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Editorial Discussion & Analysis (EDA)

20th & 21st August 2021

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Note -

- The Newspaper clippings pasted in PDF are important from Mains point of view as it contains the fodder material for Mains Answer Writing.
- Also watch DND video lectures everyday @ 4 PM on Sleepy's YouTube channel in order to understand how to get the most out of everyday's Newspaper .

Click [here](#) to watch the following topics on YouTube

1. Indian Society

1.1. Is a Caste Census Required? (The Hindu)

Is a Caste Census Desirable?

- Caste census would actually bring to the fore the large number of issues that any democratic country needs to attend to.
- Courts in India have often emphatically said that it is important to have adequate data with regard to reservation.
- We must not get fixated over only those communities which want welfare benefits from the state must benefit while others not.
- Caste is not only a source of disadvantage; it is also a very important source of privilege and advantage in our society.
- Caste enumeration is also required to document, as far as possible, this privilege
- Caste has produced advantages for certain communities, and these also need to be recorded.
- The Naming and counting of caste is a difficult thing that we have to pass through in order to bring about a future when it will not matter as much as it matters today.

Why do Governments Shy away from Releasing the Caste Census?

- Main need is that of exposing privilege.
- Important questions of demands coming up because of mismatches between the numbers that we come out with and the share in resources that different communities have.
- **Fear Of Exposure by the Government.**
- **Those in power control data and information.**
- Data has been collected but has not been made public.
- Increase friction, to some extent harden caste identities in the short term.
- **Democracy is becoming a rule by particular party or parties which have won an election.** Vested Interests by political parties resist them from releasing public data.
- **2 exercises of a caste census – one carried out by the Union government in 2011 and another by the Karnataka government in 2015**

2. International Relation

2.1. The Abraham Accords as India's West Asia bridge (The Hindu)

- Context- Abraham accords makes India's engagement in West Asia easier.

What Is Abraham Accord?

- In August 2020, led by the US- Israel and the UAE, the leaders of the three countries agreed to "the full normalization of relations between Israel and the United Arab Emirates", calling the agreement a "historic diplomatic breakthrough" that would "advance peace in the Middle East region". The agreement is called the 'Abraham Accord'.

What is in there for New Delhi?

- New Delhi is taking advantage of the Abraham Accords deal signed between Israel and a consortium of Arab States led by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in 2020.
- Indian contingent of the Indian Air Force (IAF) will now visit Israel in October to take part in multilateral military exercises.

Deepening ties in the Gulf

- India conducted the 'Zayed Talwar' naval exercises with the UAE off the coast of Abu Dhabi.
- Indian Army chief, General M.M. Naravane, visited the UAE and Saudi Arabia, becoming the first chief of the Indian Army to do so.
- In 2017 India signed a deal with Oman to access to the facility of Duqm Port.
- Abraham Accords has removed a significant strategic obstacle of balancing the act India has to play between Arab Gulf & Israel.

Changes After the Accord

- Accords, from the UAE's perspective, were to make sure the emirate along with its international centres of trade such as Dubai and Abu Dhabi **do not become targets between Jerusalem and Tehran.**
- Riyadh has praised the Accords, but said that **the resolution of the Palestinian State remains at the forefront of its requirements.**

Conclusion

- Historically, India's Non Alignment approach has always been careful of maintaining a balance between Israel and West Asia.
- **In the Past India has been training Iraqi Air Force cadets on MiG aircraft in Tikrit between 1958 and 1989, while also maintaining good relations with former President Saddam Hussein.**

- Last month India used Iranian airspace and facilities when evacuating its diplomatic staff from Kandahar
- Despite USA led Sanctions on Iran and tensions between Israel & Iran, India has safeguarded its strategic interests and worked with Iran.
- **From the UN Security Council to the Indo-Pacific, New Delhi is expected to be more assertive, diplomatically and militarily.**

2.1. The Sins of Empire (Indian Express)

- Context- The Mess Left Behind in Afghanistan After USA

Issue

- The wars in Iraq, Libya, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Somalia, Lebanon; the coups from Iran to Chile.
- Creation of secret instruments of violence in assorted places from Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Laos, Honduras, El Salvador
- Exporters of violent fundamentalism from Saudi Arabia to Pakistan

Did USA intervention in any of the above countries achieved any constructive outcome?

