ideological impasse fuelling US-China tensions have thrust minilateralism.
4. Larger factors such as the inertia and stagnation of such multilateral organisations such as the United Nations comprising more formal political structures, and the changing nature of contemporary threats, coupled with the growth of technology in the form of the ICT , have undeniably paved the way for more informal means of dialogue and negotiation, something which the minilaterals promise to incorporate.
5. Moreover, the capacity constraints of nations like India, Japan and Singapore , in view of the excessive Chinese Hegemony have stemmed the rise of the consistent need for more advanced diplomatic endeavours. Therefore ther are concepts emerging like "Plausible Trinity", "Institutionalised Forms of Conflict Managaement ".

Different forms of minilateralism-

1. Regional-centred outfits -e.g. the Lower Mekong Initiative, MGC(Mekong GAnga Cooperation) initiative .
2. Functional issue-based coalitions - e.g. Digital Nations ,
3. Identity-focused blocs of like-minded allies or partners - e.g. BRICS, Mexico-Indonesia-South Korea-Turkey-Australia [MIKTA] groupings.

Significance of minilateralisms-

1. By working with the smallest number of countries minilateral institutions can spillover the largest possible impact on solving a particular problem
2. Thriving off informality and interpersonal relations for open discussion, and compartmentalizing complex policy issues into smaller agendas, minilateralism is deemed to deliver speed.
3. Ad hoc flexibility, and innovative experimentalism allows mini lateral institutions to work more flexibly , resolve issues in more consensual manner- e.g. BBIN.
4. A small membership in minilateral institutions make it easy for building and maintenance of trust.
5. As the lifeblood of minilateralism, informality is credited with many advantages. With low bureaucratisation at play, there are more open and honest discussions, more flexibility to create ad-hoc arrangements, and less need to finance institutionalisation, such as a permanent secretariat.
6. Minilateralism break down problems into specific dimensions than addressing the expansive and comprehensive box of global issues at once. this can be equated with "disaggregated multilateralism" that pursues "global governance in pieces".

Challenges for Minilateralism-

1. Despite having smaller number of countries, the minilateral agendas are difficult to advance if and when participating countries cannot be present or cannot commit as a consequence of competing diplomatic priorities, changes in government, etc.- e.g. back in 2007, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) was short-lived when its major advocate — Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe — stepped down from his first term in office, and the new Rudd government in Australia decided against the economic risks of antagonising China.
2. Fewer members and a narrowly framed agenda could also perpetuate certain narratives that are detrimental to the minilateral itself- e.g. The China-containment narrative associated with the Quad has stuck even after its resurrection as Quad 2.0 a decade later.
3. Further , establishing and expanding minilaterals could be challenging where there is a trust deficit or a lack of familiarity between existing and new members.
4. Informality as double edged sword- A fluid, non-hierarchical arrangement could create a leadership vacuum that works against minilaterals. E.g. MIKTA Grouping.
5. Further informality contributes to a loss of focus in minilateral arrangements without organising principles, frameworks or institutionalisation.
6. Low institutionalisation also means minilaterals are often set up for shorter life expectancies than formal multilateral arrangements.
7. Domestic and international legitimacy vacillates due to political climate- At the domestic level, minilaterals are more susceptible to being culled due to changing political climates. E.g. Despite

being around for two decades, BIMSTEC only gained momentum in 2017 when the Modi government recognised that the grouping could further New Delhi's domestic agenda and foreign policy calculus.

Minilateralism is on rise in INdo- pacific-

1. Changing geopolitical dynamics in Indo-Pacific - expansionist and assertive China, larger USA involvement like AUKUS, QUAD, IPEF, etc, have produced new security arrangements in the form of minilaterals in the region.
2. Capacity inadequacy of littoral smaller countries have pushed minilateralism in the Indo-Pacific.
3. Faster and more effective decision-making process - the like-minded countries and their networks would play critical role in maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific and also improve interoperability considerably.
4. Rebalancing the power politics in theatre of Indo-pacific - the balance of power is necessary in indo pacific for minilateralism to succeed . E.g QUAD will play cortical role in maintaining BOP in the region.
5. However challenges are also been there - ambiguity and contradiction may increase at regional institutions like ASEAN, ARF, East Asia Summit, etc.

Way forward approach - COMPLEMENTARITY OF MULTILATERALISM and MINILATERALISM :

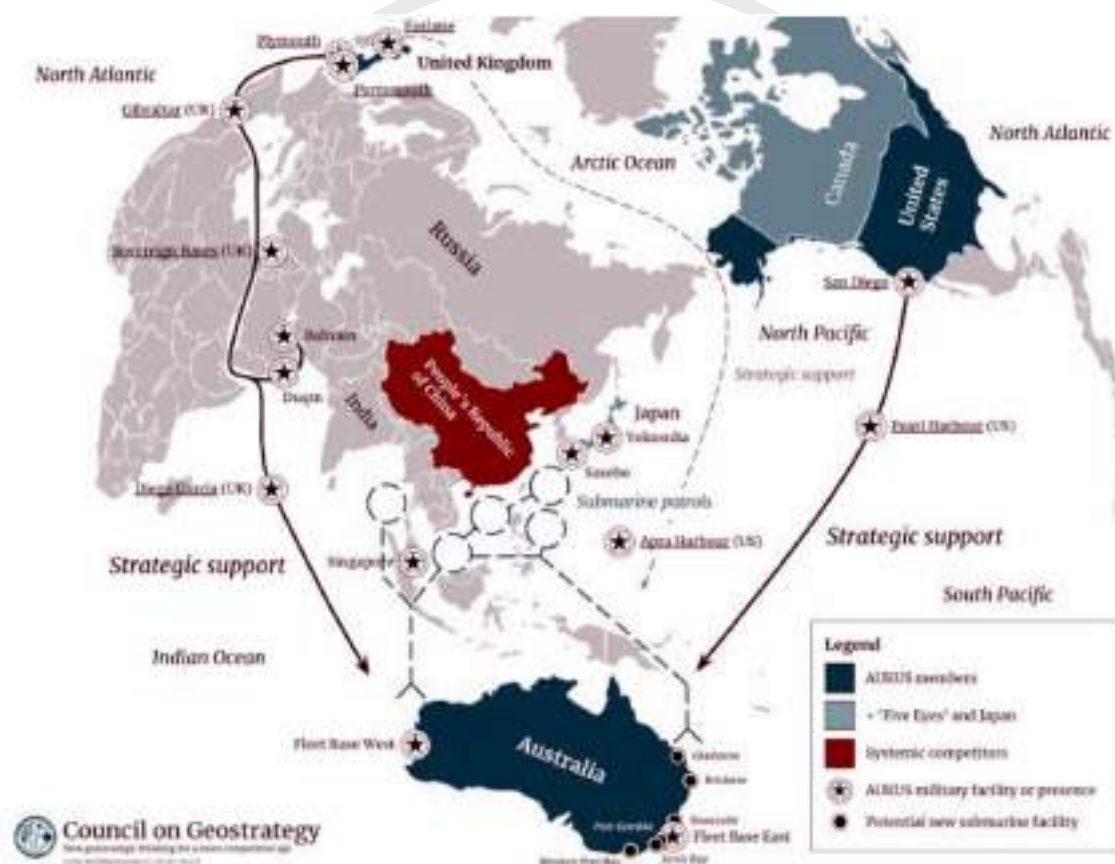
1. The ever growing phenomenon of minilateralism is not to be deemed as "completely replacing existing alliances and institutions but as complementing them" to encourage some form of consensus and coordination amongst a small group of countries in an era of contested and fragmented international politics.
2. Taking into account both it's strategic prospects and drawbacks, it could be said that minilateralism as a process cannot remain isolated and has to complement the existing multilateral institutions and attempt to diversify it's geopolitical horizon, across various aspects of policy formulation and co-ordination in a politically active area as that of the Indo Pacific.
3. Moreover, successful outcomes, can only be materialised, should member nations endeavour to bring about the very atmosphere of discourse as in minilaterals, in the larger regional and multilateral framework as well.
4. Concludingly, it could be claimed that, despite the calibrated stance adopted by the West through such distinctive units to sway the political favour in its fray, a lot still needs to be worked upon, given the tremendous hegemonic shift in present day international affairs.
5. Further the fundamental standpoint should be the credibility of these thickets of steadily developing channels of dialogue and negotiation. Therefore the prospects of co-operation and governance in the wider expanse of the Indo-Pacific need to be weighed in that credibility and practicality contexts.

International Relations Contemporary Geopolitical Issues AUKUS

Australia, the U.K. and the U.S. have announced a new trilateral security partnership for the Indo-Pacific called AUKUS. As part of this, Australia will acquire nuclear powered submarines with help from the U.K. and the U.S.

AUKUS will also involve a new architecture of meetings and engagements between the three countries, as well as cooperation across emerging technologies like applied AI, quantum technologies and undersea capabilities.

Aim - To preserve free and open Indo-Pacific for long term.



Will AUKUS be a Game Changer (Critical Analysis) -

The short answer is that it is unlikely, and the reasons are several.

1. The U.S., as a leading global military power, it already has a strong presence in the Indo-Pacific, especially in a grouping that includes Australia, India, and Japan — the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or Quad.
2. This involves joint military presence, and a wide array of war games and more in the region.
3. Similarly, the U.S., the U.K., Australia, Canada, and New Zealand are members of Five Eyes, an intelligence-sharing alliance, which also has regional security implications.

4. It is unclear what additional signaling could be achieved through the new trilateral security arrangement that does not fall within the ambit of the Quad, or in the economic realm by deepening the close ties between Washington and ASEAN.
5. AUKUS will not likely deter Beijing's strategic calculus across the region, particularly relating to its maritime ambitions and territorial expansionism.
6. The one element of AUKUS that has potential to cause a recalibration of China's plans in this realm is the nuclear-powered submarines.
7. The countries that have such submarines operational are the U.S. (68), Russia (29), China (12) the U.K. (11), France (8) and India (1).
8. Given this balance, which implies Chinese dominance across the Indo-Pacific, the effect of AUKUS facilitating the development of a nuclear fleet for Australia may tip the scales the wrong way, perhaps by heightening Beijing's anxiety over its nuclear-powered submarine fleet.

India's Stand on AUKUS -

"From our perspective, this is neither relevant to the Quad nor will it have any impact on its functioning."

- Foreign Secretary Harsh Shringla.

Opportunities -

1. It will strengthen the Quads' agenda to keep the Indo-Pacific region free, open and inclusive.
2. AUKUS could also extend itself to bolstering the Quad's efforts on maritime exercises, security and efforts in countering COVID-19, climate change, cooperating on critical technologies, and building resilient supply chains.
3. The pact opens up a window of opportunity for more strategic collaboration between India and France.
4. To deal with China: By clearly declaring its intention to deter China, AUKUS expands New Delhi's options in dealing with Beijing.

CAATSA

The Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act or CAATSA is a United States federal law that imposed sanctions on Iran, North Korea, and Russia.

Sanctions under the CAATSA -

1. The CAATSA is designed to ensure that no country is able to increase military engagement with Iran, North Korea and Russia without facing deterrent punitive action from the U.S.
2. The sanctions are unilateral, and not part of any United Nations decision, and therefore no country is bound to accept them.
3. The President shall impose no fewer than five different sanctions on any Government that enters into a significant defense or intelligence deal with the Russian Government.
4. Sanctions include stopping credit lines from U.S. and international banks such as the IMF, blocking sales of licensed goods and technology, banning banks, manufacturers and suppliers, property transactions and even financial and visa sanctions on specific officials.

5. However, the law empowers the President to waive sanctions or delay them if he/she certifies that the deal is not a threat to the U.S. and allies, that waiver of sanctions is in the U.S.'s "vital national security interests" or that the country being sanctioned promises to reduce its future dependence on the "adversary country".

Sanctions on China and Turkey -

1. The U.S. has already placed sanctions on China and Turkey for purchase of the S-400.
2. The sanctions on China included denial of export licenses, ban on foreign exchange transactions, blocking of all property and interests in property within the U.S. jurisdiction and a visa ban.
3. The sanctions on Turkey's main defense procurement agency, SSB, also included a ban on licenses and loans, and blocking of credit and visas to SSB president Ismail Demir and other officials.

Waiver for India -

The US House of Representatives passed a legislative amendment that exempts India from economic sanctions under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) on July 14, for purchasing the S-400 missile defense system from Russia in 2018. Indian-American Congressman Ro Khanna introduced the amendment, urging the Biden administration to provide a waiver to India.

Belt Road Initiative

What is it?

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), also known as the One Belt One Road Initiative, is the most emblematic of China's economic and industrial might, as of its ambitions for global, political and strategic influence. The appellation has come to signify the many Beijing-backed infrastructure projects that predate Mr. Xi's ascent.

1. BRI partnerships encompass infrastructure investments in the construction, transport, aviation, telecommunications and energy sectors stretching across many countries in Asia and Africa.
2. A number of Latin American and Caribbean states recently signed a memorandum of understanding to join the BRI.
3. The so-called 16+1 (China) grouping of central and eastern European countries includes 11 states from the European Union (EU).
4. Italy Endorsed the BRI last week, the first among the Group of 7 most industrialized nations to do so.
5. The move has caused consternation in Brussels and Washington, which are grappling with the many fissures that have surfaced in the trans-Atlantic alliance.



China's BRI roadmap

Why did China push for it?

1. The BRI is, above all, a response to slowing domestic economic growth earlier this decade, accentuated by a slump in Chinese exports to developed countries following the 2007-08 economic meltdown.
2. As infrastructure spending at home became less sustainable, Beijing shifted the emphasis in a big way to boosting the global competitiveness of domestic businesses.
3. During the BRI's fifth anniversary in September, Mr. Xi described this flagship programme as an economic cooperation initiative rather than a geopolitical or military alliance.
4. But the more common narrative is that the large infrastructure investments in the least developed and developing countries have enabled Beijing to leverage its influence around the world, potentially altering the established rules of the global order.

India's Concerns with CPEC -

The CPEC involved multiple projects, including the development of a port in the city of Gwadar in the Balochistan province, providing a port to China's Xinjiang province that would be closer than other eastern ports in China. China envisioned that Gwadar would provide it with a position on the Arabian Sea without having to go through the busy shipping lane of the Malacca Strait. Some other projects included power — the bulk of the investment — transport, and telecommunication.

Since the CPEC passes through Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, it violates India's territorial sovereignty.

Increasing Chinese Presence in the Indian Ocean Region

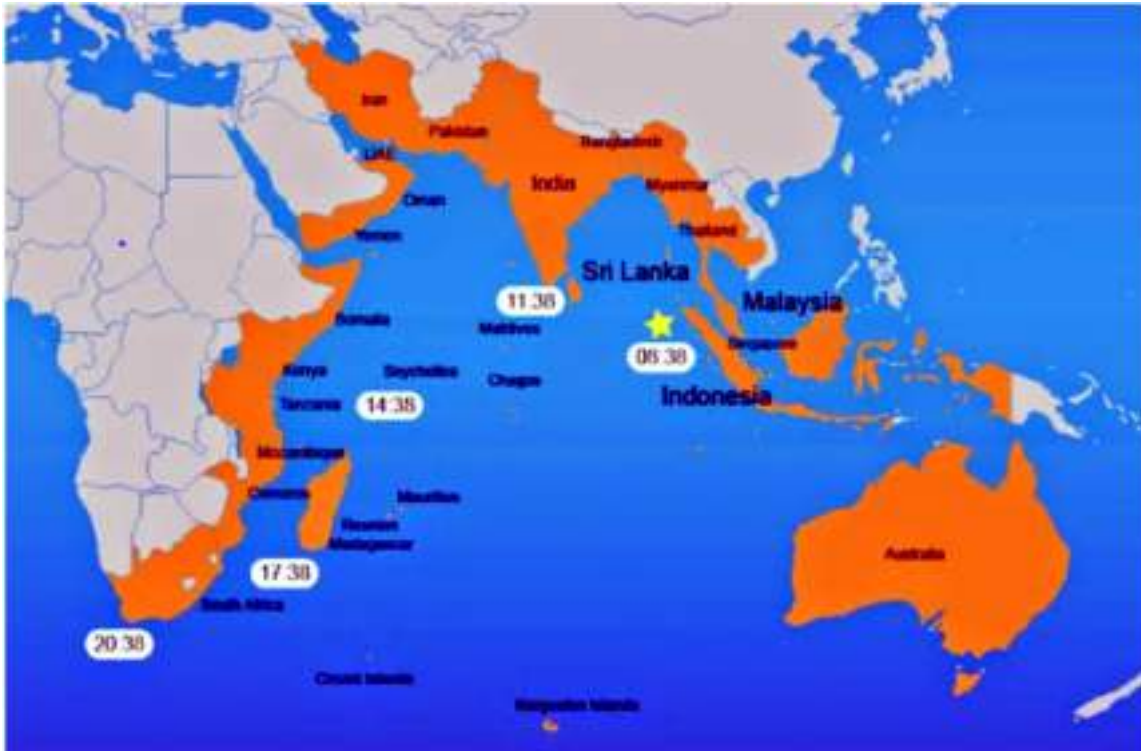


On November 21, 2022, China's top development aid agency convened the first "China-Indian Ocean Region Forum" in the southwestern Chinese city of Kunming. The meet organized by the China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA) is the latest Chinese initiative focusing on the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), underlining Beijing's growing strategic interests in a region where its economic footprint has been deepening.

Significance of IOR for India -

1. Location: India is located at the Ocean's center and has a long coastline of almost 7,500 kilometers.
2. Security dimension to India's engagement: Due to its long coastline India is always prone to terrorist attacks and security breaches. Smuggling, illegal fishing, and human trafficking are other major concerns.
3. Strategic Importance: India is engaged in various connectivity projects and is trying to extend its reach such as Chabahar Port Development in Iran and "infrastructure development rights" in Mauritius and Seychelles.
4. Economic significance: India does most of its trade through this trade route and is heavily dependent on this route for its oil supplies.
5. India explores resources of the Indian Ocean. Fisheries and aquaculture industries are major sources of exports.

