



# IAS PARLIAMENT

*Information is a Blessing*

A Shankar IAS Academy Initiative

## MAINSTORMING 2020

### INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS I



## SHANKAR IAS ACADEMY

18, Old Plot No 109, New Plot No 259, AL Block, 4th Avenue, Shanthi Colony, Anna Nagar, Chennai - 600040.  
Chennai | Bengaluru | Trivandrum | Madurai | Trichy | Coimbatore | New Delhi

[www.shankariasacademy.com](http://www.shankariasacademy.com) | [www.iasparliament.com](http://www.iasparliament.com)



## MAINSTORMING 2020

### INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS I

(JANUARY 2020 TO AUGUST 2020)

#### 1. INDIA & ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD..... 3

##### NEPAL ..... 3

- 1.1 India-Nepal - Kalapani Territorial Issue ..... 3
- 1.2 Nepal's New Map - India's Concerns..... 4
- 1.3 India's Military Ties with Nepal ..... 5

##### CHINA ..... 7

- 1.4 Indo-China Border Disputes .....7
- 1.5 India-China Galwan Faceoff..... 9
- 1.6 Darbuk-Shyokh-Daulat Beg Oldie Road .... 11
- 1.7 India Bans Chinese Apps .....12
- 1.8 Dispute over Paracel and Spratly Islands .14

##### PAKISTAN .....15

- 1.9 Ceasefire Violations at LoC with Pakistan.15
- 1.10 Pakistan's New Map .....16
- 1.11 Pakistan's SRO listing .....16
- 1.12 Pakistan's Terrorism Statement .....18
- 1.13 Terror Funding & Pakistan .....19
- 1.14 Hafiz Saeed Conviction.....20

##### AFGHANISTAN.....21

- 1.15 Afghan Peace Process and India.....21

##### BHUTAN ..... 23

- 1.16 India-China-Bhutan - Territorial Claims .23

#### 2. BILATERAL ISSUES ..... 25

- 2.1 "Developed" Tag for India ..... 25
- 2.2 Blue Dot Network..... 26
- 2.3 Modi-Morrison Summit..... 27
- 2.4 Indo-Japan Relationship..... 29

#### 3. INTERNATIONAL ISSUES .....31

##### ASIA.....31

- 3.1 Rethink of Non-Alignment Policy .....31

- 3.2 Killing of General Qassem Soleimani ..... 32
- 3.3 Israel's New Unity Government..... 34
- 3.4 Israel-Hezbollah Tensions ..... 35
- 3.5 Israel-UAE-US deal..... 36
- 3.6 U.S.-Taliban Agreement ..... 37
- 3.7 ICJ's Ruling for Rohingya ..... 39
- 3.8 Hagia Sophia Controversy.....40
- 3.9 Armenian Genocide..... 41
- 3.10 Referendum in Russia.....42
- 3.11 Korean Stand-Off .....43

##### EUROPE..... 45

- 3.12 UK's Citizenship Test ..... 45
- 3.13 Srebrenica Massacre - Ethnic Cleansing of Bosnian Muslims ..... 46
- 3.14 German Court Questioning ECJ .....48
- 3.15 Ireland's Help to Native Americans..... 49
- 3.16 Ruling in Volkswagen Dieselgate Scandal 50

##### AFRICA ..... 52

- 3.17 Somalia's Challenges..... 52

##### AMERICA..... 53

- 3.18 U.S Aid to Greenland ..... 53
- 3.19 US Visa Ban Extension - Impact on Indian IT Companies..... 55
- 3.20 US Immigration Visa Guidelines ..... 57
- 3.21 US-Huawei-ZTE Tussle .....58
- 3.22 Racial Unrest in the U.S.....59

#### 4. INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION .60

- 4.1 WHO's Relevance .....60
- 4.2 US-WHO Relationship ..... 61
- 4.3 India to UNSC: A Diplomatic Victory ..... 63
- 4.4 India & IMO ..... 65
- 4.5 OHCHR's Intervention in CAA Case ..... 66
- 4.6 Evolution of CTBT ..... 67
- 4.7 Open Skies Treaty ..... 69
- 4.8 G11 Grouping .....71
- 4.9 Italian Marines' Case – PCA Ruling ..... 72
- 4.10 International Labour Standards ..... 74

## MAINSTORMING 2020

### INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS I

#### 1. INDIA & ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD

##### NEPAL

#### 1.1 India-Nepal - Kalapani Territorial Issue

##### Why in news?

There is renewed tension between India and Nepal over the Kalapani territorial issue.

##### What is the Kalapani territorial issue?

- Kalapani lies on the easternmost corner of Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh district, between Nepal and India.
- Both India and Nepal lay claim to Kalapani.
- The dispute was revived in November 2019 when India published a revised political map showing the newly created UTs of J&K and Ladakh.
- The map showed Kalapani as part of Pithoragarh district.
- Nepal protested immediately and drew attention to the issue.
- Very recently, India inaugurated the Darchula-Lipulekh pass link road, cutting across the disputed Kalapani area.
- The road is used by Indian pilgrims to Kailash Mansarovar.
- Nepal hit back by summoning the Indian Ambassador to Nepal, Vinay Mohan Kwatra, to convey a formal protest.



##### What are Nepal's claims based on?

- The Kalapani region derives its name from the river Kali. Nepal's claims to the region are based on this river.
- The River became the marker of the boundary of the kingdom of Nepal following the Treaty of Sugauli.
- This was signed between the Gurkha rulers of Kathmandu and the East India Company after the Gurkha War/Anglo-Nepal War (1814-16).
- According to the treaty, Nepal lost the regions of Kumaon-Garhwal in the west and Sikkim in the east.
- The King of Nepal gave up his claims over the region west of the river Kali which originates in the High Himalayas and flows into the great plains of the Indian subcontinent.
- According to the treaty, the British rulers recognised Nepal's right to the region that fell to the east of the river Kali.
- Here lies the historic origin of the dispute.



- According to Nepal's experts, the east of the Kali river should begin at the source of the river.
- The source according to them is in the mountains near Limpiyadhura, which is higher in altitude than the rest of the river's flow.
- Nepal claims that a land mass, high in the mountains that falls to the east of the entire stretch starting from Limpiyadhura downwards, is theirs.
- India on the other hand says the border begins at Kalapani which India says is where the river begins.
- The dispute is mainly because of the varying interpretation of the origin of the river and its various tributaries that slice through the mountains.

#### **Is the road new?**

- For India, the Lipulekh pass has always been part of the road to Tibet.
- Since 1981, when China re-opened the Kailash-Mansarovar pilgrimage route for Indians, they have also used the pass to walk into Tibet.
- It was mentioned as one of the border passes for trade in a 1954 agreement with China.
- India's part was also reaffirmed in another trade agreement in 2015.
- The road built now follows the same alignment, and would essentially cut down their travel time by 3 days each way.
- [But India and China were in clear violation of Nepal's concerns during the 2015 Lipulekh agreement that renewed India's Mansarovar pilgrimage connection.
- Neither side consulted Nepal or sought its opinion before that agreement that boosted pilgrimage and trade to Tibet.]

#### **What is the tussle now?**

- Nepal Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli took New Delhi by surprise with an aggressive posture on the Kalapani territorial issue.
- India has been even angered by Nepal's strong protests, followed by fiery speeches by Mr. Oli and Nepal's Foreign Minister.
- The Nepali cabinet also decided to adopt a new political map.
- That reportedly claims not only Lipulekh but also other areas that are in Indian territory that have been claimed by Nepal.
- Nepal claims this by invoking the 1816 Sugauli treaty with the British.
- The move was described by India's MEA as "artificial", "unilateral" and "unacceptable".
- But, the struggle within the ruling Nepal Communist Party has probably spurred Mr. Oli's more combative posture.

### **1.2 Nepal's New Map - India's Concerns**

#### **Why in news?**

Nepal's Oli government has passed the constitutional amendment ratifying a change in its map which includes India's territories in Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh district.

#### **What is the dispute over?**

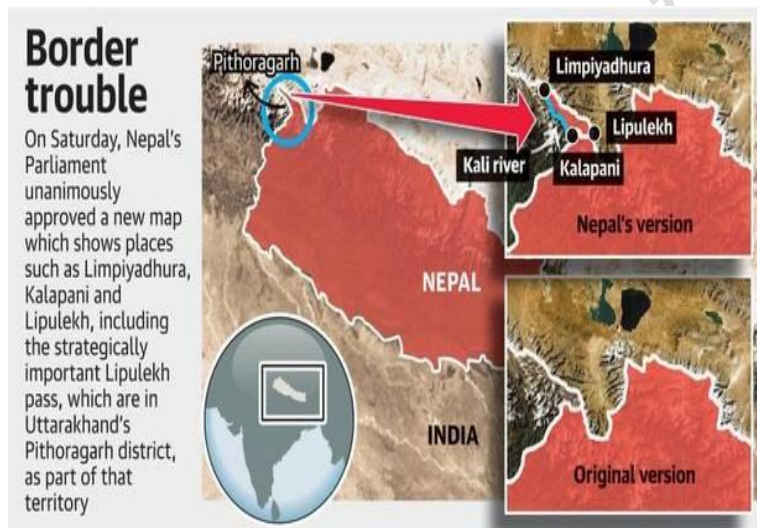
- The new map includes Lipulekh, Kalapani and Limpiyadhura, territories that India controls. [Click [here](#) to read on Kalapani territorial issue]



- The territorial dispute stems from the fact that Nepal claims the land to the east of river Kali, which forms its western border.
- As per Kathmandu's understanding, the river originates from Limpiyadhura in the higher Himalayas.
- It is thus said to give Nepal access to a triangular-shaped land defined by Limpiyadhura-Lipulekh and Kalapani.
- India opposes the notion and says the origin of the river is much further down (to the east), which reduces Nepal's territorial demand.

### What is the recent trigger?

- While the issue is an old one, it resurfaced in 2019.
- In 2019, New Delhi published new political maps to reflect some changes.
- This was following the decision on 5 August 2019 to reorganise the State of Jammu and Kashmir.
- Nepal objected to this depiction of disputed territory.



### How are the responses?

- In 2000 and 2014, India and Nepal agreed to hold talks about Kalapani and Susta, without much success.
- [Susta is a disputed village near Bihar on which both India and Nepal stake a claim.]
- Matters became worse when India's Defence Minister inaugurated a surfaced road over the Kalapani territory.
- When Nepal protested, Indian Army Chief, General Naravane, suggested it was at the "behest" of China.
- Lack of diplomatic manoeuvring to allow a step back from the tensions is primarily widening the rift.
- New Delhi contends that it was willing to discuss matters "at a mutually convenient date."
- Kathmandu says that India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has rejected two dates suggested by Nepal's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- It is said that India had routinely dismissed requests from the Nepal Ambassador for a meet with the Foreign Secretary.
- The MEA said Kalapani talks could wait until both countries had dealt with the coronavirus pandemic first.
- This further enraged the Oli government in Nepal.
- For India, the timing with India-China border stand-off further adds to the belief that Oli is backed by Beijing.

## 1.3 India's Military Ties with Nepal

### What is the issue?

- Relations between India and Nepal are currently strained with Nepal's Parliament approving a new map with Indian territories included.
- In this context, here is a look at the special ties between the Indian and Nepalese armed forces.

### How did India's military ties with Nepal evolve?

- Soldiers from Nepal form a significant part of Indian Army's legendary Gurkha regiment.

- India's military connection with Nepal goes back to the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.
- His army in Lahore enlisted Nepalese soldiers called Lahure or soldiers of fortune.
- British India raised the first battalion of the Gurkha Regiment as the Nasiri regiment on April 24, 1815.
- By the time the First World War started, there were 10 Gurkha regiments in the British Indian Army.
- When India got freedom, these regiments were divided between the British and Indian armies.
- This was done as per the Britain–India–Nepal Tripartite Agreement signed in November 1947.
- Six Gurkha regiments with a lakh-odd soldiers came to India.
- This went on to raise another regiment called '11 Gurkha Rifles'.
- This was to accommodate soldiers of 7th Gurkha Rifles and the 10th Gurkha Rifles, who chose not to transfer to the British Army.

### **What are the current practices?**

- Any Nepali can join the Indian Army, both as a jawan and as an officer.
- A citizen of Nepal can take the National Defence Academy or Combined Defence Services exams and join the Indian Army as an officer.
- The Nepalese army also sends its officers for training to India's military academies and combat colleges.
- The Gurkha regiments, which have 35 battalions, recruit a large number of troops from Nepal.
- There is a strong inter-personal ties between the soldiers and officers of the two countries due to the Gurkha regiments.
- Every year, battalions commission a tour of Nepal.
- Young officers from India trek to traditional recruiting areas in the rugged Himalayas.
- They meet the locals, and often live in villages with ex-servicemen.
- Both the officers and the troops are fiercely proud of their war cry 'Jai Maha Kali, Ayo Gorkhali', the khukri, and their command over Gurkhali language.
- [Khukri is a type of large, recurved traditional knife that originated in Nepal.]
- In the initial years after Independence, any officer who could not master Gurkhali in 3 months was shifted to another regiment.
- The Indian Chief of Army Staff can be the honorary chief of the Nepalese army.
- This convention dates back to 1972.
- Back then, the Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw, a Gurkha regiment officer, was made the honorary chief of the Nepalese army.
- Ever since, the Army chief of India is the honorary chief of the Nepalese army and vice-versa.

### **How about the rights of the soldiers from Nepal?**

- Soldiers from Nepal enjoy the same benefits as the India troops both during service and after retirement.
- They get the same medical facilities as the Indian soldiers.
- They can avail of healthcare facilities in India as well.
- Also, often, medical teams from the Indian Army tour Nepal.
- The British started giving the Nepalese soldiers pension only a few years ago.
- Unlike this, the Indian Army has never discriminated against the Nepalese soldiers.



## CHINA

### 1.4 Indo-China Border Disputes

#### Why in news?

At the Pangong Tso lake area on the LAC, there have been some clashes between Indian and Chinese soldiers.

#### What is LAC?

- The Line of Actual Control (LAC) is the disputed boundary between India and China.
- The LAC is divided into three sectors: western, middle and eastern.
- The countries disagree on the exact location of the LAC in various areas,
  1. India claims that the LAC is 3,488 km long,
  2. China believes it to be around 2,000 km long.
- The two armies try and dominate by patrol to the areas up to their respective perceptions of the LAC. This often brings them into conflict.
- The LAC mostly passes on the land, but Pangong Tso is a unique case where the LAC passes through the water as well.

#### Why is there a dispute in Pangong Tso?

- The points in the water at which the Indian claim ends and Chinese claim begins are not agreed upon mutually.
- Most of the clashes between the two armies occur in the disputed portion of the lake.
- As things stand, 45 km-long western portion of the lake is under Indian control, while the rest is under China's control.
- Eastern Ladakh forms the western sector, to the east of the Karakoram and Ladakh Ranges.
- It runs from the Karakoram Pass in the north to Chumur in the south, almost bordering Himachal Pradesh.
- Pangong Tso lies closer to the centre of this 826 km long disputed border in eastern Ladakh.

#### Where is Pangong Tso lake?

- Pangong Tso is a long narrow, deep, **endorheic** (landlocked) lake.
- It is situated at a height of more than 14,000 ft in the Ladakh Himalayas.
- The **brackish water lake** freezes over in winter, and becomes ideal for ice skating and polo.
- In the Ladakhi language, Pangong means extensive concavity, and Tso is lake in Tibetan.

#### What is the significance of the lake?

- Pangong Tso Lake has major tactical significance as it lies in the path of the Chushul approach.
- This approach is one of the main approaches that China can use for an offensive into Indian-held territory.
- Indian assessments show that a major Chinese offensive, if it comes, will flow across both the north and south of the lake.
- During the 1962 war, this was where China launched its main offensive.

#### Does the region have enough connectivity?

- Over the years, the Chinese have built **motorable roads** along their banks of the Pangong Tso.



- At the Huangyangtan base of the People's Liberation Army at Minningzhen, southwest of Yinchuan stands a massive to-scale model of this disputed area in Aksai Chin.
- It points to the importance accorded by the Chinese to the area.
- Even during peacetime, the difference in perception over where the LAC lies on the northern bank of the lake, makes this contested terrain.
- **1999road** - In 1999, the Army unit from the area was moved to Kargil for Operation Vijay.
- China took the opportunity to build 5 km of road inside Indian territory along the lake's bank.
- The 1999 road added to the extensive network of roads built by the Chinese in the area, which connect with each other and to the G219 Karakoram Highway.
- From one of these roads, Chinese positions physically overlook Indian positions on the northern tip of the Pangong Tso lake.

#### What are the "Fingers" in the lake?

- The barren mountains on the lake's northern bank, called the Chang Chenmo, jut forward in major spurs, which the Army calls "fingers".
- **Claims** - India claims that the LAC is coterminous with Finger 8, but it physically controls area only up to Finger 4.
- Chinese border posts are at Finger 8, while it believes that the LAC passes through Finger 2.
- Six years ago, the Chinese had attempted a permanent construction at Finger 4, which was demolished after Indians strongly objected to it.
- Chinese use light vehicles on the road to patrol up to Finger 2, which has a turning point for their vehicles.
- If they are stopped by an Indian patrol in between, asking them to return, it leads to confusion, as the vehicles can't turn back.
- **Recent tensions** - The Indian side patrols on foot, and before the recent tensions, could go up to Finger 8.
- Fracas between Indian and Chinese soldiers in May, 2020 happened at Finger 5, which led to "disengagement" between the two sides.
- The Chinese have now stopped the Indian soldiers moving beyond Finger 2. This is an eyeball-to-eyeball situation which is still developing.

#### What is the conflict on the water?

- On the water, the Chinese had a major advantage until a few years ago, their superior boats could literally run circles around the Indian boats.
- But India purchased better Tampa boats some 8 years ago, leading to a quicker and more aggressive response.
- Although there are well-established drills for disengagement of patrol boats of both sides, the conflicts on waters have led to tense situations.
- The Chinese have moved in more boats (the LX series) in the lake after the tensions which rose in the area from last month.
- The two sides agree upon the drill for the boats, as per the Standard Operating Procedure.

#### What is the drill?

- After a boat from the other side is spotted moving into own waters, an equal number of boats are despatched to confront the intruders.
- The boats stop about 20 feet apart, and both sides unfurl the banners.



- Both banners are on red cloth, with white lettering urging the other side to return in the interest of peace and tranquillity
- The patrol leaders on the respective boats then shout out the same messages using loudhailers.
- The standoff continues for about 10 minutes, each side asks for their banners to be lifted.
- Both sides then unfold another set of banners, which reads: “In the interest of peace and tranquillity we are returning to our side and we trust you will do the same”.
- The boats then move away and return to their respective sides.

#### What happens if a Chinese boat suddenly makes a move?

- The Chinese boats may try to make a move and get into Indian waters.
- Then, an Indian boat tails it, first giving it a chase and then circling it with high speeds.
- This tactical manoeuvre, called a “whirlpool”, traps the aggressor boat in high currents, forcing it to return as it begins to dip into an eddy.

### 1.5 India-China Galwan Faceoff

#### Why in news?

Violent clashes took place between Indian and Chinese soldiers at the Galwan valley in Ladakh along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), with reported casualties on both sides.

#### What exactly happened in the Galwan Valley?

- Tensions had been high in the area for few weeks.
- Large number of soldiers and military equipment were deployed along the LAC by both sides.
- Even though the LAC in Galwan Valley was never disputed by the two sides, the Chinese had moved into the Indian side of the LAC.
- Meeting was held at the level of Corps Commanders on 6 June 2020.
- After this, negotiations had been conducted between local military commanders of both the armies.
- They negotiated for a mutually agreed disengagement process.
- As part of that process, a buffer zone had been agreed to be created between the LAC and the junction of the Shyok and Galwan rivers.
- This was to avoid any faceoff between the two armies.
- The two armies were to move back by a kilometre each in that area as a first step.
- Colonel B Santosh Babu, who was monitoring this process, noticed that a Chinese camp was still existing in the area.
- He went to get it removed.
- This soon led to scuffle and blows being exchanged, resulting in deaths and injuries.
- More than 70 Indian soldiers were injured in a major scuffle.
- At least 20 soldiers including a Commanding Officer lost their lives on a single day.





