

Role of India's Defence Cooperation Initiatives in Meeting the Foreign Policy Goals

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Defence cooperation is an ideal tool to advance the national foreign policy objectives by building bridges of friendship, preventing conflicts, building mutual trust and capacities on a global basis. The process signals the political commitment to develop cooperative relations and dispel mistrust and misperception on issues of common military interest. The evolving geo-strategic realities necessitates that policy guidelines be formulated for integrated inter-ministerial planning on issues concerning the external security of the country. As India grows in stature, it needs to utilise defence diplomacy to the fullest extent to enhance its national interest.

After the Cold War, India's foreign relations have become multi-directional and diversified. New geo-strategic realities necessitate improvement of relations with the major powers, such as the US, EU, Russia, Japan and China and pursuance of an active 'Look East' policy in the extended neighbourhood, especially ASEAN countries.¹ Towards usage of a nation's 'soft power,' as part of defence diplomacy, role of international defence cooperation in gainfully supplementing diplomatic initiatives is increasingly being acknowledged the world over.² In view of geo-economics, gaining precedence over geo-politics even the tasking of defence forces the world over is undergoing a sea change. The pivotal role by Indian Armed Forces in creating stable conditions for the nation's economic development has also now been recognised.³

An important part of 'Defence Diplomacy' is defence cooperation. It can be defined as "any arrangement between two or more nations where their armed forces work together to achieve mutual aims and objectives".⁴ Broadly, defence cooperation aims at sharing of operational and doctrinal expertise, training and capability enhancement of one's own military, strengthening of ties with other countries and sales of weapons and military technologies. It also allows for the examination and imbibing of 'best practices', creates ability to operate alongside and enhances Maritime Domain Awareness, through a variety of information sharing mechanisms. With the interest of foreign armies for training in Indian Army establishments increasing considerably, the armed forces personnel from neighbouring countries, South East Asia, Central Asian

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Republics (CAR), African continent and a few developed countries are regularly attending military courses and being trained in India.⁵

This paper analyses the role of defence cooperation activities towards furtherance of foreign policy goals. It is laid out in four parts as follows:-

- Linkage between foreign policy and defence cooperation.
- India's major defence cooperation initiatives.
- Important benefits of defence cooperation to the foreign policy goals.
- Way ahead for defence cooperation initiatives.

Linkage between Foreign Policy and Defence Cooperation

The foreign policy of India seeks to promote an environment of peace and stability in its region and in the world, to enable India's accelerated socio-economic development and safeguarding its national security. However, it is important to note that unlike many nations like the US, India does not have any formally laid out National Security strategy through which consistent foreign policy goals could be established (same in turn makes many nations sceptical about steadiness in our approach towards foreign cooperation activities). Consequent to globalisation, the scope of international trade, finance and communications being influenced by external factors beyond the control of national governments has increased considerably. The same, in context of pursuance of foreign policy agendas, has in fact enhanced the relative importance of the armed forces, which by construct remain directly under the government control. Additionally, the emergence of international terrorism, as one of the primary threats to domestic and international security, has ushered in greater convergence in security perceptions among nations and has prompted closer security and defence-related contacts, exchanges and cooperation with a widening group of countries. The contribution of Indian Armed Forces to diplomacy can be gauged from the number of senior officers of the three Services, past and present, in many developing countries that have been trained in India. It may be recalled that some of the alumni of Indian Military Academy - YB Tun Hussain Bin Onn and Ibrahim bin Ismail, from Malaysia, rose to the position of Prime Minister of Malaysia and the rank of General,

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respectively. Similarly, Nepalese alumni like Arjun Narsing Rana, Bharat Kesar Singh and Rishi Kumar Pandey, in addition to present Army Chief General Rookmangud Katawal have risen to the rank of General in the Royal Nepalese Army. Such prominent personalities indeed have had better understanding of India's sensitivities and security concerns. Similar positive orientation has been achieved of countries like Bhutan, Nepal and Sri Lanka whose personnel undergo military training in India in large numbers.

A closer security dialogue and strengthening of defence cooperation with friendly countries remains an important objective and component of India's overall defence and foreign policies. The three key goals for India's foreign policy as identified by Indian Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon are, "Firstly, ensuring a peaceful periphery; secondly, relations with the major powers; and, thirdly, issues of the future, namely food security, water, energy and environment".⁶ To attain these goals, India has made vigorous efforts including defence cooperation initiatives to develop friendly and cooperative relations with all its neighbours and to strengthen engagement with the major powers of the world. However, currently, the defence cooperation engagement plan, in the absence of an overarching governmental guidelines, is drawn up by the Services and executed after clearance from the Cabinet Secretary (where applicable), the Ministry of External Affairs and the Ministry of Defence, thus making for a rather 'a bottom up' than a preferred 'top down' approach. The identified initiatives with various countries are based on a spirit of building mutual trust and understanding and independent of any caveats. These are largely implemented through institutionalised frameworks structured for the same (with Russia at the level of defence ministers; and with US, UK, France and Japan at the level of defence secretaries) or through offices of the concerned Defence Attaché.

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In order to exploit the full potential of the tool of defence cooperation, it is imperative that various agencies involved with the conceptualisation of the defence cooperation events (the MEA, MoD, Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff and the three Services) evolve a mutually consulted both long term (two to five years roll on plan) and short term (annual) defence cooperation plan so that these are implemented smoothly and with minimal slippages.

