

Military diplomacy and Its Employment to Enhance Global Co-Operation against Sub-Conventional Conflicts*

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Introduction

The word 'nation' refers to a community of people who share common language, culture, ethnicity, descent or history.¹ As each nation evolved into a sovereign state, with a centralised government that had supreme independent authority over a geographical area, each state formulated policies for interaction with one another based on strategic and security needs. The salient aspects of inter-state relations are: foreign relations, trade and commerce, cultural, military alliances or cooperation and quite often military confrontation. Last few decades are also characterised by sub-conventional conflicts (SCC) between states which can take the form of externally supported insurgency (proxy war) or state sponsored terrorism. This essay analyses the tenets of military diplomacy and its role in enhancing global cooperation towards preventing I resolving SCC.

Military Diplomacy

Military capability is one of the many determinants that together form 'national power'² and greatly influences the state's international relations. The peaceful employment of military strength in the pursuit of national interests is military diplomacy. During peacetime it prevents coagulation of vectors into conflicts and during war it limits the conflict. With the government spelling out the broad parameters of foreign policy, the continuum of military diplomacy is defined by the tenor of overall relations enabling achievement of right balance of foreign policy and security interests. The present tenor is to move away from insecurity-propelled militaristic approach to security-motivated cooperative approach.

The aim of military diplomacy is to:-

- (a) Reduce security concerns in the region and assist in the fulfilment of foreign policy objectives.
- (b) Bring in greater transparency and confidence in military sphere.
- (c) Build sustained co-operative relationship based on mutual trust and confidence to facilitate conflict prevention.
- (d) Achieve stability of regional and international environment by building and reinforcing perception of common interests.

Military diplomacy as practised by nations today can be broadly classified as 'preventive' and 'coercive' types based on the 'intent'. These are discussed in the succeeding paras.

Preventive Military Diplomacy. Preventive military diplomacy constitutes such military actions which prevent disputes or limit existing disputes from escalating into full blown conflicts and to limit the spread of the latter, when they occur. It aims to achieve confidence, mutually beneficial relationship and favourable security environment through co-operation in the military sphere. Some of the established methods are: defence co-operation, military-to-military contacts, co-operative security and peacekeeping operations. For example, the UN peacekeeping mission in Macedonia (UNPREDEP) in 1995-1999 was the first UN preventive military action.

Coercive Military Diplomacy. Coercive military diplomacy is 'forceful persuasion' or an attempt to get a state or a non-state actor to change its objectionable behaviour through threat or limited use of military force. The aim is to induce an adversary to comply with one's demands or to negotiate, while simultaneously managing the crisis to prevent unwanted military escalation. This is brought into play when all options of preventive diplomacy are exhausted. Military power is its key element and is used in the role of 'compellence' or 'deterrence'.

Modes of Military Diplomacy

Defence Co-operation. It is a sum of mutually beneficial defence related activities aimed at furthering one's national interest through active pursuit of cooperation among friendly nations. Defence co-operation presents equal standing and power to bargain I negotiate for all nations irrespective of their size and might and thus propel nations from their policy of isolation to meaningful engagement. This also enables capacity building, access to new high end technology, material and intellectual pool development, and long term partnership.

Military to Military Co-operation. It is the sum of all military activities aimed at reducing the trust deficit and developing interoperability through direct contact of the military forces. It can be also termed as confidence building measures (CBMs) in the military field.

Co-operative Security. With the steep growth in military technology, sudden expansion in trans-national conflicts and the high cost to maintain peace, many of the technologically and economically weaker nations are moving towards development of committed, long term multilateral co-operative security without compromising their national sovereignty.

Military Training. International Military Training Cooperation (IMTC) is an essential component of peacetime military diplomacy and covers a wide range of training activities. Such cooperation helps to build strategic security relationships with countries and address common security concerns.³

Peacekeeping Operations and Humanitarian Assistance. As peacetime military diplomacy, nations have been committing their armed forces to the UN / regional forums to undertake peace enforcement and humanitarian assistance in war torn areas. This preventive military diplomacy aims at conflict resolution, peacemaking, peace enforcement, recurrence of armed conflict, protection of civilians and assists the nation in rehabilitation I reconstruction.

