

Test code - 692021

Time - 7:30 am - 8:45 am

- 1) Africa is an underdeveloped and underutilized region of the world. As Asia continues to grow, it will soon reach its saturation and thus, the resource-rich African continent will be leading the global growth.

Reasons for Africa leading the growth

- ① Social reasons
 - high population → high market
 - increasing life expectancy
 - increasing educational levels
- ② Economic reasons
 - large market
 - resource-rich: Minerals etc.
 - increasing connectivity between nations
 - African Continental Free Trade - market.
- ③ Political reasons
 - Reduced violence in between nations
 - Establishment of stable governments in parts of continent.

Thus, combined together will lead to growth of world.

India's engagement with Africa

- ① India and South Africa are members of BRICS.
- ② India and Japan are together aiming to build a connectivity project
- ③ India has economically helped Africa in form of grants, easy loans, lines of credit.
- ④ Capacity building and Education:
 - Public servants of Senegal
 - Scholarship and educational loans to students from Africa
- ⑤ India is Africa's 3rd largest trading partner.

While several steps have been taken more needs to be done as Chinese presence is increasing in ~~near~~ region, African students facing racial discrimination in India, etc.

- 2) World Health Organization is a global inter-governmental organization formed in 1945 to deal with unrelenting global health issues across the world and giving a platform to countries to share and grow.

Importance of WHO in providing global health security during COVID-19

- ① Advisories and situations in various parts of world govern and shared in timely manner.
- ② collaboration with governments as well as civil societies to mitigate the impact of pandemic.
- ③ Regular consultations and meetings with all stakeholders to provide wholesome solutions.
- ④ Research and development work with respect to medication as well as support in vaccine formulation.

Issues with measures undertaken by WHO

- ① Delay in recognizing the pandemic despite reports of spread in China.
- ② Lack of impartial investigation with respect to origin of the virus.
- ③ The steps taken by WHO were not concrete enough and merely 'words' without much intent and meaning.
- ④ Failed to control vaccine nationalism and support the developing and least developed countries.
- ⑤ Inability to hold responsibility and accountability for the pandemic.
- ⑥ Frequent changes in advisories making it confusing for governments as well as health personnel.

Thus, while WHO failed provide timely action, in the aftermath it helped in holding global community together.

- 3) Central Asian Republics are a group of 5 countries. They were part of Soviet Union. They are majority land-locked thus, limiting their growth.

Importance of CARs for navigating opportunities in the region:

- ① Connectivity: CAR region can act as a gateway to Russia and other European countries.
- ② Trade: India's trade with the region is abysmally low which can be unlocked.
- ③ Security: India holds its only airforce base outside India in Tajikistan. This can further be used to increase India's security presence in the region.
- ④ Resources: CAR countries are extremely rich in uranium, natural gas, gold etc. These resources can be tapped by India solving its energy crisis.

⑤ Afghanistan issue : Increasing presence in CAR will also help in dealing with Taliban 2.0.

Challenges in utilizing opportunities

- ① Increased Chinese presence in the region.
- ② India does not share any land border with the region making it hard to connect.
- ③ These are authoritarian regimes with little to no similarity in India's approach of democracy.
- ④ Prone to security issues such as increasing fundamentalism and radicalism, neo-terrorism (from Afghanistan), etc. illegal drug.
- ⑤ Late move disadvantage of India.

As India celebrates 30 years of diplomatic relations with these countries it is crucial to focus on the 4 Cs - commerce, contact, connectivity and capacity building.

- 4) I2U2 is also referred to as 'Middle East Quad' due to the strong regional actors it has connected.

Transformation of India's position due to I2U2 in global politics.

- ① Secured energy supplies will enhance India's ability to survive and any political upheaval in India^{ME} as well globally.
- ② Secured sea lanes of communications (such as Suez Canal, Bab-el Mandeb) will increase India's global prestige along with ~~the~~ economic capacity.
- ③ Multilateralism: While India holds good relations with all countries of the region (except Qatar), part of a grouping will further strengthen its relations.
- ④ This will provide an additional avenue to interact with these

countries.

- ⑤ Increase India's presence in region - India is already engaged in Mega Parks with UAE as investment partner. This will further increase cooperation under CEPA (between UAE and India).

However, on one hand it will increase India's image in global world, it ~~may~~ may also bring about certain other unwanted outcomes:

- ① Russia - China - Iran nexus which may undermine India - Russia relations.
- ② Qatar was criticized by China considering it to be against itself. A similar situation may arise ~~or~~ with Iran.
- ③ USA may eventually reduce relations between UAE / Israel with other countries of region.
- ④ Can lead to beginning of another Great Game

Thus, I202 also has two sides. It is on India how to balance both.