India's Major Defence Cooperation Initiatives

India is now engaged in a wide range of activities with other friendly countries, ranging from Chile and Brazil in the Far-West to Japan and Korea in the Far-East

and has concluded suitable defence cooperation agreements with over 30 countries. The broad objectives of defence cooperation between countries are:⁷

- To promote intra and extra regional peace and stability through dialogue and cooperation in the field of defence and security.
- To promote mutual understanding on defence and security challenges as well as to enhance transparency and openness.

The range of defence cooperation activities comprise of strategic security dialogues that enable understanding of the participant concerns and establishing areas of common interest.⁸ Also included are goodwill visits at the level of the Service Chiefs; professional defence and military expert exchanges; military training;⁹ combined exercises;¹⁰ reciprocal visits of warships, observers for exercises; gifting of equipment, sports and adventure activities; disaster management and humanitarian assistance; and cooperation in UN Peace Keeping Operations. Importantly defence cooperation activities are not structured and conducted in isolation but as part of a larger process. Keeping in view our future energy needs, India is attempting to expand its energy basket beyond West Asia and Africa by reaching out to areas as far as Sakhalin and Latin America (Venezuela). This will require our armed forces to undertake defence cooperation initiatives with such countries and be fully ready to support and secure our energy interests, if required. Major defence cooperation activities being undertaken by India with important countries/regions are enumerated as follows.

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Immediate Neighbourhood and Indian Ocean Region (IOR)

The recent period has seen increased instability and turbulence in India's neighbourhood.¹¹ With growing assertion of 'non-state' actors, Pakistan is passing through yet another defining phase in its history. India's other neighbours, specifically Nepal, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Sri Lanka, appear to be going through periods of instability, which could have spill-over effects on our security. Radicalisation of domestic environment in Bangladesh, inflow of illegal immigrants to North East India, cross border movement of Indian insurgent groups from Bangladesh and Myanmar, escalation of

violence in Sri Lanka and effects of actions against LTTE in southern India are issues of great security concern. While Nepal may be moving towards normalcy, security implications of its leanings towards China and fallouts of collusion of Nepal Maoists with Indian Naxalites, if undertaken, cannot be undermined. Therefore, defence cooperation with the countries in immediate neighbourhood is the primary concern of India. In the neighbouring countries, India has remained focused on capacity building or capability enhancement of its neighbours in the form of material support, where necessitated, or offering training facilities to help them meet their internal challenges as also to contribute towards meeting common security challenges in the region especially the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).¹²

Keeping in view the need to build ability to operate alongside with partner nations for meeting various challenges such as humanitarian and disaster relief and participation in peacekeeping operations, India also undertakes a number of other cooperative activities in the form of joint exercises and exchanging observers for exercises with countries in its neighbourhood.¹³

Naval cooperation is one of the most promising areas of military-to-military cooperation by virtue of its capacity to safeguard critical Sea Lanes of Communication and establish linkages through maritime bonding. India has played a crucial role in increasing positive maritime ties by undertaking various benign measures such as combined bilateral and multilateral exercises, port calls and military assistance for training to countries in the IOR. The Indian Navy has also spearheaded conduct of Indian Ocean Naval Symposium in 2008 in India, which provided an ideal forum for maritime confidence building measures and capacity building to address various asymmetric and transnational threats in the IOR.¹⁴

South East Asia: India's role in East and South East Asia, as part of its 'Look East Policy', is becoming more evident as it builds bilateral relations and trade links with China, seeks closer economic and political ties with South East Asian nations and places special emphasis on building strategic ties with Japan. In addition to the close vicinity of Andaman and Nicobar Islands to South East Asia, the region is of vital security interest to India to combat piracy, protect Sea Lanes of Communication, tackle terrorism, block narco-trade and curb gun running. To strengthen mutual relations, India has firmed up defence cooperation with major ASEAN countries in the last few years including Indonesia, Singapore, Vietnam, Philippines, Malaysia and Cambodia.¹⁵

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Indian Navy has initiated several maritime security and capacity-building measures such as countering piracy by joint exercises, specifically with Indonesia.¹⁶ In the 1999, it returned Japanese ship 'Alondra Rainbow' to Japanese authorities after rescuing it from pirates. It has participated in Tsunami relief measures in 2004-2005 with assistance extended to Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Maldives. Joint exercises conducted with the countries of the region have helped in developing capabilities to operate alongside.¹⁷ Malaysia, as also other ASEAN countries, have offered India a role in 'Eye in the Sky' project relating to joint military air patrols over the Straits of Malacca.

West Asia: Energy security for India's developmental needs, addressing issues related to terrorism and related violence and security of Indian Diaspora, numbering approximately 3.5 million, are matters of concern in West Asia. Training and naval interactions, including joint exercises and ship visits, constitute the core of defence cooperation with many countries of this region. Defence cooperation activities with Oman comprises of joint exercises;¹⁸ bilateral visits;¹⁹ and courses. The interest of Oman is chiefly in mechanised forces, Air Defence, equestrian field, Defence Services Staff College and the National Defence College.²⁰ There are also reports of Indian Navy's bid to set up a naval air staging area in Muscat to tackle the problem of piracy in the Gulf of Aden.²¹

With Qatar, the defence cooperation agreement includes joint training exercises, training of personnel and maritime cooperation.²² This agreement is being viewed by analysts as a landmark agreement just short of 'positioning Indian troops' in Qatar. With other countries as Saudi Arabia, UAE and Bahrain, defence cooperation is limited to ongoing exchange of courses and visits.²³ With Iran, India's military relationship is limited to the Navy and that too is at low levels.