### **How serious is the current standoff?**

- This is the first time after the 1962 War that soldiers have died in clashes on the India-China border in Ladakh.
- Even otherwise, the last deaths on the LAC came from attack on an Assam Rifles patrol in Arunachal Pradesh by the Chinese in 1975.
- But the last real military engagement between the two armies was at Nathu La in Sikkim in 1967.
- In this, 88 Indian soldiers lost their lives, and more than 300 Chinese soldiers were killed.
- But all these incidents were prior to the two countries signing various agreements, starting from 1993.
- The agreements were aimed at maintaining peace and tranquillity on the border.

### **What does the nature of standoff reveal?**

- Such a large number of soldiers were killed without firing a round.
- This means that these deaths were far more brutal than they would have been had guns and rifles been used.
- In most of these scuffles, the Chinese have used bats, clubs, sticks and stones to cause major injuries.
- Besides the use of these blunt objects, some soldiers are said to have been pushed into the fast-flowing Galwan river.
- Most of the deaths were due to injuries aggravated by the intense cold in the high-altitude area.
- However, that it remained restricted to a physical tussle points to the fact that there was no escalation to a kinetic level - rifles, howitzers, rockets, missiles, and fighter jets.
- China and India are both nuclear powers, and any escalation from the current situation is highly risky, and thus is less likely to happen.
- But this is only a slight hope seen in the light of the past.
- Notably, even at Nathu La in 1967, before the military engagement escalated to artillery guns and threats of fighter jets, there was a scuffle between the soldiers of the two sides.

### **Why were weapons not used?**

- The soldiers were not carrying weapons.
- This is as per the drill followed by both sides in the border areas to avoid inadvertent escalation by opening fire.
- This is in tune with the 1996 agreement between the two countries on Confidence Building Measures in the Military Field Along the LoAC.
- This imposed many restrictions on military equipment, exercises, blasts, and aircraft in the vicinity of the LAC.

### **What happened to the Chinese side?**

- The official statements put out by the Army and the MEA have no details of any deaths or injuries to Chinese soldiers.
- However, the first statement by the Army was amended to say that there were casualties “on both sides”.
- The Chinese government or the People's Liberation Army (PLA) there has not provided any details of soldiers killed or injured in the clash.
- The only numbers that have come from are from the news agency ANI.
- It has quoted unnamed sources claiming that as per radio transmission intercepts, 43 Chinese soldiers were either killed or injured in the clash.



- Another report in usnews.com has cited “American intelligence” to say that 35 Chinese troops, including an officer, are believed to have died.

#### Has the situation been defused?

- A meeting at the level of Major Generals of both armies took place at PP14 in the Galwan area.
- It brought the situation under control, and the Indian side was able to collect all the bodies.
- The Chinese were given permission to bring in helicopters to ferry their injured back.
- But tensions have already been running high at various places on the Ladakh border since May 2020.
- The latest incident has added to the tensions, but there have been no reports of any other clashes at the border.

### 1.6 Darbuk-Shyokh-Daulat Beg Oldie Road

#### Why in news?

The construction of the DSDBO road may be the most consequential reason why China is targeting Indian Territory along the LAC in Ladakh.

#### What is the current situation?

- Large numbers of Chinese troops had massed along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and had come a little further than they used to earlier.
- The Chinese build-up along the Galwan River valley region overlooks, and hence poses a direct threat to the Darbuk-Shyokh-Daulat Beg Oldie (DSDBO) road.
- The token mutual de-escalation of the two armies is expected to be completed over an extended period.
- The withdrawals are subject to reciprocal endorsement.



#### Where is DSDBO road?

- It is a 255-km long “all-weather” road, running almost parallel to the LAC at Aksai Chin.
- The 37 **prefabricated military truss bridges** along the road are what that makes the DSDBO an all-weather road.
- It meanders through elevations ranging between 13,000 ft and 16,000 ft.
- It took India’s Border Roads Organisation (BRO) almost two decades to construct this road.
- In 2019, 500-m-long Bailey Bridge (the world’s highest bridge) was inaugurated on the road.
- Its strategic importance is that it connects Leh to Daulat Beg Oldie (DBO), virtually at the base of the Karakoram Pass that separates China’s Xinjiang Autonomous Region from Ladakh.

#### Where is DBO?

- DBO is the northernmost corner of Indian territory in Ladakh, in the area better known in Army parlance as Sub-Sector North.
- DBO has the **world’s highest airstrip**.
- This airstrip was originally built during the 1962 war.
- It was abandoned until 2008, when the Indian Air Force (IAF) revived it as one of its many Advanced Landing Grounds (ALGs) along the LAC.

### What is the importance of the DSDBO highway?

- The DSDBO highway provides the Indian military **access to the section of Tibet-Xinjiang highway** that passes through Aksai Chin.
- The road runs almost parallel to the LAC in Aksai Chin that China occupied in the 1950s.
- The DSDBO's emergence seemingly panicked China.
- This is evidenced by the 2013 intrusion by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China into the nearby Depsang Plains, lasting nearly 3 weeks.

### How is India protecting this region?

- DBO itself is less than 10 km west of the LAC at Aksai Chin.
- A military outpost was created in DBO in reaction to China's occupation of Aksai Chin.
- It is at present manned by a combination of the Army's Ladakh Scouts and the paramilitary Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP).
- There are additional strategic considerations in the area.
- To the west of DBO is the region where China has a boundary with Pakistan in the Gilgit-Baltistan area.
- This is also the critical region where China is currently constructing the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (PoK), to which India has objected.
- This is the region where Pakistan ceded over 5,180 sq km of PoK to China in 1963 under a Sino-Pakistan Boundary Agreement, contested by India.

### Is there an alternate route?

- An alternate route exists from Leh to DBO through the 17,500-ft-high Sasser Pass.
- [Sasser Pass was part of ancient Silk Route connecting Leh to Yarkand.]
- It leads from the Nubra Valley into the Upper Shyok Valley en route to China's Karakoram Pass.
- This indicates the strategic interlinking of the entire disputed region between India and China and to a lesser extent, Pakistan.
- For most of the year, Sasser pass is snow-bound and inaccessible.
- The BRO is currently building a "glaciated road" between Sasoma (north of Leh, near the Nubra river) to the Sasser Pass, but it could take several years to complete.
- But even when it is, the alternate DBDSO will remain critical to the Army and its defences in the region.

## 1.7 India Bans Chinese Apps

### What is the issue?

- The Centre has officially banned 59 Chinese apps.
- This ban has brought to the fore the 'national security versus digital rights' question.

### Why did India ban these apps?

- This ban came after clashes erupted between the Chinese and Indian troops in Galwan valley in Ladakh.
- The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) said that it has received complaints that these apps misuse user data.
- There are reports that these apps transmit users' data in an unauthorised manner to servers that have locations outside India.



- The MeitY said that many citizens have shared their concerns regarding the data security and risk to privacy relating to operation of certain apps.

#### **How did India block these apps?**

- The MeitY invoked its power under the **Section 69A** of the Information Technology (I-T) Act.
- The MeitY said that, using this Act, it blocked these apps to safeguard the sovereignty and integrity of India.

#### **Why the usage of Section 69A of the I-T Act criticized?**

- It is criticised that the Act isn't designed for data protection compliance.
- It is also argued that Section 69A is set for violations that are more specific rather than broad general violations.
- The 'security of the state' ground is what the Union as well as many State governments have unfortunately taken very wide views of.
- However, data protection is not one of the grounds.
- More importantly, Section 69A is a censorship power, which is not well designed to protect people's rights.

#### **What are the other criticisms?**

- The concerns around national security or other geopolitical concerns have intervened to result in this censorship administrative action.
- Banning of the apps is seen as a proxy for a larger geopolitical battle.
- The test of proportionate restriction may have not been met.
- The government didn't follow the three-part test while taking such steps that may intrude upon people's fundamental rights and freedoms.
- [Three-part test - That requires action that is very clear; that could not have been done by a less intrusive means; and that follows standards of necessity and proportionality.]

#### **What was the problem with the process followed by India?**

- India should have first investigated the entities.
- It should have then seen whether other mechanisms like orders, fines, etc., could be followed.
- Instead, the Centre has done an emergency blocking order.
- Then, it has said that these platforms should perhaps come to them and make a case as to why they should be unblocked.
- The Centre has said that, only after such a case, these interim orders could be overridden.

#### **How India sees digital rights?**

- India is a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- So, it has a basic understanding that regulating the Internet by governments has to respect basic human rights standards.
- In India, it is very clear that our fundamental right to free speech and expression applies to online content too.

#### **How the trade-off could be resolved?**

- Section 69A of the I-T Act is not a new power that the government is commandeering during a time of national security emergency.
- But, the necessity of blocking the app must be very clearly made out by the government.



- In this way, we can resolve the question of where we can draw the line between this trade-off between national security and rights.

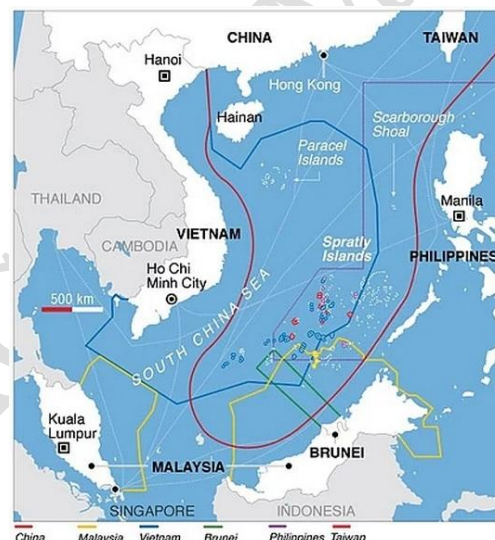
## 1.8 Dispute over Paracel and Spratly Islands

### Why in news?

- China is busy increasing its presence in the South China Sea.
- This has again brought the dispute over Spratly and Paracel Islands to the fore.

### What is the Spratly Islands dispute about?

- This relates to the tussle over the ownership of the Spratly Islands archipelago and nearby geographical features like corals reefs, cays etc.
- The ongoing territorial dispute is among China, Taiwan, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Malaysia.
- Since 1968, these nations have engaged in varying kinds of military occupation of the islands and the surrounding waters.
- The only exception is Brunei that has contained its objections to the use of its maritime waters for commercial fishing.
- The Spratly Islands are largely uninhabited.
- But there is a possibility that they may have large reserves of untapped natural resources.
- However, due to the ongoing dispute, there have been few initiatives to explore the scale of these reserves.
- So, the amount of natural resources present there is based on speculation and extrapolation by studying resources available in nearby islands.
- In the 1970s, oil was discovered in neighbouring islands, specifically off the coast of Palawan.
- This discovery ramped up territorial claims by these countries.
- Over the years, US government agencies have claimed that there is little to no oil and natural gas in these islands.
- But these reports have done little to reduce the territorial dispute.



### What is the Paracel Islands dispute about?

- The Paracel Islands dispute is slightly more complex.
- This archipelago is a collection of 130 islands and coral reefs and is located in the South China Sea.
- This is almost equidistant from China and Vietnam.
- Beijing says that references to the Paracel Islands as a part of China sovereign territory can be found in 14th century writings from the Song Dynasty.
- Vietnam on the other hand, says that historical texts from at least the 15th century show that the islands were a part of its territory.
- These islands also find mention in records starting from the 16th century by explorers who led expeditions to the East.
- These include the Portuguese, British, Dutch, French and Spanish.
- They have all written about the Paracel Islands in various texts.



- Colonial powers of the French-Indochina further accelerated the tensions with regard to the Islands due to their colonial policies in the 20th century.
- By 1954, tensions had dramatically increased between China and Vietnam over the archipelago.
- In January 1974, China and Vietnam fought over their territorial disputes after which China took over control of the islands.
- In retaliation, in 1982, Vietnam said it had extended its administrative powers over these islands.
- In 1999, Taiwan jumped into the fray laying its claim over the entire archipelago.
- Since 2012, China, Taiwan and Vietnam have attempted to reinforce their claims on the territory.
- They have engaged in construction of government administrative buildings, tourism, land-reclamation initiatives etc.
- Countries have also established and expanded military presence on the archipelago.

#### **What is the U.S.'s role?**

- The US has no territorial claims in the South China Sea.
- But it is known to send its naval force into the waters each time there are provocative developments in the waters, particularly angering China.
- Following China's renaming of the islands, the US sent in an assault ship and a guided missile cruiser into the waters near Spratly and Paracel Islands, off the coast of Malaysia.
- Soon after, Chinese and Australian warships also entered the fray. The arrival of American warships, indicate that the US's presence may only serve to heighten tensions.

### **PAKISTAN**

#### **1.9 Ceasefire Violations at LoC with Pakistan**

##### **Why in news?**

Pakistani troops violated the ceasefire along the Line of Control (LoC) in Kamalkote sector of Jammu and Kashmir.

##### **What are the recent happenings?**

- Shelling and retaliations along the LoC with Pakistan is becoming an everyday occurrence.
- All of May 2020, the PirPanjal range, which fronts the Kashmir Valley, has seen mortar and small arms firing.
- The recent firing led to the unfortunate death of Sepoy Lungabui Abonmli.
- Sepoy Abonmli is the third soldier to succumb to shelling in this area in recent times.
- Two other soldiers with injuries were airlifted to the Command Hospital in Udhampur, due to shelling in Poonch sector.
- The recent shelling in Haji Pir in Uri claimed the life of Akhtar Begum, a civilian.
- This has been a worrying trend, as when the shells reach deeper they fall in residential areas, in villages such as Churunda and Silikote.
- When shells begin raining, villagers panic, leave their homes and run further, to temporary shelters.

##### **How are the diplomatic ties currently?**

- Unfortunately, aspects of relations with Pakistan in other spheres are not encouraging as well.
- Two personnel from the Indian mission in Islamabad were suddenly missing.

- All this implies further breakdown in relations.
- It makes evident that India and Pakistan are unable even to adhere to reciprocal protocols regarding staff posted in the missions.
- Earlier, India expelled two Pakistan High Commission officials, Abid Hussain Amid and Mohd Tahir Khan, on charges of espionage.
- Whether or not it is a tit-for-tat reaction by Pakistan for this, India must take steps to ensure its diplomatic personnel do not face such harassment.

### 1.10 Pakistan's New Map

#### Why in news?

Pakistan's new map asserts its claims on J&K, Siachen and Sir Creek, and lays a new claim to Junagadh.

#### What are Pakistan's claims?

- **Jammu and Kashmir** – Pakistan map has claimed to all of Jammu and Kashmir, but not Ladakh.
- This claim goes against its own commitment to adjudicate the future of all six parts of the erstwhile royal state of Jammu-Kashmir with India.
- [Parts of the erstwhile royal state of Jammu-Kashmir - Jammu, Kashmir, Ladakh, Gilgit-Baltistan, PoK and Aksai Chin]
- The new map draws a line demarcating Gilgit-Baltistan separately from the Pakistan occupied Kashmir.
- It renamed Jammu and Kashmir as Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir.
- **Siachen and Sir Creek** - Both the places were under several discussions between India and Pakistan.
- Pakistan's unilateral claim over them is not helpful or conducive to future resolution.
- **Junagadh** - The map has made a new claim over Junagadh, which opens up a completely new dispute.
- Junagadh, a former princely state, was in contention at the time of Partition.
- The issue was successfully resolved after a referendum was conducted there in February 1948.
- In this referendum, an overwhelming 95% of the state's residents voted to stay with India.
- Junagadh's accession to India was accepted by Pakistan.
- **Ladakh** - The new map leaves the claim line with Ladakh unclear.

#### How did India respond?

- Pakistan's map appears to have reset several agreements with India that have been concretised over the past 70 years.
- The Ministry of External Affairs has termed Pakistan's announcement of a new map as an exercise in political absurdity.
- It accused Pakistan of attempting a form of territorial aggrandisement supported by cross-border terrorism.

### 1.11 Pakistan's SRO listing

#### Why in news?

Pakistan Foreign Affairs Ministry (MFA) issued a Statutory Regulatory Order (SRO) listing recently.

#### What is SRO listing?

- This SRO lists 88 fugitive terrorists, which Dawood Ibrahim and the LeT's Zaki Ur Rahman Lakhvi..

- The SRO directed its officials to implement the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) committee resolutions against them.
- It directed the officials to ensure that everyone on the list does not have access to funding, arms or travel.

### What does Pakistan deny?

- Pakistan's MFA denied that the SRO listing was new.
- The listing had UNSC and Interpol information on at least five Pakistani passports and three Karachi addresses that belonged to Dawood.
- [Dawood - The former underworld don and the accused mastermind of Mumbai's 1993 blasts.]
- However, the MFA says that the SRO did not imply an admission that he lives there.
- Instead, it argues that the move was a routine one, as a part of Pakistan's international commitments.
- Pakistan is required to align its domestic terror listings with those issued by the UNSC's ISIL and Al-Qaeda Sanctions Committee.

### Does Pakistan's domestic listing align with the international ones?

- The domestic listing is maintained under the country's Anti-Terrorism Act by the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA).
- Thus far, the domestic list had not included either Dawood or Lakhvi.
- [Lakhvi was tried for the 26/11 attacks but was granted bail in 2014.]
- In contrast, LeT chief Hafiz Saeed and JeM chief Masood Azhar, who were designated by the UNSC in 2019, were added to the domestic list.

#### Financial Action Task Force (FATF)

- Headquartered in Paris, the FATF was set up by the G7 countries in 1989.
- **Objective** - FATF acts as an international watchdog on issues of money laundering and financing of terrorism.
- It is empowered to curtail financing of UN-designated terrorist groups.
- It is to limit the concerned countries from sourcing financial flows internationally and thereby constraining them economically.
- **Members** - FATF has 39 members, which comprise 37 member jurisdictions and 2 regional organisations.
- India became a full member in 2010.

### What are the confusions?

- The MFA claims that the listing that included Dawood and Lakhvi had been issued earlier.
- This is a claim that is countered by India, which says this is a first.
- The confusion over the SRO and Pakistan's disclaimer says that its government lacks a seriousness of purpose when it comes to its actions against all terrorists.

### What are some questions?

- If the SRO had named these terrorists in past orders, there is a question why they were not added to its domestic listing.
- If it has included Dawood in its own SRO, then for the MFA to say it is paying lip service to the FATF directives, is a matter of concern.
- Finally, there is a question whether Pakistan has done anything to investigate, prosecute and apprehend these listed terrorists.

### Is Pakistan obligated to answer these questions?

- In October 2020, Pakistan is expected to face some of these questions at the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) plenary session.
- This FATF session will decide if its actions,
  1. Merit a reprieve from the grey or "increased monitoring" list, or

2. Downgrade it to the black or “high-risk jurisdiction” list.

- If downgraded, Pakistan will have to face sanctions.
- So, Pakistan needs to show proof of its actions on the ground, rather than going back and forth on the paperwork.

## 1.12 Pakistan’s Terrorism Statement

### Why in news?

India has strongly protested to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) over Pakistan’s statement to a special discussion on terrorism.

### What is the statement?

- The statement was Pakistan’s mission to the U.N.
- It was published as something delivered at an open debate on a report by the U.N. Secretary General.

### What are the problems?

- **Undelivered** - The statement was never actually delivered.
- The only countries invited to the discussion were permanent and non-permanent members of the UNSC and officials briefing them.
- Neither does the UNSC take cognisance of statements by non-participating countries.
- **Allegations against India** - The statement appeared to be an exercise by Pakistan in repeating its allegations against India.
- In the letter, Pakistan’s Ambassador sought to portray Pakistan as a victim of cross-border terrorism.
- The letter claimed that Pakistan decimated al-Qaeda in the region.
- The statement listed “four types of terrorism” Pakistan confronts, each of which was attributed to India.

