DEFENCE DIPLOMACY & NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY

Views from the Global South

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India's Military Diplomacy

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Abstract

Independent India has utilised its armed forces to progress its international relations predominantly by rendering assistance for disaster relief, peacekeeping, and capacity-building through professional military training. The Indian Ministry of Defence considers improving defence cooperation with other countries essential for the nation's security, promoting mutual trust, and conflict prevention and resolution. India's defence cooperation is decided at the highest level involving the Cabinet Committee for Security and National Security Council. The scale and scope of India's defence diplomacy has steadily expanded since the end of the Cold War, but a number of factors, both organisational and political, continue to constrain its reach and effectiveness, and the Ministries of External Affairs and of Defence do not seem to agree when it comes to defining the objectives of India's military diplomacy. The country's aim to maintain strategic autonomy tends to reduce the intensity of its military partnerships, while the political and bureaucratic leadership continues to recoil at the idea of power projection and developing expeditionary capabilities for the Indian armed forces. The national aspiration of becoming a dominant regional power remains somewhat unrealised.

Introduction

India occupies an important geo-strategic location in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), and its strategic interests extend from its immediate neighbourhood to an outer arc formed by the eastern littorals of Africa, the Persian Gulf, Central Asia and Southeast Asia. This geography provides India with an opportunity not only to define and protect its national interests but also to exert its benign influence in its extended neighbourhood (Sakhuja, 2011). India does not have any expansionist territorial aspirations and has never shown aggressive intent against any country, which has long been its outlook, instead using trade, religion and culture, what is now often termed 'Soft Power', to influence other countries (Malone, 2011). Since independence, India has also utilised its armed forces to progress its international relations, mostly by rendering disaster relief, peacekeeping, and capacity-building through professional military training. In the 21st century, Indian diplomacy has matured and learnt, albeit slowly, the importance of utilising all facets of its national power: political, diplomatic, economic, technological and military, in furtherance of the national interests.

India's military diplomacy, similar in many ways to other forms of diplomacy, includes defence-related visits, meetings, and negotiations; participation in international security conferences; defence treaties and mutual pacts; import, export or gifting of military equipment; joint exercises by armed forces; and training of personnel. All these activities would generally be undertaken in line with the general foreign and security policy guidelines set by the political leadership, but they would have strategic and military significance. Thus, effective military diplomacy, while safeguarding the state's independence, security, and integrity, also ensures the widest possible freedom of action for the state. A strong military power projection capability can dissuade potential adversaries and increase bargaining power in diplomatic negotiations through either a coercive display of force or a mere benign presence. Historically, coercion was exercised mostly through the use of navies, which led to the coining of the term 'Gun Boat Diplomacy'. Colonial powers intimidated weaker states into subjugation, or at least into accepting unequal terms for trade and concessions for exploiting natural resources or labour. In the 21st century, military intervention by major powers into another country, purportedly to prevent a humanitarian disaster arising from internal conflict, has become quite common. Such interventions normally get international approval and sanction from the UN (Dorman & Otte, 1995).

International view of military diplomacy

It is important to note the views of various countries about the conduct of military diplomacy. The Indian Ministry of Defence considers improving defence cooperation with other countries as essential for the nation's security, promoting mutual trust, and conflict prevention and resolution (Dutta, 2009), while the US government engages in defence cooperation in terms of military alliances and agreements, conducting joint operations and interoperability exercises, and facilitating access and influence. The UK sees multinational defence cooperation as an arrangement where two or more nations work together to enhance military capability, although the country ensures that its defence cooperation with other nations does not affect its relations with the US and NATO. Meanwhile, Australia uses the terms 'defence international engagement', classifying defence cooperation as a subset of international engagement and as the actions of the target country that are funded by the Australian Department of Defence through a separate Defence Cooperation Allocation. Russia defines military cooperation as the military relations of friendly states aimed at the joint solution of defence problems, which are determined by the compatibility of the respective state's interests, coherence of a political course, and mutual interest in providing international and national security. China sees defence cooperation as foreign military relations, and one of the most

important aspects is to prepare its own officers for next generation military leadership (Muthanna, 2006). In a newspaper article published on 21 February 2015, C. Raja Mohan highlighted the importance given to 'Defence Diplomacy' by President Xi Jinping during his special address to all the Defence Attachés posted in Chinese embassies the world over, as well as those defence officials dealing with foreign relations.

