Short Reviews of Recent Books

India's Military Power: A General Reflects. By Lt Gen HC Dutta, PVSM, AVSM (Retd), (Manas Publications, New Delhi, 2016), pp..284, Price Rs 795.00, ISBN 9788170495178.

This biographical narration by one of the most outstanding Generals of the Indian Army is more of a 'text book of military education' than a mere biographic sketch. I must confess that the narrative gripped my imagination and I am confident that it is bound to have a similar effect on any serious student of military literature.

The book comprising 12 chapters has three distinct parts: his motivation to join the profession of arms; personal passion to imbibe it in all its dimensions and lastly to reflect on his knowledge and experience in a capsule form. The last part (last three chapters) reflects the vital importance of military power for security and wellbeing of a Nation and how to orchestrate the same in the form of a strategy. For this reason, I have an unconventional suggestion for higher echelons of command and policy makers who may not have the time or inclination to read the entire book, to read the book in reverse order to understand the importance of framing a sound National Defence Policy. It is all the more necessary because even after 70 years of Independence, in the civil-military relationship milieu it still prevails – 'that ostensibly, the Indian Army has yet to prove its apolitical credentials'.

Let me now come back to the book itself. The story unfolds itself, finally culminating into an essence of military wisdom assimilated through a lifetime of intense hard work, professional commitment, patriotic fervour, academic knowledge honed by extensive combat experience and finally, so articulately spelt out for those who wish to imbibe the same. For all the budding leaders I would strongly recommend Chapters 6 and 7, as they can be taken as a professional guide for learning the 'Art of Military Leadership'. The unambiguous conclusion that emerges from the book is that military power is the best safeguard for any nation.

While writing memoirs there is always a danger of 'I man ship" in such writings. It goes to the credit of Lieutenant General Harish Dutta that in his biographical sketch he has scrupulously avoided that fault. On the contrary, he has erred on the other side by relating all his experiences with so much humility that it only

adds to his already established stature as a soldier and a military leader.

The book has been written in a simple language and is a racy narrative. It is a kind of manual of military education. It is strongly recommended to be read by younger officers, higher commanders and policy makers as well as civilians to get a feel of what the Army is all about and what motivates the soldiers to give their 'all' to ensure safety, security and well-being of the Country and its citizens.

Lieutenant General Ajai Singh, PVSM, AVSM (Retd)

Lieutenant General Billimoria - His Life and Times. By Major General Ian Cardozo, AVSM, SM, (USI-CAFHR, New Delhi, 2016), pp.. 92, ISBN 978-93-84695-13-2

The book recounts the story of Lieutenant General FN Billimoria, PVSM and his family, and also describes the role and contribution of the Parsi community to the society and the nation. General Billimoria came from a military background, as his father was a Brigadier in the Army. The author has made excellent efforts to research the journey of the General in the Army, replete with interesting photographs and accounts. The narration starts from early days of schooling at the Doon School, the training at the National Defence Academy, the Indian Military Academy (IMA), commissioning into the 2nd Battalion the 5th Gorkha Rifles (Frontier Force) (2/5 GR) in June 1953 and culminates in his achieving the coveted position of the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Central Command.

The General has had a very distinguished career in the Army and held many prestigious appointments, both in command and staff. He commanded 2/5 GR, the battalion which has had three Victoria Cross winners during the Second World War. He was later posted to the Infantry School, the UK, as the Indian Army Liaison Officer; as the Deputy Commandant at the IMA, and as the Commandant Defence Services Staff College, Wellington. He had the unique honour of commanding his unit in the battle, at Pir Ganj and Bogra in the then East Pakistan, during the 1971 War, which has been explained in detail in a separate chapter in the book. He commanded a division in the northeast, the 10 Corps and the Central Army. In 1990-91, he was appointed as the Colonel

of the 5th Gorkha Rifles and the President of the Gorkha Brigade, the ultimate for a Gorkha officer.

The author deserves full credit for producing a fine book, more so when the General had passed away and getting details would not have been an easy task. He painstakingly wrote letters to his associates and friends of the General for details and has included some of these letters as a separate chapter in the book. The author acknowledges the contributions of Karan Billimoria (son), a business magnate, now a peer in the House of Lords, Mrs Rati Billimoria (mother) and Yasmin (wife) for providing a wealth of information and the excellent photographs from the family archives.

The book, an interesting and easy read would be of immense value to the officers of his Regiment and to those who would like to know more about this illustrious soldier. The narrative will inspire future generations of officers and men of the Fifth Gorkha Rifles in particular, to strive for excellence and high ethics.

