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# Book Reviews

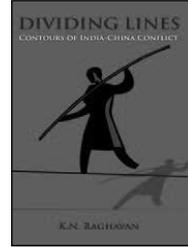
**Dividing Lines: Contours of India-China Conflict**

**KN Raghavan**

(New Delhi: Platinum Press, 2012)

Rs 225/-

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The author is a post graduate physician who joined the Indian Revenue Service (Custom and Excise) after passing the civil service examination in 1989. That background reflects his capacity for hard work and academic research on the subject. He wrote this account because he felt that the common one-dimensional Indian perception of Chinese treachery in the 1962 India-China conflict is too simplistic and there is an “urgent need to enlighten the Indian public about the chain of events that led to the month-long war and the reasons behind the severe reverses suffered by the Indian military in the armed conflict.”

Raghavan traces the origins of the Sino-Indian boundary discord to imperial Britain's Russo-phobic “great game”, messy cartographic flip-flops and territorial occupation through subterfuge. (Even at the time of India's partition, the Imperial General Staff had recommended that Northern Kashmir should go to Pakistan!). He also brings out the historic ebbs and flows of Chinese activism in reclusive Tibet. At the time of India's independence, the Government of Tibet lost India's sympathy and goodwill when it put in sweeping claims for the “return of territories on the boundaries of India and Tibet” involving Bhutan, Sikkim, Darjeeling and some areas of Ladakh.

Post-Independence, the fact that Pandit Nehru went out of his way to befriend China is well known. The author's claim that this was part of a two-pronged policy which involved “bolstering India's security using northern buffer states and extending administrative sway up to the McMahon Line” is questionable. The fact is that Nehru ignored the Chinese military occupation of Tibet despite Sardar Patel's written advice in November 1950 (the contents of this letter were kept secret for 18 years). In the mid-1950s, while pursuing *Panchsheel* diplomacy with China, he allowed it to use Calcutta port facilities to consolidate the Chinese military hold in Tibet.

On July 1, 1954, after learning about the Chinese territorial claims up to

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Demchok (Ladakh) and that they had extended patrolling to the undemarcated Indo-Tibet border (except in Sikkim), Nehru directed the printing of maps with a delineated boundary and erection of check posts in disputed areas, leaving little room for negotiations. Meanwhile, the Chinese suspected that India was helping the Khampa rebellion and had enabled the Dalai Lama's escape to India. This alongside skirmishes on the border posts resulted in the hardening of attitudes and a diplomatic breakdown. Meanwhile, sensing the failure of the government policy, the public in India put Nehru under intense pressure. This led to his famous public statement (and direction to the military) on throwing out the Chinese from the intruded Indian territory.

In the remaining chapters, the author narrates politico-military issues in much detail. He writes about civil-military alienation under Krishna Menon, Thimayya's retracted resignation, Kaul's political patronage and climb and the resultant dissension amongst senior military officers. Under these circumstances, Nehru approved the strategically disastrous "forward policy" advocated by an unprofessional coterie (Menon, BN Mullick, BN Kaul, MJ Desai). This political direction led to military movements without concern for communications and logistic reach, eyeball-to-eyeball confrontations on Thagla Ridge and Namka Chu (with Kaul trying to lead from the front at a company level!) and the ensuing larger battles in the northeast and western fronts.

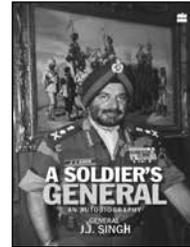
The author scores high marks in historical research and the political and military details of the events leading to the conflict and its aftermath. But he shows lack of strategic maturity in his analysis. A military strategy is subservient to grand strategy and works for the achievement of a grand strategic aim. The causes for starting an ill-fated war are more political and less military, particularly when the latter is substantially outside the decision-making loop and physically and mentally unprepared for it. When the Chinese escalated the border skirmishes into a well-planned, full-fledged war, our Foreign Office and intelligence organisation (under BN Mullick) abdicated all their responsibilities. The author highlights the military command failures but tends to underplay the intelligence and foreign policy roles for the war. He is reluctant to put sufficient blame on Pandit Nehru and his Cabinet for messing up the diplomatic dialogue, thoroughly neglecting military preparedness, and for the military demoralisation and dissensions. There was little institutional handling of the 'dividing line'. If such lessons are not brought out, our political leaders and civil servants will never learn the importance of civil-military relations. In fact, the current politico-military scenario is not too dissimilar to what existed in 1962.

