

Editorial

The July-September 2018 issue of the *Journal of Defence Studies (JDS)* offers rich and varied content to readers, featuring three timely and well-researched articles that range from an analysis of sharp power to indigenous knowledge and strategic culture, and exploring the potential for greater defence/military cooperation in a new strategic scenario unfolding in the Indo-Pacific region.

The first article featured in this issue is 'From Smart Power to Sharp Power: How China Promotes her National Interests', by Mandip Singh, where he discusses how authoritarian regimes are increasingly taking recourse to sharp power as a preferred means of realising national interests. The concept of power was popularly understood to be 'hard', for example, the use of military force to coerce/subjugate an adversary. However, hard power had limitations in an age of 'mutually destructive' warfare; it was increasingly seen that mere hard power could neither resolve conflict nor assure credible deterrence alone. Thus, 'soft power' came into the picture which was, in the words of Joseph Nye Jr. who coined the term, a policy tool that could be used to 'achieve desired outcomes through attraction rather than coercion'. The conceptual evolution of power then brought into vogue 'smart power', essentially the capacity to combine, in ways that complement, forms of both hard and soft power. 'Sharp power' is the next, and more aggressive, manifestation of smart power.

According to Singh, sharp power weaves an intricate web of responses short of war, such as coercion, persuasion, political power, and inducements to further a nation's interests, all the while concealing a long stick. He takes the example of China, in particular, that has perfected the art of using sharp power in recent years, often investing large political capital and monies to impose its will on nations all over the globe. The author highlights how various organs of the Chinese state apparatus—the United Work Front, Ministries of Public Security, State Security and Foreign Affairs—actively pursue a 'sharp' agenda through media, culture, academia, tourists, and the diaspora abroad, to lend patronage to tools of sharp power statecraft. The article interrogates the concept of

sharp power, how it differs from soft and smart power, and details the gradual and systemic penetration of Chinese influence in this regard. The author also discusses possible methods and strategies to counter that use.

Kajari Kamal's contribution to this issue is titled 'Kautilya's *Arthashastra*: Indian Strategic Culture and Grand Strategic Preferences'. In the article, she opines that the utility of the theory of strategic culture to explain the choices nation-states make is still to be convincingly proven. She uses the work of Alastair Iain Johnston in her analysis. According to Kamal, Johnston has provided a viable notion of strategic culture that is falsifiable, its formation traced empirically, and its effect on state behaviour differentiated from other non-ideational variables. Following Johnston's methodological framework, Kautilya's *Arthashastra* is identified as the 'formative' ideational strategic text which is assessed to illuminate Indian strategic culture.

Using Johnston's lens, Kamal endeavours to answer three inter-related questions about orderliness of the external environment that are extrapolated from the text. That these basic assumptions are substantively reflected in the grand strategic preferences latent in the treatise, suggest that there is coherence in strategic thought. Paradoxically, says the author, the complex, yet logical, procedure of arriving at the preference ranking incorporates quintessentially 'structural-realist' ideas. Flowing from the analysis, Kamal concludes that it is the robust strategic culture which lends meaning to these objective variables and potentially determines state behaviour in a culturally unique way. The article begins by discussing the concept of strategic culture and highlights some important conceptual and methodological issues that have directed the research. It then identifies Kautilya's *Arthashastra* as the 'object of analysis' for investigation, and delineates the 'central strategic paradigms' and 'grand strategic preferences' with reference to the text.

In recent years, India has extended its Look East Policy—dating to the early 1990s and designed to increase and improve contacts with Southeast Asia and bolster its standing as a regional power—to the Act East Policy. The latter deepens India's interaction with, and outreach to, the Association of Southeast Nations (ASEAN) states and beyond to the countries of East Asia, '...by enlarging the core interests of the region to include the immediate requirements of national and regional security. Thus the Look East and Act East policies highlight India's military, political and economic interests along with those of regional partners in

the East.¹ Vignesh Ram's article titled 'India's Defence Diplomacy with Southeast Asia: An Impetus to Act East', examines the defence/military engagement aspect of regional relations.

Ram opines that India's Act East policy is delivering results in its approach towards its eastern neighbourhood. According to him, India's improving stature in the region along with other key geopolitical players has heralded its arrival as a major regional power in the power matrix there. While defence and military engagement remains a less explored, if not taboo, topic of discussion in Asian discourse, the author contends that India is situated in a unique position, regionally, to explore this potential further. What works in India's favour in terms of a robust interaction in the military sphere, unlike other players, is the lack of historical baggage in the Southeast Asian region as well as the absence of territorial disputes. However, the author feels, despite these advantages, India does not seem to have a robust policy or enhanced interaction in terms of defence diplomacy with the regional countries. This article thus seeks to explore the defence diplomacy potential for India's Act East policy and highlight actionable areas to explore further in strengthening India's position in the region.

Adding to the focus on ASEAN and the Southeast Asian region is a commentary on the 'Emerging India-Indonesia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership' by Udai Bhanu Singh. Not only do the two countries share deep historical linkages as well as seven decades of diplomatic ties, they have recently witnessed some intensive engagement in the political, strategic, defence, security, and economic spheres. The bilateral relationship has been upgraded bilateral ties to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, a move that serves to highlight the importance of the Indo-Pacific for both countries. Not only have there been a number of meetings at the ministerial level, focussing on Foreign Affairs, Security, Defence and Trade, the respective heads of government have met twice already in 2018—in January 2018 following by a second meeting May, during the Indian PM's five-day, three-nation tour of Southeast Asia, covering Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore.

Singh's commentary serves to provide a fresh look at the India-Indonesia relationship, covering the emerging strategic scenario in the Indo-Pacific region; addressing defence and security cooperation; maritime cooperation; and energy cooperation between the two countries. At the same time, it underscores complementarities and recommends that the potential to deepen relations be explored further.

The current issue also features five in-depth book reviews in the issue as well. Ghanshyam Katoch reviews *Mission Overseas: Daring Operations by the Indian Military*; Kartik Bommakanti reviews *Army and Nation: The Military and Indian Democracy since Independence*; Kishore Kumar Khara reviews *Indian Aircraft Industry: Possible Innovations for Success in the Twenty-First Century*; N. Bahri reviews *The Great Game in Afghanistan: Rajiv Gandhi, General Zia, and the Unending War*; and Y.M. Bammi reviews *The Battlefields of Imphal: The Second World War and North East India*.

In the past decade and more since JDS has been published, our endeavour has been to publish content that benefits scholars, practitioners and interested readers of defence and strategic studies in terms of the views and analyses offered by authors. In continuing our effort to make JDS even more relevant, we would specifically welcome articles on the following topics: Military Transformation; Cyber Security; Military Strategy; Military Leadership and Likely Challenges in Future; Emerging Maritime Security Dynamics; Regional Military Balance; Disruptive Technologies that will impact warfare in future; Jointness; Defence Economics; Hybrid Warfare; Military Psychology and Higher Defence Management. Contributions can be sent addressed to: The Editor, *Journal of Defence Studies*, IDSA on the following email id: associateditor.jds@gmail.com. A detailed guideline for contributors is available on: <http://www.idsa.in/journalofdefencestudies>.

We look forward to a greater engagement on issues of defence and military studies, and strategic and security studies in the future.

NOTE

1. Sudhanshu Tripathi, 'Why India is Switching From a Look East to an Act East Policy', *Asia Times*, 15 June 2017, available at <http://www.atimes.com/india-switching-look-east-act-east-policy/>, accessed on 5 July 2018.