

13. Defence Cooperation as an Emerging Tool to Complement Military Strategy

Lieutenant General KJ Singh

Abstract

Defence cooperation and defence diplomacy have emerged as potent instruments for shaping military strategy as part of national security. The advanced countries are able to develop alliances, linkages and even dependencies utilising these tools, consequently, they are able to pursue their national interests and achieve a fair degree of strategic autonomy. India, despite emerging as a rising economy with an enviable reputation in UN peace-keeping, remains tentative in its approach, thereby not able to optimise its potential. It will be pragmatic for India to review its current policy, plans and engagement matrix.

Introduction

The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting.

- Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*

General: The most visible and effective manifestation of a strategic relationship between countries is cooperative engagement in the sphere of defence. While the world is indeed struggling to balance the dynamic trends of globalisation with nationalism, the shift from geopolitics to geoeconomics and the increased focus on connectivities, the military dimension remains the core of a nation's Comprehensive National Power (CNP). It is the power that gives the much coveted 'strategic autonomy' to prosecute policies in furtherance of national interests to achieve the desired outcomes. Most nations enunciate these goals and objectives in the form of a clearly promulgated national strategy which includes military strategy. An essential sub-set of military or security strategy is defence cooperation, also referred to as defence diplomacy, which, if applied in

a synergised and imaginative manner, can be a shaping instrument of military strategy. This has found reflection in a plethora of promulgated and published defence cooperation plans and White Papers, most notably by advanced countries like the United States of America (USA), United Kingdom (UK) and even regional forums like the European Union (EU). Countries like India, which have traditionally given only peripheral importance to defence cooperation and have worked in stand-alone or silo type of compartmentalised structures, are now being forced to look at the synergistic and symbiotic relationship among foreign policy, military strategy and defence cooperation. The recently instituted Defence Planning Committee (DPC) headed by the National Security Adviser (NSA), which is proposed to be the apex decision-making body in India, has given due importance to defence diplomacy and cooperation by including it as one of four verticals or sub-committees, along with policy and strategy planning and capability building; and defence manufacturing.

Regional Cooperation: Notwithstanding alternate swings between globalisation and insular streaks of nationalism exemplified by ‘America First’ and Brexit, regional cooperation and multilateralism have enhanced the scope of defence cooperation to newer multilateral fora like the Quadrilateral Initiative (QUAD), Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), besides the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and European Union (EU). It has also resulted in the formation of regional defence dialogue fora like the Shangri La Dialogue and Halifax Forum. It has even extended into newer formats of diplomacy in the form of the 2+2 dialogue, which includes Foreign and Defence Ministers on both sides, like the 2+2 dialogue of India with the USA and with Australia. This in itself is a validation of the symbiotic relationship between foreign policy and defence cooperation.

Preview

This chapter is laid out in the following parts:

- Terminologies and Conceptual Framework.
- Objectives and Platforms: Defence Cooperation.
- Defence Cooperation Models and Common Norms.
- Indian Approach-Historical Perspective and Current Status.
- Roadmap for Way Forward.

Terminologies and Conceptual Framework

Nuanced Context: While it is common to use terms like defence cooperation

and defence diplomacy in an interchangeable framework, they have subtle differences and have to be understood in a broad context of diplomatic parlance and current understanding of these terms, in a more nuanced manner. The important relevant terms are discussed briefly in the succeeding paragraphs.

Diplomacy: Diplomacy in a basic form is described as the art / technique of the practice of conducting international relations. It is classically defined as the conduct of international relations by negotiations and promoting goodwill and mutual trust rather than use of force, propaganda and recourse to law (increasingly being referred to as 'lawfare'). A relevant example being the Chinese activities in the South China Sea, based on a one-sided interpretation of treaties and historical records like the 'Nine-Dash Line' in the South China Sea backed up by imaginative cartography. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* states that the goal of diplomacy is to further a state's interests as dictated by geography, history and economics. Safeguarding the state's independence, security, and integrity is of prime importance; preserving the widest possible freedom of action for the state is nearly as important.¹ This freedom is now referred to as 'strategic autonomy', which can be explained in the Chinese actions of converting reefs in the South China Sea into military bases despite the ruling of international bodies, American threats and the pleas of the littoral states.

