07 Mar 2022: UPSC Exam Comprehensive News Analysis

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B. GS 2 Related

Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
1. The effects of the Russia-Ukraine conflict on maritime trade
Syllabus: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India’s interests, Indian diaspora.

Mains: Russia Ukraine crisis and impact on maritime trade

Context: As Russia continues its military onslaught on Ukraine, the Western economies have levied heavy sanctions which have affected the shipping industry as delays and shipping costs are expected to rise due to disruptions in the global supply chain.

What has been the impact on maritime trade so far in Ukraine?

- When the war started, some 15 sea ports in Ukraine were shut down. The loading and discharging of cargo ceased.
- None of the ports or the ships berthed in these ports has been attacked so far. Two ships were attacked while in anchorage leading traders to avoid Black Sea routes for their ships.
- For seafarers, the safest place in case of any accident is always the ship which has power, food and means to make water.
- Bunkers in ports have been identified for safely housing seafarers but ship crew have not moved out of their ships.
- Barring occasional attacks, ports and nuclear facilities, as strategic assets have not seen much fighting or attacks.
- So far, the war has involved the Russian Army and Air Force, not so much Naval attacks except a small operation in Kerch, says Pritam Banerjee, a logistics expert.
- Port cities such as Mariupol have been attacked from land but as Ukrainians hold out and resist the invasion, the Ukrainian president has warned of an imminent attack on the Odessa port by Russian warships.
- This would be a major escalation of the war. All the merchant ships will be under threat.
- As a direct consequence of the war, insurance premiums will go up for ships serving Black Sea ports.

What has been the impact globally?

- Crude oil prices have gone up 20% over the last week in-part due to fears and also due to possible disruptions in supply since Russia is a major supplier of oil and gas through pipelines as well as ships.
- Black Sea is home to the few warm water ports the country has and is the theater of the war.
- As crude oil prices go up, the price of ship fuel, called Bunker fuel, is going up as well.
- Fuel cost is the biggest contributor to the operating costs of a ship and the increase will have a cascading effect on shipping costs and freight.
- Bulk shipping including oil and gas tankers will be significantly affected.
- Russia and Ukraine are major traders in grain, minerals and oil. High insurance premiums, disruption in supply will rule the sector.
- In case of escalation, the Baltics and the North Sea shipping traffic may also be affected. War risk will hike insurance premiums.
- While Russia may not attack in the Mediterranean, insurance costs may go up for ships serving those routes also, which are the hub of European trade.

What is the role of Turkey in this conflict?
Turkey controls the entry and exit of Black Sea and hence has a say over ship traffic in the Black Sea.

It has banned Russian naval ships from passing through the Bosphorus Strait.

Turkey is not a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea which sees the oceans as commons and allows even warships innocent passage through territorial waters of a nation.

Turkey abides by the Montreux convention which gives it greater control over the straits.

Free passage is guaranteed for merchant vessels belonging to belligerents in war, especially if Turkey is not belligerent.

Any interpretation to curb Russian merchant ship movement will be a significant escalation and inflame the scenario.

**The pandemic saw a disruption in crew change in merchant ships. Will this conflict have a similar impact?**

- A less discussed impact of the war is the share of Ukrainian and Russian seafarers in the global seafarer workforce.
- China, Philippines and India contribute significantly to the international seafarer workforce.
- It is common for Russian and Ukrainian seafarers to serve together on merchant ships. Their joining and disembarking merchant ships will be severely affected, mounting a challenge to the manning requirements of global shipping.
- The pandemic had disrupted the free movement of crew and things were just about settling down.

**Nut Graf**

Fuel cost being the biggest contributor to the operating costs of a ship and the increase amidst Ukraine Russia war will have a cascading effect on shipping costs and freight. As Turkey abides by the Montreux convention, it has banned Russian naval ships from passing through the Bosphorus Strait which leads to the Black Sea.

**2. Russia sanctions may not dent Army preparedness**

**Syllabus:** Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India’s interests, Indian diaspora.

**Mains:** Sanctions on Russia and Impact on Indian Defense Supplies

**Context:** The armed forces are keeping a close tab to ensure Army’s preparedness especially as the global attention is on Ukraine.