The author's statement revalidating Clemenceau's adage that '*war is too important a matter to be left to generals*' on the India-China conflict is grossly out of context. Our political leaders of the time did not have Clemenceau's personality nor did they make any effort to visit and understand the ground situation like Clemenceau did in World War 1.

The book is well organised and brings out several pieces of information that are not easily available in the public domain. It is brief without missing the essentials and reads well.

Gen VP Malik (Retd)  
Former Chief of the Army Staff

**A Soldier's General: An Autobiography**  
**General J. J. Singh**  
(New Delhi: HarperCollins Publishers India, 2012)  
Rs 799/-



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The battle hardened Indian Army, the fourth largest in the world, has been led by many able chiefs, but few of them have made the effort to record their experiences for posterity. Nor have many naval and air force chiefs done so. As a result, the shortcomings in the national security decision-making process at the apex level and the state of civil-military relations – often precarious – have gone mostly unreported. In fact, it is apparent from the spate of writings in the media on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of India's war with China in 1962 that many of the important lessons of that fateful campaign remain unlearned. Gen J.J. Singh's admirably written autobiography, *A Soldier's General*, is a refreshing change and a welcome addition to the writings of the former armed forces chiefs that are available today.

Gen J.J. Singh, a third generation soldier, comes from a family with a rich tradition of military service. The first half of the book tells the story of the general's early life as a young officer in a battalion of the Maratha Light Infantry and his 'bond of blood' with his soldiers; his service in India's border areas during his formative years; the very successful command of a battalion of the Marathas;

an eventful tenure as a brigade commander, including sustaining a wound in combat, during the early years of the insurgency in Kashmir; the important training courses attended by him; his experience as a military attaché in the Indian Embassy in Algeria; his rapid rise through the military ranks to flag rank on the strength of a brilliant career backed by dedication and hard work; his handling of the Siachen dispute and Pakistan's misadventure during the conflict in Kargil in 1999 as an additional director general in the Military Operations Directorate at the Army Headquarters (HQ); his participation in Operation Parakram as a corps commander; and, his two tenures as a commander-in-chief, first of the Army Training Command and then the prestigious Western Command.

The penultimate part of the book records Gen J.J. Singh's experience as the Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) – the *Jangi Laal*, as army chiefs were called in earlier times – and his contribution as the governor of Arunachal Pradesh. From an analyst's perspective, this chapter is perhaps the most enlightening and noteworthy. As the COAS, the general had to provide directional guidance to the army's varied operational commitments for border management and internal security duties. It is not usually realised that the Indian Army has been continuously deployed for border management along many of India's land borders, particularly along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). It is also heavily committed in counter-insurgency operations since the late 1950s in the northeastern states and since 1989-90 in J&K. This situation has been aptly described as 'nation at peace, army at war'. As the chief operational commander, the COAS spends a great deal of his time in giving directional thrust to operational planning, while also visiting the areas where the army is deployed for active operations. The finer nuances of these operations have been very well captured in the book. The general's direction to the army to deal with the insurgents with 'an iron fist in a velvet glove', that is, firmly but fairly, while simultaneously waging a battle to win the hearts and minds of the local population, was very well received.

The author has written extensively about the shortcomings in India's higher defence management system and made many recommendations to improve the system. He suggests "inclusive and substantive" integration between the armed forces HQ and the Ministry of Defence, with cross postings and officers working together as teams "on the same lines as is the practice in other major democracies". He advocates creation of the post of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) of five-star rank "who should be vested with operational command of the three Services". The recommendation made for the post of permanent chairman of the Chiefs of

Staff Committee (CoSC) by the Naresh Chandra Committee recently has fallen well short of the requirement of a five-star CDS that has been suggested by the former army chief and is endorsed by most members of the strategic community. It is time the government appoints a CDS to provide single-point military advice to the prime minister and the Cabinet Committee on Security. The government will have to follow a top-down approach as the Indian Air Force continues to oppose this key reform in the management of higher defence.

