

1. What do you understand by multi-level planning? What are its benefits? How has it evolved in India? Discuss.

Approach:

As the directive is discuss, a candidate is expected to discuss various perspectives and present a logical argument. For introduction, candidate can adopt an approach where he/she defines the multi-level planning and then in brief explains how it is beneficial. In main body part, candidate has to write in detail on multi-level planning and its benefits. In the later part of body candidate has to explain how it is evolved in India besides explaining its benefits and drawbacks with respect to India and in general, along with it a way forward while explaining how it can be utilised more efficiently for betterment of India.

Introduction:

Multi-level Planning (MLP) opposed to centralized planning is an exercise where local institutions are actively involved not only at the implementation level but MLP is a more integrative effort that seeks to involve all hierarchies of administrative, geographical, political and regional levels in the planning process. It is more beneficial than centralised planning as it ensures people's active participation, cost effectiveness, checks corruption, maintains regional parties and balances etc.

Body:

It seeks to ensure the active participation of the lower hierarchical levels in information generation, data collection, policy suggestions, plan implementation & monitoring of all developmental activities. With respect to India, various levels of planning in India are as follows: at National level, at State level, at district level, at Block level and at village level.

- A planning process can be either single-level or multi-level. In the single-level planning, the formulation of plans and decision making are done at the national level; the process is centralized and the lower territorial levels come into the picture only at the implementation stage.
- Whereas, in the multi-level planning process, the national territory is divided into small territorial units, their number depending upon the size of the country, the administrative, the geographical and cultural settings.
- The concept of multi-level regional planning may be defined as 'planning for a variety of regions which together form a system and subordinate systems'.
- In such plans, there is direct participation of the people in the planning process. In multi-level planning, every region/unit constitutes a system and hence, the planning process becomes more effective. Similarly, the higher-level regional plans provide the basic frame-work for the lower-level plans.
- In multi-level planning, the various levels of planning provide bases for higher-level planning. which can be observed in Figure 1 below.

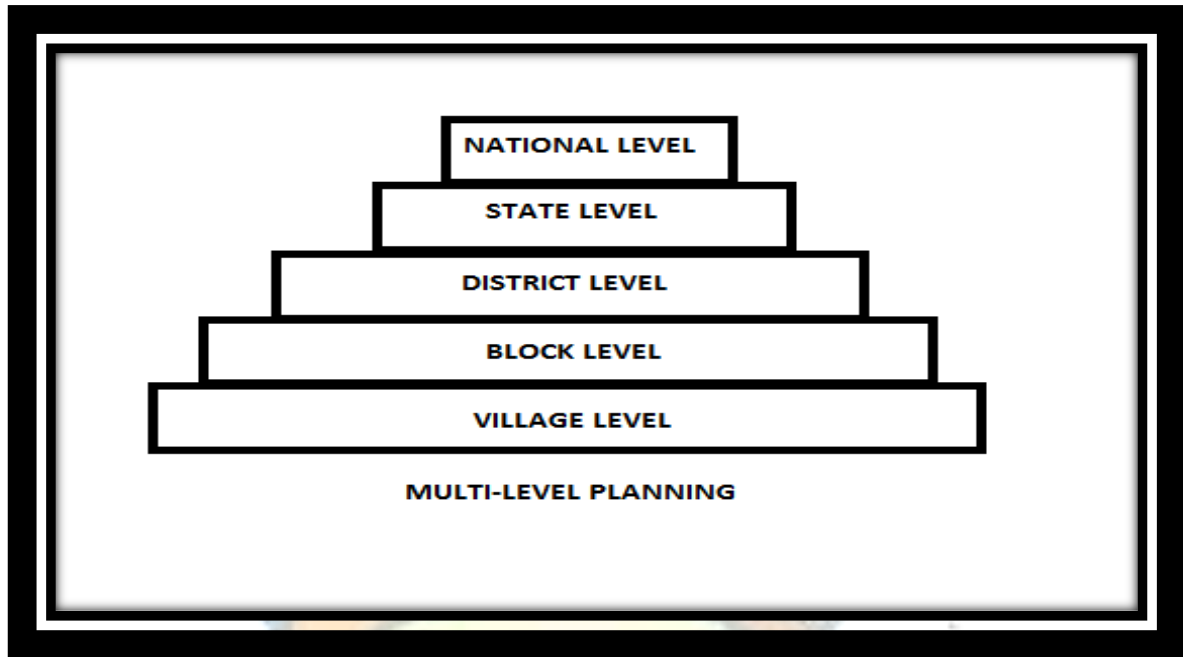


Figure 1: Multi-level planning

Benefits of Multi-Level Planning:

- Financial integration of all levels takes place because of responsibility sharing.
- Active popular participation increases: As a natural corollary to the decentralisation of planning, mechanisms for peoples' involvement need to be intensively explored for each level for more 'relevant' policy since interests cannot be adequately articulated without the active participation of people who are the intended beneficiaries.
- Affordable operations: Multi-level planning is expected to make operations affordable by providing better linkages between relevant sectors and ready access to required information, which would remove many implementation blockages.
- Addresses regional disparities and imbalances: Through inclusive decisions, Multi-level planning is expected to reduce regional disparities and bring more equity in development, since the chief factor behind persistent regional imbalances has been diagnosed as an unstudied application of the macro plan at micro levels without necessary modifications/detailing by the local development planners to address the particular requirements of an area/target group.
- Checks Corruption: Corruption is a persistent problem. For instance, the main problem with poverty alleviation programs has been the identification of beneficiaries and articulation of their needs, which has been far from orderly. Omissions/commissions alleged/inadvertent have largely thwarted efforts.
- Addresses local demands: Local development planners can decide on the territorial level based on its needs and requirements, viz. gram sabha, Samiti or Zilla Parishad, where a function can be performed with maximum impact and economy.
- Realisation of "Gram Swaraj": As per the MLP approach, the establishment of local "self-government" would renew local administration, which would have

positive spin-off effects on business generally. It's in general realisation of Gandhji's dream of 'Gram Swaraj', as people at local level take their own decisions and govern themselves.

Evolution of Multi-level planning in India:

- The 1st and 2nd Five Year Plans (FYP) gave the concept of community development where planning scope was expanded from mere law & order maintenance towards welfare and development oriented objectives.
- In 1960's formal lower level organisations were recognised because in 1957 Balwant Rai Mehta committee recommended 3 tier Panchayati Raj system for decentralisation and effective democracy.
- In 1967, ARC suggested that district level planning should be related to local area planning. Every plan must indicate resource availability at local level. Districts should have authority to decide sectorial financial outlay.
- In 1978, Dantewala working group suggested block level planning while Ashok Mehta Committee recommended strengthening of planning at Jila Parishad level by placing district level officers under DRDA (District Rural Development Agency). Today DRDA is at the lowest level in plan implementation.
- In 1982 Hanumantharao committee suggested Sharing resources for administrative and financial independence.
- The main objective of this kind of recommendations was to absorb local labour surpluses and greater involvement of people in the formulation and implementation of development plans. Hence, by the end of 1983 adopt system of block-level planning integrated into national system was available.
- In 1985 Sarkaria commission suggested for setting up of state finance commissions for financing of districts.
- At the apex of multilevel planning, in 1992, 73rd and 74th Constitutional amendments took place to planning as a subject devolved up to local levels.
- Here, Panchayati Raj institutions attained Constitutional status with mandates as was envisaged under Article 40 of Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP).
- Further to this development, PESA was enacted by Government of India to cover the "Scheduled Areas", which are not covered in the 73rd Constitutional amendment. This particular act extends the provisions of Part IX to the Scheduled Areas of the country. PESA brought powers further down to the Gram Sabha level.

In this way evolution of multi-level planning in India took place. However, it has some drawbacks which needs to be addressed.

- Though powers are devolved to local levels, they are not that much empowered to act decisively. For instance, a village Panchayat has very low economic resources to collect as a tax or revenue from the people.
- Due to this they are more of dependent on the state governments and central governments for finances. Hence, their decision making also gets hampered.
- Sometimes planning at local levels gets hijacked by the dominating class, which makes vulnerable classes more vulnerable and pushes them out of decision making process.

