WARFARE AND SOCIETY IN BRITISH INDIA, 1757–1947

EDITED BY ASHUTOSH KUMAR AND KAUSHIK ROY

War and Society in South Asia

ROUTLEDGE

WARFARE AND SOCIETY IN BRITISH INDIA, 1757–1947

This book explores the intricate and intimate relationship between military organisation, imperial policy, and society in colonial South Asia. The chapters in the volume focus on technology, logistics, and state building. The present volume highlights the salient features of expansion and consolidation of imperial control over the subcontinent, and ultimate demise of the Raj. Further, it turns the spotlight on to subaltern challenges to imperialism as well as the role of non-combatants in warfare.

The Volume

- Deals with both conventional and guerrilla conflicts and focuses on the frontiers (both North-West and North-East, including Burma);
- Looks at the army as an institution rather than present a chronological account of military operations, which highlights the complex and tortuous relationship between combat institution, colonial state, and Indian society;
- Integrates top-down approaches in military and strategic studies with the bottom-up perspectives and discusses on how the conduct of war (organisation and technology) is related to the economic, societal, and cultural impact of war.

A rich account of the British 'Army in India,' this book will be essential reading for scholars and researchers of South Asian history, military history, political history, colonialism, and the British Empire.

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War and Society in South Asia

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Edited by Ashutosh Kumar and Kaushik Roy

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Colonial Indian Army and the British units stationed in India (together called Army in India) was the largest government employer in British India and constituted the principal item of expenditure in the imperial budget. Despite imperial rhetoric regarding British liberalism and 'civilising the savages,' the strategic elites of London and Delhi were mostly concerned with warfare and empire building. So, armies and warfare cannot be neglected if we want to study the rise and fall of British-Indian Empire. The 12 hitherto unpublished chapters in this book, based on archival materials, highlight the salient features of military expansion and consolidation of imperial control over the Indian subcontinent. Since the Army in India was also used for power projection across Eurasia and Africa, some of the chapters also deal with the regions outside India where the British and Indian units were deployed.

The introduction instead of merely paraphrasing the chapters locates them within the broader historiographical matrix. The chapters are organised thematically. The first two chapters, by Peter Stanley and Douglas M. Peers, explore the intricate and intimate relationship between imperial military organisation and culture. The next theme is the relationship between ideology and historical writing. Chapter 3, while discussing the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 or the 1857 Uprising, shifts the focus from the core to the periphery. Gunpowder technology is the next issue discussed in this book. Chapter 4 deals with military hardware and British expansion in South Asia. Imperial consolidation and power projection in the era of small war is the next theme. The succeeding four essays (Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8) deal with unconventional warfare and state building in the margins. Chapters 9 discusses the logistics of British invasion of Afghanistan during 1878 and 1880. The complex and convoluted interrelationship between the colonial army and colonial society in the era of World Wars is the last theme with which this book grapples. The last three chapters concern themselves with the Army in India, colonial state

and the two World Wars. Chapters 10 and 11 portray the indigenous response to military recruitment of the peasants during First World War. The last chapter (Chapter 12) paints the innovative management techniques related with railway transportation introduced by the British officers in Burma towards the end of the Second World War.

This book treats warfare broadly. Rather than providing a chronological account of military operations, the Army in India is treated by the contributors as an institution. The complex and tortuous relationship between combat institution, colonial state and Indian society is highlighted. Not only the combatants but also the non-combatants are brought under the ambit of the study. We move away from the blood and gore of the battlefields and try to understand what war meant for the common masses. The conduct of war (organisation and technology) is related with the societal impact of war. The contributors show how the empire responded to the challenges thrown up by the colonised against the imperial project in myriad ways. This edited collection deals with both conventional war and guerrilla conflicts; hence the term 'warfare' and not war is used. Special focus on the frontiers (both North-West and North-East including Burma) is another characteristic of this edited collection. Recent trends in history writing like culture and memory (including literature, and identity formations), labour history and so on are highlighted in the chapters. Lastly, an attempt is made to integrate the top-down approach with the bottom up perspectives.

This edited collection, besides taking into account the colonial perspective, also brings under its ambit the study of British imperial policies. Taking into account the recent trend of locating South Asia in the global context, several contributors scrutinise the activities of the Army in India outside India. We also attempt to evaluate the impact of deployments outside India on the army as an institution and on the mentality of the sepoys and sowars. Hence, this book will appeal to people interested in military history of the British Empire. Our edited collection is partly designed to be a supplementary reader for all the students and teachers engaged in the undergraduate and postgraduate courses in British-Indian history. Further, prospective researchers interested in pursuing research on British Empire in Asia will find our book useful.

The two editors conceived this book during a conference on Indian military history at Jadavpur University, Kolkata, more than three years ago. Then, the pandemic set in and delayed this project. Thanks to our contributors who are a mix of young and established academicians hailing from three continents that this book is finally becoming a reality. We two editors are grateful to the series editors and also the reviewers as their comments have enriched this collection.

