

INTERNATIONAL RELATION**Russia Recognises Rebel Regions of Ukraine as Independent**

Recently, Russia recognised the Ukraine rebel regions in eastern Ukraine - Donetsk and Luhansk – as independent areas despite calls from the west to put an end to the tensions driven by fears that Russia may attack Ukraine.

- This paved the way to provide them military support — a direct challenge to the West that will fuel fears that Russia could imminently invade Ukraine.
- Tensions have peaked over the last few weeks as Russia amassed over 1,50,000 troops at Ukraine borders in one of the worst crises since the Cold War.
- The announcement shatters a 2015 peace deal signed in Minsk requiring Ukrainian authorities to offer a broad self-rule to the rebel regions.

What is Russia's Stand?

- It blamed the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) for the current crisis and called the US-led alliance an existential threat to Russia.
- Charged that Ukraine had inherited Russia's historic lands and after the Soviet collapse was used by the West to contain Russia.
- It wants Western Countries to guarantee that NATO won't allow Ukraine and other former Soviet countries to join as members.
- It has also demanded the alliance halt weapons deployments to Ukraine and roll back its forces from Eastern Europe. The western countries have rejected the demand.

What is the Background of the Crisis?

- Ukraine and Russia share hundreds of years of cultural, linguistic and familial links.
 - For many in Russia and in the ethnically Russian parts of Ukraine, the shared heritage of the countries is an emotional issue that has been exploited for electoral and military purposes.
- As part of the Soviet Union, Ukraine was the second-most powerful Soviet republic after Russia, and was crucial strategically, economically and culturally.
- The Donbass region, comprising the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts of Ukraine, has been at the centre of the conflict since March 2014 when Moscow (Russia) invaded and annexed the Crimean Peninsula.
 - In April, pro-Russia rebels began seizing territory (with Russia supporting them through hybrid warfare) in Eastern Ukraine and in May 2014, the rebels in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions held a referendum to declare independence from Ukraine.
- Since then, these predominantly Russian speaking regions (more than 70% speak Russian) within Ukraine have been witnessing shelling and skirmishes between the rebels and Ukrainian forces leading to the loss of over 14,000 lives by most estimates, creating around 1.5 million registered Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and destruction of the local economy.
- What has changed now is that the shelling has intensified since last October 2021 when Russia began amassing troops along the borders with Ukraine.
- If the situation in the Donbass escalates, the possibility of a war cannot be dismissed. One way to prevent the outbreak of a war would be to implement the Minsk agreements immediately, as Russia has suggested.

What are the Minsk Agreements?

There are two Minsk agreements, Minsk 1 and Minsk 2, named after the Belarussian capital Minsk where the talks were held.

Minsk 1:

- Minsk 1 was written in September 2014 by the Trilateral Contact Group on Ukraine, i.e. Ukraine, Russia, and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) with mediation by France and Germany in the so-called Normandy Format.
- Under Minsk 1, Ukraine and the Russia-backed rebels agreed on a 12-point ceasefire deal, which included prisoner exchanges, delivery of humanitarian assistance, and the withdrawal of heavy weapons. However, due to violations by both sides, the agreement did not last long.

Minsk 2:

- As the rebels moved further into Ukraine, in February 2015, representatives of Russia, Ukraine, the OSCE and the leaders of Donetsk and Luhansk signed a 13-point agreement, now known as the Minsk 2 accord.

- The new agreement had provisions for an immediate cease-fire, withdrawal of heavy weaponry, OSCE monitoring, dialogue on interim self-government for Donetsk and Luhansk, in accordance with Ukrainian law.
- It also had provisions related to acknowledgement of special status by parliament, pardon and amnesty for fighters, exchange of hostages and prisoners, humanitarian aid etc. However, these provisions have not been implemented because of what is popularly known as the 'Minsk Conundrum'. This essentially means that Ukraine and Russia have contradictory interpretations about the agreement.

What is the Stand of Different Nations on the Issue?

- The United States has already announced sanctions prohibiting “new investment, trade, and financing by US persons to, from, or in” the two breakaway regions.
- Japan is likely to join the US-led sanctions while French officials have been quoted as saying in reports that the European Union (EU) is also in discussions for punitive actions against Russia.
 - The EU has condemned Russia over “a blatant violation of international law as well as of the Minsk agreements.”
- The United Kingdom has also warned of further sanctions. Australia also called Russia’s actions unacceptable, it’s unprovoked, it’s unwarranted.

What is India’s Stand on the Issue?

