



RSTV Big Picture: India and West Asia-New frontiers

- **Context:** PM Modi was on a visit to Saudi Arabia. India and Saudi Arabia inked over a dozen agreements in several key sectors including oil and gas, defence and civil aviation to bolster their ties as Prime Minister Narendra Modi held extensive talks with Kingdom's top leadership.
- **Highlights of the visit:**
 - The two sides held bilateral talks during which they reviewed the historical and close relations that bind the two friendly countries and their peoples.
 - They exchanged views on regional and international issues of mutual interest.
 - The two sides re-affirmed their deep commitment to strengthen the strategic partnership envisaged in the 'Riyadh Declaration' of March 2010.
 - The two sides expressed satisfaction at the establishment of Strategic Partnership Council between the two countries and the signing of its founding document.
 - Both sides expressed appreciation for the progress of bilateral relationship in political, economic, security, defence, manpower and people to people exchanges, in recent years, which have strengthened the bilateral relations.
 - The two sides discussed regional and international issues of mutual interest, and reiterated their categorical rejection of all forms of interference in the internal affairs of countries, and the need for the international community to fulfill its responsibilities towards preventing any attacks on the sovereignty of States.
 - They stressed the Security Council Resolution (2254) with regard to the situation in Syria, and emphasized the importance of preserving the unity of Yemen and achieving its security and stability, and the importance of a political solution to the Yemeni crisis on the basis of the GCC initiative, the outcomes of the Yemeni National Dialogue and the Security Council Resolution (2216).
 - Both sides expressed hope for achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in Palestine based on the Arab Peace Initiative and the relevant UN resolutions, to guarantee the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and the establishment of their independent state on the 1967 borders with Jerusalem as its capital.
 - The two sides agreed on the importance of bilateral engagement to promote ways to ensure the security and safety of waterways in the Indian Ocean region and the Gulf region from the threat and dangers that may affect the interests of the two countries including their national security.
 - The two sides stressed that the extremism and terrorism threaten all nations and societies.
 - The two sides noted the continued positive economic transformation in both countries and stressed the importance of expanding the trade and investment ties in order to advance the strategic cooperation.
 - They reaffirmed the further deepening of trade and investment cooperation between the two countries under the Vision 2030 of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
 - During the visit, a number of MoUs were signed in several areas, including Energy, Civil Aviation, Security Cooperation, Defence, launch of RuPAY Cards and regulation of medical products to further strengthen cooperation across the sectors.
- **India and West Asia:**
 - India has economic, political, security and strategic interests with the West Asian countries.
 - Energy,
 - Trade
 - Safety of Indian community
 - 70 per cent of India's imported energy needs come from West Asia.
 - India is the largest recipient of foreign remittances from west Asia. 11 million Indians work in West Asia.
 - **Importance:**
 - To counter radicalization
 - Gate way to central Asia
 - Geostrategic importance
 - **Issues:**
 - Political instability in Syria, Yemen, Iraq
 - extra-regional players such as the USA and Russia
 - Presence of ISIS and other terrorist groups
 - GCC-Iran rivalry
 - Shia-Sunni conflict
 - Saudi-Iran rivalry
 - Arab Israel Conflict
 - Israel - Palestine Conflict
 - US-Iran conflict.
 - Influence of Pakistan.



➤ India's Look West policy:

- Cold war period: India remained a passive player though maintained close economic cooperation with both Saudi Arabia and Iran.
- India adopted Look West policy in 2005.
- India now follows a Secular and Non- Aligned Policy.
- Focus is on business-to-business and people-to-people relationships.
- There is focus on maritime diplomacy.
- Relationship today is driven more by economic calculation than political rhetoric.



