

Reviews

Encyclopedia of the Korean War: A Political, Social, and Military History. Vol. I, A–M; Vol. II, N–Z; Vol. III, Documents (Vols I–III, totalling 1,123 pages). Spencer C. Tucker, Editor; Jinwung Kim, Michael R. Nichols, Paul G. Pierpaoli, Jr, Priscilla Roberts and Norman R. Zehr, Assistant Editors. Published by ABC–CLIO, Santa Barbara, California; Denver, Colorado; Oxford, England; Copyright, 2000.

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Some of us harbour ambivalent feelings towards the large ‘chain stores’ that have come to dominate the urban retail book trade. They have thousands of titles on offer, but a great number of the tomes seem to be picture books of dubious literary merit. Beyond that, there is often something quite odd about the choice of titles they offer for sale. Their selection may reflect unforeseen trends in the publishing industry, yet in other instances the peculiar assemblage of printed merchandise suggests a discord in scholarship. If you wander into the section dubiously labelled *War*, or in the more cerebral of these book warehouses perhaps it is called *Military History*, there is a smattering on World War One a hefty amount of World War Two and an apparent surplus concerning Vietnam. And in those stores that use a chronological display technique, as opposed to *alphabetical by author*, the placing of a few Korean War titles against vast numbers concerning Vietnam is striking. What does this imaginary trip to the bookstore have to do with a three-volume encyclopaedia on the Korean War? Actually a great deal, in the abstract sense of summing-up the Korean conflict’s placement as well as current predicament within the overall study of modern Asian military history.

It has been fifty years since the Korean War raged, and half a century is considered by many historians to be the amount of time needed before the serious process of historic revision can begin. However, in the case of Korea as an unfinished conflict on a still divided peninsula, there are mitigating circumstances and the process of extended revision is probably years away. What accounts for the imbalance in publications between the War in Vietnam and that in Korea? Does it have to do with the *selling of Vietnam* as ‘America’s first living-room war’, a market symbiosis coupling books with television? Or is there some lack of interest in Korea despite its continuing contemporary relevance to Asian stability? Could there be a dearth of North Asian military specialists despite the enviable amount of research funding once devoted to the area?¹ I suspect the answer is much more complex and

¹ North Asia, as a region of military study, received large amounts of academic research money during Japan’s *economic glory days* of the 1980s—in sharp contrast to areas like South Asia.

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speaks to the selling of the Vietnam War in not just a commercial, but also in an academic context. The Vietnam War was also the 'baby-boomers war' and their stranglehold on academe has allowed them to ride a tide of 'retro' nostalgia in pop culture, a tide that happened to coincide with their careers as they exploited well-timed publishing opportunities. The real 'military analysis' amounted to only a fraction of the material produced as more sweeping social as well as political studies attached themselves to that inane advertising statement, 'Vietnam was more than a war, it was an event that defined a generation'.

Is this review spending too much time on Vietnam? The answer is both yes and no. *Yes*, in that the Korean War is the subject of the encyclopaedia under review but *No* in the sense that many of the 103 contributing article authors were unable to escape the shadow of the Vietnam War. For some of them, Vietnam was a popular *model* for conflict analysis. For others, it was the only Asian war they could remember and so they drew comparisons with something they felt more comfortable in writing about. But how comparable was the American War in Vietnam 1965–1973, with the United Nation's Police Action of 1950–1953? Leaving aside the obvious difference revolving around the issue of Korea as a UN-based action and zeroing-in on comparative military history, the frozen nature of America's Changjin Retreat (AKA Chosin Reservoir), the presence of hundreds of thousands of combatants from the People's Republic of China, the degeneration of offensive combat into positional trench warfare, all suggest to me that there were many more differences between Korea and Vietnam than a number of the encyclopaedia's contributors would have you believe. Aside from the portrayal of American fighting men locked in combat with Asian adversaries, the presence of helicopters and the fact that the Pentagon initially cast a jaundiced eye on the capabilities of its Southern allies—Korean and Vietnamese respectively; these were distinctly different wars.

The *Encyclopedia of the Korean War* is, to use that often abused marketing term, an 'information product' and as such it falls between the cracks created by the juxtaposition of a general readership with those engaged in serious military studies. It is too expensive a set for the average reader to afford and too elementary for graduate students or middle-ranking officers in a staff college setting. The first two volumes contain a series of articles related to the social, political and military significance of the Korean War. The third volume is an interesting and potentially valuable collection of 'documents'. Each of the three books repeats a series of 20 black and white maps in its opening pages. The political maps are easy enough to use but non-specialist readers would have benefited greatly from the insertion of a Military Key, as few liberal arts undergraduates understand the subtle pictographic differences between battalions, regiments and divisions; the addition of colour would also have assisted novices to gain a ready grasp of the geographic extent of opposing forces. As for the transliteration of Korean names, the McCune–Reischauer system prevails. However, a simple two or three-page *transliteration equivalency guide* would have enabled students to make greater practical use of these books to verify and coordinate data from other sources.

