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The Routledge Handbook of Indian Defence Policy

Themes, Structures and Doctrines

Second Edition

Edited by Harsh V. Pant

The Routledge Handbook of Indian Defence Policy

The Routledge Handbook of Indian Defence Policy brings together the most eminent scholarship in South Asia on India's defence policy and contemporary military history. It maps India's political and military profile in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region and analyses its emergence as a global player.

This edition of the handbook:

- Canvasses over 60 years of Indian defence policy, its relation to India's rising global economic profile, as well as foreign policy shifts;
- Discusses several key debates that have shaped defence strategies through the years: military doctrine and policy, internal and external security challenges, terrorism and insurgencies;
- Explores the origins of the modern armed forces in India; evolution of the army, navy and air forces; investments in professional military education, intelligence and net-centric warfare, reforms in paramilitary forces and the Indian police;
- Comments on India's contemporary strategic interests, focusing on the rise of China, nuclearisation of India and Pakistan's security establishments, and developments in space security and missile defence.

Taking stock of India's defence planning architecture over the past decade, this accessibly written handbook will be an indispensable resource for scholars and researchers of security and defence studies, international relations and political science, as well as for government thinktanks and policymakers.

Harsh V. Pant is Professor of International Relations in the Defence Studies Department and the India Institute at King's College London, UK. He is Director of Research and Head of Strategic Studies Programme at Observer Research Foundation in New Delhi, India. He is also an adjunct fellow with the Wadhvani Chair in US-India Policy Studies at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, DC. His current research is focused on Asian security issues. His most recent books include *China Ascendant: Its Rise and Implications* (2019), *India's Evolving National Security Agenda: Modi and Beyond* (2019), *Indian Foreign Policy: The Modi Era* (2019), *New Directions in India's Foreign Policy: Theory and Praxis* (2018) and *India's Nuclear Policy* (2018). Pant writes regularly for various media outlets, including *The Japan Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The National* (UAE) and *The Telegraph*.



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To the women and men of the Indian armed forces



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Contributors

Ali Ahmed, a former Indian Army colonel, has been a strategic analyst with a think tank and has taught peace studies at a university. Views in the chapter are personal.

Brigadier Vinod Anand served in the Indian Army for 37 years. Presently, he is writing a book on missile defence titled *Missile Warfare Capability: India's National and Military Strategies: A Contemporary Appraisal*.

Laxman Kumar Behera is Research Fellow at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), New Delhi. He was a consultant to the Task Force on Self-Reliance and Defence Modernisation constituted by the National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS), Government of India.

Kartik Bommakanti is Associate Fellow with the Strategic Studies Programme at Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi, India. He is currently working on a project centred on India's space military strategy vis-à-vis China. He specialises in space military issues, more specifically the relationship between the space medium and terrestrial warfare. Kartik also works on nuclear, conventional and sub-conventional coercion, particularly in the context of the Indian subcontinent and the role of great powers in the subcontinent's strategic dynamic. His work has appeared in *International Affairs*, *India Review* and *Foreign Policy*, among others.

Amit Cowshish is a distinguished fellow at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), a former financial advisor (acquisition) and additional secretary, Ministry of Defence, and member, Defence Procurement Board.

Sunil Dasgupta teaches political science at the University of Maryland Baltimore County, USA. He is co-author, with Stephen P. Cohen, of *Arming Without Aiming: India's Military Modernization* (Brookings Institution Press, 2010).

Nitin Gokhale is currently Security and Strategic Affairs Editor with India's leading broadcaster, NDTV.

Yogesh Joshi is a doctoral candidate at the Center for International Politics, Organisation and Disarmament, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India.

Vinay Kaura is Assistant Professor in the Department of International Affairs and Security Studies at the Sardar Patel University of Police, Security, and Criminal Justice in Rajasthan, India. He is also the coordinator at the Center for Peace and Conflict Studies in Jaipur, India. His research

interests include India's neighborhood policy, Afghanistan–Pakistan relations, counterterrorism and counterinsurgency and conflict resolution in Kashmir. He writes on issues pertaining to national security and foreign policy.

Vergheese Koithara is a retired vice admiral. He has authored three books on India's security, including *Managing India's Nuclear Forces* (Brookings Institution Press and Routledge, 2012).

Narender Kumar is a serving officer of the Indian Army and former senior fellow, Centre for Land Warfare Studies, New Delhi. He is currently holding the COAS Chair of Excellence with CLAWS.

Daniel Marston holds a professorship in military studies and is also the principal of the Military and Defence Studies Program at the Australian Command and Staff College in Canberra.

Frank O'Donnell is Lecturer in Strategic Studies at University of Plymouth.

Manjeet S. Pardesi is Lecturer in International Relations and an Asia Research Fellow at the Centre for Strategic Studies at Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand.

Kapil Patil is Associate Fellow at the Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF), New Delhi, India, and his research focuses on India's nuclear and defence-related policies. Prior to joining VIF, he worked with the Indian Pugwash Society, New Delhi, and co-authored a book titled *India's Nuclear Energy Programme: Challenges, Prospects, and Public Concerns*. He is a recipient of 2018 Emerging Leaders Fellowship awarded by the Korean Ministry of Unification and an alumnus of the Nuclear History Boot Camp (2011) organised by the Woodrow Wilson Center, Washington, DC. His research has been featured in peer-reviewed journals as well as in current-affairs magazines such as *Global Energy Monitor*, *Nautilus*, *The Diplomat*, *Swarajya* and the *CBW Magazine*.

Air Marshal Vinod Patney SYSM, PVSM, AVSM, VrC (Retd) is a distinguished fighter pilot and a decorated veteran of the 1965 and 1971 wars. Presently, he is the Director General of Centre for Air Power Studies, New Delhi.

Admiral Arun Prakash was the twentieth chief of the Indian Navy and served concurrently as the Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee. Post-retirement since 2006, he writes and speaks on maritime and strategic issues.

Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan is Senior Fellow at the Observer Research Foundation in New Delhi. She served at the National Security Council Secretariat, Government of India, from 2003 to 2007.

R. N. Ravi is Chairman, Joint Intelligence Committee, in the office of the Prime Minister and the Government of India Interlocutor for bringing peace with the separatist Naga militias in northeast India.

Ayesha Ray is Associate Professor of Political Science at King's College, Pennsylvania, USA. She is the author of *The Soldier and the State in India: Nuclear Weapons, Counterinsurgency, and the Transformation of Indian Civil-Military Relations* (Sage, 2013).

Contributors

Bibhu Prasad Routray is a New Delhi-based security analyst/consultant and a visiting fellow at the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, New Delhi.

Kaushik Roy is Guru Nanak Chair Professor at the Department of History, Jadavpur University, Kolkata, and Global Fellow at Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), Norway.

Ajai Sahni is a founding member and Executive Director of the Institute for Conflict Management; Editor, *South Asia Intelligence Review*; Executive Director, South Asia Terrorism Portal; Executive Editor, *Fault lines: Writings on Conflict & Resolution*.

Sushant K. Singh is the Associate Editor of the *Indian Express*. He has more than two decades of experience with the Government of India and has also served in Africa with the United Nations.

Vikram Sood was a career intelligence officer who retired in March 2003 after heading the Research and Analysis Wing. He is currently an adviser at Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi, an independent, public-policy private think tank.

Air Vice Marshal Arjun Subramaniam is a fighter pilot in the Indian Air Force and has a PhD in Defence and Strategic Studies from the University of Madras. He is currently working on a military history project on India's Modern Conflicts and a book on air power in modern conflict.

Stephen Tankel is Assistant Professor in the School of International Service at American University and a non-resident scholar in the South Asia Programme at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Preface

Indian defence policy is a subject that is much debated but much less understood. As India's rise in global hierarchy continues, India's credentials in the realm of defence are being measured and assessed by the world. It is important that India debates its defence policy extensively and reaches some important decisions to make it more effective and focused. While India is today one of the world's largest arms importers, thereby a significant player in the global markets, it needs to evaluate the costs and consequences of such a position.

New Delhi has accelerated its programme of arms purchases but has yet to broach the reforms that are necessary for these to translate into improved strategic options. There is no substitute for strategic thinking and institutional effectiveness in defence policy making. Without it, India will not be able to secure its security interests. Nor will it be able to acquire the kind of military muscle that would enhance its leverage regionally as well as globally.

The chapters in this volume document the evolution in Indian defence policy over the past six decades and the major debates that have shaped its trajectory. This is a subject that has not received adequate attention in the scholarly literature, and the chapters in this volume (written by scholars and policy-makers) have tried to develop a framework that may help us in better understanding the changes and continuity in Indian defence policy as well as its impact on India's emergence as a major global player.

This is the second edition of this handbook with an updated introduction and three new chapters on India's counterterror diplomacy, professional military education in India and India's cyber defence capabilities. All three chapters add to the ongoing conversations about the state of play in India's defence policy. We bring this together with the hope that these additions will further enhance the outreach of this well-received volume.

It was only with the help, support and encouragement of a number of people that this project could come to fruition. I would like to express my gratitude to Shashank Sinha, Shoma Choudhury and Brinda Sen of Routledge India, who were instrumental in getting this work commissioned and were ultimately responsible for the transformation of a concept note into a full-fledged book. I would like to express my deep sense of gratitude to all the contributors who despite their busy schedules took time off to be a part of this volume. I also wish to acknowledge the help and support that I have received from the Defence Studies Department at King's College London over the years. During the course of preparing the second edition, I have been working at Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi, which has provided me an academic home away from King's. Finally, I am grateful to my family, my wife, Tuhina and my daughter, Vaidehi, for their support in everything I have done so far. This book is dedicated to my late grandmother, Ija, whose presence I miss every single day.



