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Classroom Study Material

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

September 2016 – October 2016

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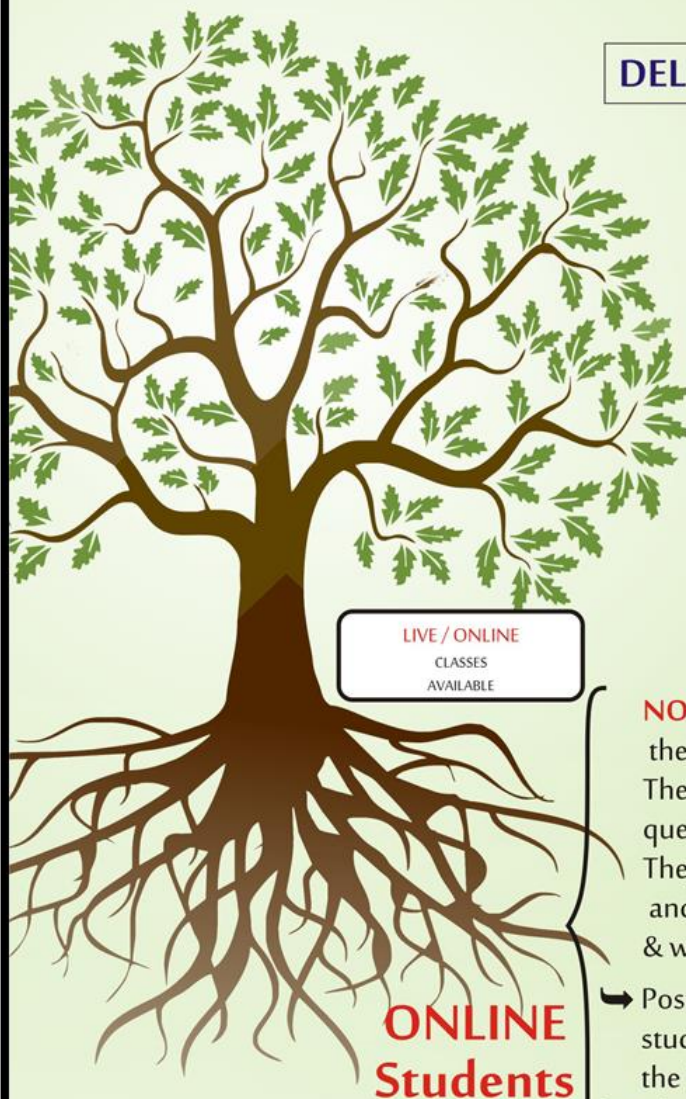
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1. INDIA AND ITS NEIGHBOURS

1.1. INDIA-PAKISTAN

Why in News?

In the wake of the Uri attack, several experts have demanded that India withdraw from the Indus Waters Treaty and also MFN status to Pakistan.

Indus Water Treaty (IWT)

The Indus Waters Treaty was signed on September 19, 1960 by the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Pakistan's President Ayub Khan.

- The 1960 treaty for the Indus and five tributaries flowing from India to Pakistan was brokered by **the World Bank (then, the IBRD)**, and has held through wars and conflicts along the Line of Control.
- The treaty administers how river Indus and its tributaries that flow in both the countries will be utilized.
- According to the treaty, **Beas, Ravi and Sutlej are to be governed by India, while, Indus, Chenab and Jhelum are to be taken care by Pakistan.**
- However, since Indus flows from India, the country is **allowed to use 20 per cent of its water** for irrigation, power generation and transport purposes.
- **A Permanent Indus Commission** was set up as a bilateral commission to implement and manage the Treaty. The Commission solves disputes arising over water sharing.
- The Treaty also provides arbitration mechanism to solve disputes amicably.
- Though Indus originates from Tibet, China has been kept out of the Treaty. If China decides to stop or change the flow of the river, it will affect both India and Pakistan.
- Climate change is causing melting of ice in Tibetan plateau, which scientists believe will affect the river in future.
- Both India and Pakistan are still at loggerheads over various issues since Partition, but there has been no fight over water after the Treaty was ratified.

Review of IWT

In the wake of the Uri attack, several experts have demanded that India withdraw from the Indus Waters Treaty whose terms are considered generous to Pakistan. However, officials made it clear that the IWT will hold, at least for the moment. Instead, the Centre drew up a list of measures to optimize use of the Indus waters that India has so far failed to do.

- The Union government has decided to set up an inter-ministerial committee to study India's further options on the Indus Waters Treaty.
- The government also decided to build more run-of-the-river hydropower projects on western rivers, to exploit the full potential of 18,600 MW (current projects come to 11,406 MW).
- A decision was taken to review restarting the Tulbul navigation project that India had suspended after Pakistan's objections in 1987.

If India revokes IWT

- Revoking it would threaten regional stability and India's credibility globally.
- It remains unclear what India intends to do with the "western" rivers in question beyond the short-term plan to irrigate Jammu and Kashmir's fields better.
- Dams required holding the course of the tributaries of the Indus to alter water levels to Pakistan dramatically would take more than a decade to build.
- Given the environmental and geopolitical consequences of such actions, they are unlikely to elicit any international funding.
- Stopping the waters of the Indus rivers can be counterproductive also

- ✓ India has water-sharing arrangements with other neighbours as well. Not honouring the Indus Treaty would make them uneasy and distrustful.
- ✓ India would lose her voice if China, decides to do something similar.

Most Favoured Nation (MFN)

- Most Favoured Nation is a treatment accorded to a trade partner to ensure non-discriminatory trade between two countries vis-a-vis other trade partners. Under WTO rules, a member country cannot discriminate between its trade partners. If a special status is granted to a trade partner, it must be extended to all members of the WTO.
- While India has given the status to Pakistan back in 1996, it has not reciprocated by doing the same till date.
- Bilateral trade between the two nations was just \$2.6 billion in 2015-16 (of which \$2.2 billion constituted India's exports to Pakistan) - which represented a minuscule 0.4 per cent of India's overall goods trade worth \$643.3 billion in the same year.
- Therefore, even if India revokes the MFN status, it would only have a **"symbolic" impact**.

1.2. INDIA-CHINA

1.2.1. BACKGROUND

India-China relations go back to old civilizations that have enriched each other being next door neighbors. Both the countries are large growing economies and major powers on the world stage. Our relations transcend the bilateral ambit and have acquired regional and global and strategic significance.

Areas of cooperation between China and India

- **Trade aspect**- China is one of India's largest trading partner.
- **Market aspect**- China is big potential market for Indian pharmaceuticals and software products whereas India is a big market for Chinese Manufactured products like electronics, machinery
- **Investment Aspect**- China has huge surplus of cash and foreign exchange which India needs desperately for its infrastructure projects whereas China needs collaboration in NDB and AIIB to get rid of its forex tied with US securities.
- **Regional cooperation**- For instance, both the countries are the members of BRICS, New Development Bank. India also was a founding member of the China-backed Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

Areas of Concern

- **Himalayan Border issue**
 - India and China have disagreed over Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh. China says Arunachal Pradesh is part of China, while India insists China is illegally occupying Aksai Chin.
 - The two sides fought a brief war in 1962 over the latter territory.
- **Strategic moves by China**
 - Beijing is moving into what New Delhi has traditionally seen as its own backyard.
 - Through the "Maritime Silk Road" initiative, China has been trying to reach out to countries such as Sri Lanka and Maldives, right in India's immediate neighborhood.
 - China is actively seeking to advance its presence in countries in India's neighborhood like Nepal and Sri Lanka.
 - **String of Pearls**
 - India is deeply unsettled over China's growing presence in the Indian Ocean.
 - The "string of pearls" strategy links China's interests in the countries surrounding India — Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Bangladesh and Pakistan.
- **Influence on the buffer state**
 - Competition for influence in water resource rich country Nepal has been brewing for years, with China courting India's traditional ally with infrastructure projects like roads and hydropower dams.
 - Nepal's location between India and China makes it geopolitically strategic, as a buffer between the two Asian giants. It also shares a border with the fraught territory of Tibet, defusing tensions between China and India.

