Book Reviews

Sharpening the Arsenal: India's Evolving Nuclear Deterrence Policy

Gurmeet Kanwal
(Harper Collins Publishers, 2018)
$22.99

Nuclear weapons are not the tools of war-fighting but of deterrence for prevention of war. Brodie had argued that the "unacceptable costs of nuclear war and commitment of retaliation secure the prospects for stable deterrence". The effectiveness of nuclear deterrence will remain if a nation is able to maintain stable deterrence by maintaining credible minimum deterrence (specifying minimum numbers of warheads) and robust delivery systems. The second important aspect is articulation of nuclear posturing and will to execute an enunciated nuclear doctrine. There is an inconclusive debate in India over 'No First Use (NFU)' because the big question is: is it part of a strategy or a cultural fallout? One of the principles of the NFU is that a nation must possess second strike capability and survival of the weapon systems and command and control centres from the first strike. Third, the inconclusive debate over which the jury is divided is the question: should India continue to pursue massive retaliation if Pakistan chooses to use tactical nuclear weapons? Is there a need to review the nuclear doctrine on massive retaliation and also consider flexible response? The fourth issue is: what is the minimum credible deterrence required by India? Should the government define it or should it remain classified? Possessing

capabilities and leveraging them are two different aspects of the nuclear strategy. Is the political and military leadership skilled to handle nuclear signalling? Do we have political leaders and nuclear warriors that inspire confidence in each other to take the right decision at the critical point in time? Even the Pentagon struggled to revitalise its strategic forces to respond to a more unstable world of nuclear powers.

The book titled *Sharpening the Arsenal: India's Evolving Nuclear Deterrence Policy* authored by Brig Gurmeet Kanwal has addressed all the issues that need deeper introspection. In the first chapter itself he has very aptly discussed: is India a 'reluctant nuclear power' or a robust and reliable nuclear capable nation? He has highlighted that there is no need for India to be defensive about the purpose of nuclear weapons. In fact, the justification to possess nuclear weapons is to deter aggression due to the fear of catastrophic retaliation. US strategist Bernard Brodie wrote in 1978: " The chief purpose of nuclear weapons must be to avert war." The author, on the basis of the trajectory India has taken to develop its nuclear arsenal and doctrine, is of the opinion that India's nuclear deterrence is now "robust and reliable". One aspect that the author should have dwelled on in this chapter is that wars were not avoided or deterred in post-World War-II era entirely because of nuclear weapons—they were also avoided because both sides were unwilling to go to war. Accoring to David P Barash, "Logically speaking, there is no way to demonstrate that nuclear weapons kept the peace during the Cold War, or that they will do so now or in the future".

Most commentators have described nuclear weapons as political weapons rather than military ones. In the backdrop of the above, a nuclear doctrine remains a vital instrument of foreign policy. Thus, it must be unambiguous in its deterrence value. Alexander A. Dynkin, Director, Institute of World Economy and International Relations

(IMEMO) of the Russian Academy of Sciences had said, "A nuclear doctrine is a tool of nuclear posturing and has internal and external dimensions." A nation demonstrates its willingness to use nuclear weapons through its nuclear doctrine. The author has discussed important facets of a nuclear doctrine in chapter two, suggesting that NFU should be part of the nuclear strategy and not a part of a defensive mindset or pacifist national character. NFU would require second strike capabilities and the endeavour of the nation should be to ensure protection of its nuclear forces after a first strike. The author has discussed scenarios wherein India may be compelled to undertake a first strike, especially when there is adequate warning of the adversary preparing for the launch of a nuclear weapon or even when an adversary attacks one's nuclear facilities with a conventional warhead. This is one of the most important aspects of nuclear posturing and the book makes a case for a review of the nuclear doctrine, especially with regard to NFU. The author has highlighted that the doctrine plays an important role in maintaining deterrence and strategic stability, since it defines the probability and possibility of a first nuclear strike. Thus, shaping the nuclear doctrine is as important as possession of the nuclear weapon itself.

