



## ***DATELINE MEI***

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### **Adieu KS**

P R Kumaraswamy

**S**cores of Indians who have never met K Subrahmanyam or worked with him at any of the institutions he has served have developed tremendous respect and admiration for him. The admiration transcends parochial identities that normally contribute to the popularity of a person in India. Nor does it refer the endorsement of his views on vital matters affect the country and its security. This emanates primarily from a genuine appreciation of qualities that distinguish KS from his contemporaries. Though I have never worked with him, just like others, I have come to admire him.

For over four decades, KS has dominated debates on national security in India. Both inside and outside the government, he has remained the principal, and at times, lonely voice, popularizing issues affecting India's security. Thanks to his tireless efforts, the public has become more conscious of what constitutes national security, a subject that has hitherto been the prerogative of ivory-towered intellectuals. Through his prolific and sharp commentaries he has single-handedly propagated national security issues far and wide.

His writings always reflect clarity of thought, a scholar's logic and a warrior's forthrightness. Not afraid of political correctness he has never hesitated to step on the toes of the high and mighty while articulating his position. More often than not, he remains at variance with the government of the day. For example, his criticism of the practice of Principal Secretary of the Prime Minister doubling as the National Security Advisor, is a case in point. Likewise, he reminded the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government that all its predecessors also deserved credit for Pokhran II. He could afford to take such a position because his national security arguments are never motivated by a personal agenda or career calculations.

KS passionately advocates national interests without losing sense of proportion. In presenting his arguments in the Realist tradition, he never adopts a self-righteous stand and carefully avoids rhetoric. Indeed, even those who are opposed to his position are enamoured by his forthrightness and clarity. This passion for national interests, however, never blinds him to India's follies. The respect that he commands among students of national security is primarily a reflection of his 'competence, knowledge and originality in thinking', to borrow his own words albeit in a different context. In his myriad roles as an officer in the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), head of a strategic think tank, media commentator and a prolific writer, he has always exceeded the standards set by his peers.

From my Preface for *Security Beyond Survival: Essays for K Subrahmanyam* (New Delhi: Sage, 2004), pp.9-10

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*Editor, Dateline MEI: P R Kumaraswamy*