

ROLE OF AFGHANISTAN IN GEOPOLITICS

Why did the superpowers have military alliances with smaller countries? Give reasons.

- ❖ Vital Resources, such as Oil and minerals.
- ❖ Territory, from where superpower could launch their weapons and troops
- ❖ Location, from where they could spy on each other
- ❖ Economic supports, in that many small allies together could help pay for military expenses.
- ❖ They were also important for ideological reasons, the loyalty of allies suggested that the superpowers were winning the war of ideas as well that the liberal democracy/Capitalism was better than Communism or vice versa.
- ❖ Example: Iran friends : Russia, Venezuela , India, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Malaysia, Indonesia, China, Pakistan

Religion:

1. **Christianity:** founded about 2000 years ago in Israel.

2. **Islam:** founded about 1400 years before// 7 Century, in Saudi Arabia

- ❖ Both Shia and Sunni agree on the fundamentals of Islam and share the same Holy Book (The Quran), but Differences originate from the question of who would succeed the Prophet Muhammad as leader of the Muslim community after his death.
- ❖ Sunni: They chose Abu Bakr, a close Companion of the Prophet Muhammad, as the Caliph (politico-social leader) of Muslim community.
- ❖ More than 85 per cent of the world's 1.5 billion Muslims are Sunni.
- ❖ Maldives, Algeria, Libya, Jordan, Morocco, Turkey, Egypt, Saudi Arabia
- ❖ Conservative strand of Sunni Islam known as Wahhabism, controls Islam's holiest shrines, Mecca and Medina.
- ❖ Shia: They wanted Prophet Muhammad's Cousin and **son-in-law** Ali to be appointed as Caliph (politico-social leader) of Muslim community. Shiites form a majority only in Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen, Azerbaijan and Bahrain,
- ❖ Karbala, Kufa and Najaf in Iraq are revered shrines for the Shias.

Geography of Afghanistan:

- ❖ A landlocked mountainous country with plains in the north and southwest,
- ❖ Afghanistan is **located within South Asia** and near to Central Asia.
- ❖ It borders Six **Countries:** Pakistan in the south and east; Iran in the west; Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan in the north; and China in the Far East.



- ❖ Afghanistan is administratively divided into 34 provinces (*wilayats*)
- ❖ After Kabul the other five large cities are Kandahar, Herat, Mazar-i-Sharif, Kunduz and Jalalabad.
- ❖ Agricultural production is the backbone of Afghanistan's economy, finest pomegranates, grapes, apricots, melons, and several other fresh and dry fruits. Afghanistan imports are larger than its exports, the biggest export of Afghanistan are dry fruit. It is also known as the world's largest producer of opium, Poppy cultivation and illicit trafficking, threaten the health and well-being of people in the region and beyond. They fuel crime and corruption, undermine stability and can be used to finance terrorist activity
- ❖ An estimated 99.7% of the Afghan population is Muslim(70% Sunni)
- ❖ **India operates an embassy in Kabul and consulates in Herat, Kandahar, Jalalabad and Mazar-e-Sharif.**
- ❖ a consulate is a smaller version of an embassy and is generally located in the larger tourist cities of a country, but not the capital

Asia’s two largest principal illicit opium producing areas.

The Golden Crescent is located in Southwest Asia and consists of three contiguous countries of Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran from East to West.

The Golden Triangle is located in Southeast Asia comprising of three contiguous countries of Laos, Thailand and Myanmar from East to West.

Golden Crescent is territorially larger than Golden Triangle. The coastally neighboring countries to Golden Triangle and Golden Crescent make trans-boundary narco-trafficking an international concern.

Concerns for India

- Vulnerable to narcotic drug trafficking as it is located between two areas.
- vulnerable to human trafficking, smuggling and cross-border illegal immigration
- It has become a challenge for India’s security

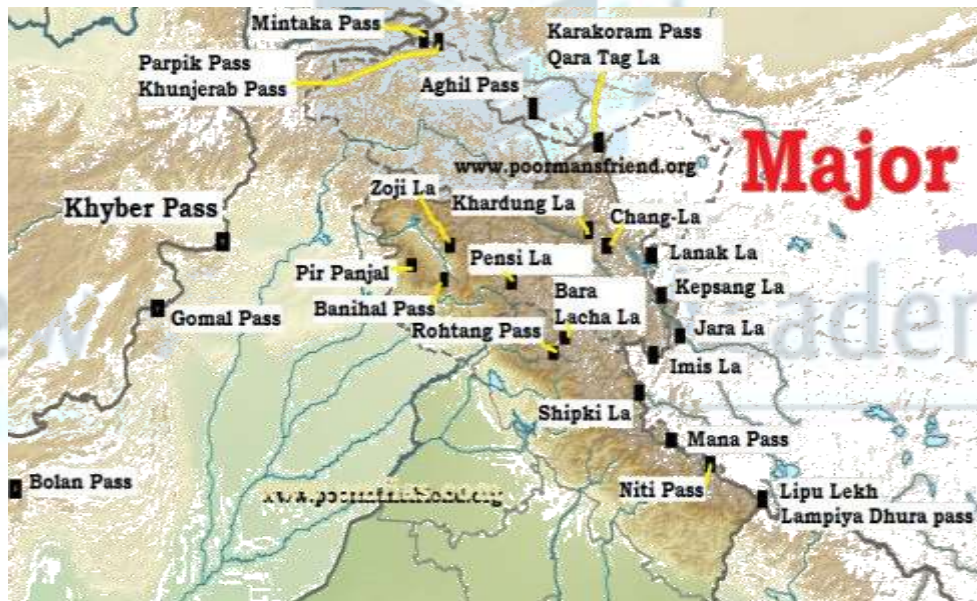


Historically, the Khyber and Bolan passes were used as the primary routes for invaders to enter India from Central Asia, including the armies of Alexander the Great

- ❖ **Khyber Pass** in the northwest. It links Peshawar in Pakistan with Jalalabad in Afghanistan,
- ❖ **Bolan Pass** links Quetta in Baluchistan Province with Kandahar in Afghanistan;

Afghanistan is also a center of 'great games'. Ancient Times: Alexander and Maurya; In Medieval times it was between Persian and Mughal Empire.

