



VEDHIK

DAILY NEWS ANALYSIS

26 - FEBRUARY 2022



VEDHIK
IAS ACADEMY

The New Learning Mantra

FOREWORD

We, at Team Vedhik is happy to introduce a new initiative - "Daily Current Affairs_The Hindu" compilations to help you with UPSC Civil Services Examination preparation. We believe this initiative - "Daily Current Affairs_The Hindu" would help students, especially beginners save time and streamline their preparations with regard to Current Affairs. A content page and an Appendix has been added segregating and mapping the content to the syllabus.

It is an appreciable efforts by Vedhik IAS Academy helping aspirants of UPSC Civil Services Examinations. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Babu Sebastian, former VC - MG University in extending all support to this endeavour. Finally I also extend my thanks to thank Ms. Shilpa Sasidharan and Mr. Shahul Hameed for their assistance in the preparing the compilations.

We welcome your valuable comments so that further improvement may be made in the forthcoming material. We look forward to feedback, comments and suggestions on how to improve and add value for students. Every care has been taken to avoid typing errors and if any reader comes across any such error, the authors shall feel obliged if they are informed at their Email ID.

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Troubled waters

India and Sri Lanka should find a lasting solution to the issues facing their fisherfolk

Fishermen from Tamil Nadu keep getting caught with alarming regularity in the territorial waters of Sri Lanka for “poaching”. Yet, the stakeholders concerned have yet to demonstrate the alacrity required for well-known solutions. In the latest development, the Sri Lankan Navy arrested 22 fishermen who are from Nagapattinam and neighbouring Karaikal, on Wednesday. There are already 29 fishermen in custody in Sri Lanka, as pointed out by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin in his letter to External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar a few days ago. As per an estimate, Sri Lankan authorities have also impounded 84 boats. The frequency with which Tamil Nadu’s fishermen allegedly cross the International Maritime Boundary Line, despite being aware of the consequences, highlights their level of desperation driven by livelihood concerns. This is, however, not to absolve them of their culpability in endangering Sri Lanka’s marine biodiversity, which is of vital importance to Tamil fishermen of the Northern Province, who suffered in the civil war. The vexatious problem has also been aggravated by events over the past month – the reported death of two Jaffna fishermen following “mid-sea clashes with their Tamil Nadu counterparts” on January 27 and 29, subsequent protests by northern Sri Lankan fishermen, and the reported auctioning by Sri Lanka of 140 impounded boats even before a Tamil Nadu government team and fishermen’s representatives could visit Sri Lanka to finalise modalities on the disposal of unsalvageable boats. There has been no word from Colombo on permitting fishermen-devotees to attend, in March, the annual festival of St. Anthony’s Church at Katchatheevu.

Apart from getting the arrested fishermen released, the governments of the two countries should fix a date for an early meeting of the Joint Working Group, last held in December 2020. They should also facilitate the resumption of talks at the level of fisherfolk, especially from Tamil Nadu and the Northern Province. Sri Lanka should be proactive as its citizens in the North bear the brunt of the alleged acts of transgression. Besides, its positive actions would be in tune with what the Prime Ministers of India and Sri Lanka agreed at the virtual-summit in September 2020 – to “continue engagement to address the issues related to fishermen through regular consultation and bilateral channels”. New Delhi should also consider providing additional incentives and concessions to fishermen of the Palk Bay districts of Tamil Nadu to elicit a better response from them for its deep sea fishing project. It could also propose assistance for the fishermen of the Northern Province as a gesture of goodwill. There is no paucity of ideas in the area of the Palk Bay fisheries conflict, but adequate action on the part of the stakeholders is found wanting.

Inflection point for the West-led global order

Its future will be defined by how it responds to the crisis in Ukraine, and in the shadow of growing Russia-China ties



HARSH V. PANT

The Ukraine crisis has come to a head with Russia biting the bullet and launching “a full-scale invasion of Ukraine.” Even as the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres was warning that the world was facing a “moment of peril” and calling for “restraint, reason and de-escalation” to avoid “a scale and severity of need unseen for many years”, Russian troops that had massed on Ukraine’s borders for months now were preparing to launch an assault on Ukraine – after Russian President Vladimir Putin recognised the Russian-backed, rebel-held areas of Donetsk and Luhansk as independent and even challenged the historical right of Ukraine to exist.

