

Societies and Military Power: India and its Armies.

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Rosen moves, in this intriguing book, away from the more "traditional" analyses of force and international security with which he has been associated, as exemplified in his influential *Winning the Next War: Innovation and the Modern Military* (1991). His concern in *Societies and Military Power* centers upon a classic chicken-and-egg issue: the interplay between underlying social structure and values and the shape of civil-military relations. He resolves this issue by wide-ranging inquiry into India.

On several occasions, Rosen warns us that his readings of Indian history are neither idiosyncratic nor deterministic. "History is full of contingent outcomes," he comments, "and nothing in this chapter or book is meant to suggest that social structures predetermine the emergence of a strong central state or its failure to emerge" (p. 141). *Societies and Military Power* sweeps over two and half millennia in one of the world's most complex, interesting societies. Has Rosen read too much into fragmentary documentation from the past? Has he skewed the evidence to reach a preordained outcome? I feared this all-too-common failing for a few score pages, then was persuaded by Rosen's interpretations.

Societies and Military Power asserts the following model, each element of which appeals to common sense but is difficult to demonstrate conclusively. (1) Social structures determine how individuals within societies treat one another; organizations enjoy some freedom to isolate their members from society. (2) Military organizations are less likely to reflect the structures of the larger society if they are relatively small and isolated physically, temporally, and/or psychologically. (3) The social structures of a political unit can affect its military power, offensive and defensive, by dividing the society as a whole and by creating divisions within the military. (4) The less a military reflects the structures of the society, the more it will be perceived as an alien element, unrepresentative of society and hence distrusted.

Central to recent models of civil-military relations has been what Luckham called "integral boundaries" (A. R. Luckham, "A Comparative Typology of Civil-Military Relations," *Government and Opposition*, Winter 1971, pp. 5-35). Modern Western societies characterized by "objective civilian control" (Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, 1957) are marked by "integral" boundaries between armed forces and the total social system. By contrast, settings such as India, historically and potentially contemporaneously, exemplify "fragmented" boundaries. Easy to assert and far more difficult to demonstrate, such models require careful empirical analysis. Detailed study of a single social system over time may provide the most satisfactory scientific foundation.

Rosen draws upon many years' interest and residence in India. Only a handful of specialists could rival the sweep of documentation used in *Societies and Military Power*. The historical sources are impressively numerous and varied in approach; but his choices are also highly - and I believe

necessarily - selective. Following a summary of his model and an exegesis of the caste system, Rosen focuses upon four separate periods: ancient India (500 BCE-500 CE); Mughal rule (1526-1707, characterized as "the medieval period"); the initial 50 years of significant British overrule (around the late eighteenth century); and the five decades since independence. These chapters account for more than three-quarters of the text.

As may be expected, the closer the historical period to the present, the more copious is Rosen's documentation, the briefer the slice of time, and the more confident his conclusions (with the partial exception of the present, for the contemporary armed forces of India are shrouded in a thick veil of secrecy). For each period, Rosen uses apt, non-Indian comparisons. Relations between Indian militaries and society in the first period are briefly contrasted with Greek armies, notably that of Alexander the Great, and with (in more detail) the Roman republic before the first century CE. "Although the historical analysis tends to support the predictions generated by the general propositions," Rosen comments, "the record is not perfectly clear" (p. 103), with the important proviso that the strategic outlook of ancient India "was not uniquely Indian" (ibid.). The second period substantially overlapped the well-studied "military revolution" in Western Europe, the genesis of many elements of the contemporary state system, and the Thirty Years War. Technological differences between India and Europe at this time were not great, but contrasts in battle effectiveness were marked. Why? Rosen concludes this section more confidently: "These two factors - the differences in Indian and European societies and in the nature of their military organizations and their relationship to the host society - accounts [sic] for the difference in military performance" (p. 161).

For the third period, Rosen looks briefly to the Ottoman Empire and then at greater length to India, contrasting the effectiveness and power of the British-led East India Company forces (able to vanquish indigenous armies with ten times the personnel), on the one hand, with Mughal forces, on the other. "The British created an army in India that was significantly more powerful than the armies of the Mughal Empire because it was professional and as such not subject to the internal divisions always in operation in the Mughal army" (p. 196). Finally, in concentrating on the post-independence period, Rosen contrasts Indian and Pakistani civil-military relations and military effectiveness; he also provides an intriguing parallel with the Hapsburg Austrian empire, which "may provide the best comparison to test any conclusions about the consequences of separating an army from its social origins" (p. 254). The contemporary Indian Army remains "a collection of small, isolated, and inward-looking military communities" whose separation from society "preserved its strength and prevented its corruption" (p. 262), but this isolation is breaking down, at a cost to India's military effectiveness.

Not unexpectedly, Rosen finds his model explains many seeming anomalies in India's civil-military relations and security. Social structures are independent variables, "not simply a way to explain 'residual' variations in military power" (p. 258). Countries that fail to isolate their armed forces from social divisions reduce intramilitary cohesion and thus undercut military effectiveness. Yet, pronounced separation between society and armed forces results in mutual alienation, encouraging coups d'etat, protection of privilege, or marginalization (as Rosen aptly observes, no military officer may serve in the Indian Ministry of Defence, even after retirement).

Societies and Military Power should arouse discussion not only among India specialists but also among all students of civil-military and state-society relations. It is an important study. The initial skepticism with which I approached this book ebbed as Rosen displayed his historical evidence. He has written an unusual, challenging book, maintaining the high quality of the Cornell Studies in Security Affairs. *Societies and Military Power: India and Its Armies* provides ample food for thought and, I hope, an inspiration to further investigation of society-military interactions.

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