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EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

Environmental Security Must Be a National Priority

 **DOWN TO EARTH**

27 June 2026

ENVIRONMENT**SECURITY & DEFENCE****GS3**

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Environmental Security Must Be a National Priority

Down to Earth 27 June 2026 **GS3**

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INTERVIEW ANGLE

"Is climate change a 'threat multiplier' that the armed forces and security planners must formally plan for, or does framing ecology as 'security' risk militarising a development problem?"

Source: [Original editorial](#) [Down to Earth](#)

🟢 Every fact web-verified against primary sources (<https://ujyari.com/how-we-verify/>)

WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

A weak monsoon, heat records, depleting aquifers and recurring disasters are no longer episodic news items. They are a continuous pressure on India's economy, its borders and its social peace. Security planning that counts only tanks, ships and battalions misses the quiet adversary: ecological collapse that hollows out the very base on which the state stands. The question before policymakers is whether environmental security should remain a footnote in development discourse or move to the heart of national-security doctrine.

THE CRUX IN 60 WORDS

Environmental degradation has crossed from being a development worry to a strategic threat. Water and food stress, climate migration, frontier and coastal exposure, and resource conflict all weaken the state. India's institutions handle environment and security in separate boxes. The argument is to mainstream environmental security into national-security planning, without militarising what remains a governance challenge.

THE ISSUE, DECODED

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CONCEPT	WHAT IT MEANS	WHY IT MATTERS
Non-traditional security	Threats to a nation's survival beyond military aggression, including ecological, economic and human security	Expands the security lens to cover climate, water and food, which now shape national stability
Threat multiplier	A factor that does not cause conflict alone but worsens existing tensions	Climate stress sharpens water disputes, migration pressure and frontier vulnerability (https://ujivari.com/vocab/vulnerability/)
Environmental security	Ensuring ecological stability as a foundation of national resilience (https://ujivari.com/vocab/resilience/)	Treats clean water, fertile soil and a stable climate as strategic assets
Comprehensive national security	Integrating military, economic, environmental and human dimensions	Provides a doctrinal (https://ujivari.com/vocab/doctrinal/) home for ecology within strategic planning
Green defence	Reducing the armed forces' ecological footprint and climate-proofing assets	Aligns military readiness with climate resilience

THE ANALYSIS

- 1 Climate is a force acting on every fault line.** A failed monsoon does not stay an agricultural statistic. It compresses rural incomes, accelerates migration to already-stressed cities, and feeds inter-state friction over shared rivers. The threat is indirect but systemic.
- 2 Geography makes India unusually exposed.** A long coastline with major ports and naval bases, a Himalayan frontier dependent on fragile glacial systems and high-altitude logistics, and a densely populated, agrarian heartland all sit in the path of climate shocks. Frontier regions that India holds as integral parts of its sovereign territory require resilient infrastructure to remain secure.
- 3 The armed forces are increasingly first responders.** Floods, cyclones and landslides routinely pull in the military for relief. This humanitarian role is valuable, but its rising frequency competes with core defence preparedness and budgets.
- 4 Resource scarcity is a recognised conflict driver.** Competition over water, fertile land and fisheries can trigger localised violence and complicate diplomacy. Scarcity rarely starts a war on its own, yet it reliably raises the temperature of existing disputes.

5 **The institutional gap is the real weakness.** India has strong individual bodies but no apex (<https://ujiyari.com/vocab/apex/>) platform that fuses climate science, intelligence and strategic planning. Environment sits with one ministry, disasters with NDMA, defence with another, and the economy elsewhere. No one owns the intersection.

DATA AND INSTITUTIONS VAULT

CARRY THESE INTO THE EXAM HALL.

NDMA (National Disaster Management Authority): apex body under the Disaster Management Act, 2005 (<https://ujiyari.com/terms/disaster-management-act-2005/>), chaired by the Prime Minister.

National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC), 2008: eight national missions, including the National Water Mission and the National Mission for Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem.

Threat multiplier: a framing used widely in global security literature to describe climate change's effect on fragile states.

Comprehensive security / non-traditional security: core concepts in GS Paper 3 internal-security syllabus.

MoEFCC and the National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS): the two pillars that currently plan in separate silos.

India's climate posture: Net-zero target by 2070, with adaptation and resilience as national priorities alongside mitigation (<https://ujiyari.com/vocab/mitigation/>).

THE DEBATE

For elevating environmental security: Ecological stability underpins food, water, livelihoods and territorial integrity. Ignoring it means planning for yesterday's wars while losing ground to today's slow-moving threats. A formal doctrine ensures budgets, intelligence and infrastructure account for climate risk.

Against securitising the environment: Framing ecology as a security matter can militarise a problem that needs welfare, regulation and adaptation. It may channel scarce funds toward defence framing and surveillance rather than mitigation, and could let governments justify hard measures in the name of "security".

Balanced verdict: The goal is mainstreaming (<https://ujiyari.com/vocab/mainstreaming/>), not militarisation. Environmental security should inform strategic planning and infrastructure, but mitigation and adaptation must stay civilian-led, rights-respecting and development-oriented. Recognising ecology as a precondition for security strengthens, rather than displaces, the development agenda.

