



## The shade of grey

**GS II: India and its Neighborhood-Relations. Important International institutions, agencies and fora - their Structure, Mandate.**



**Bottom line:** Pakistan has little option but to complete its FATF mandated tasks in the next four months. India's eventual

goal is not just in stopping attacks by terror groups, but for Pakistan to fully dismantle the infrastructure of terror in the understanding that it is in Pakistan's own interests to do so. It is hoped that the prolonged FATF process will enable this realisation in Islamabad.

### Highlights:

1. The Financial Action Task Force has retained Pakistan on its greylist. Pakistan will now face international strictures on its markets and on its ability to procure loans until the next FATF plenary in February 2021, by which time it is expected to complete the pending issues.
2. A bigger problem for Islamabad was that Turkey was the only other country in the 39-member FATF to push for Pakistan to be let off. The proposal was dropped when even other traditional backers of Pakistan such as China, Saudi Arabia and Malaysia did not support it.

### Way Forward for Pakistan

Clearly, Pakistan has little option but to complete its tasks in the next four months, which include: more action against UNSC-banned terrorists and terror groups, action against charitable organisations (Non-Profits) linked to these banned entities, tracing fugitive terrorists and pursuing convictions against them, revising the list of banned entities under the Anti-Terrorism Act to reflect all those banned by the UNSC, and cracking down on other channels of terror financing through narcotics and smuggling.

### Implications on India

1. The FATF has retained Pakistan on the greylist for the third time this year and has ensured the continued pressure to make Pakistan accountable on terror.



2. The Khan government has been forced to make a real legislative push to bring Pakistani anti-terror laws in line with international standards.
3. Meanwhile, Pakistan's support to the U.S.-led Afghan process and talks with the Taliban are crucial to the peace process, and the FATF process has made Islamabad more amenable to helping Afghanistan.
4. It remains to be seen if the actions it takes will permanently change Pakistan's course in supporting and sheltering cross-border terror groups.

## Clearing the air

### GS III: Environmental Pollution and Degradation

**Context:** President Donald Trump's scathing description of India's air as "filthy" may have come as an embarrassment for the government. Looking at the worsening pollution in northern parts of the country, triggered by stubble burning and later the Dussehra festivities, one abstains from protesting the gratuitous remark.



### The Incongruous Remark

1. The U.S. President's remarks are, of course, gratuitous, considering that he has spent his term dismantling many environmental regulations, including those relating to pollution and emissions from coal plants and automobiles;
2. His criticism of India and China is also incongruent as they have pledged to implement the Paris Agreement while Mr Trump has pulled the U.S. out of the pact.

### Ground Report on India

1. Unfortunately, mere resolve cannot raise India's stature. Sensors of the Central and State Pollution Control Boards and other private stations across the north currently show PM2.5, or fine particulate matter levels, in the very unhealthy or even hazardous bands.



2. There is mounting concern about the health impacts. WHO expressed worry about the situation.
3. There is the added dimension of COVID-19 infection today, with the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health contending that a one microgramme rise in PM2.5 is associated with an 8% increase in the death rate due to the novel coronavirus, based on long-term exposure data in the U.S.
4. Continued burning of crop stubble in Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh shows that the central sector scheme providing remedies in the form of farm mechanisation and management alternatives needs fresh impetus.

### **Actions by India Against Pollution:**

1. India is seeking to address its chronic air quality crisis partly by raising emission standards and fuels. The country adopted the BS-VI fuel standard earlier this year, potentially lowering vehicular pollution.
2. National Clean Air Programme.
3. Shift away from Fossil fuel by targeting the creation of 175 GW energy capacity through non-fossil fuel-based energy.
4. Promotion of electric vehicles
5. Promotion of Hydrogen fuels, HCNG, CNG in Delhi.
6. Actions against Stubble burning by centre and states.

## **Contesting neighbours, revised geopolitical playbooks**

**GS II: Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's interests, Indian Diaspora.**

**Context:** The year 2020 has been a watershed moment for relations between India and China following the most serious clashes between the two countries in the Galwan region of Ladakh since the 1962 war; relations between New Delhi and Beijing are at new lows. These events have had a cascading effect on the very thought process of foreign policy, not just for





New Delhi with regard to its neighbourhood but also Beijing's understanding of its own threat perceptions as well.

## Geopolitical Shift

1. For Beijing and New Delhi, one region where both contesting neighbours have employed similar versions of 'non-alignment' thinking is in West Asia, and the ethos of equitable engagement with the three poles of power in Saudi Arabia, Iran and Israel, without stepping into the entanglements of the region's multi-layered conflicts and political fissures.
2. However, the year 2020 and the tectonic geopolitical shifts it has brought in its wake, from deteriorating U.S.-China ties to the COVID-19 pandemic that started in China, followed by the Ladakh crisis, is forcing a drastic change in the geopolitical playbooks of the two Asian giants, and, by association, global security architectures as well.

## What dictates alignment now

Strategic autonomy is today a term New Delhi's power corridors are well-acquainted with. The ideation of 'strategic autonomy' is much different from the Nehruvian era thinking of 'non-alignment'. The alignment is issue-based, and not ideological.

## New India in West Asia

Pre-dating 2020, India's outreach to West Asia sharpened since 2014 with the coming of the Narendra Modi government. As the powerful and oil-rich Gulf states looked for investment alternatives away from the West to deepen their own strategic depth, persuaded by Mr Modi's centralised decision-making style, India doubled down on its relations with the likes of Abu Dhabi and Riyadh, giving open economic and political preference to the larger Gulf region. While engagements with Israel moved steadily forward, Iran lagged behind, bogged down by U.S. sanctions, which in turn significantly slowed the pace of India-Iran engagements.

