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PROCUREMENT PROCESS: **BIG HURDLE** IN NATIONAL SECURITY





MISSION

We endeavour to sound **ALERTS** and create **AWARENESS** about the myriad dimensions and manifestations of **DEFENCE** and **SECURITY** in India and around the world.



The power of a King lies in his mighty arms...

Security of the citizens at peace time is very important because State is the only saviour of the men and women who get affected only because of the negligence of the State.

- Chanakya



DSA IS AS MUCH YOURS, AS IT IS OURS!



The Government of India has announced the formation of a new body to oversee the entire gamut of defence and national security for the country. The fresh development is that it includes steps taken earlier by previous attempts at policy analysis and implementation, and it also features an innovation in having the National Security Advisor as the lead player in the new structure. The NSA will now head a new body called Defence Planning Committee that includes the Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee, the Service Chiefs, and the Secretaries of Defence, Foreign Affairs and Expenditure from the Ministry of Finance. An interesting feature of this new body is the simultaneous creation of four sub-committee to focus on policy and strategy, plans and capability development, defence diplomacy and the defence manufacturing ecosystem. This is a fairly holistic approach to matters connected with defence and national security. Especially at a time when senior military officers have been airing their grievances from public platforms about the slow pace of modernisation afflicting their services. This is a departure

from the past when military officers were seldom seen and never heard. The crisis must, indeed, be serious. Hence, the announcement of this new body. But the moot question is whether creating yet another supervisory structure is going to propel the process when the real issue is really of taking decisions. And decisions have been pending for inordinately long periods, thus, resulting in acute shortfalls in vital areas. The air force is, of course, crying hoarse on the depleting numbers of combat squadrons, the irreplaceable weapons of aerial warfare. The army has a laundry list of purchases, from assault rifles to main battle tanks to artillery pieces, the whole hog. And, the navy can't seem to get another aircraft carrier sanctioned, nor additional conventional and nuclear powered submarines. The nature and quality of military equipment must always be reflective of national priorities, capabilities, and above all, intentions. In the Indian context, none of these are fixed pillars from which to draw a long-term road map of defence planning and implementation. A vision document detailing the mid- and long-term national security scenario is imperative to realising the dreams and

aspirations of India's professional military men. Such a document would pave the way for prioritising technologies, their research and development, and their subsequent induction into the military structures.

The crisis of India's procurement muddle is sometimes also due to shifting goal posts by the armed forces themselves. The on-off debate over single or double engined fighter jets and the yet to be seen medium multi-role combat aircraft are only the most visible examples. The army's desire to change from 7.62mm to 5.56mm and back again in a matter of two decades is another such story. The navy has been far more consistent with its vision and plans, but it just doesn't get the resources allotted. The new DPC will look at the whole gamut, but its greatest contribution to India's defence and national security would be to make the procurement process speedier and consistent, something many have announced but none achieved.

Manvendra Singh



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MILITARY PROCUREMENT: FOOL'S PARADISE



The procurement of weapons and munitions for the armed forces has become an exercise in self-delusion. The French Rafale fighter aircraft contract held out to be a paragon of government-to-government deals is still stuck in the price negotiation phase and the first lot of fully operational aircraft is still nowhere on the horizon. The much-touted policy of 'Make-in-India' has already shown signs of ending up as another "licence produced" regime whereby knowhow about use of equipment may be exchanged by the original equipment manufacturer (OEM) but technology will not be shared.

For the better part of two decades, no new artillery weapon was procured because of the political fallout of the *Bofors* scandal. Politicians of all hues contributed to a stasis that kept in abeyance even the manufacture within the country of the 155 mm howitzers based on the drawings bought and paid for by India. Finally, the first lot of 40 extended range, longer barrel, and towed artillery gun system named *Dhanush* is being inducted into the Artillery Regiment of the Indian Army.

In recent times, the Indian Army, Navy and Air Force have voiced their consternation at the lack of investment in modernisation and acquisition of munitions in a likely two-front war situation. We have already seen how both Pakistan and China are stoking the insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir. The prophesy of a "two-and-a-half front war"—Pakistan and China acting collusively and at the same time, instigating an Islamic fundamentalist uprising in Jammu and Kashmir – is already confronting the nation.

We are forced to recall what the great Indian strategic thinker, Chanakya, had to say about national security. Centuries ago, he had said: "Security of the citizens at peace time is very important because State is the only saviour of men and women who get affected only because of the negligence of the State". So shall we forget this dictum of Chanakya and firmly believe that no government in India is serious and sincere enough to equip our forces to counter any attack to save its men and women? The current government, which came to power with a massive mandate, has no priority for the procurement process for the defence and security forces as discernable in the paltry budget it has set aside for national security.

We appear to have become caught in a vicious circle of our own making. Our expectation that the foreign OEMs will rush into India and share their technology; and the private sector will replace the Defence Public Sector Undertakings in the manufacture of heavy military equipment has been rudely shattered. The Indian companies are totally dependent on foreign partners for the transfer of technology and the latter is in no hurry to create a competitor in India.

The 'Make-in-India' programme has actually collapsed as no big or small manufacturer in India or foreign OEM has invested in the defence and security sector under the programme. Are we befooling ourselves by making such announcements or are we actually a land of fools that no initiative has been taken even by the current government to adequately defend the nation. The entire responsibility lies at the doorstep of the top leadership.

This edition of DSA is focussed on these big hurdles in the procurement process. I am sure that if any of the policy and decision-makers in defence and security reads this edition, he/she will be compelled to rethink as to how they have played fast and loose with national security.

Happy reading and awareness, dear reader! Jai Hind!

Pawan Agrawal



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