



BOOK REVIEW

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Ready, Relevant and Resurgent II: Shaping a Future Ready Force

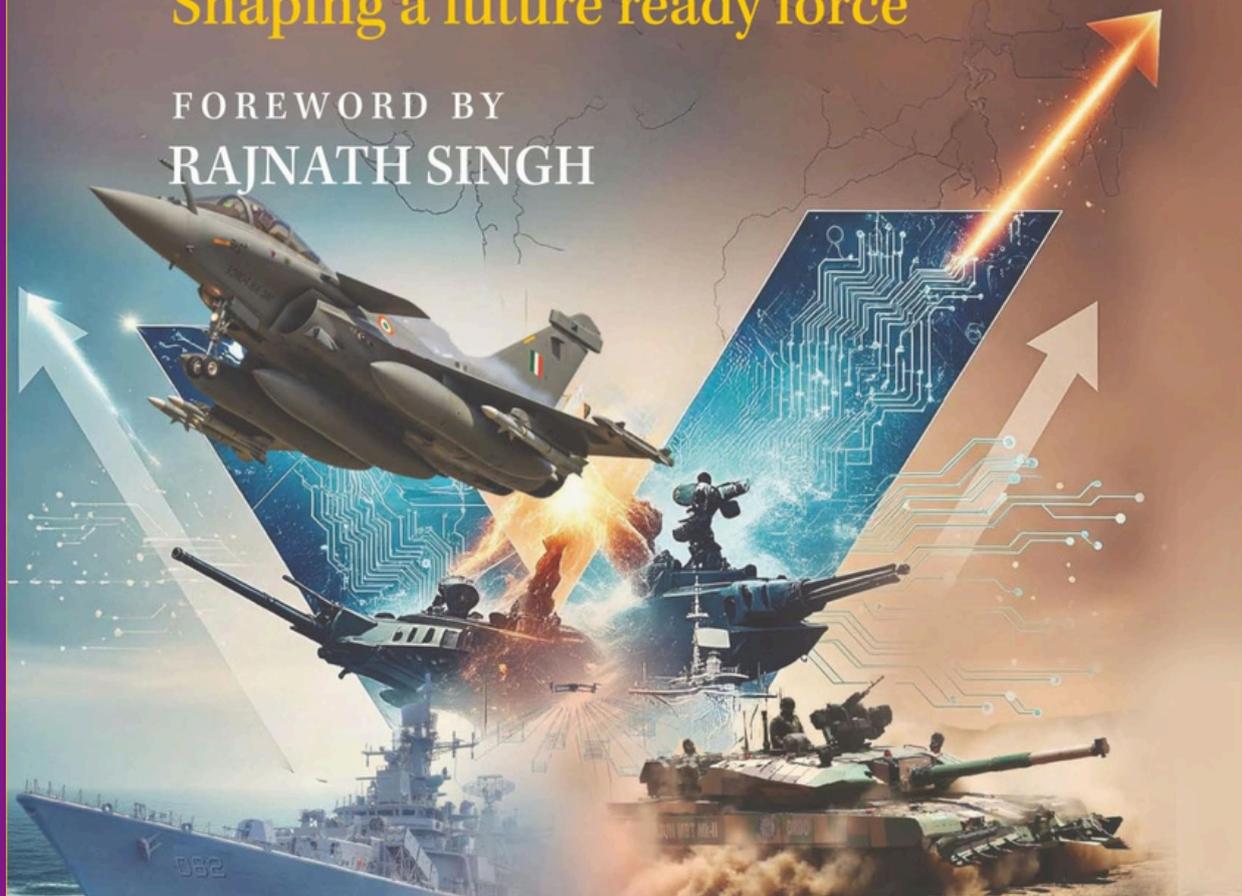
by Gen Anil Chauhan

GEN ANIL CHAUHAN

READY, RELEVANT AND RESURGENT II

Shaping a future ready force

FOREWORD BY
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Gen Anil Chauhan, *Ready, Relevant and Resurgent II: Shaping a Future Ready Force*, Pentagon Press, ISBN: 9788199116269

1. From the great game on the Asian landmass to the maritime great game in the IOR, from the geopolitics in the Kautilya era to the modern era strategies for dealing with proxy war, and from the conflicts in Europe and West Asia to the current issues on India's borders, Gen Chauhan has traversed a long path. In a bold and far-reaching narration of contemporary ideas and views, the author has negotiated a complex web of subjects and concerns of topical interest. The book *Ready, Relevant, and Resurgent II*, published by Pentagon Press in 2025, is a seminal work on the chosen direction of India's security framework in the emerging geopolitical flux confronting the region. The book will qualitatively enhance awareness of matters of security amongst military officers and those concerned with the security and safety of India. The book also has the potential to guide planners and policy makers in the Indian and global security domain.

