



Atma Nirbhar in Defence Production

This editorial is based on [“Atma Nirbhar in defence production: Where India stands among Indo-Pacific nations”](#) which was published in The Indian Express on 08/10/2022. It talks about the current state of Indigenisation of Defence Sector in India.

For Prelims: Defence Sector in India, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Defence India Startup Challenge, INS Vikrant, Dhanush, Arihant, Prachand, Defence Industrial Corridors (DICs), SRIJAN Portal

For Mains: Indigenisation of Defence, Challenges Related to the Defence Sector, India’s Recent Indigenous Move in the Defence Sector.

The [Defence Sector in India](#) is identified as an important area with an ocean of opportunities for [self-reliance](#). With large-scale modernisation requirements of the [Indian Armed Forces](#), India’s vision for [Atma Nirbhar Bharat](#) has provided further impetus to realise the goal of indigenisation of Defence Sector.

According to a study released by the [Stockholm International Peace Research Institute \(SIPRI\)](#), **India ranks 4th among 12 Indo-Pacific nations** in self-reliant arms production capabilities. But the concern is, **India is also ranked as the 2nd largest importer of arms for its armed forces in 2016-20.**

In spite of significant efforts to become self-sufficient in defence production, the **indigenous texture still lacks its flavour** due to higher import bills and it needs to be addressed.

What is Indigenisation of Defence?

- **Defence Indigenization** is the process of developing and manufacturing defence equipment within a country as a way to reduce import dependency as well as achieve self-reliance.
 - [Defence Research Development Organisation \(DRDO\), Defence Public Sector Undertakings \(DPSUs\)](#) are the major front runners in Atma Nirbhar Bharat vision.
- **1983** is marked a significant milestone in **defence indigenization** as the government approved the [Integrated Guided Missile Development Program](#) to develop 5 missile systems:
 - [Prithvi](#) (surface-to-surface)
 - [Akash](#) (surface-to-air)
 - [Trishul](#) (the naval version of Prithvi)
 - [Nag](#) (anti-tank)
 - [Agni Ballistic Missiles](#)

What is India’s Recent Indigenous Move in the Defence Sector?

- [Defence India Startup Challenge](#)
- [INS Vikrant: Aircraft Carrier](#)
- [Dhanush: Long-range artillery gun](#)
- [Arihant: Nuclear Submarine](#)
- [Prachand: Light Combat Helicopter](#)

What are the Challenges Related to the Defence Sector in India?

- **High Dependence on Imports:** The defence sector in India relies heavily on imports, and changing geopolitical circumstances cause it to be delayed. **For instance**, amid the [Russia-Ukraine war](#), India is awaiting the delivery of the [S-400 Air Defence Systems](#) under a deal signed in 2018.
 - In addition, several new deals are in line including [12 Sukhoi-30MKI aircraft](#) and **21 MiG-29** fighter jets for the [Indian Air Force](#).
- **Narrow Private Participation:** Private sector participation in the defence sector is constrained by the **lack of a conducive financial framework**, that means our defence production is unable to benefit from **modern design, innovation, and product development**.
- **Lack of Critical Technology:** Lack of design capability, **inadequate R&D investment**, inability to manufacture major subsystems and components hamper indigenous manufacturing.
 - Also, the **relationship between R&D institutions, production agencies (public or private) and end-users** is extremely fragile.
- **Lack of Nexus Between Stakeholders:** India's defence manufacturing capability is hindered by **overlapping jurisdictions** between the **Ministry of Defence** and the **Ministry of Industrial Promotion**.

What Should be the Way Forward?

- **Indigenisation with Private Boom:** There is a **need to revitalise and regulate entry points for Private sector** to enter in defence production embracing sustainable design and development to meet the needs of Indian Armed Forces in coming years.
- **Defence Industrial Corridors (DICs):** It is necessary to **extend dedicated defence industrial corridors** across the length and breadth of the country in order to harness and channel the potential of **Indian MSMEs and DPSUs** in the defence manufacturing sector, as well as to facilitate the smooth transit of raw materials.
 - Government's initiative to establish two [Defence Industrial Corridors \(DICs\) in Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu](#) is a welcome step in this direction.
- **Defence Investor Cell:** It is necessary to strengthen investment in defence by providing entrepreneurs/industry with **a single point of contact to deal with all defence production-related queries, procedures and regulatory requirements** for investment in the sector.
 - The [SRIJAN portal](#) can be linked with Investment Cell.
- **Inclusion of Defence Entrepreneurs in Policy Making:** Through streamlining procurement and shaking hands with **newer defence entrepreneurs for better policy making and implementation**, can reduce the qualitative and quantitative gaps in its defence sector.
- **Tapping the World's Defence Market:** There is also a need to give **adequate attention to the promotion of exports** of Indian Defence products.
 - It is important to **simplify and streamline export authorisation procedures** through an online mechanism and targeted outreach efforts.
 - [Defence Exim Portal](#) is a welcome step in this direction.
- **Strengthening Economy with Strategic Independence:** **Indigenised India's defence sector** would further strengthen the **economy by generating employment opportunities** and saving the exchequer by **reducing the import burden**.
 - **Also, Self-sufficiency** in defence will fundamentally lead to India's **strategic independence**.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q.1 Which one of the following is the best description of 'INS Astradharini', that was in the news recently? (2016)

- (a) Amphibious warfare ship
- (b) Nuclear-powered submarine
- (c) Torpedo launch and recovery vessel
- (d) Nuclear-powered aircraft carrier

Ans: (c)

Q.2 Consider the following in respect of Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS): (2017)

1. Inaugural IONS was held in India in 2015 under the chairmanship of the Indian Navy.
2. IONS is a voluntary initiative that seeks to increase maritime co-operation among navies of the littoral states of the Indian Ocean Region.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans: (b)