Tarak Barkawi

Culture and Combat in the Colonies: The Indian Army in the Second World War

Military history is a Eurocentric discipline, as Jeremy Black observes.[1] So too is military sociology. They are Eurocentric in the straightforward sense that their subject matter overwhelmingly concerns the militaries and wars of European, and latterly Western, states. One response is to enquire into non-Western military experience as well as the expansion of Western military systems into the non-European world and the hybrid forms that resulted, as for example in the excellent social histories of colonial armies now available.[2] But military history and military sociology are Eurocentric in a more significant sense. Categories and assumptions are derived from European histories. Debate over the sources and nature of combat motivation and battlefield conduct, for example, takes place almost entirely on Western terrain, and in no small measure concerns the armed forces of a single power in the second world war — Germany. Non-Western military histories can play an important role in enquiry into why and how soldiers fight. They can critically interrogate the terms of the debate through comparison and contrast, providing new perspective on what is, after all, parochial European experience.[3] Some of the insights offered by this 'post-colonial turn' are found at the intersection of the British Indian army and questions of combat motivation and the sources of battlefield conduct.

Debate over these questions tends to fall between two poles, the societal and the organizational, each of which conceives 'culture' differently. The societal view locates soldiers and armies within the culture and society from which they were recruited. Myths, images and ideologies derived from this context shape the way soldiers behave and give them a 'cause' for which to fight. A popular, if flawed, example of this approach is Omer Bartov's work on German forces on the Eastern Front in the second world war.[4] For Bartov,

1 Jeremy Black, *Rethinking Military History* (London 2004), chap. 3.
2 See e.g. Jeremy Black, *War and the World* (New Haven, CT 1998); Timothy Parsons, *The African Rank-and-File* (Portsmouth 1999).
3 Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ 2000).
4 Omer Bartov, *The Eastern Front, 1941–1945. German Troops and the Barbarisation of Warfare* (2nd edn, Basingstoke 2001) and *Hitler's Army. Soldiers, Nazis and War in the Third Reich* (Oxford 1993). Rüdiger Overmans's work on casualty statistics in *Deutsche militärische*

antisemitism and ideological internalization fundamentally shaped the conduct of German soldiers. Another example is found in the work of Victor Davis Hanson, who emphasizes the role of 'freedom, individualism, and civic militarism' in determining the quality and behaviour of 'Western' armies across the centuries.[5] Historically more specific is Craig Cameron's work on the First Marine Division.[6] Myth and imagination, derived from American culture, informed Marines' views about themselves and their enemies, shaped tactics, and contributed to the relative barbarization of the battlefield. Work in this vein understands culture as historically specific ideas and values, derived from civilian society, which inform soldiers' conduct.

The other approach concerns 'organizational' sources of combat motivation arising from the design and quality of military institutions. In military sociology the principal organizational theory is that of the 'primary group', the face-to-face circle of comrades who fight for one another in conditions of mortal danger.[7] Other organizational sources of fighting spirit include professionalism, regimental tradition and unit identity, quality of leadership and recruits, as well as everything from regular pay, full stomachs, good weapons, training and doctrine, to lucky generals and Dutch courage. The societal approach is inherently historical, necessarily emphasizing a particular time and place, but the organizational approach is in principle applicable across time and place. It is concerned with the general attributes of effective regular militaries. While the societal approach offers an explicit account of culture, as myths, images and ideologies that inform soldiers' understanding and action, 'culture' often remains implicit in the primary group approach.[8] It is present in notions like unit identity, comradeship and professionalism, which inherently involve shared understandings of tradition, fellow feeling and correct conduct. More fundamental is an underlying conception of the kind of soldiering and battlefield conduct associated with organized, regular warfare. The requisite

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Verluste im Zweiten Weltkrieg (Munich 1999) shows that it was the losses in 1944, not 1942 as Bartov claims, that fundamentally disrupted the Wehrmacht's ability to sustain primary groups. For more fine-grained accounts of the place of ideology in the Wehrmacht than Bartov's, see Stephen Fritz, *Frontsoldaten. The German Soldier in World War II* (Lexington, KY 1995) and Mark Mazower, 'Military Violence and National Socialist Values. The Wehrmacht in Greece 1941–1944', *Past and Present*, 134 (February 1992), 129–58. For a conceptual critique, see Tarak Barkawi, 'Peoples Homelands and Wars? Ethnicity, the Military and Battle among British Imperial Forces in the War against Japan', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 46, 1 (January 2004), 134–63.

5   Victor Davis Hanson, *Carnage and Culture. Landmark Battles in the Rise of Western Power* (New York 2001), 21. See also idem, *The Western Way of War. Infantry Battle in Classical Greece* (Oxford 1990).

6   Craig Cameron, *American Samurai. Myth, Imagination, and the Conduct of Battle in the First Marine Division, 1941–1951* (Cambridge 1994).

7   Edward Shils and Morris Janowitz, 'Cohesion and Disintegration in the *Wehrmacht* in World War II', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 12, 2 (1948), 280–315.

8   An exception is 'organizational culture'. See e.g. Theo Farrell, 'Figuring out Fighting Organizations. The New Organizational Analysis in Strategic Studies', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 19 (March 1996), 122–35.

disciplined bearing and the actions appropriate to particular situations must be inculcated through training, repeated exercises and drills. Culture here takes the form of soldierly values and attitudes, their precise content shifting with historical developments in warfare. These values and attitudes will be expressed through a particular idiom and language, and ideas derived from this local culture may compete and mix with soldierly sentiments. The question then becomes one of the degree to which the soldierly values dominate. The notion of 'soldierly values' may seem ahistorical, but it begins to describe what regular soldiers have in common despite cultural difference.

This debate over the societal and organizational sources of combat motivation provides a useful framework for the cultural analysis of soldiers and armies, one that gives due regard to the specific and the general. That said, the ground on which this debate takes place consists almost entirely of modern, *national* armies, and Western ones at that. Whether or not a particular scholar emphasizes nationalism and related political ideologies as a source of willingness to kill and die, national armies and national societies are the almost unquestioned backdrop for scholarship. This leads enquiry down certain routes and not others. For example, whether explaining combat motivation or the lack of it, the primary group approach is most convincing when combined with national identity and other societal factors.[9] But what if those factors were not present in the same kinds of way? What questions would be asked then? Ameliorating the Eurocentric character of the combat motivation debate requires looking at cases where the organizational and social context of armed forces differs considerably from that found in Western nation states. This article does so by looking at some colonial forces and their social and political context, primarily the British Indian army in south-east Asia.

Colonial armies, and other types of foreign and transnational forces, played significant roles in modern war, including the world wars. The social and organizational context of colonial armies differed considerably from their national counterparts. Rather than putatively shared national identity, colonial armies and societies were often marked by sharp ethnic division, fostered and maintained by imperial rulers. Colonial soldiers served foreign rulers, and the authorities had to contend with anti-colonial, nationalist political forces. Greater literacy, encouraged by military education, often meant that soldiers had access to news and propaganda and were familiar with the events of the day. In the Indian army, the commissioning of Indian officers accelerated this opening to anti-colonial politics and racial and other tensions in civilian colonial society. Despite this unfavourable social and political context, imperial authorities had to expand their forces rapidly to fight the very same opponents faced by the national armies of the Western allies.

Colonial armies faced contradictory imperatives. Measures designed to prevent unrest in the ranks were potentially detrimental for cohesion and

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9 See e.g. Eliot Chodoff, 'Ideology and Primary Groups', *Armed Forces and Society*, 9, 4 (Summer 1983), 569–93; Morris Janowitz and Stephen Wesbrook (eds), *The Political Education of Soldiers* (Beverly Hills, CA 1983).

effectiveness in high-intensity combat. The British Indian army, the largest and most effective colonial force ever, embodied this dilemma in particularly acute form. The army's elaborate system for the divide and rule of its own soldiers was designed to prevent dangerous combinations forming in the ranks. Different 'classes' of men, defined in terms of ethnic, caste, religious and regimental attributes, often served separately and in different capacities. As a result, each of the companies in most Indian army infantry battalions were differentiated by ethnicity and/or religion (e.g. one company each of Hindu Dogras, Punjabi Muslims, Pathans and Sikhs). The unwieldy 'class' organization created enormous problems for logistics (e.g. different food for each class[10]) and, especially, replacements, as losses had to be made up in the correct class proportions or risk unsettling the ethnic balance of the battalions.

The societal approach stresses the significance of common cultural background as a source of cohesion and shared purpose for fighting spirit. The absence of a common background in the multicultural and multiracial Indian army goes without remarking. Organizational scholars cite the significance of strong bonds of solidarity, not only between soldiers but also with company grade officers. But cultural and colonial divides marked relations between the British and Indian officers and other ranks. In a wartime Indian army battalion, emergency commissioned British officers often lacked the language skills to understand the dialects spoken by other ranks.[11] 'One didn't really get to know much about the troops like you would in a British unit', a British officer noted in this regard.[12] The language of command, Urdu, a version of Hindustani, was a second language for nearly everyone, and wartime British officers had little time to learn it. The interlocutors between the British officers and Indian other ranks were the Viceroy Commissioned Officers (VCOs), akin in some ways to very senior NCOs in a Western army but who commanded platoons and were responsible for discipline. 'The VCOs and the Subedar-Major [senior-most VCO] really ran the battalion', the same officer remarked.[13]

From the perspective of both approaches, the Indian army should have encountered some serious difficulties for cohesion and fighting spirit. While the army's broadly rural, Muslim recruiting base helped to insulate it from the mainly urban, Hindu Congress, it was still subject to nationalist challenge during the war, including the widespread unrest at home known as 'Quit India' and the formation of the Indian National Army (INA) abroad. Yet, by and large, it remained loyal and fought effectively during the war, with the

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10   In 1944, there were 30 different ration scales for the various classes of British and imperial troops in 14th Army. Churchill College Archives, Papers of Field Marshal Sir William Slim, 17/7, Major General A.H.J. Snelling, 'Administration in the Fourteenth Army', 6.

11   The failure of British officers to master dialects, as opposed to just Urdu, was a problem even before the war. Slim wrote an editorial on the subject in *The Journal of the United Service Institute of India* in July 1932 (vol. LXII, no. 268). 'It is difficult to know what a man thinks unless you speak his own language' (291). Churchill College Archives, Papers of Field Marshal Sir William Slim, 4/2, Published Articles by Slim.