Defence Diplomacy: Military and defence are generally used in an inter-changeable manner, however, defence appears to be a more appropriate term, specially when used with diplomacy to convey a peaceful and inclusive connotation. The term 'military' is commonly utilised to describe activities undertaken by the uniformed components of the nation's uniformed establishment i.e. the Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps and auxiliary forces. The term 'defence' may be used to imply the entire defence establishment to include the non-defence structures like the Defence Research and Development Organisation, Ordnance Factories, Defence University and associated bureaucracy. Defence diplomacy refers to the pursuit of foreign policy objectives through the peaceful employment of defence resources and capabilities.² It is also described as a set of activities carried out mainly by the representatives of the defence department, as well as other state institutions, aimed at pursuing the foreign policy interests of the state in the fields of security and defence policy, and whose actions are based on the use of negotiations and other diplomatic instruments.³ This benign form of engagement is often

associated with conflict prevention, capability building and promoting mutual understanding.

Definitions: Defence Diplomacy: Major General Ng Chee Khern, Air Force Chief of the Republic of Singapore, summed it up as, “In defence diplomacy, we seek to develop mutually beneficial relationships with friendly countries and armed forces to contribute to a stable international and regional environment.”⁴ Defence diplomacy is defined by Anton du Plessis, in a rather narrow sense, as the “use of military personnel, including service attaches, in support of conflict prevention and resolution. Among a great variety of activities, it includes providing assistance in the development of democratically accountable armed forces”. Du Plessis goes on to give a broader definition of military diplomacy as “the use of armed forces in operations other than war, building on their trained expertise and discipline to achieve national and foreign objectives abroad”. He also gives Cottey’s and Foster’s inclusive definition of defence diplomacy (alternatively international defence diplomacy) as “the peace-time use of armed forces and related infrastructure (primarily Defence Ministries) as a tool of foreign and security policy and more specifically use of military cooperation and assistance.”⁵

Linkages: Foreign Policy and Defence Diplomacy: Diplomacy is the first line of defence and defence the last but in between is the delicate art of military diplomacy. The military is an additional instrument and avenue which can help to avert and delay conflicts even if it may not achieve conflict resolution for which diplomacy and other avenues may be needed. Diplomacy and force should not be seen as opposing ends of the spectrum of national policy. The traditional belief of using one only when the other fails needs to be replaced as seeing them in seamless complementarity. ⁶ A right balance has to be struck among foreign policy, security interests and strengthening military relations through foreign policy measures like training programmes, equipment transfer, security exchanges/dialogues and confidence-building measures. These and other such measures lead to strengthening of the security relationship between countries. Military or defence diplomacy is neither exclusive nor outside diplomacy. In fact, it is a subset and, consequently, is the pitch and tenor of the overall relationship.

Coercive Diplomacy: Historically, militaries were utilised as an instrument of statecraft to achieve national interests. The trend was more evident in colonial Navies of the 18th and 19th centuries, which led to the coinage of the term ‘gunboat diplomacy’. Defence diplomacy is distinct and different from the concept of gunboat diplomacy or coercive diplomacy,

which is generally understood to be motivated by a desire to intimidate potential adversaries. An apt example of coercive diplomacy would be deployment of the Seventh Fleet in the Bay of Bengal by the United States of America during the 1971 operations. The action failed to achieve its objective and could be termed as an exercise in futility but it also served to underscore the limitations of gunboat diplomacy, specially in the current context though it has utility in terms of signalling and in exchanges, where asymmetry and dependency may force capitulation by the weaker party. The reported American ultimatum to Pakistan during the Kargil conflict did have a considerable influence on Pakistan's decision to withdraw.

Military Power: Last Resort: Kautilya has, in his seminal wisdom, postulated that military power should be the last and least preferred instrument of statecraft. Yet, it will be in order and pertinent to very briefly look at the fact that military capacity could well be an insurance against failure of diplomacy around the world.⁷ In very broad terms, manifestations could be preventive and coercive in nature. While preventive and persuasive forms have been discussed in brief and later in some detail, the coercive form is recommended to be applied as an exception and the very last resort, when all the other instruments and components have been exhausted and their articulation has failed to have the desired effect. Some of the manifestations of this are posturing, like deployment of fleets, missile tests (North Korean missile tests), and, in extremely rare cases, limited interventions.

