

DEFENCE & SECURITY REVIEW

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Higher Military Institutional Reforms: Chief of Defence Staff and Department of Military Affairs

DEBA R MOHANTY , DSR, February 10, 2022

General Bipin Rawat, the most decorated Indian military officer, who had served as the Chief of the Army Staff from December 2016 to December 2019, became India's first Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) effectively from January 2020 until his untimely death in a helicopter crash in Tamil Nadu on December 8, 2021. Late General Rawat, an officer of the Indian Army from the Infantry (5/11 Gorkha Rifles), had a distinguished career of nearly 43 years of military service. His demise came when he and his wife and a few staff were killed when travelling to the Defence Services Staff College in Wellington, Tamil Nadu. A tri-



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Service Court of Inquiry investigating the crash ruled out mechanical failure, sabotage or negligence. It attributed the crash to the unexpected change in weather, resulting in pilot disorientation and the helicopter hitting a surface. The post of CDS has been lying vacant since the demise of General Rawat and is expected to be filled soon. As the CDS is expected to be appointed from the pool of serving or recently retired cadres, it is widely presumed that the current Chief of Army Staff General Manoj Mukund Naravane PVSM AVSM SM VSM ADC may succeed General Rawat as the next CDS in April 2022, announcement for which could be made shortly before his retirement.

Among the many important reform initiatives in the Indian military sector through the creation of new positions and departments, reviewing and changes in different rules and procedures, new policy announcements as well as proposed new structural arrangements in the last five odd years, largely implementing major recommendations made by Lt General D B Sekhatkar Committee, the Indian government has taken many bold new steps that were earlier either kept under the carpet or inconclusively deliberated for decades. Lack of political leadership apathy, inter-services rivalries, bureaucratic bottlenecks and pathetic civil-military interface are considered prime reasons for the non-implementation of reforms initiatives. At best, sporadic attempts had been made to inject incremental reforms till the current NDA regime decided to take bold steps to reform the Indian military sector. Ever since Sekhatkar Committee had submitted its recommendations in late 2016, most of these have been implemented in letter and spirit.

Proposals for the creation of new operational theatre commands (including one for the J&K) primarily through restructuring, continuous reviewing

defence procurement procedure and manual, coming out with new defence production policy, additional policy-induced announcements, decision to offload a certain percentage of government stakes in defence public sector units (DPSUs) and listing them in the stock markets (all DPSUs are listed companies now), creating seven new corporate entities out of the earlier Ordnance Factory Board, all of which may also get listed in the stock market in near future and creation of CDS and Department of Military Affairs (DMA) under the Ministry of Defence are considered bold steps, which reflect the exemplary political will of the government of the day.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi paying homage to the fallen heroes at the National War Memorial, New Delhi, January 26, 2022

It is interesting to note that in a span of half a decade, the often pilloried DPSUs (especially the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited – HAL – which was in the news for all wrong reasons in 2015-16 when it was almost shut down because of lack of orders and inability to extract massive dues from the forces) has all started turning around and delivering results. While it has been making a range of military aircraft and helicopters, it will be an exporter of flagship indigenous brand fighter jet Tejas in the near future as at least a dozen countries have shown expression of interest in buying this 4th generation fighter. India had pursued (from 2005 till 2020) with an ambiguous concept called 'defence offsets' – starting with 'direct' to embrace 'indirect' offsets and coming out with several ambiguous data of its supposed success from government sources and sycophantic cheers from the industry and analysts – which now has been almost scrapped, ending an era of pursuance of academically fashionable policy with little practical results. Rather, various bold steps taken in the last five years on private participation in the national defence industrial eco-system by government-owned and private sectors are likely to bring better dividends than defence offsets.

Two major strands of self-reliance in defence – import substitution and making India a military exports hub – have been vigorously pursued with the result that at least 65

percent of India's defence capital expenditure budget is reserved for the domestic industrial sector, ensuring reductions in import bill (as announced in the Union Budget for FY 2022-23) on the one hand and signing a historic exports deal worth USD 375 million for supersonic cruise missile Brahmos with the Philippines recently with a possible follow-on order in pipeline. The supersonic cruise missile has received keen interest from not only the Southeast Asian region but also some important countries in the Middle East as well. India has strived hard to negate its earlier image of 'an arms merchant's paradise' to a formidable arms exporter. A USD 5 billion military exports target (by 2025) for the Indian arms industries has been laid out.