2. The significance of the book emanates not only from the subjects addressed but also from numerous new ideas and issues revealed for further deliberation. By reinforcing as well as questioning numerous traditional views and so-called established facts, the author has advocated debate and deliberation on futuristic ideas and concerns, not necessarily confined to the military domain. In his characteristic unassuming style, Gen Chauhan has covered the subjects in an easy-flowing 232 pages, grouped under 20 chapters.

The Beginnings

3. **Conventional Deterrence – Nuclear Deterrence.** There are limitations to the deterrence value of military asymmetry in the security span, transcending terrorism on one end and nuclear capabilities on the other. Notwithstanding, there is a great reliance on deterrence of various forms in the military domain. After explaining the relation between policies, doctrines, and strategies, Gen Chauhan has analysed the conventional deterrence in the India–Pakistan context. While the failure of conventional deterrence has been underlined, it also exposes and elevates the significance of nuclear deterrence in the South Asian as well as in the larger Asian region. While simplistically, this narration appears to somewhat negate India's conventional superiority over Pakistan, it in fact further reinforces and solidifies India's overall superiority in all domains. The same was clearly visible in the small 'dosage' administered to this troublemaking neighbour in May 2025. The self-assurance of Gen Chauhan's enunciation of these sensitive issues also portrays the high level of confidence the Indian security apparatus has acquired in recent times in the nuclear domain as well.

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4. **The Art and Science in Military Strategy.** The first few chapters deal with the fundamentals as applicable in the contemporary military environs. Military strategy and the use of the term in civil domain have been clarified. The debate on the art vs science content of military strategy and the comparison of Land strategy with a higher art content versus the Air strategy with higher science content has also been done skillfully. The role of technology in determining strategy of modern warfare has been well introduced.

5. **War and Politics.** It has been explained that war and politics are not watertight compartments but flow from one to the other. Politics of war and politics of less than war situations are inalienable parts of Indian security surroundings. By its very nature, political outlook is inclusive of religious realities especially in the context of Pakistan sponsored terrorism. However, the book has carefully avoided contextualizing the religion-motivated terrorism, sustained for decades by the western neighbour in the politics of the subcontinent.

Review/Criticism

6. **Terrorism.** The book gives a very balanced and apt explanation of the futility of 'declared war' in the context of hybrid/proxy war, where non-state actors are unleashed with a high measure of deniability. Modern conflicts of the hybrid and proxy type are therefore perennial and ubiquitous. Branding the terrorism format of modern hybrid war as 'bereft of rationality' may be true from the perspective of the victims, but it is apparently quite reasonable from the perpetrators' viewpoint. Despite acute adverse military asymmetry and repeated setbacks, is the sustenance of the proxy format of terrorism by Pakistani tanzems and intelligence agencies a manifestation of their desperation and last recourse or a demonstration of their confidence in this format of hybrid warfare? That this hybrid form of warfare is based on religion and past 'results' is a moot question meriting greater understanding for the long-term security framework of India.

7. **Imposition of Will – Imposition of Decision.** While discussing the traditional views on war policies and war aims, the book goes on to explain the modern and emerging political aims of war and security policies. Just like deterrence is not feasible today in the conventional domain despite a favourable asymmetry, similarly, "imposition of political will" may not be feasible through war in today's military domain. However, "imposition of decision" is feasible in the modern limited war context. It therefore merits consideration if the aim of future war will be limited to the imposition of a political decision rather than the imposition of political will.

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What will be the complexion of future political decisions, and are the Armed Forces capable of imposing such decisions on an adversary? This may require further analysis and discussion. Contextually, it may be questioned if the political decision to nullify Article 370 has been imposed on the adversary (both internal as well as external), and to what ends.

8. Revolution in Military Affairs. On the subject of modernisation and contemporary improvements, the author has emphasised the need to absorb the emerging RMA on “convergence warfare” more holistically. The discussion in the book on the RMAs pertaining to manoeuvre and net centricity has not comprehensively criticised India’s less-than-optimal adaptation of these contemporary thoughts and technologies. The existing methodologies and the present politico-military will, pertaining to the promising “convergence” of the three services as well as with other relevant organs of State, will therefore require greater deliberation and a more innovative path. The ongoing RMA also enjoins greater emphasis on technology absorption. The ‘Western’ bias of core technologies and systems in India will also need to be made more broad-based and flexible to speedily empower Atmanirbharta, as well as compatibility with friendly foreign services.

