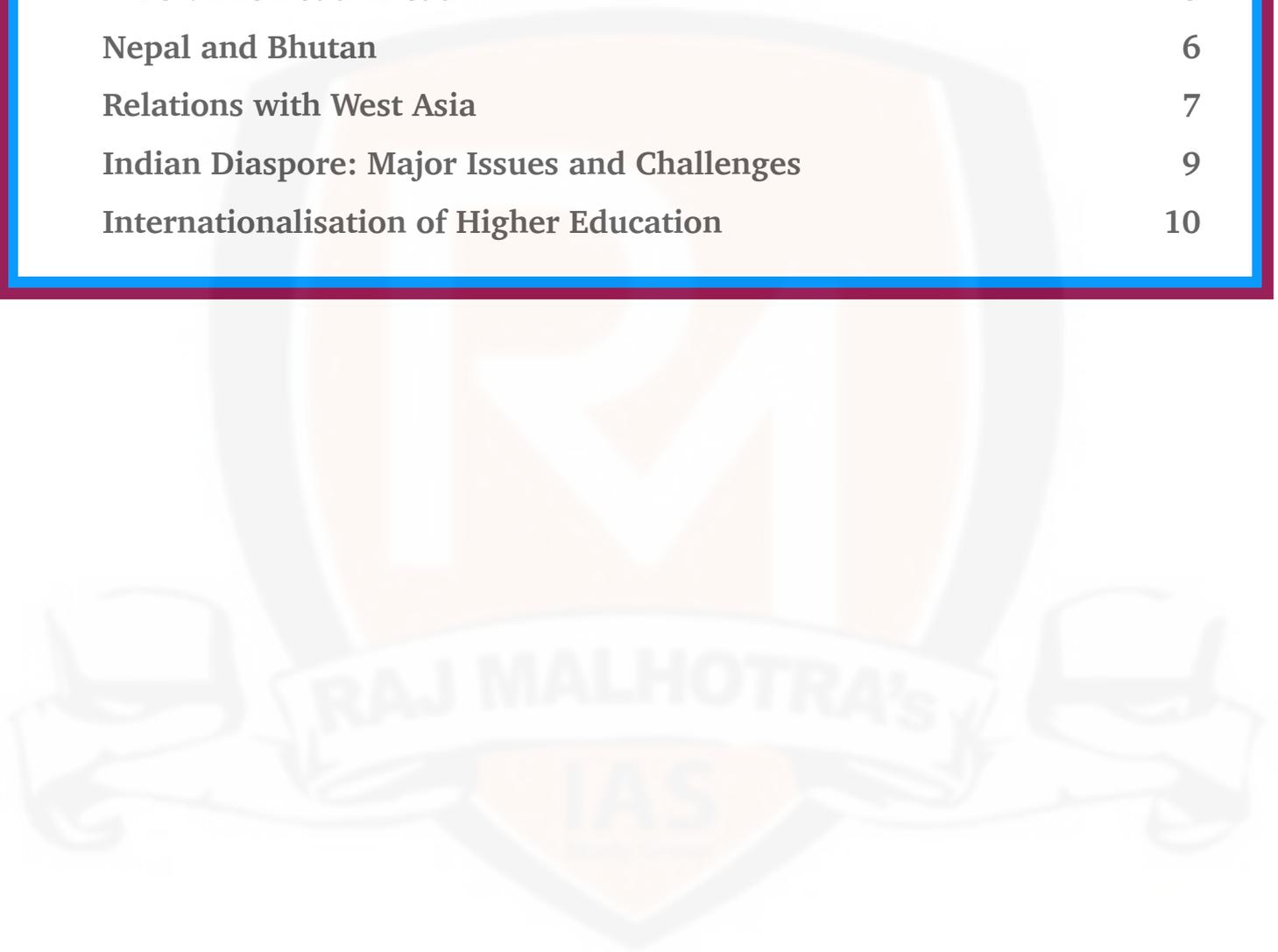


RAJ MALHOTRA'S IAS ACADEMY, CHANDIGARH

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INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Geopolitical and Geo-economic dimensions of COVID-19

There were significant changes in the global power equations even before the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, such as the shift in the centre of gravity of economic power to the trans-Pacific from the trans-Atlantic, the emergence of a more loosely structured multi-polarity, the upsurge of a nationalist and parochial sentiments in countries across the world stalling the trend towards globalisation. There is a parallel weakening of multilateral institutions and processes even while the salience of cross-cutting and cross-border challenges demanding global and collaborative responses such as Climate Change, has increased.

What are the new trends?

There are certain new trends emerging triggered by the pandemic -

- There is a notable acceleration in the adoption of digital technologies; in fact we are witnessing “galloping globalisation” in the digital space, including the extensive spread of world-from-home (WFH), the rapid adoption of tele-education and tele-medicine and the use of tele-conferencing and online meetings in place of physical gatherings.
- Newer technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, the Internet of Things and the use of big data will advance faster than envisaged.
- New issues relating to high-tech monopolies, the manipulation of social media platforms and psychological impacts of these rapid changes, will occupy the attention of individuals, communities, countries and the international community.

