Ethics & Morality · GS - IV

The Chairman of Bharat Missiles Ltd (BML) was watching a program on TV wherein the Prime Minister was addressing the nation on the necessity of developing a self-reliant India. He subconsciously nodded in agreement and smiled to himself as he mentally reviewed BML's journey in the past two decades. BML had admirably progressed from producing first generation anti-tank guided missiles (ATGMS) to designing and producing state of the art ATGM weapon systems that would be the envy of any army. He sighed in reconciliation with his assumptions that the government would probably not alter the status quo of a ban on export of military weaponry.

To his surprise, the very next day he got a telephone call from the Director General, Ministry of Defence, asking him to discuss the modalities of increasing BML production of ATGMS as there is a possibility of exporting the same to a friendly foreign country. The Director General wanted the Chairman to discuss the details with his staff at Delhi next week.

Two days later, at a press conference, the Defence Minister stated that he aims to double the current weapons export levels within five years. This would give an impetus to financing the development and manufacture of indigenous weapons in the country. He also stated that all indigenous arms manufacturing nations have a very good record of

international arms trade.

1. **As Chairman of BML, what are your views on the following points?**
2. **As an arms exporter of a responsible nation like India, what are the ethical issues involved arms trade?**
3. **List five ethical factors that would influence the decision to sell arms to foreign governments.**

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2020	GS - IV	Ethics & Morality

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
20	~250 words

Answer Hint

National security, self-reliance, economic benefits, peace and stability, human rights, end-use monitoring, international law, conflict escalation, proliferation risks, responsible export policy

Model Answer

Introduction

Defence exports can strengthen indigenous industry, create employment and deepen strategic partnerships. However, arms differ from ordinary commodities because their misuse can cause widespread violence and threaten international peace.

1. Ethical issues in arms trade

- **Economic development versus human welfare:** Export revenue can support research and domestic production, but weapons may intensify conflict and civilian suffering.
- **National security:** Exports may strengthen friendly countries, yet sensitive technologies could be diverted to adversaries.
- **Human rights:** Selling weapons to governments that repress citizens or commit atrocities may make India complicit in their actions.
- **International peace:** Arms transfers can trigger regional arms races and destabilise fragile regions.

- **Responsible self-reliance:** Indigenous manufacturing should promote technological capability without allowing commercial interests to override national and humanitarian concerns.
- **Accountability:** Corruption, opaque contracts and inadequate end-use monitoring can undermine ethical export practices.

2. Five ethical factors influencing an arms-export decision

1. **Recipient's human-rights record:** Assess whether the government is credibly implicated in atrocities, repression or unlawful attacks on civilians.
2. **End-use and diversion risk:** Verify the intended use, secure guarantees and establish effective monitoring to prevent unauthorised transfers.
3. **International law and obligations:** Ensure compliance with applicable treaties, sanctions, export controls and international humanitarian law.
4. **Regional peace and stability:** Examine whether the transfer could intensify an ongoing conflict, trigger an arms race or undermine peace efforts.
5. **India's national interest and strategic responsibility:** Evaluate legitimate security partnerships while protecting sensitive technology and India's long-term diplomatic credibility.

Conclusion

India should pursue defence exports through a transparent, risk-based and accountable framework. Economic self-reliance must remain consistent with national security, humanitarian obligations and responsible international conduct.

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