

Director's Page

By the time this issue of the USI Journal reaches you, I would have stepped down as Director after exactly eleven years at the helm of this great, unique institution which is unparalleled in its scope, reach and expertise. I was sanguine that with the support of the “elders” and “well wishers” of the Institution, I would be able to build on the strong foundations and achieve the vision laid out in the “USI-A 2020 Vision” document that was approved by the Council in Jan 2005.

The USI is a membership based institution and our members are our greatest asset. During the last decade over 3,500 Life Members were enrolled. We need the support of the Services and our Members to encourage our officers to join the Institution. The Council has approved a new category of Life Members called “Special Member Civilian” whose tenure is capped at 10 years. Adequate checks and balances have been built in to safeguard the interests of the Institution.

The USI – Centre for Armed Forces Historical Research (CAFHR) and the USI – Centre for Strategic Studies and Simulation (CS3) which were set up in the year 2000 and 2005 respectively have during the last decade covered new ground nationally and internationally. While the many faceted new activities have been spelt out in the Annual Reports of the President of the Council, I would like to highlight a few over here too.

To honour the sacrifice of Indian servicemen during WWI, the CAFHR conceptualized and executed the plans for the construction of the Indian Great War Memorial at Villers-Guislain, France. The onsite work was supervised by Sqn Ldr Rana Chhina and Maj Gen PK Goswami. The memorial was inaugurated by Shri Venkaiah Naidu, Hon'ble Vice President of India on 10 Nov 2018. I had the proud privilege to represent the Institution at the Inaugural ceremonies. The CAFHR also successfully spearheaded the “India and the Great War Centenary Commemoration Project” during the period 2014-2018 and as part of this, conducted activities in India and abroad. It is to Sqn Ldr Rana Chhina's credit that he also assisted the Bangladesh National Museum to reorganize and

renovate its permanent exhibition galleries relating to the 1971 War of Liberation. The CAFHR also curated "Travelling Exhibitions" on India and the Great War which travelled to 18 different locations across France and Belgium during Aug-Nov 2018. The CAFHR also conducted "Staff Rides" on the Chhamb Battles of 1965-1971 at Kachreal, Jammu in collaboration with the Directorate General of Military Operations. The CAFHR also commenced a community engagement programme "India Remembers" in 2016. As part of this, we also mooted the proposal that the Marigold flower join the Poppy as an Indian symbol of Remembrance. The CAFHR and the National Army Museum (NAM), UK, collaborated to organise the first Military Museum Curator's Course in New Delhi; which was extremely well received. This course was the first among the list of activities planned under the British-Indian Military Heritage Partnership signed between USI and NAM. The CAFHR has now been designated the nodal agency for the USI 150th Anniversary Celebrations. Ideas, suggestions and help from our members to make the events memorable would be most welcome.

The CS3 continued its efforts to expand the range of activities in various domains. It undertook important Net Assessment projects for the HQ IDS and the National Security Council Secretariat. The CS3 also conducted Strategic Games and panel discussions at the National Defence College, the Services War Colleges, the Foreign Service Institute, the National Police Academy, the RIS Singapore and the National Defence College, Oman. It also conducted the Core Programme at the Naval War College. The CS3 received a large number of foreign delegations and also conducted customised programmes for military officers, DRDO scientists and interns from various universities. The internship programmes for under-graduate and post-graduate students that we conduct twice a year are extremely popular. The USI has signed numerous MOUs with international institutions and conducts joint programmes with them, the latest being a joint book project with the Sichuan University, China and the Nigerian Army Resource Centre, Nigeria. Our bilateral interactions in Afghanistan, China, Vietnam etc are conducted annually. We had commenced holding an international seminar on the Indo-Pacific region in Nov 2009 and the eleventh edition of this seminar was hosted by us in

Nov 2019. These seminars attract experts from around the world. The proceedings of the seminar are published as a book annually, the one published in 2019 was titled “Evolving Geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific Region – Challenges and Prospects.” Needless to say, the CS3 continues to focus on quality research and it is a matter of pride for us that all our research scholars whether on “study leave” with us or those holding “Chairs of Excellence” have researched and published high quality single author books. We continue to encourage our scholars and interns to write for our “Strategic Perspectives” and “Blog” which are available on our digital webpage. The USI has a very robust international engagement programme and our scholars and experts have participated at events in USA, China, Japan, Russia, South Korea, Vietnam, Israel, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Sweden, Norway, Jordan etc. During the last decade over 100 scholars/experts have represented the USI abroad and their presentations were extremely well received.

It is a matter of great pride for us that during the period 2009 to 2019 we published 166 books/monographs on a diverse range of subjects. We will continue to encourage research leading to publication of books in the years ahead.

Despite the books and monographs published by our researchers, we found a general reluctance on the part of thinkers and domain experts to articulate their perceptions on strategic issues or help formulate long term strategic views. To contribute to evolution and dissemination of strategic thought we decided to bring out an “Annual Strategic Year Book.” The CS3 took on this project and the first issue was published in the year 2016 and we have since published four annual issues each one of which was received extremely well. Soon the “Strategic Year Book 2020” will be published.

