

Short Reviews of Recent Books

China's Faultlines: Implications and Lessons. By Sandeep Jain (Delhi: GB Books, 2018), pp..164, Price Rs. 995/-, ISBN 978-93-83930-75-3

China today has shaken off any pretence about modest growth and benevolent cooperation as it seeks to dominate Asia through economic expansion, military might and territorial claims. This book, in the first seven chapters, modestly attempts to unravel China's fault lines by examining the socio-economic and military aspects afflicting China and examining the traditional geopolitical tinderboxes across the Taiwan Strait, the vexing Indian subcontinent dispute and new zones of strategic competition. It also touches on the aspects of dissidence in an information age and how the new age military reform brought in by Xi Jinping has potential to rock People's Liberation Army (PLA) whose autonomy is being shackled. The suggestions offered at the end of the book are India specific where it seeks administrative and defence reforms, better technology management and necessity for a strong central authority. The author has been more critical about Indian fault lines and even tends to suggest "to draw certain lessons from China ... where they have been efficient and innovative". There have been numerous sunshine comments on the possibility of China overcoming these fault lines. According to the author "as long as leadership is in control, this will be like a storm in a teacup which China will endure".

The book makes a good read for those who are in the business of defence and diplomacy. China will remain a dominant player in world security dynamics and how China manages these fault lines will always be a source of concern for the world community. India will do good to take note of these and make considered policy decisions.

Brigadier Vivek Verma

The Tartan Turban: In Search of Alexander Gardner. By John Keay, (Kashi House, London, 2017), pp. XXIV + 324, ISBN 978-1-911271-11-6

In the 19th Century, North India attracted, for obvious reasons, a large number of 'adventurers' from the West. They were mostly gainfully employed at the courts of Indian rulers. Some of them, like George Thomas, carved out even their own principalities. Keay has successfully reconstructed the life and doings of one of these 'adventurers', Alexander Gardner, a controversial Scots-American.

This book is divided into 12 chapters: Chapter 1 deals with the Colonel's 32-year old daughter, Helena's visit to Kashmir in 1898 to trace her father's Estate there, but to no avail. The next Chapters, 2-4, there is a detailed description of the Colonel's 'aimless wanderings' in Central Asia and adjoining regions, 1819-32. Chapter 5 discusses his early years in America, 1785-1819, and Chapters, 6-8, relate to his exploits in the service of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and his successors, 1832-43. Chapter 9 deals with the events of the First Sikh War, the Colonel's somewhat controversial role therein, and finally his dismissal, mainly for mutilating one Jodha Misser. In Chapter 10, the Colonel 'reflects on his chequered past', and tries to expound his role in the Misser affair. The next Chapter, 11, deals with his last days in the service of the rulers of Kashmir, his retirement and death, 1860-77. The last Chapter, 12, opens with the author's lament that 'not all those who met the Colonel in Kashmir left any record of him, and not all who left records can be identified'; hence, the confusion and misrepresentation of facts about him. In the present work, Keay has rescued the Colonel from oblivion and infamy, and presented him in colours true to history.

In a scholarly work like this, however, even a small misrepresentation would be irksome. In Chapter 7, for instance, Keay has cast serious aspersions on the legitimacy of Prince Daleep Singh, the character of his mother, Maharani Jindan Kaur, and his father, Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Daleep Singh, he says, 'was son of a bhishti, a water-carrier'; Ranjit Singh was 'an old impotent rue' when he married his mother, Jindan Kaur, known for

her low character (p. 162). These are not historical facts, but falsehoods born of rumours spread by the vested interest and accepted by the scandal-mongers like GC Smyth, Keay's source of information here. Maharani Jindan's maid-servant Mangla's father was a bhishti, water-carrier, and not Daleep Singh's. As for Jindan's character, it is unthinkable that in a region like Punjab, people would accept a woman as 'the mother of the Khalsa' who had, as alleged, betrayed her husband, and led a loose life. The British saw in the Maharani their enemy number one, and spared no weapon in their armoury to destroy her. She told the truth in their face: 'You have not only destroyed my character, but have also imprisoned me, and separated me from my child...' (emphasis added). Whatever their relations, Sir Henry Lawrence's critique that Smyth's book, that Keay draws on here, is a 'hash'... 'concocted to suit the prurient appetite of a particular class of reader'; it is a work of 'the meanest understanding' (p. 212) is absolutely correct. Perhaps the author would like to give a re-look to this important issue.

