

International Relation Class 21

23rd February, 2024 at 1:00 PM

REVISION OF THE PREVIOUS CLASS (01:09 PM)

CHALLENGES IN RCEP (01:17 PM)

- In the absence of **significant economic players** like the US or India, RCEP might witness China's dominance.
- **Economic gains** coming out of RCEP will take a longer time to materialise keeping in mind the diverse profile of member countries.
- RCEP may be disadvantageous for small countries' industries since the trade deal might not cover the major industries of these small countries.
- The least developed countries in ASEAN such as Laos, Cambodia, and Myanmar which currently benefit from **intra-ASEAN trade** might be affected since intra-ASEAN trade may be eroded by RCEP trade.
- In this regard, there is a concern regarding the viability of **economic gains** that small countries get within RCEP.
- Being not part of RCEP, India needs to devise a more strategic approach to achieve the benefits of ASEAN.
- However, there is a need for holistic reforms within India to catch up the manufacturing sector in ASEAN.
- In this regard, there is a need for **Capital Sector Reforms, land reforms, reforms in taxation norms**, and an attempt to bridge the **infrastructural deficit**.
- India should also work along with ASEAN to create regional supply chains and take forward advantage of civilisational and cultural connections with ASEAN to out-manoeuvre China.

INDIA-JAPAN RELATIONS (01:29 PM)

- Three agendas top his visit at a time when the global order is in a massive churn- bilateral economic and security cooperation; regional Indo-Pacific security agenda within the Quad framework (with the US and Australia being the other partners); and a global G-7 agenda with Japan as its chair.
- (Aimed at synchronizing plans for the G7 summit in Hiroshima in May 2023 and the G20 summit in Delhi in September 2023.)
- PM Kishida announced a new plan for an open and free Indo-Pacific, seeking India's support to check China's growing influence across the region.
- China is the biggest common challenge India and Japan face in protecting their territorial integrity and economic security — over China's assertion on Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh in the Himalayas, and Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea.
- Japan is also wary of China's territorial-military claim on the entire South China Sea.
- The two seas are crucial for global trade.

Both India and Japan are poles apart on Russia:

- Japan wants more sanctions against Russia. But as G-20 chair, India has prevented the forum from being used for any such announcement. India has not blamed Russia for the Ukraine war, and also defied the Japan-West bloc by purchasing cheaper oil from Russia.
- March 2022--- Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida visited India.
- He described the country as an “indispensable partner” of Japan to achieve the ambitious goal of peace, prosperity and stability in the Indo-Pacific region. India will be central in all the four pillars of Kishida’s FOIP Plan, namely
 - (a) principles for peace based on respect for diversity, inclusiveness and openness;
 - (b) addressing challenges in an Indo-Pacific Way anchored on equal partnership;
 - (c) multi-layered connectivity; and finally
 - (d) security and safe use of both the sea and airspace.
- 9 July 2022---India announced one day of national mourning as a mark of respect for Shino Abe’s death.
- Later Prime Minister Modi met his Japanese counterpart Fumio Kishida in Tokyo, where the Indian Prime Minister attended Mr. Abe’s state funeral.
- Sep 2022----India Japan 2+2 ministerial dialogue was held.

KEY CHALLENGES IN THE PATH OF INDIA-JAPAN RELATIONS (01:48 PM)

- The estranged relations between Japan and Russia can put Indo-Japan relations on a litmus test.
- As far as the Russia-Ukraine war is concerned both countries have diverse positions.
- Japan is part of the US alliance and has also joined in imposing sanctions against Russia while India has refused to do so.
- RCEP and India’s position within it has also emerged as another point of friction between India and Japan.
- The inclination of the investments more toward Japan creates economic challenges between India and Japan.
- Lack of implementation on key projects such as Asia Africa Growth Corridor.
- On various global issues like the Tariff structure of WTO, and preferential policies of G7, India and Japan have opposite views.
- Indo-Pacific can be seen as a common podium for future security partnerships between India and Japan.
- India needs to strengthen its **Act East Policy and prioritize Japan and South-East Asia within it.**
- The two countries should collaborate not only in security areas but also in development projects (Asia-Africa Growth corridor) along with **skill development, especially regarding the capacity development of Indian IT professionals in Japan.**

INDIA AND CENTRAL ASIA (02:07 PM)

