

## Short Reviews of Recent Books

**21<sup>st</sup> Century Mahan: Sound Military Conclusions for the Modern Era.** Edited by Benjamin F Armstrong (*United States of America: Naval Institute Press, 2013*) pp..179 Price \$ US 21.95 ISBN 9781612512433

The book is a compilation of five of Alfred Thayer Mahan's essays, written for periodicals, specifically for readers who find Mahan's classical writing style difficult to read. The editor of the book, Benjamin F Armstrong, intentionally draws no conclusions from Mahan's work and yet applies them to current events in a 21<sup>st</sup> century context.

The book illustrates why Mahan's work remains relevant to the 21<sup>st</sup> century and how it can help develop our strategic thinking. Armstrong argues that readers often misunderstand Mahan as they read only what others have said about him, and not what Mahan himself wrote. The author's analysis is derived directly from Mahan's own writings. From the challenges of bureaucratic organisation and the pitfalls of staff duty to the development of global strategy and fleet composition, to illustrations of effective combat leadership, Armstrong demonstrates that Mahan's ideas continue to provide today's readers with a solid foundation to address the challenges of a rapidly globalising world. The book is critical of those who make light of Mahan's ideas on the acquisition of territories to enable a fleet to project power globally. The author, by his lucid writing style, has been successful in persuading his readers to re-examine Mahan and his ability to synthesise the master's ideas on the importance of Asia, which continues to be a hotbed of conflicts and tensions.

In the chapter on Globalisation and the Fleet, Mahan writes about China, Japan, Russia, Germany, Great Britain and the United States. He evaluates the importance of the Mediterranean Sea to the world's commerce, which brings to fore the discussion by Robert D Kaplan in "Monsoon" of the Indian and the Pacific Oceans. The author very aptly brings out that as commerce becomes the predominant interest of the world today, so, as a consequence, overseas political acquisitions, and maritime commercial routes are now the primary objects of foreign policy among nations.

The principal value of the book lies in its systematic collation of a historical perspective, operational development, emergent doctrines,

trends and challenges brought out in a century old Mahanian thought, which makes it as relevant today as it was when the master propounded the same.

This well edited and well-presented book provides the reader with a very comprehensive expose on how Mahan saw the value of an educated and aware naval force – able, ready and equipped to operate forward.

*Captain Sandeep Dewan, IN*

**Brave Hearts of India.** *By Maj Gen Shubhi Sood (NOIDA: SDS Publishers, 2013) pp..215, Rs : 465.00, ISBN : 9788190282857*

The author being a soldier and a scholar has written this book from the depths of his heart in a manner which no run-of-the-mill author could have done. The book covers 28 actions/individuals in a gripping manner.

Giving appropriate examples to make his point seems to be the author's forte. He points out that the President of the USA made his first formal call after election to the "Veteran Hospitals". The Prime Minister of the UK on seeing Indian Victoria Cross winners (VCs), alighted from his car, saluted them and escorted them to their place. Among the VCs, Umrao Singh posed a problem regarding the meager pension that he was getting. When he returned to Delhi, an officer from the British High Commission handed to him a very favourable response to his problem at the airport itself. In a sad contrast, the Supreme Commander in India refused to meet the veterans to hear their grievances.

Each of the 28 accounts is deeply moving and dramatically recorded saga of astounding sacrifice, loyalty, alchemy of tradition and above all the essence of the Indian Army.

The first account is of Subedar Nagarkoti who won four Indian Orders of Merit (IOM, the nearest equivalent of Victoria Cross which the Indians could not be awarded at that time). Which soldier's martial spirit has not swelled with pride at the name 'Saragarhi'? All 21 Sikh soldiers defending the post held out till the end. It was probably the purest example of 'last man, last round'. Each one was awarded the IOM. The British Parliament gave them a standing ovation. Queen Victoria was herself moved. Thereafter other great acts are chronicled. Major Som Nath Sharma in whose name a



famous colony in Delhi is named. Major Shaitan Singh whose frozen body was found many months later exactly in the same posture in which he had died. Captain (IN) Mulla who was last seen sitting on his chair and smoking a cigarette as the Khukri slowly sank. Flying Officer Sekhon who lived upto his Squadron's motto, "Swift and Fearless", till his last breath. Second Lieutenant Kheterpal, whose father visited Pakistan after the war and was treated with deference. There, the man who had killed his son came up to him and saluted him. And finally Lieutenant Triveni Singh, mortally wounded, reporting to his General Officer Commanding, "mission accomplished".