### What are the allegations?

- **TTP** - The first allegation included some of the attacks in Pakistan carried out by the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).
- According to Pakistan, TTP has been funded by an Indian terror syndicate based in Afghanistan.
- That claim has been rejected by the UNSC in part already.
- **Hired mercenaries** - Pakistan claimed that India has hired mercenaries to carry out attacks in Pakistan.
- **Hindutva terrorism** - It says that the policies of the Indian government amount to Hindutva terrorism.
- It gave specific references to the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the Ram temple construction.
- **State terrorism** - The oft-repeated one is about Indian government actions in Jammu and Kashmir which it refers to as state terrorism.

### Does India have to worry about these allegations?

- India has described these allegations as preposterous and laughable.
- India need not worry about its reputation, given its acclaimed role in fighting terror and cooperating on the international stage to deny terrorists funding and safe haven.
- Pakistan has consistently done the opposite.
- It has been continuously grey-listed at the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).
- There are several names of Pakistani terror groups and individuals present in the U.N. terror lists.



## What could India do?

- India should take the Pakistani attempt to build its case seriously.
- It should pre-empt its larger strategy of painting India in a poor light ahead of its tenure at the UNSC 2021-2022 and the upcoming scrutiny process at the FATF.

### 1.13 Terror Funding & Pakistan

#### Why in News?

The Beijing meeting of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) reveal that Pakistan had progressed in its efforts to avoid a blacklisting.

#### What is FATF?

- Headquartered in Paris, it was set up in 1989 by the G7 countries.
- **Objective** - FATF acts as an 'international watchdog' on issues of money-laundering and financing of terrorism.
- It is empowered to curtail financing of UN-designated terrorist groups.
- It is to limit the concerned countries from sourcing financial flows internationally and thereby constraining them economically.
- **Members** - FATF has 39 members which comprise 37 member jurisdictions and 2 regional organisations, representing most major financial centres in all parts of the globe.
- India became a full member in 2010.

#### What is the story behind?

- In a plenary meeting held in 2018, the FATF had determined that Pakistan was to be placed on the grey list.
- It also presented Pakistan with a 27-point list of actions.
- These included freezing the funds of UN Security Council entities such as 26/11 mastermind Hafiz Saeed and the LeT, the JeM and other Taliban-affiliated groups.
- The actions also entailed a sustained effort to bring legal action against these groups.
- It called for changes to Pakistani law in line with global standards for measures against money laundering and financing terrorism.
- Unlike in October 2019, when Pakistan had completed five points, the Beijing meeting has cleared it on 14 points.

#### What will happen in the 2020 plenary meeting?

- The plenary meeting of the FATF is expected to be held in Paris soon.
- In this meeting, the decision will be taken on whether to,
  1. Keep Pakistan on the current "grey list",
  2. Downgrade it to a "black list", or
  3. Let it off altogether for the moment.

#### What will Pakistan's progress mean to India?

- Pakistan's progress will come as a disappointment to India.
- India wants more scrutiny of Pakistan's support to terror groups lest Islamabad feels it has been let off the hook and there are a few points to consider.



- **The grey listing is not new.** Pakistan was placed on it in 2012 and later removed in 2015 after it passed a National Action Plan to deal with terrorism.
- This last grey list period has seen some **Indian demands met**, including the charge sheeting of Hafiz Saeed for terror financing, and the addition of JeM chief to the UNSC 1267 list.
- Although the FATF is a technical organisation, the **geopolitics and bilateral deals play a part in deciding outcomes**.
- As a result, India must study the politics behind Pakistan's FATF progress.

#### 1.14 Hafiz Saeed Conviction

##### Why in News?

An anti-terrorism court in Pakistan has sentenced a hard line Islamist cleric Hafiz Mohammad Saeed to 11 years in jail for financing terrorist operations.

##### How this conviction is viewed?

- Hafiz Saeed, the alleged mastermind of the 2008 Mumbai attacks, was tried to be protected by the Pakistani government for years.
- Along with Saeed, his close aide Malik Zafar Iqbal has been sentenced to 5½ years by an anti-terrorism court.
- This conviction vindicated India's years-long position that Saeed had been using his organisations to finance terrorist activities.
- While the conviction is a welcome step, Pakistan has to do more if it wants the international community to take its self-declared resolve to fight terror seriously.

##### Why should Pakistan do more?

- This is because Pakistan's actions in the past against terrorist outfits have hardly been convincing.
- It started cracking down on Saeed's groups in 2018 only after it was threatened to be put on the "grey list" of the FATF.
- [FATF (Financial Action Task Force) - An inter-governmental body fighting money laundering and terror financing].
- The Pakistan government endorsed the UN ban on these organisations in February 2018, just a few days ahead of an FATF meeting.
- Despite these actions, Pakistan was placed on the grey list.

##### Why the timing of the conviction matters?

- Unsurprisingly, the conviction of Saeed and Iqbal comes a few days ahead of another crucial FATF meeting.
- In the October 2019 meeting, FATF warned Pakistan to take measures for the complete elimination of terror financing and money laundering.
- If the FATF is not satisfied with Pakistan's actions, the country faces the risk of being downgraded to the "black list".
- This downgrading could bring tough sanctions on its financial system and it is evidently under international pressure.
- So, the question is whether Pakistan's actions are half-hearted steps aimed at avoiding the wrath of the international community or part of a genuine drive against terror.

##### How did Pakistan protect Saeed?

- Pakistan had avoided taking action against him and his groups for years.



- Saeed was put under house arrest several times, only to be released once the international attention turned away.
- The fundamental problem is Pakistan's policy of exporting terrorism to its neighbours for geopolitical leverage.

## AFGHANISTAN

### 1.15 Afghan Peace Process and India

#### What is the issue?

- Recently, the UN Secretariat held a meeting of what it calls the "6+2+1" group on regional efforts to support peace in Afghanistan.
- Though sidelined from regional discussions, India must still pursue the ample chances in the peace process.

#### What is the "6+2+1" group?

- The group includes six neighbouring countries of Afghanistan namely China, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.
- The '2' indicates the two global players - the U.S. and Russia, and '1', Afghanistan itself.
- India's absence was evident, given its historical and strategic ties with Afghanistan.

#### Is this rejection for the first time?

- This is not the first time that India is kept out of the discussions concerning Afghanistan.
- In December 2001, the Indian team led by special envoy Satinder Lambah arrived in Germany's Petersberg hotel near Bonn.
- [It was where the famous Bonn agreement on Afghanistan was negotiated.]
- They found no reservations being made for them at the official venue.
- In January 2010, India was invited to attend the "London Conference" on Afghanistan.
- But India was left out of the room during a crucial meeting that decided on opening talks with the Taliban.

#### How has India responded?

- In both 2001 and 2010, India fought back its exclusion successfully.
- At the Bonn agreement, Ambassador Lambah ensured that Northern Alliance leaders came to a consensus to accept Hamid Karzai as the Chairman of the interim arrangement that replaced the Taliban regime.
- After the 2010 conference, New Delhi redoubled its efforts with Kabul.
- In 2011, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Afghanistan President Karzai signed the historic Strategic Partnership Agreement.
- This was Afghanistan's first such agreement with any country.

#### What is India's present stance?

- In 2020, the reason given for keeping India out of the discussions was supposedly that it holds no "boundary" with Afghanistan.
- But in fact, it is because New Delhi has never announced its support for the U.S.-Taliban peace process.
- India's resistance to publicly talking to the Taliban has made it an awkward interlocutor at these discussions.
- India maintains that only an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned, and Afghan-controlled process can be allowed.

- This is a principled one, but has no takers.
- Kabul, or the Ashraf Ghani government, does not lead, own or control the reconciliation process today.
- The U.S.-Taliban peace deal only means that the Taliban will become more potent as the U.S. withdraws soldiers from the country.
- It will hold more sway in the inter-Afghan process as well, as the U.S. withdraws funding for the government in Kabul.

#### **How has India's stance affected it?**

- New Delhi's decision to find grounds for Ashraf Ghani government has had a two-fold effect:
  1. its voice in the reconciliation process has been limited
  2. it has weakened its position with other leaders of the deeply divided democratic setup in Kabul such as the former chief executive Abdullah Abdullah
- Meanwhile, India's presence inside Afghanistan, painstakingly built up since 2001, is being threatened anew by terror groups.
- These include the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP), believed to be backed by Pakistan's establishment.
- The recent brutal attack that killed 25 at a gurudwara in Kabul was meant for the embassy in Kabul.
- Intelligence agencies had also warned of suicide car bomb threats to the consulates in Jalalabad and Herat in December 2019.
- The government has said that the novel coronavirus pandemic prompted its decision to clear out both consulates in April 2020.
- But the truth is that a full security reassessment is under way for them.
- Either way, India's diplomatic strength in Afghanistan should not appear to be in retreat just when it is needed the most.

#### **What affects India's goodwill in Afghanistan?**

- India must consider the damage done to the vast reservoir of goodwill India enjoys in Afghanistan because of recent events here in India.
- This especially includes the controversy over the Citizenship (Amendment) Act.
- Afghanistan's majority-Muslim citizens, many of whom have treated India as a second home, have felt cut out of the move.
- The building blocks of that goodwill are India's assistance in infrastructure projects, health care, education, trade and food security.
- The reports of anti-Muslim rhetoric and incidents of violence in India have disturbed India's example as a pluralistic, inclusive democracy that inspired many.

#### **What should India do?**

- New Delhi must move swiftly to regain the upper hand in the narrative in Afghanistan.
- The following should assure India a leading position in Afghanistan's regional formulation:
  - i. India's assistance of more than \$3 billion in projects
  - ii. trade of about \$1 billion
  - iii. a \$20 billion projected development expenditure of an alternate route through Chabahar
  - iv. India's support to the Afghan National Army, bureaucrats, doctors and other professionals for training



- Three major projects include the Afghan Parliament, the Zaranj-Delaram Highway, and the Afghanistan-India Friendship Dam (Salma dam).
- These and other hundreds of small development projects have cemented India's position there, regardless of Pakistan's attempts to undermine it.
- So, it would be a mistake, at this point, if India's support is only to Kabul or the Ghani government.
- The Indian government must strive to endure that its aid and assistance is broad-based, to centres outside the capital (Kabul) as well.
- This should be the case even if some lie in areas held by the Taliban.
- India must also pursue opportunities to fulfil its role in the peace efforts in Afghanistan, starting with efforts to bridge the Ghani-Abdullah divide.
- An understanding between Iran and the U.S. on Afghanistan is necessary for lasting peace as well, and India could play a mediatory part.
- India should also use the UN's call for a pause in conflicts during the novel coronavirus pandemic, to ensure a hold on hostilities with Pakistan.
- Above all, New Delhi must consider the appointment of a special envoy, as it has been done in the past, to deal with its efforts in Afghanistan.

## BHUTAN

### 1.16 India-China-Bhutan - Territorial Claims

#### Why in news?

For the third time since early June 2020, China repeated its claim that Bhutan's eastern boundary was a "disputed" area.

#### What was the recent claim?

- Its first claim was at a UNDP-led Global Environment Facility (GEF) conference on 2-3 June 2020.
- Back then, Chinese representative tried to stop funding for the Sakteng forest reserve in Bhutan's eastern district of Trashigang.
- The forest, notably, has a common boundary with Arunachal Pradesh's Tawang district.

#### Why are the claims unreasonable?

- China has not objected earlier to funding provided to the sanctuary at the GEF.
- The Trashigang area does not share a boundary with China.
- Whatever the origins of the claim, Chinese officials have not raised the eastern boundary in 24 rounds of talks with Bhutan, that began in 1984.
- Thus far, talks have been only about the Pasamlung and Jakarlung valleys in Bhutan's north.
- The Doklam and other pasturelands to the west are also part of the talks; the areas that come up to the tri-junction point with India.







### What are China's suggestions and Bhutan's response?

- China referred to a “package solution” for the dispute.
- It seems to refer to an offer made in the 1990s to swap the northern and western areas.
- But this is something that Bhutan rejected, given India’s concerns.
- Bhutan’s response at the start was to reject China’s claim at the GEF, and it was able to secure the funding.
- Subsequently the Bhutanese Embassy in Delhi served a démarche to the Chinese Embassy.
- [Bhutan does not have diplomatic relations with China.]
- But the Chinese MFA (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) kept repeating the claim.
- Bhutan has now appeared to take a firm view of China’s claims.
- It has said that all disputes would be taken up in the next round of China-Bhutan talks.
- [The last round of talks was in 2016.
- Talks have been put off due to the Doklam stand-off in 2017, elections in 2018, and the recent pandemic.]

### What possibly are China's motives?

- In Bhutan's case, the Chinese claim is seen much as a pressure tactic.
- It is an attempt to hurry the scheduling of the next meeting (China-Bhutan).
- It could also be an attempt to gain leverage in the boundary talks.
- India, on the other hand, is already dealing with Chinese aggression across the Line of Actual Control.
- So, the Sakteng claim could be a diversionary tactic.
- It could also be a move aimed at creating a divide between India and Bhutan.
- More significantly, by claiming Bhutan’s eastern boundary, China is attempting to strengthen its claims over Arunachal Pradesh.

## 2. BILATERAL ISSUES

### 2.1 “Developed” Tag for India

#### Why in News?

USA has removed India from its list of countries that are classified as “developing” economies for trade purposes.

#### What is the story so far?

- Apart from India, the US has also removed some other countries from the list.
- Now, these countries will be classified as “developed” economies, thus stripping them of various trade benefits.
- This move has led to doubts over the chances of a trade deal being signed between India and the US, during their President’s visit to India in February 2020.

#### What is the “developing country” status?

- The office of the United States Trade Representative maintains a list of countries that it classifies as developing, developed, and least developed.
- The “developing” countries are allowed to export certain goods to the US without being hit by punitive tariffs that are usually imposed on goods from “developed” countries.
- The “developing country” status owes its origin to the **US Trade Act of 1974**.
- This Act authorized the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) to help poor countries develop faster.
- These benefits were extended further under the World Trade Organization, wherein rich countries grant trade benefits to countries that classified themselves as poor.
- About two-thirds of countries that are WTO members classify themselves as “developing” countries and avail benefits.

#### Is such a classification justified?

- Any classification of whether a country is “developing” or not is bound to be **arbitrary**.
- Some people see the economic progress that India and China have achieved over the last few decades as reason enough to get rid of their special status.
- Others point to the various development indicators in which India and China still lag behind the rich world.
- Further, the opinion on whether such a classification is required in the first place is divided.

#### Why is India being stripped of this status?

- The US has repeatedly accused fast-growing countries such as India and China of wrongly claiming trade benefits that are reserved for truly “developing” countries.
- This, it believes, is enough reason to scale back the various trade benefits.
- It has further cited the share of global trade enjoyed by India and China and their membership in the G20 club to argue that they enjoy significant economic power.
- Therefore, it has sought to renegotiate trade deals with countries; essentially trying to make these deals more ‘fair’ to the US interests.

#### How will India be impacted by this move?

- India had been one of the largest beneficiaries under the GSP, with over 2,000 goods exempted from import tariffs.
- But, in 2019, the Trump administration stripped off this special benefit.



- With the current change in India's status under the USTR's classification, the task of reclaiming the lost GSP benefits now becomes even harder.

### **How will the US decision affect global trade?**

- Any move to end duty-free access for foreign goods into the US, will increase the overall tax burden on goods crossing international borders.
- This will add further pressure on the global economy, which has already witnessed a slowing of growth this year.
- The countries that are stripped of their "developing" status may retaliate by imposing tariffs on US import.
- If so, it could raise further the growth effects of a tariff war.
- Recently, India offered to scale back tariffs on American dairy and other products that are imported into India.
- This came after the US complained about the restricted access that its companies have to developing countries.
- If such trade tactics manage to bring down trade barriers on both sides, it can benefit the global economy.
- But, the US and its various warring trading partners look to protect their domestic producers rather than consumers.
- So, a general fall in tariffs across the board may seem unlikely.

## **2.2 Blue Dot Network**

### **Why in News?**

The Blue Dot Network was a proposal which was on table when the US President Donald Trump made a maiden visit to India.

### **What is the Blue Dot network?**

- It will **certify infrastructure and development projects**.
- It was jointly launched by the US (Development Finance Corporation), Japan (Japanese Bank for International Cooperation) and Australia (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade).
- It is a multi-stakeholder initiative that was launched in November 2019 on the sidelines of the 35th ASEAN Summit (Thailand).

### **What does the initiative aim to do?**

- It aims to promote high quality and trusted standards for global infrastructure development by bringing together the governments, the private sector and civil society.
- The infrastructure projects will be vetted and approved by the network depending on standards, as per which, the projects should meet certain global infrastructure principles.
- The projects that are approved will get a "Blue Dot", thereby setting universal standards of excellence.
- This will attract private capital to projects in developing and emerging economies.
- The proposal for the Blue Dot network is part of the US's Indo-Pacific strategy which aims at countering China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

### **Why the proposal is countering BRI?**

- BRI is a programme that wants to connect Asia with Africa and Europe.
- It wants to connect them via land and maritime networks along six corridors with the aim of improving regional integration, increasing trade and stimulating economic growth.
- The name was coined in 2013 by China's President Xi Jinping.

- It consists of a belt of rail routes, highways, oil and gas pipelines and other infrastructure projects extending from Xian in Central China through Central Asia, Russia, West Asia and Europe.
- There is also a branch extending from Kashgar in Xinjiang to Gwadar in Balochistan via Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK).

#### **What are the areas in which Blue Dot need a lot of work?**

- **Financing** - The BRI involves direct financing that will give countries in need of immediate short-term relief.
- But, the Blue Dot Network is not a direct financing initiative and therefore may not be what some developing countries need.
- The question is whether the Blue Dot is offering first-world solutions to third-world countries.
- **Coordination** - The Blue Dot will require coordination among multiple stakeholders when it comes to grading projects.
- Given the past experience of Quad, the countries involved in it are still struggling to put a viable bloc.
- Therefore, it remains to be seen how Blue Dot fares in the long run.
- [Quad - An informal strategic dialogue between the US, Japan, Australia and India.]

#### **How has the US's foreign policy towards China evolved?**

- Prior to 2001, US foreign policy was focused towards integrating China into its plan.
- But this changed after China's emergence as a global superpower.
- Under Barack Obama, US foreign policy started shifting focus to Asia, where the US wanted to counter China's growing influence.
- The National Security Strategy (NSS) under Trump says that the China seeks to displace the US in the Indo-Pacific region.
- It also says that it wants to expand the reaches of its state-driven economic model, and reorder the region in its favour.
- The US sees China's infrastructure investments and trade strategies as reinforcing its geopolitical aspirations.
- As per the US, China's efforts to militarise outposts in the South China Sea restricts the free movement of trade and undermines regional stability.

### **2.3 Modi-Morrison Summit**

#### **Why in news?**

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Australian premier, Scott Morrison recently held a virtual summit.

#### **What is the significance?**

- India has for long been preoccupied with the perennial challenges in the neighbourhood and the ties with the great powers.
- It has, in the past, missed out on the opportunities for productive partnerships with the middle powers.
- Few countries have been underestimated in India such as Australia.
- The recent summit thus is an effort to plug that gap in India's diplomatic tradition.

#### **What are Australia's strengths?**

- With a GDP of more than US\$1.4 trillion, Australia is the 13th largest economy in the world.
- This is followed closely behind Russia that stands at \$1.6 trillion.
- Australia is rich in natural resources that India's growing economy needs.

