

From The Director General's Desk

Dear Members,

It is my privilege to extend my heartfelt wishes to each one of you for a joyous and prosperous New Year.

In retrospect, the past year has been filled with challenges and triumphs, reflecting the resilience and dedication of our team. Together, we have navigated through uncertainties, embraced change, and emerged stronger.

During the year 2023, India has taken bold strides in its transition from a balancing power to a leading power. Sustained economic growth, political stability, effective management of internal security and key achievements in science and technology have significantly enhanced India's stature. India's vision of '*Viksit Bharat*' 2047 looks a plausible goal. Hugely successful conduct of G-20 Summit, under the rubric of '*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*', with the theme of 'One Earth, One Family, One Future', has positioned India as a strong vector of the Global South. On the flip side, festering violence in Manipur posed a daunting challenge since turmoil in the state does not augur well for peace in the northeast and for the very success of India's Act East Policy.

India remains beset with a collusive hybrid threat from Pakistani-China nexus. Even though a determined effort is being made to narrow the strategic capacity gap, a more sustained effort is needed to develop a credible deterrence capability across the spectrum of conflict. India's immediate neighbourhood remains in ferment. Of particular concern are the issues such as the pro-China tilt of Maldives' new regime and Bhutan-China boundary talks. Besides, the outcome of elections in Bangladesh and Pakistan will cumulatively have strategic implications for India. In the extended neighbourhood, a Talibanised Afghanistan, Ukraine War and Gaza Conflict too have strategic ramifications for India. At the global level India is deftly navigating its relations in a highly polarised world, balancing its relations in the Indo-Pacific and Eurasia. Cognisant of the role of niche and disruptive technology, a special drive is afoot to invest in research and development and enhance capacities in high-end technologies. Nonetheless, given the intricate nature of geopolitics, a more guided effort, using the 'Whole of

Nation Approach' is needed to develop India's comprehensive national power and leverage it to promote our strategic interests.

Leaving the big picture aside, let me update our members on the transformation in the USI.

During the year, the USI Management interacted with the Hon'ble Raksha Mantri, Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), Service Chiefs, and other senior policymakers at the National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS) and Ministries to apprise them about functioning of the USI and seek their guidance and support. There was regular interaction with the Heads of Missions and foreign delegations besides participation at various national and international platforms to project the image of the Institution. The USI has signed a number of Memorandums of Understanding with national and international institutions, introduced new Chairs of Excellence and Memorial Lectures apart from other initiatives.

The Centre for Military History and Conflict Studies (CMHCS) successfully conducted India's maiden Military Heritage Festival. The themes of the event included military heritage, geopolitics, strategic security, *Atmanirbhar Bharat*, media and war, aerospace and maritime affairs. The event was attended by the Hon'ble Raksha Mantri, and eminent personalities such as the CDS, the Chiefs of Army and Air Staff, the Vice Chief of Naval Staff, and the Chief of Integrated Defence Staff to the Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee. 'Project *Udbhav*' was also flagged off during the event for illuminating India's military future with ancient strategic wisdom. The event also included an exhibition showcasing Indian military heritage from antiquity to present, service band displays, and a cultural programme with the theme 'Unity in Diversity'. CMHCS is also spearheading the Army Digital Archive Project as well as partnering with the Indian Air Force for their digitisation requirements. As part of Prime Minister's Veer Gatha project, The Gallantry Awards Portal Project was also initiated in collaboration with Ministry of Defence (MoD).

The Centre for Strategic Studies and Simulation (CS3) continued its focus on quality research in strategic and military affairs and the conduct of scenario based strategic games. The Centre hosted a number of seminars/webinars and Round Table Discussions (RTDs) focusing on geopolitical and strategic security

issues. The Centre initiated Track 1.5 dialogues with foreign partners and conducted table-top exercises. The Centre also conducted the Combined Operational Review and Evaluation Programme for HQ Integrated Defence Staff (IDS), strategic scenario gaming exercise at the Army War College, Mhow and Geneva Centre for Democratic Control of Armed Forces. USI has also completed 'Project *Jayant*', a seminal project on developing a computerised tool for conducting strategic gaming at theatre-strategic level, in collaboration with the Institute for Systems Studies and Analyses, Defence Research and Development Organisation. The CS3 also conducted bi-annual internship programmes for students from various universities. Furthermore, the Centre undertook Net Assessment projects for the MoD, HQ IDS and NSCS. CS3 also mentored foreign Visiting Fellows in conducting research at the Centre.

Professional advancement of serving officers has always been an important activity of the Institution since 1903. The Courses Section commenced the Online Pre-Staff Course for officers appearing for Defence Services Staff College for three subjects which were earlier conducted by respective Army Commands as Command Pre-Staff Courses. Besides, the USI continued with the Correspondence Courses and the Contact Programme in Hybrid mode for Competitive and Promotion examinations (Part B and Part D). More than 1,500 officers were trained during the year. About 75 per cent of the officers making it in the competitive vacancies and staff college merit list were beneficiaries of our courses.

The USI has played a crucial role in advancing India's United Nations Peacekeeping (UNPK) efforts. The establishment and nurturing of the Centre for UNPK by the USI, in collaboration with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and the Armed Forces, have transformed it into a full-fledged unit of the Indian Army, serving as a regional hub for excellence in UNPK capacity building and diplomacy. The USI has elevated its UNPK role to the policy and doctrinal level, with the United Nations Cell spearheading efforts to showcase India's contributions in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations nationally and internationally. As a founding member of the Challenges Forum, the USI collaborates with institutions such as the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, the Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network, and the Stockholm

International Peace Research Institute on various projects. The USI has conducted international courses with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research and recently collaborated on the Protection of Women in Conflict Zones with United Nations Women. Engagements with United Nations Women, the United Nations Resident Coordinator, and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have been re-established. Additionally, the USI, in partnership with the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) organised webinars on United Nations themes, leading to the publication of Monographs. A joint USI-ICWA book titled 'India and the UN Peace Operations: In the Service of Humanity and Global Peace' is set for release, and a special USI Journal (Jan to Mar 2023) has been published, featuring contributions from foreign and Indian Peacekeepers. This year USI conducted the USI-United Nations Annual Forum 2023 in collaboration with the ICRC, focusing on the International Humanitarian Law. This event was also supported by the MEA and included relevant deliberations on contemporary and critical issues.