Some of the articles in the *Encyclopedia of the Korean War* were well written and there is the occasional diamond in rough, such as Allan R. Millett's 'Historiography of the Korean War'.² The entry on Small Arms is particularly confusing owing to its piecemeal construction and overall lack of continuity. In general, the entries tend to be too preoccupied with Korea as an *American war* and a greater effort should have been made to insure detail was provided on the international aspects of UN efforts. British Commonwealth Brigade veterans of the heroic action at *Kap'yŏng*, get honourable mention as having accompanied US forces but they do not receive the credit they deserve. There is nothing in the *Kap'yŏng* entry to tell readers that the 3rd Battalion Royal Australian Regiment and the 2nd Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI) were both awarded a United States Presidential Unit Citation for their heroic rearguard action against two Chinese regiments; a defiant stand that enabled American forces to withdraw. The *Princess Pat's* were left cut-off and alone to hold Hill 677 during the final fallback. In the early hours of 25 April 1951 they had to call down artillery on their own position in a desperate bid to survive being overrun by Chinese troops. Members of that Canadian regiment will be mortified to read: 'Fighting raged through the night and into the morning of the 24th [April 1951] and for three days and nights thereafter with the U.S. force cut off but still intact . . . on 25 April the Kap'yŏng forces withdrew in a fighting rearguard action as part of a general Eighth Army retirement from Line Kansas. U.S. casualties numbered some 5,000 of whom 923 were killed in action.'³

Unfortunately the American cultural bias is not limited to commandeering battle honours for UN actions. There is also a peculiar form of American diplomatic myopia to be found in the work. In June 1953, Assistant Secretary of State for Eastern Affairs Walter Robertson began in earnest the difficult task of trying to gain President Syngman Rhee's support for an armistice. By way of introducing President Rhee's letter to Robertson on 11 July 1953, the editors inserted the one sentence caption that follows: 'President Rhee states his intentions to work out better relations with the United States State Department in the future.'⁴ In truth, the letter is a sweeping indictment of US policy with a particular emphasis by Rhee on the unfairness of America's stance in North Asia. Not only did Rhee rebel against the neo-colonial American format of economic aid dispersal, but he also forthrightly denounced the manipulation of the Korean economy. He

² Millett's review essay appears in vol. I, pp. 248–57 and as editor Spencer C. Tucker pointed out, it was originally printed in the July 1997 issue of *The Journal of Military History*, where it appeared under the title, *A Reader's Guide to the Korean War*.

³ Vol. I, pp. 306–7. The battle is annually commemorated by the PPCLI with due respect for fallen comrades. Post-parade *Kap'yŏng* festivities are often marked with frequent toasts to the regiment, its patron and the spirit of the infantry. While visiting the PPCLI's Calgary barracks during 1983, I asked a career NCO to summarize the historic significance of the battle to his regiment. To which he replied with great delight, 'It was the battle where we saved the Yank's arse and showed them how to fight!'

⁴ Vol. III, p. 1013.

saw through Washington's rhetoric and correctly labelled the aid-directive ploys as building-up Japan at Korea's expense—a gross national insult given the history of Japanese–Korean relations. You may well ask, *what is the problem if the letter is there for all to read?* The point is that the greatest number of the encyclopaedia's users will be students with a less than firm grasp of the issues and they are likely to fall back on the introductions inserted by the editors.

At one time I taught American Military History for the US Army (ROTC) at Grambling State University, a historically Black institution in Louisiana. Admittedly, my experience helps to explain why I am particularly disappointed over the encyclopaedia's entry concerning African Americans. The piece dwells for an unnecessarily long time on the 1940s, presumably setting the stage for the story of US Army desegregation and thereby redeeming the article under the title's allusion to being a political, social and military history of the Korean War. But the amount of coverage devoted to African Americans in combat is derogatorily minimal and the article's author makes no attempt to draw upon the subsequent social or political significance of post-Korean War American military integration. One might have argued that it was the integration of that army during the Korean War that enabled President Dwight D. Eisenhower to successfully use the US Army troops to enforce the desegregation of public schools in Little Rock during 1957 when Arkansas's governor threatened resistance backed by his state's National Guard. Eisenhower, very comfortable in his own skin as the general turned president, sent a triple message with his dispatch of the 101st Airborne to Little Rock. First, if the US Army can integrate so can American society. Second, if White segregationists dare defy the Federal government they risk the humiliation of being put down and if necessary occupied by an integrated force. Third, Eisenhower as President as well as Commander-in-Chief ordered the subordination of the Arkansas National Guard so that federalization of the Guard meant its direct integration could be internally implemented, if necessary, in a fashion that over-rode the Governor's power. There would be no valid issue of *state's rights* in Arkansas's bid for segregation once the US Army was called in. The article also failed to indicate the degree to which Korea shaped African American leaders who served as role models for not just the Black community but the nation as a whole. Black veterans of Korea, such as Democratic Congressman Charles B. Rangel of New York, continue to influence the political landscape of America as well as watch over its foreign policy.