6. Geopolitical proximity of IOR to India enhances India's stature of "Net security provider" and a first responder in the region.
7. Further , being a backyard of India , IOR provides India an opportunity of Strategic balancer at INDIA's "Sphere of Influence".



What is the China Indian Ocean Region forum about?

The CIDCA, which is China's new development aid agency, currently headed by former Vice Foreign Minister Luo Zhaohui, said in a statement the forum was "the first high-level official development cooperation forum jointly held by China and countries in the Indian Ocean Region" and "over 100 participants, including senior officials from 19 countries bordering the Indian Ocean" attended.

India's Stand -

New Delhi has viewed China's recent moves in the region warily, including the recent visit of a Chinese military tracking vessel, the Yuan Wang 5, to Sri Lanka. Moreover, India sees the IORA as an already established platform for the region, which has 23 members, including Australia and Maldives with 10 dialogue partners which include China, Japan, Russia, the U.K. and the U.S.

Concerns -

1. India playing it safe: Joining of QUAD by India signals that it continues to practice strategic ambivalence in the Indian Ocean.
2. India as a "Net Security Provider": Currently, India is not capable of proving security to the whole region.
3. Chinese challenge: Chinese army and Navy are increasing their presence in this region and it raises security alerts for India and other small nations.

4. China and West: Considering its rivalry with the West, China is trying to obtain a long term relationship in this region, so that it can become bigger than western powers in this region.
5. Less spending by India: India's expenditure on the Navy is very less than other major powers. In this way it will be difficult to gain superiority over other powers.

Way Forward -

1. The island nations are badly hit due to covid-19, where India shall act as a friend in need: it will have to - be the first responder and provide security and support to the countries to get back their support in future.
2. Delhi is seeking for a balance between its and "Look West" visions. Vision will be crucial for The consolidation of its IOR straddling "Act East" , its two subtly variant visions for the two ends of the Indo-Pacific seaboard.
3. Increase investments in the navy.

I2U2

I2U2 stands for India, Israel, the UAE, and the US, and was also referred to as the 'West Asian Quad' by Ahmed Albanna, Ambassador of the UAE to India. Back in October 2021, a meeting of the foreign ministers of the four countries had taken place when External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar was visiting Israel. At that time, the grouping was called the 'International Forum for Economic Cooperation'.

Areas of Cooperation -

Six areas of cooperation have been identified by the countries mutually, and the aim is to encourage joint investments in water, energy, transportation, space, health, and food security. The press release added that with the help of "private sector capital and expertise", the countries will look to modernize infrastructure, explore low carbon development avenues for industries, improve public health, and promote the development of critical emerging and green technologies.

1. The I2U2 is an outcome and a reflection of the resets that the West Asian region has been going through.
2. The formation of the I2U2 is considered as a direct outcome of the Abraham Accords.
3. The Abraham Accords saw several Arab countries such as the UAE, Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco establishing diplomatic ties with Israel in 2020. This normalization process was facilitated by the US.
4. The ending of animosity between Israel and at least some Arab countries has paved the way for greater regional and multilateral cooperation.
5. The I2U2 is an attempt towards forging cooperation between regional powers Israel and the UAE and their extra regional close partners India and the US in the wake of changing equations in the region.

Positive implications of I2U2 for India -

1. It would fill the gap the United States is leaving in the Middle East.
2. It has the potential to transform the region's geopolitics and geoeconomics.

3. The group can deepen its engagement on issues that concern India — trade, energy ties, fighting climate change and enhancing maritime security.
4. It coincides with the stronger relationship that India has with both Israel and the Gulf countries.
5. It can be an effective tool to counter China economically and politically.

Concerns -

1. Role of other Arabic Gulf powers like Saudi Arabia is yet to be ascertained in this partnership.
2. An area of concern is that Except India, the other three countries are adversaries of Iran.
3. Causes concerns for India - Iran relations which are collaborating on strategic projects like Chabahar and connect Central Asia policy.
4. New Quad is yet to clarify its strategic objectives.
5. US policy towards India has not been very concrete. It created a Parallel AUKUS in the Indo-Pacific. The US withdrew from Afghanistan without taking India into confidence.
6. In this backdrop the US needs to further clarify India's role in its strategic ambitions in the Middle east.

Thus, India's membership of I2U2 which has outlined a soft agenda of cooperation seems to be in line with its policy of "non-interference" in the internal affairs, pursuit of strategic autonomy and extension of Bilateralism to Minilaterals.

Geopolitics of South China Sea

Significance -

- The Indo-Pacific in general and South China Sea in particular has recently emerged as the geopolitical center of gravity.
- With nearly 1/3rd of world trade transiting, rich oil and natural gas resources and about 10% of the world's fishery, South China Sea has been a region of contention among the coastal states surrounding it.

Existing Disputes in the South China Sea -

1. China has claimed 90% of the area with its conception of a 9-dash line.
2. The US has increased its military presence in the region under the concept of 'Freedom of Navigation Operations' in order to enforce rule-based navigation of high seas in accordance with the UNCLOS.
3. This is in line with the principle of 'Freedom of Navigation' under the UNCLOS which provides for free movement of vessels in the High Seas.
4. Japan has increased in presence as a result of the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu Island.
5. Philippines, Vietnam have emerged as regional players asserting their rights in Spratly and Paracel Islands respectively.
6. Other players include Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei.



Relevance for India -

- India and other Southeast Asian countries have always treated the South China Sea as a global common.
- Besides it has acted as an important sea lane of communication historically where India had its trading presence from Kedah in Malaysia to Quanzhou in China.
- Besides given that we aim at increasing partnership with ASEAN countries security of South China Sea is of paramount importance to us

Russia-Ukraine War

Here, instead of studying about the war details, we are going to study about the effects and ramifications of the Russia-Ukraine War.



Effect over the global economy -

1. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) had pointed out that both Russia and Ukraine are major commodity producers, and disruptions there have resulted in soaring global prices, especially that of oil and natural gas.
2. With Ukraine and Russia accounting for up to 30% of the global exports for wheat, food prices, too, have jumped. The IMF added that the entire global economy would feel the effects with slower growth and faster inflation.
3. Rising prices may lead to social tensions, especially in countries with weaker social safety nets, fewer job opportunities, limited fiscal space and unpopular governments.
4. Economies reliant on oil imports would see wider fiscal and trade deficits along with more inflation pressure. However, exporters in the Middle East and Africa may benefit from higher prices.
5. Supply chains for high-value goods and critical components, including those of automotive and electronics, particularly bore the brunt of interruptions in the trade corridor between Europe and Asia.

Impact on the Global Agricultural Markets

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has not only created instability in the region and displaced millions of people but has also led to a global food shortage. Earlier in June, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) released a report that outlines the importance of Ukraine and Russia for agricultural markets and the risks associated with the war that broke out in Ukraine in February 2022 when Russia invaded the country.

1. A countrywide war has pressured Ukraine's agricultural production and limited its economic activity, thus further reducing the purchasing power of its people. Food insecurity and malnutrition are also on the rise.
2. FAO projections suggest that if the war causes a prolonged impact on food exports by Russia and Ukraine, the number of undernourished people around the world can increase by 8-13 million in 2022-23.
3. The war has disproportionately affected least developed countries (LDCs) and low-income food-deficit countries (LIFDCs) since a large number of countries that import food and fertilizers from Russia and Ukraine fall into these categories.
4. International prices of wheat and barley rose 31 per cent through the course of 2021, compared to the prices in 2020. This was caused due to high global demand and weather-related production limitations in countries that produce the grains.
5. In May 2022, prices of urea – an important nitrogen-based fertilizer – were recorded to be two and a half times over the December 2020 level due to the war.

India's Response -

- India abstained from voting in all resolutions.
- These principles work towards a safe and sustainable solution based on international norms and principles.
- It does not vilify any side but provides humanitarian relief and assistance to people rather than

arms to them. o For instance, India sent 90 tonnes of humanitarian assistance to Ukraine.

- It highlights strategic autonomy in times of a global upheaval and to reach a peaceful resolution through shared responsibility.

Concerns for India -

1. To maintain balance between Russia and US: India has good relations with both Russia and the US and siding with one of these countries could cost India its relationship with the other.
2. India has maintained its neutrality from distant conflict in Eastern Europe. The Indian government has abstained from the procedure vote on Ukraine at the UN Security Council.
3. Brings Russia-China closer: Russia is already averse to the Indo-Pacific concept and the Quad as a revival of Cold War bloc politics and views them as being against its Asia- Pacific interests. Any Ukraine conflict and a resulting breakdown of Russia-West ties will strengthen Russian opposition to these concepts and forums which are binding us to the US.
4. India's Investment in Russia: India's plans in Russia's energy sector and in the development of its Far East policy, in general, would become problematic. This is due to the reluctance of the private sector to fall afoul of the complex US sanctions and exclusion of Russian banks from the SWIFT.
5. Arms Trade with Russia: Russia remains the major arms supplier of India.

As per SIPRI data, Russia contributed 46% of India's total arms imports in 2017-21 (69% in 2012-16).

Indo-Pacific Economic Framework

India agreed to be a part of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF), a U.S.-led economic grouping comprising 12 countries. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who was in Japan for the Quad Summit, joined U.S. President Joe Biden, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and leaders of ten countries at the launch of the framework in Tokyo, initiating the path for negotiations among the 'founding members.' These include Australia, Brunei, India, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. Together, these countries account for 40 per cent of the global GDP.

Work in Progress

Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity has four pillars:

- Trade
- Supply chains
- Clean economy (clean energy)
- Fair economy (tax and anti-corruption)

Trade pillar deals with environment, labour, digital trade and agri

India has chosen to stay out of trade pillar until contours clearer

On remaining 3 pillars, India 'very much comfortable with final outcome'

IPEF structured jointly by the US and Indo-Pacific countries

(Concerns over joining trade pillar pertain to) digital trade, the linkage of environment and labour to trade, and possible binding commitments of any nature juxtaposed with the benefits that we will receive as a developing economy

PIYUSH GOYAL commerce and industry minister

1. On the trade front, the endeavor is to establish "high-standard, inclusive, free, and fair-trade commitments" to fuel economic activity and investments benefitting both workers and consumers.
2. As for supply chain resilience, the framework aspires to secure access to key raw and processed materials, semiconductors, critical minerals and clean energy tech, particularly for crisis response measures and ensuring business continuity.
3. In line with the Paris Agreement, the clean energy, decarbonisation and infrastructure pillar would provide technical assistance and help mobilize finance, including concessional finance, to improve competitiveness and enhance connectivity by supporting countries in the development of sustainable and durable infrastructure for adopting renewable energy.
4. Lastly, the pillar on tax and anti-corruption is aimed at promoting fair competition by enforcing robust tax, anti-money laundering and anti-bribery regimes in line with existing multilateral obligations, standards and agreements to curb tax evasion and corruption in the region.

Positives for India -

1. It would help in countering China dominated Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and other regional trade initiatives like Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP).
2. Can be a tool to counter China economically.
3. It is significant that 7 of 10 ASEAN countries and 11 out of 15 of countries that form RCEP took part in the launch.
4. Signifies first multilateral attempt to boost supply chain resilience to ease global inflationary pressures and mitigate effects of future disruptions, particularly key raw materials, critical minerals, and semiconductors.

Concerns for India -

1. US' preference to allow free and open data flows under the digital economy pillar will constrict India's ability to regulate data for domestic purposes.
2. India might be reluctant to sync its tax policies with the push for a global tax standard amongst US partners to mitigate tax avoidance and evasion.
3. Labour Standards and non-Tariff barriers will remain a bone of contention for India.
4. IPEF will not include market access commitments such as lowering tariff barriers, as the agreement is "more of an administrative arrangement," and Congressional approval, which is a must for trade agreements, is not mandatory for this.
5. IPEF isn't a traditional trade agreement.

International Relations
Syllabus Topic - India and its neighborhood relations.

Let us see the past year questions pertaining to the above topic.

Questions	Keyword/Demand	Theme
A number of outside powers have entrenched themselves in Central Asia, which is a zone of interest to India. Discuss the implications, in this context, of India's joining the Ashgabat Agreement, 2018. (2018)	India-Central Asia relations.	Contemporary Current Affairs.
'China is using its economic relations and positive trade surplus as tools to develop potential military power status in Asia'. In the light of this statement, discuss its impact on India as her neighbour. (2017)	Impact of increasing assertiveness of China on India.	Contemporary Current Affairs.
The question of India's Energy Security Constitutes the most important part of India's economic progress. Analyze India's energy policy cooperation with West Asian countries. (2017)	Energy Security of India.	Contemporary Current Affairs.
Evaluate the economic and strategic dimensions of India's Look East Policy in the context of the post Cold War international scenario. (2016)	Significance of Look East Policy.	Contemporary Current Affairs.
"Increasing crossborder terrorist attacks in India and growing interference in the internal affairs of several memberstates by Pakistan are not conducive for the future of SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation)." Explain with suitable examples. (2016)	Relevance of SAARC.	Contemporary Current Affairs.

Project 'Mausam' is considered a unique foreign policy initiative of Indian Government to improve relationship with its neighbours. Does the project have a strategic dimension? Discuss. (2015)	Role of soft power in foreign policy.	Contemporary Current Affairs.
Terrorist activities and mutual distrust have clouded India – Pakistan relations. To what extent the use of soft power like sports and cultural exchanges could help generate goodwill between the two countries? Discuss with suitable examples. (2015)	Role of Soft Power/ Cultural diplomacy in Indo-Pak relations.	Contemporary Current Affairs.
With respect to the South China sea, maritime territorial disputes and rising tension affirm the need for safeguarding maritime security to ensure freedom of navigation and over flight throughout the region. In this context, discuss the bilateral issues between India and China. (2014)	Indo-China bilateral relations.	Contemporary Current Affairs.
In respect of India-Sri Lanka relations, discuss how domestic factors influence foreign policy. (2013)	Role of Domestic factors in Indo-Sri Lanka relations.	Contemporary Current Affairs.
Discuss the political developments in Maldives in the last two years. Should they be of any cause of concern to India? (2013)	India-Maldives retaliations.	Contemporary Current Affairs.
What is meant by Gujral doctrine? Does it have any relevance today? Discuss.(2013)	Gujral Doctrine.	Contemporary Current Affairs.

Efficiency of the foreign policy depends upon the relationship with the neighbourhood in terms of security and prosperity. Therefore, the challenging task is to sustain good relations with neighbors as Kautilya said, "Your neighbour is your natural enemy".

"You can change your friends but not neighbours"
- PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee



Context of India's Neighborhood -

India's neighboring countries are witnessing political and economic turmoil as follows-

1. Economic Crisis - Sri Lanka, Pakistan.
2. Political Crisis - Coup in Myanmar
3. Strategic Challenges - Boundary disputes with China and Nepal.

New dynamics in the region -

1. Perception of India as a big Brother (by Nepal)
2. Increasing assertiveness and expansionism by China.
3. Debt trap policy of China.

4. Taliban takeover of Afghanistan
5. Af-Pak nexus - This synergy will have a spillover effect on terrorism in Kashmir.

Challenges in India's Neighborhood -

1. Unsettled borders - China, Pakistan, Nepal.
2. Heterogeneous nature of the countries in South Asia.
3. Low economic and logistic integration in South Asia.
4. Lack of consensus on threat perception - Cross border terrorism.
5. Dysfunctional institutional mechanism like SAARC
6. Rise of China and its increasing interference in India's neighborhood - Acquisition of Hambantota Port, CPEC etc.
7. Low Human Development in the South Asian region.

Current Events in India's Neighborhood -

1. LAC issue with China - In Ladakh and Tawang region.
2. Increasing influence of BIMSTEC over SAARC
3. Economic rise of Bangladesh - Bangladesh overtook India in terms of Per Capita Income.
4. Sri Lankan economic turmoil (India supported firsthand)
5. Military regaining power in Myanmar.

India's Approach -

- A. Policy Level - India channelised its efforts through- Neighbourhood First Policy, Gujral Doctrine, Mission SAGAR, Act East Policy.
- B. Diplomatic Level - Higher level diplomatic and leadership meetings, India's increasing engagement with BIMSTEC leaders.

Way Forward -

India's neighborhood policy has to be more generous and free from bureaucratic reciprocities as said by EAM Dr. S Jaishankar.

Also, India need to undertake Quick Impact Projects like 2+1 Mechanism (India, Japan collabertely investing in Colombo West Container Terminal in Sri Lanka).