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Introduction

Harsh V. Pant

Indian defence policy has been attracting global attention since the coming to office of the Narendra Modi government in May 2014, which was re-elected in May 2019 with an even greater majority in the Parliament. It has tried to make a break from the past in various policy areas, including defence. At its highest echelons it has underlined the urgent need to reform India's defence procurement policy. There is a growing recognition that, unlike the previous two decades, India will have limited resources to spend on defence in the coming years. India's challenging security environment means Indian armed forces need to upgrade themselves rapidly and prepare for modern-day threats. But successive Indian governments have now been signalling that resources for defence will be at a premium. India's other socio-economic needs will be prioritised, and Indian armed forces will have to become smarter in how they manage their dwindling resources. It is one of the main reasons why every year there is an expectation that capital allocation would see a significant hike, only to face disappointment. India's defence budget in recent years has been falling, but more significantly, an increasing component of the funds are being allocated towards salaries, pensions and other operating expenses. And given the demographic trends, the nation's pension bill is becoming larger, even surpassing the salary bill. It is therefore not surprising that India's top political leadership has been calling for reforms. Rationalising manpower in the armed forces should be a priority, and some steps have been taken for that.

It has been widely known that Indian armed forces have, for some time, been facing critical shortages. The Indian Army urgently needs new field artillery. The Indian Air Force has repeatedly expressed concerns about the obsolescence of its ground-based air defence systems. The Indian Navy's depleting submarine fleet poses its own set of challenges with just 13 conventional diesel-electric submarines, 11 of which are 20–27 years old. The Indian Army chief is reported to have told Prime Minister Modi about the 'critical hollowness' afflicting the Indian Army after a decade of missed deadlines for procurement and wherewithal to face war (Thapar 2014). It will indeed be a delicate task to manage an Indian defence modernisation program, a priority of the Modi government, during a period of relatively slow economic growth.

With the world's fourth largest military and one of the biggest defence budgets, India has been in the midst of an ambitious plan to modernise its largely Soviet-era arms since the late 1990s – one that has seen billions of dollars spent on the latest high-tech military technology – as it started asserting its political and military profile in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region. In

line with India's broadening strategic horizons, its military acquisitions have also seen a marked shift from conventional land-based systems to means of power projection such as airborne refuelling systems and long-range missiles. India has been busy setting up military facilities abroad, patrolling the Indian Ocean to counter piracy, protecting the crucial sea-lanes of communication and demonstrating a military assertiveness hitherto not associated with it.

Drivers of India's arms build-up

India's drive towards arms acquisition in recent years can be attributed to several factors. The process was ignited in the 1990s by a combination of the end of the Cold War and the growing threats from Pakistan and China. India's close ties with the erstwhile Soviet Union during the Cold War made the Soviets India's primary supplier of defence equipment to India. The West could make only small inroads into India's defence market during the Cold War. When the Cold War ended and the USSR broke apart, India and Russia maintained their relationship. Gradually the government found itself with old and outdated weapons technology. Russia was and still is a huge seller of defence equipment to India, but the government's newly re-established relations with the US and Europe allowed for a diversification of the defence market.

The rapidly evolving security environment facing India continues to pose challenges to Indian defence planners. A combination of internal and external as well as state- and non-state-based threats have emerged that have made the Indian security scenario precarious in recent years (Bajpai and Pant 2013). Internally, Indian security is challenged by a plethora of insurgencies which are a product of factors ranging from a desire for greater autonomy to left-wing radicalism to prevailing socio-economic inequities. The authority of the Indian State has seen a progressive weakening over the last few years as a result. Externally, India's immediate neighbourhood continues to pose challenges to India statecraft. India is witnessing rising turmoil all around its borders. The instability in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Myanmar is a major factor that inhibits India from realising its dream of becoming a major global player. India is surrounded by several weak states that view New Delhi's hegemonic status in the region with suspicion. A policy of 'splendid isolation' is not an option, and Indian strategic elites recognise that India's desire to emerge as a major global player will remain just that, a desire, unless it engages its immediate neighbourhood more meaningfully and becomes a net provider of regional security.

The biggest challenge to Indian strategic interests comes from the rise of China in the region and beyond. India and China are two major powers in Asia with global aspirations and some significant conflicting interests. As a result, some amount of friction in their bilateral relationship is inevitable. The geopolitical reality of Asia makes sure that it will be extremely difficult, if not impossible, for *Hindi-Chini* to be *bhai-bhai* (brothers) in the foreseeable future. If India and China continue to rise in the next few years, a security competition between the two regional giants is highly likely. If India is serious about its desire to emerge as a major global power, then it will have to tackle the challenge of China's rise (Pant 2011). China's defence modernisation and the ambiguity surrounding China's arms build-up is generating apprehensions in New Delhi and has forced India to pursue its own defence modernisation program.

The nuclearisation of India and Pakistan has forever changed the context in which wars will be fought in the region. It is part of the reason that elements within the Pakistani security establishment have become more adventurous. Realising that India would be reluctant to escalate the conflict because of the threat of it reaching the nuclear level, sections of the Pakistani military and intelligence have pushed the envelope on the sub-conventional front, using various terror groups to launch assaults on India (Kapur 2008, 73–87). For India, this presents a structural conundrum: nuclear weapons have made a major conventional conflict with Pakistan unrealistic,

yet it needs to find a way to launch limited military action against Pakistan without crossing the nuclear threshold. Nuclear weapons have allowed Pakistan to shield itself from full-scale Indian retaliation as well as to attract international attention on the disputes in the sub-continent. To overcome this constraint, India needs to preserve its conventional superiority vis-à-vis Pakistan, and this implies increasing acquisition of conventional weaponry, especially after Pakistan's use of more than \$10 billion worth of US military aid to arm against India.

India's rising global economic profile has made the world take India more seriously as a major power and has made Indian elites more ambitious in defining their global role and aspirations. There is clearly an appreciation in the Indian policy-making circles of India's rising capabilities. It is reflected in a gradual expansion of Indian foreign policy activity in recent years, in India's attempt to reshape its defence forces, in India's desire to seek greater global influence. Yet lack of any credible military option against Pakistan has brought into sharp relief the fundamental weaknesses of Indian defence policy over the last several years. The terrorist strikes in Mumbai in November 2008 exposed vast gaps in India's security system (Gupta 2009). The three-day siege of India's financial capital became a pivotal point in the country's drive to beef up and modernise its armed forces and its arsenal. With extremist violence growing in Afghanistan and Pakistan, India's ability to prevent attacks through intelligence gathering and defensive measures has become more urgent than ever (Pant 2014).

India needs a defence policy that can actually take on all these challenges simultaneously. It's a difficult task to accomplish given the fact that the multiplicity and variety of challenges that India faces often require varied responses. Yet compared to any other time in its history, India faces an international environment that has so far allowed it to pursue a 'multi-vector' defence policy as its relations with all major global powers are on a stable footing.

Growing external dependence

India's dependence on external actors in the defence sector has continued to grow and is now at an all-time high. Drastic steps will be needed as the Indian defence import bill is estimated to reach \$130 billion over the next seven years even as homeland security purchases are likely to cross \$110 billion (Sidhartha 2014). Though in the mid-1990s, India was assured that indigenous content of weaponry would increase from 30 to 70 percent by 2005, the nation still continues to import more than 70 percent of its defence requirements from abroad (KPMG 2010). India today imports defence equipment worth over \$8 billion annually even as the story of the Indian state-run defence industry has been largely one of gross inefficiency, incompetence and failure. The performance of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), the body responsible for developing technologies for the military, has been abysmal because of lack of any accountability (Menon and Sawant 2012). The Indian armed forces have not had a reliable experience in working with the DRDO-made armaments. Given its significant budgetary resources in the context of a developing nation, it seems to have failed in delivering quality output. Most of its key projects have either not been completed on time or have resulted in huge cost over-runs.

The Indian defence sector has not been successful in attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) in defence sector, with a measly \$4.94 million coming to India since the opening of the sector in 2001, the lowest in any sector (Pandit 2013). When the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government tried to increase the FDI limit from 26 percent to 49 percent in 2013, then Defence Minister, A.K. Antony, steadfast in his opposition, argued that this would make India dependent on foreign companies and vulnerable to policies of their countries of origin on a long-term basis (Press Trust of India 2013). This is a strange argument to make in a country

that is importing most of its critical weapon systems from abroad. The real reason, perhaps, was Antony's desire not to rock the boat which has been the hallmark of his time in the government, making him one of the worst defence ministers India has had in recent years, neither managing to bring transparency in the moribund procurement system nor providing a strategic direction to defence planning.

The Indian corporate sector too has been a house divided on the issue of FDI in the defence sector (Sidhartha 2014). Initially supportive of FDI including 100 percent foreign investment, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), an association of business organisations in India, has been changing its tune, suggesting that it was unlikely that technology transfers would be guaranteed with this move. The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), a rival association which aims to create conducive environment for industrial growth in India, meanwhile, has argued that FDI over 49 percent should only be allowed in a case-to-case basis, and only with technology transfers. Despite the fact that it doesn't have the capability, the Indian private sector has been raising the bogey of the level playing field for the domestic industry in order to scuttle the move to bring foreign companies in.

