

Global Geo Strategic and Politico-Military Perspectives Through Millennia Past Vol. 1 and 2

CB Verma

For those baffled by the absurd magnitude of contemporary history – mammoth armies, perpetual wars, automated weapon systems, barbaric massacres, shocking terrorist attacks or weapons of mass destruction – history is perhaps the only refuge. For, in it one begins to see some semblance of order emerging out of what otherwise appears a chaos threatening to spin out of control. The publication under review should find a respectable place in the list of those works which help us chart a somewhat broken path through such a landscape of human history.

Let me begin on a note of caution. This is not an Operational Manual – if you are a beginner in the profession of arms or in the skill of deep reading and only peripherally interested in history from a politico-military perspective – do not pick up this title. However, if for any reason history moves you, geo-strategy appeals to you and you find the lure of great minds decoding important events around you in “so-true” narratives irresistible – grab it!

The book is awesome for the sheer audacity of its scope. To claim to understand and interpret quite a few important landmarks of global history – from the pre-historic era to the contemporary era - from a geo-strategic and politico-military perspective and read an evolutionary logic through them, is not easy. And indeed, the author is serious – very serious in his attempt.

Fifty years of systematic study and research in matters military and geopolitical have prefaced five years of actual writing

to produce almost thousand pages of closely packed text that constitute this book. It reads like a life-time work – passion oozes from every chunk - cover to cover – reaching into the deepest recesses of the author’s mind, scouring the labyrinths of his soul – driving him to challenge his own limits and explore his mind – chasing his firing neurons in something of a frenzied quest – ending exhausted but not exactly satisfied. Issues are approached from multiple perspectives – classical literature, spirituality and contemporary classics are only some of them. There is something of a passionate drive at work here – if you have experienced it you know what I mean - if not try reading through.

Understandably, the book calls for time, needs patient attention and demands perseverance, but it rewards you amply – with insights, revelations, revisions and a world view that the academia may find worth engaging with.

Two parallel streams flow in the text - a historical account of various human civilisations through pre and recorded history and the multi-dimensional developments in military strategy and thinking that have taken place intermeshed with them. Many major historical landmarks and developments in military strategy linked to them can be found in the book. Facts, inferences, observations, quotes and perspectives are liberally interspersed through the chapters, often knitting themselves into engaging and informative sections. What the book promises is not a radically new take on global history but a new synthesis of circulating ideas and opinions from the global domain.

Another aspect that a reader would find of pivotal importance is the “multiple aspects of basic strategic cultures and thoughts”. These aspects have been instrumental in historically path-breaking events, including the inseparable as well as complimentary making of military history.

Let’s look at the section of which we are a part – “*Space age of the Present Modern Era*”. Multiple advances in the post-industrial revolution era in the fields of electronics, computers, automation, Information Technology (IT), nanotechnology, cryogenics, Nuclear Biological Chemical (NBC) warfare, extremism, terrorism and space age – all feature here. Apart from

documenting the outlines of each, the book offers an analysis of how weapon systems and platforms and war strategies have evolved in dialogue with important political and technological developments, through this era. And, the last section studies the Indian situation in fair detail.

Information war is a case in point. If war is understood as a contest or conflict involving the use of force to control or subjugate an opponent, information war represents its special case. The human mindscape is its theatre, social/political engineers and programmers working in tandem with intelligence and military officials are its warriors, and carefully chosen and doctored information disseminated through sophisticated programmes that track their users' preferences and predispositions are its weapons. Swifter, subtler, more efficient and ruthless, this breed has already conquered minds and hearts, effected bloodless coups and enthroned and dethroned tyrants and dictators in theatres that would have proved very challenging, if not impossible, for conventional forces. The book bares some of it!

I am personally invested in the well-being of such books – not necessarily their commercial success. Such projects hold promise of looking afresh at relatively stable domains from multiple perspectives that may help answer new queries and concerns arising in many curious contemporary minds. This book is one such attempt.

Professor Sanjiv Nandan Prasad

Global Geo Strategic and Politico-Military Perspectives Through Millennia Past Vol. 1 and 2. By CB Verma, New Delhi : Pentagon Press, 2018, 994P, Price Rs. 3995/-. ISBN:9789386618207.

