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EDITORIAL ANALYSIS



JULY 17



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AND CREDIBLE



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1. It is not all bad between India and Pakistan (THE HINDU)
2. On private investment in education, India needs idealism without illusions (THE INDIAN EXPRESS)
3. Old wine, but this time it promises potency (HINDUSTAN TIMES)
4. Rocket force | Divider disguised as multiplier (THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS)



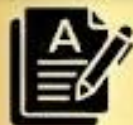
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It is not all bad between India and Pakistan

Ever since a letter written by 117 eminent Pakistanis and Indians emerged in the public domain, an acrimonious debate has begun on whether India should reopen dialogue with its neighbour, with most pointing to the inability of Pakistan to ever live peacefully with India. While this is understandable in the aftermath of the Pahalgam horror (2025), the fact remains that India and Pakistan have, on many occasions, shown far greater circumspection than their western counterparts and have also quietly cooperated to a surprising degree. Clearly, there is potential for cooperation. Equally, however, this potential has been hit progressively harder by terrorism.

Wars, yet with restraint

Every foreign correspondent writing on the India-Pakistan relationship, will frame it with reference to their three wars (1947, 1965, 1971). But few realise that during all three wars, both sides made efforts not to bomb each other's cities and civilian spaces. But there were some targets, such as the church at Ambala that was hit in 1965 as Pakistan tried to target the air base. Military historian Rana Chhina notes that the only serious attack on civilian areas was at Chhearta, hours after a ceasefire was called, but originally meant to target a key radar station in Amritsar.

Even in 1971, both sides restricted attacks to military targets, including oil storage sites. Official sources in India note that military casualties for all three wars at 8,211, while Pakistan's broad figures point to some 15,000. Sadly, no credible sources are available for civilian casualties, though accounts of the war show life going on 'courageously' in Pakistani towns, with the same fortitude reported from Amritsar, a flash point in all major wars. Consider that Allied air bombing during the Second World War killed an estimated 3,00,000-6,00,000 civilians in German cities under the new concept of "area bombing". Attacks against just Dresden, with hardly any



Tara Kartha

Former Director,
National Security
Council Secretariat

Conflict has made headlines, but quiet cooperation has also shaped India-Pakistan relations

military value, killed 25,000. Then there was the bombing of Tokyo that killed 1,00,000. Allied planes even mined the seas to deny fishing in "Operation Starvation". Germany was hardly any better, killing thousands but its crimes have been recorded. Those by the West are hard to find, but new 'doctrines' of both held human life cheap. In contrast, India and Pakistan militaries kept to a battlefield concept. Once terrorism came into play, all these niceties were set aside. But even as Pakistan suffered terror attacks, including two attempts on General Musharraf's life, in 2003, a third was foiled quietly with Indian intelligence support; that tacitly it acknowledged strong Pakistani action against terrorist groups. True, this was in the aftermath of 9/11, where Islamabad was told to cooperate or 'be bombed back into the Stone Age' according to the General.

Fragile bridges

In yet another instance, after 26/11, President Asif Ali Zardari, instructed his ISI Chief General Shuja Pasha to visit Delhi and cooperate in the investigation. This was flatly refused by the then Chief, General Kayani. A year later U.S. Vice-President Joe Biden was telling the British that Mr. Zardari was afraid of 'being taken out'. Later, the 'Memogate' scandal had Mr. Zardari's fervent appeal for help against the generals. Later, Nawaz Sharif reached out as well, being the first to congratulate Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and attending his inaugural in 2014. Mr. Modi then made a surprise visit to Rawind for a Sharif family wedding in December 2015. In January 2016, the Pathankot attack happened. This time, Islamabad registered a case for investigation. Less than a year later, Mr. Sharif himself was forced out of office on corruption charges that were never proven. Mr. Modi, Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh all invested significant political capital in reaching out to Pakistan. All three faced failure, with Manmohan Singh particularly reviled for his efforts.

Then came the 2005 nuclear confidence-building agreement, which still holds, with the last meeting held in January 2026. In contrast, arms control agreements between Russia and the U.S. have collapsed. The agreement was tested on March 9, 2022, when India acknowledged that a technical malfunction during routine maintenance led to the accidental firing of a missile into Pakistan. No damage was reported, and Delhi ordered a high-level inquiry.

While Prime Minister Imran Khan and politicians reacted strongly, Gen. Qamar Bajwa's response showed notable restraint. Gen. Bajwa also advocated using Pakistan's geo-economic potential by opening trade corridors with India, possibly due to the country's economic crisis. However, most remarkably, even as India faced Chinese incursions in Galwan, both countries reaffirmed their ceasefire commitment during Gen. Bajwa's tenure, despite the earlier abrogation of Article 370 in 2019.

There are many more instances of cooperation, though not all are publicly recorded. The constant point is that relations deteriorated sharply once terrorism began, initially targeting the military and more recently civilians, as seen in the horrific Pahalgam attack. Pakistan has suffered further as groups it once supported, such as the Taliban, turned against it.

The path to cooperation

In 2025, terrorism rose by 34% amid growing unrest in Occupied Kashmir, the tribal areas and Balochistan. Years of military rule have weakened state institutions. Yet, cooperation remains possible in areas such as glacial melt, stubble-burning alternatives and particularly narcotics trafficking, an area where both countries have previously worked together. The key step is for Rawalpindi to demonstrate clearly an end to its support for terrorism. That could even open the way for a renegotiation of the Indus Waters Treaty to mutual benefit.

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Jus in Bello (Just Conduct in War):** This is a principle of Just War Theory that dictates how combatants should act during a conflict. The historical restraint shown by Indian and Pakistani militaries—deliberately avoiding civilian targets and restricting attacks to military infrastructure during the 1947, 1965, and 1971 wars—is a classic demonstration of *Jus in Bello*.

- **Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs):** These are procedures established to prevent misunderstandings or miscalculations that could lead to war. A prime example is the 2005 nuclear CBM between New Delhi and Islamabad, which survived even acute crises, ensuring that an accidental missile misfire (like the one in 2022) was handled through inquiry rather than retaliation.

- **The Stability-Instability Paradox:** A fascinating concept in strategic studies. It suggests that when two countries have nuclear weapons, the probability of a direct, full-scale war decreases (stability), but the likelihood of minor or proxy conflicts—like state-sponsored terrorism—increases (instability). The nuclear umbrella allows the Pakistani deep state to use terrorism as a strategic tool, knowing conventional retaliation is risky.

- **Non-State Actors vs. State Proxies:** True non-state actors operate independently of any government. However, in the context of our western border, groups launching terror attacks are often "state proxies"—armed, funded, and tactically guided by the military establishment to wage a low-cost war against India.

- **Geo-economics over Geo-politics:** A paradigm shift occasionally floated by Pakistani leadership (such as during Gen. Bajwa's tenure) suggesting a pivot from territorial disputes to leveraging geography for trade, transit, and economic integration.

- **Area Bombing:** A military strategy used extensively by Western powers during WWII (e.g., Dresden, Tokyo), where entire cities are targeted to destroy civilian morale and industrial capacity. Contrasting this with the localized, battlefield-centric approach of Indo-Pak wars exposes a glaring hypocrisy in global military critiques.



- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- When we strip away the daily news noise, the core narrative of this geopolitical relationship reveals a profound duality.
 - **The Myth of Absolute Anarchy:** There is a heavy misconception, often fueled by Western observers, that India and Pakistan are reckless nuclear-armed nations perpetually on the brink of chaotic destruction. The reality is quite the opposite. Both nations have historically demonstrated a sophisticated level of military maturity. Whether it was sparing cities during conventional wars or maintaining nuclear safety protocols during technical malfunctions, there is a bedrock of rationality.
 - **The Sabotage of Civilian Diplomacy:** Every time a genuine political effort is made to bridge the divide, it is forcefully derailed. Indian Prime Ministers across party lines have spent immense political capital—taking significant domestic risks—to extend a hand of friendship. Similarly, civilian leaders in Pakistan have occasionally reciprocated. Yet, these fragile bridges are consistently blown up by the military-intelligence nexus through choreographed terror attacks (from Pathankot to recent horrors).
 - **The Hypocrisy of Global Military Doctrine:** An underlying argument here is the stark contrast between subcontinental warfare and Western military history. While Western nations preach human rights, their historical military doctrines treated civilian lives as collateral damage. The subcontinental militaries, by contrast, historically adhered to a strict battlefield ethos until the advent of proxy terrorism polluted the environment.
 - **Emerging Avenues for Non-Traditional Cooperation:** Despite the toxic political climate, geography forces a shared destiny. Issues like the rapid melting of Himalayan glaciers, severe cross-border smog from stubble burning, and the menace of narcotics trafficking require joint action. These are not political choices; they are ecological and social imperatives.
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- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

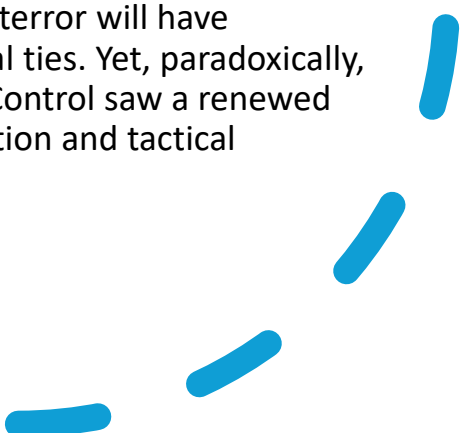
- To understand where we are today, we must trace the arc of the relationship, which has morphed through distinct phases.

- **The Era of Conventional Warfare (1947 – 1971):** The initial decades post-partition were defined by direct, uniformed conflict. Despite the bitter legacy of the 1947 partition, the wars of 1947, 1965, and 1971 were fought with a surprising degree of conventional etiquette. Militaries targeted airbases, radar stations, and oil depots, actively trying to minimize civilian casualties. The focus was territorial and strategic.

- **The Shift to Sub-Conventional Warfare (1980s – 1990s):** Realizing they could not win a conventional war, especially after the bifurcation of Pakistan in 1971, Rawalpindi adopted the "bleed India with a thousand cuts" strategy. The insurgency in Punjab and later the infiltration in Jammu & Kashmir marked the beginning of state-sponsored terrorism.

- **The Nuclear Shadow and Diplomatic Swings (1998 – 2016):** Both nations overtly demonstrated nuclear capabilities in 1998. This period saw massive diplomatic gambles (the Lahore Declaration, the Agra Summit, surprise Prime Ministerial visits) immediately followed by profound betrayals (the Kargil War, the Parliament attack, 26/11, and Pathankot).