Historical perspective of India's defence diplomacy

In ancient India, diplomacy was considered a quasi-military activity. The epics of Ramayan and Mahabharat speak of alliances between powerful kingdoms built through marriages, but occasionally coercion was utilised, backed by military power. Expanding regional influence through the conduct of 'Ashwamedha Yagna'¹ was an Indian way of exploiting military capability as an instrument of coercion for transacting interstate relations (Basham, 2004), and the last known Ashwamedha Yagna was conducted by Maharaj Jai Singh II of Amber, Jaipur in 1716 CE (Narayanan, 2015). Kautilya (also known as Chanakya),² the most acclaimed strategist and author of Arthashastra,³ was aware that stratagems would work only when backed by credible military power. He maintained that the ruler of the State of Magadh, Chandragupta Maurya,⁴ had a large and professionally trained standing army maintained by the State, although Kautilya recognised that there was no glory in war. In this context, he believed that negotiation was a strategic device, designed to lead to victory rather than compromise, and should be pursued until the end. While never questioning the primacy of politics in warfare, Kautilya viewed diplomacy and foreign policy as instruments of war (Boesche, 2003).

Indian kingdoms relied not only on their armies but also their navy to project power. The peninsular kingdom of the Cholas⁵ in the far south in medieval India was a notable maritime power, leading naval expeditions to Sri Lanka and the Maldives in South Asia, and a campaign to Southeast Asia in 1025 CE. Their overseas campaign against the kingdom of Shrivijaya in Southeast Asia involved both the army and the navy. The Cholas were engaged in a maritime trading relationship with China, and when Shrivijaya threatened this trade, which passed through the Straits of Malacca, the Cholas responded with a show of strength. The chief reason for their naval venture in Southeast Asia was to gain control of the strategic points along the Straits of Malacca, although they had no territorial ambitions outside South Asia (Malone, 2011). Today the Straits of Malacca, Sunda, and Lombok have gained extreme strategic importance for India, China and many other countries, as a large percentage of their trade, and particularly energy resources, pass through these choke points. India is worried for security reasons too, with Chinese nuclear submarines reportedly venturing into the Indian Ocean and passing through these channels, ostensibly on 'Anti-Piracy Mission'.

Independent India's defence engagements

After independence, India sought to insulate itself from the impact of the Cold War by adopting a deliberate strategy of military isolationism. Prime Minister Nehru explicitly rejected the use of armed forces for expeditionary operations, and also insisted that the membership of the Non-Aligned group was limited to those countries which did permit establishment of foreign military bases on their territory. India remained a member of the Common Wealth, but refused to join any of the Western military alliances, and even as it sought weapons from the Soviet Union at the turn of the 1960s, India was careful to circumscribe its military engagement with the USSR. One major exception to India's military isolationism in the Cold War period was its active participation in the international peacekeeping operations authorised by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

Along with this, India continued to play its role as a security provider to smaller states on the subcontinent by reviving the British protectorate arrangements with Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim in 1949-1950 (Raja Mohan, n.d). After the 1971 Bangladesh War, India came up with its own version of the Monroe Doctrine, called the 'Indira Doctrine', aiming to assert India's primacy in South Asia. New Delhi also sought to influence its neighbours against allowing military bases and facilities from the world superpowers in their territories. Unfortunately, limited diplomatic, economic and military capacities meant that the Indira Doctrine was not very effective.

The 21st century has also seen sustained efforts by China to establish closer defence ties with nearly all of India's neighbours, with the exception of Bhutan, which has been subjected to severe Chinese military coercion over territorial claims. The Chinese focus has been on developing maritime infrastructure in these countries which can serve a dual purpose, commercial as well as naval, and subsequently taking over the assets on long-term lease. Gwadar port in Pakistan and Hambantota port in Sri Lanka are examples of China's foothold in the Indian neighbourhood, but such Chinese initiatives are certainly not conducive for India's national interests and are a setback for its regional defence cooperation (Tanham, 1992). Fortunately, the 2017 Doklam plateau stand-off between Indian and Chinese forces in the Bhutanese territory did not escalate into a border conflict, partly due to India's resolute military posture, backed by astute diplomacy (Chengappa, 2017).