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Short Reviews of Recent Books

Neighbourhood Initiatives of the Modi Government : Challenges and Road Ahead. *Edited by Nalini Kant Jha, Sreelekha K R, (New Delhi : Pentagon Press, 2018. P 153, Price : 795, ISBN: 9789386618337)*

This interesting book is a compilation of papers presented by thinkers and academicians at the University Grants Commission (UGC) Centre for South Asia, Pondicherry. The Modi Government has shown good initiative and has been able to improve relations with China, Afghanistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Maldives and Bhutan. In his paper, Jayant Prasad praises the vigour of the government to reconnect with nations of South Africa and the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). SD Muni discusses the changes made in the inherited policy but describes Modi's Pakistan policy as flip-flop! AK Gupta discusses the diplomatic activism at regional and global levels but highlights the 'neighbourhood first policy'. In their paper, NK Jha and Sreelekha rightly recommend modernisation of Indian military establishment and arsenal. However, their suggestion that Indian Government should engage directly with Pakistan's military establishment is quixotic. With regard to Nepal, the duo feels that though our relations improved initially subsequently the mutual trust and cooperation declined. While NK Jha is all praise for the skilful handling of a geostrategically important neighbour like Maldives by New Delhi, yet the influence of Wahhabi Islam and intensification of Chinese presence must be taken note of. Shivaraju CD highlights the nefarious designs of the Chinese with regard to Bhutan in Doklam, Paramlung Valley and Jakarlung Valley. With Bangladesh, the Modi Government has ratified Land Boundary Agreement and galvanised the trade and transit routes. However, Sreelekha advises caution against increase in Islamic fundamentalist tendencies. S Vasani warns against Chinese master plan of One Belt One Road and Maritime Silk Road (MSR) and recommends that India adopt a pro-active approach in the IOR. Our ties with Sri Lanka are on the upswing but as Venkatraman is quick to point; we should ignore Tamil sentiments or we may lose to the Chinese in MSR. DS Rajan wonders

whether Xi Jinping under economic interests driven foreign policy might tone down aggressive territorial claims. MP Lama discusses the challenges and opportunities but opines that India continues to be a weak nation unwilling to assert itself in the comity of nations. All essays are well researched and offer useful insights.

Major General Ashok Joshi, VSM (Retd)

An Insight : The Iconic Battle of Saragarhi : Echoes of the Frontier. *By Brig Kanwaljit Singh, Pentagon Press and the United Service Institution of India, (New Delhi, 2018, P 204, Price Rs. 995/-, ISBN 978-93-86618-60-3)*

The story of Saragarhi is an epic that has often been told. This story, however, matures with its retelling particularly because the author brings to light fascinating aspects not included in earlier narrations of this iconic battle.

For the author, Brigadier Kanwaljit Singh, this has been a labour of love because he himself belongs to this renowned battalion 'The 36 Sikhs' or 'Chathis Sikhs' or 4 Sikhs as it is known today and with whom I have had the privilege to serve, when my unit was in the same brigade.

What makes this story of Saragarhi different is that the author has brought together many aspects of war on the North West Frontier in one single narrative. This, in many ways, makes the story more complete. Aspects that deserve mention are details of tribes of North West Frontier and the campaigns launched by the British to bring some control over those recalcitrant people, the chronicles of the marvelous Sikh fighters who have punctuated the pages of military history with their brave deeds, the iconic battle of Saragarhi itself and the last stand taken by those brave stalwarts who by their attitude and behaviour have epitomised the soldierly values of valour, fortitude, courage, commitment, dedication, self-sacrifice and loyalty.

A great deal of research has been undertaken by the author to resurrect historical facts, old photographs, prints, pictures, letters, and historical data that makes this volume exceptionally useful not only to the military historian but also to the average man in the street who needs to know more about the Indian Army

which continues to serve the nation with the same ardour as in times gone by.

This book is recommended for purchase by universities and service libraries as there is a great need for students of today to know that it is knowledge of the past that helps one to understand the present and in making blueprints for the future.

Major General Ian Cardozo, AVSM, SM (Retd)

The Indian Army in the First World War. Edited by Alan Jeffreys, (England: Helion & Company, Limited) published in association with the United Service Institution of India, 2018, P 313, ISBN: 9781911512783, Price not indicated.

This book is a collection of essays that cover a vast swathe of aspects pertaining to the Indian Army's participation in World War I.

These essays by eminent military historians cover the part played by Indian units in campaigns fought across Europe, Asia and Africa in the Great War from 1914 to 1918. They give the reader a good perception of aspects concerning the grand strategy and the controversies that were part of it. Indian Army was quickly mobilised and sent to war zones in seven expeditionary forces. The challenges faced included defence of Suez Canal, the catastrophes at Dardanelles, Gallipoli and Kut-al-Amara. Contribution by the Indian Cavalry in Palestine and capture of Haifa were noteworthy. Animal units performed very well. British Territorial Army Units gave a good account of themselves in Mesopotamia campaign.

