Book Review

General SM Shrinagesh:
Soldier, Scholar, Statesman
Brig Satish K Issar VSM (Retd)
(New Delhi: Vision Books Pvt Ltd, 2009)
Rs 595/-

This book an able effort, a smart juxtaposition of autobiography and biography. The autobiography part is the original, fairly voluminous, notes left by the late Gen S N Shrinagesh, and preserved by the family. The biography part complements the author's exhaustive and painstakingly researched narration of events of the general's personal and professional life. The author's major advantage is that he belongs to the late general's regiment – the Kumaon Regiment – and knows the family well.

From a professional standpoint, the autobiographical part is fascinating. It throws light on the transition of the Indian Army from a colonial to a national army while actively engaged in its own division with Pakistan, providing aid to civil authorities in the pre and post-Partition holocaust, integrating Hyderabad and Junagarh with the Indian Union, and, most importantly, participating in 1947-48 War in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). And all this happened when junior level Indian Army officers were being quickly promoted to senior positions. Gen Srinagesh, who commanded a battalion in 1942-45, was corps commander in the J&K War. Some revealing impressions contained in his notes are given below.

- *In spite of enormous disadvantages, I was determined that we should succeed (in the capture of Zoji La) and indicated my determination to the officers conducting the operation. The reaction of one of the senior officers was that even this attempt at breaking through the Zoji La Pass had remote chance of succeeding. In order to break this form of negative thinking, I asked him to put his point of view in writing. This he hesitated to do and we were able to proceed with the operational discussion with positive plans.*

- *Because of India's strict adherence to this agreement, we were unable to use the Indian Air Force in its primary role of isolating the battlefield by air attacks on enemy supply bases and lines of communications. Even aerial attacks on Pakistani installations on the Indian side of the border and inside Kashmir, like Muzaffarabad and Mirpur were not launched because of possible escalation. On the other hand, Pakistan made full use of the lull caused by the agreement, to build up its strength, and supplement its forces in such a manner that Poonch and Leh were systematically encircled.*
- *For India, the military situation in Kashmir had been adversely influenced by political considerations. Pakistan had no legal or moral right to operate with its army in Kashmir against the expressed wishes of the people and the ruler of Kashmir, whereas India had. Still India referred the matter to the United Nations, which set up the UN Commission on India and Pakistan, before which both parties came to an agreement to refrain from offensive action likely to aggravate the situation.*
- *There had been a myth that Indian soldiers could only fight under British officers. This myth was exploded.*

When initial security problems of the nation had been tackled by the army, the Government of India began to consider downsizing the army and to make use of it as a labour force. When Shrinagesh took over as chief in May 1957, the strength of the army was about 450,000. The government planned to bring it to 150,000, reducing 10,000 men per year. Gen Shrinagesh writes on that period:

- *Leaders of free India were busy impressing upon the world that we were a peace loving nation, with people wedded to the ideology of Ahimsa (non-violence), and steeped in the belief that a peaceful attitude was a sufficient safeguard against any thought of aggression. As a matter of policy, we hastily expressed our close friendship with Communist China, Nepal, Burma and Tibet. We felt certain that in spite of the necessity of Partition, and while deploring the communal frenzy that it evoked, the people of Pakistan and India were close kith and kin, and would never dream of taking an aggressive attitude to each other.*
- *To me this kind of thinking seemed manifestly short-sighted…..Dr Katju's (then Defence Minister) and my arguments on Pakistan seemed to make some headway with Panditji (Nehru). He agreed that Pakistan was making military alliances, had been contemplating rearming with modern*

weapons, and had by no means forgotten Kashmir. But when it came to China – it drew a firm, "No", because the Chinese were our trusted friends; and we (army commanders) were foolish, hot-headed, and needlessly belligerent. Unfortunately, perhaps, China had not yet built the Aksai Chin Road, and we came away with the agreement to a 3,00,000 force, less than what we had contemplated, but still a force and a military one – not a labour corps!