India-Nepal Relations

Background -

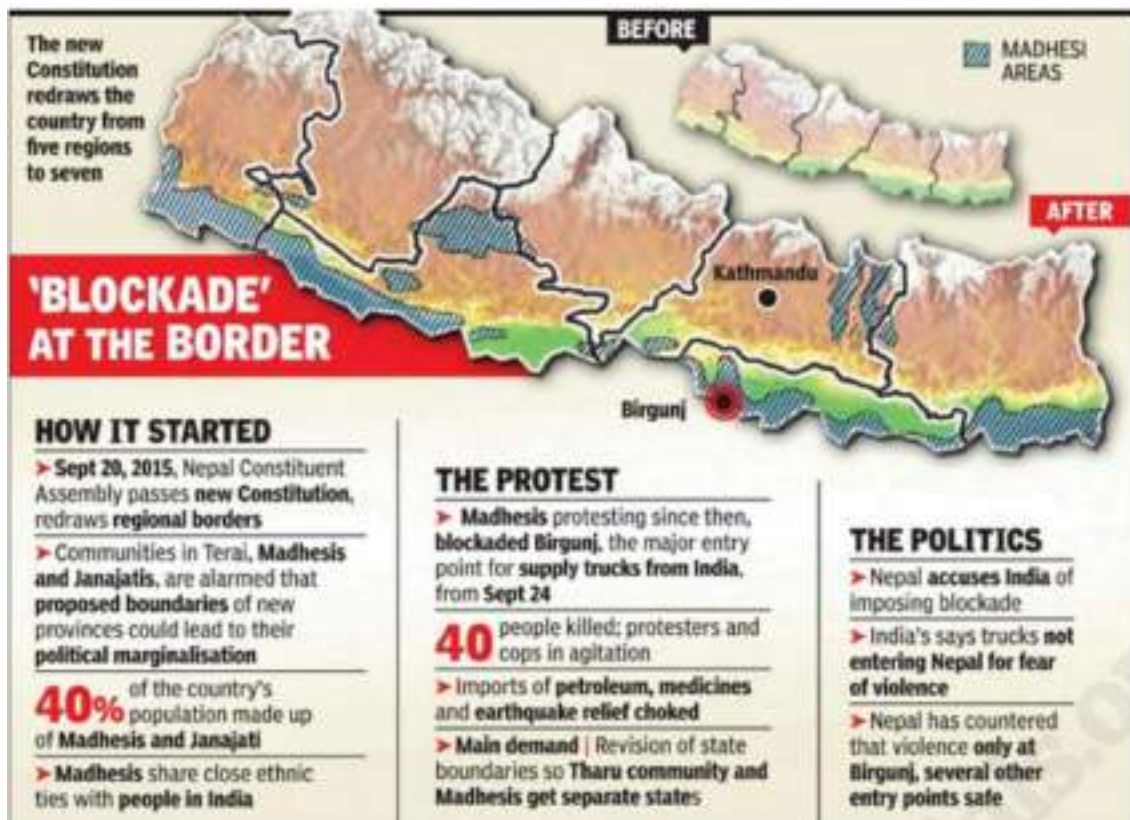
India and Nepal share unique relations on account of geographical proximity, an open border and cultural, civilisation and social bonds. This unique relationship is also being tied by "Roti Beti ke Sambandh" as reiterated by PM Modi.

The foundation of the relationship goes back to India-Nepal Treaty of Friendship 1950.

However, for various reasons the potential of this bilateral relationship isn't fully realized due to various issues.

Issues and Challenges -

1. Slow progress on various developmental projects - Pancheshwar Multipurpose Project on Mahakali river.
2. Anti- Indianism in Nepal
3. Rising Chinese influence and interference in Nepal.
4. Border conflicts due to open and porous borders - Kalapani, Limpiyadhura etc.
5. Economic blockade of 2015 is one of the important legacy irritants.
6. Inability of political leaders to resolve the issue of Madheshi people.



Way Forward -

1. Giving acceptance to the Report of the Eminent Persons' Group as a roadmap for resolving border disputes.
2. Replacing Treaty of Peace and Friendship, 1950 with a balanced and democratic treaty.
3. India should speedily complete the unfinished projects and create conditions of mutual trust.
4. Both the countries should take a common position on terrorism and criminal forces operating along the open border.
5. India should continue to engage with all the political parties.
6. Our engagement with Nepal shouldn't be limited to Political Elites but also encompass the common citizens of Nepal.

India-Bhutan Relations

Background -

The basic framework of India-Bhutan relationship goes back to "Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation 1949". Also, ever since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1968, the relationship has emerged as the most celebrated success story of India's neighborhood policy in South Asia.

However, though India and Bhutan share an exemplary and unique bond, there are various issues in the relationship.

Issues and Challenges -

1. Perception of incoherent policy towards trans Himalayan region including Bhutan.
2. Delay in developmental projects - Hydropower projects.
3. Alleged interference of India into Bhutan's internal affairs and diplomacy.
4. Strategic insecurity at tri junction point of Doklam and Chumbi Valley due to China's territorial aggression.
5. Bhutan perceives the terms of finance for the hydro electrical projects as unfair.
6. Indian aid is being criticized as creating Jobless Growth in Bhutan.

Significance of Bhutan for India -

1. Bhutan is central to - Neighbourhood Policy, Act East Policy and Gujral Doctrine.
2. Geostrategic significance - Close proximity to sensitive Chicken Neck corridor, dealing with militancy.
3. Containing Chinese rise - Bhutan is the only neighboring state which hasn't signed BRI.
4. Geopolitical Significance - Favorable towards India's UNSC and NSG membership.



Areas of Cooperation between India and Bhutan -

Domain	Importance
1. Economy	India is Bhutan's largest trading partner. Duty free transit.
2. Border Management	Four Indian states border Bhutan. Coordination and Secretary level engagement mechanism.
3. Hydropower Corporation	Potential for energy security.
4. People to People Ties	Strong partnership in education and culture. Regular cultural exchange and scholarships.
5. Multilateral Ties	SAARC, BIMSTEC, BBIN

Way Forward -

1. Addressing the trust deficit by regular contact and addressing concerns.
2. Helping and speedily completing developmental projects.
3. India must address Bhutan's concerns over the terms of finance for the hydroelectric projects.
4. Though Bhutan remains the largest recipient of Indian aid, the amount of aid in form of grants has dropped. This is not the right time to decrease aid to Bhutan when the Chinese presence is growing.
5. By focusing on religious and cultural engagement between Ladakh and Bhutan, New Delhi can begin the process of sustainable soft power approach.
6. India should demonstrate respect for Bhutanese values. Bhutanese are an environment-conscious people. Therefore, India should go for economically and environmentally viable projects.

India-Maldives Relations

Background -

India and Maldives relations are mutually symbiotic. While India follows Neighbourhood First Policy, Maldives gives priority to India First Policy. With the rising importance of the Indian Ocean Region, Maldives has gained a lot of importance from India's foreign policy perspective.



While the relationship has always been close and cordial the recent regime instability in Maldives pose some limitations.

Issues and Challenges -

1. Rising Chinese influence and interference - Debt trap diplomacy, China's loans to Maldives accounts for more than \$ 1.5 Billion.
2. Security and Strategic Concerns - Issues with new land law.
3. Strained relationship during the pro- China regime of former president Abdulla Yameen - India Out Campaign led by Yameen.
4. Political Instability is India's major concern.
5. Growing Radicalization - Increasing influence of terrorist states like Islamic State.
6. Maldives has started using China Card to bargain with India.
7. Rising Chinese footprint in the Indian Ocean Region - String of Pearls.

Cooperation between India and Maldives -

- Security Cooperation - Operation Cactus.
- Disaster Management - Maldives has been the biggest beneficiary of India's assistance during Covid-19.
- People to People Contact - Educational Scholarships given to Maldivians.
- Economic Cooperation - Tourism is the mainstay of Maldivian economy. Indian tourists form one of the largest chunks of overall tourists to Maldives.
- Diaspora - Indian communities form the second largest expatriate community in Male.

Way Forward -

- India and Maldives should work in tandem for multilateral reforms. (Ex. UNSC reform to expand UNSC permanent membership and make it more representative).
- India can develop the digital economy of Maldives through export of UPI, RuPay.
- India should cultivate close and strategic relations with Maldives since its critical for India's role as net security provider in IOR.

India-Myanmar Relations

Background -

Given the volatile and complex situation in North East India, Myanmar becomes critical for India. Also the strategic dilemma makes it difficult for India to deal with Myanmar wherein on one hand China supports Myanmar's adventurous drive and on another hand India's principal stand on democracy.

Therefore, India follows the policy of "Twin Track Approach".

Importance of Myanmar for India -

1. Due to its strategic location, Myanmar is important for the development of the North East region.
2. Myanmar is the key link that joins South Asia and South-East Asia.
3. Connectivity through Myanmar will help India to overcome the Chicken-Neck dilemma.
4. Myanmar is crucial for maintaining security and stability in the North-East region as many rebels often take refuge in Myanmar.
5. Effective cooperation with Myanmar is critical for addressing the issues of arms, drug and human trafficking.



Issues and Challenges -

1. Porous and uneven border - Helps the rebel group to easily escape and mobilize.
2. Strategic Dilemma for India - Principle vs National Interest.
3. Rising Chinese influence in Myanmar - China Myanmar Economic Corridor
4. Political Crisis - Military Coup - Refugees fleeing military crackdown are entering Mizoram. This has led to disagreement between the center & Mizoram which supports refugees.

Implications of Military Coup for India -

1. Strategic Issue - India cannot upset Junta by providing refugee to the fleeing officials.
2. Threat of insurgency as several ethnic groups thriving in Myanmar and surrounding region.
3. Threat to Indian investments in Myanmar - Kalahandi Multimodal Project.
4. It has been observed that since the coup, China's proximity with Junta has risen.
5. Issue of Human Rights.

India's Approach -

1. Non- interference in internal politics.
2. Engagement rather than criticism.
3. Balancing Influence of China.
4. Strategic Infrastructure Development - Sittwe Port Development, Kaladan Multimodal Connectivity Development Project.
5. Border Security and Mutual cooperation.



India Sri Lanka Relations

Background -

India is Sri Lanka's closest neighbor. The relationship between the two countries is more than 2,500 years old and both sides have built upon a legacy of intellectual, cultural, religious and linguistic interaction.

Important Facts -

1. Bilateral merchandise trade - \$ 3.6 Billion (2020)
2. One of the Largest trade partners in the SAARC region.
3. India is one of the largest contributors to FDI in Sri Lanka.

India Sri Lanka Cooperation -

1. Economic - India-Sri Lanka FTA, India is constructing various infrastructure, connectivity and transportation projects in Sri Lanka.
2. Political Cooperation - High level political and diplomatic visits, Friendship group in Sri Lankan Parliament to rejuvenate ties with India.
3. Cultural Relations - Shared legacy of Historical, Religious, Cultural and Linguistic ties. Ex. Ramayana heritage - Sri Lankan Tourism.
4. People to People Ties - Buddhism as a common link.
5. Military Exercises - MITRA, SHAKTI.
6. Tourism and HRD - e-Visa scheme for Sri Lankan tourists.



Issues and Challenges -

1. Issue on demolition of Power - India's reiteration for full implementation of 13th Amendment.
2. Fishing Community Issue - Sri Lankan fishermen object to Indians using bottom trawlers and fishing illegally along their coast, which often leads to arrests of the Indians.
3. The dispute status of Katchatheevu islands is still not resolved.
4. Trust Deficit issue - Non-signing of CEPA.
5. Increasing tilt towards China - Hambantota port lease for 99 years, Debt Trap by China.
6. Perceived fear of Indian hegemony by Sri Lanka.
7. Increasing trend of radicalization in Sri Lanka - National Towheed Jamaat - Easter Sunday Attack.
8. Stalled Projects - Jaffana Hybrid Energy Project.

Sri Lankan Economic Crisis -

Sri Lanka is facing protests and political turmoil because of an unprecedented economic crisis, a result of domestic as well as external factors. One of the factors for this economic crisis has been the Chinese debt obligation on Sri Lanka. With China reluctant to help Sri Lanka during this crisis, there is an opportunity for India to increase its humanitarian aid and leverage the trade and investment potential overall.

Impact on India -

1. Refugee Crisis - Influx of refugees can create socio-economic turmoil in India.
2. Chinese Influence on Sri Lanka will rise as Sri Lanka has heavily borrowed from China.
3. Trade disruption
4. Threat to Investment of various Indian companies in Sri Lanka.
5. Rebel Groups may get more underground support due to existing chaos and may hurt India's internal stability.

Opportunity for India in Sri Lankan Economic Crisis -

1. Humanitarian and bilateral aid would help India counter its Big Brother image by not interfering politically in the Sri Lankan crisis and creating a positive image in the minds of Sri Lankan people.
2. Helping Sri Lanka will boost India's image as a first responder during any crisis in the neighborhood.
3. Opportunity to bridge the existing trust deficit.
4. India can also pursue the Sri Lankan establishment to soften the 13th Amendment.
5. Stabilised Sri Lankan economy will boost India's investment and trade.
6. With Chinese projects under scrutiny in Sri Lanka, there is an opportunity for India to upscale its aid and cement its first mover advantage over China by leading an aid consortium for Sri Lanka, working closely with other friendly countries such as the United States, Japan and EU as well as the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Recent Developments -

1. India conferred Padma Shri award to renowned Sri Lankan dancer Vajira Chitrasena (People to people ties).
2. Adani investment in Colombo West International Terminal.
3. India abstained from voting in the UNHRC.
4. Economic aid worth almost \$ 4 Billion by India to Sri Lanka during the crisis.

Way Forward -

Being a regional Superpower and World's largest responsible democracy, India has to maintain constructive and cordial bilateral relations with Sri Lanka. India's security and national interest directly hinges on Sri Lanka's posture in the Indian Ocean.

To escape from this neighborly tension, India will have to frame a persuasive policy towards Sri Lanka instead of pressure.

India-Bangladesh Relations

Background -

India was the first country to recognize Bangladesh as a separate and independent state and established diplomatic relations with the country immediately after its independence in December 1971. India's links with Bangladesh are civilisational, cultural, social and economic. There is much that unites the two countries – a shared history and common heritage, linguistic and cultural ties, passion for music, literature and the arts. This commonality is reflected in our multi-dimensional and expanding relations. India and Bangladesh's geographical locations complement each other and present an opportunity for both to further develop their connectivity links and economies.

Important Facts -

1. Bangladesh is the largest trade partner of India in South Asia - \$ 10.8 Billion.
2. Bangladesh is the largest beneficiary of Line of Credit from India.

Areas of Cooperation -

1. Defense and Security - Intelligence sharing and India's supply of military equipment and technology transfer.
2. Economic Cooperation - Traditional sectors such as Tourism, Healthcare and Education.
3. Multilateral Cooperation - SAARC, BIMSTEC, IORA, BBIN.
4. Border Management - Delimitation of Maritime boundary, Land Boundary agreement 2015.
5. Cultural Cooperation - People to people ties, Scholarships to student from Bangladesh.
6. Connectivity and infrastructure projects - Khulana - Mongala Port, Maitri Super Thermal Power Plant, Roopur Nuclear plant (Bangladesh, Russia, India)
7. Cooperation against terrorism and fundamentalism.



Issues and Challenges -

1. Illegal immigration - By Bangladeshis and Rohingya Muslims hurting internal stability of North East India(specially Assam).
2. Rising Chinese Influence -Bangladesh is China's second-largest arms export destination, Increasing FDI from China in Bangladesh.
3. Increasing Radicalization of Youths - Fundamentalist groups like HUJI are increasing anti-India sentiments.
4. Contentious issues regarding Teesta River Water Agreement are yet to be resolved.
5. Negative perception regarding CAA and NRC in Bangladesh.
6. Porous and uneven borders giving rise to illegal activities.
7. Chinese companies are aggressively bidding for the infrastructure projects, consequently outbidding Indian companies.

Recent Events -

1. India and Bangladesh signed 7 agreements in September 2022 - IT, Space Technology, Training of Bangladesh railway Personnel and Judicial Officers.

Way Forward -

1. India should be more generous in developmental and economic assistance and supportive of Bangladesh's aspirations.
2. India should effectively manage Cross Border Immigration.
3. Speedily completing infrastructure projects like Maitree Project, Mongla Port.

4. Effective management of water resources especially Teesta river.
5. Utilizing the economic potential of Bangladesh to streamline BIMSTEC.
6. Improving Connectivity with Bangladesh for better economic integration of North East India - Friendship Rail and Bus Corridor.
7. Building more economic integration to leverage critical potential of Bangladesh in specialized sectors - Textile and Jute cooperation.

"In order to keep the spirit of 1971 alive, it's very necessary that we jointly face the forces that want to attack our mutual trust."

- PM Narendra Modi

"India-Bangladesh relationship is a role model for neighborhood diplomacy."

- Bangladesh PM Shaikh Hasina

India-Afghanistan Relations

Background -

India and Afghanistan have a strong relationship based on historical and cultural links. India has played a significant role in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Afghanistan. Democracy and development are the key instruments to ensure that Afghanistan becomes a source of regional stability. This has been reflected in the Strategic Partnership Agreement, signed between Afghanistan and India during Afghan President Hamid Karzai's visit to India in October 2011, which reinforced the strong, vibrant and multi-faceted relations between the two countries and at the same time formalized a framework for cooperation in various areas between the two countries: political & security cooperation; trade & economic cooperation; capacity development and education; and social, cultural, civil society & people-to-people relations.

Importance of Afghanistan for India -

1. Geostrategic Importance - Access to Central Asia (market, investment, energy security).
2. Balance of Power in the region - Competition with China.
3. Connectivity - India's ambitious connectivity projects for connecting Central Asia and Afghanistan via Chabahar port have come to a standstill.
4. Natural resources - Afghanistan is rich in natural resources with large resources of copper, iron and other unexplored minerals. Ex. Hajigek mines for Iron ore.
5. Energy Security - TAPI Gas pipeline.



Impact of Taliban takeover on India -

1. India's connectivity projects between Afghanistan and Central Asia via Chatham port may be impacted.
2. India's long term infrastructural development in Afghanistan like Delaram-Zaranj Highway, Salma Dam will be under threat.
3. Upper hand to Pakistan as Taliban is close with Pakistani regiment.
4. Drug trade will increase as it is the major source of Cash for the Taliban.
5. China-Pakistan-Taliban axis will hurt India's geo- political interests.

INDIAN INVESTMENT IN AFGHANISTAN –

- Infrastructure Development - Afghan Parliament in Kabul, Reconstruction of Salma Dam, High Impact Community Development Programme.
- Transfer of various objects like buses, ambulances, food aid, medicines, helicopters etc.
- People to People Exchange - Offering scholarships to Afghan students, training to Afghan soldiers, Afghan Cricket Team's first home ground was in Noida.