Lieutenant General Chandra Shekhar, PVSM, AVSM (Retd)

China's One Belt One Road: Initiative, Challenges and Prospects. A joint project by United Service Institute of India, New Delhi, in collaboration with Sichuan University, Chengdu (Vij Books India Private Limited, Delhi, 2016), pp..117, ISBN 9789385563591.

In Mar 2015, The State Council of China, released the Action Plan of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), initiated by President Xi Jinping as 'Silk Road Economic Belt' and '21st Century Maritime Silk Road' i.e. One Belt One Road (OBOR). It has now occupied the centre stage of Chinese infrastructure development and 'Infrastructure Diplomacy' with a near global perspective. BRI is claimed to promote composite connectivity network of four continents and their adjacent seas for sustainable development in countries along the Belt and Road architecture, creating a win-win situation for all participants. This book analyses OBOR, with emphasis on its applicability in India - China context.

The book is a very comprehensive compilation of views of two researchers each from United Service Institution of India (USI), New Delhi, and Sichuan University, Chengdu, divided into two Sections i.e. Section I giving out China's perspective in two Chapters, each written by one of the two scholars from Sichuan University. The first chapter explains the Chinese overall

perspective of BRI, and the second chapter focusses on divergences and convergences between India and China, as perceived by the Chinese scholar. Section II gives out Indian perspective in two chapters, each written by one of the two scholars from USI, covering continental and maritime perspective respectively.

The advantages of connectivity and economic growth have been well covered in the book. China would like the world to believe that it is a benign project for inclusive growth of all countries connected by it. It is also a Chinese need to reduce their logistics cost of offloading trade surpluses and overcapacities, besides increasing deployment capability of PLA to secure her Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOC), commercial and strategic interests, because infrastructure is a dual use facility (civil and military), with serious security implications. This remains under explained in the book. In Chapter II, while talking about the divergences, the author avoided commenting on serious sovereignty concerns of India in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK), in relation to China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), although some mention has been made by the Indian author later.

From India's perspective, as part of "Act East Policy" and growth of North East Region (NER), the connectivity to Myanmar and Bangladesh is essential, but it need not be formally under Bangladesh Myanmar India China (BMIC) corridor. India has already finalised requisite agreements with Bangladesh to connect NER, and trying the same with Myanmar. This aspect needed some more explanation.

The book makes an interesting reading and explains the India-China part of the BRI in a simple lucid style, well backed by enormous references.

Major General SB Asthana, SM, VSM (Retd)

The Origins and Early Developments of Shi'a Islam. By Syed Husain Mohammad Jafri, (Oxford University Press, Pakistan, 2000), ISBN 978-0-19-579387-1.

This well-researched exegesis on the origins and theological evolution of Shi'a Islam purportedly seeks to present a dispassionate study on the subject that it justifiably claims was hitherto "over-dependent on the polemical works" of Sunni heresiographers like Ibn Hazm and Al-Shahrastani. However, the

conceptual premise and general tenor of the book belies its ostensible objectivity in that it employs the Shi'a counterargument to correct the broad distortions of earlier accounts, as opposed to presenting a more balanced and objective analyses of history.

From the first chapter itself - titled 'Conceptual Foundations' - Jafri asserts that the origins of Shi'a Islam were not limited to political causes as is traditionally believed (stemming from the dispute over Prophet's succession), but had their religious and spiritual underpinnings from the outset. In spite of making this fascinating claim, the author provides little evidence to substantiate it and leaves it unaddressed. He then goes to great lengths to emphasise the pre-Islamic eminence of the Banu Hashim tribe to which the family of the Prophet and his descendants (Ahl Al-Bayt) belonged, which to any student of history is of little consequence unless the author wants to subtly infer the legitimacy of Ali's claim to being the Prophet's successor on a filial basis. Thus, the book resorts to the very polemical insinuations, it laments in its 'Preface' was the norm among the early historians.

Another drawback is that while the book frequently skips over many important events and issues pertaining to early Shi'a history, it delves into great detail on less significant matters. For instance, the chapters on letters exchanged between Amir Muawiya and Imam Hasan and the social structure of the city of Kufa are purely research-oriented and are quite out of place for this general account on early Shi'a history. Perhaps, the reader would have benefitted if the complete historical account of Shi'a theological evolution would have been detailed in this book and the research-oriented chapters, for example on the city of Kufa, could have become the subject of a separate study.

