

From the Desk of the Director, Centre for Publications and Library

It is my privilege to present the Apr–Jun 2026 edition of the United Service Institution of India (USI) Journal. This special issue focuses on the theme ‘Current Conflicts in the World: Trends, Lessons and Strategic Implications’ and examines the rapidly evolving character of contemporary warfare through the lens of ongoing conflicts across Europe, West Asia, the Indo-Pacific, and the wider global environment. The contributions in this edition collectively reflect the growing complexity of modern conflict, where traditional military competition increasingly intersects with emerging technologies, cognitive warfare, economic coercion, information operations, and geopolitical realignment.

The contemporary security environment is marked by persistent instability, expanding grey-zone competition, and growing uncertainty regarding deterrence, escalation control, and technological superiority. The wars in Ukraine and West Asia have demonstrated that while technology continues to alter the methods and speed of warfare, the enduring nature of conflict—centred around political will, considered adaptation, and national infrastructural resilience—remains unchanged. The articles in this issue examine these developments from operational, doctrinal, technological, geopolitical, and socio-politically deliberate perspectives, offering important lessons for India’s national security and defence preparedness.

The issue opens with an insightful article by Lieutenant General Ghanshyam Singh Katoch, PVSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd), titled *From Ukraine to Iran: The Déjà Vu of Contemporary Conflict*. The article argues that although the appearance of war changes with technology, the fundamental nature of conflict remains constant, astutely cautioning against mistaking technological innovation for transformation in the enduring character of warfare. The second article, *A World of Persistent Conflicts: Trajectories, Faultline, and India’s Strategic Moment*, by Lieutenant General Rajeev Chaudhry, VSM (Retd), examines the interconnected nature of contemporary conflicts and assesses the implications for India’s strategic

environment, including maritime security, supply-chain vulnerabilities, and India's role in an evolving multipolar order.

Lieutenant General Kamal Davar, AVSM (Retd), in the third article, *This Madness Must Stop*, analyses the ongoing conflict involving the United States, Israel, and Iran, highlighting the dangers of escalation, energy insecurity, and instability in West Asia, along with the broader implications for India's strategic interests. Air Vice Marshal Prashant Mohan, VM (Retd), in *United States' Air Defence in West Asia: Operational Shortcomings*, the fourth article in this edition, analyses the expanding West Asian conflict and its implications for regional stability. The article highlights the evolving character of warfare marked by drones, missiles, and stand-off engagements, while assessing the implications for India's security and diplomatic posture.

Brigadier Dinesh Mathur's (Retd) article *The West Asia Conflict: Its Perspectives and Lessons for India* highlights the strategic implications of ongoing regional conflicts and reinforces the importance of strategic autonomy, energy security, cyber resilience, and integrated national preparedness. Next, Professor Amit Gupta's *Lessons from the Iran Conflict* examines how low-cost drones, missiles, and decentralised systems are altering the economics and character of warfare, while also highlighting the growing significance of economic warfare and information operations within conflict ecologies.

Colonel DCS Mayal, PhD (Retd), in his article *Sri Lanka as China's Human Intelligence Hub: The Four Global Initiatives Facade in the Indian Ocean Region*, analyses how China's global initiatives are being leveraged to expand deliberate influence and intelligence penetration in the Indian Ocean Region through political, economic, and societal engagement grounded in Sri Lanka. Next, Group Captain Brijesh Shukla's article, *Missiles, Drones, and Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Fusion in Current Conflicts: Lessons for India's Air Defence, Deterrence, and Escalation Management*, analyses lessons emerging from recent conflicts in West Asia and Ukraine to highlight how the integration of drones, precision missiles, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, and electronic warfare is reshaping deterrence and escalation

dynamics. Specifically, the article examines the implications for India's air defence architecture, operational preparedness, and strategic posture in an increasingly contested security environment.

The transformative impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and algorithmic warfare is explored in Commander V Srivatsan's (Retd) article *Algorithmic Doctrinal Reinforcement: Mitigating Strategic Blindness in Artificial Intelligence-Enabled Warfare*. The article highlights the risks of doctrinal rigidity in AI-enabled decision-making and argues for adaptive and cognitively flexible military systems. In the final article of the journal, *From Exquisite Platforms to Attritable Mass: Rethinking India's Defence-Industrial Preparedness*, Lieutenant Colonel Nikhil Srivastava (Retd) examines the shift from expensive high-end military platforms toward low-cost, autonomous, and mass-produced systems, highlighting the importance of indigenous defence-industrial preparedness and technological resilience.

