

Cluster munitions

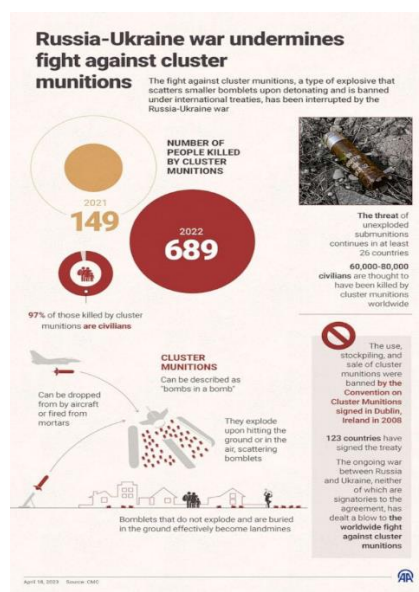
What are cluster munitions?

- Cluster munitions scatter unguided sub-munitions, or bomblets, as small as 20 kilograms over a large area, maybe the size of several football fields. The U.S. last used them during the invasion of Iraq in 2003.
- The weapons can be fired from aircraft or from the ground. Depending on the type used, anywhere from dozens to 600 bomblets may be released at a time
- There are various kinds of sub munitions, some are designed to penetrate armor or concrete while others are made to unleash as many fragments as possible against troops.
- But cluster munitions also pose a significant risk to civilians as they are indiscriminately spread out over an area, and some release bomblets that fail to explode upon impact and can detonate much later even decades late

Why are they controversial?

- More than 100 countries have essentially banned cluster munitions. Governments that signed onto the "Convention on Cluster Munitions" in 2008 committed to never using, producing, or stockpiling cluster munitions.
- Russia, Ukraine, and the United States did not sign the treaty, though

most NATO nations did



THE HINDU

AIB

- The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is a multilateral development bank and international financial institution that aims to collectively improve economic and social outcomes in Asia.
- It is the world's second-largest multilateral development institution.
- Headquartered in Beijing, China, the bank currently has 106 members, including 14 prospective members from around the world.
- The breakdown of the 106 members by continent is as follows: 42 in Asia, 26 in Europe, 21 in Africa, 8 in Oceania, 8 in South America, and 1 in North America.

- The bank started operation after the agreement entered into force on 25 December 2015, after ratifications were received from 10 member states holding a total number of 50% of the initial subscriptions of the Authorized Capital Stock.
- The United Nations has addressed the launch of AIIB as having the potential for "scaling up financing for sustainable development" and improving global economic governance.
- The starting capital of the bank was US\$100 billion, equivalent to 2/3 of the capital of the Asian Development Bank and about half that of the World Bank.
- The bank was first proposed by China in 2013 and the initiative was launched at a ceremony in Beijing in October 2014
- It has since received the highest credit ratings from the three biggest rating agencies in the world and has been seen since its inception as a potential rival or an alternative to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).



THE HINDU

PM GATI SHAKTI

- PM GatiShakti will address the past issues through institutionalizing holistic planning for stakeholders for major infrastructure projects. Instead of planning & designing separately in silos, the projects will be designed and executed with a common vision.
- It will incorporate the infrastructure schemes of various Ministries and State Governments like Bharatmala, Sagarmala, inland waterways, dry/land ports, UDAN, etc.
- Economic Zones like textile clusters, pharmaceutical clusters, defense corridors, electronic parks, industrial corridors, fishing clusters, and agri zones will be covered to improve connectivity & make Indian businesses more competitive.
- It will also leverage technology extensively including spatial planning tools with ISRO imagery developed by BiSAG-N (Bhaskaracharya National Institute for Space Applications and Geoinformatics).

PM GatiShakti is based on six pillars

- **Comprehensiveness:** It will include all the existing and planned initiatives of various Ministries and Departments with one centralized

portal. Each and every Department will now have visibility of each other's activities providing critical data while planning & executing projects in a comprehensive manner.

- **Prioritization:** Through this, different Departments will be able to prioritize their projects through cross-sectoral interactions.
- **Optimization:** The National Master Plan will assist different ministries in planning for projects after the identification of critical gaps. For the transportation of goods from one place to another, the plan will help in selecting the most optimum route in terms of time and cost.
- **Synchronization:** Individual Ministries and Departments often work in silos. There is a lack of coordination in the planning and implementation of the project resulting in delays. PM GatiShakti will help in synchronizing the activities of each department, as well as of different layers of governance, in a holistic manner by ensuring coordination of work between them.
- **Analytical:** The plan will provide the entire data in one place with GIS-based spatial planning and analytical tools having 200+ layers, enabling better visibility to the executing agency.
- **Dynamic:** All Ministries and

Departments will now be able to visualize, review and monitor the progress of cross-sectoral projects, through the GIS platform, as the satellite imagery will give on-ground progress periodically and the progress of the projects will be updated on a regular basis on the portal. It will help in identifying the vital interventions for enhancing and updating the master plan.