12   Author's interview with British officer M. Anonymity maintained at request of interviewee.

13   Ibid.

exception of the INA itself and poor performance by mostly raw and untrained battalions in the early campaigns in Malaya and Burma.[14] The discussion that follows looks at the Indian army from both the societal and organizational perspectives, attending to the very different ways in which they conceive culture and its relation to combat motivation and battlefield conduct. The first two sections provide some background to military service in British India and look at the Indianization of the officer corps and the formation of the INA. The focus here is on the kind of cultural analysis appropriate to societal approaches, exploring the role of political beliefs and attitudes and their relation to the actions of Indian officers and other ranks.

The last two sections turn to the cultural dimensions of the organizational approach, looking at some aspects of training and combat for British imperial forces in the Burma campaign. The Indian army provided the bulk of the Allied ground troops for Burma, the largest land campaign fought by Japan outside China. After early reverses, intensified training and improvements in jungle warfare tactics enabled Indian soldiers to stand up to and defeat the 'fanatical' Japanese on battlefields noted for their intensity, savagery and lack of quarter. They did so in the absence of the kind of nationalism and racial ideology scholars often invoke to account for such fighting.[15] If the reasons for this effectiveness lie in the military qualities of Indian soldiers and formations, how did the 'European' regular military adapt to such a vastly different social, political and cultural context? What cultural dimensions of 'Western' soldiering and organized warfare are overlooked in the debate between the societal and organizational approaches?

The world wars were watersheds in the history of Indian nationalism. Britain's mobilization of Indian military and economic resources disrupted established ways of doing things and overturned existing patterns and structures, a situation fraught with danger for colonial rulers. Around 1.27 million men passed through the Indian army's ranks in the first world war, with nearly 50,000 Indian soldiers among the 947,000 British and imperial war dead.[16] Indians suffered through food and other scarcities, rises in prices and taxes, a clampdown on civil liberties and political activity, and intensive recruitment for the ostensibly volunteer army, involving use of force. Sympathy rose for nationalist and revolutionary movements, as well as for Islamic politics, due in part to the use of the Indian army against the Ottoman Empire. 'Political India' widely expected that, in exchange for the sacrifices during the war, there

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14   T.R. Moreman, *The Jungle, the Japanese and the British Commonwealth Armies at War 1941–45* (Abingdon 2005), 28–9.

15   Cameron, *American Samurai*, op. cit.; John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy. Race and Power in the Pacific War* (London 1986).

16   David Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War. Soldiers' Letters, 1914–18* (London 1999), 4; F.W. Perry, *The Commonwealth Armies. Manpower and Organisation in Two World Wars* (Manchester 1988), 96–7.

would be an increase in India's political status afterwards, at the least to make it a self-governing dominion.[17] Gandhi himself had encouraged enlistment, in the hope that steps towards self-government would be made afterwards.

Such expectations were rapidly and cruelly disappointed, leading to over two decades of nationalist, revolutionary and other political activity. Congress finally achieved some real power through the Government of India Act of 1935, which placed the provinces under elected ministers who controlled all provincial departments.[18] British-appointed governors in the provinces retained 'special powers', while in Delhi the defence and foreign affairs portfolios were placed outside the control of the legislature. While Congress swept the provincial elections in 1937, the British retained control of all core bases of their power. Lord Linlithgow, Viceroy of India between 1936 and 1943, justified the 1935 Act as 'best calculated, on a long view, to hold India to the Empire'.[19]

The second time around, Congress would not support the war effort on the basis of vague or insufficient British promises regarding self-government to be delivered only once the war was won. When war came, the cabinet in London declared war on behalf of the dependent parts of the British Empire. Congress, in response, sought clear guarantees of independence in return for its support of the war effort. When these were not forthcoming, two great challenges to the Raj were launched in the midst of the war. The first was the 'Quit India' campaign beginning in August 1942 with the arrest of Congress leaders, the most widespread internal uprising the Raj ever experienced; a 'chaotic violent movement' that arguably was the decisive moment in India's independence struggle.[20] The second was the formation of the INA, raised in large measure from Indian prisoners of war (PoWs), under Japanese auspices. Inconsequential as an armed force if not in size, the INA directly raised the question of the loyalty of the Indian army but was to play its most important role in the independence struggle only after the war. As Shah Nawaz Khan, a senior officer in the INA remarked: 'If the [Indian soldier] had to fight for democracy and freedom, it was much better to fight for his own democracy and freedom.'[21] Matters were not helped when the colonial authorities presided over a major and foreseeable famine in Bengal in 1943–44, which killed almost four million.[22]

Despite all this, the Indian army successfully expanded from a peacetime strength of about 160,000 to a wartime high of nearly two million in 1943.[23]

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17   Bipan Chandra et al., *India's Struggle for Independence 1857–1947* (New Delhi 1989), chaps 12–13.

18   Johannes H. Voigt, *India in the Second World War* (New Delhi 1987), 21–3.

19   Quoted in Chandra et al., *India's Struggle for Independence*, op. cit., 448.

20   Francis Hutchins, *India's Revolution: Gandhi and the Quit India Movement* (Cambridge, MA 1973), vii.

21   Major General Shah Nawaz Khan, *My Memories of INA & its Netaji* (Delhi 1946), 6.

22   Paul Greenough, *Prosperity and Misery in Modern Bengal* (Oxford 1982), 309.

23   Perry, *The Commonwealth Armies*, op. cit., 116. Oriental and India Office Collection (OIOC), L/R/5/273, War Department History, Expansion of the Armed Forces, September 1939–September 1943, Appendix A.

From 577 Indian commissioned officers (ICOs) at the beginning of the war, 140 of whom were medical officers, there were over 8000 by war's end, with 220 lieutenant colonels and four temporary or acting brigadiers. In 1939 there had been 10 British officers to each Indian one; by 1945, there were only 4.1 British officers to each ICO.[24] What were the bases of loyalty which, on the one hand, enabled the Indian army to fight with determination against the Axis powers but, on the other, left its officers and men vulnerable to alternative organization once captured? With few prominent exceptions, such as Vlasov's army, the PoWs of metropolitan armies are not normally organized into armed formations which wage war on their former comrades.

The impetus to this alternative organization arose from a development breaching the insulation of the Indian army from 'political India': the commissioning of Indian officers. Unlike peasant lads from rural districts, the educated, sometimes urban, ICOs from middle- and upper-class families were familiar with the currents of Indian nationalism and, in many cases, with nationalist politicians themselves.[25] During the interwar years, Indian officers were subject to varying degrees of racial discrimination and their status and pay were less than those of a British officer doing the same work. Some of these officers would go on to form the core of the INA officer corps; the INA could never have been formed on the scale it was without this military leadership.

After the first world war, in response to nationalist demands, the British had grudgingly continued a very limited Indianization of the officer corps, a process bitterly resisted by many British Indian army officers.[26] Indian officers were initially assigned to specific, Indianized units, a form of ghettoization not lost on those involved. A range of racial, cultural and political tensions arose among the British and Indian officers, mitigated or exacerbated by local circumstances and personalities. After the second world war, in seeking to explain why he had commuted the sentences passed on three INA officers tried at the Red Fort, the last Commander-in-Chief of the British Indian army, Field Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck, reminded British officers that they

> . . . forget, if they ever knew, the great bitterness bred in the minds of many Indian officers in the early days of 'Indianization' by the discrimination, often very real, exercised against them, and the discourteous, contemptuous treatment meted out to them by many British officers who should have known better.[27]

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24 Pradeep P. Barua, *Gentlemen of the Raj. The Indian Army Officer Corps, 1817–1949* (Westport, CT 2003), 130; Apurba Kundu, *Militarism in India. The Army and Civil Society in Consensus* (London 1998), 50; Lt. Col. Gautam Sharma, *Nationalisation of the Indian Army (1885–1947)* (New Delhi 1996), 174, 184.

25 Kundu, *Militarism in India*, op. cit., 36. Kundu surveyed 108 ICOs commissioned before or during the war. Fully a fifth of them had friends or family who were active in nationalist politics. See also OIOC L/WS/1/707, Indian Army Morale and Possibly Reduction, 'Subversive Attempts on Loyalty of Indian Army'.

26 For overviews, see the works cited in note 24.

27 Quoted in John Connell, *Auchinleck. A Critical Bibliography* (London 1959), 947.

Nearly every memoir by Indian officers commissioned in the interwar period provides more than one story of such contemptuous and discriminatory treatment at the hands of their fellow British officers.[28] Indian officers were also anomalous entities in wider colonial society, their skin colour conflicting with their status as commissioned officers. Social clubs, where membership was often restricted to Europeans, became sites of racial conflict.

These cleavages came to a head in the context of military defeat in Malaya and Singapore. Explaining why he and other ICOs joined the INA, one Indian officer remarked on the stand at the Red Fort trial:

> We also felt and agreed upon that so far concerning our career in the Indian Army there had been distinctions between the British Officers and the [ICOs]. The [ICOs] had not been treated as well as our English comrades or brother officers.[29]

Some of this discrimination was official in the sense that it was written into their commissions. In an Indian army battalion, an ICO was paid less and held a more restrictive commission than the British officers he served alongside.[30] Lower pay was justified by the fact that Indian officers did not have to travel home or bring over their wives and children. Indian officers did find their pay sufficient but resented the lower pay scale because of its implied racial discrimination.[31]

Beyond terms of service, the degree of racism an Indian officer encountered in the interwar period depended in large measure on the attitudes of the British officers and commanders in their units. In the experience of one ICO, S.P.P. Thorat, British officers largely confined their racism to off-duty socializing, where their attitudes 'bordered on being hostile'. They did not allow their wives to dance with Indian officers and treated them as 'outcasts'. But 'whatever their social attitude toward us, the British officers were fair in their official dealings, and certainly took pains to train us in the various duties and responsibilities of young officers.'[32] One probable reason for such care is that the ability of Indian officers would reflect on the regiment just like that of any

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28 See e.g. Humphrey Evans, *Thimayya of India. A Soldier's Life* (New York 1960); Mohammad Ayub Khan, *Friends not Masters. A Political Autobiography* (London 1967); Lt. Gen. Hassan Khan, *Memoirs* (Karachi 1993); Lt. Gen. B.M. Kaul, *The Untold Story* (Bombay 1967); B.K. Narayan, *General J.N. Chaudhuri. An Autobiography* (New Delhi 1978); General Mohan Singh, *Soldiers' Contribution to Indian Independence. The Epic of the Indian National Army* (New Delhi 1975); Lt. Gen. S.P.P. Thorat, *From Reveille to Retreat* (New Delhi 1986); Lt. Gen. S.D. Verma, *To Serve with Honour: My Memoirs* (Dehradun 1988).