This issue also carries the winning entry of the USI-War Wounded Foundation Joint-Essay Competition, *Courage and Resilience: Personal Journeys of War-Wounded Achievers*, by Commander Abhishek Verma, which highlights inspiring stories of resilience, rehabilitation, and continued service among war-wounded veterans of the Indian Armed Forces.

The Archives section features *The Influence and Application of Sea Power on Expeditions Based on India* by Major GF Macmunn, DSO, RFA. The article is a historical reflection on the enduring importance of maritime power and sea control to India's national security.

The edition concludes with three important and thought-provoking book reviews that collectively examine themes of cognitive warfare, military leadership, and artillery operations in contemporary conflicts. Lieutenant General RS Panwar, AVSM, SM, VSM, PhD (Retd), reviews *Cognitive Battlespace: War in the Human Dimension* by Lieutenant General SRR Aiyengar, PVSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd) and Chandra Nath, a work that explores the growing centrality of perception management, information influence, and the human mind as a domain of warfare in the modern strategic environment.

In the next review, Major General Sudhakar Jee, VSM (Retd) presents an analysis on *China's Colonial Games in Tibet*, edited by Vijay Kranti. The volume is a comprehensive study on the political, cultural, religious, environmental, and strategic dimensions of Tibet under Chinese rule, drawing on contributions from 39 experts. He regards this book as a significant and thought-provoking work that highlights issues of cultural preservation, human rights, religious freedom, and environmental security in Tibet. Finally, Major General Sanjeev Chowdhry (Retd) reviews *Artillery's Thunder: The Untold Kargil Story* by Major General Lakhwinder Singh, YSM, a detailed study of the decisive role played by artillery during the Kargil Conflict and its enduring operational and strategic lessons for contemporary warfare. Each of these reviews seeks to enrich professional military education and contribute meaningfully to ongoing strategic and doctrinal discourse.

Taken together, the contributions in this issue underscore a central reality: the convergence of kinetic warfare, cyber operations, information conflict, AI, and cognitive contestation demands new approaches to strategic thought and defence planning. For India, the lessons emerging from current conflicts are immediate and consequential, reinforcing the need for jointness, technological self-reliance, integrated national power, and sustained foresight.

The Editorial Board hopes that this special issue will stimulate informed debate, contribute to professional military education, and encourage deeper reflection on the operational lessons emerging from contemporary conflicts. We remain grateful to all contributors, reviewers, and readers for their continued support and engagement with the Journal.

Happy Reading!

Major General Sanjeev Chowdhry (Retd)
Director, Centre for Publications and Library

Letter by General Anil Chauhan, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, SM, VSM, Chief of Defence Staff and Secretary, Department of Military Affairs, to United Service Institution of India.

	जनरल अनिल चौहान पीवीएसएम, यूवाईएसएम, एवीएसएम, एसएम, वीएसएम <i>General Anil Chauhan</i> PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, SM, VSM प्रमुख रक्षा अध्यक्ष एवं सचिव सैन्य सम्बन्धित विभाग Chief of Defence Staff & Secretary Department of Military Affairs 10011/CDS/DO	प्रमुख रक्षा अध्यक्ष सचिवालय साऊथ ब्लॉक नई दिल्ली-११० ०११ CDS Secretariat South Block New Delhi-110 011
	30 May 2026 VAdm Sanjay J. Singh, SYSM, PVSM, AVSM, NM, PhD (Retd) DG USI	30 May 2026

Dear Admiral Sanjay,

- As I demit the office of the Chief of Defence Staff, I wish to place on record my sincere appreciation for the valuable engagement and institutional support extended by you and the United Service Institution of India during my tenure.
- The enduring role played by USI in fostering professional military education, strategic dialogue and national security discourse remains deeply significant. I have greatly valued the thoughtful interactions and intellectual exchanges facilitated by the institution on matters concerning jointness, military transformation and evolving security challenges.
- Your leadership has further strengthened USI's standing as a premier platform for professional military scholarship and strategic reflection. Such institutions are vital in nurturing informed perspectives and strengthening the intellectual foundations of national security.
- I remain confident that USI will continue making meaningful contributions towards shaping strategic thought and advancing the national aspiration of a Surakshit and Viksit Bharat.

With warm regards
Yours Sincerely


