

Editorial

The past few weeks have seen many events taking place in India's immediate and extended neighbourhood and the regional security situation remains in a state of flux. In Afghanistan, since the withdrawal of a major portion of the United States (US) forces, there have been efforts at reconciliation with the Taliban albeit with the involvement of China and Pakistan. However, the sincerity of various players to arrive at genuine reconciliation is suspect. Also, it must be kept in mind that there are no quick resolutions to problems of civil war and insurgencies, and especially in Afghanistan which is never free of external intervention in what should clearly be its internal affairs. The US would definitely like an agreement which can reduce the spectre of violence and provide it the basis for stated full withdrawal before the end of Obama's second presidential term. At the same time, many field Taliban commanders question the necessity of an agreement when they are in a better tactical position. Pakistan has its own calculations and would definitely like Afghanistan to remain unstable while it makes an attempt to neutralize anti-Pakistan militants on its own side of the Durand Line. From India's point of view, the real test of Pakistan's approach towards combating terrorism will be the action against terrorist outfits operating against India. An objective analysis of the situation does not offer much hope and, therefore, India will have to keep its guard up in dealing with Pakistan.

Syria continues to be mired in civil war; and the Islamic State is maintaining its reign of terror in many parts of Iraq and Syria. Most recently, towards the end of March, Saudi Arabia led a coalition of its Gulf partners minus Oman, but also including Egypt, Morocco and Sudan to strike the Houthi militia in neighbouring Yemen, as they besieged the southern city of Aden. Pakistan is also considering participating in the operations. The Houthis are a Shia militia, widely perceived to have Iranian backing and support of the deposed President Ali Abdullah Saleh, which has captured the capital Sana'a and other parts of the country. The military operations have tacit US support as the Houthis had ousted Yemeni President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi, who is supported by Saudi

Arabia and the other regional Sunni Muslim monarchies as well as the US. The situation is grim and could turn for the worse as it is yet another event in the growing sectarian divide in the region.

Like in Iraq, Yemen too has a significant number of Indians, especially medical professionals such as nurses working there, and this latest conflict has led the Government of India to organize their evacuation. It is making use of its diplomatic and military apparatus to evacuate its citizens from Yemen. Four planes and five ships have been dispatched to evacuate Indian nationals from Yemen and, as of 7 April, 3,300 Indians and 220 foreign nationals were safely evacuated from the country. In fact, 26 nations have requested India's help in evacuating their nationals from war-torn Yemen as well. The Prime Minister spoke with King Salman bin Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia requesting Saudi 'support and cooperation in the evacuation of Indian citizens from Yemen'. India was assured of Saudi support for this endeavour by King Salman and it is truly a measure of the goodwill India enjoys with countries in the region.

In volatile situations such as these, especially in conflicts having deep-seated roots, the importance of leadership assumes great significance. India's armed forces, particularly the Indian Army is no stranger to dealing with insurgencies, having done so for many decades in Jammu and Kashmir and the North-East. India is also a large contributor to the United Nations (UN) Peacekeeping Forces in many conflict-ridden areas world-wide, as are many other countries. In 'Fit for Command: Leadership Attributes for PSO-COIN Operations', Ivo Moerman and Paolo Tripodi focus especially on peace support operations (PSOs)-counter-insurgency (COIN) operations. They find that these operations are different and often significantly more complex than conventional military operations. Such a complexity places greater demand on military leaders both at the tactical and operational levels. The diversity of tasks and threats, primacy of politics and the decentralized nature of PSO-COIN operations have serious implications for both junior and senior leaders. Although the fundamental leadership attributes for both conventional and PSO-COIN operations are timeless and common, in order to be successful in a PSO-COIN environment, military leaders should be more adept in certain attributes. The article is based on several case studies and a survey of military officers with experience of PSO-COIN conducted by the authors. It shows that military leaders who possess and develop seven leadership attributes—adaptability, judgement, sociability, resoluteness,

empathy, independence and knowledge/experience—are more likely to be successful at the tactical and operational levels in PSO–COIN.

The 18th round of talks between the Special Representatives of India and China to discuss the boundary issue was held in Delhi on 23 March 2015. While the talks were reportedly held in a cordial atmosphere, there seems to have been no progress in resolving even the basic issue of recording mutual perceptions on the Line of Actual Control (LAC). It is clear that while China does not want a repeat of the standoff on the LAC as occurred in 2013 and 2014, it does not appear keen to address the boundary question with a sense of urgency. As India had a change of government in 2014, it can be surmised that China would, perhaps, like to wait and see the trends of growth of Indian economy, the nature and state of its growing relationship with the US and Japan, and its approach to Chinese initiatives such as the Maritime Silk Route before formulating a political approach for resolving the border issue. For the moment, China would be waiting to see, if and how, India is interested in making use of its offer of investing US\$ 20 billion for infrastructure development and manufacturing in India.