During colonial times it was between Russia and Britain.



The Wakhan Corridor makes a land link between which among the following two neighbors?

- [A] Afghanistan & Tajikistan
- [B] Afghanistan & Uzbekistan
- [C] Afghanistan and Kyrgyzstan
- [D] Afghanistan & China

Wakhan Corridor: **The corridor was a political creation of the Great Game.**

And established as an imperial buffer zone between the Russian and British empires in the late 19th century. On its south side, the Durand Line agreement of 1893 marked the boundary between British India /Pakistan and Afghanistan.

It borders Tajikistan to the north, Pakistan to the south, and China to the east

The 350km narrow strip of territory in north eastern Afghanistan that extends to China and separates Tajikistan from Pakistan. Corridor Wedged between Pamir Mountains in North and Karakorum in South

The Wakhan Corridor has been the most important junction point of the Silk Route since its inception. The corridor has long been used as a trade route by Europeans and Chinese to reach the Indian Plains and the Indian Ocean's Sea Lines of Communications through the Arabian Sea Coasts.



Political:

- Republic 1973, and Loya Jirga adopts new constitution in 2004,
- In the last decade the politics of Afghanistan have been influenced by NATO countries,
- Particularly the United States, in an effort to stabilise and democratise the country.
- In 2004, the nation's new constitution was adopted and an executive president was elected.
- Afghanistan is a unitary presidential Islamic republic (President Ashraf Ghani), mostly Pashtuns,
- It is a member of the United Nations, NAM, SAARC, OIC etc,
- Leadership crisis is a fundamental problem in Afghanistan
- Conflict with Taliban and other state actors may increase.

Historical: Chronology

- The Mauryans brought Buddhism from India and controlled the area south of the Hindu Kush.
- From the 10th century to the mid-18th century;invaded by ; Ghaznavids, Khaljis, Mughals, Durrani etc.
- Founder of the modern state of Afghanistan. : **Ahmad Shāh Durrānī** also known as **Ahmad Khān Abdālī**

The Third battle of Panipat was fought between Durrani's Afghan forces and the Maratha forces in January 1761, and resulted in a decisive Durrani victory.

- Jihad is itself a product of the failure of West Asian states to address and fulfil the aspirations of their youth.
- Jihad as a tool for spreading Islam through offensive military campaigns, the idea of 'holy war..
- Global Jihad/Al -Qaeda(Foundation in Arabic): Follow Wahhabism- an extreme form of Sunni Islam
- That insists on literal interpretation of Quran/Koran.

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The origins of Al-Qaida lie in the war in Afghanistan resulting from the 1979 Soviet attack. Monarchy under King Zahir Shah lasted till 1973 and was overthrown by a coup led by Mohammed Daoud Khan. He declared Afghanistan as a republic. Against his repressive rule, protest became widespread leading to **Communist Revolution or Saur Revolution in 1978**. There were protests against the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan and to stabilize the communist regime, USSR/, **Union of Soviet Socialist Republics** intervened in 1979

- Al-Qaida : **Founded in 1988** in Pakistan by Osama Bin Laden
- **Aim:** establish an Islamic State based on Sharia Law and oppose west culture.
- Al-Qaida and its local patron, the Taliban,
- 1989 – Soviet army withdraws all troops from the country. The U.S. embassy is closed
- Taliban (Student in Arabic) : Deobandi branch less extreme than Wahabhi; it is traditional Pashtun tribal in Afganistan, differ from Taliban, both practices branches of Sunni Islam,
- Taliban, Started 1994 and governed country for 5 years 1996-2001.
- 2001 – United States and coalition forces invade Afghanistan and overthrow the Taliban government. Hamid_Karzai becomes leader of the Afghan Interim Administration
- Thus from 2001 to present, the Taliban has emerged as an important central player in the Afghan peace process. Now major players like US, Russia, China have accepted this centrality of the Taliban
- 2004-2014 - Hamid Karzai is elected President of Afghanistan.
- Emergence of the IS from within the broken society and polity of Iraq.
- ❖ Islamic State : establish 2014 in week after Mosul was captured when Taliban commanders defeated and swore allegiance to IS leader, the Iraqi national, Abu Bakr al Baghdadi. On 27 October 2019, Baghdadi killed himself and two children by detonating a suicide vest during the Barisha raid, conducted by the United States following approval from President Donald Trump, in Syria's northwestern Idlib Province.
- 2014 First term 2019 - Ashraf_Ghani is elected President of Afghanistan,
- Second term: sworn in as president for a second five-year term on 9 March 2020

Challenges in Afghanistan: as Poor Country, Lack of Foreign Investment ,Poverty, Corruption, Taliban Insurgency , Ransom and Robberies in major cities common, Devastated health care system, Uncontrolled disease spread, and to rediscover and sustain its ancient Art and Architectural Knowledge and Cultural Heritage.

Insurgency: Active rebellion against authority.

Afghanistan Needs:

- ❖ Democracy and Political Stability for Engagement and Cooperation

- ❖ Urbanization(only 24%), Food Processing Industry, Agricultural Intensification , Energy and Transport , Training and Capacity Building Measures for Defense

Importance of Afghanistan for India:

There is a strong economic, politico-strategic and security component in the India-Afghanistan relations.

