



EDITOR'S NOTE

Change is the only constant factor in human history. But aerospace power has been in the throes of change at a phenomenal pace. Much of this is due to two factors: that of an exponential advancement of technology, and second, the changes taking place in the nature of warfare. This has also created new paradoxes in the sense that while military power has become much more effective on the strength of its aerospace capabilities, it has also become less usable in traditional roles and missions. Israel, for example, began to base its counter-terrorism strategy almost exclusively on air power, while the US/ North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) relied very heavily on aerospace power in their wars since the end of the Cold War.

But before we start to draw analogies and lessons from their experiences we must note that they have been fighting these wars in foreign territories and without a hostile air environment. This is not to say that they would not have won the wars if there was hostile air power to face, but to emphasises that these two conditions for us simply would not exist as long as the armed forces are operating for homeland defence, whether in traditional wars or in counter-terrorism. And to go beyond this paradigm would require quite different politico-military dynamics and strategies than we have been used to in the past if for no reason than the existence of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Application of aerospace power, therefore, in our environment would have significantly different dimensions where three parallel armed conflicts would have to be taken into serious consideration and each and all of them would be contested.

It is in this context that we need to emphasise that while transformation in technological and operational domains would remain crucial, the transformation of the mind would assume far greater importance if the first two have to serve their intended purposes. This transformation has to be based on rational, objective, pragmatic and accurate assessments of the threats and capabilities and the best ways of force employment, with the full knowledge that there would not only be an adversary that seeks similar capabilities, but that it would seek ways and means of its own transformation, knowledge of which would remain ambiguous at best. Success in armed conflict would depend heavily on aerospace power in the future; and this success would be conditioned by the ability to conceptualise the options and strategies of force employment that allow for flexibility to deal with fast changing situations.