



DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 24-09-2024

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1. Paris Zinc roofers
2. Teesta river

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3. Quad Cancer Moonshot Initiative
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5. India needs a 'National Security Strategy'

Paris Zinc roofers

Syllabus: GS-1: Art and Culture

Context:

- *The French Culture Ministry nominated the **zinc roofing profession in Paris** for inclusion in **UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)** list.*
- *The nomination emphasizes the **craftsmanship** involved in creating zinc roofs.*

Zinc Roofing in Paris:

- **Historical Significance:**
 - *Zinc roofs have been a part of **Paris's skyline** for nearly **200 years**.*
 - ***21.4 million square metres** of **Paris's rooftops** are covered with zinc.*
- **Iconic Contribution:**
 - *The **zinc roofs** are an **integral part** of **Paris's iconic architectural look**.*

Criticism of Zinc Roofing:

- **Overheating Issues:**
 - *Zinc roofs are criticized for **overheating buildings** due to **poor insulation**.*
 - *They contribute to **increased heat absorption**, raising **indoor temperatures** during hot weather.*

UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) List:

- **Purpose of ICH List:**
 - *The ICH list includes **knowledge and skills** passed down through generations.*
 - *Elements on the list aim to protect **cultural diversity** by recognizing **heritage practices**.*
- **Categories Included:**
 - **Oral traditions**
 - **Performing arts**
 - **Social practices**
 - **Rituals**
 - **Festive events**

- **Traditional craftsmanship**
- **Contemporary rural and urban practices**

India's Contribution to UNESCO ICH:

➤ **India's Inscribed Elements:**

- *India has **15 elements** inscribed on the **UNESCO ICH** list, showcasing its rich cultural diversity.*

▪ List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of India:

S.No.	Intangible Cultural Heritage Element	Year of Inscription
1.	Kutiyattam, Sanskrit Theater	2008
2.	Tradition of Vedic Chanting	2008
3.	Ramlila, the Traditional Performance of the Ramayana	2008
4.	Ramman, Religious Festival and Ritual Theatre of the Garhwal Himalayas, India	2009
5.	Chhau Dance	2010
6.	Kalbella Folk Songs and Dances of Rajasthan	2010
7.	Mudiyettu, Ritual Theatre and Dance Drama of Kerala	2010
8.	Buddhist Chanting of Ladakh: Recitation of Sacred Buddhist Texts in the Trans-Himalayan Ladakh region, Jammu and Kashmir, India	2012
9.	Sankirtana, ritual singing, drumming and dancing of Manipur	2013
10.	Traditional Brass and Copper Craft of Utensil Making among the Thatheras of Jandiala Guru, Punjab, India	2014
11.	Nowruz	2016
12.	Yoga	2016
13.	Kumbh Mela	2017
14.	Durga Puja in Kolkata	2021
15.	Garba of Gujarat	2023

Teesta river

Syllabus: GS-1; Geography

Context

- *The topic is from the article Teesta talking*

About

- *The Teesta River, one of the major rivers in the **Eastern Himalayas**, holds significance for both **geographical and geopolitical reasons**.*



Source and Course

- **Origin:** The Teesta River originates from the Pahunri (or Pauhunri) glacier located in the eastern Himalayas, at an elevation of about 7,068 meters, in the Sikkim region.
- **Course:** It flows through Sikkim and the Darjeeling hills of West Bengal in India, then enters Bangladesh, where it eventually merges with the Jamuna River (the main distributary of the Brahmaputra). The total length of the river is about 315 km.
- **Tributaries:** Its major tributaries include Rangpo and Rangit rivers.

Geographical Significance

- **Catchment Area:** The river drains an area of around 12,540 sq. km, with the majority of its basin lying in India.
- **River's Importance to Sikkim and West Bengal:** It is vital for the irrigation of agricultural lands, supports hydropower projects, and serves as a major water source for the people of Sikkim and North Bengal.
- **Hydropower Potential:** The Teesta River is known for its hydropower potential, and several hydropower plants like the Teesta V Hydro Power Project are located along its course.

Teesta Water Dispute

- **India-Bangladesh Relations:** The Teesta River has been a contentious issue between India and Bangladesh due to the Teesta Water Sharing Dispute.
- **Historical Context:** During the British period, the Teesta's water was primarily used for irrigation in the Bengal region. After the partition, water sharing issues arose between India and Bangladesh (then East Pakistan).

