

INTERNATIONAL RELATION

China's interventions in the Horn of Africa

- ❖ **CONTEXT:** China has been investing across the African continent throughout the last decade. While the emphasis has been on investments and raw materials, it took a new turn on June 20, with the first “China-Horn of Africa Peace, Governance and Development Conference.” Beijing’s first special envoy to the region Xue Bing, appointed in February 2022, said that this is the first time China aims “to play a role in the area of security”. The conference held in Ethiopia witnessed the participation of foreign Ministries from the following countries of the Horn: Kenya, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia, South Sudan, and Uganda.
- ❖ **What are the recent projects between China and countries from the Horn of Africa?**
 - China’s focus on the Horn is a part of its focus on Africa. In January 2022, during his 17th trip to Africa, China’s Foreign Minister and State Councillor focused on increasing the infrastructural investments in African countries. China refuted accusations of debt-trapping the countries and asserted China’s three objectives in Africa: controlling the pandemic, implementing a Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) outcomes, and upholding common interests while fighting hegemonic politics.
 - The FOCAC promotes China’s role in the infrastructural and societal development of the Horn. In the 2021 forum, the entire region of the Horn participated and four resolutions were adopted: the Dakar Action Plan, the China-Africa Cooperation Vision 2035, the Sino-African Declaration on Climate Change and the Declaration of the Eighth Ministerial Conference of FOCAC.
 - During the COVID-19 pandemic, China donated over 3,00,000 vaccines to Ethiopia and Uganda, and 2,00,000 vaccines to Kenya and Somalia. Sudan and Eritrea have also benefited from China’s vaccine diplomacy.
 - China has also initiated the “2035 vision for China-Africa cooperation”; it aims to transform the health sector, alleviate poverty, promote trade and investments, and expand digital innovation. The vision also focuses on green development, capacity building, improving people-to-people exchanges and facilitating peace and security in the continent.
- ❖ **What are China’s primary interests/investments in the Horn of Africa?**
 - China’s interests are related to four major areas: infrastructural projects, financial assistance, natural resources and maritime interests.
 - Looking at Chinese investments in infrastructure, one of its landmark projects was fully funding the \$200 million African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa. It has also made significant investments in railways; it is building the Addis-Djibouti railway line connecting the land-locked country with Eritrean ports in the Red Sea.
 - China has also invested in the Mombasa-Nairobi rail link in Kenya, and has already delivered on railway projects in Sudan.
 - It also has a viable military hardware market in Ethiopia and has built over 80 infrastructural projects in Somalia, including hospitals, roads, schools and stadiums. In Djibouti, 14 infrastructural projects are funded by China.
 - With respect to financial assistance, Ethiopia, is one of the top five African recipients of Chinese investments, and also has a debt of almost \$14 billion.
 - China accounts for 67% of Kenya’s bilateral debt. In 2022, China promised to provide \$15.7 million assistance to Eritrea.
 - The third major Chinese interest in Africa is the presence of natural resources — oil and coal. Beijing has invested \$400 million in Mombasa’s oil terminal. China is also interested in minerals such as gold, iron-ore, precious stones, chemicals, oil and natural gas in Ethiopia.
 - South Sudan, a source for petroleum products, has had continued Beijing investment in the industry since the latter’s initial entry in 1995.
 - The fourth major area is related to maritime interests. China’s first and only military base outside its mainland is in Djibouti.