29 Captain R.M. Irshad, quoted in Moti Ram, *Two Historic Trials in Red Fort. An Authentic Account of the Trial by General Court Martial of Captain Shah Nawaz Khan, Captain P.K. Sahgal and Lt. G.S. Dhillon and the Trial by a European Military Commission of Emperor Bhadur Shah* (New Delhi 1946), 140b.

30 Kundu, *Militarism in India*, op. cit., 15; Sharma, *Nationalisation of the Indian Army*, op. cit., chap. 8.

31 OIOC L/WS/1/1576, INA and Free Burma Army, 'Note by EICO on measures to counter the Japanese-sponsored attack on the loyalty of the Indian Army'.

32 Thorat, *From Reveille to Retreat*, op. cit., 21.

other officer, motivating some British officers to swallow their private feelings out of professional pride. Other British officers, however, were unable to keep their racism contained to off-duty hours. Thimayya, an ICO serving in the 4/19th Hyderabad in the 1930s, an Indianized unit, tells of very poor relations between the Indian and British officers. In one incident, the adjutant yelled racial abuse at the ICOs in front of the men.[33]

Typically for the Indian army, cultural tensions were expressed in dietary terms. Until Indianization, the regimental mess was an exclusively British environment and the menu consisted of 'boiled, fried or roasted fish, chicken and scraggy mutton', that is of British 'cuisine', despite the love of many officers for curry.[34] The arrival of Indian officers in this space caused considerable discomfort on both sides. In the 4/19th Hyderabad, British and Indian officers skirmished over whether the radio would be tuned to Western or Indian music.[35] B.M. Kaul was discouraged from speaking in his 'own tongue' with other ICOs.[36] Many ICOs spent as little time in the mess as possible in the early days of Indianization. Some ate more often with the other ranks, while others arranged late-night meals of Indian food after going through the motions in the mess.[37] However, one of the unforeseen consequences of limiting Indian officers to particular units was that they were present in numbers and could both support one another and exercise more influence.[38] The Indian officers of the 16th Light Cavalry 'after a long struggle managed to introduce into their own mess one mildly curried vegetable with every meal and were jubilant with this small success'.[39] In the 1/14th Punjab, a battalion that produced an unusual number of senior INA officers, they were more successful, with curry served three nights a week as the main course.[40]

Despite such tensions, and with sufficient willingness on both sides, military life offered many opportunities for Indian and British officers to integrate successfully. An Indian officer who established his professional competence was far more likely to be accepted. 'Once you proved [to British superiors] you were good, you were good', one ICO remarked.[41] The concentration of Indian officers in the Indianized units enabled them to help each other, and many thought that they had to be twice as good in order to be accepted as equals by the British, and so sought high degrees of professional excellence.[42] While the memoirs of ICOs from this period speak of racism on the part of British

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33 Evans, *Thimayya of India*, op. cit., 158–61.

34 Narayan, *General J.N. Chaudhuri*, op. cit., 72. 'I am getting browned off with English meals. . . . How I long for a curry', one British officer told Chaudhuri (73).

35 Evans, *Thimayya of India*, op. cit., 98.

36 Kaul, *The Untold Story*, op. cit., 41.

37 Evans, *Thimayya of India*, op. cit., 104; Narayan, *General J.N. Chaudhuri*, op. cit., 72–3.

38 Evans, *Thimayya of India*, op. cit., 102–3; Kaul, *The Untold Story*, op. cit., 42; Narayan, *General J.N. Chaudhuri*, op. cit., 54.

39 Narayan, *General J.N. Chaudhuri*, op. cit., 72.

40 Khan, *Friends not Masters*, op. cit., 13.

41 Quoted in Kundu, *Militarism in India*, op. cit., 22.

42 Evans, *Thimayya of India*, op. cit., 102–3, 107–8; Kundu, *Militarism in India*, op. cit., 22–3.

officers, they also mention many who discharged their duties professionally and made every effort to teach the young Indians the nature of their trade.[43]

The vast expansion of the Indian army once war began changed matters for Indian officers in important respects. British wartime Emergency Commissioned Officers (ECOs), many from middle-class families with little direct experience of empire, had far less racial prejudice than the old regular officer corps. As one remarked:

> We junior officers were in our early twenties . . . and were pretty adaptable. Relations were civil and generally cordial considering that we were on active service and living in stressful conditions. Any strains which arose occurred among, as much as between, British and Indians and there was no serious racial discord.[44]

One Indian officer who trained with many wartime British ECOs wrote that 'officers of ability soon found themselves accepted.' He reported little trouble except 'when some British officers with colonial backgrounds started talking about how lucky the natives were who but for the white man's presence would be at each other's throats'.[45] In his experience, during the war British officers often publicly frowned on expressions of racism by other British officers. Another Indian officer, drinking with four British ECOs in a club in Bombay, was asked to leave by the secretary of the club as Indians were not allowed: 'My group would not stomach it, threw their glasses at the mirror behind the barman and we walked out!' In his view, 'there is no doubt that during the training and during war, there was excellent spirit of friendship between the officers'.[46]

During the war, higher command made persistent efforts to ensure that harmony prevailed between British and Indian officers. In some units, command instructed British officers not to 'speak in derogatory terms in the presence of Indian officers about their political leaders, customs, traditions or music'.[47] The Infantry Committee report, which was crucial to restructuring training and reinforcement procedures after the failed first Arakan campaign in Burma, identified voluntary segregation between British and Indian ECOs in the messes of training schools as a particular problem, saying that commanders needed to take a 'personal interest' in integrating officers. 'The Committee feels that the most strenuous efforts must be made from the moment the [ICO] joins his Training Centre . . . to ensure that no discrimination of any nature is permitted.'[48]

Many British officers insist that in their infantry battalions wartime rela-

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43 See e.g. Narayan, *General J.N. Chaudhuri*, op. cit., 49, 57, 65; Singh, *Soldiers' Contribution to Indian Independence*, op. cit., 35–6; Verma, *To Serve with Honour*, op. cit., 14–15.
44 Author's correspondence with Major A.G. Bramwell, 18 May 2001.
45 Author's correspondence with Colonel S.C. Singha, 23 August 2001.
46 Author's correspondence with Major General Ranbir Bakhshi, 1 August 2001.
47 Author's correspondence with Colonel S.C. Singha, 23 August 2001.
48 OIOC L/WS/1/1371, Report of Infantry Committee, 21.

tions with Indian officers were very good.[49] Wartime battalions spent a great
deal of time training in remote areas where there were no clubs or colonial
society to cause trouble. Colonel S.C. Singha, a wartime officer in 7/10 Baluch,
'never had a complaint'.[50] A British officer in this same battalion commented
that the key to the Indian army was 'mutual respect of other people's religions
and views . . . there was a sort of tolerance of people'.[51] Another officer from a
different battalion remarked that 'you always respected the next man's
religion'.[52] Commanders preparing their battalions for war probably had little
time for racial dissension among their officers. It is not surprising that the
intensity and close living of wartime training and service bred a strong cama-
raderie among the officers and men which could overcome racial antagonisms
and prejudices, in Indian as well as other colonial formations. When units of
81 (West African) Division were jeered by white South Africans during a
stopover in Cape Town on their way to India, one officer had his men relieve
themselves 'and his feelings' in an orderly fashion on the pavement of a
wealthy suburb.[53] Similarly, when the only black officer in the division was
refused a drink at a Cape Town bar, his fellow officers 'rose as one man and
went, leaving their glasses unemptied'.[54] Among other things, these officers
and men were taking pride in their units, enacting the collective identity and
bonds of fellow feeling built up in the formation and training of regular units.
In cosmopolitan, colonial militaries these bonds necessarily crossed racial,
cultural and religious lines.

   Despite the tensions involved in Indianization, military life even in peace-
time offered a number of possibilities for overcoming them. Indian officers
who were effective at their jobs, good at sport and could hold their liquor
stood a reasonable chance of acceptance. Organizational sources of integra-
tion could overcome the cultural and political tensions of the colonial context.
In wartime, the pressures for integration increased while the lack of contact
with civilian colonial society largely removed a major source of potential
trouble. But cohesion and professionalism did not mean that Indian officers
were loyal in the sense of dedication to the British cause. Their politics were
Indian (or Pakistani), not British. Many were astute and knowledgeable
nationalists and considered questions of loyalty carefully and explicitly, pay-
ing attention especially to the likely outcome of the war as events developed.
But only among those officers who found themselves in Japanese hands did
nationalist politics issue in open, armed rebellion against British rule, and even
then only after careful calculation of the pros and cons. Many officers who
continued to serve the Raj loyally had equally strong nationalist feelings; their

49   Author's interviews with British officers.
50   Author's correspondence with Colonel S.C. Singha, 23 August 2001.
51   Author's interview with Brigadier John Randle, 31 January 2001.
52   Author's interview with Major George Coppen, 24 April 2001.
53   John A.L. Hamilton, *War Bush. 81 (West African) Division in Burma 1943–1945* (Wilby
2001), 46.
54   Ibid., 46.

calculations of the best path to Indian independence simply differed. Either way, Indianization was a major breach in the carefully constructed defences between the Indian army and the tensions of colonial society. It did not, however, prevent Indian officers and men from serving professionally and effectively, except in conditions of defeat and organizational breakdown.