Mr. Putin continued to insist that he was open to “direct and honest dialogue” but with every step of the escalatory ladder he climbed, he ensured that dialogue was becoming difficult to sustain. And the Russian Foreign Ministry even suggested that the idea that Russia is to blame for the crisis in Ukraine is an invention by the West. But the invasion has now happened in full view of the international community, with Mr. Putin saying that Russia did not plan

to occupy Ukraine and demanding that its military lay down their arms. Launching a “special military operation” and alleging that Ukraine’s democratically elected government “had been responsible for eight years of genocide”, Moscow’s seeming goal is demilitarisation and a “denazification” of Ukraine.

Putin versus the West

Hours before the invasion, the western countries had imposed a new round of sanctions against Moscow (targeting Russian individuals and banks linked to Mr. Putin’s regime), and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz suspended certification of Nord Stream 2, a major gas pipeline between Russia and his nation. But clearly it had no real impact on Mr. Putin’s calculus.

United States President Joe Biden, in his response to the invasion, has suggested that Washington and its allies would respond in a united and decisive way to “an unprovoked and unjustified attack by Russian military forces” on Ukraine. But the future course of action for the West remains rather murky. Perhaps because of this, Charles Michel, the head of the European Council, has continued to insist on the need “to be united and determined and jointly define our collective approach and actions”. The European Union has announced a “massive” package of sanctions as it comes to terms with “the darkest hour in Europe since the Second World War”.



GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Where Mr. Putin has shown resolve and a single-minded sense of purpose, the West has been incoherent in its response – not being able to present a united front, and worse, not even speaking the same language at times. For Mr. Putin, this is a moment to use Ukraine to highlight his broader demands of restructuring the post-Cold War European security order. For the West, this has been a moment when it has been found wanting – a lack of imagination, lack of will and lack of leadership, all rolled into producing a lackadaisical response to the one of most serious security crises in decades.

General disarray

Mr. Biden’s leadership has been found wanting. For all his talk of leading through coalitions, all he has to show for is a disarray in the European ranks. Where Germany has been reluctant to allow North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies to ship German-origin weapons to Ukraine, France has used this moment of crisis in trying to showcase its own leadership

credentials. French President Emmanuel Macron has been talking of the European Union taking decisions independent of the U.S. in an attempt to showcase its ‘strategic autonomy’. The trans-Atlantic alliance has barely functioned despite all those who had argued that it was the fault of U.S. President Donald Trump fracturing this partnership. It turns out that even Mr. Biden has not been able to build the trans-Atlantic engagement around common objectives to be pursued collectively.

The energy factor

Moreover, the EU’s energy dependence on Russia is a reality that has to be factored into strategic considerations. With the EU importing 39% of its total gas imports and 30% of oil from Russia, and with the Central and Eastern European countries being almost 100% dependent on Russian gas, the reasons for internal EU dissonance are not that difficult to fathom.

Where Russia repeatedly made it clear that it remains willing to even use the instrumentality of force to attain its diplomatic objectives, the singular refrain from the West has been that it has no intention of escalating. In such a scenario, the initiative is always with the side that can demonstrate a willingness to ratchet up tensions. Mr. Putin is willing to take significant strategic risks which the West is not ready to do. And, as a result, the initiative since the very beginning of this conflict has been with Russia. The West has been left to

respond reactively to the developments around it. And it is in the very nature of great power politics that smaller and weaker nations such as Ukraine struggle to preserve their very existence.

A strong Beijing

This ineffectual western response has emboldened not only Russia but also China as the focus of the West is in danger of moving away from the Indo-Pacific. The Russia-China ‘axis’ is only getting stronger as the two nations seem ready to take on the West that seems willing to concede without even putting up a fight.

It was this week in 1972 that U.S. President Richard Nixon shook hands with Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai and radically altered the contours of the global order by reshaping the extant balance of power. It allowed China to emerge as the leading global economic power and helped the U.S. in winning the Cold War.

Today, the balance of power is once again in flux, and as China develops a strategic partnership with Russia, the future of the West-led global order will be defined by how effectively it responds to the crisis in Ukraine. The tragedy of great power politics is unfolding in Europe but its embers will scorch the world far and wide, much beyond Europe.

