How are soldiers made? Why do they fight? Reimagining the study of armed forces and society, Tarak Barkawi examines the imperial and multinational armies that fought in Asia in the Second World War, especially the British Indian Army in the Burma campaign. Going beyond conventional narratives, Barkawi studies soldiers in transnational context, from recruitment and training, to combat and memory. Drawing on history, sociology, and anthropology, the book critiques the “Western way of war” from a postcolonial perspective. Barkawi reconceives soldiers as cosmopolitan, their battles irreducible to the national histories that monopolize them. This book will appeal to those interested in the Second World War, armed forces, and the British Empire, and to students and scholars of military sociology and history, South Asian studies, and international relations.

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Soldiers of Empire
Indian and British Armies in World War II

Tarak Barkawi
London School of Economics and Political Science
For mama and papa
No one who saw the 14th Army in action, above all, no one who saw its dead on the field of battle, the black and the white and the brown and the yellow lying together in their indistinguishable blood on the rich soil of Burma, can ever doubt that there is a brotherhood of man; or fail to cry, What is Man, that he can give so much for war, so little for peace?

– John Masters, The Road Past Mandalay
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Acronyms

AA Anti-Aircraft
ALFSEA Allied Land Forces Southeast Asia
BO British Officer
C-in-C Commander-in-Chief
CO Commanding Officer
EA East African
ECO Emergency Commissioned Officer (British)
EICO Emergency Indian Commissioned Officer
GHQ(I) General Headquarters (India)
GO Gurkha Officer (Gurkha equivalent of VCO)
ICO Indian Commissioned Officer
IJA Imperial Japanese Army
INA Indian National Army
IOR Indian Other Rank
KAR King’s African Rifles
KCIO King’s Commissioned Indian Officer
LMG Light Machine Gun
MG Machine Gun
MT Motor Transport
NCO Non-Commissioned Officer
OC Officer Commanding
OR Other Rank
PoW Prisoner of War
RAF Royal Air Force
RWF Royal Welch Fusiliers
SEAC Southeast Asia Command
VCO Viceroy’s Commissioned Officer
WA West African
Abbreviations Used in the References

BEC  Museum of the British Empire and Commonwealth, Bristol, UK
CC   Churchill College Archives, Cambridge, UK
CSAS Cambridge Centre of South Asian Studies, UK
DL   Durham University Library, Durham, UK
GM   Gurkha Museum, Winchester, UK
IWM  Imperial War Museum, London, UK
LH   Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King’s College London, UK
NAM  National Army Museum, London, UK
OIOC Oriental and India Office Collection, British Library, London, UK
RWF  Royal Welch Fusiliers Regimental Archives, Caernarfon, Wales, UK
SWB  South Wales Borderers Regimental Archives, Brecon, Wales, UK
TNA  The National Archives, Kew, UK
WA   Firepower, Royal Artillery Museum, Woolwich, UK
Map 0.1 Burma and India during the Second World War