- **South China Sea issue**
 - While China asserting its dominance in the South China Sea region India stands strong in its view and advocates freedom of navigation and unimpeded commerce.
- **River Water Issue**
 - The dispute between india and china is mainly regarding the Brahmaputra river flowing through the two countries.
 - Due to Chinese efforts to divert the water resources of the Brahmaputra River away from India situation has remained tensed since the 1962 Indo-China war.
 - Recently, China blocked a tributary of the Brahmaputra as part of a major hydro-electric project, whose construction began in 2014.
- **Maintaining a strategic Balance-** If Sino-Indian ties worsen, India could well be firmly drawn towards the US. Part of the reason for the growing bonhomie between India and the US is China's growing belligerence.
- **Chinese support to Pakistan** (explained below)

1.2.2. CHINA-PAK AXIS

Key Concern Areas

- **UNSC and NSG Membership-** China opposed India's admission into the Permanent Membership of the UNSC and India's membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group. Whereas, it insisted Pakistan to be admitted to UNSC forgetting its reputation as a nuclear proliferator.
- **Infrastructure investment-** China has been investing in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, which will connect Kashgar in China's Xinjiang province with the port of Gwadar in Pakistan.
- **Terrorism-** China's has been shielding Pakistan's notorious Jihadi terrorist outfit chief, Massod Azhar from being listed as a 'Global Terrorist' by the UN. It does not go along with China aspiring to be a Superpower and claiming to be a 'responsible stakeholder' in global security.
- **Encouragement to Military Adventurism-** China is not only a part of the overall Pakistan problem for India but now with the CPEC as the prized strategic objective of China, the stakes for China to encourage Pakistan's military adventurism against India gets considerably raised.

Way forward for India

- Both India and China want a new international status that commensurate with their size, strength and potential.
- To restore a semblance of equality in the relationship it is necessary to build up economic and security capabilities and begin to close the power gap with China.
- Such cooperation between the two countries could allow them to rebalance global influences and develop a better negotiating position in the world.
- India's foreign policy formulations and perspectives on China and Pakistan need no longer be considered as separate foreign policy planning domains but viewed as one hyphenated strategic entity.

1.3. INDIA-AFGHANISTAN

Why in News?

Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani paid official visit to India. During the visit following agreements have been signed between two countries.

- India and Afghanistan signed an Extradition Treaty to facilitate exchange of wanted terrorists and criminals.
- The two sides also sealed agreements on peaceful uses of outer space and on cooperation on civil and commercial matters
- India also extended a \$one-billion for 'capacity and capability building' in areas such as education, health, agriculture, skill development, empowerment of women, energy, infrastructure and strengthening of democratic institutions.
- India also offered Afghanistan affordable pharmaceutical products and medicines.

1.4. APTTA (AFGHANISTAN-PAKISTAN TRANSIT TRADE AGREEMENT)

The **Afghanistan–Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement** (also known as **APTTA**) is a bilateral trade agreement signed in 2010 by Pakistan and Afghanistan that calls for greater facilitation in the movement of goods amongst the two countries.

- The 2010 APTTA allows for both countries to use each other's airports, railways, roads, and ports for transit trade along designated transit corridors.
- The agreement does not cover road transport vehicles from any third country, be it from India or any Central Asia country.
- The APTTA agreement allows Afghan trucks to transport exports to India via Pakistan up to the Wagah crossing point, but does not offer Afghanistan the right to import Indian goods across Pakistani territory.

Issues with APTTA

Far from being a unifier, the APTTA itself has become a point of deep discord.

- Bitter India-Pakistan relations mean Afghan trucks carrying perishable fruit face long delays on both sides of the border where they must be loaded and unloaded, often more than once.
- Pakistan has rejected the demand voiced by Afghan President Ashraf Ghani that India be made a party to its transit trade pact with Kabul
- India's External Affairs Minister had at the last Heart of Asia ministerial conference in Islamabad expressed India's wish to join the Afghanistan-Pakistan Trade and Transit Agreement (APTTA).

Separate trade routes

India, Pakistan and Afghanistan are moving at a furious pace to cut one another out of the trade equation.

- India is working on a corridor via Iran's Chabahar port, where goods will go up the land route and connect to the Zaranj-Delaram Highway without touching Pakistan.
- Pakistan will connect directly to China through the small strip through PoK and Gilgit-Baltistan once the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is ready, avoiding both India and Afghanistan.
- Afghanistan too is assiduously cultivating its options to the north, and its position in China's One Belt, One Road plans.

1.5. INDIA-BHUTAN

Why in news?

- The Union Cabinet approved a new agreement for a free trade regime between India and Bhutan.
- The previous Agreement on Trade, Commerce and Transit between India and Bhutan was signed on July 29, 2006 for a period of ten years.

About the new Agreement

- The new agreement provides for
 - ✓ A free trade regime between two countries.
 - ✓ Duty free transit of Bhutanese merchandise for trade with **third countries**.
 - ✓ Bilateral trade between will continue to be transacted in Indian Rupees and Bhutanese Ngultrums.
- The new agreement removed requirement of having an annual consultation between India and Bhutan for the transit of goods of both countries along with the goods originating in third country.

1.6. SAARC SUMMIT

Why in News?

In the wake of the Uri attack, Indian government has launched diplomatic offensive to isolate Pakistan internationally and in its neighbourhood.

- India has decided to pull out of the SAARC summit in Islamabad this November, with Afghanistan, Bhutan and Bangladesh deciding to follow suit.
- The decision is unprecedented as this is the first time that India has cancelled participation in the regional group's summit meeting because of actions that it blames on Pakistan-based elements.
- As per Experts, India's cancellation might handicap economic integration in South Asia.

'SAARC minus Pakistan'

By pulling out of the SAARC summit in Islamabad, the government is trying to achieve two ends: sending a tough message in the wake of the **Uri attack**, but also that it is going ahead with its plan for 'SAARC minus Pakistan' instead.

- Since the previous Nepal summit, Pakistan has blocked all protocols to better link the region, while India has pursued a "SAARC minus Pakistan" plan to push through with agreements it is keen on.
- Motor vehicle movement agreement, railway linkages, and the SAARC satellite programme for which all SAARC countries apart from Pakistan have signed up.
- With Afghanistan, which cannot be accessed by land, the two governments have discussed a separate "air corridor" for cargo.
- A bigger articulation of that vision is expected in mid-October, when India hosts **the BIMSTEC outreach summit** on the sidelines of the BRICS summit in Goa.
- Another grouping of India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka met for the **South Asia Sub-regional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) programme** in Delhi to release the first SASEC Operational Plan 2016-2025.
- SASEC's lead financier, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), has already approved about 40 infrastructures and IT projects worth about \$7.7 billion.

Pakistan's line of action

- Pakistan continues to receive support from several other countries outside of the SAARC, most notably China, and also has a new relationship with Russia that conducted its first-ever military exercises in Pakistan just days after the Uri attack. Iran too sent four naval warships to the Karachi port to participate in a Passage exercise (PASSEX).

Way forward for India

An economic union is the order of the day. If India has to achieve its global desires to be an economic power, she has to get into the driver's seat and create an environment which provides opportunities and not just veto them for security concerns.

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2. EAST ASIA

2.1. INDIA-ASEAN

Why in News?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended the 14th Asean-India Summit and 11th East Asia Summit in Vientiane, the capital of Laos.

History and Evolution of the India-ASEAN Relations after its Independence in 1947, India followed a policy of **Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)** and became a champion of decolonisation, including in Southeast Asia. However, during the 1970s, India's perceived tilt towards the Soviet Union led Southeast Asia to drift away from India as both followed different economic and political ideologies.