On the Chinese intrusion in Ladakh in the 1950s, the general's notes state: *Virtually, the intelligence organisation had not been reorganised to meet the requirements of an independent nation. In fact, when reports of the Chinese survey of the Aksai Chin Road in Ladakh were received, it was assumed that these parties had strayed into our territory by chance OR BY MISTAKE! Two years later, the road was an accomplished fact.*

Gen Shrinagesh's most interesting comments, relevant even today, are on the subject of civil-military relations, joint defence strategy and the position of the Chief of Defence Staff. He wrote:

- *What is civil control? Surely not control by civil servants whose task is to provide a Secretariat to the Defence Minister. It means, necessarily, political control, which is fundamental to our democracy. Such political control must be that of the Minister, without the Defence Secretariat working as a sort of Controller General of the three Service Headquarters.*
- *Our people have yet to be educated in the fact that the ex-servicemen's welfare is a deserving cause not only to honour those to whom honour is due, but also to give an incentive to future recruitment.*
- *The Army Chief has to think first of the performance and effectiveness of his own Service, in the competition for the limited funds available. As a result, coordinated defence strategy is rarely achieved……The proposal for an independent Chairman of the Chief of Staff Committee was raised strongly by us and has since been mooted year after year and has had the support of certain Defence Ministers. But it has always been, and is still, negated on political grounds, presumably because of the fear that an independent Chairman of Chiefs of Staff Committee would become too strong, or because of the feeling that the work can be best carried out in the Secretariat, by bureaucrats in the Defence Ministry!*

His opinion on the role and tasks of a governor:

People expect that though politics and politicians may change, there is always someone outside the normal political hurly–burly who would have a stabilising influence on the body economic and politic; and perhaps this is the great contribution a governor can make.

Many other notes of Gen Shrinagesh on issues such as the rift between the King's and Indian Commissioned Officers, political effort to reinduct Indian National Army (INA) personnel in the army, national discipline, training and quality of leadership in the army give an insight into the events of those days and his own thinking.

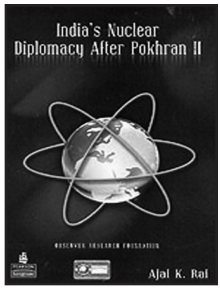
Two important conclusions can be drawn from Gen Shrinagesh's notes. One, lack of strategic consciousness and perceptions after independence, particularly on China. Two, strong political leadership of the period which tended to ignore direct military advice and depended more on its own perceptions and bureaucratic advice. The reasons could be (a) Indian military and higher defence organisation before independence was completely under British control. The British did not consult Indian leaders on strategic issues and *realpolitik*. Our own strategic resource pool of thought, talent and specialists was non-existent. (b) Having been catapulted from tactical to strategic level, senior military officers had little education and experience of strategic issues. They performed well in the operations but were unable to influence politico-military decisions.

Gen Shrinagesh emerges as a modest, humble and humane person, who went about his duties in a quiet and dignified manner, preferring to remain out of publicity and controversies. The human angle in the book is provided by the general's family, particularly by Mrs Rajkumari Shrinagesh, who as a young educated Punjabi girl married a South Indian officer – a rare event in the social milieu of the early 1930s.

An important military history contribution, the book is worth reading!

— Gen V P Malik (Retd), former COAS

India's Nuclear Diplomacy After Pokhran II
Ajai K Rai
(New Delhi: Pearson Longman, 2009), pp 270
Rs 575/-



This book presents the fascinating story of India's transformation from a country under technological denial regimes since 1974 [after the conduct of the peaceful nuclear experiment (PNE))] to an India that is today recognised as a responsible nuclear nation with advanced nuclear technology. The recent conclusion of the Indo-US civilian nuclear cooperation agreement after a long period of bitter bilateral estrangement illustrates this change in India's nuclear status.

Ajai Rai uses the Indo-US civilian nuclear deal as the starting point to examine the entire gamut of India's nuclear diplomacy. He chooses four nuclear relationships of relevance to India: with China and Pakistan for the sake of nuclear security, and with Russia and France for energy security.