- **The Deep Freeze and Tactical Restraint (2019 – Present):** Following the Pulwama attack, India established a new threshold with the Balakot airstrikes, proving terror will have conventional costs. The abrogation of Article 370 further froze political ties. Yet, paradoxically, even during the intense India-China standoffs at Galwan, the Line of Control saw a renewed ceasefire commitment in 2021, proving that backchannel communication and tactical restraint still function when mutually beneficial.



THE COMPLEXITY OF INDIA-PAKISTAN RELATIONS: DECODING COOPERATION & CONFLICT

THE DUALITY: RECENT EVENTS.



117
EMINENT
FIGURES

MODERN
CALL FOR
DIALOGUE,
IN KNOWS
RECENT
MEMORY

VS



**PAHALGAM
HORROR
(2025)**

THE DEBATE ON DIALOGUE
VS. MISTRUST, FBT



HISTORICAL RESTRAINT
MISTRUST VS. TERRORISM.

HISTORICAL RESTRAINT IN WARS.



Example of specific
limited strikes like
Ambala church

Militaries avoided civilian spaces,
kept battlefield concepts.

SURPRISING COOPERATION & FRAGILE BRIDGES.



THE DISRUPTING EFFECT OF TERRORISM.



**TERRORISM SETS ASIDE ALL
NICETIES. ACCELERATES
IN 2025
(34% RISE).**



WAY FORWARD: CONVERGING INTERESTS.

SHARED NON-TRADITIONAL
SECURITY CHALLENGES:

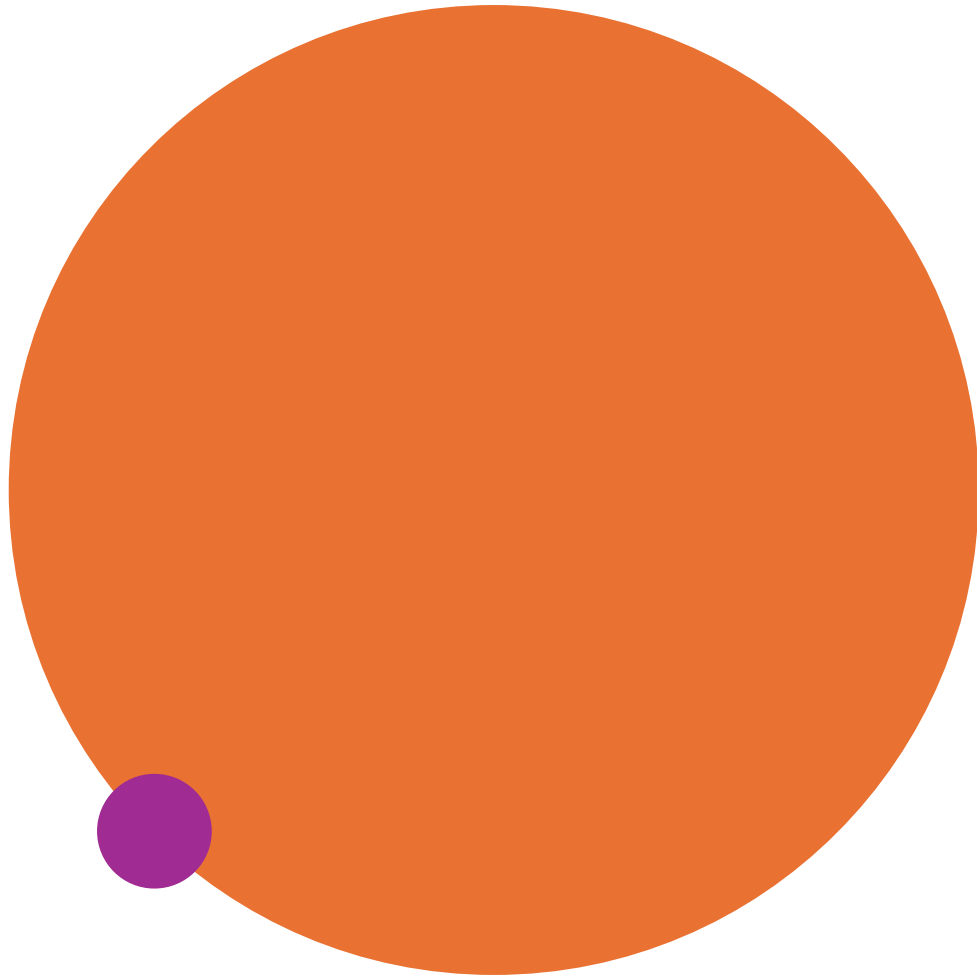


COOPERATION POSSIBLE
IN NON-POLITICAL AREAS.

THE CRUCIAL PREREQUISITE:
END TO RAW ALPINDI
SUPPORT FOR TERRORISM.



RENEGOTIATION OF INDUS
TREATY FOR MUTUAL BENEFIT



- **Logical and Philosophical Base**
- **Realism vs. Constructivism:** From a Realist perspective, the relationship is a classic security dilemma—each state's actions for its own security threaten the other. However, Constructivism explains the conflict better. The very identities of the two states are in friction. India's identity as a secular, democratic, rising global power fundamentally clashes with Pakistan's foundational identity as a homeland primarily defined by its opposition to India.
- **The Ethics of Warfare:** There is a deep philosophical contrast between the early Indo-Pak wars and modern terrorism. Conventional wars, despite their brutality, adhered loosely to an ethical framework of combatant-to-combatant engagement. Terrorism fundamentally inverts this philosophy; it specifically targets the innocent to generate political terror, rendering the old rules of military honor obsolete.
- **The Democratic Peace Theory:** This theory argues that democracies rarely go to war with one another. The structural flaw in the bilateral relationship is the democratic deficit in Pakistan. When Indian democratic leaders negotiate with Pakistani civilian leaders, the agreements hold no water because the actual lever of power—the military establishment—remains outside the democratic process.

- **Multidimensional Analysis**

- **Political Dimension:** The constant tug-of-war within Pakistan's power corridors dictates the bilateral relationship. Indian leadership has shown a willingness to engage, but the lack of a reliable, unified political partner across the border makes sustained dialogue nearly impossible.

- **Security & Legal Dimension:** The use of terror as an instrument of state policy violates fundamental principles of international law, including the UN Charter. Simultaneously, treaties like the Indus Waters Treaty showcase how legal frameworks can survive extreme geopolitical stress, though they are now ripe for review due to changing ecological and political realities.

- **Social Dimension:** There is a tragic resilience among civilians living in border towns, from Amritsar to Lahore, who bear the brunt of both conventional posturing and proxy attacks. Furthermore, rising domestic unrest in regions like Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa showcases how the weaponization of radical groups eventually cannibalizes the host society.

- **Economic Dimension:** South Asia remains one of the least integrated regions in the world. The suspension of trade hurts both sides, but it disproportionately impacts an economically fragile Pakistan. The refusal to unlock geo-economic potential due to geopolitical stubbornness results in massive opportunity costs for millions of citizens.

- **Ethical & Environmental Dimension:** Mother Nature respects no borders. The shared ecological space—rivers, glaciers, and air sheds—demands ethical stewardship. The refusal to cooperate on issues like glacial melt or stubble burning due to political animosity is an ethical failure to protect future generations.

- **Linkages with NCERTs**
- **Class 12 Political Science (Contemporary World Politics):** *Chapter - Contemporary South Asia*. This chapter is vital. It lays out the structural issues of the region, the civil-military conflict in Pakistan, and the history of the Kashmir dispute. It provides the exact bedrock you need to understand why South Asian integration fails.
- **Class 12 Political Science (Politics in India Since Independence):** *Chapter - India's External Relations*. Read this to understand the historical context of the 1947, 1965, and 1971 wars, and how India's foreign policy principles (like Panchsheel and Non-Alignment) were tested on its own borders.
- **Class 11 Geography (India - Physical Environment):** *Chapter - Drainage System*. Crucial for understanding the Indus river basin. You cannot write a good answer on the Indus Waters Treaty or water-sharing disputes without knowing the geography of the Indus, Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej.

- **Linkages with UPSC CSE Syllabus**
- **General Studies Paper II:**
 - *India and its neighborhood - relations.* (This is the most direct linkage. It covers the entire spectrum of diplomacy, trade, and conflict).
 - *Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.* (Indus Waters Treaty, SAARC, SCO).
- **General Studies Paper III:**
 - *Security challenges and their management in border areas.* (Dealing with proxy wars, infiltrations, and ceasefire violations).
 - *Linkages of organized crime with terrorism.* (The nexus between narcotics trafficking from across the border and terror funding).
 - *Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation.* (Cross-border smog, glacial melting).
- **General Studies Paper IV (Ethics):**
 - *Ethical issues in international relations.* (The morality of state-sponsored terrorism, the ethics of civilian targeting in war vs. military restraint).
- **Essay Paper:** Highly relevant for themes centered on regional peace, the cost of terrorism, and the intersection of environment and geopolitics.

- **Way Forward**

- **The Absolute Prerequisite - Zero Tolerance for Proxy War:** There can be no meaningful political dialogue until the infrastructure of terror is verifiably dismantled. The onus lies squarely on Rawalpindi to shift its strategic calculus away from using non-state actors as foreign policy tools.
- **Compartmentalized Engagement on Ecology:** We must decouple non-traditional security threats from political disputes. Setting up joint technical task forces to address glacial melting, water conservation, and air quality (smog) is essential for mutual survival.
- **Renegotiating the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT):** The 1960 treaty must be updated. Climate change, shifting demographics, and agricultural needs require a modernized framework that maximizes water efficiency and penalizes ecological degradation.
- **Strengthening the Backchannel:** Public diplomacy often falls victim to domestic jingoism. Quiet, institutionalized backchannels—between intelligence agencies and military leadership—are vital for crisis management and preventing miscalculations, as seen during the 2021 ceasefire pact.
- **Crushing the Narco-Terror Nexus:** Collaborative intelligence sharing (even if tacit) to curb the flow of drugs across the border. This is an area where tactical cooperation can yield immediate results, starving terror networks of funding while saving the youth on both sides of the border.

- **Previous Years' Questions (UPSC & APSC)**

- **UPSC Prelims**

- 2021: Question regarding the Indus Water System and its tributaries (Geography linkage).
- 2019: Question on the geographical location of Siachen Glacier (Strategic mapping).
- 2015: Question regarding the establishment and mandate of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) (Linked to terror financing).
- 2010: Question on the details and signatories of the Indus Waters Treaty.

