



Saksham Bharat: Project Udbhav | Indian Army Exploring India's Military Heritage

For prelims: [Project Udbhav](#), [Indian Army](#), [United Service Institution \(USI\)](#), [Vedas](#), [Puranas](#), [and the epic Mahabharata](#), [the Mauryas](#), [Guptas](#), [and Marathas](#), [defence and governance](#), [guerilla warfare tactics](#), [cross-border terrorism](#), [hybrid warfare](#), [Geneva Conventions and international humanitarian laws](#).

For mains: Objective and Challenges of Project Udbhav.

Why in News?

Recently, the Indian Army Chief announced [Project Udbhav](#) at the conference titled 'Historical Patterns in Indian Strategic Culture'.

- Under this project, the army is exploring **ancient war tactics** and strategies mentioned in ancient texts like the [Vedas, Puranas, and the epic Mahabharata](#).

What is Project Udbhav?

- **About:**
 - It is an initiative of the [Indian Army](#) and [United Service Institution \(USI\)](#) to rediscover the rich **Indian military heritage of statecraft and strategic thought**, derived from ancient Indian texts on **statecraft, warfare, diplomacy, and grand strategy**.
 - Udbhav aims to make the force **future-ready** by integrating ancient strategic knowledge into contemporary military practices.
- **Primary Objective of Project Udbhav:**
 - The ultimate aim is to integrate ancient wisdom into **modern military pedagogy**, enabling the Indian Army to apply **centuries-old principles** to today's complex strategic landscape.
 - It aims to explore the epic **battles of the Mahabharata** and strategic brilliance during the reigns of [the Mauryas, Guptas, and Marathas](#).
 - It encompasses a wide range of topics, including Indigenous Military Systems, Historical Texts, Regional Texts and Kingdoms, Thematic Studies, and **detailed Kautilya Studies**.
 - It aims to strengthen **civil-military collaboration** and broaden the study of ancient India's [defence and governance](#).
 - It aims to make the force **future-ready** by integrating ancient strategic knowledge into contemporary military practices.

What are the Ancient Art of War Principles linked to Project Udbhav?

- **Strategies From the Mahabharata and Ramayana:**
 - The **Chakravyuh formation** is a complex military formation described in

the **Mahabharata**. Principles of leadership, **valour, and the code of conduct** for warriors (dharma) which facilitate the objectives of Project Udbhav.

- Concepts of **psychological warfare, deception, and the use of diplomacy** and espionage.
- Strategies for managing resources, logistics, and supply lines during prolonged conflicts.
- Insights into the **code of conduct** for warriors from the **Dharmashastras**. warfare tactics from the **Ramayana**, including the use of **specialised weapons and tactics**.

▪ **Principles From the Arthashastra:**

- Concepts of **espionage, covert operations, and psychological warfare** are discussed in Kautilya's Arthashastra which inspire the aim of Project Udbhav.
- Strategies for **fortification, siege tactics**, and the use of different types of forces (infantry, cavalry, elephants, and chariots).
- Principles of **statecraft, including diplomacy, intelligence gathering**, and economic policies to support warfare.

▪ **Principles From the Vedic Text:**

- Philosophical concepts from the **Upanishads**, such as unity, discipline, and the **pursuit of righteousness (dharma)** in battle.
- Principles of self-discipline, mental fortitude, and the importance of **spiritual guidance for warriors**.
- Similarly, **Thirukkural**, the classical Tamil text composed by **Thiruvalluvar**, the Tamil philosopher, promotes ethical behaviour across various domains, including warfare. This resonates with contemporary military ethics, encompassing principles akin to just war.
- Concepts of cosmic order and the role of divine forces in warfare.

▪ **Concepts From Maratha military tactics:**

- The Marathas were adept at **guerilla warfare tactics**, utilising their knowledge of the **terrain and swift mobility to launch surprise attacks** on larger and more structured armies. This aspect is significant in Project Udbhav as it examines indigenous military systems and their adaptation to local geographical conditions.

What is the Need to Incorporate Ancient Art of War Practices into Project Udbhav?

▪ **Addressing Current and Emerging Threats:**

- The Indian Army faces various security challenges, including **cross-border terrorism, hybrid warfare**, and potential conflicts with neighbouring countries.
- Ancient warfare tactics related to **unconventional warfare, guerilla tactics, and psychological operations** will offer unique perspectives on addressing these threats, particularly in areas like **asymmetric warfare, counter-insurgency** operations, and urban warfare scenarios.

▪ **Psychological and Strategic Considerations:**

- Ancient texts often emphasize the psychological aspects of warfare, such as **deception, diplomacy**, and the importance of **morale and leadership**.
- These principles can be valuable in modern conflicts, where psychological operations and strategic messaging play a crucial role.

▪ **Cultural Relevance and Indigenous Knowledge:**

- Ancient Indian texts like the **Vedas, Puranas, and the Mahabharata** are deeply rooted in the cultural and historical context of the Indian subcontinent.
- Exploring these sources can provide insights into warfare strategies and principles that are inherently linked to the region's cultural heritage and traditional knowledge systems.

