

Defense Cooperation as a Means of Regional Stability in a Complex World

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Abstract— Over the last decade, defense activities have significantly shaped contemporary global politics, safeguarding national interests, fostering regional stability, and influencing international relations. Recent developments in the East Sea disputes and other regional conflicts underscore the pivotal significance of defense activities in shaping global political dynamics. As tensions escalate among neighboring nations over territorial claims, defense postures and military capabilities emerge as critical determinants in shaping regional power balances. Nevertheless, the integration of "cooperation" and "diplomacy" with "defense" and "military" introduces complexity and ambiguity, leading to diverse interpretations and practical challenges. This article aims to clarify and precisely define these terminologies to address these complexities, enhancing the precision and effectiveness of conducting defense activities, cooperation, and diplomacy, centering on a typical real-world example involving India. The author will draw upon Joseph Nye's Soft Power theory and the Cooperation as Self-help theory as theoretical foundations to achieve this. The article identifies that defense cooperation is indispensable in modern international relations, shaping nations' foreign policies amidst a complex global landscape.

Keywords: Defense cooperation, national security, soft power, cooperation as self-help, India.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the rapidly evolving world of international relations, the imperative role of defense cooperation as a tool for maintaining and fostering regional stability is becoming increasingly apparent. As we witness shifting global power dynamics and the escalating complexity of international disputes, the influence of defense cooperation on global political structures is undeniably profound. A case in point is the growing tensions and the resultant East Sea disputes, illustrating how defense strategies and military capabilities significantly shape the geopolitical landscape.

Yet, today's world is complex and ambiguous, especially in defense cooperation. The intersection of "cooperation", "diplomacy", "defense", and "military" often leads to diverse interpretations and poses real-world practical challenges that can impact the effectiveness of defense activities. These ambiguities necessitate a rigorous and in-depth understanding of the dynamics at play, making this study timely and relevant.

To fully grasp the complexity of defense cooperation, this paper aims to precisely define the abovementioned terms and provide clarity amidst the uncertainty. The objective is to enhance the precision and effectiveness of defense cooperation and its related activities. To bring theoretical discussions into practical light, this paper focuses on the case of India, a nation navigating its own unique defense and diplomatic challenges. By referencing Joseph Nye's Soft Power theory and the Cooperation as Self-help theory, the paper seeks to provide a comprehensive theoretical foundation for analyzing defense cooperation.

The global demand for such an analysis is substantial. With conflicts intensifying in various parts of the world and defense cooperation increasingly becoming a determinant of

global stability, examining defense cooperation's nuances can significantly influence national foreign policies and reshape the future of global politics. Additionally, the regional implications are equally significant. As nations strive to maintain stability and assert their interests in their respective regions, understanding the mechanisms of defense cooperation can be a crucial asset.

By bridging the gap between theory and practice and shedding light on the intricacies of defense cooperation, this paper critically contributes to the discourse on defense strategies and diplomacy.

II. LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Recent literature has explored defense cooperation through multiple lenses, emphasizing its importance in achieving strategic interests, preventing conflict, providing humanitarian assistance, and fostering regional stability in an increasingly complex world. Classic realist theories, as exemplified by Hans Morgenthau (1978) and John Mearsheimer (2001), serve as a foundation for understanding the motives behind defense alliances, highlighting the role of power dynamics, national interests, and the balance of power. Building upon this foundation, scholars such as David Baldwin (2017) and Alex J. Bellamy (2021) have investigated defense cooperation's role in conflict prevention and peacekeeping, demonstrating how military alliances can deter aggression and contribute to peacebuilding efforts. Additionally, Maggie Dwyer (2021) and Gareth Evans (2009) have shed light on the growing significance of defense forces in humanitarian aid and disaster response, underscoring military forces' evolving non-traditional security roles. The post-Cold War era has marked a paradigm shift in the role and