Several major opportunities to cross-reference information were squandered during the production of this encyclopaedia and that means its value as a research tool is limited. Take, for example, the failure to index the official documents in the third volume with their corresponding subject references in the first two volumes. If you locate Syngman Rhee in the Index you will find reference linkages to 80 related citations in volumes I and II. However, among those indexed linkages (pp. 1065–123) there is not a single directive leading the reader to the corresponding historic documents in volume III, such as the Rhee–Robertson Communiqué or Dulles–Rhee

Correspondence of 11 July 1953.⁵ That is indeed a shame since it diminishes the value of the so-called ‘documents volume’ and one is compelled to read through the ‘List of Documents’ (p. 787) in the hope that the often simplistically labelled entries may suggest appropriate connections. The latter course of action is highly problematic. Who could possibly tell from a document listed as ‘Telegram from Filipov (Stalin) to Chinese Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai (5 July 1950),’⁶ that it contains an official Soviet opinion on India’s mediation for China’s entry into the United Nations?

Similarly, Stalin’s stunning admission of failure by Soviet military advisors does not appear in the Index. Would you know from merely reading the curt entry listing ‘Attachment to #73 of the Politburo Protocol #78,’⁷ that the document contains one of the most succinct appraisals of Soviet tactical deficiencies in 1950? Stalin harshly condemned his field advisors in Korea for having apparently forgotten the need for combined operations. Armoured thrusts were not to be made without preparatory artillery barrages, as pockets of enemy resistors, turned tank killers, took their toll. Stalin also chastised his field operatives for their having lost Seoul to the Americans as the result of tardiness in ordering a tactical withdrawal from the central front. This document underpins the Korean War’s international significance in the evolution of twentieth-century conventional warfare. Stalin’s writing specifically demonstrates disappointment in these men as survivors of the Great Patriotic War. The veteran military advisors were thought to be well versed in Soviet offensive doctrine; the type used so successfully against the *Wehrmacht* in Operation Bagration. Here we see Stalin becoming reluctant to assume anything about the transferability of conventional tactics and strategy. It speaks directly to what we in the West eventually came to recognize as a Soviet weakness over the issue of decentralization in command structure. Today we often accept, without challenge, those historic surveys of the Cold War that speak of the period as typified by ‘rhetorical bluster’ between Washington and Moscow. But this was more than peripheral killing during a war of words. The battlefields of Korea were proving grounds for competing superpower theories of conventional warfare. Regrettably this document, highlighting the Soviet advisor’s military failure, does not receive so much as a mention under the appropriate Index entry ‘Soviet Union—military aid’.

Most Western encyclopaedias of military history are deficient in Asian subject matter and of little use to the greater field of Asian studies. Therefore, in theory, we should applaud any effort that helps address a research deficiency—particularly one suited to undergraduate usage. Having accepted that there is a real need for books like the *Encyclopedia of the Korean War* and that this can be a useful tool in the proper scholastic setting, it must be said these books suffer from a number of shortcomings. And when

⁵ See vol. III, pp. 1013–16.

⁶ See ‘List of Documents’, vol. III, p. 788.

⁷ The Top Secret Attachment of 27 September 1950 is found in vol. III, pp. 905–6.

those minor problems are taken into collective consideration, they inflict a greater toll on the encyclopaedia's credibility. The editorial staff could have papered-over a litany of problems if they had inserted a well-written *overview essay* at the beginning of the set. John S. D. Eisenhower, known particularly for his insightful contributions concerning his father's problems with coalition warfare, did devote five paragraphs of his Foreword to the flow of events. But John Eisenhower should not be faulted because a Foreword is hardly intended to yield the type of framework needed for these entries. Ultimately it is the senior editor who must bear the responsibility for not providing readers with an adequate context-setting narrative describing the history of the war in terms of causal factors, direction and a strategy that shifted as the conflict progressed. And such a contextual overview of the struggle need not have been a long piece. Recently Robert A. Divine covered the issues admirably in less than ten highly readable and easily understood pages.⁸

In closing, let it be said that this encyclopaedia will find its greatest use among American undergraduate college students approaching the Korean War for their first time as a subject of study in history or international relations courses. Many of them initially encountered the Korean War by way of the old television show M*A*S*H*. And although Mobile Army Surgical Hospitals were an interesting footnote, in the history of military medicine as it evolved during the Korean War, their depiction in re-runs of a once popular situation comedy is hardly a sufficient basis for understanding the war in an academic context. When used for directed document readings, biographical overviews, or subject specific outlines, these books will find a welcome home in appropriate institutional libraries.

