

From the Director General's Desk

Dear members,

At the outset, I take this opportunity to convey our greetings and best wishes for the year 2025. During the year 2024, the Institution witnessed a marked increase in its activities despite organisational constraints. It was with the unstinted support of the United Service Institution (USI) Council, USI members, and the dedication of the staff that we were able to overcome the challenges, adapt, and grow. The USI remains well-poised to navigate significant geopolitical shifts in the year 2025.

The world has entered an era of contested multi-polarity. The United States (US)-led so-called free and liberal world order is challenged by China and Russia. American-centric alliances and organisations such as Euro-Atlantic alliance, East Asian Alliance, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, and the trilateral security partnership among Australia, the United Kingdom, and the US (AUKUS) are being challenged by CRINK (China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea). The emergence of the Global South, a vast conglomerate of developing nations, is asserting for its rightful position in the evolving balance of power. Among the multitude of drivers of contested multi-polarity, standout factors include new generation conflicts, disruptive technologies, and the rise in the number of failing states. The 'Grey Rhino' of climate change and 'Black Swans' like pandemics continue to pose existential threats to humankind. The security landscape has never been so changed since the end of the Second World War.

In the aforesaid strategic environment, characterised by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity, the biggest imponderable is the policies and strategic behaviour of America under the Trump Administration. In this scenario of gloom and doom, multilateralism has become virtually defunct.

As far as India is concerned, the country has embarked on a positive trajectory of *Viksit Bharat@2047*. While the nation's resolve for comprehensive national development remains steadfast, its security challenges are profound. Collusive hybrid threats, grey

zone conflicts, and a hostile nuclear environment remain constant features of India's threat spectrum. The strategic milieu demands critical thinking and multi-domain skill sets to assess and strategise for new security challenges and opportunities.

As for the update on the USI activities during the year 2024:

We had an extremely busy but fruitful year replete with events and discussions which focused on various geopolitical and national security issues.

In 2024, the Centre for Strategic Studies and Simulation (CS3) advanced military research and strategic thought through scenario-based games, workshops, and a Combined Operational and Review Programme for senior military leaders. It expanded global outreach with Memoranda of Understanding with various multilateral institutes and universities, Track 1.5 dialogues, and participation in international conferences, while hosting seminars and discussions on national security and multi-domain warfare. CS3 also supported research via net assessment studies, strategic gaming exercises, and Chairs of Excellence, alongside publishing scholarly works. Annual memorial lectures addressed key topics like Jointmanship and transformation of the Indian Army, highlighting CS3's role in enhancing military preparedness and international collaboration.

The Centre for Military History and Conflict Studies (CMHCS) had a notable year with impactful initiatives to preserve and promote India's military heritage. Highlights include hosting the second edition of the Indian Military Heritage Festival and USI-National Army Museum Curators' Course, commemorating the 25th Anniversary of the Kargil War and the Indian Air Force's role in the 1971 War. It advanced archival efforts with a Digital Archive for the Indian Air Force and launched Project *Veer Gatha* and Project *Shaurya Gatha* to inspire and preserve military legacies. The Centre also introduced a Master of Arts programme in International Conflict Studies with the University of Ladakh and represented India's military legacy at international events. With ten publications and successful essay competitions, CMHCS continues to foster military scholarship and heritage on national and global platforms.

The USI Centre for Emerging Technologies for Atma Nirbhar Bharat (CETANB) established in Jan 2024, promotes indigenisation and self-reliance in defence by bridging gaps between stakeholders and advancing disruptive technologies like cybersecurity, Artificial Intelligence, and unmanned aerial vehicles. Key achievements include establishing a Cyber Centre of Excellence with the Cyber Peace Foundation, launching the Cyber Responder Programme, and hosting events such as the Aerospace and Defence Capability Roadmap 2030 Conclave. CETANB also trains army officers and law enforcement agencies on cybersecurity and misinformation and participates in global forums, including the United Nations (UN) and bilateral platforms, to enhance digital infrastructure resilience. Through its initiatives, CETANB has become a pivotal driver of India's strategic and technological progress.

