

Short Reviews of Recent Books

Revitalising Indian Democracy. By Vinod Saighal, (New Delhi, Gyan Publishing House, 2012) pp..267, Price Rs. 590/-, ISBN 9788121211505.

The book, laid out in ten chapters, offers significant analysis on a large spectrum of issues related to the decline in governance and the perceived subversion of the state machinery by vested interests. The subjects examined are varied and range from internal threats to democracy, to the fundamentals of good governance, electoral reforms, evils of corruption and black money, to the role of judiciary and its positive contribution, the regional disparity in the Northeast and the Jan Lok Pal debate. He recommends a Model for Restoration of Good Government (MRGG), that he unveiled in October 1995, which has now become a movement and of which he is the current convenor.

The author has made excellent use of annexures based on MRGG letters to the Judiciary and the Decision Makers that supplement the formulations in Chapters 1 to 10. The annexures on 'Judicial Activism', 'Degeneration of the Political Class' and 'Spare a Thought for the Security Forces', are of particular interest and add great value to the book. While examining the employment of the Security Forces deployed in Srinagar, the author explains their problems graphically, which not many are aware of.

Although many of the issues concerning the decline in public administration, dilution of values of the politicians, the absence of will to implement the plans and lack of accountability in the system, have been discussed in the media and in the seminars elsewhere, the author attempts to reinforce these by active involvement of the civil society by creating moral pressure on the Government functionaries and public awareness of voters not to vote for tainted politicians. The author suggests that there is a need to look beyond the Jan Lok Pal Bill as it is felt that even when the Bill is passed by the Parliament, it will require political leaders of high integrity to implement the same in letter and spirit.

The author needs to be complimented for making the book a reading pleasure. The language used is smooth, easy to

comprehend, crisp and expressive. The book will make a fine addition to the literature related to good governance.

Lieutenant General Chandra Shekhar, PVSM, AVSM (Retd)

Two Decades of India's Look East Policy : Partnership for Peace, Progress and Prosperity. Edited by Amar Nath Ram (New Delhi : Manohar Publishers and Distributors, 2012), pp..257, ₹ 695.00, ISBN 978817304944.

This book is a collection of essays written by twelve former Ambassadors/Secretaries and three others, one from the academic world, a journalist and a researcher. Each one has given his/her prognosis on the origins, the nature and extent of India's re-engagement with countries to its East. Unfortunately, the conceptual framework of the book is rather weak for some essayists try to focus on the policy, sometimes subsuming it with personal achievements without adding significantly to knowledge. Some of the points made are repetitive. It would have been much better had the book in its entirety evaluated and assessed the origins, the significance and the results of India's strategic shift of policy as one thematic whole.

Most essayists have attributed the significant shift in the strategic thinking that led to a renewal of India's engagement with countries to its East to the changed circumstances in the international situation with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the United States as the sole superpower. However, what is lacking is detailed analytical thought that went into decision making or was it simply as put by Ambassador Salman Haider the need to give Prime Minister Rao's visit to China and South Korea a rather 'off-the-cuff' slogan to give this pioneering journey a 'distinctive focus.'

Nevertheless for those trying to understand and evaluate India's relations with ASEAN / ARF and countries to its East, this is a worthwhile read and contains valuable source material. The collection of articles also contains fairly extensive economic and other data, although some is without attribution and would therefore need to be cross-checked. On the whole the collections of articles are an easy read and are commended for their originality.

Shri Ranjit Singh Kalha, IFS (Retd)

Tibet and India's Security : Himalayan Region, Refugees and Sino-Indian Relations, Task Force Report. By PK Gautam, P Jagannath Panda and Zakir Hussain (New Delhi: Institute and Defence Studies & Analysis (IDSA), 2012), pp 214, ¹ 375/-, ISBN 9788186019993.

