

UPSC Syllabus Topic : GS paper2 – International relation- Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Reigniting the flame of India-South Korea defence cooperation

India and South Korea have been fostering defense relations, highlighted by the recent visit of the Indian Army Chief to South Korea, aiming to bolster military ties and address mutual challenges in defense cooperation.

Relations Overview: India and South Korea celebrated the 50th anniversary of their diplomatic ties and endorsed a Roadmap for Defense Industries Cooperation in 2020. The Korea Plus initiative further aims to increase Korean investments in India.

Challenges in Defense Relations:

1. **Reassessment of India's Role:** South Korea has been slow in redefining its perception of India, still viewing it through the lens of an old Cold War ally of the Soviet Bloc, hindering deeper strategic ties.
2. **Overemphasis on Acquisition and Sales:** India has focused on acquiring weapons and technology from South Korea, while Korea seeks profit-driven sales to India. Both approaches lack long-term strategic considerations.

Opportunities in Defense Relations:

1. **Geopolitical Dynamics:** Evolving coalitions involving North Korea, China, and Russia introduce new challenges, necessitating a deeper understanding of each country's strategic needs and alignments.
2. **Technology Collaboration:** Joint development of advanced defense systems, especially in areas like space and cybersecurity, demonstrates the technological prowess of both nations.
3. **Maritime Security:** Potential collaboration exists in maritime security through joint patrolling and information sharing, given the significant maritime interests of both countries.
4. **Counter Terrorism:** India and South Korea share concerns about terrorism, suggesting potential collaborative strategies to bolster defense and security.
5. **United Nations Peacekeeping:** Both countries have experience in UN peacekeeping, indicating opportunities to share insights and resources for global stability.
6. **Joint Military Exercises:** The recent high-level visit signifies opportunities for enhanced joint exercises and interoperability.

The Way Forward: A strategic approach based on shared visions, technological partnerships, and adapting to evolving global dynamics is crucial for a robust and enduring defense relationship between India and South Korea.