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Smallarms of the East India Company 1600–1856. Vol. III: Ammunition and Performance (596 pages); *Vol. IV: The Users and Their Smallarms* (650 pages). By D. F. HARDING. Foresight Books, PO Box 15061, London, N10 2WF, UK, 1999.

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One can identify a series of English-language idioms that suggest firearms evolution has a particular historic significance to Western society. But just cataloguing all the sayings 'lock, stock and barrel', would constitute an ineffectual exercise—a mere 'flash in the pan'—simply 'falling short of the mark'; if one were attempting to analyse the cross-cultural legacy of the international smallarms trade. Apparently, firearms history is far more deeply entwined in our collective experience than we might care to admit.

⁸ See, Robert A. Divine's, *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace*, Texas A&M University Press, College Station, 2000. Note in particular pp. 47–51, 'Korea: The Perils of Limited War', and pp. 73–6, 'The Korean Armistice'.

In a previous edition of this journal, I had the opportunity to review Volume I: *Procurement and Design* as well as Volume II: *Catalogue of Patterns*, the first two offerings in David F. Harding's four-volume study of East India Company (EIC) smallarms.¹ In that review I asserted that Harding's work should give some scholars cause to reconsider what they mean by their use of the term 'The New Military History of South Asia'. Not that Harding set out to write South Asian military history *per se*, but rather his work provides valuable new historical insight into the mechanical, economic and military importance of the firearms that were the most basic tools of the Sepoy's trade. The dichotomy, presented in that earlier review, was that Harding's first two books were *very traditional* in taking us back to basics and telling us about the EIC's firearms, but also *very new* in chronicling the complexity of international weapons production, procurement and distribution in the period from 1600 to 1856.

Volume III: Ammunition and Performance

This volume contains literally hundreds of pages of technical detail devoted to understanding the manufacture and technical standards achieved with EIC ammunition. Harding's notation-laden account of how gunpowder was produced for the EIC, with regard to the firm's unique organizational behaviour and sub-contracting of local labour, will be of use to those studying early modern South Asian industrialization. Despite the seemingly monolithic appearance of the EIC's administration within South Asia, there were often great differences between the Bengal, Bombay and Madras Presidencies. In effect, each of the three Presidencies evolved its own distinctive military culture and that influenced not only soldiering in the field but military manufacturing with regard to ammunition as well as its related components. The divisions, some bordering on inter-service rivalry, remained largely intact until long after direct imperial assimilation in 1858. In addition to cataloguing the Presidencies' differences in ammunition manufacturing and fieldcraft, Harding also provides the reader with an overall synopsis of the major competing ballistic theories of the day. He demonstrates that members of the military establishment did not always recognize true scientific insight when they saw it, as in the case of the ballistic theories offered by Benjamin Robins. Understanding the stability of a lead sphere in flight, by way of modelling the 'Robins effect' as recorded in the 1740s, may seem far removed from how EIC smallarms figured in the larger scheme of things. Nevertheless, the issue of understanding *ballistic determinants* is yet another one of those historic cases in which Western military authorities had very little real understanding of the scientific principles that underpinned the most basic defence technology that they depended upon. Perhaps one does not need to know the theory of a weapon to use it effectively. But Harding's findings cast aspersions on the modern-day advoc-

¹ The previous review may be found in, *MAS*, vol. 33, no. 3, 1999, pp. 759–62.

ates of *technological determination* who see the military ascendancy of Europeans as determined by military technology that has been labelled 'superior'. That school of scholarship has depicted the so-called 'Rise of the West' as linked to Western armies that were supposedly 'more advanced in military science'. Harding's documentation shows how the South Asian military environment shaped British smallarms evolution. It suggests Westerners have painted too Euro-centric a picture of how military science and thought were disseminated in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Future authors covering 'The Cartridge Issue of 1857', will be expected to have read Harding to obtain a basic theoretical knowledge of cartridge mechanics and loading procedure in pre-1857 India. Unfortunately, in the past, several historians approached the cartridge controversy with insufficient knowledge of smallarms and some rather inaccurate statements were made about the arms and ammunition in question. Many non-specialist readers were never the wiser and it often came across as some technical mumbo-jumbo that one could denigrate as 'toys for boys'; if it were not for the fact that the cartridge issue plays a serious part in the historiography of India's freedom movement. A noted Western author, who shall remain nameless, once described Sepoys as biting the bullets from Lee-Enfield rifle cartridges. Yes, cartridges were bitten as part of the muzzle-loading procedure in those days, and yes there were 'Enfield' rifles in India during 1857. But the Lee-Enfield was a much later breech loading bolt-action repeater, as opposed to a single-shot muzzle-loader, and Lee-Enfield cartridges were not made of paper; rather they featured full metal jacket projectiles crimped into brass casings. Dental improbability aside, suffice it to say that Harding's Volume III correctly shows how EIC paper cartridges evolved, how they were made and ultimately used. In addition to obtaining historically contemporary line drawings, Harding took the time to re-create the cartridge manufacturing and packaging process, guiding his readers through the discussion with detailed photographs. In one informative plate (24.6), the paper cartridge was photographed as 'loaded' into a transparent tube (rather than in an opaque metal gun barrel), to reveal the use of the paper as a propellant *gas seal*. That rudimentary 'gas check' helped to derive greater energy from the burning black powder charge. The author, for reasons established in the opening volume of the set, ended his study with 1856 and that is appropriate, given that the work is devoted to the arms of the East India Company, not the weaponry of the 'British Raj' that emerged from 1857 to 1858. However, the concluding date of 1856 raises the possibility that we may one day see a very serious technical study from Harding concerning the 'Greased Cartridge Affair'.

