

## Editorial

I am pleased to present to the readers the third issue of 2025, which brings together six insightful articles, two commentaries and a book review.

Human intelligence (HUMINT) has traditionally been considered the backbone of all intelligence acquisition activities, wherein special agents are employed for collection of intelligence, manipulation of information, deception by feeding false information, sowing confusion, and even counterintelligence for finding out the agents of the enemy. Advancements in technology have brought countless empowered and participative actors in the conflict zone, due to which public diplomacy has become an essential element of conflict. Though there is extensive literature on how powerful nations use intelligence to shape public diplomacy, there is a notable gap in understanding the reverse process, i.e., using public diplomacy to enhance intelligence. The first article titled “Chinese Human Intelligence (HUMINT) Through Public Diplomacy in South Asia: A Critical Assessment”, by Col D.C.S. Mayal (Retd), seeks to underscore evidence of China’s discreet HUMINT activities in South Asia and India under the guise of public diplomacy. It aims to alert national leaders, military commanders, bureaucrats, intelligence agencies and think tanks about the emerging threat posed by China in South Asia.

As warfare increasingly relies on unmanned systems, driven by developments in Artificial Intelligence, communication, and weapon technology, it has become important to maintain synergy between the manned and unmanned air combat capabilities. The second article titled “Manned Fighter and Unmanned Systems: Future is Collaborative”, by Gp Capt Pankaj Dhiman, covers this issue in detail and also suggests a balanced approach to capture the best of both worlds.

Over the last few years, India’s defence procurement policy has undergone significant changes, marked by the diversification of defence acquisitions and focus on indigenisation, under the ‘Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan’ and ‘Make in India’ initiatives. Key measures include restructuring of existing bodies, revising the acquisition process and reviewing the industrial regulations and budgetary provisions. In the next article titled “India’s Quest for Self-Reliance

in Defence Sector: Reality Check, Challenges and Way Ahead”, Maj Gen G.G. Dwivedi (Retd) undertakes a review of India’s quest for self-reliance in the defence industry, assesses the significant challenges and makes salient proposals for the way ahead.

It is followed by an article titled “Safeguarding National Interests: Evaluating the Risks of Defence–Civilian Airport Proximity”, in which Mr Harsh Diwakar and Ms Kritika Jain examine the risks posed by the proximity of military facilities to civilian airports, particularly in the context of the Indian Air Force (IAF) as well as Indian Naval Air Station sites adjacent to commercial hubs, highlighting concerns regarding unauthorised access to sensitive information, infrastructure and potential terrorist threats. This article advocates for relocating civil installations away from military airports to bolster national security.

Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD), a defence system designed to defend against incoming missiles by detecting, tracking and intercepting them before they hit the potential targets, is vital for national defence. Over the last few years, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has proven to be a transformative force in bolstering the capabilities of BMD systems. The fifth article, titled “Enhancing Ballistic Missile Defence: Comparing AI-Integrated Systems with Traditional Approaches”, by Md Arifur Rahman, analyses the potential impact of AI on developing the efficacy of Ballistic Missile Defence systems, how AI-driven enhancements could address current technical limitations and overcome the BMD capabilities, and help in threat detection, interception accuracy and overall system efficiency.

It has been perceived in certain sections of the US administration that the European countries allied to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) are not spending adequately on defence and that the extra burden of security expenditure falls on the shoulders of the USA. The Russia–Ukraine war is often cited in this regard, as bulk of the costs towards arms and ammunition are borne by the USA and not by the countries in the immediate periphery of Ukraine. Also, the prevailing sentiment among the European leaders is that the USA has grown largely indifferent to the fate of Europe and therefore it would be prudent for them to address their security vulnerabilities independently. The sixth article titled “A NATO Sans USA”, by Gp Capt A.V. Chandrasekaran (Retd), examines the possibility of the USA taking exit from the NATO, the causes therein and the after-effects of managing a military alliance and the role of the European nations thereafter.

This issue also features two commentaries—“Outer Space as a Global Commons: Evolving Governance and the Challenges of the 21st Century”,

by Dr Martand Jha; and “The Arctic Frontier: Geopolitical Chessboard of Major Powers?”, by Mr Rahul Pandey. A book review of Paul M. Edwards’ *The Mistaken History of the Korean War: What We Got Wrong Then and Now*, by Ms Meghna Pradhan, is also featured 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 see a further increase in the number of contributions for our future issues.

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