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MARCH 2020



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Door No 18, New Plot No 259 /109,
AL Block, 4th Avenue, Shanthi Colony,
Annanagar, Chennai - 600040.



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IDS A APRIL 2020

1. INDIA OBSERVER IN IOC

Why in news?

India has been accepted as an observer of the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC).

What is Indian Ocean Commission (IOC)?

- The Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) is an intergovernmental body created in 1984 to protect the interests of the Western Indian Ocean islands.
- It consists of Madagascar, Comoros, La Réunion (French overseas territory), Mauritius and Seychelles.
- The Commission has five observers — India, China, European Union (EU), Malta and International Organisation of La Francophonie (OIF) - OIF is a 54 french speaking nations collective.

What are the significance of an observer status of India in IOC?

- India's joining of the IOC as an observer has strategic importance as the Commission is an important regional institution in the Western/African Indian Ocean.
- **Engagement with the Western Indian Ocean** -It will facilitate collective engagement with the islands in the Western Indian Ocean that are becoming strategically significant.
- Given China's growing presence in the region, India will be able to increase its naval presence and gain support

for its maritime projects across the Indo-Pacific.

- The Western Indian Ocean (WIO) is also a strategic location of the Indian Ocean linking the Southeastern coast of Africa to the wider Indian Ocean and beyond.
- **Opportunity in the Mozambique Channel** - The IOC islands are situated around one of the key chokepoints in the Indian Ocean- the Mozambique Channel.
- The Mozambique Channel is an arm of the Indian Ocean located between the African countries of Madagascar and Mozambique.
- The Mozambique Channel lost its significance post the opening of the Suez Canal, but the recent hostilities near the Strait of Hormuz brought the channel back into focus as the original route for bigger commercial vessels (especially for oil tankers).





- Potential of natural gas reserves in the Mozambique Channel further increases the significance of the region.
- **Cooperation with France** - It will also help to boost cooperation with France that has a strong presence in the western Indian ocean.
- SAGAR Policy - It will help to extend India's SAGAR (Security and Growth for all in the Region) policy in the region.
- SAGAR is an articulation of India's vision for the Indian Ocean which
 1. Aims for enhancement of capacities to safeguard land and maritime territories & interests.
 2. Deepening economic and security cooperation in the littoral.
 3. Action to deal with natural disasters and maritime threats like piracy, terrorism.

2. PATTERN OF ARMS TRADE

Why in news?

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) released a report showcasing an increase in the volume of international arms transfers.

What are the highlights of SIPRI report?

- Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) is an international institute based in Sweden, dedicated to research into

conflict, armaments, arms control and disarmament.

- Established in 1966, SIPRI provides data, analysis and recommendations, based on open sources, to policymakers, researchers, media and the interested public.
- Recent report of SIPRI showcases an increase of 5.5 per cent in the volume of international arms transfers during 2015–19, compared with the previous five-year period.
- The report highlights the strength of key strategic partnerships such as Russia-India, US-Japan and China-Pakistan, reinforced by arms trade.
- While Russia accounted for 56 per cent of India's arms imports, 96 per cent of Japan's arms imports came from the US and Chinese equipment made up 73 per cent of Pakistan's arms imports.
- The United States, Russia, France, Germany and China continue to be the world's largest arms exporters.

What are the findings US and Russia Arms trade?

- The US has further strengthened its position as the world's largest arms exporter, with its exports of major arms being 76 per cent higher than those of the second largest arms exporter in the world, the Russian Federation.
- Between 2010–14 and 2015–19, major arms exports from the US grew by 23



per cent, and it was the primary exporter to 19 of the top 25 arms importers in the world. Overall, the US transferred arms to 96 countries.

- Russian arms exports saw a decline, registering a negative growth of 18 per cent.
- This was primarily due to fall in exports to Syria (87 per cent) and India (47 per cent), Russia lost traction in India.
- While US arms exports increased and Russian exports declined, Chinese arms exports remained relatively stable and did not see a significant jump growing by only 6.3 per cent.

What are the findings on India?

- While Russian arms exports to India have indeed seen a decline in percentage terms, this has little relation to the strength of India-Russia relations as India is still Russia's primary arms importer.
- Along with China and Algeria, India accounts for 55 per cent of Russian exports.
- The decline in Russian exports to India may also be attributed to the fact that there has been a reduction in Indian arm imports from 14 per cent of the global arms trade in 2010-14 to 9.2 per cent in 2015-19.

What lies ahead?

- Arms trade between states can be better regulated through adherence to

best practices of informal mechanisms such as the Wassenaar Arrangement (WA) and the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR).

