

India must retain strong ties with Iran as it seeks partnership with the U.S.-Israel-UAE bloc

The virtual meet of the Foreign Ministers of India, the U.S., Israel and the UAE is a strong manifestation of the changes in West Asian geopolitics.

If Israel and the UAE did not even have formal diplomatic relations a year ago, their growing economic and strategic cooperation is opening up opportunities for other powers, including India. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, now in Israel, joined the quadrilateral conference after meeting his Israeli counterpart Yair Lapid, where they had agreed to launch talks for a free trade agreement.

The four-nation meeting also points to India's strategic desire to adopt a regional foreign policy strategy towards West Asia, transcending its bilateralism. Over the years, India has built vibrant bilateral ties with all the countries in the grouping. It is a member of the Quad with the U.S., Australia and Japan, which have common concerns and shared interests on East Asia. Israel is one of India's top defence suppliers. The UAE is vital for India's energy security. The Gulf country, which hosts millions of Indian workers, has also shown interest to mediate between India and Pakistan.

In the past, there were three pillars to India's West Asia policy — the Sunni Gulf monarchies, Israel and Iran. Now that the gulf between the Sunni kingdoms and Israel is being narrowed, especially after the Abraham Accords, the normalisation agreements signed between Israel and the UAE and Bahrain under the tutelage of the Trump administration, India faces fewer challenges to a regionalist approach. Mr. Jaishankar has hinted that there would be more meetings among the four countries.

While it is too early to speak of the strategic significance of such a grouping, there are areas where it can deepen its engagement — trade, energy ties, fighting climate change and enhancing maritime security. But India should also be mindful of the challenges in the region. The U.S. is clearly seeking to lessen its footprint here as part of its pivot to East Asia to tackle China's rise, which is redrawing West Asia's traditional equations.

India should be careful not to get sucked into the many conflicts of West Asia that could intensify amid growing regional rivalries. While the Abraham Accords made it easier for India to find common ground with the Israelis and the Emiratis, the contradiction between this emerging bloc and Iran remains as intense as ever.

India, which sees itself aligned with the U.S. in the Indo-Pacific, faces deepening insecurities in continental Asia after the American withdrawal from Afghanistan. And it will have to work closely with countries such as Iran to deal with the challenges emanating from a post-American Afghanistan. So the challenge before New Delhi is to retain a healthy relationship with Iran even as it seeks to build a stronger regional partnership with the U.S.-Israel-UAE bloc.

GS World Team Input

IN THE NEWS

What is Abraham Accord?

- ➔ The Israel-UAE normalization agreement is officially called the Abraham Accords Peace Agreement.
- ➔ It was initially agreed to in a joint statement by the United States, Israel and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on August 13, 2020.
- ➔ The UAE thus became the third Arab country, after Egypt in 1979 and Jordan in 1994, to agree to formally normalize its relationship with Israel as well as the first Persian Gulf country to do so.
- ➔ Concurrently, Israel agreed to suspend plans for annexing parts of the West Bank.
- ➔ The agreement normalized what had long been informal but robust foreign relations between the two countries.

Committed To Excellence

Expected Questions (Prelims Exams)

- Q. The Abrahamic Pact was made between which of the following?
- (a) America-Israel
 - (b) Saudi Arabia-Israel
 - (c) UAE-Israel
 - (d) Iran-Israel

Expected Questions (Mains Exams)

- Q. What strategic advantage opportunities have arisen for India in the context of normalization of relations between Israel and some Arab countries in West Asia? What policy should India adopt with regard to this region?
- (250 Words)

World

Committed To Excellence

Note: - The question of the main examination given for practice is designed keeping in mind the upcoming UPSC main examination. Therefore, to get an answer to this question, you can take the help of this source as well as other sources related to this topic.