



Editorial

This issue of *POINTER* features articles dealing with the continued transformation of the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) into a Third Generation fighting force. Given the rapid and sweeping changes involved, it is imperative for the SAF as a whole to be flexible and innovative, a requirement that invariably emphasizes organizational culture and personnel. In “SAF Transformation – Focusing on the People,” ME6 Chia Chee Chen emphasizes the need to manage change and create the capacity to change in an organization through a people-centric approach, linking the various concepts into a transformation framework useful for the SAF. Noting that individuals are the most important agents of transformation, ME6 Chia identifies the key groups of Warrant Officers, Officers and Senior Management in the SAF and recommends different change management approaches for dealing with their expectations effectively and channeling their strengths productively. Advocating systems thinking as the way forward, he then proposes methods in dealing with common impediments to its implementation, including turf wars, difficulties in learning from experience and work-family conflicts.

“High Flyers: Implications of Short Officer Careers in the SAF” by CPT (NS) Toh Weisong notes how the short officer careers in the SAF have cast doubt on the professionalism of its officers, leading to calls for their careers to be extended. He argues that short careers must prevail for now because of unique macro-level factors beyond the SAF’s control, such as social attitudes towards National Service and military careers in general and increasing competition from other employers. Instead, he examines alternative ways in which

professional competency can be built and retained in junior officers given the constraints of such short careers, with particular emphasis on realistic training and the effective inculcation of warfighting skills.

The SAF must also consider its expanding role and responsibilities in an uncertain security landscape, an issue that concerns armed forces around the world and was the topic of the inaugural Goh Keng Swee Command and Staff College (GKS CSC) Seminar 2011. Held at SAFTI Military Institute (SAFTI-MI) from 6-7 October 2011, the GKS CSC Seminar 2011 was entitled “Operations Other Than War in a Coalition Environment: Opportunities and Challenges for Modern Armed Forces” and jointly organized by GKS CSC, the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) and the SAF-NTU Academy (SNA). Thus we are once again sharing our editorial space for this issue, with Professor Ong Weichong and Ms Manaswini Ramkumar providing a short introduction to five essays from this seminar.

OPERATIONS OTHER THAN WAR IN A COALITION ENVIRONMENT – OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR MODERN ARMED FORCES

The role of the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) has evolved from “rising to the defence of Singapore” in the First Generation years of the 1960s to the “full-spectrum force” of today. In peacetime, the Third Generation SAF is expected to respond flexibly to the spectrum of Operations Other Than War (OOTW) contingences ranging from Peace Support Operations (PSO) to Humanitarian and Disaster Relief (HADR). The evolution of the



SAF from First Generation to Third is very much intertwined with Singapore's growth as a nation-state and a responsible member of the international community. The expanded role and capabilities of the SAF thus can be best explained within the context of a larger global development—one that calls upon national armed forces to play a role beyond that of homeland defence. Indeed, in today's security environment, national security is inextricably linked to regional and global security. It is this correlation between national, regional and global security that underscores the rise in collaboration and cooperation between military forces worldwide—through multilateral exercises, joint training, International Military Education and Training (IMET) and coalition operations. In short, collaboration between armed forces is essential to achieving security and stability both at home and in the neighbourhood.

In this issue of *POINTER*, readers are provided with an assessment of the various opportunities and challenges faced by modern armed forces in OOTW—in a coalition environment. The areas of focus are namely: International Criminal Law (ICL), stability operations, interoperability, peacekeeping and training. A common element that can be found in all five papers is the blurring of roles and functions between the armed forces and civil agencies. Indeed, the duties of the 21st century soldier are multidisciplinary, with each soldier expected to be a practitioner of defense diplomacy, development economics, civil engineering and peacemaking.

The article by Mr Alvin Tan explains the role of small states in upholding and shaping ICL in accordance with local value systems and regional notions of justice. Tan begins his analysis by stating that philosophical underpinnings of justice differ from region to region, and in South East Asia they are markedly different from Western legal traditions that underscore the international criminal justice system. To make

international criminal law more international and to increase its applicability, he explains the need to focus on cultural specificities and to accommodate cultural nuances when using ICL to mediate disputes between nation-states. Being an overwhelming undertaking for any individual state, small states can provide a regional mechanism for dispute mediation and resolution, thereby contributing towards regional security and stability, a function that could be undertaken by the South East Asian regional body, ASEAN.

The article by Dr Thomas Hammes deals with the future of stability operations. The complex execution of stability operations notwithstanding, Hammes observes that the academic community is not unified even in the definition of the concept and its scope. While acknowledging this stark reality, he goes on to explain that stability operations are undertaken as a necessity by the great powers, owing to five drivers—energy supply, mass migration, critical resources, humanitarian impulse and domestic politics. These drivers result in making stability operations a form of hybrid warfare, in which the expertise brought by small nation participation is of immense value and assistance in devising creative solutions. Hammes concludes the article by cautioning future undertakers of stability operations to plan with the mindset of achievable rather than aspirational goals.

The essay on the issue of interoperability is authored by CDRE Richard Menhinick. Drawing on his first-hand experience of working alongside naval task forces as part of the Combined Maritime Force, Menhinick's paper provides insight into the necessity of interoperability at the strategic, operational and tactical levels, in addition to technological interoperability. His experience in working with the naval forces of small nations highlights the requirement of the softer aspects of interoperability during coalition missions—trust, mutual respect, cultural understanding, patience and courtesy.



These values are crucial for mission effectiveness from the strategic command level down to the tactical level. Menhinick also emphasizes the role of education and international exchange courses in promoting cultural understanding and interpersonal relationships, thereby fostering personnel interoperability during missions.

BG Tan Huck Gim, who served as Commander, United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor (UNMISET), focuses on the role played by Fijian peacekeepers in UNMISET as part of the peacekeeping force that involved the participation of 26 nations. Similar to CDRE Menhinick's views on mutual understanding between military personnel, BG Tan comments on the level of professionalism and respect displayed by each national force, which ultimately ensured maximum integration of efforts. His article describes the contribution of the Fijian peacekeepers, who displayed an exemplary level of force integration as part of the larger coalition effort to stabilize East Timor. The accomplishments of a small troop-contributing nation such as Fiji is illustrative of the value of small-nation involvement.

The final article by Professor Cynthia Watson addresses the changing role of the US military's focus from traditional combat operations to Stability, Security, Reconstruction and Transition Operations (SSRTO) involvement. She states that in the post-Cold War era, the American military began to be used as a tool of statecraft to coerce belligerent governments to accept American terms and conditions that were meant to protect its national interests. This shift in the military's role leads to the question—should armed forces abandon training for traditional combat and instead focus on strengthening training for SSRTOs? In her conclusion, Watson calls for simultaneous training for both combat

and SSRTO functions—but taking into account of changing regional security dynamics and the demands placed on armed forces.

In an era where security threats no longer reside within the confines of national borders, coalition operations have become the norm rather than the exception. Moreover, the armed forces of small states such as Singapore are taking on a greater if not more visible role in coalition missions that have grown in terms of scope, scale, function and complexity. Given the impetus for a more multilateral approach to conflict resolution and advancement of regional and global order, the armed forces of small states will increasingly be called upon to take on greater responsibilities. Rather than provide a definitive roadmap, this selection of essays hopes to impress upon the reader the immense challenges as well as opportunities for modern armed forces to maintain their relevance in an age where the realities of conflict extend beyond the pristine battlefields dominated by the military.

**The *POINTER* Editorial Team &
GKS CSC Seminar 2012 Organizers**