- China's willingness to develop Eritrea's coast which would connect to China's investments in land-locked Ethiopia. The U.S. has speculated that China wishes to build another military base in Kenya and Tanzania, thereby increasing its military presence in the region.
- ❖ **Has the Horn of Africa been welcoming of China's presence?**
- Africa has been keen on interacting with China. Despite the wariness surrounding China's projects in Africa, the governments have mostly been welcoming. When conflict broke out in Tigray in November 2020, Addis Ababa appreciated Beijing for respecting Ethiopia's sovereignty.
- In December 2021, Kenya defended Chinese projects in the country; President Uhuru Kenyatta maintained that China-Africa partnership was mutually beneficial.
- In November 2021, Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni suggested that China give access to its markets, in a fashion similar to the U.S. or Europe.
- Similarly, in May 2022, the East African Community (EAC) Secretary General Peter Mathuki said the EAC would welcome Chinese investors to work in East Africa for the prosperity of the people.
- ❖ **Is China's new focus on peace in the Horn a shift from Beijing's principle of non-intervention?**
- Peace and stability is a mutual requirement for China and Africa. For Africa, Chinese investments could lead to stable environments which could help the countries achieve their peace and development objectives.
- For China, conflict in the region comes at a heavy cost. In Ethiopia, when the conflict broke out, over 600 Chinese nationals, working on different projects, were evacuated, putting several investments at risk. From a trading perspective, the region plays a significant role in achieving the objectives of the China-Africa Cooperation Vision 2035.
- China's move towards peace in Africa indicates a shift in its principle of non-intervention.
- It is China's message that its presence in the continent has a larger objective and is not likely to be limited to the Horn of Africa. This includes an aim to project itself as a global leader and boost its international status.
- The recent developments imply that China is focussing on a multifaceted growth in the continent for the long run.
- For Africa, China's presence is an alternative to the European powers, many of whom are facing criticism from African governments. Further, African governments, which do not conform to Western standards of democracy, interact better with powers like China and Russia.
- ❖ **India as a balancer**
- Concerns on Chinese investments, Neo-Colonialism, and international competition in their soil have been raised by African civil society; also, many governments have also started looking beyond China. This offers opportunity for India to increase its involvement in the continent.
- India's approach, on the other hand, is one that focuses on building local capacities and an equal partnership with Africans and not merely with African elites concerned. Though Africa has been actively engaged with China, it wants India to act as a balancer and net security provider.

PRELIMS

1. **Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII)**
- ❖ **CONTEXT:** U.S. President Joe Biden along with his G7 allies unveiled the ambitious Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII), announcing the collective mobilisation of \$600 billion by 2027 to deliver "game-changing" and "transparent" infrastructure projects to developing and middle-income countries. The PGII is being seen as the G7's counter to China's multi-trillion dollar Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to build connectivity, infrastructure, and trade projects in Asia, Europe, Africa, and Latin America.
 - ❖ **What is the PGII?**
 - The West has been sceptical of the BRI, since it was launched in 2013, as it was considered to be part of China's larger strategy to increase geopolitical influence in Asia and other developing countries.

