

Editorial

The penultimate issue of the *Journal of Defence Studies* in 2018 (October-December) includes three incisive articles on United Nations peacekeeping operations (UNPKO); the status of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces (SDF) since their reorganisation in 2007, and their future capabilities; and the form of the emerging Indian Ocean maritime security architecture under the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). We also carry a timely, detailed assessment of the latest Japanese Defence White Paper in a commentary piece. Rounding off the issue are four book reviews.

In 'United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Causes for Failure and Continuing Relevance', A.K. Bardalai notes that the first UNPKO—United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) was set up in 1948. However, seven decades after its deployment, the UN is unable to boast of many successes and the continued relevance of UN PKOs has thus come under criticism. Bardalai opines that in order to determine whether the PKOs are still relevant, it is necessary to obtain a clear understanding of the reasons/factors for their successes and failures, and thereafter assess their performance. Based on the author's personal experience of peacekeeping and prior research, the article seeks to highlight a few factors that have an overriding influence on the outcome of a PKO. It also attempts to provide a perspective on the relevance of the PKO in context of the challenges they face regarding planning, deployment and execution of such operations.

Bardalai finds that the success of a PKO also depends on coherence between the mandate, strategies, plans, programme initiatives, structures, processes and networks. His assessment is that there is a significant gap between what is professed conceptually vis-à-vis a PKO and how it is interpreted during its implementation. As with modern militaries, peacekeeping too requires a conceptual shift in restructuring the force, relying more on technology and rapid response capability rather than heavy footprints.

In 'Emerging Contours of Maritime Security Architecture under the Belt and Road Initiative [BRI]', Abhay Kumar Singh discusses how

the revival of the centuries-old 'Silk Road at Sea' into a 21st Century Maritime Silk Road (MSR) is an integral part of China's ambitious BRI. The most recent Chinese White Paper on the 'vision for enhancing maritime cooperation' broadly confirms this perception, since it considers maritime security assurance as the lynchpin of MSR initiatives. As its trade and overseas economic interests have been constantly growing, Beijing's strategic concern about protection of these interests has magnified. In this article, Singh argues that through the assurance of maritime security under a cooperative framework as an 'international public good', China, via the expansion of its maritime influence in the IOR, aims to play a proactive role in shaping the maritime strategic environment.

The article also analyses how the Indian Ocean's geographic profile, coupled with the challenges of limited access thorough choke points, has been a constant source of strategic insecurity for Beijing. China therefore sees it as a strategic necessity to establish bases and a cooperative network for support of deployed forces. Singh suggests that beyond the euphemistic embellishment about the collaborative approach for reinvigorating the regional and global maritime economies, the underlying strategic imperatives of ensuring security of China's expanding maritime interests remain unambiguous.

Kishore Kumar Khera's contribution— 'Japan's Self-Defense Forces: A Decade After Reorganisation'— is the first of two pieces in the issue focussing on Japan. It takes a look at how Tokyo banks heavily on the security alliance with the United States (US) to ensure availability of requisite military capability in the region. As China's economic and military capabilities have grown in the last two decades the gap with the US has reduced, in turn leading to a decrease in the latter's deterrence power owing to the diminishing differential, especially with respect to Beijing. China would probably take a few more decades to match or surpass the US' military capacity and capability; however, it can stretch American military might in the East Asian region rather thin in the coming decade. Thus, Japan has to develop its Self-Defense Forces' (SDF) capabilities under these conditions so as to ensure that it, along with the US, its alliance partner, is able to meet the growing challenges to its national security.

In 2007, in a major shift in security policy, Japan's Parliament approved the upgradation of the Defense Agency/SDF to a full-fledged ministry. However, the changes in the SDF, especially in its doctrine and roles, have been gradual. While the SDF has had negligible constraints,

technologically and financially, the author finds that it has not focused on the requisite capability development. Tokyo thus needs to develop capabilities that would ‘deter’, rather than merely defend. And until the SDF graduates to having an offensive capability that can deter capably, the US will continue to be a key player in Japan’s security milieu.

Linking up to Khera’s article, Titli Basu’s commentary—‘Defending Japan: Reviewing the 2018 Defence White Paper’—is a timely and incisive analysis of the latest Japanese Defense White Paper. She sets her analysis in the context of the geopolitics of East Asia, which hosts nuclear powers, three out of the top 10 nations in terms of military expenditure, contested territorial claims and active geo-political hotspots, Cold War structures, emotive history, intensifying nationalism, and differing political systems. Tokyo is thus navigating a complex and changing regional security environment. Therefore, as the region is witnessing a shifting balance of power, Japan too is revisiting its policy options and adapting accordingly against the backdrop of dramatic changes unfolding in the regional security, economic, and technological environments. Japan continues to invest in the decades-old security alliance with the US and, simultaneously, upgrading its own defence preparedness marking a departure in its post-war security policy under Shinzo Abe. As President Trump expects Japan to assume larger responsibilities within the alliance framework, the fundamental challenge before Abe is to define in clear terms the scope and limits of his concept of Proactive Contribution to Peace.

The issue carries four book reviews on contemporary titles which would be of interest to our readers. Ghanshyam Katoch reviews *The People Next Door: The Curious History of India’s Relations with Pakistan*; Alok Deb reviews *Approach to Battle: Training the Indian Army During the Second World War*; Shrabana Barua reviews *How India Sees the World: Kautilya to the 21st Century*; and Vivek Mishra reviews *The Soul of Armies: Counterinsurgency Doctrine and Military Culture in the US and UK*.