**Sanctions on Russia and Impact on Indian Defense Supplies:**

- Russia has been a strategically important military partner for India, primarily because India sources a substantial portion of its military hardware and technology from Russia.
- India has a longstanding cooperation with Russia in the field of defence. The fear is that the new sanctions may have an impact on India’s defence imports, in the absence of a new payment mechanism.
- With significant restrictions on the Russian military contractors’ ability to procure key components due to the recent sanctions, their ability to continue supplying to India is curtailed.
- There are concerns that this could constrain the ability of these suppliers to fulfill existing contracts to India such as the S-400 and stealth frigates, amongst others.
- India’s concern is that the US may act tough in the coming days over deals with Russia, with Washington’s Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) hanging like the Sword of Damocles over India’s head.
New sanctions against the Russian banking system and the move to oust the country’s banks from SWIFT will have a big impact on the ability of the two nations to carry on business as usual.

**C. GS 3 Related**

**Category: ECONOMY**

1. **CBI Arrests Former NSE MD Chitra Ramkrishna**

Syllabus: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.

**Prelims:** National Stock Exchange (NSE)

**Mains:** Critical evaluation of National Stock Exchange (NSE) co-location case

**Context:**

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) arrested the former Managing Director of the National Stock Exchange (NSE), in a case registered in May 2018.

Know more about the [National Stock Exchange (NSE) co-location case](#)

**D. GS 4 Related**

**Nothing here for today!!!**

**E. Editorials**

**Category: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

1. **In sanctions bite, Nord Stream 2 in the cross hairs**

Syllabus: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries

**Prelims:** Facts about Nord Stream 2

**Mains:** The history of competition between the U.S. and Russia to secure the European market and the significance of Nord Stream projects.

**Context**

US declared that the Nord Stream 2 is “Currently Dead at the Bottom of the Sea”

**Nord Stream 2**

- Nord Stream 2 is a system of underwater natural gas pipelines.
- The energy pipeline will facilitate an uninterrupted supply of natural gas under the Baltic Sea from Ust-Luga city of Russia to Lubmin city in Germany, bypassing transit through Ukraine and other countries.
- It covers a distance of 1,225 km and is being built at a cost of €11 billion.
- Nord Stream 2 will become a shorter and cheaper option compared to the transit through multiple countries.
Import of Natural Gas by European countries

- Despite efforts to decarbonise energy, natural gas will remain one of the major sources of energy for a few more years.
- Europe is the world’s second largest market for natural gas, and hence it is a region of conflict for hydrocarbon energy, between the U.S. and Russia.
- Germany, despite a decade of “energiewende” (a transition to a low carbon, sustainable, and affordable energy supply), is still one of the largest importers of oil and gas.

Competition between U.S. and the Soviet Union to secure European market

- The post-war European security order under the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Warsaw Pact was encouraged by an energy order in which,
  - Oil was exported to West Europe from West Asian/Middle Eastern fields controlled by U.S. companies.
  - To East Europe from the oilfields of the Soviet Union.
- The Soviet exports gains momentum
  - Problems started in the 1960s when the Soviet expanded its production swiftly.
• They planned the “Druzhba” pipeline network to integrate East Europe, along with offering West Europe large orders with lower prices for oil.
• West Germany supported the plan and the U.S. tried to preserve its market by urging NATO allies to exclude the pipeline.
• West Germany’s Chancellor finally gave approval for the pipeline and the Soviets constructed the pipeline.
• Despite the pipeline, the Soviets managed to secure a large share of the West European oil market only after the West Asian oil crisis in the 1970s.
• In 1970’s Europe’s energy shift to natural gas saw a greater linkage of Soviet gas fields to West European markets via pipelines through East Europe.

• The U.S. gains upperhand
  • The 1986 oil price crash caused by Saudi Arabia dented the Soviet economy.
  • The U.S. then used NATO eastward expansion to create a new European security order in the face of a diminished Russia.
  • The U.S. tried to curtail the growing EU-Russia gas synergy to continue its dominance in the face of Russia’s pushback.

Russia’s moves

• Russia revived its hold by increasing oil and gas production which accounted for 60% of exports, 25% of government revenue, and increased national reserves to $600 billion.
• Russia became a reliable supplier for the EU (60% of Russia’s gas exports) and Germany.
• A new pipeline was constructed to Germany via Belarus and Poland. Also, Russia supplied about 40% of the EU’s requirements.
• In 2004, instability in Ukraine created challenges for gas flow, and thus a plan was worked out to establish a direct Russia-Germany link via the undersea through the Nord Stream project.
• The two Nord Stream projects are significant as they met almost all of Germany’s import requirements, and are symbols of synergy with Russia.
• The Nord projects deprive Ukraine and East European countries of transit fees and make them dependent on Russia for supplies.
  • This resulted in tier opposition against the Nord Stream project.

