

In the beginning (i.e. after independence) India's policy towards West Asia had no definite approach.

International Relation Class 22

24th February, 2024 at 1:00 PM

INDIA -WEST ASIA RELATION (01:10 PM)

- India tried to establish bilateral relations rather than regional relations at that point India's West Asia policy had **three important actors**.
- However close to the Cold War, two new actors entered into our priority i.e. Iran and Saudi Arabia.
- By this time, Iraq somehow got out of our priority keeping in mind the political crisis that was happening there. (and drifted to Iran because Iran was also providing us same energy supplies)
- Later on another actor entered into our West Asian politics and this was Israel. Therefore in post soviet world, the bi-directional approach of our foreign policy (Including Iran and Saudi) extended to the tridirectional approach including Israel, Saudi Arabia and Iran.
- India's earlier West Asia policy which was more **economic** in perspective now has added **strategic** and **security perspective** as well.

REASONS FOR SHIFT IN INDIA WEST ASIA RELATION (01:31 PM) (ppt)

- Gulf countries have multifaceted significance now. Multifaceted in the sense of security, energy etc.
- Adoption of Modern ideas by the Gulf countries.
- Rise of **Khaleeji** capitalism.

POLITICAL EQUATION IN WEST ASIA (01:38 PM)

IRAN SAUDI ARABIA CONFLICT

- Conflict is because of:
 - 1)Ongoing struggle for dominance in the Middle East region.
 - 2)Regional conflict between Iran (Sunni) and Saudi (Shia).

WHY CHINA EMERGED AS AN IMPORTANT PARTNER IN WEST ASIA

POLITICS

- 1)China has emerged to be a prominent investment partner in terms of trade, investment, and technological exchange.
- 2)West Asia has emerged as a crucial point for the realization of China's BRI.
- 3)Declining influence of the USA as a **security provider** in the Middle East i.e. deprioritizing of Middle East from US foreign policy.

SIGNIFICANCE OF IRAN-SAUDI ARABIA PEACE DEAL (01:45 PM) for China

- The deal provided China with increased political involvement based on its quasi-mediation diplomacy.
- This deal was accepted wholeheartedly and could be considered as an easy diplomatic stride for China. Unlike the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Saudi-Iran conflict is not intractable.
- However, this deal did have a deeper impact on the political equations in West Asia as follows:
- It has resulted in the dilution of the USA's influence in the region, a much advantage for China.
- The probable reason could be the increased regional disenchantment regarding the USA as a security guarantor and lesser enthusiasm by the USA for being a regional security provider.
- China has positioned itself as an alternative power within this vacuum taking forward the policy of cooperation and consultation and not intervention at the forefront.
- China's entry into West Asia through this peace deal could create a diplomatic challenge for India in the region.
- It is said China's entry through the peace deal is a sign of its diplomatic clout to match its economic footprints in the region.
- However keeping in mind the geopolitical volatility in the region, especially regarding the Hamas-Israel conflict, there is a big question on the sustainability of this peace deal.
- The peace deal if effective could lead to the diffusion of proxy wars in different regions of West Asia thereby providing regional stability.

IMPACT ON ABRAHAM ACCORD OR I2U2 (02:31 PM)

- The peace deal posed a big question mark on the existing normalization agreements like Abraham's accord and I2U2.
- To the extent I2U2 can be perceived as an effort to isolate Iran from the geopolitics of West Asia, This peace deal course challenged the viability of this platform.
- The Beijing accord is set to decrease the sphere of the US in the region.

CONCLUSION

- Since this region is conflict-ridden, especially in relation to the renewed Israel-Hamas conflict, The perception of Chinese diplomacy being a new champion of peace and conflict should be rationalised.

ISRAEL PALESTINE ISSUE (02:43 PM)

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- Conflict between Jews and Arabs over a piece of land between the Jordan river and the Mediterranean sea.
- Balfour declaration: Establishing a home for the Jews in Palestine.
- Palestine did not like it which was followed by the holocaust.
- The International community supported Jews.
- 1947: UN voted for Palestine to be divided between two and for Jerusalem to be an international city (But never got implemented)

CREATION OF ISRAEL.

- 1948: The British withdrew and Jews seizing the opportunity declared the creation of Israel.
- Palestine objected to it which led to armed conflict.
- The neighboring Arab state also invaded but was thoroughly thrashed by Israel.

PRESENT SCENARIO

- Israel claims the whole of Jerusalem as its capital, and Palestine claims east Jerusalem as the capital.
- Gaza: Ruled by Palestinian militant group Hamas.
- West Bank: Most of the West Bank is administered by Israel.

QUESTION DISCUSSION (03:18 PM)

- Q) Discuss the effect of the Palestine conflict on the geopolitics of the world.