Kaushik Roy and Ashutosh Kumar
Kolkata and Varanasi, 2022

ABBREVIATIONS

APAC	Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections
BL	British Library
COIN	Counterinsurgency
EIC	East India Company; also known as the Company
GOC	General Officer Commanding
GOI	Government of British-India/Raj
MCO	Movement Control Officer
NAI	National Archives of India
NCO	Non-commissioned Officer
POW	Prisoner of War
RAF	Royal Air Force
SEAC	South East Asia Command
UP	United Provinces

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INTRODUCTION

Armed Forces, Society, and Culture in Colonial South Asia

Kaushik Roy and Ashutosh Kumar

The military establishment of the East India Company (EIC) and later the Raj (British Government in India [GOI] after 1859) constituted the principal pillar of British rule in the Indian subcontinent. The EIC's military establishment comprised its European force (British Army units stationed in India and EIC's private European army till 1859) and the Indian regiments which collectively may be categorised as the British-Indian Army. The soldiers of the Indian units were long-service volunteers from the countryside. They were mostly younger sons of small peasants. The Indian units were commanded by British commissioned officers. The ground force of the EIC was divided into the Bengal Army, Madras Army, Bombay Army, and the Punjab Frontier Force. These four armies were amalgamated into a single entity known as the Army in India in the 1890s. The Army in India included the British regiments stationed in the Indian subcontinent, Indian units officered by the British officers, and the Imperial Service Troops (selected units raised and paid for by Indian Princely States which were trained and commanded by British officers).

Generally, the Indian soldiers were loyal to their colonial masters. An exception was the summer of 1857 when the 120,000 strong Bengal Army fell apart. About 90,000 sepoys and sowars turned against their British masters. By 1859, with the aid of European soldiers imported from Britain and the Gurkhas, Sikhs, and Pathans recruited from Nepal, Punjab, and North-West Frontier Province, the British were able to suppress the mutineers. Even after the 1857 Uprising, the GOI maintained Indian military formations for several reasons. The British lacked the manpower to police India. Further, the Raj maintained Indian units because they were cheaper and more suited for operational deployments in the Indian ecology as compared to European soldiers. The latter frequently succumbed to illnesses in Indian climate. It was also time consuming to transport a European soldier from

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Britain who had to be paid more than an Indian soldier. At times, Indian soldiers were also used to deter rebellious European soldiery.[1]

There is currently not a single or co-authored monograph covering warfare and society of colonial India from the inception of British rule till its demise. There are two edited volumes dealing with warfare and social fabric of British India. One is Kaushik Roy's edited *War and Society* which came out in 2006.[2] That volume has 11 chapters and most of them are reprints. The bulk of the chapters focus on high politics and military strategy. In contrast, the present edited collection of Kaushik Roy and Ashutosh Kumar contains 12 fresh chapters and broadens the approach to look at war-culture-society-state in British India. Unlike the *War and Society* book which studies the period from circa 1800 onwards, Kumar and Roy's *Warfare and Society in British India* will include both imperial and indigenous perspectives from the mid-eighteenth century until decolonisation in 1947. Kaushik Roy and Gavin Rand's edited collection titled *Culture, Conflict and the Military in Colonial South Asia* which came out in 2018 was a follow up of the *War and Society* book. This book brought under its ambit the North-West Frontier.[3] However, Kumar and Roy's *Warfare and Society in British India* in addition to North-West Frontier gives due attention to North-East India, Central, and West India. Unlike the previous two edited collection, Roy and Kumar's this edited collection also studies the impact of the Second Afghan War (1878–1880) and the two World Wars (1914–1945) on India in a holistic manner.

Peter Stanley's and Douglas M. Peers' chapters in the present collection focus on the military culture of the EIC's armies during the first half of the nineteenth century, and concentrate on the social history of the European soldiers in colonial India. Military culture is actually organisational culture. What is culture? Wayne E. Lee, an American military historian, writes that culture is the product of norms and behaviour and both affect each other. Practices derived from cultural predilections are always subject to individual improvisation. Each individual act serves as a precedent which both reinforces and modify cultural norms. Further, cultural actions are subject to changes due to the evolving material conditions. Hence, culture is the product of both long-term structural factors as well as human agency and contingency.[4]

Then what is organisational culture? Tim Hallett writes that organisational culture is a negotiated order which emerges through the interactions between organisational actors. Both forms of interactions, formal and informal, generates organisational culture. Social interactions and institutional processes create culture. Personnel bring their culturally inscribed dispositions and toolkits with them into the organisation thus linking organisational culture with the broader social order.[5] Here one may refer to Maurice Matloff's assertion that history deals with human beings both as individuals and in their aggregate, acting and reacting with impersonal and personal forces. As psychological insights (mentality) increasingly have been brought to bear on the historical process, the historians' portrayal of the past is enriched, humanised, and made more concrete.[6] Military culture, in the context of Stanley's and Peers' essays in this book, could be defined as the mentality of the

military personnel and the nature of the social interactions within the military organisation and also with the host society that spawned them.

Stanley's chapter throws light on the social and professional aspects of the European soldiers and officers of the EIC and the British Crown deployed in India during the first half of the nineteenth century. He argues that the European Army of the EIC constitutes the bedrock of British rule. Stanley compares the British officers of the European force of the EIC with the latter's Indian regiments. Though professionally of the same level, the British officers of the Crown's regiments looked down upon the British officers of the Indian regiments. The Crown's British officers considered themselves as socially superior vis-a-vis their counterparts with the native (Indian) regiments. Stanley then turns the focus on the social life of the British officers and links it with their professional capabilities. While the Company's British officers grabbed most of the extra-regimental staff appointments, the Royal British Army's officers had a monopoly over senior command positions. The British officers of the Bengal Army had a tradition of petitioning and protesting over questions of pay and allowances.

The British rank and file who served in India were disproportionately Irish who mainly joined due to unemployment, particularly during the potato famine. Despite the ravages caused by alcoholism and hot climate, the privates enjoyed a higher quality of life in India compared to what they would have experienced in Britain. Gradually, with the passage of time, the army provided the European soldiers with better housing facilities and some amenities for amusements such as libraries. As a result, disciplinary problems among them were somewhat reduced.

