

Mains Master

Two wars, the consequences for America's standing

Context

- Two major global conflicts, the Ukraine war and the Israel-Hamas war, are evolving in ways that significantly impact the United States.
- The outcomes of these wars will have consequences for America's global standing, potentially influenced by the upcoming 2024 presidential election.

Background

- America plays a principal role in both conflicts through significant military and financial aid to Ukraine and unwavering support for Israel.
- Domestic U.S. politics are increasingly fractured, impacting America's bipartisan approach to foreign policy. This raises concerns about U.S. reliability if there's a change in leadership.

The Ukraine War

- The U.S. has committed substantial aid to Ukraine. However, future aid may be politically obstructed, leaving the Ukrainians vulnerable.

- Political obstruction could mean delays or complete cuts to military support packages for Ukraine.
- This risks making the already difficult defense against Russia even harder, raising the possibility of Ukrainian defeat.
- Beyond Ukraine, it sends a message that the U.S. cannot be relied upon in a crisis, damaging its global leadership role.
- The war currently favors Russia. If the U.S. withdraws support, Ukraine could collapse.
- A Russian victory in Ukraine could lead to increased aggression towards other neighboring nations formerly in the USSR's sphere.
- This would directly threaten NATO allies, forcing the U.S. into a more difficult position due to its treaty obligations.
- In a broader sense, it signals to the world that outright aggression can succeed if a strong power is not willing to offer a counterbalance.

The Israel-Hamas Conflict

- The Israeli government's actions in Gaza are fracturing support from within the U.S. Democratic party.
- Growing calls for restrictions on aid or greater accountability on Israel's actions showcase a changing tide within U.S. politics.
- This could significantly impact the traditionally strong U.S.-Israel alliance, with greater potential for criticism and less automatic support in global forums.
- Israel's reliance on military force, rather than a political solution, creates long-term instability.
- Repeated cycles of violence in Gaza highlight that military might cannot solve the root of the Israel-Palestine conflict.
- The lack of a political path breeds ongoing instability and fuels resentment in the region, harming Israel's long-term security interests

Learning for India

- Conflicts like Ukraine and Israel-Hamas highlight the volatility of relying on a single superpower for support.
- India needs to observe the shifting landscape and understand that uncritical reliance on a single power, even a friendly one, is risky in an unpredictable world.
- This can inform Indian foreign policy about the importance of diversifying relationships and alliances.
- India must balance strategic partnerships based on its own geopolitical interests while fostering self-reliance.

- Balancing relationships with multiple major powers allows for greater flexibility and leverage in addressing India's specific needs.
- Focusing on building domestic capabilities across sectors – defense, technology, etc. – ensures India's ability to act independently in its best interests when needed.

Way Forward

- The U.S. needs to reaffirm its commitments to partners and allies to maintain a stable world order.
- A political solution for Israel and Palestine remains the only sustainable path to regional peace.
- The world needs multilateral cooperation and diplomacy, moving away from dependence on singular powers.

The CAA, Muslim exclusion and the lens of the right

Context

- The Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019 (CAA) has sparked a national debate in India, with a core point of contention being its exclusion of Muslims fleeing persecution in neighboring countries.

Background

- Amit Shah, Union Home Minister, argues that the CAA's Muslim exclusion is justified due to:
- Muslims allegedly being responsible for Partition.
- Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh being officially Islamic states, precluding Muslim persecution there.

Issues with the CAA's Justification

- Partition Argument:**
 - Painting all Muslims responsible for Partition ignores the vast majority who opposed it, and those who actively resisted it.
 - The two-nation theory was largely a Muslim elitist project, not a mass movement.
 - It reflects a Hindu right-wing desire for collective punishment against contemporary Indian Muslims.
- Persecution Argument:**
 - While religious minorities face persecution in Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan, certain sects within Islam (e.g., Ahmadiyas) are also persecuted.
 - India's past inaction on this issue doesn't justify discriminating against all Muslims fleeing persecution.

Challenges Lying Ahead

- Growing Xenophobia:** Statements like Arvind Kejriwal's, depicting asylum seekers as criminals, fuel intolerance and prejudice, echoing the harmful 'termites' rhetoric.
- Broader De-Islamization Project:** The CAA, combined with acts like targeting madrasas and mosques, suggests a wider Hindu right-wing campaign to diminish and suppress Islamic presence within India.

Critical Outlook

- The CAA reveals deeply flawed historical notions and dangerous levels of prejudice within the Hindu right.
- It undermines India's secular principles and raises questions about the safety and equality of minorities within the nation.

Way Forward

- India needs a political response that rejects sectarianism and reaffirms the constitutional promise of equality and religious freedom for all.
- Addressing the real issue of persecution (for any group), requires a rights-based framework, not one driven by religious exclusion.
- Open and inclusive dialogue is crucial to counter the trend of de-Islamization and foster genuine national unity.



Context:

- Arvind Kejriwal's recent arrest by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) raises concerns about the misuse of enforcement agencies.
- The timing of the arrest, ahead of a general election, underscores the political implications of such actions.

Background:

- The case originated from a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe into Delhi's excise policy in August 2022.
- The ED subsequently launched a money laundering investigation, resulting in arrests of AAP leaders, including Kejriwal, Manish Sisodia, and Sanjay Singh.