As the chairman, CoSC, the author dealt with issues concerning India's nuclear forces and was part of the defence diplomacy efforts made to enhance the country's foreign policy objectives. He also grappled with the fallout of the recommendations made by the 6<sup>th</sup> Pay Commission and the implementation of Part II of the report of the Ajay Vikram Singh Committee. All of these find mention in the book. The author also states his vision for the future Indian Army and the modernisation that must be undertaken. He comments at length on his command and leadership experience and lays down pointers for future commanders to excel. He pays his own personal tribute to the fighting soldier – the man behind the machine – and spells out the initiatives taken for him.

*A Soldier's General* is a well rounded autobiography by an accomplished soldier. It is the story of a life well lived; it is a tale that is simply told. It captures the essence of army life in battalions and higher formation HQ skilfully and with great feeling. It also provides glimpses into decision-making at the higher levels of the Services HQ and the national level. The Marshal of the Air Force Arjan Singh, said, during the launch of the book in New Delhi, "I have no hesitation in saying it is a must read for all personnel of the armed forces, particularly the younger ones." It must also be read by all those who are involved in national security decision-making and policy analysis as well as academics and scholars.

**Brig Gurmeet Kanwal (Retd)**

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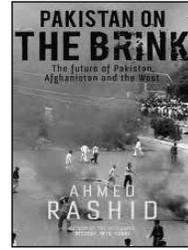
**Pakistan on the Brink: The Future of Pakistan,  
Afghanistan and the West**

**Ahmed Rashid**

(London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2012)

**Rs 399/-**

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In less than five years from now, Pakistan would be celebrating 70 years of independence. But it is a sad reflection on the country that in nearly every decade of its existence, there have been umpteen moments when Pakistan was 'on the brink'. That is where Ahmed Rashid, a Pakistani journalist of 25 years standing, finds it yet again in 2012 – politically, economically, and socially. Based on his observation of developments on *jihad*, Muslim extremist movements and US interventions in his country and the region, Rashid offers an insightful analysis of the factors that have brought the nation to the brink and offers suggestions on how to pull it back.

The book, the third in a trilogy that explores different dimensions of Pakistan – Afghanistan, clearly places Pakistan at the core of the problem and the solution. The first book, *Taliban*, had covered Afghanistan and the rise of the Taliban and Al Qaeda. The second one, *Descent into Chaos*, had examined the American war in Afghanistan and the role that Pakistan played as a reluctant partner. The third book devotes itself to a more contemporary analysis of the current crisis in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and documents the troubled relations between the many players in the region.

Most ills afflicting Pakistan today can be attributed to the obsession of its army with a perceived sense of insecurity from India. Pakistan has sought to alleviate this through building alliances with major powers (notably the USA and China), acquiring modern conventional weapons, equipping itself with nuclear weapons, and resorting to the use of terrorism. None of this, however, has alleviated its insecurities. Instead, many of these measures have resulted in a huge trust deficit between the neighbours and translated into even more insecurity.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's own polity, economy and society have not escaped the adverse impact of its actions. The 'security scare' from India has helped elevate the Pakistan military, especially the army, to a position where it rules the country with absolute impunity and immunity. The civilian democratic system has never

been strong enough to challenge the army on its policies (especially of use of terrorism), or its huge share of 25-30 percent in the national budget even as the economy and society have languished. As a consequence of these two measures, Pakistan is today losing lives and economic growth. Yet, there is unwillingness on the part of Pakistan to “act as a normal state, rather than a paranoid, insecure, ISI driven entity whose operational norms are to use extremists and diplomatic blackmail.”

As the author states in the preface, the book is a collection of essays, each exploring the subject from a different standpoint. This makes for easy reading of a complex subject. While the reader can pick a chapter based on his interest of the moment, the package as a whole offers a deeper understanding of complicated issues. To the credit of the author, while he painstakingly recounts the many tactical incidents in Pakistan–Afghanistan, presenting several statistics on the number and kind of attacks, he never loses sight of the strategic picture and, hence, the book traverses the realms of the tactical and strategic with an easy facility.