9. The Air Power. Is Air Force synonymous with Air Power? The Air Power is aptly described as a national capacity, not confined to the Air Force. Air domain awareness of military personnel, therefore, needs to be high. The ongoing debate on missiles vs manned aircraft, the air arm of the Army and the Navy and role of the Air Force in the Air, Aerospace and Space power have been explained on traditional lines in the book. While some of the traditional and articulated issues throw up new issues meriting further discussion, a balanced and futuristically relevant process for the growth of Air Power has been spelt out.

10. Technology Dependence & Casualty Sensitivity of Air Power. Owing to complex technologies and high costs, the sustenance of Air Platforms in combat situations has acquired critical proportions in itself. Optimal sustenance of air power in short as well as long-duration conflicts will therefore continue to remain challenging for India. Focus on ease and speed of replacement from indigenous sources is an obvious solution, needing greater focus and investment. The direction and investments required of the nascent aero industry and the persistent debate on missile vs manned aircraft appear to be diffusing focus. Balanced political direction, equitable procurement initiatives, increased exports, and a friendly investment environment are basic essentials to ensure the desired growth of India’s Air Power.

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11. Political Coercion - Enforcing Sovereignty: Role of Air Power. While the non-escalatory complexion of employment of the Air Power has been explained, but the same is not borne out in recent conflicts, except when the adversary lacks the air arm or the asymmetry quotient is high. The theory may also hold true when Air Power is contemplated for political coercion and enforcing sovereignty claims. Physical presence is still considered essential. If the 'enforcing capability' of the air power is questioned, their deterrence capability also gets questioned. Does the unrepudiated destruction capability of the Air Power extend significantly beyond the adversary's air power capacities, so as to seriously moderate his political will, especially when the asymmetry quotient is not very high? Contextually, very high levels of air power asymmetry may be essential, especially in the Indian subcontinent context, which in turn dictates higher investment in indigenisation, defence industry ecosystem, supply chains and as propounded in the book, cognitive load sharing between the manned and the unmanned platforms. Standoff munitions and missiles are likely to play a more decisive role in forcing political decisions, ensuring deterrence and guaranteeing sovereignty claims. The emerging needs for a potent Air power, therefore necessitates a more equitable balance between the manned platforms and unmanned, more 'intelligent' missiles.

12. Cyber and Space. Cyber and Space are emergent domains in the Indian Subcontinent. While a favourable space situation on the lines of a favourable air situation has its advantages, the domain necessitates a novel approach, which can shape the entire space matrix to advantage. This requires major investment and innovation focus. The challenge arises from pursuing this direction in the present nascent stage, where space platforms and applications have limited military utility, compared to more direct and sub-space-based platforms and systems. Such constraints, however, do not beleague the cyber domain, where India has a natural advantage. Proactively weaponising the cyber domain is an emerging need in an environment where the dependence of not only security systems but also the economies, supply chains, manufacturing, marketing, finances, etc, of countries, on cyber systems is on the increase. Space and cyber domain awareness, training, and use, therefore, has to increase quantitatively at all levels.

13. Traditional Principles of War in Emerging Warfare Context. The modern battle space has expanded in many dimensions. The third Revolution in Military Affairs has converged the domains systematically and forcefully, where the relevance of the traditional principles of war may be open to criticism. The traditional principles of war are based on land experience; however, the flexibility and adaptability inherent in the principles make them timeless and enduring, even in air and sea domains. These principles will need to be appropriately adopted and in some cases moderated, in the emerging and technologically predominant warfare context, to realise their full potential.

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14. **India's Military Heritage.** India's glorious military heritage has been acknowledged as well as analysed very dexterously by Gen Chauhan. The measure of valour in the historical martial race theory versus result-oriented and trait-based contemporary theory has been dealt with very imaginatively. While negating the relevance of the martial race in today's milieu, the integrity of service to the nation has been propounded to a high pedestal. Upholding dharma is regarded as an exalted position in India's military heritage. Valour and strength in ideas and beliefs in the service of the nation have been our culture and tradition. Contextually, the author has carefully balanced and given appropriate credit to the influence of traditional Indian culture, the British Army legacy, and the Azad Hind Fauj on the modern-day Indian Armed Forces.

