

India - West Asia Relations

Why in news?

Recently at the G-20 summit in New Delhi, U.S.-backed infrastructure project was unveiled to connect India, West Asia and Europe with shipping lanes, rail networks, pipelines and data cables.

To know more about the G-20 summit click here

West Asia Strategy of USA

- Iran rise- West Asia strategy of US is to bring Gulf Arab and Israel closer to meet their common geopolitical challenges such as Iran's rise.
- <u>Abraham Accords</u>- It set the stage for the transformation of Israel's ties with United Arab Emirates.
- <u>I2U2 strategy</u>- It has been called as the "<u>West Asian Quad" and comprises of India, Israel, the U.S., and the UAE.</u>
- <u>India Middle East Europe Corridor</u>- Through this economic corridor, US hopes that it could retain its channels of influence in West Asia.

Challenges

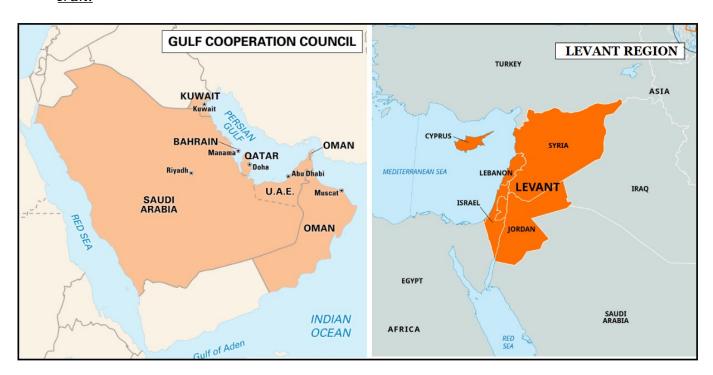
- **Arab tussle-** The true potential of Abraham Accord would not be reached unless there is a deal between *Israel and Saudi Arabia*, arguably the most influential Arab country today.
- **China factor-** It is the biggest trading partner of America's Gulf Arab allies and a major investor in the region and has shown a willingness to play a bigger role as peacemaker, which was evident in the <u>Iran-Saudi reconciliation agreement</u>.

What is India and West Asia relations all about?

- **West Asia-** It has two distinct regions: *Levant and Gulf region*.
 - **Levant region-** It includes *Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, and Syria*, and some would include the *northern part of Iraq* the area that became part of the Islamic State.
 - **Gulf region** It comprises the <u>6 Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)</u> countries namely Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Iran, and Iraq.
- **Historical ties** India had a distinct unique historical relationship with Arab, Turkish, Jewish and Persian civilisations.
- **High profile diplomatic dynamism-** West Asia is a region for India to augment its power rather than to display or assert.
- **Support Palestine cause-** India has always supported the Palestine aspiration for Independent State since Mahatma Gandhi.
- **Comprehensive Security Partnership-** It is a joint *India-UAE initiative* to promote security and stability in West Asia which was signed in 2017.
- Economic cooperation- A Framework Agreement on Economic Cooperation between

Republic of India and GCC was signed in 2004.

- Maritime connectivity- Development of <u>Chabahar port in Iran</u> would help India bypass Pakistan and increase trade relations with Afghanistan and Iran.
- **Huge remittances-** The <u>remittances from Gulf States</u> contribute a major chunk in India's total share.
- **Abraham Accords**-India's presence in a grouping of the Abraham Accords countries was seen as a legitimate recognition of India's presence in the region.
- <u>India-Middle East-Europe Corridor</u>- Announced at the G-20 Summit, the corridor enhances India's standing and also brings India and Europe closer.
- **Compete China-** US wanted to bring India as a bigger, stable partner to write new rules of economic engagement and integration, to compete with China and India seems to utilise this opportunity.
- International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)- INSTC is a 7,200-km multi-modal transport corridor that connects <u>Russia and India via central Asia and Iran</u>.



What lies ahead?

- India's overall policy towards the region should stay anchored in the idea of multiengagement — not in appeasing or containing any great power.
- With or without the U.S., or irrespective of China's presence in the region, India should strive to play a major geopolitical role in West Asia, it extended neighbourhood, without upsetting its traditional balance.

References

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