



## EDITOR'S NOTE

The recent induction of the first Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) into the Indian Air Force (IAF) symbolises a great landmark not only in the capability in air warfare but also in the conceptual approach to air operations compared to two decades ago when a large segment of the leadership believed in the efficacy of low level radars and, hence, proposed greater importance for them in comparison to airborne early warning systems. So much so that two years after initiating an indigenous project to design and develop our own airborne early system by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) (which remained under-funded and without any effort to establish collaboration with a foreign entity), the Ministry of Defence is believed to have told the visiting US Defence Secretary in late 1986 that India would have no problem if the US supplied such systems to Pakistan even under the questionable assumption that they were needed by Pakistan to intercept air violations by Afghan/Soviet aircraft targeting Afghan Mujahideen fighting the Kabul government on behalf of the US, with Pakistan as the frontline state!

The induction of AWACS symbolises not only the transformation of the Air Force in technological terms but also points to the necessity to ensure the transformation of the mind of air warriors. In a way, AWACS has symbolised the high end of technology on one side and the fundamental changes in the

nature of air warfare on the other. But we must remember that even as one of the major force multipliers of today and tomorrow, this cannot replace force. Many old and existing systems have to remain in place to ensure a total integrated capability if full advantage of the AWACS' special attributes are to be fully exploited. Unfortunately, there has been a school of thought in the Air Force, which may still be lingering in some quarters, that with force multipliers available, we could do with a smaller force. But we need to consider that both of our neighbours and likely adversaries have already acquired such capabilities. Force multipliers would no doubt enhance the effectiveness and capabilities of an Air Force; but the degree of advantage it offers would also depend upon whether the adversary also has similar even if not symmetrical capabilities. Hence, we must go back to the core lesson of military history: that technology and mass (size) do provide definitive advantages, but it is force employment that finally decides victory or defeat. Hence, the induction of AWACS in China, Pakistan and India must be seen from that perspective and the conceptual basis for ensuring advantage in force employment given high priority.

With this issue, we complete five years of publication since the journal was started in 2004. Our list of contributors has grown steadily and we are happy to see greater participation by younger authors. We are grateful to our publishing team for maintaining the excellent quality of workmanship and bringing the journal out on schedule with great regularity. Above all, we are grateful to our readership for the continued interest and support for the journal.