

## UPSC EDITORIAL ANALYSIS 28 JUL 2021

### EDITORIAL 1: NEEDED: AN ANTI-TRAFFICKING LAW

#### Topic: General Studies 2 (Social Justice)

##### Context:

- Sita was just 13 years old when she was trafficked and Her parents worked in a tea garden in Assam for meagre wages, Sita was trafficked to a placement agency for Rs20,000 as a domestic worker by a couple there she was not paid a single rupee, Instead, she was re-trafficked, raped, and exploited by employers and traffickers.
- Three Years Later, when Sita's father found the young girl trapped in a house, she did not step out instead she hid saying "I cannot show my face to my father. I am impure now. I want to kill myself."
- Like Sita, thousands of women and children from the poorest sections of our society face this.
- A nation though progresses in wealth, power or progress of a nation, but tolerates the buying and selling of its daughters similar to the medieval slave trade, then it cannot be called civilised.



##### A comprehensive Bill

- Various civil society groups like Bachpan Bachao Andolan (BBA) and others are campaigning for decades for a strong law to end this menace of human trafficking.

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- In 2017, Sita and thousands of survivors like her marched in the Bharat Yatra alongside students, governments, the judiciary, multifaith leaders, businesses and civil society demanding Anti-trafficking law.
- Around 1.2 million people on foot covered 12,000 km with the single demand that India must pass comprehensive anti-trafficking legislation by using slogans such as “Bikne ko taiyaar nahi hum, lutne ko taiyaar nahi hum (We are not ready to be sold, we are not ready to be stolen)”.
- Recently, the Government has proposed the Trafficking in Persons (Prevention, Care and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2021.
- This Bill aims to tackle all aspects of trafficking including the social and economic causes of the crime, punishment to traffickers, and the protection and rehabilitation of survivors.
- Bill by having necessary checks and balances against potential misuse of power by agencies, periodic reviews of the law, and adequate allocation of resources can ensure effective implementation.

### **A problem worsened by COVID**

- During the pandemic, the trafficking situation has further worsened as Traffickers are taking advantage of prolonged school closures and loss of family livelihood.
- Government agencies and BBA together has rescued almost 9,000 children from trafficking since the first lockdown while only 50% of them were rescued during the same time period preceding the pandemic.
- The current trafficking situation should not be undermined instead to address its human impact, there should be effective implementation of trafficking law and its associated budgets.
- Human trafficking is a crime in itself and also the propeller of several other crimes by creating a parallel black economy for other crimes such as child labour, child marriage, prostitution, bonded labour, forced beggary, drug-related crimes, corruption, terrorism and other illicit businesses.
- Even the Constitution of India has made Trafficking the only offence punishable under the Constitution of India besides untouchability.

### **Conclusion:**

- ✓ Formulating and Implementing a strong anti-trafficking law is the moral and constitutional responsibility of our elected leaders, and a necessary step towards nation-building and economic progress.
- ✓ India is stepping into its 75th year of Independence, there can be no greater gift to India than the freedom of our children for which our freedom fighters struggled, our soldiers died, and our children deserve.
- ✓ It's high time that the Government passes a strong anti-trafficking law.

### **Reference:**

Needed: an anti-trafficking law: <https://thg.page.link/BRdGLv2GZT3pKkUp8>

## EDITORIAL 2: NEEDED, A MORE UNIFIED ASIAN VOICE FOR AFGHANISTAN

Topic: General Studies (International Relations)

### Context:

- Since the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) have decided to end their presence in Afghanistan, Central Asia is emerging as a key player that the global Troika of the United States, Russia and China are turning to.
- Within a month, there have been 3 meetings between Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) contact group on Afghanistan and SCO Defence Ministers in Tajikistan, and the Central and South Asia conference on regional connectivity in Uzbekistan, highlighting the region's role in dealing with the situation in Afghanistan, and how India could build on that.



### Factoring in the Taliban

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- In the past years, Troika has kept India out of a leading role in Afghanistan.
- However, From 2019, when Troika added Pakistan (Troika plus) in Afghanistan's future discussion, India too should participate though it has no role with the Taliban.
- The U.S which invaded Afghanistan post 9/11, and declared the Taliban leadership as United Nations Security Council-designated terrorists, are now not advocating talks with the Taliban, entreating their Pakistani hosts for the help and actively paving the way for the Taliban's return to power.

### **Evaluating India's options in Afghanistan :**

India has the vision to build trade with Afghanistan, shore up development projects and increase educational and training opportunities for Afghan youth but it cannot grow bigger due to a number of factors.

