Introduction

The dominant view among Western scholars is that pre-British India had no tradition of strategic thinking. There have been some sporadic attempts by Western commentators to flesh out military ethics based on examination of Hindu religious texts. What we lack is a consistent analytical narrative, taking into account the opinions of different Indian *acharyas* (teachers) who wrote commentaries on *vigraha* (war) and justice throughout the ancient and medieval eras. To give an example, very few Western scholars know that Kamandaka (sixth century CE) speaks of the interrelationship between righteous war, people's support and a stable government, long before Carl Von Clausewitz came up with his famous trinity. And Kautilya (third century BCE) is probably the first authority on biological warfare. Again, Kautilya, Manu (Common Era) and Kamandaka wrote about the interconnections between conventional warfare (*vigraha*) and insurgencies (*kopa*). Modern historians dealing with South Asia completely neglect the historical evolution of military-strategic thought on the Indian subcontinent. And political scientists mostly engage with Western theories while trying to analyze the contours of independent India's philosophy of warfare and nuclear gaming.

The objective of this volume is to trace the effect of Hinduism on the evolution of theories of warfare[1] in India from the dawn of civilization until the present era. The focus is to bring out the complex debate between *dharmayuddha* and *kutayuddha* within Hindu philosophy. It must be noted that these two concepts are mere abstract and ideal

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[1] In this volume the term "theory of warfare" is considered equivalent to the philosophy behind warfare.

types, and in pure form have never existed or operated in history. The terms are to be understood as a heuristic device for clarifying certain trends in history. Somewhat like Carl Von Clausewitz's concept of absolute war/total war, *dharmayuddha* and *kutayuddha* are ideal concepts that can never actually be realized due to 'frictions' in the real world. In fact, the two above-mentioned Hindu concepts were never frozen in time. Rather, they have evolved through the last two millennia. For instance, the concept of *dharmayuddha* in the two epics (*Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* around 400 BCE) is quite different from the *dharmayuddha* concept that emerged in the *Manavadharmasastra* (*Laws of Manu*) composed around the Common Era. This book attempts to show how these two key concepts have emerged gradually throughout the last two millennia.

The debate revolves around four questions: what is war, what are the justifications for starting it, how it should be waged, and finally, what could be the possible repercussions of using organized violence? The tension between the Lokayata (i.e., empiricist/positivist/materialist) and non-materialist/spiritual traditions within *darsana* (Indian philosophy) needs to be chiseled out. Hence, the comparative analysis of different religious-cultural streams within the heterogeneous Hindu tradition is undertaken. This monograph partly takes into account the religious traditions that emerged within India (i.e., Buddhism and Jainism) as well as the foreign inputs (Islam and Christian militarism) and how they have shaped the traditional Hindu view of the relationship between warfare, politics and good governance.

During the late twentieth century, as a reaction to technological determinism and Euro-American pragmatism in warfare and strategy, the strategic culture approach has evolved. The strategic culture approach emphasizes cultural factors in order to explain the origins, conduct and results of warfare.[2] Jack Snyder defines strategic culture as 'the sum total of ideas, conditioned emotional responses and patterns of habitual behaviour that members of a national strategic community have acquired through instruction or imitation.'[3] Ken Booth defines strategic culture as a nation's traditions, values, attitudes, patterns of behaviour, habits, customs, achievements and particular ways of adapting to the

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[2] William H. Mott IV and Jae Chang Kim, *The Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006), p. x.

[3] Quoted from Lawrence Sondhaus, *Strategic Culture and Ways of War* (London/New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 3.

environment and solving problems with respect to the threat of the use of force. Strategic culture is important, writes Booth, in order to understand the actions of another country on its own terms. Strategic culture helps us to understand the motivations, self-image and behavioral patterns of a particular country. Booth goes on to say that we live in a created world and that strategic realities are in part culturally constructed as well as culturally perpetuated.[4]

Several military historians also highlight the interrelationship between culture and warfare. Jeremy Black says that throughout history not all societies have been driven merely by the motivation to come up with the most combat-effective military machines. In fact, the acceptance and adoption of new technologies are shaped by cultural factors. Culture shapes how societies understand loss and suffering, at both the individual and collective levels of the soldier and the society.[5] In fact, the concepts of defeat and victory are partially shaped by culture, and this influences the style of military combat. Warfare is a product of culture, and combat is in turn a major factor in shaping culture.[6] Along with culture, the social fabric also shapes organized violence.

