



Relevance of Atmanirbharata

This editorial is based on [“The world is in flux. Self-reliance is vital”](#) which was published in The Hindustan Times on 13/03/2022. It talks about relevance of Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan or Self-reliant India campaign in reference to recent developments where a country has to protect itself from all the dangers.

For Prelims: Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan, Galwan valley, NATO, Indigenisation of India's Defence Setup.

For Mains: Relevance of Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan or Self-reliant India campaign in the recent times, the ways to become self-reliant in the modern economic scenarios.

Three contemporary developments have challenged India's engagement with the world and its security concerns in the past 24 months.

- The first was the decision by China's to pick a line from a map in imagined history and send 100,000 troops and more to alter the current political equation in the Himalayas. This was a whimsical and perverse exertion of power that resulted in a bloody clash and a still continuing face-off between Indian and Chinese troops.
- Next, in August 2021, the United States (US), finalised an unethical and tragic arrangement with a band of terrorists, and deserted Afghanistan overnight. Women rights, individual freedoms and the “values” that were propagated while waging the so-called liberal war against terror, were all discarded in favour of what was expedient.
- And now, Russian troops invaded a sovereign country to enforce a political writ driven solely by the desire to preserve Russia's influence over geographies that increasingly disagree with the politics and propositions of Russia. While Russia's fears of the purpose and method of the [North Atlantic Treaty Organization \(NATO\)](#)'s expansion must not be discounted, use of force and violation of a country's sovereignty cannot be acceptable as an expression of disagreement.
 - The invasion of Ukraine has put India in an unenviable position of choosing between what is right and what it believes is right for itself.

These three international events revitalised and put forth Atmanirbharata (self-reliance) at the centre stage.

What is the Potential of Atmanirbharata (Self-reliance)?

- [Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan or Self-reliant India campaign](#) is the vision of new India. In the year 2020, Prime Minister raised a clarion call to the nation giving a kick start to the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan (Self-reliant India campaign) and announced the Special economic and comprehensive package of INR 20 lakh crores - equivalent to 10% of India's GDP.
- The aim is to make the country and its citizens independent and self-reliant in all senses. **Five pillars** of Atma Nirbhar Bharat – **Economy, Infrastructure, System, Vibrant Demography**

and Demand have been outlined.

- It aims towards **cutting down import dependence by focussing on substitution** while **improving safety compliance and quality goods** to gain global market share.
- The Self-Reliance signifies **neither any exclusionary or isolationist strategies** but involves creation of a helping hand to the whole world.
- The Mission focuses on the importance of promoting “local” products.
- Along with Atma Nirbhar Bharat mission, the government took several bold reforms such as Supply Chain Reforms for Agriculture, Rational Tax Systems, Simple & Clear Laws, Capable Human Resource and Strong Financial System which will help in achieving self-reliance in a faster way.



What are the Concerns Raised For Atma Nirbhar Bharat?

- **Curtail International Trade and Investment:** Certain aspects of the programme have the potential to curtail international trade and investment, such as increased tariffs, non-tariff restrictions on imports, and import substitution.
 - **Non-tariff Barrier is a trade restriction**, such as a quota, embargo or sanction, that countries use to further their political and economic goals.
 - Countries can use non tariff barriers in place of, or in conjunction with, standard tariff barriers (like Custom Duty).
- **Policy Issues:** Difficulties in India's **Intellectual Property** enforcement regime, gaps in pharma sector regulations, drug price controls, and norms related to **data localisation** and **governance**.
 - Data localisation (i.e. storing data within the boundaries of the country) may restrict the ability of local companies to compete in the global marketplace by limiting access to the global supply chain.
 - This isolation may result in reduced investment and access to capital and customers.
- **In Space Sector:** To **open the Space sector to private investors** was a significant step but there was, however, a 'lack of clarity' about several aspects related to the procedures.
 - Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre (IN-SPACe) provides a level playing field for private companies to use Indian space infrastructure.
- **In Defence Sector:** The import embargo on the 101 items of defence equipment is planned to be implemented over a period of four years until 2024.
 - Also changes in the **Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2020** are expected to ensure that no item in this list is imported beyond the cut-off date.
 - This may impact foreign investment in India.

What Steps Can Be Taken?

- **Build a Strategy for the Future:** A long term approach that considers regional supply chains and location decision-making is needed to succeed.
- **India Should Become Increasingly Open to Free and Fair Trade:** India should attract investors due to its strengths rather than by using tariffs as a tool to push international businesses to invest and make in India.
- **Focus on Developing and Supporting Innovators:** Focus on **STEM**, digital, creative and critical thinking skills that will build leaders and workers who can innovate and solve problems.
 - India should also develop an innovator-friendly intellectual property policy and enforcement regime.
- **Digital and Data:** With digital and data services increasingly important in global trade, there is an opportunity for India to fully integrate with other major democratic markets.
 - India should continue to harness and actively invest in the opportunities that **Artificial Intelligence, digital technology** and data present to achieve its growth potential.
- **Put Sustainability at the Center of India's Trade and Investment Strategy:** If shaped properly, trading arrangements can help support the poor and protect the environment.
 - Countries and trade blocs are cognisant of this fact and are increasingly integrating sustainability and human rights into their trade agreements and strategies.
- **Enhancing Demand:** The economic package for the country emerging out of the lockdown requires a stimulus enhancing demand across the economy.
 - The best way for this is to spend on greenfield infrastructure.
 - Infrastructure spending uniquely creates structures that raise productivity and extends spending power to the section of the population most affected by the lockdown, namely daily wage labourers.
- **Mobilising Finances:** For financing of the stimulus package, India's foreign reserves stand at an all-time high which could be strategically used to finance its needs.
 - The rest may have to come from privatisation, taxation, loans and more international aid.
- **Holistic Reforms:** Any stimulus package will fail to reflect the trickle-down effect, until and unless it is backed by reforms in various sectors.
 - Thus, the Atma nirbhar plan also encompasses the unfinished agenda of holistic reforms which may include reforms in Civil services, Education, Skill and Labour, etc.

Conclusion

The government's call for atma nirbharta (self-reliance) has acquired a new salience and ironically,

achieving it requires astute global interlinkages and perhaps even more dense global networks for a country that houses a sixth of humanity.

Trusted connectivity, diversified sources of materials and components and resilient financial and trading arrangements are no longer buzzwords but a strategic imperative requiring all of India's consensus, including within its business community, lawmakers and all stakeholders.

Drishti Mains Question

The government's call for atma nirbharta (self-reliance) has acquired a new salience in recent years. Discuss the statement in light of the recent international developments.

PYQ:

Q. With reference to India's Five-Year Plans, which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. From the Second Five-Year Plan, there was a determined thrust towards substitution of and capital good industries.
2. The Fourth Five-Year Plan adopted the objective of correcting the earlier trend of increased concentration of wealth and economic power.
3. In the Fifth Five-Year Plan, for the first time, the financial sector was included as an integral part of the Plan.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (a)

Explanation:

- India adopted the strategy of Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) in the fifties. The chief objective was to build a self-reliant economy. From the Second Five Year Plan, there was determined thrust towards substitution of basic and capital goods industries. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- The Fourth Five Year Plan emphasised on reduction of concentration of incomes, wealth and economic power to achieve social equality and justice. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- The Fifth Five Year Plan was aimed at the removal of poverty and achievement of self-reliance. The Eighth Plan focussed on financial sector reforms. **Hence, statement 3 is not correct.**