

## Letter to the Editor

Dear Sir,

Over 67,000 men of the Indian Army served in Malaysia and Singapore during World War II. When Britain surrendered Singapore to Japan on 15 Feb 1942, the vast majority of these soldiers were taken as prisoners of war (POWs). Their experiences during this period were harrowing and diverse, as they faced extreme conditions throughout their captivity. Initially, they suffered from severe overcrowding, inadequate food, and a lack of medical supplies, which resulted in a significant loss of life due to illness and malnutrition. As the war progressed, these soldiers were presented with a choice – join the Indian National Army (INA), an armed force that sought to secure India's independence by fighting alongside the Japanese, or remain POWs. Many chose to join the INA, driven by the hope of contributing to India's freedom struggle. However, not all of them joined the INA.

Those who did not join the INA faced even harsher conditions. Thousands were sent to labor camps, particularly in what is today Papua New Guinea, where they were subjected to brutal working conditions. Many lost their lives due to exhaustion, malnutrition, and disease. The plight of these soldiers is an often-overlooked chapter in World War II history, and their sacrifices deserve greater recognition.

I am currently researching the stories of these soldiers, both during and after the war. To that end, I am reaching out to veterans and their families who may have memories, documents, or stories to share. The goal is to preserve their legacy in a book that will be published in Aug 2025, coinciding with the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the war. Any materials shared will be reviewed and cleared with the families prior to publication.

### **Gautam Hazarika**

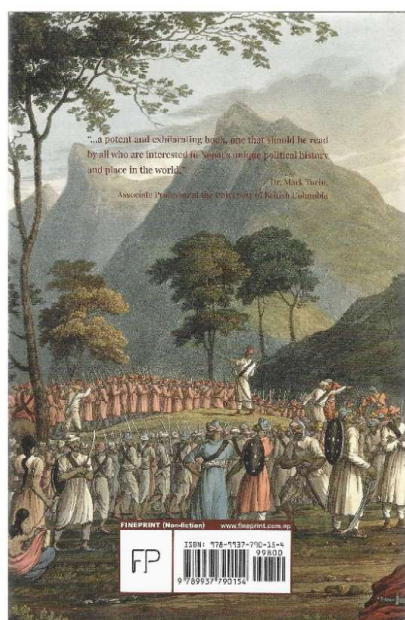
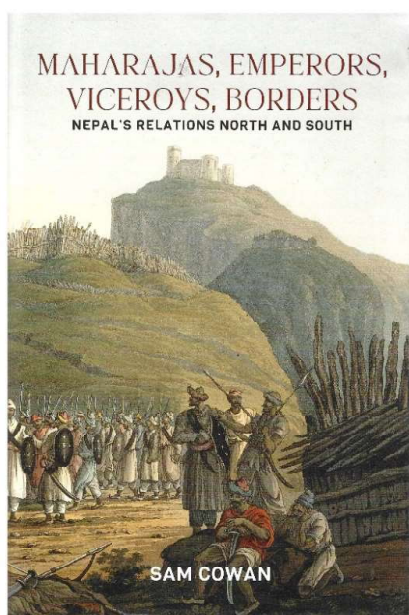
Gautam Hazarika grew up in India and after his MBA became a banker in 1993, moving to Singapore in 2002. After over 25 years in the financial world, in 2022 he started research as an amateur historian, his lifelong passion. Along the way, he has published many articles, and this would be his first book.

## **Review Articles and Book Reviews**



# Maharajas, Emperors, Viceroys, Borders: Nepal's Relations North and South

Sam Cowan



## About The Author

Sam Cowan served with Gurkha soldiers for many years in Nepal but also in Malaya, Singapore and Borneo, eventually becoming Colonel of the Brigade of Gurkhas and the Chairman of the Gurkha Welfare Trust. In this capacity, he had official audiences with both King Birendra and King Gyanendra.

After retirement, he started researching and writing articles on Nepal's history. Apart from that, he has trekked extensively in Nepal. This book; 'Maharajas, Emperors, Viceroys, Borders: Nepal's relations North and South' written from a personal viewpoint is a collection of his important articles. As he states, "Retirement from the Army meant that he could express his views publicly".

**Maharajas, Emperors, Viceroys, Borders: Nepal's Relations North and South by Sam Cowan**, Pages 298, Price ₹ 449, ISBN-13:978-9937-790-15-4, Publisher Fineprint

*Journal of the United Service Institution of India*, Vol. CLIV, No. 637, July-September 2024.