Conclusion:

In determining appropriate area levels, there is a need to take into account not only planning requirements in terms of techniques and processes but also social, political and administrative structures. There is a need to introduce Constitutional provisions to ensure continuity and authenticity to such arrangements, particularly in regard to elections for bodies at sub-state levels which will help us to realise Gandhiji's dream of 'Swaraj' in true sense.



2. How can e-governance initiatives empower Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI). Illustrate.

Approach: One needs to explain about e-governance or facts (e-governance) in the Introduction. In body, objective of e-governance initiatives in empowering Panchayat Raj Institution. (Student needs to mention the examples as well).

Illustrate: Such an answer will generally involve the use of many examples, such as tables, figures, graphs, or concrete research statistics and evidence. The aim is to use these examples to demonstrate knowledge of the subject of the question and to further explain or clarify your answer).

Introduction:

E-Governance is the application of Information Technology to improve the ability of the government to address the needs of society. It includes the publishing of policy and program-related information to transact with citizens, integration of various stand-alone systems between government to citizen (G2C), government-to-business (G2B), and government-to-government (G2G). It extends beyond the provision of online services and covers the use of IT for strategic planning and reaching the development goals of the government.

(Note: One can also explain about e-governance providing facts (ranking or performance of PRIs pre-digitalization or post-digitalization))

Body:

National e-Governance Plan was launched with the objective “Make all Public Services accessible to the common man in his locality, through common service delivery outlets and ensure efficiency, transparency and reliability of such services at affordable costs to realize the basic needs of the common man”.

(To reduce the word limit, students can use the block diagram)



Figure: Objectives of e-governance

Some of the e-governance initiatives which help to bring governance in PRI mentioned below:

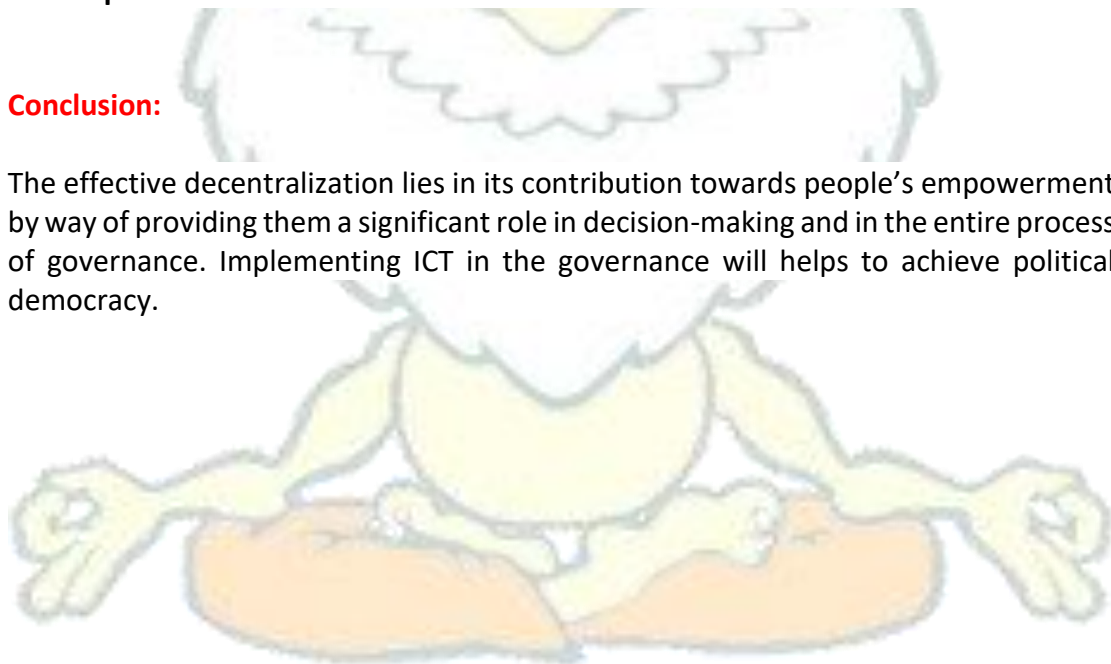
- **E-Panchayat** – This Project intends to improve quality of governance in PRIs. Further, it also enhances the coordination between Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India and PRIs. The central objective of this **project is to ensure local area development and strengthen local self-governance** by providing variety of services to its stakeholders.
- **Bhoomi Project** (Karnataka government's initiative): Online Delivery of Land Records, Bhoomi is a self-sustainable e-Governance project for the computerized delivery of 20 million rural land records to 6.7 million farmers of Karnataka. It helps farmers to **access instant information about the land**.
- **KHETI** – The Knowledge Help Extension Technology Initiative – This Information Communication and Technology (ICT) design solution, **has helped to bridge socio-economic divide digitally**. KHETI uses participatory interactive