Main trends in Geopolitics -

- China's regional and global profile has continued to expand. It has steadily narrowed the power gap with the US and is likely to continue to do so in the aftermath of the pandemic. It is the world's second largest economy with the largest trading power and has also accumulated high-technology assets such as in Artificial Intelligence and 5-G telecom networks.
- Its leadership believes that the pandemic has provided China with an opportunity to advance its interests vis-a-vis other powers particularly the US. This may be seen in the recent coercive actions in the South China Sea, the passage of a highly restrictive National Security Law in Hong Kong, virtually abandoning the One Country Two System policy granting high degree of autonomy to the key international financial centre in Asia.
- There is more threatening heroic and military provocations against Taiwan, which China is determined to reclaim as a renegade province.
- China now benchmarks itself with the US and believes that is on track to surpass the latter as the world's pre-eminent power. China is convinced of the superiority of its own authoritarian governing system and the success of its economic strategies.

Geo-economic trends -

- China's GDP is destined to overtake the US and this makes it a great economic power, however, in per capita terms it still lags behind. Its per capita GDP is only a quarter of the US.
- While China's GDP may surpass the US, and China is undoubtedly the world's largest trading power (its current foreign trade volume is larger than India's current GDP), the world's financial and currency markets are still dominated by the US and the US dollar. As long as China remains reluctant to make the Chinese currency, the Renminbi (RMB), fully convertible; it is unlikely to replace the dollar as an international currency.
- In military terms, China remains significantly behind the US and is unable to match the global reach of the US-led alliance systems in Asia and Europe.
- China is rapidly developing its scientific and technological capabilities and currently spends more on Research and Development than the US. In some areas such as Artificial Intelligence, it may be ahead of the US.
- The overall assessment is that China has significantly narrowed the power gap with the US but remains behind the latter in several important indices of power. It may have declared victory too early while the US may have woken up to the China too late.

Opportunity for India -

Thanks to concerns about China and its selfish and unilateral exercise of power, countries want India to succeed and serve as a countervailing presence to China. There could be a significant flow of capital, technology and advanced knowledge to India if an efficient and congenial economic and regulatory environment could be put in place. The size of the Indian market is an asset as is its political stability and democratic traditions.

Conclusion -

India is the only country which in terms of its size, its population, its economic potential and proven scientific and technological capabilities and its rich civilisational legacy, can not only match but surpass China. But then we need a strong national will to reach out for this goal.

Evolution of India's trade negotiations

During the 300 years of Colonial rule, the East India Company completely controlled India's external trade, allowing export of mainly raw cotton and spices and dumping finished products in the country.

Multilateral Trade under GATT -

- The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) of 1948 was the first multilateral agreement under UN aimed at boosting economic recovery by reducing barriers to trade. Even though India was one of the 28 founding members of GATT, it was not a serious stakeholder in multilateral trade negotiations.
- In the eight GATT Rounds held in the later half of the 20th century, India and developing countries were primarily concerned about safeguarding their agriculture interests against large-scale agriculture subsidies of developed countries.
- Moreover, agriculture being a livelihood issue for a large number of people in developing countries, it was felt necessary to protect it from external competition.

World Trade Organisation -

- India, along with 76 countries, was a founder member of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 1995 which subsumed the Uruguay Round GATT negotiations from 1986-1994. India believes that a fair, equitable, justiciable and predicable rules-based multilateral trading system embodied in WTO is in the best interest of developing and Least Developed Countries (LDCs).
- Under Agreement on Agriculture (AoA), the domestic support policies, subject to reduction commitments, were calculated by the total Aggregate Measurement of Support (AMS) on the base years of 1986-88. Accordingly, input subsidies known as 'Amber Box' have been calculated for exclusion from reduction commitments at less than 5% of the value of production for developed countries and less than 10% for developing countries. India and other developing countries have argued that developed countries have taken undue advantage of the huge domestic support provided under other boxes namely, 'Green' and 'Blue' that have been tacitly kept outside the reduction commitments. Efforts to bring balance in AoA negotiations remained unsuccessful till date.

Trade and Development -

- It was not until the beginning of the 21st century that WTO recognised the causal link between trade and development. This recognition led to the launching of the 'Doha Development Round' in 2001 putting 'development' at the centre of global trade.
- India scored a major victory at the Bali Ministerial Conference in 2013 when it successfully negotiated a 'permanent peace' clause on domestic support for agriculture as a trade-off for agreeing to WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation. The 'permanent peace' clause allows India to pursue its agriculture domestic support programs, without the risk of being challenged in the WTO Dispute Settlement Body, until the issue is resolved collectively by all members.