About whom is this book? It is about ordinary Indians who took the human spirit to another level. And, who is the target readership? Again the ordinary Indian, more especially those gone astray and the young and aspiring. This book is well written and easy to read. Those in authority must give it the widest reach. The author should follow it up with a sequel to cover other gems, such as Lieutenant General PS Bhagat, Victoria Cross, Lieutenant KS Judge, Victoria Cross and others of their ilk.

*Brigadier MS Chowdhury, VSM (Retd)*

**Understanding Cyber Warfare and Its Implications for Indian Armed Forces.** By RK Tyagi (New Delhi: Vij Books, 2013), pp..300, Price Rs. 1250.00, ISBN 9789382652090

The subject chosen by the author Colonel RK Tyagi is very topical and raises a lot of expectations from the book. The layout of the book shows a high content of generic discussion which is factual and is available abundantly in literature on the subject. However, it may be useful for the uninitiated. The author has taken pains to illustrate his point of view with topical and current examples; and by the time one finishes reading part one, there is adequate interest generated to know how it affects the Indian Armed Forces.

The author has used simple and well flowing language that is easily understood with suitably interjected references. He has tried and partly succeeded in transposing well known principles of war into cyber space. Maybe a little more deliberation on the cyber relevance would have brought in convincing value. But the thread seems to have been lost when additional principles have been introduced. If they are to form part of learning they should have

been adequately supported by references from literature and other researchers.

The author goes on to discuss generic effects on society and thereafter on Indian population. Good statistics have been given in related fields but adequate insertion of cyber space has been left out. Readers expecting something original in the context of Indian Defence implications will be in for a little disappointment as this aspect has been covered either generically or very sparsely. All aspects where cyber warfare and timelines could have been covered have been left a little vague. Same is the case with the chapter on recommendations.

*Lieutenant General SP Kochar, AVSM and Bar, SM, VSM (Retd)*

**India's Energy Security.** By Vivek Dhall, (New Delhi : Vij Books, 2013), pp..108, Price Rs 595.00 ISBN 9789382652151

Result of the research done by a serving officer at USI in 2012, the book covers all facets of Energy relating to India. Spread over 11 chapters in 106 pages, he traces the evolution of Energy Security Concepts since mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century and their co-relation to national well-being. He points out that India's energy basket is a mix of coal, gas, oil, LPG, electricity (including hydro generation), biomass and a bit of nuclear. While urban India is reasonably well-off, 47 per cent of rural India still does not enjoy benefits offered by energy, thus it lags behind. This gap is likely to grow further by year 2030.

Highlighting importance of Energy as an 'essential ingredient for social development and economic growth for eradication of poverty', it is brought out that India's present record is low, and she imports 70 per cent of her oil requirements (mostly from West Asia) – a big financial drain. Steps initiated by the Government to reduce this gap are adequately covered.

Plans to import gas and oil from West and Central Asia and problems being faced in developing pipeline projects through Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh have been highlighted. Maritime issues, especially safety and security involved in transportation and distribution of oil and gas through international waters and the choke points have been covered, and measures suggested to overcome them.



Renewable energy in India and energy's interface with climate change have been covered, and comparisons drawn with European and Asian countries. He points out that while Japan has taken a lead in measures related to climate change, India still lags behind. As regards renewable energy, the author emphasises that much needs to be done in this field, as it can make a significant change in lives of the rural masses of the Country. The monogram ends with Policy Recommendations in which viable suggestions have been made for policy makers.

The author could have suggested "How the Armed Forces of India could contribute in ensuring Energy Security?" Though a lot of facts are included, use of graphs would have made their interpretation simpler. The text could also have been better edited.

The book tackles an issue of contemporary national importance and is a useful addition to the existing literature on a subject of great national importance.