After the end of the Cold War and the demise of the Soviet Union, India reconfigured its economic and foreign policies, re-assessing its policy of military isolation of the previous decades and launching its military engagement with the US. The Kicklighter proposals (initiated in the early 1990s) provided the framework for service-to-service interaction between the two armed forces (Vinod, n.d), and the framework elaborated in 2005 defines multiple missions for operational cooperation, and calls for greater defence industrial

collaboration. India's defence cooperation with the US is probably the most expansive in terms of the areas covered, with the US now conducting more military exercises with India than with any other partner. India, which did not buy a single weapons platform from the US in the Cold War period, has acquired a number of systems since 2005, such as one major naval ship with considerable heli-lift and amphibious capability, and C-17 Globemaster and C-130J Super Hercules transport aircraft, which have significantly enhanced India's Out of Area capability (Rajghatta, 2007). Today, the US considers India an important partner and expects it to play a significant role in the US strategy for Asia, especially in the Indo-Pacific region. India's forward movement on defence engagement with the US has also opened the door for similar interactions with Britain, France and Russia, as well as deepening defence ties with US allies in Asia like Japan, South Korea and Australia. Today, India has bilateral defence cooperation agreements with more than 40 countries, varying greatly in their scope and intensity depending on whether the country is a major power, immediate neighbour, or a state of special interest to India along the Indian Ocean littoral and beyond (Tharoor, 2012).

India's defence diplomacy in its immediate neighbourhood

In South Asia, India's defence diplomacy with its neighbours falls into a category of its own. In the case of Pakistan, the two countries have negotiated a range of nuclear and military confidence-building measures (CBMs), but Delhi and Islamabad have struggled to institutionalise any contact between the two military establishments outside of a hotline that operates between the two headquarters, as the military CBMs between the two sides are negotiated by the Foreign Secretaries and not by military professionals (Ghosh, 2009). In a similar vein, India's military engagement with the armed forces of Bangladesh only showed improvement after the late 2000s. While the armies of the countries have not clashed, para-military forces on both sides, the Border Security Force of India and the Bangladesh Rifles, have not had happy relations. However, the broad framework agreement for cooperation signed by the two Prime Ministers, Dr Manmohan Singh and Sheikh Hasina, in 2011 has provisions for substantive military and security cooperation. Defence officers are now training in each other's institutions.

Although India has categorically refused to involve itself militarily as part of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, it signed a strategic partnership agreement with the country that includes the option of substantive Indian military support to Kabul. India has also agreed to train up to 600 Afghan army officers every year in India, with some getting specialised training in counterinsurgency, and recently gifted some attack helicopters to Afghanistan to enhance its capacity for undertaking anti-insurgency operations (Panda, 2016). After the failed intervention in the Sri Lankan civil war in the late 1980s, New Delhi has since returned to engage with the armed forces

of Sri Lanka, and though opposed by Tamil Nadu, it gave substantial military aid to Sri Lanka in its fight against LTTE. A seeming change of heart, this was to keep Pakistan and China from getting too close to Sri Lanka militarily. However, India could not dissuade Sri Lanka from granting berthing facilities in Colombo harbour to Chinese submarines in 2016, an act considered blatantly Anti-India.

In the case of Nepal, the Indian army maintains a special relationship with the Nepalese army in that the Chief of Army of each country has been accorded the same honorary status in the other country, and Nepalese citizens can enrol into the Indian army's Gorkha regiments. During a visit to Nepal by the new Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Nov 2014, a 'Made in India' 'Dhruv' advance light helicopter (ALH) was gifted to the Nepalese army (Press Trust of India, 2014). However, the present political dispensation in Nepal, headed by Prime Minister Oli of the Communist Party, seems to be getting under Beijing's influence, much to India's chagrin.

Bhutan also has special status with India, which maintains a military training team in Bhutan. The countries have signed an agreement to ensure that no activity inimical to the other is allowed to take place in the country, and Bhutan has agreed to consult India on all matters concerning its defence. Along with this, the present King is an alumnus of the Indian National Defence College, and is its youngest student (Special Correspondent, India Strategic, October 2010).

