



Mains Practice Question

Q. “The world is becoming an increasingly unsafe place and that means security must assume topmost priority.” Discuss the statement in the light of the need of defence sector reforms in India. (250 words)

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Approach

- Introduce by writing the challenging situation prevalent in the world especially in India’s neighbourhood.
- Discuss the issues with the defence sector and thus, the need for reforms.
- Conclude by giving a way forward to these challenges.

Introduction

- A fierce battle between Central Asian countries Armenia and Azerbaijan going on for the last few weeks.
- Moreover, given the key geostrategic challenges, emanating from the threat of two-front war, India faces the complex threats and challenges spanning the full spectrum of conflict from nuclear to sub-conventional.
- Recent military clashes between India and China in Galwan valley has made the government take steps to secure the sovereignty of India and maintain peace and tranquillity at the borders, India needs to carry out much-needed defence reforms.

Body

Need For Reforms Arises Due to Following Issues With Our Defence Sector

- Indian defence preparedness is facing challenges such as the absence of a clearly enunciated National Security Strategy (NSS), poor civil-military relations, the failure in modernisation on a long-term basis and sub-optimal inter-service prioritisation etc.
- **Lack of National Security Strategy (NSS):** Indian defence planning has been retrospective instead of proactive. This is because the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) meets as often as necessary to review any emerging situations.
 - However, the National Security Council (NSC), whose charter involves the evolution of an integrated NSS and the provision of guidance for long-term defence planning, seldom meets.
 - Further, the only time a serious security review was undertaken in the recent past was after the Kargil Conflict of 1999.
- **Delayed Defence Acquisition:** Despite the much-trumpeted reform in procurement Defence Reforms process, the acquisition of new weapons and equipment by the armed forces is still mired in bureaucratic red tape.
 - Due to this, annual defence budgets remain unutilised and continue to lapse back to the Ministry of Finance at the end of the financial year.
- **Issue with Defence Research and Development:** There is a dichotomy between the time-

consuming quest for technological self-reliance and the desire of the services to import arms and equipment based on immediate operational exigencies.

- The disconnect in the interface between R&D, production agencies and users remains unresolved.
- Thus, 'make' or 'buy' decisions are still contentious and DRDO projects continue to be delayed with consequent cost overruns.
- **Difficulty in Attracting Foreign Investments:** Foreign Investments (FDI) remains crucial for infusion of cutting edge technology. However, there are several issues which hamper the inflow of defence-related FDI in India.
 - For example, issues related to land acquisition, labour laws, regulatory cholesterol, the conflict between the Ministry of Defence and the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade) regarding computation methodology of FDI.

Conclusion

- **Need For A Comprehensive NSS:** The first and foremost requirement is for the government to formulate a comprehensive NSS, inclusive of internal security so that all the stakeholders are aware of what is expected of them.
 - Along with it, there is a requirement to establish a permanent National Security Commission – mandated by an act of parliament – to oversee the development of military and non-military capacities for national security.
- **Tri-Service Command:** Increasing technological disruptions has given birth to Hybrid warfare.
 - In this context, setting up of tri-service command is a step in the right direction and more commands need to be established.
 - Also, the establishment of the post of [Chief of Defence Staff](#) will complement the tri-service command.
- **Implement Naresh Chandra Committee Recommendation:** The government must accord the highest priority to the implementation of the [recommendations of the Naresh Chandra Committee](#).
 - Implementation of these recommendations will help the country's armed forces to become well prepared to meet future threats and challenges and contribute positively to security in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region alongside India's strategic partners.
- **Defence Reforms Under Atma-Nirbhar Abhiyan:** Government has done well by announcing a slew of reforms under Atma-Nirbhar Abhiyan, these help in attracting FDI, streamlining time-bound defence procurement, and boosting domestic participation in the defence sector.