The author has discussed that not only are numbers important, the delivery system is equally important for credible nuclear capability. He has pointed out that there is no way for civilian or military leaders to know how many weapons are enough to meet the requirement of "effective nuclear deterrence". The author has left it to the political leaders and nuclear force commanders to determine how many weapons are required for credible second strike capability. Along with the numbers of the weapon system, he has highlighted in chapter three the importance of the TRIAD. He has alluded to the fact that submarine launched weapon systems have a greater chance of survival after a first strike, thus, India should explore possibility of not only launching the weapon from the

Indian Ocean but also from the Pacific Ocean. In the backdrop of the above, it is imperative to develop reliable stealth nuclear attack submarines and a missile system that is accurate, and difficult to detect both during launch and while in flight.

Since Pakistan suffers from the paranoia of lack of strategic depth and the threat from India's three strike corps driving deep inside its territory, it has been prompted to develop 'Tactical Nuclear Weapons' (TNWs). India's undeclared 'Cold Start Doctrine' has increased the possibility of Pakistan using TNWs as the weapons of war-fighting. As the author has vividly discussed, should India exercise the option of massive retaliation against TNW or examine the possibility of flexible response? In chapter six, the author has emphasised that the doctrines of conventional wars do, to a certain extent, make nuclear weapons relevant if there is asymmetry in conventional capabilities. That is what is driving Pakistan to develop and make TNWs as weapons of war-fighting.

Strategic stability and Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) are both a bridge too far and a pipedream. The author has examined this in the light of the fact that the nuclear weapon, by itself, does not bring strategic stability. Rather, it sets off a race and competition that in itself is a destabilising factor. Stability can only be achieved if the political and military leaders having control over the nuclear button think rationally and do not act in an irrational manner in spite of grave provocation. Similarly, the BMD is a pipedream because the capabilities would only be known after the nuclear strike has already been carried out. In addition, BMD umbrella may not be able to engage and destroy all the incoming missiles and some may sneak in. Even if a few can penetrate the BMD umbrella, the losses will be catastrophic. Notwithstanding, BMD is an essential inventory that India needs to develop to enhance the chances of survival of its nuclear forces.

The author has brought out that a robust policy for disarmament is an alternative path to lower the likelihood of a nuclear war. Though the numbers of nuclear weapons have come down from 60,000 to 10,000, total disarmament is still near impossible due to the desire of the nuclear states to retain this weapon of coercion and deterrence. David P Barash says that ethical deterrence, non-proliferation and disarmament for risk reduction of nuclear wars have failed to obtain a commitment from the nuclear powers. The biggest stumbling block to disarmament is the doctrine of first strike. The retaliatory strike is the right of the affected state to retaliate. Therefore, as long as the first strike of nuclear weapons stays, the second strike will remain the legitimate right of a nation to defend itself or deter aggressors. Academician Alexander A. Dynkin, Director, IMEMO, of the Russian Academy of Sciences, states, "If a first (preventive) strike is deemed acceptable, nuclear disarmament would seem more complicated." Notwithstanding the global trend, the book alludes to the fact that disarmament and non-proliferation should continue to be the ultimate objective of India.

The concluding chapter of the book "Sharpening the Arsenal: Looking Ahead" has laid emphasis on developing modern, high quality nuclear forces even if the numbers are fewer. The author has stated that the geostrategic realities warrant that India should have robust delivery systems, and keep its options open for nuclear testing and the security of nuclear installations during peace and war to prevent subversion, sabotage and terror strikes. If India intends to continue with NFU, it should develop capabilities to absorb a first nuclear strike and retain the ability to retaliate. Missile technology development should be a continuous process to enhance ranges to operate from both the Indian and Pacific Oceans covering all of China and Pakistan. The author has correctly stated that BMD is essential to retain the ability of a second strike by defending and putting in place

a missile defence umbrella. The author has left it to the last chapter to express the profound thought that while developing high quality nuclear forces, India should keep working towards disarmament and non-proliferation to reduce the risk of a nuclear war. Development of nuclear forces should not be considered a panacea against conventional threats from Pakistan and China. Rather, India should continue to develop and modernise its conventional forces because there is space for conventional conflict below the nuclear threshold. Nuclear weapons are here to stay and even the pacifist countries in East Asia may be developing them, triggering a nuclear arms race in the Far East. India may choose to have lean nuclear forces, but these must be of a high quality, with a robust command and control set-up.

The author has remarkably linked doctrine, technology, conventional capabilities, and robust systems with the need for developing a mature political leadership that is capable of nuclear posturing and rationale in the approach to maintain a fine balance between deterrence and brinkmanship. It is a must read book for the policy-makers and commanders of the nuclear forces.