For those readers with more than a basic working knowledge of smallarms, Harding's presentation of graphed ballistic data may appear as his greatest research contribution to military history.² He has transformed obscure nineteenth-century test results into highly useable performance graphs that will be of value to South Asian as well as Western military historians. 'India pattern' muskets were crucial to British performance in

² Harding, vol. III, ch. 25.

the Napoleonic Wars at battles like Waterloo. They were also exported by the thousands to countries like Mexico, which used them for decades on New World battlefields that included the Alamo in Texas. No longer will military historians be able to speak glibly of the musket as having an effective range of 40 to 120 yards. Harding details 200-yard range results and elaborately explains the EIC's emphasis on aimed fire with muskets. The armies of the EIC, like the historically contemporary armies of Europe, used tactics that relied on the delivery of a specific volume of fire within an appropriate range of engagement. Rifles, used by British forces in India as early as 1711, had greater range than muskets but tended to be slower to load. Yet the musket's accuracy was more than adequate for the infantry doctrine of that era and its speed of loading was preferable to that of the slower muzzle-loading rifles. Many modern historians will be surprised at the musket's ballistic performance results because they have been conditioned to believe that the musket's range, power and accuracy, were a poor second to the rifles introduced in the mid-nineteenth century. But as Harding points out, 'The mid-Victorian proponents of rifled muskets (chiefly on the Minié principle) wildly exaggerated the inaccuracy of the earlier smoothbore muskets in their desire to promote the new technology.'³

As for the argument that the eventual replacement of smoothbore muskets by breech loading rifles in European units was a Sepoy control mechanism—a shabby theoretical variation on technological determination—Harding's research is useful in balancing what some have recently asserted were 'great gains' in dominant European weapons superiority. We learn: 'the British 11-bore smoothbore musket not only had a supersonic muzzle velocity,⁴ but one that was higher than the Enfield, Snider and Martini-Henry rifles which followed it, and which few if any writers dismiss as low-velocity weapons. Not until the .303in Lee-Metford rifle of the late 1880s⁵ did the British forces have an infantry smallarm with a muzzle velocity and muzzle energy greater than that of the much maligned "Brown Bess"'.⁶

Although his books specifically concern the smallarms of the EIC, Harding does note some of the reasons why South Asian matchlocks attained even higher velocities than those of the British musket. The addition of a constricted access powder chamber into the barrels of *jezails* tended to maximize the burning properties of their domestically produced gunpowder. The chamber's construction evidently created an air space between the powder and the ball which in turn enhanced the burning powder's propellant gas expansion to force the projectile down the barrel at higher velocities.⁷ Harding believes the Indian matchlock's combination of breech design and powder type, represented a classic instance of a valid and effective

³ Harding, vol. III, ch. 25, p. 329.

⁴ In Harding's work a mathematical line of distinction is drawn between 'low' and 'high' velocity by establishing the threshold value as being in accordance with the speed of sound through air.

⁵ Note that the Lee-Metford's appearance was well after the demise of the EIC and its military policies.

⁶ Harding, vol. III, ch. 26, p. 365.

⁷ Harding, vol. III, ch. 26, pp. 377–8.

'Eastern technology' which was not understood by historically contemporary Westerners. The *jezails*' extended killing range, noted particularly in the early Anglo-Afghan campaigns, did add strength to the arguments made by some British soldiers who urged universal adoption of a service rifle that could increase the chances of hit probability when British forces came under accurate long-distance fire from Pathan marksmen. From the late 1840s onward, the Bengal Presidency was compelled to issue more rifles to deal with the situation on the Northwest Frontier.⁸ The British need for rifles and pack-howitzers was a tactical imperative necessitated by Pathan expertise in hill warfare with the *jezail*. This further diminishes the theories of those who believe Western military technology was inherently superior and that it swept all opposition before it. The British issuance of rifles in this case was a necessary policy change motivated by the need to compete tactically with an older Asian technology used effectively by veteran hillmen.