Response from the U.S.

• The U.S. supported the deprived East European countries and launched the Three Seas Initiative to build north-south gas connectivity for liquefied natural gas (LNG) imports via maritime terminals on the Baltic, Adriatic and Black Seas.
• The shale gas revolution made the U.S. the world’s largest producer of gas and it has become a major exporter of LNG.
• The U.S. pursued strategies to lessen Russia’s hold on the EU gas market for both strategic and commercial reasons.

Key reasons for U.S. to target Nord Stream
Nord Stream 2 is completely owned by Russia unlike Nord Stream 1 which is jointly owned by European companies.

The project has the highest capacity out of all Russia’s gas pipelines.

Even if Nord Stream 1 survives, holding the market in the EU needs Russia to continue its gas supply through Ukraine.

Nut Graf

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has triggered “unprecedented” sanctions by the West, particularly by the U.S., in this regard the experts believe that the Nord Stream 2 pipeline is a well chosen target and the gas pipeline is one of the key issues central to the Ukraine conflict.

2. A safety net for students abroad

Syllabus: Effect of policies and politics on Indian diaspora.

Mains: Benefits of having a strong presence of Indian students abroad and the need and means of extending protection to them.

Context

The war in Ukraine and the evacuation program launched by the government following the crisis have highlighted the number of students that travel abroad.

Indian students abroad

- India has a history of students traveling abroad for higher education and major personalities who went abroad include Mahatma Gandhi, B.R. Ambedkar, Jawaharlal Nehru, Amartya Sen and Manmohan Singh.
- As estimated before the COVID pandemic, about 7,50,000 Indian students were studying abroad, spending around $24 billion in foreign economies, which accounts for 1% of India’s GDP.
- The number is said to increase to about 1.8 million by 2024 and students are likely to spend $80 billion.
- India is the second largest source of international students after China.
- The reasons for such a high number of students going abroad include the gap in India’s supply of quality education against the demand.

Benefits of having large number of Indian students abroad

- Sushma Swaraj referred to Indians abroad as “brand ambassadors of India”.
- The Prime Ministers of India and UK called Indians in the U.K. as the “living bridge” between the countries.
- The large base of Indian students abroad have various benefits to India in the form of,
  - Soft power
  - Knowledge transfer
  - Transfer of Indian culture
  - Remittances they send back to India

Recent events that troubled Indian students abroad

- The unfortunate deaths of two Indian students in Ukraine.
- Around 2,000 students in Canada got affected as their colleges were abruptly closed.
A few years ago many ‘bogus’ colleges in the U.K. shut down abruptly, impacting them.

During the pandemic, Australia shut its borders to many Indian students who had enrolled to study in the country.

Even in the U.K. people were seen stranded without access to food and accommodation as they lost their economic means.

Read more about the issue in CNA dated 06 March 2022

**Need for protection**

- The Indian government must proactively build a safety net for international students.
- International arrangements that require host countries to ensure the welfare of students during a crisis should be given the highest priority.
- The trade and other agreements that India signs should also negotiate for the inclusion of safety of these students.
- A mandatory student insurance scheme be formulated to ensure the interests of the students.
- Students take expensive loans from institutional and non-institutional sources to finance their education and these institutions should be regulated.

**Conclusion**

As India celebrates the achievements of Indians abroad, we should also take up the responsibility of safeguarding and ensuring their welfare.

**Nut Graf**

*If ensured a safe ecosystem, Indian students abroad can contribute significantly towards India’s development by transferring advanced knowledge and best practices.*

**Category: GOVERNANCE**

1. **Conflict and a ‘settings change’ for social media**

**Syllabus:** Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability

**Mains:** Challenges and problems with cyberspace and the way forward for India and the rest of the world.

**Context**

The war between Russia and Ukraine has brought debates on the validity of various international laws on cyberspace into the limelight.