Coercive Presence. It is the positioning of armed military force to deter an adversary from initiating or continuing an inappropriate action, to signal the intent of using armed force, if necessary. Coercion depends on two factors namely, credibility (whether the target believes that the coercer will execute its threat) and persuasiveness (whether the threat will have a great impact on the target). Some of the methods used are: 'posturing', 'naval blockade' and establishing 'no fly zone' etc. In our own context, Operation Parakram following the terrorist attack on the Indian parliament in Dec 2001 is a case in point.

Relevance

Military diplomacy has quite often been used as a means for international engagement and as a foreign policy tool. Overtime, this has had wider impact on the security of the nation. It furthers international relationships based on mutual trust and confidence. This results in reduction of arm race / stock piling of weapons, opening of borders and markets by nations leading to all round prosperity. Further, military to military contacts enhance transparency and increase interdependence in military matters which could reduce state / non-state sponsored conflicts. However, military diplomacy suffers from a few limitations as it is not formally recognised and is not fully integrated in the foreign policy instruments and continues to stay on the fringes. This lack of understanding coupled with trust deficit prevents nations from fully exploiting the full potential of military diplomacy. States with well established norms are able to utilise the full range of options to further their national interests.

Military diplomacy has been instrumental in achieving peace and stability on global scale. However, changing scenarios provide space for expansion and improvement in the art of military diplomacy, such as :-

- (a) **Strengthening Regional and Global Security Forums.** A large number of security forums presently in force, are not oriented towards enhancing inter-state co-operation for dealing with all facets of SCC. Therefore, there exist a need to augment their charter or develop new regional / global forums to address the growing menace of SCC (with emphasis on terrorism) at their source.
- (b) **Futuristic Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) based SCC.** Trends in terrorism indicate that religiously motivated and transnationally linked networks are seeking mass casualties through use of biological and chemical agents. As no commonly accepted international norms to combat WMD terrorism exist; global cooperation, both at political level (for strong counter-measures laws) and military level (diplomacy to discourage states supporting such acts) between nations to combat WMD, are required to be set-up.
- (c) **Economy Driven Military Diplomacy.** Economy drivers such as trade, energy supply lines and conflict free environment would define the national goals and military diplomacy of nations. Co-operative security approach among nations, having common economic drivers, would enhance cost effective and effective security. Therefore, comprehensive military diplomacy for end-to-end security would be the norm in days to come.

Case Study - China

Military Diplomacy. China, as one of the fastest growing Asian country, has made great strides in realising / implementing sound military diplomacy. Since 1997, Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) has made systematic approach to effectively utilise military diplomacy to achieve its national goals. Some aspects of their policies are briefly described below :-

- (a) **Strategic Outlook.** China has engaged in frequent high-level strategic security dialogues, arms sales and military technology transfers to countries with which it has strategic co-operation or which are in areas of potential conflict (African nations and Middle East). China has undertaken major defence cooperation with Russia enabling sale of Russian arms and technologies to the PRC.
- (b) **Regional Outlook.** China through military diplomatic activities with its bordering countries has shaped its regional security environment to its advantage. China has also actively pushed regional security issues in forums such as Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).
- (c) **Military Exchanges.** China has furthered self projection and knowledge transfer / understanding of operational and tactical doctrines/concepts through elaborate military exchanges and involvement in peacekeeping operations as part of the UN.

Realisation of National Goals. Some positive outcomes from active pursuit of military diplomacy are :-

- (a) Modernisation of PLA with latest technology.
- (b) Resolution of border issues with Russia, North Korea, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, Mongolia, Myanmar, Laos and Vietnam.
- (c) Security of its energy flow lines by military diplomatic ties with nations constituting the 'String of Pearls'.
- (d) Larger visibility as a responsible nation in ensuring peace and stability at regional/global levels.

Sub - Conventional Conflicts

SCC are violent engagements involving both military and non-military means, mostly covert in nature and slow acting, and yet affecting the survival of a nation state, a community and society in the long term, which can be either triggered by an adversary state or non-state actors.⁴ Typically these conflicts are above the level of peaceful co-existence and below the threshold of war, and are popularly identified as militancy, insurgency, proxy war and terrorism. Lately, economic and cyber warfare have also emerged as potent security threats.