As a whole India has invested almost \$ 3 Billion in Afghanistan.



Issues and Challenges in India-Afghanistan Relations -

1. Consolidated Af-Pak nexus will hurt the internal stability of India, especially in Kashmir.
2. Taliban takeover of Afghanistan will make SAARC much more dysfunctional as Afghanistan being one of the members (As Taliban is proxy terrorist network close to Pakistan)
3. China's aggressive approach in the critical mineral sector of Afghanistan - The lithium found in Afghanistan is a crucial component of large-capacity batteries for electric vehicles and clean-energy storage systems.
4. US-Russia and US-Iran tension makes it difficult for India to widen its footprint in Afghanistan.
5. The Taliban is still extremely ruthless and regressive which makes difficult for India to deal with the Human Rights issues - Taliban banned women from taking UNiversity level education.
6. India can become the target of more terrorist attacks.

Reason for India to engage with Taliban -

1. Economic decline of Pakistan will reduce its leveraging power and influence over Taliban.
2. Present political instability in Pakistan gives a greater strategic space to India.
3. Afghanistan is a rich source of lithium which is a crucial component of Electric Car Battery.
4. Declining influence of the USA will make it imperative for India to take the lead
5. To persuade Taliban to not utilize Afghan soil for terror activities against India.
6. India cannot lose the contact merely because the Taliban is anti-democratic, rather our focus must be on the people of Afghanistan. This must be the focus of India's foreign policy approach.

Recent Developments -

1. India reopened its diplomatic presence in June 2022.
2. Participation of India in regional security dialogue in Delhi and Dushanbe.
3. India recently committed 50,000 Metric Tons wheat as a part of humanitarian aid.

Way Forward -

1. India should realize that the Taliban will stay at least for the medium term. So India should constructively engage, notably for the people of Afghanistan in India's interest.
2. India must engage in humanitarian diplomacy.
3. Building regional consensus by engaging with like minded countries like France, Russia.
4. India should utilize multilateral platforms like SCO, BRICS, SAARC to devise solutions over the Afghan problem.

India-Pakistan Relations

Background -

India has followed a consistent and principled policy towards Pakistan i.e.: in keeping with its "Neighbourhood First Policy", India seeks normal neighborly relations with Pakistan in an environment free from terror, hostility and violence; India is committed to address issues, if any, bilaterally and peacefully in keeping with the Simla Agreement and the Lahore Declaration; and India will not compromise on issues related to its national security and take firm and decisive measures to deal with all attempts to undermine India's security and territorial integrity.

India-Pakistan Cooperation -

1. Successful implementation of Indus water treaty.
2. Cultural Relations - Kartarpur Corridor.
3. Medical Visa to Pakistani patients by Indian government.
4. People to people contact.



Issues and Challenges -

1. Historical rivalry - remnants of Partition and too divided opinions.
2. Unresolved LoC and border issues.
3. Issue over abrogation of special status of Kashmir - Pakistan has flagged this issue over international forums.
4. State sponsored terrorism by Pakistan.
5. CPEC project - Hurting India's territorial sovereignty and integrity.
6. Illegal cross border migration, terrorist intrusions and radicalization in Kashmir.
7. Vulnerability to UAVs used by terrorist outfits mainly supported by State establishment - Recent attack on IAF base station.
8. Rising Chinese influence - Making possible for two front war.

Way Forward -

1. India should engage more with Pakistan by Backchannel diplomacy through platforms like SCO, SAARC as India has reiterated that Terror and Talks cannot go together.
2. Soft Power Diplomacy - Focusing on enhancing people to people contact, cricket diplomacy etc.
3. India should upgrade surveillance mechanisms on the border.
4. Indo-Pak economic trade is abysmally low (\$ 2.5 Billion approximately) which needs to be increased further.

India-China Relations

Background -

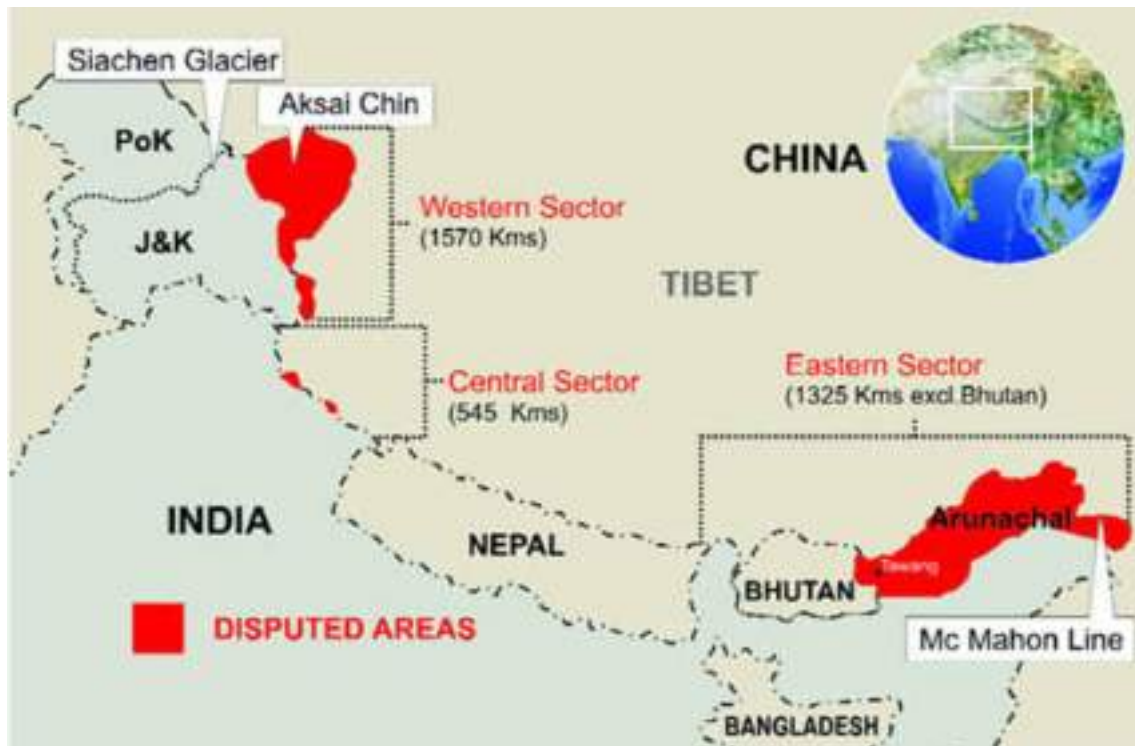
On 1 April, 1950, India became the first non-socialist bloc country to establish diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China. Prime Minister Nehru visited China in October 1954. Though the border conflict in 1962 was a setback to ties, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's landmark visit in 1988 marked the beginning of improvement in bilateral relations. In 1993, the signing of an Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility along the Line of Actual Control on the India-China Border Areas during Prime Minister Narasimha Rao's visit reflected the growing stability in bilateral ties.

During Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's visit in 2003, India and China signed the Declaration on Principles for Relations and Comprehensive Cooperation and also mutually decided to appoint Special Representatives (SRs) to explore the framework of a boundary settlement. During the April 2005 visit of Premier Wen Jiabao, the two sides established a Strategic and Cooperative Partnership for Peace and Prosperity.

Further in the Prime Ministership of Manmohan Singh the relationship has diversified and expanded further. During the Prime Ministership of Narendra Modi relationship has seen an interesting economic jump and some strains.

Important Data -

1. India-China economic trade - Around \$ 115 Billion.
2. Trade Deficit with China - More than \$ 70 Billion.



Issues and Challenges in Indo-China Relations -

1. Unsettled borders - LAC, Mc Mohan Line issues not resolved yet.
2. Competitive global ambitions of both countries.
3. Huge trade deficit - More than \$ 70 Billion.
4. Issue of Sovereignty over Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh.
5. Territorial aggression - CPEC, Eastern Ladakh and Tawang.
6. Increasing Chinese interference in India's neighborhood.
7. Continuous stalling of India's efforts to designate terrorists at UNSC by China through use of Veto.
8. River Water Disputes - Building of Dams on the upper reaches of the Brahmaputra river - In long term, this will threaten the water security in North Eastern India.

DOMINANCE OF CHINA –

- Economic Might - \$17 Trillion Economy.
- Technological Dominance - Driving technological innovations in emerging areas like AI, Robotics, Space.
- Military - 2nd largest military expenditure in the World.
- Geostrategic Dominance - Belt and Road Initiative has presence across the continents.
- Control over Supply Chains of critical minerals- Rare earth elements.
- At the Center of Global Value Chain - Electronics and Assembly manufacturing.

Economic Dynamics of Indo-China Relations-

1. Huge dependency for APIs, Electronics and Solar Panels - 70% of APIs and 80% of Solar Panels India imports from China.
2. Huge trade deficit with China - China exports to India around \$ 100 Billion.
3. The Chinese economy is 5 times bigger than the Indian economy.

Increasing Chinese Presence in India's Neighbourhood -

1. Nepal	Trans Himalayan Multidimensional Network
2. Bangladesh	Financing 25 Projects Second Nuclear Power Plant Bangabandhu 1 Satellite
3. Sri Lanka	Debt Financing Hambantota Port Frigate Donation
4. Maldives	70% of the Debt. Several islands leased to China.
5. Pakistan	Economic Aid Debt Financing CPEC



Implications on India -

1. China - pak- Afghanistan Axis may hurt India's national interest.
2. China's economic support to Pakistan - building CPEC - hurts India's Territorial sovereignty and intergritty.
3. Threat to India's maritime security - String of Pearl Strategy by china.
4. India's strategic clout will be reduce.
5. Huge trade asymmetry will make India dependent and vulnerable to China's whims and fancies.
6. Strategic dilemma for India- whether to go for aggressive positioning as balancer to China or to follow the status-quo.
7. China's dominance at multilateral platforms - WHO, WTO, BRICS, RIC, SCO, etc. - this is inimical to India's interests.
8. India's sphere of influence at its own backyard will reduce as China is aggressively pushing the agenda of Debt trap diplomacy, heavy infrastructure creation - ex. Hambantota port construction.

Way Forward -

1. There is a need for defining, demarcating and delineating the borders to avoid the tensions and strengthen the ties.
2. India should devise a strategy to integrate economically with the neighbors.
3. India should continuously engage with like minded countries like Japan, Australia, UK which share common concerns about China.
4. Adequately funding the startups and boosting the manufacturing capabilities.
5. Improving the infrastructure ecosystem and creating more investment friendly environment.

International Relations

Syllabus Topic - Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interest.

Let us see the past year questions.

Questions	Keyword/Demand	Theme
“If the last few decades were Asia's growth story, the next few are expected to be Africa's.” In the light of this statement, examine India's influence in Africa in recent years.(2021)	India-Africa relations	Contemporary Current Affairs.
The time has come for India and Japan to build a strong contemporary relationship, one involving global and strategic partnership that will have a great significance for Asia and the world as a whole.' Comment. (2019)	Strengthening India-Japan relations.	Contemporary Current Affairs.
“What introduces friction into the ties between India and the United States is that Washington is still unable to find for India a position in its global strategy, which would satisfy India's National self-esteem and ambitions” Explain with suitable examples. (2019)	Issues in India-US relations.	Contemporary Current Affairs.
What is the significance of Indo-US defense deals over Indo-Russian defense deals? Discuss with reference to stability in the Indo-Pacific region. (2020)	Significance of Indo-US arms deal.	Current Affairs.

“India’s relations with Israel have, of late, acquired a depth and diversity, which cannot be rolled back.” Discuss. (2018)	India-Israel relations.	Contemporary Current Affairs.
In what ways would the ongoing U.S-Iran Nuclear Pact Controversy affect the national interest of India? How should India respond to this situation? (2018)	Iran Nuclear Deal and its relevance for India.	Contemporary Current Affairs.
Increasing interest of India in Africa has its pros and cons. Critically examine. (2015)	India-Africa relations.	Contemporary Current Affairs.
Economic ties between India and Japan, while growing in recent years, are still far below their potential. Elucidate the policy constraints which are inhibiting this growth. (2013)	Potential of Indo-Japan ties.	Contemporary Current Affairs.

India-Japan Relations

Background -

The friendship between India and Japan has a long history rooted in spiritual affinity and strong cultural and civilization ties dating back to the visit of Indian monk Bodhisena in 752 AD. The year 2013 was a monumental year that saw the first ever visit of then Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko (30 November-6 December 2013) to India. Within a couple of months after the landmark visit of the Imperial Couple, PM Abe paid an official visit to India in January 2014 during which he was the Chief Guest at the Republic Day celebrations (first ever Japanese PM to be honored so). PM Narendra Modi's official visit to Japan in August- September 2014 for the Annual Summit meeting (his first bilateral visit outside India's neighborhood) upgraded bilateral relations to 'Special Strategic and Global Partnership'. The India-Japan Annual Summits are being held regularly.

Important Facts -

- Bilateral trade - \$ 11.87 Billion.
- Japan is India's largest Official Development Assistance Partner.
- Japan is the 5th largest source of FDI.



Areas of Cooperation -

1. Economic complementarities and Trade Security - India and Japan signed CEPA in 2011, Currency Swap Agreement renewed.
2. Defense and Strategic - Indo-Pacific Open Initiative, Supply Chain Resilience Initiative, JIMEX, Acquisition and Cross Service Agreement.
3. Multilateral Cooperation - Platforms like QUAD, G20, G4, Indo-Pacific Economic Framework.
4. Cultural Cooperation - Historical legacy of Buddhism has great impact on India-Japan relations, Partner City Affiliation Agreement.
5. Hightech Cooperation - Space cooperation in LUPEX, India- Japan digital partnership.
6. Favorable demographic cooperation - Japan is aging while India has large skilled workforce.

Issues and Challenges -

1. Delay on modus operandi of Asia Africa Growth Corridor and lack of feasibility analysis.
2. Responding to China's challenge will be the most daunting task for both the countries.
3. Low economic trade as compared to China, Limited success of CEPA.
4. Divergent views on Regional Cooperation Economic Agreement due to various domestic projects.
5. Stalled flagship projects - Bullet Train Project still incomplete.
6. Different perceptions on Indo-Pacific vision under QUAD.
7. Contrary views on Cross-Border Data Flow - While India bats for 'Data Localization', Japan wants standardization of data flow.

Recent Events -

1. 14th India-Japan annual summit in New Delhi marking 70th anniversary of Indo-Japan relations.
2. Agreement over launching Sustainable Development Initiative for North East.
3. MoC signed in the field of cybersecurity for information sharing, capacity building programs and cooperation.

Way Forward -

1. Countering China - Annual Malabar exercise in both countries' maritime borders.
2. Green energy partnership and creating new innovative partnerships in manufacturing and MSME.
3. Streamlining CEPA for greater economic integration.
4. Japan needs India's cooperation to secure its oil supplies in the Indian Ocean, which are becoming increasingly endangered, due to the rising conventional and non-conventional security threats.
5. India and Japan also need to develop their cooperation in the high technology sectors, such as space research, biotechnology, supercomputers, etc. as their joint efforts shall enable them to find solutions to various other problems plaguing the regional and global community.
6. India and Japan can also become the pivot around which the security interests of the Central, East, South, and Southeast Asian countries can be consolidated, which feel a very realistic threat from an increasingly assertive China.

“India and Japan relations hold the greatest potential of any bilateral relationship anywhere in the World”

- PM Shinzo Abe

“India and Japan are civilisational neighbors”

- PM Manmohan Singh

In a nutshell, India and Japan's failure to involve each other earlier let them lose significant opportunities to benefit each other in both economic and strategic spheres. However, the complementary nature of the Indian and Japanese economy, and their converging security and political interests, make them "natural allies" with "common causes", and therefore, mandatory partners in the long run.

India-USA Relations

Overview:

India-U.S. bilateral relations have developed into a "global strategic partnership", based on shared democratic values and increasing convergence of interests on bilateral, regional and global issues. The emphasis placed by the Government in India on development and good governance has created opportunity to reinvigorate bilateral ties and enhance cooperation under the motto --- "ChaleinSaathSaath: Forward Together We Go", and "SanjhaPrayas, Sab ka Vikas" (Shared Effort, Progress for All) adopted during the first two summits of Prime Minister Modi and President Obama in September 2014 and January 2015 respectively. The summit level joint statement issued in June 2016 called the India-U.S. relationship an "Enduring Global Partners in the 21st Century".

Regular exchange of high-level political visits has provided sustained momentum to bilateral cooperation, while the wide-ranging and ever-expanding dialogue architecture has established a long-term framework for India-U.S. engagement.

Important Facts -

1. USA is India's largest trading partner - Bilateral trade of \$ 119 Billion in favor of India.
2. USA is India's largest merchandise export destination.
3. USA - 2nd largest source of FDI in India.
4. The US has surpassed the UAE as the top source of remittances to India, with its share rising to 23.4 percent in 2021 from 22.9 percent in 2017.
5. Indians are the third largest Asian ethnic group in the USA.

Areas of Cooperation -

1. Defense and Security - Four foundational Defense agreements - COMCASSA, GSOMIA, LEMOA and BECA.
2. Military Exercises - Malabar, Yuddha Abhayas, Vajra Prahar.
3. Maritime Security Cooperation Agreements - QUAD, I2U2.
4. Economic Cooperation - Trade in services, Attractive market.
5. USA is the most preferred destination among Indian students for Higher Education.
6. Space Partnership - Joint Microwave Remote Sensing Satellite - NISAR.
7. Counter Terrorism Cooperation.

