**Strong defence and effective foreign policy**

Swarna Bharat Party’s defence and foreign policies

*These policies should be seen in the context of the broader reform agenda outlined in* [*SBP’s manifesto*](http://swarnabharat.in/)*. Free markets require strong and effective governance. Without governance reforms detailed in the manifesto, that will build capacity and honesty in the government machine, the policies detailed below will not deliver the expected results.*

Protection from external aggression is the primary reason we have the state. Defence is therefore the single most important function of government. Citizens who choose to protect our lives and freedom by serving the Indian armed forces perform a service above all others. We deeply honour the extraordinary role and sacrifices of our armed forces in protecting India’s borders.

National security encompasses all facets of securing our nation, including economic[[1]](#footnote-1). India needs to act (at a minimum) as a regional pivot and a potential global influencer in the coming century. We will closely coordinate our defence and foreign policies, and integrate both of these with internal security.

## Defence and our national security agenda

We believe that the response of successive governments to national security has not been adequately pro-active. We are part of a nuclear neighbourhood and need to anticipate all contingencies. To deter anyone’s misguided attempts to harm India or Indian citizens living abroad, we commit to building the world’s most powerful and defensive military force, including a strong nuclear shield and mechanisms that can thwart all forms of warfare.

### White Paper

If all nations were equally committed to liberty and peace, there would be no warfare. But that’s not the situation today. Unfortunately, some of our neighbouring governments continue to stoke unrest on our borders to distract attention from their internal mis-governance. We are deeply concerned about intrusions inside the Indian border (such as inside the Line of Actual Control) by foreign terrorist groups supported by Pakistan. The line between government-directed violence and violence perpetrated in the name of religion can no longer be distinguished in Pakistan.

We are aware about our rapidly changing strategic environment, especially in the context of China’s emergence as a major power. We fully support the rise of China’s economic strength, but are concerned with its increasing belligerence and continued suppression of freedoms for its people.

In addition, rogue dictatorial regimes are expanding their reach into nuclear technology, threatening the lives of peaceful people across the world. Asymmetric warfare technology, such as cyber-warfare, bioterrorism, and other non-traditional warfare are emerging as threats to the world. A response to all this must be comprehensive, not piecemeal.

We want peace through our own independent strength, not through alliances that reduce our ability to speak our mind. (We welcome alliances, however, that are based on preserving liberty for all people.)

To inform a view on these and related issues, we will commission a comprehensive White Paper on defence to prepare India for the security challenges of the future.

### Resources for our servicemen and intelligence agencies

We pledge to our servicemen, servicewomen and intelligence agencies the authority and resources they need to defend India’s territory and freedom. All other funding can wait, but defence funding cannot. We will increase the overall share of defence in government expenditure. To demonstrate our deep and abiding gratitude to our defence personnel, we will attract and retain high quality personnel through better service conditions, and provide them with appropriate weapons and technology. Long-pending modernization and up-gradation of equipment will be remedied by compressing the execution schedule by increasing resources.

This does not mean that a single paisa will be wasted on any unnecessary equipment or manpower. We need to build a lean and mean fighting machine. Any excess funding of defence inevitably comes at the cost of vital infrastructure and other needs. The principles of new public management that will apply to the new civil service machinery will also be introduced, as appropriate, in the defence force.

#### Enhancing pride in our defence forces and intelligence agencies

The defence profession is unlike any other. There is deep honour in serving the defence force, being the fortress behind whose shelter our life and freedom flourish. It is ironic that a country blessed with a young population is facing a shortage of new entrants to the armed forces’ officer cadre. While publicizing and educating our youth about the (much better with our government) career opportunities in the armed forces, we will re-examine the process of induction, training and human resource development with special emphasis on post-retirement employment opportunities for personnel, most of whom are required to retire at a relatively young age.

For the liberty of Indians to be ensured, we need a very strong defence force. Whatever is necessary needs to be done to ensure that India is able to attract a continuing flow of high quality talent into the armed forces.

We will immediately establish a separate Pay Commission for the armed forces that financial compensation for our soldiers is sufficient to attract the best talent and ensures a highly selective process of promotions. In particular, it would be expected that senior defence personnel are paid on par with senior management in the private sector. There will, however, be no link between salaries in the armed force and civilian sector, particularly since all senior civilian officials will be on short term contracts, with salaries negotiated based on need.

One of the things that matters to potential recruits is what happens to them after their retirement (which is generally at a relatively early age in the defence forces). The party believes that pension must not be a right, and people must personally save for their old age requirements.

To create such incentives, we will ensure that standard requirements are imposed to ensure that an amount (say, 10 per cent or higher if so chosen by the employee) of employee’s salaries is compulsorily deposited into private superannuation funds that can be managed as desired by the employees. No funds will be allowed to be withdrawn from such superannuation funds without a critical exigency or achieving the retirement age (say, 60 years).