- While the MTCR seeks to limit the proliferation of missiles and missile technology, the WA promotes greater responsibility in transfers of conventional arms and dual-use goods and technologies.
- Out of the top 10 arms exporters, the US, Russia, France, Germany, the UK, Spain, Italy and South Korea are members of the WA and MTCR; only China and Israel are non-members.
- On the other hand, of the 25 top arms importers, only nine (Australia, India, Italy, Japan, Norway, South Korea, Turkey, the US, and the UK) are members of the WA and the MTCR.
- If the other major arms importers become members of such informal groupings, it can help build transparency and also limit the proliferation of dual-use goods.

Wassenaar Arrangement

- The Wassenaar Arrangement on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies is a multilateral export control regime (MECR) with 42 participating states including many former Comecon (Warsaw Pact) countries.
- The Wassenaar Arrangement was established to contribute to regional



and international security and stability by promoting transparency and greater responsibility in transfers of conventional arms and dual-use goods and technologies, thus preventing destabilizing accumulations.

- Participating states seek, through their national policies, to ensure that transfers of these items do not contribute to the development or enhancement of military capabilities which undermine these goals, and are not diverted to support such capabilities.
- It is the successor to the Cold War-era Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls (COCOM), and was established on 12 July 1996, in Wassenaar, the Netherlands, which is near The Hague.
- The Wassenaar Arrangement is considerably less strict than COCOM, focusing primarily on the transparency of national export control regimes and not granting veto power to individual members over organizational decisions.
- Every six months member countries exchange information on deliveries of conventional arms to non-Wassenaar members that fall under eight broad weapons categories: battle tanks, armored fighting vehicles (AFVs), large-caliber artillery, military aircraft,

military helicopters, warships, missiles or missile systems, and small arms and light weapons.

- India is a participating member of Wassenaar Arrangement.

MTCR

- The Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) is a multilateral export control regime.
- It is an informal political understanding among 35 member states that seek to limit the proliferation of missiles and missile technology.
- The regime was formed in 1987 by the G-7 industrialized countries.
- The MTCR seeks to limit the risks of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) by controlling exports of goods and technologies that could make a contribution to delivery systems (other than manned aircraft) for such weapons.
- In this context, the MTCR places particular focus on rockets and unmanned aerial vehicles capable of delivering a payload of at least 500 kg (1,100 lb) to a range of at least 300 km (190 miles) and on equipment, software, and technology for such systems.
- The MTCR is not a treaty and does not impose any legally binding obligations on Partners (members).
- Rather, it is an informal political understanding among states that seek



to limit the proliferation of missiles and missile technology.

- India is the recently joined member of MTCR, it was officially accepted into the group in 2018.

3. 50 YEARS OF NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY

Why in new?

50th anniversary of the entry-into-force of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) commemorated recently.

What is Nonproliferation Treaty?

- Non-Proliferation Treaty or NPT, is an international treaty whose objective is,
 1. To prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology,
 2. To promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy,
 3. To further the goal of achieving nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament.
- Between 1965 and 1968, the treaty was negotiated by the Eighteen Nation Committee on Disarmament, a United Nations-sponsored organization based in Geneva, Switzerland.
- More countries are parties to the NPT than any other arms limitation and disarmament agreement, a testament to the treaty's significance.
- 191 states have become parties to the treaty, though North Korea, which acceded in 1985 but never came into

compliance, announced its withdrawal from the NPT in 2003, following detonation of nuclear devices in violation of core obligations.

- Four UN member states have never accepted the NPT, three of which possess nuclear weapons: India, Israel, and Pakistan.
- In addition, South Sudan, founded in 2011, has not joined.
- The treaty defines nuclear-weapon states as those that have built and tested a nuclear explosive device before 1 January 1967; these are the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, and China.
- Four other states are known or believed to possess nuclear weapons: India, Pakistan, and North Korea have openly tested and declared that they possess nuclear weapons, while Israel is deliberately ambiguous regarding its nuclear weapons status.

What are the flaws of NPT?

- Despite many accomplishments, the NPT is largely seen as a Cold War era instrument that has failed to fulfil the objective of creating a pathway towards a credible disarmament process.
- The treaty's existential challenges began in the post-Cold War setting when the attempts by a few State Parties to break-out or gain nuclear latency led to numerous instances of



non-compliance, violations and defiance.

- The emergence of non-state actors with declared intent to access weapons of mass destruction and the detection of a global nuclear black-market, mentored by Pakistani nuclear scientist, A.Q. Khan, raised concerns on the limitations of the treaty to address the challenges thrown up by the new strategic milieu.
- The NPT State Parties however did not find the initiative or will to address these challenges either through a restructuring of the treaty or through amendments to “tailor the NPT for the 21st century.

What lead to the flawed bargain of the treaty?