objectives of military forces, as highlighted by Andrew Cottey and Anthony Forster (2004). Their work points to the changing nature of threats and the emergence of new strategic focuses for military forces. In particular, they emphasize that peace efforts, proactive conflict prevention, and humanitarian roles have become central features of the military's functions, moving beyond traditional defense roles. Moreover, the military has assumed a more diverse and cooperative role in international relations and humanitarian aid, with a greater emphasis on building diplomatic relationships through military channels and engagements. In the 21st century, defense cooperation has taken on various forms, as explored by Alice Pannier and Olivier Schmitt (2014). They highlight that such cooperation can be transient or permanent, formal or informal, institutionalized or not, and can exist during times of peace or be confined to moments of crisis. Building on previous work by scholars such as Hans-Joachim Morgenthau (1960), Kalevi J. Holsti (1967), Edwin H. Fedder (1968), and Bruce M. Russett (1971), Pannier and Schmitt discuss typologies of defense cooperation, distinguishing alliances based on factors such as mutuality, duration, operational capacity, geographical limitations, nature and type of commitment, degree of military integration, and power distribution among members.

The importance of defense cooperation in achieving regional stability in a complex world is emphasized in numerous studies. These works underscore the multifaceted role of defense cooperation, shaped by the evolving nature of threats, the diversity of defense cooperation forms, and the expanded role of military forces in areas such as conflict prevention, humanitarian aid, and diplomatic engagement. This expanding role of defense cooperation highlights its continuing significance in ensuring regional stability. However, despite this extensive research, a significant gap persists: the absence of a universally accepted definition of defense or military cooperation. Scholars have approached this topic from a variety of viewpoints, proposing definitions that align with their unique research focus, theoretical frameworks, or geographic and temporal considerations. This diversity in definitions stems from the inherently multifaceted nature of defense cooperation, which includes activities ranging from formal alliances and joint military exercises to intelligence sharing and humanitarian efforts. The evolving global security landscape, encompassing both traditional and non-traditional threats, adds further complexity to the task of crafting a comprehensive definition. The absence of a unified definition hinders comparative research efforts and the drawing of general conclusions across different regions and periods. It also obstructs the development of a cohesive theoretical framework for analyzing the dynamics, motivations, and outcomes of defense cooperation. Consequently, there is a pressing need to collaborate and reach a consensus on the definition of defense or military cooperation, considering its various forms and the changing global security landscape. Achieving this consensus would

improve the clarity and consistency of future research in this field, allowing for more precise evaluations of the role of defense cooperation in regional stability and global security.

The research methodology in the study utilized both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources like policy documents, political speeches, and government records served as the foundational evidence for the analysis, and their findings are detailed in the results section. Secondary sources, such as academic papers and media articles, were employed to offer additional context, and the insights drawn from them are presented in the discussion section. The approach was qualitative, focusing on analyzing the evidence to answer research questions and objectives, rather than formulating hypotheses.

In addressing the complexities of defense cooperation in contemporary global politics, this study employs two significant theoretical frameworks: Joseph Nye's Soft Power theory and the Cooperation as Self-help theory. Together, these theories facilitate a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of defense cooperation, allowing us to explore its role as a multifaceted tool for nations.

Firstly, Joseph Nye's Soft Power theory provides crucial insights into how nations can exert influence beyond mere military power. This theory emphasizes the ability of a nation to shape others' preferences through appeal, attraction, and shared values, rather than coercion or military strength alone. In the realm of defense cooperation, soft power paves the way for building alliances and partnerships grounded in cultural influence, diplomatic negotiations, and shared values, rather than solely on military prowess. This perspective enhances our understanding of how nations wield influence in a world where attraction often supersedes force.

Secondly, the Cooperation as Self-help theory, rooted in neorealist thought, elucidates why states choose to cooperate even within an anarchic international system. This theory asserts that cooperation occurs out of self-interest, as states form alliances or partnerships to counterbalance shared threats or boost their defense capabilities. It offers a logical explanation for cooperation among states, recognizing that self-preservation is often the driving force behind such alliances.

By converging these theories, the study crafts a comprehensive lens that scrutinizes the intricacies of defense cooperation, exploring it not merely as a means of exerting influence but also as a mechanism for survival in a complex global landscape. This theoretical combination, integrated with insights from existing literature, illuminates the mechanisms and implications of defense cooperation. It presents a compelling argument that defense cooperation is both an instrument of influence and a vital necessity for survival, enriching our understanding of its role in the ever-evolving world of international relations.

