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Current affairs summary for prelims

4 March, 2024

Grey Zone Warfare

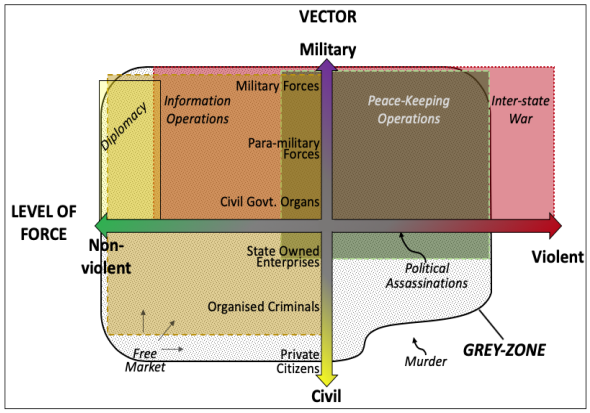
Context: *During the final day of the 2024 Raisina Dialogue on February 24, General Anil Chauhan, India's Chief of Defence Staff, remarked that "grey zone warfare" represents the latest form of informal warfare.*

What is Grey Zone Warfare?

- Grey zone warfare refers to a middle ground between direct conflict and peace in international relations.
- It involves a range of activities that are covert or indirect, making responses challenging in terms of scale.
- Activities in the grey zone include economic actions, influence operations, cyberattacks, mercenary operations, assassinations, disinformation campaigns, and more.

Origins and Characteristics

- Grey zone warfare has historical roots and has been a feature of great-power competition.
- The Cold War era favored grey zone warfare due to the risk of escalation in direct conflicts between nuclear-armed nations.
- Nations resort to grey zone tactics to promote their national objectives through covert aggression or obfuscated attribution.



Examples of Grey Zone Warfare

- Recent actions by Russia and China are often cited as examples of grey zone warfare.
- China's activities in the South China Sea, including its territorial claims and military presence, are seen as instances of grey zone tactics.
- Chinese military actions near Taiwan, such as regular fighter flights over the strait, exemplify the use of grey zone strategies.
- The US has also engaged in similar tactics, including economic sanctions, import duties, and maritime reconnaissance.

Challenges and Implications

- Grey zone warfare poses challenges distinct from open conflict, requiring appropriate responses.
- Actions in the grey zone can escalate in multiple dimensions and lead to unintended consequences.
- These tactics aim to project strength, normalize disputed claims, and bait adversaries into escalation, complicating crisis management.

Chief of Defence Staff

- The creation of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) was recommended in 2001 by a Group of Ministers (GoM) studying the Kargil Review Committee (1999) report.
- Following the GoM recommendations, the Integrated Defence Staff was established in 2002 to serve as the Secretariat for the eventual CDS.
- In 2012, the Naresh Chandra Committee proposed appointing a Permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee as an interim measure to address concerns over the CDS.
- The post of CDS was formally established in 2019 based on recommendations from a committee of defence experts led by Lt General DB Shekatkar.
- General Bipin Rawat became the first CDS of India, assuming office on December 31, 2019.
- The primary role of the CDS is to enhance operational synergy among the three service branches of the Indian military and minimize inter-service frictions.
- The CDS also serves as the head of the newly created Department of Military Affairs (DMA) within the Ministry of Defence.
- Acting as the single-point military adviser to the Defence Minister, the CDS advises on matters involving all three services, while service chiefs provide counsel only on issues concerning their respective services.
- As the head of DMA, the CDS has the authority to prioritize inter-service procurement decisions as the Permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee.
- While the CDS can provide directives to the three chiefs, he does not possess command authority over any of the armed forces.
- The CDS holds the rank of Secretary within the Department of Defence (DoD) and is empowered to oversee the revenue budget.
- Additionally, the CDS plays an advisory role in the Nuclear Command Authority (NCA).

First-ever Made-in-India ASTDS Tug

Context: *On March 2, 2024, Union Minister of MoPSW & AYUSH, Shri Sarbananda Sonowal, inaugurated the 60T bollard pull tug named 'Ocean Grace' and the Medical Mobile Unit (MMU) virtually.*

About Ocean Grace:

- The Ocean Grace is the first 'make in India' ASTDS Tug developed by Cochin Shipyard Limited under MoPSW.
- It reflects the commitment to the 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' initiative of PM Modi.
- Equipped with cutting-edge technology, the tug has a remarkable bollard pull of 60 tonnes.

Green Tug Transition Programme:

- In Gurugram, Haryana, India's first National Centre of Excellence in Green Port & Shipping (NCoEGPS) was inaugurated.

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- The event also marked the launch of the Green Tugs Transition Programme (GTTP) aimed at operating green tugs in all major ports by 2025.
- NCoEGPS will serve as the nodal entity for the GTTP.
- India aims to become a 'Global Hub for Green Ship' building by 2030, driven by the launch of GTTP.
- Green Hybrid Tugs will utilize Green Hybrid Propulsion systems and eventually adopt non-fossil fuel solutions such as Methanol, Ammonia, and Hydrogen.
- The goal is to convert at least 50% of all tugs into Green Tugs by 2030.
- Ports including JNPA, DPA, PPA, and VoCPA will purchase two brand-new green tugs by 2027.
- Measures aim to achieve a remarkable reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 to 70% by 2047.