The Report published by the IDSA is both relevant and timely; relevant because it analyses the divergent demographic forces at play in the Buddhist dominated frontiers of India, while it is opportune in terms of its timing due to the continuing simmering in Tibet, frostiness in Sino-Indian relations and the foreboding shadow of succession 'after' the life-time of the 'Living Buddha,' the Fourteenth Dalai Lama.

The Report covers significant ground of the multi-cultural demographics of India's northern borders, and provides well researched answers to the diverse questions ranging from the influence of Buddhism and its role in bonding the people of Tibet and India. Of contemporary relevance are questions of the status of the refugees living in India and the pivotal role of the Dalai Lama in Tibet, India and in Socialist China. Issues that have been touched upon are extremely sensitive, and creditably, have been handled in keeping with the sensibilities of the Tibetans, their Indian hosts as well as the Chinese.

The Report has considered the post-Dalai Lama contingencies, not merely in terms of the succession, but more significantly, how the options are likely to manifest. Importantly, the Dalai Lama has himself announced that his successor will be found from the Exile community and not from the land under control of China. On the other hand, China has announced that though the Fifteenth Dalai Lama will be chosen in accordance with the Tibetan traditions, he would be from amongst the Tibetans born in the Peoples Republic of China (PRC). This places the issue at cross purposes and there exists the possibility that the Institution may come to an end. There is no denying the fact that there are various complexities and the situation needs to be managed with sagacity, maturity and dignity it demands.

The status of the Tibetan refugees in India remains ambiguous, though as the Report concludes, poses no security risk for India. Thus, the recommendations made in the Report with regard to their status require serious consideration pragmatically speaking;

as time goes by, the chances of their returning to Tibet seem to be receding.

The cross section and extent of sampling that has been incorporated is testimony to the diligence with which the field work was carried out by the team. This has enriched the Report and made it purposeful, making it a vital resource for future scholars.

Brigadier AS Cheema, VSM

Why Bureaucracy Fails. By Kalyan Ray (New Delhi : Manas Publications, 2011), pp..252, ₹ 695.00, ISBN 9788170494003.

The author has dealt with the problems of bureaucracy since Independence in a holistic manner and has covered the evolution of administrative structure in India since the British period to date. He has touched the core of the problem in his statement, 'the more we talk of having less of it, the more we have it'.

His discussion of 'from a Control Raj to Corporate Raj' covers the issue of corruption in its historic and contemporary context. Of particular interest is the discussion of economic liberalisation which covers beyond the domestic areas of international banking and financial institutions, black money and current scams in the Government and the Armed Forces.

The author contends that the IAS being a central service is a misnomer; it is basically a superior state service. While the selection and initial placements are made by the Central Government, the system of Central deputation is not equitable and is based on patronage. His discussion on a committed bureaucracy and its politicisation clearly brings out that in essence it is manifested in the establishment of the Prime Minister's and Chief Minister's Secretariats. This has further marginalised bureaucracy and resulted in centralisation of power.

I do not agree with the author's suggestion that a third tier of bureaucracy is required to serve the local bodies. The requirement is of technical help and guidance in the formulation and execution of local projects. It is not entirely correct that during the British rule self governing institutions and at the local level withered away. As a matter of fact after Independence, instead of reviving and nurturing them, we further marginalised them due to political exigencies.

In the final chapter, 'Way Ahead : Future of Indian Policy', though aptly titled, the idea that democratic polity is the fountainhead of policy formulation, has not been discussed adequately. Instead, he has gone into the known problems of bureaucracy, over extension of the state and fallout of economic development. While one could not agree with this more but I wish he had discussed – what needs to be done? Some of the areas that could be examined are absorption of experts and technocrats in the system, changes in secretarial functioning, pruning and integration of regulatory bodies in the system and their accountability to the legislature.

The book would be a valuable reading for people interested in governance and administration.

Lieutenant General VK Nayar, PVSM, SM (Retd)

Global Nuclear Disarmament: Geopolitical Necessities. Edited by VR Raghavan (New Delhi : Vij Books India Pvt Ltd in association with Delhi Policy Group, 2012), pp: 133, Price ₹ 795/-, ISBN 9789381411315.

