



CURRENT AFFAIRS



Argasia Education PVT. Ltd. (GST NO.-09AAPCAI478E1ZH)
Address: Basement C59 Noida, opposite to Priyagold Building gate, Sector 02,
Pocket I, Noida, Uttar Pradesh, 201301, CONTACT NO:-8448440231

Date - 14 Oct 2021

**Nobel Prize for Economics 2021:
Natural Experiments And the Causal
Relationship
(GS 3, Economics, The Hindu, Indian
Express)**

The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences has decided to award the Nobel Prize for economics 2021, one half to **David Card** for his *“empirical contributions to labor economics”* and another half jointly to **Joshua D. Angrist and Guido W. Imbens** *“for their methodological contributions to the analysis of causal relationships”*. They have basically provided us with a new insight about the labor market and manifested the importance of natural experiments in concluding the cause and effect relationships. This will for sure help us in finding answers to important questions for society.

Many questions in social science which is related to the decisions taken by people deal with cause and effect.

Understanding the Natural Experiments: For example, if there is an increment in minimum wages as per the law by the government, then will it affect the employment rate as the employer would hire fewer workers? Or something else would also come into play and will affect the employment rate. For example what if the employer has decided to pass on the burden of increased cost, due to increased wages to consumers.

Questions: How do immigration affect pay and employment levels? Should immigration be considered as to reduce the availability of resources to the existing residents? What if the immigrant population contributed more to the economy and resulted in an increase in the income of existing residents.

How does the extension of compulsory education by one year for a group of a student will affect them? Will it affect in the same manner for all students in the group in terms of increasing their future income or will it be different for different students. Will the extension of compulsory education necessarily result in an increase in income for all students of the group? What if some students do not look into the extension of education as to get an economic benefit, but to them, the value of education in itself is a benefit.

Difficult to Answer: These questions are difficult to answer because we have nothing to use as a comparison.

In the first question, we do not know what would have happened if there was no increment in the minimum wages. had the employment rate remained the same or increased if there had been no increment in minimum wages. In the second case, we do not know what would have happened, if there had been no immigration at all or less immigration. In the third question, we do not know what would have happened if the students had not gone for the extension of education.

However, this year's Nobel Prize winners have shown that it is possible to answer these questions and similar kinds of questions using natural experiments. The concept of natural experiments resembles the concept of clinical trials in medicine. The key is to use situations in which chance events or policy changes result in groups of people being treated differently in a way that resembles clinical trials in medicine. It means that the outcome of any cause will be not depending upon that specific cause only as the same cause will be affecting differently in different situations. This approach of Nobel laureates spread to other fields as well and revolutionized empirical research.

David Card has analyzed the effects of minimum wages, immigration and education on labour market, using natural experiments. He has basically challenged the conventional wisdom of Empirical/Theoretical research. The results showed among other things that increasing the minimum wage does not necessarily lead to fewer jobs. We have now witnessed that the income of people who were born in a country can benefit from new immigration. We have also now witnessed and realised that the resources provided to a student in a school is important for his/ her success and play important role in students future labour market.

Data from a natural experiment are difficult to interpret. In the mid-1990s, Joshua Angrist and Guido Imbens solved this methodological problem of interpretation, demonstrating how precise conclusions about cause and effect can be drawn from natural experiments.

Card's studies of core questions for society and Angrist and Imbens' methodological contributions have shown that natural experiments are a rich source of knowledge. Their research has substantially improved our ability to answer key causal questions, which has been of great benefit to society.

Information: The Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences is officially known as **The Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel**. The Nobel Prize for economic science differs from other awarded by Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences in the sense that it is officially known by a different name. It is an award funded by **Sveriges Riksbank** and is annually awarded by the **Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences** to researchers in the field of economic sciences since 1968. However other Nobel Prizes have been awarded since 1901.