A key to Central Asia: India's economic assistance and support to democracy is a step to reduce Afghanistan's dependency on Pakistan and helps India to establish links with energy rich Central Asia.

A balancer: For India, a friendly and pro-active democratic regimes in Afghanistan would act as a balancer in the region.

TAPI: India also sees Afghanistan as an essential component of the TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) pipeline. To address its energy needs to sustain its economic growth, pipelines from Iran and Central Asia would be extremely important.

Geo-economic importance: Geo-economically Afghanistan is very important for India, the foreign trade policy of India and the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), hosts a tremendous promise that could help the country develop economic and strategic importance in Eurasia and Central Asia.

India Policy For Afghanistan: Democracy and Development are Key Instrument to ensure Afghanistan as source of Regional Stability.

So, Covers Four Broad Areas:

1. Infrastructure Projects
2. Small and Community Development Projects : like Institutions
3. Education and Capacity Building
4. Aid and Humanitarian Assistance like, 200 Public and Private Schools, School Feeding Program, and Scholarship to Afghan Students

In January 1950, a five-year Treaty of Friendship was signed between the two countries in New Delhi and Strategic Partnership in 2011

- Focus on sustained reconstruction and concerted socio-economic development in Afghanistan
- India s **national interests lie in a peaceful and stable** Afghanistan, promoting peace and prosperity in the country.
- India argues that the **tripartite relationship** between India, Pakistan, and Afghan are **mutually independent**: Ex In both the 1965 and 1971 wars, **Afghanistan was non-committal and did not support India.**
- **On the Kashmir issue, Afghanistan has not publicly supported India**
- **India has not entered the debate on the Durand Line.**
- Economic Interest:

Afghanistan has a mineral wealth of about \$1-3 trillion of Iron ore, Lithium, Chromium, Natural Gas, Petroleum etc.

India's presence in Afghanistan can help us increase trade with Central Asia Countries.

India has played an important role in reconstruction and rehabilitation of Afghanistan,

- ❖ Making significant investments in technical cooperation and Defence Cooperation in the country
- ❖ Will provide economic assistance and capacity building.
- ❖ **Improving Trade and Connectivity between India-Afghan,**
- India wants to improve transport connectivity and economic collaboration with countries in Central and South Asia through Afghanistan
- There is a land route through Waga Atari route. But Pakistan doesn't allow India-Afghan trade through this route.
- India and Iran inked a transit agreement on transporting goods to landlocked Afghanistan.
 - Indian investment in **Chabahar port** in southeastern Iran will serve as a hub for the transportation of transit goods.
 - India builds Deleram- Zaranj highway in Afghan.
 - India-Afghan established two air corridors to facilitate bilateral trade. Kabul-Delhi and Kandahar-Delhi
- India helped Afghans in the reconstruction of Salma Dam/ Afghan-India Friendship Dam in the Herat province.
- India has also constructed a new Parliament complex for the Afghan government.
- Making electricity transmission lines, financial support, cricket stadiums in Kandahar etc

There is an India Afghan joint working group on trade, commerce, investment.

- ✓ India will also train Afghan defense personnel on operations. And India gifted a Mi 25 attack helicopter.
- ✓ India will sign MoU with Afghan to train its police force helping to train Afghan civil servants and security forces.

Recently, India has also agreed to implement some important new projects such as the Shahtoot Dam(Kabul River) and drinking water project for Kabul, road connectivity to Band-e-Amir in Bamyan Province to promote tourism, low cost housing for resettlement of returning Afghan refugees in Nangarhar Province and a gypsum board manufacturing plant in Kabul etc.

Dam – Used For Irrigation, Drinking Water, Ground Water Recharge, Contribution, Promotion of Tourism Industry and Increase in Job Opportunity and Income.



Salma Dam, officially the Afghan-India Friendship Dam,

- Is a hydroelectric and irrigation dam project located on the Hari River in Chishti Sharif District of Herat Province in western Afghanistan.
- The hydroelectric plant produces 42 MW of power in addition to providing irrigation for

75,000 hectares of farmland (stabilising the existing irrigation of 35,000 hectares and development of irrigation facilities to an additional 40,000 hectares of land).

- The dam was opened on 4 June 2016 by Indian Prime Minister Modi along with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani.



Route 606 / **Connecting Highway**:

- ❑ India has constructed a 215/ 218-km road from Zaranj/ (Capital of Nimruz province of Afghanistan) to Delaram((border city of Afghanistan)) for facilitating the movement of goods and services to the Iranian border.

- ❑ Border Roads Organization (BRO) of India, has constructed this highway.

- ❑ The highway, completed in 2010, connects Iran with the Garland Highway, which links Kabul, Kandahar, Mazar-e-Sharif Herat, and Kunduz.

- ❑ India is involved in plans to build a railway line from this place to the mineral-rich Hajigak region of Afghanistan. The Chabahar Rail Project is a 628 km Chabahar-Zahedan line, which will be extended to Zaranj across the border in Afghanistan.



GEOPOLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CHABAHAR

PORT: Chabahar: Persian words: **four spring**

- Chabahar Port is located in Sistan and Baluchestan province in the **Southeastern** part of Iran, on the **Gulf of Oman**. located on the **Makran coast**

- It was being operated by **India Ports Global Private Limited (IPGPL)**. India's first shipment of

wheat to Afghanistan was sent through Chabahar Port. Boost trade ties, diplomatic ties, and military ties with Iran. Securing Access to Energy and Natural Resources

- port will be used by India to **ship crude oil and urea** which will cut transport cost and freight time for India to Central Asia and the gulf by about a third. **Proximity to the Strait of Hormuz** will boost oil trade.

