Defence & Security · GS - III

Examine how the growing importance of military reserves and mobilisation capacity reflects the changing nature of national defence preparedness in an era of prolonged geopolitical tensions.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
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MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

Military reserves, force mobilisation, NATO, military readiness, hybrid warfare, defence logistics, national security

Model Answer

Changing requirements of national defence

Contemporary security threats increasingly involve prolonged conflicts, cyber operations, hybrid warfare and sustained pressure on military logistics. Consequently, national defence preparedness requires more than maintaining standing armed forces. Trained reserve personnel provide an additional layer of operational capacity.

Strategic importance of reserve forces

1. **Rapid force augmentation:** Reservists enable governments to expand military manpower during emergencies without maintaining an excessively large permanent force.

2. **Operational sustainability:** They can support logistics, medical services, engineering, communications and territorial defence, allowing regular forces to concentrate on specialised operations.

3. **Specialised capabilities:** Civilian professionals with expertise in information technology, cybersecurity, engineering and healthcare can strengthen military capabilities through reserve arrangements.

4. **Deterrence and resilience:** Credible mobilisation capacity signals preparedness and improves the ability to sustain operations during prolonged crises.

5. **Collective defence:** Within NATO, national reserve systems contribute to the alliance's overall readiness and reinforce collective defence commitments.

Structural challenges

Reserve mobilisation depends on adequate training, equipment availability, clear command structures and coordination with regular forces. Employers may face workforce shortages when reservists are called up, while prolonged mobilisation can impose significant fiscal and social costs.

Lessons for India

India's defence preparedness can benefit from stronger integration of the Territorial Army, trained reserves, veterans and specialised civilian expertise. Regular mobilisation exercises, modern equipment, cyber-reserve capabilities and coordination between military and civilian agencies can improve readiness.

Conclusion: Military reserves are an important component of a resilient defence system. Their effectiveness depends not merely on numerical strength but on training, mobilisation infrastructure and integration with regular military capabilities.

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