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

It is my privilege to present this edition of the *United Service Institution of India (USI) Journal*. The contributions in this issue examine the institutional, technological, military, geopolitical and historical dimensions of India's evolving security environment. Collectively, they highlight how contemporary warfare is being transformed by Artificial Intelligence (AI), autonomous systems, cognitive warfare, political-military instability and the renewed importance of defence-industrial and maritime capabilities.

The contemporary strategic environment is characterised by persistent conflict, compressed decision cycles, economic coercion, technological disruption and growing uncertainty over deterrence and escalation control. While emerging technologies continue to alter the conduct and tempo of warfare, recent conflicts reaffirm the enduring importance of political purpose, professional military judgement, institutional clarity, industrial capacity and national resilience. The contributions in this edition examine these developments and offer valuable lessons for India's national security and defence preparedness.

The issue opens with Lieutenant General Rajeev Chaudhry, VSM (Retd) examining rank convergence in India's uniformed services in his article, *Symbol, Status and Statecraft: Reassessing Rank Convergence in India's Uniformed Services*. The article examines the increasing similarity between rank insignia in the Armed Forces and Central Armed Police Forces. It argues for clearer institutional differentiation and formal rank-equivalence guidelines to preserve constitutional distinctions, protocol coherence and organisational morale. Next, Commander V Srivatsan (Retd), in *Algorithmic Doctrinal Reinforcement: Mitigating Strategic Blindness in AI-Enabled Warfare*, identifies the danger of AI systems reinforcing established doctrine and commanders' cognitive biases. He argues that military AI must be designed not merely to accelerate decisions

but also to question assumptions, reward dissent and anticipate strategic surprise.

Colonel Ajay Kumar Tomar, PhD in his article, *Preparing for Future Conflicts: Emerging Lessons from Russia–Ukraine and US–Israel–Iran Conflicts for India*, examines the changing character of contemporary warfare. It highlights the growing importance of endurance, resilient supply chains, ammunition availability, affordable warfighting capabilities, information operations and multi-domain integration. The article advocates solutions tailored to India's requirements and aligned with *Atmanirbharta* and *Viksit Bharat*. The fourth article in this edition, *Fluid Frontiers: Mapping the Geopolitical Fault Lines of a Fragmenting World Order,* by Dr Kawal Deep Kour, introduces the Conflict Trajectory Mapping Framework, tracing how material, narrative, and technological power shifts across five phases of conflict. Applied to Ukraine, Gaza, the Red Sea, India, Türkiye and Indonesia, it argues that the world has entered a 'post-stability' era in which instability is managed, not resolved. Offered as work in progress, the article invites scholarly debate on whether resilience, rather than restoring order, is now statecraft's central task.

In the next article, *Loyalty, Purges and Fragility: Stress within the Chinese People's Liberation Army*, Colonel Shanu Krishna analyses the consequences of recurring political purges within the People's Liberation Army. The article argues that prioritising political loyalty over professional continuity may weaken institutional trust and operational effectiveness. It also assesses how India could utilise this period to strengthen preparedness along the land frontier and consolidate its positional advantage in the Indian Ocean Region.

In a rather innovative article, *The Three-Body Problem Trilogy: A Reflection of New China under Communism*, Group Captain Sunny Vyas, employs Liu Cixin's trilogy as a lens through which to understand Chinese strategic culture. The article explores themes including surveillance, strategic patience, deception, existential deterrence and collective behaviour, while recommending that India develop stronger institutional memory, credible deterrence and strategic resilience across multiple domains. Dr Salam Binodkumar Singh's article, *Artificial Intelligence in the Defence Sector: A*

Comparative Analysis of the United States, China and India, compares the development and military adoption of AI by the three countries. It highlights the need for India to strengthen indigenous research, public-private partnerships, secure defence datasets, computing infrastructure, edge AI, autonomous systems and skilled human resources. The article advocates a focused, trustworthy and human-centred approach towards AI which is well-suited to India's defence requirements.