Provides India with better connectivity to Afghanistan **bypassing Pakistan**.

- It will be the **gateway to the International North-South Transport Corridor** which is a combination of road, rail, and sea routes connecting Russia, Europe, Central Asia, Iran, and India.

India can carry out humanitarian operations from this port if the need arises. This port is just 170 km away from Gwadar port operated by China in Pakistan, hence this port would be of strategic importance to the Indian Navy and defense establishment.

Human Resource Development and Capacity Building initiatives constitute an important segment of India's assistance in Afghanistan.

- On an average, **more than 3,500** Afghan nationals undergo **training/education** in India **every year**.

- More than **15,000 Afghan students pursue education in India on self-financing** basis.
- has helped to **create a large pool of trained manpower** that has been an asset to both the public and private sectors in Afghanistan
-) Nearly 50 Afghans are completing graduation in the **Indian school of Mines Dhanbad** with a view to strengthen technical man-power in mining sector in Afghanistan.
- The Indian Agriculture Research Institute (IARI) is involved in training, equipping and establishing the and contributing to capacity building in agricultural sciences in Afghanistan.
- **Major humanitarian assistance by India**
 1. To combat the global pandemic of COVID-19 and related issues of **food security**, India is committed to deliver 75,000 MT of Wheat to Afghanistan in 2020.
 2. supply of 5 lakh tablets of Hydroxy-chloroquine, 1 Lakh tablets of **Paracetamol** and 50,000 pairs of **surgical gloves** to Government of Afghanistan in 2020.
 3. **Provision of food assistance** of 11 lakh tonnes of wheat, both as grains and biscuits, was distributed to approximately 1.5 million school children
 4. A **Medical Diagnostic Centre** in Kabul was set up in 2015. The Centre provides latest diagnostic facilities to children of Afghanistan thereby generating goodwill for India.

Cultural Factors: People to people ties:

- Indian Diaspora in Afghanistan: Presently, there are estimated to be about 2500 Indians in the country, Most of the Indian Diaspora are engaged as professionals in Banks, IT firms, Construction companies, Hospitals, NGOs, Telecom companies, Security companies, Universities,
- Afghan students apprx16000, pursuing education in Indian Universities. Indian offers many scholarships to Afghan students including Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) scholarships, scholarships for the children of the martyrs of Afghan Security Forces etc.
- Indian medicines and health care system are perceived to be highly trustworthy. Thus, India is the most favoured destination for most Afghan tourists, especially for medical tourism
- Two Governments came together to establish an India- Afghanistan Foundation (IAF) in 2007. IAF is a trust fund which finances projects aimed at fostering India-Afghanistan relations through enhancement of economic, scientific, educational, technical as well as cultural cooperation.
- Cricket has been a major factor in promoting people-to-people ties between the two countries.

The **Taliban is a Sunni fundamentalist organisation**, a military group, involved in an insurgency against the government in Afghanistan.

Recent Views: Taliban will have a “key” role in Afghanistan’s future. and “As Qatar is involved in the Afghanistan peace process, The Qatar government has hosted the Taliban’s main office in Doha since 2013, The Taliban regime was recognized **only by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)**.

According to a **recent UN report**, at least a dozen different militant groups are now active in both Pakistan and Afghanistan, with at least 6,500 Pakistani nationals reportedly involved.

Surge of violence in Afghanistan with frequent clashes between the Taliban and Afghan security forces amid US troop withdrawal. Ex Kunduz , jalabhad, Kandhar.

The **Taliban** has capitalised on the final stages of the **US troop withdrawal** and has **made huge advances** across the country, **claiming control of more than 80 of the country's 421 districts.**, fighters also captured Shir Khan Bandar, Afghanistan's main border crossing with Tajikistan, According to the UN report, **Pakistan-based jihadi groups** such as Jaish-i-Mohammed (JeM) and Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT) continue to **fight alongside Taliban groups against Afghan national forces.**

Washington has **committed to withdrawal.** In return, the Taliban has **pledged to engage in** intra-Afghan negotiations and not allow terrorist groups to use the country for attacks against the United States.

- ❖ For India, the only way in which sustainable peace can come to Afghanistan is if there is **“peace within Afghanistan and peace around Afghanistan”**
- ❖ The **US and the Taliban signed a landmark deal in Doha on February 29, 2020** following multiple rounds of negotiations Biden administration: **withdrawing US troops fully by September 11, 2021.**
- ❖ **Pakistan's support** for the Taliban **cannot** ensure Afghanistan's future. If the Taliban need some legitimacy and longevity in governing Afghanistan, **New Delhi's role will continue to be a critical one.** This fundamental reality no one can ignore.
- ❖ The Heart of Asia – Istanbul Process (HoA-IP) is an initiative of Afghanistan and Turkey, which was officially launched at a conference hosted by Turkey in Istanbul in 2011.
- ❖ It is a platform for promoting regional security, economic and political cooperation centred on Afghanistan through dialogue and a set of Confidence Building Measures (CBMs).

During the Heart of Asia conference, Afghanistan President lauded India's air effort with respect to the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline.