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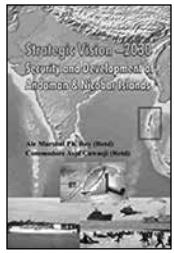
Strategic Vision 2030: Security and Development of Andaman and Nicobar Islands



PK Roy and Aspi Cawasji
(New Delhi: Vij Books India Pvt Ltd, 2017)
Rs 850/-

Since India's independence in 1947, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands (ANI) have continued to suffer the legacy of being a British penal colony, more famously known as *kala paani*. With their remote location, more than 1,200 km from the mainland, their development was an economic challenge that was subordinated to more pressing concerns on the mainland. Moreover, concerns about the fragile ecology and sustenance of the tribal inhabitants have been given primacy, resulting in only 37 of the 572 islands constituting the archipelago, being inhabited. Development has been slow and even the rehabilitation efforts in the islands since the tsunami of 2004 have progressed hesitantly, more at providing basic necessities than enhancement of facilities. The islands, which constitute just 0.2 per cent of India's landmass, provide 30 per cent of its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). However, this vast EEZ has hardly been explored, leave alone exploited.

The islands have also failed to figure prominently in the geostrategic or security calculus of the nation. The leadership has been more focussed on dealing with the two northern neighbours and it is only in recent years, with increasing dependence on the sea lanes for its growing economy, that the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) has gained greater strategic importance. The islands' proximity to the East Asian countries as well as to the Malacca Strait, the choke point through which the Sea Lanes of Communications (SLOCs) connect

the Western Pacific to the IOR, makes them important to expand political and commercial ties with the major economies of East Asia, an important facet of the Look East/ Act East policy of the Indian government. The Malacca Strait is also the critical lane for military and commercial shipping of a resurgent China, which is heavily dependent on it for its energy imports as well as to help expand its influence in the IOR. Straddling the strategic SLOCs, the ANI's geographical location provides the capability to project power into the region, and balance, influence or counter Chinese actions, as required.

With their growing prominence, it is important that appropriate steps are taken towards the islands' economic and security related development. Towards this, analysis by professionals with greater insight into the minutiae would be of great assistance to the decision-makers. This book, authored by two people with such credentials, is a welcome step in this direction. While Air Marshal Roy has had an immaculate tenure at the helm of the Andaman and Nicobar Command for slightly less than two years, Commodore Cawasji has had extensive stints around the island territory.

The book has been written in an innovative style, of small chapters, covering different aspects of the ANI. It aptly introduces the historical and geographical perspectives. Interesting facts about the inheritance of the islands during independence have been brought out. The authors have then chosen to do a wider appreciation of the global environment, followed by the growing geostrategic and geoeconomic importance of the IOR in a globalised, interconnected world of the 21st century. India's growing interest in the IOR for economic and strategic reasons has been elucidated, with emphasis on the growing Chinese presence, the importance of security of the SLOCs, the competition for resources, as well as the growing non-conventional threat in the region. Chinese interests have been elaborated upon, including its Maritime Silk Route initiative, as also the recent US moves at rebalancing its strategic posture.

In subsequent chapters, the focus has narrowed to the ANI and various aspects have been covered, including their geography, history, demographics and natural, industrial and economic potential. With their intricate knowledge of the region, the authors have been able to delve into varied elements – from the natural resources to the economic indicators and infrastructure requirements and the governance, budgetary and environment aspects. Special emphasis has been given to the EEZ of over two million square kilometres. The authors have brought out that once the United Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf accepts India's claim, the continental shelf around the island would be enhanced by over a million square kilometres, making its seabed area almost equal to its land area.

However, neglect has been the underlying theme and this has been emphasised through various examples. For instance, the authors have drawn attention to the aspects of the remote locations of the islands, extended linear spread, thick forest cover and heavy, prolonged rains that make any construction activity economically unviable. This has discouraged greater private participation in infrastructure development and most investment is through government initiatives. Moreover, more than a decade after the tsunami of 2004, an important road that helps link the north with south islands has still not been rebuilt, with communication dependent on the air and sea links. The shifting focus of the Indian government, with an allocation of Rs. 10,000 crore in 2015, for various shipping and maritime projects, has been welcomed.

