

# Book review on a general speaks



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The name of the author of the book “ A General Speaks” is General (Retd) S. Padmanabhan and it is published by Manas Publications, New Delhi. It was first published in 2005 and its second impression was published in 2007. The author is a qualified person and the experience he took during his service enables him to write this book. He is popularly known as Paddy. General (Retd) S. Padmanabhan was born on 5th of December 1940 at Trivandrum (Kerala). He joined the elite Rashtriya Indian Military College (RIMC), Dehradun in 1952. He was commissioned in Regiment of Artillery on 13 December 1959. During his long military career of 43 years he had various assignments, some of the important are;

Fight against militancy in Punjab, North-Eastern states, Jammu & Kashmir.

He commanded 15 Corps (in Jammu & Kashmir), Northern Command and Southern Command.

He also held the assignment of Director of Military Intelligence (D. G. M. I).

He was Instructor in Indian Military Academy and School of Artillery.

He remained Indian Army Chief from 30 September 2000 to 31 December 2002.

During his tenure as Army Chief, Operation Parakram was conducted in which Indian Army remained on the borders of Pakistan for about Ten months. He was the author of the famous book “ The writing on the wall: India checkmates America 2017”.

### **About Book:**

“ A General Speaks” contains the views of General S Padmanabhan about Indian army and its role with reference to security issues. In this book he had covered a broad perspective initiating from grass root level to the top level forces role with a blend of political leadership role. If we go by chronology of the book initially, writer gives the vision of new millennium army then he discusses future of warfare along with the insight into future wars. Then, techniques of intelligence in 21st century have been discussed in detail followed by the phenomenon of terrorism prevailing in current scenario. A deliberate effort has been made to elucidate political control of services. Foreign policy and national security were also analyzed critically to render fruitful recommendations. Psychological profiles of Pakistan Military, Indian Army at grass root level have been discussed to draw comparison as well as to point out shortcomings. Finally, writer discusses prospects of peace in South Asia.

### **Author's Thesis:**

The author's thesis is about Indian army and its role with reference to security issues specially. The author of this book has divided his book into

twelve chapters. He started his book with the role of Indian Army in new millennium and started first of all from the historical evolution of Army in India. Moreover, he also throws some light on economic conditions of India. Then he moved towards the details of capability of Indian Army and shed light on the dynamics of Indian Defense like deterrent capability, war fighting capacity, conflict management, force projection capability and peace keeping. He says that after becoming army chief, he tried to raise the standard of Indian army for meeting 21st century challenges and promotion of games in the country. The army has also faced the tough time of Tehalka revelations about corruption along with the increasing menace of terrorism. He had specified the reasons of fighting a war along with the causes of outbreak of a war. He also suggested measures for its control. Moreover, the disaster relief operation made during Gujrat Earthquake reveals certain limitations of Disaster Management Authorities, though the armed forces have handled it quite well as per the resources. He also elaborates the reasons of wars as for territory, economic gains, punishing enemy and in defense. May be any other reason might be added for fighting a war in future. But the future wars will be more devastating due to the presence of nuclear arsenal. He also suggested the measures for preventing wars in future by powerful role of UNO, strong UN General Assembly to check UN Security council's veto, UN's role in regulating weapons, UN Enforcement Wing, strong non-proliferation measures, check on terrorist groups, WTO and Globalization phenomena should be made friendly for third world countries and UN to be a potential Disaster Management Authority. He comments that future wars will be of short duration and more hazardous. Besides that, he also discussed the features of successful war as well as reasons for abortive

war. He threw light on the Intelligence agencies and mentioned its two goals viz. acquisition of knowledge and counter intelligence. He also discussed the intelligence agencies structure of India and Pakistan. He discussed terrorism and mentioned the terrorist ways to make a squad of fanatics and mentioned the causes for terrorism that are source of spreading terrorism and mentioned the current position of India regarding that. He had also discussed the structure of army's control under political government since its inception and mentioned the possibility of army intervention with all its pros and cons along with the strength and weakness of army in this regard. He also made a brief view of an Indian soldiers' life along with difficulties faced by him. He also shared his views on the foreign policy and national security issues facing India. Furthermore, he discussed Pakistan army officers, soldiers and Indian army soldiers and made a comparison between soldiers of both the countries. He gives special attention to media and discussed the dealings between military and media in India along with setting guidelines for both. Finally, he turned his attention towards the peace conditions in South Asia and discussed it historically, politically and policy wise with special reference to Indo-Pak relations and Indian position. So this was the thesis of the author.

### **Reaction to Author's Thesis:**

The book is quite informative as the author has discussed different diverse aspects in book and the author had command over the topics he is writing. Yet, it would not be wrong to say that the book has some short comings. First of all, there was an element of bias present in the work. The author presents his view while showing a clear bias towards Pakistan. He tried to assert his personal and nationalistic views over the facts. After reading the book one

might get impression that the Pakistan is causing problems for India.

Moreover, he presented a narrow view of terrorism and it seems from the book that the terrorism is only what he perceives it to be. The book lacks proper organization because the chapters are not properly arranged. The chapters should be:

First, relating to his self.

Then, the chapters relating to armed forces along with its control, comparison with other armed forces, structures and intelligence agencies.

Then, chapters relating to wars and media.

Finally, the chapters dealing with terrorism, foreign policy and national security.

### **General Summary and Recommendations:**

The book has been published by Manas Publications, New Delhi-110 002 (India). It has twelve chapters. It contains acknowledgements, preface, bibliography and index as well.

This book contains about army its structure and the political control over it. Along with that it also covers the topics like foreign policy, national security, terrorism and media. So, I would recommend it for military elite, diplomats, students of strategic studies, politicians and researchers conducting research relating to foreign affairs, policy making or strategic studies.

The media persons may get benefitted but only from a single chapter. As far as general reader is concerned, it provides only knowledge to him as the

book is written in simple language but it would not be beneficial for him in getting the insight of this dimension. The book has not covered the basic concepts of this dimension.