- In a major shift away from policies of the Cold War era, India adopted the **“Look East Policy” (LEP)** soon after economic liberalisation in 1991 to increase economic and commercial ties with East and Southeast Asian nations such as China. Over the years the policy has also concentrated on building closer ties on the strategic and security aspects in the region.
- Phases of LEP-
 - ✓ **Phase I** lasted between 1991 and 2002, when the primary thrust was **toward renewed political and economic relations** with ASEAN countries.
 - ✓ During **Phase II** (2003 to 2012), the scope of the LEP was broadened to include China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand.
 - ✓ The new phase of LEP would focus on **extensive economic and security issues**, including joint efforts to protect the **Sea Lanes of Communications** and launch **coordinated counter-terrorism activities**.
- One of the major consequences of India's engagement with ASEAN has been the **ASEAN-India Free Trade Agreement (AIFTA)**, which was seen as an essential step towards deeper economic integration.
 - ✓ Its initial framework was signed on 8 October 2003 in Bali, Indonesia and the final agreement was signed on 13 August 2009, coming into effect from 1 January 2010.
 - ✓ The FTA reduced tariff barriers to trade between India and the ASEAN countries, and included specific provisions for services trade and investment facilitation.
- India was accorded full **ASEAN Dialogue Partner Status in 1995**, followed by its membership in the ASEAN Regional Forum. The India-ASEAN Relations soon broadened its cooperation into political as well as security arenas. India also joined the East Asian Summit (EAS) in 2005.
- ASEAN has been a **strategic partner** of India since 2012. India and ASEAN have 30 dialogue mechanisms which meet regularly.
- India's engagement with the ASEAN and wider Asia-Pacific region has acquired further momentum following the enunciation of the **‘Act-East Policy’ (AEP)** at the 12th ASEAN-India Summit and 9th East Asia Summit in Myanmar in November 2014.
- Under the AEP, India not only expected to bolster its economic engagements with the region; it yearned to emerge as a **potential security balancer as well**.
- **Commerce, Culture and Connectivity** are the three pillars of India's robust engagement with ASEAN.
- Enhancing the connectivity in all its dimensions – physical, digital, economy, institutional and cultural- has been at the heart of India's strategic partnership with ASEAN.

Why is it important?

These summits are important for both Asean members and India because issues like maritime security, terrorism and other matters of regional and international interests were discussed at a time when China was involved in a raging dispute with the Philippines, Vietnam, Taiwan, Malaysia and Brunei over ownership of territory in the South China Sea.

Importance of ASEAN for India

- **Economically:** India is one of the strategic partners of ASEAN. With a total population of 1.8 billion and a combined GDP of \$3.8 trillion, ASEAN and India together form an **important economic space** in the world.

- **Geopolitically**
 - ✓ India expects to benefit geopolitically as well from its rejuvenated affinity with ASEAN and other regional countries.
 - ✓ India has attempted to demonstrate its ability to play a dynamic role in the region. India sent a strong signal to China by mentioning the importance of maintaining freedom of navigation in the **South China Sea**.
- **Maritime Importance: Freedom of navigation in the South China Sea** is essential for India in order to ensure that its sea-bound trade continues uninterrupted.
 - ✓ Sea lanes are “life lines of global trade.” India supports freedom of navigation based on United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).
 - ✓ ASEAN is important for extending cooperation in areas such as maritime security including freedom of navigation, drug trafficking and cybercrime.
- **Security Aspect:** There are diverse areas on which India and ASEAN are jointly working, e.g. non-traditional security threats such as terrorism, human and drug trafficking, cybercrimes and piracy in the Malacca Straits, etc.
- **Connectivity Aspect**
 - ✓ The envisaged highway (under construction) and rail connectivity to energy giants like, Nepal and Myanmar and further to Thailand, will improve people to people contact, thus enhancing the sphere of economic cooperation and interdependence.
 - ✓ The highly underdeveloped NE States of India, which lie at the gateway to a region offering unlimited economic opportunities, will witness an economic transformation.
- **Energy security**
 - ✓ ASEAN countries, particularly Myanmar, Vietnam and Malaysia can potentially contribute to India’s energy security.
 - ✓ Oil and natural gas deposits in the South China Sea region.

East Asia Summit (EAS)

- The East Asia Summit is the premier leaders-led forum in the Asia-Pacific. Since its inception in 2005, it has played a significant role in the strategic, geopolitical and economic evolution of East Asia.
- Apart from the 10 ASEAN Member states, East Asia Summit includes India, China, Japan, Republic of Korea, Australia, New Zealand, United States and Russia.
- India, being a founding member of the East Asia Summit, is committed to strengthening the East Asia Summit and making it more effective for dealing with contemporary challenges.

Trade relation with ASEAN

- Trade between India and ASEAN stood at US\$ 65.04 billion in 2015-16 and comprises 10.12% of India’s total trade with the world.
- The ASEAN-India economic integration process has got a fillip with the creation of the ASEAN-India Free Trade Area in July 2015, following the entry into force of the ASEAN-India Trade in Services and Investment Agreements.
- Conclusion of a balanced Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement will further boost our trade and investment ties with the region.

Important Issues Highlighted by PM Modi during the EAS

The two most significant issues highlighted by PM Modi during his address at EAS were: Recommending strongest action against those states that use terrorism as an instrument of state policy and outlining India’s principled stand on the South China Sea issue.

- PM Modi commented that most countries in the South Asian region were pursuing a peaceful path to economic prosperity “But, there is one country in **India’s neighbourhood whose competitive advantage rests solely in producing and exporting terrorism.**”
- For India’s principled stand on the South China Sea issue, he said that the lanes of communication passing through the sea were “**main arteries of global merchandise trade**”.
- India supports freedom of navigation and over flight, and unimpeded commerce, based on the principles of international law, as reflected notably in the UNCLOS.

2.2. INDIA-SINGAPORE

Why in news?

Prime Minister of the Republic of Singapore Mr. Lee Hsien Loong visited India recently.

Significance of Singapore for India

- India and Singapore has a wide ranging relationship that is as strategic as well as economic.
- Singapore has been developing close links with Indian states like West Bengal, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana. Hence, economic partnership is increasing.
- Both countries are seeking to explore other areas such as tourism and skill development.
- Singapore has been backing a greater role for India in the Indo-Pacific region.
- The landscape in ASEAN is changing. In such a situation, Singapore's voice is likely to become even more crucial and the India-Singapore strategic partnership is likely to further strengthen.

During the visit the following agreements were signed:

- MoU in the field of Industrial Property Cooperation between Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) and Intellectual Property Office of Singapore.
- MoU on Collaboration in the Field of Technical and Vocational Education and Training between the National Skill Development Corporation and ITE Education Services, Singapore.
- MoU on Collaboration in the Field of Technical and Vocational Education and Training between the Government of Assam and ITE Education Services, Singapore.
- The agreements were signed for "smart cities drive" and "skill India program" during the bilateral visit as Singapore has expertise in both the fields.

2.3. INDIA-VIETNAM

Why in news?

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit to Vietnam marked an important step forward in their ties. During Modi's visit, the two countries decided to upgrade their relationship from a "strategic partnership" to a "comprehensive strategic partnership."

Outcomes of the Visit

- India and Vietnam signed 12 agreements in a wide range of areas covering defence, IT, space, double taxation and sharing white shipping information, signalling a strong upward push in their strategic ties.
- **Defence Agreement:** India extended \$500 million Line of Credit to Vietnam for facilitating deeper defence cooperation with the south East Asian nation, as the two countries elevated their ties to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership to respond to emerging regional challenges.
- India had offered earlier \$100 million in 2013 to Vietnam to buy defense hardware. Though both countries have been negotiating the sale of **BrahMos missiles** (jointly produced by India and Russia), no decision was taken on the issue during this latest visit.

Trade and investment

- The bilateral trade between two countries is around \$ 8 billion; it has grown 400 per cent in the last six to seven years. Both sides have agreed on a new trade target of US\$ 15 billion by 2020.
- India has 93 projects in Vietnam with total investment of about US\$ 1 bn.
- Vietnam has three investment projects in India with total investment of US\$ 23.6 million.

