



## EDITOR'S NOTE

For the second year running, the lead article in the Winter edition of the *Journal* incorporates the thoughts of the Chief of the Air Staff. It is appropriate that an air power journal should periodically publish the views of the air chief. The contribution is a 'must read'.

As we come to the end of a rather eventful year, there are two significant issues that will remain matters of continued concern. The first is the birth and rise of the 'Islamic State'. It is becoming increasingly more powerful and relevant and this is a black mark on the international community at large. The question that must be asked is: why was it not nipped in the bud? Unfortunately, no valid answers are forthcoming. What is worse is that, apparently, there is no discernible concerted plan of action to counter the menace. Air power has been effectively employed but it cannot put an end to the rebel movement. Also, though air power effectiveness is a function of numbers, even more importantly, it depends on the nature and accuracy of intelligence information. That will always be difficult to come by in hostile territory. There is a silver lining in the fact that although the Islamic State controls a fair amount of real estate and even calls itself a state, no country has so far recognised it as such. Therefore, it should be possible to adopt a coordinated plan to end the menace. Unfortunately, all the players ostensibly fighting the Islamic State appear to have overpowering agendas of their own. As a result, every nation engaged in offering a challenge to the Islamic State is playing a double game, at the least; some have even three or four competing interests. It is difficult to understand as to how the international community has been unable to ensure that the Islamic State is unable to sell oil even when offered at considerable discount. Short-term gains could easily boomerang in the mid to long-term. Again, it is more than conceivable that the oil is being sold to those that have also taken up arms against the rebels. In any case, it is difficult to understand why steps have not been taken to ensure that the rebel ranks are not buttressed from outside

the region. All in all, the Middle East region is in tremendous flux and it is difficult to predict when some measure of stability will return. The impact of the upheaval is bound to be felt far and wide and for some time to come.

The second issue worthy of mention is the ongoing debate on India's nuclear doctrine. The debate started in India and has been taken up abroad as well. This writer is in favour of leaving the doctrine unchanged but the issues raised by the detractors merit a response. Greater clarity is warranted on three issues. It is opined by some that our adopting the No First Use (NFU) philosophy should be discontinued; the presence of Tactical Nuclear Weapons (TNW) with Pakistan must be addressed afresh; and the promised response should be altered from 'massive retaliation' to 'punitive retaliation'. In essence, the essential difference is in the perceived purpose of our nuclear weapons. Are nuclear weapons meant to deter use of such weapons or should we plan on their use in war-fighting? If they are intended as a deterrent, the NFU philosophy commends itself. Also, massive retaliation emphasises the intention to deter as opposed to the somewhat watered down term 'punitive response'. Punitive response could also imply willingness to fight a nuclear war. That must never be our intention. A nuclear bomb is not just another weapon that could be used in a war. What is needed is that our credibility of a second strike is maintained and this is signalled in no uncertain terms to our possible adversaries. As regards TNW, a nuclear weapon is a strategic weapon and the term is a *non sequitur*. In fact, one aspect of TNWs is indeed dangerous as the authority for release of the weapon would have to be decentralised to a level where the complete picture may not be discernible and serious mistakes can occur. Thus, we will do well to leave our doctrine unchanged.

There are a number of aspects that impinge on our national security; the different contributions in this *Journal* cover extensive ground and each article is worthy of the attention of the reader.

Happy reading.