- **A treaty authored by the superpowers** - What started as an initial momentum to halt nuclear tests in the atmosphere soon transformed into a quest for a comprehensive disarmament instrument with the superpowers pressured to arrive at a framework agreement.
- The US-Soviet Joint Statement on Agreed Principles for Disarmament Negotiations (McCloy-Zorin Accord) of September 1961 provided an initial breakthrough.
- This largely implied that the nuclear powers will not relinquish control (in

allied territory) or help in their manufacture, and that others will undertake not to produce them.

- Following China’s nuclear tests, the US and Soviet sides came up with individual drafts for a treaty to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons.
- Both drafts talked about the means to prohibit transfer of nuclear weapons and technology or assisting any state in their manufacture.
- While their common interest to ensure ‘no additional fingers on the trigger’ facilitated dialogue towards a reconciled draft, the non-aligned grouping, finding various proposals in these drafts as impinging negatively on their interests, sought the means to push for a balanced instrument.
- **Biased Interests** -With the drafts of the superpowers evolved towards commonality by the end of 1967, it was becoming clear that their effort was to curtail the formation of new nuclear powers rather than commit to either a credible disarmament process or surrender their own development rights.
- The manner in which the safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was evolving even when the NPT negotiations were in progress with the NWS (Nuclear weapon states) allowed to maintain ‘voluntary’ safeguards while the rest



were subjected to comprehensive safeguards, seemed intrusive and discriminatory to the NNWS.

- The Indian representatives consistently termed the offer as ‘atomic apartheid’ and ‘commercial super-monopoly’.
- **One treaty, many missions** -Despite the posturing about the need to maintain balance between the three pillars of non-proliferation, disarmament and peaceful uses of nuclear energy, the treaty was clearly about non-proliferation, and more importantly, the superpowers’ focus was on horizontal proliferation.
- Despite common cause identified with the quest for a comprehensive disarmament instrument, the superpowers were able to reconcile their differences and draft a framework that fundamentally ensured that no additional nuclear power emerged on the scene and that their arsenals, which anchored the Cold War deterrence balancing, remained intact.

4. DRAFT DEFENCE PROCUREMENT PROCEDURE 2020

Why in new?

Ministry of Defence (MoD) released draft Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP) 2020 which aims to increase indigenous

manufacturing and expedite procurement of defence equipment.

How DPP evolved in India?

- It was first introduced in 2002 to provide probity, transparency and a structured procedure which would streamline the procurement of military hardware for the Armed Forces in a time bound manner.
- DPP has been a work in progress since its initiation in 2002 and through successive iterations in 2006, 2008, 2011, 2013, 2016 and finally in 2020.
- DPP 2020 will supersede DPP 2016, the draft was finalized by a committee headed by Director General Acquisition, which was set up in August 2019.
- DPP will cover all Capital Acquisitions undertaken by MoD and Service Headquarters (SHQ) both from indigenous sources and ex-import, except for medical equipment.
- Defence Research and Development Organization, Ordnance Factory Board and Defence Public Sector Undertakings will, however, continue to follow their own procurement procedure.
- Its aim is to ensure timely procurement of military equipment as required by Armed Forces in terms of performance, capabilities and quality standards, through optimum utilization of allocated budgetary resources



- In addition, self-reliance in defence equipment production and acquisition will be steadfastly pursued as a focus of the DPP with an ultimate aim to develop India as a global defence manufacturing hub.

What is the significance of Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP) 2020?

- **Indigenous Content (IC) ratio hiked**
 - In view of the experience gained by the domestic industry, the Draft proposes increasing the IC stipulated in various categories of procurement by about 10% to support the 'Make in India' initiative.
- Use of raw materials, special alloys and software incentivized as use of indigenous raw material is a very important aspect of 'Make in India' and Indian Companies are world leaders in software.
- New Category Buy (Global – Manufacture in India) has been introduced with minimum 50% indigenous content on cost basis of total contract value.
- Only the minimum necessary will be bought from abroad while the balance quantities will be manufactured in India.
- **Complex and unique decision making:** Defence acquisition has certain unique features such as supplier constraints, technological complexity, foreign suppliers, high

cost, foreign exchange implications and geo-political ramifications.

- Therefore, a balance between competing requirements such as expeditious procurement, high quality standards and appropriate costs needs to be established through this DPP.
- **Shift focus on Self-reliance:** There is immense potential to leverage the manpower and engineering capability within the country for attaining self-reliance in design, development and manufacturing in defence sector.
- **Streamlining and simplifying process:** Defence Procurement involves long gestation periods and delay in procurement which impact the preparedness of our forces, besides resulting in opportunity cost.
- DPP favours swift decision making, provides for suitable timelines and delegates powers to the appropriate authorities to ensure an efficient and effective implementation of the procurement process, by all stakeholders concerned.
- **Addressing the trilemma:** India aspires to the acquisition of high-quality equipment, at low cost, in a short timeframe, when only two of these three are possible at any time.
- Thus, critical decisions will need to be made to sacrifice either cost, quality, or speed of acquisition.



