

Short Reviews of Recent Books

Territorial Army: Gateway for Civilians to Army. By Lieutenant Colonel Surender Singh, (Chennai, : Notion Press; June 2020), Pages 302, Price - Rs 400/-, ISBN-978-1648997037 (Paperback)

The changing nature of war, and extension of war to newer sophisticated domains, has forced the administrative and military establishments across the world to relook into the role of the defence forces in protecting territorial integrity and sovereignty of the nation. The blurring line between conventional and unconventional warfare in a highly competitive and contested environment has compelled scholars to examine the concept, dynamics and organisational features of army in a newer light. Amidst heated debates over integrated commands, the book 'Territorial Army: Gateway for Civilians to Army' by Lieutenant Colonel Surender Singh is a valuable addition to the study of territorial army.

The book looks into the *longue durée* features of the territorial army, highlighting the role and rationale for citizens' army, with very interesting anecdotes across the book, making it interesting to readers. The book runs into 300 odd pages and looks into the establishment of territorial army in India, with ample factual and contextual information. The chapter on concept of different territorial armies is short but exhaustive. The detailed nature of first three chapters makes these attractive and exciting. The chapter 3 on Dynamics of Indian Military Traditions provides ancient perspective, though the readers could have been given more details of the Great War of Mahabharata where the role of civilians is rightly emphasised by the author. The European Military roots rightly places the chapter in context of the book and, hence, gives credence to the next chapter on the role of territorials in the Great Indian Revolution of 1857. The 1857 revolution, and fear of another mutiny, prompted the raising of Volunteer Force of India. The flow of the chapter is immaculate and chronological in nature, with table and contents, making it a must read.

Territorial Forces during the World Wars is again an interesting and enriching read. However, the addition of the events post World War-I, including the dilemma over the role of territorial army within the British administration, would have added crucial

dimension to it. The complexity of relationship between British cavalry units and its political and military class after the first world war, the idea of creation of a system of decentralised administration during the reform of the territorial army in 1920s, the backlash from territorial army highlighted by other authors could have been a valuable addition.

Chapter four on post Independence organisation is again an exhaustive read with plenty of takeaways, particularly details on growth of territorial army. Finally, the author has substantially put forward his views and vision for the future of territorial army. The vision and opinion truly reflects his thorough understanding of the territorial army based on his reading, its role in the changing nature of warfare, and shortcomings, if not lacunae, in the current system. He rightly advocates the role of citizen's army in countering the emerging security challenges to the nation, which should back the regular military forces. Nowhere author has made any allusion of dismantling or reducing the true capacity of the regular forces; he, on the other hand, has recommended ways and means to support it through territorial army.

Finally, the book has painstakingly explained the various facets of the territorial army, its history and evolution, and need for it in future to counter modern security threats.

Shri Gaurav Kumar

The Coolie's Great War: Indian Labour in a Global Conflict, 1914-1921. By Radhika Singha, (New Delhi HarperCollins India, December 2020), Hardcover Page 396, Price Rs. 699/-, ISBN-13: 9789353579852

Until a few years ago, the number of books on the Indian participation in the Great War could perhaps be counted on the fingers of both hands; with a few left to spare. The period of the centenary commemoration of the conflict (2014-2018) saw a resurgence of interest in histories from the periphery and a number of excellent books were written on the role played by India in the First World War. These helped to create a greater understanding of the very significant impact that India had upon

the course of the war and also to examine, in turn, the outcome of the war's legacies upon India.

However, there was a piece of the puzzle that was missing. Of the approximately 1.4 million Indians who were recruited for service, nearly 5,64,000 were non-combatants or followers, the bulk of whom served in the numerous labour and porter corps' raised for service in the various theatres of the war. There was, till date, no account of the war service of this bewildering array of non-combatant followers whose numbers were used to swell the Indian manpower contribution to the war effort, by colonial authorities and Indian elites alike. This book fills that yawning gap in the story of the Indian 'contribution' and sheds light on this vital yet little known aspect of the 'war to end all wars'.

The book consists of six chapters, each touching upon different themes relating to the repurposing and deployment of Indian labour for imperial military purposes during the war. It delves into myriad aspects of this mobilisation: ranging from the geopolitical imperatives that underpinned the pre-war movement of Indian labour to the manner in which these were reframed for the purpose of attaining imperial war aims. In the process, it allows the reader to gain a better insight into not just the terms of service, and the forms of contract that governed that service, but also the manner of utilisation of Indian labour in theatres as diverse as France, Mesopotamia and India's North West Frontier. The resistance to enforced recruitment in some parts of India brought the war to the doorsteps of remote areas of the country, with repercussions on local communities that are felt till today.

This book, therefore, not only fills an important gap in the Indian military historiography of the Great War but also places the participation of these menial labourers into a larger framework of a transnational labour history. It is essential reading for all military, social and labour historians and helps to even out the overtly Eurocentric narrative of the conflict, and place it in a global perspective. Very highly recommended for all Service libraries.

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