

International Relations This Week: Episode 57

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1. Indian Foreign Secretary's visit to Myanmar

Context: The Foreign Secretary of India visited Myanmar to explore and examine the possibility to preserve India's interest in the country.

Crisis in Myanmar: A perspective

- In February 2021, Myanmar's military group known as Tatmadaw prepared an agenda and attacked Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy to prevent her from assuming office for the second term.
- The military leadership invoked a state of emergency after the coup and established the State Administrative Council headed by commander-in -chief Min Aung Hlaing.
- This led to the emergence of an extensive Civil Disobedience Movement against the military junta through strict non- collaboration and massive street demonstrations.
- The tatmadaw responded with violent crackdown which triggered increasing radicalization.
- The military coup and its economic outcomes along with the devastating effects of the pandemic resulted in a massive humanitarian crisis in Myanmar.
- The coup, consequently, united the diverse political, ethnic and religious groups by increasing tolerance and inclusiveness in the pro-democracy movement.

About the Visit:

- This was the first visit of an Indian official to Myanmar after the military coup and involved discussions between India, the State Administration Council, political parties and members of civil society.
- India has agreed to extend humanitarian support to Myanmar.
- The security concerns in the India-Myanmar border and the revival of democracy in the country were an important part of the discussion.
- India expressed its deep concern towards the military coup and conveyed its firm faith in the principles of democracy.
- India confirmed its strong support for people-centric, socio-economic developmental projects in Myanmar such as the Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project and the Trilateral highway to facilitate trade and improve connectivity in the region.

- It was reiterated that India will support the Rakhine Development Programme and Border Area Development Programme for the benefit of the people of Myanmar.
- Beijing's growing political, military and economic footprint in Myanmar is a major concern for India.

India's firm stand:

- It was reaffirmed that India will continue to encourage the [ASEAN](#) initiative and expressed hope that progress will be made in a pragmatic and constructive manner.

Read in detail about [India- Myanmar Relations](#) in the linked article

2. Kazakhstan Issue

Background:

- Kazakhstan is an oil-rich former Soviet nation in Central Asia that has been witnessing torrential periods of unrest.
- It is believed that the internal disturbance in Kazakhstan intended to seek the Russian intervention to promote the interest of the authoritarian government led by President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev.
- The Kremlin had deployed more than 2000 Russian troops at the request of Kazakh's President.
- There were protests surrounding the steep rise in fuel prices that spiraled into the border uprising over political and social discontents in the largest city of Kazakhstan – Almaty.

Kazakhstan: Strategic significance

- It is among the 10 largest countries in the world by size.
- Consists of huge reserves of chrome, uranium, iron ore, petroleum and natural gas.
- It is strategically located between China and Russia.

Interventions that furthered the turmoil:

- The Collective Security Treaty Organization ([CSTO](#)) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization ([NATO](#)) have been intervening in the internal issues of Kazakhstan.
- These organizations are meant for providing aid during any external aggression but in this case there was no external attack. The issue that emerged in Kazakhstan was a consequence of internal disturbance wherein emergency had to be declared.
- Therefore, experts inferred that the intervention by CSTO and NATO led to the creation of new geopolitical tensions.
- Such interferences were against the sovereignty of Kazakhstan as it was conceived by the analysts.
- The Russians opposed the multinational interventions by the US without following the collective security procedure of the United Nations.

India's Interest in Kazakhstan:

- India doesn't have a substantial scope in the region of Kazakhstan especially considering the tense situation in Afghanistan.

- However, India still looks forward to safeguarding its interests by checking China's growing prominence in the region as India is unwilling to let China get access to the explosives that are in abundance in Kazakhstan.

What is suggested?

- In the upcoming days, an intervention by the United Nations is envisaged to send directives of free and fair elections in Kazakhstan.

3. Chile's New President and Constitutional Changes

Context: Gabriel Boric became the new President of Chile and is considered to be the youngest modern President who has to enlivened a new hope for the country.

Significance of the historic victory:

- The electoral victory of Boric has been perceived as the defeat of fascism and the right wing.
- It was felt throughout Latin America where ideological divisions have been rising amidst hours of crisis driven by the pandemic resulting in increasing inequality, economic losses and inadequate health care facilities.
- The newly elected President has assured to work towards the issue of climate change.
- A promise has been made to end the private pension system of Chile which was the hallmark of the neoliberal economic model imposed by the dictatorship of Gen. Augusto Pinochet.
- Therefore, the victory of Boric spread across a wave against the dictatorial regime that was executed by Augusto Pinochet.
- Gabriel Boric is considered to be the most leftwing leader since Salvador Allende who was overthrown in 1973 by a military coup.
- He has expressed his inclination towards European social democracy and intends to work to narrow down the gulf between the rich and poor to transform Chile into a social welfare state.
- He advocates important issues of feminism and assures to improve mental health services.
- Chile is also embarking on an adventurous journey on constitution making and experimenting with a federal system.
- The success of Chile's experiments might be an eye opener for Brazil and Argentina. Hence, Chile is being looked at with great hope.

4. US – Russia talks in Geneva

Context: The US-Russia talks were held in the wake of a major crisis in the eastern part of Ukraine.

Highlights of the talk:

- There were no signs of narrowing differences between the US and Russia in the [Ukrainian Crisis](#).
- US seeks end to Russian troop buildup near Ukraine.
- Russia expressed its strong opposition to NATO expansion.

Read more about [Ukraine – Russia Conflict](#) in Perspective, Sansad TV.

5. Blunder by Boris Johnson in UK

Context: The British Prime Minister Boris Johnson landed up into serious trouble because of his certain actions which were both politically and ethically unacceptable

The Issue in Details:

- The British Prime Minister was caught attending a gathering during the lockdown and lied in the Parliament. This drew huge attention and criticism.
- He apologized in the Parliament for attending a party in the Downing street gardens and defended himself saying he was assuming the party to be a work event. Such a statement has been vehemently ridiculed.
- There was a call for his resignation from the post of Prime Minister by the former Brexit Secretary.
- Many members of the Parliament await the results of the Partygate Probe, the aftermath of which can make him walk away.
- The Partygate incident revealed the COVID-19 inappropriate behavior of the Prime Minister who violated the lockdown rules.
- The members of Johnson's own Tory party are also supporting his resignation and some openly declared no confidence in his leadership.

The way ahead:

- The British Prime Minister has attempted blunders that cannot be overlooked starting from the lack of acumen on the issue of [Brexit](#) to his inappropriate behavior in the midst of the pandemic.
- Facing huge criticism across the country, there is a significant possibility that Boris Johnson will have to resign from the responsible office he is holding.
- This will be a lesson for countries like India which does follow the British Parliamentary form of democracy to act against corrupt leaders and save the legacy of important offices that add to the essence of democracy.

Takeaways from the International Events:

- The ongoing crises across the globe have set examples of emerging trends in geopolitics which can offer insights to shape India's foreign policy in the upcoming days even though there was no substantial association of India with many of the events. However, in the dynamic ambit of International Relations, every nation gets to explore avenues to learn and progress.
- Presidential Election in Chile can be exemplary for India to introduce more reforms that contribute to make the democracy more vibrant.
- The challenges that India faces with the existing turmoil in Myanmar needs proper diplomatic channels and more diplomatic talks to retain territorial peace and stability.
- India's Neighborhood First Policy needs more impetus to spread the message that the country stands for peace and humanitarian causes in an unswerving manner in countries like Myanmar and Bangladesh.
- This may dilute the aftermath of [CAA](#) and the Rohingya crisis that deteriorated India's relationship with Bangladesh and Myanmar.