Africa: Africa has evolved into a region of key strategic importance to major countries all over the world as a supplier of energy and natural resources. Currently, India has military-to-military cooperation activities, primarily related to the training field, with almost one-third of the African nations.²⁴ The key element in our engagements with Africa relates to the peacekeeping operations.²⁵ Indian naval ships have also conducted patrols off the African coast, at the request of Mozambique Government to provide coastal and maritime security during the African Union Summit held at Maputo in July 2003 and World Economic Forum Conference in 2004.²⁶ Defence cooperation activities with South Africa comprise of training such as of submarine personnel of South African Navy, professional exchanges, attendance on courses, joint exercises,²⁷ exchange of observers in exercises, visits and equipment cooperation - an example being the Casspir mine protected vehicle. A combined naval exercise conducted between India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA) along the Cape Town, called IBSAMAR, aimed at tackling terrorism at sea, has also showcased the South-South cooperation spirit of our foreign policy.

With Key Powers

Cooperative equations amongst the emerging major power centres, to a large extent, influences international geo-politics. Defence diplomacy is a predominant facet in the foreign policy of Western nations as also of China.²⁸ In this context, conduct of defence cooperation is an important indicator of improving relations with these countries.

United States (US): Military cooperation remains one of the most vibrant, visible, and proactive facet powering the transformation of US-India relations.²⁹ Both share common interests in maritime security, non-proliferation of WMD, fighting terrorism and a strategically stable Asia. India, in specific, stands to gain in the field of nuclear energy, space technology and through access to advanced US technology meeting important defence requirements in the domain of high end military platforms and systems.³⁰ India-US 'New Framework of Defence Relation,' a 10-year defence framework agreement signed in 2005, envisions expanded joint military exercises, increased defence-related trade, and the establishment of a defence and procurement production group.³¹ It also talks of collaborating in multinational operations 'when it is in their common interest'. Indo-US defence cooperation is being conducted in a most institutionalised manner.³² US and India have conducted over 24 military exercises with a view to develop ability to operate alongside since 2002, demonstrating the fast pace at which the military relations are progressing.³³

Russia: The relationship with Russia remains very important to the core of India's foreign policy interests. Indian interests vis-à-vis Russia include support in international forums, energy security, high end technology needs, especially in nuclear and space fields, and acquisition of defence equipment. Declaration on Strategic Partnership, signed in the year 2000, has elevated the bilateral relationship from a simple buyer-seller relationship to joint research, development and production. Both sides are in advanced stage of negotiations in the joint development and production of multi-role transport aircraft and fifth generation fighter aircraft. India is also acquiring aircraft carrier Admiral Gorshkov with likely delivery in 2012. Russia is the only country with whom India has an institutionalised mechanism at the level of defence ministers to monitor bilateral military technical cooperation. Joint Indo-Russian Army, naval and airborne exercises are a regular feature.³⁴

European Union (EU): India entered into 'Strategic Partnership' with the EU in 2004. This was followed by endorsement of a comprehensive Joint Action Plan setting out a road map for the EU-India Strategic Partnership.³⁵ Notwithstanding, India's goals are also to forge strong bilateral relations with several EU member states as well. EU countries have significant defence related technological expertise, infrastructure, and vast combat and peacekeeping experience.

United Kingdom (UK): Building on the achievements of the 'New Delhi Declaration' (2002) and 'India-UK Joint Declaration' (2004), India and UK have committed themselves to strengthening and deepening the bilateral comprehensive Strategic Partnership. The same is underpinned by growing economic ties and the presence of a large Indian Diaspora in the UK.³⁶ Defence cooperation, being developed through the India-UK Defence Consultative Group (DCG), forms an important part of Indian and British bilateral relationship. Presently India has many products of British origin in service such as aircraft carrier INS Viraat, Harrier aircraft and Sea King helicopters. Highlights of the bilateral programme include visits;³⁷ courses;³⁸ joint exercises in the maritime, land and air environments;³⁹ and a few other exchanges.

France: France has always shown greater understanding of India's security concerns and has played a key role in fending off the efforts by the international community to isolate India in the post-Pokhran phase. An Indo-French High Committee on Defence is the driver of bilateral defence cooperation activities which are primarily armament oriented with the emphasis on joint ventures and transfer of technology. Joint exercises with France basically have a naval orientation.⁴⁰ Attendance on courses (Joint Services Defence College, France since 2003), exchange of helicopter pilots, Special Forces interaction, exchanges to include cadets exchange and observers during exercises are some of the other cooperative activities.

China: Since the first meeting of India–China Defence Dialogue at Beijing in November 2007, both countries have traversed a significant distance towards mitigating the historical mistrust among each other.⁴¹ India has an active defence exchange programme and an elaborate matrix of confidence-building measures with China that have helped promote greater trust between the two armed forces. As part of confidence building measures, some places on the LAC have even seen variety of interactive activities ranging from sports to adventure including a small joint mountaineering expedition and sports matches between two forces and participation in each others National Days and festivals.⁴² Currently defence cooperation activities are focused on visits⁴³ and conduct of select exercises with the three Services.⁴⁴ Indian Air Force's Surya Kiran Aerobatic Team performed during the Zhuhai Air Show in November 2008. Notwithstanding the positive contours, spin-offs from defence cooperation activities with China are likely to be limited due to significant territorial and political differences.