In the South Asian context, during the pre-British era war offered an avenue of social mobility for men of the lower classes. Successful military leaders effected a permanent, often inheritable elevation of social and material position. This upward mobility of able military men increased the stability of the stratification system. Stephen Peter Rosen claims that internal divisions (stratifications) are carried over into the military organization spawned by the host society. A state may occasionally, writes Rosen, go for a military system that reflects the dominant structures of the society, and such a military organization is not always the most effective.[7]

Social structures may or may not vary across cultural boundaries. By contrast, the culturalists argue that the concept of a culture remains constant within the cultural boundaries. The strategic culture approach focuses on the strategic behaviour of nations. Such behaviour varies

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[4] Ibid., p. 5.
[5] Jeremy Black, 'Series Preface', in Everett L. Wheeler (ed.), *The Armies of Classical Greece* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), p. ix.
[6] R. Brian Ferguson, 'A Paradigm for the Study of War and Society', in Kurt Raaflaub and Nathan Rosenstein (eds.), *War and Society in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds: Asia, the Mediterranean, Europe and Mesoamerica* (Washington, DC: Centre for Hellenic Studies, distributed by Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 409.
[7] Stephen Peter Rosen, 'Military Effectiveness: Why Society Matters', *International Security*, vol. 19, no. 4 (1995), pp. 5, 6, 19.

because the subjective ideas of the strategic elites vary. Hence, different ideas about the same reality result in different behaviours. In other words, strategic culture theory attempts to explain the complex behaviour of small groups of powerful individuals.[8]

Warfare is the product of both social and cultural forces, and Hinduism is a sort of socio-cultural system. Azar Gat assumes that religion fosters social cohesion among particular communities and that this in turn enables the community to survive in the big bad world. In fact, religion can be seen as part of the defence mechanism of a community. Gat rightly states that scarcity is partly relative. Competition and violent conflict intensify when opportunities and abundance increase. The potential for violent behaviour is innate, but such behavior is also socially learnt. Pugnacity and pacifism can be habituated by experience.[9]

The cultural relativist thesis claims that rationality is the product of Western culture and is not applicable to the non-Western societies.[10] Christopher Coker asserts that the West is unique in secularizing warfare. Since the West has instrumentalized war, it has turned its back on the ritualized aspects of combat. However, for non-Western societies, violence remains the moral essence of the warrior. Taking the example of the *Bhagavad Gita*, Coker asserts that for non-Western warriors, violence is existential. War for them is as much achieving one's humanity as achieving the objective of the state, but this is not the case for modern Western soldiers.[11] Coker's view is dominant among Western military historians, the majority of whom assert that classical Greek civilization gave rise to the Western Way of Warfare, which was further refined in Roman and medieval times. The Western tradition of warfare, characterized by technological innovations, rationality, and the absence of religious and cultural ethics as regards the application of violence, gave the West global military superiority during the early modern era.[12] In recent times, the

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[8] Ibid., pp. 7, 14.

[9] Azar Gat, *War in Human Civilization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 55, 139.

[10] Victoria Tin-Bor Hui, *War and State Formation in Ancient China and Early Modern Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 18. According to Ken Booth, cultural relativism is the ideal that advocates scientific detachment on the part of the analyst. Sondhaus, *Strategic Culture and Ways of War*, p. 3.

[11] Christopher Coker, *Waging War without Warriors? The Changing Culture of Military Conflict* (London: Lynne Rienner, 2002), pp. 6–7.

[12] Geoffrey Parker (ed.), *The Cambridge Illustrated History of Warfare: The Triumph of the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). See the Introduction by Parker and the two essays by V. D. Hanson in this edited volume.

paradigm of a monolithic and homogeneous Western Way of Warfare has been challenged by several historians.[13]

A complex relationship between rationalism and warfare has also existed in non-Western cultures. It would be wrong to assume that warfare is merely a cultural expression in non-Western societies. Warfare has been both existential and instrumental in China, India and the Islamic polities throughout history. Andrew Scobell asserts that China has a dualistic strategic culture. One strand is a Confucian one, which is conflict-averse and defensive-minded, and another strand is *realpolitik*, one that favours military solutions and is offensively oriented.[14]

A similar dualistic tradition, as exemplified by *dharmayuddha* (moderate, non-military, defensive-oriented statecraft) and *kutayuddha* (*realpolitik* in nature and aggressive in orientation) is also present in Hinduism. Manoj Kumar Sinha asserts that in ancient India, the proponents of *dharmayuddha* generated laws of armed conflict based on humanitarian considerations in order to limit the suffering caused by war.[15] Unlike the *jihad* of Islam and the crusade of Christianity, there is no justification in the *dharmayuddha* tradition for war against foreigners of other faiths. Surya P. Subedi notes that the concept of *dharmayuddha* in Hinduism is directed against the evil, whether they are nationals or aliens.[16] In contrast, the proponents of *kutayuddha* focus on overt militarism.[17]