- **Interim Agreement:** *The 1983 ad-hoc agreement allocated 39% of Teesta's water to India and 36% to Bangladesh, but a final agreement has not been reached.*
- **Current Status:** *The water-sharing treaty remains unresolved, with Bangladesh seeking a higher share of the river's waters for its agricultural needs.*

Environmental Significance

- **Biodiversity:** *The Teesta River basin is home to rich biodiversity, supporting various flora and fauna. The river's upstream areas in Sikkim are home to species like the red panda, snow leopard, and several medicinal plants.*
- **River Morphology:** *The Teesta is known for its meandering course in the plains of North Bengal, forming large sandbars, which make it prone to flooding during the monsoon season.*
- **Glacial Impact:** *The Teesta is a glacial-fed river, meaning climate change and glacial retreat in the Himalayas can significantly affect the river's water volume. Melting glaciers due to global warming can lead to increased flow, but reduced glaciers will eventually lower water levels, impacting agriculture, hydro projects, and drinking water supply.*

Economic Importance

- **Agriculture:** *The river is vital for irrigation, especially in the plains of West Bengal and Bangladesh, where it helps cultivate crops like paddy, jute, and wheat.*
- **Fisheries:** *The river is also important for local fisheries, supporting livelihoods along its banks.*
- **Hydropower Development:** *Several hydropower projects have been developed along the river in Sikkim, including the Teesta III, Teesta IV, and Teesta V projects, contributing significantly to Sikkim's economy and energy generation.*

Cultural Significance

- *The Teesta River has cultural and religious significance, especially in the Sikkim and Darjeeling regions.*
- *It is often associated with local folklore and spiritual beliefs, particularly among indigenous communities.*

Challenges

- **Water Disputes:** *The ongoing water-sharing dispute between India and Bangladesh remains a critical issue.*
- **Environmental Concerns:** *Large-scale hydropower projects have raised concerns about ecological degradation, deforestation, and displacement of local communities.*

- **Flooding and Erosion:** *The Teesta is prone to seasonal flooding, especially during the monsoon, causing riverbank erosion and loss of fertile land in the plains.*
- **Climate Change:** *The river's dependence on glacial melt makes it vulnerable to the impacts of global warming, which may reduce its water volume in the long run.*

Conclusion

- *The Teesta River is not just a crucial water resource for India and Bangladesh but also holds geopolitical importance due to the unresolved water-sharing dispute.*
- *Additionally, it plays a critical role in the economy and ecology of the regions it traverses.*

Quad Cancer Moonshot Initiative

Syllabus: GS-2: International Relations.

Context:

- *Quad Cancer Moonshot Initiative: Ending Cervical Cancer in the Indo-Pacific*

Overview

- **Launch by Quad Countries:** *United States, Australia, India, and Japan.*
- **Focus:** *Cervical cancer in the Indo-Pacific, a largely preventable disease, and laying groundwork to address other cancers.*
- **Objective:** *Strengthen cancer care ecosystem, improve infrastructure, research, data systems, and enhance prevention, detection, treatment, and care.*

Importance of Cervical Cancer in the Indo-Pacific

- **Leading Cause of Cancer Deaths:** *3rd leading cause among women in the region.*
- **Challenges:**
 - *Less than 10% of women have completed HPV vaccination.*
 - *Less than 10% have undergone recent cervical cancer screening.*
 - *Issues with healthcare access and limited resources.*

Goals of the Initiative

- **HPV Vaccination Promotion:** *Increase vaccination rates in underserved areas.*
- **Screening Access:** *Expand access to screenings, especially for low-resource regions.*
- **Treatment Expansion:** *Address gaps in treatment availability.*
- **Life-saving Potential:** *Expected to save hundreds of thousands of lives over the coming decades.*

Broader Commitment: Biden-Harris Administration

- **Cancer Moonshot in the U.S.:**
 - *Reduce cancer death rate by at least 50% by 2047.*
 - *Prevent over 4 million cancer deaths.*
 - *Improve the experience for those affected by cancer.*

Quad Commitments

Collaborative Efforts

- **Gavi Support:** *Quad countries pledge support to Gavi for HPV vaccine distribution in the Indo-Pacific.*
- **Partnership with UN Agencies:** *Bulk purchasing of HPV diagnostics to reduce screening costs.*
- **International Atomic Energy Agency:** *Improve access to medical imaging and radiation therapy.*

