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Special Issue

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All about Alexander and Chandragupta Maurya

(Source: [Indian Express](#))



Context: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday (November 14) said that Chandragupta Maurya, who founded the Mauryan empire in the 4th century BC, had defeated Alexander of Macedon in battle — and yet, it is the latter whom historians have chosen to call “great”. “...Once the countrymen learn the truth, India will change,” Adityanath said.

‘Greatness’ in perspective

- Alexander was referred to as “great” by early historians just as several other conquerors and prominent rulers have been called across empires and ages.
- Prominent examples are the Roman emperor Constantine; the Persians Cyrus and Darius; Herod, king of Judea; and in more modern times, Catherine and Peter of Russia, and Frederick of Prussia.
- In Indian history, ‘great’ has been used for the emperors Ashoka, Rajaraja and Rajendra Chola, and Akbar, among others.
- The use of the suffix ‘great’ has become less common in modern history-writing however, as historians have moved their focus away from the political triumphs of individual rulers to the society, economy, art and architecture of their times.
- They have also subjected the rulers’ apparent greatness to new perspectives and to more rigorous historical scrutiny through a re-evaluation of old sources and by referencing those that have been discovered more recently.

The ‘greatness’ of Alexander...

- Alexander came to be called ‘great’ because of his stupendous military conquests which dazzled European writers and chroniclers of the ancient world.
- He had established, before he turned 30 years of age, the largest empire the world had seen until then, which stretched across modern western and central Asia all the way from Greece to India’s northwestern frontier.
- Subsequently, Ghenghis Khan (1162-1227) stamped his authority over a bigger swathe of Asia and Europe, and other conquerors such as Tamerlane, Atilla the Hun, and Charlemagne, as well as Ashoka, Akbar, and Aurangzeb built their own very large empires.



- The Chola emperors Rajaraja I (985-1014) and Rajendra I (1014-1044) built formidable navies that conquered the Maldives, and reached Sri Lanka and several countries of Southeast Asia across the Bay of Bengal.

...And that of Chandragupta

- Chandragupta Maurya's own achievements too, were very significant. He was the architect of an empire that controlled the plains of both the Indus and the Ganga, and which stretched until the eastern and western oceans. With Pataliputra at its imperial centre, the Mauryan Empire for the first time unified most of South Asia.
- Chandragupta laid the foundations of an extensive and efficient system of centralised administration and tax-collection that formed the bases of his empire. Trade and agriculture were reformed and regulated with the building of infrastructure and standardisation of weights and measures, and provisions were made for a large standing army.
- Chandragupta's political mentor and chief adviser was Chanakya, also known as Kautilya and Vishnugupta, to whom is attributed the legendary Arthashastra, the pioneering Indian treatise on political science, statecraft, military strategy, and economy.

Alexander's Indian campaign

- Alexander was born in 356 BC at Pella in ancient Greece, and succeeded his father, king Phillip II, to the throne at the age of 20. Over the next 10 years, Alexander led campaigns across large parts of West Asia and North Africa.
- In 330 BC, he defeated Darius III in the decisive battle of Gaugamela, and after a long campaign in Bactria in the region of the Amu Darya north of today's Afghanistan, he crossed the Hindu Kush and entered the Kabul valley.
- In 327 BC, Alexander crossed the Indus, the farthest frontier of the old Persian empire, and began his Indian campaign that lasted about two years.
- The king of Taxila surrendered to Alexander, but beyond the Jhelum he was challenged by the legendary warrior whom Greek sources have identified as Porus.
- In the battle of Hydaspes that followed, Alexander won, but following his famous interview with Porus — during which the wounded king is said to have demanded that the invading emperor treat him “as befits a king” — was impressed enough to return to the captive Porus his kingdom, and to leave him in charge of Punjab when the Greek army ultimately retreated.

Alexander's premature retreat

- After the defeat of Porus, Alexander wished to march on into the heartland of the Gangetic basin — but upon reaching the Beas, the last of the five rivers of Punjab, his generals refused to go further.
- Alexander was forced to turn back, and he followed the Indus southward to its delta, where he sent part of his army to Mesopotamia by sea, while leading the other part overland along the Makran coast.
- He reached Susa in Persia in 324 BC, and in the following year, died in the ancient city of Babylon, to the south of today's Baghdad.
- His aborted Indian campaign notwithstanding, Alexander is believed to have died undefeated in any battle — seemingly fulfilling the prophecies of the oracles that he would conquer the entire world.
- At the time Alexander turned back from the threshold of India, his army was tired and homesick, they had wearied of fighting in the heavy Indian monsoon, and it is possible they were intimidated by stories of two great armies that lay in wait for them ahead — that of the Nandas of Magadha (c. 362 BC-321 BC), comprising, according to Greek writers, at least 20,000 cavalry, 200,000 infantry, and 3,000 war elephants, and beyond, the Gangaridai empire corresponding to what is today West Bengal and parts of Bangladesh.