There is an urgent need to strengthen India's weak military manufacturing industrial base by expanding the private sector participation. This can be done by raising the FDI cap in the defence sector and by encouraging joint ventures between Indian and foreign defence firms. India's modernisation program and the desire of external actors to tap into the new market should be an impetus for reforms. India's notoriously slow bureaucratic processes will need to change if they want to continue reaching the western markets. Changes have been slow to come by because some institutional interests are so entrenched in government policy that it is nearly impossible to change.

An external force might just propel India to change. These external forces might come in the form of a backlash from western defence industry over the slow and tedious contract process. The US and Europe have made it clear they want to sell to India, but the current structure of the procurement process will only be tolerated so much. Eventually, someone might walk away. India can certainly emerge as an attractive destination for foreign manufacturers to set up defence manufacturing facilities in India for global defence markets. This will in turn lead to high-end technology coming into India with cascading effects across multiple sectors. The Modi government wants to change India's arms-importer tag and turn the country into not only a defence manufacturer but also a major weapons exporter, emulating China's transformation from being the world's leading arms importer in 2006 to one of the top global exporters of weaponry seven years later.

For this, India needs domestic political leadership. The Indian government has, over the years, failed to demonstrate the political will to tackle the defence policy paralysis that seems to be rendering all the claims of India's rise as a military power increasingly hollow. There has been no long-term strategic review of India's security environment, and no overall defence strategy has been articulated. The challenge for the Indian government is to delineate clearly what products they need and how to build up their own industry in the process by significantly reforming their domestic defence manufacturing sector. In the absence of a comprehensive, long-term appraisal of the country's defence requirements, there will be little clarity about India's real needs in defence acquisitions.

Fundamental vulnerabilities

Though Indian defence policy has become more ambitious in recent years than it has ever been in the past, some fundamental vulnerabilities continue to plague the defence policy landscape.

These include the marginalisation of the military in the national security set-up, inability to think through the use of military as an instrument of policy and lack of institutional capacity to give defence policy a long-term strategic orientation. These factors have led India to a sub-optimal defence policy, the most visible manifestation of which is India's ad hoc approach towards defence acquisitions.

Indian bureaucracy and its archaic and ineffective procurement procedures also remain a major hindrance. Decision-making remains slow, as politicians and bureaucrats are wary of approving purchases due to a series of arms procurement scandals since late 1980s. The armed forces have a dismal record in spending their capital acquisition funds, and they have been returning large sums over the last several years primarily because of delays in decision-making on procurement. The Indian armed forces keep waiting for arms and equipment while the finance ministry is left with unspent budget year after year. Most large procurement programmes get delayed, resulting in cost escalation and technological or strategic obsolescence of the budgeted items. Allowing the rollover of the unspent funds might save some of the problems by removing uncertainty over funding of the postponed program and might even encourage long-term strategic thinking in the defence policy.

It was the Kargil conflict of 1999 that exposed Indian vulnerabilities as Pakistan realised that India doesn't have the capability to impose quick and effective retribution. The then Indian Army Chief had famously commented that the forces would fight with whatever they had, underlining the frustration in the armed forces regarding their inability to procure the arms they needed. Only because the conflict remained largely confined to the 150-km front of the Kargil sector did India manage to gain an upper hand by throwing the Pakistanis out of its side of the Line of Control (LoC) (Joshi 2009). Then came the stand-off between the Indian and Pakistani armies across the LoC after the Indian Parliament was attacked in 2001, and again India lacked the ability to impose any significant cost on Pakistan quickly and decisively because of the unavailability of suitable weaponry and night vision equipment needed to carry out swift surgical strikes against Pakistan-based terror groups (Bedi 2001; Sudarshan and Pillai 2002).

These crises forced the government to act, and India saw a rise in its defence acquisitions for a while. But soon the old mindset took over and political compulsions overshadowed the nation's defence requirements. When the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government came to power in 2004, it ordered investigations into several of the arms acquisition deals of the previous government. Political vindictiveness and a risk-averse bureaucracy ensured that while Pakistan rapidly acquired US technology over the past eight years under the garb of fighting the 'war on terror', the modernisation of the Indian Army has slipped behind by about a decade. India's artillery modernisation has been stuck due to scam scares ever since the Bofors scandal, with the Indian Army not receiving even a single new artillery gun in the last two decades even as Pakistan has been equipping its army with the latest guns. This has led to an erosion in India's conventional superiority (Pubby 2009).

As a result, the situation in which India found itself after terror attacks in Mumbai in 2008 – whereby India no longer had the capability of imposing quick and decisive military costs on Pakistan and it did not enjoy the kind of conventional superiority vis-à-vis its regional adversary that it had enjoyed for the past five decades – should have come as no surprise.

After Operation Parakram of 2001–02, the Indian Army did try to evolve a new doctrine to find an answer to Pakistan's growing recklessness. This 'Cold Start' doctrine is basically an attempt to acquire the ability to fight limited wars under the nuclear umbrella (Ladwig III 2007/08, 158–90). To resolve the dilemma confronting India post-1998, Indian strategists have focused on a military doctrine that might give them the ability to launch quick, decisive, limited strikes against Pakistan to seize some territory before the international community could

intervene, which can then be used as a post-conflict bargaining chip. This doctrine is still evolving, and it is not clear how effective it would be in making sure that the conflict remains limited as Pakistan might be forced to bring down its nuclear threshold to respond to this challenge. The Cold Start doctrine is premised on a reorganisation of various army corps into smaller, more flexible integrated battle groups. This gives the advantage of a more mobile offensive capability which does not require a lengthy build-up period of three weeks as was experienced in 2002, which gave Pakistan a large window for its response. While this doctrine has found wide support in the Army, the necessary reorganisation of the Army needed to implement this doctrine has not been well-received. Moreover, the Army has found little support for this doctrine from the other two services, and the civilian government has shown no interest in this venture. The level of efficiency in joint operations between the Army and the Air Force, a prime requisite for the implementation of this doctrine, is yet to be achieved, resulting in a dangerous mismatch between strategy and operational capabilities. Execution of this doctrine would, however, also require the right kind of equipment, something India would have to acquire on a priority basis.

The façade of India's defence modernisation has, however, continued with successive governments paying lip service to upgrading the nation's defence policy. In the future, India will continue to pursue its defence modernisation program and will remain a major buyer in the global arms market for the foreseeable future. Indian armed forces will continue to demand a greater share of governmental resources as they modernise and their role extends beyond protecting the borders: fighting insurgencies, tackling terrorism in urban areas and policing the South Asian region. Given India's role as a balancer in the international system, its ties with major global players such as the US, Russia, the UK and France will remain strong, and this will help it in diversifying its defence purchases though the role of the US is set to increase substantially with a relative decline in Russian influence. Yet for all the reasons outlined earlier, arms acquisition will remain ad hoc in nature and will continue to inhibit India's potential to emerge as a significant global military power.

The higher defence organisational set-up in India continues to exhibit serious weaknesses with its ability to prosecute wars in the contemporary strategic context under serious doubt. The institutional structures as they stand today are not effective enough to provide single-point military advice to the government or to facilitate the definition of defence objectives.

The debate on Indian defence policy tends not to go beyond increasing defence expenditure and big-ticket military acquisitions. The modernisation of the armed forces does not merely involve procurement of big-ticket hardware. What is needed is a restructuring of Indian armed forces and the national defence set-up that will allow them to operate with utmost efficiency in a rapidly evolving domestic and global context.

The Modi shift

In August 2018, India's defence planning architecture underwent a significant change with the Narendra Modi government deciding to establish an overarching Defence Planning Committee (DPC) under the National Security Adviser (NSA). The aim is to leverage this cross-governmental body – comprising the Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, three service chiefs and the defence, expenditure and foreign secretaries – to enhance India's ability to do some long-term strategising.

The DPC has been tasked with drafting reports on 'national security strategy, international defence engagement strategy, roadmap to build a defence manufacturing ecosystem, strategy to boost defence exports and priority capability development plans'. Four subcommittees have been created under the DPC to focus on policy and strategy, plans and capability development,

defence diplomacy and the defence manufacturing ecosystem. Appointment of two more deputy National Security Advisers, as opposed to just one NSA in the earlier structure, is part of a major restructuring.

It has also been reported that a National Security Strategy document has been finalised, though it is unlikely that it will be made public. Given the growing focus of Indian security policy on China, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) is now running the Centre for Contemporary China Studies, an in-house think tank which is exclusively devoted to studying China. It has personnel from across various branches of the government and will aim to provide inputs to policymakers on managing China, both on a day-to-day and long-term basis.

With Pakistan, the Modi government has shifted the goal posts in significant ways – first with ‘surgical strikes’ of 2016 and then with airstrikes post-Pulwama in 2019. These are important markers in India’s approach to counterterrorism, which has been hobbled by the Pakistani nuclear bluff. India has all but called that bluff, and Pakistan’s decision to downplay these strikes underlines Islamabad’s reluctance to retaliate. With these strikes, India has managed to convey to Pakistan and to other external stakeholders that Pakistan’s nuclear blackmail has no legs to stand on and that India has military room to operate below the threshold that would trigger major conventional, or even nuclear, escalation. India is also trying to shape a counter narrative about its ability to inflict pain on Pakistan. By constantly deciding not to react militarily to Pakistani provocations, New Delhi was losing its deterrence credibility, further fueling Pakistan’s adventurism. The Modi government is trying to change that calculus.

