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Paper: Current Affairs

Date: _____

Q 4 IMEC and BRI

Ans:

1. Introduction:

In previous times, the main bone of contention between super-powers was the constant supply of energy, but in the twenty first century, the frontlines of war are shifted to economy and infrastructure development.

In this regard, two mega-projects are worth mentioning: India-Middle East Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) and The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Both IMEC and BRI are significant projects for infrastructure development and more economic integration. Let's take a brief view of each project and their potential as well as future prospects.

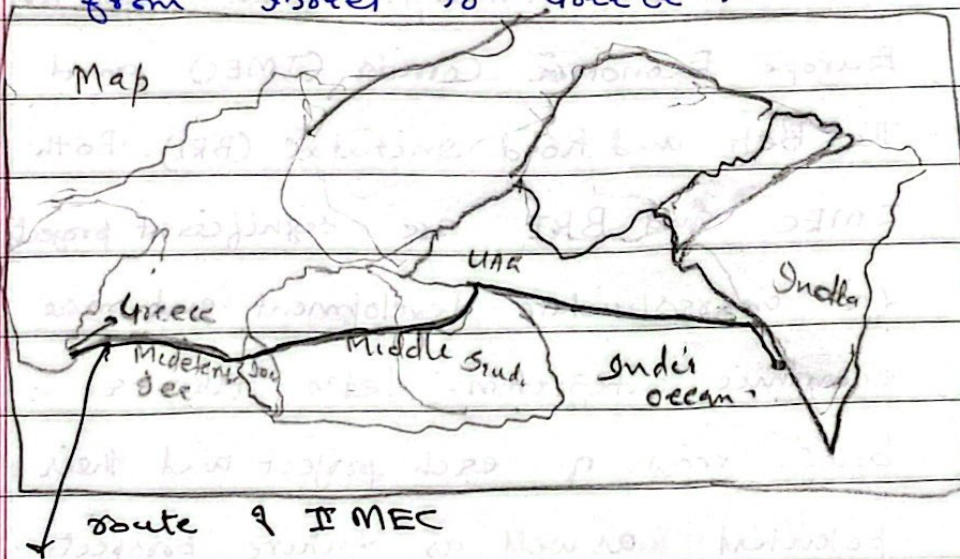
(a) Overview of India-Middle East

Europe Economic Corridor: (IMEC)

On the sidelines of G20 meeting in India, all members of G20 signed a MoU to formulate

India- Middle East Economic Corridor-

It is comprised of 2800 km rail-sea and road route. It consists of two parts - The eastern corridor which will connect South Asia with Gulf countries. It is consisted of railway track, sea ports route and road from India to UAE to Israel. The second part is Northern Corridor which will connect Gulf countries to Europe from Israel to Greece.



India (Mumbai Port & Mundra Port) →
 → (UAE) → → Railway & Road route (Saudi Arabia)
 to Israel → Port of Haifa → Greece

(3) Potential of IMEC

IMEC has significant potential in the days to come. Some of them are follows.

(i) Increased Regional Connectivity

The key potential of IMEC lies in the connectivity of the region. It connects three regions: South Asia, Gulf state and Europe.

(ii) Enhanced Economic Opportunities.

IMEC is associated with enhanced economic opportunities as it is going to boost trade and infrastructure between the participant countries.

(iii) Development of Middle East.

It provides opportunities for the Middle East. The US has termed it as "Infrastructure for peace in middle East."

(iv) Alternative to BRI

The west has been suspicious of China's BRI project.

because of its debt trap conspiracy.

Therefore, IMEC is an alternative to BRI.

(v) Alternative route to Pacific

open:

IMEC is an alternative

route for Europe because

Pacific ocean is becoming fast

the theatre of power struggle among

super powers.

(4) Future Prospects and Challenges.

There are several

challenges to IMEC. Some of

them are given below.

(i) BRI is the challenge for

IMEC.

BRI has established

contact or project with more than

160 countries.