- Alexander had by this time travelled some 1,000 miles from Macedonia, conquering seven nations and, it is said, more than 2,000 cities. He hoped to solve the “problem of the ocean” that Greek philosophers had grappled with, reaching the sea, and then sailing to subjugate more new lands.

Chandragupta and Alexander

- Historians estimate the year of Chandragupta’s rise to power in a band stretching from 324 BC to 313 BC; however, it is generally accepted that he ascended the throne in 321 BC.
- Even accepting the least recent year for his accession would, however, place him after Alexander had left India — and just before the Greek emperor’s death in Babylon.
- Be that as it may, Greek sources suggest that Chandragupta may have been in communication with Alexander during the latter’s Indian campaign. A L Basham’s *The Wonder That Was India* notes that “classical sources speak of a young Indian named Sandrocottus — identical with the Chandragupta Maurya of Indian sources...”.
- “Plutarch states that Sandrocottus advised Alexander to advance beyond the Beas and attack the Nanda emperor, who was so unpopular that his people would rise in support of an invader... The Latin historian Justin adds that later Sandrocottus offended Alexander by the boldness of his speech...and after many adventures succeeded in expelling the Greek garrisons and gaining the throne of India.”
- Based on these accounts, Basham concluded that “it is reasonable to believe that the emperor Chandragupta Maurya, who rose to power soon after Alexander’s invasion, had at least heard of the conqueror, and perhaps derived inspiration from his exploits”.

Chandragupta’s imperial ambition

- Greek and Indian sources agree that Chandragupta overthrew the unpopular last king of the Nandas, Dhana Nanda, and occupied his capital, Pataliputra. The young warrior is said to have been a protegee of the Brahmin philosopher Kautilya who, having been insulted by the Nanda king, bore a grudge against him.
- Buddhist texts say Chandragupta Maurya belonged to the kshatriya Moriya clan associated with the Shakyas. Brahmanical texts, however, refer to the Mauryas as shudras and heretics.
- Guided by the guile and strategy of Kautilya and by his own great military prowess, Chandragupta went about fulfilling his imperial ambitions. Once he had established his mastery over the plains of the Ganga, he moved north-west to occupy the power vacuum left by the retreat of Alexander’s army.
- “These areas fell to him rapidly, until he reached the Indus. Here he paused as the Greek Seleucus Nicator — the successor to Alexander — had fortified his hold on the area,” wrote Romila Thapar in *The Penguin History of Early India*. Consequently, “Chandragupta moved to central India for a while...but 305 BC saw him back in the north-west, involved in a campaign against Selucus”, in which he was successful.
- By the peace treaty that was negotiated in 303 BC, “some Seleucid territories that today would cover eastern Afghanistan, Balochistan, and Makran were ceded to the Maurya”, wrote Thapar. Some matrimonial alliances followed as well, and during the campaign and afterward, there was considerable cultural contact between the Mauryans and the Greeks.
- With the treaty of 303 BC, “the routes and nodal points of the north-west region shifted from Persian-Hellenistic to Mauryan control,” wrote Thapar. “The territorial foundation of the Mauryan Empire had been laid, with Chandragupta controlling the Indus and Ganges Plains and the borderlands — a formidable empire by any standards.”



All about S-400 purchase & implications

(Source: [Indian Express](#))

Context: *A Russian official said in Dubai that delivery of the S-400 air defence system, five of which were bought by India from Russia in 2018 for nearly US\$5.5 billion, has begun, and is going on as per schedule. Sources in the establishment confirmed the development. The first unit is expected to be operational by the end of the year. The acquisition has the potential to cause a diplomatic rupture between the US and India when the two countries are on a path to a tighter relationship.*

What is S-400?