▪ **Adaptability and Innovation:** Modern warfare is constantly evolving, and adversaries are continuously developing new tactics and strategies. By studying ancient warfare principles, the Indian Army aims **to identify innovative approaches** that can be adapted and integrated into **contemporary military doctrines**, providing a unique competitive advantage.

What are the Challenges in Applying Ancient Warfare Practices?

▪ **Integration with Modern Doctrine:**

- Integrating ancient principles with existing modern military doctrines, strategies, and

training frameworks could be a complex process, requiring **careful evaluation, adaptation,** and reconciliation of potentially conflicting approaches.

- Like, reconciling ancient principles of **leadership or command structures** with modern **hierarchies and decision-making** processes in the military could be challenging.

▪ **Ethical and Legal Considerations:**

- Some ancient warfare tactics or principles may not align with modern **international laws, conventions, and ethical norms** governing warfare, such as the treatment of civilians, prisoners of war, or the use of certain weapons.
- Certain tactics described in ancient texts, like the **use of deception or psychological warfare,** may contradict modern laws and ethical standards governing military operations.

▪ **Cultural and Societal Changes:**

- Ancient warfare principles were developed in specific cultural, social, and historical contexts that **may not be entirely relevant or applicable** in contemporary Indian society and **military culture.**
- Such as ancient principles emphasizing **caste-based roles** or societal hierarchies may not align with modern principles of **equality and inclusivity** in the armed forces.

▪ **Contextual Differences:**

- Ancient warfare was fought with different weapons, tactics, and technologies compared to modern warfare. The principles and strategies described in ancient texts may not directly translate or be applicable to contemporary warfare scenarios involving advanced weaponry, cyber warfare, and modern military doctrines.
- Examples such as the use of **chariots, elephants, and archery** described in ancient texts may have limited relevance in today's mechanized and technologically advanced warfare.

▪ **Interpretation and Translation:**

- The description of the **Chakravyu** formation in the Mahabharata may have **symbolic or metaphorical meanings** that could be difficult to translate into a practical modern military strategy.

▪ **United Service Institution of India**

- The United Service Institution (USI) of India was **founded in 1870** by a soldier scholar, Colonel (later Major General) **Sir Charles MacGregor.**
- It was established to promote interest and knowledge in the **art, science, and literature** related to the Defence Services.
- USI is a defence and national security think tank located in **New Delhi, India.**

Way Forward

▪ **Ensure ethical and legal compliance:**

- Establish robust mechanisms to ensure that any adapted ancient principles comply with international laws, conventions, and ethical norms governing warfare.
- This may involve developing specific guidelines, protocols, and oversight measures to prevent any potential misuse or unethical application of these principles.
- Principles related to the **treatment of civilians** or the use of certain weapons should be strictly aligned with the [Geneva Conventions and international humanitarian laws.](#)

▪ **Assemble a Multidisciplinary Team:**

- Bring together a diverse team of experts, including military strategists, historians, linguists, philosophers, and scholars specializing in ancient Indian texts and martial arts.
- This interdisciplinary approach will ensure a comprehensive understanding and accurate interpretation of the ancient principles.

▪ **Establish a Dedicated Research Centre:**

- Create a dedicated research centre **or think tank** within the Indian Army focused on studying and analyzing ancient Indian military wisdom.
- This centre could collaborate with academic institutions, cultural organizations, and subject matter experts to facilitate **in-depth research and analysis.** This should involve a critical examination of the historical, cultural, and societal contexts in which these texts were

written, as well as an evaluation of their literal and metaphorical meanings.

- **Identify relevant principles and strategies:**

- This may include concepts related to leadership, tactics, logistics, psychological warfare, or strategic decision-making. For example, principles of **resource management and supply chain logistics described in ancient texts** could be explored for potential adaptation to modern military logistics systems.

- **Conduct simulations and war-gaming exercises:**

- Incorporate adapted ancient principles into military training programs, simulations, and war-gaming exercises. This will allow for practical testing, evaluation, and refinement of the principles in simulated environments before potential real-world applications.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims:

Q1. What is “Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD)”, sometimes seen in the news? (2018)

- (a) An Israeli radar system
- (b) India’s indigenous anti-missile program
- (c) An American anti-missile system
- (d) A defence collaboration between Japan and South Korea.

Ans: C

Q2. In the context of the Indian defense, what is ‘Dhruv’? (2008)

- (a) Aircraft-carrying warship
- (b) Missile-carrying submarine
- (c) Advanced light helicopter
- (d) Intercontinental ballistic missile

Ans: (c)

Mains

Q1: Analyze the multidimensional challenges posed by external state and non-state actors, to the internal security of India. Also discuss measures required to be taken to combat these threats. **(2021)**

Q2: Analyze internal security threats and transborder crimes along Myanmar, Bangladesh and Pakistan borders including Line of Control (LoC). Also discuss the role played by various security forces in this regard. **(2020)**