



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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