

The Other Quad

Why in news?

India, Israel, UAE and the US sat down for their first quadrilateral meeting opening the way to a new West Asian geopolitics.

Why is this partnership significant to India?

- The partnership will aid India's strategic desire to adopt a regional foreign policy strategy towards West Asia.
- Israel is one of India's top defence suppliers with defence trade between the two countries valued at about \$1 billion annually.
- The UAE is vital for India's energy security and is also home to more than three million Indians.
- The UAE has been an interlocutor for India when it comes to Pakistan.
- India, Israel and the UAE have earlier concluded the first trilateral partnership regarding robotic solar cleaning technology.
- It can deepen engagement in sectors such as trade, energy ties, fighting climate change and enhancing maritime security.
- The partners had agreed to launch talks for a free trade agreement which is crucial for India to tap the markets of West Asia.
- The Abraham Accords narrowed the rift between the Sunni kingdoms and Israel paving easier way for India to find common ground with these countries.

The Abraham Accords was signed by the UAE, Bahrain and Israel under U.S. President Donald Trump's mediation in 2020. Under the agreement, the UAE and Bahrain would normalise ties with Israel.

Regional totals

56% Sunni | 36% Shia | 8% Other
191 million | 121 million | 28 million

Iran - Iran stands accused of interfering in Iraq, Lebanon and Bahrain, where there are large numbers of Shia. Tehran is a key backer of the Syrian president, Bashar al-Assad, of Hezbollah, and Iraqi militias

Iraq - The aftermath of the 2003 US-led invasion led to sectarian strife that claimed tens of thousands of lives. Iran and its allies are now playing a key role fighting the jihadis of the Islamic State in Iraq

Syria - Syria's four-year war, the bloodiest crisis of the Arab spring, has already cost an estimated 220,000 dead with no sign of a political settlement in the offing

Egypt - The most populous of Arab states is still adjusting to the aftermath of the 2011 revolution, with the military-backed President Abdel-Fatah al-Sisi cracking down on Islamists and consolidating power

Yemen - Yemen's deepening domestic crisis is marked by a Saudi-led effort to reassert the power of the conservative Sunni Arab states in the face of perceived Iranian influence with Shia across the region

Guardian graphic Source: Gulf/2000 Project, Sponsor School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University, New York

What are the challenges in the regionalist approach?

- **Iran factor** - New Delhi so far has been able to balance ties with Iran which is an arch rival of the Sunni Gulf monarchies.
- Indian foreign minister S Jaishankar was the first to call on Ebrahim Raisi as president elect and also attended his inauguration.
- **China's rise** - The U.S. is clearly seeking to reduce its footprint in the West Asian region as evident in the recent withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan.
- With the withdrawal of the U.S., China has been attempting to redraw the West Asia's traditional equations.
- **Taliban regime** - India has also challenges emanating from a post-American Afghanistan due to Taliban.
- India should seek to build a stronger regional partnership with the U.S.-Israel-UAE bloc without getting sucked into the conflicts of West Asia.

Source: The Hindu, Livemint