(ii) Lack of Finances:

The west has failed

to finance B3W project; therefore,

IMEC could suffer similar

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late in the days to come.

(III) Lack of infrastructure.

Many countries are lacking infrastructure to boost IMEC.

The example of Greece is a glaring one.

(IV) Road and Railway track in desert costly:

UAE and Saudi Arabia

have vast desert; therefore, constructing road routes will be a challenge for IMEC

countries.

(5) Overview of BRI:

The Belt and Road

Initiative is a Chinese project

which was launched in 2013. It

is infrastructural mega-projects,

consisting of more than 2600

projects. It is the project of

more \$ 3.4 trillion dollars. It will

serve as a gateway to three

continents: Asia, Europe and

Africa.

(c) Potential of BRI:

The BRI has a huge potential. Some of its main points are given below.

(i) Increased connectivity at regional level:

The first key benefit of BRI lies in the fact that it will enhance connectivity in three continents such as Asia, Europe and Africa through infrastructure development.

(ii) Reduced poverty across the region.

BRI has the potential to reduce poverty. According to the World Bank, BRI has potential to uplift 5 to 7 million people from abject poverty.

(iii) More infrastructure development

BRI has initiated development of roads, ports and railway track across the continents.

CPEC and Granddass ports are the glaring examples.

(iv) Shift to Greener Energy.

Mr. Xi, Chinese President, announced in 2021 that it will support coal or steel projects through BRI - This shift to renewable energy is a good sign in the wake of fastening changing climate of the planet.

(v) More Trade and Economic opportunities:

BRI has increased trade opportunities and boosted economic integration across the three continents.

(F) Future Prospects and challenges:

BRI is facing certain challenges.

(1) Global projects like IMEC and B3W.

These projects are a

threat to BRI

(ii) Debt trap conspiracy:

The west-initiated debt conspiracy is a threat to BRI

(iii) China's internal economic meltdown.

China's economy is slowing down due to ageing population and debt crisis.

Conclusion:

There is no doubt that IMF is a good initiative that would boost connectivity and economic integration. It is deemed as rival of BRI, but the truth is that both projects are going to bring much-needed development and prosperity across the three continents.

OS Pak - Afghan Relation

Ans:

Introduction:

Anotol Levan, in his book, "Pakistan: A Hard Country" writes "Whatever happens in Afghanistan, it will always impact Pakistan". This proves that Afghanistan is very essential for peace and development in Pakistan. Therefore, maintaining cordial relation with Kabul is at the heart of Islamabad's policies. However, Pakistan - Afghanistan could deteriorate in the wake of increased TTP attacks and the return of refugees. Before discussing how Afghanistan Pakistan issues are deteriorating, let's take a brief view of their relation.

(i) Overview of Afghanistan Pakistan relation:

As it is often said that one can choose its enemy, but not its neighbours.

Afghanistan is the immediate neighbour of Pakistan. Since its inception, Afghanistan and Pakistan relations have seen ups and downs. During Afghanistan war, Pakistan and USA supported for Afghan people and created mujahidin to end the war. Later on, in the war on terror, Afghanistan was invaded by USA and Pakistan stand with USA. But it provided support to Afghan people whenever they needed it.

(3) Deteriorating Relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan in the wake of increased TTP attacks and return of Refugees:

The growing attacks of terrorist organisations through the Afghan soil and Pakistan's hasty move to return refugees are negatively affecting Afghanistan Pakistan relation. Some of its negative impacts on these relations are as follows.

(i) Growing mistrust between both sides:

These terrorist attacks and return of refugees are fueling the flames of mistrust and trust deficit on the both sides. Both sides view these events as the threats of aggressive behavior.

(ii) Reduced People to people contact.

Return of refugees is seen as the sign of low people to people contact in the days to come. Because Pakistani people blame Afghani as terrorists or promoters of terrorists.