In August 2019, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced his government’s decision to appoint a chief of defence staff (CDS) whose primary function will not merely be to serve as a single point military adviser to the Government of India (GoI), but equally to establish priorities about defence acquisitions and personnel issues, apart from improving coordination between the three services and serving as the head of the chiefs of the Army, Navy and Air Force. Furthermore, the CDS role and input in the defence budget will be as important as the military counsel the CDS would provide to the government.

While addressing the Combined Commanders Conference in December 2015, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had underlined: ‘At a time when major powers are reducing their forces and rely more on technology, we are still constantly seeking to expand the size of our forces. Modernisation and expansion of forces at the same time is a difficult and unnecessary goal. We need forces that are agile, mobile and driven by technology, not just human valour’. In line with this, certain steps have been taken.

In the first such exercise of its kind since independence, the Modi government is also moving ahead with major restructuring of the Indian Army with a view to enhancing its combat capabilities as well as streamlining budgetary allocation. The Defence Ministry, which submitted its report in December 2016, constituted a committee under Lt Gen (retd.) D.B. Shekatkar to recommend measures for enhancing combat capability and rebalancing defence expenditure of the armed forces. Most of its recommendations (65 out of 99) have been accepted and are now in various stages of implementation.

The very nature of warfare is evolving rapidly, and India’s neighbours are undertaking their own restructuring. The Indian armed forces cannot remain beholden to their past practices without an assessment of the rapid evolution in technological and socio-political forces. The 1.3-million-strong Indian Army hardly has any funds for modernisation, burdened as it is by revenue expenditure and pensions. A planned Army restructuring, when fully implemented, is expected to cut up to 100,000 soldiers and reduce its crippling revenue budget, projected to rise over 90 percent in the years ahead. The plans are meant to reshape the field army into an agile and operationally more effective force to address emerging scenarios like conventional and

hybrid warfare, to restructure the army headquarters in New Delhi, to give its officer cadre a younger profile and revise the terms of engagement of soldiers, a vast majority of whom retire at the age of 35.

These decisions come at a time when Indian defence planning stands at a crossroads. The silo-driven approach to defence planning has resulted in the lack of an integrated view. The three services, as well as the civilian and defence agencies, are often seen to be working at cross-purposes. Such an ad hoc approach has meant that, more often than not, issues like threat perception and force structure are not managed via a centralised and authoritative overview. Instead, individual services tend to be driving the agenda at their own levels.

This lack of synchronisation is manifested in various ways. On the one hand, the Indian Army Chief has been talking of a two-front war. On the other, the Vice Chief of Army Staff testified before the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence in 2018 that the budget allocated to the defence forces was hardly enough to complete the committed payments for the emergency procurements already made, let alone for pursuing an ambitious defence modernisation plan.

The headlines on Indian defence policy often tend to be completely divorced from the ground reality. India's \$250 billion (USD) military modernisation programme is often talked about. But even as New Delhi remains keen on acquiring significant weapons platforms, there have been persistent doubts about its ability to harness these resources in service of a long-term strategy. Indeed, the absence of an Indian 'grand strategy' that sets out political objectives for Indian power projection – and then ensures military, economic, intelligence and educational development – coordinated toward these objectives has been a perennial topic of discussion within Indian strategic circles.

India's defence reform campaign has existed nearly as long as the current system itself. This drive focuses on extending resource integration and coordination throughout defence policymaking. Moreover, it recommends a state infrastructure able to adequately implement political judgements and to combine state resources to meet these judgements. This is currently missing in India.

Since the very beginning, the defence reform drive has implicitly targeted the need for a sufficiently integrative and coordinative state structure – required for an operationally effective defence policy. But not much success has been achieved. Reforming this system remains a core requirement for India to adequately manage its scarce resources and align these with political objectives.

Effective defence planning and force structuring is a function of an institutional framework that allows for a clear delineation of political goals, efficient mobilisation of resources and effective use of these resources for developing instrumentalities of state power. The Modi government seems to have finally acknowledged the need for new structures and processes, but time is not on India's side.

At a time when advances in technology are revolutionising warfare, India is still debating the need to move towards leaner force structures. India urgently needs to cut the flab, as over half of the annual defence budget is going to meet salary and pension requirements, which is clearly not sustainable. The priorities of India's 'Make in India' initiative and cumbersome defence procurement process will also have to be brought in sync with each other. India's status as the world's largest arms importer hardly does justice to its ambitions to emerge as a defence manufacturing hub. The debate on integration, both among the services headquarters and between the services and the Ministry of Defence, also continues unabated and should be concluded.

Effective national security planning tends to put a premium on assuring future strategic and operational adaptiveness. In the Indian context, a transformative shift in mindset, structures and processes is needed. Rapidly evolving security environment as well as a near permanent pressure on scarce resources underscores the need for strategic national security planning.

Volume overview

The chapters in this volume shed light on the diverse themes surrounding the much-neglected subject area of Indian defence policy. Each of the eight major sections addresses an aspect of Indian defence policy that is critical in shaping the trajectory of Indian policy in this important realm. The first examines the interplay between the soldier, the state and the society in modern India. It is this interplay that lies at the heart of understanding the role of the military in Indian society and its evolution over the years.

In Chapter 2, Daniel Marston provides a historical overview of the development of the Indian Army since the late eighteenth century and how it was recruited, trained and organised up to 1947. He argues that that ‘the Indian Army’s performance in 1945 made it clear to many detractors, including Prime Minister Winston Churchill, that it was a different Army than the one that had entered the war six years earlier’ and that contrary to prejudiced expectations, Indians were more than capable of commanding not just other Indians but also British officers in combat’. This success, according to Marston, was a function of the reforms in the pre-war Indianisation process as well as the recruitment practices of the pre-war period.

In Chapter 3, Ayesha Ray provides an overview of Indian civil-military relations over the past six decades by examining key debates and controversies between India’s civilian leadership and its military. She suggests that ‘conflicting objectives in political and military goals have presented themselves in a wide variety of contexts from fighting external wars, countering internal secessionism, developing nuclear doctrines, organising strategic culture and instituting defence reform’. Notwithstanding frequent tensions in Indian civil-military relations, Ray contends that ‘civilian control of the military in India is complete and the Indian armed forces continue to dutifully meet the standards of a professional and democratic military’.

Surveying the relationship between the Indian society and the nation’s military, Kaushik Roy argues in Chapter 4 that ‘the Indian Army is not a people’s army and does not function as an incubator for social experiment’. He suggests that this is a result of the Indian state not functioning as an interventionist organisation regarding recruitment in the Indian Army. Because of the long-term service of the personnel, regimental organisation and cantonments, according to Roy, the Indian Army remains isolated from the civilian society and ‘the continuation of a discriminatory recruitment policy (conscious or unconscious) results in the army causing segmentation rather than integration in the society’.

Yogesh Joshi and I examine the debate in India on the changing nature of warfare in Chapter 5 and argue that ‘even when India appears to be listening to the western debate on warfare keenly, it is surely not acting proactively to imbibe the facets of such a change’. We suggest that ‘India’s response to the changing nature of war has been undermined by the lack of reform in the higher defence structure and political apathy but it has had some notable impact on both its military strategy and capability’. Though it is not a revolution, India appears to be responding to the changing nature of contemporary warfare at its own pace, which we term *gradual incrementalism*.

The second section delineates the role that Indian military has played in the nation’s foreign policy and diplomacy. It is followed by a section on the three services and the evolution of jointery in India. The fourth section looks at the causes and consequences of doctrinal changes in the Indian military.

In Chapter 6, Sushant K. Singh argues that the use of the military as an instrument of Indian foreign policy has increased over the years. He suggests that much of India’s military strategic thinking has been formulated in the context of defending territory, and this has historically limited the role of the military. Though this is gradually changing, Singh contends that ‘India will need to make the requisite institutional changes, bringing the diplomatic and military

components together as part of a unified system' if it is to overcome its inhibitions over the use of the military as an instrument of foreign policy.

This is followed by Chapter 7 on Indian defence diplomacy by Nitin Gokhale, where he argues that 'imparting military education and inculcating tactics to soldiers from friendly countries is only one facet of New Delhi's growing emphasis on using the goodwill of its military in the diplomatic outreach around the neighbourhood and beyond'. According to Gokhale, 'India's defence diplomacy has fallen short of a grand strategic vision, mainly because many of its political leaders and bureaucrats who lord over the Ministry of Defence (MoD) do not have the bandwidth to understand the need for greater participation of the military in diplomatic activity'.

Vinay Kaura examines the role of diplomacy in India's fight against terrorism in Chapter 8. He focuses on Indian efforts at various international platforms including the United Nations, immediate neighbourhood and the Gulf region as well as on the diplomatic initiatives in the realm, including capacity building of security forces of other nations by India. He concludes by looking at some of the challenges facing India in this endeavour and underlining the need for a whole-of-government approach in its counterterror policy.