- India did not join the Western powers’ condemnation of Russia’s intervention in Crimea and kept a low profile on the issue.
- In November 2020, India voted against a Ukraine-sponsored resolution in the United Nations (UN) that condemned alleged human rights violations in Crimea thereby backing old ally Russia on the issue.
- Recently, India also suggested at the UN Security Council that “quiet and constructive diplomacy” is the need of the hour and any step that could escalate the tension should be avoided. India’s stand has been welcomed by Russia.

INDIAN POLITY

Petition to enforce the Fundamental Duties of citizens

Recently, the Supreme Court issued a notice to the Centre and states to respond to a petition to enforce the Fundamental Duties of citizens, including patriotism and unity of the nation, through comprehensive, well-defined laws.

- Fundamental Duties are specified under Article 51A (Part IVA) of the Constitution, they strive to uphold the country’s ideals and contribute to its growth and betterment.

What are Fundamental Duties?

- The idea of Fundamental Duties is inspired by the Constitution of Russia (erstwhile Soviet Union).
- These were incorporated in Part IV-A of the Constitution by the 42nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1976 on the recommendations of the Swaran Singh Committee.
- Originally 10 in number, one more duty was added through the 86th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2002.
- Like the Directive Principles of State Policy, the Fundamental duties are also non-justiciable in nature.

List of Fundamental Duties:

- To abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions, the National Flag and the National Anthem,
- To cherish and follow the noble ideals that inspired the national struggle for freedom,
- To uphold and protect the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India,
- To defend the country and render national service when called upon to do so,
- To promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities and to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women,
- To value and preserve the rich heritage of the country’s composite culture,
- To protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wildlife and to have compassion for living creatures,
- To develop scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform,
- To safeguard public property and to abjure violence,

- To strive towards excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity so that the nation constantly rises to higher levels of endeavour and achievement, and
- To provide opportunities for education to his child or ward between the age of six and fourteen years (added by the 86th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2002).

What is the Significance of Fundamental Duties?

Rights and duties are correlative.

- The Fundamental Duties are intended to serve as a constant reminder to every citizen that while the Constitution specifically conferred on them certain fundamental rights, it also requires citizens to observe basic norms of democratic conduct and democratic behaviour.
- These serve as a warning to the people against the anti-social activities that disrespect the nation like burning the flag, destroying the public property or disturbing public peace.
- These help in the promotion of a sense of discipline and commitment towards the nation. They help in realising national goals by the active participation of citizens rather than mere spectators.
- It helps the Court in determining the constitutionality of the law. For instance, any law passed by the legislatures, when taken to Court for constitutional validity of the law, if it is giving force to any Fundamental Duty, then such law would be taken as reasonable.

What is the Need to Legally Enforce Fundamental Duties?

- Since time immemorial the emphasis in Indian society in accordance with the dictates of the ancient scriptures has been on the individual's 'Kartavya'.
 - This is the performance of one's duties towards society, the country and especially towards one's parents.
- The Gita and the Ramayana enjoin people to perform their duties without caring for their rights.
- In the erstwhile Soviet Union Constitution, the rights and duties were placed on the same footing.
 - There is a pressing need to enforce and implement at least some of the fundamental duties.
 - For instance, to uphold and protect sovereignty, unity and integrity of India, to defend the country and render national service when called upon to do so and to disseminate a sense of nationalism and to promote the spirit of patriotism to uphold the unity of India.
 - These fundamental duties assume significance after the emergence of China as a superpower.
- The Verma Committee on Fundamental Duties of the Citizens (1999) identified the existence of legal provisions for the implementation of some of the Fundamental Duties. The committee provided with the provisions like:
 - No person can disrespect the National flag, Constitution of India and the National Anthem under the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971.
 - The Protection of Civil Rights Act (1955) provided for punishments in case of any offence related to caste and religion.
- It was argued in the petition that the non-adherence of the Fundamental Duties has a direct bearing upon the Fundamental Rights guaranteed under Articles 14 (Equality before Law), 19 (Protection of certain rights regarding freedom of speech) and 21 (Right to Life) of the Constitution of India.
 - For example, the need to enforce fundamental duties arises due to the new illegal trend of protest by protestors in the garb of freedom of speech and expression.

What is the Supreme Court's Stand on Fundamental Duties?

- The Supreme Court's Ranganath Mishra judgment 2003 held that fundamental duties should not only be enforced by legal sanctions but also by social sanctions.
- In AIIMS Students Union v. AIIMS 2001, it was held by the Supreme Court that fundamental duties are equally important like fundamental rights.
 - Though fundamental duties are not enforceable like fundamental rights they cannot be overlooked as duties in Part IV A.
 - They are prefixed by the same word fundamental which was prefixed by the founding fathers of the Constitution to 'right' in Part III.