This book is the result of an 18 month project conducted by the Delhi Policy Group (DPG) between 2010 and 2012 on Pathways to Nuclear Disarmament. The DPG conducted this research study as part of the deliberations of the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament constituted by the governments of Australia and Japan. As part of the project, three international seminars were conducted on various issues in an effort to deepen the understanding on various pathways to achieving nuclear disarmament. This book is a compilation of the keynote addresses of the distinguished speakers and the papers presented by experts during these seminars.

The specific focus of the three seminars was Nuclear Disarmament: Time Line Challenges, Doctrinal Challenges to Nuclear Disarmament and Nuclear Disarmament Geopolitical Imperatives. The aspect of the time line challenges has been covered by three experts. Of particular interest in this regard is the articulation of the concept of a 'Base Camp and Mountain Top' which has been described as the starting point for the route to lower arsenals and leading ultimately to the elimination of nuclear weapons. The first of the three papers, regarding the aspect of

time line challenges covers various pathways and discusses the two important interim milestones; one in terms of weapons and the other in terms of doctrines. The numbers conundrum has also been covered separately in the second paper and the third discusses the techno-political maze of nuclear disarmament.

The four separate papers on doctrinal challenges discuss various aspects ranging from the general aspect of nuclear doctrines and nuclear disarmament to the role of nuclear weapons in NATO's strategic concept to different military doctrines and their realities to finally, a discussion of 'No-First Use' as a strategic doctrine. In this regard, it has been argued by one of the experts that working on a global no-first use, as suggested by India, would be a useful first step.

The last aspect addressed in this book is with respect to the geopolitical realities which have been analysed separately by three eminent experts. The various facets analysed include the geopolitical conditions that would enable nuclear disarmament, the perspective from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and a separate analysis of the envisaged Chinese view towards nuclear disarmament.

The contents of the book would interest a wide ranging audience; particularly the strategic community and the policy makers engaged in the sphere of nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation, nuclear security and doctrinal issues.

Colonel GG Pamidi

Post Conflict Sri Lanka: Rebuilding Of the Society. Edited By VR Raghavan (New Delhi, Vij Books India Pvt Ltd, 2012) pp..191, Price ₹ 850/-, ISBN 9789381411322.

This book is the result of a joint seminar organised at Colombo by the Centre for Security Analysis (CSA), Chennai and Regional Centre for Security Studies (RCSS), Colombo. A total of nine scholars from India and Sri Lanka were engaged to carry-out research on themes covering political, socio-economic and ethnic challenges, all relating to reconstruction and development of a post war Sri Lanka. These research papers were presented at this joint seminar.

The four speakers who covered political challenges succeeded in going to the heart of the problem and in describing the deep

seated differences. They felt that the recent elections failed to generate the hoped for support for the government but achieved the opposite, i.e. high lighting the differences. They felt that the main solution rests on devolution of powers which the government is not only slow but reluctant to implement as various historical differences exert their pressures.

The socio-economic claims of the government and speakers were challenged by some others. While work on resettlement, reconstruction and de-mining was appreciated, fears were expressed at militarisation and demographic changes in the Northern and the Eastern Provinces. Data published by the government was challenged. Some speakers highlighted the need for greater efforts in the fields of education and health.

The problems in the way of ethnic reconciliation were analysed and slow progress lamented. The role of the International community and the Diaspora was commented on by some speakers.

The efforts of both the CSA and RCSS need to be commended. The contents of this book provide a very useful insight into the problems faced in post-war reconstruction in Sri Lanka. While the identification of problems has been done well; also highlighted are the multifarious obstacles and the slow progress.

This is a useful book for scholars researching and watching the progress of Sri Lanka's post war reconstruction.

Brigadier N Bahri, VSM (Retd)