

Short Reviews of Recent Books

Restructuring India's Military-Out Of Box Option. By Rear Admiral AP Revi (Retd), (New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 2012), pp..305, Price ₹ 750/-, ISBN 9788121211611.

The book provides an insightful look at the Higher Defence Management Organisational structures existing in various parts of the world and a proposed option for India.

The first four chapters give a detailed account of the higher defence organisations models that exist in the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Russia and China. He engages the reader's attention by bringing out the historical evolution, chronology of events, pitfalls of the systems as existing in these countries and their implications for India in an interesting manner.

The author thereafter has summarised the main characteristics of the four models wherein he argues that there is a clear political control over military in all cases. He goes on to add that the common threads include the structuring of the functional divisions, out of area and joint operations and a stress on theatre and integrated joint commands, and a revolution in military logistics.

The main argument by the author while proposing an out of the box option for India lies in finding ways and means to get around the roadblocks and complete the ongoing Higher Defence Management Organisation model for India within the broad framework recommended by the Group of Ministers and the Cabinet Committee on Security in February 2001. The author argues his case keeping in mind the inherent inadequacies in the Indian environment which are an overbearing reality. He thereafter lists out the conditionalities which need to be taken onboard before a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) is appointed in India. The author in the end lists out a recommended sequence of implementation for a smooth transition.

Chapter 6 covers the Revolution in Military Logistics in a detailed manner as the author strongly believes that integration of logistics within the armed forces is a common thread that runs across the globe. He follows this up with the coastal security architecture and civilian control over the military and finally concludes with a recommended course of action.

The principal value of the book lies in its systematic collation of a historical perspective, operational development, emerging doctrines, trends and challenges in the higher defence organisation the world over. The arguments stated are well supported by relevant statistical data.

This well edited and well-presented book provides the reader with a very comprehensive expose on the nuances of higher defence organisation.

Captain Sandeep Dewan, (IN), Senior Research Fellow (USI)

Internal Conflicts : Military Perspective. Edited by VR Raghavan, (New Delhi: Vij Books India Pvt. Ltd., 2012), pp..324, Price ₹ 1250/-, ISBN 9789381411339.

The book has been published for the Centre for Security Analysis (CSA) Chennai, India, as a part of an ongoing three years research project 'Internal Conflicts and Transnational Consequences', which conceptualises a new approach to understanding long standing internal conflicts in India, Nepal, Myanmar and Sri Lanka. The present volume comprises two sections. The first section is based on a paper presented by Lieutenant General VR Raghavan (Retd), and gives a strategic overview of the internal conflicts in India Nepal, Myanmar and Sri Lanka and covers the Political, Economic, Diplomatic and Security aspects including their internal and international implications.

The second section deals with implications of deploying Armed Forces in such situations and is a compilation of papers presented at a seminar held in Chennai last year. These papers were presented by retired Armed Forces Officers and Senior Administrators with vast hands on experience of handling such conflicts. Aspects of doctrine, force structure including re-equipment, psychological aspects and socio-political impact on governance and civil military relations are discussed. Broadly, it emerges that the prolonged deployment of the Armed Forces in such an environment has in some way affected their doctrine and force structure; also recommends a change from 'Top down' to 'Bottom Up' approach. Need for laying down an institutionalised coordinated structure for joint command; with specific authority, responsibility and accountability is highlighted. The two papers on Nepal highlight the impact of Maoist insurgency on governance in

Nepal including the Nepalese Army; which are both in transformation at present. It's long term impact on Indo-Nepal relations need constant monitoring. The paper on Coast Guard gives an overview of their functioning and recommends operational independence in their functioning to exploit their full potential.

Since the aspects dealt in various papers are interlinked, a certain amount of overlap in such cases is unavoidable. In spite of this, the book makes a cogent and thought provoking reading and provides excellent material for study of the subject and is recommended for study by the Armed Forces personnel and policy makers dealing with such conflicts.

Lieutenant General MM Lakhera, PVSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd)

Through Wars and Insurgency – Diary of an Army Officer. By Brigadier Kuldip S Brar (Retd), (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2013), pp. 246, Price ₹ 595/-, ISBN 9788182746824.

Brigadier Kuldip Singh Brar served the country upholding the highest standards of service in dedication to the nation in all its wars for over three decades. It is not given to too many officers to claim this distinction. Fewer still write about it. It is a pity that so few of our distinguished officers pen their story, their fortunes good or bad, and pass on their experiences to a newer generation to benefit.

What stands out in the book is the sincere and simple narration of situations from the "boot up". The most important chapter perhaps, is the experience of the Battalion in 1962 War in the Walong Sector. The conflict in this Sector is the least written about in the history of that war. The distance from Delhi, remoteness of the theatre, the dense jungle terrain, all precluded visits by any war correspondent, of the few that were in India then. Though India suffered a serious reverse in the overall campaign but, it were not the men who lost that war. Their courage and determination under the most unfavourable conditions cannot be questioned. Kuldip's own efforts at extricating his men from capture and successfully leading them back is a glorious episode in this tale.

