Science & Technology · GS - III

The growing dependence of national security on privately operated digital infrastructure raises important questions about accountability and strategic autonomy. Discuss with reference to satellite communication services during armed conflicts.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
DAILY PRACTICE 21/10/2026	GS - III	Science & Technology

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Starlink, private-sector control, military communication, strategic autonomy, critical infrastructure, public-private partnerships, service continuity, regulatory oversight, alternative communication networks, national security.

Model Answer

Introduction

Satellite communication systems have become important for civilian connectivity, disaster response and military coordination. The reported Starlink slowdown in parts of Ukraine highlights concerns about the influence of private technology providers during armed conflicts.

Key concerns

- **Operational dependence:** Military forces may rely on commercial satellite networks for communication, intelligence sharing and coordination.

- **Concentration of power:** A private provider's technical or commercial decisions may affect a country's operational capabilities.
- **Accountability:** Unclear contractual obligations and limited government oversight can complicate responsibility for service disruptions.
- **Strategic vulnerability:** Dependence on a single provider may expose countries to geopolitical pressure or sudden interruptions.

Way forward

Governments should establish clear contracts governing service continuity, emergency access and accountability. Critical communication systems should be subject to appropriate security standards and regulatory oversight. Investment in domestic satellite capabilities, interoperable networks and alternative communication channels can reduce dependence on individual providers. Public-private partnerships should preserve commercial innovation while safeguarding national interests.

Conclusion

Private satellite networks offer substantial strategic benefits, but their role in critical national infrastructure requires robust safeguards. Diversification, accountability and strategic autonomy are essential to ensuring reliable communications during crises.

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