(iii) Lowered economic cooperation:

In the days to come, Pakistan and Afghanistan would see lowered economic cooperation such as trade, investment or even humanitarian aid.

(iv) Aggressive Potential Tussle:

These aggressive measures could cause political tussle such as the pressure on diplomats or exchange of aggressive words among leaders.

(v) Aggravation of Border Disagreement

These events could add fuel to fire of already strained situation along the Afghanistan-Taliban does not consider Durand line as legitimate lines. These events could further deepen this scores.

(vi) Return of Refugees and Humanitarian Crisis:

Pakistan has returned a large number of refugees to Afghanistan because of their involvement in violent acts. This could trigger humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan.

(vii) Heightened regional insecurity

These events are going to cause heightened insecurity which is not a good omen for both Afghanistan and Pakistan.

(viii) Reduced cooperation on Afghanistan peace process.

This could lead to reduced cooperation in Afghanistan peace process as Pakistan is trying its best to establish peace in Afghanistan at every level.

(3) Ways to improve relations in these heightened tensions.

There are multiple measures that must be taken to assuage the concerns of both sides. Some of them are given below.

(i) Enhanced diplomatic engagement.

The first viable option

is to increase diplomatic engagement through track I diplomacy. The diplomats must meet and try to understand each others arguments and their concerns.

(ii) Afghanistan and Doha Agreement

Afghanistan must respect its promises made in Doha deal which include no use of Afghan soil to attack on any country.

(iii) Regional players like China as mediators:

Pakistan should pursue China as it has brokered deal between Saudi and Iran, it could act as mediator between Afghanistan and Pakistan because China has cordial relations with both countries.

Conclusion:

It is true that increasing terrorist attacks from Afghan soil and return of refugees are not the good omen for Afghanistan Pakistan relation. The deterioration of relations is possible because of growing mistrust and low engagement to allay the concerns of each other. Hope is that some elements prevail on the both sides of border and they address it at the earliest.

Q7

International

Ans:

Introduction:

The USA and China have locked their horns on many issues. Taiwan is one of the key issues in their growing rivalry. The Economist Magazine has termed Taiwan as a flash point between two super powers. Moreover, USA's continuing support for Taiwan is hurting China's "one China two system policy" which USA had acknowledged it in the 1970s. Before discussing how USA's policy toward etc. Taiwan is hurting "one China two system policy, let's discuss the one China two system policy.

(1) Understanding one China two system policy:

It is one of the outstanding feature of China's government. It means that

that ^{autonomous} state like Hong Kong can
 rule by different government
 apart from China's central government,
 but they will always be the
 integral part of China. China
 views these parts as their
 own part. Taiwan, as per
 Chinese, is drift away province
 of China and it wants to
 unify it under its one
 China policy and two government
 policy.

(2) How USA Policy towards Taiwan is hurting "China's one China two system policy."

USA policy towards
 Taiwan is aggravating the flames
 of the fire. The glimpse of that
 were seen when Nancy Pelosi visited
 Taiwan in 2022 and China launched
 its missiles and ships near Taiwan.
 Moreover, The USA President, Joe Biden
 has said that its policy to Taiwan

is strong solid. The USA is supporting sovereignty to Taiwan and want it remain independent from mainland. Similarly, it is providing military and arms support to Taiwan which is aggravating the China's one system policy. Moreover, USA is willing to support Taiwan if China invade it. This is not only hurting Chinese "one China two system policy" but also causes serious dispute in South China

(3) Implications of this growing conflicts between USA & China:

This US increasing support for China is going to have severe implications at regional level. Some of them are

as follows:

- (i) Increase tension between two super power:

The USA's involvement in Taiwan can aggravate the situation further as China and USA have locked their horns over many fronts.

(ii) Increased arm race:

USA's military support to Taiwan will act as catalyst for China to increase its budget on weapons developments, causing arm race across the region.

(iii) Trade disruption and supply

China disruption:

This could lead to trade disruption. China could use blockade or other methods to compel USA to shun its support for the independence of Taiwan.

