



2025 as Year of Reforms for Defence Force

For Prelims: [Integrated Theatre Commands](#), [Artificial Intelligence](#), [Machine Learning](#), [Hypersonics](#), [Robotics](#), [National Security Strategy](#), [Agnipath Scheme](#), [Cyber Warfare](#), [CDS](#), [India-US iCET Initiative](#).

For Mains: Reforms required in India's armed forces.

Source: [PIB](#)

Why in News?

Recently, the **Ministry of Defence** has decided to observe **2025 as the 'Year of Reforms'** to transform the Armed Forces into a **technologically-advanced combat-ready force** capable of **multi-domain integrated operations**.

Note: The Indian Army is observing the year **2024** as the [year of Technology Absorption](#).

What are the Areas Identified for the 'Year of Reforms' in 2025?

- **Jointness & Integration:** Strengthen cooperation among military services and promote the establishment of [Integrated Theatre Commands](#) (ITCs).
 - Develop **joint operational capabilities** through inter-service cooperation & training.
 - ITCs includes the **China-focused northern command in Lucknow**, the **Pakistan-focused western command in Jaipur**, and the **maritime command in Thiruvananthapuram**.
- **Emerging Technologies:** Reforms should focus on new domains such as **Cyber and Space**, and emerging technologies like [Artificial Intelligence](#), [Machine Learning](#), [Hypersonics](#) and [Robotics](#).
 - Associated tactics, techniques and procedures required to **win future wars** should also be developed.
 - Promote **technology transfer, knowledge sharing**, and public-private partnerships by improving ease of doing business between the defence and civil sectors.
- **Simplifying Acquisition:** Acquisition procedures should be **streamlined and time-bound** to accelerate and **strengthen** capability development.
- **Defence Exporter:** Position India as a **credible exporter of defence products**, fostering R&D and partnerships between Indian industries and foreign [Original Equipment Manufacturers](#).
 - India's defence exports rose to **over Rs 21,000 crore, up from Rs 2,000 crore** in 2014.
- **Veteran Welfare and Indigenous Culture:** Ensure the **welfare of veterans** while leveraging their expertise.
 - Additionally, foster pride in **Indian culture** and confidence in achieving global standards through **indigenous capabilities**, while adapting best practices from modern militaries.

What is the Current Status of India's Defence Forces?

- **Importer to Exporter:** India has shifted from being the **largest arms importer to a major exporter**, with defense exports reaching **INR 210.83 billion in 2023-24**, and a target of **INR 500 billion by 2028-29**.
- **Defence Acquisition Reforms:** The **Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP)** prioritizes domestic industry, requiring Indian companies to lead in manufacturing key systems and increasing **indigenous content (IC) to 50% or higher** in defense procurement.
- **Private Sector Involvement:** By 2022-23, private companies contributed **20% to India's defense production**.
 - The **TATA Aircraft Complex in Vadodara** marks India's first private sector final assembly line for military aircraft, dedicated to the **C-295 transport aircraft**.
- **Defence Industrial Growth:** India's defense production turnover grew from **INR 740.54 billion in 2016-17 to INR 1,086.84 billion in 2022-23**, with **14,000 MSMEs** and **329 startups** involved in defense by 2023.

Why Reforms in Defence Force Needed?