15. **Great Game in IOR.** This is an important part of the book. There is a natural prospect of expansion and opportunities in the maritime domain. After securing the South China Sea and thereby providing depth to its economic centers in South China, China is enhancing its reach in the IOR. China will continue to be dependent on sea lanes through the IOR for its oil supplies, and, as a result, a 'maritime silk route strategy' is in the offing. On the other hand, the offshore territories of extra-regional powers have the potential to stabilise as well as escalate the maritime situation. In the above matrix, India's location is not only central but also the most critical. However, India has remained in effect a 'landlocked' nation, despite vast access to the Indian Ocean and dominance over important sea lanes. The economic growth needs of both India and China will enjoin greater dependence on sea-lanes. India has to, therefore, necessarily contest/ match up to the 'encirclement' strategy of China in the seas, as also balance out its strategic partnership with Pakistan. A multipronged response, inclusive of partnership with neighbours, IOR countries and maritime powers, is essential. While the current 'collaborative' response may suffice till the time China does not attain its planned potential in IOR, India will need to graduate to a full-fledged maritime power, independent of support from other maritime powers. India's maritime power needs to grow faster than its global merchandise trade for a secured economic growth.

16. **Ongoing Geopolitical Flux.** The author has analysed the ongoing geopolitical flux and the contestations for greater geopolitical space and transition towards multipolarity. It needs to be debated if India's isolation from the 'great game' on land should also be applied to the emerging great game in the maritime domain. The discussion will also need to encompass the debate on the vision of 'vishwa mitra' in the emerging power flux and US-instigated breakdown of various global systems and orders. The moot question, therefore, is whether India needs to work towards becoming an independent 'pole' in a multi-polar world or remain a 'balancing force' between two/three poles/power blocs.

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A sashakth and surakshit Bharat will need both the wisdom of Vishwa Mitra as well as the strength of a great power. The ongoing geopolitical churn necessitates a more flexible and adaptable approach and greater dynamism in transiting from the 'fixed/established' to the 'new/uncharted.'

17. Defence Industries. Traditionally, capability development in India's Armed Forces has had significant dependence on imports, especially in the cutting-edge and niche technologies. While India inherited a large defence production base in the form of Ordnance Factories, the growth was lethargic in the initial few decades. The contemporary security environment and an appreciation of future needs enjoin greater emphasis on modernisation, indigenisation and innovation. The principal recommendations in the book include improving ease of doing business, improving processes of QA, testing, licensing and R&D. Exports will act as the main driver for the defence industry, which in turn involves improving quality and cost competitiveness in the global markets and innovating new platforms and systems required for future wars. Global player status in the defence sector requires graduating to high demand and high cost markets in West Asia and Europe where the competition will be with the well-established production houses in US and Europe. The present geo-political flux has opened 'windows' for India to expand its defence industries and defence export reach in Europe and West Asia, especially in the bulk and low technology defence wherewithal. Concurrently, India's defence industry has to transform to a collaborative form of production rather than the existing competitive format. For competitive gains at the global level, a cooperative/consortium format of production within the country, with complementary defence companies and PSUs joining hands for production of major systems/ platforms, will need to be encouraged.

18. Misc Issues. In addition to the above major issues, Gen Chauhan has covered many more topics that are also relevant. Space has emerged as an important military domain. Strategic utilisation of space to enhance the ability to monitor, communicate, and interact globally, including cooperation in civil affairs, are obvious gain from the space domain. Military utilisation of space, including space diplomacy, is an area needing greater attention. India's Defence University is another issue requiring greater impetus. On the issue of military leadership, Gen Chauhan has spelt out the vision for the future leaders. From the traditional combat traits to the need for developing leadership for an integrated force, management of technologies, and training for leadership in 'peace' situations, the author has covered a wide canvas. The author has also made very pragmatic recommendations for the young entrepreneurs, especially those in the defence sector.

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For a robust global status, the Indian defence industries have to develop a vibrant ecosystem consisting of startups, MSMEs, and innovators from various walks, including academia. Monopolies in production, R&D, supply chains, and stocking need to be gradually diluted. The creativity and motivation in India's youth also need to be tapped institutionally for innovative improvements in the defence sector.

Conclusion

19. The world is heading towards prolonged security and economic realignment. A great measure of assurance and adaptability is therefore essential in the Indian security planning and execution on its path towards a 'developed' nation. From a backdrop of traditional military thoughts and ideas peculiar to the Indian Army, Navy, and Air Force, Gen Chauhan has explained the essential principles of war, military power, and military strategies, applicable in the entire security domain, in a technologically enabled context. To the Indian Armed Forces on the cusp of major transformation, the author has laid out well-argued and implementable ideas and methodologies for the development of modern policies, strategies, and capabilities. The advocated atmanirbharta –self-reliance, has the potential to steer India safely through the global politico-economic as well as the security volatility. The book *Ready, Relevant and Resurgent II* will act like a guiding beacon for the modernisation of the Indian Armed Forces and advancement of comprehensive national power, with greater surety and confidence.

Reviewed by

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