Indian officers in the interwar period and the second world war were well acquainted with the nationalist movement. When he was a secondary school student, S.D. Verma was sufficiently inspired by Gandhi to participate in the non-co-operation movement of 1921–22.[55] In late 1931 Thorat fell in love with and eventually married an 'ardent admirer' of Gandhi.[56] Often recruited from the élite, Indian officers frequently socialized in the same circles as leading nationalist politicians.[57] Some ICOs who openly voiced their opinions were drummed out of the service in the interwar period.[58] Others covertly aided the nationalist movement. Thimayya claims to have foiled a police plot to cut off the electricity where Gandhi was speaking on one occasion. When his company was called out to suppress 'Quit India' demonstrations in Agra, he ensured that his men did not have to fire by tacit agreement with the leaders of the demonstrations.[59]

Such nationalist views and activities had to be reconciled with military service to the Raj. For some, a sense of adventure attracted them to the service despite their nationalism.[60] But many justified their service by reference to the need an independent India would have for military professionals, a motive reconciling nationalism with their chosen career. Nationalist politicians encouraged this view.[61] The attitudes of Indian officers towards the British were marked by ambivalence and conditionality. By and large, they served professionally but not with the kind of loyalty to cause and country often taken for granted in national militaries. As one later noted in the wake of the formation of the INA, 'loyalty is not quite as general as is believed by senior British Officers. A number of people are loyal but they will only remain so as long as it suits them.' This was due to the fact that in his opinion 'every Indian (soldiers included) desires a higher political status for India. The difference is only in degrees.'[62] So while ICOs served loyally and fought hard during the war, suffering wounds or worse, many did not do so out of any firm commitment to the British. Among the Indian officers Thimayya knew, 'the consensus was that we should help the British defeat the Axis powers and deal with the British afterward.' Even so, 'it was difficult for us . . . to view [the INA] as

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55 Verma, *To Serve with Honour*, op. cit., 2.
56 Thorat, *From Reveille to Retreat*, op. cit., 39.
57 Narayan, *General J.N. Chaudhuri*, op. cit., 79–80.
58 Kundu, *Militarism in India*, op. cit., 37.
59 Evans, *Thimayya of India*, op. cit., 118, 179–80.
60 Kaul, *The Untold Story*, op. cit., 16.
61 Evans, *Thimayya of India*, op. cit., 116; Thorat, *From Reveille to Retreat*, op. cit., 8.
62 OIOC L/WS/1/1576, INA and Free Burma Army, 'Letter from KCIO', 13 March 1943.

anything but patriotic.'[63] Kaul sums up his views and those of other ICOs he knew in very similar terms.[64]

This ambivalence at best towards British rule did not manifest itself in open rebellion by serving officers during the war *unless* they were caught up in situations of military defeat and organizational collapse. As one ICO noted, the nationalist views of Indian officers would only lead to disloyalty under certain circumstances, in particular if the Japanese were to master the situation.[65] And master the situation is precisely what the Japanese achieved in Malaya and Singapore at the outbreak of the Pacific War. The Indian army units garrisoning Malaya before the Japanese invasion were not generally composed of first-line manpower, much of which had already been sent to the Middle East. Many battalions were heavily 'milked', sending drafts of experienced officers and other ranks back to India to raise new battalions. A high percentage of officers and men were inexperienced and of very short service.[66]

Moreover, all the interwar inequities in status and pay, as well as the racial strains within the battalions and between Indian officers and white colonial society were keenly felt among the Indian officers in Malaya and Singapore. One Indian officer stationed in Singapore until just before it fell later reported that the ICOs in Malaya were discontented over the political situation, particularly the resignation of the Congress ministries at the outbreak of the war; they were angry at the disparity in salaries, and incensed at the discrimination they encountered in the social clubs and when travelling on trains. He quoted one ICO, who later became a prominent INA officer, saying before the war 'he'd be damned if he'd lift even his little finger to defend these Europeans'.[67] The wartime processes integrating the officer corps of the Indian army, forging the weapon that would defeat the Japanese at Kohima and Imphal and re-conquer Burma, had yet to take hold. In the 4/19th Hyderabad, relations were so bad that 'the British and Indian officers were not even speaking to each other . . . the troops themselves . . . had become sullen and silent'.[68] Thimayya prevented a mutiny in one company becoming general by telling the soldiers that they worked for him, not the British.[69] The situation was contained but, according to Thimayya,

> . . . the sympathy of the Indian officers was with the mutineers. . . . Our anti-British feelings were intense. The war in Europe and Africa was going badly for the Allies, and most of us greeted the news of a British defeat with delight.[70]

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63 Quoted in Evans, *Thimayya of India*, op. cit., 180–1.
64 Kaul, *The Untold Story*, op. cit., 61.
65 OIOC L/WS/1/1576, INA and Free Burma Army, 'Letter from KCIO'.
66 Major General Woodburn S. Kirby et al., *The War Against Japan. The Loss of Singapore*, vol. 1 (London 1957), 164–5.
67 OIOC L/WS/1/1576, INA and Free Burma Army, 'Note by EICO on measures to counter the Japanese-sponsored attack on the loyalty of the Indian Army'.
68 Evans, *Thimayya of India*, op. cit., 167.
69 Ibid., 169.
70 Quoted in ibid., 169.

Another ICO, who was captured by the Japanese at Singapore and later tortured by them for subverting INA operations, for which he was awarded the George Cross, summed up the situation among Indian formations in Malaya as follows: 'The biased treatment of Indians by British officers and the general discontent of Indian troops of all ranks was universal in Malaya.'[71]

In this context, the Japanese invaded Malaya and began inflicting one defeat after another on the Commonwealth forces as they retreated down the peninsula. The Japanese forces were experienced, lightly-equipped and repeatedly outflanked the road-bound British, Australian and Indian formations by moving around them through the countryside. Shortly after the invasion of Malaya, a Japanese officer Major Fujiwara, who had been given the task of investigating the possibilities of suborning the Indian army, made contact with Captain Mohan Singh, subsequently appointed commander of the 'first' INA.[72] Singh's battalion, the 1/14 Punjab, had been shattered in a Japanese tank attack as it was moving back to a defensive position in heavy rain. 'The tanks caused utter consternation among the Indian troops, most of whom had never before seen a tank.'[73]

The battalion broke up and Singh was outside the chain of command. 'The Battalion had dispersed, in utter confusion. It was a case of — "Everyone for himself".'[74] He could only take his 'different road' away from the British after his unit disintegrated.[75] Otherwise the same forces that kept other Indian officers, whose nationalist sentiments were equally strong as Singh's, fighting for the British would probably have operated on him as well. As long as British Indian army organization functioned, little in the way of defection to the INA occurred. Singh remarked of some Indian PoWs captured during the retreat who joined his nascent INA organization: 'They had lost their sense of discipline and were demoralized. Some of them appeared to be completely shocked.'[76] Later, in the campaign to retake Burma in 1944–45, men went over to the INA only in isolated instances and the largest formations which did so as a whole were platoons.[77] By then the British had mastered the situation. But during the débâcle in Malaya, there were examples of entire companies surrendering under the command of ICOs.[78] The INA and its much smaller German and Italian counterparts were formed from PoWs and groups of

71   Quoted in Louis Allen, *Burma. The Longest War 1941–45* (London 1984), 606.
72   Lt. Gen. Iwaichi Fujiwara, *F. Kikan. Japanese Army Intelligence Operations in Southeast Asia during World War II* (Hong Kong 1983), part I.
73   Kirby et al., *The War Against Japan*, op. cit., vol. I, 205.
74   Singh, *Soldiers' Contribution to Indian Independence*, op. cit., 61.
75   Ibid., 64.
76   Ibid., 97.
77   Philip Mason, *A Matter of Honour: An Account of the Indian Army its Officers and Men* (London 1974), 517.
78   National Army Museum (NAM), 6509–14, War Diary of 5/2 Punjab during the Malayan Campaign by Lt. Col. C.C. Deakin and Major G.M.S. Webb, 34; Peter Elphick, *Singapore. The Pregnable Fortress* (London 1995), 493–9; Fujiwara, *F. Kikan*, op. cit., 133; Randle interview.

deserters in the context of military defeat.[79] Nationalist sentiments on the part of rebel Indian officers were not sufficient on their own.

Approximately 65,000 Indian army officers and men surrendered to the Japanese at the fall of Singapore in February 1942.[80] Under 50 ICOs were in this group. About 15 remained loyal to the British throughout their captivity in very harsh conditions.[81] The rest of the officers and around 100 VCOs eventually joined the INA, providing an essential core of experienced professionals. Even so, the INA was desperately short of officers, promoting VCOs to command companies, lieutenants to command battalions, and captains ended up commanding INA divisions. This was one of the many reasons for its lack of effectiveness and staying power on the battlefield when INA formations were later deployed to Burma during the Imphal offensive.[82]

Many of the captured Indian officers were initially very sceptical of the INA. Shah Nawaz Khan and others were concerned that Singh would not be able to 'cope with Japanese intrigue' and that the INA would 'be exploited by the Japanese purely for their own personal ends'.[83] The same ambivalence of the ICOs towards the British was also exhibited towards the Japanese; their nationalism was thoroughgoing. Singh himself was very concerned about Japanese intentions, and throughout his tenure as commander made every effort to assure maximum independence for the INA. He eventually resigned and attempted to dissolve the INA in December 1942, in part because the Japanese limited the expansion of the INA, as they had no intention of invading India at the time.[84]

In the months following the surrender of Singapore, Indian PoWs divided into two, those who supported and those who resisted the INA. INA guards were put in charge of the PoW camps, and those who refused to volunteer for the INA were subjected to propaganda, punitive living conditions and some violence.[85] Khan initially worked against the formation of the INA along with a clique of officers, telling men not to join. But when he saw that there were sufficient volunteers for the INA to be viable, he finally joined it in June 1942: 'I decided in the interests of my men, to volunteer for the INA with full determination that I would do everything possible to break it or sabotage it from

79 Roderick De Normann, 'Infantry Regiment 950 — Germany's Indian Legion', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 75, 303 (1997), 172–90. Many of the Indians in 950 Regiment were from the 3rd Indian Motor Brigade, which had been cut off, repeatedly attacked, and captured en masse by the Africa Corps in 1941.
80 Kirby, *The War Against Japan*, op. cit., vol. I, 473.
81 Kundu, *Militarism in India*, op. cit., 54, 58.
82 Chandar S. Sundaram, 'A Paper Tiger. The Indian National Army in Battle, 1944–1945', *War & Society*, 13, 1 (May 1995), 35–59.
83 Khan, *My Memories of INA and its Netaji*, op. cit., 21.
84 K.K. Ghosh, *The Indian National Army. Second Front of the Indian Independence Movement* (Meerut 1969), chap. 4; Singh, *Soldiers' Contribution to Indian Independence*, op. cit.
85 Ghosh, *The Indian National Army*, op. cit., chap. 2; Khan, *My Memories of INA and its Netaji*, op. cit.; Ram, *Two Historic Trials in Red Fort*, op. cit.

within the moment I felt it would submit to Japanese exploitation.'[86] One historian of the INA comments: 'The main hurdle which stood in the way of many ICOs in joining the INA was the deep suspicion of the real intentions of the Japanese army about India's independence.'[87] Many Indian officers and soldiers joined the INA with the intention of defecting back to the British at the first opportunity, and many in fact did so.[88] As Khan remarks of some of the Indian PoWs, they were 'pro-British' and 'insisted that they had taken an oath of loyalty to the King of England'.[89]

