

Short Reviews of Recent Books

Gorichen to Siachen: The Untold Saga of Hoisting the Tricolour on Saltoro. By DK Khanna, (New Delhi: Alpha Editions, 2017), Price Rs 850, pp..147, ISBN 9789386367105

This book, in 16 chapters, is the account of a newly raised unit (19 KUMAON) that conquered the virgin peak of Gorichen (6888m) in Arunachal Pradesh and later participated in Operation 'Meghdoot' for occupying the Saltoro Range. Smooth-flowing style of the author plus plenty of photographs and sketches facilitate understanding of the gripping saga of grit, determination and initiatives at individual and collective levels, in successfully completing tasks in face of overwhelming odds and huge demands on human endurance.

The first five chapters cover the author taking over the Unit in 1981, training his command for war especially in mountains, deployment for internal security in Assam, volunteering for the expedition to Gorichen that was being abandoned otherwise, conquering the peak in October 1982, and the unit moving to Khrew in J&K during 1983. The author got the first hint of an operation in glacial area in February 1984 while recovering from spinal injury, though exact task was unclear. What followed was intense training in glacial warfare. On 18 March 1984, the Unit left Khrew for a 630 kms trek to Siachen area in company columns, with everyone carrying 35 kgs over Zoji La, through other passes and finally over Khardung La (5602m).

On 13 April 1984, troops of 4 KUMAON and Ladakh Scouts were heli-dropped short of Sia La and Bilafond La for occupying these passes. 19 KUMAON was tasked to patrol the Lagongma and Layogma Glaciers, a task later expanded to Gyong La and Zingrulma Glaciers once enemy movement was observed at Gyong La on 19 May 1984. The Unit was not equipped for operations beyond 9000 feet, however, they hoisted the Tricolour at Point 5725 (overlooking Gyong La) on 29 May 1984. The unit lost a volunteer patrol of 18 in an avalanche while attempting to occupy Point 5965.

Pakistan acknowledges that India pre-empted Pakistani plans of occupying Saltoro. The author recommends India should keep holding Saltoro Ridge strongly till the Kashmir issue is finally settled. Of many books written on Operation 'Meghdoot', this one covering

what entailed at battalion level in run up to the operation, aside from its conduct, is special. It is recommended to be read by anyone interested in India's occupation of the Saltoro Ridge.

Lieutenant General PC Katoch, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, SC (Retd)

How Pakistan Got Divided. *By Rao Farman Ali Khan, (Oxford University Press, Karachi, 2017), Price Rs 1150.00, 174 p. ISBN: 9780199406982.*

This is a book that tries to defend the indefensible. Rao Farman Ali Khan, a General of the Pakistan Army, was part of the military machine that organised the wanton killings that aimed to destroy Bengali aspirations for self rule. He served as Advisor Civil-Political affairs to five successive Governors. Among them, the only one who refused to collaborate with the military hierarchy of West Pakistan and resigned, rather than be a part of the problem, was Lieutenant General Yakub Khan. The role of Lieutenant General Tikka Khan, as the butcher of Baluchistan and later of East Pakistan is well known.

Whereas the Hamood-ur-Rehman Commission has let off General Rao Farman Ali Khan lightly, by saying that his performance and conduct does not call for any adverse comment; one needs to understand that this does not exonerate him from his sins of omission, as part of the team of diabolical killers that slaughtered more than a million defenceless Bengalis. In such a situation, Rao Farman Ali Khan had only three options – either to resign and refuse to be part of the butchery, or to be an instrument of the pogrom like General Tikka Khan, or lastly to be a collaborator to the evil West Pakistan scheme. In the eyes of the world, Rao Farman Ali is seen in the third avatar. Many in Bangladesh see him as an evil participant in the Pakistan plan to exterminate the Bengalis so that they would never aspire for self governance again.

This book is seen as an attempt to whitewash the author's role in the holocaust that took place in East Pakistan. Whereas, he may not have been the man who wielded the gun to slaughter innocent Bengalis; he is seen as the person that worked behind the scene to allow all that to happen.