In 2011, India signed a new partnership agreement with Maldives that focuses on deepening maritime security cooperation. In 1988, India was quick to respond militarily to help save President Abdul Gayum's government from rebels, but since 2013, President Abdulla Yameen seemed to take an antagonistic stand against India, apparently under influence of massive Chinese economic and military aid. For example, in 2018 the Maldives navy for the first time declined to attend the biennial MILAN symposium hosted by the Indian navy. However, with change of leadership, India Maldives relations appear to be once again getting better and working towards mutual interests.

The general global impression seems to be that India, although a rising economic and military power, has been mostly reactive in its policies, rather than acting with bold and imaginative initiative with its neighbours. On the other hand, India's subcontinental neighbours have been caught off-guard by the exponential rise in China's economic and military power projection capabilities, which have undermined India's regional influence.

India's defence diplomacy with Central and East Asian nations

The politics, security and economics of Central Asia have always been important for India, and Prime Minister Modi has visited all the countries of this region, with security cooperation being discussed prominently. The spread of ethno-religious instability

and terrorism in the region could have grave consequences for India's security, while a politically stable Central Asia can emerge as a major market for Indian goods, as well a key source of energy, particularly natural gas (Sajjanhar, 2016). With a rare display of futuristic vision, India established its first military base in Tajikistan, which is manned, equipped and maintained by Indian Air Force personnel (Pandit, 2013). Tajikistan straddles the access route to this region, with India planning a strategic opening through Chabahar port in Iran and then through Afghanistan. Operationalisation of the first phase of Chabahar port after its inauguration by the Iranian President in December 2017 enabled India to send the first consignment of wheat to Afghanistan, bypassing passage through Pakistan (Haidar, 2017). Economic liberalisation in 1991 also saw India initiating its 'Look East' Policy, which aimed to combine political, economic and security leverage in the Asia-Pacific. New Delhi's engagement with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) reflects the increasing geo-strategic importance of the South China Sea and its littorals to India's regional status (Tharoor, 2012). In 1996, India joined the security forum of ASEAN, the ARF (ASEAN Regional Forum), in 2005 the ASEAN leaders invited India to join the East Asia Summit process that was to focus on broader political and security issues facing Asia, and in 2010 India participated in the first expanded gathering of the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (Ministry of External Affairs Portal, August 2012). The stability and freedom of navigation in the South China Sea are vital interests for New Delhi, as around 55% of India's trade with Asia passes through this strategic sea route.

The Indian navy has been at the forefront of the military push in this region, with Indian naval ships making frequent visits to the countries of SE Asia. The navy has special berthing rights in Vietnam, while the Indian navy's Exercise Milan, a multinational naval exercise conducted since 1995, has now been institutionalised as a biennial event that draws in a large number of countries along the Indo-Pacific littoral. In 2008, India took another initiative by convening the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium, which brought together all the navy chiefs from the Indian Ocean area (Indian Navy, 2015). Along with this, India is developing close defence ties with Singapore and Vietnam. Singapore conducts joint training exercises with the Indian army and air force at Indian military bases (MoD Annual Report 2015-2016), while an Indian army Combat Engineers team was recently sent to Lao PDR (People's Democratic Republic) to train their cadres in de-mining and bomb disposal to clear a large number of unexploded bombs and mines from the Vietnam War era. Indian air force instructors stationed in Malaysia have trained Malaysian fighter pilots on combat tactics, and every year Defence Services Staff College training is provided to military officers from ten countries in the region. India's special and rising relations with ASEAN nations was marked by the presence of ten ASEAN top leaders, heads of government or of the state, at the 79th Republic Day celebrations on 26 January 2018 in New Delhi. Maritime security, anti-terrorism measures and cyber security issues encouraged all the leaders of ASEAN and India to join on one platform (Jacob, 2018).