III. FINDINGS

3.1. Unravelling the Intricacies of Defense Cooperation

During the Cold War, the strategy of "defense diplomacy" was employed to achieve specific geographical and strategic objectives, such as enhancing the military strengths of allies and friends against shared internal and external enemies and maintaining influence over certain regions (Ian Storey, 2012, p.288). However, the end of the Cold War marked a significant shift in the role of the military. The nature of threats changed, leading to new focuses and strategies for military forces. Rather than concentrating solely on aggression and power struggles, the military's functions expanded to include peace efforts, working proactively to prevent conflicts before they escalate (Andrew Cottey & Anthony Forster, 2004). Additionally, the military began using its resources for humanitarian purposes, such as providing aid and support during natural disasters, a role not traditionally associated with defense forces. Finally, there was a greater emphasis on fostering better diplomatic relationships through military channels and engagements. This shift toward collaboration and understanding rather than mere power projection represents a more diverse and cooperative role for the military in international relations and humanitarian aid in the post-Cold War era.

In the contemporary era of the 21st century, defense cooperation has taken on various forms, whether transient or permanent, formal or informal, institutionalized or not (Alice Pannier, Olivier Schmitt, 2014). Defense cooperation can

endure during times of peace or be confined to moments of crisis (Andrew Cottey & Anthony Forster, 2004). Scholars like Hans-Joachim Morgenthau (1960), Kalevi J. Holsti (1967), Edwin H. Fedder (1968), and Bruce M. Russett (1971) have previously proposed typologies of defense cooperation, distinguishing alliances by factors such as their mutuality, duration, operational capacity, geographical limitations, nature and type of commitment, degree of military integration, and the distribution of power amongst members. However, these traditional categorizations fall short of capturing the diversity and complexity of modern defense cooperation. A novel typology that more accurately reflects the current age is needed. This new classification categorizes defense cooperation according to the level of cooperation (whether "bi", "mini", or "multi"), their specific or general objectives, the length in time (transient or permanent), their domain (related to operational aspects or investments), and their framework (whether institutionalized or not). This novel typology, being both descriptive and empirical, offers a more nuanced understanding of the multifaceted forms of cooperation that characterize the 21st century (see figure 1), bridging the gap left by previous classifications that were primarily limited to military alliances. It acknowledges the diversification of cooperation models and provides a framework for further exploration of the conditions under which international defense agreements are formed and operate, recognizing the broader spectrum of interests, obligations, and strategic considerations that define today's security landscape.

Forms of cooperation	Objectives	Length	Domain	Framework
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Bi" (2) • "Mini" (3-7) • "Multi" (8+) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific • General 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transient • Permanent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational aspects • Investments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutionalised • Non-institutionalised

Figure 1: Type of defense cooperation

Source: (Camille Morel & Friederike Richter, 2021, pp.31)

From the above information, it can be said that "defense cooperation" and "military cooperation" are terms often used interchangeably, and for good reason, as they both describe the collaboration between different countries' military or defense forces. While "defense cooperation" emphasizes the collective measures taken by nations to ensure mutual security and protection, "military cooperation" focuses on the collaboration and coordination between armed forces to achieve common goals. Both concepts involve sharing intelligence, conducting joint exercises, coordinating strategic planning, providing mutual aid, and enhancing the capabilities of partners.

In addition, defense cooperation is an expansive concept that goes beyond the realm of mere military diplomacy. It serves as a cornerstone for fostering trust, resolving conflicts, and facilitating open dialogues and cooperation at both

bilateral and multilateral levels within international organizations. Modern defense diplomacy is a multifaceted discipline, with various international activities rooted in dialogue and partnership. Primarily overseen by defense ministries, its goal is to frame and execute state security policies while nurturing enduring relationships that promote transparency, trust, and the pursuit of shared objectives. It involves a plethora of activities, from bilateral alliances and intelligence exchanges to arms control and military assistance, and is undertaken by both civilian and military personnel within the Ministry of Defense. Amidst these, the armed forces emerge as a pivotal instrument of defense diplomacy, taking on roles that extend beyond combat and deterrence. As noted by A. Cottey and A. Forster (2004, p. 27), defense cooperation encompasses numerous instruments including bilateral ties, defense attachés, international military

agreements, and training and education programs, to name a few. Given the vast scope and tools of defense diplomacy, it's challenging to pinpoint a one-size-fits-all approach, as nations have unique contexts, capacities, and priorities. However, an efficient defense system not only amplifies a state's international standing but also stabilizes global relations, reducing the likelihood of armed confrontations.