- If clear decisions along these lines are not made, India could find itself in the worst of all worlds: spending high amounts belatedly for substandard quality equipment.
- **Defined role for Private sector:** Private investment will be a major contributor to the 'Make in India' initiative, accelerate manufacturing-led industrial growth and for capital and technology advancement.
- This would be in preference to the 'Buy Global' category as manufacturing will happen in India and jobs will be created in the country.
- **Leasing Model** - Leasing introduced as a new category for acquisition in addition to existing 'Buy' & 'Make' categories to substitute huge initial capital outlays with periodical rental payments.
- Leasing is permitted under two categories
- Lease (Indian) where Lessor is an Indian entity and is the owner of the assets
- Lease (Global) where Lessor is a Global entity. This will be useful for military equipment not used in actual warfare like transport fleets, trainers, simulators, etc.
- **New Chapters introduced** - for procurement of software and systems related projects for Post Contract Management to facilitate and provide

clear guidelines for issues arising during the contract period as typically Defence contracts last for a long period.

- A comprehensive Chapter introduced for 'Make' to cover procurement from manufacturers in India including start-ups and innovators and from research projects of DRDO.

5. UN DELEGATION ON PALESTINE

Why in News

UN delegation on Palestine visited New Delhi to seek India's political and diplomatic support for a peaceful resolution to the long-standing conflict between Israel and Palestine.

What is Israel Palestine Issue brief?

- The Israeli–Palestinian conflict is the ongoing struggle between Israelis and Palestinians that began in the mid-20th century.
- Various attempts have been made to resolve the conflict as part of the Israeli–Palestinian peace process, with only partial success, as at the end of 2019.
- The origins to the conflict can be traced back to Jewish immigration and sectarian conflict in Mandatory Palestine between Jews and Arabs.
- It has been referred to as the world's "most intractable conflict," with the ongoing Israeli occupation of the West



Bank and the Gaza Strip reaching 53 years.

- Despite a long-term peace process and the general reconciliation of Israel with Egypt and Jordan, Israelis and Palestinians have failed to reach a final peace agreement.
- The key issues are mutual recognition and security, borders, water rights, control of Jerusalem, Israeli settlements, Palestinian freedom of movement, and Palestinian right of return.
- The violence of the conflict, in a region rich in sites of historic, cultural and religious interest worldwide, has been the subject of numerous international conferences dealing with historic rights, security issues and human rights, and has been a factor hampering tourism in and general access to areas that are hotly contested.
- Many attempts have been made to broker a two-state solution, involving the creation of an independent Palestinian state alongside the State of Israel (after Israel's establishment in 1948).
- In 2007, the majority of both Israelis and Palestinians, according to a number of polls, preferred the two-state solution over any other solution as a means of resolving the conflict.

- Within Israeli and Palestinian society, the conflict generates a wide variety of views and opinions.
- This highlights the deep divisions which exist not only between Israelis and Palestinians, but also within each society.
- A majority of Jews see the Palestinians' demand for an independent state as just, and thinks Israel can agree to the establishment of such a state.

Who are the prime actors of Israel-Platine peace negotiations?

- The two parties currently engaged in direct negotiation are the Israeli government, led by Benjamin Netanyahu, and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), headed by Mahmoud Abbas.
- The official negotiations are mediated by an international contingent known as the Quartet on the Middle East (the Quartet) represented by a special envoy that consists of the United States, Russia, the European Union, and the United Nations.
- The Arab League is another important actor, which has proposed an alternative peace plan.
- Egypt, a founding member of the Arab League, has historically been a key participant.
- Jordan, having relinquished its claim to the West Bank in 1988 and holding a special role in the Muslim Holy



shrines in Jerusalem, has also been a key participant.

- Since 2006, the Palestinian side has been fractured by conflict between two major factions:
- Fatah, the traditionally dominant party, and its later electoral challenger, Hamas, which also operates as a militant organization.

What is the two state solution?

- The “two-state solution” is based on a UN resolution of 1947 which proposed two states - one would be a state where Zionist Jews constituted a majority, the other where the Palestinian Arabs would be a majority of the population.
- The idea was however rejected by the Arabs.
- For decades, it has been held by the international community as the only realistic deal to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

What is India’s stand on Israel-Palestine issue so far?

- India has consistently voted in favour of those resolutions that promote the two-state solution with a Palestinian claim to East Jerusalem.
- In 2014, India favoured UNHRC’s resolution to probe Israel’s human rights violations in Gaza.
- Despite supporting the probe, India abstained from voting against Israel in UNHRC in 2015.