Peers' chapter in this book while analysing military culture attempts to marry instrumental with discursive and ideological readings of law both in theory and in day to day action. He focuses on the court-martial mechanism which was geared to ensure a disciplinary culture among the personnel of the Company's ground forces. He concentrates on the general court-martial which was the highest disciplinary body within the penal apparatus of the army. Peers writes that the quantum of discipline was not dependent on abstract laws but on the context, race, class, economic factors, and concepts of honour. When a regiment was campaigning, the most suitable form of punishment was caning. Even in peacetime, lashing was considered cheaper compared to giving an imprisonment term to the soldiers. Organisational culture demanded that a British officer possess the qualities of an officer and a gentleman. Ungentlemanly behaviour like drunkenness, association with women of questionable character, homosexuality, theft, and indiscipline, were punishable offences. But the way these offences were interpreted varied over time and depended on the individual commanders conducting court-martials.

In addition, concerns of class and race shaped the punishment system of the EIC's court-martial mechanism. The army realised that the native soldiers came from a different socio-cultural set up. So, they were governed under Native Articles of War which were distinct from the body of laws that regulated the behaviour of the British officers and soldiers. Yet like much of the history of colonial India, most of the sources were generated by the British. Since no unfiltered

first-hand accounts of the sepoys and sowars exist, we really do not know how the Indian soldiery interpreted the military laws imposed on them by their British masters. Racism was manifested in the relationship between British officers and British soldiers vis-a-vis Indian soldiers and civilians. Punishment was carefully scripted in a symbolical manner, writes Peers, in order to impress upon the offenders and other spectators about the seriousness of the issue.

In the summer of 1857, the Bengal Army experienced a meltdown. Discontented members of the Indian nobility as well as the peasantry of North India joined the mutineers. The 1857 Uprising was the crucial enabler which resulted in the transformation of the EIC state in India to a British colony directly overseen by the British Parliament. For many British officials, 1857 was almost exclusively a sepoy mutiny: the mutiny of the *Purabias* (high-caste Brahmin and Rajput sepoys recruited from Bihar and Eastern Uttar Pradesh) of the Bengal Army. From the 1950s, the Indian nationalists tried to categorise 1857 as a national uprising or the First War of Independence. In the 1980s, scholars under the flag of subaltern studies highlighted the subaltern/populist aspects of the 1857 Uprising. Instead of focusing on the politicians and generals, subaltern scholars adopted a bottom-up perspective and stressed the role of the nameless and faceless common mass.[7] Most of the military histories of 1857 focus on Awadh, Delhi, Punjab, and to a lesser extent Central India.[8] In the new millennium, a group of scholars (one of the contributors of the present collection Sajal Nag falls within this group) while studying 1857 have sought to shift attention from the core heartland (North India and Punjab) to the hitherto marginal areas of the Indian subcontinent (like North-East India), and have highlighted the participation of minorities/highlanders inhabiting the margins of the Indian subcontinent.

Year 1857 was the most defining moment of Indian history in the sense that it gave birth to the concept of an Indian 'nation.' It is supposed to have given birth to the first generation of people whose identity was Indian. Rajat Kanta Ray has shown how the Hindus and the Muslims of North India forged a common identity in the course of fighting British imperialism during 1857–58.[9] Colonial history had depicted 1857 as a mere rebellion of the sepoys which was ruthlessly suppressed by the colonial power. For the emerging colonial state, claims Nag in Chapter 3, it was absolutely necessary to show that colonised subjects were no match for the brutal power of the Europeans and hence such daring opposition to the colonisers would always meet with defeat. At the same time, it was also politically essential for the imperialists to show that other than the dispossessed and disgruntled feudal elements, no other segment of people was with the sepoys in their struggle. Hence, it was a 'backward'-looking all sepoy affair which was put down once and for all. Since the colonial historiography depicted it as a 'Sepoy Mutiny,' the inheritors of this historiography adhered to the idea that in parts of the country like North-East India where there was no British military presence, there was no rebellion in 1857. Several scholars who deal with tribal histories of North-East India have reflected upon the fact that historians until recently have not looked for any reverberation of the 1857 'Mutiny.' Year '1857,' infers Nag, thus created its own national boundary,

mainstream and periphery, centre and the margins, national and less national on the basis of a historical event. The perception gained ground that people who did not take part in such 'national' events were easy prey to secessionist politics. This is, of course, a gross error of interpretation. The tribesmen of North-East India, says Nag, waged a longer, violent, and more intensive anti-British struggle than many parts of India. The 1857 Uprising had its ripple effect in Assam, the Princely State of Manipur, Tripura, and Cachar which are all frequently overlooked. Nag's chapter is an attempt to restore the north-eastern region of India to its legitimate place as an important participant in the great 1857 Uprising that lasted until 1859.

Military hardware is an important driver of history. The Greek historian Polybius writing about the rise of Rome stressed the quality of Roman weapons.[10] As one author puts it succinctly, technology within military history is the study of application of science of war. So, study of military technology should include new ideas, techniques, equipment, and their application in the battlefields.[11] The study of military hardware is yet to take off as far as the history of colonial India is concerned. Till now, Indian historians has no equivalent of the Society for the History of Technology. Some people have done 'nuts and bolts' history but they have failed to show the interconnections between hardware, politics, culture, economy, and social changes.[12] Daniel Headrick's pathbreaking book is an exception. He highlights the role of steel rifles, machine-guns, steamboats, and quinine in creating the global overseas empires by the Western maritime powers during the second half of the nineteenth century.[13]

Here mention may be made of W.H. McNeill's *longue duree* analysis. He asserts that too much emphasis on religious values, authoritarianism, and the absence of open market economy somewhat debilitated the chances of the Asian nations like China initiating a Military Revolution in the early modern period.[14] McNeill was obviously labouring then under the shadow of the Cold War and for him the authoritarian Soviet Russia with its closed market economy was the West's 'evil empire.' Modern studies have shown that China had actually initiated a gunpowder oriented Military Revolution long before the West, and in the case of India, the indigenous Indian kingdoms which had access to significant amount of material and demographic resources were conscious of the importance of gunpowder weapons.[15]