designing methodologies which have resulted in a customized solution for so called 'less privileged groups' such as poor farmers.

- **PFMS, e-FMS & Geo-tagging** – has been stated for bringing transparency & accountability in management of finances available to Panchayat under Fourteenth Finance Commission award, **helps in financial inclusion.**
- **Digital Inclusiveness in Auditing a Success Story** – Good governance practices of e-initiative in the field of audit has revealed effectively the **responsiveness and accountability** to public money and its usage issues. This has aired the spirit of **transparency and inclusiveness** with the financial governance agenda. There has been success in e-auditing application by the state of Madhya Pradesh in MGNREGS fund monitoring. Every individual are getting benefited and helped to reduce the ghost accounts.
- **Sevana** is a major software solution developed by Information Kerala Mission (IKM). The Sevana civil registration is utilized to register deaths and births in Panchayats and municipalities. Through these kiosks, deaths and births are registered instantly. Citizen can download birth/death certificates within 24 hours of registration at the kiosk. It helps to reduce the travelling time of the public to the nodal office, **Increases the efficiency.**
- **Sulekha software** was developed to monitor the annual plans of local government institutions in the State. Annual plans are prepared, evaluated and approved in a time bound manner through this software. **It is helping to provide the better service to citizen.**

Conclusion:

The effective decentralization lies in its contribution towards people's empowerment by way of providing them a significant role in decision-making and in the entire process of governance. Implementing ICT in the governance will helps to achieve political democracy.



3. What are the merits of Indian federalism? With the help of suitable examples, explain the ways in which India's federal polity has shaped governance.

Approach:

It expects students to write about merits of Indian federalism in the first part. In the second half write about ways in which India's federal polity has shaped governance with the help of examples.

Introduction:

The term federalism refers to the constitutionally allocated distribution of powers between two or more levels of government in the modern nation-state system. In the words of Granville Austin Indian federalism is cooperative federalism, which is exemplified by innovations like interstate council, GST council and NITI Aayog.

Body:

Merits of Indian federalism:

The most salient aspect of a federal form of government is that the governments at both the national and the state level function in their respective jurisdictions with considerable independence from one another.

- **Division of Powers:** In a federation both the federal and state governments are independent and autonomous in the spheres of their powers. 'One is not subordinate to the other. Both derive their powers from the constitution which is the supreme law of the land. The powers enjoyed by the units are, therefore, original and not delegated by the centre. E.g. Schedule 7 divided subjects under union, state and concurrent areas.
- **Separate Government:** In a federal form of government both the centre and the units have their separate set of governmental apparatus like state legislature or Gram Sabha. Still all India services provide connect between them.
- **Written constitution and amendment regarding federal issue need consent of at least half number of states.** Supreme Court also regarded federalism as part of basic structure doctrine; it helps in decentralized form of government.
- **States cannot secede from Indian union; single citizenship allows Indians to reside in any part of the country yet states can make special provisions for reservations for domiciled residents.**
- **A Better Understanding of Local Issues and Demands:** State Governments can be More Responsive to Citizen Needs. The closer a government entity is to its citizens, the more likely it is to respond to the needs of citizens.
- **Protection against Tyranny:** Spreading the national government's power among three branches that serve as a check and balance on each other, is that it serves as a deterrent to tyranny and runaway power.
- **Linguistic reorganization of states yet there is no 'one language-one state' formula.**

- Concurrent powers improve cooperation and collaboration among union and states.
- Competitive spirit among states proves healthy for overall development. Post 1991, state governments now got relative autonomy to initiate business endeavors and bring in foreign investments to their respective states.