THE HINDU

India-us

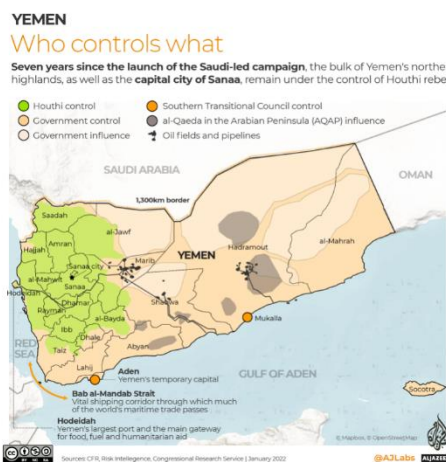
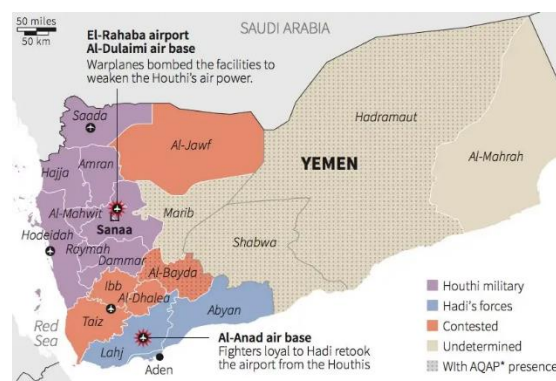
- The opening up of civil nuclear cooperation between India and the U.S. marked the beginning of a tectonic shift in global affairs at the start of the 21st century, unmatched before or since.
- Securing a waiver under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, and obtaining the approval of the U.S. Congress for the iconic 123 Agreement that paved the way for an India-specific Safeguards Agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) subsequently, were not merely unprecedented, but one-time achievements, the like of which have few equals in the annals of world history
- The promise of the transfer of technology in several areas, most conspicuously in terms of producing fighter jet engines for the Indian Air Force, and holding out the promise

of the initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET) marks a remarkable turn in the American attitude

- India cannot possibly be part of an arrangement such as the AUKUS Pact that binds the U.S. with the United Kingdom and Australia.
- The fundamentals underlying the Quad (India, Japan, Australia, and the U.S.) and AUKUS are very different. India must, instead, use the outcome of the Prime Minister’s visit to skilfully function as a ‘bridge power.
- It is eminently suited to play such a role, and should not be inveigled through blandishments such as defense ties to play the role of a subordinate to the U.S. in the politics of the Asia- Pacific.
- India’s potential should be marshaled to act as a bridge between conflicting parties in the Indo-Pacific, in West Asia, and in Europe

THE HINDU

Yemen crisis



- Given the estimated expenditure of about \$60 billion in the eight-year conflict, Saudi Arabia has been anxious to obtain a face-saving exit.
- The Saudi-Iran accord brokered by China in March provided this opportunity.
- There are reports that Iran has agreed to curtail military supplies to the Houthis and facilitate a peace process, thus opening the doors for the Saudi Houthi engagement in April.
- Challenges coming in the way of the peace process include the Houthi insistence that the kingdom pays the

salaries of all government officials, including armed forces personnel, for the last few years from Yemen's oil revenues.

- The Saudis are hardly enthusiastic about funding their former enemies.
- The Houthis are also seeking "compensation" from the Saudis for war damage; the latter are willing to consider contributing to reconstruction, but balk at the idea of "compensation".
- The Houthis are also reluctant to engage with the eight-member Saudi-supported Presidential Leadership Council (PLC) that heads the internationally-recognised Yemeni government.

The crucial point

- Relating to the Yemen scenario is that the Houthis have won the war and the Saudis are desperate to get out of the country.
- The Southern Transitional Council (STC), a United Arab Emirates (UAE)-backed movement based in Aden, wants the southern provinces that constituted the former People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY), an independent communist country from 1967 to 1990, to once again become an independent state.
- This reflects the competing geopolitical interests of Saudi Arabia and the UAE in Yemen.

- The UAE's control over ports in south Yemen, Eritrea, and Somaliland, as also the island of Socotra in the Gulf of Aden and Purim Island at the mouth of the Bab al-Mandab, has already given it a dominant geopolitical and commercial position in the western Indian Ocean.
- It is backing the STC's independence agenda to retain these advantages.
- Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, is seeking a united Yemen so that it can assert influence over the south Yemeni provinces of Hadhramaut and Amhara: Hadhramaut shares an 800-km border with the kingdom, while Amhara could provide an oil pipeline to Saudi Arabia to the Indian Ocean, bypassing the Strait of Hormuz.

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