Based on the idea, that it is possible to destabilise an enemy to such an extent that he will be eventually compelled to concede, despite his ability to continue resisting and to ultimately instill a belief that 'peace / security are not possible without compromise or concession'. Long drawn, these conflicts are characterised by asymmetry in force levels, use of innovative / non-traditional weapons / technologies and are conducted by indigenous / surrogate forces. These covert operations are complex in nature and use of brute force alone does not yield solution but entails co-ordinated efforts of all the instruments of 'national power' for synergised solution to the conflict. SCC are also referred as 'unconventional' or 'asymmetrical' conflicts.

The major contributors for rise of the SCC are: aspiration for independence (LTTE in Sri Lanka), weak and non-functioning state machinery (Maoists in Nepal), social exclusion (Baluchistan in Pakistan), communal hatred (Bosnia), ethnicity (Syria), globalisation and modernisation (African states). Overtime, SCC have evolved into multiple forms due to varied causes for their initiation; such as: terrorism, insurgency, super terrorism, proxy war, economic and cyber warfare. A combination of various factors; such as, economic loss in case of full fledged war, growing aspirations of individuals for independence, failure of state machinery in uplifting the society, growing religious intolerance and easy availability of arms have led to sudden rise in SCC.

Resolution of SCC

Challenges. The difficulties in dealing with SCC begin with its very nature - it defies the principles, logic and technological aspects of conventional warfare. Some of the challenges in addressing these conflicts are:-

- (a) **Restraint in Retaliation.** The sub-conventional warfare differs in respect to application of fire power by the armed forces. Severe restraints are imposed on the soldiers in SCC because of political ramifications and human rights issues.
- (b) **Winning of Hearts and Mind.** SCC also encompass an internal discontent within a nation, and hence a certain degree of restraint must be imposed. Indiscriminate violence on the part of military against indigenous population will do little towards winning their hearts and minds.
- (c) **Formulation of Response.** One of the difficulties encountered with respect to formulating responses to unconventional conflict is that they all differ in some respects. Though generalisations can be formulated about such conflicts, the circumstances that surround the origins of a particular conflict are never exactly replicated in other conflicts. Hence, each conflict needs to be looked at differently for finding a lasting solution.
- (d) **Global Phenomenon and Collective Action.** Terrorism is a global phenomenon, with no definition and limits to the use of imagination in perpetuating acts of terrorism. The cross border nature of these conflicts, can't be tackled by one country in isolation and requires collective approach on various fronts. Thus, capability and capacity building are imperative, as also the nations' ability to dissuade, deter and disarm the adversary.
- (e) **Stress on Soldiers and Need for Additional Training.** Soldiers operating in SCC environment are subjected to high levels of stress and also require specialised training to handle anti national elements.

Channels for Resolution. The nature of SCC has been such that 'instant' resolution through application of force has never been successful. In fact, it can be counter-productive. Each conflict requires multi-pronged approach by all elements of national power. A few measures recommended for resolution are :-

- (a) **Political and Co-operative Approach.** This approach involves understanding and negotiating with the perceived oppressed by encouraging political solutions within the ambit of the Constitution. As the process of reconciliation is long, the state would require the 'will' and perseverance in establishing its legitimacy and gaining public faith. The military plays a supporting role in establishing the government's supremacy by using the 'principle of minimum force'. International co-operation through military diplomacy and intelligence sharing would be essential in preventing the flow of arms, ammunition and funds from foreign sources.
- (b) **Military Approach.** This approach involves the use of full military might in establishing the law of the land. This approach has been successful in certain set-ups such as China and Sri Lanka. Severe violation of human rights, curbs on mass media and widespread violence / prosecution marks such approach.

Military Diplomacy as Solution for SCC

The SCC no doubt has caught the attention of all nations, post - 11 Sep 2001. The idea of 'thousand hurting cuts' through these conflicts, needs to be addressed with all means. The effectiveness of military diplomacy in dealing with this menace is analysed in succeeding paragraphs.

Can SCC be resolved through Global Cooperation? Due to the complex nature and trans-national characteristics, resolution of SCC by a single nation appears impossible. Inter-state co-operation at all levels, is the way ahead for dealing with SCC. A positive security environment implies that no inimical activities against one's nation are planned and undertaken from another. Therefore, engagement in regional/global co-operation would create mutually beneficial environment based on trust and commitment which could catalyse further growth / interdependence in areas of

common interest among states. Therefore, co-operation in development of collective resilience would be result oriented and cost effective against SCC.