The British Government made a promise to accord Dominion status to India, which was betrayed. Indian officers were inducted into the Indian Army which proved beneficial to India in the long run. However, Khilafat movement caused complications. Islam and Gadhar movement had its effect on war. There was surge of Indian nationalism after the war. There was adverse effect of war on India's economy, politics and it caused social unrest. The Jalianwalabag massacre had adverse effect on Sikh troops.

There was lack of published material on substantial contribution made by India in conduct of many battles. Whatever little was published, there was bias on the part of British authors. After the war, demobilisation took place wherein Indian troops did not get a fair deal. Many such aspects have been covered that bring alive what happened a hundred years ago in global cataclysm that killed millions of soldiers and civilians across the world.

Each of the above subjects has been covered in great detail and is a 'goldmine' of information to the military historian and the academic researcher. The articles are well annotated with detailed footnotes citing sources of information. Overall the book provides a wealth of knowledge to the reader, that too in one comprehensive volume. This book should be part of all military libraries and universities where military history is researched and taught.

Major General Ian Cardozo, AVSM, SM (Retd)

Pentagon Year Book 2019: South Asia Defence and Strategic Perspective 2019. Edited by Vijay Sakhuja (New Delhi : Pentagon Press, 2019), P 248, Price Rs.1995, ISBN – 978-93-86618-73-3.

China today has effectively breached the Himalayan barriers and is gaining influence over the region long considered by India as its 'strategic neighbourhood'. The use of its 'cheque book diplomacy', under the garb of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), in the region is leading to a zero-sum-game with India and is a major cause for concern in the prevailing geo-political and geo-economic uncertainties. However, all is not as well as China wants the world to believe. The overt 'arm-twisting' of Sri Lanka to gain control of Hambantotta Port in a debt-equity swap has rung the alarm bells in the region.

Coupled with a slowing economy and a push back of sorts to its BRI, comes the US Trade War that seems to have pushed China to pause and re-calibrate its strategy. This book is a timely effort on analysing the various perspectives of the flagship project of the BRI, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). It

would add to the existing knowledge, as it provides varied perspectives to the concomitant issues plaguing the CPEC at present.

The book is spread over ten Chapters dealing with the main theme (CPEC), and has the Country Notes on South Asian Countries including Military Balance at the end. The style is crisp, clear, smooth flowing and easy to read.

However, it needs to be noted that the Silk Road Economic Fund and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank are two entirely different entities – the first is a state owned Chinese institution, while the other is a multilateral financial institution (Seigfried O. Wolf, chapter 1). It is interesting to note that James Dorsey, in chapter 4 includes Pakistan as part of Greater Middle East. The Military Balance, published as part of the Country Notes, is a good effort but lacks citation.

Overall a very nicely written book that is easy to comprehend by a layman. It should be part of every think tank, universities and military unit libraries.

Major General Rajiv Narayanan, AVSM, VSM (Retd)

India-Uzbekistan Partnership in Regional Peace and Stability : Challenges and Prospects. Editors : Rajiv, Narayanan, Batir Tursunov, Gaurav Kumar, New Delhi : Vij Books, 2018, P 155, Price Rs. 495/-, ISBN:9789388161169

The combined efforts of analysts from the Institute for Strategic and Regional Studies (ISRS), Uzbekistan and the United Service Institution of India (USI) have coalesced to produce a comprehensive study of relevance and importance of India-Uzbekistan Partnership in maintaining regional peace and stability. Suitably structured, each section of the book comprises narratives from Indian and Uzbek perspectives. These include an assessment of challenges to regional security, the role and approach in conflict resolution and peace building, prospects for cooperation, trade and transit, management of Islamic radicalisation, appraisal of India-Uzbek relations and the way forward. Notwithstanding this extremely large canvas, the

distillation of ideas on each topic by the scholars is noteworthy. Various authors have rightly traced our links from Mahabharat times as Saka, Kushan, and Kamboja find reference in it. The *Uttar Path* (Northern trade route) provided overland links for India to China and Europe.

