

Editorial

2015 is turning out to be a watershed year in the annals of our nation's history, leaving its mark on Singaporeans from all walks of life. As we celebrate the Golden Jubilee of our independence as well as 50 years of the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) since its inception, we came together to mourn the passing of our founding Prime Minister, Mr Lee Kuan Yew on 23rd March 2015. And as we reflect on the past with pride and continue to look to the future with hope, we must never forget the achievements of our founding generation who has put Singapore on a firm path of progress as an independent and sovereign country, with a competent armed force, well able to defend our nation against potential threats and challenges. As our Minister of Defence, Dr Ng Eng Hen had said at the Committee of Supply Debate in March 2015, it was after decades of steady investment in our defence capabilities that the SAF is today a strong and capable military that can be counted on to defend Singapore's interests and sovereignty. Dr Ng had added that "whether through exercises or real operations, the SAF has shown that it can move decisively as one integrated professional force and succeed in the missions and tasks assigned."¹ In truth, there is a rapidly changing landscape of new external security threats that the SAF will have to respond and counteract. These include cyber threats, hybrid warfare as well as the danger of the amplification of disinformation due to social media.

In this issue, we present relevant topics ranging from a discussion on military intelligence to full-spectrum operations to the use of pre-emptive force as well as the strategic merits of airpower. Finally, we are also featuring a comparison of the philosophies of the master war strategists, Clausewitz and Sun Tzu.

In 'Globalisation and Its Impact on Military Intelligence', CPT (NS) Fu Wen Hao, Kelvin states that global intelligence communities are wrestling with the tidal changes that are happening around the world and coming to terms with the rapid pace of change that has come to characterise the 21st century. These changes, CPT (NS) Fu feels have been exacerbated by globalisation, which has caused tremendous changes in the global, political, social, cultural and security

landscape. According to CPT (NS) Fu, the revolution in military affairs, which was built on information technology and communication revolution, has heralded a dramatic shift in the way militaries conduct warfare, paving the way for the integration of complex command and control systems and the fusion of various types of firepower into highly coordinated military operations. In his essay, CPT (NS) Fu argues that globalisation has led to greater intensification of the interactions among people, ideas, economies, governments and nations which greatly redefine the way militaries must realign their strategy.

The essay, 'Illuminating Human Biases in the Intelligence Cycle' is written by CPT Ng Zhaohong, Jeffrey who assesses the impact of human biases and makes recommendations on how to eliminate such biases, thereby enhancing Singapore's military intelligence in the process. CPT Ng highlights that in today's day and age of increasing modernity, when technology on all fronts such as entertainment gadgets and military equipment are undergoing constant cycles of improvement and upgrading, it is unsurprising that people's dependency on such technology will only increase further. He adds that this is particularly true when it comes to quality military intelligence as accurate and reliable assessments of potential threats compensate for the lack of strategic depth and provide much-needed time and space to safeguard and protect the country's sovereignty. As a result of this, the SAF has continued to invest substantially in capability development, force structuring and process refinements to sharpen our intelligence edge.

MAJ Benson Chian's essay is entitled, 'Should the SAF Maintain its Existing Focus on Full-Spectrum Dominance or Should the Organisation Return to its Core Deterrence and War Fighting Mission.' In his essay, MAJ Chian argues that it is Singapore's geographical and population limitations that have resulted in the SAF developing its military into an all-encompassing, multi-faceted defence force capable of fulfilling Singapore's defence policy of *diplomacy and deterrence*. MAJ Chian emphasises that while this policy has indeed presided over a successful period of peace and harmony within and beyond Singapore, the constant evolution of threats, both conventional

and unconventional, has led to a debate on whether Singapore should continue to diversify its military to arm it with capabilities to counter a multitude of threats, such as cyberwars and terrorism, or to return to its roots of core deterrence and war-fighting mission. Certainly, major conflicts like the latest Arab-Israeli conflict and the conflict between Russia and Ukraine have reminded countries around the world of the need to have a robust and resilient military that is well-equipped in war-fighting missions to protect their sovereignty. In the light of both conventional and unconventional threats that have occurred in recent years, MAJ Chian examines whether, for the SAF, building a diversified and multi-dimensional military is a more feasible and logical choice or, it should focus on its core deterrence and war-fighting mission.

In his essay, 'The Use of Pre-Emptive Force', COL Gaurav Keerthi highlights that the use of anticipatory military actions or pre-emptive forces by states in the name of self-defence has long been a controversial decision that has elicited much critical debate. He explains that anticipatory attacks refer to any form of self-defence that is exercised before the enemy is able to impact you. Considering the distinction between preventive and pre-emptive force, COL Keerthi distinguishes between small and large states in the use of pre-emptive force in self-defence. He argues that the use of pre-emptive force is more justifiable for small states.

LTC Tan Kian Seng in his essay, 'The Strategic Merits of Airpower' critically unpacks Mark Clodfelter's arguments on the strategic merits of airpower. LTC Tan contends that it is not accurate to say that the modern vision of airpower centres only on the destructiveness of its arsenal and equipment and not on that weaponry's efficacy as a political instrument. He explains that until the introduction of the air dimension in the early 1900s, wars had been primarily fought either on land or sea. Air battle has since offered a third dimension in warfighting, without the need to deploy

a huge force, unlike the typical conventional land or sea battles. In LTC Tan's view, air power is unique in its ability to achieve the strategic objectives in a speedy and precise manner. In his essay, LTC Tan also briefly discusses the possibility of land and sea power replacing airpower.

The final essay, 'A Study of Sun Tzu's *Art of War* and Clausewitz's *On War*' is by LTC Ong Cher Howe. According to LTC Ong, Sun Tzu and Clausewitz are both known to be the most recognised and proficient writers on the subject of war and strategies. Although they wrote in different times and were from different backgrounds, their philosophies on war and strategy have still proven to be extremely helpful and effective in current times. In his essay, LTC Ong compares both Sun Tzu and Clausewitz's famous texts written on the subject of war: *Art of War* and *On War*, and aims to prove how both works are not extremely different even when they were written in a divergent, historical, cultural and technological context. Instead, what both Sun Tzu and Clausewitz tried to express were not diametrically opposed. Hence, any contradiction that arose, were from their own slightly unique points of analysis. LTC Ong also explained that while both of them defined war as means to rational policy ends, they were both well aware of the power of moral influence and the paradoxical trinity. His essay also studies how both their works can be applied to today's military applications despite the advanced technology of the modern era.

POINTER would like to take this opportunity to bid a fond farewell to LCP Wu Wenjie and REC Joshua Foo as they leave to pursue their studies. We also say good bye to PTE Zhu Ling kai as he is posted to another unit. With their diligence, positive attitudes and excellent work ethics, they are indeed great assets to POINTER office. We thank them for their contributions and wish them all the very best in their future endeavours.

The POINTER Editorial Team

ENDNOTES

1. http://intranet.defence.gov.sg/miapps/AnnouncementMgr/am_detail.jsp?aid=OA47349