

**BOOK REVIEW: SSB: INDIA'S SWORD AND SHIELD AT BORDER BY DR. P. A. GHOSH, MR V. K. SHARMA, AND DR. MONOJIT DAS** published by Adroit Publishers (14 November 2022), ISBN-13 978-8187393900

- Sukriti Agrawal\*

Constituted in 1963 as Special Service Bureau (SSB) after the 1962 Indo-China war to build people's morale and inculcate the sense of national integration building up the spirit of resistance to resist subversion, infiltration sabotage besides other threats from across the border. The force trained large numbers of local volunteers who later became the eyes and ears of the country, the volunteers learnt in intelligence gathering and other self-defense training including weapons training that helped in countering cross border Chinese propaganda. The success of the Arunachal Pradesh model (then part of NEFA or Northeastern Frontier Agency) was soon implemented in other border states to counter cross border propaganda in various areas like North Bengal, hill districts of Uttar Pradesh (now Uttarakhand), Himachal Pradesh, part of Punjab and Ladakh area of J&K, then further extending to Manipur, Tripura, Meghalaya, Sikkim, Rajasthan, South Bengal, Nagaland and Mizoram. However, the nature of duty for SSB has been amended after the Kargil war 1999 and the recommendation of the Kargil Review Committee (KRC) mandated the one border one force policy.

SSB owing to special training skills and excellence in winning the hearts and minds of the border population was bestowed with guarding the Indo-

---

\* Ph.D. Research Scholar, @ Sam Higginbottom University of Agriculture, Technology and Sciences, Prayagraj (U.P.); Email: 21phfs201@shiats.edu.in

Nepal and Indo-Bhutan border. The open border is sensitive in nature and always at threat of being exploited by anti- Indian elements to enter the country and promote violence. As a border guarding border, the force was renamed as Sashastra Seema Bal and placed under the Ministry of Home affairs that is also accorded the status of being Lead Intelligence Agency (LIA) at both Indo-Nepal and Indo-Bhutan Border. On the other hand, the recent incidents at the China border has once again raised the query of reviving the SSB in its initial form of Special Service Bureau which is a long standing demand owing to strengthening of India's national interest, the clash on 9th December has once again sparked the debate with China's aggression. The development of China's new rail and road trade route with Nepal that would link Guangdong, Tibet and Kathmandu is already making India apprehensive, which intensifies with its engagements at Bangladesh and Myanmar aimed towards diluting the bilateral relations and influencing the border population at Indian side by mushrooming of foreign aided madrasas which can lead to serious threats with Pakistan's ISI involvement especially along the eastern border where even the Indian states have disputes among themselves.

SSB with its experience can be an effective counter threat to protect sanctity at borders specially preventing the propaganda from China and Pakistan where the revival however might take a significant time but won't be difficult thereby giving India support both tactically by deploying advanced missiles and mountain strike corps at border and SSB in the interior to thwart the propaganda and launch counter propaganda towards China.

The book is divided into 6 chapters:

*Chapter 1* being introductory generally covers the concept of national security, i.e., internal, and external security, literature survey, aim of study, research hypothesis, methodology and likely contributions to the national security domain.

*Chapter 2* focuses on the geopolitical perspective of India's land border focuses on the historical evolution of India's land border and difficulties in the management of India's border security as relations with neighbours are changing.

*Chapter 3* focuses on SSB, its organization, roles and tasks, in both as Special Service Bureau and Sashastra Seema Bal.

*Chapter 4* deals with the role of SSB in the management of India's national security, internal security and other different activities and roles, external security (role in management of external border with Nepal and Bhutan including UN Missions).

*Chapter 5* assesses the challenges faced by SSB personnel during and after their services to the nation.

*Chapter 6* discusses findings, challenges to be faced by SSB in future and suggestions for improvement and further modernization.

The overview on the Tibetan issue and other contemporary geopolitical issues are very well covered in this book, but it could have been better if it could have been made in two volumes to cover the whole work of this dynamic force as the people or today's youth at large are not aware of such facts. The attempt to cover the geo-political issues are nicely argued to which the book written by Dr PA Ghosh, Shri VK Sharma DIG SSB ret'd

and Dr Monojit Das has managed to re-ignite the thought of reintroducing the force in their original role. This book succeeds in highlighting the works of the SSB which mostly remains an unsung hero. The work gives us an opportunity to remember the deeds and sacrifice of such patriotic youths who fought for the country's national integrity with their best of spirit which is again needed at this time when the country is progressing towards development and rising as Asian superpower.

