

Editorial

With the rollout of the Covid vaccines in the first quarter of 2021, we present to you the first issue of the *Journal of Defence Studies* in 2021. This issue (January–March) features three articles and one book review. The first article “Asymmetric Competition Ahead for Indian Air Power” by Air Vice Marshal Rajesh Isser (Retd) explores the changing character of air warfare driven mainly by rapid advances in technology. The author opines that thinking and planning asymmetrically is a sensible military option in the emerging conflict scenarios, and causes disruption and dilemmas in adversaries with conventional mindsets. The article also deliberates on some ‘disruptive’ issues that are likely to affect employment, doctrine, force development and the very future of exclusive manned air power. The other issues addressed in the article are risk-taking with manned/unmanned platforms, futuristic unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) employment, effectiveness of traditional air support in battle, airspace control, applicability of the observe–orient–decide–act (OODA) loop and fresh doctrinal approaches.

In the second article “Demystifying Trade Warfare”, Capt. (IN) Himadri Bose examines the conduct and relevance of trade warfare in the twenty-first century, in view of the globalisation of trade, the proliferation of merchant vessels registered with flags-of-convenience, legal challenges in trade interdiction and blockades and technological advancements in shipping. The article begins with a brief history of trade warfare and points out some notable technological developments in naval warfare. It also addresses the often asked question of the relevance of navies pursuing a maritime trade warfare strategy at the cost of naval resources that could be utilised in other tasks during a conflict. The article also discusses legal dimensions of maritime trade warfare, the challenges it faces in the twenty-first century and suggests suitable measures to deconstruct the complexity of the international maritime trading system.

The third article featuring in this issue is “Strategic Saliency of the Gwadar Port: An Analytical Study” by Sindhu Dinesh. The growing prominence of Gwadar Port has resulted in increased economic and

strategic interdependence between Pakistan and China, which has made Gwadar an important reference point in discussions on the geo-politics and geo-economics of the South Asian Region. The article begins with an evaluation of the strategic salience of Gwadar Port against the backdrop of the ongoing Baloch insurgency; followed by an assessment of the strategic outlook of Pakistan and China on Gwadar Port. It also mentions the activities being undertaken at the port, the agencies involved in those activities; and the anxieties of external countries over possible strategic and military use of the port by China in future. Both Pakistan and China have their own strategic perceptions on Gwadar. While for the former, economic development and increasing its relevance in the Indian Ocean Region is the main focus; for China, Gwadar would be an important transit route to reach the coasts of Africa in less than four days and one day to Dubai as compared to the prior two weeks in both cases; as well as to develop and connect its western region to the nearest sea port. The article also attempts to compare Gwadar Port vis-à-vis Chabahar Port, often termed as 'strategic geopolitical launch pads' for China and India respectively.

This issue also features a review of the book *Biological Weapons: Coronavirus, Weapon of Mass Destruction?* authored by U.C. Jha and K. Ratnabali. The reviewer, Gp Capt. Kishore Kumar Khera VM (Retd), mentions this book as a noteworthy contribution as it analyses various facets of biological weapons, and the lack of a verification mechanism in the 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. The book gives us a useful analysis of the dangers of Biological weapons that have been brought into sharp focus by the COVID-19 crisis of 2020.

We hope that this issue would find resonance with our readers and serve to inform and educate on key issues. We thank the authors and 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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