Moumita Chowdhury in Chapter 4 turns the spotlight on the linkages between the evolution of military hardware and the rise of EIC between the last half of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century. On the basis of archival data derived from National Archives of India, New Delhi, she discusses how the EIC from 1800 till 1857 introduced the art of modern ordnance production in India. She shows the ingenious ways through which EIC combined European techniques with locally sourced material resources to create an efficient ordnance production system in India. To counter the threat posed by EIC, Indian powers also adopted European methods for producing gunpowder, cannons, and gun carriages. She compares the performance of opposing artillery and analyses their efficacy on the battlefield. The EIC's attention to the quality of timbre for gun carriage

production, standardisation of the production processes of gun carriage and gunpowder, sophisticated methods for refining the gunpowder, production of quality coke and charcoal, and the corning of gunpowder, proved decisive in the long run. In the end, superior logistics, better management practices, and efficient use of technology gave victory to the British. Thus, Moumita Chowdhury steers clear of the culturalist argument of Carlo M. Cipolla who in one of his books claims that the Asian rulers of the early modern period viewed cannons not instrumentally but as sacro-magical objects.[16]

Whether war makes the state or vice versa is an unending debate. Warfare and state building are intertwined with each other like a DNA double helix. The early modern era witnessed an increase in the scale and scope of war in West Europe thanks to the transformation in military affairs which some historians categorise as a Military Revolution. The maritime European powers who initially came for trading purpose in the extra-European world started importing their transformed militaries during the eighteenth century to build up their overseas empires. By importing and applying Western military techniques, Britain was able to build up the biggest overseas empire in Africa and Asia.

Small war was the conceptual tool used by British officers during the late nineteenth century to explain the wars they had waged in building and maintaining their empire in Africa and Asia. The concept of small war to a great extent is the product of nineteenth-century military orientalism. Military orientalism stands for the West's attempt to define itself against an imagined inferior orient. The whole project functioned as the handmaiden of Western empire building. Orientalism is the language of power and the small war concept is the tool for projection of power. The basic assumption of Major-General Charles Callwell (1859–1928), the creator of the small war concept (it was first introduced in 1896), is the Hobbesian notion that non-Western societies were primordially violent and violence was an integral element of their nature. In contrast, the West is represented in Callwell's framework as representing the trinity of reason, liberty, and progress.[17] Daniel Whittingham asserts that Callwell's thought was shaped by Victorian attitude towards the 'savage' races. Further, Callwell unlike Carl von Clausewitz failed to realise the emerging importance of ideological motivations which added a new meaning and layer to colonial rebellions. So, Callwell was not the father of modern counterinsurgency (COIN) theory.[18]

Not only Callwell but colonial documents and memoirs dealing with British relations with the frontier tribes of India are also deeply embedded within the military orientalist framework. Sameetah Agha in her monograph warns: 'Abounding in orientalist colonial tropes, such accounts shared the outrage of the government and largely reproduced and overlapped with the official narrative.'[19] Actually, military orientalism in British India was a much larger affair. Douglas M. Peers in one of his articles writes that both the EIC and the Raj acquired knowledge about India for both specific military needs and sheer curiosity. The army needed to know about which areas were healthy for its troops, which groups were most martial and loyal, and detailed geographical knowledge for revenue assessments. Many officers

were indeed serious scholars. The image of all the British officers being anti-intellectual, cheroot smoking, and sport maniacs is erroneous. However, the body of knowledge that they produced was influenced by romanticism and in such knowledge, the clear distinction between fact and fiction was absent. Peers' concludes that the military orientalism in British India was more about colonial anxieties and survivability of British rule in the subcontinent rather than notions and assumptions of innate and inevitable superiority of the sahibs over the colonials.[20]

Not all the 'military orientalists' suffered from paranoia and anxiety about the 'shaky' colonial structure over which they presided. One such exception was Olaf Caroe (1892–1981), who served as foreign secretary of the GOI during the Second World War and then as governor of North-West Frontier Province, the most troublesome charge for any colonial official. In his preface to Major-General J.G. Elliott's book on North-West Frontier (1968), Caroe arrogantly noted:

> Again we built better than we knew. . . . It can hardly be that this tribal belt will remain forever in this age unadministered, untaxed, and in a tribal state of society. It must move into the contemporary world. Who can achieve this. . . . Here is a field in which contemporary Britain is qualified to help soothe asperities and to deploy the knowledge and wisdom of the past in the service of a great people today.[21]

Military orientalism and small wars, these two concepts were always evolving. Callwell's theoretical framework was updated by Major-General Charles W. Gwynn who differentiates between small wars and imperial policing. In the case of the small war, wrote Gwynn in 1934, if the situation requires it, then unlimited amount of force could be used. However, the watchword in case of imperial policing was the use of minimum amount of force. Rise of nationalism in the colonies in the first half of the twentieth century made large-scale repression almost an impossibility. Further, deployment of military assets for a long time to cow down mass uprisings permanently proved to be extremely costly. Hence, deployment of minimal amount of force and political concessions made sense. So, for Gwynn, small war is passe, a thing of late nineteenth-century colonial warfare while imperial policing is the vital thing during the first half of the twentieth century.[22]