The book, having 86 beautiful photographs and paintings, is, on the whole, a useful addition to the scanty literature on the subject.

Professor KC Yadav

Tryst with Perfidy—The Deep State of Pakistan. By Kamal Dawar, (Rupa Publications, New Delhi, India), pp-224, Price- Rs- 595/-, ISBN: 978-81-291-1

The author of the book was the first head of India's Defence Intelligence Agency and, therefore, eminently suited to write a book which researches the birth and subsequent entrenching of extra-constitutional interests in the Pakistan body politic, exemplified by the Army and Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) dyad. He correctly defines 'Deep State', as "a state within a state", which determines the policies and operations of the government.

The book chronicles the evolution of the ISI as a power unto itself. The author traces the circumstances which led to the Pakistan Army to set up the ISI and its involvement in internal

politics. Having firmed in as a power centre the Deep State starts believing that they are best suited to take decisions in National interest. What is unsaid is that being the ruling elite confers great advantages to the Deep State which they are loath to relinquish. That Pakistan, over the years, has earned the dubious distinction of being the epicentre of global terror, is an outcome directly attributable to its Deep State and its support to fundamentalist proxies, first in Afghanistan, then in Kashmir and now in both places.

The language of the book is crisp and smooth-flowing and well researched with a decent bibliography. However, the author's statement that "Maharaja Hari Singh demobilised nearly 40,000 Muslims from his army, which caused resentment against them (p. 17)" is a factual error. The figure of 40,000 ex-servicemen is well documented to be demobilised ex-servicemen of the British Indian Army post World War II. The J&K Army at the end of WW II had a strength of approximately 10,000 of which the Muslim component was barely 20 per cent. The Poonch-Mirpur area of J&K and the adjoining Jhelum district of British India had a great tradition of soldiering in the British Indian Army. The ex-servicemen were easily afflicted by the communal inflammation from the adjoining area of Punjab.

While the book chronicles all events, an infirmity is lack of details of the Kargil War which was a classic Deep State misadventure. Another infirmity in an otherwise neatly printed book are a few editing errors, and in this edition, faulty binding of pages 49–65.

The book is of value to those who, in dealing with Pakistan will come up against the "Deep State". It will help them to understand the motivations and machinations of this Deep State and perhaps enable them to come up with appropriate counters to dangerous Pakistani stratagems which appear illogical and hard to fathom.

Lieutenant General GS Katoch, PVSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd)

United Nations Peacekeeping and Conflict Resolution. By Sanjay Barshilia (New Delhi: KW Publishers Pvt Ltd, 2018), pp 162, Price Rs 680, ISBN 978-93-87324-42-8.

“If the United Nations did not exist, we would have to invent it. So why not to use our analytical tool kits to repair it?”

(Weiss, 2008: 16)

The United Nations peacekeeping has grown in complexity and dimensions, and conflicts which UN is expected to deal have increased in scope from ‘Interstate conflicts’ to include ‘Intrastate conflicts’ making the process of resolution extremely complicated, and well beyond the capacity of UN. While the global politics and changing nature of warfare has marginalised the role of UN, there is still no organisation which has as much acceptability in the globe as United Nations. The fact that no Third World War (of the type as First and Second World War) has taken place, some credit can justifiably be given to the United Nations, besides other factors like threat of nuclear holocaust or mutually assured destruction.