Efforts to strengthen India's military presence have not kept pace with the Chinese activity. The path-breaking establishment of the unified Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC) in 2001 has not progressed as envisaged due to funding issues, lack of adequate resources, multiple inter-Services, and command and control issues. These facets have been brought out in the chapter dedicated to the ANC. Historical and functional aspects have been covered, along

with the various challenges in terms of force structure and lack of adequate troops, platforms, radars and infrastructure required for efficient conduct of operations over such a large expanse of land and sea territory. The Air Marshal has cited some personal achievements but has lamented the absence of an ocean-based strategy from Indian strategic thought and emphasised on the gap between the proposed plans and the current situation on the ground with respect to resources and infrastructure.

Having done a comprehensive scan of the ANI, the strategic significance of the islands has been reiterated, with specifics. The growing Chinese interest in the IOR has been elaborated upon as has been the strategic importance of proximity of the islands to the Malacca Strait. Good use has been made of maps and charts. A novelty here has been a short chapter that summarises the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) of the ANI.

Wide ranging recommendations towards economic and security development follow. The authors have emphasised that national security is as important for economic dynamism and prosperity as it is for creating military assets, and sustainable economic development of the area is a must to provide a secure environment. They have strongly advocated a more pragmatic balance between environmental considerations and development. The domains covered include forestry, agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries and different industries. Greater importance has been given to the tourism industry with a proposition that enhanced road, sea and air connectivity, along with more human settlements, will enhance the employability of the islands. A major recommendation relates to the construction of shipping infrastructure, including a transhipment port at Greater Nicobar Island, an idea that has been gaining traction in recent years. Compelling arguments have been made towards this project that would provide both economic and strategic advantages.

The analysis of the security of ANI has included the non-

conventional threats, such as human trafficking, illegal migration, poaching of marine resources, arms and narcotics smuggling as also aspects of coastal security before making specific recommendations towards better functioning of the ANC. Recommendations include the suggested force levels, together with combat elements, and related infrastructure, including extension of the length of the existing runways and increased size and depth of the harbours. Other important issues covered are those of jointmanship and aspects related to logistics. The book concludes by putting forth strategic options and making policy recommendations, encompassing broad recommendations and specific ones related to economic development and security. Important suggestions include a well-defined national strategic vision, alignment with like-minded nations and substantial investments to unlock the potential of the underleveraged asset.

With greater acknowledgement of the strategic significance of the ANI, there has been a number of initiatives by the Government of India in recent years towards infrastructure development, for both economic and security considerations, most of which find mention in the book. These include the approval of the long pending fourth radar station at Narcondam Islands, a broad-gauge railway line connecting Port Blair with Diglipur, an undersea cable link between Chennai and five islands to improve the digital connectivity, and a long-range missile test facility of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) at South Andaman's Rutland Island. A number of highway and shipping projects to improve connectivity with the mainland and within the islands have been announced, with a 15-year perspective, towards truly realising the commercial and strategic potential of these islands. The greater involvement has been underlined by the Defence Minister's visit to Port Blair in October last year and tasking of the NITI Aayog for planning and management of sustainable development in the islands. ANI's strategic

significance has been recognised in the Indian Navy's Maritime Security Strategy paper and, in the future, the area might see an enhanced naval presence.

As India seeks to enhance its regional stature and secure its interests, the book provides valuable informed inputs for policy-makers and the executive for civil and military development of the ANI. The authors, through objective analysis, have been able to align common concerns of economic, geostrategic and security importance and provide a probable roadmap that could provide a template for development in the future. Although, some of the aspects have been repeated in multiple chapters, this only emphasises their salience.

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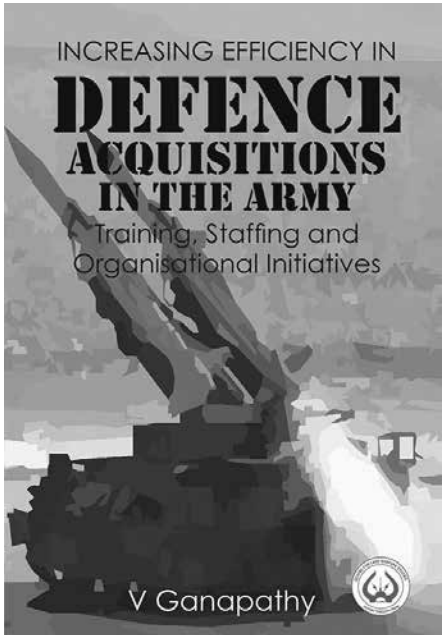
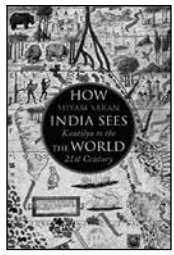