Issues and Challenges -

1. Acquiring U.S. high technology comes with its own set of obligations in terms of ensuring its security.
2. US sanctions on Iran are hampering the pace of development of Chabahar port.
3. Recent war in Ukraine is diverting US attention from the strategic challenge of China in the Indo-Pacific region.
4. Divergent views on Pharma patents and data localization policies - India remained on the Priority Watch List of Special Probe 301.
5. Canceling the GSP status of India hampers Indian competitiveness.

6. Withdrawal of the USA from Afghanistan has created a Power Vacuum in the region which may be captured by China.
7. Different perceptions of the role of QUAD in the Indo-Pacific region.
8. India and the US have had to overcome a difficult legacy. The US has for decades done great damage to India's strategic interests by obstructing the development of our nuclear and missile capabilities and denying us dual use technologies by imposing global sanctions through its domestic legislation as well as international export control regimes.

Way Forward -

1. India and USA should cooperate in Vaccine Research and Development - Universities in USA can collaborate with Vaccine Manufacturers from India.
2. Focus on common long term interests - Combating terrorism, Asian security and prosperity.
3. Both the Countries should cooperate with each other for reforming the global governance structure.
4. The USA should devote more diplomatic and financial capital in the Indo-Pacific region to contain the China challenge.
5. The USA should actively transfer technology and finance especially in challenging situations of climate change.
6. Bothe the countries should cooperate in making Global Institutions robust and sustainable - CDRI, ISA, QUAD.

India-Israel Relations

The bilateral relations between the Republic of India and the State of Israel have an extensive and comprehensive economic, military, and political relationship. They are both in the I2U2 Group. The Indian and Israeli governments have stated they have deep ties rooted in mutual problems and a desire to address them, especially in regards to Israeli tech applications for India.

Important Data -

1. Bilateral merchandise trade of \$ 5.66 Billion in Indias favor.
2. India is the third largest trade partner of Israel in Asia.
3. Diamond trade - Amounts for half of bilateral trade.

Areas of Cooperation -

1. Defense - Military hardware and high tech weaponry (Phalcon system, Thermal sensors, surveillance equipment for yellow sea).
2. Partnership in Cutting Edge Technologies - Nano Technology, Water Technology and Bio-Tech.
3. Agriculture - Joint investment in industrial ventures and agriculture markets.
4. Intelligence cooperation - RAW and MOSSAD intelligence input and exchange.
5. Space Cooperation - Cooperation in electric propulsion system (EPS) for small satellites and GEO-LEO (Geosynchronous Earth Orbit-Low Earth Orbit) optical link.

6. Cultural Ties - Cultural Exchange Programme (for the period of 2020-23) in August 2020 to facilitate bilateral cultural exchanges spanning all fields of art and culture, including youth exchanges.



Way Forward (Future Prospects) -

1. Strategic Complementarities - India's military market is in search of new solutions to diversify suppliers. Israel can fill this place.

2. Both the countries should strive for creating a triangular forum to combat terrorism.
3. India-Israel relations should diversify from Military to Knowledge Intensive sectors like IT, Software, Space Research.
4. India should increase its cooperation with Israel significantly in its mission to double the farmers income.
5. Both the countries should launch joint ventures in defense-manufacturing and research.
6. Cooperation in semiconductor manufacturing.

India-Iran Relations

India-Iran relations span centuries marked by meaningful interactions. The two countries shared a border till 1947 and share several common features in their language, culture and traditions. Both South Asia and the Persian Gulf have strong commercial, energy, cultural and people-to-people links.

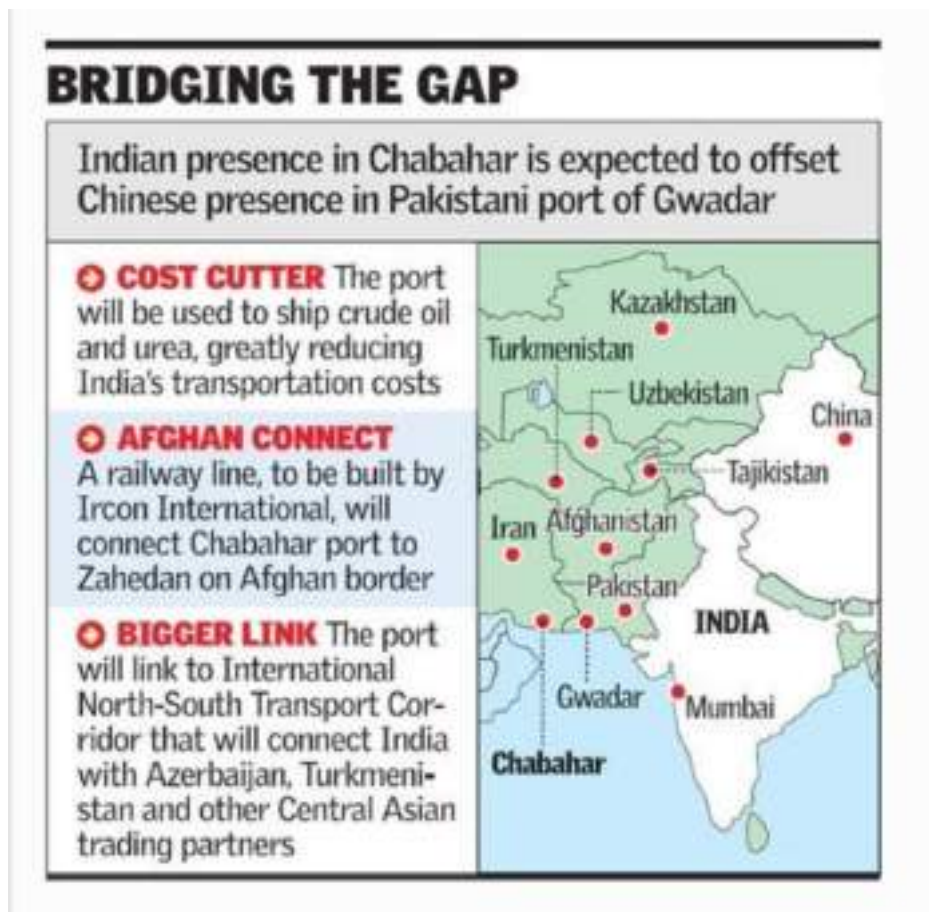
Important Facts -

1. Bilateral trade of \$ 1.9 Billion.
2. Iranian oil import has been reduced to less than 1% in 2021.
3. Prior to the US sanctions India used to pay Iran for oil trade in Indian Rupee.



Importance of Iran for India -

1. Iran provides an alternative route of connectivity to Central Asia and Afghanistan.
2. Iran used to be the second largest oil exporter to India in 2009-2010, its share went down to less than 1% in 2020-21, due to US sanctions. So Iran is important for India's energy security.
3. India is developing Chabahar port in Iran. Indian presence in Chabahar port will offset Chinese presence in Gwadar port.
4. Iran owing to its close relations with the Taliban has been an important country for India to engage with Taliban in Afghanistan.



Issues and Challenges in India-Iran Relations -

1. India's decision to stop the oil imports from Iran owing to the US sanctions isn't liked by Iran.
2. Increasing closeness of Iran and China - 25 year Strategic Partnership agreement between both countries.
3. There are other sticky issues like Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen launching drone attacks against Saudi Arabia and UAE, both close partners to India.
4. Pace of progress of development of Chabahar port and INSTC is slow.
5. India becoming part of I2U2 and growing military cooperation with Israel is criticized by the hardliners in Iran.
6. Stalled Iran Nuclear deal has created difficulty for India to trade with Iran.

Recent Developments -

1. Saudi Arabia and Iran are engaging in talks with each other which has led to a ceasefire in Yemen.
2. UAE and Qatar have held talks with Iran.

These developments suggest the change in the dynamics in the West Asia region.

Way Forward -

1. India should use its strategic autonomy and start importing oil from Iran. This will reduce international oil prices.
2. India should readily cooperate with Iran for speedy completion of projects such as Chabahar Port and International North South Corridor.
3. India should use diplomatic weight to streamline the stalled Iranian nuclear deal.
4. Completion of India-Oman-Iran gas pipeline.
5. India should engage more with the Taliban through the Iranian regime.
6. The trade between two countries is very low. Both the countries should go for a Preferential Trade Agreement to improve it.

India-Russia Relations

Overview -

Russia has been a longstanding and time-tested partner for India. Development of India-Russia relations has been a key pillar of India's foreign policy. Since the signing of "Declaration on the India-Russia Strategic Partnership" in October 2000 (during the visit of President Putin), India-Russia ties have acquired a qualitatively new character with enhanced levels of cooperation in almost all areas of the bilateral relationship including political, security, defense, trade and economy, science & technology, culture, and people-to-people ties. Under the Strategic Partnership, several institutionalized dialogue mechanisms operate at both political and official levels to ensure regular interaction and follow-up on cooperation activities. During the visit of the Russian President to India in December 2010, the Strategic Partnership was elevated to the level of "Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership."

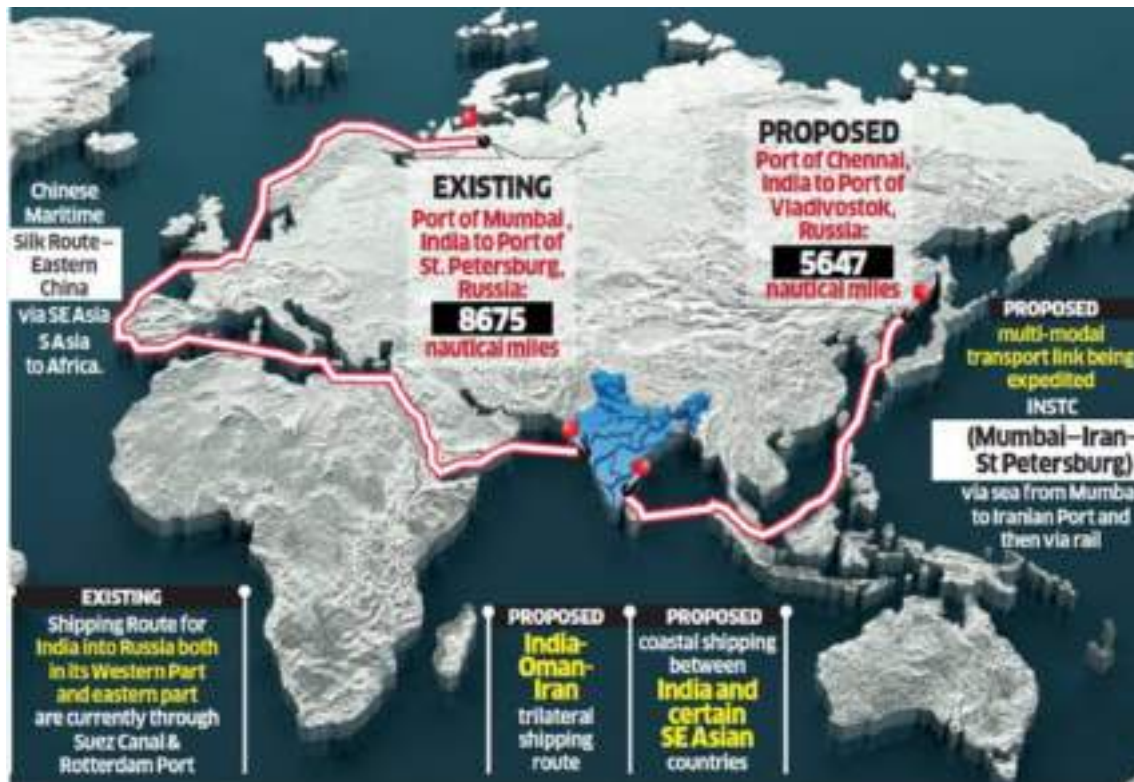
Despite Covid-19 related challenges, India-Russia relations have continued to deepen, with enhanced cooperation in all areas of the bilateral relationship, including political engagements, security, defense, trade & economy, science & technology and culture. Cooperation was further strengthened through joint efforts in the fight against Covid-19 pandemic, including in the field of vaccine trials and production, supply of drugs and repatriation of citizens of both countries.

Important Facts -

1. Bilateral Trade - \$ 8.1 Billion.
2. Russian investment in India - \$ 18 Billion.
3. Indian imports of Russian arms reduced from 70%(2015) to 46%(2021).

Significance of Russia for India -

1. Russia can play a role in diluting tensions between India and China through RIC.
2. Important for India's energy security.
3. Combating Terrorism - Both the Countries calling for early finalization of Comprehensive Convention on Combating Terrorism.
4. Largest arms exporter to India(46%).



Areas of Cooperation - Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership rest on four pillars.

1. Political and Security Cooperation - Convergence of interest in Central Asia, Support for NSG and UNSC membership of India, Joint Working Group on Afghanistan, Converging anti-terrorism efforts through SCO and BRICS.
2. Defense Cooperation - Buyer-Seller relationship has been transformed to Joint Research, Development and Production (BrahMos), Technology Transfer.
3. Space Cooperation - GAGANYAN Mission, ISRO and ROSCOSMOS are partnering in GLONASS.
4. Energy Cooperation - Natural partner in energy security since Russia is controlling 20% of global energy resources.
5. Nuclear Cooperation - Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant, Rooppur Nuclear Project.
6. Economic and Commercial - Both have intended to increase investment to \$ 50 Billion, Rupee-Ruble trade, Development of Industrial Corridor in India.
7. Connectivity Cooperation - International North South Transport Corridor.

Issues and Challenges -

1. Dissatisfaction in India with post-sales services and maintenance being offered by Russia.
2. Cost escalation and delay in service delivery from the Russian side.
3. Low level of trade between two countries - \$ 8 Billion (Indo-Russia trade lacks diversification and mainly dominated by the arms)
4. Growing Russia-China closeness puts India into a dilemma.
5. Russia's Concerns - Apprehensions from Russia over increasing Indo-USA closeness (QUAD, I2U2).
6. Russia's growing relations with Pakistan has been a matter of concern for India.
7. The Indo-Russia energy sector has in recent years seen increased cooperation through two-way investment. However, difficulties involved in direct supply through pipelines remain.
8. Lack of involvement of the Private sector and poor logistic connectivity.

Recent Developments -

1. 21st India-Russia Summit - Signing of 10 Year Defense Cooperation Pact.
2. Delivery of S400 Defense System.
3. India abstained from the UNSC resolution on Russia-Ukraine war.
4. RBI and Bank of Russia signing an agreement to jointly respond against cyber attacks.

Way Forward -

1. Broaden collaboration on bilateral and regional issues by focusing on new theaters of cooperation like Far East Region, Arctic, Central Asia etc.
2. Joint Development of Defense Products through Make in India and Coproduction of Weapons and Spare Parts.
3. Rule Based International Order under UN, BRICS.
4. Going for greater economic integration by diversifying business sectors with private sector involvement.
5. Speedily completing INSTC.
6. After the Taliban's takeover, leveraging relations with Russia can be a key strategy for India in Afghanistan. Example: NSA talks between India, Russia, Central Asian republics etc.
7. There is a need for improving Economic cooperation – Improving logistics – FTA with EAEU etc.

Though the Middle East remains India's most viable choice for energy imports, emerging geopolitics and shifting traditional alliances compels India to diversify its partners. Russia, with its abundant energy resources, coupled with the exit of Western oil companies from its energy projects, offers tremendous opportunity for India.

India-Africa Relations

Overview -

Africa-India relations are the historical, political, economic, and cultural connections between India and the African continent.

Historical relations concerned mainly India and East Africa. However, in modern days—and with the expansion of diplomatic and commercial representations— India has now developed ties with most of the African nations.

India's relationship with Africa has progressed by utilizing consultative and responsive processes, principally under the umbrella of the India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS). Since the inception of IAFS in 2008, it has grown to rank among the biggest regular diplomatic gatherings of African leaders.

Important Facts -

1. Bilateral Trade - \$ 66 Billion- India is the fourth largest trade partner of Africa.
2. India is the fifth largest investor in Africa.



Significance of Africa -

1. Economic - Africa's growing middle class will be a great market for India.
2. Geopolitical Significance - 55 countries from Africa have critical weight in global institutions such as the UN etc.
3. Provides strategic space for India to test its soft power.
4. Energy Security - Potential sites for oil and natural gas. Alternative for India, away from the political instability of the Middle East.
5. Increasing population which if skilled could be a
6. Source of human resource.

Issues and Challenges -

1. India's low economic footprint as compared to China - Chinese bilateral trade is \$ 254 Billion while India's is \$ 66 Billion.
2. Delay in project completion by India in its development partnership Commitment.
3. Competitive might of China - China is increasingly taking interest in the security of the African continent.
4. Frequent civil wars in countries like Rwanda, Congo, Somalia, Sudan etc.
5. Climate change and desertification (Desertification in Sahel region)
6. Growing instances of Violence and Discrimination against African students in India.
7. Lack of state capacity and good governance in African countries.
8. The Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) is yet to be implemented effectively.
9. Lack of infrastructure development and connectivity across the continent.

Way Forward -

1. India should diversify trade and country basket - Currently the trade is dominated mainly by Petroleum Products, LNG and that too from Namibia and South Africa.
2. Timely completion of development projects.
3. Development friendly private investment needs to be promoted for mutual benefits.
4. India-AU dialogue needs to be institutionalized as an annual event and it can be promoted at Track 1.5 Level (i.e. involving businesses, academia and government representatives)

10 Guiding Principles for India-Africa engagement, as articulated by PM Modi during his Uganda visit, and addressed to the African nations:

1. Africa will be at the top of our priorities. We will continue to intensify and deepen our engagement with Africa. As we have shown, it will be sustained and regular.
2. Our development partnership will be guided by your priorities. We will build as much local capacity and create local opportunities as possible. It will be on terms that are comfortable to you, that will liberate your potential and not constrain your future.
3. We will keep our markets open and make it easier and more attractive to trade with India. We will support our industry to invest in Africa.

