

28 Jan 2022: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. [India to face tough choices at UNGA](#)

Syllabus: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests

Prelims: UN Security Council Resolution 8979

Mains: UNSC Resolution and Indian Response

Context: India abstained from the UN Security Council Resolution 8979 condemning Russian action in Ukraine.

UN Security Council Resolution 8979:

- The 8979th meeting of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) was held to pass a resolution under Chapter VII of the UN charter.
- The draft resolution was called to vote to end Russia's military offensive against Ukraine.
- It also aimed to deplore Russia's decision to grant independence to Ukraine's breakaway regions Donetsk and Luhansk and reverse the decision, calling it violative of territorial integrity and political independence of Ukraine.
- Out of the total fifteen members of the UNSC, eleven voted in favor, Russia vetoed the resolution and three countries abstained from the voting. Thus, the resolution was rejected by the UNSC.

Response to the UNSC Resolution

- The U.S. and European countries leading the diplomatic charge against Russia are hopeful of gaining a large majority in the 193-member UNGA.
- If a UNGA vote happens, India will have to choose where it stands in the much larger global arena: with us, or with countries like China, Syria and Venezuela on the issue.
- India has thus far refrained from supporting any resolution criticizing Russia but officials said India's growing concerns over the "humanitarian crisis".
- Russia has "highly appreciated India's independent and balanced position at the voting in the UNSC".

What Does India's Abstention From Voting Means?

- India abstained from voting on the draft resolution of UNSC for holding Russia accountable for Ukraine's crisis.
- A UNSC resolution is of two kinds:
 - **One is obligatory:** An obligatory or binding resolution of the UNSC is passed under Article 39, Chapter VII of the UN charter.
 - **Other non-obligatory:** A non-binding resolution of the UNSC is one that is passed under Article 33, Chapter VI of the UN charter.
- During UNSC voting, abstention by non-P5 members merely means that temporary members do not wish to take sides in a resolution.
- Thus, India's abstention along with China and the UAE could not have hampered the fate of the resolution.
- What restricted the resolution to get passed was the requirement of concurrence of P5 members on the resolution.
- Since Russia is a P5 member, Russia vetoed the resolution by not concurring with the rest of the P5 members.
 - **Veto:** The act of not concurring with the rest of the P5 members in this voting is called a veto.

Know more about [United Nations Security Council \(UNSC\)](#)

Why Did India Abstain From Voting?

- India appeared to have abstained from the voting for multiple reasons.
- By abstaining from voting, India could establish its neutrality in a matter involving Russia and the USA.
- India has been on a path of strategic partnership with the USA, in which the Indian government has invested a lot.
- At the same time, Russia is an all-weather friend of India. It is a matter of regret that the path of diplomacy was given up.
- Moreover, India's vote was in any way inconsequential given Russia has the veto power to block the resolution from getting passed.
- Therefore, India had the luxury to be seen as neutral on a matter that it supports but not by going against an all-weather and tested ally.
- It must be highlighted that Ukraine has a chequered past with respect to India in international relations.
 - Ukraine has opposed the Indian action of removing the special status of Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370 in Parliament, and has also sold weapons to Pakistan.

Conclusion:

- India is sympathetic to the cause of territorial integrity and political independence of Ukraine but also shares the Russian security concern vis-à-vis Ukraine joining [NATO](#).
- Ukraine's heavy-handed approach to the Russian-speaking ethnic minority of Donetsk and Luhansk regions that Russia just declared independent entities.
- Though India is in-principle in agreement with the rest of the world that the territorial integrity of Ukraine is non-negotiable, it did not want Russia to be penalized with onerous international sanctions.

Nut Graf

The UNGA resolution aims to take strong measures against Russia unless it announces a ceasefire and withdrawal of troops from Ukraine. India faces more difficult choices with the U.S. and European-led coalition pushing for a vote at the UN General Assembly aimed at "isolating Russia".

2. India is engaged with all parties on Ukraine: Foreign Secretary

Syllabus: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests

Mains: India's Response to the Ukraine Crisis

Context:

The Prime Minister of India held a high-level meeting amidst the Ukraine crisis.

India's Response to the Ukraine Crisis

- India aims to contribute in resolving the Ukrainian conflict and believes dialogue between the warring sides was the only way ahead.
- India has been in touch with a very wide range of interlocutors who are involved in the situation.
- Ukraine had sought an intervention by India in resolving the crisis.

- India had conveyed “anguish” at the tragic loss of lives in the fighting and expressed India’s willingness to contribute in any way towards peace efforts.

