

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 4th 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 21st 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 20th century to Indo-Pacific in the 21st.
- ✓ 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 neighborhood 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.