

1. Understanding U.S.-Israel Relations

Introduction

This text discusses the historical and current state of relations between the United States and Israel. It highlights the strong and long-standing bond between the two countries, as well as the factors that contribute to this relationship.

Origins of U.S.-Israel Ties

The U.S. has supported the idea of a Jewish homeland in Palestine dating back to the early 20th century. The Balfour Declaration, U.S. congressional resolutions, and swift recognition of Israel in 1948 underscore the early alignment of interests. While there were tensions in the early years, such as during the Suez Crisis and concerns about Israel's nuclear program, the 1967 Six-Day War marked a shift towards closer U.S.-Israel relations due to common Cold War interests.

In this war, two of the Arab countries Israel defeated — Egypt and Syria — were Soviet allies. From then on, the U.S. started seeing Israel as a stable ally who can check the expansion of Soviet influence in West Asia.

Current Status of U.S.-Israel Ties

Today, the U.S. and Israel maintain a robust alliance. The U.S. provides significant financial, military, and political support to Israel. Israel is a major recipient of U.S. aid and benefits from a deep defense partnership, which includes joint research and development. The U.S. has consistently used its veto power in the UN Security Council to protect Israel from critical resolutions. U.S. military support for Israel has been evident in various conflicts, including the 1973 Yom Kippur War and Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon.

Tensions in the Relationship

While there have been occasional disagreements and personality clashes between U.S. Presidents and Israeli Prime Ministers, these have not led to a breakdown in their relationship. Notable instances of tension include President Carter's push for peace with Egypt, President George W. Bush's calls for restraint in the West Bank, and President Obama's differences with Prime Minister Netanyahu over the Iran nuclear deal.

Why the U.S. Supports Israel

Several factors contribute to the enduring U.S. support for Israel. Israel's strategic value in a volatile region has made it appealing to the U.S., both during the Cold War and in the post-Cold War era. Additionally, the influence of American public opinion, electoral

politics, and the powerful Israel lobby, along with strong ties in the military-industrial complex, have solidified the institutional consensus in the U.S. about its relationship with Israel, regardless of the political party in power.

In summary, the U.S.-Israel relationship is a complex and enduring one, rooted in historical ties and influenced by various geopolitical and domestic factors.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Relations

Source: The Hindu

2. AI Summit: A Global Pact on AI Risks

Introduction

The world's first Artificial Intelligence (AI) Safety Summit held at Bletchley Park, UK, brought together 28 major countries, including the United States, China, Japan, the United Kingdom, France, and India, along with the European Union. The summit aimed to address the challenges posed by "frontier AI" and resulted in a significant declaration on AI risks and global collaboration.

Bletchley Park Declaration

The summit's participants defined "frontier AI" as highly capable foundation generative AI models with the potential for dangerous capabilities, posing serious risks to public safety. The Bletchley Park Declaration emphasized the need for international cooperation to address risks related to frontier AI, including intentional misuse, control issues, cybersecurity, biotechnology, and disinformation risks.

Global Collaboration

The declaration was endorsed by additional countries, including Brazil, Ireland, Kenya, Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, and the United Arab Emirates. To promote international collaboration on frontier AI safety, South Korea will host a virtual AI summit in the next six months, and France will organize an in-person summit within a year.

U.S. Presidential Action

The declaration came shortly after US President Joe Biden issued an executive order aimed at safeguarding against AI threats and implementing oversight over AI safety benchmarks. The order requires AI companies to share the results of tests of their newer products with the federal government before making the new capabilities available to consumers. The safety tests undertaken by developers, known as "red teaming", are aimed at ensuring that new products do not pose a threat to users or the public at large. Following the order, the federal government is empowered to force a developer to tweak or abandon a product or initiative.

Diverse Regulatory Approaches

Various countries have taken different approaches to AI regulation. The European Union proposed a new AI Act, classifying AI based on use-case scenarios. The UK adopts a "light-touch" approach to foster innovation, while the US falls in between, aiming to define an AI regulation rulebook. China has also introduced its own AI regulatory measures.

Tech Leaders' Concerns

Tech leaders, including Elon Musk, Steve Wozniak, and others, called for a six-month pause in AI development, expressing concerns about AI's rapid growth. Musk emphasized AI's potential threat and existential risks to humanity.

India's Evolving Stance

India has been actively considering AI regulation, shifting from not pursuing legal intervention to formulating regulations based on a "risk-based, user-harm" approach. Initiatives such as forming a domestic statutory authority and collaborating with international agencies reflect this evolving stance.

Conclusion

The AI Safety Summit's Bletchley Park Declaration signals a global commitment to addressing the risks associated with frontier AI. International collaboration and diverse regulatory approaches are shaping the future of AI governance, while concerns from tech leaders emphasize the need for responsible development.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Science & Technology

Source: The Indian Express

3. UNESCO's Recognition of Kozhikode as a 'City of Literature'

Introduction

Kozhikode, a city in Kerala, has been designated as a 'City of Literature' by UNESCO's Creative Cities Network (UCCN). Gwalior from Madhya Pradesh was also among the 55 new cities to join the network. These cities have been handpicked to represent seven creative fields — crafts and folk arts, design, film, gastronomy, literature, media arts, and music. Kozhikode was included in the category of literature and Gwalior in the category of music.

In this article, we'll explore what the UCCN is, the Indian cities included in it, and the implications of such recognition.

The UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN)

The UCCN was established in 2004 with the goal of fostering collaboration among cities that prioritize creativity as a key element for sustainable urban development. It comprises 350 cities across more than a hundred countries. The network aims to

harness the creative, social, and economic potential of cultural industries to support UNESCO's objectives of cultural diversity, resilience to challenges like climate change, inequality, and urbanization, and the promotion of creativity in urban planning and problem-solving.

Indian Cities in the Network

In addition to Kozhikode and Gwalior, several other Indian cities are part of the UCCN:

Varanasi (music)

Srinagar (crafts and folk arts)

Chennai (music)

Kozhikode's Literary Heritage

Kozhikode, situated in North Kerala, boasts a rich literary and cultural heritage. The city is home to numerous influential figures in Kerala's literary and cultural scene, with various media houses, publishing houses, and libraries contributing to its literary tradition. Notable authors such as S.K. Pottekkatt, Vaikom Muhammad Basheer, and M.T. Vasudevan Nair have made significant contributions to Kozhikode's literary legacy. The city has also nurtured talents in film and theatre over the past few decades.

Objectives of UCCN

Membership in the UCCN allows cities to acknowledge the importance of creativity in urban development, fostering partnerships between the public and private sectors and civil society. It aims to establish centers of creativity and innovation while providing opportunities for cultural professionals and creators. These cities work toward achieving the United Nations' sustainable development agenda.

Areas of Action

The UCCN's objectives are realized through actions taken at both the city and international levels. Cities engage in professional and artistic exchanges, research, and evaluations to share experiences and best practices in creativity and cultural innovation.

Annual Conference

One of the highlights of the UCCN is its annual conference, which gathers mayors and stakeholders from member cities worldwide. This conference facilitates the exchange of practical information on policies and activities implemented by creative cities and encourages collaboration between cities on various initiatives. The last conference took place in Istanbul, with the next one scheduled for July 2024 in Braga, Portugal.

Membership Requirements

Every four years, member cities must submit a Membership Monitoring Report, demonstrating their commitment to realizing the UCCN's mission. These reports

outline action plans for the subsequent four years, detailing achievements, lessons learned, and the impact of their designation as creative cities.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Organisations

Source: The Indian Express

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