Vol. IV: The Users and Their Smallarms

In reviewing these books together, there is a great temptation to compare Volumes III and IV to each other rather than to consider their role in the development of thought presented in the now complete set. Social historians, perhaps bored to tears by the plethora of technical data in Volume III, will find more redeeming features in Volume IV simply because it deals directly with human experience. Woven through this study are vignettes covering issues that affected the daily lives of South Asian soldiers. This included the accidental wounding of Sepoys who were rendered casualties by the discharge of their comrade's weapons. Dangerously worn 'touchholes' in the breech of a musket often permitted a searing jet of flame to burn the man standing to the right when a unit fired by ranks.

Harding's work embraces Kolff's vision of a vibrant South Asian *military labour market*,⁹ and shows that in the seventeenth century, EIC military effectiveness was facilitated when the Company supplied South Asian 'jobber commanders' with weapons that were logistically compatible with those of the EIC's greater trade network. The British could maximize the deployment of South Asian fighting men if standard weapons with standard calibres were issued. The EIC's mercenary troops eventually evolved into vast Sepoy armies and the Bombay Presidency took the lead in bridging regional military labour markets. It hired Sepoys trained by the Portuguese in Goa and by 1684 Bombay added two companies of 'mainland Rajputs'.¹⁰ These data underpin a model of peripheral military incorporation with obvious ramifications for those studying the degree to which the EIC provided a shared common experience for South Asian soldiers from across the sub-

⁸ Harding, vol. IV, pp. 126–37, 484–96.

⁹ Dirk H. A. Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput & Sepoy, The ethnohistory of the military labour market in Hindustan, 1450–1850* (Cambridge University Press, 1990).

¹⁰ Harding, vol. IV, ch. 32, p. 238.

continent. The history told in Harding's Volume IV is illustrated with a number of prints and drawings from the Fine Art Department of Britain's National Army Museum. Although published here in black and white, several plates provide historically contemporary depictions of military men—South Asian officers and enlisted men—in service to the three Presidency armies.

In recent years some anti-imperial historians have implied that the EIC knowingly under-trained as well as under-gunned their Sepoy armies in order to retain European military dominance—a Machiavellian interpretation of military control if you will. However, Harding's research shows that line of reasoning as militarily and historically unsound. As early as 1766 the Court of Directors accepted the Madras Presidency's argument that if Sepoys were to be depended upon, then they must have muskets equal to those of European troops.¹¹ And as early as 1771 the tactical training of Sepoys was noted as being the same as for Europeans.¹² What incentive was there for British officers to create a military force that could not be depended upon in combat? Why would officers jeopardize their own lives in battles against opponents as highly skilled as Haidar Ali and Jeswunt Rao Holkar? *Colonel Baillie's Disaster* in the Karnatak Campaign of 1780 and *Colonel Monson's Retreat* following the Mukundara Pass Withdrawal in 1804, were not self-orchestrated British defeats intended to retro-fit strength to the cases of EIC officers who had already been successful in arguing that all EIC Sepoy troops had to be issued with the best equipment and trained to the highest standards. The EIC was a publicly traded company and it could not make money by losing wars. In that respect, meaning an army run on a commercial resource-based accounting system, it may have been a more effective military tool of foreign policy than many historically contemporary national armies. Throughout its history the EIC consistently fought to win and Harding reveals that the documentation tracing Sepoy equality in training and weapons issuance stretches from Elihu Yale's order of 1687 up to the penultimate year of *Company Raj* in 1856.¹³

On a more critical note, Harding never misses an opportunity to point out cases where the Madras Presidency Army, not the Bengal Army, proved to be the leader in military training, technology and tactics. This is particularly true in the period from 1750 to 1810 and that negates a number of former assumptions about Bengal's military leadership. The author's tendency towards a southern bias comes from his tracking the degree to which the Madras officers or 'coast soldiers' were the most professionally minded military innovators within the EIC. Harding's insightful and overdue observations on the Madras Army may be readily employed by scholars attempting to identify separate trends in *EIC military culture* within South Asia.¹⁴ Following 1857, a number of the Madras Presidency's contributions

¹¹ Harding, vol. I, p. 14.

¹² Harding, vol. III, p. 267.

¹³ Yale's order of 1687 is found in vol. IV, pp. 155–6.

¹⁴ Peter Stanley made great strides in the recognition of specific British military cultures within South Asia. See, *White Mutiny, British Military Culture in India, 1825–1875* (Hurst & Company, London, 1998).

slipped from sight and the dominant input of Bengal-based military culture was absorbed, filtered and formalized with Whitehall's assumption of direct military control.