Dozens of incremental, structural and procedural reforms initiatives have occurred, as explained above, but the decision to create a CDS and a separate Department of Military Affairs are the two major initiatives of the current government that stand out with enormous national security implications. Although the Defence Minister now has three distinct single point advisors in the military (CDS), civil (Defence Secretary) and scientific (Chief of DRDO) domains, attempts are on to seamlessly integrate all three domains (including military-industrial) both vertically and horizontally. For example, one, two and three-star serving generals from the armed forces are now parts of DMA as Directors, Joint Secretaries and Additional Secretaries along with their civilian counterparts. All integrated institutions like Defence Intelligence Agency, Joint Commands, Strategic Forces Command, and a few multi-services agencies are now administratively under the control of the DMA. Although still evolving as a distinct institutions, the Department of Military Affairs and CDS have played a pivotal role in restructured national security architecture. The CDS is not only the Secretary of the DMA; he also serves as the Permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee (PC-COSC). Reforms in higher military organizations in India, among others, are evolving to address institutional rigidities and in the process, facilitate smoother decision making at the highest levels like Defence Acquisition Council (headed by the Defence Minister) and Cabinet Committee on Security (headed by the Prime Minister).

Members of the Constituent Assembly during the late 1940s had vociferously supported a militarily strong India with a strategic ambition to play a constructive role in global affairs. With limited resources and due to a variety of reasons, India chose to pursue its military prowess through state controlled military-industrial and scientific institutions, which produced average results amid sporadic military victories in the following six decades. It is only in recent times that the current regime appears all geared up to raise the profile of Indian military might to global standards largely through structural reforms, glimpses of which are already visible.

BRIEF: No.1

INDIAN DEFENCE BUDGET 2022-23: Prudent use of Resources Lies at the 'Core' of Military Power

The Indian government has allocated a budget estimate of INR 5,25,167 crore (roughly about USD 70 billion in current prices) for national defence (MoD), translating into 13.3 percent of the total central government expenditure and 2.03 percentage of GDP. Expenditures of all branches of national defence (Army, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, DRDO, Ordnance Factories, civil defence and defence pensions) are primarily covered under this budget. While revenue expenditure accounts for INR 2,45,353 crore, capital budget stands at INR 1,60,071 crore and total pension allocation (now a separate category carved out of revenue expenditure) stands at 1,19,696 crore. The defence budget has seen a very marginal overall increase in the last five years vis-à-vis revised expenditure (RE) of the previous year (FY 2021-22) and 'Actuals' of the preceding year (2020-2021). 'Unspent syndrome' (inability to spend the allocated resources in any particular financial year) has been a major problem till now but have been largely addressed in recent years, specifically in the capital expenses category. This is visible from the estimates of a particular year grows in revised and actuals, thus indicating not only spending all money in a particular year but also using additional money for equipment modernization.



Finance Minister N Sitharaman carrying the Budget (2022) in the paperless format in a tablet kept inside a red cover with National Emblem.

Available data from government sources for the past five years and their comparisons with the previous ten years on strategic as well as micro dynamics of budgetary allocations throw interesting insights, to begin with. First, there exists a difference between what is called 'national defence' and 'national security' at least in the narrow sense of the terms. The former is largely understood as resources allocated for armed forces, defence R&D and production. At the same time, the latter includes resources allocations to the Ministry of Home Affairs (for internal security) and military-induced allocations for the Department of Space and Atomic Energy. A cumulative allocation for national security thus accounts for roughly 25 percent of the central government

expenditure, which is not deficient by any standard. Contrary to conventional arguments by most defence and security affairs analysts that India spends less than its adversaries or bigger powers, it thus needs further debate. 'Deficiency' and 'gun versus butter' debate must pave the way for prudent and rational allocation and, more importantly, 'outcome' of and value addition to military power.