Showcasing Commitment towards International Obligations

Disaster Management and Humanitarian Relief

Events such as joint exercises held between individual or combined armed forces of India and its foreign partners assumed a new meaning, when the

military assets of India, US and other countries joined together for coordinated and cooperative initiatives to provide immediate help and relief to the huge populations affected by the Tsunami disaster. While not all disasters can be predicted and prevented, a state of preparedness and ability to respond quickly can considerably mitigate loss of life, property, and suffering. The golden rule is 'lives can be saved, damage to property reduced and recovery from disasters accelerated by taking action before floods rise, fires rage, pipes rupture, ground shakes or contamination spreads'. By all counts, the military is perhaps the most well structured organisation to assist the civil administration when major disasters strike. The armed forces are one of the best organised, structured and equipped organisations to react both to natural and manmade disasters. Cooperation in disaster management and humanitarian assistance would indeed facilitate in further strengthening bilateral ties. Armed forces have played an important role in providing humanitarian assistance during Tsunami disaster in 2004;⁴⁵ cyclone Katrina;⁴⁶ evacuation of Indian citizens from Lebanon during the 2006 Israel-Lebanon conflict;⁴⁷ cyclone Nargis-Myanmar in May 2008;⁴⁸ and Wenchuan earthquake-China in May 2008.⁴⁹

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Peacekeeping Operations

Consequent to myriad of challenges the world community faces today, instability and conflicts in some regions necessitating use of force are likely to remain, at least in the foreseeable future. For global acceptance it is prudent that this force, if applied, is through international consensus under the flag of the UN. Discharging its obligations towards global peace and as a stakeholder in the international security architecture, India is one of the largest contributors of troops for UN mandated peacekeeping operations.

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Since Independence, India has sent more than 85,000 troops in various UN mandated peacekeeping missions. Currently, India is the third largest contributor of the troops, with approximately 8,300 troops deployed in various UN missions abroad.⁵⁰ Further, professional excellence of the Indian troops has won universal admiration.⁵¹

Combating Sea Piracy

Successful patrolling on 'Presence-cum-Surveillance' mission of piracy infested water in the Gulf of Aden by the Indian Navy since October 08 and thwarting of attacks by the pirates has facilitated in protecting India's sea

borne trade and instilled confidence in its sea faring community.⁵² The decision to deploy warships in the region was taken by the government after Somali pirates hijacked Japanese-owned Stolt Valor on September 15, 2008. Despite increased cooperation among different navies, with even taskforces from the US and the European Union operating in the region, the pirates have continued their attacks with impunity. India, too, is contributing its might to deter piracy by patrolling the normal route followed by Indian flagships during passage from Salalah (Oman) to Aden (Yemen) as well as by coordinating with other foreign navies.⁵³

Benefits to Foreign Policy Goals

Enhancement of Security in the Immediate Neighbourhood and Indian Ocean Region (IOR)

Measures to build capacity and enhance capability have helped tangibly in improving combined ability to respond to natural disasters and mitigating turbulence in neighbouring countries like Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka. Such activities with littoral states like Maldives, Seychelles, and Mauritius have not only also benefited India in enhancing its surveillance capability over its Extended Economic Zone but have also helped in significantly countering the sea ward threat from LTTE.

Strengthening India's Regional and Broader Global Links

Defence cooperation activities, by building mutual trust and understanding, have played a key role in strengthening India's linkages and building 'Bridges of Friendship' with countries in its neighbourhood as also with key global powers.

Capacity Building of Own Armed Forces

Exposure to technology, organisations, doctrines, concepts, skills including Special Forces culture and working ethos of countries with wide spectrum of technology, sharing combat experience, such as through interaction with US CENTCOM experienced military leaders, and peacekeeping experience, especially of NATO countries, are important areas which enable capacity enhancement of own armed forces. Changing mutual perceptions of the engaged militaries, building mutual trust, opportunity to cross-train on weapons, equipment and communication systems of the foreign militaries, intelligence sharing at military intelligence levels and enriching the armed forces cadre by widening their horizons are some of the additional gains.⁵⁴ It has also helped in building a group of officers from all the three services, adequately familiar with the battle and staff procedures of foreign militaries in various fields of interaction.

Boost to Defence Industry

Military-technical cooperation combining provisioning of arms and equipment to partner nations, technology access and investments are important in inter-state relations

Military-technical cooperation encompassing provisioning of arms and military equipment to partner nations, access to technologies and investments in the defence sector are becoming very important in inter-state relations. Export and import of defence equipment has both security and commercial dimension. The scope of cooperation with Russia has expanded with start of large scale Sukhoi licence production programme, under which HAL was to make 140 Su-30MKIs in India.⁵⁵ Defence cooperation arrangement has facilitated procurement of critically needed paratroops and Special Forces items, six Lockheed Martin C-130J Super Hercules aircraft for which an agreement to purchase was signed in January 2008;⁵⁶ eight long range maritime reconnaissance aircraft⁵⁷ and an amphibious transport ship, the USS Trenton from the US. Ecuador has placed order for seven 'Dhruv Advanced Light Helicopters' worth \$56.7 million.⁵⁸ The DRDO also signed an agreement with Brazil's Embraer to jointly develop an Early Warning System (EWS) for the IAF.⁵⁹ When India privatises its defence industry and begins to co-produce advanced weapons systems with its partners, India may be able to expand its defence exports especially in the immediate and extended neighbourhood and thus, draw higher financial benefits to the country.

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Support to Joint R&D Projects

Given our woefully inadequate R&D base, we shall continue to suffer from lack of contemporary and state-of-the art technology. To this extent, we must establish meaningful bilateral relations with developed nations especially the comparatively apolitical ASEAN region, Japan and South Korea.

Thus, we can not only duplicate our technology intake from the West but also establish a related indigenous R&D infrastructure for the future. Defence cooperation activities have also improved prospects in the fields of research and technology. Some important ventures are:

- Possible development of Short Range Surface-to-Air Missiles (SRSAM) and of the Kaveri engine for Light Combat Aircraft as also upgrading of Mirage-2000 aircraft with France.⁶⁰
- Designing consultancy by Italy to the Indian Navy to build its first indigenous aircraft carrier (expected to be completed by 2012) in

addition to cooperation in developing an oceanographic survey vessel, heavyweight torpedoes for submarines and advanced warships and frigates.⁶¹

- Joint R&D projects with Israel like man-portable miniature UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles) and advanced radars to missile systems.⁶²
- Offer of sale of F/A-18 and F-16 aircraft by the US with the possibility of co-production arrangements.

