

1. The Coronation of Xi Jinping as China's de facto president for life and Putin's election in Russia brings a new form of authoritarian political order. Discuss the implications for India?

With the Coronation of Xi-Jinping as China's de facto president for life and Putin's election in Russia, a new form of authoritarian political order is shaping up, challenging the liberal order like never before.

Putin got more than 76 percent of the vote and now becomes the longest serving Russian leader since Stalin, being at the helm of Russia as either President or prime minister since 1999.

In Elections, for the first-time, the authorities changed the system of voting for people who can't vote in places of their permanent residence. Officials expected the new system to prevent the use of rigging schemes - known as 'carousels' - for which they have been previously criticized by the opposition.

Implications for India are: First-ever Six nation Speaker's Conference in Islamabad held in December supported the Pakistani line on Kashmir. Declaration signed by Afghanistan, China, Iran, Pakistan, Russia, and Turkey. This was aimed at enabling the participating countries to engage in meaningful discussions to explore common means of combating terrorism, maintaining peace and enhancing connectivity of people and states. The Conference will also involve interaction among peace activists, representatives of business and trade community.

professionals, academia and experts from the Six Countries.

This underscored that "for ensuring global and regional peace and stability, the issue of Jammu and Kashmir needs peaceful resolution by Pakistan and India in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions."

Pakistan's Kashmir fixation meant that it forced other interlocutors to bring the Kashmir issue to the declaration.

During his visit to New Delhi in December, Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov publicly called on India to join China's belt and road initiative and hoped the New Delhi will find a way out to benefit from the mega connectivity project without sacrificing its position on the issues flagged by it.

Chinese act of dominance: on Indo-Pacific region.

New Delhi has to therefore find like-minded countries to build alternative platforms and narratives so as to preclude Chinese hegemony in the wider Indo-Pacific region.

Way forward is for a relationship that largely relies on defence and where the economic underpinnings are lagging the need of the hour should be to have candid conversations about the current state of play in the relationship. Just relying on sentimentalism of the past won't work anymore as new challenges confront India and Russia as the global geostrategic environment undergoes a profound reordering.

2. Discuss the Concerns raised about Customer rights in the insolvency and Bankruptcy Code?

The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) 2016, no doubt is a path breaking initiative in the whole reform process.

Not Surprisingly, it has triggered huge debate and one of the key grey areas that had emerged in a recent cases pertained to the rights of the customers in an insolvency process.

The Supreme Court had reportedly indicated that it would settle the grey areas in the Code to see what role homebuyers could play in liquidation proceedings, while hearing arguments in the Jaypee infotech case.

When the IBC 2016 was introduced, it classified Company Creditors into two categories — Financial Creditors (Bank & financial institutions) and operational Creditors (Suppliers and vendors). It did not address the position of other Creditors or Customers who could not fit into either of the two categories. The other Creditors comprised segments like homebuyers, deposit holders and Customers who had made advance payment for purchase etc. The customer angle came into Spotlight in the case of homebuyers of Jaypee infotech, Customers of telecom firm Aircel and Nathella Jewellery.

An Amendment was ~~Spotlight~~ brought into the Corporate insolvency resolution process regulations in August 2017 whereby a new rule was introduced. Regulation 9A Created a new Residency Category of Creditors, namely other Creditors. This enabled other Creditors to file claims against a firm under insolvency by ~~submitting~~ filing Form F with the resolution professional (RP). Despite the other Creditors rule being brought in there is still uncertainty for customers who had paid advances to the company.

"The key issue still remains whether advances paid by customers are treated similar to that of debt owed by the company to banks and other vendors in the normal course of business and the order of priority in which repayment will be in the insolvency process."

Legal protection: Efforts, no doubt are on to provide legal protection to safeguard the interests of depositors. Etc is still emerging and in early days. The most question, however is "how do we classify customers of Aircel, Nathella and the like"?

their individual exposure to these firms may be small, no doubt but collectively they form a major chunk of money owed. Hopefully the SC will step in to clarify this major grey area in the code which is proving a pain point for customers of assorted kinds and where a quick solution needs to emerge

3. Shanghai Cooperation Organisation is an excellent opportunity for India to secure its economic and security interests in the region. Elaborate.

Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO): It is a Eurasian political, economic and military organisation which was founded in Shanghai. The SCO was founded by leaders of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan in 2001. Uzbekistan joined the group later. India and Pakistan signed the memoranda for becoming a permanent member of the SCO in 2016.