There are many important issues covered in the book and several lessons highlighted, but from an Indian perspective, five important takeaways can be identified.

One, on the objectives of the US intervention in Afghanistan and whether these have been met, Rashid points out that the USA never had a clear ‘end state’ in mind except to go after Osama bin Laden. That target was decimated in 2011, but as is evident, the removal of bin Laden did not mean the end of the Taliban in Afghanistan. The tasks of political and economic rebuilding of the state and stabilising the region are still nowhere in sight. Complications persist due to a lack of uniformity in the desire of some of the other players in the region, notably Pakistan, to actually achieve these objectives. Consequently, it is certain that Obama will be seeking a second presidential term without having found a political solution to end the war. While the troop pull-out could well happen in 2014 as planned, will the American forces be able to claim victory? Rather, they could leave behind a power vacuum that would be a cause of great regional and international security concern in the future.

Secondly, Rashid identifies the biggest failure of the USA in its war in Afghanistan as arising from its unwillingness to pay adequate attention to the central role of Pakistan in creating and sustaining the Taliban insurgency. Some American policy advisors like Richard Holbrooke, did underline the need for “resolving the Pakistan conundrum” as an essential complement to the

solution of Afghanistan, but not everyone in the White House was convinced. President Bush, for instance, was keen on maintaining close cooperation with the Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI) in catching Al Qaeda, and to facilitate this, he was willing to ignore the rapid expansion (with Chinese help) of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal, something that today poses an international security challenge. President Obama did bring greater focus to Pakistan, but it was more in terms of stepping up counter-terrorism operations in Pakistan. This included greater use of drones, increase in the number of Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) operatives in Pakistan, and creation of a parallel intelligence agency hidden from the ISI. No effort was made to persuade Pakistan to abandon its support for terrorism. In the process, no major breakthroughs in the war on terrorism were achieved, but relations between the US and Pakistan dived to a new low.

The third important issue that Rashid highlights is Pakistan's dilemma over its identity. He astutely identifies factors that have interfered with Pakistan's emergence as a cohesive state and accords highest importance to the failure of the national elite to define a "coherent national identity capable of uniting the nation". While the military has defined Pak identity in terms of its mistrust of India, the politicians have neither challenged this, nor offered any alternative vision of a credibly functioning democracy. At the same time, the growth of the fundamentalist religious groups has created further identity crises on whether Pakistan is an Islamic state, which the Pakistan Taliban wants to be based on Sharia or Islamic law, or whether it is a state that can offer space for other religious and ethnic minorities. This remains an unresolved issue.

The fourth notable subject that the author flags relates to the country's own suffering as a result of its duplicity on terrorism. The author recounts an explanation once offered to him by a Pakistani general on the purpose of Pakistan's use of terrorism against India. According to the army man, as quoted by Rashid, terrorism "kept 700,000 Indian troops and paramilitary forces in Kashmir at very low cost to Pakistan; at the same time, it ensured that the Indian Army could not threaten Pakistan, created enormous expenditures for India, and kept it bogged down in military and political terms." The policy may have been cost-effective, but as Rashid points out, Pakistan is suffering its consequences today. The economy is in shambles, jobs are scarce in both the agriculture and industrial sectors, and the only cottage industry that is thriving is that of home grown terrorism – whose victims are today more inside Pakistan than outside.

A fifth interesting insight that Rashid offers is that the Pakistan Army has not been oblivious to the adverse developments in the country as a result of its actions.

He draws attention to a study on “Pakistan’s Security Imperatives in the Medium Term” commissioned by the army in 2000, which concluded that “Pakistan’s security threat was primarily internal and related to Islamic extremism”. But no one was ready to accept this, and terrorism was relegated to being a “latent threat and India as the more clear and present danger”. Even in its support to the war on terrorism, Rawalpindi has chosen to be selective – fighting some groups while continuing to support others. There is an inherent contradiction here which is unsustainable. As Rashid graphically highlights, “As long as its selective approach to extremist groups continues, the Pakistan Army’s high command is throwing its soldiers into a meat grinder with no strategy or end in sight.”