## About the Book

**T**he book comprises of eight articles which cover the period from the Anglo-Nepal wars till 2008. the first of which discusses the Kalapani Lipu Lekh border a disputed territory between Northwest Nepal and India, which after festering for several years, came to the forefront in 2020. Cowan provides much needed context and a detailed investigation into major aspects of the border that is now in the forefront of Indo-Nepal relations, including a history of the frontier, created in the aftermath of 1814-16 Anglo-Nepal war and subsequent Sugauli Treaty.

Drawing on reproductions of files and maps from archives and relevant academic studies, Cowan details the roles and limitations of the demarcation. While India felt that in order to provide security from China, India's sovereignty would only be guaranteed if the Himalaya's were secured, not just the Indian Himalaya but Bhutanese and Nepali too. Prime Minister Nehru has been quoted during his visit to Nepal in Jun 1959 as saying; "The Himalayas are the guardians and sentinels of India and Nepal and their white capped peaks welcome friends and are a warning to those of hostile intent". To do so required a strong military presence near or on other countries' borders. Yet while Nepal worried that it ran the risk of becoming a mere province of India, it also required assistance guarding its long remote frontier. The Indian military extended an offer to Nepal to help open and run border checkpoints between Tibet and Nepal and from 1952 to 1970, there were 18 Indian military checkpoints on Nepal's Northern frontier. As per Cowan, "Lipu Lekh's absence from the list is striking and revealing".

As regards Lipu Lekh, Cowan claims that there was a long-established diplomatic precedent for China and India treating Lipu Lekh as Indian territory and as a recognised border post between India and China. To quote Cowan, "India from the date of its independence has assumed and acted on the basis that the trail to Lipu Lekh fell exclusively within its territory and the ownership of the pass was exclusively between it and China".

China accepted this principle as per Article IV of the Sino-Indian Trade Agreement over the Tibet Border in 1954 and this status remained unchanged in both the Memorandum of Understanding on Border Trade during President Li Peng's visit to

Delhi in 1991 and the 'Protocol of Entry and Exit Procedure' for border trade in Jul 1992. In both these agreements Lipu Lekh was mentioned as a 'Mutually agreed border trading point'.

This was again reenforced in Article V of the Agreement between Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and the Chinese Premier, Wen Jiabao, on 11 Apr 2005. Whereas Nepal had made no attempt to create similar diplomatic convention or support, as he writes, "Nepal's case for Kalapani has been badly undermined by long years of silence on the issue by the country's leaders". Details of the case are too vast to go into here, but Cowan provides a balanced understanding of the border dispute and the geopolitical realities.

The truth is that the Sugauli Treaty signed on 04 Mar 1816 never had a map attached as 'All maps were so incorrect that no satisfactory judgement could be framed from them'. To put it simply the British wanted a trade route to Tibet 'Free of interference by the Gorkhas' and hence, Edward Gardner the Commissioner of Kumaon was given the 'Authority to move the boundary as far East' from the river and adjust the treaty terms accordingly'. In fact, the book quotes historical records to state that 'Nepal's recent claim to Limpiyadhura, based on what is written in the Sugauli Treaty and framed using almost identical words used by Bum Shah was firmly rejected by Lord Moira in Sep 1817'. In addition, the 'China-Nepal Boundary Treaty signed by King Mahendra in Beijing in Oct 1961 'Makes no mention at all to Lipu Lekh'. As per Cowan 'It corresponds to the 1879 map and the one claimed by India today'. Quoting Ambassador Rakesh Sood, "We now have a territorial dispute between India and Nepal and it's not going to be easy". "I think this will be remembered as PM Oli's lasting legacy to have created an insurmountable problem in India-Nepal relations".

Chapter three covers the three meetings at Lipu Lekh between the Surveyor Captain Webb who was responsible for carrying out the survey of Kumaon and Chinese Governor of Taklakot in May 1816 at Lipu Lekh. Cowan also writes about the Survey of India map of 'Kumaon and British Gurhwal' published in 1850, which accurately showed the line of the border as decreed in the Sugauli Treaty and quotes the Governor Generals letter of 05 Sep 1817 rejecting in the strongest terms, Nepal's claim to the land it is now claiming again. He states, "That there is no record of any official

in Kathmandu protesting against the ruling, and the matter rested there till 13 June 2020”.

The book is not just focused on border disputes. There is coverage of the Nepal-Tibet war of 1792, which was an awakening for the Gorkhas, who suffered a rare military defeat and were forced to sign a Peace Treaty and entered into a feudatory relationship with China.