In context of the above the author has put in an exhaustive analysis of challenges of UN peacekeeping, conflict prevention, peace building, as well as conflict resolution by starting with separate examples like Syria having complication of intra-state conflict and terrorism, Yemen facing terrorism and foreign intervention without the Security Council’s approval, and Ukraine which had to handle annexation of Crimea, and tug of war between NATO and Russia, making diplomacy and conflict resolution difficult. There have been some successful missions, hence one or two examples of that would have made the analysis more balanced.

The author has exhaustively covered the evolution of peacekeeping in light of emerging global flashpoints and changing nature of conflicts. In this context he has given some analysis of the four panel reports for reformation of UN namely Brahimi Report, Capstone Doctrine, New Horizon Report, highlighting the

latest HIPPO Report. The role of regional organisations in brokering peace in many cases has been aptly highlighted along with advantages and disadvantages. It was interesting to read the problems related to protection of civilians, which the author has covered very well.

The helplessness of UN could have been deliberated a little more, although it has been mentioned throughout the analysis in patches. UN can only be as effective to the extent its members want it to be so. The 'Big Five' with exception of China (which recently started contributing troops for its own reason to give them some operational experience), do not contribute troops. The reformation and reconstitution/ reorganisation of Security Council has been covered, but issues like doing away with veto powers of the 'Big Five' because the national interests of all of them can never match at any point of time, hence veto power is more of an obstruction to any firm action by the Security Council. The individual national interests of countries are over-riding global interests; hence global impact of UN seems to be weakening. The author covered the problems of terrorism, which has emerged as the biggest challenge to mankind, but the proxy war and nuclear blackmailing by countries like North Korea and Pakistan need to be included in such challenges, being threats to global peace. There is a need to bring UN Resolutions on tactical nukes/dirty bombs which have the potential to be passed on to militants, as well as growing menace of cyber crimes and threats.

The author has also highlighted the role of India in UN, which will go well with Indian readers. Overall it is a comprehensive analysis of the issues which the author took up for analysis. It's an interesting reading, and the book deserves to be a part of all libraries and peacekeeping centres.

Major General SB Asthana, SM, VSM (Retd)

The Information Game in Democracy. Dipankar Sinha. (London: Routledge, 2018), 218 pp, Price Rs. 795.00, ISBN 9781138323407

Winston Churchill said very haughtily that, “democracy is the worst form of Government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.” Churchill should know as he lost elections when he was at the peak of his political career after the Second World War. Another famous statesman Abraham Lincoln said, democracy is a government “of the people, by the people, and for the people,” or institutionalising freedom and empowering the individual. In the Post Modern Information age democracy is expected to be strengthened due to proliferation of mass media with a better informed public which can make rational choices.

This may be too simplistic an assumption feels Dipankar Sinha, a professor of political science of University of Kolkata. Alternate facts, fake news and “as received,” forwards with intermediation of technology and politics has resulted what he deems to be, “mediatation”, or media dictating political agenda. The author then sets about exploration of the main theme of manipulation of information as a game in democracy.

Set in six chapters, Sinha first explains how information is a building block of democracy undermined today by prioritisation of fiction over fact. In the second chapter vital role of information in governance is underlined and how technology has an adverse impact creating a gap between the government and the people militating against physical contact. The next chapter distinguishes between information and informed society an oft debated issue.

Chapter Four outlines the dialectics of reality creation to an uninformed audience exploiting technological processes and corporatisation of information. Next the author exposes how networks create information monopolies thus being the antithesis of empowerment of the individual in democracies. In the final chapter the author argues the proliferation of spin and mediatation and what is unstated nexus between media, ideologies and politics. The author thus outlines how in democracies even though information is not controlled it is

channelized to achieve political objectives. It goes to the credit of the author that he does not dismiss mainstream media as the devil but the need to transverse ills through building an informed society from the grass roots.

All in all a work of heavy reading for the academic, political scientist, media and practitioners of politics.