- **UPSC Mains**

- 2020 (GS-2): "Terrorist activities and mutual distrust have clouded India-Pakistan relations. To what extent the use of soft power like sports and cultural exchanges could help generate goodwill between the two countries? Discuss with suitable examples."
- 2019 (GS-3): "The banning of 'Jamaat-e-Islami' in Jammu and Kashmir brought into focus the role of over-ground workers (OGWs) in assisting terrorist organizations. Examine the role played by OGWs in assisting terrorist organizations in insurgency affected areas. Discuss measures to neutralize the influence of OGWs." (Directly links to state-sponsored proxies).
- 2016 (GS-2): "'The Indus Water Treaty is surviving but just.' Elaborate the statement in the light of the present bilateral relations between India and Pakistan."

Private players are making their presence felt in health and education. What are the implications?

More education entrepreneurs needed

[illegible]

Five of these strategies, public housing, universal public employment, de facto social insurance, public housing, and public day care, have failed to meet rising demand. Public housing, the most successful strategy, has been able to maintain a growing level of service in the face of rising costs, but its growth has been slow and uneven. Public day care, which has been the most successful in meeting rising demand, has been able to maintain a growing level of service in the face of rising costs, but its growth has been slow and uneven.

Private equity funds carry a fiduciary duty to the investors. The company is not a partner within a limited partnership. The way the law is constructed is to protect the investors. There is no direct involvement in the company. There is no direct involvement in the company.

financial performance. Fungible brands typically rank highest on margins, innovation, average customer acquisition and retention, and growth. This is not the surprise it once was. Fungible brands in some industries have been able to grow as well as many companies with high brand strength and low margins.

the 1990s. The researchers found that the ability to focus on the stimulus and ignore the background was significantly affected by the amount of time spent in the laboratory. The researchers found that the ability to focus on the stimulus and ignore the background was significantly affected by the amount of time spent in the laboratory.

The only regular template to the lower the sedimentation rate is available to control.

Recent health care cost containment efforts have been concentrated at the point of purchase, for example, central purchasing and therapy management information systems. They represent an attempt to affect competition and have little or no effect on cost. A more fundamental approach to cost containment is to change the way health care is delivered. This approach is the focus of the Institute of Medicine's report, *Health Care at the Crossroads*.¹ The report calls for a fundamental restructuring of the health care system, one that would be organized around the patient and the family rather than the hospital. The report also calls for a new approach to financing health care, one that would be based on the value of the care provided rather than on the volume of services provided. The report also calls for a new approach to the regulation of health care, one that would be based on the quality of care provided rather than on the volume of services provided.

[illegible]

Other countries use administrative legal instruments to ban illegal activities, but the regulatory institutions, like the U.S. Coast Guard, are not as equipped to handle what is called "grey" or "grey" activities. In the U.S., a lot of what is called "grey" or "grey" activities are not covered by the regulatory institutions, and many of them are not covered by the regulatory institutions. In the U.S., a lot of what is called "grey" or "grey" activities are not covered by the regulatory institutions, and many of them are not covered by the regulatory institutions.

Spencer claims that even small but "high" performance will be compared with others. "One thought here is that their report will, in essence, rank them on just a couple of numbers and average. People's own sense of achievement is probably compared against the other team's work."

Watershed planning has only a small time slice of 17 years. It will follow it through that time slice as it becomes increasingly significant. The idea of the current format for regional planning is to have a common framework for regional planning, and to have a common framework for regional planning, and to have a common framework for regional planning.

The challenge before the government is not to encourage investment that is unprofitable, but to ensure that government-owned services remain at the centre of the health and education systems. Government should not encourage large companies to take health care services to all sections of the community.

The author is a former health secretary and former chief executive of NHS.

[illegible]

Support From the environmental movement, the business community, the United Nations and the United States Congress, the program has been a success story. It has been hailed as the most significant effort to date to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, the United Nations' 2000-2015 agenda for global development. The program has been hailed as the most significant effort to date to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, the United Nations' 2000-2015 agenda for global development. The program has been hailed as the most significant effort to date to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, the United Nations' 2000-2015 agenda for global development.

[illegible]

Looking for a completely representative picture from abroad is a daunting task, given the wide differences in, and cultural gaps between, markets. It may be the case that through competition, internationalization, and application of international marketing strategy independent and diverse sites will differentiate strategies and resources will be used in the international markets that will greatly enhance the effectiveness of the model.

His strategy is to offer a wide range of options, generally based on meeting needs, and to negotiate. There is nothing as a friend or a business partner.

Intensive, group-therapy-building work and simplified use of tools in our development is now being taken on by the students at the school where a community committee will pay more per year for food than in Chicago. It's encouraging that community work around training principals, teachers, or administrators to become more active participants in the development of community building is now being taken on by the students at the school where a community committee will pay more per year for food than in Chicago.

They're not as common as other types of worms, but you can find them in your garden. They're not as common as other types of worms, but you can find them in your garden.

[illegible]

Summary: We examined the current data gaps that threaten our capacity to make progress in business and environmental education over the last three decades in light of our globally non-profit, non-governmental and non-profit organizations as well as the business, non-profit, and government sectors. The lack of broad-based policy and educational leadership in business and the environment is a major barrier to progress. We need to develop a more effective leadership structure to address these issues and move it forward more rapidly. We need to build a more effective leadership structure to address these issues and move it forward more rapidly. We need to build a more effective leadership structure to address these issues and move it forward more rapidly.

Edwards' ideas require a radical and paradigmatic reorganization of society and human existence as we understand it now. The difficulty of this made it difficult to spread quickly and extensively. However, he did have a few strong supporters, most notably the French philosopher, Henri de Saint-Simon. The latter had a more social and less esoteric philosophy for many individuals and ideas and thus in England of the 19th century and following, there became a movement. The name of Fourierism, that had a social structure, was a simple word for happiness (Fourierism).

*The authors thank the Institute of Government Services
for a sabbatical of Mark A. Miller.*

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Goodhart's Law:** The principle that "when a measure becomes a target, it ceases to be a good measure."
 - *Context:* If the government measures educational success solely by building infrastructure (the hardware), it completely misses the actual goal of learning outcomes (the software).
- **Hayek's Discovery Principle:** The economic theory that quality and innovation cannot be mandated by a central authority; they must be discovered organically through market competition, trial, and error.
- **Information Asymmetry:** A market failure where one party has more information than the other.
 - *Context:* Patients cannot judge the quality of a hospital (infection rates, surgical success) before getting treated, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation.
- **Fiduciary Duty:** The strict legal and ethical obligation of Private Equity (PE) funds to maximize financial returns for their investors. They are structurally designed to seek profit, not to act as public charities.
- **Adverse Selection:** A situation where market rules inadvertently attract the worst candidates.
 - *Context:* Overly complex regulations and heavy capital requirements in education push out genuine teachers and attract politicians or "land sharks" who have the capital and clout to game the system.
- **EBITDA (Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation, and Amortization):** A standard metric used by corporate boards to measure operational profitability.

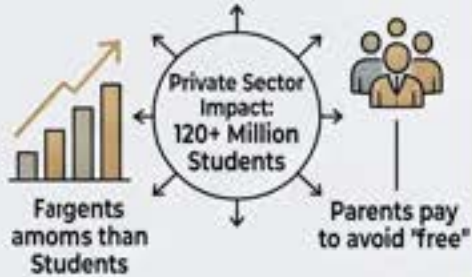
- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- When we strip away the emotional rhetoric surrounding health and education, a few stark, pragmatic realities emerge:
- **The Supply Bottleneck is the Real Enemy:** Debating whether schools and hospitals should be public or private is a luxury. The sheer volume of demand in India means we need an explosion of supply. Quality will only emerge when supply outstrips demand, forcing institutions to compete for citizens.
- **Regulatory Hostility Breeds Hypocrisy:** Mandating that schools operate strictly as "not-for-profit" trusts forces a dishonest system. It prevents transparent financial investors from entering the space, leaving it to those willing to extract profits through the backdoor (e.g., via allied management companies).
- **Capital is Necessary, but Unregulated Capital is Predatory:** Private equity is crucial for scaling up healthcare infrastructure for an aging population. However, because investors prioritize financial metrics (EBITDA), hospitals can resort to aggressive billing.
- **The Missing Outcome Regulator:** The solution is not price controls, which stifle supply. The solution is forcing radical transparency. If hospitals are mandated by law to publish their mortality rates, infection rates, and readmission data, market discipline will naturally punish poor performers.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**
- **Pre-Independence (Philanthropy & Missions):** Healthcare and education were largely driven by community philanthropy, religious missions, and local trusts. The colonial state's footprint in mass welfare was minimal.
- **Post-Independence (1947–1990 - The Welfare State):** The newly independent Indian state took the mantle of providing public goods. We saw the rise of government schools, universities, and Primary Health Centres (PHCs). The private sector existed but was heavily curtailed by socialist policies and the license raj.
- **Post-Liberalisation (1991–2010 - The Corporate Entry):** As state capacity faltered under population pressure, the doors were opened. This era saw the rise of corporate hospital chains and private engineering/medical colleges. However, the sector remained legally tangled in "welfare" definitions, leading to massive fragmentation.
- **The Current Era (2010 onwards - The Private Equity Boom):** We are now in the era of institutional capital. Massive foreign and domestic Private Equity funds are pouring into health, diagnostics, and EdTech. The debate has shifted from *whether* private capital should exist, to *how* the state should regulate its relentless drive for profit.

1. SUPPLY

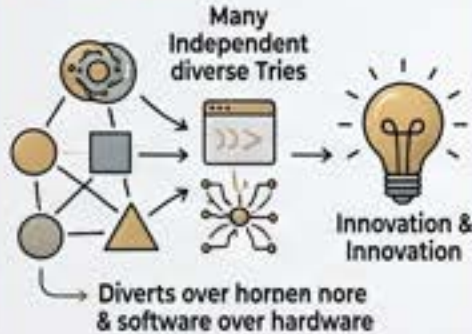
- PRAGMATIC ACCEPTANCE: MOST EXPENSIVE SCHOOL IS NO SCHOOL.
- MASSIVE INCREASE TO DISCOVER 'GOOD SCHOOLS'.
- COST, QUALITY, QUANTITY RECONCILIATION.



