

## ➤ EDITOR'S NOTE

As the year 2025 draws to a close, the number of conflicts worldwide have increased to more than 60, with more than 100 nations involved, either directly or indirectly. Contemporary air power and nuclear choices reflect the turbulence of the world order and the challenges faced by nation-states. Doctrinal shifts have taken place and shifting geopolitical alignments have only exacerbated inter-state relations amongst nation-states even as global institutions find themselves ineffective in dealing with the state of the world order. Technology cycles have reduced and nations that do not adapt or incorporate emerging and niche technologies into warfare would do so at their own peril.

While air power has been the lead instrument of military power, from Operations Midnight Hammer, Rising Lion and Sindoor, a nuanced understanding of its doctrinal tenets is imperative before any change in its doctrinal employment is implemented. With the proliferation of unmanned aerial systems, airspace management has become challenging, especially in the Tactical Battle Area (TBA). The concept of the 'air littoral', derived from the 'maritime littoral', seeks to demarcate this region as the airspace above the TBA to be delineated in command and control from overall airspace management. *'Control of the Air Littoral by Land Forces: A Doctrinal Misstep'* seeks to address the conceptual and contextual flaws in the argument that demands the control of the TBA by the land forces.

Emerging and niche technologies are here to stay and armed forces across the world continue to innovate and adapt to take full advantage of these technologies in warfare. *'Exploitation of Emerging and Niche Technologies by the IAF'* takes a critical look at these technologies and the manner in which the IAF has integrated them in a network-centric environment to its advantage.

It also looks at the way ahead for the Indian Air Force (IAF) to become a lead player in a whole of nation approach, partnering in the research and development of these capabilities not only for the military but also for the nation.

Drones have become integral to warfare as their capabilities and capacity continues to increase exponentially in the military domain. The ongoing conflicts across the globe have seen innovative use of unmanned platforms. *'Drone Warfare in Russia-Ukraine Conflict: Myths, Reality, and Lessons for India'* carries out an objective analysis of the conflict with respect to the technology, tactics and operational impact of drones, and draws lessons for India.

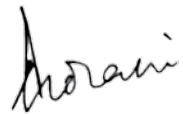
India's civil nuclear energy sector is witnessing a transformation from the hitherto state-dominated model to one where the private sector and foreign players will be able to play an increasing role. Policy reforms have not only facilitated this transformation but also energised the private sector with incentives that would see nuclear energy playing a more significant role in India's energy mix. *'India's Quest for Civil Nuclear Innovations : Potential Role of the Private Sector and International Partnerships'* examines the issue in detail, from a historical overview to the current and emerging trends and the challenges ahead.

Saudi Arabia, despite being the world's largest oil exporter, is looking at nuclear power as a sustainable and reliable source, keeping climate change and energy security in mind. Towards this, it seeks to develop its indigenous civil nuclear programme and is looking at collaboration with the United States for the same. *'US-Saudi Civil Nuclear Cooperation and the Risk of A Regional Nuclear Arms Race'* looks at the issue and examines the reasons and implications of this towards fuelling a nuclear arms race in the already volatile Middle East region. Saudi Arabia's insistence on acquiring domestic uranium enrichment facilities raises legitimate concerns about the future trajectory of its nuclear programme.

In the Book Review section, *'On Grand Strategy'* by John Lewis Gaddis has been reviewed. A Cold War historian and Pulitzer Prize winner, John Lewis Gaddis provides his perspective on the art and science of grand strategy as

the ends, ways and means towards achieving national objectives. He looks at prudence and humility as virtues in a strategist who understands the limits of human control and gives importance to the moral dimension of strategy.

From control of the airspace in the TBA to the importance of drones and modern technologies in the utilisation of air power, along with the importance of nuclear energy and cooperation, this edition of the *Journal* presents a bouquet of articles on the subjects. I am sanguine that these articles would provide readers with a perspective on issues that require informed debate and professional reflection. Wishing all the subscribers of the *Air Power Journal* a happy and prosperous 2026.



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