

Editorial

Like we had done last year, we are coming up with two special issues of the *Journal of Defence Studies* this year. The July–September 2022 issue is going to be a special issue on UN Peacekeeping Operations, and the subsequent issue would deal with various kinds of drones, Swarm Drones and counter-drone measures. A ‘Call for Papers’ and the ‘Concept Note’ are being circulated to invite contributions for the special issue.

We are happy to mention that we have received a large number of submissions for the special issue on UN Peacekeeping Operations and even as we are processing these, we present to you the April–June 2022 issue. The first article by Colonel Dhiraj Ramanand is titled ‘Sino-Russian Cooperation and Competition in Central Asia’, and it examines the standing of Russia and China which seem to be cooperating as well as competing in Central Asia. The article begins with a historical perspective of Sino-Russian relationship, and then covers their approach towards the Central Asian Region over the last two decades, their convergences, divergences and economic issues, besides other factors. It also covers the recent developments post Taliban takeover of Afghanistan and the January 2022 protests in Kazakhstan, and discusses the way ahead for India.

The second article ‘Belarus: Russia’s Cat’s Paw’ by Group Captain AV Chandrasekaran, Retd, talks about a country which has escaped the scanner of major countries despite violating the laid-down international rules for a long time. The apparent cause for this world apathy is the unwavering support offered to Belarus by Russia, an acknowledged military powerhouse. The article brings out the possible consequences of this relationship and how Belarus can severely dent democratic norms and create disorder, while in the grip of the Russians. In a way, Belarus has become an echo chamber of the Russian establishment and follows the predicted pathway paved by the Russians and is greatly assisting the aspirations of Putin who hopes to regain the lost glory of the erstwhile USSR. The article covers Russia’s strategy, the Russia–Belarus military fusion, and the future trajectory of Belarus’s relationship with Russia.

The author has also pointed out striking similarities between Russia and Belarus, on the one hand, and China and Pakistan on the other, and goes on to say that both Pakistan and Belarus function as the cat's paw of China and Russia respectively.

In the third article 'Recalling Air Power in the Indian Context', Wing Commander Swaim Prakash Singh has highlighted that the importance and lethality of air power cannot be discarded in the present technological era as it has been quite significant and decisive in numerous wars and conflicts. To bring out the efficacy of air power, the author has cited examples from the wars and conflict on Indian soil, be it the Dakota Landings at Srinagar in 1947; at Leh in 1948; employment of air power during the wars in 1962, 1965, 1971, and 1999, or the recent Balakot air strike in 2019. The article brings out the missing link of a proper perspective on the role of the Air Force, and analyses the importance of Air Force and air power as tools of modern warfighting and as the preferred choice of instrument for the national leadership. It also states that air power is a facet of comprehensive national power relevant not only in wartime but in peacetime as well.

The issue also features three commentaries and one review essay. The first commentary is titled 'Combat Stress in Conflicts: Home and Abroad', written by Major General Atanu K. Pattanaik, Retd. The second commentary titled 'About the Genomic Origin and Direct Source of the Pandemic Virus' is by Dr Dany Shoham, and the third commentary 'Return of the Old Giant to Indo-Pacific' is authored by Dr Gauri Narain Mathur. The issue also carries a review essay by Dr Cherian Samuel, in which he has reviewed three books—John Arquilla's *Bitskrieg: The New Challenge of Cyberwarfare*; Nicole Perlroth's *This is How They Tell Me The World Ends: The Cyber Weapons Arms Race*; and Ben Buchanan's *The Hacker and the State: Cyber Attacks and the New Normal of Geopolitics*.

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 and would like to hear more from our readers about topics they feel should be addressed by the journal. We hope that along with our growing readership, we would also see more contributions to future issues.

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Managing Editor