For Srinath Raghavan, a scholar of modern India, in the interwar period, British imperial policing in colonial India followed the minimum force formula. The army's deployments and actions, writes Raghavan, were characterised by civil-military cooperation and the primacy of civilians to prevent excessive use of force.[23] Raghavan's assertion is in line with arguments made by scholars like Nick Lloyd, Rod Thornton, and Thomas Mockaitis who argue that British COIN (the new name first introduced by the Americans for imperial policing aka small war) from the late nineteenth century has been distinguished by the minimum force formula. Lloyd's assertion that the British response at Jallianwala Bagh (13 April 1919) was the product of nervousness and not brutality[24] is questionable. In contrast to the 'humane' interpretation of British COIN, from the other pole,

historians like David French, Huw Bennett, and Matthew Hughes among others argue that British COIN was nasty, harsh, and brutal. Torture and indiscriminate arrest plus repression, argue this group, were the hallmarks of British COIN. At times, asserts this group of scholars, the British used exemplary force against even the non-combatants in the hostile zone of operations.[25] Following this approach, Douglas Porch writes:

> [W]hat has been called small war in its various reiterations as imperial policing or COIN . . . does not constitute a specialized category of warfare. Rather, it consists of the application of petty war tactics that its advocates since the 1840s have puffed as infallible prescriptions of effortless conquest, nation building, and national grandeur.[26]

Despite Porch's criticism about the utility of small war as an analytical tool, one thing is sure. Small war was an important instrument for the British in constructing and maintaining their colonial polities beyond Europe.

One of the most dominant characteristics of eighteenth-century state formation in Western and Central India was the upward mobility of marauding leaders. In Chapter 5, Aryama Ghosh by following the warfare and state formation approach makes a case study of the Pindari leader Amir Khan (1769–1834). The Pindaris were mostly Muslims and some marginal peasants who took to arms out of desperation. Continuous warfare in the nineteenth century had ruined agriculture in large parts of Deccan. Hence, these marginal peasants were pushed towards military service which though dangerous was economically more lucrative and socially prestigious. The British historian Richard Holmes claims that the impact of the Pindaris (also called *Pila Kaptans*, that is, yellow captains because these leaders of the military bands wore yellow/saffron scarfs) were not all that negative. In fact, by infusing their loot (cattle and cash) in their local economies, the Pindaris accelerated agricultural growth in their bases located in Central India.[27]

Ghosh's chapter argues that the transformation from roving banditry to stationary bandits was not totally discontinued by the British even after their success in the Maratha-Pindari War (1818) which could be labelled as a sort of small war. British policy makers like John Malcolm (1769–1833) were in favour of keeping these comparatively stable Pindari chiefs like Amir Khan Pindari of Tonk as a counterbalance against Rajput chiefdoms. This chapter further explains that with the growth of indirect rule, British pacification policy aimed to keep a balance of power in the fringes and practiced hegemony like their Maratha predecessors by providing legitimacy to military upstarts like Amir Khan.

Ghosh goes on to argue that light cavalry was one of the most efficient tools used by the British in pacifying the countryside as part of waging small wars. Further, he claims that flying columns were utilised by the British officers in India just like the French military leaders Marshal Thomas Robert Bugeaud (1784–1849) in Algeria. Ghosh asserts that flying columns for fighting the mobile marauders were first introduced by Duke of Wellington (1769–1852) and the British officers

during the Second (1803–05) and Third Anglo-Maratha Wars (1817–18). British dragoons functioned as flying columns against the light cavalry of the Marathas and their Pindari allies. One might argue that the flying column technique emerged separately in early nineteenth-century India and Algeria. Both the British and the French faced a similar threat: mobile non-state marauders. While Bugeaud's pacification policy in the 1840s at Algeria was shaped by *razzia*,[28] the British COIN operations during the first half of the nineteenth-century India were probably influenced by the Maratha *ganimi kava* and the light Sikh cavalry's caracole tactics.

While Ghosh focuses on British pacification and state building in Central India, Sohini Mitra in Chapter 6 shifts the spotlight to North-East India. Jangkhomang Guite takes a romanticised view of the inhabitants of North-East India and writes that the highland region functioned as a refuge zone. Successive waves of refugees from Burma (Myanmar) and the plains of India moved into the mountainous zone of North-East India to escape the exploiting claws of the state. He continues: 'The primacy given to the idea of individual freedom and the safety of their hills from conquest determined their practices and lifeways. This precisely took the case of state evasion as the guiding value.'[29]

The Lushai or Kuki Hills of North-East India has been home to hill communities like Chin-Kuki-Lushai. After the EIC was granted *diwani* rights in 1765, the British ventured into areas beyond East and North Bengal to resist Burmese aggression. The British interest in North-East India rose with time due to expansion of tea plantations in this region. Containing the incessant raids by these hill communities in this region became imperative for the EIC and later, the Raj. Survey operations in the Lushai country threatened the hill communities' traditional worldview and social order. In fact, survey operations and road building were the prelude to the British annexation both along North-East India and the North-West Frontier. As a result, innumerable unconventional wars took place between the British and the non-state communities both in the regions west of Indus River and east of Bengal. Following Callwell's terminology, they can be termed as small wars. Mitra's chapter, by delving into such wars in the Lushai country, asks the question whether British small wars in Lushailand conformed to the minimum force policy or not. Based on archival sources collected from national and various state archives of India, and following 'War, Armed Forces and Society' approach, Mitra investigates different facets of British expeditions and state building practices in the region to explain the nature of the British colonial state in the North-East Indian Frontier. The War, Armed Forces and Society approach developed from the War and Society School which emerged in the West during the 1960s. The advocates of War and Society methodology turns the spotlight from studying the art of war (battles, campaigns, and great generals) to the impact of warfare on society and also on the institutional cum social arrangements for supporting the military forces.[30] Mitra concludes that overwhelming force was not the only technique in the British arsenal as far as state formation in the frontier zone was concerned. Social cleavages in 'native' society and imperial politics also played a part in shaping the contours of British expansionism in North-East India.