How India Sees the World: Kautilya to the 21st Century



Shyam Saran
(Juggernaut Publishers, 2017)
Rs. 599/-

India's foreign policy and its dynamics have been analysed and discussed by many scholars and diplomats, ranging from KPS Menon's *Many Worlds and Many Worlds Revisited* to the very recent Shivshankar Menon's *Choices: Inside the Making of India's Foreign Policy*" on various facets of India's worldview till date. To add to the list is Shyam Saran's book, *How India Sees the World: From Kautilya to 21st Century.*

Starting with the Hindu cosmology, which locates India in the southernmost petal of the four-petalled lotus flower, also known as Jambudvipa, floating in the cosmic ocean, the author goes on to describe, and draw, implicit inferences of India's view about itself and the world. He infers that India "is only one among the lotus petals that make up our universe, which is in contrast to the Chinese world view which sees the 'Han core as the most advanced', surrounded by a barbaric and less civilised world. It is the humble belief of being just a part of this universe, devoid of a superiority complex, that has shaped the principles on which India pursues its foreign policy. It accepts a world in which there are other entities, *dvipas* or islands with unique values and characteristic features. And, therefore, India will never have a 'middle kingdom complex'." In this book, Saran very candidly reinforces the influence of India's traditional literature and historical legacy on the practice of diplomacy and statecraft. From Kautilya's *Arthashashtra* to Kamandaki's *Nitisara*, Saran, candidly establishes the connection between India's ancient precepts of diplomacy and statecraft to the practice in contemporary times. From the idea

of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam,* which means *"common humanity"* to the techniques of *sama, dana, danda, bheda,* the contrasting themes of idealist and realist paradigms are interweaved together, and have been a constant feature of Indian foreign policy since independence. Saran advises on how India can draw inferences from them to navigate in today's complex world, to maximise its own national interest. He, however, cautions that the precepts from these texts are not to be applied mechanically, as we live in different times, and so they only offer a useful template for managing relations in a shrewd, diplomatic manner, in a chaotic world. In the context of managing India's foreign relations and formulation of the principles of foreign policy, since independence, Saran appreciates and defends Nehru's worldview and the policy of non-alignment; he advocates that this policy was designed to maximise India's national interest as it "assured the country its autonomy in the realm of international relations", especially at a time when the world was polarised at the height of the Cold War.

The author reflects upon the elements of geography and history that have shaped India's world view. He asserts that India is a classic example of a cosmopolitan and crossroads culture and this is due to its peninsular geographical character extending across major maritime routes in the Indian Ocean and also due to its intersection of ancient caravan routes linking the Occident to the Orient. These routes not only facilitated trade and business but also the exchange of ideas and the essence of Indian culture. Therefore, today, the manner in which India is emerging as a powerful country and exercising its influence in the region, its outreach is on the lines of the remembered pathways of the past. He makes compelling arguments by quoting similarity of civilisational and cultural values cutting across religion and language barriers which makes the Indian subcontinent a single geopolitical and ecological space with a shared history and economic interdependencies and its eventual

integration, transcending national boundaries, as the ultimate objective of India's foreign policy.

The major focus of Saran's book is on India's neighborhood, especially India's relations with Pakistan, China and Nepal. Writing in an easy story-telling style, Saran narrates interesting anecdotal evidence to build up his arguments about our achievements and shortcomings in dealing with these countries.

In dealings with Pakistan, Saran sees a pattern or a trajectory of "dialogue-disruption-dialogue" repeating itself in endless cycles. Each major terrorist attack by Pakistan results in suspension of dialogue and bilateral engagements, which, after an interval, is followed by the resumption of dialogue, mostly on India's initiatives. So, for Pakistan, this appears to be a low cost strategy which yields the desired results, while India has no "credible response options between the extreme choices of military retaliation, suspension of bilateral talks and appeasement".