**Problems in the Cyberspace**

- **Content moderation** – is a major concern, where information warfare can be triggered and throttled.
  - Content Moderation is the practice of monitoring and applying a pre-determined set of rules and guidelines to user-generated content to determine if the post is permissible or not.
- **Lack of responsible actions by corporations** – major social media giants do not have the obligation to act responsibly as is expected of a state.
- **Amplification of content** – major social media platforms provide space for extremist views even as they have special teams to handle such conduct, the prevalence of such posts are rather high.
• **Misinformation and disinformation** – even as Algorithmic solutions are used to address them, they have largely failed to achieve their objectives in critical situations.

**Way forward**

• The current geopolitical crisis offers an opportunity to the social media platforms to demonstrate the commitments to the values they profess.
• The platforms should look further at other options than relying on small teams with minimum knowledge of various geographical and cultural problems.
• The safety of users should be prioritised to address concerns, even at the cost of profits.
• The international community and the liberal world order have to be proactive in order to tackle such challenges.
• There is a need to establish a clear protocol to balance the business and intersection with global public life in critical situations. It is important to have clear frameworks to guide the corporations in cases of conflict.

**Recommendations for India**

• As India’s strategic position in the global order looks to be reducing, it is time for India to set that right and gain momentum in the world order.
• The lack of consistent norms on the state’s role in cyberspace as well as the intersection of business, cyberspace, and state activity is an opportunity for India.
• Indian diplomats should initiate conversations in this regard that benefit the whole global community.
• India should ensure that it contributes towards maintaining a rule-based order that could greatly benefit India.
• It is also important for India to reassess its domestic regulatory framework on social media platforms.
• Transparency and accountability should be the foundation of the regulations of social media platforms in the digital era.
• India must work against the regulatory norms that deeply infringe the rights guaranteed by the constitution.

**Nut Graf**

*Considering the intersection of cyberspace and social media with the global public interests in critical situations, there is a need for a clear protocol that outlines and governs the behaviour of such platforms.*

**F. Prelims Facts**

1. **Locally made trainer aircraft finishes sea trials**

   **Syllabus: GS-3: Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.**

   **Prelims:** **HANSA-NG**

   **Context:** A first-of-its-kind indigenous aircraft trainer, HANSA-NG, developed by the CSIR-National Aerospace Laboratories (CSIR-NAL).

   **About HANSA-NG:**

   • HANSA-New Generation is one of the most advanced flying trainers designed to meet the need of flying clubs in India for trainer aircraft.
- It is designed and developed by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research-National Aerospace Laboratories (CSIR-NAL).
- It is an ideal aircraft for commercial pilot licensing due to its low cost and low fuel.

2. Winged visitors from abroad flock to the wetlands in Punjab

**Syllabus:** GS-3: Environment and Ecology: Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

**Prelims:** Central Asian Flyway

**Context:** There have been inconveniences in sighting the winter migratory waterbirds through the central Asian flyway due to unconducive weather conditions.

**Background:**

- Every winter, the birds make their way to India through the central Asian flyway, which covers a large continental area of Europe-Asia between the Arctic and the Indian Oceans.
- The waterbirds census exercise is conducted every year in six major and most biodiverse wetlands, which include the Nangal Wildlife Sanctuary, the Ropar Conservation Reserve, the Harike Wildlife Sanctuary, the Kanjli Wetland, the Keshopur-Miani Community Reserve and the Ranjit Sagar Conservation Reserve.

**Central Asian Flyway:**

- The Central Asian Flyway (CAF) covers a large continental area of Eurasia between the Arctic and Indian Oceans and the associated island chains.
- The Flyway comprises several important migration routes of waterbirds, most of which extend from the northernmost breeding grounds in the Russian Federation (Siberia) to the southernmost non-breeding (wintering) grounds in West and South Asia, the Maldives and the British Indian Ocean Territory.

**G. Tidbits**

Nothing here for today!!!

**H. UPSC Prelims Practice Questions**

**Q1. Which of the following National Waterways is/are correctly matched?**

**National Waterway River**

1. NW-1 Ganga-Bhagirathi-Hooghly River System
2. NW-2 Brahmaputra River
3. NW-3 Krishna and Godavari
4. NW-10 Amba River

**Options:**

a. 1, 2 and 3 only
b. 3 and 4 only

google.com
c. 1, 2 and 4 only
d. 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: c

Explanation:

- The National Waterways Act came into effect in 2016.
- It proposed 106 additional National Waterways and merged 5 existing Acts which were declared the 5 National Waterways.
- As a result, 106 new waterways were identified by IWAI and intimated to MoS.