India became a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) at the Astana Summit. The SCO's objectives are centered around cooperation b/w member nations on security-related concerns, military cooperation, intelligence sharing and counter terrorism.

The presence of China and India, the world's most populous countries, would make the SCO the organization with the largest population coverage. Its headquarters in Beijing.

Importance: Economic: India's membership in the SCO provides it with select opportunities in the geo-economics and the geo-strategic sphere in the Central Asian region (CAR). The CAR supplies around 10% of oil and energy to the world, with India being one of the most energy-hungry nations, involvement in the SCO provides it with an opportunity to satisfy its energy requirements through regional diplomacy.

India's pending energy projects like the TAPI (Turkmenistan - Afghanistan - Pakistan - India) pipeline, IPI (India - Pakistan - India) pipeline, and CASA (Central Asia - South Asia) - 1000 electricity transmission projects - all of which are blocked, due in part to Pakistan's recalcitrant approach - can get a much needed push through the SCO. India is likely to get greater access to major gas and oil exploration projects in Central Asia.

Security: In the sphere of security, the SCO formed regional Anti terrorism structure (RATS) in 2005 at Tashkent

RATS which works on information sharing and joint Counterterrorism measures b/w member states. The SCO has successfully nullified 600 would be attacks and extradited more than 500 terrorist through the RATS mechanism. India's full membership in the SCO will enable it to play an instrumental role in RATS. India through RATS can improve its Counterterrorism experience, by working toward intelligence sharing, law enforcement, developing best practices and technologies, mutual legal assistance, extradition arrangements and capacity building amongst other members. Through the SCO, India can also work on anti drug trafficking, which is a major concern for Afghanistan.

The re-emergence of radicalism in Afghanistan, particularly the presence of the Islamic state, will have a major impact on the already tense Kashmir region of India. Thus India, being a major stake holder in Afghanistan, alongside the SCO will have to help fill the security vacuum left after the NATO withdrawal.

It will also be interesting to view India's response if Pakistan tries to regionalize the Kashmir issue through the SCO. India will also have to tread carefully should China raise the Tibet issue at the SCO, as India has given shelter to the Dalai Lama for decades.

3. Israel's 'Nation State' law has the potential to spread havoc in the already volatile Middle East region. Critically evaluate by keeping in mind India's position on the issue.

Israel proposed a controversial new "Nation-State law" last week that's sparking both celebration and fierce debate over the very nature of Israel itself.

The law does three big things:

- It states that "the right to exercise national self-determination" in Israel is "unique to the Jewish people"
- It establishes Hebrew as Israel's official language, and downgrades Arabic—a language widely spoken by Arab Israelis to a "Special Status".
- It establishes "Jewish settlement as a national value" and mandates that the state "will labour to encourage and promote its establishment and development"

The 'Nation State' law passed by Israel's parliament amid strong protests by opposition lawmakers, has raised concerns about its commitment to peace in the region. The legislation which will become one of Israel's powerful basic laws that have constitutional



§ Status, lays down that "Israel is the historic homeland of the Jewish people and they have an exclusive right to national self-determination in it".

Issue Area: Arab Community which makes up a fifth of Israel's population faces discrimination when it comes to opportunities and rights.

→ It challenges the basic concepts of equality, which even Israel's declaration of independence promised to all its inhabitants.

→ The legislation is racist and a form of apartheid aimed at creating two systems within one country.

→ The emphasis on Jerusalem and the promise to promote settlements pose a direct threat to any peace process with the Palestinians.

→ Jerusalem remains a disputed territory, with Palestinians seeing its eastern part as the capital of their future state.

Israel's claims over the city remains a key point of dispute b/w the two sides.

Regional Implications:

→ The law automatically excludes Israeli Arabs from the sphere of full citizenship.

→ It will put states like Saudi Arabia that are interested in normalizing relations with Israel in a very uncomfortable position.

→ Together these laws allow the Israeli state to institutionalize discrimination against the minorities at home, deepen occupation in the Palestinian territories and stifle even the limited rights of the Palestinians living under occupation.

6. India initiative in Sri Lanka to develop the loss making Mattala Airport will end up being yet another white elephant project in the region. Discuss the context of India's efforts in the 2012 to out manoeuvre China.

India has agreed to form a joint venture with Sri Lanka to operate the country's loss making Mattala Rajapaksa International Airport in Hambantota.

Mattala Rajapaksa International Airport (MRIA)

It is located in a remote area in an under-developed part of the country. Mattala airport has struggled to attract both passengers and airlines. This has led to MRJA being dubbed the "world's emptiest international airport" with its vacant corridors, gates and tarmac.

