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THEATERISATION OF ARMED FORCES

THIS ARTICLE COVERS “DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS”, AND THE TOPIC DETAILS “THEATERISATION OF ARMED FORCES”. THIS TOPIC IS RELEVANT IN THE “SECURITY” SECTION OF THE UPSC CSE EXAM.

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The Armed Forces have finalised the structure for making integrated theatre commands. They are now considering appointing a Vice Chief of Defence Staff and a Deputy Chief of Defence Staff.

WHAT IS THE THEATERISATION OF ARMED FORCES?

The reorganisation of the Indian Armed Forces into integrated theatre commands represents a significant defence reform initiative geared towards enhancing coordination and effectiveness. This involves restructuring the military into unified geographic commands termed theatre commands. Key components of this reform include:

- Establishment of a unified command structure encompassing the Army, Navy, and Air Force under a single commander for specific geographic regions.
- The primary aim is to facilitate seamless planning and coordination, ensuring the most efficient use of resources to achieve defined objectives.
- The theatre commander bears exclusive responsibility for integrated planning and execution of operations within their designated area.
- It fosters synergy among the services, dismantles operational barriers, and facilitates joint planning and execution.
- Several prominent military powers, such as the US, China, the UK, and France, have already embraced the theatre command concept.
- **The reason behind the establishment of Theaterisation:** The imperative for theaterisation in India originates from lessons derived from past conflicts like the 1962 Sino-Indian War and the Kargil conflict. Its objectives include addressing challenges such as service integration gaps, inefficient resource utilisation, and sluggish decision-making processes. The proposed framework for India involves the establishment of two land-based theatre commands (Western and Northern) and one maritime command.

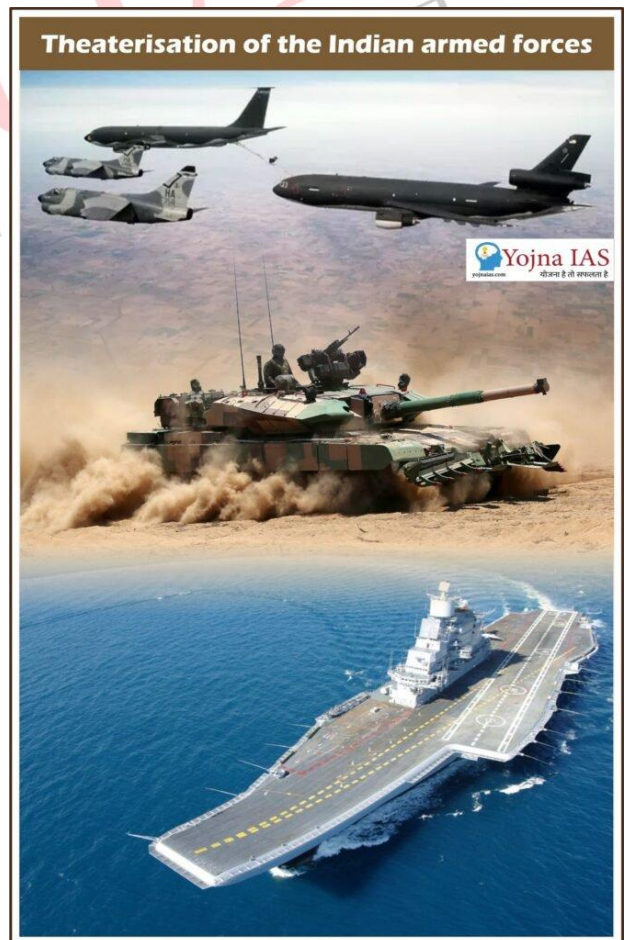
- **Current situation:** India's existing command arrangement comprises 17 individual service commands and merely two tri-service commands. The breakdown of the 17 single-service commands is as follows:

1. Army- 7 commands
2. Air Force- 7 commands
3. Navy- 3 commands

The two tri-service commands are the Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC) and the Strategic Forces Command, which are responsible for nuclear weapons management. Established as a fully integrated tri-service command in 2001, the Andaman and Nicobar Command operates at full capacity.

