



I2U2- The West Quad

This editorial is based on [“India’s new West Asia approach is a welcome break with past diffidence”](#) which was published in The Indian Express on 12/07/2022. It talks about I2U2 grouping and related India's participation in the I2U2 summit.

For Prelims: I2U2, West Asian Quad, Food Security, Abraham Accords, Maritime Security, Biotechnology, Startup Ecosystem, Robotic Solar Cleaning Technology, The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World, Haifa port

For Mains: Prime Areas of Cooperation of I2U2, Significance of I2U2 for India, China's Expanding Role in the Middle-East, Internal Conflicts of the Arab World

I2U2 is the new grouping formed by four nations- **India, Israel, UAE, and the US**. It was given the name [International Forum for Economic Cooperation](#).

It is **focused on expanding economic and political cooperation in the Middle East and Asia**, including through **trade, combating climate change, energy cooperation**, and coordination on other vital shared interests. The four-nation framework would foster support and cooperation in various domains like **infrastructure, technology and [maritime security](#)**.

The first virtual summit of I2U2 will focus heavily on the [global food and energy crisis](#) resulting from the [conflict in Ukraine](#).

What is the Background of I2U2 Grouping?

▪ Abraham Accords:

- In September, 2020, **Israel, UAE and Bahrain signed [Abraham Accords](#) brokered by the United States** which has subsequently led to **normalising of relations between Israel and a number of Arab Gulf countries**.
 - **I2U2 was initially formed in October, 2021** following the Abraham Accords, to **deal with issues concerning maritime security, infrastructure and transport**.
 - The aim was to harness the unique array of capabilities, knowledge and experience of all four nations which ultimately lead to the formation of I2U2.

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What can be the Prime Areas of Cooperation of I2U2?

- **Security:**
 - This will help the countries in exploring security cooperation among the four nations within the framework of these new groupings.
 - **India already has a robust bilateral security cooperation with Israel, the US and the UAE.**
- **Technology:**
 - Each of these countries is a **technological hub** [Biotechnology](#) is prominent in each of these countries as well.
 - **Israel is called a Startup Nation already.** India has been also developing a widening [startup ecosystem](#) of its own.
 - UAE also recognises that the future of the world economy is not going to be built around just hydrocarbons, oil and gas. It needs to work in the technology sector too.
 - In May this year, a project was commissioned in which **Ecoppia, an Israeli company, would manufacture robotic solar cleaning technology in India, meant for a project in the UAE.**
- **Food Security:**
 - Joint efforts by these four countries become crucial to tackle and reduce the consequences of [food security](#) and safety.
 - According to the 2020 report by ['The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World,'](#) around **14 percent of India's total population is undernourished.**
- **Trade and Connectivity:**
 - I2U2 can **revitalise and re-energise the system of trade and commerce** among the four countries.
 - After the US, **UAE is the second-largest export destination of India.**
 - **Connectivity:**
 - **I2U2 will boost India's project along with UAE and Saudi Arabia** to build a connectivity corridor that runs from India to the Arabian gulf across the Arabian peninsula to Israel, Jordan and from there to the European Union.
 - If this corridor is completed then **India will be able to cut the cost of**

moving a container significantly (for instance from Mumbai to Greece by over 40%).

What is the Significance of I2U2 for India?

- **India's West-Asian Policies:**
 - Until now, India's West Asian policies have largely insisted on keeping its bilateral relationships separate from each other.
 - **This is the first step to bring those relationships with UAE and Israel together and merge them.**
 - **Advantage from Abraham Accords:**
 - India will get advantage of the Abraham Accords to **deepen engagement with Israel without risking its ties with the UAE and the other Arab states.**
- **Benefit Market:**
 - India is a **massive consumer market**. It's a frontline producer of **high-tech and highly sought-after goods** as well that will attract investors from West Asia.
- **Thrust to Geopolitical Presence:**
 - **I2U2 will boost India's geopolitical presence** especially in West Asia and India will strategically and economically establish itself as a World player.
- **Indian Diaspora and Remittances:**
 - There are around 8 to 9 million Indians in West Asia, 2.5 million in the United Arab Emirates alone. **They are India's goodwill ambassadors.**
 - Indian communities in West Asia have a significant impact upon the Indian economy, through inward remittances. **Further cooperation with West Asian countries through I2U2 will enhance inward remittance.**
 - According to a [UN report on international migration](#), in 2017, **inward remittances from the Gulf into India were 38 billion U.S. dollars.**

What are the Challenges Associated with I2U2?

- **Challenges for Israel:**
 - As far as the quest for peace and resolution of the Arab-Israeli problem is concerned, the Abraham Accords are a major breakthrough.
 - However, the other states in the region are still reluctant to maintain friendly bilateral relations with Israel.
 - Also, at the grassroot level, the [Israel-Palestine conflict](#) is still a major area of concern.
- **Internal Conflicts of the Arab World:**
 - **Iran-Saudi:** The [Shia-Sunni conflict](#) between Iran and Saudi Arabia is also going on which is also running through Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen.
- **Possible Splitting of Countries:**
 - The internal conflicts in the Arab world will possibly lead to the significant partners of India like Iran split from the former into another group.
 - The developing situation might lead to the creation of two groups one with **China, Pakistan, Russia, Iran and Turkey** while **India, Israel, USA and UAE** are likely to be on the other side.
- **China's Expanding Role in the Middle East:**
 - India must also look at the presence of China which has been expanding its footprint in the region.
 - **Israel:**
 - **Israel's Haifa port has been expanded by China**, more than one and a half billion-dollar investment in Haifa has been made by China.
 - China is also building the Ashdod port which is the only port Israel has in the mediterranean.
 - **UAE:**
 - UAE was one of the first countries that got **Huawei's** (Chinese MNC) assistance for its [5G project](#).

What Should be the Way Forward?

- **Seizing the Opportunity:**
 - The I2U2 is a win-win proposition for all the countries concerned. **India needs to play a more active role as far as cooperation with West Asia is concerned.**
 - India must navigate this area which is full of landmines, very cautiously because the fundamental interests of India: **energy security, food security, workers, trade, investment and maritime security lie in this region.**
- **Reassuring Other Partners in West Asia:**
 - Two countries, specifically, need to be reassured that this new arrangement is not aimed at them: **Iran and Egypt.**
 - **For India, Iran is important** in relation to the present context of Afghanistan. **India must deal with the challenges both diplomatically and strategically in this region.**
 - **Egypt has friendly relations with all the four countries** in this alliance but it must be reassured that it will not be impacted economically or politically.
- **Mutual Cooperation Among the Four Countries:**
 - There are challenges in dealing with the complications of the West Asian region.
 - **Balancing the rival countries diplomatically and strategically** in order to maintain friendly relations with each other can be done **through mutual cooperation among the four countries.**

Drishti Mains Question

Critically examine the aims and objectives of I2U2. What importance does it hold for India?

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. The area known as 'Golan Heights' sometimes appears in the news in the context of the events related to (2015)

- (a) Central Asia
- (b) Middle East
- (c) South-East Asia
- (d) Central Africa

Ans: (b)