

**Role of Indian Armed Forces in Nation Building  
and  
in New World Order**

By  
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1. The shift in the approach to manage international relations, international events, efforts for regime change, changes in government, approach to manage disasters; both man-made and natural, has triggered debate about the role of the Armed forces in shaping the world governance mechanism and nation building. The first decade of 21<sup>st</sup> Century is witness to increasing role of military diplomacy especially by United States of America's Armed forces in North-Africa, Middle East, Afghanistan, Pakistan and East-Asia. Indian Armed forces have also played a very positive and constructive role in nation building not only in India but also abroad. India's role in UN Peace Keeping Operations in various parts of the world since 1951 is a shining example which has been acknowledged and appreciated by UN. Mr. Kofi Annan, UN Secretary-General has categorically complimented India and Indian Armed forces. On 18<sup>th</sup> April 2005, he wrote, "India has been one of the most eloquent voices helping to shape in, UN agenda.....; the experience and professionalism of your armed forces has proved invaluable, time and again in UN peace keeping operations in which over hundred Indian soldiers have given their lives." It speaks volumes of Indian Diplomacy and Indian Armed forces in saving, shaping, securing and building several nations apart from India itself.

Military cooperation has emerged as a critical component of India's regional and world diplomacy.

2. The role of armed forces in nation building and building of world order has been debated, discussed, analyzed for quite some time now. It has become a regular feature of all the discussions, symposiums and seminars on the subject (specially with reference to disaster management). There are two divergent views that are being voiced in various fora. One view recommends dampening our response and discourage over-enthusiasm; the other view (school of thought) recommends a larger, proactive and more participative as well as supportive role in Nation building and shaping of the world. Most recent example is the role of Egypt Army in stabilizing Egypt after the end of the rule of President Hosni Mubarak!!
3. It is an undisputed fact of human survival (nations comprise of human beings only!!) that individuals turn to collective security endeavour (National Security) because individual effort and capability may be unequal to the task at hand and inadequate in many ways!! Unequal because forces of nature and many of the challenges and threats can not be faced or countered individually, because many individuals find themselves incomplete except while being in group. This holds good for an individual, small nation or even most powerful nation, the so-called Super Power!! There are limitations to individual power, and the limitations and impediments are increasing day by day. Therefore, there is a need to explore new ways and mechanism of collective behaviour dealing with

struggle for peaceful survival, security, progress, prosperity and betterment. Indian armed forces represent and project collective power of our nation which has made invaluable contribution to ensure international security, peace, stability and also building India as a powerful, stable and influential nation. There is co-relation between world security, regional security and national security. Similarly there is co-relation between nation building, region building and building a peaceful, stable world without conflicts.

4. Indian Armed forces (in present form) have their origin during the British Rule in India. The only Indian ruler who recognized the importance of sea and coastal security and the role of Navy was Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. This philosophy influenced the region. Today we see the important role played by Indian Navy right from Indonesia to Israel and even beyond; in ensuring security of sea-lanes and also in disaster management. Indian army started with a modest beginning of our nation during British rule but it has flowered in to an army of world fame with proven professional competence on battle fields in different theatres of war all over the world. Mr. Winston Churchill, the British Prime Minister referred to the Indian Army of Second World War (approximate strength 20 lakhs) as the largest volunteer army known in human history. Even today it continues to be among largest volunteer army in the world. The unique feature of the Indian Army and Armed forces has been that it is the only armed force in the third world!! Apart from protecting our nation from external

aggression and threats, Indian Armed forces have made significant contribution in the process of building of Indian Nation as emerging power in the Region and World.

5. Indian Armed forces have protected India's territorial and other national interests, right from day one of our Independence till today. India has been subjected to external aggression and wars in 1947, 1962, 1965 war 1971 and Kargil war. Armed forces our nation have proven their worth and professional caliber. Liberation of Goa from Portuguese Rule strengthened our nation.
6. We have been subjected to continuous internal unrest, insurgency, armed revolt in North-East India, and terrorism in Punjab, and Jammu & Kashmir ever since 1950!! It is to the credit of Indian Army that none of the originators of revolt or terrorist movement have succeeded in their objectives and goals.
7. Indian Armed forces have been recognized and accepted as 'Symbol of National Unity.' The concept of nation-hood in political terms is a recent origin in India. It has to still find deep roots in our country. With its personnel drawn from different parts of India and belonging to different religious, ethnic and linguistic groups the Armed forces have been a symbol of national unity. Indian Army constituted the ultimate sanction behind Sardar Patel's wise and firm policy of unifying the country. The presence of strong and disciplined army was a major factor in persuading the Princely States to merge with Union of India.

8. Indian Armed forces have also been making invaluable contribution towards national stability, while serving in aid to civil authorities (administration). Even during days of partition of India, Indian Army was called upon to control communal violence, restoring law and order, controlling refugee movement and running refugee camps. Never in the history had any army was called upon to handle a task of such a magnitude in any country. Army has also been used extensively to combat secessionism, extremism, insurgency and terrorism. These subversive forces have been kept in check by Indian Army duly supported by Indian Air Force. Further during natural calamities like floods, earthquake, tsunami, droughts Indian Armed forces have always risen to the occasion and rendered invaluable service in reshaping daily life, economy, disturbed services which is all part of the nation building process.
9. Indian Armed forces have also been playing a significant role in international peace keeping mission. India is the fourth largest contributor to UN Peace Mission across the world. Indian Armed forces have performed exceedingly well in Korea, Indo-China, Gaza, Lebanon, Congo, Yemen, Iraq, Rwanda and other countries making Indian Diplomacy strong. In today's world national diplomacy is increasingly been supported by military diplomacy, specially in Iraq, Afghanistan, Middle-East and East Asia. Indian Armed forces saved Maldivis from being taken over by undesirable elements. If the IPKF had not been sent to Sri Lanka, the political map of Sri Lanka would have been different.

10. In the field of sports and games the Indian Armed forces have contributed a lot. Only fighting a conventional war does not contribute to nation building; even prevention of war or conflict contribute to nation building. Some of the areas which are also part of nation building and image projection process are given below:
- (a) Internal peace keeping.
  - (b) Protect India from external aggression.
  - (c) Provide immediate relief during natural disasters.
  - (d) Organising national and international sports events.
  - (e) Winning first Silver Medal in World Olympic.
  - (f) Running academic and educational institutions and develop world-class Engineers, Managers, Administrators, Doctors and leaders not only for India but for the world.
  - (g) Providing medical help in remote areas of India and abroad.
  - (h) Running orphanage/s.
  - (i) Conducting reconstruction programmes like "Sadbhavana" in J & K; 'Good-Will' in North-East and 'Operation Seawave' during Tsunami.
  - (j) Indian Air Force provided the first Indian representative Squadron Leader Rakesh Sharma in space programme.
  - (k) Daughters of Armed forces officers have brought glory and fame to India by winning contests like Miss World and Miss Universe.
11. The list of contributions made by Armed forces is very long. It is suffice to say that Indian Armed forces have profoundly influenced the course of

history of our nation and many nations in the world in support of Indian diplomacy. Armed forces continue to provide inspiration to our youth and people at large. There has to be some good reason when all opinion polls time and again conclude based on public opinion that Indian Army is the last 'bastion of hope' of 87% people of India!! Our Armed forces have made outstanding contributions to national integration, national stability, national defence and nation building. Our armed forces are recognized and accepted as 'island of discipline' in growing sea of indiscipline, they have proved to be the 'hall mark' of democracy by rigidly maintaining a 'apolitical stance'!

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