

International Relations This Week: Episode 72

International relations is a very important segment of the [UPSC syllabus](#). In this series, we present an analysis of the most important international issues and developments that occurred over the past week relevant for the IAS exam. In this article, you can learn more about the UK PM's visit to India, developments in Afghanistan, and Nigeria, the European Commission's President's visit and the latest developments on the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Video link: <https://youtu.be/ri-HWb80Jz0>

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1. Developments in Afghanistan

Background

- Eight months have passed since the [Taliban](#) takeover in Afghanistan.
- It was expected that the move would result in an unprecedented humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan as there were severe shortages of food and life-saving medicines.
- The Taliban failed to keep up their assurances of forming an inclusive government and restoration of the rights of women.

Latest developments

- Events of bombings - a series of bombings took place in the country targeting a school and a mosque in the Shia neighbourhood of the northern province of Kunduz.
 - Hospitals and schools especially those belonging to the minorities such as Shias, Hazaras and Tajiks are targeted.
- Socio-economic crisis - the U.S. has suspended the infrastructure projects and other forms of aid granted by the U.S. through USAID, the World Bank, IMF and the [Asian Development Bank](#).
 - It has also frozen the Afghan government's reserves held in U.S. bank accounts which are said to be valued at around \$9.4 billion as of April 2021.
 - The extreme measures taken by the U.S. have affected the 37 million Afghans that have resulted in economic failure and social unrest which ultimately help the Taliban strengthen their influence.
- Violence along the borders - there have been repeated exchanges of fires between the border security forces of Pakistan and Afghanistan.
 - The Taliban had promised the rest of the world that the land of Afghanistan would not be used against the interest of any other countries, but it has failed to do so in the case of the

anti-Pakistan insurgent group Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan which is also known as Pakistani Taliban.

- The Taliban have also attempted to block Pakistan's plans to finish fencing the 2,600 km border that was drawn by British colonial rulers with no consideration for the Pashtun tribes it divided.

Also read: [Durand Line](#)

Implications

- The ongoing crisis in Afghanistan is becoming more complex as the West has shifted its focus toward the conflict in Ukraine.
- Several states have still not recognised the Taliban thus aggravating the current crisis.
- Since the financial channels of Afghanistan have ceased, the Taliban are relying more on opium cropping and trade in contraband substances to source revenue.
 - This will have severe spill-over consequences for India and neighbouring countries.

2. Developments in Nigeria

Background

- Nigeria is the most populous and important country in Africa.
- It is a major oil-producing and exporting country.
- However, the country is struggling to protect its sovereignty and integrity due to the constant troubles caused by insurgents and terrorists.
- Continuous armed conflicts by and with Boko Haram have resulted in widespread displacements, food insecurity, and many victims of violence.

Boko Haram

- Boko Haram is a terrorist organization based in northeastern Nigeria, which is also active in countries like Chad, Niger, and northern Cameroon.
- Boko Haram means "Western education is forbidden".
- It has been involved in most serious human rights abuses such as female genital mutilation, abduction, hostage-taking, extrajudicial killing, looting arsenals, etc.

Crisis in Nigeria

- The morale of the military forces is low and they are often seen surrendering to these insurgents.
- The insurgents have extended their influence in recent times and control many rural and forest areas.
- There have been reports of large scale corruption in the country.
- The French and UN forces who were deployed for undertaking peacekeeping measures have also said that they will withdraw if the situation worsens.

Recent events

- There was an explosion at an illegal oil refinery in southern Nigeria which resulted in the death of over 100 people.
- This event has reflected the huge number of people working in illegal oil refineries in the Niger Delta where the unemployment rate is soaring.
- The government reports that in 2021, over \$3bn of oil has been stolen which is siphoned off from official pipelines and then refined in the bush and sold in the black market in Nigeria or exported.
- This has not just affected the government revenue but also has resulted in huge environmental damage as the gas produced in oil extraction is often burnt off, instead of being reused in a process called gas flaring. As the illegal oil business has grown, gas flaring has intensified and air pollution has worsened.

India-Nigeria Relations

- Nigeria is India's largest trading partner in Africa with bilateral trade worth \$16 billion in 2019-20.
- India is one of Nigeria's leading investors.
- In recent years, Nigeria has become one of the major sources of crude oil for India as India imports about 8 to 12% of its crude requirements from Nigeria.
- The current crisis in Nigeria is making India rethink its investment strategies in Africa.

Read more on [India - Africa relations](#) in the linked article.

3. Developments in Russia-Ukraine conflict

Background

For detailed background on the issue refer to the following article:

[Russia - Ukraine conflict](#)

Latest developments



Image source: BBC

- Russian forces have continued to focus their attacks on the eastern part of Ukraine.
- About 5 million refugees from Ukraine have crossed borders into neighbouring countries, and many more have been forced to move inside the country.
- The repercussions of the war are also felt in Russia. The Russian economy has experienced a severe shock.

Impact of war on Central Asian countries

- Central Asian republics are keenly following the events in Ukraine.
- Russia through its adventure in Ukraine has made a statement that none of these republics in Central Asia had a history of independent nationhood till they had joined the USSR.
- These countries in Central Asia fear that if Russia wins the war in Ukraine, it would be encouraged to extend its reclamation of the lost territories of the erstwhile USSR.
- If Russia fails to achieve anything significant in Ukraine it might shift its focus towards Central Asia and try to extend its dominance on these republics.
- The war has also impacted Russia's plans of establishing a Eurasian Economic Arrangement.

Impact on India

- As most of the Central Asian countries are landlocked and share vast boundaries with China, any fallout in the region would push these countries closer towards China.
- Russia is a major channel for India to access the Central Asian countries as there is no direct access and any disturbance between Russia and these countries will impact India's interests in the region.
- India is in a difficult situation with its growing relationship with the US on the one hand and Russia on the other hand with which it has had a time tested friendship and historic ties.

4. Visit of the President of the European Commission to India

Context

- President of the European Commission Ursula Von der Leyen visited India.
- The President of the European Commission had been invited as the Chief Guest for the 2022 edition of the Raisina Dialogue.

Know more about - [Raisina Dialogue](#)

Highlights of the visit

- The European country leaders who visited India for the Raisina Dialogue have persuaded India to change its stance in the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war.
- The West has urged India to stand against the violation of human rights, autocracies, dictatorships and perpetrators of war crimes such as Russia and China.
- There has also been slight criticism about India's conduct in failing to protect the rights of minorities and shrinking space for freedom of expression.
- India has asked the western world to look at Asia and questioned the muted response by the West on the issue of Afghanistan for the last 20 years.
- On the question of why India is increasing its oil procurement from Russia, the Indian Foreign Minister pointed out that India is still procuring very less when compared to what European countries are procuring from Russia.
- India has rightly used the Raisina Dialogue to show the western world that India takes its decisions based on its strategic autonomy, and national interests and cannot be forced to take a stance according to the West's lead.