Md Layeeque Azam, Economics Faculty

TERRORISM: Its new genres and further challenges [GS II, International Relations]

CONTEXT: Two decades after September 11, 2001, when al-Qaeda attacked over American soil, resulting into US invasion of Afghanistan. The developments now in the same series are in the form of the return of the Taliban in Afghanistan.

The question arises whether the Global war on terror was a failure?

Are there lessons to be learnt from it?

BACKGROUND PERCEPTIONS:-

The 9/11 attacks were the aggregate of a series of systemic and structural shortcomings of the U.S. security establishment along with the failure of human imagination.

A/c Historians, Osama bin Laden's actions were motivated by geopolitical and religious objectives, and his obsession with the 'sufferings of Muslims' in many far-flung regions.

He wanted to force the U.S. to alter its policies in areas of conflict, by such attacks. However, he failed and al-Qaeda faced the consequences.

Laden's goal to destroy the 'myth of American invincibility' failed and the Global war on terror neutralised the fears that terrorism was assured to create large-scale chaos across the globe.

Reasons for bin Laden's failure:-

- Laden and other leaders, all lacked the centrality of vision or power essential to sustain the momentum of such initiatives.
- Initially Afghanistan and Pakistan provided safe havens, and the situation changed once the safe havens were no longer available.
- The lack of visibility of the leaders and their diminishing authority over time contributed to the disappearance of the terror momentum and the capacity for militancy and violence.

Challenge continues:-

Two decades have passed since of the Global war on terror is continued, however it did not eradicate terrorism.

Terror groups such as **al-Qaeda** and the **IS** today pose a persistent challenge. Even after:-

- Leadership losses
- Organisational fracturing
- Territorial degradation
- Hard intelligence on the myriad terror modules
- The absence of a single core for either al- Qaeda or the IS

CHANGING NATURE OF ATTACKS:-

It would be tempting for intelligence agencies to think that the current low attacks shows the weakening of terror modules, including that of al-Qaeda and the IS , including –

- low-tech attacks
- small arms attacks
- the occasional use of Improvised Explosive Devices
- random 'lone wolf' attacks

.The Terrorism, stemming from a mixture of religious fervour and fundamentalist aims, remains vibrant.

The newer breed of terrorists, though less familiar with teachings of the Egyptian, Sayyid Qutb or the Palestinian, Abdullah Azzam, but they are well-versed in the practical methodologies practised by:

- Jalaluddin and Sirajuddin Haqqanis (the latter is a Minister in the Interim Afghan Government),
- Hafiz Saeed of the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and
- Maulana Masood Azhar of the Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), etc.

Hence, it is possible to conclude that notwithstanding some temporary setbacks caused by the Global war on terror, the broad contours of terrorism, specially Islamist terrorism, remain much the same.

A warning-

The return of the Taliban in Afghanistan, after humiliating the combined forces of the U.S., the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Afghan Armed Forces is a grim warning of what lies in store for the neighbourhood.

Apart from giving radical Islam a fresh lease of life and a new thrust, it has come at a time when the democratic world is demonstrating a diminishing appetite to fight terror away from their own 'locales', thus leaving the field wide open to the forces of Terror Inc., of which the Taliban is an indispensable entity.

Several terror groups which possess varying capabilities such as al-Qaeda, the IS, the Daesh across Asia, the LeT, JeM and the TRF (The Resistance

Front, which is backed by the LeT) in India, the Al-Shabab in Africa, etc., are certain to feel energised and gain a fresh lease of life.

In India-

Kashmir is witnessing a new wave of terror attacks reviving memories of the 1990s. **Targeted killings of minorities** have begun to send tremors across Jammu & Kashmir (J&K), and many other parts of India.

The current situation is against India, with J&K being in the centre of several terror groups, further complicated by Pakistan's efforts to aid and support them through the use of its 'regulars'.