South China Sea conflict

- India and Vietnam called for "peaceful" resolution of the South China Sea issue and "exercise self-restraint."
- They also urged all parties to show "utmost respect" for the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

Vietnam's Importance for India

- Vietnam is an important element of India's Act East Policy, which aims to re-invigorate its historical ties with countries in Southeast and East Asia.

- **Connectivity:** In the future, the India-Myanmar-Thailand trilateral highway could link up with already existing roads like the one linking Thailand with the Vietnamese port of Da Nang.
- Vietnam is also an important partner for India's engagement in the ASEAN being the coordinator country for India-ASEAN ties for 2015-2018.
- **Strategic location:** Vietnam is located at a strategically important place and operates as "the gate" to enter Southeast Asia from north.
- India's relations with Vietnam are marked by growing economic and commercial engagement. India is now among the top ten trading partners of Vietnam.
- India's growing economy needs energy resources and Vietnam has rich hydrocarbon reserves, for example ONGC had been given two exploration blocks originally (Block 127 and Block 128 in 2006).

India's Importance for Vietnam

- India could be a bulwark against the dominance of any single country in the region. Hanoi has a long-festering territorial dispute with Beijing in the South China Sea.
- Indian companies can infuse much needed capital and technology into the Vietnamese market to bring it to par with its East Asian counterparts.
- There is the strong cultural aspect to the relationship, with Buddhism seeping into Vietnam from the land of its birth in India. Vietnam has a large number of Buddhists and many of them come to visit Buddhist holy shrines in India.
- Spirituality has given a fresh and interesting aspect to India-Vietnam relationship. With the resurgence of Buddhism in Vietnam, the country has found a deep connect with India, home to Buddhism.

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3. WEST ASIA

3.1. INDIA-EGYPT

Why in News?

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi paid official visit to India.

Outcomes of the Visit:

Political and Security Cooperation

- Declaration of a **“robust defence and security partnership”** is likely to further energise the Joint Defence Cooperation which was set up in 2006 and has held six meetings so far.
- The two leaders highlighted the leading role of India and Egypt in the maintenance of **international peace and security**, being among the ten largest troop and police contributing countries in United Nations missions.
- **Fighting terrorism** has been identified as an important issue for both India and Egypt as they are concerned with the growing menace of the Islamic State (IS).
- The two leaders affirmed their commitment to achieve a **comprehensive reform of the United Nations**, including the revitalization of the General Assembly as the only universal organ representing all member states.
- The two leaders strongly **condemned terrorism** in all its forms and manifestations. They also reaffirmed their resolve to work together at UN on concluding the **Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT)**.
- To tackle **the challenges of adverse impacts of climate change**, the two leaders highlighted the importance of a global approach based on the principles and provisions of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Paris Agreement in particular the principles of **Equity, and the Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR)**.
- Both leaders emphasized that enhanced support from developed countries to developing countries and the provision of adequate, predictable and sustainable means of implementation in particular **finance, technology transfer and capacity building** is a corner stone for the realization of the globally agreed commitments to tackle climate change.

Trade and Investment

- India and Egypt vowed to take their economic and trade ties to the next level. Both countries have set a bilateral trade target of \$8 billion in the near future from the current \$3 billion.
- There are currently 52 Indian companies operating in Egypt of which 25 are joint ventures with a total investment of \$3 billion across a wide range of sectors.
- As a \$286-billion economy with around 89 million consumers, which is the second largest in Africa, Egypt has tremendous potential as an economic partner.
- President Al-Sisi invited Indian participation in the Suez Canal Economic Zone, particularly in sectors such as petro-chemicals, energy, agriculture, healthcare, education, skills and IT.

Agreement on Maritime Transport

- India and Egypt signed an agreement on Maritime Transport. The agreement would help the two nations to step-up co-operation on the seas not only in terms of maritime commerce but also in transit of naval vessels.

Cultural exchange

- Cultural exchange is another vital aspect of our excellent bilateral relations.
- The two leaders agreed that a special and enlarged **"India by the Nile Festival"** would be held in 2017 to commemorate the 70th anniversary of India's independence. They also welcomed the proposal to have the inaugural **"Egypt by the Ganga Festival"** in 2017.

4. INDIA-RUSSIA

4.1. INDIA-RUSSIA RELATIONS

Why in news?

- The Russian President visited India for the 17th bilateral summit between India and Russia.
- PM Modi highlighted the “special and privileged strategic partnership” between India and Russia by quoting that, “An old friend is better than two new friends.”

Key Highlights of the Bilateral Summit

- **Cross Border Terrorism-** Condemned unequivocally and sealed a deal on ‘information security’ to counter terrorism, drug trafficking and other illegal cross-border activities.
- **Defence Sector-** Agreement to buy Russia’s most advanced S-400 ‘Triumf’ anti-missile defence system, to manufacture Kamov-226T utility helicopters and four improved Krivak or Talwar class stealth.
- **Regional Integration and Trade-** Emphasize on implementation of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).
- **Infrastructure and Technology-** Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) to invest in a sub-fund under the National Infrastructure Investment Fund (NIIF) of India.
- **Nuclear Power Project-** Modi and Putin both jointly declared the second unit of Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant (Units 5 and 6).
- **Russian Largest FDI in India-** Russian oil firm Rosneft and United Capital Partners signed an agreement to acquire Essar Energy Holdings Ltd’s refining and retail assets at \$10.9 billion, making it Russia’s largest foreign direct investment in India.

4.2. RUSSIA-PAKISTAN

Why in News?

Pakistan-Russia conducted first-ever joint military drills dubbed ‘**Friendship—2016**’ in Pakistan. Reflecting growing military ties between the two former Cold War rivals.

Concerns for India

- Joint military exercise held at a moment when India was trying to isolate Pakistan after the Uri attacks, coping with fresh political violence inside Kashmir, and drawing international attention to India’s claims over Gilgit-Baltistan.
- That Russia was unwilling to postpone these exercises in deference to Indian sensitivities at this critical juncture suggests something fundamental is at work in Moscow’s approach to the Subcontinent.
- The joint drill is seen as another step in growing military-to-military cooperation, indicating a steady growth in bilateral relationship between the two countries.
- A Russian-Pakistani renaissance started in 2014 when the Kremlin removed its arms embargo against Islamabad.
- In 2015, Moscow agreed to sell four Mi-35M helicopters to Pakistan and welcomed Islamabad to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

Change in Russia’s strategy

Under President Vladimir Putin, Russia has shown assertiveness in international affairs.

- It has taken a clear position on opposing Western intervention and militarist regime-change policies in Iraq and Libya and now in Syria.
- Russia has used counter-force in the fight against the Islamic State in backing Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

- It retook the province of Crimea that it had gifted Ukraine in 1954 due to (Soviet) historical reasons. This invited unilateral sanctions on Russia from the U.S. and the European Union.
- Demonised by the West, Russia has become a strategic partner of China and they have significant convergence of interests.
- Russia dependent on arms and energy exports is constantly looking for new markets and Pakistan is a potential one. The planned exercises were an extension of this search.

India's policy shift

India as an emerging power has developed a strategic partnership with the U.S. There are **real and perceived shifts in Indian armament policies** where Russia dominated for years.

- India has opened up to the U.S., France, and Israel, all of whom are gradually edging out the Russians in some sectors. The Kremlin has grown cautious lately about India's augmenting defense cooperation with the United States and other Western nations.
- Russia-India trade has not grown to great heights despite the encouragement of both states. Yet India has been supportive of Russian positions and has a careful and calibrated response to all Russian actions — in Chechnya, Syria, Ukraine and elsewhere, India has supported Russia. The Russians, on their part, have dutifully backed the Indian position on Kashmir.
- The greatest weakness is the lack of an **economic relationship that encompasses** the Indian private sector. India's odd defence purchase and equity stake in a Siberian oil or gas field are substitutes for rather than the basis of a strategic relationship.
- India has its own military exercises with the U.S. and has signed logistics agreements which can eventually give the U.S. access to Indian naval bases.