Afghanistan Pipeline/TAPI Pipeline

- ❖ it is a natural gas pipeline being developed by the Galkynysh – TAPI Pipeline Company Limited
- ❖ 1,600 kilometers (km), from the gas pipeline will transport gas produced from the Galkynysh gas field in Turkmenistan (TKM)-Afghanistan (AFG) border to the Pakistan (PAK)-India (IND) border.
- ❖ Mary Region Turkmenistan -214km upto Afg+The pipeline will run through Kandhar and Herat highway in Afghanistan, for a length of 774km. It will cover 826km in Pakistan, across the cities of Quetta and Multan, finally terminating in Fazilka at the Indo-Pakistan border in Punjab region, India.
- ❖ The TAPI project is being funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), which is also acting as transaction adviser for the development

Turkmenistan took a loan of \$700m from Islamic Development Bank for financing the project in December 2016. The remaining three countries made an initial investment of \$200m in the TAPI project.



- **Supporting the Afghan stand,** India has been asserting that **the peace process must be Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-controlled**
- India, as a responsible regional power, should steer Afghanistan towards political stability, security through an inclusive government, economic growth, reconstruction and regional integration, which is what that country needs the most.

India and Iran Relations



Asia can be divided into Six Regional Divisions:

Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan

Eastern Asia: China, Hong Kong, Japan, North Korea, South Korea, Macau, Mongolia, Taiwan

Northern Asia: Russia

South-eastern Asia: Brunei, Myanmar, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Vietnam.

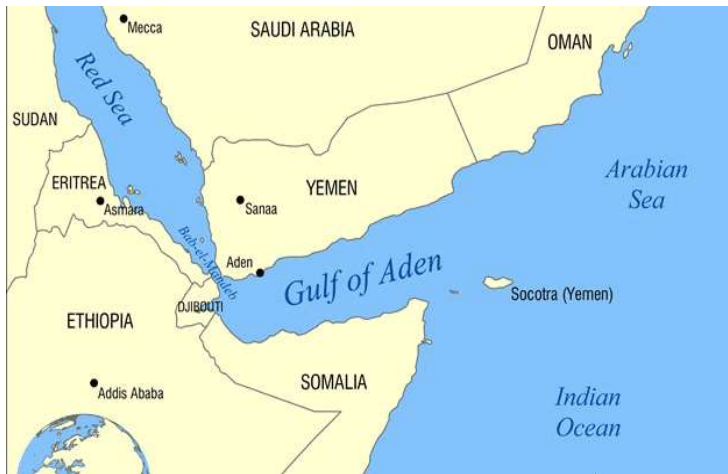
Southern Asia: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka.

Western Asia: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Cyprus, Georgia, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, State of Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Yemen.

Middle East: region of the world that is in between Europe and Asia.



17 Countries : Bahrain(Smallest), Cyprus, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, ,Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia(Largest), Syria, Turkey, UAE, and Yemen.



Bab-el-Mandeb is the third most busiest and important waterway after -Strait of Hormuz and Strait of Malacca. The strait of Bab-el-Mandeb connects the Indian Ocean with the Red Sea **by way of Gulf of Aden**



Strait of Hormuz important waterways or chokepoints. It is the strategic link that connects the oil fields of Persian Gulf, Gulf of Oman and the Indian Ocean. It is the only waterway which gives

Narrowest strait of world – Bosphorus strait

Anatolia or AsiaMinor: large peninsula in Western Asia, makes up the majority of modern-day Turkey, The region is bounded by the Turkish Straits to the northwest, the Black Sea to the north, the Armenian Highlands to the east, the Mediterranean Sea to the south, the Aegean Sea to the west. The Sea of Marmara forms a connection between the Black and Aegean seas through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits and separates Anatolia from Thrace on the Balkan peninsula of Southeast Europe.

Note :Straits are the converse of isthmuses. That is, while a strait lies between two land masses and connects two larger bodies of water, an isthmus lies between two bodies of water and connects two larger land masses.

Mesopotamia:Mesopotamia refers to the historical region located in West Asia which was bounded by the Euphrates and Tigris river systems. In the modern times, Mesopotamia corresponds to most parts of South East Turkey, Kuwait, Iraq, northern parts of Saudi Arabia, the eastern region of Syria, and regions along the Turkish-Syrian and Iraq-Iran borders.

Fertile Crescent shaped region in the Middle East includes Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Israel, Jordan, and Egypt, together with the southeastern region of Turkey and the western fringes of Iran.

The region is one of the cradles of civilization because it is one location where settled farming first emerged as people started the process of clearance and modification of natural vegetation in order to grow newly domesticated plants as crops. Early human civilizations such as Sumer in Mesopotamia flourished as a result.

West Asia includes 19 States

West Asia subregion: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Cyprus, Gaza Strip and Palestine, Georgia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syrian Arab Republic, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, West Bank and Yemen

Eight seas surround the region (clockwise): the Aegean Sea, the Black Sea, the Caspian Sea, the Persian Gulf, the Arabian Sea, the Gulf of Aden, the Red Sea, and the Mediterranean Sea.

located in India's extended neighbourhood, It hosts over 8 million Indians



Why West Asia : Strategic Importance.

- It hosts over 8 million Indians
- abundant hydrocarbon resources are critical for **India's energy security**, and the region is a major source of remittances from Indian workers employed there.

West Asia holds about 52 percent of the global oil reserves and 41 percent of gas reserves;

India's security and wellbeing are deeply intertwined with that of West Asia

- India has wide-ranging institutional relations with every country in West Asia, encompassing cooperation in various fields, including counter-terrorism
- A large number of Indians have an emotional engagement with the region, which hosts the two holy mosques and a number of holy places associated with Christianity and Islam
- **Security:** Ensuring the stability and security of the Persian Gulf region and Gulf of Aden. Piracy in the surrounding regions remains a threat to Sea Lines of Communication.
- For Investment from West Asian Countries in India.
- For Regional Connectivity, Access to New Market Areas,



ARABIAN PENINSULA: it is the largest peninsula in the world,

- ❖ Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Iraq, and Yemen. The Arabian Peninsula is surrounded by the Indian Ocean, Levant, the Persian Gulf, and the Red Sea.
- ❖ The peninsula plays a critical geopolitical role in the Arab world due to its vast reserves of Oil and Natural gas.