- Considered one of the most advanced and potent air defence systems in the world, S-400 Triumf has the capability to protect against almost all sorts of aerial attacks, including drones, missiles, rockets and even fighter jets. The system, intended to act as a shield over a particular area, is a long-range surface-to-air missile system.
- Named SA-21 Growler by NATO, and developed by Russia's Almaz Central Design Bureau, S-400 can engage intruding aircraft, unmanned aerial vehicles, cruise missiles, and ballistic missiles, a recent article in US Air Force's Journal for Indo-Pacific Command stated.
- It has "surfaced as an anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) asset designed to protect military, political, and economic assets from aerial attacks".
- Each unit has two batteries, each of which has a command-and-control system, a surveillance radar, and engagement radar and four launch trucks.
- Russia has been developing S-400 since 1993. Testing began in 1999- 2000 and Russia deployed it in 2007.
- According to Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies think tank, its "mission set and capabilities are roughly comparable to the US Patriot system" but unlike some Patriot interceptors, "the S-400 does not currently employ hit-to-kill ballistic missile defence technology".
- The system comes equipped with four types of missiles: short- range up to 40 km; medium-range up to 120 km; long-range 48N6 going as far as 250 km, and very-long-range 40N6E up to 400 km and a flight altitude of 180 km. It can simultaneously track up to 160 objects in a 600 km range, and target 72 objects in a 400 km range, according to a study.

How does it work?

- S-400 detects an aerial threat approaching the air defence bubble (the area it has to protect), calculates the trajectory of the threat, and fires missiles to counter it.
- It has long-range surveillance radars that send information to the command vehicle. On identifying the target, the command vehicle orders a missile launch.
- Think of the Iron Dome, recently used by Israel to protect against incoming rockets from Gaza May. Only, S-400 has the capacity to protect a much larger area from threats that are much farther.

Why has India bought them?

- To protect against attacks by missiles, or fighter jets from China or Pakistan. A report in February by the think tank Observer Research Foundation mentioned that from the perspective of the Indian Air Force, "there is no alternative system capable of serving its long-range air defence requirements, from the standpoint of either capability or cost". The S-400, it said, can "constrain the adversary's air operations even within their own airspace" a capability "unmatched by typical Western systems offered up as analogues".
- The report compared S-400 with the American MIM-104 Patriot system, which it noted is "primarily oriented toward missile defence with less focus on the pure anti-aircraft role".



- It said S-400 can be deployed within five minutes, compared to 25 minutes for Patriot (PAC-3). It has a speed of 4.8 km/s compared to 1.38 km/s. It is cheaper too, with a per-battery cost of approximately \$500 million, compared to the Patriot's \$1 billion.

By when will they be delivered?

- In Dubai, Director of Russia's Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation Dmitry Shugaev said: "Russia has started supplying S-400 air defence system to India, and the first division will be delivered by the end of 2021". India is slated to receive first of the five units it bought by end of the year.
- India has placed an order for five units in October 2018. Initially, the delivery was to begin within 24 months, but has been delayed for several reasons.
- The government told Parliament in July 2019, around the time when India paid Russia around \$800 million as the first tranche, that the final deliveries of all units are likely to be done by April 2023.

Who all have it?

- Several nations have been interested in it. Belarus requested it in 2007 and got the first delivery in 2016. Algeria bought it in 2014 and got the first unit in 2015. Turkey had placed an order with Russia in December 2017, and delivery began in July 2019. Egypt, Saudi Arabi and Qatar have also shown interest.
- What concerns India is that China placed an order in March 2014, and the delivery began in 2018. During the standoff in eastern Ladakh, which began in May 2020 and remains unresolved, China had reportedly deployed its S-400 along the Line of Actual Control.

Why is the US upset with it?

- There are several reasons. One is that the US wants India to wean off its traditional reliance on Russian defence systems.
- Russia has been the largest defence partner for India over the decades, a relationship that is changing as India inches closer to the US diplomatically and strategically; imports from the US have gone up, largely at the cost of Russian imports.
- A report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute on the trends in international arms transfer, released in March, said that while arms imports by India decreased by 33% between 2011–15 and 2016–20, Russia remained the largest supplier to India in 2011-15 and in the next half decade from 2016 -20.
- "However, Russia's deliveries dropped by 53 per cent between the two periods and its share of total Indian arms imports fell from 70 to 49 per cent. In 2011–15 the USA was the second largest arms supplier to India, but in 2016–20 India's arms imports from the USA were 46 per cent lower than in the previous five-year period, making the USA the fourth largest supplier to India in 2016–20." The report stated.
- But the large cause of concerns about the deal for Indo-American relationship lies in a 2017 law passed by the US named Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act (CAATSA), whose objective is to counter American adversaries Iran, Russia and North Korea through punitive measures. Title II of the Act deals with sanctions in Russian interests, including its defence industry.
- The Act empowers the US President to impose at least five of the 12 listed sanctions mentioned in Section 235 on persons who engage in a "significant transaction" with Russian defence and intelligence sectors. The US imposed sanctions on Turkey, a longstanding NATO ally, in December 2020 over its purchase of the system.
- In January, a US Congressional report warned that if India goes ahead with the purchase of the S-400 system, it may lead to sanctions.
- The report warned that "India's multi-billion dollar deal to purchase the Russian-made S-400 air defence system may trigger US sanctions on India" under CAATSA. A few days later, the outgoing US