Therefore, it can be concluded that "*defense cooperation*" and "*military cooperation*" reflect the same fundamental idea, differing only in terminology, not in definition or intent. The cooperation can span a range of activities, from sharing intelligence, joint training exercises, equipment procurement, to policy coordination.

3.2. The Intersection of Soft Power and Self-help Theory in Defense Activities

Concepts of defense diplomacy according to the theory of "soft power": Joseph S. Nye (2002, p.8) identified three types of power and how they are applied or created, including hard power, economic power, and soft power. Among them, hard power relates to using force (military) to coerce one country to obey the will of another (Robert J. Art & Robert Jervis, 2009, pp.133). Soft power, as identified by many scholars, notably Joseph S. Nye, is the ability to persuade a country and its leaders to do what another country wants or the ability to guide the mindset of a country in a way that benefits another country through factors such as the attractiveness of the viewpoints that country presents, public opinion, or the cultural influence of that country. The habitual perception of defense-military as the source of hard power often makes it difficult to recognize that defense-military can also be a source of soft power.

Through the ways of creating or using soft power from cultural resources or public diplomacy, we can understand the methods of generating or utilizing soft power from defense diplomacy resources. According to Joseph S. Nye, there are generally two ways to create soft power:

The first method, also called the indirect approach, is when a country undertakes activities to assist the public of another country (the target nation) to gain their goodwill. Consequently, the public of the target nation will create a political atmosphere favorable to, or in line with, the intentions of the implementing country. This can happen when the public pressures their government officials through democratic processes in their homeland, in forms such as street protests or creating conditions that compel their national leaders to develop policies favorable to the implementing country (Joseph S. Nye, 2011, pp.94-97). The indirect method is understood as: Source (to create soft power) - impacts the public - creates a political atmosphere - decisions of the leaders. The source of indirect soft power often operates through public diplomacy: governments use educational, developmental, and social programs to directly interact with the public of other countries to garner their support (Goran Swistek, 2012, pp.80). Regarding using defense-military resources to indirectly create soft power:

activities that garner significant public attention like disaster relief, collaborating on non-traditional security issues, development support, and military-led humanitarian aid are not just charitable acts but also aim to build favorable relations between that military force and the public of another nation. Thus, using military resources and development projects to win the "hearts and minds" of another country's public, thereby influencing their defense-military policymakers in a way favorable to the implementing country, is a form of defense diplomacy that indirectly creates soft power.

The second method is when soft power is directly created by persuading the leadership of another country to support the views presented. The direct method is understood as: Source (to create soft power) - impacts leaders - decisions of leaders. Traditional diplomatic forms like state visits and international conferences fall under the direct method of creating soft power; as they are direct measures between governments aimed to achieve the desired outcomes of the initiating government. In defense diplomacy, forms such as: military delegation visits at various levels, officer exchanges; conferences, seminars, defense dialogues; joint military training programs, joint military exercises, and naval ship mutual visits are peaceful uses of military force intended for direct exchange of ideas, viewpoints, and priority policies between countries. The ultimate purpose of these efforts is not just to strengthen cooperation for mutual benefit, but also to influence leadership to decide on defense-military policies beneficial to the initiating country. With this approach, it is clear that defense diplomacy is used to directly create soft power. Therefore, according to the theory of soft power, defense resources are not only used to create hard power (through force) as commonly understood but also to create soft power.