Confidence Building and Deterrence

Defence cooperation activities signal our political commitment to develop cooperative relations, promote military transparency, reduce misperception and promote perception of common interests. Consequently, defence cooperation becomes instrumental in dispelling mistrust, providing transparency, building confidence and helps to prevent conflict.⁶³ Defence cooperation activities undertaken with China have helped to reduce the peer conflict to building mutual trust. Taking note of India's security concerns, the Myanmar Army has in the past acted against the insurgents operating from its soil. Similarly Bhutan also undertook successful the operation 'Op All Clear' to flush out Indian insurgents operating from bases in Bhutan in December 2003. Positive perception building, through defence cooperation, may also prompt Bangladesh to act against Indian insurgents and ISI aided groups who use Bangladesh as a conduit for undertaking terrorist operations against India. Perception sharing with Malaysia has to a large extent helped in dispelling its apprehensions on India's growing role in the security of the Malacca Straits. Conduct of multilateral joint exercises by Indian Navy with navies of US, Australia and Japan have amply showcased feasible trends in partnerships with India, which could emerge as and when needed, and thus may act as a deterrence to our potential adversaries like China.

Defence cooperation activities develop our cooperative relations, promote military transparency, reduce misperception and promote perceptions of common interests.

Way Ahead for Defence Cooperation Initiatives

Some of the recommendations to make military-to-military cooperation more effective and valuable are:

Formulation of Policy Guidelines: The Indian defence cooperation is dealt with on a case-to-case basis which varies from country to country. As a

consequence of 'bottom up' approach, the plans/initiatives prepared by HQ IDS and Service HQ are forwarded to the Ministry of defence wherein it may or may not get approved. All incoming or the outgoing visits are approved by the 'Raksha Mantri' himself, after MEA clearance.⁶⁴ Further, there is a basic lack of clarity on 'how much' and 'how far' to go with a specific country. Therefore, there is an important need to crystallise policy and contingencies for undertaking combined operations with friendly countries, as applicable, so as to give strategic logic and profile to future bilateral defence cooperation events. Accordingly, an engagement matrix needs to be stipulated to ensure that defence cooperation activities are progressed on an envisioned road map and are carried out in sync with the foreign policy objectives.

Integrated Planning: As India grows in stature, it will need to utilise defence diplomacy to the fullest extent to enhance its national interests. To be an effective instrument of the national strategy, the military instrument cannot operate in isolation but only as part of a fully coordinated and coherent overarching national strategy. Integrated planning between Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Defence, Headquarter Integrated Defence Staff and the three Services is crucial for ensuring a synergised approach in international cooperation.⁶⁵ As far as the defence cooperation events are concerned, it is suggested that an overarching two to five years 'roll on' plan, at the MoD level, should be evolved after mutual consultations between the MEA, MoD, HQ IDS and the Service HQs. This in turn should form the basis of structuring annual defence cooperation events plan by HQ IDS and the Service HQs. This annual plan, after approval at the MoD and MEA level, should be delegated to HQ IDS and the Service HQs for implementation. However, should there be a need of undertaking additional visits; these could be approved separately, on case-by-case basis, by the MoD and MEA as part of 'unplanned visits'.

Requirement of Specialists: Considering the scope, intensity and derivatives of the defence cooperation activities, it is imperative that such activities are handled by experienced and specialist officers who should remain focused on global issues and particularly on countries of India's strategic interest. It can be achieved by creating a core of specially trained officers for this job like being done in case of the United States among many other western countries.⁶⁶

Annual Audit of Activities Conducted: An audit of defence cooperation activities, to ascertain cost vis-à-vis achievements in relation to the stipulated focus areas, needs to be undertaken in the form of an annual report. The same would also assist in creation of desired institutional memory and maintenance of requisite focus on quality vis-à-vis the quantity of events.

Improvement of Relations with West Asian Countries: To combat the scourge of extremism and terrorism, the Gulf countries through vibrant partnerships with India can play an important role.⁶⁷ Keeping in view India's

strategic interests in West Asia and likely aggravation of instability post de-induction of US forces from Iraq by August 2010,⁶⁸ a more focused approach by India needs to be accorded for enhancing defence cooperation with countries of the region. While the engagement of the Gulf States needs to be progressed mainly on the diplomatic and political fronts as being currently undertaken, these initiatives can be supported by defence cooperation drives by signing of MoU on defence cooperation with additional countries such as Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and energising defence cooperation activities with countries of the region with whom we already have such agreements (Oman, UAE, Qatar) to extend a tangible impact. The recommended activities are mutual visits by senior officers, exchanging observers during exercises, offering additional vacancies for courses covering leadership, equitation and technical fields. Gifting of some indigenously built weapons, equipment and bringing up training infrastructure like shooting ranges, IT labs and joint sports and adventure activities can also be considered.

Military Interaction with Pakistan: There may be a need to supplement diplomatic engagement of Pakistan by engaging its military through military diplomacy. The desirability and contours of this would require to be thought through. Several advantages could accrue such as the tempering of Pakistani views on Indian intent and on Kashmir and for showcasing the professional role of militaries in democracies. It would be useful if in some future juncture Islamists forces may require to be combated jointly. While post 26/11, the political environment may not be truly conducive for this kind of an initiative, however, once Pakistan offers assurances which meet our security concerns, we could gradually move towards consolidation of Confidence Building Measures on the Line of Control followed by exchange of observers during select exercises and extending invites for symposiums such as IONS.