- It also has huge reservoirs of strength in higher education, scientific and technological research.
- In the global diplomatic arena, Australia has a significant place than is believed.
- Its armed forces, hardened by international combat, are widely respected.
- Canberra's intelligence establishment is valued in many parts of the world.
- Australia has deep economic, political and security connections with the ASEAN.
- It also has a strategic partnership with one of the leading non-aligned nations, Indonesia.
- Canberra has a little "sphere of influence" of its own in the South Pacific (now under threat from Chinese penetration).

### How relevant are these for India?

- All these Australian strengths should be of interest and value to India.
- India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, believed Australia is a natural part of Asia.
- He invited Australia to participate in the Asian Relations Conference in Delhi in 1947, a few months before independence.
- But the rest of the 20th century did not see much cooperation between the two countries.

### How has the relationship been in the last few decades?

- India's nuclear tests in 1998 have been significant in changing the course of relationship with Australia.
- The following political differences between Delhi and Canberra complicated the possibilities that the end of the Cold War opened up.
- But since 2000, Canberra has taken consistent political initiative to advance ties with India.
- It has worked on resolving the nuclear difference and expanding the template of engagement.
- Notably, there was a gap of nearly three decades between Rajiv Gandhi's visit to Australia in 1986 and Modi's trip in 2014.

### What are the challenges?

- It was exactly in that gap of nearly three decades that China transformed its relationship with Australia.
- Delhi's temptation to judge nations on the basis of their alignments with other powers stands in contrast to Beijing.
- Beijing always seems to put interests above ideology.
- China promotes interdependence with a targeted middle power.
- It then turns it into political influence and tries to weaken its alignment with the rival powers.
- However, now, India-Australia ties are being renewed with India's new political will to liberate its relations from ideological prejudice.

### What are the scopeful areas of cooperation?

- The Indian diaspora, now estimated at nearly 7,00,000, is the fastest growing in Australia.
- This has become an unexpected positive factor in the bilateral relations.
- Besides, there is common membership of many groupings like the G-20, East Asia Summit, IORA, and the Quad.





- This has increased the possibilities for diplomatic cooperation on regional and global issues.
- The current downturn in the global economy limits the immediate possibilities for realising the full potential of commercial relations.
- But there are a host of emerging issues.
- Some of them include reforming the WHO, 5G technology, strengthening the international solar alliance, building resilience against climate change and disasters.
- The geopolitical events in the Indo-Pacific have opened up a massive space for consequential security cooperation between the two countries.
- Over the last few years, defence engagement between the two countries has also grown.

## 2.4 Indo-Japan Relationship

### Why in news?

Japan's Prime Minister announced that he would step down as a chronic illness has resurfaced.

### Who is Japan's PM?

- Shinzo Abe is Japan's Prime Minister.
- Abe, whose tenure began in 2012, was due to be in office till September 2021.
- He had first become the PM in 2006, but resigned in 2007 due to illness.

### How committed was Abe for a relationship with India?

- In his first stint in 2006-07, Abe visited India and addressed Parliament.
- During his second stint, he visited India thrice.
- He was the first Japanese PM to be Chief Guest at the Republic Day parade in 2014.

### How did the Indo-Japan ties transform?

- The foundation for "Global Partnership between Japan and India" was laid in 2001.
- Annual bilateral summits were agreed in 2005.
- However, it was Abe who accelerated the pace of ties since 2012.
- **In first term** - Abe, who visited India in 2007, laid the foundation for his concept of Indo-Pacific.
- This concept has now become mainstream and one of the main pillars of Indo-Japan ties.
- **In second term** - Abe helped build the relationship further.
- In 2014, Narendra Modi as PM chose Japan for his first bilateral visit outside the neighbourhood.
- Modi and Abe agreed to upgrade the bilateral relationship to "Special Strategic and Global Partnership".
- The relationship encompassed issues like civilian nuclear energy, maritime security, quality infrastructure, Act East policy and Indo-Pacific strategy.

### How was the Indo-Japan nuclear deal signed?

- When Modi went to Japan in 2014, the Indo-Japan nuclear deal was still uncertain.
- This is so because Tokyo was sensitive about a deal with a non-Nuclear-Proliferation-Treaty member country.
- Abe's government convinced the anti-nuclear hawks in Japan to sign the agreement in 2016.
- The pact was a key to India's deals with US and French nuclear firms, which were either owned by or had stakes in Japanese firms.

### What are the defence agreements?

- Under Abe, the two sides decided to have Foreign and Defence Ministers' Meeting (2+2).
- They are negotiating the Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA), a military logistics support pact.
- In November 2019, the first Foreign and Defence Ministers' Meeting was held in New Delhi.
- In 2015, a pact for transfer of defence equipment and technology was also signed.

### What is the Indo-Pacific strategy?

- During Abe's tenure, India and Japan came closer in the Indo-Pacific architecture.
- Abe had spelt out his vision of the Confluence of the Two Seas in his 2007 speech when the Quad was formed.
- But, Quad collapsed soon.
- In 2017, Chinese aggression grew in the Pacific, Indian Ocean, and India's borders in Doklam.
- As a result, Abe mooted the idea of reviving the Quad.
- Quad was revived as Indian, Japanese, Australia and US officials met in Manila on the sidelines of the East Asia summit.

### What is Japan's stand on India-China stand-offs?

- Since 2013, Indian and Chinese soldiers have had four border-stand-offs, including the ongoing one since May 2020.
- Abe's Japan has stood with India through each of them.
- Japan has made statements against China for changing the status quo.

#### Quad

- Quad is a multilateral grouping among Japan, Australia, India and the United States.
- Quad was convened, in 2017, at the level of senior officials on the margins of the East Asia Summit in Bangkok.
- There are common references to the creation of a free, open and inclusive regional architecture, rules-of-the-road, freedom of navigation and over-flight, and, ASEAN centrality.

### What are the infrastructural investments?

- During Abe's visit in 2015, India decided to introduce the **Shinkansen system** (bullet train), due to begin in 2022.
- Under Abe's leadership, India and Japan formed the **Act East Forum**.
- The Forum is engaged in projects in the Northeast.
- The two countries also planned **joint projects** in Maldives and Sri Lanka among others to counter Beijing's influence.

### What is next?

- Much to India's comfort, Abe did not get distracted by India's domestic developments.
- He focused on strategic, economic and political deliverables.
- India will now wait for Abe's successor, who will have big shoes to fill.

### 3. INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

#### ASIA

##### 3.1 Rethink of Non-Alignment Policy

###### What is the issue?

- In separate statements, Minister of External Affairs S. Jaishankar laid out India's world view in the face of global challenges.
- In this context, it is imperative to look into the remarks made on non-alignment policy.

###### What is the current global scenario?

- There is a perceptible repositioning of the US; its influence and powers are not as they used to be.
- This has allowed many other countries to play more autonomous roles.
- It does not affect India as much because India was never part of an alliance system and it will never be.
- But countries who depended more on the U.S. are finding themselves in a place to take a call on many issues.
- However, the conditions are opening spaces for middle powers like India, Japan, the European Union and others.

###### What are the observations made on non-alignment?

- Non-alignment was a term of a particular era and geopolitical landscape.
- One aspect was independence, which remains a factor of continuity for India.
- Otherwise, non-alignment is an old concept today.
- Multipolarity in the world necessitates India to take a definite and proactive stand.
- It might even have to take "risks" on issues such as connectivity, maritime security, terrorism and climate change.
- However, certainly, India does not reject non-alignment in its entirety.
- Non-alignment worked for India during the Cold War era between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.
- But the fact that India and China share a land boundary would always be a factor in a "new cold war" between the U.S. and China.
- So, India would no longer remain disentangled from difficult decisions.
- But it would not compromise on its independence either.
- More importantly, India has "never been part of an alliance system, nor will it ever be".

###### What about India-US ties?

- Mr. Jaishankar said that even the U.S. must look beyond its present alliances and engage with more multilateral arrangements.
- He spoke of Indo-U.S. cooperation in many fields, and the growing maritime collaboration in particular.
- But he left unsaid the hard reality that military collaboration with US on land would prove problematic given India's disputed boundary with China.
- There were multiple references by U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to the India-China clashes at Galwan Valley.



- There were calls from him for India and the U.S. to jointly “counter” China.
- Despite this, India has rightly chosen not to raise its tensions with China in any forum other than bilateral talks with Beijing.
- Equally significant is the government’s outreach to Russia.
- This includes Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's visit and the participation of Mr. Jaishankar in the Russia-India-China trilateral recently.

### **What is the significance?**

- A time of crisis often clarifies priorities.
- India faces a double crisis of battling the novel coronavirus pandemic and Chinese aggression at the border.
- At this crucial point of time, the message from New Delhi is one of a carefully calibrated balance.
- The statements are a clear-eyed assessment of India’s constraints and avenues for its potential growth.
- This is a clear assertion of India’s strategic independence and resistance to joining any alliance. It comes as a timely reminder amid speculation that tensions with China will push India into stronger ties with the US.

## **3.2 Killing of General Qassem Soleimani**

### **Why in news?**

Iran’s top security and intelligence commander, Major General Qassem Soleimani, was killed in a US drone attack in Baghdad.

### **What happened?**

- General Soleimani was killed in an airstrike, for which the US later claimed responsibility.
- The strike was carried out by a drone on a road near Baghdad’s international airport.
- Soleimani had reportedly just disembarked from a plane.
- The blast also killed others including Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis.
- He was the deputy commander of the Iranian-backed militias in Iraq known as Popular Mobilisation Forces.
- The strike capped a week of conflict between the United States and Iranian-backed militia in Iraq.
- It started with a rocket attack at a military base, which killed an American contractor.

### **Who was General Soleimani?**

- Soleimani, 62, was in charge of the Quds Force of Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).
- IRGC was designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization by the US in 2019.
- The Quds Force undertakes Iranian missions in other countries, including covert ones.
- Soleimani, who had headed the Quds since 1998, had looked after intelligence gathering and covert military operations.
- He had also drawn immense influence from his closeness to Iran’s supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.
- He was seen as a potential future leader of Iran, according to various reports.
- Given Soleimani’s influence, observers have equated his killing with the killing of a U.S. Vice President.
- More than anyone else, Soleimani has been responsible for the creation of an arc of influence, which Iran terms its ‘Axis of Resistance’.

- It extends from the Gulf of Oman through Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon to the eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea.

#### How did Soleimani rise to this stature?

- In 1979, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's rebellion toppled the Shah in Iran.
- Soleimani, then 22, joined the Ayatollah's Revolutionary Guard.
- During the Iran-Iraq War, Soleimani was sent to the front with the task of supplying water to soldiers.
- But, he ended up undertaking reconnaissance missions, and earning a reputation for bravery.
- In 1998, Soleimani was made head of the Quds Force, which launched his rise to power.



#### How had Soleimani's experience with the U.S. been?

- As Quds head, Soleimani briefly worked in cooperation with the US.
- This was during the US crackdown in Afghanistan following 9/11; Soleimani wanted the Taliban defeated.
- The cooperation ended in 2002 after President George W Bush branded Iran a nuclear proliferator, an exporter of terrorism, and part of an "Axis of Evil".
- The US was accusing Soleimani of plotting attacks on US soldiers following the 2003 invasion of Iraq, which eventually toppled Saddam Hussein.
- In 2011, the Treasury Department placed him on a sanctions blacklist.
- In recent years, Soleimani was believed to be the chief strategist behind Iran's military ventures and influence in Syria, Iraq and throughout the Middle East.
- Soleimani has sought to reshape the Middle East in Iran's favour, working as a power broker and as a military force.

#### How has the US justified his killing?

- The Department of Defense issued a statement underlining Soleimani's leadership role in conflict with the US.
- General Soleimani and his Quds Force were said to be responsible for the deaths of hundreds of American and coalition service members and the wounding of thousands more.
- He had orchestrated attacks on US coalition bases in Iraq over the last several months.
- The IRGC FTO designation highlights that Iran is an outlaw regime that uses terrorism as a key tool of statecraft.
- The IRGC, part of Iran's official military, is said to have engaged in terrorist activity or terrorism since its inception 40 years ago.
- As per the U.S., the IRGC has been directly involved in terrorist plotting; its support for terrorism is foundational and institutional, and it has killed US citizens.





### 3.3 Israel's New Unity Government

#### Why in news?

Israel's longest-serving PM, Benjamin Netanyahu, was sworn in along with his rival-turned-partner, the Blue and White party leader, Benny Gantz.

#### What happened?

- No single party in Israel has ever won an outright majority in parliament.
- Mr. Netanyahu failed to get enough seats in Parliament with consecutive elections.
- The rival factions were unable to strike a deal and assemble a ruling coalition.
- However, the rival factions recently ended a deadlock by joining hands.
- This happened after three consecutive snap elections and more than a year-long political impasse between the rival factions.
- As per the deal brokered, Mr. Netanyahu will serve as Prime Minister for the first 18 months.
- He will hand over the role to his erstwhile opponent Gantz for the remainder of the three-year term.
- Until then, Gantz will serve as the Defense Minister.

#### What was the rival party's stance?

- Netanyahu's Likud party is right-wing.
- On the other hand, Benny Gantz represents the centre-left of the country, and leader of the Blue and White party.
- Also a former Army Chief of Staff, Gantz entered politics with the sole mission to oust the Likud party head from office.
- The two political stances are very different from each other.
- Benny Gantz proposed legislation to set term limits for the premier.
- In his election campaigns and during difficult coalition negotiations, Mr. Gantz was firm that he would never work under a PM who faced criminal charges.
- He was even ready to join a unity government with Likud, provided that Mr. Netanyahu stepped aside.
- Ironically, the judicial trial into Mr. Netanyahu's indictment for corruption, bribery and breach of trust is yet to begin.
- The courts are also hearing challenges to his choice as PM, as Mr. Netanyahu could influence the nomination of judges and the prosecutor.

#### What are the contentions?

- The coalition partners differ on the extent of judicial authority and the role of ultraorthodox groups in the military.
- Gantz believes in protecting the independence of courts.
- In contrast, Netanyahu is accused of curbing judicial freedom under the garb of making judicial reforms.
- [The new government will also have to witness the corruption trial against Netanyahu.]
- Benny Gantz believes the annexation of occupied Palestinian lands should be carried out with an international consent.
- On the other hand, Netanyahu only believes it necessary to cooperate with the US.



### 3.4 Israel-Hezbollah Tensions

#### Why in news?

Israel attacks Hezbollah targets in southern Lebanon.

#### What is the story behind?

- Hezbollah is a Shia militia-cum-political party in Lebanon.
- Hezbollah and Israel have fought two wars before. They have been observing a tenuous ceasefire for 14 years.
- The recent attacks mark a significant escalation in the crisis that has been building up along the border in recent years.
- Recent tensions began after Israel targeted Iranian weapons and supplies within Syria.

#### Why Israel specifically targets supplies in Syria?

- In Syria, the Shia militias fought alongside regime fighters against rebels and Sunni jihadists.
- So, Israel fears that Iranian supplies to Hezbollah via Syria would leave them stronger.
- This would enhance Israel's security challenges in the northern border.

#### What was Israel's target in the recent attacks?

- In the recent attacks, Israel targeted an observation post.
- The Israeli Defense Forces claimed that this post was attacked as they were used by Hezbollah for intelligence collection.
- The raid shows the growing appetite of the newly formed unity government of Netanyahu.
- This government is under fire at home over its COVID-19 crisis handling, for war as a means to address the simmering border problems.

#### For Israel, how tough target Hezbollah is?

- In 2000, after 18 years of occupation of southern Lebanon, Israel was forced to withdraw mainly due to the fighting of Hezbollah.
- In 2006, Israel invaded Lebanon, aimed at destroying Hezbollah's military capabilities.
- But after a month of Israeli aerial and land attacks, Hezbollah fired hundreds of short-range rockets into northern Israel.
- Ever since, both sides have been wary of another open conflict.
- Israel, which bombed Gaza several times since its 2005 withdrawal from the strip, had been careful when it came to Hezbollah.
- The militants turned their focus to capacity building after the 2006 war, and, since 2011, to the civil war in Syria.

#### What is the axis formed?

- Syria has been a vital link between Hezbollah and Iran ever since the group was founded in the early 1980s.
- Iran has substantially increased its footprint in Syria, bolstering the Iran-Syria-Hezbollah axis.
- Israel sees this axis as a growing security challenge.
- Hence, it started the bombing operations in Syria, risking another conflict with Hezbollah.



### 3.5 Israel-UAE-US deal

#### Why in news?

Israel and the United Arab Emirates, helped by the US, have arrived at an important peace agreement.

#### What is the big deal?

- The deal was announced by the US White House.
- The deal says that the UAE will establish diplomatic relations with Israel if its President commits to give up the plan to annex the West Bank.
- [West Bank is the main territory of a state that the Palestinians want.]
- The UAE becomes the third Arab nation to recognise Israel after Egypt (1979) and Jordan (1994).
- It has the potential to change the geopolitics of West Asia and beyond.

#### What about the Palestinians?

- The Palestinian leadership rejects and denounces the UAE, Israeli and the US trilateral announcement.
- The Palestinian Authority, which seeks a two-state solution, lashed out against the deal as a betrayal by the UAE.
- For the Palestinians, the Israeli commitment that it will not pursue its plan to annex the West Bank is an empty concession.
- This is because the deal does not address the Palestinian demand for statehood.
- President Binyamin Netanyahu floated the annexation plan recently.
- It says Israel will claim sovereignty of all land in the West Bank on which Jewish settlements have come up.
- This plan would literally cut up the dream of a Palestinian state.
- It was not certain if Netanyahu would have gone ahead with it even without the UAE deal.
- Now, by agreeing not to, he has enabled the UAE to talk it up to its Arab allies as a major concession extracted from Israel.
- Netanyahu himself can project it elsewhere abroad as a big give on his part, without compromising on the core issues of the conflict.

#### How have the Arab states reacted?

- **Saudi Arabia** has said nothing so far.
- But, the ruling family's Prince Turki al-Faisal had rejected the proposals for Israel-Palestine peace unveiled by the US in January 2020.
- But Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MbS) has been hailed as an ally by the Trump administration.
- He has formed a friendship with Trump's son-in-law, tasked with finding a solution to the Israeli-Arab conflict.
- There is bound to be speculation that the UAE could not have taken its decision on Israel without the support of Saudis.
- Over the years, the Saudis have seen both the US and Israel as insurance against Shia Iran.
- The smaller Gulf States of **Oman and Bahrain** have quickly fallen in line behind UAE.
- It could be a matter of time before the others, including Saudi, do as well.

## How does the region's geopolitics change?

- If the **Arab states** do fall in line, it would bring all Sunni nations in the region in an anti-Iran alliance with Israel.
- **Iran** and its proxies and allies have been weakened and broken by war, the ISIS and al-Qaeda.
- [Iran's allies - Syria, Lebanon and Iraq, the Hezbollah in Lebanon, and the Houthis in Yemen]
- Hezbollah, which Israel has treated as enemy, faces a domestic backlash after an explosion in Beirut.
- **Russia**, a staunch ally of Syria, has not yet reacted.
- The deal will send ripples through other parts of the world. In South Asia, it will put **Pakistan** in a bind.
- Pakistan is already facing criticism at home for not being able to take on India over its 2019 decisions in Kashmir.
- Pakistan is unlikely to be seen as joining an Arab alliance that has abandoned another cause dear to Pakistan, that of Palestine.
- But then, UAE is a good friend.
- Pakistan has already annoyed Saudi Arabia by not agreeing to hold a special session on Kashmir at the OIC.
- Even if Pakistan does not join the Arab stampede towards Israel, it cannot rail against them for it.

### 3.6 U.S.-Taliban Agreement

#### Why in News?

A deal has been signed between the United States of America (USA) and the Taliban insurgents in Doha.