- In December 2017, India had criticised the United States vote for recognising Jerusalem as the Israeli capital at the UNGA vote.
- In June 2018, India had voted in favour of Palestine on the UN General Assembly (UNGA) resolution to investigate an indiscriminate force usage by Israeli forces against Palestinian civilians.
- As a part of Link West Policy, India has de-hyphenated its relationship with Israel and Palestine in 2018 to treat both the countries mutually independent and exclusive.
- In June 2019, India voted in favor of a decision introduced by Israel in the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) that objected to granting consultative status to a Palestinian non-governmental organization.

What is CEIRPP’s visit to India in this regard?

- United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP) was founded in 1975 by the United Nations General Assembly.
- It aims to formulate a programme to enable the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self-determination, to national independence and sovereignty, and the right of Palestine refugees to return.



- The delegation of the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP) intends to engage India in the settling of the question of Palestine.
- During the visit of the UN delegation on Palestine, India has reiterated its stand and supported the Two-State solution for the Israel-Palestine issue.
- The visit aimed to enhance the political and diplomatic support of India for a peaceful solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict and engaging Indian counterparts on synergies in capacity building for staff and institutions of Palestine.
- The delegation intends to involve countries like India as it shares good relations with both Israel and Palestine, and are also attached to multilateral principles, to play a bigger role in the resolution of the issue.

6. CORONA AND GCC NATIONS

Why in news?

The COVID-19 outbreak has created a lot of concern among the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.

What are Gulf Co-operation Countries?

- The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf originally known as the Gulf Cooperation Council is a regional intergovernmental political

and economic union consisting of all Arab states of the Persian Gulf except Iraq, namely: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

- The Charter of the GCC was signed on 25 May 1981, formally establishing the institution.
- All current member states are monarchies, including three constitutional monarchies (Qatar, Kuwait, and Bahrain), two absolute monarchies (Saudi Arabia and Oman), and one federal monarchy (the United Arab Emirates, which is composed of seven member states, each of which is an absolute monarchy with its own emir).
- There have been discussions regarding the future membership of Jordan, Morocco, and Yemen.
- A proposal in 2011 to transform the GCC into a "Gulf Union" with tighter economic, political and military coordination has been advanced by Saudi Arabia, a move meant to counterbalance the Iranian influence in the region
- The Peninsula Shield Force is the military arm of the GCC formed in 1984.
- In order to reduce their future dependence on oil, the GCC states are pursuing unprecedented economic structural reform.



What is the status of Covid-19 in GCC?

- As of April 30, 2020, Saudi Arabia remains the worst affected country with more than 20,000 confirmed cases, followed by the United Arab Emirates (UAE).
- As the COVID-19 cases continue to rise, the key priorities for the GCC countries at this point are to contain the spread of the pandemic, maintain the flow of trade across their borders and preserve their economies from adverse impacts.
- The GCC countries have adopted several precautionary measures to deal with the pandemic.
- To contain the further spread of the virus, all these countries have suspended commercial flight operations, shut the government and private sector offices, closed mosques, educational institutions, and have declared curfews and lockdowns.

- They have been raising awareness among the people by establishing special helplines and through media including social media and the internet.
- The GCC has set up a 'joint operations room' for exchange of information and joint coordination of the fight against the pandemic.
- As a result of these precautionary measures, the spread of the virus has been controlled to a significant extent.

What are the impacts of Covid-19 on GCC?

- The closure of the industrial and commercial activities because of the pandemic would certainly affect their economies.
- In order to deal with the immediate situation, all the GCC countries have announced financial stimulus packages to support their citizens, businesses and institutions.
- For the GCC countries, the spread of the pandemic comes at a time of falling global oil prices.
- As the economies of these countries are heavily reliant on the export of oil and gas, the fall in the oil prices is going to hit them even harder.
- The spread of COVID-19 is affecting the energy markets as the movement of people and goods in the region and beyond have been severely restricted.
- Key oil importers such as China, Japan, Korea and India are facing



severe difficulties due to the spread of the pandemic and thereby affecting the energy demand and supply.

- Global oil prices have also fallen sharply in the last two months. The dual shock of the spread of the pandemic and the fall in oil prices will have a deep impact on the economies of the oil-producing GCC states.
- At this unprecedented time, securing the health of the citizens, supporting businesses and the private sector and, at the same time, maintaining unity remains the key challenges and priorities for the GCC.

7. YEMEN'S COMPLEX GEOPOLITICAL LANDSCAPE

Why in news?

The warring factions in Yemen expressed their desire for a mutually acceptable ceasefire, followed by a ceasefire declaration from a Saudi-led alliance in April 2020.

What is the brief history of Yemen's political landscape?