The USI Centre for *Atmanirbhar Bharat* Initiative (CANBI), launched in Apr 2022, addresses critical gaps between stakeholders' perceptions and actual positions by integrating geostrategy and technologies into a new vertical of the USI. Functioning as a bridge between the defence industry and the armed forces, it serves as a platform for idea cross-fertilisation and the development of a robust ecosystem for indigenisation and self-reliance. The initiative's objectives include exploring the link between geostrategy and fast-developing technology, mentoring Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and start-ups aspiring to join the defence industry, identifying export promotion opportunities for defence products/services, and supporting government efforts to attract strategic industries to India. Over approximately 18 months, the initiative has evolved to network and collaborate with various governmental and non-governmental establishments, institutions, and think tanks in India and abroad. It focuses on deliberating strategic issues such as cyber security, hybrid warfare, disruptive technology, Artificial Intelligence (AI), automation, space-centric warfare, and unmanned aerial vehicles, conducting Track 1.5/2 dialogues on the geopolitics of technology, such as with the QUAD countries on AI/Machine Learning in Cyber Security and holding RTDs with stakeholders to improve awareness

of domestic MSMEs in the defence industry. Additionally, the initiative collaborates with the CyberPeace Foundation to establish a Cyber Centre of Excellence at the USI, covering cyber policy research and advocacy, threat intelligence and advisories, and research and development. The Centre, in collaboration with, Microsoft Corporation and India Future Foundation hosted a 'Cyber *Manthan*' on 'Securing India's Core Sectors from Emerging Digital Threats'. CANBI also conducted seminars on 'Cyber Security' in collaboration with the US Embassy and the Taiwan Economic and Cultural Centre, and 'AI Enabled Gyro Stabilised Gimbal Sights'. Further, there was a panel discussion on 'Mitigation of risks in AI Enabled military Systems'.

The Editorial Section has been continuously striving to ensure quality publications. The USI Journal, a prestigious publication with an uninterrupted history since 1871, serves as a source of pride for the Institution. It covers a broad spectrum of topics, including military heritage, national security, defence forces, and international relations. The Indian Council of Social Science Research, has provided a grant of INR 1,00,000 for the publication of the USI Journal. The USI Strategic Year Book, now in its eighth edition, was released by General Anil Chauhan, CDS. This edition covers various aspects of India's National Security across six thematic sections. Recognised as a seminal work, the Year Book provides valuable perspectives and inputs for policymakers, academia, and the strategic community. In the realm of Books, Monographs, and Occasional Papers, the Institution has published eight books during the year. Furthermore, two Monographs and six Occasional Papers have been published. Notably, two Occasional Papers contain edited versions of keynote addresses by General VP Malik and General MM Naravane, former Chiefs of Army Staff. In the realm of digital advancement, the USI significantly expanded its presence on various online platforms. Towards the end of the year a capsule on International Humanitarian and Space Laws was conducted for the officers of the Indian Air Force.

The USI organised several notable events throughout the year, encompassing seminars, panel discussions, memorial lectures, and special addresses. Among these were the Indian Military Heritage Festival, the UN Forum, the special addresses by the Chief of Naval Staff and Chief of Air Staff, a seminar

addressing 'Women, Peace, and Security in Peacekeeping Operations', the 'General PS Bhagat Memorial Lecture', the '21st Major General Samir Sinha Memorial Lecture', the 'Major Bob Khathing Memorial Lecture', the 'Marshal of the IAF Arjan Singh Memorial Lecture', and the '27th Colonel Pyara Lal Memorial Lecture'.

The USI also conducted the regular essay competitions in 2023, each focusing on critical military and strategic topics. In the 'USI Gold Medal Essay Competition', which centred on 'Ukraine Conflict: Military Lessons for India', a total of 91 entries were received. Simultaneously, the 'Lt Gen SL Menezes Memorial Essay Competition' explored 'China's Galwan Aggression: Military Lessons for India', receiving 39 entries. Additionally, the 'USI-War Wounded Foundation Joint Essay Competition', themed 'Looking at the Disabled Soldier – Past, Present, and Future – His Care, Career Prospects, and Rehabilitation', received 16 entries. The essay competitions have received quality entries, and the winning entries will be published as part of the USI Journal.

Throughout the year, the USI Library has maintained its commitment to providing a valuable collection and services. With over 70,204 books, some dating back to the 16th and 17th centuries, the library serves as a significant repository of knowledge and archival material. The addition of 153 books highlights a dedication to ongoing expansion and updates. Notably, the inclusion of historical Army Lists, such as the Bombay Army List from 1793, provides avenues for those researching their ancestors' service details. The 'Fortnightly First' initiative, showcasing curated articles from think tanks, demonstrates the library's commitment to disseminating knowledge. Accessible on the USI website, these articles, along with links to USI content and YouTube recordings of seminars/webinars, enhance the library's role in providing a comprehensive information service. By combining traditional resources with digital platforms, the USI Library ensures members have diverse access to information and educational content, embodying a dynamic and forward-thinking approach to learning and research.

The growth of the USI membership over the years is impressive and reflects the Institution's popularity and significance. Starting with 215 members, the Institution has experienced