4. We will harness India's experience with the digital revolution to support Africa's development; improve delivery of public services; extend education and health; spread digital literacy; expand financial inclusion; and mainstream the marginalised.
5. Africa has 60 percent of the world's arable land, but produces just 10 percent of the global output. We will work with you to improve Africa's agriculture.
6. Our partnership will address the challenges of climate change.
7. We will strengthen our cooperation and mutual capabilities in combating terrorism and extremism; keeping our cyberspace safe and secure; and, supporting the UN in advancing and keeping peace.
8. We will work with African nations to keep the oceans open and free for the benefit of all nations. The world needs cooperation and competition in the eastern shores of Africa and the eastern Indian Ocean.
9. As global engagement in Africa increases, we must all work together to ensure that Africa does not once again turn into a theater of rival ambitions, but becomes a nursery for the aspirations of Africa's youth.
10. Just as India and Africa fought colonialism together, we will work together for a just, representative and democratic global order that has a voice for one-third of humanity that lives in Africa and India.

India-Central Asia Relations

Overview -

India and Central Asia have had long standing historical, cultural, political, and economic relations that have over the time metamorphosed into a stable, mature, and transformational partnership. India's proximity and growing convergence on issues of mutual concern with the five Central Asian countries—comprising Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan—have been reflected in heightened cooperation in addressing emerging geostrategic challenges in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the changing world order. Concurrently, the two sides have enhanced deliberations and cooperation on areas such as trade and connectivity, economic development, development partnership, energy security, regional issues of mutual interests as well as the mutual geopolitical concerns of each side on emerging challenges in Afghanistan.

During the third India-Central Asia Dialogue recently held in New Delhi on 19 December 2021, the two sides further reiterated commitment towards building robust cooperation in addressing emerging global concerns while emphasizing the ardent need to promote security, stability, and long-term shared economic prosperity in the India-Central Asia geopolitical architecture.

Important Facts -

1. India's bilateral trade with Central Asia - \$ 2 Billion.
2. INSTC passes through Central Asia.
3. Central Asia has the third largest oil and gas reserve on the planet.

Significance of Central Asia for India -

1. Geostrategic Importance - The region lies on the crossroads of hotspots like the Middle East, Russia.

2. Energy Security - Rich in hydrocarbon resources.
3. With Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, Central Asia has become very important for India.
4. The region has large potential from the point of view of export from India (IT services can be exported).



Issues and Challenges -

1. Connectivity - India doesn't have direct connectivity. The problem of connectivity has become more difficult with the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan.
2. India's trade with the region is very low (0.5% of India's overall trade, on the other hand China has trade worth of \$ 100 Billion). The trade potential has to be realized.
3. Increasing Chinese presence and engagement in the region through Belt and Road Initiative.
4. US sanctions have stalled the development of Chabahar port due to which INSTC completion is yet to be completed.
5. Internal issues - Problems of governance and inter-state disputes.

Major steps taken by India to strengthen relationship with Central Asia -

1. Connect Central Asia Policy
2. International North South Transport Corridor.
3. Development of Chabahar port.

4. Ashgabat Agreement.
5. TAPI Gas pipeline project.

Way Forward -

1. Boost economic trade by finalizing FTA with Eurasian Economic Union.
2. India must redouble its efforts to further its regional presence. This becomes more important in the context of China's Belt and Road Initiative, with two of its six corridors running through Central Asia.
3. India must increase its developmental and humanitarian aid to the region and promote closer people-to-people ties through education, knowledge transfer, medicine and health, culture, cuisine and tourism.
4. India should engage with the region proactively through multilateral organizations like SCO, EAEU etc.
5. Speedy completion of connectivity projects like Chabahar Port and INSTC.
6. Need to work on 4Cs- Commerce, Capacity enhancement, Connectivity and Contacts as highlighted by the India-Central Asia dialogue.

India-West Asia Relations

Overview -

India has traditionally enjoyed close and friendly relations with Arab countries. These relations date back to ancient times. There are important Indian investments in countries stretching from Oman to Egypt, Sudan and beyond. There have been cultural ties with the region throughout history. Much of our external trade passes along the Suez Canal, the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. India's staunch commitment to the Palestinian cause, common views on major international developments and strong economic and commercial relations form the foundations of India-Arab relations today.

India's institutionalized ties with the Arab League have further strengthened India's relations with Arab countries and this is exemplified by the exchanges that have taken place between India and Arab League in recent years.

Important Facts -

1. Trade has crossed \$ 175 Billion in 2021.
2. Indian diaspora - 9 Million.
3. CEPA with UAE.



Significance of West Asia for India -

1. Energy Security - West Asia and North Africa account for 60% of India's crude oil imports and 85% of LNG imports.
2. Huge market for export.
3. Second largest remittance source region - \$ 50 Billion.
4. Huge diaspora connect - Making relationships much more integrated.
5. Strategic Importance - Chabahar port, security of India's import and export.

New emerging dynamic for Cooperation -

1. Defense and Security Cooperation - Israel (I2U2).
2. Expansion of counter terror cooperation with gulf countries.
3. Welfare of Indian diaspora - Gulf kingdoms have started addressing many longstanding Indian concerns.

4. Cultural and People to People Ties - Recently UAE declared Hindi as a court language.
5. Partnership in Energy Sector - ARAMCO acquiring 20% stake in RIL.

Historical Factors that shaped Geopolitics of the Region -

1. Arab - Israel rivalry owing to the Post War history of creation of Jewish State Israel from the Arabic Palestinian territory.
2. Arab – Iran Rivalry which is based on the Shia – Sunni rivalry and is a race for regional hegemony amongst the Muslim world countries of the region.
3. Israel – Iran rivalry which started post the Iranian revolution of 1979 and has been escalating because of Iran's Nuclear Program.

Issues and Challenges -

1. Declining influence of USA and rising Chinese influence leading to shift in balance of power in the region - China-Iran 25 Year Strategic Partnership.
2. India's share in Sovereign Wealth Fund is meager 0.5%.
3. India's negligible share in infrastructure projects.
4. Despite being the second largest buyer of oil, token presence in gas sector assets.
5. There is growing polarization between two parts of West Asia, both of which India has close ties with Israel, Saudi and UAE on one side, and Iran on the other.
6. Iran's hosted Russia-Turkey over the Syrian issue. Russia – Turkey normalization is also troubling for India, given tensions with Turkey over Pakistan and Kashmir issue.
7. Most of the countries in the region are part of OIC, which frequently raises the Kashmir Issue.

Strategic Areas of the Middle East -



Recent Developments -

1. Formation of I2U2.
2. UAE, Bahrain has normalized their relations with Israel through Abraham Accord.
3. Change in the mindset of the USA - Earlier the USA was on the side of Saudi, but now the US is in favor of resolution of the Yemen crisis.
4. The Barakah nuclear power plant is the United Arab Emirates' first nuclear power station, the first nuclear power station in the Arabian Peninsula, the second in the Persian Gulf region and the first commercial nuclear power station in the Arab World.

Opportunities and Way Forward -

1. Paying great attention to domestic dynamics in the Gulf Kingdom - Delhi should support the region's reform agenda (To support in modernizing and stabilizing Arab societies).
2. India should offer strong public opinion support for positive reforms. This will lend greater weight to India.
3. Pursuing Strategic partnership and sustained power diplomacy with Iran, Saudi and Israel.
4. Diversifying relationship to more High-Tech economic integration - Energy, Digital Innovation, Arms Production, Space Technology etc.
5. India should be looking for alternative energy sources to meet its demand given the instability and hostile situation in the region.

Indo-Pacific Region and QUAD

Overview -

The Indo-Pacific region is a geopolitical area that spans two regions of the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. Stretching from the west coast of the United States to the west coast of India, the Indo-Pacific is a 24 nations regional framework comprising the tropical waters of the Indian Ocean, the western and central Pacific Ocean, and the seas connecting the two in the general area of Indonesia.

Since 2011, the term "Indo-Pacific" has been used increasingly in the global strategic/ geopolitical discourse. As a framework, the Indo-Pacific seeks to create a connected multipolar region that must be governed by commonly agreed international norms, rules and practices. The term "Indo-Pacific" refers to the maritime space stretching from the Indian Ocean, across the littorals of East Asia to the western Pacific Ocean.

Countries belonging to the Indo-Pacific Region -

Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei, Cambodia, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, Timor Leste, United States, Vietnam.

QUAD -

'Quadrilateral Security Dialogue' (QUAD), the Quad is an informal strategic forum comprising four nations, namely -- United States of America (USA), India, Australia and Japan. One of the primary objectives of the Quad is to work for a free, open, prosperous and inclusive Indo-Pacific region.

The group met for the first time in 2007 on the sidelines of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean). It is considered an alliance of maritime democracies, and the forum is maintained by meetings, semi-regular summits, information exchanges and military drills of all the members.

What Is The Quad?

The Quad, officially the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD), is not a formal alliance. It is an informal strategic forum comprising four maritime democracies:

India, Japan, Australia and the United States



PRIMARY OBJECTIVES

Maritime security, addressing climate change, combating Covid-19 pandemic, among others.

The Quad is also seen as an attempt to counter the growing might of China

Important Facts -

1. Indo-Pacific accounts for 63% of Global GDP.
2. 50% of Global Maritime trade passes through Indo-Pacific.
3. Richness of natural resources.
4. Home for 60% of the global population.

India's Vision of Indo-Pacific -

- India envisages a free, open, inclusive, peaceful and prosperous Indo-Pacific, built on a rules based order and with sustainable and transparent infrastructure investments.
- It should have freedom of navigation and overflight, unimpeded lawful commerce, mutual respect for sovereignty, peaceful resolution of disputes, and equality amongst nations.
- India's vision of the Indo-Pacific is positive, and inclusive of all nations in its geography and beyond who have a stake in it.
- ASEAN centrality and unity is an important element of the vision.

PM envisioned seven pillars of Indo-Pacific Maritime Geography in 'Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative' - maritime security ecology and resources; capacity building; disaster risk reduction and management; S&T and academic cooperation; trade, connectivity and maritime transport.



Significance of Indo-Pacific and QUAD -

1. Maritime Security and Cooperation - Mission SAGAR
2. Active participation of India in regional groupings like IORA, EAS, MGC Corridor, ADMM+ etc.
3. Rule based international order, free and open Indo-Pacific are critical for Indo-Pacific and QUAD will address it.
4. Connectivity through SAGARMALA Programme, BIMSTEC.
5. QUAD will have a crucial role in countering Chinese rise in the Indo-Pacific and also ensuring freedom of navigation in the region.
6. India's national maritime interests are aligned with the Indo-Pacific and QUAD will play a critical role in it.

Issues and Challenges -

1. Increasing footprint of China in the Indo-Pacific - String of Pearls.
2. Russia and China perceive QUAD as Asian NATO. This may hamper India's bilateral relations with them.
3. Challenges in coordinating the Indo-Pacific wing of MEA with the Ministry of Defense.
4. India's limited naval capacity and low military trade.
5. Different perceptions among the members of QUAD regarding the Indo-Pacific vision- Lack of definitional consensus and difference in priorities.
6. India's low economic integration within the region - India's blackout from RCEP.
7. Challenges in balancing continental and maritime strategy.

Recent Developments-

1. AUKUS formation.
2. IPEF - Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Economic Prosperity.
3. Supply Chain Resilient Initiative (India,Japan,Australia).

Way Forward -

1. Strengthening and effectively channelising existing architecture of Indo-Pacific wing, SAGAR etc. on Indo-Pacific.
2. Building strategic coherence with Look East Policy.
3. Bringing clarity on regional Indo-Pacific vision.
4. India's role in the Indo-Pacific will remain limited if it does not prove to be a major economic partner to these States.
5. Expansion of QUAD - India should pitch for countries like Indonesia and Singapore to be invited to join QUAD in the future.
6. Need for maritime doctrine - Consolidating military and non-military tools, engaging with strategic partners.
7. Joint Collaboration in developmental partnership - Quick Impact Project, 2+1 Mechanism

International Relations
Syllabus Topic - Indian diaspora.

Let us see the past year questions on the topic.

Question	Keyword/Demand	Theme
'Indian diaspora has a decisive role to play in the politics and economy of America and European Countries'. Comment with examples. (2020)	Role of Indian diaspora.	Contemporary Current Affairs.
The Indian Diaspora has an important role to play in South East Asian countries economy and society. Appraise the role of Indian Diaspora in South-East Asia in this context. (2017)	Role of Indian diaspora.	Contemporary Current Affairs.

Here the focus of these two questions is mainly upon the role played by the Indian diaspora.

Diaspora -

- Populations, such as members of an ethnic or religious group, that originated from the same place but dispersed to different locations.
- A population that is scattered across regions which are separate from its geographic place of origin.

Indian Diaspora -

The Indian diaspora has spread all across the globe. Diaspora has played a crucial role in the development of India.



Significance of the Indian Diaspora -

1. It Acts as a soft power and plays a crucial role in image building.
2. Lobbying for India's interest - 123 Agreement.
3. Economic Contribution - As per the World Bank report, India is the leading remittance receiving country in the World - \$87 Billion.
4. Pressure Group - The diaspora acts as a pressure group. Due to which many times, the country in which they live formulates policies which are beneficial for India.
5. Acts as an agent of change - Facilitates investment and people to people exchanges.
6. Political Power - Ex. Rishi Sunak, Alok Sharma.
7. Influential positions held by Indian diaspora - Google CEO Sundar Pichai.
8. Development of the host country - Ex. Silicon Valley.

Issues and Challenges faced by the Indian Diaspora -

1. Middle-East -
 - Economic slowdown and increasing trend of automation has resulted in job cuts.
 - Exploitative Kafala system.
 - Issue of security due to radical groups.
 - Nitaqat law - Aims to replace the large overseas working population with the Saudi population.

2. North America and Europe -

- Racial discrimination
- Stricter Visa rule post brexit
- Demands for dual citizenship.

3. General Issues -

- Adverse working conditions, lack of social security. Violations of contractual terms etc.

Way Forward -

1. Negotiate Standard Labor Export Agreement with the host countries.
2. Asking Indian missions to be in frequent contact with the diaspora.
3. Covering overseas Indian workers under insurance schemes.
4. Setting SEZs for PIOs.

Government Initiatives for the Indian Diaspora -

1. Prime Minister's Global Advisory Council Of Overseas Indians - The Government of India has constituted the Prime Minister's Global Advisory Council of People of Indian Origin to draw upon the experience and knowledge of eminent people of Indian origin in diverse fields from across the world.
2. The Overseas Indian Citizenship (OCI) Scheme - The Overseas Indian Citizenship (OCI) Scheme was formerly launched in January 2006 by amending the Citizenship Act, 1955 to facilitate lifelong visa free travel to India and certain economic, educational and cultural benefits to Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs).
3. Organizing Pravasi Bhartiya Divas.
4. Dedicated Ministry for Overseas Indian Affairs.

International Relations

Syllabus Topic. - Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and affecting India's interest.

UNSC Reforms and India

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations (UN) and is charged with ensuring international peace and security, recommending the admission of new UN members to the General Assembly, and approving any changes to the UN Charter. Its powers include establishing peacekeeping operations, enacting international sanctions, and authorizing military action. The UNSC is the only UN body with the authority to issue binding resolutions on member states.

The Security Council consists of fifteen members, of which five are permanent: [6] China, France, Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States. These were the great powers that were the victors of World War II (or their successor states). Permanent members can veto (block) any substantive Security Council resolution, including those on the admission of new member states to the United Nations or nominees for the office of Secretary-General. This veto right does not carry over into any General Assembly or emergency special sessions of the General Assembly matters or votes. The other ten members are elected on a regional basis for a term of two years. The body's presidency rotates monthly among its members.

Currently India has the Chairmanship of UNSC.

Arguments for reforms in the United Nations Security Council -

1. Change in Geopolitical Scenario - Current structure of the UNSC reflects the geopolitical scenario of post World War 2 which has changed significantly over the years.
2. UNSC was expanded only once in 1963 (four non-permanent members were added). Since then, despite an increase in the membership of the UN, no reform has happened.
3. Inequitable representation - Europe is over represented while Asia is under represented. On the other hand there is no representation at all for South America and Africa.
4. Big North-South divide.
5. In the absence of reforms, there is a threat that the decision making process may shift to other multilateral forums.



Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan

Overall Objective -

A Council that is more reflective of the contemporary geopolitical realities of the world	=	A more effective Council
A more representative Council	=	A more effective Council
A more democratic Council (incorporating inclusive and participatory decision-making)	=	A more effective Council
A Council with a membership that includes regional powers will be more capable	=	A more effective Council

Expected reforms in the UNSC -

1. Increasing the membership of Council.
2. Rethinking about the power of Veto.
3. Bringing more transparency in the decision making process.
4. Making the UNSC more representative and diverse.
5. Improving the coordination and relationship between UNSC and the United Nations General Assembly.

Challenges to UNSC Reforms -

1. For UNSC reforms there is a need to amend the UN Charter. For this 2/3rd majority of the UN General Assembly and 2/3rd majority at UNSC is required which is a very tough process.
2. The Permanent members of the UNSC aren't much ready for the reforms at UNSC.
3. Opposition to each other. Ex. India's membership at UNSC is opposed by Pakistan and China, Japan's membership is opposed by China, Brazil's membership is opposed by Argentina etc.
4. United for Consensus (Coffee Club) is holding back reforms at the UNSC.

So overall, lack of consensus is the biggest obstacle in the UNSC reforms.