    Aside from political commitments to Indian independence, Khan and other officers had two additional motives in mind in joining the INA. As the INA was responsible for many of the Indian PoWs in Singapore and Malaya, joining the INA not only meant better treatment for themselves but also allowed them to work for better conditions for their men. Khan himself was placed in charge of all Indian PoWs in Malaya and vigorously pursued their interests with the Japanese, securing better conditions for them, the best of any PoWs in the Far East, he claimed at his trial.[90] Another important motivation was the desire to protect Indian expatriates in Malaya, Singapore and Burma from the Japanese and, should the Japanese actually enter India, to protect Indian civilians from their depredations.[91] Summing up these motivations, one ICO who joined the INA later said: 'We decided to form INA to protect Indian soldiers from Jap treatment; and to protect Indian civilians and women from the Japs.'[92]

    'Quit India' rallied many waverers among Indian PoWs to the INA.[93] It was significant, for men considering using violence against the British, that the independence movement inside India had taken a violent turn.[94] As one officer, Captain Sahgal, recalled in 1986: 'We felt that after the "Quit India" resolutions . . . really India had declared war on the British and that every true Indian should join the fight against the British.'[95] But what really transformed ambivalence into fully-fledged support was the arrival of Subhas Chandra Bose, sent from Germany via U-boat. Bose's arrival in May 1943 and his establishment of the Provisional Government of Free India gave the 'second' INA a legitimacy in the eyes of many Indian officers that it had lacked under Mohan Singh.[96] The moment of maximum British weakness, however, had passed and the Japanese offensive in 1944, accompanied by the 1st INA

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86   Quoted in Ram, *Two Historic Trials in Red Fort*, op. cit., 105.
87   Ghosh, *The Indian National Army*, op. cit., 68.
88   Ibid., 60.
89   Khan, *My Memories of INA and its Netaji*, op. cit., 39.
90   Ram, *Two Historic Trials at Red Fort*, op. cit., 107. Ghosh, *The Indian National Army*, op. cit., 68–9; Khan, *My Memories of INA and its Netaji*, op. cit., 37–42.
91   Ghosh, *The Indian National Army*, op. cit., 70–1.
92   Quoted in Ghosh, ibid., 69.
93   Khan, *My Memories of INA and its Netaji*, op. cit., 40.
94   Ghosh, *The Indian National Army*, op. cit., 46, 56–7.
95   British Empire and Commonwealth Museum (BEC) Oral History Archive, Tape SH7.
96   Ghosh, *The Indian National Army*, op. cit., 145–8.

Division, failed to open the door to north-eastern India. There were few defec-
tions from the British Indian army to the INA after the fall of Singapore and
Burma in 1942. Bose had to turn to recruiting Indian expatriate civilians to fill
the ranks of the INA and it was the INA which, in the face of the military
débâcle that befell it and the Japanese in Burma in 1944–45, suffered from
mass desertion as its officers and men went back over to the British.[97]

British and Indian protagonists in the drama of the INA make a number of
claims regarding how many of the approximately 65,000 Indian army soldiers
captured in Malaya and Singapore eventually volunteered for INA service.
Lord Wavell and Philip Mason claim that between 35,000 and 45,000 Indian
soldiers 'stood firm to their allegiance, facing continuous privation and hard-
ship, sometimes torture and death, rather than be false to the salt they had
eaten and the oaths they had taken when they enlisted'.[98] Lord Wavell notes
that over 11,000 Indian PoWs died in Japanese captivity while INA dead from
all causes were less than 2000.[99] By contrast, Mohan Singh and Major
Fujiwara argue that 42,000 'rose for Mother India'.[100] One reason for the
disparity in estimates is that the Japanese initially armed only 16,000 of the
volunteers. In the summer of 1942 the Japanese had no intention of invading
India and the formation of the INA was a low priority for them. As a conse-
quence, they began using Indian PoWs, ostensibly under Singh's command, for
labour, many being sent to the South Pacific and Thailand.[101] Indian PoWs
lived and died in the harsh conditions of Japanese prison and labour camps
even though they volunteered for INA service. Later, after Bose's arrival, the
INA would eventually number around 45,000, but about 18,000 of these were
recruited from civilian Indian expatriates in the Far East.[102] According to
Indian army intelligence's own wartime estimates, approximately 5000 Indian
PoWs remained 'staunch non-volunteers'.[103] Gurkhas, Punjabi Muslims and
Pathans numbered heavily among the non-volunteers; while Sikhs and the
Hindu classes, Dogras and Jats, numbered heavily among the volunteers.[104]
The INA thus reflected the divisions of the Raj, with those from the fringes or
beyond — Nepal, Punjab and North-west Frontier Province — more likely to
remain loyal to the British.

While there is little doubt that nationalist politics were a factor in inspiring
some to join the INA, Fujiwara's unreflective reference to 'Mother India' over-

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97 Ibid., 188–9; Khan, *My Memories of INA and its Netaji*, op. cit., 48; Ram, *Two Historic Trials in Red Fort*, op. cit., 346–7; Sundaram, 'A Paper Tiger', op. cit.
98 From his Foreword to Hugh Toye, *The Springing Tiger. A Study of a Revolutionary* (London 1959), v.
99 Quoted in V.P. Menon, *The Transfer of Power in India* (New Delhi 1957), 225.
100 Fujiwara, *F Kikan*, op. cit., 186; Singh, *Soldiers' Contribution to Indian Independence*, op. cit., 112.
101 Ghosh, *The Indian National Army*, op. cit., chap. 4.
102 Connell, *Auchinleck*, op. cit., 951; Peter Ward Fay, *The Forgotten Army. India's Armed Struggle for Independence 1942–1945* (Ann Arbor, MI 1993), 525–6.
103 Fay, *The Forgotten Army*, 525.
104 Khan, *My Memories of INA and its Netaji*, op. cit., 26.

states the case. When the choice was between the INA and Japanese captivity, the outcome was pre-determined. One Indian officer said: 'All my people preferred to be in the INA than to fall into the hands of the Japanese.'[105] Mason tells of one VCO and his men who joined the INA. Their ICO told them that 'they had the choice between digging latrines for the Japanese and once more becoming soldiers — but this time in the service of an independent India. They chose to be soldiers.'[106] Conditions in Japanese prison camps in the second world war were horrific. The death rate among Allied prisoners was over 27 per cent as compared to 4 per cent for those interned by the Germans and Italians.[107]

Indian PoWs in Singapore were treated somewhat better but, as one ICO noted, they knew that they were being treated better precisely because of the INA.[108] One VCO who was not in the INA described the poor conditions in his camp where the men were suffering from malaria and there were no medicines or proper shelter. An INA officer came by and told them: 'If you join the INA all these troubles will be solved.' While he did not join at that point, several months later when 'our conditions were going from bad to worse' he and other men from his unit did.[109] Another INA officer tried to recruit Indian PoWs by telling them that 'as Buddha [i.e. the Japanese god] was born in India, we should join hands with the Japanese'.[110] It is far more likely that many, as Khan notes, 'signed up as volunteers in the INA in order to avoid hardship'.[111] Francis Tuker tells of an Indian soldier from Mohan Singh's battalion who said, when asked why he joined the INA after the war, 'that in the Army he was taught to obey, so when his officers ordered him to come with them he did so and so did his friends'.[112] One Indian soldier captured during the Japanese conquest of Burma in 1942 described the rough treatment meted out to Indian PoWs by the Japanese. 'The treatment of the Japanese soldiers with the Indian Prisoners was very rude and cruel.' There were beatings and a great deal of forced labour. After some time, INA officers visited the camp and encouraged them to join the INA and liberate India with the help of the Japanese. The Indian PoWs refused and were handed back to the Japanese, who beat them and locked them in a barracks without food, supplying only water to the prisoners for 15 days during which several died. The INA officers returned and this time the men volunteered, although the soldier who related the story re-defected at the first opportunity.[113]

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105   Major Rawat, quoted in Ghosh, *The Indian National Army*, op. cit., 69.
106   Mason in Toye, *The Springing Tiger*, op. cit., vii.
107   Yuki Tanaka, *Hidden Horrors. Japanese War Crimes in World War II* (Boulder, CO 1996), 2–3.
108   Ghosh, *The Indian National Army*, op. cit., 69.
109   Quoted in Ram, *Two Historic Trials at Red Fort*, op. cit., 55.
110   Ibid., 59.
111   Khan, *My Memories of INA and its Netaji*, op. cit., 48.
112   Lt. Gen. Sir Francis Tuker, *While Memory Serves* (London 1950), 53.
113   Gurkha Museum (GM), G46, Loose Archives 1/7 GR, 'Indian National Army — Counter Measures'.

The major recruitment for the INA, and the only time Indian army soldiers joined in large numbers, took place in the immediate aftermath of military débâcle, defeat and mass surrender. As GHQ(I) was to note correctly very soon after the formation of the INA: 'Once things are going well, troops are much less likely to be affected by Indian National Army propaganda.'[114] Some insight into the minds of captured Indian soldiers can be gleaned from a collection of letters from Gurkha PoWs in Italy. The PoWs, all of whom were Gurkha Officers (Gurkha equivalents of VCOs), wrote of their 'disillusionment' and the 'catastrophe' that had befallen them. They were 'truly burning with anxiety' over whether their families had heard of their 'sad plight' and what would happen to their pay and pensions.[115] The arrangements made for the surrendered Indian army personnel immediately after the fall of Singapore worked to increase the sense of disorganization and abandonment by the British. The British officers were separated from the Indians who were then collected in Farrar Park on 17 February 1942, two days after the surrender. Although estimates vary, about 40,000 Indians were present, around two-thirds of those captured; most of the Indian army soldiers who would join the INA were at Farrar Park that day.[116] A ceremony was conducted and nominal rolls of the Indian soldiers present were handed by the senior British officer to Major Fujiwara, who then passed them to Mohan Singh. In his speech, Fujiwara said that Japan was not prepared to keep the Indians as PoWs and that he was handing them over to Mohan Singh, who was now referred to as the General Officer-in-Command of the INA. They would have to obey his orders.[117] After Fujiwara's and Singh's speeches, the assembled Indian soldiers cheered. 'We had been told numerous tales of Japanese barbarities and inhuman treatment that would be accorded to prisoners of war', Khan wrote in his memoir, and Indian soldiers now found out that the Japanese would be treating them as comrades in arms rather than as PoWs. 'Naturally there was a feeling of great relief and rejoicing.'[118]

In his 1946 memo on the court martial of INA officers, Auchinleck wrote that experienced officers of the Indian army have

> . . . always recognized that the loyalty of our men was really to the officers of the regiment or unit, and that although there may have been some abstract sentiments of loyalty and patriotism to the Government and to the King, the men's allegiance for all practical purposes was focused on the regiment, and particularly on the regimental officers, on whom they depended for their welfare, advancement and future prospects.[119]

Once Indian soldiers were in the hands of the Japanese, the Raj and its regi-

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114 Ibid.
115 GW, GWG, Loose Archives 1/7 GR, Letters from PoWs held in Italy.
116 Fay, *The Forgotten Army*, op. cit., chap. 4; Ghosh, *The Indian National Army*, op. cit., 35.
117 Khan, *My Memories of INA and its Netaji*, op. cit., 18; Fay, *The Forgotten Army*, op. cit., 82; Ram, *Two Historic Trials in Red Fort*, op. cit., 51.
118 Khan, *My Memories of INA and its Netaji*, op. cit., 20.
119 Quoted in Connell, *Auchinleck*, op. cit., 947.

mental officers could no longer be their 'universal provider and protector'.[120] Indian prisoners were separated from their British officers; Indian army organization was *broken down*. It was 'the end of all things' for these men, 'the majority of whom were simple peasant farmers'.[121] In this disrupted, disorganized state, fearing with good reason what would become of them in Japanese captivity, the men of the Indian army were liable to alternative organization.