- The U.S., along with G7 partners the U.K., Japan, France, Canada, Germany, Italy, and the European Union (EU), had in 2021 announced the launch of the Build Back Better World (B3W) with the aim of narrowing the \$40 trillion infrastructure gap in the developing world. PGII is therefore, a relaunch of Mr. Biden's B3W plan.
- USA described the PGII as a "values-driven, high-impact, and transparent infrastructure partnership to meet the enormous infrastructure needs of low and middle-income countries and support the United States' and its allies' economic and national security interests".
- The G7 members aim to collectively mobilise \$600 billion by 2027 to invest in sustainable and quality infrastructure projects in developing countries, including India, and strengthen global supply chains.
- Mr. Biden announced the country's pledge to channel \$200 billion in grants, public financing, and private capital over the next five years for the PGII.
- European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen declared Europe's pledge of mobilising 300 billion euros for the partnership over the same period.
- ❖ **What kind of projects will the PGII undertake?**
- All PGII projects will be driven by "four priority pillars that will define the second half of the 21st century".
- **First**, the G7 grouping aims to tackle the climate crisis and ensure global energy security through clean energy supply chains.
- **Second**, the projects will focus on bolstering digital information and communications technology (ICT) networks facilitating technologies such as 5G and 6G internet connectivity and cybersecurity.
- **Third**, the projects aim to advance gender equality and equity, and lastly, to build and upgrade global health infrastructure.
- The U.S International Development Finance Corporation (DFC), along with the G7 nations and the EU are disbursing a \$3.3 million technical assistance grant to build a vaccine facility in Senegal, having a potential yearly capacity of manufacturing "millions of doses of COVID-19 and other vaccines".
- European Commission's Global Gateway initiative is also undertaking projects supporting the PGII such as mRNA vaccine plants in Latin America and a fibre-optic cable linking Europe to Latin America among others.
- In India, the U.S. DFC will invest up to \$30 million in Omnivore Agritech and Climate Sustainability Fund 3, an impact venture capital fund that invests in entrepreneurs building the future of agriculture, food systems, climate, and rural economy in India.
- ❖ **How does it compare to China's BRI?**
- The Belt and Road project was started to revive connectivity, trade, and infrastructure along what was China's ancient Silk Road.
- China had announced a two-pronged approach of building a Silk Road Economic Belt on Land and a maritime 21st century Silk Road.
- The project initially aimed to strengthen connectivity with Southeast Asia but later expanded to South and Central Asia, Africa, Europe, and Latin America, with Mr. Xi saying it would "break the bottleneck in Asian connectivity".
- The G7 meanwhile has specifically touted the PGII as a values-based plan to help underfunded low and middle-income countries meet their infrastructure needs.
- PGII has laid focus on climate action and clean energy, while China has built large coal-fired plants under BRI along with solar, hydro, and wind energy projects.
- While the G7 has pledged \$600 billion by 2027, China's overall funding for BRI by that time could reach \$1.2 to 1.3 trillion dollars with the actual funding being higher.
- Under the PGII, large private capital will be also mobilised while China's BRI is majorly state-funded.
- The BRI was also launched at a time when China's local construction firms were short of projects in developed Chinese provinces.

- Studies have shown that 89% of the contractors participating in BRI projects are Chinese.
- According to Engineering News Record's 2019 data, seven out of the world's 10 biggest construction contractors based on foreign revenue were Chinese.
- Large number of Chinese workers is employed in BRI projects; for instance 1.82 lakh were working in Africa by late 2019.
- While G7 leaders emphasised 'transparency' as the cornerstone of PGII projects, the BRI has faced criticism for making countries sign confidential tenders for extending massive loans, leaving countries indebted to China.
- For instance, after the BRI's flagship \$62 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, Pakistan owes Beijing a large proportion of its foreign debt.
- China builds BRI's projects by extending large, low-interest loans to countries that have to usually be paid over 10 years.
- There have been cases of debt-saddled countries failing to repay on time. Sri Lanka, for instance, had to cede its key Hambantota Port on a 99-year lease to China.
- PGII aims to build projects through grants and investments.
- A PGII project has already been announced in India but India had opted out of China's BRI, being wary of Beijing's aim to increase its influence in the Indian Ocean Region by roping in Pakistan as a major BRI recipient.

2. Niti Aayog's report on India's gig economy

- ❖ **CONTEXT:** Government think-tank Niti Aayog has proposed fiscal incentives, like tax breaks or start up grants, for companies with about one-third of their workforce as women and people with disabilities. This is in an attempt to increase the participation of women in the gig economy. In a report titled 'India's Booming Gig and Platform Economy', the organisation also recommended extending social security measures such as income support, paid sick leaves, insurance and pension plans to people working for platform companies like Swiggy, Zomato, Ola, and Uber.

- Gig workers are typically hired by companies on a contractual basis and are not considered employees. They do not receive some of the benefits that an on-roll staff does.

❖ **What were some of Niti Aayog's observations?**

- The organisation, in its report, noted that female labour force participation in India has remained low, oscillating between 16 per cent to 23 per cent in the last few years. Similarly, persons with disabilities, who make up for 2.11 to 10 per cent of India's population, have a labour force participation rate of 36 per cent.
- Structural barriers like access to education and lack of skilling have hindered participation of the two demographic groups in the country's labour force.
- Based on a survey conducted across urban centres of India, women are more likely to take up platform jobs after their education and marriage.