Reform of WTO -

- Presently, talk on reform of the WTO has gathered momentum in the wake of unilateral measures and counter-measures imposed by mostly USA and China. Developed countries are seeking to graduate few emerging countries like India, China, Brazil, South Africa etc. from the status of 'developing countries' by withdrawing Special and Differential Treatment (S&DT).

- India strongly opposed this distorted view arguing that development parameters of developing countries are not even remotely close to those of developed countries and putting them in the same basket as developed countries is unfair.
- Another challenge in WTO for developing countries is effort by plurilateral groups to push for new issues on the WTO Agenda for rule making such as e-commerce, investment facilitation, MSME and gender. For India and developing countries, Doha Development Round remains unfinished and new issues run the risk of undermining the 'development' agenda.

Tariff and Non-Tariff Barriers -

- WTO member countries had bound their tariff rates for each line of product; developed countries bound 99% of their tariff lines to below 5% rates and developing countries bound their rates to 98% but with varying peak rates, within which they can maintain flexible applied rates.
- India brought down its applied rates significantly from an average 100% rates in the 90s to currently around 15% for industrial products and 25% for agriculture products.
- WTO Agreements on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards (SPS) and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) have defined rules on standards but these are not enforceable. As Standards are voluntary in WTO, countries tend to take advantage of the ambiguity in the Article 20 of GATT that allows governments to restrain imports in order to protect human, animal or plant life or health, provided they do not discriminate or use it as disguised protectionism. For developing countries coping up with these high standards is hard as they add up costs.

India's Share in World Trade -

- India's share in the world merchandise exports at the time of our independence in 1947 was 2.2%; it dropped to 0.5% in 1983 and marginally raised to 0.7% in 2000. Currently, India's share in global exports is 1.7%.
- In 2000, India's total trade was about \$103 billion (exports \$43 billion+ imports \$60 billion); in 2010, it was \$528 billion (exports \$201 billion \$327 billion imports) and in 2019-20, it was about \$787 billion. India's major trading partners are USA, EU, China, UAE, Germany, Singapore, UK, etc.
- A worrisome factor for India is the ever widening trade deficit with China, which is feared to be dumping its goods in India indiscriminately through a deliberate state-sponsored unfair trade practices, while insulating its markets through highly cumbersome non-tariff measures.
- India's export product profile more or less remained constant for several years; petroleum products, Gems and Jewellery, machinery, organic chemicals, pharmaceuticals, electronics, leather etc. have been consistently leading the chart. Diversifying export basket with value added products would help to expand its global market share.
- Services constitute more than 55% of India's GDP, similar to the economic profiles of most developed countries. India's export of services trade has been gradually growing in the last two decades; in 2019, services exports were \$214 billion and imports \$128 billion and India supplies 40% of global demand for IT skilled manpower. However, India's share in world services trade is only 2.6%, mostly concentrated in IT and IT-enabled services.

Global Value Chains -

- Global value chains or Supply Chains are a reflection of fragmentation of production processes that have assumed a high degree of sophistication and specialisation due to changes in technology, skills, capital and investment policies.
- It denotes an underlying principle that companies source raw materials and intermediate products at qualitative and competitive prices from wide ranging sources across the world. It marks a shift away from the traditional way of manufacturing where components and finished products are all produced in one country.
- Some sectors of India, especially Pharma, Auto and Textiles are well-integrated into GVCs while those of China, Japan, Korea, Singapore etc, are not only extensive but also deeply entrenched in several countries around the world, lending their products competitive edge in the global markets.

Free Trade Agreements -

- Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) create conducive environment for GVCs to operate efficiently.
- GATT Article 24 of WTO allows member countries to enter into bilateral/regional preferential trade arrangements in order to achieve higher level of trade liberalisation, notwithstanding that

this provision, amounts to derogation of GATT Article 1 'Most Favoured Nation' (MFN) that stipulates non-discriminatory treatment on trade preferences to all countries.

- India concluded about 16 FTAs/PTAs and another 29 of them are under either negotiation or review. India's most notable bilateral FTAs are with Japan, South Korea, Chile, Singapore and regional FTAs are SAFTA, ASEAN, MERCOSUR, APTA etc.
- Traditionally, India has been conservative to opening its economy through Free Trade Agreements for fear of exposing domestic industry to external competition. However, trade data of last 10 years suggests that India's volume of trade with its FTA partner countries has significantly grown and trade deficit remained either constant or widened marginally.
- Not being part of preferential trade architecture could be detrimental for a growing economy like India as it would amount to inevitable erosion of its market share when FTA countries begin to trade amongst their partner countries at zero duty tariffs. Therefore, the way to go about an FTA negotiation is to seek longer staging phase out of its tariffs with a partner country while at the same time seek immediate phase outs in areas of core interest. For example, as India is relatively strong in textile, leather, chemicals, automobile components, pharma etc., seeking immediate tariff phase out in these sectors through FTA could be beneficial. Also, India's interest in services trade has grown exponentially; seeking openings in services sector for movement of professionals should be a priority. Similarly, encouraging investments through FTA route should form part of the strategy.