Ambivalent loyalties on the part of Indian officers were not obstacles to professional service. Officers like Thimayya could hold 'intense anti-British feelings' and still effectively and vigorously pursue the conduct of the war in Burma.[122] Had the fortunes of war turned decisively against the British, the outcome may well have been very different; in such a case the lack of firm political commitment to the Raj on the part of Indian officers might well have led to an adjustment of their calculations and defection to the Axis. This is precisely what happened in the PoW camps in Singapore and Malaya, where it must have seemed that British Asia was finished. The underlying political issue was always Indian independence and the best way to achieve it. As Auchinleck put it: 'It is no use shutting one's eyes to the fact that any Indian officer worth his salt is a Nationalist.'[123] For Indian officers, political beliefs mattered less on the battlefield than they did in the PoW cage.

That Indian other ranks volunteered for the INA when faced with the prospect of Japanese captivity is not surprising; it is the behaviour of those who remained loyal despite everything that should occasion comment. Choosing survival and better conditions when they were offered was all too human, a choice not available to most Allied prisoners of the Japanese. The material previously presented gives some indication of the various conditions and motivations which led men to join the INA. After surrender, these men were no longer soldiers in formed units in an organization that sustained them. The INA offered material betterment with a political and moral rationale for those who desired it, conveniently or sincerely believed in at whatever level of sophistication. The mass of men can only be expected to respond to such inducement, especially once legitimated by sight of effective rebel leadership with a substantial following. Imputing political purposes to the actions of Indian PoWs, whether loyalty to the Raj or to free India, misrepresents the motivating forces for most. Soldiers' behaviour can be represented by others as having a political content it lacked in practice. The idea of military service and sacrifice for a cause adds significant emotional potency to such representations. In just this way Congress made good use of the INA story in the immediate aftermath of the war, portraying its soldiers as men who fought for India's freedom.[124]

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120 Auchinleck, quoted in Connell, *Auchinleck*, op. cit., 948.
121 Ibid.
122 Evans, *Thimayya of India*, op. cit., 169.
123 Auchinleck, quoted in Connell, *Auchinleck*, op. cit., 949.
124 See Fay, *The Forgotten Army*, op. cit., chaps 19–21.

The societal approach draws attention to soldiers' historically specific beliefs and attitudes, and the role of these ideas in influencing action. As the more literate and educated class, officers should be most influenced by the politics and values of their social context. The social and educational background of junior officers plays an important role in Bartov's work, for it was the officers who acted as 'educators and instructors in both military and ideological matters' for the troops.[125] ICOs were clearly conscious of and influenced by Indian politics. The very idea of forming an INA can only be understood against the backdrop of Indian nationalist politics. Key figures, such as Mohan Singh, were motivated by deeply-held commitments. However, the occasions for these beliefs and attitudes to play an important role were limited. Military life, especially in wartime, could knit together British and Indian officers despite the political, cultural and racial tensions of colonial society. Sentiments of fellow feeling arose which by and large overrode political disagreements and racial prejudice, as long as military organization continued to function effectively. Only when organization broke down, as in Singapore, did politics come to play a decisive role in officers' behaviour.

Soldiers have views and attitudes on all manner of subjects of interest for cultural analysis and social history. The question here is the degree to which, and the occasions upon which, these beliefs become salient for combat motivation and conduct on active service. As Gerald Linderman comments, many American soldiers in the second world war certainly believed in the justice of their cause, but 'Consideration of principles and larger aims diminished drastically as soldiers realized they had no bearing on battle . . . Such ideas were extraneous to absorbing daily pursuits and consequently virtually disappeared from their thoughts.'[126] 'High politics' and a range of beliefs and attitudes may simply lack significance for soldiers at the front. But is there another way of thinking about culture, military organization and combat?

As remarked in the introduction, the debate between the societal and organizational approaches entails different conceptions of the significance of history and culture. The 'primary group' is in principle universal and reflects a social scientific interest in general models applicable across social and historical contexts. Such a view is easily articulated with ahistorical notions of professional soldiers who share similar values across the centuries, an idea John Lynn has recently subjected to critique.[127] Scholars like Lynn, Bartov and Cameron argue that war and soldiering are historical and fundamentally shaped by time and place. Invoking social and cultural history, they argue that cultural constructions inform soldiers' conceptions of themselves and their enemies, guide conduct in battle and on campaign, and constitute the meaning and nature of specific battles and wars.

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125 Bartov, *Eastern Front*, op. cit., 40.
126 Gerald F. Linderman, *The World within War. America's Combat Experience in World War II* (New York 1997), 24.
127 John A. Lynn, *Battle. A History of Combat and Culture* (Boulder, CO 2003).

These are powerful and effective arguments, but their tendency is to reduce entirely war and the military to historical particularity. By contrast, Karl von Clausewitz's intellectual project involved attending to both the putatively universal dimensions of war and their embodiment in particular historical contexts. An analogous approach can be taken with the 'Western' regular military institution. This institution shares common features across different times and places. The relevant historical context is not just these times and places, and the local cultures found there, but the history and global expansion of this institution, of a particular way of organizing humans for war. The institution does so by trying to create a certain kind of person, the regular soldier. This is a cultural process, even though the individuals involved in different times and places will speak different languages and have different beliefs.

An analogy can be drawn with capitalist enterprises. European capitalists sought to introduce into other parts of the world new forms of organizing and disciplining labour. Capitalist enterprises, for example factories and mines, are found in diverse social and cultural contexts, where they exhibit both similarities and differences. What is essential from the point of view of the capitalist is that the work is done according to set standards and procedures, that workers arrive on time, perform their routinized tasks adequately, and so on. Rationalized labour of this kind entails social and cultural change for workers accustomed to other modes of production. Moreover, this local culture can become a problem for the capitalist if it generates obstacles to labour discipline. Allowances and accommodations may need to be made with local practices. A continuum can be imagined with a local worker accustomed to non-capitalist routines of labour on one end; on the other is the fully rationalized, disciplined modern worker capable of the required self-regulation. Actual empirical workers, whether in the West or elsewhere, will fall somewhere along the continuum. Modernizing processes, such as capitalism, are always embedded within local cultural contexts, transforming them to greater or lesser degrees.

European officers raising colonial forces were in the position of capitalists setting up enterprises on foreign shores. They sought to organize regular forces in a variety of different cultural contexts. What was crucial was that recruits were trained to a sufficient standard, performed adequately the tasks of regular soldiers, and were inculcated with the requisite disciplined bearing in the face of danger and privation. The Europeans had to work in and through the local culture of the recruit to produce regular soldiers. As for the capitalist, local culture could become the site of resistance, negotiations and disciplinary difficulties, and indeed this was often the case in the history of the British Indian army. Accommodations had to be made, such as separate kitchens for Hindu and Muslim companies in infantry battalions. In these ways, hybrid forms arose, distinctive combinations of the regular military institution and local forms of life. What is important to recognize is that the degree of cultural change involved in these processes is not necessarily reflected in the particular content of soldiers' beliefs. They may still pray to the old gods, but are doing so as a different kind of person in a new institutional and structural context.

Some discussion of the training of colonial forces will help to develop this discussion further.

Because they were used to produce a similar product, the basic training regimens and battle drills used in the Indian army were similar to those in the British army. At the same time, they had to be adapted to the cultural idiom and educational standard of Indian recruits. This often required less expert knowledge of Indian ethnicities than might be suspected, especially considering the elaborate imperial ethnography that characterized martial races recruiting handbooks for the Indian army.[128] The following example concerns a training exercise that deals with a common problem for infantry recruits — fire discipline. Raw troops fire too soon and are liable to use up their ammunition too quickly. While always important, fire discipline was of particular significance in Burma due to the difficulties of supply and because firing prematurely revealed troops' positions, a tendency exploited by Japanese 'jittering' tactics. Fire discipline plays upon masculine and sexual metaphors, of having the self-control to hold one's fire until the right moment. One Indian army exercise placed trainees with a limited amount of ammunition in a defensive position. They were told that the exercise would last several hours and that then they would be subjected to a series of mock assaults. Invariably, they used up their ammunition too quickly. At this point, the instructors came out haranguing the men for being weak, childish, feminine and unable to control themselves. Sometimes the men were made to put on saris, i.e. women's clothes, to emphasize the point. In another variation, the instructor would appear dressed as a Japanese officer and tell the men: 'You behave like a lot of raw recruits. Trained soldiers keep cool in action. They do not get excited and lose their nerve . . . You are just a bunch of schoolboys. Instead of trying to fight soldiers like us you ought to be back in your homes with your mothers to look after you.'[129]

Some effort was made to 'translate' this exercise into local cultural context through appropriate props such as saris, and, of course, the use of Urdu as the language of instruction. Other Indian army training regimens involved similar adaptations. Fieldcraft exercises were called 'tiger hunts' rather than 'cops and robbers'. For those being trained in motor transport, who had little experience of motor vehicles, a series of similes between vehicles and horse-drawn carts was used (e.g. the accelerator was like the whip).[130] These translations were efforts to produce a similar type of person — the regular soldier trained in particular tasks — from different cultural contexts.