• **Background of India Saudi relations:**

- India and Saudi Arabia enjoy cordial and friendly relations reflecting the centuries old economic and socio-cultural ties.
- The establishment of diplomatic relations in 1947 was followed by high-level visits from both sides.
- The historic visit of King Abdullah to India in 2006 resulted in signing of 'Delhi Declaration' imparting a fresh momentum to the bilateral relationship.
- The reciprocal visit by Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh to Saudi Arabia in 2010 raised the level of bilateral engagement to 'Strategic Partnership' and the 'Riyadh Declaration' signed during the visit captured the spirit of enhanced cooperation in political, economic, security and defence realms.
- India is one of the Kingdom's 8 Strategic Partner Countries under 'Vision 2030'.
- Saudi Arabia is India's 4th largest trade partner and is a major source of energy as India imports around 18 % of our crude oil requirement from the Kingdom.
- In 2018-19, the India-Saudi bilateral trade has increased by 23.83 % to US \$ 34.03 billion.
- Saudi Aramco and UAE's ADNOC are jointly participating in the development of US \$ 44 billion 'West Coast Refinery & Petrochemicals Project Limited' in Raigad, Maharashtra.
- The 2.6 million (as of August 2019) strong Indian community in Saudi Arabia is the largest expatriate community in the Kingdom and is the 'most preferred community' due to their expertise, sense of discipline, law abiding and peace loving nature.
- The Hajj Quota was increased by 24, 975 in 2019, enabling 2, 00, 000 Indians performing Hajj in 2019. Around 7, 00, 000 Indians also visit the Kingdom to perform Umrah every year.

• **Background of India and UAE relations:**

- India and United Arab Emirates (UAE) established diplomatic relations in 1972; the UAE Embassy in India was opened in 1972 while Indian Embassy in UAE was opened in 1973.
- India-UAE bilateral relations have received impetus from time-to-time with exchange of high-level visits from both sides.
- India and UAE have following institutional mechanisms in place for addressing sector-specific issues.
- India-UAE commercial relations are anchored by energy cooperation, trade, investments by UAE in India and investments & businesses driven by Indian expatriates in UAE.
- In the energy sector, UAE accounts for 8 percent of India's oil imports and is the fifth largest supplier of crude oil to India.
- Both the countries have speeded up the relationship to transform from what used to be a buyer-seller relationship into strategic partnership.
- India-UAE trade which was valued at US\$ 180 million per annum in the 1970s, is today around US\$ 50 billion (exports from India US\$ 28 billion and imports to India US\$ 22 billion in the year 2017) making India the second largest trading partner of



UAE, while UAE is India's third largest trading partner (after China and US). Moreover, UAE is the second largest export destination of India of over US\$ 31 billion for the year 2016-17.

- The two nations share historical ties and have maintained regular cultural exchanges both at official and people to people levels. India and UAE signed a Cultural Agreement in 1975.
- New data from the International Organization of Migration showed that the Indian population in UAE has grown to 3.3 million, making it the largest concentration of Indian nationals outside India. Professionally qualified personnel constitute about 15 & 20 percent of the community, followed by 20 percent white-collar non-professionals
- **Background of India and Iran relations:**
 - India-Iran relations span millennia marked by meaningful interactions.
 - The two countries shared a border till 1947 and share several common features in their language, culture and traditions. Indian subcontinent and the Persian Gulf have strong commercial, energy, cultural and people-to-people links.
 - India and Iran established diplomatic links on March 15, 1950.
 - In April 2001 the two countries signed the **Tehran Declaration** which set forth the areas of possible cooperation between the two countries.
 - Both sides signed **The New Delhi Declaration** in 2003 which set forth the vision of strategic partnership between India and Iran.
 - India-Iran bilateral trade during the fiscal year 2018-19 rose to USD 17.03 billion as compared to USD 13.76 billion in 2017-18. The value of India's exports stood at USD 3.5 billion and imports from Iran were USD 13.5 billion.
 - During the visit of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi to Tehran in May 2016, the contract on Chabahar was signed which, inter-alia, comprises investment of \$85 million for equipping the port. The contract also comprises of provision of credit of approximately USD 150 million for the development of the 1st Phase of Shahid Beheshti port at Chabahar.
 - The Indian community in Iran comprises of around 4000 Indian nationals.

SOURCES:

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