Surveying the evolution of the Indian Army, Sunil Dasgupta suggests in Chapter 8 that the convergence on conventional military options from nuclear weapons and insurgency and terrorism underscores 'extraordinary continuity in the Indian Army as an institution'. He argues that 'the threshold for the Indian Army abandoning its conventional posture remains high' and 'the roots of institutional continuity are buried in the country's long-held strategic restraint, the structure of civilian-military relations and the relative roles of the other services'. Dasgupta concludes that the Indian Army 'will continue with internally driven incremental rather than forceful externally imposed military modernization'.

In Chapter 9, Arun Prakash underlines some of the salient factors in the evolution of the Indian Navy. These include opting 'for a growth model focused on indigenous development and production', setting sights 'on a strategic vision of regional maritime influence, rather than on immediate tactical-level threats', and crafting 'an intellectual underpinning to rationalize and synergise its endeavours by writing a maritime doctrine and strategy'. He concludes that 'India's "maritime awakening", however, remains inchoate and a note of caution needs to be struck about the lack of strategic vision amongst India's politico-bureaucratic elite'.

Vinod Patney in Chapter 10 looks at the Indian Air Force (IAF), the youngest of the three services. He goes on to suggest that it is in the nature of modern warfare that the Air Force has to be always prepared and ready to fire the first shots in war, and the IAF has learnt to do so. Patney argues that as major capabilities transform the IAF, 'the real challenges will be assimilation of technologies and acquisition of knowledge' and that 'human resource development will become increasingly important'.

Examining the issue of jointness in the Indian armed forces, Vinod Anand contends in Chapter 11 that while ensuring jointness was critical in the past, it 'has become more of an imperative without which no modern military can expect a successful outcome of a military campaign'. He underlines that 'while the three Services do agree in principle on the inescapable need of fostering jointness and integration in the armed forces to achieve a common military objective, there has been little movement towards these goals'. This can prove costly as 'rigid structures, processes and antiquated organisations are likely to be less responsive to the changing nature of a postmodern war'.

Ali Ahmed surveys the doctrinal landscape of the Indian Army in Chapter 12 and argues that 'governmental reticence on strategic doctrine, the start point of military doctrine is having an adverse impact on the military's function and on national security in general'. He suggests that

‘since both the conventional and subconventional spheres require great limitations on the use of force, the former on account of the nuclear backdrop and the latter owing to the demographic terrain of operations, this vacuum of civilian oversight needs urgent rectification’.

In Chapter 13, Manjeet Pardesi discusses the doctrinal evolution in the Indian Navy and argues that ‘while primacy has remained the desired and thus far unfulfilled goal for India in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), the Indian Navy’s (IN) operational doctrine has revolved around the concept of deterrence’. He suggests that though deterrence by denial has remained the cornerstone of the Indian naval doctrine since the late 1960s, in the event of deterrence failure, the IN is geared towards taking the offensive to its traditional rivals, Pakistan and China, even as India does not yet have the ability to pursue a successful sea denial strategy towards these powers.

Arjun Subramaniam turns his gaze on the doctrinal developments in the Indian Air Force in Chapter 14 and makes a case that ‘doctrinal evolution in the IAF has been a slow process, impeded as it has been by a continuous struggle for doctrinal space within a “land-centric” military environment’. He contends that ‘apart from highlighting the principles of war, the structure of air power and the air campaigns, it [IAF] has introduced fresh perspectives on combat enabling operations, sub-conventional warfare, nation building, aerial diplomacy, information warfare and human resource development’.

The fifth section examines the debate surrounding the Indian defence budget and procurement policy. This is followed by a section dealing with internal security challenges facing India and the nature of the Indian State’s response.

Examining the changing contours of Indian defence spending since the country’s independence in 1947 (in Chapter 15), Laxman Kumar Behera underlines that ‘after increasing to 3.5 per cent in the wake of 1962 border war with China, and remaining at above three per cent in latter part of the eighties, the defence-GDP ratio has since declined to below two per cent in recent years’. He argues that ‘unless the GDP grows at a much faster pace from the present sub-five per cent level, the additional amount available to the defence would not be significantly different from what armed forces are getting now’.

Amit Cowshish looks at the issue of defence procurement in India in Chapter 16 and argues that though India has made some efforts towards modernisation of its armed forces over the last decade, the modernisation programme has not been much of a success story, especially on account of the nation’s ‘heavy dependence on import of the defence equipment and an inherently tardy procurement process’. Though various government-appointed committees have looked into various aspects of defence production and procurement, the end result, according to Cowshish, has not been very encouraging.

In Chapter 17, Stephen Tankel traces the nature of jihadist terrorism facing India during the last 25 years and concludes that ‘India is confronting a variegated jihadist threat in which Indian militants, foreign militant groups, and the Pakistani intelligence services all play a role’. Jihadist terrorism, for India, has internal and external dimensions, which are historically intertwined and in the last few decades have become increasingly blurred. As a result, Tankel suggests ‘countering this threat will remain both a foreign policy and internal security challenge’.

Ajai Sahni examines the Naxalite challenge facing India in Chapter 18, underlining that ‘the Naxalite movement has undergone many cycles of resurgence and reversal, and it is evident that the present phase is one of “tactical retreat”’. Sahni concludes that ‘it is the infirmity of the state and its virtual absence across vast territories that have created the spaces for the Maoist ideology and insurgency, and it is only a gradual and painstaking extension of modern governance and of the effective delivery of concomitant benefits to currently marginalised populations, that will defeat these movements’.

Surveying India's Northeast in Chapter 19, Bibhu Prasad Routray argues that 'the region continues to remain a hotbed of armed insurrections, new as well as old' and that 'a culture of violence has pervaded the region, posing in the near and the long term, recurrent challenges to India's nation building project'. He contends that 'the current narrative of insurgency in the northeast is mostly that of wasted opportunities for the government' as 'the operational decline of major outfits and the ongoing peace processes could have been used by the state governments to initiate development measures, extend the reach of the police and work towards stabilising the region'. But that has not happened and as a consequence, according to Routray, 'a revival of insurgencies, more lethal and more capable of surviving security force operations, in the coming years cannot be ruled out'.

The seventh section discusses the institutional underpinnings of Indian defence policy. The final section looks at the role of nuclear weapons as well as the challenges of missile defence and gathering militarisation of outer space for Indian defence policy.

In Chapter 20, Frank O'Donnell and I examine the national security apparatus in India and argue that though India's national security system appears durable due to its absence of military coups and the ability of civil and military leaders to organise effective responses to various military provocations, 'a closer investigation of its operation reveals certain dysfunctions flowing from its design that are growing in their visibility and effects on Indian defence policy'. We contend that while defence crises in the past may 'have permitted civilian and military leaders to temporarily override these conditions and develop a coordinated response, this is becoming more difficult as the security issues they face become more complex; as the military and civilian agencies continue to grow in budgetary and physical size, increasing the scale of consequences of poor management; and as the elected civilian leaders who direct the entire system, and who alone have the authority to reform it, take steadily less interest in defence issues in general.'

Vikram Sood surveys the landscape of the Indian intelligence system in Chapter 21 and argues that an effective intelligence system will have to take into account the threats India is likely to face over the next decade or two as well the capabilities inherent in the system 'to secure and promote the country's interests, that would prevent others from upstaging us or, if required, reversing the trend among India's rivals'. Sood argues that Indians need to ask if their present organisational structures 'have the ingredients to deliver and what is required to be done to attain that capability'. Periodic reforms are essential 'to ensure that the country has the best intelligence apparatus it can afford'.

Providing an overview of the Indian police system in Chapter 22, R.N. Ravi argues that 'the Indian police are inadequate – structurally and ideologically – to meet with the policing needs of a prodigiously plural, economically aspirational and politically empowered democratic India'. He contends that 'the fundamental shift in the locus of power from the ruler to the people– the essence of a democracy, predicates radical re-engineering of the structure and the ethos of the Indian police from being a fount of awe and fear to the one of care and service to the people, a police that resonates with the popular sentiments and is responsive to the security needs and expectations of the people.'

Narender Kumar provides a survey of the Paramilitary Forces (PMF) and Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) of India in Chapter 23 and suggests that despite India having one of the largest number of CAPF and PMF, 'these forces have been found inadequately equipped to deal with emerging threats'. According to Kumar, 'the spread of LWE, inability to relieve army from internal security duties, lack of capability to deal with the regular intrusion along the LAC and repeated deployment of the army in aid to civil authority has shown that these forces have punched below their capabilities at critical junctures'.

This is followed by Kapil Patil reviewing the status of Professional Military Education (PME) in India in Chapter 25. Patil argues that ‘the extant PME institutions in India are narrowly focused on building technical skills of officers to perform specific missions and tasks’, which does not allow the officers to have a broader strategic understanding. This constrains their ability to deal with complexities in the strategic environment which is ridden with uncertainties. Patil blames successive governments for their failure ‘to reform the PME system and bring qualitative changes to the environment’.

Vergheese Koithara examines the role of nuclear weapons in India’s defence policy in Chapter 24 and argues that where in all other nuclear powers, ‘the military is an active participant in decision-making processes concerning the development and employment of nuclear weapon systems’, in India military participation is still negligible. He contends that ‘the negative fallouts from this are seen not only in the management of nuclear forces, but also in that of conventional forces, particularly with regard to the new thinking needed for conducting conventional operations under mutual deterrence’. It is India’s defence management system which, according to Koithara, has ‘enfeebled its conventional as well as nuclear military capabilities’.