WTO : The Road Ahead

The 164 members of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) are currently engaged in the difficult task of selecting the next Director General (DG) of this multilateral institution. The new DG would assume office at a time when the WTO as an inter-governmental organisation is buffeted by multiple challenges, which have eroded the credibility of this organisation.

Challenges of WTO -

- First, the dispute resolution arm of the WTO has been rendered dysfunctional as the US has blocked the process of nomination of members of the Appellate Body. It may be noted that under the two-stage dispute resolution mechanism, the Appellate Body hears appeals on issues of law and legal interpretation arising from the findings of the WTO panels constituted to resolve trade dispute among its members.
- The second challenge confronting the WTO is the failure of its negotiating arm to deliver substantial results. WTO members had launched the Doha Round of multilateral trade negotiations in 2001. When it was launched, the needs and interests of the developing countries were at the heart of the negotiations. However, almost two decades later, the outcome of the negotiations is extremely thin.
- A more recent challenge, crippling the WTO, is that countries are gradually losing respect for the rules of this organisation. The legal pressure and moral force to comply with past commitments at the WTO appears to have considerably weakened. This has considerably eroded the multilateral trading system. Nothing illustrates this better than the protracted spat on trade issues between the US and China.
- Another dark cloud on the WTO horizon is the aggressive push by the developed countries from benefiting from Special and Differential Treatment (S&DT) provisions in future negotiations. This concept recognises that developed countries do not expect reciprocity from developing countries in trade negotiations. This is premised on the fact that there is a wide gap between the standards of living in developing and developed countries.
- An additional source of fiction that has emerged over the past three years is the attempt by about eighty countries to negotiate rules in different areas, including electronic commerce and investment facilitation. These negotiations are being undertaken without any mandate from the WTO membership. Popularly referred to as Joint Statement Initiatives (JSI), these negotiations are an attempt by the developed countries to negotiate rules in areas of their economic and commercial strengths.

Functions of WTO -

The functions of the WTO are five-fold -

- First, it facilitate the implementation, administration and operation of the Multilateral Trade Agreements,

- Second, the WTO provides the forum for negotiations among its Members concerning their multilateral trade relations in matters already within the ambit of its rules,
- Third, it provides a mechanism for settling trade-related disputes among its members,
- Fourth, the WTO administers the Trade Policy Review Mechanism, whereby trade policies of its members are periodically reviewed,
- Fifth, with a view to achieving greater coherence in global economic policy-making, the WTO cooperates with the International Monetary Fund and with the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

Role of DG WTO -

- The DG heads the secretariat of the WTO. In the discharge of their duties, the DG and the staff of the secretariat shall not seek or accept instructions from any government or any authority external to the WTO. The DG and the secretariat are required to be non-partisan and neutral in all matters. The influence of the DG and salience of his role arises from the prestige attached to the chair. A deep knowledge of the complex technical issues at the WTO is an added advantage for the DG.
- Further, a convention has evolved under which the DG chairs the Trade Negotiating Committee which has the overall responsibility of taking forward the mandated multilateral trade negotiations. Often, the DG has to step in to smoothen the friction among the WTO member countries, broker deals and find compromises, if deadlocks arise in the functioning of the WTO.
- In this role, the DG may also be required to interact with the heads of government. All this calls for the DG to have exceptional diplomatic skills, backed by a deep understanding of political forces at work in the decision making process and harnessing them for furthering the objectives of the WTO.

Nepal and Bhutan

The India-Nepal Treaty for Peace and Friendship, 1950 was signed against the backdrop of Communist victory in China's civil war, imminent occupation of Tibet by China and the latter not conceding independence of Nepal.

India's relationship with Nepal -

- Through India's good offices, an Interim Coalition Government of Nepali Congress and Rana elite was established in February 1951 commencing a new era of democracy.
- Despite being short of technical manpower and material resources itself, India extended development assistance to Nepal.
- An Indian Aid Mission (IAM) was established in 1954, later renamed Indian Cooperation Mission in 1966 and subsequently merged with the Embassy as the Economic Cooperation Wing in 1980.
- Nepal had non-existent transportation and communication network with motorable roads limited to the Kathmandu valley. The first major project under Indian aid was the 189 km Tribhuvan Highway connecting Kathmandu with Birganj on the Indo-Nepal border that was completed in 1956. Several major link roads were also constructed. In 1966, India commenced construction of the 1024 km east west highway called Mahendra Rajmarg. Work was completed with the handling over in 2001 of 22 bridges on its western sector.
- The first airport in Nepal - the Tribhuvan Airport at Gaucher in Kathmandu - was also built with Indian aid in 1951. Subsequently, in the 1960s five more airports at Simra, Janakpur, Bhairhawa, Pokhara and Biratnagar were constructed.
- Tribhuvan University, the first to be set up in 1959 received Indian assistance for infrastructure and faculty up to mid 1970s. During the 1952-1972 period over 320 schools and libraries in Nepal received Indian assistance.
- Over the past seven decades Indian assistance also extended to various sectors including agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, community development, soil conservation and industrial estates. In 2003, a Small Development Projects Scheme was launched focusing in areas of education, health and community development. Over 500 projects costing over INR 10 billion have been implemented. Following a major earthquake in 2015 India has extended USD 1 billion as reconstruction assistance.
- The Kosi and Gandak barrage projects were implemented in the 1950s and 1960s under agreements signed in 1954 and 1959 respectively. At Nepal's request, the Kosi and Gandak agreements were amended in 1966 and 1964 respectively. Main changes in the Kosi agreement