❖ **What are Niti Aayog's recommendations for the gig economy?**

- According to NITI Ayog Fiscal incentives such as tax-breaks or start-up grants may be provided for businesses that provide livelihood opportunities where women constitute a substantial portion (30 per cent) of their workers. Likewise, a platform with high accessibility or high degree of participation of PwDs too may be rewarded with fiscal incentives.
- Apart from incentivising platforms that focus on recruiting women workers, the report recommended that businesses have a higher share of women managers and supervisors in the organisation to ensure that communication to workers does not perpetuate gender stereotypes.
- The report also recommended firms adopt policies that offer old age or retirement plans and benefits, and other insurance cover for contingencies such as injury arising from work that may lead to loss of employment and income. "Such plans and policies may be uniquely designed by a firm, in partnership with insurance companies, or could be designed and offered in collaboration with the government, as envisaged under the Code on Social Security, 2020. A social security cover out of a corpus fund can also help gig workers in case of contingencies.
- The Aayog's report also said that social security benefits be extended to workers in a partnership mode, as envisaged in the Code on Social Security, 2020 — as such, the report said businesses

should consider providing income support to workers as it would be a “critical step in providing assured minimum earnings and social security from income loss in the wake of uncertainty or irregularity in work.

- It also suggesting offering paid sick leave to workers apart from insurance cover.
- ❖ **How big is the workforce engaged in the gig economy?**
- Niti Aayog estimates that more than 7.5 million workers were engaged in the gig economy in 2020-21. This could grow to 23.5 million workers in the next eight years, making up for 4.1 per cent of total livelihood in India.
- According to the report, at present, about 47 per cent of the gig work is in medium skilled jobs, about 22 per cent in high skilled, and about 31 per cent in low skilled jobs.
- Gig workers can be broadly classified into platform and non-platform workers. Platform workers are those whose work is based on online software apps or digital platforms, while non-platform gig workers are generally casual wage workers, working part-time or full- time.
- ❖ **Why are Niti Aayog’s recommendations significant?**
- While platform companies have created avenues of employment, it has often been marred by low wages, unequal gender participation, and a lack of possibility for upward mobility within an organisation. This has triggered protests from workers at companies like Swiggy, Zomato, Ola, Uber, and Urban Company, among others.
- Gig workers are typically hired by companies on a contractual basis and are not considered their employees. As a result, they do not receive some of the benefits that an on-roll employee of the company may have — this means they often do not receive benefits like paid sick and casual leaves, travel and housing allowances, and provident fund savings, among other things.
- 3. **Partners in the Blue Pacific (PBP)**
- ❖ **CONTEXT: Amid China’s aggressive push to increase its Pacific sphere of influence, the US and its allies Australia, New Zealand, Japan and the United Kingdom — have launched a new initiative called ‘Partners in the Blue Pacific’ for “effective and efficient cooperation” with the region’s small island nations.**
- **The geostrategic competition in the region has intensified of late after China made the projected scope of its growing footprint clear by pushing for a sweeping, common cooperation agreement with 10 Pacific nations.**
- ❖ **What is Partners in the Blue Pacific (PBP) initiative?**
- The PBP is a five-nation “informal mechanism” to support Pacific islands and to boost diplomatic, economic ties in the region. Announced recently, it aims to enhance “prosperity, resilience, and security” in the Pacific through closer cooperation. It simply means that through the PBP, these counties — together and individually — will direct more resources here to counter China’s aggressive outreach.
- The initiative members have also declared that they will “elevate Pacific regionalism”, and forge stronger ties with the Pacific Islands Forum.
- According to the five nations the forum remains open to cooperating with additional partners and will be led and guided by the Pacific Islands.
- The areas where PBP aims to enhance cooperation include “climate crisis, connectivity and transportation, maritime security and protection, health, prosperity, and education.
- ❖ **How is China trying to transform its ties in the Pacific?**
- As China signed a security pact with Solomon Islands in April 2022, the deal flagged serious concerns about the Chinese military getting a base in the southern Pacific, close to the US island territory of Guam, and right next to Australia and New Zealand.
- The deal, which boosted China’s quest to dominate crucial shipping lanes criss-crossing the region, rattled the US and its allies. It also triggered urgent moves to counter China’s growing Pacific ambition amid a power vacuum fuelled by apparent lack of US attention.
- But China undertaking a multi-nation tour to push 10 Pacific nations to endorse a “game-changing” agreement called the “Common Development Vision”.
- According to the draft agreement, China wanting to work with “traditional and non-traditional security,” and expand law enforcement cooperation with these countries.