Misuse of central agencies:

- Detaining accused individuals without swift trial proceedings undermines the rule of law.
- Targeting opposition figures erodes public confidence in the impartiality of law enforcement agencies.
- Instances of central agencies pursuing constitutional functions, like Hemant Soren, highlight unchecked power dynamics.
- Selective arrests, often coinciding with political realignments, fuel suspicions of political vendettas.
- Leniency towards corruption charges for those aligning with the ruling party exacerbates concerns.

Implications:

- Misuse of central agencies stifles dissent and undermines democratic foundations.
- Erosion of trust in democratic institutions jeopardizes electoral integrity and governance.

Way Forward:

- Establish greater accountability and transparency in enforcement agency operations.
- Implement safeguards against political interference and arbitrary investigative practices.
- Strengthen judicial oversight to ensure impartial investigations.
- Uphold the independence of investigative agencies to protect democratic principles and justice.

Blowback
Pakistan's Support of Islamists in Afghanistan: A History of Blowback
Rocky Relations on the Afghan-Pakistan Border

- Context:** The Durand Line, a border established during British colonial rule, remains a source of deep dispute between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Afghan governments have historically refused to recognize it as a legitimate international border.
- Background:** Pakistan often uses airstrikes against alleged militant hideouts in Afghanistan, fueling tensions and resentment.
- Recent Events:** Pakistan's recent airstrikes targeting the TTP led to a sharp escalation. The Taliban, now the official government of Afghanistan, retaliated with attacks on Pakistani forces, demonstrating their unwillingness to be dictated to by their former patrons.

Pakistan's Longstanding Ties with the Taliban

- Context:** Pakistan's security establishment has long viewed the Taliban as a strategic asset to counter Indian influence in Afghanistan.
- Background:** During the 1990s, Pakistan's support for the Taliban was overt. It provided funding, arms, and sanctuary, making it instrumental in the Taliban's rise to power.
- The Double Game:** After 9/11, under US pressure, Pakistan officially turned against the Taliban. However, it continued providing covert backing, hoping to maintain leverage in Afghanistan while outwardly playing the role of a US ally in the 'war on terror'.

Pakistan's Strategy Backfires

- Strategic Aims:** Pakistan hoped its support for the Taliban would ensure a friendly regime in Kabul, granting it strategic depth against India and expanding its regional influence.
- Unintended Consequences**
 - The Durand Line Dispute:** No Afghan government, including the Taliban's, has accepted the legitimacy of the Durand Line, creating ongoing conflict.
 - The Rise of the TTP:** The Afghan Taliban's victory has emboldened the ideologically aligned Pakistani Taliban (TTP), increasing their attacks within Pakistan.
 - Loss of Leverage:** The Afghan Taliban, now in power, are more independent. They refuse to cut ties with the TTP, defying Pakistan's demands and demonstrating Pakistan's dwindling control.
- Blowback:** The Consequences of Supporting Insurgency
 - Historical Pattern:** Pakistan has a long track record of using Islamist militant groups as proxies in regional conflicts. This tactic has repeatedly backfired as these groups eventually turn on their former patrons.
 - The Current Crisis:** The TTP, nurtured and emboldened by the Taliban's example, now poses a major existential threat to the Pakistani state. Pakistan finds itself trapped in a dangerous situation of its own making.

Prelims Booster

In Iran, Bahai minority faces persecution even after death

- Iran's Bahai minority faces ongoing persecution, even after death, as evidenced by the recent destruction of Bahai graves in the Khavaran cemetery in Tehran, highlighting the systematic discrimination and harassment endured by the community since the Islamic revolution in 1979.
- Iranian authorities reportedly destroyed and levelled Bahai graves, denying the community the right to mark their resting places, reflecting a broader pattern of persecution that includes restrictions on education, business raids, asset confiscation, and arrests, with the Bahais lacking recognition in Iran's constitution and facing continuous violations of their religious and burial rights.
- The United States and United Nations have condemned the destruction of Bahai graves and the ongoing persecution, with the U.S. State Department highlighting violations of funeral and burial rights, while senior Bahai figures remain imprisoned, and hundreds of community members are facing legal proceedings or serving prison sentences, underscoring the intensified repression faced by the Bahai community in Iran.
- Despite the challenges and persecution, the Bahais maintain a spiritual center in Haifa, Israel, with a long history predating the establishment of the state of Israel, symbolizing the resilience and enduring faith of the community in the face of adversity.

Can Arvind Kejriwal continue to be CM while in custody?

- Questions arise regarding Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's ability to continue in office while in judicial custody, with reference to the principles of constitutional morality, good governance, and public trust that underpin the norms for holding public office, as highlighted in recent judgments by the Madras High Court and the Supreme Court.
- Past court rulings have emphasized the importance of upholding high moral standards and avoiding actions contradictory to the rule of law for individuals occupying public office, with considerations on whether a Minister accused of financial scandals or in custody can effectively fulfill their duties and responsibilities, while maintaining the integrity and credibility expected of public officials.
- The Madras High Court's judgment in a similar case raised practical concerns about a Minister's ability to perform official duties while in custody, including issues related to accessing government files, receiving salary from the state exchequer without fulfilling duties, and upholding public and constitutional morality, underscoring the need for individuals in power to adhere to ethical standards and governance principles despite legal challenges or political circumstances.
- The court emphasized the public's legitimate expectation for individuals in positions of authority to demonstrate high moral conduct, emphasizing that political considerations should not override the imperatives of public morality, good governance, and constitutional trust, highlighting the broader societal expectations and ethical responsibilities associated with holding public office.