

Editorial

POINTER Vol 48, No. 1 is a compilation of essays from students of our local Command and Staff Course (CSC) of the Goh Keng Swee Command and Staff College (GKS CSC) as well as from two National Servicemen.

The first of the essays, 'Non-Offensive Defence As A Strategy For National Defence' is written by LTC Phang Chun Chieh. In this essay, LTC Phang argues that, against conventional state-based threats, Non Offensive Defence (NOD) is a viable national security strategy if the state has a defensible geography, a benign geopolitical neighbourhood, and low geostrategic value. Against terror, LTC Phang argues that the stove-piped nature of military NOD has limited effectiveness and that it is useful only as part of a larger umbrella of counterterrorism (CT) strategies. He first discusses the concept of conventional NOD and illustrates its permissive conditions using New Zealand and Singapore as examples, before presenting the applications and limitations of NOD as a CT strategy.

MAJ Edward Khoo Chun Kiat wrote the next essay, 'The Centre Of Gravity Concept in Clausewitz's *On War*'. In this essay, MAJ Khoo seeks to illustrate that even though the concept of centre of gravity (COG) may be abstract, it can still be of use to military planners. He highlighted various problems with the concept such as subjectivity and mistranslation which could lead to confusion and a lack of utility. An example of this he adds, is the lack of a common definition of the COG, as well as the different conclusions which can be derived from the multitude of conflicting methodologies that have arisen even in the same scenario. However, MAJ Khoo also explains that the COG can still be a useful concept as it helps planners understand increasingly complex operating environments by revealing relations within the multiple systems, distinguishing between the important and the peripheral. He feels therefore, that the COG enables planners to focus actions on what are important and enhances efficiency.

The third essay, 'Can A Small State Challenge A Much Larger State Or A Collection Of Enemy States?' is written by ME5 Lim Sher Hern. Here, ME5 Lim discusses how, despite the odds stacked against them, small states can still employ an effective conventional

deterrence strategy. He first examines the concept of deterrence before exploring the issue of deterrence through military superiority. He then analyses other approaches to deterrence, such as total defence and alliance. ME5 Lim also highlights that it is in the interests of small states to pursue some form of deterrence against potential adversaries because an armed conflict can threaten their very existence. However, he concludes that deterrence is not a permanent solution to security problems. It is a dynamic posture that has to be maintained to ensure that the state does not pay a heavy price for the devastation of war. In his opinion, successful deterrence is simply an extension of time to address the underlying geopolitical issues.

In the following essay, 'Cyber Power – An Experimental Framework', MAJ Alex Hoh Li Wei highlights that Cyber is the fifth domain after Air, Land, Sea and Space. In his opinion, cyber is evolving and contested by economic, security and civil interests. He stresses that dynamism in cyber must be matched with dexterity in policy and decision-making. However, many leaders remained unfamiliar with this domain. Consequently, responses may fail to address root-causes, exacerbate volatility, generating unexpected emergences in the complex and interconnected cyber domain. In this essay, MAJ Hoh suggests a framework for cyber power. He exemplifies the application of this framework to operationalise threat-intelligence. He then explores gaps across issues relating to threat appreciation in cyberspace. Changes happen daily in the cyber domain and the framework is not definitive.

LTA(NS) John Yap and LTA(NS) Ryan Lee wrote the final essay, 'Applying The Jus Ad Bellum Framework To Cyberspace'. In this essay, LTA(NS) Yap & LTA(NS) Lee outline and explore the challenges involved in the application of the *jus ad bellum* framework to cyberspace. In the essay, the authors sought to address three central issues. First, how norms of international law developed in a pre-cyber age, govern cyberspace. Then, they examined when cyber operations would rise to the level of cyber warfare. Thirdly, they explored when cyber operations would trigger the victim state's right to self-defence and what problems would impede the exercise of that right.