Pum Khan Pau in his monograph on the Chin Hills asserts that the British followed a brutal and harsh policy towards the Chin/Zo people who inhabit the India-Burma borderlands.[31] In Chapter 7, Pau makes a case study of British policy of disarmament towards the Zo (Chin-Kuki) people of the India-Burma Frontier during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Traditionally, guns had never formed part of the indigenous weapons of the hill peoples of the Indo-Burma (or India-Burma) Frontier. However, when the British sought to annex these hill tracts in the late nineteenth century, the imperialists were seriously challenged by the indigenous hill people armed with imported guns. A colonial official in the Chin Hills had rightly remarked:

> [W]hen one sees one's comrades shot, or the tribesmen out of hand, it is very bitter to think that the weapons which are killing our people and causing us so much anxiety were manufactured by ourselves and were formerly held by our own troops.

Thus, European guns became a 'thorn in the heel' of the British which prompted them to resort to the policy of disarmament as the only option left to subdue the indigenous people under their control. Such a policy, however, backfired as it evoked stiff resistance. Chapter 7 probes the centrality of guns in the encounter between the expansionist British and indigenous hill tribes in the India-Burma Frontier during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In doing so, this chapter seeks to answer when and how did guns arrive in the hills of the Indo-Burma Frontier. This chapter shows the changes wrought on the nature of jungle warfare by firearms and integration of the handheld firearms into the socio-cultural life of the highland people of North-East India. Finally, Pau asks how effective was the British policy of disarmament within the larger framework of imperial policy towards the Indo-Burma Frontier.

Overall, we can say that the British policy of disarming the Chin/Zo people is nothing new but a continuation of the policy which the EIC and later the Raj had followed towards other communities in the Indian subcontinent. In fact, the Western European states had also followed the policy of demilitarising their home societies very stringently in an attempt to establish a public monopoly of violence as part of their programme of building military-fiscal entities both in their homelands and in their overseas colonies. The military-fiscal state was a product of the early modern European Military Revolution. Such a state attempted to create a monopoly of violence in the public sphere and constructed a hierarchical bureaucratic machinery which reached the bottom layers of the society. The objective of such a polity was to extract the maximum amount of revenue in cash from the society for conducting expansionist wars. If we believe John Brewer, Britain became a fiscal-military state in the early modern era.[32] Both Chris Bayly and Douglas M. Peers (in his monograph titled *Between Mars and Mammon*) classify the EIC state as a military-fiscal entity. For Peers, the Company state in the first half of the nineteenth century represented a Garrison state.[33] The emergence of such a polity was

a break with the precolonial past. For Dirk Kolff, this occurred when the British disarmed the dynamic and vibrant military labour market of Hindustan during late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[34] However, an exception to Kolff's work can be made as regards British policy towards the Pathans.

According to one estimation, between 1849 and 1908, the GOI launched 51 major campaigns along the North-West Frontier.[35] The North-West Frontier or the Indus Frontier constituted the most important security threat for British India. The Sunni Pathans (Pashtuns/Pakhtuns) acquired handheld firearms from Iran and Afghanistan.[36] The Pathans were able to manufacture crude copies of imported firearms in their makeshift arsenals. Faction fights among the various tribes and clans, their sense of independence, the ubiquitous role of the *mullahs* and *faqirs*, and the prospect of plunder instigated the Pathans to attack the regions east of the Indus.[37] Religion (especially Sunni Wahhabism) then and even now is a powerful motivating force in provoking and sustaining Pathan attacks on the Raj. The British attempt to control the hydrological resources and salt production in the areas inhabited by the Pathan tribes further infuriated them and Islam functioned as the ideological cohesive force in fighting the greedy foreigners.[38]

To what extent did the British-Indian Army employ the element of force in warfare along and beyond the North-West Frontier of India is the central question which Arka Chowdhury in Chapter 8 seeks to answer. Since the second half of the nineteenth century, the British Raj invested considerable resources in men and material in subduing the 'unruly' tribes of the North-West Frontier. By analysing a number of conventional military actions as well as punitive campaigns, this chapter attempts to intervene in the debate centring on the 'minimum force' doctrine. He shows four new technological weapons deployed by the British to subdue the tribesmen: gas, Dum Dum bullets, machine-guns, and aircraft. Finally, probing into the institutional memory of the British-Indian Army in the North-West Frontier, this chapter seeks to find if the learning mechanism of the army led to any doctrinal development. One can argue that at least from the technological perspective, frontier campaigning was anything but a technological backwater.

Despite the trend in scholarly research, that British COIN policy was 'humane,' the men in London were always more than eager to use the new technologies of killing produced by modern science in 'savage warfare' beyond Europe. For instance, during the 1919–1921 Arab Uprising in Mesopotamia, the Royal Air Force (RAF) and Winston Churchill advocated the use of chemical weapons against the 'rebellious' Arabs. The British were not alone in using chemical weapons against non-Europeans while conducting small wars. The French, Italians, and the Japanese resorted to chemical warfare while expanding their overseas empires and quelling rebellions by the colonised.[39] Chapter 8 highlights the debate within the British imperium about whether poisonous gases should be used or not in small wars within India.