Know more about [Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and the response from the rest of the world.](#)

Nut Graf

India is engaging officials on both sides, Russian and Ukrainian, and trying to play a significant role in alleviating a difficult situation.

C. GS 3 Related

Category: ECONOMY

1. Exclusion from SWIFT: what it entails

Syllabus: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India’s interests.

Prelims: SWIFT

Mains: SWIFT; it’s functioning and significance

Context: The U.S., Europe and several other western nations are moving to exclude Russia from the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT).

What is SWIFT?

- SWIFT stands for the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication.
- SWIFT, first used in 1973, went live in 1977 with 518 institutions from 22 countries, its website states. SWIFT itself had replaced the much slower and far less dynamic Telex.
- SWIFT is a messaging network used by banks and financial institutions globally for quick and faultless exchange of information pertaining to financial transactions.
- Know more about [SWIFT](#)

What happens if one is excluded from SWIFT?

- If a country is excluded from the most participatory financial facilitating platform, its foreign funding would take a hit, making it entirely reliant on domestic investors.
- This is particularly troublesome when institutional investors are constantly seeking new markets in newer territories.
- An alternative system would be cumbersome to build and even more difficult to integrate with an already expansive system.

How is the organization governed?

- SWIFT claims to be neutral.
- Its shareholders elect the 25-member board, which is responsible for oversight and management of the company.
- It is regulated by G-10 central banks of Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, The Netherlands, the United Kingdom, the United States, Switzerland, and Sweden, alongside the European Central Bank.

- Its lead overseer is the National Bank of Belgium.
- The SWIFT oversight forum was established in 2012.

Nut Graf

The ongoing Russia-Ukraine war has brought the SWIFT payment system into the limelight, with the US and European nations threatening to cut off Russia from the financial world.

D. GS 4 Related

Nothing here for today!!!

E. Editorials

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

1. The anatomy of India's Ukraine dilemma

Syllabus: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.

Mains: Analysing India's response, options and implications on its interests due to the crisis in Ukraine.

Context

India abstained from a United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution which called for condemning the Russian military action against Ukraine

India's Response

- India's response to the Russian aggression against Ukraine has been shaped by harsh geopolitical situations.
- Although India abstained from voting against Russia, India expressed strong uneasiness about the Russian actions.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi, spoke to Russian President Putin and called for an "immediate cessation of violence"
- India has so far ignored Ukraine's pleas that urge India to mediate with Russia to halt its military advances.

Options for India

- Condemn Russian aggression
 - This option will set India against Russia.
- Support Russian aggression
 - This option will set India against the U.S. and its allies.
- Remain silent on Russian aggression
 - This option will be considered as pro-Russian tilt.
- Express displeasure (short of condemning) and call for diplomacy
 - It is one of the best possible options for India as it is least harmful.

India's pro-Russian Tilt

- India has taken a subtle pro-Russian position on the Ukraine issue.

- This pro-Russia tilt is not just the stand of the government, but also of the Indian strategic community.
- There is an increasing hearing of subtle and indirect justifications of the Russian military actions from the Indian strategic community.
- India's Russia tilt is not just because of its friendship with Russia but instead it is a geopolitical necessity.

Reasons for India's pro-Russian tilt

- **Weakened US led global order**
 - India is slowly recognising the weakening of the U.S. led global order and the rise of China as a major power.
 - S. withdrawal from the region and its decline as the chief system shaper has further complicated India's position in the region.
- **The China factor**
 - China as the rising superpower and Russia as its strategic ally at a time when China has shown its aggressive intentions against India is an unprecedented challenge for India.
 - Hence, having Russia for its support is crucial for India.
 - Even though Russia may not be able to counter Chinese actions towards India directly, an India-Russia strategic partnership will certainly help India.
 - The longer the standoff lasts in Ukraine, the closer China and Russia could become, this certainly is a problem for India.
- **Hostile neighbourhood**
 - India is currently under immense pressure from China, Pakistan and Taliban-led Afghanistan in its neighbourhood. Here lies the dilemma for India.
 - India needs Russia's help to manage its neighbourhood problems through defence supplies, working together at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) or exploring opportunities for collaboration in Afghanistan.
 - Russia is India's only partner of consequence in the Continent.
 - If the U.S.-Russia rivalry becomes more severe, the focus on the Indo-Pacific and China would reduce.

