

Need for Defence Reforms

What is the issue?

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The state of India's national security and defence is getting worse than before and are in a dire need of reform.

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What are the recent measures?

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- The government set up a Defence Planning Committee (DPC) to assist in the creation of national security strategy, international defence engagement strategy and a roadmap to build -

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1. Defence manufacturing ecosystem
2. Strategy to boost defence exports
3. Priority capability development plans.

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- It has also decided to revive the Strategic Policy Group (SPG) within the overall National Security Council (NSC) system.

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- It has recently appointed the National Security Adviser (NSA) as the chairman of the Strategic Policy Group (SPG) of the National Security Council (NSC).

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What are the concerns?

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- **Centralisation** - There are concerns that appointing NSA to SPG would lead to further centralisation of decision making.

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- The post of the NSA is also not a legally-mandated one and he has no parliamentary accountability.

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- **LOC** - Overall violence in Jammu and Kashmir and ceasefire violations on the Line of Control reached a 14-year high in 2017, and did not subside in 2018.

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- There are far more attacks on security forces and security installations in J&K, and militant recruitments and violence against civilians in the State are rising at an alarming rate.

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- **Neighbourhood policy** - Though the government claims that the surgical strikes of 2016 gave a befitting response to Pakistan, it hardly made any significant gains in reality.

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- A report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs recently revealed that the Chinese forces are back in the Doklam plateau with more force.

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- The report goes on to fault the government for continuing with its conventionally deferential foreign policy towards China.

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- India's neighbourhood policy holds a clear absence of vision on how to balance, engage and work with the many great powers in the regional and the broader international scene.

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- **Defence preparedness** - India spends close to \$50 billion annually on defence and yet might still be ill-equipped to fight the wars of the modern age, especially in the neighbourhood.

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- India also suffers from almost non-functional higher defence organisation and the defence policy doesn't hold any political oversight or vision.

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- **Defence management** - There is little conversation between the armed forces and the political class, and even lesser conversation among the various arms of the forces.

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- Our doctrines, command structures, force deployments and defence acquisition continue as though each arm is going to fight a future war on its

own.

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- **Institutional lacuna** - In India, talk of appointing a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) has died down and the key post of military adviser in the National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS) remains vacant.

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- The NSC almost never meets and the National Security Advisory Board, initially set up to seek 'outside expertise' on strategic matters, has become a space for retired officials.

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- **Modernisation** - The state of modernisation and domestic defence industry in the country are in a sorry state.

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- Under the present system, where the ratio of revenue to capital expenditure in defence is roughly 65:35%, any serious attempt at modernisation would be impossible.

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What should be done?

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- The country should have an overall national security document from which the various agencies and the arms of the armed forces draw their mandate.

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- It should also enable them to create their own respective and joint doctrines which would then translate into operational doctrines for tactical engagement.

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- In the absence of this, national strategy is broadly a function of ad hocism and personal preferences.

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Source: The Hindu

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Quick Facts

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National Security Council

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- The NSC is an executive government agency tasked with advising the Prime Minister's Office on matters of national security and strategic interest.

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- It is the apex body of the three-tiered structure of the national security management system in India.

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- The other two tiers are the Strategic Policy Group (SPG) and the National Security Advisory Board (NSAB).

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- The SPG is the first level of the three tier structure and forms the nucleus of the decision-making apparatus of the NSC.

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- The NSAB consists of a group of eminent national security experts outside of the government.

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- It provides a long-term prognosis and analysis to the NSC, and recommends solutions and address policy issues referred to it.

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