A RAND Corporation analyst, George K. Tanham, writes that the fatalism inherent in Hinduism has discouraged sustained long-term strategic planning by Indian rulers throughout history. Tanham implies that Hindu India has no tradition of strategic thought.[18] One modern Indian scholar has challenged Tanham by arguing that, India being a country with an oral culture, strategic lessons have been imparted orally from generation to generation over thousands of years.[19]

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[13] John A. Lynn, *Battle: A History of Combat and Culture* (Oxford: Westview, 2003).

[14] Andrew Scobell, *China's Use of Military Force: Beyond the Great Wall and the Long March* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 15.

[15] Manoj Kumar Sinha, 'Hinduism and International Humanitarian Law', *International Review of the Red Cross*, vol. 87, no. 858 (2005), pp. 285–6.

[16] Surya P. Subedi, 'The Concept in Hinduism of "Just War"', *Journal of Conflict & Security Law*, vol. 8, no. 2 (2003), pp. 342–3.

[17] Biren Bonnerjea, 'Peace and War in Hindu Culture', *Primitive Man: Quarterly Journal of the Catholic Anthropological Conference*, vol. 7, no. 3 (1934), pp. 35, 44–5.

[18] George K. Tanham, 'Indian Strategic Thought: An Interpretive Essay', in Kanti P. Bajpai and Amitabh Mattoo (eds.), *Securing India: Strategic Thought and Practice, Essays by George K. Tanham with Commentaries* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1996), pp. 72–3.

[19] Waheguru Pal Singh Sindhu, 'Of Oral Traditions and Ethnocentric Judgements', in ibid., p. 174.

By analyzing the treatises of famous Hindu *acharya*s, we can get some idea of the Hindu theoreticians' attitude towards just and unjust wars. This volume does not attempt to provide a textual analysis of the various religious and quasi-religious texts generated under the rubric of Hinduism over the last two millennia. The objective of this volume is to elucidate the complex interaction between the evolution of the philosophy of warfare and Hindu religious ethics in South Asia during the last two and half millennia. Further, this volume follows the 'history from the top' approach and concentrates on texts generated by the elite 'grand' tradition rather than on the little tradition of folklore, local cults and regional deities. This is because, as it will become evident in the following chapters, the strategic managers and warlords throughout South Asian history have been influenced by the grand tradition.[20]

This volume has a broad scope both geographically and temporally. The genesis of military ethics in South Asia is studied in a global context by comparing and contrasting the Indian case with those of other civilizations. Major trends will become visible when sweeping cross-cultural analysis is undertaken across temporal periods. This is necessary in order to tackle the argument put forth by several historians that a Western Way of Warfare emerged in classical Greece and is still functioning. Also, some Western scholars occasionally group the Chinese and Indian military cultures as an Eastern Way of Warfare, which is posited as the polar opposite of the Western Way of Warfare. In fact, this volume tries to show that numerous similarities as well as dissimilarities have existed between the Indian and Chinese military cultures, on the one hand, and the Indian and Western military cultures, on the other. Michael I. Handel, in making a comparative analysis of Carl Von Clausewitz's and Sun Tzu's views, reaches the conclusion that the basic logic of strategy, like that of political behaviour, is universal.[21] In this book, Indian theorists and military theories are compared to Chinese and Western political philosophers and military thinkers in order to show that the binary concepts of Western and Eastern traditions of warfare are faulty.

Rather than engaging in abstract theorizing, this volume will attempt to historicize each theorist. For instance, Kautilya operated at a time when the pan-Indian Mauyran Empire was at its zenith. Kamandaka, by

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[20] The grand tradition is the high Sanskrit culture as exemplified by texts like *Arthasastra*, *Nitisara*, etc. generated by persons close to the seat of state power for an elite audience.
[21] Michael I. Handel, *Masters of War: Classical Strategic Thought* (1992; reprint, London: Frank Cass, 1996), p. xiii.