U.S. Contributions

Department of Defense

- **HPV Vaccine Expert Exchange:**
 - *U.S. Navy will support expert exchanges with Indo-Pacific partners starting 2025.*
 - *Build capacity and enhance healthcare systems in the region.*

FDA's Oncology Center of Excellence

- **Project Asha:** *Technical visit to India for capacity-building in cancer trials.*
 - *Collaboration with stakeholders to improve clinical trial management, streamline approval processes, and share regulatory expertise.*

National Cancer Institute (NCI)

➤ **Global Cancer Research:**

- *Currently involved in nearly 400 projects in the Indo-Pacific.*
- *Focus on cervical cancer vaccination, screening, and treatment.*
- *Expand collaboration to provide evidence-based cancer information to health professionals and patients in the region.*

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

➤ **HPV Vaccination Program Support:**

- *Partner with the Philippines Ministry of Health to evaluate vaccination programs.*
- *Broaden cancer control efforts with pilot cervical cancer screening studies in U.S. Pacific territories.*
- *Develop an implementation guide to strengthen screening and early detection capacity.*

U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC)

- **Support Private Sector Projects:** *Focus on preventing, diagnosing, and treating cancer, including cervical cancer, in underserved communities.*

U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)

- **Support for Gavi:** *Pledge of \$1.58 billion to Gavi to expand HPV vaccination access across low- and middle-income countries.*

State Department (PEPFAR)

➤ **Integration of Cervical Cancer Screening:**

- *Share best practices for scaling cervical cancer screening within HIV treatment programs.*
- *Focus on strengthening supply chains for medical supplies required for screening and treatment.*

Australia:

- **Funding:** *Australia will provide AUD 16.5 million to the Elimination Partnership in the Indo-Pacific for Cervical Cancer (EPICC), expanding HPV vaccination, screening, and treatment programs in countries like Timor-Leste, Fiji, and Papua New Guinea. Philanthropic support, particularly from the Minderoo Foundation, brings total funding to AUD 29.6 million.*

- **EPICC Initiatives:** *EPICC focuses on strengthening HPV-related policies, laboratory capacity, and cancer management across the region. The initiative will screen 140,000 women in the Pacific over the next four years.*

India:

- **Technical Expertise:** *India will contribute its expertise in digital health through the National Non-Communicable Disease portal to track cancer data across the Indo-Pacific. A commitment of \$10 million supports the WHO Global Initiative on Digital Health.*
- **Screening and Vaccination:** *India will provide \$7.5 million worth of HPV sampling kits, detection tools, and vaccines, enhancing the reach of preventive care. It is also expanding population-based screening for cervical cancer using cost-effective methods like Visual Inspection with Acetic Acid (VIA).*
- **Treatment and Research:** *India is bolstering cancer treatment through the "Strengthening of Tertiary Care Cancer Centres" program and expanding access to affordable treatments under Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY). Research led by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) will focus on enhancing cervical cancer detection and care, with results shared regionally.*

Japan:

- **Medical Equipment and Assistance:** *Japan has committed around \$27 million in medical equipment, including MRI and CT scanners, to Indo-Pacific countries like Cambodia and Vietnam. Between FY2019 and FY2023, Japan provided \$75 million in assistance for combating cancer in the region.*
- **Global Health Support:** *Japan's contributions to organizations such as Gavi and UNFPA help promote women's health and cervical cancer prevention. Additionally, partnerships with the National Cancer Center Japan will strengthen regional cancer care initiatives.*

Improving Access to Cancer Screening and Prevention:

- **World Bank & Global Financing Facility:** *They are investing \$400 million in HPV-related services, including screening, vaccination, and treatment in countries like Vietnam, Laos, and the Philippines, aiming to strengthen health systems and increase vaccine access.*
- **Women Health and Economic Empowerment Network (WHEN):** *This network is allocating \$100 million for cervical cancer prevention in Southeast Asia, focusing on HPV screening, diagnosis, and treatment through concessional and investment capital.*

- **Serum Institute of India:** Partnering with Gavi to provide up to 40 million doses of HPV vaccines to underserved populations in the Indo-Pacific region.
- **Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation:** Committed up to \$180 million over four years to accelerate global HPV vaccine uptake and develop new therapeutic vaccines.
- **Sabin Vaccine Institute:** Supporting the creation of the Cervical Cancer Elimination Consortium-India (CCEC-I), aiming to eliminate cervical cancer in 100 districts with a comprehensive prevention and treatment strategy.
- **Jhpiego & Roche:** Expanding HPV testing and thermal ablation treatment in the Philippines, targeting underserved urban areas.
- **Illumina:** Focusing on genomic diagnostic tests to improve precision medicine for advanced cervical cancer patients.
- **Roche Diagnostics:** Expanding cervical cancer screening and education in the Indo-Pacific, particularly targeting under-screened groups.
- **Becton Dickinson & Co. (BD):** Supporting cervical cancer screening camps for underserved women and training healthcare workers in screening best practices.