Can Military Diplomacy enhance Global Co-operation? Military diplomacy achieved through agreements, dialogues, military-to-military contact and technical cooperation between states aims to create a stable and peaceful security environment essential for economic growth and development. As a win-win situation, military diplomacy is mutually beneficial as it enhances defence capability, opens channel for availability of high end technology and establish secure channels of trade / energy for the participants. Hence, military diplomacy promotes regional/global cooperation which is the basic requirement for states to maintain healthy international relationships.

Military Diplomacy - An Effective Technique. The efficacy of military diplomacy in developing global cooperation is well understood, as seen by the growing number of nations involved in bilateral/multilateral military relations. Global cooperation is the only available tool for efficient resolution of SCC.

Afghanistan Example. On 11 Sep 2001, terrorist linked to Al Qaeda network rammed hijacked aircraft into twin towers of the World Trade Centre in New York City. Operation Enduring Freedom began on 7 October 2001, towards which 36 states offered military contingents / equipment and 44 states opened their airspace. The use of wide-ranging tools such as political, financial and military, made available by the broad coalition had a decisive impact. Further, use of military diplomatic tools by the USA such as military aid and coercive techniques has enabled it to sustain the war against terrorism in Afghanistan. This conflict greatly emphasises the relevance of cooperative approach when dealing with SCC.

Strengthening Military Diplomacy

The SCC are required to be addressed by all components of national power. Established diplomatic tools which have been traditionally involved in resolution of conflicts need to be synergised with military diplomacy, to attain better response in the fight against sub-conventional threats. Some of the requirements are discussed in succeeding paragraphs.

Synergising Military Diplomacy with Conventional Diplomacy. Career diplomats are the main actors in the conduct of international relations. The integration of global economy has not only resulted in 'interdependence' but also in proliferation of problems. As a large number of these problems have security implications, there is a need to synergise the efforts of armed forces with the efforts of career diplomats. Some of the modalities for this integration are:-

- (a) Development of strong ties between various ministries and agencies, so that a cohesive approach in identifying and addressing security issues (setting aside the turf wars) can be achieved.
- (b) Deputing defence personnel to various diplomatic assignments for closer interaction and feedbacks, and vice versa.
- (c) Diplomats through their networks should coordinate availability of credible early warnings on security related matters to the military.
- (d) Periodic interaction through meetings / seminars between diplomats and military to identify bottlenecks and opportunities for enhanced cooperation.

Synergising Military Diplomacy with other Diplomatic Actors. The expanding realm of trans-national relations has added new layers of diplomacy. States no longer are the only actors in international processes. Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Multi National Corporations (MNCs), Non-Governmental Elite and Media are undertaking transnational activities at the margins of government activity as follows : -

- (a) **NGOs.** Due to their impartial and humanitarian mediation, NGOs have been actively involved in implementation of conflict resolution agreements such as disarming of militias and facilitating return of refugees. For example, International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) and International Campaign to Ban Landmine (ICBL) achieved banning of antipersonnel mines in 1997.5 Further, as NGOs are less intrusive and have grass root connections, they have been giving early warnings of impending conflicts, i.e. preventive diplomacy.
- (b) **Eminent Individuals.** They are the people who come together to advance the interests they hold in common and are at the heart of transnational activity. This type of diplomatic work is more widely acknowledged today as 'Track II Diplomacy'.
- (c) **International Organisations.** These organisations were established to undertake specialised tasks or to administer international projects. Each member nation of the organisation is represented to defend national interests and cope with interdependence / problems facing international society, e.g. the UN, World bank, International Monetary Fund etc.
- (d) Some areas where integration of armed forces with the above actors could be synergised are :-
 - (i) Early warning mechanism by NGOs to armed forces.
 - (ii) Creation of public support for military actions.
 - (iii) Creation of international opinion against proliferation of WMD and terrorism.
 - (iv) To facilitate disarming of various armed groups and peace building.

Synergise Military Diplomacy with Mass Media. The media is another factor of growing importance in international negotiations. Effective links between the military and the media would provide opportunity to prevent misinformation campaign, test ideas and policy alternatives as also building informed public opinion on military related issues.

Use of Military Diplomacy in SCC by India

SCC Environment. Lack of political will to consolidate national interest and ambiguous national policy on conflict resolutions has resulted in large number of SCC prone areas in India. The northeast Indian states are facing SCC due to unresolved ethnic issues and influx of outsiders. Kashmir has been central to terrorism in India due to proxy war being sponsored by Pakistan. Naxalism has spread into nearly six states namely; Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Orissa. It has become a most serious internal security threat.