- ❖ The most populous cities on the Arabian Peninsula are Riyadh, Dubai, Jeddah, Abu Dhabi, Doha, Kuwait City, Sana'a, and Mecca.



The Levant denotes a vast geographical region situated in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The area termed as the Levant does not have fixed boundaries and it changes over time.

The countries which comprise the Levant are characterized by similar linguistic, cultural, and religious traits.

These countries and regions are Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Cyprus, Turkey (Hatay Province), Israel, Jordan, and Palestine.

A broader definition of the Levant roughly refers to the territory from Greece to Egypt.

- ❖ Look West Policy is the overall Indian government's strategy in dealing with the West Asian nations. It was adopted by the Indian government in 2005 West Asia is a part of India's extended neighbourhood. Continued peace and stability in the region is of vital strategic interest to India.
- ❖ Currently, the Look West Policy focuses on three main axes:
 - ❖ The Arab Gulf countries: Arab Gulf states (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, and the UAE)
 - ❖ Israel
 - ❖ Iran
- ❖ So, Focus: strategic balance in India's foreign policy while dealing with Israel-Palestine issue and US-Iran tensions.
- ❖ Soft power of India in the region due to the large presence of Diaspora, Bollywood, and Indian Cuisines will aid in emerging of India as a strong player in the region.
- ❖ multiple rivalries of the region- Saudi Arabia and Iran, Turkey and Egypt, Qatar and Saudi/ UAE and Israel and Palestine



Gulf Cooperation Council is a regional, intergovernmental political and economic union, Trade bloc of Six : of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates

GCC: Hq : Riyadh. formed in 1981

Iran and Iraq not members.: Reason : Iran/Persian Language is not an Arab country /Arabic Language and Saudi and Iran tensions, Iraq is not a member because of its shambling economy, current instability with ISIS and

mainly because Iraq invaded a member of the GCC (Kuwait)

Arabic is an Afro-Asiatic Semitic language. Persian is an Indo-European Iranian language.



PERSIA/ INDIA AND IRAN BILATERAL RELATIONS

Geographical Factors : Iran is Located in Western Asia, It is bordered to the northwest by Armenia and Azerbaijan, to the northeast by Turkmenistan, to the east by Afghanistan, to the southeast by Pakistan, and the , and to the west by Turkey and Iraq.

Energy Hub: Caspian Sea. Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman.

Iran - thirty-one provinces (*ostān*) Iran has a democratically elected president, a parliament (or Majlis)

POLITICAL FACTORS:

Why Islamic Revolution in Iran ,1979.

Democracy protest overthrow of the Pahlavi monarchy which was led by Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. Ruhollah Khomeini was an Iranian revolutionary and religious leader

He was essential in the founding of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979.

Soviet troops in Afghanistan from 1979- 1989, in Afghanistan, Monarchy under King Zahir Shah lasted till 1973 and was overthrown by a coup led by Mohammed Daoud Khan. **Communist Revolution or Saur Revolution in 1978** . There were protests against the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan and to stabilize the communist regime, USSR/ Union of Soviet Socialist Republics intervened in 1979

Al-Qaida : **Founded in 1988**, Taliban , Started 1994 , Islamic State : establish 2014

Iran: Supreme Leader is in charge of the office for an 8-year term without prohibitions regarding the limiting of the number of terms, till two Supreme Leader, after Iran Revolution

1. Ruhollah Khomeini: 1979- 1989
 2. Ali Khamenei
- ✓ the highest ranking religious and political leader in the country, and the Head of State of Iran.
 - ✓ The supreme leader is responsible for appointing senior officials in the military, judiciary, and the civil government
 - ✓ The office of the supreme leader is more powerful than the office of the president, Four year term of president
 - ✓ The current President of Iran is Hassan Rouhani Since 2013.
 - ✓ **Ebrahim Raisi**, a conservative politician, hardliner(a person who is reluctant to accept changes and new ideas) was elected president in the 2021 Iranian presidential election and will assume office on 3 August 2021.

- ✓ Election watchdog called the **Guardian Council** (a panel of 12 members including six clerics and six jurists appointed by the Supreme Leader) that **disqualified some of the candidates favoured by the public.**
- ✓ Candidates in **Iran's elections** are **screened by** committees of the government, and thereafter by the **Guardian Council**
- ✓ Islamic Republic of Iran has two types of armed forces: the regular forces of the Army, the Air Force, and the Navy, and the Revolutionary Guards, branch of the Iranian Armed Forces, founded after the Iranian Revolution
- ✓ **Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps:** designated as a terrorist organization by the governments of Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and the United States
- ✓ The government of Iran supports the military activities of its allies in Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon (Hezbollah) with military and financial aid. Iran and Syria are close strategic allies
- ✓ The current President of Iran is Hassan Rouhani Since 2013.
- ✓ **Ebrahim Raisi**, a conservative politician, hardliner (a person who is reluctant to accept changes and new ideas) was elected president in the 2021 Iranian presidential election and will assume office on 3 August 2021.
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Historical Background

- ✓ Since Prehistoric times, there have been culture similarities between Persia & India. Pre Independence, India and Iran were neighboring nations.
- ✓ Connect between Shias in J&K and Kargil with Iran: Students from these places travel to Qom in Iran, which is considered the largest Shia scholarship centre in the world.
- ✓ India and Iran has been neighbors till 1947, however independent India and Iran established diplomatic relations in 1950
- ✓ **Diplomatic Presence:** Embassy in Tehran, India has two Consulates in Iran, one in Bandar Abbas and other in Zahedan.
- ✓ Iran has its Embassy in New Delhi. In addition, Iran has two Consulates (Consul General) in Mumbai and Hyderabad and two Cultural Centres in New Delhi and Mumbai.