India's defence engagements with African nations

Today, Africa looms large in the security and geo-strategic considerations of many nations, and the continent is fast emerging as one of the most sought-after destinations for bilateral engagements. India's relations with Africa are conditioned and energised by historical linkages and strong political foundations of the past. Indian troops had fought as part of British forces during Robert Napier's expedition to Abyssinia in April 1868, and in both the World Wars in North and East Africa. Sacrifice and valour of Indian soldiers is part of African history. One Indian army division had played a crucial role in Ethiopia regaining its independence by overthrowing Italy's military control. As an acknowledgement of the sacrifices of Indian soldiers, in 1941 Sudan had gifted £100,000 to India, and that money went into making the majestic Administrative and Academic Block of National Defence Academy in Khadakwasla. This building has been named 'Sudan Block' in gratitude.

New Delhi's approach to the African continent reflects a balance between national values and interests, taking into account the diversity of Africa as well as the policies of other key players. Training and enhancing military leadership capacities has been the focus, with Indian military training teams working in many African countries, and many African military personnel being trained in various Indian defence institutions. India played a central role in the establishment of the Botswana Command and Staff College, Harar Military Academy of Ethiopia, and the Nigerian Military Academy, and the first Commandant of the Nigerian Academy was an Indian army officer. IAF personnel man the aviation wing of the Mauritian police force, while naval personnel do the same for Mauritius and Seychelles coast guards, and an IAF helicopter training team has been in Namibia for over two decades.

When parts of Africa have been afflicted by rebellions and conflicts, and restoring peace became a priority, India joined UN peacekeeping missions in a number of African countries, including Burundi, Ethiopia and Eritrea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan, and Zaire (now DR Congo), and the fairness, professional conduct and valour of Indian soldiers on these missions was acknowledged by the UN, as well as the host countries (UN News, n.d). The year 2018 marked 75 years of Indian troops presence on African soil, mostly to liberate countries from foreign occupation or to restore peace, as mandated by UN Peacekeeping Missions. India also assisted Mozambique in providing coastal security by deploying two naval ships during the 2003 African Union Summit in Maputo, and in 2004 during the World Economic Forum summit attended by many heads of state (Beri, 2014). India is also steadily expanding its military engagement footprint with the countries of the North and South American continents.

Humanitarian activities by Indian armed forces

The 21st century has seen an exponential spread of terrorism through the seas of the IOR. 80% of the world's oil and gas is transported through the choke point of the Gulf of Aden and along the Somali coast, which has faced the scourge of piracy. India has joined the international effort to combat this threat by deploying a naval ship since the year 2008, and Indian naval warships have safely escorted more than 3000 merchant vessels through the area. On a few occasions, punitive action has also been taken against the pirates, and these efforts are sure to raise India's image as a responsible military power (Indian Navy, 2015). Over the years, India has been steadily enhancing its Out of Area Contingency and military intervention capabilities and has demonstrated them in recent times. During the 1991 Gulf War, India airlifted more than 100,000 civilian workers who were forced to leave Iraq, the largest airlift since the Berlin airlift at the end of World War II (Fabian, 2011). During the Southeast Asian tsunami in 2004, the Indian armed forces were at the forefront of rescue and relief operations, with over 30 Indian navy ships setting sail with rescue teams and relief material, even while engaged in relief and rescue on the Indian eastern seaboard (Sakhuja, 2005). Indian naval ships have evacuated stranded Indians and citizens of other countries from war zones, such as Lebanon in 2006, Libya in 2011, and Yemen in 2015. Along with this, India has been regularly exercising its armed forces with every major country in the world including China, displaying its strategic reach capability. These exercises are not only conducted bilaterally but also in multinational scenarios. The Indian navy conducts IBSAMAR exercises with the navies of Brazil and South Africa, as well as participating in trilateral exercises with the navies of the US and Japan. The Indian air force regularly participates in Exercise Red Flag, a multinational aerial combat exercise organised by the US air force, and also exercises with the air forces of the UK, France and Russia. Such exercises contribute to greater understanding of each other's capabilities and capacities. Indian air force aerobatic teams, Surya Kiran and Sarang, have thrilled audiences the world over with their daredevil precision flying.