Improving Cancer Care Delivery:

- **Project ECHO:** Launching 10 new learning networks to improve cancer prevention and care in the region, including training healthcare workers on HPV vaccine implementation.
- **American Cancer Society:** Offering grants and technical assistance to civil society organizations to improve cancer care delivery and increase the uptake of prevention services.
- **American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO):** Updating guidelines on the management of cervical cancer and supporting their adoption across the Indo-Pacific.
- **International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA):** Expanding its **Rays of Hope** initiative, which strengthens radiotherapy and imaging capacities, with anchor centers in Japan and India.
- **Union for International Cancer Control (UICC):** Collaborating with over 1,150 members across 172 countries to address inequities in cancer care through their 'Elimination Partnership in the Indo-Pacific for Cervical Cancer.'

Increasing Capacity for Cancer Research, Infrastructure, and Training:

- **Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center & Royal North Shore Hospital:** *A \$40 million partnership to advance clinical trials and liquid biopsy technologies for cervical cancer detection.*
- **Amazon Web Services (AWS):** *Offering cloud computing resources to support cancer research and treatment using advanced datasets.*
- **Pfizer:** *Expanding the INDovation initiative to support startups focusing on early diagnosis and cervical cancer care at primary health centers.*
- **Elekta:** *Increasing radiotherapy capacity and training in Southeast Asia to eliminate cervical cancer.*
- **MD Anderson:** *Expanding cervical cancer research and training partnerships in countries like Indonesia and others in the region.*

Increasing Cancer Awareness and Education:

- **Hologic:** *Using AI to expand cervical cancer screening and raise awareness in the Indo-Pacific, also publishing the Global Women's Health Index.*
- **Global Initiative Against HPV and Cervical Cancer:** *Promoting HPV vaccination and screening efforts, organizing workshops, and raising awareness across the Indo-Pacific region.*

Cervical Cancer: Key Points

- **Definition:** *Cervical cancer originates in the cells of the cervix, the lower part of the uterus that connects to the vagina. It is one of the most common cancers in women globally.*
- **Causes:**
 - **Human Papillomavirus (HPV):** *Most cases are caused by persistent infection with high-risk types of HPV, a sexually transmitted infection.*
 - *Other risk factors include smoking, weakened immune system, long-term use of oral contraceptives, and multiple pregnancies.*
- **Symptoms:**
 - *Early stages may be asymptomatic.*
 - *Common symptoms include abnormal vaginal bleeding (especially after sex), pelvic pain, and unusual discharge.*
- **Prevention:**

- **HPV Vaccination:** *Effective in preventing infection with HPV types that cause most cervical cancers.*
- **Regular Screening:** *Pap smears and HPV tests help detect precancerous changes in the cervix.*
- **Treatment:**
 - **Early Stages:** *Surgery (hysterectomy), radiation therapy, or chemotherapy.*
 - **Advanced Stages:** *Combination of radiation and chemotherapy.*
- **Prognosis:** *Early detection significantly improves the chances of successful treatment and survival.*