Rai comprehensively traces the history of the many steps that India and the US traversed to make the new nuclear reality. However, the strength of the book lies in sounding a note of caution on "unrestrained giddiness about the 'paradigm shifts'." Indeed, it would do well for India to remember that its strategic relationship with the USA would encounter bumpy pockets. Having a "global hegemon" on its side has its advantages, but India will also have to ensure its decision-making retains national security uppermost in mind. In fact, this aspect would be severely tested as and when a decision on India's accession to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) become imminent. While India may not have any need to oppose the US on these treaties, neither must it feel obligated to the US to sign them. It must make its decision on the basis of the sole criterion of national interest. The challenge for India's nuclear diplomacy, therefore, will lie in making Washington conversant with India's security needs and safeguarding them even at the cost of standing up to US pressure, and most importantly, doing it all, as Rai says, "without antagonizing the hegemon."

One such important security concern is the threat from Pakistan's 'use' of its nuclear weapons for needling India at the sub-conventional level. While Rai seems to suggest that Pakistan embarked upon its nuclear weapons journey only after suffering defeat from India in 1971, enough writings from Indian and Pakistani

scholars document that the pursuit had begun much earlier. In fact, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had argued in favour of it from 1964 onwards once China had conducted its nuclear test. Security concerns, more than prestige, egged Islamabad in this direction and it has used the capability to 'bleed' India on different occasions. Rai, however, very rightly questions whether Pakistan has learnt any lessons from the military and diplomatic crises that its nuclear policy has often landed it in. He doubts if the Pakistan Army has conducted an objective, official assessment of the inefficacy, if not dangerous foolishness, of its use of coercive diplomacy against India.

On India-France nuclear relations, Rai points out that President's Chirac's understanding of India's justification for "pursuit of an independent nuclear force" allowed "precious elbow room to Indian diplomacy" immediately after the nuclear tests. Also, as an exporter of high technology, France was willing to accommodate India's energy needs through civilian nuclear cooperation, but felt constrained by the existing non-proliferation regime. Therefore, the Indo-US nuclear deal will fructify into a more productive bilateral Indo-French nuclear engagement. The larger question, however, will be how India can use this relationship to balance pressures that might arise from the US, especially in the field of non-proliferation? The book shies away from providing any answers to this.

In fact, on non-proliferation, though the author painstakingly traces the history of India's nuclear diplomacy from the period of the first prime minister, he, however, is not forward looking enough. The strong point of the chapter lies in a perceptive account of the main objectives of Nehru's nuclear policy as well as the elaborate historical account of India's many non-proliferation initiatives. This, however, appears to leave the author exhausted and curiously enough, the chapter does not bring into context the special waiver that India obtained and whose circumstances and implications are so well explained in the first chapter of the book. India's engagement with the international community on civilian nuclear commerce would obviously have an impact on India's future conduct of diplomacy on non-proliferation, but the book falls short of recommending changes in India's nuclear diplomacy to better make use of the opening avenues and opportunities.

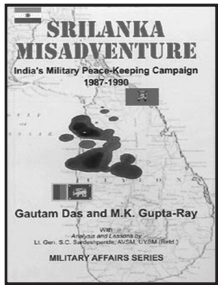
This lacuna is particularly felt since in his preface the author has pointed out that the conclusion of the cooperation agreement with the USA is, in some sense, not the culmination but the beginning of India's challenges since New Delhi will now be required to craft adequately nuanced nuclear policies that

allow opportunities to be exploited for energy without compromising strategic interests. Indeed, as a 'special' member of the non-proliferation regime, domestic and global expectations from India will be high. The reader would, therefore, have gained from the author's perspective on how India's nuclear diplomacy must tackle the emerging challenges.

Nevertheless, for a detailed account of the change in India's many nuclear relationships, the book renders great service. It will contribute to the existing literature on the understanding of issues that constrained India's nuclear diplomacy in the past and which were successfully overcome by the conclusion of the Indo-US civilian nuclear agreement.