➢ **Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047:**

- Initiatives include the development of cutting-edge technology vessels and introduction of electric water taxis, hybrid electric Ro-Ro ferries, and hybrid LNG electric cargo carriers.
- Deployment of a hybrid tug, green hydrogen, and ammonia-powered tugs at major ports is planned.

➢ **Sagarmala Programme in Odisha:**

- 53 projects valued at approximately Rs. 54,500 Cr are being monitored, with 21 projects already completed.
- Under the Holistic Development of Coastal Districts initiative, nine projects are identified focusing on fisheries, skill development, tourism, and urban water transportation.

➢ **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR):**

- Paradip Port significantly contributes to CSR activities including education, environment, healthcare, sanitation, electricity, sports, and culture.
- The inauguration of the Medical Mobile Unit (MMU) costing around Rs 48LPA reflects the port's dedication to providing accessible healthcare to underprivileged communities.

➢ **Expansion Projects:**

- The Western Dock project worth Rs 3,004.63 crore aims to enhance capacity to over 300MTPA in the next two years.
- It involves deepening and optimization of inner harbour facilities, including development of a western dock under PPP mode at Paradip Port.

WTO's 13th Ministerial Conference

Context: *The WTO's 13th Ministerial Conference, concluding on March 2, 2024, failed to address public stockholding (PSH) and domestic support for farmers in developing nations like India.*

➢ **Conference Details:**

- Originally scheduled for February 26-29 in Abu Dhabi, the conference was extended by a day.
- The extension aimed to narrow differences between developed and developing countries on crucial issues such as agriculture and fisheries subsidies.
- Despite the extra day, the impasse remained unresolved.

➢ **Public Stockholding and Food Security:**

- India and 80 other countries seek a permanent solution for public stockholding (PSH) of food.
- PSH, along with subsidies and minimum support prices (MSP), are seen as trade-distorting measures by the developed world.
- India emphasizes that food security and livelihoods should be prioritized over the trade interests of exporting countries.

➢ **Draft Text and Negotiations:**

- A draft text on agriculture issues, including India's demands, was placed in the public domain before the conference.
- Although consensus was not reached, having the text was considered a significant step for future negotiations.

➢ **Outcomes and Statements:**

- The conference witnessed intense negotiations amid various global challenges.
- While progress was made on some topics like agriculture, a comprehensive agreement was elusive.
- The Union Commerce Minister of India expressed satisfaction with the outcomes, highlighting India's stance on permanent solutions.
- Despite close negotiations, no consensus was reached on fisheries issues, including harmful subsidies.

➢ **Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies:**

- The Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies (AFS) aims to curb harmful subsidies contributing to overfishing.
- India and other developing countries emphasize the need for a transition period to address their development needs.
- Negotiations on fisheries subsidies reached close but could not finalize due to unresolved issues.

➢ **Adoption of Ministerial Decision:**

- Ministers adopted a Ministerial Decision to review special and differential treatment provisions for developing countries and LDCs.
- The decision aims to make these provisions more precise, effective, and operational, supporting development and integration into global trade.

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NEWS IN BETWEEN THE LINES

World Wildlife Day

Recently, the Prime Minister of India greeted the wildlife enthusiasts on World Wildlife Day and appreciated all those who are at the forefront of sustainable practices and supporting wildlife conservation efforts.

About World Wildlife Day:

- World Wildlife Day is a United Nations International day dedicated to celebrating all the world's wild animals and plants.
- Every year on **3rd of March**, the entire world celebrates World Wildlife Day to spread awareness regarding sustainable practices for conserving biodiversity.
- The day also encourages awareness about wildlife and their habitats.
- The **theme** for World Wildlife Day 2024 is **"Connecting People and Planet: Exploring Digital Innovation in Wildlife Conservation".**
- March 3rd was chosen as the date for World Wildlife Day because it coincides with the **birthday of CITES** (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora).
- CITES is an international agreement signed in **1973** aimed at ensuring that international trade in wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival.

Dachigam National Park

Recently, a pair of Kashmiri hangul spotted at the Dachigam National Park on the outskirts of Srinagar.

About Dachigam National Park:

- Dachigam National Park is situated in Srinagar district of Jammu and Kashmir on the east side of **Dal Lake**.
- The name "**Dachigam" translates to "ten villages**," referring to the ten villages relocated during its formation before World War I.
- It has been a **protected area since 1910** under the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir and was **declared a National Park in 1981.**
- **Flora:** It has diverse flora including trees like **wild cherry**, **apple**, **pear**, **walnut**, **oak**, **pine**, **birch** and more.
- **Fauna:** It is home to various endangered and vulnerable species such as the **Hangul**, **Asiatic black bear**, **Himalayan brown bear**, **Indian leopard**, **Himalayan grey langur** and a wide range of avian species.