We retain our focus on China with an interesting and informative article by Dany Shoham on ‘China’s Biological Warfare Programme: An Integrative Study with Special Reference to Biological Weapons Capabilities’. Shoham attempts to profile China’s biological warfare programme (BWP), with special reference to biological weapons (BW) capabilities that exist in facilities affiliated with the defence establishment and the military. The article reviews and profiles a wide variety of facilities affiliated with the Chinese defence establishment and the military. The outcome of Shoham’s analysis points at 12 facilities affiliated with the defence establishment, plus 30 facilities affiliated with the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) itself, that are involved in research, development, production, testing or storage of BW. The article contends that the chances that an outstanding state like China would ignore new avenues of BW designing and deployment are a priori slim, if any. China, in all likelihood, is and will persist as a paramount BW possessor.

The first quarter of every new calendar year is highly anticipated owing to the presentation of the government’s annual budget to Parliament. It was all the more anticipated this year as it was the first full budget of the new Modi government, presented by Finance Minister Arun Jaitley. As per the budget figures for 2015–16, the amount allocated to defence has

increased, albeit modestly, by 7.5 per cent from Rs 2.29 trillion to Rs 2.49 trillion. India remains the world's largest importer of defence equipment and the government does plan to address this by pulling defence equipment into the ambit of the ambitious 'Make in India' policy, aimed at reviving India's industrial economy. The reaction of most analysts to the budget has been tempered or even unenthusiastic, and the defence allocation is being seen as rather inadequate. A look at the details reveals little or no scope for major weapons systems such as the MMRCA, helicopters or artillery guns being procured during the coming financial year. This is because more than 90 per cent of the funds allocated for capital acquisition in the defence budget will go towards meeting the existing committed liabilities. What is heartening, however, is to see that the three Service Chiefs are now regularly meeting the political leadership and providing their inputs for policy and decision making. The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) has also been meeting regularly and taking decisions on procurement with a clear focus on indigenous defence production, in keeping with the larger push towards 'Make in India', championed by the Prime Minister. While this process may delay modernization of the armed forces in the short term, it is likely to prove advantageous in the long run. A note of caution, however: the government will have to find the means to procure weapons and address the immediate equipment shortfall, the inadequacy of which is affecting the combat readiness of the forces. Thus, overhauling of the ordinance factories should be on top of the government's agenda; at the same time, public-private partnership in developing all varieties of ammunition and quality small arms should be addressed with a sense of urgency.

A related issue which also requires careful consideration is the maintenance of existing equipment. The government should outsource maintenance of major equipment to the original equipment manufacturers (OEM) to save money and ensure higher level of serviceability of equipment. A number of examples of this arrangement exist, one of which is that of the United Kingdom (UK). In that country, maintenance of military helicopters produced by Augusta Westland has been entrusted to the company for the next five years. A similar exercise could be undertaken in India and Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) could be entrusted with the task of not only major overhauls but also repairs beyond first line. Additionally, the Seventh Pay Commission is likely to present its report to the government in 2015 and, going by convention, the report

will be made applicable wef 1 January 2016. It is hoped that the report of the Pay Commission will be processed well in time and implemented on the due date so that arrears do not pile up, imposing huge burden on government finances, including on the defence budget.

There have also been reports of the government considering the implementation of some of the major recommendations made by the Naresh Chandra Task Force, including the appointment of a Permanent Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee. Such important decisions should not be deferred indefinitely. It would be in the country's interest to reform its higher defence organizations quickly, despite resistance from certain quarters.

Moving forward in his detailed discussion of the Parliamentary Standing Committees on Defence, Amit Cowshish discusses how the latest such committee, constituted by the 16th Lok Sabha continues to use the same approach as its predecessor, evident from the release of the latest reports. 'Standing Committee on Defence (16th Lok Sabha): Striking Old Notes on Debut' informs us of the constitution of the Standing Committee on Defence under the chairmanship of Major General B.C. Khanduri (Retd.), three months after the national elections in 2014. The Committee opened its account with a report on the action taken by the Ministry of Defence (MoD) on the recommendations made by the Standing Committee on Defence of the 15th Lok Sabha on MoD's Demands for Grant (DGs) for the year 2013–14. Cowshish examines the new Committee's approach to looking at the issues that had engaged the attention of the Committee in the past and finds that the more things change, the more they remain the same.