**Operational National Waterways in India for UPSC**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>NW Number</th>
<th>River System</th>
<th>Route</th>
<th>Length (in km)</th>
<th>Locations</th>
<th>Established</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>NW – 1</td>
<td>Ganga-Bihadirathi-Hooghly</td>
<td>Prayagraj – Haldia</td>
<td>1620</td>
<td>Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal</td>
<td>1986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>NW – 2</td>
<td>Brahmaputra</td>
<td>Sadiya-Dhubri</td>
<td>891</td>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>NW – 3</td>
<td>West Coast Canal, Champakara Canal, and Udyogamandal Canal</td>
<td>Kottapuram – Kollam</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>NW – 111</td>
<td>Zuari– Sanvordem Bridge to Mormugao Port</td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Goa</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Hence Option C is correct.

**Q2. The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) provides security cover to**

1. Nuclear Installations
2. Space Establishments
3. Private corporate establishments
4. VIP’s nominated by the Home Ministry

Options:

a. 1 and 2 only
b. 1, 2 and 3 only
c. 3 and 4 only
d. 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: d

Explanation:

Central Industrial Security Force (CISF):

- The Central Industrial Security Force came into existence in 1969 to provide integrated security cover to certain sensitive public sector undertakings with a strength of only three battalions.
- The CISF security umbrella includes India’s most critical infrastructure facilities like nuclear installations, space establishments, airports, seaports, Private corporate establishments, power plants etc.
- In addition, the CISF also protects important government buildings, iconic heritage monuments and the Delhi Metro.
- Hence Option D is correct.

Q3. Consider the following statements with respect to HANSA-NG:

1. It is Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) developed by Aeronautical Development Establishment
2. It will replace/supplement the Heron UAVs in service with the Indian armed forces
3. It can be deployed at high altitude areas like Ladakh and in harsh environments for day-and-night surveillance by infantry soldiers and Special Forces

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

a. a) 1 only
b. b) 2 and 3 only
c. c) None
d. d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: c

Explanation:

- HANSA-New Generation is designed and developed by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research-National Aerospace Laboratories (CSIR-NAL).
- It is one of the most advanced flying trainers designed to meet the need of flying clubs in India for trainer aircraft.
- It is an ideal aircraft for commercial pilot licensing due to its low cost and low fuel
Hence all the statements are incorrect.

Q4. Mariupol, a major port city recently seen in the news, is part of which country?

a. Romania  
b. Poland  
c. Belarus  
d. Ukraine

Answer: d

Explanation:

- Mariupol is a city of regional significance in south eastern Ukraine, situated on the north coast of the Sea of Azov at the mouth of the Kalmius river, in the Pryazovia region.
- It is the tenth-largest city in Ukraine, and the second largest in Donetsk Oblast.
- Hence Option D is correct.

Q5. Consider the following statements in respect of the Laureus World Sports Award which was instituted in the year 2000: [PYQ 2021]

1. American golfer Tiger Woods was the first winner of this award.
2. The award has been received mostly by ‘Formula One’ Players so far.
3. Roger Federer received this award the maximum number of times compared to others.

Which of the above statements are correct?

a. 1 and 2 only  
b. 2 and 3 only  
c. 1 and 3 only  
d. 1, 2 and 3

Answer: c

Explanation:

- Since 2000, the Laureus World Sports Awards have included a number of accolades given by the Academy at their discretion.
- The American golfer was the first winner of this award. Hence, Statement 1 is correct.
- The award was received mostly by ‘Tennis players’ (11 awards) where ‘Formula one’ and ‘athletes’ have won four. Hence statement 2 is not correct.
- Roger Federer received this award the maximum number of times (5 times) compared to others. Hence, Statement 3 is correct.

I. UPSC Mains Practice Questions
1. Social media platforms have gone by the mantra of “tech neutrality” to avoid taking decisions that may be considered political. Critically evaluate the need for social media norms particularly while dealing with conflicts and violence. (250 words; 15 marks)[GS-3, Internal Security]

2. Indian students abroad have been facing increasing risks to their safety and well-being. Hence, agreements that oblige host countries to ensure the welfare of Indian students during crises should be given importance. Analyse. (250 words; 15 marks)[GS-2, International Relations]