

Introduction

In the past, scholars have tried to analyse India's strategic behaviour in the international system. Col Sachin S. Mahadik's 'Reimagining India's Strategic Culture in the Emerging World Order' presents a different perspective. Colonel Mahadik, VSM, is a Senior Research Fellow at the United Service Institution of India, with over 25 years of service experience. He has a keen interest in the contemporary warfare studies, internal security issues and India's strategic culture. The book is published by Pentagon Press LLP in July 2026. The book has around 200 pages of in-depth analysis of strategic culture and national security strategy of India. It retails in a price range of ₹895 to ₹995 at various e-commerce platforms. The book tried to interrogate the image behind the strategic culture that guides the decisions. The central argument here is about the reimagination of India's strategic culture in the volatile, uncertain and complex world order. It also moves beyond the traditional debate of whether India has a strategic culture to how India can redefine its role while securing its national interests.

Central Argument

The book is divided into five chapters surrounding what comprises strategic culture, what is India's strategic culture and why India needs to reassess it in the dynamic world order.

Chapter 1- This chapter highlights the difference between strategy, strategic culture, strategic behaviour and national culture of states. It traces the evolution of concept of strategic culture from the first academic discussion of Jack Synder in 1977 to the generations that followed him. It also defines the elements, variables that defines a countries strategic culture and how they are used to justify actions and frame issues.

Chapter 2- This focuses on defining the strategic culture of India. He starts with George Tanham's essay about India lacking a strategic culture and proceeds to explain the contradictions as explained by scholars like Menon, Pranjpi etc. He later focuses on the evolution of strategic culture through the subconscious incorporation of cultural and religious ideas across borders, western concepts of political systems, colonial resistance, and economic and technological interdependence. This also covers how strategic decision are taken in the country and what comprises the strategic community of India.

Chapter 3- India's ancient texts were analysed in this. Vedas, Upanishads, Arthashastra, Ramayana, Mahabharat etc, are explored to understand how ancient wisdom is relevant in contemporary conflicts. The limited understanding of these texts due to extensive use of Sanskrit and vast literature, lack of qualified scholars, perception as outdated and religious association were highlighted in this chapter. Dharma, pragmatism, patience, restraint, flexibility and adaptability emerged as the common treads in all the texts.

Chapter 4- This chapter explores the relationship between India and the world order. It argues that China's rise, USA's domestic politics, regional conflicts, technological developments, new strategic alliances have changed the global balance of power. India is at the juncture of global politics while addressing complex immediate and extended neighbourhood. It highlights the need for dialogue, sub-regional cooperation, people to people interaction, cooperation for addressing non-traditional security concerns etc are necessary for an inclusive and equitable world order.

Chapter 5- The last chapter is regarding the reimagining of the strategic culture for the long-term strategic objective of Viksit Bharat by the 2047. It provides the of analysis strategic successes over the years, failures and the gaps that persists in India's security strategy. The balance between civilisational legacy, strategic autonomy, capacity building and a whole of nation approach is necessary to secure India's strategic interests.

Evaluation

Even though the book emphasises on analysing strategic culture through the lens of ancient texts and broader civilisational legacy, it argues that rectification of internal inconsistencies is necessary. The outdated power dynamics of the global order needs proactive international cooperation and substantive reforms in international organisations. India's strategic objectives depend on a blend of strong institutions, sustainable economics, innovations and adoption of advanced technologies and global cooperation. One of the most significant insights from this book is the India should work to move beyond regional strategic isolation and look for global engagement. It insists on maintain the balance between Dharma, pragmatism and strategic restraint to safe guard the core interests.

Larger Debate and enduring relevance- The book reaffirms the unresolved debate about India's strategic culture. It questions India's strategy in the multipolar, interdependent, hyper-globalised world order i.e whether it should strive for a more assertive military strategy as evident in the Operation Sindoor or follow the strategy of inclusion and soft power projection. Col Sachin analysis the polarisation of international system, weaponisation of economy by major powers, contestation of technologies, privatisation of outer-space, expansion of battlefields across domains, renormalisation of large-scale wars and various other issues. Under these circumstances his thought of 'reimagining' raises relevant question about India's strategic culture and policy requirements for long-term objectives.

Conclusion

The book deserves recognition as a contribution to the study of India's strategic culture, strategic community and national strategy. It also theorises how various variables have formed the strategic culture of the nation, how literature should be examined for modern conflicts. In the aftermath of Operation Sindoor it also tries to answer how military hard power and soft power together forms the base of India's security approach. Col Sachin's insistence of Dharma, strategic autonomy and pragmatism provides the study relevance. Its comparative analysis of literature of strategic culture, ancient texts through the lens of strategic culture, foreign policy choices, military and institutional collaboration provides strategic studies audience a base to understand what India's strategies will reflect in the fragmented and uncertain world order.

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