Sabina shoal

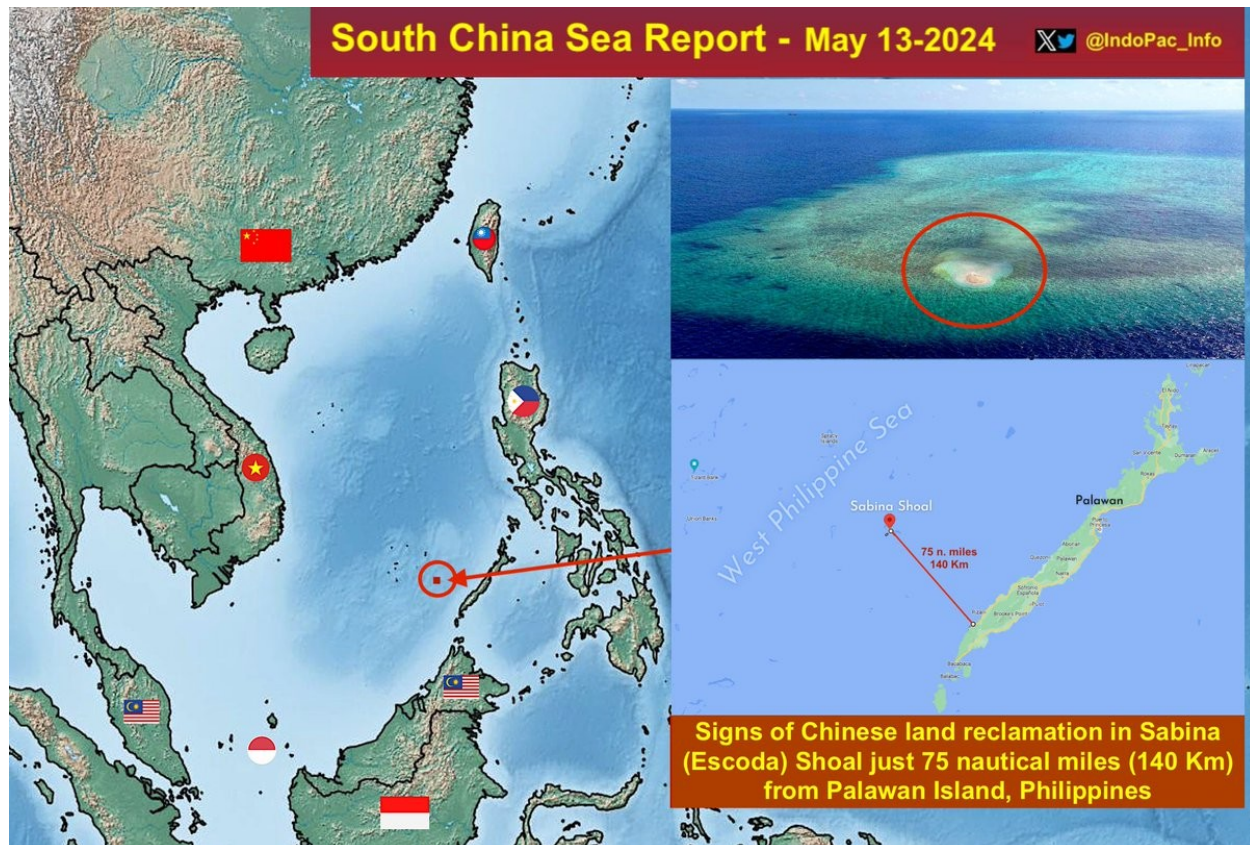
Syllabus: GS-2; International Relations

Context

- *With the increasing Chinese presence at Escoda (Sabina) Shoal blocking supply missions to **Filipino troops** stationed in the West Philippine Sea, the Philippine government should now accept the offer of the United States to escort its ships in the disputed waters, former Supreme Court Senior Associate Justice Antonio Carpio said.*

About

- *Sabina Shoal is a **coral reef located in the South China Sea**, part of the disputed **Spratly Islands**.*
- *This region is known for its geopolitical significance, as it lies at the center of maritime territorial claims involving several Southeast Asian nations, including China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Brunei.*



Location

- Sabina Shoal is situated about 75 nautical miles west of Palawan, a Philippine island, and falls within the Philippines' **Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)**.
- It lies near the western edge of the Spratly archipelago, an area rich in fishing grounds and potential oil and gas reserves.

Territorial Disputes

- The South China Sea, including areas like Sabina Shoal, has been a flashpoint for tensions due to overlapping territorial claims.
- China asserts that Sabina Shoal falls within its "**Nine-Dash Line**," a demarcation that covers nearly 90% of the South China Sea, based on historical claims.
- This line, however, has been widely contested, particularly by the Philippines, which views Sabina Shoal as part of its EEZ under the **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)**.

Importance and Activities

- **Strategic Location:** Sabina Shoal, like many other features in the Spratlys, has strategic military value due to its proximity to important shipping lanes and its potential use for surveillance and military outposts.