contrast, functioned at a time when the Hindu civilization was facing military threat from the Central Asian nomads. Hence, Kautilya could afford to be more aggressive than the defensive-minded Kamandaka. Chunks of the writings of the various *acharya*s are included to give the reader a feel for the theorists' thinking patterns. Dating and assigning authorship to the various classical Hindu texts is almost impossible. This is because ancient authors put their own views in the third person, presenting them as said by earlier writers.[22] We know something about Herodotus, Thucydides, St. Augustine and so on, but next to nothing about Kautilya, Manu and the author of the epics. In fact, we are not even sure whether Manu, Narayana (the author of *Hitopadesa*) and others were real individuals or not. In *darsana*, unlike in Western philosophy, the individual is unimportant. The individual author is merely recording truth, that is, the word of God. Secondly, most of the ancient Sanskrit works were written after the sixteenth century.[23] This was due to the domination of the oral tradition in South Asia. Before the late medieval era, most works were transferred orally from generation to generation. Hence, scholars continue to debate about the level of interpolation. Further, Sanskrit scholars debate whether these works are the product of a single author or several authors. The debates regarding date and composition of classical Sanskrit works are of interest to Indologists and linguistic experts. To an extent, Homer's *Iliad* is also characterized by this problem. While one group says that the *Iliad* represents a work of the early classical era, others argue that the *Iliad* comprises several layers: one going back to the archaic Greek era, another to the heroic era, and so on.

China's strategic culture, say William H. Mott IV and Jae Chang Kim, has emerged over two millennia. The problem as regards ancient Chinese history is the uncertainty regarding dates, numbers and facts, and especially motives, perceptions and feelings. Dates are important because they establish a sequence of what precedes and what follows that allows some inferences not only about cause and effect but also about the evolution of strategic thinking.[24] Many scholars doubt whether Sun Tzu was a historical figure.[25] Similar doubts are raised about the historicity of the classical

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[22] P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmasastra (Ancient and Medieval Religious and Civil Law in India)*, vol. 1, Part 1 (1930; reprint, Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1968), p. 195.

[23] Irfan Habib and Vijay Kumar Thakur, *A People's History of India*, vol. 3, *The Vedic Age and the Coming of Iron, c. 1500–700 BC* (New Delhi: Tulika, 2003), p. 1.

[24] Mott IV and Kim, *Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, p. xi.

[25] Hui, *War and State Formation in Ancient China and Early Modern Europe*, p. 19.

Indian thinkers such as Kautilya, Manu and Kamandaka. Mott IV and
Kim assert that the Chinese chroniclers used numbers not as data but as
a literary technique to convey impressions. The same could be applied to
ancient and medieval India's chroniclers. Mott IV and Kim claim that the
ancient thinkers have deliberately recorded fiction and poetry and that
their works are not constrained by historical facts. Unlike Euro-American
philosophies, Chinese strategic culture has conceptualized the state not
as an abstract or legalistic notion but as an organic link between *tao* and
people.[26] Ancient Hinduism also considered society and *rashtra* (state) as
an extension of the cosmic order.[27]

Jitendra Nath Mohanty asserts that all the classical schools of Hindu
philosophy accept the idea that knowledge leads to desire, desire to
effort, effort to action and action to success or failure. Success occurs if
the object has been correctly determined in knowledge. Mohanty goes
on to say that to a large extent Indian philosophy is theoretical. At the
same time, the Indian mind assumed, a priori, that knowledge of truth
must be practically beneficial. In the *Vedanta*, *Samkhya* and much of
Buddhist literature, it is emphasized that knowledge of reality, by dis-
pelling ignorance, shall remove suffering. It is knowledge upon which
they focus because only knowledge can remove ignorance; no amount of
practice can.[28] Over time ideas emerged through discourse, but ideas also
evolved through practice. Andrea M. Gnirs says that the written sources
of ancient Egypt are not strictly historical but are characterized by a pro-
pagandistic tradition. These texts reflect an elite ideology and describe
the world as it should be rather than as it is.[29] The same applies to the
texts generated in ancient India.

The practical conceptions of warfare comprise grand strategy (what
the Americans call national security policy), military strategy, military
doctrine and tactics. Grand strategy includes both military and non-
military elements like foreign policy (diplomacy), economic aspects of
warfare and military strategy. Military strategy refers to the planning
and actions related to the use of military assets for conducting warfare.
Andrew Scobell defines military doctrine in the following words: 'military

[26] Mott IV and Kim, *Philosophy of Chinese Military Culture*, pp. xii, 19.
[27] Subedi, 'Concept in Hinduism of "Just War"', p. 341.
[28] Jitendra Nath Mohanty, *Theory and Practice in Indian Philosophy* (published for the
    Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, by K. P. Bagchi & Co.: Kolkata, 1994),
    pp. 6–7, 12–13.
[29] Andrea M. Gnirs, 'Ancient Egypt', in Raaflaub and Rosenstein (eds.), *War and Society in
    the Ancient and Medieval Worlds*, p. 76.