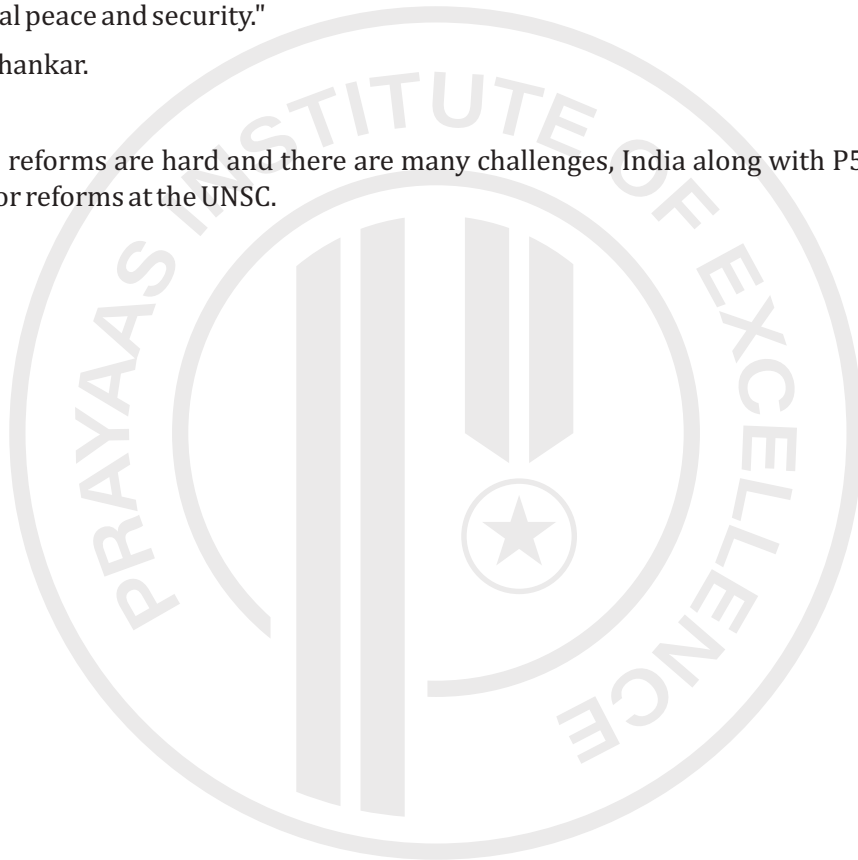
Argument in favor of India's permanent membership at UNSC -

1. A vibrant democracy consisting of 1/6th of World's population.
2. 5th largest economy in the world in terms of nominal GDP and 3rd largest economy in the world in terms of Purchasing Power Parity.
3. Responsible nuclear power.
4. 3rd largest military spender after the USA and China.
5. India is one of the largest contributors to the United Nations Peacekeeping Force.
6. Active participation in global affairs like climate change.

"We reaffirm that adapting the United Nations to the contemporary world realities necessarily requires urgent and comprehensive reform of the Security Council, the principal organ for international peace and security."

- EAM S Jaishankar.

Though the reforms are hard and there are many challenges, India along with P5 members must push hard for reforms at the UNSC.



International Relations

Global Groupings

BIMSTEC

Overview -

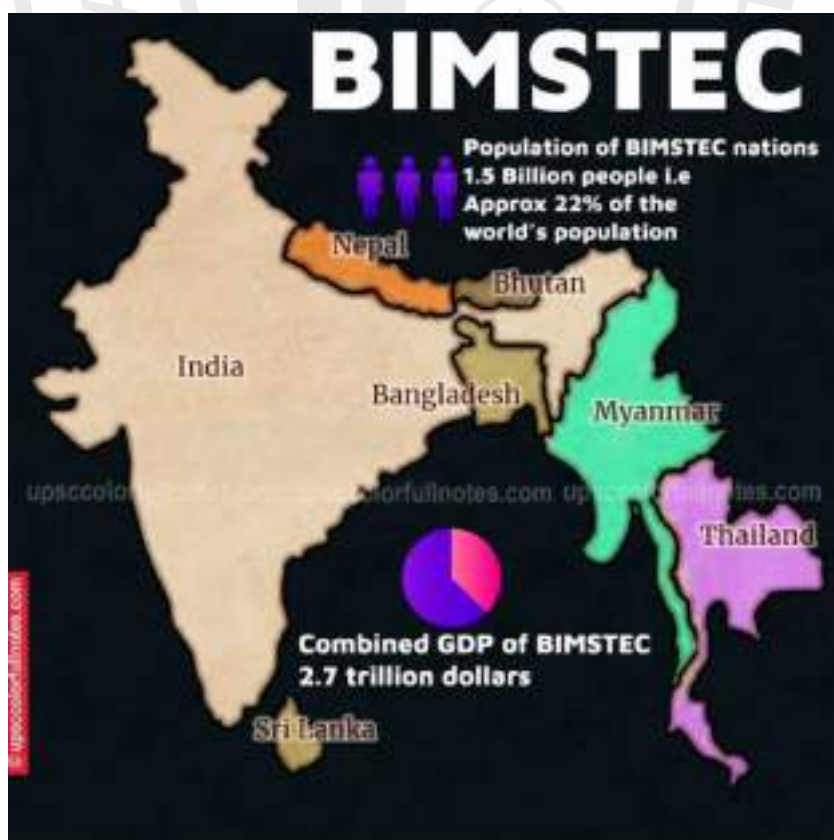
The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is a regional organization comprising seven Member States around the Bay of Bengal region. BIMSTEC constitutes a unique link between South and South-East Asia with five Members from South Asia (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka) and two from South-East Asia (Myanmar and Thailand).

The organization came into being on 6 June 1997 through the 'Bangkok Declaration'. Initially, the economic bloc was formed with four Member States with the acronym 'BIST-EC' (Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand Economic Cooperation). Following inclusion of Myanmar on 22 December 1997 during a special Ministerial Meeting in Bangkok, the Group was renamed 'BIMST-EC' (Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand Economic Cooperation). With the admission of Nepal and Bhutan at the 6th Ministerial Meeting (February 2004, Thailand), the name of the grouping was changed to 'Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation' (BIMSTEC).

Permanent Secretariat of BIMSTEC has been operational since September 2014 in Dhaka.

Important Facts -

1. Bay of Bengal (BOB) hosts 22% of the global population - 1.6 Billion.
2. It covers a combined GDP of over \$ 3.7 Trillion.
3. 25% of world trade passes through BOB.



Significance of BIMSTEC for India -

1. Strategic - Enables India to pursue three core policies - Neighbourhood First, Act East, Economic development of North East.
2. Important platform to counter Chinese influence.
3. Young demography and emerging economies in the region.
4. Platform for intra-regional cooperation between SAARC and ASEAN.
5. Physical connectivity with BIMSTEC would also help India integrate itself with ASEAN's Master Plan of Connectivity 2025.

Important Connectivity Projects -

1. Kaladan Multimodal Project - Connecting Kolkata to Sittwe Port in Myanmar and then Mizoram by river and road.
2. IMT Trilateral Highway - Connecting India and Thailand with Myanmar.
3. BBIN Motor Vehicle Agreement for free flow of goods and people.

5th BIMSTEC Summit 2022 -

“BIMSTEC - Towards a Resilient Region, Prosperous Economies, Healthy People.”

Outcomes -

1. Adoption of BIMSTEC Charter - Seven specialized sectors for working and cooperation.
2. India has been given leadership on Security Pillar - Involving. Counter-Terrorism, Trans-National Crimes, Disaster Management and Energy.
3. Enactment of Master plan for transport connectivity.
4. Three BIMSTEC agreements signed on capacity building.

Issues and Challenges -

1. Suffers from neglect and lack of Commitment of its members.
2. Connectivity gap in BOB - Physical infrastructure (Poor roads and rail connectivity, inefficient last mile links)
3. Recent tensions in the member states (India-Bangladesh over border dispute and Myanmar-Bangladesh over Rohingya)
4. Delay in adoption of FTA fuels doubt about its efficacy.
5. Chinese aggressiveness and its increasing presence in the BOB impacting the autonomy of shipping routes (Malacca Dilemma)
6. Intra-regional trade is only 6% in the last decade.
7. Regional geopolitics - Reluctance to convey anti-China impression due to over dependence on China.
8. Limited organizational capacity and bureaucratic delay.

Way Forward -

1. Urgently negotiating FTA - Recommended by FICCI in 2018.
2. Strengthening political engagement - Recent 5th BIMSTEC summit to host Biennial Summit.
3. Collaborating and mitigating non-traditional threats.
4. Speedily completing connectivity projects for better economic integration.
5. Prioritizing multilateralism - Facilitating tourism diplomacy, academic and student exchange programmes.
6. Informal face to face discussion should be taken up on contentious issues like Kalapani and Rohingya Crisis. Such issues need to be resolved consensually through dialogue and mutual trust.

PM Modi called upon member countries and fellow leaders to transform the Bay of Bengal into a Bridge of connectivity, prosperity and security.

SAARC

Overview -

India is a founding member of the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) that was set up in 1985 as an organization to build a connected and integrated South Asia with the larger aim of promoting the development and progress of all countries in the region.

India continues to support various initiatives in the SAARC framework to achieve closer cooperation in diverse areas.

Out of the eighteenth SAARC Summits held so far, India has hosted three, viz. the second (Bengaluru, November 1986), the eighth (New Delhi, May 1995) and the fourteenth (New Delhi, April 2007).

India enjoys excellent bilateral relations with Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka. As per our 'Neighbourhood First' policy, India is an active development partner and is engaged in several projects in these countries. Our engagement with these countries is based on a consultative, non-reciprocal and outcome-oriented approach, while focussing on delivering benefits like greater connectivity, improved infrastructure, stronger development cooperation in various sectors, security and broader people-to-people contacts.

Important Facts -

1. 22% of Global Population.
2. 3% of Global Area.
3. 3.8% of the Global Economy.



Five Broad Spheres of Agreement to Cooperate -

1. Human Resource Development.
2. Transport.
3. Meteorology, Science and Technology and Telecommunication.
4. Rural and Agricultural Development.
5. Population and Health related activities.

Issues and Challenges pertaining to SAARC -

1. Too heterogeneous and divided nature of member states leads to mutual animosity and hatred.
2. Problem of imbalance - India is perceived as a regional hegemon / Big brother.
3. Asymmetric Development - India comprises 70% of SAARC area and population.
4. Indo-Pak rivalry affects the functioning of SAARC.
5. Taliban takeover of Afghanistan.
6. Rising influence of China - China is trying to establish relations with the member states of SAARC excluding India. For Ex. China has started CPEC with Pakistan, Hambantota project with Sri Lanka, FTA with Maldives and railroad pact with Nepal.
7. Shortage of resources and reluctance from countries to increase their contribution to SAARC.
8. Lack of consensus on threat perception over cross border terrorism.

Way Forward (Roadmap for Reforms) -

1. SAARC countries should realize that economic integration is the only way for greater regional integration.
2. Energy security should be linked together through the Unified South Asian Power Grid System.
3. Pooling technical and financial resources in collaborative projects.
4. Launching Quick Impact Projects - Like Sri Lanka West Port Terminal.
5. Enhancing cooperation in areas like Science and Technology, Space, Education and Health on the line of Indus Water Treaty.
6. Strengthening and streamlining, the already existing regional centers for cooperation - Ex. Agriculture Center in Dhaka, Disaster Management Center in India etc.

Need for Unity and Consensus -

In an edge when destinations of global capital and technology are determined by degree of integration of the region, including availability of infrastructure, skilled labor, low logistics cost etc, regional cooperation becomes a positive sum, win-win game. Despite a violent history of warfare European nations sank their differences and formed the EU. On similar lines SAARC leaders should realize their vision of peaceful regional development.

ASEAN

Overview -

India's relationship with ASEAN has emerged as a key cornerstone of our foreign policy. The relationship has evolved from the 'Look East Policy' enunciated in early 1990s which led India to become a Sectoral Partner of ASEAN in 1992, a Dialogue Partner in 1996 and a Summit-level Partner in 2002. The upgrade of this partnership to Strategic Partnership during the celebration of 20th anniversary Commemorative Summit at New Delhi in 2012 was a natural corollary to the growth of India-ASEAN relationship during the last two decades. The India-ASEAN Strategic Partnership acquired a new momentum with the announcement of "Act-East Policy" in the 12th Summit in 2014. It conveyed a clear intent on the part of India to up-scaling its engagement with the ASEAN Member States. The Act-East Policy emphasizes Connectivity, Commerce and Culture as the focus areas of action for a greater ASEAN-India integration. It takes into account the blueprints of the three pillars of ASEAN community building process, the ASEAN vision document ASEAN 2025- Forging Ahead Together, the ASEAN Master Plan for Connectivity 2025, the ASEAN ICT Master Plan 2020 and the Initiative for ASEAN Integration Work Plan III.

Important Facts -

1. ASEAN is the 4th largest trading partner of India.
2. India-ASEAN trade crossed \$ 100 Billion.



Areas of Cooperation -

1. Connectivity - Physical (IMT Trilateral Highway), Maritime (Kaladan Multimodal Project), Institutional (ARF, AIBC, MGC).
2. Political and Security Cooperation - Strategic Partner of ASEAN, Security partner in South China Sea, Joint Military Exercises.
3. Economic Cooperation - 4th largest trading partner, FTA.
4. Cultural Cooperation - Religion (Ramayana, Mahabharata), Language (Tamil as an official language in Singapore)
5. Indian Diaspora - important instrument of India's soft power, especially in Singapore and Malaysia.

Issues and Challenges -

1. Economic - India has an unfavorable balance of trade. India has pulled out of the RCEP deal.
2. Rising Chinese influence and interference in the territorial sovereignty of ASEAN nations (Spratly Island).
3. China's claim over the South China Sea can threaten hydrocarbon exploration prospects of India.
4. Delayed Projects: India is committed to connectivity projects like India-Myanmar-Thailand trilateral highway. However, timely completion is an issue.
5. Ineffective Negotiations: Many bilateral deals with these nations are yet to be finalized, leading to the halting of various aspects of diplomatic ties.

Way Forward -

1. Explore opportunities in enhancing Physical and digital connectivity between India and ASEAN.
2. India must speed up work on connectivity projects, such as India-Myanmar-Thailand trilateral highway and building new trade and transport linkages with all ASEAN Nations.
3. Furthering cooperation in areas like Climate change, sustainable development and renewable energy.
4. Enhancing developmental cooperation through initiatives such as community oriented short gestation Quick Impact Project.
5. Improving P2P and Cultural relations - Focus on our youth and provide scholarships to youths from ASEAN through NALANDA University and ITEC.

India needs a close diplomatic relationship with ASEAN nations both for economic and security reasons. Hence, Stronger strategic, security & economic ties will create greater interdependence between India and ASEAN members. This will serve as an effective counter to China's growing clout in the region.

Shanghai Cooperation Organization

Brief on SCO -

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization(SCO) is a eight-member multilateral organization, established on 15 June 2001 in Shanghai, China by the leaders of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

These countries, except for Uzbekistan, had been members of the Shanghai Five group, formed on 26 April 1996 with the signing of the Treaty on Deepening Military Trust in Border Regions.

In 2001, during the annual summit in Shanghai, the five member nations first admitted Uzbekistan in the Shanghai Five mechanism (thus transforming it into the Shanghai Six).

Thereafter, on 15 June 2001 the Declaration of Shanghai Cooperation Organization, was signed and in June 2002 the heads of the SCO Member States signed the SCO Charter which expounded on the organization's purposes, principles, structures and forms of operation, and established it in international law. At the July 2005 Astana Summit, India, Iran and Pakistan were granted Observer status. In July 2015 in Ufa, Russia, the SCO decided to admit India and Pakistan as full members. India and Pakistan signed the memorandum of obligations in June 2016 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, thereby starting the formal process of joining the SCO as full members. On 9 June 2017, at the historic summit in Astana, India and Pakistan officially joined SCO as full- members.

Important Facts -

1. Represents 60% of Eurasia's territory.
2. 42% of the global population.
3. 20% of Global GDP.

Member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation



Relevance of SCO for India -

1. Important platform for advancing India's connect to Central Asia Policy.
2. Countering regional terrorism through RATS (Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure).
3. Energy Cooperation - Unblocking India's access to Eurasia and provide fillip to TAPI Gas pipeline project.
4. SCO provides a channel to India-Central Asia Business Council to enhance economic cooperation.
5. SCO bolsters India's status as a major Pan Asian player.
6. SCO can play a crucial role in stabilizing Afghanistan which is in India's interest.

Issues and Challenges -

1. Dominance of China - Barring India, the BRI has been endorsed by all the members of SCO.
2. Shifting great power politics and rivalry in the region would make it difficult for India to navigate strategically.
3. India-Pakistan rivalry.
4. Definition of terrorism: India's definition of terrorism is different from the definition of SCO under RATS.
5. Russia-China-Pakistan closeness - Can create hurdles for India at strategic level.
6. Inadequate measures against counter-terrorism, especially threats emerging from Af-Pak region.
7. Afghan contact group - India is not on the same page with other members of the SCO.

HEALTH Framework (Given by PM Modi)

- H - Healthcare Cooperation
- E - Economic Cooperation (Against Protectionism, Primacy of WTO)
- A - Alternate Energy (Promotion of Solar Energy)
- L - Literature and Culture.
- T - Terrorism free society (Strengthening SCO RATS)
- H - Humanitarian Cooperation

Way Forward -

1. India should maintain strategic autonomy and retain its independent voice against dominance of other members.
2. Streamline the connectivity projects - Speedily Completing Chabahar port and giving fillip to INSTC.
3. India should utilize the SCO forum as a backchannel negotiation platform with China and Pakistan.
4. Through SCO, India can play a constructive role in the Central Asian Region - Deradicalization of youths and capitalizing on its soft power.
5. Strengthen people to people cooperation and cultural contacts

BRICS

Overview -

The leaders of BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) countries met for the first time in St. Petersburg, Russia, on the margins of the G8 Outreach Summit in July 2006. Shortly afterwards, in September 2006, the group was formalized as BRIC during the 1st BRIC Foreign Ministers' Meeting, which met on the sidelines of the General Debate of the UN Assembly in New York City.