— Dr Manpreet Sethi, Senior Fellow, CAPS

Sri Lanka Misadventure: India's Military Peace-Keeping Force Campaign 1987-1990
Gautam Das and M K Gupta Ray,
(New Delhi: Military Affairs Series, 2007)
Rs 595/-



This is another addition to the series of books on Indian Peacekeeping Force Operations in Sri Lanka. The author presents a brief overview of the background, which led to the signing of the Indo- Sri Lanka Accord, 1987, the induction of the Indian Peacekeeping Force (IPKF) and its interaction with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The book details the background to the deterioration in the relations between the IPKF and the LTTE, which subsequently led to the conflict. The major part of the book covers the various phases of the campaign from the induction of additional troops to the de-induction phase. The book gives a lucid account of the complexities of fighting the LTTE in an urban environment for the capture of Jaffna town. There is a vivid account of the operations of 41 Infantry Brigade in general and 16 Sikh and 19 Raj Rif in particular. The book also contains some useful interviews with Prabhakaran, the commander of the LTTE and Lt Gen AS Kalkat, the IPKF Force commander. The author could not have found a better person than Lt Gen S C Sardeshpande to do the analyses and draw some useful lessons from this campaign.

The author could have also covered the operations of 18 and 115 Infantry Brigades that played a key role in ousting the LTTE from its stronghold in Jaffna. The progress of operations could have been better illustrated by the use of coloured maps.

The major highlight of the book is the lack of judgment with regard to the military capabilities of the LTTE on the part of Gen Sundarji, the then chief of the Army Staff and his commitment to late Shri Rajiv Gandhi, the then prime minister of India, that the operations would be completed within one week. The induction of ill-prepared, ill-equipped and under-strength units at short notice was a consequence of this commitment. Worse was that the units were placed under new formations and commanders. According to the author, the Sri Lanka misadventure provides a text-book example of strategic incompetence wherein the Indian state failed to achieve its stated objectives.

The book is written in simple language. It will not only be a useful addition to the libraries of units/formations but also a key contender for being prescribed for promotion examinations.

— Maj Gen Samay Ram (Retd)

Chinese WMD Proliferation in Asia: US Response
Monika Chansoria
(New Delhi: Knowledge World, 2009)
Rs 680/-

Chinese Proliferation in Asia: US Response provides a detailed account of China's weapons of mass destruction (WMD) proliferation activities. Specifically, it examines the international responses in general and of the US in particular and the significant geo-politics underlying these developments. The narrative provides a view as to how China has used WMD proliferation as a tool in furthering its foreign policy objectives. The narrative is useful, and will serve as a good reference point.

The author makes a forceful conclusion that China, right from its inception, has been systematically working to "deploy a small but varied nuclear force that could survive a superpower attack, penetrate existing enemy defences and hit significant targets of potential aggressors" (p.3). Similar views have been articulated by many other scholars, especially Robert G Sutter in his various CRS Reports.

Despite the 1988 assurance that Beijing will abide by the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) Guidelines and thereby not engage in transfer of missiles, it continued to engage in missile proliferation to the Middle East in 1989 and 1990, and to Pakistan throughout the early 1990s. This has been a major failure for the MTCR. This is because China has tried to interpret these guidelines very narrowly to continue extensive assistance to Pakistan, selling missile technology as well as giving manufacturing assistance to Pakistan, including establishing a second missile factory in Pakistan. China has also tried to link the entire missile proliferation issue to continued sale of US weapons to Taiwan and the possible US missile defence programme in the Asia-Pacific. While the author records these developments, it might have been useful to bring out the failures of the MTCR and other multilateral arrangements as also point out as to how and why these arrangements failed to put a cap on Chinese activities. It will also be important to analyse the geo-political compulsions of the US in failing to apply pressure on the supplier country – China, or the recipients – Pakistan and Iran.

Third, the author makes an authoritative conclusion that China alone possessed the capacity of being a "strategic challenger to America" (p. 28). It may be borne in mind that dealing with rising powers or potential challengers has been an issue that the US has been dealing with ever since the end of the Cold War. In this regard, it might be pertinent to study the 1992 Department of Defence report, authored by Paul Wolfowitz which suggested that the United States should seek to preserve the American primacy and prevent the rise of various regional hegemons. It even suggested that the US should "discourage Indian hegemonic aspirations over the other states in South Asia and on the Indian Ocean" (Patrick E Tyler, "US Strategy Plan Calls for Insuring No Rivals Develop a One-Superpower World: Pentagon's Document Outlines Ways to Thwart Challenges to Primacy of America," *New York Times*, 08 March 1992). In fact, the book would have benefitted significantly from the recently declassified reports [the draft of the Defence Planning Guidance (DPG) and the related working papers are posted on the National Security archive website of the George Washington University] that bring out some of these objectives clearly. The report talked not just about China, but other regional powers as well, including India and its ambitions in the South Asian and Indian Ocean region.