The book is also quite selective in its exposition of historical events and does not sufficiently explore crucial occurrences like the assassination of Caliph Uthman, the accession of Ali, the Battle of Jamal and the Battle of Siffin. It is a work that principally serves as a Shi'a explanation of disparate scholarly contentions and conflicting versions of certain historical events. However, the saving grace of this book lies in the chapters related to Husain's martyrdom and the concluding exegesis of the concept of Imamate. The flawless writing style and the erudite scholarship, in spite of its partisan outlook, redeem this partially compelling read.

Dr Adil Rasheed

India's Engagement with East Africa: Opportunities and Challenges. By Dr Nivedita Ray, (Vij Books, New Delhi, First Edition 2015), pp..175, Price Rs 695/, ISBN 9789382652946.

The author has systematically covered the region of East Africa and then drawn its historical and current linkages with India. She brings out India's engagements at international, regional, sub-regional and bi-lateral levels. She also brings out the role being played by the private sector, public sector and multi-faceted Government-to-Government engagements. The importance of Indian Diaspora as a Heritage Resource is well covered. Final chapter covers the security challenges of East Africa and how Indian cooperation has resulted in stability of the region.

India's linkages with the region date back to 19th century, when traders from the West Coast of India sailed across the Indian Ocean to East Africa. These linkages were strengthened during the British colonial rule, when besides traders, labourers and craftsmen were taken by them to Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. They have assimilated well into the local population, are economically strong and enjoy prestige and status. This gives India advantage over others.

India is giving aid and assistance to the East African Countries (EAC) as equal partners, with mutual consultation. This covers development and infrastructural projects, capacity building, agriculture and trade. For ensuring internal security, India has readily provided military aid and assistance, through the UN (Peacekeeping) and also bilaterally. India also provides a number of scholarships in her educational and professional institutions to the youth of EAC. The author brings out that though there are other countries (like China) trading in EAC and providing aid, their activities do not necessarily pose a challenge to India's initiatives.

The book covers events and projects up to 2013 only. The initiatives taken by the NDA Government in 2014 could have been included, as a Post Script. The research could have been enriched by interviewing a few dignitaries of the previous and present Indian Governments. Ideally, a few views of leaders/diplomats /officials of the EAC could have also been taken.

The book provides a rich background of India-East Africa cooperation and is recommended for libraries of institutions associated with studies of international relations.

Lieutenant General YM Bammi, PhD (Retd)

War-Conflict-Security and the Military. By Maj P Tuhinikar Choudhary (Retd), (Institute for Democratic and Economic Affairs, Hyderabad, 2015), pp..279, ISBN 978-81-926688-1-9.

The nature of war is constantly evolving from the Clauzewitzian model that has prevailed for over three centuries to the Non-Trinatrian in the 21st. Soldiers today are called upon less to fight kinetic battles but more insurgencies, terrorism, law and order and humanitarian assistance and disaster response. This has impacted the dynamics of strategy, operational art and tactics as well as military organisations. An understanding of nuances of today's warfare and application of the same in the context of security challenges that are faced by India assumes importance. This is particularly so due to weak knowledge domain in this sphere restricted to a small elite, mostly military. Available literature on the subject is either too esoteric or non contemporary. Choudhary's compact book overcomes this deficiency to some extent with lucid yet simple style and a unique format for each chapter- highlights, quotations, key concepts, description of the issue and recommendations. The book thus provides a bird's eye view of matters related to national security and strategy.

Set about in 15 chapters the book covers a vast panorama of subjects commencing with nature of war in the 21st Century to organisation for war, equipping, budgeting, insurgency and terrorism and so on, ending with the most recent form of confrontation – stone pelting. To substantiate his conclusions the author has quoted from a number of sources of well established military authors thereby providing a veritable trove of knowledge on a wide range of subjects covered. Choudhary has also given recommendations on each aspect which can provoke debate such as dealing with China, Pakistan and the collusive emerging axis. While one may not agree with all the recommendations by the author, yet that he has ventured to do so in this compact volume is commendable.

Given the vast number of subjects tackled most of which are complex; reducing these for understanding by the layman is indeed very challenging. Thus some of the conclusions of the author such as a solution to the Kashmir issue through review of Indus Water Treaty alone or for media to downplay the impact of terrorist incidents as the per capita fatalities are low as compared to say diseases and accidents are a bit jarring. Nonetheless, an extremely readable and erudite work on war, strategy and security in the Indian context.

Brigadier Rahul Bhonsle, SM (Retd)

Bonded Labour in Pakistan. Edited by Ayaz Qureshi and Ali Khan, (Karachi, Oxford University Press, 2016), pp 214, Rs 695.00, ISBN 978-0-19-940389-9

Pakistan ranks third in the world with respect to bonded labour numbers/modern forms of slavery, after China and India. This includes debt-bondage, human trafficking and forced domestic and child labour. According to the Global Slavery Index, approximately 2.1 million individuals in Pakistan are enslaved in one or the other form of slavery. The book puts across case studies of bonded labour across different sectors and regions in modern day Pakistan.