The question can be asked whether it was the saris per se that made the fire discipline exercise effective. Did the exercise work because of efforts, however clumsy, made to translate it into local cultural forms? This question

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128 See e.g. Major R.M. Behtam, *Marathas and Dekhani Musalmans* (Calcutta 1908).
129 Imperial War Museum (IWM), P 140, Papers of Major General A.C. Curtis, Report 14th Indian [Training] Division, July 1943–November 1945.
130 OIOC L/MIL/17/5/2240, Army in India Training Memorandum, No. 13, Nov.–Dec., 1941, 'Teaching Indian Recruits the Principles of M.T.'.

immediately raises other issues concerning the comparability of different cultures.[131] For example, some of the gendered tropes that the instructors played on revolve around constructing premature ejaculation as unmanly. This may or may not be the case in different local cultures; Western constructions of militarized masculinity are not necessarily universal. The effectiveness of the exercise is not to be found in the cultural props, but rather in the way it simulates a set of conditions found in battle. The opposing force is trying to kill you and your comrades and taking the correct action in a particular situation might enable you to survive and kill the enemy instead. Trainees did not need too much imagination to figure out what would happen if they used up all their ammunition too quickly in actual combat. The instructors were working hard and creatively to impart lessons that had cost lives to learn. Perhaps the ham-fisted deployment of the saris did the trick. More likely, the point was made when the trainees realised that their magazines were empty and the mock Japanese kept on coming.

The exercise plays a small role in making soldiers who are capable of staying cool under fire and taking the correct actions. This is only one element of the necessary soldierly bearing and disciplined attitude that regular military training seeks to create. The cultural change involved is that of producing a person with a certain kind of sensibility. How a soldier, located in a specific cultural context, understands or culturally constructs what is at stake is not the central issue, as long as he has internalized the values and sentiments inherent in the 'Western' tradition of regular warfare. As with factory labourers, it should not matter to the capitalist what local cultural practices his workers engage in as long as they perform their duties well. But if soldiers have not been fully 'soldierized' in their training, if understandings about war and soldiering incompatible with the conduct required of regular soldiers remain, then problems arise.

71 (Somali) Battalion of 11 (East African) Division illustrates the point. Unlike most British African forces, 71 (S) Battalion had a unitary ethnic composition and managed to retain a capacity to act collectively in defiance of discipline over the course of its formation and training. Its primary groups resisted rather than obeyed higher authority. Two incidents of mass disobedience occurred in training in Ceylon, one involving the refusal to carry heavy packs. In Burma, two companies of the battalion were cut off from their brigade on some high ground, where the Japanese opened an accurate and heavy, by Burma standards, artillery fire on their positions. The battalion commander was wounded, the wireless sets destroyed, and the mortar ammunition trucks set on fire. At this point, the Somalis abandoned their positions and collected in small groups to the rear, carrying their commander and two other wounded officers with them. They made their way back to the brigade box,

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131 See e.g. Alasdair MacIntyre, 'Is a Science of Comparative Politics Possible?' in idem, *Against the Self Images of the Age. Essays on Ideology and Philosophy* (Notre Dame, IN 1978), 260–79.

reaching it around 2300 hours. Major-General Dimoline, the division commander, described their arrival:

> I personally met the battalion as they came in and their morale and general bearing was in no way impaired. They were laughing and joking, and considered they have definitely outwitted the enemy since they said 'When they attack after the bombardment they will find nobody there.' They also remarked that they were NOT going to sit in positions under heavy shelling. During the day's fighting they had lost some 30 casualties in the two companies and had brought in all their wounded with them . . . The loss of equipment and arms, etc., [from abandoning their positions] did NOT seem to worry them in the least. Every man had his own personal weapon.[132]

The 71 (S) Battalion had not been properly socialized into regular warfare. Its soldiers retained a capacity to act collectively in defiance of orders and military expectations. Of particular note is the Somalis' notion that they had 'outwitted' the Japanese by leaving their positions empty. The Somalis' idea of warfare did not include sitting out an artillery bombardment, nor defending their positions — holes in the ground somewhere in Burma — against the determined Japanese assault sure to follow. A few days later, a Somali platoon was sent to reinforce a hard-pressed Indian company under orders to clear a Japanese-held village. When the Somalis arrived, without a commissioned officer in command, they told the British commander of the Indian company 'quite firmly' that 'we are not going any further'.[133]

What is at stake is not cowardice or even an unwillingness to take casualties. The Somalis suffered 30 on the day they were cut off. Some days earlier, they lost 12 killed and wounded in an attack that killed 21 Japanese. Dimoline described them as 'brave and courageous individual fighters' but thought that they would be better employed in a guerrilla role rather than positional warfare.[134] The 71 (S) Battalion story illustrates the significance of the local character and histories of particular military formations in accounting for combat motivation. Through their absence, the story also illustrates the values and sentiments inherent in the Western way of war. Other colonial units had imbibed these values and behaved differently in similar situations. In January 1945, after a night of repeated Japanese assaults, mortar and shell fire, as well as fire from two medium machine guns, dawn found a company of the 7/16 Punjab standing in 'their trenches half filled by the sand thrown up from the enemy's mortaring, shelling and grenading' but still 'in excellent fighting trim'.[135] The different combat behaviour of the 71 (S) Battalion and the 7/16 Punjabis is unlikely to be explained by relative levels of political commitment to Britain's war aims or dedication to the quixotic re-conquest of Burma, or

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132   Liddell-Hart Centre for Military Archives (LH), Dimoline papers, IX/4, Confidential Memo on 71 (S) Bn KAR to Advanced HQ, ALFSEA, 12 May 1945.
133   Peter Gadsdon, *An Amateur at War*, unpublished ms, 75–7.
134   LH, Dimoline papers, IX/4, Confidential Memo.
135   Public Record Office (PRO) WO 203/2607, Reports on Operations: General, 'The Kyeyebyin Battle'.

by the different local cultures of the Africans and Indians. The Punjabis were successfully inculcated with the soldierly norms of modern, organized warfare; the Somalis were not.

   Part of what is being argued here is that the 'Western' military institution and regular warfare can be thought of as common structural contexts that shape the character and conduct of people caught up in them. The cultural change involved will not necessarily be registered in the different local idioms through which soldiers express their experiences. Cameron remarks that American marines 'looked to their own distinctive cultural heritage for answers to the questions all soldiers must ask'.[136] Soldiers ask similar questions because they confront, at some level of generality, common situations. They can only turn to their own heritage for cultural resources to answer these questions, and the answers they give will always reflect their different backgrounds. But it is the common conditions in which soldiers find themselves that give rise to these different cultural responses. The conditions found in the military and on the battlefield shape soldiers' behaviour in similar ways, on both sides. As Cameron also notes, across the vast cultural divides of the Pacific War 'the marines did exhibit the same savage responses in battle as their enemy'.[137]

   Thinking of battle as a common structure shared by both sides, shaping behaviour in similar ways, is one way to understand why soldiers from vastly different cultural backgrounds may exhibit similar responses. One of the characteristics of regular, organized warfare is that once in combat, soldiers' best chance of survival is often to fight effectively together in the way they have been trained to do. Paradoxically, the instinct for self-preservation can be mobilized as a reliable source of combat motivation. An example helps to develop the point. Due to the low force to space ratio in Burma, there was no continuous front. On defence, units often relied on all-round perimeters with interlocking fields of fire from concealed positions. The defence was interdependent; the occupants of each foxhole or bunker had to keep the enemy out of the perimeter and relied on their comrades to do the same. Surviving a determined attack required co-operation and vigorous and effective fighting. Cowering at the bottom of a foxhole in such circumstances was self-defeating, especially since the Japanese were known not to take prisoners and to mistreat those they did take. This does not mean that every soldier was able to overcome his fear, but the situation channels behaviour towards vigorous defence. Combat motivation can be self-generating for trained soldiers, especially for the defenders but also for attackers who also must co-operate if they are to succeed, keep their casualties down, and avoid disciplinary sanction from their own officers. For these processes to work, strong sentiments of group solidarity among soldiers are necessary as well as the kind of soldierly discipline and coolness under fire referred to earlier. Not all units will have these quali-

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136   Cameron, *American Samurai*, op. cit., 20.
137   Ibid., 126.

ties in equal measure, and the particular enemy, terrain and so on will shape the nature of the fighting.

When both sides in an engagement have the appropriate military bearing, battle can take on the attributes of a deadly, interactive game in which 'each side . . . compels its opponent to follow suit; a reciprocal action is started which must lead, in theory, to extremes'.[138] In the early hours of 27 April 1944, the men of A Company, 3/1 Gurkha Rifles found themselves on a position known as Crete West. Repeated assaulting waves of Japanese infantry forced in their perimeter and the situation was confused as dawn arrived, with the Japanese consolidating their gains a mere 10 paces from the company command post. A platoon was ordered to counter-attack at 0545 hours and they advanced with kukris[139] and grenades. 'The tempo of the fighting increased and the yelling of kukried Japs, the groans of bayoneted Gurkhas with the shouts and laughter of the unwounded Gurkhas all combined to make the area like a nightmare.'[140] A Japanese artillery concentration halted the Gurkha platoon attack, killing the whole of the forward section. Rallied by the platoon commander and a company officer, they put in

> . . . another wild charge. This time the Japs could bear it no longer and turned and fled. Maddened with blood after their kukri massacre this was the signal for all able bodied men to rush forward and urge them on their way with yells and screams and a crescendo of fire from their [light machine guns] and Tommy guns. When daylight came it was impossible to tell between Gurkhas and Japs. Due to the [artillery fire] the forward bunkers were like a hellish butchers shop. 20 bodies were counted but no one could stand any more and the remainder were buried in situ. Two outside observers afterwards estimated the Jap killed as over 60. Our own casualties were 20 killed and 34 wounded.[141]

Desperate defence of the perimeter inspired greater efforts to breach it. Each move evoked a corresponding one from the other side in an intensifying dynamic of battlefield violence, ebbing and flowing over the ground until the collapse of one of the sides. The conduct of the troops was in large measure driven by the structure of the situation and its demands, and reflected the high military quality of the formations involved.