Four, the author's assertion that military modernisation was not a priority in the Chinese scheme of things in the 1990s might be erroneous. This contradicts the author's own analysis of the Chinese defence budget. The author illustrates high Chinese defence spending by citing a RAND report and a Japanese study which says that China is spending to the tune of $140 billion in purchasing power

parity (PPP) terms to "establish a militarily dominant position in Asia by taking advantage of the current situation when the US and Russia have cut back their armed forces and defence budgets" (p. 29).

The author rightly points out that the Chinese WMD proliferation activities have been part of its larger foreign policy objectives, in general and "to imperil US interests outside the Asia-Pacific" (pp. 46-47). While it is true to some extent that Beijing had an eye on US influence, Chinese activities may have had another important element under consideration – to check India and keep it bogged down in South Asia. India's rising profile in Asia and beyond does raise concerns in Beijing and it does view India as a strategic competitor. However, the Chinese wariness about India is not entirely new. India has always figured in China's strategic calculus; this may have become more pronounced in the last decade or so. For instance, China-Pakistan ties are a classic case. By helping Pakistan on the nuclear and missile front, Beijing kept New Delhi embroiled in a conflict situation and to a great extent achieved the objective of preventing India from rising fast as China's peer competitor. China-Pakistan nuclear cooperation has also altered the strategic framework in the Indian subcontinent. For that matter, China's strong ties with other South Asian countries also has similar objective – to contain India's rise and influence even within South Asia by strengthening Beijing's strategic relations with "India-wary" countries. Thus, Beijing has made significant inroads into India's own backyard through cross-border economic and strategic penetration into Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Maldives. Therefore, China's geo-strategic objectives and military security concerns vis a vis India, along with territorial disputes and the need to protect its soft strategic underbelly – Tibet and Xinjiang – drives much of China's South Asia policy.

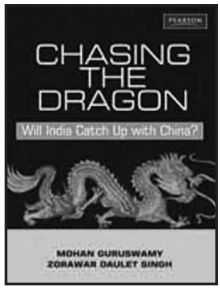
Chapters III and IV provide a detailed account of the Chinese proliferation activities to Iran, Pakistan and North Korea. While there may have been several articles on the subject, these chapters provide a useful compendium, which will prove useful to any researcher or policy-maker. In the North Korean context, it might have been useful to analyse as to what are the advantages or disadvantages to China of a nuclear North Korea. Does China not want to see a nuclear North Korea under its patronage? It might. While Beijing may have periodic concerns on the stability of the ageing leadership in Kim Jong Il and also refugee inflow into China in case of instability, Pyongyang could be used as a buffer state against the US and its allies in the region – South Korea and Japan. If China did not have such long-term objectives, it may not have been in its interest to support Pyongyang's nuclear and missile related activities.

The author also looks at the issue of missile defence, asking whether it is a proportional response to Chinese proliferation activities. On the Asia-Pacific front, the US has been beefing up its missile defence capabilities in view of the threat from the North Korean missiles and increasing Chinese military capabilities. The chapter could have also asked why Seoul, for instance, has been less than supportive to the US on this issue. Because South Korea has been particularly slow in responding to missile defences due to certain important developments that the South Korean leadership considers more important from their perspective. These include: reconciliation with North Korea and a possible reunification of the Koreas and improved relations with China, especially in the economic arena. The leadership has believed that acquiring or developing (jointly with the US) any system would adversely impact these objectives. Meanwhile, South Korea is developing a series of defence measures, including production of Aegis-capable KDX-III class destroyers which can detect and track missile launches, but will not carry anti-missile weapons. South Korea has also been in talks with Germany for the procurement of PAC-2 missiles for air defence purposes. Despite the rapprochement between the two Koreas, South Korea does not rule out North Korean missile threats. Hence, Seoul accepts the protection offered by the PAC-3 systems that the US has in Seoul, on certain conditions: that Seoul is not developing such a system; it does not have any operational control on the US system; and that it is not cooperating in joint-production of any Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) system. Another factor why Seoul has been cold to the BMD is due to the fact that BMD is directed more against long-range missile threats, but threats that Seoul faces come from short-range missiles (see, Kurt M Campbell, Jeremiah Gertler, "The Paths Ahead: Missile Defense in Asia," CSIS, March 2006).

