

International Relations This Week: 11 Jan to 17 Jan 2023

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 UN Designated LeT Terrorist, World Economic Forum, South Korea's Indo-Pacific Vision, Starlink in Ukraine and UK-Japan Defense Pact.

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1. UN Designated LeT Terrorist

Key Details:

- The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) 1267 Committee listed Abdul Rehman Makki as a global terrorist. Makki is a Pakistani national.
- Makki, who is brother-in-law to terrorist leader and Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT) founder Hafiz Saeed, will now be subject to sanctions that entail freezing assets and travel bans among other measures.
- According to the UNSC 1267 Committee, Makki acts as head of political affairs for the terror group LeT.
- He also functioned as head of LET's foreign relations department and member of the LeT's Shura or governing body.

2. World Economic Forum

Introduction:

- The annual meeting of the [World Economic Forum](#) has begun at Davos, Switzerland.

- The theme for 53rd WEF meeting will be 'Cooperation in a Fragmented World'.
- The gathering of professionals, academics, investors, and political and commercial leaders will discuss and support creative solutions for some of the most serious problems confronting the world today, such as climate change, global inflation, and the Russia-Ukraine situation.

Important Reports of World Economic Forum:

- Global Competitiveness Report
- Global Information Technology Report
- Global Gender Gap Report
- Global Risks Report
- Global Travel and Tourism Report
- Global Enabling Trade Report
- Global Environment Performance Index
- Inclusive Development Index

3. South Korea's Indo-Pacific Vision

Introduction:

- South Korea has recently unveiled its own “Strategy for a Free, Peaceful and Prosperous Indo-Pacific Region”.
- The move highlights a decisive shift in Seoul's political intent and vision leaving behind former President Moon Jae-in's cautious approach to the Indo-Pacific.
- South Korea's version of “strategic ambiguity” emphasized treading a delicate balance between the two great powers, the United States and China, without taking obvious sides.

South Korea's Balancing Act:

- South Korea has been militarily aligned with the United States since the 1950-53 Korean War, and is also deeply economically intertwined with neighbouring China.
- As the US bolsters its alliances to counter China throughout the Indo-Pacific region, medium-size regional powers including South Korea are coming under growing pressure to choose a side.
- Even Beijing is putting pressure on South Korea to move the US ally more closely into China's sphere of influence.

Inclination towards the U.S.

- In April 2022, President Yoon Suk Yeol's policy consultation delegation on a visit to the United States highlighted the upgrading of the South Korea-U.S. strategic alliance and

also South Korea's new interest in being included as part of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad).

- The U.S. also upgraded the South Korea-U.S. "global comprehensive alliance" beyond the Korean Peninsula and South Korea also signed onto the United States' Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF).
- South Korea also upgraded its [Terminal High-Altitude Area Defence \(THAAD\) system](#) despite facing domestic protests and opposition by China.
- South Korea contends the THAAD system is meant to protect South Korea against threats from the North, but China sees it as a direct threat to its security.

Inclination towards China:

- Contemporary relations between China and South Korea are characterised by extensive trading and economic relations. China is by far South Korea's largest trading partner.
- In 2015, China and South Korea signed the bilateral China–South Korea Free Trade Agreement which aimed to boost annual bilateral trade to over \$300 billion, while lifting both countries' GDP.
- In November 2020, China and South Korea, along with 13 other Asia-Pacific nations, signed the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership.
- China, South Korea and Japan are also engaged in long-running negotiations for a trilateral free-trade agreement which would further integrate their economies.
- South Korea also joined the China led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), in 2015 despite Washington's misgivings.

Indo-Pacific Vision by South Korea:

- South Korea's vision is based on three principles of cooperation: 'Inclusiveness, Trust and Reciprocity'.
- South Korea joins several countries that have put out a strategy for the Indo-Pacific region.
- The strategy observed that the stability of the regional order is being increasingly eroded by rising uncertainties in the security environment, and there is growing concern about "democratic backsliding and challenges to universal values such as freedom, the rule of law, and human rights."
- Stressing that their inclusive Indo-Pacific Strategy neither "targets nor excludes" any specific nation, South Korea expects to work with every partner that is aligned with its vision and principles of cooperation.
- On relations with Japan which have seen some friction of late, the strategy said improved relations with Japan is essential for fostering cooperation and solidarity among like-minded Indo-Pacific nations.

- With China, a key partner for achieving prosperity and peace in the Indo-Pacific region, “we will nurture a sounder and more mature relationship as we pursue shared interests based on mutual respect and reciprocity, guided by international norms and rules.”

