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. • Abraham Accords- It set the stage for the transformation of Israel's ties with United Arab Emirates. • I2U2 strategy- It has been called as the "*West Asian Quad" and* comprises of *India, Israel, the U.S., and the UAE.* • India Middle East Europe Corridor- 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 Iran-Saudi reconciliation agreement.

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 *6 Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC*) 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 *Chabahar port in Iran* would help India bypass Pakistan and increase trade relations with Afghanistan and Iran.
- **Huge remittances-** The remittances from Gulf States 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.
- **India-Middle East-Europe Corridor-** 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 *Russia and India via central Asia and Iran.*

What lies ahead?

- India's overall policy towards the region should stay anchored in the idea of multi-engagement — 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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