Many Indian Leaders visited Iran to improve bilateral talks, like J.L Nehru, Indira Gandhi, Morarji Desai. After Iran revolution 1979, Narasimha Rao, K. R. Narayanan,. Then, Atal Bihari Vajpayee signed the “Tehran Declaration” which set forth the areas of possible cooperation between the two countries .Also, Manmohan Singh, to Modi.

A **Trilateral agreement on Transit and Transport** was signed between India, Iran and Afghanistan. Chabahar was signed which inter-alia commits to Indian investment of \$85 million for equipping the Chabahar port.

Apart from it

- Two countries have in place Bilateral Consultative Mechanisms at various levels which meet regularly
- Offices of both countries also hold regular consultations on bilateral and regional issues
- The Chambers of Commerce of both countries have regular interactions including visits of commercial delegations.
- MoU between Foreign Service Institute, MEA and the School of International Relations, Iran’s MoFA
- The Iranian side welcomed the investment of Indian side in setting up plants in sectors such as fertilisers, petrochemicals and metallurgy in Chabahar FTZ on terms mutually beneficial to the concerned parties.
- welcomed prospects for participation of India’s railways in various ongoing and future projects
- The Iranian side extended its support for India in hosting the Sixth Ministerial Meeting of the Heart of Asia Istanbul Process on Afghanistan.
- **Commercial Relations:**
 - ❖ India-Iran enjoys economic and commercial ties covering many sectors though it has traditionally been dominated by Indian import of Iranian crude oil.
 - ❖ India continued to engage with Iran at the time of sanctions
 - ❖ **Major Indian exports to Iran include** rice, tea, iron and steel, organic chemicals, metals, electrical machinery, drugs/pharmaceuticals, etc.
 - ❖ **Major Indian imports from Iran include** petroleum and its products, inorganic/organic chemicals, fertilizers, plastic and articles, edible fruit and nuts, glass and glassware, natural or cultured pearls, precious or semiprecious stones, etc.

Industries : Iran believes that India fulfils a substantial part of Iran’s needs. For example, India is very capable in steel, in aluminium, in mines and metals, railroads, software, IT, technology and so on. There is a lot of demand in these sectors in Iran.

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO IRAN

- India helped Iran in times of natural disasters and health emergencies.
- India delivered aid that included PPE kits and PCR machines to Iran in April 2020 during the COVID-19 crisis
- In June 2020, India supplied Malathion pesticide to Iran to fight the menace of desert locusts

- In 2019, India provided 103 tonnes of aid to Iran during the floods that ravaged the country.
- There are also substantial number of Indian fishermen,, workers, university students and professionals in Iran.
- There is an Indian school in Tehran run by the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS) under the aegis of Embassy of India and another Indian school in Zahedan.
- **People to people contacts** : a high level commitment in both countries to promote and facilitate people to people contacts.
- . Indian pilgrims visit the Sh'ia pilgrimage circuit in Iran (Qom, Mashhad, Hamedan) and Iraq (Najaf and Karbala) every year
- Annually, more than 20,000 Iranian tourists visit India, with Delhi-Agra-Jaipur, Mumbai-Pune-Goa and Hyderabad being the most preferred destinations
- large number of Iranian students pursue higher studies in medicine, pharma, engineering, humanities and other courses in India

WHY IRAN RELATIONS ARE IMPORTANT

1. **Connectivity:**

- Iran ensures overland connectivity between Eurasia and India and it is not just an energy supplier. Iran has borders with a large number of countries that India could not access because of the barrier that Pakistan posed to India's overland connectivity plans. India's infrastructure-building activities in Afghanistan is done with support from Iran.

2 **Energy:**

- India can decrease the dependence on Saudi for oil and Iran oil is comparatively cheap
- Iran has the world's second-largest reserves of natural gas, yet it is not a major exporter.
- Iranian gas would be helpful for our economic development in case India needs to achieve a double-digit GDP and bring up people who are below the poverty line.
- Iran's energy infrastructure – long neglected as a result of Western sanctions – requires major upgrades to make it capable of sustained energy exports.
- This will require massive foreign investment and India can tremendously help here.

3. **Geopolitical Access to Central Asia and Iran:** Iran Chabahar Port: key to Connect Central Asia Policy

4. Iran Imp for role in **Afghanistan**- Iran-Afghan railway link Iranian port with the iron ore mines in Hajigak in Afghanistan

5. Iran may also provide connectivity to Central Asia and Europe, via the International North South Transport Corridor(INSTC), which is estimated to be 40 percent shorter and 30 percent less expensive than trade via the Red Sea-Suez Canal-Mediterranean route.

Why is the United States so keen on this particular region?

- ❖ after Russia, Iran has the second-largest gas reserves
- ❖ the Americans see Iran as a major destabilizing agent in the region .
- ❖ American fear of Iran is the economic and military capability of Iran

- ❖ Apart from Israel and Turkey, Iran is a major military-capable power. Iran has a huge army and navy, and it has built up its missile capability which can reach more than the regional parameters
- ❖ **In spite of Sanctions**, the Iranians are continuing to build up their capability and are becoming self-reliant, not so much on the oil revenues, but also on the non-oil revenues.
- ❖ Iran has a growing influence in Iraq; all governments in Iraq have been pro-Tehran. Syria has a strategic partnership with Iran.