In Chapter 27, Rajeswari Rajagopalan outlines the evolution and status of India’s missile defences (MD) and space security policies and programmes. She argues that Indian policies in both these areas have become much more pragmatic than before. According to Rajagopalan, ‘the general Indian policy paralysis that has lasted several years has also had its effect on India’s space and missile defence efforts’ even as ‘at the same time, fairly autonomous bureaucratic actors such as the DRDO appear to be driving some aspects of the change forward, at least as it affects their narrow interests’. This has seemingly ‘resulted in haphazard and inconsistent changes in Indian policy’.

In the final chapter, Kartik Bommakanti provides an overview of India’s cyberspace capabilities at the tactical and operational levels in the context of Net-centric Warfare (NCW). While tracing the evolution and status of cyber capabilities for each of the three services, Bommakanti argues that the Indian Navy and Indian Air Force ‘have been at the forefront of integrating cyber capabilities into order of battle to produce greater and secure communications at all echelons and improved situational and battlespace awareness’ even as the Indian Army has been a laggard in this domain.

Overall, the chapters in this volume document the evolution in Indian defence policy over the last six decades and the major debates that have shaped its trajectory. This is a subject that has not received adequate attention in the scholarly literature, and the chapters in this volume, written by scholars and policy-makers, have tried to develop a framework that may help us in better understanding the changes and continuity in Indian defence policy as well as its impact on India’s emergence as a major global player. Of course, it is not possible to cover every single aspect of this subject area in one anthology. But those interested in pursuing any particular topic in greater depth will find the chapters in this volume opening up avenues for them to take their interest forward.

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Section 1
Soldier, state and society
in India



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The Indian Army

1700s–1947

Daniel Marston

This chapter¹ outlines some of the key themes that played a significant role in the development of the Indian Army for more than 100 years of its existence. In order to understand the strains that became evident when India and Pakistan became independent, it is first necessary to understand how the Indian Army had developed since the late 18th century and how it was recruited, trained and organised up to 1947.

The recruitment practices of the British authorities – and how these changed throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries – are a critical component of understanding this era. Another key theme is the expansion of the officer corps to recruit from the Indian population, and the British authorities' slow and somewhat resistant recognition of the necessity for this action. The practical changes in the organisation and leadership of the Indian Army will be considered, especially in the early to mid-20th century, as these issues have come to define how both the Indian and Pakistan armies operate today.

Recruitment and organisation of the Indian Army, 1700s–1947

The recruitment structure of the English East India Company (EIC),² the Indian Army's predecessor, was drastically different during the 18th and early 19th centuries from that of the 20th-century Indian Army. The Company was divided into the three presidencies of Bombay, Bengal and Madras, each of which fielded their own units. By the late 1750s, the British had adopted the French practice of recruiting local Indians as sepoys³ and training them in 'continental' or traditional linear warfare style. However, as the 19th century progressed and the EIC's power increased, the recruiting practices of the various presidencies changed. Madras tended to recruit from the Madras region, from all classes,⁴ which meant that no one class dominated the army. The Bombay Army followed a similar process.

The army of the Bengal presidency was different. At the beginning of the 1760s, many of the soldiers came from the Rajput and Brahmin castes. Over the next 50 years, the Bengal Army chose to recruit almost exclusively from the high-caste members of the Awadh region (Alavi 1995). By the early 1800s, the Bengal Army was the dominant army of the three presidencies, but there were those who felt that it had become too segregated. Restricted recruitment of high-caste soldiers created problems for the Bengal Army officers; high-caste soldiers would

not take orders from a low-caste native officer or NCO (Alavi 1995: 274–81),⁵ and insisted on food being prepared to strict standards in accordance with their religious proscriptions (Omissi 1994: 5).⁶ The Bengal Army's deployment to war in Afghanistan in 1838 also raised religious issues. As a former 19th-century subedar, Sita Ram noted: 'The sepoys dreaded crossing the Indus because it was beyond Hindustan; this is forbidden by our religion and the very act means loss of caste' (Lunt 1988: 85).⁷ Many soldiers deserted or discharged themselves from duty rather than undertake this act.

After the First and Second Anglo–Sikh Wars of the 1840s, the Bengal Army also began to recruit from the Punjab region. The Sikhs had created a reputable army of Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs, who had been drilled in the European fashion. After the wars ended, the British recruited some of the defeated army into the Punjab Irregular Force (later, the Punjab Frontier Force), and some recruitment was allowed within the Bengal infantry units stationed in the Punjab. For the most part, however, opposition to opening up the regular regiments of the Bengal Army to former soldiers of the Sikh Army persisted for a variety of reasons: professional jealousy, suspicion of Sikhs and ongoing assertions from some British authorities on the necessity of demilitarising the Punjab (Yong 2005: 37–9).

The sepoys of the Bengal Army resented this incursion into their ranks by the peoples of the Punjab. Subedar Ram noted: 'This annoyed the sepoys exceedingly, for the Sikhs were disliked by Hindustanis who considered them to be unclean and were not permitted to associate with them' (Lunt 1988: 159).

The reluctance to recruit from the Punjab changed with the Indian Mutiny of 1857.⁸ During the Mutiny, 18 new regiments had been raised from the Punjab, which remained loyal throughout the crisis, in both the Punjab and the United Provinces. With the Punjab Irregular Force and the new regiments, this meant that there were more than 50,000 men under arms in the Punjab who were loyal to the British suppression of the mutinous Bengal Army regiments in northern India (Yong 2005: 48).

The military recruitment of the Bengal Army did not change dramatically in the immediate aftermath of the Mutiny, but over the next 25 years, some significant reforms were put in place. Most of the Bengal Army was reorganised under the Peel Commission findings of 1859; however, this reform left unresolved the question of what to do with the new Punjab-raised irregulars. Ultimately, a decision was made to open up recruitment for the Bengal Army along regional lines: the Bengal Army would still recruit from across northern and central India, but would consist of many classes and races. Many in the Commission felt it was best to create a system that fostered the concept of 'divide and rule' to avoid recreating the environment that had existed prior to the Mutiny. The recruitment of high-caste Brahmins and Rajputs was down-sized in response to their perceived involvement in the Mutiny, while the recruitment of Gurkhas from Nepal was expanded in recognition of their perceived loyalty and performance during the same period. Also, regiments were to recruit and serve in their local areas, which meant that, henceforth, only Punjab-raised regiments would serve in the Punjab and the Frontier regions. This meant that, by 1870, only 35 per cent of the Bengal Army was recruited from the Punjab (Yong 2005: 54–5).⁹ Many of the irregular regiments raised in the Punjab during the crisis were taken into the Bengal Army line (MacMunn 1911: 111–12; Barstow 1928: 17).¹⁰

The anticipated threat presented by Russia and the Second Afghan War (1879–81) changed recruitment for the Indian Army again, and in particular, began a shift towards the northern and north-western regions as the main recruiting areas. The changes began with the findings of the 1879 Eden Commission Report, which recommended some significant reforms. Among these were the creation of an army corps that would fall under the command of a single commander-in-chief (C-in-C), which would obviate the need for the three separate C-in-C positions in

existence at that time. Other suggestions included formally bringing the Punjab Frontier Force under army command, further recruitment of troops from the Punjab region and downsizing the Madras Army.

There was considerable opposition to this plan from within the Indian Army, including from Sir Frederick Haines, the then C-in-C of India (Streets 2004: 97). The opposition to the Eden Commission's findings would be overcome with the appointment of Field Marshal Lord Roberts of Kandahar as C-in-C, India, in 1885. Lord Roberts stated, 'I have no hesitation myself in stating that except Gurkhas, Dogras, Sikhs, the pick of Punjabi Muhammadans, Hindustanis of the Jat and Ranghur casts . . . certain classes of Pathans, there are no Native soldiers in our service whom we could venture with safety to place in the field against the Russians' (Philips 1964: 517).¹¹

The recruitment drive to bring more northern Indians into the Bengal Army, later expanded to the army as a whole, was the product of what became known as the 'martial race theory'.¹² This assertion – that one group was martial and another was non-martial – was to have lasting repercussions in India. Many classes¹³ of Indians, such as Bengalis and numerous groups from southern India, were deemed 'non-martial', and, as a result, excluded from the army.¹⁴ Meanwhile, the northern areas of India, especially the Punjab, were favoured as the main recruiting grounds.

Most units of the Bombay and Madras Presidencies had remained loyal during the Indian Mutiny, and so, were not greatly affected by the removal of units from the army list. The feeling in the British government, as well as among those serving on the Peel Commission, was that those units that had remained loyal during the Mutiny deserved to remain in service.¹⁵ The poor performance of the Madras regiments in the Third Burma War of 1885 reinforced the notion that the Madrassi soldiers had lost their fighting abilities. Roberts has been quoted as saying, 'I tried hard to discover in them those fighting qualities which had distinguished their forefathers during the wars of the last and beginning of the present century. But long years of peace and security and prosperity attending it had evidently had upon them, as they always seem to Asiatics, a softening and deteriorating effect' (Mason 1988: 345).