After a series of high level meetings, the 1st BRIC summit was held in Yekaterinburg, Russia on 16 June 2009.

The BRIC group was renamed as BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) after South Africa was accepted as a full member at the BRIC Foreign Ministers' meeting in New York in September 2010. Accordingly, South Africa attended the 3rd BRICS Summit in Sanya, China on 14 April 2011.

Important Facts -

1. 41% of Global Population.
2. 23% of Global GDP.
3. 16% share in global trade.
4. Comprises 30% of the land surface of the world.



Significance of BRICS -

1. Voice of emerging countries from the global South.
2. Contributes in creating an inclusive international financial architecture - New Development Bank.
3. Countering terrorism - India has galvanized BRICS against terrorism and brought focused consultation on terror financing.
4. Achieving SDG goals to eradicate poverty and hunger - BRICS Agriculture and Research Platform.
5. BRICS provides India an opportunity for strategic autonomy and balancing equations against the west.
6. India is actively pursuing its membership for UNSC and Nuclear Supplier Group (NSG). China forms the major roadblock in pursuing such goals. Therefore, BRICS provides an opportunity to actively engage with China and gain its support.

Issues and Challenges -

1. Geographical separation: Members are fragmented along 4 different continents.
2. Different Political Ideologies among the member states - While India is a vibrant democracy, China and Russia have authoritarian regimes.
3. Economic Imbalance - China is way more economically dominant than other countries.
4. China's expansionist ambition creates suspicion in the minds of other members about BRICS functioning in the future.
5. Inadequate capital infusion in the NDB.
6. Low intra-country trade among the members (Geographical fragmentation hampers trade integration).

Way Forward -

1. India should utilize the BRICS platform to voice Global Governance Institutions Reforms (World Bank, IMF, WTO).
2. India can press for more democratization of the UN and UNSC through BRICS.
3. BRICS nations should go for a Bottom-Up approach (Private Sector and citizen involvement).
4. Streamlining counter terrorism agenda within BRICS. India should take the lead in this aspect.
5. BRICS should establish an international and reputed Credit Rating Agency which will work transparently and give fair ratings (Pitched by PM Modi).
6. Along with the G20, India should utilize BRICS to push for interest of Global South.



International Relations

Syllabus Topic - Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate.

Let us see the past year questions.

Questions	Keyword/Demand	Theme
Critically examine the aims and objectives of SCO. What importance does it hold for India? (2021)	Analysis of SCO.	Contemporary Current Affairs.
Critically examine the role of WHO in providing global health security during the COVID-19 pandemic. (2020)	Performance analysis of WHO during Covid-19.	Current Affairs.
'Too little cash, too much politics, leaves UNESCO fighting for life.' Discuss the statement in the light of US' withdrawal and its accusation of the cultural body as being 'anti-Israel bias'. (2020)	UNESCO issues.	Current Affairs.
What are the key areas of reform if the WTO has to survive in the present context of 'Trade War', especially keeping in mind the interest of India? (2018)	Reforms in WTO.	Current Affairs.
What are the main functions of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)? Explain different functional commissions attached to it. (2017)	ECOSOC	Static.

<p>What are the aims and objectives of the McBride Commission of UNESCO? What is India's position on these? (2016)</p>	<p>McBride Commission's role</p>	<p>Contemporary Current Affairs.</p>
<p>"The broader aims and objectives of WTO are to manage and promote international trade in the era of globalization. But the Doha round of negotiations seem doomed due to differences between the developed and developing countries." Discuss in the Indian perspective. (2016)</p>	<p>Issues pertaining to WTO.</p>	<p>Contemporary Current Affairs.</p>
<p>Discuss the impediments India is facing in its pursuit of a permanent seat in the UN Security Council. (2015)</p>	<p>Issues of UNSC reforms.</p>	<p>Contemporary Current Affairs.</p>
<p>India has recently signed to become founding member of New Development Bank (NDB) and also the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). How will the role of the two Banks be different? Discuss the strategic significance of these two Banks for India. (2014)</p>	<p>Strategic significance of NDB and AIIB.</p>	<p>Contemporary Current Affairs.</p>
<p>WTO is an important international institution where decisions taken affect countries in a profound manner. What is the mandate of WTO and how binding are their decisions? Critically analyze India's stand on the latest round of talks on Food security. (2014)</p>	<p>WTO rules and regulations.</p>	<p>Contemporary Current Affairs.</p>

<p>Some of the International funding agencies have special terms for economic participation stipulating a substantial component of the aid to be used for sourcing equipment from the leading countries. Discuss the merits of such terms and if, there exists a strong case not to accept such conditions in the Indian context. (2014)</p>	<p>Conditional financing by International institutions.</p>	<p>Contemporary Current Affairs.</p>
<p>The World Bank and the IMF, collectively known as the Bretton Woods Institutions, are the two inter-governmental pillars supporting the structure of the world's economic and financial order. Superficially, the World Bank and the IMF exhibit many common characteristics, yet their role, functions and mandate are distinctly different. Elucidate. (2013)</p>	<p>Difference between IMF and World Bank.</p>	<p>Static.</p>

Here, we can clearly see that the focus of the questions is the contemporary issues faced by the institutions. Accordingly here we will do analysis of Important institutions.

United Nations

United Nations
Intergovernmental organization

Founded: October 24, 1945, San Francisco, California, United States

Key documents: The UN Charter
Universal Declaration of Human Rights
Convention on the Rights of the Child
Statute of the International Court of Justice

Member States: 193

Main Organs:

- General Assembly
- Security Council
- Economic and Social Council
- Trusteeship Council
- International Court of Justice
- Secretariat

Source: UN official website

CGTN

Issues and Challenges in the functioning of UN -

1. Imbalance in the permanent membership of the UN Security Council (UNSC)
2. Increasing UN secretariat transparency
3. Accountability and efficiency,
4. Financial reform, calling for diversity and democracy through the implementation of a representative voting system in the General Assembly (UNGA), and
5. Inadequacy in the human rights petition system.

Seven key proposals for development system reform by EU -

1. A new generation of UN country teams (UNCT), to be demand-driven, skilled, and tailored to meet country-specific priorities
2. A reinvigorated resident coordinator (RC) system, emphasizing sustainable development.
3. A coordinated and restructured regional approach to support work in the field more effectively.
4. A renewed space for UN member states to ensure coherent, transparent and accountable results underpinned by system-wide evaluations.
5. A stronger UN institutional response and system-wide approach to partnerships for the 2030 Agenda.
6. A funding compact to bring better quality, quantity and predictability of resources coupled with increased transparency to deliver on the 2030 Agenda.
7. Necessary concrete steps to accelerate the alignment of the development system with the 2030 Agenda.

World Health Organization

Institutional Framework of WHO -

World Health Assembly

The World Health Assembly is the decision-making body of WHO. It is attended by delegations from all WHO Member States and focuses on a specific health agenda prepared by the Executive Board. The main functions of the World Health Assembly are to determine the policies of the Organization; appoint the Director-General; supervise financial policies; and review and approve the proposed programme budget.

Executive Board

The Executive Board is composed of 34 technically qualified members elected for three-year terms. The annual Board meeting is held in January when the members agree upon the agenda for the World Health Assembly and the resolutions to be considered by the Health Assembly.

Constitution

WHO's work remains firmly rooted in the basic principles of the right to health and well-being for all people, as outlined in our 1948 Constitution. The Constitution was adopted by the International Health Conference held in New York 1946 and entered into force on 7 April 1948.

Election of Director-General

The appointment of the current WHO Director-General took place at the Seventy-fifth World Health Assembly in May 2022 (WHA75). Member States, through a circular letter sent by the WHO Secretariat, were invited to submit proposals for candidates. The World Health Assembly re-appointed Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus as Director-General by secret ballot. The next election for Director-General is expected in 2027.

The role of WHO in public health

WHO fulfills its objectives through its core functions:

1. Providing leadership on matters critical to health and engaging in partnerships where joint action is needed;
2. Shaping the research agenda and stimulating the generation, translation and dissemination of valuable knowledge;
3. Setting norms and standards and promoting and monitoring their implementation;
4. Articulating ethical and evidence-based policy options;
5. Providing technical support, catalyzing change, and building sustainable institutional capacity; and
6. Monitoring the health situation and assessing health trends.

Issues pertaining to the functioning of WHO -

1. Funding: Most of the financing for Programmatic Activities of the WHO comes from extra budgetary contributions, which though voluntary in nature, are normally earmarked. The WHO enjoys very little flexibility in use of these funds.
2. Presently, only broad-based priorities are discussed with member states and in respect of selection of activities, their expenditure and concurrent monitoring, there is no regular and institutional mechanism involving the member states.
3. Unlike international bodies such as the WTO, the WHO, which is a specialized body of the UN, has no ability to bind or sanction its members.
4. Growing affinity towards China.
5. Lack of monitoring mechanism on international health regulations.
6. Absence of collaborative mechanism for effective decision making.

Recommendations given by India -

1. Strengthening the Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) declaration process.
2. There is a need to ensure that extra budgetary or voluntary contributions are unearmarked to ensure that the WHO has necessary flexibility for its usage in areas where they are required the most.
3. Establishing strong and robust financial accountability frameworks.
4. Ensuring fair, affordable, and equitable access to all tools for combating COVID 19 pandemic and, therefore, the need to build a framework for their allocation.
5. There is an integral need to establish a system facilitating pan world surveillance by leveraging innovating ICT tools.
6. Any pandemic management requires effective data driven insights and hence need to integrate digital health agenda also as a priority area along with pandemic management.

Health Emergencies and public health threats, particularly those at the level of epidemics and pandemics, have become a global challenge requiring a coordinated and prompt global response. It is important to ensure that the global health governance and support structures with the WHO at its core are robust and suited to deal with such emerging challenges as COVID 19 pandemic.

World Trade Organization

The World Trade Organization (WTO) is the only global international organization dealing with the rules of trade between nations. At its heart are the WTO agreements, negotiated and signed by the bulk of the world's trading nations and ratified in their parliaments. The goal is to ensure that trade flows as smoothly, predictably and freely as possible.

WTO 12th Ministerial Conference at Geneva -

HIGHLIGHTS OF A HISTORIC MC12 OUTCOME PACKAGE

Trade and health 

Members agree on a COVID-19 global response, a framework to render WTO more resilient & better prepared for future pandemics.

Agriculture 

- Draft Ministerial Declaration on the emergency response to food insecurity
- Ministerial Decision to exempt food purchased by the UN's World Food Programme (WFP) for humanitarian purposes from any export restrictions.

Fisheries Subsidies 

In a historic milestone for ocean sustainability, WTO members have forged an Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies which sets new global rules to curb harmful subsidies and protect global fish stocks for all those who rely on it, in a manner that also recognizes the needs of developing and least-developed countries. Members also commit to continue negotiations, including for further rules on certain fisheries subsidies that contribute to overcapacity and overfishing.

E-Commerce 

WTO members agreed to maintain the current practice of not imposing customs duties on electronic transmissions until MC13.

 **12th WTO MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE**
GENEVA, 2022
CO-HOSTED BY KAZAKHSTAN

Concerns raised over the decisions -

1. Exemptions provided to the developing countries on fishing subsidy for 4 years only. This period isn't sufficient.
2. Also there is no mention of 'Special and Differential Treatment'.
3. No decision on India's demand for seeking solution on the issues of Permanent Stockholding.
4. The extended moratorium on electronic transmissions is Favorable for developed countries like the USA and UK - As per UNCTD this has led to annual loss of \$ 10 Billion globally and 95% of this loss is suffered by the developing countries.
5. Waiver on IPR for Covid-19 Vaccines agreement is a watered down version of the original proposal made by India and South Africa in 2020 which demanded broader intellectual property waivers on vaccines as well as treatments and tests.

Unresolved issues for India at WTO -

Issue	Indian Position
1. The WTO views India's Minimum Support Price (MSP) as a trade distorting measure and placed it under amber box provisions at WTO meaning it has to be capped at 10 percent of the total value of the concerned product.	India argues that the MSP is not for export promotion but for ensuring food security.
2. Technical Barriers and Phyto-Sanitary Barriers are hurting India's interests. Ex. Return of Alphonso Mangoes.	India has demanded rationalization of such measures.
3. Non-recognition of domestically given GI tags hurts the marketability of the product.	India has demanded a higher level of protection to the GI products.
4. Investment facilitation	India argues that developing countries should be given flexibility for application of TRIMS

Status of Developing Country at WTO -

Matter of choice

WTO allows member countries to classify themselves as "developed" or "developing". However, other members can challenge the decision of a country to be classified as "developing". Only the "least-developed countries" status is designated by the UN. Countries in the three lists:

Developing	Developed	Least-developed countries
India	U.S.	Afghanistan
China	European Union	Bangladesh
Russia	Japan	Bhutan
Brazil	Canada	Myanmar
South Africa	Australia	Nepal
South Korea	New Zealand	South Sudan

Digital Trade Divide at WTO -

THE DIGITAL TRADE DIVIDE

<p>US Demands</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > No curbs on data localisation, transfer, including personal information > Zero duty on e-transmission > Negotiations to include improvement in goods & services trade 		<p>EU</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Cross-border data flow should not be restricted > No need to share source code of software > Open up computer services, expand coverage of IT agreement
<p>India's concerns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Will result in unbridled data outflow > May lead to easing of duties, more opening up of services sectors > Developing countries do not get anything in return at WTO 		<p>China</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > More exploratory talks needed on data flow, storage, treatment of digital products > Focus on trade related aspects of e-commerce, clarify relationship between future rules & current WTO pacts > Need to focus on development status of WTO members

Importance of WTO for India -

1. WTO promotes 'Rule Based International Order' which is crucial for developing countries against the influence of developed countries in global trade.
2. The free trade regime has boosted India's IT exports and Pharma exports.
3. Collapse of WTO would lead to rise of regional trade regimes like TPP, which is not in the interest of India.
4. Most of the regional trade regimes are in favor of TRIPS + (which advocates evergreening of patents), which is harmful for India's Pharma exports.

General issues with the functioning of WTO -

1. Ineffective against the Chinese policies - Unfair trade practices and trade manipulations.
2. Dysfunctional Dispute Settlement Body due to US blocking of appointment of Judges.
3. Long decision making process since it involves consensus.
4. Increasing trend of countries moving towards regional/plurilateral trade regimes - TPP, RCEP.
5. Exclusion of some countries like - Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Uzbekistan.
6. Non-tariff barriers hurting the interests of developing countries.
7. Lack of consensus among the member countries over key agreements like AoA, ITA, TRIMS etc.

Way Forward -

1. Strengthening WTO's dispute settlement system is the need of the hour to tackle the emergent situation.
2. Rules and procedures at the WTO have to be evolved as per the changing time.
3. The operational framework of the WTO needs to be changed as per the changed economic balance.
4. Seeking to achieve consensus over conflicting issues - AoA, ITA, TRIMS etc.

The World is so integrated and interconnected that countries have to come together to resolve issues. WTO can play an important role in it.

G20

On December 1, India assumed the presidency of the G20 forum, taking over from Indonesia. Prime Minister Narendra Modi called it a "huge opportunity for India"

The G20 comprises Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, the U.K., the U.S. and the European Union.

History of G20

1. The G20 forum was established in 1999 by the finance ministers and central bank governors of seven countries – Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the U.K., and the U.S. after a meeting in Washington DC. The uniting factor was the 1997-98 financial crisis and its aftermath.
2. The representatives met in Berlin, Germany, for the first annual meeting of the group. The first meeting of G20 leaders took place in 1999, and it was elevated to the level of heads of government/State in 2008. In 2009, G20 was designated the "premier forum for international

economic cooperation".

3. The forum initially dealt with matters related to macroeconomics, but over the years, its agenda has expanded to cover issues relating to trade, climate change, sustainable development, health, agriculture, energy, environment, climate change, and anti-corruption.

Significance of G20 -

1. 90% of Global GDP.
2. 80% of Global Trade.
3. 60% of Global Population.

Working of G20 -

1. Processes under G20 are divided into two parallel tracks – the finance track and the sherpa track.
2. The finance track is led by finance ministers and central bank governors of member nations, who meet throughout the year.
3. Sherpas, who are personal emissaries of leaders, lead the sherpa track. They oversee negotiations all through the year, discussing agenda items for the summit and coordinating the substantive work of the G20.
4. Working groups designed around specific themes operate within both tracks. These include representatives from relevant ministries of member nations and invited/guest countries too.
5. Various international organizations, like the United Nations, International Monetary Fund, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development also participate in working groups.

Issues and Challenges associated with G20 -

1. Lack of effective power - Not a legally binding institution.
2. Imbalance in representation - Lack of sufficient representation for the African Countries.
3. Issue of Transparency and Accountability due to lack of formal charter.
4. Some of the policies of the G20 promote protectionism.

Challenges to India during the Presidential Term -

1. Rising food and energy prices
2. Global Economic slowdown.
3. Climate Change - Many countries have disapproved idea of limiting the global temperature rise up to 1.5 Degree Celsius.
4. Geopolitical Issues - Russia-Ukraine war.
5. Economic crisis in the neighboring countries.

Opportunities and Way Forward for India -

1. Great platform to focus on crucial issues like counter-terrorism and Supply Chain Issues.
2. Building an alliance for food security.
3. Pressing for reforms in the global governance body - WB, IMF.

4. India can pitch for UNSC permanent membership.
5. Provides India a greater voice for making the concerns of the "Global South" heard at a very crucial juncture for the international community.
6. India can use the platform to bridge the gap between the West and the Global South on issues such as climate change, trade facilitation and health care resilience support.

"G20 Presidency unparalleled, a crucial responsibility"

- EAM S Jaishankar.





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