Cowan also provides a detailed analysis of the East India Company and its relationship with the Qing Dynasty, and how this relationship directly impacted the British relationship with Nepal. He states, that “The English had become hooked on tea” which became a major source of profit for the East India Company and China was the only producer, hence, there was acute sensitivity to Chinese feelings. Hence, before launching the war Lord Moira obtained ‘Informed views on likely Chinese reactions’.

The book also throws light on how the Nepalese tried to draw the Chinese into the war. The Nepalese ‘Wanted China to support its military rivalries, the pleadings of which intensified in 1814. Cowan says, “Nepal’s intricate manoeuvres ended total failure”. He goes on to write that ‘They also found out the hard way just how limited and restricted were China it owed its vassals.’ He also gives insights into what the British wanted in the aftermath of the Gorkha war, what the Qing dynasty thought about this and the Western borders of Nepal.

There is an in-depth essay on King Mahendra and his role in key events of Nepali history, including the drafting of the 1959 constitution by Sir Ivor Jennings, who wrote the Ceylon Constitution in 1946 had a completely different mindset to the man who was called to help draft Nepal’s new constitution. Amid Cold War imperatives placed political stability over the democratic rights of Nepal’s citizens thereby favouring the ‘Hereditary Executive’ giving him total and absolute control over the Army, leading the way for King Mahendra’s subsequent coup in 1960.

In fact, the book clearly brings out how he prevented the advent of democracy by arresting BP Koirala the first Prime Minister. Cowan does an admirable job in portraying both the fallout and resistance to the coup, but the inner worries and doubts of King Mahendra and criticism by the West, fortunately for King Mahendra the 1962 Indo China war ‘Came to his rescue’, thus saving ‘his imposed Panchayat system and his absolute position within it’.

In addition, after the Nov 1962 war, Indian opposition to Mahendra weakened rapidly and he was able to embark on his much-acclaimed strategy of playing China off against India, which essentially consisted of worrying India that he was getting closer to China.

The various facets of the relationship between the Ranas, who ruled Nepal autocratically for 104 years, and the British, who gave them legitimacy, is given out beautifully. The book also covers the importance that the many military awards and insignia played in internal Rana politics. As the Ranas greatly desired these awards, this keenness to get not just an award but the most senior and prestigious one possible gave the British officials more opportunities to try to use the awards to get Nepal's rulers to adopt policies that were advantageous to British interests.

While the essays cover how the Nepalese allowed recruiting of Gurkhas for the British Indian Army to take place, it also throws light on an interesting facet of the character of the Ranas as General Sir Kaiser Shamsheer Jung on being appointed as Knight of Most Excellent Order of the British Empire wanted Garrads of London to make him an extra-large star as he thought the regulation pattern star was not impressive enough.

## **Conclusion**

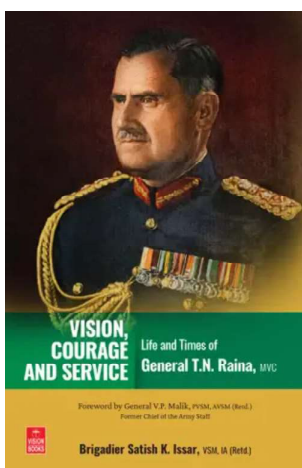
The book, backed by maps and historical documents gives an insight into key aspects of Nepali history throwing light on some lesser-known aspects by the authors access to archival material. Each chapter takes a particular historical episode and with Cowan's 'Obsessive Commitment' to dig deep reveals certain facts that throw light on the events from an unusual angle.

Meticulously researched, analysed and written with intellectual rigour, the book is an insightful collection on key events which include the Anglo-Nepal War of 1814-16 and the Treaty of Sugauli in 1823 and their relevance to contemporary issues including the dispute regarding Lipu Lekh and the area to its West known as Limpiyadhura. It is a book that is both scholarly and readable and needs to be read by those who are interested in Nepal's unique political history and its impact on India.