## Advantage Beijing

1. Meanwhile, China's overtures have been steadily more adventurous as it realises two major shifts that have taken place in West Asia.



2. First, Beijing has tried to capitalise around the thinking in the Gulf that the American security safety net is not absolute, and they need to invest more in others. China, being second only to the U.S. in both economic and military terms today, is the obvious engagement.
3. Second, the Gulf economies such as Saudi Arabia, even though attempting a hard shift away from their addiction to the petro-dollar, will still need growing markets to sell oil to in the coming decade as they reform their economic systems. The obvious two markets here are China and India.

### **Sharp contrasts: Indian and Chinese diplomacy in West Asia**

1. China is no longer happy with a passive role in West Asia, and through concepts such as “negative peace” and “peace through development”, in concert with tools such as the Belt and Road Initiative, Beijing is now ready to offer an alternative model for “investment and influence”.
2. China suggested the development of a “new forum” to address the region’s tensions — an alternative to the West-led ecosystems that have prevailed for decades.
3. From India’s perspective, as it maintains its balancing act of diplomacy in West Asia, the overt outreach to the Gulf and the ensuing announcements of multi-billion-dollar investments on Indian shores by entities from Saudi Arabia and the UAE is only New Delhi recognising the economic realities of the region.

### **Green Shoots of Peace in the Region**

1. Despite entanglements in the Yemen war and general tensions between the Gulf states and Iran, the likes of Saudi Arabia, the UAE and so on have maintained relatively strong and stable economic progression.
2. Israel’s recent peace accords with the UAE and Bahrain add much further weight towards a more stable Gulf region — the caveats withstanding that the operationalisation of the accords is smooth and long-lasting.

### **Conclusion:**

The theory of interests superseding ideology in foreign policy is fast unravelling practically, both from the perspectives of India and China.



## The many lessons from COVID-19

**GS II: Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.**



**COVID-19  
RESPONSE**

**Bottom line:** The most important lesson from the pandemic is the significance of investing in public health and primary healthcare.

Countries that invested in primary healthcare over the past decade or two are reaping the benefits now. Another lesson is the positive role of science and scientists. The global collaboration between scientists to take forward advances in knowledge so that science is continuously informing our response to the pandemic has been encouraging.

### Impact of COVID on Public Health

1. COVID-19 has also disrupted the education system. It has also adversely affected access to nutritious food as a huge number of children depend on school meals.
2. Over 70% of countries reported partial or complete disruption of immunisation services. Other services disrupted include diagnosis and treatment of non-communicable diseases, cancer diagnosis and treatment, family planning, contraception, antenatal care, malaria and TB case detection, treatment facility-based births, and urgent blood transfusions, as well as emergency surgery.
3. This will have a huge impact. On the one hand, essential services have to be provided; on the other hand, we must ensure financial protection. This can be guaranteed only if there is either a health coverage scheme, like Ayushman Bharat or through private health insurance.

### Gendered impact of COVID-19

1. In India, the pandemic has had a differential impact on women. A recent modelling study showed that because of the reduction in coverage of essential services, the prevalence of wasting in children could increase by 10% to 50%.



2. There could also be 60% more maternal deaths because interventions like the administration of uterotonics and antibiotics, and clean birth environments, are no longer available.
3. Another worrying development is the surge in domestic violence.
4. Many women have lost their work and livelihoods. More women than men work in the informal economy and therefore their income fell by over 60% during the first month of the pandemic.
5. In India, the number of women and girls living in extreme poverty is expected to increase from 87 million to 100 million.

### Lack of gender-specific data

A few months ago, the World Health Organization (WHO) emphasised the importance of gender analysis and gender-responsive public health policies. One of the major issues is the lack of availability of data that are disaggregated by sex and age. We also do not have data on violence against women and children. We have urged WHO the Member States to collect data, report and analyse it, disaggregated by sex, and include responses to violence against women as an essential service.

### Lessons for Future

1. Many countries have moved to digital technology, especially using platforms to provide telemedicine, for example, to overcome the problem that people could not meet physically. Platforms like ECHO have been used in many States to train healthcare workers and the government's e-Sanjeevani platform is enabling telemedicine appointments.
2. We now have a national digital health blueprint and a road map. We want to move towards electronic and portable health records. It is important to think about new ways of collecting, using and sharing data, *enabling local, contextualised decision-making*.
3. We also need to think about working with the private sector, which is already playing a very big role in technology. But we need to think about technologies that are considered public health goods.
4. In Puducherry, for example, they did an experiment with *shared medical appointments*. This seemed to result in better health outcomes as well as



higher productivity, apart from reducing costs and saving a lot of time for doctors.

5. We need to further integrate social protection systems, food systems and health systems in order to really have an impact on nutrition. India has done much to ensure these services, but it needs to expand these to protect its most vulnerable population groups. We must ensure that the pandemic does not further increase food insecurity.
6. We often think about health as purely as the delivery of services to take care of the sick. The risk factors and the social and environmental determinants of health, such as the quality of water and air impact our health. But investments here are much more difficult as they lie outside the health sector. It is a question of all arms of the government looking at the impact of their policies on health.
7. Empowering our frontline health workers will yield rich dividends. We need to invest in them to ensure that they have the tools they need, receive regular training and mentoring, and are well paid.
8. We need to invest in strong institutional mechanisms and capacities in our regulatory bodies, research centres and public health institutions.