

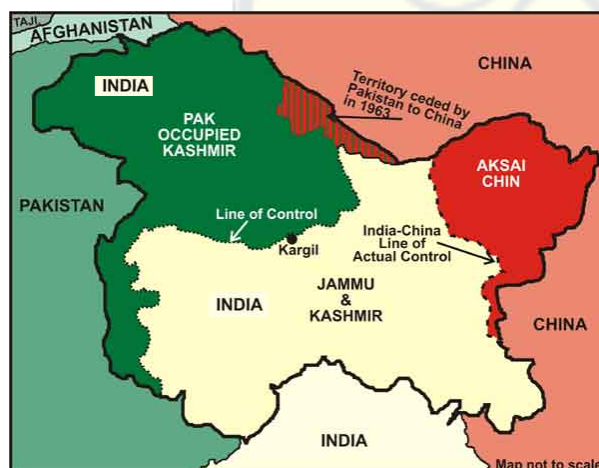
1. In what ways will the abrogation of Article 370 affect India's relations with Pakistan? Examine.

Introduction:

Recently, the government of India has repealed Article 370 of the Constitution which used to grant special status to J&K and till now restricted Indian parliament to make any laws for the state and it can only preside over the subjects like Defence, External Affairs, and communication. Now J&K is divided into two Union Territories, one of Jammu and Kashmir with legislative assembly and another of Ladakh without legislative assembly.

Body:

Erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir is divided between Indian and Pakistani administered territories. The crucial border between them is known as the "Line of Control." So Pakistan has a keen interest in the affairs of state of Jammu and Kashmir. This is why the abrogation of Article 370 will affect India's relation with Pakistan.



The abrogations of Article 370 affect India's relations with Pakistan in the following ways:

- **Bilateral Relation:** Islamabad downgraded its diplomatic mission in Delhi and asked India to withdraw its envoy to Pakistan in retaliation. Although, ambassadors were not engaged in any serious political dialogue and just doing representational functional, so it will not affect much between two countries.
- **Trade:** Pakistan decided for suspension of bilateral trade to lodge its protest against New Delhi's move to revoke Jammu and Kashmir's special status. This won't affect India much as India and Pakistan have very minuscule bilateral

trade. However, this will hurt Pakistan as their textiles industry imports 65% Cotton from India.

- **Cultural:** Pakistan has decided to ban all cultural exchanges with India, including all kinds of joint ventures between the entertainment industries of the two countries. As the Pakistan government has banned the screening of Indian films in the country's cinemas, this will affect the box office as Bollywood has a huge fan following in Pakistan.
- **Travel:** Countries have stopped functioning of Samjhauta express train. This will affect the divided Muslim and Sikh families in both countries. Islamabad also announced that its airspace would be partially closed to India, for a month. This will cost more to Indian airlines flying to the west. Pakistan has, however, kept the Kartarpur project alive.
- **Terrorism:** Pakistan threatened for more Pulwama like attacks. Pakistan will provoke Kashmiri people for anti- India sentiments and sponsor and radicalize them for stone pelting, militancy and terrorism. This will create a more volatile situation in the valley and is a threat to India's internal security.
- **Tension on Border and War:** Cross border shelling will increase on the border. Moreover, there is a threat of war between the two nuclear nations. Chances are less as Pakistan is going through an economic crisis right now.

Conclusion:

Pakistan is trying to internationalize the issue. Pakistan's narrative in this subject has very little substance. Both countries should go for a bilateral resolution of J&K issue of disputed territory peacefully under the Shimla Agreement of 1972. Domestically, India should also pump adequate funds in Jammu and Kashmir for developmental projects and win the confidence of the people to counter radicalization and militancy. India should also be very careful to avoid any Pulawama like attacks and be vigilant on borders.

2. Keeping in mind, an aggressive and far more proactive China, there is an urgent need of enhanced and much deeper outreach towards Maldives, Sri Lanka and Bhutan. Elucidate.

Introduction:

India's relationship with China have gone through a tumultuous phase in the last few years. There have been disputes like China's opposition to India's entry in NSG, Support for discussion on Kashmir issue in UNSC recently among others.