Ways in which India's federal polity shaped governance:

Nations are described as federal or unitary, depending on the way in which governance is organized. Governance is nothing but process of decision making and implementation.

- Decentralization of governance: The diverse regional aspirations have managed to constantly assert themselves, resulting in the decentralization of governance in India. E.g. creation of new states, Autonomous district councils.
- Effective and efficient governance: India realized one size fits all approach cannot sustain. Importance of states in economic development policies, replacement of powerful planning commission by more facilitating NITI Aayog.
- Innovation in Law and Policy: Indian union and states adopted each other's best practices of policy to replicate in their own jurisdiction. E.g. Mid day meal scheme of Tamilnadu. It also facilitated to create new system altogether. E.g. Policy innovations like GST council.
- Participatory governance: 73rd and 74th constitutional amendment helped to increase participatory democracy in India. Federal structure also helped to bring consensus based governance at grass root level.
- Accountability and transparency in governance also improved due to federalism as government went close to people. In apparatus like Gram Sabha, it is lot more easy to ask question to representatives.
- The most important moment for federalism in this phase is the revelation of the vital role of state governments on the ground in managing the COVID-19 crisis. After initial challenges, the Union government ceded adequate space and autonomy to the states for strengthening their healthcare facilities, managing the localized lockdowns, and implementing social security measures to mitigate the impact of the pandemic.

However, there is need to bring some reforms to improve federal governance in India like the contentious role of the governor in suppressing the states for the Centre's interest needs to be reviewed, proper utilization of the institutional mechanism of the Inter-state Council must be ensured to develop political goodwill between the Centre and the states on contentious policy issues and the gradual widening of the fiscal capacity of the states has to be legally guaranteed

Conclusion:

In culturally diverse, developing countries like India; federalism is chosen not merely for administrative requirements but for the very survival of the nation. Strong federalism and good governance are necessary to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 16 as it is dedicated to improvement in governance, inclusion, participation, rights, and security.

4. With its focus on equity and critical learning, NEP addresses present, future challenges. Elucidate.

Approach:

It expects students to write - in first part about present challenges faced by Indian education system - in second part write how different provisions of NEP addressed present and future challenges while focusing equity and critical learning. In end write 1-2 points about few lacunas.

Introduction:

The Union Cabinet approved the National Education Policy (NEP) in July 2020. This policy will usher in sweeping changes to the education policy of the country, including a renaming of the Ministry of Human Resource Development as the Education Ministry. The NEP 2020 aims at making “India a global knowledge superpower”.

Body:

Currently Indian Education system faces following challenges:

School Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate public funding in the sector. • Disproportionate focus on school infrastructure as opposed to learning outcomes. • Challenges in governance and monitoring mechanisms for learning outcomes. • Accountability systems in government schools. • Inadequate teacher training, large number of teaching vacancies and rampant absenteeism. • Limited options for vocational education in the school system. • Inadequate support and counselling given to children in schools.
Higher education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdated and multiple regulatory mechanisms limit innovation and progressive change. • Outdated curriculum results in a mismatch between education and job market requirements, dampens students’ creativity and hampers the development of their analytical abilities. • Quality assurance or accreditation mechanisms are inadequate.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no policy framework for participation of foreign universities in higher education. • There is no overarching funding body to promote and encourage research and innovation. • Public funding in the sector remains inadequate. • There are a large number of faculty posts lying vacant, for example in central universities, nearly 33 per cent of teacher posts were vacant in March 2018; faculty training is inadequate.
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NEP 2020 addressed present and future challenges by focusing on equity and critical learning as follows:

