

Editorial

The penultimate issue of the *Journal of Defence Studies* in 2020 (October-December) includes three incisive articles analysing the Russian influence on the Chinese Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA), an assessment of the role of Pakistan's Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) in propagating biased narratives, and India's imperatives for acquiring a nuclear attack submarine fleet. Rounding off the issue are two interesting book reviews.

The issue begins with an insightful analysis of the Chinese Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) by Maj Gen Mandeep Singh in his article, *Learning from Russia: Comparing Russian and Chinese Military Reforms*. Challenging the prevailing conventional wisdom about Chinese military reforms being driven by strategic competition with the United States, and inspired by changes in the US military as the sole template, the article argues that China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) has been considerably influenced by Russian doctrine, force structuring and equipment from its inception, and continues to draw heavily on the Russian experience. Maj Gen Mandeep Singh has argued that in many ways, the Chinese RMA has followed the Russian RMA, which was driven by the latter's experiences in modern wars in Georgia, Ukraine, Crimea, and Syria. Given the opacity and secrecy surrounding the ongoing reforms in the People's Liberation Army (PLA), it would be useful to study the Russian RMA to extrapolate the future trajectory of the changes that are underway in the PLA. The article concludes that the PLA has suitably modified the Russian military doctrines, reorganisation and restructuring, as well as the induction of military equipment to suit the threats and challenges that confront it.

In the latest edition of the Pakistan Army's *Green Book 2020*, Lt Gen Raza Muhammad Khan (Retd) had highlighted imperatives for India-centric information warfare. Explaining the significance of the internet and social media platforms, he argued that, 'with the proliferation of the internet, nowadays nothing can escape exaggeration, distortion and fabrication to manipulate perceptions on crucial issues of peace and

security'. While the Indian intelligentsia remains focussed on Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) operations, the role of ISPR in anti-India activities is yet to be fully grasped. Divya Malhotra's article, *Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Assessment of the Pakistan Military's Discreet Propaganda Factory Post-1990*, aims to fill this gap by assessing Pakistan military's main objective behind ISPR's involvement in manufacturing and distribution of biased narratives after 1990. She argues that ISPR's activism is based on a two-pronged agenda: first, winning internal legitimacy vis-à-vis its civilian government; and second, active cyber warfare against India to stir domestic chaos and harm its international reputation. Progressively, ISPR has expanded its bandwidth to reach out to a large cross-section of Pakistani society by subtly feeding biased narratives through its electronic and print media networks and innovatively employing young talent in its internship scheme. These are manifestations of Pakistan military's inclination to use it as a propaganda tool both internally and externally, as part of its evolving 'fifth-generation' war strategy.

Cmde Roby Thomas in his article, *Nuclear Attack Submarines: The Elixir for a True Blue-Water Navy*, argues that nuclear attack submarines today are the 'Brahmastra' in the fleet of a true 'Blue-Water' navy and India needs to prioritise this. In a world marred by geopolitical flux and great power contestations in the twenty-first century, the maritime domain has emerged as the locus of the evolving geostrategic calculus, and the use of submarines – as machines of coercion and war – will continue to evolve with emerging technologies, and remain relevant to 'maintain the peace'. Roby Thomas has highlighted strategic and operational imperatives for acquisition of SSNs in the Indian submarine fleet. While India has an ongoing SSBN programme with *Arihant* and its follow-up as a part of the ATV project, the acquisition of SSNs has remained unrealised thus far. The article refutes the contention that conventional submarines – especially air independent propulsion (AIP) – enabled submarines – being the much cheaper option, should be able to do the job of an SSN as a strategic enabler. The article argues that while AIP offers a significant operational advantage over diesel electric propulsion due to greater underwater endurance, AIP-enabled conventional submarines have significant limitations in undertaking operational tasks such as SSBN escort, fleet ASW protection, inland precision strike and sea denial operations in the far seas. Further, even though the per capita cost of AIP-enabled conventional submarines (SSK) may be lower that

SSN, the article points out that 2-6 SSKs would be needed for missions undertaken by a single SSN. If the total life-cycle cost of the number of SSKs that would provide equivalent on-station capability to one SSN is taken into account, an SSK fleet would cost 1.3 to 3.5 times more than an SSN fleet to maintain the same on-station capability. The article concludes that given the growing complexities and strategic challenges in India's geopolitical environment, India needs to 'keep its eye on the horizon' and astutely plan its rise by facilitating the strengthening of its maritime capacities, which, among other naval platforms, must include an SSN fleet.

The issue also features two book reviews. Capt (IN) Himadri Bose reviews Anant Krishan's book, *India's China Challenge*, and has pointed the book as a notable examination – from an Indian perspective – of the challenge posed to India by the meteoric rise of China. Capt (IN) M. Doraibabu reviews *The Costliest Pearl: China's Struggle for India's Ocean* by Bertil Lintner and considers the book as a good read for Indo-Pacific watchers to understand the nuances of Chinese efforts to enhance their influence.

We hope that this issue would find resonance with our readers and serve to inform and educate on key issues. Our thanks to the authors as also the referees who assisted us in the peer review process. The JDS Editorial Committee would like to hear more from our readers about this current issue as well as about topics they feel should be addressed by the journal. Do write to the Managing Editor, *Journal of Defence Studies* at ddg.idsa@nic.in. We hope that along with our growing readership, we would also see more contributions to future issues.

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