Ahmed Rashid has offered his perspective on the many factors that cast a shadow on the future of Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the West. He dares to hold a mirror to his countrymen – exposing the country as it is, warts and all. For him, what happens in Pakistan is the core issue since, “its geostrategic location, its nuclear weapons, its large population, its terrorist camps, and its enfeebled economy and policy make it more important – and more vulnerable – than even Afghanistan.”

The important question, however, is whether well meaning, rational voices in Pakistan are willing to accept this. Many Pakistani scholars and analysts have dismissed the book as a “Western narrative” written to please a Western audience. Unfortunately, such an ostrich like attitude can only do more harm to the nation and create security concerns for the region and the world. It would be far more useful for every Pakistani to seriously carry out a self-analysis and undertake course correction in order to bring the country back from the brink.

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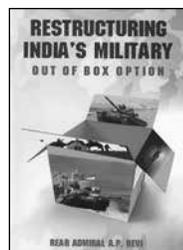
**Restructuring India's Military:  
Out of Box Option**

**Rear Admiral AP Revi**

(New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 2012)

**Rs 750/-**

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Regular assurances after every conflict notwithstanding, the Indian security apparatus continues to abhor structural or organisational changes. The changed geo-political situation, India's rise as a regional economic and strategic power, the growing nuclear threat, the global rise of terrorism and the revolution in military affairs (RMA), because of the rapid technological advances, question the status quo much more than before.

Post Kargil, the government, for the first time since independence, instituted a comprehensive review of the national security. The Kargil Review Committee (KRC) had then brought out that "the present obsolete system has perpetuated the continuation of the culture of the British Imperial theatre system of an India Command whereas what is required is a National Defence Headquarters." While there have been incremental changes, most reforms have not achieved the desired end point and have lost steam midway. New institutions set up in the aftermath of Kargil, like the Integrated Defence Staff, Strategic Forces Command, Defence Intelligence Agency and a trial theatre command, the Andaman and Nicobar Command, have not truly grown to fulfil their envisaged roles. Integration of the armed forces with the Defence Ministry has hardly moved beyond the name changes. The defence procurements system, however, has been the silver lining with the Defence Procurement Procedures (DPPs) seeing continuous upgradations.

In this book, the author has tried to cover the issues that are relevant to the modern Indian military. Besides the higher defence management structure, he has also endeavoured to highlight wide ranging issues like defence logistics, coastal security and disaster management. He has argued that most impediments to reforms stem from the anxious civil-military relations and has even dedicated a chapter to this. The author advocates a model of segregating the functions of staff, operations and support and the restructuring of the defence management structure accordingly. At the very outset, he says that restructuring of military structures, organisations and procedures is not unique and that major countries

have either evolved or revolutionised theirs with the changing environments and individual experiences, both global and local. He has systematically explored the changes of the military management of four relevant countries, the USA, United Kingdom, Russian Federation and China, to reach his 'out of the box solution'.

For each state, after tabulating the chronological order, he has highlighted how individual events and critical reports were instrumental in the evolution of the respective systems. His leanings towards certain issues becomes evident as he deliberates more on the issues of 'civil control of the military', the post of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), defence logistics, Joint Theatre Command, and separation of the organising, training and equipping functions from the operational deployment functions. He has, at this stage itself, expressed that the UK model should be the one to be emulated for higher defence management.

Individual experiences notwithstanding, there are some commonalities that affect all major states and these have been summarised by the author. Some of the important ones relevant to the Indian context are:

- Civilian political (and not bureaucratic) control of the military.
- Technological advances are causing the RMA. These not only affect the war-fighting techniques but prompt changes in the structures to incorporate the new entities, in the form of integrated/functional operational commands that are formed to address these challenges.
- Internal security, asymmetric warfare and global terrorism have redefined the parameters of warfare.
- Globalisation has meant longer reaches and subsequently more out of area operations for the major powers.
- Joint operations and the revolution in military logistics (RML) are mandatory for all future conflicts.

