



EDITOR'S NOTE

The last three months have been as significant as any in the recent history of our country. The year 2014 ended with the drawdown of US-NATO forces from Afghanistan with many opining that the 'job' was only half done or less. There are legitimate fears of instability in the region that could spill over to other parts of South Asia and Central Asia. India is naturally concerned that the situation does not take an ugly turn that will be of detriment to us. The internal and external pulls and pressures are many that encompass terrorism, trade, diplomacy and power politics. The situation merits continuous monitoring for some time to come. Some contingency planning will also be in order.

The visit of President Obama in January was a momentous event. Apart from the fact that he was the first US president to be the chief guest at our Republic Day parade, the visit signalled that the strategic partnership was well on track. There was the very apparent bonhomie between the leaders of the two countries and the mutual understanding on a host of different issues, including the "vision document", was clearly noted by our friends and possible adversaries. President Obama's commitment to support our "Make in India" programme was very welcome and so was the desire for furtherance of the Defence Trade and Technology Initiative. However, the Americans, once again, were insistent on our signing the three "foundation pacts" viz the Logistics Support Agreement (LSA), Communication Interoperability and Security Memorandum Agreement (CISMOA) and Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-spatial Cooperation (BECA). Our signing the three agreements has been debated for over ten years now. The implications are self-evident. Our reticence is understandable as the agreements could impact our relations with other countries. Also, there is some danger that our security interest could be compromised. On the other hand, not signing the agreements will mean that equipment and services that would be operationally advantageous would be denied to us. Indeed, that has happened in the recent past. If we

are not to deny ourselves the full gains of a strategic partnership, it may be advisable to start a dialogue on the subject and accept only those conditions that we can live with. Some compromises will be necessary but we could insist that we will sign the required agreements, with modifications as agreed to, on a case by case basis. Such an approach should be acceptable.

The 10th edition of the biennial International Aerospace Exhibition "Aero India", was held in February 2014. The exhibition attracted considerable interest and a record number of aerospace companies participated. There were as many as 328 foreign companies and 266 Indian companies that took part. The corresponding figures for the last such exhibition, "Aero India 2013" were only 212 and 266 respectively. The presence of so many well known companies was encouraging but, unfortunately, no orders or contracts ensued. Apparently, our "Make in India" call has been heard but much work still needs to be done.

On the last day of February, the annual budget was duly rolled out. By and large, the budget was well received but the defence budget excited comments that were to be expected from those who have neither the professional expertise in, nor the responsibility for, any aspect of national defence. It is true that the defence budget is a mere 1.74 percent of projected Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and only 11 percent of government expenditure. However, such figures can be misleading and it is necessary to determine how we intend to spend the moneys and whether the incremental capabilities that should result will best meet the projected threats to our national security. A more detailed examination of how we spend the defence budget is long overdue. One wonders when such an exercise will become the necessary prelude to the fashioning of the defence budget.

As usual, this edition of the *Journal* addresses a number of issues related to national security. National security is a complex subject and comprises a vast number of varied considerations. It is our hope that we continue to raise issues that merit examination and study.

Happy reading