Conclusion

Defence cooperation has indeed emerged as an ideal tool to advance many important foreign policy objectives. Some of the distinct roles played by defence cooperation in complementing macro level foreign policy goals in building mutual trust and confidence with strategically important countries, giving transparency to our foreign policy initiatives, strengthening India's Look East Policy, improving regional and global security and capacity building of the Armed Forces as also establishing linkages, both at the regional and global levels. Additionally, defence cooperation has helped in demonstrating India's commitment to regional stability,

Integrated planning between Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Defence, Headquarter Integrated Defence Staff and the three Services is crucial to ensure a synergised approach in international cooperation.

showcasing India's defence/defence-industrial capabilities and reassuring Indian citizens abroad. However, there is still scope to further consolidate defence cooperation relationship with many countries, especially those countries which are located along India's strategic footprint. Notwithstanding its positive spinoffs, due care has to be exercised while conducting defence cooperation so as not to jeopardise on own sovereignty, security and relations with friendly countries.



Notes

1. Radha Kumar, "India as a Foreign Policy Actor – Normative Redux", CEPS Working Document No. 285, February 2008.
2. Defence Diplomacy may be defined as "those actions undertaken through the exchange of high-level defence related visits and dialogues on security challenges and port calls" Ministry of Defence Annual Report 2003-2004, pp. 184, at www.mod.nic.in.
3. Annual Report 2006-2007, Ministry of Defence, Government of India, pp.2.
4. Text of 'Key Note Address by the Hon'ble Raksha Mantri during Seminar, Defence Cooperation as a Tool for Enhancing National Interest', Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS), New Delhi, February 18, 2008 at <http://landwarfareindia.org/index.php?task=Defence%20Cooperation&action=research>.
5. Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India provides assistance to the developing and under developed nations under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme. Courses are also availed by Nepal and Bhutan under Special Aid Programme of the Ministry of Defence. Some developed western countries also send their officers for training in military institutions on reciprocal and self-financing basis. Annual Report 2006-2007, Ministry of Defence, Government of India, pp.116.
6. S. Menon, "The Challenges Ahead for India's Foreign Policy", speech delivered at the Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi, April 10, 2007 at <http://meaindia.nic.in/cgi-in/db2www/meaxpsite/coverpage.d2w/coverpg?sec=ss&filename=speech/2007/04/11ss01.htm>.
7. CLAWS Seminar, "Defence Cooperation as a Tool for Enhancing National Interest", Key Note Address by the Hon'ble Raksha Mantri, February 18, 2008.
8. Muthanna, "Enabling Military-to-Military Cooperation as a Foreign Policy Tool", Knowledge World, New Delhi, 2006, pp.20-23.
9. It covers a wide range of activities ranging from sharing of best practices/operational experience, conduct of professional courses to providing training teams and military training advisers. Growing interest in defence training is evident with the three services accepting 572 officers/trainees from 61 countries in training year 2007-2008, up from 388 participants the previous year from 36 countries to various defence training institutions. Annual Report 2007-2008, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, pp.108.
10. To understand mutual tactics, techniques and procedures and evolve common operating procedures.
11. Dr. Subhash Kapila, "India's Embattled Security Environment: Policy Options", Paper no. 3091, South Asia Analyses Group, March 10, 2009.
12. Facilitating commissioning of two Indra radars in 2006 in Sri Lanka, provisioning of naval ship INS Tillanchang to Maldives in April 2006 and military sales of T-55 tanks and 105 mm artillery to Myanmar are some examples.
13. Joint military exercises between the Indian Army and the Seychelles Peoples' Defence Forces (November 2001, November 2004 and early 2008) in Seychelles primarily aimed at issues related with specialised diving operations, anti-coup and anti-terrorism actions and the Sri Lanka-India Naval Exercise (SLINEX) in 2005, joint exercises "Ekueuvrin" (Army) and "Dosti" (Coast Guard) with Maldives are examples. Military observers from 60 countries, witnessed exercise 'Brazen Chariot' held in India in March 2008.
14. In recognition of the centrality of 'Constructive Engagement' as the primary means of achieving and assuring mutually beneficial maritime security, stability, safety, and consequent collective prosperity amongst all littoral states of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), as many as twenty-six Chiefs-of-Navy of the littoral states met in New Delhi, on February 15, 2008 at <http://indiannavy.nic.in/ion.htm>.
15. India also has been extending support in the field of training, such as training of Malaysian Air Force pilots, in addition to attendance in various courses. Material support to some of the countries is also done such as dispatch of parachutes and medicines to the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces.
16. MILAN'-a regular exercise with Asia-Pacific Maritime Navies - initiative in 2008 was a six-day exercise at Port Blair which focused on anti-piracy, search and rescue operation and pollution control problems.
17. Singapore-India Maritime Battle Exercise (SIMBEX), an anti Submarine Warfare exercise in 2004 (Kochi), India-Singapore bilateral army exercise 'Agni Warrior' in November 2008 and the air force SINDEX in June 2006 at