While 'Zero-day' attacks like New York (9/11) and Mumbai (26/11) are still very much on the drawing board of terror groups, it is also known that a new breed of terrorists is experimenting with newer forms of terror, specially the possibility of 'enabled or remote controlled terror'. This is a frightening prospect.

The forms of 'new era' terror-

A challenge for Intelligence and terror specialists must begin to anticipate how to deal with 'new era terrorists', recruited over the Internet, who would thereafter be guided through different steps, over a sustained period, by anonymous handlers located elsewhere.

Internet-enabled terrorism — a completely new genre of terrorism — would be very different from what we have seen so far.

TO CONCLUDE:-

THE NEW FORM OF TERROR THAT HAS BEEN EMERGING FROM THE NEW BREED OF TERRORISM IS MORE DEADLY AND THREATENING. Linked to this is the threat posed by **cyber-terrorism**. Digital sabotage has already entered the armoury of certain terror groups. Cyber sabotage is a distinct possibility in certain situations today. It is well-known that terror groups that have state backing, have the capacity today to employ cyber techniques to carry out hostile attacks on the ICT-enabled infrastructure of another country. India and other countries globally have to collectively think and address the new emerging crisis soon .

Rajeev Yadav

Cultural Significance of Kochi-Muziris (GS Paper 1 ; History and Culture)

Context : Kochi-Muziris Biennale is postponed because of the covid situation. It is now set to open on December 12, 2022, and will run for four months, till April 10, 2023. The formal announcement was made on October 14.

Cultural Significance of Kochi

- Kochi has been an important cultural centre of India for centuries
- For the centuries many traders, seafarers and travellers have interacting with this town and they were involved themselves in the trade of spices
- Many foreigners like Portugal, Greece, Arab, China, The Netherlands and England penetrated India for the trade therefore we see the the cultural impact of foreign culture over indigeneous culture of Kochi
- Therefore multicultural evidences can easily been explored from his historical town
- Vishu is a Hindu festival popular in Kochi also. However Vishu is I celebrated in the other Indian states also. For example it is celebrated in the Tulu Nadu region in Karnataka, Mahé district of the Union Territory of Pondicherry, neighbouring areas of Tamil Nadu and in the regions of their diaspora communities. It is celebrated to bring prosperity. Other festivals like Holi, Diwali, Eid-ul-Fitr, Christmas, Easter, Milad-e-Sharif are also celebrated in this region
- Kochi Carnival is the biggest and most loved carnival in the city. It is celebrated for Ten days in the month of December. TIn this carnival we see the cultural glimpse of portuguese. This celebration also welcomes the new year . On New Year's Day an elephant parade is organised and tunes of "Panchavadyam" fills the air.

Cultural Significance of Muziris

- Muziris is the ancient cultural city of kerala. Muziris has been popular for international trade for more than 3000 years . Muzirish was a famous port of ancient India and in the sangam text we see the name of this port .
- It was one of the greatest and largest trade centre of ancient India which trade relations with greek , South East Asia and other part of the world

- Our archaeologists and scientists are exploring the cultural evidence from this site and the project related to Muziris Heritage is the effort to reinstall its legacy as well as its fame
- Archaeologists have found evidence of international trade from this site from the 7th century BC. Indian species are exported to various regions of the world . Even though archaeologists had also claimed that they had the remains of the Alexandrian Empire, they controlled a developed network of trade with India which had previously existed under the influence of the Persian Achaemenid dynasty.
- Greek historian Historian Strabo and Plinni also describe Indian-Roman trade. The Port of Alexandria became the major staging point for the spice trade (Northern Silk Route).
- Parthian Empire during the 3rd century BC was located on the trade route between the Roman Empire in the Mediterranean Basin and the Han Empire of China became important places in the circulation of spices.
- The reign of Augustus (27 BC- 15 BC) is the witness of direct trade relations between Rome and India.
- Saint Thomas, one of the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ, arrives in Muziris from Jerusalem and thus this site has also become the holy place of Christianity also
- These types of biennale should be held on time to time to protect and to enhance our ancient Indian Culture.