Second, the government has been struggling to rationalize (read, decrease) revenue budgets that account for nearly 70 percent of total resources allocations, indicating that despite the government's best efforts, a healthy balanced allocation still eludes Indian decision-makers. The revenue-capital imbalance, heavily tilted toward the former, has been a constant feature for the last several decades. There were attempts during the early 2000s till 2012-13 by the then governments to rectify this imbalance, and the previous governments, to some extent, were able to reduce it. However, given the current scenario, the imbalance has started worsening again, primarily because of an increase in pensionary benefits as well as additional allocations for addressing OROP (One Rank One Pay) provisions. The imbalance is also due to increasing spending on the capital side of the revenue budget (for example, operations, maintenance and repair of inventories or infrastructure development), which accounts for nearly 25 percent of the revenue expenditure. The imbalance could reflect a different picture if this category is included in the main capital budget (which caters primarily to fresh acquisitions and milestone payments for previous purchases). However, it is common knowledge that the Indian military is still considered manpower intensive and it is only recently that a 'lean mean high tech military' is being seriously pursued.

Third, India is among the least spenders on military R&D, as is evident from its budgetary allocations for DRDO, which stands at INR 13,367 crore (roughly less than USD 2 billion). A global comparison with major powers suggests that the R&D budgets of the US (USD 112 billion) and China (USD 87 billion) are bigger than the total Indian defence budget. At the same time, even smaller advanced countries from Europe spend more than the Indian budget on military R&D. Big powers invariably have big but indigenous arms industries, which otherwise means aspiring powers can never attain such status unless they nurture a large military manufacturing and R&D base. India's military R&D budget should double every two to three years for the next couple of decades at the least to be counted among top spenders.

Last but not least, this year's budget has demonstrated India's intent to reduce import bill through large-scale domestic acquisitions by allocating 65 percent of the capital expenditure to Indian companies. This is indeed a bold step at a time when India is not only engaged in a confrontational situation against China in the Himalayan borders, which requires a range of equipment suitable for high altitude and difficult terrain needs but more importantly, needs to be equipped for future requirements across threat spectrums – from conventional and nuclear to cyber and grey zone warfare.

India's resources allocations may appear deficient but are largely prudent, disappoint in areas like R&D but encourage private participation (which itself will create demands for R&D), strive to address the revenue-capital imbalance (if revenue does not decrease), it should at least be reasonable, while capital spending can be increased through internal accrual by increasing military exports and getting financial cushion for equipment modernization. In sum, the message is clear: 'earn more and modernize yourself'.

BRIEF: No.2

THE UKRAINE IMBROGLIO: INDIAN INTENTS CONVEY MULTIPLE MESSAGES

On January 31, 2022, India abstained from a procedural vote for a proposal to discuss the situation in Ukraine in the UN Security Council (UNSC). Russia and China voted against it, while US and others pressed for a discussion on Ukraine. Contrasting reactions came immediately: while China chose not to comment, the Russian envoy to the UN praised India's decision profusely, while the US foreign policy officials argued that India-US relations would not be impacted much by this Indian decision. Some European diplomats wondered how India



Flags of India, Ukraine, Russia and the United Nation

could align with Russia and China. The latter has been engaged in a military stand-off with India along the Himalayan borders between the two countries for close to two years. The pro-Russian factions within Ukraine welcomed India's position and hoped that India would shed its diplomatic apathy and play a direct role in the Ukrainian problem, which has the potential to worsen further if rigid positions continue from both sides - 1,00,000 strong Russian troops build up along the borders, indicating a possible military confrontation and US and NATO as well as few European countries denouncing aggressive Russian moves in the region.

It is evident by now that any problem emerging anywhere on earth invariably brings in both the US and Russia and, of late, China simply because all three have embedded global influence in most regions. Countries like the UK or France get into such conflictual issues depending on their strategic considerations. The new entrant into the high international politics is India, whose strategic interests as well as intents

have grown manifold in vertical and horizontal terms in recent times. Existing big powers and aspiring powers are in all likelihood to deal with India in any situation that may even be far from its shores. Analyzed from this prism, it will be interesting to see what kind of role is India likely to play in the current scenario in Ukraine.

