

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

It is my honour to present the Jan–Mar 2026 edition of the *Journal of the United Service Institution of India (USI)*. This issue brings together a diverse and forward-looking collection of articles that examine India's evolving strategic environment, the changing character of warfare, emerging technologies, and enduring lessons from military history. Taken together, the contributions reflect the widening scope of contemporary security discourse—ranging from strategic analysis and operational innovation to historical reflection and intellectual debate.

The issue opens with an article by Vice Admiral Sanjay J Singh, SYSM, PVSM, AVSM, NM, PhD (Retd) titled '*India's Strategic Challenges*', which assesses the country's 2026 security environment amid the geopolitical turbulence of 2025, highlighting tensions with Pakistan, West Asian instability, maritime disruptions, and the need for defence modernisation, jointness, and self-reliance. The second article, '*Control of Operational Fires: Necessity of Reconnaissance, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Targeting Brigades*', by Brigadier Prodipto Goswami argues for integrated Reconnaissance, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Targeting Brigades to compress decision cycles and enhance sensor–shooter integration for effective operational fires in future multi-domain conflicts.

The third article by Colonel Dinesh Mayal, PhD (Retd), titled '*China's Global Initiatives Quartet: Weaponising Development, Security, Civilisation, and Governance*', analyses Beijing's four initiatives as an integrated framework to reshape global governance and expand China's long-term strategic influence, particularly across the Global South. The next article by Colonel Ashish Nagaich, SM, and Dr Gopal Bhushan, '*Artificial Intelligence Beyond Large Language Models*', traces the evolution of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and argues that it extends far beyond large language models such as ChatGPT. It highlights the wider ecosystem of AI models and their specialised applications, stressing the need for a broader understanding to responsibly harness AI for practical problem-solving.

The article *'Cyber Security Vulnerabilities of Artificial Intelligence-Enabled Counter Drone Systems: Risk and Resilience Strategies in South Asian Environment'*, by Colonel Harmeet Singh and Professor (Dr) Anurag Jaiswal examines cyber risks in AI-driven counter-drone technologies and advocates resilient, multi-layered cyber-defence frameworks supported by indigenisation and robust policy standards. Professor (Dr) Nirmala Joshi, in the sixth article titled *'Indian Perspectives on Eurasia'*, examines the renewed geopolitical importance of Eurasia and Central Asia through Mackinder's Heartland theory, highlighting India's historical ties and contemporary engagement through connectivity, defence cooperation, and multilateral platforms.

Colonel Vineet Banga's article, *'Veiled in Shadows: The Role of Women as Spies in European and American Conflicts'*, highlights the often-overlooked contributions of women in espionage and their significant role in shaping military and political outcomes. The next article by Colonel Tirath Singh Rawat (Retd), *'Silent Reach, Decisive Strike: The Evolution of Unmanned Warfare'*, traces the rise of unmanned systems as decisive force multipliers and calls for doctrinal adaptation, interoperability, and integrated command structures.

Dr Ingudam Yaipharemba Singh's article titled *'Facets of Cross-Border Drug Trafficking in the Manipur–Myanmar Borderland'* examines the nexus between narcotics trafficking, organised crime, insurgency, and porous borders, highlighting its growing implications for regional security. In the tenth article titled *'76 Years of Indo-Philippines Ties and India's Act East Policy'*, Dr Martand Jha explores the expanding strategic partnership between India and the Philippines, highlighting the growing convergence in maritime security, defence cooperation, and regional connectivity under India's Act East Policy. The last contribution by Major HS Mankoo, titled *'Celerity Warfare'*, highlights the importance of speed, synchronisation, and decision dominance in modern conflict, arguing that compressing the observe–orient–decide–act loop will be vital for future multi-domain operations.

This issue also features a contribution from the USI archives titled *'The Cannon and the Cannoneers of Bygone India'* by C Grey, which offers a historical perspective on artillery traditions in India and their evolution over time.

Among the prize-winning essays included in this issue, Commander Arun Kumar Yadav's winning entry for the USI Gold Medal Essay Competition, *'Cognitive Warfare: India's Approach to Influencing Perception and Behaviour'*, examines how modern conflicts increasingly target human cognition through information operations, disinformation, and psychological influence. The essay proposes a whole-of-government framework for strengthening India's cognitive resilience and narrative dominance. The Lieutenant General SL Menezes Memorial Essay Competition winning entry, authored by Group Captain Brijesh Shukla and titled *'Doctrinal Evolution of the Indian Armed Forces Since 1947'*, traces the evolution of India's military doctrine from its early defensive orientation to a more sophisticated multi-domain framework shaped by wars, technological change, and contemporary reforms such as the creation of the Chief of Defence Staff and theatre commands.

The edition concludes with three book reviews. Major General Jagatbir Singh, VSM (Retd) reviews *'Shooting Straight: A Military Biography of Lieutenant General Rostum K Nanavatty'* by Arjun Subramaniam, offering insights into the leadership and professional legacy of one of India's distinguished military commanders. Colonel RC Patial, SM, FRGSP, PhD (Retd) reviews *'Redlines Redrawn: Operation Sindoor and India's New Normal'*, which analyses the strategic implications of Operation Sindoor for India's evolving security posture. Finally, Major General Ashok Joshi, VSM (Retd) provides a short review of *'Kashmir in the Line of Fire'* by Major General Ranjan Mahajan, a work that examines the enduring strategic complexities of the Kashmir conflict.

Taken together, the contributions in this issue offer a rich and multidimensional exploration of contemporary and historical aspects of war, strategy, and security. The Editorial Board hopes that this edition will stimulate informed debate, enrich professional military

education, and contribute meaningfully to India's evolving strategic discourse.

We welcome your feedback and suggestions.

Happy Reading!

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