The Course Section continues to do yeoman service by helping officers in their professional advancement through correspondence courses for promotion and competitive examinations. Regularly conducted ‘contact programmes’, where participants are put through mock examinations, are highly

subscribed. In addition, on request from Army formations, we also conduct lectures at various stations. The Chief Instructor has also reached out through Skype to address officers. During the period 2009 to 2019 a total of 23,330 officers subscribed to the various courses conducted. The Chief Instructor and his dedicated team need to be complimented and supported in all their endeavours.

The USI had set up the USI-Centre for UN Peacekeeping in Dec 2000 and nurtured it for 14 years, during which period it established a name for itself as a Centre of Excellence. To enlarge our contribution on policy, doctrinal and strategic issues, the USI became founding member of three international organisations viz The Challenges Forum, the Peace Capacities Network and Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network (EPON). Similarly our interaction with the Swedish Armed Forces International Centre continues and Maj Gen SB Asthana, CI, is the USI member on their Advisory Board. We have been actively associated with EPON, where Lt Gen Abhijit Guha participated in research projects in the UN missions AMISOM and MONUSCO and Maj Gen Asthana participated in the meetings and seminars in Washington DC and New York in Nov 2019. The USI had also hosted a three member delegation of the High Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations comprising of Mr Jose-Ramos Horta, Nobel Laureate and former President of Timor-Leste and Chair of the Panel, Ms Ameerah Haq, Vice Chair of the Panel and Lt Gen Abhijit Guha, a distinguished Blue Beret and member of the USI and member of the Panel. The interaction with the Panel was followed up by the USI sending its recommendations for consideration by the Horta Panel. The USI continues to be active in peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities and is extremely well networked with international institutions. We could consider hosting an international peacekeeping / peacebuilding Seminar as part of the 150th Anniversary Celebrations, should we get support from the Services and the MEA.

Our Library with over 69,000 books is a storehouse of knowledge and archival material. We have added over 7,500 books during the last decade but unfortunately the Library remains under-utilized. The USI Journal continues to provide members with a forum to express their views and keep abreast of developments

in the field of security, defence strategy and international relations. In keeping with contemporary trends and to make our humble contribution to the environment, the Journal has been digitized since January 2017.

We also broke new ground by venturing into the field of “glacier studies” and “solar power”. To highlight the importance of our glaciers, we initiated a project to fix the snouts of some important glaciers. During the period 2010 to 2012 we sent out small teams led by Col KS Dhami (Retd) and supported by the Army to Gangotri and Siachen in 2010, Kolahoi in 2011, and Baspa and Bara Shigri in 2012. As far as the solar power project is concerned, we are the first institution to install roof top solar panels for power generation. The generation capacity of the solar power plant is 270 KW. The project, which will be commissioned shortly, will result in an annual saving of approximately Rs. 20 lakhs.

It has been an honour and a privilege to have served the USI and its members. In departing, I would like to pay tribute to the dedication and commitment of the staff of the Institution, who by their dedicated hard work, made my task so much easier. I would like to particularly acknowledge the sterling contributions of Maj Gen YK Gera, Col VK Singh, Maj Gen PJS Sandhu, Lt Gen Chander Prakash, Maj Gen BK Sharma, Maj Gen SB Asthana, Maj Gen PK Goswami, Brig MS Chowdhury, Lt Col BS Verma and Sqn Ldr RTS Chhina and core team of Distinguished Fellows and Senior Research Fellows comprising Lt Gen GS Katoch, Maj Gen Rajiv Narayanan, Maj Gen RPS Bhadauria, Brig Narendra Kumar, Gp Capt Sharad Tewari and Dr Roshan Khanijo who worked tirelessly to bring up the name of our institution. I would be failing in my duty if I did not acknowledge the contribution of Residency Resorts to the USI, so ably led by late Gen Gurinder Singh, late Admiral Chopra and Shri Sudhir Kapoor. The camaraderie and the commitment of the entire USI team is truly our strength.

Whereas all the subordinate staff in the various sections contributed in considerable measure to the effective functioning of the Institution, I would like to make a special mention of Sudesh Kumar, Nk PP Singh and Rodas who have served the USI round the clock. I must place on record my compliments to Savita Saluja, who as my Personal Assistant served with devotion and dedication.

The years I have spent as Director of the Institution have been very satisfying and rewarding. Whatever I have achieved was due to the support of the Service Chiefs, Council Members, “elders and well wishers” of the Institution and the totally dedicated team that we have at the USI. It has indeed been an honour to have been the Director and I will treasure the memories of my tenure here.

In the end I would like to wish Maj Gen BK Sharma, Deputy Director (Research) good luck and success in all his endeavours as the next Director of the USI. He will continue to have my unqualified support in all that he does for our Institution.

Thank you, one and all, and my best wishes for a Happy New Year.

Jai Hind,

Lieutenant General PK Singh, PVSM, AVSM (Retd)
Director USI