The Centre for Courses, a key pillar of the Institution since 1903, advanced professional training for serving officers in 2024 through an Online Pre-Staff Course for Defence Services Staff College (DSSC) army aspirants and introducing a Pre-Staff Course for Air Force and Navy officers. It continued correspondence and hybrid-mode programmes for competitive and promotion exams (Part B and Part D) and was designated a node of excellence by Army Training Command of the Indian Army for conducting command pre-staff courses and precis writing. Training over 1,500 officers, with 75 per cent achieving competitive vacancies and DSSC merit list positions, the Centre maintained its high standards of success.

The USI Annual UN Forum 2024, held in collaboration with International Committee of the Red Cross and Centre for United Nations Peacekeeping (CUNPK), focused on 'Changing Character of Conflicts: Challenges to Peace Operations and International Humanitarian Law'. Key discussions included civilian and peacekeeper protection, climate change impacts, and women's roles in UN operations. Earlier in May, a seminar addressed civilian protection in modern conflicts. Dec featured lectures by the Ambassadors of Brazil and the European Union on strategic partnerships and a Japanese roundtable on defence cooperation. With CUNPK now a part of the Indian Army, USI has shifted focus to UN peacekeeping policies and was nominated to the Advisory Committee of the Challenges Forum, reinforcing its role in global dialogue and partnerships.

The Editorial Section of the USI upheld its tradition of excellence with notable achievements, including the continued success of the USI Journal, established in 1871, and the release of the USI Strategic Year Book 2024 and the USI-Army War College joint publication on 'India's Strategic Thought and Multi-domain Warfare,' launched by Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan. This year's outputs featured five monographs and eight occasional papers. Collaboration with the Eastern Air Command resulted in four articles published across two editions of the journal, and the USI significantly expanded its digital presence. The Editorial Section has also managed the social media handles of USI and has created YouTube videos on strategic issues, including the Global Heatmap, a weekly roundup of current affairs. Additionally, the Section hosted the second space domain course for Air Force officers and the USI Gold Medal Essay Competition on non-contact and non-kinetic warfare, with preparations underway for the inaugural USI-Chief of Air Staff Essay Competition in 2025. These efforts highlight the Section's commitment to advancing military scholarship and strategic discourse.

The USI Administration Section significantly enhanced operations and infrastructure in 2024. Key achievements included digitising accounts with the Tally system, introducing a rent-free Point of Sale system for convenient transactions, and securing a 30-year extension of the land lease, along with a 50 per cent reduction in property tax by reclassifying the property from commercial to private. Infrastructure upgrades featured new audio/video equipment, seminar room furniture, reverse osmosis systems, a water motor, and expanded library office space for scholars. Fire safety was improved with Auto Fire Balls. These initiatives underscore the Section's commitment to efficiency and improved facilities for members and staff.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the USI Council for their invaluable guidance and steadfast support during this transformative phase. I also thank our esteemed members and contributors who actively participated in various events and enriched our publications, including the USI Journal and the Strategic Year Book. I encourage everyone to continue supporting USI's initiatives, engage enthusiastically in events, and contribute to our literary pursuits.

I am deeply grateful to each member of the USI family for their exceptional work on both the academic and administrative fronts this past year. Their dedication, hard work, and commitment have greatly enhanced the Institution's reputation and advanced our shared mission of knowledge and excellence. My thanks also go to the USI support staff for their reliable efforts, ensuring smooth operations throughout the year.

As I conclude the Director General's page for 2024, I would like to acknowledge Residency Resorts for maintaining clean and comfortable accommodations, as well as high-class catering at the USI premises.

Looking forward, the coming year holds great promise for the USI. We stand ready for further innovation, impactful research, and significant contributions in the fields of literature and strategy. May 2025 bring fresh perspectives, inspiring achievements, and renewed purpose. Let us embrace every opportunity and together, make this a year of remarkable accomplishments, elevating the USI to new heights.

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

With best wishes,

Jai Hind

Major General BK Sharma, AVSM, SM** (Retd)