doctrine is devised to prepare for the kinds of wars that the armed forces anticipate from the threat environment and national objectives defined by the security policy.'[30] Rajesh Rajagopalan writes that military doctrine also throws light on the kind of war the military expects to fight and the manner in which it trains its soldiers. Military strategy, Rajagopalan continues, specifies how a particular objective is to be reached and is conditioned by various environmental factors that include the balance of opposing forces, the capabilities of the respective commanders and geography.[31] Rajagopalan's definition of military doctrine appears too broad. And at the same time, Rajagopalan appears to be a realist and does not take into account the cultural ethos shaping doctrine and strategy. Military doctrine could be defined as a set of views on war and the principles concerning its conduct that are adopted by the military leadership and taught in the military academies and that provide the basis for war plans. It is fruitful to define military tactics much more inclusively as military thought and practice regarding combat on the battlefield.

The evolution of the philosophy of warfare has involved a continuous interaction between the material culture and the ideas generated by the intellectual elites of the society. The material culture comprises the technological base, the mode of production of the society and the structure of the polity. Constant dialogue has occurred between the techniques and tools of warfare and the ideas about why and how to conduct warfare. In other words, the evolution of the ethics of warfare in South Asia cannot be understood without understanding the war-making tools and techniques available to communities during particular periods.

The term "military ethics" refers to the norms of behaviour of armies and polities during wartime and the collective set of ideas that gave birth to such norms. The just war concept in Western philosophy comprises *jus ad bellum* (just resort to war) and *jus in bello* (rules about battlefield behaviour). Torkel Brekke asserts that, unlike Western theoreticians, Hindu writers took very little interest in matters of *jus ad bellum* and in particular the principle of right authority. He maintains that this was because the Hindu theoreticians made no distinction between private duels and public violence or between internal and external enemies. According to Brekke, this was because pre-modern Indian polities were amorphous structures with fuzzy territorial borders. The power

[30] Scobell, *China's Use of Military Force*, p. 45.
[31] Rajesh Rajagopalan, *Fighting like a Guerrilla: The Indian Army and Counterinsurgency* (London/New York/New Delhi: Routledge, 2008), pp. 36–7.

and influence of the various kings overlapped and interpenetrated in such a way that it was difficult to distinguish between internal and external affairs.[32] By contrast, this volume argues that the Hindu *acharya*s realized the complex and nuanced inter-linkages between state and non-state violence. Because the *acharya*s, unlike many Western theoreticians, realized the linkages and close intermeshing of *vigraha* (conventional warfare) and *kopa* (unconventional warfare/insurgency), this volume throws light on the theory and praxis of both inter-state and intra-state warfare.

Scholars studying the interconnections between religion and violence have to grapple with the problem of whether monotheism has been more prone to violence. Hans Kung claims that long before the advent of monotheism, the world was full of violence associated with religion and that there is no evidence that violence associated with religion has increased since the advent of the monotheistic religions.[33]

Hinduism is not a monotheistic religion. It has neither a single prophet nor a single church nor a single authoritative text. In fact, there are 330 million gods and goddesses in the Hindu pantheon. One Western scholar correctly asserts that there is no single coherent body of beliefs in Hinduism.[34] Even within Hinduism, various branches like Brahmanism, Vedantism, Vaishnavism, Shakti and Tantra co-exist. Many scholars have questioned whether the concept of religion should be applied at all in the case of Hinduism, which is a way of life. According to them, Hinduism as it is understood today evolved in the nineteenth century due to the interaction between a classification and categorization scheme introduced by the British colonial state, Western education and indigenous reform movements.[35] There is much truth in this assertion.

However, it cannot be denied that Brahmanism as it has evolved from the dawn of Aryan civilization in South Asia constitutes the core of Hinduism even today. Tanham, like Stephen Peter Rosen, accepts that the core of Hinduism is the caste system, which has continued to operate on the

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[32] Torkel Brekke, 'The Ethics of War and the Concept of War in India and Europe', *NUMEN*, vol. 52 (2005), pp. 59, 61, 80.

[33] Hans Kung, 'Religion, Violence and "Holy Wars"', *International Review of the Red Cross*, vol. 87, no. 858 (2005), p. 255.

[34] Coker, *Waging War without Warriors?*, p. 141.

[35] Torkel Brekke, *Makers of Modern Indian Religion in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 1–52; Romila Thapar, 'Imagined Religious Communities? Ancient History and the Modern Search for a Hindu Identity', in David N. Lorenzen (ed.), *Religious Movements in South Asia: 600–1800* (2004; reprint, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 333–59.