- **Lack of National Security Strategy (NSS):** The absence of **NSS** creates a **gap between political intentions and military operations**, undermining the alignment of defense strategies with national policies.
 - It has resulted in a **lack of preparedness against emerging threats** like those from China and Pakistan.
- **Rise of Cyberwarfare:** Cyberspace is the **5th domain of warfare**, with **state-sponsored actors and states themselves** sabotaging key economic parameters and military installations.
 - This was seen in **Estonia** and other conflicts, with the latest being the **Ukraine-Russia cyber warfare**.
- **Dependence on Imports:** India remains the **world's top arms importer** for the period **2019-23** with imports having **gone up by 4.7%** compared to the period **2014-18**.
 - The slow indigenization pace and challenges in building a **competitive domestic defense industry** hinder self-reliance in defense production.
- **Cultural Resistance to Jointness:** The Indian military's **service-specific approach**, with each branch (**Army, Navy, Air Force**) maintaining its **autonomy** has led to resistance in adopting an integrated model.
- **Insufficient Funding:** Despite substantial allocation in absolute terms, it is **only 1.9% of India's GDP** which **limits modernization** of defence forces, particularly in areas such as technology, equipment, and infrastructure.
 - In 2020, the **FDI limit** in defense was increased to **74% through the automatic route** and up to **100%** through the **government route** for access to **modern technology**.
- **Ad-hoc Procurement Processes:** Post-**Galwan clash 2020**, the armed forces were granted **exclusive powers for emergency procurements** to address critical capability gaps, highlighting a **lack of strategic readiness** despite tactical necessity.
- **Short-term Policy:** The **Agnipath scheme** has been criticized for its **short 6-month training period**, raising concerns about recruits' readiness for real combat.
 - The **4-year service period** risks **losing experienced personnel**, potentially impacting the army's capability and morale.

What are India's Initiatives for Reforms in Defence Forces?

- [Defence Industrial Corridors](#)
- [Corporatization of the Ordnance Factory Boards](#)
- [Defence India Startup Challenge](#)
- [SRIJAN Portal](#)
- [Innovations for Defence Excellence \(iDEX\)](#)

▪ [Mission Raksha Gyan Shakti](#)

Goldwater-Nichols Reforms in US

- **About:** The **Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act, 1986** restructured the **US Department of Defense** to enhance **military effectiveness and efficiency**.
 - The reforms were designed to address issues identified in the aftermath of the **Vietnam War (1955-1975)** and **Operation Eagle Claw (the failed U.S. mission to rescue hostages in Iran)**.
- **Goal:** The primary goal was to improve **joint military operations**, strengthen civilian control, and streamline **defense decision-making**.
- **Key Provisions:**
 - Improved **military advice** to the President
 - **Clear responsibilities** for unified combatant commanders
 - **Unified commander's** authority and responsibilities
 - Strategy formulation and **contingency planning**
 - **Efficient use** of resources
 - **Joint officer** management
 - Effectiveness of **joint military operations**
 - **Defense management** and administration

Way Forward

- **Institutional Reforms:** The establishment of the [Chief of Defence Staff \(CDS\)](#) and [Department of Military Affairs \(DMA\)](#) is a positive step, but **clearer responsibility** distribution is needed.
 - The CDS should lead military decision-making and bridge civilian-military gaps.
- **Integrating Technologies:** Focusing on **autonomous systems**, [cyber warfare](#), and **AI** can give India a technological edge in potential conflicts with China or Pakistan.
 - Expanding **drone capabilities in intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance (ISR) and precision strikes** will boost operational flexibility.
- **Boost Domestic Defence Industry:** Public-private partnerships and **foreign collaborations** should be pursued to strengthen the domestic defense sector.
 - A more **efficient allocation of resources** is necessary, prioritising technologies that offer asymmetrical advantages.
- **Maximise Defence Cooperation:** Expanding defense cooperation with regional and global powers like [India-US iCET initiative](#) will boost India's strategic autonomy and security.
- **National Defence University (NDU):** India should prioritize establishing an NDU for advanced training and research in **defense strategies, policies, and technologies** to develop a strong cadre of strategic thinkers and planners.

[Drishti Mains Question:](#)

Discuss the reforms proposed in the Indian Defence Forces for 2025 and associated challenges.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

[Prelims](#)

Q.What is “Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD)”, sometimes seen in the news? (2018)

- (a) An Israeli radar system
- (b) India's indigenous anti-missile programme

(c) An American anti-missile system

(d) A defence collaboration between Japan and South Korea.

Ans: (c)

Q. In the context of the Indian defence, what is 'Dhruv'? (2008)

(a) Aircraft-carrying warship

(b) Missile-carrying submarine

(c) Advanced light helicopter

(d) Intercontinental ballistic missile

Ans: (c)

Mains

Q. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the defence sector is now set to be liberalized: What influence this is expected to have on Indian defence and economy in the short and long run? **(2014)**

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