NEED FOR INTEGRATED THEATRE COMMANDS

- **Improved Operational Coordination:** Integrated Theatre Commands establish a unified command structure encompassing the Army, Navy, and Air Force under a single commander, ensuring smooth planning and execution of operations in specific strategically significant geographic areas.
- **Efficient Resource Utilisation:** By centralising resources from all three services under one command, redundancy in resourcing is minimised, and assets can be deployed more efficiently and effectively, particularly during times of conflict or crisis.
- **Enhanced Strategic Response:** Theaterisation facilitates swift deployment of military assets, strengthens strategic response capabilities, and bolsters overall defence readiness, especially along borders with neighbouring countries such as China and Pakistan.
- **Synergy and Collaboration:** The establishment of Integrated Theatre Commands promotes synergy among the services, encourages joint planning and execution, and fosters cohesion within the defence apparatus, leading to more effective military operations.
- **Learning from International Practices:** Drawing insights from successful implementations in countries like the US and China, India seeks to streamline military operations, enhance command-and-control structures, and adapt to evolving security dynamics by instituting Integrated Theatre Commands.



CHALLENGES FOR INTEGRATED THEATRE COMMANDS

- **Structural Organization:** An essential hurdle lies in determining the organisational structure, including delineating reporting lines and

establishing a transparent chain of command within the integrated theatre commands framework. This entails defining the interactions among the three services, identifying reporting hierarchies, and structuring operational command and control.

- **Financial Allocation:** Adequately allocating funds and effectively distributing finances to support the establishment and operation of theatre commands is pivotal but can pose significant challenges. Prudent financial planning is imperative to ensure the seamless functioning of integrated theatre commands.
- **Allocation of Resources:** Concerns have been raised regarding the dispersion of assets, particularly by the Indian Air Force, across multiple theatre commands, which could potentially diminish combat efficiency and inflate costs. Replicating resources for each theatre command could strain the defence budget.
- **Service Culture and Competition:** The distinctive service cultures and inherent competition for resources and influence among the Army, Navy, and Air Force can hinder the synergy necessary for successful integrated theatre commands. Each service's management of resources and pursuit of a larger share of the defence budget can impede collaborative endeavours.
- **Experience and Adaptation:** India's limited experience with integrated theatre commands may require adjustments and refinements as these commands evolve. Developing expertise and refining operational strategies will be critical for the effective implementation of integrated theatre commands.
- **Political Decision-Making:** Ensuring clear and unified military advice to India's political leadership is essential to maintain coherence in military operations and strategies. Divergent perspectives among the service chiefs could present challenges for political decision-makers.

MAINS PRACTISE QUESTION

Q1. What is the significance of enhancing strategic response capabilities through the implementation of theaterisation, particularly along India's borders with neighbouring countries?

[Himanshu Mishra](#)

UNITED NATIONS FORUM ON FORESTS

THIS ARTICLE COVERS 'DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS' AND THE TOPIC DETAILS OF "UNITED NATIONS FORUM ON FORESTS". THIS TOPIC IS RELEVANT IN THE "ENVIRONMENT" SECTION OF THE UPSC CSE EXAM.

WHY IN THE NEWS?

At the 19th United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF 19) held in New York, India showcased its remarkable progress in conservation and the sustainable management of forests, highlighting a steady growth in its forest cover for the last 15 years.

During the session, India emphasised its commitment to biodiversity and wildlife preservation, noting the significant expansion of its conservation areas. This includes an extensive network comprising over a thousand national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, tiger reserves, biosphere reserves, and various wildlife habitats. Moreover, India spotlighted its role in establishing the International Big Cat Alliance, a crucial initiative for the global protection and conservation of the seven major big cat species, leveraging international collaboration. The 'Green Credit Programme' launch was also shared, a strategic move to encourage organisations to plant trees and rehabilitate deteriorated forest areas, thereby contributing to enhanced climate action efforts.