- China's diplomatic visit to Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Samoa, Fiji, Tonga, Vanuatu, and Papua New Guinea, and hold virtual meetings with the Cook Islands, Niue, and the Federated States of Micronesia. By the tour ends, the deal ran aground amid warnings of the Pacific states becoming part of "Beijing's orbit". Despite that setback, China indicated that it would continue pursuing this goal.
- This intention became even more clear recently when China was trying to arrange a virtual meeting with the leaders of 10 Pacific Island states on the sidelines of the high-level Pacific Islands Forum gathering in Fiji in mid-July 2022.
- China and the US are among 21 PIF dialogue partners, but this year the regional forum had decided not to engage with the dialogue partners in-person during the Fiji meet.
- ❖ **What is being done by the US and its allies to counter China?**
- Before launching the PBP, the US and its partners started the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF), a trade-boosting play in the region with 13 nations — Australia, Brunei, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand, Fiji and Vietnam — as partners.
- Away from the Pacific, the G7 announced a plan — Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII) — to rival China's Belt and Road Initiative by promising to raise \$600 billion to fund development projects in low and middle-income countries.
- ❖ **Why is the Pacific region strategically important?**
- In its 2019 strategy report, the US Department of Defence called the Indo-Pacific the "single most consequential region for America's future."
- According to the report Spanning a vast stretch of the globe from the west coast of the United States to the western shores of India, the region is home to the world's most populous state (China), most populous democracy (India), and largest Muslim-majority state (Indonesia), and includes over half of the earth's population.
- Among the 10 largest standing armies in the world, 7 reside in the Indo-Pacific; and 6 countries in the region possess nuclear weapons.
- Nine of the world's 10 busiest seaports are in the region, and 60 percent of global maritime trade transits through Asia, with roughly one-third of global shipping passing through the South China Sea alone.
- The US has long maintained a balance of power in the region with its hub-and-spoke system where America is the hub and its allies are spokes whose security is guaranteed by the US military power.
- China, analysts believe, is trying to make its own version of the same system, even as it insists the sole aim of the US policy of having overwhelming influence in the region is to contain Beijing's rise.

ANSWER WRITING

Q. To what extent, in your view, the Parliament is able to ensure accountability of executive in India? (150)

❖ **Introduction**

- The Constitution of India provides for a parliamentary form of government, where the Executive is responsible to the Parliament for its policies and acts. The parliamentary democracy provides for a daily assessment of accountability of the executive to the legislature.

❖ **The Parliament ensures the accountability of the Executive in the following ways**

- Question-hour, zero hour, calling attention motion, adjournment motion, no-confidence motion, censure motion, and other discussions.
- MPs may pose questions to ministers related to the implementation of laws and policies by the government.
- Budgetary control for appropriation of grants and post-budgetary control through committees like Public Accounts Committees.
- The system of committees – such as standing committees, select committees and adhoc committees etc. – facilitate scrutiny of the actions and activities of the executive.

