

Institute of National Security Studies

**Closed Door Round Table Discussion**

**“Cognitive Biases in Intelligence Analysis: An Unwitting Threat to the National Security”**

**Press Release**

Intelligence analysis is a key component in strengthening the national security of any nation. It is a complex and difficult undertaking, where “cognitive biases” impact every judgment and decision whereas Intelligence Community (IC) needs to be aware of the effects of cognitive biases. In this context, Institute of National Security Studies (INSS), the premier think tank on national security established under the Ministry of Defence, hosted a Closed Door Round Table Discussion titled “Cognitive Biases in Intelligence Analysis: An Unwitting Threat to the National Security”. The event was held on Thursday, the 24<sup>th</sup> of February 2022 from 1400hrs to 1530hrs (IST) via zoom.

The event was chaired by Professor Rohan Gunaratna, Director General, INSS. The Guest Speakers for the event were Major General Udaya Perera (Retd) RWP RSP VSV USP M.Sc. (Ind) M.Sc.(USA) USAWC NDU-CT(USA) psc (SL) psc (Ind), former Director General, Military Intelligence, Sri Lanka Army and Dr. Malkanthi Hettiarachchi (PhD), AFBPsS (UK), DCP (UK), Chartered Clinical Psychologist, Counterterrorism Trainer & Researcher. In the introductory remarks, Professor Gunaratna, the event chair stated that the current threat landscape and the strategic environment which the Intelligence services should mainly focus on. Professor Gunaratna requested the intelligence agencies to build an interagency process of the criminal justice and prison system with intelligence as the vanguard. “Produce the intelligence officer 2.0, train the next generation to understand about the energy security, environmental security, communications security, terrorism and foreign interference,” added professor Gunaratna

The first speaker, Major General Udaya Perera (Retd) commenced his presentation by stating the importance of the theme, “Cognitive Biases in Intelligence Analysis”. He claimed that it is a prominent weakness which can be seen in all intelligence agencies as well as in the Intelligence Community. He explained the nexus between Intelligence Analysis and cognitive biases, and methods of mitigating such biases from a practitioner’s perspective.

The second speaker, Dr. Malkanthi Hettiarachchi delivered a comprehensive explanation on cognitive bias and intelligence analysis. Her presentation focused on how cognitive bias impacts on inaccurate intelligence and how such failures impact on national security. Dr. Hettiarachchi further presented several broader academic and policy implications in her speech.

The discussion was followed by an insightful Q and A session, which generated a great interaction between the panelists and the audience. Final remarks of the conference were delivered by Professor Rohan Gunaratna.