

EVA STALIN IAS ACADEMY – BEST IAS COACHING IN CHENNAI

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EDITORIAL ANALYSIS → 10 MAY 2023 → THE INDIAN EXPRESS:

INDIA WEST ASIA RELATIONS:

- **Context:**

- India, the United States, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) recently met to discuss the potential for rail connectivity with West Asia through sea lanes.

- **West Asia's present situation and past:**

- West Asia has always been the scene of conflicts, whether they were motivated by sect (Sunni Saudi Arabia vs. Shia Iran) or religion (Jewish Israel vs. Muslim countries) or great power politics (Russia supported Iran, Iraq, etc. vs. US supported Saudi Arabia, Israel, etc.).

- **However, a couple of these established dynamics have significantly changed recently, leading to de-hyphenation as a result of:**

- The US-mediated Abraham Accords 2020 for normalising ties between Muslim Bahrain and the UAE and Jewish Israel.
- The relationship between Shia Iran and Sunni Saudi Arabia was repaired in 2023.
- The rise of China poses a threat to established great powers like the U.S. US presence there.
- The US has faced a challenge from the Russia-China axis, which indirectly pulled India into the US fold.
- The Belt and Road Initiative is China's attempt to increase its regional influence.
- Another strategy for gaining influence is debt trap diplomacy.
- The friendship between China and Pakistan is a problem for India in its neighbourhood.

- **West Asia's importance to India:**

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- West Asia is regarded as being in close proximity to India. India's relationship with the area is based on history, cross-cultural interactions, and a thriving diaspora. India has significant interests in the region, including those related to trade, energy, stability, and security for the Indian people there.
- Energy safety: The country imports about 40% of its oil and 70% of its gas needs from the area.
- The country that receives the most international remittances from west Asia is India. A rise from US\$ 83 billion in 2020 to US\$ 87 billion in 2021 went to India. A significant portion of India's overall contribution comes from remittances from the Gulf States. In reality, Saudi Arabia (\$34.5 billion) and the UAE (\$43 billion) will be the world's second and third-largest sources of remittance outflow in 2020, respectively.
- 11 million Indians living abroad, mostly in West Asia. Therefore, maintaining regional stability is a top priority for India.
- In order to combat radicalization, terrorism, and crime in India, collaboration and coordination are essential.
- West Asia is the entry point to the landlocked, energy-rich region of Central Asia.
- Reduce the influence of China in west Asia and the Arabian Sea, which is of strategic importance. Through the OBOR programme, China is making steady progress towards west Asia.
- **India's 2014 Link West Policy:**
- **India's Link West Policy is a new paradigm in multifaceted engagement with West Asia that breaks free from local politics and ideological restraints. This policy's main tenets include:**
- Removing the hyphen from relationships between opposing sides of a dispute, such as Iran and Saudi Arabia or Israel and Palestine. It implies that relationships with either party shouldn't be impacted by those with the other. Both relationships are still separate.
- Dealing with superpowers like the US or Russia while taking principled stances on terrorism, nuclear proliferation, and other contentious regional topics of importance.
- Direct interaction with the region's influential diaspora is necessary to assure their security.
- To defend India's interests in the area, it will be important to contain China, with a particular focus on maintaining control over the Indian Ocean region through West Asia.
- **Steps to Take:**
- Due to the growing threat posed by the Taliban, non-conventional threats, cyber warfare, Fourth Generation Warfare or proxy warfare, etc., West Asia is crucial to maintaining peace in the South Asia region. If India contributes positively to the advancement of peace in the area, it can enhance its case

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for a permanent seat on the UNSC. This will safeguard its investments in the area, energy security, and crucial diaspora interests.