A Sri Lankan white elephant

Unfortunately for Sri Lanka, the foreign bank countries were right. The whole project has turned out to be a white elephant. International shipping companies had not interest in using Hambantota, when there was an excellent port at nearby Colombo. The small fishing town of Hambantota, near the southern tip of Sri Lanka, has long been Exhibit A for those who worry about the strategic impact of China's Belt and Road Initiative.

India wants to buy the world's emptiest airport in Sri Lanka, and the airport is India's answer to Chinese domination and limit Beijing's influence in the island nation. Hambantota could make a fine logistics point for expanded Chinese naval presence.

Colombo has repeatedly in Sri Lanka but New Delhi worries that China's influence will one day reach a point where the Sri Lankan govt can't say no. There are also fears of influx of Chinese labour in the North province - traditionally affiliated to India owing to its ethnic makeup of Tamils.

Checkmating the Chinese Navy: The Chinese takeover of Hambantota port only increases New Delhi's worries that it will become an Indian Ocean hub for the Chinese Navy. But in fact, Hambantota has never been feasible as a full blown Chinese naval base.

This is where the world's emptiest airport comes in. India is proposing to spend around US\$ 300 million to buy out Sri Lanka's debt to China in return for a 40-year lease over Hambantota airport.

The long and twisted saga of Hambantota is emblematic of growing strategic competition in the Indian Ocean region, much of it focussed on ownership and access to infrastructure. In coming years we are likely to see a lot more jostling b/w India, China and others in the Indian Ocean over control of ports, airports and other pieces of critical infrastructure - and perhaps increasingly for control over governments.

7. Evaluate the need for lateral entry into Civil Services despite the fact that the generalist nature of Indian bureaucracy is designed to give scope for specialization.

With a Committee of Secretaries favouring lateral entry into the civil service, the Department of Personnel & Training (DOPT) has been instructed to put up a proposal on the induction of outsiders in the middle rung of ministers that deal with economy and infrastructure.

Instructions have come from the PM office to prepare a broad outline of modalities for selecting private individuals for appointment in the rank of deputy secretary, director and joint secretary.

The idea of lateral induction is not new.

It was recommended by the 2nd Administrative reform Commission, high level committees appointed by different governments and a plethora of think tanks.

Need for lateral entry in Civil Services :

Shortfall in numbers - There is an overall 20% shortfall of IAS cadre officers alone in 24 state cadres. The Baswan Committee (2016) has shown how large states such as Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan have a deficit of 75 to over 100 officers to go to the Centre on deputation is understandable.

Target oriented ; outside talent from the private sector is more likely to be target-oriented which will improve the performance of the government.

Also, more Competition will encourage Career Civil Servants to develop expertise in areas of their choice.

Improved governance: The Conventional wisdom on lateral entry is that it infuses fresh energy and thinking into an insular, Complacent and often archaic bureaucracy.

Why this may not be a good Idea:

Disturbed balance: The proposal for lateral entry at Senior decision-making levels, besides increasing the disconnect b/w policymaking and implementation, will also result in inequitable sharing of the benefits and burdens of govt service, with permanent Civil Servants left to bear the burden of "humble" implementation and lateral entrants getting access to "glamorous" policymaking positions, without having roughed it out in remote and rural India in the rough and tumble of Indian democracy.

Previous experiences: While there may be exceptions, the experience of Inducting private Sector managers to run public Sector enterprises is not particularly Satisfactory. Whiz-kids from the private sector who ran Air India, Indian Airlines and Vajudost proved to be failures.

Discontent among the government personnel: Large-scale lateral induction would, in fact amount to a vote of no Confidence in the government personnel management system, rather than in the highly dedicated, motivated and talented officers who have chosen to join the Civil Services.

And it is also difficult in assessing performance.
Conclusion: India's Civil Services need reform. There is little argument about this. Internal reforms - such as insulation from political pressure and career paths linked to Specialization - and external reforms such as lateral entry are Complementary, addressing the same deficiencies from different angles. It has been an exception in the Indian Civil Services system and should continue to be so.

8. The prime minister has recently announced ISRO's ambitious manned space mission 'Gaganyaan' - as India's next big venture in space exploration. Critically examine the challenges that lie ahead for ISRO and discuss the feasibility of the mission.
- Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) unveiled details of first indigenous human space mission dubbed as Gaganyaan to be launched in 2022. The mission was announced by prime minister Narendra Modi during his 72nd Independence Day speech. Under it, three Indian astronauts (Gaganyatri) will be taken to space on board Gaganyaan spacecraft by 2022.
- This will be first human space mission to be indigenously developed by ISRO.