India's new global geopolitical ambitions are now a concoction of its trade and economic, diplomatic, military, diaspora-induced, strategic and soft-power considerations depending on whom and how India engages at what levels. Such an expanded yet flexible approach adopted by India actually becomes necessary for it to be involved in target countries without overt interference in their internal affairs. For example, the quest for exploring opportunities in strategic minerals and oil can make India wander from central to South America to Australia and Oceania. India can explore possibilities worldwide while searching for collaborative high-tech manufacturing and exports. At the same time, India's trade and maritime interests have no more confined from the Gulf of Hormuz to Malacca Straits but have gone much beyond encompassing all oceans. Keeping its core strategic interests in mind, India now has the wherewithal to manage countries in and around its neighbourhood and play a constructive role in affairs anywhere. In sum, India's location in world affairs is now somewhat acknowledged. Keeping a close watch on Ukraine and making a definitive move like abstinence does indicate the degree of India's growing stature.

Ukraine may appear either distant or distinct to India's strategic interests for the outsiders. However, Indian interests in Ukraine are much bigger than what meets the eyes. Strategic minerals like lithium and rare earth deposits, nuclear power (Energoatom) and raw material and most importantly, military equipment, components and sub-components are looked like a complete package for India to engage Ukraine. Along with Saudi Arabia and Turkey, India remains one of the largest importers of Ukrainian weapons and platforms. It has established deeper engagement with the Ukrainian military industry through various JVs and government-to-government partnerships. It is obvious that India's not-so-pronounced strategic interests in Ukraine would always make it a direct participant in any major issue that impinges on peace and stability. Tacit support to Russia in Ukraine would actually assure India of protection of its multi-dimensional economic and business interests. It is thus not surprising that the Indian Ministry of Foreign Affairs is watching the developments very closely and carefully crafting its immediate as well as long-term responses.

India opting to abstain from voting at the UN, in the final analysis, denotes a set of multiple messages toward involved as well as distant actors: a) the vote won the hearts of Russia and major factions of Ukraine, thus demonstrating that India's relations with Russia and a major east European country are going from strength to strength; b) it also sends across a shuttle signal to China that India should not only be taken lightly along the Himalayan borders but also at distant countries where India's strategic interests are growing; c) the vote effectively tests that established resolve of countries like US and trans-Atlantic powers toward certain Indian decisions, with the

biggest tests coming soon whereby US has to decide whether to waive or impose sanctions on India's purchase of S-400 air defence systems from Russia; d) being a major importer from Ukraine, primarily military equipment and industrial collaborations, India has developed a space for itself to conduct persuasive influence on Ukrainian leaderships, which would in most cases would actually complement Russian interests; and e) last but not the least, being counted as a major stakeholder in the region, India puts another stamp on its growing global profile. India would never wish for a direct military confrontation. However, it may not shy away from making a strong pitch against unjust actions or even giving overt support to one of the confronting parties.

DSR NEWS DIGEST *January 2022*

JANUARY 01: 'INDIA, PAKISTAN EXCHANGE LIST OF NUCLEAR INSTALLATIONS'

India and Pakistan exchanged lists of nuclear installations and facilities, covered under the Agreement on the Prohibition of Attack against nuclear Installations and facilities between both the countries. The Minister of External Affairs said that the Agreement, which was signed on December 31, 1988 and entered into force on January 27, 1991 provides, inter alia, that India and Pakistan inform each other of the nuclear installations and facilities to be covered under the Agreement on January 1 of every calendar year. This is the 31st consecutive exchange of such lists between the two countries, the first one having taken place on January 1, 1992. ([IANS / Economic Times](#))



JANUARY 06: 'CARRIER-BORNE JET SEARCH BEGINS WITH RAFALE DEMONSTRATION'

The selection process for new carrier borne fighter jets for the Indian Navy is underway with a demonstration by France's Rafale M (Marine) in Goa but several challenges remain ahead, with stiff competition by the American side that is fielding the F 18 Super Hornet that holds out the promise of enhanced naval cooperation in the region. The Rafale M, which operates from the French Charles de Gaulle carrier, will demonstrate its capability to take off from the shore based test facility at Goa that simulates the ski jump deck of Indian Aircraft Carriers. The test presents challenges as the Rafale, as well its American competitor, have been designed for catapult assisted take off from carriers, against the ski jump technique that is used onboard Indian carrier INS Vikramaditya and the upcoming Vikrant which is undergoing sea trials. ([Economic Times](#))