Kuldip does ask but does not answer, if the conditions were different and his troops given half a chance would the outcome have been different? One misses this critique in his writings. But, after all it is in fact written as a "diary", narrating stories and events from the perspective of a regimental officer.

There are numerous vignettes of army life in all its diversity. Life in cantonments, courses and exercises, demonstrations and operational deployments, of other wars and insurgencies; all described from a personal viewpoint of a young officer. There is his personal story as well as befits a diary.

Kuldip's career in the Army came to an early end as the years had run out for him. Even then he continued to serve later in a civilian capacity restoring the faith and trust of the Sikh youth led astray by hostile propaganda, as part of an initiative of the Government of Punjab. Again his leadership qualities were in full display.

This book is the story of the Indian Army, a living being, much more than the sum total of its numbers. It breathes its environs, sets new standards and upholds values fast disappearing in a materialistic world. More such ventures need to be encouraged. The printing and production of the Book is highly commendable. A good Index facilitates reading. A few photographs add the personal touch. It is a book that describes the life of an individual, but celebrates the Indian Army.

Major General Dipankar Banerjee, AVSM (Retd)

Bangladesh's Fight Against Terrorism (Return from the Precipice). *By Dr Anand Kumar, IDSA. (New Delhi, Pentagon Security International, 2012), pp..141, Price ₹ 595/-, ISBN 97882746978.*

Dr Kumar has done excellent work by researching; explaining and analysing the problems faced by Bangladesh since its creation. He has also highlighted the impact of Dhaka's political problems on security concerns of the region, especially India.

In a systematic and logical manner, he first traces the revival of Islam and its fundamentalist seeds in the predominantly Sufi nation. The influence of Pakistan and other Wahabi nations, foreign NGOs (mostly sponsoring madarasa and being financed by Islamic countries) and the local elements who were against the creation of Bangladesh, have been covered in adequate details. The involvement of Pak ISI in using Bangladesh as a base for destabilising India and the part played by Bangladeshi national returning from the Afghan War and the rise of anti-India feelings

post 1975 assassination of Banglabandhu, and the first military coup, have been well covered.

Tracing the patronage received by various Indian insurgent groups (like ULFA) in Bangladesh, especially during the two spells of military rule and of BNP (which termed them as freedom fighters) has been well documented. The chapter on 'Financing of Terror Groups' is well researched and informative, relying on varied sources. Details of various terrorist groups operating in Bangladesh and their political and social influence highlight the immediate and long term goals, to convert the Country into a staunch Islamic nation, their links with Indian sympathisers have been highlighted.

Of special significance is the chapter 'From Denial to Action Against Terror'. The author highlights that till 2008 Bangladesh had always denied presence of any Indian Insurgents Groups in that country. This has changed since 2009. The Awami League under the Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina took bold action against terrorist groups of not only Bangladesh but also of India, by handing over ULFA leaders to India; though there is no Treaty of Extradition between the two countries. Dhaka also drove away other Indian insurgents from their territory. These two very positive steps auger well for the future. The Awami League has also shown firm resolve by conducting trial of War Criminals in a transparent manner, for their anti Bangladesh role.

In the last chapter the author feels that lack of domestic consensus on firm action against fundamentalists is the major handicap being faced by Bangladesh in bringing back the Country to its original secular form. He concludes that while under the Awami League terrorism is certainly down, but it has not yet been fully overcome. This, he attributes to the internal terrorist crisis in Pakistan, a country which is seen as a role model by Bangladesh terrorists and fundamentalists till now.

Written in a direct, simple manner, the list of references and citations add to the authenticity and research effort put in by the author. The book is a must read for all those studying military matters and international relations as it not only narrates the success of Bangladesh against terrorism, but also highlights its impact on India's internal security.

Lieutenant General YM Bammi, PhD (Retd)

End Game in Afghanistan : For Whom the Dice Rolls. By Hiranmay Karlekar, (New Delhi: Sage Publications India Pvt Ltd., 2012), pp..353, Price ₹ 495/-, ISBN: 9788132109747.

This book, laid out in seven chapters, deals with the future of Afghanistan; analysing regional and geostrategic consequences of possible contingencies up to 2014 and beyond including an extreme possibility of a takeover by Al Qaeda-Taliban. The duplicity and dubious reliability of Pakistan as peace broker, her obsession with 'strategic depth', facade of operations in FATA, inability of prolonged opposition to the US, the US accommodating Pakistan without compromising own core interests and imponderables of trusting "good Taliban" are covered well.