- Kalaikunda, Indian Army-Royal Thai Army combined Counter Terrorism exercise 'MAITREE 07-1' in 2007 at Ranchi in central India are examples.
18. Exercise 'Thammar Al Tayyib' on the Western seaboard from April 24 to 26, 2003.
 19. Such as Indian Army Chief's first ever visit to Oman in October 2005 and visit by the Commander of the Royal Army of the Sultanate of Oman visited India in June 2006, NDC Course from India to Oman in 2004, Command and Staff Course from Oman to India in April 2005.
 20. Omani military observers attended 'Exercise Desert Strike' in Rajasthan, November, 2005.
 21. "Naval air base to tackle piracy", Business Line, February, 2009.
 22. Vivek Raghuvanshi, "Qatar Discuss Defense Cooperation", Defence News, India, November 10, 2008.
 23. Commander of UAE Land Forces visited India in November 2006, Commander in Chief of the Bahrain Defence Force visited India in March 2007, NDC delegation visited Saudi Arabia in May 2007 and a Mechanised Infantry delegation visited India from Saudi Arabia in 2006.
 24. India has deployed military training teams in a number of African countries such as at Botswana, Zambia, Lesotho. Training teams were earlier deployed in Nigeria and Tanzania as well. The IAF also has four training teams in Botswana, Mauritius, Namibia and Zambia.
 25. Embassy of India, History of Indian Participation in UN Peacekeeping Operations in http://www.indianembassy.org/policy/peace_keeping/history_india_UN_peace_keeping.htm.
 26. Ministry of External Affairs, MOZAMBIQUE-FACT SHEET at <http://meaindia.nic.in/foreignrelation/27fr01.pdf>.
 27. Air Defence Exercise 'Golden Eagle' in September-October, 2004 with the South African Air Force along with that of Germany, Britain and the US.
 28. It is also expected to support China's larger foreign, diplomatic, political, economic and security agenda set forth by its leadership. Kristen Gunness, "China's Military Diplomacy in an Era of Change", University Fort Lesley J. McNair, June 20, 2006.
 29. Robert O. Blake, Charge d'Affaires at the US Embassy in New Delhi, "US-India Relations: The Making of a Comprehensive Relationship", Addressing Indian military officials at the Army War College, Mhow, August 30, 2004 in Military cooperation propelling India-US ties, India News Online <http://news.indiamart.com/news-analysis/military-cooperation-7210.html>
 30. For a year after the 9/11 attacks on the US, the Indian Navy patrolled the Strait of Malacca alongside the US Navy.
 31. Ministry of External Affairs, "Fact sheet on various aspects of India – US bilateral relations" at <http://meaindia.nic.in/foreignrelation/usa.pdf>.
 32. It comprises of joint exercises, subject matter expert exchanges (logistics, intelligence, mechanised, improvised explosive ordinance etc), seminars such as the Pacific Armies Management Seminar and observer programmes as Non Lethal Weapons related (NOLES).
 33. Significant command and field training exercises (counter terrorism and peacekeeping) have been conducted by the Indian Army with US Marines (Shatruej in India in January 2008), Special Forces (Balance Iroquois in Guam in August 2008) and the Pacific Army (Exercise Yudh Abhyas 2008 in Hawaii in September 2008). The Indian Navy conducts the Malabar series of exercises with the US Navy encompassing facets related with contraband control operations, sea control operations, air defence, sea replenishment including fuel transfer, cross-deck flying etc (Ex-Malabar CY 08 off the Goa coast in October 2008). The Indian Air Force participates in COPE INDIA series of exercises (Cooperative Cope Thunder 2004 was the first time in history of Indian Air Force (IAF), wherein, fighter aircraft of the IAF participated in a multinational exercise held outside India. The IAF also participated in landmark 'Red Flag' exercise at Nevada in August 2008, which is otherwise reserved for select NATO countries.
 34. Such as the naval exercises in October 2005 and 2007 off the coast of Visakhapatnam and the Sea of Japan respectively; INDRA-09 in Arabian Sea in January 2009, Army Special Forces exercise in India (Exercise INDRA-05 in 2005) and in Russia (Exercise INDRA-07 in September 2007 along with Indian Air Force).
 35. Report by Ministry of External Affairs on EU-India Joint Action Plan: Implementation Report, October 13, 2006 at <http://mea.gov.in/declarestatement/2006/10/13js01.htm>.
 36. Ministry of External Affairs, Joint Statement issued after INDIA-UK Summit, January 21, 2008 at <http://meaindia.nic.in/pressrelease/2008/01/21js01.htm>.
 37. Ship visits average five per year and heads of all three Services and the British Chief of Defence Staff exchange visits.
 38. An exchange of students on courses DSSC / JSC, NDC/RCDS is undertaken annually.
 39. Examples are KONKAN 2006; Exercise Emerald Mercury in India in March 2005; Ex Lion strike and Ex Wessex Warrior in September 2008 and Exercise Indra Dhanush in India in October 2006.
 40. VARUNA-2003/1 (naval exercise) was conducted off Mumbai in 2003, VARUNA 2008 off the East coast in May 2008 and 'Ex-Garuda' (air exercise) in Kalaikunda in February 2007.
 41. "India, China Aim to Hold Regular Joint Exercises", Times of India, November 04, 2008.
 42. "Foreign Relations Briefs, Defence Exchanges China", December 2008 at <http://meaindia.nic.in/>.
 43. A 60-member delegation from the PLA Air Command College visited India in June-July 2003; Chief of Indian Army visited China in May 2007.
 44. These include the naval Search and Rescue Exercises conducted off Shanghai in November 2003, off the coast of Kochi in November 2005 and joint manoeuvres off the Eastern coast of China in April 2007, Army exercises 'Hand-in-Hand 2007' in China' in December 2007 and in India (Belgaum) in December 2008.