Owing to the nature of these books as a *de facto Encyclopedia of EIC Smallarms*, Harding uses a repetitive chronological methodology. If you read the four volume set from cover-to-cover you will find several places where material overlaps, such as points concerning the poor performance of British bayonets and two-groove rifle ammunition in the Sutlej Campaign of the First Anglo-Sikh War. But that overlap and repetition, not normally encountered in a subject-specific scenario when one *looks up* a given item, is quite forgivable and may indeed be necessary. For example, the sections dealing with flintlock and percussion ignition chronologically overlap the sections on ammunition manufacturing and performance. These are editorial concessions to the majority of readers who will only consult these books on an item-by-item basis.

Harding made extensive use of records in Chennai and Delhi but it was his painstaking examination of the British Library's Oriental and India Office Collection (OIOC), the huge holdings that formerly constituted the India Office Library, which makes these books of great value to researchers beyond those few souls purely interested in EIC smallarms. Harding's work includes comprehensive references to military reports, packing lists, shipwrecks, inventories, expenditure ledgers and accounts receivable. Economic, Labour and Social historians unaccustomed to the networking of corresponding reports to the Court of Directors and the Military Boards of Madras, Bengal and Bombay, would do well to study the diversity of accession numbers and file references used by Harding. His chapter footnotes read like a roadmap of archival inter-connectivity within the OIOC. These tomes were never intended to grace the nightstand of casual nocturnal readers and the author makes no apology for his obsession with detail. For it is Harding's near-pedantic concern with bibliographic as well as mechanical minutiae that makes these books truly valuable reference works and explains their presence on the open shelves of the British Library's OIOC Reading Room.

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Propaganda and Information in Eastern India 1939–45: A Necessary Weapon of War. By SANJOY BHATTACHARYA. Curzon Press: Richmond, 2001. ISBN 0-7007-1406-5 X1V, 242 pp.

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During the years 1939–45, gaining victory over the Axis powers was obviously the primary concern of British government at home and abroad. The policies and actions of the Government of India were consequently formulated and carried out in the light of this primary concern, in contrast to the immediate pre-war years when imperial policies were primarily assessed in

terms of their effect on Indian nationalism. Thus, as the author of this finely nuanced study observes, ‘attempts to manufacture consent between 1939 and 1945 were usually only marginally linked to older hegemonic projects.’ (p. 9) But the existence of this undeniably genuine threat, not just to the British position in India but to the very existence of the British nation, meant that certain accommodations had to be made to ensure the necessary minimum level of support continued to be given to the imperial government by its Indian subjects, in particular in regard to their responses to the Indian Independence movement.

Sanjoy Bhattacharya’s ground-breaking monograph examines the war-time efforts of the British colonial state to ‘manufacture consent’ in eastern India (Assam, Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and eastern U.P.; that region most liable to Japanese invasion and subsequently the primary staging point for the allied response). It focuses in particular on a ‘necessary weapon of war’—state policies of information control. By placing the war at the centre of the stage, it demonstrates how war-time events shaped economic, socio-political, and de-colonization policies and developments.

This work follows several recent studies, notably Christopher Bayly’s *Empire and Information*, which have brought out the importance of the control of ‘information’ in the colonial context. But whereas Bayly emphasized the powers of the ‘native informant’, Bhattacharya’s work demonstrates that in the time and place under consideration, ‘authorities were able to create networks through which the political sensibilities of a wide cross-section of Indian society was gauged without the assistance of the “informant.”’ (p. 207). Knowledge of the state of Indian morale and opinion was obtained by censorship of private correspondence rather than imposed by Europeans (alone, or in collaboration with ‘native informants’). This knowledge was then used by the colonial state to respond to the concerns raised in censored correspondence, making the indigenous population agents of official action, albeit generally unwittingly. But this evidence of unmediated knowledge clearly adds a new dimension to the issue of information control in the colonial context. We may look forward to further studies proceeding from this point, studies which examine, for example, the extent to which this process was known *at the time* (or was open to further manipulation by indigenous officials), and the question of what information was acted on (such as food supply concerns) and what was not acted on (religious ritual concerns? British military strategies?).

The colonial state did not, of course, have unquestioned ‘control’ over information and one of the strengths of this work is that it displays an advanced understanding of the Central Government’s lack of ability to enforce its will over provincial governments and officials, with the ‘colonial state . . . seen . . . as a multi-layered edifice, where officials were given—or sometimes took—the autonomy to interpret policy within their particular localities.’ (p. 4) The concept of the monolithic state is further discredited by the author’s welcome recognition that an individual within a multi-layered organization such as the Government of India does not necessarily have unquestioning loyalty to the aims and methods of that organization. Indeed this point might have been further developed by a closer examina-

tion of the mentality of specific influential individuals within the administrative levels. Were their decisions ideological or *ad hoc*? The fragmented nature of 'Indian opinion' suggests another area where this work will open up neglected fields of enquiry. This emphasis on the complexities of multi-layered authority and of the role of individual and organizational agency within that authority, analysed through a sound base of primary source analysis (allied to the judicious use of oral history), is a long overdue response to simplistic and primarily theoretical examinations of a monolithic colonial state.