It includes legal study of bonded labour in Pakistan and lists out details of the legislations, plans and policies. The book has also provided a list and outcome of court cases which are interesting and useful inputs for a person interested in the subject. The chapter on 'Debt Bondage at the Brick Kilns in Pakistan' contains assessment methods and observations which provide a good insight on bonded labour dynamics. The variations in bonded labour in various sectors such as mining, brick kilns and domestic work have been enumerated in the book. The ethnic, religious and caste dimensions have been well analysed.

The case studies contained in the book establish the link between the debt and bondage. The analysis of the 'peshgi' system (advance payment) has been carried out in fair detail particularly in the brick kiln sector. Tactics adopted by the employer to strengthen the grip over the bonded labourers have been clearly spelt out.

The book rightly brings out that the changes in regional economy have not been matched by the political structure and the livelihood strategies of labourers. The book has brought out that the governments in Pakistan have tried to resolve the problem through legislative and executive means but the intent has failed to translate into action. The workforce in Pakistan is no different than the workforce in many other developing countries and are well aware of the disadvantages they have in an informal sector.

The charts and data referred to in the book appear to be authentic as it is well supported by cross references and notes. The summary of findings as listed out in Chapter 10 are based on a scientific research design and would be of immense use to a student of Sociology and Social Anthropology.

Lieutenant General Chander Prakash, SM, VSM (Retd)

China's Approach towards Territorial Disputes: Lessons and Prospects. By Sana Hashmi, (New Delhi, KW Publishers, 2016), pp..260, Price Rs 1280, ISBN 9789383649891.

A slim volume of about 200 pages, the book deals with China's territorial boundary settlements with 13 states [China claims 14 states, but POK is not a state] that share land frontiers with her. Only two boundary settlements remain—India and Bhutan. The reasons for this are complex and the author's views need further refining, although she has made some pertinent points.

The author has done well in articulating and succinctly presenting China's disputes with 11[12 according to the Chinese] of her other neighbours and with whom she has settled the remaining boundary disputes. In case a quick reference is required into the origins and the course of settlement of these disputes, then this narrative is very suitable. The author has to be commended for diligently producing most of the details with maps, in a clear and concise manner that makes reading very pleasing on the eye.

However, the narrative is a little short when it comes to describing China's own attitude towards settlement of territorial disputes and the philosophy that China has adopted. If the author had accessed Chinese sources, which in recent times the Chinese have de-classified, then the narrative would have become that much more sophisticated and authentic. Relying mostly on western sources to decipher Chinese policies may not have been the best possible option available. Recently 'China Quarterly' [Vol1, No.2, July 2015] a publication of the Shanghai Institute of International Studies published an article by Kong Lingjie, an Associate Professor of the China Institute of Boundary and Oceanic Studies, on the issue of China's foreign policy towards territorial and boundary disputes. This work is an excellent compilation of Chinese policies on boundary issues and recent changes introduced as a result of the One Belt One Road (OBOR). Now that Chinese sources are becoming readily available, scholars must tap into this new source material.

There are some obvious errors which could have been eliminated by better editing. Nevertheless, the book is worth reading and the author must be complimented for her sincere effort.

Shri RS Kalha, IFS (Retd)

Even If It Ain't Broke Yet Do Fix It: Enhancing Effectiveness Through Military Change. By Vivek Chadha (New Delhi, Pentagon Press, 2016), pp 192, Price Rs 795, ISBN 978-81-8274-919-1.

This is a rare book on military change and its management with the Indian Army as its subject. The author starts with a wide survey of published material on change, largely international, to highlight different factors and principles enunciated by different authors. Military change is complex phenomenon and factors governing it vary vastly from country to country and regions.

In the Indian context, the study relates to the post-Independence experience, both in the conventional warfare and the counter insurgency domains. In each domain, changes are examined in the organisational, strategic and tactical fields based on case studies. In this regard, developments post-1962 War and the General Krishna Rao Report 1975 form two major case studies amongst others. In India, there is limited interest and specialisation on military issues amongst the political elite and the bureaucracy. The governing structure has failed to incorporate military leadership at the highest levels of decision making. Consequently, military advice reaching decision making levels is filtered and multilayered.