2. BIODIVERSITY



- GOODHART'S LAW: METRIC BECOMES GOAL (BUILDINGS VS BUILDING SCHOOLS).
- HAYEK'S DISCOVERY PRINCIPLE: QUALITY THROUGH COMPETITION, EXPERIMENTATION, REPLICATION.



3. MERITOCRACY



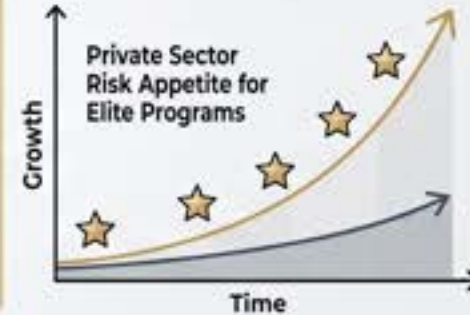
- CURRENT REGS FAVOUR POLITICIANS & LAND SHARKS.
- HOSTILE TO TRANSPARENT EQUITY RAISING.
- FIRST-GEN ENTREPRENEURS NEED FINANCIAL INVESTORS (VC).



4. EXCELLENCE



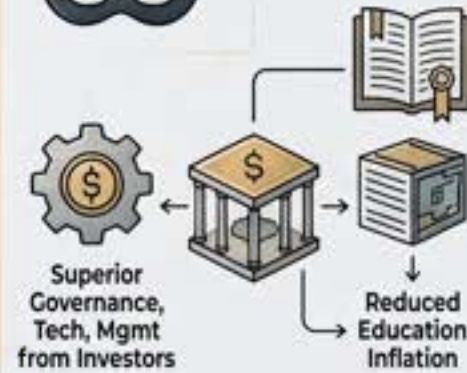
- AI ACCELERATING: POWER LAW SHIFT (80/20 BECOMES 90/10).
- GIFTED-STUDENT PROGRAMS (WEIGH STUDENTS) VS MASS EDUCATION (COUNT STUDENTS).



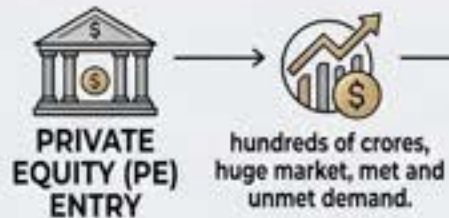
5. HONESTY



- LEGAL BUT NOT SPIRITUALLY NON-PROFIT (MASS MISLABELING).
- Lack of trust Around Price vs Cost motivations Ineffective Controls.



PRIVATE EQUITY (PE) IN HEALTHCARE & ED: THE BALANCING ACT



MANDATE RADICAL TRANSPARENCY: OUTCOME DATA AS SOLUTION.



MARKET DISCIPLINE WORKS WITH COMPARATIVE DATA.



- **Logical and Philosophical Base**
- **Pragmatism vs. Utopianism (The Second-Best Reality):** In a perfect world, the state provides flawless, free education and healthcare. In reality, a flawed private school is infinitely better than no school at all. Policymaking must be rooted in "idealism without illusions"—accepting human nature and market dynamics.
- **The Excellence vs. Equality Trade-off:** Mass democratic programs are designed for equality—lifting the bottom quartile. However, global leadership requires excellence, which is driven by a power law (where a small percentage of highly gifted individuals drive massive innovation). Private institutions are structurally better suited to take the risks required to cultivate this elite excellence.
- **Accountability through Transparency:** The philosophical belief here is that consumers (patients/parents) are smart. If you solve the information asymmetry by giving them clear, standardized data, they will make choices that regulate the market better than any government bureaucrat could.

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- **Multidimensional Analysis**
 - **Social:** The reliance on private capital risks deepening the socio-economic divide. The affluent access world-class corporate hospitals and international schools, while the poor are left with crumbling public infrastructure. Yet, ironically, even the poor are abandoning free public schools to pay for low-cost private ones, signaling a massive loss of trust in state machinery.
 - **Political:** The "license raj" in setting up schools and colleges has created a powerful nexus. Because starting an institution requires massive land and regulatory clearances, it has become a favored enterprise for local politicians, leading to regulatory capture.
 - **Legal:** The legal fiction of "not-for-profit" education creates a shadow economy. It confounds regulators, denies the state legitimate tax revenues on educational surpluses, and discourages clean, compliant corporate governance.
 - **Ethical:** This is the core friction—the fiduciary duty to maximize investor returns directly clashes with the ethical mandate of healing the sick or educating a child. Turning a patient into a "revenue-generating unit" crosses fundamental moral lines if left unchecked.
 - **International:** We can look outward for solutions. The UK's Care Quality Commission inspects and publicly rates both public and private hospitals. The US mandates public reporting of hospital-acquired infections. India's lack of such unified, outcome-based regulation makes it an outlier.
 - **Economic:** Private equity brings immense economic benefits: massive employment generation, tech integration, supply chain efficiency, and scaling. But without an independent regulator, it also drives medical inflation and catastrophic out-of-pocket expenditure for citizens.

Linkages with NCERTs

Class & Subject	Chapter Name	Why it Links to this Issue
Class 11 Economics	<i>Human Capital Formation in India</i>	Details how investments in education and health directly translate to economic growth and productivity.
Class 11 Economics	<i>Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalisation</i>	Provides the historical context of how and why private capital entered sectors previously dominated by the state.
Class 10 Political Science	<i>Outcomes of Democracy</i>	Discusses the accountability of a democratic government in providing basic public goods and reducing inequality.
Class 12 Sociology	<i>Social Inequality and Exclusion</i>	Highlights how the privatization of essential services can exacerbate historical inequalities in access.

Linkages with UPSC CSE Syllabus

Paper	Specific Syllabus Topic	Application
GS Paper 2	Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.	The direct impact of private equity and corporate structures on the affordability and accessibility of health and education.
GS Paper 2	Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies.	The urgent need for an independent, statutory regulator for the healthcare sector (similar to TRAI or SEBI).
GS Paper 3	Investment models.	Analyzing Private Equity (PE) as a critical investment model for infrastructure (hospitals, universities).
GS Paper 4	Corporate Governance; Ethical issues in international relations and funding.	The ethical dilemma of balancing a fiduciary duty to investors with the moral duty to patients and students.

- **Way Forward**

- **Establish a Unified, Statutory Regulator:** Move away from fragmented laws (like the Clinical Establishments Act and pollution norms) and create an independent body for healthcare and education with teeth—similar to the RBI for banking.

- **Mandate Radical Transparency:** Require all hospitals to upload standardized outcome data (surgical success rates, infection rates, average billing for common procedures) to a public, government-backed portal. Let the market discipline poor performers.

- **Legalize For-Profit Education:** End the legal hypocrisy. Allow schools to operate as legitimate, tax-paying, for-profit corporate entities. This will attract clean private equity, enforce strict corporate governance, and reduce the influence of local mafias.

- **Shift from Hardware to Software:** Regulatory bodies must stop obsessing over land size and building norms. Audits should focus entirely on learning outcomes, teacher quality, and pedagogical innovation.

- **Previous Years' UPSC and APSC Questions**

- **Prelims :**

- *UPSC 2018:* Questions regarding the Right to Education (RTE) Act and the mandate for private schools to reserve seats for economically weaker sections.

- *UPSC 2015/2019:* Identification of indicators used by NITI Aayog for the Health Index and School Education Quality Index (SEQI).

- *UPSC 2012:* Questions focusing on the composition and objective of the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) vs. urban/private healthcare divides.

- **Mains (Analytical Themes):**

- *UPSC GS 2 (2020):* "In order to enhance the prospects of social development, sound and adequate health care policies are needed particularly in the fields of geriatric and maternal health care. Discuss." (*Link: The role of private capital in filling the geriatric care gap*).

- *UPSC GS 2 (2015):* "The quality of higher education in India requires major improvements to make it internationally competitive. Do you think that the entry of foreign educational institutions would help improve the quality of technical and higher education in the country? Discuss." (*Link: Foreign PE and institutions bringing excellence*).

- *UPSC GS 2 (2022):* "Besides the welfare schemes, India needs deft management of inflation and unemployment to serve the poor and the underprivileged sections of the society. Discuss." (*Link: How medical and educational inflation, driven by unregulated private sectors, harms the underprivileged*).

- *APSC GS 2 (Recent Trends):* Evaluate the performance of public health infrastructure in Assam in the context of rising private healthcare dependency.





Old wine, but this time it promises potency

India's new draft health policy has a stronger implementation pathway but needs to draw lessons on why earlier policies didn't work

India's draft National Health Research Policy, which was released for public comment in July, has notable strengths.

First, the policy draft directly confronts administrative barriers, many of which lie within the department of health research's authority to address. Per the new policy, funding agencies would be required to publish turnaround times from application to project closure. Unspent funds could be carried across financial years. Single ethics review would be permitted for multi-site studies so that the same protocol need not be approved multiple times.

Even if the policy achieved only these reforms and nothing else, it would represent substantial progress over the current situation.

Second, the draft proposes a fundamental rethink of how research should be evaluated. The proposed Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) Impact of Research and Innovation Scale extends assessment beyond publications and citations to include clinical translation, policy influence, indige-

nous technology, mentorship and community benefit. The current heavy emphasis on publication counts has tended to favour smaller, often descriptive studies over research with greater translational potential.

Third, the draft proposes treating public-funded research infrastructure as national assets accessible to researchers beyond the institutions that house them. This welcome step has been a major driver of research in other settings, but how this will be implemented in India remains to be seen. Organisations such as the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Platforms (C-CAMP) in Bengaluru already provide a successful model for shared scientific infrastructure.

Fourth, the draft recognises that data are now a core component of research infrastructure. It proposes strengthening disease registries and biobanks while promoting secure sharing of health data across institutions. If implemented well, these investments could lower the cost and increase the quality of health research long after individual projects have ended.

Fifth, the policy seeks to broaden where research is conducted. Rather than concentrating capacity within a handful of premier institutes, it envisages medical colleges and district hospitals becoming active participants in multicentre research networks.

Sixth, the draft presents health research as an opportunity to establish India as a leader in clinical research and

affordable medical technologies relevant to low- and middle-income countries. That ambition is well-aligned with India's growing scientific capabilities but will require policies and frameworks that enable data access.