Riddled with ethnic and other fault-lines and 97 per cent GDP dependent on foreign aid, Afghanistan's ability to defeat Pakistan backed forces will depend on internal cohesion, military capability, reasonably good governance and international assistance, both economic and military.

ISI sheltered LeT, JeM, HuM functioning unhindered despite bans is strengthening Taliban-Al Qaeda in a rapidly radicalising Pakistan. Should Al Qaeda-Taliban succeed in Afghanistan, together with Al Qaeda / affiliates entrenched in Arabian Peninsula and North Africa, they may become unstoppable. Such eventualities together with BNP victory in Bangladesh can kick-start the Ghazwa-e-Hind (Battle for India).

Though the US seeks out long-term security ties with Central Asia Region (CAR), in the event of Taliban-Al Qaeda getting upper hand in Afghanistan, the US is unlikely to return in force. The overall scenario requires a wider global coalition to include Russia, India, China and moderate Muslim countries in conjunction with western forces.

The author has also addressed two vital questions: will the US focus shifting to Asia/Asia-Pacific detract from war against Taliban - Al Qaeda; and, can the shift to intelligence based special operations and drone attacks succeed in the backdrop of limited Afghan military capability? The nuances, imponderables and remaining question marks are discussed in detail.

The book is well researched, well referenced and certainly adds to knowledge about the fast changing developments of the

region. The style of writing is smooth flowing, displaying clarity of strategic thought that keeps the reader engrossed.

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

Peace is Everybody's Business: Strategy for Conflict Prevention. By Arjun Ray, (New Delhi, Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd., 2012), pp..233, Price ₹ 495/-, ISBN 9788132109433.

Ray's magnum opus on strategy for conflict prevention is based on his version of *Sadbhavana*, which as he puts it, came to him as a 'vision' whilst commanding a Corps in Ladakh. The author propounds this strategy across fourteen chapters that include essays on alienated societies specially the Muslims, conflict prevention, human security, people, winning the hearts of alienated societies, prevailing culture of silence, women's empowerment, media and peaceful uses of technology, leadership change, re-education and a changed role for the military. While elaborating on these issues, Ray shows himself to be a maverick who thinks in new directions yet admits his failure in converting his senior and middle piece officers to his form of *Sadbhavana*. What Ray actually faced as insurgency movement in Ladakh was by his own admission to handle 'anomie' – a lack of social standards and 'existential vacuum' – a mix of collective apathy and boredom!

Pursuing his 'vision' with extraordinary zeal, he embarked on a mission and set up 13 primary schools, 11 women's empowerment centres and 60 centres for education of non-literate women in 16 months. Apart from educating his men on the Quran and Hadith, a curious measure enforced by him was the use of defence and regimental assets for helping the populace along the Line of Control. Ray makes trenchant observations that the Indian Government inclusive of administration, politicians, experts, NGO's as well as the military have failed to understand the underlying causes of alienation, especially in Kashmir. The author is categorical that the Kashmir problem is not because of the proxy war, infiltrators or terrorists sent by Pakistan but because of us – since every Kashmiri is not with us! In these intellectually reasoned essays, Ray tends to overwhelm with statistics, homilies, philosophies and quotations. While there is some truth in many of his assertions at times he meanders off into jejune and didactic statements whose relevance is at best tendentious.

Major General Ashok Joshi, VSM (Retd)

Towards a Geopolitics of Hope. By William H Thornton and Songok Thornton (National Cheng Kung University, Taiwan), (India: Sage Publications, 2012), pp..260, Price ₹ 750/-, ISBN 9788132109440 (HB).

As a hypothesis, the book argues that the assumption of First World countries that economic prosperity will result in a more democratic China, has failed. Even within China, only a percentage of population has benefited, while her record of dealing with Human Rights continues to be dismal.

The book reflects on the post World War II ; and more currently, on post 1990s Cold War policies of the West and Russia towards China. It analyses how and why these have failed to change the political attitude of China.

In eight chapters devoted to policies of America, Russia, India and the region of South East Asia towards Beijing, especially in the era of Globalisation and market reforms of Deng leading to an open market, the authors highlight that the world professing democracy and regime change have failed in China. They argue that for economic and trade benefits, the so-called democracies have not succeeded in encouraging China to become more sensitive to values of Human Rights (HR) and adopting a democratic system. They point out that while the Free World denounced the Tiananmen Square massacre, they did not forcefully impose trade penalties on Beijing, mainly to safeguard their economic interests.

The prevailing situation in Tibet and the ill-treatment of the Tibetans by the Chinese, and its impact on India and the region is well covered. In the same wane, the authors also take India to task. They feel that New Delhi has given greater emphasis to Globalisation and economic relations with China, rather than impressing upon Beijing to improve her HR record. The chapter touching upon the socio-economic and political culture of India, highlights its weaknesses, including her opportunist policy towards Myanmar. The authors feel that India has a major role in shaping the 21st Asian Century, for which she needs to set her house in order, including steps to fight Naxalism.