As such, Swarna Bharat Party will draw a firm line on all new hires, who will not receive any defined benefit pension, but shall instead receive annuities based on their contributions during their active service/employment.

There would, however, be a fixed and defined pension for war widows. Also, all retired defence personnel will be able to transition to other jobs (since there will be no tenured civil service, and all jobs will be open to competition at all times). They would not receive any pension initially but if they fail to get any job after trying, they shall be provided a veterans supplement.

For all defence forces recruited under a defined pension model, the pension system would be equalised. In effect, we will have One Rank One Pension for the Defence forces. Equalisation shall not apply to any other government services’ or PSUs’ defined pensions.

The party would like to offer support for OROP, fully aware that this is going to be extremely expensive to the country. The issue is a result of bad policies in the past, and fixing it by directly equalising pensions is not the most efficient option. However, the decision has already been taken by the BJP government and we believe the government will find funds to deliver this policy. We would like to link the OROP support with the hope that all concerned will actively support a much wider range of governance system reforms, e.g. the abolition of IAS and all other tenured services; the abolition of pensions for all new recruits; and radical restructuring the defence forces to reduce intake at the lower levels (soldiers) and increase the use of technologically competent people who can use robotics, drones, and other high-tech equipment.

### Chief of Defence Staff

Defence policy should be under the direction of the people, through their government. Defence strategy (for delivery of high level policies and objectives) should then involve active consultation with the defence forces. The defence forces should thereafter be given independence on operational matters, within the broad parameters of policy and strategy.

On operational matters, we agree with the Kargil review committee’s recommendations on the appointment of a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and Integrated Army Command. We will integrate the operational command of the Army, Navy and Air Force under a CDS to avoid coordination errors of the past. This will allow the creation of theatre commands operating under the Chief, with the Army, Navy and Air Force becoming seamless war machines of a single defensive force.

The CDS will be given the rank of a Minister of State, reporting to the Defence Minister. The Army, Navy and Air Force Chief’s stature will be made equal to that of the Cabinet Secretary.

Staffing is an operational matter. We will ensure that (except for the CDS) the appointment of other senior officials of the armed forces is kept away from politics. Bipartisan due process at arms length from the government will be put in place, and the government obligated to appoint the officials recommended by this process.

### Strong intelligence agencies

We will strengthen the Research and Analysis Wing to ensure top class external intelligence, thereby enabling informed defence and foreign policy choices. We will significantly increase human intelligence (boots on the ground) both at home and abroad, as well as our technological and cyber-warfare capabilities to deal with the diverse threats facing the country.

More broadly, we will enhance the capabilities of the entire intelligence community to ensure that our country’s leaders and military are kept fully informed in an uncertain and dangerous world. We will ensure strong accountability to ensure that our nation’s sensitive information and activities are protected. Where necessary, we will enact legislation to formally embed the role of various agencies and avoid any role clarity issues.

### Defence production

Indigenous development and production of state of the art equipment and security systems is vital for India. Under the leadership of the Defence Research Development Organization (DRDO), we will encourage the domestic private sector to actively participate in defence research & development and production of cutting edge technologies. Through such private production of defence equipment (under DRDO oversight), the government will ultimately be able to privatise most public sector defence manufacturing undertakings.

Robotics will play a critical role in the future armed forces. We will encourage Indians working in this field abroad, to return to India and produce indigenous defence (and commercial) robots. Given the significant role of the private sector in our policy framework, we expect such people to be motivated primarily by private sector opportunities.

### Defence procurement

The current procedure for defence procurement involves trials and technical approval within the armed forces, followed by independent price negotiations conducted by bureaucrats and politicians. Such a procurement process has been a hotbed of high-level corruption. We will ensure an independent assessment system, a separate system for negotiation, a separate system for issue of orders and a separate system for receipt of supply and quality assurance, each reporting its independent actions to a high level board focused on probity. Politicians will be kept at arms length from the entire process, since they do not have any specialised knowledge or skills to offer.

### Border roads and defence communication

We will ensure that environmental clearances are expedited and critically-needed funding allocated for border roads and rail line connectivity to the Eastern, Western, Northern and Central sectors (where commercially possible, through private sector participation). We will support the deployment of the best means of communication within the defence forces.

### Reduced armed force deployment in internal security duties

We will not deploy armed forces against their own countrymen unless there are extreme or unanticipated threats to internal security beyond the capacity of a local administration or paramilitary force. Where armed forces are deployed, they will be provided total immunity from prosecution by civil authorities, given they operate under an entirely different accountability system. Internal accountability (under armed force rules) will, however, continue. Internal operations are not a licence to kill innocents.