As the authors bring out, Central Asia is one of the “youngest” regions, as young people make up 60 per cent of the population. The challenges and threats to the young and hence to the region stem from terrorism, religious extremism, drug trafficking and organised crime. It is to be noted that none of the Central Asian States, although members of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), have renamed their states as Islamic republics. However, the Wahhabi / Salafi schools have permeated to take roots in contemporary Central Asia, especially in the Ferghana Valley shared by Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. *En passant*, it may be mentioned that foreign terrorists arrived in Jammu and Kashmir from 1989 onwards. To the great credit of Uzbekistan, they are taking positive steps to educate the youth and implement preventive mechanism to neutralise the scourge of terrorism. However, Salafi jihadists often prevail on the young minds with cleverly crafted narratives. Given the fascination of the millennial generation with the internet, both Uzbekistan and India have to guard against “online radicalisation”. The book is a compilation of practical ideas that need to be evaluated and implemented by the two nations to ensure peace and stability in the region.

Major General Ashok Joshi, VSM (Retd)

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| CAFHR-37 | The Iconic Battle Of Saragarhi – Echoes of The Frontier" by Brig Kanwaljit Singh (Retd) M/s Pentagon Press | 995 | 2018 |

* Available at USI of India ** Available at M/s Vij Books of India Pvt Ltd

USI

(Estd. 1870)

OUR ACTIVITIES

Library and Reading Room

The library holds over 68,000 books, and journals, including some books of 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, on an astonishing variety of subjects. While the principal emphasis is on strategy and defence, there are a large number of works on different vistas of Indian life. There are memoirs, biographies, recollections, diaries, journals, manuscripts for scholars and researchers. The reading room is air-conditioned, spacious and well stocked in terms of current reading material. Library was automated in 2002.

Correspondence Courses

The Institution runs regular correspondence courses for officers of the Armed Forces to assist them in preparing for promotion examinations, and for the entrance examinations to the Defence Services Staff College and Technical Staff College. Over the years, this has been a significant and well-received activity.

USI Journal

The *USI Journal* is the oldest surviving defence journal in the country and in Asia, having first appeared in 1871. In an era when there is a feeling that free expression of views by Defence personnel is not looked upon kindly by the establishment, the Journal in fact provides just such a forum, without regard to seniority and length of service in the Armed Forces, subject of course, to propriety and quality of the written work.

Centre for Strategic Studies and Simulation

The Erstwhile Centre for Research and its resources have been merged into the new Centre named as USI Centre for Strategic Studies and Simulation (USI-CS3) wef 01 January 2005. The Centre aims at conducting detailed and comprehensive enquiry, research and analyses of national and international security related issues, and gaming and simulation of strategic scenarios, to evolve options for wider discussion and consideration.

USI Centre for UN Peacekeeping (CUNPK)

The Centre was established in 2000 and functioned with USI till Aug 2014, when it moved out of USI premises and was delinked from USI. Its aims were organising workshops, seminars and training capsules for peace-keepers, observers and staff officers – both Indian and foreign. It also oversaw the practical training of Indian contingents. It functioned under a Board of Management headed by the Vice Chief of the Army Staff and worked in close coordination with the Service Headquarters and the Ministries of External Affairs and Defence. In August 2014, CUNPK moved out to the accommodation allotted by the Army HQ.

Centre for Armed Forces Historical Research (CAFHR)

The Centre was established on 01 Dec 2000 and encourages study and research into the history of the Indian Armed Forces with objectivity, covering different facets such as strategy, tactics, logistics, organisation and socio-economic aspects and their implementation.

Gold Medal Essay Competitions

Every year the Institution organises two gold medal essay competitions: one for officers below 10 years of service and the other open to all officers. These essays, the first one of which was introduced in 1871, constitute a barometer of opinion on matters that affect national security in general and the defence forces in particular.

Lt Gen SL Menezes Memorial Essay Competition

This has been instituted from 2015 on a subject related to Armed Forces Historical Research. The Essay Competition is open to all across the globe.

Lectures, Discussions and Seminars

A series of lectures, discussions and seminars on service matters, international affairs, and topics of general interest to the Services, are organised for the benefit of local members in Delhi.

MacGregor Medal

This medal is awarded to Armed Forces personnel for valuable reconnaissance and adventure activity they may have undertaken.

MEMBERSHIP

The following are eligible to become members of the Institution :

- Officers of the Armed Forces
- Class I Gazetted Officers of Group 'A' Central Services.
- Any category mentioned above will be eligible even though retired or released from the Service.
- Cadets from the NDA and Cadets from the Service Academies and Midshipmen.

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