#### What is this deal about?

- This deal could pave the way toward a full withdrawal of foreign soldiers from Afghanistan over the next 14 months.
- This will also represent a step towards ending the 18-year-war there.
- In October 2001, the U.S. went into Afghanistan after the 9/11 terror attacks with the goals of defeating terrorists and stabilising Afghanistan.
- Almost 19 years later, the U.S. now seeks to exit Afghanistan with assurances from the Taliban that,
  1. They will not allow Afghan soil to be used by transnational terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda and
  2. They would engage the Afghan government directly to find a lasting solution to the civil war.
- For U.S., the deal represents a chance to make good on his promise to bring U.S. troops home.

#### What did the war cost?

- For U.S., the Afghan war is estimated to have cost \$2-trillion, with more than 3,500 American and coalition soldiers killed.
- Afghanistan lost the lives of many civilians and soldiers.
- After all these, the Taliban is at its strongest moment since the U.S. launched the war.
- The insurgents control or contest the government control in half of the country, mainly in its hinterlands.

#### What is the issue with this deal?

- The war had entered into a tie long ago and the U.S. failed to turn it around despite U.S. Presidents having sent additional troops.

- Faced with no other way, the U.S. just wants to leave Afghanistan. But the problem is with **the way it is getting out**.
- The fundamental issue with this deal is that it deliberately **excluded the Afghan government** because the insurgents don't see the government as legitimate rulers.
- By giving in to the Taliban's demand, the U.S. has practically called into question the legitimacy of the government it backs.

#### **What were the concessions made in the agreement?**

- The Taliban was not pressed enough to declare a ceasefire.
- Both the sides settled for a 7-day "reduction of violence" period before signing the deal.
- The U.S. has committed to pull out its troops in a phased manner in return for the above-mentioned two assurances from the Taliban.
- But the Taliban has not made any promises on whether it would respect civil liberties or accept the Afghan Constitution.
- The Taliban got what it wanted i.e. the withdrawal of foreign troops without making any major concession.

#### **What would be the impact?**

- Security experts have called the deal a foreign policy gamble that would give the Taliban international legitimacy.
- The U.S. withdrawal will weaken the Kabul government, altering the balance of power both on the battlefield and at the negotiating table.
- A weakened government will have to talk with a resurgent Taliban.
- The U.S. in a bid to exit the war has practically abandoned the Kabul government and millions of Afghans who do not support the Taliban's violent, tribal Islamism, to the mercy of insurgents.

#### **Why India seems to be at the losing end?**

- The earlier Taliban regime was anti-India because India had militarily supported the Northern Alliance that kept up the military pressure against the Taliban.
- Today's Taliban does not share the same animus for India.
- So, India could've rearranged its approach to Taliban this time around.
- However, India did not reach out to the Taliban because,
  1. It didn't want to irk the elected government in Afghanistan and
  2. It adopts a moralistic approach in dealing with extremist groups.
- This moralistic attitude that India would only talk to the legitimate government in that country, is a self-defeating position.
- As a result, India's relations with Afghanistan will take a hit in the immediate aftermath of the deal.

#### **Why will India be hit?**

- China is deeply involved in the geopolitics and geo-economics of the region including in Afghanistan.
- So, India's traditional ability to influence the region's political and security outcomes will be severely limited.
- This will be further exacerbated by the U.S. withdrawal from the region.
- Other regional actors in Afghanistan are also less friendly towards India than ever before: like Iran, Russia, Pakistan, etc.



- Unless India carefully envisages a counter strategy, these factors will increasingly push it into a geopolitical tough spot in the region.

### **What is the Kashmir angle?**

- The direct physical impact of the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan on Kashmir will be negligible.
- But, there is going to be more psychological impact on the disenchanted Kashmiri youngsters.
- They may pick up guns drawing inspiration from this Afghan situation where US leaving the country in the hands of an extremist group.

### **3.7 ICJ's Ruling for Rohingya**

#### **Why in News?**

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) has made a ruling on the military excesses on Rohingya in Myanmar against Rohingya Muslims recently.

#### **What is the Rohingya crisis?**

- In 2017, the Myanmar military launched a brutal crackdown on Rohingya villages in the country's Rakhine state.
- An estimated 7.3 lakh Rohingya have fled to Bangladesh since then.
- However, Myanmar has firmly denied all allegations of genocide.
- It has also denied nearly all allegations made by the Rohingya of mass rape, killings and arson against its army.
- Myanmar asserts that the soldiers carried out only legitimate counterterrorism operations.

#### **Who has taken Myanmar to the ICJ?**

- It is the Republic of the Gambia that took Myanmar's case to the ICJ in November 2019.
- Its suit claims that the brutalities by the defence services of Myanmar amounted to crimes of genocide under the 1948 Genocide Convention.
- The Gambia is backed by the 57-member Organisation for Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

#### **What was the procedure followed at ICJ?**

- The case was heard by 16 United Nations judges at the ICJ.
- Both the Republic of The Gambia and the Myanmar had the opportunity to present themselves before the court.
- The hearings were streamed live on the ICJ website.

#### **What was the recent ruling?**

- The ICJ ruling on the prevention of alleged acts of genocide against Rohingya Muslims has finally pinned legal responsibility on Myanmar's government for the military's large-scale excesses of 2017.
- The ICJ has stipulated Ms. Suu Kyi's civilian government to submit an update of the steps it has taken to preserve evidence of the systemic brutalities within 4 months.
- It has also been asked to furnish 6-monthly reports thereafter, until the conclusion of the case, which relates to genocide accusations.
- It has further emphasised that an estimated 600,000 Rohingya resident in Myanmar still remained highly vulnerable to attacks from the security forces.
- The ruling vindicates the findings by the UN and human rights groups.



- Their findings are that there was prevalence of hate speech, mass atrocities of rape and extra-judicial killings, and torching of villages in Rakhine province that forced migration of Rohingyas to Bangladesh.

#### **What is Ms. Suu Kyi's argument?**

- Arguing the defence in person during the three-day public hearings, Ms. Suu Kyi, who was elected in 2016, insisted that the 2017 violence was proportionate to the threat of insurgency.
- She even questioned the Gambia's standing to bring the suit, saying that there was no bilateral dispute.

#### **What is Myanmar's response?**

- Rejecting the ICJ's ruling, Myanmar's Foreign Ministry has accused rights groups of presenting the Court with a distorted picture of the prevailing situation.
- In a statement, it defended the army's action as a legitimate response to violations of the law by the insurgent Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army.
- However, the above claim is at odds with the findings of an Independent Commission of Enquiry established by the government.
- The Commission acknowledged that war crimes had been committed during the military campaign, when about 900 people were killed.
- But there was nothing to back the assertions of gang-rape, or evidence to presume any intent of genocide, it held.
- Although it could take years before the court pronounces the final verdict in the genocide case, this injunction is an important victory for the refugees languishing in Bangladeshi camps.

### **3.8 Hagia Sophia Controversy**

#### **Why in news?**

Turkey's highest court convened to decide on turning Istanbul's Hagia Sophia museum into a mosque

#### **What is the Hagia Sophia?**

- Hagia Sophia is listed as a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) World Heritage Site.
- It is a 1,500-year-old iconic structure built in 532 AD.
- It was originally a Greek Orthodox Christian patriarchal cathedral.
- In 1453, it was turned into an Ottoman imperial mosque.
- In 1934, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Republic of Turkey, turned it into a museum, to make the country more secular.
- There have been calls for long from Islamist groups and nationalists in the country to convert the Hagia Sophia back into a mosque.
- In 2019, Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan had said it he would turn the structure back into a mosque again.

#### **What is the controversy about?**

- When Erdogan entered politics three decades ago in Turkey, he objected to the calls to convert Hagia Sophia into a mosque.
- But his rhetoric changed in 2019 during municipal elections in Istanbul that he ended up losing.
- Erdogan's plans for the conversion of the Hagia Sophia are closely connected with his attempts to score political points.



### Why is Greece objecting to this conversion?

- The controversy about the Hagia Sophia comes at a time when there are diplomatic tensions between Turkey and Greece over other issues.
- In May 2020, Greece objected to the reading of passages from the Quran inside the Hagia Sophia.
- Greece's Foreign Ministry had issued a statement saying this move was a violation of UNESCO's 'Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage'.
- Greece had said the Hagia Sophia had been designated a museum of world cultural heritage.

### What is Turkey's response?

- Turkey responded by saying that Greece's objections to the reading of passages from the Quran were indicative of its intolerant psychology.
- Some within Turkey's political circles view the issue of Hagia Sophia as a domestic matter.
- So, they do not seem to welcome the interference of international players.

## 3.9 Armenian Genocide

### Why in news?

This year (2020) marks the 105<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.

### What is the Armenian Genocide?

- The Armenian Genocide is called the first genocide of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- It refers to the systematic **annihilation of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire** from 1915 to 1917.
- Approximately 1.5 million Armenians died during the genocide, something Turkey has consistently denied.
- The Armenian diaspora marks April 24 as Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day.

### Why did the Armenian Genocide occur?

- The Armenian Genocide is a direct result of the developments during the First World War.
- Although Armenians had always faced discrimination, harassment and persecution in Asia Minor, this heightened around 1908.
- The Armenians were an educated and wealthy community, characteristics that drew resentment from others.
- The Armenians in the Ottoman empire were Christians by faith.
- The Ottoman Caliphate feared that they would bear allegiance to Russia with similar religious affiliations than the Ottoman Empire.
- **Hamidian Massacres (1894–1896)** - It is the first state-sanctioned pogrom which is a result of the continued hostility towards Armenians.
- [Pogrom - An organized massacre of a particular ethnic group]
- The Hamidian Massacres were a prelude to the Armenian Genocide.
- But, the reigning monarch, Abdul Hamid II was never held accountable for the massacres.

### Who were the Young Turks?

- In 1908, a **political reform movement** that called itself the Young Turks formed of intellectuals and revolutionaries.
- It led a rebellion against Abdul Hamid II in an attempt to **overthrow the monarchy** in favour of a constitutional government.

- When the monarchy was overthrown, Armenians believed they may finally get a chance at equality in the state.
- However, as the political ideology of the Young Turks changed, they **became less tolerant of Armenians**.
- The Russo-Turkish wars and the conflict in the Balkans and Russia further increased hostilities against the Armenians.

### What happened during World War I?

- After the World War I broke out in November 1914, the Ottoman Turks participated in the war, siding with Germany.
- The Armenians began organising volunteer battalions to fight for Russia against the Ottoman Turks.
- This resulted in the Ottoman Turks engaging in a mass-removal campaign of Armenians from the border areas along the Eastern Front.
- On April 24, 1915, Ottoman Turkish government officials executed many Armenian intellectuals.
- It was the start of the Armenian Genocide.
- As the Armenians were forced to walk for days in the deserts of Syria and Arabia, many died in the journey.
- They faced brutality in concentration camps across Syria and Iraq.
- Armenians in villages were burned in large groups and were intentionally drowned in the Black Sea.



### What happened in the aftermath?

- Many documents and evidence pertaining to the Armenian Genocide were destroyed a few years before and after the end of the war.
- Many Armenians were displaced.
- They fled to countries around the world seeking refuge.
- Diplomats posted in the region during the Armenian Genocide had documented the occurrences in personal diaries and official records.
- Displaced Armenians were not permitted to reacquire the property that they were forced to leave behind during the genocide.

### Does Turkey recognise the Armenian Genocide?

- Turkey has dismissed the use of the term “Armenian genocide”.
- In 2007, then Turkish Prime Minister, called for an alternative term to be used for the ‘Genocide’ - 1915 Olayları, the ‘Events of 1915’.
- In Turkey, intellectuals who have openly written about the Armenian Genocide have faced violence, arrest and have even been killed.
- As of 2020, 32 countries and Parliaments have formally recognised the Armenian Genocide.
- Only Turkey and Azerbaijan openly deny its occurrence.
- Remaining countries, including India, have not officially recognised the Armenian genocide.

## 3.10 Referendum in Russia

### Why in news?

Russians are voting on a constitutional referendum proposed by President Vladimir Putin.

### What is a referendum?

- Referendum is an electoral device of direct democracy.
- By referendum, voters may express their wishes with regard to government policy or proposed legislation.

### What is this vote about?

- In his address to the Russian Federal Assembly, Putin proposed substantial amendments to Russia's constitution.
- For these amendments, he suggested holding a nation-wide constitutional referendum.

### What are the proposed amendments?

- The proposed amendments would allow Putin to occupy the highest office in the country post 2024, when his term is set to expire, till 2036.
- They would allow the President to appoint the heads of law enforcement agencies in Russia in consultation with the Federation Council.
- The upper house of Russia's Parliament would be able to propose the dismissal of federal judges.
- In specific cases, the Federation Council can remove the judges of the Constitutional and Supreme courts following the proposals by President.
- A presidential candidate would have to have lived in Russia for at least 25 years and cannot ever have held foreign citizenship or residency.
- Other proposed amendments include provisions for the Russian constitution to take over international law.

### What do critics say?

- **Criticism** - The critics say that Putin thinks that these amendments may clear the obstacles for his rule over Russia beyond 2024.
- However, they say that the process may not be straightforward.
- Putin has indicated that he has no plans of staying in office beyond his term.
- **Indications** - The proposals have already been accepted in both houses in Russia's parliament.
- Legally no referendum is required to enforce these amendments to the Russia's Constitution.
- However, Putin is conducting a referendum.
- Observers do not believe that Putin will face challenges in the passing of these amendments.
- These moves indicate that Putin plans to exert influence over the government after his tenure, but from the sidelines.

## 3.11 Korean Stand-Off

### Why in news?

North Korea blew up the joint liaison office with South Korea in Kaesong, a city in the southern part of North Korea.

### What is the liaison office?

- In 2018, North Korea and South Korea jointly set up a liaison office at Kaesong in North Korea.
- The objective was to facilitate communication between North Korea and South Korea.
- It came as a result of a series of inter-Korean summits in 2018.
- The Kaesong Industrial Complex is a joint industrial zone where factories are operated and run by both North Koreans and South Koreans.



### **Why did North Korea resort to demolition?**

- The demolition of the joint liaison office follows a recent deterioration in relations between Pyongyang (North Korea) and Seoul (South Korea).
- Activists and defectors in South Korea were sending anti-North Korean propaganda leaflets, rice and Bibles using balloons across the border.
- Tensions between the two countries had increased after Pyongyang objected to these activities.
- Pyongyang had also cut off communication with Seoul following this.
- These moves are also said to have come after North Korea's frustrations at South Korea's inability to revive inter-Korean economic projects.
- South Korea's delay was probably due to pressures from the US, along with UN sanctions.
- The economic projects had, notably, been beneficial to Pyongyang.

### **What are the other measures by North Korea?**

- Following the demolition, North Korean state media KCNA announced that Pyongyang would be deploying troops in demilitarised areas.
- This also includes the Kaesong industrial zone.
- North Korea would be adding artillery units along the border with South Korea for reinforcement.
- North Korean police posts that had been withdrawn when relations had improved between the two countries would now be instituted once again.

### **What was South Korea's response?**

- South Korea's President Moon Jae-in called for an urgent national security meeting following the demolition.
- The country's Unification Ministry called the incident "a senseless act."
- It is seen to have destroyed the hopes of those who wished for peace on the Korean Peninsula.
- The South Korean government said they would "respond strongly" if the situation worsens.

### **What is the significance?**

- The demolition comes just days after North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's sister Kim Yo Jong had threatened to destroy the liaison office.
- It occurred just hours after Pyongyang threatened to engage in military action at the border with South Korea.
- These actions by North Korea have been the most provocative in recent years.
- It has become one of the most serious incidents to have occurred between the two countries without them actually going to war.

### **What possibly caused the drift?**

- South Korea's President Moon Jae-in has made efforts over the past few years to improve relations with Pyongyang.
- However, Pyongyang is probably hoping to pressure Seoul into giving it more concessions that would be economically beneficial for North Korea.
- Notably, North Korea has been hit hard by sanctions.
- It is still unclear how COVID-19 has impacted North Korea.
- However, it is expected to have been affected badly, especially China being North Korea's main trading partner.



### **What is the U.S.'s role in this regard?**

- It has been 2 years after U.S. President Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un met in Singapore to discuss denuclearisation.
- But little has been achieved in that direction.
- Mr. Kim had in principle agreed to denuclearisation in return for the lifting of American sanctions.
- But talks stalled as the U.S. insisted on “complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization” by North Korea in return for any concession.
- The North Koreans were wary particularly because of the U.S.’s history of tracking back on its promises.
- Mr. Kim’s regime thus offered a staged approach.
- It put a freeze on nuclear tests and offered to shut its Yongbyon nuclear complex.

## **EUROPE**

### **3.12 UK’s Citizenship Test**

#### **Why in news?**

Historians have called on the United Kingdom’s Home Office to review its citizenship test.

#### **What is the citizenship test?**

- The UK’s citizenship test is called the ‘Life in the UK Test’.
- It is a requirement for applicants who wish to acquire UK citizenship.
- This test is based upon an official handbook published by the UK’s Home Office.

#### **What is the issue with this handbook?**

- In this official handbook, the Britain’s history was retold in such a manner that it sanitises the nation’s violent and brutal past.
- The handbook contains misleading and false representation of history during Britain’s colonisation.
- This representation may be difficult for citizenship applicants from nations that were former British colonies.

#### **What are the objections to this test?**

- In an open letter, 181 signatories have called for a review of this test.
- They want a review because the handbook, on which this test is based upon, is fundamentally misleading and demonstrably false.
- The test appears to glorify Britain’s colonial past, say the historians.
- There are many examples that the historians have highlighted in their letter.

#### **What are the highlighted examples?**

- The handbook states that while slavery was illegal within Britain itself, by the 18th century, it was a fully established overseas industry.
- The historians say that whether slavery was legal or illegal within Britain in the 18th century was a matter of debate.
- The handbook does not mention about the three million people who were transported as slaves and that people died during these journeys.

- It states that in the 20th century, there was an orderly transition from Empire to Commonwealth, with countries given their independence.
- The historians say that decolonisation was not an 'orderly' but an often-violent process.
- The handbook promotes the misleading view that the Empire ended simply because the British decided it was the right thing to do.
- Similarly, the abolition of slavery is treated as a British achievement, in which enslaved people themselves played no part.
- The historians state that people of colour and people in colonies also have not been adequately represented in this retelling of history.
- Their contributions to the development and growth of Britain have been entirely omitted in the handbook.

#### **Was the Home Office's citizenship test handbook ever revised?**

- Given the handbook's latest edition was published in 2013, the presence of these inaccuracies are even more troubling.
- The handbook is not just a relic that has been continuously used without consciousness about these factual errors and misstatements.
- Conversations regarding historical inaccuracy and the whitewashing of Britain's colonial past were very much occurring in 2012-2013.
- This was the time when the process for republishing the handbook in an updated edition had started.
- Despite this, the Home Office had made no attempts to consider its own role in regurgitating convenient, white-washed retellings of history.
- Historical knowledge is and should be an essential part of citizenship.
- However, historical falsehood and misrepresentation should not.

#### **Why is the handbook problematic?**

- For applicants from former colonies with knowledge of imperial violence, this account is offensive.
- For those from outside the former Empire without prior education in history, the official handbook creates a distorted view of the British past.
- For British citizens in general, the official history perpetuates a misleading view of how we came to be who we are.

#### **What has been the Home Office's response?**

- It appears that the Home Office has taken note of the letter.
- A Home Office spokesperson said that the Office would keep its contents under review and consider any feedback that they receive.
- But, it was not clear if the concerns highlighted in this specific letter were going to be considered by the Home Office.
- This comes at a time when the Black Lives Matter movement has led to widespread protests across the UK and Europe.

### **3.13 Srebrenica Massacre - Ethnic Cleansing of Bosnian Muslims**

#### **Why in news?**

Commemoration services were recently held at the Srebrenica-Potocari Memorial and Cemetery in remembrance of the victims of the Srebrenica massacre.

### What is the Srebrenica Massacre?

- Srebrenica is a town in Bosnia and Herzegovina in south-eastern Europe.
- In July 1995, approximately 8,000 Muslims, mostly men and boys were killed in Srebrenica.
- It was carried out by the Bosnian Serb forces led by Commander Ratko Mladić.
- These killings were later classified as 'genocide' by international tribunals investigating the massacre.

