

Editorial

We mark the end of 2014 with the final issue of the year, *POINTER*, Vol 40, No. 4. As we wind down to the end of the year, we reflect on the many and varied events which have taken place, both globally and closer back home and the impact that they have. Examples are the deaths brought about by the Ebola virus epidemic, the on-going unrest from the conflicts caused by the establishment of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (also known as the ISIS or ISIL), the annexation of Crimea, and the downing of Malaysian Airlines Flight 17 in Ukraine, just to name a few. All these drive home the important message that Singapore should not take its peace and security for granted but continue to strive to develop and grow to remain strong and independent. As we look forward to our 50th anniversary next year, we can celebrate how far Singapore has come and the achievements we have attained as a people. At the same time, we can also look forward and ahead to what we should change and adapt for a better future.

In this issue, we present three articles on war, in different perspectives—the first with a frame of reference from the Clausewitzian point of view. The second is a discourse on the means of war and explores why pursuing wars with limitless violence is impractical. Closer home, the third essay looks at the counter-insurgency (COIN) situation during the Malayan Emergency which took place from 1948 to 1960.

On a more positive side, we also want to provide some coverage on technology, its significance and impact. At the *Smart Nation* Launch on 24th November 2014, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said, “..... our vision is for Singapore to be a Smart Nation – A nation where people live meaningful and fulfilled lives, enabled seamlessly by technology, offering exciting opportunities for all.”¹ In this issue, we will feature an article that discusses the pros and cons of technology from a military angle. Another essay on the challenges faced by a military research analyst as he filters out ambiguous information while making sense of it within a limited timeframe, will also be featured. Our final article elaborates on the concept of the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness

(CSF) programme developed by the United States of America (US) Army, showcasing its benefits with the use of vivid examples.

In the article, *Clausewitz’s views on the Transformation of War, Politics and Society—An Analysis of the Wars in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, MAJ Foo Kong Pin, Gilbert states that modern day theories on war fighting focuses on ideas that technology and societal changes would determine the battling capacities of the military and the war itself. However, he highlights that according to Clausewitz, the changes in war are less a function of technology or shifts in ideas and more a result of the involvement of society in the conduct of war. This article explores Clausewitz’s claim that war did not change much due to inventions or innovations in technology and strategies, but rather due to the transformation of society. This article aims to establish that the transformation of society is time-dependent, has a psychological basis and is central to ‘inventions or new departures in ideas’ and that these would take hold first, before they make any significant impact on the manifestations in war.

The article, *Can Wars ever be Pursued with Limitless Violence* is by MAJ Leonard Wong. In this article, MAJ Wong focuses on the means of war and addresses why pursuing wars with limitless violence is impractical, with the support of Clausewitzian concepts. This article also looks at the possibility of a limitless war occurring in the future given the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) and nuclear weapons. MAJ Wong then elaborates on the forces that prevent the ‘means’ of war in meeting Clausewitz’s ideals—the dimensions of strategy and the remarkable ‘trinity’. In conclusion, MAJ Wong discusses the future of wars and expresses the view that even the RMA will not eliminate friction and fog although it may reduce its prevalence. In his opinion, the true nature of war is characterised by uncertainty and the presence of various elements that work to prevent wars from ever being pursued with limitless violence.

In *The Limits of Malayan Emergency as the Universal Counter-Insurgency Paradigm*, MAJ Soh Yen

Chu, Elizabeth takes a critical look at the principles and policies put forth by the British Administration during the Malayan Emergency (1948-1960), particularly with regards to its counter-insurgency (COIN) strategies. According to MAJ Soh, the optimal utilisation of a military force, the harnessing of a nation-state national unity and proper leadership techniques via command and control are key learning points to be taken away from the crisis. However, she cautions that it is vital to note that each COIN situation is unique and depending on the scenario, the learning points need to be applied with some degree of flexibility. MAJ Chu adds that each situation can be unique, based on the cultural dynamics and current ideologies pertinent in the local population. As such, each situation requires appropriate management, taking into consideration the key factors that contribute to the situation at hand whilst also keeping in mind past achievements and failures.

The article *Technology—Boon or Bane* is jointly written by ME5 Seah Ser Thong, Calvin, ME4 Yap Chun Hong, Kelvin and Ms Malini Deepan. According to the authors, the utility of technology in the military context has grown at a ubiquitous rate, from raw firepower to warfare support systems and logistic environments. The rapid development of technology has allowed the military to rapidly expand its capabilities over the past half a decade. As a result, the military has become increasingly reliant on technology and the authors feel that there is a need for sufficient and effective management structures to prevent an emergency in the event that technology fails. The authors conclude with the observation that technology is a double edged sword—it can be a formidable life-saving mechanism in times of crisis or, a possible, perilous shortcoming if mismanaged or not used to its fullest advantage.

The fifth article, “*Combating the Cognitive Trap of Mirror-Imaging: Pitfalls and Possibilities for the Intelligence Officer*” by 2LT Philip Chan explores the significance of intelligence in the military, from decision-making to execution. 2LT

Chan emphasises that the intelligence officer or analyst constantly faces the challenge of filtering out ambiguous and incomplete information while making sense of it within a limited timeframe. Under these circumstances, 2LT Chan highlights that mental strategies such as mirror-imaging are used to accurately understand and predict an adversary’s intent and possible courses of action. In this article, 2LT Chan addresses how mirror-imaging functions as a mental heuristic and discusses how it can lead to both success and failure in handling intelligence. In his article, 2LT Chan also provides examples of intelligence failures due to mirror-imaging and suggests adopting the Analysis of Competing Hypotheses (ACH) approach which arguably mitigates the disadvantage of mirror-imaging.

In the article *The US Army’s CSF Programme: Lessons for the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF)*, CPT Chen Jingkai elaborates on the concept of the CSF programme developed by the US Army, showcasing its benefits with the use of examples that relate to the SAF. CPT Chen feels that CSF, a training system for resilience that taps on psychological science, may be better than traditional psychological programmes for post-trauma sufferers. He concludes that through the adaptive adoption of the relevant aspects of the programme, the SAF may benefit from the CSF as it helps the organisation attain operational readiness.

POINTER would like at this point to bid BG Benedict Lim, Commandant, SAFTI MI and our Editorial Board Advisor, farewell as he moves on to head the MINDEF Communications Organisation. We extend our warmest welcome to RADM Giam Hock Koon as he takes over from BG Lim.

We are also pleased to announce that the Chief of Defence Force Essay Competition 2014/2015 is now open for participation. We would like to invite all our readers to take part in the competition. Details can be found on the POINTER website at <http://www.mindef.gov.sg/safti/pointer>.

Finally, we would like to wish all our readers a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! Happy Holidays!

The POINTER Editorial Team

ENDNOTES

1. Extracted from Transcript of Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong’s Speech at the *Smart Nation* Launch on 24th November 2014.