

United Service Institution of India

‘Lt Gen SL Menezes Memorial Indian Military History Essay Competition 2026’

Subject : Post-Independence Wars - Key Lessons in Strategic Military Leadership

Concept

1. The essay on the above mentioned subject should be approached keeping in mind the following :

As India modernises its armed forces and recalibrates its strategic posture in an increasingly contested neighbourhood, the lessons of its post-independence wars deserve renewed and unsentimental examination. This competition invites essays that interrogate how India's military leadership — at the operational and strategic levels — shaped the outcomes of its wars from 1947 to Kargil. Rather than commemorating these conflicts, contributors are asked to critically assess them: examining failures of civil-military coordination, the gap between declared political objectives and military strategy, and the institutional constraints that shaped command decisions under pressure. Essays that draw lessons directly applicable to India's present and future strategic environment will be particularly welcomed.

Rules

2. The competition is open to all **members of the Indian Armed Forces, the Territorial Army, the Assam Rifles, the Senior Division of the National Cadet Corps, and the Paramilitary Forces, the Police and the Civil Administration in India, including retired personnel**. Entries from foreign nationals are also accepted.
3. Essays must be between 3,000 to 4,000 words in length, including footnotes. The word count should be mentioned in brackets at the end of the essay. **Entries that do not specify the word count or exceed the prescribed limit are liable to be rejected.**
4. The essay must be an original work by the author. Proper citation of sources is mandatory in the prescribed format. **Jointly authored essays will not be accepted. Entries found guilty of blatant plagiarism will be disqualified, and disciplinary action may be recommended.**
5. A panel of three judges appointed by the USI will evaluate the essays based on the following criteria:
 - (a) The extent to which the essay provides **fresh insights** into the subject.
 - (b) Whether the essay, in whole or in part, is **suitable for publication**.
 - (c) Understanding of the subject.
 - (d) **Logical development of the theme** and coherence of thought.
 - (e) Quality of **language and expression**.
 - (f) Proper use of footnotes and bibliography, as applicable. **Essays lacking footnotes or a bibliography will be rejected.**

6. The decision of the judges will be final. They may recommend a First Prize, which includes a **cash award of ₹15,000 and a certificate, and a Runner-up Prize, which includes a cash award of ₹10,000 and a certificate**. Winners will also receive **gratis Life Membership of the USI**. Additionally, the winning essay(s), if recommended by the judges, will be published in the USI Journal.
 7. The Institution reserves the right to **withhold awards** if the submitted essays do not meet the required standard. Cases of plagiarism will result in disqualification.
 8. **Copyright** of all submitted essays will remain with the **United Service Institution of India**.
 9. Essays must be written in English, printed on one side of the paper, and double-spaced. Hard copies should be submitted in triplicate, along with a soft copy sent via email. Essays will be evaluated only after receipt of both hard and soft copies to enable plagiarism check.
 10. Hard copy submissions must remain **ANONYMOUS**, with no identifying details of the author included in the essay or the covering letter. **A sealed envelope must accompany the essay, containing a paper with the author's name, address, and email. Service officers must also provide their personal number, rank, date of commission, unit, address, and email.** The title of the essay should only be written on the outside of the envelope. These envelopes will be opened only during the USI Council meeting, after the judges have finalized their decision. **Essays violating the anonymity rule will be rejected.** Additionally, the email forwarding the soft copy must have only the essay title in the subject line.
 11. All essays should be sent to the Director General, United Service Institution of India, Rao Tula Ram Marg, Post Bag No.8, Vasant Vihar PO, New Delhi - 110 057, with a submission deadline of **15 Sep 2026**. The envelopes should be clearly marked as '**Lt Gen SL Menezes Memorial Indian Military History Essay Competition 2026**'. Soft copies must be emailed to menezes.essay@usiofindia.org **Essays received after last date will not be accepted.**
 12. For any queries or clarifications, please contact the **Director CMHCS**, at menezes.essay@usiofindia.org
- ### Style Sheet
13. All essays must conform to the **USI style sheet**, available at: <https://www.usiofindia.org/page-details.php?slug=stylesheet>