*Major General Jagatbir Singh, VSM (Retd)*



**Vision, Courage and Service, Life and Times of General TN Raina, MVC by Brigadier Satish K. Issar, Pages 500; Price ₹ 599/-, ISBN-13 : 978-9386268518 Published- Vision Books Pvt Ltd; First Edition (1 Jan 2021);**



The autobiography of this heroic Indian General, 'The Life and Times of General TN Raina, MVC', brings out the true spirit of a warrior. General Tapishwar Narain Raina, MVC, the esteemed former Chief of the Army Staff with a remarkable tenure from 1975 to 1978, remains enshrined in the annals of Indian military history. While this autobiography captures his career trajectory and the accomplishments brought to the Indian defence arena and the world, it also traces his personal ethos as the Chief of the Army Staff, General Raina's career out of which the Indo-Pak

War that began in Dec 1971 was one the most crucial ones that saw Raina at his tactical best. Brigadier Issar skilfully conveys Raina's strength in the leadership role during this dangerous period, focusing on vision and courage in the face of danger and hardship. He provides vivid narration of strategic sessions, frontal encounters, together with his interactions with the troops and this makes it easier to appreciate the temperament of this hard-featured, strict yet compassionate commander. Another area where the biography is excels is in explaining is due to the much focus used in explaining how Raina's leadership styles when serving in the general service years was different from those in his higher rank positions. Issar gives a blow-by-blow portrayal of Raina's coming of age in the Indian Army but intersperses his narration with powerful moments detailing Raina's bravery and strategic prowess on the battlefield. One of such narration can be typified by his fighting experience in World War II and the Indo-China conflict with real life lesson on holding his ground in the face of adversity. Additionally, the book also reveals the behind the scenes work of General Raina in improving the quality of life of soldiers and their dependents. His concerns and efforts to improve living standards of his men and their promotion are described with due consideration. Issar spends quite some time recounting the visionary ideas of General Raina such as revamping the Indian Army's infrastructure and pushing

for technology, which have brought lasting changes to the force. With regard to criticisms, it is important to note that although the book provides a good, detailed account of General Raina's life it tends to be hagiographic at times, which may give an impression that critical examination of some of the contentious actions during his leadership is lacking. Such incidents are rare and do not negate the primary goal of providing factual information about his life and his service. In addition, there are photographs and documents that complement the material and give the reader more insight into the text, 'Vision, Courage, and Service'. These are not just illustrations but tools that make the historical narrative more personal and less abstract, where faces are given to names and situations to the events narrated. Thus, the biography 'The Life and Times of General TN Raina, MVC', is an excellent example of a work that does justice to the person. It not only tells one about the major events of General Raina's life but also gives one an idea about the temperament of a man who was a soldier and a gentleman. This book is an informative read for all those interested in the history of the Indian military, and it would indeed inspire many in the forces as well as other citizens of the country. It is written in a very professional, precise, and polite manner that is best suited for those who wish to gain insight on military hierarchy and the honor in serving the country.

Summing up the analysis of General TN Raina's biography as narrated by Brigadier Satish K Issar, one can emphasise that one of the chief values of this work is in the fact that it goes beyond the concept of military heroic deeds. The job that Issar is portraying is the human aspect of leadership, which is empathy, moral character and a doggedness on nation building. These qualities depicted in the book present General Raina not only as a military strategist but also as a symbol of unchanging values that are relevant to both military and civilian societies. A biography is not just a story of someone's life but turns it into a story of leadership that can be followed and continued. In the pages of this book, the entire life story of General Raina is revealed in a way that is nothing short of inspirational on the traditional values of leadership and unyielding spirit of servant leadership which cuts through generations and is relevant to anyone in leadership irrespective of the position adopted.

*Dr Jyoti Yadav*

## MEMBERSHIP

The following are eligible to become members of the Institution:

- Officers of the Armed Forces.
- Class I Gazetted Officers of Group 'A' Central Services.
- Any category mentioned above will be eligible even though retired or released from the Service.
- Cadets from the National Defence Academy and Cadets from the Service Academies and Midshipmen.

For further particulars, please write to Director General, USI of India, Rao Tula Ram Marg, (Opposite Signals Enclave) Post Bag No. 8, Vasant Vihar PO, New Delhi – 110057.

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Adm-SYB/22 **		"STRATEGIC YEAR BOOK 2022" Edited by Maj Gen BK Sharma, AVSM, SM & Bar (Retd), Lt Gen GS Katoch, PVSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd) and Gp Capt Sharad Tewari, VM (Retd)	2250	2022
OP-2/2022**		"India and the Blue Economy : Challenges and Way Forward" by Dr Roshan Khanijo & Ms Samridhi Roy	325	2022
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Adm-UNPO/2022		"Keeping the Peace –UN Peace Operations and their Effectiveness : An Assessment" by Maj Gen (Dr) AK Bardalai (Retd) M/s Pentagon Press	995	2022
CS3/R-114**		"Geo-Politics of Water in South Asia : Implications For India" By Col Anurag Jyoti	1250	2022
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R-111**		"STRATEGIC YEAR BOOK 2021" Edited by Maj Gen BK Sharma, AVSM, SM & Bar (Retd), Lt Gen GS Katoch, PVSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd), Gp Capt Sharad Tewari, VSM (Retd) and Dr Roshan Khanijo	1850	2021
M-1/21**		"The Determinants of India's National Military Strategy" By Lt Gen (Dr) Rakesh Sharma, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd)	295	2021
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\*Available at USI of India

