



Dreamstime

## NECESSITY OF BEING ATMANIRBHAR

— Vice Admiral Shekhar Sinha\*

A nation cannot become a great power by importing combat platforms and equipment. In today's uncertain and volatile days, war days are unpredictable. Here in India, often repeated belief is/was that war will be short and swift. If that be the truth, the attrition rate of both human and platforms could be higher since the Armed Forces would fight to obtain favourable results in country's favour. It is important to examine the security situation in the world and around our country which necessitates military readiness round the clock. Weapon systems and platforms need to be inducted and legacy ones upgraded to keep pace with fast moving technology. These cannot be imported forever since it

drains our foreign exchange. PM Modi's drive towards India becoming self reliant, 'Atmanirbhar', aims to manufacture defence platforms and equipment in the country either by the industry themselves or in collaboration with a foreign OEM. Few platforms such as diesel submarines will be built under strategic partnership since complete technology with Indian companies is still short distance away. Global security has continued to deteriorate through 2023 as continuum to decade gone by. If one looks at entire globe, Israel Hamas, Russia Ukraine and Sudan stand out as three major ones which doesn't seem to be drawing to close. Closer home, there is armed conflict in Myanmar which has implications

on India. Recent developments in Bangladesh have serious security implications for India. The two live borders of India, Pakistan and China, don't seem to be headed for truce. Troops are sitting at eyeball distance which are recipe for conflict at slightest provocation from either side. The cross border terrorism seems to have shifted to Jammu from the valley. Apart from being battle worthy round the clock on these two borders, the advances in technology have witnessed induction of new kind of weapon platforms on these live borders. Keeping pace with countermeasures is essential. Nature of these two wars have symptoms of continuity. It is neigh impossible for a developing country like India to continue on top of importer chart. While there has been fraction reduction in conflicts around the globe, there has been sharp increase in manufacturing and export of weapon systems. This clearly indicates possibility of prolonged contests/conflicts requiring continuous supply of weapons and ammunitions. One also has to look at the world disorder which is in a churn. The current order resulted in the aftermath of WW II when many countries were colonies of declining European powers. The world has changed since then and international order has evolved. It is characterised by considerable continuity ( says SIPRI). Now the contestation about the future shape of international order hinges on the relationship between the legitimacy of its rules and norms and the distribution and exercise of power. SIPRI further states that international order includes principles intended to govern and limit armed conflicts but the effectiveness of their implementation is being weakened by division and rivalry among leading powers, as well as by structure and deep roots of many of today's conflicts and the actions of key governments and their leaders. The ramifications of these international disorder wouldn't easily or quickly be resolved. Free trade and freedom of navigation are some issues on which shared interests run deep. Countries eyed to understand that cooperation is key to maritime security and ways need to be found for international order conducive to meet today's challenges. The contestation for geopolitical supremacy is playing out in the

Indo Pacific and countries in the littorals are getting sucked into facing likelihood of major conflict. And that requires very high degree of military preparedness to sustain those situations over longer duration. This calls for availability of arms ammunition in large quantities. PM Modi's emphasis on self reliance is a very thought out direction. Today, we are moving in that direction rapidly. The macro decisions which have been taken include corporatisation of OFBs asking them to perform, special manufacturing zones in Uttar Pradesh and Tamilnadu, priority to indigenously designed and developed equipment in the Armed Forces, skill development of large workforce, rapid development of infrastructure for quick transportation of products, Tax holidays for MSMEs for number of products, reasonable freedom to form joint ventures with OEMs, possibilities of exporting manufactured equipment to friendly countries etc. Our PSUs and private sector are deeply involved in this process which can be observed by monitoring their performance. It has opened job opportunities and resultantly upliftment of living standards. On higher end we manufacture diesel submarines, ships, fighter aircraft, transport aircraft, attack helicopters, tanks, artillery guns, radars, rifles, rocket launchers, all types of missiles, Electronic Warfare equipment, variety of ammunitions etc. For the first time India's defence equipment exports have exceeded ₹27000 Crores earned handsome foreign exchange. A private entity has been cleared to produce explosive material for use in ammunition manufacturing. Transport aircraft is being manufactured completely by private company in collaboration with a foreign OEM. Shortly India will have indigenously built jet engines for Fitment in Tejas MK 2 and future AMCA aircraft. There are many other mid level items which are being manufactured for our Armed Forces and exports. Overall, the international order is in churn and India needs to stand with G 20 nations and not fall prey to the supremacy contestation. In the existing circumstances there is no sign of lasting peace. Security situation around India calls for readiness which will be achieved by becoming atmnrirbhar.

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