

Editorial

The previous issue of the *Journal of Defence Studies* included a perspective on Operation Golden Bird, a counter-insurgency operation carried out on the India-Myanmar border in 1995. Cross-border terrorism, especially on the western border, is a reality that India has been dealing with for some decades now. Periodically, events occur that serve to reinforce the magnitude of the problem. On 18 September 2016, four terrorists belonging to the Pakistani jihadi group Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) struck at an Indian Army camp at Uri in the state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), resulting in the deaths of 20 soldiers. Provocative as this particular incident was, the response of the Indian government was carefully calibrated to address the ‘cumulative build-up of terrorist attacks that had been emanating from across the Line of Control (LoC).’¹ While there were a number of options for counter-terror strikes, the Government of India as well as the Army made it clear that these would come but the execution in terms of time and space was reserved and not speculated upon. The counter strikes that were officially announced on 29 September marked a ‘distinct departure from the strategic and tactical approaches it had adopted in the past...[that] reinforced the government’s restraint and mature response, which had characterised past Indian responses as well.’² The strikes targeted only terror launch pads across the LoC and clearly indicated India’s interests in punishing the perpetrators of the attack and, at the same time, not escalating the military threshold.

Independent India has had a long history of its army and paramilitaries operating in insurgency-prone areas. Over time, the near-constant presence in such areas have taken a toll on those who serve multiple tenures in such conflict zones. In a timely and important article titled ‘Conceptualising Stress in the Armed Forces: A Public Health Perspective’, Yasir Hamid Bhat takes a close look at how work stress affects security personnel. He points to the fact that, in recent years, frequent reports of suicide and fragging cases among armed forces

personnel have prompted questions about the negative effects of stressful life experiences on the well-being of soldiers. A narrow conception of mental health cannot help us understand or explain the status of mental health and well-being of a soldier, which eclipses the interwoven nature of various social determinants of health at the workplace, such as the complexity of social categories reflected in class, power and caste structures. These work together to produce vulnerability to stress and affect the mental health and well-being of armed forces personnel. In his article, Bhat works with the aim of conceptualising stress in military settings and its effects on soldier's mental well-being, and explores the complex interrelationships between a soldier's mental well-being and his/her work, the organisational structures, processes and the environment within which they operate.

India's quest to acquire competitive defence technology is based on two routes: indigenous development and import. While India has made significant progress in indigenous development (a good example being ballistic missiles), defence technology development in other fields far outpaces Indian achievements. Therefore, a large segment of defence technologies and systems continue, as in the past, to be imported. It is here that the issue of technology transfers assumes importance. In the current issue, Kevin A. Desouza discusses this very concept in 'Transfer of Defence Technology to India: Prevalence, Significance and Insights'. Transfer of technology has been prevalent in numerous forms across the world, both in the civil as well as defence domains. These transfers, primarily in the form of licensed manufacture, have provided a significant boost to the production capabilities and self-reliance of developing nations in the past and hold great promise, in the future, for nations that do not have a well-developed science and technology base. Desouza's article addresses transfers in the defence domain and delves into some of its fundamental aspects through a coverage of its prevalence in India; whether it contributes to the attaining of national goals; understanding its core fundamentals and connected nuances; and finally, its benefits and costs, including issues of restriction.

Since 2014, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), also known as the Islamic State, has been a prominent factor in conflict-ridden West Asia, especially in Syria and Iraq. Despite its relatively recent appearance, the terrorist organisation arose in the utter confusion and breakdown of state order in Iraq post the US-led war in 2003. The organisation

spread its tentacles into neighbouring Syria in the aftermath of a popular uprising against the government in 2011, which in turn brutally cracked down on its own population. In 'The Rise and Future of ISIS', K. Nishant Nair traces ISIS' journey as it gained ground in parts of Iraq, Syria and Libya, and the support it received from unexpected quarters of the world. The article points to a strong digital presence as a defining feature of the group. Nair opines that the military and political characteristics of the ISIS have also made it vulnerable by making it a visible target, denying it the advantages of a formless, diffused organisation, which has been the traditional refuge of terrorist organisations worldwide. He explores the future scenarios that are likely to manifest with the ISIS as it begins to lose power and influence in its traditional strongholds. Nair discusses possible scenarios based on the loss of leadership, loss of territory and one in which the group retains leadership and territory in the backdrop of constant digital presence. He also takes into account a wild card scenario that envisages the ISIS obtaining a nuclear bomb from a state's arsenal or developing one on its own.

The current issue also includes five book reviews of interesting and recent titles. A.K. Bardalai, a veteran participant in UN Peacekeeping Operations, reviews *United Nations Peacekeeping Challenge: The Importance of the Integrated Approach*; Shrabana Barua reviews *Open Skies: Transparency, Confidence Building, and the End of the Cold War*; Surojit Mahalanobis reviews *Diplomatic Dimensions of Maritime Challenges for India in the 21st Century*; Y.M. Bammi reviews *India's Military Power: A General Reflects*; and Priyanka Singh reviews *Understanding Kashmir and Kashmiris*.

The JDS Editorial Board would like to hear more from our readers about the current issue as well as about topics you feel should be addressed by the journal. Do write to the Managing Editor, *Journal of Defence Studies* at ddg.idsa@nic.in. We also invite contributions for forthcoming issues on emerging security threats and scenarios; civil-military relations; higher defence planning; doctrines and concepts; organisations and structures; command and control mechanisms; logistical support and sustainability issues; budgeting procedures and practices vis-à-vis the Indian Armed Forces; military history, especially on wars fought by India and Indian participation in the First and Second World Wars; participation in UN peacekeeping operations; and bilateral/multi-lateral defence cooperation, among others. We hope that along with our growing readership, we would also see more contributions to future issues.

NOTES

1. Vivek Chadha, Rumel Dahiya, Neha Kohli and Shruti Pandalai, 'Uri, Surgical Strikes and International Reactions', IDSA Issue Brief, 4 October 2016, available at http://idsa.in/issuebrief/uri-surgical-strikes-and-international-reactions_041016.
2. Ibid.