Indian response to expanding Chinese footprint in IOR

The 21st century has seen a dramatic rise of China in economic and military terms. This has given rise to its quest to become a superpower. Steadfastly China has sought to spread its footprint in the Indian Ocean Region by building maritime infrastructure along many of the littorals, which is ostensibly intended to provide security to its energy trade passing through these waters. India considers the Chinese action as detrimental to its influence in the IOR and a potential security threat. But this should naturally be expected of a rising power, and Chanakya even espoused it in his 'Mandala Theory'⁶ on foreign policy in the treatise Arthashastra (Kangle, 1965). In fact, without an overt display of aggressive diplomacy; India, too, has attempted to do the same by establishing defence

cooperation relations with most of the countries sharing common borders with China and in its immediate neighbourhood. South Korea has been a significant defence systems supplier to India, including providing Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPVs) to the Indian navy. In 2015, India and Japan agreed to deepen their strategic relations, with mention made of the possible acquisition of long-range amphibious aircraft 'Shinmaywa US-2' in the near future, giving India an extended capacity to patrol the further reaches of the Indian Ocean (Duchatel et al., 2015). In the same year, India and Mongolia agreed to elevate their relationship to the strategic level, and the Indian navy increased the frequency of its ships showing the flag in the South-China Sea, even paying a goodwill visit to Chinese ports.

India's decision-making apparatus

India's defence cooperation gets decided at the highest level, involving the Cabinet Committee for Security (CCS) and National Security Council (NSC), assisted by the NSC Secretariat (NSCS) and Strategic Planning Group (SPG), Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Defence and individual Service Headquarters. At apex level, decision-making rests with the NSC, which comprises the Prime Minister as Chairman, the Ministers of Home Affairs, Defence, External Affairs, and Finance, and the Chairman of Niti Ayog⁷ (National Integrated Transformation Institute) as members (Kanwal, 2016). However, defence cooperation and defence diplomacy are still considered subsidiary to the political and economic initiatives conducted by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) to build relations with other nations. Compared to the importance given by other nations to military engagements to ensure their national interests, India's focus on leveraging its military capacities, experience and prowess for similar purpose seems to be minimalistic, and at times lethargic. This is not to say that the Indian defence forces have shied away from such tasks, but their participation has been controlled and cleared by the MEA, and is also largely impacted by the enthusiasm and energy displayed by the political dispensation of the day towards building bilateral and multilateral relations in pursuit of national interests.

Challenges to Indian defence diplomacy

The scale and scope of India's defence diplomacy has steadily expanded since the end of the Cold War. Nevertheless, a number of factors, organisational and political, continue to constrain its reach and effectiveness. At the organisational level, a shortage of staff in the headquarters of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and the Ministry of Defence (MoD) remains a major impediment. Very few Indian Embassies and High Commissions have Defence Attachés posted to look after military and security interests or to render advice to civilian diplomats, and the MEA and the MoD do not appear to agree when it comes to defining the objectives of India's military diplomacy. As of 2018, India had just four Defence Attaches posted amongst its twenty-nine diplomatic missions in Africa.

While the leadership of the Foreign Office has come to value the possibilities of military diplomacy, the MoD remains deeply conservative and has been reluctant to follow suit.

Connected to this is an issue that is rooted in the peculiar structure of India's civil-military relations. Few democracies have the kind of overwhelming dominance by the political setup and civilian bureaucracy over the military service as is seen in India (Limaye, 2007). This has led to a suboptimal engagement of defence personnel in diplomatic activities. While training to defence officers on the basics of international relations and diplomacy is carried out during various in-service courses, the professional diplomats are not regularly exposed to defence-related issues, hence the general lack of enthusiasm to pursue defence diplomacy as part of the nation's overall diplomatic efforts. It is still rare to find senior military officers accompanying the Prime Minister or the External Affairs Minister on their official visits.

India also needs to resolve a number of political and strategic ambiguities to strengthen its military diplomacy. The need to maintain strategic autonomy tends to reduce the intensity of military partnerships, especially with the world superpowers, as India's political establishment is apprehensive of the danger of becoming militarily subordinate. The second conflict is between the traditional imperative of territorial defence and the new need of securing India's growing interests far from its shores. The Indian political and bureaucratic leadership continues to recoil at the idea of power projection and developing expeditionary capabilities for the Indian armed forces, yet they frequently call upon the security forces to manage emergencies in the immediate and extended neighbourhood. India has even attempted coercive diplomacy, using its military might against Sri Lanka when the air force air-dropped humanitarian aid over Jaffna in 1987, leading to the signing of the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord.