B Srinivasan's article, *Geopolitical Antecedents and Strategic Implications of the 2026 Iran–United States Military Confrontation: A Critical Assessment*, examines the political, nuclear, military and proxy-related developments that transformed prolonged rivalry into direct conflict. It evaluates the wider implications for deterrence, nuclear security, regional stability, maritime commerce and global energy supplies, particularly in relation to the strategic vulnerability of the Strait of Hormuz. Subsequently, Commander Ravi Shankar NRK (Retd), in *The Algorithmic Age of Warfare: Lessons from Contemporary Conflicts and a Techno-Legal Framework for Autonomous Defensive Response in India*, addresses the tension between machine-speed threats and meaningful human control. The article proposes a four-pillar framework encompassing pre-authorised autonomous defensive responses, edge-based resilience, joint maritime-domain awareness and agile procurement, while retaining democratic accountability and compliance with international humanitarian law.

The final article, *Operation X in Naval Warfare History: An Early Example of Indian Maritime Hybrid Warfare*, by Monika Choudhary, revisits India's clandestine maritime campaign during the Bangladesh Liberation War. It demonstrates how naval commandos, covert action, local intelligence, irregular tactics and conventional naval power were integrated to disrupt Pakistan's ports, shipping and logistics. The article provides a valuable historical perspective on contemporary concepts of asymmetric and hybrid maritime warfare.

This issue also carries the Second Prize-winning entry of the USI Gold Medal Essay Competition by Wing Commander Maxmillan GG titled *Cognitive Warfare: India's Approach to Influencing*

Perception and Behaviour. The essay examines cognitive warfare as an emerging sixth domain of warfare centred on influencing human perception, behaviour and decision-making. It proposes a comprehensive National Cognitive Warfare Strategy for India, encompassing institutional integration, defensive resilience, offensive capabilities, legal reform, talent development, technological innovation and engagement with the global cognitive-security ecosystem. The Archives section features Lieutenant Colonel J A H Pollock's 1898 essay, *Notes on Hill Warfare*. Based on more than two decades of frontier service, the essay examines advance and rear guards, flank protection, piquets, convoy security, fieldcraft, camp defence and operations against mobile adversaries familiar with mountainous terrain. Its emphasis on adaptability, cohesion, physical endurance, tactical patience, and learning from the adversary remains highly relevant to contemporary high-altitude and irregular warfare.

The edition concludes with two important book reviews. Major General Sanjeev Chowdhry (Retd) reviews *Wings of Support: Nine Decades of Action by the Transport Fleet of the IAF* by Air Marshal Rajeev Sachdeva, AVSM, PhD (Retd). The book chronicles the evolution of Indian military air transport and its contribution to major operations, humanitarian assistance, overseas evacuations and nation-building. It also examines *Atmanirbharta* in aerospace production and proposes an air-mobility doctrine suited to the requirements of *Viksit Bharat 2047*. In the second review, Colonel RC Patial, SM, FRGS, PhD (Retd), examines Lieutenant General Rakesh Sharma's *War Is a True Chameleon: Strategising for Future Wars in the Indian Context*. Drawing upon Clausewitz's distinction between the enduring nature and changing character of war, the book analyses AI, drones, cyber operations, electronic warfare, space capabilities, grey-zone competition and multi-domain operations. It stresses that technology must remain subordinate to strategy, doctrine, leadership and political purpose, while advocating jointness, *Atmanirbharta*, innovation and whole-of-nation preparedness.

Taken together, the contributions in this edition underline the convergence of institutional, technological, cognitive, industrial and operational challenges confronting India within its security ecosystem. They reinforce the need for constitutional clarity, adaptive doctrine, human-centred AI, cognitive resilience, robust supply chains, defence-industrial mobilisation, integrated deterrence, jointness and enhanced maritime and air-mobility capabilities.

The Editorial Board hopes that this edition will stimulate informed debate, enrich professional military education and contribute meaningfully to India's strategic and doctrinal discourse. We remain grateful to all contributors, reviewers and readers for their continued support and engagement with the *USI Journal*.

Happy Reading!

Major General Sanjeev Chowdhry (Retd)

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