Ambassador to India Kenneth Juster raised issues of “interoperability” between the forces of the two nations, which was viewed as a veiled reference to the S-400 deal.

- India’s External Affairs Ministry responded that “India and the US have a comprehensive global strategic partnership” and “India has a special and privileged strategic partnership with Russia”. The ministry said “India has always pursued an independent foreign policy. This also applies to our defence acquisitions and supplies which are guided by our national security interests.”
- The issue remains unresolved, though. Two US senators had reportedly written to President Joe Biden last month, urging his administration to waive any sanctions against India over the purchase.
- Now that the delivery has begun, it remains to be seen what action, if any, the US is willing to take, especially as it has made the Indo-Pacific its main area of focus to counter China’s rise.

5 terms that came up at the climate change conference in Glasgow

Context: After two weeks of negotiations with governments debating over provisions on phasing out coal, cutting greenhouse gas emissions and providing money to the poor world, the annual climate change summit came to an end with the adoption of a weaker-than-expected agreement called the Glasgow Climate Pact.



FIVE TERMS THAT CAME UP AT THE CLIMATE CHANGE
CONFERENCE IN GLASGOW

NET ZERO

Amount of
greenhouse gases
(the ones that cause
the Earth to heat up)
released in the
atmosphere



Amount of
these gases removed
from atmosphere,
through processes like
photosynthesis, or
physical removal using
futuristic tech

- At Glasgow meet, PM Modi pledged Net Zero for India by 2070

#QUIXPLAINED

1



MITIGATION

Refers to the reduction of greenhouse gases — the only way the rise in global temperatures can be halted in the long term

- At Glasgow meet, one of the main discussions was to increase the ambition of mitigation actions



2



ADAPTATION

All the ways in which human beings, and others, need to adapt to climate change and extreme weather patterns — making agriculture resilient, flood defences, etc

- At Glasgow meet, developed countries were asked to at least double their contribution for adaptation efforts in the developing world

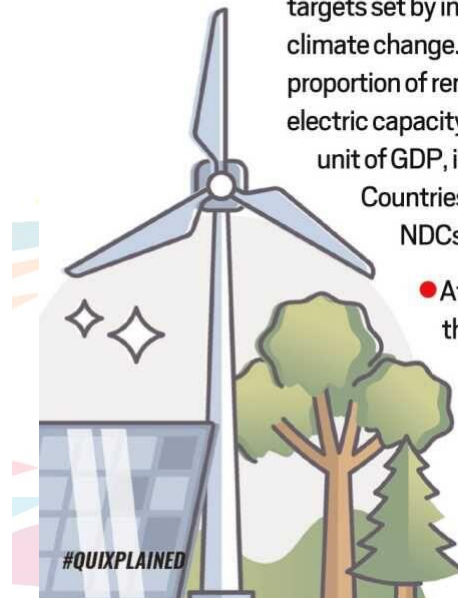


NDCs

Nationally Determined Contributions or targets set by individual countries to fight climate change. India's NDC: increasing proportion of renewable energy in installed electric capacity, decreasing emissions per unit of GDP, increasing forest cover.

Countries have to update their NDCs every five years

- At Glasgow meet, countries that had not submitted their NDCs for 2020 were asked to do so by 2022



CLIMATE FINANCE

All the money required to fund the actions needed to fight climate change. Money is needed for mitigation, adaptation, and to monitor actions countries are taking to keep global temperatures from rising beyond 2 degree Celsius from pre-industrial times.

- At Glasgow meet, developing countries asked developed countries to mobilise at least US\$ 1.3 trillion every year from 2030 onwards

TEXT: ESHAR ROY

#QUIXPLAINED

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