The Gurkhas, their British officers and the Japanese, all would have recourse to different cultural resources to narrate the battle at Crete West. The divergent backgrounds of the participants undoubtedly influenced their conduct in the fight, in just the ways that the societal approach, with its emphasis on cultural particularity, suggests. What this discussion has sought to open up, however, is a different kind of cultural dimension of military organizations, one concerned with a common transformation into regular soldiers and learning the rules of a certain kind of warfare. This kind of culture is crucial to the effective functioning of regular militaries and it is this military culture that was

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138   Karl von Clausewitz, *On War* (Princeton, NJ 1976), op. cit., 77.
139   Gurkha machetes.
140   LH General Sir Douglas Gracey, 2/6, History of the 3/1 KGVO GR, chap. 2, 4.
141   Ibid.

more or less successfully exported to the non-European world in the raising of colonial militaries. Much has been left under-specified in this argument, such as what precisely are the values associated with the regular military and what are the parameters of organized warfare. Equally, it remains an empirical question to assess the relative role of local and regular military culture in the conduct of actual soldiers. Hybridity is always the likely case and may take diverse forms. Michael Calvert praised the 12th Nigeria Rifles, on Chindit operations in Burma, for defending the block at White City, and in particular for a spirited counter-attack. At the same time, the Nigerians were known for lining their foxholes with the heads of enemy dead.[142] Their qualities as regular soldiers were mixed with practices derived from their own traditions of warfare.

The debate between the societal and organizational approaches to combat motivation and battlefield conduct encounters a core disjuncture over the nature of explanation and the role of culture. The societal view provides historically specific accounts of particular armies and the ideas and beliefs that, it is argued, hold them together and provide the cause for which they fight.[143] The organizational approach relies on social scientific methodologies and seeks general explanations. Soldiers, rather than seen as culturally determined, meaningful beings, are conceived as bundles of basic personality needs.[144] The best candidate for a general explanation is 'primary group' theory.

This clear significance of comradeship and cohesion for fighting spirit is behind military sociology's primary group theory. As long as their organization can sustain their basic material and psychological needs, soldiers will fight for one another in conditions of mortal danger. Studies of primary groups in national armies, however, have illuminated a basic indeterminacy in Edward Shils and Morris Janowitz's theory.[145] Why should primary groups act in a way determined by higher authority? Soldiers who mutiny also rely on primary groups. More common and lesser forms of combat indiscipline, such as a patrol which finds a safe place to rest and returns with false reports, require cohesion among comrades to carry out and avoid discovery. The values of group solidarity upon which primary group theory depends appear to cut both ways; they can be the basis of a fighting spirit or its opposite. This indeterminacy led many primary group theorists to modify their approach to nationalism, ideology and other 'societal' factors which might 'point' primary groups

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142   Michael Calvert, *Prisoners of Hope* (London 1996), 125–6.

143   See e.g. James M. McPherson, *For Cause & Comrades. Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York 1997).

144   David Smith, 'The Freudian Trap in Combat Motivation Theory', *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 25, 3 (September 2002), 191–212.

145   See e.g. Cameron, *American Samurai*, op. cit., 198–200; Eliot Chodoff, 'Ideology and Primary Groups', *Armed Forces and Society*, 9, 4 (Summer 1983); Anthony Kellett, *Combat Motivation. The Behavior of Soldiers in Battle* (Boston, MA 1982), 101–4.

in the right direction, towards the enemy, and in so doing account for varia-
tions in fighting spirit among various units and armies.[146] The problem here is
that it is heroic to assume that the mass of common soldiers develop the kind
of political dedication that inspires willing sacrifice of life and limb, and that
such dedication provides a firm and reliable basis for combat discipline. As
Lord Wavell commented: 'Much is said nowadays of the necessity that the
soldier should be convinced of the justice of his cause; and he certainly cannot
escape propaganda. Yet many battles and campaigns have been won by men
who had little idea of why they were fighting, and, perhaps cared less.'[147]

In a colonial context, the turn to nationalism to supplement primary group
theory is not available. Instead, the view developed here is that the relevant
cultural context is not only national society and the local culture of recruits,
but also the training ground, the campaign and the battlefield. The regular
military and organized warfare comprise structural contexts that transform
the humans caught up in them. Clearly this argument has a great deal in
common with the organizational approach, but retains a conception of
humans as meaningful beings. It has sought ways of understanding cultural
change occasioned by the regular military institution that operates 'under-
neath' diverse languages and beliefs. Part of the power of this institution must
lie in its capacity to generate social solidarity, and to do so in vastly different
times and places. In colonial contexts, it must do so among soldiers who have
little in common with their officers and must fight in wars not their own.

The successful export of the regular military institution around the world is
one indication of its elementary powers for the generation of group solidarity.
These powers play on general human capacities and do not depend on specific
national or cultural attributes; 'anybody's son will do'.[148] From the beginning
of their service, soldiers are placed in common conditions and designated by a
common symbol, core features of military life pregnant with the possibilities of
comradeship and cohesion. The basis for unit identity and group solidarity is
present when a platoon of recruits falls in for the first time, is given a numeri-
cal designation, and is subjected to commands as a single body. For recruits,
performing common actions under a common symbol is not necessarily the
result of some pre-existing group solidarity derived from civilian society.
Rather, such actions are part of the ongoing construction of group solidarity
within the military:

> It is by uttering the same cry, pronouncing the same word, or performing the same gesture in
> regard to the same object that they become and feel themselves to be in unison . . . it is the
> homogeneity of these movements that gives the group consciousness of itself and con-
> sequently makes it exist.[149]

146 See e.g. Janowitz and Wesbrook (eds), *The Political Education of Soldiers*, op. cit.
147 OIOC L/WS/1/778, GHQ (I) Infantry Liaison Letters, No. 24, February, 1946, Appendix A, 18.
148 Gwynne Dyer, *War* (London 1985), 101.
149 Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (New York 1965), 262–3.

The situations in which soldiers might be 'uttering the same cry' or performing the same actions are not limited to formal ceremony or parade ground drill but pervade military life. Examples extend from route marches to 'digging in' to the yelling of battle cries. Bonds of fellow feeling are continually made and re-made in military life.

Nonetheless, there is no better and more obvious example than close order drill. Drill arouses sentiments of affinity and the sense of immersion in a larger, powerful collectivity. As one Indian army training pamphlet put it, drill stimulates 'by means of combined and orderly movement, the man's pride in himself and his unit' and involves not 'tedious parade ground movements carried out in perfunctory manner, but rather the physical satisfaction to be derived from sinking one's own individuality in the perfect timing of a mass movement in which every individual is keyed up to the maximum personal tension'.[150]

Drill does not depend for its effects on the particular ethnic origins of the soldiers. William McNeill's own experience of drill in the US army was the basis for his views about the role of 'keeping together in time' in producing social solidarity across historical eras and cultural spaces. He argued that moving together rhythmically as a group while giving voice induces 'euphoric fellow feeling', and wrote of his own experience with drill that 'words are inadequate to describe the emotion aroused by the prolonged movement in unison that drilling involved'.[151] What drill could do in India and the USA, it could also achieve in Africa. Charles Carfrae describes how his company of Nigerians both enjoyed and were exceptionally proficient at the drill they practised every morning:

> Since Sandhurst days six years before I had had a weakness for drill done really well and my heart would fill with foolish pride as I shouted my words of command, felt the soldiers' emotional response and watched the flash and glitter of a hundred bayonets moving as one. The men called drill 'dancing' in Hausa and it was as gratifying to them as to me that they performed better than any other company.[152]

'Battle drills', designed to teach men modern, dispersed tactics, often performed by whistle commands, exhibited many of the same characteristics as their parade ground counterpart.

Soldiers participate in close order drill throughout their military careers. It plays a prominent role in the numerous daily and periodic ceremonies performed by units in garrison. Officers were well aware of the ways in which drill could revivify a collective sense of pride even in veteran units, especially those that had suffered heavily in combat or had not performed as expected.[153]

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150 OIOC L/MIL/17/5/2256, Military Training Pamphlet No. 14 (India), 1941, Infantry Section Leading, 61.

151 William H. McNeill, *Keeping Together in Time. Dance and Drill in Human History* (Cambridge, MA 1995), 2–3.

152 IWM 80/49/1, Charles Carfrae, 'Dark Company', second version, 54.

153 LH Dimoline Papers, IX/2, 28 (EA) Infantry Brigade Training Instruction No. 9, 24 August 1944; LH Messervy Papers, V/19, 7th Indian Division Training Instruction No. 1, 4 June 1945.

Commanders often insisted on a 'smart turn out' for parades shortly after a unit was pulled out of the line. After battle 'there must be no relaxation of . . . saluting and turn out'.[154] One Indian battalion drilled all its companies together after a period in which they had been dispersed for training in order to build the cohesion of the battalion as a 'fighting entity'. As one of its officers explained: 'It was considered that a very short, periodical spasm of close order ceremonial drill, with all [the companies] massed together, acting together with the utmost smartness under the orders of their CO would do a good deal to counteract the centrifugal tendencies of modern training.'[155] A British battalion in Burma, which had seen a great deal of action, suffered the demoralizing effects of a poor battalion commander, and finally broke and ran, after receiving enfilading fire during an advance, was subjected to large doses of drill and ceremony in the jungle shortly afterwards as a means of rebuilding the pride of soldiers in their unit, and consequently themselves.[156] Clearly, McNeill's 'discovery' was something well known among the professional officers of British and imperial forces.

These examples suggest that a basic aspect of military life, drill, serves to remake and revivify bonds of solidarity in a variety of contexts and for soldiers from vastly different backgrounds. The national and local languages, traditions and cultures of soldiers certainly pervade military life and make each army and units within it appear unique and distinct. Colonial armies generally sought to articulate unit identities to the local cultural context, nowhere more so than in the Indian army with its elaborate martial races ideology. In a similar way, the British regimental system makes use of regional and other local identities to foster an esprit de corps. Underneath this surface colour, however, are core properties of the regular military that generate group solidarity by acting upon general human capacities.

Tarak Barkawi

is Lecturer in International Security, Centre of International Studies, University of Cambridge and Postdoctoral Fellow, Center for International Security and Cooperation, Stanford University. He is currently working on a book manuscript entitled *Soldiers of Empire. Battle and Society in the 'Good War'*.

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154   OIOC L/MIL/17/5/2235, A Lecture to Infantry Officers on Man Management.
155   NAM 7512–5–2, 8/6th Rajputana Rifles, Digest of Services, 5.
156   Author's interview with an officer who served in various capacities in this battalion including that of adjutant.