

# Editorial

Our first issue for 2021—Vol 47, 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).

The first of the essays, 'Challenges To ASEAN's Regional Security' is written by LTC Lau Jianmin Jamin. In this essay, LTC Lau argues that the ASEAN region is beset by a range of regional security challenges and that co-operation in the ASEAN region is undermined by a number of factors. He begins his essay by outlining the international security threats facing the ASEAN region and the transnational phenomena that can potentially destabilise the region. He then assesses how regional co-operation has been undermined by a lack of common identity and the complex and varied internal politics of ASEAN countries. LTC Lau then examines the institution of ASEAN and contends that the mechanism of co-operation amongst ASEAN members is undermined by a range of factors. He makes a holistic assessment of how successful ASEAN has been in fostering regional security and co-operation, in relation to its stated challenges. LTC Lau then concludes that despite its criticisms, ASEAN's overall success in preventing armed conflict in a highly volatile region is indeed commendable.

LTC Goh Nichola wrote the next essay, 'Is Non – Offensive Defence Viable As A Strategy For National Security?' According to LTC Goh, non-offensive defence is described as the strategic defence stance taken by a country to safeguard its national interest. Without being aggressive with its military, a nation can potentially deter an aggressor, through its uneven terrain or foreign alliances. LTC Goh goes on to add that non-offensive defence is viable as a strategy only if certain conditions are fulfilled—suitable geography, benign strategic environment and neutral foreign outreach. In the case of Japan, she puts forth an additional condition, which is alliances. In LTC Goh's opinion, however, non-offensive defence is only fully viable if the three conditions highlighted above are met.

In the next essay, 'Is There A Likelihood That Weapons Acquisitions Can Become Destabilising?' MAJ Ragumaran s/o Davindran highlights that over the past 15 years, with weapons acquisitions playing a central role, the total defence expenditure for ASEAN has doubled in absolute terms. Against this backdrop,

researchers have questioned if the changing arms dynamic would have an adverse effect on regional stability. In the essay, MAJ Ragumaran uses the ASEAN context to argue that weapons acquisition processes alone do not lead to destabilisation. He presents his argument in three segments. In the first segment, he provides a review of weapons acquisition to establish a common understanding of key terminologies that would surface throughout his essay. He then proceeds to analyse the reasons behind the weapons acquisition processes and underlines other underlying factors that can cause destabilisation. Finally, MAJ Ragumaran examines the weapons acquisition processes between India and Pakistan and concludes that these processes alone do not contribute to destabilisation as there are other underlying factors that affect regional stability.

ME5 Tang Zhan Sheng wrote the essay, 'How Can Threat Assessments Become Self-Fulfilling Prophecies?' In this essay, ME5 Tang explains the concept of the self-fulfilling prophecy which results from actors believing and expecting a purported eventual state of affairs and then unwittingly rendering it true via their corresponding attempts to manipulate its emergence. He then explores how states make threat assessments in the context of an anarchic system. Through the examples of the Cuban missile crisis, Al Qaeda in Iraq and bioterrorism, ME5 Tang illustrates the role of perception and misperception in transforming threat assessments into self-fulfilling prophecies. He then discusses the nuclear domino theory and its association with Taiwan to exemplify how a vicious, self-fulfillment spiral can be negated. Finally, ME5 Tang concludes that when caught in a self-fulfilling prophecy, it will be best to reflect on the prophesied outcome and alter one's behaviour in response, so as to break out of the self-fulfillment cycle.

The final essay in this compilation entitled, 'Despite Changes In Technology, It Is Still Possible To Identify Continuities in Naval Warfare' is written by ME5 Dhanashanker s/o Ramakrishnan. Here, ME5 Dhanashanker elaborates on the relevant continuities in naval warfare within the maritime operating environment which can dictate naval warfare principles.

He first defines the maritime operating environment and what it means to attain supremacy within the maritime domain. Then, he highlights how technology has shaped naval warfare tactics. Subsequently, ME5 Dhanashanker discusses emerging naval hybrid warfare. He concludes with a current case study concerning naval activities in the South China Sea.

At this juncture, we bid farewell to Mr Kuldip Singh, a key member of the POINTER Editorial Board as

he retires after 50 years of service in MINDEF. We wish to thank Mr Kuldip for his full support of POINTER. Happy Retirement, Mr Kuldip!

POINTER would also like to offer our very best wishes to CFC Toh Jie Hung and CPL Ong Jing Xian as they leave to pursue further studies. We thank them for their contributions and wish them well in their future endeavours.

The POINTER Editorial Team