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India's Wars: A Military History 1947–1971

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Americans. What happened? Why was there such a fundamental change? Why were the Japanese unable to sustain these traits later in the war? Books that challenge the received wisdom are always fun, and this one only increases the interest in the next two translations.

NICHOLAS EVAN SARANTAKES



India's Wars: A Military History 1947–1971, by Arjun Subramaniam. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2017. 576 pages. \$40.

Air Vice-Marshal Arjun Subramaniam is not a man to shy away from challenges. In *India's Wars*, he attempts to explain in one volume the creation, evolution, and employment of India's armed forces during the first quarter century of its independence. He succeeds remarkably well, and this volume likely will be the best example of its genre for the foreseeable future.

India's Wars is more than an impressive chronological discussion of battles fought and mostly won. Subramaniam also examines questions and issues of high strategy and national identity. For example, he examines how a country led by the heroically popular pacifist Jawaharlal Nehru could create a joint military consisting of former colonial regiments with long and storied traditions, elements of the Indian army that had fought alongside Japanese troops in World War II, and air and naval forces. This section of the book looks at India's martial past during the precolonial and colonial periods.

The book then follows a chronological path, examining major military actions. Subramaniam looks hard at the

first Indo-Pakistan War, of 1947–48. Responsibility for initiating the war is placed solely on Pakistan. Associated chapters feature detailed descriptions of India's attempts to hold ground in Jammu and Kashmir. Useful maps accompany every battle description.

It is easy to forget, except in the well-known example of Jammu and Kashmir, that the boundaries of modern India were not permanently established at partition. The princely state of Hyderabad chose not to join greater India and opted to continue as an independent state. Similarly, Portugal did not relinquish its city colony of Goa on India's west coast. When efforts at political solutions increasingly appeared doomed to fail, the government decided to settle both situations via military means.

The 1962 India-China war is examined thoroughly with as much attention to this Indian defeat as is given to earlier victories. Subramaniam identifies political failures on the basis of unrealistic expectations regarding Chinese intentions and miscalculation of Chinese capabilities. Mistakes in operational dispositions and tactics are faced squarely.

Subramaniam's best writing covers the 1965 war with Pakistan. He carefully explains Pakistan's strategic and operational preparation for the conflict, including an alliance with the United States, modernization of the Pakistani armed forces with U.S. equipment, and substantial improvement of such capabilities as close air support. Although Pakistan was unable to field as many divisions as India, Subramaniam makes a convincing case that the acquisition of Patton tanks, better artillery, and F-86 fighter-bombers gave Pakistan a qualitative edge. Subramaniam also makes a point

of crediting Air Marshal Asghar Khan of the Pakistani air force as responsible for significant improvements in his service.

The role of paramilitary mujahideen is discussed in detail, Subramaniam arguing that these forces were largely ineffective in sparking popular uprisings. He also looks at the opposing navies, and attributes lack of any real Indian naval campaigns to the unavailability of INS *Vikrant*, India's sole aircraft carrier, during the period of hostilities.

Subramaniam provides clear descriptions of combat actions, supported by adequate maps and occasional pocket biographies of key personalities. He candidly admits to failures of Indian intelligence, and notes that Pakistani forces experienced similar problems. Indian mistakes and losses are cataloged carefully, as are those of Pakistan. He draws extensively from personal interviews, unit war diaries, and secondary sources.

The book concludes with the liberation of Bangladesh. Although Pakistan is identified as responsible for widespread human rights abuses in what was then East Pakistan, Subramaniam recognizes that Indian leaders from Indira Gandhi on down recognized the greatly improved strategic situation India would face if Pakistani forces were removed from a shared eastern border. The war's depiction follows Subramaniam's pattern of explanatory description, buttressed by maps. He examines the rapid collapse of Pakistani forces in Bangladesh and military operations along the West Pakistan-Indian border. Subramaniam provides a careful examination of the naval war and mentions the roles of militia forces, intelligence, and covert operations.

Regrettably, Subramaniam stopped his examination of India's military at 1971. His excellent ability to analyze

and explain would have been welcome in looking at the role of the Indian military during the national emergency of 1975 to 1977. An examination of the impact of India's nuclear capabilities on doctrine, strategy, tactics, and forces also would be a notable addition to this work.

Taken in its entirety, the picture *India's Wars* paints of the evolving Indian military is a flattering one. Modern military prowess rides comfortably on proud traditions and achievements of the past. If a reader detects a certain satisfaction on the part of the author, it is as well deserved as it is understandable.

RICHARD J. NORTON



Brothers at Arms: American Independence and the Men of France and Spain Who Saved It, by Larrie D. Ferreiro. New York: Random House, 2016. 464 pages. \$18.

In the past, Larrie Ferreiro has combined his expertise in military history with his extensive knowledge of naval architecture to produce unique interpretations of eighteenth-century events that shaped our world. Building on the impressive scholarship in works such as his *Ships and Science* and *The Measure of the Earth*, *Brothers at Arms* combines familiar accounts of French officers who served with the Continental Army with descriptions of the contributions of other French and of Spanish officials without whose assistance the newly created United States likely would not have survived.

The book begins with the interesting assertion that the courts of Europe, particularly the Bourbon monarchies of France and Spain, were the principal audience for the Declaration of