ANSWER

Israel

INTRODUCTION

- After the Russia-Ukraine crisis, Israel Hamas conflict has emerged as yet another flashpoint in the geopolitics of the world.

POLITICAL RAMIFICATION

- It has ignited regional instability in West Asia and has the following ramifications:
 - It has created regional instability which will have a ripple effect in the neighbouring regions.
 - It has led to a dilution of various normalisation efforts for instance Abraham Accord, I2U2 and the peace deal.
 - It has opened the floodgates for extra-regional actors to be active in West Asia and a new cold war-like situation has emerged with the US and West on one hand and Russia and China on the other hand.
 - This conflict has reflected the magnitude of terrorism not only capable of creating regional instability but also global disturbance.

ECONOMIC RAMIFICATION

- It has reduced the economic advantage that West Asia owns in terms of natural resources since it has led to the retreat of investment from this region.
- The conflict has led to the disruption of supply chains especially via the Red Sea and Suez Canal leading to increased oil prices and concerns regarding energy security and food security.

SOCIAL RAMIFICATIONS

- The conflict has created a humanitarian crisis in West Asia with Israel's blockage of essential supplies to the Gaza region.
- It could lead to a refugee crisis which might affect neighbouring countries like Egypt.
- It could lead to delaying of multilateral initiatives like India's Middle East economic corridor. (It is said IMEC might be delayed but not derailed).

- **IMPACT ON INDIA**

- India with its conflict-ridden borders in eastern and western sectors needs to be extra conscious regarding terrorist activities and border management.
- A situation like this ^{creates} presents a challenge to our diaspora policy regarding the evacuation of our nationals.
- If the conflict is not controlled it can create a new Cold War situation with alliances and counter alliances between regional and extra-regional actors.
- It can also create a proxy war situation in West Asia further deteriorating the regional stability.
- At this point dialogue and diplomacy through other-party negotiations can be the only viable way out.

QUESTION DISCUSSION (03:37 PM)

- Historically India was the only non-Arab country to back the Palestine cause. In 1947, India voted against the UN partition plan for Palestine together with Arab states, Preferring a federal state and showcasing its commitment to the Palestinian cause. (bz India was guided by the idea of economy.)
- In 1974, India recognized PLO as the sole representative of the Palestine people.
- solidarity with Palestine was a cornerstone of our foreign policy keeping into mind anti-colonial and non-aligned principles.
- India backed the right of Palestine to self-determination and even supported Palestine's inclusion as a non-member observer state in the UN.
- Throughout ^{these years} this year, India adopted a hyphenated approach between Israel and Palestine.
- However, the stand changed keeping in mind our security concerns and Israel being our defense supplier.
- Likewise in 2017, the Indian PM for the first time visited Israel but skipped the customary stoppage in Palestine.
- The **following year**, the Israeli PM made a visit to India to boost commercial and diplomatic ties. However, India did not exhibit a complete decoupling of the Palestinian cause and adopted a balanced approach. Thus Indian PM a month after this meeting made a historic visit to Palestine making him the first PM to do so.
- This was made to assure our Arab partners that India's close ties with Israel would not change its principled position on Palestine.
- **The reason for this policy shift could be:**
- 1) Israel emerging as our key defence supplier.
- 2) India's growing proximity with the US which has a pro-Israel stand.
- The policy shift can be witnessed in a few other ways as well, For example In 2019 India changed its voting pattern in the UN.
- India ^{backed} backed Israel at ECOSOC to deny observer status to a Palestinian organization.
- India also abstained on a resolution demanding a probe into Israeli action in the Gaza strip in the UNHRC.
- While maintaining support for a two-state solution and for Palestinian statehood, India has managed to develop strategic ties with Israel in terms of trade and defence.

INDIA'S LOOK WEST POLICY (04:01 PM)

- India adopted this policy in 2005. This policy is tridirectional involving Israel, Iran and Saudi Arabia as its pivotal areas.
- India's look-west policy is completely secular in nature. It has never looked into the Shia-Sunni and Jewish equation.
- The policy is primarily driven by Economic concerns along with Energy security, Maritime security, Connectivity and diaspora diplomacy.

DOMESTIC CHALLENGE

- Domestic political instability. -
- The existence of extra-regional actors which have turned this area into an arena of great games.

SECURITY CHALLENGE

- Rise of radical forces such as ISIS.
- Threat of piracy (Gulf of Aden)
- Migration (Human security)
- Drug trafficking.
- Iran's ambitious nuclear programme.

SOCIAL CHALLENGES

- Humanitarian crisis
- The refugee issue.

The topic for the next class:West Asia, India-USA.