

## **India's 1st National Security Strategy**

**Source:** This post is derived from the article titled " India's 1st National Security Strategy" published in The Indian Express, November 5, 2023.

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** **GS Paper 3** - Internal Security

**News Summary:** India is developing its inaugural National Security Strategy to address diverse threats and guide military reforms. The absence of a previous strategy was due to political hesitancy and accountability concerns in defense management. Experts emphasize its significance for safeguarding national interests and security.

**Q1.** Why is India in the process of creating its first National Security Strategy, and what does this strategy aim to achieve? How does the absence of a National Security Strategy impact India's approach to addressing security challenges and evolving geopolitical tensions?

**Context:** India is in the process of creating its first National Security Strategy, a document that outlines the country's security objectives and methods to achieve them.

**What is the National Security Strategy?** The National Security Strategy is a government document that delineates a nation's security objectives and the means to achieve them. It encompasses a wide spectrum of threats, both traditional and non-traditional, offering a comprehensive perspective on national security. This strategy plays a pivotal role in shaping a country's approach to military, economic, and diplomatic affairs to safeguard its interests and ensure security.

**Examples:** Several developed countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, and Russia, have established their own National Security Strategies. Pakistan, too, has unveiled its National Security Policy 2022-2026.

**India's Need for a National Security Strategy:** India necessitates a National Security Strategy to effectively address multifaceted traditional and non-traditional threats and uncertainties. Experts underscore the significance of such a strategy in guiding military reforms and providing a clear roadmap amid evolving challenges and geopolitical tensions. Without it, military reforms lack a solid foundation.

## **Contours of National Security Policy**

### **Setting Clear Objectives:**

- Determine what needs to be protected and identify potential threats that might disrupt the country's stability.

### **Prioritizing Key Areas:**

- Establish new government departments focusing on innovation and technology, especially in fields like hydrogen fuel cells, desalination, and cybersecurity.

### **Adapting the Strategy:**

- Develop a well-rounded strategy that prepares for various threats, including the possibility of taking limited preventive actions and discouraging potential adversaries.

### **Embracing New Priorities:**

- Concentrate on vital emerging technologies, improving connections, building infrastructure, enhancing cyber security, and securing maritime areas.

### **Government's Role:**

- Allocate a separate budget for cybersecurity, create a centralized team of cyber experts to counter cyberattacks, and utilize India's talent in software development. Strengthen cybersecurity capabilities at the state level.

### **Defending, Deterring, and Utilizing:**

- Protect important infrastructure, promote open reporting of cyber breaches, deal with the complexities of cyber deterrence, and be prepared for cyber warfare to achieve national security goals.

### **Why did India never have a national security strategy?**

The absence of a National Security Strategy in India can be attributed to political hesitancy and concerns about accountability in defense management. Various experts cite reasons that span from a lack of coordinated government efforts to the government's reluctance to disclose its national security objectives.

## **On Air Pollution in Indian cities – Tiding over; Giving the urban Indian a better life**

**Source:** This post on "Air Pollution in Indian Cities" is based on articles titled "Tiding over" and "Giving the Urban Indian a Better Life," published in The Hindu on 6th November 2023.

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper 3 Environment – Environmental Pollution and Degradation

**News:** These articles address the concerning problem of air pollution in Indian cities. They shed light on the various factors contributing to the deterioration of air quality in urban areas and suggest necessary measures to combat these challenges.

**Q2.** What are the key factors contributing to the severe air pollution crisis in India, and how can a sustainable and ecological urbanization strategy, along with enhanced public transport, assist in mitigating this issue?

### **Status of Air Pollution in India:**

- India faces a severe air pollution crisis, with 39 out of the 50 most polluted cities globally located within the country.
- Air quality deteriorates not only in the Indo-Gangetic plains but also in coastal cities.
- The average Indian loses 5.3 years of life expectancy due to air pollution, with residents of Delhi losing 11.9 years.

## **Reasons for Worsening Air Pollution:**

1. **Urban Development Strategy:** Emphasizes real estate expansion, road widening, and fuel-consuming vehicles, contributing significantly to pollution.
2. **Anthropogenic Factors:** Key contributors include road dust, industrial emissions, and vehicular exhaust.
3. **Expansion of Grey Infrastructure:** Decreased green spaces and increased concrete structures.
4. **Crop Residue Burning:** The burning of paddy straw in North India during winter creates smog and particulate matter.
5. **Land Use Change:** Open spaces handed over to developers and inadequate afforestation affect the city's ecology.
6. **Promotion of Car Sales:** Road widening encourages car ownership, leading to increased pollution.
7. **Construction Activities:** Construction contributes about 10% of Delhi-NCR's air pollution with insufficient monitoring.
8. **Lack of Public Participation:** City residents lack a role in urbanization.
9. **Issues with CAQM:** The Commission for Air Quality Management has limited powers, mainly making recommendations.

## **Recommended Actions:**

1. **Sustainable Urbanization:** Adopt a sustainable and ecological urbanization strategy.
2. **Public Transport:** Invest in affordable and accessible public transport with increased bus services.

3. **Graded Response Action Plan:** Extend such plans to other Indian cities, with different actions based on air quality.
4. **Industrial Pollution Monitoring:** Real-time monitoring and resident supervision.
5. **Preserve Urban Commons:** Maintain ponds, water bodies, urban forests, parks, and playgrounds.
6. **Strengthen Urban Governance:** Create pollution guides and procedures for transparency.
7. **Enhance Coordination:** Improve coordination and compliance, especially with agencies like CAQM.