There was more to British pacification policy than merely the kinetic element. Religion stirred the emotions of the Pathans, writes Robert Nichols. However, the Pathans were susceptible to bribery.[40] Both the Mughals and the British paid

subsidies to the *maliks* in order to keep the tribesmen in line. Take, for instance, the case of the Orakzais. In 1898, the British calculated that they numbered some 30,000 fighting men. The Raj to keep them in good humour paid them collectively Rs. 8,948 annually.[41]

Things become clearer if we put British COIN in India in a comparative context. India was not a settler colony like Australia or North America. India's hot and humid climate and the vast demographic resources saw to it. So, the British did not initiate a policy of genocide or ethnocide in India as occurred in Australasia and in the New World. Nor did the British attempt large-scale forced displacement of indigenous communities in India as the Ottomans did to the Armenians during the First World War. According to one author, during the First World War, the Ottoman initiated genocide resulted in the death of 1 million Armenians.[42] However, the minimum force concept needs to be contextualised. The minimum force formula was not an abstract. The amount of force that was applied varied with time and space. Minimum force means only the required amount of violence was used to suppress rebellion in a particular context rather than using all the available apparatus of coercion to the maximum extent.

The fluid border between the homeland of the Pathans and Afghanistan enabled the armed Pathan marauders to move to and fro across the Indus. When pursued by the Army in India's columns, the recalcitrant Pathans took refuge in Eastern Afghanistan. Further, the British wanted a stable and friendly Afghanistan to prevent any spilling over of Russian influence south of the Oxus. The tribes inhabiting Eastern and Southern Afghanistan and British India's North West Frontier were of the same ethnic stock, spoke Pashto and followed Sunni Islam. Even if the *Amir* of Afghanistan wanted, he could not check the flow of Pathans across the fluid open frontier. Especially from the second half of the nineteenth century, the strategic managers in London and Delhi were anxious about the 'inexorable' Russian advance in Central Asia. In fact, it could be argued that the British somewhat overplayed the threat of a Russian advance across the Pamirs and this in turn created opportunities for the officers in the field for further career moves. In 1878, the Raj launched the second invasion of Afghanistan to initiate a regime change in Kabul. The war dragged on till 1880. Kaushik Roy in Chapter 9 shows the construction of logistical establishment which enabled the Army in India to maintain 40,000 soldiers and an equal number of non-combatants in the semi-arid barren landscape of Afghanistan during the Second Afghan War.

While in the nineteenth century, the British-Indian Army conducted small wars, in the early twentieth century, the Army in India participated in both World Wars. The British-Indian Army became the largest volunteer force in each World War. During the First World War, about 800,000 combatants (the bulk of them from Punjab) joined the British-Indian Army.[43] George Morton-Jack's *The Indian Empire at War* provides an interesting and analytical narrative covering all the fronts in which the Army in India was deployed during the Great War.[44] Alan Jeffrey's edited collection *The Indian Army in the First World War* (2019) has 14 chapters dealing with the organisation of the Army in India and experiences of the sepoys

and sowars during the Great War and in its immediate aftermath.[45] Ashutosh Kumar and Claude Markovits' edited collection *Indian Soldiers in the First World War* (2021) explores the experiences of the sepoys and sowars during the Great War in eight chapters.[46] K.C. Yadav' Chapter 10 and Ashutosh Kumar's Chapter 11 in this book expand their analyses to include the mental horizon of the soldiers. Most of the Indian soldiers, being illiterate, have left us with no written account. So, two contributors in this edited collection try to fill this lacuna by utilising local non-archival indigenous sources. Yadav and Kumar individually use a plethora of indigenous sources, marking an innovative experiment with new historical methodology to reconstruct the social history of the sepoy during the First World War.

Both of them focus on the Indian sepoys deployed in France. Since they look at slightly different sources, they come up with varying statistics regarding the deployment of sepoys. For the readers, it is best to rely on the statistics generated by the GOI.[47] Santanu Das has stressed the imperial interest on the Indian sepoys' mind and body in the following words:

> Thus, from the arrival of the sepoys in France or Mesopotamia, through their convalescence in the hospitals at Brighton to their internment in the POW Camps in Germany, the Indian sepoy body was the site of multiple intensities of meaning and was subjected to a variety of visual representations.[48]

Yadav and Kumar turn the focus upside down and try to see how indigenous societies interpreted the Indians' imperial adventure. Yadav's and Kumar's chapters challenge the argument that the Indians willingly joined the British-Indian military service. Using a variety of local vernacular (indigenous/Indian) sources, Yadav and Kumar assert that the so-called martial races did not willingly join to fight and die for the King-Emperor. Poverty was one of the factors which pushed the small peasants towards military service. True, the British did not impose conscription, though there was some talk in 1918 of imposing it. Nevertheless, argues Yadav, the civil administrators of Punjab in full concurrence with the army authorities used subtle forms of coercion on the home front to force the men to enlist in the army. Yadav concludes that this measure made the Punjabis angry which culminated in the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in 1919.

Kumar in Chapter 11 explores the social and cultural mentality of the North Indian soldiers and their families, especially from the Gangetic belt, through the medium of the vernacular publications composed and written by the writers and poets of the region and at times by the soldiers themselves. In an attempt to provide a social matrix of the peasant warriors, this chapter explores the soldiering tradition of North Indian peasants since the Sultanate period, and traces the continuation of recruitment traditions until the 1857 Uprising, with special attention to the break in recruitment after 1859 until the beginning of the war in 1914. While examining the recruitment of sepoys and their experiences in the First World War, Chapter 11 argues that the vernacular publications produced by independent writers and poets provide details about the causes of the war and the nature of loyalty of

Indians towards the British Emperor. The account presented by the returning soldiers describe the actual experience of the war. On the one hand, numerous lives were lost on foreign battlefields, but on the other hand, many made their fortunes and raised their status through fighting for the British Empire.