pertained to land for barrage being given on 99 years lease (Article 5) and Nepal's "right to withdraw water" being elaborated to "every right to withdraw" (Article 4). Similar changes were made in the Gandak agreement.

- The positive dimensions of the water agreements between India and Nepal are unappreciated, if not ignored, because of over politicisation of the issue of water resources cooperation. Despite significant benefits to Nepal, the myth of India cheated Nepal has negatively impact water resources cooperation. After several decades of stalemate, the India-Nepal treaty on the Integrated Development of Mahakali was signed and ratified in 1996 but remains unimplemented as it marks its silver jubilee.

India's relationship with Bhutan -

- In 1947, with China claiming Bhutan as its territory there was concern about developments in the region. The Treaty of Perpetual Peace and Friendship between India and Bhutan was concluded on August, 8, 1949 during the rule of King Jigme Wangchuk. It was premised on shared security interests. The treaty was updated by India-Bhutan Treaty of Friendship signed on February 8, 2007 which committed the two countries to not allow use of their territory for activities harmful to the national security and interests of the other.
- Following PM Nehru's historic visit to Bhutan in 1958, India's development assistance to Bhutan commenced in 1961 nearly a decade after the start of Indian assistance to Nepal.
- One of the first major projects to be undertaken was the 179 km Western Highway connecting the capital Thimphu to Phuentsholing on the Indo-Bhutan border and was completed in 1968. The 180 km Eastern Highway from Trashigang to Darranga on Indo-Bhutan border, 595 km East West Highway and the Paro Airport were also completed in 1968. The 248 km Central Highway was completed in 1980.
- Indo-Bhutan cooperation is so extensive that it is difficult to do justice to it in limited space. Suffice to say that the journey starting from the first FYP 1961-1966 which had a total outlay of Ngultrum 107.2 million totally funded by India has reached 12th FYP 2018-23 outlay of Nu 280773 million, 77.56% funded by domestic revenues and 16% by Government of India assistance (INR 45000 million).
- The agreement for 27 MW Jaldakha HEP constructed on Indian side of the border was signed in 1961 and provides for electricity to southern areas of Bhutan. The 336 MW Chukha HEP was commissioned in 1986-88 and greatly enhanced government revenues through power sale to India. Bhutan sees cooperation with India in hydropower as true example of mutually beneficial relationship, providing clean electricity to India, generating export revenues for Bhutan and further strengthening the bilateral economic linkages. The ambitious framework agreement on India-Bhutan hydropower cooperation envisages 10000 MW generation capacity.

Conclusion -

Nepal was the first beneficiary of Indian aid. Aid programme in Nepal not only started well before aid programme in Bhutan but was more comprehensive in scope in the 1950s and 1970s. India's development diplomacy assumed that what is good for Nepal and Bhutan is good for India.

Bhutan's leadership believed in enlightened self interest and its foreign policy sought genuine dialogue with India to discover the path of mutually beneficial economic development that would strengthen bilateral ties with India. The results are self evident. Bhutan has the highest per capita income in South Asia and is focused on Gross National Happiness (GNH).

In Nepal, despite the extensive development assistance by India, there was a consistent effort by some to belittle India's contribution although evidence shows that India's economic and development assistance to Nepal remains unparalleled in the history of development assistance from one developing country to another.

Relations with West Asia

India's engagement with the countries of West Asia and the Gulf have been among the most intense and diverse of our foreign policy initiatives and, perhaps, the most fulfilling. The intensified engagement now transformed into a 'Link and Act West Policy', has seen defence and security cooperation emerging as a key pillar of the policy.

Significance of India's ties in the region -

- For India, Iran is the gateway to Afghanistan and Central Asia and beyond through the strategic Chabahar port, the Arab states and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries are integral to India's energy security and counter-terrorism efforts, as is Israel, while maintaining good ties is crucial for the safety and welfare of the huge Indian diaspora in the region.
- West Asia occupies a pivotal position in international relations, because of its geographical location and close proximity to South and Central Asia, Europe, and Africa, its vital position along major sea trading routes, its enormous energy resources - accounting for 34% of world crude oil production, 45% of crude oil exports and 48% of proven crude oil reserves.