1. India is hesitating on open talks with the Taliban, which even Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani had suggested, has cut India out of the current reconciliation process.
2. India - Pakistan bad relations have resulted in Pakistan blocking India's overland access to Afghanistan and now India can access Afghanistan only through Chabahar, which is not viable or cost-effective and also long as U.S. sanctions on Iran are in place.
3. Current Tensions between India and China on the Line of Actual Control and India's boycott of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2017, has led to another route to Afghanistan being off-limits.
4. the U.S. has announced a new formation of a "Quad" on regional connectivity U.S.-Uzbekistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan that does not include India.
5. United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is conducting a trial for truck transportation from Tashkent to Karachi and back.

After so many hurdles, there was a possibility that the Central Asian window, with the "Stans" (five Central Asian republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) will open new possibilities, but there too, there are some caveats.

### **Uzbekistan's view**

- Tashkent (Uzbekistan) after coming to power in 2016, has mended its relations and ended border disputes with each of the other Central Asian States, and outreaches to the U.S. and China to shift the traditional tilt towards Moscow.
- Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirziyoyev has made purposeful moves on Afghanistan as in 2018, his government became one of the first countries to publicly invite a Taliban delegation from Doha.
- Tashkent is also promoting a number of ambitious trade and connectivity initiatives with the Ashraf Ghani government.

### **A push for connectivity**



- Uzbekistan President Mr Mirziyoyev is planning for a modern version of the “the ancient northern trade route known as the Uttara Patha, connecting the Indo-Ganges Plain with the southern territories of the Eurasian continent through the historical cities of Takshila, Gandhara and Termez.
- Uzbekistan President is also of view of reviving the old Silk Routes which would bound Central and South Asia together, and Afghanistan shall act as a key link in “practical connectivity” for them.
- Mr Mirziyoyev also emphasised the salience of the Termez-Mazar-i-Sharif-Kabul-Peshawar railroad, the Trans-Afghan railroad to connect to China’s BRI, and the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) via the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas as key elements of the “architecture of connectivity” but he ignored the Chabahar route that India had suggested.
- Also, Agreement between Uzbekistan and Pakistan on Transit Trade (AUPTT) has been signed which would give Uzbekistan access to the Pakistani seaports of Gwadar and Karachi, rather than Iranian ports.

### **Uzbekistan’s calculations:**

1. Uzbekistan thinks that the prosperity of these land-locked Central Asian countries can only flow from access through Afghanistan to the closest ocean, i.e. the Indian Ocean.
2. For all successful transit through Afghanistan there is a need for guarantees of safe passage from the Taliban, backed by the group’s mentors in Pakistan.
3. Each of the “Stans” is now a part of China’s BRI, to increase trade, investment and some modicum of control over Pakistan.

### **Shared concerns:**

- Though there are fewer hopes for talks between India and Central Asian Countries, India can initiate talks on common concerns with Central Asia such as Afghanistan overrun by the Taliban and under Pakistan’s thumb- the worries of battles at their borders, safe havens for jihadist terror groups inside Afghanistan and the spill-over of radicalism into their own countries.
- India and its neighbours have to work together to ensure that the government structure does not collapse by ensuring funding of Afghanistan.
- As part of the SCO’s Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), India must also engage with the Central Asian countries in fighting terror.
- India can support the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) in terms of airpower.
- Afghanistan’s first Strategic Partnership was with India 10 years ago and then India gifted a few helicopters which is not adequate, New Delhi can support in conjunction with other countries that depend on Soviet-made arms, including helicopters and planes, weaponry, ammunition and spare parts.

### **Dealing with Pakistan**

- Only India and Pakistan better relationship may help to have stability in the region.

- India along with discussions with Taliban leadership in Doha must make more strategic engagement with Pakistan to have peace in the region.
- Countries of Central Asia and South Asia must have a more unified voice and they have to understand that Afghanistan's future will affect both regions much more than it will the distant global powers that currently dominate the debate.

### **Conclusion:**

- ✓ In 2015, Prime Minister Modi in Kazakhstan said that Silk Road that connected central and South Asia faded away not just because of the rise of sea-based trade of the new European powers but because Central Asia was no longer a bridge between regions, but the new fault line between great empires to the east, west and south.
- ✓ Similarly, at present Afghanistan has the potential to become that bridge or the biggest boulder between Central and South Asia and India should initiate open talks with the Taliban and actively engage with Afghanistan for the stability of the region.

### **Reference:**

Needed, a more unified Asian voice for Afghanistan: <https://thg.page.link/YsWvdi4cJEHEcsgz7>

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