INDIAN ECONOMY

Prime Minister has flagged off 100 Kisan drones

Recently, the Prime Minister has flagged off 100 Kisan drones in different cities and towns of India to spray pesticides in farms across India.

- He also flagged off "Drone Kisan Yatra" to promote chemical-free farming in India.

- The initiative was first announced in Budget, 2022 to ensure inclusive drone development.
- Earlier, the government banned the import of drones to encourage their manufacturing in India (Drone Shakti Scheme).
- In January, 2022 revised guidelines of the “Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanization” (SMAM) scheme was issued in a move aimed at making drones more accessible to the farmers.

What are Kisan Drones?

- The Kisan drone will have an unmanned tank filled with insecticides and nutrients.
- The drones are expected to have a high capacity of 5 to 10kg.
- The drone will spray the same amount of pesticide on about one acre of land in just 15 minutes.
 - It will save time, will require less effort and spraying will be done uniformly.
- They will also be used to carry vegetables, fruits, fish, etc to the markets from the farms.
 - These items will be supplied directly to the market with minimal damage, consuming lesser time, resulting in more profits to farmers and fishermen.

How the use of Kisan Drones is a Significant Step?

- Kisan Drones will be used to boost the agricultural sector in the country.
- The use of Kisan Drones will be promoted for crop assessment, digitization of land records and spraying of insecticides and nutrients.
- It will usher in a new edge revolution as high capacity drones will be used to carry vegetables, fruits, fishes to the market directly from the farms.
- The development of the drone market in India will generate fresh employment and new opportunities for the youth.

What are the Associated Challenges?

- Experts in the agricultural sector are skeptical about the benefits of drones and how they will increase farmers’ income.
 - There is not any sign of the government meeting its earlier promise of doubling farmers’ income by 2022.
- The spraying of pesticides and fertilizers may help in production, but it is the industries that will profit the most.

How Drones Emerged in Recent Times?

- Until recently, there was a conception that drones were meant for armed forces and fighting enemies.
 - However, the Kisan Drone Suvidha has added a new chapter in the farming sector and it will prove to be a milestone for drone technology.
- Garuda aerospace has set a goal of developing one lakh drones, which are being used for diverse purposes.
- Under the “SWAMITVA scheme”, land records are being documented through drone technology. Also medicines, vaccines are being supplied to various parts of the country and it is also being used for sprinkling pesticides etc on crops.

PRELIMS FACT

UNESCO, celebrates 21st February as International Mother Language Day

Recently, Every year, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) celebrates 21st February as International Mother Language Day to promote mother tongue-based multilingual education.

- The theme of 2022 is: “Using technology for multilingual learning: Challenges and opportunities”, it focuses on the potential role of technology to advance multilingual education and support the development of quality teaching and learning for all.
- The world has over 7,000 languages whereas India alone has about 22 officially recognized languages, 1635 mother tongues, and 234 identifiable mother tongues.

What is International Mother Language Day?

- UNESCO declared 21st February as International Mother Language Day in 1999 and the World has been celebrating the same since 2000.
- The day also commemorates a long struggle by Bangladesh to protect its mother language Bangla.
- The resolution to mark 21st February as the International Mother Language Day was suggested by Rafiqul Islam, a Bangladeshi living in Canada.
 - He proposed the said date to commemorate the 1952 killings in Dhaka during the Bangla Language Movement.

- The aim is to protect the diverse culture and intellectual heritage of different regions of the world.
 - According to the United Nations (UN), every two weeks, a language disappears and the world loses an entire cultural and intellectual heritage.
 - Due to globalisation, the rush for learning foreign languages for better job opportunities is a major reason behind the disappearance of mother languages.

What are Global Efforts for Protection of Languages?

- The UN has designated the period between 2022 and 2032 as the International Decade of Indigenous Languages.
 - Earlier, the United Nations General Assembly had proclaimed 2019 as the International Year of Indigenous Languages (IYIL).
- The Yuelu Proclamation, made by UNESCO at Changsha (China) in 2018, plays a central role in guiding the efforts of countries and regions around the world to protect linguistic resources and diversity.

What are India's Initiatives to Protect Mother Tongues?