In addition, defense cooperation, seen through the perspective of "cooperation as self-help", highlights the core idea of mutual dependence and collective security. In our interconnected world, nations can boost their individual security by joining hands – sharing resources, intelligence, and strategies (Charles L. Glaser, 1994). This amplifies their defense prowess. Simply put, when a country collaborates with others, it's helping itself in the process. There are plenty of reasons why "Cooperation as Self-Help" is beneficial in the realm of defense. First, defense operations are often expensive and resource-intensive. Pooling resources and funds can make these ventures more financially feasible. Secondly, while one nation may have weaknesses in its defense setup, cooperation can fill these gaps by leveraging the strengths of each partner. This isn't just about tactics; it sends a powerful message of unity to potential adversaries. Sharing intelligence in this age of information is another significant advantage. Collaborative defense efforts mean nations can merge their intelligence, resulting in informed strategies and a unified stand against shared threats. Also, cooperation offers flexibility. As threats change, countries

can modify their defense strategies without the burden of maintaining a vast infrastructure alone.

A perfect example of this principle in action is NATO. Formed after World War II, NATO's member nations understood that defending against external threats was more effective when done together (John S. Duffield, 1994). Not only did this ease the load on each nation, but it also presented a united front against potential adversaries. Likewise, joint naval drills, collaborative counter-terrorism operations, and shared military bases are real-world examples of how defense cooperation can be a form of self-help. In essence, the synergy that arises from combined efforts, pooled intelligence, and coordinated strategies ensures a more stable and predictable security environment. Thus, the idea of "cooperation as self-help" isn't just a grand vision; it's a tried and tested method for bolstering global security.

The Indian case illustrates the transition from a bi-level to a multi-level approach to cooperation. Indeed, the concurrent employment of these various modes of cooperation to advance national interests and embrace a preferred foreign policy, also known as 'strategic autonomy,' may enhance efficacy in India's defense field.

3.3. Defense Cooperation in Practice: Case Study of India and Its Global Implications

In the context of the 21st century, as elucidated by scholars like Alice Pannier, Olivier Schmitt, and others, defense cooperation has evolved into multifaceted and complex arrangements. The traditional models, as outlined by Hans-Joachim Morgenthau and others, fall short in encapsulating the modern dynamics of defense cooperation. India's defense strategy provides a practical illustration of this modern complexity. India's defense strategy emerges as a prime embodiment of this multifaceted evolution. On one end of the spectrum, we observe "mini-level" cooperation, evident in exercises like "Malabar" with the U.S., Japan, and Australia, which emphasize inter-operability and a shared military understanding. On the other end, there are "multi-level" regional collaborations like the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium, which coalesce multiple nations under the aegis of a specific regional goal, in this case, maritime security. Yet, cooperation isn't solely confined to exercises or regional blocs; it manifests in permanent alliances, such as India's collaboration with Russia on the BrahMos missile system (Aayush Maniktalia, 2023, p.2). This partnership represents a deep-rooted bond, spanning the gamut from research and investment to actual operational deployment. In parallel, we see "bi-level" cooperation between India and individual partners, suggesting a dual-tiered approach to defense collaboration. Yet, not all defense ties are enduring. Some are transient, driven by the urgency of the moment, much like India's swift intervention in the aftermath of the 2015 Nepal earthquake, demonstrating that defense cooperation can be as fleeting as it is lasting, contingent on the situational imperatives. Thus, in the contemporary epoch, defense cooperation is no longer monolithic but is a mosaic of

partnerships, strategies, and imperatives, exemplified aptly by India's multifarious defense engagements.

The two contrasting types of defense cooperation discussed in the statement reflect the diversity of approaches nations can take in addressing their collective security needs. On the one hand, institutions like the Indian Military Academy, which hosts foreign cadets, exemplify the more structured and formal aspects of defense cooperation. Such cooperation typically involves long-term commitments, established protocols, and clearly defined training programs. Countries share knowledge, training, and other resources through these formal partnerships to foster lasting relationships and strengthen their defense capabilities. On the other hand, intelligence-sharing agreements with countries like Afghanistan to counter regional terrorism signify a more informal framework of cooperation. These arrangements are focused on addressing specific threats and are often characterized by their flexibility and ability to respond quickly to evolving security challenges. Such a partnership may not involve long-term commitments or predefined protocols, but it plays a critical role in addressing immediate security concerns by enabling nations to share intelligence and other resources as needed. Both forms of defense cooperation serve distinct purposes and offer different benefits, with formal, institutionalized cooperation providing stability and predictability and informal, targeted cooperation offering adaptability and swift action.