In the neighbourhood, both Pakistan and Afghanistan are at the centre of terrorism and have unstable political systems. The radicalisation of the domestic environment and the continuous inflow of illegal immigrants into India, cross-border movement of insurgents from Bangladesh and Myanmar are issues which have security ramifications for India. The political instability in Nepal could become a breeding ground for terrorism and pose serious security threats. The relations between India and China continue to be affected by the lingering border dispute.

Military Diplomacy. The apex organisation for military diplomacy in India is the National Security Council (NSC) assisted by the Strategic Planning Group (SPG). International relations are handled by the MEA (in consultations with MoD) with separate divisions for each country. The MoD and the three Services have separate departments for coordination of military diplomacy.⁶ India has Defence Attaches (DAs) in 34 foreign countries and 43 foreign DAs are located in India. The effectiveness of Indian approach can be evaluated as under : -

(a) **Positives.** The Indian approach has often been reasonably effective and in sync with the national foreign policy. India has strengthened its bilateral ties with bordering countries, Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). India has also been at the forefront of undertaking humanitarian efforts during natural calamities. It is also involved in co-operative efforts to guard the Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOC) and training of foreign military personnel. India has also been involved in joint bilateral military exercises. India's defence industry is trying to get a foothold in the huge defence related market.

(b) **Negatives.** However, a lot needs to be done by India to catch up with the growing pace of world scenarios. India has no concept or policy for employment of military diplomacy as a foreign policy tool. Organisationally, there is lack of institutionalised mechanism to conduct military diplomacy. The three Service Headquarters are in no way involved with the decision making, both in MEA and MoD, despite being the main actors on the ground. Delay in creating the appointment of CDS is resulting in piecemeal approach by the three Services. Various departments involved in the formulation of military diplomacy are understaffed. There is no separate financial head for funding the defence cooperation activities. Despite the growing contact of India with foreign countries, only 34 DAs have been sanctioned. India is failing to leverage its military diplomacy with neighbouring countries to prevent the cross-border support for organisations in India fomenting insurgencies and instability in India.

Therefore, in view of the above, there exists a need to change India's outlook towards military diplomacy to further its national interests. The two proposed models are brought out in the succeeding paragraphs.

Model I - Graduated Enhancement Approach (GEA). This Model is aimed at enhancing the present structure of conducting military diplomacy, so as to progressively move to a better and efficient system, and thus effectively control SCC. This can be achieved as follows:-

(a) **Core Policy.** Presently there exists no core policy for conduct of military diplomacy. Defining of the Core Policy on military diplomacy in line with the National Security Strategy and Foreign Policy, would provide guidelines for all levels to plan and execute military diplomacy. Taking cue from this policy, each of the three Services can draw up their plans to meet national objectives.

(b) **Institutionalisation of Military Diplomacy.** The bureaucracy at MEA and MoD do not allow its turf to be encroached upon by the Armed Forces. Therefore, institutionalisation of the procedure, with enough room to cater for the growing security needs, is required. The concerns and needs of the Defence Forces should be factored in at every level of decision making.

(c) **Streamlining of the Organisational Structure.** Despite the present organisational set-up consisting of the MEA, MoD and the three Service Headquarters, there exist grey areas of responsibilities, resulting in unclear and delayed procedures. A well defined organisational structure with cross linkages and financial powers needs to be established and maintained.

(d) **Acquisition Policy.** With the military diplomacy clearly defined, the three Services should accordingly plan development / procurement of arms to meet the requirements of military diplomacy. The power projection capability needs to be compatible with the core national policy.

(e) **Institutional Measures.** Building organisations and legal measures on security related issues, through arms control accords and treaties to control terrorism and WMD (in the IOR) would enable various nations to come on even ground to control development of threats. These measures, have the greatest potential of de-escalating inter-state and intra-state insecurities.

(f) **Staffing.** The results, achieved through military diplomacy would depend on the quality and quantity of staff provided at every level for planning and executing National policy decisions. With growing international

relations, India has to identify more countries where DAs are required to be positioned, along with adequate supporting staff. This staff must be adequately trained to handle diplomatic assignments.