Significance of this policy for India:

- The three principles of cooperation- ‘inclusiveness, trust and reciprocity’ of South Korea’s vision perfectly aligns with India’s foreign policy.
- It prioritises Special Strategic Partnership with India.
 - As per the strategy “India presents great potential for growth, having the world’s second largest population and cutting-edge IT and space technologies”.
- South Korea expresses its strategy to increase strategic communication and cooperation through high-level exchanges in foreign affairs and defence, while strengthening the foundation for enhanced economic cooperation by upgrading the Republic of Korea (ROK)-India Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement [CEPA].
- It also talks about building an open and inclusive architecture in South Asia through different substantive cooperation programmes with sub regional multilateral including the Indian Ocean Region Rim association (IORA).
 - South Korea had joined IORA as dialogue partner in 2018 and the SAARC which it joined as observer in 2006.

4. Starlink Satellites in Ukraine**Background:**

- In February 2022, as Russia’s invasion disrupted Ukraine’s Internet services, the country’s deputy prime minister, Mykhaylo Fedorov, took to Twitter to ask Elon Musk to activate Starlink, SpaceX’s broadband constellation, for use.
- Musk reacted instantly and activated Ukraine’s Starlink service immediately.
- Since then Starlink has been helping Ukraine in the fight against Russia by providing thousands of Starlink satellite internet devices to Ukraine without any charge.
- The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) was one of the contributors for early U.S support for Starlink in Ukraine. Other contributors for starlink in Ukraine include Poland, the U.K, several NGOs.

Starlink in Ukraine War:

- Starlink internet terminals have been vital in ensuring continued internet and cellular connectivity in areas that have been destroyed in Ukraine’s fight against Russia. More than 1,50,000 people were using Starlink’s internet service.
- It also emerged as a crucial communication tool for Ukraine’s armed forces because their own mediums of communication were compromised by Russian hackers.

- Starlink is easily accessible even in the combat environment because it is portable and can be rigged to run off a car battery.
- Starlink is being used by troops, NGOs and, according to reports from CNN, used to help fly drones monitoring troop movements and artillery fire.
- Ukrainian soldiers are using Starlink internet to upload pictures of probable Russian targets.
- The terminals provided by Starlink have been used for battlefield communications. And have become so important to the war effort that when areas are liberated by Ukrainian troops they have made requests for Starlink services to be activated there.
- The report suggested that Ukraine used the internet service to successfully attack Sevastopol — the Crimean headquarters of Russia's Black Sea Fleet.

Understanding Starlink Satellites:

- Starlink is a satellite constellation that comprises thousands of small satellites in Low-Earth orbit.
- The Starlink satellites carry Hall thrusters, which use electricity and krypton gas to generate an impulse, to manoeuvre in orbit, maintain altitude and guide the spacecraft back into the atmosphere at the end of their mission.
- SpaceX first began sending them into space in 2019 and currently, there are more than 3,000 of these satellites that send internet signals to designated ground receivers.
- Unlike traditional internet providers, Starlink doesn't require any ground infrastructure.
 - One just needs to have a small satellite dish or a receiver device to access high-speed internet, much like satellite TV.
- The company also has a mobile application for Android and iOS that uses Augmented Reality to help customers choose the ideal location and position for their receivers.

5. UK-Japan Defense Pact

Introduction:

- In line with Britain's "tilt towards the Indo-Pacific" policy, the U.K. and Japan have signed a defence agreement called 'Reciprocal Access Agreement'.
- The Japan-UK RAA is an agreement which establishes procedures between Japan and the UK for the cooperative activities conducted by the defence force of one country while visiting the other country, and defines a status of the visiting force.
 - The UK is the second country, after Australia, to sign the RAA with Japan.
- According to the Prime Minister of Britain, the Reciprocal Access Agreement would be significant for both nations as it cements commitment to the Indo-Pacific and underlines joint efforts to bolster economic security, enhance defence cooperation and provide momentum to innovations that create skilled jobs.

- The new pact is regarded as the most significant treaty between the two countries since the signing of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty of Alliance in 1902.
- This will simplify procedures when implementing cooperative activities, such as port calls of vessels and joint exercises between the two countries and further promote bilateral security and defence cooperation.

Growing Closeness between UK and Japan:

- Britain and Japan enjoy strong historical ties that underpin their increased cooperation in recent years.
 - Britain was an important model for Japan's late 19th century modernization efforts and both countries were formal allies in the early 20th century, in part, in an effort to counter the rising challenge of Russia as a geopolitical actor in Asia.
- Japan and Britain have deepened their security partnership in recent years, taking advantage, in part, of their more focused and increasingly strategic national security decision-making processes.
 - In December 2022, Japan's F-X fighter jet program was merged with the UK and Italy's 'Tempest' program to create the Global Combat Air Programme.
- The UK and Japan signed a free trade agreement in October 2020, marking the beginning of a new phase of economic partnership
 - The U.K. and Japan had also launched a digital partnership aimed at bolstering cooperation in semiconductors, cyber resilience and online safety.
 - Britain is also considering accession to the [Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership \(CPTPP\)](#).