- NEP is important for several quantitative, and more importantly, qualitative changes. These range from pre-school to higher education with thrust on practicality and skill development; breaking the stereotypical divide of arts, commerce and science streams in high school; reorganising schooling years; making the education system more inclusive; permission to foreign universities to establish branches in India; and thrust on Indian and ancient languages.
- Other transformative changes relate to education in the local language or mother tongue at least up to the fifth grade and if possible, eighth and beyond; universal access and early childhood education; curriculum change leading to learning outcomes (LOs) and competencies; stress on equity, gender, special needs and promotion of multilingualism.
- It focuses on early child development, the endeavour to reduce the dropout rate, putting in place different forms of assessment, the emphasis on essential learning and critical thinking and the centrality of the teacher and teacher education.
- The NEP will bring two crore out-of-school children back into the mainstream. The policy aims at a 100 per cent Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in school education by 2030 and 50 GER in higher education by 2025 – it's currently about 25 per cent.
- Some elements of the overarching Universal Access to Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) framework relate to the NCERT's National Curricular and Pedagogical Framework for Early Childhood Education (NCPFECE). It also involves aligning NCPFECE with the latest research on ECCE and national and international best practices. The integration of vocational education with basic education in all institutions by identifying focus areas based on skills gap analysis and mapping of local opportunities will develop entrepreneurial competencies.
- Innovations in the higher education ecosystem include high-quality universities and colleges, multidisciplinary education, learning optimisation, extension of the graduate course from three to four years, multiple entry and exit points, college teachers' education, replacement of the UGC, AICTE and NAAC, dispensing with the MPhil programme and the proposed National

Research Foundation. The key principles of the NEP relate to accessibility, equality, accountability, affordability, and quality of education.

- The “fragmented” ecosystem of higher education will be integrated once NEP’s vision of combining different institutions into multidisciplinary universities and “higher education institution clusters” or “knowledge hubs” is realised. By upgrading the digital infrastructure, emphasising on learning at your own pace and underlining the importance of online courses, the NEP attempts to bridge the digital divide.
- The policy talks of solving mathematics problems through a variety of innovative methods, including the regular use of puzzles and games. There is a provision to teach coding at the middle-school level.
- The philosophy of access, equity, infrastructure, governance and learning has ultimately to be grounded in action to drive India’s growth, modernisation and structural transformation. The policy justifiably aims to increase the spending on education from the current 3.2 per cent of GDP to 6 per cent of the GDP.

However, mobilising funds could be difficult because of the resource crunch, low tax-to-GDP ratio, kick-starting the economy, strife with neighbours and competing development requirements. The policy’s success will also hinge on its integration with the government’s other policies — the New Industrial Policy, Digital India, Skill India, Atmanirbhar Bharat and the “vocal for local” programme.

Conclusion:

NEP 2020 present wide-ranging reforms in the policy are aimed at making the Indian education system more contemporary and skill-oriented. Proper implementation of the reforms and ideas envisioned in the NEP 2020 will fundamentally transform India. With the emphasis on knowledge-economy driven growth in the 21st century, this is precisely what India needs to dominate in the future decades of growth and drive the education requirements of our young population.

5. The Quad offers a great opportunity for reforming China-centred economic globalisation. Comment.

Approach:

As the directive is comment, it is important to pick out the main points and give one's opinion based on the information or the arguments originated from the reading. One should take a neutral ground and write facts and viewpoints. Introduction for this question may start with explanation of what is quad, what are subsequent developments and what is the main focus of this group.

Introduction:

The Quad, or the quadrilateral security dialogue between India, US, Japan and Australia, is now emblematic of the geopolitical churn in the eastern hemisphere. Less noted but equally significant is its geo-economic agenda that has drawn South Korea, Vietnam and New Zealand into the post-pandemic consultations in the so-called "Quad Plus" format. In both the domains, China is the natural focus.

Body:

The policy discourse is about blunting Beijing's ambition to exercise regional hegemony and preventing it from bending the global economic order in China's favour.

- Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) is the informal strategic dialogue between India, USA, Japan and Australia with a shared objective to ensure and support a "free, open and prosperous" Indo-Pacific region.
- The idea of Quad was first mooted by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in 2007. However, the idea couldn't move ahead with Australia pulling out of it, apparently due to Chinese pressure.
- In December 2012, Shinzo Abe again floated the concept of Asia's "Democratic Security Diamond" involving Australia, India, Japan and the US to safeguard the maritime commons from the Indian Ocean to the western Pacific.
- In November 2017, India, the US, Australia and Japan gave shape to the long-pending "Quad" Coalition to develop a new strategy to keep the critical sea routes in the Indo-Pacific free of any influence (especially China).