Defence Cooperation: This is an important and vital component of defence diplomacy and can be defined as any arrangement between two or more nations, where their armed forces work together to achieve mutual aims and objectives.⁸ The basic objectives of defence cooperation include knowledge sharing and understanding of doctrines and operational expertise. This, combined with joint training and mutual discussions, serves to develop interoperability, which may be required for disaster relief and joint operations like peace-keeping. This also serves to enhance situational awareness, particularly in the maritime domain.⁹ In the geoeconomic domain, it includes acquisition of weapons and equipment and ideally sharing knowhow, Transfer of Technology (TOT) and even joint production like in the case of the T series of tanks like the T-72 and T-90 between India and Russia.

Scope: As explained earlier, coercive or gunboat diplomacy, including aggressive signalling has its own limitations and is in an entirely different realm, hence, it is not discussed in detail in this chapter. Also excluded from this

discussion is the intelligence gathering function, which is indeed an inevitable adjunct of defence diplomacy and may include open source information gathering by transparent as well as covert means, which is often denied. A relevant case study of covert means are the activities of Pakistani diplomats, who were caught indulging in objectionable activities in their mission in Kathmandu in December 1999 in the aftermath of the hijacking of the IC-819 to Kandahar. These activities, unfortunately, often include subversive activities like financing and arming terrorists, even hijackers, as well as fiscal terrorism through the circulation of counterfeit currency.

Objectives and Platforms: Defence Cooperation

Objectives: The basic objectives of defence cooperation are as follows:

- Promote internal (also referred to as homeland security in some countries), regional and global peace.
- Enhance domain and situational awareness, including maritime awareness.
- Forge mutual understanding and better appreciation on security challenges as well as enhance transparency and openness.
- Share and imbibe best practices, including niche capabilities like peace-keeping, cyber warfare, high altitude operations, etc as also functioning of the armed forces of relatively more advanced countries.
- Develop interoperability and capability for joint peace-keeping operations, regional interventions particularly for disaster relief and rescue.
- Ensure enforcement of law of commons, specially with regard to freedom of navigation and passage on Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOCs), combat sea piracy and coordinate rescue missions on the high seas.
- Promote joint research, production, transfer of technology for development of weapons and equipment.
- Share and build capability to tackle common challenges like hybrid/sub-conventional warfare, terrorism, cyber warfare and space through collective wisdom.
- Foster traditions and a healthy cooperative competitive spirit through sports, adventure, ceremonials and exhibitions.
- Sign/execute defence agreements/Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs)/treaties, which could range from mutual assistance to cooperation. These ensure that respective positions and convergences are identified, agreed and recorded to enhance trust, and to prevent/minimise misunderstanding at a later stage.

Platforms for Defence Cooperation

Defence cooperation can be fostered through a variety of activities like exchange of high- level defence related visits, dialogue on security challenges and port calls; training exchanges and many more, some of which are listed as follows:

- **Security and Strategic Defence Talks/Dialogues:** Multi-tiered dialogues to enable an understanding of mutual concerns and establish areas of common and shared interest. These dialogues could be at the political level of the national leadership: head of state/government/ ministry and the civil and/or military professional/specialist level within the government and the armed forces. Some relevant examples are the Singapore Summit talks between Presidents Trump of the USA and Kim of North Korea, and the Wuhan Summit between President Xi of China and Prime Minister (PM) Modi of India. These talks can also be programmed at the ministerial or staff level. A new format gaining prominence is the 2+2 talks, with both sides fielding Foreign and Defence Ministers/Secretaries.
- **Border Liaison/ Interaction and Flag Meetings:** These meetings, held at the field level, serve to air and smoothen out differences/grievances at the local level in the field. These are held regularly by India and China at designated meeting points like Nathu La, Bum La, Chushul, etc. They are also held bi-annually between India and Myanmar.
- **Delegation Visits and Exchanges:** Visits and mutual exchanges serve to enhance understanding, domain awareness as also promote confidence and transparency.
- **Informal Contacts and Track 2:** Contacts at all levels, formal or informal like course tours of the National Defence College (NDC), Track 2 dialogue, and alumni interaction serve to foster a better comprehension of the respective positions. They also serve to reduce animosity and enable a more conducive approach towards problem solving and a certain degree of interoperability.
- **Seminars, Conferences and Think-tanks:** Participation in international conferences, seminars and forums like the Shangri La Dialogue or Halifax Forum provides opportunities to articulate own perceptions, including red lines, and interact with others to forge collective wisdom. The Indian Ocean Symposium (ION), steered by India, is a path-breaking initiative for cooperation amongst Indian Ocean littorals.
- **Training Teams:** Providing training and capacity building like the US and British teams in Afghanistan and the Indian Military Team (IMTRAT)

in Bhutan comprises one of the most effective instruments and is also reflective of serious commitment.