Way forward

- The military exercise may not have much impact on India-Russia relations but surely it indicates that India cannot take Russia for granted. There is urgent need to revitalize our relation with Russia. In these circumstances, India has to rebuild on its strengths and common concerns with the Russians.
- Russia will not become a major Pakistani partner any time soon, and will remain closely connected to India. Still, the Kremlin's move delivers a strong message to the Modi administration. In effect, New Delhi acknowledges Moscow's security concerns but also understands that the Russia-Pakistani partnership would continue to evolve proportionally to India's cooperation with the West.

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5. IMPORTANT INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

5.1. REGIME CHANGE IN BRAZIL

Brazil's Dilma Rousseff was stripped of the country's presidency in a Senate impeachment vote, ending 13 years of leftist rule in Latin America's biggest economy.

Reasons for Rousseff's Impeachment

- Ms. Rousseff's popularity has eroded fast over the last year with a deepening economic crisis and a spreading **corruption scandal**, in which several of her Workers Party (PT) leaders have been implicated.
- Some of the measures she took, such as **cutting public expenditure to control deficit**, were counter-productive as they drove the PT's traditional base, the working people, away from her.

Economic crisis

- Brazil's economy is going through its worst recession in more than three decades following a drop in prices for Brazilian commodities such as oil, iron ore and soya.
- In 2015, the economy shrank by 3.8%, its worst annual performance since 1981.
- Inflation reached 10.7% at the end of last year, a 12-year-high.
- Unemployment increased to 9% in 2015 and economists predict it could go into double figures in the coming months.

Impact of impeachment

- The impeachment is likely to deepen **Brazil's political crisis** at a time when the country needs a stable administration to cope with the enormous challenges it faces, especially the current economic crisis, and chronic corruption.
- The impact of the Brazilian political crisis on global politics has been damaging because the world needs the contribution of the region's largest country.
- Geographically and politically, Brazil has to be the axis around which its predominantly Spanish-speaking neighbours must turn and coordinate their policies.
- Russia, China and India have strengthened their politico-economic bilateral relations with Brazil considerably in recent years, and will be fearful of what the future may hold.
- Due to leadership crisis first in South Africa and now in Brazil, the efficacy of BRICS, IBSA and BASIC has become precarious.

5.2. MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

5.2.1. NEW YORK DECLARATION ON MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

Need for Declaration

- The world is faced with more than 21 million refugees, almost 41 million internally displaced, 3.2 million asylum seekers and increasing flows of mixed migrants caused by conflict, repression and poverty.
- This grave trend is further fueled by climate change and the disasters and pressure on resources they leave behind. Such incidences have led to the New York Declaration.

Aim of the Declaration

- it expresses the political will of world leaders to save lives, protect rights and share responsibility on a global scale.

- The declaration aimed at providing a more coordinated and humane response to the refugee crisis that has strained resources and sparked divisions from Africa to Europe.

What are the commitments?

The New York Declaration contains bold commitments both to address the issues we face now and to prepare the world for future challenges. These include commitments to:

- Protect the **human rights** of all refugees and migrants, regardless of status. This includes the rights of women and girls and promoting their full, equal and meaningful participation in finding solutions.
- Ensure that all refugee and migrant children are **receiving education** within a few months of arrival.
- Prevent and respond to sexual and **gender-based violence**.
- Support those countries rescuing, receiving and hosting large numbers of refugees and migrants.
- Work towards ending the practice of detaining children for the purposes of determining their migration status.
- Strongly condemn **xenophobia against refugees** and migrants and support a global campaign to counter it.
- Strengthen the positive contributions made by migrants to economic and social development in their host countries.
- Improve the delivery of humanitarian and development assistance to those countries most affected, including through innovative multilateral financial solutions, with the goal of closing all funding gaps.
- Implement a comprehensive refugee response, based on a new framework that sets out the responsibility of Member States, civil society partners and the UN system, whenever there is a large movement of refugees or a protracted refugee situation.
- Find new homes for all refugees identified by UNHCR as needing resettlement; and expand the opportunities for refugees to relocate to other countries through, for example, labour mobility or education schemes.
- Strengthen the global governance of migration by bringing the International Organization for Migration into the UN system.
- **No binding commitments:** The declaration has no concrete commitments and is not legally binding but rather calls on countries to protect refugees' human rights, boost humanitarian aid and increase resettlement of refugees.

Refugees

- According to the UN Refugee Agency, refugees are people forced to flee due to armed conflict or persecution, while migrants choose to move in search of a better life.
- Around the world, there are currently about 21.3 million refugees, 3.2 million asylum seekers, and 40.8 million migrants.

5.2.2. UNICEF REPORT ON REFUGEES

Why in news?

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on 7 September 2016 released the report titled *Uprooted: The growing crisis for refugee and migrant children*.

Key findings

- According to the report, nearly 50 million children have been uprooted across the globe and millions more migrating in the hope of finding a better, safer life.
- Traumatized by the conflicts and violence they are fleeing, they face further dangers including
 - ✓ the risk of drowning on sea crossings,
 - ✓ malnourishment,
 - ✓ trafficking,
 - ✓ rape and even murder

International protocols

- Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)
- Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1951) and Protocol (1967)
- Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air (2000)
- International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (1990).

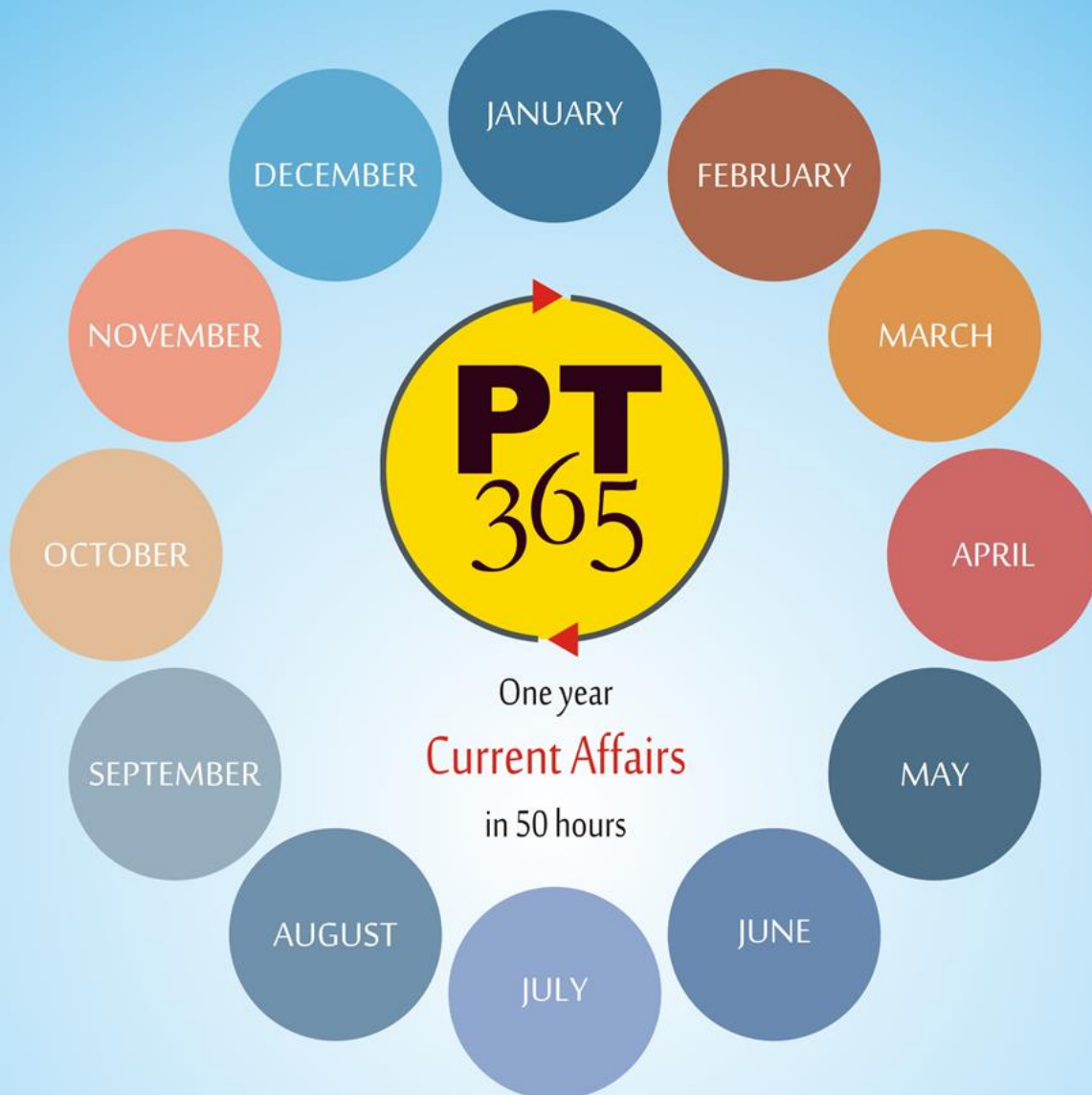
Many countries are yet to ratify these which will strengthen protections to these refugees.

