

Editorial

The issue features three research articles and two book reviews. In ‘Leveraging India’s Maritime Diplomacy’, Roby Thomas directs our focus on to how India can leverage its substantial soft power credentials of defence diplomacy for the long haul, the key thrust being on naval cooperation. The Indian landmass has had a dominating influence over the maritime trade routes, that criss-cross the expanse of the Indian Ocean. Historically, there have been significant maritime linkages between ancient Indian empires and those in the South-East Asian region, now comprising the countries of Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. There were also deep cultural affinities between the subcontinent and South-East Asia. Towards the west as well, Indians were sailing the seas for millennia. India’s influence on the seas, however, waned over time with the domination of the seas by outside powers. Post-independence, India’s stand tended to be benign, stressing on peaceful resolution of disputes, disarmament and the desire to maintain equidistance, as much as possible, during the decades of the Cold War. India has seen exponential economic growth in the last three decades and today has one of the largest and most capable militaries in the world. Its rise, however, has not been without contestation. In recommending the soft power approach to building on defence diplomacy, Thomas shows how India’s growing economic and military capabilities, especially the coming of age of the Indian Navy in the late twentieth century, has propelled the navy as a partner of choice for the Indian Ocean littoral nations. He also briefly links the discussion to the context of Sino-Indian relations in the current scenario.

Himadri Bose’s contribution—‘Russo-Japanese War: An Examination of Limited War Strategy’—undertakes an examination the concept of limited wars by looking at the progression and culmination of a century-old war and how lessons of the time remain relevant today. The competing imperial ambitions of Russia and Japan over Manchuria and Korea led to the Russo-Japanese War in 1904-1905. The war heralded the rise of Japan to prominence among nations and

fast-tracked the trajectory of its ascendancy. The Meiji restoration in the mid-nineteenth century had opened the doors of Japan to the rest of the world; however, it did not have the ability to defeat major powers such as Russia. According to Bose, Japan obviated the asymmetry in capability by executing an effective limited war strategy which centred on limiting political objectives; developing synergy between the Japanese Army and Navy's military action in support of those limited political objectives; and favourably shaping the diplomatic environment for non-interference of major powers during the conflict as well as in post-conflict negotiations. It thus serves as a pertinent example of limited wars, which are increasingly the wars of choice in the twenty-first century. The Russo-Japanese War thus offers important lessons for executing a successful limited war strategy applicable to wars in the present time.

Human societies have been witness to conflict since time immemorial, and advances in technology have led to a considerable degree of sophistication in the fighting of wars with each succeeding generation. Technology today has enabled an even greater increase in the physical distance between adversaries, and levels of mechanisation and automation than ever before. The weapons systems that are being developed today are progressively autonomous and their increasing use is raising a host of ethical and legal questions that must be addressed as well. In 'Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems under Existing Norms of International Humanitarian Law', Bashir Ali Abbas explores the position of lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS) under the existing rules of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). Specifically, Abbas seeks to examine if the existing rules of IHL are sufficient to govern the use of LAWS or is a new body of law specific to such weapons systems needed? Furthermore, as these weapons systems are technically not deployed in armed conflict, do existing international legal mechanisms allow for a pre-emptive ban and would such a ban be premature? In addressing these questions the author analyses the position of LAWS under Article 36 of Additional Protocol I along with an exploration of the question of attribution of responsibility for war crimes and breaches of IHL if such weapons are deployed. Abbas uses the Iran Air Flight 655 incident of 1988—in which a civilian airliner was shot down by a US Navy vessel using a surface-to-air missile— as a case study to underscore the problems of accountability. He also briefly addresses the ambit of the United Nations Security Council to engage with the questions posed by LAWS and that of the International Court of Justice to take up its

legality. The article's conclusion is that if autonomous weapons systems have the ability to comply with existing IHL efficiently, then their use should not be brought under a blanket ban on such systems, even if such a ban is instituted in the future.

The issue also contains two book reviews: Kishore Kumar Khera reviews *Human Rights in the Indian Armed Forces: An Analysis of Article 33*, and Atul Pant reviews *Assessment of Chinese Military Modernisation and its Implications for India*.