- Nevertheless, there have been some recent instances wherein the Parliament was found to be unable to ensure accountability of the executive:
- Evading the route of debates/discussions/checks, such in the cases of Aadhaar Act (money bill route), farm laws (use of voice vote mechanism), etc.
- The Parliament side-lined the parliamentary institutions as lesser bills were referred to parliamentary committees.
- Due to lack in coordination and decorum, there were disruptions during the sessions and question hour registered low productivity.

Thus, though the Parliament seems to be quite empowered to hold the political executive to account, there are several limitations and constraints over this power in practice. Some such constraints may be enumerated as follows:

- Dominance of the majority party or majority coalition in the parliament.
- The compulsions of anti-defection law and the role of party whips.
- Complex and technically complicated presentation of policies, laws and the budgets.
- Frequent use of exceptional provisions of the Constitution like ordinance making power.

To ensure complete accountability of the Executive to the Parliament, some steps need to be taken. One can accommodate the 15-point reform charter as suggested by the Vice President. It is also required to make the committee system function effectively and efficiently by ensuring that the members of the committee are nominated on the basis of domain knowledge and for a longer assured term.

MCQs

1. How many of the following country or countries is or are not the part of Horn of Africa?
 1. Djibouti
 2. Eritrea
 3. Ethiopia
 4. Somalia

Select the correct answer using the code given below

 - a) Only one country
 - b) Only two countries
 - c) Only three countries
 - d) **All the four countries**
2. Consider the following Statements regarding Gig Economy
 1. It is a free market system in which temporary positions are common and organisations contract with independent workers for short-term engagements.
 2. Platform workers are those whose work is based on online software apps or digital platforms, while non-platform gig workers are generally casual wage workers, working part-time or full-time.

Select the correct statement using the codes given below

 - a) 1 only
 - b) 2 only
 - c) **Both 1 and 2**
 - d) Neither 1 nor 2
3. "Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII)" recently seen in news is related to which of the following Organisation?
 - a) **G7**
 - b) G20
 - c) IMF
 - d) WB
4. Consider the following countries
 1. US
 2. Australia
 3. New Zealand
 4. Japan

5. United Kingdom
How many country or countries is or are part of the initiative called “Partners in the Blue Pacific”
 - a) Only two countries
 - b) Only four countries
 - c) Only three countries
 - d) All the five countries**
5. Consider the following statements
 1. Under Article 179 of the Constitution, a Speaker can be removed by a resolution of the Assembly passed by a majority of all the then members of the Assembly and The process does not require any prior notice.
 2. The Speaker cannot make any decisions under the Tenth Schedule until the question of his removal is settled
 Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?
 - a) 1 only
 - b) 2 only**
 - c) Both 1 and 2
 - d) Neither 1 nor 2
6. The term “Hermit” recently seen in news is related to which of the following?
 - a) A Spyware**
 - b) A anti tank missile
 - c) A newly developed search engine
 - d) Space shuttle
7. Consider the following statements with regards to Gulabi Meenakari Art recently in seen in news
 1. Gulabi Meenakari is a GI-tagged art form of Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh
 2. It is an age old art form of decorating metal with coloured enamel.
 Which of the above statement is /are correct?
 - a) 1 only
 - b) 2 only
 - c) Both 1 and 2**
 - d) Neither 1 nor 2
8. National Statistics Day celebrated on which of the following?
 - a) 27th June
 - b) 29th June**
 - c) 30th June
 - d) 1st July
9. West seti Dam recently seen in news is related to which of the following country?
 - a) India
 - b) Bhutan
 - c) Bangladesh
 - d) Nepal**
10. Consider the following statements about UN Human Rights Council
 1. There are no permanent members of the UN Human Rights Council.
 2. No member can hold membership of UN Human Rights Council for a more than two consecutive terms.
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 - a) 1 only
 - b) 2 only
 - c) Both 1 and 2**
 - d) Neither 1 nor 2