Finally, the policy addresses India's research workforce. India produces only about 1.5 medical science PhDs per million people each year, remarkably low for a country aspiring to scientific leadership. The draft proposes expanding MD-PhD programmes, creating clinician-scientist career pathways, establishing dedicated research posts within medical colleges, and supporting women and researchers returning from career breaks or from overseas. These are sensible reforms, but tripling PhD density by 2037 is unlikely without a corresponding increase in funding.

These are worthwhile reforms. The question is whether this policy can achieve what its predecessors, the earlier National Health Research Policy, first released in 2007 and revised in 2011, could not.

Once the new language around One Health, Artificial Intelligence and digital infrastructure is set aside, much of the underlying diagnosis is familiar. Earlier policy documents also pointed out that research is scattered across ministries, capacity is locked in a few institutions, medical colleges barely publish, and evidence rarely reaches policy. The proposed solutions have changed little. The 2007 policy also called for faster release of research



India produces only about 1.5 medical science PhDs per million people each year, very low for a country aspiring to scientific leadership. HT ARCHIVE

grants and reduced bureaucracy. The ideas around mission-mode projects, a standing fund for outbreaks, and research made compulsory in medical colleges have all been proposed before.

Even on funding, the idea of allocating 2% of the public health budget to research has been advocated. Yet, nearly two decades later, total health research investment is only 0.024% of GDP. The new policy proposes increasing this to 0.072% by 2037 and 0.15% by 2047. A six-fold increase over two decades sounds ambitious, but even if this is achieved, India's investment would still be modest by international standards and unlikely to support the research ecosystem expected of the world's most populous nation.

The current draft promises that public investment "shall rise progressively and predictably", yet it also acknowledges that the department of health research cannot direct the budgets of the department of biotechnology, the department of science and technology, CSIR or the Anusandhan National Research Foundation, all of which finance health research. The policy sets national spending targets without identifying the institutional mechanism that would ensure they are achieved.

To bridge the funding gap, the policy proposes to rely on private and philanthropic funding. The instruments — advance market commitments, chal-

lenge prizes, CSR funding and public-private partnerships — are sensible, but none is new. The draft would be stronger if it explained why mechanisms that have yielded limited results in the past are likely to succeed now.

The current draft is stronger on implementation steps, but is that enough to make a difference this time?

Publishing turnaround times for research proposals is a welcome step, but accountability should extend much further. A possible remedy would be to constitute an external body to hold the policy to account. Not the usual assembly of institutional heads, but a mix of scientists, public voices, and working researchers drawn from the bench rather than institutional leadership only, charged with publishing an annual assessment of how far implementation has matched intent. If the department of health research is willing to be judged each year against what it has promised, there is reason to hope this policy can revive India's health research. Without that seriousness of accountability, and a firm financial commitment from the finance ministry, it will join the long line of government policy documents that were filed and forgotten.

Ramanan Laxminarayan is president, One Health Trust. The views expressed are personal

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Translational Research (Clinical Translation):** This is the crucial bridge between the laboratory and the patient. It refers to taking scientific discoveries made "at the bench" (in the lab) and translating them into clinical interventions "at the bedside" (treatments, drugs, or policies).

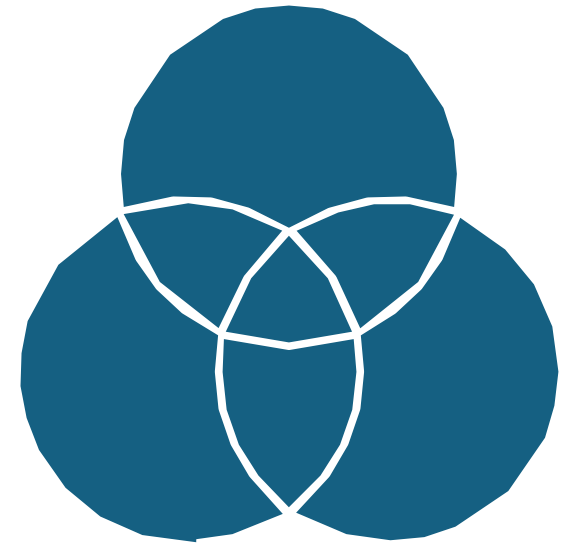
- *Example:* Identifying a viral protein in a lab and developing a rapid diagnostic kit for use in rural clinics.

- **Single Ethics Review:** In multicentre medical studies, protocols traditionally require approval from the ethics committee of every single participating hospital, causing massive delays. A single ethics review allows one central committee to approve the study for all sites, drastically cutting red tape.

- **Biobanks & Disease Registries:** Biobanks are secure repositories that store biological samples (like blood, tissue, or DNA) for future research. Disease registries are databases tracking the incidence and outcomes of specific diseases in a population. Together, they form the "data infrastructure" of modern epidemiology.

- **Advance Market Commitments (AMCs):** This is an economic tool used to spur research. A government or philanthropic body promises to buy a certain quantity of a medical product (like a vaccine) at a predetermined price once it is successfully developed, thereby reducing the financial risk for private researchers.

- **One Health:** A collaborative, multisectoral approach recognizing that human health is deeply interconnected with animal health and the shared environment. It is critical for tackling zoonotic diseases like COVID-19 or Nipah virus.



- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**
- When we evaluate the evolution of health research frameworks, several core themes emerge. The current policy discourse reflects a conscious shift from merely generating knowledge to ensuring that knowledge actively serves society.
- **Dismantling Administrative Bottlenecks:** A major roadblock in scientific advancement is bureaucratic inertia. Reforming this involves publishing strict turnaround times for project approvals, allowing unspent research funds to carry over into the next financial year, and streamlining ethics reviews. These are functional steps to keep researchers in the lab rather than buried in paperwork.
- **Redefining Scientific Merit:** There is a strong push to move away from the traditional "publish or perish" culture. Future assessments of scientific impact will likely look beyond mere publication counts and citations. The focus is shifting toward indigenous technology development, actual clinical translation, mentorship of young scientists, and tangible benefits to the community.
- **Democratizing Research Infrastructure:** Historically, high-end research equipment has been locked within elite, premier institutes. The new paradigm treats public-funded laboratories as national assets, allowing researchers from smaller colleges or district hospitals to access shared scientific infrastructure, much like the successful C-CAMP model in Bengaluru.
- **The Funding Chasm:** The most significant systemic vulnerability is the massive gap between ambition and financial reality. While there is a vision to scale health research funding progressively to 0.15% of GDP by 2047, current investments hover at a mere 0.024%. Without binding mechanisms to ensure varied government departments and the private sector actually release these funds, targets remain on paper.
- **The Need for Institutional Accountability:** Policy documents often recycle well-intentioned ideas—such as mission-mode projects or compulsory research in medical colleges. The critical missing link is an independent accountability mechanism. Evaluating policy implementation requires a mix of grassroots bench scientists and public voices, rather than relying solely on the institutional leadership grading their own homework.



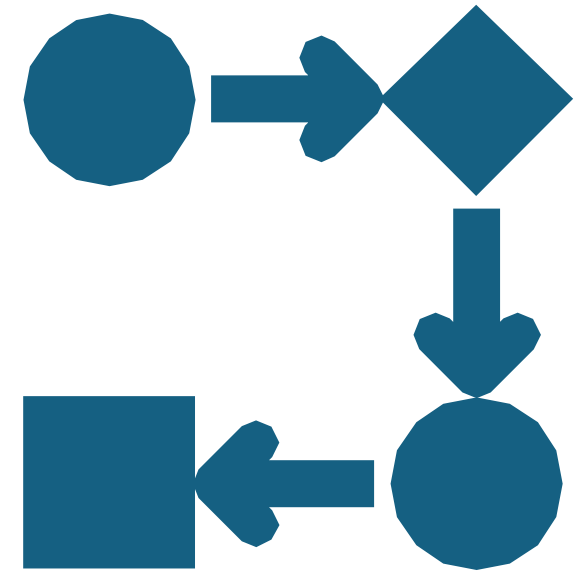
- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- **Pre-Independence Foundations:** The journey began with the establishment of the Indian Research Fund Association (IRFA) in 1911, which was later rebranded as the ICMR in 1949. The Bhore Committee (1946) laid the earliest groundwork, emphasizing the need to integrate preventive and curative healthcare through robust research.

- **Post-Independence Institution Building:** The 1950s and 60s saw the establishment of premier institutes like AIIMS, designed to be temples of medical education and research. However, research remained heavily centralized, focusing primarily on communicable diseases like TB and Malaria.

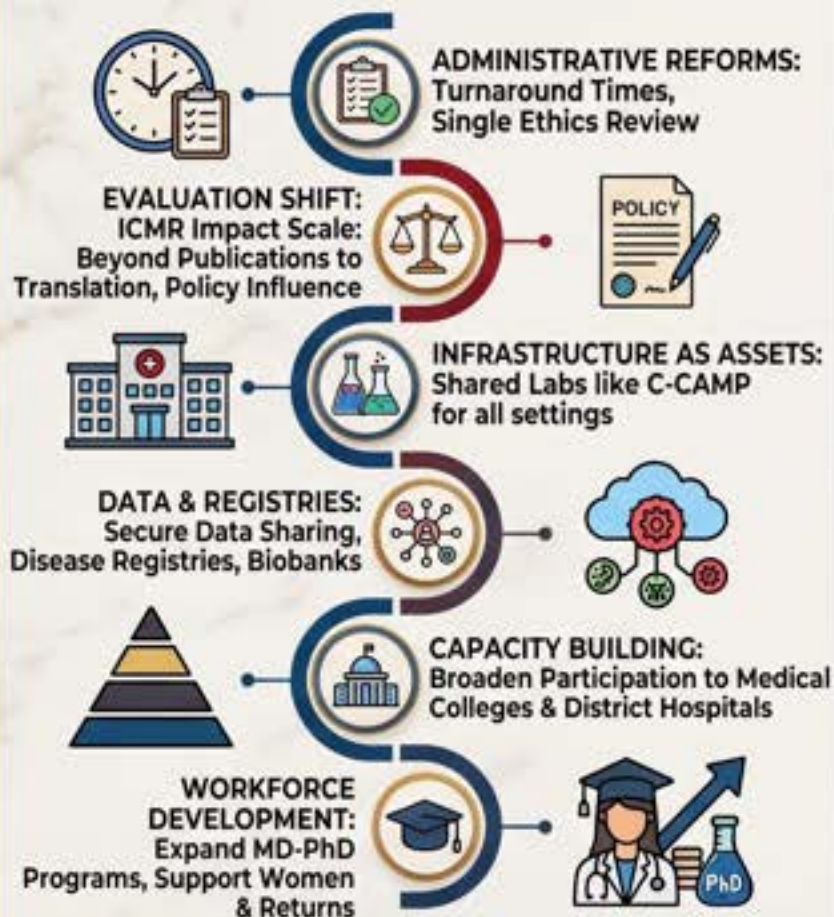
- **The 2007 and 2011 Policy Era:** Earlier iterations of National Health Research Policies recognized the fragmented nature of funding and the lack of research in peripheral medical colleges. While they correctly diagnosed the issues—proposing faster grant releases and reduced bureaucracy—they severely lacked financial teeth and implementation mechanisms.