- In countries they travel through and at their destinations, they often face xenophobia and discrimination.
- 1 in 200 children in the world is a child refugee.
- Nearly 1 in 3 children living outside their country of birth is a refugee
- Child refugees has increased by two times from 2005 to 2015.
- Regional perspective:
 - ✓ Asia is home to 2 in 5 of the world's child migrants

Six specific actions to protect refugee and migrant children

- Protecting child refugees and migrants, particularly unaccompanied children from exploitation and violence.
- Ending the detention of children seeking refugee status or migrating by introducing a range of practical alternatives.
- Keeping families together as the best way to protect children and give children legal status.
- Keeping all refugee and migrant children learning and giving them access to health and other quality services.
- Pressing for action on the underlying causes of large-scale movements of refugees and migrants.
- Promoting measures to combat xenophobia, discrimination and marginalization.

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6. IMPORTANT INTERNATIONAL/ REGIONAL GROUPS AND SUMMITS

6.1. G-20 SUMMIT

Why in News?

11th G20 Summit was held in Hangzhou, China. The theme of the Summit was **“Toward an Innovative, Invigorated, Interconnected and Inclusive World Economy”**.

Highlights of G20 Summit

- Leaders of G20 economies have made substantial achievements on **development issues including consensus to advance anti-corruption campaign** and set up a research centre in China on fugitive repatriation and asset recovery.
- **Sustainable Development**
 - ✓ For the first time, the summit put the issue of **development front and centre of the global macro policy framework**, constituted an action plan to facilitate the implementation of the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and supported** the industrialisation of African countries and least developed countries collectively.
- **Hangzhou Consensus**
 - ✓ **“Hangzhou Consensus”** calls on the G20 to deliver more inclusive economic growth through **co-ordinated macroeconomic policy, open trade and innovation**. In short, it reaffirms the group’s core mandate: to make globalisation work for the benefit of all.
- **International tax avoidance**
 - ✓ Numerous low-key objectives shared by multiple G20 members, such as strengthening enforcement against **international tax avoidance and advancing cooperation on Base Erosion and Profit Shifting**.
- **Climate change**
 - ✓ Despite pressure from the US and China, the final G20 communique has skipped any mention of the **December 2016 deadline for member-countries to ratify the Paris Agreement on climate change**.
 - ✓ It has also avoided specifying a date for ending fossil fuel subsidies.
- Among the major issues that found mention in the summit was the question of excess steel capacity in China resulting in a flood of cheap imports into India, the U.K. and other economies.
- Little real progress was made on key issues of climate change and energy.
- Other challenges that consumed the attention and energy of leaders on the sidelines, including co-ordinated responses to the **Syrian crisis, refugees, terrorism and migration, remain unresolved**.

G-20

- The G20 started in 1999 as a meeting of Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors in the aftermath of the Asian financial crisis.
- It is a premier forum for international economic cooperation and decision-making. It comprises 19 countries plus the European Union.
- G20 represents 85% of global GDP, 80% of international trade, 65% of world’s population.
- In 2008, the first G20 Leaders' Summit was held, and the group played a key role in responding to the global financial crisis.

6.2. 17TH SUMMIT OF THE NON ALIGNED MOVEMENT (NAM)

Why in news?

- The 17th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) took place in Margarita, Venezuela.
- India was represented by Vice President and not by the head of government (Prime Minister) as the usual practice.
- Only once before, the Indian Prime Minister had not been to the NAM Summit at Havana (Cuba) in 1979 under the caretaker government of Prime Minister Charan Singh.

Highlights of Vice President address at summit

- **Anti-terrorism Push:**
 - ✓ India echoed for "concrete action" to fight against terrorism and asked the 120-nation group to set up a mechanism to ensure effective cooperation in combating the menace.
 - ✓ Vice President called terrorism as one of the "most egregious sources of human right violations today" and condemned its use as an instrument of state policy.
- **UN reform**
 - ✓ Vice President strongly flagged the issue of UN reforms. He urged for use the forthcoming 71st UNGA to ensure that discussions in the Inter-Governmental Negotiations move forward.
 - ✓ Noting that the global landscape has changed since 1961, when NAM was formed, Vice President stressed that the values and principles on which the foundations of the movement, namely
 - "respect for sovereignty"
 - "peaceful settlement of disputes" and
 - "international cooperation" — are as relevant today as they were at the time of the first summit.
- **Sustainable development**
 - ✓ He urged member states to ensure wholehearted and holistic implementation of the SDGs and remain attentive to any effort to modify or distort Agenda 2030.
 - ✓ He called Sustainable development as the bedrock and the highest aspiration of NAM countries' efforts.
- **Peace and sovereignty**
 - ✓ He asserted that peace and sovereignty are a prerequisite for development; a peaceful global environment is essential for development and for development cooperation.

Post-Cold War world Transition in NAM

Over the course of the past 60 years, the NAM has seen an erosion of its authority.

- The Third World debt crisis of the 1980s crushed the economic ambitions of NAM states.
- **Unipolar world:** The Soviet Union collapsed, the U.S. bombed Panama and Iraq, and history seemed to end with American ascendancy.
 - ✓ By the early 1990s, several important powers of NAM began to back away (Argentina left in 1991). Yugoslavia crumbled, with war tearing apart its promise.
 - ✓ India went to the IMF and gestured to the U.S. that its days of non-alignment had gradually come to a close. NAM oscillated between suspicion of U.S. motives and attempts to regenerate the economic engines of its members.
- **No binding principles:** NAM does not have any binding principles and that it is a marriage of convenience among disparate countries. Contrary to the image of a cohesive movement seeking to challenge the dominance of the imperialist powers, it was hard to find agreement among the founding leaders on the purpose and objectives of NAM.
- **Division within NAM:** The Iran-Iraq war, the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, the Vietnamese intervention in Cambodia, and the military support to national liberation movements in Southern Africa and Central America had deeply divided the NAM.

Importance/Relevance of NAM

- NAM acts as catalyst to foster the **co-operation between south -south nation**.
- NAM is particularly important **in elections at the UN**, including the possible identification of new permanent members of the Security Council. In fact, it was through NAM that we operated to counter the efforts to expand the UN Security Council by including just Germany and Japan as permanent members.
- No NAM country may agree to isolate Pakistan, but the NAM forum will be an effective **instrument to project our anti-terrorist sentiments**. NAM has the potential to act as a strong movement against international terrorism. NAM therefore must continue to live as the movement of the developing countries engaged in the pursuit of international peace, security, and development.
- NAM today, like the Commonwealth has always been, is a **heritage we need not discard**.
- The very informal nature of NAM permits members to operate individually. It also has the facility of members reserving their positions, as we did on the non-proliferation positions of NAM.

