

EVALUATION INDICATORS

1. Contextual Competence
2. Content Competence
3. Language Competence
4. Introduction Competence
5. Structure - Presentation Competence
6. Conclusion Competence

Overall Macro Comments / feedback / suggestions on Answer Booklet:

1.

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6.

All the Best

2. Agnipath: Addressing the challenges of the Indian armed forces

As unfortunate as the Russia-Ukraine war, it does provide perfect testbed for many hypotheses. One of them is the role of military personnel in actual war among rising involvement of technology.

While Russia has been recruiting soldiers through conscription and financial incentives, it has most probably not worked out. On the other hand motivated young Ukrainian soldiers have been fighting back courageously.

The above analysis can be compared to reformative initiative

brought up by the Indian government - Agnipath scheme. It intends to recruit youngsters, in the age group of 17.5 to 23, for four years. At the end, only 25% will be recounted back through permanent commission. Rest will be given lump sum ~~abot~~ amount and training certificates to help them integrate into civilian life.

Touted as a scheme to solve multiple challenges faced by the Indian armed forces, can it be successful? Before this, we need to discuss the present state of Indian military and challenges it face. Then, we will discuss how Agnipath will solve these challenges and at

the same time creating some new one. Finally, a verdict on the scheme alongwith what more is needed will be analysed.

According to SIPRI, India is the third largest armed force in the world in terms of personnel and spending. The structure has been common since early beginning - comprised of three wings of Army, Navy and Air Force. It also has numerous war experiences with mixed records - a setback in 1962 war with China while resounding successes in wars with Pakistan in 1971 and 1999. Further to maintain its crown jewel, India spends nearly 4% of its annual budget on defence.

Moving to challenges, the most

dominant one is the two-front war threat with China and Pakistan. This is because of border disputes and changing geopolitical scenarios. Further, it needs to balance continental threats with emerging maritime challenges on the Indo-Pacific.

Next big challenge is personnel and finance management. Indian Army employs more than 10 million with other contribution from two wings. Does it require such a big manpower in a tech-warfare era? In the domain of budget, it needs higher share for capital procurement but revenue expenditure is causing concern. India spends nearly a quarter of its defence budget on pensions.

Moreover, armed forces lack high grade weapons and technologies with India being largest defence importer in 2021. There is also skill deficiency and leadership errors at the top. This can be gauged by empty offices of Chief of Defence staff and recent amendment to expand the pool for the same.

Finally, there is lack of synergy between three wings of the armed forces and auxiliary organisation like intelligence. Failure to gauge China's intentions in Balwan is the epitome of this malady. This misbalance even creeps into funding with Navy occupying just 15% of total defence budget.

These challenges, internal to

armed forces, have been aggravated by emerging threats like cyber war, high technology wars with drones etc and growing spatial theatres of conflict in the world.

Now some of these challenges are aimed to be solved by Agnipath scheme. Theoretically, it will reduce average age of personnel from early 30s to around 27. It can also reduce revenue expenditure with more funds for arms procurement.

Further, it provides opportunity to conduct highly skilled and creme-la-da-creme of the recruits after 4 years. The 25% permanent employees will have higher human capital.

technological training and age of their socie.

The benefits even extend to societal domain. It aims to reduce gender and caste discrimination through All-India recruitment and equal opportunity to female cadets. Also, re-entry of individuals with military ethos in the society can improve social capital. They can be recruited in many businesses and training received by them can be utilised for the benefit of society.

Thus, Agnipath scheme has the potential to solve not just conventional challenges faced by armed forces but also prepare them to face future threats. Although, it has the potential

to create some challenges, both old and new, for military, government and society.

First and the most pertinent one is what will happen to the next 15% of the Agniveers. If we analyse the state of ex-servicemen presently, nearly 15% of them are unemployed. Does the state and the corporates have enough room to accommodate these new entrants that most probably will have lower academic skills than their compatriots? The answer to this is the most important determinant of the success of Agniveer.

Second, the impact of this scheme on military structure and ethos

can be negative. Some argue that 4 years are very less time to accommodate new members into the well-functioning machine. Further, training period of only one and a half years ~~is~~ is not enough to completely train Agniveers for combat. For example, Navy requires at least 4-5 years for its personnel to get comfortable with its ships and frigates.

Even the motivation of contractual soldiers during the height of a war is being questioned. Young recruits in the Russian war is fleeing the battlefield, according to many reports. Also, regimental ethos can be harmed due to All-India character of the scheme. And as Agniveers will form separate units within armed forces, they can be discriminated

Third, it can have lead to militarisation of society. Unemployed military-trained Agniveers can easily fall into the laps of dangerous crimes and crime syndicates like drug trafficking, criminal gangs etc. for example, in America, ex-servicemen are often hired as mercenaries for criminal groups and drug cartels.