- **Assigning Attaches and Liaison Officers:** Posting defence and Service specific attaches provides interface, structure and continuity in relationships. The USA and China have the widest coverage, covering more than 100 countries, whereas India covers only 44 odd countries. In certain cases, in addition to Defence Attaches (DAs), Liaison Officers (LOs) are also assigned like the Indian LO in the US Pacific Command and another one in the Infantry School in the UK.
- **Joint Maritime Patrol and Surveillance:** An emerging instrument of defence cooperation in the maritime domain is the monitoring of the SLOCs and Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) through joint or coordinated patrolling and surveillance to combat crime on the high seas, specially against piracy.
- **Joint Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief:** The scale of tragedy often dictates the multilateral humanitarian relief effort during major disasters. This was amply highlighted by India's speedy response during the tsunami of December 2004 and the earthquake in Nepal. Assistance and coordination is often in the fields of communications, joint relief operations, mutual assistance, medical and sharing of resources, etc.
- **Multi-Nation/ Joint Exercises:** Exercises involving two or more countries and representation from one or more military Service serve to enhance interoperability and understanding. Some relevant examples are the SCO exercises and Malabar series of naval war games.
- **UN Peace-Keeping Activities:** These activities may include a range of activities like peace enforcement/ making; peace-keeping, peace building, support and logistics activities, including training.
- **Military Games and Sports:** Participation and conduct of sports events at the local, regional and global levels like the World Military Games at Secunderabad promote bonhomie and healthy competition.
- **Military Adventure Activities:** Defence cooperation is also promoted through joint adventure activities like mountaineering. HIMEX, conducted in 1994, was one such endeavour, which unfortunately has fizzled out.
- **Exhibitions, Parades, Displays and Commemorations:** Ceremonial events to commemorate campaigns like World Wars, exhibitions, parades, memorial services and battle study tours are also being utilised as another avenue for defence cooperation.

- **Equipment Fairs and Exhibitions:** Such events serve as a platform to exhibit and market weapons and equipment for commercial, knowledge sharing and even to showcase capabilities.
- **Use of Training Areas/Ranges:** Countries like Singapore lack facilities for training and have been utilising ranges and training areas in India and Australia. Some niche testing facilities in the aerospace and maritime fields, located in advanced weapon producing countries, are still utilised by other nations that don't have such facilities. One such example is the Baikonur range and torpedo testing facilities in Kazakhstan.
- **Professional Competitions:** Professional competitions like the Cambrian Patrol, and Tank Biathlon in Russia foster competition and knowledge sharing.
- **Creation of Infrastructure and Connectivities:** The sheer range of Chinese activities under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and Maritime Silk Corridor in projects like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor(CEPC), Hambantota port development and Hullemalle airport in Maldives are apt examples of creating dependencies. India has also, in a modest way, maintained roads in Bhutan through Project Dantak, built the Zaranj-Delaram road connecting Iran to Afghanistan, and a road in Myanmar linking Kalemayo and Kalewa to Moreh. Overall, our track record in this field does not inspire much confidence.

Defence Cooperation Models and Common Norms

US Model: Most advanced countries have well defined and clearly enunciated national security policies and objectives, which are regularly published in the form of White Papers and doctrines. The USA has clearly spelt out its national security strategy, service specific strategies and guidelines. Relevant to this analysis is Joint Publication 3-20 on Security Cooperation, published on May 23, 2017, which is a detailed manual for understanding the US' approach to defence cooperation. Even armed forces with the dubious distinction of opacity like those of Russia and China, have started publishing sanitised versions of their strategy in the form of White Papers. All these nations follow a 'top down' approach, which starts with the authority at the apex laying down objectives and national strategy. Their plans are on a long-term basis and have a certain amount of continuity, as was reflected in their insistence on signing a Defence Framework Agreement with India in June 2008 for a period of ten years. The American system leverages the area specialist system, with defence diplomats

spending nearly a life-time in their core areas of specialisation. In the US model, retired defence officers are drafted into diplomatic positions, like Admiral Harry Harris was appointed as Ambassador to South Korea after his stint as Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific Command.

