

The Way Ahead



Phalcon A50 AWACS (Photo: Angad Singh)

Force multipliers for the IAF

Although the concept of ‘Force Multipliers’ is not new at all, there is renewed emphasis for this in the Indian context. The Indian Air Force has been suffering from dwindling number of fighter squadrons as it transits to an all fourth-gen fighter force, with the fifth generation still somewhat far away. As the Indian Air Force has less and less kinetic platforms in its inventory, it becomes imperative to utilise those available to their maximum potential. In a modern battlefield, the efficacy of a platform can be enhanced by using the so-called force-multipliers, systems and procedures that increase on-station time, provide greater output, and get more ‘bang for buck’ from the kinetic options. The Indian Air Force has obviously been working on this aspect for some time, with earlier options initially imported and now indigenous work going on also for the future.

Air-to-Air Refuelling

One of the most important, and possibly the least tech intensive (compared to others) option, is a straight forward air-to-air (AAR) refuelling platform. An AAR platform increases the range of a fighter or a transport aircraft and even heavy helicopters and in turn increases the weapon coverage area/combat radius carried by them. It also

allows the platform to stay airborne longer and carry increased payloads at take-off.

One of the longest quests of IAF has been to acquire an AAR system to complement – and maybe later replace – the older Ilyushin Il-78MKIs. Two renditions of the AAR programme have been finalised and then were cancelled by IAF, both involving the Airbus A330MRTT. The third iteration

