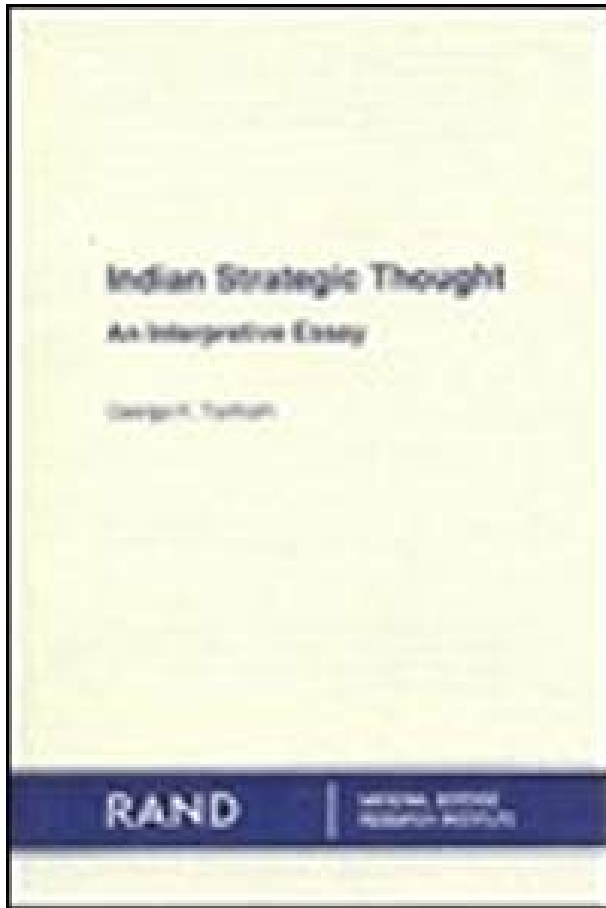


Indian Strategic Thought: An Interpretive Essay



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This report analyzes the historical, geographic, and cultural factors influencing Indian strategic thinking: how India's past has shaped present-day conceptions of military power and national security; how Indian elites view their strategic position vis-a-vis their neighbors, the Indian Ocean, and great power alignments; whether Indian thinking follows a reasonably consistent logic and direction; and what this might imply for India's long-term ability to shape its regional security environment. The author identifies four principal factors that help explain Indian actions and views about power and security: Indian geography; the discovery of Indian history by Indian elites over the past 150 years; Indian cultural and social structures and belief systems; and the British rule, or raj. India has a predominantly defensive strategic orientation, although some leaders now seek a more offense-oriented strategy. India retains a longstanding commitment to strategic independence and autonomy, although its economic, industrial, and technological shortcomings continue to limit the success of such a strategic design. Indians realize that the high technology being developed for India's longer-term defense has implications for Indian strategy. Domestic and budgetary constraints will continue to limit Indian military power for many years.