- **The Modern Shift (Post-COVID-19):** The pandemic exposed the critical need for self-reliance (*Atmanirbhar Bharat*). Consequently, the present focus has aggressively pivoted toward digital health infrastructure, Artificial Intelligence, indigenous vaccine development, and securing raw data as a strategic national asset.



DRAFT NATIONAL HEALTH RESEARCH POLICY: A VISION FOR INDIA'S HEALTH R&D (UPSC/APSC ANALYSIS)

CORE POLICY REFORMS



THE FUNDING CHASM & MULTI-DIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS

PROGRESSIVE & PREDICTABLE RISE NEEDED

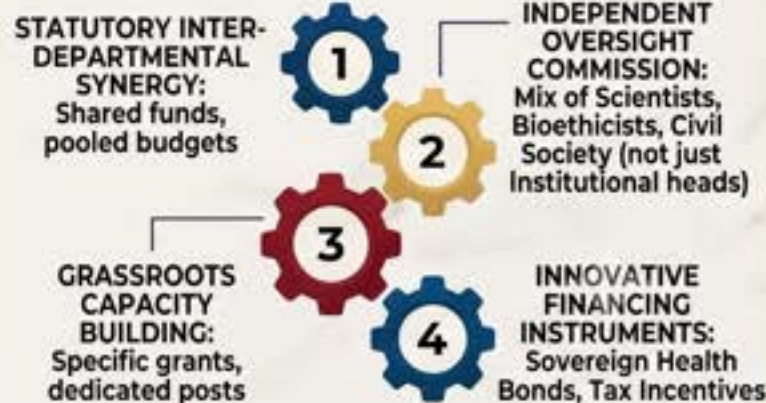


UPSC/APSC SYLLABUS LINKAGES



The syllabus section has been revered and detailed with regional issues, national mortal issues, and critical aritcal analysis of implementation challenges.

WAY FORWARD: FROM VISION TO REALITY



- **Logical and Philosophical Base**

- **Utilitarianism in Science:** The shift toward translational research and community benefit is deeply utilitarian—focusing scientific resources on innovations that generate the greatest good for the greatest number of people, particularly in low-resource settings, rather than on obscure, theoretical studies.

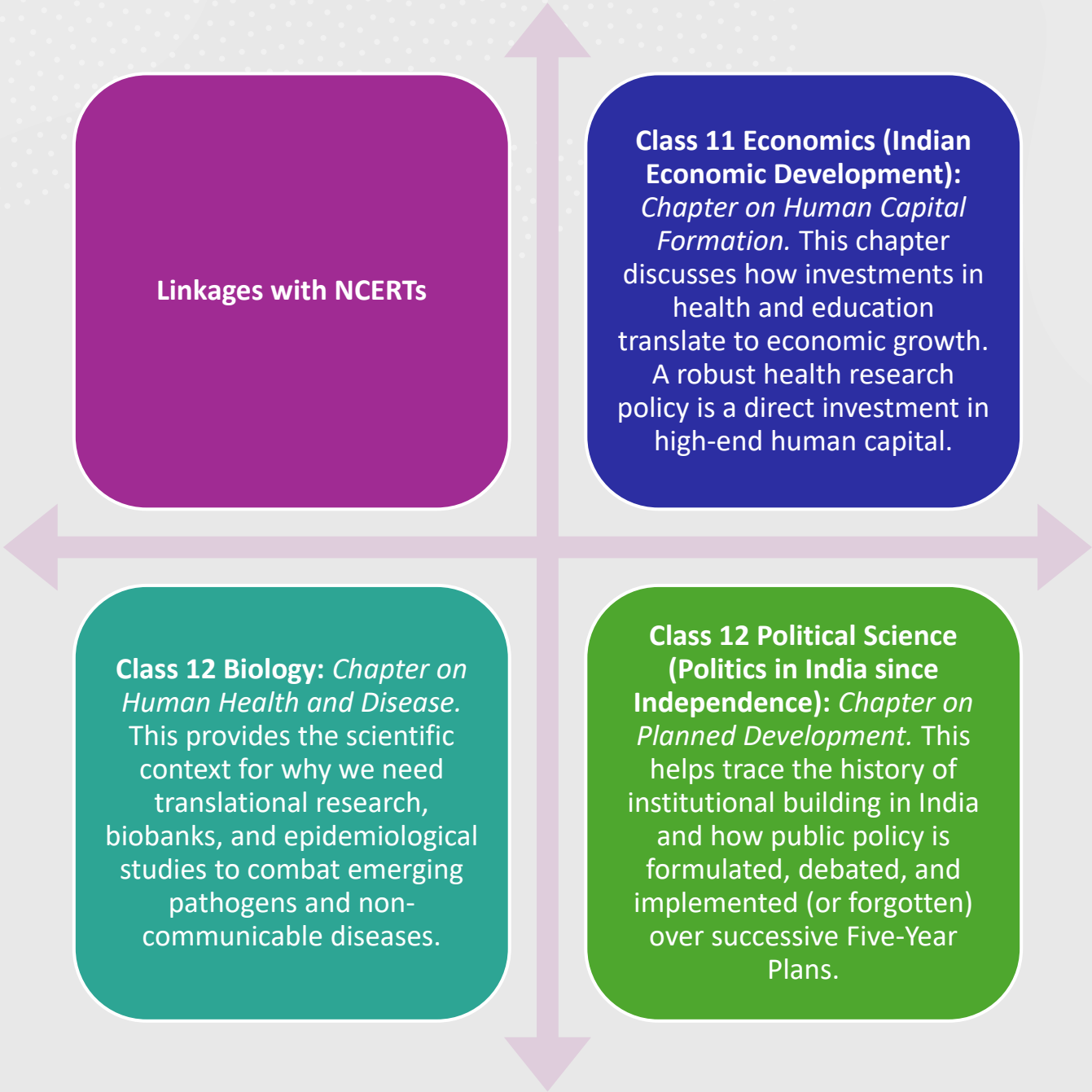
- **Egalitarianism and Distributive Justice:** By expanding research capabilities beyond elite institutes to district hospitals and medical colleges, the framework attempts to distribute scientific capacity geographically and socially. This ensures that research reflects the diverse genetic and socio-economic realities of the entire populace, not just urban centers.

- **Pragmatic Realism vs. Policy Idealism:** There is an ongoing tension between the idealistic goals of becoming a global scientific leader and the pragmatic realities of a developing nation's budget. The discourse acknowledges that grand visions are fundamentally useless without the mundane, pragmatic machinery of accountability, timely funding, and administrative efficiency.



- **Multidimensional Analysis**

- **Social Dimension:** Expanding MD-PhD programs and explicitly supporting women researchers returning from career breaks are vital for creating a socially inclusive scientific workforce. Furthermore, focusing on diseases endemic to local populations ensures that research directly improves public health outcomes.
- **Political Dimension:** The fragmentation of health research across multiple ministries (Department of Health Research, Department of Biotechnology, DST, CSIR) requires massive political will to coordinate. Inter-ministerial synergy is essential to prevent duplication of efforts and ensure seamless funding pipelines.
- **Legal Dimension:** The sharing of health data across institutions and the creation of national disease registries bring up complex legal challenges regarding patient privacy, data protection (under the Digital Personal Data Protection Act), and intellectual property rights for indigenous technologies.
- **Ethical Dimension:** The streamlining of ethics reviews must be carefully balanced to ensure patient safety is never compromised for the sake of speed. Additionally, there is an ethical imperative to focus on affordable medical technologies for Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs), countering the global trend of prioritizing highly profitable "first-world" diseases.
- **International Dimension:** By aiming to be a hub for affordable clinical research, India is positioning itself as a leader of the Global South. This aligns perfectly with India's diplomatic soft power, as seen during the 'Vaccine Maitri' initiative.
- **Economic Dimension:** Raising R&D expenditure is an economic necessity. Relying heavily on CSR, public-private partnerships, and challenge prizes acknowledges the limitations of the public exchequer, but requires robust economic incentives to make health R&D attractive to the private sector.



Linkages with NCERTs

Class 11 Economics (Indian Economic Development): *Chapter on Human Capital Formation.* This chapter discusses how investments in health and education translate to economic growth. A robust health research policy is a direct investment in high-end human capital.

Class 12 Biology: *Chapter on Human Health and Disease.* This provides the scientific context for why we need translational research, biobanks, and epidemiological studies to combat emerging pathogens and non-communicable diseases.

Class 12 Political Science (Politics in India since Independence): *Chapter on Planned Development.* This helps trace the history of institutional building in India and how public policy is formulated, debated, and implemented (or forgotten) over successive Five-Year Plans.

Linkages with UPSC CSE Syllabus

GS Paper II - Governance & Social Justice:

- *Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.* (Direct linkage: The structure and funding of the health research ecosystem).
- *Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors.* (Linkage: Analyzing the effectiveness and implementation gaps of policy documents).

GS Paper III - Science & Technology and Economic Development:

- *Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.* (Linkage: Translational research, clinical trials, and indigenous medical tech).
- *Indigenization of technology and developing new technology.* (Linkage: C-CAMP models, building homegrown bio-infrastructure).
- *Investment models.* (Linkage: Public-private partnerships and AMCs in R&D funding).

GS Paper IV - Ethics:

- *Ethical issues in international relations and funding; Corporate Governance.* (Linkage: The ethics of medical trials, data sharing, and CSR funding in research).

Essay Paper: Highly relevant for topics touching upon India's demographic dividend, the knowledge economy, self-reliance (Atmanirbhar Bharat), or the gap between policy formulation and execution.