The Army in India during the interwar period prepared for both conventional and unconventional warfare. Instead of a tradition bound organisation, the Army in India was forward looking. Not only did it experiment with new ideas and techniques of warfare, but it also attempted to learn lessons from the campaigns it conducted during and after the First World War. This learning process became evident when we analyse the training architecture of the Army in India between the two World Wars. Despite the inelastic budget and financial crunch, the Army in India crafted an innovative doctrine which was applicable with slight modifications in varied terrains against different force structures of the opponents. Continuous innovations in the theory and practice of training occurred during the Second World War. To a great extent, this explains the Army in India's final triumphs over the *Wehrmacht* in North Africa and Italy, and against the Imperial Japanese Army in Burma.[49]

Jonathan Fennell's massive work focuses on the motivations and experiences of the citizen soldiers of Britain and her Dominions during the Second World War. The citizen soldiers were conscious of their rights and demanded best available facilities from the state before going to battle.[50] The sepoys (*jawans* during the Second World War) were quasi mercenaries and not citizens of an independent nation state. Nevertheless, the *jawans* were conscious of the duties and the obligations of the British imperium towards them. Here, logistics play a crucial role. Mass attritional industrial war during the Second World War resulting in massive casualties made logistics more important compared to the earlier wars fought by the sepoys for the EIC and the Raj, respectively.

In the last chapter, Michael W. Charney turns the focus on logistics during the Second World War. He studies the role of railways in the India-Burma theatre of operations. Douglas E. Delaney's pathbreaking monograph shows that there was continuous exchange of ideas regarding training, tactics, and staff works between the metropolitan British Army and the Dominion Armies during the era of two World Wars.[51] Charney shows the exchange of ideas regarding logistics between India, Britain, and the Middle East. India was the base for supplying Lord Mountbatten's South East Asia Command (SEAC). Royal engineers were sent to India even before the Second World War to study the operation of railways in a non-European theatre. Charney charts the complex web of technology flows from Britain to India and back to the metropole. The techniques and tools of transportation of military goods on rail is termed by Charney as 'Movement Control,' a sphere which experienced continuous tussle between American ideas and methods with British way of doing things. The issue as regards railway transportation signified not only the introduction of new technology but also the use of new innovative management techniques for optimum use of the new technology. So, military technology related with supply during the Second World War was an amalgam of hardware and software.

The aforementioned essays enrich our understanding of the multifaceted dimensions of colonial rule and also the impact of the colonial state's coercive apparatus on various aspects of colonial economy, society, and culture. The British left the Indian subcontinent in 1947 but the successors to the British-Indian Army, the Indian and Pakistan armies, continue to carry the colonial legacies. As regards recruitment policies in the form of Martial Race theory and long-term voluntary enlistment, regimental organisational framework and operative doctrines for conventional and unconventional warfare, to a great extent, the armies of New Delhi and Islamabad remain mirror images of the Raj's Army in India, which, in turn, descended from the armies of the EIC. Further, the exchange of ideas between the Indian and Pakistani armies with the British Army continued even after 1947 at least till the mid-1950s. Herein lies the importance of this book.

Notes

1 T.A. Heathcote, *The Military in British India: The Development of British Land Forces in South Asia, 1600–1947* (Manchester/New York: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 41.
2 Kaushik Roy (ed.), *War and Society in Colonial India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006).
3 Kaushik Roy and Gavin Rand (eds.), *Culture, Conflict and the Military in Colonial South Asia* (London: Routledge, 2018).
4 Wayne E. Lee, 'Warfare and Culture,' in Wayne E. Lee (ed.), *Warfare and Culture in World History* (New York/London: New York University Press, 2011), pp. 1–11.
5 Tim Hallett, 'Symbolic Power and Organizational Culture,' *Sociological Theory*, vol. 21, no. 2 (2003), pp. 128–49.
6 Maurice Matloff, 'The Nature of History,' in John E. Jessup, Jr. and Robert W. Coakley (eds.), *A Guide to the Study and Use of Military History* (Washington, DC: Superintendent of Documents US Government Printing Office, 1982), p. 7.
7 Two examples of the Subaltern approach are Rudrangshu Mukherjee, 'The Sepoy Mutinies Revisited,' in Mushirul Hasan and Narayani Gupta (eds.), *India's Colonial Encounter: Essays in Memory of Eric Stokes* (1993, reprint, New Delhi: Manohar, 2004), pp. 193–204 and Tapti Roy, *The Politics of a Popular Uprising: Bundelkhand in 1857* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994).
8 The latest in this category is T.A. Heathcote's *Mutiny and Insurgency in India, 1857–58: The British Army in a Bloody Civil War* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2007).
9 Rajat Kanta Ray, 'Race, Religion and Realm: The Political Theory of "The Reigning Indian Crusade," 1857,' in Hasan and Gupta (eds.), *India's Colonial Encounter*, pp. 205–54.
10 Theodore Ropp, 'Military History to the End of the Eighteenth Century,' in Jessup, Jr. and Coakley (eds.), *A Guide to the Study and Use of Military History*, p. 96.
11 Lieutenant-Colonel John F. Votaw, 'An Approach to the Study of Military History,' in Jessup, Jr. and Coakley (eds.), *A Guide to the Study and Use of Military History*, p. 48.
12 See for instance Brigadier R.C. Butalia, *The Evolution of the Artillery in India: From the Battle of Plassey (1757) to the Revolt of 1857* (New Delhi: Allied, 1998); R. Balasubramaniam, *The Saga of Indian Cannons* (New Delhi: Aryan Books International, 2008).
13 Daniel R. Headrick, *The Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).
14 W.H. McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power: Technology, Armed Force and Society since AD 1000* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983).
15 Peter Lorge, *The Asian Military Revolution: From Gunpowder to the Bomb* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Kaushik Roy, *War, Culture and Society in Early Modern South Asia, 1740–1849* (London/New York: Routledge, 2011).