Deadly Sins of an Empire (USA)-

- Corruption- Internally, empire always empowers corrupt practices, the legions of lobbyists, arms dealers. Corruption ensured both that the US Treasury was drained and no state was built in Afghanistan.
- Self Deception- From Vietnam to Afghanistan, America knew exactly what is going on. But the stakes in keeping the myth of imperial virtue and imperial power produce self-deceptions
- Morality- What does the rule of law mean when empire itself enacts a regular lawlessness
- Continual expansionism- Omniscience of empire is apt to give every local conflict global significance and reminding the world that it is pre-eminent.
- Hypocrisy- It is inevitable in politics. More power tries to stretch, the more it deploys double standards.
- Cults of Violence- The creation of stable states and societies requires the pacification of violence
- Racism- USA being a champion of "liberty" it cannot get away from reinforcing claims of superiority that generate resentment.

Conclusion

- The withdrawal from Afghanistan is not an end of the corrupt political economy of violence.
- Withdrawal does not signal a commitment to greater multilateralism or the rule of law.
- It is the Afghan president, their army, that is to blame, as if after 20 years of intervening in a society, the US had no responsibility.
- US management of the withdrawal will give fillip to **fundamentalism's deepest psychological impulses**

3. Indian Economy

3.1. Informal Sector to the Fore (Indian Express)

- Context- India's Informal Sector

Issue

- **India's large informal sector, which employs around 80 per cent of the labour force and produces about 50 per cent of GDP.**
- Informal sector workers suffered far more from the national lockdown in 2020 than their formal sector counterparts.
- India was one of the few countries with high inflation throughout pandemic-stricken 2020.
- In normal times, Informal Firms are very active in the production of essential goods like food and textiles.
- **The prospects for the 40 per cent in the informal agricultural sector have been surprisingly resilient too.**
- **Rural wages have held up well over the pandemic, led by good monsoons, an exemption to the food trade from the various lockdowns**

Worrying Concern

- **In Urban India People employed across the trade, hotels, transport, manufacturing and construction sectors.**
- Spending has moved from small firms to bigger ones.
- Employees of large firms have done much better than small and informal firms.
- **Surveys over this time also show a rise in urban unemployment and self-employment, with the latter category seeing the highest earnings loss.**

Way Forward

- Formalisation that comes only on the back of external pressure or leads to deep distress in the informal sector, may not be sustainable.
- Rather Government should focus on policy changes that help small and informal firms grow over time into medium or larger formal sector firm.
- What is needed is protection for informal sector workers via social welfare schemes such as MGNREGA.
- Disruption they are facing must not lead to a permanent fall in demand.
- Good case for setting up a more permanent direct urban social welfare structure.

Conclusion

- India can't wish away the informal sector
- Believing that fortunes of the formal and informal sectors move together is a myth.

3.2.Reboot to Reset (The Hindu)

- **Context- India - USA Free Trade Agreement put off U.S., is no longer interested in securing a bilateral free trade agreement**
- (FTA), as per indications from the Joe Biden administration
- Years of negotiations towards a 'mini-trade deal' followed by a full-blown trade pact that Mr. Biden's predecessor oversaw may well be infructuous now.
- The government will now work on
 - ✓ **Market access issues on both side**
 - ✓ **lowering of non-tariff barriers**
 - ✓ **Mutual recognition pacts and adopting common quality standards can also help Indian exports in the interim.**
- **The trade target of US\$ 500 Billion which was set up during the time of Barak Obama continues to remain the same.**
- India was pulled out of the U.S.'s Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) that granted some tariff relief to its exports by the Trump government in 2019.

What is GSP?

- The GSP, the largest and oldest US trade preference programme, is designed to promote economic development by allowing duty-free entry for thousands of products from designated beneficiary countries.
- **India has been the biggest beneficiary of the GSP regime and accounted for over a quarter of the goods that got duty-free access into the US in 2017**
- Exports to the US from India under GSP – at \$5.58 billion – was over 12 per cent of India's total goods exports of \$45.2 billion to the US in 2017.
- **The termination of GSP came as a big blow for India's competitiveness in items groups such as garments, engineering, and intermediary goods in the American market.**

Way Forward

- Opportunity for India to holistically review its stance on global trade.
- Commerce & Trade Minister has signaled a revamped approach towards FTAs and reminded Indian industry there cannot be one-way traffic.
- Trade policy cannot be perpetuated in isolation and, in fact, affects investments too.