*Lieutenant General YM Bammi, PhD (Retd)*

**Military Agency, Politics and the State in Pakistan.** By Ejaz Hussain, (*Sanskriti: New Delhi, 2013*) pp..452, Rs. 1150.00 ISBN 9788187374770

This well researched volume, by a noted Pakistani scholar, attempts to fill the gap of a proper theory-guided research of civil-military relations (CMR) of Pakistan as well as the phenomenon of military intervention in politics in Pakistan. In this study the Author's attempt is to solve through analytic narratives, dependent and independent variables, the core question – why the military continues to intervene in Pakistan's politics? The Author has taken due cognisance of the seminal works of Huntington, Janowitz, Feaver, Finer, Nordlinger, Pearlmuter, Desch and Cohen in CMR, thereby designing the model and flow matrix for detailed examination of all five cases of coup d' etat in Pakistan. The emphasis in this study is less on sociological, historical and economic perspectives but centres primarily on the political aspects that resulted in military takeovers.

This comprehensive work is spread over seven chapters. In the first chapter are dealt the theoretical aspects including the core question as also dependent and independent variables that are germane to the core question. Subsequent three chapters

analyse the theory and practice of CMR, general politics, the state in Pakistan and the empirical shortcomings therein, the nitty-gritty of 1958 and 1969 coups and the CMR during the period. Thereafter, in following two chapters are explained the changes during Bhutto's regime with the help of a causal model and Nawaz Sharif's failure to control the military. He concludes that it is the military that caused the July 1977 coup because the military maintained its stranglehold especially on defence and foreign affairs. Thereafter the fourth and the fifth coups are discussed for which the military again is directly held responsible.

The coups d'etat were legitimised on account of weak political institutions, incompetent politicians and the bogey of external threat from India! The Author concludes that Pakistan's military is able to maintain its overall suzerainty of the state because it is able to maximise its own economic interests and drive the foreign/defence policy as a dominant factor. The study clearly demonstrates that in Pakistan the military intervenes both overtly (coups) and covertly for its own interests which are primarily political in nature. A well researched study which will doubtless be of interest to Pakistan analysts, thinkers and students of political science.

*Major General Ashok Joshi, VSM (Retd)*

**The Islamist Challenge in West Asia, Doctrinal and Political Competitions After the Arab Spring.** *By Talmiz Ahmad (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, in Association with Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses, 2013.) pp 150, Price Rs 695 ISBN 978-81-8274-737-1.*

Implanting of Israel in Palestine in 1948 gave fresh impetus to Arab nationalism: army-led regimes took over in Egypt, Iraq, Syria and Yemen in the 1950s. Soon after, North African Arab states gained freedom from colonial rule. Thereafter, the Arab states in the Gulf shook off colonial tutelage. The new regimes ruled in the name of nationalism but failed to meet adequately either, the aspirations for better life or, the challenge posed by external forces. The overthrow of the Iranian monarchy and subsequent rule by dominant Shia clergy, added another challenge posed to the Arab rulers – that by Islamist forces. Corrupt governance by the rulers saw outbreak of Islamist-led mass protest in Tunisia and then in Egypt in 2011. The protest catapulted them to state power (in Egypt, for a brief period only).



While the mainline Islamists were willing to seek non-violent change, groups like al Qaeda mounted armed challenge to the existing regimes and their alleged foreign sponsors. As in other cases of historic change, there is alternate advance and retreat. Undoubtedly, the setback to peaceful change such as in Egypt creates space for armed insurrection as is currently seen in Syria and in North Africa.

Ambassador Talmiz Ahmad has spent decades in the Arab world – he was twice India's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia. Currently, he advises on energy issues from his base in Dubai. In his latest work – *The Islamist Challenge in West Asia* – he elaborates on the prevailing 'doctrinal and political competition' in the region, where India has vital political and economic interests. He deals with 'competition-and-confrontation' in the struggle for power within Arab countries and between the Arabs and the Iranians in the region. Importantly, he elaborates on the emphasis on doctrinal purity which motivates the Islamists.

The book is essential reading for policy planners and others interested in the region, known for its diverse political and cultural traditions competing for pre-eminence.