- Yemen is a country at the southern end of the Arabian Peninsula in Western Asia.
- It is the second-largest Arab sovereign state in the peninsula, Its coastline stretches for about 2,000 kilometers.
- It is bordered by Saudi Arabia to the north, the Red Sea to the west, the Gulf of Aden and Guardafui Channel to the south, and Oman to the east.

- Yemen is a member of the Arab League, United Nations, Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.
- Yemen is characterized as a failed state with high necessity of transformation.
- Yemen is one of the least developed countries in the world and in 2019 the United Nations reported that Yemen is the country with the most people in need of humanitarian aid with 24.1 million people in need.
- Yemen's constitutionally stated capital is the city of Sana'a, but the city has been under Houthi rebel control since February 2015.
- In ancient times, Yemen was the home of the Sabaeans, a trading state that flourished for over a thousand years and included parts of modern-day Ethiopia and Eritrea.
- The administration of Yemen has long been notoriously difficult, Several dynasties emerged from the ninth to 16th centuries, the Rasulid dynasty being the strongest and most prosperous.
- The country was divided between the Ottoman and British empires in the early twentieth century.
- The Zaydi Mutawakkilite Kingdom of Yemen was established after World War I in North Yemen before the creation of the Yemen Arab Republic in 1962.



- South Yemen remained a British protectorate known as the Aden Protectorate until 1967 when it became an independent state and later, a Marxist-Leninist state.
- The two Yemeni states united to form the modern Republic of Yemen in 1990.
- President Ali Abdullah Saleh was the first president of the new republic until his resignation in 2012. His rule has been described as a kleptocracy.



What is the background of Yemen Crisis?

- Yemen has a history of fractured polity, leading to tribal clashes, along with the presence of terrorist groups such as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).
- As a result, the country is undergoing a massive humanitarian crisis due to the internal displacement of people on a large scale.
- Since 2011, Yemen has been in a state of political crisis starting with street protests against poverty, unemployment, corruption, and president Saleh's plan to amend

Yemen's constitution and eliminate the presidential term limit, in effect making him president for life.

- President Saleh stepped down and the powers of the presidency were transferred to Vice President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi, who was formally elected president on 21 February 2012 in a one-candidate election.
- The total absence of central government during this transition process exacerbated several clashes on-going in the country, like the armed conflict between the Houthi rebels of Ansar Allah militia and the al-Islah forces, as well as the al-Qaeda insurgency.
- In September 2014, the Houthis took over Sana'a with the help of the ousted president Saleh, later declaring themselves the national government after a coup d'état, Saleh was shot dead by a sniper in Sana'a in December 2017.
- This resulted in a new civil war and a Saudi-led military intervention aimed at restoring Hadi's government.
- At least 56,000 civilians and combatants have been killed in armed violence in Yemen since January 2016.
- The conflict has resulted in a famine affecting 17 million people, The lack of safe drinking water, caused by depleted aquifers and the destruction



of the country's water infrastructure, has also caused the largest, fastest-spreading cholera outbreak in modern history, with the number of suspected cases exceeding 994,751.

- Over 2,226 people have died since the outbreak began to spread rapidly at the end of April 2017.

Who are Houthis?

- The principal power struggle lies between the UN-recognised government of Mansour Hadi, supported by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and the Iranian-backed Houthis.
- The Houthis belong to the Zaydi sect of Shias, which comprise nearly 40 per cent of the Yemeni population.
- Under the al-Ahmar family, Zaydis had ruled over Northern Yemen for almost a millennium before being overthrown in a coup in 1962.
- For next three decades, the Zaydis who “for centuries had been at the top of country’s social pyramid” were marginalized both politically and economically by the government, which finally led to the creation of Ansar Allah movement founded by Mohammad Badr al-Din Houthi along with Muhammad Izzan.
- The movement soon turned into an armed movement which carried out extensive military campaigns during 2002-09 in the hope of securing greater political participation.
- The Houthis achieved a breakthrough in September 2014 when they captured capital Sanaa and placed President Mansour Hadi under house arrest.
- Later in January 2015, President Hadi resigned and escaped to Saudi Arabia, where he pleaded to the international community to restore his elected government in Yemen.
- As a result, in March 2015, an alliance led by Saudi Arabia and UAE and comprising of several other Arab countries, with logistics and intelligence support from the US, commenced the military campaign against the Iranian-backed Houthi militia in Yemen.
- This intervention significantly complicated the prospects of any peace in the existing multi-dimensional regional crisis.
- What makes it even more difficult to find any solution to the problem is that each faction has its vision for the future of Yemen.

What lies ahead?

- The Saudi-Iran rivalry is being played out in Yemen, making it extremely difficult for any peace deal to come through.
- Backed by Tehran (Iran), Houthis have demonstrated a strong defence, and the conflict has prolonged with a continuous military stalemate in various provinces, effectively turning



Yemen into a battlefield of Iran-Saudi rivalry.