### What led to this?

- The disintegration of Yugoslavia in 1991 threw the south-eastern and central Europe in chaos.
- It led to violent inter-ethnic wars in the region over the next few years.
- The Bosnian War took place between 1992-1995.
- It witnessed a period of displacement and ethnic cleansing of Bosniaks or Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats.
- The Bosnian Serb army and paramilitary forces were behind this.
- In many ways, the Srebrenica massacre was a result of this regional conflict.
- According to some researchers, this massacre was the worst atrocity against civilians in Europe since the Holocaust.

### What happened during the Srebrenica massacre?

- During the war, the Srebrenica massacre started on July 11, 1995.
- It was when Commander Ratko Mladić occupied the town of Srebrenica.
- Thousands of Bosnian Muslim families sought refuge with the Dutchbat.
- It was a Dutch battalion under the UN forces that had been deployed, following the upheaval during the Bosnia War.
- Many Bosnian Muslims had sought refuge believing it to be a safe zone.
- But this UN peacekeeping mission led by the Netherlands failed to stop these murders.
- Some researchers say the mission did not protect Bosnian Muslims.
- But more worse, in some cases, it actively handed over young boys and men to Bosnian Serb forces knowing that they would be killed.
- The safe zone later fell under the control of the Bosnian Serb forces after the Dutch forces surrendered.
- It is said that the 8,000 Muslims who were killed during the massacre were murdered within 2 weeks of the start of the occupation of Srebrenica.

### What was the extent of the violence?

- Babies, young boys and men were subjected to atrocities and killings.
- Besides, the massacre also saw widespread crimes against women, where girls and women were subjected to violence and rape.



- Witnesses, girls and women, later said that they had not been given any protection by UN forces.
- This was despite the forces having witnessed the violence that was being perpetrated in front of them.
- Survivors recounted how Bosnian Serb forces had forced Bosnian Muslims to dig their own graves and later shot them to death.
- 25 years after the massacre, bodies of victims continue to be found in mass graves.

### 3.14 German Court Questioning ECJ

#### Why in news?

Germany's constitutional court has questioned the legality of a past ruling of the European Court of Justice (ECJ).

#### What is the ECJ?

- The European Court of Justice (ECJ) is the supreme court of the European Union (EU) in matters of EU law.
- It is a part of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU).
- The Luxembourg-based court was found in 1952 after the Treaty of Paris.
- It ensures that EU law is interpreted and applied the same in every EU country.
- It ensures that countries and EU institutions abide by EU law.
- It settles the legal disputes between national governments and EU institutions.
- In terms of hierarchy, the national courts of member countries are below the ECJ in matters of EU law.

#### What was the ECJ's 2018 verdict?

- In 2018, the ECJ had ruled that a EUR 2 trillion bond-buying scheme of the ECB was legal as per EU law.
- This scheme aimed at reinvigorating the EU economy after the multi-year European debt crisis.

#### What is the German Court's verdict?

- In Germany, opponents of the scheme had for years complained to the German Constitutional Court, the country's highest.
- The German Court in turn had expressed its concerns on parts of the scheme in 2017.
- It ruled that the ECJ's 2018 ruling was "ultra vires", meaning beyond the latter's legal authority.
- It said that the ECJ did not properly address whether the ECB scheme was justifiably suited for the EU economy.
- It said that the ECJ's verdict failed to consider the importance of the proportionality principle that applies to the division of competences between the EU and the Member States.
- The German court has now given the ECB three months to prove that the bond-buying scheme was proportionate as per the EU's actual needs.

#### What was the response of the EC?

- After the German ruling, the European Commission (EC) underlined the supremacy of the ECJ.
- The EC said that notwithstanding the analysis of the detail of the German Court decision, they reaffirm the primacy of the EU law.
- In addition, it reaffirmed that the rulings of the ECJ are binding on all national courts.

#### What is the significance of the verdict?

- The German ruling came to the delight of Eurosceptics, and was echoed by governments that have been in the EU's crosshairs.



- Poland said that the German verdict is of tremendous importance for it.
- Critics of the German verdict said that the Court could strike at the legal foundations of the 27-member zone.
- The resultant power struggle between the two courts could lead to a rewriting of EU treaties, which in itself a highly contentious process.
- This verdict is seen as a challenge to the long-settled hierarchy of EU judiciary.
- Some economists have also slammed the judges' understanding of monetary policy of both the German and EU courts.
- Experts believe that national courts in Poland and Hungary would follow the precedent set by Germany in challenging the EU court's orders.

### 3.15 Ireland's Help to Native Americans

#### What is the issue?

- Native American communities in the U.S. are usually the hard hit at times of a disease outbreak.
- For COVID-19, Ireland has offered aid to them. Here is how and why.

#### How vulnerable are the Native Americans?

- A study was conducted by various US government agencies in 2009 following the H1N1 flu outbreak.
- The reports suggested that death rates were higher among Native Americans in the country.
- Almost a decade later, now, Native American communities have found themselves hit hard by the onslaught of coronavirus infections.
- Native Americans in Navajo Nation, spread across the states of Utah, Arizona and New Mexico in the U.S., have been particularly affected.
- The reasons include -
  - i. high rates of poverty
  - ii. high risk pre-existing health conditions of diabetes, heart diseases and asthma that many suffer from in Native Americans communities
  - iii. little access to adequate healthcare
- These are the very reasons that made them more susceptible to H1N1 flu too. In addition, there are also various other social-cultural factors.
- Many households do not have access to running water, making sanitation a challenge.
- Due to socio-cultural factors, many generations in Native American families live together in cramped quarters.
- This makes isolation and social distancing difficult if not impossible during the times of COVID-19.
- Notably, the US is among the countries with the highest numbers of COVID-19 infections.
- The government and healthcare system is struggling to contain the outbreak. So, vulnerable communities face harsher circumstances in an already challenging environment.

#### What is Ireland's aid now?

- Institutions offering medical and public health services in federally-recognised Native American communities have been consistently underfunded.
- The health-related challenges have exacerbated due to COVID-19 for the communities.
- However, help arrived for the Native American communities from an unexpected source - Ireland.

- A crowd-funding campaign on GoFundMe had been set up in the U.S. to help Native Americans.
- This was unexpectedly flooded with donations in early May 2020, from people in Ireland and those with Irish surnames.
- The GoFundMe campaign collected approximately \$3.9 million in two weeks since it was set up.

### Why Ireland?

- To recount, Native Americans had offered aid to Ireland during the Great Famine that occurred between 1845 to 1849.
- The famine altered Ireland's cultural, demographic and political landscape.
- Large sums of money were donated to Ireland, from people around the world.
- These included from places like Calcutta to Native American tribes in the United States.
- In 1847, Native American Choctaws had donated approximately \$150, which would be equivalent to approximately \$5,000 today.
- The Native Americans had themselves experienced starvation some 16 years prior to that.
- They had been forcefully displaced by settlers from their native lands, an occurrence that came to be known as the Trail of Tears.
- The humanitarian gesture of the Native Americans towards Ireland's people was thus rooted in an understanding of their own pain and suffering.
- In the comments section of the GoFundMe campaign now, people said they were making donations in commemoration of this aid.
- About 173 years later, Ireland's people are repaying the generosity of the Native Americans.

### 3.16 Ruling in Volkswagen Dieselgate Scandal

#### Why in news?

Germany's Federal Court of Justice (BGH) ruled against car manufacturer Volkswagen, the first judgment in the dieselgate scandal.

#### What was the "dieselgate scandal"?

- In 2015, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) found that in over 590,000 diesel motor vehicles, Volkswagen had violated the Clean Air Act.
- The vehicles were equipped with "defeat devices" in the form of a computer software.
- This was designed to cheat on federal emissions tests.
- A defeat device is one that bypasses or renders inoperative a vehicle's emission control system.
- Essentially, software of this kind is designed to detect when the vehicle is undergoing an emissions test.
- It then turns on full emissions controls during the testing period.
- In the course of normal driving, the effectiveness of such devices is reduced.

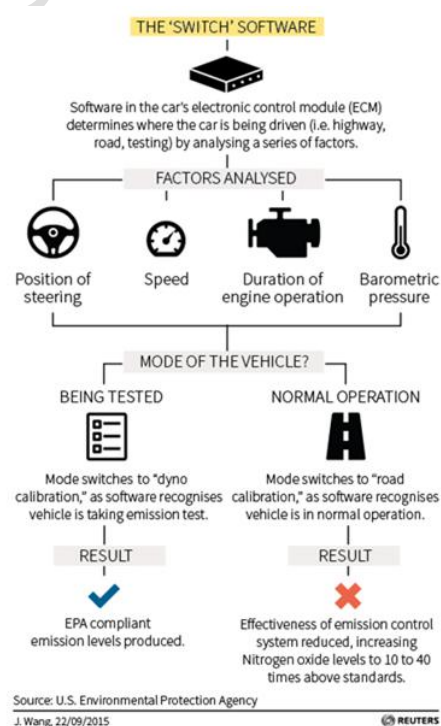
#### What did the EPA bring to light?

- EPA's notice in September 2015 alleged that Volkswagen installed these devices in its 2009-2015 two-litre diesel vehicles.
- It thereby was violating EPA's emissions standards since these vehicles emit 40 times more pollution than the level permitted.

- Some of the affected vehicles included Jetta (2009-2015), Beetle (2013-2015) and Passat (2012-2015) among others.
- The major excess pollutant, in this case, was nitrogen oxides.
- In November 2015, the EPA issued a separate notice of violation of the Clean Air Act to car manufacturers Audi, Porsche and Volkswagen.
- This was for producing and selling certain 2014-2016 model 3-litre diesel cars and SUVs that included a software device for circumventing emissions standards.
- These vehicles emitted nine times more pollution than the standards allowed.
- Subsequently, Volkswagen informed the EPA that the defeat devices existed in all of its US three-litre diesel models since 2009.
- On filing of a complaint, in 2017, Volkswagen pleaded guilty to three criminal offence and agreed to pay \$2.8 billion as a criminal penalty.
- Further, as separate civil resolutions of civil, environmental, customs and financial claims the company agreed to pay \$1.5 billion.

### What is the latest court ruling about?

- Following the EPA allegation in 2015 in the U.S., regulatory investigations were carried out against Volkswagen in several countries.
- These included South Korea, France, Italy, Germany, UK and Canada.
- In September 2015, Volkswagen revealed that over 1.2 million vehicles in the UK were involved in the diesel emissions scandal.
- Out of the 11 million affected vehicles worldwide, over 2.8 million were in Germany.
- So, in 2019, the Federation of German Consumer Organisations (VZBV) brought forward a case against Volkswagen on behalf of consumers in the country.
- Following this, the recent ruling by Germany's Federal Court of Justice concerned a case involving petitioner Herbert Gilbert.
- He bought a used Volkswagen Sharan in early 2014 for approximately €31,000.
- In his case, Gilbert asked that the company pay him the full purchase price plus interest.
- Whereas, the Volkswagen group maintained that consumers did not suffer any damage from the manipulated diesel cars.
- The court however ruled that Gilbert be paid compensation to the tune of over €26,000, minus depreciation resulting from the kilometers he drove.
- The judgment also requires that petitioners return their cars to the company.



### Why is the ruling significant?

- The ruling has set a crucial benchmark for over 60,000 such pending cases brought forward by German consumers.
- The company, on the other hand, has maintained that they would offer these consumers a payment.
- This would be less than what consumers can get through a court judgment.

- However, if consumers settle with the company directly they get to keep their vehicles.
- Several thousand consumers chose to settle with the company, due to which the recent ruling's impact will be limited.
- However, significantly, in the reasoning of their judgment, the judges maintained that it should be assumed that the Board of Directors knew about the manipulation because of the scale of the fraud.

## AFRICA

### 3.17 Somalia's Challenges

#### What is the issue?

- Somalia is grappling with the challenge from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Therefore, two challenging questions before it could be deferred.

#### What are the two challenges?

- Due to the public health emergency,
  1. June 8 public hearings at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on Somalia's maritime dispute with Kenya may be postponed.
  2. The general elections scheduled for later this year may be postponed [Somalia seeks to restore universal suffrage after five decades.]

#### What is the maritime dispute?

- **Friction** - Somalia and Kenya have locked horns for over a decade on the delimitation of the maritime boundary in the Indian Ocean.
- At issue is a 1 lakh sq km area containing huge deposits of oil and gas.
- Under a 2009 Memorandum of Understanding, each granted the other no objection to presenting separate submissions to the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS).
- These submissions concern the outer limits of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles.
- The parties also committed to finding a settlement in accordance with international law on the basis of the CLCS's recommendations.
- **Intensification** - But friction intensified following Kenya's 2011 despatch of troops into Somalia, ostensibly to counter the al-Qaeda affiliate, al-Shabab.
- Kenya's backing for the semi-autonomous Jubaland region has also caused consternation in Somalia.
- **ICJ's involvement** - Given the diminishing prospects of a mutual compromise on the dispute, Somalia petitioned the ICJ in 2014.
- Somalia won a symbolic victory of sorts in February 2017.
- The Hague court in the Netherlands rejected by a majority Kenya's argument challenging the admissibility of Somalia's application, as also the court's jurisdiction in the case, in view of the MoU.
- The court held that this MoU was in no way breached just because one of the parties decided on an alternative mode of dispute resolution.
- Moreover, while the agreement was legally binding, there was nothing to suggest that judicial proceedings could take place only after the CLCS issued its own recommendations, said the court.
- **In a diplomatic row** - In 2019, Kenya recalled its ambassador and expelled Somalia's envoy.
- In parallel, the African Union has intervened to find a settlement out of court via a mediator.

- As regards the judicial proceedings at The Hague, a decision is expected on the public hearings scheduled to commence June 8, 2020.
- [The case was postponed twice last year.]

### What is the issue with elections?

- **After 5 decades** - In this year's election, people of Somalia will for the first time since 1969, will exercise their right to political participation under universal suffrage.
- **Law** - The one-person one-vote law received President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed's assent in February, 2020.
- This law is a milestone in Somalia's path to democratic governance after enduring military rule for two decades and the long transition following the civil war.
- **Path towards democracy** - There was a 100-fold increase in the number of delegates in the 2016 electoral college.
- This electoral college chose the 275-member House of the People and the 54 senators-strong upper chamber.
- There are fewer women legislators in the current parliament than the 30% seats allotted to them.
- But a steady increase in the number of female representatives witnessed in successive elections is an encouraging sign.
- **Suppression of Press** - Somalia has systematically suppressed a free press that is vital to a vibrant democracy.
- Amnesty International said that 8 journalists have been killed and many have fled the country during Mr. Mohamed's term as the al-Shabab and the police behave with impunity.
- The Committee to Protect Journalists said in 2016 that as many as 59 media personnel were killed since the 1991 civil war.
- In the backdrop of such systemic constraints and the current pandemic, the implementing universal suffrage would be practically difficult.
- Authorities and activists can, however, take comfort in the fact that the alternatives would be far less desirable.

## AMERICA

### 3.18 U.S Aid to Greenland

#### Why in news?

The United States has made an offer of financial aid to Greenland, which has angered Denmark.

#### What is the U.S.'s proposed rationale?

- The U.S. iterates that the decision was to aid "sustainable growth" in the autonomous island.
- The other reasons for the US government's decision include -
  - i. Russia's "aggressive behaviour and increased militarisation in the Arctic"
  - ii. China's "predatory economic interests"

#### What is the Political relationship between Denmark and Greenland?

- Denmark established trading colonies in Greenland, and between late 1700s and mid-1900s, the Danish government assumed full control over Greenland.
- During World War II, Denmark came under the occupation of Germany.



- Also, Greenland's protection became the responsibility of the United States.
- However, Greenland was returned to Denmark in 1945.
- Following this, numerous social and economic reforms were undertaken by the Danish government.
- Greenland was granted autonomy on May 1st, 1979.
- In 1973, Greenland had joined the European Union as part of Denmark but left in 1985.
- The foreign affairs and defense of Greenland is managed by Denmark.
- Denmark also contributes to about two-thirds of Greenland's budget.



### Why is Denmark concerned?

- Greenland is an autonomous island that falls within the territory of the Kingdom of Denmark.
- Earlier U.S. had a row with Denmark over a proposal to “purchase” Greenland from the Denmark.
- The Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen had earlier dismissed the possibility of the US acquiring Greenland.
- Denmark maintained that Greenland was not for sale, was not Danish too but belonged to Greenland itself.
- The financial aid proposal follows plans by the US government to open a consulate in Nuuk, Greenland's capital.
- Members of Denmark's parliament expressed outrage at this attempt of the US government.
- Some politicians considered the steps to be “extremely provocative” interference by the US.
- Both Greenland and Denmark are well-aware of the shifting geo-politics in the region.
- But the decisions are seen as an extension of the Trump administration's colonial policies towards the island.

### Why is Trump so interested in Greenland?

- Trump's interest in Greenland is almost an extension of his worldview and US foreign policy in his administration.
- Purchasing another country or territory is unusual, but the US government has done this twice before -
  1. when President Thomas Jefferson acquired Louisiana from the French in 1803
  2. when President Andrew Johnson purchased Alaska from Russia in 1867
- If the plan ever materialises, Trump would secure a place in US history of being the third president to add land to the country's territory.
- For many among Trump's voter base in the US, acquiring new territory would appeal to their nationalistic and imperialistic views.
- **Greenland** - Interestingly, Greenland, though the world's largest island, is geographically a part of the North American continent.
- However, it has always been culturally aligned with Europe.
- Greenland is also a resource rich land mass, strategically located between the Arctic Sea and the Atlantic Ocean.
- It has some of the largest deposits of rare-earth metals, including iron-ore, uranium, byproducts of zinc, neodymium, praseodymium, dysprosium and terbium.
- These rare-earth metals are used in the production of electric cars, mobile phones and computers.



- **Geopolitical** - For the longest time, China has been the world's largest supplier of the above rare-earth metals.
- An acquisition of Greenland would make the US less reliant on China for these rare-earth metals.
- Greenland, as a part of the Arctic region, also has large deposits of undiscovered oil and gas.
- The US is opening a consulate in Greenland after nearly seven decades of closing its first consulate after the Second World War.
- The move is largely to counteract Russia and China's aggressive foreign policy moves to gain more influence in the region.
- Russia has been steadily expanding its military presence in the Arctic.
- China has done its bit on the economic front.
- Due to climate change, the Arctic ice is melting at an accelerated rate, opening up water routes for military and maritime trade.
- This is in addition to global superpowers and regional players vying for control over Greenland's vast untapped natural resources.

### 3.19 US Visa Ban Extension - Impact on Indian IT Companies

#### Why in news?

The US administration extended the 60-day ban on immigration and non-immigrant worker visas till the end of 2020.

#### What is the stated reason?

- The US President Donald Trump said that the move was to protect domestic workers.
- They are said to have been impacted due to a contraction in the economy in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Popular work visas including the much-coveted H-1B and H-2B, and certain categories of H-4, J, and L visas shall also remain suspended.

#### What are the different categories of visas issued?

- Immigrant visas are issued to foreign nationals who intend to live permanently in the US.
- Non-immigrant visas are for foreign nationals willing to enter the US on a temporary basis.
- These may be for tourism, medical treatment, business, temporary work, study, or other similar reasons.
- The US issues a certain number of visas each year to fill a vacuum of highly-skilled low-cost employees in IT and other related domains.
- This allows companies from outside the US to send employees to work on client sites.
- Of these work visas, the H-1B remains the most popular among Indian IT companies.
- H-1B is issued for people to work in a specialty occupation.
- It requires a higher education degree of its equivalent.
- The US government has a cap of 85,000 total H-1B visas for each year.
- Of this, 65,000 H-1B visas are issued to highly skilled foreign workers.
- The rest 20,000 can be additionally allotted to highly skilled foreign workers who have a higher education or masters degree from an American university.
- Apart from the H-1B visas, the US government also issues L1 visas.