If successful, India will become fourth nation in the world to send astronaut into space after US, Russia and China. Former Indian Air Force (IAF) Rakesh Sharma was first Indian to travel to space. He was part of the Soviet Union's Soyuz T-11 expedition, launched by April 2, 1984.

Objectives of Gaganyaan mission: Enhance of science and technology levels in the country, Serve as national project involving several institutes, academia and industry, Improve of industrial growths & inspire youths, develop technology for social benefits and improve international collaboration.

Launch phase: GSLV Mk-III launch vehicle will be used to launch Gaganyaan as it has necessary payload capability for this mission. The spacecraft will comprise of crew module and service module that ~~contains~~ contains orbital. It weighs approx 7 tonnes and will be placed in low earth orbit (LEO) of 300 - 400 km. Crew module's size will be 3.7 meters and of service module will be 7 meters.

Orbital phase: The mission will send three-member crew to space for period of five to seven days. The launch vehicle will take off from Spacecraft of Sriharikota, A.P. and it will reach desired orbit in 16 min.

Re-entry phase: The velocity of whole module will be reduced and will be turned in opposite direction so that it can start to come down. When it will reach distance of 120km from Earth's surface service module will be removed and separated out. The module carrying crew alone will back to earth; this will take about 36 min to reach Earth. ISRO is planning to land crew module in Arabian Sea, closer to Gujarat coast or in Bay Bengal or even land from where the crew will be recovered.

Challenges are the critical technologies required for the mission eg: Environment Control and Life Support Systems - meant to make the crew capsule livable and the flight safe for the astronauts. In development phase and working is going on in case of Space Suits. The crew escape system is an emergency escape measure designed to quickly pull the crew module along with the astronauts to a safe distance from the launch vehicle in the event of a launch abort. Mention experiment for emergency escape for astronauts called the pad Abort test which will be repeated at higher distances, etc. Food and hygiene are other aspects. This type of programme will enhance the scientific technologies in our country & pride the nation.

4. The resolution of Kashmir Crisis is not guaranteed even if there is Consensus among all the Concerned Stakeholders involved. Discuss.

War Kashmir Crisis : For the last 60 years, Since Independence in 1947, the issue of Kashmir has been the bone of contention in the Indo-pak relations. Both India and Pakistan lay their claims that Kashmir which includes the Pakistan occupied Kashmir part, Jammu, Leh and Ladakh and Kashmir Valley are their territory.

In the name of religion terrorists in Kashmir have been spreading hatred, violence and are killing innocent people in Kashmir to get it separated from India. Quite recently evidences that Separatist and terrorist leaders are being funded by Pakistan have been unearthed. India despite maintaining restraint to a great extent now needs to resolve this issue once for all to end the crisis.

Key facts about Kashmir issue :

A good area of Jammu & Kashmir was invaded by Pakistan in 1948 and is still controlled by it. Out of this illegally occupied area, Pakistan has gifted a part of it to China. Pakistan's calls its occupied area of Kashmir as Azad Kashmir while India terms it Pakistan occupied Kashmir (POK). UNO intervened and asked Pakistan to withdraw all

the invaders and forces from Pak and Conduct plebiscite as the first step which Pakistan has not done so far. In order to get control of full territory of Jammu and Kashmir including which is with India, Pakistan has been training and sending the groups of terrorists to create unrest, terrorise Kashmir people, kill innocent people and instigate them against India.

Kashmir is coveted by Pakistan as it can provide fertile for terrorist organisations and will be the best way to infiltrate into India. Today Kashmir valley stands as a very strong wall that Pakistan stands finds very difficult to break through into India. To protect integrity India has already lost many soldiers butchered by Pakistan in most cruel some way.

War could not be the permanent solution to Kashmir crisis as it will result in loss of lives and property to a great extent and will leave low areas that would redevelop again in few years.

It is widely understood that India-Pakistan relations are severely crisis-ridden and that is why the relationship b/w the two countries simply does not improve. The 2004-2008 dialogue

process was called off after the 26/11 attacks.

Therefore, Occurrence of crises, be they terror attacks, ceasefire violations or terrorist infiltration can interrupt the dialogue process b/w the two countries at will. Both India and Pakistan are well aware of it and also know it is impossible to rule out such crises.

The present conflict is in Kashmir valley. The root of conflict b/w the Kashmiri insurgents and the Indian govt is tied to a dispute over local autonomy: and based on the demand for self determination.