Implication of India's interests

- Russian action in Ukraine ignoring the concerns of the rest of the world including the U.S. will strengthen China and its territorial ambitions.
- The new sanctions regime may have implications on India's defence deals with Russia.
- Further India's weak response on the issue will reduce India's ability to be a "swing state" or a "leading power".
- India's position also indicates that when it comes to geopolitics, India will prioritise its interests over its principles.
- If tensions between Russia and the West continue, balancing the two will be a complex task to Indian diplomacy.

Strategic autonomy

- In the recent past, India's strategic autonomy has been under a lot of stress.
- However, India's response to the Ukraine crisis, particularly its "explanation of vote" at the UNSC indicates a recourse to the principle of strategic autonomy.
- India made it clear that it will make statements and will not be pressured by either party.
- In this regard, India's subtle support to Russia is not due to Russian pressure but is to safeguard its own interests.

Nut Graf

With the stalemate at the UNSC, India being friends with both the United States/West and Russia, and being constantly urged by Ukraine, is uniquely placed to undertake some much-needed mediation between the rival sides.

Category: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. A day to embody the true spirit of science

Syllabus: Achievements of Indians in science & technology.

Prelims: Vigyan Sarvatra Pujyate programme

Mains: Freeman Dyson's views about science and the need for transformation in the Indian scientific community.

Context

The Government is organising a Science Week called 'Vigyan Sarvatra Pujyate'.

Vigyan Sarvatra Pujyate

- A programme titled Vigyan Sarvatra Pujyate is being held to celebrate the S & T achievements of India over the past 75 years as a prelude to National Science Day on February 28 that commemorates Sir C.V. Raman's discovery on light scattering.
- It is being held at 75 locations across the length and breadth of the country.
- The aim of the program is to inspire India's youth into building a progressive nation.

To read more about – [Vigyan Sarvatra Pujyate programme](#)

Freeman Dyson's views

- Freeman Dyson in his book, **The Scientist as Rebel**, argues about why dissent is the soul of science.
- He believes that science is universal, like music, dance or poetry.
- He considered evidence-based modern science as an intellectual rebellion or as a form of dissent against social constraints or the restrictions imposed by the locally prevailing culture.
- He also views that the Arabs, Indians, Japanese and Chinese have contributed highly to the development of modern science.

Indian context

- For Indian scientists in the past, science was a double rebellion,
 - One against English domination.
 - And another against the fatalistic ethos of religion.

- This rebellious spirit revived science in India in the pre-Independence era.
- Sir C.V. Raman's discovery should not be seen independent of the social reform movements of those days.
- With an ideological shift in recent times, academic freedom is now under greater pressure.
- For science to excel it needs to be promoted in a free spirit.
- As Dyson argues, "science is an inherently subversive act, a threat to establishment of all kinds, whether it upends a long-standing scientific idea, or it questions the received political wisdom or irrationality".

Need for transformation

- Cultural changes are difficult to achieve, especially in a society that is bound by traditions.
- A former Director-General of the CSIR, said that tradition-bound countries such as India need to free themselves from the cultural chains of the past to foster original thinking.
- It is the duty of scientists to promote a free and unrestricted intellectual environment by actively engaging in the transformation of values.
- A key challenge is to strengthen the social democratic norms within the institutes that represent Indian diversity.
- National Science Day should provide a platform where free discussions are organised, endorsing the true spirit of science, that help realise its huge transformative potential.

Nut Graf

The programme Vigyan Sarvatra Pujyate is designed to make youth feel proud about India's scientific achievements. The event should be used to celebrate the true spirit of science that defies all types of intellectual restrictions, thus promoting critical thinking in academics.

Category: ENVIRONMENT

1. Tackling the plastic problem

Syllabus: Environmental pollution and degradation

Mains: Impact of plastic wastes, key challenges in addressing the issue and the way forward.

Context

The UN Environment Assembly meeting in February-March 2022.

Plastic waste in aquatic ecosystems

- A [United Nations Environment Programme \(UNEP\)](#) report in 2021, estimated that emissions of plastic waste into the aquatic ecosystems would triple by 2040 if no actions are undertaken.
- The UN Environment Assembly meeting scheduled in 2022 may formulate a way forward for global cooperation in this regard.

Negative impacts of Plastic waste

- Plastic products like bags, bottles, etc. take a long time to decompose.
- The increase in the consumption worldwide and low interests in recycling programmes have led to more prevalence of plastic wastes.
- Plastic wastes result in a huge loss of marine life, especially Marine fisheries and wildlife.

- This also impacts the livelihoods and income of people in the coastal regions, who are dependent on marine ecosystems.