Examining the reaction of subordinate ranks of provincial and national governments highlights the distinction between Indian local and British central government and if the current academic 'trend is to overestimate the solidarity of the colonial regime', Bhattacharya demonstrates that, in practice, local administrators shaped the ultimate form which government took. That complexity of socio-political relationships within the colonial state proved problematical for the authorities; attempts to enforce policies such as vaccination, which were designed to gain the support of the populace, were liable to generate not support, but opposition at local levels.

War had produced an increase in the number of possible ideological standpoints for opposition to the colonial state, and the Congress party were able to use their existing nation-wide networks to increase their political support through the manipulation of local issues; thus drawing in support for their wider and longer term aims. Indian officials were generally politically, rather than war minded, and Congress was able to exploit issues such as the massive road-building schemes which disrupted local economies, the economic problems in areas linked into the South East Asian economies, and in particular the great increase in the number of troops stationed on Indian soil, including foreign troops (both European and Asian) with all the culture implications that entailed. By 1944, for example, there were 102,000 Chinese troops in India.

Given the lack of resources available to the Government of India, it was essential that propaganda was targeted at the specific sections of the community where it was most effective. Government made practical decisions as to which social groups were strategically important, and Bhattacharya demonstrates that ultimately government was engaged in a battle for the hearts and minds of its own employees, rather than primarily using those employees in the targeting of those outside state structures.

The propaganda strategies of the wartime colonial government involved a wide range of activities, including control of print, film, and wireless, the oral dissemination of information through talks to troops etc, and the use of material and medical aid in conjunction with that control. Propaganda included descriptions of welfare projects etc., which were often initiated at local level in response to local demand, and at that level, while recognizing the political value of subsidized clothes, medical aid, etc., these projects also had a law and order aspect and were often seen in these terms.

The Punjab, the prime recruiting ground, remained the focus of propaganda aimed at the military. Given the belief that the success of the war effort was dependent on the 'moral resolve, discipline and effective provi-

sioning' of troops, issues of food and health were at the forefront. Thus there was a considerable expansion of military medical services and action in the Punjab and other recruiting areas.

The British experience of ruling India had given them a sophisticated understanding of the likely concerns of the Indian people and their propaganda therefore focused particularly on Japanese atrocities against religion and Indian women, although as the author states, 'a particular publicity item could represent the truth, be an absolute fabrication, or merely be the truth out of context, depending on the audience and the current strategic situation.' (p. 124)

The application and effect of State propaganda on the civilian target audiences is also examined, with the focus clearly shown to be on the urban rather than the rural population. Even in war-time, the British remained concerned with the sources of cultural innovation within India. War-time solidarity among the allies did not prevent a British fear of American influence, with the British authorities limiting the American's usage of wireless. A shortage of equipment limited the scope of radio propaganda in any case, but there were also organized cinema shows and exhibitions which provided opportunities for more or less explicit propaganda.

While the effectiveness of censorship was restricted by a lack of manpower, the Government was not without its extraordinary powers; rationing of newsprint meant that the selective grant of newsprint could be used to exert control over newspapers. Film censorship was by District Magistrates at local level, enabling censors to take local cultural factors into consideration. The system was, in general, sophisticated, practical, and far from intrusive. Of particular interest is the process by which soldiers' letters were examined, but not generally censored. Instead a weekly report of the soldiers' concerns was compiled on the basis of the information in the letters, and action was then taken in regard to the revealed grievances. Thus a soldier whose letters revealed his worries as to the food supplies in his district might find soon after that news sources were highlighting the distribution of food aid in his district.

The empirical basis of this work strengthens the theoretical understanding it provides, and there is a wealth of detail in the notes. Two points arising are of particular interest; evidence that the so-called 'martial classes' were actually those social groups from 'localities with well-ordered recruitment systems and comprehensive administrative structures' (p. 196), and the ultimate effects of British propaganda on the Independence movement. The increased reliance on the use of civilians in the military meant the induction of considerable numbers of those whose ultimate belief was in independence. The military and civil powers were forced to recognize this, and the increasing awareness of those in the upper echelons of the imperial government that they would be unable to rely on local troops for the internal defence of the colonial state after the war was a major factor in the acceptance of the need for decolonization. Indeed, the evidence here tends to suggest that pragmatic military minds were quicker to see the inevitability of independence than the civil powers.

Well-written and researched, this work is distinguished both by its clarity and its concise examination of the issues. Its findings are of considerable

importance to anyone working on the colonial state and it sheds light on a number of related issues and wider debates. It will provide a sound basis for future studies developing the insights demonstrated here and should be read by all of those concerned with issues of information, decolonization, and imperial policy.

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