American foreign policy in the region has always been:

1. Israel-centric;
2. revolving around the geopolitics of oil and gas and
3. focussed on looking at viable markets for their arms industries

Americans believe that Israeli dominance in the region has to be retained and has to be protected by the United States foreign policy. The Americans have marketed themselves as peace brokers in the region, but their recognition of the Golan Heights as a part of Israel, puts these credentials in doubt

U.S. is trying to keep an **anti-Iranian bloc alive in the region and this serves American interests to sell its arms** in the region. Immediately after the Iranian revolution, the Americans helped erect the Taliban in Afghanistan

a combination of American sanctions and Saudi-UAE efforts, plus the support of Israel makes it a very formidable challenge for Iran. Oil prices have started climbing up again (in view of sanctions against Iran and Venezuela).

US Sanctions mean: They would not be able to carry out trade or have any kind of cooperation with entities from other countries:

The following industries or segments of Iran were sanctioned by the US.

Banking industry, Shipping industry, Insurance industry, Energy/Petroleum Industry, Nuclear Industry

International trade, Missile/Arms industry, Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

countries have been facing US sanctions. Iran, Cuba, Venezuela, Syria, North Korea, Sudan

Japan and South Korea has dramatically reduced their oil intake from Iran. Thus, they seem to be indicating that they are willing to abide by what America is suggesting.

Iran agreed to deal due to severe economic sanctions on it. After the nuclear deal was signed under President Obama, these sanctions were lifted. However, under President Trump, these sanctions have again been re-imposed, which is more or less a continuation of what the U.S. has been doing since 1979,

Iran agreed **to rein in its nuclear programme in a 2015 deal struck with the US, UK, Russia, China, France and Germany (P5 +1) and EU**

Under **the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)** Tehran agreed to significantly cut its stores of centrifuges, enriched uranium and heavy-water, all key components for nuclear weapons.

Under its terms, Iran agreed to dismantle much of its nuclear program and open its facilities to more extensive international inspections in exchange for billions of dollars' worth of sanctions relief.

Iran nuclear facilities



Nuclear restrictions. Iran agreed not to produce either the highly enriched uranium or the plutonium that could be used in a nuclear weapon. It also took steps to ensure that its Fordow, Natanz, and Arak facilities pursued only civilian work, including medical and industrial research.

- President Rouhani was one of the key architects of the 2015 nuclear deal
- Former US President Donald Trump abandoned the pact in 2018 and

reimposed harsh sanctions, prompting Tehran to start violating some of the nuclear limits in 2019.

Reason:

1. **Iran's support for groups the U.S. considers terrorists**, like Hamas and Hezbollah, Houthis
2. Doesn't curb Iran's development of ballistic missiles

Note: **Iranian military support to Hezbollah** - Hezbollah is a Shia Islamist political party and militant group based in Lebanon

- ❖ Renewed U.S. sanctions against Iran "have led to a sharp downturn in Iran's economy, pushing the value of its currency to record lows, quadrupling its annual inflation rate, driving away foreign investors, and triggering protests.

Recently in the News:

Under Biden, the US has expressed an interest in restoring the JCPOA.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres appealed to US President Joe Biden's administration to lift or waive all sanctions on Iran as agreed under a 2015 deal aimed at stopping Tehran from developing a nuclear weapon.

Appeal to Washington comes amid talks to revive the deal – known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) – under which Iran accepted curbs on its nuclear programme in return for a lifting of many foreign sanctions against it.

- ❖ **What are Abraham Accords?**
- ❖ The Israel–UAE normalization agreement is officially called the Abraham Accords Peace Agreement.
- ❖ It was initially agreed to in a joint statement by the United States, Israel and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on August 13, 2020.
- ❖ The UAE thus became the third Arab country, after Egypt in 1979 and Jordan in 1994, to agree to formally normalize its relationship with Israel as well as the first Persian Gulf country to do so.
- ❖ Concurrently, Israel agreed to suspend plans for annexing parts of the West Bank. The agreement normalized what had long been informal but robust foreign relations between the two countries.



In 1967, Israel launched a preemptive strike against Egypt, Syria, and Jordan and at the end of this **Six-Day War**, Israel captured:

- **Golan Heights** from Syria.
- **West Bank and East Jerusalem** from Jordan.
- **Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip** from Egypt.

The 1967 war is particularly important for today's conflict,

as it left Israel in control of the **West Bank and Gaza Strip**, two territories home to a large number of Palestinians

In the light of Israel's reluctance to return the captured territories, another **Arab-Israeli war** erupted in 1973 (**Yom Kippur war**) in which Israel suffered some setbacks.

In 1979, Israel-Egypt signed a peace treaty, accordingly Israel **return Sinai Peninsula to Egypt (1982)**. Egypt became the first Arab nation to officially recognize Israel as a state.

Now: Gaza Strip: located on the east coast of the Mediterranean Sea between Israel and Egypt. Gaza, is a self-governing Palestinian territory. The territory is governed by a pro-Palestine group known as Hamas

Consider the Correct Statements wrt to Golan Heights

1. The Golan Heights is a rocky plateau with an area of 1,800km² on the border between Israel and Syria in south-western Syria.
2. Israel occupied the Golan Heights, West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip in the 1967 Six-Day War
3. India has also not recognized Golan heights as Israel territory and has called for the return of Golan Heights to Syria.
4. The area is also a key source of water for an arid region. Rainwater from the Golan's catchment feeds into the Jordan River. The area provides a third of Israel's water supply.

Select the code

- a. 1 only b. 1., 2 and 4 c. all of the above d. 1 and 2 only

The Tropic of cancer passes through

- a. India and Iran
- b. Iran and Pakistan
- c. India and Saudi Arabia
- d. Iran and Iraq