

## Editorial

India has a long civilisational history and experience of complex cultural exchanges that has contributed to the development of its national identity and behaviour. The nation also has been shaped through the crucible of war and diplomacy forged by several kingdoms and empires over centuries.

Although the world recognises India's immense contribution in the spiritual, intellectual and scientific domains, it is yet to fully appreciate the country's rich heritage in the realms of political philosophy and strategic studies. The wealth of India's historical treatises and relevant literature on warfare, diplomacy and statecraft still needs to be holistically studied.

To further explore and analyse the wealth of Indian strategic culture and traditions, the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses has always been at the forefront of pioneering research on the subject, and this Special Issue of the *Journal of Defence Studies* is another significant milestone in this regard. It identifies new historical sources and throws fresh perspectives and insights on some key facets of Indian strategic culture.

The special issue begins with a guest editorial by Dr Adil Rasheed, in which he talks about how the concept of strategic culture has evolved over the years as an alternative theory for studying the dynamics of international relations, which propounds that the strategic behaviour of nations is mostly influenced by their individual historical experience and culture.

The first article 'Interrogating "Hyphenated Cultures": India's Strategic Culture and its Intelligence Culture', by Late Dr Michael Liebig presents a theoretical/meta-theoretical view on 'hyphenated cultures' in the context of political science, with special emphasis on intelligence culture and provides a sketch of Indian Intelligence Culture. The article is also rewarding in the insights it provides on the nature of culture itself. In this article, the author points out that while understanding 'culture'—whether the study hyphenates it with politics, strategy, intelligence or bureaucracy—it should factor in the outstanding

significance of the diversity of collective experiences, the *longue durée* of cultural continuity and the efficacy of the past experiences and ideas upon the present. He also makes the critical observation that the *longue durée* continuity of hyphenated cultures does not mean that they cannot change as consequence of contextual changes, but the change of hyphenated cultures will most likely be what Eckstein has called ‘pattern-maintaining change’.

The second article by Col Pradeep Kumar Gautam, ‘A Comparison of Kamandaka’s *Nitisara* and Kautilya’s *Arthashastra*: Statecraft, Diplomacy and Warfare’, begins with a brief overview of both *Nitisara* and *Arthashastra*, and then discusses the historical period during which Kamandaka compiled the *Nitisara*, including questions about the identity of Kamandaka. It also highlights some important milestones in the likely period when the text was written and composed. Thereafter, it dwells into the continuities and changes in the concepts from the time of Kautilya’s *Arthashastra* to that of *Nitisara*, and its unique features. In this way, the article explores the evolution of Indian strategic thought and culture between the writing of the two texts and also sheds light on the expanded geo-cultural space of India that spread beyond the Himalayas to other regions of Central Asia.

In the third article ‘Influence of Vedanta on Indian Strategic Culture’, Dr Adil Rasheed studies the impact of the three sets of canonical texts of Vedanta literature—the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagvad Gita* and the *Brahma Sutras*—on Indian strategic thought and behaviour. These texts gave the Indian spiritual and philosophical mind such invaluable concepts as ‘Satyamev Jayate’ and ‘Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam’ which became the core doctrinal and strategic values of independent India. The ideals of the *Satvik* warrior (selfless soldier driven by high ideals) as enshrined in the *Bhagvad Gita* guided rulers like Shivaji and inspired freedom fighters like Gandhiji. The concept of ‘maya’ refined Indian psyche in matter of threat perception and strategic deceit, which makes the Indian army personnel one of the finest in the world.

The fourth article by Dr Aprita Anant is titled ‘A “Regional” Intervention in the Debate on India’s Strategic Culture: Maratha Statecraft in *Agyapatra*’, and studies Maratha strategic thinking as it existed in the 17th century, through a textual analysis of the *Agyapatra*, a treatise that speaks of the strategic thinking of *Chhatrapati* Shivaji. The article dwells on four aspects of statecraft as explored in the *Agyapatra*—instrumental use of force; merit, morality and accountability

in governance; maintaining strong defences and maritime prowess for enlarging the empire; and engagement with European traders. In all, the article studies Maratha regional strategic culture in relation to the historical as well as the non-historical, contemporary renditions of Indian strategic culture. It highlights the importance of both morality and pragmatism in Maratha statecraft and illustrates a sophisticated system of checks and balances at every level and a unique mix of civil and military administration.

The fifth and the last article of this special issue is 'Cultural Explanation of Statecraft: The Politics and Policies of Asoka and Akbar', in which Dr Nazir Ahmad Mir avers that the policies of the Mauryan king Asoka and the Mughal ruler Akbar were not driven by external threats as structural realism argues. Their priority was domestic order and harmony, which was forged through a constructivist approach of building social and cultural norms around the ideals of 'Dhamma Vijaya' in the case of Asoka and concepts like 'Sulh-i-kul' by Akbar, which gave strength and longevity to empires ruling over diverse religious and ethnic populations.

We hope that the articles of this special issue would help deepen the general understanding of the historical underpinnings of Indian strategic culture, and promote further research in this field. We thank the authors and the referees who assisted us in the peer review process and would like to hear more from our readers about topics they feel should be addressed by the journal. Do write to the Associate Editor, *Journal of Defence Studies* at [jds.mpidsa@gov.in](mailto:jds.mpidsa@gov.in). We hope that along with our growing readership, we would also see more contributions to future issues.

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