Consumption externality

- Plastics is an example of a **consumption externality** (which involves many people) rather than a **production externality** (which involves one or multiple firms)
- Consumption externality is a complex issue, as it is challenging to differentiate the behaviour of consumers.
- Since the number of consumers is more, the cost of controlling them will also be high.

Key challenges

- Several regions across the world have banned plastic items, although this approach promotes a sustainable environment, and helps save marine and wildlife ecosystems, It causes:
 - Inconvenience for consumers
 - Increases substitution cost
 - Creates unemployment as it affects the production of plastics
 - Leads to less economic activity
 - Leads to less income generation
- The replacement of plastics that are low cost, have substitutes that result in a deadweight loss for the economy.
- If plastics are banned, the efficiency of imposing tax and the associated problems have to be considered.
- It is complex to identify and impose an exact tax regime as it depends on specific factors that vary across countries.

Way forward

- The environment regulation for plastics should include a 'command and control' approach.
 - "Command-and-control" approach demands the polluters to meet emission-reduction targets and facilitates the installation and use of specific types of equipment to reduce emissions.
- The effectiveness of regulations depends on its framework, foundation, design and execution.
- Regulations should be credible, transparent and predictable.
- A tax rate should be carefully determined and in general, the rate of tax on plastics should be higher than the cost of compliance.
- Eco-taxes may be imposed in the various stages of production, consumption or disposal of plastics.
- The pollution-controlling authority should install meters for recording the emission or the effluent discharged in the process of production or consumption of plastics.

Evaluating the social cost

- The social costs should be estimated differently in the local/regional and global contexts.
- Health and hygiene are the factors in the local context
- Climate change is the predominant factor in the global context.

- Eco-tax rates on plastics should be equal to the marginal social cost arising from the negative externality associated with production, consumption or disposal of goods and services. This requires evaluation of damage to the environment based on scientific assessment of the adverse impacts on health, environment, etc.

Conclusion

The comprehensive policy measures against plastics should involve,

- Removal of existing taxes and subsidies that have a negative environmental impact, taking into account the different types or grades of plastics, and restructuring existing taxes in an environmentally friendly manner.
- Inclusion of creative and effective policy solutions to reduce plastic consumption.
- Promoting multiple uses of plastics through better waste management, educating the public, incentivising R & D activities for substitute development, appropriate disposal mechanisms and waste management.

Nut Graf

There have been concerns growing over ecotoxicological implications due to the growing prevalence of plastics in the environment particularly in marine ecosystems which has visible effects on a trans-national scale. In this regard, the latest UN Environment Assembly meeting has gained significance and is expected to propose a framework for tackling the issue.

F. Prelims Facts

1. DRDO, Safran to develop engine for aircraft

Syllabus: GS3: Science and Technology: Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate.

Prelims: Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA)

Context:

- India and France are concluding a deal for the joint development of a 125KN engine for the indigenous fifth generation Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA).

Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA):

- The Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) is envisioned as a replacement for the British SEPECAT Jaguar and Mirage 2000 the IAF flies.
- AMCA is an Indian programme to develop fifth generation fighter aircraft for the Indian Air Force and the Indian Navy.
- The collaboration is between the Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO) and French engine maker Safran.
- The initial design of the AMCA started way back in 2009 and is envisaged as a twin engine stealth aircraft with an internal weapons bay.

G. Tidbits

Nothing here for today!!!

H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Q1. Consider the following statements with respect to International Atomic Energy Agency

(IAEA):

1. It is headquartered in Vienna, Austria
2. India is a founding member of the IAEA
3. RATS is a network for providing international assistance, upon request from a Member State, following a nuclear or radiological incident or emergency

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 3 only
- c. 1, 2 and 3
- d. None

Answer: a

Explanation:

- The IAEA is the international center for cooperation in the nuclear/atomic field. It is a UN agency headquartered in Vienna, Austria. **Hence Statement 1 is correct.**
- The address was known as 'Atoms for Peace' and this was the organization's first name when it was formally established in 1957. India became a member in 1957 itself. **Hence Statement 2 is correct.**
- The Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) is a permanent organ of the **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)**. Its objective is to help members states fight combat, extremism, terrorism and separatism. **Hence Statement 3 is not correct.**

Q2. Which of the following are the Specialized agencies of the United Nations?

