

Editorial

We are excited to present, under the new rebranded POINTER, the first compilation of essays from students of the various courses from the schools in SAFTI Military Institute – the Command and Staff Course (CSC) from the Goh Keng Swee Command and Staff College (GKS CSC) and the Joint Senior Leadership Course (JSLC) from the SAF Warrant Officer School (SAFWOS) in the Specialist and Warrant Officer Institute (SWI). It is hoped that the new POINTER will provide an avenue for SAF Officers to research, reflect, express and share professional thoughts and ideas as well as enhance their critical thinking and writing skills.

The essays from GKS CSC are taken from two of the modules under the CSC, Analysis of Defence and Security Policies (ADSP) and the Evolution of Strategic Thought (EST). Both these modules are conducted by the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) under the Nanyang Technological University (NTU). For the essay from JSLC which is under SAFWOS, the module is Military Studies and Geo-Political Studies (MSGP) and it is also conducted by RSIS.

The first of the CSC essays, ‘The Relationship Between Arms Dynamics and the Security Dilemma – An Analysis’ is written by MAJ Sean Paul Magness. In this essay, MAJ Magness argues that despite the defence spending increases, the situation in Southeast Asia does not constitute an arms race due to the lack of adversarial relationships exemplified in the Treaty of Amity and Co-operation. MAJ Magness highlights that while all Southeast Asian states maintain normal diplomatic relations and trade with each other and exhibit a constructivist approach to political, economic and security co-operation as seen in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum (ARF), the perception that there is an arms race remains. In this essay, he will use the example of Singapore and Malaysia to examine these perceptions and explain why there is no arms race.

The next CSC essay, ‘Air, Land or Maritime Strategy – Which is More Crucial in the Battlefield?’ is written by MAJ Michael Lui Peiwen. Citing various historical events, MAJ Lui argues that maritime and air strategies should always be assessed and formulated in terms of their impact on land strategy. In the first half of the essay, he discusses how maritime strategy has to be

developed and evaluated in terms of its impact on land strategy. In the second half of the essay, he analyses and rebuts the belief that air strategy can be formulated and assessed on its own merits as the decisive element in war, independent of its impact on land strategy. The writings of several theorists as well as the battles and campaigns of the 20th Century, particularly from World War Two (WWII), were deliberated. Focusing the scope of his essay within the context of non-nuclear, conventional war between states in the 20th century, MAJ Lui concludes that air and maritime strategies must always be assessed and formulated in terms of their impact on land strategy.

MAJ Paul Lye Chee Wei wrote the CSC essay, ‘The Nature of War – Unchanging in the Face of Shifting Form and Material Dimensions.’ This essay comprises two central arguments—first, that the fundamental concepts of war have endured and are still applicable today; and second, the way in which wars are being conducted is constantly changing and adapting, based on context. In this essay, MAJ Lye focuses on the Prussian General Carl von Clausewitz’s book, *On War*, written in 1832, as an important source of introduction to war, strategy, concepts and the psychological effects of war. He argues that the nature of war has not changed much in the 188 years since *On War*. MAJ Lye discusses the key principles on the nature of war based on Clausewitzian theories. He then compares these principles against the works of two notable academics who advocate war’s evolution—Mary Kaldor and William S. Lind. He then highlights that while their ideas certainly do represent the current context of war to a fair extent of accuracy, they do not in fact necessarily contradict the theories found in *On War*.

ME4 Ratnam Saravanan wrote the JSLC essay, ‘Should the Singapore Armed Forces Continue to Rely on Cutting-Edge Technology?’ In this essay, ME4 Saravanan emphasises the significant role that technology has played and will continue to play, in our lives. According to him, for a small nation like Singapore, a cutting-edge technology and technical know-how are important prerequisites for the SAF to maintain its operational edge. ME4 Saravanan also feels that having stringent and robust processes in place to manage the defence budget

and long-term planning of the country will ensure its peace and security. In his view, the SAF must continue to find ways to be more cost-effective so that it can focus on future weapons. He believes that with continued emphasis on technology, the SAF will continue to remain relevant and formidable in this region.

The final essay in this compilation of SAFTI essays is a CSC essay from an international officer, Commander (CDR) AKM Rakibudduza (Bangladesh) who wrote, 'Addressing the Arms Race – An ASEAN Perspective.' In this essay, Cdr Rakibudduza first analyses and highlights the concept of an arms race, arms modernisation and arms dynamic. After a discussion of these concepts, he then scrutinises the motive for their existence. Thereafter, Cdr Rakibudduza examines the present context through historical perspectives along with

recent military expenditure and modernisation efforts of selected Asian states since the Cold War to disprove the existence of an arms race in Asia. The scope of this essay is confined within the context of non-nuclear acquisitions.

At this juncture, POINTER would like to bid farewell to our Chairman of the POINTER Editorial Board, COL Simon Lee. We wish to thank COL Lee for his support, encouragement and guidance. POINTER has benefitted much from his insightful observations on a wide variety of military subjects.

We also bid farewell to COL Kevin Goh, a key member of the POINTER Editorial Board. We wish to thank COL Goh for his full support of POINTER.

We would also like to extend our warmest welcome to COL Paul Cheak who takes over as Chairman, POINTER Editorial Board. Welcome, Sir!

The POINTER Editorial Team