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Putin's moves are hardly 'chess thumping'

The Russian President's actions this week may yield tactical gains but scarcely pass the test for strategic victory



RAKESH SOOD

Diplomacy has retreated as the smouldering Ukraine crisis took a decisive turn this week. On February 24, Russian President Vladimir Putin launched "special military operations" with the objective of "demilitarising Ukraine" but not "occupying" it. Just days prior to this, Russia had upped the ante by recognising the sovereignty of the Peoples' Republics of Donetsk and Luhansk, two of Ukraine's eastern-most provinces and deploying Russian peace-keeping forces in these territories. A meeting between United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov stands cancelled and the prospects of a summit between U.S. President Joe Biden and Mr. Putin have evaporated into thin air.

The Russian actions have been strongly condemned and sanctions imposed by the U.S., the European Union (EU), the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and Japan. After 1945, this is the second time that national boundaries are being redrawn by force; the first was the 1999 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) air strikes on Serbian forces that led to the creation of Kosovo. Russian and Chinese protests about NATO undertaking "out of area operations" without United Nations Security Council approval carried little weight.

A crisis in the making

In the post-Cold War world that promised a rule-based liberal international order, clearly the message from Thucydides' Peloponnesian Wars still held – "the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must".

In 2022, Russia has fired the

first shot but NATO is not blameless either. The Ukrainian crisis has been in the making for over a decade. After the fall of the Berlin Wall in late-1989, then U.S. Secretary of State James Baker was meeting Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev in Moscow in February 1990 to help ease the way for German unification. He assured Mr. Gorbachev that NATO understood the "need for assurances to the countries in the East", adding that even with Germany a part of NATO, "there would be no extension of NATO's jurisdiction one inch to the east".

By end-1991, USSR had broken up into 15 countries; Mr. Gorbachev faded into history and a change in the White House was under way. Rather than look for a new European security framework, the newly independent Baltic and central European states sought security in a U.S.-led NATO. The old caution that the cost of expansion goes up as it reaches closer to the Russian border was discarded and NATO adopted an 'open door' policy.

Beginning in 1999, NATO has added 14 new members in stages. At the NATO summit in 2008, at U.S. President George Bush's urging, an in-principle opening for Ukraine and Georgia was announced, though France and Germany, conscious of Russian concerns, successfully opposed defining a time frame. It was a bad compromise and the damage was done.

Later that year, Russia intervened in Georgia on the grounds of protecting the Russian minorities and took over the northern provinces of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In 2014, following the Euro-maidan protests against the pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovich, Mr. Putin annexed Crimea. For Russia, Crimea is vital as the peninsula hosts Russia's Black Sea fleet, providing it access to the Mediterranean and its bases at Latakia and Tartus in Syria. At the same time, pro-Russia separatists, assisted by Russian mercenaries, created autonomous regions in



AFP

the Donbas region.

Despite no timeline for membership, Ukraine was made a NATO Enhanced Opportunity Partner in 2020. The presence of British and U.S. warships in the Black Sea began to increase. In 2019, the U.K. entered into a cooperation agreement with Ukraine to develop two new naval ports, Ochakiv on the Black Sea and Berdyansk on the Sea of Azov, a move that Russia saw as potentially threatening.

Clearly, Mr. Putin's grievances, beginning with NATO's bombing of Serbia in 1999, interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya and colour revolutions to engineer regime changes, the U.S.' unilateral withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty in 2002 coupled with missile defence deployments in Poland and Romania that Russia perceived as offensive, were accumulating.

Faltering Euro-diplomacy

France and Germany initiated talks between Ukraine and Russia under the Normandy format leading to the Minsk agreements, in 2014 and 2015. The first was for a ceasefire between Ukraine and the Russian-backed separatists and the second was between Ukraine, Russia, the two separatist regions of Luhansk and Donetsk and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Supportive declarations by France and Germany were intended to address Russian security concerns.

Ukraine undertook to introduce certain constitutional amendments to provide a degree of autonomy to the two provinces and Russia was to assist in withdrawal of all foreign forces. However, neither side implemented and positions have only hardened since.