Body:

Expansionist China is becoming more aggressive and proactive in its international affairs, to counter it, India needs to proactively engage in enhancing its relationship

towards Maldives, Srilanka and Bhutan. The need to enhance with these three countries in particular is because:

With Srilanka:

- Chinese inroads in Sri Lanka is seen to be threatening to India's security and safety.
- Sri Lanka is considered to be important to Chinese "String of pearls" theory which is considered to be threatening India's security by presumably encircling India.
- Increasing Chinese role in Sri Lanka and Indian ocean is seen to undermine India's role as the net security provider in the Indian ocean region.
- China has got lease of Hambantota port which could be used for military purpose in times to come.
- Increasing influence of China, will decrease Sri Lanka's dependence on India, thereby reducing India's bargaining power.

With Maldives:

- Strategic location of Maldives is very important for surveillance operations in the Indian Ocean region.
- Protect India's trade interests and security interest.
- To keep watch on global terror as country is closely linked to radical Islam. It has sent the highest number of foreign fighters to support terrorist groups in Syria and Iraq.
- It is also a member in China's String of pearl theory and ambitious Belt and Road Initiative, a development strategy which has met with a certain resistance by India.
- It has Free Trade Agreement with China. The archipelago nation is the only SAARC country, other than Pakistan, to have a free trade pact with China.
- China has also sent warships to visit the Maldives. If China, which has stepped up military pressure on India along their Himalayan frontier, turned one of the Maldivian islands into a naval base, it would effectively open a maritime front against India.

With Bhutan:

- Bhutan is a strategically important country for India due to its location, and both sides have been ramping up overall cooperation, including in areas of defence and security, and energy, over the past a few years.
- Bhutan's significance to India stems from its geographic location. Nestled in the Himalayas, it is sandwiched between India and China. Thus, it serves as a buffer between the two Asian giants. Bhutan's value as a buffer soared after China annexed Tibet in 1951.
- As the 2017 crisis in the Doklam region revealed, India will strongly oppose, even militarily, any Chinese attempt to assert control over mDoklam.

Securing Bhutan's present borders especially its western border is clearly important for India.

- Doklam in the hands of a hostile power would heighten the vulnerability of India's Siliguri Corridor, a narrow strip of land that links India to its North-eastern states. So vital is Doklam to India's defence that India has a permanent and sizeable military contingent and an army hospital in Haa district, where Doklam is located.
- Bhutan is also very vital for India's energy security needs due to its hydroelectric potential.

Way forward:

- Neighbourhood first: India should in the first place resolve the differences with its small neighbors. Else it will only pave the way for China to exert growing influence in the region as it was seen in the case of Nepal during the economic blockade by India.
- Revival of SAARC should be stressed upon.
- Common platforms like SCO, of which both India and China are members, should be leveraged to iron out the differences and resolve issues.
- Infrastructure projects should be fast-tracked.
- India's overall approach towards its small neighbors should be that of big brother. It should not be assertive given the sensitivities involved.
- Internal balancing- Building up domestic military muscle by raising new forces, improving existing ones, or buying weapons.
- India is also cooperating with Australia, US and Japan to contain china's influence and also to sustain principle of free maritime trade.

3. What role should Indian play in Afghanistan in the backdrop of the rapidly changing dynamics in this troubled region? Analyse.

Introduction

Afghanistan has been mired in conflict for some 40 years. It has been almost 18 years since America and other NATO members invaded to kick out the Taliban in the wake of the September 11th attacks. The two sides have been negotiating directly for some time over the American troops withdrawal in exchange for a commitment from the Taliban not to harbour terrorists.

Body

Background:

- Taliban fighters, whom US-led forces spent billions of dollars trying to defeat, are now openly active in 70% of Afghanistan.
- Recent attacks claimed by Taliban and Islamic State group militants have killed scores in Kabul and elsewhere.

- IS is more active in Afghanistan than ever before, although it remains far less powerful than the Taliban.
- The prospect of a premature US withdrawal from Afghanistan is bad enough. Now Indian diplomacy must act fast to quell newly emergent threats to the country's fragile democracy.

