

# Editorial

We wrap up 2020 for Vol 46, No. 2 with a compilation of essays from various sources—students from our local Command and Staff Course (CSC) of the Goh Keng Swee Command and Staff College (GKS CSC) as well as from an overseas CSC, the United States Air Command and Staff College. We are also featuring an ad hoc essay submitted about Swarm Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV). In addition, there is also an essay from a Senior Analyst from the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) and another from a Staff Officer of the Ministry of Education. Both authors had pursued a Master's Programme at RSIS.

The first of the essays, 'Air, Land and Maritime Strategy – Which is More Critical in Warfare?' is written by MAJ Sean Paul Magness. According to MAJ Magness, land power has always been regarded as the dominant form of military power as the main objective of territorial states is to conquer and control land. And, land power has been the main military instrument for achieving this aim. In this essay, MAJ Magness explores the importance of not just land strategies but air and maritime strategies in a battlefield, concluding that the latter 2 can be impactful as well. He feels that both air and maritime strategies have proven decisive, giving examples like the 1999 NATO campaign in the Yugoslavia. War. MAJ Magness presents his views in three parts. In the first part, he explains the concept of strategy and the importance of understanding the types of political objectives which a military force can fulfil. In the second part, he examines how force utility and a nation's strategic culture shapes its military strategy and predisposes a nation into favouring particular domains of military strategy. The third part discusses the case study of the Pacific War during World War II and the 1999 NATO campaign in Yugoslavia (*Operation Allied Force*) to demonstrate how force utility and strategic culture resulted in their respective strategies being assessed either independently from land strategy, or in the case of Yugoslavia, without any land strategy at all. Furthermore, the Pacific War has been regarded as the only great-power war in modern history in which the outcome was not determined by land power alone, and one in which air and maritime power played more than an auxiliary role. On the contrary, OAF is often held up as *the* example of the effectiveness of independent airpower.

The next essay, 'What are the Past, Present and Future Challenges to Singapore's National Security?' is

written by MAJ Alex Phua Thong Teck. In this essay, MAJ Phua discusses Singapore's operating environment and examines how her national security strategies have adapted to challenges to stay relevant and effective in defending her national interests. He briefly outlines Singapore's national interests, based on her geography and history. He then frames her national security strategies with a grand strategy framework of Defence and Security, Nation Building, and National Development, to crystallise the discussion and explore pertinent challenges from independence, to the future. MAJ Phua feels that while Singapore's national interests remain constant, the proposed national security strategies can still be used to frame and respond to challenges in new operating environments.

MAJ Jeffrey Ng Zhaohong who attended the United States Air Command and Staff College, wrote the next essay, 'The Persistence of Violence in the Cyber Age.' According to MAJ Ng, with the advance of technology, cyber space has become the new battleground for war. It has provided huge opportunities for many countries to further their political agendas without resorting to violent conflicts. In fact, similar to the threat of nuclear destruction, cyber attacks' threat of widespread devastation can deter and compel against violent escalations. Furthermore, cyber space's high cost-effectiveness and difficulty in attribution provide a viable non-violent avenue to achieve political gains. Besides manipulating rational calculations, cyber information operations can subvert people's passions and soften the psychological battlefield, thereby reducing the violence involved in achieving one's political goals. However, MAJ Ng highlights that historical examples have shown that in a clash for survival and critical interests, man will exhaust all means, including physical violence and destruction, to exploit vulnerabilities in all dimensions to preserve his interests. He concludes that violence will continue to persist as part of the nature of war.

In the following essay, 'How Singapore and the Singapore Armed Forces Can Get Ready for the Era of Swarm UAVs', CPT Daryn Koh Wei Ren believes that Swarm Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) have the potential to pose a real threat when used for malicious purposes, citing various examples to prove the capabilities of such technology. He feels that Singapore may be susceptible to attacks from Swarm UAVs due to its small geographical size. He also highlights that swarm

UAVs can continue with the mission even with the loss of a sizeable portion of its members as it is possible for a large enough swarm to overwhelm a small country's air defence system. In this essay, CPT Koh explores possible solutions to Swarm UAVs, namely, Deterring Rogue Drone Operators and Disrupting Swarm UAVs. He concludes that there is no one size fit all solution to the threat of swarm UAVs and highlights that continuous efforts and resources have to be committed in order to deal with such a threat.

Mr Ivan Ng Yan Chao wrote the essay, 'Are the Goals of Belligerents in 'New Wars' Really Different from the Goals of Earlier Wars?' 'New wars' is a term advanced by British academic Mary Kaldor to characterise warfare in the post-Cold war era.<sup>1</sup> According to Mr Ng, it had been claimed that in 'New Wars', the struggle is not about geopolitics but about identity politics instead. Mr Ng aims to analyse this claim and argue that while it is true that identity politics plays a greater role in New Wars compared to wars in the past, the claim is problematic for two reasons. Firstly, even in the case of New Wars, geopolitics remains an ever-present consideration and has not simply been supplanted by identity politics. Secondly, wars in the past were also arguably driven by identity politics, thus, identity politics is not unique to New Wars. In this essay, Mr Ng proceeds to first define and

discuss the key terms discussed. He then considers how identity politics is a prominent feature in the goals of belligerents in New Wars today. He concludes that both identity politics and geopolitics are important components of New Wars, and indeed, Old Wars as well.

The final essay in this compilation is entitled, 'The Importance of Context for Military History & Education' and is written by Mr Ian Li. According to Mr Li, military history as a field has significant benefits to military education but, it should be properly contextualised. He feels that for there to be any meaningful interpretation, accounts must be critically analysed to understand the perspectives in which they have been written and the assumptions that inherently underlie them, particularly those that arise from the particular piece being written for the specific purpose of nation-building or education. Ideally, a healthy variety of perspectives are used in conjunction with one another so that the reader is presented with a complete picture of the event with which to then form his own interpretations and conclusions.

POINTER would like to wish all our readers A Merry Christmas and A Happy New Year! Happy Holidays!

**The POINTER Editorial Team**

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<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New\\_wars](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_wars)