Swarn Singh

Powers of National Green Tribunal (GS 3 – Environmental pollution & Degradation , Tribunals)

CONTEXT:-

Recently, the Supreme Court has declared the **National Green Tribunal's (NGT)** position as a “unique” forum endowed with **suo motu** (on its own motion) **powers** to take up environmental issues across the country.

What is the National Green Tribunal (NGT)?

- It is a specialised body set up under the National Green Tribunal Act (2010) for effective and expeditious disposal of cases relating to environmental protection and conservation of forests and other natural resources.
- With the establishment of the NGT, India became the third country in the world to set up a specialised environmental tribunal, only after Australia and New Zealand, and the first developing country to do so.
- NGT is mandated to make disposal of applications or appeals finally within 6 months of filing the same.
- The NGT has five places of sittings, New Delhi is the Principal place of sitting and Bhopal, Pune, Kolkata and Chennai are the other four.

Structure of NGT

- The Tribunal comprises the Chairperson, the Judicial Members and Expert Members. They shall hold office for a term of five years and are not eligible for reappointment.
- The Chairperson is appointed by the Central Government in consultation with the Chief Justice of India (CJI).
- A Selection Committee shall be formed by the central government to appoint the Judicial Members and Expert Members.
- There are to be at least 10 and maximum 20 full time Judicial members and Expert Members in the tribunal.

Highlights of the Judgement:

- Not limited to Adjudicating Role: The role of the NGT is not simply adjudicatory in nature. The Tribunal has to perform equally vital roles that are preventative, ameliorative or remedial in nature.
- The functional capacity of the NGT is intended to leverage wide powers to do full justice in its environmental mandate.
- Article 21 rights cannot stand on a narrow compass of interpretation. Article 21 of the constitution protects the right to life and personal liberty.
- Multidisciplinary Role: NGT, as a complimentary, competent, specialised forum, to deal with all environmental multidisciplinary issues both as original and also as an appellate authority.
- International Commitment: The NGT embodied the international obligation India owed to the environment.
- The NGT has been recognised as one of the most progressive Tribunals in the world.
- This jurisprudential leap has allowed India to enter a rather exclusive group of nations which have set up such institutions with broad powers.

Challenges

- Two important acts – Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 have been kept out of NGT's jurisdiction. This restricts the jurisdiction area of NGT and at times hampers its functioning as the crucial forest rights issue is linked directly to the environment.
- The NGT decisions are being challenged in various High Courts under Article 226 (power of High Courts to issue certain writs) with many asserting the superiority of a High Court over the NGT, claiming 'High Court is a constitutional body while NGT is a statutory body'." This is one of the weaknesses of the Act as there is lack of clarity about what kind of decisions can be challenged; even though according to the NGT Act, its decision can be challenged before the Supreme Court.
- Decisions of NGT have also been criticised and challenged due to their repercussions on economic growth and development.
- The absence of a formula based mechanism in determining the compensation has also brought criticism to the tribunal.
- The decisions given by NGT are not fully complied by the stakeholders or the government. Sometimes its decisions are pointed out not to be feasible to implement within a given timeframe.
- The lack of human and financial resources has led to high pendency of cases – which undermines NGT's very objective of disposal of appeals within 6 months.
- The justice delivery mechanism is also hindered by a limited number of regional benches.

Way Forward

- There is a need for more autonomy and to widen NGT's scope for effective protection of the environment in balance with human developmental activities.
- The government needs to provide adequate financial and human resources — if it does not want the NGT to wither away.

- NGT offers a path for the evolution of environmental jurisprudence by setting up an alternative dispute resolution mechanism. It helps reduce the burden of litigation in the higher courts on environmental matters.

BY ANSHUM VERMA

FACULTY (POLITY, GEOGRAPHY AND ENVIRONMENT)

Plutus IAS