Role of India:

- **Soft power:** Broadly speaking, New Delhi has pursued a "soft power" strategy toward Afghanistan, sticking to civilian rather than military matters. Example: The Salma Dam power project in the Herat province, construction of the Afghan parliament building, helping in the expansion of the Afghan national television network, and several smaller projects in agriculture
- **Bilateral donor:** India has pledged some US\$1.3 billion on various projects, emerging as the sixth largest bilateral donor to Afghanistan.
- **Policy:** India's Afghanistan policy has two major objectives: first, to curtail Islamabad's influence in Kabul and deny Pakistan's state and non-state agents leverage to plot against Indian interests, and second, to gain access to vast energy markets in Central Asia.
- **Vested interests:** India has been one of the staunchest supporters of a strong and "independent" government in Kabul since an Afghanistan that is indirectly controlled by Rawalpindi is detrimental to Indian strategic interests. New Delhi is working in close coordination with the government of Ashraf Ghani in almost all regional and international issues of concern.
- **Importance for afghan led government:** India has been opposed to any outside interference in talks with the Taliban, asserting that the peace process must be "Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-controlled."
- **India–Pakistan:** This relationship continues to serve as a primary source of instability in the region, and, indirectly, also of instability in Afghanistan.
- **Neighbouring countries:** Pakistan–China and China–India relations are important considerations for Pakistan and India when they formulate their foreign policy strategies, including those related to their bilateral relations.
- **Constraints:** Due to geographical distance and absence of military footprint dictate that India cannot convincingly push for a complete exclusion of Pakistan from the Afghan peace process.
- **United Nations:** India's recent critical stance at the United Nations for its failure to sanction new Taliban leaders and their helpers in the neighbourhood may be ethically appropriate, but seems out of sync with emerging ground realities in Afghanistan.

Conclusion

The decision to abrogate the special status to Jammu and Kashmir came in the backdrop of a flurry of activities in Afghanistan. These developments have a direct bearing on India.

4. Even though the formation of BIMSTEC was a diplomatic masterstroke, the grouping hasn't lived up to its true potential. Analyse.

Introduction

The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is a regional grouping of seven countries i.e. Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand that lie in the littoral and adjacent regions of the Bay of Bengal. It came into existence on June 6, 1997, through the **Bangkok Declaration**.

Body



The BIMSTEC region is home to around **1.5 billion people** which constitute around 22% of the global population with a combined gross domestic product (GDP) of 3.5 trillion economy.

BIMSTEC= SAARC- (Pakistan, Maldives and Afghanistan) + (Thailand and Myanmar)

Why BIMSTEC was a diplomatic masterstroke:

- Stagnation of SAARC limited both, the scope of India's growing economic aspirations as well as the role it could play in improving regional governance.
- At the 18th SAARC Summit in Kathmandu, in 2014, India proposed **the SAARC Motor Vehicles Agreement**. However, this could not progress due to resistance from Pakistan.
- This compelled Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal (BBIN) to sign the **BBIN Motor Vehicles Agreement in 2015**.
- Pakistan also opted out of the ambitious **SAARC Satellite project** proposed by India, leading to a change in its name to the South Asia Satellite.

- Series of terrorist attacks on Indian defence establishments in **Uri and Pathankot**.
- There is a tendency in some quarters to see India's interests in BIMSTEC as part of its strategy to isolate Pakistan and position BIMSTEC as an alternative to SAARC. The above instances suggest otherwise.
- The main motivation for India to push BIMSTEC is thus not Pakistan; rather, it is in the country's interest to ensure that the region does not lag behind and that an unstable neighbourhood does not drag its growth.
- India's desire to link South Asia to the economically dynamic Southeast Asia is also part of this strategy.
- The rationale behind making the BIMSTEC mechanism work is to reassure South Asia that the region can work together to achieve common goals with India playing its due role.

Role and working of BIMSTEC:

- BIMSTEC enjoys good **Regional Co-operation** than SAARC which faced obstacles in the area of security cooperation. Example: cross-border terrorism emanating from Pakistan.
- The member countries have generally cordial relationships, something patently missing among the SAARC countries.
- The region has countries with the fastest-growing economies in the world. The combined GDP in the region is around US\$3 trillion and will likely grow further.