Role of India's Defence Cooperation Initiatives in Meeting the Foreign Policy Goals

45. During the Tsunami disaster in 2004, the Indian Navy also operated jointly with the navies of the US, Japan and Australia to provide relief in the affected countries. These included 'Operation Castor' (Maldives), 'Operation Rainbow' (Sri Lanka) and 'Operation Gambhir' (Indonesia).
46. One IL 76 was tasked for cyclone relief supplies to US during September 2005 carrying 25 tonnes of load and consuming 51 hours of flying.
47. The Indian Navy evacuated 2,280 Indian, Nepalese and Sri Lankan nationals from Beirut to Larnaca and transporting 65 tons of relief supplies from Larnaca to Beirut as part of Op Sukoon, Annual Report 2007-2008, Ministry of Defence, Government of India, pp.32.
48. India extended relief support to Myanmar by launching Operation Sahayata under which two Indian Navy ships and two Indian Air Force (IAF) aircraft supplied the first international relief material to the cyclone-hit country. The two aircraft carried 4 tonnes of relief supplies each while the Indian Navy transported more than 100 tonnes of relief material. Cyclone Nargis at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyclone_Nargis.
49. The Indian Air Force inducted tents, blankets, medicines and sleeping bags and other relief material for those affected by the devastating Wenchuan earthquake in Sichuan, China in May 2008. Press Release Embassy of India at Beijing at http://www.indianembassy.org/cn_new/news/20080520-2.htm.
50. United Service Institution of India-Centre for United Nations Peacekeeping (USI-CUNPK), has been set up in New Delhi, drawing on India's vast experience in the field of UN Peacekeeping. The Centre conducts International Training Capsules for Military Contingent Officers, Military Observers, and Staff and Logistics Officers. Till date, the centre has trained 333 Officers from 71 countries in various courses being run at the centre.
51. 4 SIKH Battalion deployed in Lebanon was awarded a Unit Citation and 73 individual citations for gallantry in recognition of the efforts by the International Community for display of exemplary commitment during the 34 Day Israel-Hezbollah war. Annual Report 2007-2008, Ministry of Defence, Government of India, pp.23
52. INS Tabar sank Somalian pirate boat on November, 2008. "India Praised for Sinking Pirates", November 20, 2008 in http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7739171.stm.
53. Rajat Pandit, "Commandos answer SOS from Saudi, Indian vessels, scare off pirates", The Times of India, November 11, 2008 at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/India/Indian-navy-repluses-attack-off-Gulf-of-Aden/articleshow/3699918.cms>.
54. Familiarisation with specialised US weapons/equipment such as M 16 rifles, Stryker vehicle, Huey Cobra Attack Helicopters, C-130J Hercules aircraft, P-3C Orion etc.
55. "Sukhoi in India – New Prospects for Cooperation", Indian Aviation Civil & Military, January-February, 2009, pp.17.
56. Gulshan Luthra and Air Marshal Goel (Retd), "India signs agreement for Hercules aircraft", Hindustan Times, February 06, 2008 at <http://www.hindustantimes.com/StoryPage/StoryPage.aspx?id=d0f6e6af-5619-465f-864a-387f60e3906&&Headline=India+signs+agreement+for+Hercules+aircraft>.
57. "Boeing P-8I Selected as Indian Navy's Long-Range Maritime Patrol Aircraft", Reuters, January 06, 2009 at <http://www.reuters.com/article/pressRelease/idUS126216+06-Jan-2009+PRN20090106>.
58. "HAL bags export order from Ecuador to sell Advanced Light helicopter", February 10, 2009 at <http://news.webindia123.com/news/articles/India/20090210/1173812.html>
59. Year End Review, Ministry of Defence, December 30, 2008 at http://pib.nic.in/release/re1_print_page.asp?reid=46243.
60. "MBDA to tie-up with DRDO for short-range missile", Aviation India, February 15, 2009 at <http://indianaviationnews.net/aeroindia2009/labels/Surface%20to%20Air%20Missile.html>.
61. "Italian Army Chief to Begin India Visit from 17th November", India Defence, November 16, 2008, at <http://www.india-defence.com/reports-4080>.
62. Indo-Israel joint working group (JWG) on defence, co-chaired by defence secretary Vijay Singh and his Israeli counterpart Brigadier-General (retired) Pinchas Buchris.
63. Andrew Cottey and Anthony Forster, "Reshaping Defence Diplomacy", Chapter I, Adelphi Paper 365.
64. K. A. Muthanna, "Enabling Military to Military Cooperation as a Foreign Policy Tool", India's Approach: An Analysis, United Services Institute, Knowledge World, 2006, pp. 147.
65. Major General Sheru Thapliyal (Retd.), "Discrimination against the Military", December 26, 2008 at <http://www.thefrontpagearchives.com/26dec2008/index.html>.
66. The FAO functional area is unique to the US Army. It encompasses assignments where expert Army officers apply their regional expertise, language skills, knowledge of US and foreign political-military relationships, and their professional military skills and knowledge in key Army and DOD positions. Major James A. Franklin, "The US Army Foreign Area Officer Program", USA, at <http://www.disam.dsca.mil/pubs/Indexes/Vol%2010-3/Franklin.pdf>.
67. Speech by Shri Pranab Mukherjee, Minister of External Affairs, at the Emirates Centre for Strategic Studies and Research (ECSSR), Abu Dhabi on the "India's Foreign Policy and India-Gulf Relations: Meeting the Challenges of the 21st Century", May 12, 2008 at <http://www.mea.gov.in/cgi-bin/db2www/meaxpsite/coverpage.d2w/coverpg?sec=ss&filename=speech/2008/05/13ss01.htm>.
68. Tom Vandenberg. "Obama to Troops: Iraq Mission to End in August 2010", USA Today, February 27, 2009 at http://www.usatoday.com/news/military/2009-02-26-marine_N.htm.