- 5) Middle East continues to be a centre of political turmoil due to resources it has - Oil, natural gas and control over choke points such as Suez Canal, Bab-el-Mandeb.

Entities with power stake in region

Regional powers : ① Countries like Saudi Arabia and Iran which are in the power game.

② Israel v. Palestine - Further, even after Abraham Accord position of Israel has not got any better.

Extra-regional powers : ① USA - Supports Israel and Saudi Arabia, along with sanctions on Iran

② Russia - Established military government in Qatar, relations with Iran.

③ China and India - Primarily due to geographical location and resource-richness

④ Pakistan : To keep itself relevant, export of militants.

India's approach to balance regional and extra-regional powers

① Policy of De-hyphenation as adopted by India in 1991 (Israel and Palestine) needs to be applied in other cases, if possible.

② Economic steps to engage with Iran amid US sanctions. eg - as recently allowed VOSTRO accounts for trade with Russia. Similarly, steps can be taken to engage with Iran.

③ Secular foreign policy : Shia v. Sunni tussle is very strong in the region. However, with highest global Muslim population, India needs to stay away from this.

④ Indian role : As against falling in line with any side, India needs to let the world know it has a side of its

over, aligned with its national interest.
 Eg - Recent stand with respect to Russia
 Ukraine war.

- ⑤ Policy of long-term engagement with
different blocs so as to maintain
 relations with all powers while promoting
 self-interest.
 Eg - Recently, China ~~ag~~ entered into 27
 years long gas contract

Thus, Middle East being the area of resources
 as well as power, it is essential
 India develops its policy, so as it
 become powerful as well as resourceful.

6) Nordic countries are a group of ⁵ countries in Northern Europe and North Asia.

These countries are resource-rich as well as rank high on human development Index, giving lot of opportunities to engage with them.

Potential of India's engagement with Nordic countries

① High regards to Indian democratic values
evident from the fact that they have Summit level relation only with India and US.

② Blue Economy: As these regions are water/ice rich their expertise can be utilised in

- Blue economy sector
- building and restoring water bodies

③ Investments: These are some of the highly developed countries and there can be

convinced to invest in Sovereign Wealth Funds, Sustainable development projects, etc.

④ Climate change: Melting ice and increased temperatures will impact these countries as much as India. Thus, their research and innovation can be utilized.

⑤ Supports UNSC permanent membership bid of India.

Challenges of India - Nordic relations

① Indian stand on Russian - Ukraine war, which Nordic countries have been highly against.

② Trade between India and the region is ~ \$13 bn which is very low. This needs to be increased.

③ NATO membership : Countries like Sweden and Finland are looking for NATO membership this may further increase pressure on India to choose a side.

India has generally shared a good relation with these countries without any bad past. Thus, it is time to convert the acquaintance in friendship for the prosperous growth and development of both.

7) International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) is a connectivity project led by India from Iran to Afghanistan and further ahead to Central Asia.

Complete Reliance on INSTC ?

India can completely rely on INSTC because :

- ① INSTC is a sort of counter to China's Belt and Road initiative
- ② It can ^{increase} trade with Russia and Central Asian countries as :
 - reduced cost of transportation
 - less time consuming
- ③ In accordance and complimentary to Ashgabat Agreement which is an inter-continental connecting project.

However, while INSTC is a good project complete reliance on it would be counter-productive to Indian interests because :

- ① Delay in initiation of project

has already made nations wary of the project.

② Sanctions on Iran: With US sanctions it is all the more difficult to engage with Iran.

③ Pakafuz agreement — A 540 km railway connecting Yashkent — Kashub — Peshawar has already begun work.

India's INSTC also is on parallel route, thereby making Afghanistan less dependent on INSTC.

④ Trade with Afghanistan (primary recipient of benefit from INSTC) has been affected due to Taliban 2.0.

Other options

In a globalized world where connectivity is of crucial importance, India can explore new options for connectivity projects such as:

① New areas such as Afro-Eurasian

which also require connectivity and are as of now not so much filled by Chinese - ~~path~~

② New partners : under INSTC, both Iran and Afghanistan continue in an environment of uncertainty politico-economically. Thus, India should engage with countries that are more stable.

③ New modes : while road / railway is one of the ways, India should also focus on waterways / corridors which require less money as well as time.

④ Technological advancement such as drones should be used with countries where India does not hold direct connectivity.

Eg - used in Afghanistan.

Thus, while pursuing a policy of continuing INSTC, India should simultaneously explore other options.