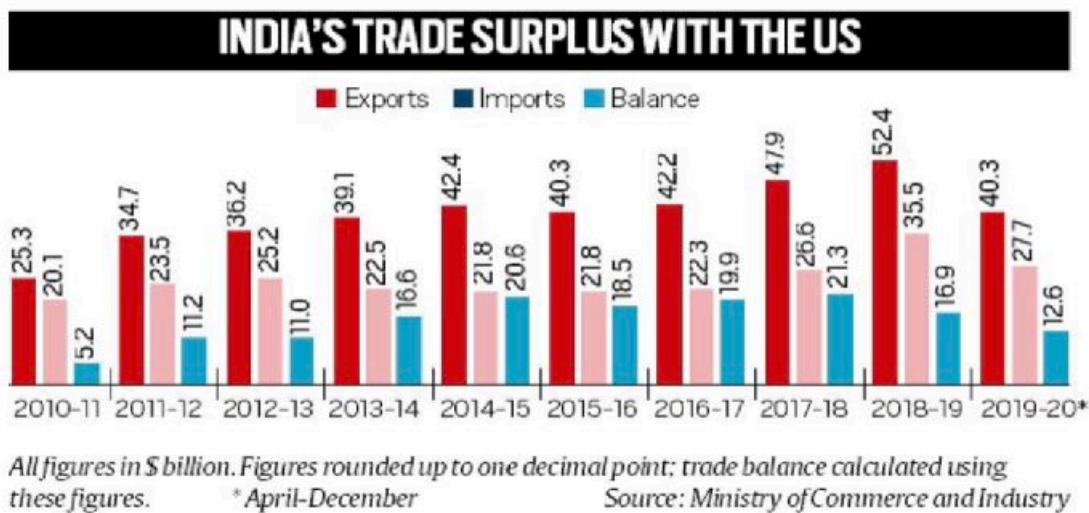
Conclusion

- India needs to demonstrate to its potential FTA partners, including the EU and the U.K., with which rivals like Vietnam have already sealed a deal, **that it is a viable alternative to China in a post-COVID world.**

- India has already walked out of the RCEP.
- In the backdrop of the global economic slowdown, where India's global exports have **fallen consistently**, it is important for the country to diversify and strengthen bilateral relations with other markets

Harley Tariffs

- India is a "tariff king" that imposes "tremendously high" import duties, President Donald Trump had complained in the past.
- He had cited the example of Harley-Davidson, the US motorcycle maker. Even after India halved the duty on the bike to 50% in 2018, the **rate is "still unacceptable"**.
- Harley plant at Bawal in Haryana has been assembling the bikes since 2011, and Harley has still not captured a sizeable chunk of the Indian market.



4. Polity & Governance

4.1. Lawmakers & Disorder (The Indian Express)

- Context- Severe Punishment over Suspension?

Rajya Sabha Convention & Procedure

- House rules vest in the chairman all the powers necessary to conduct proceedings smoothly.
- The rules also provide for the suspension of MPs who “disregard the authority of the Chair or abuse the rules of the Council by persistently and willfully obstructing the business of the House”
- The power to suspend a member is vested in the House, not in the chairman.
- Chairman names such a member whereupon a motion is moved by the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, or any other minister seeking the suspension of the member.

Suspension Vs Punishment

- Suspension is the only serious punishment provided for in the rules.
- Acts of misconduct: Disregarding the authority of the chair, abusing the rules of the council by persistently and willfully obstructing the business thereof.
- Punishing members long after the occurrence of misconduct is very rare.
- For the acts of misconduct by the MPs outside the House, which constitute a breach of privilege or contempt of the House, usually the privilege committee investigates the matter.
- Special ad-hoc committees are appointed only to investigate serious misconduct by MPs outside the House.
- No special committee is required to go into what happens before the eyes of the presiding officer inside the House and as per rules they need to be dealt there and then only.

Conclusion

- The rules do not recognise any punishment other than suspension for a specific period.
- Article 20 of the Constitution prohibits a greater penalty than what the law provided at the time of committing the offence.
- Speculation of a formation of a special committee to suggest severe punishment.

Question for the Day

It is often said that the “Largest & Oldest democracies of the world” have enormous trade integration potential. In light of recent USA- India FTA being called off, How can “Atmanirbharta” be coupled along with FTA proposed with countries such as USA, Australia and UK in the near future? (250 words)