In comparable instances, Lieutenant General BN Kaul had tried to exhort himself from the 1962 debacle with his book 'The Untold Story' and Lieutenant General AAK Niazi tried to defend his conduct in the 1971 war with his book, '*Betrayal of East Pakistan*'. In the eyes of the man in the street, both books have failed to clear the sullied performance of their authors. Rao Farman Ali Khan's book is of a similar genre and, in my opinion has done no better with this book.'

Notwithstanding the above, the book walks the reader step by step through the tortuous sequence of events that led to the break-up of Pakistan. There are many 'ifs' in the story and the author tries to bring out that the demise of Pakistan could have been avoided if both sides could have looked at the big picture with more maturity and less anger. What comes out clearly however, is the arrogance, ego and stubborn rigidity of the principal characters from West Pakistan who refused to countenance being ruled by a Bengali Prime Minister or having Bengali ministers in the Pakistani Cabinet despite the fact that they won a landslide victory that justified these appointments.

Before the final breakdown of talks, a possible solution did present itself in the evolution of a confederation of East and West Pakistan, with separate Prime Ministers in the two wings. According to the author, the President, General Yahya Khan, during his final talks with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Dhaka in mid-March, appeared to be willing to consider this option, if only to step back from the abyss of the break-up of Pakistan, but the Prime Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto would have none of it. The rest is history.

The reader however needs to read the book and decide for himself. While reading the views that the author tries to convey, he needs to read between the lines and balance Rao Farman Ali Khan's version against the vast material on this topic that is available in the public domain.

An interesting book that deserves to be read, if only to know what happened during those fateful days; even though it is narrated by a person of the Government of West Pakistan who 'willy-nilly' was part of the plot.

Major General Ian Cardozo, AVSM, SM (Retd)

Learning to Live with the Bomb – Pakistan: 1998-2016. By Naeem Salik, (Oxford University Press, Karachi, 2017), Price Rs 1125/-, p, 328, ISBN 9780199404568.

The Book, written by Dr Naeem Salik is an interesting read. It will be handy for the scholars who desire to know the Pakistani nuclear programme, as the book provides a Pakistani perspective on the country's nuclear programme. Much is expected from this book, as the author has a good understanding of Pakistan's nuclear issues, due to his past association with the Pakistani Government in establishing the Pakistan's Command and Control structure after the 1998 nuclear tests, and also, the author served at the Strategic Plans Division.

The book is comprehensive with adequate citations. The theoretical aspects have been covered coherently, giving both a pro and counter narrative to many of the controversial issues, but the author's own views on some of these issues are lacking. Nevertheless; the book provides an in-depth account of Pakistan's nuclear programme be it the Command and Control structure or its evolving nuclear doctrine.

The book has eight chapters. In the First Chapter, which is a backgrounder, the author explores Pakistan's experience as a Nuclear Weapon State, through a process of its 'Nuclear Learning'. Further he enunciates the 'Typology of Nuclear Learning' and illustrates an interesting 'Nuclear Learning Matrix', where the role of military, political leadership, bureaucracy and security analyst's interaction in terms of decision making, doctrinal aspects, institution building, safety and security etc., are elucidated. Second Chapter briefly delves into Pakistan's nuclear history and a chronological progression of its nuclear programme and the development of its nuclear weapons. He also tries to provide an insight, as to why Pakistan's nuclear programme became controversial, especially the repercussions to the Pakistani propaganda of the 'Islamic Bomb'. It concludes with the important lesson being learnt - that through single minded determination and national resolve, insurmountable challenges could be overcome by Pakistan.

Third Chapter discusses the evolution of Pakistan's nuclear doctrine – its role, significance and various manifestations. It also discusses the nuclear strategy by various other nuclear weapon states. It concludes by stating that Pakistan has gradually matured

in its nuclear ideas and has responded to the changing threat environment with a definitive nuclear objective of deterrence and stabilisation of strategic deterrence in South Asia. Next Chapter deals with the all-important 'Command and Control' set up. He starts with the description of assertive and the delegative types of controls and further on the nature, challenges, the internal dynamics and the evolution of its nuclear command and control structures in Pakistan. He further highlights the difference between the National Command Authority (NCA) Ordinance of 2007 and 2010 and illustrates the organisation, role and functions of NCA and its constituents, and organisation of the Strategic Plans Division (SPD).