India's engagement in UN peacekeeping missions and multilateral exercises like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization demonstrates the "multi-level" aspect of defense cooperation, signaling a commitment to global peace (Gaurav Saini & Happymon Jacob, 2022). It can be seen that India's defense cooperation strategy provides a rich, empirical example that resonates with the novel typology proposed for understanding the diverse and complex forms of defense cooperation in the contemporary era. It captures the various levels, domains, frameworks, and durations that characterize modern defense agreements, bridging the gap left by traditional categorizations and reflecting the broader spectrum of interests, obligations, and strategic considerations defining today's security landscape.

India's defense cooperation strategy is shaped by the changing balance of power in Asia and aims to enhance regional stability and security (C. Raja Mohan, 2008). Internally, India has strengthened its defense capabilities to establish a robust regional presence. Externally, it has sought to diversify its alliances by forming strategic partnerships with like-minded countries such as Japan and Australia. This diversification reinforces India's global position and helps maintain a multipolar Asian order, preventing any single country from achieving regional dominance.

India's defense cooperation initiatives are a key component of its foreign policy and have far-reaching implications for both regional and global security (Arvind Dutta, 2009). On a bilateral level, India has established defense agreements with

several countries, including the US, Australia, Japan, Russia, China, and Vietnam. These agreements cover a wide range of activities, such as joint military exercises, technology transfer, and intelligence sharing. These partnerships serve to strengthen India's defense capabilities, enhance interoperability with allied forces, and foster mutual trust and cooperation. In addition to bilateral agreements, India is also actively involved in multilateral defense cooperation through platforms like QUAD and ASEAN (C Raja Mohan, 2023). QUAD, which includes the US, Japan, Australia, and India, aims to promote a free and open Indo-Pacific region, while ASEAN focuses on fostering regional security and stability in Southeast Asia. By participating in these platforms, India seeks to contribute to regional peace and security, counterbalance the influence of potential adversaries, and promote a rules-based international order.

These defense cooperation efforts contribute to regional stability by fostering strong alliances and partnerships. They also enhance counter-terrorism efforts through intelligence sharing and joint operations. Additionally, defense cooperation can yield economic benefits, such as increased trade and investment, and opportunities for growth in the defense industry. However, India's defense cooperation strategy also faces challenges, including geopolitical tensions, resource allocation concerns, sovereignty issues, diplomatic balancing, and technology transfer risks. Despite these challenges, defense cooperation provides India with opportunities for enhanced security, counter-terrorism efforts, economic benefits, regional stability, and increased global influence and leadership. In summary, India's defense cooperation strategy aims to create a balanced and stable power structure in Asia, aligning with broader goals of peace, security, and economic development in a complex world.

IV. CONCLUSION

The nexus between defense activities and regional stability remains profoundly interwoven in today's intricate geopolitical tapestry. As evidenced by the recent upheavals in the East Sea and similar regional conflicts, defense mechanisms are not mere tools of intimidation or dominion but vital instruments to foster understanding, maintain peace, and instill equilibrium in international dynamics. Through the lens of Joseph Nye's Soft Power theory, it becomes evident that mere military might not sustain stability; the intertwining of diplomacy, cooperation, and defense is essential. In the case of India, as cited, defense cooperation has proven to be a productive means to safeguard territorial and national interests and strengthen bonds with neighboring nations, leading to a more secure and harmonious regional environment.

Furthermore, the Cooperation as Self-help theory reaffirms that nations can achieve greater security through collaborative defense endeavors than through isolationist strategies. To navigate the treacherous waters of global politics, nations must redefine and reorient their

understanding of the defense. It is not solely about showcasing strength or dominance but about fostering ties, understanding mutual interests, and working collaboratively towards a stable future. This fusion of defense and diplomacy is challenging, as terminologies and strategies can often be misconstrued or manipulated. However, with clear definitions and sincere intent, defense cooperation can be the linchpin of regional stability in our multifaceted world. As global landscapes evolve, so must the strategies nations employ; defense cooperation stands out as a beacon of hope in ensuring regional stability amidst the complexities of modern international relations.

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