There were those who criticised Roberts' comments as oversimplification, and blamed sub-standard performance on the fighting capabilities and leadership of the British and native officers of the Madras Army. Many officers, upon appointment to the Indian Army, preferred service with the newly constituted Bengal Army or the Punjab Frontier Force. Their reasoning was that the likelihood of seeing action was greater in the Bengal and Punjab units, due to their involvement along the Afghan frontier, and that the Bengal and Punjab regiments were increasingly considered to be 'elite'.¹⁶

Military critics of this trend noted not only that some of the blame for poor troops should be placed on the lack of good officers but also that relying on a given area or class for the majority of the army's recruitment was bound to have dire consequences in the long run,¹⁷ especially in the event of a major war. The practice continued, however, and by 1891, 21 battalions of the Madras infantry had been disbanded. By 1893, 44 per cent of the Indian Army was drawing recruits from the 'martial race' areas (Streets 2004: 100). The Madras units remaining on the army list had been opened to recruitment from the northern areas of India, and by 1900, only 25 regiments still recruited from the Madras region. Some units completely lost their connection to the old Madras Army in the 1903 reorganisation,¹⁸ and by 1910, only 11 regiments still recruited from Madras. The rest of the regiments of the old Madras Army were made up of troops from North India, mostly the Punjab (Omissi 1994, 19).

The Bombay Army also found itself in a difficult position when its recruiting grounds were expanded to include some of the northern regions. By 1903, just 54 of the 208 companies of the

army were recruited from the old Bombay recruiting grounds. The rest of the companies were from the Punjab, the North-West Frontier region and Rajputana (Yong 2005: 71–2). On the eve of World War I, of the 552 infantry companies in the Indian Army as a whole,¹⁹ 211 were composed of men from the Punjab, 121 were from the Frontier region, 80 companies were Gurkhas and the remaining troops came from the other regions of acceptable classes. Overall, by 1914, 75 per cent of the Indian Army had been recruited from the martial races.²⁰

As mentioned above, the Indian Army had been divided into the three major presidency armies of Bombay, Bengal and Madras since the 18th century, while the Punjab region was essentially treated as a separate entity in the Punjab Frontier Force.²¹ In 1903,²² Lord Kitchener,²³ C-in-C of the Indian Army, abolished the old structures²⁴ and created a more centralised organisation. All of the infantry regiments (battalions) and cavalry regiments were renumbered in sequential order, and units of the Punjab Frontier Force were formally integrated as part of the army.²⁵ Gurkha regiments were given their own regimental numbering system from 1 to 10. While the infantry regiments (each consisting of one battalion) were listed in sequential order, they were also grouped in loose federations of units of two to five battalions, and given a regimental centre, to which recruits would report. By the beginning of World War I, there were 43 such regimental groupings; this number rapidly expanded to 115 with the onset of war (Gaylor 1992: 8–9).

Impact of World War I

During World War I,²⁶ the old system of recruitment – with heavy emphasis on the Punjab – continued for at least the initial years. This system, which had a specific battalion send out officers to recruiting areas to find replacements, worked well initially. As the war expanded,²⁷ and there was more need for Indian troops, the structure suffered increasing strain, reaching a crisis point in 1915. As a result, much of the pre-war class recruitment system was abandoned, and in the Punjab, other areas were opened up: 22 new classes were added to the recruitment list, and in 1917, a new system of territorial recruitment began (Yong 2005: 108–17). Regimental officers and depots were established in regions where no recruitment had ever happened. In doing so, they noted that there were numerous classes which had not previously been recruited who were suitable candidates for army service. As one Indian Civil Servant (ICS) noted: ‘there was also considerable exclusiveness on the part of the army; certain tribes capable of providing excellent material were barred by reason of some real or fancied social objection’ (Leigh 1922: 34). Whole regions of the Punjab were opened to recruitment from a variety of regiments, and not just steered into specific units. By the end of World War I, the Punjab had supplied more than 40 per cent of all recruits for the combatant arms of the Indian Army. It came down to one soldier out of every 26 men, compared to the rest of India – with one soldier of every 150 men mobilised.²⁸ If percentages from the Punjab and the recruiting grounds of the United Province are combined, three-fourths of all Indian Army recruits from this period came from these regions (Philips 1964: 533). Even with this dominance, other peoples from across India, who had previously been dropped from the army list,²⁹ were once again considered eligible. The performance of some of the ‘non-martial’ races in World War I sparked some debate and attempts to bolster support for the martial race theory, but the controversy was short-lived.

The civil authorities, led by the Punjab governor, Sir Michael O’Dwyer, also worked closely with military authorities to streamline the recruitment process.³⁰ O’Dwyer sought the involvement of local landed elites from across the Punjab in mobilising communities for recruits, offering compensation for this cooperation in the form of major land grants and formal titles.³¹ This centralisation of recruitment efforts during World War I, the involvement of military and civil authorities and the co-opting of the rural elite were to lay the foundations of a heavily

militarised province and a structure that would have significant ramifications for the political situation in 1947. As Professor Yong stated:

The process of mobilization brought about a close association between the military and the provincial civil administration, laying the foundations of a militarized bureaucracy in colonial Punjab. From 1916 to 1919, the Punjab 'home front' was, in effect, governed by a military bureaucracy, whose administrative/military tentacles reached into every level of society and the economy. The direct assumption of a military function by the Punjab government, and its intrusion into society on behalf of the military during the war, was to mark the beginning of a quasi-military state in the Punjab.

(Yong 2005: 139–40)³²

Recruitment for the Indian Army in the inter-war period followed pre-war practices. Initially, the Government of India wished for a large post-war standing army that would encompass many of the newly raised units and expanded recruitment classes. The idea behind this was that it would be easy to recruit and keep up reserves for any future conflict. Unfortunately, the Government of India had to cut back due to the financial constraints of the 1920s and 1930s, and when the axe fell, the first units to suffer were those that had been newly raised. Under pressure, the government followed the old line of sticking to the pre-war martial race theory.³³ As the Indian Army reorganised into large regimental units, the 3rd Madras Regiment was set at four regular battalions and one training battalion.³⁴ By the end of the 1920s, however, the regular and training battalions had been disbanded in response to economic pressures (Gaylor 1992: 138–9). Senior members of the government made their feelings on the Madras infantry known (Omissi 1994: 40),³⁵ and only territorial units survived.

The final economic measure that affected recruitment practices in the Indian Army before World War II occurred in February 1933, when the pioneer³⁶ battalions were disbanded. While this decision may not appear to be comparable with the others described, it had a significant effect upon those classes of peoples who were recruited exclusively for the pioneers. Within the Sikh community, the Jats were recruited for the infantry, and the Mazhbi and Ramdasias Sikhs for the Sikh Pioneers (Hookway 1999: 1–2). As noted in the *Handbooks for the Indian Army: Sikhs*, 'their extraordinary bravery, endurance . . . soon won them a high reputation as soldiers . . . in the numerous campaigns on the Frontier . . . and during the Great War' (Barstow 1928: 77). Notwithstanding such a praiseworthy record, this decision meant that the Mazhbi and Ramdasias Sikhs were effectively denied the opportunities offered by military service until World War II.

By 1939, the composition of the Indian Army was similar to its 1914 counterpart, relying heavily on a select group of classes of Indians, mostly from the Punjab, for all of its recruitment needs. As had occurred in World War I, the exhaustion of the limited recruiting pool became a problem early in World War II, especially in the Punjab.

Recruitment of the army during World War II

World War II precipitated a period of unprecedented expansion for the Indian Army. Between 1939 and 1945, the army expanded from 200,000 to more than 2.5 million men and officers, even though conscription was never imposed. The Indian Army began the war as the 'Imperial Reserve' for the British government, and by its end, 24,000 were killed, 64,000 wounded, 60,000 captured³⁷ and 11,000 missing on active service (Menezes 1993: 370).

Throughout World War II, the Indian Army also faced fundamental questions about its existence, size and composition.³⁸ Recruitment expanded to include South Asian ethnic groups

that had long been dismissed as being 'non-martial'. The army's rapid expansion in response to the needs of the war raised additional questions concerning the quality of troops and officers.

The rapid expansion of the Indian Army placed a significant strain on the areas from which recruits were traditionally drawn, especially in the Punjab. One key issue that arose early in the war was the recruitment of Jat Sikhs.³⁹ The political and ethnic tensions of the 1920s and 1930s were exacerbated in 1940 by discussions of a future Pakistan. There were two small mutinies during this period that included Jat Sikhs; their involvement led them to be labelled as 'troublesome' and created reluctance to recruit them. By 1942, the recruitment numbers of Jat Sikhs had dropped to all-time lows. The British perpetuated this trend, recruiting non-Jat Sikhs as well as more Muslims from the Punjab. As Jat Sikh numbers dropped,⁴⁰ the numbers of Muslims (or Punjabi Musalmans, PMs) quadrupled. By 1943, with the Punjab providing 36 per cent of all soldiers recruited into the army, the Jat Sikhs represented 7 per cent, Hindu Jats 5 per cent, and PMs and Pathans accounted for more than 25 per cent (Yong 2005: 290–1).

