Defence & Security · GS - III

Examine the challenges of safeguarding national security against espionage in an increasingly interconnected world.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
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MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

Classified information, insider threats, cyber espionage, counter-intelligence, institutional safeguards, international cooperation, civil liberties

Model Answer

Introduction

Espionage involves the unauthorised acquisition or disclosure of sensitive information for intelligence purposes. Growing digital connectivity, international competition and access to classified databases have expanded the range of threats to national security.

Major Challenges

1. **Insider Threats:** Officials and personnel with authorised access may misuse their positions due to financial incentives, coercion or ideological motivations.

2. **Cyber Espionage:** Foreign actors can exploit digital vulnerabilities to access defence networks, critical infrastructure, research data and strategic communications.

3. **Technological Complexity:** Cloud storage, artificial intelligence and interconnected communication systems create new vulnerabilities and complicate attribution of intelligence operations.

4. **Protection of Classified Information:** Large volumes of sensitive information make access control, monitoring and secure information management difficult.

5. **International Dimensions:** Espionage networks may operate across jurisdictions, making investigation, evidence collection and accountability challenging.

Measures to Strengthen National Security

1. **Robust Vetting:** Periodic background verification and risk-based security clearances can reduce insider threats.

2. **Cybersecurity Infrastructure:** Encryption, multi-factor authentication, secure networks and continuous vulnerability assessments should be strengthened.

3. **Institutional Accountability:** Clearly defined access permissions, audit trails and prompt reporting mechanisms can prevent misuse of sensitive information.

4. **Counter-intelligence Capacity:** Intelligence agencies require technological capabilities, trained personnel and coordination to detect hostile operations.

5. **Legal Safeguards:** Secrecy laws must protect legitimate national-security interests while incorporating due process and safeguards against arbitrary action.

Conclusion

Effective counter-espionage requires a combination of technological preparedness, institutional vigilance and international cooperation. National security measures must also remain consistent with constitutional values and the rule of law.

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