(g) **Training in Diplomacy of Military Officers.** Diplomacy must enter the syllabi of our military academies. Trained military officers must be deputed to Indian embassies and missions around the world, both, to add to the numbers of DAs as well as to perform non-military functions. Not only will this expose military officers to the nuances of diplomacy; furthermore, the socialisation of defence and foreign service officers through such postings will create benefits in the long term, in terms of greater understanding and policy coordination.

Model II - Integrated Systemic Approach (ISA). This system aims at revamping the existing structure so that all factors having bearing on the military diplomacy of a nation are involved in its formulation through collective responsibility. A greater degree of freedom in terms of responsibilities and financial power is also proposed as shown in Figure 1. This system would enhance the conduct of military diplomacy and also achieve effective resolution of SCC in India.

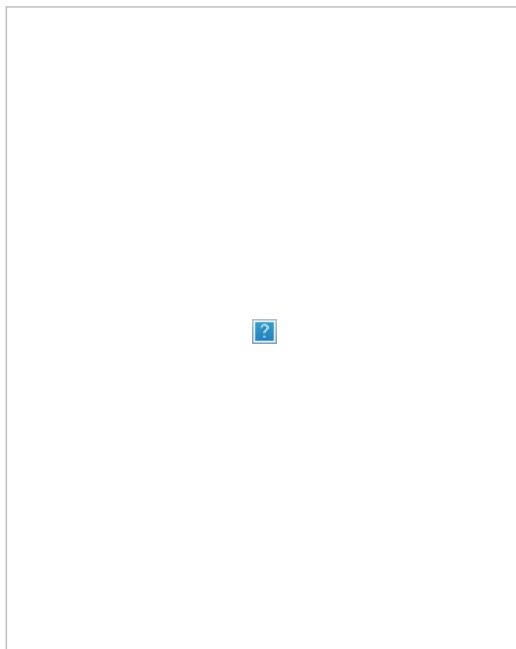


Figure 1: Integrated Systemic Approach

Model II consists of the following main features : -

- (a) **Core National Policy.** The core National Policy is required to be well defined. From this policy, the Foreign Policy is derived. Towards formulation of these policies inputs from MEA, MoD (including Service HQ), Commerce Ministry (for economic requirements), Home Ministry (for internal security conditions), Intelligence Agencies (for emerging internal and external security conditions) and Centre of Excellence (for inputs on new security developments) are taken towards arriving at a comprehensive policy.
- (b) **Military diplomacy Guidelines.** Well defined guidelines on military diplomacy are derived from the foreign policy and serves as the template for undertaking all military diplomacy activities.
- (c) **Responsibilities of MEA and MoD.** From the military diplomacy guidelines, well defined structure and responsibilities towards undertaking military diplomacy are specified to prevent any grey areas. Each level should be delegated financial powers.
- (d) **Chief of Defence Staff (CDS).** Appointment of CDS, so that he becomes the single point contact for MoD. This will result in synergised military diplomacy activities by all the three Services.
- (e) **Feedback Mechanism.** Feedback mechanism be incorporated into the organisation to measure the effectiveness of the military diplomacy activity. the feedback could be obtained in terms of increase in economic activity, reduction in SCC in targeted areas, increase in arms sale etc.
- (f) **Concept of Theatre Commander.** Theatre Commanders of the rank of General/Admiral/Air Chief Marshal could be appointed under the Integrated Defence Staff (IDS). Each Theatre Commander would be responsible for drawing out military diplomacy plans (in line with the foreign policy) in respect of countries falling under his theatre and ensuring its implementation post approval. This would provide the Services more control on the planned military diplomacy activities.
- (g) **Indian Defence Related Industry.** Growth in indigenous defence industry would give a great boost to the quality of military diplomacy undertaken by India. Long term material dependence can be generated by providing Indian equipment as part of military diplomacy.
- (h) **Identify Core Issues of Military Diplomacy.** Issues such as 'resolving of border disputes', 'tackling of terrorism', 'power projection and trust building through military diplomacy' and 'concept study on new methods of

military diplomacy' need sustained focus and efforts.

(j) **Other aspects** as proposed in Model I are also relevant.

Conclusion

In the next 20-25 years, as India enters a crucial phase of economic growth, the Defence Forces will have a critical role to play in maintaining a peaceful strategic environment in its neighbourhood and ensuring unhindered economic growth. Therefore, it is imperative that the relevance of 'military diplomacy' be recognised and suitably intertwined with national goals for security and prosperity of our nation.

Endnotes

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