### Volunteers to support full-time military

We will strengthen and revamp the part-time volunteer force and building a strong reserve of officers and soldiers. Significantly increased resources will be made available for training and other support of such forces. We will particularly encourage the participation of women in these forces.

### Honouring and supporting veterans and their families

We acknowledge our deep obligation to our veterans, and commit to providing them and their families with care and dignity. Our nation’s warriors are volunteers, who serve from a sense of duty. We will focus on providing them with health, education, disability and home loan services, and memorial services upon death.

We will undertake a holistic approach to address concerns regarding pay disparities, neglect of war widows and disabled soldiers. Our wounded warriors, whether still in service or discharged, deserve the best medical care. We will make military and veterans’ medicine the gold standard for mental health care (such as for PTSD), advances in prosthetics, and treatment of trauma and eye injuries. As well, we will care for the immediate families of those who have made the ultimate sacrifice, who must be assured of meaningful financial assistance.

We will support veterans in their journey to re-enter the job market as soon as possible after their military service ends. A job for a veteran is more than a source of income. It is a new mission, with a new status. We urge the private sector to give priority to veterans in their hiring decisions. We will review the scope for any tax breaks for hiring veterans.

### National Armed Force Museum

We believe that the achievements of war heroes need to be well honoured, documented and preserved for posterity. We will establish a world-best National Armed Force Museum that records all battles and provides, for posterity, a comprehensive resource (both physical and online) for remembering our war heroes.

## Integrated defence and foreign policy

We believe that foreign policy should be informed by national interest and strongly woven into defence policy. The highlights of our foreign policy are outlined below.

### Key principles and processes

General principles of peaceful engagement with all peoples of the world, through trade and mutual respect, will underpin all our interactions.

#### Security

We will work closely with friendly nations to enhance mutual interests such as extradition of criminals and shutting down terrorism.

As indicated earlier, we will maintain a strong national defence capability, and enter into security alliances as equal partners, where appropriate.

If unfriendly neighbours fail to exercise self-restraint and continue barbaric behaviour (such as beheading Indian soldiers), we will not issue any further requests or warnings and may use unlimited force to clinically destroy the enemy force, including its leadership.

We advocate global disarmament. We believe, however, that India needs an adequate arsenal of nuclear weapons to motivate mutual disarmament, or at least deter nuclear attacks. We will consider destroying our nuclear weapons when all other countries undertake the simultaneous and total elimination of their nuclear capability.

#### Foreign treaties

We believe that there are no permanent friends or enemies amongst nations, and treat all nations with equal respect, offering our hand in friendship and engaging with them in the manner justified by their own actions. We do not wish to entangle ourselves in the affairs of other nations except where mutual interests are served, or (in extremely rare cases) a nation is involved in the genocide of its own people, in which case we could intervene to stop such genocide. We believe that our treaties and alliances should be very selective and not weaken or encroach upon our sovereignty and independence of opinion.

#### Free trade and economic cooperation

A key plank of our economic and foreign affairs strategy is free trade and investment. Free trade lowers prices and increases choice for consumers. There is also a reduced possibility of war between nations with intertwined economic interests.

We actively support liberty in all countries. We will only cautiously engage with nations that have territorial ambitions or violate human rights.

Where possible, we will remove trade barriers unilaterally, regardless of counterbalancing actions from others. At a minimum, we will seek multilateral trade agreements, and where such agreements are not forthcoming, we will seek bilateral Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), particularly with neighbours Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, Maldives and Myanmar. We will throw open India to global talent and investment, particularly from Asia.

We will cooperate with friendly neighbours to share waterways for mutual benefit. With them we will seek to build trans-border economic projects that give them a stake in India’s growth. This will involve, where possible, more inland waterways and cross-border links.

#### No acceptance of foreign aid

We reject the idea of foreign aid. India cannot grow on a foundation of pity or charity. India’s policies have let us down, and we take responsibility for fixing them. We do not object to foreign voluntary organisations undertaking development work in India, but object to foreign government funding, and any foreign political or religious funding.

#### Strengthening our diplomatic force

India has one of the smallest foreign offices in the world: a bench strength of around 1,800 officials. China has three times this number and the US over 20,000. As part of governance machinery reforms, we will both modernise the diplomatic force and increase uptake through open entry at all levels from amongst Indian citizens, particularly from the academia, subject to stringent checks. Principles of new public management will be introduced and tenure at all senior levels eliminated.

#### International organisations

We are concerned about undue roles assumed by many international organisations with a largely unaccountable bureaucracy. Often, these organisations take a strong anti-liberty stance, such as against freedom of speech. We will participate in international organisations (including the United Nations and the Commonwealth of Nations) cautiously, wary of empty words and attempts of dictators and other immoral leaders to tell the world what it should do.