Fourth, its impact on relations with Nepal is an open question. As Gurkhas have been part of Indian Army since Treaty of Sagauli (1816), how Agniveer will impact their recruitment process needs to be dealt with.

To counter some of these

challenges, the government has been proactive. Ministry of Defence and CAPFs have announced some reservation or rebate kind of policy for Agniveers. Even some state governments like Jharkhand and Corporates like Mahindra Group have promised jobs for those who end up on the civilian side after 4 years.

These efforts work or not is a future problem. At the same time, it can be concluded that Agnipath was badly needed. To completely utilise its potential, the government and the Armed Forces need to monitor and review the first recruitment cycle. It needs to be constantly ~~up~~ upgraded as per review to make it stable.

It also needs to be understood

that Agnipath is not the Panacea for all ills of the armed forces. It needs many more reforms to make it 21st century force. One of them is having a Defence Vision Document to guide all stakeholders. Defence indigenisation is another need that should be fulfilled in near future.

Agnipath is the beginning of many reforms. The success or failure of this scheme can decide the fate of armed forces, government and society. As the name suggests, it is well on Agni-path. It can either forge the ~~weak~~ military metal into hardened force or reduce it to ashes. We need to make sure that latter doesn't happen.

5. Sooner or later, there will always be cost of freebies

On the surface, India is an agricultural powerhouse. It is a net exporter of agri-products with one of the leading producers of cereals, horticulture products, milk etc. As we delve deeper, the problems start to emerge out of this rosy picture. These problems can be better understood through the example of the region which has benefited the most.

The agri sector in Punjab is stagnated. Since 2000s, it has been growing well-below national average. The cropping pattern is distorted. Coupled with procurement system, it has created evil concoction of problems. Environmental damages like declining groundwater, declining soil fertility and increasing

pollutions are the top of the iceberg. The poor state of Punjab's economy with high debt and disimal discom performance is another manifestation of a bigger malady.

This malady is freebies. The problems Punjab and many states are facing can be attributed to freebie culture. Before we discuss the cost of freebies in detail, we need to know what do we mean by freebies.

Simply defined, freebie is something given without having to pay for it, especially as a way of attracting support for or interest in something. for example, DMK government providing color TVs during election is

an epitome of freebie culture.

This needs to be differentiated from welfare measures that many government engage into. Welfare is something that is designed to promote well-being of disadvantaged social groups. For instance, free food grains under PDS to families living below poverty line is a welfare measure.

Freebies doesn't always have to include giving monetary benefit or some resources to people free of cost. It can also include state not exercising its right to collect what is theirs. This manifests into tax incentives, tax breaks, revenue forgone etc. Corporate tax cut in 2019 can also be included under freebies, so does export incentives.

Before moving to the costs of freebies, it becomes important to discuss the need and rationale behind freebies.

Whatever the governments or political parties argue, the most important rationale behind freebies is to attract voters to vote in their favour. This can be proved through increasing announcement of freebies when elections are near. For example, AAP announcing free electricity for upcoming Gujarat elections.

Ignoring this, most political parties rationalise freebies through the lens of social justice and welfare state. They argue that the government is fulfilling objectives enshrined in Directive Principles of State Policy. This has been accepted by Supreme Court in Subramaniam Balaji case.

Another reason behind freebie culture is economic incentives. These act as a tool to incentivise production, economic growth and reduce economic vulnerabilities for example, MSP aims at increasing foodgrains production.

Although welfare measures can be argued for and even some irrational freebies can be rationalised, these ultimately create negative externalities. In most cases, the cost of freebies are too high to compensate for the benefits. Even well-meaning welfare freebies can have some costs. These, at times, might not be clearly visible in the near future but can have a debilitating impact.

These costs are most visible in economic domain. One, it leads to increase in public debt and fiscal

deficit. The Punjab government's debt to GPP ratio is above 50%. The Delhi government which had revenue surplus of nearly 10000 crores in 2014 will for the first time may have revenue deficit in FY23.

Two, freebies leads to distorted expenditure. There is less money available for capital expenditure, that has a multiplier effect, due to freebies. According to RBI, nearly 85% of Punjab government's revenue is committed with only 8% available for capital expenditure.

Third, higher fiscal deficit also impacts micro-economic fundamentals like interest rate, inflation etc. As government gives extra money to public,

it increases demand-side inflation.

Fourth, the mixture of all these economic vulnerabilities can lead to sub-national bankruptcy which will impact overall growth of the country. This has already happened in the case of Sri Lanka which cut tax rates.

As economy and polity are related, the impact of freebies transcend all barriers. It strikes at the very heart of free and fair elections. The political parties with the intention of grabbing power announce a slew of freebies. This is like buying votes by giving freebies at the cost of taxpayers.

