

Editorial

As we go to press in this April, we cannot but keep in mind the massive electoral exercise currently underway in India. While it is more or less clear that India will have a new government come mid-May, the impact of this change on strategic/security/defence issues is perhaps less clear. Therefore, crystal ball gazing would seem to be the natural order of the day and we could always project what we feel would be the required changes and those which might become reality. But let us leave the crystal ball gazing to others and limit ourselves to important issues that have been in the news, discussed and deliberated upon since the previous issue appeared. Of particular importance, we feel, are the series of accidents plaguing the Indian Navy's ships and submarines, culminating in the resignation of Admiral D.K. Joshi, Chief of Naval Staff (CNS) on 26 February 2014. Also important is the online outing of the Henderson-Brooks Report on the 1962 India-China War and the consequent regeneration of discussions on the problems affecting Higher Defence Management in India.

Fourteen accidents within the span of one year would be too much for any navy. Not only do such accidents raise serious questions about the maintenance and upkeep of naval vessels, they also highlight a critical lack of robust remedial measures to address the shortcomings that resulted in these accidents. On 25 February 2014, the Russian-built kilo class submarine INS Sindhuratna was undergoing sea tests after a refit about 40-50 km off the coast of Mumbai. A cable fire on board, according to available reports, caused the death of two officers and injured seven sailors. Coming just six months after the explosion on the INS Sindhurakshak in which 18 lives were lost, this perhaps became the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back. Owning moral responsibility for the incidents the CNS resigned, and in the process set a high standard of accountability despite the fact that he alone could not have done anything to avoid these accidents. It will, perhaps, take some time before the causes of these accidents are fully investigated and known (with investigations still underway). It is our opinion, however, that the Indian Navy views these accidents very seriously and is already taking measures to avoid

their recurrence. At the same time, it must be stressed that issues such as delays in procurement of replacement ships and submarines, availability of funds for maintenance and upgradation, and similar requirements of the other two services and the Coast Guard would require a serious introspection and more thrust at every level of the government. As we wrap up this issue, Admiral R.K. Dhowan has taken over as the new CNS after officiating for around 50-odd days.

It is hoped that the next government in New Delhi takes immediate cognizance of these important issues and moves forward quickly to do the needful. The Indian Navy, on its part, has to make sure that the morale of its personnel does not get affected by these incidents. The need of the hour is a high degree of leadership in order to overcome the perceptions being formed about the operational status of the Indian Navy. Naval Headquarters and the various operational authorities also have to ensure that the men and equipment are employed in an optimum manner, adhering to fatigue limits of both men and materiel, thereby decreasing the chance of accidents and mishaps.

Over the years, the Henderson-Brooks Report, written in the aftermath of the 1962 debacle, has acquired the proportion of the elephant in the room. While it has not officially been released by the Indian Government, large sections of the report were posted online last month by Australian journalist and author Neville Maxwell. This release may be considered by some as a breach of security since the report is still classified as 'Top Secret' by the Government. At the same time, the contents of the report were more or less known to researchers and scholars owing to Maxwell's book, *India's China War*, and the Government of India's leaked publication, *History of the Conflict with China, 1962*, both of which are based on the contents of the report. Its outing/leak, however, underscores two important issues: firstly, there is urgent need for declassification of documents as keeping them under wraps continuously serves no useful purpose. Secondly, suppressing such documents, in fact, tends to become counter-productive as future generations cannot learn from the mistakes of the past and are therefore prone to repeat them.

Another issue which is of immediate concern is that of Higher Defence Management. While addressing the Combined Commanders' Conference on 22 November 2013, the Prime Minister stated: 'We require urgent and tangible progress in establishing the right structures for the higher defence management and the appropriate civil-military balance in decision making that our complex security environment demands.'

Again, I encourage you to give this the highest professional consideration, harmonize existing differences among the individual services and evolve the blue print for the future.’ This statement clearly points to the need for urgent action to address the issue of higher defence management and civil-military relations in the country. It is true that some of the civil-military relation issues are perceptual in nature, but the perception, if permitted to prevail over a long period, often gets entrenched as fact. It will take real and not cosmetic changes in the way business is transacted at various levels of the government to change these perceptions. The armed forces are convinced that they are deliberately kept away from the decision-making process and their views are filtered before being projected to the political leadership. It is absolutely essential to establish a dyadic system for advising the political leadership with clear demarcation of roles. The MoD may require restructuring as well wherein some functions belong to the military leadership while others remain with the civilian bureaucratic structure. A parallel interface between the military and the civilian bureaucracy at various levels will reduce friction and misconceptions about each other. This debate and other important issues are extremely important and a decision on these cannot be delayed any more. The new government will have to take some long-pending decisions on the organizational structure of the armed forces and Ministry of Defence, prepare and issue National Security Strategy and Defence Capability Plan, and then ask for Joint Services Plan, Long Term Integrated Perspective Plan, among others. For these plans to be of any use, there will need to be clear commitment of resources. The ‘written word’ is absolutely essential since it would lay down responsibility in no uncertain terms and foster accountability. A security administrative cadre within the civilian bureaucracy is also the need of the hour. The acquisition process needs streamlining further with the private sector being assigned a larger role in building a defence industrial base. A Defence Reform Board under the direct charge of the Raksha Mantri—with a charter to firm up the reforms needed and a time-bound action plan to implement the reforms—must be on top of the new government’s agenda. Instead of starting afresh on studying the problem areas, the reports and recommendations of the previous committees and task forces can be harmonized and an action plan worked out within first six months of the next government assuming office.

