

Book Review: Fault Lines

Written by Kapil Chandni
Wednesday, 22 April 2009 14:46

India has experienced multiple and varied threats from its neighbourhood. Within the country too, there are many anti-state factors which continue many insurgencies against the republic. The recent 26/11 attacks on Mumbai, the hot borders and the latest attacks on security personnel on election duty underline the problems facing India's ascent on the world stage. And yet, somehow, these topics end up getting just mere lip service.

Fault Lines is a collection of essays and editorials of Bharat Verma , the founder-editor of the highly acclaimed Indian Defence Review. These sixty essays cover more than a decade of events responsible for shaping India's security environment.

The author is a rare combination (in India at least) of being a public school graduate, an Armoured Corps Officer and then being an entrepreneur-publisher and founder of India's first military and strategic affairs publishing house along with the Indian Defence Review. This makes his perspective all the more refreshing as he is not promoting any lobby or special-interest group. The articles are engaging and do not shy away from calling a spade a spade.

These essays are short capsules on the topic they cover which range from medieval Indian battles to India's dismal Olympic performances and the scourge of fundamentalist terror. There are timely and still relevant suggestions on modernizing the Indian Armed Forces, joint warfighting and a call for better civil-military relations.

The essays are categorized by the year they appear and reading the earlier essays invokes a sense of *déjà vu* . The suggestions are common-sensical and informed readers will no doubt shake their heads and wonder how would things have been if anyone in the decision making process in the establishment had thought over these points too.

The author cites occasions where India's generosity has emboldened opponents further. The sheer lack of strategic thinking at upper echelons coupled with a lack of informed debate on a non-partisan national policy on India's security is costing the country dearly in terms of lives, opportunities and funds which could be allocated to something more meaningful.

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The last decade has seen India's neighbourhood degrade into chaos. The Cold War has ended changing the contours of geopolitics in India's area of influence.

America has now come to recognize India as a power it can engage on equal terms and China is finding its strategic position in this era of uncertainty. Small wars, insurgencies and America's wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are intensifying and the ramifications of all these threats to global security will be properly understood few years from now.

Fault Lines provides a handy reference to India's position and responses to these issues.

This collection does not just criticize, it also informs and suggests alternate ways of securing India's interests.

Ultimately, this book holds a mirror reflecting past follies, but it also reflects the concerns of a growing, young nation which is interested in a strong and secure Nation.

This book is a must read for administrators and leaders and everybody who wants to know more about India's evolution in a rapidly changing world.

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