To conclude

Politics of the Third World has successfully influenced the thematic setting of the global agenda. Today North-South relations and the issues connected with the development of countries of the South have become one of the main inertia systems of our global world, and in formulating potential answers to global challenges. There is an ever increasing need for non-alignment in the sense of alliance formation and concerted efforts to make the existence of the NAM "no less necessary than before." What we need to do is to strengthen the movement with new hopes and new challenges as per 21st century.

6.3. BIMSTEC

Why in news?

- The Summit was held in Goa in October 2016. The next meeting will be held in Nepal for the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit in 2017.
- **Focus Areas** of Summit were Regional connectivity, terrorism, development of the region, Cooperation in various sectors, promoting people-to-people contacts and tourism.
- In this regard, BIMSTEC countries have issued **Leaders Retreat Outcome Document**.

About BIMSTEC

- The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is a regional organization.
- It came into being on 6 June 1997 through the **Bangkok Declaration**.
- It comprises of seven Member States lying in the littoral and adjacent areas of the Bay of Bengal.
- **Five deriving from South Asia**, including Bangladesh, Bhutan, **India**, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Two from Southeast Asia, including Myanmar and Thailand.

Key Highlights of document

- **For countering terror**
 - ✓ Strongly condemned the recent terror attacks in the region and called for strong measures for the states that encourage, support and provide sanctuary to terrorists.
 - ✓ Called for early ratification of the BIMSTEC Convention on Cooperation in combating International terrorism, criminal matters, transnational organized crime and drug trafficking.
- **Cooperation for Environment**- Agreement on greater efforts towards the conservation of the mountain ecosystems, bio-diversity and agreed for implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.
- **Enhancing people to people contact**- Proposed for establishment of BIMSTEC Buddhist Circuit and BIMSTEC Heritage Sites, decided to expedite the establishment of the BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Commission and BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Observatory in Bhutan.
- **Fisheries and Food Security**- Cooperation in sustainable development of fisheries in Bay of Bengal region.
- **Eliminating Poverty**- Reaffirmation to the commitment to effective implementation of the BIMSTEC Poverty Plan of Action.
- **For Trade**- Commitment to the early conclusion of BIMSTEC Free Trade Area negotiations was renewed along with directing the Trade Negotiating Committee (TNC) and Working Groups to expedite the finalization of its constituent agreements.
- **Exploring other areas of development**-Agreement to explore ways to **deepen cooperation** in areas such as aquacultures, hydrography, seabed mineral exploration, coastal shipping, eco-tourism and renewable ocean energy with the objective of promoting holistic and sustainable development of the region.

Relevance of BIMSTEC

- Earlier also, Bay of Bengal had emerged as a vehicle for regional cooperation as **BBIN grouping - Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and India** after Pakistan's reluctance to sign on to the South Asian connectivity agreements at the SAARC summit, 2014.
- Now, with the collapse of the SAARC summit in Islamabad, 2016 the Bay of Bengal has turned into a zone of regional cooperation.
- Further, with rich history of maritime commerce across the Bay of Bengal and being high-end tourist destination there exist enormous possibilities for regional economic cooperation among the members of the BIMSTEC and **SAARC (minus Pakistan)**.

6.4. BRICS

6.4.1. EIGHTH BRICS SUMMIT

Why in news?

- The Eighth BRICS Summit, held at Goa under the theme "**Building Responsive, Inclusive and Collective Solutions.**"
- The summit concluded with adaptation of Goa Declaration. The ninth BRICS Summit will be hosted by China in 2017.

Key Highlights of Goa declaration

On world Security- Strongly condemned terrorism in all its forms, committed to increase effectiveness of the UN counter terrorism framework. Also, called for need for adaptation of Comprehensive Convention on Terrorism (CCIT) in the UN General Assembly

On SDGs- Welcomed adoption of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals.

On UN Reforms- Reiterated urgent need to reforms of the United Nations, including International UN Security Council to increase representation of developing countries.

On New Development Bank- BRICS members were satisfied with the approval of the first batch of loans by the New Development Bank (NDB), particularly in renewable energy projects in BRICS countries.

BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement

- CRA, established in 2015 by BRICS member nations is now operational and the central banks of the grouping's members are "fully ready to carry out" the transactions.
- It is a framework for the provision of support through liquidity and precautionary instruments in response to actual or potential short-term balance of payments pressures.

About BRICS

- BRICS is the acronym for an association of five major emerging national economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.
- It was established in 2009. Originally it was known as BRIC before the inclusion of South Africa in 2011.
- The first formal summit was held in Yekaterinburg, Russia.
- They are distinguished by their large, fast-growing economies and significant influence on regional and global affairs.

#5GoalsfromGoa

For Positive direction and strong momentum of Intra-BRICS engagement

1. Institution building must remain a focus area
2. Transform quantum and quality of trade & investment linkages among BRICS
3. Focus on key priorities of our economic transformations
4. Secure our Societies from terror
5. Thriving people to people exchanges

6.4.2. BRICS RATING AGENCY

Key Facts

- BRICS have agreed to set up an independent rating agency based on market-oriented principles in order to further strengthen the global governance architecture.
- BRICS institution-building is critical for transforming the global financial architecture to one based on the principles of fairness and equity.
- The BRICS countries have already set up New Development Bank (NDB), which became operational last year, to meet funding requirements of the members.
- There are concerns that the methodologies of the big three global agencies- S&P Global Ratings, Fitch Ratings and Moody's Investors Service- is biased against developing countries, reflected by their poor rating of these economies.
- Despite having deep capital buffers, the ratings of multilateral banks like the BRICS-promoted NDB are affected due to the parent countries' sovereign ratings.

- Further, under the present pricing model of rating agencies, the company or institution issuing bonds pays the rating agency to be rated, known as issuer-pays model. This is an ethical issue of moral hazard in this model of rating.

6.4.3 MOU BETWEEN EXIM BANK, NEW DEVELOPMENT BANK

Why in news?

- Union Cabinet signed a pact between Export-Import Bank of India (Exim Bank) and BRICS-promoted New Development Bank (NDB).
- It is a non-binding umbrella agreement which aims at establishing a cooperation framework in accordance with the national laws and regulations, along with skills transfer and knowledge sharing amongst the signatories.

Benefits of MOU

- It will enhance trade and economic relations among the BRICS countries.
- It is strategically relevant for cooperation for sustainable development and inclusive economic growth.
- It will help India play an enhanced international role.

6.5. NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

Why in news?

The United Nations' highest court rejected nuclear disarmament cases filed by the Pacific nation of the Marshall Islands against Britain, India and Pakistan.

Reasons for rejection of the case

Marshall Islands had failed to prove that a legal dispute over disarmament existed between it and the three nuclear powers. The court rejected it saying it that it lacks jurisdiction.

Arguments for Nuclear disarmament

- **Strategic excuse**, most nations equipped with nuclear weapons claim that they rely on them for strategic defense, and they are vulnerable to various attacks without these destructive weapons which is not true in multipolar world.
- **Economically**, nuclear weapons programs divert public funds from health care, education, disaster relief and other vital services. It is time to redirect money towards meeting human needs.
- **Environmentally**, nuclear weapons are the only devices ever created that have the capacity to destroy all complex life forms on Earth.
- **Security concerns**, nuclear weapons pose a direct and constant threat to people everywhere. Far from keeping the peace, they breed fear and mistrust among nations.
- **Humanitarian Issues**, the abolition of nuclear weapons is an urgent humanitarian necessity. Any use of nuclear weapons would have catastrophic consequences.
- **Nuclear Terrorism** – There is danger that nuclear weapons in politically unstable countries like Pakistan or Russia may fall into the hands of rogue terrorist elements.