JANUARY 07: 'NOT YET SEEN ANY CHINESE ROBOTIC SOLDIER ON LAC, WILL HELP THEIR REAL SOLDIERS ESCAPE EXTREME COLD: SECURITY SOURCES'

Amid Chinese media claims that robotic soldiers have been deployed by their Army, top sources in security forces on February 6 2022 said that even though no such soldiers have yet been sighted on the borders but it would be helpful for the People's Liberation Army to do so as their troops are finding it very difficult to cope up with the bone-chilling winters there. This is the second consecutive year when the Chinese soldiers have been forced by their superiors to stay put on the Indian borders where temperatures range between minus 20 to 40 degrees Celsius. "We are yet to come across any of these robotic soldiers armed with guns. But if the Chinese Army is doing so, it would help their soldiers who are finding it difficult to survive there", sources in security forces told. ([Asia News International](#))

JANUARY 11: 'DRDO FLIGHT TESTS MAN-PORTABLE ANTI-TANK GUIDED MISSILE'

On January 11, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully flight tested the Man-Portable Anti-Tank Guided Missile (MPATGM). The defence ministry said the anti-tank missile was flight-tested in its final "deliverable configuration". The indigenously developed MPATGM is a low weight, "fire and forget" missile. "The missile impacted the designated target and destroyed it. The final impact event was captured on camera and the test has validated the minimum range successfully," the MoD said. ([PTI / India Today](#))

JANUARY 12: 'WORK GOING ON FOR UP-GRADATION OF INFRASTRUCTURE ALONG INDO-CHINA BORDER: ARMY CHIEF'



The Indian Army Chief has stated that force deployment from the Indian side has been enhanced. Responding to media queries during the annual presser ahead of the Army Day (January 15, 2022), the Indian Army Chief General Manoj Mukund Naravane said that the threat on the northern borders has not been reduced, though there has been a partial disengagement. "While ensuring the sanctity of our claims, the Indian Army will deal with the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in a resolute, firm and peaceful manner. All necessary safeguards are in place," he added. ([Financial Express](#))

JANUARY 13: 'INDIAN ARMY CONDUCTING WORKSHOP FOR FIELD COMMANDERS ON NEGOTIATION, COMMUNICATION SKILLS'

The Indian Army said it was conducting a workshop for its field commanders on negotiation and communication skills so that they can deal with "dynamic and emerging challenges". A delegation of the Indian Army officers is currently holding the 14th round of talks with its counterpart in the Chinese Army to resolve the border dispute in eastern Ladakh. The main focus of this round of talks is to carry forward the disengagement process at Hot Springs (Patrolling Point 15), military sources said. ([PTI / The Print](#))

JANUARY 14: 'INDIA UNDERTAKES MARITIME PARTNERSHIP EXERCISE WITH JAPAN'

Indian Naval Ships Shivalik & Kadmatt undertook Maritime Partnership Exercise with Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force Ships Uruga and Hirado in the Bay of Bengal on January 13 2022. The exercise included a wide range of flying operations, replenishment approaches and tactical manoeuvres. The precision, coordination and high level of interoperability reflected not only the high standards of professionalism and preparedness the two navies maintain to counter threats at sea, but also the high level of trust and understanding that they have built over the years. ([Asia News International](#))

JANUARY 16: 'NAVIES OF INDIA AND RUSSIA CONDUCT PASSING EXERCISE IN ARABIAN SEA'

The navies of India and Russia conducted a passing exercise in the Arabian Sea, the Indian Navy said on January 15. Indian Navy's indigenously designed and built guided missile destroyer INS Kochi exercised with Russian Federation Navy's destroyer Admiral Tributs, it mentioned. "The exercise showcased cohesiveness and interoperability between the two navies and included tactical manoeuvres, cross-deck helicopter operations and seamanship activities," the Indian Navy's official statement said. ([PTI / Economic Times](#))



JANUARY 20: 'UAE TERROR ATTACK BLATANT VIOLATION OF INTERNATIONAL LAW: INDIA'