Recent developments -

- The Abraham agreement, signed between the United Arab Emirates and Israel, to establish full diplomatic relations and 'normalise' their bilateral relations provides India, a close partner of both Israel and UAE, a chance to become an important player in West Asia, possibly even influencing a peaceful resolution of the bitterness that has beset Arab-Israeli ties for over seven decades. It also is a big step towards Arab de-hyphenation of the Israel-Palestine issue, which has kept the region unstable.
- The recently-forged deal provides India with new opportunities to play a much larger role in regional security and stability in the Gulf as it not only enjoys very close ties with Israel, but has burgeoning ties of an increasingly strategic nature with the Gulf monarchies, particularly the UAE and Saudi Arabia. Rapidly improving relations with the Gulf countries, an area India considers its neighbourhood and strategic backyard, has been an important success story for the present government, paying it rich dividends, in crucial security and economic areas.
- India has unequivocally welcomed the Agreement between two of its strategic partners and hoped it would be a harbinger for peace in the region. New Delhi also reiterated its traditional support for the Palestinian cause and hoped for early direct negotiations for an acceptable two-state solution.

Why India needs to bolster its ties with West Asia?

- Other than leveraging its economy for a bigger opening in this region, which will bolster the Indian economy's own revival efforts, ramping up security ties with the Gulf countries, with armaments sales, defence drills, intelligence sharing and anti-terrorism exercise among others will help further strengthen Indian security.
- Energy security is a major area of cooperation, from fossil fuels to renewables, food security is another, while the size of the Indian market and the diversity of products manufactured here is another attractive proposition for the Gulf countries, and Israel.
- The region supplies over two-thirds of India's oil and 80% of its gas requirements and, given that the Gulf countries offer tremendous potential for cooperation in trade, investment, energy, manpower and infrastructure development, India has a crucial stake in ensuring peace, stability and well-being of the region.

Recent engagements -

- A major highlight of the Prime Minister Modi's visit to Oman in 2018 was the formalisation of base facilities to the Indian Navy by Oman at its port in Duqm. India secured access to Duqm port for military use and logistical support to bolster its maritime strategy to secure sea lanes, prevent piracy and counter Chinese influence and activities in the western Indian Ocean region.
- On his second visit to Riyadh, in October 2019, the PM briefed King Salman about New Delhi's thinking for the future development of J&K and attracted development funds for Kashmir. The visit also saw formalisation of the bilateral Strategic Partnership Council, headed by the Saudi Crown Prince and the Indian PM.
- The two Sunni bastions, Saudi Arabia and UAE, along with Kuwait and Qatar, are at the core of 'Link and Act West' diplomacy with West Asia. India realises the role these countries play in its energy security and in the well-being of the over nine million Indians living in the region, annual remittances from whom top USD 60 billion.
- The Prime Ministerial visits have seen a flurry of investments into India. In 2018, the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company and the Saudi giant Aramco agreed to take a 50% stake in the \$44 billion refinery India was building in Maharashtra. Both are interested in investing in India's natural gas sector and in building the Indian strategic crude oil reserve, with investments of tens of billions of dollars. The UAE is also the first partner of India's National Investment and Infrastructure Fund and investment USD 1 billion as the anchor investor.

Advantages for India -

- Over 9 million Indians live in the region and, in most countries, constitute the largest expatriate communities there. The Indian diaspora has emerged as major contributors to the well-being and development of their host economies and countries where Indians are the preferred workforce largely due to their discipline, sincerity and ethos of hard work.
- India's 'soft power' is also clearly visible in the region; with the cultural connect of language, food, music, yoga and of course, Bollywood movies. India's democratic character, its neutrality and non-interference in internal affairs of others and goodwill towards all have allowed the prime minister to rely on soft power diplomacy as his key foreign policy instrument. Medical and health diplomacy has also gained traction in these countries, with many preferring the Indian option over more expensive western medical facilities.

Isolation of Pakistan -

The way Pakistan has been distanced by Arab nations like UAE and Saudi Arabia, in forums like Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, has been another major gain for India. Exceptionally close intelligence, de-radicalisation and counter-terrorism collaboration with all these countries has been a hallmark of recent agreements. With Pakistan thus unable to use J&K as a bargaining chip against India, New Delhi gets an opportunity to substantially raise its influence among the overwhelmingly Muslim West Asian countries.

Indian Diaspore: Major Issues and Challenges

People leave their homeland, some to follow their dreams, some run from war and hunger and some lured by the sense of adventure. On any case, leaving homeland and going abroad is a huge step and a life-changing experience.