Till an alternative to the United Nations is created, however, we insist on permanent membership and veto power for India in the Security Council.

#### Supporting Indians abroad

We will firmly protect the interests of Indian citizens who live or work abroad (NRIs), and maintain close relations with foreigners of Indian origin (OCIs and PIOs), many of whom continue to think and work for a new India even though they live abroad. We believe that the Indian diaspora are a fantastic asset for the country: widely aware of the world, of good practices and well settled. We encourage them to help India fulfil its destiny.

#### Dual citizenship

In recognition of their contributions, and to directly allow them to bring their knowledge to India through the political process, we will give OCIs an opportunity to resume Indian citizenship. Subject to security clearance, OCIs will be able to resume full Indian citizenship for a one-time fee of $10,000 without losing their alternative citizenship/s.

### Relationships with specific nations

India’s international interests encompass important relationships, such as with our SAARC neighbours, with Commonwealth countries, with Japan, Russia and the USA, and with many nations of Asia. Limitations of space prevent us from including all nations, but a few key relationships are discussed below.

#### USA

We are committed to a strong relationship with USA, to foster and strengthen freedom and democracy across the world. For this relationship to grow stronger, we expect the USA to stop arming countries that threaten India’s interests.

#### Japan

We will enhance our engagement with Japan in scientific and manufacturing partnerships. Japan will be invited to invest in India, assured of good governance and the rule of law under the policies we bring to India. We will also enhance defence collaboration with Japan and Australia in the Asia-Pacific region.

#### China

India aims to have excellent trade and cultural relations with the Chinese people. However, we reject all claims of the Chinese on Indian territory, including the territory occupied by China in J&K, and believe there are opportunities for China to play a more constructive role in Tibet by giving it greater autonomy, on par with its historical independent status. We also wish to see China defend the freedoms of its people, and their rights to opinion and democratic franchise. Such actions by China will allow the two largest nations of the world to work towards mutual prosperity and global peace.

#### Russia

We will continue our decades old friendship with Russia, which supplied defence equipment to us when others were unwilling to do so. We hope that Russia will enhance freedom of speech for its citizens and engage actively with the rest of the world, given it is in our self-interest to create global trade and peace.

#### Pakistan

We support India’s policy directions to date in relation to Pakistan. We believe that better trade and cultural relations should be contingent on Pakistan bringing its ongoing hostilities against India to a complete halt. Given its tortured history, however, this seems unlikely. We suspect that Pakistan’s internal conditions are likely to remain precarious for some time.

Subject to Pakistan stopping incursions into India, we will work towards ending the border dispute with Pakistan. If Pakistan can demonstrate and assure durable peace through changes to its internal governance systems, we will consider formalizing the Line of Control (LoC) into a permanent national boundary. After undisturbed peace has been achieved, we will consider throwing open the border for much greater trade and interaction. In due course, these open borders for trade will assist in long term peace.

When pre-conditions for peace are met, we will also collaborate with Pakistan to build highways to Iran and central Asia.

#### Bangladesh

We are committed to strong ongoing trade and cultural relationships with Bangladesh, even as we wish to deal with illegal migration into India. We acknowledge that immigration has reduced. However, there remain innumerable challenges in sending back illegal immigrants to Bangladesh. We will work towards agreement with Bangladesh to put an end to illegal migration.

#### Nepal

Indian governments have, since 2004, often seemed to assist Maoist forces in Nepal. We reject any support for Maoists and will work to encourage liberty, democracy and good governance in Nepal.

#### Sri Lanka

We remain committed to better relations and trade with Sri Lanka. We will work closely with Sri Lanka towards genuine democracy and liberty for all, including equal treatment of Tamils in Sri Lanka. We will collaborate with Sri Lanka to build a bridge across the Palk Strait, to facilitate commercial activity.

#### Corridors with South East Asia

We will aim to help complete the Asian trilateral highway to Thailand, as well as the Kaladan multi-modal transport corridor. We will work towards linking a new port in Chennai with Dawei in Myanmar and on to Thailand. As more transport connections are built into Southeast Asia, we will further strengthen our bilateral engagement with SE Asian countries.

#### Undersea energy corridor with the Middle East

We will seek to facilitate an undersea energy corridor connecting oil terminals in western India to oil sources in Iran, Qatar and other Middle Eastern countries. We remain concerned with the absolutist regimes in many Middle Eastern nations, which constitutionally reject pluralism, free speech and democracy. We will engage with these nations to promote the equal rights of all their citizens and of others who may choose to live or work there.

1. Such as cyber attacks on companies, theft of IP, preventing outflow of black money, etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)