Since the author served as the Director, Arms Control and Disarmament Agency at the SPD, he has included in his book the chapters on Nuclear Safety and Security Arrangements, Pakistan's Nuclear Export Control Regimes and Pakistan's Nuclear Regulatory Regime.

In conclusion, the book has a lot of data collected from various open sources which through the book is available at one source and which would be useful for the researchers, but there is no newness in terms of analysis of threats, and the author has been guarded in divulging his own views.

Dr Roshan Khanijo

A Tale of Two Victoria Crosses. By Lt Gen Baljit Singh, (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2017), pp..82, Price Rs 495/-, ISBN: 9788182748859.

There are many books that cover various aspects of that most iconic of gallantry awards, the Victoria Cross (VC). Instituted in 1854, the VC was the highest reward for gallantry in the face of the enemy that soldiers of the commonwealth nations could aspire to. The first awards to the Indian Army were made for the expedition to Persia in 1856-57 but till 1911 only British officers were eligible for the decoration. Indian soldiers became eligible from 1912 onwards and the first recipients were decorated for gallantry in action on the western front in France and Flanders in 1914. From 1856 till Independence in 1947, 164 VCs were awarded to the Indian Army of which 40 were to Indians.

This book, which has 82 pages and number of captivating photographs, is written by way of tribute from one soldier to another.

It is an attempt by the author to resurrect the memory of a brave Indian officer, Lieutenant Karamjeet Singh Judge of the 4th Battalion, 15th Punjab Regiment (now 12 Punjab, Pakistan Army) who fell in the moment of his greatest glory while directing tanks of 116th Regiment, RAC onto Japanese bunkers during the Battle of Meiktila in Burma on 18 March 1945.

While the author narrates the events that led to the award of the VC the charm of the book lies in the author's narrative that links events and people across space and time to tell a tale of human warmth, affection and soldierly ties that transcend race and nation.

Lieutenant Karamjeet Singh was the younger brother of the author's first commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Ajit Singh Judge. The anecdotes linking the two brothers and another VC of the Sikhs, John Smyth, the author and other actors that played a part in the telling of this story are what make this little book stand apart from others of its ilk.

The book is recommended for purchase by service libraries as it highlights tales of bravery, leadership and devotion to duty, linking the soldiers' ethos across generations.

Squadron Leader Rana TS Chhina, MBE (Retd)

Themes of Glory – Indian Artillery in War. By Brigadier Darshan Khullar (Vij Books India Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi, 2017), Price Rs 850/-, p. 233, ISBN 9789385563973.

The first thing that strikes one about this book is its novel approach. It does not follow the stereotype of writing a book. The uniqueness of this book has been aptly summarised in the introduction "About the Book". To quote "*Writing even an abridged history of the Regiment of Artillery, which is the second largest Arm of the Indian Army and its glorious achievements would have been a herculean task and would have run into a couple of volumes*". But the author has deftly tackled the dilemma by selecting to write about six field generals, eight gallantry award winners, four Artillery intensive battles, twenty four battle honours and some noteworthy vignettes of valour. With this uniquely innovative approach, the book makes a great collection of marvelous facts of the Regiment and the role it has played in shaping the outcome of wars fought by the Indian Army".

The author has selected six field generals very aptly. All of them have made a unique contribution to the Regiment of Artillery in their own way – whether in peace or in war. General Kumaramangalam handed over a battle hardened and well-equipped Army to Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw, which enabled the latter to win laurels in 1971 war resulting in creation of a new nation – Bangladesh. Piece done on six field generals is embellished with anecdotes which add value to the narration. Lieutenant General KP Candeth kept a low profile but under his able leadership Western Command made a great contribution to the overall war effort in 1971. Major General Mohinder Singh took over a demoralised 15 Infantry Division and restored its fighting spirit by his personal example and was rightly awarded the Maha Vir Chakra (MVC). The credit to stem the tide of Pakistan offensive in Chhamb Sector rightly goes to Lieutenant General Sartaj, which then Captain Sheru Thapliyal (later Major General) saw first-hand as he was a OP Officer with 5 SIKH, part of 191 Infantry Brigade. Baba Sartaj, as he was affectionately called by all ranks, stood like a rock on the East Bank of Manawar Tawi river and rallied all ranks to halt the rampaging Pakistanis. A maverick, who was nonetheless very astute and capable, General Jacob, although the Chief of Staff, Eastern Command, played an outstanding role in the war in securing the surrender of over 93000 prisoners of war, a feat, unparalleled in military history. Major General Lachman Singh Lehl rose to fame as the GOC of 20 Mountain Division in the Eastern Sector in 1971 war and for his skillful command in Hili and Bogra battles. He is also a soldier-scholar.