British System: The United Kingdom has identified defence diplomacy as one of the military's eight defence missions, and aims to utilise defence diplomacy to "dispel hostility, build and maintain trust and assist in the development of democratically accountable armed forces" to make a "significant contribution to conflict prevention and resolution." Defence diplomacy is often developed and implemented in close coordination with the Foreign and Development Ministries to ensure coherence and focus across the government.¹⁰ These are as an outcome of structured reviews, which in the UK was termed as the Strategic Defence Review, which stipulates conflict prevention as the core mission. It even resulted in the creation of a new and eighth mission of military diplomacy, which, in turn, stipulates three specific Military Tasks (MT), which contribute to this mission. These are as follows:

- MT-16: Arms control, non-proliferation, confidence and security-building measures.
- MT-17: Outreach activities designed to contribute to security and stability through bilateral assistance and cooperation programmes.
- Mt-18: Military training cooperation with foreign military forces.¹¹

Chinese Framework: China has outlined some of its policies in the form of a White Paper, which indicates that defence diplomacy is an integral and critical part of Chinese foreign policy. China maintains DAs in 109 countries, sends more than 100 military delegations abroad every year and receives more than 200 visiting military delegations, thereby maintaining a high tempo of consultations and dialogue. China has a well organised National Defence University, which has customised and tailor-made programmes for trainees from target countries, specially from Africa. In fact, as a matter of 'realpolitik' and to further the priority programmes like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and Maritime Silk Corridor, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has reached out to a large number of countries like Maldives, Nepal, Myanmar, Bangladesh, besides their trusted ally, Pakistan. Consequently, Chinese equipment and arms form the bulk of the inventory in these countries. China is, thus, ensuring continued dependence of these countries for servicing, retro-fitting and spares. China has a very large presence in the Ordnance Factories Wah and Heavy Industries Taxila through

companies like NORINCO. China is planning joint production of aircraft (JF-17) besides tanks, guns and a plethora of equipment, already under assisted/joint production in Pakistan.

Russian Model: While the erstwhile USSR and later Soviet Russia has a comparative model, one noteworthy aspect is the management of techno-commercial aspects. The Russians have been trendsetters in this field and besides supplying equipment to a large number of countries, they have also created dependencies for servicing and repairs, thereby developing leverages. India, being a large customer, has a separate and functional Indo-Russian Military Technical Cooperation Committee.

Common Norms: An analytical and comparative study of models prevalent in various countries throws up the following norms:

- Almost all countries follow a 'top down' approach, which entails strategic guidance from the top, with enunciation of the national security strategy.
- Goals/objectors for defence cooperation are derived from the national security strategy and are clearly spelt out.
- Most countries have long-term plans stretching to five to ten years along with annual ones derived from the long-term plans. The USA signed a ten-year framework plan with India in 2005.
- Periodic review of plans is carried out, along with clearly spelt out milestones like the Strategic Defence Review in the UK and Quadrennial Review in the USA.
- Most countries utilise a trained cadre of defence diplomats, including area and language specialists. Some even have a military diplomatic corps.
- Planning is based on an engagement matrix, which prioritises target countries and allocates resources and efforts accordingly.

Indian Approach: Historical Perspective and Current Status

Historical Perspective: India inherited the British system, and in the initial years, was very reluctant with regard to defence cooperation, essentially confining its activities to UN-led peace-keeping missions. This trend continued till the 1962 War, characterised by non-alignment and 'Panch Sheel', which essentially meant minimal importance to military diplomacy. It was after the rude shock of the debacle in 1962 that India woke up and attempted basic and emergency acquisitions. This need was further highlighted in the 1965 War and compounded by Pakistan becoming part of the US-led Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO) and Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO).

These factors resulted in India beginning to rely on Soviet origin equipment and, at one time, the share of Soviet equipment approximated 70 percent of the inventory and the signing of a defence treaty with the USSR in 1971 as a prelude to the Bangladesh War. Later, India also signed a strategic defence cooperation partnership pact in 2000. Notwithstanding these initiatives, the basic approach was essentially 'low key' and 'reactive', wherein defence cooperation activities were mostly restricted to attendance on training exchanges/courses and visits by the senior leadership, related to our equipment purchases. Enhanced interaction with other militaries was seen as an expensive exercise, which was even adversely commented on by the auditors.