**Terminology:**

- **Grey Infrastructure:** Engineered assets serving society, such as transportation and wastewater treatment.

## **No appetite for food safety**

**Source:** This post is derived from the article titled "No Appetite for Food Safety – States Must Enhance Safety Mechanisms," published in Business Standard on 6th November 2023.

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper 3 Agriculture – Food Security & Food Processing and Related Industries in India – Scope and Significance.

**News:** The article delves into the recent decline in food safety standards in India, as indicated by a recent report. Many states have received lower safety ratings and exhibit weak enforcement, despite government efforts to promote investments in the food industry.

**Q3.** What is the State Food Safety Index (SFSI), and what were the key findings of the SFSI 2022-23 Report regarding food safety in Indian states? Additionally, could you explain the government's initiatives for the food industry and the recommended actions to enhance food safety in India?

### **State Food Safety Index (SFSI):**

- The State Food Safety Index is an annual assessment initiated by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) in the year 2018-19.
- Its primary purpose is to provide a dynamic quantitative and qualitative benchmarking model for evaluating food safety standards in all States and Union Territories (UTs).
- Significantly, the index aims to bring about a competitive and positive transformation in India's food safety ecosystem and encourage states and UTs to work towards ensuring safe food for their citizens.

## STATES WITH STEEPEST INDEX FALL

State	2019	2023
Maharashtra	74	45
Bihar	46	20.5
Gujarat	73	48.5
Andhra Pradesh	47	24
Chhattisgarh	46	27

Source: SFSI reports; all scores out of 100

## SAFETY MEASURE

Parameter	Weight
Compliance	28
Consumer Empowerment	19
Human Resources and Institutional Data	18
Food Testing Infrastructure	17
Improvement in SFSI Rank (added in 2023)	10
Training and Capacity Building	8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

### Key Findings of SFSI 2022-23 Report:

- The SFSI 2022-23 report has raised concerns about the deteriorating food safety conditions in Indian states.
- Notably, 19 out of 20 major Indian states have witnessed a decline in their SFSI scores.
- The food testing infrastructure across states saw a substantial decrease, with the average score dropping from 13 to 7 out of 20.
- Compliance, human resources, and institutional data scores also saw a significant fall.



## **Government's Initiatives for the Food Industry:**

- The government introduced the Production Linked Incentive Scheme for the Food Processing Industry (PLISFPI) with an allocation of Rs. 10,900 crores.
- A particular focus of this initiative is on small and medium enterprises (SMEs), with 16 applications approved for innovative and organic products, including millet-based items.
- Guidelines mandate that manufacturing, including primary processing of eligible products, must take place in India to support local production and ensure fair compensation for farmers, particularly small-scale ones.

## **Recommended Actions:**

- **Efficient Regulatory Framework:** States must urgently develop and enhance regulatory and enforcement mechanisms to ensure food safety and attract investments.
- **Strengthen Food Testing:** The decline in food testing infrastructure scores necessitates investment in upgrading state food testing facilities.
- **Investments in Infrastructure:** Continued and increased investment is essential to address infrastructure deficiencies like cold chains, reducing waste, and improving efficiency.
- **Maintain Global Market Standards:** India must adhere to global market standards to remain competitive in the international market.

## On Rural Economic Distress

**Source:** This post is drawn from the article titled "RBI Governor's Growth Optimism Masks Rural Distress," published in Live Mint on 6th November 2023.

**UPSC Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper 3 Indian Economy – Growth and employment. GS Paper 3 Agriculture – Marketing of agricultural produce and issues and related constraints.

**News:** The article delves into concerns regarding the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) optimism about economic growth. It highlights the evidence of rural distress, challenging agricultural conditions, and inflation that disproportionately affect rural consumers compared to their urban counterparts.

**Q3.** How has climate-related agricultural challenges, higher inflation rates, and low employment levels in rural areas contributed to low rural demand, and what are the key concerns regarding the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) response to these issues, as highlighted in recent reports, and what actions are recommended to address rural distress?

### **Reasons for Low Rural Demand:**

**Climate and Agricultural Output:** Irregular monsoons and unseasonal rains have negatively affected crop sowing and output, directly impacting rural incomes.

**Inflation's Impact:** Rural areas have experienced higher inflation, with a September rate of 5.3%, compared to urban inflation at 4.65%, resulting in tighter budgets for rural consumers.

**Low Employment and Income Levels:** The repercussions of demonetization and the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic have continued to hinder rural income and employment recovery.

## **RBI's Response to Rural Issues:**

**Disregarding Rural Distress:** Despite various indicators of rural market weakness, RBI reports seem to downplay these issues, indicating a readiness for rural consumers to participate in the broader economic recovery.

**Contradiction in Data and Statements:** The RBI's statements about reduced joblessness and potential rural recovery conflict with data from market research and corporate reports that highlight ongoing rural consumption challenges.

**MPC's Stance on Rural Demand:** In the minutes from the Monetary Policy Committee's (MPC) meeting, there was limited mention of rural distress, indicating that the RBI may not fully acknowledge the challenges facing the rural sector during policy discussions.

## **Recommended Actions:**

**Acknowledgment of Rural Distress:** The RBI should openly recognize the specific challenges facing rural areas rather than presenting an overly optimistic view of the economy.

**Targeted Monetary Policy:** The Monetary Policy Committee should consider the distributional effects of its policies and focus on supporting rural demand while mitigating inflation in rural areas.

**Data-Driven Policy-Making:** Policymaking should integrate insights from market research and corporate reports that highlight the persistent weakness in rural markets.