Major steps taken by the Government to Handle the Issues of Diaspora -

- An online database of emigrants and comprehensive, Missions, Recruiting Agents, Foreign Employers, Insurance Agencies to make the whole emigration process faster and transparent.
- Government also started 'Madad' portal for online lodging of the grievances of the emigrants.
- The government recently amended the rules of the PIO Card Scheme so that new recipients of PIO cards will be valid for the duration of their life.
- New Embassies in Latin America and African countries to help the Diaspora.
- Bilateral engagement with US, UK to address the concern of skilled labour.
- Programmes like 'Bharat ko Janiye' to help the Indians living abroad learn about India and also an opportunity to visit India.

Significance and Contribution -

- It helps the transfer of knowledge resources expertise and also bridges the markets for the development of the country of origin and the rest of the world.
- The soft diplomacy - a vital role played by the Indian Diaspora - is critical in the success of the Indo-US nuclear deal.
- The country of their residence also has developed due to this Diaspora. Silicon Valley, for example, represents the success of the Indians in the US.
- The development of Science and Technology is mostly due to the role played by the Indian Diaspora.
- The Diaspora is the major source of trade investment in India.
- The World Bank predicts Indian Diaspora to be the largest contributor and earner of inflows of remittances which is helping the balance of the Current Accounts.

Government initiatives -

- The 'Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas' is an initiative started by the Government in 2003 to mark the contribution of the Indian community overseas in the development of India.
- The Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs has been merged with that of the Ministry of External Affairs.
- The Visa on Arrival is a facility that India has approved and allowed. Now almost 43 countries have been permitted to have a Visa on Arrival by the Indian Government.

- The economic engagement of Indians with India is facilitated by the Overseas India Felicitation centre which was set up by the Indian Government with the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).
- The Indian Government has evacuated the Indian diaspora in Yemen in 2015 through Operation 'Rahat' and also from South Sudan through Operation 'Sankat Mochan'.
- The 'Pravasi Kaushal Vikas Yojana' is another important programme undertaken by the Indian Government which promotes the growth and engagement of youth who target employment overseas.
- The Indian Government now is very quick to respond to the challenges and problems faced by the Indian diaspora especially because the Government has become more digital and active in the social media.

Issues faced by Indian Diaspora -

West Asia -

- Low oil prices owing to Shale gas boom and slower global growth is resulting in job cuts for Indians.
- The rising conflicts and instability due to the Shia-Sunni conflicts and the radical Islamism.
- Fierce competition from skilled labour from the Philippines and cheap labour from Nepal.
- Regressive and medieval policies like employer seizing the travel documents upon arrival known as 'Kafala' labour system.

US, Canada and UK -

- Discriminative practices owing to a racist, colonial mindset persists.
- Strict H-1B visa norms in the US Congress.
- President Donald Trump's call to channel more jobs to Americans.
- Revision of visa norms in UK post-Brexit.
- The disparity in jobs and racial abuse due to terrorist branding.
- Cultural integration due to various eating preferences, consumerism and nuclear society.

Dual citizenship -

Majority of Indian diaspora want to retain their Indian citizenship along with the citizenship of the country of their residence.

Way forward -

- The already affected migrants and diaspora need to be ensured to feel welcome back home on arrival and there needs to be an easier process of immigration and customs clearances.
- The Government needs to address the problems of blue-collar workers working overseas like:
 - Negotiating a Standard Labour Export Agreements with the host countries.
 - Monitoring and supervision of our overseas workers by our Missions.
 - Compulsory insurance schemes covering the risks faced by our overseas workers.
- There should be a greater focus on promoting tourism among 2nd generation PIOs and frequency of these PIOs to make frequent visits to their home state and visit relatives and family.
- The welfare of Indian Women married to NRIs/PIOs.
- Economic Development -
 - Diaspora professionals working in senior positions in the manufacturing can help promote India as an important destination for outsourcing.
 - The government should also consider setting up of Special Economic Zones, exclusively for projects to be set up by NRIs/PIOs.
 - The Government should consider issuing special infrastructure bonds for attracting NRI/PIO investments on the lines of the Israel Bonds.
- The diaspora's financial and intellectual capital must be cashed by India and the major challenge before India is how it can tap this for mutual benefit.

Internationalisation of Higher Education

Some of the key elements that the last three decades has witnessed are: mobility and exchange of students, scholars and faculty, collaborative/twinning programs, and reputation building and branding of universities and higher educational institutions (HEIs) through global and regional

rankings. The number of international students in the global higher educational ecosystem in the last ten years (2010-2020) has doubled to 5 million.

Background -

- Historically, in the 12th and 13th century, India was the global leader in attracting global scholars from across the world to its world class universities such as Nalanda, Takshila, Vikramshila etc.
- In the 20th century, USA and UK led the internationalisation of higher education to attract talent pool from across the world that added invaluable diversity of knowledge, content and culture in the universities leading to cutting-edge research and innovation. This in turn helped in the economic development and growth of the country.
- Realising the value of internationalisation of higher education, Canada, Australia, China, Singapore and several other countries have also given a thrust since last two decades and devised policies to not only bolster the enrolment of international students, but also to retain them in their labour markets.