HOW TO THINK ABOUT THIS (TRANSFERABLE SKILL)

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When an issue looks purely environmental or economic, ask: which existing tension does it sharpen? Map the second-order effects (migration, scarcity, instability) rather than the first-order event. This converts a single-subject topic into a cross-cutting answer that links GS3 environment with GS3 internal security and GS2 governance, exactly the synthesis examiners reward.

DIAGRAM-IN-WORDS

Climate shock (weak monsoon / glacial melt / sea-level rise) -> resource stress (water, food, land) -> livelihood loss + migration -> social and inter-state friction + frontier/coastal vulnerability -> military diverted to relief + strategic exposure -> need for integrated environmental-security doctrine

THE WAY FORWARD

- ① **Create an integrating mechanism.** Establish an environmental-security cell linking the NSCS, MoEFCC, NDMA and economic ministries to fuse climate intelligence with strategic planning.
- ② **Climate-risk map critical assets.** Audit ports, naval bases, frontier logistics, power and water infrastructure for climate vulnerability and harden them.
- ③ **Adopt green defence.** Reduce the armed forces' carbon and water footprint and climate-proof cantonments and forward posts.
- ④ **Align adaptation finance with security planning.** Treat resilient water, agriculture and coastal-zone investment as strategic, not merely developmental.
- ⑤ **Strengthen regional water and climate diplomacy.** Use cooperative frameworks to manage shared rivers and disaster response, reflecting India's interests and official positions.
- ⑥ **Keep mitigation civilian-led.** Pursue net-zero, renewables and ecosystem restoration through development institutions, so security framing complements rather than captures climate action.

THE TAKEAWAY BOX

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Argue that environmental security is a dimension of comprehensive national security, evidence the threat-multiplier mechanism, flag the institutional silo problem, and recommend mainstreaming without militarisation.

“Environmental security is not a softer cousin of national security; it is the ground on which all other security stands.”

NDMA and the Disaster Management Act, 2005; NAPCC’s eight missions; National Mission for Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem; India’s 2070 net-zero target; non-traditional vs traditional security.

Balancing the duty to protect citizens with the risk that “security” framing can erode rights and crowd out welfare spending; the intergenerational (<https://ujivari.com/vocab/intergenerational/>) justice of acting on slow-moving threats.

Builds on questions about non-traditional security threats and the role of climate change in internal security and disaster management.

GS3 internal security (threat multipliers), GS3 environment (climate adaptation), GS2 governance (institutional coordination), and disaster management.

Sources: *Down To Earth* (<https://www.downtoearth.org.in>), *Press Information Bureau* (<https://pib.gov.in>)

Source: Environmental Security Must Be a National Priority — Ujivari.com | Free UPSC & State PCS Editorial Analysis

KEY ARGUMENTS AT A GLANCE

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Ecological stress, water and food insecurity, climate-induced migration and resource conflict now constitute a strategic threat to the Indian state, and should be formally elevated within national-security doctrine and planning.

 **SUPPORTING**

- Climate change acts as a ‘threat multiplier’ that aggravates existing fault lines: water disputes, internal displacement, border vulnerability in the Himalayas, and coastal naval-base exposure.
- Resource scarcity (water, fertile land, fisheries) is a recognised driver of internal and trans-boundary conflict, and India’s dense, agrarian, climate-exposed geography heightens this risk.
- Existing institutions treat environment and security in separate silos, leaving no apex body to integrate climate intelligence with strategic planning.

 **COUNTER**

Securitising the environment risks militarising what is fundamentally a governance and development challenge, diverting resources to defence framing rather than mitigation, adaptation and welfare.

 **WAY FORWARD**

Embed environmental security in the national-security architecture through a dedicated cell, climate-risk mapping of critical infrastructure, green defence practices, and integration of adaptation finance with strategic planning, while keeping mitigation a civilian-led priority.


MAINS ANSWER FRAMEWORK

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QUESTION

Environmental degradation has moved from being a development concern to a strategic national-security threat. Critically examine, and suggest how India can mainstream environmental security into its national-security planning. (250 words)

INTRODUCTION

Traditional security focused on territorial defence against external aggression. The 21st century has expanded the concept to non-traditional security, where environmental degradation directly threatens the survival, stability and sovereignty of the state.

BODY

Environmental security operates as a threat multiplier. Erratic monsoons and shrinking groundwater undermine agrarian livelihoods, fuelling distress migration that strains urban and inter-state stability. Glacial retreat in the Himalayas affects river flows, raising the salience of trans-boundary water with neighbours and the integrity of high-altitude military logistics along the frontier, which India holds as integral to its sovereign territory. Sea-level rise endangers coastal cities and naval assets.

Extreme events divert the armed forces into recurring disaster relief, eroding combat readiness. Yet India's institutions remain siloed: the environment ministry, defence establishment, NDMA and economic ministries plan separately.

There is no apex mechanism to fuse climate intelligence with strategic foresight. Critics rightly warn that securitisation can militarise a development problem and crowd out adaptation spending.

The answer is not militarisation but mainstreaming: treating ecological stability as a precondition for national security while keeping mitigation civilian-led.

CONCLUSION

India should formally recognise environmental security in its strategic doctrine, build an integrating institution, and align adaptation finance with security planning, so that ecological resilience becomes a pillar of comprehensive national security.


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