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# BOOK REVIEW

**India's Cybersecurity Policy: Evolution and Trend Analyses**

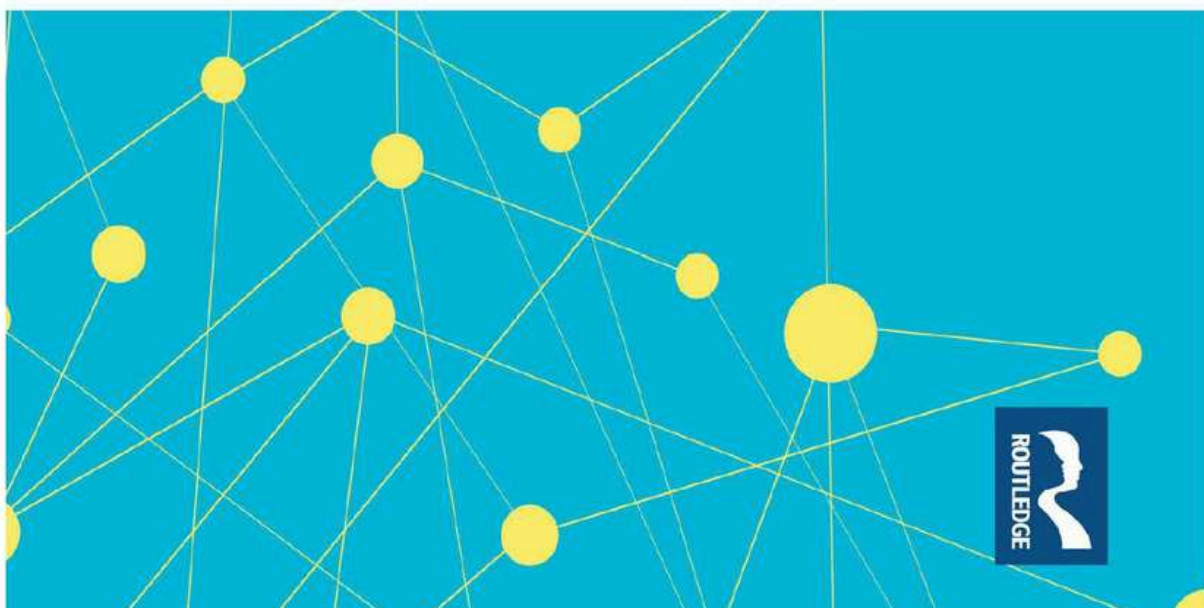
*Authored by Thangjam K. Singh*



## **INDIA'S CYBERSECURITY POLICY**

**EVOLUTION AND TREND ANALYSES**

Thangjam K. Singh



## Introduction

In the contemporary environment, “securitization of cyberspace”, once an overlooked domain, has now shifted from the periphery to the core of national security discourse. In that context, Thangjam K. Singh’s “India's Cybersecurity Policy: Evolution and Trend Analyses” brings a comprehensive and timely analysis of India’s evolution in the cyber domain. The book is available to be purchased at all the leading ecommerce platform like Amazon and Flipkart etc, and is available in both hardcover and paperback format. Singh traces the provenance and transition of India’s digital ecosystem through three phases, the emergence in the pre-securitization era at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the developing securitization phase (2001-2020) and the advanced post securitization phase from 2021 onwards. The theoretical foundation of the evolution of India’s cybersecurity approach, according to Singh, is characterized by two overlapping frameworks: a hybrid of the liberal-realist approach, representing the early phases of cyber-domain expansion and the anarchic-hegemonic approach, suggesting the cyber activities during conflicts and geopolitical volatility. Singh highlights the strategic and inclusive architecture of India’s cyber security capabilities enhancement plan, as also highlights the vulnerability owing to the fragmented authorities across the ministries. He proposes a unified framework in this regard in order to calibrate the strategy to incorporate rapidly evolving emerging technologies like quantum, AI, 5G networking, etc. His scholarly work sits within the broad debate contrasting India’s strategic posture in relation to the Western and Eastern digital models.

## Key Arguments and Critical Appraisal

The apparent objective of the book is to bridge the research gaps and streamline the understanding of the evolution of policies protecting India’s digital infrastructure. The interdisciplinary approach of the author, bringing political imperatives of the contemporary global order, binding them with the technical nuances of digital networks, provides the book a cross-paradigmatic outlook. Another noteworthy insight propagated by the author is the nature of the dual theoretical belief system in India, guiding the policy approach towards cybersecurity. Singh suggests that India does not adhere to any single theoretical school of international relations, instead, India promotes its liberal stance by projecting cyberspace as a fertile ground for global cooperation and economic development, while adopting a realist stand that characterize cyberspace as a domain of warfare and "strategic interest".

Chapter 1 of the book confers an introductory conceptualization of cyberspace as a domain transitioned from acting as a playground for information and communication technologies to the arena of national security and power politics. Interlinking this evolution with the mainstream IR theories of realism and securitization theory of the Copenhagen school, Singh reiterates how cyberspace has now become a new domain akin to land, air and sea.

Chapter 2 of the book traces the evolution of global cybersecurity policies and practices within the categorization of state actors and multilateral institutions. It suggests that, with global powers such as the US, China and Russia shaping norms and capabilities, cyber power is becoming central to the global hierarchy. The chapter provides a horizontal description of the chronological policy development rather than establishing analytical depth.

Chapter 3 of the book provides a policy and strategic evolution of India's cybersecurity framework. Singh argues that India primarily adopts a realist approach in dealing with challenges encountered, but also maintains a cooperative outlook in cyber diplomacy and private sector engagements. The mapping of Indian laws, policies and regulations, institutional structure and oversight mechanisms is chronological and comprehensive. However, the argument that the policy proliferation directly inculcates effectiveness is debatable, and a critical analysis is needed.

Chapter 4 explores India's higher organization in cyber security domain and how they create a cross-complimenting cybersecurity governance architecture. In that, Singh focuses on the roles of different ministries, threat dimensions, and different stakeholders, suggesting that India's cybersecurity policymaking is centralized with key ministries dominating all aspects till implementation. Although the distribution of responsibilities across the ministries has been criticised by the author, citing a lack of clarity and overlapping mandates.

The last chapter proposes a forward-looking framework for cybersecurity policies in India. It suggests an overhaul of the outdated policies, structural mandates and institutional coordination while emphasising the emerging technological threats in the domain. Singh's demarcation of strategic and non-strategic cyber threats organizes the concept but feels somewhat rigid. The book provides a vast (horizontal) set of recommendations, covering all aspects of cyberspace and digital penetration. The centralized control, according to the author's suggestion, could work better in India's democratic system, however, I believe resilience and adaptability may also lead to same outcomes.

## Conclusion

A major part of Singh's scholarly work seeks to cover the institutional architecture, offering a critical perspective on the roles of the seven dedicated ministries coordinating under the directives of PMO. Singh argues that India's cybersecurity framework is a multistakeholder system where government, private sector, civil societies and academia have their distinct roles to play. He calls this framework "inclusive" and "comprehensive", at the same time highlighting its vulnerabilities and upgrades needed for its calibrated evolutions. Thangjam K. Singh's book is a valuable contribution to furthering India's stance on digital sovereignty. It briefly archives India's journey from a nascent cyber actor to a strategic power. The author calls for a "unified framework" which aligns with India's unique cybersecurity needs and institutional orders. To that end, I sincerely recommend this book for anyone who wishes to begin their journey in India's cybersecurity paradigm and gain a foundational understanding of the domain itself.

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