

## EDITOR'S NOTE

It gives me immense pleasure to share my thoughts and vision with my readers as I pen down my first editor's note for *Defence and Diplomacy (D&D)* as Director General, Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS).

The Indian Air Force (IAF) took a leap of faith to encourage critical thinking on aerospace power, national security and strategy, international theory, leadership, contemporary and irregular warfare amongst its officers. Towards this endeavour, a flagship course acronymed WASP or Warfare and Aerospace Strategy Programme was started at the College of Air Warfare in 2022. This fifteen-week programme that involves intensive daily reading of 250-300 pages, seminar discussions and written essays culminating in a capstone seminar is now being run concurrently at CAPS from this year. There exists a need to separate training from Professional Military Education (PME) and this programme aims to bridge this gap.

The Defence Research and Development Organisation or DRDO, which has in the past done seminal work towards indigenous research and development and manufacturing in collaboration with the public sector, has come under increasing pressure to deliver as India still remains one of the largest importers of defence equipment. The Vijay Raghavan Committee constituted last year to look at reforms in the organisation and role of the DRDO submitted its report to the government late last year. The committee has recommended that DRDO should focus on high end futuristic technology by associating academic institutions and start-ups with greater privatisation from the private sector. It has also recommended that the organisation be brought under the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), supported by a Defence Technology Council which would have the National

Security Advisor (NSA), and Raksha Mantri (RM), representatives of the academia and industry as its members. The jury is out for the nation to wait and see how far the recommendations of the committee will be accepted and implemented.

The IAF has emerged as a trustworthy first responder to any humanitarian or disaster relief requirement across the globe. With its strategic airlift capability, the men in blue have provided succour to not only the diaspora abroad but also people from other regions ravaged by crises and disasters in the true tradition of recognising the world as being 'one family' or *Vasudev Kutumbhakam*. International recognition for the IAF in this domain has come only because of the relentless training and professionalism of its personnel who strive for excellence in their mission.

Quantum technology is turning out to be a game-changer and its employment in computing, communications, cryptography and various other fields will not only have implications on national security but also lead to economic growth, scientific discovery and aid in addressing societal challenges. As these technologies mature and develop, international collaboration will be required to address issues related to data privacy, governance, regulation and ethical issues in the policy domain. The Indian government, having realised the importance of this technology had earmarked Rs 6,000 crore last year to be spent by 2030-31 and established the National Mission on Quantum Technologies and Applications with an aim to seed, nurture and scale up scientific and industrial Research and Development (R&D) to create a vibrant and innovative ecosystem in quantum technology.

The employment of drones in warfare marked a seminal shift ever since the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia. The use of drones by the Houthi rebels to disrupt international shipping in the Red Sea region following the Israel-Hamas conflict has seen the active involvement of Iran which has become a major supplier of drones. Drones based on Iranian designs are being increasingly used by Sudan and Syria, and the Russians in the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict. The Shahed -136, a Kamikaze drone with the warhead on its nose, designed to loiter over a target unless instructed to attack, is modelled on the Israeli Harpy design.

Iran has also manufactured the Karrar combat drone, which is jet propelled and can carry various weapons, including air-to-air missiles. These drones, designed to bolster Iran's air defence capabilities, have security implications in the fragile West Asian region.

In August 2024, it is going to be three years since the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan. The country has since then been ruled by the Taliban which has not been recognised and its uneasy truce with Pakistan has led to a deteriorating security situation in the region. Early this year, the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) unveiled its new administrative framework that mirrors the Afghanistan Taliban. Following a meeting convened by its leadership council, the TTP demoted two Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (JuA) leaders from their ascribed positions. This led to an increase in the friction and schisms between the two factions that had been simmering for a while. The TTP, at the same time, recognises the usefulness of the JuA, recognising its shared objectives with the organisation of overthrowing the Pakistan Army and implementing the *Sharia*. These developments need to be watched as they could play a crucial role in the stability of Pakistan and the region.

Australia came out with its National Defence Strategy in April 2024 that outlines the country's strategic decisions and roadmap in view of the current geopolitical scenario. While the US-Australia relationship remains critical to Australia's national security, the AUKUS (Australia, United Kingdom, United States) collaboration looks at building the capabilities of the Australian defence forces in the maritime domain. In recent years, there has been an incremental desire to enhance and deepen the defence collaboration between India and Australia with the 2+2 dialogue between the defence and foreign ministers of the two countries commencing in September 2021. India and Australia need to collectively address security challenges in the Indo-Pacific region through its Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) alliance as well as mutually to ensure peace and stability.

China has been pursuing cognitive warfare as a part of its national strategy to not only undermine democracies but also fracture societies by weaponising information. China, with a history of long-term planning and its strategy of winning without fighting, has used the cyber domain for targeted attacks on Indian government

organisations and companies. India needs to be wary of this and develop appropriate response strategies that go beyond banning Chinese apps.

This edition of *D&D* covers a crucial and wide range of national security issues. Focussed research articles by CAPS scholars, academia, and serving officers of the Indian armed forces seek to add value to the existing discourse on these subjects that impinge on India's national security. The journal also includes a Book Review on *Why Bharat Matters* authored by India's Minister for External Affairs Dr S Jaishankar, a practitioner turned politician, who has been instrumental in enlarging the country's presence at the global high table. The book gives deep and interesting insights into India's foreign policy. Candid and constructive feedback would be welcome from the readers of this journal and we look forward to the same with the intention of improving upon our discourse.

Happy reading !



Air Vice Marshal **Anil Golani**  
Director General  
Centre for Air Power Studies