Lastly, given all these developments, the concluding chapter could have devoted a section to analysing the implications for the region, and more importantly for India. The book, however, certainly is a useful addition to the existing literature.

— Dr Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan, Senior Fellow, ORF

Chasing the Dragon: Will India Catch Up with China?
Mohan Guruswamy and Zorawar Daulet Singh
(New Delhi: Pearson Publishers, 2010)
Rs 585/-



The book *Chasing the Dragon* is an all-inclusive attempt by the authors to address what perhaps could be the most important query—whether India and China, two strong competing economies within Asia, will eventually be successful in reclaiming their due in the sphere of international political economy.

The book raises a series of pertinent questions revolving around the emergence of economic warfare in Asia of which, China and India are two most significant players. The ascension of China and India has certainly been an outstanding development of this century. The authors have questioned both the structure of the world economy and the balance of global geo-political power. This specifically raises the issue—how aggressive a superpower will China be? Moreover, how shall this facet impact upon India whose vast population and economic prospects appear to guarantee prosperity? It is a well-known and accepted fact by now that global power is witnessing a rapid shift towards the East with special reference to India and the People's Republic of China. As a matter of fact, Sino-Indian bilateral trade is expected to hit a staggering $60 billion by 2010.

The authors have managed to pile up extensive empirical data through various sources. The book offers a survey of the initial decades after reforms in India and in the post-reforms period as a whole, and the nature of the lead opened up by China. The authors have asserted that the emergence of China as a major international actor has been the dominant geo-political event of the new millennium so far. It could well be stated that the larger Asian economic story is intrinsically linked to Chinese growth since Beijing today accounts for over 55 percent of Asian exports, 7.2 percent of world imports, 16.5 percent of global import growth and 16 percent of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth.

The authors have stressed upon a fact, already well known—China's economic rise in Asia is not a sovereign dynamic but has been heavily driven by the US involvement in East Asia. This holds true since Beijing has acted as a manufacturing tool for the West. Since 2000, Chinese international economic interactions have manifested in cross-border trade and investment linkages that have fundamentally altered the structure of global product and factor markets.

The authors have illustrated this fact as they focus on the East Asian geo-economic division of labour, where China is now at the epicentre of regional production networks, and which India, for the most part, has excluded itself from.

The book evaluates the role of investments made by foreign investors, the competition for natural resources in the continent and finally the export markets that are bound to emerge soon between China and India. The authors argue that the ascent of China as a global economic actor has inevitably been the dominant theme in international economics literature.

Besides, the authors also examine the other emerging reality in this part of the world i.e., India as the other Asian transformation story. It is a reality that China and India are among the top three economies in the world on the basis of purchasing power parity (PPP). The book studies the Indian and Chinese economies as ones stated to be in a state of 'transition' with their socio-economic rejuvenation manifested with a desire to deepen their integration with the global economic progress. The authors make the conclusion that however interesting their geo-political environment may be, for the foreseeable future, both India and China will be preoccupied with their domestic priorities.

India is increasingly aware of the widening economic disparity with China, and China, on the other hand, fears that a democratic India may increasingly participate in US designs to 'contain' it. The book provides insights to areas wherein India could learn from the recent Chinese experience and its great success in transforming its economy from a traditional peasant economy to a manufacturing and export powerhouse.

The authors cite the example where many of the policies adopted by China such as encouraging the establishment of huge manufacturing capacities by domestic and foreign investors can be considered by India for adoption with some modifications to suit its prevalent political economy. The Chinese experience in transforming its state-owned enterprises from being state-owned ventures into relatively autonomous and vital engines of growth holds many lessons for India grappling with its huge and often inefficient public sector undertakings.