Further, there is a hidden impact of freebies on society too. As government wastes money on unproductive resources, the society loses out on beneficial infrastructure. Shifting of debt burden on future generation, no funds for creation of basic infrastructure like schools, increasing inequality between haves and have nots are some of the hidden impacts of freebies.

To illustrate, the case of universal basic income can be analysed. As people start gaining money without effort, they may spend them on conspicuous products like alcohol. Some even become docile opting out of labour force.

Next, the environmental cost of subsidies are most visible. Misuse of natural resources, distorted consumption and production patterns, and waste generation is all too visible even if one close his/her eyes. Free electricity to the farmers has led to the problems of groundwater decline, overirrigation and wrong cropping pattern.

All of these costs combine together to ultimately impact human development of the ~~company~~ country. As economy collapses, basic services like health and education will suffer. There will be rise of conflicts, coupled with decline of morality in the societal life.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, freebies can improve the levels of human development too. Free healthcare under Ayushman Bharat Yojana has improved health conditions. The life expectancy which was 30 years at the time of independence is now 70 years. PDS, free healthcare etc have played important role in this.

Freebies have also contributed to economic development. Record food production has been because of MSP support. Increasing export, that touched \$420 billion in FY22, is because of export incentives. Decreasing corporate tax rates have created new jobs through corporate expansion. This can be shown through increase in corporate tax collection since 2019, around 30%.

Ultimately, freebies will have some costs but at the same time can also provide benefits. The dilemma then becomes how to balance some costs with benefits. Here are some solutions to solve this dilemma and the larger problem of freebie culture.

At the beginning, there should be clear distinction between who needs freebies and who doesn't. Giving free electricity to middle and rich class can't be justified.

further, there also has to be a distinction between needed welfare measures and irrational freebies. The share of education, health and sanitation in total freebies/subsidies is only around 30%. This needs to go up at the cost of other.

Next, more power can be given to electron Commission to stop irrational electron freebies.

Strengthening model code of conduct and giving power to de-recognise the party should be the starting steps.

The parliament can pass an act to define freebies and what can be allowed under them.

This can also create an independent commission to look after its monitoring.

The above measures can ~~act~~ at best act as balm to reduce the pain. It can be completely healed only through public debate. They have to be made aware of the cost of freebies through education, debates, awareness

campaigns, involvement of civil society etc. The destiny of freebies is ultimately in the hands of people. They can play their role by rejecting freebies via their votes.

There's a saying - that there is no such thing as free lunch. But at least free lunch can fill the empty stomach. As a welfare country, the government has to share some costs for the welfare of the people. It only has to make sure that the costs are not higher than the intended benefits.

Freebies

Intro - Green Revolution, MSP, problems

Thesis - What is freebies? Distinction b/w subsidies & welfare/rational freebies: Why do we need freebies?

Cost of freebies: Benefits of freebies: Solutions.

Freebies - define → distinction with welfare
various types and examples of freebies.

Need/Rationale

↳ social justice

↳ welfare state

↳ increase economic
production

↳ balancing competition
deficiencies

↳ to garner support

↳ reduce vulnerability

Cost of freebies

↳ on economy

↳ on society

↳ on polity

↳ on environment

↳ on development

Benefits

• create demand

• increase income

Solutions

i) SC - committee (independent com)

ii) let voters decide

iii) An act

iv) EC

v) Public debate

Agnipath

Intro - Russia-Ukraine war

Thesis - state of armed forces - challenges -

Agnipath - how Agnipath will solve these
challenges - some new challenges created
by Agnipath - what more needs to be done

Agnipath

state

- ↳ third largest
- ↳ " " spender
- ↳ war experiences
- ↳ structure
- ↳ budget

Agnipath

- ↳ will reduce avg age
- ↳ pensions & salaries
- ↳ high skilled individuals
- ↳ gender equity
- ↳ all India recruitment
- ↳ military ethos

What more needs to be done

- ↳ Security doctrine / white paper
- ↳ Theatre commands
- ↳ Indigenous
- ↳ Tech & emerging threats
- ↳ leadership
- ↳ Intelligence
- ↳ cooperation

Challenges

- ↳ budget mgmt ↳ conventional threats
- ↳ manpower
- ↳ technology & weapons
- ↳ intelligence ↳ political
- ↳ lack of synergy
- ↳ leadership crisis
- ↳ emerging threats
- ↳ 3 wings imbalance

New Agnipath challenges

- ↳ what after 4 years
- ↳ foreign policy
- ↳ on society
- ↳ on military functioning
 - ↳ regimental ethos
 - ↳ north & south
 - ↳ training
 - ↳ motivation
 - ↳ dissemination

with Agnipath

- ↳ pilot phase
- ↳ keep modifying
- ↳ was needed