

EDITOR'S NOTE

There was but one news item that dwarfed the others during this quarter. That was the Doklam standoff. Numerous articles and commentaries were written, and voices raised in all channels of the print and electronic media. The opinions varied from the imminence of war, at one end, to the impossibility of war, at the other. All felt a sense of relief when the standoff was lifted. A spate of post facto opinions followed that covered the spectrum, from the inevitability of a peaceful resolution to the need to be more watchful as the 'dragon' had been infuriated. Common sense will suggest that the path to follow is somewhere in between. We should be continuously on guard, work towards becoming better equipped, and improve our infrastructure. At the same time, we must retain our equanimity and remain confident that we are capable of confronting any military misadventure by China. The importance of China is well recognised at our Centre and we will continue to study and analyse what China says and does.

Our lead article in this issue of the Journal is the speech given by **Shri NN Vohra**, governor of Jammu and Kashmir, during the First BK Nehru Memorial Lecture under the aegis of the Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development. Besides justifiably praising the work and life of the late BK Nehru, the speech gave a good account of what ails India at present, and the author, in his inimitable style, gives remedial prescriptions. It is an interesting and engrossing article that makes good reading.

Arguably, the most destabilising factor in South Asia and, indeed, the region, is a nuclear Pakistan. Hence, it behoves us to continue to study the history of Pakistan's attempts at nuclear proliferation and to extrapolate

the possible implications for the future. **Dr Manpreet Sethi**, in a very well researched article, shows that in spite of many vociferous denials by Pakistan, the world has little doubt on the role of that country both as a recipient of nuclear technology and in furthering nuclear proliferation. More importantly, the threat of nuclear terrorism emanating from that country is live. The presence of so many terrorist groups in Pakistan and the country's support to many of them has the potential for nasty misdeeds. Unfortunately, in spite of clear knowledge of Pakistani perfidy, the world has done little to ward off a serious challenge facing all of us. The world will have to pay for the sins of allowing Pakistani nuclear capability to develop due to what can only be termed as opportunistic and other pressing concerns.

The next three articles study different aspects of recent Chinese history. **Sana Hashmi** discusses the deepening concerns about Chinese activities in the Asia-Pacific region. China's burgeoning economy, growing defence expenditure and being a major, if not the leading, trading partner with the countries in the region should have given China a great advantage in extending its sphere of influence. The influence of the US in the area is also apparently waning but China, by her actions and demands, has created considerable suspicion amongst the countries in her periphery.

The major organisational changes or 'military reforms' effected by China last year have excited many discussions and debates on their relevance to other countries, and their likely impact. China's new Western Theatre Command is geographically opposite the entire northern and eastern India and, hence, will play the lead role in the case of any Sino-Indian conflict. **Dr Temjenmeran Ao** describes the theatre command and its implications for India. He discusses the infrastructural developments in the region and cautions that India should maintain a watchful eye on the developments.

In July 2016, the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) gave its verdict in favour of the Philippines but China has categorically stated that it does not accept the verdict. However, non-acceptance of the verdict does not make it bad in law. **Pooja Bhatt** analyses the verdict and the Chinese position.

Sovereignty and ownership of tiny but contested islands is involved and the only thing we can say with some certainty is that the last word on the PCA verdict is yet to be written.

In an article intriguing titled "What If?" **Air Mshl Bharat Kumar** discusses selected decisions taken by the Indian Air Force in yesteryears and their outcomes. What might have been is the common refrain. The article is a journey down memory lane, and the author rues some, in his view, untimely decisions that were taken. Some may argue that the decisions were not really wrong given the limited information then available but no one can have any doubts on the scholarship behind the article. He cites a number of examples and his analysis in each case of how things could have been different makes good reading.

Operation Cactus, the operation mounted at short notice to save President Gayoom and his government in the Maldives is a heroic success story in the annals of the history of our air force. **Gp Capt Ashok Chordia**, who actively participated in the operation, compares this operation with the evacuation of Mussolini in September 1943 and the Israeli raid over Entebbe in 1976 to bring home the Israelis held in captivity. All three were brave, adventurous and successful operations and the author analyses the similarities and differences. The article suggests, without being prescriptive, how such operations could be conducted in the future.

The cyber world continues to excite us with the myriad possibilities it raises and the challenges we must face. It is a continuous study and the cyber realm increases in significance on a near daily basis. **Gp Capt Ashish Gupta** discusses a number of issues under the cyber rubric and his section on cyber activism between India and Pakistan is both revealing and instructive. The sections on cyber terrorism and cyber guerrillas are equally illuminating. The article should be read more than once to get its true import.

In the concluding article in this edition of the Journal, **Dr Poonam Mann** looks at the presumed expansion of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) into Central Asia and on how this will affect India. She has considerable

expertise on Central Asia. This becomes obvious as one reads the article. She makes sound recommendations but the salient message is that we must be watchful and engage the Central Asian regimes to mutual advantage.

Happy reading.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'H. Katz'.