

## International Relations This Week: Episode 75

Contemporary international affairs reflect the divergent issues and their implications on the rule-based global order. The circumstances of developments in Ethiopia in an ongoing humanitarian crisis, the much-awaited visit of President Biden to Asian countries, the role of Turkey in Eurasian politics and the neighbouring Pakistan's financial woes have direct or indirect implications on India's national interests. These are important developments in international relations from a [UPSC exam](#) perspective. In this article, you can get a gist of these points discussed by Prof. Pushpesh Pant in the video given below:

**Video Link:** [https://youtu.be/O5a14I\\_S7mw](https://youtu.be/O5a14I_S7mw)

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### 1. Developments in Ethiopia

#### Context:

The Ethiopian and Eritrean forces are battling to remove the Tigray People's Liberation Front, or T.P.L.F., from its stronghold in the northern region of Tigray. This has led to destabilising effect on the [Horn of Africa](#) which has led to a severe humanitarian crisis.

#### Background of the Conflict:

- The conflict started in November 2020, when Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed ordered a military offensive against regional forces in Tigray.
- There were allegations that Ethiopian and Eritrean forces carried out killings and rapes in the Shire region of Tigray in November 2020.
- There has been a mass emigration of more than two million of Tigray's six million people since 4 November.
- Due to the conflict, the Ethiopian government imposed a blockade on the Tigray region which has led to a decrease in the flow of humanitarian aid to the region.

#### Perception towards Noble Peace Winner Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed:

- In 2019, Mr. Abiy Ahmed received the Noble Peace Prize for concluding a peace treaty with Mr. Isaias, the dictator of Eritrea.
- He was also regarded as a young, energetic, liberal leader, who would herald a new change in Ethiopia.
- He abolished controls on the news media, initiated sweeping economic reforms, and stabilised relationships with the neighbouring countries of South Sudan, Egypt, and Somalia in pursuance of GERD Diplomacy (Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam).
- However, in the aftermath of the conflict since 2019, Mr. Abiy had resorted to old tactics of repression such as shutting down the internet in some areas, arresting journalists and detaining protesters and critics.
- The Norwegian Nobel Committee, which awards the Nobel Peace Prize, issued a rare admonition of an honoree, saying he had *“a special responsibility to end the conflict and contribute to peace.”*

### India's Interests in Ethiopia

- The relevance of India's diplomatic and economic connections with Ethiopia may be greater than it appears on the surface.
- India shares friendly relations with Ethiopia and is one of Ethiopia's most significant non-hydrocarbon investors.
- Approximately 2,000 Indians currently work as professors in Ethiopia across Tigray's four major universities.
- After the start of the conflict, universities and colleges in Tigray shut down, forcing Indians in the region to return home.
- The domestic instability will have an impact, but India will not be a directly affected party for the same.
- India has in generality, goodwill in its relationship with Ethiopia and other African nations, regardless of the political leadership.

### Way Forward

- Humanitarian organizations should have quick access to Ethiopia's government.
- The Eritrean military should leave Ethiopian territory because their presence is disruptive and violates international and regional standards.
- Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia need to be identified and safeguarded.
- To assist combat disinformation, the Ethiopian government should lift the communications restriction and support a genuine and impartial inquiry into accusations of crimes.
- The international community should step up its diplomatic efforts to assist Sudan in resolving its border dispute via rule-based discussions.
- It should also push Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan to reach an agreement on the Nile's waters and the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam.

## 2. President Biden's Visit to Asia

### Context:

President Biden is on his first trip to Asia since taking office with stops in Japan and South Korea. The intent is to consolidate economic partnerships and enhance multilateral engagement with the Asian allies in countering Chinese hegemony in the Pacific Region.

### Significance of the Visit:

- Despite agreeing with the One China Policy, the USA has hinted at its displeasure over the Taiwan issue. Biden has sought to revitalise the [QUAD](#) in order to send a message to China. The comments about appropriating Taiwan forcefully by China have led to a diplomatic issue considering the USA provides defence capabilities to Taiwan.
- In order to create a bulwark against Russia, Biden has pushed for the [Indo-Pacific Economic Framework](#), a long-sought economic agenda among 13 nations.
- The U.S.A is also having in-roads to set the economic rules in the region, and Biden met with several top South Korean companies like Samsung Electronics and Hyundai Motor Group, which reflected his interest in attracting greater South Korean investment in the United States. One big win was Hyundai's announcement that it would establish a new electric vehicle and electric vehicle battery manufacturing plant in Georgia, which will create 8,100 jobs.
- The Biden visit will also see put Pyongyang's nuclear programme on the agenda in along with boosting cooperation on technology, trade and security issues with South Korea and Japan.
- Biden will also convene a summit of the leaders of the Quad grouping – which includes the US, Japan, India and Australia, and launch the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), an agreement that seeks to set standards on supply chains, worker protections, decarbonisation and anti-corruption.
- The IPEF seeks to strengthen economic relationships between all of the participating nations to enhance resilience, sustainable development, inclusiveness, economic expansion, fair treatment, and competitive spirit in the Indo-Pacific region. Biden initiated the IPEF with twelve initial partners who collectively account for 40% of the global GDP.