In the intense diplomacy during the last six weeks, particularly the back-to-back visits by French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Schulz to Moscow and Kiev, there was talk of reviving the Normandy format. But Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky was in no mood to oblige with over 1,50,000 Russian troops poised on his border and Mr. Putin was looking for his own face saver. Mr. Macron has a difficult re-election coming up in April and Chancellor Schulz has already been criticised for being soft on Russia because of energy dependency.

Mr. Biden faces a critical mid-term election in November that could see the Senate shift to Republican control and had already faced considerable flak for the messy withdrawal from Afghanistan last year. His aim was to ensure trans-Atlantic unity in NATO. Russia's threatening moves made NATO members, especially the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) and the central Europeans like Poland and Romania, especially nervous. Finally, NATO remained united but unable to provide an off-ramps solution.

Putin's chess gambit

With a military force of 2,00,000 and an equal number of reserves, prudence dictates that Mr. Putin would not want to take over Ukraine. However, the separatist groups that currently control only part of the provinces of Luhansk and Donetsk would want to extend their territory beyond the current Line of Contact dividing the separatists and the Ukrainian forces.

Along the Black Sea coast, Russia could seek to extend a coastal corridor to the Crimean Peninsula. This would cement its hold on

the Sea of Azov, giving it control over Mariupol and Berdyansk and restrict Ukraine to Odessa in the west.

Ideally, Mr. Putin would have liked to bring about a regime change in Kiev, but that seems unlikely now. Domestic troubles in Belarus have made President Alexander Lukashenko, in power since 1994, dependent on Russian support. Both countries announced that the 35,000 Russian soldiers, in Belarus for joint exercises that concluded on February 20, would stay on for "training cooperation and inspections". A Russian military presence in Belarus puts pressure on the 65-mile long Suwalki corridor that constitutes the boundary between Lithuania and Poland and more importantly, separates Belarus from Kaliningrad, the Russian enclave on the Baltic Sea that hosts its Baltic fleet.

Mr. Putin may claim victory in the near term, but in the long term, he has over-reached himself. NATO has been rejuvenated, the trans-Atlantic unity strengthened and Russia's economic ties with Europe have been adversely impacted. Given Russia's considerable foreign exchange reserves, of nearly \$640 billion, sanctions imposed by the U.S. and EU may not hurt immediately but eventually will begin to bite both the oligarchs and the common people. Worse, Russia will become more dependent on China – for political support as well as a market for its energy exports. This will eventually weaken its hand in central Asia.

Russians have been the greatest chess players and President Putin knows that a move on the chessboard will close certain options while opening up others. The challenge is to constrain the adversary's options while increasing one's own options and space for manoeuvre. His actions this week may yield tactical gains but hardly pass the test for strategic victory.

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The perfect storm

Russia's Ukraine gambit could unravel key assumptions driving India's economic policy

The combative advent of the Russian military into Ukraine early Thursday has predictably spooked markets across all asset classes the world over. Oil prices surged to an eight-year high of around \$105 a barrel, stock markets tumbled with the Indian bourses crashing nearly 5% on Thursday and the rupee dipping perilously close to the 76 to a dollar mark. The flight to safety amid all this mayhem propped up India's favourite yellow metal to a 15-month high. Domestic stock indices that have already been witnessing tumultuous swings in recent weeks as global inflation flared up and the US Federal Reserve signalled faster throttling of 'easy money' liquidity, did pare some of these initial losses on Friday. But multi-layered uncertainty will keep investor nerves on edge, as will the diplomatic fallout of how the UNSC decides to tackle Russia in its vote, with the western world seeking strict condemnation and sanctions, while India has thus far preferred not to take a side. There could be double-edged economic ramifications for those sitting on the fence if the extent of sanctions against Russia are intensified. This could deter Indian interests, be it in terms of trade financing, investment flows and even banking transfers as calls to bar Moscow from the SWIFT global payment network grow louder. For now, Russia's oil exports have not been explicitly targeted yet.