- **Way Forward**

- **Statutory Backing for Inter-Departmental Synergy:** To solve the funding bottleneck, there should be a statutory mechanism that binds the various scientific departments (DBT, DST, CSIR, DHR) to pool a dedicated percentage of their budgets specifically for mission-mode health R&D.
- **Independent Oversight Architecture:** Move away from self-regulation. Establish an independent 'National Health Research Commission' comprising working bench scientists, bioethicists, and civil society members to publish annual, transparent audits on policy implementation and fund utilization.
- **Grassroots Capacity Building:** Mandating research in medical colleges is futile without infrastructure. The government must introduce specific grants to upgrade laboratories at the district hospital level, accompanied by dedicated non-clinical research posts to take the burden off practicing doctors.
- **Innovative Financing Instruments:** Beyond traditional CSR, India should explore Sovereign Health Bonds and tax incentives for venture capitalists investing in indigenous medical hardware and biotech startups, creating a sustainable financial ecosystem independent of annual budgetary constraints.



- **Prelims:**

- *UPSC 2020*: Question regarding the public health spending as a percentage of GDP and the National Health Policy targets.
- *UPSC 2017*: Question on the role of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and its functioning.
- *UPSC 2015*: Question on Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) and patenting in the pharmaceutical sector in India (linked to indigenous tech).
- *APSC 2022*: Questions regarding digital health initiatives and flagship health schemes of the central/state government.

- **Mains:**

- *UPSC GS2 (2022)*: "Besides being a moral imperative of a Welfare State, primary health structure is a necessary precondition for sustainable development." Analyze.
- *UPSC GS3 (2020)*: COVID-19 pandemic has caused unprecedented devastation worldwide. However, technological advancements are being availed readily to win over the crisis. Give an account of how technology was sought to aid the management of the pandemic.
- *UPSC GS2 (2019)*: "Appropriate local community-level healthcare intervention is a prerequisite to achieve 'Health for All' in India." Explain.
- *UPSC GS3 (2017)*: India's traditional knowledge in medicine is a great asset. How can we protect it while also promoting modern scientific research?
- *APSC GS2 (2023)*: Discuss the structural bottlenecks in the implementation of public health policies in Assam/India and suggest remedial measures.

DIVIDER DISGUISED AS A MULTIPLIER

INRA is debating the creation of an independent rocket force (RF) modelled on China's People's Liberation Army Rocket Force and Pakistan's Army Rocket Force Command. Some voices are also pushing for a combined drone, rocket, artillery and missile (DRAM) force.

The proponents point to the prominent role of drones, missiles and rockets in the Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Iran wars as proof that these systems can be decisive. Their importance is indeed undeniable, and we need them in large numbers. The defence ministry is investing significantly in such weapons across the three services. However, the assumption that a separate command structure is superior to integrated employment is flawed.

A dedicated RF would create silos focused on narrow objectives rather than synergistic application. The wiser approach would be to let each service develop capabilities aligned with its concept of operations and then empower theatre commanders to orchestrate effects using all available assets, including drones, rockets and missiles, under a 'joint fire plan' within integrated theatre commands.

Creating an independent RF would undermine the hard-won push for jointness through integrated commands. Theatre commanders must control the tempo of operations without having to negotiate with another headquarters every time deep strikes are required. Placing an RF outside the integrated theatre command structure would introduce friction, duplicate effort and weaken power projection abilities.

Comparisons with the Strategic Forces Command are misplaced. The SFC exists to deter weapons of mass destruction and manage escalation; it is an organ of last resort. An RF would be a weapon of first resort and operate on an entirely different paradigm and logic.

China's PLARF is a distinct service branch reporting directly to the Central Military Commission, in charge of both conventional as well as strategic weapons. Within that construct, operational control of conventional assets is exercised through theatre commands, which operate under a dual-military-political leadership in which party committees and political commissars ensure loyalty to the Chinese Communist Party. Essentially, in China, the party commands the gun. Pakistan's ARFC is an army-specific command reporting to the army chief. Neither model aligns with India's democratic civil-military relations or its current drive towards integration.

GROUP CAPT
AJAY AHLAWAT (RETD)



Indian Air Force veteran

A practical alternative is to create a joint staff position of joint-force-DRAM commander within each theatre, working alongside the joint force air component commander. Together, they could synchronise deep strikes, coordinate fires and intelligence-surveillance efforts, and execute the theatre's war plan without adding an additional layer of command.

The efficiency of drones, missiles and rockets does not require new bureaucratic structures. A centre of excellence, operating under the Integrated Defence Staff, could develop a joint doctrine, standardise tactics and procedures, and continuously study global developments.



A separate rocket force would complicate coordination, foster turf battles, duplicate infrastructure and strain budgets. Comparison with China and Pakistan can be misleading because their command structures are quite different. A better way could be for the services to build domain expertise

Inspiration can be drawn from organisations such as Russia's Rubicon Center of Advanced Unmanned Technologies.

A separate RF might promise quicker kinetic action, but it cannot control the enemy's inevitable response or manage escalation. Theatre-level coordination is better suited to handle the full spectrum of consequences.

Rapid technological change further weakens the case for a new force. In Ukraine, systems such as the Bayraktar TB2 and HIMARS, immensely successful in the beginning, saw their effectiveness decline sharply within months. The reality calls for more agile procurement

processes, not the creation of another headquarters that would still be bound by the existing procurement rules.

Should the government nevertheless decide to raise an independent RF, three fundamental constraints would remain.

Time: Even with strong political backing, the institutionalisation process has taken five years to merely reach the 'being examined' stage. A new RF would likely require 3-7 years for limited operational capability and 10-15 years for full capability. By then, directed-energy weapons, quantum technologies, hypersonics and AI-controlled drone swarms would have rendered much of the original force structure obsolete.

Budget: Significant upfront and recurring expenditure would be needed for the headquarters, training infrastructure, logistics and C4ISR (command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance). With a stretched defence budget, the RF would compete with the services for funds.

The services are unlikely to transfer their existing inventories. For instance, the Navy would resist placing ship-launched BrahMos under a land-based RF commander. The result would be duplication, as already visible in the distribution of Apache helicopters between the army and the air force.

M manpower: The armed forces already face shortages exacerbated by the Agnipathi scheme's high turnover. Creating a new entity would require shedding trained personnel from existing units. The 2008 experiment with tri-service agencies for space, cyber and special operations—which relied on seconded personnel who never materialised—has a lesson. Those organisations have largely become coordination desks under the Integrated Defence Staff.

Thus, a separate RF would complicate coordination, foster turf battles, duplicate infrastructure, strain budgets and slow decision-making—the very problems military reforms seek to eliminate.

The path to modern warfare lies in deeper integration: services building domain expertise, theatre commanders orchestrating joint fire and a synergy of intelligence driving strategy and adaptation. Fragmentation is not progress; integration is.

(These are personal)



- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Integrated Theatre Commands (ITC):** Instead of the Army, Navy, and Air Force fighting separate wars, an ITC brings assets from all three services under a single three-star general for a specific geographical theatre. *Example:* If a conflict breaks out on the eastern border, the theatre commander controls the fighter jets, the mountain infantry, and naval assets in the Bay of Bengal simultaneously, ensuring a unified response.
- **Rocket Force (RF):** A dedicated, standalone military branch entirely focused on operating conventional and sometimes nuclear missiles, rockets, and drones. China's People's Liberation Army Rocket Force (PLARF) is a prime example of this specialization.
- **DRAM (Drones, Rockets, Artillery, and Missiles):** A modern collective term representing the primary kinetic tools of contactless warfare. These are the systems currently dominating battlefields like Ukraine and the Middle East by striking deep into enemy territory without risking human infantry.
- **Strategic Forces Command (SFC):** India's existing tri-service command responsible for managing and administering the country's tactical and strategic nuclear weapons stockpile. It operates strictly as a deterrent and an instrument of last resort, not for conventional daily warfare.
- **C4ISR:** An umbrella acronym for Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance. This is the "nervous system" of any modern military setup, requiring billions of dollars in infrastructure to function effectively.
- **Jointness:** The philosophy of synergistic application of military power. It means the services do not just cooperate; they are organically fused in planning, procurement, and operations to avoid duplication of effort.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The contemporary strategic debate centers on a critical dilemma: Should a modern military create a highly specialized, independent branch for new technologies (like an independent Rocket Force), or should these modern weapons be integrated into a unified command structure?

- **The Illusion of Standalone Efficiency:** Proponents of an independent Rocket Force argue that specialized tech requires specialized command. However, the counter-argument is that modern warfare cannot be fought in silos. Creating a separate force fundamentally undermines the hard-won progress toward jointness. A theatre commander must have direct control over drones and missiles to orchestrate a "joint fire plan" without having to negotiate with an external Rocket Force headquarters for fire support.

- **Deterrence vs. First Resort Paradigms:** It is a mistake to compare a conventional Rocket Force with the Strategic Forces Command (SFC). The SFC manages nuclear escalation—it is designed to *prevent* a war. A conventional Rocket Force, heavily reliant on drones and tactical missiles, is a weapon of *first resort*. Delegating this to an independent silo removes the holistic battlefield management required to handle the enemy's inevitable retaliation.

- **The Fallacy of Borrowed Models:** Looking at China's PLARF or Pakistan's Army Rocket Force Command (ARFC) offers a skewed perspective. China's model is heavily rooted in Communist Party control, where political commissars oversee military theatres. Pakistan's model is heavily army-centric. Neither structure aligns with India's democratic civil-military relations or its current push for tri-service equality.

- **The Resource and Obsolescence Trap:** Establishing a new headquarters demands immense capital, infrastructure, and manpower—all of which are currently stretched thin. Furthermore, the speed of technological evolution is ruthless. Weapons that dominate today (like certain drone swarms) may be obsolete in five years due to directed energy weapons or AI. Creating a rigid bureaucracy for rapidly changing tech is counterproductive.

- **The Integration Alternative:** Instead of a separate force, a more pragmatic approach involves embedding a Joint-Force DRAM Commander within existing theatre commands. This ensures rapid deep strikes are synchronized with air, land, and sea movements without adding unnecessary layers of bureaucratic red tape.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**
- **Post-Independence Silos (1947–1990s):** Inheriting the British military structure, India's Army, Navy, and Air Force operated almost independently. While this system managed early conflicts, the lack of joint planning occasionally led to suboptimal resource utilization, most notably during the 1962 conflict.
- **The Kargil Catalyst (1999):** The Kargil War was a massive wake-up call. The initial lack of coordination between the Army and the Air Force highlighted critical vulnerabilities. Consequently, the Kargil Review Committee laid the intellectual foundation for modern military jointness.
- **Early Steps toward Integration (2001–2012):** The creation of the Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff (HQ IDS) in 2001 and the Strategic Forces Command (SFC) in 2003 marked India's first serious attempts at tri-service synergy. Later, the Naresh Chandra Task Force (2012) further emphasized the need for a permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee.
- **The Paradigm Shift (2019–Present):** The establishment of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and the Department of Military Affairs (DMA) in 2019 initiated the biggest military reform since independence: Theaterisation.
- **The Contemporary Trigger:** The ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East have visibly demonstrated the devastating power of drones and missiles. This has sparked the current debate—whether to absorb these lessons by creating a specialized Rocket Force or by pushing these assets down to the newly conceptualized Theatre Commands.



COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS: AN INDEPENDENT ROCKET FORCE FOR INDIA?

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CONTEXT & CONCEPT DEBATE

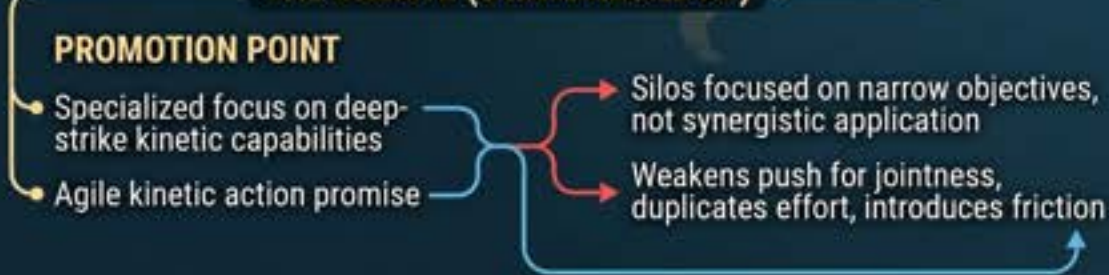
UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT



COMPARATIVE MODELS



THE DEBATE (STANDALONE RF)



THE CHOICE: FRAGMENTATION vs. INTEGRATION

INTEGRATED PATHWAY & IMPLICATIONS

RECOMMENDED APPROACH: INTEGRATED THEATRE COMMANDS



PRAGMATIC ALTERNATIVES



KEY CONSTRAINTS & CHALLENGES (FOR SEPARATE RF)



FRAGMENTATION IS NOT PROGRESS; INTEGRATION IS.

- **Logical and Philosophical Base**

- **The Philosophy of Synergy (Holism vs. Reductionism):** The push for Theatre Commands relies on the Aristotelian logic that "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts." A specialized Rocket Force represents a reductionist view—believing that optimizing one specific capability (missiles) optimizes the war effort. The holistic view argues that combat power comes from the seamless orchestration of air, land, and space, not isolated excellence.

- **Clausewitzian Tempo and Friction:** Carl von Clausewitz famously wrote about the "friction" of war—the countless minor incidents that lower performance. Creating an independent Rocket Force introduces bureaucratic friction. If a Theatre Commander has to request missile strikes from an external entity, the operational tempo drops. Control over the tempo of war is the ultimate strategic advantage.

- **Democratic Civilian Oversight:** The architecture of a military reflects the political philosophy of the state. In authoritarian regimes, parallel military forces often exist to coup-proof the regime or assert party dominance. In a democracy like India, military structure focuses purely on operational efficiency and absolute subordination to the civilian leadership, making integrated, constitutionally clear chains of command non-negotiable.

- **Utilitarian Resource Allocation:** From an economic philosophy standpoint, defense planning operates under absolute scarcity. The utilitarian approach dictates that a stretched defense budget must yield the maximum security dividend. Funding a redundant headquarters for a standalone force fails the test of maximum utility compared to investing directly in the weapons themselves.



- **Multidimensional Analysis**

- **Social & Demographic Dimension:** The armed forces are currently navigating immense manpower transitions, most notably through the Agnipath scheme, which creates high turnover. Raising a new, independent force would require cannibalizing highly trained personnel from the existing services, exacerbating the current shortage of mid-level technical experts in the military.
- **Political Dimension:** Defense reforms are inherently political. Pushing through integrated Theatre Commands requires tremendous political will to overcome inter-service turf wars. Creating a separate Rocket Force could politically derail the theaterisation process by opening up new avenues for inter-service budgetary competition and bureaucratic infighting.
- **Legal & Administrative Dimension:** Under the Allocation of Business Rules and the constitutional framework, the President is the Supreme Commander. Creating a new force requires massive legislative and administrative amendments, redefining the Army, Navy, and Air Force Acts to establish jurisdiction, court-martial procedures, and command authority for this new branch.
- **Ethical Dimension:** The proliferation of Drones and Missiles (DRAM) brings us to the edge of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS). An independent force focused purely on kinetic strikes might develop a doctrine leaning heavily toward algorithmic warfare. Keeping these weapons under Theatre Commanders ensures that human-in-the-loop ethical considerations, proportionality, and collateral damage are assessed holistically.
- **International & Geopolitical Dimension:** Our primary adversaries, China and Pakistan, have centralized their rocket forces. However, mimicking them ignores India's unique geopolitical posture. India requires rapid, flexible responses along complex mountainous borders and vast maritime spaces. Theaterisation sends a strong geopolitical signal of a mature, cohesive, and modernized military apparatus to the international community.
- **Economic Dimension:** Modern C4ISR infrastructure is astronomically expensive. If India creates an independent Rocket Force, it will have to duplicate logistics, training centers, and command nodes. Economically, it is far more prudent to use the existing defense budget to procure indigenous platforms (supporting 'Make in India' and 'Atmanirbhar Bharat') rather than spending capital on new bureaucratic headquarters.

- **Linkages with NCERTs**
- **Class 11 Political Science (Indian Constitution at Work):** *Chapter 4 - The Executive.* This chapter explains the constitutional mandate of the President of India as the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. It provides the foundational understanding of civilian control over the military, which is central to why India cannot adopt models like China's party-controlled military structures.
- **Class 12 Political Science (Contemporary World Politics):** *Chapter 7 - Security in the Contemporary World.* This chapter beautifully distinguishes between traditional and non-traditional notions of security. The debate over drones, missiles, and cyber-warfare directly links to the evolving nature of traditional security threats and the concept of balance of power.
- **Class 11 Geography (India: Physical Environment):** *Chapter 1 - India: Location.* Understanding India's vast and varied topography—from the high altitudes of the Himalayas to the expansive Indian Ocean—explains why decentralized Theatre Commands are geographically more logical than a single, centralized Rocket Force headquarters sitting in New Delhi.

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- **Linkages with UPSC CSE Syllabus**
 - **General Studies Paper 2:**
 - *Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors.* (Analysis of defense reforms, creation of CDS, and theaterisation).
 - *India and its neighborhood- relations.* (Contrasting India's military modernization with the structures of China and Pakistan).
 - **General Studies Paper 3:**
 - *Security challenges and their management in border areas.* (How drones and rockets alter border defense mechanisms).
 - *Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate.* (The core debate of structuring a military force, inter-service integration).
 - *Science and Technology- developments and their applications.* (The rapid evolution of AI, drones, directed-energy weapons, and hypersonics in warfare).
 - **General Studies Paper 4 (Ethics):**
 - *Ethical issues in international relations.* (The morality of remote warfare, automated drone swarms, and the responsibility of escalation).
 - **Essay Paper:**
 - Highly relevant for philosophical or tech-based essays such as: "Technology is a useful servant but a dangerous master in the theatre of war," or "Integration, not fragmentation, is the hallmark of modern governance."



- **Way Forward**

- **Prioritize Theaterisation over Fragmentation:** The immediate focus of the defense ministry must remain steadfast on rolling out the Integrated Theatre Commands. Any distraction, such as raising an independent Rocket Force, will only delay the vital integration process. The mantra should be jointness first.
- **Institute a Joint-Force DRAM Commander:** Instead of an independent entity, create specialized sub-commands within the Theatre Commands. A Joint-Force DRAM Commander working directly alongside the Air and Land Component Commanders will ensure rapid deep-strike capabilities without bureaucratic delays.
- **Establish a Tri-Service Centre of Excellence:** Drones and missiles are evolving daily. The Integrated Defence Staff (IDS) should establish a dedicated Centre of Excellence to study global conflicts, standardize tactics, and develop a unified joint doctrine, much like advanced research centers globally.
- **Reform Defense Procurement:** The real bottleneck is not the lack of a new headquarters, but the slow pace of acquiring modern technology. The government must introduce ultra-agile procurement cycles for software-defined weapons, drones, and AI systems, ensuring the military acquires them before they become obsolete on the global stage.

- **Prelims Questions (UPSC):**

- 2014: What is "Terminal High Altitude Area Defense" (THAAD)? (Highlights UPSC's focus on missile and anti-missile technologies).
- 2018: What is "Terminal High Altitude Area Defense" (THAAD)? (Repeated theme of strategic missile assets).
- 2019: Consider the following statements regarding the Agni-IV missile... (Tests deep knowledge of India's strategic delivery assets).
- 2021: Which one of the following is a reason why astronomical distances are measured in light-years? (While physics-based, it shows an inclination towards advanced technological metrics; similarly, questions on hypersonic speeds or directed energy are highly probable).
- *Potential Future Question formulation:* "With reference to India's defense architecture, consider the following statements regarding 'Integrated Theatre Commands'..."

- **Mains Questions (UPSC):**

- 2021 (GS3): Keeping in view India's internal security, analyze the impact of cross-border cyber attacks. Also, discuss defensive measures against these sophisticated attacks. (Links to modern, contactless warfare capabilities).
- 2020 (GS3): Discuss the significance of the newly created post of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and its role in ensuring jointness among the armed forces. (Directly relates to the theaterisation and integration debate).
- 2019 (GS3): What is the Cyberdome Project? Explain how it can be useful in controlling internet crimes in India. (Highlights the need for specialized tech management).
- 2017 (GS3): The scourge of terrorism is a grave challenge to national security. What solutions do you suggest to curb this growing menace? What are the major sources of terrorist funding? (Modern technologies like drones are the new vectors of cross-border terrorism, requiring integrated responses).
- *APSC Specific (GS3 Equivalent):* Discuss the strategic significance of the Northeast region in India's defense architecture. How can the modernization of military infrastructure along the borders enhance national security? (Links the concept of theaterisation directly to the Eastern Command and border management).



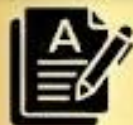
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