Brigadier RK Bhonsle, SM (Retd)

Indian Recipients of the Military Cross Vol. I & II. By Sushil Talwar, (New Delhi : Knowledge World, 2017), 580 p & 581 p 1292, Price Rs. 7800.00, ISBN 9789386288707

This is the first book to focus on the Military Cross and that too specifically on recipients from the Indian Army from the date it was instituted after the outbreak of the First World War till the date of Indian Independence when Indians were no longer eligible for the award.

The recognition of courage in the face of the enemy and extreme adversity have been essential features of military activity worldwide, but it was left to Sushil Talwar to bring out a comprehensive reference work meticulously researched and illustrated with photographs that resurrect the faces of brave warriors of a different period of time and space.

The medal and its ribbon are beautifully designed and were instituted in December 1914 as recognition of gallantry in the field for junior officers and warrant officers of the colonial armies. The medal is in the shape of a Greek cross and the ribbon is white with a central purple stripe.

The two volumes of the book contain detailed record of all the Indian recipients of the Military Cross of World Wars I & II which contribute significantly towards filling the gap in the absence of a publication in this matter.

The book brings out the relative scarcity of the award to Indian officers in both the World Wars considering that the Indian Army was the largest volunteer army in the history of human

conflict. During World War I, Indians and Gurkhas were awarded just 145 MCs and 895 in World War II.

An interesting aspect brought out by the author is that nearly one third of all awards of the Military Cross have been awarded to members of the Indian Medical Corps which brings out not only that this is the only corps which had Indians serving as officers during World War I, but also that the Indian Medical Corps had many brave and gallant personnel.

This work encapsulates an extraordinary labour of love that extended into a period of research of over ten years. Its documentation does great credit to the author and these volumes should be part of the collection of every military historian and every institution dealing with military history.

Major General Ian Cardozo, AVSM, SM (Retd)

Karan Singh : Jammu & Kashmir (1949- 1967). By Harbans Singh, (New Delhi, Brahaspati Publications, 2018) 352 pp, Rs. 695.00, ISBN: 81-85382-14-X

This well researched volume is essentially about J&K after its accession to India by Maharaja Hari Singh and the important role played by Karan Singh (virtually a teenager) to save the State from the nefarious designs of Sheikh Abdulla. The study is well structured in twenty one chapters. Arranged sequentially, they merge seamlessly into one another. As the author brings out, the seeds for discord in the Valley were sown much earlier by resurgent Islam that included efforts of Iqbal in championing the cause of Muslims in Palestine, Xinjiang, India and Kashmir. The author shows the two main players responsible for bringing continued misery, strife and isolation to J&K – Nehru and Sheikh Abdulla. For greater mileage, in 1938 Abdulla adroitly changed the name of Muslim Conference to National Conference. It remains a moot point whether Nehru and Patel were wise in removing Hari Singh so unceremoniously after he had signed the Instrument of Accession. Abdulla gradually acquired an Orwellian image and was encouraged no end by the appeasement politics of Nehru. Nehru's vision was extremely myopic and he could never fathom

the sentiment of Praja Parishad and its demand for, ek nishan, ek pradhan' , 'ek vidhan. Equally, Sheikh Abdulla never understood the cause of Ladakh or the Dogras. Nehru displayed chicanery and timidity in ignoring Maulana Azad's sane advice to sack Abdulla as also BN Mullick's report that the great game of the British since 1930's was to encourage Abdulla to spearhead a liberal movement in the Valley! Spellbound by Mountbatten, Nehru took the issue to the UN; which further emboldened Abdulla and he continued his ranting at the UN about injustices being perpetrated on Muslims. A supine bureaucracy guided by a blinkered Nehru continued to kow-tow to Abdulla resulting in Article 370 et al. Karan Singh finally saw through the perfidy of Abdulla when he wanted to abolish jagirdari without payment that would have hurt the Hindus in the State. Karan Singh showed great strength of character in ordering Sheikh Abdulla's arrest that later led to substantial progress in J&K. Harbans Singh has done a yeoman's service by highlighting various important facts about J&K. The book is a valuable addition to the Kashmir imbroglio.

Major General Ashok Joshi, VSM (Retd)