India's imports of petroleum products from Russia are only a fraction of its total oil import bill and thus, replaceable. But getting alternative sources for fertilizers and sunflower oil may not be as easy. Exports to Russia account for less than 1% of India's total exports; pharmaceuticals and tea could face some challenges, as will shipments to CIS countries. Freight rate hikes could make overall exports less competitive too, but it is the indirect impact on the trade account that is more worrying. The surge in crude oil prices will drum up India's inelastic oil import bill, and gold imports could jump back up and keep the rupee under pressure. Trade and current account deficits may be jeopardised, although forex reserves are healthy. The biggest concern, for India, however, remains the impact of oil prices on inflation, and the unravelling of the Budget math which hinges on average oil prices of \$75 a barrel. The RBI's assertion that retail inflation had peaked at 6.01% in January, as well as its growth-accommodative stance may need a rethink with oil prices 11% higher since its February 10 monetary policy review. On the fiscal side, the Government, which has been conservative in its revenue assumptions in the Budget, has the room to preemptively cut domestic fuel taxes to nip inflationary expectations, stoke faltering consumption levels and sustain India's fragile post-COVID-19 recovery through this global churn.

Biden announces additional sanctions on Russia

'Putin is the aggressor. He chose this war', says the U.S. President

SRIRAM LAKSHMAN
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Joe Biden announced additional sanctions on Russian entities and individuals hours after Russia began an assault on Ukraine.

"Putin is the aggressor. Putin chose this war. And now he and his country will bear the consequences," Mr. Biden said during a televised address to the nation from the East Room of the White House on Thursday.

"Today, I'm authorising additional strong sanctions and new limitations on what can be exported to Russia," he said. The sanctions were designed to have maximum long-term impact on Russia while minimising the impact on the U.S. and its allies, according to the President.

The sanctioned entities include VTB, SberBank, Bank Otkritie, Sovcombank OJSC, and Novikombank. The U.S. and its allies also placed restrictions on transactions of



Joe Biden

13 major state-owned enterprises in Russia. Sanctions also extended to several Russian elites and their family members as well as 24 Bel-

arusian individuals.

Sanctions would also apply to Russia's import of sensitive technology – targeting its defence, aviation and maritime sectors, the White House said in a statement.

Mr. Biden said the U.S. was not imposing sanctions alone but in concert with the 27 EU countries, the U.K., Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and "many others."

Mr. Biden reiterated that U.S. forces would not fight Russians in Ukraine but bolster NATO's defences in Europe, especially in NATO's eastern flank.

"Our forces are not going to Europe to fight in Ukraine but defend our NATO allies and reassure those allies in the east," he said.

Mr. Biden said Mr. Putin was trying to re-establish the USSR. "He has much larger ambitions in Ukraine. He wants to in fact, reestablish the former Soviet Union. That's what this is about."

He side-stepped a question on why he had not directly sanctioned Mr. Putin. Asked if he had urged China to help isolate Russia, Mr. Biden said that he was not prepared to comment on the issue.

'India said to eye rupee trade to offset sanctions on Russia'

'Disruption in fertilizer supplies from Russia could threaten India's farm sector'

REUTERS
MUMBAI

India is exploring ways to set up a rupee payment mechanism for trade with Russia to soften the blow on New Delhi of Western sanctions imposed on Russia after its invasion of Ukraine, government and banking sources said. Indian officials are concerned that vital supplies of fertilizer from Russia could be disrupted as sanctions intensify, threatening India's vast farm sector.

India has called for an end to violence in Ukraine but refrained from outright condemnation of Russia, with which it has long-standing political and security ties.



Bypass route: India had engaged in rupee trade with Iran after the latter came under Western sanctions. ■VELANKANNI RAJ B

Russia invaded Ukraine by land, air and sea on Thursday. Russian forces pressed their advance on Friday and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy pleaded with the international communi-

ty to do more, saying sanctions announced so far were not enough.

India's plan is to get Russian banks and companies to open accounts with a few state-run banks in India for

trade settlement, a banking source involved in the discussions said.

If the conflict escalates and sanctions intensify, India would not be able to settle transactions in dollars and "so an arrangement has been proposed to set up a rupee account, which is being considered," the source said.

Funds in such accounts act as a guarantee of payment for trade. Such mechanisms are often used by countries to shield themselves from the blow of sanctions. India had also used it with Iran after it came under Western sanctions for its nuclear weapons programme, the source added.