*Shri SK Bhutani, IFS (Retd)*

**Territorial Army: Future Challenges.** By Lt Col Harish Katoch  
(New Delhi: Vij Books India Pvt Ltd, 2013), pp..138, Price 595.00  
ISBN 9789382652120

The author has researched the historical evolution of the Territorial Army (TA) in India since its inception during the British era to its growth post-Independence; and thereafter, examined its relevance in the present day security environment. The author has highlighted the need for expansion of the TA in India for the urban areas, border regions, as well as for the specialised roles. He, however, laments that the concept of the TA has not really taken-off in India due to the indifference of the Army and apathy of the Government.

Harish has examined the employment of the TA in some of the leading militaries and given a broad overview and analysis of their size and likely roles, which obviously differ in each country due to their peculiar needs. The author opines that the TA in India

as a percentage of the regular forces is comparatively rather low and suggests its enhancement for, both, the active duties and as national reserve. The suggestion to selectively raise TA units, to replace a unit or sub-unit of the combat elements, in the defensive formations has to be examined in the larger perspective of its competence, operational preparedness, the peace and field rotational policy, its frequency of deployment in the field and the equipment profile.

Whereas TA, as a concept is good for ensuring economy and as an instrument of social cohesion, its growth has to be balanced. Some of the TA units have performed exceedingly well both in the operations and during peace time, however, it cannot be enlarged unduly and assigned new roles without acceptance of necessity, notwithstanding the better options that would be generated by expansion, for making the service a more attractive career. The author, has been able to document various issues and the challenges being faced by the TA, and has recommended a few steps in this regard. These recommendations should generate considerable interest and debate amongst the planners, both within the Armed Forces and in the Government.

*Lieutenant General Chandra Shekhar, PVSM, AVSM (Retd)*

**March of a Foot Soldier.** By DK Havanoor (Bangalore : DK Havanoor, 2013), pp..175, Rs 500.00, ISBN 9789351043

An interesting narrative of the journey of an infantry officer from his induction into the Army to the day he retired.

The language is easy to follow and his story reminds us of our own journey through life in our own regiments. Vignettes of life at the Officers Training Academy, initiation into his regiment, incidents on courses of instruction, experiences at border posts and forward areas, interaction between officers and soldiers of his regiment, the institution of the Officers Mess and regimental customs and traditions, all make an interesting and absorbing mirror image of our own lives in uniform.

Colonel Havanoor's book reminds us that all of us have stories to tell and that we need to follow his example.

*Major General Ian Cardozo, AVSM, SM (Retd)*



**Conspiracy of Silence: Japanese Prisoners of War in India 1942-1946 [Selected Source Materials].** By TR Sareen (*New Delhi: Life Span Publishers & Distributors, 2010*) pp. 382, Rs 1100.00, ISBN: 9788183690287.

As most students of military history in India are aware, the Imperial Japanese Army was a force to contend with during the Second World War. Their unyielding, rigid discipline stemmed from the *Bushido* code of the warrior. They were not only fanatical in battle, but also brutal towards those who were unfortunate enough to fall into their hands as prisoners of war (PsW). However, the *Bushido* code not only meant that the Japanese often preferred death over surrender, it also meant that the few Japanese soldiers who did fall alive into allied hands considered it a fate worse than death. Many would subsequently attempt suicide, or refuse to give their real names and personal details to their captors. Subsequently repatriated to Japan after the end of the war, they were shunned and ignored by their countrymen. The saga of Japanese PsW remains one of the shameful untold stories of modern Japanese military history. Two major PsW camps in pre-Independence India were located at Bikaner (Rajasthan) and Baleli (Baluchistan).

This book is a compilation of numerous primary source records collected by the author from various archives around the world while researching his book 'Japanese Prisoners of War in India, 1942-46: Bushido and Barbed Wire', published by Global Oriental, 2006. To that extent, it is in many ways a companion volume to the earlier book. However, as a stand-alone publication, the book contains much of interest to the historian and lay reader alike. Of particular interest to students of military propaganda are the sections on psychological warfare and morale. While the book is essentially a compilation of documents from various archives, the author has done a great service by publishing these records as a consolidated volume for reference by interested scholars of the Second World War.

*Squadron Leader Rana TS Chhina (Retd)*