- It is clear that Yemen is heading towards becoming another theatre of Shia-Sunni conflict or proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia.
- Over the last five years, the assessment has been repeatedly ascertained, Saudi Arabia has carried out extensive military campaigns with minimal success.
- Iranian support to Houthis has systematically grown after the beginning of Saudi campaign with the shipment of small arms to include heavy artillery, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and even small range surface-to-surface missiles (SSMs).
- Following the Covid-19 Saudi Arabia declared a “comprehensive ceasefire”, Tehran is yet to make an official statement on the issue.
- However, given the impact of COVID-19 pandemic in Iran and its sanctions hit economy, it is unlikely that Tehran would have sufficient resources to actively stay involved in the Yemeni conflict.
- Riyadh too is exhausted with the war and deeply affected by falling oil prices in addition to its internal political problems.
- In such a situation, Riyadh may look for an honorable exit from Yemen’s war theatre.

- It can be argued that under present circumstances, both Iran and Saudi Arabia have sufficient number of reasons to make the ceasefire work.
- The cooperation of UAE, a partner of Riyadh in the coalition, would be equally crucial.
- The Yemeni conflict has already engulfed Saudi Arabia, UAE and Oman.
- It is imperative to come up with long-lasting options to end the civil war; otherwise, country’s vulnerability would expand to the whole Arabian Peninsula.

Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED)

- ❖ ACLED is a non-governmental organization specializing in disaggregated conflict data collection, analysis, and crisis mapping.
- ❖ ACLED codes the dates and locations of all reported political violence and protest events in over 100 countries in real-time.
- ❖ As of 2019, ACLED has recorded more than half a million individual events across Africa, South Asia, Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Central Asia and the Caucasus, and Southeastern and Eastern Europe and the Balkans.
- ❖ Expansions are underway for Latin America and the Caribbean, East Asia, and Western Europe.



- ❖ The ACLED team conducts analysis to describe, explore, and test conflict scenarios, making both data and analysis open for use by the public.

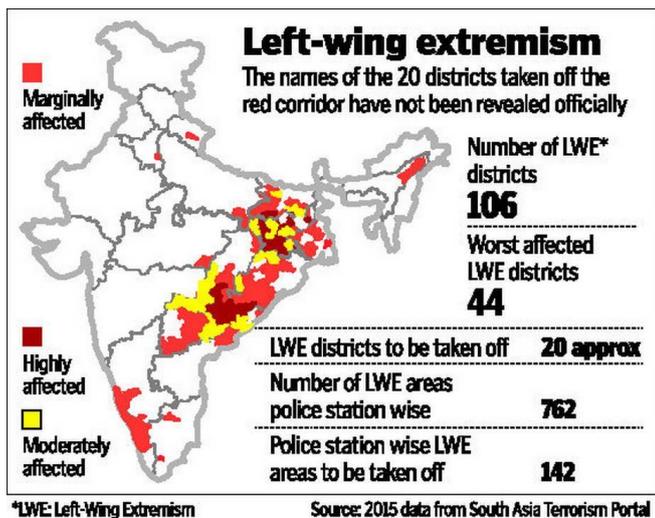
8. IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON LEFT WING EXTREMISM

Why in news?

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent countrywide lockdown to prevent its transmission have variedly impacted the Indian Maoists.

What is the brief history of Left Wing Extremism in India?

- The Naxalite–Maoist insurgency is an ongoing conflict between Maoist groups known as Naxalites or Naxals, and the Indian government.
- The insurgency started after the 2004 formation of the CPI-Maoists – a rebel group consisting of the PWG (People's War Group) and the MCC (Maoist Communist Centre).
- Their origin can be traced when the Communist Party of India (Marxist) split in 1967, leading to the creation of the Communist Party of India (Marxist–Leninist).
- The ongoing conflict had taken place over a vast territory (around half of India's 28 states) with hundreds of people being killed annually in clashes between the CPI-Maoists and the government every year since 2005.
- Of late, it has mostly been confined to Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Maharashtra.
- The armed wing of the Naxalite–Maoists is called the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA) and is estimated to have between 6,500 and 9,500 cadres, mostly armed with small arms.
- The Naxalites have frequently targeted tribal, police and government workers in what they say is a fight for improved land rights and more jobs for neglected agricultural laborers and the poor.
- The Naxalites claim that they are following a strategy of rural rebellion similar to a protracted people's war against the government.
- The Bastar district of Chhattisgarh is worst Maoist-affected region of India.
- CPI (Maoist) Tactical Counter Offensive Campaign (TCOC) which commences from February to June (until the onset of monsoons) every year.
- During Tactical Counter Offensive Campaign TCOC, the rebels launch their attrition war by conducting audacious attacks on the security forces and inflicting maximum damages to the government property.