Kyiv braces for fresh assault from Russia

He also tweeted that there had been heavy fighting with people killed at the entrance to the eastern cities of Chernihiv and Melitopol, as well as at Hostomel.

An adviser to Mr. Zelensky said Ukraine was prepared for talks with Russia, including on staying neutral, one of Moscow's pre-war demands. But Mr. Lavrov said no talks could be held until Ukraine's military laid down its arms.

Mr. Putin says Ukraine is an illegitimate state carved out of Russia, a view Ukrainians see as aimed at erasing their more than thousand-year history. Mr. Putin says he does not plan a military occupation, only to disarm Ukraine and remove its leaders.

But it is not clear how a pro-Russian leader could be installed unless troops con-

trol much of the country.

Hundreds of people were crowded into a cramped bomb shelter beneath a building after a televised warning of air strikes. "How can you wage a war against peaceful people?" asked Viktoria, 35, as her kids aged five and seven slept in their winter coats.

Witnesses said loud explosions could also be heard in Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-biggest city, close to Russia's border, and air raid sirens sounded over Lviv in the west.

Authorities also reported heavy fighting in the eastern city of Sumy.

Mr. Zelenskiy said the 13 guards were killed by a Russian strike would receive posthumous honours.

U.N. agencies said as many as five million people could try to flee abroad.

Missiles hit Kyiv, city on the 'defensive'

Ukrainians crowd bomb shelters; Russia claims control over airport

REUTERS
KYIV

Russian missiles pounded Ukrainian capital Kyiv on Friday, families covered in shelters and authorities told residents to prepare Molotov cocktails to save the city from an assault that the Mayor said had begun with saboteurs in the city.

Moscow claimed to have captured the Hostomel airfield northwest of the capital, a vital staging post for a planned assault on Kyiv, which has been fought over since the first hours of the war. This could not immediately be confirmed.

"The city has gone into a defensive phase. Shots and explosions are ringing out in some neighbourhoods. Saboteurs have already entered Kyiv," said Mayor Vitali Klitchko. Air raid sirens wailed over the capital of three million people, where some residents sheltered in underground metro stations, a day after Russian President Vladimir Putin launched an invasion. Ukrainian officials said a Russian aircraft had been shot down and crashed into a building in Kyiv overnight, injuring eight people.

European Union finance ministers agreed to freeze European assets of Mr. Putin and his Foreign Minister. NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg said the alliance was deploying parts of its combat-ready response force on alliance territory and would continue to send weapons to Ukraine.

U.S. officials believe Russia's initial aim is to topple President Volodymyr Zelensky. Mr. Zelensky said he knew he was "the number one target" but would stay in Kyiv.

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EDITORIAL ► PAGE 10



Escape route: People waiting for an evacuation train from Kyiv in Ukraine on Friday. • REUTERS

Russia willing to talk with Ukraine, Putin tells Xi

Chinese President expresses support to Moscow by urging Europe to address 'legitimate security concerns of all countries'

ANANTH KRISHNAN
HONG KONG

Russian President Vladimir Putin told China's President Xi Jinping in a phone call on Friday that Moscow was willing to hold high-level negotiations with Ukraine, the Chinese government said.

Mr. Xi, in the call, broadly expressed support to Russia by calling for Europe to address "the legitimate security concerns of all countries" – a point emphasised by China in recent days referring to Russia's concerns over NATO – and did not criticise Russia's invasion.

The official Xinhua news agency said in a readout of the call that Mr. Putin conveyed that Russia was willing to conduct "high level negotiations with Ukraine".

Later on Friday, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said Mr. Putin is ready to send a delegation of high-ranking officials to Minsk, the capital of Belarus, to talk with Ukraine officials. Whether there are conditions for those talks, as Rus-



In ruins: A woman standing next to her house damaged in a rocket attack in Kyiv, Ukraine. •AP

sia's invasion continued on Friday, remains unclear.

The phone call between Mr. Xi and Mr. Putin, who held a summit meeting in Beijing earlier this month, once again reflected Beijing's two-pronged approach to the Ukraine crisis: calling for dialogue and a peaceful negotiation, while at the same

time refraining from criticising publicly the actions of its close ally, Russia. The Chinese position has been broadly similar to India's on the crisis, which has also called for a diplomatic resolution but hasn't criticised Russia's invasion.