- The second India-Central Asia NSAs meeting took place in Kazakhstan- on 17th October 2023.
- **Discussions on aspects of connectivity:**
- Indian NSA Chief asked the Central Asia countries to utilize Chabahar Port in Iran and its terminals which are operated by an Indian company for maritime trade.
- India deplored the denial of land connectivity between Central Asian Regions and India by a conscious policy of a particular country.
- India stressed that the connectivity initiatives must be transparent, consultative, and inclusive in nature.
- On terrorism, NSA Chief Ajit Doval emphasized that terrorism is a serious threat to international peace and security.
- India pointed out that the linkages between terrorism and drug trafficking were a serious menace.
- 19th May 2023---C+C5--President Xi Jinping Chairs the Inaugural China-Central Asia Summit in Xian (China). The summit marked the opening of the "Year of culture and Art of the Peoples of China and Central Asia". Amid G7, China hosts a summit of its own with Central Asia.
- 6th December 2022----1st India-Central Asia NSAs meeting took place.
- January 2022----First India-Central Asia virtual summit.
- December 2021---- 3rd meeting of the India-Central Asia Dialogue was held in New Delhi in December 2021 under the chairmanship of EAM Jaisankar. They decided to step up efforts to achieve the full potential for trade between India and Central Asia and make optimum utilisation of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).

SIGNIFICANCE OF CENTRAL ASIA FOR INDIA (02:26 PM)

- **1)Geo-Strategic importance:**
- Central Asia has always been seen as Russia's backyard.
- It is the battleground for strategic space due to its position as an access point between Europe and Asia. (Land bridge between Asia and Europe).
- **2)Geo Economic Importance:**
- **Rich in natural resources:**
- Kazakhstan has one of the biggest reserves of uranium, besides stores of coal, lead, zinc, gold, and iron ore.
- The Kyrgyz Republic is rich in gold and hydropower, and Turkmenistan has one of the world's largest reserves of natural gas.
- Tajikistan has huge hydro-power potential and Uzbekistan has gold, uranium, and natural gas.
- Important for ensuring energy security: Turkmenistan is part of the proposed TAPI gas pipeline.
- **3)Security:**
- **National security:**
- India's only overseas airbase lies in Farkhor, Tajikistan.
- Regional security (due to its proximity to Pakistan and Afghanistan).
- Central Asia lies near the '**Golden Crescent**' of opium production (Iran-Pak-Afghan) and is also a victim of terrorism, illegal arms trade, narcotics trafficking and arms smuggling.
- 4)China's angle
- 5)Connectivity (International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)).

Connect Central Asia Policy:

- India considers that Central Asia has tremendous strategic and economic value for India and falls into India's extended neighborhood. Indian PM visited all five countries of Central Asia in 2015.
- Soon India launched a broad-based Connect Central Asia policy.

The Connect Central Asia Policy is based on - 4Cs:

- 1)Commerce (economic cooperation);
- 2)Connectivity (regional connectivity):
- **Two important initiatives for improving connectivity:**
- **Development of the International North-South Transport Corridor(INSTC):**
- INSTC is a multi-mode network of ship, rail, and road route for moving freight between India, Iran, Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, Central Asia and Europe.
- Becoming a member of Ashgabat Agreement.
- The Ashgabat agreement is a multimodal transport agreement between India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Oman, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan for creating an international transport and transit corridor facilitating the transportation of goods between Central Asia and the Persian Gulf.
- The agreement came into force in April 2016.
- 3)Consular (Political Cooperation and Strategic Cooperation).
- 4)Community (Cooperation in education, people-to-people contact, medical cooperation. Means Soft power).

AREAS OF COOPERATION (02:36 PM)

- **1)Energy:**
- **Civil nuclear cooperation:**
- Kazakhstan is one of the first countries with which India launched civil nuclear cooperation. It has been supplying nuclear fuel to Indian nuclear plants since 2010.
- The TAPI project,a trans-country natural gas pipeline from the Caspian Sea, Turkmenistan to India through Afghanistan and Pakistan is as an important to connect energy-rich Central Asia with energy-starved South Asia.
- 2) Trade and Investment cooperation Kazakhstan is India's largest trade and investment partner in Central Asia.
- **3)Security and Defence:**
- "Khanjar" is an annual joint military exercise between India and Kyrgyzstan.
- "Kazind" is an annual joint military exercise between India and Kazakhstan.