What are new strategies followed by Maoists?

- Maoists are reported to have devised a few coping mechanisms to overcome the impact of the lockdown on their supplies of rations and finances, albeit in a minuscule way.
- The Maoists in Bastar are forcing the village headmen and others to arrange rations for them.
- Places where villagers are unable to arrange large stocks of rice, the Maoists are snatching a one-month free ration from each of the below poverty line (BPL) families.
- The Maoists are also allegedly transporting stranded migrant workers to their respective villages in lieu of money.
- The lockdown situation has increased Maoists' desperation and they are exploiting the villagers for meeting their ends.
- The Maoists had reportedly offered a temporary unilateral ceasefire early this month in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Odisha, especially in the regions falling under Andhra Odisha Border Special Zonal Committee (AOBSZC).
- While the Maoists' refrain is to 'facilitate government's relief operations in their core areas to fight COVID-19', it is believed that the offer is opportunistic and misleading.

What is the account of Covid-19 on LWE?

- While there are no verified inputs that suggest confirmed cases of coronavirus among their cadres, the lockdown has certainly increased Maoists' desperation to meet their demands of food supplies and other essentials.
- Maoists, all across the left wing extremism (LWE)-affected states, primarily procure their rations and other essential commodities through a network of aides from village-level haat bazaars (weekly markets).
- With haat bazaars being temporarily shut, they are reportedly facing acute shortage of food supplies.
- Also, since the entire economic and construction activities have been grounded in these areas to ensure the efficacy of the lockdown, the Maoists' finances have taken a beating given that extortions from contractors, mining industry, truck drivers, etc., formed a major part of their finances.



- The factors that might have influenced the Maoists' decision to initiate a truce call are: achieving a possible breather in hitherto intensified security offensive in their core areas, and the increased social pressure to pave the way for COVID-19 relief operations in remote villages, which otherwise might increase the miseries of the underprivileged masses.
- Moreover, the Maoists have not relented on their violent campaigns in the most affected states of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Bihar.
- The Maoists are, in fact, shoring up their strength and preparing for future operations.
- They are reportedly holding village-level meetings and recruiting ground-level forces in the remote villages of Jagdalpur, Dantewada, and Sukma districts.
- It is believed that the Maoists could also offer money and enlist the jobless migrant workers returning to their villages.
- Recently, a large group of armed Maoists from Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Odisha and West Bengal has reportedly joined their Bastar colleagues to up the ante against the security forces.
- They are torching road construction vehicles, digging up the roads that

lead to the strategically important police camps in remote villages and planting landmines on the deserted lanes to target the security patrols.

What are the recent measures taken by Security forces?

- Prior to the commencement of the COVID-19 lockdown, the security forces in Bastar had launched a massive combing operation – 'Pahar 2020' which was carried out simultaneously from the border areas of Telangana, Maharashtra and Odisha, deep into the forests of Sukma, Narayanpur, Bijapur and Dantewada districts of Chhattisgarh.
- As a result, the joint forces were largely successful in dominating and subsequently liberating substantial areas under the Maoist control, forcing them on the back foot and confining them to smaller areas.
- In the wake of COVID-19 pandemic, the security forces in Bastar have scaled down their anti-Maoist operations for fear of being exposed to the infection as well as apprehensions of likely shortage of essential items for the personnel.
- The Chhattisgarh Police has reportedly decided to suspend massive area domination exercises involving large forces and are instead taking up "fewer dedicated offensives" in the Maoist core areas based on specific intelligence.



- Moreover, the various Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) units deployed in the Maoist-affected areas have been shouldering the additional responsibility of spreading awareness about the pandemic and providing relief assistance to the villagers.

What is the way forward?

- With the majority of security forces now confined to their camps or undertaking relief operations for over a month now, the Maoists seems to be enjoying a much-needed respite from the hitherto stepped up security offensives, especially in the remote Bastar Division.
- While it is true that desperate times call for desperate measures, however, the forces mandated with anti-Naxal operations in the LWE-affected districts should not be diverted to the COVID-19 related relief work.
- They should continue with the area domination exercises in Maoist core areas and undertake dedicated intelligence-based operations.
- It is even more necessary given that the lockdown period also coincides with the TCOC.
- Although initially they suffered some setbacks due to the lockdown, their indulgence in a series of brazen violent incidents over the past one month indicates that the Maoists are exploiting the situation to have an upper hand vis-à-vis security forces.
- The Maoists' call for a ceasefire in certain areas should by no means be a reason for the security forces to lower their guard.
- Besides catering to the security needs, the governments of the LWE-affected states must address the employment needs of the returning migrant workers lest they fall prey to the Maoists' propaganda and swell their cadre base.