New Approach: A new phase in defence cooperation was ushered in from 2001. Perceptions have changed for the better, and there is increasing realisation within the government of the positive role that defence diplomacy can play, in furthering our interests through non-traditional means. The Indian armed forces undertake an enhanced range of cooperative activities and even bilateral and multilateral military exercises, in concert with numerous militaries of the world, leading to mutual benefit and enhanced trust and confidence in each other. Despite this realisation, in 2008, India had representation in only 37 countries against 51 nations having defence missions in India. In June 2005, India inked a historic framework agreement with the USA laying out a roadmap for ten years as also marking a new phase of multiple engagement partners instead of reliance on only Russia. Besides the USA, India has also elevated its defence diplomacy to the strategic level with Britain, the EU, France, Australia and Japan.

Drivers of Changed Environment: The current wave of dynamic change can be ascribed to the realisation of India emerging as a rising power and breaking into the top economies. The Indian defence forces have acquired a status of being in the top bracket. The market potential of India in general and the defence market in specific has also acted as the catalyst for the heightened interest in defence cooperation. A striking example is that as many as 113 countries have defence missions in New Delhi, compared to 51 nations only a decade ago. India has also emerged as a net provider of security, a stabilising influence and a key enabler in its extended neighbourhood. The US made a historic and dramatic shift by renaming the Pacific Command as the Indo-Pacific Command. The nature of emerging threats like terrorism, cyber warfare, and militarisation of space defy borders, and mega disasters promote enhanced cooperation. India has taken part in 43 peace-keeping missions, with a total

contribution exceeding 180,000 troops and a significant number of police personnel having been deployed. India is the third largest troop contributor with more than 7,500 personnel deployed with ten UN peace-keeping missions of whom 995 are police personnel, including the first female police unit formed under the UN.¹² The Indian armed forces, despite modest resources, are envied for their apolitical, secular and people friendly approach. Hence, most other Armies seek opportunities to work and train with the Indian armed forces due to their sheer professionalism and operational experience spread over a variety of challenging terrain.

Appraisal of Current Indian Model: The current model in India operates with a major void as there is no promulgated national security strategy and guidance is derived from the Raksha Mantri's (RM's) Operational Directive. This Operational Directive is neither intended, nor designed, to provide any useful direction for defence cooperation. Hence, it is a 'bottom up' model, more like an annual calendar of visits, talks, exercises and such exchanges. It is, more often than not, episodic in response and event driven, with no real delegation, hence, every visit or exchange needs a clearance through a tortuous bureaucratic process, very often leading all the way to the desk of the Cabinet Secretary. We, at best, remain tentative in our approach in delegation and allowing the defence forces to progress defence cooperation through an agreed policy. All control is still exercised through the Ministry of Defence through the Joint Secretary (PIC) and funnelled through Ministry of External Affairs for political clearance even on routine issues. In 2018, India has only 70 DAs posted in 44 countries and with multiple accreditation, it somehow manages to cover 91 countries, which is a sub-optimal compromise. In contrast, 113 countries have their DAs in New Delhi.¹³ The diplomatic world is governed strictly by the quid pro quo approach and with no matching reciprocity from India, 60 countries may, at some time, consider a review on retaining their attaches in India. While all efforts are made by Service Headquarters (HQ) and Integrated Defence Staff (IDS) HQ, it basically amounts to multiple stakeholders vying for their share of the pie as there is no cogent long-term plan. Most common norms highlighted consequent to a comparative analysis of the models being followed in the advanced countries are conspicuous by their absence in our case. Even in project execution, our progress and commitment has been described as lacklustre compared to the focussed approach of the Chinese. The most worrying aspect is that our bureaucratic system, with multiple links, leads to a situation where promises

and commitments made by even the visiting chiefs and Raksha Mantri are not honoured, leading to loss of credibility.

Military-to-Military Contacts: The Indian Army remains a shining and rather unique example of being apolitical and working within constitutional norms in a neighbourhood characterised by armed forces controlling the levers of foreign and defence policies. In such a situation, our military could have been utilised to leverage military-to-military contacts. A case in point is the USA, which despite its deep-rooted democratic traditions, utilises the US Army for contacts with the Pakistan Army. This approach could have paid handsomely in Myanmar, Nepal and, even to an extent, in opening new channels with Pakistan.

