

## **4. The Missing Piece in India's Defence Jigsaw Puzzle**

**Prelims Level: Governance - Policies**

**Mains Level: GS-III Indian Economy and Issues Relating to planning, mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development and Employment.**

- Despite being the 4<sup>th</sup> largest spender on defence in the world, India does not have a defence white paper laying out a realistic framework for strategic requirement in the changing geopolitical scenario.

### **Current Scenario: How is India Planning?**

- Currently India's defence planning is lopsided towards the 2-front threats from Pakistan and China and hence lacks a strategic vision.
- Notwithstanding, the 2-front threat, India's defence plans should clearly lay out requirements based on
  - ✓ Shifting centre of gravity of geopolitics
  - ✓ Changing technology (cyber warfare)
  - ✓ Emerging strategies like proxy wars etc.

### **Shortcomings in the Current Planning System:**

#### **1. Overemphasis on 2-front Threat:**

- ✓ A look at the current acquisitions show that maximum focus has been laid on 2-front threat.
- ✓ For instance, the recent deals for acquiring Rafale fighter jets, 200 Kamov Ka-226 light utility helicopters from Russia, S-400 Triumf Air Defence System, Poseidon-8I Maritime Reconnaissance Aircraft, Apache Attack Helicopters, Romeo Multi Mission Helicopters for the Navy etc reflect this overemphasis on Pakistan and China.

#### **2. Lack clarity**

- ✓ A look at the plans of the armed forces indicates that the operational requirements are laid out towards generic objective and lack clarity.

### **What is needed?**

#### **3. Modernisation**

- ✓ As a thumb rule any modern Armed Forces should have 1/3 rd of its equipment in the vintage category, 1/3 rd in the current category and 1/3 rd in the state of the art category.
- ✓ Indian Army currently has only 8% state-of-the-art.

- ✓ Thus India should plan for technologies of the future including artificial intelligence, robotics, bio-technology, modern weapons like hypersonic technology which are said to be fulcrum of arms race in 21<sup>st</sup> century.

#### **4. Clear objectives in line with changing geopolitics:**

- ✓ It is well known that the geopolitical centre of gravity has shifted from Atlantic in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to Indo-Pacific in the 21<sup>st</sup>.
- ✓ India has also articulated for free and open indo-pacific in its construct of Indo-Pacific Policy.
- ✓ While China's growing assertiveness in Indo-Pacific is a reality, it is not necessarily confrontational in nature.

#### **5. Due Consideration to the Neighbourhood**

- ✓ Given that China is a formidable opponent in the neighbor-hood and projects such as BRI involve the sensitive sovereignty issues, India should clearly assess the nature of BRI (whether economic or military) and plan accordingly instead of a conflict-prone approach.
- ✓ India's defence white paper should keep into account that Chinese spheres of influence in South Asia, South East Asia and West Asia.
- ✓ Our defence white paper should clearly differentiate between areas where India and China can peacefully co-exist and conflict zones.

#### **Conclusion:**

- India should prepare a defence white paper that would be more judicious in planning its resources by clearly laying out more definitive approach keeping in view the above challenges.