Over the past few years, there has been a greater focus in India on expanding its reach in the maritime domain, and rightly so. India has a long coastline, with the Arabian Sea to its west and the Bay of Bengal to its east, opening up to the vast Indian Ocean to the south. It articulated a clear, focused maritime strategy in 2007, seeking to re-orient its outlook towards this area. This comes at a time of increased competition for resources and strategic influence over the Indian Ocean region, with China seeking to move into what India has traditionally seen as its own domain. We have also seen over the past two-three years the US' pivot towards the Asia-Pacific as well, seeking to balance the rising Chinese behemoth. In this context, we have two interesting articles in this issue which provide us a reflective, historical perspective as well as a contemporary and futuristic one.

In 'Revisiting the 1971 'USS Enterprise Incident': Rhetoric, Reality and Pointers for the Contemporary Era', Raghavendra Mishra goes back to the incident involving the USS Enterprise's movement into the Indian Ocean during the closing days of the 1971 Indo-Pak War and the liberation of Bangladesh. While we celebrate deepening Indo-US ties today, that was certainly not the case four decades ago. The USS Enterprise naval task group entry into the Indian Ocean led to further deterioration in the relations between India and the US, an estrangement that lasted until the end of the Cold War. The US couched this show of force under the rubric of ensuring safety of American personnel caught up in a war zone. In India, however, this was seen as a coercive attempt to prop up a genocidal military regime. Using recently declassified official records from both the sides, additional scholarly works on the 1971 conflict, and in light of rapprochement in Indo-US relations, the article attempts to deconstruct the rhetoric and reality of this incident. It examines the prevailing politico-strategic environment, roles of diplomatic-military apparatus of major players, the mechanics of the naval deployment, and provides lessons for historical re-interpretation and the utility of sea power in the contemporary context.

In 'The Rise of the Bengal Tigers: The Growing Strategic Importance of the Bay of Bengal', David Brewster contends that the Bay of Bengal region is now growing in economic and strategic importance. The economic prospects of many Bay of Bengal states is making the region a cockpit for Asian growth and a key economic connector between East and South Asia. Brewster's article looks at strategic developments in the Bay of Bengal and their implications for our understanding of the Indo-Pacific. It argues that the Bay of Bengal needs to be understood as a region with its own particular strategic dynamics and issues and contends that the area is fast becoming a key zone of strategic competition in Asia and is of vital strategic importance to India.

Ajay K. Chhabra brings forth his technical expertise to comment on the 'Benchmarking of Shipyards and Processes for Cost Effective Naval Shipbuilding'. His article highlights the applicability of benchmarking methodologies to the shipbuilding industry, and how these could be utilized to improve the competitiveness of shipyards to enable delivery of cost-effective naval platforms. Cost continues to be a major factor that characterizes the competitiveness of shipbuilding, and is cited as the main reason for the industry having moved from Europe to Asia during the

last two decades. Chhabra examines in detail the benchmarking system most commonly used by USA, Europe, Japan, South Korea and the UK, and brings out the advantages accrued as a result of the implementation of the recommendations of focused studies. He then analyses the various issues that plague Indian shipyards, especially the Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs), and posits how benchmarking studies similar to those undertaken by leading shipbuilding nations elsewhere could help improve the Indian naval shipbuilding industry.

In 'Special Forces: An Appraisal', Amit Kumar discusses the growing importance of such forces in the Indian security apparatus. This is an issue of some importance given that the nature of conflict is evolving fast, and as the arena progressively transforms from conventional to unconventional, the role of Special Forces will be critical in shaping outcomes. Not only has the nature of conflicts changed in the past decade, and established the primacy of Special Forces, the latter's role has evolved too. Today, special operations are meant to be decisive and achieve strategic objectives. Indian security establishment has also been taking notice of these changes and by and large making right moves.

The issue also carries four book reviews: Vivek Chadha reviews *India's Doctrine Puzzle: Limiting War in South Asia*; Akash S. Goud reviews *Policing Insurgencies: Cops as Counterinsurgents*; Shekhar Kumar Dey reviews *Drone Warfare*; and Vikas Jain reviews *Can Wars be Eliminated?*

As always, we look forward to hear from our readers on the contents of each issue so do write to us. Comments and inquiries for contributions to the issue as well as book reviews can be sent to nkohli.idsa@nic.in.