Any disruption in the bilateral mechanism of talks and dialogue only creates a space for external involvement and activism, which is not aligned with India's interests. For example, during previous India–Pakistan crises, there have been interventions by the US, which served Pakistan's interest and were not welcomed by India. Saran also points out India's failure in devising and developing an effective strategy to deal with cross-border terrorism, sponsored by Pakistan. Even the response mechanism to these terror attacks is weak and ineffective. There is an urgent need to develop a strategic response to Pakistani misadventures, and for this, we need to have certain "pressure points". These pressure points constitute Gilgit and Baltistan, where we can be aggressive in highlighting the plight of the tribal population and, on the other hand, we should highlight human rights atrocities committed by the Pakistani Army in Baluchistan. Saran narrates an anecdote in this regard in which he had highlighted the issue on December 27, 2005, in a press statement:

> The Government of India has been watching with concern the spiralling violence in Balochistan and the heavy military action, including the use of helicopter gunships and jet fighters by the Government of Pakistan to quell it. We hope that the Government of Pakistan will exercise restraint and take recourse to peaceful discussions to address the grievances of the people of Balochistan.

The main reason behind raising and highlighting these issues was to "build up countervailing pressure on Pakistan whenever it raised Kashmir or any other matter to criticise India". According to Saran, promotion of people-to-people relations, cultural relations and civil society dialogue will serve as an important diplomatic toolkit for management of relations with Pakistan, in the sense that, this would create interest groups, in a long run, having stakes in peaceful India-Pakistan relations. With more and more ordinary Pakistani citizens being exposed to the Indian reality, the less will be the chance and opportunity for the Pakistani officials to churn, cultivate and nurture anti-India feelings. In dealing with Pakistan, our "policy objective should be the management of this adversarial relationship rather than any quest for a grand reconciliation" and this has to be based on the acknowledgement of the fact that India-Pakistan relations are deeply adversarial and likely to remain so in the future, writes Saran.

While writing about, and explaining, China in this book, Saran seems to be disappointed by India's poor understanding of the country. He writes, "This is a country whose attitudes and ways of thinking have formed over millennia, layer upon layer; and has been less influenced by outside world". India entered into the Chinese consciousness as a source of opium which the British insisted on dumping in China. The deployment and use of Indian soldiers in various military campaigns against the Chinese may have led to the development of a negative attitude towards Indians, says Saran.

China's world view, according to Saran, is very much guided by the elements in the Chinese culture. Its world view is inherently hierarchical, consisting of the Han core, surrounded by smaller and less civilised countries. This psyche still dominates and guides the Chinese sentiments, and with the increase in its economic and military capabilities, China anticipates its return to the top of the economic and security architecture in Asia. Devoting a chapter to the India-China border dispute, Saran narrates an anecdote about how he retrieved from junked documents, during his posting in Yangon, an old letter from Jawaharlal Nehru to Burmese Premier U Nu which mentions that Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai repeatedly, though only orally, "accepted the McMahon Line between India and China." This was substantiated later in the writings of well-known South Asia expert Wang Hongwei. In this chapter, it is highlighted that up to 1985, China suggested the border dispute be settled on the "package proposal" put forward by Zhou Enlai in 1960: that China would accept the alignment as defined by the McMahon Line in the east, while India should accept the Chinese alignment in the west. But, this "package proposal" slowly disappeared from the mid-1980s when then Ambassador to China A.P. Venkateswaran rejected it saying that "it would legitimise the territorial gains achieved by China through force of arms." Post 1985, the Chinese position hardened and they were more adamant on the handing over of Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh.

The book dwells upon Nepal with utmost seriousness, given the fact of Chinese inroads into Nepal. China's expanding economic engagement leading to its increased involvement in Nepal's domestic politics, and anti-India sentiments being churned by a few Nepalese leaders, who incite nationalistic fervour for electoral gains, requires very candid and serious attention which, unfortunately, is lacking from the Indian side. Saran terms India's Nepal policy to be "episodic and crisis-driven" and weak.

To conclude, this book is an impressive discourse on India's foreign policy and is a must read for students as well as practitioners, in order to develop a comprehensive insight as far as formulation of foreign policy and practice of diplomacy are concerned. Saran gives Kautilya's *Arthashastra* and Kamandaki's *Nitisara* their due. But, at the same time, he urges that India should pursue an "expansive Ashokan approach" which should be a perfect blend of idealism and realism. India should take lessons from its history and pursue its foreign policy on the remembered pathways of the past in order to extend its outreach in the changing world order. He concludes by stating that India possesses all the attributes of upholding diversity and plurality which will act as pillars of strength in its pursuit to glory.

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