

China's approach in Afghanistan

- Early April this year (12-13), the Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China (PRC) Qin Gang, along with his counterparts from Russia, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan met in Samarkand for the meeting of the Foreign Ministers of Afghanistan's neighboring countries.
- The meeting coincided with the release of a position paper by Beijing on its policy in Afghanistan. Titled, 'China's position on the Afghan Issue.
- The paper first delineates the core principles which inform Beijing's policy choices the 'Three Respects' and 'Three Nevers', i.e., China respects the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Afghanistan and the 'independent choice', religious sentiments, and national customs of the Afghan people.
- Urging the international community to view the Afghan issue in a 'comprehensive, balanced and objective manner', China advocates using alternative regional groupings which do not include the U.S. and its allies, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), and the Moscow Format Dialogue.
- China urges the Taliban, regional countries, and the international community to crack down on terror groups, specifically the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, and help Afghanistan in augmenting its counterterrorism capabilities.
- The question of refugees and narcotics and their cross-border trafficking are also highlighted.
- Owing to its strategic location, Afghanistan is also economically very important for China: for its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and due to the presence of vast mineral resources.
- China has taken incremental steps to entrench its image as a major country playing a crucial role in ensuring global governance and providing a 'moderate and pluralistic environment' for dialogue.
- For India, China's continued engagement with Russia and Iran, along with the Central Asian countries will be consequential in understanding how their policies will shape and what it would mean for India's interests in Afghanistan.
- As China, India, and Russia dabble in trade using partner currencies for payment instead of the U.S. dollar,

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- The rise of the dollar as the world currency closely aligns with the rise of the U.S. as one of the world’s strongest economies with a deep financial system and a stable government.
- According to reports from the International Monetary Fund, the dollar’s share of foreign exchange reserves has fallen over time from 80% in the 1970s to about 60% in 2022. The euro has made up for about 20% of the remaining 40% room created by this fall.
- Most of the Renminbi reserves that are held outside China are by Russia.
- In fact, both these countries accumulate the currency of the other as foreign exchange reserves. From that point of view, a trading arrangement between China and Russia makes more sense.
- However, even though India’s biggest supplier of oil is Russia followed by Saudi Arabia and Iraq, its biggest trading partner is still the U.S., according to recent data.
- Moreover, Russia’s importance as an oil supplier is a result of the deep discounts offered by its oil suppliers to Indian refiners. Such discounts will not be sustainable over the long run
- Dollar-denominated assets Along with general acceptability as a medium of exchange for international trade, the U.S. dollar is also in demand because of demand for dollar-denominated assets worldwide.
- The debt issued by the U.S. government is bought by many countries across the world as a hedge against currency fluctuations affecting the valuation of reserves.
- Additionally, many currencies are pegged to the U.S. dollar and a few countries use the dollar as their own currency
- As U.S. government debt is in high demand worldwide, it gets issued at the lowest interest rate. This relaxes the fiscal constraint substantially, boosting the debt-issuing government’s capacity to borrow more without having to deal with the negative effects of such borrowing on the domestic economy.
- This phenomenon is often referred to as the dollar premium and is something that many other governments would like to have access to, including that of China and Russia.



THE HINDU

Why dollar cannot be dominated?

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Blue sky

What is Blue-sky?

- Blue-sky is a micro-blogging platform and social website built on the AT Protocol (Authenticated Transport Protocol).
- Blue-sky might be classified as a Twitter competitor due to its founding team but it is different in terms of its structure, as it is meant to form part of a decentralized ecosystem.
- Users of apps built on the AT Protocol would be able to move between platforms without losing their followers, media, work, and data.

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Water body census

Why is a water body census necessary?

- India is facing a water crisis with groundwater decline, biodiversity loss, and climate change increasing the frequency of floods and droughts. In this context, water bodies are important.
- What does the data show? Such a large national effort allows us to compare spatial and temporal trends of water bodies across the country.
- These are some of the observations based on the data:- (a) Most water bodies in the country are very small the vast majority of India's water bodies are less than one hectare (ha) large. This means locating and keeping track of them is likely to remain a challenge
- (b) The water bodies show regional patterns that correlate with rainfall in general, in drier States like Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Rajasthan, water bodies tend to be larger and publicly held. In the wetter parts of the country, like Kerala, West Bengal, and States in the northeast, more than three-quarters of the water bodies are privately owned
- (c) Most water bodies have never been repaired or rejuvenated

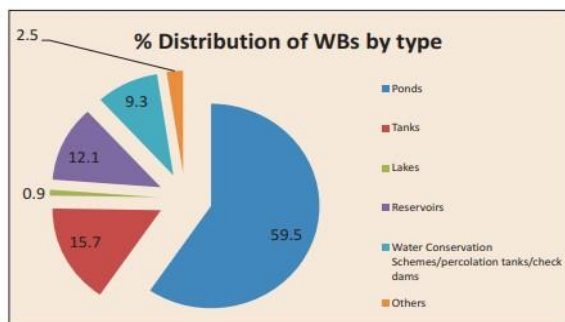
several water bodies were classified as “not in use”, meaning despite the recent interest in rejuvenating water bodies, most of them have never been repaired or revived.

- As per the report, 24,24, 540 water bodies have been enumerated in the country, out of which 97.1% (23,55,055) are in rural areas and only 2.9% (69,485) are in urban areas. 59.5% (14,42,993) of water bodies are ponds, followed by tanks (15.7%, i.e 3,81,805), reservoirs (12.1%, i.e 2,92,280), Water conservation schemes/percolation tanks/check dams (9.3%, i.e 2,26,217), lakes (0.9%, i.e 22,361) and others (2.5%, i.e 58,884).

State is the leading state for water conservation schemes. Whereas West Bengal has the highest number of ponds & reservoirs, whereas Andhra Pradesh has highest number of tanks, and Tamil Nadu has highest number of lakes.

- 99.7% (96,767) water bodies are public owned whereas the remaining 0.3% (295) are under private ownership.

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- It is a matter of pride for Maharashtra, which Maharashtra