Absence of a national security strategy is another impediment. Consequently, military change has often taken place long after its need and with a lack of inter-service joint approach leading to wastage and inefficiencies. It has been led by a few visionary military leaders and during crisis situations when the political leaders were amenable to military advice. Change has occurred, both Top Down and Bottom up. While changes in the conventional domain have mostly been 'Top Down' marked by tardy implementation, in the counter insurgency domain it has mostly been 'Bottom up' based on ground experience. The principle of minimum force and the avoidance of use of heavy weapons was an early post-Independence military change in countering insurgencies.

An important aspect covered by the author is the level of Professional Military Education (PME). A survey of serving as well as retired officers reveals that our environment is not conducive to the growth of military leaders, especially those holding senior positions. PME challenges relate to our failure to imbibe creativity and open thinking as also lack of strategic foresight and inability to understand issues of national security. The focus of PME is

deeply embedded in tactical issues and fails to create a foundation for strategic thinking among our junior and middle level officers. This deficiency affects timely military change.

Our excessive adherence to secrecy and tendency to brush most problems under the carpet inhibited the author. However, he has shown perseverance and great analytical abilities to produce this vastly original study which will go a long way to enhance the PME of serving middle and senior level officers, and guide future change. Written in a flowing style and avoiding any jargon, the book is strongly recommended for all levels of decision makers in the Defence Services and those connected with national security. Excellent references are given at the end of each chapter and ample tables have been included.

Brigadier N Bahri, VSM (Retd)

The Burning Chaffees. By Brig BS Mehta, (KW Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 2015), pp..371, ISBN 978-93-83649-85-3.

The Burning Chaffees is the battle account of 'C' squadron 45 Cavalry in the war for the liberation of Bangladesh. It is not merely the battle account of an armoured squadron, written for the regimental history of 45 Cavalry, it is much more than that. It is first-hand account of 'C' squadron that completely destroyed Pakistan's 3 (Independent) Armoured Squadron in a tank vs. tank battle at Garibpur on 21 November 1971. The battle account by the author, who took over command of the squadron on the death of Major DS Narag, MVC in the midst of the raging tank battle, is unique. The author brings to life the horrors and the fleeting sense of life and death in a tank battle that raged for more than 48 hours in the 'Khaji' (dates) strewn landscape of Garibpur. The account is not about ground manoeuvres and wide outflanking moves; it is about the grit of tank crews, their excellent gunnery and expertise in combat akin to close guarter battle of an infantry sub unit. The account of this tank battle should become an essential reading for every young armour officer as also for infantry platoon/company commanders.

The book is distinguished by another unique facet of the regiment which merits some recounting. 45 Cavalry was originally raised in 1916 during World War I, but was disbanded when the war ended. It was re-raised during Second World War but was

demobilised in 1946 after the war. It was re-raised in May 1965 with a class composition of Jats, Rajputs and Sikhs but was reassigned the role of an armoured delivery regiment during 1965 Indo-Pak War. However, due to shortage of trained manpower in the original class composition, it was changed to two third South Indian Classes (SIC) and one third Dogras. Finally, the Regiment was re-raised once again as a light armoured regiment equipped with light PT-76 tanks (an amphibious tank) in Jan 1966. In 1967, its class composition was changed once again, with the Dogra squadron being replaced by a squadron of Other Indian Classes (OIC); implying that all castes, tribes and other communities could enroll in this squadron/regiment. And, sure enough the regiment proved its mettle during the 1971 war.

45 Cavalry was equipped with PT-76 tanks for deployment in the riverine terrain of Eastern Theatre. Due to major differences in its gun calibre and the type of ammunitions used, the officers of the older regiments found it difficult to accept PT-76 tank and had mentally written off the tank as a sitting duck in a tank vs. tank battle. Those commissioned directly into 45 Cavalry, including the author, became the core foundation of the regiment. Young officers and sowars dedicated themselves to learning everything about the task and formed the regiment into a battle winning instrument by the time the war started in 1971. The author has candidly described the reluctance to change amongst the older generation of officers.

It is a fascinating book. There are not many books of this genre.

Brigadier SP Sinha, VSM (Retd)

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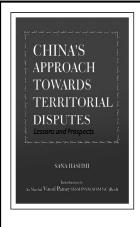
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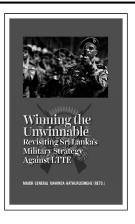
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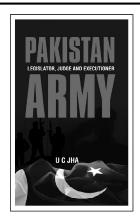
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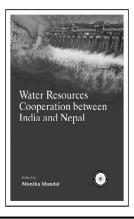
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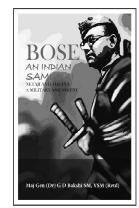
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