China has also been explicitly critical of NATO and has

blamed it for the tensions. In the call, Mr. Xi said it was "necessary to abandon the Cold War mentality" and "respect the legitimate security concerns of all countries and form a balanced, effective and sustainable European security mechanism through negotiations."

"China supports Russia

and Ukraine to resolve the issue through negotiation," he said.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry made a similar point on Friday, saying China "always believes that there is a complex historical background and context on the Ukraine issue" and that "the legitimate security concerns

of all sides should be respected". "In the future, China will continue to make its own efforts to promote a political settlement of the Ukraine issue," spokesperson Wang Wenbin said, adding that "China's approach is in sharp contrast to the U.S. approach that aims to create a crisis and benefit from the crisis."

Surprise enemy with Indian arms, says PM

Modi calls for vibrant defence industry

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday stressed the importance of customisation and uniqueness of defence systems for having a surprise element over the adversaries.

“Uniqueness and surprise elements could only happen when the defence equipment is developed in our country. This year’s Budget has a blueprint for developing a vibrant ecosystem, from research, design and development to manufacturing, within the country,” he said.

Budget boost

Mr. Modi was addressing a post-Budget webinar, titled “Aatmnirbharta in defence – call to action”, organised by the Defence Ministry during which Defence Minister Rajnath Singh announced steps for implementing various measures announced in the Budget aimed at giving a level playing field for the private industry and start-ups.

Mr. Modi said, “Transparent, time-bound, pragmat-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi at a webinar on the defence sector. •PTI

ic and fair systems of trial, testing and certification are essential to the growth of a vibrant defence industry. For this, an independent system can prove useful in solving problems.” The recent years’ effort to strengthen *aatmnirbharta* in the defence sector was clearly visible in this year’s Budget, he noted.

Mr. Singh said: “For meeting the wide-ranging requirements of trial, testing and certification, the government has decided to set up an independent nodal umbrella body.”

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Surprise enemy with Indian weapons: PM

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had announced in the Budget speech that in the annual budget of 2022-23, defence R&D will be opened up for industry, start-ups and academia and 25% of defence R&D budget has also been earmarked for this purpose.

Mr. Modi said the 25% was kept aside so that the private sector could come on a par with the DRDO (Defence Research and Development Organisation) and defence PSUs (Public Sector Units) and a special purpose vehicle model had also been arranged in the Budget. “This will establish the role of the private industry as a partner beyond just a vendor or supplier,” he pointed out.

The Defence Ministry had, so far, released positive indigenisation lists, items which could only be procured domestically, of more than 200 defence platforms and equipment. After this announcement, contracts worth ₹54,000 crore have been signed for domestic procurement, and the procurement process of more than ₹4.5 lakh crore worth equipment was at various stages.

“The third [indigenisation] list is expected soon,”

he said.

Five projects

Mr. Singh said, “We will reform the quality assurance process, so that it is non-intrusive, prevention-based and free from the ‘inspector raj’. We will create a monitoring mechanism under the Director General-Acquisition, with representatives from all the three Services to monitor the budget earmarked, specifically for the private industry and start-ups, so that it is fully utilised. For promoting industry led R&D efforts, I will sanction at least five projects under Make-1 during the financial year 2022-23.”

Mr. Modi observed that as a result of the government’s encouragement to Make in India, more than 350 new industrial licences have been issued for defence manufacturing in the last seven years.

He asserted that cyber security was no longer confined to the digital world but has become a subject of national security. “The more we deploy our formidable IT [information technology] power in the defence sector, the more confident we will be regarding our security,” he added.