A few challenges

There are challenges for India from both within and outside, because of which BIMSTEC hasn't achieved its full potential :

- Unsettled borders, refugee issues and ethnic tension among BIMSTEC member countries.
- Region **lacks physical connectivity**. The tri-lateral highway connecting India-Myanmar-Thailand hasn't been started yet.
- Overcoming weaknesses like **project implementation** in other countries as compared to China.
- **Infrequency of the BIMSTEC summits**, the highest decision-making body of the organisation. In its 20 years of existence, the BIMSTEC summit has taken place only thrice.
- Another issue would be for India to counter the impression that BIMSTEC is an **India-dominated bloc**, a problem that it faced for a long time in SAARC
- Good relations between India & Pakistan will benefit both the countries. This would also mean Pakistan military losing its relevance.
- **Lack of political will** has also limited the prospects of BIMSTEC. Countries like Thailand and Myanmar focus more on groups like ASEAN.

- Growth of **intra-regional investment** is negligible. The delay in the adoption of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA), a framework that was agreed upon in 2004, fuels doubts about BIMSTEC's efficacy.

Way forward

- India will have to carefully navigate the emerging regional geopolitics, as many of the elements that made SAARC hostage to political rivalry and turned it into a defunct mechanism can re-emerge in BIMSTEC.
- Today, most of the smaller neighbours are more willing to engage so as to benefit from India's economic rise. Nonetheless, for internal political reasons, the same issue may re-emerge and pose hurdles in the progress of BIMSTEC.
- India needs to show sensitivity to the concerns of smaller neighbours.
- Leverage BIMSTEC as a bridge linking South and Southeast Asia.
- Learning from ASEAN and prioritizing economic connectivity, which is the prerequisite for regional integration.
- Enhancing cooperation in disaster management, terrorism, maritime security and transnational crime.
- The members need to work collectively towards making BIMSTEC a stronger, more effective and result-oriented organisation for achieving a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable Bay of Bengal Region.

Conclusion

The future of BIMSTEC stands in strong technical and economic cooperation. The focus and synergies in one direction will allow the group objectives to be fulfilled. If all countries work to focus, it will be at advantage to all countries and that should be the way forward

5. Where does Iran feature in India's economic and geo-strategic puzzle? What has India done to deepen cooperation and further trust with Iran? Discuss.

Introduction

Iran is a Middle East nation, which can be called as regional power on account of its strategic location, resources and historical importance.

Body

Economic Significance

- Iran is India's third largest oil supplier (making 15% of total oil imports), its rich surplus energy resources makes it a potential partner for resource deficit India.

- India securing berths in Chabahar port will help in improving trade between India, Afghanistan and Central Asia. (Zaranj-Delaram Highway)
- At Chabahar Free Trade Zone (FTZ) India will setup plants in sectors such as fertilizers, petrochemicals and metallurgy. This will ensure India's energy security as well as increase economic activity among country.
- Iran is a big market for India for India's agro-products, software services, automobiles etc. These can be leveraged further.
- India has been discussing for exploitation of Farzad B gas field.
- The International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC) that passes through Iran can provide India connectivity to Central Asia and Europe.



Geo-Strategic Significance

- The strategic location of the region, acts as a Eurasian bridge connecting Asia and Europe (Especially after signing TIR Convention and Ashgabat Agreement).
- Regional security dynamics- Iran is important player for maintenance of peace in Afghanistan.
- For combating piracy and securing Sea lanes of communication (SLoC) in the Indian Ocean region.
- Iran-Baluchistan border can be used as a frontier, if Pakistan tries any misadventure in Jammu & Kashmir region.

Measures/Initiatives taken by India

- Agreement on crude payment mechanism that allows for payment in Rupees and this will further enhance trade between both the nations.
- Agreement for Avoidance of Double Taxation and prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on Income. It will avoid burden of double taxation between two countries in order to promote flow of investment and services.
- MoU has been signed on exemption from Visa requirement for holders of Diplomatic Passports.
- MoU has been signed for establishment of an expert group on trade remedy measures to promote cooperation in areas of mutual interest. (Trade remedial measures such as anti-dumping, countervailing duty etc)
- Cooperation in field of Health and medicine and traditional systems of medicine.
- MoU on Postal Cooperation includes exchange of experience, knowledge and technology in e-commerce and logistics services, cooperation on philately, feasibility studies on using air and surface transit capacities of both countries.
- Lease contract for Shahid Behesti Port. (Phase 1 of Chabahar during interim period)

Conclusion

However, there are concerns plaguing due to USA withdrawal from JCPOA and CAATSA act. India must be vocal in its support of the French and German positions on the JCPOA, and should seek waiver from American sanctions. India must effectively utilize the opportunity of playing arbitrator role and emerge as a global power.