China has been the chief beneficiary of the globalisation of the world economy which began accelerating since the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s.

- This phase of relatively free movement of capital and technology and goods and services enabled China to transform itself into a low-cost manufacturing hub for the world.
- It became an export powerhouse leveraging its access to the large consuming markets of the US, Europe and Japan.
- Thanks to its brand of state capitalism and managed markets, China emerged relatively unscathed from the global financial and economic crisis (GFEC) of 2007-8 while the advanced capitalist economies of the West faced prolonged disruption and stagnation.
- The Western consensus behind globalisation has been eroded as competition from China has sharpened. As China, accelerated its ambition of becoming a

world super power through its Belt and Road Initiative, Cheque book diplomacy etc. and by becoming a hub of global manufacturing industry.

- Due to this there is a rise in protectionist sentiments in the West, a greater scrutiny of inward investment particularly for acquisitions in the high-tech sector, and growing sensitivity over loss of intellectual property to Chinese firms.
- Also, Chinese aggression with its neighbours regarding Land boundary and maritime boundary issues forced the global leaders to think about opening a wide front against China on diplomatic table.

QUAD a great opportunity for reforming China-centred economic globalisation:

- As of now, it is an ad hoc grouping that has the potential to develop itself into a full-fledged economic and security-based international organisation.
- It is clear by now that India's foreign and domestic policies have started countering China's rise with the banning of several Chinese Apps and upholding the 'self-reliance' model of economic growth.
- The US has described China, along with Russia, as a strategic rival in its National Security Strategy, National Defence Strategy and the Pentagon's report on Indo-Pacific Strategy.
- Quad is an opportunity for like-minded countries to share notes and collaborate on projects of mutual interest.
- Members share a vision of an open and free Indo-Pacific. Each is involved in development and economic projects as well as in promoting maritime domain awareness and maritime security.
- It is one of the many avenues for interaction among India, Australia, Japan and the US and should not be seen in an exclusive context.
- Confronting an expansive Chinese aggression on its frontiers and Beijing's growing strategic influence in the subcontinent and the Indian Ocean, Its and opportunity for Delhi to explore security coalition-building with its Quad partners.
- India has also been a pioneer in economic decoupling from China. For instance, its withdrawal from the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership in 2019 and its opposition to China's Belt and Road Initiative first articulated in 2017.
- USA has laid out a comprehensive framework for addressing the ideological, political, economic, technological and security challenges posed by China. But disentangling the web of economic interdependence woven over the last four decades is not easy.
- Free, open, prosperous and inclusive Indo-Pacific region serves the long-term interests of all countries in the region and of the world at large.

Hence, Quad shows a great potential to check China's ambitions be it in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond. However, global community is of the opinion that China's rise cannot be halted but can only be countered with an equally strong economic and security-oriented organisation and the Quad fits the setting. However, some of the following challenges persists in-front of QUAD grouping.

- **Undefined Vision:** Despite the potential for cooperation, the Quad remains a mechanism without a defined strategic mission.
- **Maritime Dominated:** The entire focus on the Indo-Pacific makes the Quad a maritime, rather than a land-based grouping or an economic counter grouping, raising questions whether the cooperation extends to the Asia-Pacific and Eurasian regions.
- **India's Aversion of Alliance System:** The fact that India is the only member that is averse to a treaty alliance system, has slowed down the progress of building a stronger Quadrilateral engagement.

Conclusion:

The challenge before the quad grouping lies in finding areas of mutual interest. However, Japanese PM Shinzo Abe's "Confluence of Two Seas" address to the Indian Parliament gave a fresh impetus to the Quad concept. Which recognises the economic rise of India at par with the developed nations in the west. Hence, QUAD holds the potential to reform China-centred economic globalisation besides ensuring a multi-polar world.

