

Editorial

It gives me great pleasure to present to readers the first issue of the *Journal of Defence Studies* of 2024. Like the last few volumes, this year's volume will also have a mix of general as well as special issues. The 'Call for Papers' for the special issue titled "Atmanirbharta (Self-Reliance) in Defence and Aeronautics" is getting a positive response, and we are hopeful about receiving a healthy number of submissions for the special issue. We are also planning to bring out a special issue on "India-US Defence Cooperation" later this year.

This issue consists of a Special Feature, five articles, two commentaries and four book reviews. The Special Feature titled "India's Quest for Strategic Autonomy: Opportunities and Challenges in the Emerging World Order" is an Address delivered by Ambassador Sujan R. Chinoy, Director General, Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (MP-IDSA) at the 5th General K.V. Krishna Rao Memorial Lecture held at Manekshaw Centre, Delhi on 5 October 2023. It is followed by the first article titled "Managing Officer Talent in the Army: A Study of the US System", in which Col Guriqbal Singh Gill explores the prevailing talent management ecosystem in the Indian Army and compares it with the system in the US Army with a view to cull out implementable recommendations that could enable better officer talent management.

The next article "Navigating ASEAN Centrality amidst Internal Friction and Interplay of Strategic Frameworks between the US and China", by Mr Om Prakash Das, scrutinises the concept of ASEAN centrality in the context of major external powers, notably the US and China. The article discusses whether the ASEAN centrality concept is oriented towards soliciting other major powers to recalibrate the influence of existing major powers, while also exploring the broader obligations on all major powers, encompassing regional structures and systems.

It has been seen that 'war by other means' or 'strategic competition' in multiple domains has taken precedence over direct physical conflict. The term 'multi-domain operations' (MDOs) has therefore become a part of the conflict management lexicon over the last decade. The third article "Evolution of Multi-Domain Operations and Prospects for Application of

Aerospace Power”, by Air Marshal Tejinder Singh, attempts to trace the evolution of multi-domain operations, identifies the key tenets at the doctrinal and concept of operations (CONOPS) level and examines the prospects of application of aerospace power in this new paradigm.

India is facing increased threats through both conventional and unconventional means, hence it is crucial to shore up its capabilities in its western and eastern flanks of island clusters. While the eastern side is relatively well protected through the presence of military assets in the Andaman archipelago, it is not the case with the Lakshadweep group of islands on the western flank. In the fourth article “Militarisation of Minicoy Island: Strengthening India’s Starboard Flank”, Gp Capt A.V. Chandrasekaran (Retd) puts emphasis on improving the military preparedness in the Lakshadweep area that can detect and respond to sea-based threats in real time. The author suggests that construction of a runway on Minicoy Island that is capable of hosting fighter/bomber operations would go a long way in assuaging threats, and support India in effectively balancing the power equation through force posturing.

The fifth article is titled “Securitisation of Economic Projects: A Case of Chinese Private Security Companies (PSCs) in Pakistan”, in which Dr Devendra Kumar analyses the presence of Chinese PSCs in Pakistan and their ways of functioning; potential drivers and challenges of increased deployment of PSCs; and the implications it would have on the nature and extent of China’s engagement in South Asia and beyond.

This issue also features two commentaries—“Belt and Road Initiative at 10: Past Imperfect, Future Tense”, by Gp Capt Praveer Purohit (Retd); and “Use of Virtual Reality in Managing Emerging Infectious Diseases”, by Dr Kritika Roy. Four book reviews are also published in this issue.

We hope that this issue will be received well by our readers. We would also like to thank the authors and the referees who assisted us in the peer review process. We would appreciate feedback from our readers about topics they feel should be addressed by the journal. We hope that along with our growing readership, we will also receive an increasing number of contributions for our future issues.

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Managing Editor, Journal of Defence Studies