Key trends -

Internationalisation of Higher Education in the last three decades (1990-2020) has witnessed the following key trends -

- Increasingly driven by national and global rankings with focus on internationalisation abroad than on 'internationalisation at home'.
- More of a 'case by case basis', ad hoc, arrangement with regards to internationalisation policy and absence of a comprehensive and robust foreign education policy.
- Mostly catered to a small segment of elite students and not being inclusive and intercultural.
- Economic and political imperatives been the primary force for promoting it as opposed to creating a global intellectual world order embedded with rich socio-cultural diversity.
- Prominently and strategically practiced more among developed economies than in emerging and developing economies.

Recent trends -

- The Indian higher education sector is the largest education system in the world in terms of institutions with over 998 Universities, 39931 Colleges, 10725 standalone institutions and second largest in terms of students enrolment with 34.6 million students.
- An estimated 7,00,000 Indian students are studying abroad (of which around 50% study in North America) as opposed to just 47,427 international students coming to India.
- The maximum share of students come from neighbouring countries with Nepal contributing 26.88%, followed by Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Sudan, Bhutan, Nigeria, United States of America, Yemen, Sri Lanka and Iran.
- The most popular courses for foreign students are Bachelor of Technology and Bachelor of Business Administration, followed by Bachelor of Arts, Science and Commerce degrees.

Types of Educational Exchanges -

One of the significant aspects in the post-economic liberalisation was the signing of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) under the WTO in 1995, which identifies education as a 'service to be liberalised and regulated by trade rules'. Under the provisions of the GATS of which India is a signatory, there are four kinds of supply of services -

1. Cross-border supply of services from territory of one member to another member (distance education, e-learning).
2. Consumption of a service abroad by the citizens of a member country in the territory of another member country (study abroad).
3. Commercial presence of service supplier of a member country in the territory of another member country (presence of foreign universities in other territories).
4. Presence of natural persons enabling a form of trade resulting from mobility of people from one-member country to another country (cross-border mobility of teachers).

Recent initiatives -

- Some of the Government backed initiatives to promote internationalisation includes the General Cultural Scholarship Scheme (GCSC) implemented through Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) which encourages student mobility by providing scholarships to countries from Latin America, Africa and Asia.

- Global Initiative for Academic Networks (GIAN) promotes interaction between scientists, entrepreneurs and students internationally and the *Connect to India* programme by Ministry of Education encourages student mobility by offering short-term programmes.
- The CV Raman International Fellowship for African Researchers was launched in 2010 by Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) in partnership with Department of Science and Technology and Ministry of External Affairs. The fellowship scheme was introduced under the India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS) to promote scientific cooperation between India and Africa.
- In 2018, the Union Ministry of Education launched an ambitious “Study in India” programme to project India as a higher education designation by attracting and facilitating inward mobility of foreign students from 34 target countries (representing Africa, Middle East, and SAARC regions), thereby increasing India’s market share of global education exports.

Way forward -

- Provide autonomy to Institutions of Eminence (IoEs) and high NAAC rated/NIRF ranked institutions to design and run online programs for foreign students.
- Top NIRF and NAAC ranking Indian Universities should be encouraged to develop joint online programs with top 500 foreign universities with appropriate credits.
- The cap on intake of international students should be raised from the present 15% to 25% on supernumerary basis that will help in cross subsidising fee for Indian students.
- For twinning programmes, the requirement of spending 1-2 semesters in a foreign university campus needs to be relaxed in the COVID-19 environment. The course should be allowed to be completed entirely in India with virtual support from foreign universities.
- Establish Indian Network for Internationalisation of Education (INIE) that will be in the form of a consortium of Universities that are ahead in internationalisation. With international network as associate members, this network can frame policies and also mentor other universities in various aspects of Internationalisation.

Study in India Programme -

The ‘Study in India’ programme launched by the Government in 2018 needs to be executed strategically on a mission mode by engaging relevant stakeholders.

1. Appoint an education counsellor at every Indian embassy abroad in order to help promote Indian higher education and the benefits of studying in India.
2. Create a strong scholarship programme that will encourage the best brains to choose India as a study option.
3. Develop ‘student cities’ that should be safe along with adequate infrastructural and logistical supports.
4. Develop niche programmes in the areas that India has expertise in , such as life sciences, space sciences, creative disciplines, etc.
5. Create a framework to map the credits of Indian programmes with a global framework so that there is a seamless mobility/transfer of credits.
6. A joint working group should be created with inter-ministerial collaborations at the federal level and city level administrators along with leaders of leading public and private HEIs to develop a conducive ecosystem.
7. Effective industry engagement for apprenticeships and employment, safe and secure living environment, state-of-the-art infrastructure, etc. are some of the other critical prerequisites to boost international mobility of foreign students to India.