\*\* Available at M/s Vij Books of India Pvt Ltd

# USI

(Estd. 1870)

## OUR ACTIVITIES

### Centre for Military History and Conflict Studies (CMHCS)

The CMHCS was established in Dec 2000 at the behest of the three Service Headquarters for encouraging an objective study of all facets of Indian military history with a special emphasis on the history of the Indian Armed Forces. It focuses on diverse aspects of the history of Indian military evolution, policies, and practices—strategic, tactical, logistical, organisational, socio-economic, as well as the field of contemporary conflict studies in the broader sense.

### Centre for Atma Nirbhar Bharat (CANB)

The centre was established on 01 Jan 2024 and also includes Cyber Centre of Excellence (CCoE) as part of it in conjunction with Cyber Peace Foundation. The centre's objective is to forge emerging technologies with geostrategic and geopolitical situations with a view to make the services self-reliant by making possible the indigenous production of defence equipment and spares. The CCoE trains military personnel in artificial intelligence, cyber, and machine learning in addition to cyber forensic analysis in its well-equipped lab.

### Gold Medal Essay Competition

Every year the Institution organises a Gold Medal Essay Competition open to all officers. These essays, the first one of which was introduced in 1871, constitutes a barometer of opinions on matters that affect national security in general and the defence forces in particular.

### USI War Wounded Foundation Joint Essay Competition

This essay competition was instituted in 2021 after the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between USI and the War Wounded Foundation. The competition is open to all across the globe and must be on the subject of issues relating to the experiences and/or rehabilitation of war disabled personnel of the Indian Armed Forces.

### Lt Gen SL Menezes Memorial Essay Competition

This has been instituted from 2015 on a subject related to armed forces historical research. The essay competition is open to everyone, all across the globe.

### Lectures, Discussions, and Seminars

A series of lectures, discussions, and seminars on service matters, international affairs, and topics of general interest to the services are organised for the benefit of local members in Delhi.

### MacGregor Medal

This medal is awarded to armed forces personnel for valuable reconnaissance and adventure activity they may have undertaken.

### Centre for Strategic Studies and Simulation (CS3)

The erstwhile Centre for Research and its resources have been merged into the new centre named as CS3 w.e.f. 01 Jan 2005. The centre aims at conducting detailed and comprehensive enquiry research, and analyses of national and international security related issues, and gaming and simulation of strategic scenarios, to evolve options for wider discussion and consideration.

### Centre for UN Peacekeeping (CUNPK)

The centre was established in 2000 and functioned with USI to organise workshops, seminars, and training capsules for peacekeepers, observers, and staff officers, both Indian and foreign. It also oversaw the practical training of Indian contingents. In Aug 2014, CUNPK moved out under the Integrated Headquarter of Ministry of Defence (Army). The USI has now established a United Nations (UN) Centre which is focusing on operational, strategic, and policy issues related to UN Peacekeeping. It also organises seminars and conferences on such issues.

### Correspondence Courses

The Institution runs regular correspondence courses for officers of the armed forces to assist them in preparing for promotion examinations, and for the entrance examinations to the Defence Services Staff College and the Technical Staff College. Over the years, this has been significant and well-received activity.

### USI Journal

The USI Journal is the oldest surviving defence journal in the country and in Asia, having first appeared in 1871. In the era when there is a feeling that free expression of views by defence personnel is not looked upon kindly by the establishment, the journal in fact provides just such a forum, without regard to seniority and length of service in the armed forces, subject to propriety and quality of the written work.

### Library and Reading Room

The library holds over 68,000 books and journals, including some books from the 17th, 18th, and 19th Centuries, on an astonishing variety of subjects. While the principal emphasis is on strategy and defence, there are a large number of works on different vistas of Indian life. There are memoirs, biographies, recollections, diaries, journals and manuscripts for scholars and researchers. The reading room is air-conditioned, spacious and well-stocked in terms of current reading material. Library was automated in 2002.