Although the share of gallantry awards won by the Regiment of Artillery is a mere pittance of the total won by the Indian Army, the selection of eight award winners is very apt and deserving. The citations of the MVC winners say all.

Four artillery intensive battles have been carefully and correctly chosen. Khem Karan in 1965, Poonch and Basantar in 1971 in the Western Sector and battles in Kargil in 1999 prove that artillery indeed is a battle winning arm. The list of Battle Honours won by the Regiment is extensive, covering the period right from the Second World War onwards to Jammu and Kashmir operation in 1947-48, 1962, 1965 and 1971 wars to operation Vijay in Kargil in 1999.

The final chapter, rightly named 'Vignettes of Valour', showcases the ability of the gunners to take on infantry role and display their ability to innovate and take extra initiative whenever the need has arisen. The much neglected gun end also finds a mention in some of these episodes.

To conclude, Brigadier Khullar deserves kudos for an extra ordinary book with its interesting, racy and apt description of personalities and events which must have taken a great amount of research. This book deserves to be in all unit and formation libraries and also in the Think Tank archives. To quote Major General Ashok Mehta – "*Themes of Glory is a fine repository of vignettes of valour and the wisdom of Topchis.*"

Major General SV Thapliyal, SM (Retd)

China-Pakistan Relations – A Historical Analysis. By Ghulam Ali, (Oxford University Press, 2017), pp 263, Price 1225, ISBN 978-0-19-940249-6.

The book is authored by a Pakistani professor, who works at the China Study Centre, COMSTATS Institute of Information Technology, Islamabad and has done Postdoctoral Fellowship at the Center for Pakistan Studies, Department of South Asian Studies, Peking University, and Beijing. He examines how and why of the "all weather, time tested and sweeter than honey" relationship between Pakistan and China that has evolved over the years and its durability.

The historical perspective of the relationship is laid out in seven chapters covering the period from 1950 to April 2015. The chapters are - The Formative Phase (1950-62); Strengthening and Deepening of Relations (1963-77); China's Reforms and Modernisation, and relations with Pakistan (1978-89); China's Policy of Balance and Stability (1990-2001); China's Renewed Interest in Pakistan- Relations Post 9/11; China-Pakistan Economic Corridor; and the last chapter covers the 'Factors of Durability'.

The book explains how in the early years when both China and Pakistan faced internal and external challenges, their relationship turned into *entente cordiale*. The author argues that the disruption in US-Pakistan relations, the sanctions and the India factor pushed Pakistan closer to China. The nature of Sino-Pakistan

relationship is strategic and armed forces of the two countries have helped to strengthen it.

There are also commercial and economic aspects in this relationship. To support this contention, the author argues that when China during the period 1978-89 was reforming and undertaking modernisation, instead of mainly focussing on Pakistan expanded the scope of her South Asian policy and stopped grants and started giving concessional loans to Pakistan. China's supply of arms to Pakistan, help in nuclear and missile programme and support in other areas must be viewed in this backdrop.

The book conveys that mutual trust accumulated over the years, interdependence and ongoing expansion makes the relationship between China and Pakistan strong and capable of overcoming any challenges of the future. It is brought out that there are structures in place that ensure that their relationship remains a 'give and take relationship' against a 'patron-client equation'.

The author gives greater credit to China than Pakistan for maintaining durable partnership. But cautions that with the launch of China Pakistan Economic Corridor, the relationship has reached crossroads where it can grow exponentially or it may get diluted due to the possibility of more active engagement by China in the internal affairs of Pakistan, something from which China has stayed away in the past.

The book is very informative, well-structured and arguments have been developed logically. It is considered useful in understanding the historical perspective and the contours of the relationship between China and Pakistan to researchers, planners and policy makers.

Lieutenant General Chander Prakash, SM, VSM (Retd)

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