- **Fishing Grounds:** *It is an essential area for local fishing industries, particularly for the Philippines, which heavily relies on the resources of the South China Sea for its fishing communities.*
- **Resource Potential:** *Although no significant oil or gas explorations have been conducted specifically at Sabina Shoal, the broader South China Sea is believed to be rich in hydrocarbons, making it an economically attractive region.*

Recent Incidents

- *Sabina Shoal has been the site of recent tensions, particularly between the Philippines and China.*
- *In recent years, there have been incidents involving Chinese maritime militia or coast guard vessels operating near or around the shoal, leading to diplomatic protests by the Philippines.*
- *These activities have been seen as part of a broader Chinese strategy to assert control over the South China Sea.*
- *In response, the Philippines has increased patrols and surveillance around the area, asserting its rights under UNCLOS.*
- *The Permanent Court of Arbitration's 2016 ruling, which rejected China's claims over the South China Sea, has further bolstered the Philippines' position regarding its claims, although China continues to disregard the ruling.*

Ecological Concerns

- *Sabina Shoal, like many other coral reefs in the South China Sea, faces environmental threats due to overfishing, illegal fishing practices, and potential damage from militarization.*
- *Activities like dredging and land reclamation in other parts of the Spratly Islands have led to widespread coral reef destruction, and similar activities could jeopardize the biodiversity in and around Sabina Shoal.*

India needs a 'National Security Strategy'

Syllabus: GS-3: Internal Security.

Context:

- **Context:** Recent discussions about a National Security Strategy (NSS) have gained momentum as geopolitical dynamics shift, with India's neighborhood in flux and economic ambitions facing global challenges.
- **Economic Dimension:** India's goal of becoming a \$4 trillion economy is threatened by global conflicts like the wars in Ukraine and Gaza, which are slowing global growth.
- **Key Focus:** A strong economy is central to all sectors, including defence, healthcare, and infrastructure, necessitating a strategy that prioritizes scarce resources.

Interpreting the Term 'National Security'

- **Differing Interpretations:** National security means different things to different countries, influenced by their global positions and priorities.
- **U.S. Example:**
 - The U.S. NSS ties national security with maintaining global leadership, combining values and interests.
 - The NSS guides further documents like the National Defense Strategy and departmental postures, ultimately influencing budgeting decisions.
- **UK and France Examples:**
 - The UK's Integrated Review (2021) focuses on cooperation with allies to project itself as a global power.
 - France's NSS, shaped by the Ukraine war, emphasizes its nuclear deterrence and aspirations for European leadership.

Need for India's National Security Strategy

- **Comprehensive Approach:** An NSS for India should integrate aspects of defence, finance, investments, and climate change into a coherent policy.
- **Secrecy Element:** Such a strategy should remain secret, particularly when it involves clear threat assessments.
- **Current Challenges:** India's strategy should address its economic and military challenges, particularly in relation to a stronger China, and balance its multialignment strategy (e.g., Quad and BRICS).

Multialignment Strategy

- **Multialignment Definition:** *India's approach to foreign policy, making friends with capable nations while avoiding firm alliances.*
- **Strategic Groupings:**
 - **Quad:** *A security dialogue between India, the U.S., Japan, and Australia to ensure maritime freedom.*
 - **BRICS:** *A China-led economic grouping involving Brazil and Russia, aimed at balancing global alliances.*
- **Challenges with China:** *India's \$85 billion trade deficit with China complicates relations, while China's territorial claims present military threats.*

Defence and Budgeting Prioritisation

- **Threat Prioritisation:** *A key aspect of NSS is identifying the greatest threats and allocating resources efficiently.*
- **Military Capabilities:** *India's military capacity, particularly in submarine and shipbuilding, lags behind China, necessitating urgent upgrades to naval capabilities.*
- **Transparency Issues:** *While India's defence budget is relatively transparent, a secret NSS must highlight weaknesses candidly rather than presenting an overly optimistic view.*

Messaging to the Public and Political Context

- **Domestic Messaging:** *National security strategies need to balance public expectations of strength with realistic capabilities.*
- **International Flexibility:** *A written NSS could limit India's flexibility in foreign policy, especially in sensitive global issues like the Russia-Ukraine war and the Gaza conflict.*

Integration of Economy with National Security

- **Economic Linkages:** *National security is deeply connected to economic policy, industry, and financial institutions. A cohesive strategy would align economic priorities with security needs.*
- **Implementation:** *The National Security Council Secretariat is capable of handling this integration, provided the strategy remains simple, clear, and confidential.*

Conclusion

- **Urgent Need for NSS:** *India requires a comprehensive and coherent National Security Strategy to align its economic, defence, and foreign policies.*
- **Key Recommendations:** *The NSS should remain secret, concise, and focused on India's unique geopolitical and economic challenges, ensuring effective governance and preparedness against external threats.*