



India and the New Eurasia

Prelims: Russia-Ukraine, NATO, QUAD, Indo-Pacific, AUKUS, INSTC

Mains: India and the New Eurasia, Challenges and Potential.

Why in News?

As 2023 begins, the world is embracing a 'new normal' where old and new fault lines are being **reconfigured in Eurasia and the Indo-Pacific.**



What is Eurasia?

- The idea of Eurasia is not new. Many used it as a neutral term to describe the **vast landmass that connected Europe and Asia.**
- Despite continental continuity, **Europe and Asia emerged as separate political and cultural spheres** over the millennia.
- Geographically, **Eurasia is a tectonic plate** that lies under **much of Europe and Asia.** However, when it comes to the political boundaries, there is no **shared international understanding of what constitutes the region.**

How has been the New Geopolitical Dynamics in Eurasia?

- **Japan** is trying to build strong military partnerships with Europe, while South Korea, which does not always see eye to eye with Japan, is **also trying to raise its profile in Europe**.
 - South Korea is **selling major weapons platforms in Poland**.
- Australia, which has joined the US and UK in the [AUKUS \(Australia, the UK and the US\)](#) arrangement, is **equally eager to bring Europe into the Indo-Pacific**.
- Together **Japan, South Korea and Australia** are bridging the divide between Asia and Europe long seen as separate geopolitical theaters.
- This process has been **accelerated by Russia's war in Ukraine and the alliance between Russia and China**. This new dynamic presents challenges as well as opportunities for India. But first to the emergence of a new Eurasia.
- Well before Japan and South Korea turned to Europe, it was China and Russia who altered the geopolitical dynamic in Eurasia.
- Days before the Russia-Ukraine War, both Russia and China signed an agreement **declaring an alliance "without limits" and no "forbidden areas"**.
- China, which had made a largely successful effort to cultivate Europe since the 1990s, deliberately **avoided taking sides in Europe's conflicts with Russia**.

How are other Countries Eurasian Policies?

- **USA's Interests in Eurasia:**
 - Washington's Indo-Pacific strategy does not seem to account adequately for the rise of Eurasia.
 - US' interests in Asia lie primarily in the western Pacific and the [South China Sea](#). Both regions are far from the core of the Eurasian theater.
 - However, amidst mounting challenges from **China in the Indo-Pacific maritime domain**, Washington has begun to **rethink its strategic commitments to Eurasia**.
 - The USA and EU are engaging in talks about rebalancing the trans-Atlantic responsibilities for Europe's collective defence.
- **China, A Major Player in Eurasia:**
 - The recent most important development in Eurasia is **the dramatic rise of China and its growing strategic assertiveness**, expanding economic power and rising political influence.
 - Beijing's approach to the long and [disputed border with Bhutan and India](#), its quest for a security presence in Tajikistan, the active search for a [larger role in Afghanistan](#), and a greater say in the affairs of the broader sub-Himalayan region speak volume about its growing influence.
 - The expansion of [China's Belt and Road initiative](#) and Europe's growing economic interdependence with China have added to Beijing's powerful leverages in Eurasia.
 - These leverages were reinforced by a deepening alliance with Russia that straddles the Eurasian heartland.
- **Russia:**
 - Russia saw itself as both a European and Asian power but had trouble becoming a part of either.
 - Together **Russia and China unveiled a Eurasian alliance** that they might have hoped would deliver the long-awaited coup de grace to the global hegemony of the West.
 - The occupation of Crimea in 2014 and the invasion of Ukraine are a product of what Putin sees as his historic mission of **reuniting the "Russkiy Mir" or the Russian world**.
 - When post-Soviet Russia's effort to integrate with the West soured in the 2000s, **it developed "Eurasia" and "Greater Eurasia" as new geopolitical constructs**.

How is India's Eurasian Policy?

- **Security Dialogue:**
 - In 2021, [Delhi Regional Security Dialogue on Afghanistan](#) was held as a part of **developing a Eurasian strategy**. India's [National Security Advisor](#) invited his counterparts from Pakistan, Iran, Central Asia, Russia, and China to join this discussion.

- However, Pakistan and China **skipped the meeting**. Pakistan's reluctance to engage with India on Afghanistan reveals Delhi's persisting problem with Islamabad in shaping a new Eurasian strategy.
- It also reinforces the urgency of an Indian strategy to deal with Eurasia.
- **International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC):**
 - The **INSTC** which aims to bring Eurasia closer together, is a laudable initiative.
 - It is a **multi-modal transportation established on 12th September 2000 in St. Petersburg**, by Iran, Russia and India for the purpose of promoting transportation cooperation among the Member States.
 - The INSTC **was expanded** to include eleven new members, namely: the Republic of Azerbaijan, Republic of Armenia, Republic of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Republic of Tajikistan, Republic of Turkey, Ukraine, Belarus, Oman, Syria, Bulgaria (Observer).
- **Challenges and Potential:**
 - For India, the rise of Eurasia is making it harder to ride on two boats at the same time. Until now, **India could easily hunt with the maritime coalition — the QUAD** — in the Indo-Pacific and run at the same time with the continental coalitions led by Russia and China.
 - This was possible so long as the maritime and continental powers were not at each other's throats.
 - But the conflict between the US, Europe, and Japan on the one hand and China and Russia on the other is **now acute and shows no signs of immediate amelioration**.
 - On the downside, then, India's mounting security challenges from China on the Himalayan frontier and the tightening embrace between Moscow and Beijing will mean the **shadow over India's continental strategy will become darker in the days ahead**. On the upside, the possibilities for strengthening India's strategic capabilities in partnership with the US and Europe as well as Japan, South Korea and Australia have never been stronger. It is up to Delhi now to seize the emerging possibilities.

Way Forward

- India must devote similar energy as Japan and South Korea do to the development of a **"Eurasian" policy**. If the Indo-Pacific is about Delhi's new maritime geopolitics, Eurasia involves the recalibration of India's continental strategy.
- India, over the decades, has dealt with Eurasia's constituent spaces separately but what Delhi now needs is an integrated approach to set a strong foothold in Eurasia.
 - India will surely encounter many contradictions in its path between and among the USA, Europe, Russia, China, Iran, and the Arab Gulf but it should not let these contradictions hold India back.
 - The key for India lies in greater strategic activism that opens opportunities in all directions in Eurasia.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. 'Belt and Road Initiative' is sometimes mentioned in the news in the context of the affairs of (2016)

- (a) African Union
- (b) Brazil
- (c) European Union
- (d) China

Ans: (d)

Mains

Q. The new tri-nation partnership AUKUS is aimed at countering China's ambitions in the Indo-Pacific region. Is it going to supersede the existing partnerships in the region? Discuss the strength and impact of

AUKUS in the present scenario. (2021)

[Source: IE](#)

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