



# The hard power imperative

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## **India needs to urgently modernise the armed forces**

- In a new programme called 'Insect Allies', launched by the Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), which is responsible for developing military technologies in the U.S., researchers have been asked to evolve insects that introduce genetically modified viruses into crops.
- This is being done ostensibly to address infections.
- One is yet to come across a more ingenious explanation for a lethal weapon system being developed.
- The DARPA has denied that this is its intention, but history has proven that noble human intentions have been overpowered by the lure of obtaining a technological advantage to enhance power.

## **Developing hard power**

- No country calling itself a power can afford to lag behind its adversaries in the technology innovation cycle.
- China realised this early, and its advancements in weapons technology has been impressive.
- However, the narrative in Delhi is stuck on the mundane issues of third- and fourth-generation fighter programmes of Tejas and Rafale.
- India seems to hope for an environment sans war.
- Soft power processes such as the Wuhan summit and the waiver for India under CAATSA (Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act) are important but they are not substitutes for the hard power necessary to buttress nation-building.
- China and the U.S. may be adversaries, but economic reasons will not let their rhetoric and mutual trade wars cross the rubicon.
- Cold calculations of national interest drive their decision-making, and collateral damage by way of broken promises and overlooked pledges of friendships with less powerful nations, India included, are plausible.
- Promises of friendships between unequals do not withstand the lure of

economic give and take of the powerful engaged in a geo-economic tussles; it is a truism that while capability takes time to build, intentions can change overnight.

- It is time that India stands on its own with its indigenous hard power.

### **Needed: An adequate budget and time**

- Hard power grows only if there is an adequate budget, and if time is given for acquiring intellectual property in the military.
- According to the World Bank, India's total investment in R&D has stayed static at 0.63% of the GDP for a 20-year period.
- More worrying is that three-fifth of this is in sectors other than defence.
- Developing intellectual property through indigenous R&D is key to this endeavour.
- What India's polity needs is some serious bipartisan introspection and discussion, which will be in national interest.

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