This issue of JDS—Vol. 8, No. 2, April-June 2014—begins with a perspective piece by Amit Cowshish titled ‘Vulnerabilities in the Capital Acquisition Process’. Cowshish stresses on the need to focus

on the processes associated with three stages in capital acquisition that are vulnerable to transgressions, and to make them impermeable: SQR formulation, field evaluation, and commercial negotiation. The processes associated with some other stages could also have similar vulnerabilities. The author suggests that these vulnerabilities be identified through an empirical study. He states that the problems associated with the process related to the aforesaid stages could possibly be tackled by creating a professional organization to do the job and closer association with private industry; laying down detailed guidelines to cover the issues related to field trials on which there is lack of clarity; and, implementing the decision taken in 2002 to establish the Directorate of Management Information System and a Cost Accounting Cell in the Ministry of Defence. It is also imperative that a Defence Acquisition Institute be set up for the purpose.

We are all familiar with cloud technology—Google Drive, Dropbox, OneDrive are some popular and well-known examples. But the same technology also has important uses in the defence sector. Ajey Lele and Munish Sharma discuss this in some detail in ‘Relevance of Cloud Computing for Defence’. The authors contend that a modern-day military must invest in cutting-edge technologies to leverage their benefits in the evolving nature of warfare which encompasses every aspect of science. In the case of information and communication technology, research and development has unleashed vast potential for civilian and military applications, which vary from simple logic execution to high-end supercomputing. Having made inroads into the operations of the private sector, cloud computing is slated to perform a central role in the functioning of governments and defence and security agencies as well. Under the aegis of ICT, cloud computing can find applications in defence sector as it offers numerous advantages over traditional information technology (IT) systems, such as scalability, agility and interoperability. The article identifies the key defence operations where cloud computing could help in addressing the IT needs while keeping the acquisition and maintenance costs at a minimum. It brings in the concerns and challenges ahead in the way of adopting cloud computing while taking stock of initiatives taken by the governments of leading militaries of the world.

Pakistan is a state party to the 1972 Biological Weapons and Toxins (BW) Convention. Yet, as Dany Shoham hypothesizes in ‘Pakistan and Biological Weapons’, its related outward conduct tends to foster the image of an obedient, sheer science- and protection-oriented profile. In

other words, it is publicly accentuated that an ongoing Pakistani BW programme cannot be proved, at the same time it is clear that some Western intelligence agencies possess classified information that is highly supportive of such an active programme occurring in the country. The biotechnological and biomedical infrastructures of Pakistan evidently enable such a programme. Shoham delves into the history of the Pakistani BW programme, which in all likelihood commenced in the 1980s, and possibly yielded a first generation BW arsenal in the 1990s or the early 2000s. The article suggests that ongoing development and upgrading have been observed, underlying a significant Pakistani sub-nuclear weapon of mass destruction capability.

Lee Cordner takes a risk-assessment approach to maritime security in his article 'Exploring Risks and Vulnerabilities: An Alternate Approach to Maritime Security Cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region [IOR]'. He opines that shared risks and common vulnerabilities for state and non-state actors, generated by traditional and non-traditional security challenges, converge to a significant extent at sea. Risk-based approaches offer the potential for regional and extra-regional actors to engage in a constructive and non-confrontational dialogue that can assist collective security cooperation. Thus, analysing the evolving risk context, and assessing the risks and vulnerabilities, offers a sound basis for developing cooperative strategies for enhancing security in the maritime domain. Cordner suggests that developing a regional strategic risk assessment, with a maritime security focus, should be a priority for IOR cooperative security entities, with the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) playing significant roles in this work.

In 'Troubled Waters: Exploring the Emerging Dynamics between Navies and Private Security Companies in Anti-piracy Operations', Riddhi Shah studies the interaction between the two major security actors in anti-piracy operations: navies and private military security companies (PMSCs). With the return of piracy to the Indian Ocean there has been a corresponding rise of the private player in the maritime domain and, for the first time in modern history, the private military security industry is working alongside traditional navies on the field. Shah argues that there exists much potential for fruitful engagement between the two actors: PMSCs and navies. At the moment, however, long-held prejudices, in conjunction with ambiguity in the role of PMSCs in anti-piracy

operations and lack of structural variables, presents a formidable barrier to future PMSC-Navy interaction.

We are all aware of how environmental issues will gain greater import in future. Climate change, environmental degradation are one part of the larger issue, the other being growing economies and populations putting greater stress on limited resources, which, in turn, will impact countries' security calculations. Highlighting one such aspect is 'Marine Eco-concern and Its Impact on Indian Maritime Strategy' by Arnab Das. He opines that maritime strategic planning cannot be done in isolation of marine eco-concerns. Marine species perceive the environment around them through acoustic signals and depend on sound for numerous functions like foraging, communication and navigation. As shipping and other activities increase in the seas, especially in littorals, the acoustic noise thus generated becomes a pollutant in the marine environment. This aspect coupled with the absence of a regulatory framework adds to the growing problem. Das thus advocates the need for a more inclusive maritime strategy.

The issue also includes a review essay by Gautam Sen on V.P. Malik's recent book: *India's Military Conflicts and Diplomacy: An Inside View of Decision-making*. It also carries shorter book reviews: Prakash Singh reviews *Red Revolution 2020 and Beyond: Strategic Challenges to Resolve Naxalism*; Sanjiv Tomar reviews *Proxy Warfare*; and P.K. Chakravorty reviews *The New Soldier in the Age of Asymmetric Conflict*.

We also carry in this issue a 'Letter to the Editor' by Wg. Cdr. (Retd.) S.K. Dey. We seek more feedback from our readers so do write in to us with comments/observations/suggestions.