- The recently announced National Education Policy 2020 has given maximum attention to the development of mother tongues.
- The Commission for Scientific and Technical Terminology (CSTT) is providing publication grants towards the publications of University Level Books in regional languages.
 - It was established in 1961 to evolve technical terminology in all Indian Languages.
- The National Translation Mission (NTM) is being implemented through the Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL), Mysore under which the text books of various subjects prescribed in Universities and Colleges are being translated in all languages of the Eighth Schedule.
- "Protection and Preservation of Endangered Languages" scheme for conservation of threatened languages.
- The University Grants Commission (UGC) also promotes regional languages in higher education courses in the country and supports nine Central Universities under the scheme "Establishment of Centre for Endangered Languages in Central Universities".
- Other Initiatives by the Government of India include the Bharatavani project and the proposed setting up of a Bharatiya Bhasha Vishwavidyalaya (BBV).
- Recently, an initiative Namath Basai by Kerala State Government has proved to be very beneficial in educating children from tribal areas by adopting vernacular languages as medium of instruction.
- Google's Project Navlekha uses technology to protect mother language. The project is aimed at increasing the online content in Indian local languages.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns. In the ongoing Sino-U.S feud, Australia and India need to convert their intent into action and capitalise on the innumerable opportunities available in different sectors. Examine. (150 words, 10 marks)

Introduction

With India's clash in Galwan valley with China and Australia-China fallout due to covid, south China sea issues, there is an opportunity for India to work closely with Australia to reign the power politics played by China. Moreover, with US-China trade war, India and Australia can diversify trade and reduce dependence on China.

Body

India-Australia relations: Opportunities amid ongoing US-Sino feud

- **Convergence:** Chinese aggression and assertive foreign policy are common concerns and has brought both the democracies closer. Both have shared interests in vision of a free, open, inclusive and rules-based Indo-Pacific region.
 - Both are part of QUAD, and also proposed Supply Chain Resilience Initiative.
 - Australia's Pacific Step Up and India's Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC) reaffirm their cooperation in the South Pacific region.
- **Economic relations:** Bilateral goods and services trade between two was \$30.3 billion in 2018-19, and the level of two-way investment was \$30.7 billion in 2018.
 - In 2018, Australia announced implementation of "An India Economic Strategy to 2035", a vision document to shape India- Australia bilateral ties.
 - India is also preparing an Australia Economic Strategy Paper (AES) on similar lines.

- This was after fallout of Australia and China.
- Progress after fallout with China: Elevated the “2+2” engagement to the level of Foreign and Defence Ministers (from secretary level), where strategic discussions will be taking place every two years. India already has such mechanism with USA and Japan.
 - MOU on cooperation in the field of mining and processing of Critical and Strategic minerals.
 - Mutual Logistics Support Agreement was signed.
 - Joint declaration on shared vision for Maritime Cooperation in the Indo- Pacific region.
 - These developments must continue on faster pace.

Limitations of India-Australia ties

- Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) still remains inconclusive after 9 rounds of negotiations.
- India opted out from Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). Among other things, India and Australia could not agree regarding market access over agriculture and dairy products.
- Australia’s economy is heavily dependent on China, with China being Australia’s largest trading partner, accounting for 26 % of its trade with the world.
- The prospects for bilateral relationship are recognized in both countries as strategically useful, economically productive and aligned with each other’s new agenda.
 - However, it is recognized that the natural synergy has so far not been exploited fully.
 - Countries should conclude CECA at the earliest, to realize the economic opportunities.

Conclusion

Based on several commonalities and closely aligned values in principles of democracy, liberty, the rule of law, human rights, freedom of speech, free press and multiculturalism both must enhance the bilateral relationship by expanding engagement in various sectors like defence industry and commercial cyber activity etc.

DAILY QUIZ

- Q1. Consider the following statements regarding nitrous oxide.
1. Being a short-lived greenhouse gas, it substantially contributes to global warming.
 2. When it reaches the stratosphere it reacts with ozone and depletes it, with an impact comparable to that of CFCs.
- Which of the above statements is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only (b) **2 only** (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
- Q2. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) can designate individuals as “terrorists” under which of the following provisions
- a) Prevention of Terrorism Act, 2002
 - b) National Security Act, 1980
 - c) **The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Act, 2019**
 - d) None of the above
- Q3. Faith for rights (F4R) movement, sometimes seen in news is associated with
- a) Oxfam International
 - b) **United Nations**
 - c) World Economic Forum (WEF)
 - d) Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR)
- Q4. Consider the following statements.
1. All power in a democracy ultimately belongs to the country’s people.
 2. Finance Commission (FC) is a constitutionally mandated body that balances revenue power with expenditure responsibilities.
- Which of the above statements is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only (c) **Both 1 and 2** (d) Neither 1 nor 2
- Q5. Software that enables a user to obtain secret information about another computer’s activities?
- a) Malware (b) Adware (c) **Spyware** (d) Trackware