

Lt Gen Kamal Davar articulates on the need for **Military Diplomacy**



A Vital Tool for Furthering National Interests

Anation's strength to thwart diverse threats to its interests and adequately address the varied transformational geo-political challenges in today's highly troubled world rests primarily on its Comprehensive National Power (CNP). The various parameters which contribute to CNP should be robust, sustainable and ever improving. Some of the constituents of CNP are a nation's economic power, military capabilities, industrial and technological prowess, infrastructural architecture, its population and the resultant demographic dividends, educational and medical reach, societal harmony within and, more importantly, the respect its diplomacy enjoys in the comity of nations. The CNP gets enhanced from a judicious amalgam of hard and soft power leading to augmentation in its smart power. Diplomacy to further a nation's goals is, unquestionably, a critical dynamic and, if supplemented with defence/military diplomacy, will prove vastly beneficial for a nation.

The world's leading power, the United States, like many other Western nations, since decades has effectively employed

military diplomacy to further its interests all around the globe. Its theatre commands are staffed and chartered to pursue US objectives all across the world. The US has consciously implemented what one of its renowned and popular presidents, John F Kennedy, once wisely expressed, "Diplomacy and defence are not substitutes for one another, either alone would fail." As currently the sole superpower in the world, however, with an assertive China making frantic efforts to catch up, the US rightly believes that, even in a democratic dispensation, a nation's effective power is synonymous with the power of its military – to be pragmatically employed both in its hard and soft connotations.

But is India, a regional power currently and aspiring to be a global power, conscious of the fact that it underplays and under-utilises the beneficial impact of its military in various hues and roles? In keeping with its rising status, is India according the necessary impetus to another eminently useful ingredient of its CNP, namely, military diplomacy within the overall gambit of overall diplomacy? The answer would be, woefully, in the negative ! India appears

to be, inexplicably, ambivalent about the utilisation of military diplomacy in the furtherance of its interests. That absence of a strategic culture in India and thus it not being strongly inter-woven in the Indian way of life, perhaps, is the answer to India not giving adequate priority to its military. Military diplomacy is not an exclusive instrument, but supplements a nation's foreign and security policies objectives...

Military Diplomacy: An Overview

There is no official definition or standard interpretation of military or defence diplomacy. Both the words, military and defence, though being different, are customarily interchangeable in their usage. On the face of it, the term (Military Diplomacy) appears to be an oxymoron! As the military normally achieves the nation's objectives with hard power by employment of force, on the other hand, diplomacy endeavours to accomplish the nation's goals by soft power, be it dialogue, persuasion, cooperation, treaties and alliances, aid which may include both economic and military and other humanitarian assistance. Somewhere, coercion is also an aspect