Roadmap for Way Forward

Visualised National Security Objectives: As per considered opinion, the Indian national security objectives can be stated as follows:

- Securing the country, its territory, resources, interests and citizens, including those abroad, against conventional and non-conventional security threats.
- Enhancing defence capability by development of material, equipment, infrastructure, technology and knowledge that impact India's security and, in turn, Comprehensive National Power (CNP).
- Creating an environment for India's development by providing conducive conditions for pursuing a strategic dialogue with the major powers and in the extended neighbourhood, including undertaking defence cooperation activities.

Desired Outcomes: Key desired goals/objectives of defence cooperation in keeping with the national security objectives are enumerated as follows:

- Promote national security interests by building relationships and orchestrating appropriate measures.
- Harmonise stands and opinions on security issues and challenges in the extended neighbourhood.
- Promote interoperability and knowledge sharing with a view to boost own capabilities by exchange of best practices and niche capabilities.
- Joint development of equipment and transfer of technology to boost own indigenous capabilities and defence manufacturing eco-system.
- Promote dependencies in training by establishing training teams.

- Enhance export of military equipment and create avenues for joint production, repairs and servicing.

Engagement Matrix: Defence cooperation, being an all encompassing field with a large number of countries and covering a vast range, it will only be pragmatic to prioritise. This exercise should ideally lead to an engagement matrix, which has to be applied as part of a long-term plan yet remain open to periodic updations and correctives to cater for dynamism of the environment. These could be classified as per the representative model indicated:

- **Top Priority:** The criticality of the response and the severity of challenges dictate that the first priority should be accorded to countries which have a conflict situation or potential conflagration due to contested borders, like Pakistan and China. While there is a need to attempt a long-term confidence-building programme, in the near and mid-terms, it is important to promote confidence-building measures like hot lines, flag meetings, border talks and all possible measures to keep the situation under control.
- **Priority -I.** These include two categories;
 - **Immediate Neighbourhood:** The government has mandated a 'Neighbourhood First' policy and utilising this criteria, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Afghanistan and Maldives are to be given enhanced and sustained attention.
 - **Capacity Enhancers:** These are countries that help us to enhance our capabilities and have an added relevance in our quest to develop a self-reliant military industrial eco system. Some of the countries in this category are the USA, Russia, France, Israel, Britain, Japan, Germany, Australia and South Korea.
- **Priority-II:** The list of these countries includes those in the extended neighbourhood, specially the Indo-Pacific region. The strategic importance of countries is also a function of their role in energy security, the diaspora, counter-terrorism and own investments. It may also be a function of Chankaya's criteria of the Mandala theory by which the Central Asian Republics (CARs), Mongolia and Vietnam assume importance due to the counter-leverage on own adversaries. Emerging economies like Brazil also figure in this reckoning.
- **Priority-III:** The rest of the countries appear in this list yet each needs to be given a separate treatment and not treated in the manner of 'one size-fits all'.

Structural and Functional Imperatives: These are derived from common norms listed as part of the comparative evaluation of contemporary models.

- The defence cooperation plan should be a ‘top down’ plan, wherein clear-cut policy, targets and prioritisation of the engagement matrix have to be spelt out.
- The views of the armed forces and their advice should be factored in the formulation of policies, plans and engagement matrix.
- The defence diplomacy desk has to draw up a long-term plan with annual roll-over plans. These plans should be duly approved and have milestone checks and goals.
- Adequate budgetary provisions should be made, with flexibility of expenditure.
- Staffing levels have to be improved, both in quantity and quality, to cater for enhanced engagement by increasing the number of attaches and developing area and language specialisation.
- Considering the dynamism of the environment, regular feedback, periodic reviews and mid-course correctives should be applied.
- Delegation, both financial and functional, should be built in within the agreed policy and plans.

Conclusion

Defence cooperation can indeed be an enabling and shaping tool to prosecute the national security strategy to achieve national interests and acquire strategic autonomy. If India has to meet the obligations of a rising power, it is axiomatic that our current approach is reviewed and a well thought out long-term defence cooperation plan is operationalised with an appropriate structure and functional autonomy.

Notes

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