The book covers a vast canvas (including Russia's intervention in Georgia, expansion of NATO, Myanmar's relations with China, India and ASEAN), which enhances its value. It would be of interest to scholars.

Lieutenant General YM Bammi, PhD (Retd)

Ours Not To Reason Why. By Brigadier RR Palsokar (Retd), (Kolkata: Power Publishers, 2012), pp.. 273, Price ₹ 450/-, (US \$ 20, GBP 15), ISBN 9789382070702.

Amongst the plethora of books and articles on the chequered course of the Indo – Sri Lankan Accord and consequent intervention by the IPKF, professional (military) readers rued the absence of authentic literature on the bloody campaign trail of the IPKF from those who intimately saw and experienced ‘blood, toils, sweat and tears’. The Campaign against LTTE claimed 1240 lives with thrice that number being wounded. This story needed to be told!

Ravi Palsokar, who commanded 7 Infantry Brigade for two years as part of the IPKF, has admirably filled this void. The seemingly confusing and at times pointless operations conducted by his units and sub units have been expertly interwoven into a racy, taut, highly engrossing narrative embellished with the author’s forthright and balanced observations. The author candidly admits the shortcomings of his overstretched force in an alien environment and the difficulties that they encountered. Most importantly, it has been done without rancour. Palsokar has thoughtfully introduced a chapter at end of the book giving a brief glimpse of the vexatious Sinhala – Tamil problem for those unfamiliar with the Sri Lanka imbroglio.

Though the author has restricted his narrative to the operations of his Brigade, important lessons emerge in the realm of India’s force projection overseas in counter-insurgency operations such as: dissonance in political thinking, its adverse impact on higher direction of operations, lack of appropriate political and military intelligence, poor training, unsuitable equipment, failure to exploit the full potential of the Indian Air Force and the Indian Navy, flawed psychological build-up and poor media management; reminiscent of our 1962 debacle. Bravery of the Indian soldiers and officers once again bailed out the Nation. Tragically and not surprisingly, we were to learn the same lessons from the Kargil War again. Equally sad was the home-grown support that the recalcitrant LTTE continued to enjoy in Tamil Nadu throughout IPKF’s bloody struggles.

This story was worth waiting for 25 years because of the lessons it brings out. It is a must read for all who want to know

what it was like to be in a difficult sector of Northern Sri Lanka. For those who were there, it will be a nostalgic trip down the memory lane.

Brigadier AS Adhikari, VSM (Retd)

Victoria Cross: A Love Story. By Ashali Varma, (New Delhi, Pearson, 2013), pp..243, Price ₹ 375/-, ISBN 9788131774595.

Lieutenant General Premindra Singh Bhagat, PVSM, VC was an exceptional individual who defined and shaped the Indian army of his age. This eminent soldier was the first Indian Commissioned Officer to earn the Victoria Cross for valour during the Second World War for the astounding act, described by his commanding officer as “the longest continued feat of sheer cold courage” at Metemma (Abyssinia) on 31 January 1941. That achievement alone could have defined his military career but he went on to achieve much more. Examples of physical and moral courage are seldom found together, in the same person, yet Bhagat had this distinction.

The book *Victoria Cross: A Love Story*, written by his daughter, Ashali Varma, is a fascinating showcase of biographical writing. It combines the insight of a child and the discernment of a historian in evocative detail which recreates the story of his life and times.

Prem Bhagat was commissioned on 15 July 1939 from the Indian Military Academy and later rose to be the first General Officer commanding-in-Chief (GOC-in-C) of Northern Command. He also headed the Indian side at the delineation talks with Pakistan to demarcate the Line of Control after the 1971 war. Few military commanders, in India, have been treated with the reverence that Prem Bhagat received.

Prem Bhagat did not resign from the army on being passed over to be the Chief of the Indian Army. In July 1974, he accepted the appointment of Chairman, Damodar Valley Corporation (DVC) as a serving military officer. With his characteristic vigour and no-nonsense approach, he got the sluggish behemoth moving, and soon, the results were there for all to see. During the ten months he was at the DVC, production increased twenty-fold, and he became the toast not only of Kolkata, but the whole of West Bengal.

Ashali Varma is wisely restrained in commenting on military matters as she narrates her story of a man who gained immense

stature within the army by his deeds. For those who love reading history, the story of such a pivotal figure is full of fascination.

Written in a simple, easy to read style, the book is a riveting read and is highly recommended for its inspiring tale of two great individuals – Prem and his wife Mohini. It is a touching memoir and a valuable record of two exceptional individuals. It deserves a place in all homes and libraries.

Colonel Harjeet Singh (Retd)

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