Rapid expansion placed noticeable strain upon the resources of the traditional recruitment areas, and GHQ India headquarters realised that recruitment must be broadened to other areas and groups. This decision was undertaken tentatively at first, by taking Madrassis and others into the expanding service corps of the army. Following General Claude Auchinleck's appointment as C-in-C recruitment reform became more decisive. Auchinleck stated that 'as regards to recruitment of the rank and file, I have no doubt at all that apart from political considerations we must broaden our basis and this was already in hand before I arrived. I propose to continue and hasten the process. There is plenty of good untouched material which we can and should use'.⁴¹

Nor did Auchinleck intend to confine recruitment from non-martial races to the service corps. He specifically suggested that the old 3rd Madras Regiment should be re-raised, and that new infantry units should be raised to represent the other provinces. He asserted that these units were not to be for show only, but would be used alongside other units in fighting the war. He recognised the political dimensions of this move, stating that 'it will greatly help in meeting the political demand for the wider representation in the army'.⁴² Amery, as secretary of state for India, recognised and accepted these proposals, and was disappointed when Auchinleck was chosen as C-in-C of the Middle East in June 1941, taking him away from the opportunity to implement them personally.⁴³

The recruitment of non-martial races was stepped up from 1940 to 1942, but there was still a faction in GHQ India that doubted their potential as fighting troops. Many of the new recruits were sent to non-infantry or cavalry services within the army, as well as to the Indian Army Service Corps, signals, engineers and artillery.⁴⁴ A report published in February 1942 documents 38,000 recruits from non-martial races enlisted, of whom 33,000 were stationed in India. Meanwhile, 'martial races', such as Jat Sikhs and PMs, reported numbers at 50 per cent stationed in India and 50 per cent overseas.⁴⁵ In response to an Indian politician's questions during debates in the Council of State, GHQ India wrote a note stating that 'other classes are not yet battle tried so it will be a while before their martial qualities are assessed'.⁴⁶

A report by the Adjutant General's office in late 1942 argued for recruitment from non-martial races by making the claim that the performance of PMs, Dogras and Jat Sikhs in the field was declining. The report stated that 'the general quality of the recruit [pre-war classes] is tending to decline both physically and in terms of intelligence and this is when guts and brains are needed'.⁴⁷ The report by the Adjutant General's office also documented how many of the units, including both the Madras and Sikh Light Infantry, were lacking in junior leaders, and recommended that this be remedied quickly, noting however, that 'foreign' VCOs or British NCOs were not the answer.⁴⁸ However, at least one witness considered that the Madras Regiment's turnout and abilities improved when it received (British) guardsmen as drill instructors. Major Barton, in an

interview, commented that in his opinion the guardsmen had filled a vacuum created by the pre-war neglect of these units.⁴⁹

In a War Staff communiqué to London, GHQ India formally announced that 'the former distinction of martial and non-martial race has been removed'.⁵⁰ By mid-1943, there were still those within the Indian Army who were willing to concede that the recruitment of non-martial races was necessary, but continued to assert that it should not be done too quickly. General G. N. Molesworth⁵¹ commented, in support of this argument, that 'the Northwest groups are virile and that the rest of India had lost its appetite for war'.⁵²

The arrival of Auchinleck as C-in-C, India, for the second time, in late June 1943 brought a strong supporter of expanding recruitment and training of non-martial race troops for battle. His arrival coincided with the aftermath of the First Arakan defeat, when the British government was calling for the Indian Army to be downsized. Churchill stated clearly what he felt the problems were, but he failed to recognise the significance of the tactical errors that were committed in battle and which were subsequently rectified. He was also apparently unaware that non-martial race units had not seen active service in the campaigns.⁵³ They had all been stationed in India or near the frontlines on communication duties. Churchill stated to Leo Amery, 'It [Indian Army in 1943] bears no relation to the splendid old time Indian units' (Callahan 2007: 202). Issues of insubordination arose with troops from the martial races in the field and not the non-martial races.⁵⁴ During the summer of 1943, the British government called upon the Indian Army to reduce the numbers of units and formations. Auchinleck viewed this as a signal that the British government had lost confidence in the Indian Army and that this loss was partly due to the expanded recruitment of non-martial races. In a letter of response to the viceroy, Field Marshal Wavell, Auchinleck described in some detail his thoughts and feelings on the topic of non-martial races and the government's attitude. He bluntly stated, 'the idea underlying the demand for reduction seems to be based upon the idea that the Indian Army is now composed to a large extent of men who because they belong to classes previously untried as soldiers are unreliable and unsuitable'.⁵⁵

Auchinleck went on to comment that the Madrassis comprised about half of the new recruits and noted that, 'from all accounts the Madrassis are doing very well'. He further stressed that 'the recruitment of the old classes has been pushed to such lengths that the recruits now coming forward are often of poor quality and it is time to say that it is preferable to secure good specimens of new classes which can be maintained'.⁵⁶ A further example of his commitment to the new classes is highlighted at the end of the letter, when he stated, in no uncertain terms, 'there is little doubt that [the] new classes must continue to have their place in the Indian Army of the future'.⁵⁷

A speech given in the Indian Assembly in November 1943 highlighted GHQ India's attempts to deal with the issues of recruitment. The officer speaking stated that the Indian Army was open to all classes of India. The only parameters for officers and other ranks were sufficient education and physical attributes. The officer ended his speech by stating, 'Sir I assure the house that there is no discrimination at present against scheduled classes and there will be none'.⁵⁸

Auchinleck's commitment resulted in two significant achievements. First, he was able to forestall the vast cuts proposed to the numbers of the Indian Army.⁵⁹ Some units were disbanded, but this was because units from the North-West Frontier and PAIFORCE were brought back to serve in the Burma Campaign. Second, he had some of the non-martial race infantry units committed to battle to gain experience, and, if possible, to make a name for themselves and dispel critics.⁶⁰

By the end of the war, the recruitment totals from all classes were as cited in the following list. These clearly indicate a preference for the pre-war classes, but this is partly attributable to the recruitment bias, which was still extant during the early part of the war. The numbers of the new

class recruits⁶¹ rose steadily towards the end of the war; the numbers listed represent the percentages of the total numbers of each population who were eligible for military service: Jat Sikhs 88 percent⁶²; Kumaonis 50 percent; Pathans 50 percent; Jats (Hindus) 46 percent; Sikhs (others, including Mazbhi and Ramdasia) 40 percent; Garwhalis 38 percent; Dogras 32 percent; PMs 30 percent; Ranghars 27 percent; Gujars 24 percent; Brahmmins 23 percent; Rajputs 22 percent; Rajputana Musalmans 18 percent; Maharrattas 16 percent; Coorgs 15 percent; Madrassis 14 percent; Baluchis 10 percent; Mahars 8 percent; Ahirs 7 percent; Assamese 3 percent and Chamars 3 percent.⁶³ The Punjab was still heavily represented, and this fact would have a major impact in the post-war period as demobilised soldiers returned home. The Indian Army's recruitment history during World War II highlights the reforms and expansions that its recruitment policies underwent.

The new classes also provided significant numbers of men and officers for the supporting combatant and non-combatant services. Failure to expand recruitment would have resulted in a shortage of supplies for the forward units, brought on by a shortage of troops in the Indian Army Services Corps. The supporting services provided by the engineers and artillery paid huge dividends for the army during operations in North and East Africa, Italy and Burma.

Indianisation of the officer corps⁶⁴

Following the demand by the Indian legislature for more Indians to be commissioned at Sandhurst, and the subsequent lack of response from potential cadets, the decision was made to create an Indian Military Academy (IMA) at Dehradun. The Academy was formally opened on 10 December 1932; cadets who completed the required course of training would henceforth achieve the designation of Indian Commissioned Officer (ICO), and they would only be eligible to command Indian soldiers,⁶⁵ unlike their predecessors, the King's Commissioned Indian Officers (KCIOs), who had been eligible for positions of command over both British and Indian troops.⁶⁶ A precedent for this decision did already exist, in that Dominion officers experienced a similar fate. The cases were not generally considered equivalent, however, since on the whole, few British troops or officers were present throughout the Dominions, while ICOs regularly had to contend with the reality of British Army troops and British officers in their country. This decision was to cause bitter resentment among the officers,⁶⁷ and significant friction between KCIOs and ICOs.⁶⁸

The course at the IMA was designed to last two and a half years, the extra year of instruction added to instruct cadets in British customs, which might be unfamiliar to them.⁶⁹ There were two terms a year, and 40 cadets were accepted for each term. Fifteen cadets were selected from the Indian Army, 10 from the princely states and 15 from open competition (Omissi 1994: 184). Even with such quotas established, selection continued to be made primarily from the designated martial races.⁷⁰ Lieutenant General Candeth noted that, of his entering class in 1934, 40 per cent were Musalmans, 30 per cent were Sikhs and the rest were Dogras, Jats and Mahrattas. He, as a Madrassi,⁷¹ was the only cadet who could be considered non-martial.⁷²

Although the initiatives undertaken by the Indian Army could be construed as attempts to limit or undermine the success of the Indianisation process and segregate the cadets into specific units, there were those who clearly did not want the scheme to fail. One example of this is the calibre of the training officers selected for the IMA. Many officers have noted that the British training officers were first class; Lieutenant General Harbkaash Singh even claimed that British officers selected for the IMA 'were known for their sympathy for the Indian cause'.⁷³ While this statement may seem an exaggeration, other officers have noted that the British officers respected the Indian cadets and did not perpetuate a colour bar. One of the first officers posted to the IMA was Major Reginald Savory⁷⁴ of the 1/11th Sikh Regiment, and many Indian officers later