### Recommendations for India:

- India, Japan, and the United States should continue to enhance their broader ties, including interactions with China, to show the benefits of collaboration and coordination.
- The United States should continue to back India's efforts to strengthen ties with its friends and neighbours in Southeast Asia.

- India must implement its “Act East” strategy, which aims to strengthen both strategic and commercial ties with the area.

Know more about [India's Act East Policy](#) in the link.

### Way Forward

- The multilateral engagements must be targeted to offer practical solutions to critical problems such as supply chain bottlenecks, the greening of infrastructure, and the dissemination of digital technologies.
- Along with the [AUKUS](#) alliance, revitalising QUAD will have greater maritime strategic importance. This needs to emphasise the indivisibility of the rules-based order.

### 3. Developments Associated with Turkey

#### Context:

The Republic of Turkey has been in news for many reasons due to its strategic location and a stark shift in the socio-political nature of government. With its involvement in Syria to the division of the island of Cyprus, Turkey is seeing a shift in its global position.

#### Common Irritants:

- There has been a rise in Islamic fundamentalism in the region since the election of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in 2014. Despite the liberal and pluralistic interpretations of Islam in the formative years of the Republic, Turkey has seen a stark shift in political decisions such as the change of name to *Türkiye*, and the conversion of Hagia Sophia into a mosque.
- Territorial dispute with Greece over the maritime jurisdiction of the Aegean Sea has also led to the heating up of issues in Europe. The dispute has to do with Turkish claims to maritime territories in the eastern Mediterranean Sea. Turkey is the only member state of the [United Nations](#) that does not recognise Cyprus.
- Turkey has been consistently taking an anti-USA approach despite being a NATO member, all throughout the Cold War era. The Turkish President has said that Turkey is “not favourable” towards Finland and Sweden joining NATO. Further, one of the key issues is Turkey’s purchase of Russian [S-400](#) air defense systems, which, according to many in the West, illustrates Turkey’s realignment away from NATO and the U.S. in defense procurement and geopolitical orientation.
- With reference to the Turkey-Kurdish conflict, the Kurds comprise nearly one-fifth of Turkey’s population of seventy-nine million. Various insurgent groups such as the PKK and YPG have waged an insurgency since 1984 against Turkish authorities for greater cultural and political

rights, primarily with the objective of establishing an independent Kurdish state. The ongoing conflict has resulted in nearly forty thousand deaths.

- Domestically, Turkey's economic problems have begun rearing their head as President Erdogan has continuously insisted on cutting the interest rates leading to a record high of 21 percent inflation. This has resulted in an increase in the prices of medicine, milk, toilet paper, etc. Some gas stations have also closed after exhausting their stock. This situation also needs an early course correction.

### **Recommendations for India:**

- Turkey has been taking an anti-India and pro-Pakistan approach since the rise of the far-right Nationalist Movement Party (MHP). This has also led to a close relationship between Turkey and China, and Turkey is contemplating joining the Chinese Silk Route project which travels through disputed territory. India must tread carefully and cultivate relationships with countries which are more conforming to its national interest.
- India also stands to gain from the Turkish experiment with the USA, since India has also purchased the same S-400 air defence system from Russia, despite the USA's warning over the application of [CAATSA](#). It is not probable that the USA would put an embargo on India without Turkey having to face any repercussions for the same act as both countries have been described as strategic allies of the USA.

### **Way Forward**

- The USA must engage with Turkey in order to align its interests in the region and avoid any spillover effect.
  - The recent Ukraine War has shown that Turkey is willing to act in line with NATO members but prefers to have limited interference from [NATO](#) advisories. Though Turkey voted for a UN General Assembly resolution condemning Russia, it has not sanctioned Russia or closed its airspace to Russian aircraft.
  - The claims of maritime jurisdiction between Greece, Cyprus and Turkey must be resolved under the aegis of [UNCLOS](#). The EU and Turkey should not let tensions in the eastern Mediterranean lead to open conflict since the issue can have ramifications for the region and the global relations at large.
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## **4. Neighbourhood - Developments in Pakistan**

### **Context:**

Recently at the Turkish Pakistan Ship Building Program, the Pakistani Prime Minister declared Turkey to be a time-tested big brother. This partnership could lead to the inclusion of Turkey in the [China Pakistan Economic Corridor](#).



**Economic Crisis in Pakistan:**

- Pakistan is the worst performer in Asia, with its rupee dropping by almost 8% in the last month.
- The economic crisis in Pakistan is due to extensive spending on non-developmental and economically unviable projects. The country is in dire need of \$36 billion in foreign financing in the next fiscal year.
- China Pakistan Economic Corridor also created a Chinese debt of \$64 billion on Pakistan, which was originally valued at \$47 billion in 2014.
- The reserves of the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) plummeted to USD 10.308 billion with a decrease of USD 190 million.
- The IMF has refused to revive the USD 6 billion programme if Pakistan fails to remove the fiscally unsustainable fuel and electricity subsidies.

**Way Forward:**

- There is a need to understand the issues with Chinese Projects which create a debt trap in the host country. The recent example of Sri Lanka proves a similar experience.
  - The International Monetary Fund shall be responsible to provide the bail-out but in the experience of Pakistan, without structural reforms, the same shall be redundant. Hence, there is a need to eliminate the subsidies on electricity and petrol.
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