Defence Diplomacy

What is the issue?

- India is currently facing international criticism for some of its actions.
- The “defence diplomacy” which is at the centre stage in the pursuit of its foreign policy, has helped India to stay afloat.

What is defence diplomacy?

- Defence diplomacy is a term used in international politics.
- It refers to the pursuit of foreign policy objectives through the peaceful employment of defence resources and capabilities.
- In earlier years, India hardly looked at military interactions as a means to further the national interest. But, this has changed.

How is defence diplomacy helping India?

- India is currently under international criticism, especially from the muslim world, for some of its actions.
- At the same time, its economy has also been sliding.
- Defence diplomacy has helped India to stay afloat in this worrying environment.
- It has taken the form of frequent and ambitious joint exercises with militaries of the region and beyond, port visits by warships, and so on.
- While with most countries this has been not very significant, with the US in particular, and with Japan, the interface has been substantial.

What is India’s defence diplomacy strategy?

- The Indo-Pacific has been repeatedly proclaimed as a region of mutual interest and our understanding of the term is different.
- The precise purpose of the term “freedom of movement at sea” is to counter growing Chinese influence in the region.
- With no other country with which India has defence cooperation at sea does the term Indo-Pacific form the basis of cooperation.
- So, the one significant element of our defence diplomacy in the last decade has been the relationship with the US.
- This has revolved on our purchases of military hardware from them.
- This having been said, if defence diplomacy has become a key ingredient of

our foreign policy as we aspire to move up in the global power chain, then it is all to the good.

How should India's diplomacy be?

- With China, India share disputed borders and a tense security relationship.
- With Russia, a defence interface that goes back six decades stands in some difficulty now.
- In the Muslim world, Iran cannot be easily ignored, nor Indonesia in the ASEAN, or Bangladesh next door.
- With these countries, India needs to increase its defence interactions so long as India recognises its limitations.

What would be the impact of defence diplomacy?

- India's profile as seen from outside is now increasingly getting predicated on domestic issues within its borders.
- As India is seeking to emerge as a major power, its domestic issues must mesh holistically with the desired international image.
- Defence diplomacy can only take India thus far. But, it cannot, by itself, overcome the negatives.

Source: Business Standard

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