Ethics & Morality · GS - IV

Ajit has been recently promoted as the Head of the Department of Weapon Sales (DWS) in the Ministry of Defence Production (MDP). His charter of duties includes international sales of weapons produced domestically by MDP.

In two recent wars, MDP weapons have performed admirably, resulting in many countries showing interest in buying them, particularly long-range artillery and missiles. Country A and country B have asked for these weapons. However, production constraints restrict DWS to accept only one purchase order.

Country A is a developing nation with a sound technology base. MDP is planning R&D collaboration with it for the next generation of weapons. It is not part of any security alliance and needs weapons for protection from a troublesome neighbour. It seeks a large acquisition on a long-term loan.

Country B is also a developing nation. Military strength is its priority, with the military budget often ingressing into allocations for human resources and infrastructure development. It is in security alliance with a superpower who has a large military base there and periodically allots it financial grants. It is a member of an economic bloc with which the government is currently negotiating a free trade agreement. It is not a signatory of NPT but possesses smaller nuclear weapons and delivery systems. It supports

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some guerrilla forces abroad. It has sought a smaller acquisition and is prepared to make some advance payment. It is currently negotiating arms purchases from another nation too.

Ajit discussed this case with his counterparts in the related departments. Therein, the significant economic benefits, employment generation and stronger diplomatic relations arising from this sale were highlighted. It was also emphasized that refusing the deal could result in country B purchasing weapons from some other supplier. Ajit was aware that in arms sales, due diligence at each stage was pivotal to ensure conformity to national policy and international treaties.

(a) Discuss the options available to Ajit. Which option should he select and why?

(b) How can Ajit balance nation's economic and strategic interests with ethical considerations?

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2026	GS - IV	Ethics & Morality

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
20	~250 words

Answer Hint

Arms trade ethics, national interest, due diligence, non-proliferation, human rights, strategic autonomy, economic interests, international obligations, end-use monitoring

Model Answer

1. Ethical Issues

Ajit must balance economic and strategic interests against the risk that weapons may contribute to regional instability, human-rights violations or proliferation. Country B's nuclear capability, support for guerrilla forces and military prioritisation create significant ethical and security concerns.

2. Options

Ajit could accept Country B's order because of immediate economic and diplomatic gains, select Country A because of technological cooperation and its stated defensive requirement, or defer the decision until comprehensive due diligence is completed.

3. Recommended Course

Ajit should not decide solely on financial returns or diplomatic pressure. He should undertake a structured assessment of end-use, diversion risk, regional security implications, international obligations and the buyer's human-rights and proliferation record.

If Country B fails the required legal and security criteria, the order should not be approved merely because another supplier may capture the market. Subject to due diligence and applicable national policy, Country A's defensive requirement and prospective technological partnership may provide a comparatively less problematic basis for consideration.

4. Balancing Interests

Economic gains should be pursued alongside strategic autonomy, employment generation and technological advancement. Strong end-user certificates, monitoring mechanisms, non-transfer assurances and compliance reviews can reduce misuse risks.

Conclusion

Responsible arms exports require more than commercial efficiency. Ajit should place legality, national security, non-proliferation and human security alongside legitimate economic and diplomatic interests before taking the final decision.