ABOUT THE UNITED NATIONS FORUM ON FOREST:

The United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) is a global platform inaugurated in 2000 by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It advocates for responsible management, preservation, and sustainable growth of all forest types. This initiative acknowledges forests' vital importance for ecological stability, economic advancement, and societal health, marking a significant step towards addressing these global concerns.



India is a founding member of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF). It focuses on implementing promises made at global gatherings like the Earth Summit 1992 and the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. Its objective is to foster the management, conservation, and sustainable growth of forests of all varieties.

The forum facilitates dialogue among various stakeholders for sustainable forest management, mobilises financial resources, especially for developing countries, and aims to boost political commitment towards prioritising forest issues globally.

SOME KEY INITIATIVES UNDER THE UNFF:

- **United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030 (UNSPF):** This strategic plan outlines a comprehensive approach to the sustainable management of all forest types and trees in non-forest areas, **aiming to stop deforestation and forest degradation**. It is aligned with major global agendas, endorsing the execution of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement within the framework of the UN Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification.
- **Global Forest Goals:** The UNSPF outlines six Global Forest Goals and 26 associated targets aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These goals address issues such as increasing forest area, enhancing forest-based economic, social, and environmental benefits, and mobilizing financing for sustainable forest management. **These 6 goals are:**
 1. Enhance initiatives to combat forest degradation by adopting sustainable forest management practices, encompassing protection, restoration, afforestation, and reforestation.
 2. Enhance forest-based economic, social, and environmental benefits. This includes improving the livelihoods of forest-dependent people and contributing to eradicating poverty.
 3. Increase the area of protected forests worldwide and ensure forest biodiversity conservation. This effort aims to safeguard the variety of life that forestsharbour, recognising their inherent worth and the advantages they offer to human well-being.
 4. To effectively implement sustainable forest management, it's essential to gather considerably more financial resources, including new and additional funds, from various sources. This approach will guarantee that sufficient financing is available to achieve the other objectives.
 5. Promote governance frameworks to implement sustainable forest management, including through the United Nations Forest Instrument. This involves creating and enforcing policies that support the sustainable management and conservation of forests.
 6. Enhance cooperation, coordination, and coherence among all forest-related processes and initiatives. This goal aims to ensure that efforts to achieve the Global Forest Goals are unified and that there is synergy between different initiatives and stakeholders.
- **Forest Instrument:** Officially known as the Non-Legally Binding Instrument on All Types of Forests, this instrument outlines the policies and measures countries have committed to implementing to achieve sustainable forest management.

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL BIG CAT ALLIANCE (IBCA):

The International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA), launched in April 2023 and led by India, is dedicated to conserving the seven primary big cat species globally. The alliance has 97 members and is committed to enhancing cooperation, exchanging successful strategies, and crafting policies to tackle the illicit trade and hunting of wildlife. India has committed \$100 million to support the

alliance over its initial five-year period, and the IBCA plans to become financially independent through diverse funding mechanisms.

The primary objective is to protect and conserve populations of big cats, including tigers, lions, leopards, jaguars, cheetahs, and snow leopards, in their natural habitats. They ensure the preservation and restoration of habitats critical for big cats' survival, thereby maintaining biodiversity and ecosystem health.

WAY FORWARD:

- Implement and enforce strict laws against illegal logging, land conversion, and other activities that lead to deforestation and forest degradation, and adopt best practices in forest management that balance ecological, economic, and social objectives.
- Involve local communities in forest management and decision-making processes to ensure that conservation efforts are socially inclusive and sustainable. Develop mechanisms that allow local communities to benefit economically from forest conservation through eco-tourism, sustainable harvesting, and other income-generating activities.
- Implement REDD+ initiatives that provide financial incentives for developing countries to reduce deforestation and forest degradation emissions.
- Advanced technologies, such as remote sensing, geographic information systems (GIS), and drones, are used to monitor forest cover and illegal activities.
- Gather financial support from global donors, public agencies, and private industry to back projects and initiatives to preserve forests.

PRELIMS PRACTICE QUESTION:

- Q. How can reforestation and afforestation contribute to forest conservation? How does the UNFF promote the management, conservation, and sustainable development of all types of forests?**

[AMIT PRADHAN](#)