The author presents his recommendations for the Indian scenario, starting with the higher defence management. While he believes that scrapping the present concept and starting afresh would be the most rational option, he recommends, pragmatically, first completing the ongoing process recommended by the Group of Ministers and approved by the Cabinet Committee on Security in 2002. This, he justifies, will validate the investments made towards building the institutional infrastructure to support that model. This can then be channelised to meet the revised concept, he augurs. The military framework he proposes is inclined towards demarcation of responsibilities of different appointments according to staff, operations and support divisions. He is emphatic about the appointment of

a CDS in the long term as the principal military advisor to the government. He is realistic about this, even listing the prerequisites to be met for this appointment. In the interim, he recommends upgradation of the post of Chief of Integrated Defence Staff (CIDS) equal to that of the Service chiefs, with the CIDS having operational authority while the Service chiefs head the administrative and technical functions. He also recommends that the CIDS look after development of joint operational capabilities, including logistics, and integrated command, control, communication, computers, intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance (C4ISR) systems and also advocates having a joint logistics structure headed by a Chief of Defence Material, a four-star rank officer.

The author has suggested Theatre Command options and also proposed a sequence of implementation. This proposal has evoked reservations, mostly from the air force and some from the navy. While the army proponents recommend the primacy of 'boots on the ground' in conventional operations, the other Services argue that in contemporary wars, it is the strategic goals and not only real estate that should define the larger goals. Hence, the dithering over this concept and the debates over 'cooperation' vs. 'integration'.

The chapter on Revolution in Military Logistics is particularly interesting. The author has used his experience in dealing with 'material' in the navy while making his roadmap for a joint logistics system. He has broadly covered the efforts made by the individual Services towards digitising their inventories, praising their efforts, but, at the same time, is critical of the relative shortcomings. He has then delved into subjects like standardisation, codification, cadre rationalisation, defence capital acquisition, offsets, foreign direct investment (FDI), outsourcing, research and development (R&D). This is a subject relevant to jointmanship, and while changes to the higher defence structure may continue to be mired in controversies, this is one area where the individual Services need to let go of their reservations and work towards integration. Service-centric operations have led to huge financial losses. An effective joint logistics system will avoid such losses not only in procurements, but also in maintenance and sustenance. It would also be more efficient in meeting the critical demands of the Services.

Talking about shortcomings in the coastal security in the next chapter, he has covered the steps taken over the years in addressing coastal security. Integration of the intelligence network once again finds mention as do issues of mindset block and turf considerations. He argues for integration of the coastal security architecture with the director general (DG) of the coast guard as the designated 'situational head' with associated powers.

In the chapter on Civilian Control Over the Military, he has lauded the defence Services for their service to the nation before presenting Michael C Desch's study on 'Civilian Control Over the Military' to buttress his argument that conditions in India have mostly been favourably inclined towards a stable civilian control over the military and that their fears are unfounded. In the penultimate chapter, he has elucidated the steps taken towards disaster management through enactment of the National Disaster Management Act and setting up of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) authority and National Disaster Relief Force.

The author has researched and analysed his subject well. He has also presented it lucidly with a host of charts in support of his facts. There are, however, a number of typos which do affect the narrative. Whether his recommendations are truly 'out of the box' is debatable for they do take inspiration from other states and have been discussed by various committees and authors earlier, individually, if not collectively. He also lays down a comprehensive roadmap that, in his view, is the need of the hour.

The author claims to have submitted his proposals to the Naresh Chandra Task Force on national security. The task force has recently submitted its report and it is under consideration by the Cabinet Committee on Security. The speculative leaks in the press suggest that it has side-stepped the issue of CDS by recommending the post of a permanent Chiefs of Staff Committee. As the report is made public, it would be interesting to know where the submissions made by the author find convergence with the report. While structural changes are in order, of equal importance would be ensuring that institutions that are set up do end up preserving their charter with the requisite empowerment.

This is an interesting book that gives a comprehensive insight into the higher defence management and revolution in military logistics and makes valid and informed recommendations for India. Even if these suggestions are not implemented, they do provide the reader a template to gauge the success of differing systems. It also provides a taste of some other contemporary issues which the reader can explore further.

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