- This allows companies to transfer highly skilled workers to US for a period of up to 7 years.
- H-2B visas allow food and agricultural workers to seek employment in the US.

### **Why did the US suspend non-immigrant worker visas?**

- Since it was started in 1952, the H-1 visa scheme has undergone many changes and revisions.
- These were done to allow or disallow certain categories of skilled workers into the US.
- The changes were made depending on the economic situation of the country.
- The eventual technology boom saw the arrival of the internet and low-cost computers in developing nations such as India and China.
- This led to a large number of graduates with a will to work at relatively low costs in the US.
- This turned out to be a win-win situation for both the employer and the employee.
- However, there raised a concern of having low cost workers in the US at the expense of domestic workers.
- In 2017, after taking over as the US President, Trump had hinted that the low-cost workers were hampering the economy and undercutting jobs of citizens.
- The US had then hinted at reforming the “broken” H-1B visa system.
- Now, Trump seized the opportunity provided by the economic contraction due to Covid-19.
- He first banned the entry of non-immigrant workers till 23 June 2020.
- It is now extended till 31 December 2020.

### **What are the likely implications?**

- Since the ban is effective immediately, the processing of all new H-1B, H-2B, J, and L visa categories stand suspended.
- So, those who do not have a valid non-immigrant visa as of 23 June 2020 and are outside of the US, will not be allowed to enter the country until 31 December 2020.
- H-1B, H-2B, J and L visa holders, and their spouse or children already present in the US shall not be impacted by the new worker visa ban.
- Also, workers in essential services in the food sector have been given some reprieve.
- Their entry shall be decided by the consular officer of immigration services.

### **How does it affect the Indian IT companies?**

- Indian IT companies are amongst the biggest beneficiaries of the US H-1B visa regime.
- Since 1990s, Indian IT companies have utilised a huge share of the total number of visas issued each year.
- As of April 1, 2020, the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) had received about 2.5 lakh H-1B work visa applications.
- Indians had applied for as many as 1.84 lakh or 67% of the total H-1B work visas for the current financial year ending March 2021.
- Apart from the suspension, the executive order has also made sweeping changes to the H-1B work visa norms.
- So, the visa issuance will no longer be decided by the currently prevalent lottery system.
- The new norms will favour highly-skilled workers who are paid the highest wages by their respective companies.
- This could result in a significant impact on margins and worker wages of Indian IT companies that send thousands of low-cost employees to work on client sites in the US.

- The large Indian IT companies have cut down their dependency on H-1B and other worker visas by hiring as much as 50% of staff locally.
- However, they still rely on these visas to keep costs in check.
- Indian IT companies also offer subcontracts to Indian nationals already present in the US with valid H-1B visas.
- E.g. Bangalore-based Wipro spends as much as 20% of its revenue to subcontract Indian workers with valid H-1B visas
- In all, the changes are largely disadvantageous to the Indian IT companies.

### 3.20 US Immigration Visa Guidelines

#### Why in news?

The United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (US ICE) has given new regulations for international students' visa.

#### What are the new US regulations?

- International students might have to leave the US if their universities moved classes entirely online in the upcoming semester.
- The agency also said that if students would not move back, they would face the risk of deportation.
- Students attending schools offering normal in-person classes can stay.
- However, they cannot take more than one class or three credit hours online.

#### What do these regulations mean for Indian students?

- Indian students currently enrolled in schools or programmes that are entirely online for the fall semester will have to come back home.
- They can stay back only if they take alternative steps like moving to a school that offer in-person instruction or choose a medical leave.
- As the pandemic forced American campuses to shut down, Indian students had to come back to India.
- These students would not be permitted to enter the US if their classes are entirely online.
- The same applies to prospective students who were going to join in the fall semester.

#### What would happen to those enrolled in universities with a blend of classes?

- Indian students enrolled in universities that have announced a hybrid blend of in-person and online classes for the fall semester can
  1. Remain in the US, and
  2. Those who returned to India will be allowed to re-enter the US.
- They will be allowed to take more than one class or three credit hours online.
- The university will have to certify to the US government that the student is not taking an entirely online course load for the fall 2020 semester.
- This exemption does not apply to F-1 visa students in English language training programmes.
- Also, this exemption does not apply to M-1 visa students, who are not permitted to enrol in any online courses.

#### Why has the US government announced these changes?

- International students in the US are required to do most of their learning through contact classes.



- The campus shutdowns forced the government to provide temporary exemptions for international students to take more online classes.
- However, these exemptions were made only for the spring and summer semesters.
- The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP), under the US ICE, did not say much on the reasons behind revisiting the above exemptions.
- Some are seeing this as a pressure tactic to get universities to reopen for the fall semester.

#### **How will this affect international enrolment in US universities?**

- The US universities have already made admission offers to international students.
- The SEVP announcement could encourage prospective students to defer their joining to the next semester.
- As for the active or enrolled students, they may even drop a semester.
- **QS Survey of international students** - Over half the respondents of the survey intended to defer their entry into foreign universities due to the Covid-related uncertainties.
- The revised US guidelines are only going to cement such intent further.
- This means revenues of US universities, especially those that have announced an online fall semester, are bound to get hit.

#### **How have the US universities reacted to the new guidelines?**

- Some universities have been quick on the uptake.
- They have changed their fall semester plans in less than a day of the government announcement.

### **3.21 US-Huawei-ZTE Tussle**

#### **Why in news?**

The US Federal Communications Commission (US FCC) designated Chinese telecom vendors Huawei and ZTE as national security threats.

#### **Why has the US banned Huawei and ZTE?**

- The first official action on these Chinese telecom equipment makers was taken based on House Intelligence Committee's report (2012).
- The report said that both the companies posed a risk to national security.
- It also said that the US businesses should avoid buying equipment from them.
- On most occasions, the US had accused Huawei and ZTE of working in ways that were contrary to national security or foreign policy interests.

#### **Why is this ban important?**

- Huawei is the world's largest maker of telecom equipment and the second largest maker of mobile phone parts.
- It has been at the forefront of innovation that allowed many companies to build large telecom infrastructure at very low costs.
- ZTE has tied up with several big corporations to manufacture their patented equipment in China at very low costs.
- A ban on both Huawei and ZTE could mean an **increase of up to 30% in cost** of telecom equipment across the board.



- Apart from hardware, Huawei has also been trying to make inroads into the software and operating systems (OS) industry.

### Will the Huawei ban impact India?

- This decision could put pressure on India to take similar action.
- **Equipment market** - The low cost equipment from Huawei or ZTE could provide some relief to domestic telcos.
- Huawei was a major equipment supplier to companies like Vodafone Idea and Airtel during the initial rollout of the 4G services in India.
- Over the years, Huawei has made inroads into nearly 25% of the total telecom equipment market in India.
- **4G expansion** - Now, Department of Telecommunications said that it would rework the 4G network expansion tenders of BSNL and MTNL.
- This would bar global vendors like Huawei and ZTE from participating.
- **5G trials** - In 2019, the telecom minister said that all players, including Huawei, were permitted to participate in 5G trials in India.
- To allay security fears, Huawei had said it was ready to sign a no backdoor agreement with the government.
- Under the agreement, Huawei would vouch that it did not gain access to any Indian customer's equipment under any circumstance.
- Barring Huawei and ZTE from even bidding in the 5G auctions could mean equipment as much as 30% costlier.

### 3.22 Racial Unrest in the U.S

#### Why in news?

The United States is witnessing widespread protests against the recent death of George Floyd, a black man, by the action of police.

#### What led to the protests?

- Floyd, an unarmed black man, died in the hands of Minneapolis police.
- Derek Chauvin, the police officer filmed kneeling on Floyd's neck, was arrested soon after.
- He was charged with murder and manslaughter.
- Demonstrations erupted in cities across the U.S. in response to the death of George Floyd.
- Another such issue took place in 2014 with the shooting death of a black 18-year-old, Michael Brown, by a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri.



#### How prevalent were the protests?

- The anger in response to Floyd's killing descended into rioting and looting in several cities.
- Protests have erupted in at least 140 cities across the U.S. in the days after Floyd's death.
- Violence spread overnight despite curfews in several major cities rocked by civil unrest in recent days.
- The sight of protesters flooding streets fuelled a sense of crisis in the U.S. after weeks of lockdowns due to the coronavirus pandemic.
- The closely packed crowds and many demonstrators not wearing masks sparked fears of a resurgence of COVID-19.



- Police fired rubber bullets and tear gas in many cities.
- In London too, hundreds of protesters took to Trafalgar Square chanting “no justice, no peace.”
- A crowd descended on the U.S. Embassy in Berlin too, calling for the police officers to face justice.

#### **What controversy did Trump trigger?**

- Besides protests, President Donald Trump let himself into the controversy.
- He triggered a broader debate on censorship of posts by social media platforms.
- The Twitter masked and attached a caution note to a tweet by Mr. Trump for “glorifying violence”.
- In the tweet, he had labelled protesters calling for action against police for Floyd’s death “THUGS”.
- He added, “when the looting starts, the shooting starts.”
- [This comes as a reference to a threat by a police chief, who in 1967 declared “war” and vowed violent revenge on African-Americans in Miami Beach.]
- This is hardly the first time that the U.S. President has spread messages of hatred.
- He has said, among other things, that Mexicans were rapists and drug dealers.
- In early 2017, he banned visitors from certain Muslim-majority countries.

#### **What does this demand?**

- The situation calls for far-reaching legislative reforms on -
  - i. the use of excessive force by police against minorities
  - ii. punishment for all hate crimes
  - iii. workplace discrimination
  - iv. inhumane treatment of migrants at the border
- Such an agenda, focused on the complete reform of government institutions toward supporting a pluralist ethos is crucial now.

## **4. INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

### **4.1 WHO’s Relevance**

#### **What is the issue?**

- COVID-19 has infected more than 19 million people, and devastated economies.
- This has brought the relevance of the World Health Organization (WHO) under question.

#### **What the WHO should have done?**

- An early warning and timely policy measures by the WHO would have forewarned countries.
- The countries would have set their preparatory efforts in motion for mounting a decisive response strategy.
- The WHO was expected to play the dual role of a think tank and oversee global responses to public health emergencies.

#### **What did it actually so?**

- The earliest COVID-19 positive case in China was reported in November, 2019.
- But China informed the WHO about the disease only in January, 2020.



- Then, confirmed cases were reported from Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and the U.S. in January.
- But the WHO continued to downplay the severity of the virus.
- The WHO declared the COVID-19 pandemic as a public health emergency of international concern only on January 30.
- It ignored Taiwan's hints of human-to-human transmission and requests on sharing relevant information.
- Further, it went on to praise China's response to the pandemic.
- WHO was severely criticised for its poor handling of the Ebola outbreak in 2014 as well.

#### **What is its relevance?**

- The relevance of the health agency has been fading.
- The WHO has been reduced to a coordinating body, beholden to the interests of rich member states.
- Its functional efficiency has been disadvantaged.
- This is due to the organisational lethargy, absence of decisive leadership, bureaucratic indolence and underfunded programmes.
- It has an inability to evolve to meet the needs of the 21st century.
- Director General Tedros Adhanom has been criticised for his leadership abilities during this pandemic.

#### **What is the concern with the funding?**

- The WHO is funded through assessed contributions made by the member states.
- These contributions can be spent as per the WHO's priorities approved at the World Health Assembly.
- The WHO is also funded through voluntary contributions from member states and private donors.
- These contributions are allocated in consultation with the donors.
- While voluntary contributions accounted for nearly 80% of the budget in 2018-19, assessed contributions merely constituted 17%.
- The challenges owing to constrained finances encumber autonomy in decision-making by favouring a donor-driven agenda.

#### **What should the WHO do?**

- The governments across the globe are equally responsible for their inept handling and ill-preparedness.
- However, that does not vindicate WHO's tardiness in handling the crisis.
- Many countries rely predominantly on the WHO for enforcing policy decisions governing public health.
- Political leanings and financial compulsions of WHO cannot betray that trust.
- The burden of their expectations must weigh heavily on every policy decision taken by the WHO.
- For when the WHO fails, many innocent lives are lost.

### **4.2 US-WHO Relationship**

#### **Why in news?**

The US President sent a letter to the World Health Organization (WHO) saying that the body had shown dependence on China.

### What did the letter say?

- The US President wrote that the repeated missteps by the WHO in responding to the pandemic had been extremely costly for the world.
- He threatened to halt funding to the WHO permanently if it did not commit to “substantive” improvements within 30 days.
- He also said that he would reconsider the membership of the US in the body.

### How much does the US contribute to the WHO?

- A large number of countries, philanthropic organisations, United Nations organisations, etc funds the WHO.
- According to information uploaded by the WHO,
  1. Voluntary donations from member states contribute 35.41%,
  2. Assessed contributions are 15.66%,
  3. Philanthropic organisations account for 9.33%,
  4. UN organisations contribute about 8.1%;
  5. The rest comes from myriad sources.
- The US contributes almost 15% of the WHO’s total funding and almost 31% of the member states’ donations, the largest chunk in both cases.
- India contributes 1% of member states’ donations.
- Countries decide how much they pay and may also choose not to.
- For the WHO, the loss of about 15% of its total funding is bound to have an impact the world over.
- However, unless other countries do the same as the US, the move may not severely hamstring WHO operations.

### What does the WHO do with its funds?

- The WHO is involved in various programmes.
- In 2018-19, 8.77% on increasing access to essential health and nutrition services, about 4.36% on prevention and control of outbreaks, etc.
- The Africa countries received \$1.6 billion for WHO projects; and South East Asia (including India) received \$375 million.
- India is a member state of the WHO South East Asia Region.
- The Americas received \$62.2 million for WHO projects.
- That is where most of WHO funding comes from and the least of it goes.

### How does WHO prioritise spending?

- The annual programme of work is passed by WHO’s decision-making body, the World Health Assembly (WHA).
- The WHA, held annually in Geneva, is attended by delegates from all member states.
- It focuses on a specific health agenda prepared by the Executive Board.
- The main functions of the WHA are to determine WHO policies, appoint the Director-General, supervise financial policies, and review and approve the proposed programme budget.
- The decisions on money allocation depend on the situation in countries.

- The WHO's 13th General Programme of Work (2019-23) lays down: "Unequal development in different countries in the promotion of health and control of diseases, especially communicable diseases, is a common danger."

#### **What are the criticisms of WHO's handling of the pandemic?**

- Since it first began handling the pandemic, the WHO has faced criticism from various quarters, much before Trump began his offensive.
- Some have blamed the UN body for the lavish praise it laid on Chinese efforts to contain the virus, while ignoring reports of whistleblowers being targeted in that country.
- It is also criticised for relying on data from China.
- It used this data to announce in January that there was no clear evidence of human-to-human transmission of the coronavirus.
- It is also blamed for its delay in classifying the outbreak as a global pandemic, which it did on March 11.

#### **What is the US influence over WHO?**

- The US, a founding member of the WHO, has long exercised a strong influence over the organisation.
- It has played a key role during the 2014 Ebola epidemic, and combating the HIV/AIDS epidemic, among several other achievements.
- US domestic bodies also collaborate with the WHO on a range of issues.
- During the Cold War, the US clout caused the Soviet Union and its allies to leave the WHO for several years.
- The tables now appear to have turned, with the US finding itself at odds with China's rising sway over the UN body.
- If the US ceases to remain a member state, it would be left with much less access to the WHO resources, especially at a time when it is the worst affected by the pandemic.

### **4.3 India to UNSC: A Diplomatic Victory**

#### **Why in news?**

**India's election** to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) as a non-permanent member is a significant diplomatic victory for the country.

#### **What is the UNSC?**

- The United Nations Charter established six main organs of the United Nations, including the Security Council.
- It gives primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security to the UNSC, which may meet whenever peace is threatened.
- It has **15 members**, and each Member has **one vote**.
- Out of the 15 members, 5 are permanent and 10 are non-permanent members with 2-year tenure.
- Only the UNSC has the power to make decisions that member states are then obligated to implement under the Charter.
- It dispatches military operations, imposes sanctions, mandates arms inspections, deploys election monitors, etc.

#### **Why is this election seen as a victory?**

- India has long been pushing for reforms at global institutions.
- The victory was not unexpected as India was the only contestant for the Asia Pacific seat.



- In the UN General Assembly, the election would be done by secret ballot where India needed two-thirds of the votes for victory.
- India secured the seat with 184 votes in the 193-strong UNGA.

#### **What happened at the election that India won?**

- India was the only candidate for the vacancy from the Asia Pacific.
- Last year, India's candidature for the seat was endorsed unanimously by the Asia Pacific group.
- This group comprises of 55 countries, including Pakistan and China.
- That endorsement meant that India would be a **clean slate candidate** for the elections, with an assured victory.
- Even if a country is a "clean slate" candidate and has been endorsed by its group, it still needs to secure the votes of two-thirds of the members present and voting at the UNGA session.
- This means that it should secure a minimum of 129 votes, if all 193 member states participate.

#### **What are the other countries that were elected?**

- Mexico, Norway and Ireland were also elected as non-permanent members.
- Mexico won the Latin American seat uncontested.
- But, Norway and Ireland emerged victorious from a three-way contest for the Western Europe and Others Group seat.
- Neither Kenya nor Djibouti, which were contesting the seat from Africa, won a two-thirds majority. They will face another vote.

#### **How did India seek support?**

- India sought the support of member countries by highlighting its commitment to **multilateralism and reforms**.
- Ahead of the vote, India had launched a campaign brochure which,
  1. Highlighted India's demand for transparency in mandates for UN peacekeeping missions and push for the India-led Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism,
  2. Called for joint efforts for UN reform and expansion of the UNSC

#### **What would be India's objective?**

- New orientation for a reformed multilateral system (NORMS) would be India's overall objective during its tenure that will begin next year.
- NORMS was laid out by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar.
- Achieving this would depend on how India will conduct diplomacy in the global body, build alliances and raise issues that go beyond the interests of the big five.

#### **What is the impact of the pandemic on the geopolitics?**

- India has long been of the view that the structure of the UNSC does not reflect the realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- It has got increasing support from member countries for its push for reforms.
- But the five permanent members of the UNSC have resisted it.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has already shaken up the global order and sharpened the rivalry between the U.S. and China.
- It has also opened up fresh debates on strengthening multilateralism and multilateral institutions.
- In this context, the challenges before India are many.

#### 4.4 India & IMO

##### What is the issue?

- The International Maritime Organization (IMO) lists India as among the 10 states with the largest interest in international seaborne trade.
- But India's participation in the IMO has been haphazard and inadequate.

##### What is IMO?

- Shipping accounts for over 90% by volume and about 80% by value of global trade.
- The International Maritime Organization (IMO) is a body that regulates the shipping industry with a range of legislations.
- It currently has 174 member states and three associate members.
- There are also many non-governmental and inter-governmental organisations.

##### How does IMO work?

- The IMO is primarily a secretariat that facilitates decision-making processes on all maritime matters through meetings of members.
- The binding instruments are brought in through the conventions.
- Maritime matters are dealt by the committees of the IMO like the Maritime Safety Committee (MSC), Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC) etc.
- Each committee is designated a separate aspect of shipping and supported by sub-committees.
- The subcommittees are the main working organs, where the proposals from a member state are analysed and forwarded to a main committee.
- The main committees put the approved proposal for enactment through the Convention.

##### How do prominent maritime nations operate in IMO?

- They have their permanent representatives at London (HQ, IMO).
- They are supported by a large contingent of domain experts from their maritime administration, seafarers and industry associations.
- They ensure that they have representation in every subcommittee, working group.
- European countries move their proposals in unison and voting or support are given en bloc.
- China, Japan, Singapore, Korea and a few others follow the same pattern ensuring that a large delegation intervenes in the meetings for their cause.
- This has resulted in these countries fiercely protecting their interests.