General Studies Paper I	
A	History of Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of art forms, literature and architecture from ancient to modern times;
B	Modern Indian history from about the middle of the eighteenth century until the present-significant events, personalities, issues;
C	Freedom struggle-its various stages and important contributors / contributions from different parts of the country;
D	Post-independence consolidation and reorganization within the country;
E	History of the world will include events from 18 th century such as industrial revolution, world wars, re-drawal of national boundaries, colonization, decolonization,
F	Political philosophies like communism, capitalism, socialism etc.-their forms and effect on the society
G	Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India;
H	Effects of globalization on Indian society;
I	Role of women and women's organization;
J	Social empowerment, communalism, regionalism & secularism
K	Salient features of world's physical geography;
L	Geographical features and their location- changes in critical geographical features (including water bodies and ice-caps) and in flora and fauna and the effects of such changes;
M	Important Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami, Volcanic activity, cyclone etc.
N	Distribution of key natural resources across the world (including South Asia and the Indian subcontinent);
O	Factors responsible for the location of primary, secondary, and tertiary sector industries in various parts of the world (including India);
P	Population and associated issues;
Q	Urbanization, their problems and their remedies
General Studies Paper II	
A	India and its neighbourhood- relations;
B	Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate;
C	Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests;
D	Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.
E	Indian Constitution, historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure;
F	Comparison of the Indian Constitutional scheme with other countries;
G	Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein; Inclusive growth and issues arising from it;
H	Parliament and State Legislatures - structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these;
I	Structure, organization and functioning of the executive and the judiciary, Ministries and Departments;

J	Separation of powers between various organs dispute redressal mechanisms and institutions;
K	Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional bodies;
L	Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies;
M	Mechanisms, laws, institutions and bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections;
N	Salient features of the Representation of People's Act;
O	Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance- applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential;
P	Citizens charters, transparency & accountability and institutional and other measures;
Q	Issues relating to poverty and hunger,
R	Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States, Performance of these schemes;
S	Issues relating to development and management of social sector / services relating to education and human resources;
T	Issues relating to development and management of social sector / services relating to health
General Studies Paper III	
A	Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment;
B	Effects of liberalization on the economy, changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth;
C	Inclusive growth and issues arising from it;
D	Infrastructure Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc. Government budgeting;
E	Land reforms in India
F	Major crops, cropping patterns in various parts of the country, different types of irrigation and irrigation systems;
G	Storage, transport and marketing of agricultural produce and issues and related constraints;
H	e-technology in the aid of farmers; Technology Missions; Economics of Animal-Rearing.
I	Issues of buffer stocks and food security, Public Distribution System- objectives, functioning, limitations, revamping;
J	Food processing and related industries in India – scope and significance, location, upstream and downstream requirements, supply chain management;
K	Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices
L	Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology;
M	Indigenization of technology and developing new technology;
N	Developments and their applications and effects in everyday life;
O	Issues relating to intellectual property rights
P	Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment
Q	Disaster and disaster management
R	Challenges to internal security through communication networks, role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges, basics of cyber security;
S	Money-laundering and its prevention;

T	Various forces and their mandate;
U	Security challenges and their management in border areas;
V	Linkages of organized crime with terrorism;
W	Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security;
X	Linkages between development and spread of extremism.
General Studies Paper IV	
A	Ethics and Human Interface: Essence, determinants and consequences of Ethics in human actions;
B	Dimensions of ethics;
C	Ethics in private and public relationships. Human Values - lessons from the lives and teachings of great leaders, reformers and administrators;
D	Role of family, society and educational institutions in inculcating values.
E	Attitude: Content, structure, function; its influence and relation with thought and behaviour;
F	Moral and political attitudes;
G	Social influence and persuasion.
H	Aptitude and foundational values for Civil Service , integrity, impartiality and non-partisanship, objectivity, dedication to public service, empathy, tolerance and compassion towards the weaker sections.
I	Emotional intelligence-concepts, and their utilities and application in administration and governance.
J	Contributions of moral thinkers and philosophers from India and world.
K	Public/Civil service values and Ethics in Public administration: Status and problems;
L	Ethical concerns and dilemmas in government and private institutions;
M	Laws, rules, regulations and conscience as
N	sources of ethical guidance;
O	Accountability and ethical governance; strengthening of ethical and moral values in governance; ethical issues in international relations and funding;
P	Corporate governance.
Q	Probity in Governance: Concept of public service;
R	Philosophical basis of governance and probity;
S	Information sharing and transparency in government, Right to Information, Codes of Ethics, Codes of Conduct, Citizen's Charters, Work culture, Quality of service delivery, Utilization of public funds, challenges of corruption.
T	Case Studies on above issues.