(iv) Invasion of Taiwan: a possible outcome.

China could invade Taiwan which is not good sign for regional peace and stability

(v) Semi conductors and other supplies:

Taiwan is a key supplier of semi conductors to both USA and China. This growing rivalry is going to disrupt it. According to Wilson center, Taiwan provides 90% of semi conductors.

(vi) Increased regional insecurity:

This conflict could increase regional insecurity because of heightened tensions between two super powers. USA's involvement in Taiwan is the main for regional peace and stability in the days to come.

Recommendations:

(i) Diplomatic engagement through
Track I or Track II.

The most viable
option is to engage with each
other through track I or track
II. The high official should
elley concerns of each other
to avoid war.

(ii) USA reduce its support
to Taiwan.

USA must not
engage with Taiwan is sovereign
because it could trigger
conflict which is not in
favor of any body.

(iii) Using good offices of
regional or international organization.

Another way is to
use good offices of G20
or UN to address these
grievances.

Conclusion:

There is no doubt USA's involvement in Taiwan issue is hurting Chinese 'one China two system' policy. This could trigger severe consequences, ranging from regional instability to trade and supply chain disruption. This issue must be addressed at the earliest by taking the pragmatic steps.

Q3

Ans

Introduction:

OIC was created with a motive to providing muslim countries a platform to raise their voice against the discrimination and injustices muslims are facing. However, OIC has become a talk shop in the present scenario as it has failed to fulfill its entrusted task: uniting muslim countries under its banner. There are several reasons for its failure ranging from internal rift to influence of super power. Before discussing its failure, its take a brief view of OIC.

(1) Overview of OIC:

Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) was founded in 1967. Initially, it

was comprised of 25 members. Now, its strength is 57 countries. The key objective of OIC was to unite muslim ummah. Another objective was to enhance relations, culture and economic ties among muslim countries. The third goal was to make peace among muslim countries through promotion of dialogue among muslim states.

Why OIC has failed:

There are several reasons behind the failure of OIC. Some of them are given below.

(i) Internal rift:

OIC members have internal disputes among each other; therefore, it could not carry out its mandated tasks. Iran's rivalry with other Gulf states is

a glaring example of that.

(ii) Lack of mechanism to resolve conflict:

OIC has no proper framework to resolve conflict among member nation.

Influence of one nation is twisting the functions of OIC.

(iii) Lack of proper funding:

OIC has failed because it is cash-strapped organization. It relies on the vulnerable contributions of the member states. Therefore, it has failed.

(iv) Influence of USA:

The USA has a significant influence on countries like Saudi Arabia, Qatar etc. Therefore, it is hampering the proper working of OIC.

How Hamas - Israel war and
Iran - KSA rapprochement
can make it successful organization:

There are several
ways this conflict could provide
much-needed impetus for the
success of OIC. Some of
them.

(i) Reduced internal rivalry:

Iran - KSA rapprochement
can be a positive sign to
alleviate internal rivalry among
the members because both
were engaged in sectarian
conflict and proxy wars.

(ii) United front in Hamas
conflict:

All muslim countries
have condemned the on-going
conflict in Hamas - Israel. This
is impetus to unite muslims
under the banner of OIC.

(ii) Saudi Arabia and Collective meeting of Arab League & OIC.

Saudi-Arabia has commenced the collective meeting of OIC and Arab League.

This is a clear & proof that OIC could become a success organization.

(3) Additional Recommendations:

① Raised funding of OIC can be boost for organization.

② Consensus among members on all issues can make it a better organization.

③ Improving the working of OIC mechanism can be a magic pill for it.

Conclusions

Although OIC has become a talk shop, its failures can be seen across the region such as lack of stance against Hamas - Israel war. There are several reasons for its failure, ranging from internal rivalry to influence of super power. By taking pragmatic steps it can become a successful organization in the days to come.