



## EDITOR'S NOTE

**T**he Indian Air Force (IAF) completes 75 years of its existence during which it has had to fight competent air forces more often than most other air forces have done. It is not only one of the very few air forces that were independent at birth and stayed that way, but it cut its teeth on the Northwestern Frontier Province where its partitioned limb continues to battle the tribes in Waziristan, though less successfully. And very soon after World War II came to Indian shores and borders, it underwent rapid expansion and was thrown into the war to halt the Japanese juggernaut. In a dramatic operation, it bombed the Japanese bomber base with make-shift arrangements on a lumbering reconnaissance aircraft locally kitted with two bombs the very next day after arriving at a border airfield in Burma on February 2, 1942. During the next three days, a much older Royal Air Force (RAF) squadron, the 28th, joined in to carry out counter-air operations under the leadership of the then sole squadron of the IAF meant for army cooperation against a formidable air force

From then on, the IAF has never looked back and has accumulated vast experience in war and peace. Barring perhaps the US Air Force (USAF) and the Israeli Air Force, the IAF has been involved in more wars than any other air force. And this has often been done at difficult periods when it was in the process of reorganisation and major reequipping, like in the 1965 War. It has won every air war during these decades and has supported the Indian Army, at times under the most demanding conditions, to ensure that victory is achieved and the nation fully defended. However, the problem is that we have tended to emphasise on a part of the role of the IAF, and not the whole of it: that the role of the air force is to defend India and not merely provide air defence.

A serious rethinking of our understanding of the primary role of the Indian Air Force is crucial to enable the ongoing transformation of the Service to be vectored toward the goals that it must undertake. In essence, this implies a clearer

understanding and articulation of the future role of the IAF (which the Chief of the Air Staff has admirably done in the article in this issue) to provide direction for force development for the future.