Hangul:

- Hangul (Cervus hanglu), also **known as the Kashmir Stag** is a subspecies of the Central Asian red deer.
- It witnessed a sharp decline since **1947**, with around 2,000 spotted initially, decreasing to 384 by **1968**.
- by **2015**, the number fell to as low as 183, however, there has been a recent steady increase, with 261 hanguls estimated in **2021**.
- There are 19.2 males per 100 females “which is much lower than the ideal ratio of 40-50 males per 100 females”.
- Hangul, the Kashmir stag, is classified as **critically endangered by the IUCN** and **listed under CITES Appendix I**.

Striped Marlin

A new study published in Current Biology explains how the striped marlin coordinates its attacks to avoid injuring others.

About Striped Marlin:

- The striped marlin (**Tetrapturus audax**) is known as one of the fastest animals in the ocean and a top predator.
- It is found in **tropical and temperate oceans** and can grow to be **13.8 feet long** and **weigh up to 490 pounds**.
- It has a **torpedo-like body**, with a dark blue or black top and a **silvery-white bottom**.
- It exhibits a turn-taking style of attack when hunting in groups, targeting **schools of prey fish one at a time.**
- **Rapid colour changes play a key role in this coordination,** with the attacking marlin becoming brighter during the attack and returning to its normal coloration afterward.
- Colour changes might serve a dual purpose of **signaling attack motivation** and **confusing prey.**
- **It is classified as "Near Threatened" by the IUCN.**

Personality in News Sarojini Naidu

Sarojini Naidu (13 February 1879 – 2 March 1949)

- Sarojini Naidu, an Indian **independence activist**, **poet** and **politician** was born in a Bengali family in Hyderabad, **Telangana**.
- She was affectionately known by several nicknames including "**The Nightingale of India," "Bharat Kokila"** and **"Bulbul-e-Hind**."

Contributions:

- Sarojini Naidu actively participated in various movements **led by Mahatma Gandhi**, including the **Non-Cooperation Movement and the Salt Satyagraha.**
- She accompanied Gandhiji to London for the inconclusive **second session of the Round Table Conference for Indian–British cooperation in 1931.**

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- Naidu made history as the first Indian woman to preside over the Indian National Congress **(INC) as its president in 1925**.
- After India gained independence, she **became the first woman to hold the office of Governor in India**, serving as the **Governor of the United Provinces** (present-day Uttar Pradesh).
- Naidu authored works in both English and Urdu, including notable poems like "**In the Bazaars of Hyderabad" (1912)** and **"The Golden Threshold (1905)", "The Bird of Time (1912)"** and **"The Broken Wing (1912)".**

Ethical Values: Integrity, Compassion, Courage, Leadership, etc.

Place in News

Nainativu Island

Recently, the Sri Lanka Sustainable Energy Authority, the Government of Sri Lanka and Indian company U-Solar Clean Energy Solutions signed the contract for building "Hybrid Renewable Energy Systems" in Delft or Neduntheevu, Nainativu and Analaitivu islands off the Jaffna peninsula.

About Nainativu Island:

- Nainativu Island is located off the **Jaffna Peninsula in the northern part of Sri Lanka.**
- It is **one of the smaller islands** in the region and is **situated in the Palk Strait**, which separates **Sri Lanka from the Indian mainland.**
- It is renowned for its religious significance, being home to the **Naga Pooshani Ambal Kovil**, a Hindu temple dedicated to the goddess Nagapooshani (also known as Bhuvaneswari).
- The island is also known for its archaeological sites, including **remnants of ancient Buddhist stupas** and ruins dating back to ancient times.

Place in News

Balochistan

Recently, the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) candidate Sarfaraz Bugti was elected unopposed as the new Chief Minister of the restive Balochistan province.

Balochistan (Capital: Quetta)

Location: Balochistan is a province in Pakistan, located in the southwestern region of the country.

Boundaries: Balochistan shares its border with **Iran** (West), **Afghanistan** (North) and the **Arabian Sea** (South).

Physical Features:

- Balochistan is home to several notable mountain ranges, including the Sulaiman Range, Kirthar Range, and Toba Kakar Range.
- The major rivers in the province include the **Zhob River**, **Hingol River** and **Dasht River**.
- Balochistan is rich in natural resources such as **natural gas**, **coal**, **copper**, **gold** and other minerals.
- The **Gwadar Port**, located in Balochistan, is a key project under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and serves as a major hub for trade and commerce.

POINTS TO PONDER

- Where is the Vikramaditya Vedic Clock, recently mentioned in the news, located? **– Ujjain**
- Which organization published the Global Waste Management Outlook 2024, recently seen in the news? **– UNEP**
- Brian Mulroney, who recently passed away, was the former Prime Minister of which country? **– Canada**
- How many railway stations have successfully achieved the prestigious "Eat Right Station" certification? **– 150**
- Melanochlamys Droupadi, recently seen in the news, belongs to which one of the following species? **– Sea slug**

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