The Indian security debate tends to be reticent about acquiring and deploying the military instruments of power projection, although steps have been taken to build the requisite capabilities by acquiring strategic transport aircraft and naval ships. The Indian establishment is traditionally opposed to forward military presence through foreign military bases, but its growing aspirations as a regional power cannot be met unless it is able to protect its national interests, including beyond its shores. Similarly, to be able to operate in distant waters, the Indian navy will need victual facilities around the Indo-Pacific littorals. A beginning has been made through an agreement signed during Indian Prime Minister Modi's visit to Oman in February 2018, to utilise the Duqm Port facilities for logistic and maintenance requirements of the Indian navy (Panda, 2018). Similar facilities would also be essential for its air force, and while Indian military aircraft and ships have been given temporary transit facilities by many friendly countries, India will have to develop a range of special political relationships and military partnerships to acquire larger basing facilities.

Conclusion

In the future, India may have to confront growing security challenges in its immediate neighbourhood, as well as in other regions important for its expanding national interests. It is expected that there will be greater regional and international demand for India's military services, support and cooperation, and the country will need to take a more pragmatic and practical approach to utilising its military capacities. As part of overall diplomatic efforts, its defence diplomacy would be vital to build confidence amongst nations, decrease the risk of conflicts, and encourage peaceful dispute resolution. Like other types of national engagements, defence cooperation is an investment for building capacities and relationships. It, therefore, means that mainstreaming defence diplomacy along with other facets of national power projection is essential for the country in its quest for a position at the international high table.

Notes

- 1 Ashwamedha Yagnais a Sanskrit term referring to a horse sacrifice ritual of Vedic times in ancient India. It was used by ancient Indian kings to prove their imperial sovereignty. The process involved releasing a horse to wander for a period of one year, and the horse would be followed by the king's warriors. In the territory traversed by the horse, any rival could dispute the king's authority by challenging the warriors accompanying it. After one year, if no adversary had managed to kill or capture the horse, the animal would be guided back to the king's capital. It would be then sacrificed, and the king would be declared an undisputed sovereign.
- 2 Kautilya (Chanakya) was an Indian teacher, philosopher, economist, jurist and royal advisor. He is traditionally identified as Kautilya or Vishnugupta, who authored the ancient Indian political treatise, the Arthashastra. He mentored Chandragupta Maurya, the first ruler of Maurya dynasty to build a large empire by bringing smaller fiefdoms under one control
- 3 Arthashastra is an ancient treatise on statecraft, economic policy and military strategy, incorporating Hindu philosophy. Kautilya is credited as the author, although there is a possibility of the book being a compilation of works by many authors of the time. After being lost for many centuries, one original copy written on palm leaves was discovered in South India in 1905. One principle tenet of statecraft was the pursuit of power through realpolitik.
- 4 Maurya Empire was founded in 322 BCE by Chandragupta Maurya, a pupil of Chanakya, by taking over the kingdom of Magadh after overthrowing the Nanda rulers. The Maurya empire spread its rule over a large territory, extending from present-day Afghanistan to Bangladesh, covering the entire peninsular India except for a small territory at the southern tip. Emperor Ashok was the third ruler of the Mauryan dynasty. The Mauryan empire had well-established trade relations with the Egyptians, Greeks and Syrians, and India's national emblem is based on the Lion Capital of Emperor Ashok at Sarnath.
- 5 Chola Empire was the longest-ruling dynasty of southern India, from 300 BCE to 1279 CE. During the 11th century, the empire had extended its maritime influence from the Maldives to the Malaya peninsula, backed by a strong naval force. The kingdom was centrally governed, with the king being assisted by disciplined bureaucracy. The Chola kings were patrons of art and architecture. Rajaraja Chola I and Rajendra Chola I were the greatest rulers of the Chola dynasty, during the period 985 CE to 1044 CE.
- 6 Mandala Theory. Chankaya (Kautilya) propounded the 'Mandala Theory' which emphasises the imperatives of international relations for any nation-state. Kautilya's writings are studied in detail in major institutes for defence and strategic studies, along with Sun Tzu, Clausewitz and others.
- 7 Niti Ayog. The National Institution for Transforming India is the premier policy 'Think Tank' of the Government of India, providing both directional and policy inputs.

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