



**Douglas E. Delaney.** *The Imperial Army Project: Britain and the Land Forces of the Dominions and India, 1902-1945.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018. 368 pp. \$110.50, cloth, ISBN 978-0-19-870446-1.

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Douglas E. Delaney's *The Imperial Army Project* seeks to answer the question of how the British managed to get the considerable and different armies of the Dominions and India to cooperate and work together in defense of the empire. Specifically, the book seeks to discern what the British War Office wanted from these armies and what it was eventually able to achieve. Delaney examines the period from the Boer War to the Second World War. He breaks his work into four periods: two cover the preparation for war (1902-14 and 1919-39) and two cover the wars (1914-19 and 1939-45).

Chapter 1 focuses on the trauma of the Boer War, the efforts put into place to reform the War Office, and the empire's armies. Chapter 2 examines how the newly created Imperial General Staff sought to ensure that the Indian and Dominion armies would follow the model of the British Army and be capable of expeditionary deployment. Chapter 3 studies the growth and use of the Dominion armies during the Great War. Chapter 4 concentrates on the interwar period and looks at the challenges of military interoperability at a time of fiscal austerity and war weariness and also delves into political challenges in India and the Dominions. Chapter 5 deals with the effort to create a modern fighting force and to continue to strive for compatibility during the period of inter-

national tensions. The final chapter examines the last great imperial war effort: the Second World War. The chapter addresses how India and the Dominions greatly expanded their military forces, and how tactics and technology were jointly assimilated by all the imperial armies.

According to Delaney, the forty-five-year-long Imperial Army Project was a success. It enabled the British to create a military system that allowed for efficient cooperation and use of the imperial armies. These armies could rely on a foundation of common doctrine, training, and military education to foster wartime interoperability. The Second World War was the pinnacle of this project, and the partition and independence of India and Pakistan in 1947 signified the end of the project.

Delaney, however, tends to understate the ineffectiveness of this interoperability during war time. This is particularly true for the Second World War when cooperation and interoperability between the Australian and British forces during the disastrous Malayan campaign all but collapsed. Even the traditional bonds between the British and Indian armies were tested as Winston Churchill and his General Staff treated the Indian Army with scant respect. In North Africa, Indian Army commanders were scapegoated for their perceived ineffectiveness against the German AfriKa Korps. The same scenario played out dur-

ing the early stages of the Burma campaign, and it was only later that the Indian Army was given a free hand to develop a war-winning formula. The book has a greater focus on the Dominion armies, and the Indian Army receives less attention (especially in chapter 3 on the First World War).

Despite these weaknesses, this is an important work. It joins F. W. Perry's classic *The Commonwealth Armies: Manpower and Organisation in Two World Wars* (1988) as a valuable look into the British Empire's imperial army system. The book has the benefit of extensive archival research in the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, and it will be an invaluable addition to any collection on the British Empire and imperial military history.

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