

substantial expansion, reaching 3,500 members when it moved to its present premises in 1996, and currently boasting a membership of 14,432. The initiative to grant Civilian Special Membership to deserving individuals has been successful, with 29 membership cards issued out of the annual quota of 100 members. This program not only contributes to the Institution's diversity but also recognises and includes individuals who may not have a military background but have valuable contributions to make. The enrolment of 69 life members, 16 associate members, 172 ordinary members, and 770 course members during the current year underscores the Institution's ongoing commitment to fostering a diverse and engaged community. The special drive to enrol members from the Assam Rifles units and the Central Armed Police Forces demonstrates a proactive approach to expanding membership into specific areas of interest.

The USI has increased its digital outreach through social media platforms such as X (formerly known as Twitter), LinkedIn, Instagram and Telegram. In addition, the USI has made great strides in the YouTube content with the launch of the 'USI Strategic Dialogues'. It is a podcast wherein field experts working under the banner of the USI speak on the various elements of national security and geopolitics.

Since 2011, the USI has been facing significant financial difficulties, aggravated by the lack of grants from the Services and MoD. The situation deteriorated in 2020 due to low bank interest rates and a decline in income from traditional sources during the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite financial constraints, the Institution prioritised crucial repairs and enhancements to audio-visual facilities, showcasing a commitment to maintaining its capabilities. The severity of the financial situation was underscored by the implementation of extreme austerity measures from 2021 to 2022. The USI highlights the likelihood of its financial status remaining critical unless substantial funds or grants are obtained from the Services and MoD. Collaborative endeavours with external entities aim to secure additional resources for financial sustainability. The Institution's proactive measures underscore its dedication to overcoming financial challenges and ensuring ongoing operations and growth. Despite its financial limitations, the USI has continued its upward trajectory in performance, aligning with its rich traditions. The Institution has established new clusters and benchmarks to

enhance its reputation, along with that of the Indian Armed Forces and the nation as a whole.

I express my gratitude to the USI Council for their guidance and unwavering support during this transformative period.

I also take this opportunity to thank the esteemed members and contributors who have actively participated in the various events and contributed to the USI Journal, Strategic Year Book and other publication forms. I urge everyone to continually support the USI initiatives and also participate enthusiastically in the events and contribute to the literary front.

I would also like to place on record my heartfelt gratitude to each member of the USI family for their stellar performance on both the academic and administrative fronts throughout the year. Their dedication, hard work, and commitment have not only elevated the reputation of the Institution but have also contributed significantly to our collective pursuit of knowledge and excellence. I would also like to thank the USI support staff for their commitment in ensuring the functioning of the Institution without any hitches.

As I conclude the Director's page for 2023, I would like to thank the Residency Resorts for their commitment to providing neat and clean lodging facilities at the USI premises.

Looking ahead, the coming year holds promise and potential for the USI too. We are poised for further innovation, impactful research, and meaningful contributions in the literary and strategic fields. May the New Year bring fresh perspectives, inspiring breakthroughs, and a renewed sense of purpose. Let us seize every opportunity that comes our way, and together, make 2024 a year of unprecedented accomplishments and take the USI together to dizzy heights of glory.

Wishing you and your loved ones a happy, healthy, and prosperous New Year!

With best wishes,

Jai Hind

Major General BK Sharma, AVSM, SM** (Retd)
Director General, United Service Institution of India

Editorial

Dear Readers,

I am delighted to present the USI's Journal for the final quarter of 2023. Throughout the past 153 years, the USI has consistently been committed to delivering strategic insights on matters crucial to national security and geopolitics. This edition comprises 12 meticulously researched articles covering a range of topics, from the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict to the Chinese human intelligence mechanism, to another one on the steps Beijing has taken to establish its primacy in global affairs and the ongoing issues in Manipur. Diplomatic relations between India and neighbouring countries like Bhutan, Maldives, and Taiwan are thoroughly analysed to provide insights into potential future developments. Additionally, the journal explores the evolution of warfare technologies, including ballistic missile systems and drones. An article is dedicated to the India-Middle-East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), shedding light on its economic and geopolitical implications compared to the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative. Then there is an article on improving our preparedness in the sphere of Space Domain Awareness for the management of our national space proficiencies. Furthermore, an article on the Russo-Ukrainian War focusing on modernisation and capital procurement concerning India.

The first article, 'Azerbaijan's Capture of Nagorno-Karabakh Opens Up Challenges for India in the South Caucasus', is authored by Major General Jagatbir Singh, VSM (Retd). According to the author, the South Caucasus has gained significance for India's aspirations to establish a transportation corridor connecting it to Europe through the Iranian plateau. However, the ongoing conflict over the Armenian Nagorno-Karabakh Enclave within Azerbaijan poses a hindrance to India's plans. The article explores the key challenges arising from the geopolitics of the conflict, its regional dimensions, India's stakes, and concludes with noteworthy policy recommendations. Following this, an article by Group Captain Praveer Ashok Purohit (Retd), titled 'IMEC: Reimagining Connectivity Through Shared Aspirations' highlights the objectives of the IMEC, aiming to stimulate economic development through

enhanced connectivity and economic integration between Asia and the West. It also addresses the challenges and suggests ways through which IMEC could overcome critical issues in areas of funding, interoperability, and harmonising different systems and policies.

The third article, 'Chinese Global Human Intelligence Operations Through Cultural Diplomacy', by Colonel DCS Mayal, argues that Chinese Diasporas, including students studying abroad, have acted as agents for collecting human intelligence using a strategy colloquially named as the 'policy of thousand grains of sand'. The article further asserts how India can similarly bolster its cultural diplomacy using its own diasporas, equally large in numbers and much more diverse, to augment its intelligence-gathering capabilities. The fourth article is by first time contributor, Vinayak Sharma, titled 'China's Middle Kingdom Dream'. This article details how China has been working towards establishing Beijing's dominion over the world. Close attention is paid to the institutional measures, expansionism, soft power and the economy on the basis of which China hopes to rise to the status of superpower. The article further focuses on China's complex strategic outlook for the establishment of Pax Sinica.

