

- This is supported by the fact that some of the information that Mr. Navalny uses in his anti-corruption campaigns would be difficult, actually impossible, to find in publicly available sources.
- This kind of knowledge would have to come from someone not just inside, but very high-up in the system.

What is the likely impact?

- The anti-regime protests expectedly sparked off mixed reactions.
- Some suggest that these are the beginning of serious moves for regime change.
- Navalny's return from Germany is even compared to a similar journey in 1917 in a sealed train by iconic Bolshevik leader (Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov) Lenin.
 - This was the precursor to the October revolution of that year.
- Notwithstanding the euphoria, Alexei Navalny is unlikely to be the catalyst that will lead to 'regime change' in Russia
- And whatever the reasoning, Mr. Navalny is no Lenin, even if the protests for his release continue.
- His nationalist platform is not currently capable of appealing to all sections of Russian society or convincing the political opposition to coalesce around it.
- However, it is clear that now, Mr. Navalny will have a more prominent role in Russian politics.
- He is likely to emerge as a favourable figure of the western media.
- Navalny's presence and role is also an indication of serious churn among the Russian elites.
- To note, in Russia, historically, barring once, change usually begins in the upper echelons of power.

8. INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

8.1 Russia's Exit from Open Skies Treaty

Why in news?

- Russia recently announced that it was leaving the Open Skies Treaty (OST).
- In November 2020, the United States left the OST first after accusing Russia of violating the pact.

What is the Open Skies Treaty?

- The OST is an accord with over 30 countries being part of it.
- It allows participants to fly unarmed reconnaissance flights over any part of their fellow member states.
- It was first proposed in 1955 by former US President Dwight Eisenhower as a means to deescalate tensions during the Cold War.
- The treaty was eventually signed in 1992 between NATO members and former Warsaw Pact countries following the demise of the Soviet Union.
- It went into effect in 2002 and had 35 signatories, including key players US and Russia, along with one non-ratifying member (Kyrgyzstan).

How does it work?

- The OST aims at building confidence among members through mutual openness, thus reducing the chances of accidental war.
- Under the treaty, a member state can "spy" on any part of the host nation, with the latter's consent.
- A country can undertake aerial imaging over the host state after giving notice 72 hours before, and sharing its exact flight path 24 hours before.
- The information gathered, such as on troop movements, military exercises and missile deployments, has to be shared with all member states.
- Only approved imaging equipment is permitted on the surveillance flights.