However, the book also discusses at length the irony and a potential hurdle towards achieving comprehensive growth by both India and China—extreme poverty. The per capita income of both countries stands far below the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) group of nations, and below even most South American and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries. The majority of the workforce is dependent on agriculture for sustenance. The second chapter provides an analysis of the existing differences

in the situation between Beijing and New Delhi. India faces far more acute problems and needs to industrialise more swiftly. India's growth at present is largely sustained by the growth of services. For the period 2002-03 to 2006-07, services contributed 69 percent of the overall average growth in GDP. The authors have underlined the alarming asymmetry in the GDPs of the two nations and assessed the reasons behind this asymmetry. Clearly, China's economic growth was much faster than India's and reflective of how Asia is transforming itself, as discussed elaborately in the book.

The authors cite a *Report on Conditions of Work and Promotion of Livelihood in the Unorganised Sector* prepared by the National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector—a first-of-its-kind study on the state of informal or unorganised employment in India. This study highlights certain crucial statistics including that 86 percent of India's working population, or 395 million workers, constitute the unorganised sector. According to these findings, in 2004-05, 91 percent of agricultural labourers and 64 percent of rural and 52 percent of casual non-agricultural labour force received a wage below the national minimum wage designated by the central government (Rs 66 per day). Even 57.3 percent of unorganised, regular workers in rural areas, and 47.2 percent in urban areas received a wage below this minimum.

The authors emphasise that India's growth phase is more sustained and the onus now lies on India's leadership to exploit this opportunity to the fullest. For the same, India needs to launch literacy programmes on a massive scale to educate its large populace, enhance the quality of its workforce, upgrade and expand its infrastructure and adopt policies that speed up industrialisation, and the modernisation and expansion of the agricultural sector. Herein lies an irony, according to the authors, since China chanced upon its transformation under the dynamic leadership of Deng Xiaoping. In India's case, the critical national consensus still eludes its leadership as it stands on the cusp of major transformation. This is visible time and again as even a tiny step towards reform assumes the shape of an incapacitating experience—reflective of the true nature of Indian democracy.

The authors highlight the principal failure of India's economic planners which centres on their dismal record in shaping the conditions to leverage India's comparative advantage—its huge pool of unskilled workforce. A staggering 14 million Indians, entirely unskilled, enter the labour force each year. This automatically impacts upon the arena of job creation that can hardly be overstated. The book points out the limits of skill-based development (service sector growth) for India.

The book cites innumerable empirical surveys by means of which the authors demonstrate the extent of economic asymmetry between India and China. The book suggests that India reorient its development strategy by focussing on a manufacturing-led model. For the same, physical infrastructure, energy security, food security, education, healthcare, Research and Development (R&D),Science and Technology (S&T) will have to be addressed as part of a coherent strategy for development. The authors suggest that in the case of the Chinese experience, it was investment in these vital areas that underpinned and sustained Chinese growth for over two-and-a-half-decades.

Nevertheless, the authors state on p. 164, "the likelihood of armed conflict is now much reduced with both countries acquiring a greater stake in the international political economy." This is a highly debatable statement made by the authors since the fact needs to be understood that mounting trading ties do not necessarily guarantee bridging of political differences. Given the existential disputes between the two countries, China could well ratchet up tensions at any given point in time. Increasing Chinese military incursions across the border into India coupled with Beijing's disinclination to trade maps underlines its disinclination to an overall border settlement. The contention by the authors that armed conflict is less probable owing to economic integration is not entirely acceptable and does not signify as a true indicator of the overall growth in Sino-Indian relations.

At the tactical level, China has incessantly followed a policy of aggressive diplomacy and military engagement with a view to tying down India. This 'aggression in intent' has been reflected in a spate of recent incidents in the fields of both diplomacy and military engagement, thus, pinpointing a hardening Chinese posture. Along with growth in economic and trading ties, there ought to be some movement forward vis-à-vis political and strategic understanding between the two nations.

Overall, the book is a successful attempt by the authors to evaluate the prospects of India catching up with China and the core policy lessons that India could derive as it seeks to reclaim its position in the global economic system. The book by Mohan Guruswamy and Zorawar Daulet Singh shall add as a worthy contribution to the already existing literature on this subject.

— Dr Monika Chansoria, Research Fellow, CLAWS