##### How does India operate?

- India has followed the same pattern.
- India's permanent representative post at London has remained vacant for the last 25 years.
- Representation at meetings is often through a skeletal delegation.
- The number of submissions made by India in the recent past has been very few and not in proportion to India's stakes in global shipping.

##### How does it affect India's interests?

- **High Risk Areas Demarcation** - IMO has demarcated "High Risk Areas" in Indian Ocean based on presence of pirates.



- This resulted in half the Arabian Sea and almost the entire south-west coast of India being seen as piracy-infested, despite the presence of the Indian Navy and Coast Guard.
- The High Risk Area formulation led to a ballooning of insurance costs. It affected goods coming into or out of India.
- So, it took great efforts to revoke the promulgation and negate the financial burden.
- **NavIC** - There was also great difficulty in introducing the indigenously designed NAVigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC) in the worldwide maritime navigation system.
- **Environmental Regulations** - IMO had recently mandated that merchant ships should not burn fuel with sulphur content greater than 0.5% beginning January 1 from the previous level of 3.5%.
- Refineries in India struggle to meet the demand.
- Freight costs also have increased resulting in a cascading effect on retail prices.
- New legislative mandates of IMO, fitment of new equipment and changes to ship structural designs being brought on have been driven by developed countries.
- They are not entirely pragmatic from the point of view of India's interests.

#### 4.5 OHCHR's Intervention in CAA Case

##### Why in News?

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has made an intervention application for a Supreme Court case regarding the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), 2019.

##### What is the OHCHR?

- The OHCHR is the leading UN entity on human rights that speak out objectively in the face of human rights violations worldwide.
- The UN General Assembly (UNGA) adopted the UNGA resolution 48/141 in 1994 and this created the OHCHR.
- The General Assembly of the body has entrusted the High Commissioner with a mandate to **promote and protect all human rights** for all.

##### On what grounds is this UN body seeking to intervene in CAA case?

- The High Commissioner seeks to intervene in the CAA case as **amicus curiae** (third party) and established a pursuant to the UNGA resolution 48/141.
- In the intervention application, the High Commissioner has underlined that she is the principal human rights official of the UN.
- She also adds that it is her role to support the domestic courts with their constitutional function in ensuring the implementation of international legal obligations regarding human rights.

##### What exactly does the intervention application say?

- **Admirable** - The OHCHR has admired the CAA's stated purpose,
  1. Protection of some people from persecution on religious grounds,
  2. Simplifying procedures and facilitating the granting of citizenship to such persons from some neighbouring countries.
- It welcomes that India has exhibited to persons seeking to find a safer, more dignified life within its borders.
- **Questionable** - It says that the examination of the case by the Supreme Court of the CAA is of substantial interest to the High Commissioner.





- It says that CAA raises human rights issues, including its compatibility in relation to the right to equality before law and non-discrimination on nationality grounds under human rights obligations.
- It questions the reasonableness and objectivity of the criterion of extending the benefits of the CAA to Buddhists, Sikhs, Hindus, Jains, Parsis and Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan alone.

#### **Is there a specific basis on which the CAA has been faulted?**

- The High Commissioner flags some central principles of international human rights law:
  1. The impact of the CAA on some migrants;
  2. The enjoyment of human rights by all migrants and the rights of all migrants (non-citizens) to equality before the law;
  3. The principle of non-refoulement which prohibits the forcible return of refugees and asylum seekers to a country where they are likely to be persecuted.
- The application mentions that all migrants regardless of their race, ethnicity, religion, nationality and/or immigration status enjoy human rights and are entitled to protection.
- It says that the international human rights law doesn't distinguish between citizens and non-citizens or different groups of non-citizens for providing protection to them from discrimination.
- This international law requires the granting of citizenship under law to conform to the right of all persons to equality before the law and to be free from prohibited discrimination", the application says.

#### **How has India reacted to this UN body's move?**

- The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said that the CAA is an internal matter of India and it concerns the sovereign right of the Indian Parliament to make laws.
- The MEA says that it strongly believes that no foreign party has any locus standi on issues pertaining to India's sovereignty.
- It said that India was clear that the CAA is constitutionally valid and complies with all requirements of India's constitutional values.
- It also said that the CAA is reflective of the long-standing national commitment in respect of human rights issues arising from the tragedy of the Partition of India.

### **4.6 Evolution of CTBT**

#### **What is the issue?**

- Suspicions were recently raised in the U.S. on China violating the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).
- In this backdrop, here is an overview of the evolution of the CTBT and its effectiveness.

#### **What is CTBT?**

- The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is the Treaty banning all nuclear explosions - everywhere, by everyone.
- The Treaty was negotiated at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva and adopted by the United Nations General Assembly.
- It was opened for signature on 24 September 1996.
- The Treaty has not entered into force yet.
- [The signature to a treaty indicates that the country accepts the treaty.
- The ratification symbolizes the official sanction of a treaty to make it legally binding for the government of a country.]

- The CTBT is essentially a “**zero-yield**” treaty.
- This means that the agreement prohibits all nuclear explosions that produce a self-sustaining, supercritical chain reaction of any kind whether for weapons or peaceful purposes.

### How has banning nuclear testing evolved?

- For decades, a ban on nuclear testing was seen as the necessary first step towards curbing the nuclear arms race.
- But Cold War politics made it impossible.
- A Partial Test Ban Treaty was concluded in 1963 banning underwater and atmospheric tests but this only drove testing underground.
- By the time the CTBT negotiations began in Geneva in 1994, global politics had changed.
- The Cold War had ended and the nuclear arms race was over.
- The USSR had broken up and its principal testing site, Semipalatinsk, was in Kazakhstan (Russia still had access to Novaya Zemlya near the Arctic circle).
- In 1991, Russia declared a unilateral moratorium on testing, followed by the U.S. in 1992.
- By this time, the U.S. had conducted 1,054 tests and Russia, 715.

### What were the challenges in the process?

- Negotiations on nuclear test ban were often contentious.
- France and China continued testing, claiming that they had conducted far fewer tests and needed to validate new designs.
- They argued that the CTBT did not imply an end to nuclear deterrence.
- France and the U.S. even exploited the idea of a CTBT that would permit testing at a low threshold, below 500 tonnes of TNT (trinitrotoluene) equivalent.
- This was one-thirtieth of the “Little Boy”, the bomb that U.S. dropped on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945.
- Civil society and the non-nuclear weapon states reacted negatively to such an idea and it was dropped.
- Some countries proposed permanently shutting down all test sites as the best way to verify a comprehensive test ban.
- This was unwelcome to the nuclear weapon states.

### What was the U.S-proposed idea then?

- The U.S. came up with the idea of defining the “comprehensive test ban” as a “zero yield” test ban.
- This would prohibit supercritical hydro-nuclear tests but not sub-critical hydrodynamic nuclear tests.
- [Hydronuclear experiments, as distinguished from hydrodynamic ones, use actual fissile material assembled to form a supercritical mass in which a chain reaction begins.
- Dynamic experiments are used to gain information on the physical properties and dynamic behavior of materials used in nuclear weapons.]
- Once the UK and France agreed, the U.S. was able to prevail upon Russia and China to accept this understanding.
- This was a moment of the U.S.’s unipolar supremacy.
- The Clinton administration in the U.S. announced a science-based nuclear Stockpile Stewardship and Management Program.
- This was a generously funded project to keep the nuclear laboratories in business and the Pentagon happy.

- Accordingly, the CTBT prohibits all parties from carrying out “any nuclear weapon test explosion or any other nuclear explosion.”
- The above terms are neither defined nor elaborated.

#### Why does CTBT lack authority?

- Another controversy arose regarding the entry-into-force provisions (Article 14) of the treaty.
- India’s proposals for anchoring the CTBT in a disarmament framework did not find acceptance.
- In June 1996, India announced its decision to withdraw from the negotiations.
- Unhappy at this turn, the U.K., China and Pakistan took the lead in revising the entry-into-force provisions.
- The new provisions listed 44 countries by name whose ratification was necessary for the treaty to enter into force and included India.
- India protested that this attempt violated a country’s sovereign right to decide if it wanted to join a treaty; but this was ignored.
- The CTBT was adopted by a majority vote and opened for signature.
- Of the 44 listed countries, to date only 36 have ratified the treaty.
- China, Egypt, Iran, Israel and the U.S. have signed but not ratified.
- China maintains that it will only ratify it after the U.S. does so but the Republican dominated Senate in the U.S. had rejected it in 1999.
- In addition, North Korea, India and Pakistan are the three who have not signed.
- All three have also undertaken tests after 1996; India and Pakistan in May 1998 and North Korea six times between 2006 and 2017.
- The CTBT has, therefore, not entered into force yet, and lacks legal authority.

#### 4.7 Open Skies Treaty

##### Why in news?

The United States administration said that it would withdraw from the Open Skies Treaty (OST).

##### What is the Open Skies Treaty?

- In 1955, the former **US President Dwight Eisenhower** first proposed it as a means to deescalate tensions during the Cold War.
- The treaty was eventually signed in 1992 between NATO members and former Warsaw Pact countries following the demise of the Soviet Union.
- It went into effect in **2002** and currently has **35 signatories** along with one non-ratifying member (Kyrgyzstan).
- The OST aims at building confidence among members through mutual openness, thus reducing the chances of accidental war.
- Under the treaty, a **member state can spy** on any part of the host nation, with the latter’s consent.
- A country can undertake aerial imaging over the host state after giving notice 72 hours before, and sharing its exact flight path 24 hours before.
- The data gathered, such as on troop movements, military exercises and missile deployments, has to be shared with all member states.

- Only approved imaging equipment is permitted on the surveillance flights, and officials from the host state can stay on board throughout the planned journey.

#### **Why the US wants to withdraw from the OST?**

- While it was envisaged as a key arms control agreement, many in US had for over a decade accused Russia of non-compliance with OST protocols.
- Russia was blamed for obstructing surveillance flights on its territory, while misusing its own missions for gathering key tactical data.
- The U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo accused Russia of violating the Treaty openly and continuously in various ways for years.
- So the U.S. President Trump's administration has now chosen to withdraw from the pact.
- Russia has denied the allegations, and has called U.S.'s exit as very regrettable.

#### **What is the significance of the OST?**

- The OST was signed in 1992, much before the advent of advanced satellite imaging technology, which is currently the preferred mode for intelligence gathering.
- Yet, surveillance aircraft provide key information that still cannot be gathered by satellite sensors, such as thermal imaging data.
- Also, since only the US has an extensive military satellite infrastructure, other NATO members would have to rely on US to obtain classified satellite data.
- This satellite data would be more difficult to obtain compared to OST surveillance records that have to be shared with all members as a treaty obligation.
- Notably, the OST's utility for U.S. is that since 2002, it has flown 201 surveillance missions over Russia and its ally Belarus.
- A former Trump official had also hailed OST data gathered during the 2014 Russia-Ukraine conflict.

#### **What US departure could mean for the treaty?**

- Pompeo said that the US would reconsider its decision to withdraw if Russia demonstrates a return to full compliance.
- This approach is reminiscent from last year when Trump had suspended US participation in the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty.
- **[INF Treaty** - A security agreement that had been credited with curtailing the arms race in Europe towards the end of the Cold War]
- Then too, the USA had said that it would re-engage with Russia if it sought a new treaty – a possibility that never materialised.
- Experts believe that the same could happen with the OST, with Russia using USA's exit as a pretext for leaving the treaty itself.
- Russia's departure could adversely impact USA's European allies that rely on OST data to track Russian troop movements in the Baltic region.
- Pulling out of the OST, an important multilateral arms control agreement would be yet another gift from the US to Russia.

## 4.8 G11 Grouping

### Why in news?

United States President Donald Trump has proposed for a “G11” Summit.

### What is G11?

- G11 will be the expansion of the G7 grouping.
- [G7 or Group of Seven is an intergovernmental economic organization.
- It consists of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States.]
- G11 will include G7 countries, India, Australia, South Korea, and Russia.
- It is being widely perceived as an “anti-Chinese” platform.

### Why was G11 initiated?

- **Outdated** - Mr Trump cancelled the G7 summit, originally scheduled for June at Camp David, on account of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- He has declared this 45-year-old organisation “outdated” because he didn’t feel it “properly represents the world”.
- This is a valid assertion, given the realignments of global economic power over the past half-century.
- **Global realignments** - The United Kingdom’s position after Brexit will weaken its already declining global heft.
- Italy has slipped behind India in terms of gross domestic product (GDP).
- But the exclusion of China, the world’s second-largest economy, has raised questions about Trump’s intentions.

### What is the question for India?

- The big question for India is whether, if this invitation is issued, should be accepted, given its own current strained relations with China.
- On balance, the answer should be yes, both in terms of serving,
  1. India’s own geo-strategic interests and
  2. Within the dynamics of the immediate and long-term India-China relationship.
- China’s exclusion, however, should not stop India’s acceptance.

### How will India benefit?

- A forum like G11 offering an opportunity for an exchange of views on issues that are important to India can be of considerable value.
- In particular, it may offer an occasion to discuss with some of the world’s most important leaders the impact of Covid-19 on the global economy.
- It will help lay down the contours of a coordinated response.

### How will China view India’s acceptance?

- The question of India’s acceptance of any such invitation may be perceived as provoking China at a time when it is making aggressive inroads into Indian Territory.
- This move, in turn, is seen as partial retaliation for the Indian government’s closer embrace of a US establishment, which has been increasingly hostile to China.

- On the contrary, it is precisely because of these developments that the India should be receptive to G11 invitation.

#### **What should India do?**

- India would have the virtue of transmitting the message that no other country can dictate India's foreign policy.
- Being seen to be intimidated by China's military muscle-flexing in Sikkim and Ladakh leaves India open to pressure from China to exclude deeper partnerships with Japan or Australia.
- Both Japan and Australia, together with the US, are part of the 13-year-old Quadrilateral Security Dialogue.
- In addition, India is involved in groupings that exclude China, such as the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IORA).
- So accepting potential G11 membership should not be seen as a precedent-setting move.

#### **What are the uncertainties involved?**

- U.S President Trump can invite any country as a G-7 special invitee.
- However, changing its composition will require the approval of the other members as well.
- Already, there are some concerns over Russia, which could derail the entire G-11 plan.
- So, this makes any concrete decision by New Delhi on the issue premature.
- Mr. Trump has indicated that he could hold the meet close to the UN General Assembly session in September 2020.
- But it is unclear when the summit will actually be held, given the November 2020 polls in the U.S.
- Despite its border tensions with China, India must also consider its objectives in attending this grouping.
- This is because G-11 is perceivably a grouping aimed at fuelling a new Cold War between the U.S. and China.
- Notably, there are deep member differences in G-7 itself on issues including climate change, security contributions, Iran, etc.
- In France, in 2019, the grouping was unable to issue a joint communique due to these differences, which was a first in its 45-year-old history.
- So, an evaluation of the G-7's effectiveness as a multilateral forum thus far is also needed.

### **4.9 Italian Marines' Case – PCA Ruling**

#### **Why in news?**

The Permanent Court of Arbitration has given its judgment in the Italian Marines' Case.

#### **What is the case?**

- In 2012, two Kerala fishermen were shot dead by Italian marines from the Enrica Lexie.
- Enrica Lexie is about 20.5 nautical miles off India's coast.

#### **What is the judgment?**

- The Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) admitted that both India and Italy had concurrent jurisdiction in the matter.
- However, it ruled that India does not have jurisdiction to try the marines as they were acting on behalf of a state.



### What are the points favouring India?

- The PCA found that the Italian vessel had violated the rights and freedom of navigation of the Indian fishing vessel under UNCLOS.
- [UNCLOS - United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea]
- The PCA has also found that the action, which caused loss of lives, property and harm, merited compensation.
- It asked the parties to consult each other on the compensation due to India as a result.

### What is the argument that the PCA reject?

- The PCA rejected a key argument by Italy that India led the Italian vessel into its territory and arrested the marines.
- Another rejected argument is that India violated its obligation under Article 100 of UNCLOS.
- [Article 100 of UNCLOS is regarding measures to suppress piracy.]
- This may mean that the PCA did not view the incident as one related to piracy at all.

### Is the incident really an international issue?

- The circumstances indicate that there was **no attempt at piracy** by the fishing vessel.
- The fishing vessel was **within India's Contiguous Zone**.
- It was quite clear that the offence warranted arrest and prosecution by the Central government under domestic law.
- As legal tangles were being sorted out, and India was dealing with the diplomatic fallout, the marines managed to obtain orders to leave India.
- The National Investigation Agency's invocation of a domestic act caused a **diplomatic furore** as it provides for the death penalty.
- Ultimately, it took time for these charges to be dropped.

### What is the conclusion?

- The PCA's award is final and has been accepted by India.
- This is a huge setback for the expectation that the two marines would face a criminal trial in India.
- The takeaway for India should be the lessons, in the legal and diplomatic domains, which can be drawn from the experience.

#### Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA)

- It is an intergovernmental organization located at The Hague, the Netherlands.
- It provides a forum for the **resolution of international disputes** through arbitration and other peaceful means.
- It provides services of arbitral tribunal to resolve disputes between member states, international organizations, or private parties arising out of international agreements.
- In PCA, parties can themselves select the arbitrators.
- The organization is **not a United Nations agency** but has observer status in the UN General Assembly.
- The rulings of PCA are **binding** but the tribunal has no powers for enforcement.

#### UN Convention on the Law of Sea (UNCLOS)

- It is the international agreement that resulted from the 3<sup>rd</sup> UN Conference on the Law of the Sea.
- It provides a regulatory framework for the use of the world's seas and oceans.
- UN has no direct operational role in the implementation of the Convention

## 4.10 International Labour Standards

### Why in news?

In the International Labour Organization's (ILO's) 101-year history for the first time, a labour standard has been universally ratified.

### What does this mean?

- This historic moment was made when the Kingdom of Tonga decided to outlaw the worst forms of child labour (Convention 182).
- **Convention 182** was adopted in international labour conference, 1999.
- It prohibits the sexual exploitation of children, trafficking, deployment in armed conflict and other conditions that compromise their overall well-being.
- It complements the ILO's efforts under the Minimum Age **Convention 138** of the year 1973.
- Convention 138 prevents the employment of children below a lower age threshold.

### When did India ratify?

- In 2017, India ratified the Convention 182 and Convention 138.
- This move has signalled its legal commitment to the elimination of child labour.

### What is the influence of these ILO conventions?

- Under the influence of both these ILO standards, millions of young children have been rescued from hazardous conditions of work.
- In turn, these have resulted in significant increases in enrolments in primary education.
- However, the landmark ratification does not detract from the enormity of the challenge that remains.

### What are the challenges?

- An estimated 152 million are trapped in child labour and 72 million of them are engaged in hazardous work.
- The current efforts would have to be stepped up significantly to achieve the goal of total abolition of the scourge of child labour by 2025.
- But the COVID-19 pandemic is threatening a reversal of recent gains.
- There are widespread job losses, deterioration in conditions of work, decline in household incomes and temporary school closures.

### What are these Conventions part of?

- The two instruments on child labour are among the eight core ILO Conventions.
- These eight conventions are regarded as embodying the spirit of the 1998 declaration on fundamental principles and rights at work.
- Instruments relating to the freedom of association and the elimination of discrimination in employment and occupation are among the others.
- They provide the framework to counteract the predominance of informality in the conditions of work.
- They should be a priority for governments.

#### **Eight Core Conventions of the ILO**

1. Forced Labour Convention (No. 29)
2. Abolition of Forced Labour Convention (No.105)
3. Equal Remuneration Convention (No.100)
4. Discrimination (Employment Occupation) Convention (No.111)
5. Minimum Age Convention (No.138)
6. Worst forms of Child Labour Convention (No.182)
7. Freedom of Association and Protection of Right to Organised Convention (No.87)
8. Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention (No.98)