Nuclear facts

- There are 16,400 nuclear weapons on Earth today.
- Five states are declared as nuclear weapon zones under the Non-Proliferation Treaty: **US, UK, France, Russia and China.**
- Many other countries have been suspected of developing nuclear weapons **including India, Pakistan, Israel, Iraq, Iran, Libya, Syria and Korea.**
- The only nuclear bombs ever to be used were by the US against Japan in 1945.

India's Stand on Nuclear disarmament

India attaches the highest priority to nuclear disarmament and shares common concerns with the co-sponsors, that the international community has not been able to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations.

Way Forward

- Nuclear disarmament will create moral suasion for nuclear weapons states to disarm, and establish an international norm prohibiting nuclear weapons' development, possession and use.
- The states having nuclear weapons should participate fully in the negotiations to come out with a better policy formulation for the world.

6.5.1. DISARMAMENT AND SECURITY COMMITTEE

Why in News?

- Un general assembly's disarmament and security committee voted for negotiations to begin next year on a new international treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons.
- Four of the five UN Security Council nuclear powers - Britain, France, Russia and the United States — voted against the draft resolution while China abstained besides India and Pakistan.

Why is it important?

- It moves diplomatic and legal action beyond the veto power of nuclear-dependent governments that want to keep their privileges under the Non-Proliferation Treaty.
- The new multilateral treaty will for the first time provide a comprehensive approach to prohibiting activities such as the use, deployment, production, transporting, stockpiling and financing of nuclear weapons.
- It will also extend the NPT's nuclear disarmament obligation by creating a clear, unequivocal legal obligation to eliminate existing arsenals that will apply to non-NPT as well as all NPT states.

About NPT

- Non-Proliferation Treaty or NPT, is an international treaty whose objective is to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology, to promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and to further the goal of achieving nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament.
- It came into being in 1970. In 1995 it was extended indefinitely.
- The treaty recognises five permanent UNSC members: **the US, Russia, the UK, France and China.**
- Four UN member states have never joined NPT: **India, Israel, Pakistan and South Sudan.**

6.6. MOU BETWEEN INDIA AND AARDO

Why in news?

The Cabinet approved MoU for the triennium 2015 – 2017, between India and the African Asian Rural Development Organization (AARDO).

About the MoU

- The capacity building programs in the field of rural development will be organized every year during the triennium at various Institutions in India.
- The duration of each training programme shall be of two to three weeks.

Significance of MoU

- It will promote cooperation among African and Asian countries.
- It will help in the direction of eradicating thirst, hunger, illiteracy, disease and poverty in the region.

About AARDO

- The AARDO is an autonomous, inter-Governmental organization established in 1962, headquarter in New Delhi.
- AARDO currently has 31 countries of the African - Asian Region under its fold.
- India is one of the Founder Members of the Organization and is the largest contributor among the members.



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6.7. MALDIVES QUILTS COMMONWEALTH

Why in news?

- The Maldives quit Commonwealth over allegation of corruption and deteriorating human rights.
- The country becomes the latest to leave the Commonwealth after Gambia which quit in October 2013.

Background

- Maldives government was put on notice thrice and given six months to address concerns including the detention and prosecution of opposition leaders.
- Evidences were found of curbing fundamental rights, targeted persecution of opposition leaders and misuse of state institutions (including the judiciary, legislature and the police) to restrict, crush and punish dissent.
- Imprisonment of previous Maldives President was found illegal and the current president was ordered to pay him compensation.

Reasons to quit as given by Maldives

- The foreign ministry claimed that it was treated “unjustly and unfairly” by the organization.
- It was used “in the name of democracy promotion, to increase the Commonwealth’s own relevance and leverage in international politics”.
- It argued that the decision to penalize the Maldives was unjustified, as the inquiry commission had found the transfer of power in the Maldives was consistent with the constitutional provisions.

What is Commonwealth?

- It is an international association established in 1949 consisting of the UK together with states that were previously part of the British Empire, and dependencies.
- Many countries from Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe and the Pacific have joined the Commonwealth, current membership--52 countries.
- Membership is based on free and equal voluntary co-operation.
- The last two countries to join The Commonwealth are Rwanda and Mozambique.

6.8. INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

Why in news?

Burundi, South Africa and Gambia have quit ICC. Kenya and Uganda now, intend to follow the suit.

Why is it important?

- The withdrawal makes South Africa the first state to quit the 1998 Rome Statute that established the court.
- South Africa’s proposed withdrawal from the International Criminal Court shows startling disregard for justice from a country long seen as a global leader on accountability for victims of the gravest crimes.

About ICC

- It is the world’s first legal body with permanent international jurisdiction to prosecute genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.
- The 124-member ICC is based in The Hague.

ICC: Areas of Concern

- **Lack of Jurisdiction-** ICC does not have jurisdiction over some of the most powerful nations in the world such as US, Russia, China and Israel.
- **Narrow Mandate-** It does not investigate rights violations of five permanent members of the UN Security Council: the US, Great Britain, France, Russia and China.
- **No free authority-** its authority is dependent on the cooperation of the international community.
- Politicized Prosecution and Unaccountable Prosecutors despite having safeguards in place against politically motivated prosecutions.
- **Ambiguity between State Sovereignty vs Universal Jurisdiction-** Ambiguities arise in the relationship between the legal and political underpinnings of the ICC because the Court is weakened by policies that remain dominated by a sovereign model, despite operating principally within a universalist legal framework.

What needs to be done?

- There are many ambiguities in Rome Statute which needs to be removed.
- Support from permanent members of the UN Security Council which holds veto powers over the cases of the ICC.
- Focus on increasing the capacity of the ICC to ensure that it can conduct its existing investigations and cases effectively.
- A clear action plan with proper funding mechanism.
- Strengthening investigation and prosecution with transparency and accountability measures.
- Support for participation and effective representation of the victims.

6.9. UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Why in news?

Russia lost its bid to retain a seat on the UN Human Rights Council due to allegations of war crimes in relation to its policies in Syria.

Why is it important?

It was the first time since the UNHRC's creation a decade ago that one of the Security Council's five permanent members failed to be elected to the council.

Possible Impacts after ousting Russia

- It is unlikely to create any significant change in Russian foreign policy toward Syria.
- It may further fuel already tense relations between Russia and the West, particularly the United States, and worsen the human rights situation in Russia itself.
- Russia's ousting from the UNHRC is inconsistent with Saudi Arabia's successful reelection to the council. Despite harsh criticism regarding Saudi Arabia's actions in the Yemeni civil war, the country kept its place on the Human Rights Council. It underscores the use of human rights as a tool of Western intervention.

About UN Human Rights Council

- The council is 47-member body based in Geneva.
- It was created in 2006 to promote human rights globally.
- Members of the council work to engage countries on improving human rights.
- They make decisions ranging from exposing violations to recommending that the Security Council make a referral to the International Criminal Court.
- The council doesn't have the authority to take action but can exert significant pressure on the violating country and set up special rapporteurs with the mandate to investigate and report human-rights abuses.

6.10. INDIA'S SPEECH AT UNGA

Why in News?

It was considered as a well-crafted speech that touched on issues like SDGs as well as those of concern to India like terrorism.

Significance of speech

- **Diplomacy over war-** India diplomatically isolated Pakistan at UNGA meet. India gave a strong message about intolerance of terrorist activities in the country.
- **No compromise over Kashmir-** India unequivocally called for Jammu and Kashmir as an integral part of India.
- **Stand for rights violations in Baloch-** India took Baloch agenda forward, thus explaining the rationale behind its decision to grant political asylum to Brahmdagh Bugti. It was a clear signal to Pakistan that India will help in making Balochistan an issue on the international map.
- **No talks until terror-** India imposed "no terror" pre-conditions for dialogue for the country and urged the UN to pass the India-proposed Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT)- it provides a legal framework making it imperative for all signatories to deny funds and safe havens to terrorist groups.
- **Priority to SDGs-** India's commitment to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was appreciated for its efforts Swachh Bharat Mission, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Jan Dhan Yojana and Skill India program.

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