Strongly condemning the drone strikes in Abu Dhabi in which two Indians were killed, India has termed the attacks on innocent civilians and infrastructure as a "blatant violation of international law", stressing that the Security Council should stand united in sending a clear signal against such heinous acts of terror. At a Security Council open debate on the Middle East on January 19 2022, India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador T S Tirumurti expressed strong condemnation of the recent terror attack in Abu Dhabi, in which three people, including two Indians tragically lost their lives. "Such an attack on innocent civilians and civilian infrastructure is completely unacceptable. It is a blatant violation of international law. It is also against all civilized norms," he said. ([PTI / The Print](#))

JANUARY 20: 'INDIAN ARMED FORCES AWARD CONTRACT TO SAAB TO SUPPLY ANTI-ARMOUR WEAPON AT4'

Swedish defence company Saab said it has been awarded a contract to supply single-shot anti-armour weapon AT4 to the Indian armed forces. The company has been awarded the contract for the lightweight and fully disposable weapon after going through a "competitive programme", a statement issued by Saab said. "AT4 will be used by the Indian Army and the Indian Air Force," it said. Operated by a single soldier, the single-shot system has proven efficacy against structures, landing craft, helicopters, armoured vehicles and personnel, the statement said. ([PTI / Economic Times](#))

JANUARY 25: 'A STORM BREWING IN KYIV FOR NEW DELHI; INDIA MUST PREPARE FOR IMPACT OF MILITARY CONFLICT IN UKRAINE'

Vice Admiral Kay-Achim Schonbach may have had to step down as Germany's navy chief for his comments in India on being more accommodating to Vladimir Putin over the Ukraine stand-off. But the faultlines he identified are at the heart of the strategic conundrum that inform a potentially volatile situation that can have serious implications for India - essentially, the future of the Russia-China nexus. ([Economic Times](#))

JANUARY 27: 'PM HOSTS LEADERS OF FIVE CENTRAL ASIAN COUNTRIES VIRTUALLY'

Prime Minister Narendra Modi hosted leaders of five Central Asian countries virtually on January 27. Connectivity, enhancing trade, people to people connect and Development Partnership with the five countries were the focus of the talks. The summit level talks took a day after Republic Day Celebrations, where the five leaders were expected to be the Chief Guests. Due to the growing numbers of positive COVID-19 cases, this year there were no guests at the celebrations due to COVID-19 pandemic. ([Financial Express](#))



JANUARY 27: 'PM MODI VOWS TO DEEPEN INDO-FRENCH TIES, JOINTLY WORK FOR PEACEFUL INDO-PACIFIC'

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on January 26 2022 thanked French President Emmanuel Macron for his Republic Day greetings, and said he looks forward to deepen India's strategic partnership with France as well as jointly work for an open and peaceful Indo-Pacific region. Macron had wished the prime minister and people of India on the country's 73rd Republic Day with a message in Hindi posted on his Facebook page. ([PTI / The Hindu](#))

JANUARY 28: 'BRAHMOS MISSILE DEAL WORTH USD 374 MILLION SEALED WITH PHILIPPINES'

A deal worth USD 374 million has been inked between the BrahMos Aerospace Pvt Ltd and the Philippines. The deal is for the shore based anti-ship variant supersonic cruise missiles. This is the first time India has a deal for exporting a missile which has been made in India under an Indo-Russian Joint Venture. The negotiations of exporting BrahMos Missile to one of the Asean countries had been going on for a while. The negotiations with Vietnam which started back in 2016, are also in an advanced stage. ([Financial Express](#))

JANUARY 29: 'AMID TENSIONS OVER UKRAINE, INDIA TRIES TO APPEAR NEUTRAL'

While treading cautiously on the Ukraine crisis, India backed diplomatic efforts to resolve the situation saying it was closely following the ongoing high-level discussions between Russia and the US. In its first remarks on the threat of a military flare-up between Russia and NATO forces, the government called for a peaceful resolution of the situation through sustained diplomatic efforts "for long term peace and stability in the region and beyond". ([Times of India](#))

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About SSPC

The Society for the Study of Peace and Conflict (SSPC) is an independent, non-profit, non-partisan research organization based in New Delhi, dedicated to conduct rigorous and comprehensive research, and work towards disseminating information through commentaries and analyses on a broad spectrum of issues relating to peace, conflict and human development. SSPC has been registered under the Societies Registration Act (XXI) of 1860. The SSPC came into being as a platform to exchange ideas, to undertake quality research, and to ensure a fruitful dialogue.

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