INDIA'S EFFORTS TO STRENGTHEN COOPERATION WITH CENTRAL ASIA (02:38 PM)

- 1)Connect Central Asia policy – launched in 2012 to strengthen strategic, economic, and security cooperation.
- 2)Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) membership – With full membership of SCO, there will be more frequent summit-level contacts between the top leaderships of India & CARs.
- India hosted the SCO summit on the 4th of July 2023 to focus on the sustainable development of Central Asia.
- 3)International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) – a multi-modal transport project to connect the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea.
- India, Iran and Russia in 2000 launched INSTC to develop a new trade route that would help in cutting the costs and time in moving cargo between Russia and India.
- **4)Chabahar Port in Iran:**
- Once the Chabahar port is ready, along with INSTC it can become an important anchor for trade to and from Central Asia via Afghanistan.
- **5)Signing of the Ashgabat Agreement:**
- An international transport and transit corridor facilitating transportation of goods between Central Asia and the Persian Gulf.
- The pact was signed in 2011 by Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Iran, Oman and Qatar and aimed at developing the shortest trade route between the Central Asian republics and Iranian and Omani ports.
- India joined the Ashgabat agreement in 2018 to diversify its connectivity options with Central Asia.

CHALLENGES IN INDIA CENTRAL ASIA RELATIONS (02:59 PM)

- **Absence of direct connectivity.**
- **China's factor:**
- The increasing presence of China under the OBOR initiative.
- The growing cooperation between Russia and China might affect the dynamics of India's relation with Syria.
- **Lack of operationalization of connectivity projects such as TAPI and INSTC** especially when China is coming forward with new connectivity initiatives under BRI.
- **Security:**
- Unstable Political conditions in various CARs and their ripple effect.
- The problem of **Drug trafficking** due to proximity with **Golden Crescent**.
- Increasing Islamic Radicalisation due to Proximity with Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the Middle East.
- There is a failure of CARs to recognise themselves as a collective regional Bloc due to ethnic issues and conflict over natural resource and border disputes.
- This is the reason, India is not able to formulate a **coherent foreign policy** regarding Central Asia.
- Due to the close relationship of CARs with Russia, India could act as a very critical actor in taking forward three important regional actors of Asia that is India itself, Central Asia, and Russia.
- With regard to Russia, India can act as a **balancing force** as far as the West is concerned and Russia can act as a moderating force in CAR as far as China is concerned.
- India should take forward the implementation of the INSTC project more seriously.
- In this regard, India has been pitching for including Uzbekistan and Afghanistan as the Eastern corridor of the INSTC Project.
- India should make efforts to utilise the untapped potential of the region and create new markets with CARs in areas like Pharma Sector, Green Energy, Research and Development, and Science and Technology.
- Something like **Air corridors** that have been developed in Afghanistan should be explored with CARs.
- There is a need to formalise a **Free Trade Agreement** between India and CARs.
- We can start it by formalising an FTA between India and EEU of which Central Asia is also the part.

INDIA AND WEST ASIA (03:23 PM)

- **Significance of West Asia for India:**
- **1)Energy security:**
- 70% of India's imported energy needs come from West Asia.
- **2)Gateway to Central Asia**
- **3)Strategic Region:**
- The Persian Gulf is a very important zone for India's maritime security, and the Strait of Hormuz is a strategic point.
- **5) Countering Pakistan**
- **6) Trade & Investment** – UAE and Saudi Arabia are India's third and fourth-largest trading partners respectively.
- **7)Economic Growth** – India is the largest recipient of foreign remittances from West Asia, which plays a significant role in India's growth.
- **8)Indian Diaspora** – Six West Asian countries (UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and Bahrain) accounted for nearly 70% of all Indians who live abroad. Also there is migration of less skilled labour, especially to this area.
- **9) Culture & Religion** – India hosts the 3rd largest Muslim population in the world, which views Saudi Arabia as its important pilgrimage.
- **10)Regional Connectivity** – India has invested in Iran's Chabahar port which is expected to a bridge of trade between India, Iran, and Central Asia along with Afghanistan.
- **11)Defence** – India has a strong defence and security partnership with Israel which is useful for its security and military modernization drive.
- **12) Regional Stability** – Close cooperation is essential with west Asian nations to counter radicalization and rising terrorism in the region.
- **13)Maritime Diplomacy** – West Asia is an integral part of India's Indo-Pacific maritime domain.
- Naval cooperation has already been gaining momentum with Oman giving berthing rights to Indian naval vessels to fight piracy in the Gulf of Aden.

The topic to be discussed in the next class- India and West Asia Relations