

Editorial

This first issue of *POINTER* for 2012 features the top three winning essays of the Chief of Defense Force Essay Competition 2010/2011. First prize essay “The Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI): Can It Deliver?” by MAJ Adrian Choong examines the shortcomings of the initiative in its role of interdicting the trafficking of weapons of mass destruction at sea. As legal and jurisdictional issues severely curtail the effectiveness of the current framework, MAJ Choong proposes consensus building among the international community to pave the way for universal acceptance of the PSI. Member states should thus establish a good track record of intercepting illegal shipments within their own waters to win over more skeptical or reluctant neighbors. MAJ Ooi Jin-Kai’s “Interpreting Recent Military Modernizations in Southeast Asia,” in second place, analyzes recent military acquisition programs in the region. He concludes that the rapid changes taking place are a natural consequence of growing economic prosperity among Southeast Asian states and in line with long term force modernization trends. However, the implication is that the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) will find it increasingly difficult to retain its qualitative edge in the future as neighboring countries continue to develop and expand their military capabilities. He therefore recommends creating a collective security community with neighboring countries, supplementing Singapore’s conventional military deterrence with diplomacy. In “Forcing Strategic Evolution: The SAF as an Adaptive Organization,” CPT Choy Yong Chong, the third prize winner, tackles the challenge of future warfare. Concluding that uncertainty remains an integral part of warfare and that militaries increasingly face a shifting and ambiguous security landscape, he urges the SAF to adopt a culture of adaptability to prepare itself for any eventuality. Training that more closely replicates operational conditions, a digital knowledge management system that can quickly disseminate the lessons learned, a leadership model that can fulfill the need for both initiative and discipline, a military culture that rewards innovation and feedback, and a modular approach to capability development are identified as key elements of an adaptive SAF.

Indeed, the need for adaptability is greater than ever. The strategic uncertainty that began with the end of the Cold War and the current “War on Terror” continues to challenge defense planning. Faced with shrinking budgets, spiraling platform costs and rising wages, militaries struggle to stay relevant and make the best use of increasingly limited resources. From the high-technology Revolution in Military Affairs to decentralized Fourth-Generation Warfare, all modern warfare theories stress the need to transform military doctrine, structure, equipment and even thinking in order to cope with the demands of the changing battlefield. This issue of *POINTER* features articles relevant to the SAF as an adaptive organization: one that is truly able to transform and reinvent itself for the new century.

The uncertain security landscape is also a concern in “A Ready SAF: A Strategy for Tomorrow” by LTA Lim Guang He, who argues that Singapore should adopt a flexible strategy that can respond to a wide range of challenges but retains the ability to address the most imminent and dangerous threats. He draws lessons from commercial practice to suggest how the SAF may best tailor its limited resources to tackle future missions, emphasizing versatility and efficiency as crucial to this process. He also notes that these elements are part of the envisioned Third Generation SAF and concludes that force transformation is necessary for true force readiness. In “Transformers of the Third Generation SAF,” CPT Phua Chao Rong, Charles examines personnel development. He emphasizes the need for the SAF to win over the hearts and minds of its own personnel, motivating them to contribute willingly to the organization and developing in them the skills and knowledge necessary for transformation. The SAF as an institution must nurture the agents of its Third Generation transformation by encouraging efficient work processes, emphasizing both formal and informal learning, building a culture of innovation and extending opportunities for personal development and contribution to all levels of the organization.

In “Operational Learning: The New Relevancy for Knowledge Management in the SAF,” SLTC Karuna Ramanathan tackles the area of learning in the SAF. In order to develop the fundamental skills of adaptability, rapid learning and operational imagination in SAF leaders, the organization as a whole must become more accepting of constant change, develop deep rather than surface knowledge and anticipate and learn from the challenges it faces. This requires developing a knowledge management system that encourages sharing of information, promoting a systematic initiative to inculcate officers with the skills to gain insights and motivate their subordinates, and broadening organizational learning programs among SAF personnel. In “Takeaways from Business School for the SAF,” COL Frederick Chew identifies several key lessons that the SAF can draw from commercial practice. From organization behavior to human resource and operations management, the best practices of the business world can be adapted to improve efficiency in the military sphere.

Tech Edge article “Identification Friend or Foe (IFF): A Necessity on the Battlefield” by ME5 Calvin Seah and Malini T Deepan deals with the challenges and significance of implementing effective IFF systems. Despite the increasing use of precision weapons, “friendly fire” continues to plague armies. Examining the root causes of fratricide, the authors identify the characteristics of the ideal IFF system and weigh various technological solutions to the problem.

POINTER would like at this point to bid BG Tan Ming Yiak Mark, Commandant, SAFTI MI and our Editorial Board advisor, farewell as he moves on to greater things. We extend our warmest welcome to BG Benedict Lim as he takes over from BG Tan. This issue also sees the departure of two key members of the *POINTER* Editorial Team. Editor Dr Pang Yang Huei has steered the journal through a year of change and we wish him well as he departs for a new career in academia. We also bid farewell to CPL Ng Yi Ming, who will be heading off to university. May he find success in his future endeavors.

The *POINTER* Editorial Team