1. Food and Agriculture Organization
2. International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)
3. International Telecommunication Union
4. World Health Organization
5. World Meteorological Organization

Options:

- a. 1, 2, 3 and 4 only
- b. 2, 3, 4 and 5 only
- c. 1, 3, 4 and 5 only
- d. 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Answer: c

Explanation:

- The UN Charter stipulates that each primary organ of the United Nations can establish various specialized agencies to fulfill its duties.
- There are 17 specialized agencies of the UN. They are mentioned in the table below:

Agency	Acronym	Headquarters	Founding Year
<u>Food and Agriculture Organization</u>	FAO	Rome, Italy	1945
<u>International Telecommunication Union</u>	ITU	Geneva, Switzerland	1865 (Joined UN in 1947)
<u>International Fund for Agricultural Development</u>	IFAD	Rome, Italy	1977
<u>International Labor Organization</u>	ILO	Geneva, Switzerland	1946
<u>International Maritime Organization</u>	IMO	London, United Kingdom	1948
<u>International Monetary Fund</u>	IMF	Washington, United States	1945
<u>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</u>	UNESCO	Paris, France	1946
<u>World Health Organization</u>	WHO	Geneva, Switzerland	1948
<u>United Nations Industrial Development Organization</u>	UNIDO	Vienna, Austria	1966
<u>International Civil Aviation Organization</u>	ICAO	Montreal, Canada	1944
<u>World Intellectual Property Organization</u>	WIPO	Geneva, Switzerland	1967
<u>International Fund for Agricultural Development</u>	IFAD	Rome, Italy	1977
<u>Universal Postal Union</u>	UPU	Bern, Switzerland	1874
<u>International Telecommunication Union</u>	ITU	Geneva, Switzerland	1865

United Nations World Tourism Organization	UNWTO	Madrid, Spain	1974
World Meteorological Organization	WMO	Geneva, Switzerland	1950
World Bank Group	WBG	Washington, D.C, USA	1944

- The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is not a specialized agency of the UN. **Hence Option C is correct.**

Q3. Which amongst the following statements is the best description of Doctrine of eminent Domain?

- It is a doctrine whereby a party may be barred from raising a claim due to an unreasonable delay in pursuing the claim
- It holds that a larger and greater body should not exercise functions which can be carried out efficiently by smaller and lesser body
- The purpose of this doctrine is to determine under which head of power or field i.e. under which list a given piece of legislation falls
- It is the right of the Central or State Government to acquire private property for public purpose

Answer: d

Explanation:

- The doctrine of Eminent domain means the supreme power of the government under which property of any individual can be taken over in the concern of the general public.
- Thus eminent domain is clarified as the power of the government to take over the property of a secluded person when it is wanted for a public purpose.
- Hence Option D is correct.**

Q4. The term 'Base Erosion and Profit Shifting' often seen in the news is related to

- Mining operation by multinational companies in resource-rich but backward areas
- Curbing of the tax evasion by multinational companies
- Exploitation of genetic resources of a country by multinational companies
- Lack of consideration of environmental costs in the planning and implementation of developmental projects

Answer: b

Explanation:

- Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) refers to the strategies used by multinational companies to avoid paying tax, by exploiting the mismatches and gaps in the tax rules.

- Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) is mostly prevalent in Intellectual Property (IP) intensive Technology domain (companies like Google, Apple etc) and the companies in Life Sciences domain like Pfizer, Merck etc.
- **Hence Option B is correct.**

Q5. With reference to the casual workers employed in India, consider the following statements:

1. All casual workers are entitled for employees Provident Fund Coverage
2. All casual workers are entitled for regular working hours and overtime payment
3. The government can by a notification specify that an establishment or industry shall pay wages only through its bank account.

Which of the above statements are correct?

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 2 and 3 only
- c. 1 and 3 only
- d. 1, 2 and 3

Answer: d

Explanation:

- According to Supreme Court standards, the definition of employee includes casual labor, casual workers (should) have all of the same rights as regular workers.
- Casual workers are entitled to social security payments under the Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, according to the Supreme Court. **Hence Statement 1 is correct.**
- According to the Minimum Wages Rules, 1950, employees in India are entitled to regular working hours and overtime compensation. **Hence Statement 2 is correct.**
- According to the Payment of Wages (Amendment) Act 2017, "the Government may specify that the employer of any industrial or other firm shall pay wages to each employee solely by cheque or by crediting the wages to his bank account." **Hence Statement 3 is correct.**

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions

1. Plastic sticks around in the environment for ages, threatening wildlife and marine species. Discuss India's efforts towards reducing its plastic footprint. (10 Marks, 150 Words)[GS-3, Environment]
2. India should set itself free from the cultural chains of the past to foster critical thinking. In the light of the statement, examine how the National Science Day can nurture a new generation of youth. (10 Marks, 150 Words)[GS-3, Science and Technology]