Rahul B. Wankhede, in his article 'Evolution of India's Ballistic Missile Defence Program: Prospects and Challenges', writes that the deployment of the Ballistic Missile Defence has showcased technological advancements and self-reliance in the development of laser-based interception technology. The article further elaborates on the resource allocation and technological advancements necessary for seamless integration into the military infrastructure. The sixth article, written by Major HS Mankoo, titled 'Counter Drone Warfare', talks about the proliferation of consumer-grade drones and how it has ushered in an era of new security challenges. It focuses on the technical aspects of countering drones and analyses methods for detection, identification, and neutralisation of said drones. It also explores the types of drones that have been used during the Ukraine conflict and the lessons that can be learned by the Indian military.

The next article, by Brigadier Pawan Bhardwaj on 'National Security Dynamics: The Role of India-Taiwan Collaboration amidst Geopolitical Challenges' highlights the compulsive need for a nuanced cross-cultural partnership with Taiwan. He brings out that common religious and cultural beliefs can be used to bridge collaboration deficiencies and improve strategic communications. The eighth article, titled 'Manipur- The Way Ahead', by Brigadier Dinesh Mathur (Retd), focuses on the conflict that rattled the northeastern state, leading to widespread arson, damage to life and property, along with human rights violations. The main thrust of the article is on how the Assam Rifles, being the mainstay force in the northeast, can be effectively utilised to ensure such conflicts are curtailed in the future.

The next article, 'A New Discourse on Indo-Maldives Relations: Challenges and Opportunities', by Tanya Jain, focuses on the evolving Indo-Maldives relations in light of the recent election of Dr. Mohamed Muizzu. Often termed as 'Pro-China', President Muizzu's rise to power could signal a changing atmosphere in the Indo-Pacific region and, therefore, require a recalibration of the strategic calculus. In his article, 'Space Domain Awareness: The Global Common', Lieutenant Colonel Amandeep Singh has discussed the Space as an operational sphere. He has advocated for the first mover's advantage and that Space Domain Awareness (SDA) allows for monitoring the space environment, thereby identifying commercial SDA opportunities that, in turn, could help enhance the ability to conduct national security missions.

In the penultimate article of the journal, Dr. Beena, in her article titled 'The Enduring Bonds: Soft Power Diplomacy in the India-Bhutan Relationship', has advocated for the importance of soft power diplomacy in the making of enduring long-term partnerships by transcending political boundaries. The article asserts that yoga can be used as a tool for reviving cultural affinities and historical connections. In the final article of the journal, Colonel Ashish Dutta in his contribution titled, 'What Lessons Can Be Drawn from Russia-Ukraine Conflict By The Indian Army With Respect To Modernisation And Capital Procurement', states that it is too early to say whether the conflict will result in the continuance of unipolarity or lead to a multi-polar world order. He also argues

that the geopolitical implications cannot be yet determined. The conflict, involving advanced weaponry from both Western and Russian sources, offers crucial lessons for the Indian Army in terms of force modernisation and capital procurement.

The last part of the journal contains a book review article by Major General, Jagatbir Singh on the biography of Major General AV Natu, MVC, 'A Soldier's Soldier: Saviour of Poonch 1971', by Brigadier Vijay Natu. The review provides a comprehensive account of General Natu's life, covering his early years, military service, and post-retirement period. The book highlights General Natu's impact on people he encountered, emphasising unit bonding and *esprit de corps* (Union is Strength), particularly in the 9th Gorkha Rifles. The narrative includes anecdotes showcasing General Natu's leadership during the 1971 Indo-Pakistan War, where he played a crucial role in the defence of Poonch, earning him the Maha Vir Chakra. The biography also reflects on the larger historical context of the Indian Army from partition to post-1971, emphasising the importance of leadership and professionalism.

In conclusion, the USI Journal remains steadfast in its mission to provide a platform for informed discourse and strategic analysis. As we eagerly await your feedback and suggestions, we express our sincere gratitude for your continued support. Special acknowledgement is extended to the Indian Council of Social Science Research for their invaluable financial assistance in bringing this journal to fruition.

Happy Reading!

Major General Sanjeev Chowdhry (Retd)
Director Editorial

Azerbaijan's Capture of Nagorno-Karabakh Opens Up Challenges for India in the South Caucuses

Major General Jagatbir Singh, VSM (Retd)®

Abstract

India has huge strategic and economic interests in the South Caucasus region. The South Caucasus region has also become key for India's ambitions to build a transportation corridor linking it to Europe through the Iranian plateau. The proposed International North South Transport Corridor effectively outflanks Pakistan while giving India access to overland routes to Europe and Central Asia. A Black Sea-Persian Gulf trade route would allow Indian goods to be exported to the West through Georgian ports. However, the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, the long-disputed Armenian Enclave within Azerbaijan, the emergence of the next faultlines in Nakchivan and the nexus between Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Pakistan working together to counter India's influence in the Middle East and Central Asia is holding back India's ambition in the region.

The paper tends to look in the some of the key challenges for India emerging out of the geopolitics of the conflict, regional dimensions of it, stakes for India and finally makes some significant policy recommendations.

®Major General Jagatbir Singh, VSM (Retd) is a Distinguished Fellow at the USI of India. Commissioned in 1981 into the 18 Cavalry, he has held various important command and Staff appointments including command of an Armoured Division.