

**The New Arthashastra: A Security Strategy for India,**  
edited by Gurmeet Kanwal, New Delhi: HarperCollins, 2016, pp. 436,  
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*Vivek Chadha\**

The clamour for a national security strategy has become part of a constant refrain that accompanies every debate on India's strategic culture or national security outlook. This repeated call for a security strategy stems from a perceived lack of clarity for functionaries within the government as well as the larger audience. An important constituent amongst the latter are a large number of countries that increasingly look upon India as an important partner in the evolving geopolitical environment. However, the lack of clarity on India's security concerns and strategic direction tends to dilute the policy formulations outlined from time to time. It also leads to inadequate implementation, which further tends to increase the gap between intent and reality.

The book under review, *The New Arthashastra: A Security Strategy for India*, therefore, comes as a welcome introduction into the domain of security studies. It attempts to fill an existing void created by the absence of an official government document. This receives substantive credence by virtue of the selection of contributors by the editor of the project, who is himself a distinguished voice on security issues in India.

The foundation of the project is configured well through a conceptual outline in the form of a preface by Gautam Sen and the introduction by General (Gen) Ved Malik, the former Chief of Army Staff and a well-

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\* The Author is Research Fellow with the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi.



regarded voice on national security. Interestingly, both make a relevant point while formulating the context of their contributions. They suggest correctly that the concept of security cannot and must not be confined to the obvious contours of 'conventional military threats', both external and internal. Gen Malik's introduction provides an excellent wide sweep of the evolving national security architecture, despite its slow and laborious pace, national security challenges, the decision-making process and functional problems in the domain of security management. This is supplemented by Lieutenant General (Lt Gen) B.S. Pawar, who provides an overview of the spectrum of threats faced by the country.

The outline of the project envisioned in the introduction is carried forward through individual chapters on each of the specific areas that the book aims to address. It largely succeeds in this endeavour, with the rest of the chapters focusing on threats, national security objectives, defence diplomacy, intelligence, nuclear deterrence, external threats, maritime strategy, proxy war, internal security, space, cyber, defence research and development, economic warfare, energy security, indigenisation and funding for defence, providing the inputs for a final assessment of the grand strategy and India's security strategy.

One of the weakest links within the Indian security establishment that any future strategy needs to address remains intelligence. Vikram Sood, a veteran in the field, offers some important suggestions to improve existing capacities. He suggests the need to develop capacities to forecast threats and challenges, rather than merely reacting to them (p. 116). He further emphasises on the need to strengthen the counter-terrorism grid to help ensure pre-emption of strikes, achieve higher conviction rates and undertake covert as well as hard power-based operations (pp. 117, 124). The need for 'de-bureaucratising' intelligence to make it sharper and more effective, and further sharpening its ability to conduct soft war against adversaries to influence decisions, is also raised in the chapter (pp. 122–23).

The chapter on crafting a maritime strategy for India also provides important pointers and takes a forthright and pragmatic view of the issue. Admiral Arun Prakash, former Chief of Naval Staff, underlines the criticality of the maritime environment given the impact of globalisation, piracy, terrorist threats emanating from the seas, and the rise of China, especially in India's neighbourhood (p. 170). He underlines the dilemma of the armed forces, which forces them to 'extemporize and undertake planning in a strategic void' (p. 172). The release of the Indian Navy's

maritime doctrine, for which the author deserves credit, focuses on military, diplomatic, constabulary and benign roles. With this, it aims to achieve conventional deterrence. Further, this is augmented by the achievement of a second-strike capability in the form of a nuclear-propelled submarine, *INS Aribant*. Prakash further elaborates upon the maritime strategy in a twofold domain. The indirect aims to achieve denial capabilities, while the direct mode looks at delivering weapons from the sea (p. 176). He further highlights the contours shaping the strategy in the form of protecting India's interests to include population, resources and diaspora; underwrite India's strategic autonomy; and safety of trade and energy routes (p. 177).

The publication reinforces some notable aspects that are relevant and useful points for policymakers. The first aspect that deserves focus is the envisaged capabilities, in view of the threats and challenges visualised and the resources needed to develop the same. The bread versus gun debate has raged for long. Often, sides that represent a certain perspective, push for what they consider critical. Lt Gen Aditya Singh outlines the defence objectives in his chapter (pp. 81–82). This is further elaborated upon by the editor's concluding chapter, which in ways is the essence of the book. Here, Kanwal outlines the national security objectives (pp. 353–55). There is an interesting divergence in the thinking of the two in terms of their security objectives. Aditya Singh argues for building a capacity for a two-front conflict, along with the simultaneous ability to retain control over rear areas. Kanwal, in contrast, aims to resolve the boundary disputes with both Pakistan and China. Further, he highlights the need to undermine the China–Pakistan nexus and also ensure that India does not have to fight a two-front war. India's national security is possibly best served by a deterrence capability against the former and in a worst-case scenario, by ensuring that the armed forces have to fight a divided opposition.

The reality of India's capability for both contingencies depends to a large extent on the ability to create the desired deterrence capability. However, the nature and cost of this modernisation raises more questions than answers. 'State-of-the-art defence technology, partly acquired from strategic partners and partly developed indigenously, must be integrated with the weapon platforms to gain a decisive edge over India's military adversaries' (p. 379). However, this desire is challenged by the financial outlay and its judicious expenditure, as evident in the past. Amit Cowshish infers in his chapter that 'buildup of military capabilities was

not a critical factor in the worldview of the political elite in the wake of India's independence... The wars in 1947–48, 1965 and 1971 did not change this template' (p. 243). Further, he proves that higher defence outlay is not linked to a higher gross domestic product (GDP) (pp. 244–45). Therefore, the argument that an increase in GDP is the surest way for modernising the armed forces is not likely to happen. It is evident from this comparison that there seems to be a disconnect between the projection by the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and the allocation by the Ministry of Finance (MoF). As an illustration, the 'gap between the projection and allocation increased from Rs 12,453.42 in 2009–10 to Rs 79,362.72 in 2014–15. In 2015–16, the gap between projection and allocation was Rs 40,659.33 crore' (p. 247). This highlights the mismatch between the desire of the armed forces and the allocation by the state. While the book does not relate to the other agencies and forces, it is likely that the reality could well be similar. Given this reality, it remains imperative to evolve a national security strategy in light of capabilities that are backed up by the trend line of fund allocation or take a hard, long look at how defence is being managed.

Despite the large cross-section of chapters in the book, one realises that creating a comprehensive document on the subject is a challenge. As an illustration, even as the book delves into the national security architecture, it tends to remain more armed forces centric. This is important for external security threats; however, internal challenges emanate more from the limitations and constraints faced by forces dealing with internal security. This includes fundamentals like policing and central armed police force capacities and training, which is equally important and relevant. Consequently, the budgetary constraints faced by the armed forces are equally if not more relevant for agencies involved in the intelligence and policing duties. Yet another aspect which has become and will remain a challenge for national security is the opportunity and threat posed by the emerging domain of information warfare, of which cyber is just one of the components. The employment of social media in the recent years, especially in relation to radicalisation, recruitment of terrorists and funding, has brought this into sharper focus that needs greater attention.

The volume editor deserves credit for attempting to bring together a wide array of themes and subjects that form an integral part of India's national security. In attempting it, Kanwal has not only succeeded in integrating the views of some of the foremost security experts in

the country, he has also successfully synthesised these views in his conclusion, suitably moderating perspectives where needed. The book is a foundational study, which will serve students of security studies and policy planners alike. It is also a suitable platform for further delving into individual subjects by experts in the field, with an aim of reconciling some of the challenges that have been highlighted by the contributors.

